

There is a long postscript (pp. 109-118) by Tom Winnifrith that attempts to deal with the question of the definition of epic that is worth reading also.

Aspects of the Epic is a collection that will be of more than passing interest to students of classics, of comparative literature, and of modern Greek literature. It suggests a number of useful ways in which scholars from related but different disciplines can come together to discuss important topics of common interest.

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Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*. London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983. Pp. xvi + 382. Cloth. \$ 29.95.

The French have in recent years contributed enormously provocative analyses of Greek myth and thought, and such contributors, though challenged by ancient Greek culture, have not necessarily been classicists. In fact, it has not been uncommon for anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists to bring forth studies that have approached Greek studies from an untraditional and surprisingly fruitful point of view. Jean-Pierre Vernant, Professor at the College de France, author of *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Harvester Press, 1978); *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Harvester Press, 1980; Methuen, 1982); *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Cornell University Press, 1982); and co-author of *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece* (Harvester Press, 1981), originally published the present collection in French in 1965 under the title *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*. Its translation into English will assure it an even wider audience. Dedicated to I. Myerson, whose methods in historical psychology, anthropologist Vernant has for over a decade tried to apply to the field of Greek studies, the volume *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* ranges over Greek religion with its myths, rituals, and illustrated representations; philosophy; science; art; social institutions; and technical and economic material. Though the essays can be read and used separately, they «seek to understand the individual, in Ancient Greece, a being inseparable from the social and cultural environment of which he is at once the creator and the product» (p. ix). Because we find a certain cultural kinship in the ancient Greeks and they live on in our cultural tradition, we can study them as a whole and we can apply to them today's psychological categories with a certain degree of precision. We can trace in the ancient Greek the course of Western man from the *homo religiosus* to the *homo politicus*. Especially appealing to scholars of the last half century have been the gradual development of the idea of the individual. They form the bulk of the interest of Vernant's very provocative collection of fifteen studies. Such topics as memory and time, space, work and technological activity, imagery and the concept of the double are discussed in detail. Particularly full are the discussions on work and space.

The book is organized in seven major parts: (1) «Myth Structures,» which includes

two essays on «Hesiod's Myth of the Races: An Essay in Structural Analysis» and «Hesiod's Myth of the Races: A Reassessment»; (2) «Mythical Aspects of Memory and Time,» which consists of «Mythical Aspects of Memory» and «The River of Amélès and the Méléte Thanatou»; (3) «The Organization of Space,» which embraces four essays: «Hestia-Hermes: The Religious Expression of Space and Movement in Ancient Greece»; «Geometry and Spherical Astronomy in the First Greek Cosmology»; «Geometrical Structure and Political Ideas in the Cosmology of Anaximander»; and «Space and Political Organization in Ancient Greece,» while (4) «Work and Technological Thought» cover «Prometheus and the Technological Function»; «Work and Nature in Ancient Greece»; «Some Psychological Aspects of Work in Ancient Greece»; and «Some Remarks on the Forms and Limitations of Technological Thought among the Greeks.» Part (5) is entitled «The Psychological Category of the Double» and consists of a single essay on «The Representation of the Invisible and the Psychological Category of the Double: The Colosos.» Part (6) «Personal Identity and Religion» also consists of a single essay called «Some Aspects of Personal Identity in Greek Religion.» The final part (7) «From Myth to Reason» concludes the book with another single essay «The Formation of Positivist Thought in Archaic Greece.» Each essay is supported by a very ample supply of endnotes and there is a brief introduction, a brief index, but no end-of-book bibliography.

The author is determined «to seek to discover what the ancient Greek personality was, and how its various characteristics differed from personality as we know it today. Which of its aspects become defined, in greater or less detail, at particular moments, and what form do they take? Which aspects remain ignored? Which features of identity already find expression in particular types of works institutions, and human activities, and to what degree? Along what lines and in what directions did the Greeks develop the concept of personality?... And, finally, how far is personality organized? What is its core? What are its most characteristic features?» (p. xiv) Not all these questions are answered, but Vernant probes sharply and limits himself to the classical period.

Vernant's chapters on work and space are perhaps the most original and the most interesting. He is fascinated by the discovery that the social, political, and scientific thought of the Greeks was influenced by a geometrical orientation. Plato in the *Laws* may have provided the ultimate model of political space treated geometrically, but geometry seems to have characterized Greek civilization. Whether it be the belief that the earth is at rest because its central position places it at an equal distance from everything, or the idea of the circular altar of the hearth (Hestia) as the symbol of the enclosed space of the house with its evocation of the maternal abdomen, or the notion that the agora was formed from an original circle of warriors in military formation that became a definite space used for public debate involving free speech (*isēgoria*), the author astutely delineates the transformations that took place from the mythical to the political and geometric. Hestia becomes «the principle of permanence... the goddess who immobilizes space around a fixed centre and the god who renders it completely and everlastingly mobile?» (p. 161).

For the ancients, technological activity and work are rarely thought to have had any moral value, nor was there a clearly defined behavioral psychology associated with

them. There were social, political, and economic obstacles to technological progress among the Greeks, as Vernant views it. *Technē* had to break away from magic and religion and, by the classical period, technical skills did become secularized. The ancients were less concerned with the manufacture of a product (*poiēsis*) than they were with its use (*chrēsis*), which defines the *eidos* that the manufacturer embodies in matter. Form (*eidos*) is what directs and governs the work which the worker brings into being. In Aristotelian terms, it is the final cause that determines the productive process as a whole, while the artisan is the efficient cause, together with his *technē* and his instruments. In this system, «The user, not the producer, possessed the knowledge of the form of the object made» (p. 294).

Vernant vividly shows us the development of the idea of the *psyche* from Homer's wraith to a category of personal identity — a new human dimension that was both an objective reality and a subjective inner experience. At the same time, he describes for us the Greek scientific revolution («a complete break with the past») and the development of the new philosophical thought that rejected the supernatural and the marvelous and the ambivalent character of earlier logic. Philosophy raised its own problems, constructed its own rationality, did not carry out experimentation, and utilized a kind of reason that had an impact on men but not on nature.

Myth and Thought among the Greeks will provide the basis for much lively discussion and further research. Even though the book contains some errors of fact (e.g., Prometheus and metallurgy on p. 244, the killing of Typho on p. 345), some questionable interpretations of Greek original sources, numerous omissions of accents and breathings in the citation of Greek words, even the printing of a zeta for a terminal sigma in every Greek word with a terminal sigma for the first forty-two pages of the book, these infelicities can perhaps be excused in a book reproduced directly from typescript because fundamentally this collection of essays is a substantial contribution to the interpretation of the classical Greek heritage.

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Paolo Vivante, *The Epithets in Homer: A Study in Poetic Values*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982. Pp. x + 222. Cloth. \$22.00.

The late Milman Parry's research certainly revolutionized the premises on which studies of Homer had previously been conducted and the impact of his work has certainly been felt well beyond classical studies. Paolo Vivante of McGill University in Montreal, already noted for his detailed and creative work on Homer, has applied the «principle of imaginative focus as characteristic of poetic expression» to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in his latest book in a detailed analysis of Homer's noun-epithet phrases in which he finds «clusters the large body of discourse which brings out ideas of relation: cause and effect, reciprocity, narrative connection, swift transition, descriptive pointed-