

# Learning Temperance in Homer's Odyssey

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Learning Temperance in Homer's *Odyssey* Being a work of importance in the western tradition of philosophy, *The Odyssey* is much more than some play written by Homer ages ago. Though *The Odyssey* certainly is a dramatic work and partially intended for entertainment, it also provides insight into the ways of thinking of the time it has been written in. Aside from illustrating the perspective of early Greek philosophy *The Odyssey* also raises certain questions pertaining to virtues and the morality of actions undertaken therein. Such questions and the pursuit of their answers may also lead to a better understanding of the actions taken in present-day society and the human condition in general. One of the virtues that is present throughout *The Odyssey* is temperance, or the lack thereof. In the course of Odysseus' journey, numerous events take place which are determined by the actions of Odysseus' himself, as well as those of his shipmates. In fact, the endeavor here is to portray how the delays and troubles encountered by Odysseus and his crew are due to their inability to exhibit proper self-restraint in conduct, expression, and indulgence of the appetites. This is undertaken in the proceeding text by an examination of two specific episodes from Homer's *The Odyssey*. The first episode being Book X of *The Odyssey*, entitled "The Grace of the Witch", containing Odysseus' encounter with the goddess Kirke. The second being Book V under the title of "Sweet Nymph and Open Sea," of how Odysseus departs the island of the nymph Kalypso. Both

episodes are intended to demonstrate the importance of temperance in the journeys of Odysseus. Prior to a discussion of how temperance affects The Odyssey, it is good to discuss the concept of..... middle of paper .....ry for him to learn the virtue of temperance. If he is not able to moderate his impulses towards revenge, feasting, and lovely goddesses, then he shall always be doomed to roam upon the wine dark seas. Obviously he does learn this, since he does return to Ithaca without being smitten down by the gods, but he returns a different Odysseus. The new Odysseus realizes that there is more to living than a feast of roast meats and wine each night before the flawless bed of love of a lovely goddess. The new Odysseus wipes a salt tear from his cheek at the sight of an old hound that lays neglected (17.394). Works Cited Baird, Forrest E., and Walter Kaufman. "Aristotle." Ancient Philosophy. 3rd ed. Philosophic Classics, vols. 1. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000. 304 - 444. Homer. The Odyssey. Trans. Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998.

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