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## **Intellectual Characters in Homer's Epic**

In modern scientific literature the theory of intellect by Howard Gardner – Harvard University professor, is widely acknowledged. Howard Gardner admits that the intellect of the person may be defined according to the skills he owns. However, a skill is a person's inherent (physical and mental) ability. The ability is given to a human being as a potential and further development of this ability depends on how the person will be given a chance to develop this skill (for instance, appropriate education, living conditions, requirements and so on). If a person acts properly, or gets proper training, the inherent ability turns into a skill and if he does not learn or work in this field, this skill will not develop. Gardner enumerates different kinds of intellect: linguistic-humanitarian, logical-mathematical, visual-graphic, physical-kinesthetic, audio-musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intellect. Gardner enumerates the skills which indicate the existence of each type of intellect in a person (Gardner, 1989, 4-9). I tried to use these measurements while ascertain the intellectual level of epic characters.

There are a lot of personages in Homer's epic. There are about 956 characters only in *Iliad*. Surely I would not be able to discuss all of them. That is why I chose the most outstanding characters, analyzed them and did the generalization. These personages are the following: Agamemnon, Odysseus, Nestor, Priam, Hector and so on. These personages have been discussed in the scientific literature in many different aspects, though nobody has paid attention to their level of education. Not only the main characters are educated, but other characters also show their knowledge in

different fields: they are singers, dancers, healers, masters of military service, orators and so on (Duglas, 2001, 67-78)

Agamemnon frequently makes compromises. This trait of character can be seen from the very first chapter. His first reaction to give back the daughter to Chryse is negative (Hom., *Iliad*, I. 28-30), however, he soon changes his decision as he sees that according to Calcha's prediction, Apollo abates his anger only when they give the daughter back to Chryse (Hom., *Iliad*, I. 116-117).

The second case of making a compromise can be seen in the relation with Achilles. When Agamemnon surrenders Chryse's daughter and requires Briseis this makes Achilles angry. He decides to stop fighting and return home.

At first Agamemnon does not take his anger into consideration, on the contrary, he tries to show his cruelty to him and punish him for resisting his ideas (Hom., *Iliad*, I. 178-180). However, in the second book Agamemnon admits his mistake, is very self-critical and believes that their reconciliation has great importance for defeating Troy and says if they conciliate nothing will avoid Troy from losing (341).

Agamemnon can listen to and take wise advice, he can confess his faults. He is quite self-critical. In the fourth book Atrides got angry, when he saw the army was not fighting and addressed to them rudely. The king tells them that they appear to dine straight away, but they avoid fighting (Hom., *Iliad*, IV, 338-348).

Odysseus did not like Agamemnon's words and thought that he did not deserve scolding. Agamemnon took back his words and even apologized to him (Hom., *Iliad*, IV, 358-363).

In the ninth book Achaeans believe that they can do nothing without Achilles. Nestor tells Agamemnon about his fault and asks him to give him a gift, affectionate and friendly word. Agamemnon confesses his fault and shows readiness to expiate his blame with the gift and enumerates the list of gifts in front of everybody (Hom., *Iliad*, X, 115-116).

Agamemnon can give clever advice. In the tenth book he addresses to his brother Menelaus to be modest to the soldiers and address to them with their manes and fight with them (Hom., *Iliad*, X, 67-71).

In book 14 he highlights that he is ready to take any person's advice, despite the person's age. The important thing is that the advice must be good (Hom., *Iliad*, XIV, 107-108). In the 19<sup>th</sup> book Agamemnon's self-

critical character is obvious. He analyses the reason of Achilles's anger and admits that the Gods made him insane when he took Achilles's war prize—the maiden Briseis (Hom., *Iliad*, XIX, 88-89).

Achilles is a symbol of incomparable physical strength, victory and the best friend. In the *Iliad* his coordinative trait of character is to turn from radical decision to common sense or making a compromise.

In the first book he gets angry with Agamemnon who decides to capture other soldiers' treasure instead of Chryse's daughter. Achilles decides to stop fighting and return back to native Phthia, as he is ashamed by Agamemnon's scolding and does not want to enrich his treasure (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 149-171).

By this action the king became much angrier and decided to capture Achilles's maiden. Achilles had a bad idea in mind: to take out the sword and kill the king. At this time Athena tells him that she is sent by Hera to inform that he should calm down and he should not use the sword, scolding would be enough (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 207-214).

Achilles manages to control his feelings. Here it is obvious that Achilles has the ability to keep balance in tension and to obey God's rules (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 218).

In my opinion, Achilles's intellect is highlighted by the sophisticated gesture he met the delegates sent by Agamemnon. Evribate and Talthibios were sent to visit Achilles and to take his maiden with them for Agamemnon. Although they obeyed the king's order, as they reached the tent of Achilles, they became scared (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 332-333).

Achilles met the guests with honour and tried not to make them feel tensed. He admitted that the guests should not be blamed as the author of the decision was Agamemnon (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 334-336). Achilles did not even let them tell about their intentions, he asked Patroclus to give the maiden to the delegates.

In the ninth book Achilles appears still angry and it seems he will never calm down. Swift-footed character tells the delegated about his strict decision that he is going to come back to his native Phthia (Hom., *Iliad*, IX, 315-316). To Phoenix he says that he will think about whether to stay on the fighting field or to go home (Hom., *Iliad*, IX, 618-619). However at the end he says that he will not involve in the battle until Hector makes fire to their ships (Hom., *Iliad*, IX, 651-655).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> book Achilles punctuates that he is not going to forget about

his anger (Hom., *Iliad*, XVI, 53-55). However when he sees the necessity to be involved in the battle, he changes his decision immediately. Here it is obvious that he can predict the future danger and tries to avoid it.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter Achilles's complete changing is obvious, turning from imprudence to prudence. He learns about Patroclus's death and feels himself guilty. Peleus's son is self-critical, regrets about his behaviour because of him lots of Achaeans were killed. He is ready to forget about his anger, involve in the battle, fight against Hector and revenge for his friend. If the Gods want him to be killed, he is ready for such misfortune (Hom., *Iliad*, XVIII, 101-116).

Calchant is famous for having much knowledge in the poem. I want to pay attention to his judging skill. When Achilles asks him to tell the reason why Apollo had got furious, he first asks him to protect him from Agamemnon (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 74-84).

After Achilles promises that nobody would insult him, Calchant tells them the reason: the god got furious because the king captured Chrise's daughter and he will not calm down until the woman was given back to his father (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 93-100).

As we see Agamemnon's further action, we guess that Calchant's discretion was necessary. From here it is obvious that he has the sense of prediction the results.

Nestor is the most intellectual character among Homer's personages. He is famous for his wise advice. We can say that his knowledge is connected with his life experience that is why he tries to prove his advice with real examples. His advice is connected with different issues. Among them are military affairs what he knows the best. In the fourth chapter he gives Agamemnon military advice where his knowledge of military issues is well illustrated (Hom., *Iliad*, IV, 301-309). He advises the king to pay attention to other's opinion as a good piece of advice values much (Hom., *Iliad*, II, 360-368). Agamemnon likes his advice and considers him as the best advisor (Hom., *Iliad*, II, 370).

Despite the fact that Nestor cannot take part in the battle, he has the mission to encourage the warriors by words. He is the best orator, he speaks in a very sweet voice and in his speech we see high level of education. From the very first chapter we see that he is the expert in eloquence. He tries to reconcile Agamemnon and Achilles. He is very accurate as he is trying not to make either of them irritated. He tries to

praise both of them in the equal degree and equally asks them to calm down, so that neither of them thinks that he is guilty.

He appeals to Agamemnon not to capture Achilles's woman, at the same time he asks Agamemnon to get rid of rivalry with the king. It is difficult to say which one is his favorite. He tell Achilles that Agamemnon is stronger, but tells to the king that Achilles is the strongest of all. Surely, Nestor is a master of eloquence. I suppose, this episode is the best example of ancient eloquence (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 254-284).

Nestor makes right decisions. He chose the delegates to be sent to Achilles and the fact that this decision was the best can be proved by Achilles's words. He said that he liked the most among the Achaeans (Hom., *Iliad*, IX, 198). It seems Nestor intentionally chose the delegates who were famous for their diplomatic skills and were Achilles's favorites.

Hector deserves the most honor from the readers of the *Iliad*. Like other characters he can make decisions independently. However his choice is always based on the responsibility for the country and readiness to fight to defend the native people. Before he joined in the battle, Andromache cries that she has no mother or father and if Hector dies, he will stay alone.

Hector proves his decision logically: if he does not join in the battle he will be laughed at by the Trojans for cowardice (Hom., *Iliad*, VI, 441-443). Enemies may take Andromache as a captive and she would have to live there her whole life (Hom., *Iliad*, VI, 460-465). Hector convinced his wife that there was no other way and she agreed to her husband right away (Hom., *Iliad*, VI, 495-496). Hector surely seems to be a very educated and intellectual person.

Priam has judging and decision- making skills. Menelaus orders to fetch him to help Trojans make the right decision as he is famous for his witty mind (Hom., *Iliad*, III, 109-110). He is a great orator that is well expressed in his speeches (Hom., *Iliad*, XXIV, 486-506).

'Strong-minded' – Homer calls Odysseus (Hom., *Iliad*, I, 311) and his smart consciousness is indeed eye-catching in homer's poems.

When Agamemnon addressed to the army to come back home as there was no hope to win (Hom., *Iliad*, II, 140-142). The soldiers went to the ships, began to get ready to go back. Athena tasked Odysseus to stop them and encourage to continue fighting. The goddess was hopeful he could do the job well as he was eloquent (Hom., *Iliad*, II, 169)

Odysseus used his knowledge of oratory and addressed to the army. His speech is based on rational arguments: 1. Nobody knows what really the king thinks, he may have tested the army; 2. What he said was not well heard for the soldiers; 3. If Agamemnon got furious, he would punish the Achaeans. We believe in the strength of Odysseus' speech as he manages to persuade the army (Hom., *Iliad*, II, 211).

Trojan Antenor remembers Odysseus, when he was sent to the Trojans for Hellen. Odysseus fascinated them with his eloquence. He admits, before he began speaking, he did not seem different from others (Hom., *Iliad*, III, 219), but when he began speaking, everybody learned about his uniqueness.

Odysseus eloquence is visible in the episode when he was sent to Achilles. Odysseus has diplomatic and rhetoric education. He began speaking with apologizing and admitted that the table did not lack anything as the supper in Agamemnon's tent (Hom., *Iliad*, IX, 225-228). So he mentioned Agamemnon's name and is careful not to irritate him by mentioning the king's name. This speech is a good example of eloquence. The speech is not based on the emotion. He logically proves the existence of the danger and asks Achilles to help the army: 1. He addressed to Achilles, if he hates the king, other soldiers are innocent and he should help them; 2. As he is angry because of one woman, the king will give him seven women together with other treasure; 3. Odysseus reminded him not to pass the chance to fight against Hector, so he could gain the most important fate -the name of the hero and honor; 4. And finally, he asks to show respect in his tent, as they are his guests and ask for help (Hom., *Iliad*, IX, 225-642). Here we see that Odysseus can think logically and expresses his opinion supported with arguments.

Odysseus's characteristics is expressed in the 'Odyssey' in different ways. Homer created a new method to show his rational mind. In the strange environment does not mention his name and tells an unreal story about himself, in which his fantasy helps him. By this Odysseus manages, learns first what is the attitude to the story of the Troy and only after that decides whether to take away his mask. For example, he tells to the Phaeacians that he is Odysseus, when he learns that there is no danger. In the case of the Penelope's suitors, he began acting with the name Odysseus when sees there is the right time for it (Hom., *Odyssey*, XXII, 5-7). He did not even tell Evmeus about himself before he learned what he thinks

about his master. He does it so well that even the Goddess Athena praises his creative skill (Hom., *Odyssey*, XIII, 291-292).

After Considering Homer's characters, we can conclude that they have almost all the characteristics that is given in the theory of intellect by Howard Gardner: they are self-critical; they can admit their fault; they can give wise advice; they can take sensible advice into consideration; they never refuse to apologise; they make compromises; they have rich vocabulary; they can predict the results (that is why they make compromises); they are physically active; they are good leaders; they love team-work (fight), etc. Accordingly they have all kinds of intellect: linguistic-humanitarian, logical-mathematical, visual-graphic, physical-kinesthetic, audio-musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intellect. Their intellectual level is not lower than of what a modern educated person has. That means ancient education gave the same skills to people as the modern education provides.

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**Abstract**

In modern scientific literature the theory of intellect by Howard Gardner – a Harvard University professor, is widely acknowledged. Howard Gardner admits that the intellect of the person may be defined according to the skills he owns. However, a skill is a person's inherent (physical and mental) ability. The ability is given to a human being as a potential and further development of this ability depends on how the person will be given a chance to develop this skill (for instance, appropriate education, living conditions, requirements and so on). If a person acts properly, or gets proper training, the inherent ability turns into a skill and if he does not learn or work in this field, this skill will not develop

The paper aims to define the intellectual level of the characters in the Homeric epic. They seem to have almost all the characteristics that is given in the theory of intellect by Howard Gardner: they are self-critical; they can admit their fault; they can give wise advice; they can take sensible advice into consideration; they never refuse to apologise; they make compromises; they have rich vocabulary; they can predict the results (that is why they make compromises); they are physically active;

they are good leaders; they love team-work (fight), etc. Accordingly they have all kinds of intellect: linguistic-humanitarian, logical-mathematical, visual-graphic, physical-kinesthetic, audio-musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal intellect. Their intellectual level is not lower than of what a modern educated person has. That means ancient education gave the same skills to people as the modern education provides.