

## Whom do you admire more as a leader – Odysseus in the *Odyssey* or Aeneas in the *Aeneid*?

These two heroes have embarked from the same destination but on very different journeys. Whilst they are both Iliadic heroes at the start of their stories, they develop and adapt their manner towards the characteristics required of them to succeed. Before we judge them, it is necessary to determine our definition of a successful leader. A hero from the Iliad must be “a speaker of words and one who is accomplished in action”, according to the horseman Phoinix (Iliad.9.413). A leader must have these primary qualities then, as he must lead by example, but to create the ideal we must add to this. The leader should rely on no others but in turn listen to sound counsel. He should be fair in his justice, in control of his situation and surroundings, keep his men abreast of the plan of action and reasoning behind it, remain calm under pressure and have compassion and understanding for his people. Thus his primary concerns should be the welfare of his people, their security and maintaining peace at all costs. His men, a good indicator of his leadership to us, should therefore give him loyalty, trust, and obedience, if the leader has led them suitably. The performance of the men is also important, and what they achieve under his direction is representative of his strength of leadership, though this must be compared with how they act without his presence. These measures can be seen as the important assets of a competent leader, though extenuating and uncontrollable circumstances must be taken into account, as we make a sound judgement of our two heroes.

Aeneas and Odysseus themselves are different, both in character and in their quest. Whilst Aeneas is born of the goddess Venus, Odysseus' lineage has no close link to a deity. However, whilst Aeneas is of divine descent, he receives little or no help from his mother. When he lands at Carthage and Venus is kind enough to give him information about Dido's people, she is disguised and departs immediately after having spoken, to the despair of Aeneas (“you so often mock your own son...you too are cruel” A.1.406). The other help he receives is limited (“thick mist” A.1.411) and with no knowledge of its existence. Whilst his mother is vehement in defending her son and his people when she is on Olympus (“it is unspeakable. We are betrayed” A.1.252 “take pity on them” A.10.60), no action is taken to ease him in his distress or console him in person. Within the *Aeneid*, the gods are not the ever-present guardians that Athene is to Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, whether they agree or not (“Hercules checked the great groan... helpless tears streamed” A.10.465). Athene on the other hand, not only helps Odysseus with her divine power but she gives him advice (“go to the swineherd” O.13.403), disguises him (“change you beyond recognition” O.13.396), and even cares for his family (“instil more spirit into Odysseus' son” O.1.89, “prompted the wise Penelope” O.21.1). She is very intimate with Odysseus, conversing at length and speaking very openly (“you are so persuasive, so quick-witted, so self-possessed” O.13.333). Whilst Venus never alights on the earth to console Aeneas in his grief (“heart sick at the sadness of war” A.8.29), Athene can not bear to leave her hero in distress (“I cannot desert you in your misfortunes” O.13.332). Aeneas is in fact quite a lonely character and doesn't even compete in the games of Book 5, which we can easily imagine Odysseus competing in (as in the

Iliad). His lack of personal contact with the gods shows that he is just a pawn, merely a very important pawn. However, the actual tangible help that Aeneas receives is far greater than Athene's to Odysseus. The son of Venus receives divine weapons "beyond all words" and of "shining splendour". Neptune's actions against the work of Juno allow his crew to survive the shipwreck ("calming the swell" A.1.145). Thus, whilst Aeneas is never given a piece of news from the Olympians that he actually wants to hear ("dumb and senseless" A.4.280), his physical aid from the gods is great. Odysseus receives emotional and strategic help from Athene ("the two of them sat down...to scheme" O.13.371), as well as assistance from Hermes in person. However, his encounters with monsters and magic are largely left to him. He is given no divine armour, and Athene checks her aid in deference to Poseidon. But Venus just goes head to head with Juno, despite her lesser status, and aids Aeneas.

Odysseus walks with the gods and they interact with him regularly but this counterbalances his character as a loner. Aeneas' leadership begins in conjunction with his father Anchises who dies in Sicily, but his son Ascanius is on the voyage also. He also has no alienation from his men, such as Achates, and listens to their words ("there is no danger" A.1.584). Odysseus on the other hand has a difficulty with listening to people. Despite Agamemnon's warning in Book 11 ("make a secret approach" O.11.456), it takes Athene's reminder ("tell not a single person" O.13.308) to prevent catastrophe ("I would certainly have come to a miserable end...if you, goddess, had not made all this clear to me" O.13.383). He ignores Circe's advice not to put on his armour when he goes past Scylla. He ignores his men's attempts to stop him saying his name to the Cyclops. This inability to accept criticism or advice hampers a good relationship with his men.

Odysseus hardly ever refers to his men by name and the only man whom we hear in person is the treacherous Eurylochus and the drunken ghost of Elpenor. No direct speech from a living Ithacan on Odysseus' crew is ever said to him in kind. Though Odysseus goes so far as to divide the men up and share command with Eurylochus, his pondering as to whether or not he should "lop his head off" counts against it. Odysseus acts very much on his own compared to Aeneas whom only ever parts company from his men when he is with Dido and when he first lands on Carthage. However, Odysseus is frequently dividing himself from his men. He receives the souls of the dead on his own, with no Sibyl to guide him. He forages on his own in Scherie, he lands his ship away from the others at Telepylus, he lets no one else control the rudder leaving Aeolia and he sleeps away from the others upon Thrinacie.

Odysseus' repetitive action of taking everything upon himself points to the different nature of his and Aeneas' travels. Odysseus is going home to free *his* wife, *his* home, and *his* kingdom. His men just happen to be going to the same place. Aeneas though is going to found a new race *with* his people. It is essential, for his mission to be completed successfully, that he reaches Latium with a band of men to found Rome. Odysseus though has no commitment to his crew. Homer is very insistent on the fact that the Ithacans on the ship are not worth saving and could not have been saved from destruction, despite Odysseus' attempts ("in spite of all his efforts... their own transgression that brought them to their doom" O.1.6). The point that these are his fellow countrymen, whom he should have the utmost concern for, as their king, seems to be ignored. Aeneas has no legal duty to his crew as their king, unlike Odysseus. The Ithacan crew does have their shortcomings but compared to the Trojans, the Ithacans' arduous trials on the seas are far worse. No rest is received from Troy until Aeaea. The Sirens, and Scylla and Charybdis also occur without a pit stop in between – it is not surprising that Eurylochus expresses the wish of the men

to land and take on supplies ("you expect us, just as we are...[to] go wandering off over the foggy sea" O.12.285). The crew has lost 11 ships by the time they leave the Laestrygonians. Odysseus' own ship lost 6 ships at Ismarus and a further 6 by Scylla. The deaths have been incredibly gory and sudden ("dashed their heads on the floor" O.9.289) and the emotional toll on the crew must have been huge. Though criticism is made of Odysseus' crew for opening the guest gift from Aeolus (it is also partly Odysseus' fault for not confiding in them enough), Queen Arete has similar reservations concerning the sailors taking Odysseus home. In Book 13, she provides him with a "strong box" for the Phaeacian guest gifts and a maid to guard them, since she doesn't trust her own best sailors.

The greatest act of disloyalty and disobedience by Odysseus' men is the eating of the cattle of the Sun-god, despite Odysseus' repeated warnings and their swearing of an oath, the breaking of which displays their dishonour. However, not only are they carrying out a different journey from the Trojans, they have very little control over the ship. Aeneas' crew know where they are going each time they set out and manage to get there at the end. The only time that the ship goes on course for Odysseus is when they are going over the River of Ocean and when Circe directs them where to go. Thus the futility of the situation must affect the crew also. The final strain on them is that, apart from the incestuous court of Aeolus and the magical island of Circe, they have little or no contact with civilisation. Instead, they face barbarians like the Cyclopes and Lystraegonians, not to mention the monsters such as Scylla. The crew is indeed hardly the most honourable band of men, but the strain they are under aggravates this.

Odysseus' treatment of them hardly inspires them either. He scorns the tears of the men on the shores of Aeaea ("for all the good they did" O.10.204). He considers "lopping off" Eurylochus' head, simply for being afraid of returning to the house of Circe. He doesn't listen to Eurylochus' concerns either, as he reminds the crew of Odysseus' bad decision of staying within the cave of Polyphemus ("this man's reckless folly" O.10.436). He acts more like a schoolteacher than a skipper; never indulging them like Aeneas does with the funeral games in Book 5. He instead seems to spend his time berating them when they have done wrong, even using violence ("dragged them under the benches" O.9.99, "confronted my men one after the other and rebuked them" O.12.393). The only time that any of them enjoy rest or food, it ends up not working out. The Cicones interrupt the rest on the shores of Ismarus. After their meal in the cave of Polyphemus, Odysseus' waiting for the owner of the cave ends in catastrophe. On Aeaea, it is the men that become frustrated and want to leave, having to remind Odysseus of his 'nostos' (homecoming). Thus, the crew gets no enjoyment in the voyage and any illusion of rest or leisure turns out to be a poisoned chalice. Odysseus does apparently have compassion for his crew ("never had to witness a more pitiable sight" O.12.259) but yet does not shed a tear for the dead on the seas around Thrinacie. His concern is for himself and his accomplishment. He abandons the men to die at Telepylus. Even if he might not have managed to save any of them, he didn't even try. His concern for his crew *should* be the most important thing, yet he is willing to risk the security of his men for guest gifts in the cave of Polyphemus. Then, once again risks the lives of his crew to shout his name to the Cyclops and thus improve his 'kleos' (everlasting fame), despite their attempts to silence him. He acts better in his dealing with the Sirens and he only indulges his desire to hear their song once he is incapacitated and unable to harm the crew. However, making his crew do this to him shows us that, even if he has become more concerned with the welfare of his crew, he still wants to experience

the dangerous song. Curiosity in the Odysseus' is merely a character trait and should not be overly criticised though.

Aeneas on the other hand is always concerned with the well being of his people. He is a peace loving man and is "heart sick at the sadness of war" which comes upon his men. This is not out of his fear of his own death, as he knows he must survive (fate has decreed it so), but it is out of compassion for the dead that will die. Odysseus, though divinely endorsed in his slaughtering of the suitors never even considers the suitor Amphinomus, "a man of principle", "sensible" and "intelligent", worthy of a moments pause. In contrast, Aeneas feels great pity for Lausus, who was a worthy man caught in the fighting. Lausus had aimed to kill Aeneas, whilst Amphinomus had only aimed to "force him [Odysseus] from the door". The compassion for human life can be seen far less in Odysseus than in Aeneas, who has managed to make the jump from Homeric hero to Virgilian hero.

A skill in rhetoric, usually an ever-present quality in the "snowflake" words of Odysseus, is not used to his crew. His speeches do not console them in their torment and are used to inform them of what he has decided. He does this on the shore of Aeaea and as they leave for the Underworld. Aeneas on the other hand, gives a very rousing speech right at the start of Book 1, and even "showed them the face of hope and kept his misery deep in his heart". Though Aeneas is hardly the diplomat that we see of Odysseus in his supplication to Nausicaa, he does have the understanding and compassion of the men, which Odysseus lacks. Aeneas is frequently associated with the epithet 'pius' meaning 'care for others', a trait which comes through strongly.

The sacrifices that Aeneas is prepared to make are far more than Odysseus makes. Aeneas spends his time in Carthage, enjoying hospitality and his feelings of love for the Queen Dido grow and grow. The message of Hermes then leaves him "dumb and senseless", but he also now "longed to be away". The pain of Dido when she finds out is touching. Aeneas, we can be sure, did love her and does not wish to leave Carthage ("it is not by my own will that I still search for Italy" A.4.361, "heart shaken by his great love" A.4.396, "spoke sweet words of love" A.6.455). However, his 'pietas' (divine duty) rules his heart ("he longed to soothe her...he nevertheless carried out the commands of the gods" A.4.397). Compare this pitiful scene of lovers separated with the similar scenes of Odysseus on Aeaea. He is reminded by his men of his mission to get back to Ithaca. In turn, he clasps her knees in supplication. He is so over exuberant in his appeal to leave, and it contrasts completely to her reaction ("do not stay on unwillingly" O.10.488). There is no heart wrenching departure here. He leaves with supplies, a favourable wind and a favourable shore to return to. Aeneas left in secret, with fires from Dido's suicide on the horizon. The sacrifices he is ready to make for Rome are great, including the great war of Latium, which he cries about, even though it is a necessity. Odysseus has no such reservations in his head when he kills the suitors.

Aeneas' self control, compared to Odysseus, is once again more impressive. Odysseus restrains himself from killing Eurylochus on Aeaea, and restrains himself from acting against the women and then the suitors in the palace. However, the thoughts to kill Eurylochus shouldn't have been there anyway and it is in fact his men whom "held me back and calmed me down", not his composure. Similarly, it is the words of Athene, in Book 13 and onwards, that maintain his composure in the palace just as much as his endurance ("endure your aggravation" O.13.309, "You really are incorrigible!...go to sleep" O.20.45). Aeneas on the other hand is extremely self controlled. He does not get angry all through Book 12 until line 495; "at this his anger rose". This has been despite repeated cowardice of Turnus, more needless

deaths of Latins and Trojans, the arrow he has in his leg, the breach of the treaty and the actions of Juturna. It takes an arrow to carry "away the plumes" from his helmet for him to become angry.

Aeneas' men achieve a fantastic feat. They have arrived in a new country, and managed to coalesce armies together to combat an alliance drawn up against them. Whilst Aeneas is not a king, he acts as such and his successful supplication to both Tarchon and Evander, show us that he is indeed worthy of ruling Lavinium. However, the ability to win over the king and win the marriage of the princess is also achieved by Odysseus in Scherie. They are both great men and we hear much from others about their ruling in the past. Odysseus, King of Ithaca, is well known in the country as just and fair ("Odysseus ruled with a father's loving care" O.2.233). Aeneas' men speak similarly ("no equal for piety and his care for justice" A.1.545).

If we consider the great calamities, which occur when Odysseus is not there to control the Ithacans, his effect on the people is obvious. We can see that the country falls into ruin ("not since the good Odysseus sailed have we been called to Assembly" O.2.26), the men are untrustworthy ("evil counsels prevailed" O.10.46), and many of his household are corrupted. Aeneas is important to his people also, but he is not such a gem among the Trojans as Odysseus is among the Ithacans. The Trojans successfully supplicate Dido on their own ("Put every anxious thought or of your hearts" A.1.563). We do not see Aeneas competing in games, but we see the Trojans competing among themselves in Book 5. The Trojans are very successful in their war in Books 7 onwards and they are distinguished by men. Nisus and Euryalus, though killed for being too adventurous, definitely take some of the limelight away from Aeneas. However, this does remind us that he is a leader and not a hero. When he leaves to go to Pallanteum, the Trojans do suffer badly and are hemmed in within their own camp ("Ascanius is trapped behind a wall and ditches, surrounded by missiles" O.10.235). However, it is important to remember the influence of others such as Pallas, Nisus, Euryalus, Tarchons and the distant Evander. The race of Trojans seem to be more proficient without supervision than the Greeks on Odysseus' boat, who seem to need constant watching to make sure they don't break oaths or resort to treachery. Thus, the people themselves may be the reason why Aeneas achieves arguable more impressive feats than Odysseus.

Throughout the latter stages of Book 12, Turnus is thrown up as leader whom is the anti-Aeneas. He is isolated from the rest of the battle and keeps himself from even his own side ("Turnus was still in the wood when the bitter news came" A.11.895). He is not compassionate to the dead and dying ("crushing whole columns of men under his chariot wheels" A.12.330). His revelry in death and the way the council of Latinus is against him, especially Drances, emphasises his inability to lead. Whilst he fights selfishly, he is unwilling to fight single combat, revealing a streak of cowardice. The emphasis of the anti-Aeneas can only uplift Aeneas in our eyes. Indeed, it is my considered view that Aeneas is the more impressive leader. Whilst both of the heroes adapt their original profile as a Homeric hero, they do not become the same thing. Odysseus becomes the Odyssean hero, who specialises in tricks ("the whole world talks of my stratagems" O.9.19) and personal survival. However, Aeneas becomes the Virgilian *leader*, his concern is always for the people and they are the most important thing to him. The reason that the endings of the books are so dissimilar and the Aeneid is far less satisfying than the Odyssey is a result of this point. Odysseus' accomplished aim can be viewed within his lifetime, and listened to within a short time. His short-term goal of going to bed with Penelope, and sorting out the situation in his country is all seen within the borders of the story. Aeneas' ending merely means that his journey is at an end but the rest of the story lies with

his people. The emphasis is on the people he is leading and not what he individually has accomplished.