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From Concrete to Concept:  
How Greek Philosophers Conceptualized Homeric Depiction

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By

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From Concrete to Concept:  
How Greek Philosophers Conceptualized Homeric Depiction

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Director: Matthias Vorwerk, Ph.D.

Whether ancient Greek philosophy be understood as a continuation or repudiation of Homer, the Homeric texts constituted much of the ancient Greek cultural scaffolding presupposed by nearly every Greek philosopher. In *New Science* Vico observes that there are two kinds of metaphysics, one imaginative and the other rational: "imaginative metaphysics" of concrete particulars is poetical, while "rational metaphysics" of abstract concepts is properly philosophical (405-407). Vico's view is refined in this dissertation by showing that what is depicted in Homer is conceptualized in Early and Classical Greek philosophy in a transformation from concrete to abstract thinking.

The unique contribution of the dissertation is, first, its methodological approach, i.e., the systematic analysis of the philosophical reception of Homer, which, in turn, makes the case that there is an ontological problematic in Homer, and, finally, explores the transformation of that problematic from Homer's imaginative metaphysics to the rational metaphysics of Early and Classical Greek philosophy. The dissertation, thereby, also offers a challenge to the anti-metaphysical bias of twenty-first century materialists.

Part One asks whether Homer was a philosopher at all. I.i assesses Vico's distinction between imaginative and rational metaphysics, and therein the movement from concrete thought to conceptual thought. I.ii takes up the question of whether Plato held Homer to be a

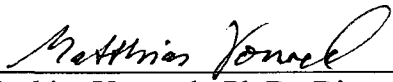
philosopher. The chapter concludes that—on Plato’s account—insofar as a philosopher is one who studies “that-which-is,” Homer was no more a philosopher than, and every bit as much a philosopher as, Heraclitus, Protagoras, or Empedocles. Plato sought to succeed Homer as the premier teacher of the Greeks.

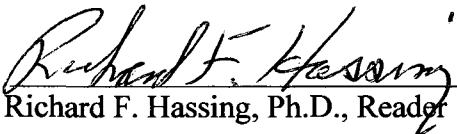
Part Two treats the way Homer’s imaginative metaphysics establishes the problematic for rational metaphysics as it develops in the works of Early Greek philosophers as well as of Plato and Aristotle. The following themes are examined in chapter-length studies: II.i “Being, Seeming and Knowing;” II.ii “Body and Soul;” II.iii “Banquet and Being;” II.iv “War, Peace and the Divine Nature;” II.v “The Household and the City.”

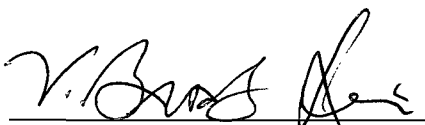
The dissertation concludes by arguing that an imaginative metaphysics of concrete particulars is not only possible but actually preceded rational metaphysics in historical development.



This dissertation by Jeffrey Dirk Wilson fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in philosophy approved by Matthias Vorwerk, Ph.D., as Director, and by Richard F. Hassing, Ph.D., and V. Bradley Lewis as Readers.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Matthias Vorwerk, Ph.D., Director

  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
V. Bradley Lewis, Ph.D., Reader

To my professors at Bowdoin College in gratitude, especially

Franklin G. Burroughs

Steven R. Cerf

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Nathan Dane II

William D. Geoghegan

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ὁ δ' ἀπορῶν καὶ θαυμάζων οἶεται ἀγνοεῖν (διὸ καὶ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφος πῶς ἐστίν. ὁ γὰρ μῦθος σύγκειται ἐκ θαυμασίων).

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

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Associate Professor Richard F. Hassing supervised my Ph.L. thesis and very kindly agreed to serve as first reader of my dissertation. I remember when I was working on my thesis, he said to me, “Many students do not realize that writing the proposal for the Ph.D.

dissertation is more difficult than writing the master's thesis." I witness to the truth of that observation. There were seventeen drafts of my dissertation proposal with some half-drafts between the whole drafts which required most of A.D. 2006. Although Professor Hassing was not obliged to read the dissertation prior to my director's approval, he very generously read my work as it unfolded. He provided many helpful and varied comments from long lists of solecisms in the text to very substantial philosophical reflections on my argument. I offer him my most heartfelt thanks for his graceful attention to my work.

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The graduate work which I now conclude could not have occurred without the support of The Catholic University of America for which I offer my thanks and appreciation. Beyond financial support, The Catholic University of America has been a very happy place for me. In particular I want to thank the Right Reverend Professor John F. Wippel who was instrumental in my coming to The Catholic University America School of Philosophy. He is also my mentor in metaphysics. Without his tutelage, this work would not have been possible.

The Dean of the School of Philosophy, The Very Reverend Associate Professor Kurt



Pritzl, O.P., has guided, encouraged and supported me in my studies during these past seven years for which I am grateful. Dean Pritzl told me in my first interview with him, “If you want to study philosophy in the context of Christian faith, this is the place.” The School of Philosophy has kept that promise. I also took his course, “Early Greek Philosophy,” which provided me a basis for examining the relationship between philosophy and the Homeric poems. The paper I wrote for him on Xenophanes is largely incorporated into this work.

One of my first courses at The Catholic University of America was on friendship in Plato and Aristotle taught by Assistant Professor Daniel Maher. For Plato’s contribution to the subject we read the *Lysis*. I remember all too keenly the physical nausea I experienced while reading the *Lysis*. Even if the open pederasty of that dialogue is, as some would argue, merely a metaphor for pedagogy, I found it repugnant, offensive, and degrading. Along the way I also took note of the sniping at Odysseus, in specific, and at Homer, in general. Instinctively I knew I was on Homer’s side, but I did not adequately understand why. Like old Vico I set out on the “Search for the True Homer.” Thus, the paper I wrote for Professor Maher that semester was the scholarly starting point for this dissertation. I wish to thank him publicly for helping me find the road which has proved so fecund for me.

As further acknowledgement, Giambattista Vico’s work on Homer was never far from my mind while writing, first, my thesis and, then, my dissertation. For introducing me to the writings of that sublime thinker I thank Professor Virgil Nemoianu. His course on Vico and Leibniz filled a gap in my philosophical formation. If philosophy is about truth, then philosophy must consider poetry and, indeed, all of life as well as the narrower

discipline of dialectic. That was a lesson I gleaned from Vico and Leibniz, and from Professor Nemoianu's own elegant method.

There are the several administrative assistants who have worked in the Catholic University School of Philosophy and numerous staff members of the Mullen Library whose cheerful responsiveness is part of the invisible glue which holds this dissertation together. Among those many, one person in the Mullen Library deserves special mention. Ms. Traci Perkins went beyond the literal requirements of her job to assist me in the preparation of this dissertation. She often found ways to make the rough smooth. Thereby she has not only supported my research but also the higher mission of the university.

There are, of course, a plethora of relatives and friends who have contributed to this project in various ways. To my family, I offer this embracing thanks. The Reverend Professor Eugene H. Peterson and his wife, Elder Janice Stubbs Peterson, have been stalwart friends since my youth. They have supported me in a variety of ways for which they have my heartfelt gratitude. Professor Donald Phillip Verene of Emory University kindly read the Vico chapter and saved me from at least one serious error. Associate Professor Joshua P. Hochschild of Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg, Maryland also made suggestions for the Vico chapter which led to substantial improvement. He has also expressed his constant confidence in me on difficult days. The Metaphysical Society of America gave me a tremendous boost when they, first, accepted a paper, based upon the Vico chapter, for presentation at their A.D. 2009 conference and, then, awarded me the Aristotle Prize for that paper. To all these good folks, I offer my public thanks. To those whom I should have thanked publicly and have not, I ask your forgiveness.

I have made several references in these acknowledgements to my Ph.L. thesis, “Homer’s Paradigm of Being: A Philosophical Reading of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.” In substance large parts of that work and in spirit all the parts are incorporated into this dissertation.

That thesis was dedicated to the memory of Professor Nathan Dane II of Bowdoin College. His inspired teaching of Homer made an impression on my rational soul so profound that it was there waiting for my philosophical studies thirty years later. When I dedicated the thesis, it was my intention also to dedicate the completed doctoral dissertation to him. Among other things, two years of my own full-time undergraduate teaching at Mount St. Mary’s University have intervened between completion of thesis and dissertation. As I have reflected on what it has been like to teach undergraduates, my thoughts have often drifted back to the time when I was myself an undergraduate. I have remembered with embarrassment the many petty stupidities, injustices, and even—I am sorely sad to say—a few cruelties which I committed against my teachers. I did appreciate them at the time, but nothing like the appreciation I have for them today. Thus, I dedicate this dissertation to all my professors at Bowdoin College. Especially, I single out those professors who gave me the best and endured me the most: Franklin G. Burroughs, Steven R. Cerf, Louis O. Coxe, Nathan Dane II, William D. Geoghegan, James L. Hodge, William T. Hughes, Burke O. Long, James P. McDermott. And from that list, I draw two for particular appreciation. Once again, I remember Professor Dane with gratitude for making me acquainted with Homer. At this time, I also want to recognize Professor James L. Hodge who was my major advisor and guided my senior honors thesis. He has been a faithful and encouraging friend to me these

many years. Because of the forbearance shown to me by my teachers, now when I encounter frequent student misdemeanors and occasional felonies against courtesy and good sense, I smile wryly and recall, “I too was once young.”

Jeffrey Dirk Wilson

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The Feast of the Ascension in the year of grace 2009



Frontispiece to Giambattista Vico's *New Science*

## Introduction

But Homer came first. Day after day and month after month we drove gloriously onward, tearing the whole *Achilleid* out of the *Iliad* and tossing the rest on one side, and then reading the *Odyssey* entire, till the music of the thing and the clear, bitter brightness that lives in almost every formula had become part of me.

—C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

What Professor Lewis claims for himself, that the Homeric poems infused his life and work, this dissertation claims for ancient philosophers of the Early Greek and Classical periods. Whether ancient Greek philosophy be understood as a continuation or repudiation of Homer, the Homeric texts constituted much of the ancient Greek cultural scaffolding presupposed in almost every philosophical account. As Xenophanes observes, "from the beginning all have learned according to Homer."<sup>1</sup> This dissertation will establish, first, that ancient Greek philosophers are better understood when read in conjunction with Homer rather than separated from him, because Homer concretely established in poetic depiction the problematic which occupied Early and Classical Greek philosophers conceptually. It will be further argued that Homer's poetic depiction constitutes a metaphysics of the imagination which preceded historically the philosophers' rational metaphysics. Both points arise from the insights of Giambattista Vico.

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker: Griechisch und Deutsch*, ed. Walther Kranz, 9th ed., vol. 1 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1960), 21 [11] Xenophanes B10; hereafter, Xenophanes, B10 D.-K.

### 1. *Status Quaestionis*

The state of modern scholarship regarding the philosophical reading of Homer begins with Giambattista Vico. Homer is fundamental to the newness of Vico's *New Science*. In the frontispiece, Lady Metaphysic stands atop the globe of nature. In ecstasy, she contemplates the providence of God. Divine providence shines upon "a convex jewel which adorns the breast of metaphysic"<sup>2</sup> and then is reflected "onto the statue of Homer, the first gentile author who has come down to us."<sup>3</sup> A right understanding of Homer is an essential pre-condition to founding the new science of history and human institutions which Vico calls "a rational civil theology of divine providence."<sup>4</sup> In the four hundred and twenty six pages of the Bergin-Fisch edition, there are over one hundred specific references to Homer throughout *New Science*.<sup>5</sup> The thirty-four pages of Book Three are given entirely to the "Discovery of the True Homer." Vico does not leave the careful reader to make inferences from what is implicit in the text, he makes explicit that understanding Homer rightly is central to his project, a truth which had escaped even him in the first edition of his work:

This poetical wisdom, the knowledge of the theological poets, was unquestionably the first wisdom of the world for the gentiles. The statue of Homer on a cracked base signifies the discovery of the true Homer. (In the first edition of the *New Science* we sensed it but did not understand it. In the present edition it is fully set forth after due consideration.) Unknown until now, he has held hidden from us the true institutions of the fabulous time among nations, and much more so those of the dark time which

---

<sup>2</sup> Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*, trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), ¶5, 5; hereafter, *NS* 5.

<sup>3</sup> *NS* 6.

<sup>4</sup> *NS* 2.

<sup>5</sup> *NS* 437.

all had despaired of knowing, and consequently the first true institutions of the historic time.<sup>6</sup>

Vico's challenge, the newness of his reading, is that in order to understand human history and human institutions, one must rightly understand Homer. This is a very different founding of a political science, as Professor Patrick J. Deneen has discerned, from that found in Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Montesquieu and Hume, and different again from Descartes' vision. Vico "seeks to preserve the place of myth in civilization."<sup>7</sup> For Vico, when men were incapable of "the clean and pure heart which metaphysic must have,"<sup>8</sup> the providence of God was mediated by myth—what Vico calls "poetic wisdom" to "the crude minds of the first founders . . . [who were] all robust sense and imagination."<sup>9</sup>

The point of departure for the present work is Vico's observation that there are two kinds of metaphysics, one imaginative and the other rational: *Imaginative metaphysics* of concrete particulars (*la metafisica fantasticata*) is poetical, while *rational metaphysics* of abstract concepts (*la metafisica ragionata*) is properly philosophical.<sup>10</sup> Vico writes, "[rational] metaphysics abstracts the mind from the senses, and the poetic faculty must submerge the whole mind in the senses; [rational] metaphysics soars up to universals, and the poetic faculty must plunge deep into particulars." Vico's point of view will be engaged

---

<sup>6</sup> NS 6.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick J. Deneen, *The Odyssey of Political Theory: The Politics of Departure and Return* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000) 169. Professor Deneen's work has been of great value in writing this dissertation. He has anticipated many of the same interests and concerns which occupy this work.

<sup>8</sup> NS 5.

<sup>9</sup> NS 6.

<sup>10</sup> NS 405-407.



and refined by arguing that there is not an absolute disjunction between Homeric poetry, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other, rather that what is depicted in Homer is conceptualized in Early and Classical Greek philosophy in a process of transformation from concrete to abstract thinking. Vico's imaginative metaphysics is sometimes called here *depictive metaphysics*; the two terms are used interchangeably. Depictive metaphysics, to define a new term, presents the question of being through relations, character and circumstances of beings of any kind. Stated negatively, depictive metaphysics, unlike rational metaphysics, exhibits neither concept nor argument; there is no separation from matter or motion.

The relationship of depictive to rational metaphysics is modelled in the relationship between Vico's frontispiece and the text which follows.<sup>11</sup> In the frontispiece is depicted everything Vico wants to say in his book. An illiterate person could apprehend Vico's message by gazing upon the picture. The apprehension would be imaginative, even perhaps affective. That person might never be able to conceptualize or express what he has apprehended, perhaps not even know that he has apprehended something. He might not be able to understand his apprehension rationally if it were explained to him even by such an exhaustive teacher as Vico. In the text, by contrast, Vico gives rational expression of what is depicted in the frontispiece. The model of relationship between depictive and rational metaphysics is itself depicted in that Vico felt unable or, at least, unwilling to dispense with either frontispiece or explanatory text. Both kinds of metaphysics are necessary to his *New Science*. Vico is the philosophical author of the questions considered in this dissertation.

---

<sup>11</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 173-74.

Loaded into the argument that what is depicted in Homer is conceptualized in philosophy is the question of how to read texts. Before examining the work of scholars who attend to, say, Plato's reading of Homer or Vico's reading of Plato's reading of Homer as well as Vico's reading of Homer himself, it is important to take up the question of reading. To put this another way: the conceptualization of depiction is a species of reading, but of what genus? Professor Zdravko Planinc's *Plato Through Homer* explores that question.<sup>12</sup> Professor Planinc examines what he calls Plato's refiguring of "the tropes of Homer's *Odyssey*,"<sup>13</sup> proposing that Plato did not merely criticize or even simply engage Homer, rather remade Homeric epic into philosophy. He observes that the Bible, Shakespeare's plays and Plato's dialogues "are foundational for our civilization and culture."<sup>14</sup> He points out that material from such civilizational sources is often integrated into other works, often without quotation or citation. He comments:

It is known variously as rewriting, rescripting, source work, text work, mimesis, *imitatio*, rhetorical imitation, compositional genetics, intertextuality and midrash. I will call it by one name, intentionally chosen for its lack of theoretical grounding: "refiguring." If an author uses a source text, deliberately and meaningfully, as part of a new text, the new text refigures the source.<sup>15</sup>

The conceptualization of depiction is a species of the genus *refiguring*. Professor Planinc notes that there has been a recent emergence of literature around the work of refiguring.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Zdravko Planinc, *Plato Through Homer: Poetry and Philosophy in the Cosmological Dialogues* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Planinc, *Plato Through Homer*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 12n 9.

It will be argued here that Plato explicitly refigures Homer's depictive metaphysics as rational metaphysics and that earlier Greek philosophers also refigure the epic tropes of Homer into philosophical tropes though perhaps without conscious intention. Professor Planinc argues specifically that Plato refigures the *Odyssey* in order to show that "Socrates is a new Odysseus."<sup>17</sup> This is a point which shall also be considered in I.ii.

The twentieth century pioneer of reading Homer philosophically was Professor Seth Benardete. His *The Bow and the Lyre* is explicitly, as the subtitle says, *A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey*.<sup>18</sup> Professor Benardete's intellectual life models what this dissertation advocates: he reads philosophical texts as a classicist. The ear of his soul was always tuned to the music as well as to the words of the texts before him.<sup>19</sup> In the "Preface" to *The Bow and the Lyre*, he summarizes years of pondering based on an inkling that Plato had either done something brilliant on purpose, or there had been one of the most extraordinary coincidences in the history of the world, "More than forty years ago, when I first studied Homer, I used something I found in Plato in order to understand the plot of the *Iliad*; . . . . Plato was there as a map or grid that allowed me to trace out faint trails in older authors who could not guide me, through no fault of their own, as well as Plato could."<sup>20</sup> He then discusses his journey of puzzlement as he read the poets and Plato and found uncanny correspondences, "An occasional hit can be artless, but a pattern of success makes one

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<sup>17</sup> Planinc, *Plato through Homer*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> Seth Benardete, *The Bow and the Lyre: A Platonic Reading of the Odyssey* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997).

<sup>19</sup> I do not have a background in classics. What was lifelong formation for Professor Benardete was for me a discovery in the mid-life study of philosophy.

<sup>20</sup> Benardete, *Bow*, xi.

suspect that the dice are loaded. If they are loaded, the simple separation of poetry from philosophy is no longer possible.”<sup>21</sup> He then discusses lies that are like the truth and Homer as a truth-telling liar in his depiction of Odysseus as another kind of truth-telling liar. He then discusses the question of whether Plato’s “noble lie” has a genealogy in Homer:

We did not know before we turned to the *Odyssey* whether the poets themselves had anticipated Plato in this regard, or if they had pointed out to him this way of understanding their own doing or making but had stopped short of it themselves. If they had stopped short, then Plato would have recovered a way of thinking that is not on the way to philosophy but is philosophy, and the apparent tension between Plato the poet and Plato the philosopher would disappear.<sup>22</sup>

Philosophy was not invented by Plato until long after Homer,<sup>23</sup> and yet it may be because of Homer that philosophy was invented. Perhaps no one has thought as deeply about this point as Professor Benardete. In addition to *The Bow and the Lyre, The Argument of the Action:*

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., xii.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>23</sup> Someone will point out that there were thinkers who lived prior to Plato who are deemed philosophers (i.e., from Thales to Socrates). It will be shown in I.ii that though Pythagoras may have coined the term “philosopher” (Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. with a revised supplement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), s.v. φιλόσοφος; hereafter, LSJ, s.v. φιλόσοφος), nevertheless it was Plato who defined the term and analyzed various thinkers in terms of the definition (e.g., *R.* 6.484a1-3, *Th.* 152e1-9). It is only later that the terms “philosophy” and “philosopher” are applied more generally. One sees Aristotle engaged in the work of sorting, for example, in *Poetics* 1447b15-19 where he distinguishes the substance of the work, respectively, by Empedocles and Homer though both wrote in meter. This example supports the view that the attribution of the title “philosopher” to Early Greek thinkers came later in that Aristotle, in this passage, does not call Empedocles “φιλόσοφος,” rather “φυσιολόγος” and characterized his work as φυσικόν. In the *Metaphysics* 1.983b7-8, one can see Aristotle using the term (here: “those who philosophize,” φιλοσοφησάντων) in a more general way as he commences his retrospective review. In I.ii, some considerable attention will be given to the use Plato makes of “philosopher” in distinction to the generic use of the word in later periods. That having been said, the defining and sorting continue as evidenced by Wittgenstein’s discussion of what “philosophy” means, “If, e.g., we call our investigations ‘philosophy’, this title, on the one hand, seems appropriate, on the other hand it certainly has misled people. (One might say that the subject we are dealing with is one of the heirs of the subject which used to be called ‘philosophy’.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Preliminary Studies for the “Philosophical Investigations:” Generally known as The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 28.

*Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy*<sup>24</sup>; is also a mine of important material as is the recent publication of his 1955 doctoral dissertation as *Achilles and Hector*.<sup>25</sup>

Among contemporary scholars, Professor Donald Phillip Verene offers the fullest treatment of Vico as he read Homer and Plato. Professor Verene adumbrates Vico's reading of Homer versus Plato in his 1981 study, *Vico's Science of Imagination*. He summarizes his thesis:

Vico's philosophy offers a new starting point, not simply by siding with the wisdom of Homer against the rational wisdom of Plato, but by interpreting the wisdom of Homer in a new way. This interpretation is centered in Vico's theory of poetic wisdom, *sapientia poetica*, through which we come to a new understanding of the image and the rational idea. By means of his concept of memory, Vico works his way back to the world of original thought, to the myth. Through his discovery of the imaginative universal, of fantasia as a way of thinking and acting, Vico finds a new origin for philosophical thought.<sup>26</sup>

Thinking, according to Vico, is not restricted to ratiocination. Man can think with images, and thus with myths and with poetry. Professor Verene probably goes too far in saying that Vico sides with Homer against Plato. Vico's stance is more nuanced. He sides with Plato as Plato, but sides against Plato in his opposition to Homer. Vico affirms that the whole of truth—the whole λόγος or *ratio* in their original meanings—requires both the rational wisdom of philosophy and the imaginative wisdom of poetry. Vico affirms their historical inter-relatedness, “But it was poetic wisdom itself whose fables provided occasions for the

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<sup>24</sup> Seth Benardete, *The Argument of the Action: Essays on Greek Poetry and Philosophy*, ed. with an introduction by Ronna Burger and Michael Davis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Seth Benardete, *Achilles and Hector: the Homeric Hero*, ed. Ronna Burger, with a preface by Michael Davis (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Donald Philip Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 34-35. Professor Verene augments his assessment in chapter six of *Knowledge of Things Human and Divine: Vico's New Science and Finnegan's Wake* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), “The New Science: The Life of Nations,” 145-203, especially 182-91.

philosophers to meditate their lofty truths, and supplied them also with means for expounding them.”<sup>27</sup>

Professor Deneen’s *The Odyssey of Political Theory* has a wonderful companion in Professor Jacob Howland’s *The Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy*,<sup>28</sup> a work which reads the *Republic* as literature as well as philosophy and, therein, as heir to the Homeric poems. Professor Deneen adds the additional layers of interpretative reading of Homer by Vico, Rousseau, and the Frankfurt School. Just as Plato refigures Homer, so does Vico refigure not only Homer but also Plato refiguring Homer. Professor Deneen adds other layers of refiguring. He reflects on the use of Vico by the Frankfurt school. A kind of poetic dimensional depth begins to be described: Deneen refiguring Adorno and Horkheimer refiguring Vico refiguring Homer and even refiguring Plato refiguring Homer. Professor Deneen’s epigraph for his chapter, “Escaping the Dialectic: Vico, the Frankfurt School, and the Dialectic of Enlightenment,” is this quotation from Plato’s *Republic*, “And surely the myths are, as a whole, false, though there is a truth in them, too.”<sup>29</sup> That is as true for philosophical refiguring of those myths as for the originals, as Professor Deneen, to his credit, indicates in his presentation of how Adorno and Horkheimer read Vico:

Through a unique examination of Homer’s *Odyssey*, Horkheimer and Adorno seek to locate enlightenment elements and attempt to show that there is no historical “progress” as such—only that “progress” has always been with us and is finally inescapable. However, the extent to which their interpretation is not wholly upheld

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<sup>27</sup> NS 901.

<sup>28</sup> Jacob Howland, *The “Republic”: The Odyssey of Philosophy* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 169, quoting R. 2.377a5-6.

by the text of the *Odyssey* suggests that their deep pessimism may not be entirely warranted.<sup>30</sup>

Professor Deneen's judgement is insightful, but at the same time, if one considers the text of Adorno and Horkheimer as refiguring, then it is as mistaken to say that they misread Homer as to say Plato did. Philosophy, and even the scholarship of academic philosophy, must take into account the literary moves as well as the logical moves of a text, following another of Vico's great insights that the excesses of poetry and philosophy go unchecked when the two are isolated from each other.<sup>31</sup>

For the health of both poetry and philosophy, their quarrel must continue in the bonds of marriage; they must never divorce. To play with the title of a book by Professor Benardete, *The Argument of the Action*, argument can be implicit in literary action and literary action can be implicit in philosophical argument. Professor Deneen understands this; he uses the Adorno-Horkheimer misreading, e.g., their finding "deep pessimism" in Homer, as a point of departure for his own refiguring of Vico and of Homer.<sup>32</sup> Of course, this dissertation is exactly that kind of endeavor as well, the use of readings and misreadings as points of departure for yet another philosophical refiguring.

Professor Deneen argues that the Adorno-Horkheimer interpretation of the *Odyssey*, as reckoned by a consensus of "those who study the work of the Frankfurt School," is

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>31</sup> NS 7.

<sup>32</sup> "Horkheimer and Adorno continue a tradition as old as the post-Homeric cycles of epic poetry to return to the ancient themes of longing and limitation, the desire for immortality and death, the demands of the self and those of the polis, and the role of politics in negotiating these seemingly insurmountable divides." Deneen, *Political Theory*, 170.

“perhaps the centerpiece of Critical Theory,”<sup>33</sup> even while disagreeing with many of the conclusions. He sides with Vico against them, seeking Vico’s vision “of a rationality that he called ‘poetic logic,’ precisely that form of ‘poetic truth that Adorno rejects.”<sup>34</sup> He continues, “For Vico, in distinction from his Enlightenment contemporaries, there is no strict division between *mythos* and *logos* (myth and rationality). Indeed, the *mythos* that preceded *logos* allowed enlightenment to develop.”<sup>35</sup> Professor Deneen argues in effect—or, at least, it is an implication of his argument—that, in historical terms, Homeric mythology made philosophy possible.

The insights of Professor Alisdair MacIntyre on the significance of Homer for philosophy, both in *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*,<sup>36</sup> bear upon the reflections of this dissertation. As on so many other points in philosophy, his summary of the relationship of Homer and Plato on the reading of Vico is as succinct as it is complete:

Vico argued that the human understanding in the course of moving from the age of the gods through the age of the heroes to the age of men transforms itself from a poetic mode to which the imaginative universal is central to a rational mode in which the imaginative universal is replaced by the intelligible universal. This conceptual transformation is indeed the one that was enacted in the passage from Homer to Plato.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 189. As an example of this “centerpiece,” Professor Deneen summarizes their views on this point, “The ‘evident untruth in myths’ (DE, 46) is nothing less than an effort by the property holders (such as Odysseus) to perpetrate dominion over the proletariat and to exploit their labor.” Ibid., 188.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>36</sup> Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). Alisdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*, 57.



The difference between the work of the distinguished philosophers and scholars reviewed above and this dissertation is that what they addressed as a subordinate point or theme in their respective studies becomes the central point and theme here. The thesis of this work is that what is depicted in Homer becomes conceptualized in Early and Classical Greek philosophy.

## 2. The Homeric Question

The Homeric Question is this: who was *Homer*? Other issues quickly follow, such as the unity of each of the epics and authorial unity. Professor Fowler opines that the modern debate was opened by Villoison in 1788 and Wolf in 1795,<sup>38</sup> but, in fact, Giambattista Vico had already raised the question and answered it in his *New Science*, the third edition of which was published in 1744. After surveying the evidence for the diachronicity of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Vico states, “We must conclude that two poems were composed and compiled by various hands through various ages.”<sup>39</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation, it matters not at all how many authors contributed to the final works. What does matter is the date when some kind of stable common text was available in the Greek world. The stance adopted here is that there are two clear historical points when some kind of common text either existed or came into existence. The first was the Panathenaea Festival as expanded by Pisistratus who died in 527 B.C. The second date certain was the death of Aristarchus, last of the great Alexandrian editors, in 145 B.C.

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Fowler, “The Homeric Question,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. Robert Fowler (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 2006), 220.

<sup>39</sup> *NS* 805.

After 527 B.C. some kind of common text existed because there was the competition in reciting Homer as part of the Panathenaea Festival. A nice piece of support for the existence of some kind of text by the time Pisistratus died comes from Professor Fowler, though perhaps somewhat against his will:

Writing material was scarce and expensive. Consequently, the poems must have been transmitted by oral means – which is to say, they remained polymorphous – until they were finally written down. The moment at which this is said to have happened is sixth-century Athens in the context of the Panathenaic festival: the so-called ‘Peisistratid redaction’, after the family of tyrants who turned the festival into an international showcase. There are at least two problems with this view. One is that, though the evidence suffices to show that a text was produced for the Athenian festival, it does not show that this was the first such text; indeed it rather suggests the opposite. Who or what was the ‘Homer’ of which the Peisistratids wished to ensure the authentic version? The story implies that liberties were being taken, not that there was no text; it implies an interesting textual awareness of oral vagaries, which indeed continued to work their mischief for a long time afterwards, and which had already left some indelible marks on our text, but it does not imply the birth of the text it sought to control. An even greater problem is that, were the texts still essentially oral, constantly being recomposed in performance until fixed in the sixth century, their formulaic diction would betray the fact. The formulas continued to evolve, and one can establish the relative dates of texts by analysing their neologisms.<sup>40</sup>

If there was not literally a text during the era of Pisistratus, there still existed some kind of common oral rendering of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. If “liberties were being taken,” as Professor Fowler asserts, they had to be taken *with* something. The recitations of the Panathenaea Festival created the idea of the Homeric canon, but it did not create let alone finalize the canon itself. What is additionally clear is that the idea of a Homeric canon already had an authoritative status during the lifetime of Pisistratus. Setting aside questions about *Odyssey* 24, while the whole of the Homeric canon may not have existed by 527 B.C., it may be argued that the parts which were woven into that canon did exist by that time.

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<sup>40</sup> Fowler, “The Homeric Question,” 224-25.

Professor Voegelin points out that it is difficult to move the two epics much further forward than about 680 B.C. given the kinds of armor that are and are not depicted in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, “Since Late Geometric vases depict the old armature down to c. 700, while the first vase painting of a hoplite shield appears c. 680, the date of the *Iliad* cannot be moved much below 700.”<sup>41</sup> Professor Voegelin supposes that his analysis applies to common texts as well as to their components. For reasons already set forth, that view is not adopted here, but his logic does hold for the components. The term *canon* is especially fitting in relation to the Homeric poems because of their authoritative status. What is as clear as it is puzzling to the scholarly heirs of modernity is that Homer’s authority preceded the Homeric canon. It was the authority of Homer which created the canon. 680 B.C shall be taken in this dissertation as the *terminus ante quem* for that Homeric authority and for the components which ultimately would be woven together to create a stable common text.

Professor Gilbert Murray argues that the alternatives to solving the Homeric Question of either one author or many constitute a false dichotomy. He suggests that the unity of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* arises precisely from the centuries of intentional and unintentional editing which continued right down to the great ancient editors of the two Homeric poems, Zenodotus and Aristarchus.<sup>42</sup> Of Zenodotus who was faced with a plethora of texts, he writes:

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<sup>41</sup> Eric Voegelin, *The World of the Polis*, ed. with an introduction by Athanasios Moulakis, in *Order and History*, vol. 2 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 139.

<sup>42</sup> He posits four stages about the second of which—covering the period of concern in this dissertation—he writes, “When it began we can hardly guess, nor how the expurgations gradually came to be accepted and canonized in the official texts; but the process must, in some form or other, have lasted through a great part of the life of the poems.” Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 267. Professor Nagy also presents an evolutionary model of “at least five distinct

We can see that he regarded the texts of his day as containing, in every part of the poems, whole masses of stuff that was not ‘Homer’. He collected many MSS., but seems not to have had any that he considered authoritative. . . . Being himself an epic poet he used his critical faculty and rejected much merely because it was ‘unseemly.’<sup>43</sup>

The significance of the editing by Zenodotus on the basis of what is *fitting* (i.e., seemly) is all the more significant because Zenodotus flourished in 285 B.C., sixty years after the death of Plato. Professor Murray goes on to discuss the work of Aristarchus and to summarize the state of the *common text* as existing—or not—when Zenodotus began his work:

Thanks to the brilliant pioneer work of Zenodotus, Aristarchus was able to proceed with more caution. The ground had been cleared for him, and, besides, the Ptolemies had been for some generations zealously collecting MSS. But it is noteworthy that when Aristarchus does cite a MS. authority for some reading, he never shows knowledge of any particular authoritative tradition. . . .

This seems to show that (1) Zenodotus found the text in a state of great disorder, and (2) neither he nor Aristarchus had any authoritative MS. tradition by which to correct it. The one recension which Aristarchus thought worthy of a special critical sign was not an ancient vulgate but the edition of Zenodotus.<sup>44</sup>

The conclusion, then, is that there was no common text, in the modern sense of the word until after the death of Aristarchus in 145 B.C. Again, Professor Fowler sums up the situation, in this case more straightforwardly, “A stable vulgate text eventually emerged

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consecutive periods of Homeric transmission.” Gregory Nagy, *Homeric Questions* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 41. His third period, “definitive,” ran “from the middle of the sixth century to the later part of the fourth.” He observes, “A context for the definitive period in my evolutionary model is a pan-Hellenic festival like the Panathenaia at Athens, which served as the formal setting, established by law, of seasonally recurring performances of the Homeric Iliad and Odyssey . . . .” Ibid., 42. What he calls “a standardizing period” lasted from the late fourth century until the acceptance of the Aristarchean text c. 150 B.C. After that came “a relatively most rigid period,” when there was a stable common text. Ibid., 42. Professor Nagy acknowledges his debt to Professor Murray. Ibid., 39, n. 41. Professor Nagy repeats and expands his schema in a later work. Gregory Nagy, *Homer’s Text and Language* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 27-31.

<sup>43</sup> Murray, *Greek Epic*, 284.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 284.

under the influence of the Alexandrian scholarship, especially that of Aristarchus in the second century B.C.; in particular, the number of verses in his edition was decisive.”<sup>45</sup>

This is a fascinating topic. A library of tomes has already been written on the subject with new additions each year not only in print but now also on-line.<sup>46</sup> The concern here, however, has to do with Homer as known by Early and Classical Greek philosophers. In particular and especially, what was the text of Homer known by Plato? There is a supposition that a common text existed which Plato knew. For example, Professor Benardete wrote an article, entitled “Some Misquotations of Homer in Plato.”<sup>47</sup> The presumption of the article’s title is that Plato knew the common text, and occasionally he made mistakes in quoting that common text. Professor Murray suggests another possibility:

It is clear that Plato’s quotations are much closer to our text than those of any other fourth-century writer.

The simplest conclusion would be to assume that Plato used a text very like ours. Yet perhaps that would be a mistake. Among the writings of the first disciples of Aristarchus we find one by Ammonius, *περὶ τῶν ὑπὸ Πλάτωνος ἐξ Ὁμήρου μετενηνεγμένων*, ‘On Plato’s quotations from Homer’. The purpose of the book was

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<sup>45</sup> Fowler, “Homeric Question,” 231.

<sup>46</sup> On this point, Professor Nagy observed in 2004: In Homeric studies, there is an ongoing debate centering on different ways to establish the text of Homer, . . . . In an age of information technology, the debate has only intensified, and the stakes have been raised ever higher.” Nagy, *Homer’s Text and Language*, xi. The title of his first chapter characterizes the debate, “The Quest for Definitive Text of Homer.” *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Professor Benardete is clearly aware of the textual issues at stake. His use of the word “misquotations” is as much an interpretive stance as a statement of historical reality. Seth Benardete, “Some Misquotations of Homer in Plato,” *Phronesis* 8(2) (1963) : 173. Professor Sedley writes in a similar vein, “Socrates half-remembers lines of Homer” and “As Homer says in a line quoted – almost correctly! – by Socrates.” David Sedley, *Plato’s “Cratylus”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 78-79. Professor Murray surveys “a good many small fragments quoted from Homer by various authors which do not occur in our text,” authors such as Pindar, Hippocrates, Aeschines, Xenophon, and Aristotle. He concludes, “The list is not complete, but even apart from the evidence of the papyri, it seems to me quite conclusive. There must have been current in the fourth century texts of Homer very different indeed from ours. Make handsome allowance for slips of memory and the like, the testimony of these unknown lines is not to be overthrown, and cannot be shaken by any but the most overwhelming evidence on the other side.” Murray, *Epic*, 289-90.

textual recension. That is, the quotations in Plato were a recognized authority for the text of Homer in Alexandrian times. There was a whole small literature on Plato's relation to Homer. He shared with Herodotus the title of Ὀμηρικώτατος, and exercised a quite special influence on the Alexandrian school. It is, perhaps, not Plato who agrees with our vulgate, but our vulgate which, wherever it had the evidence, tried deliberately to follow the readings of Plato? It is curious, at any rate, that the writer whose quotations, few as they are, come next to Plato's for conformity with our text, is the other recognized 'Homerikôtatos', Herodotus.<sup>48</sup>

It may be that Plato was a premier source for the Alexandrian editors. What is clear is that the Alexandrians held Plato to have been a great respecter of Homer. That does not mean Plato did in fact respect Homer, as they thought, but those who read Plato as denouncing Homer should take the Alexandrian opinion into consideration. Advancing Professor Murray's suggestion further, Plato shapes the understanding of Homer today. For example, Professor Nagy uses Plato's *Ion* as a source in discussing how the rhapsodes performed Homer in the fifth century B.C.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, in that dialogue, Socrates is depicted as knowing Homer better than the rhapsode. That this view of Plato's relationship to Homer, i.e., as an authority on Homer whose discussion of Homer shaped the ancient contours of what was understood as Homer's identity as well as providing scholars of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries A.D. with valuable information, is further supported by the questionably Platonic dialogue *Hipparchus*. In specific, that dialogue contributes to the understanding of Pisistratus's influence on the stabilization of the Homeric text:

Pisistratus' son, Hipparchus . . . was the eldest and wisest of Pisistratus' children. In addition to the many other fine deeds in which he displayed his wisdom, it was he

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>49</sup> Nagy, *Questions*, 21, 82, 89, 92. E.g., "The succession of rhapsodes linking a Homer in the remote past with the Homeric performances in the 'present' of the historical period—as extrapolated from such accounts as Plato's *Ion*—is a *diachronic reality*." Ibid., 82. Professor Nagy also cites *R. 600d* in support of his view. Ibid., 89.

who brought the works of Homer to this land, and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to recite them in relays—one following another—as they still do now.<sup>50</sup>

The authorship of *Hipparchus* has long been in dispute.<sup>51</sup> The current scholarly consensus is that *Hipparchus* can be dated to the time around Plato's death and "is a good example of the way questions were discussed in the mid-fourth century Academy."<sup>52</sup> Here is a dialogue which has Socrates praise an Athenian statesman, associated with tyranny, for instituting the performance of Homer in the Panathenaea. If the dialogue was written by Plato, then it is evidence that Plato regarded as a boon to Athenian culture the introduction of Homer to Athens by the family of Pisistratus. In a sense, if the dialogue was not written by Plato, then the dialogue provides even stronger evidence of Plato's respect for Homer. If Plato had written the *Hipparchus*, some interpreters could argue for ironic or esoteric meaning in Socrates' praise. If the author was not Plato but someone near him, then it suggests a state of affairs in which contemporaries of Plato believed that Plato admired Homer as author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

The net effect of this consideration is to conclude that a common text of Homer during the period studied in this dissertation did not exist, or, if it did exist, it has not been found. The notion that Plato was an authority on Homer is a point to be remembered

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<sup>50</sup> *Hippr.* 228b4-c1; Cooper 613. On the point of this account's influence, Professor Nagy writes, "In these accounts of the supposedly Athenian reception of Homeric poetry, reinforced by the story of 'Plato' *Hipparchus* 228 claiming that it was Hipparkhos, the son of Peisistratos, who introduced the Homeric poems to Athens, we confront the germ of the construct that has come to be known among classicists as the 'Peisistratean recension.'" Nagy, *Questions*, 74. Professor Nagy exegetes Hipparchus 228b in support of his view. *Ibid.*, 80-82.

<sup>51</sup> Professor Pangle briefly surveys the controversy. In the end, he holds Plato to have written the dialogue. Thomas L. Pangle, ed., *The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten Forgotten Socratic dialogues*, *Translated, with Interpretive Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 3n2.

<sup>52</sup> D. S. Hutchinson, "Hipparchus," in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, 609.

throughout. At the same time, the post-modern reader must assume a well-informed agnosticism each time he reads a quotation in Early and Classical Greek philosophy from Homer. When Pisistratus died, Homer had a referent of ancient authority, namely two bodies of material called the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Exactly how that referent was constituted in 527 B.C. is not known today, and it probably cannot be known. What can be said is that when Xenophanes or Plato cites Homer, there is the presumption that there existed something which everyone would understand. They were working at least with the idea of a canon of Homeric material though that canon would not be closed until approximately two centuries after Plato's death. It is significant that the Alexandrian editors who shaped and finally defined the Homeric canon regarded Plato with Herodotus as the pre-eminent knowers of Homer.

There are, then, two of Homer. This two-ness has nothing to do with the question of one author or many, or none. It has to do with what *Homer* meant to the thinkers who have come to be called Early and Classical Greek philosophers, i.e., Thales to Aristotle. The first Homer is Homeric authority. When Xenophanes or Plato refers to Homer, they mean this Homeric authority.<sup>53</sup> The date that is posited in this dissertation for a time after which someone could invoke Homer authoritatively is 680 B.C. The second Homer is the Homeric canon. As has been shown, at least the idea of a Homeric canon existed from 527 B.C. although it has not been established that a stable common text existed before 145 B.C.

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<sup>53</sup> This is very much analogous to the Jewish reference to the Torah with respect to Mosaic authority. Professor Voegelin discusses the similarity of the problems and their solutions with respect to "Moses" and "Homer." Voegelin, *Polis*, 136-37.



### 3. Methodology and Unique Contribution

When work began on this dissertation there seemed to be a need to justify reading Homer philosophically. Upon its completion, the better question seems to be, “How can anyone study philosophy, especially ancient philosophy, without a grounding in Homer?” On this point Professor Francis MacDonald Cornford and Professor John Burnet can be taken as icons, respectively, of the views that 1) philosophy is the rational continuation of mythology or 2) philosophy is the scientific repudiation of mythology. Professor Burnet discusses the relationship of philosophy to mythology as disjunctive:

In the first place, philosophy is not mythology. It is true that there is plenty of mythology in Plato, and we shall have to consider the meaning of that later. It is also true that we shall have to take account from the first of a mass of cosmogonical and eschatological speculation which influenced philosophy in many ways. These things, however, are not themselves philosophy, and it cannot even be said that they are the germ from which philosophy developed. It is important to be quite clear about this; for in some quarters Oriental cosmogonies are still paraded as the source of Greek philosophy. . . . These things, however, have nothing directly to do philosophy. From the Platonic point of view, there can be no philosophy where there is no rational science. . . . Now rational science is the creation of the Greeks, and we know when it began. We do not count as philosophy anything anterior to that.<sup>54</sup>

When Professor Burnet says *we*, he means “Plato and I,” for he makes clear that he understands himself as at least *an* authoritative interpreter of Plato, “It will be convenient to state at once, however, that for the purpose of this work, I mean by philosophy all Plato meant by it, and nothing he did not mean by it.”<sup>55</sup> Note that in this clarification of his posture in relation to Plato he uses the first-person singular; in the earlier quotation which follows this clarification, he uses the first-person plural. The position of Professor Burnet is

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<sup>54</sup> John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato* (London: Macmillan Company, Limited, 1953), 3-4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

a variant of the declaration by Polybius, quoted and rejected by Vico, “If there were philosophers in the world there would be no need of religions.”<sup>56</sup>

Professor Cornford opens his *From Religion to Philosophy* with an address to just such a position as was held by Professor Burnet:

The words, Religion and Philosophy, perhaps suggest to most people two distinct provinces of thought, between which, if (like the Greeks) we include Science under Philosophy, there is commonly held to be some sort of border warfare. It is, however, also possible to think of them as two successive phases, or modes, of the expression of man’s feelings and beliefs about the world; and the title of this book implies that our attention will be fixed on that period, in the history of the western mind, which marks the passage from the one to the other.<sup>57</sup>

Professor Burnet’s approach is disjunctive: either mythology or philosophy. Professor Cornford’s approach is conjunctive, but only temporally: mythology (religion) and then philosophy. While the stance of this dissertation is much more with Professor Cornford than with Professor Burnet, nevertheless the one seems as bound up with the dogmas of modernity as the other. As an instance, both learned gentleman are committed to progress. For the one, philosophy is the alternative to religion which human progress offers. For the other, philosophy is what succeeds religion in the progress of humankind.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Vico quotes this declaration at least twice. After he has countered the views of Hobbes, he continues, “From this point begins the refutation of the false dictum of Polybius that if there were philosophers in the world there would be no need of religions. For without religions no commonwealths can be born, and if there were no commonwealths in the world there would be no philosophers in it.” *NS* 179. Another use comes at the beginning of his “reprehension of the metaphysics” of certain modern philosophers, “Therefore, if one does not begin from—‘a god to all men is Jove,’—one cannot have any idea of either science or of virtue. Thus is easily dismissed the supposition of Polybius, who says that, if there were philosophers in the world, there would be no need of religions!” Donald Phillip Verene, “Giambattista Vico’s ‘Reprehension of the Metaphysics of René Descartes, Benedict Spinoza, and John Locke’: An Addition to the *New Science* (Translation and Commentary), *New Vico Studies* 8 (1990): 2.

<sup>57</sup> Francis MacDonald Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study of the Origins of Western Speculation* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965), v.

Professor Mark Lilla argues that Vico was an anti-modern.<sup>59</sup> The progress of modernity presupposes that human history is linear, and because it is linear it can be ameliorative. For Vico, by contrast, human history is not only linear, but also cyclical. There is the succession of ages: divine, heroic, and human.<sup>60</sup> That succession is also cyclical, thus his famous “*corso e ricorso*.” In turn, the cycle is successive and, therefore, not merely cyclical. Professor Fisch discusses this dynamic interaction:

Course and recourse, as in the flow and ebb of the tides, may mean traversing the same stages in opposite directions; or recourse may mean simple recurrence, a coming back or around of some particular event or state of affairs; but the strongest and most literal meaning is a retraversing of the same stages in the same order. . . .

But the term “recourse” has a further meaning. A *ricorso* does not, like the recurrence of a cosmic cycle, merely repeat the *corso*. It is a historical, not a purely natural, process, and it has the legal sense of a retrial or appeal. Since the historical *corso* has not received justice, it must, as it were, appeal to a higher court for a rehearing of its case. The highest court of justice, however, is providential history as a whole.<sup>61</sup>

What one finds in one age, say, the divine, corresponds to something in the ages of heroes and men. One finds marriage, for example, in all three ages, and one can examine how marriage in the three ages are correlative to each other. It is also possible to consider how

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<sup>58</sup> Professor George Thomson surveys and analyzes the Burnet-Cornford debate. George Thomson, *The First Philosophers*, vol. 2 of *Studies in Ancient Greek Society* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1955), 165-72.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., “Vico again seems to be calling Europe away from its modernity. Now his warning is that Europe’s rise to the apex of reason and science is about to be followed by a new age of decline, perhaps even a return to barbarism. . . . Modern philosophy encourages these dangerous tendencies by teaching that all truths must be doubted, that man is not sociable, that he has no soul, and that providence does not guide his fortunes.” Mark Lilla, *G. B. Vico: The Making of an Anti-Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 225. See especially Professor Lilla’s chapter, “The End of Philosophy.” *Ibid.*, 224-34.

<sup>60</sup> *NS* 31.

<sup>61</sup> Max Harold Fisch, “Introduction,” in *The New Science of Giambattista Vico: Unabridged Translation of the Third Edition (1744) with the addition of “Practice of the New Science,”* ed. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), xlii-xliii.

marriage in one divine age correlates to marriage in another divine age. While Professor Burnet's approach to mythology and philosophy is disjunctive and Professor Cornford's is temporally conjunctive, Vico's approach is correlative. As shall be discussed in I.i, for Vico the rational metaphysics of philosophy is correlative to the imaginative metaphysics of mythology which he calls "poetic wisdom," the term which serves as title to the second book of his *New Science*. Professor Fisch does not discuss Vico in terms of modernity, anti-modernity, or post-modernity. Nevertheless, his juxtaposition of Vico and Lord Verulam expresses well Vico's relationship to the whole modern project:

Presumably the new science, a creation of the eighteenth century, itself belongs to that "New World of the Sciences" which Bacon envisaged. But it is a science which faces in the opposite direction. Though created in the second-cycle age of men, its creation has made possible by a return to the poetic wisdom by which the world of nations was first created. In devoting half the book to poetic wisdom, Vico exhibits scientific and philosophic wisdom seeking to know itself by recovering its own origins in vulgar or poetic or creative wisdom. In doing this, it becomes itself creative, or recreative. Doubtless all science is in some sense constructive, but the new science is so in a special way. For in *this* science, philosophic or scientific wisdom comprehends, though with the greatest difficulty, that vulgar or creative wisdom which is the origin and presupposition of all science and all philosophy.<sup>62</sup>

Modernity marches into the future where progress is expected, even presumed. New knowledge may be an alternative or successor to the old, but either way it is preferable to the old. Vico's insight is that the present science encompasses the correlative sciences of earlier ages. As this analysis applies to the relationship of Homer and Plato, one can say that for Professor Burnet, there is either Homer or Plato. For Professor Cornford, there is Homer, then Plato. For Vico, in Plato is Homer, and, in another sense, in Homer is Plato. Homer's imaginative metaphysics becomes the paradigm for Plato's rational metaphysics. Plato

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<sup>62</sup> Fisch, "Introduction," xli-xlii.

conceptualizes Homeric depiction, thus the Homeric poems are refigured in the Platonic dialogues.<sup>63</sup>

The unique contribution of this dissertation will be its methodological approach, the systematic analysis of the philosophical reception of Homer, which establishes the ontological problematic in Homer, and explores the transformation of that problematic from Homer's depictive metaphysics to the rational metaphysics of Early and Classical Greek philosophy. A second goal is to use the results of that enquiry to argue for a post-modern metaphysics.

There is a paradigm of being in Homer, i.e., metaphysical relations are depicted. This is not to claim that Homer was a philosopher in any intentional sense. In fact, such an intention would have been historically impossible since, as shall be argued in I.ii, Plato invented *philosophy*. Vico affirms with energy that Homer was not a philosopher precisely because he was "an incomparable poet."<sup>64</sup> As has been discussed above, Vico does hold that Homer engaged in imaginative metaphysics. His presentation of material is metaphysical. Homer was also indispensable to Greek philosophers if only, at times, as a point of departure or as a past to be rejected. In the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, however, are depicted many of the topics which philosophy would later consider: being, seeming, knowing, the relationship of body and soul, the relationship of the physical and metaphysical, the character of human society. That is to say, what interested Homer also interested philosophers, at least, from

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<sup>63</sup> There are many themes which this work might have taken up, but which the strictures of time and space have not permitted. One of those is ἐκφρασις. For discussions, general and specific, of *ekphrasis*, one can consult the "Special issue on ekphrasis" of *Classical Philology*. Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner, eds., *Classical Philology* 102, no. 1 (January 2007).

<sup>64</sup> NS 896.

Xenophanes to Aristotle. The chief difference between Homer and the philosophers is the method they apply to those topics. It is now prudent to say a word, taking again the example of Professor Planinc, about refiguring as a way of reading Plato through Homer.

Refiguring is use of source material that transforms it. Sometimes the author simply quotes the source in a context that makes it different, in the way a different frame can transform a picture. Lincoln's statement, "A house divided against itself cannot stand,"<sup>65</sup> is as famous in the United States of America as a political statement about slavery as the original statement which Christ used as an empirical truth to refute the accusations of his opponents who charged that he employed evil to do good. It is further interesting to note that Lincoln did not actually quote Christ, at least not from the King James Version of the Bible, and he did not cite him at all. He recast Christ's words without explicit attribution.<sup>66</sup> Because his audience knew the reference, Lincoln was free neither to quote nor to cite; he simply refigured Christ's words.

Characterization is another kind of refiguring. A standard technique by defense attorneys in our era when seemingly everything is captured by video cameras is to tell the jury what they are seeing in the video. While the jury watches the images, for example, of multiple policemen beating an inner-city African-American youth, the defense attorney explains how the policemen were acting in self-defense. When the youth lifts his arm, the attorney informs the jury that he is threatening the policeman, countering the possibility that

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<sup>65</sup> St. Matthew 12:25; St. Mark 12:25; St. Luke 11:17. The closest is St. Mark's rendering, "And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

<sup>66</sup> Abraham Lincoln, *Speeches of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. G. Mercer Adam (New York: A. L. Burt Company, 1906), 52.

a naïve juryman might think the youth was merely trying to effect a barrier between himself and the next blow of the baton. As shall be seen in I.ii, Plato has a penchant for having Socrates quote and characterize Homer in just these ways. Such instances are easy to substantiate. There are other kinds of refiguring through allusion or merely resonance that are harder to discern because they require a sharing of the imaginative and rational setting of the author. For the same reason, this kind of refiguring is difficult to show to someone. Those who see it, see it, and those who don't, don't. As an illustration of this point, in the preceding example of police beating an African-American youth, some will have already recognized the case of Rodney King; others will acknowledge it now that it has been pointed out; a third group will remember the Rodney King case but will reject the characterization; for still others, the allusion will be meaningless.

Part of the effort of this work is to attempt a reading of the Early and Classical Greek philosophers through Homer. One must immediately admit that the attempt to re-create a Homeric backdrop against which to see the work of philosophers from Xenophanes to Aristotle is itself a refiguring. Such a refiguring is surely at least as valid as the default settings of the modern and post-modern reader of those same philosophers through the cultural lens ever increasingly tinted by more than two millennia of philosophical thought. In a word and as an example, the attempt to read Plato through Homer is valid and necessary in contrast to the blatantly anachronistic reading of Plato through, say, Kant, since it is clear that Plato never had the benefit of having read Kant.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Professor Arthur Adkins' *Merit and Responsibility* is an example of a book—an excellent book in many ways—which explicitly works from a methodology of anachronistic analysis, i.e., asking modern questions of ancient texts. Kant provides the motif for his methodology, “For any man brought up in a western

While a philosophic reading of the Homeric poems is justified, at the same time it is important not to pretend that they are something which they are not. Professor MacIntyre describes well the necessary balance. On the one hand, Professor MacIntyre sees the necessity of beginning with Homer:

From Homer, therefore, Athenians had to begin. And we who find one of the two most important of our beginnings with respect to justice and practical rationality in the conflicts of the Athenians have therefore no alternative but to begin with Homer too.<sup>68</sup>

On the other side of the balance, he sees the danger in asserting too much for Homer, “The Homeric poems are not philosophical treatises. The conceptual schema which they embody is revealed to us only in its range of concrete applications. The connection between different parts of it are not rigorously articulated.”<sup>69</sup> It is not just that Homer does not present his

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democratic society the related concepts of duty and responsibility are the central concepts of ethics; and we are inclined to take it as an unquestionable truth, though there is abundant evidence to the contrary, that the same must be true of all societies. In this respect, at least, we are all Kantians now. Surely, we assume, in any society ‘What is my duty in these circumstances?’ is the basic question which the agent must ask himself in any matter which requires a moral decision; and since, as we all know, ‘ought’ implies ‘can’, anyone who had to pass judgement on any action must first inquire, in considering whether the agent did or did not do his duty, whether he could or could not have acted otherwise, and hence whether he may be held responsible for his actions or not.” Arthur Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 8. Professor Adkins goes on to acknowledge that this approach “from the Greek point of view, is the wrong angle altogether.” *Ibid.*, 9. He, nevertheless, goes on to ask the ancient texts modern questions. Dr. Adkins’s book makes a nice contrast with this dissertation because it is held here that his method was wrong, but it is also recognized that he was successful in that he knew what the modern questions were, thus the excellence of his work. The method of this dissertation is the right one—the attempt to read texts historically forward, from the most ancient to the less ancient—but it must fail, because we do not know the ancient questions and part of the task, an important part, is to discover the questions themselves, an endeavor whose worth is not diminished by the certainty of its failure. With Socrates, we shall, at least, know that we do not know.

Professor Stanley Rosen goes so far as to encourage the reading of Plato in light of Kant, “In order to understand what Plato is after, we do better to think of Kant than any other modern philosopher.” Stanley Rosen, *Plato’s “Republic”: A Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 360. What Professor Rosen states here explicitly is often implicit in any Straussian reading of Plato, as shall be averred from time to time hereafter.

<sup>68</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.



material systematically. That might also be said of Marcus Aurelius. The significant point is that Homer had neither philosophical intention nor awareness. He could not have had either because philosophy had yet to be invented. One can read philosophically what was written without philosophical intent. This dissertation investigates the ways in which that was done by Early and Classical Greek philosophers and, just as significantly, how they esteemed the content of Homer when read philosophically.

Another voice on this point is that of Professor Werner Jaeger, who makes a strong declaration for the philosophical reading of Homer:

The work of Homer is throughout inspired by a comprehensive philosophy of human nature and of the eternal laws of the world-process, a philosophy which has seen and judged every essential factor in man's life. He contemplates every event and every character in the light of his universal knowledge of the underlying and eternal truth. The love of Greek poetry for gnomic utterances, its tendency to measure each event by a general standard and to reason from the general to the particular, and its frequent use of traditional examples as universal types and ideals—all these tendencies originate with Homer.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: the Ideals of the Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet, from the second German edition, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 49. "Überall im Homer tritt ein umfassendes 'philosophisches' Denken über die menschliche Natur and die ewigen Gesetze des Weltlaufs zu Tage. Es gibt nichts Wesentliches im Menschenleben, was in ihr nicht enthalten wäre. Der Dichter betrachtet auch den Einzelfall gern im Lichte seiner allgemeinen Erkenntnis des Wesens der Dinge. Die Vorliebe der griechischen Poesie für das Gnomische, die Neigung alles was geschieht an einer höheren Norm zu messen, das Ausgehen ihres Denkens von allgemeingültigen Prämissen, der häufige Gebrauch mythischer Exempel als allgemein verbindlicher Typen und Ideale, alle diese Züge haben ihren letzten Ursprung im Homer." Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: Die Formung des Griechischen Menschen*, first ed., vol. 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1934), 80. Professor Jaeger continues this theme, "Für den modernen Beschauer bleibt es ein umfassliches Wunder, dass alle charakterischen Kräfte und Tendenzen des Griechentums, die in seiner weiteren geschichtlichen Entfaltung zur Wirkung gelangt sind, im Homer schon deutlich vorgebildet zu Tage treten. Dieser Eindruck schwächt sich naturgemäss ab, wenn man die Gedichte isoliert sieht. Erst wenn man Homer und die Griechen der Folgezeit zusammenschauend betrachtet, tritt ihre starke Gemeinsamkeit hervor." Jaeger, *Paideia: Die Formung*, 88. "As we study him to-day, we cannot but marvel when we see all the characteristically Hellenic powers, the tendencies which develop throughout Greek history, already manifest in Homer's work. This is of course less obvious when we read the poems by themselves; but when we contemplate Homer and the later Greeks in one broad survey, we cannot help seeing the underlying identity of spirit." Jaeger, *Paideia: Ideals*, 55.

It is true that in the German original Professor Jaeger puts “philosophical” in inverted commas, but what follows is actually more significant, “Der Dichter betrachtet auch den Einzelfall gern im Lichte seiner allgemeinen Erkenntnis des Wesens der Dinge. (The poet sees and accounts for the particular in light of his universal recognition of a thing’s substance.)”<sup>71</sup> The task of this dissertation is to identify in Homer’s poetic depiction those universals which philosophers later conceptualized. Homer may not have been systematic. He could not have been an intentionally philosophical writer. All that considered, however, taken together the various Homeric depictions form a problematic which philosophy inherits.

Homer depicts; the philosophers abstract. As Professor Benardete neatly puts it, “He [Plato] seemed to me to have given the arguments for what Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles had only shown.”<sup>72</sup> Professor Benardete, as a strong Straussian, held that “human being is the being whose specific difference is logos, not phantasia.”<sup>73</sup> This dissertation, for all of the use it shall make of his many brilliant insights and analyses, will distinguish itself from that important Straussian dogma. It shall be argued that one finds pre-conceptually and in terms of the imagination, i.e., concretely, what one finds conceptually in Plato. That being acknowledged, the topics of philosophy fall under this general inquiry of the ways that Homer anticipates philosophy: what and how the world is, with the emphasis on *is*. As often as possible, the explicit reception of Homer by a philosopher will be considered. On other

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<sup>71</sup> My translation.

<sup>72</sup> Benardete, *Bow*, xi.

<sup>73</sup> Richard F. Hasting, e-mail to the author, August 11, 2008.

occasions, an historical development will be traced from Homer through the period of Early and Classical Greek philosophy. Homer's poems constitute a reference point, implicit when not explicit in all of Greek philosophy.

Much of this study will necessarily consider how Plato received Homer simply because Plato frequently used Homer as a point of reference. Sometimes Homer provides the occasion for a dialogue (e.g., *Ion* and *Hippias minor*), sometimes for an important dimension of a dialogue (e.g., *Republic*), and on many other occasions either for a significant point (e.g., *Apology*, *Cratylus*, *Laws*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*) and or what seems to be a passing remark (e.g., *Lysis*). In the extant works of Aristotle there are plenty of references to and discussions of Homer, but one must wonder what a study of philosophical reception of Homer would look like if we had not lost works such as his six books on *Homeric Problems*, listed by Diogenes Laertius<sup>74</sup> or *On Blessedness, or Why Did Homer Invent the Cattle of the Sun?*<sup>75</sup> listed in the *Vita Menagiana*.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are taken here as volumes one and two of the same pre-conceptual and pre-philosophical project to discover the world as it is. In this regard, the two poems explore knowledge within the limits of wonder. In the final pages of *The Odyssey* Odysseus tells an old retainer to banish wonder, “ἀπεκλελάθεσθε δὲ θάμβευς,”<sup>76</sup> in order to sit down to a meal of succulent pork. Life, in its necessities and pleasures, sets limits on wonder and, therefore, on that recognition of ignorance which is the beginning of all

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<sup>74</sup> Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols., ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2.2387. Hereafter, Barnes 2.2387.

<sup>75</sup> Barnes 2.2388

<sup>76</sup> *Od.* 24.394-96.

pursuits of knowledge, as Aristotle observes.<sup>77</sup> What shall be seen is that the mortal protagonists of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* alternate between catalytic wonder and longing to live life simply. The long way home followed by Odysseus, through ten years of war and ten years of wandering, is a depiction of exploring the nature of the world as it is, in order to live in the world as it is. Pre-philosophical and even pre-conceptual though Homer's method may be, what he seeks is a knowing of the world which Greek philosophers later shall seek with their new tools, what comes to be known as philosophy.

The discussion of that problematic includes the following themes: being, seeming and knowing; body and soul; banquet and being; war, peace and the divine nature; the household and the city. The main emphasis is on Plato, who engaged Homer frequently, but other philosophers, including Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Aristotle, are also discussed. One rule in particular shall guide this study. The Homeric problematic must arise from patterns in the text. As Professor Sir Moses Finley puts it, "An important methodological rule follows: no argument may legitimately be drawn from a single line or

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<sup>77</sup> "And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (whence even the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom, for myth is composed of wonders); therefore since they philosophized in order to escape from ignorance, evidently they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end. And this is confirmed by the facts; for it was when almost all the necessities of life and the things that make for comfort and recreation were present, that such knowledge began to be sought." Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.982b17-25; Barnes 2.1554.

On the way that life's necessities set limits on philosophical enquiry, one recalls David Hume's declaration at the end the *Treatise's* "Part One," "Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hour's amusement, I wou'd return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strain'd, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther." David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 1.4.7.9, 175. One notes that Hume did manage to write another 220 pages in the same work following this declaration.

passage or usage. Only the patterns, the persistent statements have any standing.”<sup>78</sup> The search is for a paradigm rather than a point, a problematic and not merely a problem.

The first part asks whether Homer was a philosopher at all. Part I.i assesses Vico’s observation about imaginative and rational metaphysics, in specific Vico’s verdict that “Homer was an incomparable poet, just because . . . he was in no sense a philosopher.”<sup>79</sup> Rather than accepting the distinction between pre-philosophical and philosophical thinking, here the movement from concrete (i.e., pre-conceptual) thought to conceptual thought is examined.

I.ii takes up the question of whether Plato held Homer to be a philosopher. Already in *Ion* and *Hippias minor*, Plato begins to explore the problem of how the philosopher, utilizing rational method, should read Homer’s authoritative mythology. While Vico himself repeatedly denies that Homer was a philosopher, nevertheless he sees that Plato attempted to resolve the question by attributing “esoteric wisdom” to Homer.<sup>80</sup> In *Theaetetus*, Socrates goes further and identifies Homer explicitly not only as a thinker but even as captain of an army—including Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Protagoras—which fights for change and motion.<sup>81</sup> Building on the base of those passages, I.ii will argue that Plato ranked Homer among thinkers such as Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Protagoras, and, further, that Plato understood himself to be conceptualizing philosophical questions which he found depicted in Homer.

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<sup>78</sup> Moses I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 149.

<sup>79</sup> *NS* 896.

<sup>80</sup> *NS* 780. *R* 2.378d3-7.

<sup>81</sup> E.g., *Tht.* 152d5-153a2

The second part treats the way Homer's depictive metaphysics establishes the problematic for rational metaphysics as it develops in the works of Early and Classical Greek philosophers including, but not limited to Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Plato, and Aristotle.

II.i assesses Homer's depiction of being, seeming and knowing. In *Theaetetus*, Socrates recognizes that for Homer being is fluid.<sup>82</sup> The philosophy of flux and motion is condensed, according to Socrates, to the view that knowledge is perception.<sup>83</sup> In opposition to that view, Socrates makes a decisive move from the depictive metaphysics of particulars evidenced in Homer to the rational metaphysics of universals; he calls knowledge the result of the soul's pursuit of that-which-is.<sup>84</sup> The Heracliteans led by Homer advocate, according to Socrates, a metaphysics of becoming, while Parmenides, followed by Socrates, advocates a metaphysics of being.

II.ii examines the Socratic inversion of body and soul. For Homer ψυχή is what is left over when someone dies, a perduring shadow of the person's life. It is the body that matters. Socrates, however, inverts the body/soul relationship, giving superior value to ψυχή and making the body depend upon it.<sup>85</sup> According to Socrates, that which is grasped by reasoning, the intelligible, is unchanging and, therefore, more real than that which is grasped by sensation. The movement is from the Homeric view of the human being, in which the

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<sup>82</sup> E.g., in the flowing streams of Ocean and Tethys, *Tht.* 180c5-d4, consistent also with the gods taking many shapes in *R.* 381b1-e2.

<sup>83</sup> *Tht.* 160d3-e3.

<sup>84</sup> *Tht.* 187a5-6.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., *Phd.* 79e8-81a3.

physical presence is primary, and the soul is a shadow of the body, to the Socratic view, in which the soul is primary and the physical body is the limitation from which the soul must be liberated in order to attain wisdom.

II.iii investigates eating and banqueting as a theme frequently depicted in Homer and then reflected upon by philosophical authors. Eating is necessary to animal existence. Banqueting, however, is an expression of explicitly human life. The term *human being* implies a hierarchy of conditions or estates of being from mere animal existence to what Leon Kass calls "the perfection of our nature."<sup>86</sup> Xenophanes' depiction of a symposium marks a new departure compared to Homer by emphasizing purity and rejecting mythological tales as topics for conversation.<sup>87</sup> Plato engages feasting both in the literary setting of some dialogues (e.g., *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and especially *Symposium*) and as a metaphor of philosophical reflection.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, he recognizes the importance of common meals for the life of the guardians in *Republic*, and in *Laws* he introduces symposia as educational means to foster harmony among citizens. It is Aristotle who teases out the distinctions in the hierarchy of being in relation to production and, consequently, also the consumption of food, "Indeed, there are many kinds of food, and therefore there are many forms of lives both of animals and men."<sup>89</sup> Both the relation to nature and the level of

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<sup>86</sup> Leon Kass, *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfection of Our Nature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>87</sup> Xenophanes, B1 D.-K.

<sup>88</sup> E.g., "the banquet of words" in *R.* 1.352b2-3 and *Ti.* 27b3-4)

<sup>89</sup> *Pol.*4.1256a19-20; Barnes 2.1993.

civilization are expressed and, to some extent, caused by the kind of food an animal or human eats.

II.iv studies war and peace as alternative paradigms of being in relation to the divine nature. The Homeric themes of war, peace and divine nature are examined as they play out in the writings of Xenophanes and Heraclitus. The exposition of war in Plato and Aristotle is then taken up as a function of politics disassociated from the divine nature (especially in *Republic* and *Politics*). The historical development moves from war in which heroes fight as surrogates of the gods to war purely as a function of the human *polis*, partly made necessary by the insistence in *Republic* that the gods as absolutely good are incapable of any evil.<sup>90</sup>

II.v takes up the relationship of household and city. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, taken together, are ultimately about households threatened, disrupted, destroyed and restored. This chapter will consider the philosophical responses to the Homeric paradigm of household in relation to the *polis*, including the *Republic*, in which the household has no part, and the *Laws*, in which it is fully restored in Plato's political vision. Aristotle's contribution to the restoration of the household in philosophy will be examined especially in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where he asserts that "man is by nature coupling more than political"<sup>91</sup> and that marriage is the relationship of gender complementarity in which all three kinds of friendship (of utility, pleasure and virtue) can be united.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *R.* 2.379a3-e5.

<sup>91</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a15-17; my translation.

<sup>92</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a17-32, *Pol.* 1.1252.a25-30.



The present enquiry is not intended to stand in isolation, rather it is offered as a word on the state of metaphysics at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Thus, in addition to the first argument that what is depicted in Homer is conceptualized in philosophy, this dissertation will argue, as an implication of the first argument, that the imaginative metaphysics of Homeric depiction provides a basis for a new metaphysics in post-modernity. Since Hume, the world has been divided between those who hold that metaphysics is a dead science and those who continue to argue for metaphysics as not only philosophy but first philosophy. The “metaphysics-is-dead” crowd, in agreement with the gregarious Scotsman, argue that being *qua* being is, at most, a posit since we live in a world of concrete particulars only,<sup>93</sup> if we are permitted to say that we live among “external objects” at all.<sup>94</sup> For those thinkers, universals are merely wishful thinking projected upon concrete particulars. Classical metaphysicians in modernity are themselves divided among Kantians and Thomists. They agree, however, that metaphysics as first philosophy must involve universals and separate from the matter and motion of concrete particulars.

The present work is intended to address both the metaphysicians and the anti-metaphysicians. The claim here, returning to Vico’s insight, is that Homeric depiction established the problematic which occupied Greek philosophers conceptually and, thus, that

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<sup>93</sup> “There is no such thing as abstract or general ideas, properly speaking; but that all general ideas are, in reality, particular ones, attached to a general term, which recalls upon occasion, other particular ones, that resemble, in certain circumstances, the idea, present to the mind.” David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. with an introduction by Eric Steinberg (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 109n66.

<sup>94</sup> “It is a question of fact, whether the perceptions of the senses be produced by external objects, resembling them: How shall this question be determined? By experience surely; as all other questions of a like nature. But here experience is, and must be entirely silent. The mind has never any thing present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connexion with objects. The supposition of such a connexion is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning.” *Ibid.*, 105.

there is a sense in which a depictive metaphysics of concrete particulars is not only possible but actually preceded rational metaphysics in historical development. This claim, *contra* Hume and company, is that metaphysics is possible even if we live in a world of concrete particulars only. The same claim, *contra* Kantians and Thomists alike, is that metaphysics is not only possible but is historically existing in the works of Homer, without abstraction, exhibiting neither concept nor argument and without separation from matter or motion. The interest is to answer the question first attempted by Kant: is it possible to do metaphysics if one accepts the challenge of Hume's conditions? It will be argued that Homer's depictive metaphysics answers that question and challenge affirmatively.

# **I Was Homer a Philosopher? A Reply to Giambattista Vico**

All these were properties of the heroic age of the Greeks, in which and throughout which Homer was an incomparable poet, just because, in the age of vigorous memory, robust imagination, and sublime invention, he was in no sense a philosopher.

—Giambattista Vico, *The New Science*

Why did Vico think it necessary to argue that Homer was not a philosopher? At least since the time of Classical Greek philosophy, Homer has been interpreted allegorically by philosophers and theologians in a way that claimed him as authority for their own views. There is an extensive literature on Homer as a basis for philosophical and theological allegory.<sup>1</sup> The premise of much allegorical interpretation is that Homeric texts were really intended philosophically or theologically. The allegorical interpretation was offered as a simple discovery of the text's true meaning. Vico rejected Homer as philosopher because he affirmed Homer as poet. What the allegorizers had missed beginning with Plato, by Vico's account, was that Homer made poetry from the human imagination while philosophers developed philosophy from the human reason. From that insight, Vico developed his view on the imaginative metaphysics of poetry and the rational metaphysics of philosophy. The exploration of that distinction provides a basis for understanding how Homer established much of the ontological framework for later philosophers.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Luc Brisson, *Platon: Les mots et les mythes* (Paris: François Maspero, 1982) and *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe: 1. Sauver les mythes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2005); Félix Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956); Robert Lamberton, *Homer: The Theologian* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les grecques: Etudes de psychologie historique*, 2<sup>nd</sup> (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 1985).

## 1. Imaginative and Rational Metaphysics

Giambattista Vico asserts that, at least among philosophers, everyone has read Homer through Plato, “As Plato left firmly fixed the opinion that Homer was endowed with sublime esoteric wisdom (and all the other philosophers have followed in his train . . .), we shall examine particularly if Homer was ever a philosopher.”<sup>2</sup> It was Vico’s claim which first suggested the idea which is the fundament of this work, that it was actually the inverse which ought to be done, namely to read Plato (and other philosophers) through Homer. There is need to work from Vico’s challenge to the present premise. In effect, Vico accuses Plato—to put it anachronistically—of being a Straussian.<sup>3</sup> There is the exoteric meaning of the text for the vulgar, but to the discerning philosopher, such as Plato himself, there is an esoteric wisdom which is manifest enough. Professor Giuseppe Mazzotta thinks Vico’s reading of Plato’s reading of Homer was simply wrong, “Vico’s criticism of Plato for inaugurating the traditional view of Homer as a philosopher is, on the face of it, a flagrant misreading of Plato. Plato never claims that Homer’s poems have any esoteric wisdom to convey.”<sup>4</sup> Vico may or may not have been correct in his reading of Plato’s reading of Homer, but what did he mean by it? As Professor Mazzotta points out, Plato’s understanding of Homer is for Vico “tantamount to considering poetry as a function of philosophy.”<sup>5</sup> By

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<sup>2</sup> *NS* 780.

<sup>3</sup> Not only is the accusation Straussian, so also is the anachronism itself. Professor Benardete gives fine illustration of a Straussian anachronism, when he, in effect, suggests that Homer was a Platonist, “Homer seems to have reflected on the Platonic possibility of philosopher-kings.” Benardete, *Bow*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The New Map of the World: The Poetic Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 156.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

contrast, Vico holds that poetry, to be rightly understood, must be explored in its own terms.<sup>6</sup>

While Vico insists on poetry's rights, he nevertheless uses philosophical categories by which to discuss and measure poetry. One such term is "metaphysics," which is of central concern to this work. There is the rational metaphysics of philosophy and the imaginative metaphysics of poetry:

So that, as rational metaphysics teaches that man becomes all things by understanding them (*homo intelligendo fit omnia*), this imaginative metaphysics shows that man becomes all things by *not* understanding them (*homo non intelligendo fit omnia*); and perhaps the latter proposition is truer than the former, for when man understands he extends his mind and takes in the things, but when he does not understand he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.<sup>7</sup>

Understanding is absent from imaginative metaphysics. There is no proper ratiocination.

Vico's claim is extraordinarily bold. There is a sense in which imaginative metaphysics is

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<sup>6</sup> Again without reference to Vico, Professor Benardete explains that these same issues of how Greek poetry and Greek philosophy are related, though differently formulated in terms, occasioned the writing of *The Bow and Lyre* and the problem had been suggested to him by his teacher, Professor Leo Strauss. In a passage already quoted in the "Introduction" with respect to Homeric anticipation of Plato's noble lie, Professor Benardete writes, "We did not know before we turned to the *Odyssey* whether the poets themselves had anticipated Plato in this regard, or if they had pointed out to him this way of understanding their own doing or making but had stopped short of it themselves. If they had stopped short, we would know why it seemed Plato was so sure a guide to the poets, and still the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy would be preserved. If, however, they had not stopped short, then Plato would have recovered a way of thinking that is not on the way to philosophy but is philosophy, and the apparent tension between Plato the poet would disappear." Benardete, *Bow*, xiv. While the insights of both Messrs. Strauss and Benardete are valuable to the present work, the position taken here is distinguished—and perhaps is distinguished most clearly—from the Straussian view with respect to "thinking." Professor Strauss was influenced both by the neo-Kantianism of his own teacher, Professor Ernst Cassirer, as well as the "thinking" of Cassirer's far greater rival, Martin Heidegger. The argument that shall be made here is that the conceptualization which is a function of ratiocination proper did not exist at the time of Homer and is not present in the Homeric epics. Professor Verene discusses imaginative genera in terms of "thinking," but his use does not seem to imply ratiocination proper, consistent with the view of Professor Claude Lévi-Strauss, "This idea of the connection of the form of thought with the form of symbolism is an idea of considerable significance in contemporary science. This idea . . . allows him to show that the first men of humanity did not think the same as modern men, but it also allows him to show that they did in fact *think*." Verene, *Imagination*, 74.

<sup>7</sup> NS 405.

actually more metaphysical than rational metaphysics because when I think of something, I *am* less that something than when I do not think it. When I think “apple,” I am less the actual apple than when I am immersed in that apple: seeing it, smelling, touching, tasting it, hearing its crunch. Ratiocinative understanding removes me from my identification with the apple. That is, after all, the character of intelligibility; it is separate from matter and motion. I become the apple when I eat it in a way that I do not when I think it.<sup>8</sup> Vico acknowledges the difficulty that the modern thinker has just in comprehending this claim, “To discover the way in which this first human thinking arose in the gentile world, we encountered exasperating difficulties which has cost us the research of a good twenty years.”<sup>9</sup>

Understanding the world had been undertaken for so long as an enterprise of the intellect which, with Descartes, derives nothing from the senses and the imagination,<sup>10</sup> that what Vico discovered and then proposed in his *New Science* was in the most literal way, inconceivable.

About the struggle of the modern to enter into the apprehension of the world through imaginative universals he writes:

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Kass comes at this point from another direction, “No wonder food is so important to survival: Where it goes, there I am; where it goes not, there I am not; what it is, that too am I. We are identical, I and my stuff.” Kass, *Hungry Soul*, 20. Mr. Graham Greene comes at this same sense of being through non-understanding when he presents a scene in which a modern European missionary is explaining the presence of Jesus Christ in the Christian believer to his pre-modern African audience (using “modern” and “pre-modern” in a cultural rather than in a chronological sense, “When you make a song you are in the song, when you bake bread you are in the bread, when you make a baby you are in the baby, and because Yezu made you, he is in you.” Graham Greene, *A Burnt-out Case* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961), 97. The philosopher abstracts from the concrete and says, the loaf of bread participates in the baker; the human creature participates in the divine creator.

<sup>9</sup> *NS* 338.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., “Neither our imagination nor our senses could ever assure us of anything if our understanding did not intervene.” Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, AT 37.

But the nature of our civilized minds is so detached from the senses, even in the vulgar, by abstractions corresponding to all the abstract terms our languages abound in, and so refined by the art of writing, and as it were spiritualized by the use of numbers, because even the vulgar know how to count and reckon, that it is naturally beyond our power to form the vast image of this mistress called ‘Sympathetic Nature.’ It is equally beyond our power to enter into the vast imagination of those first men, whose minds were not in the least abstract, refined or spiritualized, because they were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body. That is why we said above that we can scarcely understand, still less imagine, how those first men thought who founded gentile humanity.<sup>11</sup>

Imaginative metaphysics is not thought, insofar as thinking is ratiocination, nor can it be thought. By analogy, just as the seeable cannot be heard, nor the touchable smelled, the imaginable cannot be ratiocinated. Vico insists that it is “beyond our power” actually to enter into the apprehension of the world in the way to which poetic mythology witnesses. The parts of the human soul have been so re-arranged by the concept and the ratiocinative work of conceptualization that the modern human person, as Vico was, has not the capacity to apprehend the pre-conceptual apprehension of the world. Vico is in the position of someone pointing to the mode of apprehension to which neither he nor his readers have access. Thus, Vico observes, quoting Virgil, “All things are full of Jove.”<sup>12</sup> That entails “the credible impossibility.” Vico continues, “It is impossible that bodies should be minds, yet it was believed that the thundering sky was Jove.”<sup>13</sup>

There is a nice example of that to which Vico points as well as the continuing difficulty and even impossibility for the modern or post-modern reader to enter into that to which he points. Homer states that “Zeus’s raincloud increases them [the winegrapes] (καί

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<sup>11</sup> NS 378.

<sup>12</sup> NS 379, quoting Virgil, *Eclogue* 3.60.

<sup>13</sup> NS 383.



σφιν Διὸς ὄμβρος ἀέξει)<sup>14</sup> Professor Fitzgerald translates that half-line, “ripen in heaven’s rain,”<sup>15</sup> which completely misses the mythological character of Homer’s formula; the translation is completely naturalistic. Professor Fagles seeks to preserve that character in his rendering, “swelled by the rains of Zeus.”<sup>16</sup> It is Alexander Pope who best captures the quality of a Zeus-infused world, “And Jove descends in each prolific shower.”<sup>17</sup> In the Homeric half-line, the divinity and the force of nature are one. The rain is not an act of god; it is god. It is not merely that Zeus is the sky, but that Zeus both is the sky and is the rain, and as the rain fattens the grapes, Zeus is the grapes too. The anthropomorphism, of which Xenophanes accuses Homer,<sup>18</sup> is a later development. The difficulty of translating that half-line is an indicator of what is “beyond our power.” The problem is not a new one. Already by the time of Aristotle, “Zeus” had become mere metaphor. Aristotle observes that when Homer says “Zeus rains,”<sup>19</sup> it is clear that he means, “the sky rains.”<sup>20</sup> At some stage there was what Vico calls “Sympathetic Nature” and which here is called “the fluidity of being.” By the time of Aristotle, that worldview had come to an end, at least among the literate. By

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<sup>14</sup> E.g., *Od.* 9.111, 358.

<sup>15</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1951), 142; hereafter Fitzgerald, *Odyssey*, 142, or when the Greek text has been cited, Fitzgerald 142.

<sup>16</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles with an introduction by Bernard Knox (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 215; hereafter, Fagles, *Odyssey*, 215.

<sup>17</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Alexander Pope. With an introduction by Thomas Yoseloff (New York: Fine Editions, 1956), 122; hereafter, Pope, *Odyssey*, 122.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., Xenophanes B14-16 D.-K.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 198b18.

<sup>20</sup> Barnes 1.338.

the time of Vico, that worldview had come to an end even among the illiterate. Vico points to a *je ne sais quoi*. Like him, the modern and post-modern reader sees that at which he points, but also knows not what.<sup>21</sup>

Twenty years of labor were required for Vico to come to terms with the poetic wisdom of the ancients and which—*corso e ricorso*—awaits humanity at some unknown date in the future. Once the character of imaginative universals is comprehended, one can then distinguish between imaginative and rational metaphysics, the work of poetry is to evoke experience even when not being experienced, while the work of philosophy is to analyze that which is in experience which can be separated from any given experience.

In another passage, Vico places in parallel metaphysics and poetic faculty, universals and particulars, “For metaphysics abstracts the mind from the senses, and the poetic faculty must submerge the whole mind in the senses; metaphysics soars up to universals, and the poetic faculty must plunge deep into particulars.”<sup>22</sup> It is clear that Vico understands “metaphysics” in a way that is distinguished from other philosophical terms and that abstraction is part of metaphysics’ special character. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that Vico’s use of terms is not univocal and not even always consistent. To understand the two foregoing passages in relation to one another, “rational metaphysics” of ¶405 is taken to correspond to “metaphysics” in ¶821, and “imaginative metaphysics” to “poetic faculty.” The latter passage comes from Vico’s “Discovery of the True Homer”

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<sup>21</sup> Professor Richard F. Hassing has contributed substantially to the development of this thought with his suggestions and challenges. Professor Verene comments on *NS* 378 and that which is “beyond our power”, “We as moderns live only on the surface of our bodies, rarely going inside them to the depths of our senses. The Cartesian ‘I think’ knows nothing of the body.” Verene, *Knowledge*, 187.

<sup>22</sup> *NS* 821.

where he is chary of using the word “philosophy” in any way whatsoever with respect to Homer. The movement of metaphysics is abstraction of the “mind from the senses”; that of the poetic faculty is submergence of the “mind in the senses.” Attention to prepositions and to directional movement is important in this brief quotation. Rational metaphysics leaves the senses behind, deriving the mind *from* them. Vico does not say that the poetic faculty must leave behind the mind, rather that it plunges the mind into the sensory realm. Rational metaphysics separates the mind from the senses, while imaginative metaphysics unites the mind with the senses. The mind collapsed into the senses yields images as the mode representing truth which corresponds to intelligibles in rational metaphysics.

Vico elaborates the distinction between rational and imaginative metaphysics in terms of “intelligible class concepts” and “imaginative class concepts”:

The first men, the children, as it were, of the human race, not being able to form intelligible class concepts of things, had a natural need to create poetic characters; that is imaginative class concepts or universals, to which, as to certain models or ideal portraits, to reduce all the particular species which resembled them.<sup>23</sup>

What does Vico mean by “imaginative class concepts?” Just before this passage, he gives the example of the child who in the early period of speaking learns one name of one thing and then uses that name to name every similar thing.<sup>24</sup> Drawing out this insight, one can say of the toddler, having learned that the man she knows best is “Papa,” and the woman “Mama,” shortly thereafter regards all adult males as “Papa” and all adult females as “Mama,” until she learns further distinctions. At this early stage of the child’s development,

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<sup>23</sup> NS 209

<sup>24</sup> NS 206.

“papa” and “mama” are imaginative genera which is to say that they are not concepts at all, properly speaking (i.e., in terms of ratiocination). Imaginative genera are images which signify categories without forming an abstract concept separate from the image. The rational thinker can think “man” without thinking of a man. The imaginative thinker thinks only the image “papa” without a separate rational concept.

Since Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*, it has been common for philosophers to suppose that there are three points to the semantic triangle: thing, concept and name.<sup>25</sup> Is the second point of Aristotle’s triangle really “concept?” A closer reading of *De interpretatione* 16a4-8 shows that “concept” is not necessarily intended:

Now spoken sounds are symbols of affections in the soul (τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων), and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written

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<sup>25</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas is characteristic of this understanding as explicitly evidenced in his commentary on Aristotle’s text, “When he speaks of passions in the soul we are apt to think of the affections of the sensitive appetite, such as anger, joy and other passions that are customarily and commonly called passions of the soul, as is the case in II Ethicorum. . . . But here Aristotle is speaking of vocal sounds that are significant by human institution. Therefore ‘passions of the soul’ must be understood here as conceptions of the intellect, and names, verbs and speech, signify these conceptions of the intellect immediately according to the teaching of Aristotle.” Aristotle, *On Interpretation: Commentary by St. Thomas and Cajetan*, trans. Jean Oesterle (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1962), Bk. 1, Lsn. 2, Sct. 5, p. 25. Professor John P. O’Callaghan takes extensive interest in the hermeneutic triangle in his book, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn*. He comments specifically on the passage just quoted, “One reason for the identification of *passions of the soul* with *conceptions of the intellect* in the context of ‘articulate sounds signifying from human institution’ is that St. Thomas wants to rule out the possibility that ‘passions of the soul’ might be taken as ‘affections of the sensitive appetite,’ since certain groans may more or less naturally, not by institution, signify pain. The most important part of the explanation, however, proceeds by associating generally with the *mode of signifying*, while associating singularity with the *res* (thing) signified. The explanation denies that a general articulated sound signifies a general *res*, where the context makes clear that *res* is taken *extra animam*, by contrast to what are ‘conceptions of the intellect.’ Instead, a general articulated sound signifies a nature ‘in abstraction from singulars,’ a nature existing only in the intellect. Further, the explanation asserts that general articulated sounds do indeed signify singular *res*, but only through the mediation of the intellect’s conceptions.” John P. O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 20. What is interesting about both St. Thomas’s comment and Professor O’Callaghan’s discussion of it for present purposes is that neither author considers the possibility that “images” might be signified by Aristotle’s “passions of the soul.” The Thomist reading of Aristotle on this point is that “passions of the soul” are “conceptions,” and that “a general articulated sound signifies a nature ‘in abstraction from singulars.’” As shall be seen, another reading of Aristotle will be proposed.

marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place—affections of the soul—are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses (ὁμοιώματα) of—actual things—are also the same.<sup>26</sup>

Things and their images in the soul are the same for all people everywhere. The signs, whether spoken or written, are not the same for all people everywhere. One notes that there is nothing in the passage, explicitly or implicitly, which requires intellection in its proper sense of ratiocination. In fact, “affections of the soul” at least allows for an activity other than intellection, especially when they are called “images” or “resemblances” of things. Instead of concepts (i.e., the categories generated by reason) Aristotle may well be thinking of the categories generated by the imagination. The semantic triangle, thing-image-sign is truer to Aristotle’s text than thing-concept-sign.

Aristotle also seems to allow for the possibility of imaginative universals in poetry when he contrasts poetry with history. He observes that a versified Herodotus would still be history. Poetry is more than verse:<sup>27</sup>

Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature of universals (ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου), whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do—which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him.<sup>28</sup>

What confuses the superficial reader of poetry is that there are all those nouns, proper and common, which seem to denote specific things (i.e., particulars). Even when there is a

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<sup>26</sup> Aristotle *De interpretatione* 16a4-8; Barnes 1.25. A point that could be raised is that language is itself already a partial abstraction, in that the word “dog” is not itself a dog. Investigation of the role of language in relation to concrete and concept in the transition from Homer to the philosophers would require another work of length at least equal to this one.

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle *Poetics*, 1451a39-b5.

<sup>28</sup> *Poet.* 1451b5-11; Barnes 2.2323.

correspondence between the noun and the thing, poetry is saying something universal rather than something merely particular. Herodotus's Darius is a particular king; Homer's Odysseus is a universal hero. Aristotle's claim, of course, is subject to challenge, but what seems clear is that he allows for the possibility of a pre-conceptual or non-conceptual universal. Poets as well as toddlers may mean "all men" when they say "Papa."

At this point, it is necessary to comment on the relationship between what constitutes a truly human being and concepts. St. Anselm observed that faith precedes any proper understanding.<sup>29</sup> This he meant in the context of Christian faith, of course, and thus has his dictum been read. There is also a certain empirical truth to his observation, however. Call it an article of faith, a posit, a working hypothesis or what one will, there is always some belief which makes possible and informs all understanding.<sup>30</sup> I must believe a chair in some way exists in order to understand "chair." This is a truth as old as the poem of Parmenides: a unicorn must exist in some way, if only as a mental construct, in order for it to be possible to affirm that a unicorn does not exist as a physical, historical being. A Kantian holds that the forms of things are innate in the human mind. All concepts are reducible to and constructed from the forms of space and time. Concepts, then for the Kantian, are *a priori*, and, therefore, to speak of pre-conceptual thought is sheer nonsense. A pre-conceptual being

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<sup>29</sup> "Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia 'nisi credidero, non intelligam'." "For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that 'unless I believe, I shall not understand' [Is. vii.9]." M. J. Charlesworth, trans. and ed., *St. Anselm's Proslogion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), I, 114-15.

<sup>30</sup> Here I am reading together St. Anselm, already cited, as well as Plato and Hume. At the end of his exposition of the Divided Line, Socrates of the *Republic* says that the soul knows things in the world, both natural objects and human artifacts, by belief. *R.* 6.510a5-6, 511e1; Cooper 1131,1132. For his part, Hume states that "belief is nothing but a more vivid, lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain." Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 32.

must be, *ipso facto* and at best, a pre-human being. That is simply an article of faith for the Kantian which precedes all his understanding of the world. For him it might make sense to talk of pre-argumentative or pre-philosophical or proto-philosophical thought where depiction, for example in Homer, stands in the place where argument can later be found in Plato, but to talk of pre-conceptual thought is simply and only a contradiction in terms. It were a contradiction which might even be regarded as a “strange French idea.” It is, in fact, an idea which is consistent with a dictum of the French sociologist and, at least some would add, philosopher, Claude Lévi-Strauss, “L’homme a toujours pensé aussi bien”:<sup>31</sup> “Man has always thought equally well,” but that what man has thought *with* has altered. Animals are chosen as totems, he writes, “not because they are ‘good to eat’ (‘bonnes à manger’) but because they are ‘good to think’ (‘bonnes à penser’).”<sup>32</sup> Again a scene from childhood comes to mind when a child’s mouth is the validating organ as he seeks to know his world by putting each thing he encounters into his mouth.<sup>33</sup> It can be argued that when the child has his mother’s nipple in his mouth that he is not thinking, properly speaking, but then one is back to definitions which are fundamentally articles of faith. Faith, in the sense of belief as defined above, is either in some sense a rational act or what is called reason is built upon

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<sup>31</sup> Boris Wiseman and Judy Groves. *Introducing Lévi-Strauss* (New York: Totem Books, 1998), 53.

<sup>32</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 89 ; idem, *Le totémisme aujourd’hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 128. This is a theme which recurs in the work of Professor Lévi-Strauss. For example, he writes, “Nous ne prétendons donc pas montrer comment les hommes pensent dans les mythes, mais comment les mythes se pensent dans les hommes, et à leur insu.” Idem, *Le Cru et le cuit* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1964), 20.

<sup>33</sup> Professor Onians makes a similar point about the mouth and tongue as organs of knowledge. Richard Broxton Onians, *The Origins of European Thought: About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 13-14.

a fundamentally irrational posit. That this line of reasoning (!) will be equally offensive to Kantians, Thomists, and Cartesians is clear, albeit from differing concerns.<sup>34</sup>

The argument of the present work is: Vico holds that there are imaginative universals in Homer to which the rational universals of philosophers correspond. To identify proper concepts in the Homeric texts is nothing other than anachronistic projection of something, namely concepts, which did not exist until well after the *terminus ad quem* of the components of the Homeric corpus which, as has been argued in the “Introduction,” was *circa* 680 B.C.

## 2. Poetry and Philosophy Born in Ignorance and Wonder

Repeatedly, Vico argues that what Homer and all other ancient poetic wisdom depict is given rational and abstract expression by philosophers. ¶375 warrants discussion with respect to ignorance and wonder as the origins of both poetry and philosophy:

Hence poetic wisdom, the first wisdom of the gentile world, must have begun with a metaphysics not rational and abstract like that of learned men now, but felt and imagined as that of these first men must have been, who, without the power of ratiocination, were all robust sense and vigorous imagination. This metaphysics was their poetry, a faculty born with them (for they were furnished by nature with senses and imaginations); born of their ignorance of causes, for ignorance, the mother of wonder, made everything wonderful to men who were ignorant of everything.<sup>35</sup>

Vico adds two paragraphs later, “And thus they began to exercise that natural curiosity which is the daughter of ignorance and the mother of knowledge, and which, opening the

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<sup>34</sup> Indebtedness is acknowledged to Professor Richard Velkley for his patience and generosity in helping me to sharpen views on this point with which he stands in most profound disagreement.

<sup>35</sup> NS 375.



mind of man, gives birth to wonder.”<sup>36</sup> Wonder is equally the starting point for both poetic and philosophical metaphysics. With the same point of departure, poetic metaphysics arises from the imagination as the primary human faculty for apprehending the world, while philosophical metaphysics arises from the intellect as the primary human faculty for apprehending the world. Both kinds of metaphysics seek first causes but express their explanations respectively in terms of imaginative or rational genera.

In this view, Vico stands very near Aristotle who observes near the beginning of the *Metaphysics*:

For it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize; they wondered originally at the obvious difficulties, then advanced little by little and stated difficulties about the greater matters, e.g. about the phenomena of the moon and those of the sun and the stars, and about the genesis of the universe. And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (whence even the lover of myth (φιλόμυθος) is in a sense a lover of wisdom (φιλόσοφος), for myth is composed of wonders); therefore since they were pursuing science in order to know, and not for any utilitarian end.<sup>37</sup>

For Aristotle, wonder yields to ignorance which, in turn, yields to philosophy, either rational or mythological. The views of Aristotle and Vico are not quite identical. They do not agree as to which comes first, wonder or ignorance, for example. If Vico had this passage of Aristotle in mind, he does not indicate it. They do agree that ignorance and wonder are preambles to an attempt to explain the world without a “utilitarian end,” either as philosophy proper or myth. Aristotle is prepared to see myth as depiction which expresses what he sought to express rationally, as he points out a few pages later. He discusses how makers of myths were seeking to understand primary causes just as philosophers did at a later period,

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<sup>36</sup> *NS* 377.

<sup>37</sup> Aristotle *Metaphysics* 1.982b11-22, Barnes 2.1554.

though he distances himself from the view, as he often does, with the formula, “There are some who think”:

Some think that the ancients who lived long before the present generation, and first framed accounts of the gods, had a similar view of nature; for they made Ocean and Tethys the parents of creation, and described the oath of the gods as being by water, which they themselves called Styx; for what is oldest is most honourable, and the most honourable thing is that by which one swears.<sup>38</sup>

The makers of myth were engaged in imaginative speculation which prefigured rational speculation. This reading of Aristotle is further re-enforced by what Professor Walter Kaufmann calls among “the most famous sentences in the *Poetics*” (1451b5-9), already quoted above.<sup>39</sup> Aristotle recognizes that poetry is about universals. He is not willing to say that they are philosophical universals, nor does he probe the universal character of poetic imagery in the way that Vico does exhaustively. He simply states the recognition that universals are expressed in poetry. Taken with the two passages from the *Metaphysics*, one can draw out his thinking on this point. Poetic mythology and philosophy proper both attend to the same reality and ponder that reality in universal terms. There is no doubt that Aristotle sees the philosophic enterprise as superior and superseding to mythology, but just as clearly he sees that he and Homer work from the same ignorance born of wonder in search of first

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<sup>38</sup> *Metaph.* 983b28-35; Barnes 2.1556. Ocean and Tethys will be further discussed in I.ii in the context of Plato’s reference (*Tht.* 180c5-d4) to the same passages in Homer (e.g., *Il.* 14.201, 246) and in II.i as an important feature in Homer’s paradigm of being.

<sup>39</sup> Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1968), 41. Reading Professor Kaufmann on this point is fruitful; he discusses “the philosophical dimension” of poetry. *Ibid.*, 92-101. See also *NS* 809-812.

causes.<sup>40</sup> Vico writes what might be read as a response or an addition to Aristotle, “The greater the object of wonder, the more the wonder grows.”<sup>41</sup>

The comparison of Aristotle and Vico provides a basis to show where Plato both agrees and disagrees with them. Socrates of the *Theaetetus* says, “For this is an experience which is characteristic of a philosopher, this wondering: this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else. And the man who made Iris the child of Thaumatas was perhaps no bad genealogist.”<sup>42</sup> Implicitly, Socrates praises Hesiod here who presents such a genealogy. “Thaumatas” means “wonder.”<sup>43</sup> Mythology is born of the same wonder as philosophy. In that, Socrates of the *Theaetetus* agrees with Aristotle and, speaking diachronically, with Vico. Absent is a passage in Plato parallel to Aristotle’s recognition that poetry speaks of universals. Here is a distinction which shall be rediscovered throughout the present work. Plato employs mythology even while he rejects poetry. Aristotle affirms both mythology and poetry as analogues to philosophy.

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<sup>40</sup> Professor Nancy du Bois Marcus is correct when she asserts, “The centrality Plato gives Homer as a rival educator distinguishes him from Aristotle, for example, for whom the quarrel between philosophy and poetry is not definitive of his own conception of philosophy. Aristotle takes as his starting point not Homer but other philosophers.” Nancy du Bois Marcus, *Vico and Plato* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 222. In addition, it must be said that for Aristotle, there is no “quarrel.” Philosophy and poetry alike are created in the search for universals. While Homer is not the recurring theme for Aristotle as he is for Plato, nevertheless Aristotle does take Homer seriously and does pronounce that Homer in both his mythology and his poetry anticipated the work undertaken by philosophy. The differences in the reception of Homer by Plato and Aristotle, respectively, shall be examined throughout “Part II” of this work.

<sup>41</sup> NS 184.

<sup>42</sup> Socrates is playing on the derivation of Thaumatas (Θαύματος) for the Greek word for wonder, τὸ θαῦμα. Plato *Theaetetus* 155d2-7; idem, *The Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), 173; hereafter, Cooper 173.

<sup>43</sup> See Cooper 173, note 12.

### 3. Depiction and Conceptualization

Vico gives specific examples of poetic depictions which prefigure philosophical conceptualizations. One such is particularly valuable in its allusion to the monumental work of Descartes:

The metaphysics of the philosophers, by means of the idea of God, fulfills its first task, that of clarifying the human mind, which needs logic so that with clear and distinct ideas it may shape reasonings, and descend therewith to cleanse the heart of man with morality. Just so the metaphysics of the poet giants, who had warred against heaven in their atheism, vanquished them with the terror of Jove, whom they feared as the wielder of the thunderbolt. And it humbled not only their bodies but their minds as well, by creating in them this frightful idea of Jove. (The idea of course, was not shaped by reasoning, for they were not yet capable of that, but by the senses, which, however false in the matter, were true enough in their form—which was the logic conformable to such natures as theirs.)<sup>44</sup>

Here Vico provides a clear scheme of the relationships among metaphysics, logic, and morality.<sup>45</sup> His special interest is to show how both philosophers and poets express metaphysics, logic, and morality, and then how those two expressions correspond to each

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<sup>44</sup> NS 502.

<sup>45</sup> Descartes' last work, *The Passions of the Soul*, was a kind of ethics based upon his "clear and distinct ideas," in which he seeks to order human passions according to reason in a way analogous to training a good bird dog. He concludes that treatise, "These things are worth noting in order to encourage each of us to make a point of controlling our passions. For since we are able, with a little effort, to change the movements of the brain in animals devoid of reason, it is clear that we can do so still more effectively in the case of men. Even those who have the weakest souls acquire absolute mastery over all their passions if we employed sufficient ingenuity in training and guiding them." René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, in *Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 238. Vico, by contrast, gives expression of how logic is the governing principle which both frames "clear and distinct ideas" and then cleanses "the heart of man." One wonders if he has in mind here Aristotle's *orthos logos* which is one of the pervasive principles of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (e.g., "The mean then is as right *logos* declares," (my translation) "τὸ δὲ μέσον ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὀρθὸς λέγει." NE 6.1138b20-21). For Vico, the heart, seat of the passions, needs not merely to be ordered, but to be "cleansed." Vico also makes explicit that he regards a true ethics as impossible from the defective metaphysics of Descartes and others. He writes, "For the metaphysics of the philosophers must agree with the metaphysics of the poets, on this most important point, that from the idea of a divinity have come all the sciences that have enriched the world with all the arts of humanity: just as this vulgar metaphysic taught men lost in the bestial state to form the first human thought from that of Jove, so the learned must not admit any truth in metaphysics that does not begin from true Being, which is god. And René Descartes certainly would have recognized this, if he had noticed it in the very dubitation that he makes of his own being." Verene, "Giambattista Vico's 'Reprehension,'" 2.

other. The form of imaginative metaphysics is the form of rational metaphysics; it is the matter of the two which differs. The matter in poetic metaphysics is the sensible (e.g., the sound and feeling of thunder, the sight of lightning); and in rational metaphysics, the intelligible (e.g., “the idea of God”). Form (logic) shapes the phantasms of the poetic metaphysicians just as it shapes the thoughts of the rational metaphysicians. Professor Verene argues, “Vico’s ideas constitute a philosophy of recollective universals which generates philosophical understanding from the image, not from the rational category.”<sup>46</sup> He further clarifies his understanding of Vico, “Images or *universali fantastici* are not . . . simply cloaks. The image is to be understood on its own terms.”<sup>47</sup> As is clear from ¶ 502, “clear and distinct ideas” correspond analogously to poetic images, rather than being juxtaposed to them. The whole scheme of Vico’s thought hangs on the three ages of gods, heroes and men, a scheme which implies correspondence among the three ages, something he makes explicit in his eleven “triadic special unities.”<sup>48</sup> The poetic metaphysicians arise in the age of the gods and continue in the age of the heroes. For example, in the encounter

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<sup>46</sup> Verene, *Imagination*, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 33. He later elucidates this point, “If we as modern thinkers form concepts in terms of intelligible genera, how did the first men think such that our manner of concept formation can be understood as developing from a first form of thought? This question can be regarded as stating the philosophical side of Vico’s philosophical-philological method.” Ibid., 73.

<sup>48</sup> Vico discusses “the successive ages of gods, heroes and men.” Those three ages “develop . . . , by a constant and uninterrupted order of causes and effects present in every nation through . . .” the eleven triadic unities: three kinds of natures, customs, natural laws, civil commonwealths, languages, written characters of language, jurisprudence, authority, reason, judgements, and times (i.e., the fashions of the age). NS 915. These unities are adumbrated in ¶¶915-79. For example, customs in the age of the gods and in the age of heroes and in the age of men are analogous. X is in the divine age as Y is in the heroic age and as Z is in the human age.

between Polyphemus and Odysseus,<sup>49</sup> one sees depicted the heroic age superseding the divine age. Rational metaphysics arises in the age of men.

Taking the use of “clear and distinct ideas” as implicit reference to Descartes, the present interpretation is that Vico embraces Descartes’ genius, but insists on conjunction (reason and imagination) exactly where Descartes insists on disjunction (reason to the exclusion of imagination).<sup>50</sup> As analysis of this passage, Vico saw the great peril in Cartesian rationality which begins by excluding everything except his one indubitable truth of rationality, “I think, therefore I am.”<sup>51</sup> First, it excluded the imagination and regarded the senses as unreliable at best, and second, once imagination was excluded from the operations of the intellect there was the danger of someone picking up the imagination as the exclusive human faculty of apprehending the world.<sup>52</sup> In Thomistic and, indeed, Aristotelian epistemology, while the intellect is the ruling human faculty, it fully embraces the operations

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<sup>49</sup> *Od.* 9.105-565.

<sup>50</sup> Descartes, for example, attributes failure to believe in God to “the images of sensible things . . . besieging my thoughts from all directions.” Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, AT 69. In fact, imagination is not even necessary for “me” to be what “I am.” He writes of the imagination, “For were I lacking this power, I would nevertheless undoubtedly remain the same entity I am now.” *Ibid.*, AT 73.

<sup>51</sup> Descartes, *Discourse*, AT 32.

<sup>52</sup> Implicit in the present analysis is a critique of the French reading of Vico from Michelet to Barthes, Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida in which the imagination stands as alternative to and in exclusion of reason. For a genealogy of Vico’s influence on French intellectual thought, see Linda Orr, *Jules Michelet: Nature, History, and Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974) and *Oeuvres complètes* of Roland Barthes, ed. Eric Marty, vol. 1, *Michelet* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2002), 291-447. As an example of Cartesian disjunction and its role in the thought of Vico and in French intellectual history, Barthes writes, “*Ce vieux couple romantique du cœur et de la raison, de la spontanéité et de la réflexion, de la religion et de la philosophie, se trouve déjà chez Vico (le verum, vérité cartésienne, de nature intellectuelle, opposé au certum, vérité sentimentale, par définition collective), où Michelet a pu le prendre.*” Barthes goes on to discuss the divorce of “this old romantic couple” in French intellectual life. Barthes, *Michelet*, 411. The criticism implicit here is that French post-modernists have accepted Descartes’ disjunction precisely in their rejection of Cartesian rationalism. In this sense, post-modern irrationalism is Cartesian; a true anti-Cartesian stance insists, as Vico does, on conjunction rather disjunction, on reason *and* imagination.

of the senses and the imagination.<sup>53</sup> By contrast with St. Thomas, Descartes isolates the intellect from the imagination and the senses. While appreciating the genius of Descartes, Vico expresses reservations. First, in order for a metaphysics of clear and distinct ideas to be a complete metaphysics, it must imply an ethics (“it may shape reasonings, and descend therewith to cleanse the heart of man with morality”). Second, a metaphysics of clear and distinct ideas (i.e., a rational metaphysics) has its analogue in a metaphysics of poetic images (“Just so the metaphysics of the poet giants”). By further inference, a poetic metaphysics is superior to the rational metaphysics if it yields an ethics while the rational metaphysics does not. Professor Deneen summarizes Vico’s analysis of the encounter between Odysseus and Polyphemus, “Irrational myth leads to morality.”<sup>54</sup> Every metaphysics must be judged by the morality it produces. Vico argues for the conjunction of the two analogous metaphysics of intellect and imagination against the disjunction which arises from Cartesian thought, namely either a metaphysics of the intellect or of the imagination. Not only are they conjoined, says Vico, but they are in fact successive in the ages of gods, heroes and men, repeated throughout all ages in all countries and cultures.

As Vico observes in the passage just quoted, as there is a poetic metaphysics, there is also a poetic logic. He elaborates that point later:

That which is metaphysics insofar as it contemplates things in all the forms of their being, is logic insofar as it considers things in all the forms by which they may be signified. Accordingly, as poetry has been considered by us above as a poetic metaphysics in which the theological poets imagined bodies to be for the most part

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<sup>53</sup> For a summary of St. Thomas’s epistemology, see John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 35-42.

<sup>54</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 173.

divine substances, so now that same poetry is considered as poetic logic, by which it signifies them.<sup>55</sup>

The division of the speculative sciences by St. Thomas Aquinas is a useful tool in analyzing this passage.<sup>56</sup> St. Thomas observes that there are three speculative sciences: physics, mathematics, and metaphysics. The objects of physics exist in matter and in motion and are understood in matter and motion. The objects of metaphysics do not need matter or motion either to exist or to be understood. If one thinks of the world divided in terms of metaphysical objects and physical objects, then mathematics emerges from the boundary between the two. Mathematics faces toward physics insofar as the objects of its study exist in matter and motion and toward metaphysics insofar as the objects of its study do not need matter or motion to be understood. A new boundary then exists between metaphysics and mathematics. What emerges from that boundary is logic which is the science of signifying that which is. Metaphysics is the science of the being which logic signifies. Vico affirms that just as there is a poetic logic which corresponds to rational logic, there is a poetic metaphysics which corresponds to rational metaphysics.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> NS 400.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Division and Methods of the Sciences*, ed. with an introduction by Armand Maurer, 4<sup>th</sup> revised ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), 12-15.

<sup>57</sup> This paragraph has been written keeping in mind the challenge of Professor Jonathan Barnes who argues powerfully that “there is no such thing as metaphysics.” Jonathan Barnes, “Metaphysics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 72. It is difficult and perhaps foolish to attempt to argue with so brilliant a logician and interpreter of Aristotle, even when one is certain that he is wrong. What the argument of this paragraph shows, however, is how an analytic philosopher could go wrong on this subject, attending so carefully to the signs as to forget that which is signified. Professor Barnes argues that there are things which exist, but not being *qua* being (“Our science studies beings, not being; it studies the things which exist.” *Ibid.*, 70). The science of Professor Barnes studies “things which exist” as they are *signified*; metaphysics studies “things which exist” insofar as they exist, in that they *are*. When standing on a boundary facing in one direction, it is impossible to know how the country looks if one faced in the opposite direction.



St. Thomas's analysis of the three speculative sciences also provides a fitting preamble prior to surveying the relationship of imagination to reason (or, properly said in regard to St. Thomas's division, to intellect since reason is in motion what the intellect is in rest)<sup>58</sup> in the history of philosophy. In St. Thomas's epistemology, imagination is both integral and subordinate to intellect. Imagination stands between the senses and the intellect, mediating and sorting sensory data, forming phantasms which are fed to the intellect for analysis. The intellect also tests and corrects the imagination and the other lower faculties through reflection. In such a scheme, it would be nonsensical to say that a person thought with the imagination. As physics terminates in the senses, and metaphysics in the intellect, nothing higher than a mathematical object can terminate in the imagination. The idea of correspondence between imagination and intellect simply has no place.<sup>59</sup> For Descartes, it is reason in action, thinking, which is primary, but he has replaced metaphysics with mathematics as first philosophy.<sup>60</sup> Hume, the younger contemporary of Vico, reacting against Descartes, does not dispense with the senses or reason but understands them as weaker partners to the imagination, his famous theatre of the mind.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to the

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<sup>58</sup> Father Maurer explains, "For St. Thomas, reason and intellect are not really distinct powers of man. They are one and the same intellectual power by which we know in different ways. Through reason we move from the known to the unknown, advancing from one thing to another in our conquest of truth. Through intellect we grasp an intelligible truth simply and intuitively, without any movement or discourse of the mind. So the act of reason is compared to that of intellect as movement to rest, or as the reaching out for something to the actual possession of it." Thomas Aquinas, *Division*, xxxiii.

<sup>59</sup> This discussion of Thomistic epistemology follows that of Monsignor Wippel cited above.

<sup>60</sup> For example, Descartes writes, "Only mathematicians have been able to find any demonstrations, that is to say, certain and evident reasonings." Descartes, *Discourse*, AT 19. He discusses the certainty of God's existence in terms of a triangle's certainty. "Demonstrations in geometry" are certain, while those of metaphysics are not. Again, he emphasizes "reason" over against "imagination" and "senses." *Ibid.*, AT 36-40.

<sup>61</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, 1.4.6.4, 165.

treatment by other thinkers, Vico's originality stands in bold relief. He rejects neither imagination nor reason; he does not subordinate the one to the other. Vico insists that in the different ages, imagination and reason are equally capable of abstracting universals from particulars, in one case imaginative universals and in the other rational universals, and, further, that rational and imaginative universals correspond to one another.<sup>62</sup>

The modern reader is tempted to ask if Homeric likenesses are not merely metaphors. To that question Vico gives a nuanced answer. From the following passage, distinctions shall be noted which establish Vico's analysis of the relationship between imaginative and rational genera and, further, the basis for the additional concern of this work, namely that philosophers received their ontological paradigm from Homer. Vico defines metaphor as a trope in poetic logic:

The most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent [trope] is metaphor. It is most praised when it gives sense and passion to insensate things, in accordance with the metaphysics discussed above, by which the first poets attributed to bodies the being of animate substances, with capacities measured by their own, namely sense and passion, and in this way made fables of them. Thus every metaphor so formed is a fable in brief. This gives basis for judging the time when metaphors made their appearance in the languages. All the metaphors conveyed by likenesses taken from bodies to signify the operations of abstract minds must date from times when philosophies were taking shape.<sup>63</sup>

Vico writes of metaphor in the singular, but a careful reading of this passage reveals that there are actually two kinds of metaphor or, at very least, two different operations which arrive at metaphor: 1) poetic and 2) rational metaphor. Poetic metaphor "gives sense and

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<sup>62</sup> Professor Verene discusses the traditional role of imagination in philosophy, "Traditionally in philosophy the imagination has been the handmaiden of the concept." Verene, *Imagination*, 33-34. That is true of Platonic, Aristotelian, Thomistic and Kantian philosophy, but not of Hume or of French irrationalism.

<sup>63</sup> NS 404.

passion to insensate things.” Thus, the insensate thing, “sky” was given “sense and passion” as “Jove”; “sea” as “Neptune.” The same principle applies to many particular things. All flowers are “Flora,” and all fruits “Pomona.”<sup>64</sup> This is the operation of imaginative abstraction whereby an animate being, in fact some form of deity, is a concrete particular or the sum of many concrete particulars. This is Vico’s poetic metaphor: the sky is Jove. “The sky is Jove” is only metaphorical, however, to those for whom it is no longer an adequate expression of a state of affairs. This is Vico’s analysis of mythology’s personification of nature. When “the sky is Jove” was taught from parent to child (or grandparent to grandchild), it was believed to express accurately an actual state of affairs. Vico understood that. As a statement of analysis by one who no longer held that view, Vico explains that the operation of poetic metaphor is the imaginative abstraction of things. The operation of poetic metaphor is from the concrete particular to an imaginative genus which is that particular. The sky cloudy, the sky clear, the sky by night and by day is always Jove. This flower which blossomed today and will wilt tomorrow, and that flower which has been in bloom for a week, and all other flowers that are, ever have been and ever shall be, rose, violet, crocus, tulip etc. are all Flora. The image, “Jove” or “Flora,” is the concrete particular.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> NS 402. As he works toward his explication of metaphor in 404, Vico discusses how Jove becomes an imaginative universal in NS 379. Such imaginative universals hold as much for heroes as for gods, “Achilles connotes an idea of valor common to all strong men, or Ulysses an idea of prudence common to all wise men.” NS 403.

<sup>65</sup> This understanding is very near to that of Professor Verene when he writes, “Poetic characters are particulars that function as universals, that is, for the ages of gods and heroes they accomplish what class concepts accomplish for the third age of purely human or logical thought. Universality of the imagination uses a particular as a universal.” Verene, *Knowledge*, 183. It seems clear that Vico and Professor Verene in his interpretation do not merely mean that “poetic characters . . . *function* as universals” (emphasis added), but that

Vico observes a second kind of metaphor which operates in the opposite direction. It is the metaphor “conveyed by likenesses taken from bodies to signify the operations of abstract minds.” This is rational metaphor, and it is also metaphor as the word is ordinarily used. Distinguishing rational metaphor from the operation of poetic metaphor, Vico writes, “We nowadays reverse this practice in respect of spiritual things, such as the faculties of the human mind, the passions, virtues, vices, sciences, and arts; for the most part the ideas we form of them are so many female personifications.”<sup>66</sup> Rational metaphor states a concept in terms of the image of a concrete particular. When Boethius, for example, wanted to write about all of philosophy taken together, he invented Lady Philosophy and gave her voice. He did not, however, believe in the existence of Lady Philosophy in the way that many once believed in the existence of Jove. To summarize, poetic metaphor expresses concrete

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they also are the universals. In *NS* 209 which Professor Verene uses to illustrate his point, Vico calls the “poetic characters” “imaginative class concepts or universals” and again “universals or intelligible class concepts.” Professor Verene, in his explanation of poetic characters as universals, writes, “Achilles, whom we grasp as a particular figure, not a property or attribute, is univocally predicated of diverse individuals. These individuals are not analogous to Achilles, not ‘like’ Achilles, each of them literally *is* Achilles.” *Ibid.*, 184.

This is a very important point as part of creating a metaphysics of particulars in response to Hume’s affirmation, already quoted, “There is no such thing as abstract or general ideas, properly speaking; but that all ideas are, in reality, particular ones, attached to a general term, which recalls upon occasion, other particular ones, that resemble, in certain circumstances, the idea, present to the mind.” Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 109n 66. What Hume did not see, and what was clear to his older contemporary, is that in the absence of “a general term,” a particular can also be a universal. It is interesting to note that though Professor David K. O’Connor does not use the word “universal,” what is claimed here about Vico he claims for Plato, “For in Plato’s hand, Socrates and the rest are no longer just individuals. They become representatives and exemplars of human possibilities as such. Plato invests his characters with this further dimension of significance by projecting them onto gigantic figures of myth.” David K. O’Connor, “Rewriting the Poets in Plato’s characters,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s “Republic”*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 55-56. Socrates identifies himself in much this way when he addresses the question of being the wisest of men, “What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, as if he said, ‘This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless.’” *Ap.* 23a5-b4; Cooper 22. This identification is a transition from Socrates the hero to Socrates the logical category (i.e., for “Socrates” read “any given human being meeting these conditions”). It is an example in an early Platonic dialogue of the shift from the concrete (i.e., Socrates as existing) to concept (i.e., Socrates as an abstraction).

<sup>66</sup> *NS* 402.

particulars in terms of an image while rational metaphor expresses concepts in terms of an image. What the two kinds of metaphor have in common is that both move toward the image, but they arrive at the image from opposite directions, respectively of concrete particulars and concepts, as can be seen in the following diagram.



This analysis draws out points made by Vico. He did actually distinguish between the two movements toward metaphor. It would have been helpful had he given them two different names. In the present work, only rational metaphor, namely concept expressed as the image of a concrete particular, is called “metaphor.” Vico’s poetic metaphor, concrete particulars expressed as an image, shall be called “imaginative genus” or “imaginative abstraction” or “imaginative universal.”<sup>67</sup> What Vico argues—and his point is adopted here—is that rational abstraction in the philosophers corresponds to imaginative abstraction in Homer. The special addition made here is to argue further that Homeric imaginative abstractions provide the ontological paradigm from which philosophers developed rational abstraction. This is the theme of the present work: what is depicted in Homer is conceptualized in philosophy.

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<sup>67</sup> Professor Verene’s discussion in his chapter, “Imaginative Universals,” is helpful. Verene, *Imagination*, 65-95, especially 74-80. It is the view of the present study that 1) imaginative universals are not “proto-conceptual” rather “pre-conceptual,” 2) meaning that they precede concepts historically rather than preceding concepts psychologically, 3) further, imaginative universals in one age correspond to rational universals in another age, and 4) imaginative and rational abstraction are in each paradigm the matter shaped by form (see discussion above of ¶502). The view of this work seems to be in agreement with Professor Verene when he writes, “Vico’s philosophical-philological method depends upon the power of fantasia to think particulars in universal form.” *Ibid.*, 109.

One way to understand more clearly the movement toward image is to reflect upon the use of myth by Plato. It has been said above that the imaginative speculation of myth prefigured rational speculation. Thus, in terms of historical development, myth precedes and—the claim is made here—creates the problematic for philosophy. Plato creates myth, however, after rational speculation.<sup>68</sup> The Myth of Er, for example, is the last word in the *Republic*. Plato uses myth as a metaphor for the rational speculation which precedes it. Even when myth does not constitute the final word of a dialogue, myth is meant to express rational conception. Homeric myth presents imaginative genera as expressions of concrete experience. Platonic myth is metaphor for rational speculation.

Vico also wants to make absolutely clear how profoundly he disagrees with what he believes to have been Plato's reading of Homer. The distinction of imaginative genus and metaphor proper provides the basis for understanding why Vico was so adamant on this point. For Vico, Homer did not possess esoteric wisdom, "For the wisdom of the ancients was the vulgar wisdom of the lawgivers who founded the human race, not the esoteric wisdom of great and rare philosophers."<sup>69</sup> It has already been observed that Professor Mazzotta holds Vico to have been wrong in his assessment of Plato's esoteric reading of Homer. Plato's view of Homer is the next subject to be examined, but it might first be asked how different Vico's view of Homer was from Plato's. Professor Patrick Deneen comments, "Despite the claim that he disagrees with Plato—indeed, to attribute unreflective admiration of Homer's wisdom to Plato is at best disingenuous on Vico's part—Vico proceeds with a

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<sup>68</sup> Joshua P. Hochschild, note to the author, November 15, 2007.

<sup>69</sup> *NS* 384.

critique of the Homeric epics that shares a great deal in common with Plato's critique both in the *Republic* and the *Apology*.”<sup>70</sup> It is not clear that Vico attributed “unreflecting admiration of Homer's wisdom to Plato,” rather that he characterized Plato's reading of Homer as distinguishing between an exoteric and esoteric meaning and that Plato found in that esoteric reading an anticipation of the questions which occupied him as a philosopher.<sup>71</sup> Whether Plato did actually thus characterize Homer remains an open question. What Professor Deneen observes correctly is the great similarity between the way Vico characterizes (and criticizes) Plato's reading of Homer and Vico's own reading of Homer. Vico accuses Plato of finding esoteric wisdom in Homer. Vico says that the imaginative metaphysics of Homer prefigure the rational metaphysics of the philosophers. What is the difference between the two characterizations?<sup>72</sup>

The difference is the same kind as was observed in Vico's discussion of metaphor. Recalling the distinction already made between imaginative genus and metaphor proper, Vico is saying that Homer wrote in imaginative genera while Plato found in Homer philosophical metaphor. For Vico, Homer abstracted imaginatively from the world of

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<sup>70</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 175.

<sup>71</sup> NS 780 has already been quoted where Vico states, “as Plato left firmly fixed the opinion that Homer was endowed with sublime esoteric wisdom (and all the other philosophers have followed in his train).” It was against the supposition that Homer was a philosopher, established by Plato, that Vico argues. Vico discusses cyclopean barbarism as an explicit theme which Plato (and Aristotle as well) take from Homer. NS 950, 962, 982, 1005. This will be examined in II.v.

<sup>72</sup> Professor Benardete does not cite Vico, but he reflects upon this same point, “The poets' wisdom was vulgar wisdom. . . . If, however there had been this constant anticipation in the poets of what Plato made explicit, it seemed one would have to resort to the notion that the poets said many beautiful things but did not know what they meant (*Apology of Socrates* 22c2-3). An occasional hit can well be artless, but a pattern of success makes one suspect that the dice are loaded. If they are loaded, the simple separation of poetry from philosophy is no longer possible.” Benardete, *Bow*, xi-xii.

particulars, while, according to his reading of Plato, Plato found in Homer the images of concepts.<sup>73</sup>

What seems clear is that Vico is correct, at least, about the modern reading of Plato's reading of Homer and indeed about the modern reading of Homer himself. The modern reader finds it difficult to think that when Homer says that the sky is Zeus, he could be speaking other than metaphorically. The modern supposition is that concept is expressed in terms of an image. What Vico affirms—and in this, the present work follows Vico—is that Homer was working in the opposite direction. Homer expressed concrete particulars in terms of imaginative genera. An aim here is to discover Homer's paradigm of being by examining his work as written rather than as interpreted, i.e., working from concrete particulars to imaginative genera (Part II). Before turning to Homer, however, it is important to investigate Vico's charge against Plato: did he regard Homer as a philosopher?

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<sup>73</sup> Professor Marcus discusses Vico's understanding of Plato's reading of Homer over against her own understanding of Vico's reading of Homer, (e.g., Marcus, *Vico and Plato*, 30-31). Where the present interpretation seems to differ from hers is the emphasis here that what Vico criticizes in Plato's reading is Plato's movement to image from universal concept rather than Homer's movement from particulars to universal image.



Homer was a great poet altogether and that made up for a lot of the rascality. His *Iliad* is still read. Wherever you go on the face of the civilized globe you will hear of Homer, the glory that was Greece. Yes, indeed. I'm told there are some very nice verses in the *Iliad* of Homer, very good stuff, you know. You have never read it, Mr. Shanahan?

He was the daddy of them all, said Shanahan.

—Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds*

### 1. Historical and Textual Prolegomena

Homer's poems were the textbooks of Athenian education. The freeborn, girls as well as boys, were taught the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The freeborn adult who had once been the class dunce could, nevertheless, recite large sections of both poems by heart. Homer was simply inescapable.<sup>1</sup> After Athens' calamitous defeat in the Peloponnesian War, there was a crisis among the citizenry about the cultural presuppositions which may have induced Athens to make the several decisions which had led to her defeat.<sup>2</sup> It is against that backdrop

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<sup>1</sup> "There were three branches of elementary education, normally but not necessarily taught in different establishments. The *grammatistes* taught reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as literature, which consisted of learning by heart the works of poets, selected because of their value for moral training (Homer being the chief author studied. . . . A training in letters [taught by the *grammatistes*] would be a minimum of schooling. Girls, too, as we see from the vase-scenes, might receive an education in all three branches." Frederick Arthur George Beck, "Education," in *OCD*, 372. Professor Murray summarizes, "In what sense do the [Homeric] Poems form the main or central thread of Greek tradition? We know that from about the sixth century onwards Homer formed the staple of Greek education. Every one knew Homer, and all parts of Greece accepted him." Murray, *Epic*, 196. He also argues that the public recitation of Homer at the Panathenaea was no accident. The *Iliad* as the tale of the Pan-Achaean war provided the authoritative paradigm for what Athens sought to achieve in uniting all Greeks. *Ibid.*, 188-92.

<sup>2</sup> "Almost exhausted, Athens won the costly battle of Arginusae (406). But once more politics destroyed what the fleet had saved: a new peace offer was rejected and the victorious generals were tried and executed for failure to rescue the crews of waterlogged ships. In 405 the last Athenian fleet was surprised and destroyed at Aegospotami in the Hellespont. Besieged by sea and land, Athens capitulated in April 404.

that one must read the indictment of Homer in Plato's works, especially in the *Republic*.

While Homer remained the cultural touchstone, new genres of writing had developed in the Greek world, and Athens had been a center for new modes of expression. The authoritative mythologies of Homer and Hesiod had yielded three new genres of writing and thinking each of which teased out one element of mythological writing while suppressing other elements: history, philosophy and drama. It was at such an historical moment that Plato lived, sat at the feet of Socrates and, subsequently, delivered his own teaching veiled in the words which he assigned to others.<sup>3</sup>

The veil which Plato casts over his own thoughts while writing his dialogues is an important fact to take into consideration when studying the question of Plato's view of Homer. While pondering Plato's silence in his own voice, Professor Kaufmann quotes

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"The Peloponnesian War had been, as Thucydides says, the greatest 'disturbance' in Greek history. Methods of warfare, never gentle in Greece towards prisoners and non-combatants, became more cruel; the only hopeful attempt at Greek unity was defeated; and the old autonomy was not won back, but an incompetent imperialism substituted for an enlightened one. Greece hardly recovered from the war." Arnold Wycombe Gomme and Nicholas Geoffrey Lemprière Hammond, "Peloponnesian War" in *OCD*, 796.

Professor Voegelin assesses the outcome of the war in terms of what had ended but also in terms of a new possibility, "The genius of Thucydides revealed itself in the discipline by which he resisted the temptation to obscure the dilemmatic structure of political existence by any attempt at rationalization. Because of this achievement he must be considered the true heir to the tragic tradition. But at the same time, because of its content, his work marks the formal end of tragedy insofar as it tells the story of the death of a hero who once represented the order of Zeus against the disordering hubris of power. The Dike of Zeus had disappeared from the order of Athens, and the tragic sentiment had withdrawn from the people into single individuals who as contemplators preserved the meaning of order in measuring the surrounding disorder by the memory of its standards. . . . Thucydides, while moving on the same level of political action as Machiavelli, apparently had no conception of an alternative to his Periclean prince—for which he can hardly be blamed, since he did not have the experience of prototypical saviors which Machiavelli had. This absence of a spiritual reforming personality not only from the reality of Athens, but even from the imagination of a Thucydides, shows clearly that an age of political culture had irrevocably come to its end. The time of the polis was running out; a new epoch or order began with Socrates and Plato." Voegelin, *Polis*, 439.

<sup>3</sup> On this point, Professor Howland writes, "Plato never speaks directly to his readers in the dialogues, and so he never directly tells us what he thinks, or what we ought to think. The dialogues thus leave the burden of interpretation to the reader, who must actively interrogate the text if he is to discriminate intelligently between the competing positions represented therein." Howland, *Odyssey*, 27.

Aristotle's word of praise for the blind bard, "Homer, admirable as he is in every other respect, is especially so in this, that he alone among epic poets is not unaware of the part to be played by the poet himself in the poem. The poet should say very little in his own character, as he is no imitator when doing that."<sup>4</sup> Professor Kaufmann comments, "The point is that as long as the poet speaks, instead of letting his characters speak, he is not *mimetes*—not engaged in make-believe, not pretending."<sup>5</sup> What is interesting here is not so much what Aristotle's praise and Professor Kaufmann's comment say explicitly about Homer, rather what it says implicitly about Plato. At least by this one criterion, Plato's work was completely poetic, that is to say mimetic, since he never speaks in his own voice. Given the indictment of Homer and poetry overall in Plato's works, this fact is as startling as it is obvious. In contrast to Greek drama, there is not even a character in the dialogues which corresponds to the chorus, external to the action. There are, indeed, characters which frame the central narrative, but they are not mere passive narrators and commentators; they too are part of a tale that is told even if only as the frame narrative to the dialogue proper. That is the circumstance of Euclides and Terpsion in *Theaetetus*. On Aristotle's point, Plato outdoes Homer by never intruding at all into his dialogues either as narrator or speaking character.

Because of this fundamentally mimetic quality of Plato's work, there shall be made here a strenuous effort to maintain three tiers of exegesis. On the first tier, opinions shall be attributed to the protagonists of the various dialogues. There is what Socrates of the *Republic* says and what Socrates of the *Theaetetus* says. On the second and third tiers a

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<sup>4</sup> Aristotle *Poetics* 1460a5-8.

<sup>5</sup> Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 38-39.

principle enunciated by Professor Sir Moses Finley with respect to Homer, as discussed in the “Introduction,” shall be followed with respect to Plato, “An important methodological rule follows: no argument may legitimately be drawn from a single line or passage or usage. Only the patterns, the persistent statements have any standing.”<sup>6</sup> The second tier of exegesis is to establish Socrates’ consistent position on some point. In such circumstances, reference shall be made to Plato’s Socrates. The third tier is to establish an opinion held by Plato himself. On Plato’s own views, prudence dictates reticence, but after a thorough consideration it is sometimes possible to venture a reasonable guess.

This work shall also attempt to take into account that Plato uses an important principle of epic poetry best exemplified by Homer—according to Aristotle— while writing his own dialogues in which so many charges are laid against Homer. This is the Plato we know and love. He demonstrates his mastery of rhetoric in writing the speeches of Socrates against rhetoric in the *Gorgias*. He commits to writing the sublime teaching given by Socrates in the *Phaedrus* against writing. He writes mimetically always, but most interestingly when Socrates of the *Republic* eviscerates poetic mimesis. Homer nods; Plato smiles.

Plato also advances a state of affairs which existed prior to his birth. Fifth century B.C. Athens had come to distinguish between Homer and the Homeric characters and then amongst the Homeric characters themselves. Odysseus, Ajax, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Hecuba, Andromache, Clytemnestra and many other heroic women and men take on lives of their own as represented by the Athenian dramatists. Aristotle makes this observation when

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<sup>6</sup> Finley, *World*, 149.

he writes about character development in poetry, “We have an instance of baseness of character, not required for the story, in the Menelaus in *Orestes*; of the incongruous and unbecoming in the lamentation of Ulysses in *Scylla*.”<sup>7</sup> His criticism of inconsistency is solid evidence that inconsistency in a single character from text to text existed. To put it more neutrally, the evidence is solid for the extent to which Homeric figures took on lives of their own in Greek drama. The two figures of Odysseus in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* and *Ajax* stand in contrast, at very least in moral coloring, not only to the Odysseus of Homer but even to each other.<sup>8</sup> As shall be seen, Plato felt free to treat Homer and Homeric characters differently if not altogether independently of each other. It will even be suggested that Plato along with his Socratic rivals, especially Antisthenes and Xenophon, may have argued for an inversion of the popular estimation of Homer over against his heroes.

It is also well to inform the reader at the outset that the understanding of how the works in the Platonic corpus cohere most approximates the views set forth by Professor Charles H. Kahn in his *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*:

*The ordering of Plato’s dialogues*

Group I

1. Apology, Crito
2. Ion, Hippias Minor
3. Gorgias, Menexenus,

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<sup>7</sup> *Poetics* 1454a28-29; Barnes 2.2327.

<sup>8</sup> Professor Kaufmann observes that not only were the Greek dramatists not bound by the Homeric canon, they were not even bound by their previous plays, “When a playwright came back to a family on which he had written previously, his hands were in no way tied by his earlier plays. . . . Striking examples can be found in Sophocles as well: Odysseus in his *Ajax* is the very image of nobility, while Odysseus in his *Philoctetes* is on an altogether different plane morally.” Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 114.

4. Laches, Charmides, Euthyphro, Protagoras
5. Meno, Lysis, Euthydemus
6. Symposium, Phaedo, Cratylus

Group II

Republic, Phaedrus, Parmenides, Theaetetus

Group III

Sophist-Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus-Critias, Laws.<sup>9</sup>

The acceptance of this outline is approximate because a precise chronological ordering of the dialogues is impossible, as Professor Kahn freely concedes.<sup>10</sup> What is persuasive in his approach,<sup>11</sup> besides the moderation and precision which he brings to bear on the question, is his reading of the Group I dialogues as “proleptic.” Regardless of the detailed chronological order of Group I there is among them a “systematic orientation towards the *Republic* that ties all or most of these dialogues together and offers the most enlightening perspective on their interrelationship.”<sup>12</sup> The tenet of the present work is that the *Republic* is the great watershed dialogue: all the other dialogues either lead up to it (i.e., are proleptic) or flow

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<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue. The Philosophical Uses of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 47-48.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

<sup>11</sup> Professor Kahn reviews the history of scholarship on dating and ordering Plato’s dialogues. The principles by which the three groups of dialogues were developed included statistical analysis of words and phrases, “the avoidance of hiatus” in Attic rhetoric, and stylometric considerations. The various approaches have offered mutually confirmed results. *Ibid.*, 42-44. He distinguishes between the high degree of certainty in assigning dialogues to the three groups and the conjecture involved in ordering dialogues within each group, “In general the ordering must be decided by literary tact, historical imagination, or personal hunch. This hermeneutical choice is not to be confused with the kind of solid philological result, intersubjectively confirmable, that is represented by the division into the three groups.” *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

from it. The arguments which become fully elaborated in the *Republic* are already given brief and usually suggestive treatment in earlier dialogues. Those that flow from it shall be of interest here, in particular the *Theaetetus* in which Homer is most explicitly treated as an authoritative figure and the “Stranger” dialogues (*Sophist, Statesman, Laws*).

## 2. The Socratic Indictment of Homer

One does well to make the distinction early between Plato’s account of Homer as “philosopher” and Homer as “serious thinker.” The significance of that distinction will become clear as this chapter unfolds, but a superficial reading of the *Republic*, especially Books 2, 3, and 10, suggests that Plato rejects Homer both as a philosopher and as a serious thinker. It will be shown that, in fact, Plato read Homer as a very serious thinker. The distinction will also be made between what Plato’s Socrates, and presumably also Plato, meant by “philosopher” and what is meant by the term in twenty-first century A.D. schools and departments of philosophy. The result will be a nuanced assessment of Plato’s appreciation for Homer as well as his many and profound difficulties with him.

In considering the Socratic indictment of Homer, one must keep in mind the ambivalence which Socrates is depicted as having toward the author and characters of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>13</sup> First, the antiquity of the “ancient quarrel” between poetry and philosophy will be considered. Next to be examined is the attack on Homer by Socrates of

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<sup>13</sup> Professor Bloom identifies a helpful distinction in reading Books 3 and 10, “That treatment [in Book 3], however, dealt only with the uses and disadvantages of poetry in the education of warriors, men who needed courage and the salutary tales which would encourage it. [In Book 10] Homer is the teacher of the Greeks, and his title to that role must be examined. In the earlier discussion, Homer’s hero, Achilles, was the theme; in this discussion, Homer himself is the theme.” Allan Bloom, *The “Republic” of Plato: Translated with Notes, an Interpretive Essay, and a New Introduction* (U.S.A.: Basic Books, 1991), 426.

the *Republic*. Three proleptic dialogues shall then be analyzed, two that are closely related in the treatment of Homeric themes, *Ion* and *Hippias minor*, and then a dialogue in which the challenge to Homer is far subtler, the *Lysis*. At that point, the *Republic* shall be considered again, but this time as it presents a solution to Plato's problem of how to regard Homer and Homeric heroes. The Socratic indictment will then be traced in the *Theaetetus* where Socrates attacks Homer not as a poet, rather as a serious thinker and even as the ultimate authority for the doctrine of change and motion. As a final step, it shall be argued that Plato refigures both Socrates at the beginning of the *Republic* as Odysseus and Odysseus at the end of the dialogue as the icon for the paradigmatic philosopher, who becomes the Strangers of the *Sophist-Statesman* and the *Laws*. It will be argued that the Eleatic and Athenian Strangers express a vision of the new, Platonic Odysseus, that is Odysseus as philosopher.

#### a. The "Ancient Quarrel"

Socrates of the *Republic* asserts in Book 10 that between philosophy and poetry there is already "an ancient quarrel."<sup>14</sup> That phrase is often quoted, but is it true? *Republic* 10 is given to the explicit and extensive consideration of that quarrel, but what is the evidence of its antiquity? The ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy "is evidenced by such expressions as 'the dog yelping and shrieking at its master,' 'great in the empty eloquence of fools,' 'the mob of wise men that has mastered Zeus,' and 'subtle thinkers, beggars all.'"<sup>15</sup> Such is the testimony in support of the claim as offered by the rationalist philosopher of

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<sup>14</sup> R. 10.607b5-6; Cooper 1211.

<sup>15</sup> R. 10.607b5-c3; Cooper 1211.



being. They are mere locutions of the street which have no specific bearing on the relationship between poetry and philosophy. Socrates' claim is a bald assertion. To any extent that the sayings quoted by Socrates could be deemed as evidence for the quarrel, they are depictions. Socrates finds them useful metaphors. The evidence, then, for the quarrel between rational philosophy and imaginative poetry is itself poetic image.<sup>16</sup>

In historical fact, how "ancient" could the quarrel be? From the modern vantage point, Thales is reckoned the first of philosophers. He flourished in the early sixth century B.C. The Homeric material existed a century before that. While Plato would not have had a handy timeline to make comparisons, it is reasonable to assume that he understood Homer to have preceded Thales by a considerable period of time. Prior to Thales one could argue that the poetry of Homer and Hesiod held in unity what would later become history, drama and philosophy. Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles all wrote in verse. Perhaps one could say that Xenophanes or Heraclitus quarreled with Homer, but not with poetry. Professor Glenn Most argues that it was, in fact, Aristotle who first made the distinction between the mythmakers and the physical philosophers and that Plato was the last to see the whole tradition of Homer, Hesiod, Heraclitus and Parmenides as authorities who were engaged in work of like kind.<sup>17</sup> He writes:

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<sup>16</sup> In addition to the scholars engaged in this section, one also notes the thoughtful reflection on "The Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry" in Professor Rosen's study. Rosen, *Republic*, 352-76. There is also Professor Levin's book-length treatment. Susan B. Levin, *The Ancient Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited: Plato and the Greek Literary Tradition* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> Glenn W. Most, "The Poetics of Early Greek Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A. A. Long (Cambridge: the Cambridge University Press, 1999), 332-33. My own treatment of the relation of poetry to Early and Classical Greek philosophy owes much to Professor Most's penetrating discussion. This debt is acknowledged neither accepting his views categorically nor suggesting that he would agree with my own reading.

Plato does not distinguish sharply between poets and philosophers among his predecessors, and he has his Protagoras claim that ancient poets were really sophists but disguised their opinions for fears of exciting hostility (*Prot.* 316d-e). As far as we know, Aristotle was the first author to distinguish terminologically between what he called *mythologoi* and *theologoi* on the one hand and *physikoi* or *physiologoi* on the other.<sup>18</sup>

To Professor Most's list, one could add Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. Socrates of the *Republic* does not hesitate to place Aeschylus, for example, in immediate relation to Homer, even if it is only to refute both of them as he does in the *Republic*.<sup>19</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates discusses Pericles both in relation to his teacher Anaxagoras and in relation to the plays he produced. Politics, philosophy and poetry need sorting in relation one to another.<sup>20</sup> In *Ion* (533d1-4), one finds the same proximity between Homer and Euripides in a neutral citation of both. Even as Plato was writing the *Republic*, decades would elapse before Aristotle would definitively explain why Empedocles' philosophy in

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<sup>18</sup> Most, "Poetics," 332.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., *R.* 3.380a1-2, following a list of foolish errors made by Homer, 379c5-e5, similarly 383a2-c2.

<sup>20</sup> The testimony on Sophocles and Euripides is subtler. In *Phaedrus* 268a-270a, Socrates discusses what is proper to various kinds of activity. Knowing how to raise or lower body temperature, induce vomiting or make one's bowels move does not make a person a physician. He goes on to discuss writing and staging of plays, in which connection he names Sophocles and Euripides. He then names Pericles who was an orator, politician, general, and producer of plays. Pericles is said to have learned his rhetoric from the work of Anaxagoras. These are seamless shifts. One implication seems to be the question of boundaries to activities. Was it possible for Pericles truly to be an orator, politician, general, and producer of plays, or was he just a dabbler in affairs he did not understand like the person who knows how to take a laxative who poses as a physician? One also notes that two of the four changes in the body have to do with the ejection of material regarded in a negative fashion, especially when the denotations for those two materials are employed as epithets. Did Socrates of the *Phaedrus* intend to say that the work of Pericles was vomit or excrement? In typical contradiction, Plato has Socrates himself discuss playwrights, warriors and a philosopher, all in the same passage and all equally as authorities to be reckoned with. It is also worth noting that the four ancient Greek playwrights of whom we have works extant were approximate contemporaries of Socrates: Aeschylus (525/24-456 B.C.), Sophocles (496-406 B.C.), Euripides (485-406 B.C.), and Aristophanes (454/445-385). Plato takes advantage of this fact to include a personal reminiscence—without relying upon it for historical accuracy—of Socrates' encounter with Sophocles (*R.* 329b5-c2). One recalls Professor Benardete's insight that Plato's work stands in the same approximate relationship to the dramatists as to Homer (Benardete, *Bow*, xi).

verse does not count as poetry proper.<sup>21</sup> Insofar as there was a quarrel between poetry and philosophy at the time Plato wrote, the quarrel could not have been ancient. In fact, one could easily suggest that it was invented by Socrates of the *Republic*.<sup>22</sup> Professor Nightingale is especially insistent and clear on this point, “It is Plato’s private quarrel, then, which is retrojected back onto the ancients in *Republic* 10 and thereby made to escape the contingency and specificity of Plato’s own historical moment. The quarrel is thus made to appear natural rather than artificial, a historical fact rather than one of Plato’s more powerful fictions.”<sup>23</sup> It is an old ruse to wrap innovation in tradition: Socrates of the *Republic* will not invent a quarrel; he merely joins the fray.

Thus, when Socrates postulates “an ancient quarrel,” he may merely want to make a debating point: Socrates at his rhetorical best. Another way to read that claim, however, is to understand Socrates as saying that the conflict between poetry and philosophy is already implicit in Homeric depiction. In this reading, the quarrel between philosophy and poetry expresses the quarrel between reason and imagination. This is consistent with the text of the *Republic*, in general, and of Book 10, in specific, and requires no anachronism either on the part of Socrates or of the modern reader. This explanation also accounts for his use of traditional sayings as received wisdom. The quarrel is as old as Man.

The “quarrel,” then, arises from the danger inherent in poetry and song which had long been known. In fact, it is already depicted in the *Odyssey*. Director of Studies Pierre

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<sup>21</sup> Aristotle *Poetics* 1447b17.

<sup>22</sup> On this point, Professor Most comments, “The expression ‘the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry’ was his.” Most, “Poetics,” 359.

<sup>23</sup> Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1995), 65. She writes at some length on this point. *Ibid.*, 60-67.

Vidal-Naquet observes that in the *Iliad*, Achilles alone is shown to sing, while in the *Odyssey* “bards multiply.”<sup>24</sup> While bardic singing, synonymous with poetry in the Homeric epics, might express the excellence of Achilles, it is equally possible that it is an emblem of the dangerousness inherent to his character. Achilles is the hero most subject to his spiritedness and least to mind. Odysseus, by contrast, though he himself can sing the song of his voyages, recognizes the peril in it. As Director of Studies Vidal-Naquet points out, Odysseus sets limits to song when he insists on hearing the sirens’ song while, at the same time, he insists on being physically restrained as he listens. He, further, strictly admonishes his crew absolutely to ignore anything he says while under the influence of the sirens.<sup>25</sup> It was Circe who had warned Odysseus about the Sirens. She says that if Odysseus listens to what she says “even a god himself will re-mind you (μνήσει δέ σε καὶ θεὸς αὐτός),”<sup>26</sup> otherwise Odysseus will never get home.<sup>27</sup> It is also Circe who counsels him on how to avoid the bewitchment of the Sirens’ song, an interesting kindness from one who was herself bewitching.<sup>28</sup> As Director of Studies Vidal-Naquet observes, the song of the Sirens is about the Achaeans’ victory at Troy. He summarizes the significance of the depiction, “Poetry . . . is a dangerous thing. . . . The *Odyssey* contains then a kind of reflection about the craft of the

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<sup>24</sup> Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Le Monde d’Homère* (Perrin: Paris, 2002), 21-22. Director of Studies Vidal-Naquet actually says that Achilles is the only hero *capable* of singing, but that goes beyond the text, “Dans l’*Iliade*, le seul héros capable de chanter, en s’accompagnant d’une cithare, est Achille, le héros par excellence, le ‘meilleur des Achéens,’ Dans l’*Odyssee*, au contraire, les aèdes se multiplient.” Achilles is the only hero who is shown to sing, but that does not necessarily preclude the logical possibility of other heroes being able.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Od.*, 12.37-38.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.47-58.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.229-243.

bard, about both the grandeur and the dangers which he can produce.”<sup>29</sup> It should be noted, however, that the Sirens are singers of poetry in the wild, untamed world. When Demodocus sings of the same events, he does so in the context of a royal court,<sup>30</sup> the civilized world where Alcinous is king and Arete is queen, the two being first cousins. Even there, Odysseus is mindful of the peril. There are no physical restraints which can prevent him from weeping and in that sign disclosing his identity to Alcinous.<sup>31</sup> Odysseus, having experienced the danger again at the table of his host, then recounts the danger he had already experienced on the open sea. In both contexts the song was about the Achaeans’ victory at Troy. In both circumstances, Odysseus had need of restraint. At the Phaeacian court, the restraint is internalized while on the wild, open sea, faced with the poetry that bewitches sailors, the restraint is external. Thus, in depiction, the poet warns hearers that they will be seduced to their peril, if they do not take care and perhaps even if they do.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Vidal-Naquet, *Le monde*, 22. “La poésie . . . est chose dangereuse. L’*Odyssee* contient donc une sorte de réflexion sur le métier d’aède, sur la grandeur et les dangers qu’il peut représenter.”

<sup>30</sup> Professor C. S. Lewis conjures the atmosphere of a royal court in which epic poetry was performed, “Such, then, is epic as we first hear of it; the loftiest and gravest among the kinds of court poetry in the oral period, a poetry *about* nobles, made *for* nobles, and performed on occasion, *by* nobles (cf. *Il.* ix, 189). We shall go endlessly astray if we do not get well fixed in our minds at the outset the picture of the venerable figure, a king, a great warrior, or a poet inspired by the Muse, seated and chanting to the harp a poem on high matters before an assembly of nobles in a court, at a time when the court was the common centre of many interests which have since been separated; . . . But also, it was the place of festivity, the place of brightest hearths and strongest drink, of courtesy, merriment, news and friendship.” C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to “Paradise Lost”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 15.

<sup>31</sup> *Od.* 8.83-95.

<sup>32</sup> Professor Most recognizes the danger inherent in song as depicted in the *Odyssey*, but understands that danger-as-seduction is related to truth. He reviews both these scenes, the courtly song of Demodocus and the Sirens’ song in the wild, and concludes that both express Homer’s claims to veridicality, “As here, so always in the early Greek epic, poetry enchants, but no enchantment is greater than that produced by truth.” Most, “Poetics,” 342-43. In this respect, Professor Most’s reading stands in sharp contrast to the reading by Socrates of the *Republic*, who claims that part of Homer’s inherent danger is that he makes the false beautiful.

On this reading, Socrates of the *Republic* does not invent the “quarrel,” rather he externalizes what is already internal in the Homeric canon: poetry can be dangerous. In fact, Socrates of the *Phaedrus* implicitly acknowledges this debt to Homer. Socrates spins a little myth about the relationship of the cicadas to the Muses in which he makes reference to those who navigate around the cicadas as if they were Sirens. Of course, it is Odysseus who manages to navigate around the Sirens, but the reader must supply that piece of information. Nearly twenty lines later, Socrates says that the cicadas, when they die, report to the Muses “those who honor their special kind of music by leading the philosophical life.”<sup>33</sup> This is a splendid example of Plato’s conceptualizing Homeric depiction and with a subtlety which is remarkable even in an author who is frequently sublimely subtle. Odysseus is not named at all. When Socrates speaks of “those who honor” the cicadas’ music, there is no repetition of the question to which this little myth is the answer: what is the gift the cicadas give to mortals who navigate “around them as if they were Sirens?” The connections must be provided by the reader. Odysseus by recognizing the danger and by counteracting the songs of the Sirens was living the philosophical life. One notes here that part of the subtlety is the implicit separation of Odysseus from Homer, a move which shall be repeated and with increasing explicitness. In Homer, one finds the depiction of poetry’s danger. Plato makes Homer the emblem of that which Homer recognized. At the same time, Plato identifies in Homer the icon of the philosopher, namely Odysseus. On this reading, then, the “ancient quarrel” was between Odysseus and his author. As shall be argued later in this chapter, in

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<sup>33</sup> *Phdr.* 258e6-d8; Cooper 535-36. M. LévyStone points to this passage, though without exploiting it fully. David LévyStone, “La figure d’Ulysse chez les Socratiques : Socrate *polutropos*,” *Phronesis* 50 (2005), 210.

the *Republic* it is Socrates as Odysseus who will address if not resolve the problem of poetry's danger.

In the *Republic*, the groundwork for discussing “the ancient quarrel” came in the first lines of Book 6, Socrates asserts that “both the philosophers and nonphilosophers have revealed who they are” (“οἱ μὲν φιλόσοφοι, . . . , καὶ οἱ μὴ”).<sup>34</sup> Book 6 is, of course, on the way to the climax of the Divided Line (509d3-511c1) where Socrates establishes images as the lowest order of being, and images are the stuff of poetry. Those who are not philosophers are “lovers of opinion” in distinction to “lovers of wisdom who greet with delight that which truly exists,”<sup>35</sup> by which Socrates seems to mean the Forms themselves because those who love only opinion are those who “saw and loved beautiful sounds and colors and the like but wouldn't allow the beautiful itself to be anything (αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ καλὸν οὐδ' ἀνέχεσθαι ὡς τι ὄν).”<sup>36</sup> The case seems open and shut: those who are concerned with what will be placed on the fourth level of reality—mere images—are not philosophers.

The philosopher knows that-which-is rather than merely that-which-seems-to-be. This suggests a possible explanation for why when Socrates names “the ancient quarrel” he only quotes some traditional sayings (discussed above) as his evidence,<sup>37</sup> thus giving definitive expression to a “quarrel” as old as Man. Everybody on the street knows the quarrel; he just does not know how to name it. There is a part of us—the part which

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<sup>34</sup> R. 6.484a1-3; Cooper 1107.

<sup>35</sup> Τοὺς αὐτὸ ἄρα ἕκαστον τὸ ὄν ἀσπαζομένους φιλοσόφους ἀλλ' οὐ φιλοδόξους κλητέον; R. 5.480a11-12.

<sup>36</sup> R. 5.480a2-4; Cooper 1107.

<sup>37</sup> R. 10.607b5-c3; Cooper 1211.

responds to poetry— that keeps trumping our best part, namely reason’s apprehension of that-which-is. The verdict appears final: Homer was a poet, not a philosopher. Not only was Homer not a philosopher but he endangered the entire philosophical project by making likenesses, so far removed from true reality, *seem* more beautiful than Forms, mathematical and even things.<sup>38</sup> The case against Homer seems closed, but *is* it? Other testimony comes into consideration.

### **b. Poetry and Myth**

In the Homeric canon are fused two elements which would later be regarded as, at least, possibly distinct from each other: poetry and myth. Following the development of Greek culture from Homer to Aristotle, one sees that poetry and mythology are variously coupled and decoupled. Both Plato and Aristotle held that mythology has a potentially philosophical character in ways that poetry does not. Whether Aristotle was correct when he opined that Empedocles’ poetry was an accident to his philosophy needs to be examined. By contrast, when Parmenides wrote mythologically that was not an accident to his philosophy. In the *Republic*, it is clear that even when Socrates challenges both the poetry and the mythology of Homer, he repudiates poetry as a medium but only says that Homer gave the world unedifying myths. Myth remains available as a tool possibly useful to philosophy in a way that poetry does not. At the end of the *Republic*, Socrates shows the way to a better kind

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<sup>38</sup> The rejection of poetry as a tool by which to do philosophy is consistent not only in the *Republic*, but also in the dialogues proleptic to it. Discussion below of *Ion* and *Hippias minor* supports this view. An examination of *Prt.* 347b-348a yields the same result. Professor Kahn makes a nice distinction here between the historical Socrates and Plato’s Socrates, “Whatever Socrates’ own practice may have been – and that we do not know – Plato is adamantly opposed to the use of poetic interpretation as a mode of doing philosophy. That opposition is most fully expressed in the *Protagoras* passage quoted above (347a-348b), but it is clearly implied not only in the *Ion* but also in the *Hippias Minor*.” Kahn, *Plato*, 123-24.



of mythology with his myth of Er told in prose.<sup>39</sup> Why is it that Plato repudiates poetry for the philosophical enterprise and that Aristotle regards it as accidental?

Professor Marshall McLuhan offers an insight which applies here:

In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.<sup>40</sup>

Professor McLuhan wrote those words in response to the advent of new technology in the twentieth century. They are equally pertinent to an old technology. Poetry is a technology.

Aristotle is helpful on this point since he refers to the τέχναι of poetry: epic, tragedy, comedy and dithyramb.<sup>41</sup> His *Poetics* is, partly, an analysis of the various technologies of poetry. The differences amongst the various poetic technologies, specifically the different kinds of mimesis, must be appropriate to the different objects.<sup>42</sup> For Aristotle that

Empedocles wrote in hexameter was not appropriate because he was a φυσιολόγος, one who

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<sup>39</sup> “It isn’t, however, a tale of Alcinous that I’ll tell you but that of a brave Pamphylian man, called Er, the son of Armenias, who once died in a war” R. 10.614b2-4; Cooper 1218. “The Myth of Er” then lasts to the end of the *Republic*, seven Stephanus pages. Professor Vorwerk observes that Plato uses myth to guess at or point toward truth beyond the boundary of rational argument, “Der Mythos setzt demnach dort ein, wo logische Argumentation und wissenschaftliche Aussagen nicht mehr möglich sind und nur noch das Wahrscheinliche erschlossen werden kann.” Matthias Vorwerk, “Mythos und Kosmos,” *Philologus* 146 no. 1 (2002), 50.

<sup>40</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 1995), 7. Along these same lines, Professor Most observes, “If it is a truism, proven most incontrovertibly by these four figures [Xenophanes, Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Empedocles], that there is no ancient (or even modern) philosopher whose discursive form can safely be neglected if his thought is entirely to be understood, all the same it is particularly true in the case of the early Greek thinkers as a group that no account of their philosophy that considers only the structure of their arguments, and not also the form in which they chose to communicate those arguments to their public, can be considered fully satisfactory.” Most, “Poetics,” 335.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle *Poetics* 1447a.21, 13-14.

<sup>42</sup> *Poet.* 1448a.8-18.

seeks to understand the structure of nature, not a ποιητής, one who makes according to a given technology, as Homer was.<sup>43</sup> What does not seem to occur to Aristotle is that the choice by Empedocles—or Xenophanes and Parmenides, for that matter—to write in hexameter was to make a point by the choice of poetic technology.<sup>44</sup>

If “the medium is the message,” then what was the message of the choice made by Empedocles, Xenophanes and Parmenides to use the poetic medium?

Giambattista Vico observes, “Now the sources of poetic locution are two: poverty of language and need to explain and to be understood.”<sup>45</sup> Vico explains that the kinds of poetry correspond to the ages: divine, heroic and purely human. Divine poetry has its expressions in “mute signs” (e.g., hieroglyphs, totems, the paintings of Lascaux); heroic poetry has its expression in epic (e.g., *Iliad* and *Odyssey*); human poetry has its expression in iambic verse yielding eventually to prose. In alphabetical language heroic poetry approximates most nearly to the divine, “Heroic speech followed immediately on the mute languages of acts and objects that had natural relations to the ideas they were meant to signify, which was used in the divine times.”<sup>46</sup> When a Greek writer, whose genre would typically call for prose, chooses to write in hexameter, he claims for his writing the same heroic and nearly

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<sup>43</sup> *Poet.* 1447b.17-19.

<sup>44</sup> The consideration of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Empedocles together here is in no way suggested by Aristotle himself. In fact, it is likely that he distinguished, at least, between the poetry of Xenophanes and Empedocles, based upon another comment in the *Poetics*. After discussing the views of Sophocles and Euripides, Aristotle says, “The tales about the Gods, for instance, may be as wrong as Xenophanes thinks, neither true nor the better thing to say; but they are certainly in accordance with opinion.” *Poet.* 1460b34-1461a1; Barnes 2338. In the *Metaphysics*, by contrast, Aristotle quotes Democritus, Empedocles, Parmenides and Homer on the “knowledge of sensation” and “thought” (*Metaph.* 4.1009b10-31), suggesting that epic poet and student of nature may alike comment on such matters.

<sup>45</sup> *NS* 22.

<sup>46</sup> *NS* 22.

divine character as the epics possessed. When Xenophanes, Parmenides and Empedocles wrote in hexameter they invoked the same authority as was attributed to Homer.

The case of Xenophanes is of particular interest. He was a poet of his time indicated by his choice of the latest poetic technology (i.e., elegy).<sup>47</sup> Xenophanes was also an innovative thinker. What is puzzling and revolutionary is that he uses the most traditional poetic technology for his most innovative declarations. Messrs. Kirk, Raven, Scofield observe that “the extant theological and physical fragments are nearly all in hexameters.”<sup>48</sup> Not in content only are those fragments revolutionary. Xenophanes tips his hand through the use he makes of hexameter itself. Professor Leshner points to this convergence, “But in his series of satires or *silloi* (fragments 10-22), . . . he explores new territory, attacking many conventional religious ideas and offering physical explanations for phenomena rich in religious or spiritual importance.”<sup>49</sup> His intentional incongruity is poignant: through the use of hexameters, the traditional poetic technology, Xenophanes claims for his innovations

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<sup>47</sup> “In his elegiac poems (fragments 1-9), Xenophanes touches on topics characteristic of the poetry of his time.” J H. Leshner, *Xenophanes of Colophon. Fragments: a Text and Translation with Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>48</sup> KRS 167. Professor Jaeger’s analysis produces a slightly different result, though his analysis is still approximately consistent with the conclusions in the present work. “But the personal character of Xenophanes’ work is most clearly revealed in his invention of a new type of poetry—the *silloi*. These poems were satirical in character. Although they were generally written in elegiac distichs, I am convinced that they sometimes took the form of pure hexameters such as we find in Xenophanes’ later imitator Timon, . . .” Jaeger, “Xenophanes,” 39. What is needed here is a detailed analysis of Xenophanes’s fragments in respect to meter.

<sup>49</sup> Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 4. Professor Jaeger pretends to see too much into the intentions of Xenophanes, but his analysis is consistent with the literary evidence, “While the pioneer thinkers of the new philosophy had not marshaled their discoveries polemically, Xenophanes made the world of myth a focal point for his opposition. It was not unreasonable that he, the poet, should be the one to see in this situation implications which spelled disaster for all previous poetry. It seemed to him self-evident that the poet is the one real educator of the people, and his work the only genuinely responsible authority of *paideia*. And so it was with Xenophanes that the work of deliberately transfusing the new philosophical ideas into the intellectual blood-stream of Greece began. Jaeger, “Xenophanes,” 42.

equal authority with Homer. By writing in verse Xenophanes showed that he understood poetry to be the medium of teaching the Greeks. Homer could not be eliminated; he had to be replaced. The immoral mythology, on Xenophanes' account, transmitted by Homer (and Hesiod) had to be replaced with a new mythology: εὐφήμοις μύθοις καὶ καθαροῖσι λόγοις.<sup>50</sup> Xenophanes took the first step toward a rational mythology which Plato would announce as a program in the *Republic*.

Though one sees Aristotle's point about the incidental character of Empedocles' verse,<sup>51</sup> and even if one concurs with Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Scofield that Empedocles wrote in hexameter following the example of Parmenides and Hesiod,<sup>52</sup> the question of why he did so remains. The answer is that the weight of tradition very strongly demanded the use of both mythology and hexameter when explaining the world. Another way of putting this is to say that by the time of Aristotle the poetry of Empedocles may have been an accident of his philosophy, but at the time of Empedocles himself his philosophy inhered in the substance of his poetry. That is equally true for Parmenides and Xenophanes though Professor Most identifies two different motives for Parmenides and Empedocles, on the one hand, and of Xenophanes, on the other. For Xenophanes, the motive was reception. He

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<sup>50</sup> Xenophanes, B1.9 D.-K.

<sup>51</sup> *Poet.* 1.1447b17-19; Barnes, 2, 2316.

<sup>52</sup> "Empedocles' decision to write in hexameter verse is more easily explained than Parmenides'. In the first place he was (in Theophrastus' words, 355) an emulator of Parmenides. . . . Secondly . . . *Purifications* . . . is naturally suited to an epic treatment in the manner of Hesiod, to whom Empedocles is here heavily indebted." KRS, 283.

ensured for his thought “a larger public audience” than he could by using “that new-fangled object, the book.”<sup>53</sup> For Parmenides and Empedocles, the motive was authority:

In Parmenides and Empedocles the choice of poetic form seems designed to resolve a crucial philosophical problem: given that all human beings are subject to the delusion of appearance, how can the philosopher know the truth of what he claims to know? For them, only a god could possibly be the source of a set of transcendent truths to which a mere mortal, if left to his own devices, would have had no access.<sup>54</sup>

Wider reception is not merely a function of accessibility, but also of authority. Thus at a certain level, Professor Most’s two motives can be reduced to one. Xenophanes as well as Parmenides and Empedocles claimed the mantle of authority, if implicitly in contrast to the explicit claims of the later thinkers. The student of Early and Classical Greek philosophy notes various approaches to tradition’s demands. Xenophanes wrote in verse, but anti-mythologically. Parmenides wrote a rational myth in verse. Empedocles wrote rational non-myth in verse. Plato wrote myths in prose. Aristotle wrote neither myth nor verse, at least none when he was philosophizing. The overall movement is from philosophy’s uneasy conjunction with poetic mythology to the complete disjunction effected by Aristotle. With respect to medium, which is to say the mode of writing, that Plato may have regarded Homer as a philosopher is, at least, arguable; that Aristotle thought so, plainly is not.

Recalling again Professor McLuhan’s more universal observation, “the medium is the message,”<sup>55</sup> one sees that the choice of poetic medium by Xenophanes, Parmenides, and

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<sup>53</sup> Most, “Poetics,” 352.

<sup>54</sup> Most, “Poetics,” 353.

<sup>55</sup> McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 7.

Empedocles is inextricable from their messages. It will now be argued that the choice of medium is also true of Plato, a choice upon which he reflects in the *Republic*.

As has been discussed, until Plato, philosophy could be written in prose or poetry. If it was written in poetry, then it could be written mythologically (e.g., Parmenides) or not (e.g., Xenophanes) or even in a hybrid of the two in which cosmic forces exist independent of divine personification (e.g., Empedocles). Such was the array of models from which Plato might choose. In *Republic* 3.392c3-398b5, when Socrates has satisfied himself that he has treated the content of the Homeric poems adequately, he turns to the question of style, “For we’ll then have fully investigated both what should be said and how it should be said.”<sup>56</sup> Explicitly, Socrates discusses Homer, but because he is seeking to find the correct medium for the expression of philosophy he is also implicitly reflecting upon the technologies employed by various thinkers until his day. While discussing Homer, he is effectively sorting through the media choices of thinkers, whether strictly philosophers or not. To that end, he makes the following distinctions:

1. stories are about that which has been, is and will be (392d1);
2. the narratives are either:
  - a. “narrative alone”
  - b. “narrative through imitation”
  - c. “both” (392d2-3).

Socrates then explains what he means by using illustrations from early scenes in the *Iliad* (393a1-394b3). This is literary analysis which Socrates can then apply to different kinds of

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<sup>56</sup> R. 3.392c7-8; Cooper 1030.

writing. “Narrative alone” are the words of the omniscient narrator when “the poet himself is speaking and doesn’t attempt to get us to think that the speaker is someone other than himself” (393a3). Into this narration Homer inserts speeches which are imitations of the characters themselves (393b5-c1).

Socrates gives examples of how the Homeric epics might read if there were no imitative speeches, rather narrative only. He says that the imitative speeches are the poet hiding himself (393c11-394b1). If, on the other hand, there were only the imitative speeches without narration, then one would have the kind of discourse one finds in plays, both tragic and comic. Dithyrambs have only narration. Epic poetry has both imitative speeches and narration (394b9-c3). Socrates now raises the question of whether imitation will be permitted in the city he is envisioning (394d1-4). The first objection is that no one can be good at more than one kind of imitation (394e8-9). A person may only imitate one kind of thing and that beneficial to the city (394e1-6). There is one kind of imitation that befits the honorable and other kinds which are forbidden them (396b10-c3). Now comes the part of Socrates’ speech that bears most upon the present discussion:

[Socrates]: Well, I think that when a moderate man (μέτριος ἀνὴρ) comes upon the words or actions of a good man (ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ) in his narrative, he’ll be willing to report them as if he were that man himself, and he won’t be ashamed of that kind of imitation. He’ll imitate this good man most when he’s acting in a faultless and intelligent manner, but he’ll do so less, and with more reluctance, when the good man is upset by disease, sexual passion, drunkenness, or some other misfortune.<sup>57</sup>

While he will imitate the good man in his unhealthy states (e.g., “upset by disease, sexual passion, drunkenness, or some other misfortune,” 394d2), he will refuse to imitate the lesser

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<sup>57</sup> R. 3. 396c5-d3; Cooper 1034.

sort except when he is doing something worthy at that moment. There is one exception, however; the moderate man might playfully imitate the base chap (394c2-e1).

By contrast, the baser a chap is, the more kinds of imitation he will engage in (397a1-b1). Implicit here is a rejection of theatre in which all manner of imitation is performed. Plato then gives Adeimantus the line that in the proposed city the only imitation permitted shall be unalloyed imitation of the “meet” (ἐπιεικής) man (397d4). Socrates provides the rationale. This has to do not only with literature, but also with the division of labor in the city: the cobbler must not also serve as a soldier, nor the juror as a farmer (397e4-8). As Professor Kahn observes, the rejection of poetry arises from its failure to be truly a τέχνη.<sup>58</sup> A true technology must be good for some one activity, what Professor Kahn calls “the principle of a one-to-one mapping between *technē* and subject matter.”<sup>59</sup> The “one-to-one mapping,” to borrow Professor Kahn’s term, of poetry is to deceive. Τέχνη is ordered to some specific kind of work which serves and benefits the city. Poetry is ordered to a kind of unwork which disorders and even destroys the city. This is the great insight of Nietzsche within his assault on Plato:

*Art . . . in which lying is sanctified and the will for deception has good conscience on its side, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science: Plato’s instinct felt this—Plato, the greatest enemy of art which Europe has produced up to the present. Plato versus Homer, that is the complete, the true antagonism—on the one side the wholehearted ‘transcendental,’ the great defamer of life; on the other, its involuntary panegyrist, the golden nature.<sup>60</sup>*

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<sup>58</sup> He discusses this development in relation to the *Ion*, but also argues that it is consistently implicit in Plato’s works. Kahn, *Plato*, 104-10.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>60</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Horace B. Samuel, in *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*, ed. Willard Huntington Wright (New York: Modern Library, 1927), 3.25, 783.



Explicitly, Socrates is talking about the Homeric epics in 392c3-398b5. Homer imitates every kind of man. It is not just that there are base characters, but even varieties of base characters. Polyphemus, the suitors, and the goatherd represent just three kinds of baseness. There is also the imitation of all manner of phenomena. It is as if the reader can feel the salty waves washing over him as the ship of Odysseus sails through Scylla and Charybdis. He can almost hear the Sirens' call. "The rosy-fingered dawn" is vivid before his eyes as he reads by electric light.<sup>61</sup> The rhapsodes make matters worse by imitating the imitations, adding another layer of least-realness to the poems. Socrates engages the dramatists more obliquely, but their art forms, comedy and tragedy (394c2), and their dramatic effects are named (397a1-b2). Not until the end of Book 7 does Socrates provide the philosophical undergirding for this rejection of most poetry and theatre in his exposition of the Divided Line (509d3-511e2). Imitation is the lowest level of reality engaging the lowest rational faculty, the imagination (511d5). Poets are, by definition, liars. They are all the more guilty for making the whoredom of deception *seem* beautiful. As Socrates explains why poets must be driven from the city, he is working toward this line, "Both the philosophers and nonphilosophers have revealed who they are."<sup>62</sup>

Socrates states carefully the importance of reverentially rejecting all rhapsodes and making way only for "a more austere and less pleasure-giving poet and storyteller, one

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<sup>61</sup> "[Socrates] Will they [the guardians] imitate neighing horses, bellowing bulls, roaring rivers, the crashing sea, thunder, or anything of that sort? [Adeimantus] They are forbidden to be mad or to imitate mad people." R. 3.396b5-9; Cooper 1033. This is an interesting exchange because, strictly speaking, the reply of Adeimantus is a non-sequitur. The implication seems to be that that anyone who would engage in that kind of imitation necessarily "is mad (μαίνεσθαι)."

<sup>62</sup> R. 6.484a1-3; Cooper 1107.

who would imitate the speech of a decent person” (398b1-2). Socrates repeats the word just used by Adeimantus, “meet” (ἐπιεικής). Who is this “pure imitator” and who is the “decent person?”<sup>63</sup> This is Socrates of the *Republic* describing Plato creating Socrates of the *Republic*. Plato does not pretend to imitate the historical Socrates, rather only insofar as Socrates “is acting in a faultless and intelligent manner.”<sup>64</sup>

What Socrates praises is an adaptation of the Homeric method, “He’ll therefore use the kind of narrative we described in dealing with the Homeric epics a moment ago.”<sup>65</sup> After all the explicit criticism of Homer, Socrates now says that with a few alterations it is Homer’s style of writing which is best. This correct style is narrative mixed with imitation (which is to say, direct discourse), but only of the meet man. It is striking how close this analysis of Homeric style comes to describing the method which Plato himself employs, the Socratic dialogue. First, Plato eliminates nearly all the imitation of poetry. Second, he writes dialogues which are an admixture of narrative and imitation. Third, the one consistent protagonist in his dialogues is Socrates whom Plato considered meet. Fourth, Socrates is nearly always “acting in a faultless and intelligent manner” (396c5), though he does show Socrates imitating base characters “in play” (396e1), which is to say when he is mocking them.

The conclusion is that in 392c3-398b5, Socrates praises exactly the method used by Plato in his writing of the *Republic* and other dialogues. Plato has adopted and adapted the

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<sup>63</sup> R. 3.397d4-5; Cooper 1034. In Cooper, “ἐπιεικής” is translated “decent.”

<sup>64</sup> R. 3.396d1; Cooper 1034.

<sup>65</sup> R. 3.396e4-8; Cooper 1034.

Homeric method to the writing of philosophy. Professor Bloom comes very near to this point in his commentary, “What is needed is a form of poetry which is not compelled to make what is not truly highest appear to be highest. Ultimately the Platonic dialogue with its hero, Socrates, is that form.”<sup>66</sup> Given the repeated and extensive critique that Socrates of the *Republic* launches against Homer and specifically against the imitative quality of Homer’s poetry, the possibility of Plato imitating Homer is startling. Socrates has said that in imitative speech, the poet hides himself whereas in narrative he is speaking in his own voice. As has been noted at the beginning of this chapter, one of the chief differences between Homer and Plato is that Plato never speaks in his own voice. Further, in the *Republic*, there is no narrator outside the dialogue. It is Socrates himself who does the little narrating required. Thus, the *Republic* is entirely imitation, even the narration, of the “meet” man, Socrates. The clue to this may be Socrates’ introduction to the myth of Er, when he says that it is not “a tale of Alcinous.”<sup>67</sup> In *Odyssey* 9-12, Odysseus recounts his own tale, speaking in his own voice both as narrator and protagonist as well as speaking in the voices of his many interlocutors during his adventures. The same can be said of Socrates in the *Republic*. Plato is an Homeric writer.

From the array of possibilities for the writing of philosophy, Plato has made some choices. While he has rejected poetry *per se*, he has embraced a chaste form of imitation: the

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<sup>66</sup> Bloom, “*Republic*”, 360. Again, Professor Bloom comments, “It is not, then, that poetry must be entirely banished but that it must be reformed. Book X begins with a criticism of Homeric poetry and ends with an example of Socratic poetry.” *Ibid.*, 427. On this point, Professor Segal observes, “In recasting this epic comprehensiveness into philosophical form, Plato is also highly conscious of altering the medium as well as the content.” Segal, Charles. “‘The Myth Was Saved’: Reflections on Homer and the Mythology of Plato’s *Republic*,” *Hermes* 106, no. 2 (1978), 325.

<sup>67</sup> *R.* 10.614b2; Cooper 1218.

moderate man creates an imitation of the good and meet man, Socrates. Though Plato rejects poetry as a medium for philosophy, he readily makes use of mythology. In fact, it is Plato's fabrication of myth which gave birth to the term, "the noble lie." There are irresolvable dilemmas as long as a strictly historical discourse is employed. Professor Bloom, in his interpretation of 412b-416d, writes, "The only remedy that Socrates can find is a great lie—the noble lie."<sup>68</sup> The lie is layered, since—to begin with—it is not Socrates who finds the lie, rather Plato the writer who finds the lie for his character, Socrates of the *Republic*. What is the difference between the profligate deception of poetry and the nobility of a lying myth? Any answer to that question must be inferential, but there is, at least, one answer which is obvious even if not entirely unproblematic. With respect to the Divided Line, poetry is ordered to images, lowest in reality. As has been discussed at length, the whoredom of poetry is to make *seeming* so beautiful that even rational persons are seduced away from beholding that-which-is. Myth, however, is ordered to the divine, and on Plato's account, therefore, that which is immaterial and highest in reality and because highest in reality, therefore, most beautiful, namely the Forms. Because the Forms are purely intelligible, they cannot rightly be spoken of in any language ordered to historical accuracy. That would be to tie down the Forms to things, only second from bottom in order of reality. Another kind of language is necessary in which it is obvious no historical claim is made thus leaving the language open for the possibility of disclosing non-historical truth. It is for this reason, as Professor Bloom observes, that "the poets are the authentic, the only teachers about the

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<sup>68</sup> Bloom, "*Republic*", 365.

gods.”<sup>69</sup> To eliminate poetry altogether would equally eliminate all discourse about the divine. The new, rational myth, the noble lie, is necessary to replace the old poetic mythology for the purpose of speaking truly about the divine.

Socrates of the *Republic* has laid the foundation for this move in his analysis of lying in Book 2. While a genuine lie “is equally hated by all gods and humans,”<sup>70</sup> there are other kinds of lies which seem to be falsehoods and, indeed, in some sense are falsehoods, but which are either necessitated by circumstance (e.g., when a person in a psychotic state asks if you have called the police to take him away, or when a child asks if it is going to hurt when the doctor puts in the stitches) or by the incommensurable character of some higher truth.<sup>71</sup> A genuine lie is a statement which is not merely superficially false, but which is soulfully false (i.e., when my soul through by words is lying to your soul).<sup>72</sup> In this latter case, the words convey a falsehood from the center of human being, while in the former case, the words though literally false convey a truth to your soul (e.g., I have called the police to take you away, or I have taken you to the pediatrician, because I profoundly care for your health, and—more—I love you). There remains then the lie which is told because we do not have either the experience or the vocabulary to speak definitively about that of which we speak. There is, on the account of the *Republic*’s Socrates, a lesser nobility but nobility nevertheless in the superficial falsehood to one’s psychotic friend or wounded child,

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 428.

<sup>70</sup> R. 2.382a4-5; Cooper 1020.

<sup>71</sup> R. 2.382c6-d3.

<sup>72</sup> R. 2.382b1-5.

but the noblest of lies will be told in reaching toward that truth totally beyond our reach, namely the purest apprehension of that-which is.<sup>73</sup>

Anyone who has tried to teach Plato's doctrine of Forms has encountered the difficulty of explaining that there are extra-mental and purely intelligible realities which are more real than the sensible things of everyday life. One resorts to expressions like "Form-heaven," quickly followed by the disclaimer that makes it seem there is a place where Forms are, but since they are purely intelligible there is no "place" for them since only sensible realities can be in a "place." It is this quandary which leads Plato to use myth, but with a striking distinction from myth as retold by Homer or Hesiod. Homeric myth claims or seems to claim historical accuracy. Professor Most draws attention to this point, "We ourselves may justly admire the evident imaginative originality and inventiveness of early Greek epic poetry; but, for their part, Homer and Hesiod claim that, on the contrary, the only validation of their poetry is that it tells the truth, conforming veridically to a real past or present state of affairs."<sup>74</sup> That is exactly the kind of claim that Socrates never makes for the myths he spins. The reader does not project that kind of claim onto Platonic myth. Classicists, archeologists, and television crews continue to search for Troy in a way that no one searches for Er. For Plato, mythological discourse can be used to tell the truth not as "a real past or present state

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<sup>73</sup> This discussion was suggested by Professor Vorwerk. Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, December 18, 2008. Professor Schofield's discussion of this passage differs somewhat from the reading here. He does not seem to recognize the lower order noble lie (e.g., to the psychotic friend or the wounded child). He also implies a minimalist understanding when he translates ψυχή as "state of mind" (R. 2.382b2). Socrates is discussing the most essential character of the human being in this context, not something as ephemeral as a state of mind. Malcolm Schofield, "The Noble Lie" in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's "Republic"*, ed. by G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 144-45. On a somewhat different point, Socrates of the *Republic* seems to provide a warrant for the esoteric reading of Plato when he suggests another reason for telling of a superficial lie is as defense against one's enemies. R. 2.382c6-8.

<sup>74</sup> Most, "Poetics," 342-43.

of affairs,” rather about that-which-is, truth purely intelligible. In a word, poetry is the spinning of a fabulous veil of seeming which disguises or obscures that-which-is. Myth—at its best—draws back the veil in order to allow the well-exercised rational soul to behold that-which-is as both soul and Forms are illuminated by the Good.<sup>75</sup> If this reading of Plato be right, the travesty of Homer is that poetry makes a strumpet out of what has the capacity to disclose Being in all its beauty and truth. Plato gives us a Socrates who wrests myth from its captivity to poetry. Plato as an author has resolved “the ancient quarrel.” He rejected poetry categorically while explicitly modeling himself as an Homeric writer in his chaste use of imitation and myth for the writing of philosophy. Thus, as Socrates observes to Glaucon in the final lines of the *Republic*, “Myth has been saved.”<sup>76</sup>

That is the state of affairs as the *Republic* closes, but at the end of his life, Plato seems to have made a kind of peace between poetry and philosophy, even a kind of peace with Homer himself. Homer appears there as the exemplary educator of the Greeks. “Education,” the Stranger says, “is in our view just about the most important activity of all.”<sup>77</sup> He then summarizes his previous discussions on learning the right songs and dances

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<sup>75</sup> R. 6.507e6-509d4.

<sup>76</sup> This is the translation rendered by Professor Segal. Segal, “Myth Was Saved,” 329. In the Cooper edition, μῦθος is translated “story”, “And so, Glaucon, his story wasn’t lost but preserved (Καὶ οὕτως, ὃ Γλαύκων, μῦθος ἐσώθη καὶ οὐκ ἀπώλετο).” R. 10.621b8; Cooper 1223. Professor Vorwerk’s reading agrees with that of Professor Segal, “Gleichwohl ist der Bericht des Er ein Mythos, wie Sokrates selbst zum Schluß sagt (621b8).” Vorwerk, “Mythos und Kosmos,” 49. Professor Bloom translates the line, “a tale was saved and not lost.” It is possible that Plato intended ambiguity here, playing on the dual meaning of “μῦθος.” Thus by creating a new kind of myth, he has rescued the form of myth. Had he wanted to be unambiguous, he could have used “ἀπόλογος,” as he does at the outset of his story (614b2). Professor Halliwell calls “Er’s soul journey . . . a *muthos* (as Socrates himself calls it, 621b).” Stephen Halliwell, “The Life-and-Death Journey of the Soul: Myth of Er,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s “Republic”*, ed. by G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 447. In any event, the tale Socrates tells is commonly called not the “tale” or “story,” rather “the *myth* of Er.”

as a means of forming citizens who will perform both their civic and military duty. The antecedent for the personal pronouns in this passage seems to be “the human being” (ἄνθρωπος).<sup>78</sup> This is citizenship in the broadest sense: every human living in the city, male and female alike as becomes clear in a subsequent speech.<sup>79</sup> As authority for his view of education’s central place in human life, the Stranger quotes Homer, referring to him as “the poet”:

He must go on his way, confident that the poet’s words are true.

Some things, Telemachus, your native wit will tell you.  
And Heaven will prompt the rest. The very gods, I’m sure,  
Have smiled upon your birth and helped to bring you up.<sup>80</sup>

This is a quotation of the *Odyssey* 3.26-28,<sup>81</sup> where Athena in the guise of Mentor is speaking to Telemachus. This is a citation of Homer which is not only entirely positive, but actually refers to these lines from the *Odyssey* as a paradigmatic statement of education’s nature. There is another passage a few pages later where the Stranger seems to bring “the ancient quarrel” to a close.<sup>82</sup> The Stranger reflects over the day’s journey and conversation in a way that tempts the reader to wonder if this comes very close to Plato speaking of

<sup>77</sup> L. 7.803d6-7; Cooper 1472.

<sup>78</sup> L. 7.803c4.

<sup>79</sup> “We are not going to withdraw our recommendation that so far as possible, in education and everything else, the female sex should be on the same footing as the male.” L. 7.805c6-d1; Cooper 1473. The Stranger goes on to allow for some differences, most significantly that women are not to engage in military service. L. 7.806a6-7; Cooper 1474.

<sup>80</sup> L. 7.803e5-804a3; Cooper 1472.

<sup>81</sup> Cooper 1472 n13.

<sup>82</sup> Benardete, *Plato’s “Laws”: The Discovery of Being* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 215.



himself and the work of his lifetime. Clinias has asked for “the model work that enable him [the Guardian of the Laws] to decide what material all the children may learn.”<sup>83</sup> The

Stranger answers him:

I haven't got far to look for a model. You see, when I look back over this discussion of ours, which has lasted from dawn up till this very moment—a discussion in which I think I sense the inspiration of heaven—well, it's come to look, to my eyes, just like a literary composition. Perhaps not surprisingly, I was overcome by a feeling of immense satisfaction at the sight of all 'my collected works' so to speak, because of all the addresses I have ever learned or listened to, whether in verse or in this kind of free prose style I've been using, it's *these* that have impressed me as being the most eminently acceptable and the most entirely appropriate for the ears of the younger generation. So I could hardly commend a better model than this to the Guardian of the Laws in charge of education. Here's what he must tell the teachers to teach the children, and if he comes across similar or related material while working through prose writings, or the verse of poets, or when listening to unwritten compositions in simple prose that show a family resemblance to our discussion today, he must on no account let it slip through his fingers, but have them committed to writing.<sup>84</sup>

Even if one reads this passage literally and, therefore, only referring to the *Laws*, one sees clearly that Plato is making a joke when he says the discussion looks “just like a literary composition.” Professor Benardete translates this phrase more literally which underlines the degree to which the Stranger is settling “the ancient quarrel,” “The Stranger is very pleased when he glances back at his own speeches all collected since dawn, for they suit the bill and have been spoken ‘in a manner absolutely like a kind of poetry’ (811c7-d5).”<sup>85</sup> Once it is acknowledged that Plato the author jokes with his reader through the voice of the Stranger, the possibility emerges that “this discussion” refers not only to the *Laws*, but to the entire

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<sup>83</sup> L. 7.811b8-c1; Cooper 1478.

<sup>84</sup> L. 7.811c6-e5; Cooper 1478-79.

<sup>85</sup> Benardete, “*Laws*,” 215.

corpus of Plato's work, the long day of his life. Whether referring to the *Laws* only or to the Platonic corpus, the Stranger places the work alongside "the verse of poets." This comity of authors is not, however, absolute. When the tragedians ask for admission to the city, the Stranger proposes this response, "First of all show your songs to the authorities for comparison with ours, and if your doctrines seem the same as or better than our own, we'll let you produce your plays; but if not, friends, that we can never do."<sup>86</sup> This, in general, is consistent with the criteria set forth by Socrates of the *Republic* for readmission of Homer and other poets.<sup>87</sup> Poets may be prohibited from entering the city, but the prohibition is particular and not categorical. With that qualification, it can be said that the works of Plato and Homer together guide the Guardian of the Laws as he educates the youth of the city.

### c. Socrates of the *Republic* v. Homer

There remains, however, the fact of the charges which Socrates of the *Republic* aims at Homer. What are they? Socrates summarizes much of his indictment against Homer in Books 2, 3, and 10, especially 10.595b9- 608b2. 1) Homer is not fit reading for young people. Reading the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* makes them less likely to show courage in the face of battle because they will fear death<sup>88</sup> and, further, encourage them "to do bad

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<sup>86</sup> L. 7.817d4-8; Cooper 1484.

<sup>87</sup> "If the poetry that aims at pleasure and imitation has any argument to bring forward that proves it ought to have a place in a well-governed city, we at least would be glad to admit it." R. 10.607c3-6; Cooper 1211.

<sup>88</sup> "Then we must supervise such stories and those who tell them, and ask them not to disparage the life in Hades in this unconditional way, but rather to praise it, since what they now say is neither true nor beneficial to future warriors." R. 3.386b8-c1; Cooper 1022.

things.”<sup>89</sup> 2) There was no Homeric way of life. This charge has been partially considered in the discussion of *Republic* 10.600a4-7, c4-6 above. 3) In relation to the principles set forth in the Divided Line, Homer presents images which are “third from the truth,”<sup>90</sup> the lowest form of reality. 4) While images are of the lowest form of reality, they are still something of reality, but Homer compounds this failing by presenting false images, thus even accuracy is lacking in the representations of reality at the lowest form. This charge applies especially to Homeric depiction of the gods.<sup>91</sup> For Socrates of the *Republic*, philosophy is metaphysics, the science of being. Homer’s representation of gods in flux is to reduce being to becoming.<sup>92</sup> 5) The most explicitly damning charge against Homer, however, is that he

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<sup>89</sup> “For that reason, we must put a stop to such stories, lest they produce in the young a strong inclination to do bad things.” *R.* 3.391e12-392a1; Cooper 1029. Plato seems to prepare for this point at the end of the *Ion* when he challenges Ion to employ the expertise he has learned as an Homeric rhapsode in service of his country. *Ion* 540e7-541e1. Professor Bloom makes his comments based upon the Peloponnesian Wars as backdrop to the dialogue (presumably because Ion says “Neither your city nor Sparta would choose me for a general,” which is followed by Socrates’ naming three foreigners whom Athens had appointed generals (*Ion* 541c3-d2; Cooper 949)), “His [Ion’s] poetry provides the gods which Athenians and Spartans invoke as guarantors of their causes when they march out to slay one another.” Allan Bloom, “An Interpretation of Plato’s *Ion*,” in *Giants and Dwarves* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 160. Even if Professor Bloom is correct in his analysis, that still does not explain away the fact that from the time of Pisistratus, the Homeric epics provided the authoritative basis for Greek unity. In his commentary on *R.* 3.386a-392c, he opines, “Now, it is perfectly obvious that Achilles, although he believed that Hades was a dreadful place, was still able to be courageous. Socrates cannot seriously mean that the view of Hades presented by Homer necessarily makes a man a coward.” Bloom, “*Republic*,” 354. What Professor Bloom does not allow for is the change in historical circumstances from the time that Socrates lived to the time Plato wrote about Socrates, a point that shall be argued below.

<sup>90</sup> *R.* 10.602c1-2; Cooper 1206. It needs to be noted that in the Divided Line, there are four levels of reality: Forms, mathematical objects, things, and images (*R.* 6.509d6-511c2). In *R.* 10.597b5-7, there are only three levels of reality: the Form of the bed, the bed built by a carpenter, and the bed painted by a painter. Missing is the level of mathematical objects. The fourth and lowest in *R.* 6.509d6-511c2 is third and lowest in *R.* 10.597b5-7. Professor Jessica Moss puzzles over “Plato’s argument against poetry” at some length, apparently without ever seeing the relationship of the three levels of reality in Book 10, just discussed, and the Divided Line. Jessica Moss, “What is Imitative Poetry and Why is It Bad?” in G. R. F. Ferrari, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s “Republic”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 415-44.

<sup>91</sup> “As we said earlier, these things are both impious and untrue, for we demonstrated that it is impossible for the gods to produce bad things.” *R.* 3.391d7-e2; Cooper 1029.

makes those false images so beautiful<sup>93</sup> that even the super-rational Socrates finds them hard to resist.<sup>94</sup> Professor Gilbert Murray comments on this point about Plato, “Poetry was to him a seducing fire.”<sup>95</sup> 6) There is also a subtler and more pervasive reason for attacks on Homer, one that goes beyond the *Republic*. This reason is harder to find in the Platonic text because of the reason itself. It also goes far in explaining why Plato never writes in his own voice and why Socrates, especially in the dialogues of Group I, will not allow himself to be pinned down to a specific teaching. The reason is that Plato rejected the notion of an authority which someone could appropriate by proof-texting a passage from the authority’s work. In a sense, this is not a charge against Homer himself, rather a charge against the way Homer was received in fifth and fourth century B.C. Athens. The problem is one Xenophanes had already determined, “Since from the beginning all have learned according to Homer.”<sup>96</sup> The issue was Homeric authority and how that authority was invoked. Plato did not want “according to Homer” to be replaced by “according to Plato” or “according to Socrates.” This principle guided Plato in his writing, but precisely because of the principle it

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<sup>92</sup> “Is it impossible, then, for gods to want to alter themselves? Since they are the most beautiful and best possible, it seems that each always and unconditionally retains his own shape.” R. 2.381c7-9; Cooper 1020.

<sup>93</sup> “Nonetheless, he’ll go on imitating, even though he doesn’t know the good or bad qualities of anything, but what he’ll imitate, it seems is what appears fine or beautiful to the majority.” R. 10.602b1-4; Cooper 1206.

<sup>94</sup> “However, we haven’t yet brought the most serious charge against imitation, namely, that with a few rare exceptions it is able to corrupt even decent people, for that’s surely an altogether terrible thing. . . . Listen, then, and consider whether it can or not. Even when the best of us hear Homer or some other tragedian imitating one of the heroes sorrowing and making a long lamenting speech or singing and beating his breast, you know that we enjoy it, give ourselves up to following it, sympathize with the hero, take his sufferings seriously, and praise as a good poet the one who affects us most in this way.” R. 10.605c6-8, c10-d5; Cooper 1210.

<sup>95</sup> Murray, *Epic*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Xenophanes, B10 D.-K.; Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 21.

had to be expressed implicitly. It is ironically humorous when one considers the extent to which Plato failed in this part of his endeavor. Despite the fact that Plato never in the dialogues speaks in his own voice, philosophers opine without end, “According to Plato . . . .”

Those charges need to be considered one by one.

The curious quality to the first charge, the unfitness of Homer to be read especially by the young because the poems would promote cowardice, is that in historical terms, it was factually false.<sup>97</sup> It was during the rule of Pisistratus (d.527 B.C.) that 1) Homer became the definitive authority of the Athenians and, 2) to the extent that there was a common Homeric canon during the Classical period, that such a canon was determined and 3) that canon was recited at the Panathenaea.<sup>98</sup> That means Homer was memorized by boys and girls precisely in the sixth century when the alliance of Greeks beat back the Persians repeatedly and also when Athens was defeated by Sparta. Knowing Homer by heart did not empty the Athenians of their courage. They memorized Homer and beat back the Persians. The triumph of Sparta over Athens in the Peloponnesian War had many causes, but Athenian cowardice was not one of them. If there was one lesson to be drawn from the Pan-Hellenic victory over the

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<sup>97</sup> Professor Kaufmann points to the very different view held by Aristotle, in particular in relation to the cathartic effect of tragedy. He then summarizes both Aristotle’s opinion and his own, “Whatever Aristotle may have meant, he clearly disagreed with Plato’s claim that the exhibition of violent emotions on the stage is likely to lead me to emulate, say, Philoctetes or Heracles by shrieking and moaning in agony instead of learning self-mastery. Aristotle suggested that emotional people, particularly the less educated, need some relief and purgation—precisely in order to behave with more restraint in real life. What neither Plato nor Aristotle realized was that most men’s daring is so slight that it can be spent in an hour’s identification with Oedipus or Antigone.” *Kaufmann, Tragedy*, 135. Professor Lewis also comments aptly upon the cleavage between imitation and that which it imitates, “For it is a very old critical discovery that the imitation in art of unpleasing objects may be a pleasing imitation.” *Lewis, Preface*, 92.

<sup>98</sup> Murray, *Epic*, 188-91, 299-306.

Persians *and* the Athenian defeat by Sparta, it was that Greeks win when they stand together and lose when they are divided. One could find no better text to support such a conclusion than the *Iliad*. The historical Socrates fought as a hoplite and, therefore, surely had no doubts about the courage of his fellow citizens in battle. In fact, in the case made by Socrates of the *Republic*, there is no historical reference; the charge is made logically and in theory. It will be necessary to return to this point in II.ii, "Body and Soul," but it needs to be asked here what Plato was thinking of when he put this charge in the mouth of Socrates. There are various possibilities. 1) Perhaps the premise given by Socrates of the *Republic* is disingenuous, merely a philosophical pose. 2) Perhaps the premise spoken by Socrates is actually the view of Plato who never experienced battle and who saw a growing timidity among his own and following generations of Athenian men. 3) Perhaps the premise is simply an error of judgement, a point of philosophical opinion not consistent with the historical state of affairs. An explanation that takes something from each of those possibilities is that Plato is rejecting a state of affairs in the fourth century to which he speaks in the dialogue's context of the fifth century. This is to seek an explanation of the first charge in terms of the second, that there was no Homeric school.

Just as curious as the circumstances counterfactual to the assertion that Homer was unfit for the young are the similar counterfactuals to the second charge that there were no Homeric schools promoting a Homeric way of life. Socrates taunts Homer on this point, "Homer, . . . tell us what cities are better governed because of you . . . ? Who gives such credit to you? Will he be able to name one?" Glaucon responds, "Not even the Homeridae

make that claim.”<sup>99</sup> Professor Benardete identifies an obvious flaw in the logic of Socrates, “Socrates’ ostensible argument against Homer for having had no effect on education has a foolish air, for if that criticism were justified, the expurgation of his poetry would have been unnecessary.”<sup>100</sup> In fact, not only did Homer have an “effect on education,” contemporaries of Socrates and Plato were basing their teaching on Homer, but they were doing so allegorically. Director of Research Luc Brisson comments on the historical context:

But, it is with the Cynics, Plato’s and Aristotle’s contemporaries, that allegory reaches one of its peaks.

Antisthenes, whom Plato supposedly represented as Cratylus in the dialogue so titled, is thought to have devoted a very large part of his work to Homer and his characters. . . . His two favorite heroes were Heracles and Odysseus. . . . Odysseus saw him[self] as a model in the domain of morality. His self-control enabled him to escape Circe’s spells and to prefer Penelope over Calypso.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> R. 10.599d2-e6; Cooper 1203-04. Someone might argue, citing R. 6.598d7-599a4 that “Socrates does not deny that Homer had an effect on education, on the contrary; his claim is that this effect is unjustified.” Mathias Vorwerk, note to the author, July 10, A.D. 2008. In fact, that passage at most only ambiguously asserts Homeric influence on Greek education. The argument actually runs this way: for all the memorization and recitation of Homer, it never achieved traction. Homer, Socrates argues, however pervasive in Athenian culture, was ever tangential to Athenian life. Socrates is explicit and repetitive on this point. In addition to the passage quoted in the text (R. 10.599d2e6), Socrates subsequently challenges Homeric authority, “Then, if there’s nothing of a public nature, are we told that, when Homer was alive, he was a leader in the education of certain people who took pleasure in associating with him in private and that they passed on a Homeric way of life to those who came after him, just as Pythagoras did?” Once more, Glaucon responds on cue, “Again, we’re told nothing of this kind about Homer.” R. 10.600a9-b3 and b6; Cooper 1204. Socrates then makes exactly the distinction between Homeric imitation and true education, “If Homer had really been able to educate people and make them better, if he’d known about these things and not merely about how to imitate them, wouldn’t he have had many companions and been loved and honored by them?” R. 10.600c2-6; Cooper 1204.

<sup>100</sup> Benardete, *Second Sailing*, 218. Of course, with Professor Benardete, one must look for an argument other than the “ostensible” one. After the quoted observation, he does proceed to make sense of the characterization in a dense, evocative analysis to which a sentence or two here could not do justice.

<sup>101</sup> Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths. Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 37-38. “Mais c’est avec les Cyniques; des contemporains de Platon et d’Aristote que l’allégorie atteignit l’un de ses sommets. Antisthène, que Platon aurait représenté sous les traits de *Cratyle* dans le dialogue qui porte ce nom, aurait consacré à Homère et à ses personnages une très importante partie de son œuvre. Ses deux héros favoris sont Héraclès et Ulysse. . . . Pour sa part, Ulysse se voit considéré [Perhaps a better translation of this were “Odysseus found himself considered”] comme un modèle dans le domaine de la morale. Sa tempérance lui permet d’échapper aux enchantements de Circé et de préférer Pénélope à Calypso.” Luc Brisson, *Introduction à la philosophie du*

The problem might have been precisely that there were schools of Homeric morality and that Socrates of the *Republic* was adamantly opposed to their method, namely allegorical interpretation.<sup>102</sup> This possibility suggests that the problem with Homeric poetry in the ideal commonwealth had as much to do with interpretation of Homer by Plato's contemporaries as with the Homeric material itself. Thus the claim that Homer is unfit to be read would be a philosophical pose aimed at the Cynics whose way of life did not, in Plato's opinion, promote the good of the city. That way of life arose from the interpretation of Homeric texts called ὑπόνοια, which means "*suspicion, conjecture, guess*" then "*the real meaning which lies at the bottom of a meaning.*"<sup>103</sup> It is often interpretatively translated as "allegory." The second formal meaning as well as the interpretative meaning are in play when Socrates says, "We won't admit stories into our city—whether allegorical or not (οὐτ' ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν)—about Hera being chained by her son. . . . The young can't distinguish what is allegorical from what isn't (ὑπόνοια καὶ ὁ μὴ), and the opinions they absorb at that age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable."<sup>104</sup> The various allegorical methods arose from philosophical etymology.<sup>105</sup>

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*mythe. Sauver les mythes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2005), 55. Professor Kahn observes similarly, "Antisthenes was a voluminous author, apparently as prolific as Plato. About one-fifth of his total output seems to have been devoted to Homeric themes." Kahn, *Plato*, 122.

<sup>102</sup> E.g., "The young can't distinguish what is allegorical and what isn't, and the opinions they absorb at that age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable." R. 2.378d7-e1; Cooper 1017.

<sup>103</sup> LSJ, s.v. ὑπόνοια.

<sup>104</sup> R. 2.378d3-8; Cooper 1017.

<sup>105</sup> The "types of allegory were rooted in the common practice of applying etymology to proper names, a practice of which there is a remarkable example in Plato's *Cratylus*." Brisson, *Myths*, 32. Brisson, *Sauver*, 48. Dr. Baxter also notes this relationship, "One needs to recall the attraction of etymology for



Just over half of the *Cratylus* is a discussion of names, what they mean and how the meaning relates to the name itself.<sup>106</sup> Examination of one instance points to the problem of the approach. Hermogenes asks about the meaning of “Athena.” Socrates replies:

The ancients seem to have had the same opinion about Athena as do contemporary experts on Homer. Many of them say in their interpretations of the poet that he represents Athena as Understanding or Thought. The maker of names seems to think the same sort of thing about the goddess. Indeed, he speaks of her in still grander terms, saying she is the very mind of god.<sup>107</sup>

Even though Socrates asserts the ancients and moderns to be in agreement about the interpretation of “Athena,” thus suggesting that the exegesis he develops ought to be acceptable to him, Socrates maintains a certain intellectual distance from that exegesis. He never quite assents to the etymology. Why not? A few words need to be said about the special role of the *Cratylus* in the Platonic corpus. *Cratylus* may be unique among Plato’s dialogues as coming both before and after the *Republic*, a dialogue which was probably written early—thus proleptic to the *Republic*—and revised in important ways after the *Republic*.<sup>108</sup> To the extent to which *Cratylus* is read proleptically to the *Republic*, then Plato

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allegorists, namely that it seems to provide decisive evidence for a particular allegorical interpretation. Allegory works usually over a fairly broad canvas and presupposes a coherent analogical theory, knowledge of which allows one to interpret something which is false at the literal level as true at the secondary level, allegorical level. . . . As the divergences widen, the allegory is liable to break. Etymology, by tying the allegorical interpretation more directly to the text, is a way of trying to repair that separation from the surface text. This is why etymology is allegory’s handmaiden.” Timothy M. S. Baxter, *The “Cratylus”: Plato’s Critique of Naming* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 118-19.

<sup>106</sup> “Socrates turns (in 391b-421d) to a long discussion of the ordinary (Greek) names that are the immediate tools of communication.” J. L. Ackrill, “Language and Reality in Plato’s *Cratylus*,” in *Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 46. The *Cratylus* runs from 383-440, a total of fifty-seven Stephanus pages, thus, the discussion of names takes up thirty of the fifty-seven.

<sup>107</sup> *Cra.* 407a8-b4; Cooper 125.

<sup>108</sup> This assessment of *Cratylus* continues to follow Professor Kahn, but only up to a certain point. He writes, “The contents of the *Cratylus* on the theory of naming, the problems of flux, Protagorean relativism and

would not want Socrates of the *Cratylus* to be identified with the camp which Socrates of the *Republic* will denounce. In fact, Socrates begins to build his case in the *Cratylus* which shall occupy him fully in the *Theaetetus*. In *Cratylus* 402a, he frames the argument against Heraclitus' doctrine of flux and motion which he attributes ultimately to Homer, "I seem to see Heraclitus spouting some ancient bits of wisdom that Homer also tells us—wisdom as old as the days of Cronus and Rhea. . . . Heraclitus says somewhere that "everything gives way and nothing stands fast," and likening the things that are flowing (rhoē) of a river, he says that 'you cannot step into the same river twice.'"<sup>109</sup> Socrates reverts to this concern in the final pages of the dialogue and challenges the entire etymological approach as an expression of becoming rather than being, and, therefore, having nothing to do with knowledge and philosophy at all, "So whether I'm right about these things or whether the truth lies with Heraclitus and many others isn't an easy matter to investigate. But surely no

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the paradox of false statement, all point ahead to discussion of these topics in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*. Hence scholars who judge by content have been inclined to date the *Cratylus* with a later group of dialogues. But since in the matter of dating Plato's change of style is our only reliable clue, I believe we must simply accept the fact that the *Cratylus* belongs chronologically with the *Phaedo* and *Symposium* in Group I. It is clear that Plato's philosophical concerns could operate on several tracks at the same time. What the *Cratylus* shows is that, even before the *Republic*, he already had problems in view that he would deal with more fully only in later works." Kahn, *Plato*, 364. Of course, his analysis only holds if the *Cratylus* is completely a pre-*Republic* dialogue.

Professor Sedley argues persuasively based upon textual variants—apparently written by Plato and then written into the margin of a later manuscript "by some Platonic scholar in antiquity"—that there was an early dialogue which was later revised. Sedley, *Cratylus*, 10, 6-14. He summarizes his analysis, "It is surely no coincidence that it should be of all Plato's writings the *Cratylus*, a dialogue that modern scholars have found peculiarly hard to date, in which, equally peculiarly, evidence of two different strata presents itself. I strongly favour the hypothesis that the hard core of the dialogue as we have it belongs not later than the middle of Plato's middle period – as is suggested by the combination of the stylometric data, the presence of the middle-period Form theory, and, although I hesitate to speak so impressionistically, the overall feel of the dialogue – but that at least some of it was rewritten late in his career, quite possibly close to the date of the *Sophist*. Because the dialogue's concern, truth and signification was untypical of Plato's early and middle periods, but close to his heart at the time he wrote the *Sophist*, the decision to issue a revised and corrected edition makes ready sense." *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>109</sup> *Cra.* 402a4-6, 8-10; Cooper 120.

one with any understanding will commit himself or the cultivation of his soul to names, or trust them and their givers to the point of firmly stating that he knows something.”<sup>110</sup>

Socrates engages thoroughly in etymological interpretation precisely in order to show the falsity of the method and that it is a method bound up with flux and motion, and therefore with becoming.<sup>111</sup> As such, it is anathema to a philosopher of being.

There is the added factor that Antisthenes was a rival of Plato’s to be heir of Socrates’ mantel. In *Cratylus* 407, Socrates refers to both ancient and contemporary interpreters of Homer. Antisthenes, presumably, was included among the later group. Professor Kahn states, “In the fifteen years after Socrates’ death, Antisthenes was probably regarded as the most important follower of Socrates.”<sup>112</sup> Further, in the extant fragments, when Antisthenes writes about Homeric characters, he “reflects a number of distinctively Socratic ideas . . . . Antisthenes apparently conceived Odysseus as a kind of Socratic sage.”<sup>113</sup> The rivalry was at times bitter. Professor Kahn summarizes the report of Diogenes Laertius, “After quarreling with Plato he wrote a book against Platonic dialectic entitled *Sathōn*, which rhymes with *Platōn* but means ‘a large prick’ (D.L. III.35: cf. vi.16).”<sup>114</sup> Plato, by putting a speech into the mouth of Socrates saying that there is no school of Homer

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<sup>110</sup> *Cra.* 440c1-6; Cooper 155-56.

<sup>111</sup> On this point, Dr. Baxter comments, “The alternative etymologies demonstrate that names do not enjoy the semantic stability that Cratylus and others had assumed. Names too are in flux. Thus the natural theory of Cratylus has left us with nowhere in our world that has the stability to allow us to acquire knowledge.” Baxter, “*Cratylus*,” 181.

<sup>112</sup> Kahn, *Plato*, 4.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

and denouncing allegorical reading of Homer, implicitly aims his own dismissive jibe at Antisthenes and his followers. There is apparently nothing new about the bitterness of academic infighting. Without diminishing the serious issues which Socrates raises about Homer, there is reason to think that at another level Homer is a placeholder for Antisthenes in the *Republic*. Professor Kahn proposes the explanation in relation to *Ion* and *Hippias minor* which is being suggested here in relation to the *Republic*:

We can see now how *one* motive for the Homeric material in *Ion* and *Hippias Minor* may well be a polemical response to Antisthenes, Plato's prominent and ultimately most hostile competitor as heir to the Socratic tradition. Plato's response will have been particularly apt if, as seems quite possible, Antisthenes represented Socrates himself as engaging in this quasi-philosophical form of Homeric exegesis. Whatever Socrates' own practice may have been—and that we do not know—Plato is adamantly opposed to use of poetic interpretation as a mode of doing philosophy.<sup>115</sup>

Part of Plato's purpose was to establish himself as the one authentic interpreter of Socratic philosophy. His success has had the effect of eliminating levels of meaning from the modern superficial reading of his texts (such as his polemic against Antisthenes), levels which may have been the most obvious to superficial readers of his own time.

The third, fourth and fifth charges shall be taken together: Homer's poems as images are removed three degrees from the truest reality and the truest knowledge; even on their own terms as images, they are false; they are all the more dangerous for that because of their seductive beauty.<sup>116</sup> At the end of the *Republic*, those three charges stand. They are consistent with the Divided Line and with the experience of Athenians, no less of Socrates

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-24.

<sup>116</sup> Professor Most comments on this point with respect to Early Greek philosophers, "The clear implication is that it is only because their poetry was so beguilingly beautiful that they were able hitherto to fool so many people." Most, "Poetics," 337.

as depicted and presumably of Plato himself than of the politicians and craftsmen of the city: they found the Homeric poems powerfully beautiful. If there were no dialogues of Plato after the *Republic*, it would be fair to say that Plato held Homer to be no philosopher. There would still remain, however, the question of Plato's discovery of esoteric meaning in the Homeric texts which shall be taken up below. Those who want to hold that the judgement of Socrates of the *Republic* that Homer was no philosopher have a difficulty of their own: what was Plato doing by re-introducing the Homeric cast of characters in the Myth of Er in the final pages of the *Republic* with Odysseus making his appearance on the penultimate page in an action fully approved by Socrates as he tells the story. The role of Odysseus at that moment in the *Republic's* denouement shall also be taken up below. At this point in the treatment of the question, "Did Plato regard Homer as a philosopher?" let one very obvious fact be observed: the *Republic* was not Plato's final dialogue. If it had been, then one could still argue that the dialogue concludes with a tension between the obvious exclusion of Homer as a philosopher and the re-introduction of the Homeric cast at the end of the *Republic*. The least one could conclude is that Plato did not regard Homer as a philosopher, but he did himself find in Homer an occasion for philosophizing. Such a conclusion is far more positive than a dismissal. The *Republic*, however, was not Plato's final dialogue, and it is not Plato's last word on Homer as shall be seen in the discussion below on Homer in the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates names him as the captain of the army of flux and motion.<sup>117</sup>

Why? Any explanation must be an inference. It seems likely that Plato was faced with the problem of how to estimate Heraclitus, Empedocles, Protagoras and others who were, by the

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<sup>117</sup> *Tht.* 152e1-153a3.

account of Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, advocates who denied the kind of truest reality which had been explicated by Socrates of the *Republic*. On the basis of the argument that Homer was no philosopher because he worked in the realm third from truth, neither were Heraclitus, Empedocles, Protagoras and the rest philosophers either. Although Socrates does not quite say that Heraclitus, Empedocles and Protagoras were not philosophers, he does not use the specific term of them. He calls them, for example, σοφοί, but not φιλόσοφοι.<sup>118</sup> They were “wise ones,” “serious thinkers,” but not philosophers proper. The regard of Socrates in the *Theaetetus* for Homer shall be taken up at length below. At this point it is important to note, that once Homer is understood as a predecessor to Heraclitus and others, then one sees that the fourth and fifth criticisms inhere logically in the third. If all is in flux and motion, then there can be no true images because nothing can be affirmed truly about anything.

Aristotle comments on this:

Regarding that which everywhere and in every respect is changing nothing could be truly affirmed. It was this belief that blossomed into the most extreme views above mentioned, that of the professed Heracliteans, such as was held by Cratylus, who finally did not think it right to say anything but only moved his finger, and criticized Heraclitus for saying that it is impossible to step twice into the same river; for he thought one could not do it even once.<sup>119</sup>

If the images of Homer are false in their seductive beauty, then by the account of Cratylus they are no less false, nor less seductive, nor less beautiful than every experience of the natural world itself. For Cratylus, as represented by Aristotle, every word is a false image because every perception of the world is false. Homer as a poet could be dismissed, if ambiguously given Plato’s use of the Homeric cast in the final pages of the *Republic*.

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<sup>118</sup> *Tht.* 152e2.

<sup>119</sup> *Metaph.* 4.1010a8-14; Barnes 2.1594.

On the sixth and final point, Plato rejected the kind of authority which was attributed to Homer.<sup>120</sup> Throughout the rest of this chapter, note will be made of the ways that Plato cuts Homer down to size. An irony in the authoritative position of Homer is that by accepting it, his interpreter participates in Homeric authority. This seems to be part of what Plato found wrong with allegorical or metaphorical interpretation: it leaves the interpreter in possession of Homer and his authority.<sup>121</sup> Plato seeks to set forth a different kind of authority, one that is, at once, both more exclusive and more available than an authoritative author, namely the authority of rational argument. It is more exclusive because it cannot be taught to every child of the city in the way recitation of Homeric texts can be taught. At the same time, it is more available because it actually insists on at least one partner in conversation. This is a fundamental shift from rhetoric, which may be defined as persuasive explanation of and for a known truth-claim, to dialectic, which can be defined as argument toward an as yet unknown truth-claim. Socrates of the *Phaedrus* points to this problem with Homer. He is an authority recited to convince rather than to engage in dialogue. He condemns certain writings, “Those that are recited in public without questioning and explanation, in the manner of the rhapsodes, are given only in order to produce

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<sup>120</sup> Professor Nightingale observes that the “ancient quarrel” has to do with the David-like new discipline of philosophy taking on the Goliath of poetry, “By announcing a quarrel between philosophy and poetry, in short, Plato emphasizes that the discussion of poetry directly reflects upon the nature of philosophy. At the same time, he invests philosophy with an extraordinary status—a status that it certainly did not have in this period. For philosophy now emerges as the powerful adversary of the giant that is poetry. By picking a quarrel with poetry, in sum, Plato tries to have it both ways: although philosophers are a new and ‘tiny’ group, they are engaged in an epic battle with the poets.” Nightingale, *Genres*, 67.

<sup>121</sup> Professor Kaufmann argues that Plato’s reading—actually his mis-reading—of Homer arose at least partly from the even worse reading of Homer by his contemporaries, “That Plato insists of reading Homer in the spirit of the least perceptive kind of fundamentalism is, no doubt, due to the fact that many people in those days did cite the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in that way.” Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 21.

conviction.”<sup>122</sup> Rather than trying to convince people to hold this view or that notion, Plato’s aim is to persuade people to think. Plato’s challenge was how to be an author without becoming an authority. Professor Kahn comments upon Plato’s motive:

His principal aim, above all in the earlier works, is not to assert true propositions but to alter the minds and hearts of his readers. Plato’s conception of philosophical education is not to replace false doctrines with true ones but to change radically the moral and intellectual orientation of the learner, who, like the prisoners in the cave, must be converted—turned around—in order to see the light.<sup>123</sup>

To continue using the imagery of the Cave, it is not, then, enough, to make better shadow puppets. The problem is not primarily in what is seen, rather in the mode of seeing. No longer should people see with their eyes, rather with their rational souls. Thus dialectic becomes the new authority replacing the old “According to . . .” and not merely “According to Homer,” rather also “According to anybody at all.”

Professor Sedley, after discounting the notion that Plato does not appear in his dialogues as a means of distancing himself from what is said there, offers insight consistent with but not the same as that of Professor Kahn:

Plato’s real reason for persisting with the dialogue form is, I think, a very different one, his growing belief – more than once made explicit in his later work – that conversation, in the form of question and answer, is the structure of thought itself. When we think, what we are doing is precisely to ask and answer questions internally, and our judgements are the outcome of that same process. Hence it seems that what Plato dramatizes as external conversations can be internalized by us, the readers, as setting the model for our own processes of philosophical reasoning. . . . Plato’s very word for philosophical method ‘dialectic’, means quite literally the science of conducting a conversation in this question-and-answer form, and it is vital to appreciate that the inter-personal discussion portrayed in the dialogues is not the

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<sup>122</sup> *Phdr.* 277e8-278a1; Cooper 554.

<sup>123</sup> Kahn, *Plato*, xiv.



only mode in which such discussion can occur: internal discussion is another, and perhaps even more fundamental, mode.<sup>124</sup>

It may be that Plato was merely mimicking what he observed about human thought (i.e., an imaged description) as Professor Sedley suggests, but it may also be, the view held here, that Plato was contributing, perhaps without knowing it, to changing the way humans think (i.e., an imaged prescription). That change is, to reprise the theme of this dissertation, to conceptualize poetic and especially Homeric depiction. Plato may have assumed that this is the way people really always thought, but that they just did not know it, and by writing his dialogues he made true what he thought had already been true. To speak anachronistically, this inversion could be called “Plato’s Copernican revolution,” as an analogue to Kant’s Copernican revolution in which Kant proposed that in fact concepts had always existed in the human mind prior experience, but that until he noticed the fact no one else had.<sup>125</sup>

This discussion points to why Plato would choose Odysseus over Achilles as he does at the end of the *Republic* (10.619e6-d5). Achilles is occluded, while Odysseus is depicted as making the right kind of choice. In the next section, the theme of Achilles versus Odysseus in the Platonic corpus will be considered. Let it be noted here the kind of man Achilles is in the *Iliad*. He is a man who remains stuck as he is. He is full of wrath. His refusal to fight expresses his wrath; his decision to fight expresses his wrath. Only his

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<sup>124</sup> David Sedley, *Plato’s Cratylus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-2.

<sup>125</sup> For example, Kant writes, “Hume’s problem rescues for the pure concepts of the understanding their *a priori* origin and for the universal laws of nature their validity as laws of the understanding, yet in such a way as to limit their use to experience, because their possibility depends solely on the reference of the understanding to experience, but with a completely reversed mode of connection which never occurred to Hume: they are not derived from experience, but experience is derived from them.” Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002), 313.

encounter with Priam shows him in a different light, but it does not move him. He continues on the path to fulfill his destiny, to die glorious in battle. Odysseus, by contrast, is a man who is committed to the journey home, cost him what it will. He is a man who deliberates, who takes counsel, who learns from his mistakes, who makes choices, and forever remains focused on his virtue.<sup>126</sup> When he finally succeeds in his homegoing even as he lies in the arms of his wife after twenty years of longing, he prepares for another journey.<sup>127</sup>

Plato's commitment not to replace "according to Homer" with "according to Socrates" or "Plato," determined how he must write. Professor Leo Strauss discusses the importance of giving priority to discovering Platonic method before making assertion about Platonic teaching:

One cannot understand Plato's teaching as he meant it if one does not know what the Platonic dialogue is. One cannot separate the understanding of Plato's teaching from the understanding of the form in which it is presented. One must pay as much attention to the How as to the What. At any rate to begin with one must even pay greater attention to the 'form' than to the 'substance,' since the meaning of the 'substance' depends on the 'form.' One must postpone one's concern with most serious questions (the philosophic questions) in order to become engrossed in the study of a merely literary question.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Professor MacIntyre comments on this point, "When Odysseus invokes what he knows to be the right way to behave in order to inhibit the effects of fear, he is not weighing two alternative reasons for action. It is rather that he calls upon his *aretē* to give him strength of purpose to overcome passion." MacIntyre, *Whose Justice*, 16.

<sup>127</sup> On the night of his reunion with Penelope, Odysseus recounts the instructions from Tiresias (*Od.* 11.121-37), "I must take an oar/ and trudge the mainland, going from town to town,/ until I discover men who have never known/ the salt blue sea, nor flavor of salt meat—/ strangers to painted prows, to watercraft/ and oars like wings, dipping across the water./ the moment of revelation he foretold/ was this, for you may share the prophecy: some traveler falling in with me will say:/ 'A winnowing fan, that on your shoulder, sir?'/ There must I plant my oar, on the very spot,/ with burnt offerings to Poseidon of the Waters:/ a ram, a bull, a great buck boar. Thereafter/ when I come home again, I am to slay/ full hecatombs to the gods who own broad heaven,/ one by one./ Then death will drift upon me/ from seaward,/ mild as air, mild as your hand,/ in my well-tended weariness of age,/ contented folk around me on our island./ He said all this must come." *Od.* 23.267-84; Fitzgerald 403-04.

To reprise the Professor McLuhan's theme, "The medium is the message."<sup>129</sup> The *Phaedrus* is much concerned with the problems involved in writing. Commenting on *Phaedrus* 275d4-276a7 and 264b7-c5, Professor Strauss writes:

A writing is good if it complies with "logographic necessity," with the necessity which ought to govern the writing of speeches: every part of the written speech must be necessary for the whole; the place where each part occurs is the place where it is necessary that it should occur; in a word, the good writing must resemble the healthy animal which can do its proper work well.<sup>130</sup>

Professor Strauss has translated literally "τινὰ ἀνάγκην λογογραφικὴν" from *Phaedrus* 264b7, "logographic necessity." This is to ask if there is some reason why the words have to be written in a certain way. Socrates proposes an animal's organic unity as the right analogue. The necessity is that each part is essential and in integral relationship with all the other parts. If there is a literary appendix—meaning a literary analogue to the useless human organ—it can at least be explained as a remnant of an older necessity. Words and phrases are not interchangeable. Each must be placed where it fits into the organic whole. Professor Strauss takes Socrates' observation about the right kind of writing which will be read as it should be by those who should read it, in distinction to the kind of work read by everyone and interpreted willy-nilly. In other words, "logographic necessity" is a first principle of Platonic writing. Of course, Plato can err, and he can fail, but his intention is to put every word in its right place.

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<sup>128</sup> Strauss, *City and Man*, 52. Professor Stanley Rosen follows his mentor on this point, "It is now very widely accepted that one cannot understand Plato's philosophical teaching apart from the most careful consideration of its literary presentation." Stanley Rosen, "*Republic*," 353. Professor Howland makes a similar point, "One cannot understand Plato without paying due attention to his style." Howland, *Odyssey*, 25.

<sup>129</sup> McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 7.

<sup>130</sup> Strauss, *City and Man*, 53.

d. *Ion and Hippias minor*

*Ion* and *Hippias minor* have the distinction of being two of the three shortest Platonic dialogues, and both attend to matters Homeric. They are similar in literary style and in each, Socrates has one primary interlocutor.<sup>131</sup>

As Socrates greets Ion in the first lines of the dialogue bearing the interlocutor's name, Ion is fresh from victory at a contest of rhapsodes. Ion is not only a professional reciter or performer of Homer's poetry, he is the best of the best. It is important to remember, however, that professional though Ion was, he was always reciting the poetry to people who often knew the poems as well as he did. The rhapsode's art was in the way he recited that poetry. Perhaps the experience closest to the rhapsode's challenge available to the modern English-speaking audience is that of the actor playing Hamlet as he approaches the most famous soliloquy, knowing that every person in the theatre will be rehearsing the first two lines in his mind and that a few in the audience may even help the actor by muttering the lines *sotto voce*, as they think, under their breath. Some of *Ion's* humor arises from exactly this point. Socrates knows Homer as well as the rhapsode. Indeed, Socrates is depicted in the dialogue as having a better knowledge of Homer than Ion, insofar as Plato allows Ion one quotation of a speech from Homer while giving Socrates four speeches.<sup>132</sup> Implied is that Socrates not only knows his own subject better than Ion, but he also knows the rhapsode's subject better.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Kahn, *Plato*, 101-02.

<sup>132</sup> Respectively, *Ion* 537a5-b5, 538c1-539d2; Cooper 944, 946-47. Professor Bloom observes, "The conclusion of the first section was that Ion knew all the poets; the conclusion of the one will be that he does not even know Homer." Bloom, "*Ion*," 151.

Socrates of the *Ion* categorizes the contents of the Homeric epics:

Does Homer speak of any subjects that differ from those of *all* the other poets? Doesn't he mainly go through tales of war, and of how people deal with each other in society—good people and bad, ordinary people and craftsmen? And of the gods, how they deal with each other and with men? And doesn't he recount what happens in heaven and in hell, and tell of the births of gods and heroes? Those are the subjects of Homer's poetry-making, aren't they?<sup>134</sup>

This schema is important as an early expression in the Platonic corpus of what the Homeric poems are *about*. Even as Socrates is laying the groundwork to assault the status of Homer explicitly, what he names become themes which philosophy addresses. Consider the following outline of Socrates' analysis of Homeric content:

## I. Human Society

### i. War

### ii. Civil Society

#### 1. Ethics

a. What makes people good

b. What makes people bad

#### 2. Technology

a. Unskilled workers

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<sup>133</sup> Socrates' mastery of that which he seeks to defeat appears to be a fundament of Plato's method. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates shows himself to be a master of the etymological method which he discards. Professor Cooper observes, "At least part of Plato's purpose seems to be to establish Socrates' credentials as a first-rate practitioner of the art of etymology as then practiced, better than the 'experts' themselves." Cooper 101-02. One recalls again that Socrates is at his rhetorical best in the *Gorgias* all the while condemning rhetoric. Socrates condemns writing in the *Phaedrus*, a written dialogue. Plato's Socrates condemns many of the Homeric myths, but he fabricates as many myths as he repudiates. Socrates of the *Republic* may condemn ὑπόνοια, but he frequently discovers undercurrents of meaning. It is as important to attend to what Socrates does as to what he says.

<sup>134</sup> *Ion* 531c2-d1; Cooper 939.

## b. Skilled workers

## II. Theology

## i. Divine interaction

## a. Divine relations with each other

## b. Divine relations with men

## ii. Non-terrestrial Realms

## a. Heaven

## b. Hell

## iii. Generation

## a. Gods

## b. Heroes.

All the foregoing themes are taken up by philosophers. The argument will be made, in fact, that philosophers take the place of the old heroes. They bear the relationship to the divine in philosophy that the heroes bore in Homeric epic. In relation to the divine and other subjects, as the heroes in their actions (including the saying of words as an action) depicted by poets are authoritative, so the philosophers in their conceptualizing discourse are authoritative.

It is not the themes themselves, then, which separate epic poetry and philosophy, since the themes of the former become the themes of the latter. The addition by Socrates—and that is the addition of philosophy—in this passage is the analysis of the epic text according to category. Director of Research Luc Brisson observes a similar distinction between “concepts” and “individuals” in his analysis of *Republic* 2 and 3:

In the section devoted to the type of discourse proper to music, Plato gives a list of the five classes of names into which the subjects of mythical discourse are divided: gods, daemons, heroes, inhabitants of Hades, and men of the past. All the names pertaining to each of these five classes share an essential characteristic: they are all proper names. Hence they do not refer to concepts (“gods, heroes etc.”) but to individuals (“Zeus, Oedipus, etc.”) or to groups considered as individuals (“Muses, Trojans, etc.”); that is, in general they refer to animate beings endowed with a rational soul, including animals, plants, and inanimate objects playing a role on the model of rational beings. The result is generalized anthropomorphism.<sup>135</sup>

Rather than “individual,” “singular” or perhaps “particular” better approximates the category of “Zeus, Oedipus, etc.” As for “anthropomorphism,” it is a term that better suits the analysis by philosophers beginning with Xenophanes, rather than a statement of what Homer is doing. “Personification” is a better designation for the “animate beings.” They are ensouled, but not necessarily with “a rational soul.” It may be that “rational soul” cannot be spoken of prior to the creation of concepts, and that what one finds in Homer is imaginative soul. While these exceptions are taken to Monsieur Brisson’s use of those two terms, his assessment is nonetheless useful. Socrates of the *Republic* summarizes and analyzes the Homeric text. By making his own distinctions, he erases or, at least, obscures, the Homeric distinctions. By finding metaphor, he loses imaginative genus. The personal beings of Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Hades, etc. have become merely the genus “gods.” Thus Plato has shifted the reading of Homer.

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<sup>135</sup> Brisson, *How Philosophers*, 22; “Platon, dans la section qu’il consacre alors au type de discours propre à la musique, énumère les cinq classes de noms entre lesquelles se répartissent les sujets de ce type de discours qu’est le mythe : les dieux, les démons, les héros, les habitants de l’Hadès et les hommes du passé. Or, tous les noms qui ressortissent à chacune de ces cinq classes présentent une caractéristique essentielle : ce sont des noms propres. Par suite, ils renvoient non pas à des concepts : ‘dieux, héros, etc.’, mais à des individus : ‘Zeus, Œdipe, etc.’ ou à des collectivités considérées come des individus : ‘Muses, Troyens, etc.’, c’est-à-dire en général à des êtres animés et doués d’une âme rationnelle, bêtes, plantes et êtres inanimés intervenant sur le modèle des êtres rationnels : d’où un anthropomorphisme généralisé.” In specific, M. Brisson cites *R.* 2.376e-3.403c. Brisson, *Sauver les mythes*, 34.

Absent philosophical analysis, in hearing and reciting Homer (and only subsequently reading him, since hearing and reciting Homer were the primary means of access through the time of Plato and Aristotle), one apprehended a theme as a whole, *in situ*, and without conceptual reference. Knowing inhered in hearing or reciting. Nowhere does Homer reflect on what he has written, as he might have said for example, “Now in my first work, I took up the subject of war and of Achilles’ wrath.”<sup>136</sup> The work of philosophy is to abstract from what Homer wrote and outside the context of what he wrote. Socrates does not say, “Homer wrote about the war between the Achaeans and the Trojans over the abduction of Helen by Paris,” rather simply, “tales of war.” “Tales of war” is a simple abstraction from the concrete depiction of war in the Homeric epics. This work is entitled, *From Concrete to Concept*, but not in some single step or even in a mechanical way. The world did not go to sleep one night in beds, only to wake the next morning in “beds.” Descartes, no doubt, would not quite recognize the early philosophical abstractions as concepts in the way he understood “concept.” There is an early move in philosophy, however, from depiction replete with detail to a summary abstraction (e.g., in the *Iliad* there are “tales of war”). In abstraction, there is necessarily—and perhaps sadly too—a reduction not only of the many but also of the variety to one, be it one class or one term. Socrates also makes a summary abstraction of

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<sup>136</sup> There is a point, *Il.* 2.484-93, which Professor Matthias Vorwerk has called to my attention where Homer “comes close” to that kind of reflection, “Tell me now, Muses, dwelling on Olympos,/ as you are heavenly, and are everywhere,/ and everything is known to you—while we/ can only hear the tales and never know—/who were the Danaan lords and officers?” *Il.* 2.484-87. Homer does not analyze or abstract, but he does step back from the action for an assessment of the Danaan (Achaean) ranks which then follows. Homer perceives that there is a kind of knowing which only the mortals possess. There is a sense in which this is the claim of the philosophers: knowing is divine, and, thus, the life of the philosopher is godlike. As shall be argued in the following chapters, as heroes stood to the divine in Homer, so philosophers stand to the divine in philosophy.



Hesiod, Homer, and others as “poets.” Thus as in the examples of “tales of war” and “poets,” one sees “summary abstraction.” Socrates states this summary abstraction as a result of his prior analysis of the Homeric texts and, further, as a basis for further analysis. As a result of that second step analysis, he offers further abstractions much nearer to the modern conceptual abstraction. He discusses “power,” “wisdom,” “knowledge” and “technological skill,” to name a few obvious examples.

Here, then, are two criteria of philosophy proper which distinguish it from epic poetry: analysis and abstraction. At the same time, that analysis and abstraction are exercised with respect to Homeric depiction. Socrates identifies the images which for Homer were imaginative genera, and discusses them in terms of intelligible genera, that is, of concepts.

Once Socrates and Ion have agreed on the analysis of Homeric themes, Socrates proceeds to raise two subjects not named: arithmetic and medicine. The aim here is to distinguish between the person who can recite artfully and someone who actually has mastery of some knowledge.<sup>137</sup> For example, one needs to be able to distinguish between someone who has merely memorized the times table as a series of sounds and someone who actually knows how to multiply. Socrates probes Ion on his views:

Socrates: Well now, Ion, dear heart, when a number of people are discussing arithmetic, and one of them speaks best, I suppose *someone* will know how to pick out the good speaker.

Ion: Yes.

Socrates: Will it be the same person who can pick out bad speakers, or someone else?

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<sup>137</sup> *Ion* 531d4-532c5; Cooper 939-40.

Ion: The same, of course.

Socrates: And that will be someone who has mastered arithmetic (τὴν ἀριθμητικὴν τέχνην ἔχων), right?

Ion: Yes.<sup>138</sup>

Socrates is speaking of technical knowledge here which is far more than mere rote repetition. Socrates comes to the heart of his indictment against Homer and poets, in general, when he says, “For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him.”<sup>139</sup> A dichotomy is immediately established: there is poetry, non-rational or even irrational, and there is rational inquiry. When the poet *qua* poet creates poetry, reason is absent. That is as true of the rhapsodes who recite poetry as it is of the poets themselves.<sup>140</sup> There is no mastery of knowledge, rather only the state of being possessed by the gods.<sup>141</sup> The question of authority has already been raised with respect to the entire philosophical tradition *vis-à-vis* Homer. It has been argued that Plato sought to replace the authority of “according to Homer” with the authority of rational argument. Socrates of the *Ion* takes on the authority of Homer as surrogate for divine authority. This dialogue is a contest between Socrates, standing for rational argument, and Ion, standing for Homer, tradition, and the gods. Socrates challenges the fundamentals of Athenian life.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Ion* 531d12-4; Cooper 939.

<sup>139</sup> *Ion* 534b3-4; Cooper 942.

<sup>140</sup> *Ion* 534c4-d3; Cooper 942.

<sup>141</sup> *Ion* 536c1-2; Cooper 943.

Socrates says of the rhapsodes something which prefigures his Divided Line in the *Republic*. Rhapsodes “turn out to be representatives of representatives.”<sup>143</sup> Rhapsodes are far removed from the reality which they represent, even though at the moment they are reciting the poems it seems that they are actually there at the reality being represented. Socrates asks Ion a question to which the rhapsode readily answers affirmatively, “And doesn’t your soul, in its enthusiasm, believe that it is present at the actions you describe, whether they’re in Ithaca or in Troy or wherever the epic actually takes place?”<sup>144</sup> Poetry is “a divine gift,” and the rhapsode’s part in it is due to being possessed of the divine and not from any mastery of knowledge.<sup>145</sup> Socrates is not merely saying that one kind of knowledge does not transfer automatically to another (i.e., the one with knowledge of poetry does not necessarily know anything about the topics discussed in his poetry such as war and statesmanship), rather he suggests that poets let alone rhapsodes do not have proper knowledge at all. Divine inspiration is something other than knowledge. In fact, it is a kind of loss for the person; reason is vacated in order to make room in the soul for divine inspiration.

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<sup>142</sup> This reading follows the interpretation of Professor Bloom, “Homer presents the authoritative view of the whole according to which Greeks guide themselves . . . . Socrates, then, is testing the Greek understanding of things, particularly the gods. . . . In the *Ion*, Socrates confronts authority, the authority for the most decisive opinions. . . . As the spokesman of the tradition, Ion has answers to the most important questions, but he does not know that those answers are themselves questionable. Socrates’ contribution is only that of questioning the traditional answers and thereby elaborating the essential structure of human alternatives.” Bloom, “*Ion*,” 142-43.

<sup>143</sup> *Ion* 535a5; Cooper 942. Professor Bloom observes, “The very existence of the rhapsodes—these shallow replacements for the knowers of the whole—serve to initiate us into a new dimension of the quest for knowledge of the highest things.” Bloom, “*Ion*,” 144.

<sup>144</sup> *Ion* 535b3; Cooper 943.

<sup>145</sup> *Ion* 536c2; Cooper 943.

Socrates brings even that “divine gift” into disrepute. At the end of the dialogue, he concludes that Ion has not produced what he had promised at the beginning. Socrates accuses Ion either of doing him wrong or being “possessed by a divine gift.” Ion says he would rather be possessed by the divine than to do someone a wrong.<sup>146</sup> The joke, of course, is that it is the effect which is characterized alternatively as either a divine gift or a wrong, thus denigrating the value of the poet’s, let alone the rhapsode’s, divine inspiration. When one wants to know how to drive a chariot, one wants a charioteer by one’s side; when sick, a doctor; when contemplating the city’s defense, a general—never a rhapsode.<sup>147</sup> The implication here that prefigures what is made explicit in the *Republic* is that the poet and rhapsode are useless, at best, in the city. Even if poets are valued because of divine possession, still all poets are divinely possessed, and Homer is, therefore, just one more poet.<sup>148</sup>

In *Hippias minor*, it is a noted sophist whom Socrates engages. The dialogue addresses the question about the basis of the ethical life. It does so entirely in relation to the characters of Achilles and Odysseus as alternative models of morality. A distinction, as curious as it is important, was made in fifth-century Athens between Homer and Homeric heroes. This is true not only of Achilles and Odysseus, but many others who people the dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. The heroes take on lives of their own in Greek culture. Even as Homer was being recited by rhapsodes, a fact which provides the

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<sup>146</sup> *Ion* 542a2-b1; Cooper 949.

<sup>147</sup> *Ion* 537a-541e1; Cooper 944-49.

<sup>148</sup> Professor Bloom comments, “Moreover, Socrates now stresses that the various poets are equally possessed, and Homer is in no sense superior in this decisive respect.” Bloom, “*Ion*,” 151.

setting for Plato's *Ion*, Odysseus had become an object of disdain. Monsieur David LévyStone summarizes instances of Greek cultural animus towards Odysseus as, for example, his "Machiavellian" aspect in the *Philoctetes* by Sophocles. He argues that Odysseus became a symbol of the political leadership which led Athens to disaster in the Peloponnesian War.<sup>149</sup> The Socratic writers, by contrast—M. LévyStone names Antisthenes, Plato and Xenophon—take up the cause of Odysseus. Though not without criticism, they regard him as representing "an example of moderation and wisdom."<sup>150</sup> Throughout the Platonic corpus there is a connection between Socrates and Odysseus which though "not always explicit is strong and ongoing."<sup>151</sup> M. LévyStone's next insight is absolutely essential to a right understanding of Plato's regard for Odysseus. Plato will often plug an entire episode of the *Odyssey* into his own text merely through the use of a tag-line or allusion, "It [the connection] reveals itself sometimes, in the Platonic text, without mentioning the name of the personage, through mere citations of Homer or even through allusion to the hero's adventures which are like the quest for knowledge undertaken by the philosopher, a

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<sup>149</sup> LévyStone, "Ulysse," 181-82.

<sup>150</sup> "Ulysse représente plutôt un exemple de modération et de sagesse; il est un des seuls grands personnages d'Homère dans ce rôle de 'héros positif.'" LévyStone, "Ulysse," 182. Professor Stanford treats in detail the fifth-century Athenian disregard for Odysseus and, by contrast, Plato's rehabilitation of him, in specific with regard to *R.* 620c3-5, "Plato shows genuine sympathy here. If Odysseus had been all that fifth-century writers had said, ambitious, unscrupulous, unsuccessfully successful, disliked by the good, denounced by the honest, well might he have chosen the *fallentis semita vitae* for his next life." W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 90-117, in specific 117. Professor Deneen analyzes Plato's treatment of Achilles and Odysseus, arguing for Plato's consistent preference for the latter. Deneen, *Political Theory*, 90-112.

<sup>151</sup> "Si le lien entre le philosophe et le héros n'est pas toujours explicite, il est fort et continu." LévyStone, "Ulysse," 183.

philosophical odyssey analogous to that of Odysseus.”<sup>152</sup> This reading of the Platonic text is consistent with Professor Strauss’s principle of “logographic necessity” discussed above. Plato, like Antisthenes and Xenophon according to M. LévyStone, inverts the popular cultural valuation of Homer and Odysseus, respectively. The culture honors Homer and dishonors Odysseus, while Plato praises Odysseus and repudiates Homer. M. LévyStone observes how extraordinary this reversal is when Plato will have Socrates “take on Homer the author” actually “in order to defend Homer’s character, Odysseus.”<sup>153</sup> Plato, like his Socratic contemporaries, rescues Odysseus. M. LévyStone suggests the reason why. For Plato’s Socrates, there is no knowledge without the light of goodness, “If Odysseus is wise, then he can be nothing other than good.”<sup>154</sup>

Socrates develops fundamental principles of moral philosophy from an analysis of the two characters. Addressing Eudicus, the third (and by far the least) figure in this dialogue, Socrates puts the problem:

For your father Apemantus used to say that the *Iliad* of Homer is a finer poem than the *Odyssey*, to just the extent that Achilles is a better man than Odysseus; for, he said, one of these poems is about Odysseus and the other about Achilles. I’d like to ask about that, then, if Hippias is willing. What does he think about these two men? Which of them is better?<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> “Il se révèle parfois, chez Platon, sans que le nom du personnage soit prononcé, par de simples citations d’Homère ou même par des illusions à ses aventures qui assimilent la quête de savoir entreprise par le philosophe, à une Odysée semblable à celle d’Ulysse.” Ibid., 183.

<sup>153</sup> “Il n’hésite pas à s’en prendre à l’auteur, Homère, pour défendre son personnage, Ulysse !” Ibid., 192.

<sup>154</sup> “On ne peut donc douter que la polytropie d’Ulysse soit, pour le Socrate de Platon, positive, du simple fait même qu’elle relève du savoir. Et, à suivre un bon raisonnement socratique, si Ulysse est sage, il ne peut être que bon.” Ibid., 205.

<sup>155</sup> *Hippias minor* 363b1-5; Cooper 923.

Socrates begins with Achilles and Odysseus, and he stays with them to the very end of the dialogue as represented abstractly in the man who does injustice voluntarily (Odysseus) in contrast to the man who does injustice involuntarily (Achilles).<sup>156</sup> The word “ἐκόν” translated here “voluntarily,” means “to do something on purpose” and sometimes even “for a purpose.”<sup>157</sup> Odysseus controls his truth-telling and lying according to the purpose at hand with rare exceptions (e.g., the revelation of his name to Polyphemus). The words and actions of Achilles, by contrast, are subject to wrath, again with rare exceptions (e.g., his encounter with Priam). Odysseus lies according to calculation, while in Achilles wrath displaces calculation. Socrates addresses the question of moral philosophy through an exegesis of character. He analyzes what Homer depicts in the words and deeds of Achilles and Odysseus. That is to say, Socrates finds the paradigm of ethics in those two figures which he must mine with the tools of logical analysis.

It will be observed that when Socrates pushes this argument to its logical conclusion, Hippias declines to accept it. Socrates only partially joins his demur, “But given the argument, we can’t help having it look that way to us, now, at any rate.”<sup>158</sup> As a dialogue proleptic to the *Republic*, *Hippias minor* develops the moral and logical framework for the “useful” lie.<sup>159</sup> The critic of the present analysis might also point out that mention of

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<sup>156</sup> “So the more powerful and better soul, when it does injustice, will do injustice voluntarily, and the worthless soul involuntarily.” *Hp. mi.* 376a6-7; Cooper 936.

<sup>157</sup> Ἐκόν is defined “readily,” “willingly, purposely.” LSJ, s.v. ἐκόν.

<sup>158</sup> *Hp. mi.* 376b7-c2; Cooper 936.

<sup>159</sup> *R.* 2.382c6-d3; Cooper 1021; 3.389b7-c6; Cooper 1026. M. LévyStone discusses this point at length. He notes that Socrates of the *Republic* 2.382c distinguishes between lying “in word” and “in deed.” He develops the distinction of “le mentir vrai et le vrai faux,” “the true liar and the true falsehood.” The one who

Achilles and Odysseus ceases “in the last third of the dialogue[; from] 372a ff. there is no reference to them at all, not even in the conclusion.”<sup>160</sup> It has already been argued in relation to the *Ion* that the Platonic method is to have Socrates first analyze the concrete and then abstract from it. That is the pattern which Plato repeats here. First, Socrates analyzes Achilles and Odysseus. The result of that analysis is that Achilles lies unintentionally and Odysseus intentionally and therefore Odysseus is the better man, “Socrates: Then it seems that Odysseus is better than Achilles after all. Hippias: Not at all, surely, Socrates. Socrates: Why not? Didn’t it emerge just now that the voluntary liars are better than the involuntary ones?”<sup>161</sup> In fact, it is exactly at that point (371e4-8), when analysis has yielded an abstraction (“the voluntary liars are better than the involuntary ones”) that Socrates leaves off reference to the concrete figures of Achilles and Odysseus. From that point to the end of the dialogue, Socrates no longer has need of Achilles or Odysseus as concretes; he can develop his argument conceptually, in terms separate from the concrete. Plato is engaged with Homer first on the concrete level, but then moves through analysis and abstraction to the discussion of concepts separate from the concrete.<sup>162</sup> Aristotle, by contrast, is only

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lies only “in word” can be considered positively, whereas the one who lies “in deed” is altogether false because he lies in his soul. He then applies the results of this analysis to *Hippias minor*. He also notes, aptly, that in the *Iliad*, Odysseus is depicted as employing only “useful” lies in order to win the war. Without such useful lies, Troy could never have been taken.” “Sans ses ruses, Troie n’aurait pu être prise !” LévyStone, *Ulysse*, 199, 202-03n66.

<sup>160</sup> Matthias Vorwerk, e-mail to author, July 9, 2007.

<sup>161</sup> *Hp. mi.* 371e4-8; Cooper 931.

<sup>162</sup> This interpretation is obviously at odds with that of Professor Morgan following Professor Blundell, “Socrates’ aim, on the other hand, is to dismiss these literary characters as moral exemplars; both Achilles and Odysseus fall short of the standard of knowledgeable excellence. Blundell points out how Odyssean versatility is a latent paradigm both for the late fifth-century Athenian democracy and Hippias’ own cleverness and adaptability. By indicting Odysseus, Socrates indicts the democracy and the sophist.” Morgan,



interested in concepts separate from the concrete and not in the concrete circumstances or persons from which they are derived. This can be seen in Aristotle's treatment of "the false" in *Metaphysics* 5.29 (1024b17-1025a13) where he criticizes Socrates' conclusion in *Hippias minor*.

Aristotle names Plato's *Hippias* explicitly, and his discussion makes clear that he means the dialogue known as the *Hippias minor*.<sup>163</sup> Aristotle analyzes the conclusion enunciated by Socrates:

This is why the proof in the *Hippias* that the same man is false and true is misleading. For it assumes that he is false who can deceive (i.e., the man who knows and is wise); and further that he who is *willingly* bad is better. This is a false result of induction; for a man who limps willingly is better than one does so unwillingly; by 'limping' Plato means 'mimicking a limp', for if a man were actually lame willingly, he would perhaps be worse in this case as in the corresponding case of character.<sup>164</sup>

Aristotle rejects the idea that something could be true in deed (πράγμα) while false in word (λόγος), the idea that truth can be communicated by producing "a false appearance."<sup>165</sup>

Aristotle's objection is that the false conclusion arises from "induction" (διὰ τῆς ἐπαγωγῆς).<sup>166</sup> It is interesting to note that Aristotle challenges both Plato and Antisthenes<sup>167</sup>

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*Myth and Philosophy from the Presocratics to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112-13. M. W. Blundell, "Character and Meaning in Plato's *Hippias Minor*", in *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues* (OSAPh suppl. vol.), J. C. Klage and N. D. Smith, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 131-72. The basic problem with Professor Morgan's argument is that if Socrates indicts Odysseus, it is, as has been shown, only a very partial and tentative indictment. The analogy does not work, namely that the indictment of democracy and the sophist is also only partial and tentative.

<sup>163</sup> M. LévyStone notes that the acceptance of the dialogue's authenticity is due in no small part to Aristotle's witness. LévyStone, "Ulysse," 199, note 57.

<sup>164</sup> *Metaph.* 5.1025a6-13; Barnes 2.1618.

<sup>165</sup> *Metaph.* 5.1025a1025a4-6; Barnes 2.1618.

<sup>166</sup> *Metaph.* 5.1025a9-10; Barnes 2.1618.

in this section on “the false,” support for the view that the two were contemporaries and rivals to the Socratic mantel. For all that the two Socratic philosophers sparred with each other and differed on this point, to Aristotle they are but degrees apart in their errors. More significant, however, is that Aristotle only addresses the conclusion of the analysis and abstraction in the *Hippias minor*, that is to say as the conclusion is separate from matter and motion. He says nothing of Achilles or Odysseus as concrete entities. This kind of transition from Plato to Aristotle will be seen repeatedly in the second part of this work. As a matter of historical development, Plato is the intermediary who abstracts the Homeric metaphysics from the concrete of poetic depiction. However Aristotle may have treated the relationship of concrete and concept in his lost exoteric works, in his extant works Aristotle typically takes the transition from concrete to abstraction as a given and deals with the abstractions alone.

The general principle of logographic necessity and its particular form in the use of tag-lines and allusions must be accepted in order to understand the *Hippias minor* as a dialogue about Achilles and Odysseus as alternative paradigms of the moral life. Without those tools, the reader is likely to miss or dismiss the conclusion. The analysis here initially follows that of M. Lévystone and subsequent arguments are consistent with his work.

In the way Socrates has framed the question, one already finds an implied reduction of the two texts: the *Iliad* is about Achilles, and the *Odyssey* about Odysseus. The reduction seems to precede Socrates although he also seems to accept it. At least, he says nothing against the reduction. The two heroes are typological figures whom the Athenians ponder in

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<sup>167</sup> *Metaph.*. 5.1024b33-35; Barnes 2.1618.

a reduced sense of heroism. In Homer, the two are heroes in respect to their being between gods and ordinary men. As Socrates quotes Apemantus, they are heroes only in the sense of role models. Should Athenian boys aspire to be like Achilles or like Odysseus? Apemantus took the view that Achilles was superior to Odysseus, and, therefore, that the *Iliad* is superior to the *Odyssey*.

There are two points to observe here. First, the characters of Achilles and Odysseus are the basis for the Socratic adumbration of an ethical problematic. What is depicted in Homer becomes the explicit basis for Socratic analysis and abstraction. The second point is that the Homeric texts are reduced from the status of epic to mere moral lesson books. While that reduction is not the work of Socrates, he does nothing to refute it. Hippias, for his part, makes clear that it is just in such a reading of Homer that the epics have contemporary value. One is reminded of Nietzsche's criticism of his nineteenth century contemporaries that they thought they had the right to judge the past by their own standards.<sup>168</sup> Hippias gives adequate evidence that this tendency is an old one. He says, for example, having quoted lines from the mouth of Achilles (*Iliad* 9.308-10, 12-14), "In these lines he [Homer] clearly shows the way of each man, that Achilles is truthful and simple, and Odysseus is wily and a liar [one who says what is false]; for he presents Achilles as saying these words to Odysseus."<sup>169</sup> Socrates shifts the focus of discussion from what Homer meant to what

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<sup>168</sup> "Those naïve historians call measuring past opinions and deeds by the common opinions of the moment 'objectivity': here they find the canon of all truths; their work is to make the past fit the triviality of their time." Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. with an introduction by Peter Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), 34.

<sup>169</sup> *Hp. mi.* 364e3-365b4; Cooper 924.

Hippias means, since Homer is not present to answer for himself, but Hippias is.<sup>170</sup> Socrates develops the question of truth and falsehood in relation to power and wisdom and then to intentionality.<sup>171</sup> Along the way, Hippias hits upon a fine point about Odysseus, and a point that lies near the center of this dialogue's puzzle, "when Odysseus tells the truth, he always has a purpose, and when he lies, it's the same."<sup>172</sup> The ethical problematic which unfolds here will have life both in the later work of Plato and in that of Aristotle, especially in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. That ethical problematic, it will be argued in II.i, "Being, Seeming and Knowing," represents a misreading of Homer. The depiction discussed morally in the *Hippias minor* and in subsequent works is primarily metaphysical in Homer. Homer shows no concern whatsoever that Odysseus lies. In fact, not just *that* he lies, but more importantly *how* and *why* he lies are signs of who Odysseus *is*.

*Hippias minor* ends with a moral conclusion to which neither Hippias nor even Socrates can assent, namely "it is up to the good man to do injustice voluntarily, and the bad man to do it involuntarily; that is, if the good man has a good soul. . . . So the one who voluntarily misses the mark and does what is shameful and unjust . . . would be no other than the good man."<sup>173</sup> The model for their discussion has been Odysseus as the man who did injustice voluntarily, at least in respect to telling what he knew to be false with great skill. The reader perhaps does well to remind himself that this dialogue was written decades before Aristotle distinguished between moral and intellectual virtues. It may be that Socrates

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<sup>170</sup> *Hp. mi.* 365d1-2, Cooper 925.

<sup>171</sup> Respectively, *Hp. mi.* 366a1-2, 371e4-5; Cooper 925, 931.

<sup>172</sup> *Hp. mi.* 371e2-3; Cooper 931.

<sup>173</sup> *Hp. mi.* 376b2-3, 4-5; Cooper 936.

does not think of making the distinction here because those kinds of qualities were united in the person of Odysseus. One senses that there is something not just puzzling to Plato's Socrates about Odysseus, but troubling as well. He seems clearly to prefer Odysseus to Achilles throughout the dialogue, and yet he cannot quite get over the "rascality" of Odysseus. At the same time, Socrates also exhibits a certain "rascality" in what has long been called "the Socratic method."<sup>174</sup> Socrates rarely says clearly what he holds to be true, and he often dissembles deftly—as deftly as Odysseus—while guiding his interlocutor toward some elusive conclusion. Here Socrates implicitly breaks through the presenting ethical issues to the underlying metaphysical question. When does the truth of being require the telling of something superficially false? It would seem that Socrates of *Hippias minor* is on the way to the noble lie. The final summation in the *Hippias minor* engages the question of the soul, and what constitutes a good soul. The puzzle of Odysseus provides the basis for arriving at these questions. As shall be seen, Socrates of other dialogues recurs to just that puzzle.

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<sup>174</sup> On an adjacent point, Professor Michael J. O'Brien observes, "It [*Hippias minor*] can also claim a place in the vast Ulysses literature, since it offers Odysseus, the willing liar, as an archetype of Socrates, the ironical man." Michael J. O'Brien, *The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 103. Professor O'Brien argues that Odysseus and Achilles are placeholders for Socrates and Hippias respectively, "'Who is the better man, Achilles or Odysseus?' But this problem, whose implications for philosophy seem at first glance remote and uninteresting, is the mask for another issue of more immediate and pressing concern: 'Who is the better man, Hippias or Socrates?'" Ibid., 100, in general, 100-05.

e. *Lysis*<sup>175</sup>

*Ion* and *Hippias minor* are straightforward in their relationship to Homeric material. Socrates states a question in terms of the Homeric epics, and then proceeds to analyze the relevant texts and draw abstractions from his analysis. The Platonic refiguring of Homeric poetry is far more indirect in the *Lysis*. The present interpretation of the *Lysis* is consistent with Professor Kahn's "proleptic reading";<sup>176</sup> the concern here is with prolepsis in relation to Plato's treatment of Homeric themes. Professor Kahn comments that "The *Lysis* is one of the more perplexing dialogues, and its interpretation has been the subject of endless controversy."<sup>177</sup> This dialogue shows a much more developed literary composition than *Ion* and *Hippias minor*. There is an introductory statement, which, though brief, provides rich detail for imagining the scene. There is also a story line about the twists and turns of adolescent friendship into which Socrates weaves his philosophical reflections on φίλια and ἔρωϛ. Without being able to cite a scintilla of textual evidence in support of the view, it would seem impossible, nevertheless, that Plato could have written a dialogue about friendship among young men, that Socrates could have undertaken the conversation with those youths about friendship or that anyone in Athens could have heard or read such a

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<sup>175</sup> Material on the *Lysis* had its origin in a course with Professor Daniel P. Maher whose guidance is gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>176</sup> Kahn, *Plato*, 281-91. The present interpretation of the *Lysis* has almost nothing in common with that of Professor Kahn. He primarily analyzes the argument while the present treatment primarily analyzes literary structure and historical context. The interests of the two discussions are also very different. Professor Kahn attends to the ways *Lysis* prepares the ground for "Plato's erotic model for philosophy" (*Ibid.*, 286), while the interest here is what *Lysis* has to say about Homer's two paradigmatic heroes, Achilles and Odysseus, and the two kinds of friendship they represent. All that having been said, the present interpretation and that of Professor Kahn seem entirely compatible.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 281. Professor Scott summarizes that controversy. Gary Alan Scott. *Plato's Socrates as Educator* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 192.

dialogue without thinking of Achilles and Patroclus. In II.v the subject of the household will be considered which will provide occasion for returning to this text. At present, it is enough to say that the *Lysis* is understood here as having a sub-text of Achilles versus Odysseus, representing respectively male friendship versus the household. Enough needs to be said to explain why this view of the *Lysis* is held, even if such evidence is insufficient to convince all.

*Hippias minor* clearly demonstrates that the contrast of Achilles and Odysseus was alive in Athenian culture during Plato's lifetime and that Plato found the conversation among his neighbors suggestive for philosophical reflection. Professor Bolotin, in providing background to the discussion of friendship (φιλία)—an abstract noun which does not exist in Homer's vocabulary—in the *Lysis*, points to the passage where Achilles pleads for his mother's help to have new and even better armor made in order that he might avenge the death of Patroclus. Achilles says of Patroclus, "that one was as prized (φίλος). . . as my head."<sup>178</sup> While the possibility of any erotic relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is occluded in the Homeric texts, the question of it was alive when ancient Greeks discussed the two friends.<sup>179</sup> The two primary forms of friendship in Homer are the friendship of Achilles and Patroclus, when two people are prized to each other, and that of guest-friends, ξεῖνος (ξένος in Attic Greek or ξεῖνος in Ionic). Socrates makes reference to guest-friendship by quoting Solon, translated here as "host," "Happy (ὄλβιος) the man who has as friends

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<sup>178</sup> David Bolotin, *Plato's Dialogue on Friendship. An Interpretation of the Lysis with a New Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 124. II. 18.78-82

<sup>179</sup> Phaedrus discusses Achilles and Patroclus as lovers in *Symposium*, 179e1-180a7. Also, see Herbert Jennings Rose and Charles Martin Robertson, "Achilles" in *OCD*, 5.

(φίλοι) his children and solid-hoofed horses, his hunting hounds and a host (ξένος) abroad.”<sup>180</sup> In three respects this quotation fits Odysseus: 1) his son, Telemachus, proved a true friend to him during his absence and on his return; 2) his hound, Argos, faithfully awaited his return and died in a final howl of recognition; 3) Odysseus came to his own country, Ithaca, as a ξεῖνος which is variously translated, but principally as guest-friend or stranger.

“Guest-friendship” was a relational institution in ancient Greece which made travel and commerce possible. It plays a large part in the *Odyssey*. It will also be argued here that the role of the stranger is essential to understanding the end of the *Republic* and three “stranger” dialogues, *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Laws*. A stranger arrives in a country, and must be received with appropriate courtesy.<sup>181</sup> This word for “stranger,” however, denotes a set of complex social relations. Ξένος (ξεῖνος) can be a kind of friendship akin to a commercial treaty. When person A visits the country of person Y, then person Y treats person A as an honored guest. When person Y visits the country of person A then person A treats person Y as an honored guest. The relation is reciprocal, and covers hospitality, commercial exchange, protection and friendship. In English the relationship is often translated or referred to as “guest-friendship.” The relation also has loaded into it a more general imperative. In the golden words of Liddell and Scott, “because in the olden time it was a sacred duty to receive, lodge and protect the helpless stranger, Hom. uses ξεῖνος for *any stranger* (who did not give himself out to be a robber or enemy), and so for *a wanderer* or

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<sup>180</sup> Quoting Solon frg.23; *Lysis* 212e3-4, Cooper 696.

<sup>181</sup> For an interesting discussion of “stranger” and “hospitality,” see Kass, *Hungry Soul*, 101-103, 110-114.



*refugee, who was to be treated just like a guest.*"<sup>182</sup> Professor Murray accentuates the quality of "helplessness" which is at the root of the honor given to the stranger:

Realize what a stranger is, in a primitive society. He is a man with no home, no friends, no one to protect him from injury, no one to avenge him afterwards. He has not even his own sanctuaries to shelter him afterwards. And again, a suppliant: a suppliant is any man or woman who formally casts away all means of self-defence and throws himself upon your mercy.<sup>183</sup>

The most vulnerable person is honored because of his vulnerability. Failure to honor the stranger, let alone to violate him, was the height of impiety, "Zeus is the watcher of stranger and suppliant."<sup>184</sup> The Greeks of the Homeric poems were rovers. Their survival depended upon the law of hospitality and protection for the stranger. Menelaus has a speech in which he expresses well the exigencies of hospitality:

Could we have made it home again—and Zeus  
give us no more hard roving!—if other men  
had never fed us, given us lodging?  
Bring  
these men to be our guests (θoinηθῆναι): unhitch their team!<sup>185</sup>

Successful completion of one's sea journey, and therefore existence itself, depended upon receiving guest hospitality. Supply lines were non-existent. Sufficient provisions could not be stowed aboard ship. Storms, pirates, and other exigencies could suddenly deplete all resources. *Being*, existence in contrast to non-being (non-existence), depended upon hospitality.

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<sup>182</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855), s.v. ξένος.

<sup>183</sup> Murray, *Epic*, 86.

<sup>184</sup> *Od.* 9.270, as quoted by Professor Murray. *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>185</sup> *Od.* 4.33-35; Fitzgerald 58. This is the only use of θοινάω in Homer. Cunliffe, *Lexicon*, s.v. θοινάω.

This passage has another significance which connects guest-friendship to the *Lysis* and, even more specifically to the quotation of Solon. As *Odyssey* 4 opens, Menelaus and Helen are giving a wedding feast. Nestor and Telemachus pull up to the front door of the palace. A servant announces the arrival of two strangers of heroic rank and asks, “What do you say, shall we unhitch their team, or send them on to someone free to receive them (φιλήσῃ)?”<sup>186</sup> The use of φιλέω here effectively means “to treat someone as a member of our household.” In a very literal way the question is, “Should the outsider (stranger) be treated as an insider (friend)?” It is very likely that the servant recognized Nestor since the reply by Menelaus implies the servant’s participation in the Trojan War. In any event, he clearly understood that these were men of heroic rank, and, therefore, they were entitled to hospitality. The reply of Menelaus includes the literal bringing of the strangers, who were standing outside, inside into the house (οἶκος) and to the banquet table. The stranger had become guest-friend—the same word denoting both categories—and as such was to be received as if he were a member of the household. A guest-friend was a stranger who had become “like one of the family.” By the time of Plato, the word οἰκεῖος had developed, derivative of οἶκος. Literally, it meant “of the household,” but it had a secondary meaning as “one’s own” or “akin” in the metaphorical sense. LSJ notes that it is often used in opposition to ξένος.<sup>187</sup> In this respect, it is often used in the *Lysis*. The narrative frame for Menelaus’ speech is a wedding feast between persons of the first rank and with highest personal claim upon Menelaus. What is depicted is that the obligations of guest-friendship superseded other

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<sup>186</sup> *Od.* 4.28-29.

<sup>187</sup> LSJ, s.v. οἰκεῖος.

social claims of a very high order, perhaps even all other social claims. Social existence depended even more upon the bond of guest-friendship than of marriage. When Solon says, “Happy the man who has . . . a ξένος,” he points to a social relation of premier importance in the Greek world.

Unlike *Ion* and *Hippias minor*, *Lysis* has only one explicit quotation or mention of Homer, and that a curious one, “God always draws the like unto the like.”<sup>188</sup> As Professor James Haden observes:

It does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the quotation of a line from Homer would to an educated Greek not only subtly lead the mind back into their context, at which point the associative memory and imagination can take over and move through such admittedly non-logical links.<sup>189</sup>

This single Homeric line comes at the dialogue’s mid-point. The quotation from Solon precedes the Homeric line by just more than a Stephanus page. There is a quotation from Hesiod which follows the Homeric line by just more than a Stephanus page.<sup>190</sup> As Plato has structured his dialogue, the three authorities most honored in Athens (i.e., Homer, Hesiod and Solon) stand at the center. The first and the third are meant as elucidations of the Homer line which constitutes the turning point of the dialogue. That third quotation reads, “Potter is angry with potter, poet with poet/ And beggar with beggar (πτωχὸς πτωχῶ).”<sup>191</sup> Professor Bolotin examines the context of the Homeric line in the *Odyssey*. He recognizes that beneath the superficial idea of “like to like,” the preceding line in the Homeric text casts that notion

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<sup>188</sup> *Ly.* 214a5; Cooper 698.

<sup>189</sup> James Haden, “Friendship in Plato’s *Lysis*,” *Review of Metaphysics* 37 (1983), 346-47.

<sup>190</sup> The *Lysis* runs 203-223b. The Homer quotation comes at 214a5; that of Solon, 212e2; that of Hesiod, 215c4-5.

<sup>191</sup> *Ly.* 215c4-5, Cooper 699.

in very different light, “Here comes one scurvey type leading another!/ God pairs them off together, every time.”<sup>192</sup> The speaker of these lines is Melantheus the goatherd, also a retainer of Odysseus, but unfaithful. He has pandered to the suitors, thereby promoting disorder and disrepute in the household. Socrates’ favorable quotation of Melantheus’s line points to a repudiation of Odysseus, at least, insofar as Odysseus has come to restore the household. Socrates quotes Homer’s villain, Melantheus, against Homer’s hero, Odysseus.

Odysseus has landed in his own country, Ithaca, where he travels in the disguise of a beggar. As Descartes observes in the *Discourse on Method*, “When one takes too much time traveling, one eventually becomes a stranger in one’s own country.”<sup>193</sup> Odysseus has returned to his kingdom as a stranger. He is received with generous hospitality by his faithful old swineherd, Eumaeus, who prior to his captivity as a slave was himself a prince in his native country. In fact, even as a slave in the household of Odysseus, Eumaeus is a man of authority and responsibility. “Swineherd” does not capture the measure of power he has over other subordinate slaves as well as for the supervision of the pig herd. He plays a vital and semi-independent role in the household. Eumaeus receives Odysseus as a guest-host receiving his guest-friend. Once in Ithaca, Homer’s most common title for Odysseus is ξείνος, “guest-friend” or “stranger.” Eumaeus addresses Odysseus thus and then makes a speech about the obligations to strangers as ones sent from Zeus, “Tush, friend (ξείν’),/ rudeness to a stranger (ξείνων) is not decency, poor though he may be, poorer than you./ All

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<sup>192</sup> *Od.* 17.217-18; Fitzgerald 295. Bolotin, *Friendship*, 124-128.

<sup>193</sup> Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, AT 6.

wanderers (ξείνοι) and beggars (πτωχοί) come from Zeus.”<sup>194</sup> Thus linking the quotation of Homer to that of Solon, Odysseus is that “happy man” (ὄλβιος) who has a guest-host. At the same time, Odysseus is the beggar of the Hesiod quotation. In *Odyssey* 17.220, Melantheus uses the same word for beggar about Odysseus as Hesiod uses, πτωχός. Indeed, “stranger” and “beggar,” Professor Murray’s suppliant, are often paired as in *Odyssey* 14.56-58 cited above. “Potter is angry with potter, poet with poet/ And beggar with beggar,” and, one might add, Plato with Homer.

Professor Bolotin rightly observes that “his very quotation from the *Odyssey*” is a “sign . . . of Socrates’ opposition to Homer.”<sup>195</sup> Socrates implicitly sides with Melantheus against Odysseus. It will be argued in II.v that it is Socrates’ opposition to the household and to the biological family which leads him to oppose Odysseus in the *Lysis*. At this point, the aim is to show that Plato is refiguring Homeric material in a far more subtle and sophisticated way than in *Ion* and *Hippias minor*, where Socrates stands as a respectful exegete of the Homeric texts. In the *Lysis*, however, Plato is not yet ready to have Socrates attack Homer directly as he does in *Republic*. To give another example of allusive refiguring, Socrates discusses with Lysis the various members of his household, his father, the slaves who are his chaperons, and then his mother:

“But what about when you come home to your mother, does she let you do whatever it takes to make you happy, like playing with her wool or her loom when she’s weaving? She doesn’t stop you from touching the blade or the comb or any of her other wool-working tools, does she?” “Stop me?” he laughed. “She would beat me if I laid a finger on them.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> *Od.* 14.56-58; Fitzgerald 233.

<sup>195</sup> Bolotin, *Friendship*, 125.

Just as it would have been impossible for the Athenians to consider male friendship without thinking of Achilles and Patroclus, so also it would have been impossible for them to hear this image of Lysis' mother at the loom without thinking of Penelope. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates explicitly uses the image of Penelope weaving as an example of what philosophy should not be like.<sup>197</sup> Nothing betokened womanly virtue more than her work at the loom. The mockery implied in Socrates' question was impious. Like Melantheus, Socrates brings disorder and disrepute to the household, thereby preparing for his explicit attack on the household in *Republic*.

This reading of *Lysis* suggests a far more antipathetic view of Homer than in *Ion* and *Hippias minor*. The claim is that the strength of opposition is clear not in spite of the sole reference to Homer, rather it was the large silence on Homer which expresses a bold negative stance. The claim here is that Plato could not escape Homer. He could have Socrates recite Homer to a champion rhapsode (in the *Ion*), exegete Homeric texts (in the *Hippias minor*), or he could craft his dialogue as an allusive refiguring of Homeric tropes (in the *Lysis*), but the Homeric paradigms remained fixed as obligatory occasions for philosophizing.

#### **f. Homeric Depiction and Socratic Conception in the *Republic***

Socrates of the *Republic* does not regard Homer as a philosopher, and yet he is not altogether of one mind. It will be shown that there are occasions when Socrates abstracts

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<sup>196</sup> *Ly.* 208d2-e2; Cooper 692.

<sup>197</sup> *Phd.* 84a2-5.

philosophic truth from Homer depiction. Does Socrates use the material as essentially philosophical or only illustrative? This, in turn, raises again Vico's accusation that Plato found "esoteric wisdom" in Homer.<sup>198</sup> It has already been observed that Vico means by his accusation, Plato's Socrates identifies in Homer concrete expressions of rational conceptions. Setting aside at present Vico's own reading of Homer, it is important to ask if Vico was correct in his assessment of how Plato read Homer. It has already been seen in the previous chapter that Professor Mazzotta thought Vico's view on Plato's reading of Homer simply wrong. He says categorically, "Vico's criticism of Plato for inaugurating the traditional view of Homer as a philosopher is, on the face of it, a flagrant misreading of Plato. Plato never claims that Homer's poems have any esoteric wisdom to convey."<sup>199</sup> As shall be seen, Plato's Socrates does indeed claim Homer's poems had esoteric wisdom, if by "esoteric" one means the truest meaning, the meaning of highest order, which is not evident to the casual hearer or reader. Perhaps Professor Mazzotta meant something else by "esoteric," or perhaps he meant to qualify his statement to make it less than categorical, or perhaps he was simply wrong. The *Republic* provides copious matter for the responding to the question exoteric versus esoteric readings, though the answer will sometimes depend on the form impressed upon that matter by the critical reader. In other instances, however, Plato's Socrates expounds a passage from Homer in a way that clearly distinguishes between Homer's exoteric and esoteric meanings. For example, *Republic* 2.378d1-e2, which has already been examined in I.ii.2.c with respect to philosophical etymology, Socrates opines,

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<sup>198</sup> NS 780.

<sup>199</sup> Mazzotta, *New Map*, 156.

“We won’t admit stories into our city—whether allegorical or not (οὐτ’ ἐν ὑπονοίαις πεποιημένας οὔτε ἄνευ ὑπονοιῶν),”<sup>200</sup> Explicit in this speech is that Socrates fully believed there was an esoteric truth to be discovered in Homer through allegorical interpretation even when the exoteric story was as unedifying as imaginable. Messrs. Liddell, Scott, and Jones cite this speech as an example of how ὑπόνοια can be used in sense of “*the real meaning which lies at the bottom of a thing, the true intent.*”<sup>201</sup> They cite the passage just quoted as an illustration of this “real meaning.” As used by Socrates in *Republic* 2.378d1-e2, ὑπόνοια here must surely also have the root etymological sense of “hidden meaning.” Socrates does not deny that an underlying meaning exists, but he rejects an esoteric exposition because the exoteric meaning of the passage is blatantly immoral and even impious. No matter how exemplary the underlying point may be of certain stories, if they are not on their face edifying, then they cannot be permitted in the Socratic city. Professor Benardete explains why the allegorical or metaphorical interpretation must be excluded from the city:

Socrates’ rejection of immoral stories with or without “underthought (huponoia)” precludes such tragic wisdom. Children must not be given the opportunity to draw any inference from the action of a story (378d6). The stories must be transparent and not have to be “read”; they must be like the goods of which the gods are the cause and which are good not only in themselves but in their effect.<sup>202</sup>

If stories are to be divine, then they must be godlike which necessitates unqualified goodness. Goodness cannot be equivocal, because then it would only be qualified goodness. This relates to the point made above, that allegory ultimately expresses a philosophy of flux

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<sup>200</sup> R. 2.378d1-e2; Cooper 1017.

<sup>201</sup> LSJ, s.v. ὑπόνοια.

<sup>202</sup> Seth Benardete, *Socrates’ Second Sailing: On Plato’s “Republic”* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 63.



and motion. Univocity is essential to goodness. An irony in this, of course, is that what Plato himself thought is itself *ὑπόνοια*, that which one must guess at. His mind is hidden under the words of his dialogues.

While Socrates of the *Republic* disparages some of the stories told by Homer, he also makes use of other passages. One such passage is of especial interest because Socrates avers to it three times, twice in the *Republic* and once in the *Phaedo*. The quoted passage is the *Odyssey* 20.17-18. Each quotation is a little different and bears examination separately. In the first, *Republic* 3.390c5-d4, Socrates has been assembling a small florilegium of quotations from Homer and other Greek authorities for the purpose of distinguishing between those which can rightly be quoted and those which should always be eschewed. Given that Homer was the schoolmaster of Athens, if Socrates wants to displace Homer or to modify his influence, he must establish some principle external to himself for doing so. With Athens' ignominious defeat in the Peloponnesian War fresh in mind, Socrates identifies a principle which would have been incontrovertible: good education is whatever will make Athenian youths courageous and fearless of death.<sup>203</sup> When some noble virtue is extolled or exemplified, then such a passage should be employed in the instruction. That is the context when Socrates quotes *Odyssey* 20.17-18 the first time.

But if, on the other hand, there are words or deeds of famous men, who are exhibiting endurance in the face of everything, surely they must be seen or heard. For example,

“He struck his chest and spoke to his heart (ἠνίπαπε μύθῳ):

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<sup>203</sup> *R.* 3.386a1-b1.

‘Endure, my heart, you’ve suffered more shameful (κύντερον) things than this!’<sup>204</sup>

The purpose Socrates finds in the quotation is for moral encouragement, what might be called building character.

The second quotation, *Republic* 4.441b2-c2, is more explicitly philosophical.

Socrates is discussing the three parts of the soul (appetitive, spirited and the ratiocinative) and that the three parts of the soul correspond to the three parts of the city.<sup>205</sup> Socrates quotes Homer in this instance as explicitly depicting what he himself wants to say philosophically, namely that there is a civil war amongst the parts of the soul, and that the ratiocinative part can and should command the spirited part:

Moreover, also, as has been said before, that line of Homer bears witness, “striking his breast, he admonished his heart with words.” There plainly, Homer poetically made the power of reasoning (τὸ ἀναλογισάμενον) about the better and the worse strike a blow upon the unreasoning power of spiritedness (τῷ ἀλογίστως θυμουμένῳ), as one thing to another.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> R. 3.390d1-5; Cooper 1028. Professor Ferrari points out that in Homer’s text—although he does so in his comment not on 390d1-5, rather 441b2-c2—just prior to these lines, the spirit of Odysseus barked like a dog – like a bitch defending her pups against an interloper.” G. R. F. Ferrari, “The Three-Part Soul,” in G. R. F. Ferrari, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s “Republic”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 170. He also points out that the word translated “shameful” is derived from the Greek for dog, “A closer translation is: ‘You’ve endured more ‘dog’ than this’ (*kunteron*).” *Ibid.*, 186. See also Deneen, *Political Theory*, 93-94 on this one explicitly positive quotation of Homer by Socrates of the *Republic*. Professor Deneen comments, “This is the only *positive* example of instructive poetry offered by Socrates in his discussion of poetic education (against his stated intention not to offer one); thus, the importance of the virtue [moderation] being recommended here is stressed.” Deneen, *Political Theory*, 93. On the import of what Odysseus says in the Homeric context, see Onians, *Origins*, 13.

<sup>205</sup> R. 4.439d2-441c3.

<sup>206</sup> R. 4.441b2-c2; Cooper 1072 altered. It is typical that commentaries comment on this passage with respect to the relationship between spiritedness and rationality, but without pausing to reflect upon the significance of Socrates’ use of Homer here. “It is in order to distinguish them [the spirited and the calculative] that Socrates brings up the example of Odysseus quieting his heart; but this example, we saw, was notable for differentiating the conflicting elements not on moral but only on instrumental grounds.” Ferrari, “Soul,” 172; see also 169. “We see that young children are spirited from birth, whereas they come to calculation later, and in the case of the many, much later, and some seem never to possess it. The same is true of beasts, and it is attested by Homer with respect to Odysseus, who calms down his anger by the faculty of calculation (441a5-

One notices that Socrates only quotes the first line of the two he had quoted earlier in the *Republic*, omitting the actual words with which Odysseus “admonished his heart.” It is also interesting that he explicitly makes reference to the fact that he has quoted this passage before. Socrates attributes to Homer an understanding of rational analysis which he has merely expressed poetically. Socrates says that Homer’s intention is clear. In Socrates’ own terms, he is not interpreting Homer allegorically, because he attributes to Homer the same understanding of the depiction as Socrates himself has. He is saying, in effect, that this speech of Odysseus’s is univocal, that there is only one way to understand it, i.e., this is the exoteric meaning, and there is no esoteric meaning.<sup>207</sup> Even if one takes the claim of Socrates at face value, he expresses abstractly what Homer depicts. Socrates does not simply repeat the depiction, he explains it. If it needs explaining, then it is difficult to see how the explanation is not “esoteric wisdom,” even though Socrates does seem to insist that his understanding of the Homeric quotation is not esoteric.<sup>208</sup>

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c2). Stanley Rosen, “*Republic*,” 159. Professor Ferrari does pause to puzzle a bit over what seems to him a contradiction. Given Socrates use of this passage from Homer in 3.390d1-5, he asks, “Is there any reason, then, why these soldiers who must learn to fight when outnumbered (422b-c) should not go on to hear the whole story of the punishment inflicted by Odysseus?” Plato’s reception of Homer here, however, does not seem to interest him. Ferrari, “Soul,” 184.

<sup>207</sup> This is an example of the kind of fundamentalist reading of Homer of which Professor Kaufmann’s accuses Plato. Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 21.

<sup>208</sup> It might be supposed, as Professor Ferrari seems to do, that Socrates’ quotation of Odysseus here is like his use of the Leontius story, “Finally, he gives in and runs up to the corpses, forcing his eyes wide open and cursing them: ‘there you are, you wretches! Take your fill of the beautiful spectacle!’ the case proves that anger can fight against desires and so indicates that the spirited is distinct from the desiring part, as the case of Odysseus stilling his heart bears witness that the spirited is distinct from the calculative part.” Ferrari, “Soul,” 180-81 and *passim* 180-184. The quotation of Homer has a far greater significance. First, Plato only uses the story of Leontius once in *R.* 4.439e6-440a3. He uses this citation of Odysseus three times. Second, this very positive use of Homer comes against a backdrop of general, consistent, persistent condemnation of Homer throughout the *Republic*. It is important to note Socrates’ framing of the quotation. He states explicitly twice, once before and then after the quotation, that he is saying in his analysis what Homer said through depiction,

It is a pity that Homer is not available to be asked if he is surprised to discover he understands his words in the same way as Socrates of the *Republic*. Part of the effect of how Plato portrays Socrates here is to make Socrates the equal and even the contemporary of Homer. In that regard, just as Socrates of the *Republic* is Plato's literary creation, so also is Homer of the *Republic*. Plato's art lulls the reader into forgetting that Socrates of the *Republic* is not the historical Socrates. That same art lulls the same reader into forgetting that Homer of the *Republic* is not the historical Homer either. In fact, Plato's treatment of Homer contributes substantially to the impression that there was an historical Homer. Thus in the pages of the *Republic*, the effect is of Homer and Socrates as literary contemporaries. In addition, though the text may present the contretemps as between Homer and Socrates, the sub-text is Plato's Homer and Socrates over against the Homer and Socrates of Antisthenes. As has been discussed above, the bitter rivalry between Plato and Antisthenes was ever before the literate public in fourth century B.C. Athens in a way that it has long ceased to be for students of Plato.

In Socrates' third use of this quotation, *Phaedo* 94d3-5, he is again explicating his doctrine of the soul.<sup>209</sup> On this occasion, he wants to defeat the notion that there is a harmony of various elements in the soul. Over against that notion, Socrates wants to affirm

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"Besides, our earlier quotation from Homer bears it out. . . . For here Homer clearly (σαφῶς) represents (πεποίηκεν) the part that has calculated about better and worse as different from the part that is angry without calculation." R. 4.441b3-5, b7-c2; Cooper 1072.

<sup>209</sup> Professor Stern notes this line from Homer is also quoted in the *Republic*. Paul Stern, *Socratic Rationalism and Political Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's Phaedo* (Albany: State University of New York, 1993), 101-02.

that the ratiocinative element of the soul rules or, at least, can and should rule the other components of the soul:

[Socrates:] Well, does it now appear to do quite the opposite, ruling over all the elements of which one says it is composed, opposing nearly all of them throughout life, directing their ways, inflicting harsh and painful punishments on them, at times in physical culture and medicine, at other times more gently by threats and exhortations, holding converse with desires and passions and fears as if it were one thing talking to a different one, as Homer wrote somewhere in the *Odyssey* where he says that Odysseus [“striking his breast, he admonished his heart with words: ‘Endure it, o heart, for more shameful things than this have you endured!’”] Do you think when he composed this the poet thought that his soul was a harmony, a thing to be directed by the affections of the body? Did he not rather regard it as ruling over them and mastering them, itself a much more divine thing than a harmony?

[Simmias:] Yes, by Zeus, I think so, Socrates.

[Socrates:] Therefore, my good friend, it is quite wrong for us to say that the soul is a harmony, and in saying so we would disagree both with the divine poet Homer and with ourselves.<sup>210</sup>

Socrates supposes that Homer had rationally reflected on the point of whether the soul is a harmony. At least, he says as much. Socrates throws off this line: it is “somewhere” in Homer. Thus the blind bard is invoked with respect to the specific point on harmony partly to arrogate his authority in support of the soul’s immortality.

Having seen the use made of that quotation from Homer, once in the *Phaedo* and twice in the *Republic*, one can safely conclude that Plato’s Socrates likes that quotation. If Plato’s Socrates repudiates allegory in the manner of Antisthenes, then what is one to make of his threefold quotation of *Odyssey* 20.17-18? His use in the three different passages must be univocal. That is to say, Plato’s Socrates explicitly chooses a passage in Homer where the poet depicts what Plato’s Socrates wants to express in terms of rational argument. This is a

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<sup>210</sup> *Phd.* 94c8-95a2; Cooper 82. My own translation of Homer is retained as indicated with brackets.

clear case where Plato's Socrates identifies an important issue in the philosophical problematic which he receives from Homer. Professor Joe Sachs even makes a case for the importance of images in the *Republic*:

The divided line is an image about images, in the middle of a dialogue full of images. One of the things that most of all gives the *Republic* its characteristic flavor is its profusion of images of all kinds. At various points in the dialogue (such as 435 D and 506E), Socrates emphasizes that a precise account of the things under discussion would have to go by a longer and harder road, but that a lot can still be gained by images. In fact an image has the advantage over a theory in that one can more easily be reminded that it is not knowledge but only a dialectical step toward knowing. . . . One of the words used most frequently in the *Republic* is *oiomai*, translated here almost always as "I imagine" as another constant reminder that everything made intelligible in the dialogue is offered first to the imagination, and is thought through, and into, only by those willing to make their own efforts to ascend through the stages of the divided line.<sup>211</sup>

Although he does not explicitly comment on Socrates' use of Homer, he does discuss as an example of Socrates use of images in 440d "where Socrates praises him [Glaucou] for getting hold of a conception in thought by taking to heart what was first in the imagination."<sup>212</sup> The identification, then, is of what Professor Sachs calls "image" and here is called "depiction."

In another instance, Socrates of the *Republic* discusses the painter who like the poet works in depiction, as the painter's depiction corresponds to the philosopher's rational expression of the same point:

[Socrates:] Then don't you think they'd next sketch the outline of the constitution?

[Adeimantus:] Of course.

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<sup>211</sup> Joe Sachs, *Plato: "Republic", Translation, Glossary, and introductory Essay*, with an afterword by John White (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2007), 7.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

[Socrates:] And I suppose that, as they work, they'd look often in each direction, towards the natures of justice, beauty, moderation, and the like, on the one hand, and towards those they're trying to put into human beings, on the other. And in this way they'd mix and blend the various ways of life in the city until they produced a human image based on what Homer too called "the divine form and image" when it occurred among human beings.

[Adeimantus:] That's right.

[Socrates:] They'd erase one thing, I suppose, and draw in another until they'd made characters for human beings that the gods would love as much as possible.

[Adeimantus:] At any rate, that would certainly result in the finest sketch.

[Socrates:] Then is this at all persuasive to those you said were straining to attach us—that the person we were praising is really a painter of constitutions?<sup>213</sup>

There is, however, the problem of the "painter of constitutions." He is not, strictly speaking, a philosopher since he is concerned with the image of a constitution and not the constitution itself. The painter is to historically existing constitutions as the philosopher is to the "paradigm" of the best constitution which is "in heaven" (ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παράδειγμα).<sup>214</sup>

There remains the problem of what to do with these depictions of constitutions. In the Homeric text, Socrates says, one sees depicted—"painted"—the various constitutions of men, mixed and blended into the divine image. Socrates has just framed the perfect admixture of human qualities until it attained to godlikeness in terms of "justice, beauty and moderation," all of which are in very short supply among heroic heroes, save for Odysseus.

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<sup>213</sup> R. 6.501a5-c3; Cooper 1122.

<sup>214</sup> R. 9.592b2-3; "There is a model of it in heaven." Cooper 1199.

**g. Homer: Authority for Change and Motion in *Theaetetus***

Up to this point, only the thesis has been argued that Plato conceptualized what Homer depicted. There remains the question of whether Plato held Homer to have been a philosopher. Here it is essential to distinguish two different questions. First, did Plato himself regard Homer as a philosopher? Second, did Plato regard Homer as what modern and contemporary philosophers regard as philosophers. The *Theaetetus* provides the primary basis for answering those questions, thus before taking them up, something needs saying about the dialogue itself.

*Theaetetus* is a dialogue that can be dated with relative accuracy because “the dialogue’s prologue seems to announce the work as published in his [Theaetetus’s] memory, shortly after his early death on military service in 369 B.C.”<sup>215</sup> Professor Cooper observes that the date of writing roughly corresponds with the arrival of Aristotle in Plato’s Academy in 367 B.C.,<sup>216</sup> when Plato was sixty years old. The relationship of *Theaetetus* to the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* is explicit in the texts of these three dialogues.<sup>217</sup> A similar connection is made to the *Parmenides* as an antecedent dialogue when Socrates makes reference to meeting the philosopher of being.<sup>218</sup> In the series of *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman*, *Theaetetus* is the only dialogue in which Socrates is the main protagonist. It will be argued in I.ii.3 that in the later dialogues, Socrates yields to not just another protagonist, but another kind of protagonist. In these four dialogues, Socrates appears as one among the

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<sup>215</sup> Cooper 157.

<sup>216</sup> Cooper 157.

<sup>217</sup> *Tht.* 210d4; *Soph.* 216a1-4; *Pol.* 257a1-2. See Cooper 157.

<sup>218</sup> *Tht.* 183e5-184a2. See Cooper 157.



many “wise.” The *Theaetetus* provides an assessment of philosophical thought in the way that is typical in Aristotle’s works, but is not the standard in Platonic dialogues. Socrates discusses the views of the various thinkers and in a way that is only partially accurate, but which then gives Socrates a sound basis for launching his own line of thought.<sup>219</sup> Far more usual in Platonic dialogues is that the philosophical thought countered by Socrates is espoused by his interlocutor, be that interlocutor from the youth of Athens, like Plato’s brothers in the *Republic*, or the thinkers themselves, as in *Protagoras*, *Parmenides*, and *Gorgias*.

The four dialogues also share a quality of narrative framing which distinguishes them. The *Parmenides* and the *Theaetetus* are presented as recollections about the conversation with Socrates as told by someone who observed the encounter but who did not participate in it. The same narrative frame is implicit in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* because of the internal references which present those two dialogues as following *Theaetetus*. That feature lends some dramatic depth to the four dialogues. It may be that Plato hoped thereby to suggest a different kind of authority for the teaching. When words are remembered and passed down, they gain weight as tradition. Plato pulls ancient Homer into the present, reducing him to a mere captain of similar thinkers. Platonic thought is elevated by making Socrates remembered as one who held his own with giants. At the same time, a new type of figure emerges, a nameless Stranger (ξένος), to whom even Socrates shows some deference.

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<sup>219</sup> In *Phaedo* 96ff., Socrates discusses the thought of Anaxagoras, but in that case as basis for agreement and further development. KRS observe, “[Plato’s] references to Heraclitus, Parmenides and Empedocles are more often than not light-hearted obiter dicta, and one-sided or exaggerated ones at that, rather than the sober and objective historical judgement. . . . Aristotle gave more serious attention to his philosophical predecessors than Plato had done, and prefaced some of his treatises with formal surveys of their opinions.” KRS 3.

All the foregoing literary points contribute to a context in which the various quotations and allusions to Homer must be read.

Socrates of the *Theaetetus* goes further than Socrates of the *Republic* or of the *Phaedo* when the Socrates of those earlier dialogues uses Homeric depiction as a basis for his own conceptualization. Socrates of the *Theaetetus* identifies Homer explicitly not only as a thinker, but even as metaphorical captain of an army of thinkers (including such lieutenants as Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Protagoras) which fights for change and motion.<sup>220</sup> Socrates sums up his foregoing discussion:

Socrates: As regards this point of view, let us take it as a fact that all the wise men of the past, with the exception of Parmenides, stand together. Let us take it that we find on this side Protagoras and Heraclitus and Empedocles; and also the masters of two kinds of poetry, Epicharmus in comedy and Homer in tragedy. For when Homer talked about ‘Ocean, begetter of gods, and Tethys their mother’, he made all things the offspring of flux and motion. –Or don’t you think he meant that?

Theaetetus: Oh I think he did.

Socrates: And if anyone proceeded to dispute the field with an army like that—an army led by Homer—he could hardly help making a fool of himself, could he?<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> *Tht.* 152d5-153a2.

<sup>221</sup> *Tht.* 152e1-153a3; Cooper, 170. See also *Cra.* 402a8-c3.

In surveying some of the most prominent book-length treatments of *Theaetetus*, one discovers a substantial disparity in the kind of appreciation given to the Homeric references over all and the references to Ocean and Tethys in specific. Professor Cornford seems to set the example for ignoring Homer in his commentary on *Theaetetus*. On *Tht.* 152e, 179e, and 180d, he makes no mention of Homer or Ocean and Tethys. Francis Macdonald Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The "Theaetetus and the "Sophist" of Plato with a Running Commentary* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), 37-39, 92-97. Professor McDowell says about the list of thinkers in 152e, “Two of the people mentioned here call for some special comment.” They are Parmenides and Heraclitus. One can make a reasonable inference that the other three, Empedocles, Epicharmus as well as Homer, do not merit “special comment.” John McDowell, *Plato: "Theaetetus"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 129. He does mention Homer in relation to 153c-d, but it is only a mention. He lumps Homer and Heraclitus together, when commenting upon 179d-181b, but says nothing at all about Ocean and Tethys in either passage. One might well wonder why the other three are mentioned. What purpose do their names serve in that list? That question does not seem to have occurred to most of the commentators reviewed in this note. Although Professor Rosemary Desjardins opens her work with a reference to Odysseus and discusses “wave” as a theme in Plato, she seems to have no interest in the role Homer or the references to Ocean and Tethys play in the dialogue. Neither appears in the index. When she

Socrates makes Homer responsible for the doctrine of “flux and motion.” II.i will take up the question of what that teaching was. At this point, the aim is to see if Socrates regarded Homer as a philosopher. Socrates both makes distinctions and blurs distinctions in this passage which warrant consideration. He calls all those named “the wise” (οἱ σοφοί), but not “philosophers.” One recalls again the statement made by Socrates of the *Republic* at the beginning of Book 6, “Both the philosophers and nonphilosophers have revealed who they are (οἱ μὲν φιλόσοφοι . . . καὶ οἱ μὴ).”<sup>222</sup>

The claims made by Socrates in the passage above require analysis.

1) There is Parmenides (in 180e4 and 183e3 he will add Melissus), author of the doctrine of being, versus the army of flux and motion which includes Homer,

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discusses *Tht.* 152e2-8, where Homer as well as Ocean and Tethys are mentioned, she makes no comment about them. Rosemary Desjardins, *The Rational Enterprise: Logos in Plato's "Theaetetus"* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 1, 199, 20-28. Professor Burnyeat seems to occlude Homer as well as Ocean and Tethys from his consideration *Tht.* 152e, 179e, and 180d. Myles Burnyeat, *The "Theaetetus" of Plato* (Indianapolis; Hackett Publishing Company, 1990), 10-13, 42-50. Professor Polansky does, at least, note the references to Homer and, inspecific, his account of Ocean and Tethys. He takes them into account as part of his analysis of the discussion on flux and motion. Ronald M. Polansky, *Philosophy and Knowledge: A Commentary on Plato's "Theaetetus"* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1992), 88-90, 154-56, and 192, note 29. Professor Stern, by sharp contrast, takes up the questions of references to Homer throughout his commentary and understands Homer to be an important, perhaps the most important figure whom Socrates challenges. Paul Stern, *Knowledge and Politics in Plato's Theaetetus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, especially 176-82 and 191-96. Professor Stern presents a tidy summary of the varieties in interpretive emphasis. *Ibid.*, 6-11. There seems to be a divide between those commentators, not only of *Theaetetus* but of Plato in general, between, without implying that the divide is categorical, those interested in political philosophy (e.g., Benardete, Bloom, Planinc, Stern, Voegelin) who hold that the Homeric references are significant and those primarily interested in other areas of philosophy (e.g., Burnyeat, Cornford, Desjardins, McDowell, Polansky) who do not find them important. As an example, Professor Stern notes that in a passage which he discusses at some length is dismissed by Professor McDowell and others, “McDowell writes, ‘I suspect that in fact the whole of 152e2-153d5 is not intended very seriously.’ Bostock maintains that the link between Homer and flux is not meant as ‘sober history.’ Chappell finds this passage ‘an exercise in parody’ that aims to make the flux doctrine ‘look guilty by association’ because of the ‘outrageously bad arguments’ supplied for its support.” Stern, *Knowledge*, 93, note 25. M. LévyStone may be an exception to this dichotomy, interested as he is in questions about Homer and Odysseus without a manifest interest in political philosophy. LévyStone, “Ulysse,” 181-214.

<sup>222</sup> R. 6.484a1-3; Cooper 1107.

Epicharmus, Heraclitus, Protagoras, and Empedocles. By the standard of the *Republic*, only metaphysicians—those who contemplate that-which-is—are truly philosophers. That standard applied to the list of thinkers here reveals that Parmenides (and Melissus) and Socrates himself alone are philosophers. The others are “wise men of the past,” but not philosophers.

2) Homer and Epicharmus are called poets, but one observes, as has been discussed, that Parmenides and Empedocles both expressed their thought in hexametric poetry.

3) Epicharmus is said to have written comedy, and Homer tragedy, but one observes that Epicharmus wrote comedy in the sense of writing plays, and Homer tragedy in a very different sense.

4) In the sense that Homer was the father of tragedy, was he not the father of comedy too? When the rhapsode sings the tale of Polyphemus saying that “No Body” had put out his eye, can we imagine anything but laughter among the audience? Comedy has been variously defined, but the *Odyssey* possesses three characteristics which late fifth century Athenians expected from the genre: sly jokes, terrific sex scenes, and a happy ending. Hephaestus catching Ares and Aphrodite *in flagrante delicto* (*Odyssey* 8.266-366) comes immediately to mind.<sup>223</sup> Professor C. S.

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<sup>223</sup> In restrained prose, the *OCD* opines, “The end of the play is festive in character. . . . It is probable that comic irreverence is the elevation to a high artistic level (Demodocus’ tale of Ares and Aphrodite in *Od.* 8 may be compared) of a type of irreverence which permeates the folklore of polytheistic cultures. . . . The actors wore grotesque masks, and their costume included artificial exaggeration (e.g., of belly and phallus) for comic effect; the phallus may have been invariable for male roles until the fourth century. No limit seems to have been set, in speech or action, to the humorous exploitation of sex (normal or perverted) and excretion, and the vocabulary used in these types of humour eschews the euphemism characteristic of prose literature.” Kenneth James Dover, “Comedy (Greek), Old,” in *OCD*, 269-70.

Lewis aptly points out that even in the context of the *Odyssey* tragedy and comedy are distinguished by two different kinds of renderings by the bard Demodocus in the hall of Alcinous:

In the first, the court poet gets up, steps into a central position in the midst of a troupe of expert dancers and sings a short lay which has three characteristics of being about gods not men, of being comic, and of being indecent. That is the light court poetry. (*Od.* VIII, 256,265) The serious court poetry is another matter. The poet has a chair placed for him and an instrument put into his hands. A table is set beside him with wine, that he may drink “when his heart desires.” Presently without orders from the king, he begins his lay when the Muse prompts him; its three characteristics are that it is about men, it is historically true, and it is tragic. (*Od.*, VIII, 62-75)<sup>224</sup>

The only fault one could find with Professor Lewis’s analysis is that in his example tragic poetry came first in the royal court’s entertainment followed by comic poetry. That is to say, it was the same order later transferred to the presentation of fifth century B.C. Greek drama in which the satyr play followed the tragic plays.

5) Socrates quotes Homer’s statement about Ocean and Tethys as the basis for understanding Homer as the author of the theory of flux and motion.

6) The speech by Socrates evaluates diachronic texts synchronically.

If this passage is evaluated by modern or contemporary criteria for philosophy, Socrates seems to mix and match here. Philosophy, poetry, prose, myth, tragedy, comedy, stage plays, work from the misty past and from contemporary writers are stacked against each other. As long as the modern or post-modern reader carries distinctions to Plato’s text, it will be misunderstood. Essential to a right reading is the discernment of the distinctions made by Socrates of the *Theaetetus*, and indeed by Plato’s Socrates and, in the final

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<sup>224</sup> Lewis, *Preface*, 13.

analysis, by Plato himself. To state the obvious, at the time of Plato's writing, there had not been twenty-four hundred years of philosophical thinking and writing. While it is possible that Pythagoras and Heraclitus used the term,<sup>225</sup> in some important respect, Plato is coining the term "philosopher" and defining what a philosopher is.<sup>226</sup> If the definition of philosopher offered by Socrates of the *Republic* were taken as the current standard of philosophical study, then the reading lists for Ph.D. candidates in philosophy would be very substantially reduced. Having qualified the question being asked, it still must be observed that Socrates here makes distinctions which do not hold even in his own terms. To say that Homer is father of tragedy and Epicharmus of comedy is nonsense as a juxtaposition. Aeschylus and Epicharmus were contemporaries. In the way that Epicharmus was the "master" of comedy, it was Aeschylus who was the "master" of tragedy. Homer looms large over the works of both dramatists.<sup>227</sup> There is a sleight of hand going on here. Homer is named as the author of the doctrine of flux and motion and as the leader of those who hold that doctrine. At the same time, Homer is made a mere contemporary with thinkers of either recent memory or of those actually living. This double move is achieved through Socrates' synchronic reading of diachronic texts. Thinkers of ancient times, those of a century ago, those of the past century,

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<sup>225</sup> LSJ, s.v. φιλόσοφος.

<sup>226</sup> Professor Nightingale makes this point well, "But 'philosophy' was a discipline that did not have an ancient pedigree: it is Plato who first uses the term to designate a specific intellectual enterprise." Nightingale, *Genres*, 60. She provides an excellent overview of the word's development. *Ibid.*, 14-21. She concludes, "Before the fourth century, then, there was no special subgroup of intellectuals that had appropriated the title of '*philosophoi*.'" *Ibid.*, 15. Professor Williams opines authoritatively, "[Plato] virtually invented the subject, philosophy." Bernard Williams, introduction to *Plato: "Theaetetus"*, ed. Bernard Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), viii.

<sup>227</sup> Arthur Wallace Pickard-Cambridge and Reginald Pepys Winnington-Ingram, "Aeschylus," in *OCD*, 17-19. Kenneth James Dover, "Epicharmus," in *OCD*, 389-90.

those living now are all leveled in Socrates' analysis. It is Socrates who arbitrates among the various thinkers of importance. As has already been discussed above, the authority of "according to Homer . . ." is being replaced with the authority of dialectic.<sup>228</sup>

As has been observed, Homer does not meet the standard of being a philosopher pronounced by Socrates of the *Republic*. Does Socrates of the *Theaetetus* regard Homer as a philosopher? It is clear that Socrates regards Homer as an important thinker, but it is not yet clear what the standard for philosophy is from this one excerpt. Other passages need to be taken into account before arriving at a final conclusion.

In a later passage, Theodorus characterizes Heraclitean thought, following the lead of Socrates, as the heritage of Homer:

You know, Socrates, these Heraclitean doctrines (or, as you say, Homeric or more still ancient)—you can't discuss them in person with any of the people in Ephesus who profess to be adepts, any more than you could with a maniac (οὐδὲν μᾶλλον οἶόν τε διαλεχθῆναι ἢ τοῖς οἰστρώσιν). They are just like the things they say in their books—always on the move.<sup>229</sup>

Theodorus, on his own account, describes the substance and manner of the Heracliteans. He attributes, on Socrates' account, the doctrine of flux and motion to Homer and to authorities "even more ancient." That doctrine is of ancient standing, but Homer is not the ultimate authority. Here again, one sees Homer being reduced to size. The identity of those more ancient authorities is not clear, but their existence as predecessors of Homer diminishes the authority of Homer. He only passed on that which he received from others.

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<sup>228</sup> This is consistent with the overall Platonic program. What is of interest here is that and how the authority of Homer is replaced with that of dialectic. In the *Gorgias*, for example, the concern is to replace the authority of rhetoric with the authority of dialectic, "Already at the start of our discussions, Polus, I praised you because I thought you were well educated in oratory (ῥητορικὴν). But I also thought that you had neglected the practice of discussion (διαλέγεσθαι). *Grg.* 471d3-5, and at length *Grg.* 471d3-474b5; Cooper 815-18.

<sup>229</sup> *Tht.* 179e3-8; Cooper 199.

While this doctrine is of ancient authority, one cannot have even reasonable argument with them because they make themselves moving targets. Homer is disparaged by being made responsible for an irresponsible teaching, thus too Homer's status is lessened. The disparagement of Homer and all who follow him also inheres in the subtle joke Theodorus makes, one which does not readily reveal itself in the translation. Theodorus says that Homer, Heraclitus, and their crowd are no more capable of dialectic than a cow stung to frenzy by gadflies. While the image of a cow madly galloping across a field hangs in the air, he adds wryly that like their theory they are "always on the move." Of course, it is Socrates the gadfly who stings those cow-like unthinking persons and then finds them incapable of dialectic. Heraclitus, Protagoras, Empedocles, and the rest are merely chewing the cud of Homeric tradition which Homer, in turn, had merely coughed up from his rumen. Socrates does not scold Theodorus, however, as he does Polus in *Gorgias* when he points out that laughter is not refutation.<sup>230</sup> This passage re-enforces the points made with respect to *Theaetetus* 152e1-153a3: Homer is at once made author of an important if false doctrine, and his authority is diminished. The question remains: did Socrates of the *Theaetetus* regard Homer as a philosopher?

While nothing in *Theaetetus* stands in opposition to the definition of "philosopher" given in the *Republic*, Socrates of the *Theaetetus* seems to add to the list of necessary qualifications. The *Theaetetus* is commonly read as a work on epistemology.<sup>231</sup> If one takes the question, "What is a philosopher?" how does one know the answer according to what

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<sup>230</sup> *Grg.* 473e2-3.

<sup>231</sup> Cooper 157.



one learns about knowing from the *Theaetetus* itself? Socrates does not answer the question directly. To the extent that he answers it at all, his answer is oblique and discursive. At least one way of knowing implicit in the *Theaetetus* is through the gathering of signs. That is a very different method than a list of qualifications. One either meets qualifications or does not. Signs must be analyzed. The absence of a minor sign is not necessarily decisive. There can be no set answer to the question, only a considered answer. What are the signs, then, of being a philosopher?

First, Socrates says, referring to Hesiod, “For this is the experience which is characteristic of the philosopher, this wondering; this is where philosophy begins and nowhere else. And the man who made Iris the child of Thaumis was perhaps no bad genealogist.”<sup>232</sup> This is very like what Aristotle will observe in *Metaphysics* 1.982b11-22., “And a man who is puzzled and wonders thinks himself ignorant (whence even the lover of myth (φιλόμυθος) is in a sense a lover of wisdom (φιλόσοφος), for myth is composed of wonders).<sup>233</sup> While Socrates does not explicitly go so far as Aristotle as to say that even “the myth lover” is in some sense a philosopher, by his reference to Hesiod he does imply that there is some kinship between the philosopher and the myth-maker.<sup>234</sup>

In that passage is also the second sign. Those whom he refers to as the “men of name, the hidden truth of whose thought (ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστών τῆς διανοίας τὴν ἀλήθειαν

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<sup>232</sup> *Tht.* 155d2-5; Cooper 173.

<sup>233</sup> Barnes 2.1554. This passage was mentioned in the “Introduction” and both quoted and discussed in I.i.2.

<sup>234</sup> Cooper 173n12.

ἀποκεκρυμμένην)” Socrates would reveal.<sup>235</sup> He is speaking specifically here of Protagoras, but in that he broadens his reference from “man” to men” and given that his list of thinkers both before and after this passage names Homer and Heraclitus as well as Protagoras, one can easily assume all three are men of stature in contrast to the “crude people” who do not understand that there is a reality which cannot be seen.<sup>236</sup>

This line of Greek, “ἀνδρῶν ὀνομαστῶν τῆς διανοίας τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀποκεκρυμμένην,” is also very important evidence for developing a response to Professor Mazzotta’s charge that Vico was wrong about Plato’s finding “esoteric wisdom” in Homer.<sup>237</sup> While Homer is not explicitly named in this passage, it is clear from the larger context of *Theaetetus*, in specific the two passages already discussed, that Socrates includes Homer among those “men of name” whose thought held hidden truth. In fact, Socrates will grudgingly express his appreciation that they had, at least, encrypted their views, thus keeping their ideas out of the hands of the common people on the street.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> *Tht.* 155d10-e1; my translation.

<sup>236</sup> *Tht.* 155e5-156a2. Cooper 173.

<sup>237</sup> “Plato never claims that Homer’s poems have any esoteric wisdom to convey.” Mazzotta, *Vico*, 156. The argument here against Professor Mazzotta’s claim is consistent with the analysis offered by Professor Stern who imputes an explanation for the necessity of esoteric meaning, “One rationale for the ancients’ practice of esotericism is the consideration to which Socrates points: some views ought to be ‘concealed from most people (180d1).’ Subscribing to this belief, those who practice esotericism for this reason must presume a significant difference among humans. They must see in humankind an inequality to decide that only some relatively few humans are equipped to hear and understand the truth about things – and act accordingly.” Paul Stern, *Knowledge*, 194.

<sup>238</sup> “Socrates: Then you have a look round, and see that none of the uninitiated are listening to us—I mean the people who think that nothing exists but what they can grasp between both hands; people who refuse to admit that actions and processes and the invisible world in general have any place in reality. Theaetetus: They must be touch, hard fellows, Socrates. Socrates: They are my son—very crude people. But these others, whose mysteries I am going to tell you, are a much more subtle type.” *Tht.* 155e3-156a3; Cooper 173.

A third sign, and one very much consistent with the *Republic*, is that philosophers reflect, analyze, consider, discuss as long as it takes until “they hit upon that which is.”<sup>239</sup> This is a central point to Socrates’ argument here since he is making the case for being against the doctrine of flux and motion. In this passage, the philosopher hits upon “that which is,” in contrast to the lawyer who is not searching for truth, rather seeks merely to persuade others that the case of his client should prevail and who works under the strictures of time and a set of court rules.<sup>240</sup>

Fourth, Socrates emphasizes detachment from the things of this world. It is only the philosopher’s “body that sleeps in the city. His mind (διάνοια) having come to the conclusion that all these things are of little or no account, spurns them and pursues its winged way, as Pindar says, throughout the universe. . . .”<sup>241</sup> Socrates then gives the example of Thales who, while star-gazing, fell into a well.<sup>242</sup> He is equally indifferent to the stockyard report and the latest political developments.<sup>243</sup> This too is consistent with the definition Aristotle will later give in the passage already quoted that one pursues philosophy without “any utilitarian end.”<sup>244</sup>

Fifth, a sign that recurs in this discussion is that a philosopher’s incompetence in worldly matters causes amusement and even laughter among onlookers, be they the well

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<sup>239</sup> Ἄν μόνον τύχῳσι τοῦ ὄντος. *Tht.* 172d9; Cooper 192.

<sup>240</sup> *Tht.* 172c3-173b6.

<sup>241</sup> *Tht.* 173e2-5.

<sup>242</sup> *Tht.* 174a4-b4.

<sup>243</sup> *Tht.* 174d3-e2.

<sup>244</sup> *Metaph.* 1.782b11-22; Barnes 2.1554.

rehearsed lawyers of the courts,<sup>245</sup> or a “Thracian servant-girl” as was the case with Thales,<sup>246</sup> or “the rest of the crowd.”<sup>247</sup>

Sixth, as part of his impracticality the philosopher may not notice the man next door because he is asking, “What is Man? What actions and passions properly belong to human nature and distinguish it from all other beings?”<sup>248</sup> When Socrates puts the philosopher’s fundamental question, “What is Man?” he is clearly responding to the Protagorean dictum, “Man is the measure of all things,” which he will explicitly address four pages later (178b2-7). Socrates, in effect, inverts the pronouncement of Protagoras. It is not that “Man is the measure of all things,” rather that the philosopher must ask what is the measure of Man. To what degree is this an example of the kind of question the philosopher asks, and to what degree is it the question which a philosopher asks? Certainly, it is the kind of question, as “What is justice?” is also the kind of question the philosopher asks. At some point the big questions converge: to be truly just is to be human; to be truly human is to be just. There is also a sense in which the question of Man is prior to the question of justice insofar as a human person must exist in order to pose the question. The passage suggests, at least, that the anthropological question is of definitive importance.

There is a seventh sign embedded in the fifth. That the philosopher may be ignorant of his neighbor because he is inquiring about the nature of Man indicates that the answer to the inquiry does not arise from experience. It is not by knowing men and women, *a* through

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<sup>245</sup> *Tht.* 172c3-6

<sup>246</sup> *Tht.* 174a4-8; Cooper 193.

<sup>247</sup> *Tht.* 174c4; my translation.

<sup>248</sup> *Tht.* 174b4-5; Cooper 193.

*n*, that one discovers the nature of Man. The philosopher could know nothing of Thracian servant girls or lawyers or anybody else in the rest of the crowd, but could know the nature of Man. This powerfully suggests that the philosopher is investigating what is non-material and extra-mental and more real than beings which are material or thoughts which are merely mental. The contrast of “the folks next door” and “Man” points to a metaphysics of what are elsewhere called “Forms,” and not to an ontology of existing beings, let alone an ontology of mental categories. The implication is that anyone who begins with experience and extrapolates concepts from that is not a philosopher. The philosopher is one whose mind intelligibly apprehends the purely intelligible.

A eighth sign of the philosopher is that he knows “how to strike up a song in his turn like a free man, or how to tune the strings of common speech to the fitting praise of the life of the gods and of the happy among men.”<sup>249</sup> This is a curious sign, and no less so taken metaphorically. He is not speaking of the ancient bard, let alone the contemporary rhapsode. This is the hero. It is Achilles of the *Iliad* and Odysseus of the *Odyssey* who could, indeed, “strike up a song.” The implied suggestion is that the philosopher has replaced the hero of old.

Others may discover more signs in those pages of the Theaetetus, but these eight will suffice here and, in the case of the eighth, perhaps more than suffice.

Socrates works toward a discussion of Protagoras (178b2-179d5) and then to Homer and Heraclitus (179d6-180d7) and then, more briefly, to Parmenides and Melissus (180d7-

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<sup>249</sup> *Tht.* 175e4-176a1; Cooper 194-95. Strictly speaking, this is inferential, since what Socrates says is that the nonphilosopher does not know how to do these things, though he can make his bed and prepare delicious food. One can hardly bear to think of those under the misapprehension of being philosophers based on their unmade beds and bad food.

e4). Who among them are philosophers? Given that the long discussion of what it is to be a philosopher precedes the consideration of the five, it is at least possible that the question was a live one for Plato himself.

Between his respective re-introductions of Homer and Heraclitus, on the one side, and Parmenides (with the addition of Melissus), on the other, Socrates states the problem:

The problem now, we have inherited it, have we not, from the ancients? They used poetical forms (μετὰ ποιήσεως) which concealed from the majority of men their real meaning, namely, that Ocean and Tethys, the origin of all things, are actually flowing streams, and nothing stands still. In more modern times, the problem is presented to us by men who, being more accomplished in these matters, plainly demonstrate their meaning so that even shoemakers may hear and assimilate their wisdom.<sup>250</sup>

Socrates attributes to the mythological poets—and clearly Homer is in the first rank of them—not only esoteric wisdom but an intention to make wisdom esoteric for the purpose of hiding it from the men on the street. Later thinkers of the same school made their mistake worse by explaining it so clearly that every man on the street could understand it. It would seem that Professor Mazzotta is simply wrong. If not Plato himself, at least Socrates of the *Theaetetus* says explicitly that the problem of change and motion was hidden by the mythological poets under “poetical forms.” Socrates has no doubt that the poets themselves understood the underlying philosophical problem. As has been noted above, it was to their credit that they “concealed from the majority of men their real meaning.”

Over against those thinkers are Parmenides and Melissus,<sup>251</sup> and, of course, Socrates. Whether Socrates thinks that Homer, Heraclitus, and Protagoras were

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<sup>250</sup> *Tht.* 180c7-d4; Cooper, 199.

<sup>251</sup> *Tht.* 180d7-e4.

philosophers, he clearly sees them as having framed a philosophical problem. What has changed over time is that the teaching has become more open, more available to the average person. That change is itself a problem—and here one can say—according to Plato, because it is exactly the hiddenness of Homer’s teaching, its esoteric character, which Plato imitates. As has been observed above, Plato hides himself in his work even more than Homer, since Plato never enters his dialogues while Homer does sometimes enter his epics, as Aristotle comments.

When tested by the eight signs of a philosopher, the case of Homer is a mixed result. On the first, the sense of wonder is conveyed and evoked on every page. Homer manifests the second sign in that he concealed his highest meaning from the common hearer or reader. With respect to the fourth, impracticality is a quality of the hero which is taken over by the philosopher. Neither the rage of Achilles, nor the longing for home of Odysseus is for a “utilitarian end.” Though the “love of honor” is the wrong question,<sup>252</sup> it is not utilitarian. In fact, the impracticality of Homer is a point on which Socrates of the *Republic* convicts Homer when, in Book 10, he repeatedly points out that one cannot learn how to be a good general or anything else from reading Homer.<sup>253</sup> On the sixth, Homer is also concerned with the big questions and not merely with the details of everyday. That is true in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. One example is given from each from amongst the many examples which could be given. The *Iliad* is, at one level, about the relationship of a hero and the heroic life to the larger community of which the hero is part. While that characterization of the *Iliad* is

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<sup>252</sup> R. 10.620c4-5; Cooper 1223.

<sup>253</sup> E.g., R. 10.599b9-e4.

especially true in relation to Achilles, it is also true in relation to many other characters such as Agamemnon, Odysseus, Paris, and Hector. In the early lines of the *Odyssey*, Zeus acknowledges that humans accuse the gods of causing evil in the world. Zeus, in effect, challenges humans to do what they can on their own.<sup>254</sup> The rest of the work can be read as responding to the relationship between the divine and the human and the responsibility of each for the state of affairs in the world.

As has already been noted, the eighth sign, the ability to strike up a song, is a quality which the philosopher actually inherits from the Homeric hero, pre-eminently Achilles and Odysseus. Homer, of course, more than anyone in Greek history had struck up a song.<sup>255</sup> The fifth sign of being laughed at is ambiguous with respect to Homer and his heroes. Nestor is the paradigmatic “wise old man,” and yet he is laughable too for his archaisms and long-windedness. Achilles, by contrast, is many things, but never laughable in a philosophic way. Again, it is ironic that Socrates of the *Republic* makes Homer laughable in a way not unlike the way that Aristophanes makes the historical Socrates laughable. Socrates of the *Republic* likens the text of Homer to a funny joke the telling of which makes the teller seem a buffoon.<sup>256</sup> Where Homer fails is with respect to the two signs of being. It could be said that Homer does contemplate that-which-is (sign three), but not as purely intelligible (sign

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<sup>254</sup> *Od.* 1.32-43.

<sup>255</sup> Mathias Vorwerk, note to the author, July 10, 2008.

<sup>256</sup> “And doesn’t the same argument apply to what provokes laughter? If there are any jokes that you yourself would be ashamed to tell but that you very much enjoy hearing and don’t detest as something evil in comic plays or in private, aren’t you doing the same thing as in the case of what provokes pity? The part of you that wanted to tell the jokes and that was held back by your reason, for fear of being thought a buffoon, you then release, not realizing that, by making it strong in this way, you will be led into becoming a figure of fun where your own affairs are concerned.” *R.* 10.606c2-9; Cooper 1210-11.



seven). If Homer is not a philosopher, on Plato's account, then it is because of the question which occupies Socrates of the *Theaetetus*: being versus becoming.

Homer as the author of the doctrine of flux and motion as adumbrated by Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Protagoras must be taken into consideration, and if Homer is still no philosopher it is in the same sense that the learned gentlemen who followed him were not philosophers either. If "philosopher" be restricted—as it seems to have been by Plato—to metaphysicians, defined as those who contemplate being, then by the account of Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, there were no philosophers save Parmenides, Melissus, and Socrates himself.<sup>257</sup> Throughout his works, Plato found it necessary and fruitful to have Socrates contend with Homer. Plato's Socrates—that is, Socrates as represented in multiple dialogues—finds esoteric teaching in Homer which Socrates sometimes uses in support of his own thought (e.g., "Endure, my heart" in *Phaedo* and *Republic*) and sometimes finds it necessary to refute (e.g., flux and motion in *Theaetetus*). Plato adopted much from what he considered to be the esoteric character of Homer's teaching. Though Plato gave different shape to the open and hidden qualities of his own teaching, he believed he had found first in Homer the basic method of writing a text which invited both exoteric and esoteric readings.

It is necessary, in conclusion, to return to a distinction made earlier. Did Plato regard Homer as philosopher in the sense Plato himself defined philosopher, or did Plato regard Homer as one among those whom twenty-first century schools and departments of philosophy reckon as philosophers?<sup>258</sup> For Plato, only those who contemplate that-which-is

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<sup>257</sup> *Tht.* 152e, 180e, 183e.

are philosophers, and, therefore, Homer, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Protagoras were none of them philosophers. At the same time, Plato did number Homer among those who contributed to the philosophical problem of being and becoming, and, therefore, in the sense that the twenty-first century schools and departments of philosophy mean the term “philosopher,” then Plato did count Homer among the philosophers, indeed, to use Mr. Flann O’Brien’s phrase, Plato considered Homer “the daddy of them all.”<sup>259</sup>

### 3. Beyond Socrates: The New Odysseus

Socrates of Plato’s dialogues is the literary creation of Plato. His Socrates bears a relationship to the historical Socrates, but the extent and character of the relationship is open to speculation. It has been argued above that just as Plato created a literary philosopher

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<sup>258</sup> Even in the philosophy departments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this question is alive and well. For example, Professor Carl A. Huffman asks, “Granted that Pythagoras had a larger impact on the society of his day than any other early Greek philosopher, in what sense is it legitimate to call him a philosopher.” Carl A. Huffman, “The Pythagorean Tradition,” in *Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A. A. Long (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 74. He concludes, “Nonetheless, the primary goal of all Greek philosophy from Socrates onward was not just rational argument but the living of the good life. Pythagoras can justly claim to have been the first thinker to set forth a comprehensive plan for a good life, a plan of life based on a view of the world that influenced Plato’s myths if not the Socratic elenchus.” *Ibid.*, 75. Professor Huffman’s analysis is, of course, anachronistic; he evaluates Pythagoras by a standard which was established in the Platonic corpus well after the death of the older thinker. On the question of philosophy’s creation, the assessment made by St. Augustine of Hippo, after sixteen centuries, remains pellucidly insightful. He traces the two principle strains of thought which Plato synthesized into this *nova res* called philosophy, “And, as the study of wisdom consists in action and contemplation, so that one part of it may be called active, and the other contemplative—the active part having reference to the conduct of life, that is, to the regulation of morals, and the contemplative part, to the investigation into the causes of nature and into pure truth—Socrates is said to have excelled in the active part of that study, while Pythagoras gave more attention to the contemplative part, on which he brought to bear all the force of his great intellect. To Plato is given the praise of having perfected philosophy by combining both parts into one.” St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods with an introduction by Thomas Merton (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), VIII.4 (247).

<sup>259</sup> Flann O’Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (Normal and London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2005), 169. Professor Howland recognizes Homer as philosopher in forwarding his own thesis that the *Odyssey* is “the *Republic*’s primary mythical subtext”, “Second, the *Odyssey* lends itself to such appropriation, because it is in important respects a profoundly philosophical work.” Howland, *Odyssey*, 51.

named Socrates, so he created a literary poet named Homer. Plato's Homer was the foil to Plato's Socrates. Because of Homer's stature in the ancient Greek world, Plato could and did increase the stature both of Socrates and of himself through his artful juxtaposition of the poet from the mists of history and the recently executed gadfly of Athens. It has also been argued that during the fifth century B.C., Homer's characters took on a life independent of Homer himself, especially in Athenian drama. Homer remained the author and authority for Greek life, but Agamemnon, Ajax, Odysseus and others stepped out of the epic poems and became dynamic characters in Greek life. By way of analogy, one can get a sense of that when one considers the person of Sherlock Holmes who has long since had his own life independent of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Film and stage interpretations and even new novels about Holmes evidence the many facets of his character: Holmes the drug addict, Holmes the beekeeper, and even Holmes the married man. In that kind of way, Homeric heroes walked the streets of fifth century Athens, but Homer remained with the gods, aloof and untouchable. Another aspect of Plato's genius was to bring Homer down from Olympus and to make him not only a contemporary of Socrates but of every Athenian.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> On this point, the interpretation here stands in distinction to that of Professor Rosen when he writes, "We cannot engage with characters in a poem as we do with living persons, but the wisdom of poets like Homer, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe is none the less genuine, and one could argue that their understanding of human nature exceeds that of almost all philosophers in the narrower sense of the term. We are now in a position to conclude that there is something to understand in poetry that is different from a knowledge of the arts or professions practiced by the *dramatis personae*." Rosen, "*Republic*," 365. He is correct, of course, that "we cannot engage with characters" in exactly the same way "as we do with living persons," but it is an important part of the present argument that, in fact, Plato creates a literary *dramatis personae* distinguishable from their historical originals (e.g., Homer and Socrates), and, further, that Plato's literary Homer and Socrates displace the historical originals in subsequent treatment of them such that scholars attempt to disentangle Plato's Socrates not only from the historical Socrates, but also the Socrates of Xenophon, Antisthenes, Aeschines, Aristuppus, Eucleides, and Phaedo respectively—not to mention the Socrates of Aristophanes. Professor Kahn's excellent study witnesses to both the necessity and difficulty of this endeavor. Kahn, *Plato*, 1-35, *passim*.

It has also been argued that Plato sought to replace the authority of “According to Homer . . .” with the authority of dialectic, an authority which could not merely be proof-texted but required, rather, ignorance committed to rational engagement. Plato thought he would have failed if he merely replaced “According to Homer . . .” with “According to Socrates . . .” or “According to Plato . . . .” While he was intensely jealous of his role as the authoritative interpreter of Socrates (witness his rivalry with Antisthenes), at the same time he remains hidden in his dialogues. In the character of dialogues too, there is variety in the depiction of Socrates. There are the dialogues which are fairly brief and focused and which end without a clear resolution; *Ion*, *Hippias minor* and *Lysis*, all discussed above, serve as examples. There are other dialogues in which Socrates is prominent, but in which one finds other views extensively represented or canvassed; *Gorgias* is an example of the former, and *Theaetetus* of the latter. In two dialogues, *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Socrates yields to the Eleatic Stranger as the central protagonist. In the *Laws*, Socrates disappears altogether and is replaced by the Athenian Stranger. It will be argued here that the Strangers of those three dialogues is a refigured Odysseus, first an Eleatic Odysseus and last an Athenian Odysseus, or, to put it another way, the Parmenidean Odysseus and the Socratic Odysseus. When, at the end of *Republic* 10, Odysseus takes up “the life of a private individual who did his own work,”<sup>261</sup> he is taking up the life of Socrates. Plato refigures Socrates as a hero and Odysseus as a philosopher. This reading stands very near to that of Professor Planinc when he writes about the relationship of the *Odyssey* to Plato’s work:

The *Odyssey* is not the only source text used in composing the dialogues, but it is by far the most important. Plato may not have used it in the composition of all the

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<sup>261</sup> R. 10.620c6-7; Cooper 1223.

dialogues, but its traces are evident in the most significant ones. His intent in refiguring the *Odyssey*, to put it simply, is to present Socrates as the greatest hero of Greece. Socrates is a new Odysseus, Athens is his Ithaca, and the episodes of Socrates' life—his diverse encounters with sophists and philosophers, young men and compatriots—take on the aspect of dramatic events in Odysseus's wanderings and homecoming.<sup>262</sup>

The present analysis of Odysseus's appearance and choice of souls at the end of the *Republic* and of Odysseus's role in those dialogues proleptic to the *Republic* agrees, in many respects, with that of Professor Planinc. In a similar vein, Professor Deneen writes:

Again, the image of the Socratic philosopher is Odyssean: . . . Odysseus returns home in disguise, notably as poor beggar. He accustoms himself to the situation on Ithaca before revealing himself: only then after considerable difficulty, is political order reestablished in the *polis*. Socrates, also a wandering beggar of sorts, disguises himself as an ignorant man seeking wisdom from supposedly wise people in Athens.<sup>263</sup>

Without adopting the entirety of Professor Deneen's analysis, what he sees is that Socrates like Odysseus was a stranger in his own country. The interpretation here attempts to offer a nuanced relationship between Odysseus and the Strangers of the *Sophist-Statesman* and *Laws*. Perhaps up to and including most of the *Republic*, Plato did think of Socrates as the "new Odysseus," but at the end of *Republic* in Odysseus's choice of the just soul, a new being stands ready for the philosophical pilgrimage, neither Socrates nor Odysseus and yet

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<sup>262</sup> Planinc, *Plato*, 13.

<sup>263</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 117. In an earlier passage of the same work, Professor Deneen after commenting upon *R.* 390d1-5, which has been discussed above, he concludes, "What Socrates in fact implicitly recommends is the entirety of the *Odyssey* itself, the epic poem par excellence of the enduring, prudent hero. Whereas this first quotation from the *Odyssey* indicates that Socrates condemns the *Iliad*, this final one suggests that the *Odyssey* is to be retained." *Ibid.*, 94. Professor Deneen also notes his reading concurs with that of Professor Benardete. *Ibid.*, 94n29, citing Benardete, *Second Sailing*, 65. Professor Stanford notes that the Cynics considered Odysseus disguised as a beggar, a "philosophical beggar." Stanford, *Ulysses*, 70.

with something both of Socrates and Odysseus. The role of Odysseus will be considered, first, in the *Republic* and, then, in the three Stranger dialogues.<sup>264</sup>

a. *Republic*

Plato ends the *Republic* (614b2-621d3) with a most extraordinary literary turn. Having rejected Homer and the poets, Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates a new kind of myth, a rational myth in prose, to replace the old non-rational myths in verse.<sup>265</sup> Socrates says that it will be not the “tale of Alcinous” which refers to *Odyssey 9-12*, “rather of a brave man,”<sup>266</sup> playing on the Greek word for “brave” or literally “strong” (ἀλκίμου) and the name of Alcinous (Ἀλκίνου), both in the genitive.<sup>267</sup> The first two syllables of the two words are the same. “Alcinous” literally means “strong intellect,” and ἀλκίμος means “strong.”<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Professor Amihud Gilead interprets the *Phaedo* as “a new kind of *Odyssey* which is not a journey of adventure on far seas and in remote islands; it is a journey within, into the depths of the human soul, into the most forgettable regions of the human memory.” Amihud Gilead, *The Platonic Odyssey: A Philosophical-Literary Inquiry into the “Phaedo”* (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1994), 87. Thus, his claim is that even in a dialogue earlier than the *Republic*, the *Odyssean* theme is already determinative. *Ibid.*, 2-3. He makes the identification of Socrates with Odysseus, “Socrates is a new, competing *Odysseus*: a spiritual hero, morally and intellectually.” *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>265</sup> I am indebted to Professor David Roochnik of Boston University who delivered a lecture at The Catholic University of America in the fall of A.D. 2003 in which he raised the question of *Odysseus*’s appearance at the end of the *Republic*. His challenge was no small catalyst to the thinking which has resulted in this dissertation. Professor Halliwell comments on the Myth of Er, “It is, in effect, a reinvented myth, and as such one contribution to Plato’s larger project of (re)appropriating the medium of myth for his own philosophical purposes.” Halliwell, “Myth of Er,” 447.

<sup>266</sup> *R.* 10.614b2-3; my translation.

<sup>267</sup> Cooper 1218, note 11.

<sup>268</sup> “Seine Erzählung – so läßt sich das Wortspiel Ἀλκίνου-‘αλκίμου deuten – führt im Gegensatz zur Homerischen Schilderung des Hades nicht zur Furcht vor dem Tod, sondern zu dem festen Vertrauen auf den Lohn der Gerechtigkeit im Jenseits.” Vorwerk, “Mythos und Kosmos,” 49. Professor Vorwerk’s discussion of the “Myth of Er” focuses on its eschatological character in relation to other Platonic myths as well on why Plato chooses to use myth at all. The present interpretation attends to other aspects of the “Myth of Er,” which can be read with Professor Vorwerk’s analysis.

The strong warrior, Er, dies in battle, descends to the nether world and, just as his funeral obsequies are to begin, he revives and tells of what he had seen in Hades. This is a “*nekuia*” (νέκυια), defined as “a magical *rite by which ghosts were called up and questioned* about the future,” and which serves as the “subtitle . . . of the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*”<sup>269</sup> where Odysseus descends into the underworld of Hades. There is a sense in which the entire *Republic* is a “*nekuia*,” indeed all of the dialogues featuring Socrates qualify since in them Plato conjures, from among the dead, Socrates who is not questioned but questions and not about the future rather about the truth.

Both Professors Planinc and Deneen (following Professor Voegelin) provocatively argue that the entire *Republic* takes its overarching motif from Odysseus’s account to Penelope of his visit to the House of Hades.<sup>270</sup> This, they say, is suggested by the opening word of the dialogue: κατέβην “I went down”). Professor Planinc thus opens his book, *Plato through Homer*:

From its first word—*katebēn*, “I went down”—Plato’s *Republic* remains unfamiliar to us. . . . It cannot be a minor detail that Plato has Socrates recollect the entirety of the previous night’s discussions and narrate it, in his own voice, to an unidentified auditor. And it cannot be an insignificant literary ornament that Plato has Socrates begin by alluding to the scene in the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus, finally reunited with Penelope, tells her of his long travels and the hardships yet to come, as he heard them from Teiresias,

on that day  
when I went down (*katebēn*) inside the house of Hades, seeking

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<sup>269</sup> LSJ, s.v. νέκυια.

<sup>270</sup> In a more general sense, Professor Rosen also sees Socrates of the *Republic* as a refiguring of Odysseus. Among other characterizations, he calls “the Platonic Socrates . . . a kind of philosophical transformation of the Homeric Odysseus.” Rosen, “*Republic*”, 353.

to learn about homecoming, for myself and my companions.  
*(Odyssey 23.251-53)*<sup>271</sup>

That reading of the *Republic*, in effect, makes everything in the dialogue until 614b a narrative frame for Er's account of his visit to the world of the dead. Professor Deneen's reading takes his interpretation in a different direction than the one which will be pursued here, but though different both can be read together:

As Eric Voeglin [*sic*] points out with accustomed sensitivity to resonance and myth in Plato's thought, three descents and ascents in the *Republic* are linked: (1) that initial descent by Socrates to the Piraeus . . . ; (2) the ascent and descent of the philosopher in the Allegory of the Cave; and (3) the final descent and ascent of Er. . . . If the resonance of all these descents in the *Republic* recalls Odysseus's descent to Hades, then significantly the one descent in which Odysseus is mentioned by name—the Myth of Er—holds an interpretative key about the preceding images and, I will argue, about the ultimate viability of the *Republic's* recommendations itself when the role of Odysseus in the Myth of Er is considered retrospectively in relation to the Allegory of the Cave in Book 7.<sup>272</sup>

What is shared here with Professors Deneen, Planinc, and Voegelin is the understanding of Odysseus's journey to the House of Hades as a central interpretive tool for rightly understanding Plato's *Republic*. Images are not univocal. Professor Voegelin plumbs the various literary resonances:

The *kateben* opens the vista into the symbolism of depth and descent. It recalls the Heraclitean depth of the soul that cannot be measured by any wandering, as well as

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<sup>271</sup> Planinc, *Plato*, 1-2.

<sup>272</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 101, citing Voegelin, *Plato*, 52-62. Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 106-16.

Professor Klonski concurs in Professor Deneen's assessment and treats it as settled, "Contemporary scholarship has revealed that Socrates' words are meant to remind us of another more ancient 'journey down,' the one that occurs in *Odyssey*, Book XI." R. J. Klonski, "The Preservation of Homeric Tradition: Heroic Re-Performance in the *Republic* and the *Odyssey*," *Clio* 22 (3): 257. Professor Howland notes the resonance of the opening sentence of the *Republic* with "Odysseus's narration of his descent into Hades for his wife, Penelope." Howland, *Odyssey*, 48. Rather than building on this particular point, however, his approach is to consider the *Republic* as a whole in the ways that Plato is purposefully refiguring the *Odyssey*. He discusses what he thinks was Plato's rationale. *Ibid.*, 51-52.



the Aeschylean dramatic descent that brings up the decision for Dike. But above all it recalls the Homer who lets his Odysseus tell Penelope of the day when “I went down [*kateben*] to Hades to inquire about the return of myself and my friends” (*Od.* 23.252-3), and there learned of the measureless toil that still was in store for him and had to be fulfilled to the end (23.249-50).<sup>273</sup>

The view adopted here is that κατέβην is not necessarily an allusion only to Odysseus’s first night with Penelope, but that it is the primary allusion, and that the three descents and ascents of the *Republic* (i.e., to Piraeus, into the Cave, and into Hades) provide structure to the dialogue as a whole.

If Plato did intend κατέβην as a tag to Odysseus’s account to Penelope of his journey to the House of Hades (*Odyssey* 23.251-53), then consider the evocations. Socrates speaks “to no identified person—that is, directly to the reader.”<sup>274</sup> If Socrates stands in the place of Odysseus, then the reader stands in the place of Penelope. Odysseus has conquered his enemies, but still must face the kinsmen of the slain. In this brief interlude, Odysseus and Penelope make love. Odysseus’s account is pillow talk; they lie together in that bed—as Odysseus recounts,<sup>275</sup> was built into olive tree, into which the entire house was constructed—which is a fusion of natural object and human artifact. The erotic metaphor of philosophy is, in this case, heterosexual and even connubial. Among other points to note,

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<sup>273</sup> Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 108. Professor O’Connor recognizes the significance of “the *kateben*,” “For *katabasis* is the word for a trip to the underworld. In particular, it is the word Odysseus himself uses when he recounts to his wife Peneope his ‘Visit to the Dead’ (*Odyssey* 23.252). . . . It is Socrates himself who seems to be projected onto this chastened Odysseus, who retires to private life . . . . Socrates characterizes a ‘descent’ four more times in the dialogue, and all four reinforce and embellish this Odyssean theme.” O’Connor, “Rewriting the Poets,” 59-60.

<sup>274</sup> Cooper 971.

<sup>275</sup> *Od.* 23.183-204.

Odysseus recounts his tale to Penelope as Socrates to his hearer or reader, at night.<sup>276</sup> On this reading, it is Socrates as Odysseus who challenges Homer, an observation consistent with the point made by M. LévyStone, discussed above, that Plato will simultaneously criticize Homer and defend Odysseus.<sup>277</sup> It will be interesting to see what can be discovered when one takes Socrates as Odysseus, especially with regard to the Myth of Er.

Socrates peoples his Myth of Er with an Homeric cast: Thamyris, Ajax Telamonides, Agamemnon, Epeius, Thersites.<sup>278</sup> The hero of the Socratic myth is, in fact, a character whose qualities he has pondered, as has been seen above, from the earliest of Plato's dialogues, the quintessential Homeric hero, Odysseus. Absent from the Homeric cast is Achilles. Professor Bloom comments:

The key to Er's account of his visit to the other world is the absence of Achilles. . . . Achilles no longer exists, alive or dead in the new poetry or the new Socratic world. Correspondingly, the wise voyager Odysseus gains higher status. All he needed was to be cured of love of honor (a form of spiritedness), and he could live the obscure but happy life of Socrates.<sup>279</sup>

In this new vision, there is Odysseus and not Achilles. The disjunctive choice of *Hippias minor* (i.e., either Achilles or Odysseus) has been resolved in favor of the one who lies on

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<sup>276</sup> Professor Rosen notes the significance of the three descents and that "the descent to Piraeus takes place at night," but he does not see or discuss the connection to Odysseus. Rosen, "*Republic*", 19. Professor Halliwell plays down Odysseus's significance when he refers to "his cameo appearance in the story." Halliwell, "Myth of Er," 448.

<sup>277</sup> LévyStone, "Ulysse," 192.

<sup>278</sup> *R.* 620a3-b5.

<sup>279</sup> Bloom, "*Republic*", 436. Professor Benardete too observes, "Achilles is conspicuously absent from the Myth of Er." Benardete, *Second Sailing*, 224. Professor Benardete considers the possibility that Odysseus has chosen the life of Socrates, but rejects it, "Only the experiences of Odysseus might give him a chance; but Socrates himself seems never to have been Odysseus. His *daimonion*, he said, was probably unique (496c4-5)." *Ibid.*, 229. Professor Deneen suggests an association of Plato himself with Odysseus. Deneen, *Political Theory*, 94-100.

purpose and who is, therefore, a truth-teller. Achilles who lies without purpose is occluded from the *Republic's* final tableau.

Odysseus, now in the realm of the dead, has the opportunity to choose a new life. Though he is the last, he still has choices, and he makes the best choice of all, “the life of a private individual who did his own work” (βίον ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου ἀπράγμονος).<sup>280</sup> Odysseus chooses the life of someone who is just, as described by Socrates in Book 4, we “have often said ourselves that justice is doing one’s own work and not meddling with what isn’t one’s own” (τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμονεῖν δικαιοσύνη ἐστὶ).<sup>281</sup> The interpretation of this passage adopted here is that Plato as author is speaking about Socrates as the truly just person by putting a generic word about justice in the mouth of Socrates.

Professor Roochnik’s question hangs in the air: why does Plato have Socrates introduce Odysseus on the last page of the *Republic* in a clearly favorable way? Professor Deneen observes, “Many commentators on the Myth of Er do not pause to reflect on the grounds or rationale for admiring the particular life that the soul of Odysseus chooses. Those few that have reflected on the grounds for Odysseus’s soul’s specific choice agree that it is noteworthy, but disagree on the grounds.”<sup>282</sup> It is argued here that the choice of life made by

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<sup>280</sup> R. 10.620c3-5.

<sup>281</sup> R.4.433a8-b1. See also 433d4-9.

<sup>282</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 106. Professor Deneen surveys the literature in note 60. Ibid., 125. Professor Rosen does not see any major significance in the role of Odysseus at the end of the *Republic*. On his account, it is only occasion for one last attack on Homer, “Socrates thus closes the myth with one final rebuke of Homer, and in this way with the whole Greek tradition of justice.” Rosen, “*Republic*”, 386.

Odysseus's soul is of signal importance for understanding the *Republic* and the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*.<sup>283</sup>

The terms ἀπράγμων and someone μὴ πολυπραγμονεῖν are taken as equivalents here.<sup>284</sup> Thus, by the tag in Book 10 when Socrates says that Odysseus chooses “the life of a private individual who did his own work,” it is suggested that Plato is saying Odysseus

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<sup>283</sup> Although specific textual evidence shall be cited for the importance of Odysseus's choice at the end of the *Republic*, it is also useful to ask why might Plato have found the character of Odysseus attractive. This is not to attempt to penetrate Plato's authorial intentions, rather to ask a more public question, why would Plato's choice of Odysseus make sense?

One reason may have been that in the non-Homeric tradition about Odysseus, he is represented as having been unwilling to go to the Trojan War. In the *Cypria*, when Odysseus is summoned to the muster for Troy, he feigns madness to avoid service. Martin L. West, *Greek Epic Fragments from the Seventh to the Fifth Centuries B.C.*, vol. 497, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 70-73 (5). Aristotle notes this point noted by Aristotle. *Poet.* 1451a26-27. Palamedes calls his bluff by threatening Telemachus which causes Odysseus to resume normal behavior and join the expedition against Troy. Herbert Jennings Rose and Charles Martin Robertson, “Odysseus” in *OCD*, 747. Thus, Odysseus opposed the policy of Agamemnon and Menelaus, and yet it was he who devised the means of final victory.

A second reason may have been the journey Odysseus was to make once he got home. During his sojourn in Hades, Tiresias prophesies that Odysseus will find his way home but only to discover the suitors eating up his substance. When Odysseus has defeated his enemies, he is to set out on a journey with an oar on his shoulder and travel inland until someone so ignorant of the sea asks him why he is carrying that winnowing fan, meaning the oar. At that point, he is to plant the oar and make sacrifice to Poseidon. *Od.* 11.90-137. The journey is not reported in the *Odyssey* but in the lost *Telegonia*. Rose and Robertson, “Odysseus” in *OCD*, 747. The end of the *Republic* corresponds to the end of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus now with the soul of Socrates would begin a new journey, a pilgrimage of philosophy.

A third possible reason is closely aligned with both the first and the second. Socrates of the *Ion* considers Achilles and Odysseus as alternative typological heroes. Indeed, Homer depicts them as such. Achilles is all spiritedness and appetite with little or no ratiocinative power. In Odysseus, ratiocination rules spiritedness and appetite. As has been seen, Plato's Socrates found Odysseus paradigmatic in that respect. Achilles also represents the warrior ideal who would fight without good cause and would refuse to fight when there was good cause. Like Odysseus, by contrast, Socrates was a brave soldier, but saw that deliberation was necessary even to warfare, and thus the Socratic Odysseus was the right kind of hero for philosophy, politics, and the future of Athens. This view is represented by Professor Klonski, when he comments on *R.* 10.620c3-5, “Odysseus emerges from his journeys an appropriately Socratic/Platonic political figure.” Klonski, “Heroic Re-Performance,” 270.

There are problems with all three possibilities, and, in any case, the possibilities are all speculative.

<sup>284</sup> “ἀπράγμων . . . opp. πολυπράγμων.” LSJ, s.v. ἀπραγμ-άτευτος. Socrates uses another form of the word to describes the “civil war” which can arise amongst the three parts of the soul because of “a meddling (πολυπραγμοσύνην) and doing of another's work, a rebellion by some part against the whole soul in order to rule it inappropriately.” *R.* 4.444b1-3; Cooper 1075. The clear implication is that the opposite quality is necessary for the right ordering of the soul. Aristotle, quoting Euripides, uses ἀπράγμων and πολυπράγμων as opposites which implies that ἀπράγμων and μὴ πολυπραγμονεῖν are equivalents, οἱ δὲ πολιτικοὶ πολυπράγμονες; διὸ Εὐριπίδης: πῶς δ' ἂν φρονοῖν, ᾧ παρῆν ἀπραγμόνως/έν τοῖσι πολλοῖς ἠριθμημένον στρατοῦ/ ἴσον μετασεῖν? *Eth. Nic.* 6.1142.

chooses the life of Socrates. Professor Bloom either holds this view or comes very close to it when he compares the presence of Odysseus to the absence of Achilles:

Correspondingly, the wise voyager Odysseus gains a higher status. All he needed was to be cured of love of honor (a form of spiritedness), and he could live the obscure but happy life of Socrates. In this Socrates also gets his inspiration from Homer, and thus lets us know that there may be another side to Homer's poetry than that which the tradition had popularized.<sup>285</sup>

The symmetry of the *Republic* would then be that Socrates chooses the life of Odysseus on the first page and Odysseus chooses the life of Socrates on the last page.

Professor Deneen discusses this possibility that Odysseus is choosing the life of Socrates,<sup>286</sup> but wonders how Odysseus's being ἀπράγμων is consistent with his being πολύτροπος, "Odysseus seems to choose exactly the life that most opposes his past history and seemingly his own disposition. . . . [he] is the supreme example of the human who does many things."<sup>287</sup> He considers various possible explanations in this regard, but considers that there is insufficient "evidence to conclude that any one is the most likely."<sup>288</sup> What he fails to consider is that ἀπράγμων perfectly describes Odysseus when one considers that his many and wily ways are all teleologically ordered. Odysseus—compared with Agamemnon or

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<sup>285</sup> Bloom, "Republic", 436. My reading of Professor Bloom on this point agrees with the view of Professor Deneen, "Allan Bloom suggests that Odysseus's soul's choice does intimate a subsequent incarnation not only as a philosopher, but as Socrates." Deneen, *Political Theory*, 106.

<sup>286</sup> He relates 10.620c3-5 not only to 4.433a8-b1 and 433d4-9, but also to 4.368c-369a and 441d-e and then to 6.496d-e. *Ibid.*, 107-08.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 107. Professor Roochnik sees no conflict between the life of minding one's own business and Odysseus of the "many ways," "Not surprisingly, then, Odysseus widely traveled and well versed in the various ways of men, and in Homer famously characterized as *polutropos* ('man of many ways),' is superbly equipped to make the best of choices." David Roochnik, *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's "Republic"* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>288</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 109.

Achilles, for example—is the hero who, from the beginning of the *Iliad* and until he finds himself in bed with his wife, is focused on winning the war and returning safely home. The same can be said for others, Menelaus and Nestor as examples, but it is Odysseus who devises the stratagem for success at Troy and Odysseus who defies gods and men alike in his homegoing. Indeed, this is part of Socrates' point when he quotes Odysseus in a passage which has already been examined above:

Moreover, also, as has been said before, that line of Homer bears witness, 'striking his breast, he admonished his heart with words.' There plainly, Homer poetically made the power of reasoning (τὸ ἀναλογισιάμενον) about the better and the worse strike a blow upon the unreasoning power of spiritedness (τῷ ἀλογίστως θυμουμένῳ), as one thing to another.<sup>289</sup>

In one of the passages discussed by Professor Deneen, 6.496d5-6, "Taking all this into calculation (ταῦτα πάντα λογισμῷ λαβών), he keeps quiet and minds his own business," Socrates associates the power of reasoning which he had identified in Odysseus and which here is identified with not only the virtue of justice (as one who "keeps quiet and minds his own business") but the requisite disposition to be a philosopher.<sup>290</sup> Precisely when Odysseus watched his men being eaten by Polyphemus, he kept quiet and minded his own business, and when he watched his slave girls' wantonness with the suitors, he kept quiet and minded his own business. However spirited Odysseus was, he subdued his spiritedness to his ability to calculate. The one occasion when his "love of honor" overcame his calculative ability was

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<sup>289</sup> R. 4.441b2-c2; Cooper1072 altered. See Deneen, *Political Theory*, 105.

<sup>290</sup> R. 6.496a11-e2.

when he proclaimed his true identity to the blind Polyphemus which, in the end, caused Odysseus's wanderings to be prolonged many long years.<sup>291</sup>

Again, why might Plato have chosen Odysseus to appear on the last page of the *Republic*? Professor Roochnik's solution is not commensurate with the excellence of his question. He argues that Odysseus's choice is "very non-Kallipolean,"<sup>292</sup> but then he argues, overall, for the *Republic* as a dialectical dialogue which in the subtlest dialectical way proposes that dialectical activity "is probably possible only in a democracy."<sup>293</sup> He attends to the significance of βίον ἀνδρῶς ιδιώτου ἀπράγμονος, but reads it too literally as a choice of the private life in a very modern sense and without recognizing the relationship to Socrates' definition of justice in 4.433a8-b1. What Professor Roochnik rightly and very suggestively notes, however, is that something is being said here about the status of the philosopher in the Athenian democracy. Having begun with a wonderful insight, his analysis goes wrong because he does not read the text in the context of Plato's historical conditions. The question of democracy, however, is highly useful in understanding the role of Odysseus in the *Republic*'s final pages.

Immediately prior to Odysseus's choice of soul is the choice of Thersites. That Thersites is an emblem of democracy is well established.<sup>294</sup> Early in the *Iliad* (2.211-277),

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<sup>291</sup> *Od.* 5.475-535. M. LévyStone notes the connection between the three references to *Od.* 20.17-18 and Odysseus's choice of soul in R. 10.620c3-5. LévyStone, "Ulysse," 191.

<sup>292</sup> Roochnik, *City*, 92. It is clear that the question fascinates Professor Roochnik. In what he acknowledges is "a short book on Plato's masterpiece" (*City*, 1) he discusses Odysseus's choice five times (*City*, 83, 85, 92, 128, and 131—the last page).

<sup>293</sup> Roochnik, *City*, 2. This is a major theme of his book which is given a final reprise on p. 131.

Thersites, a mere common mortal and not of heroic rank, presumed to criticize Agamemnon in front of the army. Achilles and Odysseus both regard the man with contempt, though it is Odysseus who steps forward to denounce Thersites and then to give him a sound beating to the approbation of all present and of the omniscient narrator. In the Myth of Er, the soul of the “laughable (γελωτοποιῶ)” Thersites chooses the life of a monkey. Thereby, Plato apparently depicts democracy as something laughable and as fit only for sub-human life.<sup>295</sup> The last scene of the *Republic* repudiates democracy and holds up the new hope of the old order’s best (represented by Odysseus) now purged and assuming the life of philosophy.<sup>296</sup>

Professor Vorwerk astutely compares the Myth of Er with the myth Socrates spins in his final and long speech in the *Gorgias* (523a1-527e7). The myths come at the end of the dialogues, a fact which Professor Vorwerk recognizes as expressing Plato’s intention to underline the importance of the myths in those two dialogues as well as in the *Phaedo*.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> “Beginning with Thersites (*Il.* 2.212), there were always movements against the rule of the noble and rich, as the lower ranks of free people tried to win full citizenship.” Victor Ehrenberg, “Democracy,” in *OCD*, 327.

<sup>295</sup> *R.* 620c2-4. Professor Roochnik seems to miss the significance of Thersites.

<sup>296</sup> The refiguring of Thersites by Plato—and here it is Plato as author since Socrates is only recounting the story of Er, and here also Professor Voegelin notes Plato’s deft shift from Socrates to Er so that it ceases to be Socrates’ story at all, “And then Plato gently changes the Socrates who told the myth of Er, into the Er who could tell it because he went down to Hades.” (Voegelin, *Plato*, 59; Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 113.)—provides an occasion to compare the treatment of Homer by Plato and Aristotle respectively. In order to draw on the authority of Homer and to make the point that democracy is contemptible, Plato refigures two Homeric tropes, the images of Thersites and Odysseus. By contrast, Aristotle treats the *Iliad* as one source among many to be considered in his study, “Homer says that ‘it is not good to have a rule of many’, but whether he means this corporate rule, or the rule of many individuals, is uncertain.” (*Politics*, 4.1292a13-15, quoting *Il.*, 2.204.) Aristotle does not point out that it is Odysseus who makes this speech. In fact, it is the speech which Thersites rails against just seven lines later. Plato refigures Homeric depiction in order to channel Homer’s powerful influence into Socrates’ final speech in the *Republic*. Aristotle simply ignores the depiction and addresses the literal content only.

<sup>297</sup> “Unter diesen sind es vor allem die eschatologischen Mythen von Seelengericht nach dem Tod, die sich jeweils am Ende des *Gorgias*, des *Phaidon* und des *Staates* finden, die für das Verständnis der



Professor Vorwerk's important thesis is further supported by comparison of the myths at the end of *Gorgias* and *Republic* in relation to the roles of Odysseus and Thersites. In the *Gorgias*, Thersites is depicted as someone who is wicked, but redeemable. Socrates generalizes from the example of Thersites, "As for Thersites and any other private citizen who was wicked (Θερσίτην δέ, καὶ εἴ τις ἄλλος πονηρὸς ἦν ιδώτης), no one has depicted him as surrounded by the most grievous punishments."<sup>298</sup> Socrates argues from the silence of the poets, surely with Homer foremost in consideration. His observation could be read as a correction of the poets. In contrast to those like private persons, such as Thersites whose conduct warranted less than the severest punishment, and even more like the public men who used great power wickedly, all of whom were punished in accordance with whether they were "curable or incurable,"<sup>299</sup> there are those occasional souls sent to the isles of the blest, "Once in a while he inspects another soul, one who has lived a pious life, one devoted to truth, the soul of a private citizen or someone else, especially—and I at any rate say this, Callicles—that of a philosopher who has minded his own affairs and hasn't been meddling in the course of his life (καὶ οὐ πολυπραγμονήσαντος ἐν τῷ βίῳ)."<sup>300</sup> Though the identification with Odysseus is not made here as in the Myth of Er, still three lines later, Socrates quotes Odysseus during his sojourn in the House of Hades (*Odyssey* 11.569) as a true witness about Minos, "He alone holds the golden scepter the way Homer's Odysseus

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Platonischen Philosophie bedeutsam sind, weil sich in ihnen die metaphysischen, kosmologischen und ethischen Anschauungen Platons zu einem anschaulichen Gesamtbild verdichten. Ihre exponierte Stellung am Ende der Dialogue unterstreicht diese Bedeutung." Vorwerk, "Mythos und Kosmos," 46.

<sup>298</sup> *Grg.* 525e2-4; Cooper 867.

<sup>299</sup> *Grg.* 525e2-526-c1; Cooper 867-68.

<sup>300</sup> *Grg.* 526c1-5; Cooper 868.

claims to have seen him.”<sup>301</sup> Odysseus is depicted as a hero with clear vision pertaining to the things beyond this world. What is most significant in the comparison is that the philosopher is οὐ πολυπραγμονήσαντος, corresponding to the definition of justice (καὶ μὴ πολυπραγμονεῖν δικαιοσύνη ἐστὶ) in *Republic* 4.433a8-b1 which has been read here as equivalent with the life chosen by Odysseus (βίον ἀνδρὸς ἰδιώτου ἀπράγμονος) in *Republic* 10.620c3-5. Plato rejects democracy in the depiction of Thersites in both dialogues. More important, however, is that in *Gorgias* it is the philosopher who chooses the life of minding one’s own business; in *Republic* it is Odysseus who makes that choice. If the two are read together, then Odysseus is the philosopher who chooses aright.<sup>302</sup>

A comparison of Homer’s role in the myths of all three dialogues also yields interesting results. In *Phaedo* and *Gorgias*, Socrates invokes the authority of Homer for his myth. In *Gorgias*, he begins by quoting Homer (523a3) and then he makes a deft shift to his own account (524a8-b2). Also, Odysseus is “Homer’s Odysseus” (526d1), as if distinguishing him from someone else’s Odysseus, that of Sophocles for example. In *Phaedo*, Socrates gives his own account and then makes reference to Homer along the way (111e5-112a5).<sup>303</sup> In the Myth of Er, however, Homer—like Achilles—does not appear.

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<sup>301</sup> *Grg.* 526c5-d1; Cooper 868.

<sup>302</sup> Professor Deneen opines about Odysseus’s choice in *R.* 10.620c3-5, “Socrates does not explicitly say that the soul of Odysseus chooses the life of the philosopher or that his choice will lead to the institution of the just city in speech. Rather, it is simply the fact that he chooses the life of ‘private man who minds his own business’ that is intended to elicit our admiration. If the method of Odysseus’s soul’s choice is notable for its singular reflection, the choice remains perplexing.” Deneen, *Political Theory*, 106. He is right that Odysseus’s choice of the philosophic life is not explicit, and he does discuss extensively the perplexity, but if *R.* 10.620c3-5 is read with *Grg.* 525e2-526d1, then it does seem obvious, even if still not explicit, that Odysseus is choosing the life of the philosopher.

This is the account of Er as retold by Socrates. Though there is an Homeric cast of characters, their author is not mentioned. He has, in very fact, been banished. In *Gorgias*, the authority of Homer is implicitly invoked. In *Phaedo*, Homer is a source. In the Myth of Er, Homer does not exist. Not only does the examination of Thersites and Odysseus in the final myths of *Gorgias* and *Republic* and the role of Homer in all three dialogues add support to Professor Vorwerk's interpretation, but also to Professor Kahn's thesis that *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*, amongst other dialogues, should be read proleptically in relation to the *Republic*. The general movement from the proleptic dialogues to the *Republic* is that Homer decreases and Odysseus increases until the authority of Homer is no greater than that of those fifth century dramatists contemporary with Socrates while Odysseus has become an icon for the philosopher. It is an irony that during the period when the text of Homer became increasingly stable (i.e., 527-145 B.C.), the authority of Homer diminished. The shift, seen both in the works of fifth century B.C. dramatists and in the Plato's dialogues, is from Homer as author and authority in whose works one discovers the heroes to Homer and his heroes as characters in fifth and fourth century B.C. Athens. As the Homeric text stabilizes, Homeric authority disintegrates.

Someone might argue that *Apology* 31c4-7 provides evidence on which a challenge could be made to the present reading. Indeed, there are various points in the *Apology* which bear on the present consideration. Socrates of the *Apology* evidences concern about poetry, for example, which anticipates the expurgations and exile of Homer in the *Republic* when he

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<sup>303</sup> In his comment on *Phaedo* 112a, Professor Gilead observes, "Homer is the hidden, almost permanent, interlocutor of Plato, who would like to take his place in the Greek culture by means of an intellectual and moral revolution." Gilead, *Platonic Odyssey*, 92.

informs the gentlemen of the jury, “Poets do not compose their poems with knowledge, but by some inborn talent or inspiration, like seers and prophets who also say many fine things without any understanding of what they say.”<sup>304</sup> In 31c4-7, he also seems to say something contrary to the view developed here that ἀπράγμων and someone μὴ πολυπραγμονεῖν are signs of the just man, “It may seem strange that while I go around and give this advice privately and interfere in private affairs (πολυπραγμονῶ), I do not venture to go to the assembly and there advise the city.”<sup>305</sup> Socrates makes clear a few lines later in that speech, however, he is not setting forth a standard different than that argued here in relation to Odysseus’s choice of life in *Republic* 10.620c3-5. In fact, what he says a few lines later entirely supports the present reading that the question is how to be a philosopher in the city without getting killed, “No man will survive who genuinely opposes you or any other crowd and prevents the occurrence of many unjust and illegal happenings in the city. A man who really fights for justice must lead a private, not a public, life if he is to survive for even a short time.”<sup>306</sup> That is a question which occupied Plato from the time of Socrates’ death until his own.

Another problem, noted by M. LévyStone,<sup>307</sup> is that Socrates of the *Apology* in 28c1-d4, likens himself to Achilles who hearing his mother’s conditional prophecy of his death

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<sup>304</sup> *Ap.* 22b9-c2; Cooper 22.

<sup>305</sup> Cooper 29.

<sup>306</sup> *Ap.* 31e1-32a3; Cooper 29.

<sup>307</sup> LévyStone, “Ulysse,” 208. See also Professor Bloom interpretation that Socrates of the *Apology* identifies himself with Achilles. He says in his interpretation of *R.* 3.386a-392c, “In the *Apology*, where he most forcefully states his superiority to the fear of death, Socrates identified himself with Achilles.” Bloom, “*Republic*”, 354 and passim 353-61.

“despised death and danger and was much more afraid to live a coward.” Socrates continues, “This is the truth of the matter, men of Athens: wherever a man has taken a position that he believes to be best, or has been placed by his commander, there he must I think remain and face danger, without a thought for death or anything else, rather than disgrace.”<sup>308</sup> M.

Lévystone follows the reading of Professor Benardete which actually turns the identification of Socrates with Achilles on its head. Achilles can only be Achilles, Professor Benardete argues, when he is in motion as “a warrior,” but Socrates is Socrates when he is sitting still as a philosopher.<sup>309</sup> Socrates may reckon that Homer as a poet has no true knowledge and yet he likens himself to a Homeric hero. One sees in the *Apology* that there is already the tension between the poetry of Homer and the heroes of Homer. This favorable likening of himself to Achilles, however, yields to a preference for Odysseus. In short, the first disjunction, Homer or his heroes, is followed by a second, Achilles or Odysseus. The possibility that Socrates of the *Apology* sees himself as Odysseus is suggested very early in the dialogue when Socrates says that he speaks to the jury as if a stranger, “The position is this: this is my first appearance in a lawcourt, at the age of seventy; I am therefore simply a stranger (ξένως) to the manner of speaking here. Just as if I were really a stranger (ξένος), you would certainly excuse me if I spoke in that dialect and manner in which I had been

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<sup>308</sup> *Ap.* 28c9-d1, d5-9; Cooper 26-27.

<sup>309</sup> Lévystone, “Ulysse,” 208; Seth Benardete, “Some Misquotations of Homer in Plato,” *Phronesis* 8, no. 2 (1963), 173-74. There is a problem with Professor Benardete’s article if taken literally, because the “vulgate” of Homer, as he calls it, was not settled until one to two centuries after Plato’s death. In fact, however, his analysis does not depend upon a pre-Platonic common text of Homer. What is significant is Plato’s text of Homer as cited and how the Platonic quotation differs from the “vulgate” and what that suggests. Read that way, Professor Benardete’s study is of enormous value.

brought up.”<sup>310</sup> If this is correct, then the jurors are, in effect, suitors who stand between the hero and what is his by right.<sup>311</sup> Professor Benardete makes the point that at the end of the *Apology*, it is not Achilles whom Socrates names as someone he wants to meet, rather Odysseus. He argues further for an identification of Socrates with Odysseus in the *Apology*:

[Odysseus] reminds them [the Achaeans], however, of Calchas’ prophecy that Troy will fall in the tenth year ([*Od.* 2.] 299-332). That the Achaeans should remain out of trust in a seer inevitably recalls Socrates’ reason for persisting in his practice: the oracle at Delphi obliged him to keep his station ([*Ap.*] 28e4-19a4). Thus the noble but hardly guiltless Achilles yields almost completely to the prudent Odysseus.<sup>312</sup>

Socrates of the *Apology* emerges from this analysis as the wily Homeric hero showing what it is to be a philosopher in the democratic city where “the Dike of Zeus,” in Professor Voegelin’s poignant phrase, has been lost.<sup>313</sup>

The match-up, then, is between Odysseus and Thersites, between philosophy and democracy. Socrates went down to Piraeus, which—because it was the naval base of operations—was a stronghold of the democratic forces in Athens.<sup>314</sup> If Messrs. Deneen and Voegelin are correct, and the three descents (i.e., to Piraeus, to the Cave, and to Hades) are

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<sup>310</sup> *Ap.* 17d2-18a1; Cooper 19.

<sup>311</sup> Yet another possible difficulty is noted by M. LévyStone when Socrates of the *Apology* “compares himself with Ajax and then Palamedes, two ‘victims’ of Odysseus.” “Socrate se compare d’abord à Ajax, puis à Palamède, tous deux ‘victimes’ d’Ulysse (41b-c)” M. LévyStone seems to think that this problem remains unresolved and, therefore, ultimately indicates ambiguity about Odysseus in the text of the *Apology*. LévyStone, “Ulysse,” 208-09.

<sup>312</sup> Benardete, “Misquotations,” 174. Professor Benardete also interprets Socrates of the *Protagoras* as Odysseus, “Protagoras is another Orpheus who by his voice alone arranges his followers into a disciplined chorus; the house of Callias, whose butler is a very Cerberus, is itself Hades where Socrates as Odysseus sees Hippias as Heracles and Prodicus as Tantalus.” Benardete, *Argument*, 186.

<sup>313</sup> Voegelin, *Polis*, 439.

<sup>314</sup> “During the fifth and fourth centuries the inhabitants, many attached by interest to navy and empire, proved the staunch supporters of radical democracy at Athens; . . .” Charles William John Eliot, “Piraeus,” in *OCD*, 835. “Furthermore, it [Piraeus] was a center of the democratic party.” Bloom, “*Republic*”, 440n3.

related,<sup>315</sup> then it would seem reasonable to argue that part of what the *Republic* suggests is the question of how the philosopher engages people in democracy without getting himself killed. To that end, Socrates, at the beginning of the dialogue, chooses the life of Odysseus, and Odysseus, at the end of the dialogue, chooses the life of Socrates. How does one live life in absolute fidelity to truth and still manage to get home safely? The answer is that the philosopher, like Odysseus returning to Ithaca, goes amongst his own people as a stranger.<sup>316</sup>

#### b. *Sophist, Statesman, Laws*

The argument, then, is that in *Republic* 10.620c3-5, Odysseus takes up the life of the philosopher and as such becomes the Stranger of the *Sophist, Statesman, and Laws*. Before considering the evidence for this claim, a review is in order of various points made throughout this chapter on Plato's view of Homer. Logographic necessity is invoked here as a principle of Plato's artistry as an author. Unless there is evidence to the contrary with

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<sup>315</sup> Professor Voegelin summarizes the view succinctly and elegantly, "The Piraeus of the Prologue becomes the Hades of the Epilogue, and they both blend into the subterranean Cave of the parable." Voegelin, *Plato*, 60. Voegelin, *Plato and Aristotle*, 114.

<sup>316</sup> On this point, M. LévyStone provides elegant analysis, "Comme Ulysse déguisé en mendiant, le philosophe, dénué de tout, ne doit jamais avoir honte de son ignorance . . . . Le héros incarne . . . Socrate lui-même, vagabond de la philosophie, rencontrant chaque jour de nouveaux interlocuteurs sans jamais se détourner de son but suprême, la sagesse." LévyStone, "Ulysse," 210. He also takes it as a settled point of scholarship that Plato intends an identification of Socrates with Odysseus, "De nombreux autres parallèles entre les textes platoniciens et les poèmes homériques peuvent être mis au jour, qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de citer ici : différentes études (Klonski 1993, Howland, 1993) ont montré le lien étroit qui existe entre la *République* de Platon de l'*Odyssée*, et comment Socrate y est semblable en tout point à Ulysse." LévyStone, "Ulysse," 211. Professor Deneen similarly observes, "Odysseus returns home in disguise, notably as a poor beggar. . . . Socrates, also a wandering beggar of sorts, disguises himself as an ignorant man seeking wisdom from supposedly wise people in Athens." Deneen, *Political Theory*, 117. He argues for the beggarly status of Socrates in the *Republic*, "Socrates' penury is highlighted at the outset of the *Republic* where the young men promise to pay for Socrates in order to persuade Thrasymachus to speak (337d)." *Ibid.*, 129n 82.

respect to a specific passage, the presumption is operative that Plato constructed his dialogues as organic wholes in which each word was placed to support the healthy working of that whole. A second principle expressive of the first is Plato's use of tag words or phrases which are intended to lead the reader into scenes, dynamics, and characters of the Homeric poems. A third point is the importance of Odysseus's return to Ithaca as a stranger, ξεῖνος (Ionic) and that doing so was essential to his recovery of wife and kingdom.

As has already been observed, after the *Republic* Socrates plays a smaller and smaller role in Plato's dialogues until he disappears altogether in the *Laws*. Of course, the supposition has been repeated since Aristotle, though not unanimously, that the Athenian Stranger is Socrates.<sup>317</sup> Professor Planinc understands the connection between Odysseus and the Athenian Stranger, but he accepts Aristotle's too-simple identification of Socrates as the Athenian Stranger, "Odysseus was unrecognized by his countrymen after his homecoming. He appeared to them in disguise as a nameless stranger. In the *Laws*, Socrates also appears in disguise as a nameless stranger."<sup>318</sup> Too much emphasis has been given to the adjective, "Athenian," and too little to the noun, "Stranger" (ξένοσ (Attic)). It is the noun which the protagonist of the *Laws* shares with the protagonist of the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. If Socrates is the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*, then who is the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, dialogues in which Socrates appears?<sup>319</sup> It makes much more sense to understand

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<sup>317</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 2.1265a9-12. Planinc, *Political Philosophy*, 273.

<sup>318</sup> Planinc, *Political Philosophy*, 273.

<sup>319</sup> This point is completely obscured in Professor Cooper's edition of *Plato's Complete Works*. In both the introductions and texts to *Sophist* and *Statesman*, ξένοσ is translated "visitor." Cooper 235-358. While Professor Cornford does translate ξένοσ as "Stranger," he shows no interest in investigating whether this protagonist might have a genealogy outside the Platonic corpus, "The stranger, then is not, as Socrates feared, a



the “Stranger” in each dialogue as Odysseus who in *Sophist* and *Statesman* is the Eleatic Odysseus, or perhaps the Parmenidean Odysseus, and in the *Laws*, the Athenian or Socratic Odysseus.<sup>320</sup> At the end of the *Republic*, the soul of Odysseus has a new life and a new journey. One notes that like the journey of Odysseus commanded by Tiresias, the journey of the Athenian Stranger is ever further inland.

There are also textual signs pointing to the conclusion of reading the Stranger in each of those dialogues as Odysseus. Socrates’ first speech of the *Sophist* evokes multiple scenes from the *Odyssey*:

Are you bringing a visitor (ξένον), Theodorus? Or are you bringing a god without realizing it instead, like the ones Homer mentions? He says gods accompany people who are respectful and just. He also says the god of visitors—who’s at least as much a god as any other—is companion who keeps an eye on people’s actions, both the criminal and the lawful ones So your visitor might be a greater power following

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‘very spirit of refutation’, but a genuine philosopher; and the philosopher is the ‘divine’ or inspired man who looks down from above on human life and is taken by the world for a madman. These traits recall the *Phaedrus* (249) and the *Theaetetus* (173E). All this means that the Stranger stands for the genuinely philosophic element in the Parmenidean tradition. He understands dialectic as the co-operative search for truth, and, once the conversation is started, his manner is distinguished by no individual trait from that of the Platonic Socrates. He is an abstract figure, a representative of Parmenides, because Parmenides had set the problem that to be attacked: How can what appears, but is not real, exist at all?” Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge*, 169-70.

<sup>320</sup> Someone might suggest that “It does not seem to make more sense *prima facie* that one person – Odysseus – should be both the stranger from Elea and the stranger from Athens.” Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, July 10, 2008. Significant is that Plato uses the same noun, “stranger” in *Sophist-Statesman* and *Laws*. Note once again that the Cooper so-called translation of “ξένος” as “visitor” actually obfuscates the clear meaning of the Greek word and, thereby, also blocks access to the history of that word in Greek culture. The guise or disguise of the philosopher as stranger can be changed for the purpose of survival. It is exactly this which Socrates says in a passage that, for other reasons, shall be treated shortly, “Certainly the genuine philosophers who ‘haunt our cities’ (ἐπιστροφῶσι πόλεως)—by contrast to the fake ones—take on all sorts (παντοῖοι) of different appearances just because of other people’s ignorance.” *Sph.* 216c4-6; Cooper 237. Professor Benardete comments on that passage, “Alongside the true philosopher’s apparitions, there appear artful apparitions of the philosopher, which will look either like the philosopher’s apparitions—sophist, statesman, or madman—or like the philosopher himself. . . . Odysseus, whom Athena disguised, looks as much a beggar as the real beggar Arnaeus, whose nickname Irus gives him the appearance of the gods’ messenger.” Seth Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato’s Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), II.72.

along with you, a sort of god of refutation to keep watch on us and show how bad we are at speaking—and to refute us.<sup>321</sup>

The temporal setting for the *Sophist* is the morning after the conversation recorded in the *Theaetetus*, and thus is a continuation of that conversation. As has already been discussed, one of the themes of *Theaetetus* is to identify the signs of a philosopher. That question is fully in play as Theodorus, in his first speech (216a4) and again in his first reply to Socrates (216c1), asserts explicitly that the Stranger is a philosopher. It is no accident then that he comes from the circle of Parmenides, who is named in the *Theaetetus* as one of Socrates' two predecessors with Melissus, and Zeno, who is not named at all in *Theaetetus*, but who is an "interlocutor in Parmenides"<sup>322</sup> (216a3). As Professor Benardete rightly observes, this dialogue is about being and seeming, "The philosophers appear as nonphilosophers. Being, in this case at least, appears as not being or illusion."<sup>323</sup> The question is: who is this Stranger? Socrates then responds with a second Homeric tag, "Certainly the genuine philosophers who 'haunt our cities' (ἐπιστροφᾶσι πόληας)—by contrast to the fake ones—take on all sorts (παντιοῖοι) of different appearances just because of other people's ignorance."<sup>324</sup> Professor Benardete remarks that Socrates "weave[s] together at least three different passages from Homer," *Odyssey* 9.270-71, from the "tale of Alcinous" when Odysseus is introducing himself to Cyclopes, 17.483-87 which is a comment made to Antinous after he had thrown a stool at Odysseus in disguise, and perhaps three other

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<sup>321</sup> *Sph.* 216a5-b6; Cooper 236.

<sup>322</sup> Cooper 1808.

<sup>323</sup> Benardete, *Beautiful*, II.72.

<sup>324</sup> *Sph.* 216c4-6; Cooper 237.

passages, 7.120 (in the hall of Alcinous), 9.175 (espying the country of the Cyclopes), and 13.201 (without knowing where he was, surveying Ithaca for the first time upon his return), in which the curiosity of Odysseus to know the ways of other peoples is the common feature. Professor Benardete concludes, “The Stranger then is another Odysseus.”<sup>325</sup> As Odysseus visited many countries, lastly his own, so this Eleatic Stranger is visiting Athens. Also, *Sophist* 216c4-6 is a passage where the designation “misquotation” of Homer is warranted since Socrates of the *Republic* quotes this line of Homer in accordance with the common text of today, “Then let no poet tell us about Proteus or Thetis, or say that ‘The gods, in the likeness of strangers from foreign lands,/ Adopt every sort of shape and visit our cities.’” Plato knew that line of Homer as everyone since Aristarchus has known it. His refiguring of the Homeric line is indubitable in this case. Through the quotations to the *Odyssey*, Socrates raises the question of who the Stranger is (thus the interest in the manner of his disguise), and, at the same time, he is asking whether the people of Athens will receive the Eleatic Stranger in the manner of the highly rational host, Alcinous, or the host of brute appetite, Polyphemus, or perhaps as a native country receives its greatest hero disguised as a beggar.

Because *Odyssey* 17. 481-87 is predominant in Socrates’ references, it warrants closer examination. Odysseus, as a stranger and disguised as a tramp, had returned to his

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<sup>325</sup> Benardete, “Misquotations,” 176-77. Professor Benardete’s later commentary on the *Sophist* (*The Being of the Beautiful: Plato’s Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman*) seems partly to agree with his earlier analysis in “Misquotations” (e.g., “The philosophers appear as nonphilosophers. . . . Odysseus, whom Athena disguised, looks as much a beggar as the real beggar Arnaeus, whose nickname Irus gives him the appearance of the gods’ messenger.” II.72), and partly not (e.g., “Socrates combines two Homeric passages, in both of which he himself appears as a supreme criminal. The first is from a speech by Odysseus to Polyphemus, in terms of which Theodorus is, unknown to himself, Odysseus, Socrates is Polyphemus, and the stranger is Zeus.” II.69). R. 2.381d1-4; Cooper 1020.

own hall only to find it swarming with suitors for his wife's hand in marriage; they were, therefore, also pretenders to his domain. The lead suitor, Antinous, abuses Odysseus both physically and verbally. What follows is the response to Antinous's bad conduct:

But now the rest were mortified, and someone  
spoke from the crowd of young bucks to rebuke him:  
“A poor show, that—hitting this famished tramp—  
Bad business, if he happened to be a god.  
You know they go in foreign guise, the gods do,  
looking like strangers (ξείνοισιν), turning up  
in towns and settlements to keep an eye  
on manners, good or bad.”<sup>326</sup>

Translators are tempted to assist the reader in identifying the speaker of those lines, but in fact the speaker is anonymous. The speech comes from someone among the suitors, but without saying that the speaker is one of the suitors, though there is explicit and general condemnation of Antinous by his fellows.<sup>327</sup> Those lines are spoken by an anonymous voice, possibly that of a god and perhaps of Athena; in the *Odyssey* as in the *Sophist*, being and seeming are in play. The law of hospitality to strangers is, as discussed above, fundamental to truly human society. Part of the rationale for treating strangers well is that whatever they seem, they might, in fact, be gods or heroes in disguise. Again, the quotation points to

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<sup>326</sup> Fitzgerald 304-05. M. LévyStone follows the insights of Messrs. Benardete and Eisner in seeing an implicit comparison, “On peut aussi se reporter au *Sophiste* (216a-b) où Socrate fait référence dans le corps même du texte à plusieurs passages de l’*Odyssee* (IX, 270-1, XVII, 484-487 . . .) comparant implicitement l’Etranger à Ulysse.” LévyStone, “Ulysse,” 210.

<sup>327</sup> *Od.* 17.481-82 read, Ὡς ἔφαθ’, οἱ δ’ ἄρα πάντες υπερφιάλως νεμέσησαν./ ὧδε δέ τις εἶπεσκε νέων υπερηνορεόντων. Pope makes the speech come from the crowd in general, “His furious deed the general anger moved,/ All, even the worst, condemn’d; and some reproved.” Pope, *Odyssey*, 250. Professor Fagles not only makes explicit that the speech comes from the suitors themselves, but even divides the lines among them, “Naked threats—/ but the rest were outraged, even those brash suitors,/ One would say to another, ‘Look, Antinous,/ that was a crime, to strike the luckless beggar!’/ ‘Your fate is sealed if he’s some god from the blue.’/ ‘And the gods do take on the look of strangers/ dropping in from abroad—’ ‘Disguised in every way/ as they roam and haunt our cities, watching over us—’/ ‘All our foul play, all our fair play too!’ So they warned, but Antinous paid no heed.” Fagles, *Odyssey*, 370. Professor Fitzgerald maintains the ambiguity of the original.

Odysseus, and suggests the question, “Shall we receive him well or poorly?” Socrates speaks the lines of the anonymous voice. If the conjecture is correct that the voice is that of Athena, the divine being who most symbolizes reason, then it is Socrates who stands here in place of Athena. Socrates’ conflation of texts also suggests that he sees a connection between the way Polyphemus received Odysseus and the way Antinous received Odysseus. Not to discern that someone is a philosopher and not to treat that philosopher well is to be sub-human like the Cyclopes and to deserve the penalties Polyphemus and Antinous received. The person who does not discern the philosopher sees with only one eye and deserves to have that eye put out. The person who does not welcome the philosopher deserves ignominious death.

At the same time that Socrates cites the Homeric text, he also refigures it by substituting “philosophers” for the “gods” who “haunt the cities.” He says, “Certainly the genuine philosophers who ‘haunt our cities’—by contrast to the fake ones—take on all sorts of different appearances just because of other people’s ignorance.”<sup>328</sup> The use of this Homeric tag by Socrates of the *Sophist* is understood as all the more remarkable when one compares it with the quotation of the same passage by Socrates of the *Republic*:

[Socrates:] Is it impossible, then, for gods to want to alter themselves? Since they are the most beautiful and best possible, it seems that each always and unconditionally retains his own shape.

[Adeimantus:] That seems entirely necessary to me.

[Socrates:] Then let no poet tell us about Proteus or Thetis, or say that

The gods, in the likenesses of strangers from foreign lands,  
Adopt every sort of shape and visit our cities. . . .

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<sup>328</sup> *Sph.* 216c4-8; Cooper 237.

Nor must mothers, believing bad stories about the gods wandering at night in the shapes of strangers from foreign lands, terrify their children with them. Such stories blaspheme the gods and, at the same time, make children more cowardly.<sup>329</sup>

Socrates of the *Republic* has already begun the work of refiguring the Homeric text which Socrates of the *Sophist* continues. Socrates of the *Republic* insists that there should be no more tales of gods haunting cities. “Gods haunt cities” becomes “\_\_\_\_\_ haunt cities.” Socrates of the *Sophist* fills in the blank, “Philosophers haunt cities.” Socrates of the *Republic* removes the gods from this reference making space for Socrates of the *Sophist* to insert philosophers in their place. The thesis of the present work is that Plato went far in the direction of conceptualizing the problematic which he found depicted in Homer. As has been shown, that is often the case. Here, however one reads the opening twenty-five lines of the *Sophist*, one finds refiguring and not conceptualization of Homeric depiction: Plato redepicts Homeric depiction. Odysseus, the Homeric hero, has become Odysseus, the Platonic philosopher: Odysseus who comes among his own people as a stranger.

There is no need to re-introduce the Eleatic Stranger at the beginning of the *Statesman*, neither in the context of the story nor in relation to Odysseus, since the Eleatic Stranger’s identity is explicitly assumed at the beginning of *Statesman* based upon the *Sophist* as a preceding dialogue.<sup>330</sup>

At the beginning of the *Laws*, one finds another Homeric tag which functions as does the tag at the beginning of the *Sophist*. The Athenian Stranger says to Clinias, “You follow Homer, presumably, and say that every ninth year Minos used to go to a consultation with

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<sup>329</sup> *R.* 2.381c7-e6; Cooper 1020.

<sup>330</sup> *Sim.* 257a1-2; Cooper 295.

his father Zeus, and laid down laws for your cities on the basis of the god's pronouncements?"<sup>331</sup> The Cooper edition cites *Odyssey* 19.178-79 which is from a story spun by Odysseus to Penelope attempting to establish his *bona fides* as a stranger. He claims to be Aithon, son of Deukalion and the brother to Idomeneus. This tag is a splendid example of Plato's literary genius. He chooses a quotation which works at two levels. The reference meets his purpose perfectly in relation to starting a conversation about constitutions and laws and, at the same time, it is a sign that the Athenian Stranger is Odysseus in disguise, Odysseus whose lying is itself a principle sign of his true identity.<sup>332</sup> For those who want to see unity in the Platonic corpus, here is the end point of a parabolic theme launched in *Hippias minor*: Odysseus is known by the character of his lies. In the *Laws*, the Socratic Odysseus masters the art of the noble lie, the rational myth told to make possible a *life in being* for folk too simple to apprehend truth through dialectic.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> L. 4a7-b3; Cooper 1319.

<sup>332</sup> E.g., Athena says to Odysseus when he prevaricates, "Whoever gets around you must be sharp/ and guileful as a snake; even a god/ might bow to you in ways of dissimulation./ You! You chameleon!/ Bottomless bag of tricks! Here in your own country/ would you not give your stratagems a rest/ or stop spellbinding for an instant?" *Od.* 13.291-94 ; Fitzgerald 225.

<sup>333</sup> E.g., "But just suppose that the truth had been different from what the argument has now shown it to be, and that a lawgiver, even a mediocre one, had been sufficiently bold, in the interests of the young, to tell them a lie. Could he have told a more useful lie than this, or one more effective in making everyone practice justice in everything they do, willingly and without pressure." L. 663d6-e2; Cooper 1354. There is a sense in which the city of the *Laws* is the noble lie as the second best, the possible best. Professor Benardete notes about this tale, "The story also recalls Socrates' 'noble lie . . .'" Benardete, *Plato's "Laws"*, 75. He also likens the Stranger's preludes to the noble lie. *Ibid.*, 151. In relation to the second-best character of the city, Professor Benardete says, "Unlike the situation in the best city, there is going to be nothing in the second best that confirms its stories. The noble lie gets debased." *Ibid.*, 167. Professor Kahn also comments, "Unlike the *Republic*, the *Laws* does not describe a utopia but a Cretan city with a definite location in time and space, not an ideal state but as good an imitation as Plato thought possible in fourth-century Greece." Charles H. Kahn, "Foreward" in *Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the "Laws,"* by Glenn R. Morrow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), xvii-xviii.

In addition to that opening tag, there is at least another occasion when the Stranger assumes the position of Odysseus in order to argue for his insistence that the defence of the new city should depend only on an army and not at all on a navy. Professor Benardete also notes the Athenian Stranger's quotation of Odysseus when he chides Agamemnon over the army's all too ready access to the ships in *Iliad* 13.242-49.<sup>334</sup> The Stranger denounces the transformation of soldiers into sailors. He argues that while the Greeks did defeat the Persians finally through the naval operation at Salamis that it was a battle which made the Greeks themselves worse, unlike Marathon and Plataea, victories against the Persians which made the Greeks better.<sup>335</sup> It is in this context that he quotes the speech of Odysseus against using ships as an available last resort. The Stranger quotes not only Odysseus, but Homer too, glad in this instance to have the authority of the bard as well as of the hero. One recalls that Piraeus was the seat of Athenian naval power and finds resonance between this passage and the opening lines of the *Republic* where, it has been argued, Plato casts Socrates as Odysseus recounting his journey in Hades. Though reading Homer may debilitate the youth of Athens, even Homer understood that ships were only good for transporting soldiers and should never be the occasion for making sailors. In the background here is the decline of Athens after the Peloponnesian War when the city depended upon mercenaries for its ever diminishing independence and security.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Benardete, "Misquotations," 175. M. LévyStone also takes this passage into consideration. LévyStone, "Ulysse," 189.

<sup>335</sup> *L.* 4.705d3-707d6, in particular 706b7-d6.

<sup>336</sup> For a discussion of Plato's view of naval power as debilitating the moral strength of Athens, see Professor Glenn R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the "Laws,"* with a forward by Charles H. Kahn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 99. Professor Voegelin summarizes neatly the



#### 4. The Reply to Vico

With the challenge of Vico as the catalyst, this chapter began by asking whether Plato regarded Homer as a philosopher. The facile answer to that question is that he did not. A more thorough reading of Plato demands a more nuanced answer which has been attempted here. In 399 B.C., Socrates was everything to Plato. As the years passed, the young philosopher exhausted his recollection of the historical personage. With his first dialogue, he began refiguring the person he had known. At the same time, Plato tried to come to terms with Homer, always inescapable, seductive, and brilliant. He saw—and he probably saw this with the artist’s eye before he knew it with the philosopher’s mind—that the problematic of philosophy, even for Socrates, had been largely established in Homer’s authoritative mythology. There was a struggle within him between Homer and Socrates which found its outlet most magnificently in the *Republic*. By the time he etched the last words of that central dialogue in wax, he had arrived at a resolution. He dealt with Homer by separating from him the hero, Odysseus. That allowed him both to reject Homer and to use him. Though his synchronic reading of diachronic texts, Plato’s use of Homer was not as an ancient authority, rather as if he were a nearly contemporary source. To the extent that Plato’s Socrates denies Homer to be a philosopher, he also denies that status to Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Protagoras, since they too—following Homer on Socrates’ account—hold the teaching that all the world is in flux and motion. Plato’s knowledge and use of those

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history of Athens during Plato’s lifetime, “His youth fell in the period of the Peloponnesian War (431-404); he was in his twenties when he witnessed the regime of the Thirty Tyrants and their overthrow of the democratic party. The years of his manhood were filled with the internecine wars of the Hellenic poleis and their leagues; and in his last years he still could observe the rise of Macedonia under Philip II.” Voegelin, *Plato*, 3. On the use of mercenaries from the end of the Peloponnesian War until 338 B.C., the *OCD* remarks, “The possibilities of using mercenaries were now fully exploited.” Herbert William Parke, “Mercenaries (Greek and Hellenistic),” in *OCD*, 673.

nonphilosophers was masterful. Thus whatever the character of Plato's repudiation of Homer, his repudiation must be read in the context of his assimilation of Homer's poems as occasions for philosophy.

Plato also created a synthesis of Odysseus and Socrates which would become the standard of philosophical measure for the rest of his life, though with the artist's freedom to treat them separately if he chose as in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. This was the rational Odysseus, philosopher as hero. Years later, Plato would trace the journey of the new Odysseus, the Athenian and thus rational. The one who returned as Stranger to his own country would henceforth serve philosophy as he travelled ever inland until he came to the cave of Zeus where, in the encounters of Minos, man became man and, in the plans of three old men, man was to become newly rational.<sup>337</sup> Professor Benardete sees the overall direction of the *Laws* similarly, reflecting on 886b10-d2:

The Stranger, then, seems to be imagining what would happen if he and not Homer were at the beginning, and he and not Homer were the educator of a new Greece. What if philosophy and not poetry started off civilization? Would it be possible to redraw the distinction between barbarism and civilization, so that the double origin of Greece in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* could be grounded philosophically?<sup>338</sup>

When Odysseus came home to Ithaca, he had to re-establish his right in order to restore his household. From the end of the *Republic* to the last word of the *Laws*, it is the new Odysseus, at once Eleatic, Socratic and, most of all, Platonic, who returns to the place of human origins where in the first giving of laws man was invented and where now man is to

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<sup>337</sup> "The soul is far older than any created thing, and . . . it is immortal and controls the entire world of matter; and second . . . reason (νοῦν) is the supreme power among the heavenly bodies. He also has to master the essential preliminary studies, survey with the eye of a philosopher what they have in common, and use them to frame consistent rules or moral action; and finally, when a reasoned explanation (λόγον) is possible, he must be able to provide it (τόν λόγον)." *L.* 12.967d6-968a1; Cooper 1615.

<sup>338</sup> Benardete, *Plato's "Laws"*, 214. See also *L.* 12.969b1-c3.

be re-invented. From the time of Socrates' death until that of Plato, Athens lost her virtue. Liberty became license. The republic of citizen-warriors yielded to a security state maintained through mercenary soldiers. Macedonian empire loomed large. For Plato, Athens as a city was beset in a way analogous to the household of Odysseus on his return home. Athens needed a new Odysseus. Politics had to begin anew: human right must be re-established in order to restore the human city. Plato's last lines of philosophy are a question about this re-founding. The Athenian Stranger is ready to depart. He charges Clinias and Megillus with responsibility for the founding of the new city, a project of "head and intellect." Clinias steps up. He declares his commitment to the new city and, to that end, his intention of detaining the Athenian Stranger to assist them further. He then asks his fellow, "Will you join in?" The verb used by Clinias is highly evocative, συλλαμβάνω. The primary meaning is "collect, gather together," but it can mean "buy up," "seize," "enjoy together," "conceive" as in becoming pregnant, and, finally, "take part with."<sup>339</sup> It is a word resonant with Platonic themes. The answer to Clinias comes from the mouth of Megillus, but it is the answer Plato hopes and expects from his reader: Συλλήψομαι.<sup>340</sup>

"I shall join in."

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<sup>339</sup> LSJ, s.v. συλλαμβάνω. This is the word used by Heraclitus in B10, if one agrees with Professor Kahn on the variant reading, "Graspings (σλλάψιες): wholes and not wholes, convergent divergent, consonant dissonant, from all things one and from one thing all." Heraclitus, B10 D.-K.; Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus. An edition of the fragments with translation and commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 85 (CXXIV).

<sup>340</sup> L. 12.969b7,d1-3.

## **II Homer's Imaginative Metaphysics as Problematic for Rational Metaphysics**

The formidable gaiety of the Platonic dialogues, the use of the dialectic as a method of intellectual chase, stems from the discovery that words, stringently tested, allowed to clash as in combat or manoeuvre as in a dance, will produce new shapes of understanding. Who was the first man to tell a joke, to strike laughter out of speech?

—George Steiner, *After Babel*

### 1. Reading Homeric Metaphysics

Homeric metaphysics has been usually read by the modern reader and continues to be read by the post-modern reader as metaphor. This is metaphor in the second Vichian sense, the concrete image of an abstraction. It has been argued above that Homer *at least as often* writes metaphysically when post-moderns read him metaphorically. Such a metaphorical reading is anachronism, and it was Plato who first gave to Homer a thorough metaphorical reading, thus discovering in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* that “esoteric wisdom” of which Vico speaks.<sup>1</sup> Once Plato read Homer metaphorically, it has proven difficult and often impossible for subsequent philosophers to read him any other way.<sup>2</sup> Professor Kaufmann provides numerous examples of this kind of anachronism which he insists is the right

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<sup>1</sup> NS 780.

<sup>2</sup> In a discussion of the “concrete” and the “abstract,” Professor Snell rejects an abstract reading of Homer, although he does postulate a metaphorical reading which some read as an abstraction, “Absichtlich vermeide ich, den naheliegenden Unterschied von ‚konkret‘ und ‚abstrakt‘ in diese Untersuchung hineinzubringen, denn er ist selbst fragwürdig; fruchtbar wird sich auch weiterhin der Unterschied von Organ und Funktion erweisen. Man soll z.B. nicht meinen, Thymos hätte deswegen bei Homer schon eine ‚abstrakte‘ Bedeutung weil einmal die Bildung ἄθυμος vorkommt. . . . ‚Herzlos‘, ‚Kopflös‘, ἄθυμος bezeichnen das Fehlen der Funktion. Der ‚metaphorische‘ Gebrauch der Organbezeichnung, den man als Abstraktion bezeichnen könnte, hat seinen Platz auch in der primitiven Sprache.” Bruno Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes: Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 24-25. The problem with his analysis is that if an organ has ceased to function, it has ceased to be an organ. This is Aristotle’s point when he points out that a severed finger is only equivocally a finger. *Metaph.* 7.1035b24-25.

reading of the *Iliad*. A brief passage from Professor Kaufmann will suffice to illustrate the point:

The poem abounds in references to the gods that are readily translatable into “naturalistic” language. Here are a few striking examples: “thus Agamemnon prayed, but Zeus was not prepared to grant him what he wished. He accepted his offering, but in return he sent him doubled tribulation” [51:11.419f]. In other words, Agamemnon’s fatted five-year-old ox went for nothing; but it is so much more beautiful to say: “But he accepted his offering and multiplied his tribulations.” And instead of saying, “but it was not to be,” Homer says: “but Zeus would not grant it.” [72:III,302].”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, however, it is not that such “references to the gods . . . are readily translatable into ‘naturalistic language,’” rather that the modern or post-modern *understands* such references naturalistically. The attempt here is to understand such references *as Homer meant them*. It is curious to note that what Professor Kaufmann considers “naturalistic” is actually abstract. Where Homer talks of gods whom he believed to exist, Professor Kaufmann recasts the account in terms of “fickle fortune” and “luck”<sup>4</sup> which Professor Kaufmann does not really believe to exist. By “fickle fortune” and “luck” he merely means “but it was not to be” or “it was meant to be,” but either way, these are abstractions which replace the Homeric concrete.

Without supposing that Professor Steiner would take the view of this work against the view of Professor Kaufmann, he does understand that there existed some moment in human history before the first joke was told. By extension, it is argued here that there existed some moment in history before natural phenomena were understood naturalistically, when the expression of natural phenomena as divine was metaphysical and not metaphorical. This is known because literary remains survive in which a sixth century

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<sup>3</sup> Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 144.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

author, Xenophanes, explains that what had been thought to be divine is actually a natural being, “And she whom they call Iris, this too is by nature (πέφυκε) a cloud, purple, red and greenish-yellow to behold (ιδέσθαι).”<sup>5</sup> In this distinction between divinity and nature Xenophanes makes a decisive move away from Homeric ontology.<sup>6</sup> This fragment has the added advantage of being found in a scholium on *Iliad* 11.27,<sup>7</sup> where Homer likens the serpent-designs on a cuirass given to Agamemnon to “rainbows that Lord Zeus will pose on cloud as presages to men.”<sup>8</sup> The placement of the scholium suggests that an ancient author understood this word of Xenophanes as a comment on Homer. What had been considered as a being both at once divine *and* as something hanging in the sky was now to be understood as a natural being *only*. The rainbow is something by nature; φύω (πέφυκε) indicates the sorting of the phenomenon into a natural genus.<sup>9</sup>

Although this sorting of divine and natural beings is still far from an abstraction, it moves strongly from the realm of imaginative genera to that of abstract genera. In Homer the fundamental and untransgressable divide is between immortal and mortal. That divide is

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<sup>5</sup> Xenophanes B32 D.-K.; Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 36-37.

<sup>6</sup> “Fragment 32 offers a naturalistic account of a phenomenon commonly regarded either as a deity or a sign sent by a deity.” Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 139. Professor Leshner calls attention to the similarity in Anaxagoras, B19 D.-K. *Ibid.*, 140. Messrs. Kirk, Raven and Schofield comment, “It is possible enough that his motive for giving physical explanations of the heavenly bodies was to disprove the popular conception of them as gods. This is certainly implied by the phrase ‘what men call Iris’” KRS 174.

<sup>7</sup> Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 139.

<sup>8</sup> *Il.* 11.27-28; Fitzgerald 252. Professor Fagles renders the lines, “Shimmering bright as rainbows arched on the clouds by Cronus’ son, a sign to mortal men.” Fagles, *Iliad*, 297. It may even be that the scholiast thought this reference in Homer an authority for the assertion of Xenophanes insofar as the divinity of the rainbow as the goddess Iris is not explicit in the line, though the rainbow is still an omen from Zeus.

<sup>9</sup> Professor Leshner cites N. Marinone’s *Lessico di Senofane*, 65, “essere per propria natura.” Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 140.

absent in Xenophanes B32. Again, for Homer, Iris the goddess of the rainbow, ranks among the immortals. Xenophanes recasts the category “immortal” and distinguishes two new categories, “the divine” and “the natural.” This conclusion is further re-enforced by Professor Leshner’s analysis of the final word of the fragment, ἰδέσθαι. Homer “frequently” uses “θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι” and “always in line-final position”:

The term *thauma* refers to objects or persons possessing an extraordinary appearance, usually a god or an object belonging to a god (for instance, the shield of Hephaestus, *Iliad* 18.549). When, therefore, Xenophanes speaks of the rainbow as a νέφος . . . χλωρὸν ἰδέσθαι, his audience—raised on the songs of Homer and Hesiod—would hear both what he said and what he did not say the rainbow was.<sup>10</sup>

Implicit in the Xenophanean text is that the rainbow was not a divine wonder. To the extent that Xenophanes and his hearers would marvel, it was no longer at the goddess Iris, rather at the distinction between god and nature. This was something new under the sun. After Xenophanes, people could read “references to the gods” naturalistically, but not before. Xenophanes is the first witness, of which record is extant in the Greek tradition, to the distinction between the gods and the natural world, which is to say between metaphysics and physics. For Homer, however, all of physics is metaphysics,<sup>11</sup> i.e., about being *qua* being, but, following the analysis of Vico, imaginatively rather than rationally.

The Xenophanean distinction of divine and natural beings is strong evidence that Homer held Iris to be an actually existing entity, and not merely a fictitious being to whom is attributed various natural qualities. In this regard, the ancients in the age of the Homeric bards, for whom mythology was truth-telling, lived nearer to metaphysical being than do

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>11</sup> This insight is ultimately derived from Vico: “The theological poets in their extremely crude physics saw in man these two metaphysical ideas: being and subsisting.” *NS* 693.



those who understand the world conceptually because for the bards and their hearers nothing—not even something so slight as a concept—intervened between themselves and reality. Professor Joseph Mali, following both Vico and more recently Monsieur Marcel Detienne, traces the modern devaluation of myth:

As Marcel Detienne has recently argued, the modern theories of myth which emerged in the Enlightenment and flourished in the positivistic schools of the nineteenth century, those which, on the whole, identified, and subsequently dismissed, the mythical epochs and aspects of our modern culture as residual elements of primitive irrationality in it, have derived their main conceptual and tactical arguments from the anti-mythological tradition in ancient Greece: ‘The moral judgments of the nineteenth century’, he writes, ‘are sanctioned by the righteous severity of the ancient philosophers’.<sup>38</sup> According to Detienne, this tradition, which originated with Xenophanes (c. 530 BC) and culminated with Thucydides and Plato a century later, opposed the mythical stories because they were stories of a particular kind: they were traditional, not critical, stories.<sup>12</sup>

This analysis is sound from the standpoint of Plato. What it still misses, however, is why for Plato the traditional story was no longer acceptable, namely that it had ceased to be a story which told the truth about the world. For Plato as for Xenophanes, Iris was a fictitious being. It is not that Plato displaced the Homeric worldview. It is, rather, that the Homeric worldview had long since ceased to obtain. Xenophanes B32 witnesses to the failure of the Homeric worldview, if perhaps only to the beginning of that failure. In I.ii, it was touched upon that in fifth century B.C. drama Homer’s characters bestrode the stage and took on lives of their own, independent of Homer. Though the name of Homer continued to be authoritative, it was like the authority of the British monarch at the beginning of the twenty-first century A.D.: her name commanded respect, but had become devoid of power.

Professor Benardete characterizes Hermogenes of the *Cratylus* as “the impoverished heir to

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Mali, *The Rehabilitation of Myth: Vico’s New Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 156.

great wealth.”<sup>13</sup> That expresses well the condition of the fourth century B.C. Athenian in relation to the Homeric legacy: heirs of Homer, they lived in cultural, moral, and intellectual poverty. Plato filled the void once occupied by Homer.

As has been seen in I.ii, Socrates of the *Theaetetus* ranges Homer with Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Protagoras as philosophers of flux and motion.<sup>14</sup> In his analysis of their collective philosophy, Socrates concludes that their position necessarily implies the reduction of knowledge to sensation: αἴσθησιν ἐπιστήμην γίνεσθαι.<sup>15</sup> The Homeric mythology of Oceanus and Tethys is central to the discussion of knowledge in the *Theaetetus* as well as in a dialogue which treats similar themes, the *Cratylus*. Other references in the Platonic corpus to Oceanus and Tethys will also be taken into account. This chapter begins with Platonic reception of Homer. Having established what Plato says of Homer’s views, the Homeric passages in which Oceanus and Tethys appear will then be considered. It will be argued that the characterizations of Homer by Plato’s Socrates are accurate, namely that there is in Homer what shall be called here “fluidity of being,” what Vico calls “Sympathetic Nature.”<sup>16</sup> While a few other examples shall be given in relation to Homeric fluidity of being, the treatment shall focus primarily on Oceanus and Tethys, first, because of the multiple passages of Platonic reception which afford analysis, and, second, because of spatial constraints within the scope of the present work. Once the positions of

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<sup>13</sup> Benardete, *Argument*, 159.

<sup>14</sup> *Tht.* 152d5-153a2, 160d3-e1, 179d4-e3.

<sup>15</sup> *Tht.* 160e1-2.

<sup>16</sup> *NS* 378.

Homer and Plato respectively have been established, then other philosophers will be situated in relation to them.

## 2. Plato and the “Oceanus and Tethys” of Homer

Socrates of the *Theaetetus* points to lines in Homer about Oceanus and Tethys to justify the judgement that Homer was the first philosopher of flux and motion. Material from the *Theaetetus* was used in I.ii to argue that Plato regarded Homer as a serious thinker and, in the twenty-first century A.D. sense of the word, as a philosopher. Now the same material shall be examined to consider what Plato postulated as the Homeric doctrine of flux and motion. In this instance, it is not only possible but also necessary to say “Plato,” because it is not only Socrates of the *Theaetetus*, *Phaedo*, and *Cratylus* who impute that doctrine to Homer, but at least referentially the same suggestion is made by Timaeus in the dialogue bearing his name. The dialogues themselves as well as the contexts within the dialogues in which references to Oceanus and Tethys are found make for interesting comparisons. One dialogue, *Phaedo*, is proleptic to the *Republic*, while *Theaetetus* and *Timaeus* were written later. As was seen in I.ii, *Cratylus* may be unique among Plato’s dialogues as coming both before and after the *Republic*, a dialogue which was probably written early—thus proleptic to the *Republic*—and revised in important ways after the *Republic*. In two, *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, the Oceanus references are found in myth and in the other two, *Cratylus* and *Theaetetus*, in dialogue. Thus, there is one reference in myth and one in dialogue in the two works proleptic to the *Republic*, and one reference in myth and one in dialogue in the two works after the *Republic*. As has already been noted, there are three references in the mouth

of Socrates and one spoken by another Platonic character. Plato, then, seems to have had a durable interest in Oceanus and Tethys. Both Socrates of the *Cratylus* and Socrates of the *Theaetetus* use the references as emblematically representing the doctrine of flux and motion. A review of the citations in the four dialogues is in order.

The reference to Oceanus in *Phaedo* is made without mention of Tethys, the only occasion when Plato has a character speak of one without the other. Socrates gives his friends a vision of the afterlife, a new myth which builds explicitly on the old Homeric mythology. After a lengthy discussion of Tartarus, Socrates says of Oceanus, "There are many other large rivers of all kinds, and among these there are four of note; the biggest which flows on the outside (of the earth) in a circle is called Oceanus."<sup>17</sup> In *Timaeus*, it is Timaeus and not Socrates who gives an account of Oceanus and Tethys as part of the genealogy of the gods:

Earth and heaven gave birth to Oceanus and Tethys, who in turn gave birth to Phorcys, Cronus and Rhea and all the gods in that generation. Cronus and Rhea gave birth to Zeus and Hera, as well as all those siblings who are called by the names we know. These in turn gave birth to yet another generation. In any case, when all the gods had come to be, both the ones who make their rounds conspicuously and the ones who present themselves only to the extent that they are willing, the begetter of this universe spoke to them.<sup>18</sup>

The status of those two references is not clear, precisely because they occur in myths, one spoken by a figure other than Socrates, and, finally, because the naming of them seems to be incidental. There is no discourse on their significance. In fact, that may be the significance, namely that the place of Oceanus and Tethys is diminished in each setting. In *Phaedo*,

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<sup>17</sup> *Phd.* 112e4-7; Cooper 96.

<sup>18</sup> *Ti.* 40e5-41a5; Cooper 1244.

Oceanus is only one large river and not a divinity. There is something of a contradiction here. This reference takes place in the context of a myth, but it is in an important sense a de-mythologized myth. What are understood as gods elsewhere, even in other Platonic works (witness the *Timaeus* reference which follows), are described here as de-deified natural phenomena. Even as a river it is small enough when compared to the vastness of Tartarus. In *Timaeus*, Oceanus and Tethys are in no sense the origin of all things. They, like all the other gods, are created and, ultimately, subordinate to “the begetter of this universe.”

Socrates of the *Cratylus* quotes and discusses Homer’s reference to Oceanus and Tethys and significantly connects that reference to Heraclitus:

Socrates: Heraclitus says somewhere that “everything gives way and nothing stands fast,” and likening the things that are to the flowing of a river (ποταμοῦ ῥοῆ), he says that “you cannot step into the same river (ποταμόν) twice.”

Hermogenes: So he does.

Socrates: Well, then don’t you think that whoever gave the names ‘Rhea’ and ‘Cronus’ to the ancestors of the other gods understood things in the same way as Heraclitus? Or do you think he gave them both the names of streams merely by chance? Similarly, Homer speaks of Oceanus, origin of the gods, and their mother Tethys, I think Hesiod says much the same. Orpheus, too, says somewhere that

Fair-flowing Oceanus was the first to marry,  
And he wedded his sister, the daughter of his mother.

See how they agree with each other. And how they all lean towards the doctrines of Heraclitus.

Hermogenes: I think there’s something in what you say, Socrates, but I don’t understand what the name ‘Tethys’ means.

Socrates: But it practically tells you itself that it is the slightly disguised name of a spring! After all, what is strained (*diattōmenon*) and filtered (*ēthoumenon*) is like a spring, and the name ‘Tethys’ is a compound of these

two names.<sup>19</sup>

That this discussion takes place in the dialogue named *Cratylus* is itself a point worthy of note. Who was Cratylus? Messrs. Diels and Kranz list five testimonies to Cratylus, three from Aristotle and the other two from Plato's dialogue, *Cratylus*.<sup>20</sup> It is of some importance, at this point, to consider the character of Cratylus's teaching. Scholars are divided over whether and, if so, the degree to which Aristotle's testimony derives from Plato's account of Cratylus in his dialogue of that name.<sup>21</sup> Professor Kahn does not think Aristotle learned anything about Cratylus from Plato and finds it odd that Aristotle states Plato had been influenced by Cratylus.<sup>22</sup> One may just as reasonably infer, by contrast, that in the many

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<sup>19</sup> *Cra.* 402a8-d2; Cooper 120.

<sup>20</sup> Cratylus A1-5 D.-K.: Plato, *Cra.* 429d; Aristotle, *Rh.* 3.1417b1; *Metaph.* 1.987a29 and 4.1010a7; Plato, *Cra.* 383a.

<sup>21</sup> Professor Cooper suggests Aristotle's "information about him may however derive from what the character Cratylus says in this [Plato's] dialogue." Cooper 101. Professor Kahn is of the same view, "This attribution [of Cratylus's influence on Plato] looks like an Aristotelian inference from an over-hasty reading of the dialogue that bears his name." Kahn, *Plato*, 82.

<sup>22</sup> "Aristotle strangely names Cratylus as one of Plato's teachers (*Metaphysics* 987a32), perhaps because he regarded him as a source of the Heraclitean influence which he rightly recognized in Plato's own thought." Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 3-4.

"There is no reason to suppose that Aristotle had any good evidence for the early development of Plato's thought. When he arrived in Athens as a youth of seventeen, Plato was sixty years old and had probably recently completed the *Phaedrus*, *Parmenides*, and *Theaetetus*. . . . The importance attributed by Aristotle to the theory of flux probably reflects the fresh impact of the *Theaetetus*. ('This is what he later believed.')

(Note: There is no reference to the flux of sensible things in any Platonic dialogue before the *Cratylus*, and no characterization of the sensible as such before the *Symposium* and *Phaedo*. Aristotle's retrojection of all this back into Plato's youth seems devoid of any historical basis.) And the exaggerated estimate of Pythagorean influence certainly corresponds to the intellectual atmosphere of the Academy in Plato's later years.

"It is sometimes supposed that Aristotle is relying here on an oral tradition in the Academy, or even that he had discussed these matters with Plato himself. (Note: Ross (1924: I, xxxvii) speaks of "the supposition that all he [Aristotle] knew of Socrates he learnt from the Academy, and perhaps even from Plato himself.") Such an assumption seems entirely gratuitous. We know nothing of the personal relations between Plato and Aristotle (who was his junior by nearly forty-five years). And what we know of Plato as a writer does not suggest any readiness to speak openly about his intellectual development." Kahn, *Plato*, 81-82.

Of course, if Professor Sedley is correct that Plato revised the *Cratylus*, then the revision would have occurred about the time or after Aristotle's arrival at the Academy. Professor Kahn has based his supposition

years Aristotle studied and worked with Plato, the latter shared other thoughts and anecdotes as well.<sup>23</sup>

While Aristotle's characterization of philosophy other than his own must always be examined with care, nevertheless it seems safe to accept his account when he affirms that Plato "in his youth became familiar with Cratylus and with the Heraclitean doctrines (that all sensible things are in a state of flux and there is no knowledge about them)."<sup>24</sup> As Professor Sedley points out, Aristotle does not even say that Cratylus was the teacher of Plato, only that Plato became aware of the teachings of Cratylus and, through him, of Heraclitus's teachings. Professor Kahn holds that the *Cratylus* was an early dialogue and Professor

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that Aristotle could not have known anything about the historical background of the *Cratylus* on his previous judgement that it is a dialogue altogether composed before the *Republic*. If that premise can be challenged—as Professor Sedley ably does—then the conclusion, based upon it, falls.

<sup>23</sup> Professor Sedley is very helpful on this point, "Scholars have devoted hundreds of pages to looking this particular gift horse in the mouth. [Professor Sedley explicitly names Professor Kahn as one of the scholars to whom he is responding.] It is a singularly precious reconstruction by Aristotle of his master's intellectual formation, and contains a rare biographical datum which it would be an enormous pity to dismiss. Aristotle does not make it explicit that – as some less reliable ancient sources claim – Plato was actually Cratylus' pupil, and it may even be that their relative ages did not make that a very appropriate relation. ([Note:] If at 428b Cratylus offers to take on Socrates, his senior, as a pupil, that is no doubt meant as a comic instance of misplaced condescension.) But that Cratylus was an early philosophical influence on Plato he does make explicit; and Aristotle was, after all, in an excellent position to find out about his master's philosophical background if he wanted to. ([Note:] Cf. n. 36 above. Kahn (1996:82) is surely, at all events, over-sceptical in calling it 'gratuitous' to suppose that Aristotle acquired this biographical information from Plato, whose pupil he was for two decades. It would be more gratuitous to assume that Aristotle never got round to asking him.) Moreover, Aristotle is surely right to present Plato as believing in the flux of the sensible world." Sedley, "*Cratylus*", 17-18.

It seems clear that Professor Kahn overstates his case. His arguments are valid insofar as they encourage caution in reliance upon Aristotle's account, but with Professor Sedley one must conclude that the use of the word "gratuitous" about the suggestion of Aristotle's having learned something of Plato's biography is an excessive characterization. Professor Kahn also holds a very narrow view about who could have influenced Plato other than Socrates. He refers, for example, to Aristotle's "exaggerated estimate of Pythagorean influence." Kahn, *Plato*, 81. He also denies that Xenophon had any influence on Plato and, in fact, argues that Xenophon's Socrates is derived from Plato's. *Ibid.*, 32, 76-79, 87. He might be correct on any one of these points, but together they suggest an unwillingness on his part to think that Plato was much influenced by any thinker other than Socrates.

<sup>24</sup> *Metaph.* 1.987a31-34; *Barnes* 2.1561.

Sedley that the “core” of the dialogue is early. Prior to beginning to write the *Cratylus*, Plato became sufficiently knowledgeable of those views to develop his own challenge to their doctrines. In that Cratylus lived in Athens as a contemporary of Socrates and Plato, it is difficult to imagine that Plato did not know him since there is no extant reference to the historical Cratylus prior to the dialogue by Plato of that name.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, Aristotle actually attributes a view to Cratylus not found in Plato (i.e., “Cratylus, who finally did not think it right to say anything but only moved his finger, and criticized Heraclitus for saying that it is impossible to step twice into the same river; for he thought one could not do it even once.”<sup>26</sup>) and explicitly cites another Socratic thinker, Aeschines, as the source for one of his comments about Cratylus, i.e., “So Aeschines described Cratylus as ‘hissing with fury and shaking his fists.’<sup>27</sup> What emerges is a sketch of a kind of linguistic Empedoclean of which the twentieth century saw new incarnations like the Dadaists who required coherent language to explain their purposeful incoherence<sup>28</sup> or Derrida who had to stoop to the use of words when railing against logocentrism.<sup>29</sup> In his

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<sup>25</sup> Accounts of the historical Cratylus all seem to be based on the five *testimonia* already cited in D.-K.

<sup>26</sup> *Metaph.* 4.1010a12-15; Barnes 2.1594-95.

<sup>27</sup> *Rhet.* 3.1417b1-2; Barnes 2.2264.

<sup>28</sup> Thus Professor Steiner, in his discussion of Dada, quotes a leading Dadaist, Hans Arp, who explains the movement, “We were seeking an elemental art’, recalls Hans Arp, ‘which could cure man of the lunacy of the time.’ As Dada sprang up, ‘madness and death were competing. . . . Those people not immediately involved in the hideous insanity of world war behaved as if they did not understand what was happening all around them. . . . Dada sought to rouse them from their hideous stupor.’” George Steiner, *After Babel* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998), 203.

<sup>29</sup> Professor Lilla assesses Derrida’s assault on logocentrism, “He [Derrida] then claimed that the metaphysical tradition could only really be overcome if the very language of philosophy was ‘deconstructed,’ a language in which even Heidegger was snared. At the root of the metaphysical tradition was a naïve notion of language as a transparent medium, a ‘logocentrism,’ as Derrida dubbed it.” Mark Lilla, *Reckless Minds*:



comment on Aristotle's reference in the *Rhetoric*, Professor Sedley assesses the historical

Cratylus:

In his *Rhetoric* (III 16, 1417b1-3), Aristotle quotes the Socratic writer Aeschines of Sphettus, who described Cratylus as waving his hands and hissing while he spoke. This semi-independent testimony can be interpreted as showing a Cratylus who still believes in the power of language – he does, after all, still speak – but who is already adjusting language to accommodate the extreme fluidity of its objects. His motions of the hands, and likewise his hissing of the tongue, which according to the analysis of the primary sounds in Plato's dialogue (427a1-8) is one way in which the human voice conveys motion, look like part of Cratylus' increasingly desperate struggle to fit language to the world's fluidity, before his final decision to give up and just point.<sup>30</sup>

Twice in that passage, Professor Sedley uses the word “fluidity” to characterize the views of Cratylus. For Socrates of the *Cratylus*, Oceanus and Tethys are metaphors for the doctrine—as he alleges, held by Homer, Heraclitus, and Cratylus—of flux and motion. In this characterization, there is a relationship between the instability of the world and the instability of language. About that-which-is one can, nay must always say the same thing. The problem with that-which-changes is that it seems to be something at this moment, and seems to be something else at another moment. How can one know that-which-is and distinguish it from that-which-changes? For Socrates of the *Cratylus*, one of the markers of

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*Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), 171. This is a theme throughout Professor Lilla's account of Derrida. *Ibid.*, 159-90. He says of a seminar given by Derrida, “Like most of the participants I met, [I] had difficulty understanding what Derrida was driving at.” *Ibid.*, 176. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle calls the mere repetition of words “incontinence” in contrast to the use of language as the expression of knowledge, “The fact that men use the language that flows from knowledge proves nothing: for even men under the influence of these passions utter scientific proofs and verses of Empedocles, and those who have just begun to learn can string together words, but do not yet know; for it has to become part of themselves, and that takes time; so that we must suppose that the use of language by men in an incontinent state means no more than its utterance by actors on the stage.” *Eth. Nic.* 7.1147a18-23.

<sup>30</sup> Sedley, “*Cratylus*,” 20.

being is the stability of language. This is a point to keep in mind later in the chapter when examining the Homeric mythology.

How, then, does Cratylus appear in the dialogue bearing his name? The *Cratylus* is fifty-seven Stephanus pages. After the second line, Cratylus is silent for the next forty-five pages. During the final quarter of the dialogue, Socrates engages Cratylus in a way that establishes very little more about his beliefs other than that he did not object to contradiction. To the very end of Plato's dialogue, in spite of having concurred with nearly everything Socrates has to say, the character Cratylus maintains his commitment to the teaching of Heraclitus over against the arguments of Socrates.<sup>31</sup> Cratylus is depicted in the dialogue as the kind of person Theodorus characterizes in the *Theaetetus*, "They are just like the things they say in their books—always on the move. As for abiding by what is said, or sticking to a question, or quietly answering and asking questions in turn, there is less than nothing of that in their capacity."<sup>32</sup> By the account of Socrates of the *Cratylus*, Cratylus and, in turn, Heraclitus, followed the teaching implicit in Homer and Hesiod.

Socrates and Hermogenes discuss the circumstance of a weaver when the shuttle, one of his tools, breaks. He turns to a carpenter to fashion a new one:

Socrates: Suppose the shuttle breaks while he's making it. Will he make another looking like the broken one? Or will he look to the very form to which he looked in making the one he broke?

Hermogenes: In my view, he will look to the form.

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<sup>31</sup> "But I assure you, Socrates, that I have already investigated them and have taken a lot of trouble over the matter, and things seem to me to be very much more as Heraclitus says they are." *Cra.* 440d8-e2; Cooper 156.

<sup>32</sup> *Tht.* 179e7-180a3; Cooper 199.

Socrates: Then it would be absolutely right to call that what a shuttle itself is.<sup>33</sup> A broken shuttle is not really a shuttle.<sup>34</sup> The true shuttle is that which is always and perfectly a shuttle, namely the form of the shuttle. Professor Sedley observes that “the functions of words” are “cast in terms of name-Forms.”<sup>35</sup> It is the stability of the form which points to its ontological status as higher than the physical thing. The form of the shuttle cannot be broken as the physical shuttle can. Socrates applies this point to language. He discusses the fact that there are sometimes more than one word for a thing:

Hermogenes: And where does Homer say anything about names, Socrates, and what does he say?

Socrates: In lots of places. The best and most important are the ones in which he distinguishes between the names humans call things and those the gods call them.<sup>36</sup>

Socrates later concludes that the ancients were like his own contemporaries (presumably such as Cratylus and Protagoras) who teach that all is in flux and that the different names for things reflect the proposition that those things are themselves always changing:

Well, I think that the people (οἱ πάντο παλαιοὶ ἄνθρωποι) who gave things their names in very ancient times are exactly like these wise men (οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν σοφῶν). They don't blame this on their own internal condition (τὸ παρὰ σφίσιν πάθος), however, but on the nature of the things themselves, which they think are never stable or steadfast, but flowing and moving, full of every sort of motion and constant coming into being.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Cra.* 389b1-6; Cooper 108.

<sup>34</sup> Again, one notes that this is a point Aristotle will make that a finger severed from the human body is only equivocally a finger. *Metaph.* 7.1035b24-25. Thus a broken shuttle is only equivocally a shuttle.

<sup>35</sup> Sedley, “*Cratylus*,” 84.

<sup>36</sup> *Cra.* 391c10-d6; Cooper 110.

<sup>37</sup> *Cra.* 411b4-c5; Cooper 129.

Professor Benardete calls that passage “the single most important statement of the *Cratylus*.”<sup>38</sup> The teachers of flux and motion, both ancient (e.g., Homer and Hesiod) and more recent (e.g., Heraclitus and Protagoras), have made a mistake about the cause of their perception that the world is always “flowing and moving.” They imputed stability to “the experience within themselves (τὸ παρὰ σοφίῃσι πάθος)” rather than to the things themselves. They simply got the matter wrong way round: it is the things themselves which are stable and one’s experience of those things which changes.

Socrates, now talking with Cratylus himself, works out the logic of that position and observes that if a thing is constantly in flux then even as a thing is named, the thing itself has become something else, such that the name is false the moment it is spoken, “But if it is always passing away, can we correctly say of it first that it is *this*, and then that it is *such and such*? Or, at the very instant we are speaking, isn’t it inevitably and immediately becoming a different thing and altering and no longer being as it was?”<sup>39</sup> Socrates never quite states, rather leaves the reader to infer what Professor Benardete expresses in succinct elegance, “The intelligibility of names depends on their stability.”<sup>40</sup> It is hard to read these passages from the *Cratylus* without thinking about Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*; it is harder still to read them as if one had not already become acquainted with the semantic triangle. Plato is sifting and sorting here, establishing a boundary between seeming and being and how to know what appears and what truly is.

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<sup>38</sup> Benardete, *Argument*, 161.

<sup>39</sup> *Cra.* 439d8-11; Cooper 155.

<sup>40</sup> Benardete, *Argument*, 152.

In the *Theaetetus*, one finds Plato's further and more developed use of Oceanus and Tethys consistent with the treatment in *Cratylus*. There are two passages to be analyzed, both of which were discussed in I.ii.2.g in relation to the question of whether Plato regarded Homer as a philosopher. First is 152e1-153a3:

Socrates: As regards this point of view, let us take it as a fact that all the wise men of the past, with the exception of Parmenides, stand together. Let us take it that we find on this side Protagoras and Heraclitus and Empedocles; and also the masters of two kinds of poetry, Epicharmus in comedy and Homer in tragedy. For when Homer talked about "Oceanus, begetter of gods, and Tethys their mother," he made all things the offspring of flux and motion.—Or don't you think he meant that?

Theaetetus: Oh I think he did.

Socrates: And if anyone proceeded to dispute the field with an army like that—an army led by Homer—he could hardly help making a fool of himself, could he?<sup>41</sup>

Professor Sedley observes, "This passage has so much in common with what we have already met in the *Cratylus* that the two texts can legitimately be used to illuminate each other."<sup>42</sup>

In 180c7-d6 Socrates elucidates his earlier discussion:

This problem now, we have inherited it, have we not, from the ancients? They used poetical forms (μετὰ ποιήσεως) which concealed from the majority of men their real meaning, namely that Oceanus and Tethys, the origin of all things (ἡ γένεσις τῶν ἄλλων πάντων), are actually flowing streams, and nothing stands still. In more modern times, the problem is presented to us by men who, being more accomplished in these matters, plainly demonstrate their meaning so that even shoemakers may hear and assimilate their wisdom.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Tht.* 152e1-153a3; Cooper, 170.

<sup>42</sup> Sedley, "*Cratylus*," 110.

<sup>43</sup> *Tht.* 180c7-d6. Cooper 199.

Socrates ranges two schools of thought in Greek tradition. The more ancient school harks back to Homer who held the doctrine of flux and motion which he expressed poetically. Thus, Oceanus and Tethys are poetical figures—which is to say, for Plato they are metaphors—for the doctrine of flux and motion.

Though not named in the *Theaetetus*, Xenophanes too comes into consideration. The Eleatic Stranger credits Xenophanes with the founding of this school. He has just been speaking about Parmenides and how to analyze the question of how in some sense “that which is not” exists and how “that which is” does not exist.<sup>44</sup> The Stranger then begins a review of various philosophical positions. He uses a method which makes a nice contrast with that of Socrates in *Theaetetus*, in passages already quoted, where Socrates ranges various thinkers in relation to the question of flux and motion. Here, the Stranger summarizes Early Greek philosophy. He discusses positions without naming names, for the most part, requiring the reader to correlate ideas with specific thinkers. In the midst of this discourse, he then names Xenophanes— other than Aphrodite the only name in this speech of twenty lines—as the founder of the “Eleatic tribe,” though he quickly adds that this tribe was started even earlier by “people before him.”<sup>45</sup> This is reminiscent of those lines in *Theaetetus* when Theodorus says that a doctrine came from Homer or others “still more ancient.”<sup>46</sup> This trope is meant to counter the “According to . . .” syndrome. As has been argued in I.ii, it is not Homer, Xenophanes, Socrates, or Plato who is to be the authority,

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<sup>44</sup> *Sph.* 241d5-7 and in general 241d5-242c7; Cooper 262-63.

<sup>45</sup> *Sph.* 242c8-243a5; Cooper 263-64

<sup>46</sup> *Tht.* 179e4-5; Cooper 199.

rather dialectic itself. This is the solitary explicit reference to Xenophanes in the Platonic corpus.

A note from Aristotle helps to make connections. He reports that Xenophanes is said to have been the teacher of Parmenides.<sup>47</sup> That statement could simply rely on Plato's account, as Messrs. Kirk, Raven and Scofield opine,<sup>48</sup> but Aristotle implies actual knowledge of Epicharmus's reply to Xenophanes when he writes with respect to his own account in relation to the Eleatics, "For it befits us to put the matter so rather than as Epicharmus put it against Xenophanes."<sup>49</sup> This may provide partial explanation for why Socrates of the *Theaetetus* ranges Epicharmus with Homer and why the Eleatic Stranger of the *Sophist* hails Xenophanes as his philosophical forebear.

Reading together various Platonic references to other thinkers, with respect to the discussion of Oceanus and Tethys, Plato seeks to identify two different traditions in Greek thought. The first, in historical terms, is the school of flux and motion represented by Homer, Hesiod and perhaps other authorities even more ancient. The most important of

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<sup>47</sup> "Xenophanes, [was] the first of this school of monists (for Parmenides is said to have been his pupil)." *Metaph.* 1.986b21-22; Barnes 2.1560. KRS comments, "This remark was not necessarily intended as a serious historical judgement (one may compare the statement of *Theaetetus* (152d-e, 160d) that Homer and Epicharmus were the founders of the Heraclitean tradition), and is confirmed by the addition of the words καὶ ἔτι πρόσθεν, 'and even before'." KRS 165. It has been argued here that even though the references to Homer et al. are often meant emblematically, that does not mean Plato did not have history in view. In *Sophist-Statesman*, for example, Parmenides is treated as a philosophical icon. He is also named with Homer et al. in *Theaetetus*, but that does not mean Plato did not take seriously the historically verifiable teaching of Parmenides. As has been argued in I.ii, the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues is a literary creation; that in no way implies Plato did not have the historical Socrates in view all the while. There is Plato's Socrates and his Homer and his Xenophanes and Epicharmus too. Professor Stern addresses this point with respect the treatment of Parmenides by Socrates of the *Theaetetus*, "I want to suggest the possibility that, having just called attention to the practice of exotericism, Socrates' own treatment of Parmenides will be less than explicit. In this way, he can subject his predecessor to scrutiny without wholly subverting that which makes him so venerable." Stern, *Knowledge and Politics*, 195.

<sup>48</sup> "Yet Aristotle's judgement possibly arises from Plato's remark." KRS 165.

<sup>49</sup> *Metaph.* 4.1010a5-6; Barnes 2.1594.

more recent thinkers in this school is Heraclitus from whom the thought of all the rest “flows,” namely Cratylus, Epicharmus, Empedocles and especially Protagoras. The second school was founded by Xenophanes, followed by its greatest exponent, Parmenides, then Melissus, and, finally, Socrates himself.

Why was it important for Plato to associate Homer with the doctrine of flux and motion? Messrs. Kirk, Raven and Scofield assert that Plato “is obviously not entirely serious in his treatment of Homer as forerunner of the flux-idea assigned to Heraclitus, so we cannot be sure of the precise value he attached to the Homeric Okeanos-passage.”<sup>50</sup> No reason is given for this judgement. While they are sure that Plato did not take the idea seriously, they are equally sure that Aristotle did.<sup>51</sup> On other occasions, Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Scofield point out that Aristotle’s view may depend upon Plato’s reading.<sup>52</sup> That could also be the case in this instance. One would then have to argue that Aristotle either did not recognize Plato’s half-hearted seriousness or that recognizing it he himself took the matter more seriously. Both of those are actual possibilities, but since Aristotle is not reluctant to criticize his former teacher (witness his account of Platonic Forms in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1096a12-16), it is probable that both Plato and Aristotle were serious. Again, why was it important for Plato to understand Homer’s account of Oceanus and Tethys as the source for the later teaching of flux and motion?

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<sup>50</sup> KRS 15.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 15 citing *Metaph.* 1.983b27-31, “Some think that the ancients who lived long before the present generation, and first framed accounts of the gods, had a similar view of nature; for they made Oceanus and Tethys the parents of creation.” This passage shall be discussed below.

<sup>52</sup> E.g., with respect to Aristotle’s statement that Xenophanes founded the Eleatic school, KRS 165.



Plato ascribes to Homer the doctrine of flux and motion because Oceanus is the virtue of life which, to borrow a term from St. Thomas Aquinas, is infused in living beings as the first cause of those beings.<sup>53</sup> In Plato's reading of Homer, Oceanus is the primal divine being, apparently unique in having no beginning as well as sharing the quality of deathlessness with other divinities. The deathlessness of other gods is derived from the deathlessness of Oceanus; the river of his immortality flows through them. Whatever strength of life is found in any other being comes from Oceanus as the ultimate origin of existence. Because the ever-flowing streams are fundamental to Oceanus's being, and because all other beings have their origin in Oceanus, the character of being—that is, namely, of existence itself—is fluid in the most literal way. Thus, in Plato's sense of being, Oceanus is not, because Oceanus endlessly becomes. Professor Bloom encapsulates the Platonic apprehension of Oceanus, "The River Oceanus which surrounds Homer's world is a thing of constant, meaningless change."<sup>54</sup> It will now be argued that fluidity of being is characteristic of Homer's imaginative metaphysics and that it is depicted repeatedly throughout the Homeric epics.

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<sup>53</sup> "Virtus infusa causatur in nobis a Deo, sine nobis agentibus, non autem sine nobis consentientibus." St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* 1/2, q. 51, a. 4 ad 6. Professor Onians summarizes his survey of Oceanus in a variety of ancient Greek sources, "It can now be explained as the imagined primal ψυχή or procreative power, liquid and serpent." Onians, *Origins*, 249.

<sup>54</sup> Bloom, *Republic*, 427

### 3. “Oceanus and Tethys” in Homer

Homer speaks of Oceanus and Tethys on numerous occasions (e.g., *Iliad* 3.3; 14.201, 246, 302; 18.489, 607-08; *Odyssey* 11.13, 639).<sup>55</sup> Even amongst those references, one can distinguish cosmological and aetiological accounts. The cosmological passages explain something about how the world came into existence. Aetiological passages are accounts of the doings of gods and goddesses which account for why certain events on the human plain take place as they do. A third kind of account combines both the aetiological and the cosmological. Homer concludes his account of Achilles’ new shield as made by Hephaestus by situating Oceanus cosmologically, “Then, running round the shield-rim, triple-ply,/ he pictured all the might of Oceanus stream.”<sup>56</sup> That the round<sup>57</sup> shield depicts the cosmos is explicit, “He pictured on it earth, heaven, and sea, unwearied sun, moon waxing, all the stars /that heaven bears for garland.”<sup>58</sup> *Il.*iv, “War, Peace and the Divine Nature,” shall return to this shield. Here it is enough to note its explicit cosmological character. Oceanus ran outside the dome of the sky.<sup>59</sup> The sun, moon and stars are all inside the circle of Oceanus, which

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<sup>55</sup> George M. A. Hanfmann, “Oceanus (mythological),” in *OCD* 744-45.

<sup>56</sup> *Il.* 18.607-08; Fitzgerald, 454. “Homer appears to mean Achilles’ shield to be circular and puts Ὠκεανός at its outmost rim (*Il.* xviii, 607f.)” Onians, *Origins*, 249 n7.

<sup>57</sup> “The shield made for Achilles is obviously thought of as round.” KRS 11.

<sup>58</sup> *Il.* 18.483-85; Fitzgerald 450.

<sup>59</sup> The position of Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield is that Homeric Oceanus only encircles the flat earth, “That Okeanos surrounds the circular surface of the earth, though not explicitly stated in the Homeric poems, is suggested in 4 [*Il.* 18.607] (where the shield made for Achilles is obviously thought of as round), in 8 [*Il.* 14.200], and by some of the epithets applied to Okeanos – especially ἀψόροος, ‘back-flowing (which probably means ‘flowing back into itself’).” KRS 11. There is evidence in Homer, however, that at least Oceanus underlies the earth, evidence cited by Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, “The sun rises from Okeanos (e.g. *Il.* vii, 422), but there is no suggestion of a vessel of any kind. The refinement of the sun sailing round Okeanos could be post-Homeric. At *Od.* X, 191 the sun goes *under* the earth, but this probably means

was unending in the way that a circle is unending. There is no beginning or end; it is continuous. Though Oceanus was understood as the encompassing river of all that is, nevertheless one could sail to its coast:

By night  
 our ship ran onward toward the Ocean's bourne,  
 the realm and region of the Men of winter,  
 hidden in mist and cloud. Never the flaming  
 eye of Helios lights on those men  
 at morning, when he climbs the sky of stars,

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'sets'. The stars in Homer bathe in Okeanos (e.g. *Il.* v, 6; xviii, 489); they can hardly all have boats, and might be conceived as going through Okeanos and passing under the earth, though such details need not have been visualized." KRS 13n1. Set aside the question of a "vessel." If "the sun sailing round Okeanos could be post-Homeric," then it could also be Homeric. No reason is given for their suggestion that its being post-Homeric should be preferred to its being Homeric. There is no reason to think that Homer merely means "the sun sets" when he says that "the sun goes *under* the earth." In fact, the KRS reading is, using Professor Kaufmann's, term "naturalistic," and yet it has been shown here that there is no basis for a naturalistic reading of Homer prior to Xenophanes. Note also that in the first quotation from KRS, they acknowledge that their view is "not explicitly stated in the Homeric poems, rather "is suggested" in the account of Achilles' shield. In fact, their view is not "suggested" by Homer, rather Homer explicitly depicts that Oceanus encircles the dome of the sky as well as the circle of the earth. In *Il.* 18.483-89, it is explicit that earth, sky and sea are all chased upon the shield. The translation of Professor Lattimore will be given here because it is the most literal. The translations of Professors Fagles (483) and Fitzgerald (454) agree with it on all substantial points. Homer describes how Hephaestus began his work of engraving the shield, "He made the earth upon it, and the sky, and sea's water,/ and the tireless sun, and the moon waxing into her fullness,/ and on it all the constellations that festoon the heavens,/ the Pleiades and the Hyades and the strength of Orion/ and the Bear, whom men give also the name of the Wagon,/ who turns about in a fixed place and looks at Orion/ and she alone is never plunged in the wash of Oceanus." Lattimore, 388. Explicit is that only the Bear of all the stars is not submerged in Oceanus. That is consistent with the view that Oceanus is under the earth as well as around it. Those who want to defend the idea that Oceanus merely encircles the earth, as do Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield (KRS 92), must explain the medium through which the sun passes as it moves from west to east during the night. Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield assert that the idea that there is water under the earth comes from Egypt, but they provide no evidence for thinking so. Their own language in conclusion acknowledge the weakness of their case, "The conjecture might be hazarded that Thales was indebted to Egypt for this element of his world-picture." KRS 93. The explicit evidence of Homeric depiction counters the various assertions made by Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield. At the end of describing the shield's creation, Homer says, "He made on it the great strength of the Oceanus River/ which ran around the uttermost rim of the shield's strong structure." *Il.* 18.607-08; Lattimore, 391. Given that the sky is depicted on the shield, and that Oceanus is depicted on the extreme rim of the shield, then Oceanus is depicted as encircling the entirety of the cosmos including the sky and the sea as well as the earth. At a minimum, the assertions of Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield on this point ought to be read with considerable caution given the qualified character of their statements (e.g., the use of words like "suggest," "could," and "probably"). Absent from their analysis is an explanation for privileging certain evidence while disparaging other evidence. The view argued here is further supported by Herodotus' (4.36) mockery of Ionian maps which represent the cosmos as has been argued here was the view of Homer as discussed by Professor Jaeger, "Herodotus makes fun of the schematic structure of the old Ionian maps of the world, which showed the earth as round as if it had been turned on a lathe, and surrounded by Oceanus—which had never been seen by mortal eyes, at least on the east and north." Jaeger, *Paideia*, ed. Hight, 158.

nor descending earthward out of heaven;  
 ruinous night being rove over those wretches.  
 We made the land, put ram and ewe ashore,  
 And took our way along the Oceanus stream.<sup>60</sup>

One could sail to the end of the cosmos. The intrepid Odysseus could explore the world beyond the limits of mortal experience. This is a mythological account of discovering the physical universe. It is exploration and discovery depicted. Note that Oceanus alone (i.e., without Tethys) appears in these cosmological accounts.<sup>61</sup> Thus Oceanus is the imaginative genus of which all the rivers and streams of the world are imaginative species.

In *Iliad* 14.153-356, Hera wants to distract Zeus because of his adamant support for the Trojans. This is an aetiological account explaining how after the nearly decisive Trojan attack on the Achaean position, the Achaeans were able to mount a convincing counter-attack. The aetiological answer to this puzzle, given in depiction, is Hera's successful seduction of her husband. Divine actions are determinative in the outcome of human events. As Hera gathers tools for her seduction, she uses part of the story about Oceanus and Tethys as a ruse. It happens, then, that the part of the story of most interest here is, in practical terms for Hera, a throwaway mythological commonplace which serves the goddess as pretext.

I am on my way  
 to kind Earth's bourne (πολυφόρβου πείρατα γαίης) to see Okeanos,  
 from whom the gods arose (θεῶν γένεσιν), and Mother Tethys.  
 In their great hall they nurtured me, their gift  
 from Rhea, when Lord Zeus of the wide gaze  
 put Kronos down, deep under the earth and sea.  
 I go to see them and compose their quarrel:  
 estranged so long, they have not once made love  
 since anger came between them. Could I coax them

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<sup>60</sup> *Od.* 11.13-22; Fitzgerald 175-76. See also *Il.* 11.639-40.

<sup>61</sup> Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, July 17, 2007.

into their bed to give and take delight,  
I should be prized and dear to them forever.<sup>62</sup>

There are two cosmological points immediately evident in this tale. The first is “the bounds of much feeding Earth.” Earth is bounded by Oceanus, thus suggesting that Oceanus is unbounded.<sup>63</sup> The second is that the gods are generated from Oceanus (θεῶν γένεσιν), to be considered below.

There is a reprise of Hera’s story about going to see Oceanus and Tethys which Hera tells to Zeus himself with some distinctive differences:

I go my way to the bourne of Earth, to see  
Okeanos, from whom the gods arose,  
and Mother Tethys. In their distant hall  
they nourished me and cared for me in childhood.  
Now I must see them and compose their strife.  
They live apart from one another’s bed,  
estranged so long, since anger came between them.  
As for my team, it stands at Ida’s base  
ready to take me over earth and sea.  
On your account I came to see you first,  
so that you will not rage at me for going  
in secret where Okeanos runs deep.<sup>64</sup>

Hera deletes the reference to Zeus’s overthrow of Kronos. She also adds details which expand the cosmological worldview. The goddess will ride in her chariot drawn by horses from the base of Mount Ida “over earth and sea” to Oceanus who has “deep, steady flow”

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<sup>62</sup> *Il.* 14.200-210; Fitzgerald 336.

<sup>63</sup> Gabriel García Márquez reports a conversational remark which expresses well this relationship of Earth and Ocean, “My grandfather had led me across that burning wasteland, walking fast and not telling me where we were going, and then, without warning, we found ourselves facing a vast extension of green water belching foam, where an entire world of drowned chickens lay floating. ‘It’s the ocean,’ he said. Disenchanted, I asked him what was on the other shore, and without a moment’s hesitation he answered: ‘There is no shore on the other side.’” Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Living to Tell the Tale* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003), 13.

<sup>64</sup> *Il.* 14.301-11; Fitzgerald 339.

(βαθυπρόου), a word used almost exclusively of Oceanus (*Iliad* 7.42; 14.311; *Odyssey* 11.13; 19.434) and, on one occasion only, of the river Xanthos (*Iliad* 21.8). Even in the last case, it could be argued that the reference is, in fact, to Oceanus. The men who are being driven into Xanthos are on the journey from the land of the living to the house of Hades. As has been seen above, it is where the earth ends that Oceanus begins. One travels Oceanus's stream in order to arrive at the house of Hades. Oceanus is characteristically "deep flowing." As the source of the gods, their changeable nature may be derived from the constant movement in the depths of their origin.

Perhaps the most significant word in relation to flux and motion is when Hypnos (god of sleep) characterizes Oceanus with the words, "the streams of ever-flowing Oceanus, first beginning of all the gods (καὶ ἄν ποταμοῖο ῥέεθρα/ Ὠκέανοῦ, ὃς περ γένεσις πάντεσσι τέτυκται)"<sup>65</sup> Here is an even stronger statement of the flux inherent in the origin of all things, not merely of the gods (14.201) but in this passage of all things. The original character of Oceanus is emphasized by the intensive particle, *περ*. Oceanus is the primordial being.<sup>66</sup> Gods are deathless but not eternal; once generated, they cannot die, but they did not always exist. Oceanus is, one may infer, the one being without beginning as well as without

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<sup>65</sup> *Il.* 14.245-46; my translation.

<sup>66</sup> This reading of Homer stands in contrast to the divine genealogy found in Hesiod where he is said to be "son of Uranus (Sky) and Ge (Earth), husband of Tethys, and father of the Oceanids and River gods (*Hes. Th.* 133, 364)." Hanfmann, "Oceanus (mythological)," in *OCD* 744. It may simply be that the Homeric account represents an older mythological tradition which also makes sense given, as Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield point out as discussed above, that there is little in Homer about Oceanus. The Oceanus material, as mythic remnants, may have been interpolated into the text in the way that someone telling a story in the present may interpolate an account from a grandparent which is not consistent in style and content with the narrative present. This is especially likely in the references to Oceanus made by Hera in her story-telling.

end.<sup>67</sup> The eternal character of Oceanus is depicted on Achilles' shield as encircling all that exists and occurs on earth. Oceanus, without beginning or end, is the being in which all other beings have beginning.<sup>68</sup> In that beginning being are ever-flowing streams which is to say, in terms of the *Cratylus* and *Theaetetus*, that beginning being is ever in flux and motion.

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<sup>67</sup> Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield read *Il.* 14.200, 301, and 245-46 according to the same principles of naturalistic reduction as was in seen in the discussion of Oceanus' place in the Homeric cosmos. They are correct when they opine that "outside the particular episode in which these two passages occur, the Διὸς ἀπάτη or Deception of Zeus by Hera (*Il.* xiv, 153-360 and xv, *init.*), there is almost nothing in Homer that can reasonably be construed as specifically cosmogonical or cosmological in content; that is, as going beyond the accepted outline of what has been termed the popular world-picture." KRS 14. They are right when they add that even in these passages, "there is not much." *Ibid.*, 14. That there is "not much" is not a reason to reduce that little as they do, "Indeed, there is little which might not be explained without introducing cosmological interpretations, if a slight oddity of expression is allowed." As before, note the careful qualification of their scholarly opinion. That there is only a "little" for which they cannot account with their theory means that there is some of what they find in Homer for which they cannot give an account without resorting to "cosmological interpretations." Further, they suggest that it is those "cosmological interpretations" which are introduced, but in fact, the cosmological aspects of the passages are explicit. It is their reductionist theory which is introduced. They acknowledge that one has to allow for "a slight oddity of expression" in order to make even their partial explanation work. As was seen before, if one takes away their qualifications, nothing is left of their naturalistic reduction.

The theory which Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield introduce to interpret these passages is that "the river Okeanos is the source of all fresh water . . . ; water is necessary for life, therefore life must have originated, directly or indirectly, from Okeanos." *Ibid.*, 14. Their explanation is very pertinent to the fundamental theme of the present work, namely the relationship of concept and concrete. They suppose that Homer has analyzed the cosmological order conceptually and then developed a concrete metaphor for that conceptualization. That is, they suppose that Homer employed metaphor in the second Vichian sense, when it fact he gives an imaginative genus. Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield acknowledge—one is tempted to say that "they admit"—that "This would not explain his [Oceanus'] parenthood of the gods in 8 [*Il.* 14.200 and 301], but that could be a poetical extension." *Ibid.*, 14. This supposes that Homer wrote poetry as Alexander Pope did. They further acknowledge the problem of the text which stands explicitly against their theory, "It would also involve limiting the application of πάντες in 9 [*Il.* 14.244] to living creatures and plant life, but again the same kind of poetic looseness might be presupposed." *Ibid.*, 14. Now, it is not merely "poetic extension," but "poetic looseness." This they posit about a text, to quote Professor Most again, which was esteemed for its veridicality, "We ourselves may justly admire the evident imaginative originality and inventiveness of early Greek epic poetry; but, for their part, Homer and Hesiod claim that, on the contrary, the only validation of their poetry is that it tells the truth, conforming veridically to a real past or present state of affairs." Most, "Poetics," 342-43. At the end of their interpretation of these passages, Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield state, "It must be admitted, however, that the references, if so understood, would be pointlessly abbreviated and give a somewhat bizarre effect." KRS 14. It is difficult to understand how or why they would persist in standing by their posited interpretation given that admission. Why not, instead, simply read the text as it is and draw the obvious cosmological inferences. That is attempted here. If the present interpretation errs, it can be easily corrected by immediate reference to the text.

<sup>68</sup> Professor Onians comments, "γενέσις suggests the process or, in this context, the *substance* rather than the *agent* of generation. That Homer uses it twice of the cosmic river and not elsewhere of gods, men, or

It has been observed that all Homeric physics is metaphysics. It is also the case that in Homeric metaphysics anything that exists is living, at least when a thing is in motion<sup>69</sup> even if it is set in motion by another. To use an instance quoted by Aristotle as an example of what Aristotle reads as “metaphorical life,”<sup>70</sup> Homer writes that “the spear tore through his chest in its fury.”<sup>71</sup> Thus too, the rainbow is a goddess, not merely a colored cloud as Xenophanes would later explain.<sup>72</sup> Professor Onians discusses extensively that “life is liquid,”<sup>73</sup> a view for which he finds ample support in Homer. For example, death or even the diminution of life in a being is characterized in terms of drying up, “With advancing years this [abundance of liquid] gradually dries up and simultaneously life and strength diminish to their close. To age was to lose flesh, i.e. to lose liquid, to ‘dry up’. Thus to convert Odysseus into an old man Athene ‘dried up the fair flesh (κάρψε μὲν οἱ χροῖα καλόν) on his

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animals, which are agents, ‘fathers’, can scarcely be accidental.” Onians, *Origins*, 247. It is interesting to compare treatment of Plato and Aristotle respectively on this point. Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield set *Thi.* 152e5-8 and *Metaph.* 1.983b27-33 in contrast to each other. Plato quotes the Homeric line, “Okeanos begetter of gods and mother Tethys,” while Aristotle cites “the ancients” saying “Okeanos and Tethys were the parents of coming-to-be. KRS 15. In fact, Homer does not say that Tethys was a “parent.” The Cooper edition adds a possessive pronoun which makes the English translation say something which the Greek original does not say, “Ocean, begetter of gods, and Tethys *their* mother” (emphasis added). Granted that one could interpret the line to mean, “As Oceanus was the source of the gods so Tethys was their mother.” That would make the Homeric line consistent with Hesiod’s account, but it is not what the Homeric line actually says. It is Oceanus who is explicitly the genesis of the gods. It has already been noted above that in reading Plato and Aristotle here, Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield hold equally Plato not to have been serious and Aristotle to have been serious. An observation, both more interesting and more accurate, is that Plato regards Oceanus and Tethys as a metaphor in the second Vichian sense for “flux and motion,” while Aristotle reads the ancients more literally. Aristotle understands Oceanus and Tethys as “the parents of coming-to-be (τῆς γενέσεως πατέρας).” Thus the reading of the present work, i.e., that Oceanus is the primordial being, is consistent with Aristotle’s reading with the addition of Tethys, i.e., that Oceanus and Tethys together are the primordial beings.

<sup>69</sup> Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, July 17, 2007.

<sup>70</sup> *Rhet.* 3.1411b32; Barnes 2.2253.

<sup>71</sup> *Il.* 15.542; Lattimore 323.

<sup>72</sup> Xenophanes, B32 D.-K.

<sup>73</sup> Onians, *Origins*, 144, 212-23, 254-56, 289-91 (passim 200-99).



pliant limbs.”<sup>74</sup> He also points out, in a passage also quoted by Aristotle in relation to Oceanus and Tethys as “parents of coming to be,”<sup>75</sup> that “the ‘greatest and most awful oath for the blessed gods’ is by the *water of the river* of the underworld, the water of Styx proper to the dead.”<sup>76</sup> It is exactly such an oath which Hypnos demands of Hera in the account of her seduction of Zeus.<sup>77</sup> Professor Onians does not make the inference made here, namely that Oceanus as the primal being is the virtue—this is virtue in the sense of what a thing has and does in order to be what it is—<sup>78</sup> infused in all existing things, but it does seem that he makes all the points upon which the conclusion is premised:

1. Oceanus is the primal being from which all things are made;

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 214. This view is also supported by the interpretation of KRS, “Theophrastus’ abbreviated account of Thales’ material principle is given by Simplicius, *in Phys.* p.23, 21 Diels (= Theophrastus *Phys. op.* fr. 1), DK 11A13. It is a close parallel of Aristotle in 85 [*Metaph.* 1.983b6], using in many parts the same phraseology. It adds one more conjectural reason for Thales’ choice of water, that corpses dry up (τὰ νεκρούμενα ξηραίνονται).” KRS 91. What is significant in the reference to KRS is they recognize the same point as Professor Onians, namely that water as the life-principle is not only evidenced in its presence but in its absence: where water is, life is; where water is not, life is not. Against the conclusion of Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, however, is the point that one need not suppose Thales chose water as his first principle. Once Oceanus is recognized as the Homeric life principle, the source of all things even the gods, then one can say that Thales merely took the first step toward abstraction. For Thales, it was no longer the mythological Oceanus who was the first principle, rather the physical entity of water.

<sup>75</sup> *Metaph.* 1.983.b29-33; KRS 15.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 247, citing *Il.* 15.35-40 .

<sup>77</sup> *Il.* 14.270-76.

<sup>78</sup> This is an understanding of virtue consistent with that of Professor MacIntyre, “A man in heroic society is what he does. . . . ‘Virtue’, is in the Homeric poems use for excellence of any kind. . . . This concept of virtue is more alien to us than we are apt at first to recognize.” MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 122. Professor MacIntyre concerns himself with human virtue, as the Greek word, ἀρετή, is used by Homer in a deeply literal sense of “manliness.” He moves beyond the virtue of heroic men to that of heroic women as well, e.g., Penelope. Ibid., 123. The step taken in the present work is to see that everything that exists has its virtue. Water is always wet, and fire always burns. If a chair can no longer be sat upon, it has lost its virtue and is, to take up Aristotle’s point once more, only equivocally a chair. Thus, Aristotle, summarizes ἀρετή, “every excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well.” *Eth. Nic.* 2.1106a15-17; Barnes 2.1747.

2. Oceanus is liquid;

3. Liquid is the life principle of existence;

4. Insofar as a thing has existence it is wet, and insofar as a thing's existence is diminished it dries up.

There is no ultimate source other than Oceanus and, therefore, all liquid must ultimately be derived from Oceanus's waters. Although it requires a few steps to arrive at the conclusion, in Homeric metaphysics, Oceanus is infused in all beings. Because an essential quality of Oceanus is its state of ever-flowing, this quality is also infused in all beings. Thus, one arrives at the explanation of the assertion by Plato's Socrates that Homer held "nothing stands still."<sup>79</sup> The modern or post-modern reader must be mindful that Oceanus is a divine being differentiated even from other divine beings as the primal and the one eternal divine being. It may be that the word "god" is inadequate to Oceanus's being since the gods have their origin in him. To say that Oceanus is infused in all beings is to say that all beings participate in Oceanus's primal divinity.

#### **4. Early Greek Philosophy on Homer and Homeric Themes**

Thales is an icon of philosophy. Professor Burnet, in a moment of understatement, writes, "Of Thales himself we know a great deal less than we should like to know."<sup>80</sup> If Homer can be dated between 750 and 680 B.C. and if Thales predicted an eclipse in 585

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<sup>79</sup> *Tht.* 180d3.; Cooper 199.

<sup>80</sup> John Burnet, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato* (London: MacMillan and Company, 1953), 18.

B.C., then a century or perhaps a century and a half separate them.<sup>81</sup> Without trying to ascertain what Thales might actually have thought or taught, it will be useful for present purposes to consider how Plato and Aristotle regarded this icon with respect to Oceanus and Tethys. As Thales is an icon, so the anecdote told by Socrates of the *Theaetetus* about Thales is iconic: while gazing at the stars, he fell into a deep hole filled with water.<sup>82</sup> Given the larger context, one could say that Thales while surveying the universe fell into the water of Oceanus. Aristotle is explicit:

Of the first philosophers, most thought the principles which were of the nature of matter were the only principles of all things; . . . .

Yet they do not all agree as to the number and the nature of these principles. Thales, the founder of this school of philosophy, says the principle is water (for which reason he declared that the earth rests on water), getting the notion perhaps from seeing that the nutriment of all things is moist, and that heat itself is generated from the moist and kept alive by it (and that from which they come to be is a principle of all things). He got his notion from this fact, and from the fact that the seeds of all things have a moist nature, and that water is the origin of the nature of moist things.

Some think that the ancients who lived long before the present generation, and first framed accounts of the gods, had a similar view of nature; for they made Oceanus and Tethys the parents of creation, and described the oath of the gods as being by water, which they themselves called Styx; for what is oldest is most honourable, and the most honourable thing is that by which one swears. It may perhaps be uncertain whether this opinion about nature is primitive and ancient, but Thales at any rate is said to have declared himself thus about the first cause.<sup>83</sup>

Aristotle seems to distinguish here between the age of philosophy (“the present generation”), inaugurated by Thales, and the age of the myth-makers, those who explained natural phenomena in terms of the gods. There is both continuity and discontinuity here. The

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<sup>81</sup> “Thales predicted an eclipse which took place in 585 B.C. He was presumably not active, therefore, much earlier than the beginning of the sixth century.” KRS 76.

<sup>82</sup> *Tht.* 174a4-5.

<sup>83</sup> Aristotle, *Metaph.* 1.983b6-8 and 1.983b19-984a2; Barnes 2.1555-56. = Thales A.12 D.-K.

continuity is that Aristotle understands the myth-makers and the philosophers as talking about the same thing. The myth-makers explained the first cause as “Oceanus and Tethys the parents of creation,” while philosophers explained the first cause as water. In the terms of the present work’s thesis, philosophers conceptualize what myth-makers depicted. “Parents” are concretes while “first cause” is a concept. The discontinuity is that philosophers have a better mode of discourse, explaining the world in its own terms rather than in terms of something else.

It has been argued that Homer actually held Oceanus and Tethys to exist as beings who were responsible, though perhaps only intermediately, for the existence of the world. What Thales thought is subject only to speculation. Aristotle, however, seems to have thought that when Homer or other myth-makers said that Oceanus and Tethys engendered the world, they were speaking metaphorically. When he writes about metaphor in the *Rhetoric*, he makes a clear distinction between things possessing life and those which are lifeless:

It has already been mentioned that liveliness is got by using the proportional type of metaphor and by making our hearers see things. We have still to explain what we mean by their ‘seeing things’, and what must be done to effect this. By ‘making them see things’ I mean using expressions that represent things as in a state of activity. . . . So with Homer’s common practice of giving metaphorical life to lifeless things; all such passages are distinguished by the effect of the activity they convey. . . . In all these examples the things have the effect of being active because they are made into living beings; . . . . In his famous similes, too, he treats inanimate things in the same way:

Curving and crested with white, host following host without ceasing.

Here he represents everything as moving and living; activity is movement. Metaphors must be drawn, as has been said already, from things that are related to

the original thing, and yet not obviously related—just as in philosophy an acute mind will perceive resemblances even in things far apart.<sup>84</sup>

It does not seem to have occurred to Aristotle that some people might not make this distinction between entities with life and entities without life, which is to say entities with soul and without soul. Thus the difference, according to Aristotle, between Homer and Thales was the mode of discourse. Both sought the first cause. Aristotle makes that all the more clear in his remark that the mind of the philosopher and that of the poet work in either the same way or a closely analogous way; they both “perceive resemblances even in things far apart.” It is argued here that Homer, in fact, did not distinguish between soul-less and ensouled entities, that he held everything to be alive, indeed that being was fluid. This view is called “hylozoism.” Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield describe this view of the world in relation to both Thales and Aristotle:

The precise nature of Thales’ belief that all things are full of gods is obviously not determinable. . . . The point was that the range of soul, or of life, was much greater than it appeared to be. Thales was giving an explicit and individual statement of a broad supposition common to all the early physicists, that the world was somehow alive, that it underwent spontaneous change, and (what irritated Aristotle) that there was therefore no need to give any special account of natural change. This presupposition is still sometimes called ‘hylozoism’; but this name implies too strongly that it is something uniform, determinable and conscious. In fact the term applies to at least three possible and distinct attitudes of mind: (a) the assumption (conscious or not) that all things are absolutely in some way alive; (b) the belief that the world is interpenetrated by life, that many of its parts which appear inanimate are in fact animate; (c) the tendency to treat the world as a whole, whatever its detailed constitution, as a single living organism. (a) is an extreme, but in view of the universalizing tendency of Greek thought not an impossible, form of the general presupposition; in a way it might be said to be exemplified by Xenophanes. Thales’ belief, it has been suggested, approaches close to (b). (c) is implicit in the old genealogical view of the world’s history described in chapter 1 [“The Forerunners of

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<sup>84</sup> *Rhet.* 3.1411b24-1412a9; Barnes 2.2252-53.

Philosophical Cosmogony”], which still persisted to some extent under the new rationalized form of philosophical cosmogony.<sup>85</sup>

Though Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield hold that Xenophanes “exemplified” one of these positions, “that all things are absolutely in some way alive,” they are sure at the same time that Homer did not exemplify such a position:

The spears in the *Iliad* (XI, 574 etc.) which are ‘eager to devour flesh’, and other similar cases, are sometimes cited as an indication that the animistic view was an old one. Animism is, of course, as old as man himself, and it arises out of the failure to objectify one’s experience of the outside world, a technique which requires some practice. The Homeric expressions are better described as a literary conceit, like the pathetic fallacy – a deliberate rejection of the technique.<sup>86</sup>

Do Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield intend to say that Homer, whatever may be meant by the name, did not hold with hylozoism, but that Xenophanes who explicitly and significantly distinguishes divinity and natural object in B32, nevertheless, did hold with hylozoism? It is difficult to read their comment on hylozoism any other way, and yet the evidence favors exactly the converse. Given the terms used by Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield their characterization of Homer constitutes an intellectual rescue. Animism on their account is a “failure to objectify one’s experience of the outside world.” The unstated presupposition is that at the time of Homer there existed the ability “to objectify one’s experience of the outside world.” Animists have the ability to do so, but fail to do so. This is but another example of Professor Adkins’ observation, “We are all Kantians now.”<sup>87</sup> The argument of

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<sup>85</sup> KRS, 97-98.

<sup>86</sup> KRS 98n1. Professor Benardete seems to have understood this fluidity of being from his earliest days as a scholar. He writes in his doctoral dissertation, “Sometimes Hector’s (or Achilles’) armor is likened to fire, but more often they themselves are fire, which flashes from their eyes [*Il.* 15.605-10, 19.16-17, 365-66].” Seth Benardete, *Achilles and Hector: The Homeric Hero* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005), 61.

<sup>87</sup> Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*, 8.

the present work and, indeed, supported by the evidence adduced by Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield is in historical development a time existed when there was no objectification “of the outside world,” rather that the world was experienced as fluid being, and that, further, a time came when objectification occurred, and after that came conceptualization, and that, finally, in the transition from Homer to Xenophanes to Plato to Aristotle one sees exactly that train of historical development. There was a moment when the first joke was told and the first concept conceived. The mistake—literally the mis-taking—of Homer is as old as Aristotle when, as quoted above in his *Rhetoric*, he reads as metaphor in the second Vichian sense, i.e., metaphor proper, what was in fact metaphor in the first Vichian sense of imaginative genus. A great obstacle in the post-Aristotelian reading of Homer and even more in the post-Kantian reading of Homer is that once literary metaphor was discovered it became nearly impossible for any educated western reader to apprehend the reality of imaginative genus to the ancients. It was Vico in his great insight who created anew for moderns and now post-moderns the ability to read Homer in some manner close to the mode in which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed.<sup>88</sup>

Four components of the Homeric legacy remain central as attention is turned to Early Greek philosophy. First, Oceanus is the primal source of all being, and insofar as things have life it is because the virtue of Oceanus is infused in them betokened by moisture. Second, because the streams of Oceanus are ever-flowing and because the virtue of Oceanus infuses all beings, being itself is literally fluid. Flux and motion are inherent to being, i.e.,

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<sup>88</sup> Here again is the key passage, “It is equally beyond our power to enter into the vast imagination of those first men, whose minds were not in the least abstract, refined or spiritualized, because they were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body. That is why we said above that we can scarcely understand, still less imagine, how those first men thought who founded gentile humanity.” *NS* 378.

being is always becoming. Third, seeming and being are closely joined, probably in no small part because being is fluid. Seeming is as likely to contribute to being as to be an alternative to being. Seeming and being and their relationship to each other are evidenced by signs. Through the preponderance of signs one can come to knowledge. Fourth, knowledge is a kind of sensation perceived by internal organs. These four components ought to be constant points of reference when examining the views, respectively, of Thales, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Protagoras, and Empedocles.

According to Aristotle, Thales held water to be “the element and first principle of existing things,”<sup>89</sup> a view consistent with Oceanus as the primal source of all being. Aristotle’s explanation of that view is purely naturalistic, but the explanation is his own inference and he posits only as a guess as to why Thales thought of water as the first element and principle. Aristotle also reports that Thales held the earth to rest on water.<sup>90</sup> This is a substantial departure from the Homeric worldview in which Oceanus enveloped the earth. Professor Burnet sums up the significance of the shift in thought, “It was something to get the earth to float.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, contrary to the view of Professor Jaeger that “it is not easy to say how the Homeric idea that Oceanus is the origin of everything differs from the doctrine of Thales that water is the basic principle of the universe,”<sup>92</sup> one can make a distinction between water as the first principle which encircles the world and water as the first principle

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<sup>89</sup> *Metaph.* 1.983b6; KRS 88-89.

<sup>90</sup> “Others say that the earth rests on water. For this is the most ancient account we have received, which they say was given by Thales the Milesian.” *Cael.*, 294a28 (=Thales B13 D.-K.). KRS 88-89.

<sup>91</sup> Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 21.

<sup>92</sup> Jaeger, *Paideia*, trans. Highet, 151.



which supports the world. For Thales, as the first natural philosopher, the Homeric fluidity of Oceanus persists as a first principle since he seems to have thought that living soul or perhaps divinity was imbued in all things; at least Aristotle thought so.<sup>93</sup>

While Xenophanes B32 marks an important turn on the road from depictive metaphysics of the imagination to abstract metaphysics of rationality, as was considered in II.i.1, it also evidences continuity with Homeric logic as manifest in the identification of Odysseus to Telemachus (*Od.* 16.187-88). Odysseus says, “I am not a god [ $\sim A$ ]; . . . I am your father [B].” Xenophanes makes the same kind of distinction about the rainbow that Odysseus made about himself:

$\sim A$

B

I am not a god .

I am your father.

The rainbow is not a goddess.

The rainbow is a cloud.

Each author employs the logical categories of identity, non-contradiction, though in a way that is implicit to the text and without naming or almost equally certainly, without thinking of those categories. Thus through logic, both Homer and Xenophanes advance the distinction between what a thing might seem to be and what it actually is. By making that distinction, each also advances epistemology. One knows through making such distinctions. For Plato, Homer and Xenophanes fight in the opposing armies, respectively, of becoming and being. In the immediate comparison, however, each through the exercise of affirming that something is  $\sim A$  and is B has set a limit on becoming. Each uses logic to advance metaphysics, without naming either the instrument or the science. For Homer, Odysseus

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<sup>93</sup> *De An.*, 405a19 (=Thales A2, D.-K.); 411a7 (=Thales A2, A5).

cannot become a god and cease to be the father of Telemachus. For Xenophanes, the rainbow cannot become a goddess and cannot cease to be a cloud. For Xenophanes certainly, but even for Homer, becoming is not an absolute principle.

Socrates of the *Theaetetus* names Heraclitus, Protagoras and Empedocles as Homer's lieutenants in the army supporting the philosophy of flux and motion.<sup>94</sup> He specifically relates the Heraclitean doctrine to Homeric Oceanus in his summary, "all things flow like streams."<sup>95</sup> Socrates of the *Cratylus* makes a similar declaration about Heraclitus when refers to "Heraclitus' doctrine that the things that are all flowing and that nothing stands fast,"<sup>96</sup> and further states, "Heraclitus says somewhere that 'everything gives way and nothing stands fast,' and likening the things that are to the flowing of a river (ποταμοῦ ῥοῆ), he says that 'you cannot step into the same river (ποταμόν) twice.'"<sup>97</sup> Not only do the passages from the *Theaetetus* and *Cratylus* support the exposition to this point relating the philosophy of flux and motion to the virtue of Oceanus infused in all existing things, but further suggests that this connection was the catalytic thought in the teachings of Heraclitus.

Even when Heraclitus does not explicitly refer to Oceanus, he may be thinking of Oceanus as he develops his doctrine of generation, corruption, and existence in terms of water, "For souls it is death to become water, for water it is death to become earth; out of earth water arises, out of water soul."<sup>98</sup> Without implying that Xenophanes influenced

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<sup>94</sup> E.g., *Tht.* 152e2-3.

<sup>95</sup> *Tht.* 160d7-8; Cooper 179.

<sup>96</sup> *Cra.* 401d4-5 (=Heraclitus A6 D.-K.); Cooper 119-20.

<sup>97</sup> *Cra.* 402a8-10; Cooper 120. See Heraclitus A6, 15, B12, 49a, and 91 D.-K.

Heraclitus, the move seen in the fragments of Xenophanes from imaginative toward abstract genera through a new kind of sorting becomes decisive in Heraclitus. Earth comes from water, but once it exists earth is itself elemental. Death is not an impenetrable boundary, rather a stage in generation: the death of water is the origin of earth; the death of souls is the origin of water. As with Xenophanes, however, there are both continuities as well as new departures. The circle which in Homer was Oceanus is now a cycle: souls, water, earth, water, soul. This is also consistent with the fragments which suggest that the drier the soul is, the better it is (B117, 118). Also, Heraclitus says of soul what Homer says of Oceanus, that it is limitless, “You will not find the limits (πείρατα) of the soul by going, even if you travel over every way, so deep is its report.”<sup>99</sup> In the way reminiscent of Homeric Oceanus as primal virtue infused in all existing things, the structure (λόγος) of Heraclitean soul augments itself<sup>100</sup> and is “always flowing.”<sup>101</sup>

Heraclitus engages in sorting which implicitly moves away from the Homeric imaginative genera toward more naturalistic, and therefore more rational, genera. This is consistent with his reflections on nature itself (e.g., B112, 123). For example, Heraclitus calls male and female “opposites” (έναντίων όντων).<sup>102</sup> In a nice piece of physical science, Heraclitus observes, “Cold warms up, warm cools off, moist parches, dry dampens.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Heraclitus B36 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 75 (CI).

<sup>99</sup> Heraclitus B45 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 45 (XXXV).

<sup>100</sup> Heraclitus B115 D.-K.

<sup>101</sup> Heraclitus A15 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 79 (CXIII).

<sup>102</sup> Heraclitus, A22 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 67 (LXXXIa).

There are the opposites of cold and warm, moist and dry. Each quality moves toward its opposite. In a similar way, Heraclitus names opposites, “day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger” though in the context of “god” that is not clear.<sup>104</sup> Another fragment identifies a correspondence between opposites, “The way up and down is one and the same.”<sup>105</sup> In another kind of distinction, the general conclusion is drawn from long observation, “Dogs bark at those they do not recognize.”<sup>106</sup> Heraclitus continues the break with mythological explanation begun by Xenophanes. He analyzes a thing as it is in its own nature and not in relation to a divinity. Even in the exceptional fragment (e.g., B67) where “god” is mentioned, it is the generic “ὁ θεός” and not a specific Olympian.

From the analysis of Heraclitus to this point, it is already evident that for him knowledge at least begins in sense perception, but then Aristotle also says as much. There is little or no basis in the extant fragments or the testimony to argue that for Heraclitus knowledge *is* perception. B112, “Thinking well is the greatest excellence and wisdom: to act and speak what is true, perceiving things according to their nature,”<sup>107</sup> for example, is tantalizing but subject to be argued *pro* or *contra*.<sup>108</sup> What does seem clear, however, is the

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<sup>103</sup> Heraclitus, B126 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 53 (XLIX).

<sup>104</sup> Heraclitus, B67 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 85 (CXXIII).

<sup>105</sup> Heraclitus, B60 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 75 (CIII).

<sup>106</sup> Heraclitus, B97 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 57 (LXI).

<sup>107</sup> Heraclitus B112 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 43 (XXXII).

<sup>108</sup> First, there is the question of authenticity which is disputed. Second, there is the question of translation and, consequently interpretation. Professor Kahn argues for authenticity and gives an example of Homer’s use of *σαοφοροσύνη* when Telemachus plays along with his father’s disguise as a beggar (*Od.*23.30) which makes this fragment a candidate for interpreting as a move toward conceptualizing what is depicted in Homer. At the same time, one must ask, without being able to answer the question, whether Heraclitus meant,

strongly semiotic character of knowledge, as it is in Homer. For example, the identity of Odysseus disguised as a beggar was discovered through the accumulation of signs (e.g., the hunting scar, drawing the bow no one else could draw, revealing the secret of his marital bed to Penelope, enumerating the varieties of orchard stock to Laertes). So too for Heraclitus, the nature of a thing is discovered through various signs, such as cold warming, warm cooling, moist drying, dry dampening, etc. Knowledge is the gathering of signs until some moment of awareness emerges. At times, this is explicit as in B93, “The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither declares nor conceals, but gives a sign.”<sup>109</sup> In other passages, it is implicit, “Nature loves to hide”<sup>110</sup> and “the hidden atunement is better than the obvious one.”<sup>111</sup> Through signs one recognizes the road up and the road down, heat giving way to cold, day giving way to night.<sup>112</sup>

Socrates of the *Theaetetus* challenges the arguments of Protagoras more than any other of the thinkers he opposes.<sup>113</sup> Of the seventy Stephanus pages in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates maintains a running argument against Protagoras for about thirty pages (152-183), nearly all aimed at one statement, “Man is the measure of all things.” Why did Socrates

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first, that by *κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαῖοντας* one is to understand sensation in the literal sense, and, second, if it is then to be equated with the prudent thinking of one engaged in *σωφρονεῖν*. Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 119-23.

<sup>109</sup> Heraclitus B93 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 43 (XXXIII).

<sup>110</sup> Heraclitus, B123 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 33 (X).

<sup>111</sup> Heraclitus, B54 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 65 (LXXX).

<sup>112</sup> In this connection, it is interesting to note the use by Heraclitus of, as has been discussed in I.ii, Plato’s last word: *συλλαμβάνω*, if one agrees with Professor Kahn on the variant reading, “Graspings (*συλλάψεις*): wholes and not wholes, convergent divergent, consonant dissonant, from all things one and from one thing all.” Heraclitus, B10 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 85 (CXXIV).

<sup>113</sup> In the index of the Cooper edition, listed are eighteen references or allusions to Protagoras, five to Homer, five to Heraclitus and one to Empedocles.

spend so much of his argument against that one claim? It may be that he did so because it was a statement that seemed to him manifestly wrong and yet, at the same time, so close to what he considered the first question of philosophy, “What is man?” Indeed, it is odd that a thinker as famous as Protagoras should have so few attested teachings, with a mere twelve fragments and some of them doubtful.<sup>114</sup> A very great deal of what is known about Protagoras is known directly or indirectly through the writings of Plato. Professor Paul Woodruff has attempted to sort out various historical possibilities about Protagoras. Plato’s reading of Protagoras is that man is the judge of all things, and that as it seems to me, so it is, “What I perceive obtains only at the moment I perceive it, and similarly for you (on the assumption that no two of us perceive the same object at the same moment, and we each change the object by perceiving it).”<sup>115</sup> Professor Woodruff points out that this view may not have been that of Protagoras at all, but it does seem to be, at least, Protagoras as Socrates’ straw man in the *Theaetetus*. This then would explain why the teaching of Protagoras was so much worse than that of Homer, Heraclitus, and Empedocles combined. They merely suggested that the world was constantly changing. Protagoras, by contrast, claimed—according to Socrates in both the *Cratylus* and the *Theaetetus*—that the world changes as my perceptions of it change. Rather than a changing world which I observe, it is a world as I observe it. In this view, not only is knowledge reduced to sensation, but being itself is made dependent upon sensation. Professor Verene, in discussing Vico’s analysis of Jove as a figure of the first deity, states, “Jove as the first name is drawn forth from the flux of

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<sup>114</sup> Protagoras, B1-12 D.-K.

<sup>115</sup> Woodruff, “Rhetoric and relativism: Protagoras and Gorgias,” in Long, *Early Greek*, 302-305 and specifically 303.

sensation.”<sup>116</sup> At the literal level, Protagoras could be left out of a discussion which has Oceanus as its motif. As Protagoras is represented by Plato, however, Protagoras entirely conceptualized the principle of flux and motion expressed in the concrete of Oceanus. The flowing rivers of Oceanus have become the ever-changing character of sensation. It is not with his foot that man steps into the river of the world, rather with his senses. In this regard, Cratylus’s amendment of the Heraclitean word—about putting one’s foot in the same river twice—pertains to Protagorean sensation, “He [Cratylus] thought one could not do it even once.”<sup>117</sup> It is not merely the world which is an ever-flowing stream; the senses themselves too are ever-flowing streams. Rather than knowledge of the world, one has confluence of sensation and world. Whether this was the opinion of Protagoras, Socrates of the *Theaetetus* is marvelously perceptive of the point inherent in the teaching of Protagoras. Without reference to Protagoras, Socrates of the *Republic* makes explicit this same point about measuring the good, “Any measure of such things that falls short in any way of that which is is not good measure, for nothing incomplete is the measure of anything.”<sup>118</sup> A rule of measure which changes is worthless; if the thing measured changes, measuring it is pointless. The stream of one river cannot be used to measure the stream of another river. For Plato, the doctrine of flux and motion whether concrete or conceptual is not merely dangerous philosophically, it is demonstrably wrong in practical terms. If such a doctrine truly accounted for the world as it is, then one could not know it let alone talk about it. The

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<sup>116</sup> Verene, *Imagination*, 172.

<sup>117</sup> *Metaph.* 4.1010a12-15; Barnes 2.1594-95.

<sup>118</sup> *R.* 6.504c1-3; Cooper 1125.

fact of the doctrine, i.e., that anyone held such a view and could articulate it coherently, is proof that the doctrine itself is wrong.

## 5. Homer and Plato

It has already been noted above in the consideration of Professor Sedley's commentary on the *Cratylus* that "the functions of words" are "cast in terms of name-Forms."<sup>119</sup> In an analysis of Homeric formulae and Platonic Forms and the relationship between them, Professor Charles Segal offers an insight similar to that of Professor Sedley:

As we descend the scale to the smaller unit of Homeric expression, the formula, we find that the formulas, like the similes, seek to lay hold of a stable, permanent, typical reality. In the midst of the incessant change and newness of events, they help to fix images of reality into enduring and momentous constants. This effect is especially important for oral poetry, for the medium of "winged words," the most fluid and perishable of forms, does not permit the audience or the poet to take stock or to reflect at leisure on the events unfolding rapidly before him. The language itself, therefore, shapes the emergent action into patterns that render it intelligible and coherent in the course of the telling. The basic linguistic units in which the story is told are themselves performed, as it were, toward a stable, typified reality, toward familiar, though not commonplace, norms of experience.<sup>120</sup>

Implicit in what Professor Segal is probing here is how the rhapsodes could memorize long poems and how the audiences who listened to them could comprehend those poems. The formulae were key to both.<sup>121</sup> Professor C. S. Lewis also has an insight very near to that of Messrs. Sedley and Segal:

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<sup>119</sup> Sedley, "*Cratylus*," 84.

<sup>120</sup> Segal, "Myth Was Saved," 318.

<sup>121</sup> Professor Lewis argues for this view, "The most obvious characteristic of oral technique is its continual use of stock words, phrases, or even whole lines. . . . This phenomenon has been explained often enough from the poet's side. 'These repetitions,' says Mr Nilsson, 'are a great aid for the singer for whilst reciting them mechanically he is subconsciously forming the next verse' (*Homer and Mycenae*, p. 203). But all



The permanence, the indifference, the heartrending or consoling fact that whether we laugh or weep the world is what it is, always enters into our experience and plays no small part in that pressure of reality which is one of the differences between life and imagined life. But in Homer the pressure is there. The sonorous syllables in which he has stereotyped the sea, the gods, the morning, or the mountains, make it appear that we are dealing not with poetry about the things, but almost with the things themselves.<sup>122</sup>

The impression that in Homer, one apprehends not images rather “the things themselves” is exactly the charge which Socrates of the *Republic* makes. He reviews the three kinds of bed. There is the Form of the bed which is most truly the bed. There is, then, the physical bed, built by an artisan. Third, there is the image of the bed made by the artist, which, as Socrates prompts Glaucon to acknowledge, is an imitation not of truth (i.e., the Form of the bed), rather only of appearance, (i.e., the bed made by the carpenter).<sup>123</sup> It is not only the ignorant who are moved by imitations of appearances, but “even decent people (τοὺς ἐπιεικεῖς).”<sup>124</sup> Here, Plato comes very near to a discovery. Because it is impossible to penetrate his mind through his texts, it is also impossible to know whether he made the discovery or only touched the edge of it. Platonic Form, that which most truly is, corresponds to Homeric formula. Professor Segal comments on the degree to which the formulae “lay hold of a stable, permanent reality”:

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art is made to *face* the audience. . . . It is a prime necessity of oral poetry that the hearers should not be surprised too often, or too much. The unexpected tires us: it also takes us longer to understand and enjoy than the expected. A line which gives the listener pause is a disaster in oral poetry because it makes him lose the next line.” Lewis, *Preface*, 19-20.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22.

<sup>123</sup> *R.* 10.596a10-598c4; Cooper 1201-02.

<sup>124</sup> *R.* 10.605c6-8; Cooper 1210.

To such an extent do Homer's formulas describe essential, enduring qualities rather than the impressions of the moment that certain 'fixed' epithets recur even when they are, apparently, inappropriate. . . .

Homer's formulas, like Plato's language of the Forms, create a world. Their allegiance is not primarily to the particular, but to a large vision of reality, to a coherent heroic universe. . . . It is here where poet and philosopher, for all their differences, overlap: each seeks to arrive at the timeless and essential quality above the particular and to view human life against the vision of a coherent, ennobled ideal which embraces the whole of reality.<sup>125</sup>

In I.i, it was argued Homer sets forth particulars as universals, e.g., Zeus and Odysseus.

Plato's Forms correspond to the Homeric particular-as-universal. In this analogous relationship, the formula stands as the definition of the particular-as-universal, e.g., "Father of gods and men," "of wise counsels," "the rosey-fingered," "the wine-dark," "the owl-eyed goddess." To understand this in Vichian terms, Homeric formulae express in poetic logic what Platonic Forms express in rational logic. The former is according to the logic of the heroic age; the latter, according to the age of men. Without reference to Vico (or, for that matter, without the benefit of his triads), Professor Segal offers this summary analysis, "The formulas, in other words, contain a 'pre-logic' . . . : they crystallize fluid objects into coherent, organized shapes."<sup>126</sup> In the fluidity of being apprehended by Homer, it is the formulae which express being, that-which-is. Professor Segal states, "Homer deals in poetic images, Plato in logical concepts."<sup>127</sup> With the aid of Vico, one can adjust that assessment: Homer deals in imaginative logic; Plato, in conceptual logic.

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<sup>125</sup> Segal, "Myth Was Saved," 319-20.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

One can see how formula works as a statement of being in the context of a world of flux when one considers the most famous epigram of flux and motion, the fragment of Heraclitus, “You cannot step into the same river twice.” To the extent to which that statement is true, it is always true. It is a statement of being which never changes. It is not that on Monday through Friday, “You cannot step into the same river twice,” but on weekends you can. The observation of Heraclitus is a statement of what is always true, what Aristotle calls “knowledge (ἐπιστήμη).”<sup>128</sup> Thus the most famous characterization of flux and motion is itself a statement of being.<sup>129</sup>

Conceptual metaphysics, then, came into existence at the point in Greek history when the oral culture was yielding to written culture. The fluidity of the spoken word—language as flux and motion<sup>130</sup>—was becoming [!] stable in the permanence of the written word. Much of the *Phaedrus* is occupied with the theme of how writing and metaphysics are correlated.<sup>131</sup> Perhaps as today the culture of the book yields to the image culture (via first

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<sup>128</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 6.1039b20-24.

<sup>129</sup> This reminds one of G. K. Chesterton’s observation that the theory of evolution explains everything except the theory. That holds to an even greater degree for chaos theory. The statement that there is no explanation is itself explanatory.

<sup>130</sup> “In the realm of orality one cannot dip twice into the same wave, and therefore the lie is a stranger.” Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders, *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (New York: Random House, 1989), 85.

<sup>131</sup> E.g., “Socrates: Well, then: our playful amusement regarding discourse is complete. Now you go and tell Lysias that we came to the spring which is sacred to the Nymphs and heard words charging us to deliver a message to Lysias and anyone else who composes speeches, as well as to Homer and anyone else who has composed poetry either spoken or sung, and third, to Solon and anyone who writes political documents that he calls laws: If any one of you has composed these things with a knowledge of the truth, if you can defend your writing when you are challenged, and if you can yourself make the argument that your writing is of little worth, then you must be called by a name derived not from these writings but rather from those things that you are seriously pursuing.

Phaedrus: What name, then, would you give such a man?

the television and now the computer and all its unnatural children), conceptual metaphysics is yielding to a different kind of apprehension of reality, or perhaps we are merely ready for the next course of history.

## 6. Plato and Aristotle on Homer

What strikes the reader repeatedly when examining Aristotle's treatment of points raised not only in Homer but also in his predecessor philosophers including and often especially Plato is how completely Aristotle has demythologized any given question. When, for example, in *Metaphysics* 4.1010a10-14 Aristotle treats the same idea in Heraclitus as has been seen in *Cratylus* 402a8-10, he has no need to make reference to Oceanus. It is not that he has forgotten Homer because he has just quoted the blind bard twenty lines earlier. Aristotle dispenses with Homeric depiction in order to do his work with concepts. When he does quote Homer, it is illustrative rather than depictive. A second example is Aristotle's law of identity. As has been seen above, it was possible for Athena to take the semblance of Telemachus and perform deeds in that semblance which were the deeds of Telemachus. Odysseus explained at least twice that the person of appearance here and now is the same as the person remembered or person of reputation. For Aristotle, identity is obvious in a way that had not been obvious for those encountering Athena as Telemachus or Odysseus as himself. Aristotle writes:

We should say what, and what sort of thing, substance is, taking another starting-point; for perhaps from this we shall get a clear view also of that substance

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Socrates: To call him wise, Phaedrus, seems to me too much, and proper only for a god. To call him wisdom's lover—a philosopher—or something similar would fit him better and be more seemly." *Phdr.* 278b7-d6; Cooper 554-55.

which exists apart from sensible substances (τῶν αἰσθητῶν οὐσιῶν). Since, then, substance is a principle and a cause (ἡ οὐσία ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία τις ἐστίν), let us attack it from this standpoint. The ‘why’ is always sought in this form—“why does one thing attach to another?” For to inquire why the musical man is a musical man, is either to inquire—as we have said—why the man is musical, or it is something else. Now “why a thing is itself” is doubtless a meaningless inquiry; for the fact or the existence of a thing must already be evident (e.g. that the moon is eclipsed), but the fact that a thing is itself is the single formula and the single cause (αἰτία) to all such questions as why the man is man, or the musical musical, unless one were to say that each thing is inseparable from itself; and its being one just meant this. . . . Plainly we are seeking the cause (τὸ αἴτιον). And this is the essence (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) (to speak abstractly) (ὡς εἰπεῖν λογικῶς) which in some cases is that for the sake of which, e.g. perhaps in the case of a house or a bed, and in some cases is the first mover; for this also is a cause. But while the efficient cause is sought in the case of genesis and destruction, the final cause is sought in the case of being also.<sup>132</sup>

Aristotle summarizes and disposes several points about which much has been said in the commentary on Homer, Early Greek philosophers and Plato. His response to the question of how to know Odysseus would be that the substance of Odysseus underlay all his sensible appearances. His substance was “that which was” (τὸ τί ἦν) in order for Odysseus “to exist” (εἶναι). Odysseus young, Odysseus old, Odysseus disguised as a beggar, Odysseus godlike, are the sensible manifestations of the one substance of Odysseus. What Aristotle would say if asked about Athena appearing as Telemachus and the status of deeds accomplished thus is not so clear since he might well discount the premise. Put, however, as “if X appeared as Y and performed deeds in that appearance would the deeds be those of X or Y?”, a clearer answer emerges: Aristotle would affirm that the deeds of X are the deeds of X in spite of sensible appearance. Even in this analysis, one has to suppose that Aristotle would disallow the possibility that X appearing as Y was, in some way, ontologically identical with Y. Aristotle can also discuss generation and destruction without reference to the gods, in

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<sup>132</sup> *Metaph.* 7.1041a7-19, 27-33; Barnes 1643-44.

contrast to the rational mythology offered by Plato meant to replace the old Homeric mythology (e.g., *Timaeus*). Plato's Socrates may have rejected the understanding of gods as represented by the Olympian pantheon, as Professor Snell observes, but not without serving them. The philosopher's concern with the soul and what constitutes knowledge is an acknowledgement of divine activity in human life.<sup>133</sup> The philosopher, Plato's Socrates, like the hero Odysseus, could defy the gods (as Odysseus defied Poseidon) or accept their friendship (as Odysseus accepted the friendship of Athena), but the gods remained ever with him.<sup>134</sup>

Aristotle simply does not seem to think of referring to theological mythology to explain natural philosophy though, one must add, in the esoteric Aristotelian corpus which remains. Where formerly various states of reality were explained in terms of gods, now Aristotle uses the word, "cause" (τό αἴτιον), a word not found in Greek literature until Pindar and Herodotus.<sup>135</sup> Instead of the imaginative metaphysics of Homer's poetic myth or even the rational account of either Parmenides's poetic myth or the Plato's rational prose

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<sup>133</sup> "Die Prozesse gegen Philosophen wie Sokrates fallen in diese Zeit und zeigen, wie scharf dieser Wandel empfunden ist. Man mochte Sokrates mit Recht vorwerfen, er sei von den alten Göttern abgefallen: in tieferem Sinne diene er doch den olympischen Göttern, die einst den Griechen die Augen geschlossen hatten. Es ist ein absurder Gedanke, daß Apoll oder Athena ‚Geist‘ als ihren Feind angesehen haben sollten, und sehr griechisch sagt Aristoteles (Met. 983a), daß der Gott dem Menschen das Wissen nicht vorenthält." Snell, *Entdeckung*, 42.

<sup>134</sup> Professor Snell notes the proud standing of the heroic man before the gods, "Der homerische Mensch steht frei vor seinem Gott: er ist stolz, wenn ihm ein Geschenk des Gottes zufällt, und zugleich bescheiden, da er weiß, daß alles Grosse von der Gottheit kommt. Und wenn der Mensch unter einem Gott zu leiden hat, wie Odysseus unter Poseidon, so duckt und fügt er sich nicht vor ihm, sondern besteht mutig diese Feindschaft, trotz aller Leidenschaft verhalten zwischen Demut und Anmaßung." Snell, *Entdeckung*, 38.

<sup>135</sup> LSJ s.v. αἴτιος. Αἴτιος is found in Homer, but the word means "blameworthy, to blame." Cunliffe s.v. αἴτιος. This suggests that "cause" was, in the first instance, a negative thing: i.e., a cause was something which was negatively responsible for something happening; a cause was what could be blamed.

myth, one arrives at abstraction in “sinewy”<sup>136</sup> prose, or as Aristotle himself says, “ὡς εἰπεῖν λογικῶς.” Rational categories are sufficient for Aristotle to explain the world’s being.<sup>137</sup> Even as he suggests that philosophy replaces mythological poetry for the more highly developed rational humans, Aristotle explains the transition from what has been called here “imaginative metaphysics” to “abstract metaphysics.” Speaking about the origin of poetry he says:

To be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture (τὰς εἰκόνας ὁρῶντες) is that one is at the same time learning (ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν)—gathering the meaning of things (καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον), e.g. that the man there is so-and-so (οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος); for if one has not seen the thing before, one’s pleasure will not be in the picture as an imitation of it, but will be due to the execution of colouring or some similar cause.<sup>138</sup>

Poetry accomplishes learning through pictures what philosophy accomplishes through rational argument. Aristotle’s use of συλλογίζεσθαι here doubles for both poetry and philosophy. In its root meaning, the verb means “to reckon altogether, bring at once before the mind” as used by Herodotus and then “to bring together premises” as found in Plato, and

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<sup>136</sup> Barnes 1.xi.

<sup>137</sup> Here, one sees that it were truer to use the term “Pre-Aristotelian” instead of “Pre-Socratic” of philosophy. All of philosophy prior to Aristotle does lead to Aristotle in a way that a similar claim is not true of Socrates. Socrates and Democritus, for example, are equally Aristotle’s predecessors. Among the most pre-eminent Pre-Aristotelian philosophers, of course, would be ranked Socrates and Plato. Although Professor Barnes is the author of an important work which has the title, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), he indicates elsewhere that he regards Aristotle—and not Plato—as the monumental philosopher, “Plato had an influence second only to Aristotle.” Jonathan Barnes, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), xv. He adds, “Someone – was is [sic] A. N. Whitehead – observed that Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato. A witty apophthegm, but false: substitute ‘Aristotle’ for ‘Plato’ and the aphorism will be, as it were, less false.” *Ibid.*, xvn3.

<sup>138</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 4.1448b13-18; Barnes 2.2318.

finally “to infer by way of syllogism, to conclude” as Aristotle usually employs the word.<sup>139</sup> In poetry’s repetition of images, one learns “that this is that” (ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος). Depiction and argument are analogues. Depiction is the syllogism of poetry. To analyze this passage from Aristotle, the distinctions of Vico are useful with respect to imaginative and rational metaphysics:

The first men, the children, as it were, of the human race, not being able to form intelligible class concepts of things, had a natural need to create poetic characters; that is imaginative class concepts or universals, to which, as to certain models or ideal portraits, to reduce all the particular species which resembled them.<sup>140</sup>

What Vico calls “imaginative class concepts” is what Aristotle calls “συλλογίζεσθαι τι ἕκαστον.” Aristotle understands that in poetry, the poet (and then the hearer of poetry) gathers this, this, this, this, this and says “Zeus” or “Athena” or “Odysseus,” as the case may be.

Professor James E. Redfield recognizes the significance of Aristotle’s use of συλλογίζεσθαι in the foregoing passage.<sup>141</sup> He begins his comment on “Imitation as a Mode of Learning,” “Aristotle extends or renews the Homeric tradition of identifying the central organizing principle of the poem as the story—no longer called *kleos*, but *muthos*, ‘plot.’”<sup>142</sup> Aristotle commences the *Poetics* with a use of μύθος in the way Professor Redfield describes, “I propose to speak not only of poetry in general but also of its species and their

<sup>139</sup> Liddell and Scott, 5<sup>th</sup>, s.v. συλλογίζομαι; e.g., *An. Pr.* 40b30, 42a39, 68b16, LSJ s.v. συλλογίζομαι.

<sup>140</sup> *NS* 209.

<sup>141</sup> James E. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the “Iliad”*: “*The Tragedy of Hector*,” Expanded Edition, Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 52-55.

<sup>142</sup> Redfield, *Nature*, 52.



respective capacities; of the structure of plot (μύθους) required for a good poem.”<sup>143</sup> If Professor Redfield is correct, then the shift from κλέος to μύθος by Aristotle is an enormous reduction of Homer. Achilles in assessing the prospect of his death as a warrior observes:

“One day a man on shipboard, sailing by  
on the winedark sea, will point landward and say:  
‘There is the death-mound of an ancient man,  
A hero who fought with Hektor and was slain.’  
Someone will say that someday. And the honor (κλέος)  
won by me here will never pass away (οὐ ποτ’ ὀλεῖται).”<sup>144</sup>

Homer’s κλέος is not merely “story,” but as is manifest in this passage it, at very least, implies “eternal glory.” The warrior will die, but report of his deeds will never be destroyed. The verb (ὄλλυμι) is a strong one. It is what was done to cities when they were “laid waste.” It means “to bring to nothing.”<sup>145</sup> Homer employs κλέος as a vehicle to immortality. Other than procreation, it was the only means to immortality which is the one characteristic of the gods which the heroes not only did not share, but also could not share. Aristotle’s reception of Homer was not only as conceptualization of what Homer depicts—and thus the analogous relationship of conceptual argument to concrete depiction—it was also a transformative reception of Homer which reduced heroic poetry from a means by which mortals could attain immortality, to a merely—and in this case, purely—literary form.

Homeric depiction becomes literary metaphor for argument. To return again to a passage already considered above, Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric*:

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<sup>143</sup> *Poet.* 1447a7-9; Barnes 2.2316.

<sup>144</sup> *Il.* 7.87-91; Fitzgerald 164. See Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 161-62.

<sup>145</sup> Cunliffe s.v. ὄλλυμι.

It has already been mentioned that liveliness is got by using the proportional type of metaphor and by making our hearers see things. We have still to explain what we mean by their ‘seeing things’, and what must be done to effect this. By ‘making them see things’ I mean using expressions that represent things as in a state of activity.<sup>146</sup>

Aristotle gives several examples of this kind of metaphor, e.g., “And the point of the spear in its fury drove full through his breastbone.”<sup>147</sup> For Aristotle, it is obvious that this is merely a turn of phrase. He assumes that everyone knows arrows are not furious. It does not occur to him that the Homeric hero might have held an arrow actually to be furious, or, when such a notion does occur to him, he rejects the notion out of hand, as has been seen above in the discussion of hylozoism (II.i.4). Poetic depiction has this kind of analogous relationship to arguments: concrete depiction makes it possible for argument to be seen. Professor Redfield, with the principles of Claude Lévi-Strauss in view, concludes his discussion of Aristotle’s use of συλλογίζεσθαι by comparing poetic imitation (which corresponds to what here is called “concrete depiction”) to science (which corresponds to what is here called “conceptual argument”). He discusses at some length the difference between a cow and an imitation of a cow, followed by a consideration of how science and imitation make it possible to have knowledge of cows. He then summarizes:

Science explains the whole in terms of its parts and explains typical effects in terms of typical causes. . . . Whereas science deals with abstracted elements, categories and processes, an imitation states (in some specific way) the whole being of the thing. Each imitation rises from some inclusive, if schematic intuition of patterns found in experience. By the vision of the imitator, the parts are reduced to a whole, and their wholeness revealed, perhaps for the first time.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Rhet.* 3.1411b24-26; Barnes 2.2252.

<sup>147</sup> *Rhet.* 3.1412a2; Barnes 2.2253; quoting *Od.* 15.542.

<sup>148</sup> Redfield, *Nature*, 55.

This is a splendid piece of analysis, but it does have one very remarkable flaw. Implicit is the assumption that science precedes imitation. Professor Redfield suffers the affliction identified by Professor Adkins, “We are all Kantians now.”<sup>149</sup> Implicit Kantianism makes it difficult for the late-modern and post-modern reader to see the world any other way than that the human person apprehends the world scientifically first, however primitively, and imitatively only second. It follows from such unthought presuppositions that imitation is derived from science. This is Vico’s metaphor in the second and proper sense, metaphor as it came to be understood by Plato and defined by Aristotle. In historical experience, however, the reverse is the case. It is not that in imitation “the parts are reduced to a whole,” rather that in science the whole is reduced to parts. That is the movement from Homer to Aristotle. In Homer, one finds metaphor in the first Vichian sense, i.e., as imaginative genus. Once humans were taught to see the world in parts—and if Aristotle was not the first, he was certainly the most systematic until Kant in teaching people to see the world in terms of parts—it was difficult ever after to understand heroic poetry as anything other than metaphorical expression of what science had already discovered. In historical fact, poets discovered first what philosophers later analyzed and conceptualized.

Professor Redfield concludes his discussion of “Imitation as a Mode of Learning” by understanding his own opinion to be a variation on the theme already set forth. “As Aristotle puts it,” he says, and then he quotes *Poetics* 1451b5-11:

Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of a nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By

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<sup>149</sup> Adkins, *Merit*, 2.

a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do—which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him.<sup>150</sup>

Aristotle recognizes Alcibiades as a universal (and presumably would recognize Achilles and Odysseus as universals as well). Aristotle supposes, however, that Homer's method was that of fifth century dramatists, working—to use Professor Redfield's terms—from science to imitation, rather than—as Vico asserts and is affirmed here—in terms of imitation, i.e., poetic depiction of the world in imaginative genera.

In fact—should anyone want to disparage this work's metaphysical reading of the *Poetics*—Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Lambda explains his view that ancient science had handed down its conclusions in terms of the poetic story:

Our forefathers in the most remote ages have handed down to us their posterity a tradition, in the form of a myth (ἐν μύθου σχήματι), that these substances are gods and the divine encloses the whole of nature (καὶ περιέχει τὸ θεῖον τὴν ὅλην φύσιν). The rest of the tradition has been added later in mythical form (μυθικῶς) with a view to persuasion of the multitude and to its legal and utilitarian expediency; they say these gods are in the forms of men or like some of the other animals, and they say other things consequent on and similar to these which we have mentioned. But if we were to separate the first point from these additions and take it alone—that they thought the first substances to be gods (ὅτι θεοὺς ᾤοντο τὰς πρώτας οὐσίας εἶναι)—we must regard this as an inspired utterance, and reflect that, while probably each art and science has often been developed as far as possible and has again perished, these opinions have been preserved like relics until the present. Only thus far, then, is the opinion of our ancestors and our earliest predecessors clear to us.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> *Poet.* 1451b5-11; Barnes 2.2323.

<sup>151</sup> *Metaph.* 12.1074b1-14; Barnes 1698, quoted by Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths. Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 38.

Several points are to be noted. 1) Aristotle speaks of recurrence (e.g., “each art and science has often been developed as far as possible and has again perished”) in a way that very much anticipates Vichian *corso e ricorso*.<sup>152</sup> 2) He says that the ancients regarded the gods as first substances, in other words “that this is that.” This passage from the *Metaphysics* is entirely consistent with the previously quoted passages from the *Poetics*. 3) He recognizes the fluidity of being (e.g., “they say these gods are in the forms of men or like some of the other animals, and they say other things consequent on and similar to these which we have mentioned”) in mythology although he regards it as a second stage of development. He also assumes that the overlay of fluidity was intentional and pedagogical (“The rest of the tradition has been added later in mythical form with a view to persuasion of the multitude and to its legal and utilitarian expediency;”) which is to say 4) that he assumed teachers had long since used myth the way that Plato says explicitly myth should be used.<sup>153</sup> 5) By pointing to the way myth was formerly used pedagogically, Aristotle separates himself from that tradition. He is saying that that is how myth used to be regarded and employed for public purposes, thus implying that it is no longer current practice. 6) Aristotle makes clear

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<sup>152</sup> One of Vico’s great themes is the recurrence of the three ages (of gods, heroes and men). Book IV is called “The Course the Nations Run” and Book V, “The Recourse of Human Institutions” thus *corso e ricorso*. “In countless passages scattered throughout this work and dealing with countless matters, we have observed the marvelous correspondence between the first and the returned barbarian times. From these passages we can easily understand the recourse of human institutions when they rise again.” NS 1046. See also Bergin and Fisch, “Introduction,” xlii-xliii.

<sup>153</sup> Socrates of the *Republic* summarizes his critique of myth’s educational function in his ideal commonwealth. He concludes with a criterion for the acceptable myth, “We should probably take the utmost care to insure that the first stories they hear about virtue are the best ones for them to hear.” R. 2.377e6-378e6 and in specific 2.378e1-3; Cooper 1017. The Athenian Stranger justifies the noble lie, “But just suppose that the truth had been different from what the argument has now shown it to be, and that a lawgiver, even a mediocre one, had been sufficiently bold, in the interests of the young, to tell them a lie. Could he have told a more useful lie than this, or one more effective in making everyone practice justice in everything they do, willingly and without pressure?” L. 2.663d6-e2; Cooper 1354.

how he regards myths: they are cultural artifacts to be studied as signs of how society once was but is no more in a way that has an analogue in modern archeological method, both of physical archeology made famous by Schliemann and of philosophical archeology made famous by Foucault.<sup>154</sup> 7), Adopting here the exposition of Director of Research Luc Brisson, it is held here that Aristotle held metaphysics to be embedded in the oldest stratum of mythology:

In this perspective and with certain reservations, metaphysics constitutes the essence of Greek mythology; therefore Aristotle anchored metaphysics into the most distant past. While the various branches of knowledge, including philosophy, had to be learned anew after the recurring destructions suffered by humankind, perceptions of the gods, conveyed by myths, had been maintained without interruption from their beginning to the time of Aristotle.<sup>155</sup>

On this account, Aristotle recognizes metaphysics to have been the first speculative science to be discovered in human society, and the first to be rediscovered when humans gather themselves again after the most recent destruction. Myth bears metaphysics when rational discourse has, for the time being, been lost. The relationship to Homeric mythology of Plato

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<sup>154</sup> Foucault explains his method in relation to his *Naissance de la clinique*, “Par archéologie, je voudrais désigner non pas exactement une discipline, mais un domaine de recherche, qui serait le suivant. Dans une société, les connaissances, les idées philosophiques, les opinions de tous les jours, mais aussi les institutions, les pratiques commerciales et policières, les mœurs, tout renvoie à un certain savoir implicite propre à cette société. Ce savoir est profondément différent des connaissances que l’on peut trouver dans les livres scientifiques, les théories philosophiques, les justifications religieuses, mais c’est lui qui rend possible à un moment donné l’apparition d’une théorie, d’une opinion, d’une pratique.” Michel Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits, I, 1954-1975* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 526.

Foucault also sums up his archeological method in a way which can be applied to metaphysical depiction. In relation to “the monologue of reason *about* madness” he writes, “Je n’ai pas voulu faire l’histoire de ce langage ; plutôt l’archéologie de ce silence.” *Ibid.*, 188. Archeology studies the primarily non-verbal artifacts of civilization, that which a civilization expresses apart from language.

<sup>155</sup> Brisson, *How*, 39. “Dans cette perspective, et sous certaines réserves, la métaphysique constitue la quintessence de la mythologie grecque. Par là, Aristote ancre la métaphysique dans le passé le plus reculé. Alors que les différents savoirs, y compris la philosophie, ont dû faire l’objet d’un nouvel apprentissage après les destructions périodiques subies par l’humanité ; les opinions sur les dieux, que véhiculent les mythes, se sont maintenues sans interruption depuis l’origine jusqu’à l’époque d’Aristote.” Luc Brisson, *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe. Sauver les mythes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2005), 56-57.

and Aristotle respectively can be distinguished. Monsieur Brisson writes, “In contrast to Plato, Aristotle did not adopt an attitude of radical rupture.”<sup>156</sup> A passage from the *Laws*, in which the Athenian Stranger speaks about the ancient authorities on the gods as first substance or nature shows the balanced approach to myth which exemplifies Plato’s position as characterized by M. Brisson:

The subject of these writings (some of which are in verse and some in prose) is theology. The most ancient accounts, after relating how the primitive substances (ἡ πρώτη φύσις)—the sky and so on—came into being, pass rapidly on to a description of the birth of the gods and the details of how once born they subsequently treated each other. On some subjects, the antiquity of these works makes them difficult to criticize, whatever their influence—good or bad—on their audience; but when it comes to the respect and attention due to parents, I for one shall never recommend them either as a good influence or as a statement of the honest truth. Still, there’s no need to bother with this old material: we may freely allow it to be arranged and recounted in any way the gods find amusing. But the principles of our modern pundits do need to be denounced as a pernicious influence. Just look at the effects of their arguments! When you and I present our proofs for the existence of gods and adduce what you have adduced—sun, moon, stars and earth—and argue they are gods and divine beings, the proselytes of these clever fellows will say that these things are just earth and stones, and are incapable of caring for human affairs, however much our plausible rhetoric has managed to dress them up.<sup>157</sup>

The Athenian Stranger acknowledges the authority of certain ancient sources, as does Aristotle, but then takes a position easily distinguishable from that of Aristotle. No matter how ancient and authoritative the source, the Stranger judges that they are still pedagogically impermissible. At the same time, he distances himself from the pure materialists who would reject any metaphysical reality. As has already been argued in I.ii, Plato continued the mythological tradition after he had re-formed it. As has been shown

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<sup>156</sup> Brisson, *How*, 39. “A la différence de Platon; Aristote n’adopte pas à l’égard du mythe une attitude de rupture radicale.” Brisson, *Sauver*, 58.

<sup>157</sup> *L.* 10.886b10-e2; Cooper 1543-44.

even in the passage just quoted from the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes the method of using mythology pedagogically and legislatively which Plato exemplifies, but as a method which he deems *passé*. It may be that Aristotle understood myth better and in a more positive light precisely because he was not engaged with mythology as Plato had been. Monsieur Brisson is certainly correct when he points to the fundamental difference in the way that Plato and Aristotle addressed mythology. Plato sought to re-found mythology on rational grounds and with pedagogical purpose. Aristotle recognized that pedagogical purpose. He did not himself choose to utilize myth pedagogically and seemed to criticize or, at least, to distance himself from those who did. Monsieur Brisson argues that Aristotle participated in the saving of mythology by approving and, to a limited degree, engaging in allegorical interpretation of myth which Plato rejected.<sup>158</sup> It could well be argued that the shift is from spinning myths, which Plato did and Aristotle—in extant literature—did not, to interpreting myths allegorically.

As a reprise of the two kinds of Vichian metaphor, discussed in I.i, there is, first, poetic metaphor as the imaginative abstraction of things. The thing “sky” was abstracted as “Jove,” “sea” as “Neptune.” The movement is from the particular to an imaginative genus which is that particular, or, as Aristotle puts it, “this is that.” The second kind of metaphor moves in the opposite direction, beginning with an abstraction which then becomes expressed in concrete terms (e.g., Lady Philosophy for Boethius). It was argued above that Plato’s use of Homer is metaphor in the second Vichian sense. The first kind of metaphor is called “imaginative genus” or “imaginative abstraction” or “imaginative universal,” and the

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<sup>158</sup> Brisson, *How*, 40, 29; *Sauver*, 58, 43. E.g., *R.* 2.378d5-8.



second is regarded here as metaphor proper. Plato, at best, found philosophical metaphor in Homer and in all poetry. It has also been argued that for Vico rational abstraction in the philosophers corresponds to imaginative abstraction in Homer. Now, it is further argued that Aristotle held the rational abstraction of philosophy as correspondent to the imaginative abstraction of poetry in general.<sup>159</sup> In this respect, though Aristotle dispensed with myth in philosophy, as Plato never did, nonetheless he understood poetry in its own terms far better than Plato for whom mythological image was merely metaphor, the concrete expressing rational abstraction.

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<sup>159</sup> Though Vico does not state his case explicitly in relation to Aristotle, it would seem that the position taken here is at odds with that of Vico's own in relation to Aristotle's view on the origin of poetry. See *NS*, 384. At the same time, Vico quotes with approbation a passage from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* which makes a similar point about rhetorical universals in the form of maxims (i.e., *NS* 816; *Rhet.* 2.1395b1-10).

And even as he, who, with distressful breath,  
    Forth issued from the sea upon the shore,  
    Turns to the water perilous and gazes  
So did my soul, that still was fleeing onward,  
    Turn itself back to re-behold the pass  
    Which never yet a living person left.

—Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*

### 1.      **The Intelligibility of the Question**

Already in the conjunction, there is the suggestion of two things rather than merely one: body *and* soul. There is also the possibility that “body” suffices and that whatever the thing is, called “soul,” it is as merely constitutive as an organ or limb *of* the body. A chapter title “Body and Liver” or “Body and Elbow” might provoke the raising of philosophical eyebrows in a way that “Body and Soul” does not. Even the most committed of modern materialists find “Body and Soul” perfectly intelligible. They understand it, even if they might hold that it is as nonsensical as “Body and Elbow” would be. In trying to understand the Greek world prior to Plato, one must allow for the possibility that “body *and* soul” would not be intelligible. This chapter will investigate the understanding of the soul beginning with Homer for whom the human person is a unity constituted not of body and soul, rather of organs which correspond to later distinctions of “spiritual” (or “psychological”) and bodily. Professor Fränkel summarizes the Homeric view:

The Homeric human being is not the sum of body and soul, rather it is a whole. In this whole, however, certain parts can sometimes be discerned. Perhaps better said, organs become especially obvious. All the single organs refer directly to the whole

person. The arms are just as suitable an organ as the *thymos* (the organ of stimulatory excitation). The arms are not an organ of the body; the *thymos* is not an organ of the soul, rather they are both organs of the whole human person. The whole human being is altogether fully alive. That activity which we call “spiritual” can be attributed to any of the human’s members.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Fränkel recognizes the modern tendency to distinction and categorization. He cautions the modern reader not to sub-divide the whole human person. The whole is completely integrated, “There are never boundaries.”<sup>2</sup> For Homer, the soul was distinguishable from the body only when the body had become a corpse.<sup>3</sup> Most Greek thinkers until Socrates held the soul to be material. Even in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, there remain traces and perhaps re-interpretations of the soul’s material character.

*When* the Homeric unity of the human person was broken is itself perhaps a more interesting question. Professor Fränkel discusses at length the *Odyssey’s* departure in

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<sup>1</sup> “Der homerische Mensch ist nicht eine Summe von Leib und Seele, sondern ein Ganzes. Aber an diesem Ganzen können jeweils bestimmte Teile, oder besser: Organe, besonders hervortreten. Alle Einzelorgane ressortieren unmittelbar von der Person her. Die Arme sind ebenso gut ein Organ des Menschen, nicht des Körpers, wie der Thymos (das Organ der Erregungen) ein Organ des Menschen, nicht der Seele, ist. Der ganze Mensch ist überall gleich lebendig; jene Aktivität die wir ‚seelisch‘ nennen würden, kann jedem seiner Glieder zugeschrieben werden.” Hermann Ferdinand Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des Frühen Griechentums: Eine Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur von Homer bis Pindar*, Philological Monographs, ed. John L. Heller, no. 13 (New York: American Philological Association, 1951), 109; my translation.

<sup>2</sup> “Nirgends sind Grenzen.” Ibid., 112; my translation.

<sup>3</sup> “Die Sprache Homers hat kein Wort für die Seele eines lebenden Menschen, und konsequenter Weise auch keines für seinen Leib. Das Wort ψυχή (psyche) wird nur von der Seele des Gestorbenen gebraucht, und das Wort σῶμα, das im Griechischen nach Homer den Leib bezeichnet, bedeutet bei Homer ‚Leichnam.‘ Nicht im Leben, sondern erst im Tode (und in der leblosen Ohnmacht) fiel der homerische Mensch in Leib und Seele auseinander.” Ibid., 108. Viewed positively, however, this “falling out” of the human person established in a primitive sense the duality which later became predominant in Greek metaphysics, “Soul/body dualism may be said to go back to Homer, since, if *psychê* is life, *sôma* is as such the corpse.” André Laks, “Soul, sensation, and thought” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A. A. Long (Cambridge: the Cambridge University Press, 1999), 251. See also the following on these points: Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 150; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 136-39; Eric Voegelin, *Polis*, 171-72, 247, 293-94; Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 73-89.

understanding the human person, but he asserts that the unity is only destroyed in Hesiod.<sup>4</sup> Surely, one better says, “began to be broken.” At the time of Socrates there were certainly competing views of the human person in relation to body and soul (e.g., Empedocles, Democritus, and the Pythagoreans).<sup>5</sup> Professor Laks turns an apt phrase when he discusses that which is “toward the soul,” “[Early Greek philosophers] could talk about cognitive faculties without any reference to the soul.”<sup>6</sup> He observes that “for Homer” the soul was one of the human’s “constitutive elements,” but that was true not for Homer only but also for those thinkers who intervened between Homer and Plato.<sup>7</sup> Prior to Socrates, the Homeric unity no longer held, and yet the duality of body and soul did not yet exist. The question, then, is when the duality of body and soul had become the default setting of Hellenism such that the fact of a different view in Homer needed to be noted. Professor Snell comments that the great second-century B.C. editor of Homer, Aristarchus (d. 145 B.C.), observes the difference between Homer’s unitary view of the human person compared to the current body-soul dualism.<sup>8</sup> It can be said that after the *terminus ad quem* of Homeric authority, i.e.,

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<sup>4</sup> Professor Fränkel concludes at the end of his chapter on Homer, “In diese Situation tritt zunächst die einzigartige Gestalt Hesiods, und dann, mit ganz anderer Funktion, die Lyrik; Hesiod, um die Außenwelt, zunächst noch in der Sprache und im Vers des Epos, lehrhaft und umfassend zu bewältigen; die Lyrik, um in Dichtungen von neuer Art das persönliche Leben von innen her zu erfassen. Denn dies beides ist nun auseinandergetreten. Die frühere Einheit ist zerbrochen.” Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie*, 132. In general, see his discussion, 120-32.

<sup>5</sup> KRS, 320-21, 409-33; Long, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 73-78, 196-97, 250-54.

<sup>6</sup> André Laks, “Soul, sensation and thought,” 250-251.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>8</sup> “Schon Aristarch bemerkt, daß das Wort (Soma) das später ‚Leib‘ ist, bei Homer nie auf den lebenden Menschen bezogen wird.” Snell, *Entdeckung*, 16, citing Lehrs, Aristarch 86, 160. Professor Kaufmann follows the readings of Messrs. Fränkel and Snell. Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 150.

after 680 B.C., the Greek vision of the unified human person began to be broken; by 145, that brokenness was complete.

The Homeric representation of soul also precluded immortality, because no matter what Homer thought the perduring character of soul to be, it was in no way like immortality. Professor Voegelin says bluntly, “The Homeric *psyche* has the peculiar existence of the ‘shadow’ that also can appear in dreams, but it is no immortal soul with an afterlife.”<sup>9</sup> Life is exactly what the Homeric soul does not have. The soul’s perdurance is existence without life. What may seem a contradiction to some becomes at least partly explicable when one realizes that the θυμός, the seat of stimulatory excitation, does not survive human death.<sup>10</sup> The gods are immortal; humans are mortal. Immortality is not merely the continuation of existence; immortality inheres only in continuous existence of divine substance. Though something of the mortal perdures after death, nevertheless that perdurance is of a mortal being. The perdurance is less than mortality, not more.

Key to understanding body and soul in Homeric depiction and the rational conception of philosophy are the contrasts of materiality/immateriality, unity/duality, and mortality/immortality. The transformation from Homer to Plato’s Socrates can be reduced, in large part, from an understanding of a whole human person dissolved at death into decaying corpse and perduring but diminished soul to an understanding of soul as an

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<sup>9</sup> Voegelin, *Polis*, 293.

<sup>10</sup> “What we would call the ‘person’ of a man, in Homeric language his *thymos*, dies with him.” Voegelin, *Polis*, 293. An example which supports Professor Voegelin’s assertion is that state of Tiresias in the House of Hades, something which will be examined in greater depth below. Let it be noted here that though his shadow (ψυχή) had its “reason” (φρένες ἔμπεδοί εἰσι) and mind (νόον), he is not said to have his θυμόν. *Od.* 10.492-495; Fitzgerald 172. “Stimulatory excitation” is my translation of Professor Fränkel’s “die Erregungen.” Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie*, 109.

immaterial and immortal being housed in a material and mortal body. Thus, Plato's representation of Socratic soul radically inverts the Homeric understanding of what it is to be human. That inversion is one of the most profound and lasting revolutions in the history of philosophy, but, at the same time, one should not miss that Plato introduced the theme of inversion itself into philosophy. Since, as has been argued in I.ii, Plato invented philosophy, inversion inheres in the character of philosophy from its inception. This chapter is an investigation into 1) the transformation of Homer's unified vision of the human to a duality of body and soul and 2) into the revolutionary character of the claim, made by Plato's Socrates, of the soul's primacy.

## 2. The Mortal and His Soul

### a. "According to Homer . . ."

The distinctions of moderns and post-moderns are often not Homer's, and Homer's are often not those of moderns and post-moderns. One of Homer's most important distinctions is usually lost on modern and post-modern readers, that of heroic man (ἄνθρωπος) and ordinary human (ἄνθρωπος). Professor Benardete explains, "Both the Achaeans and Trojans not only insist on being men as opposed to women, but also of being *andres* as distinct from *anthrōpoi*. *Anthrōpoi* are men and women collectively, and men and women indifferently, and whatever may be the virtues of an *anthrōpos*, it cannot be martial courage, which is the specific virtue of men."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Benardete, *Argument*, 16.

Heroic men have more in common with the gods<sup>12</sup> than with *anthropoi*, save for their mortality. Heroic men are godlike as an *anthropos* never can be, but the heroic man and *anthropos* alike share mortality. Only insofar as he must die is a man also an *anthropos*. Again, Professor Benardete elucidates the point, “The gods are blessed and immortal, while *anthrōpoi* are mortal, and it is only his weakness, when confronted with the power of the gods, that makes a hero resign himself to being human.”<sup>13</sup> The heroic man is precariously situated between gods and *anthropoi*.

A contrast emerges between Achilles and Odysseus in their respective relationships to the impossibility of immortality or, better, to the temptation of its possibility. In one sense, Achilles existed as an experiment to cross the barrier between the mortal and the immortal, the son of Peleus, a mortal hero, and Thetis, an immortal goddess.<sup>14</sup> Achilles must choose between a long life on earth never to be remembered and valorous death whose fame would never be destroyed. When Achilles has gone to his tent after Agamemnon claimed

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<sup>12</sup> “*Andres* and *theoi* belong to the same order; they may be built on different scales, but they are commensurate with one another (cf. [*Il.*] 19.95-96).” *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> My recollection is that this insight derives from Professor Benardete. Professor Jasper Griffin writes in this vein, “The hero who is most often compared with the gods is Achilles. But not only is he said to be ‘god-like’, but also we observe in action how like the gods he is, and above all how like Zeus himself.” Jasper Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 88. Again he writes, “‘Remember he writes that you are not a god’ was the most regular and most typical of all expressions of Greek wisdom; it would not have been, if Greeks had not been tempted to forget it, and to think that they were, or could be, gods. . . . The stature of man is defined by both facts: man can aspire even to contend with gods—but such aspiration must end in disaster. The god returns to his blessedness, but the man is destroyed.” *Ibid.*, 168-69. In general terms, Professor Griffin’s books is about how gods and heroes are like and unlike, but with especial attention to Achilles; see pp. 88-90, 102, 141, 162-63, 177, 190-91, 195.

Professor Redfield makes a similar observation, “Achilles is thus something more than a great warrior; he is the consequence of a onetime solution to a problem of cosmic order. Thetis bore a mortal child because the gods could not allow her to fulfill her own nature by bearing a divine son. Achilles is the greatest of mortals—he is in a way too great to be a mortal—but he is not a god. His closeness to the gods is the course of his tragedy.” James M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the “Iliad”: The Tragedy of Hector*, expanded ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 241.

Briseis from him, a council of heroes which gathered with Agamemnon sends an embassy to Achilles, for the purpose of negotiating his return to the field of battle. In the context of that conversation, Achilles surveys the two alternatives. If he returns home, then his father will choose a wife for him, and he will live in his own hall and embrace his “dear wife (φίλην ἄκοιτιν).”<sup>15</sup> Achilles recognizes the value of life upon the earth, “Now I think/ no riches can compare with being alive (έμοι ψυχῆς ἀντάξιον).”<sup>16</sup> He recalls the alternatives as set forth by his mother, Thetis:

If on one hand I remain to fight  
 around Troy town, I lose all hope (ᾠλετο) of home  
 but gain unfading glory(κλέος ἀφθιτον); on the other,  
 if I sail back to my own land (φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν) my glory  
 (κλέος)  
 fails (ᾠλετο)—but a long life lies ahead for me.<sup>17</sup>

The use of ὄλλωμι is even more striking in this passage because Achilles frames both possibilities in terms of what will be reduced to nothing, either home or fame. Here, in this clean disjunctive syllogism, one sees the alternative paradigms of being, war and peace, which shall be examined in II.iv. Even for Achilles, the warrior *par excellence*, domestic life is a worthy choice, one that he recognizes as the equal of imperishable fame. This implies a very high view of marriage, of hearth, and home. What is clear to Achilles is that to choose domestic life and peace is to repudiate the possibility of that one kind of immortality open to heroes. Valorous death on the battlefield made it possible always to be remembered. He supposed that no bard would sing an epic in the halls of kings about a good husband and

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<sup>15</sup> II. 9.393-400.

<sup>16</sup> II. 9.401. Fitzgerald 216.

<sup>17</sup> II. 9.412-16; Fitzgerald 216.



father who ran his household well.<sup>18</sup> This one kind of immortality open to the heroes, namely fame, has two forms, glory and shame as Professor Kaufman observes:

Much more might be made of the heroes' dread of shame and their longing for lasting fame. . . .

There is no immortality and reward for heroism, except the glory of being remembered in some great poem. . . .

What remains distinctive in Homer and has no equal in the Bible is the fierce delight and interest in the moment—in observation and conversation and combat—coupled with the constant knowledge that all this is but ephemeral, that death is near, and that the best a man can hope for is to be remembered evermore in poetry. Thus the tragic poet does not merely relate some ancient story for the entertainment and instruction of his audience; he participates in the tale by fulfilling his heroes' most urgent desire. And while the atmosphere of the *Iliad* is drenched with death, the first great tragic poem of world literature is also a song of triumph because it grants the dead their wish for immortal glory in song.<sup>19</sup>

Implicit in the alternatives before Achilles is that he could attain immortal glory through death on the battlefield, but he could also attain immortal ignominy by departing that battlefield for the safety of hearth and wife. That the hope of immortal glory motivates men

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<sup>18</sup> While the virtue of domestic life does not promise immortal fame, it does offer another kind of possible immortality through procreation. It is not clear to what degree Homer regarded seminal fluid as the transmitter of ψυχή but at some point the head and male genitals were regarded as “its outward essentials.” Onians, *Origins*, 122. This would be consistent with the frequent annihilation of all males of a defeated city. This tradition in Greek thought is preserved in the Aristotelian *Economics*, “Every care should be taken on behalf of our own children’s mother and nurse, in whom is implanted the seed from which there springs a living soul. For it is only by this means that each mortal, successively produced, participates in immortality; and that petitions and prayers continue to be offered to ancestral gods.” [*Oec.*] 3.2; Barnes 2148.

<sup>19</sup> Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 161-62. Professor Kaufmann provides the following examples from the text of the *Iliad*: 7.91, 11.315, 16.498ff. The first of these bears closer examination. It is a declamation urging courage in battle which concludes by considering some future traveler who will pass the grave of one who would fall that day in battle:

One day a man on shipboard, sailing by  
on the winedark sea, will point landward and say:  
‘There is the death-mound of an ancient man,  
A hero who fought with Hektor and was slain.’  
Someone will say that someday. And the honor (κλέος)  
won by me here will never pass away (οὐ ποτ’ ὀλεῖται).’

The warrior will die, but report of his deeds will never be destroyed. The verb (δλλῶμι) is a strong one. It is what was done to cities when they were “laid waste.” It means “to bring to nothing.” Cunliffe, *Lexicon*, 290-91.

to sacrifice all is a view Plato has Diotima enunciate, “I believe that anyone will do anything for the sake of immortal virtue and the glorious fame that follows; and the better the people, the more they will do, for they are all in love with immortality.”<sup>20</sup> This is a fascinating speech, partly because of its content, partly for its narrative frame, “And in the manner of the perfect sophist she said.”<sup>21</sup> She begins with the “love of honor” of which in the myth of Er, Socrates tells his auditor, Odysseus has at last been cured.<sup>22</sup> While Socrates will redefine immortality in his inversion of body and soul, he makes use of this longing which Diotima posits as universal and insuperable. Achilles sought to attain immortality in the one way that it was possible for a mortal hero, namely through fame.

It may have seemed to Plato that the character of Odysseus lent itself to philosophical refiguring because he resisted the temptation to seek immortality (e.g., his refusal of Calypso’s offer) in Homeric terms, thus leaving open the possibility of immortality in the rational terms of philosophy. Odysseus stands in contrast to Achilles by his choice of domestic life over immortality. Calypso promised Odysseus immortality if he would stay with her, an offer he refused.<sup>23</sup> The sojourn of Odysseus with Calypso comes after his stay with Circe and, most significantly, after his encounter with Achilles in the house of Hades. An example of the complex genius of the *Odyssey* is that while the

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<sup>20</sup> *Smp.* 208d7-e1. There is some resonance here with Heraclitus, “The best choose one thing in exchange for all, everflowing fame (κλέος ἀέναον) among mortals; but most men have sated themselves like cattle.” Heraclitus B29, D.-K.; Kahn, 72 (XCVII).

<sup>21</sup> *Smp.* 208c1; Cooper 491.

<sup>22</sup> *R.* 620c5. Professor Ferrari uses the passage from the Symposium as an interpretive key to the *Republic*, but he does not note the connection to the myth of Er. G. R. F. Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 257.

<sup>23</sup> *Od.* 5.203-213.

encounter with Circe precedes the encounter with Calypso, the telling of the story about Circe (Book 10) follows the telling of the story about Calypso (Book 5) because the *Odyssey* tells of Circe in the “tale of Alcinous.” When Calypso offers Odysseus life without death (ἀθάνατος) if he will stay with her, he has already been cautioned by Achilles against the lure of immortality. Because of the creative complexity of the *Odyssey*, when the hearer (or reader) first learns of Calypso’s offer to Odysseus, he does not know that Odysseus has already been warned against trading the life of hearth and home for anything as miserably ephemeral as immortality.

It was not, then, for the sake of Penelope only that Odysseus declined to stay with Calypso, but also for the sake of the fittingness of mortality even to a hero. Odysseus expresses a strong sense of what is properly his own, of the home where he belongs.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting that even Calypso recognizes what is properly his own; she had reckoned that through her lovemaking and the promise of immortality, she could woo him from his homeward longing. Professor Benardete suggests that the offer by Calypso was not “genuine,”<sup>25</sup> but genuine or not, immortality did not properly belong to the hero. A comparison between key lines of the speeches by Calypso and Odysseus respectively bears out the shared understanding.

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<sup>24</sup> *Od.* 5.215-24.

<sup>25</sup> “He therefore must realize later that Calypso’s offer to make him deathless and ageless cannot be genuine. His shape and his mind make him the mortal he is, and only at the price of losing that unity could he survive such an alteration.” Benardete, *Bow*, 87. Professor Benardete has already suggested, however, that Calypso herself knew or had every reason to know that her offer could be fulfilled, “Calypso interprets Zeus’s command to release Odysseus as just another example of divine jealousy when it comes to open marriages between men and goddesses ([*Od.*] 5.118-28; cf. 15.250-51). The two instances she mentions, Orion and Iasion, certainly suggest that had Odysseus accepted her offer, he would have been killed at once.” *Ibid.*, 38. If Odysseus understood this nearly certain eventuality, then it gives another dimension to his daily tearful longing for home; it was a longing for life itself in the only way possible to him.

Calypso: οὐτῶ δὴ οἰκόνδε φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν  
αὐτίκα νῦν ἐθέλεις ἰέναι;<sup>26</sup>

Odysseus: ἀλλὰ καὶ ὧς ἐθέλω καὶ ἐέλδομαι ἡματα πάντα  
οἴκαδέ τ' ἐλθέμεναι καὶ νόστιμον ἦμαρ ἰδέσθαι.<sup>27</sup>

Each uses a form of the Greek for “homeward” (οἰκόνδε and οἴκαδε respectively). Calypso asks a question but in terms which show complete understanding of Odysseus’s desire. Each reduplicates “homeward” (φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν and νόστιμον ἦμαρ respectively) If anything, Calypso uses language even stronger about Odysseus’s home than he does. He speaks about “the day of homecoming” (νόστιμον ἦμαρ) while she speaks about going “into the dear earth of my father” (φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν), a phrase which combines both male (“father”) and female (“earth”) images. Calypso’s phrase is also exactly the one used by Achilles when he responds to the petition that he return to the field of battle in *Iliad* 11.414. The choice is clear between home and immortality, between sex with a goddess forever young and a wife who will grow old.

Achilles frames the possibilities of famous death and forgotten life in “the dear earth of my father,” or of something worse, namely ignominious life remembered, but it is Odysseus who shows another way. Faced with the choice between a different kind of immortality and home, Odysseus chose home. He is depicted as one who can resist erotic power to make the right choice which suggests that he is morally superior to many divinities. What would have astonished Achilles and perhaps have reengaged his rage is that Odysseus remains as deathless in fame for choosing home as Achilles for his choice of

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<sup>26</sup> *Od.* 5.204-205.

<sup>27</sup> *Od.* 5.219-220

valorous death. Odysseus is the hero who does not die in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. At the end of the story, he lives to begin yet another journey.

The heroic man's circumstance of being both godlike and mortal exemplifies that fluidity of being discussed at length in II.i. He experiences an interpenetration of divinity and humanity which makes him more interesting than either the Homeric gods or Homeric *anthropoi*. Neither Zeus and Athena, nor Thersites and Elpenor capture the auditor's or reader's attention in the way that Achilles, Odysseus, and Hector do. While it is not clear that Professor Voegelin understands the man-*anthropos* distinction as well as Professor Benardete, nevertheless he captures the fraught quality of heroic man:

Only one thing is really certain even about Homeric man: He must die. Hence, "mortal" is the preferred synonym for man, distinguishing his nature without a doubt from that of the immortal gods. For the rest, the transhuman elements of the order of being penetrate so deeply into man or, from the other side, man is yet so imperfectly closed as a self-conscious, reflecting agent, that the status of various phenomena as human or divine must remain in doubt and, in particular, that quite frequently it will not be certain to what extent the actions of man are his at all.<sup>28</sup>

Man could not be immortal. The attempt to cross that boundary was an absolute impiety which even the father of the gods, Zeus, dared not attempt. He considered saving his son, Sarpedon. Hera, on hearing his reflections, counseled against it, "A man who is born to die, long destined for it, / would you set free from that unspeakable end? / Do so; but not all of us will praise you."<sup>29</sup> Part of Hera's point seems to be that even Zeus could only temporarily rescue Sarpedon. There are forces greater than the gods, and the inevitability of a mortal's

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<sup>28</sup> Voegelin, *Polis*, 172.

<sup>29</sup> *Il.* 16.441-43; Fitzgerald 391.

death is one. There was no impiety greater in Greek religion than for a mortal to attempt to cross the barrier of immortality.

For Homer, the mortal—embracing both heroic man and *anthropos*—is a purely material being of which the soul is a remnant after death.<sup>30</sup> The physical character of the soul is evidenced in the grizzly poetry of his descriptions:

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<sup>30</sup> Professor Erwin Rohde provides copious examples of how not to read the Homeric poems, of which the following passage is characteristic, “But how are we to think of this ‘Psyche’ that, unnoticed during the lifetime of the body, and only observable when it is ‘separated’ from the body, now glides off to join the multitude of the ‘Invisible’ (Aides)? Its name, like the names given to the ‘soul’ in many languages, marks it off as something airy and breathlike, revealing its presence in the breathing of a living man. It escapes out of the mouth—or out of the gaping wound of the dying—and now freed from its prison becomes, as the name well expresses it, an ‘image’ (εἰδωλον). On the borders of Hades Odysseus sees floating ‘the images of those that have toiled (on earth)’. These immaterial images withdrawing themselves from the grasp of the living, like smoke (*Il.* xxiii, 100) or a shadow (*Od.* xi, 207; x, 495), must at least recognizably present the general outlines of the once living person.” Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, trans. from the eighth edition by W. B. Hillis (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, Inc., 1925), 5. Professor Rohde draws on many passages which are discussed here. He projects a later view of soul onto the Homeric text. He rightly gives account of the Homeric description: the soul is “like smoke . . . or a shadow.” His conclusions are not merely erroneous, they are diametrically opposite to the clear import of the Homeric text. Precisely in its being visible like smoke and shadows, it is not and cannot be “immaterial.” It is literally and explicitly not invisible: it can be seen. The supposition that the soul is “now freed from its prison” is patent nonsense. The soul is actually delivered unto a prison, namely the house of Hades. Also nonsense is the attempt to read εἰδωλον as a positive term. The text is absolutely explicit, as shall be seen below, that the “image” which the soul has become is a diminution and not a magnification of what it had been. On those points, Professor Rohde is demonstrably wrong. He has done exactly what Vico observes: he reads Homer through Plato. His extreme anachronism has led him astray. He is looking for “abstract concepts” where there are none and, as is argued throughout this work, when there were none. He understands Homer metaphorically in the second Vichian sense; inconceivable (!) to him is that Homer gives us imaginative genera. One example of Professor Rohde’s attempt to find what had not yet been invented will suffice, “But that he had already begun to tread the slippery path in the course of which the psyche is transformed into an abstract ‘concept of life’, is shown by the fact that he several times quite unmistakably uses the word ‘psyche’ when we should say ‘life’. It is essentially the same mode of thought that leads him to say ‘midriff’ (φρένες) when he no longer means the physical diaphragm, but the abstract concept of will or intellect. To say ‘psyche’ instead of ‘life’ is not the same thing as saying ‘life’ instead of ‘psyche’ (and Homer never did the latter); but it is clear that for him in the process of dematerializing such concepts, even the psyche, a figure once so full of significance, is beginning to fade and vanish away.” *Ibid.*, 31. Again, his observations are accurate enough, but his analysis is opposite to his observations. To the degree that Homer dematerializes anything—and, in a sense, the very use of words at least transforms the materiality of an existing entity into another and intermediate materiality—he dematerializes concretes. It is simple logic that one cannot dematerialize concepts; concepts are immaterial; they are separate from matter and motion. Further, does Professor Rohde suggest that Homer’s dematerialization of psyche—to whatever extremely small extent that such a statement might be true—was a reduction of something “so full of significance” that he commenced the process by which it began “to fade and vanish away”? Plato would be very surprised. The Homeric soul is pitiful; the Platonic soul is gloriously rich. From Homer to Plato, “psyche” gained significance and did not lose it. One concludes that Professor Rohde

And Patroklos  
with one foot on his chest drew from his belly  
spearhead and spear; the diaphragm came out,  
so he extracted life and blade together.<sup>31</sup>

The combination of meticulous anatomical detail (“with one foot on his chest drew from his belly/ spearhead and spear; the diaphragm came out” names four different body parts of two different men) with an elegant literary device (“he extracted life and blade together”) makes for vivid reading. It is important to remember that this was popular material. Thus knowledge of the anatomy in the Homeric texts can be assumed to have been commonplace from the mid-eighth century B.C. forward. This phrase “he extracted life and blade together” is also interesting because the word translated “life” here is ψυχή. Thus “soul” is depicted as a physical thing which can be drawn from the body. One imagines the soul sticking to the sword in a way that blood might. As Professor Alisdair MacIntyre nicely puts it, “All psychology in Homer is physiology.”<sup>32</sup> In Homeric terms, however, there was no non-concrete, no psychological, no non-physical. The Homeric soul is a material entity.

Homeric interest in anatomy was very likely one expression of the ancient Greek concern for the body as a whole. The extraordinary fact is that the last third of the *Iliad* is very substantially about the disposition of two bodies, that of Patroclus and of Hector. Patroclus is killed in Book 16. Book 17 begins by telling of Menelaus’ protecting the body of Patroclus:

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projects his own views onto the Homeric poems which is a pity because his work is full of careful observation which, if more carefully regarded by him, would have led him to very different conclusions.

<sup>31</sup> *Il.* 16.502-05; Fitzgerald 392.

<sup>32</sup> MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*, 18.

Now he came forward in his fiery bronze  
 through clashing men to stand astride the body—  
 protective as a heifer who has dropped  
 her first-born calf: she stands above it lowing,  
 never having known birth-pangs before.<sup>33</sup>

Those lines sound the theme which continues through the last line of the *Iliad* which concludes, “So they performed the funeral rites of Hektor, tamer of horses.”<sup>34</sup> The possession of Patroclus’ body takes on an importance, at least temporarily, equal to absolute victory. In the same form of address both Achaeans and Trojans, in consecutive speeches, are urged to fight for the body.

And some Achaian veteran might say:

“Old friends, no glory in our taking ship  
 again for home; sooner may black earth here  
 embed us all! That would be better far  
 than giving up this body to the Trojans,  
 a trophy for them, and a glory won!”

And of the Trojans there were some to say:

Old friends, if in the end we are cut down  
 alongside this one—just like him—the lot of us,  
 still not a man should quit the fight!”<sup>35</sup>

Achilles, who was prepared to see the armies of his people defeated before the gates of Troy rather than give up his anger, is roused by new anger at the death of Patroclus to fight the Trojans. As was observed in I.ii.2.d, “in Achilles wrath displaces calculation.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Il.* 17.3-5; Fitzgerald 407.

<sup>34</sup> *Il.* 24.804; Fitzgerald 594.

<sup>35</sup> *Il.* 17.414-22; Fitzgerald 420.



Before any other deed is proposed, Achilles bellows so wildly that the Trojans fall back, and the Achaeans conclusively retrieve the body of Patroclus.<sup>37</sup> Achilles prepares the body of his friend for burial. The funeral rites are striking because they apply nard to the wounds as for healing. They bathe and anoint the body with oil.<sup>38</sup> All that is in preparation for cremation. The key is to understand that in every step, including cremation, they are cleansing the body. It is essential to stop the rotting process. Thetis promises Achilles to stop the deterioration of Patroclus' body.<sup>39</sup> Later when Achilles has killed Hector, though he drags Hector's body around the camp day after day, and leaves the body for the dogs and birds, gods intervene to prevent deterioration of the body. Rotting is dirty, a desecration. Burning stops the rotting.

Why should the last third of the *Iliad* work through the disposition of those two bodies, however heroic Patroclus and Hector were in life? The answer is that it was the body which continued to bear the substantial identity of the person. The destiny of the soul depended upon the proper funeral rites being performed to the body. This point is vital when subsequently assessing that critique of Homer made by Socrates of the *Republic*: the fate of the soul is a function of the physical disposition of the body. As *Iliad* 23 opens, Achilles has recovered the body of his friend, Patroclus, as well as of his arch-opponent, Hector. Achilles cannot bear to part with the body of Patroclus, and at the same time he is intent of

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<sup>36</sup> This was the point Socrates of the *Hippias minor* makes about lying—and doing injustice in general, “So the more powerful and better soul, when it does injustice, will do injustice voluntarily, and the worthless soul involuntarily.” *Hp. mi.* 376a6-7; Cooper 936. See I.ii.2.d.

<sup>37</sup> *Il.* 18.214-38; Fitzgerald 442-43.

<sup>38</sup> *Il.* 18.343-53; Fitzgerald 446.

<sup>39</sup> *Il.* 19.18-36; Fitzgerald 458.

dishonoring the body of Hector. The two desires lead him to neglect giving his friend a proper funeral.<sup>40</sup> The soul of Patroclus appears to Achilles while he sleeps,<sup>41</sup> shaming him for his disregard for the obsequies which piety required:

Now restful floods  
of sleep, dissolving heartache, came upon him,  
and soon forlorn Patroklos' shade came near—  
a perfect likeness of the man, in height,  
fine eyes, and voice, and dressed in his own fashion.  
The image stood above him and addressed him:

“Sleeping so? Thou has forgotten me,  
Akhilleus'. Never was I uncared for  
in life but am in death. Accord me burial  
in all haste: let me pass the gates of Death.  
Shades that are images of used-up men  
motion me away, will not receive me  
among their hosts beyond the river. I wander  
about the wide gates and the hall of Death.  
Give me your hand. I sorrow.  
When thou shalt have allotted me my fire  
I will not fare here from the dark again.  
As living men we'll no more sit apart  
from our companions, making plans. The day  
of wrath appointed for me at my birth  
engulfed and took me down.<sup>42</sup>

Without proper burial the soul is condemned to wander, forbidden to enter into what small pitiable rest there awaits it in Hades. It is difficult to conceive a higher and more substantial view of the body than that expressed in such depictions.

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<sup>40</sup> *Il.* 23.1-64.

<sup>41</sup> *Il.* 23.65-92.

<sup>42</sup> *Il.* 23.65-79; Fitzgerald 537-38.

At the same time, though the fate of the soul is a function of the physical disposition of the body, the body (i.e., the corpse) and the soul both being at hand, it is the soul of his old friend that spoke to Achilles and that Achilles seeks to embrace:

He stretched his arms out but took hold of nothing,  
as into earth Patroklos' shade like smoke  
retreated with a faint cry. Then Akhilleus  
rose in wonderment and clapped his hands,  
and slowly said:

“A wisp of life remains  
in the undergloom of Death: a visible form,  
though no heart beats within it. All this night  
the shade of poor Patroklos bent above me  
grieving and weeping, charging me with tasks.  
It seemed to the life the very man.”<sup>43</sup>

Two lines warrant a more literal translation, “Alas, for there is still something (τις) in the house of Hades, a soul and image (ψυχή και εἶδωλον), even though the *phren* is altogether gone (ἀτὰρ φρένες οὐκ ἔνι πάμπαν).<sup>44</sup> Patroclus leaves the earth without his φρένες which are organs of thinking; nevertheless something of Patroclus remains existing. One recalls Aristotle’s criteria for tragedy, “through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions.”<sup>45</sup> In the tragic moment, Achilles realizes a new truth—for catharsis crystallizes insight—namely that even in death something perdures. The ψυχή and εἶδωλον of Patroclus are present while the φρένες are altogether gone. Professor Onians argues that φρένες are the lungs which was the seat of that “thinking [which] is described as ‘speaking.’”<sup>46</sup> It is not

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<sup>43</sup> *Il.* 23.99-107; Fitzgerald 538-39.

<sup>44</sup> *Il.* 23.103-04.

<sup>45</sup> Aristotle *Poetics* 1449b28; Barnes 2320.

<sup>46</sup> Onians, *Origins*, 26-28, 13.

clear if “*ψυχή* καὶ εἶδωλον” is a simple reduplication or, as Professor Onians holds, denote two different aspects of what remains of Patroclus, namely, “The *ψυχή* leaves the body . . . (as a phantom of the person such as is encountered in a dream) and persists in the house of Hades as an εἶδωλον.”<sup>47</sup> That Patroclus is an εἶδωλον is to say the remnant of the man “preserves its form and does not disintegrate.”<sup>48</sup> If this analysis is correct, the logic of the two terms corresponds to outside and inside. For example, a traveller when received inside a home becomes a visitor. He does not cease being a traveller, rather the new term signifies what the traveller is in the new setting, namely a visitor. The *ψυχή* which “leaves the body” perdures “in the house of Hades as an εἶδωλον,” but does not cease being a *ψυχή*. One may well ask why others in the House of Hades without φρένες (e.g., his mother, Achilles, and Agamemnon) were able to speak with Odysseus and to give him good counsel. The answer is that it was the blood which made it possible for them to speak without φρένες. Tiresias, however, drinks the blood not out of necessity, rather as a kind of refreshment. Professor Stanford comments, “Teiresias, being specially privileged (see 10, 493), does not have to drink the blood before he can speak, but he desires to drink it as a strengthening tonic.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 95. Professor Voegelin develops this point, “The word *psyche*, which in later Greek means ‘soul,’ is present . . . but it is an organ of man rather than the organizing form of a body. Not much information can be extracted about this *psyche* from the epics, except that it means a life-force that leaves man in death and then leads a miserable existence as a shadow, the *eidolon*. And since there is no conception of the soul, such phenomena as ‘emotions,’ ‘stirring of emotions,’ ‘thinking,’ cannot be conceived as functions of the *psyche* but must be understood (by the terms *thymos* and *noos*) as additional organs of man. The problems of man and his soul are not absent from the Homeric work . . . nevertheless this peculiar articulation of man into a bundle of organs and forces compels the poet to treat such questions by means of a symbolism that barely recognizes man as a well-circumscribed, world-immanent center of action.” Voegelin, *Polis*, 171-72.

<sup>49</sup> W. B. Stanford, *The Odyssey of Homer: Edited with General and Grammatical Introduction, Commentary, and Indexes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1974), 385, on *Od.* 11.96. See also footnote 52 below.

Up til now, the minimal character of the Homeric soul has been emphasized. Professor Benardete observes, however, “It is Achilles who realizes that the soul is something, after all, in the house of Hades (*Iliad* 23.103-04).”<sup>50</sup> There is about the Homeric soul at once qualities of something and of nothing which leads translators to seek a term that conveys both meanings at once, thus the frequent rendering “shade.” In this work, “soul” is consistently used as the translation for “ψυχή” because it was not the word which changed from Homer to Aristotle, rather what the word meant.

When the soul of Patroclus appears to Achilles, he has not yet entered the house of Hades. The impiety of Achilles blocked the entrance of the soul. No matter how grim might be the house of Hades, worse for a soul was to wander the earth unable to enter the place proper to it. This is an extremely important point in relation to the development of Greek thought about life on earth compared to life in the house of Hades. Here is an instance in Homer where existence of the soul is worse on earth than in the house of Hades. There are then two points of discovery about the soul which are harbingers of the teaching about the soul in Plato’s dialogues. First, the soul, however ephemeral, still is something and not nothing. Second, there is at least one circumstance when the perdurance of the soul on earth is actually worse than its perdurance in the house of Hades.

In *Iliad* 23, it is the soul of one dead who approaches someone living. By contrast, Odysseus’s descent into Hades was a revolutionary moment in literature, ranking Odysseus with Orpheus. Odysseus travelled to the underworld and returned to earth fully alive. Just as there are both positive and negative characteristics of the soul’s perdurance in Achilles’

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<sup>50</sup> Benardete, “*Laws*,” 214-15.

encounter with the soul of Patroclus, so is there also in Odysseus's descent. Circe counsels Odysseus on how to make his journey.<sup>51</sup> It is her characterization of Tiresias, the blind seer of Thebes, which Socrates of the *Republic* quotes in order to delete it from the Homeric text. Four lines are especially informative:

You shall hear prophecy from the rapt shade (ψυχῆ)  
of blind Teiresias of Thebes, forever  
charged with reason (τοῦ τε φρένες ἔμπεδοί εἰσι) even among the  
dead;  
to him alone, of all the flitting ghosts (σκιᾷ),  
Persephone has given a mind undarkened (νόον . . . πεπνῦσθαι).<sup>52</sup>

This passage exemplifies why ψυχή is often translated “shade.” Ψυχή is parallel with σκιά (“shadow”). Even in the house of Hades and Persephone, Tiresias has his “*phren* intact.” The point here seems to be not that Tiresias does have the power of thinking, but that none of the other souls do.<sup>53</sup> This statement stands in radical contrast with that about the soul of Patroclus whose *phren* was altogether gone. This point of comparison may mark a major development in Homeric psychology: even in the house of Hades and Persephone it is

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<sup>51</sup> *Od.* 10.488-540.

<sup>52</sup> *Od.* 10.492-95; Fitzgerald 172.

<sup>53</sup> *R.* 3.386d8; Cooper 1023. Professor Deneen comments, “Teiresias, like the others, must drink the ram’s blood in the macabre ceremony that awakens the souls of the dead to speech (11.95-99). Teiresias’s *nous*, then, does not differ in its initial manifestation from those others in Hades; but once ‘activated,’ his wisdom remains. Like the rest of the dead souls, he retains what was with him in life: for Achilles, it is his indignant anger; for Teiresias, his foresight and wisdom. Allan Bloom rightly notes this retention of one’s mortal qualities, but he seemingly forgets that Socrates explicitly seeks to excise this passage, thus in a sense excising a recommendation of wisdom in mortal life. Yet by citing this passage, both in its negative commentary on the afterlife of the ‘fluttering souls’ and, more notably, in the positive mention of Teiresias’s retention of wisdom, Socrates allows commentators like Bloom to extract a positive lesson from the passage, even as it poses as a negative example to those who would be more apt to fear its apparent lessons regarding the horrors of death.” Deneen, *Political Theory*, 91. Bloom, “*Republic*,” 357. By way of agreeing with Professor Deneen, the point of the excision cannot logically emphasize the positive which perdures; otherwise it would not be expunged. Socrates takes aim at the negative which Homer through Achilles says about existence in the house of Hades, i.e., that all but Tiresias are mindless. At the same time, there is merit to the argument that what one examines, one emphasizes.

possible to retain this organ of life, even if only by the special intervention by the queen of the dead. Tiresias had special insight even when among the living, and—like Demodocus (and Homer!)—he was blind. Thus, while he walked the earth, he was the blind man who could see that to which the seeing were blind. In the house of Hades, Tiresias possesses the faculty for thinking. The point must not be overemphasized, however, since the other souls in the house of Hades are like the soul of Patroclus rather than like that of Tiresias.<sup>54</sup>

When Odysseus encounters Achilles in the house of Hades, he points to the incongruity of Achilles' status in his former life with his status as soul in the house of Hades, “Formerly in life, we honored you equal to the gods (πρὶν μὲν γάρ σε ζῶν ἐτίομεν ἴσα θεοῖσιν).”<sup>55</sup> The soul of Achilles, however, proclaims to Odysseus, the living man among the dead, that reigning in the house of Hades is no compensation for perdurance so devoid of substance:

Let me hear no smooth talk  
of death from you, Odysseus, light of councils,  
Better, I say, to break sod as a farm hand  
for some poor country man, on iron rations,  
than lord it over all the exhausted dead.<sup>56</sup>

This is an extraordinary indictment of the Greek warrior culture by the hero who most exemplified it. It would be better to work as a *thes* (θητευόμεν) bound to a “landless man (ἀνδρὶ παρ’ ἀκλήρω)” “than lord it over all the exhausted dead.” Achilles was saying that

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, the account of Odysseus's encounter with his mother, Anticlea, *Od.* 11.204-224.

<sup>55</sup> *Od.* 11.484; my translation.

<sup>56</sup> *Od.* 11.488-91; Fitzgerald 190.

the condition and estate in life of a θής was preferable to any condition and estate in death.

Professor Sir Moses Finley draws out the significance of this passage:

A *thes*, not a slave, was the lowest creature on earth that Achilles could think of. The authoritarian household, the *oikos*, was the centre around which life was organized. . . . The terrible thing about a *thes* was his lack of attachment, his not belonging. . . . he was no part of the *oikos*, and in this respect even the slave was better off.<sup>57</sup>

A “landless man” was already on the fringe of society. He hailed from the hero class (witnessed by ἀνήρ), but had evidently lost his estate. He was himself thus subject to plunder at any time. Achilles discusses the relationship of the *thes* to that landless man. The *thes* had no permanent attachment to this noble experiencing hard times, rather he worked for wages which were by no means certain especially since the situation of the landless man was itself uncertain. Sir Moses cites the protestations of Poseidon to Apollo about the latter god’s predilection for the Trojans given that gods had worked for the Trojans as *thetes* and never received their pay. He points out that the disguised Odysseus is asked by “the leading suitor Eurymachus” if he would like to work for him as a *thes*, “you can be sure of pay.” Sir Moses notes the irony of that remark and that based upon the experience of Poseidon at the hands of the Trojans, one could almost be sure of not being paid.<sup>58</sup> Achilles has chosen an image of a status (*thes*) which was most precarious even in the context of a hero’s solid household but working for a hero who had no proper household. He would prefer to be a day-laborer with no protection of the law working for a man who had little ability to protect

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<sup>57</sup> Finley, *World*, 57-58. The translation of these lines is by Sir Moses.

<sup>58</sup> Finley, *World*, 57; *Il.* 21.441-52; *Od.* 18.346-61.



him even if would. Achilles had traded hearth and home for immortal glory in song, and found subsequently that he had made a poor deal.

Professor W. B. Stanford, in his commentary on the *Odyssey*, observes how radically distinct is the declamation of Achilles when compared to Milton's Satan:

Note in this passage the typical early Greeks' attitude to existence after death. Its shadowy impotence appalled them, for they loved vigour, action, personality and the sunshine. Contrast Milton's Satan – "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven." The recurrent melancholy of all Greek literature is mainly due to this abhorrence of losing one's vital powers after death.<sup>59</sup>

Milton's Satan and Homer's Achilles are equally defiant. Achilles concludes his speech to Odysseus:

Oh to arrive at father's house—the man I was,  
For one brief day—I'd make my fury and my hands,  
Invincible hands, a thing of terror to all those men  
Who abuse the king with force and wrest away his honor!<sup>60</sup>

The man's rage remains undiminished, but the ability to act upon that rage no longer exists. The two literary figures can be taken as icons of their cultures. In early Greek antiquity, life on any condition seemed better than death in the house of Hades. The most insubstantial life on the earth was better, that is more substantial, than lordship of the dead in the house of Hades. In modernity, autonomy is valued above all things. It is preferable to live a miserable, hellish life on one's own terms than to live blissfully under the dominion of another. Two points need to be observed. First, this radical estrangement of the modern viewpoint from that of early Greek antiquity presents an obstacle to the modern, let alone post-modern, in understanding Homer's poems. Second, Professor Stanford's observation

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<sup>59</sup> Stanford, *Odyssey*, 398, note on *Od.* 11.488-91.

<sup>60</sup> *Od.* 11.501-03; Fagles 265.

lends support to Professor Lewis's insight which shall be discussed in the context of how Plato read this passage, "An inch beneath the bright surface of Homer we find not melancholy but despair."<sup>61</sup> Once that "inch" is penetrated, there is nothing left but the despair.

In the account of Odysseus in the underworld, *Odyssey* 11, Homer tries to come to terms with the nothingness of being in Hades and the somethingness of it, as evidenced, for example, by the necessity of the souls drinking blood in order to communicate with him.<sup>62</sup> Another example that works well dramatically but is completely illogical is that the same souls whom Odysseus cannot embrace are, nevertheless, held at bay when he wields his sword.<sup>63</sup> In Homer, to the degree to which an entity exists, it exists physically. The soul can speak; it can be seen and heard. The soul can drink blood and be held at bay with a drawn sword. All the while, there is the hint that materiality is not sufficiently explanatory; e.g., a soul cannot be embraced. There is a poignant contradiction which waits to be addressed.

Physical being (i.e., his existence and identity) extends to what Aristotle would call *habitus*: the hero is clothed in his household.<sup>64</sup> Even the slave has a higher state of being according to the extent of the household under his or her domain. Not only Eumaeus, but

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<sup>61</sup> Lewis, *Preface*, 29.

<sup>62</sup> E.g., *Od.* 11.92-99.

<sup>63</sup> *Od.* 11.48-50, 96-97.

<sup>64</sup> Professor Benardete's comment on the treatment of "Hades" in *Cratylus* 403b3 supports this view, "Not to be here is as terrifying as to be without body. Our attachment to our place in this world and our own bodies is so strong that not even Hades, who seems preferable to annihilation, can console; what truly consoles is wealth." Benardete, *Argument*, 159. The reason for the Homeric soul's inconsolability is that what Socrates of the *Cratylus* calls wealth actually clothes mortal man as an extension of his being. The household is not separate and distinct from the Homeric hero; it is part and parcel of who he is.

Eurycleia too has a high level of being. To lose one's household (i.e., to be a landless man) or one's place in the household is *to be* less. For Priam, to lose his city does not much differ from losing his life. The custom of slaying the vanquished men is to complete the deprivation of their being already begun in conquering their city. To take the women of the vanquished and make them one's own is to add the substance of another to one's own substance. Life in the house of Hades was the loss of being.

Odysseus is hero of heroes. He descends into the place where one only goes by losing one's substance, yet he remains completely substantial and then returns to the surface of the world with none of his substance diminished. In light of that achievement, the opening conversation between the dead Achilles and the living Odysseus casts the quest of homegoing in heroic terms:

What greater feat remains  
for you to put your mind on, after this?  
for you to put your way down to the dark  
where these dimwitted dead are camped forever  
the after images of used up men?<sup>65</sup>

Achilles can imagine no achievement greater than that of the living man to travel to Hades' house and then return to the land of the living; Odysseus, however, can. It is the quest of homegoing. In fact, the counsel of Tiresias, Agamemnon and Achilles are all essential to Odysseus's work of arriving home. Odysseus will arrive at his household stealthily, as advised by Agamemnon. He will forsake glorious immortality for the life of the hearth, as advised by Achilles. Beyond the close of the *Odyssey*, he will make a journey inland and ever after forsake the sea, as directed by Tiresias. Homegoing is more difficult and more

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<sup>65</sup> *Od.* 11.474-76; Fitzgerald 190.

worthy than any other task that a hero might attempt. Only with counsel from the great ones among the dead will the task be possible. That is to say that the lifeless souls possess a wisdom which the man living does not. Here is a prefiguring of the Socratic inversion: it is the soul shed of all corporeal that knows. Perhaps there is another prefiguring. It may be that the Odyssean quest for home prefigures that longing of the soul, described by Plato's Socrates, to throw off the stranger's disguise and claim its rights in life full and without end which is the eternal home.<sup>66</sup>

#### **b. Departures of Early Greek Philosophy**

The materialist understanding of the ψυχή persisted among the Early Greek philosophers and traces of it remain even in Plato's work, as shall be discussed below. Professor Onians summarizes the history of this view. The soul was associated with various liquids sometimes in general, consistent with the discussion of Ocean in II.i, and sometimes in specific, such as brain or spinal fluid, bone marrow, or sperm.<sup>67</sup> Anaximenes (fl. c. 546-526 B.C.)<sup>68</sup> is credited with one of the first major departures, namely that soul is the air which binds a human being into a unity. Thus with Anaximenes, there is a new first principle of life, namely air.<sup>69</sup> Water had been displaced as the primal source of all things.

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<sup>66</sup> This insight was suggested by Professor Matthias Vorwerk in a note to the author, July 2007. In a comment on the *Phaedo*, Professor Burnet observes, "The view that the soul is a stranger and a sojourner in this life was also destined to influence European thought profoundly." Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 43.

<sup>67</sup> Onians, *Origins*, 118-19.

<sup>68</sup> Long, *Early Greek Philosophy*, xviii.

<sup>69</sup> The view here follows that of Aristotle, "Anaximenes and Diogenes make air, rather than water, the material principle above the other simple bodies." *Metaph.* 1.984a5.

Even more momentous is that Anaximenes asserts that air is to the world as soul to a human being, Anaximenes juxtaposes ἀέρ and πνεῦμα as recorded by Aetius, “As our soul, he says, being air holds us together and controls us, so does wind [or breath] and air enclose the whole world.” Aetius adds the comment, “Air and Wind are synonymous here.”<sup>70</sup> There may be a continuity here with Homer.<sup>71</sup> If so, then new with Anaximenes is an understanding of how breath functions in the body. If Aetius is correct in attributing the word about soul to Anaximenes, then that insight is a great moment in the long transition from the Homeric understanding of soul as perduring shadow to the understanding of Plato’s Socrates that soul is the immortal part of the human being.

While Socrates of the *Phaedo* cites Anaxagoras with respect to mind, “It is Mind that directs and is the cause of everything,”<sup>72</sup> it is probably Pythagoras, or at least Pythagoreans, who had greater influence on Plato’s Socrates. Pythagoras taught that the soul was immortal and inhabited various animal bodies over its eons of existence.<sup>73</sup> The problem in discussing Pythagoras is that he wrote nothing, but his followers wrote much and attributed their much to his nothing. Professor Barnes concludes, nevertheless, that the doctrine of metempsychosis is rightly attributed to Pythagoras. He quotes Xenophanes B7 which Diogenes Laertius says was aimed at Pythagoras, “And they say that once as he was passing by a puppy being beaten, he felt compassion and said thus: ‘Stop, don’t beat it, since in truth

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<sup>70</sup> Anaximenes B2 D.-K.; KRS 158-59. See discussion in KRS 159-61.

<sup>71</sup> KRS 159. Professor Onians is also of this view. Onians, *Origins*, 115n7.

<sup>72</sup> *Phd.* 97b8-c4; Cooper 84.

<sup>73</sup> Pythagoras A8a D.-K.; KRS 238.

it is the soul of a friend which I recognized upon hearing it cry out.”<sup>74</sup> Professor Barnes then comments: “Xenophanes’ story is a jest, not a piece of doxography, but the jest has no point if its butt was not a transmigrationist.”<sup>75</sup> At the same time, Professor Barnes observes:

There is nothing strikingly novel in the view that we somehow survive our earthly deaths; and the view was widespread in Greece from the dawn of history. Nor was there anything new in the supposition that the soul of my grandam might haply inhabit a bird: ‘theriomorphism’ is a commonplace in Greek mythology. The gods, with tedious frequency, dress themselves in bestial garments; and Circe turned Odysseus’ crew into swine. The novelty in Pythagoras’ doctrine (if novelty it was) consisted in the conjunction of those two old superstitions: men survive death by virtue of their *psuchē*’s taking on a new form. Survival and transmogrification add up to metempsychosis.<sup>76</sup>

While Professor Barnes seems certain in his conclusion, there is that parenthetical murmur of doubt, “if novelty it was.” One concludes from Xenophanes’ fragments (e.g., B11, 12) that he was willing to criticize and correct Homer. It is interesting, therefore, that he also criticized the Pythagorean departure from the Homeric view of soul. There are two original points in Pythagorean metempsychosis. First, the soul is not stuck in the house of Hades. The Achilles of Homer despairs of the unending diminution of Hades’ house. Pythagoras sees a door out of that house back to the bright sunshine of the earth. Second, metempsychosis makes it possible to say for the first time, “body *and* soul.” Note the claim is that metempsychosis makes it *possible* to say “body *and* soul,” not that it was said. For

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<sup>74</sup> Xenophanes B7 D.-K.; Leshner 19.

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 104. KRS quotes his comment with approbation. KRS 220. Professor Leshner takes a more cautious approach. He allows “as fairly well settled” that “Xenophanes alludes to a belief in metempsychosis or the transmigration of the soul and, second, his story is intended as ridicule.” Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 79. He suggests, however, that the ridicule might be aimed at the certainty of the insight, which is claimed by Pythagoreans and perhaps by Pythagoras himself, to be able recognize a particular soul in its new guise. *Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>76</sup> Barnes, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 105.

Homer, the body only came into existence when it had become a corpse. Now, there was that which lived linearly with a beginning and end, the body. There was that which lived cyclically without beginning or end, the soul.

While Professor Barnes gives credit to Pythagoras for a rational account of metempsychosis,<sup>77</sup> he rightly points out, “Metempsychosis does not in itself entail immortality.”<sup>78</sup> In fact, he observes that excepting perhaps Heraclitus, “Other early thinkers did not greatly bother their heads about their *psuchai*.” He calls Alcmaeon “the one bright exception to that generalization.” In this respect, it is Alcmaeon rather than Pythagoras whose insight is a fundamental turning point from the Homeric view of the soul to that of Plato’s Socrates.<sup>79</sup> One short fragment sums up the essentials of the attributed teaching, “Alcmaeon supposes the soul to be a substance self-moved in eternal motion, and for that reason immortal and similar to the divine.”<sup>80</sup> This is a radical departure from the Homeric view. The Homeric perdurance of soul is triggered by death. Soul is not merely what is left when a mortal dies; in some sense, Homeric soul is caused by death. Alcmaeon taught that the soul is deathless, that it was in motion prior to the mortal’s birth and it continues in

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<sup>77</sup> “Metempsychosis is no rough dogma: it is a rational theory.” Ibid., 111.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 114. Cebes makes this point in the *Phaedo*, “I do not deny that it has been very elegantly and . . . sufficiently proved that our soul existed before it took on this present form, but I do not believe the same applies to its existing somewhere after our death.” *Phd.* 87a1-4; Cooper 75. Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, February 22, 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Professor Barnes quotes the pertinent fragments including: Alcmaeon A1 and 12; Eusebius, *Preparatio Evangelica* XI.28.9; and a passage from Plato’s *Phaedrus* (245c-246a) where Alcmaeon is not named. Barnes, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 116-17. Professor Barnes gives a much more detailed and careful analysis, though both his analysis of Alcmaeon and Pythagoras might be vulnerable to criticism that the Early Greek philosophers might not have thought in the categories of a post-Fregian logician. While Professor Barnes’ analyses may be an anachronistic projection, they do show the genius contained in the fundamental teachings of Pythagoras and Alcmaeon.

<sup>80</sup> Alcmaeon A12 D.-K.; KRS 347.

motion after the mortal's death. Following the analysis of Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, this kind of immortality requires death in order for soul to be reincarnated.<sup>81</sup> Mortal life is linear, while the life of the soul is cyclical. Alcmaeon and other Early Greek philosophers departed from the Homeric view of perduring soul to a new view of soul that is deathless and thus divine. What no Greek thinker has thus far declared is that the soul is anything other than material.

Of the extant Early Greek fragments, one can conclude that it was Heraclitus whose gnomic sayings speak more completely about the soul than any other Early Greek thinker.<sup>82</sup> It has been argued extensively in I.ii that the condemnation of Homer in the Platonic corpus is not to be trusted. With respect to the soul, the same kind of caution may be necessary in reading Plato on Heraclitus. Heraclitus is, as Socrates of the *Theaetetus* argues, a very Homeric philosopher, and yet his innovations also prepare the way for the Socratic inversion.

That fame is immortal and that the best people will exchange everything else in life for it is a Homeric view to which Heraclitus assents. Professor Kahn identifies Achilles with "the best" who, according to Heraclitus, chose "everflowing fame among mortals."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> "So if he is immortal . . . he must undergo physical death followed by incarnation in a new body." KRS 348.

<sup>82</sup> Professor Barnes does not concur with the view that the meaning of Heraclitus is "oracular," "The obscurity of Heraclitus' writings is customarily misrepresented. He is, like all Presocratics, given to a vexatious vagueness; he frequently propounds paradoxes; and he has a mild penchant for puns. But puns are harmless and paradoxes are not always obscure. The fragmentary state of Heraclitus' surviving words often makes his sense opaque; but I do not find his style particularly 'oracular.'" Barnes, *Presocratic Philosophers*, 58.

<sup>83</sup> Heraclitus B29 D.-K.; Kahn, 72-73 (XCVII). If one accepts Professor Kahn's identification, then the move is from "Achilles" as a concrete to "the best" as a concept. "Heraclitus has generalized this choice [between fame and satiety] as an option between two forms of death and survival." Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 234.



Sometimes Heraclitus even outdoes Homer as, for example, when he criticizes the bard of the Trojan War for having Achilles wish away strife.<sup>84</sup> Like Homer, Heraclitus is a thoroughgoing materialist. He likes empirical observation,<sup>85</sup> but it does no good to those with barbarian souls.<sup>86</sup> Sensation does not belong to the earthly body only; he affirms, “Souls smell things in Hades.”<sup>87</sup>

For all that Heraclitus resonates with Homer and for all that Socrates of the *Theaetetus* denounces him, it is the Ephesian who most anticipates the Socratic claim that the boundary between mortality and immortality is penetrable, “Immortals are mortal, mortals immortal, living the others’ death, dead in the others’ life.”<sup>88</sup> This statement expresses extraordinary impiety, as Professor Broadie observes, “There could hardly be a more aggressive denial of the conventional belief, unquestioned by Xenophanes, in the unbridgeable gulf between human and divine.”<sup>89</sup> As revolutions go, it was a particularly elegant one, for this fragment, as Professor Kahn states, is “in point of form Heraclitus’ masterpiece.”<sup>90</sup> Professor Kahn reads “mortals” as “men” and immortals” as “gods,” since

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<sup>84</sup> Heraclitus A22; D.-K.; Kahn, 66-67 (LXXXI).

<sup>85</sup> Heraclitus B55 D.-K.

<sup>86</sup> Heraclitus B107 D.-K.

<sup>87</sup> Heraclitus B98 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 78-79 (CXI). Professor Kahn thinks that Heraclitus might mean since souls are invisible in Hades, they have to use another faculty for discernment, namely smell. Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 257. Even if he is correct in this suggestion, the Heraclitean soul remains a material entity.

<sup>88</sup> Heraclitus B62 D.-K.; Kahn, 70-71 (XCII).

<sup>89</sup> Broadie, “Rational Theology” in *Early Greek Philosophy*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. A. A. Long (Cambridge: the Cambridge University Press, 1999), 213.

<sup>90</sup> Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 216.

the respective terms are “practically synonymous in Greek.”<sup>91</sup> When, however, he says that B62 “asserts some equivalence between mortals and immortals by an interchange of death and life,” he goes somewhat beyond what the fragment says. He develops an extensive interpretation based upon, what he calls, both weak and strong readings of the fragment. A simpler, more direct interpretation is to understand Heraclitus here in terms of flux. He says in B12, “Upon those that step into the same rivers different and different waters flow . . . They scatter and . . . gather . . . come together and flow away . . . approach and depart.”<sup>92</sup> Messrs. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield comment, “According to the Platonic interpretation, accepted and expanded by Aristotle, Theophrastus and the doxographers, this river-image was cited by Heraclitus to emphasize the absolute continuity of change in every single thing: everything is in perpetual flux like a river.”<sup>93</sup> “Everything is in perpetual flux like a river,” even the gods. That is all the clearer when one remembers Ocean as the primary life principle, as discussed II.i. To say that the river of Ocean is always changing is to say that a god is always changing. That point being made, it also becomes immediately clear why Plato had to repudiate Heraclitus even while tacitly accepting his radical proposal that the boundary between mortal and immortal could be crossed. For Heraclitus, the boundary is crossed because all boundaries are crossed. For Plato, the boundary is crossed because his predecessors had all been mistaken about the soul: it is simply and supremely in the human that-which-is.

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>92</sup> Heraclitus B12 and 91 D.-K.; KRS 195; Kahn 52-53, 78-79 (L, LI, and CXIII B). See KRS 195n1 on the relationship of B12 and 91; their reading is accepted here.

<sup>93</sup> KRS 195.

B62 also creates the possibility of saying “body *and* soul” in a way that had not been possible before.<sup>94</sup> It expresses the opposites of mortality and immortality in terms of each other much as Heraclitus expresses the natural opposites of up and down, hot and cold, night and day, etc. It may be that Heraclitus inaugurates a naturalistic theology, extrapolating from the observations about nature to conclusions about the divine nature. Perhaps Heraclitus is only saying that mortality and immortality are to each other as up and down. Read through the lens of the later Socratic inversion, the words of Heraclitus seem anticipatory, but his meaning in actuality may move very little in that direction.<sup>95</sup> It is his symmetrical logic which invites inversion.

In Homer, as has been seen, there is a clear understanding of what is mortal and what immortal and that the barrier between the two is impenetrable. The significance of negation and identity in both Homer (e.g., *Od.* 16.187-88) and in Xenophanes (e.g., Xenophanes B32 D.-K.) has been discussed in II.i.4. Prior to Heraclitus, the opposition of mortal and immortal as well as the significance of negation and identity had developed to a point of revelatory clarity, but Heraclitus adds that there is apposition even in opposition, “The way up and down is one and the same.”<sup>96</sup> After all, he observes, “war is shared and Conflict is

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<sup>94</sup> “Doch wie immer dieser Prozeß im einzelnen verlaufen sein mag – mit dieser Unterscheidung von Körper und Seele ist etwas „entdeckt“, das sich als so evident dem Bewußtsein aufdrängt, daß man es von nun an immer als selbstverständlich existierend nahm, so sehr auch das Verhältnis des Leibs zur Seele oder das Wesen der Seele Gegenstand stets neuer Fragen war. Die neue Auffassung von der Seele trägt als erster Heraklit vor.” Snell, *Entdeckung*, 25. Professor Snell regards B45 as highly determinative.

Professor Kahn surveys the scholarship of this point which he thinks overstated, “But if there is wide agreement on the originality of Heraclitus’ view of the psyche, there is less agreement on just what that view was.” Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 127.

<sup>95</sup> Professor Kahn notes this, “The fragments show no trace of a Cartesian or Platonic contrast between mind and matter, soul and body.” *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>96</sup> Heraclitus B60 D.-K.; Kahn, 74-75 (CIII).

Justice, and that all things come to pass (and are ordained?) in accordance with conflict.”<sup>97</sup>

This same apposite opposition is well-attested in the Heraclitean fragments.<sup>98</sup> Although there is no fragment which quite says so, it is consistent with other fragments to suggest that for Heraclitus the immortal and the mortal are apposite as well as opposite. Professor Burnet notes this point, “Seeing that the soul of every man is in constant flux like his body, what meaning can immortality have? It is not only true that we cannot step twice into the same river, but also that we are not the same for two successive instants.”<sup>99</sup> Once Heraclitus has proposed the apposite and correlative quality of opposition, the barrier between immortals and mortals becomes penetrable.<sup>100</sup> This laid the groundwork to ask how those apposite opposites, body and soul, relate to each other, analogous to the way that hot and cold, up and down relate to each other. Again, this is not to say that Heraclitus himself ever thought it,

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<sup>97</sup> Heraclitus B80 D.-K.; Kahn, 66-67 (LXXXII).

<sup>98</sup> E.g., Heraclitus B10, 30, 48, 51, 54, 59, 61, 67, 102, 110-111, 126 D.-K. Professor Burnet does not use the term “apposition,” but he points to much the same dynamic in the Heraclitean fragments, “A glance at the fragments will show that the thought of Herakleitos was dominated by the opposition of sleeping and waking, life and death, and that this seemed to him the key to the traditional Milesian problem of the opposites, hot and cold, wet and dry.” Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 60.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>100</sup> Professor Benardete comments on Hermes’ speech about the magical plant *moly* (μόλυ) which he dug in order to give to Odysseus as inoculation against the magic of Circe to turn men into pigs, “What Hermes does with the *moly* is to show Odysseus its nature (*phusis*): ‘It was black in its root, and its flower like milk; the gods call it moly, but it is hard for mortal men to dig it up, but the gods can do everything.’ If the decisive action is the showing forth of its nature and not the revelation of its divine name, as if it were a magical charm, the *moly* itself is irrelevant. What is important is that it has a nature, and the gods’ power arises from the knowledge of its nature and of all other things. . . . ‘The way up and the way down are one and the same,’ Heraclitus says (fr. 60), but there are still two contrary ways, and one has to go one way or the other, even while one knows they are one. It now seems that Homer was the first, as far as we know, to have come to an understanding of this philosophic principle, to which he gave the name ‘nature.’” Benardete, *Bow and Lyre*, 87. This is an interesting philosophical reading of the passage, but it is also an over-reading which projects a later understanding of “nature” onto the Homeric text. It is not clear that by φύσις Homer means anything more than “growth” from the root meaning of the verb, φύω, “And he handed me its growth (καί μοι φύσιν αὐτοῦ ἔδειξε).” *Od.* 10.303.

but he made it possible to think of the human being as something partly mortal, partly immortal in the way that mortality and immortality call to each other from their depths. As with all other Early Greek thinkers, for Heraclitus the soul is thoroughly material.<sup>101</sup> “Mortal and immortal” occurred to him; “material and immaterial,” apparently, did not.

To appropriate philosophically the principle of apposite opposition yields interesting results when one considers Heraclitus and Parmenides together. Heraclitus, of course, is characterized even caricatured as the philosopher of change. Parmenides is equally characterized as the advocate for the stability of being. Both thinkers arrived at their profoundest insights by plumbing the depths of the word “not.” Though in very different ways, both philosophers affirm that what-is-not is. Of course, opposites and negation are not necessarily the same. The law of the excluded middle, for example, applies to negation, but not to opposites. Either the coffee is hot or not hot, but it is not necessarily hot or cold. Some opposites, however, are also the affirmative and negative of the same thing, and that is the case with both material-immaterial and mortal-immortal. Although far from being a unique construction, it is interesting that “immortal” in Greek as in English, is the negation of “mortal.” The preferred state is the negation of the less preferred state. In reflecting upon the Homeric legacy, mortality is fully concrete and in a certain sense the negation of mortality is the negation of the concrete. Of course, in Homer the immortality of the gods is as completely depicted as human mortality. There is, however, in the imaginative genera of gods and immortality a shift from the concrete toward the non-concrete, namely toward abstraction.

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<sup>101</sup> “Since Heraclitus is a monist . . . the psyche is also a physical principle.” Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 128.

Insofar as the teaching of Plato's Socrates on the soul is that the soul is not material and not mortal, the views of Parmenides bear upon the question of the soul. Parmenides challenges those—and perhaps he has Heraclitus in mind—“who believe that to be and not to be are the same and not the same; and the path taken by all is backward-turning.”<sup>102</sup> Aristotle reports that this line of thought has been attributed to Heraclitus, though Aristotle seems to say that he regards Heraclitus too highly to believe entirely the attribution.<sup>103</sup> Aristotle, though he repudiates the possibility of  $A$  and  $\sim A$ , he also takes the trouble to understand what such a thinker—Heraclitus or whoever—has in mind. They thought they were “inquiring about the whole of nature and of being.”<sup>104</sup> This is exactly the point in relation to the soul. Homer was first of the Greeks, on record at least, to attempt to understand the nature and being of the soul. Heraclitus and Parmenides both sought to plumb the implications of “not,” though in ways that were opposite and, one suspects, that Heraclitus would have thought appositely opposite. What Heraclitus and Parmenides had to say about negation bears on the question of mortality and materiality and, therefore, upon the soul. Heraclitus saw that beyond the question of mortality and immortality, and by inference of materiality and immateriality, that there was a larger ontological structure, a logos, within which affirmation and negation are not only intelligible but inform each other in existence, “It is wise, listening not to me but to the report, to agree that all things are

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<sup>102</sup> Parmenides B6 D.-K.; KRS 247.

<sup>103</sup> *Metaph.* 4.1005b24-26.

<sup>104</sup> *Metaph.* 4.1005a33.

one.”<sup>105</sup> Parmenides, for his part, asserts that, nevertheless, “is” and “is-not” cannot be said to be “the same and not the same.” Mortality/immortality and materiality/immateriality are disjunctive. The disjunctions exist within some larger ontological order. This is an essential part of the problematic as inherited by Socrates. By exploring the implications of “not,” both Heraclitus and Parmenides opened the possibility to consider philosophically an idea of soul which is neither mortal and nor material.

### 3. Plato’s Refiguring

#### a. Hades and His House

In the *Republic*, Socrates not only states his intention to transform the Greek understanding of Hades, but also why:

[Socrates:] And can someone be unafraid of death, preferring it to defeat in battle or slavery, if he believes in a Hades full of terrors?

[Adeimantus:] Not at all.

[Socrates:] Then we must supervise such stories and those who tell them, and ask them not to disparage the life in Hades in this unconditional way, but rather to praise it, since what they now say is neither true nor beneficial to future warriors.<sup>106</sup>

There follow seven quotations from Homer to be expunged: *Odyssey* 11.489-91, *Iliad* 20.64-65, *Iliad* 23.103-04, *Odyssey* 10.495, *Iliad* 16.856-57, 23.100-01, and *Odyssey* 24.6-9.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Heraclitus, B50 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 45 (XXXVI). Professor Kahn writes, “The unity of opposites and the community of the *logos* (with its triple application to discourse, soul, and universe) provide the initial clues for interpreting this extraordinary claim, whose full meaning requires an understanding of Heraclitus’ thought as a whole. In that sense, the rest of our commentary will be an exegesis of this proposition: *hen panta einai*.” Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 131. Professor Snell observes, “Eine zweite Qualität des Logos bei Heraklit ist, daß er ein κοινόν, ein „Gemeinsames“, ist, daß er durch alles hindurchgeht, daß alles teil an ihm hat.” Snell, *Entdeckung*, 27.

<sup>106</sup> R. 3.386b4-c1; Cooper 1022.

*Odyssey* 11.489-91 is from the speech of Achilles' soul to Odysseus. This passage is especially important because of the way Socrates will later refigure this exact quotation in *Republic* 7.516d3-7. *Iliad*, 20.64-65 describes the fear of Hades himself that "mortals and immortals" alike would see clearly the vile nature of his domain.<sup>108</sup> *Iliad* 23.103-04 describes the departure of Patroclus's soul for the House of Hades, as witnessed by Achilles. *Odyssey* 10.495 is from the speech of Circe as she gives advice to Odysseus about what to expect and how to behave in the house of Hades, in specific describing the ability of Tiresias who "alone could think" (πεπνύσθαι) in contrast to whom "others are flitting shadows." *Iliad* 16.856-57 is taken from the description of Patroclus's death as witnessed by Hector. *Iliad* 23.100-01 describes the soul of Patroclus leaving Achilles. Last, *Odyssey* 24.6-9 describes the wretchedness expressed by souls of the slain suitors as they depart their bodies for the house of Hades. What all seven have in common is the understanding of Hades' house as a dreadful place where what perdures after death has the scantest existence and that entirely of misery. Three of the four quotations from the *Iliad* relate to Patroclus. One from the *Odyssey* has to do with Achilles, thus four of the seven have to do with one or both of them.<sup>109</sup> It has been argued in I.ii.3.a that Socrates of the *Republic* is a re-figuring of

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<sup>107</sup> Cooper 1023.

<sup>108</sup> *Il.* 20.61-65; Fitzgerald 475.

<sup>109</sup> "Allan Bloom incorrectly asserts that, of the seven quotations, "all but the central one have to do more or less directly with Achilles" ("Interpretive Essay," *The Republic of Plato*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Allan Bloom [New York: Basic, 1991], 354). Of the four quotations from the *Iliad* (2, 3, 5, 6), only the fifth does not refer to Achilles but instead to Patroclus's soul departing from his body. Of the quotes from the *Odyssey*, the first is from Achilles' famous speech in the underworld, whereas the fourth and the seventh deal with Teiresias and the dead suitors, respectively." Deneen, *Political Theory*, 121-22, note 21. Professor Deneen's critique is itself somewhat confusing. He uses ordinals when he should use cardinals. When he writes, "fifth," he means "quotation 5." In fact, quotation 2 has to do with Hades and his house, not at all with Achilles. Otherwise the reading here concurs with that of Professor Deneen.



Odysseus when he gives an account to Penelope of his sojourn in the house of Hades. It is fitting then that Socrates as Odysseus revises the account of Hades and, necessarily also, of soul. Three of the seven scenes cited have been considered above in their Homeric context: *Iliad* 23.100-01, *Odyssey* 10.495 and 11.489-91. That consideration has established an Homeric understanding of Hades' house. What shall now be seen is how Plato's Socrates demythologizes and remythologizes the inherited Homeric understanding.

Against the broad background of the Homeric Hades' house, one passage among the seven expurgated warrants detailed examination because of the second quotation of it in *Republic* 7.514a1-c2. Professor Bloom rightly notes that Achilles is at the center of Socrates' concern, "Socrates brings Achilles to the foreground in order to analyze his character and ultimately to do away with him as the model for the young. . . . Socrates is attempting to work a fantastic transformation of men's tastes in making the ugly old man more attractive than the fair youth."<sup>110</sup> The point is to replace Achilles with Socrates "as the model for the young." The principle of interpretation in the present work, argued in I.ii, is that Plato has given his readers Socrates as Odysseus. In relation to 3.386c-387a, it is Socrates as Odysseus who takes on Achilles. With that insight, it is time to examine how Socrates refigures the first passage he expurgates, *Odyssey* 11.489-91, when Achilles decries his condition in the house of Hades to Odysseus, "'I would rather labor on earth in service to another,/ To a man who is landless, with little to live on,/ Than be king over all the dead.'"<sup>111</sup> At the beginning of Book 7, Socrates presents the Allegory of the Cave. He

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<sup>110</sup> Bloom, "*Republic*", 354.

<sup>111</sup> R. 3.386c5-7; Cooper 1023.

describes the details so often rehearsed in introductory philosophy courses and exclusive graduate seminars alike: humans chained deep inside a cave and shown the projected shadows of objects made to resemble real things, the one person who is dragged above ground and there temporarily blinded by the sunlight, then realizing that he was seeing the world as it really is for the first time.<sup>112</sup> As he then reflects on the cave where he once lived, what would he think? Socrates ponders the circumstance:

And if there had been any honors, praises, or prizes among them for the one who was the sharpest at identifying the shadows as they passed by and who best remembered which usually came earlier, which later, and which simultaneously, and who could best divine the future, do you think that our man would desire these rewards or envy those among the prisoners who were honored and held power? Instead, wouldn't he feel, with Homer, that he'd much prefer to "work the earth as a serf to another, one without possessions," and go through any sufferings, rather than share their opinions and live as they do?<sup>113</sup>

Socrates uses Achilles' speech about existence in the house of Hades—a speech which he has expurgated from the Homeric text—to characterize life in the cave.<sup>114</sup> It can be observed, of course, that the expurgation in 3.386 is for the warrior class, but Socrates raises two problems with the Homeric house of Hades; it "is neither true nor beneficial to future warriors."<sup>115</sup> Simply noting the difference in the setting when Socrates of the *Republic* refigures that quotation cannot explain the now positive use of the image. On the account of

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<sup>112</sup> R. 7.514a1-c2.

<sup>113</sup> R. 7.516c8-d7; Cooper 1134.

<sup>114</sup> "Socrates makes clear his own preference in Book VII, where Achilles' speech to Odysseus, which here in the discussion heads the list of the seven censored passages on Hades, is what a man liberated from the cave speaks of when he remembers his life there (516d5)." Benardete, *Second Sailing*, 66. Professor Deneen gives a neat summary of the debate over the point of whether Kallipolis is, therefore, the cave, and further whether the philosopher ought ever to redescend into it. The discussion is fascinating, but beyond the scope of the present work. Deneen, *Political Theory*, 112-19, 126 note 72.

<sup>115</sup> R. 386c1; Cooper 1022.

Socrates, what Achilles says about the house of Hades is not true in absolute terms.

Professor Deneen comments aptly on this refiguring:

So we discover how even after excising Achilles' famous words in Book 3 of the *Republic* (386c)—the first to be disallowed to the hero—they reappear now in a more positive form in Book 7, not however for their embrace of slavery or fear of death, but for their rejection of honor and a ruling position at any cost.<sup>116</sup>

In fact, the expurgation of Book 3 was precisely an expurgation of the “fear of death.” That was the basis for Socrates' rejection of that passage. Professor Bloom both comes very near the point, and he then misses it altogether when he writes, “The kallipolis is a cave, nay Hades and to be in it is as to be a shade.”<sup>117</sup> Leave out Kallipolis for a moment, and consider the relationship of the cave to Hades. Socrates' cave is exactly not-Hades. Reading 3.386c5-7 and 7.516c8-d7 together yields the result that Achilles merely misapplied his speech. What he said is true, but it is not true about Hades or about the life of the soul after death, rather it is true about life on earth. From this refiguring it cannot be said what life in Hades is like, according to Socrates of the *Republic*, but it can be said what life on earth is like. All one need do is take the Homeric descriptors of Hades and apply them to life on earth. The reading together of those two passages, at very least, suggests that Socrates intends to invert

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<sup>116</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 118.

<sup>117</sup> Allan Bloom, “Response to Hall,” *Political Theory* 5 (1977): 317; quoted in Deneen, *Political Theory*, 113. Professor O'Connor approaches but then also misses the point by not observing Socrates' inversion here, “This is Socrates' second recitation of the lament of Achilles' soul, and it presents us with a puzzle. For now Socrates uses Homer's exactly to undermine the attachment of one particular man to political leadership and to the affairs of the city. . . . Socrates criticized Homer's gloomy hell for disheartening the guardians on whom the city must rely for their courage. But does not Socrates' identification of politics with hell have the same effect, if for different reasons?” O'Connor, “Rewriting the Poets,” 58-59. It is because the new Platonic Hades is perfection for which human longing is appropriate that someone can have courage enough to engage in the Cave of earthly politics.

the Homeric relationship of earth to Hades.<sup>118</sup> Part of his project is to develop a new understanding about what follows earthly death or, perhaps, what follows the cycle of earthly living and dying, namely a perfect existence for perfected souls. Socrates is saying that Achilles, and Homer, got it wrong: it is in life on earth, life in Kallipolis, in which the soul is a shade. After death, there is the possibility for the soul to exist in its full glory. Professor Stanford observes, as quoted above, that the Greeks loved “sunshine.”<sup>119</sup> Speaking metaphorically, the point made by Socrates of the *Republic* in quoting *Odyssey* 11.489-91 in the context of the Allegory of the Cave is to say that the sun shines after death, not before. The relationship of earthly life and after-life has been inverted. One does well to flee earthly life as from a cave prison, in order to attain to the after-life as above ground and in the sunlight.

Besides that inversion, Plato also reduces the Homeric house of Hades. First, one notes that Socrates of the *Phaedo* can refer merely to “Hades.” It has become a place, whereas for Homer, Hades is a god, and the place to which the souls went was the house of Hades, the house of a god.<sup>120</sup> One can observe Socrates of the *Cratylus* moving from concrete at least *toward* concept as he redefines the imprisonment of Hades’ power from forceful restraint to the imprisonment of desire, and desire of the highest order, for virtue. Hades has become a philosopher god who shares the best of his wealth (as Pluto) only after

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<sup>118</sup> Professor Howland suggests otherwise, “Quoted in this context, the words of the shade of Achilles, spoken to Odysseus in Hades (*Odyssey*, 11.489-91) anticipate Socrates’ suggestion at 521c that we are to compare the prisoners in the cave with the dead residents of Hades.” Howland, *Odyssey*, 137, also 49. His reading projects that reading onto the text, rather than abstracting it from the text.

<sup>119</sup> Stanford, *Odyssey*, 398, note on *Od.* 11.488-91.

<sup>120</sup> *Phd.* 83d9 and *Od.* 10.491.

humans “are free of their bodies.”<sup>121</sup> To experience the philosophical Hades, one must be truly free of the body. Those who are still desirous of the body, instead of virtue, are subject to an invincible madness. Socrates of the *Gorgias* refers to “the people in Hades—meaning the unseen,” another diminution of the concrete character of the house of Hades as the dwelling of a god.<sup>122</sup> Later in the same dialogue, Socrates speaks of Hades simply as a place where the dead go.<sup>123</sup> The Athenian Stranger gives Hades even less standing, “the so-called ‘under’ world, which men call ‘Hades’ and similar names.”<sup>124</sup> The Stranger, at once, accepts this mythology as authoritative and raises doubts about its existence or, at least, the human’s ability to know what it is.<sup>125</sup> He uses the mythological names as placeholders for a truth which is only approximately known. The old mythological Hades, who was a god with a

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<sup>121</sup> *Cra.* 402d11-404a7, especially 404a1-7; Cooper 121-22.

<sup>122</sup> *Grg.* 493b4-5; Cooper 836.

<sup>123</sup> *Grg.* 525c6-8.

<sup>124</sup> *L.* 10.904c10-d4.

<sup>125</sup> In this context, the Stranger quotes Odysseus who is in his own house and hall as a stranger, “And in spite of your belief that the gods neglect you, my lad, or rather young man, *This is the sentence of the gods that dwell upon Olympus – to go to join worse souls as you grow worse and better souls as you grow better, and alike in life and all the deaths you suffer to do and be done by according to the standards that birds of a feather naturally apply among themselves.*” *L.* 10.904e4-905a1; Cooper 1561. This is an interesting point in Plato’s reception of Homer, if perhaps not one of central importance. The Cooper text cites this as from *Odyssey* 19.43 when disguised Odysseus and Telemachus, who now knows the stranger’s true identity, have their path suddenly illuminated by a light from no evident source. Telemachus, amazed, declares that the light must come from a god. In fact, the text has told the reader that Athena provided the light. Odysseus replies, “This is the sentence (δίκη) of the gods that dwell upon Olympus” (Cooper 1561). By the divine light, father and son shift arms from the main hall to a place where they will be to hand when the moment arrives for revenge. Odysseus then sends Telemachus to bed while he heads for Penelope’s room where she will politely interrogate him in his assumed identity of beggarly stranger. *Od.* 19.1-105. The import of the quotation seems to be that transformative power is provided and efficacious for all, either for their rescue or punishment, even if they do not recognize the divine source of the experienced effect. The interesting point of the quotation as reception is that the Athenian Stranger quotes Odysseus as stranger. The text seems to imply that Clinias is cast as Telemachus; the Stranger addresses him “my lad, or rather young man (ὦ παῖ καὶ νεανίσκε).” *L.* 10.904e5; Cooper 1561.

house, is diminished, and the new philosophical “Hades,” placeholder for wherever it is that dead souls go, is increased. One sees here that Plato as author is not able, or perhaps willing, to dispense with mythology, but he does insist on transforming it, perhaps by the divine light which not everyone recognizes. The word *Hades* is demythologized, i.e., emptied of its Homeric content, and remythologized, i.e., filled with Platonic content. Thus, demythologization-remythologization, used in conjunction with inversion, is an instrument in the Platonic method.

A passage in the *Republic* supports the proposal that what Platonic characters say about Hades in the dialogues is evidence of this demythologization-remythologization. The truly rich in the city are those who live “a good and rational life (ζωῆς ἀγαθῆς τε καὶ ἔμφορονος).” This life is only possible if the city is governed by the right kind of people.<sup>126</sup> People of the right kind must be compelled to assume guardianship of the city.

[Socrates:] Do you want us to consider now how such people will come to be in our city and how—just as some are said to have gone up from Hades to the gods—we’ll lead them up to the light?

[Glaucou:] Of course I do.

[Socrates:] This isn’t, it seems, a matter of tossing a coin, but of turning a soul from a day that is a kind of night to the true day—the ascent to what is, which we say is true philosophy.<sup>127</sup>

Here “from Hades to the gods” has become mere metaphor, in the second Vichian sense. It is a mythological expression of the philosophical pilgrimage from becoming to being. This is an example of using depiction to represent a rational idea. Homeric mythology, rather

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<sup>126</sup> R. 7.520e4-521a8; Cooper 1138.

<sup>127</sup> R. 7.521-c1-8; Cooper 1138

than describing the reality of the world as it is, has been reduced to the status of literature, its images to be employed by another author metaphorically. “From Hades to the gods” signifies a real transformation, but no longer literal entities. What in Homer are imaginative genera have become rational metaphors. The words remain the same, but the referents are radically different. The use of demythologization-remythologization as an instrument of philosophical truth-telling is consistent in dialogues from the major periods of Plato’s work, including those read proleptically to the *Republic* (*Gorgias*, *Cratylus*, and *Phaedo*) the *Republic* itself and the *Laws*.<sup>128</sup>

This transformation of Hades from the house of a god to a metaphor for philosophy must be kept in mind as attention is turned again to the *Phaedo* and the teaching on the soul. In fact, this metaphorical account of Hades is the only one which makes any sense in the *Phaedo*. The soul being invisible cannot possibly go to a visible place as when Socrates says, “The soul, the invisible part which makes its way to a region of the same kind, noble, pure and invisible, to Hades in fact, to the good and wise god whither, god willing, my soul must soon be going.”<sup>129</sup> Hades is here, by definition, a region “noble, pure and invisible.” Socrates plays on the etymological affinity of Hades (Ἅιδης) and “invisible (ἀϊδής).”<sup>130</sup> This is paradigmatically metaphorical language; Socrates speaks of a mythological place (Hades having become merely a place and no longer a god who has a house which is home to dead souls) to which his soul will go, but both soul and Hades are invisible. That which is not and

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<sup>128</sup> E.g., *Grg.* 493b4-5, *Cra.* 402d11-404a7, especially 404a1-7, *Phd.* 83d9, *R.* 7.521-c1-8, *L.* 10.904e4-905a1.

<sup>129</sup> *Phd.* 80d5-8, Cooper 71.

<sup>130</sup> This is explicit in *Cratylus* 403a5-8.

cannot be apprehended by the senses is spoken of as a thing and, more to the point, as a mythological thing demythologized and philosophically remythologized.

In this remythologized Hades, there are gradations in order to accommodate souls in various conditions. Those in a state of unalloyed purity and invisibility go directly to the gods who are, of course, also pure and invisible. There are other levels of Hades for those still tainted to various degrees by the flesh and its burdens. Socrates of the *Phaedo* describes such a realm within Hades proleptic to the myth of Er:

Because every pleasure and every pain provides, as it were, another nail to rivet the soul to the body and weld them together. It makes the soul corporeal, so that it believes that truth is what the body says it is. As it shares the beliefs and delights of the body, I think it inevitably comes to share its ways and manner of life and is unable ever to reach Hades in a pure state; it is always full of body when it departs, so that it soon falls back into another body and grows with it as if it had been sewn into it. Because of this, it can have no part in the company of the divine, the pure and uniform (μονοειδοῦς συνουσίας).<sup>131</sup>

Professor Gilead comments, “Contrary to Homer’s Hades, the Platonic Hades is an unseen realm, namely intelligible; hence, it cannot be seen by the eyes of flesh and blood, but only by a mental vision through the eyes of the mind.”<sup>132</sup> *Republic* 619b7-620b7 can be read as an elaboration of this passage from the *Phaedo*. In the myth of Er, Plato’s Socrates explains *how* the soul is incorporated anew. In the last pages of the *Phaedo*, Socrates completes his teaching on Hades from earlier in the dialogue, “Those who have purified themselves sufficiently by philosophy live in the future altogether without a body; they make their way

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<sup>131</sup> *Phd.* 83d4-e3; Cooper 73.

<sup>132</sup> Gilead, *Platonic Odyssey*, 87. At one level, Professor Gilead’s interpretation is refreshing insofar as he gives the *Phaedo* a thoroughgoing reading in relation to Homer. The flaw in his interpretation is the kind of implicit Kantianism which has been criticized throughout the present work. He writes, for example, of “the internal Odyssey” and “the journey into Hades within.” *Ibid.*, 88. There is no point on which Kant more clearly disagrees with Plato than the locus for the Forms. For Plato, Forms are extra-mental realities, while for Kant they are innate mental realities.



to even more dwelling places which it is hard to describe clearly, nor do we now have the time to do so.”<sup>133</sup> Souls purified by philosophy go to another place, presumably a non-spatial place perfectly immaterial as are the souls themselves. In the end, Socrates dispenses even with his rationally remythologized Hades. At the same time, he is left only with analogies of material things (e.g., “dwelling places,” literally “houses”) by which to conjure ideas of the perfectly immaterial.

### b. The Soul Immortal

There is probably no inversion in the history of ideas—no paradigm shift, no Copernican revolution—more momentous than this move by Plato’s Socrates to privilege the soul over the body. It is the essential move from the material to the immaterial and from flux to being which made is nothing less than the invention of hope in a way that had never before existed in the Greek world. To make hope possible required the greatest impiety imaginable in Greek religion, namely to claim for humans what previously had been claimed only for the gods, immortality. Of exactly that impiety,<sup>134</sup> Socrates of the *Phaedo*—the condemned Socrates, awaiting execution— was defiantly guilty, “So the soul is deathless? – It is (Ἀθάνατον ἄρα ψυχή. Ἀθάνατον.)”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> *Phd.* 114c2-6; Cooper 97. See a similar passage in *R.* 7.521c1-8.

<sup>134</sup> It is a commonplace of philosophy that Socrates was charged with impiety. What, exactly, was that impiety? The *OCD* opines, “There has been considerable dispute as to the precise significance of this charge.” Guy Cromwell Field, “Socrates” in *OCD*, 998. The argument here is that 1) the boundary between the immortality of the gods and the mortality of humans was absolute and essential to Greek piety, and that, therefore, 2) to propose the mortality of humans was the grossest impiety.

<sup>135</sup> *Phd.*, 105e6-7. See also 106e4-6 and *R.*10.610e10-611a1.

Much of the secondary literature suggests a kind of deafness to the radical challenge which Socrates of the *Phaedo* offers to Homer, even when the author is attentive to Homeric notes in the text. The introduction by Dr. Eva Brann et al. (Eva Brann, et al., *Plato's "Phaedo": With Translation, Introduction and Glossary* (Newburyport: Focus Publishing/ R. Pullins Company, 1998) as well as the commentary by Professor Peter J. Ahrensdorf are examples of this kind of fine scholarship which, in spite of all their virtues, do not discuss the implicit challenge to Homer. For example, Professor Ahrensdorf writes, "Socrates actually encourages us to feel, at least, that we are not simply human beings and therefore that we are not simply mortal." Peter J. Ahrensdorf, *The Death of Socrates and The Life of Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's Phaedo* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 93. As a point of interpretation in the *Phaedo*, his claim is modest enough, but against the Homeric backdrop, the suggestion that men and women "are not simply mortal" is to challenge the one uncrossable boundary—even if it is not actually crossed. In a similar way, Dr. Brann et al. make an excellent point about the soul in Hades, "As Cebeus points out, to argue that the philosopher should be cheerful in the face of death because There [sic], in Hades, he will achieve the separation of soul from body that had been his practice and care throughout life, is to presuppose that the soul will still *be* once this separation has occurred." Brann, "*Phaedo*", 7. For the Homeric heroes, "the separation of soul from body" is the catastrophe awaiting every mortal. In the *Phaedo*, it is aspiration for which one's soul has been long cultivated. The house of Hades is dreaded by every character in Homer, even Hades himself. That Hades might be the "There" which all seek, against the Homeric backdrop, is an idea novel and disturbing. Mr. David Bostock even goes so far as to see descriptions of the soul after death made by Homer and Socrates of the *Phaedo*, respectively, as being much of a piece, "The belief in the reasonably 'full' mental life after death is common, and from Homer onwards (*Odyssey* xi) all those who have pictured it have pictured the souls as having the shape of human bodies, and as doing just the kind of things that ordinary living human beings do." David Bostock, *Plato's "Phaedo"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 28. The Homeric text explicitly says, as has been discussed above, that only Teiresias had "the reasonably 'full' mental life after death." The drinking of blood was essential to the conversations which other souls held with Odysseus. Without it, they would not have been capable of engaging him. The Homeric souls in Hades' house anguish constantly. To the denizens of the A.D. twenty-first century developed nations, that may seem to be "doing just the kind of things that ordinary living human beings do," but it was not ordinary for the Homeric man or *anthropos*. Professor David Gallop seems completely oblivious to the radical departure with respect to Hades as the destination of souls, "The place [Hades] is named after the god whose realm it is. This suits the identification of Forms and gods as the soul's destination." David Gallop, *Plato: "Phaedo": Translated with Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 143, note on 80d8-81a3. In the *Phaedo*, the Forms are what most truly exist, while in Homer, the house of Hades is where dwell that which least exists. The inversion is absolute. In a similar way, Professor Paul Stern manages to discuss the new teaching on the soul by Socrates of the *Phaedo* without reference to the Homeric tradition against which it is taught. Paul Stern, *Socratic Rationalism and Political Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's "Phaedo"* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 49-90. As an example of what results from this defect, one observation by Professor Stern serves well. He begins his chapter on "The Proofs of Immortality" by stating, "Among the commentators on the *Phaedo* there is near unanimity that the first three proofs of the immortality of the soul are defective. This judgment reflects the view of the participants in the dialogue themselves who call attention to this inadequacy. The question that must be addressed is why should Plato choose to have Socrates spend a significant portion of his waning moments making bad arguments?" *Ibid.*, 49. Set aside the question of whether there might be any historical content in the dialogue (which would nullify a fundamental premise of the question, namely that Plato chose to have Socrates spend "his waning moments" thus), and consider the "inadequacy" in its historical context. Whether the historical Socrates or the literary Socrates, one sees in the *Phaedo* the invention of the most enduringly influential ideas in the history of the world. Seen against the Homeric backdrop, even "defective" proofs are astonishing and must have been shocking to many in the original audience. Given "the second sailing" motif of the dialogue (*Phd.* 99c9-d1), one might as well call the voyage of Columbus to the New World defective because he failed to reach the East Indies. In terms of paradigm shifts, as a parallel mistake one might discuss the inadequacy of the proposal of Copernicus that the earth revolves around the sun without first considering the prevailing geocentric view of the world. In the present work, the question of "Body and

There is disagreement over how revolutionary is the claim made by Plato's Socrates. Professor Burnet completely separates the role of Socrates from that of Plato, a distinction commonly made and impossible to justify on the basis of historical scholarship. After acknowledging the role of the Pythagoreans in grasping "the conception of Soul as something more than the mere ghost of popular belief," he goes on to assign credit respectively to Socrates and Plato, "Sokrates had insisted on the reality and eternity of the soul; but Plato was the first to attempt a scientific justification of this belief."<sup>136</sup> Professor Kahn, in a sense, argues both ways, also giving too much credit to what was "in the air":

Socrates' position in the history of philosophy is secure enough without attributing to him a revolutionary new concept which he might have got directly from Heraclitus, but which was probably 'in the air' in fifth-century thought and usage. The concept was a new one, and only after Plato did it come to dominate the earlier view of the psyche as essentially biological, emotional, or non-rational.<sup>137</sup>

Professor Kahn criticizes Professor Burnet's "special pleading" for the role of Socrates.<sup>138</sup>

The kind of readings—and disagreement—exemplified by Professors Burnet and Kahn is analysis external to the text. They consider what one finds in the Platonic text and compare that to what transpired antecedently or concurrently in contemporary Greek culture. Professor Leo Strauss, by contrast, criticizes action internal to the text. He operates as a kind of *ex post facto* counsel for the defense in the trial of Socrates. For example, he writes, "It is

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Soul" is only one of several. The discussion here is, for that reason, less than complete. The hope is that once this methodological necessity is made clear, it might evoke a thorough adumbration of the *Phaedo* with the principle of radical transformation from the Homeric view as a primary hermeneutical tool.

<sup>136</sup> Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 333.

<sup>137</sup> Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 127

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 311n112.

the greatest proof of Socrates' piety that he limited himself to the study of human things."<sup>139</sup> Thereby, he misses the impiety of Socrates because he does not attend to the Socratic insistence that what is most essentially human is the soul and that the human soul is immortal: Immortality, according to Greek piety, belonged to the gods alone. The most egregious impiety of Socrates was the imputation to man a quality which was exclusively divine. In fact, Professor Strauss renders irrelevant the whole question of piety in relation to Socrates, as understood by Socrates, when, for example, he very aptly observes with respect to Socrates of the *Republic*, "Piety is replaced by philosophy."<sup>140</sup> That is surely as right a judgement as one could make about Plato's Socrates, so why continue to defend his piety? What must be obvious is that according to traditional Athenian piety, the replacement of piety by anything is tautologically impious. To state the obvious, Socrates was not judged according to the standards of philosophers in the twentieth century A.D.

How does one account for the revolutionary impiety pronounced by Plato's Socrates, an impiety which became the basis for a new piety?

As was noted in the discussion of Achilles' account of perdurance in Hades' house, Professor C. S. Lewis observes that "an inch beneath the bright surface of Homer we find not melancholy but despair. 'Hell' was the word Goethe used of it. It is all the more terrible because the poet takes it all for granted, makes no complaint." He comments further that the Homeric poems' "greatness lies in the human and personal tragedy built up against the tragedy of meaningless flux. . . . Only the style—the unwearying, unmoved, angelic speech

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<sup>139</sup> Strauss, *City and Man*, 20.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

of Homer—makes it endurable.”<sup>141</sup> How it seemed to Homer’s audience is subject only to speculation, but that it seemed to Plato as Professor Lewis describes is more, far more, than likely. To review the historical circumstance once more: there was the defeat of Athens by Sparta, the condemnation of Socrates, the growing dependency of Athens upon mercenaries and the looming threat of Macedonia. What was flux, whether biological or political, other than the physical expression of despair? The body is, according to Socrates of the *Phaedo*, but a jailhouse from which the soul must be freed.<sup>142</sup> Part of the *Phaedo*’s message is that when one says “Socrates died,” that really means “the least part of him died in order that the best part of him could continue to live and live more fully.” What to his disciples seemed an occasion of despair was, in truest truth, an occasion for hope. The teaching of Plato’s Socrates on the soul is a release from despair and the invention of philosophical hope. On the basis of rational argument (i.e., without resorting to revelation), Plato’s Socrates offers a vision of soul after death which is the fulfillment of the highest and best human aspirations. One cannot call the soul’s immortality “after-life,” for it is far more accurately “after-death.” What Homer taught about Hades’ house is true of existence on earth. Only after the release from earthly and, therefore, material limitations can the soul become all that it can be.

What, then, is the soul according to Plato’s Socrates?

The soul which is “divine, pure and uniform” apprehends the invisible through “the reasoning power of the mind” (τῷ τῆς διανοίας λογισμῷ).<sup>143</sup> The soul, “resembling the

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<sup>141</sup> Lewis, *Preface*, 29, 30.

<sup>142</sup> *Phd.* 81d9-e3, 82d9-e7.

<sup>143</sup> *Phd.* 79a3; Cooper 69.

divine” rules the body “resembling the mortal” by nature’s command.<sup>144</sup> In a brief passage which provides much evidence for his defiant impiety, Socrates then provides key descriptors for the soul and body:

The soul is most like the divine (θείω), deathless (ἀθάνατω), intelligible (νοητῶ), uniform (μονοειδεῖ), indissoluble (ἀδιαλύτῳ), always the same as itself (ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως), whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble and never consistently the same.<sup>145</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting addition here is “intelligible.” That, presumably, is what is apprehended by “the reasoning power of the mind.” The soul is intelligible and apprehends the intelligible, while the body is sensible (extrapolating a broader category from visibility) and apprehends the sensible. After nearly twenty-four hundred years of reading Plato, these claims for the soul are familiar even if they are not always accepted. When Plato wrote these ideas and, if Plato is accurately representing the teaching of the historical Socrates, when Socrates taught these ideas, they were unfamiliar even to those who accepted them. The basic claim of Plato’s Socrates is that there are entities having existence which are not subject to sensation. To Homer and, indeed, in the Greek world until Socrates, such a notion would have been incomprehensible.

One can get some idea of how this teaching must have affected fifth and fourth century B.C. Athenian listeners by again considering modern materialists compared to ancient materialists. The modern materialist understands the teaching that there are immaterial beings, but he rejects the teaching. The ancient materialist simply could not understand what was being said. On the face of it, the following sentence was nonsense: the

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<sup>144</sup> *Phd.* 79e9-80a5; Cooper 70.

<sup>145</sup> *Phd.* 80b1-3; Cooper 70.

invisible exists. Souls existed, but to the degree that they were difficult to see indicated their low level of existence. If a soul was like “a fleeting dream,” the dream however faint and difficult to remember was precisely visible. The gods could be seen, sometimes in their plain identities, other times cloaked in the identity of some other being.<sup>146</sup> To say that the invisible not only exists but also rules that which is visible would have seemed to the ancient materialist like saying, “that which does not exist rules that which does exist.” Xenophanes criticized the folly of his predecessors for thinking a colored cloud to be a goddess, but that does not mean he was ready to understand that an intelligible and immaterial goddess ruled the colored cloud.

It is interesting how little Socrates of the *Phaedo* has to say about the gods. Of that little, perhaps the most interesting is when Socrates says, “All would agree, that the god, and the Form of life itself, and anything that is deathless, are never destroyed.”<sup>147</sup> This is already an extraordinary claim which Plato knew not to be the case. Even if one supposes with Professor Burnet that he may not have known the work of Democritus,<sup>148</sup> he did know Protagoras who, on the account given by Socrates of the *Theaetetus*, could not have agreed at very least because the mortal could not measure immortality.<sup>149</sup> Explicitly, Socrates says

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<sup>146</sup> There are many examples of humans seeing gods in both Homeric poems, of which the following two instances are only illustrative. In the *Iliad*, Thetis appears in her own identity to Achilles. *Il.* 19.6-39. In the *Odyssey*, Athena appears first as a shepherd and then as a woman to Odysseus. *Od.* 13. 221-24,287-90.

<sup>147</sup> *Phd.* 106d5-7, Cooper 91. The translator, Professor G. M. A. Grube, shows his own prejudices here when he leaves “god” in lower case, but capitalizes “Form.” More fitting would be to choose a case, upper or lower, and use it for both words.

<sup>148</sup> Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 193.

<sup>149</sup> If all experience is relative, then even if the deathless existed, it would be impossible for a human to know it, and if perchance he did know it, he could not accurately tell anyone else about it. This is not to say anything at all about the actual teaching of Protagoras, rather as it is represented by Socrates of the *Theaetetus*,

that the immortal beings (soul, the god and form of life) are indestructible. To which his interlocutor, Cebes, says something even more amazing, “All men would agree,”—which was not then and is not today and never has been the case—“by Zeus, to that, and the gods, I imagine, even more so.”<sup>150</sup> There seems, then, to be “the god” apart from “the gods.” The gods would agree that the god is immortal and indestructible, but then what is the status of “the gods” in relation to “the god?” In five lines, Plato has had his characters conjure both universal human and divine choruses who assent to the opinions of Socrates. Which entity ranks highest: the human chorus, the divine chorus or Socrates? It is the philosopher, Socrates, who has become the ultimate authority here. There is also more of the demythologization-remythologization enterprise already seen in relation to Hades. Whether “the god,” “the gods,” or “the divine,” such beings are, Socrates teaches by implication, “deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself,” since those are the qualities of the soul, and the soul is like the divine. Plato does not let go of the old theological language, but “god” has become a placeholder for “the highest intelligible

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for example, “Shall we listen to Protagoras, and say it is cold for the one who feels cold, and for the other, not cold?” *Tht.* 152b7-8; Cooper 169.

<sup>150</sup> *Phd.* 106d8-9; Cooper 91. For the sake of argument, put the case that the statement by Socrates and the affirmation by Cebes is to be read as follows, “Is this not to be understood in the sense that if God, the Form of Life, and anything that is deathless exist, then they can never be destroyed? And it is this that all would agree upon?” Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, February 22, 2009. As a hypothetical, perhaps all can agree to Socrates’ affirmation. If such a being exists, then it might be definitionally deathless. One might argue, as an alternative possibility, that positing the existence of such a being, it could have given the world its life-principle, but later expired. Like a cosmic mother of being, the “god” gave its life while giving birth to the world. When the statement is made as a statement of fact—that such a being exists and, therefore, is deathless, then it is patently not affirmed by all. As is argued above, Democritus would not agree that there is such a “Form of Life.” In addition, Socrates does not even argue for this principle dialectically which, as is established in I.ii, is his mode for the apprehension of truth. Instead, he uses a cheap debating trick—one worthy of a superb sophist. At this point, he replaces dialectic with rhetoric. He asserts a revolutionary principle as if it were a commonplace.



being.” In terms of the gods in the authoritative mythologies of Homer and Hesiod, Plato’s Socrates is an atheist. He does not believe such gods exist, i.e., material, sensible gods. The Homeric gods had material existence. On the account given by Socrates of the *Phaedo*, if such beings exist and behave in the manner described by Homer, then they are not truly gods, i.e., deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself. He empties the old words of their content, and loads new understanding into those words. In the second half of the twentieth century A.D., that enterprise would come to be known as “deconstruction-reconstruction.”

“All men would agree,” opines Socrates of the *Phaedo* (106d5-7), but did even Plato entirely agree? Plato represents his own version of the materialist approach in the elaborate mythology of the *Timaeus*, a cosmology explained, significantly, to Socrates rather than by him. The materialist understanding of the soul is, thus, removed somewhat from Plato and even more from Socrates, not unlike the way that Socrates of the *Symposium* uses Diotima. With those qualifications, it is noteworthy that Plato does create an elaborate and eloquent materialist explanation even of the soul. One passage is sufficient to illustrate this point:

Also, at this stage souls do not have a ruling orbit taking the lead. And so when certain sensations come in from outside and attack them, they sweep the soul’s entire vessel along with them. It is then that these revolutions, however much in control they seem to be, are actually under their control. All these disturbances are no doubt the reason why even today and not only at the beginning, whenever a soul is bound within a mortal body, it at first lacks intelligence.<sup>151</sup>

One could argue that there is nothing in the account of *Timaeus* that necessitates the soul’s material existence, and that even if the soul were material, intelligence need not be material. Intelligence could be the immaterial element of the material soul. That would be to argue

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<sup>151</sup> *Ti.* 44a4-b1; Cooper 1247.

that not only can one distinguish body and soul, but also soul and intelligence. Even if one grants such an argument, the problem remains—and it seems to be a problem which much occupied Plato both in the *Timaeus* and the *Theaetetus*—of how it happens that the immaterial soul is affected, and affected powerfully, by material beings. A difficulty for the students of Plato twenty-four hundred years later is that *Timaeus* and *Theaetetus* were written after the *Republic*. There is the possibility that Plato was not entirely convinced by the arguments made by his Socrates in dialogues proleptic to and including the *Republic*, or, at least, that the Socratic account of the immaterial soul was not sufficiently explanatory of human experience. Even in the last pages of the *Republic*, the myth of Er has souls browsing through “lives” as if they were the suits of dead gentlemen donated to the parish thrift shop.<sup>152</sup> The dichotomy there is not body and soul, rather life and soul, but there is no less a dichotomy. That the soul could exist apart from some given body, and thus necessarily the twoness of body *and* soul, and that the soul was primary in relation to the body seem to have been unshakeable Platonic principles, but how the soul and body were related seems unanswered in any final way. Once again, it has been seen that even though Plato abandoned poetry proper, he continued to use mythology and poetic language as media for the exploration of how the body and soul are interrelated.

#### 4. Aristotle's Last Word

When one turns to Aristotle's teaching on the soul, one of the most striking features is how diminished Homer is. When Aristotle does cite Homer on soul, he shows no interest

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<sup>152</sup> R. 10.619e6-d5.

in mythology, in general. In *De anima* 1, Aristotle quotes Democritus quoting and commenting upon Homer, “Democritus roundly identifies soul and mind, for he identifies what appears with what is true—that is why he commends Homer for the phrase ‘Hector lay with thought distraught’; he does not employ mind as a special faculty dealing with truth, but identifies soul and thought.”<sup>153</sup> Though Democritus is never mentioned in the Platonic corpus, Aristotle’s identification of him with Homer is very like the identification of Heraclitus and others with Homer by Socrates of the *Theaetetus*. Notwithstanding Aristotle’s own strong materialist commitment, he understood well his own radical departure from Homer:

There are two distinctive peculiarities by reference to which we characterize the soul—(1) local movement and (2) thinking, understanding, and perceiving. Thinking and understanding are regarded as akin to a form of perceiving; for in the one as well as the other the soul discriminates and is cognizant of something which is. Indeed the ancients go so far as to identify thinking and perceiving; e.g. Empedocles says ‘For ‘tis in respect of what is present that man’s wit is increased’ . . . and Homer’s phrase “For suchlike is man’s mind” means the same. They all look upon thinking as a bodily process like perceiving.<sup>154</sup>

His citation of Homer is brief and entirely unmythological. Homer and Empedocles are treated as equally authoritative thinkers. This illustrates well how Aristotle seems to have been less subject to the seduction of myth and less convinced of its usefulness than was Plato. The soul can be understood in rational terms. This is a shift to be noted when pursuing various points of comparison between Plato and Aristotle: for the younger philosopher, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* may in some sense be considered history and may always be read as literature, but it is no longer an acceptable paradigm for doing metaphysics. What makes the

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<sup>153</sup> *De an.* 1.404a27-404b1; Barnes 1. 644.

<sup>154</sup> *De an.* 3.427a18-26; Barnes, 1.679; quoting *Od.* 18.136.

Aristotelian departure all the more interesting is that though he rejects Homer as metaphysics, he understands how Homer had been the teacher of metaphysics, as has been argued in the previous chapter. Someone might suggest that only the lecture notes of Aristotle are extant and that his public teaching is altogether lost. While that is true, at the same time, it is striking how absent in his lecture notes are discussions of the metaphysical character of Homeric poetry and of poetry altogether in the way that it is common in Plato. Aristotle's statements in *Poetics* 1451b5-11 and *Metaphysics* 12.1074b1-14 are the exceptions which prove the rule. In those two passages, he explicitly discusses rational philosophy as the successor to poetic depiction. He *analyzes* mythological poetry; he does not spin rational myths. The logic of his argument would suggest that retelling myths was what philosophic people—people who were asking the questions of causality and being—engaged in because they did not have the rational methods of philosophy to consider those questions abstractly. It could be said, then, that Plato persuaded his philosophical successors—beginning with Aristotle—to subscribe to a view of which he was himself never entirely convinced, namely that poetry should be excluded from the house of philosophy. Plato repudiated Homer only after he had assimilated and appropriated him, but it was only his repudiation which held.

iii Banquet and Being:  
How Eating Becomes Philosophic Medium and Message

I recognize that that is good eating, said the Good Fairy, though myself I have no body that I could feed. As a feat of eating it is first-rate.

—Flann O’Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds*

**1. Food and Philosophy**

Eating is necessary to animal existence. Banqueting, however, is an expression of explicitly human life. The term *human being* implies a hierarchy of conditions or estates of being from mere animal existence to what Dr. Leon R. Kass calls “the perfection of our nature.”<sup>1</sup> In Homer, one finds not only much banqueting as well as more ordinary eating. Vico observes, “Now the theological poets in their extremely crude physics saw in man these two metaphysical ideas: being and subsisting.”<sup>2</sup> This chapter will investigate the relationship between eating and being and, more specifically, it will investigate eating as expression of ontological being. Not only does Homer describe often and in detail the eating of the heroes, but also that they performed important parts of preparing and serving food. Vico interprets this fact as priestly sacrifice in daily life:

So Achilles on the occasion of the dinner he gives Priam cuts up the lamb and Patroclus [sic] then roasts it, prepares the table and puts bread upon it in the serving baskets; for the heroes celebrated no banquets which were not sacrificial in nature, with themselves in the character of priest. . . . Agamemnon himself, accordingly kills

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Kass makes use of Homer in his discussions: Kass, *Hungry Soul*, e.g., on hospitality and cannibalism, *ibid.*, 102-03, 110-14; on the lotus-eaters and the wrong kind of hospitality, 114-17; the motive to create bread, 120-22.

<sup>2</sup> *NS* 693.

the two lambs whose sacrifice consecrates the terms of war with Priam. Such was the magnificence at that time of an idea we would associate with a butcher!<sup>3</sup>

Even in Vico's day, reflecting philosophically on eating was not easy. What had been priestly rituals had become mere economic enterprises, the economy intervening between food and subsistence on one level and between food and access to the divine on another level. Thus the butcher shop, as an economic entity, intervenes between eating and metaphysics, whether the metaphysics of existence (subsistence) or the metaphysics of divinity. A quarter of a millennium later, the fast-food drive-thru, as Dr. Kass demonstrates at length, has become determinative of what eating is—at least in the U.S.A., “Fast food, TV dinners, and eating on the run to save time, meet our need for ‘fuel,’ and provide close to instant gratification. But for these very reasons, they diminish opportunities for conversation, communion, and aesthetic discernment; they thus shortchange other hungers of the soul.”<sup>4</sup> Eating and all that eating encompasses have become compressed into this one economic model (i.e., the fast-food drive-thru) to the point that even obvious issues related to eating, even what might be called the purpose of eating (i.e., diet and nutrition) have to be externally re-introduced into the economic model. The introduction of salads into the fast-food menu exemplifies this external nutritional addition to the core menu of hamburgers on white bread rolls accompanied by French fries cooked in trans-fat with catsup and other condiments as the only vegetables in sight (or taste).

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<sup>3</sup> *NS* 801. Of course, Patroclus is dead when Achilles feasts Priam. Messrs. Bergin and Fisch note that Patroclus assists in *Il.* 9.199-224, and that Achilles' hospitality to Priam occurs in *Il.* 24.601-42. In effect, Vico has conflated those two passages.

<sup>4</sup> Kass, *Hungry Soul*, 229.

The typical reader in the industrialized, computerized twenty-first century A.D. is so insulated by the economic model of eating that walking out of one's tent or house to a pen, there to lay hands on an animal, to kill, butcher, prepare, cook, and eat it is simply unimaginable. To the Homeric hero a truth was obvious at every meal, a truth, which Dr. Kass observes, has largely been lost, "If the near boundary of the human is the animal, the far boundary is the divine."<sup>5</sup> Removed from both the animal eaten and the divine to be worshipped in eating, the post-modern denizen is strangely alone with his food. If he finds little access to the physical acts behind the plastic-wrapped slabs in the meat department of the grocery store, reflecting philosophically on those acts poses challenges of another order. Such are but a few of the cultural obstacles to a philosophical reading of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

## 2. Eating in Homer

Even as the Achaeans and Trojans were ranged against each other during the day for battle, they feasted nightly, only the ramparts of Ilion separating them.<sup>6</sup> The combatants were familiar with the anatomical intricacies of their slaughter animals. Butchering and preparing such animals for the evening feast is work faithfully recorded in the *Iliad*:

When prayers were said and grains of barley strewn,  
they held the bullock for the knife and flayed him,  
cutting out joints and wrapping these in fat,  
two layers folded, with raw strips of flesh,

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<sup>5</sup> Kass, *Hungry Soul*, xvi.

<sup>6</sup> *Il.* 7.476-77.

to burn on cloven faggots, and the tripe  
 they spitted to be broiled. When every joint  
 had been consumed, and kidneys had been tasted,  
 they sliced the chins and quarters for the spits,  
 roasted them evenly and drew them off.<sup>7</sup>

In this instance and, perhaps, in every instance—as Vico observes—the work of abattoir and kitchen as well as the pleasure of table were also ritual sacrifice.<sup>8</sup> It might be better said that ritual sacrifice prepared for the evening feast which, in turn, expressed something important of the divine-human relationship as well as something about the character of human society. The offering of sacrifice was obligatory by humans, but the acceptance of them was solely at the discretion of the gods. That for which the Achaeans offered sacrifice, Zeus refused them, “But Zeus would not accomplish these desires./ He took the ox, but added woe on woe.”<sup>9</sup> Though the gods would side with one army or one hero against another, still the heroes even as enemies possessed a solidarity over against the gods. Heroes were obliged to give the gods what the gods wanted without being able to know for sure 1) what the gods did actually want and 2) if the gods would grant the heroes’s prayers even if they did fulfill divine expectation. It could not be otherwise since two opposing heroes or heroic armies could

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<sup>7</sup> *Il.* 2.422-29; Fitzgerald 49.

<sup>8</sup> Following the declaration of banqueting by Achaeans and Trojans alike in *Il.* 7.476-77, the text continues, presumably implying that the reaction was experienced on both sides of the battle line, “But all night long/ Zeus the Profound made thunder overhead/ while pondering calamities to come, and men turned pale with fear. Tilting their cups/ they poured out wine upon the ground; no man/ would drink again till he had spilt his cup/ to heaven’s overlord.” *Il.* 7.478-81; Fitzgerald 177.

<sup>9</sup> *Il.* 2.419-20; Fitzgerald 49.



fulfill perfectly the divine expectation, but only one side could prevail in battle.<sup>10</sup> The gods, and ultimately Zeus, must choose. Athena, in the guise of Mentor, states clearly the divine prerogative, “A god could save the man simply by wishing it.”<sup>11</sup> Perhaps some of the camaraderie among enemies arose from this shared sense that their fates were contingent upon the divine will.<sup>12</sup>

That eating in the Homeric texts had a theological character or, at least, a theological aspect, is clear. Eating was also philosophical as living metaphysical depiction. There is, first, the ontology of existence inherent in the question of subsisting, but there are also philosophical issues depicted in eating, principal of which are identity and knowing. II.iv will analyze the shield of Hephaestus in detail (*Iliad* 18.468-608) as expressive of war and peace as alternative paradigms of being. Let it simply be noted here, that the first image chased onto the shield and described in the text is of “weddings” and “wedding feasts.”<sup>13</sup> Later there are images of preparing plough land for sowing and then of the harvest, followed

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<sup>10</sup> One recalls Lincoln’s observation in the “Second Inaugural Address” about the two sides of the American Civil War, “Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes his aid against the other. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully.” Lincoln, *Speeches*, 410.

<sup>11</sup> *Od.* 3.231; Fitzgerald 48. One recalls also the opening lines of the *Iliad* in which human actions are understood as a function of the divine choice, “Anger be now your song, immortal one, Akhilleus’ anger, doomed and ruinous,/ that caused the Akhaians loss on bitter loss/ and crowded brave souls into the undergloom,/ leaving so many dead men—carrion/ for dogs and birds; and the will of Zeus was done (Διὸς δ’ ἐτελείετο βουλή).” *Il.* 1.1-5; Fitzgerald 11.

<sup>12</sup> The solidarity of heroic men is also the ineluctability of death as Athena observes, in the guise of Mentor, “Though as for death, of course all men must suffer it:/ the gods may love a man, but they can’t help him/ when cold death comes to lay him on his bier” *Od.* 3.236-39; Fitzgerald 48. As has been observed in II.ii.2.a, even Zeus realizes he cannot intervene to prevent the death of his son, Sarpedon. *Il.* 16.439-61.

<sup>13</sup> *Il.* 18.490-92; Fitzgerald 451.

by scenes from a vineyard and then herds of cattle, and a valley of sheepfolds. Eating and the means to eating all inhered in the bow-legged god's vision of peace.<sup>14</sup>

The themes of identity and knowing are present in the solemn meal shared by Priam and Achilles (24.643-58) when the old king has come as a suppliant to beg his son's body. As soon as Achilles has granted Priam's request, he says, "Now let us think of supper."<sup>15</sup> Anticipating a refusal on the grounds of doing something unfitting and, perhaps, impious in the circumstances, Achilles cites the precedent of Niobe in similar extremity. The precedent was an extraordinary one to cite because there was no reassurance in it whatsoever. Niobe, mother of twelve, had boasted she was equal to Leto, mother of two. It was unfortunate for Niobe, however, that the two offspring of Leto were Artemis and Apollo who promptly avenged the insult to their mother by killing the twelve children of Niobe. Even in her profound sorrow, Niobe ate a meal, but it was her last act before being turned to stone.<sup>16</sup> Implicit in Achilles' recounting of the story is the impending doom of Priam and, one can add, of Achilles himself. For that moment, the wrath of Achilles is spent. Priam has risked everything for the sake of piety with respect to the dead and a father's love for his son. The temptation for the twenty-first century A.D. reader is to think that the story moves from a sublime moment to the mundane (i.e., they are hungry, so they must eat), but far more than that is in play. First, in every meal, the will of the gods is impending. This is the first scene

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<sup>14</sup> *Il.* 18.541-89; Fitzgerald 452-53.

<sup>15</sup> *Il.* 24.599-601; Fitzgerald 587.

<sup>16</sup> *Il.* 24.602-20. See Herbert Jennings Rose, "Niobe," in *OCD*, 735-36.

to which Vico refers in *New Science* 801 quoted above. Second, eating is a means of knowing true identity. Until now, Priam and Achilles have known each other as enemies. In the meal they are about to share, they shall know each other in a new way. Achilles, then, seizes a white lamb, kills it and gives it to his men to prepare. Lamb and bread constitute their supper. When all had eaten and drunk their fill, Homer renders a recognition scene in which Priam and Achilles wonder at each other's godlike character:

When thirst and appetite were turned away,  
Priam, the heir of Dardanos, gazed long  
in wonder at Akhilleus' form and scale—  
so like the gods in aspect. And Akhilleus  
in his turn gazed in wonder upon Priam,  
royal in visage as in speech. Both men  
in contemplation found rest for their eyes.<sup>17</sup>

The implication is that thirst and hunger prevented their eyes from seeing each other as they most truly were. Eating together, giving and receiving hospitality transformed their ability to perceive each other. Homer uses “wonder” (θαυμάζω) with respect to the regard of each for the other. Not long before, they had merely been noble enemies. Eating together had made possible the disclosure of their truest being. In the place of explicit worship of the gods one finds in this passage the mutual reverence of the divine nature in these two heroic men. Twice in the passage, Priam is called by his patronymic, “Son of Dardanus.” Dardanus, in turn, was a son of Zeus. Priam is also called “image of god (θεοειδής).”<sup>18</sup> Priam calls

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<sup>17</sup> *Il.* 24.628-33; Fitzgerald 588.

<sup>18</sup> *Il.* 24.629, 631, 634.

Achilles, “nourished by Zeus (διοτρεφές).”<sup>19</sup> Those designations are, of course, formulaic, but that does not diminish their significance. In Homer, terms are formulaic because they are significant. With respect to formulaic repetition, Professor C. S. Lewis argues that “the actual operation of the Homeric diction” contributes to the sense of permanence about the various beings of the world, and thus contributes to the believability of the poems,<sup>20</sup> the sense of what Professor Most calls “conforming veridically to a real past or present state of affairs.”<sup>21</sup> Once the question of being as existence has been satisfied through eating which is as theological as it is nutritional, the question of being as identity can be addressed. To repeat the thesis of this work, Homer was a philosopher not of concepts but of imaginative genera which express depictively what would, centuries later, be understood as rational categories.

The meal offered to the wandering stranger is also related to the question of identity. Eating is prelude to conversation as ritualized as the butchering of the beasts served at table. The host asks his guest, “Who are you?” The guest finally must disclose his identity. If the answer is given too readily, the ready openness may be taken as possible deceit or, at least,

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<sup>19</sup> *Il.* 24.635.

<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *Preface*, 21-22.

<sup>21</sup> Most, “Poetics,” 343. Professor Matthew Clark surveys various scholarly viewpoints with respect to Homeric formulae, especially those which play down the significance of the formulae. Matthew Clark, “Formulas, Metre and Type-scenes,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, ed. Robert Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 123-30. He concludes with a revision of an older stance nearer to the views of Professor Lewis, quoted above, “More, recently, some scholars have argued that a proper understanding of oral poetics does not detract from the meaning of the poems but in fact adds to it. . . . The meaning of a word may refer beyond its context to the rest of the poem or even to the rest of the epic tradition.” *Ibid.*, 130. He might have added that a formulaic expression may even point to truth. In *Il.*i.5, it has also been argued that Homeric formulae express in poetic logic what Platonic Forms express in rational logic.

as a thesis to be tested. For example, when Nestor has asked Telemachus, “Who are you?” Telemachus answers immediately.<sup>22</sup> Nestor rehearses the signs which testify to the claim made by Telemachus. He does not say that he doubts Telemachus to be the son of Odysseus, but he does review the evidence to hold that the claim is true.<sup>23</sup> He also points out that the claim will be tested severely, as was that of Orestes to be the son of Agamemnon.<sup>24</sup> The forthrightness of Telemachus in claiming to be Odysseus’s son stands in sharp contrast to Odysseus’s own reticence to disclose his identity. In the hall of Menelaus, the ritual unfolds differently as the witchlike Helen both asks and answers the question about Telemachus. Menelaus, like Nestor, reviews the evidence for believing that in fact the guest in his hall is the son of Odysseus. Just as later Alcinous will guess at Odysseus’s identity seeing him weep at hearing the recitation of his own deeds, Menelaus guesses at his guest’s identity when seeing him weep at hearing the recitation of his father’s deeds.<sup>25</sup> Weeping as a sign of someone’s identity is not unlike the blush found in Platonic works as a sign of philosophical recognition.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Od.* 3.69-85.

<sup>23</sup> *Od.* 3.120-25.

<sup>24</sup> *Od.* 3.195-200.

<sup>25</sup> *Od.* 4.138-15; 8.83-94, 521-35.

<sup>26</sup> Socrates of the *Lysis* explicitly associates the blush of Lysis with philosophical recognition, “‘Do you think, Menexenus,’ I said, ‘that we may have been going about our inquiry in entirely the wrong way?’ ‘I certainly think so, Socrates,’ said Lysis. And as he said it, he blushed. I had the impression that the words just slipped out unintentionally because he was paying such close attention to what was being said, which he clearly had been all along. Well. I wanted to give Menexenus a break anyway, and I was pleased with the other’s fondness for philosophy, so I turned the conversation towards Lysis.” *Ly.* 213d1-e1; Cooper 697. Plato makes use of the blush throughout the first scene of this dialogue, e.g., *Ly.* 204b5-d8. Professor Benardete

There are other variants of the feast followed by the ritual of disclosing identity. Telemachus welcomes Athena in the guise of Mentor. He plays the host, but then Athena skillfully turns the ritual toward discovering who Telemachus is.<sup>27</sup> Part of the disclosure of Polyphemus's barbarism is that though he asks the host's question, "Who are you?", he refuses to perform his pious duty as host.<sup>28</sup> Two examples of the feast as prelude to disclosure of identity will be examined in detail: first, Alcinous's and then Eumaeus's hospitality to Odysseus.

When Alcinous receives Odysseus into his hall in Book 6, the tension of the stranger's identity is stretched until Book 9. Already in Book 7, Alcinous has not stinted his hospitality. He has every right to ask his guest's identity.<sup>29</sup> Prior to posing the ritual question, Alcinous has already demonstrated that he recognizes kingly aspect in his guest; for example, he ordered his favorite son to give up his chair, in effect the throne of the heir apparent, to the mysterious wanderer.<sup>30</sup> Odysseus spars verbally with his royal host. The modern reader, inured by a hundred novels and operas on which identity turns,<sup>31</sup> is tempted

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notes, in addition, the following occurrences of the blush "exclusively in Socratically narrated dialogues": *Riv.* 134b, *Chrm.* 158c5, *Euthd.* 273d6, 297a8, *Prt.* 312a2, *R.* 350d3. Benardete, *Argument*, 205, 229 note 8. He comments on instances of Plato's use of the blush in the *Lysis* and *Charmides*, "Both episodes seem to point to the issue of self-knowledge and its impossibility." *Ibid.*, 205-06.

<sup>27</sup> *Od.* 1.23-43, 158-212.

<sup>28</sup> *Od.* 9.253-76.

<sup>29</sup> *Od.* 7.237-39.

<sup>30</sup> *Od.* 7.167-71.

<sup>31</sup> Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and Johann Strauss, II's *Die Fledermaus* are examples in each genre in which disclosure of true identity plays an important part in the denouement.

to understand this encounter as a kind of parlor game. In one sense, it was that, but a parlor game on which life and even the destiny of a kingdom might hang, as has been observed above. Now, Odysseus, having escaped the temptations of Calypso and Circe, is offered the daughter of Alcinous and Arete his wife, and with her, perhaps, that throne which, out of courtesy, he had been given for the period of a meal. The ritual of disclosure is far more extensive and complex here than has been seen in other contexts. There is a mid-day banquet followed by the singing of an heroic tale of Odysseus before the gates of Troy by the blind bard, Demodocus, in turn followed by games of track and field which were rounded out by a comic tale sung by the minstrel. There was bathing prior to the evening feast, followed again by the singing of a heroic tale, again the one which matters to this story, the role of Odysseus in the fall of Troy.

All through the day, Odysseus has given signs of his identity: his weeping, his athletic prowess, his oratorical skill, his defiant lordliness to all comers and at the same time his unending courtesy toward his hosts. These recognitions occur at two levels in parallel. Alcinous in the story accumulates the signs of his guest's identity. The original hearers of the *Odyssey*, also after a banquet, accumulate the signs as well.

In Book 8, after the evening feast and the rhapsode's song, finally and with great ceremony, Alcinous demands to know his guest's name and then only after he had already discerned the stranger's identity through various signs:

During the feast, since our fine poet sang,  
our guest has never left off weeping. Grief  
seems fixed upon his heart. Break off the song!

Let everyone be easy, host and guest;  
 there's more decorum in a smiling banquet!  
 We had prepared here, on our friend's behalf,  
 safe conduct in a ship, and gifts to cheer him,  
 holding that any man with a grain of wit  
 will treat a decent suppliant like a brother.  
 Now, by the same rule, friend, you must not be  
 secretive any longer! Come, in fairness,  
 tell me the name you bore in that far country;  
 how were you known to family, and neighbors?<sup>32</sup>

With Alcinous's just demand, Book 8 comes to an end, leaving the hearers (and readers) in suspense until the ninth book be taken up. Odysseus begins his reply with the first line of Book 9 and by line 19 declares his name. His reply, however, continues through the end of Book 12, when he concludes in the final lines of the *Odyssey's* first half, "Those adventures made a long evening, and I do not hold with tiresome repetition of a story."<sup>33</sup> Odysseus has told his tale until there was not much left of the night.<sup>34</sup> The whole telling of his adventures was an essential part of Odysseus's answer to the question of his identity.

Aristotle observes that for knowledge to be complete it is necessary not only to know, but to know that one knows.<sup>35</sup> The "tale of Alcinous" is a depiction of how the knowledge of insight is tested through the aggregation of signs until there emerges an explicit, positive knowing—a knowing that one knows. It is the kind of operation which Aristotle describes in *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.1143a35-b3 and 7.1147a1-b19 of how *voũç* and

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<sup>32</sup> *Od.* 8.539-51.

<sup>33</sup> *Od.* 12.453-54; Fitzgerald 213.

<sup>34</sup> *Od.* 13.16-19.

<sup>35</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 7.1146b31-37.



φρόνησις with respect to universals and particulars are externalized in the Homeric text through depiction of how Alcinous, a name which means “Big Brain,” knows who Odysseus is. From particulars, Alcinous derives a universal which, in turn, is applied to new particulars from which the universal is enriched, continuously until knowledge (knowing that one knows) is attained. From the aspect of the stranger, Alcinous has the insight that this is a royal perhaps even a divine personage in disguise. He tests that insight in new particular circumstances: courtesy, speech, physical prowess, tears. From those particulars, he derives an enriched universal of his guest until he arrives at the knowledge that this is Odysseus.<sup>36</sup> That identity he continues to test until Odysseus confirms what Alcinous has already inferred, then knowledge becomes explicit and public.

The same ritual of disclosure is observed in far humbler circumstances when Eumaeus the pigherd receives his disguised master as a guest. Eumaeus emphasizes the sacred character of showing hospitality to strangers (14.55-58). The time is presumably mid-day since those who herd swine under Eumaeus’s direction are “afield” or otherwise occupied.<sup>37</sup> Eumaeus butchers two young pigs, mast fed, thus the food of slaves (14.72-81),

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<sup>36</sup> This analysis is derived from Vico who states that Achilles and Odysseus (Ulysses) are universals, “Thus the mythologies, as their names indicate, must have been the proper languages of the fables; the fables being imaginative class concepts, as we have shown, the mythologies must have been the allegories corresponding to them. Allegory is defined as *diversiloquium* insofar as, by identity not of proportion but (to speak scholastically) of predictability, allegories signify the diverse species or the diverse individuals comprised under these genera. So that they must have a univocal signification connoting a quality common to all their species and individuals (as Achilles connotes an idea of valor common to all strong men, or Ulysses an idea of prudence common to all wise men).” *NS* 403. Professor Verene comments, “But the real truth they convey is in what they are, their actual embodiment of a virtue like cleverness or courage.” Verene, *Knowledge*, 189.

<sup>37</sup> *Od.* 14.24-28; Fitzgerald 232.

prepares the meal, and offers it to Odysseus who eats and drinks his fill (14.109-14). There is no explicit reference to worship of the gods in this narrative, though it may be implicit, for example, Eumaeus “shook out barley meal,/ took a winebowl of ivy wood and filled it.”<sup>38</sup> Eumaeus and Odysseus exchange speeches about the state of affairs on Ithaca and what news there has been of Odysseus until Eumaeus asks, “who are you, where do you hail from, where’s your home and family?”<sup>39</sup> In reply, Odysseus tells one of his long, elaborate lies (14.191-359). The two banter back and forth for a time. Odysseus, as the disguised stranger, affirms repeatedly that the Lord Odysseus is alive and well. Eumaeus dismisses those affirmations even though they were under oath. The exchange lasts about three hundred lines, about two-thirds of Book 14. The swineherd announces that it is time for the principal meal of the day (14.407). All the ritual which was absent in the earlier meal is described in detail now, including a prayer for the safe return of Odysseus (14.421-24, 432-35, 446-47). Eumaeus instructs his men to choose a fattened hog which he had said previously was reserved for the suitors’ table (14.81). This hog he will “sacrifice to the stranger/guest-friend (ξείνῳ ἱερεύσω).”<sup>40</sup>

Something has transpired between the first meal and the second. There are several signs that Eumaeus has seen through his master’s disguise. The hearer/reader cannot be sure. Something caused the swineherd to go from offering the guest-friend mast-fed swine fit for

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<sup>38</sup> *Od.* 14.77-78; Fitzgerald 234.

<sup>39</sup> *Od.* 14.187-88; Fitzgerald 237.

<sup>40</sup> *Od.* 14.414; my translation.

slaves to the fattened hog usually reserved for high table in the master's hall. Eumaeus further shows reverence for his guest by serving him slices of pork reserved for nobility which Odysseus receives with profound appreciation; he pronounces a blessing upon Eumaeus (14.436-441). At very least, Eumaeus signals that he recognizes nobility in the stranger. There are also the shifts in the frame of worship within which the meals occur. Explicit worship is absent at the first and present in detail at the second. In one of these, Eumaeus performs an additional act of honor, something surely very near to a sign of fealty or perhaps even recognition of the divine nature of his guest: Eumaeus "cut and burnt/ a morsel for the gods who are young forever,/ tipped out some wine, then put it into the hands/ of Odysseus, the old soldier, raider of cities."<sup>41</sup> The ritual portions of meat and wine intended for the gods are put into the hands of Odysseus. What exactly Eumaeus has surmised remains a mystery, but some kind of recognition has clearly taken place. Eumaeus *knows* that the stranger *is* not who he *seems* to be. Thus the issues of being, seeming and knowing are fully in play. The feast expresses identity and knowledge. Through the meals, Eumaeus knows something about the being of Odysseus. Through the meals, Eumaeus communicates to Odysseus that he has recognized something far nobler than appearances suggest. In the juxtaposition of meal and knowledge, the metaphysics of eating emerges. There is eating which sustains existence. There is the eating as part of honorable hospitality (mast-fed pork), but then there is the eating of heroes (fattened pork). At each level, eating in some way—to use Dr. Kass's term—expresses the perfection of human nature. Thus at

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<sup>41</sup> *Od.* 14.446-48.

table the question, “Who are you?” opens the possibility of knowing identity, existence and personhood. The questions of being, seeming and knowing do not run only one way. At the same meals when Eumaeus discovers the being of his guest, Odysseus, for his part, tests the being of the swineherd. The wily “raider of cities” has entered his own country as a broken-down beggar. Through the meals served by the swineherd, he knows that Eumaeus is truly his man, reliable and faithful in every way.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to a depiction of banqueting, Homer also gives us a hero who comments on food, that man of many parts, Odysseus.<sup>43</sup> Professor Stanford reviews important aspects of Odysseus’ commentary on food.<sup>44</sup> First, in *Iliad* 19, the rage of Achilles drives him to seek battle without eating and without allowing the troops to eat. Against that heroic rashness, Odysseus speaks prudently, arguing for the greater likelihood of success if the army is fed before going to the battlefield.<sup>45</sup> The debate is long, about one-fifth of Book 19. In effect, Agamemnon accedes to Odysseus’ proposal of bribing Achilles to let the soldiers

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<sup>42</sup> This analysis runs counter to that of Professor Bolotin when he writes, “Rather than make them acquainted, Athena has helped Odysseus to disguise himself as a beggar, unrecognizable even by his own swineherd. Their reason for this concealment is the danger to Odysseus from Penelope’s suitors. Apparently Athena and Odysseus do not trust Eumaeus enough to tell him that the beggar he is with is his own master. For although Eumaeus has always been a faithful servant, he may not be strong or careful enough to protect such a secret.” Bolotin, *Friendship*, 127. It may be that the discretion of Eumaeus is so great that he does not state aloud even to Odysseus what he realized. He communicates some discovery of recognition the precise shape of which is left ambiguous to the hearer/reader.

<sup>43</sup> Professor Stanford discusses Odysseus as a hero apart, “One finds the same distinction in a quite different kind of trait—in Odysseus’s unusually frank and realistic remarks on the importance of food in human life. All the Homeric heroes were hearty eaters and drinkers. But, whether by accident or convention, none of them except Odysseus had anything to say about eating.” Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, 67.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-71.

<sup>45</sup> *Il.* 19.154-237.

eat before being led into battle. As Professor Stanford further notes,<sup>46</sup> while the troops eat their meal, Zeus commands Athena to do for Achilles what he will not do for himself, “Infuse in him sweet nectar and ambrosia,/ that an empty belly may not weaken him.”<sup>47</sup> The human prudence and moderation of Odysseus stand in sharp contrast to the lack of it in Achilles whose shortcoming is augmented by divine intervention.

Professor Stanford observes that Odysseus is the only Homeric hero to use the word “belly (γαστήρ),” (e.g., Od. 7.215-18; 15.344-45; 17.286-89, 473-74; 18.53-54).<sup>48</sup> Ancient literature of various genres and periods are consistent in “accusing Odysseus of greed and gluttony.”<sup>49</sup> Odysseus’s opening speech in the hall of Alcinous establishes banqueting themes which will be considered below in relation to Xenophanes and Plato:

Alkinoos, king and admiration of men,  
How beautiful this is, to hear a minstrel  
Gifted as yours: a god he might be, singing!  
There is no boon (τέλος) in life more sweet, I say,  
than when a summer joy holds all the realm,  
and banqueters sit listening to a harper  
in a great hall, by rows of tables heaped  
with bread and roast meat, while a steward goes  
to dip up wine and brim your cups again.  
Here is the flower of life (κάλλιστον), it seems to me!  
But now you wish to know my cause for sorrow—

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<sup>46</sup> Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, 68.

<sup>47</sup> *Il.* 19.347-48 and 352-54; Fitzgerald 468.

<sup>48</sup> “If one remembers that no other hero in the *Iliad*, nor any Homeric heroine in either poem, even uses the word for ‘belly’ and still less discusses its effects, it is clear that Odysseus is an untypical hero in this respect.” Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, 69.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 69n6.

And thereby give me cause for more.<sup>50</sup>

This speech opens Book 9. Book 8 concludes with the bard's singing of the Trojan Horse and the fall of Troy. Taken together, the song at the end of Book 8 and the Odysseus's account at the beginning of Book 9 offer the same contrast as one finds depicted on the Shield of Achilles as described in *Iliad* 18.482-608, the images of society at war and at peace.<sup>51</sup> The end of war, as Aristotle will observe, is peace. Men will besiege a city for a decade in order to return home and to gather as a community as one at a banquet of meat, bread, and song.

Banquets are enormously important in Homer's singing of his epic poems. *Odyssey* 7-12 have their setting, almost entirely, in banqueting and of Books 8-12 on one day. In the words of Flan O'Brien, "As a feat of eating it is first-rate."<sup>52</sup> If feasting is more prominent in the *Odyssey* than in the *Iliad*, the culture of feasting each night is pervasive in the *Iliad*. Eating together is also central to the encounter of Achilles and Priam, one of the most heart-rending scenes in all of literature. Eating is ontological at various levels. First, being as existence requires eating. Second, eating together was an essential weaving of society's

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<sup>50</sup> *Od.* 9.2-15; Fitzgerald 139.

<sup>51</sup> Professor Lewis cites *Il.* 9.189, 18.569, 593ff., *Od.* 8.62-75, and 256-65, in support of his characterization of epic poetry's *Sitz im Leben*, "We shall go endlessly astray if we do not get well fixed in our minds at the outset the picture of a venerable figure, a king, a great warrior, or a poet inspired by the Muse, seated and chanting to the harp a poem on high matters before an assembly of nobles in a court, at a time when the court was the common centre of many interests which have since been separated; when it was not only the Windsor Castle, but also Somerset House, the Horseguards, the Covent Garden, and perhaps even, in certain respects, the Westminster Abbey, of the tribe. But also, it was the place of festivity, the place of brightest hearths and strongest drink, of courtesy, merriment, news and friendship." Lewis, *Preface*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds*, 111.

fabric. The necessity of eating for survival is elevated into communal act. Eating together embraced the whole hierarchy of being. The gods were there. The lord of the place was there with all his household: wife and children, male and female slaves and their children—some of which were slaves, while others were free—and any other retainers. Guests were there whether neighboring nobility or landless men tramping the world. Indeed, those last might prove to be a king or even a deity in disguise. Eating together was the primary image of peace and the constant consolation in war. Third, banquets were occasions for testing appearances in order to discover what most truly is. At table, through the aggregation of signs, the community came to shared recognition. The knowledge discovered at table was public and belonged to all. In turn, the destiny of kings and kingdoms could hang upon right discernment at table. Eating which makes being as animal existence possible became occasion for revelation of being in terms of identity and destiny.

### 3. Xenophanes' Critique

In many ways, Xenophanes (c. 570-478 B.C.)<sup>53</sup> represents a mid-point in the movement from imaginative to rational metaphysics. Xenophanes retains the Homeric literary form. He is a rhapsode repeating and creating long poetic songs in dactylic hexameter (though also in elegiac), but in place of myth he has introduced the questions of nature and of reason as possibly adequate explanations of the world. This is true, in specific, with respect to the banquet as philosophical metaphor. In Homer, the banquet and all that

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<sup>53</sup> Long, *Early Greek Philosophy*, xxvii.

it encompasses—eating, drinking, courtesy, story-telling, discernment, worship—depicts imaginative genera which later become understood in rational and natural terms, such as being, seeming and knowing, already discussed at length in II.i. In Xenophanes, imaginative genus has become truncated, at least as available in the extant version of fragment B1 where he describes a symposium, isolated from the rituals of eating and sacrifice. Professor Fränkel observes that what Xenophanes describes is the same kind of intellectual drinking party made most famous by Plato's *Symposium*.<sup>54</sup> The continuity from Homer to Xenophanes is also clear to Professor Fränkel. He likens Xenophanes to Odysseus at the beginning of *Odyssey* 9, when the stranger replies to his royal host's importunate request for revelation of his identity.<sup>55</sup> With respect to the question of banquet and being, Xenophanes B1 is a transition from Homeric feasting to Platonic symposium.

For now the floor is clean (καθαρόν) as are the cups and hands of all.  
 One puts on the woven garlands;  
 another passes along a fragrant ointment in a bowl.  
 The mixing bowl stands full of cheer  
 and another of wine, mild and flower fragrant in the jars, is at hand-  
 which says it will never give out.  
 In the midst frankincense gives forth its sacred scent,  
 and there is cold water, sweet and pure (καθαρόν).  
 Golden loaves lie near at hand and the noble table  
 is loaded down with cheese and rich honey.  
 An altar in the centre is covered all about with flowers  
 while song and festive spirit enfold the house.

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<sup>54</sup> “Von jeher bildeten bei den Griechen abendliche Trinkgelage den äußeren Rahmen für eine geistig erhobene Geselligkeit, mit heiteren oder nachdenklichen Gesprächen und Vorträgen; Platons Symposion ist für uns das bekannteste Beispiel.” Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie*, 421.

<sup>55</sup> “Und wie Odysseus im neunten Buch der Odyssee, als er sich anschickt, wie ein kundiger Sänger die Zechenden zu unterhalten, seinen Vortrag mit einem ausführlichen Preis der feiertäglichen Stunde beginnt, so auch Xenophanes in dem längsten Fragment (1) das wir von ihm besitzen.” Ibid., 421. Professor Lesher observes the same parallel. Lesher, *Xenophanes*, 50.



But first glad-hearted men must hymn the god  
 with reverent words and pure (καθαροῖσι) speech.<sup>56</sup>  
 And having poured a libation and prayed to be able to do  
 what is right—for these are obvious—  
 it is not wrong to drink as much as allows any but an aged man  
 to reach his home without a servant's aid.  
 Praise the man who when he has taken drink brings noble deeds to light,  
 as memory and a striving for virtue (ἀρετῆς) bring to him.  
 He deals neither with the battles of Titans nor Giants  
 nor Centaurs, fictions of old,  
 nor furious conflicts—for there is no use in these.  
 But it is good always to hold the gods in high regard.<sup>57</sup>

The continuity with and discontinuity from Odysseus's encomium in *Odyssey* 9.2-15 are both clear. There is the same sweet, contented delight in the banquet, and yet Xenophanes' description is didactic as well as celebratory. Professor Leshar summarizes the fragment, "The basic features of Xenophanes' sympotic poem are clear enough: the poet describes a banquet scene brimming with good food and drink, piety and festive spirits, and calls for conduct that befits both the occasion and the gods, whom we must hold always in high regard."<sup>58</sup> Professor Fränkel notes the new tone of this poem compared to Homer, especially in the specific quality explicitly invoked three times: purity (lines 1, 8, and 14). Both he and Professor Leshar discern the physically upward movement throughout the fragment.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> This line reads, εὐφρήμοις μύθοις καὶ καθαροῖσι λόγοις. Xenophanes B1, l. 14 D.-K.; Leshar 10. As Professor Leshar notes, some kind of contrast may be intended here between *muthoi* and *logoi*, but if so each is deemed a positive good. As he further notes, there is nothing in this line to associate *muthoi* with the denigration of myth at the end of the fragment. Leshar, *Xenophanes*, 48. It is also possible that the use of *muthoi* and *logoi* is an example of literary reduplication.

<sup>57</sup> Xenophanes B1 D.-K.; Leshar 10-13.

<sup>58</sup> Leshar, *Xenophanes*, 50.

Taking it as a whole—always questionable with any fragment—the structure suggests that in order to make right access to the divine, the floor should be spotlessly clean.

For all the continuities from similar scenes in the Homeric poems, there are also important shifts. Xenophanes's depiction of a symposium marks a new departure by emphasizing purity and rejecting mythological tales as topics for conversation.<sup>60</sup> Professor Fränkel says that the singer in the Xenophanes fragment “throws the [Homeric] tradition on the trash pile.” He interprets this move by Xenophanes as transitional to the expurgations of Homer by Socrates of the *Republic*.<sup>61</sup>

Demodocus singing about the adulterous tryst of Ares and Aphrodite is exactly the kind of story that Xenophanes does not think should be sung, “There is no use in these,” i.e.,

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<sup>59</sup> Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie*, 422. Professor Leshner describes the scene, “This progressive elevation of sentiment, aptly symbolized by the upward progression from the floor (1.1) to table (1.9) to house (1.12) to human excellence (1.20) to respect for the gods (1.24) gives the poem its didactic character.” Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 54.

<sup>60</sup> “Im einzelnen aber sind die Vorschläge ungewöhnlich. Nach Xenophanes soll man nicht um göttlichen Schutz und Hilfe oder um Gutheit und Gedeihen schlechthin beten, sondern vielmehr darum, daß das eigne Streben und Bemühen dann – und nur dann – zum Erfolg führen möge, wenn es rechtlich ist.” Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie*, 423.

<sup>61</sup> “An Platons Dichterkritik erinnert im folgenden das was Xenophanes über die Auswahl von Themen für poetische Vorträge sagt. (Vgl. Platons *Staat*, Buch III; *Theait.* 175e, 7; usf. – Xenophanes' Bemerkung über das Gedächtnis in Vers 20 zielt darauf, daß Teilnehmer die nichts eigenes beizusteuern wußten, Dichterverse zu rezitieren pflegten.) Eine große Anzahl von alten Mythen will er ausgeschlossen wissen, weil sie nur Erdichtungen der Vorväter seien. Mit dieser revolutionären These wirft der fahrende Sänger jene Tradition auf den Kehrlichthaufen, auf die seit ältesten Zeiten seine Zunftgenossen ihre Kunst gründeten. Für ihn wird eine Überlieferung durch ihr hohes Alter nicht sanktioniert sondern im Gegenteil entwertet: was man sich früher ausgedacht hat, wird ein fortschrittlicher Mensch von heute nicht mehr glauben.” Ibid., 423-24; my translation. Professor Fränkel's comparison of Plato and Xenophanes will be pursued below.

“fictions of old, nor furious conflicts”.<sup>62</sup> Only worthy deeds are to be recalled as the praiseworthy man stretches toward virtue. II.iv will examine Xenophanes’s opening the question of the divine nature in B1. Here, it is enough to note that reverence for the gods remains an important feature of the symposium’s rituals. Those who gather to lift their cups should, in their conversation, bring “noble deeds to light.” It is an open question whether Odysseus’s account of his adventures would count as such. Plato does not cite this passage from Xenophanes, but—as Professor Fränkel observes—Plato says something very similar when he condemns the man who “does not know how to strike up a song in his turn like a free man, or how to tune the strings of common speech to the fitting praise of the life of gods and of the happy among men.”<sup>63</sup> It might be asked if Plato is “less radical than Xenophanes.”<sup>64</sup> There are only fragments of Xenophanes, so the question cannot be properly answered. What can be said is that Plato’s willingness to depict the extremes in behavior during a symposium (e.g., Socrates and Alcibiades) may be read as more moderate than the sweeping away of debauchery by Xenophanes. Perhaps Xenophanes was disgusted by the frequency and extent of lewdness during after-dinner entertainment, but it is difficult to imagine that the expression of his views could have been good for business. The kind of symposium implicitly rejected is easy to imagine. Talk was ribald; drunkenness to

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<sup>62</sup> B12 further underscores this point, “As they sang of numerous illicit divine deeds: theft, adultery, and mutual deceit.” Xenophanes B12 Leshner 22-23.

<sup>63</sup> *Tht.* 175e6-176a1; Cooper 194-95. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie*, 423, note 6. Professor Leshner points to a similar line in *R.* (607a4). Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 53.

<sup>64</sup> Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, October 15, 2007.

incapacity, the rule.<sup>65</sup> In the end, Xenophanes provides an example and measure of moderation: a man should not drink to the point that he cannot walk home unaided. He recognizes that the old may need an arm to lean upon even if they have not been drinking. It is also possible that the gods were explicitly mocked at the drinking parties he seeks to reform, as well as—and this is explicit in the fragment—wrongly characterized.

Xenophanes presents a purified symposium in which pleasure and restraint, joy and purity, conviviality and virtue inform each other. It is not yet a philosophical symposium, but it seeks to clear Greek culture of excess and filth in a way that makes space for the symposium envisaged by Plato. Though Xenophanes depicts substantial departures from the Homeric banquet, the tradition itself is affirmed as inherent to Greek culture, as B6 attests:

For you sent the thigh of a young goat and won a fat leg  
of a fatted bull, a thing of honour to fall to a man  
whose fame will reach all Greece and never cease  
so long as a Greek sort of song shall be.<sup>66</sup>

Not only the feast as an occasion of honor, but, B22 shows, the old question of the guest's identity remains the point of departure for after dinner conversation:

One ought to say such things as there, beside a fire in wintertime,  
lying fully fed on a soft couch,  
drinking sweet wine and eating chick-peas for dessert:  
'Who among men are you and what family are you from?,' 'How old are  
you, good sir?'

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<sup>65</sup> The measure of inappropriate drunkenness reminds the author of his days as a student in Edinburgh (1976-77). On Friday and Saturday nights after pub-closing, the sidewalks were full of male trios, two men who could hardly walk bearing between them a third who could not walk at all. They left puddles of vomit in their wake. When the *OCD* opines that while "some did not drink; others displayed riotous intemperance," one wonders if the exemplars in mind were of Socrates and Alcibiades as depicted in Plato's *Symposium*. Michael Coffey, "Symposium," in *OCD*, 1028.

<sup>66</sup> Xenophanes B6 D.-K.; Leshner 18-19.

and ‘What age were you when the Mede came?’<sup>67</sup>

This fragment suggests that guest-friendship continued to be a strong bond of the far-flung Greek culture. The Persian invasion replaces the Trojan war as the point of reference, but the formulation of the questions and, presumably the hospitality which they betoken, are much the same three centuries after the Homeric *terminus ante quem*. Xenophanes is careful to preserve the best of Homeric tradition, repudiating what he considered evils and building upon its virtues.

#### 4. Platonic Metaphor

Having accepted the large lines of Professor Kahn’s view that the *Republic* is the central dialogue in the Platonic corpus, then all the others are understood, at least to some extent, either as proleptic to or following from the *Republic*. When examining Plato’s use of banquet and eating throughout his works, the *Republic* stands as the constant point of reference because it is the dialogue which most thoroughly—explicitly and implicitly—engages the Homeric poems. *Symposium*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws* are all considered as they pertains to the question of how eating relates to being in the *Republic*.

At the outset of the *Republic*, Socrates is waylaid by a band of young men who insist that he join them in their planned revelry. “Dinner” and “talk” are juxtaposed as two principal features of the evening’s program.<sup>68</sup> Thrasymachus mocks Socrates, “Enjoy your

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<sup>67</sup> Xenophanes B22 D.-K.; Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 30-31.

<sup>68</sup> *R.* 1.328a7-9.

banquet of words!” (Εὐώχοῦ τοῦ λόγου). Socrates, however accepts the image, and asks Thrasymachus to “complete the banquet.”<sup>69</sup> Rational words constitute the whole meal. Professor Strauss remarks upon the absence of eating in the *Republic* which has a dinner party as its setting:

Owing to his [Socrates’s] initiative, all sight-seeing and even the dinner are completely forgotten in favor of the conversation about justice, which must have lasted from the afternoon until the next morning. . . . This action too reveals the character of the Socratic restoration: the feeding of the body and of the senses is replaced by the feeding of the mind.<sup>70</sup>

As Plato wrote the *Republic*, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were ever in his mind as manifestly testified by the myriad references to those works. It is a very small leap to suggest that the Homeric banquet is his constant point of reference in *Republic*. Where Homer describes the anatomical details of animals butchered for the heroes’ feasts, Plato has Socrates cut his interlocutors’ arguments into similarly edible morsels of dialectic. Sometimes they chew with pleasure, and sometimes they choke. Homer’s physical feast has become a metaphor for the Socratic philosophical feast.

As both Messrs. Stanford and Deneen have observed, Socrates explicitly condemns Odysseus’s praise of the heroic banquet in *Odyssey* 9.2-15:

What about making the cleverest (σοφώτατον) man say that the finest of all is when

*The tables are well laden  
With bread and meat, and the winebearer  
Draws wine from the mixing bowl and pours it in the cups.*

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<sup>69</sup> R. 1.352b3-6; Cooper 996.

<sup>70</sup> Strauss, *City and Man*, 64.

or

*Death by starvation is the most pitiful fate.*

Do you think that such things make for self-control in young people?<sup>71</sup>

How does one read this if Socrates is a refigured Odysseus? First, note that Homer bears all the blame for the first speech. Odysseus is “the cleverest man,” whom Homer *makes* give that speech. It is a nice point for observing how Plato separates the character from the author and, then, exonerates the character while blaming the author. Compare that condemnation with Socrates’ praise for a Homeric image just a few lines later. Here is one of the three Platonic repetitions, as discussed in I.ii.2.f, of *Odyssey* 20:17-18, “He struck his chest and spoke to his heart;/ ‘Endure, my heart, you’ve suffered more shameful things than this.’”<sup>72</sup> The narrative frame of that quotation gives Homer no credit while praising “words or deeds of famous men, who are exhibiting endurance in the face of everything, surely they must be seen or heard.”<sup>73</sup> It is curious that Plato has Socrates say “famous men” plural and not “famous man” singular, unless Plato intends for the reader to think not only of Odysseus, to whom the line belongs in Homer, but also of Socrates himself, about whom it could be said—at least, on Plato’s account—that he exhibited “endurance in the face of everything.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> R. 3.390a8-b5; Cooper 1027-28.

<sup>72</sup> R. 390d4-5; Cooper 1028.

<sup>73</sup> R. 390d1-3; Cooper 1028.

Professor Deneen points out the egregiousness of Socrates' coupling Odysseus's praise for the banquet and the statement that "Death by starvation is the most pitiful fate."

The opinion about "death by starvation" is not that of Odysseus, rather of Eurylochus:

In one of the most blatantly decontextualized passages yet cited, Socrates seems to indicate that the person's words damning hunger are a main lesson of the text, in this case the *Odyssey*. However, the speaker is not Odysseus; the words are those of Odysseus's second in command, Eurylochus, who is admonishing his men to disobey Odysseus's and the gods' order not to eat of the Sun god's herd. Eurylochus succeeds in his importuning over Odysseus's objections; of all the remaining Ithacans attempting to return from Troy, only Odysseus refuses to eat, despite his hunger. The Sun god exacts his revenge on the impious: the last of Odysseus's ships is destroyed and its men drowned, with the exception of the one who did not eat. Socrates' suggestion to excise this passage is clearly outrageous; in context it instructs one that hunger or thirst is not the worst form of death, that the prudent, pious, and wise man will resist his hunger when necessary.<sup>75</sup>

Thus far, Professor Deneen has it right, but then he concludes, "The sense of Socrates' argument disagrees with the words he chooses to excise; in effect, Socrates reveals himself to be in agreement with the lesson of the *Odyssey*." He thinks that when Socrates quotes favorably the "Endure my heart" passage, he thereby makes explicit what had been his "implicit agreement with the *Odyssey*."<sup>76</sup> Here, Professor Deneen, in effect, trips over his own discovery, for in support of his view he cites an article by Professor Darrell Dobbs, "Reckless Rationalism and Heroic Reverence in Homer's *Odyssey*."<sup>77</sup> It is one thing to

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<sup>74</sup> Professor Deneen makes a similar point, "If Socrates at various points equates a kind of endurance with philosophy—for endurance requires neither great strength nor beauty but firmness of soul—then he also points to the philosophical qualities of the long-enduring Odysseus." Deneen, *Political Theory*, 94.

<sup>75</sup> Deneen, *Political Theory*, 93.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.



analyze the Homeric text and the Platonic text and to conclude that they are in implicit agreement, but it is clear, nevertheless, that Socrates of the *Republic* did not think he was agreeing with Homer. This *aporia* should lead the reader to ask, “What is Plato about here?” The necessary clue is precisely in Dr. Dobbs’s article title. The point of the Homeric story as depicted is that the prudent man knows the limits of rationality. Right rationality bows to right reverence. That is a conclusion to which Socrates of the *Republic* cannot and must not agree. For him, rational dialectic is always ordered to truth. Reverence implies an authority to which rationality must defer. As has been argued extensively in I.ii, a substantial plank in the Platonic platform is to replace the authority of the gods or of Homer or of anyone or anything else with rational dialectic. Socrates of the *Republic* must repudiate a story which has as its point the necessity of human reverence for divine authority (i.e., “Don’t eat the cattle of Helios!”), even if to do so he must employ exactly the kind of sophisticated sleight of hand which he condemns so roundly in the arguments of his contemporaries. In the one passage which he praises (i.e., “Endure my heart!”), Socrates of the *Republic* finds the depiction of his fundamental point: spiritedness must yield to rational calculation. Once this is understood, then the purpose of condemning Homeric banquet also becomes clear:

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<sup>77</sup> Darrell Dobbs, “Reckless Rationalism and Heroic Reverence in Homer’s *Odyssey*,” *American Political Science Review* 81 (1987), 491-508. This interesting article works out of a method in sharp contrast to the one argued in the present work. Professor Dobbs’ approach is anachronistic, supposing that there existed at the time of Homer a modern concept and practice of reason, not to mention an intentionality on the part of Homer or even more dubiously of Odysseus, “The contribution of the *Odyssey* to liberal democracy consists principally in its critique of rationalism.” *Ibid.*, 491. The article still has value if one reads it in the context suggested here, namely that philosophy later abstracts concepts from Homeric depiction. That being said, Both Messrs. Deneen and Dobbs miss the point of how the Homeric material is used by Socrates of the *Republic* as discussed here.

appetite as well as spiritedness must yield to rational calculation. Thus Socrates of the *Republic* brings eating and philosophy into sharpest contrast.

Professor Stanford's insight bears upon this consideration as well when he guesses that philosophers object to Odysseus's use of τέλος, even if one observes that Homer's use of the word does not necessarily imply what it clearly implies for Plato.<sup>78</sup> For Plato, nothing physical, nothing to do with appetite or spiritedness could ever be said, even casually, to be the τέλος of human life. At the same time, Socrates shows that even when eating is a bad and alternative metaphor for being, it remains nonetheless a metaphor for being:

Therefore, those who have no experience of reason or virtue (φρονήσεως και ἀρετῆς), but are always occupied with feasts (εὐωχίαις) and the like, are brought down and then back up to the middle, as it seems, and wander in this way throughout their lives, never reaching beyond this to what is truly higher up, never looking up at it or being brought up to it, and so they aren't filled with that which really is (οὐδὲ τοῦ ὄντος τῷ ὄντι ἐπληρώθησαν) and never taste (ἐγεύσαντο) any stable or pure pleasure.<sup>79</sup>

There are the physical banquets which one finds at eye level, but one has to look up from the table in order to taste "the being of being." Socrates of the *Republic* recognizes the subsistence level of being which makes physical eating necessary as a means of human life which is not itself the end of human life, but which does point to the right end of human life. Such eating even gives a pleasure which can prepare the eater for another kind of banquet—

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<sup>78</sup> See Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*, 69. Professor Stanford speculates, "Probably what most provoked philosophers in Odysseus' praise of banquets was his use of the word τέλος which later came to mean something like the *summum bonum*." Ibid., 255n7. Professor Deneen discusses the criticism of Homer on food by Plato's Socrates. Deneen, *Political Theory*, 91-94. He reflects on the contradictions in the criticism, "A paradox arises that succeeds in calling more attention to the curiousness of Socrates' 'censored' passages than their simple rejection would at first indicate." Ibid., 93.

<sup>79</sup> R. 9.586a1-6; Cooper 1194.

that of rational words—through which one taste that stable and pure pleasure which is the essence of being. This higher tasting requires virtue and the application of mind. Whether Plato has intended it, he has nonetheless put into the mouth of Socrates a rational analogue to the banquet Odysseus enjoyed at the table of King Alcinous and his queen, Arete.

Socrates of the *Republic* disdains physical gluttony in either of its forms (excess of quantity or of refinement), but he does not disregard the physical feast as long as it is a means of human life and not its end. Good philosopher that he is, he distinguishes between a manner of eating and drinking which is fitting and that which is not. Professor Leshner notes passages in both *Republic* and *Laws* which address what is fitting at such events.<sup>80</sup> While “the feeding of the mind” is surely central to the *Republic*, Professor Strauss may state his point too strongly in his view that intellectual eating replaces physical eating.<sup>81</sup> There is a Socratic idyll in which right eating has its place:

For food, they'll knead and cook the flour and meal they've made from wheat and barley. They'll put their honest cakes and loaves on reed or clean leaves, and, reclining on beds strewn with yew and myrtle, they'll feast with their children, drink their wine, and, crowned with wreaths, hymn the gods. . . . I was forgetting that they'll obviously need salt, olives, cheese, boiled roots, and vegetables of the sort they count in the country. We'll give them desserts, too, of course, consisting of figs, chick-peas, and beans, and they'll roast myrtle and acorns before the fire, drinking moderately.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> “For Plato’s differentiation between decent and indecent celebration, see *Republic* 363c-d, 372b-d, 420e, 586a; *Laws* 637a-e, 639d-42a, 671c-72a.” Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 52.

<sup>81</sup> He contrasts Plato’s *Republic* with St. Thomas More’s *Utopia*, “Since More understood very well the relations between speeches and deeds, he expressed the difference between his perfect commonwealth and Plato’s by having his perfect commonwealth expounded after dinner, whereas the exposition of Plato’s commonwealth takes the place of dinner.” Strauss, *City and Man*, 61.

<sup>82</sup> *R.* 372b2-8,c4-d1; Cooper 1011. Professor Deneen notes the similarities between Socrates’ idyllic feast and the kind of feast praised by Odysseus at the outset of *Od.* 9. Deneen, *Political Theory*, 92.

Though it is a family meal Socrates describes, the citizens' diet and manner of eating are consistent with the symposium of Xenophanes B1. Delight is to be found in simplicity and moderation and right piety toward the gods, even to the detail of the garland crowns.

Glaucon calls this "a city for pigs," but Socrates describes this city in the most positive terms. It is a city of perfect moderation where there is neither poverty nor war.<sup>83</sup> The people will live long lives "in peace and good health" generation after generation.<sup>84</sup> It is impossible to tell if Plato intends Glaucon's "city of pigs" as an allusion to Homer. There are two possible referents. First, there is the household of Circe who turned men into pigs. Second, there was the household of Eumaeus the pigherd. The households of Eumaeus and Circe stand in sharp contrast to each other. The house of Eumaeus is of fieldstone; Circe's of smooth stone. The dogs at the door of Eumaeus's house are fierce as wolves; at Circe's door

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<sup>83</sup> R. 2.372c1. Dr. Kass reads this passage differently. He notes "that Socrates does not oppose" Glaucon's condemnation of the idyll as a "city of pigs." Kass, *Hungry Soul*, 120. For a positive reading of "the city of pigs," see Paul W. Ludwig, "Eros in the *Republic*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's "Republic*," ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 225-27. Professor Rowe, in a note as neutral as it is analytical, opines, "The 'city of pigs' bears some resemblance to the city of Magnesia in the *Laws* or perhaps to that combined with the portrait of life in the age of Cronus in the myth of the *Politicus*, since as yet here in the *Republic* Socrates has not built in any human political institutions at all, or even an army." Christopher Rowe, "The Place of the *Republic* in Plato's Political Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's "Republic*," ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 44. Professor Rosen seems to agree with Glaucon's characterization, but without ever quite saying that Socrates agrees with him, though that may be implied in his analysis. Rosen, "*Republic*," 75, 80, 81, 94, 108.

<sup>84</sup> R. 2.372d1-3; Cooper 1011. Professor Howland discusses the "city of pigs" juxtaposed to the "feverish city" and argues that Socrates is working toward a mean of the two, "The first two cities thus clarify the goal at which Socrates aims, while warning that the 'healthy' city may purchase justice at the cost of deforming that which is most distinctively human." Jacob Howland, *The "Republic": The Odyssey of Philosophy* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 89, and in general, 88-92. In a similar vein, see also Bloom, "*Republic*," 344-48. Does Socrates of the *Republic* ever repudiate the healthy city? It may be that he proposes another kind of city only because there are too many people like Glaucon who refuse to be satisfied with health and peace. This view is consistent with that of Professor Hanson when he calls Plato, "the would-be protector of conservative agrarian values." Victor Davis Hanson, *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 334.

stand wolves and mountain lions which are like dogs. The pigs tended by Eumaeus are pigs; those tended by Circe used to be men. The household of Eumaeus is according to nature; that of Circe, according to evil witchcraft.<sup>85</sup> If Homeric allusion is intended, the image is fully ambiguous. The city of pigs might be according to nature or corrupted by an “evil drug (κακὰ φάρμακ’).” It may be exactly this ambiguity which Plato intends.<sup>86</sup> He has Socrates set forth the agrarian ideal, but he also has Glaucon denounce it contemptuously without demur from Socrates. The scene is, at once, admirable in its noble simplicity and inadequate in a contentment which draws nigh to complacency. Glaucon will destroy the simplicity with “the desire for more” which leads to the necessity of war (372d7-e1, 374c3-7). Socrates will disturb the complacency in order to lead the city to philosophy.<sup>87</sup> Either way, the idyll is lost.

Comparison of eating in the Socratic idyll and his discussion of tasting food which makes existence possible and tasting the being of being shows that even physical eating has virtue beyond animal survival. In the quest for the perfectly intelligible, Socrates of the *Republic* resorts to a vocabulary of appetite. At the end of *Republic* 1, responding to a riposte by Thrasymachus, he uses the language of banquet to express the inadequacy of the conversation thus far, “Yet I haven’t had a fine banquet. But that’s my fault not yours. I

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<sup>85</sup> *Od.* 14.7-22 and 10.210-19. See the discussion below in II.v.2.b.

<sup>86</sup> In a note on M. Vidal-Naquet’s *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and the Forms of Society in the Greek World*, Professor O’Connor comments on “the ambiguous value of simplicity and innocence in Plato.” David K. O’Connor, “Rewriting the Poets,” 89.

<sup>87</sup> Richard F. Hassing, note to author, March 21, 2009.

seem to have behaved like a glutton, snatching at every dish that passes and tasting it before properly savoring its predecessor.”<sup>88</sup> Implicit in the Socratic imagery is that in human beings, no matter how like animals they may eat, there is more to appetite than mere appetite. It is true that a dog will gladly eat a piece of Brie while her master and mistress are out of the room, but the dog does not make distinctions between the Brie and the morning dish of dog food or between the expensive French cheese and the pickings of a field freshly spread with cow manure, let alone to organize the three into a meal of hors d’oeuvres, main course and dessert. Loaded into the human carnal appetite is a rationality that permits the choice and preference of grain-fed to mast-fed pork or the distinction of a main course comprised of bread, cheese, and olives followed by a dessert of chick peas. Even in the being of subsistence there are vectors pointing toward the being of being.

Like the *Republic*, its continuation, the *Timaeus*, has a dinner party as its dramatic setting, perhaps as a return invitation for the feast of the *Republic*.<sup>89</sup> Socrates expresses his anticipation of repayment for his own “banquet of words (τὴν τῶν λόγων ἐστίασιν).”<sup>90</sup> Unlike the *Republic*, however, the *Timaeus* does not take up eating as a theme. Timaeus does offer two alternative terms, however, which relate to the difference between dog and human appetite for food, “the whole universe (ὁ δὴ πᾶς οὐρανός)” and “world order

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<sup>88</sup> *R.* 1.354a13-b3; Cooper 998. See also *Ly.* 211c10-d1; *Grg.* 522a1-2; *Phdr.* 227b6-7. Plato *Republic: Books 1-5*, trans. Paul Shorey, Loeb Classical Library, Plato 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 99d.

<sup>89</sup> Cooper 1224. *Ti.* 17a1-3; Cooper 1225.

<sup>90</sup> *Tim.* 27b7-8; Cooper 1234.

(κόσμος).”<sup>91</sup> The first term merely designates “everything that is as it is,” while the second term denotes an order or arrangement. Whether the order of the cosmos is internal to the natural world or only seen and projected upon that world by the human mind, “cosmos” is not subject to, for example, chaos theory in a way that “the whole universe” is. “Cosmos” implies that the world can be properly spoken of in rational language rather than mere physical language: the world can be explained as well as described. This is the same kind of distinction as “food” and “meal.” “Food” has no necessary rational order. “Food” is whatever can be ingested to sustain life. “Meal,” by contrast, is a cosmos. “Meal” is “food” ordered in a way which transcends the mere sustenance of life, the satisfaction of appetite or even the establishment of supremacy in relation to others. One dog will eat another dog’s food to keep the second dog from eating it, but that dog will never eat a cup of chicken bouillon to whet his appetite for venison tenderloin and steamed asparagus, cleansing the palate with a green salad to conclude with a slice of rhubarb pie. There is natural world and cosmos, food and meal.

Both Socrates of the *Republic* and the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws* recognize the community-building potential of sharing a meal together, even when it is the simplest fare. The community of guardians--insofar as it secures the community of the city—is rooted in the common table.<sup>92</sup> In regard to the guardians’ regimen, Socrates actually has a good word to say for Homer. The guardians ought to have the discipline of excellent soldiers, “You

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<sup>91</sup> *Ti.* 28b2-3; Cooper 1235.

<sup>92</sup> *R.* 3.416e3-4.

might learn about such things from Homer.”<sup>93</sup> Socrates reviews the diet of the Homeric heroes. They ate neither fish nor boiled meat, rather only roasted meat without exotic side-dishes or fancy desserts. Socrates then relates the discipline of diet to the kinds of songs which also make for a solid regimen.<sup>94</sup> This anticipates a theme which the Athenian Stranger will adumbrate though with songs and drinking wine as analogues.<sup>95</sup> The commonwealth envisioned by Socrates has common tables for women and men mixed together.<sup>96</sup> The Athenian Stranger takes up this theme early in the *Laws*<sup>97</sup> and continues throughout the work. Attendance is required even of newly married couples and women in general.<sup>98</sup> He recurs to the problem of persuading people that common tables of mixed sexes is a good idea.<sup>99</sup> The Stranger objects to single-sex common meals as promoting social disorder and wanton pleasure, perhaps a resonance with the reservations of Xenophanes (e.g., B1) about

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<sup>93</sup> R. 3.404b10-11; Cooper 1041.

<sup>94</sup> R. 3.404b11-e2. This is an interesting point in the Homeric poems. Professor Murray points out that there is the eating which is actually done by the heroes in the epics, the kind of eating praised by Socrates of the *Republic*. There is also the eating implied in the Homeric similes. He observes, “In the similes, however, there is quite a lot about fishing, alike with rod and net and spear; about diving for oysters and the advantages of a sea rich in fish. There are similes taken from the catching of larks and pigeons, and perhaps from hawking. There is much about milk and cheese, and one mention of boiled pork. That is the poet’s own work-a-day world, where people had at most two meals a day and meat was a scarcity, not the world of the great Zeus-born heroes.” Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 121. Thus one sees in the representation of food—applying the Vichian distinction of the three ages: of gods, of heroes, and of men—both the age of the heroes (e.g., eating roasted meat and drinking wine, as praised by Socrates of the *Republic*) and the age of men (the diet reflected in the Homeric similes).

<sup>95</sup> L. 2.664b3-674c7.

<sup>96</sup> R. 5.458c8-d1.

<sup>97</sup> L. 1.625c6-8.

<sup>98</sup> L. 6.780a8-c2, 781c2-d2.

<sup>99</sup> L. 8.839c6-d5.



symposia.<sup>100</sup> It would seem that when those concerns can be otherwise allayed, then common tables help unite the militia-police of “Country-Wardens.” Thus, absence from the common table is a serious infraction.<sup>101</sup> Part of what they share together is rough living which includes food not only simple and spare but to some degree undesirable.<sup>102</sup> In the end, the Stranger assumes that the common meals can be achieved,<sup>103</sup> and he turns his attention to the kind of food to be eaten.<sup>104</sup>

Plato’s interest in the common table, as evidenced both in *Republic* and *Laws*, is about being at another level, the being of community. It is an intermediate form of being between the being of subsistence and the being of being, thus the *Laws* has much more to say about common meals since it has a second-best polity in view. Even the brief survey of passages from the *Laws* above leads one to conclude that the Stranger’s opinions are not entirely consistent. For example, the young warriors are to eat with each other, a newly-wed husband and wife should not be deprived of each other’s company, and there should be mixed-sex common tables; all three of these prescriptions cannot be maintained simultaneously. Professor Morrow has observed the inconsistency and suggests two explanations. The *Laws* is an unfinished dialogue, and it attempts to reconcile “two types of

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<sup>100</sup> L. 1.633a3-5, 636a2-b3.

<sup>101</sup> L. 6.762b6-d1; Cooper 1437.

<sup>102</sup> L. 6.762e7-9.

<sup>103</sup> L. 8.842b1-4.

<sup>104</sup> L. 8.847e2-c6.

social organization, one essentially Dorian, and another . . . from his native Athens.”<sup>105</sup>

While those explanations seem valid, they should not prevent discernment of a more fundamental reason for discrepancies. In the *Laws*, Plato attempts to present a polity in the realm of achievable being with the possibility of access to a commonwealth of philosophers in the being of being. As Professor Benardete has observed, Clinias concludes that if the commonwealth of the *Laws* is always on a footing for war, then “peace does not exist.”<sup>106</sup>

War is primarily metaphysical—being versus seeming—and only political second. Peace, in this context, would be to abide purely in the being of being. The commonwealth must ever guard against the threats to being at the highest level achievable, “The legislator . . . has to build safeguards into his laws so that they do not produce on their own through the experience of them variants on what is that deviate from his own intentions.”<sup>107</sup> The common table, therefore, is a bulwark against faction and singularity. That is why—in terms of *pros hen* analogy—dancing as a community and eating as a community are both secondary analogates in relation to the primary analogate of being. Community eating and dancing are infused with being, and thus also participate in being. Professor Benardete quotes the pronouncement of Clinias that “there is always by nature an undeclared war of all cities against all cities.”<sup>108</sup> Insofar as this is first an expression of metaphysics and only

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<sup>105</sup> Morrow, *Cretan City*, 397-98.

<sup>106</sup> Benardete, “*Laws*,” 9.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>108</sup> Professor Benardete gives no citation for this point, but the line quoted here is *L.* 1.626a3-5. *Ibid.*, 8.

second of politics, political warfare is always at the level of seeming. If cities, through the exercises of dancing and eating together, could attain to a steady-state of being, then they would truly live in peace. This reflection on eating, dancing, and readiness to warfare may illuminate the shield of Achilles. One reading of the shield's depiction is that war and peace are alternative paradigms. If the analysis of community eating and dancing in the *Laws* is applied to the scenes depicted on the shield of Achilles, then the depictions of war on the shield can be understood as failures to attain to being. The wedding feasts and life in the city gate are depictions of the human approach to the possibility of oneness in being.

The image in the *Laws* of the common-table-toward-constant-readiness-for-warfare shows that for all Plato's moves toward the intelligible, depiction remains a powerful instrument of philosophy in his hands—and in his final dialogue. In fact, the *Laws* prescribes that what begins as literary depiction should be formally legislated and then acted out in the living community. It would seem that Plato intends (*pace* Oscar Wilde) for life to imitate art. The power of depiction is especially evident in the *Symposium*, a dialogue in which the word “συμπόσιον” never appears. Professor Benardete raises this power to another level when he proposes that the *Laws* be read as a dry symposium.<sup>109</sup> The *Symposium* does not use the term “banquet of words,” rather it *is* a banquet of words, or perhaps better, a drinking party of words. Professor Bloom observes how Plato substitutes speeches for drinking in the dialogue, “At a banquet or symposium the guests reclined, and the wine was passed from left to right. Usually they drank in competition, challenging one

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<sup>109</sup> “We are confronted with the possibility that the *Laws* as a wineless symposium imitates Plato's *Symposium* in a very austere mode. . . . The word συμπόσιον does not appear in the *Symposium*.” *Ibid.*, 6.

another. In the *Symposium*, a competition of speaking is substituted for one of drinking, and the order of the speeches is from left to right.”<sup>110</sup> That dramatic dynamic changes, as Professor Benardete observes, when Alcibiades arrives and the gathering becomes truly a drinking party.<sup>111</sup> Alcibiades was a man who clearly has what Heraclitus would call a very “wet soul.”<sup>112</sup> By contrast, Socrates perfectly exemplifies Heraclitus fragment B118, “A gleam of light in the dry soul, wisest and best.”<sup>113</sup> Professor Leshner comments, “Plato perpetuates the idea in his description of Socrates’ legendary feats of self-control (*Symposium* 176c, 223d): having ‘drunk his companions under the table,’ Socrates ‘spent the rest of the day as usual, then, toward evening, made his way home.’”<sup>114</sup> Socrates has a dry soul and, pre-eminently, tastes the being of being. Alcibiades has a wet soul and is stuck at

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<sup>110</sup> Bloom, “Republic,” 455 (Book 4, note 3).

<sup>111</sup> Benardete, “Laws”, 6.

<sup>112</sup> Heraclitus B117 D.-K. See also B95, 77,

<sup>113</sup> Heraclitus B118 D.-K.; Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 77 (CIX). Though there is a fierce controversy over this fragment, it does not affect the present interpretation. The reading of KRS works just as well, “A dry soul is wisest and best.” (KRS 203) (and DK’s preferred reading, “Trockene Seele weiseste und beste”), as indicated by their comment, “The efficient soul is dry (230), that is fiery. A soul that is moistened, for example, by excessive drinking as in 231[“A man when he is drunk is led by an unfledged boy, stumbling and not knowing where he goes, having his soul moist.”].” KRS 204. For a defense of Professor Kahn’s reading as well as a history of the problem and his own accommodation with the reading of Professor Kirk, see Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 245-54.

<sup>114</sup> Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 52. Dr. Kass observes, “Noting that Socrates, in the *Symposium* and elsewhere, drinks everyone else under the table but does not himself get drunk, they [some friends of rationality] argue that wine may be therapeutic for disharmonious souls but that the fully rational and harmonious human soul has no need of such external stimulants. Perhaps so. Still, one wonders, if this be so, why Socrates—being supremely rational and not in need of wine—chose to drink at all. Must we infer, from that fact that he never got drunk, that he never got high?” Kass, *Hungry Soul*, 125. The answer to Dr. Kass’s question, is “Yes, Socrates ‘never got high.’” That is the point. Socrates’ soul remains dry no matter how much wine he imbibes. By analogy, Socrates’ soul remains dry despite all the onslaught of spiritedness and appetite. Socrates remains rational no matter what.

the glutton's trough. The others have souls in an intermediate state, participating more or less in being.

The *Symposium* bears another relationship to Homeric banquet beyond depicting the philosophical remaking of a kind of party descended from those common in Homer. In the hall of Alcinous, Demodocus presents both comedic and serious song. The comedy is the story of Ares and Aphrodite caught in their adultery by Hephaestus (*Odyssey* 8.266-366). The erotic character of the *Symposium* is well established. It may be that *Symposium* should be read as a philosophical commentary on the Hephaestean web which captures all who engage in erotic pursuit and which makes possible their public humiliation. Aristophanes, himself a comedic dramatist who knew well the art of the bawdy story, evokes this scene (192c2-e4), and Agathon cites it explicitly (196c8-d4). It may be that Plato also has in mind the adultery of Alcibiades with a Spartan queen which was revealed because her husband had not engaged in sexual intercourse with her during a ten-month period, at the end of which she bore a child.<sup>115</sup> If this suggestion is correct, then the *Symposium* is both a commentary on what it depicts, namely an after-dinner drinking party, and, at the same time, a commentary on the bawdy tale sung by Demodocus. It has already been argued that Plato uses the vocabulary of eating in multiple dialogues as metaphor for the human longing and

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<sup>115</sup> "For while king Agis was absent, and abroad with the army, he [Alcibiades] corrupted his wife Timaea, and had a child born by her.

"There were many who told Agis that this was so, but time itself gave the greatest confirmation to the story. For Agis, alarmed by an earthquake, had quitted his wife, and for ten months after was never with her." Plutarch, "Alcibiades," in *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, trans. John Dryden, revised Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: Modern Library, 1864), 249.

capacity for the being of being. The *Symposium* is a depiction of this same longing and capacity.

Socrates of the *Republic* implicitly addresses the Parmenidean question of being and non-being in the context of the kind of riddles “one is entertained with at dinner parties,” “One cannot understand them as fixedly being or fixedly not being (οὐτ’ εἶναι οὔτε μὴ εἶναι) or as both or as neither.”<sup>116</sup> Socrates actually turns this moment into a riddle by giving some of the clues for the riddle without either reciting the full riddle itself or the answer. The key to the riddle of the riddle is that there is something which is both what it seems and not what it seems. Socrates then makes the move to say, that there is pure being (τοῦ ὄντος εἰλικρινῶς), what is called elsewhere “the being of being,” and there is “the wandering intermediate.”<sup>117</sup> The dinner motif persists throughout this dialogue and here in a fashion that makes an ephemeral moment in postprandial conversation into a metaphor for one of philosophy’s most sublime questions. What the after dinner riddle is to the ordinary banquet, the question of being is to the philosophical banquet. Returning to the doctrine of logographic necessity, this passage is also a kind of philosopher’s set of Russian nesting eggs. There is the riddle inside the riddle inside the riddle etc. One can never be sure that the latest riddle is the last. Implicit in this passage is the question of the banquet’s ontological status. What is the banquet, whether Homeric, Xenophanean or Platonic? They are “wandering intermediates.” Not even the Platonic banquet attains the status of pure being

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<sup>116</sup> R. 5.479b11-12, c3-5; Cooper 1106.

<sup>117</sup> R. 5.479d1, 8-9; Cooper 1106.

which, presumably, is the pure and immediate apprehension of being without the intermediate of sensory perception. Just as the after dinner conversation of the Homeric and Xenophanean banquets arises from the question of identity, so it does with Platonic banquets. The after dinner riddle is aimed at discovering who the philosophers are.<sup>118</sup> They are revealed through the method of Homeric epistemology, namely through various signs: 1) being able to see the beautiful or the just in contrast with those who can see only beautiful or just things,<sup>119</sup> 2) when someone “loves learning” and strives for truth,<sup>120</sup> 3) when a person’s soul is “just and gentle,”<sup>121</sup> etc. Plato prepares his readers for the final scene at the end of the *Republic* when Odysseus chooses the life of Socrates: just as the hero reveals his identity after the Homeric banquet, so the philosopher reveals his identity after the Platonic banquet. At the table of Alcinous, the gathered signs point to Odysseus. At the end of the *Symposium*, the gathered signs point to Socrates. At the end of the *Republic*, the gathered signs point to Odysseus who is Socrates, each the Stranger in his own country.

One of the most extraordinary aspects of the connection between the carnal banquet and the philosophical banquet is that they are connected at all. The former serves as a metaphor for the other. How is that possible? Socrates puzzles over the problem of having a commonwealth that is practicable and, at the same time, one that makes doing philosophy possible and safe. It would seem that Plato’s highest criterion for the rightness of a civil

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<sup>118</sup> R. 6.484a1-3.

<sup>119</sup> R. 5.479e1-480a4.

<sup>120</sup> R. 6.485d3-4.

<sup>121</sup> R. 6.486b10-12; Cooper 1109. See also 490c8-d7.

body politic is that it is safe for philosophy. He calls for a mixing and blending “until they produced a human image based on what Homer too calls ‘the divine form and image’ when it occurred among human beings.”<sup>122</sup> Even the standard and often silly after dinner riddle can become a door to purest being. The wandering intermediate relates to “the being of being.” This then leads to a line of discussion which arrives at the Divided Line at the end of Book 6. Whether it is more a Neo-Platonic reading (or merely a too-ready acceptance of Aristotle’s critique) of Socratic teaching in the *Republic* or actually what Socrates does say, the final answer to the question of how the carnal banquet relates to the philosophical banquet is that the carnal banquet participates in the form of banquet. Socrates makes this point with respect to beds in Book 10.<sup>123</sup> Of course, it is also at that point that Socrates presents his most damning indictment of Homer, namely that he makes seductively and, therefore, dangerously beautiful that which has the lowest degree of reality, namely imitation.<sup>124</sup> Implicit, however, in the critique of Homer made by Socrates of the *Republic* is that imitation is imitation of that-which-most-truly-is.

Here is one more startling fact: while Plato repudiates poetry as the right mode of knowing truth, he only dispenses with the mechanics of poetry (i.e., line and meter), but he retains the soul of poetry, namely depiction, and uses it (e.g., the *Symposium*) ancillary to argument and sometimes (e.g., the Myth of Er) as a substitute for it. In a sense, this is

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<sup>122</sup> *R.* 6.501b1-7; Cooper 1122.

<sup>123</sup> *R.* 10.596a5-597b15.

<sup>124</sup> *R.* 10.601b9-c1.



consistent with the entire thrust of Plato's position: he rejects the bodily qualities of poetry while retaining its soulful character.

### 5. Aristotle's Analysis

Plato's dialogues are redolent of the common table whether of soldiers on the march, a family in daily refreshment and delight, a commonwealth gathered in civic unity, or philosophers dining on being itself. Aristotle replaces Platonic evocation with his special brand of analysis, spare and incisive. Perhaps if any of Aristotle's dialogues or Plato's lecture notes were extant, the contrast might not be so stark. Readers inherit the work of editors as well as of authors. Diogenes Laertius lists amongst the works of Aristotle, *Symposium* (one book) and *Rules for Messing* (one book).<sup>125</sup> Vita Menagiana lists *Messing Problems* (six books) and the "Life of Ptolemy" adds *Farming* (fifteen books).<sup>126</sup> Those titles suggest Aristotle's rich interest in both the production and consumption of food. What remains on the subject of food are a few references in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, and *De anima*.

Aristotle prepares for the question of eating in relation to being in the *Nicomachean Ethics* when he asks what the relationship is between the human's function and being.<sup>127</sup>

Only a few lines earlier he makes a statement often taken as one of Aristotle's great

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<sup>125</sup> Barnes 2.2386-87. Aristotle's *Symposium* is taken by some to be identical with *On Drunkenness*. Michael Coffey, "Symposium Literature" in *OCD*, 1028. Professor Barnes lists nine fragments from *Symposium* and *On Drunkenness*. Barnes 2.2425-26.

<sup>126</sup> Barnes 2.2388.

<sup>127</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1.1097b26-34.

pronouncements on the human being, “the human is political by nature.”<sup>128</sup> Human *being* is to be political. He observes that the category of living is broad, including animals and even plants as well as the human. For the moment, he sets aside the question of nutrition.<sup>129</sup> At the same time, however, he observes that there is a connection between the practical side of human life and rationality, “The function of man is an activity of soul in accordance with, or not without, rational principle.”<sup>130</sup> He further elucidates this point by observing that the appetitive soul, which the human has in common with animals while not being rational “shares in a rational principle,” “For we praise the reason of the continent man and of the incontinent, and the part of their soul that has reason, since it urges them aright and towards the best objects.”<sup>131</sup> Anything, therefore, that a human does—doing in the sense of voluntary action—is done in relation to rational principle, whether in accordance with it or contrary to it. Aristotle has established the framework in which to consider the relationship between the human’s least obviously rational acts and that quality in which human nature is grounded: being political. Nutrition, *per se*, may be set aside, but Aristotle has established a basis for consideration of human nutrition as a “function of man” which is “an activity of the soul” at least “not without rational principle” and essentially tied to human politics. This relates to a point already observed in Plato’s work. A dog and a man can both eat Brie, but the man’s

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<sup>128</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1.1097b12.

<sup>129</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1.1097b35-1098a1.

<sup>130</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1.1098a8-9 ; Barnes, 2.1735. In *De anima*, Aristotle gives an explicit account of how nutrition is teleologically ordered, even in plants. Anything that takes nutrition does so in order “to partake in what is eternal and divine.” Aristotle, *De an.* 415a14-415b8 and specifically b3-4; Barnes 1.660-61.

<sup>131</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1.1102b13-16; Barnes 2.1741.

eating of Brie is ordered rationally in a way that the dog's eating of Brie is not. That the human eats is in common with plants and animals, but that the human chooses what he eats and arranges menus for dinners inheres in his nature as rational.

A feature of truly human life as political in which Aristotle continues the vision expressed in Homer and upon which Plato philosophizes is the common table. For Aristotle, the common tables express the order of the political community. In *Politics* 7, he prescribes that the common tables of the soldiers should be in the guardhouse, those of the magistrates at the highest point in the city, those of the freemen a little lower down, those of the priests near the temples.<sup>132</sup> What seems clear is that the rational ordering of human life implies that the truly human *being*, being *human*, does not eat alone.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle offers his insight into the causal nexus between eating and being and thus, also, between eating and politics:

Again, there are many sorts of food, and therefore there are many kinds of lives both of animals and men; they must all have food, and the differences in their food have made differences in their ways of life. For of beasts, some are gregarious, others are solitary; they live in the way which is best adapted to sustain them, accordingly as they are carnivorous or herbivorous or omnivorous: and their habits are determined for them by nature with regard to their ease and choice of food. But the same things are not naturally pleasant to all of them; and therefore the lives of the carnivorous or herbivorous animals further differ among themselves. In the lives of men too there is a great difference. The laziest are shepherds, who lead an idle life, and get their subsistence without trouble from tame animals; their flocks having to wander from place to place in search of pasture, they are compelled to follow them, cultivating a sort of living farm. Others support themselves by hunting, which is of different kinds. Some, for example, are brigands, others, who dwell near lakes or marshes or rivers or a sea in which there are fish, are fishermen, and others live by the pursuit of birds or wild beasts. The greater number obtain a living from the cultivated fruits of the soil. Such are the modes of subsistence which prevail among those whose

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<sup>132</sup> *Pol.* 7.1331a19-1331b7; Barnes 2.2112-13.

industry springs up of itself, and whose food is not acquired by exchange and retail trade—there is the shepherd, the husbandman, the brigand, the fisherman, the hunter. Some gain a comfortable maintenance out of two employments, eking out the deficiencies of one of them by another: thus the life of a shepherd may be combined with that of a brigand, the life of a farmer with that of a hunter. Other modes of life are similarly combined in any way which the needs of men may require. Property, in the sense of a bare livelihood, seems to be given by nature herself to all, both when they are first born, and when they are grown up. For some animals bring forth, together with their offspring, so much food as will last until they are able to supply themselves; of this the vermiparous or oviparous animals are an instance; and the viviparous animals have up to a certain time a supply of food for their young in themselves, which is called milk. In like manner we may infer that, after the birth of animals, plants exist for their sake, and that other animals exist for the sake of man, the tame for use and food, the wild, if not at all, at least the greater part of them, for food, and for the provision of clothing and various instruments. Now if nature makes nothing incomplete, and nothing in vain, the inference must be that she has made all animals for the sake of man.<sup>133</sup>

This passage has its context in a chapter dealing with a general theory of property and how it is accumulated.<sup>134</sup> Aristotle asks if the getting of food is part of household management,<sup>135</sup> and he answers that it is.<sup>136</sup> The quoted passage constitutes Aristotle's investigation into the question. Aristotle begins by affirming that 1) there are many kinds of food and that 2) "therefore there are many kinds of lives both of animals and men." Further, 3) not only does existence depend upon food, but 4) the kind of existence also depends upon the kind of food. Aristotle then goes on to give examples of both animals and human beings.

What is fascinating here is that he sees the kind of food as determinative of the kind of life, rather than the inverse. The herdsmen, for example, having determined to live from

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<sup>133</sup> Aristotle *Politics* 1.1256a20-b23.

<sup>134</sup> *Pol.* 1.1256a1-4.

<sup>135</sup> *Pol.* 1.1256a17-19.

<sup>136</sup> *Pol.* 1.1256b27-30.

milk of sheep or goats,<sup>137</sup> labors least in his nomadic wanderings. Those who live primarily from food they acquire directly are the herdsman, the farmer, the brigand, the fisherman, and the hunter. These are not necessarily discrete categories, however. Herdsmen may tend to brigandage. Farmers may hunt. Food of some kind makes being as existence possible. The kind or kinds of food in that being as existence determine the kind of being. Food acts on human beings as a cause of being and kind of being. Final causation is also at work in this analysis as well from the other end. Plants exist for the sake of all animals, presumably including humans, and animals exist for the sake of human beings. Causality moves in both directions. Human beings are the final cause for the animals and plants which provide them the necessary food and fiber. At the same time, animals and plants as sources of food cause human existence and the kinds of food cause the kinds of human existence. This conclusion does not derive from one passage. Later in the *Politics*, Aristotle observes that when a civil body politic is constituted substantially by “the class of farmers and of those who possess moderate fortunes . . . the government is administered according to the law.”<sup>138</sup> The decision to raise grain determines not only the kind of life lived by the farmer and his family but, in aggregate, creates an ontological predisposition to the constitutional rule of law.<sup>139</sup> Aristotle explains part of the causal nexus, and other aspects can be inferred from what he says

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<sup>137</sup> Aristotle seems to mean herders of sheep, goats and perhaps cows but not of swine.

<sup>138</sup> *Pol.* 4.1292b25-28.

<sup>139</sup> Here “constitutional rule of law” signifies what today is usually signified by “democracy.” “Democracy” is not used here in order to distinguish the polity of farmers and the moderately prosperous in distinction to “democracy” in its etymological sense of “rule of the crowd” which tends to be Aristotle’s more usual use of “δημοκρατία,” e.g., 4.1279b40-80a7.

elsewhere. Farmers and the moderately prosperous must be busy about their own business, thus resonating in an unexpected way with the insight of Socrates of the *Republic*<sup>140</sup> that the just man is one who minds his own business. Because they must mind their own business, they do not have time to engage in politics more than is good for them.<sup>141</sup> The farmer's limitation predisposes him to democracy and the rule of law as much as does the ethical virtue of his life. For example, presumably the stability of the farmer, in contrast to the herdsman, makes him more industrious and more honest. He must deal with the consequences of his actions rather than moving to the next pasturage.

What Aristotle's analysis of food production has in common with Homeric depiction and Platonic dialectic also helps to highlight Aristotle's decisive methodological shift. In matters pertaining to food there is revelation of being. In Homer, the revelation is embedded in the carefully orchestrated rituals which are consummated in the question which has been in play since first contact, "Who are you?" In Plato, it is in the feast of dialectic in which identity is hidden and revealed. "Both the philosophers and nonphilosophers have revealed who they are."<sup>142</sup> In Aristotle, there is something cold-bloodedly removed from human interaction. He distances himself intellectually from that which he analyzes. The analysis, however, is still teleologically oriented to being. By knowing "the shepherd, the husbandman, the brigand, the fisherman, the hunter," one discovers the human character

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<sup>140</sup> *R.* 4.433a8-b1. See the discussion in I.ii.3.a.

<sup>141</sup> *Pol.* 4.1292b28-29.

<sup>142</sup> *R.* 6.484a1-3; Cooper 1107.

which is to say the moral and political virtue—or lack thereof—in each case. The means of food production discloses who they are.

Aristotle's comments are the frank observations of one not included in any of the categories he analyzes, since Aristotle was presumably among those who acquired their food "by exchange and retail trade."<sup>143</sup> The question he does not pose is the causal relationship of obtaining food and fiber from "exchange and retail trade" on the kind of human life lived. That he makes, at best, an inadequate distinction between those who actually produce food and those who sell in the marketplace is clear from his list of the six necessary "functions of a state" which lists food first but without distinction among those who make, process, and sell it. There is the provision for money, but not of the merchants who make money necessary; for without retailers and/or merchants, an economy would be undertaken with a system of barter. In sum, however, he manages to avoid naming merchants, though they may be implied in the "wealthy class," "There must be farmers to procure food, and artisans, and a warlike and a wealthy class, and priests, and judges to decide what is necessary and expedient."<sup>144</sup> All the categories he discusses belong to subsistence, and yet as he draws his conclusion he moves very easily from those kinds of existence which are often as precarious as they are independent to the more stable and mutually dependent condition of the city. He writes about the necessities of life "for the community of the city or the household" (εις

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<sup>143</sup> *Pol.* 1.1256a40-42.

<sup>144</sup> *Pol.* 7.1328b5-24; Barnes 2.2108. Socrates of the *Republic* makes provision for the middle-man between farmer and city-dweller. See *R.2.371a10-d7*.

κοινωνίαν πόλεως ἢ οἰκίας).<sup>145</sup> If the nomadic wandering after sheep makes a man lazy and open to the temptation of stealing the sheep (or other goods) of another, then what is the effect on a man who buys his cheese, olives and bread in the city market? It may be that Aristotle's account only begs the question which Dr. Leon Kass seeks to answer in his *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfection of Our Nature*. Quite another book could be written with the title, *The Hungry Soul: Getting Food and the Determination of Our Nature*. Aristotle's analysis suggests this latter approach. Implicit in Aristotle's discussion, however, is a world divided by the permeable boundary of the market. Subsistent households stand on one side of that boundary. In Aristotle's day, that meant in practical terms all rural households. Urban households stand or, at least, can stand on the other side of that boundary. In Athens of the fourth century B.C., many urban households had farms which both directly and indirectly made possible the maintenance of the urban household. Those were the great families, however. Less prosperous city-dwellers depended on the market for the being of their existence. As milk directly from sheep determined the kind of existence lived by a shepherd, so olives, cheese, bread and wine from the market determined the kind of existence lived by the city-dweller. For example, the city envisioned by Socrates of the *Republic* presupposes the market as the origin of food. In fact, the one reference to farming in the *Republic* is to the point that only very few people should farm as a positive consequence of dividing labor.<sup>146</sup> That division is retained and developed in the *Laws*.

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<sup>145</sup> *Pol.* 1.1256b30.

<sup>146</sup> *R.* 2.370c8-d1.



Citizens will have both a town house as well as a farm.<sup>147</sup> The Athenian Stranger allows that the legislator will not much need to regulate trade and banking, but will promulgate laws as important and detailed as those related to family life to govern “farmers, shepherds, beekeepers, for the protectors of their flocks and the supervisors of their equipment.”<sup>148</sup>

There is something vitally fundamental about farming which requires great care. The people engaged in that work, however, will be far less numerous than those living in the city, and yet commerce is left largely unregulated. It seems fair to ask, what happens when the market or any economic model intervenes between the source of food and those who eat? The lengthy passage quoted from Aristotle implies that question as do Plato’s various discussions of farms, common meals, and diet, but neither addresses it. One may well wonder why neither Plato nor Aristotle takes up the question of what happens when markets intervene between production and consumption.

The short answer is that markets, as distinguished from trade, were only coming into existence in the fifth and fourth century Greek world. Professor Karl Polanyi addresses the subject of how a market economy began to come into existence:

The elements of that seminal institution [“the price-making market”] must have come from the Hellenic sphere, some time in the first millennium B.C. Sixth and fifth century Greece was, therefore, in essential respects, economically more naïve than even the extreme “primitivist” would have it, while in the fourth century these very Greeks initiated the gainful business practices that in much later days developed into the dynamo of market competition.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> L. 5.739e8-b1.

<sup>148</sup> L. 8.842d1-e1; Cooper 1503.

It is in the fourth century B.C. that Athens makes the transition “from a heroic to a semi-commercial economy.”<sup>150</sup> Just as Plato refigures Odysseus, the Homeric hero, Athens and the Mediterranean world refigure Homeric eating. The Homeric hero strides to the livestock pen, to the fire, and to the table. By the time of Aristotle, a market intervenes. The Homeric hero lives in existential immediacy lost to the fifth century B.C. Athenian citizen.

There had always been trade, but there had not always been markets which are characterized by temporal and spatial permanence such as was found in the Athenian *agora*.<sup>151</sup> Trade can be improved by, but does not require money; barter is sufficient. Markets, however, do require an intermediate currency. “Coinage,” observes Professor Polanyi, “and the retailing of food were introduced together in Athens.”<sup>152</sup> Even after the introduction of coinage, markets were still slow to develop, “Broadly, coins spread much faster than markets. While trade was abounding and money as a standard was common, markets were few and far between.”<sup>153</sup> Barter trade was succeeded by monetized trade even in an incipient market such as the Athenian *agora*, but two centuries were required before monetized trade could truly be called a market. Aristotle offers his observations about the

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<sup>149</sup> Karl Polanyi, “Aristotle Discovers the Economy,” in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires: Economies in History and Theory*, ed. Karl Polanyi et al. (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), 64.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>151</sup> “One of the first city markets, if not the very first, was no other than the *agora* in Athens. Nothing indicates that it was contemporaneous with the founding of the city. The first authentic record of the *agora* is of the fifth century when it was already definitely established, though still contentious.” *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

economy “in the second half of this period.”<sup>154</sup> There was a period of time, then, when trade, as conducted by the old caravanserai, existed simultaneously with “the local food market,” but for some part of that period they did not converge.<sup>155</sup> At some point, however, they did converge, and heroic immediacy then yielded to civic intermediacy.

When Aristotle writes about the qualities of human life which arise from various economic activities, his observations are based upon experience. Of a market economy, he had only the experience of seeing it in its earliest days which was centuries or, arguably, even two millennia before the market economy would replace hunting, farming and herding. Professor Sir Moses Finley comes close to this point when he discusses the work of Professor Polanyi, “This learned activity presupposes the existence of ‘the economy’ as a concept.”<sup>156</sup> For Aristotle, the economy had to do with the household and the community.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>156</sup> Moses I. Finley, “Aristotle and Economic Analysis,” in *Articles on Aristotle: 2. Ethics and Politics*, ed. Jonathan Barnes et al. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 153. The views of Sir Moses are also consonant with those in this work, when he writes, “Nowhere in the *Politics* does Aristotle ever consider the rules or mechanics of commercial exchange. On the contrary, his insistence on the unnaturalness of commercial gain rules out the possibility of such a discussion, and also helps explain the heavily restricted analysis in the *Ethics*. Of economic analysis there is not a trace.” Ibid., 152. Part of the explanation as to why there is either “heavily restricted analysis” or none is that “commercial exchange” was only incipient during Aristotle’s lifetime. Even disagreeing with commercial exchange, he might well have analyzed it had he seen it fully existing either in Athens or in another part of the known world.

Dr. Scott Meikle summarizes the scholarly debate over the extent to which ancient Greece had or did not have a market economy. Scott Meikle, *Aristotle’s Economic Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1-5. He stakes his own position, “By the fourth century BC, Athens had developed the production and circulation of commodities, or exchange values, to a significant degree. . . . I shall argue that Aristotle has a body of thought directed specifically at analyzing that development.” Ibid., 5. His methodology is consistent with the view expressed here, that Aristotle’s economic analysis extends as far as his experience of economic events of his day, which were only incipiently “economic” in the sense of the modern market economy.

Because for him concept always arose from concrete, it was inconceivable that markets could ever replace his communitarian vision because there was no concrete experience upon which such a concept could be abstracted.<sup>158</sup> The task remains for the followers of Aristotle by the communitarian principles of Aristotle to analyze the market economy based upon some centuries' experience of it.

Aristotle passes easily from household to city when he speaks about "the community of city or of household," but in fact, a household alone must concern itself with the getting of food in an elemental way that the city does not.<sup>159</sup> The city through the market can purchase its food. The city follows its market as the shepherd follows his sheep. The city must cultivate the market as the farmer cultivates the fields. The city must pursue the market as the hunter pursues the stag or boar. It is the market which creates the circumstance that makes the constitutional rule of law difficult or even impossible, namely, according to Aristotle, that the rich are few and the poor many.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Professor C. C. W. Taylor summarizes, "Households and villages are thus natural forms of association in that they develop in response to certain natural human needs. . . .

He [Aristotle] now (1252b27-31) argues that since the *polis* is the complete or perfect type of community, it must be a natural form of community if, as has already been shown, the more primitive forms are natural." C. C. W. Taylor, "Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 236.

<sup>158</sup> "On the nature of the economy Aristotle's starting point is, as always, empirical. But the conceptualization even of the most obvious facts is deep and original." *Ibid.* 80.

<sup>159</sup> In Section IV of his second *Enquiry*, Hume makes this point, "But here is the difference between kingdoms and individuals. Human nature cannot, by any means, subsist, without the association of individuals; and that association never could have place, were no regard paid to the laws of equity and justice. . . . But nations can subsist without intercourse." David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. with an introduction by J. B. Schneewind (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 35.

<sup>160</sup> *Pol.* 3.1279b35-1280a7.

The movement from Homer to Aristotle is from the world in which everyone from king to slave and landless man was engaged in getting food to the world of Athens in the fourth century B.C. in which the city-dweller could and did typically obtain food from the market. In Homer, it is at the banquet table where the swineherd-slave discovers the beggar to be his lord and the king discovers his slave to be a prince. The household was a community in the getting of food and thus identity could be and was disclosed in the banquet. Plato—and this is equally true in *Republic* and *Laws*—had to find metaphors to recreate eating as ontological expression. That he accomplishes by promoting the common table of the city, but also by substituting a banquet of words for a banquet of food. Aristotle rediscovers the ontological character of food in his analysis of kinds of food causing kinds of life, but he does so—to repeat what has been said throughout this work—without reference to mythology.<sup>161</sup>

That shift from Plato to Aristotle with respect to mythology has significance in helping the post-modern reader to penetrate what Vico found impenetrable, namely that heroic thinking was so different as to make access to it all but impossible for those who live

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<sup>161</sup> Notwithstanding differences in method and in premises, there is much in the treatment here of food, in specific, and in the general thesis of this work that runs parallel to and is influenced by *Le cru et le cuit* as well as other works by Claude Lévi-Strauss. Two brief passages express central points taken seriously here: 1) “Le but de ce livre est de montrer comment des catégories empiriques; telles que celles de cru et de cuit; de frais et de pourri; de mouillé et de brûlé, etc., définissables avec précision par la seule observation ethnographique et chaque fois en se plaçant au point de vue d’une culture particulière ; peuvent néanmoins servir d’outils conceptuels pour dégager des notions abstraites et les enchaîner en propositions”; and 2) “Et si l’on demande à quel ultime signifié renvoient ces significations qui se signifient l’une l’autre, mais dont il faut bien qu’en fin de compte et toutes ensemble ; elles se rapportent à quelque chose, l’unique réponse que suggère ce livre est que les mythes signifient l’esprit, qui les élabore au moyen du monde dont il fait lui-même partie. Ainsi peuvent être simultanément engendrés, les mythes eux-mêmes par l’esprit qui les cause, et par les mythes, une image du monde déjà inscrite dans l’architecture de l’esprit.” Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le cru et le cuit* (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1964), 9, 346.

after the discovery of abstraction.<sup>162</sup> The discussion of transition from trade to markets which was concomitant with the transition—in the Vichian sense—from heroic to human society (what Professor Polanyi calls the transition “from a heroic to a semi-commercial economy”<sup>163</sup>) helps to explain Aristotle’s merely literary regard for Homeric depiction. Although Aristotle was only forty years younger than Plato, in many respects, Aristotle, even as Plato’s contemporary, lived in a new world. For Plato, in economic terms, the hero’s walking out to a pen, and there to butcher some quadruped followed by roasting the fresh meat was still an image of life as really remembered if not really lived. By the time of Aristotle’s mature years, incipient markets had decisively intervened between producers and consumer. In this respect, the status of food had fundamentally changed. Mythological depiction no longer obtained veridically; imaginative genus could no longer be concrete. Fruit as a goddess or crops watered by Zeus could only be metaphors and no longer a statement of reality. Markets interrupted the fluidity of being and, thereby, created producers and consumers. A concept, called “currency,” stood between the concrete farmer with a concrete crop and the concrete city-dweller with a concrete hunger. As Professor Polanyi rightly observes, Aristotle was as concrete a thinker as conceptual; indeed, he was a

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<sup>162</sup> Here again is the pertinent passage discussed in I.i, “But the nature of our civilized minds is so detached from the senses, even in the vulgar, by abstractions corresponding to all the abstract terms our languages abound in, and so refined by the art of writing, and as it were spiritualized by the use of numbers, because even the vulgar know how to count and reckon, that it is naturally beyond our power to form the vast image of this mistress called ‘Sympathetic Nature.’ It is equally beyond our power to enter into the vast imagination of those first men, whose minds were not in the least abstract, refined or spiritualized, because they were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body. That is why we said above that we can scarcely understand, still less imagine, how those first men thought who founded gentile humanity.” *NS* 378.

<sup>163</sup> Polanyi, “Aristotle,” 65.

conceptual thinker because he was a concrete thinker. In the transition from Plato to Aristotle, it was not the quality of thought which changed. It was, rather, the kinds of concrete particulars available for abstraction that changed. New was the now conceptual relationship which intervened between the concretes. Thus, Plato, as the Alexandrian editors observed, was truly Ὀμηρικώτατος,<sup>164</sup> in a way that Aristotle was not.

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<sup>164</sup> Murray, *Epic*, 295.

One imaginative moment seems now to matter more than the realities that followed. It was the first bullet I heard—so far from me that it “whined” like a journalist’s or a peacetime poet’s bullet. At that moment there was something not exactly like fear, much less like indifference: a little quavering signal that said, “This is War. This is what Homer wrote about.”

—C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

## 1. Metaphysics and Political Philosophy

There is a sense in which abstraction permits thinking about political philosophy separate from the question of being. The work of abstraction, after all, is to arrive at concepts independent of the concrete particulars in which the concepts are embodied. In this regard, war and peace depicted are more evidently ontological because the activity of war ends some kinds of being (e.g., particular biological and corporate civic existence) and begins other kinds of being (e.g., fame and power). This chapter will explore war and peace as alternative paradigms of being in Homer and then show how early and classical Greek philosophers dismantle Homer’s poetic mythology in the inexorable march toward the conceptual abstraction achieved by Aristotle.

## 2. Homeric Depiction

### a. The Third Homeric Hero: Hector

There are two epics by Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and each, it would seem, has its hero, Achilles and Odysseus, respectively. Already in the titles, however, there are



signs that the two works do not stand in such strict parallel. The title, “*Odyssey*” suggests that the work is about Odysseus. “*Iliad*,” by contrast, suggests that it is about Ilion, that is to say Troy. Professor Knox begins his “Introduction” to the translation of the *Iliad* by Robert Fagles:

“*Iliad*” is a word that means “a poem about Ilium” (i.e., Troy), and Homer’s great epic has been known as ‘The *Iliad*’ ever since the Greek historian Herodotus so referred to it in the fifth century B.C. But the title is not an adequate description of the contents of the poem, which are best summed up in its opening line: “the rage of Peleus’ son Achilles.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Iliad* is about Achilles and his rage, but it is not about that in the way that the *Odyssey* is, indeed, about Odysseus and his determination to get safely home. There is an *Achilleid* within the *Iliad*,<sup>2</sup> but though the *Iliad* begins with the wrath of Achilles, it ends with the funeral of Hector.<sup>3</sup> Odysseus has many foils in the *Odyssey*, but the only one who remains a fixed point throughout his home-going is Penelope, his wife. By contrast, though Achilles also has many foils, the story sharpens its focus once Hector has killed Patroclus. At the end of *Iliad* 16, it is Patroclus himself who, with his dying breath, frames the balance of the poem in his address to Hector:

“I’ll tell you one thing more; take it to heart.  
No long life is ahead for you. This day

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Knox, “Introduction,” in Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1990), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Lewis uses this term in the quotation which serves as the epigraph to the Introduction of this work, “Day after day and month after month we drove gloriously onward, tearing the whole *Achilleid* out of the *Iliad* and tossing the rest on one side, and then reading the *Odyssey* entire, till the music of the thing and the clear, bitter brightness that lives in almost every formula had become part of me.” C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955), 145.

<sup>3</sup> “Anger be now your song, immortal one,/ Akhilleus’ anger. (Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος)” *Il.* 1.1; Fitzgerald 11. “So they performed/ the funeral rites of Hektor, tamer of horses (Ὡς οἱ γ’ ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἑκτορος ἵπποδάμοιο).” *Il.* 24.804; Fitzgerald 594.

your death stands near, and your immutable end,  
at Prince Akhilleus' hands."<sup>4</sup>

Hector suggests to the body of Patroclus that Achilles might be the first to fall.<sup>5</sup> From that point, the poem's story-line drives relentlessly to the end. Either Achilles or Hector must die. Professor Redfield observes, "In some sense the story of the *Iliad* is the story of the relation between these two heroes."<sup>6</sup> *Iliad* 17 is occupied with the recovery of Patroclus's body, while Achilles' armor worn by Patroclus is left in the hands of Hector. Book 18 tells how Achilles received new and extraordinary armaments. In Book 19, Achilles and the Achaeans ready themselves for the coming assault on Trojan lines. Books 20 and 21 recount the battle with special attention to the movements of Achilles and Hector. Achilles and all the Achaean host rout the Trojans, driving them into the refuge of their walled city where they close the gates behind themselves. At the beginning of *Iliad* 22, Hector stands before the city wall to face alone the wrath of Achilles.<sup>7</sup> That image of Hector defending the city wall inspired philosophical reflection.

A substantial difference between Achilles and Hector in the philosophical reception of Homer is that the treatment of Hector is almost univocally positive, while Achilles is often corrected both in his words and deeds. For example, as quoted by Aristotle, Heraclitus takes Homer to task for Achilles' pronouncement against war, "Heraclitus blames the poet

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<sup>4</sup> *Il.* 16.850-53; Fitzgerald 403.

<sup>5</sup> *Il.* 16.859-61.

<sup>6</sup> Redfield, *Nature*, 27. Professor Redfield couples the first and last lines of the *Iliad*. *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Il.* 22.1-6.

who wrote ‘may strife perish from among gods and men’”<sup>8</sup> This line comes from Achilles’ lament for the fallen Patroclus. In the *Iliad*, it shows that even the paradigmatic warrior, heedless of his doom, does recognize the utter wretchedness of war. It is a moment of introspection which makes Achilles more humanly attractive to the modern reader. At least in Aristotle’s quotation, Heraclitus finds fault with Achilles for not embracing strife as the counterpoint to peace. From an entirely different perspective, Socrates of the *Republic* finds the behavior of Achilles toward the body of Hector so heinously impious that he expunges the account from Homer as “not to be believed,” “Nor is it true that he dragged the dead Hector around the tomb of Patroclus.”<sup>9</sup> Philosophers challenge the Homeric Achilles, the Greek ideal as warrior. While there is some preference for Hector before the wall of Troy, even he is diminished over the course of philosophy from Early Greek to peripatetic. The movement which shall be observed is from the fiercely irrational warrior, to the warrior whose courage is ordered by reason, and, finally, to a model of civic courage which equals, or at least nearly equals, the valor on the battlefield.

#### **b. Handiwork of Hephaestus**

War and peace as alternative expressions of being are strikingly depicted by Hephaestus on the shield he makes for Achilles. Achilles has finally been roused to battle by the death of this particular friend, Patroclus. Because Achilles had given his armor to Patroclus which Hector had taken from the dead hero as spoils of war, Achilles was without

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<sup>8</sup> *Eud. Eth.*, 7.1235a25-26 ; *Il.*, 18.107 ; Heraclitus A22 D.-K.; Kahn, 66-67 (LXXXI).

<sup>9</sup> *R.*3.391b5-6, referencing *Il.* 24.14-18; Cooper 1029.

armor.<sup>10</sup> Achilles expects to face Hector who would most likely be wearing the original and extraordinary armor of Achilles. Before Achilles could properly join battle he needed new armor and, somehow, armor more glorious than that which Patroclus had lost. Thetis, mother of Achilles, approaches Hephaestus, the immortal smith, with her request to fashion armor for Achilles.<sup>11</sup>

Hephaestus forges the shield with five layers of metal to make it as impenetrable as possible. On the face of the shield he chases scenes which give expression to the two Homeric paradigms of being under the one great sky of which principle nighttime constellations are depicted. The two scenes are of peace and war.<sup>12</sup>

The scene of peace begins with weddings and wedding feasts (*Iliad* 18.490-508). There is dancing in the streets. However idyllic the scene begins, there is a dispute between two men over a murder. One man claims that satisfaction has been paid, while the other says it has not. The crowd of people in the marketplace, and perhaps filling the streets because of the wedding, take sides. There are town officials who restrain the crowd, and bring the two disputants before the town elders. The outcome of their dispute is not stated. What seems significant is that the point shall be resolved according to the rule of law. The matter would be settled not by contest of arms or some other trial by ordeal, rather by the argument deemed most “straightforward.”

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<sup>10</sup> *Il.* 17.189-197.

<sup>11</sup> *Il.* 18.385-461.

<sup>12</sup> *Il.* 18.462-617.

The other scene is of war (*Iliad* 18.509-540). There is a town besieged. The besiegers argue over whether “to sack the town, or treat for half of all the treasure stored in the citadel.”<sup>13</sup> Inside the city wall, the townsmen prepare for battle. Leading in the maneuvers of war are Ares and Pallas Athena.<sup>14</sup> When the battle begins, Strife, Uproar and Fate join the fray.<sup>15</sup>

The text tells the reader that there are two scenes on the shield, but a third is described (*Iliad* 18.541-605),<sup>16</sup> an extended agricultural depiction with five sub-scenes. There is a broad field where ploughmen were busy with teams of oxen. As each team made the turn at the field’s edge someone approached the ploughman with a cup of sweet wine. The soil itself is black in its rich fertility.<sup>17</sup> Ploughland is succeeded by a field in harvest, “a king’s field.” Workers scythe the grain while others come behind them to bind the sheaves, followed in turn by children gleaning stray heads of grain. The king stands quietly watching all this work underway while under an oak tree within sight the harvest feast is being prepared.<sup>18</sup> That is succeeded by a vineyard in joyful harvest and then a pasture of cattle.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Il.* 18.510-12.

<sup>14</sup> *Il.* 18. 516-17.

<sup>15</sup> *Il.* 18. 535.

<sup>16</sup> There is not necessarily any significance in the numerical discrepancy. It is a commonplace of Biblical wisdom literature, for example, to have a progression of numbers from the statement of 1) the theme, the question, and 3) the answers. Proverbs 30:15-16 illustrates this, “The horseleach hath two daughters, crying, Give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough.”

<sup>17</sup> *Il.* 18. 541-49.

<sup>18</sup> *Il.* 18. 550-60.

<sup>19</sup> *Il.* 18. 561-72.

In the pasture scene a pair of lions creep in, and tear into a bull which the herds and dogs are unable to prevent. The agricultural depiction concludes with a dance in a beautiful valley village.

The scenes began with a depiction of the stars above. They conclude with Ocean enveloping all. The shield is explicitly a depiction of the cosmos.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Scholarly opinion about the significance of this shield ranges from deeming it indecipherable to recognizing its great importance. Professor James M. Redfield has some justice on his side in his statement that he does not understand the depiction on the shield itself and even finds the Homeric similes insoluble riddles, "If we attempt the interpretation of the similes by means of this pattern [those of the shield], no easy correlations leap to the eye. The similes of the *Iliad* are extraordinarily diverse in both their inner content and their application to the poetic context in which they occur, and probably no useful universal statements can be made about them. By noting recurrences, however, some points can be made." Redfield, *Nature*, 188.

Professor Jaeger, by contrast, finds Achilles's shield a rich source of Homeric disclosure. He describes the scenes, both natural and political. He finds in those scenes depictions of "the complete harmony of nature and human life in which the world is addressed as it is and not according to "the conventions of mere 'oughts.'" He writes, "Die vollkommene Harmonie der Natur und des Menschenlebens, die in der Schilderbeschreibung zu Tage tritt, herrscht überall in der homerischen Auffassung der Wirklichkeit. . . . Die letzten ethischen Schranken sind für Homer wie für die Griechen überhaupt Gesetze des Seins, nicht Konventionen eines blossen Sollens. Auf der Durchdringung der Welt mit diesem erweiterten Wirklichkeitssinn, an dem gemessen jeder blosser 'Realismus' unwirklich erscheint, beruht die unbegrenzte Wirkung des homerischen Epos." Jaeger, *Paideia*, 1.80-82. Thus, the world depicted on the shield stands in sharp contrast to the world according to Kant in which what is most truly real is determined precisely by "oughts."

Professor Jaeger sees in the shield the depiction of that Homeric reality which is larger and more integrated than "realism." He recognizes the overall paradigm of being in the depiction of the two cities, but he does not identify the sub-paradigms of peace and war. For all the excellence of his penetrating analysis he does not note the essential difference between the two cities: while he describes the presence and activity of the gods in the city at war, he does not observe their absence in the city at peace. The circumstances around the shield as well as the scenes depicted require closer scrutiny.

Vico believes he understands the shield clearly. He interprets the depictions as expressing Homer's understanding of the world, i.e., "the history of the world described by the same Homer as depicted on the shield of Achilles." *NS* 681. The entire treatment is *NS* 681-86. His particular contribution in interpreting the shield is to perceive that the scene of battle is warfare between the two cities which are the cities, respectively, of the heroes and of the people. *NS* 683. He interprets the two cities in relation to Eumaeus "when he spoke of the two cities of his fatherland, both ruled by his father, between which the citizens had all their property clearly divided (meaning that there was not part of citizenship which they shared in common." *NS* 683. On Vico's reading, the battle scene is not like the Achaeans besieging Troy, rather it is like the conflict in *Iliad* 2 when some of the people, and most notably Thersites, presume to speak against Agamemnon. Odysseus, having seized Agamemnon's royal staff, speaks persuasively to men of rank but violently to common soldiers. *Il.* 2.182-277. If Vico is correct, then in the modern sense, there is only one city physically with concentric political spheres, both of which are ruled by the king.

What is most interesting about those scenes is that the scenes of peace are godless while the war scene is populated with gods who are clearly on the side of the heroes. This is the most vivid depiction of what is implicit throughout the *Iliad*: the gods are responsible for human woe while human felicity must be worked out by men and women themselves. The shield brings forward the Homeric themes. The depiction of godfilled war verses godless peace raises the question of atheism in the Homeric poems. For Professor Burnet, the *Iliad* can be read as nearly atheistic:

The spirit of the Ionian civilization had been thoroughly secular, and this was, no doubt, one of the causes that favoured the rise of science. The origin of this secular spirit is to be found in the world described by Homer. . . . It cannot be said that the Olympian gods are regarded with reverence in the *Iliad*, and sometimes they are not treated seriously.<sup>21</sup>

Professor Burnet reveals his own prejudices when he describes the putatively secular character of the Ionian culture as one cause of ancient science. It is blatantly false to say that the Olympians “are not treated seriously,” and if they are not revered in some Burnetian sense, they are feared. One counterfactual is powerful as refutation. At the end of Book 6, Homer records:

But all night long  
Zeus the Profound made thunder overhead  
while pondering calamities to come,  
and men turned pale with fear. Tilting their cups  
they poured out wine upon the ground; no man  
would drink again til he had spilt his cup  
to heaven’s overlord.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*, 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Il.* 7.478-81; Fitzgerald 177.

The Achaeans and Trojans alike took the gods seriously and paid them their due. At the same time, Professor Burnet has rightly pointed toward attitudes about the gods as depicted in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Professor Benardete notes that the gods are absent in *Iliad* 6.<sup>23</sup> He argues that divine absence is a kind of final cause of the *Odyssey*, “The occlusion of the gods, toward which the *Odyssey* is working, puts the poet through the Muse in the position of being the sole authority about the gods.”<sup>24</sup> He adds, “Odysseus enters upon his adventures proper without the gods.”<sup>25</sup> He even suggests that “God” has become a mere placeholder in the *Odyssey*, “‘God’ is just a way of hiding from others one’s own lack of caution.”<sup>26</sup> While the word is too strong if it stand unqualified, there is, nevertheless, an element of *Götterdämmerung* in the *Odyssey*.

There is also, explicit in the text, the famous charge against the gods as the cause of human misery, acknowledged by Zeus at the beginning of the *Odyssey*,<sup>27</sup> which could allow a reading of the poem as depicted theodicy. Something is afoot. It is Professor Murray, in his clear-eyed moderation, who discerns the theological shift which has occurred. The understanding of the divine had already changed substantially from more primitive views, “For Homer there are no cow-goddesses nor yet cow-headed goddesses, no owl-goddesses nor yet owl-headed goddesses; only a goddess in supremely beautiful form who takes a

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<sup>23</sup> “To return now to the gods. Athena and Hera return to Olympus at the end of the fifth book, ‘having stopped baneful Ares from his slaughter of men,’ and the sixth book announces the departure of all the gods (6.1).” Benardete, *Argument*, 40.

<sup>24</sup> Benardete, *Bow*, 48. See also his discussion on p 106.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>27</sup> *Od.* 132-43. On this, see Benardete, *Bow*, 83.



blameless interest in cows or is attended by a faithful owl.”<sup>28</sup> In this respect, Xenophanes was wrong when he opined:

But if horses or oxen or lions had hands  
or could draw with their hands and accomplish such works as men,  
horses would draw the figures of the gods as similar to horses, the oxen as  
similar to oxen, and they would make the bodies  
of the sort which each of them had.<sup>29</sup>

The implication is that humans fashioned gods after their own image, but Professor Murray makes the point that they only did so after they stopped fashioning them after the images of cows and owls. It apparently did not occur to Xenophanes, from the extant fragments, that anthropomorphism was a recent development in Greek theology. There were older, blood-drenched myths (e.g., Kronos eating his children at their births) which antedate Homer. “To us they sound strange, these myths,” Professor Walter F. Otto observes, “and so they did to the Homeric age also.”<sup>30</sup> In Homer, there are only the remnants of Kronos’s divine infanticide. For example, Homer has Poseidon explain how he and his brothers, Zeus and Hades—the sons of Kronos—came to divide dominion of the world.<sup>31</sup> The closer details of family relations are omitted. Hesiod, writing after the *terminus ante quem* (680 B.C.) for the Homeric components, “first tells the story.”<sup>32</sup> One might suppose that Kronos eating his children was merely created after Homer, but not so. For Hesiod, those stories had become

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>29</sup> Xenophanes B15 D.-K.; Leshner 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> Walter F. Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion*, trans. Moses Hadas (New York: Octagon Books, 1978), 37.

<sup>31</sup> *Il.* 15.187-95.

<sup>32</sup> Otto, *Gods*, 36. See Hesiod *Theogony* 137-38, 154 ff. 453 ff.

safe to tell again as literature. For Homer, for some reason they were not to be told.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the Homeric culture still possessed a real dread for the elemental realities of which those stories gave an account. Because of the diachronic character of the Homeric epics, it is difficult to generalize about how they stand in relation to older strata of mythology. For example, Professor Redfield remarks on the relationship of the “Iliadic gods” to the forces of nature, “These Iliadic gods may use the means of nature—thunderbolt and earthquake—but they do not guarantee a cosmos; their interventions are erratic and personal.”<sup>34</sup> That is a fine

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<sup>33</sup> Though Professor Otto’s entire account is not adopted here, nevertheless his discernment of the large lines on this question seems apt. See Otto, *Gods*, 34-39. See also Herbert Jennings Rose and Herbert William Parke, “Kronos,” OCD, 574.

<sup>34</sup> Redfield, *Nature*, 76. See his discussion on “The Problem of the Gods.” Ibid., 75-78. Beyond this point, however, the present interpretation departs from that of Professor Redfield when he writes, “Most important, the gods of the *Iliad* are lacking in *numen*; they are in fact the chief source of comedy in the poem. . . . Just as the epic tells, not of men, but of heroes, so also it tells stories, not of gods conceived as actual, but of literary gods.” Ibid., 76. That is anachronistic. That the Homeric poems became literature is certain, but becoming literature was a process still underway during the lifetime of Plato and which became substantially complete through the work of the Alexandrian editors as has been argued in the “Introduction.” A difficulty and perhaps the determinative difficulty in Professor Redfield’s interpretation is that he reads the Homeric text as if it were synchronic with its audience, “Insofar as the gods of the *Iliad* are the same as the gods accepted by Homer’s audience . . . to this degree the peculiarities of the Homeric gods fall in the same category as thought-within-the-chest and purifying sulfur. The Homeric gods are then features of an actual culture.” Ibid., 74. In fact, one of the contributing factors to the fluidity of being in the Homeric poems is their diachronic character. The poems constitute a river into which one cannot even step once. The Homeric gods are all the more in motion because they are themselves *becoming* as the story unfolds, and not only *becoming* within the text but also in relation to their auditorship.

Professor Redfield seems to reject explicitly this diachronic character. He surveys the excellence of Sir Moses Finley’s work, but then discovers a problem; Sir Moses situates the action of the Homeric poems in the Mycenaean period, but clearly “many details belong earlier or later than that.” He continues, “Shall we then say that the world of the poem is an amalgam of many periods? . . . Eventually we are forced back on ‘the kind of thing men say or think’; we speak of unfamiliar features of the Homeric world as a mixture of elements drawn from Homer’s own culture, of historical memories, and of poetic conventions. . . . The convention is for the sake of the story, and the story has a universal meaning.” Ibid., 75. That is exactly the kind of anachronism which attempts to understand Homer in post-Kantian or even merely in Post-Cartesian terms rather than in Homeric terms. It is an example of exactly that problem which Vico said it took him twenty years to realize fully, as he says in ¶ 378, which was examined closely in I.i. The central point of that passage bears repeating again here, “It is equally beyond our power to enter into the vast imagination of those first men, whose minds were not in the least abstract, refined or spiritualized, because they were entirely immersed in the senses, buffeted by the passions, buried in the body. That is why we said above that we can scarcely understand, still less imagine, how those first men thought who founded gentile humanity” NS 378.

juxtaposition of gods and nature. He also makes a clear distinction: the gods are active in the world, but “they do not guarantee a cosmos.” At the same time, there is more distance between the Iliadic gods and nature than between the deities in pre-Homeric mythology and nature of which one often finds only remnants in Homer. One describes the transition from the human worship of natural beings and forces toward the privileging of rationality as the most divine which mortals could experience. An early depiction of privileged rationality can be seen in Alcinous. Eventually, it will become Aristotle’s teleological goal of the truly human being (e.g., *Eth. Nic.* 10.1178b8-23). The anthropomorphism of which Xenophanes complains is an intermediate between pure elemental divinity and divinity of contemplative rationality.

In the scenes of peace on Achilles’ shield there is trouble, but that trouble has context in the great order of being. In the village where there is a wedding, feasting, and the ongoing business of the marketplace, there is strife too, but strife resolved by argument heard in the village court. It is argument before the wise elders that prevails and not force.

In the extended agricultural depiction there is a harmony of man and nature. Men and women work with the rhythms of nature to produce not only prosperity but elegance and even sweetness: the toiling ploughmen are rewarded at the end of each furrow with a drink of sweet wine. In a sense, they work, but they do not labor. There is also hierarchy, but the

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Professor Griffin challenges Professor Redfield for his “essentially sociological and anthropological approach.” Griffin, *Life and Death*, 145. He argues for the numinous quality of the Homeric gods against both Professors Redfield and Kirk. Ibid., 145-49. In fact, Professor Redfield identifies himself readily with the position of Professor Kirk. Redfield, *Nature*, 249 n2. In the expanded edition of 1994, he responds to Professor Griffin. Ibid., 225-47.

king is a true father of his people, and no tyrant. He stands amidst his people, providing for them even as they provide for him and for their commonwealth.<sup>35</sup>

In the agricultural depiction too there is trouble. Lions can still invade carefully domesticated nature, but not in a way that destroys the harmony. Dogs and men know their boundaries; they do their best against lions but not foolishly or purposelessly. The harmony of the preceding scenes culminates in the final scene with music and dancing.<sup>36</sup> The term which Professor Fitzgerald translates “magical dancing” (ἡμερόεντα χορόν) might better be rendered “lovely dancing, full of longing.”<sup>37</sup> Native gymnasts lead the dances with tumbles and handstands. Dancing balances work. The physical balance of the gymnasts is a metaphor for the balance in life. Work and leisure are correlative activities.

War, by contrast, is a zero-sum game. Ares awards glory to one side only. While both sides can lose, only one side can win. Besieger or besieged must win out. It is in that enterprise which the gods engage, as Hephaestus depicts war on the shield for Achilles. In godless peace man is free to fashion a society in which everyone can share in the prosperity of bread and wine and in the well-balanced joy of the dance. It is a god who depicts this condemnation of the gods. It is on the shield of the wrathful warrior that Hephaestus engraves so poignantly the fruitlessness of war and the human community which can be fashioned only in peace. Perhaps Hephaestus can see these truths as no other god can because he had been fated for destruction by his own mother on account of his legs being

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<sup>35</sup> Vico argues for the development of such a paternal monarchy. *NS* 555-60. Eumaeus was the son of a paternal monarch. The political idyll of his homeland was disturbed by a seducing interloper. *Od.* 15.411-84.

<sup>36</sup> *Il.* 18. 590-604. Fitzgerald 454.

<sup>37</sup> “Answering to the desires, lovely, delightful, charming, ravishing.” Cunliffe, *Lexicon*, s.v. ἡμερόεις.

crippled.<sup>38</sup> Thetis had hidden and protected him. Having nearly been a victim of the fickle, wrathful and capricious divine nature, he could see how humans are victims of that same divine nature.

The first paradigm, then, is that of harmonious being which humans shape in relation to nature. Humans, domesticated animals, domesticated plants, human artifacts, and even wild creatures establish a balance in which they can live as a single whole. That single whole embraces numerous metaphysical relations: justice (before the council of elders), friendship (among the workers emblematically expressed by the cup of wine in the field, the dancing, and in the benign relationship between the king and his subjects), contract (the wedding), the rule of law (the officials restrain the people when they take sides over the dispute arising from the murder), wisdom (as embodied in the village council). There is a preference for a mutual governing through friendship, most broadly conceived, rather than through force. In this paradigm peace is inextricably bound up with the several metaphysical relations, which are not expressed conceptually, rather emblematically.

The second paradigm is that of war when the gods assist humans in destroying the harmony in order for one person or group to gain the upper hand against another.

### **3. Early Greek Reflections: Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and Empedocles**

According to Xenophanes, connecting the gods with warfare was part of Homer's discrediting of divine beings. In B1, the after dinner recitation "deals neither with the battles of Titans nor Giants/ nor Centaurs, fictions of old (πλάσματα τῶν προτέρων),/ nor furious

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<sup>38</sup> *Il.* 18. 393-97.

conflicts—for there is no use in these./ But it is good always to hold the gods in high regard.”<sup>39</sup> His denigration of “furious conflicts” may be a challenge not only to the violence of mythological stories but to the ideal of the warrior as an *ipso facto* good, as opposed to war’s being an instrumental good. Professor Leshner suggests that by saying “there is no use (χρηστόν) in these,” Xenophanes has initiated what will become the criterion of “civic utility.”<sup>40</sup> To associate “furious conflicts” with the gods is, it seems, to hold them in low regard, though the gods as instigators of war are not listed in B11 when Xenophanes gives details of Homer’s libel of the gods. Xenophanes is sure that natural beings are not divine,<sup>41</sup> nor can they be understood in terms characteristic of humans.<sup>42</sup> Though the divine being transcends human knowing,<sup>43</sup> Xenophanes seems to anticipate Plato and Aristotle in conceiving of God in relation to thought.<sup>44</sup> For all his innovations, however, he seems to

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<sup>39</sup> Xenophanes B1 D.-K.; Leshner, 10-13.

<sup>40</sup> Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 54.

<sup>41</sup> Xenophanes B28-33 D.-K.

<sup>42</sup> Xenophanes B14, 15, 16, 23 D.-K.

<sup>43</sup> Xenophanes B34 D.-K.

<sup>44</sup> Xenophanes B25 D.-K., e.g., *Ti.* 71a-e, *Eth. Nic.* 10.1178b20-26. Professor Leshner discusses this fragment of Xenophanes in relation to Aristotle’s “Unmoved Mover” in *Meta.* 12.1072a21-24. He observes that “the idea of a being who moves all things by the exercise of thought without—as fragment 26 maintains—himself moving at all, has long been regarded as one of Xenophanes’ most original and enduring ideas.” Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 109. Professor Leshner seems to infer that thought here is immaterial for which there is no warrant in the Xenophanean text, nor in contemporary culture, “For those in his audience familiar with Homer’s famous depiction of a Zeus able to shake great Olympus with a single nod of the brow . . . Xenophanes’ words here in fragment 25 would have conveyed a clear message: ‘No, the really greatest god can shake *all things*, *without any physical effort at all*.’” He contrasts “that crudely physical image of divine power and his own idea of an effortlessly telekinetic divine *noos*.” *Ibid.*, 110. That is sheer anachronism. There is no evidence that Xenophanes conceived thought as immaterial (or non-physical). Professor Morgan surveys the relationships among Xenophanes and the texts of Plato and Aristotle cited above. Michael L. Morgan, “Plato and Greek Religion,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 240.

have respected the impenetrable barrier between mortal and immortal, “Thus when the people of Elea asked Xenophanes if they should or should not sacrifice to Leucothea and mourn for her, he advised them not to mourn for her if they thought her a goddess, and not to sacrifice to her if they thought her a mortal woman.”<sup>45</sup> Human behavior proper to other humans and human behavior proper to divinities are mutually exclusive.

Heraclitus regards warfare far more favorably than does Xenophanes. Warfare is part of the cosmic harmony, “War is shared and conflict is justice.”<sup>46</sup> Professor Kahn rightly sees this affirmation of war as an expression of Heraclitean “monism,” “Only at the cosmic level can Conflict and Justice be reconciled and seen as one.”<sup>47</sup> Warfare is progenitor of humans and revealer of character, “War is father of all and king of all; and some he has shown as gods, others men; some he has made slaves, others free.”<sup>48</sup> Professor Jaeger comments on this fragment, “War thus becomes, in a way, Heraclitus’ primary philosophical experience. . . It is the constant interchange and struggle of opposites in the world, including war and peace.”<sup>49</sup> In contrast to other authors’ readings of Homer, Heraclitus in a testimonium by Aristotle, criticizes Homer for having Achilles—the paradigmatic warrior—wish warfare away, “Heraclitus blames the poet who wrote ‘may strife perish from among gods and

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<sup>45</sup> Xenophanes A 13 D.-K.; *Rhet.* 2.1400b5-8. Professor Leshner observes this point when he notes in “A13 the sharp demarcation between mortal and immortal.” Leshner, *Xenophanes*, 114.

<sup>46</sup> Heraclitus B80 D.-K.; Kahn, 66-67.

<sup>47</sup> Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 206.

<sup>48</sup> Heraclitus B53 D.-K.; Kahn, 66-67 (LXXXIII).

<sup>49</sup> Jaeger, *Theology*, 118-19.

men”<sup>50</sup> It is interesting to note here that Aristotle juxtaposes Homer and Heraclitus as representing two different views.<sup>51</sup> One also recalls the opposition of Plato’s protagonists to Heraclitus and Plato’s affirmation (or at least non-negative view) of Xenophanes.<sup>52</sup> Though the Heraclitean teaching on war is not explicitly cited by Plato’s Socrates, nevertheless one can see how Heraclitus taught a monism of becoming and how war was part of that becoming: war is neither good nor evil, it is part and parcel of cosmic becoming. As shall be seen below, Plato’s Socrates argues that warfare is contrary to the divine nature. For Heraclitus, war is a principle greater than the gods. Professor Kahn makes note of this in respect to B53:

[The universal principle of opposition] is personified here in the phrase ‘father of all and king of all’, echoing the Homeric formula for Zeus: ‘father of men and gods’. . . . Thus War figures not merely as a substitute for Zeus but as a kind of super-Zeus, like ‘the divine one’ of XXX (D.114). . . . This personification of the chief cosmic principle, in terms of imagery normally associated with the king of the gods, prepares and explains the announcement that ‘the wise one alone is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus’ (CXVIII, D. 32).<sup>53</sup>

As was discussed in II.i, there were gods antecedent to the Olympians. That there should be divinity beyond the Olympians was not new, but there is a recognition by Heraclitus that there is a principle, a *logos*, greater than the Olympians. This too is not in itself new since the boundary of mortal-immortal was a principle which Zeus either had to obey or felt

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<sup>50</sup> Heraclitus A22 D.-K.; Kahn, 66-67 (LXXXI).

<sup>51</sup> *Eud. Eth.*, 7.1235a25-26 ; *Il.*, 18.107. Professor Kahn observes, “This attack on Homer . . . must be connected with Heraclitus’ own view of war in LXXXII-LXXXIII [B80 and 53 D.-K.]” Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 204.

<sup>52</sup> E.g., Socrates: *Th.* 152e1-9; Eleatic Stranger: *Sph.* 242d4-7.

<sup>53</sup> Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 208.



obliged to obey. What is new with Heraclitus is the identification of a rational principle—as opposed to a non-rational principle—which is above and beyond the Olympians and which while not exactly mythological is still personified. Perhaps this is a mid-point from imaginative genus to metaphor proper. There is still a syllogism as gathering of being; it is named. In imaginative genus, the gathering into a concrete image is of natural beings or forces (e.g., apples or thunder). In rational metaphor, the gathering into a concrete has only a metaphorical relationship to a kind of ratiocination (e.g., Plato’s Socrates’ use of Odysseus saying, “Endure my heart,” or the Lady Philosophy of Boethius). In rational metaphor, there is no real—meaning existential—relationship between the metaphor and that which it represents. Heraclitus, however, sees a real gathering into a named and personified rational principle (e.g., Warfare) all the wars that ever have been and ever shall be. Rational principle (*logos*) is higher than the Olympian gods, but it still can be personified, named, and known according to the witness of B56, “Men are deceived in the recognition of what is obvious, like Homer who was wisest of all the Greeks.”<sup>54</sup>

War, peace, and the divine nature remain inter-related, and yet in a way which the keepers of mythology had not realized. Heraclitus perceives the *logos* behind the myths. What Xenophanes regards as scandalous, Heraclitus sees as the balance of cosmic order, “The ordering, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measures going out.”<sup>55</sup> The order of all-that-is stands higher than gods and humans alike. The decisive move made by Heraclitus is to

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<sup>54</sup> Heraclitus B56 D.-K.; Kahn, 38-39.

<sup>55</sup> Heraclitus B30 D.-K.; Kahn, 44-45 (XXXVII). See also Heraclitus B1 and 50 D.-K.

understand the world rationally and, thus, is an important step toward rational metaphysics. At the same time, the approach of Heraclitus is not naturalistic in the way of Xenophanes. Although there is no Heraclitean fragment on the rainbow, one can well imagine that for Heraclitus the story of the rainbow as a colored cloud does not negate the story of the rainbow as a goddess. Both accounts are signs of an order which can be discerned in natural and divine beings alike, “Eyes and ears are poor witness for men if their souls do not understand the language.”<sup>56</sup> Not only the Lord of Delphi, but the very world itself, “neither declares nor conceals, but gives a sign.”<sup>57</sup> It may be that Heraclitus was not merely ambiguous toward mythology, rather that he discovered an ambiguity in mythology itself, an ambiguity that appeared obvious to him and which he now uncovers for others. What he found in the accounts of Homer and Hesiod, but which neither author seemed to understand is that war and peace and their relationship to the divine nature are all hidden in the *logos* of the world which the wise, who know how to read signs, may be able to discern. If so, it may also be that it was precisely the esoteric character of Homer which Heraclitus faulted and which Plato’s Socrates thought one of Homer’s few virtues. In a passage which has been examined in I.ii.2.g, Socrates of *Theaetetus* says of Homer, Heraclitus, Protagoras, and their army in contrast to “the very crude people” who explain their teachings to people on the street, “These others, whose mysteries I am going to tell you, are a much more subtle type.

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<sup>56</sup> Heraclitus B107 D.-K.; Kahn, 34-35 (XVI). That Heraclitus explicitly disagrees with Xenophanes is attested by D.-K. Heraclitus B40.

<sup>57</sup> Heraclitus B93 D.-K.; Kahn, 42-43 (XXXIII).

These mysteries begin from the principle on which all that we have just been saying depends, namely that everything is really in motion, and there is nothing but motion.”<sup>58</sup>

Heraclitus not only had a more positive view of warfare, he also used a military image in relation to “civic utility:” “The people must fight for the law as for the city wall.”<sup>59</sup> Heraclitus may be alluding to Hector’s courageous stand before the wall of Troy. Even if Heraclitus is not thinking of Hector here, nevertheless he uses the image of military valor (i.e., defending the city wall) as metaphor for civic valor (i.e., defending the law). Just as one is only safe within the city wall, one is also only safe within the law. The law, like the wall, is built up law by law, like one stone laid upon another, a palisade with one stake made effective by its continuousness with all the others. Professor Murray’s reflections on the wall during and after a period of instability are helpful:

One only concrete thing existed for him to make henceforth the centre of his allegiance, to supply the place of his old family hearth, his gods, his tribal customs and sanctities. It was a circuit wall of stones, a *Polis* ([Note:]This is the use in Homer, preserved later in the words *πολιζω, πόλισμα*); the wall which he and his fellows, men of diverse tongues and worships united by a tremendous need, had built up to be the one barrier between themselves and a world of enemies. Inside the wall he could take breath. He could become for a time again, a man again, instead of a terrified beast.<sup>60</sup>

The city wall has become a metaphor, though not yet only a metaphor; it remained a physically existing thing even as it became a metaphor for laws which were not physically existing. The city wall stood as part of military defense, but also became a metaphor for life in the city during times of peace. The city wall stood between the city-dwellers and their

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<sup>58</sup> *Tht.* 156a2-5; Cooper 173.

<sup>59</sup> Heraclitus B44 D.-K.; Kahn, 58-59 (LXV).

<sup>60</sup> Murray, *Epic*, 58.

physical enemies without; it became a metaphor for what stood between citizens and the spiritual enemies of greed, cruelty and power. In this line from Heraclitus a city had become less a place of geography and had become more a constellation of ideas. Professor Kahn comments on this fragment, “Heraclitus’ conception of the law which is ‘common to all’ and whose preservation is as vital as the city wall which protects the inhabitants from pillage and massacre.”<sup>61</sup> The law as concept has displaced the wall as concrete; the wall persists, but no longer as a physical entity, rather now as metaphor.

There are several implications to be noted. First, a city wall is a defense against a foreign enemy. Second, the law is a defense against a domestic enemy, even perhaps against one’s self, in the sense that the law externalizes interior virtue. Third, there is a shift from military courage to civic courage, a point which will be discussed below with respect to Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Fourth, with respect to these shifts, one must reflect on defense of the law in ways that are more diverse than defense of the wall even when in some way the defense is of the same kind. For example, rhetoric could be used in defending both the wall and the law. In defending the wall, a general could harangue his troops or insult the troops of a besieging enemy. In defending the law, one could persuade a citizen to obey the law or a judge to uphold law. One might also consider that the best defense of the law is good formulation of laws; thus rhetoric is engaged in deliberation prior to the adoption of laws, whether by monarch, oligarchs or democratic assembly. The primary defense of the city wall, though, is physical through military engagement, whether offensive or defensive. Insofar as there is a physical defense of the law, it is primarily through arrest and the

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<sup>61</sup> Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 180.

administration of punishment. A great deal, then, is implied with respect to war and peace in this one fragment of Heraclitus.

Thinking of B 44 with respect to Hector before the wall of Troy, is Hector replaced by a wise magistrate or an able advocate? Perhaps in part, the answer is already given in the depiction on Achilles' shield. There is the assault upon and defense of the city wall in the second scene. In the first scene, there is a depiction which might be read as a defense of the law:

A crowd, then, in a market place, and there  
two men at odds over satisfaction owed  
for a murder done: one claimed that all was paid,  
and publicly declared it; his opponent  
turned the reparation down, and both  
demanded a verdict from an arbiter,  
as people clamored in support of each,  
and criers restrained the crowd. The town elders  
sat in a ring, on chairs of polished stone,  
the staves of clarion criers in their hands,  
with which they sprang up, each to speak in turn,  
and in the middle were two golden measures  
to be awarded him whose argument  
would be the most straightforward.<sup>62</sup>

That scene can be read as a people fighting for the law in contrast to the next scene which can be read as the people fighting for the city wall. The various estates of the city are engaged in the civil conflict: the people (λαός), elders (γέροντες), criers (κήρυκες), and the claimants themselves (ἀρωγοί, a word which here might well be understood in the literal and legal sense of “advocates”). There is due process in which deliberation of arguments (ἰθύντατα εἶποι, literally a judgement to see who had “the straightest speeches”) was central. Even without imputing intentional reflection by Heraclitus on the shield of Achilles, one can

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<sup>62</sup> *Il.* 18.497-508; Fitzgerald 451.

say that what is depicted in the first two scenes on the shield of Achilles is expressed in the metaphor of the Heraclitean aphorism.<sup>63</sup>

The thought of Empedocles resonates with Heraclitus's acceptance of strife as foundational in the order of the universe.<sup>64</sup> B17 evidences Empedocles working out in greater detail the harmony between strife and love. The vocabulary of strife varies among authors. Homer uses and distinguishes *ἔρις* and *νεῖκος*,<sup>65</sup> but only the former is personified as a deity.<sup>66</sup> Empedocles prefers *νεῖκος* for his personification. Homeric personification shows strife as a goddess. She is another example of the imaginative genus in depictive metaphysics. Empedocles, by contrast with Homer and in agreement with Heraclitus, seems to regard strife as a principle. He clearly does not reject mythology, but even when he cites the gods of the Olympian pantheon, they seem more like principles than divinities, "Hear first the four roots of all things: shining Zeus, life-bringing Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis who with her tears waters mortal springs."<sup>67</sup> Joy is identified with Aphrodite.<sup>68</sup> In B50 Empedocles speaks of Iris the rainbow as a force of nature but without discounting her status

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<sup>63</sup> This comparison seems more in order as a device for interpreting B 44 than the suppositional approach of Professor Kahn acknowledges, "We know nothing of the precise political situation in Ephesus." Nevertheless, he still goes on to assert, "But we can understand the ideological background in terms of Solon's analysis of a political crisis in Athens about a century earlier." Kahn, *Heraclitus*, 179-180. A comparison, whether to Homer or to Solon, would seem more prudent than the supposition of background.

<sup>64</sup> "As in Heraclitus, 'there is local change', to use Barnes' words, 'but global stability' (*The Presocratic Philosophers* II, 13)." KRS 288.

<sup>65</sup> *Il.*, 4.37-38.

<sup>66</sup> *Il.* 4.440; 5.518, 740, 11.3, 73; 18.535; 20.48. Cunliffe, *Lexicon*, 158.

<sup>67</sup> KRS 286; Empedocles B6 D.-K. See also B3, 23, 35, 44, 98, 107.

<sup>68</sup> Empedocles B17, 1.24 D.-K. See also B86-87.

as a deity, “Iris brings wind or great gusts of rain from the sea.”<sup>69</sup> In a way similar to the thought of Heraclitus and yet distinctive at the same time, it may be that Empedocles stands mid-point in the transition from imaginative to rational genus, from concrete to concept. Natural forces are still explicable by divinities, but the explanation is more developed in terms of the logical relations at work. B134 may support this view by repudiating anthropomorphic depiction of divinity, similar to Xenophanes B15-16, but without a naturalistic reduction, in contrast to Xenophanes B32.<sup>70</sup> Divinity as principle is perhaps most explicit in B96 where Empedocles explains how the body is wondrously knit together, “And kindly earth received in its broad melting-pots two parts of the glitter of Nestis out of eight, and four of Hepahaestus; and they became white bones, marvelously joined by the gluing of Harmonia.”<sup>71</sup> In B128, he does seem to banish the fierce gods including Ares, all of whom must give place to Aphrodite, but Empedocles does not repudiate mythology here so much as rearrange it. At least in the explicit text of the fragment, he does not challenge war rather animal sacrifice.

The idea of underlying principles which hold the world in balance is as strong in his fragments as in those of Heraclitus, though much more extensively and explicitly worked out than in Heraclitus. Based upon extant fragments, Heraclitus is a philosophical oracle;

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<sup>69</sup> Empedocles B50 D.-K.

<sup>70</sup> The repudiation is clearer than the affirmation. The divinity is φρήν which D.-K. translates as “Geist” and KRS as “mind.” The latter is clearly wrong and sheer anachronism; the former, only a little less bad. As has been discussed in II.i, φρήν is physical. The divinity is purely the thinking organ. Empedocles B134 may relate to Xenophanes B23-26, especially 25.

<sup>71</sup> KRS 302. The translation of D.-K. captures something of the magical beauty in the last sentence of this fragment (τὰ δ’ ὄστέα λευκὰ γέροντο/Ἀρμονίης κόλλησιν ἀρηρότα θεσπεσίηθεν), “Das wurden die weißen Knochen, durch der Harmonie Leimkräfte aneinander gefügt mit göttlicher Schönheit.” Empedocles B96 D.-K.

Empedocles, a philosophical poet. Empedoclean imagery contributes to the new Empedoclean rationality, but without undermining the reality of the images. Empedocles depicts the balance of the world between strife and the love of friendship (φιλότης). Friendship draws all things together, and strife drives them apart in an unchanging cycle. From the drawing together and driving apart emerge the one and the many, generation and corruption (in the local sense), stability and change.<sup>72</sup> Empedocles does not speak in terms of war and peace rather in terms of the principles which stand under war and peace. If Ares is banished, nevertheless strife as an essential principle in the world's balance is not.

Early Greek philosophers comment upon war, peace, and the divine nature. The cumulative effect of their writings is to move Greek understanding from an identification of the gods with entities of nature or as personally manipulating human affairs. War and peace seem, in sum, somewhat decoupled from direct divine activity. Their contributions create new questions. If war and peace are human activities expressive of fundamental principles of the world and not the result of divine intervention, then what is the relationship of war and peace in human society? If the gods are not immortal and more powerful versions of the humans they direct, then what is the divine nature? Given the physical character of *phren*, to say that gods do not have hands, feet and genitals but are pure *phren* is a shift but it still leaves deity as understood in terms of human activity even if it is the highest human activity. The Homeric view has been in some part dismissed, in some part explored, and in some part expanded. Plato's Socrates has these views and questions as part of his heritage as he seeks

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<sup>72</sup> Empedocles B17.1-13 D.-K.



to develop a rational understanding of war and peace and of the divine nature, but divorced from each other.

#### 4. Plato's Separation of Theology from War

Plato's Protagoras declares that "the art of war" is part of "the art of politics."<sup>73</sup>

Though Plato has given this line to one of Socrates' interlocutors rather than to Socrates himself, this line represents well the view of war throughout the entire Platonic corpus. For Plato, the politics of war completely displaces the theology of war. Illustrative of this decisive shift is the Athenian Stranger's review in the *Laws* of Spartan history in relation to the Trojan War. The Stranger tells the story in terms of political events rather than in terms of divine events of which the Homeric poems are replete.<sup>74</sup> When the Stranger speaks about "god" here, it is a kind of generic god and not Zeus or any of the Olympian pantheon. These are "things said according to god and nature" (κατὰ θεόν πως εἰρημένα καὶ κατὰ φύσιν).<sup>75</sup> The things said, however, are political and not theological. The Stranger analyzes fifth century Athenian warfare in light of a speech by Odysseus against Agamemnon. He holds up Marathon and Plataea as models of the right kind of warfare against the democratic success in the sea battle of Salamis. The gods have nothing to do with the question; the

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<sup>73</sup> *Prt.* 322b5; Cooper 757.

<sup>74</sup> *L.* 3.681e1-683b6; Cooper 1370-72.

<sup>75</sup> *L.* 3.682a2.

matter is pure politics.<sup>76</sup> This decisive shift may reflect a characteristic of the Homeric poems: the heroes behave better than the gods.<sup>77</sup>

Socrates of the *Republic* argues adamantly that inciting warfare is inconsistent with the divine nature. He explicitly says that in the city he is describing, a poet may not recite the “tale of Troy” without making clear “that these things are not the work of a god.”<sup>78</sup> There is a loophole for this injunction. If gods are said to cause war, or other events which are deemed evil, then the poet must show “that the actions of the gods are good and just, and that those they punish are benefited thereby.”<sup>79</sup> Justice rightly defined is determinative. It is not enough that war is retributive. The Achaean campaign against Troy would qualify by that criterion. To be just, a war would have to benefit the one against whom it is waged. While Socrates expresses this exception in very few lines, he nevertheless states seminally a theory of just war. For example, if a country were governed by a murderous dictator who committed acts of aggression against his own people and neighboring countries, a war against him could not be called “good and just” unless it could be shown that not only the condition of the people in the tyrant’s country as well as the neighboring countries would be ameliorated, but also that the tyrant himself would be benefitted.

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<sup>76</sup> L.4.706a8-b3. Add to this passage a certain irony, if the thesis is accepted that the Athenian Stranger is the Socratic Odysseus, it is he who here quotes Homer’s Odysseus.

<sup>77</sup> Professor Murray makes this point, though he may overstate his case, “The human beings in Homer always maintain their dignity and self-respect. No hero is a liar or coward. None is drunken or loose-lived or vicious. None tortures his enemy. But the gods: that is quite a different matter. They are capable of anything. They not only practice torture . . . but they lose their dignity.” Murray, *Epic*, 268.

<sup>78</sup> R. 2.380a6-7; Cooper 1018.

<sup>79</sup> R. 2.380a7-b2; Cooper 1018-19.

Socrates declares that the first law of theology is “that a god isn’t the cause of all things but only of good ones.”<sup>80</sup> His argument is simple. Gods are good and that which is good cannot be the cause of that which is evil, rather only of that which is good.<sup>81</sup> Professor Bloom comments, “A closer look at Socrates’ prescriptions for the representations of the gods shows that they are not, in his view, all powerful and that they are subordinated to rational principle. They must be good and can only cause good; the deeper teaching implied here is that the good is the highest and most powerful principle of the cosmos.”<sup>82</sup> In identifying a rational principle as the divine, Socrates of the *Republic* continues the momentum of the move made by Heraclitus and Empedocles. What is new is that the divinity is generic and not personified. Socrates makes explicitly clear that he is challenging Homer more than any other poet, “Then we won’t accept from anyone the foolish (ἄνοήτως) mistake Homer makes about the gods.”<sup>83</sup> Plato’s choice of word, ἄνοήτως, does mean “foolish,” as in the quotation from Professor Cooper’s edition, but it literally means “non-noetic,” “non-thinking.” Part of the argument in this work is precisely that Homer’s depiction is pre-noetic, pre-conceptual. That seems also to be part of Socrates’ accusation. The Homeric representation of gods is not rational. He then gives three examples of the “foolish mistake,” namely that Homer attributes evil as well as good to the gods. One of the charges Socrates levels against Homer is that his account of the gods is inconsistent (οὕτε

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<sup>80</sup> R. 2.380c6-9; Cooper 1019.

<sup>81</sup> R. 2.379a7-b9.

<sup>82</sup> Bloom, “*Republic*”, 352.

<sup>83</sup> R. 2.379c9-d2; Cooper 1018.

σύμγωνα αὐτὰ αὐτοῖς).<sup>84</sup> Homer is alleged to have committed a logical error: the stories simply do not hang together among themselves.

Socrates makes a major philosophical contribution here to the problem of theodicy, but he does not address the part of the problem created by the unequivocal assertion that the gods are good only. If divine beings are purely good and capable only of good, then are they omnipotent? Even Zeus, according to Homer, had to work within certain parameters. As has been discussed in II.ii.2.a, Zeus either does not have the power to cross the line between mortality and immortality or the consequences of doing so are so dire that he does not dare to do so. As was further discussed in II.ii.3.b, Plato's Socrates does cross that line. By asserting the immortality of the human soul, Plato's Socrates commits, as was argued, the most heinous act of impiety, namely to claim for humans what inheres in the gods alone. In Homer, the heroes share in every other quality of the divine nature save immortality. By the Homeric standard, Plato's Socrates is guilty of gross impiety. Now, Socrates of the *Republic* argues that Homer is the one guilty of impiety. Socrates says, "These stories are not pious (ῥεῖα)."<sup>85</sup> Here again is the Socratic inversion: what Homer deemed impious (i.e., the human claim to immortality), Socrates calls pious; what Homer deemed pious (i.e., mythological tales of the gods), Socrates calls impious.

*Republic* 2.379-380 makes no reference to warfare, but bears on warfare implicitly in the context of the divine nature. This passage occurs, however, in a larger discussion of warfare beginning in 2.373e2. In Homer, waging war was not just engaged in by the heroes

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<sup>84</sup> *R.* 2.380c3.

<sup>85</sup> *R.* 2.380c2; Cooper 1019.

at the instigation of the gods, rather warfare defined heroic culture and, in many respects, even the divine nature. One could say that warfare inhered in the divine nature and, thus, that the heroes' waging of war expressed their participation in the divine nature. In the vision elaborated by Socrates of the *Republic*, waging war is just one more occupation like that of cobbling, farming, weaving or building.<sup>86</sup> In one deft rhetorical move, Socrates has lowered the warrior from godlike status to the humble level of someone who repairs shoes. In fact, the way he frames the question, he asks if a warrior should be considered less than a cobbler, "Then should we be more concerned about cobbling than about warfare?"<sup>87</sup> Waging war, at least in the fashion described by Homer, is contrary to the divine nature. The work of fighting wars is, however, as important to the city as farming and the trades. How does one wage war in this new model of warfare which is no longer theological, but is, rather, purely political?

Socrates of the *Republic* advocates not only women and men campaigning together, but children should go along as well to be apprentice warriors just as potters teach their children how to make pots.<sup>88</sup> The reward for heroic warriors is the ability to engage in sexual relations with any of the other warriors he or she chooses.<sup>89</sup> Victorious armies may take slaves from barbarian enemies but not from fellow Greeks.<sup>90</sup> In distinguishing between "war" and "civil war," Socrates also distinguishes between "natural enemies," the

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<sup>86</sup> R. 2.374b6-8.

<sup>87</sup> R. 2.374b4; Cooper 1013.

<sup>88</sup> R. 5.466e4-467a5.

<sup>89</sup> R. 5.468b2-c4.

<sup>90</sup> R. 5.469b5-c7.

barbarians, and “natural friends,” fellow Greeks.<sup>91</sup> The intention in making this distinction is to promote moderation when Greeks fight with Greeks.<sup>92</sup> Throughout the *Republic*, Socrates is redefining family. Not only is the city one big family, but the whole Greek world is one big family. Socrates uses the quotation “of this lineage” from the *Iliad*<sup>93</sup> when Diomedes and Glaucus meet in battle as enemies and then discover that they are guest-friends which leads them to exchange armor, bronze for gold.<sup>94</sup> The inequality of the armor—and that Zeus had deprived Glaucus of sense and proportion—is loaded into Socrates’ discussion of the mixing of gold and bronze which “engender lack of likeness and unharmonious inequality, and these always breed war and hostility.”<sup>95</sup> The depiction of mixed polity at the end of the *Odyssey* becomes explicit in Plato’s politics.

The revolutionary character of the Socratic polity is obvious. His inversion of piety has been discussed. That women and men should wage war in common was radical. Even if his proposal of men and women fighting together was ironic, it was no less radical for that.<sup>96</sup> Putting the warrior on the level with the cobbler was extraordinary. Of a sudden in his

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<sup>91</sup> R. 5.470c5-d1.

<sup>92</sup> R. 5.470e9-71b8.

<sup>93</sup> R. 8.547a5.Cooper 1159. *Il.* 6.211.

<sup>94</sup> *Il.* 6.234-36.

<sup>95</sup> R. 8.547a1-4; Cooper 1159.

<sup>96</sup> In general about the relationship of men and women in public life and, in the instance of this passage, about their common public nakedness, Professor Bloom recognizes that even if Plato’s Socrates is not making a serious proposal, he is nonetheless making a serious point, “This is part of Socrates’ attempt to politicize the erotic, to act as though it made no demands that cannot conform to the public life of the city. Once more, Socrates ‘forgets’ the body, and this forgetting is the precondition of the equality of women. As a political proposal, the public nakedness of men and women is nonsense.” Bloom, “*Republic*”, 382. The same point can be made about men and women serving in battle together.

account about how war among the Hellenic family will be waged when the ideal constitution begins to dissolve, Socrates hails the gold and silver elements of society because they will lead the city back to “virtue and the old order” (ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν ἀρχαίαν κατάστασιν).<sup>97</sup> This is an amazing moment of transition in the *Republic*. What is this about? Socrates seems to make a shift which at least prepares for the abandonment of the utopian city of the *Republic* in favor of the best possible city, very much a second best, like that which the Athenian Stranger will propose in the *Laws*. Also presaging the *Laws* is that Socrates does not call for an unqualified return to the “old order,” rather he calls for a blended regime, a theme which the Athenian Stranger will adumbrate.<sup>98</sup> In this respect, the

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<sup>97</sup> R. 8.547b6-7; Cooper 1159. Professor Bloom reads this passage differently, “In order to re-enforce Adeimantus’ belief in the reality of this [the best] regime and hence in the correctness of using it as a standard, Socrates constructs a myth which assures him that the good city did indeed exist a long time ago. This regime . . . is the truly ancestral regime.” Bloom, “*Republic*”, 413. His explanation is plausible, but even if it is correct it suggests an original state of perfection from which humankind has fallen, and, therefore, it is necessary in this fallen condition to establish a second-best city of the possible in the fallen state. Professor Bloom’s own interpretation takes this view, “It [the ancestral regime] is irrevocably in the past, and any changes in the present regime can only lead to a worse regime.” Ibid., 414. Though he does not use the theological vocabulary of the Christian doctrine of the Fall, his interpretation is entirely consistent with it, “Socrates’ account of the regimes diverges from the common sense in that he insists that the best regime came first and that after it there is a necessary downward movement of decay to timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and finally, tyranny.” Ibid., 416. His interpretation supports the view argued here that this is an extraordinary moment in the *Republic* when the ideal city is no longer the one being sought, rather a second-best city. Professor Donald Robinson surveys the various positions with respect to Plato’s intention of proposing “a utopia.” Professor Robinson argues the view that “Plato’s intention in the *Republic* is to present a utopia that is not a mere utopia.” Donald R. Robinson, “The Utopian Character of Plato’s Ideal City,” in Ferrari, 2007, 232-34.

<sup>98</sup> Professor Bloom does not make the connection with the *Laws*, but he does observe in his interpretation of 8.543a-569c, “The possession of private property is the crucial change from the best regime to the second best, and all the ills which beset the various regimes follow from that change.” Bloom, “*Republic*”, 419. He also observes, “At best men can struggle against further decay, but they cannot hope to establish the best regime by their own effort. By this mode of presentation Socrates teaches Glaucon and Adeimantus that the ancestral is truly respectable because it is wise and just, and that it cannot be improved upon. Thus he makes them moderate without being closed to reason, as respect for what is ancestral would make them.” Ibid., 416-17. Professor Bloom does not take up the theme of blending here, but he does comment that “Socrates tells the tale in such a way that Adeimantus will not commit any follies in attempting to reinstitute the ancestral regime.” Ibid., 413-14. The views expressed here are not identical to those of Professor Bloom, but there are striking similarities in the two readings which re-enforce each other without ever quite being in complete agreement. Passages where blending is developed in the *Laws* include 691d5-692c5, 693b, 701e1-5, 723a.

*Republic* stands as a cusp of Plato's movement from the divinized world and, in specific, divinized warfare, to a more purely political vision of the world. In the *Laws*, this transition is largely accomplished. In the *Laws*, for example, warfare has a more purely political end, in a way that anticipates Aristotle, "War . . . is an important activity and needs to be waged efficiently for the sake of peace."<sup>99</sup> The Stranger even has a proof-text from Homer when Athena counsels Telemachus, "Some things, Telemachus, your native wit will tell you (ἐνὶ φρεσὶ σῆσι νοήσεις),/ And Heaven (δαίμων) will prompt the rest. The very gods, I'm sure,/ Have smiled upon your birth and helped to bring you up."<sup>100</sup> This is a nice move, because the old Homeric order is used to authorize the new civic order set forth by the Athenian Stranger.

It may be that in making this shift, Socrates has in mind here the final scenes of the *Odyssey* (24.412-548) discussed above. If that is correct, then Socrates may be reading the meeting of city and household as the mixing of gold and bronze. The vocabulary of Zeus's speech (24.477-86) differs from the line of Socrates, and yet the meaning is very like. The best possible city is one like that of olden times in which there is creative tension between the various estates. The give-and-take of such a settlement produces peace and prosperity. Whether Socrates is thinking of the last hundred lines in the *Odyssey*, he is clearly proposing an innovation as "the truly ancestral regime."<sup>101</sup> Also in this passage, Socrates makes explicit that the warriors in his city will have second place, subject to the philosopher

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<sup>99</sup> L. 7.803d3-4; Cooper 1472. The Stranger goes on to describe the civic character of peace.

<sup>100</sup> L. 7.804a1-3; Cooper 1472.

<sup>101</sup> Bloom, "*Republic*", 413.



guardians but separate from the trades people and farmers.<sup>102</sup> In Homer it is the gods who make the decisions about war and peace; in the city of the *Republic*, it is the philosopher guardians. The Divine has been promoted far beyond the Olympic pantheon, and philosophers have replaced the heroes. The following schema represents a comparison of the shift from that of the Homeric poems to that of Socrates in the *Republic*:

| Homer:  | Socrates of the <i>Republic</i> :  |
|---|--|
| <b>Divine Nature I Immortality</b>  | <b>Divine Nature I Immortality</b>   |
| gods  | gods   |
| -----   | -----  |
| heroes (men)<br>(share divine nature with gods and<br>mortality with ordinary people) | philosophers<br>(share divine nature with gods and<br>life in the city with ordinary people) |
| -----   | -----  |
| ordinary people (anthropoi)   | ordinary people (anthropoi).   |

The architectonic structure of the world remains the same, but philosophers have replaced the heroes as the ones with the right and capacity to rule, including the authority to make war. Philosophers and ordinary people alike share the divine immortality in the truest nature of their souls.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> R. 8.547d4-8.

<sup>103</sup> David Hume makes a similar comparison of philosophers to the Homeric heroes. He comments first upon magnanimity, "Who is not struck with any signal instance of GREATNESS of MIND or Dignity of Character; with elevation of sentiment, disdain of slavery, and with that noble pride and spirit, which arises from conscious virtue? The sublime, says LONGINUS, is often nothing but the echo or image of magnanimity; and where this quality appears in any one, even though a syllable be not uttered, it excites our applause and admiration; as may be observed of the famous silence of AJAX in the ODYSSEY, which expresses more noble disdain and resolute indignation, than any language can convey." Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of*

## 5. Aristotle

### a. Refiguring Hector

In *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1116a16-1116b3, Aristotle quotes Homer three times in his discussion of courage. Aristotle introduces his quotations in a discussion of kinds of courage which may not completely attain to the ideal but which still approximate it to varying degrees:

First comes political courage; for this is most like true courage. Citizens seem to face dangers because of the penalties imposed by the laws and the reproaches they would otherwise incur, and because of the honours they win by such action; and therefore those peoples seem to be bravest among whom cowards are held in dishonor and brave men in honour. This is the kind of courage that Homer depicts (ποιεῖ), e.g. in Diomedes and in Hector.<sup>104</sup>

There follow two quotations, one of Hector and the other of Diomedes, each to the same point: if he did not go to battle, then he would be shamed for his absence.<sup>105</sup> The extraordinary feature of Aristotle's use of the Homeric material is that he employs depictions of military valor as metaphor for civic valor.<sup>106</sup> Without attributing intentionality,

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*Morals*, 62. Hume, then, comments on "philosophical TRANQUILITY", "Of the same class of virtues with courage is that undisturbed philosophical TRANQUILITY, superior to pain, sorrow, anxiety, and each assault of adverse fortune. Conscious of his own virtue, say the philosophers, the sage elevates himself above every accident of life; and securely placed in the temple of wisdom, looks down on inferior mortals, engaged in pursuit of honours, riches, reputation, and every frivolous enjoyment. . . . The philosophical tranquility may, indeed, be considered only as a branch of magnanimity. Who admires not Socrates; his perpetual serenity and contentment, amidst the greatest poverty and domestic vexations; his resolute contempt of riches, and his magnanimous care of preserving liberty, while he refused all assistance from his friends and disciples, and avoided even the dependence of an obligation? . . . Among the ancients, the heroes of philosophy, as well as those in war and patriotism, have a grandeur and force of sentiment, which astonishes our narrow souls, and is rashly rejected as extravagant and supernatural." *Ibid.*, 65-66. In short, Hume claims that what the Homeric heroes were in their world, ancient philosophers were in theirs. Of course, Hume did not much concern himself with divine nature or immortality.

<sup>104</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 3.1116a17-22; Barnes 2.1762.

<sup>105</sup> *Il.* 22.100, 8.148. Cited by Barnes 2.1762.

one can read this passage as comment on Heraclitus B 44 fragment discussed above: Hector in defending the wall and Diomedes in attacking it become metaphors for fighting for the law. The honor and shame of warfare become the honor and shame of civic participation or lack thereof. “Political courage,” which Homer “shapes poetically (ποιεῖ)” in his characters of Diomedes and Hector, Aristotle describes in rational terms. There is a lovely bi-partisanship in Aristotle’s quotation. An Achaean and a Trojan fighting before the wall of Troy preeminently depict the political courage which Aristotle analyzes. However powerful the image, it has become for Aristotle strictly a metaphor, and one in which the model of Homeric military valor is supplanted by civic valor.

In use of the third Homeric quotation, Aristotle is discussing those who do not show courage born of virtue, or to avoid simple disgrace, but only out of compulsion. He uses a military image to represent this less attractive form of civic responsibility. He quotes lines of Hector again, “But if I shall spy any dastard that cowers far from the fight,/Vainly will such an one hope to escape from the dogs.”<sup>107</sup> Those who obey the law, say, to avoid going to jail or having their property confiscated, receive no credit for it, even if in so doing they have exhibited the outward signs of courage. In his use of these three passages from the Iliad, Aristotle has conceptualized depictions of heroic military valor in terms of the relative models of good citizenship. Even the word “courage (ἀνδρεία),” derived for the word for

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<sup>106</sup> It might be pointed out the civic courage is not identical with military courage, but it is, according to Aristotle, the most like it. That civic courage is worthy is clear since two of the noblest examples of military courage are used as metaphors for it. Further, the worthiness of civic courage is clear when one compares Aristotle’s account of civic courage with that 1) of the mere experience of danger (1116b4-23) or 2) of mere spiritedness (1116b24-1117a1-5), both of which he makes clear to be part of but less than military courage.

<sup>107</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1116a34-35; Barnes 2.1762. The note in the Barnes edition cites *Il.* 2.391 and 15.348, but it is only in the latter passage that Hector is speaking. In the former, it is Agamemnon.

“man” and in Homer preeminently the heroic man, now has a meaning which can be applied to any occupation of business. Even when Aristotle uses references to Hector and Diomedes, he is illustrating civic or political courage rather than military courage. The heroes in battle—who, for Homer, are only removed from full divinity by their mortality—have now become mere inspirational examples of what every citizen should display in the assembly. It has been suggested that Hector here stands for Socrates. If so, then Achilles implicitly stands for Athens, and Aristotle’s example of civic courage speaks very specifically to the political circumstances in which Socrates died.<sup>108</sup>

The *Magna Moralia*—the status of which in relation to Aristotelian authorship remains unclear—uses one of the same quotations as in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but the discussion goes beyond what Aristotle says in the *Ethics* and even contradicts the *Ethics*. In the *Ethics*, Hector before the gates of Troy is exemplary. While it may not be identical with the courage Aristotle has just defined, he still values it positively. There, the fact that Hector seeks to flee shame and earn honor is “due to excellence (δι’ ἀρετὴν γίνεται).”<sup>109</sup> In the *Magna Moralia*, Hector is not a model to emulate. Also interesting is that the comment on Hector’s courage in the *Magna Moralia* resonates with the suggestion that Socrates is understood as a new and improved Hector:

Again, there is another form of courage, which we may call civic; for instance if men endure dangers out of shame before their fellow citizens, and so appear to be brave.

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<sup>108</sup> I recollect that this insight comes from Professor Leo Strauss. In an interpretation quite opposite from the suggestion that Socrates corresponds to Hector, and Athens to Achilles, Professor Benardete, without reference to the *Nicomachean Ethics* begins his chapter, entitled “Achilles and Hector,” with this statement, “Hector is the civil Achilles.” Benardete, *Achilles and Hector*, 121.

<sup>109</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 3.1116a29; Barnes 2.1762.

In illustration of this we may take the way in which Homer has represented Hector as saying—

Then were Polydamas first to pile reproaches upon me;

for which reason he thinks that he ought to fight. We must not call this sort courage either. . . . For he whose courage does not endure on the deprivation of something cannot properly be considered brave; if, then, I take away shame owing to which he was brave, he will no longer be brave. . . . We have then to ask who is to be so put down, and who is the brave man. Broadly speaking, then, it is he who is brave owing to none of the things above-mentioned, but owing to his thinking it to be right, and who acts bravely whether any one is present or not.

Not indeed, that courage arises in one entirely without passion and impulse. But the impulse must proceed from reason and be directed to the right. He, then, who is carried by a rational impulse to face danger for the sake of the right, being free from fear about these things, is, brave.<sup>110</sup>

Whether this pertains to Socrates, what is perfectly clear is that Homeric courage has been replaced by philosophical courage, i.e., courage which is motivated by reason and aimed at what is right and in which reason has entirely displaced fear. Fleeing shame and seeking honor are no longer actions born of virtue. It is also not enough that someone perform an extraordinary feat and die while doing it, the motivation and aim of the person must also be right. Hector is cited but he is no longer exemplary: 1) his motivation was wrong; 2) his aim was misplaced; 3) there remained fear in his heart. In Homer, Hector before the wall of Troy is the depiction of courage. By the time of the *Magna Moralia*, that depiction of courage had been analyzed to the point of showing its deficiency. Not only has Homeric depiction given way to philosophical conceptualization, but what was depicted, military courage, has been denigrated and replaced with a rational model.

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<sup>110</sup> [*Mag. Mor.*] 1191a5-10, 18-25; Barnes 2.1883-84.

### b. Secular Politics and Demythologized Theology

The most striking characteristic of Aristotle's discussions of war and peace is that the divine nature does not bear upon them at all. Homer assumes that human warfare is a function of divine interactions, both among the deities themselves as well as between the deities and mortals. Plato argues that warfare is alien to the divine nature. Aristotle writes with the unstated presupposition that warfare is a function of human politics. For the most part, this affirmation about Aristotle is based upon silence. He writes repeatedly about warfare without reference to the Olympic pantheon.<sup>111</sup> Even when he does write about religious affairs, it is to place "honours to the gods" alongside all the other institutions of a well-ordered polity.<sup>112</sup> Military activity is a "practical excellence,"<sup>113</sup> but which is not pursued for its own sake rather for the sake of some other end: peace, prosperity ("the art of war is a natural art of acquisition" 1256b22-23), freedom. War is teleologically oriented to peace, "For peace, as has been oft repeated, is the end of war."<sup>114</sup> Considered as a means, "The art of war is a natural art of acquisition."<sup>115</sup> The danger persists in a civil body politic to wage war as an end, rather than as a means. When a government orients itself to war, then the people forget how to live in peace. Having lost the sense of purpose when war is concluded, the city looks for a new war to occupy itself.<sup>116</sup> For that reason, the legislator

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<sup>111</sup> E.g., *Eth. Nic.* 1.1096a32, 3.1115a32-34, 10.1177b4-15.

<sup>112</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1160a9-30; Barnes 2.1833.

<sup>113</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 10.1177b6-7; Barnes 2.1861.

<sup>114</sup> *Pol.* 7.1334a15-16; Barnes 2.2116. *Eth. Nic.* 10.1177b6; Barnes 2.1861.

<sup>115</sup> *Pol.* 1.1256b22-23; Barnes 2.1994.

who understands the goal and art of governing in peace ought always to preside over wars rather than to allow generals to attempt to preside over peace.<sup>117</sup> Aristotle also warns against the bad use of war, for example, by a tyrant who keeps his country at war to distract the populace from attention to his misrule.<sup>118</sup> Conversely, broad-based military service promotes constitutional government and even democracy.<sup>119</sup>

Aristotle discusses both war and peace as definable concepts. Not only are the imaginative genera of Ares, Zeus and their ilk no longer necessary, they also do not cast so much as a shadow upon Aristotle's analysis. The few references Aristotle does make to poetic images of war and peace illustrate his purely metaphorical regard for such material. A reference to the "Islands of the Blest," in the *Politics*, is metaphorical. His use of the poetic image even suggests doubt about the Islands' actual existence. Note his parenthetical comment, "if such there be":

Courage and endurance are required for business and philosophy for leisure, temperance and justice for both, and more especially in times of peace and leisure, for war compels men to be just and temperate, whereas the enjoyment of good fortune and the leisure which comes with peace tend to make them insolent. Those then who seem to be the best-off and to be in the possession of every good, have special need of justice and temperance –for example, those (if such there be, as the poets say) who dwell in the Islands of the Blest; they above all will need philosophy

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<sup>116</sup> *Pol.* 2.1271b1-6.

<sup>117</sup> "Facts, as well as arguments, prove that the legislator should direct all his military and other measures to the provision of leisure and the establishment of peace. For most of these military states are safe only while they are at war, but fall when they have acquired their empire; like unused iron they lose their edge in time of peace. And for this the legislator is to blame, he never having taught them how to lead the life of peace." *Pol.* 7.1334a2-10; Barnes 2.2116.

<sup>118</sup> *Pol.* 5.1313b28-32

<sup>119</sup> *Pol.* 4.1297b23-25.

and temperance and justice, and all the more the more leisure they have, living in the midst of abundance.<sup>120</sup>

“Islands of the Blest” stand here as metaphor for the greatest possible abundance conceivable. Even if they do not actually exist, they are still serviceable as a representation of an idea. This passage is full of conceptual terms (e.g., “business,” “leisure,” “temperance,” “justice,” and “philosophy”). In fact, the most concrete term in the quotation, “Islands of the Blest,” is also the one poetical term and as such the most existentially dubious. That reference by Aristotle stands in sharp contrast with the reference to those islands toward the end of Phaedrus’s speech in the *Symposium*, “The honor they gave to Achilles is another matter. They sent him to the Isles of the Blest because he dared to stand by his lover Patroclus and avenge him.”<sup>121</sup> Plato writes a discussion of the place in the context of persons and events, in other words, as part of a narrative and not merely as a literary metaphor isolated from any context whatsoever, as it is used by Aristotle.

Aristotle’s understanding of the deities is similarly and even more significantly demythologized. The Olympic pantheon just does not come into his philosophy. The old stories of divine jealousy and malevolence involve a fundamental misunderstanding. The divine cannot be injured.<sup>122</sup> He agrees with tradition that the gods are immortal.<sup>123</sup> While the natural world is not divine in the way that Zeus is actually “the thundering sky” in Homer,<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *Pol.* 7. 1334a23-34; Barnes, 2.2117.

<sup>121</sup> *Smp.* 179e1-180a1; Cooper 464.

<sup>122</sup> *Top.* 109b33-34.

<sup>123</sup> *Cael.* 270b5-10.

<sup>124</sup> *NS* 383.



there remains some kind of connection between the divine and the natural order. He observes, for example, “God and nature create nothing that is pointless.”<sup>125</sup> Recalling Professor Kaufmann’s assertion that in Homer “references to the gods . . . are readily translatable into ‘naturalistic language,’”<sup>126</sup> Aristotle’s naturalistic interpretation of myth has more in common with Professor Kaufmann than it does with Homer:

Hence we must not believe the old tale which says that the world needs Atlas to keep it safe—a tale composed, it would seem, by men who, like later thinkers, conceived of all the upper bodies as earthy and endowed with weight, and therefore supported it in their fabulous way upon animate necessity.<sup>127</sup>

Aristotle understood the heavens as having something of the divine character in that they are immortal and not subject to generation,<sup>128</sup> but the identification of an animate deity with the heavens is severed and not only severed but presumed to have been an explanation which turned out, on closer examination, simply not to be accurate. Professor Snell is correct when he observes that the Olympic gods died at the boundary of philosophy,<sup>129</sup> but they are much dearer for Aristotle than for Plato.

Reference to divinity is frequent in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but Aristotle makes clear that “the god” in the truest sense is far removed from the kind of exchanges which fill the pages of Homer’s poems:

We assume the gods to be above all other beings blessed and happy; but what sort of actions must we assign to them? Acts of justice? Will not the gods seem absurd if

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<sup>125</sup> *Cael.* 271a33; Barnes, 1.452.

<sup>126</sup> Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 144.

<sup>127</sup> *Cael.* 284a19-23; Barnes 1.470.

<sup>128</sup> *Cael.* 283b32-284a6, 286a9.

<sup>129</sup> “Die olympischen Götter sind gestorben an der Philosophie.” Snell, *Entdeckung*, 42.

they make contracts and return deposits, and so on? Acts of a brave man, then, confronting dangers and running risks because it is noble to do so? Or liberal acts? To whom will they give? It will be strange if they are really to have money or anything of the kind. What would their temperate acts be? Is not such praise tasteless, since they have no bad appetites? If we were to run through them all, the circumstances of action would be found trivial and unworthy of gods. Still, every one supposes that they *live* and therefore that they are active; we cannot suppose them to sleep like Endymion. Now if you take away from a living being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation? Therefore the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative.<sup>130</sup>

The reference to the myth of Endymion, though not Homeric, provides a good example of Aristotle's regard for mythology. He cites scenes from literature illustratively in the way that a writer today evokes a variety of personal characteristics by simply referring to Beatrice, Iago or Mr. Micawber without supposing that any of the three had historical existence and in spite of the fact that at least one of them did have historical existence. Aristotle's reference to Endymion is an expression of the *via negativa*; this is what god is not. His affirmative statement about god is not only conceptual, but even conceptual beyond the concepts of "justice" and "temperance," because those terms require qualities which are nonsensical in relation to the divine.

There is something true in mythology, but it is not the exclusive truth. Heraclitus anticipates both Plato and Aristotle in ways that put on display the differences between the two later philosophers. Plato will reject mythology, but will not dispense with it. For him, mythology holds souls captive, preventing them from apprehending truth. At the same time, Plato recognizes that there is something true conveyed by mythology which he never is able to express through rational means only. Aristotle completely transcends mythology and fuses both the naturalistic approach, exemplified by Xenophanes, and the rational approach,

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<sup>130</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 10.1178b8-23; Barnes 2.1862-63.

exemplified by Heraclitus. Aristotle sees the rainbow as the colored cloud, and he sees the *logos* behind it, but for him the mythological approach is not only incomplete but is also unnecessary for those capable of rational discourse. Thus, the Homeric poems have become mere literature. For Aristotle, the divine act, in extreme distinction to the imaginative genera of mythology, is contemplation which is a kind of supernal thinking, not in the sense of mental deliberation or resolution but as thinking *qua* thinking; it is thinking beyond concepts.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Thus, inferentially, Aristotle saw beyond “the act of understanding” *contra* Proclus when he asserts, “Aristotle leads one up to acts of understanding with never a hint that there is anything beyond them.” Proclus, *De Providentia et Fato*, 3.171, quoted in Elmer O’Brien, introduction to *The Essential Plotinus: Representative Treatises from the Enneads, Selected and Newly Translated with Introduction and Commentary* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1964) 23.

Perhaps what now pleases me best of all is those exquisite Charlotte M. Yonge families at Pylos and elsewhere. How rightly Sir Maurice Powicke says, "There have been civilized people in all ages." And let us add, "In all ages they have been surrounded by barbarism."

—C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*

### 1. "In the beginning . . . ."

Vico imagines an age after the descendents of Noah had abandoned his religion when men "were lost from one another by roving wild in the great forest of the earth, pursuing shy and indocile women, and fleeing from the wild animals."<sup>1</sup> Human life, whether of heroes and philosophers or of ordinary people, requires connection to other beings. How did it happen in the misty dawn of history that human beings formed communities? For Homer, Plato, and Aristotle alike, the life of one mortal human must be ordered to other beings in the world. One recalls again the lament of Achilles in the house of Hades when he declares to Odysseus that he would rather work as "a *thes* bound to a landless man" than to rule the dead souls in Hades' house.<sup>2</sup> Such an unconnected life was the worst thing Achilles could imagine in life on earth.<sup>3</sup> Homer gives us households aplenty and even a well-developed city. It is significant that the city is eventually destroyed because a household had been violated. The status of Helen in relation to Menelaus and Paris raises the question of how the interests of the household and the city may not always coincide.

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<sup>1</sup> *NS* 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Od.* 11.488-91.

<sup>3</sup> Finley, *World*, 57-58.

In the *Laws*, Plato's Athenian Stranger considers the world after the flood in a circumstance very like that described in the above quotation of Vico.<sup>4</sup> For the Stranger, the scene bespeaks pristine innocence. His discussion expresses an era of simple prosperity, peace and human amity, "In the first place, men's isolation prompted them to cherish and love one another. Second, their food supply was nothing they needed to quarrel about."<sup>5</sup> That was a world of households. They were "innocent of the techniques of warfare peculiar to city-life—generally called 'lawsuits' and 'party-strife'"<sup>6</sup> In this account, something happens to human beings when they shift from the life of the household to the life of the city. In the city, the human has new possibilities of both virtue and vice not possible in isolated households.<sup>7</sup>

In considering the household, Plato and Aristotle reveal themselves as Homeric philosophers in that both recognize its foundational importance, even if—at times as discussed below—Plato's Socrates thinks that it is a foundation to be destroyed. Their attention to the household can also be called Homeric when one considers the curious silence in those Early Greek thinkers whose fragments have proved such rich resources with respect to the other themes examined in this work. Perhaps what they said or wrote about the household has been lost without a trace, but that would be even more curious than the

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<sup>4</sup> *L.* 3.677a8-9.

<sup>5</sup> *L.* 3.678.e9-10; Cooper 1367.

<sup>6</sup> *L.* 3.679d4-6; Cooper 1368. See also *L.* 3.677b5-8.

<sup>7</sup> *L.* 3.678a3-b7. For example, the Stranger says, "Can we suppose that the men of that period, who had had no experience of city life in all its splendor and squalor, ever became totally wicked or totally virtuous?" *L.* 3.678a7-9; Cooper 1367.

silence since one could at least imagine that Plato and Aristotle would have recalled something which their predecessors had said on the subject. Indeed, in the case of Aristotle one would expect a reference to an earlier thinker on the subject if only to say that he had been wrong. There is a reasonable explanation for the silence of the Early Greeks on the household, namely that the city had not yet arrived at a level of development where either the household or the city could be reckoned as existing to the detriment of the other. It was Plato who first saw that tension as he privileged the city over the household, as shall be seen, first to the household's denigration and exclusion and later to its re-integration into the city. The surviving Aristotelian corpus indicates a more univocally positive view of the household and of its virtue and necessity to the city's virtue.

The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, taken together, are, ultimately, about households threatened, disrupted, destroyed, and restored. In the homecoming of Odysseus, the slaughter of suitors and all that follows have to do with restoring the old order and, at the same time, responding to the challenge of the rising *polis*. The *Iliad* is the work in which Homer shows disorder in human society and the wrong kind of attachment to "one's own," as exemplified in Achilles' wrath arising from the violation done to what he regarded as own, e.g., Briseis, as a presenting issue, and his honor. In the *Odyssey*, Homer shows not merely how Odysseus goes home, but the variety of resourceful ways that he overcomes obstacles and resists temptations any of which would have prevented him from reaching Ithaca and Penelope. Within the *Odyssey*—in fact, a "tale of Alcinous"—there is depiction of life arguably heroic but clearly uncivilized among the Cyclopes and the response of a hero to

that culture, at once familiar and alien.<sup>8</sup> Plato and Aristotle regard the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus as an important cultural artifact from an era before the heroic age. The question of the household and the city begins in the land of the Cyclopes.

## 2. Homer

### a. Achaean Hero in the Cyclopean World

The non-linear character of the *Odyssey* has already been remarked upon (II.ii.2.a). It is not only, as has been shown, that both the events of the Trojan War as sung by Demodocus and Odysseus's account of his travels to the Phaeacian court are out of sequence with the movement of the work as a whole. Odysseus's account of the Cyclopes (*Odyssey* 9.105-566), represented by Homer as synchronic with the heroic age, would be read by Plato and Aristotle as a political memory of life before the emergence of the heroic household depicted in the pages of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in addition to the literal non-

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<sup>8</sup> Professor Murray reflects on the sense of proximity felt by those living in civilized society for those they regard as blatantly barbaric who may or not be their historical contemporaries, "Allowing for indefinite differences of detail, there seems to be a certain primitive effortless level of human life, much the same all the world over, below which society would cease to be; a kind of world-wide swamp above which a few nations have built what seem like permanent and well-weathered dwellings." "Every Greek community is like a garrison of civilization amid wide hordes of barbarians; a picked body of men, of whom each individual has in some sense to live up to a higher standard than can be expected of the common human animal. . . . Greek civilization itself was never for a long enough time well policed and organized, its remoter villages were never thoroughly enough educated, to make it secure, even in its central places, against some sudden blind resurgence of the savage." Murray, *Epic*, 9-10, 11, and in general 9-22.

<sup>9</sup> "There is a golden passage of Plato [L.3.677-684] saying that, after the local Ogygian and Deucalionian floods, men dwelt in caves in the mountains; and he identifies these first men with the cyclopes, in whom elsewhere [in the same passage] he recognizes the first family of the world. " NS 296. Vico makes other references to the Cyclopes. NS 338, 503, 516, 522, 564,547, 644, 950, 962, 982, 1005, 1012-13, In NS 1021, Vico discusses "cyclopean cruelty" which he says Plato acknowledges. See L. 635b. In NS 1098, Vico

linear character of the *Odyssey*, they read diachronically a story which Homer renders synchronically. For Plato and Aristotle, the odyssey of Odysseus is a travel in time as well as in a spatial world.<sup>10</sup> One passage in particular from Odysseus's adventure will have particular importance in later philosophical considerations:

In the next land we found were Kyklopes,  
giants, louts, without law to bless them.  
in ignorance leaving the fruitage of the earth in mystery  
to the immortal gods, they neither plow  
nor sow by hand, nor till the ground, though grain—  
wild wheat and barley—grows untended, and  
wine-grapes, in clusters, ripen in heaven's rain.  
Kyklopes have no muster and no meeting,  
no consultation or old tribal ways,  
but each one dwells in his own mountain cave  
dealing out rough justice to wife and child,  
indifferent to what others do.<sup>11</sup>

By describing what the Cyclopes did not have, Odysseus provides a list of the features considered essential to civilized society: 1) regard for others, 2) common justice, 3) field agriculture, 4) winemaking, 5) communal military arrangements, 6) civil assembly, 7) traditions, 8) justice that applies to women and children. He then adds that they have no 9) knowledge of shipwrighting or sailing.<sup>12</sup> Odysseus had an eye for all the island's

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gives a summary of his observations in the earlier passages. For Aristotle, see *Pol.* 1252b23 and *Eth. Nic.* 10.1180a28-29.

<sup>10</sup> Professor Benardete says that this is true for Vico as well, "As Vico finally admits . . . the diachronic has to be understood synchronically (section 446)." Benardete, "*Laws*", 148, note 19.

<sup>11</sup> *Od.* 9.105-115; Fitzgerald 142.

<sup>12</sup> *Od.* 9.125-28.



possibilities which were not being properly exploited.<sup>13</sup> The one mark of civilization, however, enticed Odysseus to stay when his men urge him to depart, cheese. It was not merely that the inhabitant of the cave possessed the necessary technical knowledge to make cheese, but that everything in the cave was well-ordered of which Odysseus provides several details in his account.<sup>14</sup> He wanted to meet the person with such an advanced sense of life, expecting the law of hospitality to be observed.<sup>15</sup> A further mark of Polyphemus's uncivilized character was his open contempt for Zeus's law that travellers were to be honored. Polyphemus not only did not feed his guests, he fed on them.<sup>16</sup>

The Cyclopes represent a level of barbarism which approaches civilization as it counted for Odysseus, but without reaching it. Polyphemus was a man of brawn. As door to his cave, he used a rock which Odysseus says "two dozen four-wheeled wagons, / with heaving wagon teams, could not have stirred the tonnage of that rock."<sup>17</sup> He could see, but only with one eye. He lived in proximity to other Cyclopes, but without any community. He had the gift of speech, but only to use it in the surliest and most threatening way. When he attempted to call his neighbors for help, he could not even communicate to them the cause of his distress. Because Odysseus gave Polyphemus an alias which served as a trick name,

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<sup>13</sup> *Od.* 9.128-41.

<sup>14</sup> Professor Benardete argues that this high degree of "orderliness of human life" constitutes morality, at least as understood retrospectively by Plato's Athenian Stranger. Benardete, "*Laws*", 188.

<sup>15</sup> *Od.* 9.224-30.

<sup>16</sup> *Od.* 9.252-93.

<sup>17</sup> *Od.* 9.241-42; Fitzgerald 146.

Polyphemus shouted to his neighbors that “Nobody” was doing him harm, and they thought nobody was harming him.<sup>18</sup> Polyphemus knew how to make cheese, but not wine. He had religion, but he exercised his piety only to his father Poseidon; he cursed Zeus and the other gods.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, Odysseus invokes the name of Zeus and the piety required by Zeus in the treatment of strangers.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Polyphemus and Odysseus met each other as surrogates for Poseidon and Zeus respectively.

Here depicted is the question of being in terms of politics.<sup>21</sup> Homer recognizes that there is a teleological ordering to heroic man. That is to say, Homer depicts his heroes with respect to some end state. The question is always in play as to how the hero maintains his virtue. However much he seems, compared to later developments, a law unto himself, pursuing his honor without respect to the consequences not only of failure but often of success as well, he was actually subject to a strict code. Honoring the stranger was piety of first importance. On that point hung the whole of heroic society. The civilization of that society was measured by a standard clearly enunciated as in Odysseus’s description, outlined above in nine points. Criteria included certain technical achievements like

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<sup>18</sup> *Od.* 9.407-12.

<sup>19</sup> *Od.* 9.273-78, 410-12.

<sup>20</sup> *Od.* 9.266-70.

<sup>21</sup> There are parallels between the discussion here and Professor Voegelin’s understanding of politics in relation to being. For example, Professor Voegelin writes, “The leap in being, when it occurs, transforms the succession of societies preceding in time into a past of mankind. . . . The initial leap in being, the break with the order of myth, occurs in a plurality of instances, in Israel and Hellas, in China and India, in each instance followed by its own indigenous history of repetitions on the new level of existence.” Voegelin, *Polis*, 69-70. It may be that Vico stands behind the similarity of our views.

cultivation of grain and fermentation of wine, but most of the criteria were political. Heroic society had standards of justice, not only δίκη, usually “custom” or “customary right” forms of which are used twice in the description of the elders’ council on the shield of Achilles,<sup>22</sup> but also θέμις, “a body of traditional rules or precedents,”<sup>23</sup> three forms of which occur in 9.105-15.<sup>24</sup> In fact, it is the kind of elders’ council depicted on the shield which Odysseus observes that the Cyclopes do not have. Even in heroic society where the household was the primary community, it was not a sufficient community for the maintenance of heroic society. The Cyclopes had cave households. They lived in proximity to each other, but they did not have an assembly or any other political commonality. Geographic propinquity does not necessarily imply community. *Anthropoi* needed to belong to the households of heroic men in order to be complete. Heroic men also needed another kind of association to be complete, the gathering of the heroes whether for eating or to take council.

As Odysseus encountered the Cyclopean world and though he brilliantly outwitted Polyphemus, he doomed some of his sailors and nearly doomed himself and all of his men because he himself did not take the prudent counsel of his comrades. Twice, Odysseus refused to listen. When they had discovered the cave of Polyphemus, his men urged to take everything they could and flee. Odysseus acknowledges later that he should have listened to

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<sup>22</sup> *Il.* 18.506, 508.

<sup>23</sup> Cunliffe, *Lexicon*, s.v. δίκη and θέμις.

<sup>24</sup> *Od.* 9.106, 112, 114.

them.<sup>25</sup> The second occasion came when Odysseus and his companion survivors escaped. Odysseus in his “glorying spirit” (μεγαλήτορα θυμόν), taunted Polyphemus and revealed his name which he had previously with such skill concealed.<sup>26</sup> There is a necessary reciprocity between a heroic lord and his vassal *anthropoi*. Just as *anthropoi* need to adhere to a lord in order to be teleologically complete, so a heroic man needs the adherence of those *anthropoi* for him to be teleologically complete. Taking counsel is also essential for the heroic man to remain in his end state (his entelechy). If there are no other heroes with whom to take counsel, then that of his *anthropoi* must suffice. Depicted here, then, is not only the encounter of the heroic world with the Cyclopean world, but also of the right relationship of a hero to his adherent *anthropoi*.

#### b. Aeaea and Ithaca

The counterpoint of Odysseus’ arrival on Aeaea, home of the witch Circe, and his arrival on Ithaca provide a counterpoint of households aright and amiss. Odysseus’ men enter the hall of Circe.<sup>27</sup> Her house is of smooth stone in the wild wood with wolves and mountain lions at the door, gentle as hounds because they are “fed on her drug of evil.”<sup>28</sup> Circe sings beguilingly, weaves “ambrosial fabric,/ by that craft known to the goddesses of

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<sup>25</sup> *Od.* 9.224-30.

<sup>26</sup> *Od.* 9.494-505.

<sup>27</sup> Some of this material has been previously discussed in II.iii.4 with respect to “the city of pigs” in the *Republic*.

<sup>28</sup> *Od.* 10.212-13; Fitzgerald 163.

heaven.”<sup>29</sup> Depicted in this short paragraph are humans (Odysseus’ crew), human artifacts (the house and the weaving), wild animals (wolves and mountain lions), non-animal nature (the woods and an open glade). This highly structured household mimics and gets wrong a household’s proper virtue. To begin, Circe herself is a witch. The wild animals are like domesticated animals. The weaving, normally a human art, is attributed to divine knowledge.<sup>30</sup> Circe, in a way very much more sophisticated than that of Polyphemus, violates the law of hospitality. She uses her magic to turn Odysseus’s men into pigs. Eurylochus evades the magic of Circe and runs to warn Odysseus. He, armed by the magic of Hermes, successfully resists Circe’s magic, and overcomes her. She invites him to become her lover which he does once his men are restored to their human bodies, and Circe promises not to use her magic on Odysseus any longer.<sup>31</sup> After a year, Odysseus insists he must leave, and she hastens him on his way.<sup>32</sup> Odysseus escapes this perverted paradigm of a household, Circe’s “city of pigs.”

Awaiting Odysseus at home is the faithful swineherd, Eumaeus, the pious host who welcomes and, later, will guide the hero. The household of Eumaeus is a very different kind of “city of pigs.” His house is of fieldstone (not of smooth stone like Circe’s). His dogs at the door are like wolves (rather than Circe’s wolves who are like dogs). His pigs are pigs (rather than pigs who once had been men). Here is man rightly placed in a rightly ordered

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<sup>29</sup> *Od.* 10.221-23; Fitzgerald 163.

<sup>30</sup> *Od.* 10.226-88.

<sup>31</sup> *Od.* 10.288-349.

<sup>32</sup> *Od.* 10.350-552.

biological world.<sup>33</sup> A few miles away from the household of Eumaeus is Odysseus' own home and hall. Lying before the gate of the house is the faithful hound Argus who has managed to survive his master's 20-year absence, and who yelps in recognition of Odysseus with his dying gasp.<sup>34</sup> Inside, the wholly mortal Penelope holds off the suitors with her weaving which is entirely human.

In Circe's world all is wrong: Circe herself, the feigned hospitality, her weaving, turning wild animals and men alike into domesticated animals. Despite the wrongness of that world, still all is in order. Everything is in its place, but that place is a kind of anti-virtue. On Ithaca, the world is right, but is disordered. Penelope is paradigmatically a female mortal; her weaving is her own. The swineherd is revealed as a prince and is almost a hero. The dog is the only being in the entire homecoming who knows Odysseus without a sign. Here is a world full of virtue, but all those virtuous beings are beset by the suitors. The rightness of the world is threatened by an invasive disorder.<sup>35</sup> There is an inverse relationship of Circe's household to the households both of Eumaeus and Odysseus's own hall. At Circe's house, the wrong is in order. On Ithaca, the right is in disorder.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Od.* 16.12-75.

<sup>34</sup> *Od.* 17.244-353.

<sup>35</sup> *Od.* 14.1-75.

<sup>36</sup> Professor Voegelin's *The World of the Polis* and *Plato and Aristotle* are both volumes in his series, entitled *Order and History*. In a word, the series is about how humans achieve, destroy, and then re-establish order throughout history. He writes, "*Order and History* is a philosophical inquiry concerning the principal types of order of human existence in society and history." Voegelin, *Polis*, 53. What I have not found—though it may be present somewhere in the five volumes of the series—is the distinction observed in the contrast between the households of Aeaia and Ithaca, namely that what is wrong can be well-ordered and what is right

**c. A Husband Finds His Wife**

Households abound in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In the former work, households proper are Trojan. One gets glimpses into the domestic arrangements of Priam, of Paris and Helen, and, most famously, of Hector and Andromache. There are also the extra-marital arrangements among the Achaeans. It is, after all, the conflicts over Chryseis and Briseis with which the *Iliad* begins. In Books 3 and 4 of the *Odyssey*, Telemachus makes his progress among the courts of his father's old allies, Nestor and Menelaus. In the hall of the latter, he hears the story of Agamemnon's end in his homecoming. In the journeys of Odysseus, there are the households of the Cyclopes, Calypso, Circe, Alcinous and Arete, not to mention the household of mighty Hades. Even when these sundry households stand in bold relief, it is always against the looming image of Odysseus's own household where Penelope, all the while, foiled the plots of those who would succeed her husband and displace her son.

The *Odyssey* is divided into twenty-four books, but the climax of the work comes not in the last book, but in the penultimate, Book 23 when Odysseus and Penelope are reunited. So strong is the force of that magical time when they are one in the bed which is one with the house and the tree—the image of being's unity—that Aristarchus rejected the whole of Book 24 in his edition of the *Odyssey*.<sup>37</sup> As has been seen, when Odysseus

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can be disordered. Before order can be a good, it must presuppose the right. The well-ordered wrong is a terrible evil as Homer depicts in the house of Circe.

<sup>37</sup> Murray, *Epic*, 283. Professor Knox also notes that “many scholars” think Book 24 to be a later addition. Knox, “Introduction” to the *Iliad*, 9.

triumphs over the suitors, Penelope sets him one last trial. One can imagine what Penelope, paradigmatic wife that she was, wanted to say to Odysseus after he had been away for twenty years, and with an intimate knowledge of male proclivities. Instead of remonstrance, however, she merely tries him as only a wife can try a husband. Odysseus, who escaped the wiles of Circe and Calypso, succumbs to the magic of his own true wife (as it should be—and that too is part of the Homeric biology). The magic of Penelope, however, is that she is entirely a natural woman. She is not a divine being like Calypso, tempting Odysseus with immortality. She is not a witch like Circe, using spells and potions. She is not the daughter of Arete and Alcinous, like Nausicaa. Penelope is merely and altogether a woman. When Penelope tests him, Odysseus finds that he cannot resist her magic, that of his mortal wife. He loses his composure.

Woman, by heaven you've stung me now!  
 Who dared to move my bed?  
 no builder had the skill for that—unless  
 a god came down to turn the trick. No mortal  
 in his best days could budge it with a crowbar.  
 There is our pact and pledge, our secret sign,  
 built into that bed—my handiwork and no one else's.

An old trunk of olive  
 grew like a pillar on the building plot,  
 and I laid out our bedroom around that tree,  
 lined up the stone walls, built the walls and roof,  
 gave it a doorway and smooth-fitting doors.  
 Then I lopped off the silvery leaves and branches,  
 hewed and shaped that stump from the roots up  
 into a bedpost drilled it, let it serve  
 as a model for the rest. I planed them all,  
 inlaid them all with silver, gold and ivory,  
 and stretched a bed between—a pliant web  
 of oxhide thongs dyed crimson.



There's our sign!  
I know no more. Could someone else's hand  
have sawn that trunk and dragged the frame away?<sup>38</sup>

Penelope melts at his speech, and they spend a lovely night together which Athena prolongs.<sup>39</sup> If one follows Aristarchus in considering Book 24 a later addition, then the bedroom scene of Odysseus and Penelope is, in the most literal sense, the *telos* of the story. It is the *telos* at a higher level even accepting Book 24. The *Odyssey* is about homegoing, and that story concludes with Odysseus and Penelope in bed together. Book 24 ties up loose ends. At the end of book 23, the hero has achieved his safe homecoming as neither Agamemnon nor Achilles did, and the hero's household has been restored to its rightful order.

Professor Sir Moses Finley points out the complete absence of homosexual relations in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He discusses the Greek practice which lasted for centuries, and which he characterizes as "a full bi-sexuality." He affirms, quoting Professor Gilbert Murray, "We are faced with an instance of 'expurgation' of the poems, that 'Homer has swept this whole business, root and branch, out of his conception of life'."<sup>40</sup> It is not difficult

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<sup>38</sup> *Od.* 23.181-204, Fitzgerald 401.

<sup>39</sup> *Od.* 23.205-72.

<sup>40</sup> Finley, *World*, 127-28. It might be suggested that "Greek homosexuality began to be more common later, i.e., in the sixth century." Matthias Vorwerk, note to the author, July, 2007. Indeed Professor Sir Kenneth Dover observes that "overt homosexuality was already widespread by the early part of the sixth century B.C." Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 5. To find unremarkable the absence of any homosexual reference in the Homeric poems not only requires that homosexuality *began* to be more common at a later period, but that in the world within Homeric horizons homosexuality did not exist at all. Not only is there no positive or neutral depiction of homosexuality, there is no depiction of it, let alone comment upon it, at all. That is a stunning categorical assertion. There are not even any traces of memory about homosexuality in some other civilization as one finds, for example, in Genesis

to guess why. The Homeric ideal toward which the two poems work is the household (οἶκος). Homer sets himself against anything that threatens the unity of the household. Odysseus and Penelope are the model heroic man and woman who relentlessly work toward their shared *telos* in the household.

#### d. The Old Order Restored and Mixed Polity

Having renewed his oneness with Penelope, Odysseus seeks out his father, the old king, Laertes, and finds him planting trees in the orchard. Laertes presents a special problem in the *Odyssey*, a problem which is neatly eliminated if, with Aristarchus, Book 24 is excised. Book 24 was part of the text which Aristarchus inherited, and it remains the terminal book of the edition offered by Messrs. Munro and Allen. The problem is this: why was Odysseus and not Laertes the king of Ithaca? Why did he not go to Troy as Nestor did? Since he stayed at home, why was he not in possession of power as Peleus was? Sir Moses analyzes the problem astutely:

What about Laertes? He was an old man, but not senile. Why did he not sit on the throne of Ithaca? Nestor was at least as old – about seventy in the *Iliad* – and he not only ruled before and after the war but accompanied the hosts to Troy; and there, though his value to the army was only moral and psychological, he was a leading member of Agamemnon’s council of elders. . . .

Nor is there a hint that Odysseus had usurped his father’s position; on the contrary, much of the final book of the poem is given over to a scene of

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19:1-11 about Sodom. It is exactly that kind of memory with respect to cannibalism which one finds in the *Odyssey’s* account of the Cyclopes, as has been seen above. There are three possibilities: either 1) there was no homosexual activity in the Homeric world, 2) there was homosexual activity but Homer was oblivious to it (which is to say that in all the strata of development that there was obliviousness to it), or 3) to quote Professor Murray again that “Homer has swept this whole business, root and branch, out of his conception of life.” It is this final view which is adopted here. The second is not really plausible. If the first should prove to be true, then its anthropological import would be considerable.

love and devotion between father and son. Yet so far was the ex-king from authority that all the while the suitors were threatening to destroy the very substance of his son and grandson, Laertes could do no more than withdraw in isolation to his farm, there to grieve and lament.<sup>41</sup>

While his analysis is adept, his resolution is unsatisfying, “Laertes had proved unable to rule *iphi*, by might.”<sup>42</sup> As Sir Moses observes, Achilles put his own might at the disposal of his father’s legitimacy;<sup>43</sup> Odysseus, presumably, might have done the same. Professor Benardete too recognizes the problem, and proposes a solution consistent with the text, namely, “Laertes had abdicated in favor of Odysseus some time before the Trojan War and after he had sacked the city of Nericus (24.377-78).”<sup>44</sup> That proposal is speculation, however, and has nothing for it except that there is no evidence against it. If one concludes with Aristarchus to excise Book 24, the problem increases rather than disappears. As Professor Benardete rightly observes, “We know quite a bit about Laertes before we ever meet him. Athena knew that he no longer comes to town but stays in the country creeping about his vineyard (1.188-93); and Odysseus hears a more elaborate version of the same report from his mother in Hades (11.187-96).”<sup>45</sup> Excise those two passages and the problem of Laertes grows even worse, leaving the hearer or reader at a complete loss about the father of Odysseus. Just because a question arises from a text, that does not necessarily mean that

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<sup>41</sup> Finley, *World*, 86-87.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>44</sup> Benardete, *Bow*, 151.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

the text answers the question. It would seem that the *Odyssey* neither answers nor permits anyone to answer the question, “Why was Laertes not king?” Better is to ask a question which the text does answer: what purpose does Laertes serve in the denouement of the *Odyssey*?

Old Vico sets forth his “Philosophical Proofs for the Discovery of the True Homer.”<sup>46</sup> The first is, “Men are naturally led to preserve the memories of the institutions and laws that bind them within their societies.”<sup>47</sup> In the sixth, he writes, “It is an eternal property of the fables always to enlarge the ideas of particulars. On this there is a fine passage in Aristotle [*Rhetoric* 2.21.1395b1-10] in which he remarks that men of limited ideas erect every particular into a maxim.”<sup>48</sup> This is but another way to say what has been discussed at length in I.i, that Homer presents imaginative genera as the representation of particulars. The imaginative genus is the particular writ large. Laertes is such an imaginative genus, namely that of the old order. For whatever reason he is absent in the *Iliad* and in the first twenty-three books of the *Odyssey*, his appearance in Book 24 indicates the restoration of the old order.

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<sup>46</sup> NS III.v.

<sup>47</sup> NS 811.

<sup>48</sup> NS 816. In the passage cited, Aristotle remarks that people look for a maxim which summarizes their already established belief about the nature of experience in the world. Someone with “bad children” will agree when the maxim is pronounced, “Nothing is more foolish than to be the parent of children.” *Pol.* 2.21.1395b8-9. In this context, the maxim functions in parallel to imaginative genus of myth with respect to the particulars of the world.

Remnants of various historical periods are depicted synchronically in the Homeric poems.<sup>49</sup> The tension between Ajax Telamonides and Odysseus, for instance, expresses the superseding of one paradigm of hero by another. Ajax is the stronger, but is defeated by the wiles of Odysseus.<sup>50</sup> Even when Odysseus explores the house of Hades, Ajax remains implacable against his wily comrade-in-arms.<sup>51</sup> There is a struggle here between kinds of heroes. Ajax with his archaic shield and massive presence on the battlefield is already laughable in the *Iliad* even though this physical size and skill is still a “bulwark” (ἔρκος) against the Trojans.<sup>52</sup> Odysseus stands for the new order which though it displaces the old order cannot quite dispense with it. A similar dynamic of succession is played out with regard to Nestor. He occupies an ambiguous place in the Homeric epics. In one respect, he plays no significant part, and yet he seems indispensable to the telling of the tale. Nestor’s

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<sup>49</sup> For example, burial practices as set forth in the Homeric poems relate more to the customs of the eighth century B.C. rather than those of the Mycenaean Age from which so many other details are drawn. Onians, *Origins*, 258-61. Fowler, “The Homeric Question,” 209-10. An interesting feature of twentieth century scholarship is the movement from arguing for the synchronic presentation of diachronic events to accepting it as a settled matter. Professor Murray gave the series of lectures in 1907 which became *The Rise of the Greek Epic*. There he made the case for the synchronic presentation of diachronic events or customs in the chapter, “The *Iliad* as a Traditional Book.” His argument is that there are myriad inconsistencies in presentation of armor, houses, funeral practices, theology, and other matters which can be understood as coherent if the Homeric poems were composed over a period of centuries with details of various cultural practices and of various historical events woven into the fabric of the whole but which are, at best, “extremely puzzling” if one posits some other theory of composition. In other words, he amasses details of synchronic presentation of diachronic events and customs as evidence for his theory of Homeric authorship. Murray, *Epic*, 147 and in general 146-168. He does not cite Vico which suggests the possibility that he arrived independently at the same conclusions as Vico. Ninety years after Professor Murray’s Harvard lectures, Professor Bernard Knox gives a nice summary of the diachronic features presented synchronically in the Homeric poems as a matter of settled scholarship. Knox, “Introduction” to the *Iliad*, 13-14.

<sup>50</sup> *Il.* 23.700-83.

<sup>51</sup> *Od.* 11.541-67.

<sup>52</sup> Herbert Jennings Rose et al., “Aias,” in *OCD*, 32.

old-fashioned rhetoric is implicitly mocked and admired. For example, Athena, disguised as Mentor, instructs Telemachus to seek Nestor when he needs an authenticating presence during his search to learn news of his father.<sup>53</sup> Like Ajax, Nestor is both laughable and at the same time respected. The difference between the two is depicted in the *Odyssey* where Ajax is silent in the house of Hades, while Nestor is as loquacious as ever in the land of the living.<sup>54</sup> Ajax represents a past which is not to be renewed, while Nestor as a representative of an old order still has something to say worth hearing in the new world. In this context, one also does well to note the appearance of Laertes, father to Odysseus and presumably a peer to Nestor, at the end of the *Odyssey*. A sorting among paradigms is underway. The question is depicted: what role will the old order play in the future? The bookends of the *Odyssey*, then, are Zeus and old men at the beginning and Zeus and Laertes, wielding a spear in the decisive and final denouement, at the end.<sup>55</sup> The polemical edge of the Homeric poems is against a decadent order then ending and for the renewal of an idealized order represented by Nestor and Laertes and the gods of old.

Professor Wendell Berry makes the point that Laertes is a king, but he finds consolation “as a peasant.”<sup>56</sup> Here is an encounter which is, at once, agricultural, filial, and

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<sup>53</sup> *Od.* 3.14-20.

<sup>54</sup> In his first speech to Telemachus, Nestor is given ninety-eight lines by Homer. *Od.* 3.103-200.

<sup>55</sup> Nestor and Laertes, as emblems of the venerable but largely impotent old order, presages a figure in literature such as Polonius in *Hamlet*. This motif becomes stock in the novels of Sir Walter Scott (e.g., the Baron of Bradwardine in *Waverley* and Cedric the Saxon in *Ivanhoe*).

<sup>56</sup> Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1986), 128-29.

political. Homer names the varieties of trees which Laertes is planting. Odysseus approaches his father as a guest-friend who, having given hospitality, now seeks its return, and asks the whereabouts of his corresponding ξείνος. He reveals himself to his father there in the orchard.<sup>57</sup> As proof of his identity, Odysseus recounts to his father that when he was a child his father had given him thirteen pear trees, ten apple trees, forty fig trees, and fifty vines. After twenty years it is the recitation of an agricultural catalogue which convinces the old king that this is his son who has returned home. The restoration of the right political order occurs as a function of human husbandry in the natural world. Homer's paradigm of being is rooted in biology. Just as marriage, at root a biological relationship, is also the most political relationship, so also other political relationships must be established with respect to a harmonious and integrated order of the natural world. The king is discovered in the recitation of an orchard inventory.

Odysseus and Laertes are reunited. They gather their kith and kin, readying themselves for one last battle. Down in the town, once Odysseus slaughtered the suitors, word of the king's return and revenge spread throughout the town.<sup>58</sup> Kinsmen of the dead went up to the household of Odysseus to return the revenge. Depicted here is the nascent conflict between city and household. As the *Odyssey* heads for its final scene, Athena asks her father:

What is your secret will?  
War and battle, worse and more of it,

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<sup>57</sup> *Od.* 24.294-360.

<sup>58</sup> *Od.* 24.412.

or can you not impose a pact on both?

Zeus then declares himself, with unusual clarity:

As in the old time (τὸ πάρος)  
let men of Ithaka henceforth be friends;  
prosperity enough, and peace attend them.<sup>59</sup>

Up to that moment, the likelier outcome was that Odysseus and his party would annihilate all the kin of the already-slain suitors. Athena, however, executes the will of Zeus, and prevents further bloodshed between the Odyssean party and those who would avenge the death of the suitors.<sup>60</sup> The ending is extraordinary because Athena acts through Laertes and his spear. As Professor Benardete also discusses this point, “It is through Odysseus’s way of disguising and revealing himself that Laertes is made to declare that the Olympian gods still exist (24.351).”<sup>61</sup> Odysseus reveals himself to his father just in time for the poem’s conclusion.

Laertes, like Nestor a representative of the old order, assumes his place as head of the household. He asserts his right of precedence in relation to Odysseus. At this point, Odysseus who has persevered through many trials and triumphed over many enemies yields to his father. In the homecoming of the hero, Telemachus has truly become his father’s son, Penelope her husband’s wife and Laertes his son’s father. Athena ratifies this last restoration by strengthening the arm of Laertes. He strikes a blow for the household against the town

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<sup>59</sup> *Od.* 24.472-86; Fitzgerald 423. It is interesting to compare this speech by Zeus at the end of the *Odyssey* to the one he made to Athena in Book 5.22-23 where Zeus both addresses his daughter positively, but—at the same time—he deflects her question.

<sup>60</sup> *Od.* 24.516-48.

<sup>61</sup> Benardete, *Bow*, 6.



forces. Laertes is the imaginative genus for the “old time” invoked by Zeus. Immediately, Athena, disguised as Mentor, calls a truce, re-enforced by Zeus’s bolt from the blue. Odysseus assents, and there is peace. The *Odyssey* begins with Zeus taking up the human accusation that the gods are responsible for the wars of men. He challenges mortal men to see what they can accomplish without the gods. At the end of the *Odyssey*, humans are about to recommence warfare, a civil war. Zeus and Athena intervene—in dramatic terms, each of them a *deus ex machina*—with Laertes to make peace. The Homeric poems begin with civil war on a grand scale under way as the allies of Agamemnon sought the destruction of Troy. Zeus and Athena prevent local civil war at the end of the poems. Depicted in the last one hundred lines of the *Odyssey* is a constitution of mixed polity. Laertes as representative of the old order rejoices to see his “son and grandson vie in courage.” The “gods” are “dear” (θεοὶ φίλοι).<sup>62</sup> Odysseus himself has right insofar as he is “descended from Zeus” and “son of Laertes.”<sup>63</sup> Athena insists that he not do the heroic thing: he is not to wreak vengeance on his enemies. Her adamant counsel to him is opposite to what Agamemnon demanded of Menelaus when camped under the walls of Troy.<sup>64</sup> Though the people of the town (πόλις) have fled,<sup>65</sup> in order for the restoration of Odysseus to be complete, he and the townsfolk must enter a solemn estate of mutual comity.<sup>66</sup> The old, current and new orders, household

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<sup>62</sup> *Od.* 24.514-15; Fitzgerald 424.

<sup>63</sup> *Od.* 24.542.

<sup>64</sup> *Il.* 6.55-60.

<sup>65</sup> *Od.* 24. 536.

and town, mortals and immortals, heroic men and *anthropoi* are all reconciled. This is represented by the Olympians and Laertes as an old order restored, but it is, in fact, not merely a new order but a new kind of order, namely a moderate and blended polity. Not for the last time in the history of the world, revolution is offered under the guise of re-creation. The details of such a new constitution are left to Laertes, Odysseus, and the others who heard the divine command—and to the hearers/readers' imaginations as well—and it is on just such a note that the *Odyssey* ends. Laertes' wielding of his sword to inaugurate a reign of friendship, plenty, and peace is the final re-establishment of what is fitting.

### 3. Plato

#### a. Depiction of an Unhappy Household

Although Plato does not appear in his own dialogues, his relatives and friends do. In the *Republic* his brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, are the chief interlocutors of Socrates. There is one passage in particular where Plato may provide a glimpse of the family in which he grew up, 8.548d6-550b8. The suggestion of a family snapshot arises from Adeimantus identifying his brother Glaucon as an example of the timocratic man. Plato the author puts into the mouth of his one brother that their brother in common is an example of a certain personality type that corresponds to a political constitution. Socrates describes how such a

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<sup>66</sup> *Od.* 24.546.

timocratic type is formed. He then gives an account of a particular family, perhaps Plato's family.<sup>67</sup> If it is not the family of Plato, it is still a vivid and not very attractive picture.

The father of the timocratic youth is a noble so removed from the affairs of the world that his fellow citizens take advantage of him. In fact, the father in this sketch is much like the good and just man that Socrates has already said a man should in fact be: he minds his own business.<sup>68</sup> That is also to say, he is a figure not unlike Socrates himself, "a good father who lives in a city that isn't well governed, who avoids honors, office, lawsuits, and all such meddling in other people's affairs, and who is even willing to be put at a disadvantage in order to avoid trouble."<sup>69</sup> His wife, however, resents her family's demotion, and despises her husband for being the cause of it. "To lose his wife's respect," Professor Murray observes in the context of Attic Greece, "was the greatest blow that could befall an honourable man."<sup>70</sup>

The family servants re-enforce the mother's view of her husband. The son grows up

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<sup>67</sup> This suggestion is supported by an observation by Professor Kahn, "And in the *Republic* Plato's personal signature is indirectly but unmistakably conveyed by the choice of Socrates' interlocutors, Plato's own brothers, the two 'sons of Ariston': Glaucon and Adeimantus." Kahn, *Plato*, 57-58. Professor Kahn further cites the authority of Professor David Sedley, "See Sedley (1995:4f.) for two strategic uses of the phrase 'sons of Ariston' as a subtle device by which Plato manages 'to project his own authorial voice.'" *Ibid.*, 58, note 36. See David Sedley, "'The Dramatis Personae of Plato's *Phaedo*,'" *Proceedings of the British Academy* 85, 3-26, reprinted in T. J. Smiley, ed. *Philosophical Dialogues: Plato, Hume, Wittgenstein*, Oxford." *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>68</sup> *R.* 4, 433a8-b1.

<sup>69</sup> *R.* 8.549c1-3; Cooper, 1161. "Unlike the aristocratic city, the aristocratic man really exists; he is a philosopher. Moreover, he is exactly like Socrates. He devotes himself to learning; he is totally indifferent to his body and other men's opinions of him; he is utterly dedicated and single-minded. But his wife, like Xanthippe, cannot endure the fact that her husband, and thereby she herself, is unhonored and despised. She, along with other like-minded people, convinces her son that this is not way to live. . . . Man's fall from the state of innocence is a result of a woman's temptings. The son's spiritedness is awakened, and he lives the life of a proud man, performing those deeds which will make him respected by others. Such a life entails the abandonment of philosophy." Bloom, "*Republic*", 420.

<sup>70</sup> Murray, *Epic*, 20n1.

disrespecting his father, determined to be a different kind of man. This image of the household makes a striking contrast to that presented by Homer in which every heroic man is determined to maintain his honor no matter what the material or physical cost to himself and his household. In effect, Glaucon—or any other such timocratic youth—is reverting to the nature of the Homeric warrior. To put it another way, he becomes afflicted of the one thing from which Odysseus needed to be cured in order to take up the soul of the philosopher: the love of honor.<sup>71</sup> A sign that the timocratic constitution has become oligarchic is that the rich and their wives feel free to disobey the laws,<sup>72</sup> while those households whose means fall below the property test are pressured to cashier their goods and to become drones.<sup>73</sup> For households at all levels, oligarchy is destructive of virtue.<sup>74</sup> The household fares little better in the democratic city. Drunk on freedom, fathers act like children; sons like fathers, the foreigners like citizens. Freedom “in the end breeds anarchy even among the animals.”<sup>75</sup> Socrates of the *Republic* finds little good and much ill in the household, so he eliminated the household from his city. One wonders if he found the household too vulnerable to be permitted in his city. Wives and children are to “be held in common,” he says.<sup>76</sup> Professor Bloom comments on the sex and family for the guardians

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<sup>71</sup> R. 10.620c5.

<sup>72</sup> R. 8.550d5-7.

<sup>73</sup> R. 8.550e4-7 and 552a7-10.

<sup>74</sup> R. 8.552b2-c4.

<sup>75</sup> R. 8.562e3-563a1; Cooper, 1173.

and auxiliaries, “The family is abolished, unless one considers the city as one family.”<sup>77</sup> One of the achieved goals of liberation from the Cave is freedom from biological kinship and freedom for soulful kinship. Here one discovers, according to Socrates of the *Republic* and insofar as what is said here is consistent with what is found elsewhere (e.g., *Theaetetus* 152d2-e9) according to Plato’s Socrates, what is fundamentally wrong with biological kinship:

If a nature of this sort had been hammered at from childhood and freed from the bonds of kinship with becoming, which have been fastened to it by feasting, greed, and other such pleasures and which, like leaden weights, pulls its vision downwards—if being rid of these, it turned to look at true things, then I say that the same soul of the same person would see these most sharply, just as it now does the things it is presently turned towards.<sup>78</sup>

Biological entities are always in a state either of generation or corruption; they never simply *are*. Biological kinship, therefore, is kinship with that which never simply *is*. True kinship is the soul’s kinship with that-which-is.

### **b. Repudiation of the Household in the *Lysis***

Already in the *Lysis*, Socrates brings the household into question. Socrates examines the relationship of Lysis to his mother, father and slaves in his father’s household. Throughout the dialogue, there is also a play on forms of the word “household (οἶκος)” which is only infrequently obvious in English translations. The word οἰκεῖος literally means

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<sup>76</sup> R. 4.423e6-424a1, 5.449c4-5; Cooper 1056 and 1077.

<sup>77</sup> Bloom, “*Republic*”, 385.

<sup>78</sup> R. 7.519a8-b5; Cooper 1136.

“of the household.” “Of the family,” “akin,” and then “intimate” are derivative meanings.

One important question of the dialogue is what is properly οἰκεῖος to a human being. Is what is properly οἰκεῖος actually of a person’s household or is it someone or something else? If the person is not of someone’s household, then how does one determine who is truly οἰκεῖος?

Lysis is, as Professor Bolotin observes, “a dutiful son, and his love for his parents goes together with an unquestioning obedience.” By the end of the dialogue, however, “he is seen engaging in a minor rebellion against his family’s authority.”<sup>79</sup> Socrates “releases” Lysis from his unthinking adherence to his family’s authority and mores. He begins by asking, “Am I right in assuming, Lysis, that your father and mother love you very much?”<sup>80</sup> Socrates questions whether they really want him to be happy since they do not permit him to do as he pleases (e.g., ride a chariot in a competition). He questions the wisdom of subjecting a free youth to the care of slaves. He asks if Lysis’ mother would let him engage in the work of spinning or looming.<sup>81</sup> Lysis responds that his parents are only waiting for him to come of age, an argument which Socrates quickly demolishes.<sup>82</sup> Socrates arrives at the tentative conclusion which, at once, vindicates the parents of Lysis and diminishes their standing, “But in areas where we haven’t got any understanding, no one will trust us to act as we judge best, but everybody will do their best to stop us, and not only strangers, but also

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<sup>79</sup> Bolotin, *Friendship*, 65.

<sup>80</sup> *Ly.* 207d5-6; Cooper 691.

<sup>81</sup> *Ly.* 207e5-209a3.

<sup>82</sup> *Ly.* 207e4-210c5.

our mother and father and anyone else even more intimate (οικειότερον).”<sup>83</sup> The parents of Lysis have acted appropriately, but they have done no better than right-minded strangers. There are also those who are more akin to Lysis than his parents. If Lysis is wise, then everyone will be his friend; if he is not wise, then even his parents will not befriend him.<sup>84</sup>

What is the kinship greater than that of parent-child? Friendship is the more intimate kinship, “And if you two are friends with each other, then in some way you naturally belong to each other” (‘Υμεῖς ἄρα εἰ φίλοι ἐστὸν ἀλλήλοις, φύσει πη οἰκεῖοί ἐσθ’ ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς).<sup>85</sup> The passionate love of friendship is kinship of the soul (κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν).<sup>86</sup> Biological kinship counts for nothing; it is kinship of the soul which matters. Not only is Socrates deconstructing and reconstructing kinship, but nature as well. Anachronistic projection with respect to nature must be avoided in reading this text. It is too easy subconsciously to read an understanding of nature more consistent with *Physics 2* or *Politics 1*, or even with the thought of Lord Verulam and those who came after him, when reading pre-Aristotelian texts. When Socrates says that the boys “are akin by nature,” he does not mean biological nature, rather nature as pertains to the soul. Professor Bolotin addresses this point:

Now by interpreting natural kinship as kinship of the soul, Socrates is making an important, if implicit, denial. His silence about the most usual kinship, which is the kinship within a family, implies that familial kinship is not truly by nature. . . . In the

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<sup>83</sup> *Ly.* 210b5-c3; Cooper 694.

<sup>84</sup> *Ly.* 210d1-4. Professor Kahn notes the parallel usage of “friends” (φίλοι) and “kinfolk” (οἰκεῖοι) in *Ly.* 210b-d, in specific d1-2. Kahn, *Plato*, 290n46.

<sup>85</sup> *Ly.* 221e5-6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ly.* 222a1-3.

present account, one's relatives are supplanted as the truly natural kin by those with kindred souls.<sup>87</sup>

Even when there is soulful kinship between parent and child, that relationship is still in no way privileged over the soulful kinship of the child with a friend. Biological kinship counts for nothing, and biology is not of nature. The soul is everything. Biology only detracts or distracts from the reality of the soulful kinship.

As has been argued above, Homeric kinship has a strong, if not exclusively, biological character which Socrates repudiates. This biological kinship is usually explicit: the bond of hetero-sexual intercourse, thus the biological kinship to wife, the procreation of a son, thus the biological kinship to offspring. It has also been argued that the biological character of Homeric kinship is depicted in the bed of Odysseus and Penelope which is built into the house, and both the house and bed are built into an olive tree. Kinship can also be revealed through biological signs, such as Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus through an old hunting scar. By contrast with the biological and explicitly heterosexual character of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*—a heterosexual character which occludes homosexuality—the *Lysis* has an overtly homosexual character, from the early line of Hippothales when he waylays Socrates, enticing him with the prospect of the boys in the school, "There are quite a few besides ourselves—and they're all good-looking."<sup>88</sup> Homo-erotic relationships are the

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<sup>87</sup> Bolotin, *Friendship*, 184. Professor Gonzalez uses strikingly similar language in his excellent treatment of the *Lysis*, "That Socrates wants this kind of kinship to supplant the one with which *Lysis* is familiar is shown in his incredible claim that not even *Lysis*' parents, or anyone else closely related to him, will be his kin (οἰκεῖοι) unless he is wise (210d3-4)." Francisco J. Gonzalez, "Plato's *Lysis*: An Enactment of Philosophical Kinship," *Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1995), 74.

<sup>88</sup> *Ly.* 203b8; Cooper 688.



presupposed context for friendships of soul. Professor Benardete begins his essay on the *Lysis* with this frank assessment, “In the *Lysis* Plato has Socrates present himself at his sleaziest.”<sup>89</sup>

Much else in the dialogue underscores the Socratic deconstruction and reconstruction of kinship and nature. While the father-son and mother-son relationships are explored, there is no mention of the husband-wife relationship. As homosexuality is occluded from the Homeric poems, heterosexuality is occluded from the *Lysis*. While Professor Bolotin recognizes that kinship of the soul “supplants” biological kinship, he not only misses the point but then even fills absences in the text, absences which support Socrates’ denial of biological kinship. For example, in commenting upon the friendships of opposites in 215e, Professor Bolotin supplies the male-female counterpoint as if it were part of what Socrates means:

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<sup>89</sup> Benardete, *Argument*, 198. A common rejoinder to the argument of the present work is invoke Alcibiades’ speech in the *Symposium* as evidence that Socrates rejected his advances, “I stood up immediately and placed my mantle over the light cloak which, though it was the middle of winter, was his only clothing. I slipped underneath the cloak and put my arms around this man—this utterly unnatural, this truly extraordinary man—and spent the whole night next to him. Socrates, you can’t deny a word of it. But in spite of all my efforts, this hopelessly arrogant, this unbelievably insolent man—he turned me down! . . . Be sure of it, I swear to you by all the gods and goddesses together, my night with Socrates went no further than if I had spent the night with my own father or older brother.” *Smp.* 219b4-c5, c6-d2; Cooper 501. On this account, it would seem that Socrates was the only person—male or female—who was able to resist when seduced by Alcibiades. The opening scene of the *Protagoras*, however, presents a different relationship, one in which Socrates was on the prowl for Alcibiades as an early adolescent, “Where have you just come from, Socrates? No, don’t tell me. It’s pretty obvious that you’ve been hunting the ripe and ready Alcibiades.” *Prt.* 309a1-2; Cooper 747. Simply in terms of who pursued whom, the two dialogues invert the relationship between the two. Read as diachronic accounts, they are not contradictory. The account of the *Protagoras* does negate, however, the interpretation of Alcibiades’ speech in the *Symposium* as evidence for Socrates’ passive but firmly resisting role in relation to the much younger man. It is often argued that pederasty in the Platonic dialogues is merely a metaphor for pedagogy. Socrates of the *Republic* offers a judgement on the allegorical reading of Homer which seems apt here, at least insofar as Platonic texts are required for undergraduate study, “The young can’t distinguish what is allegorical and what isn’t, and the opinions they absorb at that age are hard to erase and apt to become unalterable. For these reasons, then, we should probably take the utmost care to insure that the first stories they hear about virtue are the best ones for them to hear.” *R.* 2.378d7-e3; Cooper 1017.

For, he said, the most opposite is especially a friend to the most opposite. The speaker reasoned that this was so because each thing desires its opposite, and not what it is like. As instances of such desire, he observed that what is dry desires the moist, what is cold the warm, what is bitter the sweet, what is sharp the dull, what is empty desires filling, and what is full emptying, just as all other things desire in the same. There is no need for the speaker to supplement this list with the female and male.<sup>90</sup>

The point is not that the speaker does not have need to add “female and male,” rather that the speaker, in fact, omits it. Professor Bolotin remedies the omission a second time even as he observes it, “Had he [Socrates] wished to do so, he might have pointed to the kinship between opposites with a larger class of likes (for example, between men and women).”<sup>91</sup>

The point is that he did not wish to do so, and the reason he did not wish to do is that he was deconstructing the biological kinship and reconstructing kinship as of the soul alone.<sup>92</sup>

Professor Benardete gets this point right:

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<sup>90</sup> Bolotin, “*Lysis*”, 138.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>92</sup> A sub-theme to which this work occasionally reverts is that the modern or post-modern reader must exercise care not to project anachronistically upon the ancient texts. It is fair for a reader of this work to ask if it is not exactly that which is done here in identifying the project of deconstruction with Socrates. While fairly asked, it can also be fairly answered in the negative. It is clear that Professor Bolotin, who has no tendency to see Socrates as a forerunner to Foucault, discusses the “little brawl” at the end of the dialogue which he says is, with one possible exception, “the most violent scene in Plato’s dialogues.” Bolotin, *Friendship*, 65. At the end of his commentary, he comments upon the same scene, “He [Socrates] threatened the authority enjoyed by fathers over their sons.” *Ibid.*, 198. Professor Bolotin discusses “the ‘subversive’ element in Socrates’ approach to *Lysis*,” but he does not prosecute his analysis to its roots. *Ibid.*, 86. Professor Gary Alan Scott approaches some of these same issues, but does not delve into the themes of limits and liberation radically enough. He does, however, write a few interesting sentences on “transgression,” “Even when an individual’s limits cannot be permanently altered, they may occasionally be transgressed. Perhaps this explains why Socrates begins his capture of *Lysis* by appearing to transgress established authority. To conventional wisdom, every placing in question of established authority is a transgression. So when Socrates hypothetically removes the limits constraining *Lysis*, this might have appeared as transgression of traditional authority.” Gary Alan Scott, *Plato’s Socrates as Educator* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 70. Why does he say “appearing” and “hypothetically.” Socrates successfully seduces *Lysis* into rebellion against established authority as evidenced by the “little brawl” at the end. Perhaps some would find “redefine” as a less loaded term that “deconstruction-

He [Socrates] enlarges the horizon of Lysis's ambition, so that even to rule the entire world is not precluded, while he destroys the foundation of all security in his home and family. The disenchantment of Lysis goes along with his enchantment. To sacrifice the local, the neighborhood, and the private—everything, in short, summed up in the word *oikeion*—for the sake of the universal, seems to be the same as to replace *philein* with *eran*.<sup>93</sup>

This discounting of biological kinship is consistent with the denigration of the body found throughout much of the Platonic corpus.

### c. From Repudiation to Restoration of the Household

Within the proleptic relationship of dialogues to the *Republic*, there are also transitional prolepses. Such is the relationship of the *Lysis* to the *Symposium*. While the most obvious point of comparison is the development of ἔρωϛ,<sup>94</sup> the question of the household also bears upon the development from the one dialogue to the other. Professor Kahn observes that the development of τό οἰκεῖον in the *Lysis* “will play a part in Diotima's theory” in the *Symposium*. How one is to read the speech of Diotima is a problem as pregnant as her metaphors.<sup>95</sup> It is a given, as discussed in I.ii.1, that as an author, Plato remains hidden throughout his dialogues. The views of Socrates and of his interlocutors are all at one remove from Plato himself. The important speech of Diotima is yet another

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reconstruction.” The motif of construction seems fitting, however, given that for Odysseus that which was οἰκεῖος was literally constructed: the tree, the house, the bed.

<sup>93</sup> Benardete, *Argument*, 207.

<sup>94</sup> Kahn, *Plato*, 264.

<sup>95</sup> Professor Benardete finds a point of comparison between Socrates of the *Lysis* and Diotima, “Socrates undertakes in the *Lysis* to do for friendship what Diotima did for love.” Benardete, *Argument*, 209.

remove. Allowing for the difference between an author and an historical character as depicted by that author, Diotima is to Socrates as Socrates is to Plato. Her frank admiration of Homer for the considerable achievement of having created immortal offspring is an example of her distance from both Socrates and Plato.<sup>96</sup> She says there are two kinds of pregnancy, that of the body and that of the soul, and just as those who are bodily pregnant yearn for their offspring to become immortal, fame and procreation being the only paths to immortality open to mortals, so those pregnant of soul will yearn for immortality of the soul.<sup>97</sup> It is in this context that she opines, “But by far the greatest and most beautiful part of wisdom deals with the proper ordering of cities and households, and this is called moderation and justice.”<sup>98</sup> She proceeds to discuss true kinship in which she discounts the body in favor of the soul, “Our lover will be forced to gaze at the beauty of activities and laws and to see that all this is akin (συγγενής) to itself, with the result that he will think that the beauty of bodies is a thing of no importance.”<sup>99</sup> Once one manages to get past the disgusting metaphor of pederasty for the ascent to truth and beauty, Diotima says that if anyone can attain to soulful immortality it is the person who, beholding beauty itself, has given birth to virtue.<sup>100</sup> What is to be made of the reference to households in the development of Diotima’s tale? The quoted line could just as well have read, “But by far the

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<sup>96</sup> *Smp.* 209c7-d4.

<sup>97</sup> *Smp.* 208d7-209a3.

<sup>98</sup> *Smp.* 209a5-8 ; Cooper 491.

<sup>99</sup> *Smp.* 210c3-6; Cooper 493.

<sup>100</sup> *Smp.* 212a2-7.

greatest and most beautiful part of wisdom deals with the proper ordering of cities, and this is called moderation and justice.” The addition of “and households” is significant, but what does it signify? Socrates of the *Lysis* denigrates households, and Socrates of the *Republic* eliminates them. However much Plato was concerned with the highest calling of beauty and virtue to immortality of the soul, politics was always on his mind. Even if “households” are included for the purpose of analogy, it is not clear analogous to what. The statement is strong, “the greatest and most beautiful part of wisdom.”<sup>101</sup> It may be that at two removes, Plato is indicating the positive aspect of ambivalence about the household. Perhaps it were better to leave the question without any attempt at an answer and, thereby, to leave it in tantalizing ambiguity.

Plato, in the wisdom of old age, wrote the *Laws*,<sup>102</sup> a dialogue without Socrates as a character. Plato has his protagonist, the Athenian Stranger, restore the household to the city.

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<sup>101</sup> There is a similar tension in the *Lysis* which Professor Gonzalez seeks to resolve, “In his discussion with Lysis, Socrates concluded that all friendship is based on wisdom and goodness. He has now shown, however, that complete wisdom and goodness are incompatible with friendship. What conclusion can be drawn, then, except that *all friendship is based on that intermediate wisdom that is philosophy and on that intermediate goodness that is the desire for the good?* This conclusion receives further support from the apparent inability of human beings to go beyond this intermediate state of being neither good nor bad.” Gonzalez, *Enactment*, 79. If he is correct in this analysis, then it suggests that the “second best” which is the best possible rather than the best conceivable, so often identified with the *Laws*, was already in Plato’s mind as he wrote one of the earliest dialogues. It should be noted that while this work identifies the parallel between *Lysis* and *Symposium* on this point, Professor Gonzalez treats the *Lysis* as entirely independent of the *Symposium*.

<sup>102</sup> This characterization is bound to be controversial. For example, Professor Murray writes, almost in passing, about Plato’s authorship of the *Laws*, that the dialogue was “written in his old age, when the cloud of reaction had settled darkly upon his mind.” Murray, *Epic*, 16. Professor Murray evidently prefers the idealism of youth—or in the case of Plato what was apparently the idealism still of middle age even if, *pace* the Straussians, the *Republic* is to be read ironically—to the realism that, typically, comes with age, and thus he prefers the *Republic* to the *Laws*. That seems to represent a consensus of philosophers if one considers merely how often the earlier work appears in introductory courses on philosophy and how rarely, if ever, is the latter work even mentioned in such courses. Professor Murray comments—in a line already partially quoted in

Building upon the argument made in I.ii.3, there is no one more suitable to restore the household than Odysseus. In Book 3, the Stranger discusses the origins of “political systems (πολιτείας).”<sup>103</sup> He recalls the story of the Cyclopes as recounted in *Odyssey* 9, quoting lines 112-15 which has been discussed above. Plato’s refiguring of the material, however, transforms the Cyclopean polity into an idyll of simple rectitude, “Weren’t our primitive men simple and manlier and at the same time more restrained and upright in every way?”<sup>104</sup> This constitution of the powerful (πολιτείαν δυναστείαν) is “the most justifiable of all forms of kingship.”<sup>105</sup> The Stranger has completely turned the Homeric passage upside down. What Odysseus regarded with horror, the Stranger holds up as the paradigm of the oldest and very noble order of community. Professor Benardete calls the Stranger’s treatment of the Cyclopes, “whitewashing.”<sup>106</sup> He observes, “The Stranger does not mention that the Cyclops ate six of Odysseus’s men.”<sup>107</sup> Interpreting the Stranger as the Athenian Odysseus, then it is Odysseus himself who has forgotten that Polyphemus ate his shipmates. In terms of

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I.ii.2.c—on Plato’s attitude to poetry, in general, and to Homeric poetry, in specific, “Plato prayed to be delivered from poetry because poetry was to him a seducing fire.” Murray, *Epic*, 91. Poetry was not the only seducing fire in his life; so also was Socrates. It is not presumed here to say that Plato “prayed” to be delivered from Socrates, but it is not necessary to presume. As a fact of the Platonic dialogues, the role of Socrates changes in later dialogues, either finding himself on a more even level with his interlocutors who have richer philosophical views than do the interlocutors of the proleptic dialogues, or deferring to the Eleatic Stranger, before disappearing altogether in the *Laws*. To Homer and Socrates Plato owed much. As he hides his own voice, he creates a literary Socrates to challenge a literary Homer. In the later dialogues, Plato manages to transcend them both, but still without speaking in his own voice.

<sup>103</sup> L. 3.676a1.

<sup>104</sup> L. 3.679e2-3; Cooper 1368.

<sup>105</sup> L. 3.680e3-4; Cooper 1369.

<sup>106</sup> Benardete, “*Laws*”, 136.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

Platonic refiguring of Homer, in general, the plot thickens because when Plato's Socrates quotes Odysseus, twice in the *Republic* and once in the *Phaedo* as discussed in I.ii.2.f, when he must watch silently as his slave girls find their ways to the beds of the suitors, it is precisely to the eating of his crew members that he adverts:

Knocking his breast he muttered to himself:  
 "Down; be steady. You've seen worse, that time  
 the Kyklops like a rockslide ate your men  
 while you looked on. Nobody, only guile,  
 got you out of that cave alive."<sup>108</sup>

What makes this refiguring all the more interesting is that the Stranger and his interlocutors proceed to have an amusing conversation about the merits of Homer as a poet:

Clinias: That poet of yours sounds as if he was a charming fellow. I have gone through other verses of his, and very polished they were too. Not that I know his work to any great extent—we Cretans don't go in for foreign poetry very much.

Megillus: But we at Sparta do, and we think Homer is the prince of epic poets, even though the way of life he describes is invariably Ionian rather than Spartan. In this instance he certainly seems to bear you out when he points in his stories to the wild life (ἀγριότητα) of the Cyclopes as an explanation of their primitive customs.

Athenian: Yes, he does testify in my favor. So let's take as our evidence that political systems of this kind do sometimes develop.<sup>109</sup>

While the Stranger quotes Homer as his authority, he completely transforms the value of the quotation. Megillus the Spartan characterizes the Cyclopean way of life more accurately. The Stranger describes the kind of primitive order he has in mind, and then uses a citation from Homer as his proof-text. He repeats this structure in establishing his third level of

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<sup>108</sup> *Od.* 20.17-21; Fitzgerald 347-48.

<sup>109</sup> *L.* 3.680c1-d5; Cooper 1369.

political development, the city. In fact, he says of Homer in his characterization of those two polities, “He composed these lines, as well as those about the Cyclopes, under some sort of inspiration from God. And how true to life they are! This is because poets as a class are divinely gifted and are inspired when they sing, so that with the help of Graces and Muses they frequently hit on how things really happen.”<sup>110</sup> However the *Laws* be interpreted, at least superficially, the attitude of the Stranger is reverential toward Homer compared to Socrates of the *Republic*. Note also that while Homer depicts diachronic ages, i.e., that of the Cyclopes and of Odysseus, synchronically, the Athenian Stranger reads the synchronic text diachronically. He treats the Homeric text as a literary archeological site to be excavated at the different levels of civilization.

Vico remarks the positive view of the Cyclopes by the Athenian Stranger, as noted above, but he does not comment on how different his aspect toward Homer is from that of Socrates of the *Republic*.<sup>111</sup> Professor Jaeger, or perhaps more the interpretation of Professor Hight, comments on this discussion of the Cyclopean world and how the character of Homer’s authority is transformed:

In Plato’s day there was no archeological excavation, so he has to rely on literary tradition, especially Homer. Here he admits that the earliest poetry is (at least partially) valuable as a source for historical fact. The historical and aesthetic attitudes to poetry, which seem so natural to us now, began to develop more and more as the paideutic (i.e. the absolute) value of poetry became doubtful or lost its original sense.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *L.* 3.682a1-5; Cooper 1370.

<sup>111</sup> E.g., *NS* 296, 338, 950, 962, 982, 1005.



It has been discussed above that in the fifth century B.C., the Homeric text had lost acceptance as veridical.<sup>113</sup> The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were on the way to becoming merely literature which, as been argued in II.ii.4, they had become for Aristotle. As Plato wrote the *Laws*, Homer was still an historical source, if no longer the supreme authority. Thus, of the various levels of political development, the Stranger underscores the household and the city as the two forms of human association which express divine inspiration as betokened by the insight of the poets and, in specific, of Homer. It may also be that the thoroughly rationalized Odysseus looks beyond the immediate experience in a moment of spiritedness in order to reflect dispassionately on the political order of the Cyclopean world.

The Stranger's praise of Homer's depiction of the household is not incidental, rather it is a main point of the *Laws* where the household is fully restored in Plato's political vision. He explicitly provides for the optimal number of households (5040)<sup>114</sup> and for the internal structure of each as well as relations among them in the context of the larger community.<sup>115</sup> The commonwealth of the city is to be a community of friendship amongst

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<sup>112</sup> Jaeger, *Paideia*, ed. Highet, 3.231-32. It would seem that the final sentence of the quotation is not a translation of Professor Jaeger's text, but is, rather, an interpolation by Professor Highet. "Da es zu seiner Zeit noch keine Ausgrabungen gab, hält Plato sich an die literarische Überlieferung, besonders Homer. Er erkennt hier ausdrücklich der ältesten Poesie wenigstens zum Teil den Wert einer Quelle geschichtlicher Wahrheit zu. An der Hand des Homer schildert er den Übergang von dem gesetzlosen zyklischen Zustand zu systematischer Bindung und patriarchalischer Herrschaft." Jaeger, *Paideia*, 3.310.

<sup>113</sup> See I.ii.2.b and Most, "Poetics," 342-43.

<sup>114</sup> L. 5.737c5-6, e1-3.

<sup>115</sup> L. 5.740b1-741b6.

the householders.<sup>116</sup> The household is also restored in the *Laws* with respect to marriage and sexual order. Marriage law is first in the commonwealth of the *Laws*:

Ath. Come, tell me then, in Heaven's name,—what would be the first law to be laid down by the lawgiver? Will he not follow the order of nature (κατὰ φύσιν), and in his ordinances regulate first the starting point of generation in States?

Clin. Of course.

Ath. Does not the starting point of generation in all States lie in the union and partnership of marriage?<sup>117</sup>

Not only does the Stranger restore marriage and the household to the commonwealth, but biological nature as well. That which is biologically first, the generation of children, is also politically first. Political being is aligned *with* because caused *by* biological being. So important is marriage that the Stranger legislates for it in detail.<sup>118</sup> The centrality of marriage in the commonwealth is also indicated by the Stranger's commentary on incest. Socrates of the *Republic* permits incest between siblings "if the lottery works out that way and the Pythia approves."<sup>119</sup> In fact, that is but the logical consequence of regarding children as property in common of the city. The Stranger, however, regards any sort of incest as fundamentally impious. He accepts the taboo as a premise of society and a basis on which to construct a more general chastity in society.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> L. 5.738d4-e2.

<sup>117</sup> L. 4.720e10-721a4; *Laws: Books 1-6*, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library, Plato 10 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 311.

<sup>118</sup> E.g., L. 4.721b1-e3, 772d5-775b4.

<sup>119</sup> R. 5.461e2-3; Cooper 1089.

From the *Lysis* to the *Republic*, there is at most an ambivalence about the household and biological nature. In the *Laws*, marriage, the household, and biological nature are not only restored but amplified.

#### 4. Aristotle's Concept: Separation from the Concrete

With respect to marriage and sexuality in general, one finds marked contrasts in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. In the former, Aristotle discusses marriage in terms of friendship; in the latter, in terms of rule. While common features of the treatment in the two works shall be noted, so shall substantial differences.

A sign of Aristotle's cultural distance from the Homeric world is his brief dismissal of guest-friendship which, as been argued in I.ii.2.e, was an essential and fundamental relationship in the world of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In *Nicomachean Ethics* 8, he outlines the friendships of utility, pleasure, and virtue.<sup>121</sup> At first, he allows guest-friendship as a friendship of utility,<sup>122</sup> but later, he observes that guest-friendship (ξενικήν) is more like an association on the basis of commonalty (κοινωνικᾶς εὐόικασι) than expression of friendship proper.<sup>123</sup> The relationship of husband and wife in marriage, however, is friendship in which all three kinds can be combined.<sup>124</sup> One can easily understand marriage in terms of utility

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<sup>120</sup> L. 837e9-838e1.

<sup>121</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1156a7-15, 1156b7-8.

<sup>122</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1156a30-31.

<sup>123</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1161b14-16.

and pleasure, since Aristotle has already observed that young people prefer friendships of pleasure while as people grow older they appreciate increasingly friendships of utility.<sup>125</sup> It is usually young people who commence marriage, and thus pleasure helps to form the union. As the couple grows older, utility helps preserve the union. Aristotle also explains that each gender has its special virtue which may be brought to bear in marriage.<sup>126</sup> Aristotle typically juxtaposes virtue and the two other forms of friendship, especially utility. For example, he says that friendship is likeness and equality, and utility is usually the friendship between contraries.<sup>127</sup> In the case of marriage, however, both the elements of utility and pleasure can re-enforce the element of virtue. Thus marriage has a special and perhaps a unique place in Aristotle's philosophy of friendship because of the potential for marriage to unite all three kinds of friendship.

What is even more remarkable is that Aristotle affirms that the human being is by nature more coupling than political, ἄνθρωπος γὰρ τῆ φύσει συνδυαστικὸν μᾶλλον ἢ πολιτικόν.<sup>128</sup> It may be that Aristotle coined the word συνδυαστικόν. In *Iliad* 10.224, there is the phrase, σύν τε δύο', "with two," which Diomedes uses in a speech directed to Nestor. What he says about "with two" is significant for later development in Aristotle:

"Two men can make a team:

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<sup>124</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a24-26.

<sup>125</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1156a22-b5.

<sup>126</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a26-27.

<sup>127</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1159b2-24.

<sup>128</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a17-18.

one will catch on quicker than the other  
when there's a chance of bringing something off,  
while one man's eyes and wit may move more slowly."

Xenophon and Herodotus combine the two words into a single word σύνδυο. Euripides uses the term συνδυᾶς ἄλοχος "wedded wife."<sup>129</sup> In *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.1121a16-17, Aristotle observes that the manifestations of prodigality, giving too much and getting too little, are rarely married (συνδυάζεται) in the same person. In *Politics* 4.1290b35, συνδυασμοί<sup>130</sup> merely means "combinations," "There will be as many sorts of animals as there are combinations of the necessary organs."<sup>131</sup>

One can see in the vocabulary from Homer to Aristotle, a move from concrete to concept. Professor Sir Moses Finley asserts that Homer has no proper word for "wife" or "husband."<sup>132</sup> It would be better to say that Homer does not have a word for the concept "wife." Homer uses the word ἄλοχος, which, as has been seen, literally means "bedmate" and can designate any woman a man takes to bed with him but which often means "wife." Homer also uses the correlative terms ἀκοίτης and ἄκοιτις which again literally mean "male bedmate" and "female bedmate" which, with rare exception, clearly designate "husband" and "wife."<sup>133</sup> Aristotle speaks of ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός,<sup>134</sup> "man and woman," as "husband

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<sup>129</sup> Euripides, *Alcibiades*, 473.

<sup>130</sup> LSJ, s.v. συνδυάζω.

<sup>131</sup> *Pol.* 4.1290b35; Barnes 2.2048-49.

<sup>132</sup> Finley, *World*, 126.

<sup>133</sup> For ἀκοίτης, see *Il.*, 15.91 and *Od.*, 5.120, 21.88. For ἄκοιτις, see *Il.*, 3.138, 447; 6.374; 9.397, 399, 450 (here: generic bedmate); 14.268, 353; 18.87; 24.537; *Od.*, 1.39; 3.268; 7.66; 10.7; 11.266, 452; 13.42;

and wife,” but to describe the condition of their union it is συνδυαστικόν, which he employs to express the unitary strength of twoness.

Aristotle explains that the marital relationship precedes and is more necessary than the city (ὅσῳ πρότερον καὶ ἀναγκαιότερον οἰκία πόλεως). Here too is a fundamental distinction between human and merely animal coupling: human coupling has as its purpose not only the continuation of the species but also to provide those things which contribute to life (τῶν εἰς τὸν βίον). There is the immediate division of labor and the consequent development of different virtues.<sup>135</sup> Here are the lines which are interesting to compare with the speech of Diomedes, εὐθύς γὰρ διήρηται τὰ ἔργα, καὶ ἔστιν ἕτερα ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός. ἐπαρκοῦσιν οὖν ἀλλήλοις, εἰς τὸ κοινὸν τιθέντες τὰ ἴδια.<sup>136</sup> Because man and woman each has particular work, they supply the needs of one another, placing what is peculiar to each at the disposal of what they hold in common. These two Greek sentences afford a good example of what Professor Barnes calls Aristotle’s “sinewy Greek.”<sup>137</sup> His is the spare language of rational concepts compared to Homer’s evocative concrete imagery, and yet Aristotle’s account of the marital division of labor accords well with what Diomedes says about “with two.” “Two men can make a team,” Diomedes says, and then gives examples of

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18.144; 21.316, 325; 24.193, 459. The words ἄλοχος, ἀκοίτης, and ἄκοιτις are all examples of α-copulative. Cunliffe, *Lexicon*, 16, 23.

<sup>134</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a22-23.

<sup>135</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a18-27.

<sup>136</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a21-24.

<sup>137</sup> Barnes l.xi.

how that happens. At any given moment, one person will understand the situation better or be better able to bring off the task at hand. The presumption is that the balance is constantly shifting from one person to the other and back again. Aristotle speaks abstractly, “The tasks are immediately divided,” without specification let alone evocation. At the same time, the speech of Diomedes, though it has a particular context, is no less universal than Aristotle’s taut prose. Homer through Diomedes provides an imaginative statement of the same universal which Aristotle provides rationally.

The friendship of utility and pleasure between husband and wife is obvious enough. Given what Aristotle says about the relationship of husband to wife in *Politics* 1 as “natural ruler and subject,”<sup>138</sup> some readers may be surprised when Aristotle says in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that husband and wife are capable of friendship rooted in virtue<sup>139</sup> which presupposes not only equality but also mutuality.<sup>140</sup> Since “Aristotle” is, in fact, a set of texts which are, at best, one step removed from the philosopher, Aristotle, and since the extant texts are derived from Aristotle’s notes and/or from students’ lecture notes,<sup>141</sup> reconciliation of the statements about marriage in *Politics* 1 and *Nicomachean Ethics* 8 may

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<sup>138</sup> *Pol.* 1.1252a30-31; Barnes 2.1986.

<sup>139</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a25-26.

<sup>140</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1157b30-58a1.

<sup>141</sup> “Modern scholars have offered a further gloss on the esoteric. The surviving works, it is commonly said, are lecture notes: they are the notes which Aristotle jotted down and then lectured from (and in some cases perhaps they are notes taken by his pupils). This idea fits snugly with the notion of the esoteric; for Aristotle’s lectures, and hence any lecture notes, will have been paradigmatically esoteric – things ‘within the school.’ The idea also explains why Aristotle’s works are so abrupt and unliterary; for you do not think of your lecture notes as publishable prose.” Jonathan Barnes, “Life and Work” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12.

simply not be possible.<sup>142</sup> In the realm of purest speculation, it is also possible that in *Nicomachean Ethics* 8 Aristotle is thinking of the extraordinary marriage of Odysseus and Penelope. The virtues peculiar to each were necessary to preserve the household against the delays enforced upon Odysseus by the gods and the suitors' siege of Penelope at home. That may or may not be the case, but comparison of Homer's sublime poetry describing Odysseus and Penelope united in bed and Aristotle's precise prose about marriage provides another example of a universal, in turn, imaginatively and rationally expressed.

Here is Homer's account of, first, Odysseus's and, then, Penelope's emotions at the moment of reunion:

Now from his breast into his eyes the ache  
of longing mounted, and he wept at last,  
his dear wife, clear and faithful, in his arms,  
longed for as the sunwarmed earth is longed for by the swimmer  
spent in rough water where his ship went down  
under Poseidon's blows, gale winds and tons of sea.  
Few men can keep alive through a big surf  
to crawl, clotted with brine, on kindly beaches  
in joy (ἀσπάσιος), in joy (ἀσπάσιοι), knowing the abyss behind:  
and so she too rejoiced (ἀσπαστὸς), her gaze upon her husband,  
her white arms round him pressed as though forever.<sup>143</sup>

Ἀσπάσιος, both in this passage and in later usage,<sup>144</sup> seems to express the joy of a welcoming embrace: the earth's embrace of Odysseus, the nearly drowned swimmer, and the Penelope's embrace of Odysseus, her husband. The joy expressed also represents human,

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<sup>142</sup> E.g., *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a16-17 and *Pol.* 1.1253a19-20.

<sup>143</sup> *Od.* 23.231-40 (ἀσπάσιος, 233; ἀσπάσιοι, 239; ἀσπαστὸς, 239); Fitzgerald, 402-03.

<sup>144</sup> LSJ, s.v. ἀσπάσιος.



albeit a heroic human, triumph over a god. Athena enters the scene two lines later to prolong the night, but she is not named in the scene of Odysseus's besting Poseidon and being welcomed by earth and wife. Aristotle says succinctly that when the friendship of husband and wife is founded on virtue as well as on utility and pleasure, then they "delight (*χαίρουσιν*) in the fact."<sup>145</sup> Aristotle's use of the optative mood as well as the strong positive meaning of the word itself indicates that this marital delight in one another's virtue is a state to be desired. Instead of Homer's ten moving lines, one could easily substitute one line in the spirit of Aristotle, "Odysseus and Penelope delighted in one another's virtue." That line is analytical. Homer's lines are depictive. The same universal is expressed in each. Someone might challenge this conclusion by pointing out that the delight of which Aristotle speaks is in virtue, while the joy of Homer speaks is in marital reunion. In Homer, as Professor MacIntyre points out, "the unity of the notion of *arête* resides . . . in the concept of that which enables a man to discharge his role."<sup>146</sup> The return to his own land and recovery of his household are essential to the virtue of Odysseus, as the holding of herself and her household in readiness for her husband is essential to the virtue of Penelope. Again, virtue is conceptual for Aristotle; it is concrete for Homer.

The household is comprised not merely of husband and wife, but typically of children as well. Because children are a good shared in common by both the husband and

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<sup>145</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a26-27; Barnes 2.1836.

<sup>146</sup> Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 127. A sentence on Achilles and Odysseus (Ulysses) from Professor Verene, already quoted in II.iii.2, supports Professor MacIntyre's insight on Homeric virtue, "But the real truth they convey is in what they are, their actual embodiment of a virtue like cleverness or courage." Verene, *Knowledge*, 189.

the wife, the presence of children in a marriage contributes to marital unity (σύνδεσμος).<sup>147</sup>

The passage 1162a16-33 is replete with words formed by a συν- construction:

συνδυαστικόν, συννοικοῦσιν, σύνδεσμος, συνέχει, συμβιωτέον. Aristotle's use here of the

verb συνέχω bears comparison with his use of it with respect to political friendship in

general. In 1155a23, he says that "friendship is what holds the city together (συνέχειν)."<sup>148</sup>

In 1167a23, he gives precision to that assertion: political friendship is concord (ὁμόνοια),

being of one mind. Relating those two passages to what Aristotle says about children

holding marriage together in 1162a27-29, one can say that what concord is to the city,

children are to a marriage, that which holds it together. The concord of a city is about

universal agreement on shared goals and goods: clean water, safe roads, good schools. The

concord of a marriage is the agreement between husband and wife about shared goals and

goods: their children. Marriage can last without children, but the presence of children

provides a strong common purpose for husband and wife. There are also five uses of words

related to κοινός. Marriage is life in common. A feature that is similar to both the Homeric

passage of joyous welcome and this passage of Aristotle is that repetition of vocabulary

evokes, despite or perhaps in part even because of hardships, a character of joyful and

virtuous union.

Aristotle's last word in this consideration of marriage is also his transition to the next topic of discussion, "The life together of a man in relation to a woman, and in general of

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<sup>147</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a27-29.

<sup>148</sup> My translation.

friend to friend, it seems, is nothing other than to search for what is just.”<sup>149</sup> There are three components to this statement: 1) the life together of husband to wife, 2) the life together of any friend to any other friend, and 3) what is just. These three things illuminate each other. In Book 5, Aristotle says, “The just (τὸ μὲν δίκαιον) . . . is the lawful and the equal,”<sup>150</sup> “justice (ἡ δικαιοσύνη) . . . is complete excellence (ἀρετή) . . . in relation to others.”<sup>151</sup> What is just (i.e., what is equal and complete in virtue) informs the right character of marriage and of any friendship. The right character of marriage and of any friendship (i.e., the ways in which equality and virtue are realized in the relationship) also informs what is just. Experience of a good marriage enriches the universal of justice, and this in no small part explains Aristotle’s observation, quoted above, “The human being is by nature more coupling than political.”<sup>152</sup> Neither marriage, nor any form of friendship, is purely personal. Marriage expresses a communal nature in the context of an encompassing political nature. To know what justice in the city should be, look at justice in a marriage. The character of marriage, and of friendships in general, colors the commonwealth. The character of the commonwealth colors marriage and friendships. In a word, for Aristotle, politics begins at home.

A feature which *Nicomachean Ethics* 8 and *Politics* 1 have in common is that “nature” does the work which in Homer is performed by the gods. Again the denouement of

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<sup>149</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a30-31.

<sup>150</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 5.1129b1; Barnes 2.1782.

<sup>151</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 5.1129b27; Barnes 2.1783.

<sup>152</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a16-17; my translation.

Odysseus and Penelope's reunion is replete with examples. After Odysseus has declared the sign of the bed, Penelope justifies her caution in not admitting him immediately as her rightful husband. She says that the gods sent the difficulties which they had suffered and that a goddess incited Helen to commit adultery.<sup>153</sup> The man who appeared to be Odysseus might have merely been a divine trick to undo her hard defended virtue. Homer tells his hearers that Odysseus wept and held his wife to him as a drowning man holds the earth when washed ashore:<sup>154</sup>

The rose Dawn might have found them weeping still  
had not grey-eyed Athena slowed the night  
when night was most profound, and held the Dawn  
under Ocean of the East. That glossy team,  
Firebright and Daybright, the Dawn's horses  
that draw her heavenward for men—Athena  
stayed their harnessing.<sup>155</sup>

The gods are responsible not only for the movements of the heavenly bodies and the weather on earth, but also for the trials experienced by mortals and even for their emotions.

By contrast, Aristotle, in the passage already quoted twice, attributes to nature, “κατὰ φύσιν,” the friendship between man and woman, since “by nature (τῆ φύσει)” the human being is more coupling than political.<sup>156</sup> In *Politics* 1.2, Aristotle observes, “The household (οἶκος) is the community (κοινωνία) bound together according to nature (κατὰ φύσιν) for all

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<sup>153</sup> *Od.* 23.210-12, 218-21.

<sup>154</sup> *Od.* 23.234-35.

<sup>155</sup> *Od.* 23.241-46; Fitzgerald 403.

<sup>156</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a15-17.

the daily things.”<sup>157</sup> He then speculates about the transition from families to villages eventually to the commonwealth of the city which “exists by nature” (φύσει ἔστίν). The commonwealth of the city is both the nature and the end of families and all those communities intermediate in the development from families to city. Here is the point where nature replaces the gods, “The nature of a thing is its end (ἡ δὲ φύσις τέλος ἔστίν).” Thus, nature as the end of any given thing, whether of humans, horses or households, is also its final cause (τὸ οὐ ἔνεκα).<sup>158</sup>

Also in *Politics* 1.2, Aristotle seems to say that people attributed causes to the gods because they did not understand nature. This passage is especially interesting here because it shows how Aristotle uses Homer as a source in this matter, and he chooses a passage already well rehearsed in these pages. He quotes a line from Odysseus’s account of the Cyclopes to the Phaeacian court, “each one . . . dealing out rough justice to wife and child.”<sup>159</sup> Aristotle is not commenting upon the Cyclopes, rather he is using Homer to postulate a pattern of political development among the Greeks. He comments, “For they lived dispersedly, as was the manner in ancient times. That is why men say that the Gods have a king, because they

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<sup>157</sup> *Pol.*, 1.1252b13-14.

<sup>158</sup> In specific, “For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family. Besides, the final cause of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best.” *Pol.* 1.1252b34-1153a1; Barnes 2.1987. In general: *Pol.* 1.1252b16-1253a1.

<sup>159</sup> *Od.* 9.114-15. *Pol.* 1252b23; Barnes 2.1987. Aristotle also quotes this passage in a similar context in *Eth. Nic.* 10.1180a28-29.

themselves either are or were in ancient times under the rule of a king. For they imagine (ἀφομοιοῦσιν) not only the forms of the Gods but their ways of life to be like their own.”<sup>160</sup>

What was said about the gods was merely anthropomorphic projection onto the question of the divine nature. It is in the next paragraph that Aristotle says that the final cause of city, household, man, and horse is its nature. Thus what was attributed to the gods in Homeric culture, Aristotle attributes to nature. Examining Aristotle’s use of Homer, one sees that he is two removes from the Homeric text. First, he separates the quotation from the context of the story told by Odysseus, and he treats the quotation as a kind of maxim with general applicability. Second, he separates the political information given in the quotation from the theological worldview in which it was expressed. Once again, it is seen that separation from the concrete is fundamental to the movement from imaginative to rational metaphysics.

What Aristotle has in common here with Plato is the ignoring of the Homeric context of the passage, but his use puts much more distance between his analysis and the Homeric poem. There is no commentary on the question of Homer’s excellence as a poet or his divine inspiration.

Aristotle follows the discussion of nature as final cause with an argument that “Man is by nature a political animal.”<sup>161</sup> To describe anyone who is not “a political animal,” he quotes another line from Homer, “tribeless, lawless, hearthless one.”<sup>162</sup> In fact, this is just a

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<sup>160</sup> *Pol.* 1.1252b24-27; Barnes, 2.1987.

<sup>161</sup> *Pol.* 1.1253a3; Barnes 1987.

<sup>162</sup> *Pol.* 1.1253a4; Barnes 1988.

half-line from a speech by Nestor, in which he rallies the Achaeans at a moment when their doom seems at hand.<sup>163</sup> Nestor condemns civil war exactly at the point when he is urging his comrades to fight like heroes against the Trojans. Even in Homer, the half-line has the ring of a quotation quoted for effect by Nestor, though in exactly what respect is not clear.<sup>164</sup> The same pattern of reception, already noted, recurs here. First, Aristotle attributes to Homer the sentiments expressed by Nestor, thus ignoring the context of the quotation. Second, Aristotle uses the half-line as a proof-text for his thesis 1) that man is by nature a political animal and 2) that, therefore, nature is the final cause for the development of a city from the communities of villages and families. Not only is there no reference to the context of the Homeric passage quoted, in this case the use Aristotle makes of the quotation has nothing to do with its meaning or function in the Homeric context.<sup>165</sup> When Professor Kaufmann says

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<sup>163</sup> *Pol.* 1.1253a5-7; *Il.* 9.63.

<sup>164</sup> “The drift of this passage is not clear. According to the common view, the mention of ‘civil war’ is aimed at Agamemnon’s quarrel with Achilles,—Nestor in this way hinting at the subject which he wishes to bring before the βουλή. But the word πόλεμος is surely inapplicable, even as a hint, to anything that had passed between the two chiefs. Mr. Paley considers that the sentence ‘glances at Diomedes and his too warlike speech.’ If so, why is *civil* war specified?” D. B. Monro, ed., *Homer. Iliad, Books 1-12* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1906), 342, note 64.

<sup>165</sup> Professor C. C. W. Taylor discusses *Pol.* 1.1252b20-1253a6 at some length. He begins, “Aristotle’s account of the *polis* is firmly rooted in his philosophy of nature.” Taylor, “Politics,” 235 and, in general, 235-43. Professor Taylor finds this relationship difficult to comprehend. His problem is immediately apparent, “The precise nature of his view of the logical relation between the two is not entirely clear.” *Ibid.*, 235. Throughout the discussion, he employs similar language, e.g., “the notion of ‘natural’ in play here is not entirely unproblematic,” and “I turn to a yet more disturbing aspect of Aristotle’s slogan [“Man is a political animal.”]” *Ibid.*, 236, 239. At the end of his discussion, he has not resolved all these difficulties, and to make further progress he turns to “Aristotle’s classification of types of political constitution.” *Ibid.*, 243. Professor Taylor’s puzzlement arises from his methodological commitments as an analytic philosopher. He searches for a “logical relation” when the metaphysical relation is at his feet. He says “that for the sake of which” is a thing’s goal. *Ibid.*, 238. With such an understanding, indeed, the passage does not work. If “that for the sake of which” is a thing’s cause, even its final cause, however, then, suddenly, the passage comes into focus. That a thing’s nature is the cause of the thing is an Aristotelian truth which the analytic philosopher neither accepts nor

of the *Iliad*, “The poem abounds in references to the gods that are readily translatable into ‘naturalistic’ language,”<sup>166</sup> his judgement is not at all accurate with respect to the *Iliad* itself, as was discussed in II.i.1, but it is exactly in agreement with the way that Aristotle read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. For Aristotle—and Professor Kaufmann—the Homeric gods were placeholders for first principles. Where they differ is that Aristotle says that Homer made attributions to the gods because first principles had not yet been discovered, while Professor Kaufmann supposes that Homer knew the first principles but merely employed the gods as literary devices by which to discuss first principles.

Once again, Aristotle uses the Homeric text in a way very different from Plato. When Plato has one of his characters quote Homer, he is typically interested in what is happening there, even if he radically refigures the Homeric action. The point is that Plato imaginatively refigures the Homeric depiction. When Aristotle quotes Homer, he typically separates the quotation from the Homeric text and context. Aristotle’s approach is more

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understands. Let him merely note, however, that the passage once understood and accepted with that metaphysical relation, works logically as well as metaphysically. Not only does he try to interpret the passage without a right understanding of “that for the sake of which,” he also ignores the Homeric references. By analysis of Aristotle’s quotations of Homer here and elsewhere (e.g., *Metaph.* 12.1074b1-14), it has been seen that Aristotle replaces the Homeric gods with nature. In fact, Aristotle supposes that the ancients attributed cause to the gods because they did not understand nature. Since the Homeric gods are causes, and since nature stands in Aristotle’s thought where the gods stood in Homeric depiction, then it follows that Aristotle, indeed, understands nature as a cause, and not merely as a goal.

<sup>166</sup> Kaufmann, *Tragedy*, 144. Professor Voegelin comments upon the recurring tendency of each new age to recast the past as some variety of falsehood, “Demotion in rank is inflicted on the past by the poets and philosophers of Hellas. From Hesiod to Plato, when the leap in being has gained the *aletheia*, the truth of existence, the old myth becomes the *pseudo*, the falsehood or lie, the untruth of existence in which the forebears lives. And the past fares no better at the hands of the moderns: The primitives have a prelogical mentality; the ancients indulge in anthropomorphic representations of the gods without seeing through the fallacies of their own making; and the Middle Ages are plain dark.” Voegelin, *Polis*, 71.



strictly rational, conceptual and analytical. Plato's approach, by contrast, while rational still incorporates an imaginative dimension.

### 5. Aristotelian Moralism

A third Aristotelian text bears upon the question of how philosophers received and refigured Homeric depiction of the household, namely *Economics* Book 3,<sup>167</sup> which is Aristotelian but probably not by Aristotle. This is economics in the etymological sense, "the law (νόμος) of the household (οἶκος)." The author of the Aristotelian *Economics*<sup>168</sup> concludes his essay by using various Homeric encounters of men with women as basis for drawing moral lessons. He considers Helen's regard for Priam, Agamemnon's relations with Briseis in a way that was disrespectful to Clytemnestra, Odysseus's regard for Nausicaa, his relationships with Calypso and Circe, and his marriage to Penelope.<sup>169</sup> The treatment in the *Economics* reduces the Homeric figures to mere moral types. In fact, the moral typology requires a rearrangement of certain facts in the Homeric epics. Odysseus is an unqualifiedly moral exemplar in this account, in contrast to the fifth century B.C. tendency of the dramatists to cast him in moral disrepute (e.g., in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*). On the account of

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<sup>167</sup> "This book survives only in Latin translation; it is not included in Bekker's edition, so that the customary Bekker-references are absent." Barnes 2.2146, note 16. It is because the original is available only in Latin that Odysseus is referred to as "Ulysses."

<sup>168</sup> The *Economics* is "of different periods, from 300 B.C. to A.D. 400." G. E. L. Owen, "Aristotle," in *OCD*, 115.

<sup>169</sup> [*Oec.*] 3.3-4.

the *Economics*, Odysseus was faithful to Penelope in contrast to the unfaithfulness of Agamemnon to Clytemnestra:

Ulysses on the other hand, when the daughter of Atlas besought him to share her bed and board, and promised him immortality, could not bring himself even for the sake of immortality to betray the kindness and love and loyalty of his wife, deeming immortality purchased by unrighteousness to be the worst of all punishments. For it was only to save his comrades that he yielded his person to Circe; and in answer to her he even declared that in his eyes nothing could be more lovely than his native isle, rugged though it were; and prayed that he might die, if only he might look upon his mortal wife and son. So firmly did he keep troth with his wife; and received in return from her the like loyalty.<sup>170</sup>

Contrary to the text of the *Odyssey*, the *Economics* says that Odysseus did not engage in sexual relations with Calypso.<sup>171</sup> Odysseus did indeed reject the offer of Calypso to remain with her and become immortal (*Odyssey* 5.214-24), but he did also “share her bed” throughout his captivity (118-36) even one last time (225-27) after she had told him of Zeus’s command to release him (160-70). Faced with even stronger evidence in relation to Circe, the *Economics* exculpates Odysseus on the basis of his making a selfless sacrifice for which there is no textual evidence in the *Odyssey*. In fact, the deal Odysseus strikes with Circe is that he will make love with her only on condition that she renounces her magic in all future relations with him (*Odyssey* 10.345-47). Because he was thereby preserved, he was able also to rescue his crew, but his shipmates were not others in the strict sense, they were, rather, part of who he was as Homeric hero.

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<sup>170</sup> [*Oec.*] 3.3.

<sup>171</sup> This argument is based upon the supposition that the author of the *Economics* knew the text of *Odyssey* on this point as it is known to readers of the common text, but—as has been noted already—it is not clear that there was a common text until after the work of the Alexandrian editors in the third and second centuries B.C.

Once the Homeric figures are refigured as moral types, the author of the *Economics* concludes his essay with a summary of the moral lessons to be inferred from his exegesis of the Homeric text with respect to marital relations:

In all these precepts it is clear that the poet is teaching husband and wife to dissuade one another from whatever is evil and dishonourable, while unselfishly furthering to the best of their power one another's honourable and righteous aims. In the first place they will strive to perform all duty towards their parents, the husband towards those of his wife no less than towards his own, and she in her turn towards his. Their next duties are towards their children, their friends, and their estate, and their entire household which they will treat as a common possession; each vying with the other in the effort to contribute most to the common welfare, and to excel in virtue and righteousness; laying aside arrogance, and ruling with justice in a kindly and unassuming spirit.<sup>172</sup>

This general admonition on the conduct of married life exemplifies a spirit of mutual generosity, and is, therefore, much more consistent with *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1162a16-31, where husband and wife are yoked together in friendship which presupposes equality and mutuality, than with *Politics* 1.1252a25-31 where Aristotle seems to cast the wife in a subservient role. He writes:

There must be a union of those who cannot exist without each other; namely of male and female, that the race may continue . . . of natural ruler and subject, that both may be preserved. For that which can foresee by the exercise of mind is by nature lord and master, and that which can with its body give effect to such foresight is a subject, and by nature a slave; hence master and slave have the same interest.<sup>173</sup>

Aristotle makes clear in what follows that he distinguishes between women and slaves proper. That having been said, the passage just quoted has nothing of either the generosity or the mutuality found in the quoted passage from the *Economics* or, even more significantly,

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<sup>172</sup> [*Oec.*] 3.4; Barnes 2.2150.

<sup>173</sup> *Pol.* 1.1252a25-33; Barnes 2.1986-87.

in *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.1162a16-31. The *Economics* suppose the possibility of full partnership between husband and wife, each equal in the ability to vie in contributing to their life together which further presupposes the capacity with respect to “the exercise of mind” which in the passage quoted from the *Politics* belongs to the husband alone. In the *Economics*, there is no talk of the husband giving “law to his children and to his wives,” as Homer is quoted explicitly in the *Politics*.<sup>174</sup> *Economics* 3 is consistent with the discussion of marriage in *Economics* 1 where mutuality, generosity, and kindness are extolled virtues.<sup>175</sup> Even when the differences between men and women are discussed, they are distinguished in relation to physical strength, caution, courage, “quiet pursuits” and “outdoor activities,” and the nurturing and education children,<sup>176</sup> but not in “the exercise of mind.” The use made of Homeric material in Book 3 is extensive and explicitly an exegesis of Homer rather than the mere use of Homer for proof-texting. Perhaps most interesting is that the author attributes to Homer generous mutuality which he sets forth as the paradigmatic characteristic of marriage at its best. Odysseus is the hero of the household. His imitability arises from faithfulness to Penelope and to the sacrosanct quality of marriage. As husband to his wife and as partner with his wife in leading together their household, Odysseus stands in sharp contrast to Agamemnon and above the rest of the Homeric cast of heroes.

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<sup>174</sup> *Pol.* 1252b22-23; Barnes 2.1987.

<sup>175</sup> [*Oec.*] 1.3-4 (1343b7-1344a22).

<sup>176</sup> [*Oec.*] 1.3 (1343b27-1344a8); Barnes 2.2131.

## 6. The Theme of Political Philosophy

Professor Leo Strauss famously opined, “The theme of political philosophy is the City and Man.”<sup>177</sup> This is, at best, an incomplete statement. For Homer, Plato and Aristotle, there are, at least, three entities in tension: the singular mortal, the household of mortals, and some connection to a larger community, a πόλις. In Homer, the heroic man and his household are obvious entities, but there are also the relationships within each heroic household and the relationships among the heroic households. In the final pages of the *Odyssey*, one sees depicted a community approaching the status of a city challenging the household. The response, inspired by the gods and achieved by the restoration of the old order is a mixed polity. The young Plato expressed antagonism toward the household, giving exclusive privilege to the city as the teleological completion of the human being, but over the course of his life, he found an important place for the household as the necessary intermediate community bonding human beings in the first place which created a basis for the more enduring bond through the commonwealth of the city. Aristotle sees the configuration of human being, household and city such that city is the final cause of the human being but with the household as an intermediate and instrumental cause. When Aristotle of the *Politics* says that the city is the final cause of both the human being and the household,<sup>178</sup> he makes clear that the household as an intermediate commonwealth is

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<sup>177</sup> Strauss, *City and Man*, 1. See also p. 29.

<sup>178</sup> *Pol.* 1.1253a1-3, 19-20.

essential to the being human of men and women as singular citizens and to their union in the commonwealth of the city.

To Professor Strauss it is necessary to reply, “The theme of political philosophy is Man, the Household, and the City.”

## Conclusion

You must, so far as in you lies, become an Achaean chief while reading Homer, a mediaeval knight while reading Malory, and an Eighteenth-Century Londoner while reading Johnson. Only thus will you be able to judge the work ‘in the same spirit that its author writ’ and to avoid chimerical criticism.

—C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to “Paradise Lost”*

The present work has had two burdens. The first was to observe and discuss the reception of Homer by the Early and Classical Greek philosophers, showing that what Homer depicted was conceptualized by the philosophers. The second burden was to argue that there is a Homeric metaphysics which is depicted, that it is a materialist metaphysics which historically preceded the rational metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle. Vico’s *New Science* provided the catalyst for the development of both points.

Vico holds that because “Homer was an incomparable poet . . . he was in no sense a philosopher.”<sup>1</sup> He finds in Homer’s poetry “imaginative class concepts” which precede the “intelligible class concepts” of later philosophy.<sup>2</sup> While Vico regarded poetry and philosophy as disjunctive, he nevertheless established their analogous character, a point accepted as a fundament in the present study. He also describes the two movements toward what he calls metaphor, the first from concrete particulars and the second from rational concepts. The movement from concrete particulars to metaphor is the gathering of those particulars into one being in such a way that the being is each of the particulars and all of the

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<sup>1</sup> *NS* 896.

<sup>2</sup> *NS* 209.

particulars. The example was given of the goddess Pomona in relation to fruit. This kind of metaphor is imaginative genus. The second kind of metaphor is the movement of rational abstraction to a concrete being, or more often an image of a concrete, which stands for the rational abstraction.<sup>3</sup> Lady Philosophy of Boethius is an example of this second kind of metaphor which is metaphor proper. A great deal of misunderstanding arises in the reading of Homer by confusing imaginative genus with metaphor proper. By this distinction amongst others, Vico establishes that Homer was not and could not be a philosopher, as long as a philosopher be reckoned as one who deals in rationality. At the same time, by making his distinction Vico also shows that Homer's imaginative genera are in poetry what intelligible genera are in philosophy. It is that insight which makes possible the comparison of Homeric image and philosophical argument.

In the case of Plato, it was argued, in agreement with Vico, that Plato did regard Homer as a philosophical thinker and found in the Homeric corpus what Vico calls "esoteric wisdom."<sup>4</sup> Plato's Socrates discovers that esoteric wisdom by reading all of the Homeric imaginative genera as if they were metaphors proper. It was shown that Plato's Socrates explicitly uses Homeric depiction as a basis from which to present conceptual ideas. This explicit use of Homeric passages in a positive and philosophical way presents an obstacle to any scholar who wants to assert that Plato's Socrates repudiates Homer in a final way and that philosophy and poetry are absolutely disjunctive. Another obstacle to such scholars is

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<sup>3</sup> *NS* 404.

<sup>4</sup> *NS* 780.



that they have to explain the reintroduction of the cast of Homeric characters in the final pages of the *Republic* and that the soul of Odysseus takes up the life of one who minded his own business, which is the definition of justice given by Socrates earlier in the dialogue. An Odyssean theme was traced from the Socratic dialogues through the *Republic* and then in important later works including the *Laws*. Building upon the conclusions of Professor Planinc and others, it has been argued that the “stranger” of the *Statesman*, *Sophist*, and *Laws* was the new Odysseus, first an Eleatic Odysseus and finally an Athenian Odysseus.

In Part II, various philosophical themes were considered, first, as those themes were depicted in Homer and then tracing the often very gradual conceptualization of those themes by philosophers. That investigation produced a variety of results. In relation to Homer, philosophers found three over-arching issues: poetry, mythology and, most significantly, the fluidity of being. In the Xenophanean critique of Homer it is not the poetry or even the best of the mythology which is problematical, rather the fluidity of being. Xenophanes wrote in poetry. He was open to healthful and holy stories about the gods, but he was not willing to accept the ready identification either of divinity with natural objects or of the divine will with every circumstance in human experience. His objections were precisely metaphysical. He was concerned with what a cloud *is* and what a divinity *is*. He was also the first to suggest that ontology implies ethics. He saw that the character of divine beings could not be in opposition to the imperative for human behavior. His insights generated more questions than he had answered, but the shift was decisive: Xenophanes held that there was a moral character to the universe.

The fragments of Heraclitus suggest a turn away from both poetry and mythology in order to perceive the rational order of the whole of existing things. The surviving remnants of Heraclitean thought are oracular and gnomic, but no less rational for that. He sought an explanation in an approach which was no longer dependent upon stories about the gods. What remains from Homer in the thought of Heraclitus is precisely the fluidity of being, as Socrates of the *Theaetetus* says not only as observation but even as accusation. Parmenides, whom Socrates of the *Theaetetus* views as his only predecessor against the whole philosophical army of flux, has this in common with Heraclitus: he explores the ramifications of “is-not.” A thing cannot be and not-be, and to say that something “is not,” it must in some sense exist. As with Xenophanes, it is neither the poetry nor the mythology of Homer which bother him, for he imitates Homer in both respects. He challenges the Homeric metaphysics of fluid being. At the same time, he advances the distinction, depicted in Homer, of how seeming is related to being.

Plato rejects poetry but not mythology. Again the final pages of the *Republic* are remarkable in this respect that Socrates presents a new myth which he explicitly contrasts with Homeric myth. While Plato categorically rejects Homeric fluidity of being, at the same time, he does not hesitate to cite, quote and adapt Homer for his philosophical purposes. The contrast of Plato and Aristotle on this point is striking. Aristotle knows Homer well. He quotes Homer, and it may even be that he has Homer in mind without making reference to him, for example in the case of Odysseus and Penelope when he writes about marriage as

the possible relationship for all three kinds of friendship.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle analyzes the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as in the *Poetics*, and he quotes from them throughout his works. There is no evidence, however, that Aristotle experienced Homer as the “seducing fire,” to use Professor Murray’s term,<sup>6</sup> which had such a powerful effect on Plato. For Aristotle, Homer had become merely great literature which he used in much the way a modern philosopher might use Shakespeare. Perhaps because Aristotle did not find Homer intoxicating, he was able to understand Homer better. Emotional distance can facilitate rational analysis. Even in those occasional passages when Aristotle writes lyrically, as he does about marriage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, there is nothing poetic about it. The elegance and passion of his writing are rational. Mythology too is absent. Even when Aristotle refers to some mythological episode, his use of the material is already de-mythologized before it enters the stream of his argument. Of course, we have only the esoteric works, but there is not the slightest trace of the re-mythologizing tendency employed regularly by Plato. It is as if Aristotle’s mind had a filter which automatically eliminated the mythological character of anything he read. As one example, Plato’s Socrates argues that warfare is not consistent with the divine nature while Aristotle makes no reference to gods with respect to war. Plato’s Socrates argues for the premise that waging war is a purely political act. Aristotle writes about waging war, based upon the premise that it is a purely political act. It is not merely the literary evidence in Aristotle’s extant works which stand as evidence for this view of his

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<sup>5</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 8.1162a16-33.

<sup>6</sup> This has been quoted in I.ii.2.c and II.v.3.c, “Plato prayed to be delivered from poetry because poetry was to him a seducing fire.” Murray, *Epic*, 91.

relationship to myth. It is also what he says philosophically. Myth is the imaginative syllogism,<sup>7</sup> and the gods explained what, in his more enlightened age, he could explain by nature.<sup>8</sup>

The “Introduction” discussed the two schools of thought on philosophy’s relationship to mythology, represented by Messrs. Francis MacDonald Cornford and John Burnet, respectively, that philosophy was the natural outgrowth of mythology and that philosophy replaced mythology. There is a sense in which the writings of Plato exemplify the former view and those of Aristotle the latter. From beginning to end, Homer accompanies Plato, sometimes haunting him, other times serving him as his best authority. Plato argues with Homer, lambasts him, manipulates what he says, but he never dispenses with the blind bard. Aristotle can take Homer or leave him, but, in the end, he understands Homer better than Plato did. Aristotle’s insight about Homer, and poetry in general as was seen in II.i, is that depiction is the syllogism of poetry. He points to what Vico will call imaginative genera; in poetry’s repetition of images, one learns “that this is that” (ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος).<sup>9</sup> As depiction and argument are analogues, so poetry and philosophy are analogues. They stand as two approaches to understanding the world as it is. Aristotle was apparently satisfied that poetry and philosophy be alternatives. He went to the theatre for poetry, and he went to his classroom for philosophy. That separation largely held until Vico.

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<sup>7</sup> *Poet.* 4.1448b13-18.

<sup>8</sup> *Pol.* 1.1252b24-27.

<sup>9</sup> *Poet.* 4.1448b13-18 and *Metaph.* 12.1074b1-14.

Vico's fundamental insight was that philosophy and poetry ought to be re-united. That was the first principle of his response to Descartes. He insisted that the clear and distinct ideas of reason corresponded to the imaginative genera of mythology.<sup>10</sup> Philosophy has arrived at only a partial truth, having neglected what "is most proper to men . . . that of being social."<sup>11</sup> In order to arrive at a right understanding of man as a social animal, the imagination is not only necessary but preceded the mind as the human faculty for apprehending and explaining.<sup>12</sup> In addition to philosophy, therefore, one needs poetry, the "master key" of Vico's new science.<sup>13</sup> Vico's charge against philosophy—and one suspects that he has Descartes primarily in view—is that the senses as they interact with the imagination discover truth in images while reason discovers truth in the pursuit of clear and distinct ideas. If one were left with a world of concrete particulars only, a world devoid of concepts, then one could still discover truth expressed as imaginative genera. He asserts this not as a hypothetical possibility, rather he argues that it is exactly what one finds in Homer.

Vico's insight leads to the second burden of this present work, that a metaphysics of concrete particulars is not only possible but actually preceded rational metaphysics in historical development. In the Homeric poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, imaginative metaphysics preceded the rational metaphysics of philosophy. What Vico describes as the philosopher's isolation of reason from imagination lets both metaphysician and materialist

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<sup>10</sup> NS 502

<sup>11</sup> NS 2.

<sup>12</sup> NS 6.

<sup>13</sup> NS 34.

escape the necessity of talking to each other. Their premises stand in such fundamental opposition that real philosophical discourse cannot occur between them. If Vico is correct, however, in his correlation of imaginative and rational genera, then the same metaphysical truths obtain sensibly as well as intelligibly.<sup>14</sup>

One who adheres to a Thomistic view of metaphysics will be aware of and even sensitive to the fundamental claim that metaphysics as the study of being *qua* being only studies beings which exist separate from matter and motion and which can only be understood separate from matter and motion. Though the knowledge of all beings begins in the senses, the study of beings in terms of quantity only, i.e., mathematical objects, must terminate in the imagination. The study of metaphysical objects, however, which begins in the senses and continues in the imagination must terminate in the intellect. The objects studied according to the sciences of physics and mathematics also are beings. The problem is mathematics must *subtract* everything knowable from being except quantity, and physics must *add* matter to being. That is to say, physics is the study of beings insofar as they are material and mobile, and mathematics is the study of beings insofar as they are quantifiable.

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<sup>14</sup> In the following passage, “moral” and “metaphysical” are used interchangeably which is not adequately accurate, but it is still an interesting example of the assertion that metaphysical truth is embedded in the material world. “Adam Sedgwick a scientist who had been Darwin’s mentor at Cambridge before his journey on the Beagle, wrote to him shortly after the publication of *Origins*: ‘Passages in your book . . . greatly shocked my moral sense. There is a moral or metaphysical part of nature as well as a physical. A man who denies this is deep in the mire of folly. ’Tis the crown and glory of organic science that it does, thro’ final causes, link material to moral. . . . You have ignored this link; and, if I do not mistake your meaning, you have done your best in one or two pregnant cases to break it. Were it possible (which, thank God, it is not) to break it, humanity, in my mind, would suffer a damage that might brutalize it, and sink the human race into a lower grade of degradation than any into which it has fallen since its written records tell us of its history.’” Richard John Neuhaus, “The Public Square,” *First Things*, May 2007, 73. See Father Edward Oakes, review of Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler in Books & Culture*.

Metaphysics studies beings as they are. Thus, it is only as beings are separate from matter and motion altogether that they can, as objects of metaphysics be studied as beings themselves.<sup>15</sup> Thus, a metaphysics of the imagination, according to this Thomistic understanding, is nonsense, because the alleged metaphysical depictions are represented as material and mobile. One might as well talk of doing metaphysics with the imagination as of eating a chicken salad sandwich with the ear. Metaphysical objects are purely intelligible, and, therefore, the imagination lacks the full connaturality with metaphysical objects to apprehend them.

That is well and good as long as there is a shared belief in immaterial beings. As long as that principle is insisted upon, however, the metaphysician will have nothing to say to the materialist. The claim of this present work is, however, that metaphysical issues are embedded in the depiction of beings in matter and motion. Accepting Aristotle's insight that depiction is the syllogism of poetry, the attempt has been made to extrapolate a metaphysics from Homer's depiction. As a matter of historical development, there was in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* a materialist metaphysics which was not merely pre-philosophical but also pre-

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<sup>15</sup> Father Owens explains, "The Primary Philosophy neither adds nor subtracts, but considers the form in itself. . . . Natural philosophy . . . deals with Entity plus matter, and by this *addition* restricts its scope to sensible things. Mathematics by its *abstraction*, restricts itself to quantity." Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian "Metaphysics": A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 384. Monsignor Wippel offers a parallel explanation, "Each of these other theoretical sciences [physics and mathematics] examines one part of being (such as mobile being or quantified being), and does so according to its special mode of consideration. The special mode of consideration of any such science is different, continues Thomas, from that whereby the metaphysician studies being. It is because of this that the subject of such a particular science is not a part of the subject of metaphysics. It is not part of being under that formality whereby being itself is the subject of metaphysics." Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 9.

conceptual. Following Vico, it has been argued at length that what is depicted in Homer is conceptualized by the philosophers, especially from Xenophanes to Aristotle. What is now asserted is that Homer's imaginative metaphysics—his gift to philosophy without knowing that such a thing as philosophy would come to be—provides a basis to develop intentionally a materialist and imaginative metaphysics which will permit the committed metaphysician to address the committed materialist on his own terms.

While the beings depicted in the Homeric poems are material and therefore mobile and quantifiable, Homer shows his audience beings as they have being. Homer is rarely interested in quantity, and when he does discuss quantity it is usually in the context of a catalogue, such as the catalogue of ships in *Iliad* 2 or the catalogue of fruit trees in *Odyssey* 24. In fact, numbers are more metaphysical than mathematical. How many ships a king commands indicates the relative greatness of the king. Even when the number is literally meant, it is much more symbolically significant. The same analysis holds in relation to matter. When Homer is most scientific, from a modern point of view, for example in his descriptions of anatomy, he is relating something about the human being or the rituals of worship. That someone could learn about animal anatomy in the modern sense is merely incidental. In this regard, physics and mathematics, to the degree that they are present in the Homeric texts, are what Aristotle would later call accidents. The concerns of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* relate, at least, frequently to what become philosophical questions like identity, seeming, being and knowing. Metaphysics is first philosophy and first science not only in its pre-eminence, but also in historical terms. Homeric depiction could be an imaginative



metaphysics because physics, mathematics, and metaphysics had yet to be distinguished as speculative sciences.

Once again, it is necessary to put one's self, as much as possible, in the place of Homer, centuries before the distinctions of Aristotle which would become the staples of philosophy. One sees that in the Homeric world, the discovery that something *is* precedes the discovery that it is in motion or that it is quantifiable. A being only insofar as it exists can move or be quantified. Thus, metaphysics is the first speculative science even in the order of discovery. St. Thomas makes much of intelligibility and its ascendancy over and priority to the sensible. Descartes outdoes St. Thomas on this point when he suggests that not only is intellect the master faculty of the human being, but that the senses lie.<sup>16</sup> If one holds that there is but one mode of thinking and that is in terms of intelligibility, then the idea of an Homeric metaphysics is *ipso facto* precluded. If, however, one is open to the view of Professor Lévi-Strauss that "man has always thought equally well," but that what he has thought *with* changes, then an Homeric metaphysics is not only possible, but likely.

It is not enough, of course, merely to assert that Homer depicts beings as being, that he identified in imaginative genera what rational metaphysicians would later identify in intelligible genera. One must also ask if the presentation of those imaginative genera rises to the level of metaphysics as a science. Monsignor John F. Wippel identifies some further criteria for the speculative science of metaphysics to obtain. He discusses St. Thomas's three

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<sup>16</sup> E.g., "However, as far as God is concerned, if I were not overwhelmed by prejudices and if the images of sensible things were not besieging my thought from all directions, I would certainly acknowledge nothing sooner or more easily than him." René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), 91, AT 69.

distinctions in the meaning of the verb “to be.” To be can signify a thing’s 1) definition, 2) its actual existence, or 3) the copula of composition and division. Monsignor Wippel observes that St. Thomas “often limits himself to the second and third meanings.”<sup>17</sup> The third meaning—here Monsignor Wippel quotes Professor Gilson—has to do with “*how* a certain thing actually *is*.”<sup>18</sup> An example of the first use of “to be” is, “a horse is a four-legged animal.” The sentence states something about all horses. An example of the third use of “to be” is, “this horse is black. This third use has two forms, composition (i.e., what a thing is) and division (i.e., what it is not). The copula of composition and division speak to the first act of the intellect, the apprehension of *what* a thing is without prejudice to the question of whether the thing actually exists. The “to be” of actual existence speaks to the second act of the intellect, the judgement of whether a thing exists.<sup>19</sup> Through a repetition of apprehension and judgement, one forms an “idea of reality” of “that which is.” Although Monsignor Wippel calls this “a primitive (meaning thereby a premetaphysical) notion of being” he also acknowledges that “that which is” is complex. “That which” corresponds to the essence of a thing and “is” corresponds to “its existential aspect.”<sup>20</sup>

It is just this kind of complex account which Homer presents in relation to the identity of Odysseus. The most explicit moment is when Odysseus says about the person of

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<sup>17</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-39.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

renown and the person speaking, “That one and I are a such.”<sup>21</sup> There has also been an extensive treatment of the Problem of Odysseus in which the many signs of his being were identified. Both apprehension and judgement recur throughout the Odyssey in relation to “that which” Odysseus “is.” A Thomist might concede that one finds in the Problem of Odysseus a movement toward metaphysics, but he would insist that the final criterion for metaphysics is not met. There must be separation from matter and motion. Monsignor Wippel writes:

If it is through separation that one may consider substance as such rather than as quantified (or as material, we may add), so too it is through separation that one may consider being as such or as being rather than as quantified or as material. In sum, it is through separation that one discovers being as being, the subject of metaphysics.<sup>22</sup>

While Homeric depiction is necessarily depiction of beings in matter and motion, it has been argued, nevertheless, that insofar as depiction is material and quantifiable, matter and motion are incidental and that the question of being is separate from the issues of matter and quantity. What is depicted is being rather than matter and motion. To put it another way, in the words of Vico, Homer abstracts genera from concrete particulars, but those genera are imaginative rather than rational.

A simple example will illustrate this point. Imagine that there is a painting of a mother, father, and their three children. The painting is both a picture and a depiction. Allow that what is depicted in the painting is family love. The depiction is achieved through the relative situation of the five people to each other, through their facial expressions,

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<sup>21</sup> *Od.* 16.204-05

<sup>22</sup> Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 47.

through the posture of their bodies, and other such means as an artist brings to her work. Insofar as the painting is a picture, it is material and quantifiable and, therefore, the proper subject of physics and mathematics. Insofar as the painting is depiction, it is metaphysical. “Family love” is neither material nor quantifiable. This distinction is always true of art in some way. Manet had something metaphysical to say in *Le Déjeuner sur l’herbe*. Mahler had something metaphysical to say in *Das Lied von der Erde*. The relationship of art, including poetry, and philosophy is old. Proust wrote novels to express the ideas he had learned from Bergson. Suger read *The Celestial Hierarchy* and invented Gothic architecture. Three comments are in order. First, the explicit influence has largely been of philosophy on art rather than the reverse. Second, in the case of Homer art did influence philosophy. Third, the absolutely unique place of Homeric poems is that in some substantial form they preceded all philosophy. The second and third points suggest powerfully that philosophy has neither acknowledged adequately its debt to Homer, nor has it adequately exploited Homer in finding direction for future work. Homer created metaphysical depiction which provided the paradigm for the rational metaphysics of philosophy.

What has been attempted here is to show an imaginative awareness of being. The Thomist (and the Kantian too) would assert that the intellect is and should be the governing human faculty. Whether it should be is a different question from whether it is. Leaving the imperative and attending to the indicative, following Vico, the argument is made here that imagination was the governing faculty for Homer. Following Professor Lévi-Strauss, it is held that there are always people and peoples for whom the imagination is the governing

faculty. It has been argued here that metaphysical categories were discovered by Homer imaginatively which not only preceded but in many ways made possible the development of rational metaphysics by Early and Classical Greek philosophers. It is further suggested that the Homeric imaginative metaphysics provides a basis for the conveying of metaphysical truth today to those whose apprehension of reality is primarily imaginative rather than rational. To those who would argue that metaphysics ought not be done that way, the reply is that if metaphysics is not developed imaginatively in the post-modern context, then metaphysics will be undertaken rarely and its existence will be forcibly denied.<sup>23</sup>

One can imagine the response from a Thomist, “Certainly, it is possible to address people in a prephilosophical way about metaphysics, but it will never obtain as a speculative science.” There is surely a difference between metaphysical truth which is embedded in an image but incidental to it and images which are projected or depicted intentionally in search of metaphysical truth. The argument of the present work is that Homer was asking the same questions imaginatively which philosophers would later reformulate rationally. While those depictions are not separate as intelligible, they are separate in relation to questions of matter and motion. If the Thomists (and Kantians) wish to abandon an audience which includes erudite intellectuals as well as the masses of ordinary people, so be it. It has been argued here, however, that another path is available, namely that of a materialist and imaginative metaphysics.

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<sup>23</sup> Without supposing that this project of imaginative metaphysics would be any more convincing to Professor Barnes than rational metaphysics (in fact, he would probably find it *dégoûté*), one notes again his adamant, brilliant, and unequivocal rejection of metaphysics’ existence, “There is no such thing as metaphysics.” Barnes, “Metaphysics,” 72.

Underlying this work, and bearing both its burdens, has been the question of how texts should be read, in particular how the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* should be read. Vico alleges that everyone since Plato has read Homer through Plato. That was surely not the case for Aristotle who, as has been shown repeatedly, read Homer very differently than did Plato. Philosophers, if they have read Homer at all, have tended to read him through the lens of Plato, Aristotle, or of them both. Homer has been read with backward-looking eyes. The attempt has been made here to read Homer first and, then standing with Homer, to read forwards through the Early and Classical Greek philosophers. Of course, such an attempt must break down repeatedly. The fruit of the attempt, however, has been the identification of an ontological problematic in Homer which became the basis for Early and Classical Greek philosophy. Sometimes that transformation is explicit, such as the myth of Ocean and the story of the Cyclopes as commented upon by both Plato and Aristotle. In terms of how philosophy should be composed, the issues of poetry and mythology recur either implicitly or explicitly. Always, however, the Homeric material is the cultural scaffolding for philosophical reflection. The philosophers refigured Homer variously. Xenophanes refigured Homer, but did it as a Homeric rhapsode. Plato refigured Homer by intentionally converting poetic tropes into rational tropes even while retaining the form of myth. Aristotle seems not so much to have refigured Homer as to have analyzed him as a kind of default setting in his mind. What they all have in common, however, is that Homer was ever with them, whether to be imitated, railed against or quoted as a literary authority. If a student of philosophy is to understand Early and Classical Greek philosophy, then Homer must be ever with that

student. No one should be allowed to read a single fragment of Early Greek philosophy, let alone the great texts of Plato and Aristotle without having internalized the stories and rhythms of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In order to read philosophy aright, from Thales to Aristotle, it is necessary to have Homer in head and heart.

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