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### INITIATION OF TELEMACHOS (ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT OF THE ODYSSEY)

*Oh, how you need far-away Odysseus*

ὦ πόποι, ἦ δὴ πολλὸν ἀποιχομένου' Οδυσῆος δεύη I, 253

According to *Odyssey*, Odysseus's son Telemachos is precisely at the age of initiation (20-21 years old), i.e. the age of transition from adolescence to manhood. The status of ἀνὴρ could be obtained at different times and ages. The age of 18 was officially accepted in Classic Greece. In *Odyssey*, Telemachos is being initiated in the presence of readers. In my opinion, it is this process that the first four books of the text (*Telemachiad*) describe. Goddess Athena undertakes and carries out the initiation of Telemachos. She appears to the youth in two forms, 'preparing' the son to meet his father. Telemachos should be a man, when he meets Odysseus, in order to have the gods' ideas implemented.

Telemachos appears in the very first book of *Odyssey*. He is sitting sad among his mother's suitors (who are throwing dice, entertaining themselves), dreaming: if my glorious father returned ὀσσόμενος πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν, ἐνὶ φρεσὶν, εἴ ποθεν ἔλθων I, 115)<sup>1</sup> and drove the suitors to their homes (μνηστῆρων τῶν μὲν σκέδασιν κατὰ δώματα θείη I, 116), he could regain his power and wealth (τιμὴν δὲ αὐτὸς ἔχοι καὶ κτήμασιν οἷσιν ἀνάσσοι I, 117). It is here that Athena appears to him. She introduced herself to Telemachos as Mentos, the king of Taphians<sup>2</sup>, who was linked to Odysseus with rules of hospitality. Telemachos told Athena-Mentos: If [Odysseus] could be seen back to Ithaca now, you would see all [suitors]

<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter texts are cited from: Homer, *Odyssey*, with introduction, notes, etc. by W.W. Merry, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Τάφος is situated close to Ithaca, between Leucadia and Acarnania.



dreaming to have quickest feet, not gold or garments (εἰ κείνον γ' Ἰθάκηνδε ἰδοίατο νοστήσαντα I, 163, πάντες κ' ἄρησαίαιτ' ἐλαφρότεροι πόδας εἶναι 164 ἢ ἀφνειότεροι χρυσοῖό τε ἐσθῆτός τε 165).

We can see that Telemachos does not even dare to think about putting up resistance to the suitors. He is just daydreaming like an angry child about his all-powerful father appearing and coping with the shameless aggressors with one blow. The problem is that the suitors are almost of the same age as Telemachos, but they are numerous, while Telemachos is alone and, at the same time, lacks Odysseus's courage. Athena undertook to 'transform' the youth 'into a man'. Consistent actions are necessary to this end: 1. The first thing the goddess is to do is to arouse μένος<sup>3</sup> in Odysseus's son (καί οἱ μένος ἐν φρεσὶ θεῖω I, 89); 2. Telemachos inspired by wrath and boldness should convoke an assembly of the Achaeans to make a decision that the suitors are prohibited from entering Odysseus's home and ravaging his bulls and sheep (I, 90-92); 3. Telemachos should go to Sparta and Pylos to learn something about the return of his beloved father (νόστον πεισόμενον πατρὸς φίλου, ἣν πού ακούσῃ I, 94); 4. He should earn a good reputation among people (I, 95).

If we apply the traditional mythoritual model of the 'birth' of a hero to Athena's decision, it will become evident that the goddess's efforts are to give birth to a new hero. Zeus's daughter implements her plan in two stages. She first takes the shape of Mentès, whose main aim is to give hope to the youth. The visitor tells Telemachos insistently and categorically that Odysseus will soon come back (I, 194-195), that he did not perish on land, but is alive and locked on an island surrounded by the sea and can be tormented among savage beasts. Listen to me, she says, my prophecy is what the great gods put in my heart, which will come true without fail. I believe in that, although I am not a prophet. He will not remain far away from his beloved homeland for long. Even if he is in iron fetters, he will find the correct way and return home. No one is as ingenious as he is (οὐδ' εἶ πέρ τε σιδήρεα δέσματ' ἔχῃσι· I, 204 φράσσεται ὡς κε νέηται, ἐπεὶ πολυμήχανός ἐστιν I, 205).

Athena then notes that Telemachos looks amazingly like Odysseus with his head and beautiful eyes (I, 207-209). 'Are you indeed Odysseus's son?' the visitor asks. I believe that Telemachos's answer deserves detailed analysis. Therefore, we should follow the text carefully: 'I had better not had such an ill-fated father. It would have been better if he had lived in his homeland till his old age (ὡς δὴ ἐγὼ γ' ὄφελον μάκαρός νύ τευ ἔμμεναι υἱός I, 217 ἀνέρος, ὃν κτεάτεσσιν ἐοῖς ἔπι γῆρας ἔτετμε I, 218). He, who is the most unlucky among mortals, is my father. This is what people think' (I, 218-220).

<sup>3</sup> μένος, ετος, τό – 1. force, power, aspiration; 2. rage, anger; 3. force of life ... See more.



Telemachos then continues: there was time, when our home was full of wealth. The gods' benevolence is no longer there. His (Odysseus's) story is foggy. I would not lament him to this extent, had he fallen on the war-torn land of Troy together with his friends (ἐπεὶ οὐ κε θανόντι περ ὦδ' ἀκαχοίμην, I, 236, εἰ μετὰ οἷς ἐτάποισι δάμη Τρώων ἐνὶ δήμῳ 237, ἢ ἐ φίλων ἐν χερσὶν, ἐπεὶ πόλεμον τολύπευσε 238). The Achaeans would have made a mound for him and he would have left his eternal name to his son (I, 239-240). However, Harpies have taken him (Odysseus) now. He is lost without any trace and grave. Everyone has forgotten him. He has left only trouble and lamentations to me (I, 241-244). However, I am not lamenting him alone. The gods have brought another trouble down on me. Noble chiefs from various islands – Dulichia, Same, forested Zacynthos, and rocky Ithaca, my mother Penelope's suitors (μνῶνται I, 248), are ravaging our home. She (Penelope) does not want the loathsome marriage, but is unable to resist either (ἢ δ' οὐτ' ἀρεῖται στυγρὸν γάμον οὔτε τελευτὴν ποιῆσαι δύναται I, 249-250). They are swallowing our wealth and will ultimately ruin me too (I, 250-251).

This passage shows full well the situation on Ithaca. Young Telemachos, who cannot bear his mother's suitors, has to sit together with them, entertain himself, and feast with them. His father's return is a vain and unrealizable dream for him. Moreover, Telemachos wants everything to be clear. He wants to know if Odysseus is dead. He wishes him to have fallen on the Trojan land as a famous man, leaving his good name to his son. If we take a careful look, we will see that Telemachos is angry. Being Odysseus's son has brought him only problems. That is why he is 'philosophising' that he does not know for sure, who his father is and that he knows only what his mother is telling him. Even if we regard these words of Telemachos as a joke, they are nevertheless words of an angry person. It is not difficult to explain this. He does not remember his father, as he was a baby, when Odysseus went to war and his grandfather went to live in a village too. The boy grew up surrounded by women (mother, grandmother, and nurse). Odysseus's having fought heroically in Troy has done nothing good to Telemachos. In addition, no one knows whether he is alive or not. Had he died, he would have left his name to his son, but his mother's suitors are now ruining his home. He can do nothing about that and no help is expected from anywhere.

Having listened to Telemachos's monologue, Athena-Mentes says: Oh, how you need far-away Odysseus (ὦ πόποι, ἦ δὴ πολλὸν ἀποικομένου Ὀδυσῆος δεύη I, 253). She makes a precise assessment of the situation and follows Telemachos's dreams, but returns to reality very soon. She first says with confidence that Odysseus is to return very soon, but then changes tack,



saying that they cannot guess the gods' will and their determination to get him back or not. After that, Athena-Mentes starts speaking about business, telling Telemachos that they should think together how to evict the suitors.

From this moment, Athena-Mentes assumes Telemachos's role, urging him to act, although he has lost all hope and has reconciled himself with his fate. It is here that Telemachos's initiation starts. What is Odysseus's son to do? He should leave home (cease being under his mother's patronage), mix with people, learn how to establish relations, obtain information, and analyse it, which is supposed to enable him to make decisions and implement them. To achieve all that Telemachos needs force and appropriate spirit – μένος, which the goddess gives him. The plan should be implemented step by step. Athena-Mentes instructs Telemachos: 1. To convene a meeting of noble Achaeans on the next day, say everything, calling immortals as witnesses, and demand that all suitors return to their homes. If his mother wants to marry, she should return to her father Icaros, where the beloved daughter will be given in marriage (I, 272-278); 2. To go, together with 20 rowers, by ship to his father, who is far away (ἔρχεο πεισόμενος παρὸς δὴν οἰχομένοιο I, 281), in order to learn, what mortals are saying, or listen to the story (gossip) coming from Zeus, which is often a subject for consideration for people (ἦν τίς τοι εἶπησι βροτῶν, ἢ ὅσσαν ἀκούσης I, 282 ἐκ Διὸς, ἢ τε μάλιστα φέρει κλέος ἀνθρώποισι I, 283). Telemachos should first go to Pylos to see Nestor and then to Sparta to see Menelaus, who was the last Achaean to return home. If he learns that his father is to return, he should bear humiliation again. If he learns from rumours that he has died, he should go back home, render homage to him, and mourn in accordance with the rules. He should then convince his mother to get married (I, 284-292) and, when these are over, think about how to kill suitors by ruse or by force (I, 293-296). Athena-Mentes tells Telemachos that it is not appropriate for him to remain a child, as he is no longer a youth (οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ νηπιίας ὀχέειν, ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τηλικὸς ἐσσί I, 296-297), holding up as an example Orestes, who took revenge on his father's killers and made an immortal's name for himself (I, 298-302).

We can see that Athena-Mentes set a clear action plan for Odysseus's son. Penelope's suitors are 'dead' Odysseus's enemies, not those of Telemachos. The suitors will become Telemachos's personal enemies, when he becomes head of the family. The place is still free, 'protected' by Penelope. Telemachos should obtain the right to be the head and deserve it. It is no good to sit aggrieved side by side with his mother's suitors. It is time for decisive action.

There is nothing unusual in Athena-Mentes's plan. The person, who is being initiated, should leave his home, take a path, overcome obstacles, and



return home in possession of knowledge. One thing attracts attention here: Athena-Mentes demands that Telemachos listen to and collect rumours about Odysseus. In Greek mythology, ὄσσα personifies gossip and rumours. The etymology of this word is linked to Sanscrit *vák* and Latin *vox* – ‘voice’. Ὀσσα is Zeus's messenger. It is in accordance with Zeus's will that ὄσσα incites Achaeans in Troy to unite and resolve the future of the army (*Il.*, II, 94). Ὀσσα is very quick in delivering information from Zeus (*Od.*, I, 281-283; II, 216). He informs the Ithacans about the killing of the suitors (XXIV, 413-415).

Phama has the same function. With Sophocles, Phama is a message, divine voice, ‘the son of golden hope’. Both ὄσσα and μῦθος come from Zeus, but the Thunderer makes divine aieds deliver (sing) a μῦθος (message), and the wretched and self-styled prophets deliver ὄσσα. In addition, μῦθος is regarded as a genuine message, but ὄσσα is not. In reality, there is as much truth in μῦθος as falsehood in ὄσσα. Therefore, μῦθος (message) and ὄσσα (gossip) supplement each other to a certain extent, shaping public opinion and ideals (or vice versa). It can be said that ὄσσα is the shadow of μῦθος.

The problem is that Telemachos can indeed collect only gossip about Odysseus, because no one has seen Odysseus since the Trojan War. Proteus is the most reliable source, as he saw weeping Laertid in Ogygia. If rumours can be classified, what Proteus says is the most reliable rumour. Other rumours are based on various sources. Some are being disseminated by adventurer tramps for the sake of profit, some by prophets (including Proteus, Halitherses, and others), and others by the gods themselves (for example, Athena, who knows that Odysseus is alive, but does not maintain that for sure or, to be more correct, at times she confirms that and at times she does not. She advises Odysseus to lie too. To say the truth, Odysseus is also disseminating gossip about Odysseus). One thing is clear: the gossip comes from Zeus himself and it has a certain aim.

What is the aim of rumours about Odysseus's return and why should Telemachos ‘collect’ them? In my opinion, this has a concrete aim for the initiative involving Telemachos. The point is that collecting and analyzing rumours requires a certain intellectual level, experience, and knowledge of life. If Telemachos distinguishes between the liars and the honest and finds in the rumours the grain, which may be close to the truth, he will confirm that he is intellectually mature. Even if the rumour about Odysseus being alive and intending to return remains a rumour (i.e. even if Odysseus is indeed dead), Telemachos should realize that people do not want him to be dead, and this may be even more important than Odysseus's being alive.



Athena-Mentes tells Telemachos several times that he should not behave like a child, as he is already grown-up (οὐδέ τί σε χρὴ νηπιίας ὀχέειν, ἐπεὶ οὐκέτι τηλίκος ἐσσί I, 296-7). Having given him advice, Athena-Mentes flies away like a bird (ὄρνις δ' ὡς ἀνοπαῖα διέπτατο I, 320). She 'implants' into him a spirit (rage) and courage, and reminds him of his father (τῷ δ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ θῆκε μένος καὶ θαρσος, ὑπέμνησέν τέ ἐ πατρὸς I, 320-1). His soul, heart, and mind are moved, when he realises that the goddess has appeared to him (μᾶλλον ἔτι ἢ τὸ πάροιθεν. ὁ δὲ φρεσὶν ἦσι νοήσας θάμβησεν κατὰ θυμόν· οἴσατο γὰρ θεὸν εἶναι I, 322-323).<sup>4</sup> After the conversation with Athena-Mentes, Telemachos's face lights up like that of a deity (ἐπώχετο ἰσόθεος φῶς I, 324) and the change becomes evident to everyone – both Penelope and her suitors.

I will now dwell on one episode, which is noteworthy from a number of viewpoints. While Athena-Mentes is speaking to Telemachos, divine singer Phemios comes up to the suitors and starts singing about the difficult return of Trojan heroes. Penelope, together with two of her escort comes down from her room to listen to the singer. The lady asks Phemios to sing something else, because these sad stories fill her heart with sorrow, reminding her that she (Penelope) is the unhappiest person, because she lost such a husband. She suffers heavily for having lost the man, who became famous in the whole of Hellas and Argos (I, 325-344). Telemachos opposes his mother here. In his opinion, the aed's song has a divine meaning. He asks her mother (ἀντίον ἠΐδα I, 345), why she wants to prohibit the singer from pleasing them by singing what comes from his mind (τί τι ἄρα φθονέεις ἐρίηρον ἀοιδὸν τέρπειν ἐμῆ, τί τι ἄρα φθονέεις ἐρίηρον ἀοιδὸν τέρπειν ὄππη οἱ νόος ὄρνυται I, 346-348), noting that she should not resist the song about the Danaeans' terrible return, as people always listen to this song (this singer) with good disposition (praiseworthy mood), repeatedly inflaming their souls with this song, as if it were new (τήν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνθρωποι, ἢ τις ἀκούοντεσσι νεωτάτη ἀμφιπέληται I, 351-352). Telemachos says that she should strengthen her soul and heart to listen to it (σοὶ δ' ἐπιτολμάτω κραδίη καὶ θυμὸς ἀκούειν· I, 353), because it was not only Odysseus, but also many other well-known people, who lost the day of return from Troy in accordance with the gods' decision (οὐ γὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς οἶος ἀπώλεσε νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ I, 354 ἐν Τροίῃ, πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι φῶτες ὄλοντο I, 355).

It is quite clear from these strophes that Telemachos does not say that his father is dead like others. He says that 'he has lost the day of his return'

<sup>4</sup> θάμβησεν < θαμβέω – 'stupefaction, amazement' are ritual terms. The aim of the ritual is to move a person's soul and heart.



(ἀπώλεσε νόστιμό ἡμαρ). He also says that there were others together with Odysseus and they should not be forgotten. The most important thing in this passage is that Telemachos has understood full well the implications of Athena's advice concerning the importance of words: songs, praises for heroes, and their remembrance are a precondition for renovating the past and inflating listeners' souls. Zeus himself has set the rule for people to listen to these songs. Divine songs, like ὄσσα, come from Zeus and they have concrete goals.

After this monologue, Telemachos tells his mother to go to her room and do her own business, i.e. oversee the family household – knitting, weaving, and so forth, as it is man's business to speak, not woman's, which means that from now on, it is Telemachos, who will speak, not Penelope, as he is the master in the house (μῦθος δ' ἄνδρεςσι μελήσει πᾶσι, μάλιστα δ' ἐμοί· τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστι ἐνὶ οἴκῳ I, 358-9). Penelope, who is stunned (θαμβήσασα I, 360) by her child's (παιδὸς I, 361) reasonable words and behaviour, goes to her room (I, 360-363). Telemachos tells the suitors firmly that they are arrogant people and they should stop their noisy feasts and listen to aeds, who are like the gods (inspired by the gods) (I, 368-371). He also tells them that at dawn, he urges them to assemble at the agora, where he will tell them directly to leave (his) home (I, 372-373) and organise feasts at their own expense or ruin someone from their ranks, if they want; I will call upon the gods; Zeus may grant requirial of that deeds (ἐγὼ δὲ θεοὺς ἐπιβώσομαι αἰὲν ἐόντας I, 378, αἶ κε ποθι Ζεὺς δῶσι παλίνιτα ἔργα γένεσθαι I, 379).

The suitors are also surprised at Telemachos's behaviour (his bold words), because nothing like that has happened before. Antinoos tells the host that the gods have probably taught him (διδάσκουσιν θεοὶ αὐτοὶ I, 384) to be so bold and defiant and that time will be hard on them when he becomes their king on Ithaca in accordance with Cronion's will, to which he has the right thanks to his origin (I, 386-387). Telemachos answers them that he would have accepted power with pleasure, if Zeus gave it to him. He said that it is not bad to be a king; wealth accumulates quickly at the royal house and people respect rulers very much; however, many can be found among old and young Achaeans (residents of Ithaca) and it is possible to choose among them, since Odysseus is dead (ἐπεὶ θάνε δῖος Οδυσσεύς I, 396). He says that anyway, he is the ruler at his home (I, 402-405) and he has the power over slaves (I, 398-399), whom Odysseus captured in wars.

Eurymachos says, answering him that they do not know the gods' will on who is to rule on Ithaca (I, 400-401) and that no one of them intends to deprive him of his property, and asks who his visitor was (I, 402-405). The suit-



ors linked Telemachos's transformation with the visitor, who disappeared in a strange manner.

One more detail is interesting: Telemachos does not mention Odysseus as dead, when he speaks to his mother, but in conversation with her suitors, on the contrary, he says several times that Odysseus is dead (θάνε I, 396, ἀπώλετο I, 413). He says that he no longer thinks about the return of his father and that he will not trust any stories, which may give rise to hope, and will not pay attention to prophets, whom his mother used to summon to their house (I, 413-416). Although Telemachos said this, deep in his heart, he was sure that he saw an immortal god (I, 420). He seems to have tabooed Odysseus's return, as what he knows should not become known too early. That is why he is very categorical in conversation with the suitors, saying that he no longer believes that his father will return, because he is indeed dead.

Thus, Telemachos passed the first stage of initiation. He proved to be a talented pupil and learned the first lesson delivered by the goddess quite quickly, following her instructions. He said what he was to say and concealed what he should not have said. Telemachos's permanent epithet is πεπνυμένος<sup>5</sup> (reasonable, wise, judging, intelligent).<sup>6</sup>

In Book II, Telemachos resorts to action, starting to fulfil Athena-Mentes's instructions. His first serious test is the assembly of the Ithacans. The text makes it clear that there has been no assembly or meeting on the island since Odysseus left Ithaca (II, 25-27). Therefore, people assemble at the agora quite quickly, waiting with interests to learn the reason for the gathering. They suspect that someone may have learned news about the war or may want to give people a piece of wise advice (II, 30-32). Elders are among them.

Against the background of these expectations, Telemachos, who is sitting in his father's throne (ἔζετο δ' ἐν πατρὸς θώκῳ II, 14), stands up, looking like a god (θεῶ ἑναλίκιος II, 30). He holds a copper spear in his hand (παλάμη δ' ἔχε χάλκεον ἔγχος II, 10). Telemachos's appearance, behaviour, and confidence obviously points to his transformation. Before he starts speaking, mes-

<sup>5</sup> Τηλέμαχος πεπνυμένος (I, 153; 230; 306; 365-7; 367; 412; II, 129; 371; III, 21; 201; 225; 239. IV, 290; 315; XV, 84; 154; 179; 279; 264; 502; 512; 535; XVI, 30; 68; 112; 146; 162; 240; XVII, 45; 77; 107; 392; 398; 598; XVIII, 226; XIX, 26; XX, 338; XXI, 343; XXIV, 510); Τηλέμαχος θεοειδής (I, 103; III, 343; XVI, 20; XVII, 391, etc.); Ὀδυσσῆος φίλος υἱός II, 415; III, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Comment to line 213: πεπνυμένος - Irregular perf. part. from πνέο. Lit. 'having the breath of life' (*Od.*, 10.495) and thence = 'intelligent.'

Comment to line 230: 'To plan everything with cleverness'. see Homer, *Odyssey*, with Introduction, notes, etc. W.W. Merry, Books I, II, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press 1961.



senger Pisenoros gives him a scepter (σκήπτρον δέ οἱ ἔμβαλε II, 37). Telemachos equipped with all symbols of power addresses the Ithacans. He says that his heart is full of sorrow, he does not know anything about the return of the army, and is unable to give them a useful piece of advice. He also says that he intends to speak to them about his personal pains (II, 42-45).

He formulated what he wanted to say in the following manner: 1. My famous father (πατέρι ἐσθλὸν ἀπώλεσα II, 46), who was your king and loved you like his sons, has died (ὅς ποτὶ ἐν ὑμῖν τοῖσδεσσιν βασίλευε, πατὴρ δὲ ὡς ἥπιος ἦεν· II, 46-47); 2. A new trouble has struck me down now and my home is collapsing. The suitors are ruining everything. They do not want to address Icaros and to ask for her (Penelope's) hand (II, 48-58). There is no person like Odysseus, who could save us from this trouble (οὐ γὰρ ἔπ' ἀνὴρ οἶος Ὀδυσσεὺς ἔσκεν, ἀρὴν ἀπὸ οἴκου ἀμῦναι II, 59), and we do not have sufficient power to put up resistance either. Had I had the power, I would have combated the violence (ἦ τ' ἂν ἀνυναίμην, εἴ μοι δύναμις γε παρείη I, 62). However, I can no longer tolerate that.

From this moment, Telemachos's address to the Ithacans changes in manner. It is the son, who is to clarify now, why his fellow islanders do not sympathise with Odysseus's family, because Penelope's suitors would not be so arrogant without the Ithacans' secret or open accord (there were quite a lot of Ithacans among the suitors). Telemachos speaks cautiously in order not to anger the people and his indignation at his fellow citizens is rather implied than declared.

Telemachos tells the Ithacans that they should be ashamed before neighbours or fear the gods' rage to prevent their bad deeds from rebounding on them, because they did not lift a finger, seeing trouble in his family (II, 55-59). Then he asks them whether they were taking revenge on him being offended by Odysseus (εἰ μή πού τι πατὴρ ἐμὸς ἐσθλὸς Ὀδυσσεὺς δυσμενέων κάκι ἔρεξεν ἐυκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς, τῶν μὲν ἀποτινύμενοι κακὰ ῥέζετε δυσμενέυτες, τούτους ὀτρύνοντες II, 71-74). He says that he would prefer them to ruin his property, as he could demand everything and would never leave them in peace until he regained everything. He also says that his soul was moved by their passiveness (νῦν δέ μοι ἀπρήκτους ὀδύνας ἐμβάλλετε θυμῷ II, 79). Then he flings the sceptre down and starts weeping (ὣς φάτο χωόμενος, ποτὶ δὲ σκήπτρον βάλε γαίῃ, δάκρυ' ἀναπρήσᾳ· II, 80-1). People sympathise with him (οἶκτος δὲ ἔλε λαὸν ἅπαντα II, 81).

Thirty-nine lines are devoted to Telemachos's speech. It can be said that it is an excellent example of a public speech. Telemachos's aim was to cause people's sympathy and he achieved the goal too. Correspondingly, the son not only looked like his father (which Athena-Mentes noted), but he resem-



bled him in his ability to convince people and make speeches. This makes it clear, why *πεπνύμενος* is his permanent epithet.

It is also clear that Telemachos has taken the path of initiation. He convenes an assembly (which no one has done since Odysseus's departure), sits in his father's throne, and speaks to the people with the symbol of power – sceptre – in his hand. Telemachos transforms his family's problems into a subject for public discussion and that is no accident either. Now that time has come for Odysseus to return (which Telemachos learned from Athena), it is necessary to clarify how the population of Ithaca is disposed towards Odysseus and his family.

The epic narration and Homer's skills make this short passage amazingly capacious. We can watch how the long-haired Achaeans assemble at the agora. Telemachos comes alone, accompanied only by dogs (II, 10-11). Aegyptios is the first to speak with lonesome Telemachos, whose beauty is divine. Old, hunched, and knowledgeable Aegyptios is the father of Odysseus's companion Antiphos devoured by Cyclops Polyphemos [It was Odysseus's whim to enter the Cyclops's cave, while his companions were against that]. The old man always mourned his lost son, weeping. People expecting to hear news about their loved ones, who went to war, are effectively standing in front of Telemachos in the shape of Aegyptios. This endless expectation can not only be felt, but a question is also asked about anyone who could have learned anything about the war (II, 30).

Reading this part of the poem, one gets the impression that, when Odysseus and best young men of Ithaca went to Troy, life came to a standstill on the island and everyone switched to the 'expectation mode'. No assemblies have been convoked since then and they seem not to have been necessary either. The Trojan War started 20 years ago. Stories about the war and other Achaeans, who returned to their homes, have reached Ithaca, but everyone is keeping silent about the Ithacans. The silence is already unbearable. It is against this difficult background that Telemachos has to speak to his fellow-citizens, and he has to do that for the first time in his life. At the beginning, he seems to be apologising for summoning the Ithacans to ask them for help, not to inform them about what is interesting for them or to give them advice (II, 40-44). The very beginning of his speech makes it clear that the 'the Ithacans, who gathered at the assembly quickly' (II, 8-9), are disappointed, as they will not learn anything about their family members, who went to war. That is why Telemachos should choose words, which will reach their hearts and cause sympathy. He says publicly that his father is dead. The statement is, of course, supposed to cause sympathy. By officially admitting that Odysseus is



dead, Telemachos causes sympathy on the one hand and eyes sentiments towards the 'deceased man' on the other.

Telemachos then starts speaking about the suitors' shameless behaviour, urging gods – Zeus and Themis – to be the judges and accusing his fellow citizens of inactivity. In conclusion, he asks a question, for which, in my opinion, the whole scene was written: Are you not revenging on me, being angry at my father?

One of the suitors – Antinoos – responds to Telemachos's accusation, blaming Penelope for everything. He says that the suitors' claims are 'lawful', but Penelope has been deceiving them shamelessly (II, 85-128). Telemachos explains to Antinoos, why he is unable to force his mother to leave his home: 1. My mother gave birth to me and raised me, while my father is far away and I do not know whether he is dead or alive (II, 131-132); 2. Icaros will be quite harsh with me, if I take my mother to his home without taking his will into account, and my father will be quite angry too (II, 133-134), while my mother will send demons – terrible Eriniyes – to deal with me (II, 135). In addition, that is eternal shame in the eyes of the people (II, 136-137); 3. Leave my home, (suitors) (I, 139). If you continue to ruin my property, I will call the gods (ἐγὼ δὲ θεοὺς ἐπιβώσομαι αἰὲν ἔοντας II, 143). The fact that Telemachos has become the one chosen by the gods is confirmed by divine signs. The point is that two truths were said at the Ithacans' trial – those of Telemachos and the suitors. According to the message from the prophet of birds, Halitherses,<sup>7</sup> the truth is on Telemachos's side and the future of the suitors is dark, as Odysseus will soon return and ruin everyone (II, 157-160). Halitherses says that he told Odysseus fortune before he went to Troy, saying that he would return 20 years after the end of the war, and it is now time for the prophesy to come true. One of the suitors – Eurymachos – reviles the prophet, saying that he is 'increasing' Telemachos's rage with his words (Τηλέμαχον κεχολωμένον ὦδ' ἀνιείης II, 185) and other suitors tell Halitherses that, if he inflames rage in the young man with his futile words (αἶ κε νεώτερον ἄνδρα παλαιά τε πολλά τε εἰδὼς παρφάμεμος ἐπέεσσιν ἐποτρυνῆς, χαλεπαίνειν II, 188-189), Telemachos himself will suffer. Eurymachos then repeats what he said previously: Telemachos should order (force) his mother to return to her father and Icaros will give her a rich dowry and marry her off. He says that they, suitors, will not go anywhere, as they are not afraid either of Telemachos or prophesies (II, 195-201).

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<sup>7</sup> Two eagles pecking at each other appeared in the sky during the argument between Telemachos and the suitors.



Telemachos then tells the assembled people: 1. Give me a boat with 20 rowers to go to Sparta and sandy Pylos. I will probably learn something from mortals about my father's return or hear an ὄσσα coming from Zeus, or probably noblemen will tell me something (πρυσόμενος πατρὸς δὴν οἰχομένοιο ἢ τίς μοι εἴπησι βροτῶν, ἢ ὄσσαν ἀκούσω ἐκ Διὸς, ἢ τε μάλιστα φέρει κλέος ἀνθρώποισιν II, 215-217); 2. If I learn that Odysseus is alive and is to return, I will wait for him for another year (II, 219-220); 3. If I learn that he has died, I will make a mound for him in accordance with the rules of burial (II, 221-22); 4. I will then marry my mother off (II, 223).

Thus, Telemachos fulfils Athena-Mentes's instructions fully and successfully. Correspondingly, the first stage of the initiation is successful. Several points attract attention at this stage. At the beginning, Telemachos says that his father is dead, but then the 'game' of assumptions starts again. What if he is alive? Halitherses maintains for sure that he is alive. To find out the truth once and for all, Telemachos is ready to travel. Another stage of initiation starts here.

*Few sons are similar to their fathers and most of them are bad, while very few are better (παῦροι γὰρ τοὶ παῖδες ὁμοῖοι πατρὶ πέλονται, οἱ πλεονες κακίους, παῦροι δέ τε πατρὸς ἀπείους II, 276-277).*

This stage can be described as preparations and starting off. From this moment, Telemachos has a new helper – Athena-Mentor.<sup>8</sup>

After the Ithacans' assembly ends, the suitors go to Odysseus's home and Telemachos goes to the seashore. He washes his hands in salty water there and implores Athena (II, 261). Telemachos knows that it was Athena, who visited him and gave him instructions the day before (χθιζός). He realises, who his 'helper' is. He knows that he should cross the foggy sea (II, 263) and learn (πρυσόμενον II, 264) something about his father, who left long ago (264), but the Achaeans, particularly the swaggering suitors, are hindering his journey (κακῶς ὑπηρενορέντες II, 266).

Athena-Mentor tells him that people will be unable to call him either cowardly or unreasonable (Τηλέμαχι, οὐδ' ὄπιθεν κακὸς ἔσσεται οὐδ' ἀνοήμων II, 270), if he shows his father's powerful spirit (μένος) (εἰ δὴ τοι σοῦ πατρὸς ἐνέστακται μένος ἢ II, 271), which helped him achieve anything by deeds and words (οἷος κείνος ἔην τελέσαι ἔργον τε ἔπος τε II, 272). To travel by sea will be good too (οὐ τοι ἔπειθ' ἀλίη ὁδὸς ἔσσεται οὐδ' ἀτέ-

<sup>8</sup> Mentor is Odysseus's famous friend, to whom Odysseus entrusted his home (II, 225-226). Mentor defended Telemachos at the assembly, urging people to protect his house, but in vain, because the Ithacans said that they were afraid of the suitors. When the assembly dispersed, the suitors went to Telemachos's home again.



λεστος II, 273), because it is not in vain that he is Penelope's descendant (εἰ δ' οὐ κείνου γ' ἔσσι γόνος καὶ Πηνελοπείης II, 274). She says that there are hopes that he will achieve what is planned (οὐ σέ γ' ἔπειτα ἔολπα τελευτήσῃν ἄμενοινας II, 275). Few sons are similar to their fathers, she says, and most of them are bad, while very few are better (παῦροι γάρ τοι παῖδες ὁμοῖοι πατρὶ πέλονται, οἱ πλείονες κακίους, παῦροι δέ τε πατρὸς ἀπείους II, 276-277). After that (i.e. after he fulfils the instructions), Telemachos will no longer be bad or unreasonable. Athena says that Odysseus's wisdom has not weakened within him (ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ὄπιθεν κακὸς ἔσσεται οὐδ' ἀνοήμων, οὐδέ σε πάγχυ γε μῆτις Ὀδυσσῆος προλέλοιπεν II, 278-279) and he will hopefully accomplish what is to be done (ἐλπωρή τοι ἔπειτα τελευτήσῃσι τάδε ἔργα II, 280). As regards the suitors, whose ideas and reason resemble those of witless people; do not know either the plan (νοήμονες) or laws (rules) (δίκαιοι). They are unable to see death and their dark fate that are coming closer to them in order to destroy all of them (II, 281-284). Athena tells him not to delay his journey (II, 285). I (Mentor), she says, am your friends and adoptive father (τοῖς γάρ τοι ἑταῖρος ἐγὼ πατρώϊός εἰμι II, 286) and promises to give him a fast ship and travel with him (II, 287). Athena-Mentor then tells Telemachos how much flour, wine, and other products he needs for the journey.

At the second stage of the initiation, Athena effectively discloses everything to Telemachos. It is clear that he is not an ordinary initiate, but he, just like his father, is consecrated by a deity. That is why in her monologue, Athena underscores the similarity between the son and the father. Telemachos's appearance is similar to that of Odysseus (Athena-Mentes said this earlier). His is also a good orator and reasonable like his father. Athena is satisfied with the fact that Telemachos does everything exactly like she would like him to do without any need for her to give him instructions twice, and he sometimes does things without any instructions. Correspondingly, he is among those sons, who are no worse than their famous fathers, because, as a rule, few sons resemble their famous fathers. Odysseus's spirit (μένος) should be reinforced in Telemachos. What he has done (claimed his rights) alone is not sufficient for this purpose. He must travel his road, collect and analyse ὅσα about his father (i.e. become familiar with his father, before he meets him, because his impression of him is vague. Others are in a better position to tell him about his heroic deeds). From this moment on, Telemachos is in a more advantageous position than the suitors. Although they are numerous, their minds are shrouded in darkness. The suitors do not know what consecrated Telemachos knows.



Telemachos's initiation is intellectual. Unlike heroes of previous generations, he does not have to participate in big wars, fight against monsters, and overcome precipices. All that has been done by the generations of their fathers and grandfathers. The main thing now is for the generation of sons to 'digest' the ancestors' knowledge and experience. If we take a more careful look, we will see that the functions of the so-called third generation are somewhat different. Achilles' son Neoptolemos is a moral hero; Orestes' task is to protect his father's rights and restore his family's honest name; and Telemachos is to find his lost father, perfect his father's wisdom, and achieve harmony in his family.

From this stage, Telemachos diligently follows Athena-Mentor's instructions. He is a good 'performer'. I will dwell on several points here. On Telemachos's return home from the popular assembly, Antinoos told him: You, Telemachos, who spoke in a high-flown manner and who is unable to subdue his rage, you had better eat and drink together with us like you did previously, rather than confront us (Τηλέμαχι' ὑψαγόρη, μένος ἄσχετε, μή τί τοι ἄλλο ἐν στήθεσσι κακὸν μελέτω ἔργον τε ἔπος τε, ἀλλά μοι ἐσθιέμεν καὶ πινέμεν, ὡς τὸ πάρος περ II, 302-305). Telemachos told him: I will no longer sit with you. You ruined my property (II, 310-313), while I was under age (ἐγὼ δ' ἔτι νήπιος ἦα II, 313). I am grown up now. I have realised things thanks to others' words (advice) (νῦν δ' ὅτε δὴ μέγας εἰμὶ καὶ ἄλλων μῦθον ἀκούων πυνθάνομαι II, 314-315) and my spirit has strengthened (καὶ δὴ μοι ἀέξεται ἔνδοθι θυμὸς II, 315), I will try how I may hurl forth upon your evil fates (ὡς κ' ὑμμι κακὰς ἐπὶ κῆρας ἰήλω II, 316). In conclusion, Telemachos informs the suitors that he intends to travel. Before the journey, Telemachos executes all rules – makes a sacrifice and offers up a prayer.

Book III of the *Odyssey* describes Telemachos's visit to Pylos and Sparta. Athena-Mentor constantly accompanies him, giving him instructions on how to behave in specific situations. When Telemachos comes to wise Nestor, Athena-Mentor tells him to overcome shyness (αἰδοῦς III, 14) and insist (λίσσεσθαι II, 19) that he tell him the story. Telemachos, who has left his home and island for the first time, is excited about everything: how he can approach Nestor and how he, a young and inexperienced man, can question the elder. Telemachos admits that he does not know yet how to ask reasonable questions (πῶς τ' ἄρ' ἴω πῶς τ' ἄρ προσπτύξομαι αὐτόν οὐδέ τί πω μύθοισι πεπεύρημαι πυκινοῖσιν· αἰδῶς δ' αὖ νέον ἄνδρα γεραίτερον ἐξεεσθαι III, 22-24). The goddess answers that some of it he will discern with his own mind and some of it the daimon will suggest, adding that in her opinion, he was not born and raised without the gods' will (III, 26-28).



Athena-Mentor says unequivocally that the personal factor is important in the initiation together with divine will.

Athena-Mentor leads the way with speedy steps and Telemachos follows her ("Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσασ' ἠγήσατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη καρπαλίμως· ὁ δ' ἔπειτα μετ' ἴχνια βαῖνε θεοῖο III, 29-30). Athena puts courage in his heart before the conversation with Nestor (III, 75-77). Telemachos embraces Nestor's knees (this is the suppliant's position) and asks him to tell him all that he has seen with his own eyes or heard by chance from some wretched people (III, 92-94). Nestor notes that Telemachos's reasonable speech resembles his father's (σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσοπόωντα. ἦ τοι γὰρ μῦθοί γε εἰκότες, οὐδέ κε φαίης ἄνδρα νεώτερον ὧδε εἰκότα μυθήσασθαι III, 123-125).

Book IV of *Odyssey* starts with Telemachos's visit to Menelaos. People are fussing about in the king's house. Hermione – the daughter of Menelaos and Helen – is getting married to Achilles' son Neoptolemos (one more representative of the so-called generations of 'sons' appears in this episode. Menelaos promised him back in Troy to make him related by marriage IV, 4-6). At the same time, the son, whom Menelaos had from a slave, is also getting married.

Telemachos and Peisistratos are amazed, viewing Menelaos's magnificent palace (IV, 43-44). When the king eyes the visitors, he says that in none of them has their parents' race been extinguished and they seem to be men born by kings with sceptres consecrated by Zeus, as people like them are not born by useless people (IV, 62-64). To show respect Menelaos gives them part of his meat (IV, 65-66). At this moment, violet-savoured Helen, who looks like Artemis comes out and asks who the visitors are. Before hearing an answer, she says that she is not sure, whether this is indeed so, but she has never seen such resemblance between anyone – be it men or women – like the resemblance she could see between Odysseus and Telemachos, whom Odysseus let at home as a baby, when Achaean heroes went to Troy (οὐ γάρ πώ τινά φημι εἰκότα ὧδε ιδέσθαι οὔτ' ἄνδρ' οὔτε γυναῖκα, σέβας μ' ἔχει εἰσορόωσαν, ὡς ὁδ' Ὀδυσσῆος μεγαλήτορος υἱ εἶκε, Τηλεμάχῳ, τὸν ἔλειπε νέον γεγαῶτ' ... IV, 141-144). Menelaos agrees with Helen, saying that he has the same impression, as Telemachos has similar legs, arms, the expression of the eyes, and dense hair (οὐτῶ νῦν καὶ ἐγὼ νοέω, γύναι, ὡς σὺ εἴσκεις· κείνου γὰρ τοιοῖδε πόδες τοιαῖδε τε χεῖρες ὀφθαλμῶν τε βολαὶ κεφαλῆ τ' ἐφυπερθε τε χαῖται IV, 148-150) and adding that, when she started speaking about Odysseus, tears welled up in his throat (IV, 153). Peisistratos responds to the king and queen instead of Telemachos. He confirms that his companion is Odysseus's son, but he is shy and cannot speak boldly (IV, 158-160), telling them that they can probably help him with words or deeds (ὄφρα οἱ ἦ τι ἔπος ὑποθήσειαι ἢ τι ἔργον IV, 163). Peisistratos informs them that a



major trouble has struck down Telemachos, who remains without his father (IV, 164-167). The passage shows that Telemachos has failed to overcome shyness, because it is no joke to stand right in front of Menelaos, who has already become a legend and a hero of the Trojan War and his divine wife, for whom Greek heroes fought for 10 years. Menelaos' words and his love and enthusiasm towards Odysseus helped Telemachos to overcome shyness. Menelaos says that he could do anything for his dear friend, build a palace for him in Argos, and invite him to live there together with his family, but the god seems to have been jealous of his happiness and prohibited the unhappy man from returning home (ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν που μέλλεν ἀγάσσεσθαι θεὸς αὐτὸς, ὃς κείνον δύστηνον ἀνόστιμον οἶον ἔθηκεν IV, 181-182).<sup>9</sup> Menelaos does not say that Odysseus has died. He says that the god has prohibited him from returning home. Why should the god have been jealous of Odysseus? Probably because, unlike the Atrids' wives, his wife is faithful? However, why should the god have been jealous of this? It is the Atrids, who should have been jealous.

Telemachos receives gifts from Agamemnon and Helen: a chalice (δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον XV, 102), a precious dress for his future wife (XV, 105-108; 125-130), and a gilded silver crater made by Hephaestos (XV, 114-122). Correspondingly, the journey has proved to be useful. Telemachos managed to speak with famous heroes of the Trojan War, overcame shyness, and obtained their benevolence. Telemachos received gifts personally (obtained property). What is most important, he learned everything about Odysseus. However, everything is effectively nothing. No one was able to tell him for sure whether Odysseus was alive or not. On the other hand, he learned what great heroes thought about his father and what people said (ᾠσσα). On the basis of that, Telemachos shaped the image of his famous father. Not only he, but the whole of Greece can be proud of the image and it is now worth to wait and even sacrifice oneself to it.

Telemachos returns to Ithaca as a man, but the suitors do not know that. They failed to take into account what happened before their eyes (such was the will of the goddess). The suitors are making plans to kill Telemachos. Their judgement is as follows: If the child (νέος παῖς I, 665) has proved to be so courageous despite the will of the suitors, he will cause much trouble in the future too (IV, 665-667).

When Penelope is informed about the threat her son is facing, she is very concerned. A conversation between Penelope and her sister Iphthime's ghost

<sup>9</sup> μέλλεν ἀγάσσεσθαι – 'must himself have been jealous of this happiness' (comment to IV, 181).



(an image Athena sent to her) is noteworthy. Iphthime tells Penelope that her son will return with peace, because he has never been offensive to the gods (ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἔτι νόστιμός ἐστι σὸς παῖς· οὐ μὲν γάρ τι θεοῖς ἀλιτῆμενός ἐστι I, 806-807).<sup>10</sup> Penelope explains, why she is worried: 1. I lost my husband with the lion heart, distinguished for all virtue among the Danaeans, whose fame spread wide through Hellas and Argos (IV, 813-816); 2. Now my beloved child is gone (παῖς ἀγαπητὸς ἔβη IV, 817) for a journey, a novice, not well skilled in action or speech, who has experienced no trouble (νήπιος, οὔτε πόνων εὖ εἰδὼς οὔτ' ἀγοράων IV, 818). For him I sorrow still more than for my husband. Iphthime's phantom tells Penelope: Be calm. He (Telemachos) has with him the sort of guide, whom other men have prayed to stand beside them – Athena, the Thunderer's daughter (IV, 825-829).

Telemachos is the main hero of the first four books in *Odyssey*. We can see that this part of the text is devoted to his initiation. Telemachos then appears in the poem in Book XIV or, to be more correct, swineherd's head Eumaeos speaks about him. He reveals his woe to Odysseus, who is disguised as a tramp: I am now worrying more about Telemachos than Odysseus. I do not know whether it was a god or a man, who fogged his mind, as he went on a journey to Pylos to learn news about his father. Even if he returns with peace from there, the suitors are lying in wait for him in order to root out the name of Arces<sup>11</sup> (XIV, 174-184) on Ithaca. This is how Eurymachos describes Telemachos: He was like a child raised by the gods. I thought that, he would not be worse than his father in appearance and build of body, when he became a man (τὸν ἐπεὶ θρέψαν θεοὶ ἔρνει ἴσον, καὶ μιν ἔφην ἔσσεσθαι ἐν ἀνδράσιν οὔ τι χέρηα πατρὸς ἐοῖο φίλοιο, δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἀγητὸν XIV, 175-177).

Athena appears in a dream to Telemachos delayed in Sparta and tells him: 1. to hurry up to find his mother (still) chaste (ἀμύμονα μητέρα τέτμησ XV, 15), as her father (Icarios) and brothers are forcing her to marry Eurymachos, and also tells him about women's unreliable nature (XV, 20-23); 2. To entrust the gifts he has received to the most reliable slave until the gods send him to meet a worthy wife (XV, 24-25); 3. How to avoid the suitors, who are lying in wait for him (XV, 27-35); 4. To first go to the swineherd's head on his arrival in Ithaca and send him to Penelope on the next day to inform her that you have arrived (XV, 38-42). Athena speaks to Telemachos, who is already a grown-up man. He has to speak about everything. His mother can also behave like other mothers after they get married for a second time.

<sup>10</sup> This suggests indirectly that those, who offended gods, were punished.

<sup>11</sup> Arcesios was the name of Laertes's father.



Therefore, he cannot fully trust anyone, and everything and everyone should be controlled. This is Athena's last 'lesson'.

Before Telemachos leaves Sparta, an eagle clutches a domestic goose in its talons (XV, 160-164). Helen sees this and says that the gods have cast in her heart that Odysseus will return and take vengeance (XV, 172-178). Thus, Telemachos returns from Sparta full of hope. He gives shelter to Melampos's descendant Theoclymenos, who casually killed a man in Argos and fled his relatives' revenge. His lot is to be a tramp (XV, 223-281). On his return from Sparta, Telemachos is unable to invite to his home either Theoclymenos or the visitor (Odysseus), whom he got to know with Eumaeos. He says that he is still young and he has never tried to punish his enemies for arrogance (XVI, 71-72), while his mother is reasoning with her soul and heart, not knowing what to do – stay with him or take care of the home, be faithful to Odysseus's bed or marry the most distinguished man among the Achaeans, who is seeking her hand and giving her gifts (XVI, 73-77). He says that he will present the visitor with a cloak – chiton, but he should remain with Eumaeos for some time, because he does not advise the visitor to go to the town to meet the suitors, who can mock him, while Telemachos cannot curb them, as even the most powerful is forceless against many, because he is alone (μή μιν κερτομέωσιν, ἔμοι δ' ἄχος ἔσσειται αἰνόν. πρῆξαι δ' ἀργαλέον τι μετὰ πλεόνεσσιν ἔόντα ἄνδρα καὶ ἴφθιμον, ἐπεὶ ἡ πολὺν φέρτεροί εἰσι XVI, 87-89). Only a grown-up man can reason in this manner, not a youth, who is ready to die combating anyone, who offends him or succumb to the will of someone, who is stronger. The suitors also admit that Telemachos has become a man. They are arguing whether they should kill Penelope's son or not. Antinoos says that so long as he (Telemachos) is alive, they will be unable to achieve their goal, as he has become a man and his mind is also ready for deeds and advice (οὐ γὰρ οἴω τούτου γε ζώοντος ἀνύσσεσθαι τάδε ἔργα. αὐτος μὲν γὰρ ἐπιστήμων βουλήν τε νόον τε XVI, 372-374). One thing is also noteworthy here. Antinoos says that the Ithacans will not approve of this act (Telemachos's murder), because they no longer regard them in a benevolent manner (λαοὶ δ' οὐκέτι πάμπαν ἐφ' ἡμῖν ἦρα φέρουσιν XVI, 375). This phrase (and other passages of the text) makes it clear that the suitors behaved freely previously, because no one denounced them (the Ithacans did not condemn the suitor's audacity).

Penelope and maidservants can also see that Telemachos has become a man. One of the maidservants, Eurynome, tells her mistress that her son is precisely in the age she has implored the immortals and she has lived to see his manhood (ἤδη μὲν γὰρ τοι παῖς τηλίκος, ὃν σὺ μάλιστα ἦρῶ ἀθανάτο-



ισι γενειήσαντα ιδέσθαι XVIII, 175-176).<sup>12</sup> When Penelope reproaches her son for not defending his guest (XVIII, 215-225), Telemachos answers that her reproach is fair and he can distinguish between good and bad too, since he is no longer a minor (πάρος δ' ἔτι νήπιος ἦα XVIII, 229), but he does not have sufficient force to judge everything correctly, because he has a lot of ill-wishers and no supporters around him (XVIII, 230-232). Telemachos is precisely as reasonable as Odysseus, not yielding to emotions. The time, when he was a child, has gone. Telemachos himself says about the past that he was a child at that time (ἐγὼ δ' ἔτι νήπιος ἦα XIX, 19). Penelope admits that her son is grown-up and can take care of the family. Zeus is arousing respects towards him among the people (XIX, 159-161). In Book XX, Telemachos speaks about his rights in a very self-confident manner, urging the suitors to be reasonable (XX, 266-267; 304-306; 311-312; 315-319). We can end discussing this issue with Telemachos's words from Book XXI: 'I am the head of this family now' (τοῦ γὰρ κράτος ἔστι ἐνὶ οἴκῳ XXI, 353).

Family is a crucial issue in *Odyssey*. In the poem, the whole macrocosm is oriented and focused on the microcosm – home and family hearth. Relations between three generations, marital fidelity, and unity of and mutual respect between fathers and sons are topical issues now too. Telemachos's initiation is a leitmotif, which is part of this whole context. The universal ritual of initiation has been regarded as an indispensable component of public order since the time, when primeval families emerged. We have seen that this ritual has a significant artistic role in *Odyssey*.

<sup>12</sup> W. Merry's comments on these strophes: 'Her ὄν is linked to τηλικός and should be understood in this manner: 'Your son is now perfect, of the age you have implored the heavens to be able to see him with a grown board.' ἠρῶ <ἠράου <ἀραομαι - reaching the age of motherhood.'