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Between Mythology and History. The Ancient Poet at the Crossroads of Truth and False

Abstract: Today History is based on written documents. So, the Truth resides on the way a source is discovered and worked upon. In other words, history, in searching for the truthfulness of a past event, needs written documents.

In the ancient times, where mythology was an important part in the sphere of history, most of the historians were poets. By their special ritual, these glorious storytellers were searching for the truthfulness of a passed fact. Going in the Underworld of gods, where no mortal can, ancient poets were the only guild who, in the middle of a crowd, always spoke the reality. Moreover, these storytellers were reality itself, because the Muses, daughters of Zeus, spoke through them. So when a word was given in from of an immense audience, everyone was part of a sacred ritual; a ritual of the Truth.

As the events progress, so History. The power of the ancient and powerful poets, were but an obscure past. Words were transformed into sentences, and the writing system became the basic truthfulness of a past event. And so, forgotten, the old storytellers became mere poets, where fantasy and supernatural were the basic construct of a poetry.

Keywords: Poets, History, Truth, Homer, Philosophy of History.

Many ancient scholars have debated over a long period of time the area of Greek-Roman mythology and all the elements that have defined its existence: philosophy, history, etymology or religion. Each of these component parts expressed, through their thinkers, in their argumentation, their position on mythology; some have been convinced of the erudition from archaic narratives, others have tried to combat the mistakes of these stories through their correctness, demonstrating that what was mythical either did not fit into the system of modern values, or perpetuate a mistake not allowed for erudition reached a higher stage of understanding. The raising of an educated man within a society was made only through these debates. Scholarship for the ancients was the ability to know as many problems as possible in this laborious and arguable field, to have the quality of speech both in writing and in public spaces, and to perpetuate the knowledge of others, along with other famous writers in this gambling game of human knowledge.

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Such manifestations and elements of man's formation over the centuries were also passed on to the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, who through his vast knowledge, realizes a humanist work at a time when most scientific papers sought to expose as much as possible to European intellectual circles new ways to know the environment. Contemporaneously with Descartes and his theories of reality, Vico wanted to prove through his reading that the only fully veritable knowledge of reality is not realized in the field of the senses but in the philosophy of history; a philosophy of history that, rightly read, can show that man's perspective on natural phenomena, and implicitly reality, is a constant that only perpetuates over time.

For Vichian thought, three important stages structure the method of knowing Greek-Roman mythology. First, language analysis denotes how archaic thought occurred at the time. Secondly, Vico's *Critical Art* establishes the space and historical time that archaic thought existed. In other words, this second stage presents the space-time frame, the favourable context where mythological reflection was manifested. Thirdly, through a complex analysis of "metaphysics", the Italian philosopher wishes to demonstrate how the above-mentioned framework relates by a sacred ritual identified. So the existence of thinking, the context in which it took place, and the way it existed – by what means, referring to a specific system – define the Vichian study, proving to the reader that any Greek-Roman myth represented in the area of our human history is a true, undeniable fact.

Through the contemplation of the three stages in Vichian thought, our goal is to demonstrate first of all that the poet, through his access to transcendence, can feel inspired about a past that has already happened. So the Greek archaic poet is a historian through this nature. Secondly, history, despite the contemporary perspective, was a sacred ritual of knowledge of the past. Thus, history has an obvious metaphysical component, a retrospective of a lifetime experienced at a time when only the gods can remind the mortals. It will thus be said that the sacred ritual fulfils the role of remembrance.

Having the main goals, how can we demonstrate them? First of all, an analysis of the primary sources will help us substantially in making an argument to support the purpose of our work. These include the works of Homer *Iliad and Odysseeia*, the poems of Hesiod *Work and Days* and *Theogonia*, and the works of the philosopher Plato *About the Soul*, *About Beauty* and *Laws*; on the dramaturgy level, Eschil with *Orestia* and *Troienele*, together with Seneca *Agamemnon*, completes this main bibliographic picture.

In order to reach the reflection on the truth, we must admit that our research topic implicitly refers to this category, because history, by the definition we attribute today, is not at all compatible with that of the ancient Greek poets. Moreover, their outlook on history differs greatly from what we today conceive as a written source, the convincing act of an action in the human past. Starting from this finding, we will analyse in this scientific excursus the following: first of all, history is not just written material.

The function and objective of history in Greek archaic poets was not subordinated to written material, but to oral communication; Secondly, history does not mean truthfulness only through written documents. The alternative of truth was thus only found by the nature of the sacred word of the poet, infused by divinity; if we cannot ascertain the existence of written documents attesting to the archaic Greek poet's history and his ability to make history, with what we can replace them? and last but not least, Homeric poems have a particular way of referring to history: by religion, geography, mentality, biography, and military strategy. But how do these elements affect the utterance of truth by the fact that the poet has a particular vision of history?

The historian has always been constrained by his environment of erudition, a space where he is limited by his documents, and he is looking for the truth of past events. For what we call today Truth, the concept itself immediately *sends out the ideas of objectivity, communicability, unity* (Detienne 1996, 41). Moreover, "contemporary society perceives a truth at two levels: on the one hand, compliance with some logical principles, on the other hand, conformity with the real, thereby being inseparable from the ideas of demonstration, verification, experimentation." (Detienne 1996, 41)

For Detienne, the relationship between truth and myth is based on an evolution of rational Greek thought. What makes the link between the two elements legitimate is the perception of the Greek archaic man in relation to the phenomenon of thought. In other words, mythological thinking was from the beginning a philosophical reason (Detienne 1996, 43).

It is simple for philosophy to perceive myths as an undeniable truth precisely because these stories incorporate in themselves moral elements that have been taken over by the future thinkers of the ancient Eliade. The relationship between thinking and the event is crucial. To a historian, for example, it would seem rather suspicious to analyse a philosophy of thought in relation to the temporality of events, just as a contemplative of reason wishes to remain in his meditation without any external influence, careful to the evolution of human thinking over the centuries. Everything seems to take the perspective on which is formed a certain idea, a chain of arguments, a systematized plea. A historical discourse is distinguished from the nature of historical reality by the relationship of the two on veracity. In other words, each of the elements mentioned earlier contains a certain amount of truth: either we incarnate the pathos historian who, like Thucydides or Polybios, contemporaries of the political changes in the ancient cities.

In front of such a structure that carefully delimitates its own nature, perception and methodology, our look unquestionably seeks to overcome these obstacles.

The philosophy of history consents to seeking truthfulness precisely through a concept that has transformed over time. Is it necessary to begin our

meditation only with the definition given by Karl Löwith to the philosophy of history as a “systematic interpretation of universal history according to a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed towards ultimate significance?” (Löwith 2010, 11). Eliade, for example, admits that a historical analysis of mythical events is possible precisely because “the symbol, the myth, the ritual expresses, on different planes and with their own means, a complex system of coherent affirmations on the ultimate reality of things, a system that can be considered as a metaphysical” (Eliade 1991, 13). In other words, truthfulness is not necessarily given by an objective reality, but by a subjective metaphysics: the truth through the eyes of the seeker (Dumitriu 1990, 123-138).

If we are to follow the thread of the author’s logic, we find that if “the word is missing, the fact exists: only that it is said – that is, revealed in a coherent manner – by symbols and myths” (Eliade 1991, 14). Thus, history is no longer subject to strictly conventional elements where the document itself is an incontestable Truth, but an authentic philosophical system: the search for veracity in the evolution of thought.

In addition to Löwith or Eliade, who applies a philosophy of history in their research, Vico provides a much more nuanced framework to the actual approach. For the Italian thinker, the truthfulness of a historical fact is not expressed in the light of events written or recorded over a temporal period, but of man’s perspective on the environment from which it originates, how man’s vision attempts to rationalize the surroundings, even from mythical periods. For the real, The Truth, being a wisdom of paganism, “began to manifest itself as a metaphysical, not a rational and abstract one, like today, of people with a book, but a metaphysics based on feeling and imagination, how must have been it that of the first men” (Vico 1972, 231).

Veridity does not exist only through the perception, but also through that of a legal authority. Vico clearly sets out his own theses on this subject. Poetic wisdom is of a divine nature, its existence being known through the Muse, which Homer in *Odyssey* defines as “precious gold, as the science of evil and good” (*Ibidem*). Being of a divine nature, and thus falling into a metaphysical area, the Muse became, through evolution, the science of auspices guess. Since she is also divine, *divinari*¹, she also incorporates the element of the juridical authority of all human deeds. So, providence deals with both divine and human things (Vico 1972, 231).

Greek poet at the confluence between History and Mythology. Memory as poetic reflection.

The recent studies on this thematic segment are divided into two main arguments: when the author favours the knowledge of the mythological past through the existence of a memoir – whether individual or collective – it is

based on an external premise outside the group social. In other words, the memory for this author is an out-of-space cause unknown to the characters in question (for example the generation that actively participated in the siege of Troy) where, by natural means, it has a continuity. Whether natural or with a motive or purpose, memory serves active participants a glorious imprint of illustrious events in the depth of consciousness.

If the first part of this theme holds more to an anthropology of manifestation of consciousness in relation to mythological time and space, the second type of argument is about the relation of the poet with memory – a relationship between the recipient of memory and a sender of the same mnemotechnical element. The historical past can only be accessed by aed through:

- a. *Aletheia* – the magical-religious word articulated with poetic memory;
- b. *Anamnesis* – which is the memory, revelatory of a mystery;
- c. *Ekklesis* – the action that causes a evocation through which the poet's desired world is accessed.

Elizabeth Minchin and Hector's Memory as a Transition between the Past and the Future.

For Elizabeth Minchin (Minchin 2012, 83-99), memory, in mythological stories, is the way an individual manages to transfer information about an important past event over several generations. In other words, this cultural memory focuses on fixed points in the distant past, being perpetuated over a long period of time. And precisely this temporal longevity is due to the need for members to become aware of the individuality of the past in relation to other historical communities.

The need for uniqueness is one of the main reasons for the participants in that major event not to forget their own history, their own past².

Another major aspect in Elizabeth's argument is that happenings change in a natural way, depending on the change of the world. What we know today as rudely or fantastically a mythological narrative is due to the change of human mentality over time. In other words, being too distant and unknown to the contemporary eye, incapable of retrospective or introspective action, mythology seems to us as a set of false narratives (Minchin 2012, 86-87).

Using the arguments of Professor Jan Assmann, our author has some concepts to prove the truthfulness of the Homeric poems, precisely by applying his personal hypothesis, as outlined above. Elizabeth has three types of memory she found in the Homeric poems and subjected them to a rigorous interpretation:

First, personal memory is the *memory that remembers*. In *Odyssey* (19.392-466), Eurycleia, when he was washing Odysseus's feet, dressed in a beggar, discovered at the feet of the stranger in front of her a scar that resembled in a striking way that of the king of Ithaca. Through this observation, Eurycleia

activates its personal memory, leading the reader to a past only observed by her. That memory talks about the presence of Autolycus in the house of King Laertes, as she presents to the father-in-law of the monarch the baby that his wife gave birth to (399-402), as Anticleia asked Autolycus to name the boy wrapped in the face (402-404) and how the Eurycleia slave heard the old man by giving him the name of the baby Odysseus (405-409) (Minchin 2012, 88).

Second, communicative memory as *the memory of the past*, is the memory that intentionally remembers certain happenings and tells them. In the example of the author, Nestor represents the type of character that his wisdom full of past experiences is authentic parables and extremely good advice for young warriors. A concrete case is also found in the second Homeric poem (3.103-200, 254-328), when in the face of Telemah, Nestor tells the son of Odysseus, all the percussions involved in the king of Ithaca (Homer 2012, 34-48).

Cultural memory as a reproduction of the past, present and future is the most interesting point of argumentation of the researcher. The scene in which Hector appears alongside Andromaque is relevant. In the sixth song, before Hector emerged from the gates of Troy, his wife, Andromaque, waited for him in front of the doors that delineated the fortress-plain fortress. She is without father, mother or brother (413; 421-424). Hector only has it, and fear is slowly corrupting his conscience. He does not want to be left behind, nor to be alone forever with his son in his arms, knowing that, despite the bloody past events in which her husband had no injuries or even touched by Death, everything it will end in the end; when at some point, the impossible feverish will become the possible tangible. In the face of such a speech, Hector takes into account the truth of his wife's words, but his feelings at the moment were headed towards his status in the Trojan community: if in the face of danger he would have fled, acting like a coward, moments of rebellion against Troy would have patted their honour and would be ashamed of their own person (441-443). But Hector was raised to become a warrior, a fighter for the defence of his land, where each victory meant keeping his father, his fortune and his character pure honour (444-446).

Thus, the Trojan prince is preoccupied with a memory at the social and cultural level: the way the status of a warrior is perceived according to the mentality of his time (Minchin 2012, 92). Moreover, during his speech with Andromaque, the words are no longer his, but Homer's. Through the prince's words, the author of the poems projects in the past, present and future the evolution of the son of Priam's wife. In the beginning, Hector designs his future consciousness, anticipating the Andromaque situation after the fall of Troy. He puts himself in the place of his wife, observing on the faces of other people the recognition of his own existence based only on the analogy with the courageous Hector, defending his homeland with virtue (460-461).

Starting from these examples, Elizabeth's argument is as follows: Homer is concerned in his work on how different characters project in the past or in

the future his own memories. In the case of Hector, he puts himself in the position of his wife, accessing his past by affirming that he has no parents or brothers to care for him; then his consciousness is placed on his own person, looking at the present where the image of the warrior struggling for the glory and honour of the city and family is outlined; and eventually Hector returns to Andromaque, anticipating a future where, under the destroyed walls of Troy, she will be recognized only by the bravery of her much-loved husband, finally killed by the ruthless Achaeans (Minchin 2012, 92-94).

Another aspect that Elizabeth examines in her scientific excursus is that the episode in *Odyssey* where the main character comes into contact with the queen of the court of King Alcinous and Queen Arete falls within the same hypothesis outlined above. In the 8th song, Odysseus, at the royal table, is deeply moved by the interpretation of the court poet, Demodocus, when he played the dispute between the hero present at the banquet and the great Achilles warrior during the Trojan War (8.75-82). After making a break, the *aedus* is invited to tell again an event from the distant past, this time about Ares and Aphrodite. After completing his speech, Odysseus, blessed with the pleasure of the heard, invites Demodocus to sing about the Trojan Horse and the collapse of Ilion (487-495). The *aedus* begins his journey, and Odysseus cries at the hearing of the related.

According to the author's interpretation, the poet's memory serves to know a past that happened within ten years of the fall of Troy, an event that was included in the cultural sphere: an *aedus*, on the island of Scheria, far from Ilion, singing a war in which Odysseus was also a witness. Thus, Demodocus brings before the reader of the Homeric poem the future back to the present, allowing us to see how the hero's adventures will be celebrated in the coming years (Minchin 2012, 96).

A first corollary can be presented as follows: for Elizabeth, memory is carried out from the perspective of anthropology; the memory remains always alive within a collective due to the unity of the information that the group imparts to it in mind. The ancestral virtues and their continuity are a good reason for the posterity that is conscious of the historical past. The inner frame of memory is based on some examples of Homeric poems where the author introduces temporal elements: through his characters, Homer recounts a historical past, a lived present, and an anticipated future. Eurycleia by remembrance tells the reader Odysseus's childhood; Nestor recounts his way from Troy to the house; Hector, in relation to Andromaque, remembers his wife's past, her solitary future under the walls of Ilion, and her status as a warrior along with the honour of honour; Demodocus entices the audience by revealing a past already captured by the cultural memory of a civilization. Moreover, he reveals to the others a past with glorious successes to posterity, which can be admitted that the poet's memory is a concrete point in a current, oscillating between the vision of the past as an event already

integrated into a cultural space and a future, taking on the living image of a historical past, that will certainly happen.

Finley and the Skepticity of Memory

Finley is more cautious and reluctant in case of extensive mythology debates. He borrows the question of Ranke, *how things really are*, and delimits his research from the natural definition of myths he finds in Oedipus, Prometheus or Trojan War narratives, detaching himself from the argumentative characteristics of modern and contemporary scholars like Sorel or Cassirer (Finley 1965, 297). His speech, at first glance, seems to focus on Greek history: the way he has created stories based on irrefutable evidence from mythical-religious narratives. It is hard to detract from the mythology's belonging to history, precisely because the researcher who wishes to look for causes can find them only in the fantastic narratives emanating from Homer and Hesiod. The whole past to Herodotus and Thucydides is full of mythos.

That is why, for Finley, the merging of history with mythology is accomplished within a framework of intentionality, every aspect, every word, and any story that has a reason behind them. There is no unfolding of ideas or creation of words without a particular pretext. Even when we speak of an oral tradition, the author summarizes his argumentation on the falsehood of the truth: creation was intentional. Who serves mythology in archaic space? the author asks when he attempts to read the nature of the mythological stories (Finley 1965, 297).

The product is the myth created from disparate elements, differing from one event to another, where time does not exist. The fake mythological discourse, in relation to History, is based on the lack of Time as a chronological element. For Finley, this is a reason to discredit mythology as a veritable discourse (Finley 1965, 285).

For the English historian, memory is controlled by what they like to see, what is relevant, rational, and purposeful. There is no collective memory, because if each member has actively participated in an event, the chances of forgetting will be great from one generation to the next. Moreover, collective memory is not subconsciously interested in what it is or what it wants to become; is not articulated (Finley 1965, 286). Even if there is a chance of remembrance of a historical past – which is due to a defect in knowledge, a mental hazard – it would only take place on an individual. In other words, individual memory is selective by its very nature.

Compared to individual consciousness, collective memory differs from the other by the purpose for which that memory creates a perspective on an event, repeated by those who consider it necessary to be repeated (Finley 1965, 287).

In relation to Elizabeth's research method, Finley demonstrates that the entire creed of mythology created by poets is at the level of a clear selection, at the level of motivation created by those who need narratives to prove their truthfulness. In relation to the history where Greek specialists focus on the present, telling real events, the poet represents the person who changes the narratives of the past according to the realities of his time.

If for the first two exegetes in the mythological discourse the poet represents a tool of a time that unfolds either naturally or intentionally, for Marcel Detienne and Jean Vernant, the whole unfolding of the narrative events starts from the very statute and actions of the *aedus*, the lecher of history, which by divine inspiration narrates and lives, at the same time, a veritable past that has enchanted whole warrior communities throughout the centuries. In other words, the argumentation hitherto enunciated does not take place above Time and Space where an element affects the cycle of the evolutionary event, but our gaze realizes the glorious transition to a perspective that gives birth to worlds or reminds its historical frameworks by accessing a sacred ritual.

Jean Pierre-Vernant and Memory as the evocation of the world of the gods

Memory of space, as we have seen in the previous chapter, causes the characters to remind events, either in a natural or intentional way. So, the relationship between man and his memory is determined by an external factor – the very framework of action.

But for the singing poet to sing in front of a certain audience, space becomes an ancillary element to the ritual that dwells on it. There is only a basis for the story that tells the historical truth of the facts in a heroic past, because it has the immediate experience of these distant facts. In other words, the poet “knows the past because he has the power to be present in the past” (Vernant 1995, 139). Dependence on Muses, which causes the creator of history to be in permanent contact with them, and revelation, denotes the existence of a memo “that conveys the poet to the old events during their time” (Vernant 1995, 140). This state of subordination to a revelation expressed by the Muse encompasses that person endowed with sensitivity in a space of sacredness. Thus, through the applicability of the sacred reproduction function of a past, the temporal “organization of its narrative only reproduces the series of events to which it assists in some way, even in their succession from the origin” (Vernant 1995, 140).

Similar to Detienne's study of the Truth Rulers of Archaic Greece, Vernant notes two perspectives of Memory in relation to the Past: between the ordinary human being to just look at events such as Finley's historian and the poet who sings a glorious past, there is a great the difference; according to Vernant, the verse maker when he becomes possessed by the inspiration of

the Museum, speaks an indisputable truth. The function of a priori determines the poet, referring to society, to become a truth-teller (Vernant 1995, 140).

Truthfulness does not become a problem for the singing of the origins of its society. For they always lead to truth. Through the genealogies in the *Ship's Catalogue* of the second Song, Homer speaks a truth (Denys 1976, 118-154). And Hesiod, through his sacred wisdom from the inspiration of the Muse, accurately reports the origins of the gods, men, and the curse of those in his nation destined to work in order to live in a chronological order. Through the leeches of history, this "search for origins acquires a truly religious meaning and attributes to the poet's work the character of the sacred message" (Denys 1976, 141). So, the sacredness of the poet, through the Muse, ensures the truthfulness of the origins (through ἔξ ἀρχῆς) and, at the same time, that of the past.

Speaking about Memory and the ritual ensemble, it is also necessary for the French researcher to make a statement on the poetic function. For before laying down fixed rules and discussing the sacred consequences of the poet, we are obliged to look at the mechanism that determines these elements. *Anamnesis*, or *recall function*, is an important pillar of Vernant's argument. Through this act of remembrance, the poet performs a recollection of the past (εκκλησις), *comparable to that made for the Homeric ritual by the dead: the call to the living and the coming to the light of the day for a few moments of a defunct returning from the infernal world*. Through εκκλησις, the poet automatically establishes contact with the past, where in the present case it represents the world beyond. Thus, History, as a whole and of the way in which it relates to the past, exists as a space beyond the living, a sacred and true metaphysics, where the *aedus* communicates permanently, when it is under the divine inspiration. In short, *the privilege that Mnemosyne confers upon the aedus*, determines him to establish bridges of communication with the past that "appears as a dimension of the world beyond" (Denys 1976, 143).

An example to establish the aforementioned hypothesis is the trip of Orpheus to Hell. With remorse after the loss of Eurydice, the poet in excellence and eternally in love decides to descend into Hell to Hades to ask his wife's soul (Bacon 1976, 79). Through his status as a poet, Orpheus has the privilege of communicating with the world beyond. He holds the function of memory by which it "does not reconstruct the time, nor does it cancel it" (Vernant 1995, 143). Descending into the Inferno is a passage to a country where it can perceive and understand what it wants to know. In order to understand why his wife was taken to the beyond world, Orpheus has to cross the barrier of existence, she must sacrifice her living person to know the cause of death. Moreover, with the accomplishment of self-sacrifice, the poet manages to perceive the consequences of the natural system as well. In

relation to the Orpheus, the simple act cannot change the natural, inducing Hades to violate the unwritten laws of the world. Its purpose is only to observe, through Mnemosyne, the memorial museum, the important events of the past. Instead, the orphan power, no matter how goddess it was, although it managed to cross the boundaries of normal, could not forget its own nature, curiously and clumsily, to find on the basis of emotions, the veracity of the real. The consequence was not only the loss of Eurydice's soul forever, but also the fall in depression – and ultimately the premature death – of the poet by excellence.

The third corollary follows the evolution of a rational judgment by which, in the case of Vernant's argumentation, the following conclusion is reached: the function of the Memory is fulfilled by *anamnesis* and *ekkelesis*; the first, expressing itself by *remembering* the poet's contact when he receives inspiration from the Muse and the second, the *evocation*, where the *aedus* accesses the historical past, making a bridge between the reality in which the discourse is done in front of an audience and the world from beyond where truth is a consequence of fulfilling a terrestrial ritual.

Marcel Detienne and Memory as a mediator between the Muse and the Poet

Of all the mortal creatures who had access to supreme knowledge and, implicitly, to the power of the gods, the poet and the prophet constantly shared the same destiny; the first, which, through the inspiration of the Muses, sings the historical past, and the second, through the influence of Apollo, predicts, through a terrible pathos, the future. The archaic communities are impressive by the capacities of the two mentors, leaving them temporarily in a time when access to the power of those who made the world was done only on the basis of people where their will was not shaped by choice but by a gift offered by those on Mount Olympos. And by this "gift", it was meant a divine gift offered by the gods to chosen murderers (Dodds 1983, 102). But this demiurgical honour does not exist without self-sacrifice; a mistress who loved Demodocus was the one who took his sight, instead giving him something better, the gift of singing (Dodds 1983, 102); Cassandra, mentioned at the beginning of the study, was able to state the truth of the future prophetess, but the world ignored it³; Laocoon, the priest of Apollo in Troy, knew the Achaeans's craft, but Athena did not let him tell Priam the secret of secrets, being strangled by a huge serpent born ex nihilo by Athena⁴; some new-borns of royal families are chosen by Museums to become poets, as Hesiod states in *Theogonia*⁵.

Thus, the active participation of the individual in this transition to other worlds through a specific ritual not only carries him, but also the community

he is part of, in a history where reality was perceived only from the perspective of the sacred. If the gift received from the gods had the consistency of a mortal shortage, we should not overlook an important aspect: we cannot claim existence without a specific cause – an element to ensure its functionality. The interdependence between the Poet, Music and Memory was at the transcendent level. For there could be no Memoirs without a Muza that would whisper to the *aedus* an important event of the past.

“Give me now grace, Holy Muse, Olimp with the lodge” (Homer 2012, 290)

Homer was singing when he wanted to know more closely who was coming before the great Agamemnon to battle (11.218), when he wanted to identify the one who had driven the Trojans out of the Greek ships (14.508), or when he searched out the burning perpetrator the vessel of Protesilau (16.112).

In the midst of the war, *aedus* sings important events where fighters and heroes alike, enemies and allies, are fighting for a noble cause. For if no one could have been able to relate the important events, everything would have turned into silence, then into oblivion. “Forgetting is therefore a water of death”⁶, Vernant said in the context of the Leba-deea Oracle, where a descent in the Hades area meant for the mortal a complete wiping of information: the past was therefore inaccessible. And for the warriors tried in the most important battles, a forgetfulness was in itself a death of a history. In such moments, the poet’s function becomes a right-talking memory for the fighter community: a true clerk of sovereignty by the historical remembrance of deeds and supreme arbitrariness through the objectivity with which he revealed to society the truth of the past (Detienne 1996, 63).

With this remembrance, the *aedus* assigns to the king and his sovereigns the legitimacy of their existence. Given its status within the hierarchy of society, the historian-clerk is in “the service of the «equal» and «equal» community of those who share the privilege of practicing the arms trade” (Detienne 1996, 63). Moreover, by the power of his word, “the poet makes from a mere mortal «the equal of a King»; he gives him Being, Reality” (Detienne 1996, 65). Memory is essential to warriors. That is why, within this social group, the aristocrat fighter appears to be interested in two key values: *Kleos* and *Kydos*. By *Kleos* was meant the glory that enlightened the victory; through divine grace, the one chosen, was recognized by the gods. *Kydos* was the glory that grew as meaning, transmitted by living speech from one generation to the next. Detienne’s hypothesis demonstrates that the alien cannot alone attribute the glory of a past. He is just a “mere agent, a source of his acts: his victory is due to the gods, and his deed, once committed, only takes shape through the word of praise” (Detienne 1996, 64). So the memory of others is limited to the present. Instead, by its status and word, the poet

attributes to memory the present past of remembrance. The question of truthfulness is questioned by Dodds asking whether there is the possibility of obtaining the information at a time when there were no written documents. According to the Irish author's argument, such information containing an assertive truth could only come from an outside environment of the poet, from a contact with a wider knowledge than his own. Thus, the creative thinking of the *aedus* is not the work of the ego, but of a *logos* beyond its existence.

Hesiod, influenced by the power of the Muses from *Works and Days*⁷, aims to sing the sacred race of immortals, drawing the attention of his brother Perses, that he wants to reveal only truths, according to reality (ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ Πέρση ἐτησῶμα μθησαμηνί) (Clay 2003, 32). For Detienne, this object has a sacred character: by its religious nature, the poetic function is a ritual speech, that is, an invocation of acquiring a knowledge beyond its consciousness; and, secondly, this sacredness is found in the religious character of the cultivated land. In other words, the truth, or the Truth of speech, appears embodied in two persons: the *aedus* and the plowman. The poet, through the magical-religious word, articulated with his memory, is the ruler of the Truth. And the plowman, through the effort of memory, is obliged to remember the sacred rituals of labour. From the Hesiodian perspective, the condition of man is dependent on his qualities as a farmer. For everything he produces keeps him alive, constantly preoccupied with the way nature manifests itself to his detriment or advantage (Clay 2003, 32). It is precisely through this performance that makes its existence condition, that the plowman acquires the memory. So for both participants – the poet and the worker – to temporal sacredness, memory is a sacred attribute acquired either by the function of remembrance of the true past – referring to a past – or by the function of remembrance of the present – the succession of the seasons as an eternal cycle.

In the *Inventory of Mythology*, Hecataios of Miletus appears in the context of Detienne's analysis of the truthfulness of mythical stories:

Interstitial writing, discreet as the smile of the one who is not yet a logographer, but a "simple story maker", writing histories "as they seem true. (hos moi dokei alethea einai)". (Detienne 1996, 147)

There is a major difference between the exegetic act and the interpretation. For the French researcher, the exegesis requires the addition of information on one already processed in the act of writing. In other words, there is something extra to something that already exists:

Exegesis is the uninterrupted commentary that a culture makes on its symbolism and practices, everything that it gives to its living culture status. Parasitic speech, capturing everything that can be evoked, exegesis proliferates from within; it is a speech that nourishes and strengthens the tradition to which it links and from which it draws its own substance (Detienne 1996, 138).

On the other hand, interpretation is the novelty of an idea introduced in writing in information already processed. As well as Detienne states, “an outlook on the memorial tradition” (*Ibidem*); a *corpus* of ideas coming from outside, strong enough to change the perspective of the text in question. Hecataios is a good example for the author. Repeating what the Greek scholar says at the beginning of his work – “Hecataios of Miletus speaks thus (mythêitai). These narratives write (grapho) as I think they are. For the narrations (logoi) of the Greeks, as they appear to my eyes, are many in number and worthy of laughter” (Hecataios din Milet, *FGrHist* 1 F 1 a Jacoby *apud* Detienne 1996, 141) –, Detienne observes in this story-teller a first historian, older than Herodotus, much praised over the centuries. What Hecataios does is to interpret narratives coming to him. This erudite action “begins with the graphic space that brings our multiplicity to our eyes and continues with the narrative of verosimil” (Detienne 1996, 147). Being a genealogist and a geographer, he has the authority of the words and becomes for the people around him “the maker, the author of these stories, just as the potter shapes a cup and the poet builds a poem” (Detienne 1996, 144).

An undeniable fact for Detienne is not only the poet’s ability to convey the Truth to the hearers but, implicitly, the action that defines *mython arkhon synthetes*⁸ as being the ruler of Truth; his word is *alethes*, like his spirit (*vovç*) (Detienne 1996, 69). But such a metaphysical characteristic cannot be achieved without a complementary relationship, coming from a specific voice, a gesture belonging to a sacred ritual and, of course, a *poetic word* (Detienne 1996, 105). In relation to Vernant, the French researcher denies by *the poetic word* the ability to plot a parallel world parallel to it: “the word is not so much regarded as resting in the context of a behaviour whose symbolic values converge” (Detienne 1996, 105). The gesture and the symbolism of the gesture occur together when an attitude proves its authority, the power of taxation. For Achilles, for example, the oath that he gives to Agamemnon’s sceptre denotes the authority of detachment from the moral authority of the king of the Achaeans. From the point of view of the hero, not the existence of a man in charge is important – his character or aspirations – but his sceptre, the legal element of a political power; Peleu’s son, after he has unloaded Agamemnon’s nerves, telling him *wine bottles, a dog-bot with a terrible soul*, he faces a ritual by which he makes an oath by refusing to help the king of Argos in his war with Hector and the Trojans (Il.231-244) (Homer 2012, 12). Another example that can depict the power of a word illustrated by a gesture specific to the mythical period, is also found in the Iliad, IXth Song (565-571). It provides a coherent explanation:

At any moment, verbal language was interwoven with gestual language: when Althaia curses his son, his curse is expressed by word and posture: squatting on the ground, she strikes the earth hard to awaken Erinia vengeful. The attitude of

the body is that which gives power to the word, a word that identifies itself with the dark figure of Erinia. (Detienne 1996, 106)

But neither Althaia nor Achilles are poets, but beings who, in their voices, express magical-religious words. The resemblance between the two and the *aedus* is limited to the faculty of expression. In other words, everything depends on the ritual in which these words are said: the curse of Althaia, the oath of Achilles, and the story told by the poet. Thus, in a religious system, the consequence is this: their social behaviours are effective symbols. For they “act by virtue of their own power; in the gesture of the hand, in the sceptre, in the olive-decorated wool, there is a religious force” (*Ibidem*), so metaphysical. The authority of words spoken by a predicate, *aedus* or king-judge does not belong to “a category fundamentally different from the winner’s proclamation or the dangers of a dying man to his murderers. It’s the same kind of magic-religious word” (Detienne 1996, 106).

Marcel Detienne’s research focuses on the poet’s perspective: more precisely, he sets his argument within the world of the verse-bearer; is a perspective that comes from the way that the reality looks around. His word is Truth, and his quality is Truth Master by the way he activates and articulates his memory in relation to himself and to others. With all that he knows comes from a metaphysical environment where his senses are constrained by their nature to understand only what is given to him. Moreover, only through the Museum the poet holds the power of comprehension – the gift of clairvoyance – which is above his perception; The Muse activates the memory of the history healer, and he formulates the sung, sacred and metaphysical word. Thus, what the poet says by divine inspiration is an assertory truth. Through the social function it belongs to, specific to the archaic Greek environment where the lack of a sacred cult leader has been known from the beginning, the poet’s existence serves to identify a lived time. In short, the power of the *aedus* is to overemphasize a particular event in front of a community. He merely gives memory to those who, by their silence, have forgotten. It goes as far as exposing existence above time; For a warrior, this is not what he is without first recalling his status, duties, and objectives.

For Hesiod’s plowman, the same thing happens. But, in the case of the earth, the memory does not come from an external environment, unknown to it, but from its very nature. Without the mind of the sacred rituals of the earth, man can no longer exist. Dependence on this, forces the plowman to memorize what is necessary for his own survival – a determined act of the gods.

Since there is no word but no gesture, everything seems to merge into one element. Invocation and singing, hand gestures and oath, curse, and story are all part of a specific ritual of the age we are talking about. The voice gives

coherence to the word, and in turn the word turns into a symbol. Detienne attributes to the adjective θεόκρᾶντος the function of creating or dwelling an *ex nihilo* thing only when we are talking about the actions of the divinities: “the gods have the privilege of deciding and doing (νοῆσαι τε κρῆναι)” (*Od.*, V, 170 *apud* Detienne 1996, 108). The connection between the world of gods and the poetic does not differ for the French researcher. The connection is only at the level of metaphysics: Hermes, who pretends to be an inspired poet, does not create the illusion that what he is playing is false. For, “far from speaking vain, useless words, he makes the immortal gods and the dark earth” (*Ibidem*). It is precisely that ἐτήτυμα, mentioned by Hesiod that also appears in the context of the mortal poet: “Poetic praise raises a reality of the same order; the word is here even a living thing, a natural reality that is growing, developing; together with praise grows and the man praised, for man is praise himself⁹”. The human being is her own existence, related to this ἐτήτυμον. And without the inspiration of aedus, man is no longer what he must be.

From the social function to the divinatory function. Conclusions

By virtue of the spoken word and the way the story could be lived through the eyes of the reciter of such a world that existed in a past where the orality was the mainstay of stories, the poet, through his extraordinary memory, could look in two simultaneous space-time frames: the memory of the past and the present. The community receiving interest with the pathetic recitation of the simple aedus, aware of the added memory, the experiences of the past in relation to the conduct of the action. Collective memory is always manifested within a collective, and this social group retains the events of the past. Of course, time will go unhindered to these historical happenings, and when individuals will reflect on what has been done, they will notice with stupor the major change in mentalities, expressions, and gestures. Whether they will call it an intentionality or merely a coincidence of the change in those past events, one fact laments the concrete: the existence of a memorial denotes a formidable storage capacity of the archaic Greek at a time when writing was at the beginning (Detienne 1996, 65-69).

The element that differentiates human reality is the way the poet perceives the surrounding world. His powers are of a metaphysical nature, his ritual realizing the transcendence between our world and that of the gods. Not for the archaic community the reception of past events was the birth of a primordial mechanism through which memories became memories. But it was the poet who, through his religious and social function, became the primary mechanism himself. In other words, from him the memory started toward the listening group; he gives the other members, through his memory, the

divine ability to contemplate history, to overcome their ability to understand, to become aware of a nature beyond their perception.

This power, like a sacramental system, has specific stages through which the poet has access to the past. First, any contemplation of history implies the existence of a memory that signifies access to the unknown world. Secondly, when memory is mentioned as an element that delimits the present past, we are obliged to present the function through which this system manifests itself in the archaic period of Eliade. *Aletheia*, or the magic-religious words, lie in the fecund memorial area; *anamnesis* is the memory of the singer in relation to what is sung; *ekklesis* implies the ritual evocation through which the poet makes the transition to the world of gods and the *etetuma*, the way in which a speech, having the specific sacredness behind it, is assertive.

Conclusion

The poet is a historian; a creator of real facts, at a time when the existence of writing was precarious. During the archaic period, only by the existence of a political interest, writing was introduced into the centre of community consciousness. “Legibility and simplicity of *Linear B* (Lissner 1972, 103-112) correspond perfectly to the public character required by new social relationships. In fact, the fundamental gesture of the first legionnaires is to give written laws, not to turn them into codes entrusted to professionals, but to bring them to the eyes of citizens, at the centre of civic space” (Detienne 1996, 66). In other words, written laws, few in number, served only to their visual awareness by those who passed by them. Plato in *Laws* (Platon 1995, III, 680 a5) reminds the shepherds’ tribes, who, after the great flood, do not know any martyr, no creator of strict, clear and sufficiently defined rules. Thus, in the period when the poet has a prominent social and metaphysical character in relation to the other functions, the Greek community has not experienced any other transmission of information, and therefore of law, only through the living language. The written ones served for those who did not know the rules: “The laws, Solon says, write them (*graphein*) for the good and for the bad” (Fr. 24, pp. 18-20, ed Diehl *apud* Detienne 1996, 66).

“Political power has never been identified with writing”, Detienne states in a chapter devoted to this issue (Detienne 1996, 67). Moreover, this political power, through the deepening affiliation of the domestic religion, has concentrated exclusively over a long period of time on the modelling of the city’s institutions. So political authority has as its source a sacred function¹⁰. From the outset, the *genos* concept was reflected not only in the union of the clans, but also in the territory they were dominating. *Philotes* meant a more juridical than a sentimental connection, and *aidos*, the duty consciousness, was strongly determined by this legally binding juncture (Glantz 1992, 11-12).

Whether because of the mentality of the writing¹¹, the writing had no access to the social life of a city, or because of the refusal for the scoring act¹², the Archaic community was content with the spoken, heard and memorized language; but not for a long time¹³.

In the face of a changing eternal time, the poet maintained his metaphysical capacities only when the information was transmitted alive. In a world where life and immortality represented a duality that aimed at shaping the essence of man¹⁴, the *aedus*, before the philosophers, expressed this desire for immortality by its very transcendent nature. In a universe where, on the mythological plane, man became what cannot be, and on the philosophical plane the being was just what is in and through itself, the Greek poet remained faithful to the first defining aspect: through the versatile declamations, spoken with patos, the human being could metamorphosis in the animal or divinity – became what cannot be. In such a reality, any radical change of existence meant no purpose¹⁵. Through his songs, the god was looked upon as a man who summed up the brightest virtues (Otto 1995, 18-44), and all the human crafts he spoke in a meeting seemed to be known only by him¹⁶.

If the poet could acquire the Truth by divine inspiration in relation to the philosopher who, through reason, acquires the capacity of understanding what is and exists in this reality, means that the first becomes solidary with the god that gave him the memory and the second was bound only by himself and the ability to structure information through the limited perceptions of its human nature. The advantage of the storyteller was the existence of the sacred memory, passed to the community. In the face of a philosopher who constantly seeks divinatory thoughts and answers, he was easy to the poet “as a flake, Plato says, and he is winged and sacred, able to create only when, glowed by divine grace, he is despondent to consciousness and the judgment expelled from her. Otherwise, no man with judgment in his place could lift up or sing oracle” (Pippidi 1970, 62). The functions acquired by the archaic sphere through a self-sacrifice mentioned earlier in this research determined him to gather any precise and truthful information from the world of divinities. It was not his performance that had to be debated in public speaking, but the way to convey, update as accurately as possible the information of the Muses. The memory of the poet gained not only the ability to give a beast the memory of its existence – as we have seen in the case of the relationship between Odysseus and Demodocus – but was in itself an essential transcendence point in which the world’s meanings, its structure, its beginning, about which no ordinary mortal could see (Bădiliță 1996, 11).

Thus, the poet’s memory was the tool through which he made the passage of his consciousness beyond the world he was reflecting. The sacred process of transcendence was in itself a metaphysical system that made communica-

tion with a space inaccessible to the perception of any mortal who was not chosen by the gods.

At the basic level, the existence of the *aedus* – its social and religious characteristics – and its way of reporting on both spaces – the sacred and the profane – falls within the argumentation of the three main features mentioned at the beginning of this research.

First, the archaic thinking that sets the principle of origins and languages is found in the poet's relation to space and time. When Hesiod, inspired by the Muses at the beginning of his poem, narrates the birth of the gods with pathos, he relates what existed. Through his divine effort and the search for origins, Hesiod attributes a sacred character to the message given to his brother, Perses. Thus, by chanting the origin of reality, Hesiod's past is much more than the antecedent of the present: it is its source. At Homer, for example, we find the need to know the causes of events: the origin of the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon of Chant I, or the Catalogue of the Corps of Canto II, where, by genealogy, the heroes are related to the gods. This methodology will be copied later by Hecataios of Miletus, where, in the context of the rebellion of the Ionians against the Ahemenis in 499 BC, all the nations upon whom Darius reigns and the forces of the Great King present before the council gathered in Miletus (Detienne 1996, 142).

Second, the second feature that recalls the search for a concrete principle beyond the physical space is found in the poet's Memoir, a concept storing causes and consequences, which has long been debated.

Thirdly, reporting archaic thinking on unknown causes, which automatically identifies a sacred ritual outside of its perceptual space, I noticed in the way the archaic poet was referring to the Past by the Memory Acquired. The mechanism of memory was in itself a sacred ritual that identified, by reference to divinatory space, unknown causes. And, *anamnesis*, *Aletheia*, *ekklelesis*, *etethuma*, all these functions of the Memory make the report of understanding and expression of the aedu in relation to the profane space. Through this ability to preserve the origin and history of a community, the veritable storyteller became a mediator between the world of the sacred – where the Gods and the Muses know Past, Present and Future – and that of the profane – where the song was the remembrance of a forgotten historical event.

By combining these key hypotheses with the corollaries debated in this article, we will be able to reach the final conclusion. The way of reporting a Truth of Myth and Space that could only be accomplished through a specific dialectic, where metaphysics held a decisive role, is now valid at the end of the research. Because once we have analysed the three traits of the poet's existence, we can establish that the poet's metaphysics – the transcendence from the profane space to the sacred and vice versa – is a concept that can cover a specific dialectic that has the purpose of identifying a Truth with a Space or Mitic Time. In other words, what we call dialectic, is reflected in the

poet's ability to become aware of History through a metaphysical fact. Memory, being the divinatory omniscience, places the past in a meta-historical area, transforming the History perceived by mortal profane in a domain of sacredness. Moreover, our perception of History is limited to space and time as real, hiding the fact that any man-made introspection and retrospection involves a remembrance of unctemporaneous events with him. When we remove any existence of the writing function within a community, the transmission of information through orality causes the archaic Greek being to look for an element that offers truthfulness to it. Through the ritual that he contemplates, the poet has become an interpreter of the gods, a true connoisseur of assertive information.

Therefore, the mythology exposed by the most important poets of ancient Greece is true not in the sense of our perception of Written Truth, written, determined by rational, laborious, and argumentative criticism. But the truthfulness of the poets' words offered history and, implicitly, meta-history, which cannot be utterly convinced today: the source of any meditation on the Past is the very acronym perception of some unctemporaneous events with us, a profound and forgotten Metaphysics.

Notes

¹ It became a *divinity*; *divinari* in Latin means *to guess*, to understand either what is hidden from men – the future – either what is hidden by men – conscience (Vico, 1972, 223-226).

² "The cultural society represents its members' awareness of what unites them and what distinguishes them from others." (Minchin 2012, 85)

³ Regarding the subject of Cassandra: Eschil, 1979, 22-98; Euripide 1962, 167-234.

⁴ The suffering of this character is genuie demonstrated in the work of Lessing: "The moans of his are coming from a man, but his deeds are of a hero. Toghether, they combine a human hero, who is not weak, nor strong, but he is both at the same time, when his conscience is asking him or when his principles and duties ask him too. He is the tallest of humanity, of which the knowledge is capable to create, and art to imitate." (Lessing 1971, 39)

⁵ "Când fiicele lui Zeus măritul și-arată prețuirea lor, / Din leagăn îndrăgind pe unul din regi – vlăstarele lui Zeus – / Pe limba-i Muzele cu grijă presară stropi de dulce rouă / Și pe buzele-i curg vorbe de miere" (Hesiod-Orfeu 1987, 6)

⁶ "At the entrance of the Infern, the initiate, the oracle consultant, being already tested on other purificator rituals, was taken near two rivers called Lethe and Mnemosyne. Drinking from the first river, he would eventually forget about his human existence, and, like a dead person, he will enter in a domain of Darkness. The water from the second river would permit the oracle consultant to memorize everything he saws and heard from the other side of this world. When he returns, he will not limit himself on the knowledge of the present; the contact with the other world will relevate his past and future." (Vernant, 1995, 144)

⁷ "Voi, Muzelor Pieridene, al căror vers aduce faimă, / Veniți și despre Zeus grați-mi, slăvind pe tatăl vostru-n imnuri!" (Hesiod, 1987, 41)

⁸ The forger/creator of old stories (Detienne 1996, 146).

⁹ Cf. Pindar, *Pyth.*, IV, 174-176 – ἐκρόνθη – *apud* Detienne 1996, 147.

¹⁰ See the sceptre, as a political and religious symbol, of Agamemnon or of Achilles from Iliad I. 176; 234-236; 245.

¹¹ Beside other civilisations, like China or Mesopotamia, in which the graphical signs were reserved only to specialists and were a social instrument of codification given to a centralized political power, the Greek cities didn't create an alphabetic instrument; rather, it didn't want to master a certain kind of writing, which was the best political purpose (Detienne 1996, 67).

¹² When it comes to reject the writing, the ancient speaker is the one who doesn't need to adopt this system: "Și-apoi, tu însuși știi prea bine că mai-marii cetățitorilor și cei mai respectați dintre toți se ferec să compună discursuri sau să lase în urma lor scrieri alcătuite de ei înșiși; și toate acestea pentru că se tem de judecata viitorimii și de gândul că vor fi numiți sofști." (Cf. Platon, *Phaidros*, 257 d5-8).

¹³ When the writing was going to represent an impediment, a danger of changing for the social group already getting used to a certain way of life, the old ways were always the best ones for the present problems (Cf. Platon, *Phaidon*, 274b-275b). The myth of Theuth, through Socrates words, narrates the differences between writing and talking and the consequences of each one in a changeable time.

¹⁴ Regarding the duality as a definitive element in the ancient Greek mentality (Tilgher 1995, 16-28).

¹⁵ "Pentru a se orienta în lume înaintea dezvoltării filosofiei și științelor, oamenii recurgeau la o tripartiție pe care am putea-o numi universală: animalele, oamenii, zeii. Acest regim prefilosofic – sunt înspitit să spun: acest regim "natural" – al spiritului uman este caracterizat de un dublu demers, care ni se pare în mod necesar contradictoriu. [...] pe de altă parte, legea dinamică a acestei lumi tripartite este metamorfoza, animale, oameni și zei transformându-se unii în alții, zeu cu cap de câine, oameni cu trup de cal etc." (Manent 2012, 35-41)

¹⁶ See Platon, "Ion, sau Despre Iliada; genul probatoriu" (in Pippidi 1970, 57-70); Although the dialogue *Ion* has its purpose of destroying the illusion that Homer has a complex knowledge about every mastery, we cannot deny the poet's popularity as a teacher of Greece; for Homer as an ancient Greek teacher. (Marrou 1998, 11-40).

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