The Human Situation – Greek Terms Discussed in Lecture

\textit{ainos} ‘authoritative utterance for and by a social group; praise, fable; \textit{ainigma}: riddle’

An \textit{ainos} is a special type of speech, directed especially to those who are capable of understanding it but coded so that those who are not capable will not understand the true meaning. The emotional connection of the listener is often the quality tested in the telling of an \textit{ainos}. That is, the teller of the story is saying: I'm going to tell a story, let's see if you can get its meaning. Odysseus tests the loyalty of various people in the second half of the \textit{Odyssey} using \textit{ainoi}.

The meaning `fable` comes from the association of \textit{ainos} with Aesop’s Fables. That is, each `fable` had a moral to the story, which someone inside the culture who was qualified intellectually, morally, an emotionally, would understand. The tradition changes as these sorts of connections are lost over time, so that eventually the point, or `moral`, of the story had to be added on.

\textit{kharis}: ‘reciprocity, give-and-take, reciprocal relationship; initiation of reciprocal relationship; the pleasure or beauty derived from reciprocity, from a reciprocal relationship; gratification; grace, gracefulness; favor, favorableness’

\textit{kleo}s: ‘glory, fame (especially as conferred by poetry); that which is heard’

\textit{Kleos} is the glory a hero receives after death when he is remembered. This remembrance can take many forms: an athletic contest in the hero’s honor (and often at the site of the hero’s tomb); a religious ritual in which the hero’s life is remembered; a continuing line of descendants; or, significantly in a song culture such as ancient Greece, through the performance of a song that tells the story of the hero’s ordeals, such as the \textit{Iliad} for Achilles.

Achilles actually says in the \textit{Iliad} that he has a choice between this kind of glory and a long but obscure life. He says to his friends: “My mother tells me that there are two ways in which I may meet my end. If I stay here and fight, I shall not have a return [nostos] alone but my glory [kleos] will be imperishable [‘\textit{aphthiton}’]; whereas if I go home my name [kleos] will perish, but it will be long before the end shall take me.” The adjective \textit{aphthiton}, “imperishable, unwilling” gives the metaphor for \textit{kleos} of a flower that never wilts or dies but remains forever fresh and fragrant in full bloom; this metaphor can be extended to a young man like Achilles who dies so prematurely.

\textit{noos} designates the realm of consciousness, of rational functions; intuition, perception. \textit{noos} is the rational part of one's inner self; hence it is often translated “mind,” but it is also a uniting or integrating force between emotions and life-force and can often have the meaning of “sense” as in “good sense.”

The beginning of the \textit{Odyssey} connects \textit{noos} and \textit{nostos} (‘homecoming’) for the hero Odysseus. As the first lines state, part of the journey home for Odysseus was to come to know the \textit{noos} of other peoples. The two words are also related linguistically: they both come from the Indo-European root *nes- ‘return to light and life’; from Indo-European languages other than Greek, we see that this root occurs in myths having to do with Morning Star/Evening Star. Odysseus’ journey back to light and life requires \textit{noos} for its successful completion. For example, consider the Land of the Lotus-Eaters (\textit{Odyssey} 9.82-104), where you lose your desire for homecoming by eating the lotus: if you lose the "implant" of homecoming in your mind, you cannot go home because you no longer know what home is.

Note the names in the \textit{Odyssey} built on the word \textit{noos}: Antinoos, the head suitor, whose name means 'he who is opposed to bringing back to light and life' and Alkinoos, the king of the Phaiacians, whose name means 'he who has the power to bring back to light and life'.

\textit{nostos} ‘return, homecoming; song about homecoming; return to light and life’

See also \textit{noos}. 