

Odysseus, Hero of Practical Intelligence

ODYSSEUS, HERO OF PRACTICAL INTELLIGENCE

DELIBERATION AND SIGNS IN
HOMER'S *ODYSSEY*

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In dramatic representations and narrative reports of inner deliberation the *Odyssey* displays the workings of the human mind and its hero's practical intelligence, epitomized by anticipating consequences and controlling his actions accordingly. Once his hope of returning home as husband, father and king is renewed on Calypso's isle, Odysseus shows a consistent will to focus on this purpose and subordinate other impulses to it. His fabled cleverness is now fully engaged in a gradually emerging plan, as he thinks back from that final goal through a network of means to achieve it. He relies on "signs"-inferences in the form "if this, then that" as defined by the Stoic Chrysippus-and the nature of his intelligence is thematically underscored through contrast with others' recklessness, that is, failure to heed signs or reckon consequences. In Homeric deliberation, the mind is torn between competing options or intentions, not between "reason" and "desire." The lack of distinct opposing faculties and hierarchical organization in the Homeric mind, far from archaic simplicity, prefigures the psychology of Chrysippus, who cites deliberation scenes from the *Odyssey* against Plato's hierarchical tri-partite model. From the Stoics, there follows a psychological tradition leading through Hobbes and Leibniz, to Peirce and Dewey. These thinkers are drawn upon to show the significance of the conception of "thinking" first articulated in the *Odyssey*. Homer's work inaugurates an approach that has provoked philosophical conflict persisting into the present, and opposition to pragmatism and Pragmatism can be discerned in prominent critiques of Homer and his hero which are analyzed and countered in this study.

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