

Homer, crowned by the World (Oikumene) and Time (Chronos), and acclaimed by the Arts and Virtues. Detail of marble relief by Archelaos of Priene, c. 200 B.C.



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Homer, The Blind Seer

by Rosa Tennenbaum

European thought begins with the Greeks. Man was from the outset man; but, at first, his special qualities had to be discovered, little by little. Our thinking developed historically; in prehistoric times, the “childhood of man,” man was not yet even conscious of himself, he still bordered close “to animalness,” as Friedrich Schiller expressed it. Human thought emerged in an ascending process of continuous discoveries and acts of cognition. Thus was physical man elevated to the complex, individual personality.

The Greeks ventured upon this voyage of discovery of the essence of man. They discovered the human intellect, they gave mankind his soul. Of course, intellect and soul were specific to our own species from the very beginning; yet, man was not conscious of them, and for this reason they lacked existence. They only became so, by being discovered; it was through knowledge that they first stepped into the phenomenological world. This discovery formed the basis of a transformed, new conception of man.

The beginning of this great voyage of discovery is to be found in Homer, who presented his great epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, in the Eighth century B.C. Great poems, and an advanced civilization, had existed earlier, but they have not been handed down to posterity, or only

through fragmentary evidence. Homer himself speaks little about his own time in his poems; rather, he sings the praises of an old, long destroyed epoch, which he calls the “Golden Age.”

The Golden Age of Homer

*Crete is a land in the dark, surging sea
Surrounded on all sides, fertile and lovely. Countless
Men live there, and their cities are ninety.*

At the beginning of the Second millennium B.C.—a time which was as distant from Homer, as Homer is from us—a great civilization had already begun to develop on Crete, the great island in the Mediterranean Sea, which reached its high point around the last quarter of the millennium. Modern excavations have brought to light magnificent structures, expansive palaces, and countless small writing tablets. This writing is known as “Linear A,” and has not been deciphered to this day. Trade thrived in this period; fine pottery work and precious textiles were exported to Egypt and the Greek mainland. Art works also reached a pinnacle of development. This epoch has been called Minoan civilization, after the mythical King Minos, who ruled the island from the city of Knossos.

Minos is famous as the first ruler to govern an organized state with firmly established laws.

In the second half of the millennium, far from Crete, on the Greek mainland or Peloponnese, a new, advanced civilization superseded the Minoan. Today, in Mycenae and Tiryns, huge walls and magnificent palaces still attest to the former power of these centers. Precious textiles and the finest pottery found their way as far as Cyprus and Syria, in the south over the Cyclades as far as Egypt, in the west as far as Italy and Spain, and in the north though Boetia and Thessaly up to the Baltic Sea coast. This prosperous time has been named for “gold-rich Mycenae,” the city that formed the center of Mycenaean civilization. [SEE Map, page 45, this issue]

Their script, which we call “Linear B,” has been deciphered, so that we possess manifold evidence of their highly developed political regime, of their tariff system, and so forth. Mycenaean culture spread throughout the entire Mediterranean world, and over the newly founded colonies on the Aegean Islands and the continent of Asia Minor.

In the last quarter of the second millennium, this culture suddenly perished. Its towns were destroyed; trade came to a standstill—the basis of life was annihilated. The cause of this catastrophe is not known to us—one can only guess, whether it was a horrible earthquake, or the invasion of the so-called Peoples of the Sea, or if this great migration of people, which shook the entire eastern Mediterranean at about that time, was the trigger. With the destruction of the Mycenaean palaces, the political centers and the social system disintegrated. The survivors abandoned the cities and fell back inland, where they managed to exist in small villages, or migrated. Crete, Asia Minor, and Cyprus were the preferred places of refuge. The destruction of the city of Troy falls into this period.

A dark age overtook Greece. Depopulation, impoverishment, and isolation were the characteristics. Greek civilization reverted back to the condition of simple peasant farming in a feudal society. Writing was lost; the developed techniques in crafts, art, and architecture were forgotten. Richly decorated bowls were now replaced by simple, straight pottery of practical use value, which was elaborately trimmed with crude, geometrically stylized ornamentation. Hence, this epoch is also known as the Geometric Period.

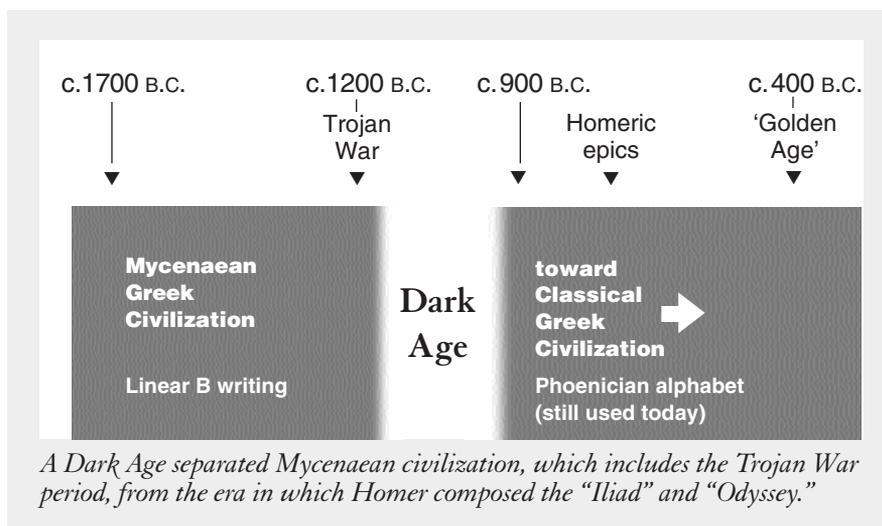
During this dark age, mankind preserved the memory of the glorious

Mycenaean civilization. In many places, the huge walls and palace ruins still stood, in whose shadow the older generation passed on its memories of this splendid past to the young. Thus, a cycle of interwoven legends and myths developed. These memories were guarded especially fervently in those places where colonizers had developed new homelands. There, where no trace of the advanced Mycenaean civilization was present, memories and preservation of tradition were passed on by word of mouth. It is here that the sources of the legends of heroes, which inspired Homer and the later tragic poets in their works, are to be found. This dark age lasted almost four centuries. In the Ninth century B.C., the rebirth gradually began, accelerating in the Eighth century. That was the century of Homer. [SEE Map, page 7, this issue]

Homer

The exact origin of the “Father and ancestor of all poets,” as the poet Goethe called him, is not known. He came from northern Asia Minor; his home was in the Aeolian-Ionian border region, actually in Smyrna, today’s Izmir (Turkey). An old “Legend of Homer the Travelling Bard,” which dates back to at least the Sixth century B.C., places him there, and his language, which mixes Aeolian and Ionian Greek, likewise shows evidence of it. Homer created a poetically dramatic language in his epics, which was distinct from everyday speech.

In this ancient legend, which no doubt soon after Homer’s death was told by the rhapsodes, Homer wandered through the towns Smyrna, Colophon, Kyme, Phodaia, Erythrae, and lingered for awhile at the court of a Dardanelles lord in Troas, the broad plains surrounding Troy. Earlier, he had seen the world on the ship of a friendly merchant—now he wandered, already



blind, as a bard through the land. For some time he lived and worked on the island of Chios, where in the Seventh century King Hector ruled. Here, he established his own school, achieved fame and prosperity, and attended the funeral games and religious festivals throughout Hellas, as a highly esteemed poet. From this point on he also established a bard's guild, called the "Homereidon," which Plato relates to us in the *Ion*. Presumably, he died on the island of Ios, which boasts of harboring his grave.

In 1795, Friedrich August Wolf unleashed an avalanche by asserting in the foreword to his Homer translation, the "Prolegomena to Homer," based on a great deal of scholarship, that Homer was illiterate, and that, therefore, the monumental epics, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, could not have been composed by one and the same person. Presumably, they were handed down orally through the centuries, obtaining their final form through this long process. The academic world split into two irreconcilable camps, in the course of which Wolf's followers split up the poem into ever smaller pieces. Goethe accused Wolf of having "killed the poet," and of ravaging "the most fruitful garden of the aesthetical realm." Schiller referred to this in his epigram:

Ilias

The wreath of Homer is rent to pieces, and the fathers
are enumerated
Of this perfected, eternal work!
But it had one mother only and the mother's features,
Your immortal features, Nature.

This fight is still continuing. Nowadays, most scholars are of the opinion that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were both originally written down, but by different poets. Homer wrote the older work, the *Iliad*, and the later *Odyssey* was written by another, anonymous poet, they say. This they deduce not least from the age of both works, whereby it is assumed that the poem about Odysseus's journey home follows the history of the Trojan War by about fifty years.

Thus, the world's greatest writer of epics, Homer, shares a fate with the world's greatest dramatist, Shakespeare. People begrudge them the authorship of their works, because the works are simply too great to have been composed by a single individual. But, conclusive evidence can not be presented to this day. Differences in grammatical usage between the two Homeric epics, which are seized on by the philologist, could just as well have originated from the tradition of oral delivery, as from two different authors. It was in the Third century B.C. that the final version of the text was constructed. Over the previous four centuries, countless different versions had come into circulation. These were then edited

and collated together into a single edition by the scholars of the legendary library of Alexandria in Egypt. We can therefore confidently hold to the idea, that Homer is the father of both epics.

Of Bards and Rhapsodes

In the *Ion* dialogue, Plato sketches, in the image of one of the famous bards of his time, Ion of Ephesus, a lively picture of the rhapsodes and their works, and the effect their art had on the audience. The rhapsode travelled from city to city, reciting his hymns at musical festivals, often competing with other bards. In rich clothing and wearing a golden wreath, he would stand on a small platform in the middle of an audience of 20,000 people—that is, the population of an entire city or town. He sang the epics of other great poets too, of Hesiod and of Archilochos, for example, but especially of Homer, and was proud to be able to recite on request, from memory, if desired, any beloved passage from the great works. Nothing captivated the public like Homer's poems.

The minstrels journeyed from court to court of the nobility, reciting their songs and accompanying themselves on the lyre. Homer describes such a bard and his background in Book VIII of the *Odyssey*. In Homer's lifetime, the simple bard was transformed into the "rhapsode"—emerging from the halls of the nobility to be among the common people. The epic poem grew to great epics this way. No longer did the rhapsodes orient to court society, but they turned to the festival gatherings, which united all of local society. The simple lyres, whose sound died away in the great plazas, must have undergone further development. And so, the musical epoch of the Greeks was awakened also.

It might have been these developments which motivated the bards to lay aside their lyres, and to take up the staff. The staff was the sign of territorial power; kings, judges, and orators in the assembly had been carrying them for a long time; now, the bard would also be provided with this token of god-like worth. The old bard, the Greek *aoidos* [ᾠοιδός] became the reciter, the rhapsode (*raps-odos* [ῥαψ-οδος]). His verse is the epic hexameter.

The bard's skill was a trade, or profession. They would impart the rules of epic songs and the works of important predecessors through an apprenticeship. Homer says of the bards who appear in his works, that they sing "artistically" and "entirely in order," and he speaks of "the right way and the proper development of the narration." Through this instruction, amateur performance was prevented and an enduring standard secured, and here may lie the basis for the ultimate prestige of the

poet and his great art, to outlive many centuries and to constantly renew itself. The outcome of this apprenticeship might not be an absolutely “divine bard,” but in each case, an expert—one who knew his trade.

The bard “hears the tidings” which blow across from olden times, he reports on the past, but also “the most recent news” is found in his poems. He chooses his themes from the old myths and legends, which portrayed traditional reality, living history for the Greeks, and his art endures therein, thus to relate, to examine and to connect anew, these well-known events, so that, creatively, something new resulted. The muses themselves teach their favorite the “elevated song.” Mnemosyne, memory, helps him to bring his songs to a close, and wisdom, truth, and virtue attend him.

The rhapsodes were the stewards of Homer’s heritage and the carriers of this knowledge right into the heart of the Fifth century B.C., the Golden Age of Greece. Although writing was already in use, one still taught through speaking, and learned through listening. Not only did the great rhapsodes of antiquity know Homer’s works by heart, but they could recite other well-known works freely, too. An important aid in this enormous accomplishment of memory was the Greek hexameter. The word signifies six measures, as the three-syllable dactylic sequence long-short-short, which formed the verse foot, was repeated six times. In the middle of each line of verse, a pause, or caesura, was inserted; while the last foot in the line was shortened to two syllables, long-short or long-long. Since, on reflection, a long syllable could also be reduced to two short syllables, or two short syllables to a long one, great freedom was given to the poet, and diversity to the hearer.

For Wilhelm von Humboldt, hexameter was “simultaneously the essence and keynote of all harmony of men and creation. When one marvels at how it was possible, to confine such an extent and depth in such simple borders, when one considers, that this particular verse is the foundation of all other poetical rhythms, and that without the magic of these harmonies the wonderful secrets of nature and creation would remain eternally inaccessible, then one tries to no purpose, to explain the origin of such a suddenly appearing phenomenon.” Greek speech was very musical: Humboldt called it “pure music.” This musicality was further strengthened through the form

and rhythm of the hexameter. The Greeks, “an eternally talkative and singing people,” could immediately in their language “combine such wonderful music with the impression of thoughts, that to them, the separation of music and poetry remained alien.”

Writing

The epoch of writing begins with Homer. Greek merchants traded with the Phoenicians, a Semitic people who lived in what is today Lebanon, whose writing they became acquainted with and brought home with them. Individual characters were no longer used to represent an

entire syllable, as was the case with Linear B, but instead, they stood for particular, individual sounds. There were no vowels in the Phoenician alphabet, only consonants. The Greeks adopted the phonetic names of the letters, but assigned different sounds to them, which were familiar to the Greek tongue. They also added vowels. So “alep” and “bet,” the first letters of the Phoenician alphabet, became “alpha” and “beta,” and our word “alphabet” is a reminder of this origin.

How important these innovations were becomes clear, when one considers, for example, the possible meanings of the consonant series “*m-r*” in English: moor, mare, mere, emir, more. With the addition of vowels, it was no longer necessary to consider what was intended, since the writing had attained

clarity and comprehensibility. These innovations show that the Greek strove for clarity and truth in thought, and didn’t rest until he could express this clarity also in writing. This process was completed before the Eighth century B.C. Before that, writing was needed primarily for practical purposes, to itemize an inventory, to compile sacrifice lists, or in order to worship the name of a god. That now changed.

Homer’s *Iliad* is the first work of universal literature which has survived in its entirety, and the first of European literature in general. We owe this good fortune to the scholars in Alexandria, who in the Third and Second centuries before Christ, gathered and organized the Classical Greek texts, along with the multitude of degenerate text versions which circulated. They brought together a number of the works of the great tragic poets, and both Homer’s epics, in a collected edition, which is the version that has been passed down to us in full. Aeschylus,



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Rhapsode, with staff. Detail from amphora, c. 480 B.C.

Sophocles, and Euripides alone had composed well over 300 works combined, of which only 32—the ones included in the edition collected in Alexandria—survive in their entirety. All the others are completely, or in great part, lost.

It is scarcely conceivable that a work like the *Iliad* could have been composed without making use of the aid of writing. And, why should one deny to Homer, of all people, who was apparently a highly educated man, the ability to use writing? In any case, the comprehensive necessity of writing begins with him; writing was no longer used only as a useful mnemonic aid, it now served also to retain, organize, and pass on ideas and images—and therefore, mental processes.

Until the *Iliad*, only oral poetry existed in Greece, which was transmitted from generation to generation of minstrels. Out of the three great cycles of legends, a so-called Epic Cycle had developed, which were the stories that related the history before and after the Trojan War and the journey home of the heroes. Since these poems were passed on orally, they have all been lost, with the exception of small fragments. We know them only indirectly, by way of hints and quotes of the ancient poets and historians. Poetry naturally succumbed to great alterations with this form of transmission.

The bards had developed a supply of formulaic figures of speech and embellished adjectives over the course of the years, which made it easier for them to organize the poem and to bring the verse line to a close. We find many such formulations in Homer: “horse-taming Trojans,” “metal-shielded Achaeans,” “lily-armed Hera,” “wily Odysseus,” “the pointed ships,” “the people’s shepherd Agamemnon.” And entire phrases, such as: “as the dawning day awoke with rosy fingers”; “and spoke the following words”; “one thing I say still to you, and you keep it in your heart”; “they raised their hands to savory prepared meals”; and so forth. Numerous such elements of oral poetry influenced Homer’s works. Also, the treasure of myths and legends, which Homer expanded for his audience in both of his epics, resulted from and was handed down through oral poetry.

The Eighth century bore witness to the diverse changes of a new epoch. With the close of the dark age, the conditions of life gradually improved, population increased, and the settlements moved together. The “*polis*”—city or state—began to develop. No longer were the courts of the nobility at the center of society, but rather, the marketplace, the “*agora*,” takes their place. Homer

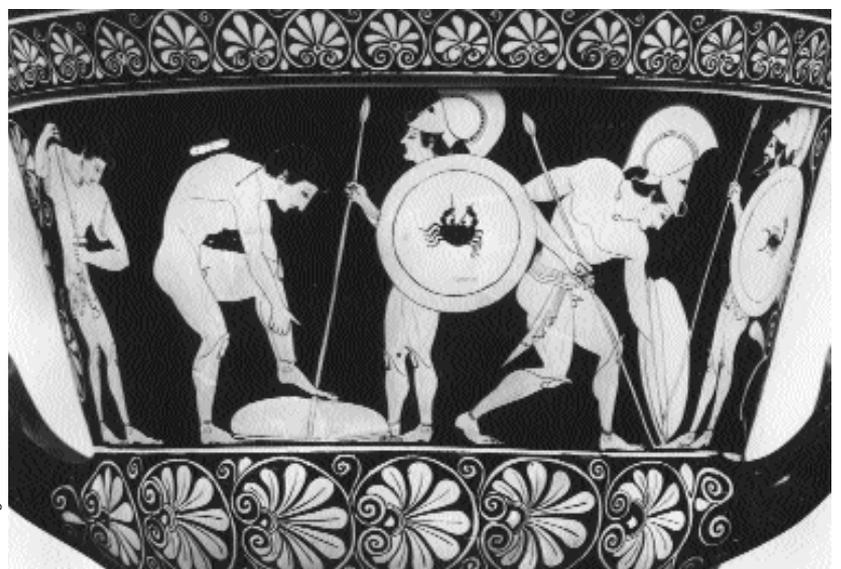
himself speaks of these changes. In Book XVIII of the *Iliad* he describes, for example, the shield which the god Hephaestus forged for Achilles. One of its numerous scenes portrays a city at peace, and a city at war. The city at peace shows a legal proceeding: two men accuse each other. Both sides would present evidence, which was heard by the council of elders. This council also passed sentence. The scene takes place in the *agora*, the hearing is public, and many people attend.

Here, Homer is describing a scene, as it would have occurred during his lifetime, in the developing *polis*. No longer does a nobleman pass judgment, but rather, the citizens, who come from among the people, do; the circumstances point clearly in the direction of democracy by this time. And, with it, the image of the heroes changes. The classic hero and great deeds of the typical heroic cycle are no longer the center of interest; instead, man *in his afflictions* moves to the focal point.

Troy

*Formerly was Priam’s city praised by men of many
languages
Far across the earth as rich in gold and ore.*

In 1871, when Heinrich Schliemann excavated the ruined city of Troy under the hill of Hisarlik in Turkey, it created an unprecedented sensation, because, by then, scholars had banished Homer’s epic to the realm of “absolute” poetry. Now Schliemann, an amateur archeologist, uncovered parts of a great settlement from the ruins, and even found a splendid gold treasure, which he called the Treasure of Priam. He was guided in his search



Warriors arming for battle. Detail from wine mixing bowl by Euponios and Euxitheos, c. 515 B.C.

by Homer's text, and proved that the legendary Troy, or Ilium, as the city was called in antiquity, had, in fact, existed. But then, did the great Trojan War, which formed the powerful scenes in the *Iliad*, also occur?

Troy, the "city full of splendid houses," was situated only six kilometers south of the Bosphorus, and controlled the entrance to the Dardanelles. This strategically favorable position, as the link between the Orient and the Occident, gave rise to the business affluence and the political power of the "Pearl of Asia," as it was also called. Troy controlled the general shipping lanes between the Aegean and the Black Sea, and levied transit duties on goods which had to pass through the straits. Since harsh southerly currents prevail at the entrance to the Propontis, many ships had to unload their freight, or spend time in the Trojan port, until the storms subsided and the winds were favorable for an entrance. That was to the advantage of Troy, and its riches and power aroused the jealousy of rival powers, and led again and again to armed conflicts.

The first permanent settlement in Troy that we know of today, already existed 3,000 years before Christ. The city was frequently destroyed, through wars, earthquakes, and blight, and rebuilt again and again from the rubble of the destroyed city. Archeologists have identified ten different layers, and accordingly located ten historical epochs of the settlement's history. In the Fifteenth century A.D., after over 4,000 years of settlement history, the hill was finally abandoned. The layers, which at the time of the *Iliad* formed a powerful city, and whose destruction the Greek scholar Eratosthenes calculated to be the year 1184 B.C., are known as Troy VI and Troy VIIa.*

Thirteen years ago, Troy was excavated again, and the discoveries of just the past five years have strengthened the importance of Homer's historical authority considerably, without that having been the intention of the researchers.

The upper city was already known. It formed the government quarter and was situated on a wall-reinforced citadel. But an extensive city was uncovered underneath, with a defensive moat, gates, and a wall surrounding it—an extensive settlement, in which well up to 10,000 people



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A warrior preparing to leave home.
Wine cup, c. 490-480 B.C.

might have lived. Historic Troy was a residential and trading city, a power and business center, which spread in the plains over more than 270,000 square meters.

Original written sources, which could finally be assigned with the help of the latest discoveries, designate this city as "Wilusa/Wilusia"—(W)Ilios, in others, is from "Taruwisa/Tru(w)isa"—in the Trojan language. Scientists have identified Hisarlik definitively as Homer's Ilium. Achaea was immortalized, on one of the numerous pillars from the Fourteenth century B.C.;

Homer designated the Greeks with the old word Achaeans. Numerous traces were also found of military conflict, for example, fire-damaged walls, skeletons, and an entire heap of unused catapult stones.

Now, scientists wonder, whence did Homer get his detailed knowledge of Troy? Indeed, researchers are certain that Homer—or, for all that, at least some "authority"—must have examined the city and its environs in person, since his description agrees precisely with findings at the location. But the Mycenaean Troy of which Homer sings in the *Iliad* had, by his time, been destroyed four hundred years earlier, and was newly built on the rubble. Therefore, how could this information from the late Bronze Age, have been recovered in Homer's time? No doubt, it was passed down orally in verse. Philologists have found evidence that the *Iliad* incorporates verses which had been recited by bards in Mycenaean times.

Thus, science itself now elevates the *Iliad* from poetry, to a historical source. That is a beautiful acknowledgment of the genius of Homer, and a late repayment to Heinrich Schliemann, whose unshakeable belief in Homer must be credited for all this knowledge.

The Iliad

In the old, orally transmitted epics, which formed the Epic Cycle, one finds an elegantly charming explanation for this disastrous war. We have these poems only in fragments, which were written down later and passed on. In the *Aithiopus*, the early history of the Trojan War is dealt with, and the cause of the war discussed. The Earth goddess Gaia complained to Zeus, that mankind had multiplied too greatly and burdened her breast too much. Zeus then decided to provoke a great war, in order to unbur-

* See the Appendix, page 43.

den the all-nourishing Earth. Thus, the reduction of the population is invoked as the reason for the war, in which the entire population of Greece was involved.

Gaia descended from the original race of the old gods, the Titans, about whom Homer reports virtually nothing. He relates an earlier legend to us, in which the war leads back to arguments among the Olympian goddesses. The Trojan prince, Paris, had been asked to choose which among Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite was the most beautiful. Each promised him a gift: Athena promised him wisdom, Hera power and fame, and Aphrodite promised him the love of the most beautiful woman in Greece. And which gift did Paris choose? He decided on Aphrodite. Later, he visited King Menelaus in Sparta, who was married to Helen, famous as the most beautiful woman of her time. Paris, without hesitation, stole Helen and took her with him to Troy, in the course of which he also made off with the royal treasure.

The actual reason for this great, destructive war lay deeper, however, and the dramatist Euripides informs us of this. In his tragedy, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, he relates the earlier history to us: All the Greek princes sued for Helen's hand, so that her father, Tyn-darus, King of Sparta, feared that one or the other who was scorned would begin a war against the chosen. He had the suitors swear an oath, that they would take joint action against anyone who tried to take possession of Helen by force. Then, he let his daughter choose her future husband, and Helen chose Menelaus.

Menelaus was Agamemnon's brother. Agamemnon was King of Mycena, the most powerful state of Greece. Menelaus became the King of Sparta through his marriage to Helen. All the Greek cities were allied through the oath that they had sworn to Tyndareos. No longer did each stand for itself alone, for now all were obliged to jointly avenge a wrong, which any one of them might do. Since Paris, a nobleman from Troy, had violated the laws of nations and of hospitality, which were sacred to the Greeks, the Greek people rose up to collectively atone for the breach of law. The army gathered at Aulis; they appointed Agamemnon as their supreme commander.

Homer selected a short span of 51 days, out of the entire ten-year war, for the action of the *Iliad*. However, through flashbacks and foreshadowing, we learn the complete outcome of the war, both its previous history,

and the hints of the events to follow. He relates the old myths and legends of the generation of great fallen heroes, teaches the history to us—and he brings in a totally new pantheon, the Olympian gods, establishing a new religion.

The *Iliad* is a complex composition, with at least three levels of action: There is, apart from actions which describe the war and camp life, an inner level, in which Homer lets us take part in human suffering and greatness of the soul; thirdly, there is the level of the world of the gods. These three parts are also encountered chronologically: Homer turns far back to "olden times," when the gods still lived on the Earth and helped to form the human community, and from there up to the dark age. But he also again and again reports scenes from the everyday life of his time; and he points far ahead into the future.

A New Image of Man

The *Iliad* is actually not an heroic epic—the hero and his deeds aren't the focus. Of course, there are many horrible war scenes, of the kind that make Homer's attitude towards war crystal clear. Homer recognized the brutality of war, and again and again

showed what it makes of man. He compares the massacred warriors constantly with wild beasts:

... like wolves, leaping,
hurling into each other, man throttling man.
(IV, 470-71)*

As a lion charges cattle, calves and heifers
browsing the deep glades and snaps their necks,
(V, 161-62)

Achilles now
like inhuman fire raging on through mountain gorges
splinter-dry, setting ablaze big stands of timber,
the wind swirling the huge fireball left and right—
chaos of fire—Achilles storming on with brandished spear
like a frenzied god of battle trampling all he killed
and the earth ran black with blood. Thundering on,
on like oxen broad in the brow some field hand yokes
to crush while barley heaped on a well-laid threshing floor
and the grain is husked out fast by the bellowing oxen's



Achilles. His state of mind, not his deeds, is the subject of the Iliad.
Detail from amphora, 445 B.C.

* English translation excerpts from *The Iliad*, trans. by Robert Fagels (New York: Penguin, 1990).

hoofs—
 so as the great Achilles rampaged on, his sharp-hoofed
 stallions
 trampled shields and corpses, axle under his chariot
 splashed
 with blood, blood on the handrails sweeping round the car,
 sprays of blood shooting up from the stallions' hoofs
 and churning, whirling rims—and the son of Peleus
 charioteering on to seize his glory, bloody filth
 splattering both strong arms, Achilles' invincible arms—
 (XX, 490-503)

The warrior on the battlefield, “hollowly crashed down in death,” “and night covered his eyes,” “the soul escaped” to Hades. Now the battle begins over the body; first over the armor, because it is valuable, then around the dead body, which they must release from the enemy, to obtain “eternal freedom,” to be able to bury it honorably as the custom commanded. The fight around the body of Achilles' friend Patroclus raged on an entire day of the war, and on both sides many warriors fell. Meanwhile, the loved ones at home, old fathers and mothers, longing for wives and children, trembled for the lives of the warriors, and hoped for a swift return—to no avail:

The son of Tydeus killed the two of them on the spot,
 he ripped the dear life out of both and left their father
 tears and wrenching grief. Now he'd never welcome
 his two sons home from war, alive in the flesh,
 and distant kin would carve apart their birthright.
 (V, 154-157)

And now his mother began to tear her hair . . .
 she flung her shining veil to the ground and raised
 a high, shattering scream, looking down at her son.
 Pitifully his loving father groaned and round the king
 his people cried with grief and wailing seized the city—
 (XXII, 405-409)

The day that orphans a youngster cuts him off from
 friends.
 And he hangs his head low, humiliated in every way . . .
 his cheeks stained with tears, and pressed by hunger
 the boy goes up to his father's old companions,
 tugging at one man's cloak, another's tunic,
 and some will pity him, true,
 and one will give him a little cup to drink,
 enough to wet his lips, but not quench his thirst.
 But then some bully with both his parents living
 beats him from the banquet, fists and abuses flying:
 'You, get out—you've got no father feasting with us here!'
 And the boy, sobbing, trails home to his widowed mother . . .
 (XXII, 490-502)

Even these few examples demonstrate a fundamental stylistic device: metaphor. Homer paints a multitude of images in immediate view of the listener from all areas of

nature, of rural and home life—of crafts, which he describes with such great skill and truth. He paints all of these images to strengthen the legends, to anchor them deeper in the mind of the listeners. Through that, we get an exact image of everyday life at that time.

Heroism in Homer

What is new in Homer's heroic epic, is how he describes man to us—man with his hopes, needs, and afflictions. Right in the first lines of the *Iliad*, the poet defines the task which he assigned to himself:

Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
 murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless
 losses,
 hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
 great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion
 feasts for the dogs and birds,
 and the will of Zeus was moving toward its end.
 Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,
 Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.
 (I, 1-8)

The theme of the epic is not the heroic *deeds* of Achilles, the undisputed great hero, who fought on the side of the Greeks, but his *state of mind*, his wrath, and the result that this anger precipitated for the entire army: a bitter feud between Agamemnon, the leader of the army, and Achilles.

The controversy broke out around a maiden, Briseis, whom Achilles had taken as booty on one of the numerous raids the Greeks undertook during the ten-year siege, and by which they laid waste to the entire environs of Troy. Agamemnon stole her from him. However, the cause lies deeper here also. It ignites a conflict between the traditional, existing power, and the strutting, deed-thirsty youth. The rivalry exploded between Agamemnon, the most powerful prince of Greece, and Achilles, the capable hero and greatest warrior in the army. Achilles wants to destroy Agamemnon, an exceedingly questionable undertaking in the midst of a destructive war. Agamemnon retaliates accordingly: he humiliates Achilles before the entire council.

Achilles draws back grumbling to his tent and, despite some attempts at reconciliation, he stays far from the fighting from then on. The Trojans exploit this weakness, and win the upper hand on the battlefield. By this time, Hector, the most brilliant hero of the Trojans, is on the verge of setting the Greek ships on fire, but Achilles is still not moved. Prodded by his friend Patroclus, he gives in only to the point that he allows Patroclus to go into battle, lending him his armor. Now, something awful occurs: Hector kills Patroclus and steals his armor.

At last, Achilles relents and returns to the war. His mother, the sea nymph Thetis, has Hephaestus forge him new weapons, and Achilles does not rest until he avenges the murder of his friend by Hector.

It was the overwhelming task of the epic poet to decide which of hero's battle deeds to relate, thus keeping them in memory as a binding ideal for the following generation. "At all times achieve the best and be prominent before others"—with these words Achilles' father Peleus had sent his son off to Troy. Homer fulfills this requirement in an excellent way: he removes Achilles, who outshines all the others by far, from the events for a while, so that he can allow the other heroes to achieve superior feats, later surpassing them with the heroism of Achilles.

In the opening of the epic, Homer also states that Achilles' anger "caused unspeakable misery and sent many brave souls of hero's sons to Hades"—that it was the cause of the death of many Greek soldiers. Achilles is no flawlessly shining hero; through his stubbornness and the intractableness of his anger, he brought the entire army to the edge of total destruction. And he did that willfully. He wanted the Greeks to suffer one defeat after the other, in order to force Agamemnon to his knees. Now, he learns in his own gut, when he loses his best friend in Patroclus, what his earlier actions did to the army.

At the same time, Agamemnon doesn't look too good either. He is lacking in self-control, arrogant, and unjust, and carries the moral responsibility for the misfortune which overtook the army. And Menelaus, who in any case was associated with attributes like "brilliant hero" and "godly warrior," reveals himself as a soft combatant, and in the hour of danger, as a coward. Homer therefore faces the Achaean army, which he wants to glorify, not uncritically; instead, he passes judgment, bluntly and impartially, on the strengths and weaknesses, even on his own side.

Achilles' counterpart on the battlefield is Hector. He is also described as a powerful, brilliant hero, but his heroism differs greatly from that of Achilles. He is the hero of the "nonetheless." He is against the war, has undertaken many attempts to settle it through negotiations, and has had to witness them all fail—and yet, he fights on the front line. He is aware that he will pay for this action on behalf of his people with his life, and that Troy will be taken. But he does what he must do. His heroism is more mature, more human. This is especially beautifully expressed during his last encounter with his wife and child in Book VI.

There, when Hector returns to the city in order to bring a sacrifice to the patron goddess Athena, the situa-

tion looks very bad for the Trojans. On the street, he meets his wife Andromache and the nanny who carries his little son, Astyanax. As he fondly beholds his son, Andromache asks him not to go into battle, so that she not be made a widow and the son an orphan. "All this grieves me also, most beloved," he answers her; however, he does not wish to shirk the responsibility for his homeland, and the faith of his comrades.

"For in my heart and soul I also know this well:
the day will come when sacred Troy must die,
Priam must die and all his people with him,
Priam who hurls the strong ash spear . . .

Even so,

it is less the pain of the Trojans still to come
that weighs me down, not even of Hecuba herself
or King Priam, or the thought that my own brothers
in all their numbrs, all their gallant courage,
may tumble in the dust, crushed by enemies—
That is nothing, nothing beside your agony
when some brazen Argive hales you off in tears,
wrenching away your day of light and freedom!
Then far off in the land of Argos you must live,
laboring at a loom, at another woman's beck and call,
fetching water at some spring. Messeis or Hyperia,
resisting it all the way—

the rough yoke of necessity at your neck.

And a man may say, who sees you streaming tears,
'There is the wife of Hector, the bravest fighter
they could field, those stallion-breaking Trojans,
long ago when the men fought for Troy.' So he will say
and the fresh grief will swell your heart once more,
widowed, robbed of the one man strong enough
to fight off your day of slavery.

No, no,

let the earth come piling over my dead body
before I hear your cries, I hear you dragged away!"

(VI, 448-466)

He wants to take his son in his arms, but his son is frightened by Hector's mighty helmet, and clings fast to the nanny, crying loudly. Hector puts down his helmet; the little boy recognizes his father joyfully, and is lifted on his arm. The sight of his young son provokes Hector's will to live, above the sense of dark foreboding. Hector lifts Astyanax up to the heavens and prays, that the gods will be willing to cradle the child. Now he is entirely himself again, now he has an inner freedom and power to console his beloved wife, whom he reminds of her household duties, and again marches out to the "slaughtering battlefield." Andromache turns homeward, rightly suspecting that she will never see her beloved again.

She quickly reached the sturdy house of Hector,
man-killing Hector,
and found her women gathered there inside

and stirred them all to a high pitch of mourning.
So in his house they raised the dirges for the dead,
for Hector still alive . . .

(VI, 498-501)

Here we already experience the future fate of both spouses: Hector will die on the battlefield, and Andromache will be taken to Greece in slavery, as part of the booty of Achilles' son Neoptolemus. And the little son? Astyanax will be slain, as all male survivors of Troy are to be.

Hector turns back to the battle. Later, after Achilles' return to battle has turned the tide, the Achaeans storm the Trojan wall, and the Trojan men seek protection within the city. Only Hector stays outside the gates; at this moment, he briefly considers making an offer of surrender to the enemy. And, as at the last meeting with Andromache, he remembers the duty that he has toward his people, and takes his position. His elderly parents are terrified and implore him to escape into the city.

Back, come back! Inside the walls, my boy!
Rescue the men of Troy and the Trojan women—
don't hand the great glory to Peleus' son,
bereft of your own sweet life yourself.

Pity me too!—

still in my senses, true, but a harrowed, broken man
marked out by doom—past the threshold of old age . . .
and Father Zeus will waste me with a hideous fate,
and after I've lived to look on so much horror!

My sons laid low, my daughters
dragged away
and the treasure-chambers
looted, helpless babies
hurled to the earth in the red
barbarity of war . . .

(XXII, 56-64)

Priam makes an appeal to his reason; Hecuba tries with impassioned words to induce him to return. Of the nineteen sons who were born to them, most died on the battlefield, and now the same fate threatens the most beloved of them, on whom the survival of Troy depends. But Hector is calm in his determination. As in the scene with Andromache, the poet shows us anew that heroism is not automatic, but means inner struggle and conquest, from which the resolve to act thusly, and not otherwise, develops.

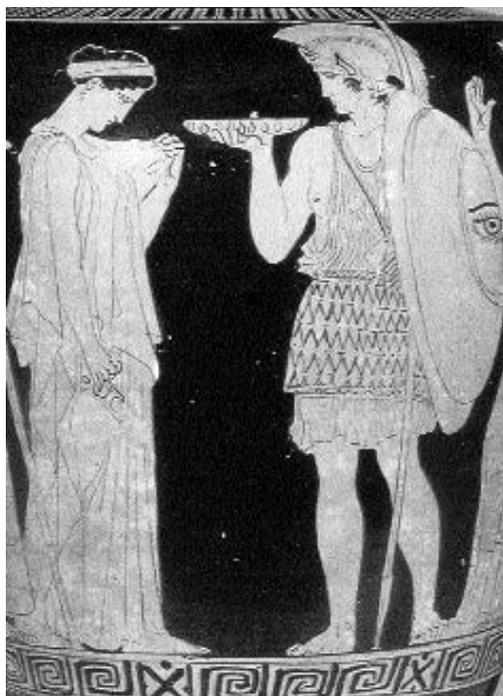
Helpless and powerless, Priam and Hecuba must witness how Achilles kills Hector, then pierces his heels in order to bind him to a chariot, and in a raging gallop, drags him around the city. For twelve days straight he drags Hector's body, in each case three times around the grave mound of his Patroclus, until Priam finally takes courage, loads up his wagon with gold and valuable gifts and, at night, secretly, accompanied only by a herald, enters the enemy camp, in order to implore Achilles for the surrender of the body of his beloved son. That is heroism also—to risk one's life for a merciful deed.

The Transformation of Achilles

Achilles undergoes a great transformation in the epic. For the longest time, we see him angry and resentful. As he receives the report of the death of Patroclus, it becomes clear what his friend meant to him. "The gloominess of dark clouds" befalls him; he tears his hair out and covers it with dust, falls down and cries so loudly in anguish, that his mother Thetis hears him in the deep of the sea and rushes to help her son. In the greatness of his suffering, the depth of the friendship is revealed.

His heart thirsts for vengeance, and in spite of the fact that Thetis reveals to him that it is his fate to die soon after Hector, he rushes forth to accomplish his revenge. Patroclus is dead, what does life mean to him? Earlier, Thetis had brought him the new weapons, which the blacksmith god Hephaestus had made especially for him. He rages in "furious madness," like a madman he slaughters in bloodlust, showing no trace of humanity. Even nature revolts against this "sea of blood"—the Scamander River, on account of the sacrilege, breaks its banks and entirely changes its course. As excessive as Achilles was in his anger, he is just as excessive in his revenge. When he takes twelve of the "best Trojan youth" captive and sacrifices them on Patroclus's grave, he reverts back to a prehistoric, barbaric time.

When Priam dares the seemingly insane undertaking and approaches the raging Achilles, embraces his knees and kisses the hand that murdered and dis-



*Hector and Andromache ("Warrior's Farewell").
Detail from a wine jar, 430 B.C.*

graced his son, an astonishing transformation occurs in Achilles. The old man asks him to hand over the corpse, and reminds Achilles of his own old father. There the rigid spirit of Achilles softens, and he breaks out in tears and wailing. He pities the unfortunate old man, lifts him up, and entertains him at his table. And as they both sit across from each other, each is astounded by the other's beauty, greatness, and merit. Achilles washes, anoints, and clothes the corpse, and lifts it himself onto the bier. Then they agree to an eleven-day truce, so that Hector can be buried honorably.

With the solemn burial of Hector, the *Iliad* ends. The task, which the poet had defined, to describe the anger of Achilles and its destructive aftermath for the Greeks, is accomplished with the transformation of Achilles. Homer's public knew the end of the history anyway; it has only become unfamiliar to us today. In Book VIII of the *Odyssey*, Homer relates the trick of the wooden horse, in which the best Greek soldiers hid, and which the Trojans pulled inside their walls as a supposed consecrated gift for the gods. During the night, the Greeks climbed out of the horse and captured the city. The Roman poet Virgil relates the capture and total destruction of Troy by the Greeks in detail, in Book II of his *Aeneid*.

The Birth Hour of Humanism

The transformation of Achilles at the end of the *Iliad* ushers in an entirely new ethic. This transformation was caused by the experience of his own grief and emotion. Grief-stricken Priam reminded Achilles of his own father. Achilles knows his own death, in front of Troy, will torture his own father with equally deep pain. Achilles is moved through the misery of Priam, and this emotion allows him to act humanly. "The most compassionate man is the best man," said the poet Gotthold Lessing, because compassion allows us to be magnanimous. A king and a prince who are at war, jointly mourn the loss of those who stood nearest to their hearts and who, in each case, were slain by the hand of the other side. If one compares this surprising picture with the typical heroic cycle, in which the fame of the warriors was measured by the number of people they slew, and in which kings may not show any weakness, then we begin to get an idea of what a revolution this ending of the *Iliad* must have been.

War and hatred are overcome through mutual esteem, respect, and sympathy, reads Homer's lesson. This is the birth hour of European humanism. Homer closely adheres to the traditional myths, he doesn't alter the legend of the destruction of Troy, and despite that, he creates something entirely new. The effect which the *Iliad*

exerted on the contemporaries of Homer, must have been powerful. It was a totally new tone, an entirely unknown image of man. Earlier, through the entire epic, he reminds us again and again of the horrors of war, and points out the plight that awaited the widowed wives, orphaned children, and old mothers and fathers left behind, inspiring the emotion and sympathy of the listener. And then this powerful ending, where even in kings, compassion steps in, in the place of hate, and mercy replaces vengeance.

Some may object, that the entire epic totals many thousands of lines, while the transformation of Achilles was sung in a mere few dozen verses. That is true. Nevertheless, one must consider, that Homer stands in the beginning of the development of the individual. Man is not yet solely the cause of his actions, he still imputes numerous responsibilities to the gods. His real essence must be discovered first. Homer portrays his heroes powerfully and frankly, but they are not individuals in our sense, their actions are not the consequence of a self-conscious decision process. Judgments and deeds must still be explained as the effect of an external god. The will, that "majestic right of our person," as Schiller himself said, fails totally, and with it every power, which maintains our person against inner and outer influences.

Only in the above-cited examples of the personal struggle which precedes the actions of Hector, Achilles, and Priam, is it otherwise. Here, no deity turns to the side and gives the correct advice, or inspires the soul to bravery in the decisive moment; here, the soul itself soars aloft, above trembling and faltering. There are those sublime moments, in which the hero must rise above himself, or be destroyed.

Homer's new image of man inspired many to make the trip themselves, and to search for the essence of mankind. Within less than 200 years, the "I" was discovered as a self-reflexive, individual unity in the early Greek lyrics, and a hundred years after that, the Greek tragedians uncovered anew the finest emotions of the soul. Homer's new ethic is celebrated in the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Parallel to the search for the essence of man, passionate investigations for the essence of the cosmos are associated, seeking the principles of the world surrounding man, and Greek scholars open up one area of knowledge after another. Now man is developed in his entire spiritual and intellectual unity—he becomes an individual. Homer is the beginning and cause of this development, and for this we bow our heads in recognition of the true greatness of his accomplishment.

—translated from the German by Pat Noble

Appendix: Scholars Debate Homer's Troy

Hypothesis and the Science of History

The main auditorium of the University of Tübingen, Germany was packed to the rafters for two days on February 15-16 of this year, with dozens fighting for standing room. Newspaper and journal articles had drawn the attention of all scholarly Europe to a highly unusual, extended debate. Although Germany was holding national elections, the opposed speakers were not politicians; they were leading archeologists. The magnet of controversy, which attracted more than 900 listeners, was the ancient city of Troy, and Homer, the deathless bard who sang of the Trojan War, and thus sparked the birth of Classical Greece out of the dark age which had followed that war.

One would never have expected such a turnout to hear a scholarly debate over an issue of scientific principle. But, where Troy is concerned, expect the unexpected. For the 2,800 years since Homer composed his great epics—or more precisely, for 3,200 years, since the time the Trojan War Homer sang of in his *Iliad* was probably fought—mankind has been concerned with the fate of Troy.

On one side of the Tübingen debate, were the leaders of an archeological team directed by Tübingen Prof. Manfred Korfmann, who have been making new discov-

eries at the site of Troy (near today's Hisarlik, Turkey) for more than a decade. In 2001 they coordinated an exhibition, "Troy: Dream and Reality," which has been wildly popular, drawing hundreds of thousands to museums in several German cities for six months. They gradually unearthed a grander, richer, and militarily tougher ancient city than had been found there before, one that comports with Homer's Troy of the many gates and broad streets; moreover, not a small Greek town, but a great maritime city allied with the Hittite Empire. Where the famous Heinrich Schliemann, in the Nineteenth century, showed that Homer truly pinpointed the *location* of Troy, and of some of the long-vanished cities whose ships had sailed to attack it, Korfmann's team has added evidence which tends to show that the bard also truly gave us the city's *character and qualities*.

On the other side, were European archeologists who, for the most part, have not excavated at Troy, but who have taken up public opposition to the Tübingen group's findings, and to its exhibition. They have been determinedly fighting to cut the Troy of Korfmann and his team 'down to size,' and above all, to keep Homer out of it! As in the many scholarly battles over Troy for hun-

Right: *Troy in the Third Millennium B.C.*
This computer reconstruction of Troy II, the layer excavated by Heinrich Schliemann, was prepared by the University of Tübingen team that has been excavating the site since 1988.

The drawing shows the pattern of a trading metropolis, with an upper city, or citadel, and a lower city which, at the later time of Homer's *Iliad*, had some 7,000 inhabitants, its own surrounding wall, and a moat.



Troy Project, Tübingen



EIRNS/Dean Andromidas

Left: *The famous palace ramp of Troy II as it appears today. At the upper end, Schliemann found what he called "Priam's Treasure," referring to the Trojan War era. Ramp and treasure were subsequently dated to the earlier Troy II period.*

Dr. Manfred Korfmann



ERNS/Dean Andromidas



www.bundesaustellungen.de

The exhibition, "Troy: Dream and Reality," which presents the discoveries of the archeological team headed by Tübingen University's Dr. Manfred Korfmann, has drawn over a million visitors to German museums this year.

dreds of years, the immortal works of the great poet are always at the center of the controversy.

Homer's Epics Speak to Us Still

Scholars have duelled incessantly over the Trojan Wars for more than two centuries. But their differences often featured episodes dreamed up by latter-day mediocrities, who thought thereby to acquire for themselves something of Homer's glory, by lying outright about the poet and his works. Homer sang of the first Trojan War. The "second" broke out in 1795 when, out of the blue, one Friedrich August Wolf suddenly claimed that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were just cut-and-paste jobs of a number of different songs—poetic inventions, not histories—by not one, but several different poets. Thus was the historical Troy disposed of; as for Homer, *dixit* Wolf, he had simply never existed. Lo and behold, during the Nineteenth century, Wolf's brainstorm came to dominate scholarly opinion.

When, in 1871, Schliemann began to dig on the hill at Hisarlik, to which he had come using the *Iliad* literally as his guide, the "third" Trojan War promptly broke out: A sizable chunk of the scientific community could not tolerate the idea of someone digging up out of the mists of history, a Troy they had labelled deader than the dodo.

Since 1988, under the leadership of Professor Korfmann, fresh excavations have been under way. His team of 75 scientists from around the world, with widely varying expertise, has made discoveries that have come to revolutionize our notion of Troy. Through his work, it has become manifest that Troy could not have been a Greek city, as dozens of generations have assumed, but rather belonged to the broader cultural area of Anatolia. From that vantage point, earlier finds have been given their proper significance, and many disputed points cleared up.

Among the most significant recent finds have been: a defensive trench completely around the city; an extensive tunnel system which collected and distributed potable water; and a large "lower city," surrounding the hill where Schliemann excavated. All these discoveries have placed Homer squarely in the center of the debate—yet again!

There was, among the many examples, the discovery in 1997 and 1998 of reservoirs and a subterranean supply well outside the lower city's wall to the west. Homer described this in Book XXII of the *Iliad*, when Hector, being pursued by Achilles around the city wall, reached

. . . where those two mother springs
Of deep Scamander poured abroad their silver
murmurings—
One warm and casts out fumes as fire, the other, cold as snow
Or hail dissolved. And when the Sun made ardent summer
glow,
There water's concrete crystal shined, near which were
cisternes made
All paved and clear, where Trojan wives and their fair
daughters had
Laundry for their fine linen weeds, in times of cleanly Peace
Before the Grecians brought their siege.
(XXII, 129-136, translated by George Chapman)

Evidence from the aforesaid finds has been collected in a touring exhibition that has, over the past year, been at Stuttgart, Braunschweig, and now Bonn, Germany, drawing almost 1 million visitors. The press has reflected that keen interest—hundreds of articles have appeared, and dozens of new books on Troy, while the *Iliad* itself has gained pride of place in Germany's bookshops. Works of a scientific bent on Troy and Homer have been selling well, and conferences on this topic have pulled in a flood of participants.

As little as ten years ago, interest in this ancient world was virtually extinct outside a narrow circle of experts.

Things have certainly changed! Korfmann's excavations, and his exhibition, have unleashed in Germany, what one may fairly call a renaissance of interest in the ancient world in this period when the great war broke out across the Aegean Sea. And they have triggered, predictably, a conflict along well-known factional lines.

The 'Fourth' Trojan War

Since the summer of 2001, the "fourth" Trojan War has been raging, provoked by a Tübingen professor of ancient history, Frank Kolb. In an article in the daily *Berliner Morgenpost*, Professor Kolb declared war on his colleague Manfred Korfmann. Just as one might think a daily newspaper something of an inappropriate forum for such a debate, so was Professor Kolb's language something less than choice. He alleged that Dr. Korfmann has been leading the public down the garden path, that he had falsified his excavations and over-interpreted his findings; in a word, that Korfmann was twisting historical truth, in order to gain fame as a Great Popularizer.

With throngs flocking to the "Dream and Reality" exhibition, Kolb's remarks against it were trumpeted far and wide by the mass media; then, interviews and scholarly declarations began to rain down from all sides. The

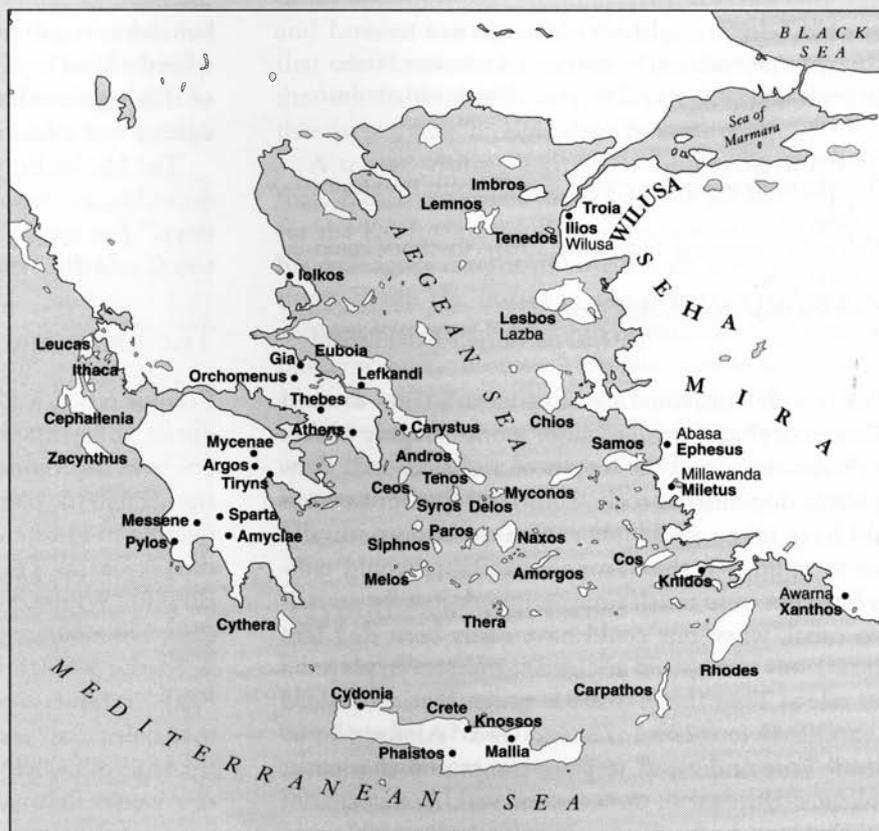
February symposium, which became a packed and widely watched debate under the title, "The Significance of Troy in the Later Bronze Age," was held, ostensibly to clear the air. In attendance were the two protagonists, along with 11 scientists from the relevant disciplines, from all over the world: archeologists, experts on ancient history and on the ancient Orient, philologists, Hittite scholars, and experts on Homer.

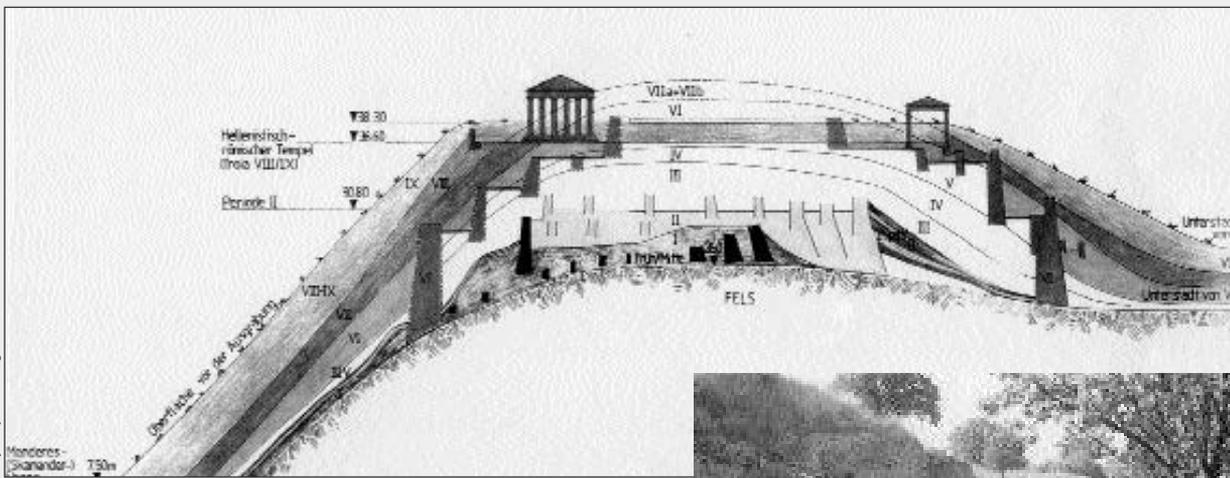
The battle got going over a wooden model of Troy, shown at the exhibition, which included the citadel and a well-built, extensive "lower city." Professor Kolb decried it as "public trickery," on the grounds that each little house shown in the wooden model did not correspond to a particular find at the Hisarlik excavation. Kolb had previously protested—and he brought this up several times during the symposium—that in Homer's days (the Eighth century B.C.) Troy had been "but a smallish settlement with scrubby little dwellings." As for the trench excavated by Korfmann's team, which they believe to be a defensive trench against the most dangerous form of weaponry of that age—war chariots—Professor Kolb begged to differ. In his view, the trench must have been for drainage purposes.

In the *Iliad*, Homer precisely described such a trench as Troy's defensive barrier against war chariots:

GREECE AND ANATOLIA IN THE MYCENAEAN PERIOD (13th century B.C.), the approximate era of the Trojan War. The maritime city of Troy and its surrounding area (Hittite "Wilusa," Homer's "Ilios") commanded the strategic sea-trade passage from the Aegean Sea into the Black Sea to the north, through the Hellespont (Dardanelles) and Propontis (Marmara Sea).

Heinrich Schliemann's 19th-century excavation of Troy at this site, proved that Homer's *Iliad* established the location of Troy precisely, as well as the cities from which it was attacked—shocking scholars, who had dismissed Homer's epic as "just poetry." The post-1988 excavations have again shocked the scholars, by proving that Homer also precisely described the city's large size, splendor, and fortifications. Some of the Mycenaean Greek cities which sailed against Troy had long disappeared when Homer's epic named and located them 500-600 years later.





Above: Cross-section of the different strata of settlement on the mound of Troy, where the citadel was first discovered by Schliemann. The lowest (earliest) level, Troy I, from perhaps 3000 B.C., sits on the bedrock ("Fels"). Schliemann excavated the first important cultural period, Troy II. Troy III-V is the so-called "maritime" period, 2600-2400 B.C. Troy VI-VII, the high culture about which Homer sang, with its huge walls and much greater extension, ended about 1200 B.C. Above these strata are the remains of Hellenistic and Roman settlements and temples. **Right:** Today's excavation site, labelled for the strata of Troy II, III, and IV.



... which being so deep, they could not get their horse
To venture on, but trample, snore and, on the very brink,
To neigh with spirit, yet still stand off. Nor would a human
think

The passage safe . . .

The dike being everywhere so deep and (where 'twas least
deep) set

With stakes exceeding thick, sharp, strong, that horse could
never pass,

Much less their chariots after them.

(XII, 62-68, Chapman translation)

The trench unearthed by Korfmann's team around the "lower city" of Troy is a major work: roughly 10 feet wide, 5 feet deep, and the length of a quarter-mile running track, dug into the rock. Constructing such a trench would have taken great labor. The question naturally comes to mind, whether Troy's inhabitants would willingly have put in so much time and work just for an irrigation canal, when one could have easily been dug into the loam, very close by. War chariots, moreover, played a major role at Troy. In the treaty between Hittite overlord Muwattalli II (c. 1290-1272 B.C.) and "Alaksandu of Wilusa," Troy undertook to place troops and chariots at the Hittites' disposal in the event of war. A war chariot was a highly complex piece of equipment, which could not have been hammered up by some village blacksmith,

but rather required both properly trained craftsmen, and specially bred horses, whose training took three years. All of this represented a major investment, and required upkeep and infrastructure.

The Hittite Empire would not likely have placed such demands, nor signed such a treaty, with a "scrubby little town." But was Wilusa, with which the Hittites had that treaty, actually Troy? That is the second sticking point.

The Language of *The Iliad*

Frank Starke, a Hittite specialist from Tübingen, said during the symposium that, "Troy's geographical position has been ascertained with certainty." His own work has shown that the place-name "Wilusa," which crops up frequently in Hittite documents, is the same city known to the Greeks as Troy. Homer often calls it "Ilios"—very close to "Wilusa," since the Greeks of Homer's time had ceased pronouncing "w."

Starke was straightaway contradicted by Mrs. Heinhöhl-Krahmer, a Salzburg Hittite expert, who objected to the idea that "comparison might be sustained, solely on the basis of coincidental assonances." She contended that one would first have to find written evidence with that name at the very site, if one were to be absolutely sure that the excavated hill was indeed Troy. Heinhöhl-Krah-

mer essentially demanded that Korfmann dig up a 3,000-year-old street sign, before calling Troy, Troy.

And now to disagreement among the philologists, the scholars of language and meaning. This would seem, at first, astonishing, since research on Homer's epic poems has been greatly stimulated by Korfmann's excavations.

Troy was utterly destroyed some time around the year 1200 B.C., the point at which High Mycenaean culture (1600-1200 B.C.) collapsed, and Greece sank into a 400-year dark age. Homer sang of the disaster in his *Iliad*, composed about 500 years after that dark age. Joachim Latacz from Basel, Switzerland, and Wolfdietrich Niemeier from Athens, pointed to indications in the *Iliad* that the entire original Troy story (not Homer's epic) stems from the Mycenaean period, and was handed down accurately for centuries by bards, to Homer in the Eighth century. It is particularly remarkable that the *Iliad* contains a great many words and poetic epigrams which were no longer used in Homer's day, and that his descriptions of armor, weaponry, battle formations, and even architecture, were Mycenaean.

At the debate, Wolfgang Kullmann of Freiburg University saw it otherwise. He argued that, the "Troy story was [first] told after the dark age was past"; in other words, in Homer's lifetime. Although Dr. Latacz showed that the "catalogue of the ships" given by Homer at the end of Book II of the *Iliad*, follows a list dating from the Mycenaean era, Kullmann insisted that the original was "a list of participants in the upcoming Olympic Games."

A third clash involved the expression "trading city." To Professor Korfmann, Troy played an important role in

trade. A member of his team observed, with some exasperation, "Had the Trojans ever imagined how acrimonious the dispute over their city was to become, they would doubtless have taken the precaution of depositing little signposts all 'round," and taken care to stash away somewhere a ship's cargo with freight from every known spot on the globe.

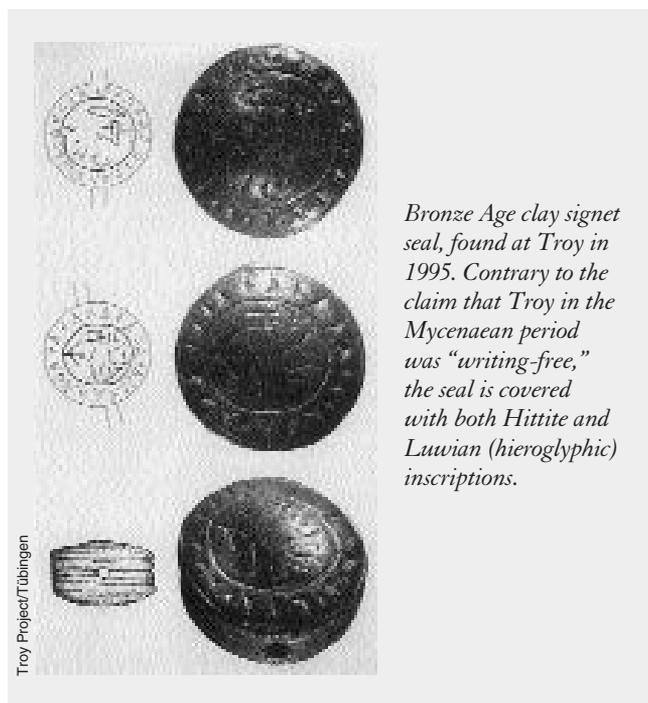
Although they didn't bury such mercantile time-capsules for us, the Trojans enjoyed an outstanding strategic position, with Troy lying precisely between the European and Asian continents, and at the head of the passage from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea. But Dieter Hertel of Munich University, leading an attack on Troy's maritime status, called this position "irrelevant." Despite the fact that trade has been attested just about everywhere else in the world at that time, and although Kolb himself readily acknowledged that trade was intense throughout the Levant, Kolb and his colleagues arrayed against Korfmann, insist that in the northern Aegean and in the Black Sea, there was no trade, nothing but "exchange of royal gifts."

The same sort of reasoning was applied to writing systems. According to Bernhard Hänsel of Berlin, the entire northern Aegean was a "writing-free zone" in Mycenaean times. Although all of Troy's neighbors had been using writing systems for centuries—the Hittites, the Egyptians, the Mycenaean Greeks themselves—Hänsel claimed the Trojans were wallflowers in this regard. And, what is one to say about the seal found at Troy, covered with Hittite and Luwian inscriptions? [SEE illustration] Kolb argued that one "cannot take seriously" Korfmann's hypothesis that this shows that writing was in use, supposing instead that the seal was "brought there by some trader."

A trader, visiting a city that didn't trade? It seemed that, in their eagerness to dampen the public's enthusiasm for the Korfmann team's new picture of Troy, Kolb and his colleagues caught themselves up in some contradictions. From the outset of the debate, Professor Kolb accused Professor Korfmann of entertaining "other than purely scientific motives." Motives outside science may be at work on the accuser's side, though. What scientific motive could have impelled Kolb's associates to intervene with the German Society for the Advancement of Research, which has been co-financing the excavations at Troy, to cut off Korfmann's funding?

'Hypothesis Non Fingo'?

For Hans-Peter Urpmann, the biologist of the Tübingen University excavating team, critical issues are at stake. For decades, archeology, as a scientific discipline, had taken a back seat to so-called "pure historical studies." But now, says Urpmann, it is in the spotlight, while the "pure" historical sciences are "backed up against the wall." "Not a single drop more can be squeezed" from



the texts over which the “pure” historians have been poring for decades. Those historians want to keep the upper hand over history, he maintains, and have been defending their position by gripping with “tooth and claw,” fixed categories and concepts.

Oddly enough, the hard core of the accusation which Professor Kolb and his fellow attackers have been levelling at the Korfmann group is, that the latter have dared to formulate hypotheses about the meaning of what they have found. Kolb and others insist that “one is not entitled to base one’s arguments on anything other than finds that one has actually got in hand, and certainly not on hypotheses.” Quite the opposite view was taken by Korfmann, who said, “a hypothesis may fairly be held to be valid, until such time as a fresh one come to replace it.”

That is the crux of the matter; that is why battles are being fought to this day over Troy. Was Troy a trading metropolis, as Korfmann would have it, or, in Kolb’s words, “an insignificant settlement of scrubby little houses”? Are the trenches defensive ones, as Korfmann would have it, or Kolb’s irrigation canals? Was the lower city “rather densely built-up with edifices of stone” (Peter Jablonka, Tübingen), or “a small, essentially agrarian outlying settlement” (Kolb)? Did it have “between 5,000 and 7,000 inhabitants” (Korfmann), or “something under 1,000” (Kolb)? All of these points show that we are faced here with “two quite different worlds,” as Korfmann said.

Does *science* involve nothing but collating data and facts, and then explaining them, or does it begin precisely where what one already knows, leaves off? In the German language, the word for science, “*Wissenschaft*,” means “creating new knowledge,” not merely interpreting the old in ever-more exhaustive detail.

In this controversy, as in others, those like Professor Kolb, who would reject the notion of hypotheses as something unscientific, as mere “speculation,” often turn out to cling like barnacles to their very own hypotheses. To assert that Homer never existed, or to insist as Freiburg’s Prof. Wolfgang Kullman did, that the *Iliad* is a mere “poetic construct” and not the telling of history, is, in itself, obviously, a form of hypothesis-making. How these historians dealt with their adversaries at the debate, exhibiting self-righteousness and sometimes arrogance, as if from an armed bunker, was visible to the many interested laymen in the audience, and did nothing to improve the standing of their particular branch of science in the public eye.

Who Was Homer?

Similarly, the question whether the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* possess an artistic unity that demonstrates they were composed by only one man of genius, is not just a

falling-out between scholars. The dispute pertains to different notions of the nature of man’s creativity. Those who protest—as did Friedrich August Wolf in the Eighteenth century—that Homer could never have composed such epics, take that stand because they cannot accept the notion that man might be capable of such an outburst of pure genius. Thus, the outcome of the controversy over Korfmann’s excavations, and their interpretation, will prove to be critical to the future of science.

At the Tübingen debate, Professor Kolb insisted over and again that, the “excavations at Troy must be seen as something separate and distinct from the *Iliad*. . . . Identifying Troy with Wilusa is mere hypothesis. . . . One must avoid imagining that the settlement had something to do with the *Iliad*.” But, why should one avoid imagining that? Because, perhaps, one actually finds so much evidence to suggest it? Might this be why Professor Kolb has turned down Professor Korfmann’s several invitations to visit the excavation site, and see things with his own eyes?

Kolb accused Korfmann of wanting, from the very outset, to excavate the “glorious Troy,” exactly as Heinrich Schliemann wanted to do in the Nineteenth century, when he followed Homer’s directions and found this buried city for the first time. Professor Kolb does not want to find any “glorious Troy.”

The Troy controversy of 2001 has been making such waves in the international scientific community, that a delegation of British scientists, led by the grand old man of Hittite studies, John David Hawkins, travelled to Tübingen for the symposium. Korfmann’s achievements, they said, were outstanding; he and his team had “set an example” for other archeologists. They expressed their hope that “the conflict” not have an adverse effect on Korfmann’s work.

And when, during the final debate, Korfmann affirmed that he would definitely continue excavating at Troy, his announcement was greeted with resounding applause from the entire hall.

—Rosa Tennenbaum

This article originally appeared in the March 29, 2002 issue of Executive Intelligence Review (EIR) (Vol. 29, No. 12), accompanied by an interview with Professor Manfred Korfmann. A detailed report on the German exhibition presenting the results of the Korfmann group’s recent archeological excavations, “Troy: Dream and Reality,” including on-site observations of the Troy/Hisarlik site, was prepared for the Feb. 8, 2002 issue of EIR by Andrea Andromidas (Vol. 29, No. 5).