

The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Themis: Etc. *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion.* By Jane Ellen Harrison. With an Excursus on the Ritual Forms preserved in Greek Tragedy, by Prof. Gilbert Murray; and a chapter on the origin of the Olympic Games, by Mr. F. M. Cornford. Cr. 8vo. One vol. Pp. xxxii + 559. 152 illustrations in the text. Cambridge: at the University Press. 1912. Price 15s. net.

W. M. L. Hutchinson

The Classical Review / Volume 27 / Issue 04 / June 1913, pp 132 - 134

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00005060, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00005060

How to cite this article:

W. M. L. Hutchinson (1913). The Classical Review, 27, pp 132-134 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00005060

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

κωμικῶν ποιητῶν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἅμα αὐστηρῶς λέγεται καὶ πολιτικῶς. Plutarch, *De Adulatore et Amico*, 68B, καὶ τοῖς κωμικοῖς πολλὰ πρὸς τὸ θέατρον αὐστηρὰ καὶ πολιτικὰ πεποιήται.

In Plutarch's *Conjugalia Praecepta* 141B we find the Hystaspes story (*Par.*, fr. 39, col. xiv) told of Philip and Olympias.

SATYRUS.

ἐρασ]θῆναι . . . [λόγ]ος? πρὸς αὐτὴν ὡς φαρμάττοι φίλτροις τὸν Ὑστάσπην. μεταπεμφαμένη δὴ τὴν ἄνθρωπον, ὅτ' εἶδεν εἰσιούσης τὸ μέγεθος καὶ τὸ κάλλος 'χαῖρε' φησι 'γύναι· ψευδεῖς ἄρ' ἦσαν αἱ διαβολαί· σὺ γὰρ ἐν τῷ προσώπῳ τῷ σῶ καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἔχεις τὰ φάρμακα.

PLUTARCH.

Ὁ βασιλεὺς Φίλιππος ἦρα Θεσσαλῆς γυναικὸς αἰτίαν ἐχούσης καταφάρμακεύειν αὐτὸν· ἐσπούδασεν οὖν ἡ Ὀλυμπιάς λαβεῖν τὴν ἄνθρωπον ὑποχείριον. ὡς δὲ εἰς ὄψιν ἐλθοῦσα τό τε εἶδος εὐπρεπὲς ἐφάνη . . . 'χαιρέτωσαν' εἶπεν ἡ Ὀλυμπιάς 'αἱ διαβολαί· σὺ γὰρ ἐν σεαυτῇ τὰ φάρμακα ἔχεις.'

There can be little doubt that Plutarch's story is derived from Satyrus, probably a reminiscence for which he had to find names. He is not writing history in this treatise, so he had a free hand.

W. R. PATON.

Vathy, Samos.

REVIEWS

THEMIS: ETC.

Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion. By JANE ELLEN HARRISON. With an Excursus on the Ritual Forms preserved in Greek Tragedy, by Prof. Gilbert Murray; and a chapter on the origin of the Olympic Games, by Mr. F. M. Cornford. Cr. 8vo. One vol. Pp. xxxii+559. 152 illustrations in the text. Cambridge: at the University Press. 1912. Price 15s. net.

MISS HARRISON is the Scholar Gipsy of Hellenic studies. In this book we find her ranging 'still untired' the accustomed fields and, to our regret, plunging into the dark and devious coverts of savage anthropology; while from her generous self-revelation we learn with what undiminished ardour 'a fugitive and gracious light she seeks.' If that light be still 'shy to illumine'; if what she hails as the true gleam be no more than a philosophical *feu follet*; that does not affect the real value of her achievement. For the road to Truth is paved with good heresies; and if indeed *Themis* embodies one, it is of the very best kind—at once brilliantly suggestive and a direct incitement to controversy.

1. Miss Harrison has taken for text the epigraphic Hymn found by Prof. Bosanquet at Palaikastro in Crete, and edited by him conjointly with herself and Prof. Gilbert Murray. She sets out from the assumption that this inscription, although of late Roman date, preserves a relic of that primitive 'group-thinking' which, following Durkheim, she now holds to underlie all religion. The 'Grundgedanke' of the Hymn is *tribal initiation as a New Birth*; this idea expressed itself in the cult of a 'Greatest Kouros,' who was the collective projection of the Kouretes or 'Initiated Young Men' of the tribe; who developed into an Eniautos Daimon—the Genius of the 'Year' in the sense of growth-cycle—and eventually into the full-blown mystery-god. On this hypothetical foundation the author proceeds to reconstruct her whole theory of Greek religion, rejecting with a fine candour several chief corner stones of her *Prolegomena*. The main results are these: all that was vital and vivifying in that religion emanated from the cult of Dionysus; because he, 'who might never enter Olympus,' embodied the conception of life perennially renewed which domin-

ated primitive matrilinear groups; whereas the Olympians were the sterile creations of a monarchical deism. But, *ex hypothesi*, they too started as group projections; Zeus, Apollo, Hermes are all Kouroi gone wrong under the blighting influence of individualistic thinking, which Dionysus for some reason escaped wholly, as did Herakles partially. (The statement that Herakles likewise never got into Olympus, which as far as myth and cult are concerned he so conspicuously did, is Miss Harrison's picturesque way of putting this.)

The most striking novelty in all this is the combination of Bergson's *durée* with Durkheim's *représentations collectives*. For the Eniautos Daimon derives, as is fully acknowledged, from Dr. Frazer's Vegetation Spirit; the principle that the god reflects the social structure of his worshippers is familiar; while that the dominant instinctive idea of primitive man was the persistence of Life through change, was taught us by a great Euhemerist long before we heard that blessed word *durée*. I speak of Sir Alfred Lyall, who traced worship and deification of the dead to this very idea. That is worth recalling, because much of 'Themis' is a polemic against Euhemerism, inspired by Prof. Ridgeway's recent theory of the Funeral Origin of Tragedy and the Games. Here old foes meet with new faces, for Miss Harrison's view of Hero-Worship is a reversion to Max Müller's. Admittedly, 'heroes' were commemorated; but a dead man only became a Hero by absorbing the ritual and functions of an Eniautos Daimon. Max Müller said that it was not until a Solar Hero had been created that any real man could be called Herakles or his exploits sung as those of Herakles. At Olympia, the Eniautos Daimon takes on a solar character; Pelops as the Sun marries Hippodameia as the Moon. In fact (p. 392) 'there is scarcely any mythological figure that does not contain sun and moon elements.' To rehabilitate this doctrine, it was essential to demolish Prof. Ridgeway's; and the claim to have done so lends special interest to Mr. Cornford's chapter on the Origin of the Olympic Games.

2. Mr. Cornford's thesis is that the

Games began as a 'race of the Kouretes,' and the winner of this race was regarded as incarnating the Eniautos Daimon. He will first put the 'Funeral theory' out of court by the evidence of ancient authorities; and the first witness he calls is Pindar. In the First Olympian, he says, Pindar 'dates the Games' from the chariot victory of Pelops; *i.e.* from an event in his lifetime, not from his death. Were this true, Mr. Cornford would score a palpable hit. But the fact is, unluckily, that Pindar does no such thing. He says not one word in *Ol. I.* about the founding of the Games; and wherever he does speak of it (notably in *Ol. II.*, *III.*, *X.*, all for victors of the same year as *Ol. I.*) he ascribes it to Herakles, who held the first contest ἀρχαίῳ σάματι παρ Πέλοπος (*Ol. X. 30*). This singular oversight has led Mr. Cornford to base his main argument on 'the myths of the First Olympian about the origin of the Games.' There are no such myths, as anyone may convince himself by reading the Ode. It is futile, therefore, to urge that the Feast of Tantalus 'constitutes a serious crux' for the Funeral theory; that 'dark and disreputable story' has no more to do with the Olympic Games than the equally dark Ixion-myth of the Second 'Pythian' has with the Theban Iolaia. But Pindar fares badly throughout the book. Among minor inaccuracies I note (p. 261) 'Pindar . . . salutes no *daimon* by name. He asks 'What god, what hero, or what man shall we sing?' Is it really forgotten that he promptly answers, *Zeus, Herakles, Theron?* (*Ol. II. 2 sqq.*)

Coming to Mr. Cornford's second witness, we find it is the legend Pausanias heard from the Elean antiquaries that 'the Idaean Dactyls or Kouretes' held a foot-race at Olympia long before the days of Pelops. One would have thought that Lobeck had exploded this legend for good; certainly no one who wishes to found upon it can afford to ignore his elaborate demonstration of its late and worthless character. As Mr. Cornford says, it has been 'persistently rejected'; but he overlooks the true reason—there is no witness for it earlier than Strabo, and an overwhelm-

ing consensus of tradition and authority against it. How does he support it? (1) 'Pindar himself is our witness' that there was a Cave called the Idaean at Olympia (p. 239). But it is a Scholiast, not Pindar, who says this; moreover, he hedges, while the other schol. ad. loc. plump for the 'Ἰδαίων ἄντρον being the famous Cretan one. (2) There was an altar of the Kouretes in the Altis, marked as ancient by its position (p. 239. The reference to Paus. V. 8. 1. should be V. 14. 7). Let us hear Pausanias: *πλησίον δὲ τοῦ Σεκυωνίων θησαυροῦ (βώμος) ἢ τοι Κουρήτων ἢ τοῦ Ἀλκμήνης ἐστὶν Ἡρακλέους· λέγεται γὰρ καὶ ἀμφοτέρω.* Now, the Elean antiquaries were all for the Kouretes; they had transferred to them not only Herakles' importation of the olive, but his very name. Is there not a strong presumption that they gave him the benefit of the doubt here because his traditional claim to this altar could not be ignored? Be that as it may, nothing can be built on an attribution to the Kouretes which even they considered dubious.

So much for the testimony adduced against the Funeral theory. If that theory is to be driven off the field, it must be by other weapons.

3. Miss Harrison is at her best in dealing with the two ritual myths on which her whole theory hangs. But the attempt to explain that of Zagreus by the analogy of tribal initiation rites which simulate a death and revival, brilliant though it is, breaks down just because it does not 'save the phenomena.' Human sacrifice is dismissed as negligible on account of its rarity (!) past and present; no notice is taken of fertility-sacrifices, nor of Zagreus' affinity with Adonis, Attis, and above all Osiris. It is conceded that his myth 'contains an element of Corn or rather Year Baby'; but objected, that Dr. Frazer's view 'fails to explain the Kouretes and the Titans disguised with white clay.' (But do savages disguise themselves *only* for initiation rites?) Here we have Miss Harrison's pivotal assumption—that the myth of

the infant Zeus guarded by the Kouretes and the myth of the infant Zagreus slain and restored to life are one and the same. But in spite of reconstruction, the stories remain two; the child grows up unscathed in the Zeus-myth; there is no place for the Kouretes in the Zagreus-myth. Clement, *capable de tout* in the way of syncretism, drags them in—and thereby makes the story absurd; the Titans 'privily stole away the child' under their very noses, '*while they were dancing round him.*' But another question arises—had the Kouretes originally anything to do with Child-Nurture? Hesiod, who is very full on the Cretan Birth of Zeus, never mentions them, and makes Gaia rear the child. Is it not probable that their sole original function was just that of the Salii, whose long-recognised affinity with them Miss Harrison well emphasises? (It accords with this that they are *πρόπολοι* of Athena and Hecate as well as of Rhea). While Miss Harrison's study of the Palaikastro Hymn admirably brings out the magical intent of the Kouretic dance, it fails in proving the connection of this with tribal initiation. And she does not seriously meet the prime difficulty, that whereas savage initiation naturally takes place at puberty, the Greek myths and cults in which she sees traces of it all have to do with a new-born babe. 'When the Greeks lost touch with the tribal customs which involved the rite of adolescence, *we may suspect that they invented* or at least emphasised Infant Initiation' (p. 20, italics mine). That sentence is typical of the book. The charm, and it must reluctantly be added, the weakness of *Themis* lies in its uncontrolled subjectivity. We catch the author's enthusiasm; we sympathise with her frank 'delight and amazement' whenever a fresh piece of evidence fits into her theory; but we cannot help seeing how frequently that theory depends on assuming that a thing is true because you 'suspect'—and wish—it to be true. It is all magnificent—but how much of it is science?

W. M. L. HUTCHINSON.