

## 3. Disregard of history (Dow, Sterling, "The Greeks in the Bronze Age")

p.157 We know also that Knossos and many other places in Crete . . . at some later time were pillaged and destroyed. Here were awful and mighty acts: why is there no epic about them? . . . Troy later was remembered in two epics that are immortal. Yet neither myth nor tradition in any other form remembered the events of ca. 1480 or of ca. 1400 B.C. The fact calls for understanding . . .

p. 158 Plainly in the formation of epic there can operate what may be called a principle of whimsicality. . . . Quite likely there were epics about Knossos. They lacked intrinsic interest, and no singer, adopting their themes, made them live. We have the Iliad, the Odyssey, and parts of many other epics clustered about them: the inferiority of these others is evident even in the fragments, . . . History is the loser on a vast scale; but the singers are concerned, not with history in our sense, but with history as material which they can use to please and enthrall their hearers. <sup>56</sup>

p.171 <sup>56</sup> The operations of the epic-creating mind, and its cavalier disregard of history, can be seen also in genealogy. Homeric poetry has less of it than some traditions: with a few exceptions, the Homeric heroes are given only two generations of ancestorys. Idomeneus of Crete needed a genealogy. He was a mighty warrior, he brought 80 ships, he came from a land still famous. In the epic-creating tradition, a connection with Minos was inevitable: not his father, who was too close anyway, but his grandfather. More intermediate generations could easily have been invented, but epic felt no need. And so a Greek warrior of ca. 1250 B.C. was given a non-Greek grandfather of ca. 1480 B.C. Various evasions have been thought of; some scholars, ancient and modern, trying to repair the damage caused by the wonderful Greek mythopoeic faculty (instead of trying to understand it), fall into the error of creating their own brand of myth. Hence "Minos II".

p. 162 History records many acts of colossal folly, but it stretches credulity to put the Trojan expedition after such events - not to mention the violence such a dating would do to the tradition of a large fleet from Pylos, under the venerable and prominent Nestor. Moreover the likely dating of the pottery found in Troy VIIa is earlier. The traditional dating of the expedition to some year soon after 1200 B.C. is therefore coming to be generally regarded as improbable.

p.163 The epics are surprisingly scrupulous, as if well informed generally, about, e.g. the Dorians; some knowledge of the peoples known to the Egyptians by name as their attackers might be expected if such peoples were then at large. . . . Troy fell, in that case, ca. 1240, but before Myk III B ceased to be exported.