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Study Material--2
On
The Iliad by Homer
(Synopsis and Analysis)

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❖ Introduction:

Homer's *Iliad* is one of the most important and earliest texts of classical literature serving the writers over the years by providing material for critical thinking and also it is the theme of many of the artistic endeavours. Here is a brief synopsis and analysis of the Book 1 of *The Iliad*.

❖ A Brief Outline of Book I of *The Iliad*:

Book-I starts with the poet's invocation to muse to support him in depicting the story of Achilles and his anger. Achilles was the greatest Greek hero of all the Achaeans who took part in the Trojan War. The poet depicts the story which starts nine years after the war. The Achaeans sacked a trojan town and took with them two beautiful maidens, Chryseis, the daughter of Chryses, a local priest of Apollo and Briseis. Achilles, the worthiest warrior took Briseis with him as his "prize" and Agamemnon took Chryseis as his. Chryses, priest of Apollo pleaded Agamemnon to return his daughter and in return he would give the Greeks a handsome ransom but the Greek commander-in-chief refused the proposal. So, Chryses begged Apollo for assistance. As a result, Apollo sent plague to the Greek camps causing death of many Greek soldiers. After ten days of terrible suffering, Achilles called an assembly where he asked the fortune-teller to reveal the real reason behind such a misfortune to the Greeks. Then Calchas, the soothsayer, from whom "past, present and future held no secrets" (*Iliad* P. 6) stood up and revealed that it was a trick planned by god Apollo and Chryses. Agamemnon became very much furious and said that he would return Chryseis if only Achilles gave his "prize" Briseis to him. Agamemnon's claim humiliated Achilles and both started to argue. Achilles threatened to withdraw from battle with his men and return home and Agamemnon threatened to take away Briseis himself from his tent. This infuriated Achilles and he wanted to take his sword to kill the Achaean leader but stopped because of the intervention of goddess Athene, sent by Hera, the queen of gods. Athene appeared in front of Achilles and checked his anger. Finally, Athene's supervision and the wise advice of advisor Nestor prevented the fight. But that night Agamemnon sent Chryseis to her father and sent some heralds to Achilles' camp to take Briseis away. Then Achilles withdrew himself from his men and broke into tears and called his mother, the sea-nymph Thetis to ask Zeus, the king of gods to punish the Achaeans. The mother learnt from his dear child everything about the quarrel with the Achaean leader and assured him to talk to Zeus about the issue as Zeus owed her a favour. Odysseus who was navigating the ship that was sent to return Chryseis did his job. He returned Chryseis to her father who became

overjoyed and the father prayed Apollo to relieve the Achaeans from the plague. So, did Apollo. After twelve days, Thetis, daughter of the Old man of the Sea went to Zeus as she promised Achilles. But at first Zeus was reluctant to help the Trojans as his wife Hera was supporting the Greeks but finally, he agreed. Hera became enraged when she came to know that her husband would help the Trojans but her son Hephaestus convinced her not to plunge the gods into fight over the mortals.

❖ **Analysis of Book I of *The Iliad*:**

Book-I opens with “Anger – sing, goddess...” where Homer invokes the muse to assist him while depicting the story of a Greek hero and his anger and this invocation to the muse is one of the most important features of epic poetry. At the same time, the word “anger” at the very beginning hints at the main theme of the epic that is the anger of Achilles and the results originated from that anger. Most minutely the poem depicts how those incidents started, the reason behind the wrath of Achilles, the problems the Achaeans face because of that anger and last but not the least the Trojan War itself. In Book I, the initial argument between the commander-in-chief Agamemnon and the proud Achilles, prevented by wise Nestor and Athene’s guidance, is paralleled at the end of the book by the quarrel between Zeus and Hera, mediated by her son Hephaistos. The dispute among the gods turns into an entertaining scene that ironically puts emphasis on the severe magnitude of the human quarrel. Homer’s practice of reiterating an earlier scene with a later one is applied throughout the *Iliad*. Actually, the entire epic poem is based on this structural technique. The very beginning significantly establishes the conflict for the rest of the epic as the rage of Achilles appears to be defensible from Book I to Book IX though his anger is opened for criticism from Book IX to Book XVIII. But in Books XVIII and XIX, a conciliation is done by the poet and this pattern continued till the end.

Though the epic poem is based on the Trojan War, it only depicts the story after nine years of the war, only a few weeks during the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles in the final year of the war. At the same time, it does not depict the end of the War, rather it ends with the death of Hector and with the prophecy of Achilles’ imminent death and the destruction of Troy. The central theme is the rage of mortals, the wrath of Achilles. But the gods do always interfere in the activities of the mortals and they engage themselves in the activities of the mortals both internally and externally. Apollo brought plague to the Greek camps by his external involvement whereas Athene controls Achilles’ rage internally. But quite

interestingly, sometimes the tricky activities of the gods bring some relief to the ongoing events of the mortals who are fighting for almost ten years. It's a kind of comic relief also as there is only war and destruction. For some critics the intervention of the gods in the human activities may have resulted from the quarrel among themselves. Actually, Homer has tried to depict the fact that human world is determined by the emotions and passions of gods. The whole event starts with Paris' selection of Aphrodite as the winner of the golden apple (the three goddess Hera, Athene and Aphrodite asked Paris to choose the most beautiful goddess among them and Paris chose Aphrodite and offended Hera and Athene. As a result, Hera and Athene started supporting the Greeks and Aphrodite was supporting the Trojans in the Trojan War). But Homer does not mention the golden apple in his narrative, he only mentions in the final book that Paris offended Hera and Athena. The emotions of the gods and goddesses are translated into the actions in the human world and that connection between emotion and action is presented with clarity throughout the Narrative.

An important aspect of the lives of the Greeks comes to the fore through the clash between the two Achaeans—Agamemnon and Achilles and that are some values of the Greeks—the sense of honour and pride. For Agamemnon, his individual glories proved to be more important than the well-being of the whole Achaean army through his act of taking away Briseis from Achilles. On the other hand, Achilles told his mother to punish the Achaeans because of Agamemnon's wrong behaviour. Both these great heroes engage themselves in a bitter quarrel with each other for the captive women. Both of them thought about their individual pride and honour: Agamemnon took Achilles' "prize" and Achilles withdrew himself from the battle to teach Agamemnon a lesson by bringing problem to the Greek army. That overweening pride is 'hubris' which enforced the hero to behave in thoughtless ways.

❖ Reference for Further Studies:

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4. <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/i/the-iliad/>
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(See the attachment below. It will be helpful to you while reading the text.)

HOMER'S "ILIAD"

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HOMER'S "ILIAD."

BY D. J. SNIDER.

It will be denied by few that the first great literary product of the world is the poems of Homer. They are the beginning of what we call Letters: a fact of the very highest import to those who look to that branch of human endeavor, not for entertainment merely, but for a guiding light of life. Homer is the creative book of Literature; all books of that sort look back to him as parent, particularly the poetical books, which are the best. It may be said that every age, as its literary effect deepens, will find a deeper significance in him, and must have a new comment upon his works. So it is and must continue to be not only with Homer but with every great book; the new time will reveal in it the new meaning; it unfolds with the ages.

The important question, therefore, must come up to the earnest student, What is it to know truly the Homeric Poems? Their variety of suggestion is great and fascinating, and has called forth many special departments of learning; erudition has burrowed into them, and constructed vast underground labyrinths, in which one is always in danger of getting lost. These labyrinthine passages have, in the first place, no end: a lifetime will not suffice to explore them; in the next place, they have no light, being always in caverns out of the path of the sun. Every new spiritual time must avoid them and reveal the old poems afresh for its own behoof; not in the darkness of erudition, but in the sunlight of the poet must the true seeker take up his abode.

Assuredly the matter of first import is comprehension of the thing in hand; one must penetrate to the spiritual principle of the work, reach down into the very soul of its maker and commune with the same. We have not grasped any product till we become a sharer in the creative activity which made it, and so pass with it into its being. This deep intimacy with the Poet is his revelation to us; before our eyes we must behold his world rise up from the deep and take on form. Let us enter his workshop and follow the generative thought as it bursts into reality, and thrills and throbs into harmonious utterance. In such man-

ner we seek to realize this old song, to make it our own, till it becomes an instructive part of our nature, singing through us into our own daily life. Then we may be said to recognize the soul of Homer, being transformed into some image of him ourselves; we have entered into kinship with him; we fraternize joyfully with his strangest shapes, and look through his remotest glimpses.

Doubtless the rarest kind of knowledge always is to know what true knowledge is. It is so often mistaken for Opinion, Conjecture, Information, Learning, and other uncertain and impure forms of human brain-work, that one is inclined to turn away from every new word, particularly if it be on an old theme. Only too frequently is such distrust justified. A mountain of commentary has been heaped around all the great works of Literature, till their light seems to go out in the darkness of illustration. We often know so much about the thing that we do not know the thing itself, cannot know it; erudition has swathed it in such dense, obscure folds that ignorance seems a blessing—indeed, a veritable illumination. Around and about the matter, never directly to the heart of it, do our learned guides keep us straying so long that we have at last to dismiss them and go on by ourselves as best we can. Knowledge, if this be such, is certainly getting into great straits, so encompassed with uncertain phantasms that she scarce knows herself, being in deep doubt whether she be not a phantasm too.

Thus we often hear men speak in wrath and desperation, thus we may sometimes speak ourselves; still, wrath is hasty, and complaint is weakness. With all his shortcomings, we cannot do without our Interpreter; he is truly a priest in that mighty Literary Hierarchy which arose with the first great book of Letters, this Homer, and has extended its spiritual sway down to our present age with an ever-increasing power and blessing. The Interpreter has a function, too, in this time of ours, indispensable; it may be very humble, or very elevated; he may be erudite merely, which is something; but his highest destiny is to be a spiritual guide, leading us back to those perennial well-heads of human culture called Literary Bibles, and teaching us to be again what their authors, the best and deepest souls of our race, have been, and thus to be truly ourselves the heirs of Time. The Interpreter, then, has his parish, if not his church; a word, weighty, even

beautiful, is given him to speak—the word of connection between what is disconnected ; the word of light where there is darkness ; the word of harmony where, on the surface at least, are seen only inconsistency, contradiction, confusion. A golden word, uniting ever where otherwise is separation, it makes head, heart, and even voice into an instrument upon which the old Poet seems to be playing again, yet attuned to a modern key-note.

Such is a hint of the ideal Interpreter, from whom the real one is likely to be quite different. If we now turn to the *Iliad*, we must first seek for its creative thought, and thought can be attained in one way only, by thinking. We shall have to wrestle with an idea, and, furthermore, witness that idea unfolding into the members of the poem. This brings us to the organism, the work, which is to be carefully analyzed, and then re-combined into unity. Thus we get its structure, or architectonic relations, which is the framework upon which its life hangs and moves to its end. This life of the poem comes through individuals whose characters are to be penetrated and brought into harmonious relation with one another, and with the entire work. Thought, organization, characters, must be first separated by reflection, then re-united into the Whole, which is thereafter to sink into our feelings, into our life, and become a part of our instinct. Thus the Homeric world is ours, not through the head alone, but through the heart, and we have passed into our complete Greek inheritance.

I. The *Iliad* is a series of dualisms, beginning with that deepest one of all, the dualism between the human and divine. But it is also a series of reconciliations : it masters its conflicts, and transforms them to harmony. Mark the Gods ; they are infinite, yet forever dropping down into the finite, which is the image of the poem, and of the entire Greek consciousness. But, on the other hand, through this finite side of the Gods we get a glance into their infinite nature ; this glance is the all-important gift in the student which he is to bring with him if he is to look into the old poet's world. It peeps through the divine limitations into the illimitable ; it sees beyond the quarrels and struggles of Olympus, and beholds the reconciling element of the divinities ; the poetic glance it is which the Homeric man must have had by nature as the birthright of his age, but which requires some train-

ing to recover on our part. To it the Gods become transparent; their strife, passions, jealousies, shortcomings, are but the outer shell, through which the divine image must be seen; this glance is the flash which spans with a bridge of light the chasm of Homer's dualisms.

The first and most important of these dualisms is that between Men and Gods. There is an Upper World, the realm of divinity; there is a Lower World, the home of human action. Everywhere in Homer these two worlds are seen moving alongside of each other, intermingling, separating; through every Greek soul a terrestrial and a heavenly stream is pouring, often in conflict and rage, but finally in placidity and peace.

The main insight is that both these worlds, though distinct to the outer eye, are one to true vision, to that poetic glance which beholds harmonies. The Gods must be seen to be in man, otherwise he is a mere puppet in the hands of external powers, whereby he loses his freedom. But the Gods must be seen to be outside of man just as well, otherwise they lose their divinity, being merely some thought or caprice of an individual. The poem is a poem of freedom, such has been the faith of the genuine reader in all ages; yet it is also a poem of providence, which providence perpetually hovers over it, and directs it. But its providence fits into freedom, such is its deepest harmony; the Gods are both in the man and in the world; they are the true essence of the human soul on the one hand, and the true reality of existence on the other. Thus the mighty dualism between Men and Gods vanishes; the two opposing sides of it pass into one supreme harmony in this grand Homeric Hymn of the Universe.

It may be truly affirmed that the highest test of the appreciation of Homer is to see this unity of the Upper and Lower Worlds as they stand in his books. Still further, it is necessary to see out of the finite manifestations of the Gods, out of their follies and weaknesses, into their universal significance. Nor must this be grasped as an esoteric doctrine in Homer, as some learned men have done; it is simply the natural meaning which, however, requires the poetic vision in order to be truly beheld. Without the connecting glimpse, Homer remains a dualism—indeed, a chaos of Gods and Men capriciously tumbling amid one another.

II. We may now pass to consider this Lower World, in which

there is transpiring a conflict of prodigious significance—the conflict between the Greeks and Trojans. These two peoples are much alike, with the same customs mainly, with the same religion and language; it is clear that they belong to the same stock: both are Hellenic. Yet, in this unity of the two, a decided difference has set in; their tendencies are, in fact, quite opposite; the Greeks are Hellenes with face turned towards the West, the Trojans are Hellenes with face turned towards the East. We behold the primitive differentiation of the Hellenic race, and the struggle of the two sides; it is the first record of that struggle which is the soul of the Greek world: Occident *versus* Orient. The spiritual separation of Hellas from the East, passing into complete opposition, is the key-note which Homer strikes in the *Iliad*; it is the great fountain of Greek legend, and the inspiring principle of Greek history. Nay, this conflict is, perhaps, the chief epoch of the World's History, exhibiting the transition out of the East to the West; and the old poem is the earliest bugle-call of war to the peoples of Europe for the preservation of the European heritage.

But what is the principle at stake in this long, desperate contest? An adequate answer to this question involves much: indeed, a new translation of Homer; not, however, of the Greek tongue into English, but of the Greek soul into English. The Poet has often stated the object of the war to be the recovery of Helen, who was the most beautiful of Greek women, also the wife of a Greek king, Menelaus. She has been taken from country and home by a Trojan, who will not give her back to Hellas. The entire Greek world of the West at once arms itself for her restoration, which, after ten years' struggle, they accomplish. Nor is it to be forgotten that they were more united upon the Trojan War than upon the Persian War, or any other deed of their history. In their own judgment, as revealed by this act, their very destiny depended upon the recovery of Helen.

So different is the Greek view from our way of regarding such a woman that we are forced to ask, What does it all mean? What does Helen stand for to the Greeks? That she represents something deep within them, the very deepest, is indicated by the great sacrifice which they made for her sake. She must be their principle, their very heart; her story is the story, already hinted,

of the Occident against the Orient. The fight before Troy for her possession is the fight of the Greeks for the very soul of their existence; indeed, the matter goes much deeper, as we here can see who look back over the tract of Time; it is the fight for the future inheritance of the race, the question therein propounded being, Which of these two contestants, Greek or Asiatic, shall be the bearer of civilization to that new European world now being born? The Greek claimed it, and won it, both in legend and in history, valiantly defending it both at Troy and at Marathon.

It is true that there is a much easier way of looking at this affair of Helen. We may regard it merely as a story which Homer employed to amuse his listeners, and to get his bread; he intended it as a pretty tale and nothing more, and we must not go beyond his consciousness. All of which simply destroys the poet, as the maker of a Literary Bible, who must also be a seer, and build wiser than he knows. Again, the fact of the abduction of Helen may be taken as literal; women were often stolen in early times, as we gather from other testimony than Homer; in mythical ages it was a common event, often celebrated in legend and song. But the difficulty remains. How is it that this story has lived, and still lives, after millions of more entertaining stories have sunk out of sight? Nay, how is it that this story still puts forth new flowers and bears new fruit, like the tree of Time itself? But yesterday a new book, a new poem, came out upon Helen of Troy; to-morrow there will be another. There can only be one reason: it has the most permanent, universal theme; it has within it not merely the heart of Greece throbbing itself into deepest seductive harmonies, but of Europe, of the whole West. This universality of its theme must be grasped if we are to understand the poem.

Some men of learning and insight have thought that the story of Helen may be confined to the Greek cities of Asia Minor, which stood, as it were, on the battle-line, and were always engaged in a struggle with Oriental powers. There was a vast settlement of Greek colonies along the eastern shore of the Archipelago, which had this question perpetually before them: Shall we remain Hellenic or become Oriental? Shall our Helen be Greek or Trojan? Throughout the history of Greece this same problem runs, with deep, heroic heart-beats: How shall we free

Greeks restore to liberty our enslaved brothers in Asia? This enfranchisement of the Asiatic Greek was the object of the Athenian League, the ambition of Agesilaus, the pretext of Alexander. Well may it be said that the first thing in Greek legend, the last thing in Greek history, is this story of Helen.

Much, indeed, she meant to the Greek cities of Asia Minor, where the Trojan battle was perpetually fought over anew; still she has a far wider, in fact, a universal meaning. The great sacred word connected with her name is restoration; she must be restored to country and family—that is, to a true, institutional life out of that ambiguous Trojan condition. One may well see in this fact a hint of the redemption of the woman from her Oriental state, and of her elevation into a worthy life in the family, which belongs to the West. Nor is the hint of morality left out, which is the subjection of the sensuous nature of man to the rational; wherein Helen's career shows both the error and the correction. Paris must perish, Troy must be destroyed; both have violated the great moral injunction. Finally, after the Trojan struggle, Helen became the image of the new world, which sprang from it, in which the senses are filled with the spiritual life of Greece, and represent the same; it is the realm of beauty in which Helen is the ideal of Art, which embodies the preceding principles and conflicts of Greek existence to the vision. This new European world of Institutions, Morals, and Art is the deep-hidden foundation of Helen's story, which foundation we must excavate in thought and bring to sunlight, like the buried walls of Troy and Mycenæ, if we are truly to comprehend the matter.

Assuredly it would be the greatest absurdity to sacrifice thousands of human beings for one merely, unless that one in some way represented what was truest and best in the thousands. Many wives, we may suppose, lost their all for that one wife Helen. But she is what they all are; the loss of her is the loss of every Greek woman, and man too. Her restoration is their restoration: so the Greeks feel throughout this poem; they must take Troy and restore Helen, else they are not Greeks. Prosaic modern peoples fight for their flag; thus they too have their symbol for which they die. But the Greek flag was Helen, most beautiful of symbols—indeed, just the symbol of beauty. We also

stake thousands of lives for the life of one citizen who has been wronged by a foreign nation. In the one we have to see the all; if not see, then feel it in the most practical sort of manner.

Helen, therefore, is the image of Hellenic spirit, of all that Greece means to mankind and to itself. She is the soul of the Greek world, and the form of it too; both in her are blended into one supreme beautiful vision of the ideal. Her restoration is, consequently, the most important of terrestrial matters; it means civilization, freedom, the home; it means, too, Art, which now springs into existence in every direction—in sculpture, painting, poetry; springs just out of this *Iliad*, and the return of Helen which is the theme of it. But we must turn to the *Odyssey* for the outcome; there we see Helen restored; hence in this, as well as in many other respects, it is the complement of the *Iliad*. Most deeply we must make this feeling ours; if Helen had not been restored, there could have been no Homer, no Homeric theme of song, no Homeric soul to sing; indeed, no Greek world.

So our Aryan race upon the plain of Troy has split again as it once split in the highlands of Armenia, long antecedent to History, upon this same question, Orient or Occident, in its earliest germ. The one party stayed behind in the Orient, became Oriental, and there they are yet; the other party set their face toward the West, advanced slowly to the boundary of the seas, doubtless with many wanderings, dissensions, and separations. But this Western party, or a fragment of it, has a second great separation, far more important than the first, and far more decisive; at the crossing into Europe it is our Hellenic branch which appears and divides within itself; it too has to settle anew that primeval question, Orient or Occident, right on the line of the transition into the West. This transition is a physical one, but also a spiritual one, which is the chief fact of it; it has, moreover, got a voice now, most wonderful, melodious, sounding down to this day. That first struggle in the heart of Asia remained inarticulate, or at most a wild, confused murmur of dim vocables; but this second struggle on the borderland bursts into splendid articulation of heroic song, as the separation is made forever from the Asiatic world. Listen to the *Iliad* singing the first and clearest note of the conflict which lasted while Greece lasted,

lasts to this day. Paris of legend, Xerxes of history, came against the West; Agamemnon of legend, Alexander of history, went against the East; it is all one theme, making a world-epos, one in Universal History, one in the human heart. Here, as elsewhere, the heart-beat and the world-beat make one music, heard still in all true poetry, heard most distinctly, if not most profoundly, in this earliest Book of Literature.

III. Such is the great external conflict, as we may call it, the parties to which are the Greeks and Trojans. But this outer struggle strikes into the heart of each contending host, and there becomes an internal conflict; each side thus finds within itself a separation into two parties. In Troy we catch repeated glimpses of the two sides, in wrangling and bitter opposition; in the Greek camp the strife within stands quite on a par with the fighting without. Both are alike; in both there is the same source of trouble; the grand external conflict is transformed to an internal one, as is certain to happen in a time of war; passing into each of the opposing sides, it becomes the moving principle of all their factions and partisanship. Thus the great struggle, which is the soul of the war, renews itself in each of the opposing forces, imaging itself in inner dissension as well as in outer war. This double scission we may trace a little in detail.

First, let us consider the Trojans. At once we see them to be divided into two parties, vehement, even rancorous, which may be called the peace party and the war party. They meet repeatedly and deliberate; the vital question is: Shall Helen be restored? The Trojans are by no means a unit upon the matter; the one side will keep the beautiful woman, will sunder wife from husband, will defy the Greeks and their principle; this is the war party, headed by Paris, connived at, if not supported by Priam, the king; it is clearly the controlling influence in Troy. They are opposed by the peace party, led by Hector and Antenor, who favor the surrender of Helen to the Greeks, and thus hope to get rid of the war. But this party does not, and cannot prevail; it is the Greek element in Troy, really maintaining a Greek view against the oriental tendency of the Trojans. Thus we behold an inner reflection of the great external conflict within the walls, in fact, within the hearts of the hostile people; each Trojan man, to whichever party he belongs, must have some dim struggle in him-

self, whereof the outer real picture is the combat of heroes before the gates of the city. The wrong of Helen has gone within, and there makes a war also—a war in every Trojan heart.

We may next turn to the internal troubles of the Greeks, who are also divided into two parties. They are all agreed that Helen must be restored by ten years' war if need be; but a new difference has arisen peculiar to the Hellenic character. The Heroic Individual, Achilles, has been dishonored by the man in power, the supreme commander, Agamemnon; heroism is distained by authority. What can heroism do but retire in anger from all participation in combat, and let the Greeks see what they are without their hero? This scission gives the theme of the *Iliad*, which is the wrath of Achilles; out of such material the poem can be made, out of the wrath of the best man, which, indeed, must be overcome before Troy or any other city can be taken. That is, the Hero, the Great Man, must be conciliated and restored to his place of supreme honor; he is altogether the stoutest link in the whole chain of the Greek enterprise; indeed, his is always the first place in the World's History. So, in this earliest literary book, there must spring up the question about the significance of the Hero; with him dishonored it is not worth while to restore Helen, not worth while for Greece to be. Such is the decree of Zeus the Highest, written in red letters of battle: first, give back honor due to the heroic man, then you can recover the beautiful woman through his heroism; but what is the value of possessing her with him degraded?

The cause of Achilles is, therefore, at bottom, the cause of Helen; he, the first of Greek men, striving to restore the first of Greek women, is injured in his honor by a wanton act of authority; the wrong done by the Trojans to the woman now finds its parallel in the wrong done by the Greeks to the man. Indeed, this injury goes to the very heart of the conflict; the special form of the wrong, the taking of Briseis, is like in character to the taking of Helen; the Greek commander is thus seen to commit the very offence for which he and his Greek armament are seeking to punish the Trojans. In his own deed must be read his penalty; the Greek cause, too, is now at war with itself, which is just the ground of this internal strife; the Captain makes all the Greeks sharers to a degree in the wrong which they have come to avenge.

Such is the inner contradiction which has arisen in the Greek camp, and which Zeus must eliminate before Helen can be saved, being at complete variance with her restoration. This dissonance, which lies deep in the Greek soul, must be brought back to harmony; the instrumentality is the wrath of Achilles, the theme of the poem; this wrath, also, is a dissonance which must be got rid of, when the discordant Greeks, made harmonious once more, will have victory.

In such manner we behold that first great dualism repeating itself, perpetuating itself in deeds on both sides, imaging itself in all hearts, Greek and Trojan. The Rape of Helen was that which originated the external war between Greeks and Trojans; it divided the Trojans into two hostile parties; it was the same cause essentially which produced the quarrel in the Greek camp between Achilles and Agamemnon. The conflict is, indeed, in every soul on both sides; it is the mighty dissonance of the age, which it is just the duty of these valiant Greek warriors to harmonize, internally as well as externally. It is the problem of the whole Hellenic people; the story of Helen is the representation of it; each Greek before Troy is, in reality, fighting this dualism in himself, in his own side, in his race. A double, indeed a triple conflict, therefore; all phases of which we see come out with intense glow in the grand embodiment of the nation, the Hero Achilles.

IV. The inner Greek scission has been mentioned: namely, the quarrel between the two leading men; it is this which produces the *Iliad* with its special theme and its special line of events as distinguished from the entire Trojan War, whereof the poem occupies but a few days. This inner scission must be healed, then the external conflict will end in the fall of Troy; the Greek Hero will lay aside his wrath and be reconciled with his own people; then he will slay the Trojan Hero, after which there will follow a second reconciliation, now with the enemy. But ere all these things transpire there is to be a grand experience, which the world may well ponder. The Greek people are to wrestle with this problem: Can we do without our Hero and take Troy? No, we cannot, is the thousandfold answer echoing from many fierce battles on the Trojan plain; we cannot do without our Achilles; there can be no real conquest of Troy unless he be present and in honor. Such is the one side of this experience, bitter, sanguinary,

spelling out in blood its deep lesson to mortal men. But the other side is not wanting; the Hero is to find out somewhat too. Can he do without his people, without his cause in which he can be heroic? By no means; he is Hero only as he takes his place and fights in the desperate front rank of battle; out of his place, sulking in his tent, he is not Hero, in fact is a nobody; much less than a mediocre man who still fights, though in mediocre fashion. Thus even the Hero reduces himself with great celerity to zero.

But he is the person upon whom the eye rests; the central figure of the poem is this Heroic Man, who is to teach so much and to be taught so much. The problem of Individuality it may be called; each human being may see himself in this portraiture; he too must find out that only as he takes his place in the ranks and fights is he anything in the world; for, if he persists in getting along without the world, the world will persist in getting along without him. It is better to be reconciled, far better; take the example of Achilles, the toughest, most unyielding granitic character that was ever portrayed; still he yielded, yielded twice, to the astonishment, perhaps, but certainly to the deep edification of all mankind. This, then, is the theme which calls the *Iliad* into being: the Heroic Individual in his double Wrath and double Reconciliation.

Therewith the entire organism of the poem is suggested, to which we may now give a little study. The first Wrath and Reconciliation embraces what was above called the internal conflict of the Greek army, the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles, till the two are reconciled (Books 1-19). The Hero is dishonored by having his prize in war taken from him, his beloved prize, the maid Briseis, whom he intended to make his wedded wife, equal in rank with Helen. In such manner is his heroic personality disgraced; wrath is his response to the insult, and not till he sees that his wrath destroys his heroship, and that he, the Great Man, is no longer reflected in the deeds of the Greeks, does he cease from anger, changing internally, and restoring his broken relations with his people. Such is the first grand division of the *Iliad*, of which we must clearly make two subdivisions if we would see the whole poem in its organic structure. These subdivisions we may call Achilles in the Right (Books 1-9) and Achilles in the

Wrong (Books 10–19), designating them from the attitude of the Hero towards his people.

The first subdivision shows Achilles as the injured one, and the attempt of the Greeks to get along without him, their best man. They begin the battle afresh; they bring forward all the lesser men, who are the valiant warriors after Achilles; they speak boldly and fight bravely. But it is of no avail; their very soul has gone out of them in the absence of their Hero; him they must bring back at all hazards. Accordingly, the embassy is sent to the wrathful chieftain, ample restitution is offered, and the grand apology; he is fully acknowledged Hero. Thus honor is satisfied, but, in spite of everything, there remains the wrath, the heroic wrath, but now empty, devoid of all just ground. Henceforward he is the implacable sore-head; he refuses to fit himself into the order of the world by being reconciled with authority, for even the Gods, as Phœnix says, are placable.

Here our second subdivision of this First Part begins, showing Achilles in the wrong, for his right is now turned to a wrong. He permits the great Hellenic cause, of which he is the Hero, to be defeated; he, the grand protector of his friends, allows those friends to perish, whereof the culmination is reached in the death of Patroclus, his dearest friend. It is clear that thus he is no longer the Hero; his honor has turned to dishonor; wrath, seeking to vindicate the worth of the individual, has destroyed it. Then comes his insight into the bitter truth of his conduct, followed by passionate repentance; he is now ready for reconciliation with the Greeks and Agamemnon. Such is the mighty change in the Hero; an internal change it is, and means a transformation of the man, indicating what true heroism is; there is an enemy within more defiant than any enemy without, and there is here a conquest greater than that of Troy—the conquest of himself. Hector was easily vanquished by Achilles, but Achilles vanquished by Achilles is the grandest spectacle of the *Iliad*; it is the turning-point of the poem; henceforth we may pronounce him a new man. Yet not complete; another Wrath rises within him, which must also be reconciled; it now turns against the Trojans, passing from the internal to the external enemy.

This introduces us to the Second Wrath and Reconciliation of the Hero, constituting the second grand division of the *Iliad*. It

is the Trojans who have brought disgrace and sorrow upon him through the loss of his friends. He used Hector and Troy as the instruments of his First Wrath; but his new insight is that such a course ends in undoing himself. Achilles brought calamity upon the Greeks for the sake of honor, but just this calamity has in a deeper sense come home to him also as the chief Greek man, and has dishonored him with a new dishonor. This second dishonor calls forth a second wrath; not yet has he risen above anger into the realm of harmony. So he has learned much, but is now to learn more still; true to his character, he will march forth against the foe, as he previously withdrew to his tent. Again, too, he carries his just wrath against an external enemy into the realms of wrong; he may kill Hector, but not maltreat his dead body; thus he violates the ordinance of the Gods, at least of Zeus the Highest, who is ultimately over both Greeks and Trojans. This he is to see; it is his second great insight and conquest of implacable wrath.

So we have the Second Reconciliation, not with the Greek, but with the Trojan; a deeper note seems touched therein than in the First Reconciliation. Achilles must destroy the destroyer of his friend and of his people; then his honor is satisfied, and he is again the supreme Hero when Hector is slain. He has now reached the culmination of his fighting; he has brought Hector to lie in death with Patroclus, the friend. Still he rages; it is, however, an empty rage, being against a corpse, which can be no longer a foe; it is a wrath without reason, like that continued wrath after the Embassy, whereby honor turned to dishonor. But he changes a second time within, and is placable towards the foe; it is his highest harmony to place himself in accord with the Gods, who decree the restoration of Hector's body. It is the last and supreme deed of the Hero, a new self-conquest, wherewith the *Iliad* ends.

But the war is not ended, nor can it end at such a point. Achilles cannot take Troy; the principle of the great conflict is not his so much as his own heroic individuality. He can bring matters to the highest point of heroism, he can destroy the heroic man of the enemy, but those walls before him he cannot scale; the Trojan War, involving the principle of Orient against Occident, he cannot end. Such is the limit of the Hero. But that

final scene is surpassingly beautiful, great, tender; the two dead warriors, Greek and Trojan, are lying in the equality of death; never again will they raise hand against one another, or against any foe; they are reconciled by the last umpire of all struggle; Hector and Patroclus, enemies in life, receive in death equal treatment from the overruling Gods, and Achilles, in heart and in act, accepts their decree, and passes out of our view forever.

In such manner our poem seizes the most transcendent of all earthly relations, that between the Hero and his people; each tries to do without the other. Behold the results. It is an ever-recurring theme of the World's History; fateful is the state which has not its Hero in its ranks; wretched, utterly worthless, is the Hero displaced from his work. His people must give him unstinted honor, such is their greatest glory; but he must do his duty; he must be reconciled both with friend and foe in the end. He has to learn to come down from his lofty selfhood, and to be subordinated to his country and to the Gods; only in this self-surrender does he truly become a hero, the embodiment of the Divine on earth. For why does he exist, the Heroic Individual? To be the terrestrial image of the Highest—to save his people and to honor the Gods; thus, the mighty individual is brought under what is universal, and reaches his true destiny. Such is the experience of Achilles; he has to find out that he, the Hero, does not belong to himself; if, in his wrath, he builds up a wall around himself to exclude his people, he has made a gigantic fortress, but he is the prisoner, and in the worst sort of captivity. He has to learn that his heroship is not his absolute possession, not his personal chattel against all the world; it has no being except in its own sacrifice. On the other hand, the people, too, have their lesson; they think that they can do without him, disregarding or forgetting him; they must be brought back to a new reverence for him, by war, defeat, by ten thousand scourges plied upon their recreant backs by the unseen avengers, guardians of Heroic Men.

But not merely in the greatest world-historical affairs do we note the perennial existence of this problem of Achilles; it is seen in the smallest matters of daily life, wherever men are associated together. Every person has in him something of the Hero, or wish to be Hero, is an Achilles in his own little realm; usually, too, his heroship is not appreciated, and he withdraws in

wrath from this circle or that enterprise, saying secretly or openly to those remaining: You will see what you are without me. Still the heavens fall not, the sun returns in glory, and the world moves on without apparent disturbance; nay, the little circle, or the little enterprise, tiniest of sublunary things, may find another hero. Thus the lesson reaches down to the humblest—a burning but healthful experience. The problem of the individual it was called above, because it seems to be connected with the very nature of individuality; every human being must settle it wisely or unwisely, making his life noble or wretched, the question being: How shall I, this separate, independent piece of free agency, sensitiveness, and self-sufficiency, with a world in me all my own, fit into the universal order of things? Not assuredly by withdrawal, by self-exclusion; the microcosm must be made to link into the macrocosm; that is just your life-duty. The very strength of the individuality makes the character mighty, and the reconciliation deep; an indifferent person has little to yield and little to receive. It is the great man alone who can make a great mistake; a small man is able to make only a small mistake. The recovery of the great man from error is great in proportion, and he becomes the Hero; still, the humblest man has his Iliad, in which there is lived, if not recorded, his Wrath and, it is to be hoped, his Reconciliation. Wonderful is the work of the old poet who has taken just this character for his Hero, which must image men while men last; an eternal, never-wearying theme, co-terminous with the very existence of the Individual.

The first change of Achilles within, casting away his wrath, is great; perhaps even greater is the second change, when he takes the Trojan enemy into the fold of reconciliation, though it be but temporary. For he sees that he violates the Gods, who are above both Greeks and Trojans, when he outrages the dead form of Hector; he assails the instinctive feeling of humanity where there is no need, for the conflict with an enemy ceases with death, and is reconciled. Thus both sides unite in Zeus; the Hero leads the way, and bridges the last and deepest chasm; there is the unity of Olympus above, there is the unity of Greeks and Trojans below, both of which are again one unity. Such is the final solution and harmony of the conflict portrayed in the poem; we may truly say that the unity of the *Iliad* is its very soul.

V. The characters of the *Iliad* constitute a living gallery of human beings, whose existence we never question, whose identity we recognize as distinctly as that of our next neighbor. We may say that the poem gives the first great lesson in characterization; it is not an abstraction, but a living deed—the whole of it, from beginning to end. To image men afresh, not in outward shape, but in their inward soul, is a great idea, the greatest in Literature, perhaps; it is a new creation of man to a degree, showing him spiritually transparent to all eyes that can see. Such a feat performed successfully makes the essence of a Literary Book, revealing the inner springs of human conduct as they break forth into action. The idea of character in its true development seems to have been given to us by Homer; from this *Iliad* we may build a world, and fill it with typical men, such as must always be in every phase of society. In this, as in other mentionable cases, Literature has followed in the ancient Homeric path; indeed, it must remain in the same, to be at all.

The Poet has clearly the fundamental distinction into men of thought and men of action; those best in the council, and those best in the field. Indeed, according to his conception, the complete man unites the two qualities, wisdom and the deed. He has thus seen and drawn that deepest line of the human soul between Intelligence and Will, on one side or other of which all character fluctuates. In the Trojan as well as Greek camp we notice both kinds of men, carefully classified; the wise man is distinct from the man of deeds, yet not wholly distinct; each shares in the gift of the other, though one trait predominates; Homer produces living realities of men, not abstract phantasms.

Our first question is, Can we find any common principle upon which to string these characters so that we may behold the spiritual bond which unites them? For some such unity we must search, as being that which holds Trojans or Greeks together, and makes a common cause possible. We shall find this fundamental ground of character in the principle about which the two parties collide, and for which they offer their lives. The conflict enters every soul and forms the basis of its action. In each human breast is a picture of the universal struggle, with fainter or intenser colors; the relation of the man to that struggle makes him what he is in such trying periods.

If we first turn to the Trojans we find them dividing upon the restoration of Helen, the source of the war; their characters may be ranged according to the ethical principle involved in that act. We may select three typical persons. Hector may be called the Greek in Troy; he favors the return of Helen, and his character corresponds to such a view. He is the domestic man first, true to one wife, with the deepest instinct of the Family; he appears as father and husband in the most tender of human relations. Very beautiful is this phase of Hector, winning for him all hearts; he clearly ranges himself on the side of the Greeks in regard to the justice of their claim; he is the ethical man in Troy. But his country is assailed; he, the Hero, must defend it, though he believes it to be in the wrong, and has the gloomiest forebodings for its fate in consequence. Such is the dissonance in Hector; still he remains loyal, in every way noble, faithfully subordinating family to country. Paris, on the other hand, is the Oriental man in Troy, the favorite of Venus, the abductor of Helen; sensual, unheroic, the man who cannot sacrifice his passion for the true life either of the family or the country. He is thus made the contrast to his brother Hector. Priam, the ruler, father of the two differentiated sons, is a sort of compromise between them; he will not restore Helen, nor does he exactly refuse; on the whole, his leaning seems to be to the side of Paris. His domestic relation, too, is a sort of barbarous compromise between East and West, between polygamy and monogamy, with a tendency to the former. He has a family, yet it borders upon a harem; not based upon violence, yet consistent with Oriental notions.

Troy has not the internal Greek problem which springs from the Heroic Individual, nor could it well have, with its face turned towards the East. In the person of Hector, both hero and authority are combined, which fact gives him his prominence in the poem, since he does more fighting than Achilles. Still, he is not its hero by any means, as some have said; he has not the grand problem of Achilles which makes the poem. The Heroic Individual must be seen wrestling with authority, the outcome of such a struggle must be shown for both sides, then the poem means something for the Greek, for the world. Hector has no such difficulty, because he has no such towering strength in him, no such unbending heart of oak; his pattern is evidently too

small for such a conflict. In comparison, he is a sweet, amiable man whom we admire, and we regret that inner dissonance which comes from having to defend a country whose cause he believes to be wrong.

We may now glance at the Greek characters; in like manner we shall find them dividing upon the line of their essential principle: heroship in conflict with authority. Such is the internal problem for all the Greeks, not for the one merely, being ingrown into their whole spiritual existence. For upon the Trojan problem, the restoration of Helen, they are a unit; just that is the object of their expedition against Troy, and is the unquestioned ground of their character. Hence domestic life does not need to appear in the Greek camp, being wholly presupposed by the purpose of the enterprise. Even the captive woman Briseis is to be elevated into an ethical life in the family by the Greek Hero who captured her, thus showing the destiny of the captive woman also is to become the wife. We have already spoken sufficiently of Achilles, as one side of this inner Greek conflict. Ajax and Diomed seem to have his possibilities of character; they are the heroes next to him, great warriors, men of action, with strong individualities. They still cling to authority, though we see that they too might fall off; the germ of the same trouble is in them. On the other hand, the wise men of the Greeks, Ulysses and Nestor, stand by Agamemnon, the leader, without faltering, though they reprove his rash act; he must be sustained against the Hero, for the sake of the all-governing principle at stake in the war; such is the true mark of wisdom: if they must choose, they prefer the victory of their cause to the honor of the individual.

Such are the main lines of distinction among the men on both sides; but the poem has a very strong feminine element, which must also be considered. Troy alone can have female characters of any significance; in it they can be at home, and in it is their problem. Troy retains Helen, and thus disrupts domestic life, the deepest principle of woman; just this is the conflict, or one phase of it, between Trojans and Greeks, for the latter are seeking her restoration, while the former are divided upon the matter. Three female characters will be found in the city who express the various shades of the domestic relation of woman as it plays into

the great conflict between East and West. Andromache, spouse of Hector, corresponds to her husband; she is the Greek wife in Troy—the faithful, devoted Greek wife; she is quite absorbed in her family ties; country lies beyond her vision. Hecuba is the Oriental wife and mother, or indicates that tendency; certainly she seems in no protest with her polygamous household. The favorite wife of the harem, perhaps the only one in the old age of Priam, we may see in her a hint of what the Trojan War meant for the redemption of woman as well as of man. Thirdly, there is Helen, the alienated Greek wife, most interesting of all of her sex; deeply fallen, but now repentant, full of self-reproach, longing to return out of her Trojan condition to her Greek domestic life. This longing of their most beautiful woman the Greeks must make real, such is their greatest enterprise; indeed, with a little deeper glance, we can see it to be their whole destiny, the grand sum of their spiritual endeavor. In Troy we behold her now, in a state of scission, inner and outer; separated physically and morally from her own, yet sighing for restoration. It has been seen how she represents the entire struggle; the grand external war between Greek and Trojan is a war within her, burnt into her very soul, tearing her life into bleeding shreds. Yet her strongest aspiration is, to be redeemed from her fallen lot, which redemption the Greeks must accomplish, for it is just that which makes them Greeks.

VI. But there must be not merely the return of the woman, but also of the man, from Troy and from the Trojan alienation. This brings us to the last grand scission of our Homeric theme, the scission into two poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. There are, then, two books upon the Trojan occurrence; this dual fact and its import are to be noted and studied. Troy is not taken at the end of the *Iliad*, which sings of the wrath of the Hero; the wrong which caused the war remains; Helen is not restored, though her restoration is everywhere implied. In the second poem, the *Odyssey*, she appears in her old Spartan home, the reinstated wife and queen. But her life and return cannot be made the theme of this second poem, which must take up a new theme, yet in a harmonious completeness with the first; our new, yet accordant theme, is the restoration of the man to family and country. It is the story of the wise Ulysses, of his many wanderings, physical and spiritual,

till he returns to peace and to his home. The whole book is one of the deepest looks into the abysses of human existence and its tireless movement; struggle, desperate, long-continued, ending in victory which brings forth a new struggle which ends again in victory. The question is: How can the man who takes Troy, or performs other great action through his intelligence, be restored through intelligence from the alienation which is born of his very deed? This present alienation is of the profoundest; the Trojan War has caused the Greek Heroes to live separated from family and state for so many years; it is not an easy matter to get back, the separation having gone so deeply into their lives and their souls.

But the work must be done, and that, too, by the wisest Greek, wherein he is to give the last and highest manifestation of wisdom, the final, fairest bloom of the Homeric world. Ulysses is the man whose skill is the chief instrumentality in taking Troy and restoring Helen; now he has the same problem of restoration for himself—which he proceeds to solve, must solve, in his spiritual strength. No army will help him, no thousand ships, no one hundred thousand heroes; nought can help him but his own mighty, much-enduring heart. He is, therefore, the ethical hero, and the intellectual one too; greater than even Achilles, who could not take Troy and release the beautiful woman, whose mission ends with killing Hector, who has not the gift of wisdom, nor the ethical purpose of the whole war so much as the idea of personal honor. We shall not disparage Achilles, but put him in his place; it is Ulysses who first enters the Trojan walls, through intelligence, and then returns to his wife, prudent Penelope. Both are the deeds of wisdom; the capture of the hostile city is a great action, but the second conquest, which implies self-restoration, is a far greater.

It will be further observed that the primitive dualism of the human mind, its diremption into Will and Intelligence, is now seen to have taken on an outward form in two poems, and in their two heroes. The one of the poems is action, the other wisdom. The one sings of the Wrath of the Heroic Man and his reconciliation through honor, the other sings of the Wise Man, returning to an institutional life and mental harmony after the great Trojan separation. This last is a sea-voyage, boisterous, full of tempests and hostility of the Gods; a soul-voyage, too, we must never forget through our absorption in the external incidents. Both poems

end in reconciliation, as they must, but they are in other respects different, if not opposite. The reconciliation of Wrath in personal honor is personal, but the reconciliation of man with institutions after his lapse is the highest harmony of life, is universal. Still, we must not leave out of mind that last act of Achilles, placing himself in unity with Zeus, the supreme ruler; yet even thus his personal feelings must be touched through the prayers of the aged Priam. But Ulysses is the Achilles who finds his honor in the ethical world, whose whole aspiration and endeavor are for a return to it, who has seen beyond the limits of the individual life into the universal one. The first is the young Hero, the second is the older one. Achilles is fated to die early with work undone, Ulysses lives to the end and completes his work; in fact, he is the completion of Achilles's life.

VII. From this Lower World we now pass to the Upper World, that of the Gods, which is the primal principle controlling Homer's Universe; the Divine is perennially over it and starts it into being. Homer has faith in the Gods, a joyous, buoyant faith, yet deeply genuine; he insists upon the overruling providence in the world, but he does not therein destroy the freedom of the individual, if he be read aright. The deities are in the man as well as outside of the man. Let it never be forgotten that these two sides, so strongly antagonistic in the upper currents of human action, are at bottom in unity; the Homeric poems rest upon this ultimate foundation, and the poetic vision is that which beholds the two streams, terrestrial and celestial, flowing harmoniously together. The Divine is the deepest, strongest instinct of the Poet; he dwells often on this lower earth, but he seems to dwell here unwillingly; he is never so happy, so free, so transcendently poetic as when he rises in one grand flight to Olympus, and tells what is going on there. In the company of the Gods he is always at his best; he often gets dull when he has to describe the combats of mortals; soon he throws off his mundane chains and mounts to the society of his deities, whereby his song seems to flow at once into a new life and vigor. In this upper realm he sees that all human action is governed by divine action; yet he sees, too, that man must be free and in harmony with the Gods.

We shall notice in the Upper World quite the same manifesta-

tions as in the Lower ; there is the same separation, the same unity—indeed, the same social and political organization. For the terrestrial is but the adumbration of the divine, the reflection of the clear heavens above in the earthly waters below. Homer feels in every throb of his heart, he shows in every line of his work, that this real world of ours, this appearance of things to our senses, is but the bearer of a divine impress ; without such impress it has no significance, would indeed fall into chaos. The Divine stamps its image upon the waxen material of Time ; this is what he is forever recalling to us by his interventions of the Gods in temporal matters, as if he were saying : Only in so far as thou makest thyself the agent of divinity, and becomest godlike thyself, hast thou, O Hero ! truly significance in the Trojan or any war.

In the Upper World we shall find, therefore, quite the same scissions as in the Lower ; we have already observed that this Lower World gets its division and organization from above, from the hands of the Gods. The first division here is into the upper God, Zeus the Highest, who has supreme authority, as against the lower Gods, who have to be subordinated. So we see in Olympus a phase of that same disruption which we noticed below on Earth. Still further these inferior Gods are divided among themselves into two parties, just upon the merits of the Trojan conflict, as the people in the Lower World are divided into Greeks and Trojans upon the same issue. Thus our grand theme, the struggle between Orient and Occident, is truly Olympian, divine ; each side of the conflict finds its representatives among the Gods ; the dualism of the time is found both on earth and in heaven.

Zeus is the supreme God, and the divine movement of the *Iliad* turns upon his three chief attitudes towards the struggle. First, he is for the Hero against the Greeks, who, according to his decree, must reconcile their Great Man before they can win. Secondly, he is for the Greeks, when the Hero is reconciled, against the Trojans ; he is the highest embodiment of the Greek principle in its conflict with the East. Thirdly, he is for the unity of the Greeks and the Trojans against the Hero when the latter collides with the Providence of the poem by insulting the fallen enemy, and must be subordinated. Achilles yields, the Hero and the God are then in accord ; this is the final and highest reconciliation. Thus, we see that there is a movement in Zeus, from his

favoring the Heroic Individual at first, till his final subordination of the latter. He is the grand movement of the world in its relation to the activity of the man; the movement of history, or of its idea, in contrast with individual development seen in Achilles.

It was said that Zeus is the supreme divinity, but in one phase this statement has been at times questioned. The issue may be put in this form: Does the Zeus of the *Iliad* control, or is he controlled by Fate? We cannot now enter upon the discussion of this subject, which seems to have divided the students of the poet from the beginning. As in all such questions, there is the superficial view, which sees the dualism, hears the discord; it may persist in dwelling upon these dissonances, of which no one doubts the existence. But there is the deeper view, which sees the reconciliation; our object is to attain this, if it be attainable. The emphatic answer may be given; there is always in Homer, as the central, moving principle, a personal God—Zeus; on the surface of the events, and on the surface of the language, Fate introduces sometimes a contradiction more or less grave, which, however, is swallowed up in the general harmony. Assuredly an impersonal Destiny does not rule the Homeric poems; consciously or unconsciously in the mind of the poet, a self-active personality is always behind them. The doubtful expressions upon this point, quite frequent if torn from their connection, must be interpreted, in view of the total conception of the movement of the poem; thus, Fate will be seen not only to vanish as the supreme Homeric principle, but in reality to confirm divine as well as human freedom as the spiritual foundation of Homer's work.

The character of Zeus has given great difficulty in its moral aspects. How could he, the supreme God, bearer of all that is highest in the Greek world, be endowed with such monstrous passions? How could such a being find worship among men? But we must consider that the Greek conceived of his divinity as human; to him the God was not the abstraction of some virtue or power, but an actual man in flesh and blood; moreover, a total man, with the sensuous as well as the spiritual element. The mightier the God, the mightier the passions; indeed, Zeus was magnified in his lower nature in proportion to his higher nature; if he had supreme power and intelligence, he had supreme senses

to correspond. He had to be a colossal lover, and hater too, just as he was the God of colossal might and mind. Mentally and physically there must be a correspondence; so he is a reality, not a shadowy ideal simply. Thus, the Divine was manifested in a sensuous form, which is the Greek standpoint.

VIII. We may now turn to the Inferior Gods, who are divided among themselves, and take sides in this Trojan conflict. Thus, they become finite, struggling persons, such as we saw below in the plains of Troy among mortals. We ask, Why this doubling of the strife? why thrust it into the Upper World when there is a Lower World given over to it entirely? This is the grand peculiarity of Homer; he furnishes a double reflection of the struggle. The Gods, too, make war; they stand for the ideal forms of the principles in collision; they signify that the conflict below on earth is a spiritual conflict; it is not a mere test of brawn, not a wild, barbarous rage of fighting mortals, seeking to devour one another like beasts of the forest. Driving the arms of the heroes is an unseen principle; it, too, must have its representation apart from the visible world of combat before Troy; it is the higher, stronger; without it the heroes would be little or nothing. This spiritual realm Homer makes the abode of the Gods, above the mortal contestants yet controlling them; he always insists upon this divine element in human affairs, which he organizes as a distinct world.

But there is a spiritual principle on both sides: there is the Greek and the Trojan principle; hence the Gods, the representatives and executors of the spiritual world, divide into two contending parties on Olympus. Troy has its right, so has Greece; the dualism is reflected in divine partisans. In the earlier portions of the *Iliad* they confine themselves to deliberating with one another, and to aiding their favorite mortals; but in the latter parts of the poem they enter the conflict and fight one another. Thus the poet never lets us forget that there is a spiritual principle at work in this Trojan struggle, always hovering above it and determining it. What that principle is, has already been unfolded; ours is the modern prosaic way of stating what Homer reveals in a poetic way by means of his divinities. We, too, demand that a war have its principle, and that the historian declare it; Homer introduces an Upper World, just to show the ideal side in the

grand conflict between Orient and Occident. This is his enduring glory, and it is this chiefly which makes his books to be bibles in the Literary Hierarchy; he shows that the worthy human deed is not a capricious, but a divine thing.

The Greek partisans are Juno, Minerva, Neptune, standing in most intimate relation to Zeus, but often in opposition to him. The Trojan partisans are Venus, Mars, Apollo, who manifestly represent the Oriental side of Olympus. Through such strife, through such limitations placed upon one another, the Gods are finite, though at the same time supposed to be infinite. Thus a contradiction arises in the conception of the Gods, of which Homer himself seems to be partially conscious. The finitude of the Divine—that is, the finitude of the Infinite—is a self-contradicting statement which in a naïve way suggests humor; the Gods, so divine, yet so human, have always a tendency to be humorous. They are a blessed company, happy, joyful, loving the laugh; still the poet is a believer, sincere, even pious. The humor of his divinities belongs in the heart of his religion; it is not the laugh of indifference, still less the sneer of skepticism. Nothing gloomy clings to his faith; he can sport with his Gods; the happy man can worship earnestly and at the same time smile at his deities. To us it seems an almost impossible state of mind; but the poet venerates the beings with whom he plays; his is a loving devotion, not by any means the sarcasm of the scoffer. The limitations of the Gods, their foibles, weaknesses, he takes as belonging to them; he can throw a touch of humor into his deepest faith, so free he is in his treatment of his Gods, yet so sincere and full of love; indeed, all true humor rests upon love—love of the object about which one is humorous. The unconscious humor of Homer rests upon his love of the Gods; he loves them because they are finite, and become humorous. Like some children, they must not be too perfect; otherwise they cease to be children, or cease to be Gods.

IX. But above all the differences of the Gods is their unity in Zeus, which is the chief fact of Olympus or the Upper World. Zeus is the providence of the poem; he stands over and bridges the two parties among men, the two parties among Gods also; he unifies the Upper and Lower Worlds. All dualism ends at last in him, the Highest; through him the great thought of a

controlling Power, of a world-moving Intelligence, breaks everywhere out of these poems. Between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* there is no difference in this respect; the one supreme deity is above and rules. Yet in another respect we see an important difference. The *Odyssey* has essentially but one grand interference of Zeus, which starts the poem and propels it to the end; he is the beginning; the action of the poem rolls from one fillip of his finger, and keeps rolling. But in the *Iliad* this interference is oft-repeated; it continues to drop into the action from the heavens above all the time. The deeds of this Lower World must be shown to depend directly upon the Upper World and its decrees, which can never be allowed to sink out of view. This distinction between the two poems is almost the distinction between the universal and the special Providence.

This unity in Zeus, lying back of Greek polytheism, has given rise to no little speculation. It has been supposed to be a remnant of the true faith, which, monotheistic at first, was corrupted into a multitudinous idolatry. Thus the Greek religion is considered a faint reflection of that true revelation originally given by God to man, from which the latter has fallen off. A theory quite the reverse has also been given—a theory, not of a fall, but of a rise of man. This takes the Greek polytheism as an intermediate step in the move out of a pantheistic worship of Nature toward monotheism, of which the supremacy of Zeus is the first early appearance.

But these theories need trouble us no further at present; it is sufficient to know that the Poet brings us to a realm above all conflict, where there reigns the divine harmony of the Universe; he is seen to rise out of all dualism on Earth and on Olympus to the oneness of Zeus. Yet not without conflict; the price of Olympian repose is the terrestrial struggle. This supreme unity above is to be brought down into the world below, where it is to abide and take on form in visible things; thus it becomes reality, indeed, the great reality in all earthly matters. What is discordant, it harmonizes; what is wrathful, it reconciles. The world, with all its vast goings and comings, is transformed into an eternally tuneful sphere, into one great piece of music which starts into song of its own accord, and sings itself finally into an *Iliad* whose whole movement is out of dissonance into reconciliation.

Our poem takes as its theme the profoundest conflict of History, that between the East and the West ; it touches the deepest struggle of the human soul, the problem of the Individual ; the world without and the man within are attuned to one note ; both find their ultimate harmony in the common God. In such a strain have the multiplex scissions come to an end.

Homer has, therefore, bridged, in his way, that profoundest of all chasms—the chasm between the Beyond and the Here, between Earth and Olympus ; it seems to be his chief striving to make some path across the enormous gap which separates the Lower and Upper Worlds. It is no easy task for us to-day ; indeed, the sum total of our whole effort runs parallel to Homer in a certain manner. We also seek an unseen Upper World in some form. Can we reach the invisible soul of our time, and make ourselves at home therewith ? Can we stand face to face with that spiritual power which uses Time as its material, and man as its instrument ? No modern book, not even religious book, recognizes more deeply than Homer that this outer world is but wax for the seal stamped by the Gods. Earth and Olympus are indeed twain, but, in the truer meaning, they are one—each is the image of the other, reflecting the discord, yet beneath all discord reflecting the reconciliation.

It was said that this harmony, springing from the conquest of fierce strife and dissonance, becomes a song ; now the man appears who vibrates to this deep attunement of things, and who can make human speech vibrate in accord with the same, giving to words the rapture and the rhythmical swell of an ocean flowing out of tempest to tranquillity. The Poet steps forth with his strains, singing this unity in Zeus as the key-note of his song : a most marvellous, adorable man. His utterance thrills with the secret harmony of the God, harmony now revealed ; all men thrill with him, being transmuted into the movement of his song. Olympus, with its scissions, moves into unity, and we see rise up an organized society of the Gods ; we behold, too, the poem which utters and images the same. The bard is truly the voice of Zeus, the Highest, whose daughters, the Muses, tell him the true word, which he again tells to man. But it is the bard alone who can hear the voice of the Muses, not every man ; indeed, that is just his gift, his genius—to be able to hear the voice of the Muses.

Critics have, indeed, denied the unity of the *Iliad* in manifold

argumentation; they have pointed out its discords, its disagreements, its uncertainties. It has this side; whoever wishes to dwell in it can do so and find much confusion, war, and rumors of war; in fact, he can pertinaciously affirm that nothing else exists in it, except to the eye of the visionary. But the true Homeric faith is in the unity of the poem, its harmony; without such qualities it could never have been a Literary Bible. Reconciliation is its divine word, the word of a Bible; most deep and true is its unity, that of Olympus itself. We must reach up into this one soul of the *Iliad* for its inspiring draughts; much disordered material floats on the surface of it as on the surface of the sun; still, these refractory masses are smelted into one brilliant flowing stream when we once see them touched by the central fires underneath. The genuine Homeric scholar has his creed, which he will repeat, after reading some hostile book, with tenfold emphasis: I believe in the unity of Homer, in the unity of the Upper World, in the unity of the Lower World, in the unity of the two together, and supremely in the unity of the poem which images all these unities.

Thus it will be seen and felt that the poem is one and in accord—its men as well as its Gods; these are harmonious parts of a Whole representing the concord of the divine and the terrestrial; man is transformed to a musical being after all his struggles, since he is in perfect agreement with his divinities. Woe be unto him when he falls out with his Gods, as Hesiod does, deeming providential Zeus to be a jealous tyrant over mankind. Then the happy Homeric unity will be rent asunder, and human life will become tragic; the Upper and the Lower Worlds will be two discordant notes, whose dissonance tears mankind to pieces. The Gods are our enemies; what, then, are we? Such is the Hesiodic man, evidently a fallen soul, in torture; but the Homeric man feels the divine powers to be in tune with himself, nay, to be in truth himself, his own spiritual essence; therefore he utters their harmony.

The poem must consequently have a musical end, not merely in verse, but in spirit. It refuses to conclude in the destruction of the city; that would be a disastrous, discordant end; in reconciliation only can the song cease worthily, although conflict may arise again afterwards. It cannot terminate in the wrath of the Hero, but in his external and internal harmony, in that lull of his soul

when he has reached up and participated in the unity of Zeus, fitting himself into the supreme, world-governing plan. This is the finality and true completion of the hero; his mission is concluded, not in wrath, but in atonement; no further height is by him attainable.

A short synoptical table may aid in keeping before the memory what has been said above, as well as in showing the organism of the poem.

I. Scission into the two worlds, Lower and Upper.

A.—THE LOWER WORLD.

II. Scission of the Lower World into two conflicting nations, Greeks and Trojans.

III. Internal scission in both Greeks and Trojans; each side has two opposing parties.

IV. The internal Greek scission producing the *Iliad*, with its double Wrath and double Reconciliation.

V. Scission of the character of the poem into two sets.

VI. Scission of the Trojan theme into two poems.

B.—THE UPPER WORLD.

VII. Scission of the Upper World into Zeus and the Inferior Gods.

VIII. Scission of the Inferior Gods into two parties, one favoring the Trojans, the other the Greeks.

IX. The unity of all these scissions, both of men and Gods, in Zeus.

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