



Homeric Epics on the Notion of Justice in Ancient Greece's Dark Ages

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Abstract. The concept of time in the early Greek culture was infused with mythological, theological, and historical imagination. The Homeric epics described a straightforward empirical sense of time understanding and life perception, and the Archaic imagination of time perception was primarily found in the two mythological-religious traditions of the Hesiodic and Orphic genealogies, in accordance with the progression from the Homeric to the Archaic periods. Eleusine, the Odyssey's "island of happiness," represents the potential for mortal immortality, which appears to run counter to the theme of "mortal decay" that permeates the Homeric epics. Though Menelaos' status on earth is described in the epic, it appears that it is not the ultimate happiness but rather a memorable grief that will always be with him.

Keywords: Homeric epics · the Odyssey · ancient Greece

1 Introduction

It is difficult to find a totally abstract concept of time in early ancient Greece, just as it is with humans everywhere else in the globe. Only through the original religious practices, social mores, customs, folkways, and mythological narratives can we comprehend the prehistoric memory of time. Some academics contend, however, that ancient Greek mythology has no concept of time outside of the figurative and that the idea of time first appeared in the Hesiodic story of Cronus. If so, how should we interpret the genesis and evolution of the prehistoric Western concept of time? Was there a more literal understanding of time in ancient Greek mythology? What form did it take? How did the ancients conceptualize and represent time?

Homer's two epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Hesiod's two works, the *Genealogy* and the *Work and the Hours*, as well as certain fragments from Russian religion, are among them and serve as important sources for examining how people experienced time at that time. Homer's epic poem doesn't really have a completely temporal idea because there are so few terms in it that describe the concept of time.

2 Literature Review

Most domestic study findings interpret the Homeric epics in a heroic ethical sense, tending to stress the virtues linked with combat. The overall position of international

studies is similar. The bravery of the hero in the face of inevitable death is underlined in Gong Qun's book *The Heroic Ethics in Homer's Epic*. The book "The Heroic Virtues in Homer's Epic" focuses more on the concept of bravery as the main virtue of the hero, and elaborates on the concepts of friendship and honor. The heroes in Homer's epic prioritize honor above all other factors, according to Ma Yongxiang's (2013) analysis [1]. The heroic ethical spirit of the epic is interpreted by Hu, Jian, and Zhao, Jingmei (2012) and Zhang, Lemin (2016), who also maintain the focus on the hero's valor, excellence, and quest for honor [2].

Some domestic experts have also argued for the benefits of flexibility. It is problematic to understand the spirit of the Homeric epics as a glorification of war (so-called glorification), and Liu Lianqing (1984) analyses the anti-war ideology in the Homeric epics and its manifestations, contending that to consider the Homeric period as a period of barbarism exaggerates the differences between Homer and us [3]. People in the Homeric period also had rich emotions, loved deeply, and yearned for harmony and order.

In a different essay, Liu makes the observation that the epic shows the tenacity of early humans by including myths and legends of bravery, as well as the rise of moral conscience in early human civilization by describing the conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans. In addition, Liu Lianqing (1985) makes it clear that researchers have either purposefully or unintentionally ignored the moral consciousness present in the *Iliad*, emphasized the predatory nature of historical conflict, viewed artistic representations of the Homeric epics as the true social history, and exaggerated the differences in people's consciousness between the ancient and modern worlds, "in total disregard of the materials and ideas already provided and presumed."

According to Chen Heng (2002), it is impossible to generalize Greek pre-classical civilization because it was pluralistic and polycentric, including the Homeric age. These investigations offer some evidence in favor of the study of adaptable qualities in the Homeric Hymns. Chen Zhongmei (2008) notes that the Greeks' sense of unity is often overlooked in favor of the exploits of heroes like Achilles. According to Chen's (2009) analysis of numerous *Odyssey* episodes, the epic authors convey universal humanity and blood emotions that are class- and time-neutral [4].

The soft virtue is a crucial indicator for comprehending how ancient Greek ethics evolved. First of all, while the Homeric and Classical Greek eras share a framework for comprehending virtue—the good life, virtue aspires to achieve the good life—there are distinctions in how the ancient Greeks conceptualised the good life in the two eras. The ancient Greeks gradually understood through conflict and tragedy that developing the virtue of flexibility was the moral way to prevent tragedy. The development and tenacity of soft qualities lead to morality, which is a set of ideologies and social standards. As a result, the soft virtue is crucial to the advancement of modern human society. In reality, humans are weak, reliant, and rational animals. Happiness in humans is also flimsy. The growth of humans and the quest of personal satisfaction need the development of flexible virtues. Numerous "atavistic" phenomena in human conduct have been seen in modern human culture. Soft virtue, a valuable ethical resource for creating a human society with a common future, is required for human civilisation. The quality of softness did not reach the domain of thought in the Homeric poems, remaining on the stage of people's

instincts, emotions, and common notions. The virtue of flexibility evolved during the ensuing centuries into a topic for philosophical discussion, a shared belief, and a part of the institutional structure of the ancient Greek city-states. The Homeric Hymns' idea of flexible virtue. The idea of flexible virtue, which appears in Homer's epics, serves as the foundation and overarching framework for classical Greek ethical theory.

2.1 Virtue as the Quality of Achieving Success

The consensus is that the city-state and the individual hero both value success and victory above all else. The city-state must win battles in order to survive and prosper, and heroes' virtues are what allow them to accomplish both the goals of the city-state and the individual hero. As a result, virtue is the quality of excelling, of outperforming others and winning. The word's etymology supports this interpretation of virtue. The word "aretê" is frequently used in Homeric hymns to describe the attributes of the hero. This word is translated into English as excellence, which means excellence, and it relates to the purpose and worth of everything in general. The Iliad describes how the horse represents the good runner and the feet represent the quick runner.

The heroes' function in the city-state is their role in Homeric society, where virtue is correlated with role or function. The warrior king plays the main role, and it is simple to comprehend the virtues that Homer identifies as being exhibited by the warrior king once we recognize that the essential virtues in this context must be those that allow one to triumph in conflict and competition" [5]. Homer's society values qualities including bravery and physical strength, which are connected to the warrior role in battle, on the basis of this concept of functional relevance.

2.2 Personal Heroism

From the viewpoint of the hero's private life, the epic heroes depend on themselves rather than the "state" to defend their families, and the survival of the family's wealth and power depends on the hero. As a result, success, especially in battle, is crucial. The word "agathos" best describes the heroic character; he is a virtuous guy who can defend his family in both battle and peace and who commands respect. Failure entails not just embarrassment but also loss and, in extreme cases, the dissolution of a family; success, however, is rewarded with honor, which includes not only favorable opinions from others but also tangible advantages like battle booty or compensation. Therefore, "a good man can act as Agamemnon did to Achilles, or as the suitor did to the Odysseus, without compromising his moral character or integrity" [6]. T.H. Irwin contends that Achilles' self-centered, apathetic attitude towards other people's lives and wellbeing does not diminish his heroic virtues and that he is still "the best Achilles," but he will lose half of his virtue if he loses the battle and is sold into slavery [7]. Along with bravery, this value criterion also saw coldness, ruthlessness, and cunning as heroic qualities.

2.3 The Homeric System

The common freemen or warriors played a function in the structure of social life in Homeric civilization that could not be disregarded. Although there is substantial controversy among academics both domestically and internationally over the function of

the people assemblies in Homer's day, "At that time, the popular assemblies were by no means optional, and the frequency with which they were convened is evidence of their importance. Agamemnon probably would not have given up his gains without the pressure of the people's assembly" [8]. Therefore, to see Homeric society, which is made up of warriors, as merely competitive is a naive and superficial interpretation of it. The limitations of the people must always apply to the hero in public life, in both times of war and peace.

The epic demonstrates the existence of a Homeric civilization founded on the "power-responsibility" reciprocity custom, where the "ought" imposed by these customs is not only optional but a fundamental component of Homeric society. The "shoulds" imposed by these traditions were not merely optional; rather, they were fundamental components of Homeric society, with authority and accountability serving as its two apexes. In the city-states of Homeric culture, a group of leaders from some of the noble families, known as basileus or kings, presided as the highest authority, with a supreme leader who was notable but unstable. For instance, if the leader made a mistake and disregarded the assembly of the people, his position might be in jeopardy. The accomplishments and contributions made by the Basileus to the Community were what determined their rank, which was justified [9]. When encouraging Glausko to engage in valiant combat, Sarpedon said: "Why do the Lydians provide us special seating, first-rate meat, and ample wine pours? Why do people regard us as though we are gods? We should now lead the Lydians and resolutely advance into the ferocious combat without hesitation" [10]. This demonstrates the authority and accountability of the heroes in Homer's community, who enjoy luxury and glory while being responsible to the community and its members and, as a result, constrained by the community's traditions.

3 Discussion

Legend has it that the epic was first brought to Greece by the Spartan lawmaker Lycurgus, and that it was the Athenian ruler Pisistratus who brought it to Athens and read it at the festival of Athena. Only after this did the poets' oral tradition of the Homeric epics gradually give way to the written writings that have been carried down through the centuries and are the focus of this research. The Iliad, Odyssey, and the surviving poems from Troy's Heroic Poetry Series are among the epics of Homer that have been sung over the years. The Homeric epics depict hazy memories of the Mycenaean civilization of the Bronze Period as well as the social occurrences of the poet's dark age. "When history is recorded for posterity, the time it was written in has some degree of effect." With this, the civilization of ancient Greece was thrown off course. Homer's epics developed during the protracted Dark Ages thanks to the oral tradition's nourishing influence, along with the singers' own adaptations and the reality of succeeding generations, inevitably resulting in a "twin epic of Mycenaean civilization and the Dark Ages."

4 Conclusion

Since the Dark Ages in ancient Greece occurred between the Mycenaean civilization of the ancient Bronze Age, its legal thought was unavoidably influenced by both ages

at the same time. The legal thought of the Dark Ages is primarily known through the descriptions of Homer's epic poems that have been passed down to the present day.

The war in the Homeric Hymns is primarily depicted as a violent rivalry between individuals and groups of people. The conflict in Homer's *Odyssey* is primarily characterised by violent struggle between people, both as individuals and as groups, and by how this unreasonable competition destroys the peaceful existence of humans. Human nature manifests it in this way. The battle in human nature is between flexible human qualities and heroic virtues. The results of this clash between competition and harmony have been. In today's world, there is still a struggle between rivalry and peace, along with all of its negative effects. Both domestic and foreign societies are competitive nowadays. The heroic qualities are typically "individually self-centred" or "collectively self-centred," and they are mainly used to satisfy human aspirations and rivalry. Without a question, desire and rivalry serve as objective catalysts for the advancement of both science and financial wealth. We will continue in the jungle of the weak without the restriction of rivalry and desire, despite our technological and scientific advancement.

It is possible to appreciate both the Homeric idea of justice and the vision of the political system from the texts of the Homeric epics that have survived. The idea of justice among them is unified under the justice of Zeus, which is founded on the divine will and purpose and is slightly differentiated by the fundamental ideas of distributive justice and corrective justice, which exists to address distributive injustice. The justice of Homer's time may appear plain and bloody in comparison to the starry concepts of the classical era, but the concept of Zeus' justice may be seen as a knowledge of justice and law as having divine roots, representing the most fundamental beliefs and desires of the ancient Greeks.

While the description of Achilles' wrath depicts the rising status of the general nobility and the populace, the Homeric view of the political system reflects the decline of strong kingship and the emergence of the Great Migration, which sowed the seeds of democratic ideas in the minds of the populace. The representation of the requirement for the king to be just in order to be respected, as well as the soldiers' open ridicule of the king, demonstrate how the Greek concept of government at this time progressively came to perceive the one-man monarchy as unjust. It can be claimed that this established the precedent for the Greeks of the later city-state era to strongly believe that the law was the will of the people, especially the will of the majority.

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