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Author(s): J. H. Lesher

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# *Perceiving and Knowing in the Iliad and Odyssey*

J. H. LESHER

The Homeric epics may contain a 'philosophy of' man, or the gods, or a 'philosophical world view' of the dome of the heavens and the encircling rivers, but they lack those features which usually mark off the beginning of distinctly philosophical thought: a critical attitude toward earlier views, the detection of inconsistencies, and the reduction of various phenomena to a single unifying principle. Homer does provide some of the vocabulary and motifs for later philosophers (e.g. Parmenides and Heraclitus) and he is at least mentioned by philosophers (Xenophanes and Heraclitus) who disagreed with what he said. But beyond this, there seems to be little of distinctly philosophical interest. Indeed, the very idea of philosophical content in oral poetry seems *a priori* unlikely.

This view of Homeric poetry is not without justification, but it is nevertheless unsatisfactory, and for two main reasons: the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are not all of a piece; in particular, they present quite different views of the nature of human experience and intellect. Second, the prominence in the *Odyssey* of the gap between perception and knowledge (or recognition, realization, understanding) should lead us to wonder whether 'pre-philosophical' is really a fair description. If, as is sometimes the case, philosophical thinking takes the form of reflection on the nature of our cognitive faculties (as for example in Heraclitus' Fr. 1), the *Odyssey* merits reconsideration. Before presenting the evidence from the epic to substantiate this claim, I want first to clear away a preliminary impediment arising from the distinctly oral character which Homeric poetry is now almost universally acknowledged to have. Is it really possible for philosophy to exist in an oral setting? If, as has been recently argued, philosophizing were an essentially literate phenomenon, then the idea of a 'Homeric philosophy' could be easily dismissed *a priori*, as easily perhaps as an illiterate nuclear physics or an oral biochemistry.

## *Literacy and Philosophy*

The exact date of the emergence of literacy on the Greek mainland is not known. The epigraphical evidence does not warrant a date earlier than the late 8th century B.C.,<sup>1</sup> but the possibility of an earlier written language

cannot be absolutely excluded. There is evidence of a spread of literacy to various parts of Greece over the next three centuries.<sup>2</sup> By the 5th century B.C. there was, at least in Athens, a substantial degree of literacy, but in this also it is difficult to be precise. Our conclusions must be based on disparate bodies of evidence and we cannot assume a uniform development of literacy in different settings. There is evidence relating to 5th century social and political life (e.g. the practice of ostracism which required 6000 citizens to write the name of the person on their potsherds), and evidence from the law courts (e.g. the initiation of a law suit by writing the *graphē* or complaint), and evidence from Greek drama (e.g. the line in Aristophanes' *Frogs*: "everyone is a reader these days"), and from the inscriptions on vases or public buildings, and from the surviving documents of commercial trade. The evidence is not of uniform value (literacy might spread at a different rate among different classes and sexes, or in different professions and activities) and it is not uncontroversial (the practice of ostracism is not the conclusive evidence some have believed it to be).<sup>3</sup> It is reasonable to accept Aristotle's generalization as accurate at least for his own time: "reading and writing are useful in money making, in the management of a household, in the acquisition of knowledge, and in political life."<sup>4</sup> Philosophical books moreover existed as early as Anaxagoras,<sup>5</sup> and by the time of Plato and Aristotle, books, readers, and libraries were not uncommon.<sup>6</sup> When we go beyond rough generalizations, however, it becomes very difficult to specify who acquired alphabetic literacy where and when. If, moreover, we are to have any confidence that some specific philosophical innovation either presupposed or was caused by literacy, this is information that we cannot do without.

Consider for example the claim made by Watt and Goody:

... some crucial features of Western culture came into being in Greece soon after the existence, for the first time, of a rich urban society in which a substantial portion of the population was able to read and write; and, *consequently* [my italics] the overwhelming debt of the whole contemporary civilization to classical Greece must be regarded as in some measure the result, not so much of the Greek genius, as of the intrinsic differences between non-literate (or proto-literate) and literate societies – the latter being mainly represented by those societies using the Greek alphabet and its derivatives.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, when so stated, the thesis is transparently implausible, as it is a simple *post hoc* fallacy: philosophy after literacy, therefore philosophy because of literacy. The argument can be bolstered by drawing attention to specific features of early philosophical thought, and arguing point by point that a particular philosophical innovation either required or resulted from

a specifically written medium. In what follows, we will consider seriatim three such proposals.

(1) Literacy made available written texts of older accounts, and the detection of inconsistencies which this allowed 'impelled' a more conscious and critical attitude (Goody-Watt, p. 48).

It is reasonable to suppose, just in general, that having a written record available in some semi-permanent form will contribute to the detection of errors of fact and inconsistencies. What we need however is reason to believe that this is what actually happened in Ionia in the early 6th century B.C.; that inspection of *written* accounts facilitated, and moreover 'impelled', philosophical criticism. Goody and Watt begin from the fact that "the Homeric poems were written down between 750 and 650 B.C. and the seventh century saw the first recording of lyric verse and then (at the end) the emergence of the Ionian school of scientist philosophers" (p. 45). This will not suffice. What we need to know is not just that some written poems existed, but that the critical responses were facilitated (or impelled) by contact with these written accounts. How are we to know this? The Ionians did clearly draw upon Homeric and Hesiodic resources, but they never refer to any written versions (if there were any) and they frequently explicitly refer to what their predecessors *said*.

The first reference to any Homeric *text* does not occur until the 4th century dialogue *Hipparchus* of the Platonic corpus. Certainly, earlier texts were *possible*, and the sixth century Homeridae *may* have defended Homer's poems from corruption by reference to a written text, but there is no hard evidence that they did so. Given that the earliest surviving reference to reading as a pastime occurs in Euripides' *Erechtheus*, and the first mention of the book trade is in Aristophanes' *Birds*, the notion of a body of available written literature as much as four centuries earlier can only be judged as highly conjectural.<sup>8</sup>

Xenophanes is perhaps the clearest example of an emerging critical attitude toward Homer, but others would do. There are in his poems new ideas and criticism of old ways of thinking, but how little any of it has to do with written discourse. Xenophanes, himself a traveling bard of the early 6th century, was well aware of the impact of Homer on everyday morals and religious belief. He criticizes Homer for his *tales* about the gods,<sup>9</sup> and notices the inconsistencies between religious beliefs in different areas.<sup>10</sup> He holds out a conception of certain truth known perhaps by the gods, but only approximated by mortal men. He criticizes current beliefs, attacks religious superstition and superstitious practices, and articulates a sharp distinction between the realms of the divine and the mortal, divorcing the

whole range of naturalistic phenomena from theistic intentions. Xenophanes makes all the appropriate critical moves: he departs from old ways of thinking, detects inconsistencies, provides new conceptions, and does all this without a single suggestion of the criticism of written texts. Whatever may be the case generally about the special virtues of written accounts, the fact of the matter is that pre-Socratic thinking does not seem to begin as the Goody-Watt thesis would ask us to think.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in spite of some *prima facie* general plausibility of (1), it must be rejected. There is no evidence that the availability of written accounts contributed to, much less impelled, the beginning of a critical philosophical attitude.

(2) Logic is 'essentially literate' and hence could not have emerged in a strictly oral culture (Goody-Watt, p. 53). By 'logic' is meant not just the logic of the *Organon* but a system of 'rules of thinking' generally, including Plato's method of collection and division (in the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Phaedrus*) and Aristotle's taxonomy. From the latter come the "key methods and distinctions in the world of knowledge" from which western science, philosophy, and literature have been formed, and all these presuppose literacy. The claim that 'logic', so understood, presupposes literacy is based upon the following:

- a. In general, oral communication would be insufficiently abstract for the purpose (p. 53).
- b. The complex series of philosophical arguments (e.g. of Plato's *Republic*) could not be 'created, or delivered, much less completely understood in oral form' (p. 53).
- c. Plato used the written characters of the alphabet in his account of the 'process of reasoning' (in the *Theaetetus*) and they serve a similar function in Aristotle's *Analytics* (p. 54).

(a) and (b) can be promptly dismissed. (b) confuses the construction of complex arguments with the analysis of their logical form (or an account of the right rules for inquiry); both (a) and (b) are falsified by almost any day in the life of Socrates.

It is true that logic *proper* demands an appreciation of the more abstract features of argument (e.g. the validity of all arguments of the same logical type) and that the use of letters serving as variables marks the real beginning of the discipline of logic. Contrast, for example, Plato's labored explanation of 'holiness' and 'the right' (and 'fear' and 'reverence') in the *Euthyphro* with the simplicity of the Aristotelian principle that All S is P does not imply that All P is S. In Aristotle, logic is at least partly a literary enterprise.

There is reason however to doubt that the study of logical proof is

necessarily literate. Some studies of a form of logical inference did take place in pre-alphabetic contexts, namely among the earliest students of geometrical proof (from whom Aristotle acquired many of the ideas and terminology for the doctrine of the syllogism). The tradition of oral communication was characteristic of the school of the Pythagoreans, and we know that they could devise geometrical proofs without recourse to lettered diagrams, i.e. through the 'application of areas'.<sup>12</sup> These are the techniques (familiar in Bk. II of Euclid) of decomposing squares and triangles into smaller geometrical figures and then recombining them to establish equality of size or similarity of shape. (Cf. Proclus *on Eucl.* I, pp. 419.15-420.12). Obviously, for such purposes, the use of written (and lettered) diagrams, or written statements of proof, would be superfluous. Iamblichus (*Vit. Pyth.* 88) says that Hippasus was "the first to publish and write down the (construction of the sphere)" but this act of impiety to the Master cost him his life. In any case, the use of pebbles to represent numbers, or groups of numbers to represent figures, as well as the use of specific shapes to establish principles about all shapes (or numbers) suffice to show that the realization of abstract principles, as well as a conception of and procedures for demonstration, took place originally without recourse to writing.

It is a mistake to credit Plato with the discovery of logic in any precise sense. The limitations of the method of collection and division – as a means for proof – were seen clearly as early as Aristotle, and the passage from the *Theaetetus* is misunderstood and misused. Plato is there discussing the letters and syllables as a model for a theory of simple and complex knowledge (and *not* 'reasoning': neither *gnōsis*, nor *epistēmē* means "reasoning"). Goody and Watt think that it is "not far" from the *Theaetetus* to the *Analytics*, but on the basic question of the notion of general logical form and substitutable variables, Plato and Aristotle are worlds apart.

The method of collection and division is significant as a heuristic principle, and Aristotle's program of classification by genus and differentia, as well as his own penchant for categorization and departmentalization, are important contributions to later thought. These are also all 'essentially literate' in the sense that as they existed, they involved the use of written accounts, terms, and symbols. That scientific classification and departmentalization is inconceivable in an early and largely illiterate context is less believable. The medical schools of Cos and Cnidos are later stages of a Greek medicine which as early as the Homeric epics was thought to have perfected a variety of techniques for ailments and disease.

The first written discussion of the principles of the art is in the Hippocratic corpus of the mid-5th century, but the contention of its authors (especially the author of *On Ancient Medicine*) is that the knowledge of treatments, including the classification of diseases, wounds, and ailments, existed long before he began to write it down. In his view, medicine has long been in possession of its own beginning points, method, and objectives.

Neither distinctly logical thinking, nor scientific classification, nor the conception of general principles governing each should therefore be viewed as 'essentially literate', if we mean by this not only that could they not have been written down, but also that they could not have been conceived without alphabetic literacy.

3. A written language favors the statement of general principles, definable truths, and the description of separate entities (e.g. God, Justice, the Soul, the Good, etc.).<sup>13</sup>

The rationale behind the thesis that written discourse is more amenable to the statement of general principles is not obvious. It may lie in the transiency of the spoken word, or the psychological difficulty of memorizing accounts other than those about persons and actions, or the transference of the greater permanence and stability of the written words to the entities written, or some general unsuitability of oral discourse for abstract matters. Whatever the theoretical background, the thesis does not stand up when measured against the accomplishments of Ionian and Eleatic philosophy. Xenophanes' conception of God, Pythagorean views of the soul, Parmenides' account of *dikē*, and Heraclitus' view of justice and the good all fail to fit the description of written discourses on abstract matters.

There is also a wealth of evidence<sup>14</sup> that the pre-Socratics from Xenophanes to Parmenides were figures who 'composed within the context of an oral culture'; i.e. that they fashioned new ideas within an older poetic framework. That Heraclitus' style is an oral one is clear from the frequent reference to his *speaking*,<sup>15</sup> his audience *hearing*, and other cases of *oral* instruction.<sup>16</sup> The utterances of Heraclitus, with their striking images, repetition, assonance, antithesis and symmetry show clear signs of being skillfully turned aphorisms designed to be heard and memorized. He succeeds therefore in conveying a 'world-view', 'the over-riding principle of the *logos*', within the constraints of the traditional oral medium (devising a variant of the epic style, the cola of the Homeric hexameter). The same is true for Parmenides: his poetic account of the nature of the real is modeled extensively on the epic, borrowing a whole family of Homeric epithets and phrases, still operating under the acoustic cues of the epic, complete with

personified *Dikē*, and ‘animal’ wisdom. In the face of all this, it is difficult to understand why one would also want to say that Parmenides’ poetic format precluded the articulation of principles, abstraction, or logic.

The upshot is that literacy does not appear to have been a crucial factor in the onset of philosophical thinking. Although roughly co-incident phenomena (at least within several centuries), the claims made for their necessary interconnectedness are theoretically unconvincing and at odds with the little that is known about the earliest philosophers. The criticism of older ways of thinking cannot be linked with the inspection of written texts, logic and scientific thinking do not necessitate literacy, and early Ionian and Eleatic philosophy does succeed in exploring abstract questions and articulating general principles even though it retains the language and techniques of earlier poets. There is then no reason why the Homeric epics could not, in a similar way, have addressed distinctly philosophical questions even though they were ostensibly sagas about heroic figures and events. But what positive reason is there to think that they did?

#### *Perceiving and Knowing in Homer*

There is no explicit theory of perception stated in either epic, and, as Hamlyn observed, Homer has no single word like “perception” to use in reflecting about the processes of seeing and hearing. It does not however follow, as Hamlyn evidently believed, that Homer “was not in the position to think about perception in itself at all”.<sup>17</sup> To see how Homer understood the nature of the faculties of sense and thought, we must however look beyond the use of a single term to observe a whole family of related expressions.

Homer frequently links the possession or achievement of knowledge with the use of the faculties of sense perception, especially the faculty of sight. As might be expected in a work with varying metrical requirements, there are a variety of terms employed for seeing or some kind of visual act. Quite commonly in both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, these expressions are linked with three of what might be termed ‘knowledge words’ in Homer: *noein*, *gignōskein*, and *eidenai*.<sup>18</sup> The sorts of things that become known through sense perception vary. The simplest kind of case is one of perceptual discrimination of an individual person or object without further identification or classification; that is, simply picking it out from its surrounding environment.

He glanced (*paptēnen*) then along the lines, and immediately was aware of them (*autika d’ egnō*) (*Il.* XVII, 82-85). He went his way glancing this way and that



(*paptainōn*) . . . and he marked him (*enoēsen*) where he stood (*Il.* IV, 200). Telemachus did not see or notice her (*enoēsen*) (*Od.* XVI, 160).

There is also perceptual discrimination of an individual *as* an individual of a particular kind or nature:

When they were a spearcast off or even less . . . he knew them for enemies (*gnō*) (*Il.* X, 358). Turning my eyes (*skepsamenos*) to the swift ship . . . I noted above me (*enoēsa*) their feet and hands as they were raised aloft (*Od.* XII, 247). I knew as I looked upon him (*egnōn* . . . *idōn*) that he was a bird of omen (*Od.* XV, 532). . . . I spy (*enoēsa*) the two horses coming into view (*prophanente*) (*Il.* XVII, 486).

And acquisition of knowledge *about* the individuals through perceptual discrimination:

Sit and watch (*eisoraasthe*) and you will know (*gnōsesthe*) which (of the horses) is ahead and which behind (*Il.* XXIII, 494).

Earlier studies of the Greek expressions for knowledge have noted the connection between *noein* and vision. This has had the salutary effect of disposing of some overly intellectual versions of the early meaning of *noein*, and pointing to the evolution from epic to later classical concepts. We do not as yet have however an accurate account of the details of how Homer does and does not think that knowing is a matter of having seen. Von Fritz, for example, (following Snell<sup>19</sup>) claimed that *gignōskein* and *noein* mark out non-overlapping areas of a semantic field designating, respectively, simpler and more complex states of awareness:

The term *idein* covers all the cases in which something comes to our knowledge by the sense of vision,<sup>20</sup> including the case in which this object remains indefinite: for instance, a green patch or a brown patch the shape of which we cannot quite distinguish. The term *gignōskein* on the other hand, designates specifically the recognition of this object as something definite: for instance, a shrub, or a mound, or a human being . . . the classification of the object under a general concept . . . The term *noein*, then, signifies a further step in the recognition of the object: the realization, for instance that this brown patch is not only a human being but an enemy lying in ambush.<sup>21</sup>

The passages already cited (and others) go against the von Fritz-Snell thesis, and in both respects: *noein* can on occasion designate simply object recognition, and *gignōskein* a more complicated realization of the significance of what one has seen and recognized. Consider first a case where *noein* seems to involve not the realization of a situation but merely perceptual discrimination: *Il.* IV, 105ff. The context is this: Athene, disguised as Laodocus, induces Pandarus to shoot a poisoned arrow at Menelaus. The arrow strikes Menelaus but inflicts only a superficial

wound. Agamemnon, upon seeing the wound, orders Talthybius to go find Machaon, “son of Aesclepius, the peerless leech”, so that Machaon may suck out the poisoned blood. Talthybius, making his way through the crowd and looking around (*paptainōn*) for Machaon, ‘spots him’ where he stands:

παπταίνων ἦρωα Μαχάονα, τὸν δ’ ἐνόησεν

Talthybius brings Machaon back to Menelaus to perform his medical duties, removing the arrow and then sucking out the blood (*Il. IV*, 105-220). Talthybius is not being characterized as realizing anything about the situation, as the von Fritz-Snell thesis would require, but simply picking Machaon out of the crowd, so that he may complete his assigned task.<sup>22</sup>

A passage from *Il. X* containing *gignōskein* tells against restricting its sense to perceptual knowledge simply of an object rather than the realization of the significance of that object or situation. Odysseus and Diomedes have set out to trap Dolon. They decide to let Dolon pass by them as they lie among the slain, and then they will set out on foot after him, making sure that they hem him in against the ships if he tries to escape. As Dolon runs past they start up after him, and “he stood still when he heard the sound, for in his heart he supposed they were friends coming from amid the Trojans . . . but when they were a spear cast off or even less, he ‘knew them for enemies’ (*γνώ ρ’ ἄνδρας δῆϊους*) and attempted to flee” (340-350). Dolon is clearly already aware that people are running after him, for he stops, thinking that they are friends. Only then does he realize that they are not friends but enemies, and this realization, which ought (according to the thesis) to be a form of *noein*, and ought not be a form of *gignōskein*, is just that. On the basis of these and other passages,<sup>23</sup> we must reject the von Fritz-Snell demarcation of *noein* and *gignōskein* as designating distinct types of perceptual knowledge.

Although they cannot be correlated one to one with *idein*, *noēsai*, *gignōskein*, and *noein*, there are significant differences in the concepts of noticing, recognizing, realizing, coming to know, and knowing.<sup>24</sup> ‘Noticing’, ‘recognizing’, and ‘realizing’ like ‘detecting’ and ‘spotting’ but unlike ‘knowing’ designate occurrences or events, and not capacities or states, and therefore although they relate to knowing, they are not identical with it. Each of them entails knowing, since what one notices, recognizes, or realizes is something one has gained knowledge of (e.g. ‘he noticed that S was P but did not know that S was P’ is transparently contradictory). But one knows something over or during a period of time while one can only realize, notice, or recognize at a particular time. Since *noein* and *gignōskein* are often best understood as one or more of the latter, they can not be thought of simply as synonymous with ‘knowing’.

'Noticing,' 'recognizing,' and 'realizing' also imply that one has acquired knowledge, (has come to be in a state of knowing, or has acquired some capacity) but even so they are not equivalent with 'coming to know' or 'acquiring knowledge' nor do they simply *mean* either of these. If I notice that the emperor has no clothes, then I have acquired some knowledge about him, but I could do the latter without having done so through noticing. I could for example learn of it by having been told that this was so, and I could thereby learn of it without having noticed it. 'Noticing' carries a special element of being struck by something, or having our attention caught in some ways by some feature of what we perceive, but 'coming to know' does not.

Similarly, although realizing entails acquiring knowledge, not all instances of coming to know take the special form of realizing or realization. If I hear that my grandfather has died, it would be inaccurate to say that this is something I have realized, although I may upon hearing the news realize something about this (e.g. that I am about to come into a fortune). What is realized cannot be what is obvious, or what we are simply informed of, but rather what emerges upon reflection, or what sinks in after a while. Thus even though *noein* and *gignōskein* are often best understood as 'realizing',<sup>25</sup> they could not in such cases be understood as synonymous with 'coming to know' or 'acquiring knowledge'.

On other occasions *gignōskein* probably means 'recognizing',<sup>20</sup> but this, for obvious reasons, cannot be identified with 'acquiring knowledge'. Recognizing something requires already being familiar with it or something of its type, and involves the specific realization that the x presently encountered is the same x or the same kind of x as one already known to us. Clearly, not all acquisitions of knowledge meet the special requirements of recognition. There are in short a number of distinctions to be drawn between the concepts of knowing, coming to know, realizing, recognizing and noting, but there is no basis for correlating them one to one with respective Greek equivalents. *Noein* and *gignōskein* cut across the field marked out by recognizing and realizing and although both *noein* and *gignōskein* entail knowledge they are not synonymous with either 'knowing' or 'coming to know'.

One salient feature of *noein* and *gignōskein* does remain: although isolated cases of *noein* and *gignōskein* occur in which no perceptual act is mentioned,<sup>27</sup> in a very large number of cases, *noein* and *gignōskein* are a matter of perceptual recognition and realization, i.e. becoming aware of the true identity or nature of the object (or person) one perceives, or the true meaning of the situation one has encountered. Because of this,

'Homeric knowledge' (apart from the 'know-how' matter of *epistasthai*) takes on a special character: it is primarily a matter of what one makes of his immediate surroundings, rather than a matter of general information, or knowledge of truths, or well defended propositional belief.<sup>28</sup>

A brief excerpt from *Iliad* III shows just how close the connection is between vision, recognition, and reaction.

As Paris stands out among the Trojans, Menelaus spots him:

But when Menelaus dear to Ares spotted (*enoēsen*) him as he came out before the crowd with long strides . . . he was glad when he saw with his eyes the godlike Alexander (21-28).

But the feeling is not mutual:

When Alexander spotted (*enoēsen*) Menelaus as he appeared before the champions, his heart was shattered, and he slipped back among his comrades (30-33).

The encounter takes the form of many other such incidents: A sees B, A immediately recognizes B and is delighted or terrified; B sees A, B immediately recognizes A and is delighted or terrified. There is a directness and immediacy in such encounters; here as elsewhere, the heroes of the *Iliad* are not baffled by what they see, they are not slow to react to the presence of the enemy. In the *Iliad* at least seeing, knowing and feeling are treated as three concurrent aspects of the moment of encounter.

A connection between seeing and knowing holds true for *eidenai* as well as for *noein* and *gignōskein*. The famous opening of the Catalogue of Ships in the second book of the *Iliad* is the *locus classicus*:

Tell me now, Muses that dwell in the palace of Olympus –  
For you are goddesses, you are at hand and know all things (*iste te panta*)  
But we hear only a rumour and know nothing (*oude ti idmen*)  
Who were the captains and lords of the Danaans (II, 484-488).<sup>29</sup>

The invoking of the Muses is the poet's way of obtaining what he knows, but the original knowledge possessed by the Muses is explicitly linked with being present (*pareste*) whereas ignorance is linked with not being present but relying only on rumour. Clearly, knowledge is connected with first hand experience, but why, necessarily, with seeing? The reasons stem from some features of Greek etymology, which though not decisive, are significant. The Greek words here translated as 'knowledge' are *iste* and *idmen*, both forms of *oida* (which is usually rendered simply 'I know', but is literally 'I have seen'). In Greek, as in other Indo-European languages, there is a connection within the very terms for knowledge, between knowledge and vision. *Oida* functions as a present tense, 'I know', but it is

actually a perfect tense formed on the present tense of *eido*, 'I see', Both expressions have their origins in the Indo-European forms \*weid-, \*woid-, and form a pattern within the family of Indo-European languages: Sanskrit *veda* (knowledge), Latin *video* (I see), German *wissen* (to know), English *witness*, *wit*, etc. The connection between knowing and seeing is therefore deeply embedded in the language.

Another sign in Homer of this close connection is the frequent explicit association of much-knowing with much-seeing. The well traveled (or far-seeing) man (or god) is nothing less than a Homeric paradigm of knowledge. Odysseus is the most obvious case, the *polytropos* man (meaning both one who has traveled many ways, and someone of many devices) whom Zeus holds to be 'beyond all mortals in *noos*' (*Od. I, 66*):

many were the men whose cities he saw (*iden*) and whose mind he came to know (*noon egnō*) (*Od. I, 3-4*).

In the same way, Menelaus connects his superior knowledge with his wide experience:

I have come to know the counsel (*boulēn*) and the mind (*noon*) of many warriors, and have travelled over the wide earth (*Od. IV, 267-269*).

And, in what is a remarkable, but logical enough extension of this, even the much traveled ships of the Phaeacians are intelligent (*phresi nēas*):

... their ships of themselves understand the thoughts and minds of men (*noēmata kai phrenas andrōn*), and they know the cities and rich fields of all peoples (*pantōn isasi*) (*Od. VIII, 556-560*).

The Sirens who tempt Odysseus with their sweet voices can offer the promise of becoming wiser men (*pleiona eidōs*) for:

we know (*idmen*) all the toils that in wide Troy the Argives and the Trojans endured, and we know (*idmen*) all things that come to pass upon the fruitful earth (*Od. XII, 189-191*).

Zeus is the epitome of wisdom or counsel (*mētis, Il. I, 508*), and he also carries the epithet 'far-seeing' (*euruopa*).<sup>30</sup> A passage in *Iliad II* offers another example of the assumption that knowledge and direct experience go together: "this we well known in our hearts, you all being witnesses to it" (*ἴδμεν ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἔστὲ δὲ πάντες μάρτυροι*). As Snell puts it: the Ionic epic sanctions the solid and dependable knowledge of the eye-witness (*DM, 143*), and "the wider the experience, the greater the knowledge" (*DM, 137*). Seeing, while not an absolutely necessary condition for knowledge,<sup>31</sup> seems in these cases at least sufficient for it.

It would be a mistake however to stop here with a blanket identification of ‘knowing’ with ‘having seen’; if we attend not just to terminology, but to the content and development of Homer’s story, it will become clear that the attribution to Homer of a simple equivalence of knowledge with sense perception is untenable. Most important are those occasions on which someone is said to see, but *not* to notice, recognize, or realize. It is in such passages that the gap between perceiving and knowing emerges. There is little of this in the *Iliad*. For the most part, things really are as they appear to be. Even when the gods don some mortal form they are correctly perceived as the mortals they have become. The deception lies not in visual illusion, but in the metamorphosis from divine to mortal form. This is not true of the *Odyssey*. We have already mentioned the first case of occurrence of the phenomenon of disguise and delayed recognition (*Od.* I, 174), and there are many others; Aristotle in fact described the *Odyssey* as characterized throughout by the theme of disguise and recognition (*anagnōrisis*, *Poetics*, 1459b). A related aspect of this theme is the presence of trickery, illusion, and deception. It is in such ruses and revelations that the story of the *Odyssey* unfolds, and it is obvious that the dramatic power of the poet’s tale presupposes the possibility of deceptive and misunderstood appearance. The *Odyssey* relates a succession of encounters between gods and men<sup>32</sup> who see but consistently fail to properly identify, name, and recognize one another. In the *Iliad*, this takes the form of divine misrepresentation and disguise (e.g. Hermes’ deception of Priam at *Il.* XXIV, 330ff.: Hermes takes the form of a mortal prince in order to convey Priam in safety to the camp of the Achaeans). In the *Odyssey*, deception and error are virtually ubiquitous, and the elements of deception, falsehood, and guile are especially prominent in Odysseus himself. He travels from place to place, but he progresses through the employment of his own intelligence and guile toward the final moment of recognition and reunion with Penelope. Along the way there are major and minor confusions, illusions, deceptions, and mistaken identities. There are two main types of case: the insightful individual who recognizes or realizes while others remain uncomprehending: *Od.* VII, 533 (Alcinoos); IV, 250 (Helen); XXI, 218 (Eumaeus); XXIV, 346 (Laertes); and second, those who are themselves unable to recognize, most notably Penelope (*Od.* XXIII, 94; XIX, 498) but even occasionally Odysseus himself (at *Od.* XIII, 196, after landing on Ithaca, he fails to recognize his native land). Perhaps the single most famous recognition scene is that in which the nurse Eurycleia recognizes (*egnō*) Odysseus upon touching his scar.

The lengthy account of Odysseus’ return and destruction of the suitors

continually contrasts those who fail to comprehend the true identity of the disguised guest, with those who sense the ominous meaning of his actions and words. What is obvious and apparent to the suitors is in fact furthest from the truth; for Agelaus, “it is clear (*dēlon*) that Odysseus will never return” (XX, 333). They ask that Zeus might grant to the beggar all his hopes for the future, failing to appreciate the irony of their prayer. Odysseus knows an omen when he sees one and rejoices (XVIII, 117):

χαῖρεν δὲ κληθῶνι δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς

The suitors tear apart the meat served to them, overlooking the dark meaning of the bloody scene (XX, 348 foreshadowing XXII, 19). The seer Theoclymenus does not miss it: “I have eyes and ears and a *noos* . . . and I see the evil to come upon you:

εἰσί μοι ὀφθαλμοί τε καὶ οὐᾶτα . . . καὶ νόος . . . νοέω κακὸν ἕμμεν

From the moment Odysseus appears before them, the suitors act to assure their own destruction, concocting verbal and physical abuse, showing a mindless disregard for their own safety, and a consistent inability to guess that the stranger in their midst is the returning lord of the house. Not until the bow is strung does it dawn on them that they have acted in great folly. Homer sums it up (XXII, 32):

τὸ δὲ νῆπιοι οὐκ ἐνόησαν

The occurrence of only one of these incidents would suffice to establish the awareness of a gap between what one sees and what one understands, but the prominence of the theme in the *Odyssey*, especially in so central a fashion in the story’s climax, shows not just awareness of the distinction, but the poet’s use of the distinction for dramatic purposes. The gap between the visible and the known, between the obvious appearance and the more subtle reality of the situation, becomes an interval in which human intelligence can either assert itself or come to grief. The mastery of appearance and the use of deception is a hallmark of Odysseus’ *mētis* or cunning. Recognition of the true nature of the situation is a sign, perhaps the pre-eminent sign of his *noos*. The failure to recognize the true identity of the guest, and the ominous character of his words is the hallmark of Anti-*noos* and the *noos*-less suitors, and it is a contributing factor to their undoing. It is therefore a mistake to attribute to Homer an uncritical identification of sense perception with recognition and realization. The *Odyssey* shows that Homer was aware of a contrast, and that it was a distinction of importance for his story.

A parallel to this can be seen in the way in which language and communication are understood in the epics. There is one very prominent model of interpersonal communication, found in both the *Iliad* and the

*Odyssey*, in which speaking, hearing, understanding, and feeling are closely linked with one another. The encounter in *Iliad* III also shows this. Hector, upon seeing Paris (38):

τὸν δ' Ἐκτωρ νείκεσεν ἰδὼν αἰσχροῖς ἐπέσιν

Paris answers (τὸν δ' αὐτε προσέειπεν, 58), and Hector reacts:

ὣς ἔφαθ', Ἐκτωρ δ' αὐτ' ἐχάρη μέγα μῦθον ἀκούσας

The exchange of words (frequently insults about one's lineage) typically follows upon the initial moment of encounter and precedes the exchange of physical blows. It has the same direct and immediate quality of the initial encounter, but now one hears and immediately understands and feels some emotion.

The reason for the immediacy in the case of visual recognition was not obvious, but here, on the auditory side, there is more to go on. Homer's phrases are telltale evidence of a conception of language which not only allows but ensures immediacy of effect. Homer often speaks of the word as being itself an instance of the quality it designates. Where one's words convey wisdom, shame, harshness and foolishness, one's words are themselves, or are endowed with, the property of wisdom, shame, harshness, gentleness, or foolishness (πυκνός, αἰσχρός, πικρός, μαλακός, νήπιος). Words are contained in one's *phrēn* or *phrenes* (*Il.* II, 213). When they are released, they are shaped by the tongue (*glōssa*, *Il.* XX, 248), let out through the mouth, escape the barrier of the teeth (*phugen herkos odonton*, *Il.* IV, 350), fly through the air (*epea pteroenta*), are heard by the ears, and lodge in the *phrēn* of the hearer (*Il.* V, 493). The 'pneumatic' character of this view of communication helps to account for the fact that a speaker can 'inspire', literally 'breathe courage' into his audience (*Il.* XIII, 72, XVII, 425, VI, 72), and so frequently utter words which 'sting the *phrēn*'.<sup>33</sup> So mechanical a view of language and meaning may be well suited for a vivid depiction of mass persuasion or the exchange of 'aerial insults', but it is not adequate for dealing with a number of features. It cannot, among other things, easily accommodate the possibility of misunderstandings, or verbal ambiguity, or verbal deceit which trades on either of these. If the *muthos* conveys meaning in so far as it is, or is an example of, the quality being signified by the speaker, then to receive the word in one's *phrēn* is *ipso facto* to take in its meaning. There could be no gap between the speaker's intended message and the hearer's received understanding, nor could the same word mean one thing in the mind of the speaker and another in the breast of the hearer.

In the *Iliad*, the 'pneumatic theory of meaning' appears frequently (it is also present in the *Odyssey*) and in the absence of verbal subtlety.



Deception occurs, but it is deception through outright prevarication, not through equivocation. When Agamemnon for example tests his soldiers, he tries to deceive them simply by lying. He believes that he will take Troy that day, but he asserts just the opposite (*Il. II*, 110ff.). The soldiers are not baffled by his remarks and they do not misunderstand the meaning of his words (their ‘hearts are roused’ and they are ‘bowed over like cornstalks hit by a blast of wind’, *II*, 147f.). In the *Iliad* at least, one speaks and another hears, immediately understands what is meant, and forthwith reacts. In both visual and auditory perception therefore, the *Iliad* is characterized by a directness and immediacy of action and effect, of impression and reception.

How different in both these ways is the *Odyssey*. Not only does it frequently display the failure to comprehend the true identity and meaning of what is seen, it also trades significantly on the possibility of failing to grasp correctly the meaning of what is said. W. B. Stanford noted this contrast between the two epics,<sup>34</sup> and he mentioned in this connection Odysseus’ most famous verbal trick: the deception of the Cyclops, Polyphemus. The story of the smaller man outwitting the giant is no doubt one of the staple folk tales of many peoples, but in Homer, the clever stratagem contains an element of linguistic subtlety and possibility that leaves the more primitive mechanistic view of language far behind.<sup>35</sup>

When asked by Polyphemus for his name, Odysseus fabricates a fictitious name (as he does elsewhere in the epic), and it is an especially clever one:

“Noman (*Outis*) is my name, Noman (*Outin*) do they call me, my mother and father and all my friends” (*IX*, 366-67).

Polyphemus hears and repeats the name correctly when he replies:

“Noman (*Outin*) will I eat last among your comrades” (369).

When Odysseus and his comrades blind the Cyclops, his cry of pain brings the neighboring Cyclops to the outside of the blockaded cave. They ask:

“Is not some (*mē tis*) mortal driving off your flocks? Is not someone (*mē tis*) killing you by guile or by force?”

Polyphemus naturally answers:

ὦ φίλοι, Οὐτίς με κτείνει δόλῳ οὐδὲ βίηφι

intending to say:

“(The man called) Noman is killing me by guile and not by force.”

The Cyclops however take him to mean:

“No man is killing me either by guile or by force.”

and depart, saying:

“If then no man (*mē tis*) does violence to you then there is no escaping the sickness that comes to you from Zeus.”

Seeing the Cyclops deceived by the unintended ambiguity of Polyphemus’ words, Odysseus rejoices, and in his last words, Homer adds yet another double meaning:

“My heart laughed at how my name and splendid device (ὄνομα καὶ μῆτις ἀμύμων) had deceived.”

*Outis* becomes *ou tis* and the *mē tis* becomes *mētis*. Homer adds a final touch to the Cyclops’ undoing when he at last wishes his heart could be freed of:

“the evils which this nobody Noman has brought”(οὐτιδανὸς πόρεν Οὐτις, 460).

The essential element of the Cyclops’ undoing is the double-edged character of Odysseus’ new name and this is significantly a deceptive property of the name (no matter who has it or says it).

There is no other incident in the story of Odysseus which can match the ingenuity of the Cyclops’ confusion, but double-edged names and remarks occur elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> Individually these passages have been taken as puns or word-play, but their cumulative effect is greater than just this. Collectively these passages give a dimension to the *Odyssey* which was lacking in the *Iliad* and its characters: a sense of the subtle and potentially deceptive powers of speech, and the corresponding powers of intelligence and ingenuity that is needed to master them.

That quality of intellect is of course personified in Odysseus the *polytropos* man, much traveled and of many devices, and it is signaled in the opening line of the *Odyssey*. It is summed up in the word Odysseus applied to his scheme: *mētis*. There are other paragons of *mētis* mentioned by Homer: Athena, certainly, and Zeus, pre-eminently, but there is mortal *mētis* as well. In the *Iliad*, Homer had spoken at length about *mētis* (in Antilochus’ race in Book XXIII), but even the *mētis* of Antilochus and his father Nestor falls short of the *mētis* of Odysseus. The contrast is instructive. Nestor, aware that Antilochus has slower horses, tries to compensate in ‘all round cunning’ (*mētīn pantoiēn*) and gives a short course in the subject:

By *mētis* is a woodsman better than by force, by *mētis* also does the helmsman on the

wine dark sea do better at guiding a ship buffeted by winds, and by *mētis* does charioteer become better than charioteer. . . he that knows cunning ways (*kerdea eidēi*) though he drives poorer horses keeps his eye on the turning post and cuts in close by, paces his horses, and keeps an eye on the leader . . . (315-325).

Nestor advises Antilochus to look out for a stump along the racecourse, to turn close in by the turning post. If he can take the lead at that point, no one will be able to pass him, not even if his horse is a god (340ff.). That at least is Nestor's idea of racing *mētis*. Antilochus' execution of the scheme leaves something to be desired. Choosing a narrow spot in the road (not at the turning post) Antilochus veers off the track in order to pass. Menelaus, rattled by Antilochus' recklessness, pulls up, fearing a collision (430-35). Antilochus had aimed for *mētis*, but he succeeded mainly in being dangerous (*oloōteros allos*, 439). Still enough of the nature of *mētis* has emerged from the incident to suggest its general features: *mētis* relies more on craft than it does on brute strength, *mētis* involves a sense of timing, the sense to select the right moment to act, and *mētis* requires flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances.<sup>37</sup> What Nestor's praise of *mētis* omits however and what Antilochus lacks,<sup>38</sup> Odysseus has in spades: guile and deceit. Odysseus says it about his own device: "He laughed at how his name and *mētis* had deceived" (*exapatesen*, *Od.* IX, 414). In the *Iliad*, *mētis* took two forms: the ability to plan or advise, and the plan, advice, or scheme devised (used interchangeably in this sense with *noos* and *boulē*). In the *Odyssey*, in the exploits of Odysseus, it becomes complex and variegated (*poikilomētēs*), and the *poly*-prefix becomes commonplace: *polymētis*, *polytropos*, and *polymēchanos*.<sup>39</sup> Odysseus' *mētis* is in short just what one would expect in a story about disguise, deception, delayed recognition, and the ambiguity of the spoken word. It does not follow, nor do I claim, that the *Odyssey* is pre-eminently a story about the nature and qualities of human intelligence. *Noos* is a recurring motif, but so also are long suffering, fidelity, and resolute purpose, qualities called to mind by Aristotle's characterization of the *Odyssey* as a story about *ēthikē*. The thesis is rather that *mētis* and *noos* play a central role in the story of Odysseus' return and that, in contrast with the *Iliad*, they typically involve the creation and penetration of deceptive appearance and utterance. When coupled with the roles played by *noein* and *gignōskein*, they reflect an interest in sense perception, knowledge, and intelligence that was absent in the *Iliad*.

Whether this merits the label 'philosophical' depends largely on what one adopts as minimum ingredients for philosophical thought. Certainly the epic lacks an argumentative or demonstrative form, but so also does

much of what counts as pre-Socratic philosophy. The oral character of Homeric poetry, as I have argued, does not of itself preclude the possibility of philosophical reflection. General theories about knowledge and intelligence do not appear before Plato and Aristotle, but there are scattered observations made by several pre-Socratic philosophers, most notably Heraclitus. He observed that although sense perception (especially vision) may be useful for knowing (Fr. 55, 101), perception may be deceptive (Fr. 56) and does not ensure understanding (Fr. 40), for people may see and not recognize (Fr. 17, 107) and hear but not understand (Fr. 19, 34). In these remarks, Heraclitus stated a view of perception and knowledge that was not entirely without precedent.

*University of Maryland*

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Rhys Carpenter, "The Antiquity of the Greek Alphabet," *A.J.A.* 37 (1933), and "The Greek Alphabet Again," *A.J.A.* 42 (1938). More general discussions are given by H. J. Lorimer, "Homer and the Art of Writing," *A.J.A.* 52 (1948), and David Diringer, *Writing* (New York, 1962).

<sup>2</sup> R. M. Cook and A. G. Woodhead, "The Diffusion of the Greek Alphabet," *A.J.A.*, 63 (1959), pp. 175-178. They suggest the Greek settlement at Al Mina as a likely starting point but it could have been begun by Greeks residing elsewhere in Syria and Phoenicia. Cf. L. H. Jeffery, *The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece* (Oxford, 1961), p. 21, and Carpenter's lengthy review of Jeffery's work in *A.J.P.* 1963.

<sup>3</sup> See F. D. Harvey's comment on the discovery of ostraka on the north slope of the Acropolis in 1937: "190 ostraka were found dumped in a well, all inscribed with the name of Themistocles . . . these were written, not in 190 handwritings, but in fourteen". "Literacy in the Athenian Democracy," *Revue des études grecques*, 79 (1966), p. 591. There is also the famous anecdote from Plutarch of an illiterate man who, not knowing who Aristides was, asked Aristides himself to write the name of Aristides on his potsherd (Harvey, p. 592). Havelock points also to wide variations in spelling, the absence of a convenient writing material, and the limited amount of literacy signified by knowing how to spell a name ("Prologue to Greek Literacy," University of Cincinnati Semple Lectures (1970).)

<sup>4</sup> *Politics*, 1338a 15f.

<sup>5</sup> A general summary of the evidence can be found in W. C. Greene, *HSCP*, 60 (1951), pp. 39-40. It seems likely that Anaximander was the first Greek prose book, but Heraclitus' book is uncertain. Anaxagoras' book is well documented in the *Phaedo* (97-98) and *Apology* (26).

<sup>6</sup> See F. G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Greece and Rome* (Oxford, 1951), p. 25. According to Xenophon, Socrates and his disciples spent time poring over collections of books, taking from them what was of value. This does not sit well with Plato's portrait of

Socrates, nor the contempt of 'book learning' which Socrates displays elsewhere in the *Memorabilia* (IV, 2).

<sup>7</sup> J. Goody and I. Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in Goody, *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 55.

<sup>8</sup> An extensive discussion is provided by J. A. Davidson in "The Transmission of the Text," in Wace and Stubbings, *A Companion to Homer* (1963), Ch. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Diogenes Laertius' word is *eirēmena*, 'what is said, spoken, told'; Xenophanes on the other hand is said to have written in epic meter (*gegraphe*). Elsewhere 'Homer and Hesiod have 'attributed' shameful activities to the gods' (B11: *anethēkan*, which is non-committal.)

<sup>10</sup> Ethiopians 'say' that their gods are snub-nosed and black, the Thracians that theirs have light blue eyes and red hair (B16: *phasi*, not a reference to written accounts).

<sup>11</sup> Similar points could not be made about Hecataeus: ('the *logoi* the Greeks tell are many and ridiculous' is not obviously detecting absurdities in written accounts). It is worth noting that where there is clear evidence of the learning of Homer and other poets from written texts, i.e. early 5th century Athens (see Herodotus VI, 27; Aristophanes, *Daitales*, fr. 223; *Clouds*, 961-1023, 1353-1379), there is also the explicit detection of poetic inconsistency (see Plato's *Meno*, the criticism of Theognis (95e-96a), *Protagoras*, the criticism of Stasinus (12a), *Lesser Hippias*, the detection of Achilles' falsehoods (369-370), etc.).

<sup>12</sup> Cf., Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics*, p. 66, pp. 143-154.

<sup>13</sup> Goody and Watt, p. 53. A similar proposal is made by Eric Havelock, "Neither principles nor laws nor formulas are amenable to a syntax which is orally memorizable", "Prologue to Greek Literacy" (The Semple Lectures, University of Cincinnati, 1971).

<sup>14</sup> Evidence assembled in fact by Havelock himself in "Pre-Literacy and the Pre-Socratics," *Bulletin No. 13, Institute of Classical Studies* (University of London, 1966), pp. 44-67. There is a similar thesis defended in his earlier *Preface to Plato*, but, I think, with less success. He there argues that the oral tradition and influence remained unabated until the time of Plato's *Republic*. Havelock takes Plato's critique of poetry to be essentially an attack on the whole 'Homeric state of mind' and attendant psychological and spiritual phenomena, and an implicit defense of literacy. The weaknesses of Havelock's thesis about the *Republic* have been discussed at length by others (see Solmsen's critical review, *AJP*, 87 (1966), pp. 99-105).

<sup>15</sup> B1: *phrazōn*, B114, "speaking (*legontas*) with *nous*."

<sup>16</sup> B1: "listening, but not hearing the *logos*," "of those whose *logos* I have listened to"; B55: "hearing but not understanding."

B104: "they attend to the bards of the people, and make the conversation of the crowd their instructor."

<sup>17</sup> *Sensation and Perception* (New York, 1961), pp. 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> They are not however closely tied to *epistēmē* (*epistasthai*) which, as is well known, is more a matter of skill or physical ability (most commonly seen in the form of *epistasthai* plus the infinitive, e.g. *epistasthai polemizein*) than it is awareness of objects or situations. The single exception is *Od.* IV, 730, "knowing well in your hearts (*epistamenai sapha thumōi*) when he went on board." References to the Greek texts are to the *Iliad*, ed. Walter Leaf (London, 1900) in two volumes; and *The Odyssey of Homer*, ed. W. B. Stanford (London, 1961) in two volumes.

<sup>19</sup> Bruno Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens in der vorplatonischen Philosophie* (*Philologische Untersuchungen*, 1924), pp. 24ff.

<sup>20</sup> This is almost always the case; the only exception I know of is *Il. XX*, 203ff.: “we know (*idmen*) each other’s parents and lineage, for we have heard tales . . . but not through sight do you know mine nor I yours”.

<sup>21</sup> Kurt von Fritz, “NOOΣ and NOEIN in the Homeric Poems,” *C.P.* 38 (1943), p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> Von Fritz would allow that *noein* does on occasion take a direct object, but he insists that this is merely short-hand for “realizing the situation, or the truth about the person or object”. The fact remains however that *noein* does sometimes occur in contexts where an object is being ‘spotted’ or ‘spied’, not with any suggestion of a broader (or deeper) realization, and not necessarily with violent emotion either. Von Fritz claims, “the poet never says in quiet discussion and where there is no emotion involved: ‘you notice M’ but always ‘you notice that . . .’, ‘you notice how’, or ‘you notice this’ where ‘this’ means a situation and not a concrete object.” (p. 85). At *Od. VIII*, 530ff. however, Alcinous alone notices Odysseus crying while listening to the singer’s tale: “Now from all the rest he concealed the tears that he shed, but Alcinous alone marked him and took heed (Ἀλκίνοος δὲ μιν οἷος ἐπεφράσατ’ ἠδ’ ἐνόησεν, 533) for he sat by him and heard him groaning heavily.” Neither does Alcinous, upon noticing Odysseus crying, experience or exhibit an emotional reaction. For other examples, see *Il. V*, 95; *Od. IV*, 116, XIX, 232.

<sup>23</sup> Similar counter-examples are provided by *Il. XVII*, 486: spying (*enoēsa*) two horses coming into view, *Il. V*, 475: ‘I neither see nor notice anyone’ (τῶν νῦν οὐ τιν’ ἐγὼ ἰδέειν δύναμ’ οὐδὲ νοῆσαι) said to Hector when he appears before Sarpedon without the company of his sisters’ husbands and brothers. For *gignōskein*, see *Od. XVII*, 549ff: coming to know (*gnōō*) that Odysseus speaks unerringly about everything.

<sup>24</sup> Von Fritz (in “*Nous, Noein*, etc.”) speaks only of “Greek terms designating knowledge or the acquisition of knowledge”, (p. 79), but he does not specify in which category *eidenai*, *noein*, and *gignōskein* belong, nor does he explain how they are related to the acquisition of knowledge (either as entailing it, or entailed by it, or as synonymous with it). A careful account of the relations among these notions is given by Alan White (*Attention*, Oxford, 1964). I would not however want to endorse his characterization of them as ‘reception concepts’. Noticing, recognizing, and realizing something (or that something is so) are not a matter of simply *receiving* information or knowledge (e.g. being told of something rather than realizing it oneself) but acquiring knowledge through attention.

<sup>25</sup> For this of course see the examples given by von Fritz.

<sup>26</sup> This may be either *gignōskein* or *anagignōskein*; *Od. VII*, 234 and XXIV, 346 are typical cases: Arete recognizes (*egnō*) the tunic which she herself had made, Laertes recognizes (*anagnontos*) all the items mentioned by Odysseus.

<sup>27</sup> e.g. “as the *noos* of a man who has travelled far and thinks in his breast (*phresi noēsēi*), *Il. XV*, 80-81.

<sup>28</sup> A full defense of this thesis would involve documenting the absence of the vocabulary of ‘propositional knowledge’ in Homer, i.e. the lack of a tie between knowing and *alētheia*, *doxa*, and *logos*. The latter terms occur in Homer but *doxa* and *logos* do not have the same meaning for Homer as they do for Plato.

<sup>29</sup> Translation by T. G. Rosenmeyer in Snell, *The Discovery of Mind* (Boston, 1953), p. 136, hereafter cited as *DM*.

<sup>30</sup> *Il. IX*, 686; *Od. II*, 146, IV, 173, etc. Alternatively and often read ‘far-sounding’ or ‘thundering’, but Zeus clearly enjoys a synoptic view of the world: “he sat amid the mountain peaks exulting in his glory, looking upon (*eisoroōn*) the city of the Trojans and

the ships of the Achaeans," *Il.* VIII, 51-52. Cf. Hesiod, *Works*, 267: πάντα ἰδὼν Διὸς ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ πάντα νοήσας.

<sup>31</sup> As we have noted, *eidenai*, *epistamai* sometimes have little or nothing to do with seeing, e.g., knowing (*eidenai*) how to utter taunts' *Il.* XX, 201, 'well skilled in archery,' *Il.* VII, 236; 'how to handle the polished bow', *Od.* VIII, 215.

<sup>32</sup> The gods of course are known to one another, and are exempt (as one might expect) from the tribulations brought on by deception and misrepresentation (see *Od.* V, 79: οὐ γάρ τ' ἀγνώτες θεοὶ ἀλλήλοισι πέλονται).

<sup>33</sup> See Onians, *the Origins of European Thought* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 67ff:

... it was natural to say that the speeches of a man who *pepnutai* (breathes) are themselves *pepnumena* (wise). They come forth with the breath that is intelligence in them, they are parts of it, and the listener puts them, takes them into his *thumos*, thus adding to his store, his knowledge. They pass from lung to lung, mind to mind. Penelope 'put the *muthos pepnumenos*' of her son in the *thumos* and words are continually said to be 'put in the *phrenes*'. Not only the evident connection between breathing and emotion already urged, but also the belief that thoughts are words and words are breath — *epea aeria* as Sappho seems to have called them — would lead to the belief that the organs of breath, the lungs, are the organs of mind. This conception of words would be natural, inevitable among men unfamiliar with writing. These words or thoughts are kept in the lungs. *Thersitēs epea phresin ēisin akosma te polla te eidē* (whose *phrēn* was fully of disorderly words). The poet uses both *muthos* and *epos* for unspoken thought.

Onians mentions parallel views of this association of thought, breath and words in the natives of New Guinea, and in early English literature, e.g. "in *Beowulf*, 'began to speak' is *wordhord onleac*, 'unlocked his wordhoard'. The mind is the breastboard, e.g. *wordes ord breathord Furbraec*, 'an opening word broke from his breast-choard,'" (p. 68). Compare Shakespeare's 'So shall my lungs coin words' (*Coriolanus*, III, 1). *Od.* XIII, 254 is another good example of this: "he spoke not the truth, but held back the word (*muthon*) always revolving in his chest (*eni stēthessi*) thoughts of great cunning". Liddell and Scott claimed that the meaning of *pepnumena*, 'wise', does not actually derive from *pneō* or cognate 'breath' forms, but from a root meaning 'vigor' or 'possessing vigor' (LSJ s.v. *pepnumai*). Frisk accepts the *pneō-pepnumai* connexion (Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1960-72); Chantraine (*Dictionnaire Étymologique*, III, p. 884) rejects Onians' claim as imprudent, but, etymology aside, the association of thoughts with the words in one's *phrēn* is well attested in Homer.

<sup>34</sup> *Ambiguity in Greek Literature* (first published in Oxford in 1932, reprinted by Johnson Reprint Corporation, New York, 1972): "what the language of the *Odyssey* lacks in grandeur and richness compared with the *Iliad* it replaces with a greater flexibility and delicacy . . . nuances of verbal meaning quite beyond the range of the blunt campaigners at Troy." (p. 98).

<sup>35</sup> An informative examination of the parallels between Homer's Cyclops story and other similar tales is provided by Justin Glenn, "The Polyphemus Folktale and Homer's *KYKLOPEIA*," *TAPA*, 102 (1971), pp. 133-181. Glenn observes that of the 125 versions examined, only two contain the 'nobody' trick, and they may be influenced by the Homeric account (p. 138). He also comments, "The 'nobody'-trick allows Homer's hero to meet the challenge with a resourcefulness and foresight practically unparalleled in the folktale as we know it." The comparative evidence, in short, strongly supports the idea of the linguistic element in the story as a distinctly Homeric contribution.

<sup>36</sup> For example at *Od.* XVII, 200, 377, when one of the suitors refers to Odysseus as *apolumantēra daitōn*, 'a kill-joy at banquets', little realizing the ominous sense of his own words.

<sup>37</sup> The general traits of *mētis* have been discussed at length by Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (New Jersey, 1978).

<sup>38</sup> Detienne and Vernant claim that Antilochus actually practices deception against Menelaus, but the case is not convincing: "the prudent trick of Antilochus adopts the guile of its opposite in order to fool Menelaus and simulates madness . . . feigning thoughtlessness and loss of control" (p. 22) Has Antilochus feigned *aphradiē*? It seems more plausible that his action is *aphradēs* no matter what his intentions might have been: to try to pass Menelaus on the shoulder of a narrow stretch of the road, both chariots at full speed, is just to be *aphradēs*: reckless. (*aphradiē* of a similar sort can be seen at *Il.* XII, 62: it is just *aphradeōs* "to try to drive the chariots through a trench set with sharp stakes and right under the wall of the Achaeans.") In any event, the generalization that "*mētis* is itself a power of cunning and deceit" (p. 21) is too strong. It is not through *deceit* that a woodsman works, or a helmsman guides the ship, and yet both are paradigms in Nestor's account of *mētis*.

<sup>39</sup> Only once is Odysseus spoken of in the *Iliad* as *poikilomētēs*, but the epithet has no clear connection with the context in which it appears (XI, 482). At best, it might be tied to Odysseus' ability to 'dart swiftly' (*aissōn*) at the band of attackers surrounding him. It is not in any case the 'dappled' all-round shiftiness of the Odysseus of the *Odyssey*.