

P. Shebay'a

## Homer's *Odyssey*: An Introductory Lecture

- \* C.S. FOCUS: the vision of man: the human condition.
- \* the ETHOS of a culture or text: characteristic spirit, atmosphere, chief concerns, basic attitudes, values, key symbols, concepts, notions.
- \* two creative skills: empathy and critical evaluation.

### A. *THE ODYSSEY*: an attempt at interpretation.

1. the story: Troy: Paris: Helen: Menelaos: Sparta: Odysseus (Ulysses).
2. Homer, the singer/poet: cultural identity; Herodotus:
 

"Homer created the genealogy of the gods by providing the gods with epithets assigning them their functions and honors and clarifying their shapes." Aesthetic ethos: The supremacy of ART (8:579).
3. Vision of the universe and human existence: The given Order of Things (G.O.T).
  - a. COSMOS (the universe, including gods and men) is one: common origin of all things.
  - b. the universe is a STRUCTURED, ORDERED whole whose basic principle is MOIRAE or "shares".
  - c. each thing has its specific domain, sphere of influence, proper place.
  - d. all things are inter-related in accordance with this over-all structure.
  - e. harmony, balance, beauty, justice obtain when each thing is in its proper place.
  - f. imbalance, disturbance (cosmic, societal and Individual) obtain when this ORDER is not respected.
  - g. human existence: drama of upsetting and restoring the balance: ARETE (character) and HYBRIS (recklessness).
4. Illustrations from Homer.
  - a. *Iliad*: Book 15: lines 184-195 "Doctrinal" statement. (Book 3: 236-238, Book 24: 28/9, 18: 130-145, *Odyssey* references)
  - b. *Odyssey*:
    1. the gods: Athene and Poseidon (13:340): Poseidon, Cyclops and Odysseus (p.29, p.151, p. 201).
    2. Odysseus: Kalypso and homecoming: the suitors: Ithaka: Penelope.
    3. refusal of immortality.
    4. the ending: restoration of order.
    5. the ending: problem of blood-revenge.
    6. inconsistent, artificial use of the gods. (Aphrodite).
    7. deus ex machina: Hollywood ending (artificial, inconsistent).
5. A summary of the vision: questions (Achilles)
6. Comparison with the ethos of *Gilgamesh*.

# THE TWELVE OLYMPIC GODS OF ANCIENT GREECE

**KRONOS** — RHEIA

**DEMETER**

agriculture;  
marriage

**HESTIA**

Vesta  
hearth

**POSEIDON**

Neptune  
sea;  
earthquakes

**ZEUS**

&

**HERA**

Jupiter  
Jove  
father of  
gods and  
men; most  
powerful  
god

(Wife of  
Zeus)  
women;  
marriage

JUNO  
(ROMAN)

**HERMES**

Mercury  
messenger  
of the  
gods

**HESPHAESTUS**

Vulcan  
fire;  
metallurgy

**ARES**

Mars  
war

**APOLLO**

Apollo  
sun;  
music;  
poetry;  
prophecy

**APHRODITE**

Venus  
love;  
beauty

**ARTEMIS**

Diana  
moon;  
hunt

**ATHEMA**

Minerva  
wisdom;  
arts

**HADES**

