

Spring 2009

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Recommended Citation

Balloo, Yennaedo. "The Epic Entourage: Homeric Values of Heroism in the Modern Age and Setting." Spring 2009
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The Epic Entourage

Homeric Values of Heroism in the Modern Age and Setting

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March 19th 2009
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Homeric epic tradition is responsible for portraying the most timeless heroes. Achilles and Odysseus stand out as true heroes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the age of gods and men at war and vying for Kleos. According to Peter V. Jones in his essay “The Kleos of Telemachus:” “[Kleos] is not what you do, but what people say about you” (Jones, p. 500) in the stories and tellings of your deeds and life. Both heroes are representative of differing ideologies of pursuing Kleos. Although these heroes seem fixed in the Homeric age, but the truth is that Achillean and Odyssean heroism translate very easily across society and era. In sharp contrast to the ancient world is the modern era in which HBO’s hit TV Show *Entourage* is set. The show chronicles the life and fame of movie star Vincent Chase and his entourage as they work to maintain the Hollywood lifestyle. It is evident through Vincent’s pursuit of stardom that the values and principles of the Homeric age are still motivating factors. Vincent Chase, recently arrived into stardom when the show begins is the modern Achilles, constant in his pursuit of fame; and Ari Gold is his fast talking agent who represents the Odyssean virtue and cunning in Hollywood.

According to Samuel Elliot Bassett in his essay “The Amartia of Achilles,” Achilles is defined by two characteristics: his honor and dedication to being the greatest warrior among the Greeks (Basset, p. 51). The latter of those comes with the decision to lead a short glorious life rather than a long life without fame or Kleos. Achilles pursues his fame even in the face of knowledgeable self-destruction (Basset, p. 51). The challenge of being Achillean comes from his every action needing to constantly contribute to these pursuits. The essential episode to negotiate in defining Achilles is his departure from the battle at the beginning of the epic. When Agamemnon forces Achilles to give up his war spoils unjustly, the other warriors, Odysseus in particular, bid Achilles to endure the

injustice and rejoin the war for their sakes. After giving Agamemnon the spoils that the king has demanded, Achilles quits the battle:

Give in to Agamemnon? I think not,
neither to him nor to the rest. I had
small thanks for fighting, fighting without truce
against hard enemies here. The portion's equal
whether a man hangs back or fights his best;
the same respect, or lack of it, is given
brave man and coward. One who's active dies
like the do-nothing. What least thing have I
to show for it, for harsh days undergone
and my life gambled, all these years of war?
A bird will give her feedlings every scrap
she comes by, and go hungry, foraging.

- *Iliad*, Book IX, 384-398

Achilles quits the war because he cannot join a battle where he is not being properly rewarded as his achievements earn, and it is widely agreed that if Achilles had relented to these pleas, he would have betrayed his own virtues and there would be no *Iliad* (Basset, p. 65). Achilles, through his mention of the bird and treatment of feedlings, implies his desire for his proper spoils is a mandate of nature, his achievements as a warrior need to be justly repaid. This is how he is able to make the plea to Zeus that the Achaeans suffer heavy losses in his absence: his constancy and deeds justify that greatness and fame. It is Achilles' faith and admiration of the constancy of the gods that lead to his lifestyle. Just as the gods are constant and worthy of the praise and offerings of mortals, Achilles believes that his constancy as a warrior should reap similar rewards. In his essay, "Odysseus and the Possibility of Enlightenment," Richard S. Ruderman explores Achilles motivations for his lifestyle: "it was a mistake [for Achilles] to have relied on the gods in this way since they were unable to satisfy the chief hope that was operative in Achilles' undertakings: the desire to have death, at least insofar as it is met nobly, transformed into something other than the obliteration of all that we are," (Ruderman, p. 152). Achilles' constancy of being and pursuit of glory is aimed to reflect

the being of the immortal gods that he might achieve something beyond the mortality of man. Achilles' tragedy is the obliteration of his being through death in spite of this.

As Samuel Basset recognizes, Achilles' absolution as a warrior by deed and reward being interrupted by Agamemnon's selfishness, something that Odysseus cannot guarantee won't happen again in his plea to Achilles: "The offer of Odysseus reduced to lowest terms is this: restitution of the prize of war- but with no assurance that the caprice of the commander may not cause him to repeat the offense," (Basset, p. 65). Achilles' return to the front is not from his loyalty to his friends, but his pursuit of fulfillment through glory of being the greatest warrior among the Greeks in avenging Patroklos by killing Hektor. At this point, Achilles' greatness and being hinge on his avenging Patroklos by killing Hektor, not on the gifts and rewards of Agamemnon anymore. Achilles does not demand now that Agamemnon present him with gifts when he rejoins the war to avenge Patroklos even though it was his demand the whole time he was refusing to fight:

Lord Marshal Agamemnon, make the gift
if you are keen to-gifts are due; or keep them.
It is for you to say. Let us recover
joy of battle soon, that's all!

-*Iliad*, Book XIX, 165-168

Odysseus at first stands very superficially as an opponent to Achillean virtue. Odysseus is always willing to lie and deceive, and Achilles loathes the act: "I hate as I hate Hell's own gate that man who hides one thought within him while he speaks another" (*Iliad*, Book IX, 381-383). As with Achilles, whose rage as a warrior defined him and is found in the invocation of the *Iliad*, so too is Odysseus defined in the invocation in the *Odyssey*:

Sing in me, Muse, and through me tell the story
of the man skilled in all ways of contending,
the wanderer, harrier for years on end,

Odyssey, Book I, 1-3

Odysseus is a being of cunning and “contending.” Some translations have the word as “turning” because he is always ready to react and change in response to a given person or situation as necessary so that he can bring himself success and fame. There are very few points in the *Odyssey* where Odysseus presents himself as who he actually is upon first introduction. Odysseus changes himself to react to the world as is necessary for his life and glory. When Odysseus is brought home, he awakens in his homeland unaware of where he is because Athena has disguised the land from him:

On his island,
His father’s shore, that kingly man, Odysseus,
Awoke but still could not tell what land it was.
-*Odyssey*, Book XIII, lines 236-238

Athena disguises herself as a young man when she first approaches Odysseus. Since he cannot recognize his home, his reaction is to disguise himself and approach the “young man” as a sailor until he can figure out where he is and what to do next in his journey homeward. Athena recognizes his arts and commends him:

Whoever gets around you must be sharp
And guileful as a snake; even a god
Might bow to you in ways of dissimulation.
You! You chameleon!
Bottomless bag of tricks! Here in your own country
Would you not give your stratagems a rest
Or stop spellbinding for an instant?
-*Odyssey*, Book XIII, 371-377

Even when Athena reveals herself, Odysseus is skeptical until she fully reveals the island to him. Athena then commends Odysseus’ cunning and abilities of speech before telling him he must endure a little longer so he can see the state of affairs in his house and properly mete out punishment for those who deserve such. Athena hid that he came back to Ithaca out of concern because she does not want Odysseus walking right back into his house to face the suitors immediately. Showing up as Odysseus, king of

Ithaca would be suicide given the current climate. Odysseus must first disguise himself as a beggar to learn of the situation in his house and with his family. Odysseus never reveals himself to anyone immediately as he conducts his investigations until he has learned of their true mettle. Those who are unworthy he continues to hide himself from until he can finally mete out punishment. Odysseus employs trickery to test everyone first because the heart of Odyssean being is found first in his interaction with the world to learn from it followed by his artful and calculated reaction for his success. Unlike Achilles who faces everything the world puts before him as the “premier warrior of the Greeks,” Odysseus is mindful of what the world is presenting to him and is reactionary, willing to pretend to be a sailor, beggar or any number of other things.

The best and most widely discussed example of Odysseus’ nature as a being of interaction-reaction is his encounter with the Cyclops, Polyphemos, in Book IX of the *Odyssey*. Based on the abundance of food and cultivation the Cyclops has in his cave, Odysseus assumes the Cyclops is an intelligent, civilized being he can interact with. Odysseus convinces his men that they should wait and meet the Cyclops, who turns out to be more terrible than Odysseus could have foreseen. The problem with Polyphemos becomes that the Cyclops refuses to interact on any true social level. Polyphemos is a being of anti-social behavior and lifestyle that is contrary to Odysseus’ nature. Polyphemos lives alone in a cave, does not share his food or deeds with anyone, and rejects Odysseus and his men’s supplication so thoroughly that he goes so far as to eat two of Odysseus’ men:

A prodigious man,
slept in his cave alone, and took his flocks
to graze afield-remote from all companions,
knowing none but savage ways, a brute

-*Odyssey*, Book IX, 201-204

Neither reply nor pity came from him,
 but in one stride he clutched at my companions
 and caught two in his hands like squirming puppies
 to beat their brains out, spattering the floor.
 Then he dismembered them and made his meal,

-*Odyssey*, Book IX, 311-316

In a situation where the “other” who Odysseus faces is a social being, Odysseus can choose a role to play that will lead to his success against them, such as when he infiltrates his house as a beggar to move among the suitors. Polyphemos rejects any kind of social interaction, and thus, there is nobody Odysseus can position himself as to interact profitably with the Cyclops. Therefore, Odysseus becomes “Nobody” to trick and overcome Polyphemos. Odysseus’ other adventures and encounters in his travels are also rooted in his need to interact and change with the other beings of the world around him.

The question now, is how these two heroes and their heroic characteristics are represented in a show that is set in present day Hollywood. Vincent Chase is the same kind of star as Achilles was a warrior: constant and unwavering; and Ari Gold, his agent, is the flexible and cunning being that Odysseus is. In the episode “The Boys Are Back in Town,” (Original air date: June 5, 2005) movie star Vincent Chase has returned to Hollywood after spending the summer doing a low budget indy film in Queens. Vincent, who is a star, but still not an “A-Lister,” has his sights set on the big budget Hollywood epic “Medellin,” and Ari Gold does his best to at first casually push the super hero flick “Aquaman” to his client:

Vincent: What have you got for me?

Ari: Aquaman!

Vincent: Aquaman?

Ari: Aquaman baby, it is Spider-Man under water!

While Ari’s panache seems to make the script something of a fun option for Vincent, the reality is that acting this role is a necessity for Vincent’s career. Vincent’s manager, E, meets with Ari to talk about Vincent getting a deal for “Medellin” instead of “Aquaman.”

Vincent does not want to negotiate with Ari or hear about Aquaman, so he sends E to do his work and get the project he feels he deserves for himself and shut Ari down on the project he sees as being beneath him. While E does a good job of representing his client's desires and bidding, Ari is able to shift gears for the discussion and explain to E bluntly that Vincent isn't on the list of actors being considered for Medellin. When E asks "Well how do we get him on the list?" Ari responds, "You do Aquaman you stupid fuck." At this point it becomes clear Ari was doing his job of spinning the situation to sway his client by first pitching Aquaman with pomp and casual enthusiasm. A conversation at the end of this episode shows Ari's abilities to react to the situation with his client as well as Vincent's tenacity to being a superstar on his own terms and having his fame through his own constancy of being as a particular kind of star. Eric, Ari and Vincent sit down to discuss the options before them and what needs to be done:

E: I told him you wanted to sit down and talk.

Vincent: I thought we just sat down and talked. What's the problem Ari, you seem stressed.

Ari: Uh... yeah, we can't get Medellin.

Vincent: Why not?

Ari: Because they're looking at other people.

Vincent: So call and tell them to look at me.

Ari: You don't think I've been on the phone?

Vincent: You're the 'most powerful agent in the business.'

Ari: One of the most powerful, yeah.

Vincent: No, you said when I signed with you that you were 'the most powerful.' He said that to you?

E: Yeah, a bunch of times.

Ari: Shut the fuck up Eric!

Vincent: Listen, Ari, snap out of it, all right? If they're not looking at me, you call them. Tell them to look at me. They'll listen to you, all right? We cool? I'm starved, let's get out of here.

Ari: Vincent, we have to do Aquaman. You didn't tell him any of this?

Vincent: No, he told me, okay? And Eric also told you that I don't want to do Aquaman. If we can't get Medellin, then we'll wait for something else that I love.

Ari: For the past three months, while your boy has been sitting on your indy set pouring creamers and getting no pussy, I have been scouring this town for an offer. It ain't out there.

Vincent: Come on.

Ari: Okay, here's an offer for you to star in a new Olsen Twins movie, it's a love triangle in which little Mary Kate and Ashley use you as an experiment to see if you can tell that they are two separate and distinct people. This would be mildly amusing if the producer didn't think he had a realistic shot of getting you. It ain't eight months ago man, listen, you cooled off. The \$5 million offers do not exist. But Warner's loves you, so Aquaman does.

Vincent: What do you think Eric?

E: I think we should read Aquaman and see what's what.

Ari: Excellent representation. Nice work, E.

Vincent: You know what I think? I think I would rather quit the business than to do more shit that I don't love. I mean I've done that. And you know what, it sucks. I was only partially joking about Neil Labute, Ari. I'll go do a play. I'd rather do a play, than this bullshit. Don't forget, I came from nothing. As much as I love the toys, I don't need them.

Note Vincent's tenacity to being famous on his terms and his unwillingness to stay in the game if he cannot have fame as he believes he deserves. Vincent does this throughout the show: if he cannot have the glory as he sees fit, then he refuses to play the game. Vincent turns down the Aquaman offer at first because he doesn't want to act in a bad movie with a second rate director for a paycheck. Much like Achilles, he must have his being justified and honored through constancy of the world's reactions just as his actions and deeds represent a constancy of being. Until James Cameron signs on as the director of Aquaman, this film offer is simply not that. Instead of being a warrior, Vincent Chase is a movie star. Much like Achilles, when he considers leaving the "war," what sways his decision is not his friends, Ari, or the money but his realization that he'll be working with James Cameron and attaining the kind of fame he's dreamt of if he resumes his being, Vincent rejoins the movie to recover his own joy of battle.

Vincent's view of constancy is something he projects onto the world as well: just as Achilles expects his friends to be constant when they are in fact acting in official capacities. In this scene, Vincent expects Ari to be "the most powerful agent in the business" who can get him the role he wants. Ari, on the other hand, understands the

need for flexibility: to do Aquaman today for a better offer tomorrow, and is not going to stubbornly seek what he cannot attain through cunning interactions; rather as an agent it's his job to negotiate and endure just as Odysseus bid Achilles in the *Odyssey*. Ari has spent the summer in meetings with Warner Bros., searching the town and gauging the offers, and Aquaman is what he has found. Rather than stubbornly seek something else, he reacts to the world's offering and approaches Vincent with cunning to convince Vincent to adapt as well. Ari's understanding of the world informs his reaction and how he approaches Vincent at the beginning of the episode: with charm and guile; then how he approached Eric in the restaurant; and finally, how he approaches Vincent at the end of the episode in this scene with harsh forwardness of the reality to which Vincent refuses to relent. Surviving in the business requires flexibility, and flexibility is even needed in how one handles clients and negotiations. Just as Odysseus tries to sway Achilles' rage towards Agamemnon, so also does Ari approach and try to sway Vincent.

Also telling is both men's treatment of E in this scene. Ari reacts to E on two instances in this scene: the first time, he tells him to "shut the fuck up Eric!" and the second time he tells him, "good representation." In contrast to this is Vincent, whose only direct interaction with E that isn't an order ("come on") is his asking what E thinks when he very clearly has already made up his mind regardless of E's recommendation. This difference reflects Odyssean versus Achillean sensibilities respectively. Vincent expects the world to follow his constancy and glory, and that Eric will then follow rank and do as he expects. Vincent therefore commands E and expects him to follow, or simply ignores what E says that doesn't agree, and walks out when he sees both men are arguing against his resolve. In contrast to the Achillean expectation and treatment that Vincent displays is Ari's Odyssean acceptance of E and what he has to say, not necessarily commanding or

ignoring, but reacting and calculating. Once Ari understands both mens' positions, he is able to take a proper approach to explaining the situation to Vincent and E so that the dilemma is clear to both. Vincent must do Aquaman to procure fame so that he can continue on his path to stardom and receive movie offers that he finds valuable.

Later in the season, both Ari and Vincent find themselves in dire straits. Vincent has fallen for his first love and costar in the fabled "Aquaman" movie, Mandy Moore, and Ari's old boss who had previously retired from the agency returns to try to muscle Ari's star client from his grasp now that Vincent is reaching new levels of stardom. Vincent's situation with Mandy Moore is complicated by her having broken off an engagement to be with him as well as his complete immersion into his love for her to the point that his friends are all worried about his obsession. Vincent's depth of devotion to Mandy Moore should come as no surprise: Achillean virtue would mean that being in love means to be ready to fall completely in love with someone, just as to be a warrior for Achilles means to battle to the fullest of his capability and to receive all the spoils that are rightfully his. In "The Exodus" (Original air date: Aug. 28, 2005) Vincent and Mandy sit down for dinner and Mandy tells Vincent that she had lunch with her ex-fiance who is concerned that she and Vincent were rushing along too quickly, caught up in just trying to recapture what they used to have. Vincent casually asks:

Vincent: Yeah, are you sure?

Mandy: How can I be sure? It's been what, two weeks?

Vincent: Well, I'm sure.

Mandy: Really? ... huh... sorry, because I'm not, I'm not sure.

Vincent's assuredness of this belief shows his level of commitment to love, that it takes his entire being, just as Achilles devotes his entire being to the war. As with Achilles, when that devotion goes unpaid as Vincent believes he deserves, Vincent's response is spoken to his friends when he gets home after Mandy breaks up with him: "**Vincent:** All

right just to get it over with just so we don't have to talk about it again, it's not over between them, and we're done... tell Ari I'm not going to do the movie, I couldn't work with her every day.” Just like Achilles, if Vincent’s constancy of achievement as a movie star does not win him the glory and reward he feels is rightly his (in this case, romance with his costar, Mandy Moore) then he quits. In a very Achillean move, Vincent spends the bulk of the next episode, “The Abyss,” (Original air date: Sept. 4, 2005) alone on the beach telling everyone who approaches him that he plans on quitting the movie business if he can’t have Mandy and can live without the riches, fame and women he’d have as the star of a James Cameron blockbuster in Hollywood. To close off the second season with a true Achillean response, Vincent goes to James Cameron to quit the movie in person and it is the promise of enduring fame in another timeless classic of the legendary director’s canon that make him stay on the movie.

While Mandy is dumping Vincent, Ari deals with territorial boss, Terrence McQuewick (played by the great Malcolm Macdowell). Ari is busy trying to gauge the security of his job as Terrence makes himself a more clear and evident threat in “The Exodus” episode. The conflict opens up when Terrence calls Ari’s assistant Lloyd later asking for Lloyd to send Ari up:

Lloyd: Mr. McQuewick's on the phone, He'd like to speak with you.

Ari: To apologize? Send him down.

Lloyd: He wants you to come up.

Ari: He won't come down?

Lloyd: He asked me to send you up.

Ari: He asked you to send me up. Did you tell him that you don't send me anywhere? Did you tell him that no one sends me anywhere in this fucking agency? Did you tell him that I send myself where I want?

Lloyd: No, I just said okay.

Ari’s move is not to simply curse Terrence or be offended and slander him, but to tell Lloyd what should be said, just as Odysseus bids Achilles to interact with Agamemnon in

a certain way and accept the king's apology during the Iliad. Ari is extremely concerned with the nature of interaction and what is said among peers and adversaries. As an Odyssean, Ari needs to compete and interact with his adversaries, and proper use of language is essential for Ari as it was for Odysseus in Polyphemos' cave. Ari meets with Terrence later in their agency's boardroom and asks Terrence to renegotiate his contract. Terrence makes clear his intention to push Ari out by offering Ari "nothing." In spite of having a year left on his contract, Ari becomes extremely agitated. He cannot deal with an environment where his speeches and negotiations are ineffective and where he is literally offered "nothing" for his efforts. Following the "negotiation," Ari races back into his office telling Lloyd:

Ari: No e-mails, no phone calls, no faxes, no nothing, simply silence Lloyd.

Lloyd: Ari-

Ari: Silence Lloyd! It's golden.

Ari's attempt at negotiation and interaction with Terrence hits a complete wall and as a result Ari needs to shut himself from everything for a period to come up with his next move. After meditating he finally snaps back to consciousness and calls Lloyd to begin contacting other top agents in the firm to organize an exodus to open his own firm. Just as Odysseus became "Nobody" in Polyphemos' cave against his anti-social conduct, so also does Ari become "nothing" in the face of Terrence's refusal to renew his contract. Ari demands silence, and then proceeds to enact a plan to become "nothing" by leaving the agency:

Ari: LLOYD! Mm... This envelope contains the names of eight agents. Anyone catches you, you eat it. Comprende? Nod if you understand what I'm saying.

Lloyd: I understand.

Ari: You can't just fucking nod? Lloyd... I want you to pledge your undying loyalty to me

Lloyd: Ari,

Ari: Lloyd, listen, do you want to make it or do you want to fold

shirts at a chinese laundry? Now Pledge.

Lloyd: I pledge my undying loyalty to you.

Ari: Okay. Now I want you to go to each of these agents and discreetly say the words: "tsetse fly." Say nothing else.

Lloyd: Ari are you leaving the agency?

Ari: Silence, is fucking golden!

Ari's method of trying to pull this off is to control the nature of communication, not just with Lloyd, but also with the other agents involved whose only instruction is to say the code words to him, which competing agent Adam Davies does not do:

Davies: Hamburger Hamlet? right?

Ari: Tsetse fly, Davies. That's all you're supposed to say. Everything else stays the same.

Davies: I'm sorry Ari, I forgot what it means.

Ari: Well, you just said it.

Davies: The Hamlet?

Ari: Yes.

Davies: Right, because nobody working in this business would be caught dead eating there.

Ari: You know what Davies you better lock down some really good clients.

At the end of the episode when Lloyd frantically calls Ari telling him that Terrence found out about Ari's plan, Ari comes back to the agency to deal with the fallout from his being caught. As he rushes through the halls with people expressing their condolences, Adam Davies emerges from his office as Ari goes by. Of all the agents to betray him and turn his plan upside down, it is the agent whose speech Ari couldn't control:

Agent: sorry bro.

Ari: It's okay, it ain't your fault.

Davies: You should be a nicer person. Maybe then, people wouldn't fuck you.

Ari: You talked Davies? [Davies nods] Hey Adam?

Davies: Yeah Ari?

Ari: Your girlfriend, when she was in the mailroom she offered to blow me. True story.

Ari's rebuttal is swift, the viewer is surprised by neither the wit nor the crassness of his retort, but that Ari is capable of answering so quickly in the face of such betrayal. Just as Odysseus endures the kicks and abuse of the suitors in his own house as he is disguised

as a beggar to continue his work in his house, so also does Ari continue on in the face of such betrayal.

“Aquaman” eventually premieres and breaks box office records, propelling Vincent to a new level of stardom. Following Aquaman’s success, the studio (Warner Bros.) vaults into the sequels, which Vincent is under contract to do. The studio cannot lock James Cameron or the original writer to work on the sequel (Warners instead assigns Michael Bay and Kevin Smith respectively), and Vincent smells a rush job that is being pushed out for the sake of riding the wave rather than making a legitimately good movie:

Vincent: I'm not doing this movie.

Ari: Vincent, you signed a contract, and I know that you are a man of your word.

Vincent: Oh yeah? And are you? Are you a man of your word Ari?

Ari: I never lied to you.

Vincent: you told me if I did Aquaman, that I could get Medellin.

Ari: You got Medellin! I can't help the timing! Listen, I would if I could. Remember, I don't get paid shit on this. It all goes to my former employer. Look, Vinnie, I know that you would kill that role and I know the timing sucks, but be a man.

Vincent fights the Aquaman sequel not only because he doesn’t want to work on a poor film, but because his dream film, Medellin, is set to begin filming at the same time Aquaman shoots also. Ari’s advice to “be a man” speaks to the conflict between Achillean and Odyssean virtues: Achillean virtue means not to give in to such a dishonorable man just because of his power; Odyssean virtue means to adapt and endure such offenses. Warner Bros. executive, Alan Gray gave Vincent a promise that they would delay shooting if Vincent could work the Medellin shooting schedule around Aquaman 2’s schedule. When Vincent seals the deal and things look all right, he finds out Alan was lying to him:

Vincent: You said if I was back on November 1st

Alan: Vincent, I've got a billion dollar franchise to protect.

Happy Meals, action figures. I can't risk all that having my Aquaman doing three hours of blow in every multiplex in the country.

Vincent: But Alan, you looked me in the eyes and said that you'd do this for me. You gave me your word. Listen, Alan, a man is only as good as his word.

Alan: Vincent, it's just business, not personal.

Vincent: Oh, Just business, All right, then I want 20 million to do "A2" or I quit, nothing personal.

Following this clash, in the episode “Three’s Company” (Original air date: July 16, 2006), Ari is caught between a rock and a hard place: For Vincent’s insolence, Alan is threatening to cut Ari and all his clients off from Warner Bros if Vincent doesn’t agree to the \$12.5 million offer. Ari visits Vincent to try to convince him to take the film offer and recognize that he has to act out of self-preservation:

Ari: It's over, I'm sorry. You have no other choice. Do you understand?

Vincent: Yes, I understand.

Ari: Good. Tomorrow, breakfast on the lot, we make amends.

Vincent: I'm not going to breakfast.

Ari: Vincent, Alan just wants to look you in the face and he wants you to tell him that you're going to honor the contract. No more grief, we move on.

Vincent: Ari, listen to me: I'm not going to any fucking breakfast. You can tell Alan I will show up every day and I will bust my ass like I've always done, but I don't want \$12.5 million, I want the seven that we agreed on, I don't want to be indebted to some douchebag.

Ari: Vinnie! He has other movies!

Vincent: I don't care! I'll never work with him again anyway. I don't care if he offers me a billion dollars.

Alan asks Ari for a breakfast meeting with Vincent to put the matter to rest following the dispute, and although Vincent agreed to do the movie for the reduced fee, he refuses to sit down to breakfast. Ari does his best to smooth talk things with Alan at the breakfast, and tries to use his cunning to find a safe middle ground for he and Vincent to still come out happier for their troubles:

Alan: Where's Vincent?

Ari: Oh look we're all good, listen it's a done deal. Vincent feels

so bad about this he said forget the 12.5 he'll do it for 10.

Alan: Oh, but he wouldn't come to a breakfast with me?

Ari: No, it's not that,

Alan: These fucking actors, they think they have all the power.

Ari: Alan, Vincent is a good kid

Alan: Fuck Vincent, Ari, and fuck you.

Although Ari does relate Vincent's willingness to sign onto the sequel for less money, he doesn't drop Vincent's counteroffer as much as Vincent did in his bout of rage to seven million. Ari knows that the act of reducing the fee is enough of a gesture and that there's no reason to get carried away and lose out on the entire five and a half million dollar bonus for the sake of Vincent's Achillean virtues and sensibilities, after all: "Achillean virtue is inferior to Odyssean cunning; it was Odysseus' wily device of the Trojan Horse and not Achilles' virtue, however impressive, that led to the successful conclusion of the war" (Ruderman, p. 151). Alan turns down Vincent and Ari's counteroffer not from any fault of Ari's but from Vincent's unwillingness to sit down and have breakfast with him. In the end, Vincent's Achillean pride is what causes his name to be blackballed at the Warner Bros. studio until Alan's passing in a later season of the show. Had Vincent been like Ari, more along the Odyssean line of cunning and willingness to sit down and interact with those who could give him the jobs and thus, fame, he would not have suffered for it and been banned from Warner Bros by Alan.

The actors, writers and producers of the show are fully aware of the motivations and principles that guide these characters. Life, in the world of *Entourage* just as in Homer's world, is a pursuit of happiness and fulfillment. In the HBO published *Entourage* book by Tim Swanson, social psychologist Orville Gilbert Brim says, "If Vincent manages to climb to the top, will it bring him happiness? ... Vincent and Drama may want to be famous movie stars, while Eric and Turtle have a greater chance at true happiness, since fame rarely provides satisfaction that spotlight chasers think it

will.”(Swanson, p. 29) Just like Achilles, Vincent chases fame and a nature of being in the world that will never completely satisfy or fulfill for him because of the limitations of mortality as Achilles faced; the writers are aware of this Homeric principle that ultimately showed Achilles as the unfulfilled shade in the underworld. Like Odysseus, Ari is not pursuing fame but is an agent of being whose aim is to fulfill a role in any given situation that will benefit himself and those he cares for: “Sure, he’s an obscene aphorism–spewing, assistant-abusing, cash crazed power monger. But he’s also a loving husband, a caring father, and a good friend to the guys” (Swanson, p. 80). This description may as well have read as an appraisal of Odysseus¹ but it’s actually the description of Ari Gold. Actor, Jeremy Piven who plays Ari recognizes: “I can’t ever get ahead of the character... He’s always dancing in some interesting dualities” (Swanson, p. 80). Odysseus is a being of constantly shifting persona and thinking as well. He is a king disguised as a beggar, the faithful husband who seduces a sorceress; he is whatever he needs to be in a given circumstance. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is a different man in the cave of Polyphemos (“Nobody”) than he is when Athena finds him on the shore of Ithaca (A sailor) or when he goes first into his house to see the suitors (beggar). In this same vein, Piven expressed a desire early in his work on the show to explore the multiple facets of Ari’s life that divide the character and govern him in separate realms in much the same way as Odysseus shifts from realm to realm: “**Piven:** From the get-go, I wanted to explore Ari’s home life and professional life... He’s a family man who’s insanely driven. He’s a beast, and so you have to be a beast... But I was interested in the duality of appearing to be incredibly crass and type A, and at the same time, loving my wife”

¹ Perhaps Odysseus never used foul or necessarily racist language, but he was a liar, thief and cheat in the *Iliad*, even going so far as to rob the temples of Troy when the siege was made.

(Swanson, p. 80). All levels of the show, from the writing to the actors portraying the characters recognize the motivations of the characters (fame for Vincent, success and wealth for Ari), as well as the natures of their beings in how the characters go about their pursuits respectively. Piven recognizes that Ari, much like Odysseus, is the good husband at home, but when he is out in the world has to be someone else for the success that he wants to bring to his wife:

Piven- Ari stays monogamous, goes home to his wife, takes care of her in every single way, and then he's out, strutting around looking at every ass and showboating because that's his way. It's his outlet. He does that instead of actually pulling the trigger and cheating. And the more authentic I can make him look and seem and feel, the more interesting it'll be when it's revealed that he's not a cad.

-Swanson, p. 81

Odysseus, before making his journey past the Sirens, to the Underworld or all other points fantastic, does spend time with the witch Circe in Book X. Odysseus' men are caught and turned to swine, and Hermes tells Odysseus how to go about saving his men which involves impressing the witch with his speech, and then having sex with her before she will turn Odysseus' men back from swine. Odysseus had sex with Circe not out of sexual desire, but from the same purpose that he gave her the speech as Hermes instructed: circumstances necessitated his being and saying the things he had to so that he could fulfill his duty to his men as their leader. Ari Gold, as Piven recognizes in the previous statement is much the same (even though Gold never cheats on his wife). Ari goes out into the world and does what needs to be done, but when he comes home, just as Odysseus, he is the good husband who is living for his wife. The question to ask then is which one takes priority? Does the home life serve as a means for the life of the "agent" outside among the world, or vice versa? Odysseus' devotion to returning home (however many delays he faces or inadvertently creates) is fairly obvious as his top priority by the

end of the epic, and Ari's parallel motivation is made clear in an outburst at couples' therapy in the episode "One Day in the Valley" (Original air date: June 18, 2006)

Mrs. Ari: Can I have your attention for just one hour please?

Ari: You could have it if you want to live in Agora fucking Hills, and go to group therapy. But if you want a Beverly Hills mansion and you want a country club membership, and you want 9 weeks a year in a Tuscan villa, than I'm gonna need to take a call when it comes in at noon on a mother fucking Wednesday.

Ari's devotion to work and commitment to being the shark he needs to be may appear to conflict with his being a good husband, but he is actually at harmony in all aspects of his life. Whatever he is for work, is what he needs to be in order to provide for his wife and family.

There are many more scenes from *Entourage* that showcase these characters in more situations that can be analyzed in terms of Homeric values. Within them there are more examples than just these of how Ari Gold, through his guiles and movement as an agent represent Odyssean values and also how his client, Vincent Chase, is the modern Achilles as a movie star rather than a warrior. While the values of the Homeric epic may seem far removed from our society because of the multiple millennia between them, and the societies themselves seem so superficially distinct of one another, this does not mean that the values that Homer captured in his epics so profoundly do not still exist today. By understanding Homeric archetypes of society and heroism, a framework can be provided for analyzing even the most seemingly distant materials and characters, such as Ari Gold, Vinny Chase and *Entourage*. In the end it seems clear that Homer would agree with the show's tagline: *A lifestyle is a terrible thing to waste.*

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