Kerdos in *Homer* : Gain, Profit, Advantage? A Status Report

This article presents the current state of knowledge on the theme of kerdos in the Homeric corpus and examines the specific relationship between this word family and the character of Odysseus.

Introduction

In 2014, I published *Poésie de la richesse et de la pauvreté. Études du vocabulaire de la richesse et de la pauvreté dans la poésie grecque antique, d'Homère à Aristophane: ἄφενος, ὄλβος, πλοῦτος, πενία, πτωχός*, (Presses de Saint-Étienne), an extensively revised edition of my thesis. This publication was in response to an ongoing interest in economic issues in the field of ancient worlds, and thus to the need for a comprehensive study. In the poetry of the 5th and 4th centuries B. C., the lexicon of wealth is essentially organized around a contrast between three abstract terms: *aphenos* refers to prestige wealth and is used mainly for the glorifying presentation of a character: it is a Homeric term, whose use subsequently declined, and whose employments in tragic poetry can be analysed as Homeric reuses. The two other abstract names for wealth, *olbos* and *ploutos*, often function in opposition, in very different ways: the first term refers to wealth blessed by the gods, ancient and generally positively connoted. *Ploutos* was originally the specific term for wealth, a neutral word which, in contrast to *olbos*, acquired the values of recent, corrupting, even deadly wealth, this evolution being linked to the socio-economic developments of the classical period, when the separation of nobility and wealth took place.

In line with this work, I have also published regularly on the theme of wealth in Ancient World, notably, in English, *Wealth in Hellenistic Poetry, bettween Continuity and Recomposition*, available on *(*https://glocal.soas.ac.uk/comela2022-proceedings)

Interest in the problem of wealth remains, which is why I began the continuation of this work on the question by examining terms that do not strictly belong to the lexical field of wealth, but which can be associated with it. My objective is to study, in particular, the family of τὸ κέρδος (*to kerdos*) “gain, profit, advantage”. This family of words[1] is found in association with wealth in the Greek ancient poetry, notably in Aeschylus's tragedy *Agamemnon*: this tragedy depicts the return of the king Agamemnon after his victory over the city of Troy. The fear of the gods' wrath hangs over the entire play, following the atrocities committed by the Greek army during the capture of the city of Troy. And at the beginning of the play, when victory has been announced in Argos, but

[1]The following words are attested in the Homeric corpus for this word family: a neuter substantive *kerdos*, mainly used in the plural (*ta kerdea*), an abstract noun *kerdosynè* and an adjective *kerdaleos*. There is also three compounds : *kerdaleophrôn* (with *kerdos* in mind ?) *nèkerdes* (without kerdos) and its opposite *polykerdes* (full of *kerdos*). and, above all, a neuter comparative (*kerdion*), wich is the most accurate term.

before the king's return, the fear that the Greek army might have shown excess in its triumph is expressed twice: v. 341-342 ἔρως δὲ μή τις πρότερον ἐμπίπτῃ στρατῷ / πορθεῖν ἃ μὴ χρή, κέρδεσιν νικωμένους. “and that no desire will seize the army to ravage what it should not, overcome by the *kerdos*”.

This use seems to redouble the theme of “mortal” wealth, symbolized by the purple carpets that Agamemnon treads on, at the request of his wife Clytemnestra, when he enters the palace, as he walked in the blood of Troy[2]. The second occurrence is also interesting, when the herald proclaims that the victory over Troy was worth it v. 573-574 : ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς λοιποῖσιν Ἀργείων στρατοῦ / νικᾷ τὸ κέρδος, πῆμα δ' οὐκ ἀντιρρέπει “for us who remain of the army of the Argians, *kerdos* is victorious, sorrow does not counterbalance” : the echo effect with the first occurrence (victory of gain) makes it clear that exactly the opposite has happened, *ie* the *pèma* (“sorrow”, for instance the many Greek deaths), and will happen. Actually, the lure of gain has overcome the army, and driven it to the hubris of an excessive victory, which will sign the king's doom.

If our aim is to have a better understanding of the relationship between gain and bad wealth (is it limited to Greek tragedy? What kind of material profit do these terms refer to exactly?), it is necessary, in our opinion, to go back up to the origin of Ancient Greek litterature, *ie* the epic poetry : we can see that the family of *kerdos*, in Homer, almost never has a meaning of material profit or wealth, even though this is its most common meaning in classical poetry: we have here a perfect example, wich is not isolated, of a relatively abrupt change in meaning between Homeric texts and later literature. To understand this phenomenon, it should be remembered that Homeric literature is an oral tradition, whose development stretches back to the 10th century B. C., for the earliest elements, to the beginning of the VI° B. C.: semantic archaisms therefore exist in the same way as phonetic, morphological and syntactic archaisms. Nevertheless, it is still surprising not to be able to perceive a detailed semantic evolution when the texts of Homeric literature are so varied, and while Homeric texts are perfectly familiar to later authors: we could therefore assume that occurrences in Homer or in later poetry may have not always been correctly interpreted.

State of Research

Two important publications have already well studied the family and its uses in Homer, firstly that of F. Bamberger, “ Κέρδος et sa famille (emplois homériques), Contribution aux recherches sur le vocabulaire de la richesse en grec ”. This publication has the merit of showing the variety, or rather the lack of unity, between the meanings of the different words in the family, but it starts from a very “etymological” perspective, i.e., by trying at all costs to link the meanings of the words to the etymology of the family, when this is not even certain, which biases the work. In fact, the author assume a *kerd- theme, present in other Indo-European languages, with the meaning of “trade, art, craft”, but,

[2]Cf. S. Coin-Longeray, «Agamemnon ou la richesse mortelle: étude d'un emploi particulier de πλοῦτος».

assuming that this is indeed the etymology of *kerdos*, this reading prism is clearly not operative for Greek: in Ancient Greek as in Latin, or Sanskrit, the meaning of words can sometimes be very different from their Indo-European origin, and it's the flaw in this study to try at all costs to relate to it, according to an obviously dated methodology.

The second publication is H. M. Roisman's "*Kerdion* in the *Iliad*: Profit and Trickiness, which focuses on the neutral comparative *kerdion*, the most attested form of this family of words. This study clearly demonstrates the specificity of the comparative, in its meaning and uses, in relation to the other words in the family, and this is the reason why we won't include the comparative form in our study, and that our interest will focus exclusively on other forms than the comparative. We should also mention the publication by A. Cozzo, *Kerdos. Semantica, ideologie e società nella Grecia antica*, Roma 1988, but we must admit that it is a rather poor work, very generalist, wich provides little new information for the epic period.

So, our aim would be to examine Homer's neuter noun *to kerdos*, studying it for its own sake, in the belief that it is the semantic starting point for the other derivatives, and leaving aside questions of etymology and coherence between the various words in the family, to concentrate on its stylistic use. From a methodological perspective, I won't be translating any of the words in the family, with the idea that this will provide a more objective analysis, without imposing any pre-established meaning: it is also important to examine all occurrences in our corpus, without selecting, because it is only from the whole that we can truly establish meaning and significance. What I can already say is that the most salient point, when we examine the uses of the noun in particular, is its privileged relationship with Odysseus, what we might expect, given the well-known art of tricks and lies of the hero, but we find also a clear relationship with those around him.

In the *Iliad*

First, it should be noted that the *Iliad* predates the *Odyssey* by about half a century, and that the latter poem is often constructed as a "mirror" (or even a critical parody) of the former. The occurrences present a certain ambiguity between positive and negative value. The compound *kerdaleophrôn* (with *kerdos* in mind ?) is clearly negative, and appears as one of the components of the confrontation between Achilles and Agamemnon[3], as the first violently attacks the leader of the expedition: "ὤι μοι, ἀναιδείην ἐπιειμένε, κερδαλεόφρον, πῶς τίς τοι πρόφρων ἔπεσιν πείθηται Ἀχαιῶν, « Truly, man clothed in impudence, *kerdaleophron,* will the Achaeans be persuaded by your words? » (I 149-150). In a very literary manner, Agamemnon himself reuses the name, this time applying it to Odysseus (who, as we shall see, is an expert in *kerdos*), while the latter remains on the sidelines during a council meeting : καὶ σὺ κακοῖσι δόλοισι κεκασμένε κερδαλεόφρον « and you, excellent

[3]Let us recall that the god Apollo sent the plague upon the Greek camp to avenge his priest Chryses, to whom Agamemnon refused to return his daughter Chryseis, who was his captive.

at dirty tricks, *kerdaleophron* » (IV 339)[4]. This occurrence not only echoes Achilles' criticism (which Agamemnon undoubtedly still has on his mind), but also establishes, early on in the epic, the presentation of Odysseus as a master of *kerdos*.

In contrast to these two instances (which are the only ones) of the compound, which are clearly negative, the family has a rather positive value elsewhere. There is one occurrence of the superlative form in the abolu, for the hero Sisyphus, when the warrior Glaucos seeks to demonstrate his quality through his ancestors, which is a classic theme in the world of heroes : ἔστι πόλις Ἐφύρη μυχῷ Ἄργεος ἱπποβότοιο, / ἔνθα δὲ Σίσυφος ἔσκεν, ὃ κέρδιστος γένετ᾽ ἀνδρῶν, « There is a city called Ephyre, deep in the land of Argos, where horses are bred. There lived Sisyphus, who was the most (with) *kerdos* of men » (VI 152-153).

It thus seems to refer to a kind of "technical competence," the ability to quickly assess a situation and react just as quickly. We see this when Agamemnon and his brother Menelaus hold a council to discuss how to respond to the crushing defeats suffered by the Greek army at that time, and raise the idea of sending a spy into the Trojan camp, dangerous mission, which will require *kerdos* : "χρεὼ βουλῆς ἐμὲ καὶ σέ, διοτρεφὲς ὦ Μενέλαε, / κερδαλέης, ἥ τίς κεν ἐρύσσεται ἠδὲ σαώσει / Ἀργείους καὶ νῆας, « We need advice *kerdaléès*, Menelaus, son of Zeus, who will protect and save the Argives and their ships. » (X 42-44). The two brothers then convene an assembly, implying that the *boule* (council, deliberation, decision-making) will be better with more people involved, as Diomedes, who volunteers for the espionage mission but not alone, will say : σύν τε δύ᾽ ἐρχομένω καί τε πρὸ ὃ τοῦ ἐνόησεν / ὅππως κέρδος ἕῃ· μοῦνος δ᾽ εἴ πέρ τε νοήσῃ / ἀλλά τέ οἱ βράσσων τε νόος, λεπτὴ δέ τε μῆτις. « If two men go together, one thinks for the other about the *kerdos*; the man alone, even if he thinks, has shorter thoughts, meager invention. » (X 224-226).

Alongside this rather generic meaning of "better thinking," there are applications for practical and technical skills, as well as for skill in chariot racing. The meaning of the plural *kerdea* in these occurrences is problematic. Thus, during the games organized for Patroclus' funeral, we see the young Antilochus surpass Menelaus : τῷ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἐπ᾽ Ἀντίλοχος Νηλήϊος ἤλασεν ἵππους / κέρδεσιν, οὔ τι τάχει γε, παραφθάμενος Μενέλαον· « Antilochos, descendant of Neleus, spurred his horses on, by *kerdea* rather than speed, overtaking Menelaus. » (XXII 514-515). The commonly accepted translation as "cunning" seems questionable, as the young driver is not cheating but simply demonstrating skill, following the advice given by his father Nestor before the start of the race, with the same words, in particular to take care to pass as close as possible to the marker: ὃς δέ κε κέρδεα εἰδῇ ἐλαύνων ἴσσονας ἵππους, / αἰεὶ τέρμ᾽ ὁρόων στρέφει ἐγγύθεν, « But who knows *kerdea*, though driving inferior horses, always looking at the milestone, goes around it closely » (XXIII 322). The repetition between the two passages, characteristic of the epic style, clearly

[4]The compound after disappears from the language, and is only found among lexicographers and later authors.

indicates that *kerdos* has the same meaning, and it is not really the idea of a ruse (and even less the idea of profit).

More interestingly, this is the first instance where *kerdos* is associated with the lexicon of knowledge, and we will see that this idea of knowledge is particularly recurrent in the case of Odysseus, and his "associates."

Odysseus

As far as Odysseus is concerned, if we follow the order of the texts, his "knowledge" is already emphasized in the *Iliad*, rather pejoratively at first: we have already seen the occurrence in IV 339, with the compound *kerdaleophrôn* applied to Odysseus by the king Agamemnon, but we can assume a rhetorical exaggeration on the sovereign's part, especially as the compound is previously hurled as an insult at Agamemnon himself, by Achilles, and perhaps just expresses Agamemnon's anger[5]. In the other instance in the poem concerning Odysseus, it is his technical skill that is highlighted, enabling him to compensate for a natural inferiority, just as the charioteer Antilochos compensated for his horses' lack of speed with his skill as a driver. In fact, when the king of Ithaca has to face the gigantic Ajax in battle, during the games organized for Patroclus' funeral, his physical inferiority can be compensated for in this way: ὣς ἔφατ᾽, ὦρτο δ᾽ ἔπειτα μέγας Τελαμώνιος Αἴας, / ἂν δ᾽ Ὀδυσεὺς πολύμητις ἀνίστατο κέρδεα εἰδώς. "So, they said, and the great Ajax son of Telamon stood up, and Odysseus the cunning also stood up, knowing *kerdos*" (*Iliad* XXIII 708-9).

This occurrence is a first indication of the "specialisation" of the hero with the *kerdos*, but the association of the word family and the hero obviously saturates the *Odyssey*. If we take the text in order[6], it begins when Helen recounts to young Telemachus, who has come to see king Menelaus in Sparta, the moment when she met and recognized Odysseus in disguise, who had come to Troy as a spy: · ἐγὼ δέ μιν οἴη ἀνέγνων τοῖον ἐόντα, / καί μιν ἀνειρώτων· ὃ δὲ κερδοσύνηι ἀλέεινεν. "Only I recognized him as he was, and I questioned him, but he evaded my questions with *kerdosynè*." (IV 250-251). This occurrence is particularly interesting because it links the Trojan War and thus the other epic poem (even though the story of Odysseus as a spy is not in the *Iliad*), and at the same time heralds Odysseus' return to Ithaca, with the theme of dressing up, the third part of the *Odyssey*, which contains most of the occurrences of the family of *kerdos*.

[5]P. Pucci believes that this occurrence is also a case of rivalry between the two texts, *kerdos* being valued in the *Odyssey*, and criticized in the *Iliad*. (*Ulysse polutropos*, p. 152 n. 14), but but we have demonstrated, with examples from the chariot race, that *kerdos* is not necessarily negative in the *Iliad*.

[6]Given that the order is complicated in the *Odyssey*, which does not have a more or less linear narrative like the *Iliad*, but presents three sequences: the Telemachy (the adventures of Odysseus' son, Telemachus, who sets out in search of his father), the tales of Odysseus at the court of the Phaeacians, and above all his return to Ithaca and the reconquest of his kingdom in the guise of a beggar. Most of the occurrences are found in the first and especially the last part, and in fact Odysseus never applies the concept of *kerdos* to himself, except in one occurrence with Penelope, but it is always the narrator or the other characters.

It also highlights Odysseus' linguistic skills, which constitute a large part of his *kerdos*, and which are clearly stated in the first stage of his "resurrection" when, having arrived on the island of the Phaeacians, he approaches Princess Nausicaa: Odysseus, after his shipwreck, naked and dirty, must address the princess without frightening her αὐτίκα μειλίχιον καὶ κερδαλέον φάτο μῦθον. "Immediately he gave a honeyed speech full of *kerdos*[7]" (VI 148).

Above all, the creation of a bond is evident in the exchange between the hero and the goddess Athena in *Song* XIII, a goddess who regularly assists him in his adventures: Odysseus has just arrived in Ithaca, but doesn't yet know that he's back home, and the goddess comes to welcome him in the guise of a shepherd. Immediately the hero invents a complicated story to conceal his identity: αἰεὶ ἐνὶ στήθεσσι νόον πολυκερδέα νωμῶν- "always in his heart meditating a *polykerdos* project" (v. 255), and this amuses the goddess, who obviously knows who he is, and replies thus: κερδαλέος κ᾽ εἴη καὶ ἐπίκλοπος ὅς σε παρέλθοι / ἐν πάντεσσι δόλοισι, "he would be *kerdaleos* and thief, the one who would surpass you in wiles of all kinds" (v. 291-292). Most importantly, she recognizes just after the identity of their cunning nature, and this resemblance actually seals their alliance: ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε, μηκέτι ταῦτα λεγώμεθα, εἰδότες ἄμφω / κέρδε᾽, ἐπεὶ σὺ μέν ἐσσι βροτῶν ὄχ᾽ ἄριστος ἁπάντων / βουλῇ καὶ μύθοισιν, ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἐν πᾶσι θεοῖσι / μήτι τε κλέομαι καὶ κέρδεσιν- "but let us cease this talk (lies and deceit), since we both know *kerdos*, you the best of mortals for projects and speeches, and I of all deities reputed for my *kerdos*" (v. 296-299)[8]. Here we see the parallelism between the hero and the goddess, one being to the world of men what the other is to the world of gods.

While, as we have said, Odysseus' *kerdos* is largely that of words, it is not limited to this, and the hero also demonstrates his intelligence by avoiding provoking the dog of the shepherd Eumaeus, the first inhabitant of Ithaca with whom he makes contact: αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς / ἕζετο κερδοσύνη, σκῆπτρον δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε χειρός. / ἔνθά κεν ᾧι πὰρ σταθμῶι ἀεικέλιον πάθεν ἄλγος, "but he sat down and dropped his staff from his hand, with *kerdosynè*. Otherwise, there, near his pigsty, he would have suffered an undignified treatment" (XIV 30-32). The turn of phrase, with the noun *kerdosynè* in the dative case, is the same as when he avoids Hélène's questions, and seems to specialize in the same expression of what not to do, the strategy of avoidance.

[7]The Greek word is an adjective, κερδαλέος, which is attested only four times in Homer, with another application to Odysseus, when he weeps among the Phaeacians upon hearing the tale of the Trojan War. King Alcinoos then urges him not to "shut himself up in *kerdaleos* thoughts" τὼ νῦν μηδὲ σὺ κεύθε νοήμασι κερδαλέοισιν (VIII 548). The hero is incognito, and this employment is clearly reminiscent of the story told by Helen, with the same skill in avoiding discussion, and il also annonces the discussion he will later have with the goddess Athena. The compound means "with a lot of *kerdos*".

[8]This strong, almost intrinsic link between the goddess and the *kerdos* is already mentioned in the *Iliad*, when the goddess, in the guise of Hector's companion Deiphobos, urges the Trojan prince to march out to meet Achilles : ὣς φαμένη καὶ κερδοσύνῃ ἠγήσατ᾽ Ἀθήνη· " Having said this, she led him with *kerdosynè* " (XXII 247). Here again, *kerdosynè* (which could be translated as "the fact of having *kerdos*") is a matter of language.

Penelope and Telemachus

The *kerdos* also characterizes Odysseus' family, forming an almost blood link with him. It concerns his wife Penelope, as early as Song II of the *Odyssey*. Her son Telemachus complains to the inhabitants about the outrages he suffers at the hands of the suitors[9], but they answer by blaming his mother: σοὶ δ᾽ οὔ τι μνηστῆρες Ἀχαιῶν αἴτιοί εἰσιν, / ἀλλὰ φίλη μήτηρ, ἥ τοι πέρι κέρδεα οἶδεν. "it is not the Achaean suitors who are guilty, but your dear mother, who knows *kerdos* very well" (v. 87-88). The suitor then recounts the ruse of the veil, woven and unwoven, and concludes by expressing some admiration for this stratagem: ὅ οἱ πέρι δῶκεν Ἀθήνη / ἔργα τ᾽ ἐπίστασθαι περικαλλέα καὶ φρένας ἐσθλὰς / κέρδεά θ᾽, "what Athena gave him, namely very fine works, and remarkable thoughts, and *kerdos*" (v. 116-118). We see here the link with Athena, which actually reinforces the one with Odysseus, and the word *kerdos*, the last term of a rather vague enumeration, is a point made by the suitor to a woman who is certainly of great quality, but also, by his idea, "bitchy"[10].

And of course *kerdos* is also the prerogative of Telemachus, his father's son, or rather it should be, for his mother reproaches him for showing less of it at his almost adult age than when he was a child: Τηλέμαχ᾽, οὐκέτι τοι φρένες ἔμπεδοι οὐδὲ νόημα / παῖς ἔτ᾽ ἐὼν καὶ μᾶλλον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ κέρδε᾽ ἐνώμας- "Telemachus, you no longer have either reflection or wisdom; when you were a child, you meditated more *kerdos* in your heart" (XVIII 215-216). The use of the word carries an (unintentional?) irony, for she reproaches her son for having let the suitors mistreat Odysseus disguised as a beggar, and this "mistreatment" is precisely part of the *kerdos* prepared by father and son, as we see in the sequel where the son installs his father the false beggar in a strategic place, to prepare the massacre of the suitors: Τηλέμαχος δ᾽ Ὀδυσῆα καθίδρυε, κέρδεα νωμῶν, "Telemachus, pondering *kerdos*, made Odysseus sit down," (XX 217).

We have here not only an echo effect with Penelope's previous comment, but also with her father in his exchange with Athena (XIII 255, cf. *supra*), with the same verb *nômaô*, whose primary meaning is the idea of skillfully handling a tool, weapon or boat. And this theme of *kerdos* also marks Telemachus' evolution towards adulthood and manhood, as he makes it his own, advising his father to act quickly against the suitors, and not to waste time on the question of who in Ithaca has remained loyal to him or not, as the king would like to do: ἀλλ᾽ οὔ τοι τόδε κέρδος ἐγὼν ἔσσεσθαι ὀΐω / ἡμῖν ἀμφοτέροισι- "for I myself think there will be no *kerdos* for us both" (XVI 311-312), and the father finally

[9]The suitors are Greek noblemen who, during Odysseus's absence - 10 years for the Trojan war and 10 years for the voyage - try to seduce Penelope. They occupy the royal palace of Ithaca after the Trojan War, when Ulysses remains absent for no reason. They wanted to seduce Penelope, to marry her, but also to take possession of Odysseus' residence and throne. But she wanted to wait for Odysseus. So, she promised her suitors that she would marry the day she finished weaving her tapestry. However, to ensure that day never came, she wove a canvas during the day and undid her day's work at night.

[10]The relationship is also forged through weaving: this craft is regularly used as a metaphor for complex, secret intrigues, and Athena is also the goddess of weaving (see the Arachne "Spider" myth).

goes along with his advice. Contrary to his mother's opinion at the beginning of the *Odyssey*, the young man proves himself, like his father, an expert in *kerdos*.

Kerdos of the Song XXIII

The last song of the poem, after the massacre of the suitors, carried out without mercy or compassion, nevertheless raises questions about the status of the *kerdos*: we see this in the final reconciliation between the spouses, when Penelope, weeping, apologizes for her mistrust, explaining that too many evil men have claimed to have news of her husband: αἰεὶ γάρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν / ἐρρίγει μή τίς με βροτῶν ἀπάφοιτο ἔπεσσιν / ἐλθών· πολλοὶ γὰρ κακὰ κέρδεα βουλεύουσιν. “My heart still trembled in my chest that some man might come here to deceive me with his words. For many meditate on evil *kerdos*.” (XXIII 215-217). In addition to the application of the name, once again, to the tricks of language, this use is remarkable for the qualification of the noun by the adjective *kakos* “bad,” which is an exception[11] and clearly implies that, contrary to what we often see in the *Iliad*, *kerdos* is not negative in itself, which allows its association with Odysseus, with the concept of a positive and a negative *kerdos*.

Another occurrence, shortly before, is quite surprising. Odysseus and his friends seek to hide the news of the suitors' deaths for as long as possible, to delay the anger and vengeance of their families, and they decide to create the appearance of a celebration in the palace and go themselves to the orchards (where Odysseus will find his father) and the hero thus sets out his plan: ἔνθα δ’ ἔπειτα / φρασσόμεθ’ ὅττι κε κέρδος Ὀλύμπιος ἐγγυαλίξῃ. “Then we'll think about what kind of *kerdos* the Olympian will give us.” (XXIII 139-140). Remarkably, at the end of his adventures, the hero seems to renounce the *kerdos* that was so much his own, ultimately handing it over to the Olympian, *ie* the king of the gods. And indeed, it is the gods who conclude the poem with a final peace pact in the following song. We can assume that at this point, with lucidity, the hero recognizes that he cannot do everything and puts himself back in the hands of the gods. However, we also know that the authenticity of the latter songs is disputed, and this may be an attempt to “moralize” deceitful characters who are experts in trickery.

This shows the complex web of meanings and relationships that weave themselves, in Odysseus' family, between the father and his son, who is in his image, between his wife and Athena, between the hero and the goddess herself; this means we must always be careful when we encounter the word in the *Odyssey*, as it clearly has a constant association with Odysseus' world. This being the case, and to return to our original theme, does the *kerdos* family in the epic only ever signify a kind of cunning or skill, and is it never linked to wealth or money? We can cite two occurrences, which undoubtedly mark the beginning of

[11]No noun in the *kerdos* family is accompanied by a qualifying adjective outside of this occurrence.

the semantic evolution that will later give to the word *kerdos* the meaning primarily of material profit.

Money?

Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, attends one of the suitors' banquets, when a suitor mocks him, who is not said to be a sportsman, but: ἀρχὸς ναυτάων οἵ τε πρηκτῆρες ἔασιν, / φόρτου τε μνήμων καὶ ἐπίσκοπος ᾖσιν ὁδαίων / κερδέων θ᾽ ἁρπαλέων- οὐδ᾽ ἀθλητῆρι ἔοικας. “Rather a ship's commander, keeper of the cargo and overseer of traveling and desired *kerdos* (?)” (VIII 162-164). This is a difficult passage, the meaning of the adjective *harpaléos* in particular being open to discussion (“eagerly grasped”, “hence eagerly desired”, “attractive”?), and the use of *kerdos* here is surprising, but certainly not unrelated to the fact that Odysseus is being addressed, so much is the word associated with him.

However, the meaning is clearly that of financial profit, and it is also perhaps a literary echo of the other instance where we can assume a “financial” use of the word. Indeed, during the reunion between Odysseus and Penelope, the latter, still incognito under his beggar's disguise, can't help telling his wife more lies, and so he asserts that Odysseus is very much alive, and could have returned long ago, but: ἀλλ᾽ ἄρα οἱ τό γε κέρδιον εἴσατο θυμῷ, / χρήματ᾽ ἀγυρτάζειν πολλὴν ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἰόντι- / ὣς περὶ κέρδεα πολλὰ καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων / οἶδ᾽ Ὀδυσεύς, "but it seemed more advantageous (*kerdion*) to him to amass wealth by going around the world ; for Odysseus knows, more than mortal men, many *kerdos*" (XIX 283-286). Once again, the *kerdos* is here (in addition to the comparative form) because we're talking about Odysseus, but it's really the idea of material profit that begins, and this may explain the meaning that the word commonly takes on in subsequent Greek texts.

I have saved for last an occurrence that continues to trouble me. During his conversations with his swineherd Eumaeus, Odysseus invents a fictional story about himself, claiming that he was kidnapped and handed over to Phoenicians as a child by a servant of his noble father, who wanted to pay for her place on the ship to return home. The woman describes the child to the sailors as follows: παῖδα γὰρ ἀνδρὸς ἐῆος ἐνὶ μεγάροις ἀτιτάλλω, / κερδαλέον δὴ τοῖον, ἅμα τροχόωντα θύραζε·/ τόν κεν ἄγοιμ᾽ ἐπὶ νηός, ὁ δ᾽ ὑμῖν μυρίον ὦνον / ἄλφοι, “I am raising a child of my brave master at the manor: a *kerdaleos* little boy who runs after me when I go out. I can bring him to your ship; you will be paid a very high price for him.” (XV 450-453). Is the meaning of the adjective *kerdaleos* subjective (the child that Odysseus claims to have been is already full of *kerdos*) or objective (he will be a source of material profit), or does the cunning hero want to combine both possible meanings?

Conclusion

This study will, I hope, have shown the particularity of the *kerdos*' family, its close link with Odysseus and the stylistic use made of it, particularly in the *Odyssey*. But it will also have shown that the financial aspect also exists, even if it seems to come later. Throughout the history of Greek literature, and especially in classical literature, material wealth has an extremely negative aspect (mortal and corrupting), and this negative aspect appears punctually in the Homeric epic, in uses that do not apply to Odysseus, and even for Odysseus, as the latter is not always a positive character. It remains to be seen what lyrical and classical poetry will make of this.

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