

## DIVINE JUSTICE AND COSMIC ORDER IN EARLY GREEK EPIC\*

“οὐ μὲν σχέτλια ἔργα θεοὶ μάκαρες φιλέουσιν,  
ἀλλὰ δίκην τίουσιν καὶ αἴσιμα ἔργ’ ἀνθρώπων.”  
Hom. *Od.* 14.83-4

**Abstract:** This article examines the ethical and theological universe of the Homeric epics, and shows that the patterns of human and divine justice which they deploy are also to be found throughout the wider corpus of early Greek hexameter poetry. Although most scholars continue to stress the differences between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with regard to divine justice, these come not (as is often alleged) from any change in the gods themselves but from the *Odyssey*'s peculiar narrative structure, with its focus on one hero and his main divine patron and foe. Indeed, the action of the *Iliad* embodies a system of norms and punishments that is no different from that of the *Odyssey*. Values such as justice are shown to be socially constituted in each epic on both the divine and human planes, and each level, it is argued, displays not only a hierarchy of power (and the resulting tensions), but also a structure of authority. In addition, the presentation of the gods in the wider hexameter corpus of Hesiod, the Epic Cycle and the Homeric Hymns is analysed, revealing a remarkably coherent tradition in which the possibility of divine conflict is combined with an underlying cosmic order. Finally, consideration of Near Eastern myths relating cosmic order to justice brings out the distinctiveness of the Greek system as a whole and, in particular, of the way it uses the divine society under Zeus's authority as a comprehensive explanatory model of the world.

It was once popular to trace in early Greek thought a fundamental change in beliefs about the nature and values of the gods. The resulting cultural history detected a moral 'progress' in the evolution of early Greek literature itself, from the amoral powers of the *Iliad*, through the gods of the *Odyssey* with their concern for righteous conduct, to the moral certainties of the Hesiodic Zeus. This model was exploded many years ago by Hugh Lloyd-Jones in *The Justice of Zeus*.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it remains a commonplace of Homeric scholarship that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* differ in their presentation of the gods, especially with regard to divine justice. Thus, in his Introduction to the major modern commentary on the *Odyssey*, Alfred Heubeck argues that 'Zeus himself has changed in the poet's vision. His actions are no longer directed by irrational impulses and emotions, and he no longer has any need to boast of his superior power ... With perceptiveness and wisdom Zeus now directs the fate of the world according to moral principles, which alone create and preserve order. The father of the gods has only a little way to go to become the just ruler of the world.'<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Lloyd-Jones himself, despite his demolition of the developmental model of divine justice, accepts that the *Odyssey*'s 'theology is in some important ways different from that of the *Iliad*', and he remarks upon the 'unquestionable difference between the moral climate of the two Homeric poems'.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, this article will aim to show that the two poems share the same moral and theological universe and, furthermore, that the patterns of human and divine justice which they deploy are also to be found throughout the wider corpus of early Greek hexameter poetry.<sup>4</sup>

Part I argues that divine justice is not absent from the *Iliad*. The still popular notion of amoral gods is shown to be flawed: the gods have human favourites and are sensitive to their honour, but that does not make them 'amoral'. Morality is essentially a system of norms and protocols governing relationships between individuals, and a similar system is shown to apply on both the

\* The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are cited from the editions of M.L. West, *Homerus: Ilias* (2 vols, Stuttgart, Leipzig and Munich 1998-2000) and H. van Thiel, *Homeri Odyssea* (Hildesheim 1991). I am indebted to Douglas Cairns, Andrew Ford, Adrian Kelly, Mary Lefkowitz, Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Ruth Scodel and the journal's two anonymous referees for much helpful discussion and advice.

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd-Jones (1983), first published in 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Heubeck (1988) 23.

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd-Jones (1983) 28, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Kullmann (1985) is perhaps the fullest exposition thus far of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*'s alleged differences in their depiction of the relationships between gods and mortals. He seeks to establish 'the incompatibility of the religious conceptions of the two epics' (p. 14). The present article, however, argues not only for their compatibility but also for their essential similarity.

divine and human levels. The action of the *Iliad* in fact embodies a system of social norms and punishments that is no different from that of the *Odyssey*. Part II accordingly turns to the *Odyssey* and challenges the prevalent idea that it represents, to use Heubeck's terms, an 'ethical transformation of the gods'.<sup>5</sup> Both poems are marked by divine interventions and favourites, so that to see the *Odyssey* as dominated by morally unambiguous and distanced gods is mistaken: the gods too are part of human suffering, as in the *Iliad*, and it is not merely humans who are to blame. (As we shall see, Zeus's opening speech in the *Odyssey* is often misunderstood in that respect.) The similarities between the poems with regard to divine justice will be detailed: each explores the gods' self-interest and their clashing wills, and both do so within the overarching system of Zeus's authority. But despite their similarities, it is also possible to show, by treating the poems individually, how each epic is trying in its own way to deepen the audience's conception of divine justice. For while each poem reflects what one might call the 'simple' view – namely, that human wrongs will be punished more or less immediately by the gods – they also explore the complexities and problems inherent in such an account of divine justice. Part III traces similar patterns of divine and human interaction in the wider hexameter corpus of Hesiod, the Epic Cycle and the Homeric Hymns, where (as in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) the gods' self-interest and clashing wills function within the overarching system of Zeus's authority.<sup>6</sup>

## I

(a) *Iliad versus Odyssey?*

It remains a standard view of the Homeric epics that the gods of the *Iliad*, in contrast to those of the *Odyssey*, are little interested in human morality. A recent treatment of the Homeric gods speaks of 'ethical considerations, which though not absent from the *Iliad* are not a major concern of its Gods'.<sup>7</sup> Another scholar claims that 'The reader who ... looks in the *Iliad* for theodicy will be disappointed. The gods are not just in any ordinary sense of the word.'<sup>8</sup> Yet, as we shall see, close attention to the text shows that the gods are intimately concerned with matters of right and wrong throughout the *Iliad*. E.R. Dodds famously found 'no indication in the narrative of the *Iliad* that Zeus is concerned with justice as such'.<sup>9</sup> However, despite Lloyd-Jones's compelling criticisms of this view,<sup>10</sup> the opposition between divine frivolity (*Iliad*) and concern for justice (*Odyssey*) persists. The central aim of this paper is to suggest that such a dichotomy is mistaken, since it neglects the ways in which the narrative of the *Iliad* itself (and not merely the pious appeals of its characters) displays a basic pattern of justice (defined as a coherent system of social norms and sanctions), and, conversely, exaggerates the extent to which the gods of the *Odyssey* embody a more 'advanced' theodicy.<sup>11</sup>

A closer analysis reveals a single and consistent form of divine justice shared by both epics. Yet far from endorsing a simple model of justice where the good are rewarded and the wicked punished (a pattern often assigned to the *Odyssey*), each poem shows a more complex system of norms and punishments in action and explores its disturbing implications for the human agents involved. Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are, therefore, theologically challenging works since each shows the simple model of divine justice to be in various ways both problematic and naïve.

<sup>5</sup> Heubeck (1988) 23.

<sup>6</sup> Rosen (1997) 484 rightly notes that the *Works and Days* is not unique in its concern with δίκη: 'In the broadest sense, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* tell one grand story about how *dikē* operates throughout all stages of human relations, from the interpersonal to the international.' However, he does not show how this works in any detail in the texts.

<sup>7</sup> Kearns (2004) 67.

<sup>8</sup> Mueller (1984) 146.

<sup>9</sup> Dodds (1951) 32.

<sup>10</sup> Lloyd-Jones (1983) 1-7.

<sup>11</sup> An alternative model is offered by Winterbottom (1989) esp. 33, 40, who challenges the gods' concern for justice in both epics, calling them 'amoral' in the *Iliad* and then seeking to extend this description to the gods of the *Odyssey*. It will be argued here, by contrast, that there is a coherent system of divine (and human) δίκη in both epics and that it is no stronger in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*.

Moreover, the form of justice that is shown to regulate the world of the poems is simultaneously cosmic and personal: cosmic in that it embraces divine as well as human society and is connected to the maintenance of order on both levels; personal (and therefore volatile) in that it is intended to control individual conduct and self-interest (whether of gods or humans) and depends for its ultimate sanction on the personal authority of Zeus himself.

(b) *Trojan wrongs*

Though the *Iliad* poet is less prone to moral judgements than the narrator of the *Odyssey*, he nevertheless shapes his narrative so that a clear pattern of norms and consequences emerges. He deliberately includes scenes which emphasize the Trojans' rôle in starting and prolonging the war and their culpable misjudgements during it. Yet unlike the *Odyssey*, where only one of the suitors, Amphinomus, is presented in any detail as a sympathetic figure (see §II(h) below), the Trojan people are seen to suffer disproportionately for the errors of their leaders, making their destruction, as an expression of divine justice, the more disturbing. The first of such scenes comes just after the duel between Paris and Menelaus. As Helen and Paris go to bed with each other, Paris recalls their first sexual encounter:

“ἀλλ’ ἄγε δὴ φιλότῃτι τραπέιομεν εὐνηθέντε·  
οὐ γάρ πώ ποτέ μ’ ᾧδέ γ’ ἔρωσ φρένας ἀμφεκάλυπεν,  
οὐδ’ ὅτε σε πρῶτον Λακεδαίμονος ἐξ ἔρατεινῆς  
ἔπλεον ἀρπάξας ἐν ποντοπόροισι νέεσσιν,  
νήσωι δ’ ἐν Κραναιῇ ἐμίγην φιλότῃτι καὶ εὐνῇι,  
ὡς σεο νῦν ἔραμαι καὶ με γλυκὺς ἴμερος αἰρεῖ” (Il. 3.441-6)

‘But come – let us take our pleasure in the bed of love. For never before has desire so enfolded my mind, not even when I first snatched you away from lovely Lacedaemon and sailed off with you in my seafaring ships, and slept with you in the bed of love on the island of Craneae – that was nothing to how I desire you now and sweet longing seizes me.’

The original offence, the abduction of Helen, is re-enacted within the narrative. Menelaus links this crime to the eventual destruction of the Trojans:

“ἄλλης μὲν λώβης τε καὶ αἴσχεος οὐκ ἐπιδευεῖς,  
ἦν ἐμὲ λωβήσασθε, κακαὶ κύνες, οὐδέ τι θυμῶι  
Ζηνὸς ἐριβρεμέτεω χαλεπὴν ἐδδείσατε μῆνιν  
Ξεινίου, ὅς τέ ποτ’ ὕμμι διαφθέρσει πόλιν αἰπήν·  
οἷ μοι κουριδίην ἄλοχον καὶ κτήματα πολλὰ  
μὰ ψ οἴχεσθ’ ἀνάγοντες, ἐπεὶ φιλέεσθε παρ’ αὐτῇι.” (Il. 13.622-7)

‘There’s no lack of outrage and shame on your part – that outrage you did me, you shameless bitches, with no fear in your hearts for the harsh anger of loud-thundering Zeus, god of host and guest, who will one day destroy your lofty city. For you made off with my wedded wife and many possessions besides, for no reason at all, since you were given a friendly welcome by her.’

Menelaus’ speech has been described as ‘a picture of men attributing to gods the enforcement of laws of which those gods are shown to be quite unaware’.<sup>12</sup> Yet the limited perspective of human characters such as Menelaus is confirmed by the wider narrative of Troy’s fall which is sanctioned by Zeus himself (*cf.* §I(c)). Nor is it solely the Greeks who disapprove of Paris’ actions: Hector describes them as worthy of stoning (Il. 3.56-7) and wishes he would die at once (6.281-2), while the narrator describes the ships that took Paris to Sparta as ‘the source of

<sup>12</sup> Winterbottom (1989) 33.



“δεῦτ’ ἄγετ’, Ἀργεῖην Ἑλένην καὶ κτήμαθ’ ἅμ’ αὐτῆι  
 δώομεν Ἀτρεΐδησις ἄγειν. νῦν δ’ ὄρκια πιστὰ  
 ψευσάμενοι μαχόμεσθα· τῶ οὐ νύ τι κέρδιον ἡμῖν  
 ἔλπομαι ἐκτελέεσθαι, ἵνα μὴ ῥέξομεν ᾧδε.” (Il. 7.350-3)

‘Come on now, let us give Argive Helen and all her possessions with her to the sons of Atreus to take away. Now we are fighting after cheating over our sworn oaths; so I do not see any good outcome for us, unless we do as I say.’

When Paris declares himself willing to return only the goods taken from Sparta (γυναῖκα μὲν οὐκ ἀποδώσω, 7.363), Priam’s complicity is culpable. The Trojan herald Idaeus, charged with relaying the response of the Trojan ἀγορή, which is no more than the μῦθος Ἀλεξάνδροιο (3.374, 388), underlines the king’s egregious error in denying his son’s guilt:

“κτῆματα μὲν, ὅσ’ Ἀλέξανδρος κοίλῃς ἐνὶ νηυσὶν  
 ἠγάγετο Τροίηνδ’ - ὡς πρὶν ἀφελλ’ ἀπολέσθαι -  
 πάντ’ ἐθέλει δόμεναι, καὶ ἔτ’ οἴκοθεν ἄλλ’ ἐπιθεῖναι·  
 κουριδίην δ’ ἄλοχον Μενελάου κυδαλίμοιο  
 οὐ φησὶν δώσειν· ἧ μὲν Τρῶές γε κέλονται.” (Il. 7.389-93)

‘The possessions that Alexander brought in his hollow ships to Troy – if only he had died before that! – all these he is willing to give back and to add yet more from his own stores. But the wedded wife of glorious Menelaus he says he will not give back, though the Trojans in fact urge him to do precisely that.’

It could not be clearer that Priam has made a disastrous mistake, allowing Paris to defy the oath and doing so in the face of popular disapproval.<sup>21</sup> No less than Paris, Priam is responsible for the destruction of Troy, his city. He acts wrongly, and he – and everyone else who depends on him – must suffer the consequences.<sup>22</sup>

As the poem progresses there are several more indications of Trojan deceit. During Agamemnon’s major *aristeia* in Book 11 he comes upon two sons of Antimachus,

ὅς ῥα μάλιστα  
 χρυσὸν Ἀλεξάνδροιο δεδεγμένος, ἀγλαὰ δῶρα,  
 οὐκ εἶασχ’ Ἑλένην δόμεναι ξανθῶι Μενελάωι. (Il. 11.123-5)

who in expectation of gold from Alexander, splendid gifts, was most opposed to giving Helen back to fair-haired Menelaus.

Paris’ bribery of his fellow Trojans brings disgrace on his entire community, but Antimachus’ own conduct emerges as particularly blameworthy, for as Agamemnon says:

“εἰ μὲν δὴ Ἀντιμάχοιο δαίφρονος υἱέες ἐστών,  
 ὅς ποτ’ ἐνὶ Τρώων ἀγορῆι Μενέλαον ἄνωγεν,  
 ἀγγελίην ἐλθόντα σὺν ἀντιθέωι Ὀδυσῆϊ,  
 αὐθι κατακτεῖναι μῆδ’ ἐξέμεν ἄψ ἐς Ἀχαιοὺς,  
 νῦν μὲν δὴ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀεικέα τεῖσετε λώβην.” (Il. 11.138-42)

(3.203-24). The audience may also have known of the story (attested in Sophocles’ *Antenoridae*, cf. Strabo 13.1.53; Soph. *fr.* 11 Radt) that Antenor’s family was spared at the fall of Troy (cf. Pind. *Pyth.* 5.83-5). If so, they may have construed it as Antenor’s reward for his wise advice here in favour of the Greeks.

<sup>21</sup> Priam may also be faulted for not remaining on the battlefield to deal himself with the outcome of the duel. The narrator draws attention to his absence (3.304-9).

<sup>22</sup> One recalls Hector’s prediction (6.448-9): ἔσσειται ἡμᾶρ ὅτ’ ἂν ποτ’ ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἱρῆ | καὶ Πριάμος καὶ λαὸς ἐϋμμελίω Πριάμοιο (‘The day will come when sacred Ilios will be destroyed, and Priam, and the people of Priam of the fine ash spear’).

‘If you are indeed the sons of wise Antimachus, who once in the Trojan assembly, when Menelaus had come on an embassy with godlike Odysseus, urged them to kill him on the spot and not let him go back to the Achaeans, now you will pay for your father’s abominable outrage.’

Antimachus’ reception of the embassy contrasts strongly with that of Antenor (*cf.* n.20), but the pattern of Trojan crimes calling forth punishment is re-enforced. Agamemnon kills Antimachus’ sons, one of them in a peculiarly brutal manner:

Ἴππόλοχος δ’ ἀπόρουσε· τὸν αὖ χαμαὶ ἐξενάριξεν,  
 χεῖρας ἀπὸ ξίφεϊ πλήξας ἀπὸ τ’ ἀχένα κόψας·  
 ὄλμον δ’ ὡς ἔσσευε κυλίνδεσθαι δι’ ὀμίλου. (*Il.* 11.145-7)

Hippolochus leapt down, and him he killed on the ground, slicing off his arms and head with his sword, and sent him rolling through the throng like a log.<sup>23</sup>

The pattern of Trojan deceit and punishment is also shown to extend back beyond the current generation. Poseidon, puzzled by Apollo’s continuing support for the Trojans, reminds him of how Laomedon had cheated them both of proper payment after they built a wall around Troy and tended the king’s cattle (21.441-57). Though Poseidon sent a sea-monster to punish the Trojans, Heracles destroyed it, yet he in turn was defrauded of his reward by Laomedon<sup>24</sup> and took his revenge by sacking Troy (5.648-51, 20.144-8). Nevertheless, Poseidon’s anger against Troy remains unappeased, so that ‘here we have a case of divine anger extending over more than one generation’.<sup>25</sup> The descendants of Laomedon pay for his crimes as well as their own, and the narrative shows that divine justice is not always instantaneous, an idea that is often treated as if it first surfaced in Hesiod and Solon (e.g. Hes. *W&D* 282-4; Solon *fr.* 13.29-32 W).<sup>26</sup>

### (c) Zeus and the fall of Troy

In trying to determine Zeus’s own attitude to Troy, scholars are often misled by the fact that Zeus nowhere expresses explicit anger at the city or happiness at its fall. Thus, with regard to Agamemnon’s prediction that Troy will be destroyed by Zeus in anger at the Trojans’ deceit (4.160-8), a recent discussion observes that ‘we, unlike Agamemnon, can see Zeus’s “real” attitude. When this Zeus brings about the fall of Troy it will be with sorrow and not with righteous indignation.’<sup>27</sup> Yet such a formulation risks confusing two very different ideas, for Zeus’s presumed feelings of pity at the city’s destruction and his conviction that the fall of Troy is right are not mutually exclusive. Zeus speaks on one occasion as if he wants to save Troy, but his real motive is evidently to annoy Hera and Athena and so facilitate the breaking of the truce (4.5-19). He also makes clear in the same context his strong affection for the Trojans, because they offer him lavish sacrifices (4.44-9), but this does not change the fact that he approves of Troy’s fall.

<sup>23</sup> There are nine fatal arm wounds in the *Iliad* (see the tables in Saunders (2004) 14-15), but this is the only time in the poem that a corpse is mutilated by having its arms cut off. The act is in line with Agamemnon’s extremely violent *aristeia* (*cf.* Segal (1971) 10, 20), but also serves to underline his fury at the treachery of the Trojans.

<sup>24</sup> Laomedon is said to have been deceived himself by Anchises, who secretly bred his mares with Laomedon’s outstanding horses (5.265-72). Diomedes captures their offspring when he defeats Aeneas (5.319-27).

<sup>25</sup> Lloyd-Jones (2002) 2. Hector’s killing of his grandson Amphimachus gives Poseidon an additional

reason to be furious with the Trojans; *cf.* 13.185-209, ending ὀτρυνέων Δαναούς, Τρώεσσι δὲ κήδε’ ἔτευχεν ([Poseidon] urged on the Danaans, and was preparing disaster for the Trojans’).

<sup>26</sup> Kullmann (1985) 20 n.45, for example, remarks: ‘It is interesting to see how the *théodicée* concept of the *Odyssey* is mitigated in Hesiod and Solon. Both authors allow that the justice of the gods is not always executed immediately.’ Yet this is doubly misleading, since it posits a false dichotomy between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and overlooks the presence of delayed punishment in the *Iliad* itself.

<sup>27</sup> Kearns (2004) 69 n.14.

Thus one scholar seeks to connect the fact that ‘[Zeus] makes no attempt to conceal his love of Troy’ with the god’s alleged ‘ambivalence’ about the punishment of the oath-breakers.<sup>28</sup> Yet this is to create a false opposition, since Zeus can love Troy and still think it right that the Trojans be punished. It is therefore irrelevant that Zeus does not express any happiness at Troy’s fall, since his approval is not only implicit in the narrative itself<sup>29</sup> but also integral to the larger cosmic order of which Zeus himself is the anthropomorphic manifestation and ultimate enforcer.

This emerges most clearly in Zeus’s major prophecy concerning the course of the war in Book 15. Addressing Hera, he bids her tell Poseidon to stop aiding the Achaeans, then continues:

“Ἐκτορα δ’ ὀτρύνησι μάχην ἔς Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,  
αὐτίς δ’ ἐμπνεύσῃσι μένος, λελάθηι δ’ ὀδυνάων  
αἰὲν νῦν μιν τείρουσι κατὰ φρένας, αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιούς  
αὐτίς ἀποστρέψῃσιν ἀνάγκιδα φύζαν ἐνόρσας,  
φεύγοντες δ’ ἐν νηυσὶ πολυκλήϊσι πέσσωσι  
Πηλείδῃ Ἀχιλῆος. ὃ δ’ ἀνστήσει ὄν ἑταῖρον  
Πάτροκλον· τὸν δὲ κτενεῖ ἔγχρῃ φαίδιμος Ἴκτωρ  
Ἴλιου προπάροιθε, πολεῖς ὀλέσαντ’ αἰζηούς  
τοὺς ἄλλους, μετὰ δ’ υἱὸν ἐμὸν Σαρπηδόνα δῖον·  
τοῦ δὲ χολωσάμενος κτενεῖ Ἴκτορα δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.  
ἐκ τοῦ δ’ ἄν τοι ἔπειτα παλιῶξιν παρὰ νηῶν  
αἰὲν ἐγὼ τεύχοιμι διαμπερές, εἰς ὃ κ’ Ἀχαιοὶ  
Ἴλιον αἰπὺ ἔλοιεν Ἀθηναίης διὰ βουλάς.” (Il. 15.59-71)

‘And let Phoebus Apollo spur Hector into battle, and breathe strength into him again and make him forget the pains that now wear out his heart. Let him drive the Achaeans back again when he has raised in them a cowardly panic so that they flee and fall among the many-benched ships of Achilles, son of Peleus. And Achilles will send out his companion, Patroclus; but glorious Hector will kill him with his spear in front of Ilios, once Patroclus has slaughtered many of the other young fighting men, and among them my own son, godlike Sarpedon. Enraged for Patroclus, godlike Achilles will kill Hector.

And from that time on I shall bring about a counter-attack from the ships, constant and continuous, until the Achaeans take steep Ilios through the designs of Athena.’

Zeus impels Hector to his death, knowing that this means the fall of Troy. Thus to doubt that Zeus approves of Troy’s destruction would be to imply that he is not the most powerful god, a point on which Zeus is especially sensitive (*cf.* n.34), not least because cosmic order cannot be separated from his power. Moreover, Zeus’s desire that Troy should fall (15.69-71) is predicated upon his belief that it is right.

The importance of cosmic order is highlighted when one considers the issue of fate, and particularly its relation to the will of Zeus. In Book 8 Zeus prophesies to Hera the death of Patroclus and Achilles’ subsequent return to the fighting, ὥς γὰρ θέσφατόν ἐστι (‘for so it is decreed’, 8.470-7). The formulation is vague, and intentionally so, since the narrator here reflects and deploys a standard Greek conception of Zeus’s will and his superior knowledge of future events in which there is little difference between ‘Zeus knows *x*’ and ‘*x* must be’. However, when Zeus considers sparing Sarpedon and Hector, though each is *πάλαι πεπρωμένον αἴσῃ* (‘long since doomed by fate’, 16.441, 22.179), the narrator exploits the idea that there is a power beyond

<sup>28</sup> Zanker (1994) 7; *cf.* n.17 above.

<sup>29</sup> Calchas had interpreted the omen of the sparrows and the petrified snake at Aulis as a sign from Zeus that Troy will fall in the tenth year of the war (2.323-32). Zeus responds to Agamemnon’s prayer for help, in the midst of unprecedented Trojan success, by confirming

with a further omen that the Greek army will not be defeated (8.242-52). The narrator marks the limits of Zeus’s assistance to the Trojans: he will honour Thetis and Achilles’ request, but will not destroy the Achaean army totally (13.347-50) – his will is that Troy shall fall, but there is no need to spell it out.

Zeus's will, and does so in relation to cosmic order. For Zeus is warned (as he was when he considered sparing Troy itself) that such a decision will cause upheaval among the gods.<sup>30</sup> While not wishing to deny that Zeus's paternal love for Sarpedon and sympathy for Hector are important features of his attitude to mortals,<sup>31</sup> these scenes are no less striking for the way they raise the possibility that Zeus could bring about a radically different outcome, yet chooses not to because it would destroy an order of which he not only approves, but of which he is both the ultimate guarantor and main beneficiary. Thus besides deploying a powerful narrative trope – things do not normally happen 'contrary to fate', so to raise the very possibility creates tension – these scenes reveal the poem's central tenets of cosmic order and human limits.<sup>32</sup>

However, Zeus's decision to maintain cosmic order is not only presented as re-enforcing human mortality. For as well as defining a hierarchy of gods and mortals,<sup>33</sup> it also marks out the structure of power among the gods themselves, since cosmic order is closely connected throughout early Greek thought to the status and power of Zeus, which are in turn defined by his personal relations with other gods. No less than Hesiod, the Homeric epics reflect the fact that the evolution of the cosmos is a violent process,<sup>34</sup> and that its maintenance may involve further violence or at least the threat of it.<sup>35</sup> The stability of the universe rests therefore upon a balance of power that is vulnerable to the turbulence of competing divine wills. Yet the structuring of the Olympians as a divine family creates a hierarchy of power that goes some way to resolving the rivalries of the gods. Poseidon is portrayed in the *Iliad* as especially sensitive about his status: as the younger brother, he is careful to support the Achaeans covertly, lest he offend Zeus (13.354-60). He insists indignantly on his equal status as son of Kronos and Rhea, with an equal domain as his portion, and it takes Iris' tactful warning against sparking Zeus's anger to make him leave the battlefield; yet he does so with a threat that failure to destroy Troy will create massive disorder among the gods (15.184-217).<sup>36</sup>

#### (d) *Divine and human justice as social practices*

There is a striking isomorphism not only between the divine and human societies themselves but also between their methods of determining and practising justice. Zeus's authority may be challenged by other gods if they disagree with his decisions; and similarly Agamemnon's temporal power rests upon his success as a leader, in which capacity he is subject to public and

<sup>30</sup> The same phrase is used in each case (twice by Hera, once by Athena): ἔρδ'· ἀτὰρ οὐ τοὶ πάντες ἐπαινέομεν θεοὶ ἄλλοι ('Do it; but be sure we other gods will not all approve', 4.29, 16.443, 22.181).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Erbse (1986) 288: 'Die Möglichkeit, sich der μοῖρα zu widersetzen, gesteht der Dichter seinem Zeus also nur scheinbar zu, lediglich um die Tiefe seines Schmerzes zu beleuchten.'

<sup>32</sup> The most important human limit being death, as Hera makes explicit when she warns of the consequences of sparing Sarpedon: the other gods would seek to spare their own mortal offspring (16.445-9); cf. n.18.

<sup>33</sup> This aspect is well expressed by Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 91: 'harmony among the gods ... can only be ensured if all mortals are abandoned to their own fate'.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Il.* 1.396-406 (Hera, Poseidon and Athena's attempt to depose Zeus), 14.200-10 (Oceanus and Tethys, the parents of the gods, quarrel; Zeus imprisons Kronos beneath the earth), 1.590-4, 14.256-62, 15.18-30 (Zeus, angered by the treatment of his son Heracles, hurled gods from heaven and hangs Hera in the sky with anvils attached to her feet). If, as Slatkin (1991) argues, the

*Iliad* poet alludes to the myth that Zeus forced Thetis to marry Peleus because of a prophecy that her son would be stronger than its father, this would be a peculiarly striking example of Zeus's superior force directed towards the maintenance of his power (see, however, Edwards (1991) 196 on *Il.* 18.429-35 and Cairns (2001a) 46-7 for the alternative explanation of Thetis' enforced marriage as due to her rejection of Zeus's sexual advances out of respect for Hera). In any case, Zeus's potential overthrow by such a son (first securely attested in Pind. *Isthm.* 8.26-48 and [Aesch.] *PV* 764-8, 907-27) is part of a wider pattern of myths depicting Zeus's control over female deities and their fertility; cf. §III(b), esp. n.134.

<sup>35</sup> *Il.* 8.7-27 (Zeus threatens to strike with lightning or throw into Tartarus any god who disobeys him; his strength is supreme), 8.397-408 (Zeus will blast Hera and Athena from their chariot if they continue their journey to aid the Achaeans), 15.14-17 (Zeus threatens to whip Hera if she continues to deceive him).

<sup>36</sup> For the rôle of divine rivalry and Zeus's authority in the *Odyssey*, see §II(c) below.

communal appraisal.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the stability and regulation of human society as a whole is based on a system of norms which are thought to derive their authority ultimately from Zeus himself. Achilles speaks of Achaeans ‘who give judgements and preserve the ordinances that come from Zeus’ (δικασπόλοι, οἳ τε θέμιστας | πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύαται, *Il.* 1.238-9), while Nestor says to Agamemnon that ‘Zeus has entrusted to you the sceptre and the ordinances, to make judgements for your people’ (καί τοι Ζεὺς ἐγγυάλιξεν | σκῆπτρόν τ’ ἠδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνά σφισι βουλευήησθα, 9.98-9). Thus Zeus is both source and patron of human justice, which is dispensed both by kings and by the elders of the community (for the latter, *cf.* 18.503-8 and §I(e) on 16.384-93).<sup>38</sup> Most importantly, justice, like all forms of value, is socially constituted, both among the gods and among mortals.<sup>39</sup>

This emerges most clearly in the poem’s depiction of the crucial mistakes made by Agamemnon and Achilles, whose decisions are measured against the evaluative beliefs of their community and found to be unjustified.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, both men make a similar error, pushing their personal status and demands for τιμή to the detriment of the common good:<sup>41</sup> Agamemnon’s conduct is repeatedly criticized from a communal perspective (*cf.*, e.g., 1.22-3, 161-2, 231, 275-84, 355-6, 9.109-11, 19.181-2), while Achilles’ rejection of Agamemnon’s offer of compensation, described by Nestor as one that ‘could no longer be faulted’ (δῶρα μὲν οὐκέτ’ ὄνοστα διδοῖς Ἀχιλῆϊ ἄνακτι, 9.164), shows his obduracy to be both selfish and destructive, as Achilles effectively subordinates the *social* process of reparation to his own will.<sup>42</sup>

#### (e) Judgements and sanctions (human and divine)

Thus, insofar as compensation, as an instrument of justice, is defined by the evaluative beliefs and practices of his society, Achilles’ attitude towards it reveals the limitations and dangers of his self-obsession. Yet the fact that norms of human behaviour are socially constituted does not

<sup>37</sup> Zeus’s supreme strength (of which he threateningly boasts: 8.18-27) marks an important difference between gods and humans which the poet has made a catalyst of his plot, since Agamemnon’s authority does not rest on his superior strength or pre-eminence as a fighter. *Cf.* Nestor’s words of restraint to Achilles: εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι, θεὰ δὲ σε γείνατο μήτηρ, | ἀλλ’ ὄδε φέρτερός ἐστιν, ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει (‘But even if you are strong, and a goddess mother bore you, he is still more powerful, since he rules over more’, 1.280-1).

<sup>38</sup> In rebuking the rank-and-file soldiers for their rush to the ships, Odysseus foregrounds the rôle of the leaders and commands: εἰς κοίρανος ἔστω, | εἷς βασιλεύς, ᾧ δῶκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω σκῆπτρόν τ’ ἠδὲ θέμιστας ἵνά σφισι βουλευήησιν (‘Let there be one leader, one king, to whom the son of crooked-minded Kronos has given the sceptre and the ordinances so that he may make judgements for his people’, 2.204-6).

<sup>39</sup> For the social creation of value in modern societies, *cf.* Raz (1999) 202-17, esp. 203-7.

<sup>40</sup> From the perspective of Homeric ethics, it matters little that Homeric society itself is a fiction. Fiction, that is, not only in the obvious sense of ‘existing within a work of literature’, but also in the stronger sense that it does not track a particular historical society. Like the epic *Kunstsprache*, Homeric society has developed to suit the purposes of generations of bards. Nonetheless, the fundamental point that the past is also constantly remodelled in the light of contemporary understanding is

well argued by Morris (2001), even if he shares the tendency of some recent scholarship (e.g. Crielaard (2002) 239: ‘we could almost speak of a historical Homeric society’) to collapse the past and place more and more features in the eighth century. Given the lack of other written evidence, the desire to use Homer as a historical source for the Archaic period is understandable, but should be treated sceptically, especially when it brushes over the many ‘anachronisms’ in the text (e.g. features that archaeology would place in the late Bronze Age; for a brief overview, *cf.* Osborne (2004) 217-18).

<sup>41</sup> The importance of other-regarding behaviour and communal interests in the Homeric economy of values is stressed by Cairns (2001b), who shows that ‘No sharp dichotomy exists between competitive and co-operative values’ (p. 216). Cairns’s incisive demolition of the (still widely canvassed) view that honour is a ‘zero-sum’ game will, one hopes, put an end to the myth of exclusive Homeric individualism.

<sup>42</sup> Similarly, when Achilles relishes the prospect of the Achaeans (including Agamemnon) ‘standing about my knees in supplication’ (νῦν οἶω περὶ γούνατ’ ἐμὰ στήσεσθαι Ἀχαιοὺς | λισομένους· χρεῖω γὰρ ἰκάνεται οὐκέτ’ ἀνεκτός, 11.609-10), the absurdity of his demands, from a collective viewpoint, is emphatically underlined, since for Agamemnon to act thus would be to place himself in Achilles’ power, and recognize Achilles as his superior, in a way that would destroy the entire social structure of the Achaean army.

mean they are of no interest to the gods or operate without them. This fundamental idea is made most explicit in the simile used to describe the rout of the Trojans as they flee from Patroclus' onslaught in Book 16:

ὡς δ' ὑπὸ λαίλαπι πᾶσα κελαινὴ βέβριθε χθῶν  
 ἡματ' ὄπωρινῶι, ὅτε λαβρότατον χέει ὕδωρ  
 Ζεὺς, ὅτε δὴ ἄνδρεςσι κοτεσσάμενος χαλεπήνηι,  
 οἱ βίηι εἰν ἀγορῆι σκολιὰς κρίνωσι θέμιστας,  
 ἐκ δὲ Δίκην ἐλάσωσι, θεῶν ὅπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες,  
 τῶν δὲ τε πάντες μὲν ποταμοὶ πλήθουσι ῥέοντες,  
 πολλὰς δὲ κλειτὸς τότ' ἀποτμήγουσι χαράδραι,  
 ἐς δ' ἄλλα πορφυρέην μεγάλην στενάχουσι ῥέουσαι  
 ἐξ ὀρέων ἐπικάρ, μινύθει δὲ τε ἔργ' ἀνθρώπων,  
 ὡς ἵπποι Τρωαὶ μεγάλα στενάχοντο θέουσαι. (Il. 16.384-93)

As the whole dark earth is drenched by a storm on an autumn day, when Zeus pours down the most violent rain, in furious anger at men who force through crooked judgements in the assembly and drive out justice, with no regard for the vengeful gaze of the gods; then all their rivers flow in spate, and the torrents cut away many slopes as they rush with a mighty roar headlong from the mountains into the swelling sea, and the cultivated fields of men are ruined – so mighty was the roar of the Trojan horses as they hurtled on.

One scholar remarks that the Zeus found here 'is hard to reconcile with the Zeus we know so well from Homer's scenes on Olympus'.<sup>43</sup> Yet while it is true that explicit statements of Zeus's interest in justice are far less conspicuous in the *Iliad* than in the *Odyssey*, we should be wary of taking too narrow a view of Zeus's concerns in the former,<sup>44</sup> since he is clearly concerned to maintain order at a cosmic level, while the audience's knowledge that Troy will fall gives the Achaeans' appeals to a punishing Zeus considerable force.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the manner in which the simile links justice (δίκη) to Zeus and the other gods is entirely consistent with the rest of the poem. Moreover, the simile's equation of justice with the making of correct judgements or decisions illustrates an important pattern. For as Zeus's decisions determine justice (or order) on a cosmic level, so the decisions of human judges establish social norms. Thus δίκη (*qua* 'justice') is essentially the revelation of particular decisions.<sup>46</sup> In the human realm these are based on social customs (acting as precedents); in the divine realm on the inscrutable will of Zeus.

<sup>43</sup> Redfield (1994) 76.

<sup>44</sup> As does Mueller (1984) 147, for example, who, having noted the theme of 'social justice' in the *Odyssey* and Hesiod, claims that when the Iliadic Zeus 'punishes the wicked with a flood, not unlike the Old Testament god, the sentiment and language of the passage stick out like a sore thumb' (16.384).

<sup>45</sup> The accounts typically given of this simile are revealing in their own way. Dodds (1951) 32 took it to be 'a reflex of later conditions which, by an inadvertence common in Homer, has been allowed to slip into a simile'. But the notion that the similes represent a 'later' stage, whether of thought or of language (as in, e.g., Shipp (1972)), is no longer convincing (even Janko (1982) 192, who is generally sympathetic to Shipp's method, remarks that 'we cannot expect a high degree of precision from a dating technique of this nature'). Kearns (2004) 69 n.14, by contrast, notes Zeus's anger with injustice, then adds 'but this is a simile, not part of the

main narrative'. Yet most similes, as here, are presented from the narrator's (authoritative) viewpoint. They are no less significant for not being part of the 'story'. And, as always, the simile's context is crucial to its impact (*cf.* Minchin (2001) 132-60): since the surrounding narrative describes the Trojans being driven back by a Greek assault which is supported by Zeus, the audience is encouraged to relate the bad judgements punished by Zeus to those of the Trojans themselves (*cf.* Moulton (1977) 37). The narrator suggests divine punishment of the Trojans even more explicitly in the simile used to describe Achilles' onslaught at 21.522-5, where the suffering of the Trojans is compared to that of a city set in flames because of the anger of the gods.

<sup>46</sup> *Cf.* Benveniste (1973) 386, who defines δίκη 'literally as "the fact of showing verbally and with authority what must be", in other words it is the imperative pronouncement of justice'. As Benveniste (1973) 379-80 notes, δίκη and θέμις (*cf.* θέμιστας, *Il.* 16.387) represent

The importance of Zeus's judgements can be seen most clearly in Hera's response in Book 8 after she and Athena have been warned that Zeus will destroy their chariot with a lightning bolt if they do not stop helping the Achaeans:

ἦ μὲν ἄρ' ὡς εἰποῦσ' ἀπέβη πόδας ὠκέα Ἴρις·  
 αὐτὰρ Ἀθηναίην Ἥρη πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπεν·  
 “ὦ πόποι, αἰγιόχοιο Διὸς τέκος, οὐκέτ' ἐγὼ γε  
 νῶϊ ἐὼ Διὸς ἄντα βροτῶν ἔνεκα πτολεμίζειν.  
 τῶν ἄλλος μὲν ἀποφθίσθω, ἄλλος δὲ βιώτω,  
 ὅς κε τύχηι. κείνος δὲ τὰ ἄφρονέων ἐνὶ θυμῶι  
 Τρωσὶ τε καὶ Δαναοῖσι δικάζέτω, ὡς ἐπεικές.” (Il. 8.425-31)

So speaking swift-footed Iris departed, and Hera addressed Athena, ‘Oh now, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, I can no longer allow us to fight against Zeus for mortals’ sake. Let them die or live as their luck will have it. But as for Zeus, let him have his own ideas and judge between Trojans and Danaans as is fitting.’

Confronted by Zeus's certain opposition, Hera concedes immediately. Her resigned *δικάζετω*, which might be translated as ‘let him pursue his judgements’ (8.431), underlines the formative rôle of Zeus's will in the outcome of the war (*cf.* §I(c) above). The human parallels to divine *δίκη* as both ‘decision’ and ‘justice/order’ are well illustrated by the judgement scene in the city at peace depicted on Achilles’ new shield (18.497-508). When a dispute arises over the correct restitution for a man's death, public opinion is divided and a solution is sought from the elders of the city:

λαοὶ δ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἐπήπυον ἀμφὶς ἀρωγοί·  
 κήρυκες δ' ἄρα λαὸν ἐρήτυον. οἱ δὲ γέροντες  
 εἶατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῶι ἐνὶ κύκλωι,  
 σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἠεροφώνων·  
 τοῖσιν ἔπειτ' ἦισσον, ἀμοιβηδὶς δ' ἐδίκασον.  
 κείτο δ' ἄρ' ἐν μέσσοισι δῶα χρυσοῖο τάλαντα,  
 τῶι δόμεν, ὃς μετὰ τοῖσι δίκην ἰθύντατα εἴποι. (Il. 18.502-8)

The people were cheering on both men, showing support for each, while the heralds tried to restrain them. And the elders sat on polished stone seats in the sacred circle, taking the speaker's staff in their hands from the loud-voiced heralds, with which they then sprang up and gave their judgement, each in turn. And in the middle lay two talents of gold, to be given to the one who among the elders spoke the straightest judgement.

As in the simile of Book 16, justice is practised (or, in the former case, abused) εἰν ἀγορῆι (16.387, 18.497). Moreover, the elders' judgements are themselves subject to public approval (which determines who is to receive the prize), making their *δίκη* a truly communal decision. Thus the ‘straightest judgement’ (*cf.* 18.508) is that which best expresses the shared evaluative beliefs of the people, yet the gods' interest in human justice is equally prominent, since the arbitration takes place ‘in the sacred circle’ (18.504), and so under the protection of Zeus.<sup>47</sup>

different aspects of the concept of order ‘which governs also the orderliness of the universe, the movement of the stars, the regularity of the seasons and the years; and further the relations of gods and men, and finally the relations of men to one another’ (emphasis added). The idea of order is also present in the root meaning of *δίκη* as ‘point to’ (~ δείκνυμι) or ‘point out a way’ (*cf.* Schmidt (1991); Chantraine (1968) 284; Frisk (1954-73) 1.393-4).

In fact, *δίκη* is often best translated as ‘order’ since this avoids the intellectual and ethical baggage of ‘justice’; see §I(f).

<sup>47</sup> As Janko (1992) 366 comments on 16.388 (ἐκ δὲ Δίκην ἐλάσσωσι, θεῶν ὄπιν οὐκ ἀλέγοντες): ‘the formula “gaze of the gods”, θεῶν ὄπις, already connotes “punishment”’. *Cf.* also Burkert (1981) 199.

*(f) Moral anthropomorphism, order and the will of Zeus*

It has been argued above that the prevalent view of the Homeric gods, which treats the gods of the *Iliad* (in contrast to those of the *Odyssey*) as immoral or amoral, is mistaken (*cf. esp. §I(a)*). Nevertheless, insofar as the standard view implies that there is something different and more overtly disturbing about the *Iliad*'s presentation of the gods, it does reflect a genuine feature of the poem, namely the more striking moral anthropomorphism of its gods. It is misleading, however, to interpret the *Iliad*'s moral anthropomorphism (as many scholars do) as if it were incompatible with the gods also being (as the characters themselves view them) enforcers of justice. This distortion often stems from a false view of divine justice itself, which assumes that because the gods are not perfect moral exemplars they cannot therefore enforce or care about basic issues of right and wrong. Yet the two notions are no more incompatible than the idea that a human being should act with δίκη. And although the idea that selfish and all-too-human gods are problematic (and perhaps not worthy of veneration) may well have preceded Xenophanes, the gods of early Greek epic still enforce a basic form of justice which is no more and no less than the characters themselves demand.<sup>48</sup> There is therefore no fundamental contradiction between the gods' personal projects and the system of reciprocal justice that they sanction. Thus, for example, one scholar considers Zeus's punishment of Hera (*Il.* 15.18-33; *cf. n.34*) to be irreconcilable with his patronage of justice, and remarks 'Zeus often seems far more concerned with his honor than with the rights and wrongs of his relations with gods and men.'<sup>49</sup> Yet these two facets of Zeus's rôle – his concern for his own τιμή and his concern for justice – are far from being irreconcilable (and only become so if one operates with an inappropriate conception of justice). Moreover, it is a basic feature of the moral universe of the poems that justice is closely tied to sensitivity about one's own honour as well as respect for the honour of others.

Though the same pattern of justice operates in both Homeric epics, the *Iliad* poet makes his narrative more problematic, not only through the presence of sympathetic Trojan characters, but also by having a number of gods fighting on their behalf. The suitors of the *Odyssey*, by contrast, though not all wicked (*cf. §II(h)*), are far less sympathetic and enjoy no divine support. It is right that the Trojans should be punished for their conduct, not least because a Trojan started the war, but the narrative draws attention to the disproportionate suffering involved, since the foreshadowing of Troy's destruction means that many innocent Trojans will pay for the mistakes of Paris and Priam.<sup>50</sup> Such harsh and disproportionate punishment may be a traditional idea (*cf. Hes. W&D 240-7*),<sup>51</sup> but is no less disturbing for being so. The poet makes the imbalance particularly emphatic in his only explicit allusion to the Judgement of Paris:

ἔνθ' ἄλλοις μὲν πᾶσιν ἐήνδανεν, οὐδέ ποθ' Ἥρηι  
οὐδὲ Ποσειδάων' οὐδὲ γλαυκῶπιδι κούρηι,  
ἀλλ' ἔχον, ὡς σφιν πρῶτον ἀπήχθετο Ἴλιος ἱρή  
καὶ Πρίαμος καὶ λαὸς Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔνεκ' ἄτης  
ὃς νείκεσσε θεάς, ὅτε οἱ μέσσαυλον ἴκοντο,  
τὴν δ' ἦινησ', ἥ οἱ πόρε μαχλοσύνην ἀλεγεινήν. (*Il.* 24.25-30)

<sup>48</sup> Even if the human characters' limited knowledge means that they may doubt whether the justice they ask for will come about, as when Agamemnon doubts Zeus's promise that he will sack Troy (*Il.* 9.19-20).

<sup>49</sup> Zanker (1994) 4.

<sup>50</sup> The pattern of misdeed and (disproportionate) punishment is starkly underlined by the narrator when Agamemnon's command that all the Trojans should be annihilated, even the children in the womb, is described as αἴσιμα ('justified', 6.62). A further example, the con-

sequences of what the narrator calls Paris' 'ruinous randiness' (24.30), is considered below. The narrator applies a similar judgement to a Greek error (Achilles' rejection of the Embassy and the sufferings it brings upon the Achaeans) when Thetis' prayer to Zeus is condemned as ἐξαισίον ('disastrous', 15.598).

<sup>51</sup> Hdt. 2.120.5 takes the death of innocent Trojans to show that the gods mete out great punishments for great crimes.

This [*sc.* to steal the body of Hector] was pleasing to all the other gods, but not to Hera or Poseidon or the bright-eyed maiden. They hung on to the hatred they had from the first for sacred Ilios and Priam and his people, because of the folly of Alexander, who had found fault with the goddesses when they came to his farm's inner courtyard, and approved of her who offered him ruinous randiness.

As Macleod comments, 'There is a powerful antithesis between the accumulated Ἴλιος ἱρὴ ἢ καὶ Πριάμος καὶ λαός and the single Ἀλεξάνδρου. The gods' anger with one citizen and his folly affects the whole city.'<sup>52</sup> Macleod well compares *Il.* 6.55-60, 'where Agamemnon's vindictive words against Troy are said to be just (62), but are also felt to be terrible'. Yet although the pattern of δίκη that dominates the poem is in some measure ruthless, it is also *impartial*, since it governs the Achaeans no differently from the Trojans.<sup>53</sup> Thus the entire Achaean army must endure the plague that results from Agamemnon's mistake (1.43-52), while Achilles' rejection of the Embassy ensures the Trojans' further success, decimating the Achaean army and leading to Patroclus' death.<sup>54</sup>

As agents of such retribution, the Homeric gods can appear disturbingly cruel, but other scenes reveal a basic concern for humanity. One of the strongest signs of this is the gods' ultimate approval of Hector's burial. It is clear that in supporting Hector's claim Apollo is acting, as he typically does, out of support for Troy and antipathy to the Achaeans, yet the specific details of his argument reveal a further concern. For while Hera cares only which of the two (Achilles or Hector) is more the *philos* of the gods (24.55-63), Apollo concentrates on Achilles' lack of pity and human respect and on the futility and excessiveness of his conduct (24.33-54).<sup>55</sup> Moreover, it is Apollo's rather than Hera's argument which finds wider support, as Zeus's instructions to Thetis make clear:

“αἶψα μάλ' ἐς στρατὸν ἔλθ'ε καὶ υἱεῖ σῶι ἐπίτειλον·  
σκύζεσθαί οἱ εἰπὲ θεοῦς, ἐμὲ δ' ἔξοχα πάντων  
ἀθανάτων κεχολῶσθαι, ὅτι φρεσὶ μαινομένησιν  
Ἔκτορ' ἔχει παρὰ νηυσὶ κορωνίσιν οὐδ' ἀπέλυσεν,  
αἶ κέν πως ἐμὲ τε δεῖσιν ἀπό θ' Ἔκτορα λύσει.” (Il. 24.112-16)

'Go at once to the camp and give this message to your son: tell him that the gods are angry with him, and that I above all the immortals am filled with wrath, because he in his madness is keeping Hector by the beaked ships and has not given him back. Perhaps he will then in fear of me give Hector back.'

<sup>52</sup> Macleod (1982) 88 on 24.27-8. Indeed, the emphasis on Paris himself is even more pointed insofar as the position of Ἀλεξάνδρου ἔνεκ' ἄτης is otherwise taken up by ἔϋμμελίω Πριάμοιο (*cf.* 4.47, 165, 6.449).

<sup>53</sup> This is a fundamental point, since impartiality is, as Elster (1999) 339 observes (cited by Cairns (2001b) 219 n.45), 'a necessary feature of any view that wants to be taken seriously as a conception of justice'.

<sup>54</sup> However, despite this impartiality, there is a fundamental disparity between gods and mortals, since the gods enjoy the privilege of being able to punish mortals in a way that mortals cannot so easily do if wronged by a god: as Achilles says to Apollo after the god has deceived him and lured him away from the Trojans: νῦν δ' ἐμὲ μὲν μέγα κῆδος ἀφείλεο, τοὺς δ' ἐσάωσας ἰρήϊδιως, ἐπεὶ οὐ τι τίσις γ' ἔδδεισας ὀπίσσω. ἢ σ' ἄν τεισαίμην, εἴ μοι δύνάμις γε παρείη (*Il.* 22.18-20). Speaking to Zeus, Hera craftily exploits the superiority of the gods in order to justify her right to punish the Trojans: καὶ μὲν δὴ πού

τις μέλλει βροτὸς ἀνδρὶ τελέσσαι, ἢ ὅς περ θνητὸς τ' ἐστὶ καὶ οὐ τόσα μῆδεα οἶδεν (18.362-3).

<sup>55</sup> Apollo's protest against Achilles' maltreatment of Hector's corpse is a striking instance of divine pity. Indeed, it is important to stress that Apollo acts out of pity rather than an impartial concern for human morality, for such impartial concern is not the domain of the Homeric gods. The scene is an excellent illustration of how the tensions inherent in the Homeric theodicy, driven by a range of individual desires and relationships, produce an appropriate resolution, just as the quarrelling among the gods eventually results in the destruction of Troy. It is a messy system, but we should resist the temptation to impose moral certainty and neatness on it. For such messiness is not necessarily incompatible with what we would term a 'moral' outcome. Indeed, if it were otherwise, the Homeric gods would have no normative (a better term in this context than 'moral') force at all.

Like Apollo, Zeus expresses his indignation at non-burial in direct speech (this is not a case of character-speech attributing human values to the gods), and he above all the gods is angry at Achilles' excessive behaviour. Moreover, Zeus's solution to the dispute between the gods who pity Hector and the stubborn haters of Troy (Hera, Poseidon and Athena) expresses a desire to uphold a basic human good (respect for the dead and their right to burial).<sup>56</sup> Zeus's proposal thus takes account of the competing claims of the gods, yet ensures that order is restored, mirroring the start of the poem, where Zeus was able to incorporate his obligation to Thetis within the wider plan of Troy's fall.

It has been well observed of Apollo's condemnation of Achilles' conduct that 'this is the only place in the *Iliad* where *nemesis* is used of the attitude of the gods toward human beings who have broken the moral code' (μη ἀγαθῶι περ ἔοντι νεμεσσηθέωμὲν οἱ ἡμεῖς, 24.53); yet the same scholar continues, 'But it is also true that this notion of god as the guarantor of norms is introduced here *only to be rejected*. Hera protests that Achilles is not human in the ordinary sense; he is a member of the divine community ... Zeus agrees with Hera ... Achilles must be drawn into the divine community' (emphasis added).<sup>57</sup> However, this overlooks Zeus's prominent rôle as the guarantor of a moral and social order which is ensured by the fulfilment of ritual acts (in this case burial).<sup>58</sup> Nor is it clear that Achilles is 'drawn into the divine community' (this argument is part of Hera's rhetorical strategy and a sign of her ulterior motives). It is Achilles' choice whether he releases Hector's body or not, and he is influenced both by fear of Zeus's anger and by a desire for the rich compensation offered by Priam at the suggestion of Zeus (*cf.* 24.112-19, 592-5). Neither reason draws Achilles closer to the gods (nor does his compassion for Priam, whose plight reminds him of his own father: 24.486-512); on the contrary, Achilles' decision is a thoroughly human response, encouraged by Zeus, whose insistence upon Hector's burial recognizes (and restores) the values of social and ritual order. Thus Zeus's decision at the end of the poem embodies the same principle of divine concern for human order that has operated throughout.<sup>59</sup>

As we have seen, what counts as δίκη ('justice') among the human characters of the *Iliad* is closely related to δίκη or 'order' at a cosmic level, since the will of Zeus extends to both. Moreover, Zeus's maintenance of order is linked to his own power, as the several reminders of his rise to supremacy make clear (n.34). Yet Zeus cannot ignore the competing plans of the other gods, and this leads to a narrative pattern which we can trace throughout early Greek hexameter poetry (*cf.* esp. §II(e) and III(b)), whereby Zeus's will is realized through the actions and reactions of others, including other gods. In short, the competing wills of the gods are seen to result

<sup>56</sup> For burial as the γέρας θανόντων, *cf.* Hera's words to Zeus on the death of Sarpedon (16.456-7), which are repeated by Zeus in his instructions to Apollo (16.674-5). Achilles speaks in the same terms of mourning Patroclus (23.9). Yet although burial is a basic human good, it would not be true to say that, because Hector is dead and can no longer sacrifice to them, the gods have nothing to gain by it. For like the gods' interest in oaths, guest-friendship and supplication, all of which impinge on their own τιμή, divine anger at non-burial is directed to upholding a principle wherein their own interests are at stake. All relationships are reciprocal, and the gods require honours, temples and sacrifices, since that is their γέρας. If the gods were simply to let terrible things (such as non-burial) happen continuously to those who honour them, those honours would end or the community would cease to exist (Nestor's complaint to 'father Zeus' at *Il.*

15.372-6 makes the reciprocity clear; *cf.* also 8.236-41), and neither would be the most desirable outcome for any god (or mortal).

<sup>57</sup> Redfield (1994) 213.

<sup>58</sup> As with their protection of strangers and suppliants, the gods' supposed care for the dead may be viewed as a projection of human anxiety about the vulnerability of the defenceless in their communities, extending succour to those individuals (e.g. outsiders, the helpless and the dead) whose condition weakens their ability to assert their customary claims to respect and justice.

<sup>59</sup> The re-establishment of order coincides with the resolution of Achilles' wrath and its consequences, creating a strong and satisfying narrative closure, even if the audience remains aware that Achilles' anger could flare up again.

in a fixed order which is identified with the will of Zeus.<sup>60</sup> Thus, as Achilles prepares to re-enter battle, Zeus assembles the gods and encourages them to assist the side of their choice, so that Achilles may not sack Troy ‘beyond what is fated’ (20.23-30); but it is clear that Apollo and the other pro-Trojan gods will eventually have to give way, since Troy must fall. The fall of Troy is itself presented as part of an impartial system of divine justice in which both Trojans and Achaeans face the consequences of their misdeeds. This pattern is overlooked by those who claim that a concern for justice is the preserve of the gods of the *Odyssey*, as if the fall of Troy were not justified within the *Iliad* itself.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, as we shall see, the pattern of justice and cosmic order embodied in the *Iliad* is also found throughout early Greek hexameter poetry. Thus, to single out the *Iliad* as presenting merely ‘a theodicy of sorts’<sup>62</sup> obscures not only the poem’s comprehensive and compelling depiction of what the gods stand for in relation to humanity, but also its essential continuity in this respect with the wider tradition of early Greek epic.

## II

### (a) *The Odyssey: a new divine world?*

It is still widely believed that the divine world of the *Odyssey* is substantially different from that of the *Iliad*.<sup>63</sup> Thus studies of the *Odyssey* abound with such claims as ‘the nature of the gods has changed’,<sup>64</sup> a transformation that is often said to result in ‘a “purer” conception of god’.<sup>65</sup> This theological difference is, in turn, frequently presented as being most acute in the sphere of divine justice, since, it is alleged, the gods of the *Odyssey* are more moralistic in their attitude to human wickedness.<sup>66</sup> Even Lloyd-Jones, who otherwise stresses the continuity of religious and moral ideas throughout early Greek literature, endorses the standard view of the *Odyssey*, namely, ‘that its theology is in some important ways different from that of the *Iliad*’.<sup>67</sup> By contrast, the foremost aim of this section is to challenge the orthodox view: firstly, by showing that, for all its characteristic themes and ideas, the *Odyssey* does not differ substantially from the *Iliad* in its presentation of the gods or their interest in justice; and secondly, by complicating the familiar picture of the *Odyssey* as a tale of clear-cut crime and punishment. Through a close analysis of Zeus’s opening speech (the *locus classicus* for moral interpretations of the poem), and by focusing on the rôle of divine rivalry and anger, reciprocal justice and the will of Zeus, this section aims to show the essential continuity of religious attitudes and social values in the Homeric epics.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Despite his privileged access to ‘great Zeus’s will’ via Thetis (ἦ οἱ ἀπαγγέλλεσκε Διὸς μέγαλοιο νόημα, 17.409), Achilles does not know that Patroclus will be killed (cf. 18.9-11). Yet even the gods themselves cannot know all of Zeus’s plans in advance. The narrator, by contrast, can, and so connects Patroclus’ death to the ‘mind of Zeus’ (16.688-91). Similarly, characters often refer to ‘the gods’ in general, but the narrator can name the actual god responsible.

<sup>61</sup> Cf., e.g., Kirk (1962) 291: ‘The gods of the *Iliad*, indeed, are almost wholly indifferent to this concept [i.e. justice], and determine events like the fate of Troy from motives of their convenience.’ Yet this approach ignores the *multiple* causes of the fall of Troy within the *Iliad* (the Judgement of Paris, the rape of Helen, the broken truce, the will of Zeus), all of which have nothing to do with ‘convenience’, but much to do with justice and cosmic order.

<sup>62</sup> So Mueller (1984) 147, exemplifying a widespread view of the *Iliad vis-à-vis* the *Odyssey*.

<sup>63</sup> Cf., e.g., Kearns (2004) 67-9, entitled ‘The gods in the *Odyssey*: differences between the epics’.

<sup>64</sup> Burkert (1997) 259; cf., e.g., Griffin (1980) 51: ‘The gods who preside over this world have also changed their nature.’

<sup>65</sup> Burkert (1997) 262.

<sup>66</sup> E.g. Mueller (1984) 147: ‘These differences are most marked when it comes to justice. The *Odyssey* is a model tale of poetic justice.’

<sup>67</sup> Lloyd-Jones (1983) 28.

<sup>68</sup> Contrast, for example, Finley (1977) 140: ‘The Olympian religion could not stand still and yet survive. The intellectual revolution reflected in the *Iliad* required still another revolution, a moral one, in which Zeus was transformed from the king of a heroic society to the principle of cosmic justice.’

For just as scholars continue to underestimate the extent to which the *Iliad* depicts a pattern of norms and punishments, so they still exaggerate the moral simplicity of the *Odyssey*, presenting it as an uncomplicated tale of villains punished and the righteous rewarded. There is no denying the more explicit ethical tone of the *Odyssey*, evident from the very first scene on Olympus onwards, but this does not mean that the theology of the *Odyssey* is in any way different from that which dominates the *Iliad*. Both poems explore the problems inherent in divine justice, and while the *Odyssey* often foregrounds a straightforward vision of the gods' concern for moral standards,<sup>69</sup> it also presents the reality of divine intervention in a manner no less disturbing than the *Iliad*. The Homeric epics inhabit the same moral and theological world, and both ask similar questions of the gods and the extent to which their actions are connected to social norms of justice.

(b) *The Odyssey: a new moral world?*

Zeus's opening speech in Book 1 of the *Odyssey* is regularly interpreted as constituting 'a radical shift from the divine attitudes displayed in the *Iliad*'.<sup>70</sup> This shift is, furthermore, said to be an ethical one, as if Zeus's assertion that humans are responsible for their own sufferings represented a moral idea alien to the *Iliad*.<sup>71</sup> Zeus's speech is certainly programmatic for what follows in the work; but that it represents an 'ethical transformation of the gods'<sup>72</sup> is demonstrably false. Let us first consider Zeus's actual words. Recalling Aegisthus' death at the hands of Orestes, Zeus addresses the other gods:

“ὦ πόποι, οἶον δὴ νῦ θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.  
ἔξ ἡμέων γὰρ φασὶ κάκ' ἔμμεναι· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ  
σφῆισιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,  
ὡς καὶ νῦν Αἴγισθος...” (Od. 1.32-5)

'Oh, how these mortals blame the gods! They say their troubles come from us, and yet they too themselves, through their own reckless acts, have sorrows beyond their destined share, as does Aegisthus.'

Zeus criticizes mortals for failing to recognize that their suffering is compounded by their own outrageous behaviour. This is certainly a strong condemnation of human folly, but it should not be taken to imply (as is often the case) that responsibility for human suffering lies with humanity alone, or that the gods of the *Odyssey* will be more concerned with proper human behaviour *per se* than are the gods of the *Iliad*.

Scholars are certainly right to stress the importance of Zeus's *complaint* (which in itself makes for an arresting opening), since reckless behaviour and its punishment will be central to the narrative, but no less significant for the theology of the poem as a whole is Zeus's acknowledgement that much of humanity's suffering is due to the gods.<sup>73</sup> In other words, while Zeus

<sup>69</sup> Cf., e.g., Eumaeus on the gods' attitude to the suitors (Od. 14.83-4; quoted above as an epigraph to this article). However, there is no mention of divine punishment for the Phoenician traders who conspired to abduct Eumaeus as a child and then sold him into slavery (15.403-84).

<sup>70</sup> Kearns (2004) 69.

<sup>71</sup> Cf., e.g., Edwards (1987) 130: 'In the *Odyssey*, however, the gods are much more concerned with moral-

ity ... [The *Odyssey* poet] is presenting the *beginning* of the idea that men are responsible for their own misfortunes' (emphasis added).

<sup>72</sup> See n.5.

<sup>73</sup> Scholars and translators often fail to give the καὶ of line 33 its full force, since it implies '[they suffer because of their own wickedness] *in addition to the troubles sent by us* [i.e. the gods]'. As Tsagarakis (2000) 47 n.163 notes, 'The καὶ makes all the difference here.'

foregrounds human disregard of divine warnings,<sup>74</sup> the subsequent narrative also makes clear the rôle of the gods as a source of human suffering (*cf. esp.* §II(d) and (g) on Poseidon and Helios).<sup>75</sup> And since these are both central aspects of the interaction of gods and mortals in the *Iliad* as well, it is misleading to speak of a ‘radical shift’ in the theodicy of the *Odyssey*.

(c) *Divine rivalry and anger*

Those who detect a different theology at work in the *Odyssey* often elide the rôle of divine rivalry and anger, both as a catalyst of the poem’s plot and as a central element of the gods’ attitudes to one another and to humanity.<sup>76</sup> Yet the focus in the second half of the poem on Odysseus’ punishment of the suitors, which is uncontested at the divine level, does not annul the clash of divine wills that dominates the first half. Athena takes advantage of Poseidon’s absence from the divine assembly on Olympus in order to raise the issue of Odysseus’ delayed return (*Od.* 1.22-7, 45-62).<sup>77</sup> When Poseidon realizes what has been done behind his back, he becomes ‘even angrier’ (ὁ δ’ ἐχόσαστο κηρόθι μᾶλλον, 5.284). For Athena has in effect exploited his absence in order to undermine the concomitants of his superior status. Thus she later defends her tardy assistance by saying to Odysseus, ‘But you see I was unwilling to fight Poseidon, my father’s brother’ (ἀλλά τοι οὐκ ἐθέλησα Ποσειδάωνι μάχεσθαι | πατροκασιγνήτωι, 13.341-2).<sup>78</sup> And it is only after securing Zeus’s approval for Odysseus’ homecoming that Athena acts to bring it about.<sup>79</sup> In short, as in the *Iliad*, Athena’s plans must operate within a divine society whose rivalries and hierarchies produce not only tensions but also a structure of authority.

It is often claimed that the gods of the *Odyssey* have ‘changed their nature’.<sup>80</sup> Yet although fewer gods are individualized in the narrative (compared to the *Iliad*), it is clear that they retain their typical characteristics, of which the most prominent are their loyalties to human favourites (Athena and Odysseus) or family (Poseidon and Polyphemus) and their ruthless punishment of those who anger or offend them (*cf.* Poseidon’s punishment of the Phaeacians, Athena’s killing

<sup>74</sup> The gods’ warning enhances Aegisthus’ folly (and prepares for that of Odysseus’ companions and the suitors, who similarly ignore divine signs). Yet the fact that Hector, too, ignores omens sent by Zeus (*Il.* 12.217-43, 13.821-32) reminds us that the *Odyssey* poet could have told Aegisthus’ story in a less negative way, i.e. as a revenge narrative, taking into account what Agamemnon’s father had done to Aegisthus’ father.

<sup>75</sup> This tells against the tendency to treat the gods of the *Odyssey* as more distanced from human affairs: e.g. Lesky (2001) 190: ‘Zeus emphatically dissociates himself and the world of the gods from the activity of men.’ *Cf.* Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 76: ‘The overall thrust of the first Olympian scene in the *Odyssey* is an insistence on the separation between gods and mortals ... The gods, then, become dispensers of justice ... in order to enforce a distinction between the human and the divine plane.’ The impression of distant gods is rather a product of the nature and scope of the story; see §II(i). As with καί (1.33), ὑπὲρ μόρον in line 34 is important, since it expresses the traditional idea that no human life is free of suffering dispensed by the gods (*cf. Il.* 24.527-33). So while it may be true that the *Odyssey*’s tale of errors and consequences is less complex and less tragic than the *Iliad*’s, there is no question of the gods being disassociated from human life and suffering.

<sup>76</sup> E.g. Griffin (1980) 54: ‘we are generally given the impression of one undivided and righteous divine will’.

<sup>77</sup> Athena’s ingenuity extends to helping Odysseus’ son as well. Disguised as Mentor, she prays to Poseidon to grant Telemachus a safe homecoming from Pylos, thus invoking the god even as she is working against him (3.55-61). The narrator adds pointedly, as if to explain this unique combination of invocation and deception, ‘so she prayed, and she herself was bringing it all to fulfilment’ (ὡς ἄρ’ ἔπειτ’ ἤρατο καὶ αὐτὴ πάντα τελέυτα, 3.62).

<sup>78</sup> In the *Iliad* Poseidon is particularly insistent on his rights within the divine family; *cf. Il.* 15.185-99.

<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Athena is careful not to challenge Poseidon openly even after Zeus has given his approval: thus she grants Odysseus’ prayer that he be well received by the Phaeacians, αὐτῶι δ’ οὐ πω φαίνεται ἐναντίη· αἶδετο γὰρ ῥα | πατροκασιγνήτων (‘but she did not yet appear to him face to face, since she respected her father’s brother’, *Od.* 6.329-30). One might compare Poseidon’s own conduct in the *Iliad*, where he recognizes Zeus’s authority (since he is ‘mightier’; *cf.* 8.209-11) and therefore takes care to aid the Achaeans covertly (13.354-7); *cf.* also Apollo’s refusal to come to blows with his uncle Poseidon at *Il.* 21.461-9.

<sup>80</sup> See n.64; *cf.* Chantraine (1954) 79: ‘Dans l’*Illiade* le divin ... reste, au mauvais sens du mot, profondément humain, passionné, trompeur et rancunier ... Dans l’*Odyssee* l’idée divine se relie à la morale.’

of Amphinomus: §II(d) and (h)). Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus is motivated by kinship and personal vengeance, not by any abstract (or un-Iliadic) sense of morality. The narrator underlines from the start the importance of Poseidon's anger to his account of Odysseus' return:

θεοὶ δ' ἐλέαιρον ἅπαντες  
νόσφι Ποσειδάωνος· ὃ δ' ἀσπερχὲς μενέαινε  
ἀντιθέωι Ὀδυσῆι πάρος ἦν γαίαν ἰκέσθαι. (Od. 1.19-21)

All the gods pitied him except Poseidon; he raged ceaselessly against godlike Odysseus until he reached his own land.

Although Odysseus' actions have not offended the other gods, it would be a mistake to ignore the wrath of Poseidon, or treat it as aberrant.<sup>81</sup> As Clay observes, 'Interpretations that try to force the destruction of Odysseus' companions and the sufferings of Odysseus himself at the hands of Poseidon into the moral pattern of Aegisthus and the suitors must be recognized for what they are: Procrustean attempts to regularize and make uniform the morality of the *Odyssey*.'<sup>82</sup> No less misleading are those approaches which seek to treat instances of divine anger as relics of a more 'primitive' mentality or cosmos.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the story of Odysseus' return is itself only one of many Greek *nostoi* disrupted by divine anger, as the poet often reminds us (1.325-7, 3.130-66, 4.499-511, 5.108-11).<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the poet sees no contradiction between Athena's destruction of the returning Greeks for their failure to punish Locrian Ajax's attempted rape of Cassandra and her desire to save Odysseus from Poseidon's anger (cf. 1.325-7, 3.134-5, 4.502, 6.323-31). Her positive and negative rôles spring from typical divine concerns, namely to punish sacrilege (the attempted rape took place in her temple at Troy) and to support her human protégé (cf. esp. 13.291-310).

*(d) Spheres of power and punishment: Poseidon and the Phaeacians*

The continuity of religious thought in the Homeric epics is well illustrated by Poseidon's punishment of the Phaeacians. Critics who presume a more 'moral' theodicy in the *Odyssey* inevitably detect in this episode a range of (illusory) problems and tensions. Thus one scholar argues that 'there is a deep-seated disjuncture: one of the *Odyssey*'s best known incidents does not conform to its dominant ethical categories, as exemplified by the suitors' fate and the paradeigma of Aegisthus. This is surprising at the least, and calls for an explanation. Why is Poseidon's anger not brought into closer conformity with the prevailing religious and moral

<sup>81</sup> Cf. S. West (1988) 61: 'Though the wrath of Poseidon is repeatedly mentioned, it has little effect; the poet deliberately avoids conflict between Poseidon and Athena over Odysseus (cf. xiii 341ff.)' Yet while it is a typical theme of the *Iliad* that gods should avoid fighting one another βροτῶν ἕνεκα (cf. 1.573-5, 8.427-30, 21.357-60, 462-7), it is not true of either poem (nor of Poseidon in the *Odyssey*: cf. §II(d)) that the gods' personal alliances or anger have 'little effect'. A striking exception is *Od.* 4.502, where it is said that Locrian Ajax could still have survived, *despite* Athena's wrath (καὶ νόσφιν ἐκφυγε κῆρα, καὶ ἐχθόμενός περ' Ἀθήνην), had he not offended the gods with his boasting (like his greater namesake: cf. *Soph. Aj.* 764-77) and been destroyed by Poseidon.

<sup>82</sup> Clay (1983) 218.

<sup>83</sup> Cf., e.g., Segal (1992) for an attempt to bracket off 'less moral, more "primitive" divine behavior in a well-demarcated section of the poem, the fabulous realm between Troy and Ithaca in books 5-13' (p. 490). Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 79 claim that 'Poseidon and Polyphemus are exceptions which serve to highlight, by contrast, the progressive thrust of the story.' They also describe Poseidon and Polyphemus as 'rather primitive figures who hark back to modes of behaviour which prevailed in the earlier history of the cosmos' (p. 92). Yet Poseidon's wrath and revenge, far from being 'exceptions', are in fact *typical* features of the universal order under Zeus, and Zeus himself sanctions Poseidon's punishment of the Phaeacians; see §II(d).

<sup>84</sup> For the importance of (divine) anger to both Homeric epics, see Woodhouse (1930) 29-40; Hölscher (1988) 268-9.

ethos of the *Odyssey*, the one which is categorically enunciated at the beginning, and which informs the central action?<sup>85</sup> The implicit assumptions of this approach are clear: Zeus's proem presents a radically different moral world, to which the rest of the *Odyssey* should conform; where it does not conform, the theodicy of the poem is inconsistent. Yet, as we have seen, the (still influential) idea that Poseidon's personal revenge and the supposedly more enlightened viewpoint of Zeus represent two conflicting patterns of justice is mistaken.<sup>86</sup>

The positions adopted by Zeus and Poseidon are entirely consistent; they are also familiar from the *Iliad*. Nevertheless, Poseidon's punishment of the Phaeacians, with Zeus's approval, remains – from a human perspective – disturbing. For as Alcinous makes clear, the Phaeacians offer to help Odysseus because of their concern for strangers and suppliants (8.544-7); yet Zeus, the patron of strangers and suppliants, allows them to be punished.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, Zeus not only approves of Poseidon's plan to smite the Phaeacians' ship as it returns from Ithaca,<sup>88</sup> and to envelop their city behind a mountain,<sup>89</sup> but also suggests turning the ship to stone, making it a permanent memorial of the Phaeacians' punishment (13.154-8).<sup>90</sup> By human standards of justice Zeus's collaboration may appear vindictive,<sup>91</sup> but it embodies a basic feature of his maintenance of divine order, since even Zeus cannot interfere constantly in other gods' spheres of influence; thus a god's decision to exercise his authority in his own sphere may take precedence over Zeus's general protection of the helpless and vulnerable. It is made clear that the Phaeacians, who have a privileged relationship with the gods (οὐ τι κατακρύπτουσιν, ἐπεὶ σφισιν ἐγγύθεν εἰμέν, says Alcinous: 7.205), are particularly close to Poseidon: they are outstanding seafarers and their devotion to sailing and the sea is underlined by the 'speaking names' of the youths who compete in the games (Akroneos, Okyalos, Elatreus, Nauteus, Pymneus, Anchialos, etc.: 8.111-17). Moreover, Alcinous and Arete are both descended from Poseidon (grandson and great-granddaughter respectively: 7.56-66).<sup>92</sup> But while Polyphemus, the son of Poseidon, exploits his kinship to punish his enemy, the Phaeacians suffer from their proximity to the god. Zeus recognizes that the other gods have spheres where their authority is paramount, so that his rôle is to maintain

<sup>85</sup> Fenik (1974) 211-12.

<sup>86</sup> As Reinhardt (1996) 84 notes, this supposed distinction was once used by Analysts to justify the distinction between two poets: 'an older one who would have written about the wrath of Poseidon and a more recent one who dealt with the intervention of Zeus'.

<sup>87</sup> Hence Odysseus' suspicious curse of the Phaeacians, spoken as he wakes on Ithaca, is doubly ironic: ὦ πόποι, οὐκ ἄρα πάντα νοήμονες οὐδὲ δίκαιοι | ἦσαν Φαιήκων ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες, | οἷ μ' εἰς ἄλλην γαῖαν ἀπήγαγον· ἦ τέ μ' ἔφαντο | ἄξιον εἰς Ἰθάκην εὐδείλιον, οὐδ' ἐτέλεσσαν. | Ζεὺς σφραγίσαιτο ἱκετήσιος, ὅς τε καὶ ἄλλους | ἀνθρώπους ἐφορᾶι καὶ τίνυται, ὅς τις ἀμάρτηι (13.209-14).

<sup>88</sup> In ending the Phaeacians' ability unflinchingly to convey travellers by sea (cf. 13.151-2, 180-3) Poseidon is not only defending his own prerogatives (for the sea as his domain, cf. esp. *Il.* 15.185-93 on the division of τιμαί between Zeus, Poseidon and Hades), but also reinforcing the distinction between human and divine, since such exceptional privileges as that enjoyed by the seafaring Phaeacians are (from the audience's point of view) a thing of the past.

<sup>89</sup> For the negative aitiology here, explaining the absence of the Phaeacians from the world of the audience, cf. *Il.* 7.459-63, 12.3-33 on the now vanished

Achaean wall (seen in the latter passage explicitly from the perspective of one looking back on the age of ἡμίθεοι (12.23)). Depictions of the ἡμιθέων γένος ἀνδρῶν as a separate race in early Greek and Near Eastern myth are well discussed by Scodel (1982).

<sup>90</sup> In the case of the Achaean wall, whose fame, Poseidon fears, will eclipse that of the walls of Troy built by Apollo and himself, a potential clash between the will of Zeus and the claims of Poseidon is similarly avoided when Zeus urges Poseidon to obliterate the wall after the Achaeans have returned home (cf. *Il.* 7.446-63).

<sup>91</sup> The gap between the Phaeacians' deeds and their fate is underlined by the wording of Zeus's agreement: ἀνδρῶν δ' εἴ πέρ τις σε βίηι καὶ κάρτεϊ εἰκῶν | οὐ τι τείη, σοὶ δ' ἔστι καὶ ἐξοπῖσω τίσις αἰεὶ. | ἔρξον ὅπως ἐθέλεις καὶ τοὶ φίλον ἔπλετο θυμῶι (13.143-5). The phrase βίηι καὶ κάρτεϊ εἰκῶν is hardly appropriate to the placid Phaeacians (its only other occurrence comes in Odysseus' warning to the decent suitor Amphinomus, where it is used to justify the beggar's god-sent misfortune: 18.139).

<sup>92</sup> Acusilaus took the passages to imply that all the Phaeacians were descended from Poseidon: Ὀμηρος δὲ (*Od.* 5.35, 7.56ff.) οἰκείους τοὺς Φαίακας τοῖς θεοῖς φησι διὰ τὴν ἀπὸ Ποσειδῶνος γένεσιν (*fr.* 4 Fowler = *FGrHist* 2 F 4).

a balance between them. This principle of divine non-interference, combined with Zeus's rôle as ultimate guarantor of order, is part of a theological pattern that runs throughout Greek epic.<sup>93</sup>

(e) *Athena and the will of Zeus*

The rôle of Athena well illustrates how similar the Homeric epics are in the way they explore the gods' self-interest and clashing wills within the over-arching system of Zeus's authority. As we saw (§II(c)), Athena is sensitive to the hierarchy of the divine family, and despite her readiness to deceive Poseidon, she needs Zeus's agreement before she can set in motion the final stage of Odysseus' return. As Hermes reminds Calypso,

“ἀλλὰ μάλ' οὐ πως ἔστι Διὸς νόον αἰγιόχοιο  
οὔτε παρεξελθεῖν ἄλλον θεὸν οὔθ' ἀλιῶσαι.” (*Od.* 5.103-4)

'But there is no way for any other god to elude or bring to nothing the purpose of Zeus who holds the aegis.'

Once Zeus has agreed to Athena's request to bring Odysseus home, which he does at the very start of the narrative (1.64-79), the audience know that Poseidon's anger (however legitimate) will not be allowed to frustrate the will of Zeus and the other gods. The narrator tells us that 'all the gods pitied him except Poseidon' (1.19-20),<sup>94</sup> yet it is appropriate that Athena, Odysseus' traditional patron, should take the lead in securing his return.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, Athena's protection of Odysseus and Telemachus is paralleled by her support for another pair of father and son protégés, Tydeus and Diomedes (e.g. *Il.* 4.387-90, 5.116-17, 5.800-13, 10.284-90; note especially 5.835-59, where Athena acts as Diomedes' charioteer and enables him to wound Ares).

Most strikingly, both epics connect Athena at a number of crucial moments with the will of Zeus. In his major prophecy of Hector's death and Troy's fall, Zeus predicts that the Achaeans will sack Troy 'Αθηναίης διὰ βουλᾶς (*Il.* 15.71). The narrator reinforces this idea as Hector finally breaks through the Achaean defences and reaches their ships:

αὐτὸς γάρ οἱ ἀπ' αἰθέρος ἦεν ἀμύντων  
Ζεύς, ὅς μιν πλεόνεσσι μετ' ἀνδράσι μῶνον ἐόντα  
τίμα καὶ κύδαινε· μινυθᾶδιος γὰρ ἔμελλεν  
ἔσσεσθ'· ἤδη γὰρ οἱ ἐπῶρνε μόρσιμον ἦμαρ  
Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη ὑπὸ Πηλεΐδαο βίηφι. (*Il.* 15.610-14)

His defender from heaven was Zeus himself, who was giving honour and glory to him alone among the many other fighters, for his life was about to be cut short: even now Pallas Athena was hurrying on the day of his fate at the hands of the mighty son of Peleus.

<sup>93</sup> It also underlies the turbulent divine world of tragedy, as is best expressed by Artemis' comforting (or so she hopes) words to Theseus: θεοῖσι δ' ᾧδ' ἔχει νόμος· | οὐδεὶς ἀπαντᾶν βούλεται προθυμία | τῆι τοῦ θέλοντος, ἀλλ' ἀφιστάμεσθ' αἰεὶ. | ἐπεὶ, σάφ' ἴσθι, Ζῆνα μὴ φοβουμένη | οὐκ ἄν ποτ' ἦλθον ἐς τόδ' αἰσχύνης ἐγὼ | ὥστ' ἄνδρα πάντων φίλτατον βροτῶν ἐμοὶ | θανεῖν ἔασαι (*Eur. Hipp.* 1328-34).

<sup>94</sup> As with the return of Hector to Troy (albeit as a corpse), divine pity (*Il.* 24.23) is coupled with a recognition of human piety (the question 'How could I forget his sacrifices to the gods?' underpins Zeus's decision in both cases: *Il.* 24.66-70, *Od.* 1.65-7). As Rutherford (2001) 131 observes, 'Both actions demonstrate the belated but real generosity and justice of the gods: in neither case is

there divine unanimity, nor is partisan feeling absent.' For Hector's burial as a symbol of divine concern for humanity, see §I(f) above.

<sup>95</sup> Cf., e.g., *Il.* 2.169-82 (Athena urges a despondent Odysseus to restrain the Achaeans from flight), *Il.* 10.245 (Diomedes chooses Odysseus to accompany him to the Trojan camp because 'Pallas Athena loves him'), *Il.* 11.437-8 (Athena saves Odysseus' life when he is wounded by Socus' spear), *Il.* 23.770-83 (Athena makes Ajax trip so that Odysseus can win the foot race; Ajax complains that she 'always stands by Odysseus' side like a mother and helps him'). At *Od.* 11.548 Odysseus regrets his victory over Ajax to win the arms of Achilles, 'and the judges were the sons of the Trojans and Pallas Athena' (11.547).

Thus although Athena has her own reasons to hate Troy (*Il.* 24.25-30), her actions are also presented as part of Zeus's larger plan for the city's fall. Her closeness to Zeus is evident when she restrains Ares from seeking vengeance for his dead son Ascalaphus; like her father elsewhere, she acts here to preserve order on Olympus (*Il.* 15.121-41). Athena alone is called ὄβριμοπάτηρ ('the mighty-fathered goddess'), and always in contexts where the will of Zeus is foregrounded, whether in the destruction of Troy or the *nostoi* of the Achaeans.<sup>96</sup> Athena thus works again and again as an extension of the will of Zeus,<sup>97</sup> and her crucial rôle in the preservation of cosmic order is best illustrated by Hesiod's account of her birth, where Zeus swallows Metis, Athena's mother, and so ends the generational conflicts of the gods in his favour (Hes. *Theog.* 886-900; cf. §III(a)). Zeus has his most important children (Apollo, Artemis, Dionysus, Hermes, Athena) by other, less powerful, goddesses in order to prevent Hera posing too great a threat to his supremacy.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, Athena's birth from the head of Zeus symbolizes their peculiarly close relationship, which is embodied in her interventions in support of Zeus's will and cosmic order.<sup>99</sup>

(f) *Odyssean seriousness versus divine frivolity?*

Returning to the *Odyssey* and its alleged theological differences from the *Iliad*, we are now in a better position to consider the episode that is frequently said to highlight (by contrast) the poem's ethically more serious divine world: Demodocus' song of Ares' and Aphrodite's adultery (*Od.* 8.266-366). According to Burkert, 'Demodocus' song makes an unbridgeable contrast with the conception of the gods in *Odyssey* Book 1 as well as with the sublimity of the gods of the *Iliad*.<sup>100</sup> Yet such an analysis of the scene is misleading, since it assumes too rigid a model of divinity in the *Odyssey* and implies that Zeus's opening speech denies the gods their traditional moral anthropomorphism (see, however, §II(b) above). On Burkert's influential reading, the *Odyssey* poet composed his work in the light of the *Iliad*, 'but with a new ethico-religious attitude, [and] saw that in his model there remained a vacuum in his own far-too-serious image of the world and its gods'.<sup>101</sup> There is, however, no such vacuum, nor is the *Odyssey* poet's presentation of the gods excessively serious: for, as in the *Iliad*, the gods are seen to be deeply concerned with proper human behaviour (so that Zeus's programmatic speech is not aberrantly solemn), while at the same time ready to assert their interests and desires at the expense of others (so that there is no lack of anthropomorphism).

Scholars often describe the gods' display of moral anthropomorphism in Demodocus' song as an instance of divine 'frivolity', which is (on the model of the *Iliad*, e.g. the quarrel on Olympus

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Il.* 5.747 (Zeus commands Athena to attack Ares), 8.391 (Athena's disobedience angers Zeus); *Od.* 1.101 (Athena makes for Ithaca, having secured Zeus's agreement to Odysseus' return), 3.135 (Zeus and Athena plan painful *nostoi* for the Achaeans), 24.540 (Zeus and Athena restrain Odysseus from killing the suitors' relatives).

<sup>97</sup> Athena's rôle in the fall of Troy is paralleled by her support for Tydeus and Diomedes at Thebes, which was eventually sacked with Zeus's approval (cf. *Il.* 4.381, 390, 408). Nestor recalls how Zeus and Athena helped the Pylians to rout the deceitful Epeians (*Il.* 11.714-17, 721, 727-9, 736, 753, 758, 761).

<sup>98</sup> Hera's subordinate rôle is embodied in the myths surrounding the birth of her own two children, Hephaestus and Ares. Hephaestus is the product of parthenogenesis, conceived by Hera in anger at Zeus: Ἥρη δ' Ἥφαιστον κλυτὸν οὐ φιλότῃτι μιγείσα ἰ γείνατο, καὶ ζαμένησε καὶ ἤρισεν ὧι παρακοίτη ('but

Hera bore renowned Hephaestus without union with Zeus, as she was furious and quarrelled with her husband', Hes. *Theog.* 927-8); or, if fathered by Zeus, he is a cripple and a cuckold (*Il.* 1.578, 599-600, *Od.* 8.308-12).

Ares is a lesser doublet of Athena the warrior goddess (cf. esp. *Il.* 5.846-63), and hated by Zeus as much as Athena is loved by him (*Il.* 5.887-97), to Ares' great resentment: ἀλλ' ἀνίει, ἐπεὶ αὐτὸς ἐγέναιο παῖδ' αἰδῆλον ('no, you incite her, since you yourself gave birth to this destructive daughter', *Il.* 5.879). The antipathy between Zeus and Ares is extended to their sons, as Heracles kills Cycnus and wounds Ares himself with help from Athena (cf. [Hes.], *Shield of Heracles* 325-471).

<sup>99</sup> Hera's hatred of Zeus's offspring by other women is clearest in the case of Heracles (cf., e.g., *Il.* 14.252-66, 19.96-133). Significantly, Zeus is said to have helped his son many times by sending Athena (*Il.* 8.362-5).

<sup>100</sup> Burkert (1997) 261.

<sup>101</sup> Burkert (1997) 262.

at the end of Book 1, the Theomachia of Books 20-1) intended to contrast with the seriousness of the action on the human level. There is some point to this, since ‘that the divine action [Aphrodite’s adultery] should echo in tones of fun what is deeply serious among men [Penelope’s potential adultery] is typical of the *Iliad*’.<sup>102</sup> Yet the ‘unquenchable laughter’ (*Od.* 8.326)<sup>103</sup> of the (male) gods as they look upon Ares and Aphrodite caught in Hephaestus’ trap should not be allowed to obscure the more serious aspects of the scene itself. For Hephaestus draws attention to his humiliation and demands proper compensation (8.306-20), which he is solemnly promised by Poseidon (8.355-6), should Ares fail ‘to pay all that is right in the presence of the immortal gods’ (τίσειν αἴσιμα πάντα μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν, 8.348). The scene thus underlines the importance of justice (*qua* reparations) among the gods – οὐκ ἔστ’ οὐδὲ ἔοικε τεδὸν ἔπος ἀρνήσασθαι is Hephaestus’s response to Poseidon (8.358) – even as it revels in the bawdy humour of Apollo and Hermes (8.335-42). The combination fits other Olympian scenes in both epics, and is neither out of step with the rest of the *Odyssey*, nor does it prove Iliadic influence, since there was humorous potential in many divine myths and these can scarcely have been limited to the *Iliad* and Book 8 of the *Odyssey* (*cf.*, e.g., *Hom. Hymn Herm.*, discussed below: §III(b)).

(g) *Errors and consequences: Odysseus and his men*

The idea that the *Odyssey* poet aims to present a clear-cut tale of crime and punishment is belied not only by the narrative of Odysseus’ revenge,<sup>104</sup> but also by Odysseus’ own account of his wanderings. For Odysseus describes both himself and his men committing disastrous errors and ignoring warnings, but only Odysseus survives and the audience perceive the crucial difference made by divine protection.<sup>105</sup> Though his comrades urge him to depart, Odysseus insists on meeting the Cyclops, with horrific results for *them*, as Odysseus himself admits:

“ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην - ἦ τ’ ἄν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν -  
 ὄφρ’ αὐτόν τε ἴδοιμι, καὶ εἴ μοι ξείνια δοίη.  
 οὐδ’ ἄρ’ ἔμελλ’ ἐτάροισι φανεῖς ἐρατεινὸς ἔσεσθαι.” (*Od.* 9.228-30)

‘But I would not listen to them – it would have been far better if I had! – since I wanted to see the man, and whether he would give me gifts of friendship. But in fact when he appeared he would not prove a lovely host to my companions.’

Having escaped from the Cyclops’ cave, Odysseus cannot resist boasting of his victory and thereby revealing his name, despite his comrades’ warning that they should get away without notice (9.492-505). As a result Polyphemus is able to pray to Poseidon that if Odysseus reaches Ithaca, he will do so after losing all his comrades (9.528-35).

Although it is his companions’ own decision to kill Helios’ cattle which ensures their destruction (the narrator in the proem calls them ‘fools’ for doing so: 1.7-9), it is clear that Odysseus’ own mistakes have endangered those around him, and that his men are caught up in the curse laid upon their return by the Cyclops. And while it may be too extreme to say that ‘the men are actually driven to the act by the very gods who punish them for it’,<sup>106</sup> it makes no difference to Helios or his vengeful response that the men’s fatal error is the product of exhaustion and star-

<sup>102</sup> Macleod (1982) 3.

<sup>103</sup> This phrase (ἄσβεστος γέλως) is also found in the divine quarrel of *Iliad* 1 (1.599), a less serious counterpart to the human one among the Achaeans: the shared contrast of divine and human supports the view that the song of Ares and Aphrodite is replicating an Iliadic technique without necessarily drawing attention to the difference between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.

<sup>104</sup> See §II(h) below on the killing of the suitors.

<sup>105</sup> *Cf.* 10.277-301, where (despite Poseidon’s wrath) Hermes’ gift of the plant *moly* saves Odysseus from being transformed into a pig by Circe.

<sup>106</sup> Fenik (1974) 213. The men’s crucial mistake is to insist on landing on the island of Thrinacia in the first place, thereby ignoring the warnings of Teiresias and Circe that the island be completely avoided (12.271-94).

vation. For as with Poseidon's anger (whether at Odysseus' blinding of his son or at the Phaeacians' assistance to Odysseus), Zeus respects Helios' right to punish those who offend the god or transgress in his domain. Moreover, Helios' threat to descend to Hades and shine among the dead (if Odysseus' men are not punished) threatens the cosmic order (12.382-3). Zeus's response is immediate:

“Ἡέλι, ἦτοι μὲν σὺ μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι φάεινε  
καὶ θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν ἐπὶ ζείδωρον ἄρουραν·  
τῶν δέ κ’ ἐγὼ τάχα νῆα θοὴν ἀργῆτι κεραυνῶι  
τυτθὰ βαλὼν κεάσαιμι μέσῳ ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ.” (Od. 12.385-8)

‘Helios, keep shining among the immortals and among mortal men upon the grain-giving earth. As for these men, I shall soon strike their swift ship with a flashing thunderbolt and shatter it in small pieces in the midst of the sparkling sea.’

Thus Zeus's promise to see to the men's destruction is motivated not only by a respect for Helios' demand to punish dishonour but also by Zeus's own rôle as the guarantor of universal order. As the god prepares to unleash the storm that will kill Odysseus' men, the poet draws attention to Odysseus' unusual knowledge of Zeus's motivation (he heard of the divine council from Calypso, who heard it from Hermes: 12.389-90), a unique qualification that underlines Odysseus' authority as a narrator (like the poet himself) of the gods' justice.

#### (h) *The killing of the suitors*

Odysseus' vengeance on the suitors is regularly treated as the archetypal embodiment of the *Odyssey's* peculiarly moral pattern. One scholar even remarks that ‘the punishment of the suitors is more than an example of reciprocal vengeance: it is an enactment of absolute and timeless justice’.<sup>107</sup> Yet such a distinction risks creating a misleading scale of values (as if vengeance were inferior to some abstract principle of justice), since reciprocal vengeance is (*qua* divine justice) an ‘absolute and timeless’ principle and the central story pattern of both Homeric epics (and much Greek myth). However, although the punishment of the suitors is unquestionably demanded by the honour-based ethics of Homeric society,<sup>108</sup> the *Odyssey* poet complicates the initial picture of the suitors as a gang of insolent reprobates. The simple moral paradigm that equates all the suitors with Aegisthus, the murderous adulterer, is first proposed by Athena (disguised as Mentès), as she encourages Telemachus to plot their death (1.294-302). Yet this assertively moralistic viewpoint becomes less clear-cut as the narrative develops. For we get a more particularized view of the suitors, revealing that not all of them are wicked, which emerges with greater clarity, significantly, as the vengeance draws closer.

We first hear of Amphinomus, one of two decent suitors, in Book 16, where we are told that ‘his speeches were the most pleasing to Penelope, since he had a sensible mind’ (μάλιστα δὲ Πηνελοπέηι | ἦνδανε μύθοισι· φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ’ ἀγαθῆισιν, 16.397-8). He persuades the suitors to reject Antinous' proposal that they try once more to ambush and kill Telemachus (16.400-406).<sup>109</sup> And his kind words to ‘the beggar’ prompt Odysseus to warn him against

<sup>107</sup> Clarke (2004) 88.

<sup>108</sup> It is prophesied approvingly by Halitherses (2.161-76; cf. 24.454-62) and endorsed by Nestor (3.211-24), Menelaus (4.333-46), Eumaeus (14.80-92), Penelope (23.63-7) and Laertes (24.351-2), among others.

<sup>109</sup> Amphinomus' rôle as a wise adviser is underlined by the speech introduction ὁ σφιν ἐν φρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν (‘in good will he addressed the assembly and said’, 16.399), which ‘always introduces speeches which the narrator approves of’ (de Jong (2001) 54 on 2.157-60, who compares 2.228 (Mentor), 7.158 (Echeneus), 24.53 (Nestor), 24.453 (Halitherses)).

remaining any longer with the suitors and even to pray that some god may save him from Odysseus' vengeance (18.122-50). Yet the narrator immediately contrasts Odysseus' attitude to Amphinomus with that of Athena:

αὐτὰρ ὃ βῆ κατὰ δῶμα φίλον τετιημένος ἦτορ,  
νευστάζων κεφαλῆι· δὴ γὰρ κακὸν ὄσσετο θυμῶι.  
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὡς φύγε κῆρα· πέδησε δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀθήνη  
Τηλεμάχου ὑπὸ χερσὶ καὶ ἔγχεϊ ἴφι δαμῆναι. (Od. 18.153-6)

Amphinomus went back through the hall with a troubled spirit, shaking his head; for his heart was full of foreboding. Even so, he could not escape his doom, as Athena had bound him too to a violent death by the hands and spear of Telemachus.

Indeed, Athena's determination to kill all the suitors, regardless of their individual conduct, is already clear:

αὐτὰρ Ἀθήνη  
ἄγχι παρισταμένη Λαερτιάδην Ὀδυσῆα  
ἄτρυν', ὡς ἂν πύρνα κατὰ μνηστήρας ἀγείροι,  
γνοίη θ' οἳ τινὲς εἰσιν ἐναΐσιμοι οἳ τ' ἀθέμιστοι·  
ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὡς τιν' ἔμελλ' ἀπαλεξήσειν κακότητος. (Od. 17.360-4)

Now Athena came and stood close by Odysseus, son of Laertes, and urged him to go among the suitors begging bits of bread so that he would know which of them were decent men and which lawless; but even so she was not going to save any of them from their doom.

Athena's intervention simultaneously separates the suitors into the good and the bad and underlines her indifference to their decency. Thus the audience know Amphinomus' fate even as he offers the disguised Odysseus protection and urges the suitors to stop abusing both the beggar and the servants of Odysseus' household (18.394-5, 414-21). The disjunction between character and fate is even clearer in the case of the suitor Leiodes, whom the narrator introduces as the first to attempt to string Odysseus' bow:

Λειώδης δὲ πρῶτος ἀνίστατο, Οἴνοπος υἱός,  
ὅ σφι θυοσκόος ἔσκε, παρὰ κρητῆρα δὲ καλὸν  
ἶξε μυχοίτατος αἰεὶ· ἀτασθαλίας δέ οἱ οἴω  
ἔχθραὶ ἔσαν, πᾶσιν δὲ νεμέσσα μνηστήρεσσιν· (Od. 21.144-7)

Leiodes was first to rise, the son of Oenops, who was their augur and always sat in the farthest corner beside the beautiful mixing bowl. Their acts of reckless folly were hateful to him alone, and he was full of indignation at all the suitors.

The narrator's comment on Leiodes' decency is expanded by Leiodes himself in his appeal to Odysseus (22.312-19), yet Odysseus rejects the supplication and cuts off Leiodes' head while he is still speaking (22.326-9). Thus both goddess and human protégé kill the two more virtuous suitors with equal ruthlessness.<sup>110</sup> The parameters of reciprocal vengeance among both gods and

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Hölscher (1988) 268: 'die Unverhältnismäßigkeit der Rache tritt gegen Ende kraß hervor, und eben dadurch, daß der Dichter für diese Opfer [Amphinomus and Leiodes] Sympathie erweckt hat'.

mortals are seen to be similarly imprecise, and guilt by association is enough to bring about disaster for Amphinomus and Leiodes (as for the Phaeacians) ‘beyond their destined share’ (cf. 1.33-4; §II(b) and (d)).

Thus although Odysseus presents himself as merely the agent of divine justice (22.411-18), and the death of the suitors is greeted as a divine act (by Penelope: 23.63-7) and as proof of the gods’ power (by Laertes: 24.351-2), the killing of the suitors can only be said to constitute ‘an enactment of absolute and timeless justice’<sup>111</sup> in a very particular sense, which recognizes the rough and ruthless reciprocity of divine justice as it is embodied in the text of the *Odyssey* (as well as the *Iliad*).<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, it must take account of the clear risks to communal well-being posed by Odysseus’ vengeance, which sparks a civil war when the suitors’ kinsmen seek to avenge their deaths (a danger foreseen by Odysseus himself: cf. 23.117-22). The poem ends as it began with Athena and Zeus reaching an agreement in Odysseus’ favour (24.472-86; cf. 1.44-79), and the narrator again underlines the importance of the gods’ intervention. For Odysseus and his men are on the verge of wiping out the suitors’ kinsmen before they are checked by Athena (24.528-36). Moreover, Odysseus ignores Athena’s command and has to be restrained, first by Zeus’s thunderbolt and then by a warning from Athena not to incur Zeus’s anger (24.537-44). Odysseus thus acts with typically heroic impetuosity and would have killed his fellow Ithacans had not the gods intervened. The cycle of violence is ended only by a divinely sponsored settlement with the suitors’ families. As at the end of the *Iliad*, divine concern for humanity helps resolve a profound crisis, and Zeus’s decision restores the communal values of social order.<sup>113</sup>

(i) *The scope of Homeric justice*

A central part of the argument so far has been that the common view of the gods of the *Odyssey* as peculiarly moralistic is mistaken, and that the poem’s picture of divinity and of human responsibility and punishment is no different from that of the *Iliad*.<sup>114</sup> With this in mind, let us consider two further claims regarding the gods of the *Odyssey* which are no less influential: the first may be summed up in the statement that ‘The different conception of the gods in the *Odyssey* implies a greater remoteness of man from the deity, i.e., greater independence and responsibility’;<sup>115</sup> the second in the observation that the *Odyssey*’s gods are ‘less colourful and less clearly individualised’.<sup>116</sup> Yet the gods of the *Odyssey* are neither more remote nor less individualized, and seem so only if one disregards the different type and scope of story narrated in the *Odyssey* (compared to the *Iliad*) and its smaller cast of characters, both human and divine. Unlike the *Iliad*, whose wider narrative (the Trojan War) constitutes an event of cosmic proportions (marking the end of the age of heroes: cf. *Il.* 12.9-33; Hes. *W&D* 161-5), the *Odyssey* confines itself for the most part to one of many *nostoi* (albeit an eventful one). However, there is no difference

<sup>111</sup> See n.107.

<sup>112</sup> Though the *Iliad* poet has chosen to present the Trojans as far more sympathetic than the suitors (it is obvious, but still notable, that the *Iliad* presents individual Trojan characters, whereas we get only one side of the story in its account of the Argives attacking Thebes and the Pylian narrative), there is a parallel insofar as both the Trojans and the suitors face indiscriminate vengeance. The poet of the *Odyssey* could have presented the suitors as a whole more positively (see Danek (1998) 41-2 for traces of alternative versions in the *Odyssey* itself), but their story remains sufficiently nuanced to explore the ethical implications of reciprocal justice.

<sup>113</sup> Thus Book 24 is both the clearest expression of the *Odyssey*’s vision of social justice and at the same time

entirely typical of early Greek hexameter poetry, *pace*, e.g., Schein (1996) 10: ‘One function of the much maligned twenty-fourth book is to insist on the correctness of this *new kind of justice*’ (emphasis added).

<sup>114</sup> *Pace*, e.g., Griffin (1980) 77: ‘The *Odyssey* ... has a different conception of the gods and heroism. Gods and heroes alike need and receive moral justification, of a sort much closer to our ideas.’ Cf. also Griffin (2004) 44 on ‘this anxiously moral poet’; yet the *Odyssey* poet is no more ‘anxious’ about moral responsibility and punishment than is the poet of the *Iliad*; see §I, esp. (a), (b) and (f).

<sup>115</sup> Kullmann (1985) 10.

<sup>116</sup> Kearns (2004) 67.

in the depiction of divine and human interaction, and the narrator's narrower scope explains the apparent moral 'shift', which is in fact no more than the contrast between a narrative that contains many heroes and conflicting gods and one that contains far fewer of both. The basic continuity is striking nonetheless. And while it is true that in the second half of the *Odyssey* 'the Gods form a united front',<sup>117</sup> insofar as there is no deity who protests the killing of the suitors, this cancels neither the troubling aspects of their punishment nor the clash of divine wills presented in the first half of the poem (see §II(c) and (h) above).

Thus the *Odyssey*'s vision of divine justice may appear narrower than the *Iliad*'s, but the same morality and theology underlie both epics. In each the gods regularly pursue their personal interests with little regard for human ideals of divine justice, and the *δίκη* (or 'order') enforced is often a harsh one.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, as in the *Iliad* (e.g. 18.497-500), the mechanisms of justice which operate in the *Odyssey* are embodied both in particular social institutions, such as compensation settlements<sup>119</sup> or judicial assemblies,<sup>120</sup> and in the cosmos as a whole.<sup>121</sup> Thus the Homeric epics display a fundamental continuity that tells against models of early Greek epic or intellectual culture which continue to be premised upon their difference. For although developmental models of early Greek thought (especially those of Snell and Fränkel)<sup>122</sup> are no longer overtly influential, and despite Lloyd-Jones's criticisms of Dodds's view that the Iliadic Zeus is not concerned with justice (*cf.* n.10), the full extent of the ethical and theological continuities, not only between the Homer epics themselves but also between those works and the rest of early Greek epic, continue to be underestimated or obscured. In a stimulating recent account of Homeric epic the developmental model is applied to cosmic history itself, but the project is hampered by the assumption that 'the portrayal of the gods in the *Odyssey* is different from that in the *Iliad*'.<sup>123</sup> However, the essential continuity is particularly evident in the fact that the Greeks themselves seem not to have perceived any such difference between the poems: Aristotle, for example, locates a number of differences between the epics with regard to structure and plot (*cf.* esp. *Poet.* 1459b13-16), but none pertaining to the gods or their morality,<sup>124</sup> while Herodotus famously treats Homer and Hesiod as equals in their presentation (and definition) of divinity (2.53.1-3).<sup>125</sup> Their analysis of early Greek poetry should guide ours, not least because Zeus's

<sup>117</sup> Kearns (2004) 69. However, when Kearns adds 'And this unity, it is strongly implied, is founded on a moral basis: personal favouritism apart, it is simply right that Odysseus should triumph over his enemies and be reinstated as ruler of Ithaca', the implied contrast with the *Iliad* is misleading, since the *Iliad* poet also makes clear the 'moral basis' of Troy's fall.

<sup>118</sup> It is therefore misleading to claim, as Griffin (1995) 12 does, that 'generally speaking the divine is on its best behaviour in the *Odyssey*', since this flattens out the complexities and turbulence of the narrative. Ford (1996) points to analogous faults in Cook's attempt to present 'a perfectly consistent theodicy in which virtuous self-restraint is rewarded and injustice punished'.

<sup>119</sup> *Cf.* *Od.* 22.54-64, where Odysseus rejects Eurymachus' offer of communal compensation from the suitors; and contrast Hephaestus' agreement to accept a fine from Ares (or Poseidon: 8.344-59).

<sup>120</sup> *Cf.* *Od.* 12.439-41: ἦμος δ' ἐπὶ δῶρπον ἀνήρ ἄγορῆθεν ἀνέστη | κρίνων νείκεα πολλὰ δικάζομένων αἰζήτων, | τῆμος δὴ τά γε δοῦρα Χαρύβδιος ἐξεφάνθη ('At the time when a man rises from his seat in the market-place for dinner, when he has settled many disputes between young men who seek justice, then it was that the timbers reappeared out of Charybdis'), where the simile,

drawn from civilized life and relating the restraint of violence through law, underlines the indiscriminate cruelty of the divine whirlpool.

<sup>121</sup> Including Hades; *cf.* *Od.* 11.568-71, where Minos dispenses justice among the dead.

<sup>122</sup> Their view of the *Odyssey* as morally circumscribed (compared to Hesiod), but still an advance on the *Iliad* (*cf.* esp. Fränkel (1975) 85-93), was foreshadowed by Jacoby (1933), e.g. 188-9: 'Wir sind noch sehr in den Anfängen des ethischen Bildungsprozesses ... denn als Hüter der sittlichen Weltordnung bilden die Götter eine Einheit; auch das ist ein "Fortschritt" von den gegeneinander und jeder für sich handelnden Iliadgöttern zu "der Gottheit" der Philosophie.'

<sup>123</sup> Graziosi and Haubold (2005) 75.

<sup>124</sup> Although, one should add, Aristotle says very little about the gods even in tragedy.

<sup>125</sup> The status of Homer and Hesiod as cultural 'authorities' (on the gods and much else) is used cogently by Ford (1997) 98 to explain the 'high-handedness' of later appropriations of their poetry (by Pindar and Plato among others): 'it was the pragmatic practice (a long poem is more widely useful in small pieces) of people for whom Homer was more important as an authority than as an author of an aesthetically unified text'.

power is presented in both Homeric epics (as in Hesiod) within a cosmic context, and in such a way that his decisions and actions combine a recognition of each god's interests and honour with a concern for social norms of justice among mortals (cf. §II(c), (e) and (h) above).

### III

#### (a) Hesiodic justice and/as universal order

Just as one should avoid treating the *Odyssey's* presentation of the nature and values of the gods as if it were different from the *Iliad's*, so one should resist attempts to interpret the gods of Hesiod as if they were different from those of Homer. For despite Lloyd-Jones's demonstration of the essential continuity in early Greek theology, one still meets with accounts of Hesiod's cosmos which treat it as a moral 'advance' on what has gone before. Thus one scholar writes of the *Theogony*: 'Die göttliche Welt entwickelt sich hin zur aufgeklärten Herrschaft des Zeus; dabei überwindet Hesiod die amoralische Dimension der homerischen Götter: Bei ihm sind die Götter tatsächlich die Garanten der Gerechtigkeit und vergelten das Gute und Böse, das die Menschen anrichten.'<sup>126</sup> However, as we shall see, the divine world that Hesiod presents is no more 'developed' than that of Homer, nor is the rule of Zeus portrayed by Hesiod any more 'enlightened'.<sup>127</sup>

In Hesiod, as in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the narrator focuses on Zeus's power and on the personal quarrels of the gods. For in Hesiod's eyes the current world-order is the consequence of internecine strife between Zeus and Prometheus, son of the Titan Iapetus. In other words, Zeus's order is equal to the way things are, and the way things are (for example, that men must work to survive because Zeus has hidden 'the means of life': *W&D* 42-7) is caused by Zeus's quarrel with Prometheus, who poses a threat to Zeus's régime. Indeed, a similar pattern of stasis leading to order informs the background to the *Iliad*: Zeus's favour to Thetis arises from his power struggles on Olympus (*Il.* 1.396-406), and so (as in Hesiod's picture of the world) a dispute over divine supremacy leads to the *status quo*: the death of Achilles, the fall of Troy, the end of the heroic age. The very structure of the *Theogony* expresses Zeus's supremacy:<sup>128</sup> the Muses sing the history of the cosmos culminating in the ascendancy of Zeus, a song that Zeus naturally likes to hear.<sup>129</sup> And although Hesiod lavishes great detail on the defeat of the Titans by the new gods (*Theog.* 617-735), the narrative of Zeus's victory over his father Kronos is strikingly brief:

<sup>126</sup> Degani (1997) 178. I have underlined the notions that are most mistaken.

<sup>127</sup> Hesiod is best seen not as an actual historical figure (*pace*, e.g., West (1978) 55: 'The autobiographical passages [in the *Works and Days*] are of course authentic'), but as a poet who has chosen to perform particular genres of song in a particular persona (his paraenetic and didactic persona being especially prominent in the *Works and Days*). The poet reminds us that he could sing, if he wished, different kinds of song, when he boasts of his victory in the poetic contest at Chalcis (*W&D* 654-7): he crosses to Euboea from Aulis, alluding to Homeric epic (650-3), which he too could sing, it is implied, since the Muses can inspire various 'paths of song' (658-9; for the metaphor, cf., e.g., *Od.* 8.72-5, 479-81, 22.347-8). Hesiod also connects the Muses' inspiration with his ability to relate 'the will of aegis-bearing Zeus' (*W&D* 661-2), reminding us that this is fundamental not only to Homeric epic but to his style of *epos* too. Thus rather than thinking in terms of historical personalities (the Hesiodic 'I' is as constructed as, e.g., Archilochus' Lothario persona: *fr.* 196a West) and sealed-off genres

(epic, didactic, catalogue poetry, etc.), we should recognize the poet's ability to combine elements from different stories, styles and genres (Ford (1992) 13-56 offers a brilliant analysis of Archaic epic as a genre, though I would venture to stress the continuity and fluidity of *epos* even more than he does; cf. his pp. 29-30 on the *Works and Days*, which he would set apart from Homer and the *Theogony* on the grounds of 'epic objectivity'). Consider, for example, the 'Catalogue of Women' narrated by Odysseus (*Od.* 11.225-332; for its relationship with the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, cf. Osborne (2005) 16-17) or the paraenetic verse deployed by Homer in the *Iliad* (esp. 9.434-605); in the latter case there is a particularly striking continuity with the techniques deployed by Hesiod, the difference being that 'Hesiod' is overtly inside his poem and his use of the paraenetic persona is on a (relatively) larger scale.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Thalmann (1984) 39-41.

<sup>129</sup> Similarly, the hymn to Zeus that opens the *Works and Days* stresses his supreme power over mankind and his rôle as an enforcer of order (3-8).

Kronos is ‘defeated by the wiles and strength of his own son’ (νικηθεῖς τέχνησι βίηφί τε παιδὸς ἐοῖο, *Theog.* 496). Hesiod does not explain how Kronos was overcome, not because he is reluctant to present a god attacking his own father, but because the poem’s focus is less on how Zeus comes to power as on how he succeeds in maintaining his power, since that is the basis for the current world-order.

The maintenance of Zeus’s supremacy relies upon his careful distribution of powers and privileges among the other gods after deposing Kronos. Unlike Ouranos and Kronos, Zeus is elected by the other gods to be their king (*Theog.* 883-5); he avoids his father’s and grandfather’s mistake of not sharing power, but makes sure to keep it close by apportioning it chiefly among his sons and daughters.<sup>130</sup> When Zeus appeals for help against the Titans, he promises the older gods that, if they assist him, their privileges will remain undiminished, and that those whom Kronos ignored will be given honours in his new régime (*Theog.* 390-6). Yet Zeus’s respect for the older gods serves merely to support his own dominance:

ὡς δ’ αὐτως πάντεσσι διαμπερὲς ὡς περ ὑπέσθη  
ἐξετέλεσσε· αὐτὸς δὲ μέγα κρατεῖ ἠδὲ ἀνάσσει. (*Theog.* 402-3)

In the same way he fully carried out his promises to all, while he himself is mighty in his power and rule.

Hesiod is especially emphatic about the honours given to Hecate (*Theog.* 411-52). But rather than seeing this as the expression of ‘her evangelist’ and ‘zealot’,<sup>131</sup> we should see the passage in terms of the structure of the world-order according to Hesiod: Hecate is dwelt upon not because Hesiod had a personal cult of the goddess, but because she is made to stand for the general process of Zeus’s canny negotiations with the gods who preceded him.

Hesiod’s Zeus is no more ‘advanced’ in moral terms than Homer’s. Both poets present a series of decisions made by a powerful and unknowable god. In Hesiod’s account, Zeus punishes mankind with Pandora to get back at Prometheus (*Theog.* 561-612, *W&D* 54-105).<sup>132</sup> However, to dwell on the morality of Zeus’s motives or his treatment of humanity would be misleading, since the point of Hesiod’s narrative is to display Zeus’s power and its connection to cosmic order, which is a direct result of Olympian power politics. Nevertheless, as in Homer, there is, as far as humans are concerned, a positive value to the world-order established by the gods. For Zeus has given humans the gift of justice, which sets them apart from animals (*W&D* 276-80).<sup>133</sup> And Hesiod, like Homer, reflects the process of personifying and allegorizing such positive social norms: both Δίκη (*W&D* 256-62) and the Λιταί (*Il.* 9.502-14) are daughters of Zeus, who seek redress from their father when they are abused or refused by mortals. Moreover, the *basileus* who is just is favoured by the gods, whether by Zeus (*W&D* 280-1; cf. *Il.* 1.237-9), the Muses (*Theog.* 81-93) or Hecate (*Theog.* 429-30). Finally, if we ask ourselves what social functions Hesiod’s poetry might have fulfilled, we find that it communicates the same basic ideas and values as Homeric epic: Zeus’s order is supreme; his will is inscrutable to mortals but inescapable; humans should avoid excess and respect legitimate claims to honour and justice.

<sup>130</sup> Zeus’s election by the other gods underlines the importance of his need to rule by consensus. It is also significant that Zeus is depicted requiring the aid of the supremely strong Hundred-Handers (Briareus, Cottus and Gyges) in order to overcome the Titans (*Theog.* 148-53, 617-735); cf. *Il.* 1.402-6, where Briareus is said to have defended Zeus’s supremacy when it was challenged by some of his fellow Olympians.

<sup>131</sup> West (1966) 277-8 on *Theog.* 404-52.

<sup>132</sup> The punishment is typically disproportionate: it is Prometheus’ trick, but all men suffer for it (*Theog.* 550-2); cf. *W&D* 240-7, §1(f). Moreover, when Zeus ends Prometheus’ torment, he does so not out of pity, but to boost the *kleos* of his son, Heracles (*Theog.* 526-34).

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Clay (2003) 83: ‘It is precisely Dike, daughter of Zeus and Zeus’s gift to mankind, that renders the heroes better than both the races of bronze and silver that preceded them.’

*(b) The Homeric Hymns, or, the world according to Zeus*

A central theme of the major Homeric Hymns, as of Homer and Hesiod, is the rôle played by Zeus's supremacy in the evolution of divine and human history, and, in addition, how his power operates so as to maintain cosmic order. The hymns to Demeter (2) and Aphrodite (5) focus in particular on how that order is established through Zeus's control of *female* deities, as Zeus determines the extent to which Demeter and Persephone can play the rôles of eternal mother and daughter, and curbs Aphrodite's (sexual) power by turning it back on the goddess herself. Zeus sets in train the plots of both hymns, approving Hades' abduction of Persephone (*Hom. Hymn Dem.* 3, 30, 77-80; cf. *Theog.* 913-14) and making Aphrodite fall in love with the mortal Anchises (*Hom. Hymn Aph.* 45-57).

The *Hymn to Demeter* reflects the pervasiveness of Greek gender ideology, as the fertility of gods, humans and nature itself are interlinked under the patronage of Zeus, who controls not only the sexual maturation of his daughter Persephone but also the division of the agricultural year (via his reconciliation with Demeter; cf. 445-7, 470-3). Since girls must be made useful by marriage and child-bearing (cf., e.g., *W&D* 695-705), Persephone cannot remain a virgin forever. Moreover, Demeter has not asked Zeus for eternal virginity for Persephone,<sup>134</sup> and so she must accept her daughter's inevitable progress to marriage and motherhood. Demeter's fixation on her own maternal rôle is no less problematic than her hostility to her daughter's, since she is not only resistant to Persephone's maturation but acts as a 'bad' mother even in her grief at Persephone's absence. For she seeks to make the baby Demophon immortal (231-41), as if to create a divine surrogate to replace her own child, yet her actions are once more doomed to failure, since she acts (as in the case of Persephone) without the permission of Zeus, whose agreement to the crossing of the boundary between mortal and immortal is essential. Finally, Demeter's 'dreadful wrath' (350, 410) puts the nascent Olympian régime in jeopardy since it threatens to destroy humanity and so end the τιμαί paid to the gods (352-4). Zeus's solution is to confirm and expand Demeter's own status and privileges (441-4). The hymn ends with both Demeter and Persephone joining Zeus on Olympus, and with their enhanced powers confirming his (483-6; cf. 364-71).

In the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (5) the goddess' ability to 'lead astray even the mind of Zeus' poses a threat to his supremacy (cf. 36-8). As soon as Aphrodite has slept with Anchises, under Zeus's influence (45-57, 166), she regrets the resulting diminution of her power (247-55). Similar patterns of rivalry, hierarchy and control are found in the hymns to Apollo and Hermes. In the *Hymn to Apollo* (3), Hera delays the new god's birth out of jealousy (91-101) and, in anger at Zeus's production of Athena from his own head, gives birth by herself to the monstrous Typhoeus, 'a bane to the gods' (πῆμα θεοῖσιν, 352).<sup>135</sup> In the *Hymn to Hermes* (4), the conflict between old and new gods is transposed to older and younger Olympians (cf. 375-6, 386), as Zeus's own children, Apollo and Hermes, bring their dispute to trial before their father.<sup>136</sup> Once Zeus reconciles them (396, 506-7), the baby Hermes is able to secure his rightful τιμαί and place among the gods, impressing Apollo with the newly invented lyre and a song that, ingeniously and appropriately, celebrates the divine order that he is about to enter (423-33). Thus the major Homeric Hymns display the same conception of the cosmos and the gods as the rest of early Greek hexameter poetry, as Zeus's plans are realized through the actions and reactions of others, and the competing wills of the gods result in a fixed order that is identified with the will of Zeus.

<sup>134</sup> In the *Hymn to Aphrodite* permanent virginity is granted to Athena, Artemis and Hestia. As their father, Zeus's control over his daughters Athena and Artemis is implicit (cf. 7-20), while Hestia is presented as requesting such an exceptional status as a privilege (γέρας) from Zeus, acknowledging his control even over the sexual lives of his sisters (21-32).

<sup>135</sup> Cf. nn.98-9.

<sup>136</sup> Hermes' challenge is accepted: δὸς δὲ δίκην καὶ δέξο παρὰ Ζηνὶ Κρονίῳνι (312); cf. 324: κείθι γὰρ ἀμφοτέροισι δίκης κατέκειτο τάλαντα.

*(c) Greek cosmic order and its Near Eastern contexts*

Recent comparative studies (and particularly the pioneering works of Walter Burkert and Martin West) have greatly enriched our understanding of the interaction between Greece and the various cultures of the ancient Near East.<sup>137</sup> Yet even if one accepts that (in the very broadest terms) ‘Greek literature is a Near Eastern literature’,<sup>138</sup> it remains to ask (in the case of each specific myth, story-pattern or idea) how the Greeks have *transformed* these Near Eastern ‘influences’ – or rather, to ask how a *common* inheritance has been given a particular articulation and meaning in *Greek* culture. For while scholars can point to many striking ‘parallels’,<sup>139</sup> they do not always consider how the Greek example has been made uniquely and specifically *Greek*, that is, how it has been *changed* and *assimilated* to a wider, pre-existing and distinctively Greek world-view. Yet such a process of *assimilation* is a fundamental aspect of all cultural transmission, and its importance emerges very clearly if we consider how the Greek view of cosmic order (as embodied in early Greek epic) *differs* from its Near Eastern congeners. Thus, even if we accept that (say) the stories of the divine succession found in Hittite and Akkadian literature had a profound influence on Homer and Hesiod,<sup>140</sup> we should also ask what a *comparison* of the Greek and the Near Eastern material reveals about each of these cultures in and of itself.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Cf. esp. West (1966) 20-31, (1997); Burkert (1991), (1992; German orig. 1984), (2004); for a brief overview of recent work on such cultural transmission from the perspective of a Near Eastern specialist, see Bryce (2002) 257-68.

<sup>138</sup> West (1966) 31.

<sup>139</sup> Haubold (2002) offers a useful critique of the unreflective methodology of Hellenists who merely catalogue ‘parallels’ that are said to ‘speak for themselves’. Yet while he praises archaeologists who have ‘long appreciated the Eastern Mediterranean as a connected landscape of mutual influences’ (p. 5), he himself offers no account of how such literary and cultural ‘influences’ are meant to operate. Indeed, it may be more helpful to think in terms of ‘interaction’ rather than ‘influence’, wherein ‘interaction’ refers to a continuous process of cultural contact and borrowing that operates *in both directions* (‘influence’, by contrast, suggests a one-way process) and *over a long period of time*. Though Burkert (2004) 23 continues to speak of the eighth and seventh centuries as the high-point of the ‘orientalizing revolution’, he also recognizes that ‘contacts of all sorts were continuous’. It is likely that many ‘oriental’ features may have dated from earlier periods, since (as Bryce (2002) 267 observes) ‘throughout this period [i.e. from the late Bronze Age to the eighth century] there was regular commercial and political contact between the Greek and Near Eastern worlds (allowing perhaps for a hiatus of 100 years or so in the eleventh century BC)’. Moreover, evidence of such early cultural interaction is growing (cf. Koenen (1994) 25-6), the most spectacular recent discovery being a cuneiform letter from the king of the Ahhiyawa to the Hittite king Hattusili III (c. 1267-1237 BC). In this letter the king of the Ahhiyawa supports his claim to some disputed islands in the northern Aegean by asserting that his ancestor (‘Kagamunas’) received the islands from the king of Assuwa (i.e. the dominant power in the Troad until the end of the fifteenth century) as part of a marriage alliance; cf. Latacz (2004) 243-4; Kelly (2006). The letter offers further testimony to the

extremely strong Bronze Age contacts between western Asia Minor and Greece, which could well have left their mark on Greek myth and poetry (it is hardly a coincidence that many figures of Greek myth come from foreign lands, including Cadmus, Pelops, Cecrops and Danaus). Of course, this letter (and others like it: cf. Niemeier (1999)) attest to political rather than literary contacts. Yet although we do not possess Mycenaean Greek texts reflecting the literary or mythological traditions of the Near East, it is not unlikely that myths, story-patterns and other ideas were carried via trading routes, diplomatic channels and the migration from the late Bronze Age onwards of ‘healers, seers, and singers or poets’ (Bryce (2002) 259, who compares *Od.* 17.382-5). For Bronze Age bards in Greece, cf. West (1973) 187-92, (1988) 156-65; S. Morris (1989).

<sup>140</sup> For the Akkadian *Atrahasis* and Homer’s ‘Deception of Zeus’, cf. Burkert (1992) 88-96; for *Gilgamesh* and the Homeric epics, cf. West (1997) 336-47, 402-17; Bryce (2002) 261-3. George (2003) 1.3-70 presents a detailed literary history of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* from the third millennium onwards. Csapo (2005) 67-79 offers an illuminating analysis of the Greek and Hittite myths of divine succession, tabulating the main parallels between them (pp. 74-5), but also asking fundamental questions about what (in terms of cultural transmission) such parallels actually show.

<sup>141</sup> In addition, though literary interaction could (and did) occur, caution is required when comparing similar phenomena in different cultures, especially with regard to chronology. Most (1997), for example, analyses the alleged Near Eastern ‘sources’ of Hesiod’s five races of men (*W&D* 106-201), noting that ‘In fact we do not possess any oriental sources older than Hesiod from which he could have derived his version’ (p. 120). He goes on to ask ‘How much of the whole myth of the races in the *Works and Days* could have been derived from a thorough familiarity with the tradition of Greek epic? The answer is: a surprisingly large amount’ (p. 121; for details, see his pp. 121-6).

Let us therefore (as a test case) consider the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, or *Epic of Creation* (composed in the twelfth century BC at the latest),<sup>142</sup> and compare the rôles of Marduk and Zeus. Like Hesiod's Zeus, Marduk is elected by the other gods to be the leading deity (though this happens *before* he has dealt with the threatening Tiamat and her monstrous allies: Tablet III),<sup>143</sup> and, once crowned king of heaven, Marduk orders the universe and apportions among the gods their various rôles and privileges.<sup>144</sup> However, unlike the Greek model centred around Zeus and his family, none of the other gods is Marduk's child. Burkert remarks: 'One might say that the oriental assembly of the gods is more a kind of senate, whereas Homer introduces a family, including current family catastrophes such as mutual scolding of parents and blows for the children.'<sup>145</sup> But, it is important to add, the divine family has a far wider significance within the *more systematic* Greek model, where the family structure is used to emphasize Zeus's supreme authority and to dramatize his eternal balancing act with the competing wills of the other gods. Moreover, even if it is the case that Hesiod, for example, presents a model of the universe, many of whose parts can be paralleled in other Near Eastern literatures (e.g. myths of divine succession, a supreme god apportioning powers, the dangerous consort of the chief god, and so on), it is yet more striking that all these elements have been combined into one coherent system. To put it rather baldly, even if Hesiod gets many of his parts from elsewhere, the system itself is still unique. And the world-order that we find in early Greek epic is distinctively different from that found in contiguous cultures, since it is based on the all-embracing order and power of Zeus; furthermore, it presents a level of analysis of the *repercussions* of Zeus's position which is peculiar to the Greek tradition.<sup>146</sup> Thus, when considering intercultural contacts, we should bear in mind (to a greater degree than is often the case) the distinctiveness of the Greek model,<sup>147</sup> which is exemplified with particular vividness both in the power of Zeus's will and in the prominence of the Διὸς βουλή as a narrative pattern in early Greek poetry and myth.<sup>148</sup>

## IV

In conclusion, our discussion has sought to explore the moral and theological universe of the Homeric epics. Furthermore, it has tried to show that the patterns of human and divine justice which they deploy are also to be found throughout the wider corpus of early Greek hexameter poetry. All such poetry, as we have seen, is concerned in various ways with the exploration of divine power and its politics. Poets seek to show how Zeus's power operates in the world, and the polytheistic and anthropomorphic facets of their religious conceptions have important implications for the system of divine power that they develop. Although the similarities between the early Greek texts are striking, they should not surprise us, for as one scholar has observed, 'Poems, after all, come not from the gods but from other poems, and if Homer was at all like the poets we know from other traditional oral societies, his true teachers were the poets he heard and

<sup>142</sup> Van De Mieroop (1997) 47 favours the twelfth century, though Dalley (1991) 229 finds such a date too late. The end of the twentieth century BC is a secure *terminus post quem*, since only then did Babylon and its patron god Marduk achieve the prominence and hegemony which are narrated and celebrated in the poem itself.

<sup>143</sup> Contrast Hes. *Theog.* 881-5, where Zeus's election takes place only after the Olympian gods have defeated the Titans.

<sup>144</sup> In the Sumerian story of cosmic order, by contrast, Enki organizes the universe and assigns the gods their powers but derives the authority to do so from Enlil, who remains the chief god; cf. Black *et al.* (2004) 215-25 ('Enki and the world order').

<sup>145</sup> Burkert (2004) 25.

<sup>146</sup> Consider, for example, how Zeus ends inter-generational conflict through his self-interested methods of family planning and female control; cf. §II(e). It is notable that the basic pattern of a chief god who *learns from the mistakes* of the divine succession before him, as Zeus does, is in itself a further novel and distinctive aspect of the Greek model.

<sup>147</sup> For example, when West (1988) 169 remarks 'It is hardly going too far to say that the whole picture of the gods in the *Iliad* is oriental', the individuality of the Greek world-order is unfortunately elided.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Διὸς δ' ἔτελείετο βουλή, *Il.* 1.5 = *Od.* 11.297 = *Cypria* fr. 1.7 Bernabé/Davies.

the poets they had heard.<sup>149</sup> As well as being concerned with power politics among the gods, each text treats the gods, and Zeus in particular, as deeply concerned with the social norms of justice, both human and divine. Moreover, while each of the poems presents characters who maintain the ‘simple’ view – namely, that human wrongs will be punished more or less immediately by the gods – they also explore the problems inherent in such an account of divine justice. The inadequacy of the simple view is seen to generate theological problems, which are only partially allayed by presenting the competing divine wills within a moral pattern governed by Zeus.<sup>150</sup>

The discussion of the *Iliad* in Part I aimed to show that the popular picture of ‘amoral’ or ‘frivolous’ Homeric gods is misleading. Thus, simply to say of ‘divine justice’ in the Homeric poems that ‘this seems an unlikely role for the *timê*-seeking Olympians’<sup>151</sup> risks creating a false dichotomy, since the gods can be (and are) interested both in their own *τιμή* and in wider issues of justice. Indeed, it emerged that any attempt to separate matters of *τιμή* from wider issues of justice, whether among gods or humans, represents in itself a false dichotomy; cf. §I(d), (f); also §II(d). This is particularly true of such institutions as the oath and guest-friendship, where the gods’ concern for their own *τιμή* is simultaneously a concern for justice (cf. §I(b), esp. n.16).

We saw the basic continuity between divine and human values: as social beings shaped by the relations among themselves, the gods value justice as much as humans do and are equally ready to assert a basic entitlement to honour and fair treatment, and to support the sanctions that ensure justice and punish its violation. Thus values such as justice are shown to be socially constituted on both the divine and human planes, and each level displays not only a hierarchy of power (and the resulting tensions), but also a structure of authority.<sup>152</sup> In addition, we saw that the moral and theological world of the two Homeric epics is the same, since the *Iliad* reflects a system of social norms and punishments that is no different from that of the *Odyssey*.

The presentation of the gods in the wider hexameter corpus of Hesiod, the Epic Cycle and the Homeric Hymns reveals a remarkably coherent tradition in which the possibility of divine conflict is combined with an underlying cosmic order. The consideration of Near Eastern parallels made clear that the idea of cosmic order as ‘the paradigm of justice’<sup>153</sup> is not unique to Greek thought; yet it also brought out the distinctiveness of the Greek system as a whole and, in particular, of the way it uses the divine society under Zeus’s authority as a comprehensive explanatory model. For, as one scholar has expressed the matter, Zeus’s authority ‘embodies the demand for an underlying unity, not chaos, in experience’.<sup>154</sup> Finally, while it has not been my intention to deny the differences between the poets, whose various kinds of story entail distinct emphases, it emerged that it has not been sufficiently stressed to what extent the poets, despite their individual approaches, are all drawing on essentially the same model of divine society and authority on the one hand, and divine–human interaction on the other. Thus whereas Hesiod, for example, places more emphasis on stasis among the gods as the foundational *aition* of Zeus’s order in the world, the wider cosmic frame is also present in Homer. And within Hesiod’s works themselves, the *Works and Days* is more concerned than the *Theogony* to relate events on the divine

<sup>149</sup> Ford (1992) 90.

<sup>150</sup> Despite some of the arguments used by those who see the *Odyssey* as a morally more ‘advanced’ text, it is *prima facie* unlikely that any major epic would endorse the simple model of ‘good always rewarded and sinner always punished’, for this would not be a particularly useful or credible theodicy, since it is obviously contrary to what one might presume to have been the case in the actual world of the audience.

<sup>151</sup> Adkins (1997) 711.

<sup>152</sup> The importance of socially created forms of value in the epics is often neglected, even by classically trained philosophers, who still present a rather narrow view both of Homeric society and its ethical conceptions; cf., e.g., Lucas (1993) 5: ‘The concept of responsibility is one that has developed and grown over the ages. We take it for granted, but the Homeric heroes had little use for that concept, centring their moral vocabulary on merit and kudos instead.’

<sup>153</sup> Burkert (2004) 60.

<sup>154</sup> Gould (1985) 25.

plane to everyday human life, yet many of its elements (e.g. farming and sea-faring) are conventional epic features which one also finds in Homer. And although many have stressed the differences between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* with regard to divine justice, these (we saw) are merely apparent and come not from any change in the gods themselves but from the *Odyssey*'s peculiar narrative structure, with its focus on one hero and his main divine patron and foe. Homer and Hesiod may not have gone unchallenged as authorities on matters of religion and ethics (e.g. Xenophanes *fr.* 11, Heraclitus *fr.* 42 DK), but as subsequent Greek literature shows, their depiction of the gods, and particularly of Zeus as the focal point of cosmic order and justice (both human and divine), proved to be a remarkably enduring and productive model for making sense of the world.

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