

Zbigniew Szczurowski

A pragmatic analysis of Achilles' first speech in Homer's "Iliad"

Scripta Classica 6, 15-33

2009

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Zbigniew Szczurowski
University of Silesia, Katowice

A Pragmatic Analysis of Achilles' First Speech in Homer's *Iliad*¹

Abstract: The article constitutes a pragmatic analysis of Achilles' first speech in Homer's *Iliad*. Basing on a detailed reading of the text, both on a lexical and grammatical level, the author makes an attempt to establish psychological motivations of its hero. The linear method of analysis used allows for a coherent investigation of the statement whereas the references to earlier and later Achilles' speeches and other characters of the epic may shed a new light on the interpretation of the conflict of the bravest warrior with the commander of the excursion, focusing the whole action of *Iliad*.

According to the main assumption of the article, the verb οἶω, appearing already in the first verse of Achilles' speech, allows for an insight into a dynamic structure of the hero's psyche. Further on, the central theme of the article is the implementation of a linguistic analysis to a psychological study of the development of Homer's heroes. The article also tries to use the observations made by Homer's experts, such as Irene de Jong and John Redfield.

Key words: Homer, Achilles, speech, a pragmatic analysis, discourse, οἶω

Introduction

The aim of this article is to look at Achilles' first speech in the *Iliad* and, through the use of linguistic methods basing on minute analysis of the text, to recreate the range of possible complex mental strategies and emotional struc-

¹ The article is a part of chapter 3 of master's thesis written under tutelage of prof. B.D. MacQueen: "Speakers of words and doers of deeds: a pragmatic analysis of first eight speeches in Homer's *Iliad*." Some additions have been made due to the change of form.

tures of the character. All that, having in mind the major problems of pragmatics of ancient texts, most importantly, the degradation of the meaning in time due to the processes of entropy, which make the text unintelligible at all levels².

The material has been chosen for several reasons. *Oratio recta*, a speech by character may seem a more than sufficient mean to make the heroes of any epic work take on various personal traits. It is so for any language art. Therefore it is worthwhile pondering the text in search of the answer to the key question, to wit: Does Homer individualise his characters, and if so, how does he do it, with regard to the well-known problem of the formulaic nature of his poetry?

The second reason for choosing a sample from the very beginning of the Homeric text is the sheer excitement of yet another question: How much is there in Homer before the moment which, in general opinion, starts the story — the taking of Bryseis?

James Redfield in his analysis of the *Iliad's* proem says: “The *Iliad* is, or at least is like, oral poetry, poetry created in performance by rapid and relatively unreflective means. As we come to understand such poetry better, we begin to invent philologies to appropriate to it. Philology then reveals that the oral poet is also a creator. He handles his material freely, and therefore meaningfully”³. The basic idea is, therefore, to read the chosen speech carefully, with the true quality of φιλόλογος — ‘the one who loves words’ and look for meanings on all the possible levels of speech. The use of verb forms, aspect, the complex or simple participle structures, the semantic component of words, their deictic function, the repetitions of certain stems, the use of personal, relative and demonstrative pronouns, word order and emphatic positioning of certain structures — all these will be taken into account as potentially meaningful and responsible the complex image of the inner life of the character and the representation of his will.

In the article, after presenting the text of the speech and roughly its context I will go on to analyse the formulaic words, possibly devoid of meaning, go on to linear analysis, which will have to be broken at some point by a digression, the importance of which makes it impossible to avoid it, and finally finish the linear analysis by commenting on some less common aspects of Homeric style.

² Ł. Tofilski: *In Search of Lost Meanings. Towards a Methodology of the Pragmatics of Ancient Texts. An Essay Presented on an International Conference “Etos i egzegeza” Katowice 2005.* [Awaiting publication].

³ J. Redfield: “The Proem of the *Iliad*: Homer’s Art”. In: *Oxford Readings in Homer’s Iliad.* Ed. D.L. Cairns. Oxford 2001, pp. 456—457.

The Speech

It is only in the fourth use of *oratio recta* that the best of the Achaeans can be heard. He opens the assembly which he summoned on the tenth day of the plague sent by Apollo:

έννημαρ μὲν ἀνὰ στρατὸν ὄχετο κῆλα θεοῖο, 53
τῇ δεκάτῃ δ' ἀγορῆν δὲ καλέσσατο λαὸν Ἀχιλλεύς⁴: 54

It happens after the first speech — Chryses' call for his daughter to be set free (17—21), Agamemnon's answer sending him away harshly (26—32) and Chryses' prayer to Apollo, asking the god for revenge (37—42). Achilles speaks for nine lines (59—67) and his speech looks as follows:

Ἀτρεΐδῃ νῦν ἄμμε παλιμπλαγχθέντας οἴω
ἄψ ἀπονοστήσειν, εἴ κεν θάνατόν γε φύγοιμεν, 60
εἰ δὴ ὁμοῦ πόλεμός τε δαμᾶ καὶ λοιμὸς Ἀχαιοῦς:
ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ τινα μάντιν ἐρείομεν ἢ ἱερῆα
ἢ καὶ ὄνειροπόλον, καὶ γάρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διὸς ἐστὶ
ὅς κ' εἴποι ὅ τι τόσσον ἐχώσατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
εἴτ' ἄρ' ὁ γ' εὐχολῆς ἐπιμέμφεται εἶθ' ἑκατόμβης, 65
αἶ κέν πως ἀρνῶν κνίσσης αἰγῶν τε τελείων
βούλεται ἀντιάσας ἡμῖν ἀπὸ λοιγὸν ἀμῦναι⁵.

Analysis of the Formulaic Structures

As time washes away the meanings, it may be wise, before having a linear analysis of the speech itself, to first concentrate on the fact, that there are three words in the presented passage, of which the use seems to be of small information to the reader/listener, as they may be parts of the formulaic expressions repeatedly appearing in the epos. These are: the verb ὄιω, the Apollonic adjective Φοῖβος, and the genitive plural of yet another adjective: τελείων. It is important to point out, that the chosen speech seems to be an example of situation where careful analysis of these potentially meaningless forms may cast the whole speech, and possibly even a larger structure, in a perspective slightly different than expected.

⁴ Homer: *Iliad*. Vol. 1. Text with an English translation by A.T. Murray. London 2001, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

Φοῖβος

The adjective Φοῖβος, to begin with, is a typical of Apollo, to such an extent that it is treated as a name and not translated, but just transferred to other languages⁶. However in this line it may have at least remains of its original meaning. It is derived from the word φοβος which in terms comes from φάος (φάφος) — ‘light of day, figuratively eyes’⁷. The Foebus is then the god of light and, possibly as well, to a much lesser extent, of the eyes. In the previous utterances of the characters the god has already been presented from two extreme perspectives: on one hand the point of view of his priest Chryses, for whom Apollo was the free shooter (ἐκηβόλος — 21), the holder of the golden bow (ἀργυρότοξ’ — 37), the powerful ruler (Χρῦσην ἀμφιβέβηκας Κίλλάν τε ζαθέην Τενέδοιό τε ἴφι ἀνάσσεις), on the other in the slighting remark of Agamemnon, who not only calls Apollo a mere god, but does not even bother to call him openly, in *casus rectus* or the vocative, he rather prefers to use genitive (θεοῖο — 28) vaguely describing the staff and fillets of the priest. In the speech by Achilles the reader is presented with a balanced, neutral version with a use of the common phrase. The same name is given to Apollo by unbiased narrator in a line preceding the current speech⁸.

If Φοῖβος is to be treated as a name it holds its meaningful position as a stage between the threatening image created by Chryses, and almost non existent uttered by Agamemnon. It is rendered like that also on the metric level — the line is not a twelve-syllable spondaic menace (21), but neither is it a slighting generalisation given in three syllables — it is an Adonius, short colon, still much more than just foot and a half, a normal amount of respect given to the god by men.

The second interpretation of this specific use is that Achilles does not want to anger the god more than he already is, therefore he calls him the god of light, which even if not regarded as reverencing, has at least to be seen as neutral. In such a sense calling Apollo Foebus and not representing him in a disrespectful way is an *apotropaic* measure, though at least in some sense taken *post factum*. The god has already been angered. These two interpretations of the use of Φοῖβος are not an “all or nothing” opposition. They present a spectrum and the actual meaning resides somewhere within.

⁶ Both the English translation by W.T. Murray and the Polish by K. Jeżewska give the Φοῖβος in line 64 a given name respectively: Foebus, Fojbos. It is in compliance with the tradition. Homer: *Iliad...*, p. 17. Homer: *Iliada*. Trans. K. Jeżewska. Warszawa 1999, p. 26.

⁷ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary*. Trans. R. Keep. London 1999, p. 323.

⁸ τοῦ δ’ ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων, p. 43.

ΤΕΛΕΪΩΝ

The remarks on the genitive plural τελείων have to follow, as the pragmatic context of the two adjective forms may be quite similar. Indeed due to this fact less emphasis will be put on it. The noun τέλος that the adjective form in question is derived from, means ‘end’, ‘sum’, ‘completion’, and when used about victims for offering — ‘perfect’, ‘unblemished’⁹. Either it was a custom that the goats and lambs had to be perfect, so that the ‘steam of their burning fat’, κνίση, pleased the gods, then the adjective is relatively free of meaning, or in the given moment Achaeans are to put special effort into the hecatomb. The importance of the phrase may be strengthened by its position in the verse: last word in the line is noticeable, and so it might underscore a certain quality of the offering to the god — the fact that these are not just any animals, but ones that are perfect in their kind.

A problem, which is not really important in the Greek original, comes up in translations, where sometimes only the goats are perfect and sometimes both victim species. There is only stylistic argument for any of these, as their syntactic structure and the use of particle τε does not rule out any of the interpretations, though equal treatment of both could be assumed¹⁰.

ΟΪΩ

Finally, there is the verb. In his *Homeric Dictionary* Georg Autenrieth defines: οἶω — “*suspicor*, to suppose, *opinor*, think, intend, mean”¹¹. The general usage, possibly due to its meaning and the narrative structure of the *Iliad*, is almost restricted to *oratio recta*. The phrases with οἶω outside the speeches by heroes are predominantly participial¹².

There is a general rule, that the verb in first person of the present active indicative is used in a rather emphatic position, in the last two syllables of the verse. This is possibly due to a metric fact that most often the *iota* is long, while *omikron* short. Moreover, as *verbum cogitandi* οἶω very often requires A.C.I. All these things are initially relevant, because they render the current use, as relatively typical.

There is also a syntactic emphasis of the verb. The whole speech of Achilles consists of two sentences. First one in lines 59—61 presents the situation at hand, in the camp, and the second 62—67, devises roughly the possible way out or, at

⁹ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary...*, pp. 298—299.

¹⁰ So: C. Pharr: *Homeric Greek, a book for beginners*. Oklahoma 1955, p. 57.

¹¹ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary...*, pp. 228—229

¹² Examples are given by G. Autenrieth — *ibidem*. These are: *Iliad*, Book XV, p. 728, *Odyssey*, Book XXII, p. 210.

least, the methods of learning the reason of sorrows brought upon the Achaeans. The verb in question is one of the two predicates of the main clauses. It makes it syntactically one of two most marked words in the speech.

For the purposes of this article intending mainly to cast some light on the initial questions it shall be enough to look at several key passages of the *Iliad*, as, in spite of this restriction, the work may still yield sufficient results. Let alone in Book I the verb is found nine times, of which all are in *oratio recta*. Twice it is not first person singular of the *indicativus activi* (78, 561 middle). One of the seven left is not used in the final position of the verb (558). However, of the six uses of the form in the final position, four are in Achilles' speeches. In Book I, in lines where it is not uttered by Achilles, the verb is regularly preceded by the infinitive *πείσεσθαι* — 'obedire', 'obey', first it is used by Agamemnon (289), then in reply to him Achilles himself copies it mockingly (296). For the third time it is Thetis who uses it, to assure her son, that Zeus will grant her wish (427).

The question arises, whether it is important that Achilles uses *ὄϊω* in the final position of the verb more often than the other characters¹³ and if so, what are the implications of it. The use of *ὄϊω*, not only in Achilles' words, but throughout the works of Homer requires a far more detailed study than any that could be presented here. Nevertheless, as it happens, this speech rouses an argument, which will finally provoke the *μῆνις* of Achilles. It is this sacred anger, that provides a good reason to examine the problem in some detail. The importance of this structure lies not in itself, but in the fact that it helps to picture one of the strategies with which Homer creates his heroes and the story.

The soft version of the hypothesis is this: *ὄϊω* is an important element of the creation of Achilles' way of speaking and it is as meaningful, if not more, also in the opening line of his first speech at the assembly. Apart from the line 59, Achilles uses it in verse closure three more times in Book I, and never differently. The analysis of these lines has to be done, rendering their most evident traits with regard to the verb looked at, before an attempt of understanding the current verse/speech can be made.

Book I, Line 170: οὐδέ σ' ὄϊω 170 / ἐνθάδ' ἄτιμος ἐὼν ἄφενος καὶ πλοῦτον ἀφύξειν.

'and I don't think, being without honor here, to pile up possessions and riches for you'¹⁴.

It is a sentence directed to Agamemnon. The indirect object *σοί* through elision becomes just one sibilant consonant — only a little more than a simple breath,

¹³ He uses it also in Book IX — in the scene of the embassy, in answers to Odysseus and to Ajax, as it is shown later in the article.

¹⁴ All the translations, unless stated otherwise, have been done by the author. These philological translations make it easier to illustrate processes in the text, which are often presented differently by translators for stylistic purposes.

showing how little reverence for the king is left in the open speech of the most important warrior.

The conjunction ἄφενος καὶ πλοῦτον could be treated as *hendiadys* used in order to amplify the image of exploit. At this stage Achilles refuses to stay and gives two reasons for that: lack of respect as the direct and problem with the prizes as the indirect one. It is his second speech directed towards Agamemnon, and both anger and irony are presented partly through a clever usage of οἶω, which not only joins two lines being thus marked syntactically, but also makes Agamemnon almost disappear between the thinking process of Achilles and the negation (οὐδέ σ' οἶω).

Book I, Line 204: τὸ δὲ καὶ τελέεσθαι οἶω: / ἧς ὑπεροπλήρησι τάχ' ἄν ποτε θυμὸν ὀλέσση 205.

‘for this I think shall come to pass: because of his arrogant acts soon might he loose his life’.

This time the message, though about Agamemnon, is directed to Athena. The anger and strife are yet again clearly visible. This line is not even ironic, but rather openly sarcastic, much stronger, less sophisticated.

In the opening of line 205 Achilles calls the behaviour of Agamemnon ἧς ὑπεροπλήρησι using the dative of cause. This noun is heavily burdened with information value, as it is a *hapaks legomenon*. The slightly problematic etymology is provided again by Autenrieth:¹⁵ either from πέλω — ‘be busy about’, ‘be in motion’, or from a noun ὄπλον — general meaning of ‘utensil’, ‘implement’¹⁶. It is the preposition ὑπέρ — ‘over’, ‘beyond’, that makes the word so meaningful. It is ‘over usage’, ‘over business’, too much of action and self-confidence on the side of Agamemnon that is so nerve-wracking for Achilles.

There are, of course, other important elements here: the futuristic use of the subjunctive¹⁷, the ellipsis of the subject of ὀλέσση, which in the whole speech does not appear in *casus rectus* (only in the genitive used with *hybris*¹⁸).

It is also the adverbial structure with elision in τάχ' and its relation with the following particle, that create the image of lack of time on the side of Agamemnon and pressurizes him even more. Yet the subjective, modalized οἶω may be making the abrupt phrase all the more striking.

Book I, Line 296: οὐ γὰρ ἔγωγ' ἔτι σοὶ πείσεσθαι οἶω.

‘I don't think I will listen to you any longer’.

Again directed to Agamemnon, this time with an adverb ὑποβλήδην — ‘interrupting’. These are one of the last words uttered on the assembly. In this very

¹⁵ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary...*, p. 313.

¹⁶ In context divided into *cordage*, on a ship, *weapons* in the battle or *tools* for construction. *Ibidem*, p. 234.

¹⁷ C. Pharr: *Homeric Greek...*, p. 303.

¹⁸ The same strategy was introduced by Agamemnon in line 28, to dishonour Apollo.

speech several line later Achilles threatens to kill Agamemnon should the latter wish to take away more than the girl (I, 300—304).

The sheer aggression of the phrase is built up partly on the use of the verb, as it is a direct repetition of Agamemnon's words from his previous locution about Achilles, describing him as of foul language, always willing to have fights: (I, 289): ἄ τιν' οὐ πείσεσθαι οἶω. — 'to which someone may not obey, I think'. In his comments to the line Pharr notes: "τιν' perhaps, refers to Agamemnon. If so, it is superlatively ironical and sarcastic. If it merely means 'many a one' as often, it still has a considerable amount of the ironical element"¹⁹. Repeating this very structure in the answer is even more marked, however modalized in the same direction, it is a statement of contemptuous disregard.

These remarks seem sufficient to observe the function of οἶω placed at the end of the verse. However, what might be even more telling, Achilles uses the verb also in Book IX, which recounts the embassy. In that book οἶω is used only these two times, both of which take in the final position of the verse. I will, therefore, proceed to analyze it briefly:

Book IX, Line 315:²⁰ οὐτ' ἐμέ γ' Ἀτρείδην Ἀγαμέμνονα πεισέμεν οἶω 315 / οὐτ' ἄλλους Δαναούς,

'Not me, I suppose, Atreus Agamemnon will persuade, nor will the other Danaans'.

It is pronounced in answer to Odysseus, who offers Achilles, in a verbatim repetition of his words, the goods of Agamemnon. The situation is no longer of an open argument, however the animosity towards the king prevails and is present in the words of Achilles.

The parallelic structures opening both verses with negative particles and two accusatives, being the two subjects of A.C.I. dependant from *verbum regens* οἶω which is under scrutiny here, may also be a representation of the anger.

It is the first statement of the refusal in Book IX, and the first formulation of it. Before making that point Achilles only explained, that he would try to express himself in the best possible way, not trying to keep something away from the emissaries (IX, 308—314).

Book IX, Line 655: ἀμφὶ δέ τοι τῆ ἐμῆ κλισίῃ καὶ νηὶ μελαίνῃ / Ἔκτορα καὶ μεμαῶτα μάχης σχήσεσθαι οἶω.

'But around my hut and near the black ship, I think Hector will be stayed, though he be eager for battle'.

¹⁹ Ibidem, pp. 127—128.

²⁰ The verb form in this line has a different metric structure, with first two vowels contracting into a diphthong. However, both Autenrieth and Pharr present such version, as possible. This variation may be partly due to a difference of the whole structure. Here οἶω is preceded by a form of future active infinitive of πείθω: πεισέμεν.

The previous passage pictured the first refusal, the current phrase on the other hand presents Achilles' last word, the final 'no'. In it the verb $\acute{\omicron}\omega$ is the last word too. The threat of Hector, presented by the legates, is very ironically disregarded: 'I think, I will manage, thank you gentlemen'.

What Achilles underscores, through the use of personal adjective $\acute{\epsilon}\mu\tilde{\eta}$ (about hut, but possibly the ship as well, syntactically there is no argument against that), and also through the use of the verb $\acute{\omicron}\omega$, is that at this stage of the affairs both Hector and Troy and the whole war are a problem of the rest of the Achaeans, mainly of Agamemnon, who wants him back so much, but not to him anymore. The fact that this kind of modalisation happens in a very emphatic position could have been expected by now — it seems that it is in the speeches by Achilles that it has most common and most striking use.

One more comment of Pharr could be added to line 296 of Book I: " $\acute{\omicron}\omega$ is ironical, as usual"²¹. His assurance of the fact may also prove, that there is such usage of the word in the *Iliad*. There is, however, an impression that in line 59 the situation is slightly different²². At that point no argument between the two main Achaeans is yet visible. In his analysis of the Book I of the *Iliad* Kumaniecki notes, that on the tenth day of the plague Achilles asks Calchas for the reasons of the plague. Kumaniecki then says that Agamemnon gets angry, but soon decides to give the Chryseis back to her father. It is only later after Agamemnon asks for some other $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\rho\alpha\varsigma$, that the quarrel between the two gradually grows into an open strife²³.

From the above analyses we learn, that each time Achilles uses $\acute{\omicron}\omega$, it creates an ironic or even sarcastic impression, and it is consistently used, in some way or another, against Agamemnon.

The Linear Analysis of the Speech Part I

The opening word of line 59 is a vocative $\text{\AA}\tau\rho\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\eta$. What is more, his name and the verb take the extreme positions in the verse. Two more structures are found here: there is the deixis of time: $\nu\tilde{\upsilon}\nu$, and the A.C.I. accusative, which consists of the first person plural personal pronoun $\acute{\alpha}\mu\mu\epsilon$ and *participium coniunctum* $\mu\pi\lambda\alpha\chi\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\alpha\varsigma$, which in terms of flexion is the participle of aorist passive, and means: 'having been driven back in disgrace'. It has to be pointed out that the

²¹ C. Pharr: *Homeric Greek...*, p. 129.

²² Both the Polish translation by K. Jeżewska and English by A.T. Murray do not leave any doubts as to the sincerity of Achilles' speech.

²³ K. Kumaniecki, J. Mańkowski: *Homer*. Warszawa 1974, pp. 79—80.

formation of this word includes a prefix πάλιν — ‘back’, ‘back again’ and the verb πλάζω — ‘drive away’²⁴.

The second line finishes the A.C.I., but starts with ἄψ — the alternative form of the preposition ἀπό ‘back’. It immediately reverberates in the prefix of ἀπονοστήσειν — ‘return (back) home’. It is yet another verb with a prefix meaning ‘back’, which already has that meaning in itself, without any additions. It is, then, clear that, before the sentence is completed, the direction of the possible retreat of the Achaeans is stated five times: twice in the prefixes, twice in the verb stems and once in a preposition in the opening syllable of line two.

There is one more meaningful opposition in the first two lines of the speech. It is very often in Homeric verse, that compound verbs undergo *tmesis*. It so happens also in the last line of current speech, where ἀπό indeed is separated by λιογὸν from ἀμῦναι. Here, however, there is nothing to separate the verbs from their prepositions. Two semantic elements in the first line and three, filling the whole first hemistich, in the second, all convey one thought.

Such a beginning seems to be fully open to claims of irony or even sarcasm. The information about the direction is given so many times, so monotonously, and in an annoyingly non open, but utterly obvious way, that it is evidently redundant.

The strategy of Achilles may be yet again more delicate and complex. It is so, because the beginning of his speech may also illustrate the situation in the camp. The plague is raging, the bodies are being burned; αἰεὶ δὲ πυραὶ νεκύων καίοντο θαμειαί — “and forever the pyres of dead bodies were burned” (I, 52), one can hear it whispered everywhere: “Back, back, back”. The situation is very tense, especially because such whispers are not what is supposed to be heard on the attackers’ side. Achilles, as the mightiest of warriors, may be creating some sort of an ironic distance between the panic in the camp and himself, and doing it partly with a precise use of ὀίω.

On the other hand it is the son of Atreus who is responsible for the whole attack and who may be starting to feel the burden of that responsibility weigh heavily upon his chest. Therefore such a declaration on the side of Achilles, his mightiest warrior as claimed, is brought forward definitely contrary to the will of the king of the people.

Now we proceed to look at two important clauses. First: εἴ κεν θάνατόν γε φύγοιμεν — “if we should escape death”, and the second: εἰ δὴ ὁμοῦ πόλεμος τε δαμᾶ καὶ λοιμὸς Ἀχαιοῦς — “if indeed (seeing that) the war and plague are to subdue the Achaeans”. Pharr²⁵ notices the difference in forms, from aorist optative φύγοιμεν to future indicative: δαμᾶ (*δαμασει) and concludes that Achilles implies that it is more probable that they will die than escape.

²⁴ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary...*, p. 245.

²⁵ C. Pharr: *Homeric Greek...*, p. 64.

The first conditional may be *modus potentialis*, of an unclear connection with the condition. In Homeric Greek it may also be *irrealis*²⁶. The second case is thus described by Autenrieth: “in conditional clause εἰ δὴ, if *now*, if *really*, if *at all events*, expressing a supposition which cannot be contradicted”²⁷. However the assertion of the main sentence is weakened by the fact, that it is formulated as A.C.I. with a problematic reporting verb.

Though the interpretations of Pharr and the outline given by Kumaniecki seem perfectly plausible, it is, nevertheless, possible to read the passage differently. First of all Achilles uses Ἀχαιοὺς in the final position of line 3. This sentence, being a strong assertion, can still be uttered ironically. Irony, the communicative strategy based on the difference between the actual locution and the real opinion of the speaker, between his or her internal world and the words he/she chooses to use²⁸, is often pertaining to strong assertions. There are, as it has been shown so far, language grounds to look for irony here. It would then mean, that Achilles continues to withdraw from the general opinion, only stating it. It may be significant, that he uses Achaeans as the object of δαμάσσω, this way separating himself from the rest. *Maybe we will then escape death, as it's sure now that the war and plague will destroy Achaeans*. It gives a notion of an account of the things whispered around the camp. The question remains, to what extent he agrees with them, and to what extent we are able to trace it.

The most obvious assumption is that Achilles is a speaker of the crowd's will. He uses the plural accusative of ἐγώ — ‘us’, he suggests coming back home, and gives two very good reasons for that, the war and the pestilence.

After three lines of a sentence presenting negative aspects of the situation, however, there comes a breakthrough. The second sentence (62—67) starts with a very energetic exclamation: ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ — ‘quick! Come!’ The next phrase is τίνα μάντιν — ‘some prophet, seer, expounder of omens which were drawn from flights of birds, from dreams, and from sacrifices’²⁹. It is used in the accusative as an object of the verb which it is followed by, namely a hortative use of the subjunctive first person plural: ἐπέομεν — ‘let us ask’. There are two more accusative forms which are objects in this sentence and to them the word τίνα — ‘some’ may apply as well — thus making the sentence even less concrete.

The final position of the verse is taken by another profession connected with the supernatural, ‘a priest’ — ἱερεῖα. This word has already been used in the poem. In line 23 all the other Achaeans (as far as we know all except Agamemnon) agree to reverence Chryses, the priest of Apollo. The accusative ἱερεῖα is the word presented in the indirect speech reporting how they reacted to his plea. There, it was

²⁶ M. Golias, M. Auerbach: *Gramatyka grecka*. Warszawa 1962, p. 209.

²⁷ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary...*, p. 83.

²⁸ M. Pytasz, R. Cudak: *Szkolny słownik wiedzy o literaturze*. Katowice 2000, pp. 154—156.

²⁹ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary...*, p. 200.

the final word before *caesura*. Here it is the final word before the verse closure. The hypothesis worth presenting at this point is, as it has been in line one of this speech as well, that in the words of Achilles the quiet talks from the Achean camp can be heard. It is another one of them, as he must have heard soldiers say it, possibly even a lot. It is also imaginable that the Achaeans remember the way that Agamemnon, against their will, turned the priest away, and that Achilles could now be making the best of it.

The fifth line continues to present the traces of possible explanations of the plague, through the professions which deal with certain aspects of divine causation. Again it is an accusative depending from ἐπέιομεν — ‘let us ask’; ὄνειροπόλον — ‘some dream interpreter’. This completes the list of possible functions of people, whose knowledge may be useful in helping the Achaeans appease whoever it is who is raging against them. There are three groups of people to choose from, indeed a kingly variety.

The first possibility is some μάντις, which is a general word for any sort of divine power ‘interpreter and helper’. Then comes the word of alternative ἢ — ‘or’, and in the opening two syllables of line 5 it is strengthened to ‘or even’ — ἢ καί. The range presented varies from ‘any’, as shown by the indefinite pronoun τινα (τίς), ‘kind of seer’, ‘priest’ or even ‘dream interpreter’. Achilles adds a specific argument for the latter, as it possibly is the least worth mentioning in this context, and thus requires supports. ‘Because even the dream comes from Zeus’ — καὶ γάρ τ’ ὄναρ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν.

The enumeration is not clear altogether, as it could be argued, that the level of seer, and priest is somewhat different to the one of the dream-interpreter, he being a specific professional, while the other two still requiring to be specified: what kind of seer, a priest to whom, etc.

Achronological Intrusion

For the reasons of integrity of the article, and in order not to repeat large parts of the material afterwards, it is necessary at this point to, leaving all the things said, stray away from the strict linear and chronological order of the analysis to look at phrases not coming from the speech of Achilles and, because there are many of them, to discuss them in less detail. The things considered seem important in rendering the speech of Achilles in full context, this way adding meanings and shades to the interpretation of his speech.

Firstly, Calchas starts his answer to the current speech of Achilles (lines 74—83) by using A.C.I.: ὦ Ἀχιλεῦ κέλευαί με μθῆσασθαι — ‘O Achilles, you command me to speak’. The verb κέλομαι requires A.C.I. which in terms requires

a subject³⁰. However it did not have to be used. Indeed, between the two speeches there is a description of Calchas and his powers, which pictures him as the best of the prophets who tell the future on the basis of bird's flights — he is supposed to know everything. However, Achilles does not ask him directly! Why not? Why build the long enumeration, list of the whole groups of people, who could help, if there is a ready answer at hand?

There is an interpretational option, slowly building up through the article, that Achilles, since the beginning of his first speech, has consciously been attacking Agamemnon. The long phrase given as possible list of alternatives would not then, really present any alternatives. *Everybody knows*, that it is Calchas, a person with the closest connections with Apollo among the Achaeans, who has to talk. The additional fact supporting that thesis, namely that when Achilles finishes and sits down, Calchas stands up:

ἦτοι ὃ γ' ὡς εἰπὼν κατ' ἄρ' ἔξετο: τοῖσι δ' ἀνέστη 68
Κάλχας Θεστορίδης οἰωνοπόλων ὄχ' ἄριστος 69

can be interpreted in terms of rigid Homeric style, but it can also be explained in terms of his mastery in describing human reactions. “We all know who you speak against Achilles” — may be the outline. Calchas goes on to say, that he knows, the things he is about to declare may anger:

[...] ἄνδρα χολωσέμεν, ὃς μέγα πάντων 78
Ἀργείων κρατέει καὶ οἱ πείθονται Ἀχαιοί: 79

[...] a man who mightily rules over all the Argives, and who the Achaeans obey.

He does not give the name. It is understood, partly because in the first collective of the Greeks, he uses a noun, which, though commonly used to signify the Greek warriors at Troy, originally meant inhabitants of Ἄργος — the city of Atreus and his sons. Then he adds one more word: βασιλεύς — ‘king’, and makes the whole thing known, as there probably was not a single soldier in the camp unable to connect the images. However it is Achilles who overtly gives the name. The moment when he does comes finally in line 90: οὐδ' ἦν Ἀγαμέμνονα εἴπησ. The phrase will be looked at soon enough indeed.

It is worth remembering that a very important question has not been answered yet: Why should Achilles be ironic? What is the motive of his using the ironic verb οἶω and the far too strong, possibly even sarcastic statements? Why present two lines of different divine professions, if in the end it is the bird flights interpreter

³⁰ M. Golias, M. Auerbach: *Gramatyka grecka...*, p. 196.

to answer? The situation in the camp is grim. It is no time to be joking around, no time for being sarcastic. According to the full blown version of my hypothesis the deeper reason of Achilles' actions is made public in this passage:

οὐδ' ἦν Ἀγαμέμνονα εἴπηρ, 90
ὅς νῦν πολλὸν ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν εὔχεται εἶναι

Even if you name Agamemnon, who has been lately boasting that he is the best of the Achaeans.

The real reason, therefore, may most probably be ambition. It is Achilles who calls himself ἄριστος Ἀχαιῶν (I, 244). He does not want to be contradicted in this filed. It is a matter of life and death for him. Or, in fact, a matter of death and death.

It is only after this statement, that Calchas presents his explanation. Achilles needs authority to attack Agamemnon and it is the authority of the god that through the words of Calchas is granted. The key point being made here is that the animosity between Agamemnon and Achilles does not start with the problem of γέρας and Bryseis. Achilles, while attacking Agamemnon (in lines 91, 122, 160, 167, 226—229), gives his own description of Agamemnon's behaviour and character observed before the quarrel: the king is boastful (91), greedy (122), he does not appreciate the help of others (160), he gets the best gifts (167) and he is cowardly (226—229). Moreover, the answers of Agamemnon come in lines 177, 287—288, 291, that is much later in the text, and consist mainly of observations which in the context given may be regarded as reasonable: that Achilles always wants to quarrel, and fight (177), that he wants to govern everybody (287—288), and also, also very true here, that he uses a disrespectful, foul language (291). Is it then Achilles who is looking for a quarrel with Agamemnon and not the other way round?

Such observation would render two important facts on the level of the whole epos in a slightly different light. Firstly 'the wrath' — μῆνις the opening idea, and the main subject of the epos. It has to be so strong, and for that reason it should have solid psychological grounds. And so it does. The undoubtedly slighting behaviour of Agamemnon is twice more painful for Achilles, as coming from someone so disregarded. Secondly, the fact, that Agamemnon, who really until the moment of strife did not have much against Achilles, is first to stop the rage also seems credible. There are of course more aspects of it, and more details to be given. This is just an outline.

Now there are three important points about this interpretation that have to be added here to render it credible within the world of Homer's epos: the relevance of the proem and the beginning, the mirror story, and the use of ὀίω, which will round this part up, before we come back, to finish reading the first speech by Achilles.

Proem and the Beginning

James Redfield³¹ describes the poetry of Homer minutely analysing the proem of the *Iliad*. Apart from other important contributions, he describes the difference between the μῆνις, the godlike wrath of Achilles, similar to the wrath of gods themselves about which the same noun is used, the χόλος name it is given often by Achilles, and others, as if the other one was too sacred to be mentioned, and the ἔρις, which is a petty, down to earth anger³². Redfield claims that, while μῆνις in the first line is the statement of the general idea of the poem, the ἐρίσαντε aorist active participle in line 7 is a turn toward the story.

While considering the very beginning of the epos it is important to note, that at the beginning the arrangement of scenes (8—12) in the *Iliad* is set backwards, with Chryses coming to the camp of the Achaeans as the pivotal scene³³. The same rule may be applied to “the anger words”. It is, of course μῆνις (1) that appears first, then two times it is ἔρις (in participle 6 and noun 8 forms), while chronologically it should have been the down to earth anger, that preceded the divine wrath.

In the context of this interpretational hypothesis it is necessary, however, to concentrate on line 8: τίς τ’ ἄρ σφωε θεῶν ἔριδι ξυνέηκε μάχεσθαι; — ‘who of the gods brought these two to fight in strife?’ With regard to what has been proposed, it should be assumed that a simple understanding of the line, that it was one of the gods (Apollo) who made the two warriors angry with each other, is to be set aside for a moment, as there is yet another possibility. The dative ἔριδι — ‘in strife’ does not have to be taken with the infinitive μάχεσθαι. If it is connected with a word closer to it in the verse: σφωε, the accusative dual of third person pronoun, we get the two in strife before any divine causation. Of course the action of the god is inevitable and will happen, however the god is only responsible for transforming the ἔρις into the μῆνις by making them fight for the girl. Had it not been for Apollo and his priest, Achilles would not like Agamemnon, but nothing would probably have happened. Line 8 of Book I, the very beginning of *Iliad*, may thus agree with the ironic, negative use of οἶω in verse 59.

³¹ J. Redfield: “The Proem of the *Iliad*...”, p. 456—477.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 459—460.

³³ I. De Jong: “*Iliad* 366—39: A Mirror Story”. In: *Oxford Readings in Homer’s Iliad*. Ed. D.L. Cairns. Oxford 2001, p. 489.

Mirror Story

The second problem is connected with an article of Irene de Jong³⁴ where she points out certain qualities of the Achilles' account of what happened in the assembly and shortly before it, when he retells it to his mother Thetis. Not only does he remember the events which are described in the beginning of the poem, but also he has a specific, individualized picture of them. Chryses, for instance, goes away not afraid, as it was described by the narrator, but angered³⁵.

De Jong writes:

A second more complex example concerns Achilles' ordering and selection of events. The emotional climax of his story lies, of course, in his quarrel with Agamemnon. Surprisingly enough he describes it in only two and a half verses (236—238), whereas the narrator devoted 250 verses to it! On reflection, this brevity on Achilles' part is very effective: with a few well chosen-words he contrasts his own sane advice (386: θεὸν ἰλάσκεσθαι) with Agamemnon's anger (387: *cholos*). To underline the contrast between the two reactions Achilles also places them in a chronological relation to each other [...], thereby suggesting that Agamemnon opposed his (Achilles') sane counsel of placating the god. In reality, the course of events was slightly different: Achilles' proposal to placate the god was made before, not after Calchas' speech (59—76). It also was not Achilles but Agamemnon who first reacted to the words of the seer, which is only logical, given his direct involvement in the whole matter³⁶.

The way that Achilles structures his story does not rule out the possibility that he was angry with Agamemnon before the strife. On the other hand, it most surely pictures him as a person capable of strong irony, as the things he says in the given passage and his way of presenting them is very different from the factual and it is with the very same methods one modalises an assertion to make it sound ironic.

Some Final Remarks on οἶω

The way it was used has been presented. The verb form used in the first line of first speech by Achilles started the whole analysis of motivation of the hero.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 493—494.

³⁶ Ibidem, p. 491—492.

There is however one more important *addendum* here. When Achilles lets go of his anger towards Agamemnon, he also lets go of the use of *όίω*. Neither in the scene with Priam in Book XXIV, nor in the *Nekyia*, in Book XI of the *Odyssey* does he modalise his speech in that way.

The verb *όίω*, therefore, in the language of Achilles, could be interpreted as the stylistic method of showing the anger, both in a suppressed — ironic and free flowing form. The use of this word makes it possible to create a hypothesis which deepens the psychological background of the characters, may render them less materialistic (it is through hurt ambition more than Bryseis, and she is just an addition to the insult, that the action of the epos really opens), still fitting their own, rather than our world, as the ambition factor in the poems of Homer is influential.

This way *όίω* could be used to show one more thing, which is not often mentioned with regard to the *Iliad*, or rather the lack which *is* — the psychological development. In case of Achilles it may not only be observed at the level of behaviour, but also at the level of his speech — one of Homeric tools to individualise characters.

The Linear Analysis of the Speech Part II — Conclusion

Line 6 presents the reason for asking the specialist. As Achilles mentions Φοίβος Ἀπόλλων Pharr notes, that he might have supposed the plague to be his work, as Apollo was the god of health and disease³⁷. It is important, however, that similar messages could have been shared around the camp. The actuality of the situation is emphasized even more, as another deictic word is applied here: *τόσσον*. It may be relatively free of meaning, “this much”. However, as Pharr noted on some other occasion, there might be even a gesture presented here.

Surprising as it may be, it is the first time in the speeches of the characters that Apollo is a subject of the verb: *έχώσατο* — ‘He got angry’. The anger constantly comes back as the main reason of the whole *epos*, so it does appear again.

Line 7 of Achilles’ speech will return sounding almost the same in the second answer of Calchas. It is a second use of alternative, this time presented by a different particle: *εἴτ’ ἄρ’ ὅ γ’ εὐχολῆς ἐπιμέμφεται εἴθ’ ἐκατόμβης*. The verb used here means ‘find fault, be angry about’ and requires genitive form of the cause³⁸. Both *εὐχολή* — ‘a prayer’ and *έκατόμβη* are not causes. It is the lack of them that would be. Their status can be seen from the point of view of the word order. The line is

³⁷ C. Pharr: *Homeric Greek...*, p. 66.

³⁸ G. Autenrieth: *Homeric Dictionary...*, p. 121—122.

symmetrical, both genitives are used in the breaking points, the first being *caesura*, the second — verse closure. Both are also preceded by εἴτ'. The symmetry is even more evident because the verb comes directly between them. As opposed to presenting different professions, where the structure of importance was complex and difficult to ascertain, here these two possibilities seem to be equal.

The interpretation in compliance with the “ironic Achilles” scenario, would say, that he intends to present these forms as identical, because they are most probable here and as such are known to everybody around, and have little or no meaning. Thus the things unsaid could gain relevance. Namely the fault of Agamemnon.

The positive condition is presented by a futuric subjunctive with κέν, which opens last line of the speech, βούλεται. It is the previous verse (66) that introduces it as another conditional clause in this speech. It is the fifth conditional clause in this speech, but there is also a triple choice list. The gradation of conditions, pertaining to which Pharr's comments have been presented here, is difficult to be continued, because there is no good method to differentiate between the use of *indicativus futuri* and the subjunctive used futurically³⁹. However the line brings element exterior to the predicate itself, which may be both just an informational futility, and yet quite meaningful phrase in its context. It is the enclitic πώς used to weaken the assertion of the subjunctive, ‘maybe’, ‘possibly’. Even this slight chance, seems at this point less probable than the final destruction.

The last line finishes the speech in a similar manner to that in which it was started: with a plural of ἐγώ. This time the dative ἡμῖν. The *participium coniunctum* ἀντιάσας explains the form of κνίσης (acc.) from the line above, already analysed with regard to τελείων. The final three words of the locution are very important: ἀπὸ λοιγὸν ἀμῦναι — ‘to ward off the death’. Death is the key motive of Achilles as the main character of the *Iliad*. The traces of his tragic decision, the choice of short, but glorious life, can be heard as early as in the final position of the first speech. This phrase also presents the key aspect for all the Achaeans gathered at the assembly.

The general uncertainty of the speech can also be shown by presenting together the alternatives and conjunctions. There is a rather weak conjunction joined by a lonely particle τε the goats and the sheep. The only real conjunction, even strengthened by the use of an adverb ὁμοῦ — ‘together’ and the use of τε καί structure is πόλεμος [...] καὶ λοιμός — ‘war and pestilence’. It is, then: ‘war and pestilence against the sheep and goats?’ — Achilles could be saying here.

There is yet another global interpretation of the first speech of Achilles, and, as it has been proved before, it does not rule out the previous interpretation completely, but renders it in a slightly different light. The key factors here would be the uncertainty and the use of plural. It would render Achilles as an almost frank

³⁹ It is even apparent, that in Homeric language the subjunctive can stand in the futuric sense in the main clause. Thus: M. Goliás, M. Auerbach: *Gramatyka grecka...*, p. 210.

giver of the thought of the soldiers from the camp: *Vox populi*. He starts with plural accusative and ends with plural dative. One of the two predicates of main clauses is the first person plural, hortative. The uncertainty and feeling of defeat is also visible in the amount of semantic elements directing retreat of first and a half lines, the probability gradation of conditional sentences.

This analysis of first locution of Achilles gives a real insight into how complex and credible, in their tangled mental hierarchies, the Homeric characters really are. Everything is a hypothesis, sometimes even a whole structure of them. The only sure things remain: πόλεμος and λοιμός.