ULYSSES OR THE CIRCLE OF DESTINY

Ηγουμαι [...] ανορι παιδειαζ μεγιστον μεροζ ειναι περι επεων δεινον ειωαι
(Plato, Protagoras, *338 e)**

We read Homer. We read him in childhood and then we never read him again. Some poets may re-read him, while scholars and Hellenists study him by subjecting his work to a comparative anatomical examination. But the people of olden times used to read him differently. Their entire education was based on Homer's writings, which they learnt by heart, and everything was explained by references to one line or another from *The Iliad* or *The Odyssey*. Here is, for instance, how Heraclitus described the education of the ancient Greeks[2]: "From the earliest age, the child's naive mind is nourished on Homer. [...] We grow older and he is constantly with us [...]. We cannot abandon him without immediately feeling the urge to go back to him; one can say that the contact with him only comes to an end when life does." However, we have generally been left from his epics with just the memory of some extraordinary, beautiful and implausible, mysterious and impenetrable fables, and nothing else. But haven't we lost by confining our interpretation only to what a child's mind and mentality could grasp from the secret core of those immortal verses?

For one thing, Homer's myths were considered the symbols of a reality impossible to describe in common words. Their interpreters thus discovered in the blind poet's writings a physical system (of nature) based on the four elements, a cosmology, an astronomical system, a moral doctrine, a theory of the ancient citadel, a doctrine of the souls and of destiny. It is no surprise then that the Greek's entire education, beginning with early childhood, should have been based on learning Homer[3]. F. Buffière called his writings "the Greeks' Bible"[4]. It is clear that Homer's verses were not taken for fables. Generally speaking, the man of letters' skill consisted in being "a good interpreter of the poetic works" (epon deinon), as Protagoras says in Plato's homonymous dialogue. This means that all poets were to be interpreted "by examining what they say", as Plato states in yet another dialogue, for they are "the fathers of wisdom and the guides [of humankind]" – [text grecesc][5]. Homer's prestige was so great that his verses used to be recited as

"incantations" to "recover the soul", as Jamblichus[6] informs us, or for "peace of mind", according to Porphyrius[7]. That is why these facts turn into a research topic for the sociology of culture – the official status of Homer's poetry in the Greek society, as early as the 6th century, resulted in a special kind of education, and hence to a Homer-centered culture with numerous and distinct aspects emphasized by certain modern authors, such as, for instance, W. Jaegerr[8], each of them becoming a new issue. For certainly, one could not explain the indeed out-of-the-ordinary appreciation this work enjoyed merely by its artistic value.

An extraordinary discovery made in the last century opened new perspectives. Believing in the reality of the facts depicted by Homer in *The Iliad*, H. Schliemann discovered Troy. He did this using the poet's indications only, and he was not even a professional archaeologist[9]. This discovery led to yet other surprises.It was not just the places that Homer had described accurately, but also the weapons and the adornments the Trojan heroes used to wear. Thus, Agamemnon's shield discovered at Mycenae displayed all the figures described in the finest detail in *The Iliad*. A natural question that might arise is whether an author so thorough in depicting concrete details should not have been, at the same time, preoccupied with the accuracy of the concrete ideas too. It is clear that, after the discovery of Troy, Homer's epics can no longer be viewed solely on an artistic level. Schliemann discovered the way to Troy by believing with all his might in the concrete truthfulness of the poetry in these works. We too shall have to find a way to the Troy of the abstract concepts in the poetry of these works. This is not easy, as the Greeks' system of categories in Homer's time and the system of categories we dress our world in are essentially different. Homer's world cannot unfold in Newton and Einstein's world. As early as the 6th century B.C., the scholars of the time had begun to "interpret" Homer's works, and their commentaries were remarkably numerous, but only few titles of the epoch's exegeses were preserved, as mentioned by Suidas and Diogenes Laertios[10]. Unfortunately, the usable information – apart from certain isolated remarks to be found in Hesiod, Pindar, the tragical authors and the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle[11], as well as in the Neo-Pythagoreans and the Stoics – comes from the authors of the beginning of our era, who were influenced by new outlooks, sometimes by Christianity or the struggle against Christianity, so they have to be taken into consideration with all due caution, and mainly they have to be separated from their mentality, which was significantly different from that of the Homeric times. I shall cite briefly several works that are worth mentioning[12].

One of these works, known under the title of *Homeric Allegories*, was written by a 1st century B.C. commentator, a certain Heraclitus[13]. The main ideas of his exegesis were taken from his predecessors, remarks Buffière, who calls him, as I have already mentioned, "Heraclitus the Rhetor". According to him, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* can only be interpreted alle-

gorically. The gods become abstractions or principles, elements or forces of nature.

Another work belongs to the Neo-Platonic philosopher Porphyrius and is known as *The Grotto of the Nymphs*[14]. The author examines an episode – briefly described in *The Odyssey* – in which it is shown that, on his return to his homeland, Ithaca, Ulysses hides the gifts from the Phaeacians in a grotto. Porphyrius interprets this as a symbol of the souls' fate on earth and after death..

Apart from these commentaries, some information on Homer can be found in a work known as Cornutus' *Theology*[15], which sees the Greek gods as mere symbols of physical realities or of philosophical abstract concepts.

In a writing known as *On Homer's Life and Poetry*[16] and attributed to Plutarch, it is argued that the entire Greek philosophy can be found in The *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, which are considered true encyclopedias of Greek thinking. However, these opinions were simply borrowed from older authors in support of Homer's omniscience.

Last but not least, another source for the interpretations of the ancient authors is Eusthatius' *Commentaries*[17]. They are mainly grammatical and philological commentaries, but also provide explanations of the Homeric myths, adding to those in the books already mentioned.

As Buffière points out, all these commentaries have a common element, that is, all authors agree that "Homer speaks enigmatically".

[...]

Any earnest researcher of Homer's works faces the same problem[18]. It thus becomes clear that they are to be studied according to their lost meaning, and then restored to the level of the Homeric and even pre-Homeric Greek mentality. This is exactly the path that we are going to follow in an attempt to rediscover – in its true significance – one of the most complex figures of the Greek world at the time of the war against Troy: Ulysses, the hero who made the Achaeans conquer and destroy Priam's citadel after ten years of siege and fighting.

[...]

> Δειυου τι πημα Πριαμιοαιζ, εποζεσευ πδλει τε τη μη.
> Θεϖυ αυαγκαιου τοδε.
>
> *(Euripide, Heculba, corul, vers. 579-580)*[19]

The above rendering of Ulysses' adventures makes it clear that gods interfere at every turn in determining the events in people's lives and, especially, in the life of Homer's hero. It is them who established an order in which the end of Troy and the deaths of Achilles, Hector and Agamemnon were also inserted. Calypso frees Ulysses only at the gods' order; if he escapes Circe's magical power, this is because Hermes wants to free him and gives him the antidote that counteracts the power of her spell; if Laertes' son has the fury of the sea or of Polyphemus, the Cyclops, against him, it is because Poseidon is against him, and so on and so forth; things seem to happen as a result of

the intervention of alien wills, the will of the gods who create the necessity – αυαγκη – that they happen like that. That is why, when the chorus in Euripides' Hecuba bemoan the ruthless fate of Priam's kin and of his citadel, they say: "this is out of gods' necessity", a phrase we might as well translate by "this is the necessary order given by the gods". But this order can be indeed known; Circe knows what will happen to Ulysses because, as she confesses, she knows he will come[20]:

Odysseus then you are, O great contender,
of whom the glittering god with golden wand
spoke to me ever, and foretold
the black swift ship would carry you from Troy.

Circe shows him how to reach by sea the land of the dead, where Pluto and Persephone reign, and warns him that Tiresias will tell him if and how he will reach Ithaca[21]:

He will come soon, great captain; be it he
who gives you course and distance for your sailing
homeward across the cold fish-breeding sea.

It follows thus that events are determined by gods at all times, in the present as well as in the future. Consequently, the Homeric Greeks believe in a "fate" – to which Homer, the tragical poets and even the philosophers allude – that man cannot escape. The quotations from their writings in support of this idea are countless. This is what Homer says[22]:

As is well-known, no one can get away from fate
Once born into this world, no matter whether brave or coward.

After Penelope's wooers are killed, Ulysses scolds the nanny for her noisy mirth at their death[23]:

Rejoice
inwardly. No crowing aloud, old woman.
To glory over slain men is no piety.
Destiny and the gods' will vanquished these,
and their own hardness.

Gods are also appealed to for fate changes. The gods themselves appeal to Zeus on various occasion to change a man's destiny. The post-Homeric traditions mention that Thetis, the goddess of the sea and Achilles' mother, tried to save her son from death, but that in this case not even Zeus can change this hero's fate of dying at Troy. Apparently, the Greeks did not in the least view this issue as simple. The mortals' accusation that the gods are the only ones responsible for the evil in the world is answered by Zeus as follows[24]:

My word, how mortals take the gods to task!

All their afflictions come from us, we hear.
And what of their own failings? Greed and folly
double the suffering in the lot of man.

In other words, man has a fate, but this is also determined by his own deeds, which may "worsen" his destiny. It would thus seem that he is accountable for them[25], and freedom of action would therefore appear in connection with destiny. But these ideas are raised for discussion in the ancient world much after Homer, and it would mean to alter essentially the concept of destiny and make the Greeks during the Trojan war think like one thousand years later or like those in Byzantium! There were many discussions and the researchers' opinions, even those of the later ancient Greeks, were diverse: some argued that "destiny", as it was understood in Homer's world, also implied the idea of freedom, an opinion shared by Aristotle too, while others, such as for instance the Stoics, claimed that there was no question of such a thing with regard to an *ananke* given by gods. Today, E.A. Dodds considers the fact of mooting only this question in connection with Homer's world "incredibly anachronistic"[26]. Indeed, we cannot explain the Greeks' mentality in those times in terms of our mental categories. To believe that Homer assigned the same meaning to destiny as us, would mean to falsify not only his texts, but his whole Weltanschauung. We believe that destiny is "a series of events considered necessary"[27]. We suddenly introduced the concept of determinism, which appeared in the scientific mentality of the post-Cartesian epoch. It was wills, intentions, sentiments, rituals, etc. that manifested themselves in Homer's "destiny". How can one then understand this "destiny" simply as a Laplacian type of "determinism", that takes place in a universe in which the place of each elementary particle is determined only by the play of the forces animating these particles? The future and the past of the universe could thus be known by simply knowing these forces[28]. In order to understand – and this too only up to a certain point – the idea of destiny in Homer's cosmos, we must re-establish a few ideas by interpreting them correctly. First, we must take into account that the gods are symbols covering much more subtle concepts, which were not easy to handle in books addressed to everyone. The commentators generally agree with this interpretation. In this respect, there is a text by Plato[29] in which he himself says that one cannot teach children a Homer in which gods fight among themselves, be these deities and their fights allegorical or not. Why? Because, Plato says, "the child's mind cannot distinguish what is allegorical from what is not"[30]. We should therefore make a very cautious examination of what the Greek texts say in this respect. What was "destiny" in the Greeks' archaic view? What was this power emanating from gods, or rather from Zeus, which not even they could defeat in certain cases, not even *Jupiter tonans* himself – "bubuitorul" ("the thunderer"), as Murnu translated it into Romanian –, for its force imposes on him too. This force was s Μοιρα

– *Moira*. It also dominated the lord of the gods, as we have seen in the case of Achilles' death, as well as all the gods, according to *The Odyssey*[31]:

> *Though as for death, of course all men must suffer it:*
> *the gods may love a man, but they can't help him*
> *when cold death comes to lay him on his bier.*

According to the usual etymology, *Moira* seems to come from the common noun μοιρα – *moira*, literally and figuratively meaning "part". Moira therefore means the "part" assigned to anyone, which in Romanian was preserved very well in the phrase "asta a fost partea mea în lume" (approx., "this has been my part in the world"), i.e. my destiny. In Hesiod's *Theogonia*[32], first appears *Moros*, the son of the Night, with the same etymology, meaning "everyone's share of luck", i.e. fate (more like bad luck). In the following lines, he speaks in the plural about Moirai – Μοιρατ –, "Fates", which he conceives as daughters of the Night. But, towards the end of his work[33], he says that the "Fates" were the daughters of Themis, the goddess of Justice, and Zeus and individualizes them by their names: Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos; Zeus endowed them "with the greatest privilege", that "of giving the mortals happiness or misery". Taken over by the Romans, Moirai became Parcae, with an apparently similar etymology as the Greek one, i.e. derived from *pars* – "part". They are three in number too. In Romanian, those who decide a child's fate at his/her birth are the "ursitoare". Philologists tell us that the word comes from the Neo-Greek verb *orizo*. But there is a Latin verb, *ordire* – "a urzi" ["to warp"]; the similarity with the Romanian word is obvious, and therefore "ursitoare" is more likely to derive etymologically from it because they "urzesc", i.e. they "warp" [map out, L.B.]. This is, in fact, the manner in which the *Moirai*, the Greek "Fates", make people's destiny. Indeed, Clotho is the "spinner" who spins the thread of a man's life from her tow; she appears in the plural even in Homer[34], under the name of Κλωθεζ – "the spinners" – coming from the verb κλωθω – ((*klotho*) –, to spin. These Κλωθεζ were deities that spun the texture of life – κλωσμα –, this word meaning interlacing the threads to make cloth (the thread that runs crosswise in a woven fabric, i.e. the woof). The idea of spinning or weaving the destiny appears in *The Odyssey* in connection with the gods that weave people's destiny[35] and with the Fates who spin the woof, and make the woven fabric of destiny[36]. The second Fate, *Lachesis*, reels, and decides on the length of the thread (of life), and her name comes from the verb λαχειυ (*lachein*), "to obtain as the result of fate or the gods' will". Last but not least, the third Fate, Atropos, has the task of "cutting the thread" (of life). The Greek word ατροποσ (*atropos*) means "what cannot return", "inflexible", "immutable".

The daughters of the Night are therefore those who "draw the woof" of man's life, which thus seems to be a "texture" or fabric in which its many threads are interwoven according to a certain rule. The fact that they are considered daughters of the Night, i.e. of Erebos, the dark, makes us believe that

man's moira is "woven" in a yet undifferentiated zone; and the fact that Hesiod considers them the daughters of Themis, the goddess of Justice, shows us that the human Moira is born out of justice itself.

But let us also examine other aspects of the concept of Moira in ancient Greece. For one thing, "fate" also incorporates the idea of necessity. This is how it resulted from the above-mentioned quotations, which we could supplement indefinitely. With the post-Homer Greek tragical authors, "necessity" – αναγκη (*ananke*), in the sense of "what necessarily has to", is almost identical with *Moira*. In Euripides[37], for instance, we come across the phrase εκ Θεων αναγκαι – "the necessities (the implacable destiny) from the gods", "governed by the gods"; however, with Homer, it is clear that Moira is much more than *ananke*. Another word that seems to replace occasionally the word Moira is αισα – *aisa* –, meaning "gods' decision", hence the phrase we find in The Iliad[38] or The Odyssey[39]: Διοζ αιση, "by Zeus' decision". Last but not least, in various texts we also come across the corresponding word for Moira, ειμαρμενη (*heimarmene*), which comes from the verb μειρομαι (*meiromai*) and is used with the same meaning as Moira. The verb meiromai also derives from "part" – μεροζ – *meros*, like *Moira*. *Heimarmene* consequently means "the part gods assign to man". However, this word does not include the entire meaning of "texture" conveyed by *Moirai*.

It therefore results that the ancient Greeks' Moira can be translated neither by "destiny" in the sense used by the moderns, nor by the Latin *Fatum* – "fate". Indeed, Fatum does not cover the idea of *Moira*, because it means "word", "oracle" (in the sense of word expressed by an oracle), (pre-established) "fate" of somebody or of events.

As we have seen, the Greek *Moirai*, Klotho, Lachesis and Atropos, have the role of "spinning" the yarns of a man's life; thus, they spin the "warp" and the "woof" that will make "a fabric" in which the warp is already set, while the other, "the woof" – κλωσμα, is to be run across. Certainly, these are mere symbols, but the succession of the Moirai's acts results exactly from the operations they perform, which can only be done in this order: the thread is "spun", "measured" and then "cut". Consequently, it cannot be cut from the beginning. All these lead to the conclusion that the ancient Greeks pictured destiny as a "interweaving" of force lines, some of which are determined ("the warp"), others ("the woof") being by nature about to be determined in the process of "weaving" the "fabric". Hence gods' ability to sometimes change a man's "destiny", or their inability to change anything at other times. Sometimes a new element could be inserted in the texture of the "fabric", that could change to a certain extent the "interweaving", that is the "destiny" of a human life. Certainly, this was the role of rituals and ceremonies, of certain actions completely incomprehensible to us, by which the Greeks invoked the gods to change whatever could be changed in their lives. As the *Moirai* were goddesses themselves, i.e. their existence was of an essential order, in order to have an effective intervention, it had to be done by the gods

themselves, who were to be involved in this action through ritualistic ceremonies. This outlook accounts for the Greek archaic populations' belief in *Oracles*, in god's ability to foretell the future, i.e. what will happen to a man or group of men in a certain situation. The *Oracle* foretold, for instance, a victory, provided they performed a ritualistic ceremony, as in the case of Iphigenia, who was sacrificed by her very father, Agamemnon, so that the Greek ships should have favorable wind to sail to Troy.

The three "Fates" certainly also "warped" [i.e they mapped out, L.B.] Ulysses' highly intricate destiny, and it is interesting that there were also three women weaving in his life who determined his destiny: Penelope, Calypso and Circe. It is true that there were also the Sirens and Nausicaa, but they did not influence the hero's "destiny", as we shall see further on.

We should therefore dwell on these three female characters. But before doing that, let us examine more closely the personality of Homer's hero, of the much praised as well as much abused Ulysses.

Οδυσσειζ πολυτροποζ
(Homer, The Odyssey, *I,1)*

Let us begin by pointing out that very many aspects regarding the personality of the hero of Troy were distorted in the course of time by the contradicting discussions on him. Even Ulysses' name is a deformation of the authentic Greek name of Odysseus, the only form to be found in Homer. Later, certain vessels bore the distorted inscription Olyseus and Ulyseus, that were later taken over by the Romans under the form Ulyxes and then Ulysses or Ulyses. Etymologically, the name Odysseus comes from οδυσσομαι, meaning "to get angry". Odysseus would therefore mean "the angry one"[41]. We shall see that this etymological meaning of Ulysses' name does not seem to characterize him, although it is correct. Certain scholars interpret the verb in the passive voice, therefore it is not about Ulysses' anger against the forces of nature, but about his being the subject that suffers the gods' anger, mainly that of Poseidon, the god of the seas. This interpretation seems more plausible.

The hero whose destiny we dwell upon is portrayed on vessels, bas-reliefs and statues as a strong, medium-sized man with a melancholy look, as if he were looking into the distance; he wears a beard and his head is covered with a sort of pointed cap as the Greek sailors used to wear. Even as a young man he shows vigor and cleverness; when he ascends the throne, he rules his small state wisely and with royal dignity; his marriage to Penelope is extremely fruitful and he becomes very rich. In Troy, he displays wisdom, courage, caution and inventiveness, which explains why he is consulted on all important occasions. Lastly, he has an important role in the conquest of Troy, by inventing the Trojan horse. In brief, Ulysses appears as a harmonious achievement of the Greek ideal of man, as a physical, intellectual, moral and emotional whole. Although he is known from *The Odyssey* as the son of Laertes and Anticleia, the later legends assign him a divine origin, due to his very qualities. In *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, the attributes that char-

acterize him are constantly renewed throughout these epics; he is "wise"[42], "kind as a father"[43], "divine" – διοζ Οδυσσευζ –-[44], "the most astute man"[45], "sensible like the gods"[46], etc. However, he himself provides his best description, when he unveils himself before Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians[47]:

I am Laërtês' son, Odysseus.
Men hold me
formidable for guile in peace and war:
this fame has gone abroad to the sky's rim.

A very controversial epithet is the one used by Homer at the very beginning of The Odyssey, i.e. πολυτροποζ (polytropos)[48]:

Ανδρα μοι εννεπε, Μοισα, πολιτροπον
(Tell me, Muse, about the polytropos man)

Let us see how we can translate the adjective polytropos. We should first sift the countless interpretations of this word. G. Murnu translates it by "brave and skillful". Giuliana Lanata[49] translates it by dall'ingegno molteplice – "with a rich mind". H. Maehlerr[50] renders it by wending – "changeable" (we shall see why); F. Buffièree[51] seems to prefer "with many faces", i.e "with a complex personality", etc. Plato himself dwelt on this issue in one of his dialogues, *Hippias Minor*[52]. In this dialogue, Hippias says that Homer described Achilles as the bravest, Nestor as the wisest, and Ulysses as the most versatile (the superlative of polytropos, that is, polytropotatos). He assigns the word polytropos not only the meaning of "a man with many faces", but also the derogatory sense of "false". Although he does not take a clear stand with regard to his interlocutor's reflections, Socrates, who converses with Hippias in this dialogue, dwells for a moment on Ulysses – of all Homer's heroes – for the philosophical aspect of the issue in question. Following all these considerations, I shall only remark that Ulysses was a common subject of the critical commentaries on Homer's epics, and they focused, more or less, on this equivocal adjective: *polytropos*. Antisthenes[53] asks himself: "What are we to think? Is Ulysses therefore dishonest because he is called *polytropos*? Not at all, he himself answers. Homer calls him so [...] because he is wise (σοφοζ) – *sophos*." În *The Iliad* as well as in *The Odyssey*, Ulysses appears endowed with all the attributes, and mainly, as the Greek commentator quoting Antisthenes also admits, he is sophos – in the ancient Greek sense of the word. The fact that, in the very first line of the epic dedicated to the hero of Troy, Homer calls him polytropos, appears as characteristic for Ulysses' personality. What is then the real meaning of this word? The word is composed of *poly* = many, and *tropos* – [τροποζ]. The word tropos is polysemantic, it has countless meanings. Here are several of the main meanings that may interest us in connection with the present issue: "attitude", "manner", "the soul's way of being", "way of speaking", "way of thinking and doing", "character", etc. Of all these meanings, it is only natural to choose the one which is compatible with the other

epithets assigned by Homer to the hero in his two epics. It would therefore be absurd to interpret the epithet polytropos as hypocritical, false, versatile, when all the other characterizations made by Homer are not only positive, but extraordinary, and consequently contradict such an interpretation. Tropos must be compatible with the other qualifier assigned to him, *sophos*, wise, the one whose thinking was more powerful than the common thinking, which is actually an existential achievement[54]. For this reason, the meaning of *tropos*, made possible by the quality of *sophos* assigned to Ulysses, can only be "way of thinking". *Polytropos* would then mean "the one with many ways of thinking", other than the common one. It is therefore not about the "versatility" of thinking[55], but about the power of thinking in various manners, just as the Greek *sophos* has the capacity to do. My interpretation is confirmed by a fragment from *The Odyssey*, which is, in my opinion, quite significant. Indeed, at the Phaeacians' council, held in the presence of their king Alcinous, a great number of people had come to meet Ulysses. This is what Homer says[56]:

> *...soon the assembly ground and seats were filled*
> *with curious men, a throng who peered and saw*
> *the master mind of war, Laërtês' son.*
> *Athena now poured out her grace upon him,*
> *head and shoulders...*

Ulysses is the "sage" also known in other civilizations, whose spiritual eminence shows on his face like a light. When he presents himself to the crowd, he is "transfigured".

Ulysses cannot be viewed as a mere sea wanderer, a common man who experiences a series of misfortunes and equally of amazing achievements; he seems more of a *sophos*, whose mind functioned "in various ways" (*polytropos*). In fact, the Platonic interpretations, as well as the stoic and the cynic ones[57] turned Ulysses into a sage full of virtues, who is saved from all misfortunes solely by his virtue. On the basis of the texts by the exegetes of the above-mentioned schools, Buffière thinks he can see in Ulysses "the Platonic sage" and "an ideal of humanity". It is only that such a such a "sage" could not belong to the epoch of the Trojan war, and not even to Homer's time, as the concept of "virtue" itself had a different meaning in the archaic epoch as compared to the time of Socrates and Plato. Ulysses is a sage, Homer himself calls him so, as we have seen, and, as a *sophos*, he has a power that allows him to fathom areas inaccessible to ordinary people, as we have seen he does symbolically. While telling the story, Homer himself in fact distinguishes him from the other heroes that left from Troy with him. In other words, the links in the series of events making up his life, from the moment he left Troy for home, can be assigned to a higher intellectual area, but they were rendered for the normal mind symbolically, although they may appear to also have a meaning on the normal allegorical level.

It was not in my intention to interpret all the events rendered by Homer in *The Odyssey*, I merely wanted to explain the "destiny" of the famous hero, Laertes' son.

Καλυψεσ – καλυπτω

(Eusthatius, Commentarii and Homero Odyseam, *I, 51)*[58]

I have said before that three women have a decisive role in Ulysses' life, and all three of them "weave". The first woman we meet in *The Odyssey* is the nymph Calypso, Atlas' daughter, who lives on the island of Ogygia, identified in the epic with "the navel of the waves"[59]. It is there that the *"goddess in the place, the daughter/ of one whose baleful mind knows all the deeps/ of the blue sea* – Atlas" keeps Ulysses against his will:

> *...Odysseus,*
> *the master mind of war, so long a castaway*
> *upon an island in the running sea;*
> *a wooded island, in the sea's middle,*
> *and there's a goddess in the place, the daughter*
> *of one whose baleful mind knows all the deeps*
> *of the blue sea – Atlas, who holds the columnss*
> *that bear from land the great thrust of the sky.*

I should point out that in G. Murnu's [Romanian] version, the phrase "the navel of the sea" – ομφαλοζ θαλασσηζ – is translated more freely by "the middle of the sea" [and so is in R. Fitzgerald's version, L.B.]. But let us take a closer look at the quoted fragment. First of all, as I have already said, Calypso is the daughter of Atlas, one of the Titans that rebelled against the gods. He was punished to hold the celestial vault eternally on his shoulderss[60]. This legend was interpreted either from a moral point of view (by the Stoics), or from an astronomical one (by the Neo-Pythagoreans); in the phrase "Atlas holds the vault", the latter discerned the idea of an ideal axis running across "the earth from the South Pole to the North Pole", around which the entire celestial vault revolves[61], that is the world's axis – *axis mundi*. The idea is not far from Homer's text, because, as we have already seen, in the quoted lines we are told that "Atlas [...] holds the columns/ that bear from land the great thrust of the sky", i.e the columns of the sky themselves. In this central point, i.e. "the navel of the seas", therefore the point where the axis mundi runs through, on which the sky rests and which, according to one interpretation, is Atlas himself, the island where his daughter lives is located. All around there are winds, waves... motion. Everything moves, except the axis around which everything is in motion. That is where Ogygia, the island washed by waves, is located, and the nymph Calypso "inhabits" this peaceful place. It is here that she keeps Ulysses for seven years "with gentle, sweet and soothing words". He reached that place after a storm had broken his ship to pieces and had drowned all his companions. Calypso, "the one with splendid locks"[62] offers him her love; moreover, she offers him what a mortal is never offered: immortality. This is what she says[63]:

Son of Laërtês, versatile Odysseus,
after these years with me, you still desire
your old home? Even so, I wish you well.
If you could see it all, before you go –-
all the adversity you face at sea –-
you would stay here, and guard this house, and be
immortal...

And here is how Ulysses himself relates Calypso's offer to King Alcinous and his wife Aretha[64]:

...Then in the dead of night
the gods brought me ashore upon Ogygia
into her hands. The enchantress in her beauty
fed and caressed me, promised me I should be
immortal, youthful, all the days to come;
but in my heart I never gave consent.

The theme of the "everlasting youth" appears again towards the end of *The Odyssey*, when, after returning to Ithaca and punishing the wooers, Ulysses tells Penelope about his adventures, among which the one with Calypso[65]:

He alone survived,
cast away on Kalypso's isle, Ogygia.
He told, then, how that nymph detained him there
in her smooth caves, craving him for her husband,
and how in her devoted lust she swore
he should not die nor grow old, all his days,
but he held out against her.

Therefore, Calypso offers to change his ontological status: she wants to transpose him from his human condition into her divine condition, so that he can remain in the "navel" of the whirlpool and the waves, immortal and unmoved by whatever sets the humans' lives in motion. In this respect, she tries to operate a change in the "fabric" of the Greek hero's "destiny", so that "he should not die nor grow old, all his days". But how? This is how Hermes finds her, when he is sent by Zeus to announce her of his decision that she should "free" Ulysses[66]:

...Hermes flew
until the distant island lay ahead,
then rising shoreward from the violet ocean
he stepped up to the cave. Divine Kalypso,
the mistress of the isle, was now at home.
.....
...before her loom a-weaving,
she passed her golden shuttle to and fro.

The goddess was therefore working – she was "weaving" Ulysses' destiny..

As we have already seen, the *Moirai* "weave" the texture of men's destiny. But the other gods too have the power to determine a change in this "destiny" by interfering in the "fabric". Homer himself says it[67], when he mentions that the leading fairy, Calypso, wanted to have Ulysses as her man, but:

...long years and seasons
wheeling brought around that point of time
ordained for him to make his passage homeward.

G. Murnu translates the phrase επεκλωσαντο θεοι (*epeklosanto theoi*) in Homer's verses quoted above by "the gods destined"; but epeklosanto is the aorist of the verb επικλωθω (*epiklotho*), whose figurative meaning is "to weave the destiny". Consequently, the phrase Murnu translated correctly, into its true sense, is in fact "the gods have woven" Ulysses' return to Ithaca[68]. Calypso was "weaving" too, but in vain. She could not change his "fate". Why? Because Ulysses could not forget Ithaca. Homer says it clearly: what Calypso was doing was to make the Greek hero "Somehow forget his Ithaca"[69]. The human condition implies memory; the divine condition is beyond memory, beyond the ontological state in which it functions in time and which puts events in a succession like beads on a string. The force that drives Ulysses towards Ithaca is so intense that gods take pity on their protégé (only Poseidon was hostile, as we know) and return him to his condition and to Ithaca. He could not transcend his own ontological status, that is the reason why he was continually suffering and "weeping" at Ogygia, as Homer says; that situation was determined by his "memory"[70]. Ulysses lives a formidable experience. But this experience remains a mere probe the mind launches like a rocket towards the unfathomable depths of existence; he meets a series of "creatures" and "events", which he can only describe allegorically, on the level of the normal intellectual experience. This is the very meaning of the nymph's name: καλυψω – *Calypso*, which comes from the verb καλυπτω (*kalypto*). This verb has several meanings: "to cover", "to envelop", "to hide", "to hide a thing under another". What happens in Ogygia, in the motionless "navel", could only be described through what moves in a "veiled" way. But Ulysses remains in the realm of motion, despite Calypso's efforts to alter the "texture" of his destiny. Motion takes him to his Ithaca.

I should emphasize an absolutely surprising connection between this experience and the one in the Romanian fairy tale, collected and published by Petre Ispirescu, *Everlasting Youth and Endless Life*. I shall not narrate the story, as it is widely known. I shall briefly mention only that the emperor promises his son, while the latter is still in the empress' womb, "everlasting youth and endless life". The emperor's son grows up, he reaches the age when he is supposed to get married, but he is restless; he is obsessed with his father's promise and he leaves on an enchanted horse (Achilles too had enchanted horses to whom he spoke), in search for the state of "everlasting youth" and "endless life". Like Ulysses, he reaches a deserted area (in *The*

Odyssey, this takes the shape of the undulating waste of the seas), he is put to three tests (like in all initiations) and reaches a palace whose mistress is "An exceptionally beautiful fairy". The fairy's "elder sisters" also live with her. Prince Charming adjusts to his new condition and "consorts with the youngest fairy". He thus achieves the state of "eternal youth", of "immortality", just like the fairies who lived in this – natural for them – state. But, one day, entering a forbidden area, "The Valley of Weeping", a veil is suddenly lifted (or is it dropped?), and the emperor's son starts s remembering. Memory, the characteristic function of the human condition, comes back to him, he remembers his parents, his country, and an unquenchable fire drives him back to his native place. He is given permission to go back home, to the state he had left. But the appearance of the world he returns to is changed, both for him and for Ulysses[71]:

Meanwhile, on his island,
his father's shore, that kingly man, Odysseus,
awoke, but could not tell what land it was.

The similarity (that could be examined closer) between Ulysses' "destiny" and the emperor's son's "destiny" is striking. It would seem that the Romanian fairy tale is based on the same veiled beliefs like the story of Homer's hero, with an interweaving of events that are nothing but symbols.

Κιπκη – κιπκοζ

(Porphyrius, in Stobaeus, Eclogae Physicae, *1, 41, 60)*[72]

The second woman we come across in the story, who has a decisive role in Ulysses' "destiny", is the magician Circe. She is a nymph, the daughter of Helios, the sun god, and of the nymph Persa. Her magical powers reach as far as the isle of Aia. Leaving aside the "magic" by which she governs the environment, turning people and animals into obedient instruments of her plans, let us see how she interferes in the adventurous life of the hero of Troy.

At first, when Ulysses' companions – who had been sent to make a reconnaissance – see her, they find what they see very strange; surrounded by "terrible beasts", she sings with a wonderful voice and "weaves a large, masterly cloth"[73]. "She seems a goddess", says a leading man from among them, namely Polit, "or perhaps a woman weaving a large cloth?" he wonders. We shall take into consideration here, as in Calypso's case, the idea of "weaving" and that of... "forgetting". Homer insists on the fact that Circe was making "a large cloth on the weaving loom", and he mentions this again when Evriloch tells Ulysses what happened in Circe's palace. Therefore, she too was weaving Ulysses' destiny. We remember that, protected by Hermes' miraculous potion, he is immune to the effect of the female magician's oblivion-inducing sorcery and thus succeeds to free his travelling companions who, as we all know, had been turned into pigs. Seeing this, Circe realizes who he is and exclaims[74]:

Hale must your heart be and your tempered will.
Odysseus then you are, O great contender (polytropos).

We also remember that, after a long stay, when Ulysses asks permission to leave for home together with his men, the goddess answers[75]:

Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
you shall not stay here longer against your will;
but home you may not go
unless you take a strange way round and come
to the cold homes of Death and pale Perséphonê.

Therefore, the terrible magician does not have the power to defeat Ulysses' "destiny", although she was "weaving" and trying to induce the state of oblivion. At first, before Hermes interfered and gave Ulysses the antidote against her sorcery, she had succeeded to discontinue the destiny of the Ithacan ruler's companions. However, the gods did not allow her to complete her work and the "cycle" of destiny resumes unfolding through "memory", for it stops only through "oblivion", i.e. by transcending the human condition.

I should also mention that the ancient writers interpreted the name Kirke in various ways, connecting it to theories meant to reveal the meaning of this character in the context of Homer's epoch. Some associate it with the word "ring" or "circle", from the Greek *kirkos* or *circos*, from which the Latin word circum – "circus" (in Rome) derives. This idea triggered an entire series of references to the theory of "reincarnation" or "metempsychosis", according to which people would pass through "*cycles*" ("circles") of – be it human or animal – existence, as it appears with the Pythagoreans or with Plato[76]. But there is another meaning of Circe, which appears even more closely related to her name, i.e that given by the Greek word Κιρκη– *Kirke*, meaning bird of prey. Even the word Kirkos, interpreted as "circle", is also the name of a species of falcon or hen hawk, which are prey birds too. That is why, through an accumulation of symbolic images, Circe lures the reckless into her vortex, like a bird of prey, and carries them into another cycle of existence, modifying the "texture" of their destiny. But Ulysses did not forget his country, Ithaca, – the condition for becoming prey to the ruthless Circe – and this unforgetting keeps him in his human cycle of existence, which he had imposed on himself as Laertes' son, Penelope's husband and Telemachus' father.

Περιφρων Πενελοπεια

(Homer, The Odyssey, *V, line 284)*[77]

The third woman who plays a decisive role in Ulysses' destiny is Penelope, his wife, who faithfully waits for him in the palace of Ithaca for 20 years, although she believes his return would be a miracle. The word Homer repeatedly uses in his verses to characterize her is the epithet περ–

ιφρων (*periphron*) – "all too wise". Penelope is fundamentally different from Calypso and Circe; the former is symbolic of the things beyond the sphere of normal understanding, of the everlasting life, while the latter stands – symbolically too – for the circularity to which existence is subjected in its human condition. Penelope is the only woman in in *The Odyssey* who is not a myth, no matter how much the ancient wanted to see in her the myth of philosophy[78]. She is simply a virtuous woman, faithful to her husband and child. But she lives in an epoch with an outlook on the world entirely different from ours, when they thought that people, their lives and events are governed by very subtle laws, that only a few wise men came to know, at least partly. One could however interfere in this invisibly determined texture through various ritualistic ceremonies. And this is what Penelope does while waiting for her husband: she weaves a cloth that will be the shroud for the burial of old Laertes, Ulysses' father; but this is just a pretext to put off the wooers, because she had said she would choose one of them after having finished weaving the cloth. For this reason, what she did during the day, she undid at night. And the trick worked for years on end, as long as Ulysses was lost in the boundless wastes of the seas. At first sight, the story seems quite improbable. How could the wooers believe that the weaving of a cloth could take years? Although they are very insistent, as the text says, they realize the stratagem only when one of the women in Penelope's service informs them, in the last stage, when the denouement is about to come. What is then the secret of the cloth? It is impossible not to make a connection between Penelope's cloth, and the ones woven by Calypso and Circe. As we have already seen, the fabric and the act of weaving are symbols for "the texture of destiny". Penelope therefore is "weaving" too, i.e. she performs an operation related to Ulysses' destiny. Was this a ritual, a ceremony meant to request the intervention of the gods by introducing in the "texture" of the hero's fate a new element that would bring him home? But, in this case, there is an extra element: what Penelope was weaving during the day, she undid at night. The Greek word for to undo is "to analyze" – αναλυειν (*analyein*) –, whence also the word (*analysis*) – "analysis". This word will help us understand what operation Ulysses' wife was performing when she was "weaving". These are several of the main meanings of the verb analyein – "to analyze": "to undo", "to set someone free from his bonds"[79], "to clear someone from an accusation", "to return", while ανα–λυω ιστον, a phrase used in *The Odyssey*[80], means to unravel a texture or the woof, "to unweave". Under these circumstances, neither "weaving", nor "unweaving" can be interpreted in the proper sense of the word[81]. It is thus quite possible that Penelope's daytime "weaving" was a ritual to make the gods interfere in the "texture" of Ulysses' destiny, while the nighttime "analysis" was another type of ritual, an attempt to "free" the Trojan hero from the "bonds" he had established during his travel cycle.

But, of all three women that "weave" Ulysses' destiny, it is Penelope who wins; certainly, also because he did not forget herself, but also because she

did not forget him, she did not stop weaving his destiny, she did not lose her virtue. In fact, this is the sense in which the final verses in *The Odyssey* celebrate Penelope's personality[82]:

O fortunate Odysseus, master mariner
and soldier, blessed son of old Laërtês!
The girl you brought home made a valiant wife!
True to her husband's honor and her own,
Penélopê, Ikários' faithful daughter!
The very gods themselves will sing her story
for men on earth – mistress of her own heart,
Penélopê!

Penelope was indeed the "match" of Ulysses polytropos – "the one with many ways of thinking", because she is periphron, "all too wise", or according to another meaning of the word φρονημα (*phronema*), "intelligence", "way of thinking" combined with περι (*peri*) – "super" –, Penelope becomes "the one with a superway of thinking".".

Το γαρ δμοιον τω ομοιον φισει συγγενεζ εστιν

(Plato, Lysis, *214 a)*[83]

I have followed an idea linearly developed in Ulysses' adventure – the one regarding his destiny being determined – and, in following this idea, I did not deviate to dwell on other details, which could have certainly made things clearer.

In the detour the Trojan hero makes for ten years, there are other female figures, but they do not interfere in the "texture" of his destiny, they do not weave.

Indeed, he is first awaited by the Sirens. They sing to him a wonderful song to divert him from his way to Ithaca. This is how they lure him[84]:

This way, oh turn your bows,
Akhaia's glory,
As all the world allows –
Moor and be merry.
Sweet coupled airs we sing.
No lonely seafarer
Holds clear of entering
Our green mirror.
Pleased by each purling note
Like honey twinning
From her throat and my throat,
Who lies a-pining?
.....
Greybeard and rower-boy
Goeth more learnèd.

.....
No life on earth can be
Hid from our dreaming.

The old exegeses dealt extensively with the Sirens' episode, which was interpreted in different ways. This is, for instance, how Cicero translated (into Latin) and understood the Sirens' promise in the above lines[85]:

Post variis avido satiatus pectore musis
Doctior ad patrias lapsus pervenerit oras

.....

Omniaque e latis rerum vestigia terris.
(And when his avid heart is filled with our songs,
He returns more learned to the shores of his homeland
.....
We can revive the whole past of the vast countries.)

According to Cicero's interpretation, the Sirens therefore promise knowledge, as they are omniscient. This is what Ulysses, just like Faustus, is tempted with, but he resists this temptation. Of all this, we are only interested in the fact that Ulysses cannot be stopped by the Sirens. Why? Because they do not "weave", they do not interfere in his "destiny", they cannot determine it, Homer's hero avoids them.

The same can be said of Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous, the king of the Phaeacians. If the Sirens try to play an evil part in Ulysses' life, Nausicaa has a beneficial role, but she cannot interfere in his destiny and change his fate either. She only has the role of directing him to her mother, Aretha, just as Athena the goddess also does in fact, because only the queen could intercede for him, as she was also *spinning*[86]:

As soon as you are safe inside, cross over
and go straight through into the mégaron
to find my mother. She'll be there in the firelight
before a column, with her maids in the shadow,
spinning a wool dyed richly as the sea.

How should we interpret all this complex of strange facts? I can only say once again that Homer's world cannot be understood directly using the categories of our time's mentality. It formed a *Kosmos* whose order was not imagined like that of the scientific universe of today. We could say that if the order introduced into the world by Descartes, Newton, Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg, etc. is expressed in numerical formulas and laws, i.e. it is a *quantitative* order, the order of Homer's cosmos is *qualitative*. The whole effort of the Greek poets and philosophers, mainly during Homer's or the Pre-Socratic era, consists in translating into the common language – based on *quantitative* concepts referring to ideas that imply the common notions of space and time – certain elements that are on an existential level that transcends space and time. Thus, they wanted to make an analogy between the

two levels, the qualitative and the quantitative one, a procedure characteristic to the mythological archaic mentality. In order to effect such a transposition, they started from a principle that went like this: the analogous is related to [is of a similar nature with] its analogous, of which Plato himself said that it was a principle "of old"[87]. But this idea can also be found in Homer[88], phrased as follows:

Here comes one scurvy type leading another!
God pairs them off together, every time.

The way to achieve this connection was the symbolic representation, which, in its complex unfolding, became a myth. We shall recall that "the symbol" was part of an object, which interlocked perfectly with the other part of the same object, thus helping in making it complete and in consequently recognizing it as a whole object[89]. In the case of this representation of the qualitative order through a quantitative one, there had to exist a perfect "homology", so that the two parts connected by the "symbol" should be "related" συγγενεζ (*syngenes*) or "co-natural". Hence the logical consequence, namely that one can influence the qualitative order through the homologous quantitative order. This is why the ancient people imagined a determined order within the spacial and temporal world "similar" to a given qualitative one, and they interfered with the order accessible to the one performing the action, in an attempt to effect a change or a reinforcement, or even to impart a desired direction to the other. This was the very reason of the ritual. Ritual means in fact "order" and comes from the Sanskrit word *rta* (*rita* = cosmic order, the *karma* or *dharma* universal law).

In the beginning, the ancient Greeks used to express this idea of "ritualistic action" by the word τελετη (*telete*), which means precisely "ritualistic action", "initiatory" ceremony[90]. But there is also another Greek word for ceremony or solemn ceremony, θεωρια (*theoria*), meaning "direct knowledge", "contemplation", the entrance of the superior mind in a higher area of existence. Later, telete appears with the wider meaning of "ceremony in general". A ritual (*telete*) was thus imagined as a spatial and temporal copy of the qualitative "texture", and the performer tried to determine the part on "the other side" of the symbol to interlock with what was the part on "this side" of the symbol. It was, so to speak, a concrete representation. This would explain why Penelope, through her tenacity in weaving and unweaving the fabric of Ulysses' destiny day and night, "prevents" it from being affected by other attempts at altering it. Even if an interference had occurred, the fabric would have been constantly restored. In the struggle against destiny, Penelope's strength combines with the force of Ulysses' will, who cannot forget his country, people and family.

After having sailed the unknown seas for ten years, after having been through a series of incredible experiences that can only be translated symbolically in our ordinary world, Ulysses returns to Ithaca. The circle is closed, Penelope no longer has to weave during the day and unweave at

night; Circe was left behind in the magic world of illusions where mortals cannot stay; Calypso was left behind in the motionless world of "the navel of the seas"; everything vanished like smoke and yet the supermental experience of Ulysses *polytropos* does not confer him a superior existential "status". He preserves his human "status", the one he had when he left Ithaca and which he assumes once more when he returns. He has not transcended this status despite everything he has experienced by transcending his condition. Why? Because gods did not give him "oblivion", and as long as "memory" binds him to his condition, his destiny is a circle that always brings him back to the starting point. It is the theory of "the eternal return", advocated by a number of Greek philosophers and resumed in modern times by various thinkers, among whom Nietzsche[91]"

"The eternal sand glass of existence will be turned upside down over and over again – and you too with it..."

NOTES

1. I think [...] that, to a man, the most important part of his culture is to be extremely skillful in interpreting poetic works.
2. Heraclitus (commentator from the 1st century B.C.), *Quaestiones homericae*, chapter 1, Teubner, Leipzig, 1910. Xenophanes of Colophon (6th-5th century B.C.), also says in one of his remaining fragments: "Because everybody has learnt Homer from childhood" (H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 5th edition, 3. vol., Berlin, 1959-1960, fragment 11).
3. In his book, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*, Paris, 1948, pp. 226-227, H.-J. Marrous says that "Homer dominates the entire Greek culture". Children used to learn to read by copying the text: "Homer is not a man, he is a god".
4. F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, "Les Belles Lettres", Paris, 1973, p. 10.
5. Plato, *Lysis*, 213 e.
6. Jamblichus, *Vita Pythagorae*, 111. Westerman, Paris, 1850.
7. Porphyrius, *Vita Pythagorae*, 32. In *Porphyrii Opuscula selecta*. A. Nauck, Teubner, Leipzig, 1886.
8. W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, 2. vol., Berlin, 1936.
9. Heinrich Schliemann, *Ithaka der Peloponnes und Troja*, Leipzig, 1869; Mykenae, Leipzig, 1878; *Ilios, Stadt und Land der Trojaner*, Leipzig, 1881. All these books were published in Ion Roman's Romanian translation under the title *Pe urmele lui Homer* [*Tracking Homer*], 2 vol., Editura Meridiane, 1979.
10. Suidas (10th century A.D.), *Historical Lexicon*, Ed. E. Bekker, Berlin, 1854; Diogenes Laertios, *On the Philosophers' Lives and Doctrines*, Romanian translation by C.I. Balmuş, with an introductory study and commentaries by A. Frenkian, Ed. Academiei R.P.R., 1963. As to the modern authors that inventoried the old commentaries on Homer, there are several remarkable books: Sengebusch, *Homerica dissertatio prior*, in *Homeri Ilias*, W. Dindorf, Teubner, Leipzig, 4th edition, 1855; C. Lehrs, *De Aristarchi studiis homericis*, 2nd edition, Leipzig, 1865; H. Schrader, *Porphyrii quaestionum homericarum ad "Odysseam" pertinentium reliquias*, Teubner, Leipzig, 1890; J.A. Fabricius, *Bibliotheca graeca sive notitia scriptorum veterum graecorum*, Hamburg, 1718. From among the more recent authors we shall cite: W. Otto, *Die Musen*, 2nd edition, Darmstadt, 1956; Marcel Detienne, *Homère, Hésiode et Pythagore*, "Lathomus", vol. LVII, Bruxelles, 1962; H. Maehler, *Die Auffassung des Dichterberufs im Frühen Griechentum*, Hypomnemata, Heft 3, Göttingen, 1963; Pierre Boyancée, *Le Culte des Muses chez les Philosophes grecs*, E. de Boccard, Paris, 1972; F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, "Les Belles Lettres", Paris, 1973 etc.
11. Aristotle wrote a (lost) work entitled *Homeric Problems or Homeric Enigmas*. The remaining fragments of this work were collected and published in Fragmenta selecta by V. Rose, Teubner, Leipzig, 1880.
12. They are commented upon by F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère*, pp. 66-78.

13. No one knows for sure who this Heraclitus was. His work was published for the first time by the famous editor Aldus Manutius under the title *Heracliti quaestiones homericae*, Venice, 1505.
14. Porphyrius (234-305), *De antro Nympharum*, A. Nauck, Teubner, Leipzig, 1886.
15. Lucius Annaeus Cornutus (1st century A.D.), stoic philosopher and Seneca's affrancised slave, wrote a work entitled *Peri tis ton theon physeos* (*On the Nature of Gods*), named in brief *Cornutus' Theology*. This book was published by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1505, and was reprinted by F. Osann, Göttingen, 1814.
16. Plutarch (1st century A.D.) is the supposed author of *De Vita et poesi Homeri* (On Homer's Life and Poetry). Benardakis published an edition of this work in Plutarch's *Moralia*, VII, Teubner, Leipzig, 1896.
17. Eusthatius of Constantinople, bishop of Thessaloniki (12th century A.D.). Several of his writings were preserved, also including two separate studies: *Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem and Commentarii ad Homeri Odysseam*. They were printed as early as 1542 (in Rome), and other editions followed, among which we should mention the modern edition of *Commentaries on the Odyssey*, in vol. 2, Leipzig, 1825-1826.
18. P.-M. Schuhl (op. cit., pp. 64-65) favours the solution already suggested by W. Knight, in *The Wooden Horse* (Classical Philology, v. 25, 1930, p. 360), that the legend of the "wooden horse" might refer to the cult of the horse and to various customs meant to break the defence of Troy's walls, which were guarded by Poseidon, "the god of the horse".
19. A terrible misfortune struck Priam's kin and my citadel; this is the unrelenting order of the gods.
20. *The Odyssey*, Book X, lines 371-374. [The English translations from Homer were taken from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald, Everyman's Library, London, 1992. The line numbers refer to the English edition. L.B.]
21. Op. cit., Book X, lines 595-597.
22. *The Iliad*, [Romanian translation by] G. Murnu, Book VI, Casa Şcoalelor, 1923.
23. *The Odyssey*, Book XXII, lines 460-464.
24. *The Odyssey*, Book I, lines 48-51.
25. E.R. Dodds, in book The Greeks and the Irrational, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1973, pp. 32-33, thinks he can distinguish between several "stages" in man's relationship with the gods. In The Iliad, this relationship is based mainly on the honour of the god, who is jealous for the respect he is entitled to and retaliates by punishing the one who does not obey him; in The Odyssey, one step further is taken and Zeus helps those who entreat him, for "all aliens and beggars are from Zeus" (see in this respect The Odyssey, Book VI, line 382 and the following).
26. Idem, op. cit., p. 7.
27. This is, for instance, how Littré's dictionary defines it.
28. P.-S. Laplace, *Essai philosophique sur les probabilités*, Paris, 1814.
29. Plato, *Republic*, 378 d-e.
30. F. Buffière thinks that Plato's text represents the formal proof that these interpretations already existed in his time, that they were proposed by his contemporaries or by his predecessors (*Les Mythes d'Homère*, p. 124).
31. *The Odyssey*, Book III, lines 254-256.
32. *Theogonia*, line 212.
33. Op. cit., lines 904-905.
34. *The Odyssey*, Book VII, line 251.
35. Op. cit., Book I, line 27.
36. Ibidem, Book VII, line 251.
37. *Euripides*, The Phoenician Women, 1763.
38. *The Iliad*, Book IX, line 608.
39. *The Odyssey*, Book XIV, line 405.
40. *Odyseus*, the one with a complex mind.
41. The word appears in *The Odyssey*, Book I, line 93 and in other parts; but this interpretation is to be found in *Scholia graeca in Homeri Odysseam*, I, 21, G. Dindorf, Oxford, 1855.
42. *The Odyssey*, Book I, line 73.
43. Ibidem, Book V, line 20.
44. Ibidem, Book XIII, line 63. Murnu omitted the word "divine" in the Romanian translation.
45. Ibidem, Book I, line 98.
46. Ibidem, Book XIII, line 123, 124.
47. Ibidem, Book IX, lines 20-23.
48. Ibidem, Book I, line 1, literal translation.
49. Giuliana Lanata, *Poetica pre-platonica*, la Nuova Italia Editrice, Florence, 1963, p. 3.
50. Herwig Maehler, *Die Auffassung des Dichterberufs im frühen Griechentum bis zur Zeit Pindars*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1963, pp. 23-24.
51. Félix Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, pp. 365-369.

52. Plato, *Hippias Minor*, 364a-365d.
53. *Scholia graeca in Homeri Odysseam*, I, 1, F. Buffière, op. cit., p. 368. The commentator transmits Antisthenes' text. (Antisthenes wrote several commentaries on Homer, but only a few small fragments were left.)
54. On this meaning of sophos, see my book *Philosophia Mirabilis*, Editura Enciclopedică, 1974.
55. In his book *Ulysse ou l'intelligence*, Gallimard, Paris, 1945, Gabriel Audisio demonstrates on the basis of countless arguments – other than mine – that Ulysses cannot be a fraud.
56. *The Odyssey*, Book VIII, lines 18-22.
57. For further developments, see F. Buffière, *Les Mythes d'Homère*, pp. 365-388.
58. Calypso.
59. *The Odyssey*, Book I, lines 67-74.
60. Hesiod, *Theogonia*, lines 360, 510-520.
61. Eusthatius, op. cit., 1389-1390. In G. Murnu's [Romanian] edition of The Odyssey, published in 1979, Adrian Pârvulescu provides some explanations on this issue in the note on page 32.
62. *The Odyssey*, Book VII, line 314.
63. Op. cit., Book V, lines 212-218.
64. Op. cit., Book VII, lines 272-277.
65. Op. cit., Book XXIII, lines 372-378.
66. Op. cit., Book V, lines 59-63, 67-68.
67. Op. cit., Book I, lines 26-28.
68. In this respect, see also Adrian Pârvulescu's note on page 28, in the 1979 [Romanian] edition of *The Odyssey*.
69. *The Odyssey*, Book I, line 86.
70. On memory and its meaning in the system of ideas of Homer's epoch, see the chapter Orpheus.
71. The Odyssey, Book XIII, lines 236-238.
72. Circe – circlee
73. Op. cit., Book X, line 305.
74. Ibidem, Book X, lines 370-371.
75. Ibidem, Book X, lines 541-545.
76. Plato, *Timaios*, 91d-92a. With regard to "the cycle of reincarnations" and the nymph Circe, we have especially Plutarch's book *De vita et poesi Homeri*. Benardakis, Teubner, Leipzig, 1896, and the fragments on the myth of Circe in Stobaeus, *Eclogae physicae*, I (a fragment from Porphyrius).
77. The all too wise Penelope.
78. The old exegetes, such as those we have cited, Eusthatius, Maxim of Tyr, etc., saw Calypso as the embodiment of science, Circe as the pleasures of life, and Penelope as philosophy.
79. *The Odyssey*, Book XXII, line 227.
80. Ibidem, Book II, line 137. G. Murnu translates it [into Romanian] by "unwove the texture", but it means in fact the unravelling of the woof, i.e. of the thread interwoven with the shuttle.
81. The old exegetes, such as Eusthatius, tried to interpret the verb analyein ("to analyze") in the logical sense it has in Aristotle's *Analytic Works*. This verb would thus mean "to analyze the premises in the syllogisms", to ratiocinate, to perform logical analyses. This interpretation, in accord with the idea that Penelope stands for philosophy, is unacceptable from the very start; the verb *analyein* ("to analyze") could not have this meaning in Homer's time, because it acquired it only in the 4th century B.C., in Aristotle's *Organon*.
82. Ibidem, Book XXIV, lines 216-223.
83. Because the similar is, by its very nature, related to its similar.
84. Ibidem, Book XII, lines 220-245.
85. Cicero, *De Finibus bonorum et malorum,* Book V, XVIII.
86. *The Odyssey*, Book VI, lines 322-326.
87. Plato, *Lysis*, 214a; *Gorgias*, 510b; *Symposion*, 174b etc.
88. *The Odyssey*, Book XVII, lines 278-279.
89. I have detailed this idea in the chapters *Orpheus* and Dante [in the author's book *The Book of Admirable Encounters*]. On the principle of "similarity" in the primitive cultures, see James George Frazer, op. cit., I, the cited edition.
90. Herodotus, *Histories*, 2, 171; Euripides, *The Bacchantes*, 22, etc.
91. Fr. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Chemnitz, 1882.

(A. B.)