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Analytic Paper 1

A role model is somebody that you look up to and that does things that you yourself would want to replicate. Role models can take the form of anyone: influential figures, friends, family, or even strangers, as long as their actions align with someone's core values and ambitions. As a Villanova student, I think that it is important to have a good role model as a guide and leader. In my life, my parents act as my role models as they help me to navigate my life morally and responsibly. Any Villanova student should have a role model that represents the core values of the university so that each student can create a positive impact on the school and be a strong representative of what Villanova stands for. Villanova University has three core values: veritas, unitas, and caritas, or truth, unity, and charity. Under certain circumstances, it is sometimes necessary to violate each of these moral foundations – however, Odysseus often breaks these principles even without necessity, often for his personal benefit. Therefore, as defined by the Villanova core values, he should not be considered a role model. This paper will explore Odysseus' traits of recklessness, mercilessness, dishonesty, and selfishness, and argue whether they align with the values of the Villanova community.

The first founding principle of Villanova is truth. Truth is an essential part of the community, as we must be able to openly trust one another, allowing for the entire community to feel safe and confident around others. Throughout *The Odyssey*, Odysseus presents himself as an untrustworthy leader as he constantly creates lies and fabrications in order to surpass his problems. Even those who are deeply loyal to Odysseus are never fully trusted or consulted. Once returning back to Ithaca, Odysseus did not initially entrust Eumaeus with his identity,

despite the swineherd remaining faithful throughout Odysseus' absence, nor did he reveal himself to his wife, Penelope, though she had never remarried in the years that Odysseus had been gone. Odysseus' identity itself is also obscured several times, as he is often disguised as a beggar. He rarely allows others to learn the full truth about him or his motives. Even his crew, which undergo many sacrifices in hopes of reaching home, act as collateral in Odysseus' schemes and are incessantly lied to. For example, in his efforts to reach Ithaca, Odysseus must choose between braving Scylla and Charybdis. He chooses to cross Scylla's path with the knowledge that some of his crew members will die as a result. However, Odysseus does not grant his crew with this information or offer them a choice in this grisly fate. As stated in the text, "No mention of Scylla – how to fight that nightmare? – / for fear the men would panic, desert their oars / and huddle down and stow themselves away" (Homer, 278). Thus, six men die as a result of Odysseus' conscious omissions of the true dangers they are to face. These manipulations build up to a point in which the crew goes behind Odysseus' back when opening Aelous' bag, believing it to hold gold, and causing them to sail further away from Ithaca. While Odysseus views these actions as traitorous and foolish, they are understandable as the crew is often neglected and omitted from the full truth; they have no reason to obey a leader that lies to them. If Odysseus had told his crew from the start that the bag held winds, then this outcome could have been prevented. At Villanova, honesty is an important aspect of our daily lives. Acting honestly builds a stronger relationship with others, including family, peers, and professors, thus creating a stronger community. Relying on lies to solve our problems will only create an uncertain environment. Thus, this attribute should not be commended by any Villanova student.

Villanova also thrives due to the importance of unity within our community. In a community built upon unity, we should always look out for each other and ensure that nobody feels neglected or ignored. Additionally, we should hold regard for others' safety and well-being. Within *The Odyssey*, however, Odysseus does not display a sense of unity, as he does not act with the safety and preservation of his crew in mind. He made several decisions which put his crew's safety at risk and allowed his personal vendettas to impede his sense of leadership and protection. A prime example of his disregard for others occurred after Odysseus and his crew escaped from the blinded Cyclops, Polyphemus. Though they had successfully made it to the ship, Odysseus, fueled by rage, taunted the Cyclops for allowing them to escape. As a result, the Cyclops was able to estimate where Odysseus and his crew were and began to throw boulders at them. Odysseus' own crew attempted to stop him, urging "So headstrong – why? Why rile the beast again?" (Homer, 227). Still, Odysseus was unwilling to consider the pleas of his crewmates and continued his taunts. Though Polyphemus missed his throws, Odysseus still put his crew in danger and could have led to the injury or death of his companions. Additionally, Odysseus' actions were unwise due to Polyphemus' status as Poseidon's son. Though Odysseus had to blind Polyphemus as a means to escape, one could argue that he took it too far by taunting Polyphemus even in safety. This blatant mockery atop of his treatment of Polyphemus was ultimately what spurred Poseidon's rage and led the god to destroying Odysseus' ship, thus deterring his journey home and killing the remainder of his crewmates. Therefore, Odysseus' action could not be considered an admirable one as his emotionally-driven decision led to the death of his crewmates and the unlucky turn of his fate. He has no grasp on unity as his decisions directly risk the lives of others.

The final principle in which all Villanova students should abide by is charity. To be a charitable person involves being there for people in need and acting graciously to others. As a Villanova student, one should also be forgiving of others and able to judge a situation thoroughly and fairly. Odysseus does not always make these honorable decisions that should be reflected by the Villanova student body. While Odysseus is strategic in many of his decisions and plans, he is emotionally-driven when faced with those who have wronged him. This can be seen through his reaction with Polyphemus, as explained earlier, as well as his method in handling the maids. When returning to his household, he slaughters the suitors that have taken over his house and vie for his wife. He then chooses to hang his traitorous maids, in a gruesome way intended to inflict pain and suffering. The language in this description is particularly violent, stating “...so the women’s heads were trapped in a line, / nooses yanking their necks up, one by one / so all might die a pitiful, ghastly death...” (Homer, 453-454). Though the maids had been disloyal to Odysseus and his household while he was absent, through their romantic developments with the suitors, Odysseus’ actions were too brutal given the maids’ minor faults. While they had been disloyal, Odysseus had been gone for over a decade and had made mistakes of his own. Ultimately, it is unrealistic to expect others to act perfectly, especially in the face of uncertainty. Charity includes having mercy for others, even if they have wronged you. Odysseus could have found a punishment for the maids more in line with the nature of their crime – banishment from the household, for example. Odysseus’ vengeful decision demonstrates his unwillingness to lend mercy and understanding to others. Odysseus once again shows a lack of charity through his selfishness and greed towards others. Odysseus’ actions are primarily self-serving, as he puts himself before others, especially among his crew, and greedily takes what is not his. For example, he foolishly leads his crew into the Cyclops’ land though he is wary of the Cyclops’

hospitality. Odysseus steals the Cyclops' food, and refuses to leave despite his crew urging him, "“Let's make away with the cheeses, then come back – / hurry, drive the lambs and kids from the pens / to our swift ship, put out to sea at once!”" (Homer, 218). Instead, Odysseus hopes that he can leech off of the Cyclops' goods more as he hopes to be greeted with hospitality. This decision leads to the entrapment of him and his crew in the Cyclops' cave, putting the entire group into a dangerous position

Others could consider Odysseus to be a good role model due to his perseverance. Despite having the odds stacked against him, Odysseus ends up succeeding in his goal to return home to Ithaca and his family. Even when put into desperate situations, Odysseus still remains hopeful. While it is true that Odysseus displays aspects of determination, he still faces moments of uncertainty and doubt. For example, Odysseus' introduction to the story is one of misery and despair, rather than strength and perseverance. Odysseus is introduced "weeping there as always, / wrenching his heart with sob and groans and anguish, / gazing out over the barren sea through blinding tears" (Homer, 155). Odysseus heavily relies on the guidance of others to instill self-confidence into himself, primarily through the counsel of Athena. Until Athena arrives and forces Calypso to release Odysseus, Odysseus has given up on coming up with his own plan to escape and has fallen submissive to his fate. Even beyond this introduction, Odysseus' self-doubt follows him. Upon learning that he must enter the Underworld to talk to Tiresias, "I'd no desire / to go on living and see the rising light of day... 'Circe, Circe, / who can pilot us on that journey?'" (Homer, 246). Without somebody to reassure this decision, Odysseus is hesitant to forge his own path. Though Odysseus can display moments of heroism and bravery, he often lacks confidence in himself without the encouragement of others. While it is not necessarily negative for a Villanova student to seek the help of others in moments of need, it is also

important to be confident in yourself and trust in your decision-making. Your self-confidence should not be solely reliant on the opinions of others.

Ultimately, Odysseus is a deeply flawed character who shows minimal effort to grow as a person, leading to an overall lack of humility, respect, selflessness, and dependability from the start of his journey to the end. Villanova University prides itself in establishing a close-knit and encouraging community that puts truth, unity, and charity above all else. As this essay has demonstrated, Odysseus holds no respect for these guiding principles of Villanova. Therefore, he would not be a positive role model for a Villanova student.