V.—*Homer and the Cult of Heroes*

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Ever since the publication of Wilamowitz's *Homerische Untersuchungen* in 1884 and of Rohde's *Psyche* in 1893, the generally received opinion has been that Homer stands out like an island in the otherwise unbroken current of Greek worship of the dead. Wilamowitz argued that there was no cult of the dead in the *Iliad;* the human being was identical with his body, which after death needed only burial in order to be completely at rest; the life (ψυχή) disappeared into the kingdom 'that no one sees,' of which no one knows anything. As for the *Odyssey,* the *Nekyia* was made up of a series of interpolations; the earliest, which contains the episode of Teiresias, scarcely differed in its ideas from the *Iliad;* the latest must have been composed after 600 B.C., in Orphic circles at Athens. Rohde, whose fascinating book was not especially concerned with the Homeric question, accepted the thesis that Homer represented a period when there was no cult of the dead; and since he recognized the existence of such cult not only in classical times but also among the Mycenaean Greeks, he took considerable pains to establish the isolation of Homer from all the beliefs and practices that are connected with the cult of the dead, and with the cult of heroes as well.

Despite the wide acceptance of Rohde's opinion, there is some reason to think that the evidence ought to be considered afresh. Not only has the position of Homeric studies wholly altered, but two important monographs dealing with the cult of heroes have appeared, which have done a great deal to clarify the religious history of the Greeks. Foucart (1898), who agrees on this point with Rohde, dismisses Homer in a few lines; Farnell (1921) finds Homer's testimony on this matter "inconclusive," and records his impression, in summing up the

two poems, that "Homer, while probably aware of hero worship and the occasional deification of the mortal, did not accept or did not wish to encourage this vain dream of the self-exaltation of man." In the face of these denials and doubts, let us attempt to summarize the evidence for the continuity of the cult of the dead among the Greeks.

In the Mycenaean age, the archaeological evidence of the cult of the dead seems fairly conclusive. The shaft graves at Mycenae were enclosed as a sacred area within the double ring of standing slabs; there are burnt remains of offerings made to the dead, and an altar, consisting of the hollow ring of stones which is typical of the cult of the dead. Schliemann mentions a black-figured vase of the sixth century B.C. inscribed *τō hέροος ἐμ-*, which makes it probable, since the fragment was found within the grave circle, that a hero was worshipped in that burial place, and even if not there, certainly within the walls of Mycenae. The entrance of the Tomb of Clytaemnestra also contained objects belonging to the cult of the dead, which show that the cult was continued during the geometric period; the beehive tomb at Dendra recently excavated by Professor Persson, and the beehive tomb at Menidi in Attica, both afford good evidence of a cult, which at Menidi was continued without interruption until some time in the fifth century B.C. At Delos there is a famous Mycenaean tomb which was regarded as a holy place from the time of its building down into the Hellenistic age; and this is particularly noteworthy because in very early times Delos was a pan-Ionian religious centre. All this and much additional evidence is excellently treated in Nilsson's brilliant work on the Minoan-Mycenaean religion (Lund, 1927); and he not only affirms that a cult of the dead existed among the Mycenaean Greeks, but suggests that the power and glory of the Mycenaean kings led directly to their worship as heroes.

When we turn to historic Greece, we find that the cult of the dead and the worship of heroes are everywhere known and practised. There are indeed various kinds of heroes, but it is

obvious that the so-called epic heroes are especially important in any attempt to reconsider the Homeric evidence and to discover whether Homer was familiar with the cult of the dead and the worship of heroes. The heroes of this kind are called epic because their deeds were celebrated in epic poetry; but it is a feeble and misleading title. One might as well say that Nelson was a lyric hero, because several poets have written odes to Nelson. What is really worth knowing about this group of heroes is the fact that they hold a peculiar place in the traditional history of Greece as well as in the religious practices of the Greeks. From Hesiod on, universal Greek tradition looks back several centuries to the Bronze Age, immediately preceding the Iron Age, and dated by Hesiod as including the war against Thebes and the war against Troy, when 'the divine race of heroes, who are called demigods,' lived, fought, and died, with the exception of a few to whom Zeus granted to live in the Isles of the Blest.

To the Greeks of the Iron Age, the relation between what they believed concerning the exploits of the heroes and the worship which they paid to those heroes was direct and clear. They worshipped the heroes for two reasons: first because of their superior civilization and their greatness in war, particularly displayed in their conquest of one of the wealthiest and strongest coast states in Asia Minor, and second because they believed these heroes were Greek heroes, the ancestors of the Greeks of the Iron Age. As ancestors, they were not the private property of those families which claimed descent from some particular hero, but they belonged to the whole Greek people; and their hold upon the Greek mind is demonstrated by several significant facts. Not only the epic but also the tragic poetry of the Greeks is wholly devoted to these heroes; their characters were the channels through which not only Homer and the other epic poets but also Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides chose to convey their instruction to the Greeks; and Pindar, to go no further afield, consecrated to the heroes many of his finest verses.

A second token of their hold upon the Greeks is the fact that the Greeks bestowed divine ancestry upon these heroes. Until recently, it was thought by many scholars that the ascription of divine ancestry to the men and women of the heroic age proved that these heroic beings were "faded" gods, *verblasste* or *depotenzierte Götter*. Thus K. O. Müller, who was perhaps the first to popularize this theory, asserted that Aegeus was but another name for Poseidon: Glaucus was Poseidon: Xuthus was Apollo, and Admetus was Hades. The principal merit of this theory was that it opened an infinite field to fancy. Eduard Meyer interpreted the marriage of Oedipus as a marriage to his mother the goddess Earth; Odysseus became a dying nature god; Pfister, Deneken, and Usener abounded in this sense. However, this theory itself has faded in the light of the archaeological discoveries, and of the careful discussions of Rohde, Foucart, and Farnell. It is curious to note that one aspect of this theory, namely its insistence that the hero is often the god of his tribe, and that the history of his tribe may be recovered from the story of the hero, bears a close analogy to the theory of the French sociologist Durkheim, who held that the religious beliefs and the gods of a tribe were a projection of its collective consciousness. However that may be, the heroes have now ceased, for most scholars, to appear remote from real history. The Greeks of the Mycenaean Age are the immediate ancestors of the Greeks of the Iron Age. But the Greeks of the Heroic Age are the immediate ancestors of the Greeks of the Iron Age. The Mycenaean Greeks must therefore be identical with the Greeks of the Heroic Age.

The attribution of divine ancestry to these Mycenaean Greeks is neither more nor less than the Greek way of saying that they were collectively remarkable men and women. The members of those earlier generations, excepting only a few of the most negligible mortals, were held to be sufficiently above the level of ordinary men to entitle them to receive worship from their inferiors. It is simply heroization upon a scale

which converts it into a national act of faith; it is pan-Hellenic, and there are no dissenting voices, except for the alleged dissent of Homer. There is no reason whatever to suppose that the inhabitants of Greece during the period from 1600 to 1100 B.C. were less human or more divine than the warriors who fell at Plataea and at Marathon. The real existence of the earlier group does not of course guarantee that all the various characters sung by the poets really existed; but, as Farnell says, "it would be astonishing if no real names of actual individuals were handed down . . ., though in any special case we may be unable to separate the real from the fictitious." [1]

A third proof of the esteem in which the Greeks held this group of heroes is the extremely wide distribution of their cults. It is unnecessary here even to summarize the facts; we must note in passing that Ionia is far from being devoid of these cults, as one might suppose if Rohde's picture of Ionia, copied and enlarged by Gilbert Murray,[2] were to be taken for the truth.

Finally, the heroes thus created served as models, in several important respects, for subsequent heroization. As the Iron Age progressed, the old tribal groupings were altered: new city-states were formed in large numbers during the prolonged era of colonization, and internal political and social changes brought about the constitution of innumerable new groups, the tribes, demes, phratries, and guilds that are so conspicuous in Greek life. Each of these groups worshipped either a god or a hero as its divine or semidivine ancestor. A good many of these heroes were fictitious, from our point of view; but invariably the basis of their cult, the substance of the very real faith that was expended upon them, was their function as more or less divine ancestors of the group. They were not exactly mediators between man and god, as has often been said, but were rather intermediaries. They linked the group

[1] *Greek Hero Cults*, p. 283.

[2] *Rise of the Greek Epic*[3], pp. 70–75, 144, 274.

to divinity; and by virtue of the use thus made of the idea of kinship with god, their cult was in so far identical with that of the national heroes. The very fact that every smaller division of the Greek people felt the necessity of this connection with deity shows the power of that impulse which had caused the Greeks to heroize their Mycenaean ancestors. The hero of a group brought that group nearer to deity precisely as the national heroes gave the whole Greek people a comfortable and stimulating conviction of kinship with their gods. It is therefore not surprising that the Greeks multiplied their heroes, and that recorded Greek history is full of hero worship.

Somewhere in the interval between the Mycenaeans and the historic Greeks, Homer is supposed, by the theory that we are examining, to have insulated and isolated himself from the worship of the dead and of heroes. Anyone who is familiar with the histories of Greek religion published during the last forty years knows that most of them have accepted on this one point at least the conclusions of Wilamowitz and of Rohde, no matter how widely they vary in other respects. Schoemann, Gruppe, Deneken, Wide, Wundt, Clemen, Lang, Decharme, Finsler, Fairbanks, Pettazzoni, Samter, C. H. Moore,[3] and Nilsson, all agree with Rohde, with few or no qualifications. As Nilsson puts it, in his excellent *History of Greek Religion* (1925, pp. 135 ff.), "In Homer the cult of the dead is lacking, and the customs and ideas associated with it have been pushed into the background and considerably reduced. Homer represents not a leap, but a break, in the development; the post-Homeric period joins on where the pre-Homeric period had ended."

A number of scholars have protested in general terms against this attempt to isolate Homer, but only a few have dealt specifically with the alleged absence of the cult of the dead and of the cult of heroes. George Foot Moore, who often

[3] *Religious Thought of the Greeks*[2], p. 26: "There is almost nothing bearing on the cult of the dead save possibly in connection with the funeral of Patroclus"; and p. 24: "on the whole the body was identified with the self rather than the soul (ψυχή)."

presents more historical truth in a single paragraph than is ordinarily to be found in a whole book, suggests that much of the ordinary Greek cultus is absent from Homer not because it is unknown but because it cannot be represented when all the Greeks are far from home engaged in war upon foreign soil.[4] W. R. Halliday insists that "there must have been a continuous tradition of the worship of the dead from Mycenaean times," and that several hero cults were known to the author of the *Odyssey*, while the *Iliad* "contains no reference to hero worship and no traces of a cult of the dead."[5] And L. R. Farnell observes that Homer was aware of sacrifices to ghosts and of divine or semidivine honors paid to certain glorified persons, though he says that the cult value of ἥρως is post-Homeric.[6]

The impression made by Rohde's arguments has therefore been lasting. Rohde himself asserted that the absence of the cult of the dead in Homer was a necessary consequence of Homeric psychology: Homer is supposed to have known nothing of any influence exerted by the *psyche* upon the visible world, and Homer's singular views concerning the *psyche* are in their turn explained as being typical of the beliefs of the Ionian cities in Asia Minor. The whole fabric of their civilization and culture had been violently altered, we are told, by the events leading up to their migration and by the migration itself; they had been forced to abandon many of their local cults, and in particular the worship of their ancestors, which died out, and was assisted into oblivion by the new practice of cremation.

The evidence for the isolation of Homer therefore falls into two classes: (*a*) the internal evidence, consisting in a view of the soul which renders it powerless after death and thereby destroys the basis of cult of the dead; and (*b*) the external evidence, consisting in the theory that among the Ionians, by

[4] *History of Religions*, I, pp. 428, 429.

[5] *Cambridge Ancient History*, II, pp. 626–628.

[6] *Psyche*, Eng. Tr., p. 8.

reason of the events of their own history, the dead had ceased to receive cult.

It would be absurd, at this late date, to attempt an elaborate and detailed refutation of this theory. And after all, it is notorious that refutation usually leads to almost any result rather than to a calm reconsideration of the evidence. It seems therefore preferable to criticize as briefly as possible the theory which isolates Homer, and then to proceed at once to the statement of an alternative explanation which it is hoped will fit the facts more closely.

In the first place, there is no reason to suppose that the Ionians either forgot their dead or lost the tradition of hero worship in the process of migration. There is conclusive evidence of the cult of heroes of the Mycenaean Age in Clazomenae, Erythrae, Samos, Miletus, Panticapaeum, Clarus, Chios, and Teos; and one of the chief centres of Achilles worship was the Black Sea, in exactly those sites which were colonized by the Milesians during the eighth and seventh centuries. The traditional founders of the twelve Ionian cities traced their descent either to Codrus or to Glaucus; Phocaea was not allowed to join the pan-Ionian amphictyony until it had borrowed three Codrid leaders from Erythrae and Teos. It is true that the Greek population of the Ionian cities was of mixed origin, but all the cities except Ephesus and Colophon celebrated the festival of the Apaturia, derived from Attica; this festival belonged to the phratries, and the phratries certainly worshipped their ancestors. At Teos, the subdivisions of the citizens were called "towers" (πύργοι), and each had its eponymous hero. At Clarus, an elaborate legend told of a contest of divination, held soon after the fall of Troy, in which at least three heroes, Mopsus, Amphilochus, and Calchas took part; and the fame of Mopsus is attested, as Picard remarks in his excellent treatise *Ephèse et Claros*,[7] by various miracles and by the number of cities of which he is the founder or the eponymous hero. The argument does not need

expansion. Ionian Greeks of course accepted some Asiatic elements in their religion, but the Greek governing aristocracy never lost touch with the tradition of their past or with the worship of their ancestors and their heroes. Rohde's supposition to the contrary has never won wide assent, for the reason that it requires an excessive degree of amnesia on the part of the emigrating Greeks.

In the second place, it may be said at once that the internal evidence for the isolation of Homer is presented in that peculiar manner which was adopted by many Homeric scholars in the nineteenth century. The procedure is worth studying. First the student extracted, from an analysis of several passages in the text, a conclusion which could be stated in dogmatic terms, to the effect that Homer knows nothing of *a* or *b*, or that Homer invariably writes *c* or *d*. Then the student discovered a number of passages which were utterly incompatible with his previous conclusion. These passages immediately ceased to be evidence, at least about Homer: they were proclaimed to be survivals, innovations, exceptions, or simply interpolations. Then another student built upon these foundations.

The assumption which underlies this technical procedure is exceedingly well known.[8] The poems of Homer were regarded as a sort of receptacle filled with miscellaneous facts derived from centuries of mysterious poetical activity. It was only natural that such a theory, which depersonalized the poems and rendered them a dead corpus, should have prevented its adherents from taking into account any explanation of the facts as a whole and as a living unity. However, in these days, it is pretty clear that the old theory has become exhausted: it has accumulated so many difficulties and disregarded so much evidence that it tends to fall of its own weight.

Thus Rohde dismissed the scene in which Theoclymenus beheld the porch and the court filled with hurrying ghosts as

[8] The writer fully recognizes the great and permanent value of the work of such excellent scholars as Rohde and Nägelsbach; it was inevitable that they should sometimes yield to a current although erroneous fashion.

the work of a later hand;[9] the funeral of Patroclus was 'adopted from an earlier source';[10] the games in honor of Patroclus were a survival of a 'once vigorous worship of the dead';[11] the burning of Elpenor's and Eëtion's weapons was a survival;[12] the funeral feast that Orestes gave Aegisthus was a survival;[13] the *Nekyia* was a late addition, and also a survival;[14] and the story that Odysseus called thrice upon his companions who had fallen at the hands of the Cicones was a 'remarkable vestige of an ancient belief.'[15]

It would be extremely difficult to explain how poets could have introduced into the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* so many unorthodox passages; and even had the poets succeeded, their auditors must have been perplexed by these apparently novel views of life after death. As a matter of fact, the view of the *psyche* that is expressed in these passages is not heretical. Rohde was driven to assume all these 'survivals' and 'additions' because he set out upon his analysis with a predetermined definition of the *psyche* which was bound to exclude much of the available evidence in Homer. According to this definition, which was essentially the same as that arrived at by Nägelsbach in his *Homerische Theologie*, *psyche* does not represent what we are accustomed to call 'spirit' as opposed to 'body,' but "is described as being without feeling, deserted by mind and the organs of mind," while after death "flesh, bones, and sinews, the midriff, the seat of all the faculties of mind and will . . . are all gone for ever." Rohde cites a few passages from Homer;[16] but our criticism of this definition must refer to Nägelsbach, since he collected most of the material. Nägelsbach announces on page 354 that the 'body is the condition and carrier of the spirit, the vehicle and centre

[9] *Psyche*, Eng. tr., p. 9.
[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 14.
[11] *Op. cit.*, p. 15.
[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 17.
[13] *Op. cit.*, p. 18.
[14] *Op. cit.*, pp. 32, 38.
[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 42.
[16] *Psyche*, Eng. tr., pp. 5–10.

of the spirit as well as its organ,' and his proof of his thesis rests upon the assertion (*ibid.*) that φρένες (= the midriff or diaphragm) are the purely corporeal principle of spiritual life. But this assertion is weakened, or rather destroyed, by his admission on page 356 that the word φρένες is often actually used in the sense of 'spirit, disposition in general, and understanding,' and that φρήν is everywhere 'psychisch' and not corporeal. A little farther on (p. 358) it develops that θυμός is the 'incorporeal principle of spiritual activities,' but that it is "connected with a corporeal organ," and that the θυμός inheres in the diaphragm (p. 363). Furthermore, the dead are 'shadows, unsubstantial heads and images, comparable to smoke.' But the Homeric picture of the dead is 'full of contradictions' (p. 366).

Such are the difficulties into which Nägelsbach, and Rohde after him, fell. These difficulties disappear when the intention of the poet, and the context in which these words occur, are more attentively considered. There is no passage in all Homer in which it is not perfectly clear whether the poet meant φρήν or φρένες to be taken as referring to the body or to the mind. And the moment we are willing to admit that a poet, in Greek or in any other language, has a right to employ one word in different senses in different contexts, the whole argument of Nägelsbach vanishes. Homer says that the ψυχαί of dead men or heroes go to the house of Hades, that they are eager that their bodies be properly burned and buried, and that they have various sorts of knowledge and emotions; and then this picture of the dead is supposed to "contradict" Homer's own views of the *psyche*, because the *psyche* of a dead man who has been burned no longer has a diaphragm and therefore should no longer have a mind. *Psyche*, in Homer, generally means something approximating the English word 'life,' and Homer's picture of the ψυχαί in Hades is a picture of what is left of the 'lives' of these heroes and heroines after their death. The pathos and the power of that picture are in large part due to the fact that these "shadows," so far from being devoid of

thought and feeling, are full of love and hatred, of family affection and of pride. Nor is it true that these "shadows" are devoid of influence upon the living. One of them suffices to fill Achilles with awe and grief; Odysseus and his men, though brave, are terrified when they learn that they must visit the "house of Hades and dread Persephone"; pale fear seizes upon Odysseus himself at the cry of the ghosts; and a dead hero gives Odysseus guidance for all that remains of his life.

There is therefore nothing in the evidence, either internal or external, which should separate Homer from the cult of the dead and of heroes. The next step is to search for an explanation of his relationship to those cults and to the ideas associated with them.

The first and most important evidence on this point is that of Homer himself. Homer says that he is describing the acts of a certain group of men who lived before the fall of Troy. The whole group of combatants are heroes, and their predecessors for several generations are heroes. In particular, all the great leaders are heroes, and all the great leaders are kings, and belong to the family of Zeus. Every king is descended from a god or a goddess, and their personal power is the token of their divine descent. There are many gradations of this heroic power; the children of the great gods are mightier than the children of the lesser gods, in exact proportion to the power of the parent; the rule is stated by Achilles when he kills Asteropaeus.[17] In precise accordance with this principle, earlier generations, most of whom are necessarily closer to their divine parents, are represented by Homer as surpassing the heroes who fell at Troy;[18] and Homer expressly and repeatedly affirms that the operation of this principle has produced, by the time at which he is speaking, a generation of such marked inferiority, that for example "even the two best men of the people, such as mortals now are, could not easily lift from the

[17] *Il.*, XXI, 190, 191.

[18] *Od.*, VIII, 223; *Il.*, I, 260 ff.

ground to a wagon" a stone that Hector was able to throw with ease.[19]

This is equivalent to saying that Homer is speaking at a time when the age of the heroes had been terminated, probably for several centuries, and that he is well aware of the differences between that age and his own. There is plenty of additional evidence that Homer composed his poems in the key of conscious and reasonably consistent archaism; bronze he represents as common and iron as still rare, cavalry is absent, the trumpet is not used (except in a simile), there are no rhapsodes, and, with great faithfulness, Homer has preserved the Achaean geography of Greece.[20] With regard to the practice of cremation our knowledge is not yet sufficient to establish whether it is a real or only an apparent exception to his archaizing. At any rate, Paton's discoveries at Assarlik show that cremation was in use there, probably in the ninth century B.C.; and the oldest graves of the Dipylon period in Athens are also cremation graves.[21] One thing is certain: it is not legitimate to argue, as Rohde does, that "the real purpose and the original occasion of the practice of cremation" is the complete banishment of the *psyche* once and for all into the other world, but that the "Greeks of Homer, accustomed by long usage to the burning of the dead, are free from all fears of haunting ghostly presences," and "thought only of the destructive powers of that element . . . , and of the benefit that they were conferring upon the soul in freeing it by fire from the lifeless body, thus adding their assistance to its own efforts to get free." The practice of cremation does not prove the existence of any particular definite belief about the soul; it went on for centuries in Greece, side by side with burial. Nothing can possibly prove that the Greeks of Homer had practised cremation or anything else so long that they had forgotten why they did it. The "Greeks of Homer" were created by

[19] *Il.*, XII, 447.

[20] See for these and other details Bury in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, II, 513, 514, and Murray, *Rise of the Greek Epic*[3], pp. 121, 122.

[21] Cf. Schweitzer, *Ath. Mitt.*, XLIII (1918), 49 ff.

Homer; the only question is whether their author attributed to them the practice of cremation because he himself was familiar with it and thought it suitable to heroes, or for some other reason.

In all likelihood, one reason why Homer adopted cremation is that the expense of cremation limited it to kings and the wealthy class, and it therefore seemed to him one of the ways in which he could enhance the grandeur of his subject. Another reason is most certainly the one given in *Iliad*, VII, 409 f.:

> οὐ γάρ τις φειδὼ νεκύων κατατεθνηώτων
> γίγνετ', ἐπεί κε θάνωσι, πυρὸς μειλισσέμεν ὦκα.

"For dead corpses is there no stinting, when they once are dead, of the swift propitiation of fire." The statement that the dead must be appeased by fire means that the dead will be angry if fire, regarded as an essential part of the honor and ritual of burial, is withheld.

So far, Homer's own testimony that he was attempting to describe the age when the heroes lived, probably several centuries previous to his own time, is confirmed by the general accuracy of the setting in which he placed his characters. More could not be expected: he was writing a poem and not a volume of the "*Ionische Mitteilungen.*" However, he accomplished this difficult feat of archaizing with an intellectual skill and power which ought forever to dispose of the supposition that he shows signs of naïveté or of a primitive mind. It takes more than mere archaeological knowledge to compose such a poem. The manuals and the dictionaries all agree that Homer used the word ἥρως in the senses of 'excellent, noble, brave warrior, brave man'; but inasmuch as Homer was archaizing, it is obvious that the dictionaries and manuals are wrong. Homer applies the word to the living, because these living men, who are characters in his poem, have the semidivine status which is the mark of the hero throughout Greek history; and Homer, for the same reason, gave to the gods the great rôle which they play. Homer was compelled by the tradition

current in his own time, and by the actual cult then going on of many of these traditional heroes, to represent the gods as displaying a lively interest, both in the heroes who were their own children and natural *protégés*, and also in each other, to the lasting scandal of Xenophanes and kindred chilly reformers ever since antiquity.

Now there is one feature in Homer's picture of the gods that is quite unmistakable; the only excuse for calling attention to it is that it suggests a solution to the alleged absence of hero cult in Homer. Search as we may, we never find Homer representing one god as worshipping another god. The lesser gods stand in more or less awe of Zeus; they implore his aid or dread his anger, but they do not worship. And yet we all know that the cult of the gods is not absent from Homer; it is present in abundance, and it is furnished not by ordinary men, but by heroes, men with more divine blood in them than ordinary men have, but who nevertheless are depicted as bearing the same relation of inferiority to the gods that ordinary men bear to heroes. Their condition of mortality makes the heroes pitiable in the eyes of the gods; and though their strength and courage, or a peculiarly happy marriage such as that of Menelaus, may entitle a few heroes to privileged treatment or even to admission to Olympus, yet as a rule the heroes die, and their souls are hurled down to the house of Hades. Hence it is only right that the heroes should worship the gods. If the society in Homer were exclusively divine, with neither men nor heroes, we should hear nothing of the cult of the gods. We have all read the complaints of the critics about the alleged secularism and impiety of Homer; and it must be admitted that Homer does not invariably represent Zeus and Hera, Ares and Aphrodite, as providing models of deportment for human worshippers. But Homer's impiety really consisted in having a sufficiently vigorous imagination to see the gods treating each other as approximate equals, while Homer's critics keep on expecting the gods to feel and to act towards each other as the critics, who worship from below, feel towards the gods.

However, the criticisms of Xenophanes and Plato were long ago adequately answered by Aristotle in one of the best chapters (25) of the *Poetics*. And it must be remembered that Homer satisfies a rational piety by often portraying the gods as engaged in the performance of their function as defenders of the faithful and patrons of the virtuous.

This discussion of the cult of the gods in Homer indicates the reason why the cult of heroes is, though certainly not absent from the poems, yet of rare occurrence. It is rare because as a general rule there is no one to do the worshipping. A condition of inferiority is a prerequisite to worship: and the heroes are therefore precluded from worshipping each other. Of course a large number of heroes die during the action of the poems, and the proper rites are paid to these dead heroes; but such funeral ceremonies ought not to be equated with the worship of heroes, but rather with the so-called worship of the dead. Farnell has proposed to use the term 'tendance,' to refer to that part of the worship of the dead which does not imply a superhuman status of the dead; but whatever term we use, it is clear that there is a difference between the worship paid by an ordinary living man to an ordinary man who is dead and the worship paid by an ordinary living man to a hero. And Homer shows his familiarity with the hero worship of his own time by his references to Heracles, Menelaus, Helen, Erechtheus, and Ino-Leucothea. In these cases Homer does not attribute worship to the actors in his poem; and his allusions are quite consistent with his position as an archaizer.

There is in Homer one example of hero worship in the fullest sense of the term. In the *Nekyia*, in a passage of great poetic splendor, Odysseus descends to the kingdom of the Dead, who are mostly heroes of past and consequently more powerful generations than his own, performs a typical chthonian sacrifice, accompanied by vows of similar sacrifice upon his return to Ithaca to all the dead and particularly to Teiresias, and successfully consults the oracular hero Teiresias.[22] This is

[22] Cf. Pausanias 1, 17, 5 on the Thesprotian rivers, from which Pausanias thinks that Homer drew his picture of Hades. A famous νεκυομαντεῖον was situated there.

genuine worship of heroes, and at the same time genuine worship of the dead, offered by one of Homer's most important characters. Here and here only in Homer's story is the condition of inferiority, the prerequisite to worship of heroes, fulfilled; Odysseus and his men, though heroes themselves, have every right to feel themselves inferior to this awful gathering of all the even greater dead who have perished; and the house of Hades, which envelops the dead, is the tomb before which worship is offered. Furthermore, the emotional signs of inferiority, fear of harm and hope of favors, are repeatedly emphasized in the narrative.

By way of conclusion, let us turn to the funeral of Patroclus. The richness and the elaboration of the ceremonies cause this funeral, with its dirge, its outpouring of blood and later of wine round the corpse, the slaying and holocaust of horses and house dogs and the twelve Trojan captives, the building of the barrow and the celebration of the games, to resemble worship. And it undoubtedly is worship, but it is the worship given by a lover and a friend, by an equal to one whose only superiority consists in the tragic status conferred by death; and therefore it is not hero cult, in the sense in which we have hitherto used that term. In other respects, the two heroes remain of equal rank; both shall die and both shall be buried in the same grave. Achilles acts throughout because of his grief for Patroclus, and his wrath at the loss of Patroclus; it is indeed hinted that he may fear Patroclus if he delays the burial unduly, but he certainly does not feel the terror that an ordinary man might feel before a hero or that Odysseus felt in Hades, nor does he expect superhuman favors from Patroclus. The ritual of the cult or tendance of the dead, which may so easily be a repetition of empty form, is here filled full by genuine emotion; and Homer seizes the occasion to assert the survival of the human soul, which is hurt by negligence after its separation from the body, just as it is helped by the due accomplishment of rites.

The worship of heroes, and the cult of the dead, and the

survival of souls who are still poignantly interested in the events of the upper world, are therefore not only familiar to Homer, but are an integral part of his picture of the divine, heroic, and human world. The religious tradition of the Greeks changes, but is continuous. These cults, and the ideas connected with them, are not vestiges or 'survivals,' except in the way that everything which is alive at a given time may be said to be a survival; they are not blindly introduced by an ignorant poet into a poem where they would shock and surprise by their lack of harmony with all else. Homer devoted his genius to the composition of two poems dealing with the sorrows and the glory of certain heroes many of whom were worshipped in his own time wherever there were Greeks, in Ionia no less than elsewhere; the inevitable result was that these poems contributed to the secure hold of these heroes upon the religious imagination of the Greeks. In accordance with contemporary beliefs, Homer endowed the heroes with divine ancestry and with superhuman powers; he thereby made their status coincide in every essential with the status of the heroes of later days. The two poems are much more as well, but they are certainly our first document in the history of hero cult, and the unhistorical isolation of Homer and of Ionia will disappear if the document is given the place that it deserves.