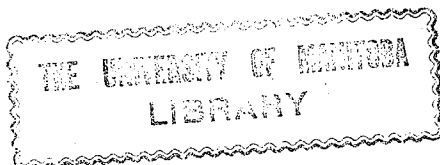


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- THE ETHICS OF THE HOMERIC AGE -



THE ETHICS OF THE HOMERIC AGE

"And those illusions which excite the scorn
Or, more, the pity of unthinking minds -
Are they not mainly outward ministers
Of inward conscience? with whose service charged
They come, and go, appeared, and disappear,
Diverting evil purposes, remorse
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,
Or pride of heart abating."

Wordsworth, Excursion.

Grote, in his History of Greece,¹ dogmatically asserts that Homer's poems were written for no didactic purpose. Philosophers might extract illustrative matter for exhortations, but the ethical doctrines which they applied must emanate subjectively from their own reflections. He goes on to say that the Homeric characters display virtues or infirmities, fierceness or compassion, with a sublime unconsciousness of any ideal standard by which to regulate their conduct. The author of the article on "Homer" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica goes further in banishing morals from the Homeric poems altogether. "Homer has no morality," he says. These, however, are sweeping assertions which need much qualifying before we can make them agree with facts.

It is true that we can find no formulated code of ethics in Homer. Ethics as a science had not been brought to the birth. Nevertheless, Homer had not only an ideal standard, but a far ^{in some respects, more} influential ^{one} than was in vogue during the times of the great Ethical philosophers of a later age. Because the ideal is implicit instead of

1. Vol. 2 pp 311-312, Everyman's Ed.

being explicit does not make it any the less really present, and the philosophers, who according to Grote make the ideal explicit by application to ordinary conduct, no more invent the ethical doctrines out of their own inner consciousness, than the miner creates the gold which he extracts from the vein or washes from the sands.

It is a well known fact that the poems of Homer were used not only as literary studies, but were also studied as the great, and we may safely assert the only, exponents of morality by the ancient Greeks and even Romans. What the Law and Prophets were to the Jews, what the Koran is to the Mahomedans, what the Bible is to the Christians, that the Homeric poems were to the Greeks.

The contention of Grote (that Homer wrote for no didactic purpose) contains its own refutation, when we take into consideration the office of the ancient bard. He was their historian as well as their poet and singer. To him alone the ancients looked, when writing was unknown or unpractised, to record the deeds of their heroes, or chronicle the peaceful pursuits of pastoral life in immortal verse, the best aid to memory possessed by an unlettered people. In this way the bard became their teacher and thus guided the habits of their uncultured minds, intellectually and morally.

Homer's own idea of the bard's office is a very high one. In his poems he portrays the bard as a moral teacher, having as sanctions for his teaching not merely human and mundane wisdom, but on the contrary having the sanction of direct divine inspiration.

In the *Odyssey* we are told Atrides leaves his fair young spouse in the care of the bard, and while she remains in his charge she continues virtuous and faithful. But when Aegisthus banishes the bard to a distant isle, then she falls away from virtue. When Penelope complains of the bard Phemius' mournful theme of the return of the Heroes from Troy when Athena vexed them with her storms, in the words:

"Thou knowest many other charms for mortals, deeds of Gods and men; I pray thee, change this piteous strain which consumes my heart within me!"¹ Whereupon Telemachus gently chides her, "Why dost thou grudge that the sweet minstrel should gladden us as his spirit moves him? When minstrels sing of woeful themes, it is not their fault; it is the fault of Zeus who sends the woes." Again Eumaeus employs this simile, "Even as when a man gazes on a minstrel, whom the gods have taught to sing words of yearning joy to mortals." (*Odys.* 17: 518)

These quotations clearly indicate the fact that the bard of ancient Greece, whom Homer represents, was a moral teacher divinely inspired by the Muses or by favor of some special God, and moreover, in consequence of this fact the people to whom he sang gave credence and obedience to his words. Plato in his "Protagoras" tells of us the educational value of Homer in his day. The boy who went to school first learnt his letters; as soon as he could read he had to study the poets. The teacher "sets before them" the works of the poets which they have to memorize.(2). The purpose of this was not only to form the boys' mind or literary taste, or to make him versed in traditionary lore; it was for the especial

1. *Odys.* 1:337 ff.

2. Plato *Prot.* 325 E.

purpose of teaching the morals inculcated by the poet, by setting before the youth the precepts (*νοῦθες*) in the poets and the example of deeds of heroes of ancient days "in order that the boy may emulate their examples and may strive to become such as they." (*Protag.* 326 A.)

In the Symposium of Xenophon one of the guests says, "My father, anxious that I should become a good man, made me learn all the poems of Homer." "Homer, the prince of poets, has treated almost all human affairs. If any of you, then, wishes to become a prudent ruler of his house, or an orator, or a general, or to resemble Achilles, Ajax, Nestor or Odysseus, let him study Homer." (1) Further, Homer was used, as Isocrates bears witness, to keep alive national feelings (2). Plato made an effort to purify the grosser elements of the Homeric poems, which he considered as detrimental to the cause of a proper education; without success, however, as Dion Chrysostom in the first century bears witness that children were taught in his day as they had from the very beginning. (3)

Homer must have some didactic purpose or how can we account for the universal use of his poems among the Greeks in teaching morality to the young. His poem has some moral content; "Ex nihilo nihil fit."

The Author of the article "Homer" in the Britannica grudgingly admits that moral feeling is present in these poems, but that there are "no general principles of action and no words

1. Xenophon Symp. 3-6. 2. Panegyricus paragraph 159
3. Quoted by Jebb. Introd. to Hom. p 83.

that indicate that acts have been classified as good and bad, right or wrong; and he goes on to say that cruel and even treacherous deeds are spoken of without the least sense that they deserve censure. In answer to these objections it may be urged that Homer's teaching is strictly objective in its method. Homer is no speculative thinker. He knows nothing of the philosophical why and wherefore of the moral content. He put down thoughts and impressions as he sees them objectified before him. He knows right is right and wrong is wrong. He cannot or does not give a metaphysical reason for the facts. He simply sees the effect of actions in human life; and gives a rudimentary classification to those actions as pleasing or displeasing to the gods, as they bring weal or woe to the doers. Homer has two sanctions for human conduct; one is the will of the gods, the other natural law.

In answer to the second objection (that Homer does not condemn certain cruel and treacherous deeds) we may answer that the statement is only partly true. He sometimes condemns evil in words, and other times uses the picture itself to condemn the action. Many since the time of Plato have said much against the pictures of lust that Homer has introduced in his poems. We must not argue from this fact that Homer wishes to teach lustful passions, or that such passions are harmless. He pictures what was the common practice in those semi-barbaric days. The pictures are drawn with such a faithful hand, with such a noble purpose behind them, that they disgust the reader as he looks on them. He does not intend his readers to imagine that evil is just as much an ideal as virtue,

for wherever he draws a picture of lust, to counteract it he also draws as a foil the opposite virtue. Unconsciously he says with Hamlet "Look on this picture and on that." We cannot draw a picture without the dark shading, or paint one without the darker colors, so Homer, the first and best of moral teachers, could not fully teach the value of virtue without showing up the vanity of vice. Does he present us with an ideal of bravery as in Achilles? He also shows the opposite of it in the cowardice of the effeminate Paris. Does he wish to show us the beauty of chastity? He paints first the awful example of the adulteress Helen, despised even by her own self, and then immortalises conjugal fidelity and chaste affection in a Penelope or an Andromache. The loves ⁽¹⁾ of Mars and Venus seem to be a blot on the purity of the Odyssey, but we must remember that Venus was really a foreign goddess, the patroness of the Trojans, and the subtilty of the poet in delineating the character of his own countrymen as the ideal heroes, and those of the Trojans as almost contemptible, is well brought out even in this disgusting picture, where Mars and Venus, who both fought for the Trojans, are held up to the ridicule of the whole court of the Olympian heaven. As a foil to this goddess of lust we have the picture of the chaste and wise Athene. "To the pure all things are pure" even the putrescence of Homer. It is only the vulture nose that smells ^{only} the carrion in every rosebed. His immoralities of gods and men are moral warnings to the world. Even his immoralities have a moral purpose behind them.

1. Odys. 8:266ff

It has been admitted, as we have seen, that there is moral feeling in Homer. This alone is admitted evidence of moral principles. We cannot have moral feelings without previously being taught by principles; in other words, moral feelings presuppose principles by which they are taught. Moral feeling might also be called the voice of conscience. Conscience is the criterion of actions, not the law of those actions. Conscience in all its operations presupposes a law; this law must be known. It is not necessary that it should be elaborately codified and minutely defined. The highest law is not necessarily a rigidly defined law; rather, it is one that is recognized. So the prophet in ancient times realized. His people already had the decalogue which clearly defined obligations categorically, but this is not the state of a perfect people he sees; a vision of the future consummation comes before him in which the laws will be put into their hearts and written on their minds. (1) But it is not the office of conscience by itself to give that knowledge. It can and does recognize those primary rudiments of it which result from our physical constitution, but it does not construct such codes or systems; these have to be taught it extraneously. When we confess a moral feeling in Homer we must at the same time admit principles, by reference to which moral feelings are ruled.

The author of the article aforesaid further admits that there was a term of ethical significance used by Homer in the word "aidos," but he objects to this as a rudimentary expression, because

1. Jeremiah 31, 33.

the word is used to express a good many meanings. But where will you find, search as you may the whole field of literature, a word that conveys and is so pregnant with so profound ethical truth as this simple word *aidos*? Where will you get a word to depict so universal a fact of moral consciousness. The English, and probably every other human language is incapable of translating this common Greek word. The nearest analogous word we have in English is the word "gentleman." We cannot define what a gentleman is; what his duties are; what his obligations are: but nevertheless the word stands for the highest ideal of manhood among the English speaking race. The mere fact of it being indefinable does not, however, insinuate that a gentleman has no principles, or ideal standard. We enshrine the word as the ideal of all that is manly and noble and good; and hold it up as an example to be followed by the younger generation, and as a foil and opposite of all that is petty and mean and ignoble. Such was the word "*aidos*" among the Greeks;- the sense of noble shame. Whenever a Greek sinned, he sinned against the "*aidos*." But the sense of noble shame itself presupposes something to be ashamed of; in other words, it suggests the existence of some principle or principles which acted as guides to the mind in discriminating what was shameful and what was not. This discriminating factor at once gives the lie to the contention that the Homeric hero had no distinct line separating right from wrong. The same author contends that the idea of law was foreign to Homer. If by law he means a codified set of rules, he may perhaps be right, although we can never be sure of this until it has been finally

demonstrated that ~~if~~ the Homeric Age was unacquainted with letters, or at least did not practice writing. But why should Homer be required to use nomos and rhetra, the later conceptions, instead of themis and dike? The objection that themis and dike are not true forensic terms because they mean custom, and the later conceptions, nomos and rhetra, are only the true legal expressions, is valueless when we consider that the nomoi were made up largely of customs. It is not necessary, as I have pointed out, that the laws should be written; a traditional law is just as unchangeable as a written law. The themistai were rules, whether written or unwritten, which were used in judgments and were probably as fixed as any written laws which we use today. These rules would no doubt be fixed by custom and precedent as the years went by, and being handed down acquired a sanction which new or changing laws could never have had. What is of supremest importance is that the laws should be known.

II.

We know nothing of the history of the Homeric period. There is no extant literature by a contemporary writer, nor indeed had the science of history been invented. Herodotus, the so-called Father of History, did not appear on the scene till four centuries later. All we can gather of the history of the period is to be found in the pages of Homer; and internal evidence must be our guide, however imperfectly it is given to us. The history of the period being wrapped in obscurity we turn to

archaeology and philology to aid us with such scraps as we can pick up from these two sciences; with possibly a comparison with contemporary nations who may have influenced the Greek mind and customs. || ^{it is surmised,} As to the origin of these people, ^{new paragraph.} Somewhere in the central Asian (1) plateau there lived in ancient ages a tribe which possessed an acute mental vigour, combined with a robust manhood. They called themselves Aryans (2) which means, probably, "good family" in contradistinction to the semi-brute tribes by whom they were surrounded, and whom they drove out and replaced.

These Aryans as they multiplied spread themselves Westward and Southward in quest of newer pastures, for they were, like all primitive tribes, a pastoral people. One branch of the family migrated Southward to India and conquered and subdued the inhabitants of that fertile country; another spreading Northward and Westward, peopled ^{Northern} Persia, Asia Minor, and eventually crossed the sea to Greece, while another party of this same stock, after wandering North of the Black Sea, found their way into Northern Greece. This, at least, is the theory, and for want of better historical evidence, it is best to accept it as the most probable explanation of the arrival of the Aryan stock into Greece. (3)

But before the separation what civilization had they obtained? To this question philology supplies a partial answer. The study of Sanscrit in recent years has added a good deal to our knowledge of the habits of the early Aryans. Max Muller, a great

1. Cf. Max Muller, Select Essays, p. 204.
2. Some scholars would give a more European locality as the original home of the Aryans.
3. Cf. Murray's History of Ancient Greece.

authority on this subject, has pointed out by his comparative study of Sanscrit, Greek, and the Gothic tongues, a few facts well worth our notice. The evidence of comparative philology (1) goes to show that before the break-up of the Aryan family they had attained a comparatively high degree of civilization. The family relations of father, mother, son and daughter, and even relations by marriage, as son-in-law and daughter-in-law, were recognized. The words for ploughing ~~are~~ from the same root in Greek and Sanscrit: this, together with the similarity of the roots in the words for the principal domestic animals, such as ox, cow, pig, sheep, goat, donkey, goose, duck, point to the fact that not only did they practice agriculture, but had attained considerable proficiency in the domestication of animals. They were still a Nomadic people, however, or possibly it would be safer to say that a part of them were Nomadic. Those who could find fertile spots would no doubt settle down, while the younger members of the family, or those who had not been able to secure fertile spots, would continue to wander till they had secured, by conquest or occupation, a more favoured locality.

These people were acquainted with road-making and the art of bridge building, and also with the art of building houses and walls, whether for fortification against enemies or defence against wild animals, we do not know.

The conception of religion had taken firm root in the Aryan mind long before the separation. Comparing the name for the

1. Max Muller Select Essays pp 319-356

Deity in the various languages, we find the Sanscrit Dyauts, corresponding to Zeus in Greek. Theirs was a gentle Nature worship, far enough removed from mere fetishism or totemism. They seemed to have had, as far as ^{we} can discover, no visible representations of Deity, or any ministering priesthood. "At the earliest dawn of history the fathers of the Aryan race, the fathers of our own race, gathered together in the great temple of Nature, like brothers of the same house, and looking up in adoration to the sky saw as the emblem of what they yearned for, a father, a God." (1)

From the similarity of the roots for sewing, weaving, building, we discover that this primitive family possessed some knowledge of the useful arts. They had divided the years into months, which points to an elementary knowledge of astronomy; and were not only able to count, but the numerals were arranged in a decimal system, which is, as Max Muller points out, one of the most marvelous achievements of the human mind; and shows the vigorous activity of the intellectual life of this people in its infant stages, in its capability of grasping such purely abstract facts as numeration. In addition to these marvelous discoveries, they were acquainted with the use of metals, both base and precious, and used them no doubt in the manufacture of instruments of the war and chase, and of domestic furniture. This state of civilization had been attained long before the separation; long enough to have given a rigidity to the manners and customs and speech, and even the grammar of the Aryans. Customs require long practice before

1. Max Muller, Sel. Ess. p. 186, Vol. 2.

they can be imbedded in the life of a people, especially a Nomadic people, to stand the wear and tear of centuries and yet retain their form.

All this took place ages before the Homeric Age. The Aryan immigrants in Greece had already possession of a rudimentary civilization when they first arrived in Greece. Such acute minds, capable of invention and retention, would no doubt have improved considerably in methods of life, when once they occupied the peculiarly favored land of Hellas. The settled life would affect many of their primitive customs and form new ones, while the influence of neighboring nations would tend to modify; and in some cases improve, and in others deteriorate the primitive simplicity of their pastoral and agricultural life.

Homer only knows of ~~the~~ two foreign nations besides the Trojans and their allies i.e., the Egyptians and Phoenicians. He makes no mention of the two great world powers, Babylonia and Assyria; nor do we find from history of these nations that they had come in contact with the Hellenic races. Homer's silence then, may be taken as direct evidence that these two nations could have had no influence, **except** in a very roundabout way which now is impossible to trace, on the character and modes of thought in the Homeric Age.

The influence of the Phoenicians can be traced more directly. These sea-rovers, very early in history, became the carriers of commerce in all parts of the Mediterranean. The islands and mainland of Greece would be easily accessible to them, would in fact, have been their first foreign ports of call. At this date

these Phoenicians found the land in possession of the early Aryan immigrants, who were not, as we have indicated, as rude as some would have us believe. They were well acquainted with the use of iron and such precious metals as silver and gold, and possibly tin; it is the latter metal that the Phoenicians seemed most eager to get for the manufacture of bronze. ~~The~~ Wine and hides would form other items in the commerce which the sea-carriers found such a lucrative monopoly. A purely commercial nation, such as the Phoenicians, with a character developed and moulded in terms of commerce, must have exercised a considerable influence in giving the knowledge of such arts in which the Greeks, as a merely pastoral and agricultural people, were deficient. To the Phoenicians the Greeks owe not ^{only} their alphabet, but even the very names of some of the letters of their alphabet. The names of ^{some} commercial products are clearly Semitic, as well as commercial terms; such, for instance, as interest, $\mu\kappa\alpha$, pirate, booty; the name of at least one animal, camel; the names of vegetables, as hyssop, frankincense; of other objects, coat, bird-cage. (1)

The religious influence which was assimilated by the Greeks must not be overlooked. The religious term Betulia or sacred stones, is the Semitic Beil-el, or Bethel. The Goddess Aphrodite is distinctly a foreign or Semitic importation. She is clearly the Astarte of the Phoenicians. "The exact debt of Greek religion to Phoenicia will never be known, but the more we learn of both races the more we see how big it was." (2) The moral influence must have degraded as the civilizing influence advanced the Greek character. The unscrupulous character of the traders, (3) with the

1. G.A.Smith.Hist.Geog. H.Land p.23 note. 2. ibid p.23.
3. Od. XV 420.

loose morals of the sailors, the bargain driving tendency, and habit of getting the best of the bargain even at the expense of cheating the simple, inexperienced colonists, must have had the ^Effect of lowering the confidence of man in man, while it sharpened the wits and the dormant business capacity of the Greek mind. The moral influence, or rather the immoral influence exercised by the lustful religion of Astarte began early to prove disastrous to the pure morals of a hardy and simple people, aided as the downward tendency was by the newly acquired ease which civilization and the fertility of the land brought to them. || The Egyptian influence can only be traced by the early legend of Cadmus and the founding of Thebes. The Egyptians, in extending their Empire, made use of their vassals, the Phoenicians, as one arm of their conquest. (1) Cadmus, in the myth, is either an Egyptian or, as some say, a Phoenician with Egyptian leanings, or under Egyptian patronage, for he named the City he founded, Thebes, no doubt after the Egyptian Thebes, a city of the Theban or Second Empire of Egypt. To the Egyptians the Greeks owe without doubt the name, if nothing else, of the Virgin Goddess Athene. This name so resembles Neith of the Egyptians that we may safely assert that she is of Egyptian origin. But not only her name but some of her attributes remind us forcibly of Egypt. She is, for instance, the Goddess of Wisdom, a clearly imported idea, when we remember that wisdom was the possession of the Egyptians pre-eminently among the ancient nations. Then she is the patroness

1. Gladstone, Homer, p 48.

of the industries and fine arts, another characteristic of Egypt at that date, and foreign to the Greek mind till introduced by the Egyptians and Phoenicians, the latter being merely the imitators and carriers, not, as some imagine, the inventors of the fine arts.

From the internal evidence of the poem we may gather that the Greeks of the Homeric age were in a primitive stage of civilization; but it was as far from the barbaric, as from the polished culture of the age of Plato. Here we find simple virtues and vices displayed. Man had not as yet refined the good, nor had he reached such a refinement of evil as in later epochs of Greek history. The civilization of the Homeric period seems to be in a transitional stage. They had not quite given up the pastoral life, even chiefs as Odysseus thinking^{it} not beneath their dignity to engage in manual toil, though they seem to have advanced to the stage of an urban community. This transitional process, as George Adam Smith points out, involves two factors; first an advancement in the civilization, and secondly a deterioration of the religious and moral tone of their life. (1)

The habits of life portrayed in the Odyssey yet retain their pastoral simplicity to a large extent, such as in Government, which is patriarchal in character, the king being called *poinēn*, the shepherd of the people. The king is aided by a *boulē*, or council of elders. No money is mentioned as a mode of exchange; two half talents mentioned in the divinely made shield of Achilles simply point to silver or gold being used as modes of barter, the same as

1. G.A.Smith, Hist. Geog. of Holy Land, p.85.

other products. All valuations are mentioned in terms of oxen as a standard value. Eurycleia, for instance, is mentioned as being bought for twenty oxen, and the armour which Diomed and Glaucus exchanged on the plain of Troy was valued as "nine oxen's to one hundred oxen's worth." (1) The weapons of war and methods of war are quite primitive, and swords and spears failing them, the heroes do not scorn the aboriginal method of hurling huge fragments of rock at one another.

Some light has been thrown on the Homeric Age by the excavations of Schlieman on the supposed sites of the places said by Homer to be the homes of Trojans and Greeks. The discoveries agree with the main facts related by Homer in regard to the probable customs and habits of the people of whom he sang. The pottery found in Mycenae is similar to that made at the Capital of Khu-n-Aten at Tel-el-Amarna. This latter City existed for only about thirty years (cir. 1400-1370) and was deserted after the death of the founder; consequently we can fix the date of Mycenae with astonishing precision. (2) Of course the date is long before Homer, but it goes to confirm the early civilizing influences that were brought to bear on Pre-Homeric Greece. This influence would affect not only the culture, but also the moral character of the Greek mind, and prepare the way for the teaching of Homer.

1. Iliad 6: 236
2. Sayce. Higher Crit. and Monuments, p.18.

III.

When Homer arrived on the scene, Greece was cut up into a number of petty states, each with its own cultus of a god or goddess. It was the purpose of Homer not only to create a pantheon of these diverse cults with a unity and consistency in itself, but also to, create, by binding together the deeds of their heroes, whether mythical or real, in one poem, a pan-Hellenic feeling; (1) while at the same time allowing each state to retain its autonomy. This he succeeded, in a large measure, in doing. Herodotus bears witness, that Homer gave to the gods their titles and defined their provinces (Herod. 2:53); but in doing this Homer purged the old myths of a considerable amount of their grossest features. Gross features still abounded and provided a nascent corruption, which a later and looser age could not discern as examples to be avoided, and so fell into habits of lewdness, thinking that they had the sanction of Homer and the immortals for their lusts. The horrible deeds of the older myths are ^{nevertheless} carefully eliminated, such as Cronus swallowing his children, and the amours of Gods in the shape of animals. (2)

Xenophanes blames Homer for making his gods perform deeds that are a blame and shame unto men. Carlyle (3) defends the almost identical charge against Mahomed in these words, "Much has been said and written about the sensuality of Mahomet's Religion;

1. Isocrates Panegyricus parag. 159.
2. Jebb. Introd. to Homer, p.83.
3. Heroes and Hero Worship. p.98

more than was just. The indulgences, criminal to us, which he permitted, were not of his appointment; he found them practised, unquestioned from immemorial time in Arabia; what he did was to curtail them, restrict them, not on one, but on many sides." So we may say of Homer, the lewdnesses were not of his appointment; he found them in his material, the mythologies of ancient Greece, enormities of all kinds, as Pausanias bears evidence, existed, but Homer culls the most objectionable of them out of his poems.

Homer never permits these lusts to men, though he relates them of the gods. His purpose even in permitting the amours of the gods is a noble one; not to educate his hearers in lust, but to give a divine pedigree to his heroes. And where even he does seem to permit lust in mortals, it is by constraint, not willingly, and for reasons of policy, that his heroes go outside the path of virtue, as in the case of Odysseus and Circe.

Objection has been made, and justly, against Homer on the score that he imputes to the gods perjury and theft; and even the pure Athene seems to exult in her tricks. Homer does not seem to be able to separate evil from the immortal gods. This is, however, in accordance with his peculiarly objective temperament. He realizes the existence of evil, but this evil must have an objective existence to him. He realizes that evil is in some mysterious way supernatural and of course in consequence is some way related to the gods. The gods ordain all things, both good and evil, they alone are the only ruling powers. Homer knows of evil powers who once assailed Olympus, but they are in Tartarus; they cannot in any way affect the affairs

of mortals. He cannot, as in the case of Christians, ascribe to rebellious demons the effects of evil deeds. It is to the supernatural ruling powers then he refers evil deeds. But he very cleverly puts the blame of all that is ignoble and base on the gods of foreign extraction, such as Aphrodite, Ares, and Hermes; and probably this is a just imputation, since it is through foreign cults that nearly all the corrupt elements came into the Homeric Pantheon. Homer never holds up the gods as ethical examples. He rather shrinks from the idea that men should emulate the gods. In some places he gives as awful examples the punishment of men who had vied with the gods, as the singer Thaumaris, who boasted that in a contest he could beat the Muses themselves if they entered the lists against him, for which act of presumption the Muses deprived him of the gift of song; and Odysseus tells of Eurytus who challenged Apollo to shoot a match with the bow, "Wherefore Apollo slew him in his wrath, seeing that he challenged him to shoot a match." (1) The gods transcended all law (2) nor indeed could they altogether be governed by the same law as the mortals. We have enshrined in a legal fiction what is a great truth, viz: "The King can do no wrong," which simply implies that the lawgiver transcends the law. So Homer realized that there must be a separation between the law and its maker, between gods, the givers of the law, and gods as governors. The gods then were looked upon as sanctions to the law, not as ethical examples. The gods possess an immense ethical value in Homer, however! First as a restraining influence on evil actions;

1. Od. VIII, 227.

2. Cf. Aristot. Nicomach. Ethics p.343 (Peter's trans).

They are a very necessary factor in the economy of human justice. "Yea and the gods, in the likeness of strangers from far countries, put on all manner of shapes, and wander through the cities, beholding the violence and the righteousness of men." (1) This Homer repeats as a sort of formula, which was either a proverb in his day or became so afterwards. Even the wanton wooers in the house of Odysseus recognize this truth, for when Antinous strikes Odysseus, taking him for a beggarman, one of these repeats the above formula and tells him that he is doomed for striking the hapless wanderer; for all beggars are of Zeus, who is their special protector. Again when Achilles would have slain Agamemnon at their first quarrel, Athene appears to him and withholds his hand and curbs his temper. In the ends of justice and mercy, Zeus interferes and restrains the fury of Odysseus when the suitors relations came to fight against him, and by his fiat makes peace between the combatants. Even the most depraved men feel this restraining influence, though they do not always obey the voice of the gods, as in the case of Aegisthus, who, though warned by Homer, yet persists in his deed of treachery (Odys 1.35 ff). The gods inspire good deeds as well as restrain evil ones; as an instance of this we read of Achilles, who, though so incensed that he thinks he cannot give up the body of Hector, yet when commanded by Zeus, performs this good deed; "So be it - - - if verily with hearts' intent the Olympian biddeth it himself." (Iliad 24:140).

The Erinyes have a peculiar ethical office in Homer. They

1. Od. 17:485.

seem to be the avengers of certain social and moral misdeeds. Gladstone calls them "the vindictresses of nature and the moral order." (1) They, in a measure, supply the idea of conscience and sense of duty. Thus when the suitors bid Telemachus send his mother home to her father, Telemachus refuses, giving as one of his reasons the fear of the Erinyes, "For my mother will call down the dire Avengers as she departs from the house." (2) They had peculiar charge of the cause of the poor; thus Odysseus calls down the wrath of the Erinyes on Antinous for striking him, "Ah, if indeed there be gods and Avengers of beggars, may the issues of death come upon Antinous." (3) They vindicate the order of nature, as in the case of the horse Xanthus, which began speaking and prophesying things to come, when stopped by the Erinyes, because it is out of the order of nature for mere brutes to use articulate speech, solely the prerogative of man. They even interpose among the immortals to preserve order. The thought of the Erinyes makes Poseidon accept the warning of Zeus. When Ares is wounded on the Trojan plain Athene tells him that it is the retribution of the Erinyes for fighting against the cause of his great mother.

Besides the Erinyes there were the Harpies, executioners of doom on those whom the gods had condemned. The justice executed by them even extends to future generations for the follies of parents. They are only brought in once in Homer, where they punish the daughters of Pandareus for his sin. (4)

1. Homer, p. 87.
3. Odys. 17.475.

2. Odys. 2.135.
4. Odys. 22.60

All things are decreed by Fate. Fate in Homer is not what it became afterwards; something above the gods and even over-ruling their plans, but is rather represented as concurrent with the will of Zeus. Destiny is expressed by various words and bears the sense of a categorical imperative, an irresistible tendency, and also has somewhat the nature of a moral law. The former is called moira and the latter aisa. All must submit to it, since it is the will of the gods; no one can resist it apparently, except in thought, some may go beyond what is decreed. Homer looks at this question in a double light, a fact some modern theologians have not realized, viz: he shows that there is a Godward side to the question, as well as a manward side. Achilles, cogitating on the issues of human life, derives the fortunes as proceeding from Zeus as the sole dispenser. Two vases are on the floor of Olympus, each containing respectively good and evil; from these Zeus dispenses as he thinks best. Mixed evil and good are the lot of some, and to others, most miserable of mankind, evil unmixed with good. This may be taken as the human view. But Homer also shows the divine side. Zeus is made to say, "Lo you now, how mortal men do blame the gods! For of us they say comes evil, whereas they even themselves, through the blindness of their own hearts, have sorrows beyond that which is ordained." (1) Here evidently Homer views Zeus and the gods as more of an over-ruling Providence which, though it maps out the general course of human life, yet leaves the details to be filled in by individual action. Much of the teaching of Homer

1. Odys. 1.32.

on Fatalism has been threshed out in the modern controversies on predestination, but modern philosophers have not sometimes possessed the wisdom of Homer in leaving the question where it ought to be left, i. e. in the region of metaphysical uncertainties. He realizes, in a measure, both free-will and predestination, but beyond stating the fact, ~~that~~ he does not go. He leaves them as they ought to be left, i. e., as irreconcilable facts to human consciousness, though they may not be irreconcilable to the mind of Zeus. (1)

Now what would be the effect of this fatalistic teaching on the ethical side? It seems to tinge the Greek character with a profound melancholy. His activities were limited, fixed, a purpose lay behind, which he could not overcome. This narrowness of scope and limited life produced a melancholic temperament. But this melancholy is not pervaded with despondency; therefore we find the Homeric character enjoying, with all the powers of his being, the short span of his allotted life. His song is in a minor chord, but it is sweetly serious and at the same time joyous. Gladstone well sums up this fact, "Human life had an aspect mostly sad: but the universe, as to its general construction, was still in tune." (2) In this optimism Homer anticipated Browning's idea: "God's in His Heaven, All's right with the world."

None of his heroes question the divine decrees. The order of nature is an earnest of the order of the moral government of the world. The moral drawn from the totality of the poems is this

1. Cf. Sanday & Headlam. Ep. to Romans, p.350.
2. Homer p.153.

that truth and justice will in the end vindicate themselves and prevail, whether in the case of nations, as in the case of the Greeks who fought in a righteous cause; or in the case of individuals such as Odysseus; and the murdered Agamemnon, concerning whose death Athene says in condemning his murderer, who suffered the just penalty of his crime; - "That man assuredly lies in a death that is his due; so perish likewise all who work such deeds." (1)

Other gods intimately connected with the ethics of the period are Atè, the seducer, and Litai, personifications of Prayers, who are the daughters of Zeus. (2) Atè is a power that seduces presumptions and insolent fools and hardens them into "atasthaliai," so that they become reckless in defying the gods. "For Atè is strong and fleet of foot, wherefore she outrunneth all prayers, and goeth before them over all the earth doing hurt to men." Prayers act as a sort of balm to the hurt done by Atè. They seem to combine the idea of repentance and intercession. "Moreover, Prayers are daughters of the great Zeus, halting and wrinkled and of eyes askance, that have their tasks withal to go in the steps of Atè; - - - and Prayers follow behind to heal them."

The favour of the gods was procured by sacrifice. Ritual and duty are, however, not confounded nor can either take the place of the other. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the gods. Thus, when Aegisthus, in defiance of the divine will of Zeus, tries to bribe the god to overlook his act of treachery, Zeus would not accept his sacrifice. Again, the daughter of the priest of

1. Odys. 1.47.
2. Iliad 9.502 ff.

Chryse has to be restored, Apollo would not accept the hecatombs without restitution of the maid. Sacrifice was performed personally by the worshipper; priests as a mediating class between gods and men are unknown to Homer; the priests mentioned in the poem being only apparently guardians of a local shrine.

IV.

What in Homer's view was the "summum bonum?" What does he consider as the ideal to which men must look up? Philosophy is entirely absent from the poems. The only place he is at all betrayed into metaphysical disquisition is when Achilles ponders on the mixed dispensation of good and evil in the lot of men. But the question is treated extremely superficially. He does nothing more than state an apparent fact, viz: that some lives have more or less joy mixed in them, and some seem permeated by misery. Homer knows nothing of the arguments of the Cyrenaics or Speusippus. In one place we are almost tempted to believe that he thought pleasure the one thing for which to live. "May, as for me I say that there is no more gracious or perfect delight than when a whole people makes merry, and men sit orderly at feast in the halls and listen to the singer, and the tables by them are laden with bread and flesh, and a wine bearer drawing wine serves it round and pours it into cups. This thing well nigh seems to me to be the fairest thing in the world." (1) But this is merely a compliment to his

1. Odys. 9:5 ff.

host, a mere rhetorical flourish. Odysseus does not believe in a mere sensual life of ease as the one consummation to be desired by man. His whole life gives the lie to such a calumny. If this had been his true opinion, he could have attained his ambition in the hollow caves of Calypso. All that mortal desires is offered to him, if he would but stay; all the sorrow will be his portion if he embarks for wife and home; yet the steadfast, goodly Odysseus chooses rather to suffer affliction and be a man, than live in pleasure and be an immortal. "Yet didst thou know in thine heart what a measure of suffering thou art ordained to fulfil, or ever thou reach thine own country, here, even here, thou wouldst abide with me and keep this house, and wouldst never taste of death, though thou longest to see thy wife, for whom thou hast ever a desire day by day." (1) Nor even does Homer offer pleasure or rest as a reward to men for virtue. Virtue must be its own reward in this world, as there is no reward in the world to come, except perhaps to a very few mortals. Plato finds fault with Homer for making the after life so dark and gloomy. Achilles would rather be a slave, the meanest on the earth, than be Lord of Hades. But herein the Homeric hero shows himself a better man, in that he works for no bait held out to him as an incentive, but for virtue itself. Only the favoured few enjoy immortality, and that not for their own worthiness. Menelaus does nothing exceptional, but he

1. Odys. 5:206.

is chosen to enjoy Elysium. "But thou, Menelaus, art not ordained to die, but the deathless gods will convey thee to the Elysian plain and the world's end - - - where life is easiest for men. No snow is there, nor yet great storm, nor any rain; but always ocean sendeth forth the breeze of the shrill West to blow cool on men; Yea, for thou hast Helen to wife, and thereby they deem thee to be son of Zeus." (1) Homer made his after-life gloomy, not because he had no better conception of it. The above quotation clearly shows that he could have made a paradise of rest for his heroes had he so desired it. But the very fact of his drawing the picture of future existence in such sombre colors goes to show that he had some moral purpose for it, combined with an insight into the working of men's minds. Carlyle seems to share the same feeling with him. "It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense, - - sugar plums of any kind, in this world or the next! In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler - - - It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made Man, that the poorest son of Adam longs - - - They wrong man greatly who say he is to be seduced by ease. Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death, are the allurements that act on the heart of man - - - Not happiness, but something higher." (2) Homer makes some of his most scathing comments on effeminacy and love of ease and pleasure. What can exceed the

1. Odys. 4:560.

2. Heroes and Hero Worship, p.98,99.

wholesome contempt with which Helen regards the effeminacy of Paris, or the scathing words in which Hector rebukes the cowardice of his unworthy brother. It is the man of deeds, both in war and sports, that gets the honor. A sedentary life is despised. Thus the rude remarks of Euryalus rouse Odysseus to fury in that the former takes him for "a master of sailors that are merchants," one who only has his goods and money bags at heart, and not a man of his hands. (1)

To such an extent was this idea of work being the worth of man fixed in the Greek mind, that we find even the kings are not ashamed to work with their hands at the most degrading manual labor. Odysseus boasts ~~that~~ his skill with the plough and other works of husbandry, while beggars such as Irus are treated with the most lordly contempt.

Pleasure then, in Homer, is looked upon as a moral degenerator. Not that Homer's heroes, in any way, are ascetics; far from it; but nevertheless he could not more plainly teach by speech and action the evil that comes from excess of pleasure than he does in these poems. Pleasure is not a good in itself, must not be an end in itself; neither is it an evil in itself, but may be abused so as to become an evil instrument. A most primitive, simple and possibly the most satisfactory conclusion of the whole matter. Virtue is probably the end that Homer would regard as the chief good. But his idea of virtue is more primitive than that of the later Philosophers. It is a complex idea, containing various elements. It contains primarily the idea of manliness, which indeed, is the

1. Odys. 8:158 ff.

original meaning of the word. It comprises courage, but is something more than that; it possesses the idea of generosity, kindness, pity, justice, temperance, prudence, perseverance, and a sense of duty. None of his characters possess all these in one person, but scattered through the poem we find each of these virtues inculcated by objectified examples. Possibly the reason why no one person is endowed with all these qualities by Homer, is that Homer, true artist that he is, never in practical experience finds all these graces combined in one person. (1) Each of his characters has his especial attributes, some possess these attributes pre-eminently, while they lack others. Achilles possesses courage above his fellows but does not seem endowed with the wisdom of Odysseus or Nestor; the latter in courage are dwarfed by the towering figure of Achilles. Homer has been criticised for the savage traits he allows in his heroes, but he could not have truthfully depicted human character otherwise. He realized what his critics forget, that human nature is not impeccable; it does not matter how high the ideals may be of which it is cognisant. Men may sin against, and do sin against the light. Yet Homer's heroes do more good, and show more good qualities than bad ones. The Iliad, from which most of the examples of savagery are taken, does not by any means represent the normal life and conduct of the heroes. War breaks down many conventions and calls forth many savage qualities even in our day, in which we claim the ideals are far higher than in Homeric times, yet we would not think of judging the characters of our citizens by their deeds

1. Xenophon Symposium 4:6.

of rapine in war time. In the Iliad we find the moral sense somewhat blunted by a sense of wrong under which the Greeks had been suffering for nine years. This calls up savage qualities and almost inhuman reprisals, at which we shudder, but which were quite in keeping with the unsettled and abnormal state which war had made imperative.

But in spite of his savagery, we find that pity is not absent from the bosom of the hero, and this is wrung from him at most unexpected times. What can exceed the vividness of the picture which Homer draws of the overwhelming grief of Achilles at the death of his friend Patroclus. We cannot imagine feelings of deeper hatred and revenge than those which burned in the soul of Achilles, feelings which drove him into an exasperation of frenzy. Even at this psychological moment we find that Homer is not afraid to wring from his hero's unwilling soul a favour which he regarded a dishonoring to the shade of Patroclus. (1) Many will be found to point out the savage and inhuman conduct of Achilles at the treatment he accords the body of a generous foe; in maltreating the body to spite the soul. Very few see the real beauty of the scene in the pity and forgiveness it calls forth. The tears and misery of an old man melt the heart of brass of the great hero; and even while all the savage passions of a deeply wronged soul cry for vengeance, so that he can hardly keep his hands off the old man, yet he grants the request, at the same time rushing out of the hut lest his worse feelings should get the upper hand and he should do a great wrong. Thus pity is made to conquer; one of the greatest

1. Iliad 24:559 ff.

moral conquests of our nature. In his self-conquest Achilles appears a greater hero than in his conquests on the battlefield.

Misery is ever kindly treated by the hero. The suppliant flying from home and country, finds a refuge in a foreign state. The beggar wandering from door to door is not unrelieved. The wrecked mariner finds hospitality and the means to return to his native shores, while even the recital of misery brings tears to the eyes of the hero.

Not only does Homer make his heroes show the sentiment of pity, but the fruit of pity is also exhibited, namely, forgiveness. This peculiarly Christian virtue is probably best seen in Odysseus. He is deeply insulted by Euryalus, but upon the apology of the latter he freely forgives him. (1) He in turn asks forgiveness of the Telmonian Ajax for winning the armour of Achilles from him. (2) Even this hero has been blamed for his cruelty in slaying the suitors, nor should we excuse his action which was indeed merciless. But we must remember that he had been provoked to such a pitch of exasperation by the conduct, ~~both to~~ ^{to} Penelope, his household and to himself, of these men, that we can hardly hold him accountable for his actions. He is not in his normal state; he is beside himself. Particularly is he culpable in the death of the suitor Leiodes, who, when he asked for mercy on the ground that he had done no evil beyond wasting his host's goods, and pleaded that he had refrained the suitors from forward deeds, was refused the life he asked for, and slain with the others. Odysseus, however,

1. Odys. 8:412.

2. Odys. 11:553.

even in his ungovernable fury is able to do some justice. He spares Medon and the minstrel Phemius because they were unwillingly forced to serve the suitors.

The hero is boundless in his generosity at other times. Hospitality both to friends and strangers was lavishly practised. It was the common practice to speed the parting guest with a present. Thus Odysseus lands in the country of the Cyclopes and expects a parting gift from Polyphemus, who shows his inhuman character in devouring his guests. King Alcinous sends him home with a huge gift of treasure, such indeed as he could not even have got as his share of the spoils of Troy. || In his intellectual virtues, which may be comprised under the heading, wisdom, the hero seems somewhat lacking, especially on the speculative side. The sense of curiosity which is the real mother of speculation, was just beginning to be aroused. Wisdom, however, was much prized among the heroes. But wisdom had only attained the idea of knowledge of affairs. It combined with knowledge, the ideas of prevision, prudence, swift decision, craftiness. It was the possession of the experienced and the aged. Homer, in one of his very rare abstract similes, compares the wisdom of Hera to the quickened intelligence of a man informed by much travel. (1) The Goddess ^αAthene is peculiarly the Goddess of Wisdom; while in Odysseus we have the ideal man of wisdom, which gave him his best known epithet of polumētis; though the wise Odysseus is not absolutely perfect in his wisdom, and more than the other characters are impeccable in conduct. Even he does

1. Iliad 15:30.

very foolish things, as when he enters the cave of Polyphemus regardless of the warnings of his comrades; and having escaped defies Polyphemus, who had already hurled a crag at the ship, thus endangering his ship a second time. Nevertheless he more than once earns for himself his title of the man of many expedients. This virtue his wife Penelope seems to share with him. She is known and extolled as the wise Penelope, the wisdom here indicated having very likely the idea of discretion, mixed together with a certain amount of feminine guile. Wisdom is made to triumph over mere brute force. Athene conquers the god of War himself in battle, indicating the victory of the mind over mere brute force. It is by wisdom, not force, that Troy is captured at last. Polyphemus' inhuman strength is not able to contend against the wisdom of Odysseus; and more by craft than force the suitors are slain. A man who was lacking in wisdom was but a poor type of manhood, one, who through the lack of it, is led into doing injustice. For this is implied in the reproof administered by Odysseus to Euryalus. (1)

In his social virtues the hero seems to have advanced to a comparatively high degree of perfection. The rights of man were held sacred, except perhaps in the case of slavery. Justice, however primitive the method of administration, may have been, was, on the whole, impartially administered. They seem to have ^{had} a rudimentary criminal code, and the worst crimes are not only recognized as such, but also suffer the punishment they deserve, either at the hands of gods or men.

The purpose of punishment is primarily retributive; the

1. Odys. 8:166

ideas of prevention and correction being naturally involved in retribution. There seems to have been no criminal tribunal, though there seems to be some idea of a civil tribunal in the trial scene on the shield of Achilles. The crimes seem to have been punished by the relations and friends, or by the individual against whom the crimes were committed. Homicide, whether voluntary or involuntary, was generally punished by the relations of the murdered, the punishment consisting either in death of the murderer, or his exile; though sometimes reparation could be made by the homicide paying a certain price to the relations. In the Shield of Achilles a civil action is being decided by the tribunal of elders, two half talents being the subject in dispute, which one side claim they have not received, and which the other side asserts has been paid as an atonement for the life which had been taken. But possibly this commercial mode of punishing the offender was rare, considering the hot blood of the heroes; and it is more likely that the murderer was either killed, or should he have time to escape, had to suffer what was perhaps as bad as death, exile. (1)

It has been said that Homer regards piracy with equanimity, and even commends it. But Homer never uses the word pirate in the modern sense of the word. His pirates or buccaneers are sea-rovers who "bring bale to alien men," never to one of their own kin. This was in accordance with the customs of the times. The hero argued that the people that had not made a treaty with him were naturally enemies; and logically treated them as such. Odysseus and his Company sack the city of Cicones, not because there was war between

1. Cf. Grote 2 Vol. pp209-211.

the two, but simply because they had no treaty of peace, and being enemies were lawful spoil. The idea of common humanity was not as yet recognized, except perhaps in cases of individual misery, when the unfortunate stranger had to beg his safety, nor was his safety disallowed him, for Zeus was the special guardian of the suppliant, and punished all who maltreated him.

Adultery and unchastity are both very heinous sins in the eyes of Homer; both are punished by the vengeance of the gods and of men. Even Helen despises herself for her act of adulterous union in words of burning shame; and confesses that she feels that even the Trojans have this contempt for her sin. The vengeance of the gods falls upon the adulterous act of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra. The ridicule of the Olympians, a most potent ethical restraint, is directed against the amours of Ares and Aphrodite, and so shameful is this disgraceful scene felt, that the poet naively says the female deities would not look upon it without hurting their modesty.

The unchastity of the female domestics of Odysseus is punished by their death. We could get no severer condemnation of actions than those with which Homer condemns these awful sins. One case of Incest is recorded, which the Erinyes punish. There is no such thing mentioned in Homer as a professional courtesan. This sad evil, which St. Augustine thought saved the world from yet worse evil, did not exist among the Greeks of the Heroic age. Concubines are mentioned, but it is single concubinage. Besides the negative commandment against adultery we have the heinousness

of the sin still more emphasized by the exaltation of modesty and the beauty of conjugal fidelity. There is no example of sensitive maiden modesty more faithfully pictured than we have in the portrait which Homer draws of the maiden Nausicaa, but it needs poetry, not stodgy, common place prose, to sing her praises. Penelope is the ideal wife who through all trials comes out the model of a true wife and mother. And as we gaze on those pure characters we feel how pure and noble and worthy of emulation they are, while on the other hand we feel only the most utter contempt for Helen, in spite of her repentance and amendment, and for the paramour Melanthe we realize a feeling of loathing too deep for words.

The hero well understood the nature of an oath. (1) From this fact we might infer that false swearing was a culpable offence in his eyes; nor are we disappointed in our inference. The Erinyes, the supernatural vindicators of justice, brought retribution on all perjurers.

Homer does not mention any specific case of bribery or corruption of the judges of the agora. Hesiod a hundred years later relates that his brother and he went to law over the division of their patrimony, and his brother, by bribing the court, secured the judgment in his own favour. Homer, however, implies the existence of this corrupt practice in the heroic age and condemns it by a divine judgment. He ascribes the awful violence of the autumnal storms to the displeasure of Zeus against the judges who perverted justice by their disgracefully partial verdicts. (2)

1. Odys. 2:377.

2. Iliad 16:587.

We do not find theft condemned in the same severe terms as other crimes, but this probably arose out of the peculiar ideas of property held in those times. It is "the strong man armed who keepeth his house and his goods are in peace" but when a stronger than he cometh then of course he is despoiled. This defect in the rights of property arose from the lack of a proper conception of civil law. Though the sanctions of natural law were known and obeyed, the sanctions of conventional law were hardly in existence. The rights of property were upheld by those who were strong enough to enforce them. That is by the relations and retainers of the individual. Where they could be enforced thus, an atonement was expected by those whose property was made free with, or if no re-st~~itution~~ was made, retaliation followed, generally consisting in the death of the offending parties. Nor would Zeus punish those who thus vindicated the rights of property. Thus Telemachus warns the suitors that if they did not quit wasting his patrimony they must bear the consequence and that without atonement.

With regard to personal virtues, Homer places courage in the highest place. But it was not a mere brute courage that he extolled, but rather courage mixed with discretion. In this respect Odysseus stands preeminent. The valour of even the hot-headed Achilles is not entirely that of a savage; rather it is mingled with some of the highest feelings of a chivalrous knight. He possesses graces of person and mind, besides mere brute strength and courage. Excess of wine is accounted unworthy of a soldier. Odysseus speaks

slightingly of Elpenor who fell from the tower of Circe through having his brains fuddled by excessive devotion to the wine-cup. And we even find Antinous taking a high moral stand, ridiculously out of keeping with his sottish conduct, in regard to this vice. "Wine it is that wounds thee, honey-sweet wine, that is the bane of others too, even of all who take great draughts and drink out of measure. Wine it was that darkened the mind of the Centaur; - - - and after that his heart was darkened with wine, he wrought foul deeds in his frenzy - - - and then with darkened mind, he bare about with him the burden of his sin in foolishness of heart." (1)

In his friendships the hero was intensely faithful. There were two degrees of friendship recognized by the Greeks, Xenos, and philos. The xenian friendship was made necessary by the peculiar institutions of the times. In an age and country where there were no inns or places of ^{public} entertainment, the traveller was compelled to rely upon the hospitality of the people, and more especially of the chief, of the land he visited. These xenian ties were formed, as a rule, with much ceremonial formality, and once formed became inviolate; the violation of such obligations on the part of either party was punished by the heaviest penalties. Paris, by eloping with his host's wife and by taking with him considerable property, brought upon himself and upon his unfortunate countrymen, the punishment due to this form of treachery. The xenian tie not only secured the friendship, of the contracting parties, but was obligatory on their descendants. A philos was one who was dear to

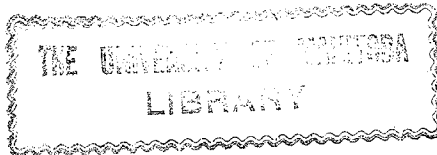
1. Odys. 21:290. Cf also Odys 14:465.

the hero from motives of personal affection. The best and closest friendship of this kind is found in the case of Achilles and Patroclus; in the words of the Old Testament prototype of all true friendships, the soul of Achilles was knit unto the soul of Patroclus, and Achilles loved him as his own soul so that "even in their death they were not divided." (1)

The humbler friendship of Eumaeus and his master is one of the most beautiful ideas in Homer. The faithfulness of the slave to his master's interests, not for the sake of reward or commendation, but simply for the memory of the love of his great master, moves us to admiration. In kindling this love Odysseus must have had a share. It was his kindness to the slave which must have won the love in the first instance. And as we look at his quaint faithfulness, shown in sleeping among the swine so that he may guard them more effectually, and his bitter reproaches of the suitors for wasting the best of the substance of his loved master, while he lives on the worst and saves what he can of the best for the return of Odysseus, we realize how deep this love was on the part of the slave.

Reverence is another of the virtues habitual to the hero. Reverence to the gods is especially inculcated and habitually practised, and lapses in this respect punished by divine judgments. Thus Ajax and Menelaus are punished for showing lack of piety to the gods; the former for blasphemy is killed by Zeus, and the latter is sent wandering till he remedies his impiety by sacrifice. Even

1. I Samuel 18, 1.



where Achilles reproaches Apollo and wishes the God were mortal like himself, and then they could meet on equal terms, no irreverence is intended against the divinity of the Deity thus defied.

Old age is peculiarly revered even in an enemy. Achilles spared the aged Priam, when he saw how much the latter reminded him of his father. The touching meeting of Odysseus and Laertes is one of the most pathetic in the two epics, and indicates the love and reverence shown by the son to the father.

The family relations ~~both~~ in the Iliad and Odyssey are well defined, and family obligations form the basis of all social ethics of Homeric times. The duties of a father to his children may be chiefly illustrated by the character of Priam; In his lament over Hector we are introduced to the inner sanctuary of paternal affections. The condition of the orphan so pathetically described by Andromache (1) illustrates, by contrast, the tender care with which the father nurtured his own children. Henry Drummond² tells us that the conception of fatherhood, when once grasped by man, illustrates the highest ideal to which nature can attain. If this is so, we can be well assured that the Hero had attained one of the highest truths in the moral content, for we find the idea of a fatherhood strongly held in the Epic morality. The tender and reverential regard of a son to his father is seen in the character of Telemachus, besides numerous other examples.

The position of woman in any community is a crucial test of the ethics of that community. In the Epics we find what a free and revered position woman occupied. The relationship of Husband

1. Iliad 22:495. 2. *Ascent of Man. Evolution of a Father*

and Wife is one of companionship, of reciprocated love and confidence. Woman is not man's play-thing, or his inferior, as in later years of Greek life, but his helpmeet. The prayer of Odysseus well brings this sentiment out. "May the gods grant thee all thy heart's desire: a husband and a home, and a mind at one with his may they give -- a good gift, for there is nothing mightier and nobler than when a man and wife are of one heart and mind in a house." (Odys. 6: 180 ff.) There, however, seems to be no example of sisterly affection shown to a brother of the same blood, or conversely the love of a brother shown to a sister. Helen shows her sisterly feeling for Hector in her lament over his body; and Briseis over the body of Patroclus, but of consanguinary ~~soterjal~~ affection there seems to be no example.

Brotherly affection is recognized. Hector and Deiphobus seem to show mutual affection to one another; and so also Menelaus and Agamemnon.

Slavery existed, though not in the rigorous mercilessness of later years, nor did the Greeks hold each other as slaves. The slave was invariably a foreigner. Homer says that the slave, when he became such, lost one half his manhood (1) Achilles, contrasting the misery of the dead, says that the most miserable of men, i.e. slaves, are better off than one who is king of the shades. From this we might ~~infer~~ that perhaps the slave's lot was not such an unhappy one after all. Nor do we find the slave unkindly treated. Eumaeus is well treated and speaks almost as on equal terms with his

1. Odys. 17: 322.

master; and is even called father by Telemachus. They were not overworked, except in the case of the slave who ground meal for the suitors; and even she thinks her task is greater than usual by reason of the rapacity of the wooers.

Thus we see that Homer recognized and inculcated by word and example, the various virtues. Many crudities may appear in the ideas, but the truth and beauty of virtue are recognized. Moral sanctions are by no means absent, as some claim, from the two Epics. The Will of the Gods formed the supernatural, and natural law, or the experience of human life, formed the natural sanction. These two were enforced by themis or themistai and Tis or public opinion. The Homeric mind is not unacquainted with law and order and social responsibility, whatever his names for these things ~~should~~^{may} be. Lawlessness is abhorrent to the Greek mind, even in its most primitive stage. When Homer wishes to depict a lawless community, or rather people, he draws for us a picture of abnormal monsters, the Cyclopes, men who are unlike human beings, without laws (athemistai) without care for the gods, without care for one another, no council to regulate their affairs, no agricultural pursuits, and with no mercy for strangers. Some would like to picture the Homeric age as not very much better than this Cyclopean condition of humanity; but Homer drew this picture as a contrast to the civilization of his Heroes, and something far lower in the scale of civilization.

Many objections can be advanced as to the actual working out of the ideal which the Hero possessed, but which in many cases

he failed to carry into practice. The men that Homer pictures for us are not ideal men, but men with ideals, which perhaps they even could not define; it was not an age of definitions. We can pick holes in the character of some of Homer's purest and best characters; We can find flaws even in the bravery of Achilles; or we can show the foolhardiness of the wisest of the Greeks on more than one occasion; or again we may even find, as Coleridge does, specks in the purity of Penelope (Coleridge accuses her of coquetry, I do not know with how much reason); or even in the purest picture of maidenhood we could point to immodesty (in Nausicaa); but the poet is vindicated in his short-comings when we realize that he is painting the portraits of men and women in the flesh, and, true artist as he is, he must of necessity bring in the flaws of weak humanity.

The Epics of Homer were used for the purpose of teaching morals to many a ^{en}degenerate age afterwards, because men realized that no better man had arisen who ^{possessed} had the genius to gather together, simply by the light of nature, such a collection of marvelous moral facts and weave them in one poem. That is why Homer remained the moral teacher of the cultured world, till greater light from the Dayspring from on High rose with healing in His wings, to bring a brighter Light to lighten the Gentiles; and those who dwelt in the valley of the shadow of Death saw a great Light, and instinctively realized that the Light that lighteth every man had indeed come into

the World. Not till then did Homer step down from his pedestal,
but vindicated the Ways of ^{God} Providence, Who left not Himself with-
out witness even in times of dark groping after the Truth, and Who
taught through the genius of Homer Ethics in the Homeric Age.