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ILIAD EDITION
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Original Introduction to the Iliad Edition

When Alexander mounted his black horse to lead the armies of Greece into Asia, he carried with him a copy of a literary work most unlike any other which the Western world has ever produced.

In the year 334 B.C. when that king landed upon the shores of Asia Minor, he unrolled one of a set of small papyrus scrolls expertly fashioned by the artists and craftsmen of his court, to be carried at all times near the king, and proceeded to read for his friends from its lines a poetry of immortal legend: of the beauty of Helen, of the war of Troy, and the baneful fury which gripped the greatest of all heroes of Greece, the famous king Achilleus.

The Lines he quoted concerned that king, and were these:

« There they found him, soothing his Soul with the clear-sounding Lyre 
Fair, and of costly Frame, inlaid, with a Crossbridge of Silver, 
Chosen, a special Spoil, from the Sack of Eëtion's City 
Pleasing his Soul with its Tones as he chanted the Glories of Heroes. »

The Iliad – so the epic is called, for Ilion was an old name for Troy – is our oldest literary masterpiece, and constitutes our only window unto that world whence sprang the origins of democracy, the origins of Europe, the source of our history and of our identity; already considered ancient in the day of Alexander, like a lonely torch it flickers through the darkness, surviving still in our millennium where all other witnesses from this remote past have grown silent.

And so it was that there, before the ancient ruins of Troy, having landed where the great Achilleus had once died in battle, the young king went with his friends to the grave of the hero, honouring in songs and contests the memory of the Greeks who died in that war. He pronounced in the presence of his companions and generals that Achilleus was happy in having had a faithful friend, and, in death, a great herald of his fame. Pouring sacred oils upon the gravestone, he recited the lines of that herald: Homeros, the Poet of the Island of Chios.

The work of Homeros, composed in the 8th century B.C., remains forever a manifesto and a testament to the spirit of the Greeks. It was handed down by generations of poets until first committed to paper at Athens in the 6th century B.C., and the copy of Alexander had been meticulously prepared from this version under the supervision of Aristotle; and indeed it was none other than the great philosopher who had taught Alexander how to read and write.
Bust of Alexander the Great (356–323)
by Lysippos
Legend recounts that the young king would place it under his pillow at night, keeping it next to his dagger; the spaces between the columns of poetry were filled with his handwritten comments, and from the Iliad he would continue to draw inspiration and his standards of moral excellence and personal bravery for the rest of his life, as he eclipsed in fame even Achilleus. Outnumbered ten to one in manpower, derided and laughed at by a world which wrote off his visions as an impossible dreamery, by old men who never ceased to predict his defeat, he died undefeated – leaving behind an empire the like of which history never saw, founding a network of Hellenic capitals stretching from Thessaly to India.

The most famous of these cities was the Alexandria of Egypt, and his Macedonian Successors would build there the famous library whence our text of the Iliad stems, a centre of learning unparalleled in history, where the paths of Heron, Archimedes, Eratosthenes and Aristarchos crossed. All of this was made possible by the conquests of Alexander, who continued to dream until his death of a harmonious Empire uniting all peoples from East to West. Everywhere he went, in all his many battles, through the deserts of Asia and to the heights of the mountains of India, everywhere the Iliad went with him, and there is no greater testimony to the force of the ideas contained therein, than his life.

Homeros is referenced by every single great thinker and writer Hellas ever produced. The world of the Greeks rests upon the poems of Homer, along with such mythological narratives as those surrounding the deeds of Herakles and Perseus; of all these narratives, the Iliad is the greatest and most important. Greece cannot be understood, Europe cannot be understood, except through Homeros: Let no man call himself educated, let no man call himself a European, before he has read it.

*About the Iliad Edition*

The legacy of the Greeks is enormous. There is hardly any major field in science, art or philosophy, which does not find its origins and initial development in the Greek world. The opportunity to hear the living voice of that world must be afforded every young man and woman:

**We are producing six complete editions of the Iliad**, beautifully presented in illustrated books, with newly prepared translations in German, English, Italian, Spanish, Demotic Greek and Danish, directly next to the 2,800-year-old Greek text and to be read listening to a vibrant recording of the original language, presented additionally in the form of a video to take advantage of the technological advances of our era.

We are breathing new life into something which for one and a half millennia had been pronounced dead, making it available to millions of young minds with the simple click from their computer. No special education or prior knowledge of Greek is necessary, the entire text is conveniently supplied so as to be understandable both to experts, and to the uninitiated. The latter will benefit from the concise illustrated introduction supplying necessary information.

Where it was before only the privilege of a select handful of specialists and scholars to delve into the earliest roots of European civilization, it now becomes the privilege of all. The following will attempt to outline the context, importance and value of the project.
Why the Iliad? Why is Homer so important?

The Iliad is the origin, the founding document of Hellenic and Roman civilization. It was the starting point and cornerstone of the classical education which was taught to all great thinkers of antiquity, and its importance is attested by such men as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybios, Cicero, Strabo, Pliny and Diodoros, all of them great fathers of civilization whose valuable contributions to European identity and society cannot be overstated.

Whereas scholars debate the exact dates and events that led to the formation of the Iliad, and its accompanying cycle of epic poems describing the myth of Troy — some holding that a real siege of Troy took place in the second millennium B.C. and formed the basis of a tradition which later morphed into the Homeric poems, others in turn arguing for competing alternative theories — it is not the actual events themselves which ought to command our attention, so much as the astonishing body of text in front of us itself, and the achievement it constitutes.

For the fascinating thing is not that a king was able to muster enough troops and support from his allies to undertake an expedition to Troy — this manner of warfare, where numerous smaller kings and chiefs render fealty unto one great lord, who then leads them with their contingents into battle, has been known since time immemorial. It is the fact that such an unremarkable event as the siege and subsequent conquest, of a coastal city — and sieges and raids were indeed most common occurrences in the ancient world — could be fashioned by a Greek poet, the one whom we call by the name of Homeros, into the incredibly rich substance of masterfully crafted poetic narrative! The Iliad is the first of its kind, and the only of its particular kind, to have ever been produced. All later epic poems are imitations of Homer.

When the Roman poet Virgil set out to write his epic poem the Aeneid, and therewith supply the Empire of Augustus with a new Latin Iliad of its own, he did so because he realized what a tremendous importance the poetry of that bard, revered amongst all throughout the Hellenistic world, as the Educator of the Greeks, had exerted upon that civilization, even unto the extent of inspiring the deeds of an Alexander.

By seizing upon Aeneas, a prince from the Iliad, the Roman Virgil grafted upon the stem of that most ancient and most glorious of panhellenistic epic myths, the entire history of Rome, and therewith seems to take the final step into fusing the two cultures together: This world, which we know as the Greco-Roman world, is where the edifice of our whole Western civilization was built, from the very letters which you are reading in this exact moment, unto the language, principles of logic and philosophical discourse employed in creating the systems of justice and of political government, which we now hold to be natural and self-evident — but which are in fact colossal achievements, attained by Greek and Roman genius. Their poetry and theatre, and all their descendants in our age, cinema, musical, ballet, opera, indeed all of the arts and the scientific principles of thought, that keep us from sliding into simple-mindedness as a society.

How will advancing the knowledge of Homeros concretely enrich our societies today?

The public knows nothing about classical Greece and Rome, apart from the fact that they invented many things, painted vases and built temples. Lacking any real understanding, they are
unable to consider seriously the state of their own kingdoms and republics in the complete context of the Western civilization of which they are in fact a part: They are effectively being robbed of the knowledge about how civilization actually evolved, in that they are presented with accounts fit for fools. How then could they ever understand and by comparison reflect truly upon their inherited identity and its composite aspects? Knowing that vases were painted at Athens and seeing a photograph of a temple does not teach anything whatsoever about the essence of the colossal evolution leading from 1500 B.C. to the construction of the Hagia Sophia. Nor does forcing students to plow through the first five hundred lines of the Iliad in a dull translation; it does not enrich anything, it is superficial, shallow, useless, fit only for the instruction of children who have not yet learnt to read and write.

And yet, even the approved text books used in education in the wealthiest European nations are filled to the brim with errors, omissions and misunderstandings. Several of the central episodes from Greek and Roman history have been made into very expensive films and series, but the scripts are so poorly researched that there is no budget could cover even with so many golden patches the gaping holes in their fabric – for the holes stem from the universal ignorance of the directors and producers. It is a holistic problem, so to speak, which affects all society.

The poverty of discourse which we witness in the public of our age, cannot fail to strike the enlightened observer as a testimony to the great spiritual decline of our age. Matters of the greatest importance, central aspects of civilized life such as the philosophical and political foundations upon which our states are based, are discussed with the most ruinous lack of competence. Our political assemblies, our senates, universities and parliaments have become assemblies of intellectual drunkards; assemblies where serious discourse concerning the future of a continent is left to the arbitrary and uninformed deliberations of the most uneducated individuals, whose narratives and visions lack any internal coherence.

They will be seen throwing the simplest words about them to arouse emotion, in opposite cases to mute or dampen emotional responses to various matters, each as it may serve his case: Common to all of them is an appeal to the lowest common denominator, not the highest – in this climate of ignorance, hence, emotion becomes a substitute for reason.

We have parties of politicians aligned along patterns of political ideologies which have lost the connection to the foundations upon which all that stands, which we deem valuable and indispensable to modern society. What the essence of Europe really is. Instead we find them discussing all kinds of petty trifles, mired down in gossip, envy and cheap personal infighting.

The standards by which a speech or a piece of writing is judged in the public space have sunk to such a low level that serious individuals with intelligence avoid public discourse altogether. Filthy and rudimentary language has become commonplace and with its spread amongst all classes has come a degradation of all language, contaminating the young men and women of our societies from their earliest formative years, leading their minds towards an acceptance of filth and stupidity, and away from any noble and genuine thoughts, which they are taught to look upon as haughty and distant, and through long years of low culture have learned to despise.

All this has been a gradual trajectory of decline, rather than some co-ordinated attack upon the
intellectual health and strength of Europe and our community of states. There is only one reason: Europe's chaotic 20th century, the recovery from which still ongoing no classical education was given any particular importance in politics. Although, the makers of opinions and politicians of all camps and flanks will say that education, democracy, culture and literacy are most important and central concepts, as far as the future of their states is concerned – they will say this in unison, acting as a great chorus, but not one of them will be able to open a single book from the founders of that democracy and that literature and that culture which they praise so much, and about which they incessantly speak, and read aloud a single line from that book. Indeed the general degree of literacy, which our schools had been charged with maintaining and improving, has deteriorated to such an extent that even the best translations of these books are unintelligible to the broader electorate. They cannot even pronounce the very word ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ. But it is one thing that the wider populace upon whose choices elections depend stands ignorant about the basic foundations of their civilization; not all strata can be expected to contribute equally to the political and philosophical discourse. What is much more important is that the minds charged with the responsibility of shaping and steering the greater public discourse, upon which the maintenance of the state and the democracy, and the rule of law, and in short occidental culture itself hinges, are actively aware of where these ideas came from, and can open a book and examine the thoughts of the classical authors from the original, when contemplating their own course of action!

So often is the speech on Europe and European democracy and European culture and European ideas and communities, that one is forced to ask why the founding principles of the political theories and their philosophical foundations are never quoted by politicians or examined in the popular discourse? Why it is not considered relevant to be able to listen to and understand the writings upon which our Western civilization was founded? The educated mind will give some license to concerns for preservation of national, cultural and ethnic traditions which appear besieged in various parts of Europe, and certainly there are valuable traditions which must be shielded with special efforts, lest they be left to drown in the floodwave of imported pseudophilosophy and consumer fashion – but to put up a cheap political worship of nationality or regionality as a substitute for true classical education will not do. We need the inheritance from Athens, Rome, and Constantinople, in order for our European identities to have any value. Without civilization, nationality is useless.

We hear politicians say that they do not need to spend their precious time studying these texts, these irrelevant museum pieces we could and should in their opinion strike them from the curricula of the schools and academies, since they prefer talking about immigration and empty clichés of national heritage rather than grasping for the roots of the problem, which is the quiet gradual decline of civilization in Europe itself. Our public spaces into which political observations and utterances are projected, and where discussions upon these matters should take place, have become so dumbed-down that the public has become hostile and indifferent to the most central contemplations, rejecting even the fundamental conversation about what a state should be, and what the purpose of us as men and as Europeans, as boring and aetherial pursuits far-removed from the everyday lives and concerns of the citizens. When Aristotle writes

« The political fellowship must be deemed to exist for the sake of noble actions, not merely for living in common. »
Then it is something which all men and women should give some consideration, whether we want a vision from politicians to enrich ourselves and our immediate surroundings, to increase our comfort, or whether we have some greater purpose as humanity and as Europeans which we need to pursue. In an age which prides itself in its technological and industrial advances, it is the more regrettable that these things are so rarely spoken of. It paints a bleak picture of the manner in which we use this enormous technical potential, that our efforts currently multiply ignorance rather than construct beacons of insight. This must be changed.

So where does the Iliad Edition fit into this?

The lazy attitude which has caused the de facto banishment of the classics from the public sphere and from public education has been lamented by educated minds for decades, but hitherto little has been done to effectively counter this colossal step backwards.

With this new comprehensive Iliad, we are undertaking the work of renovating the first of the central structural columns which uphold the ancestral intellectual house of the European and wider Western sphere of ideas: The importance of the work may be imagined in practical terms as the maintenance and strengthening of the supporting elements of a great structure, whose foundations have been eroded over the course of the centuries and are in urgent need of repair. Once the connection to the living word of antiquity has been established, the publicly available free instruction in Greek and Latin must follow. This is the ultimate aim of the European Society for Homeric Studies: That no one need pay a penny to grasp the basics well enough to get an understanding of who he is, but be provided with an open course of quality instruction, rather than depend in that quest upon television series and films made for fools, which misinform every European about his past. This misinformation ends here, with the revived words of Homeros.

EXEMPLARY FROM THE SCHOLARLY INTRODUCTIONS

accompanying the Iliad Edition

How can we really know the pronunciation of Ancient Greek? Did they really speak like this?

The pronunciation of Pre-Classical Attic Greek is known both by evidence and comparison. Inscriptions using the earliest versions of the Greek alphabet often show letters corresponding to sounds which were lost on the way to the Classical Attic Greek, whose pronunciation is in turn known from contemporary sources and deduction alike.

A famous example is the so-called 'digamma', an f-like letter — indeed the very ancestor of our Latin F — which represented a w-like sound. The original presence of this sound in the Greek of Homeros is indicated by metric irregularities which miraculously disappear once the missing digamma is restored. Additionally, earlier phonological variations can be determined by comparing the known Classical Greek form to either an earlier Mycenian Greek version (the earliest written form of Greek, spoken between 1500 and 1000 BC and written in a syllabic script called 'Linear B') or a non-Greek but related Indo-European example.

Mr. Michael Peter Vereno

PhD in Historical and Comparative Linguistics, University of Salzburg, Austria
What is the scope of the edition project and how far has it progressed?

The entire first volume of the edition has been completed, and we are now seeking funding to continue printing and publishing the ensuing chapters of the Iliad, and adding classical illustrations of the action to the 17 already completed. Two large maps are also completed and enclosed in the finished first volume. The Greek original text and the five translations are ready, the audio and video recordings are edited and rendered, the design and typesetting of the edition completed: The text is printed upon large black horizontal pages, with letters hued in copper.

The finished edition of all 24 rhapsodies will include 360 illustrations, and some 20 pages presenting a brief synopsis of the epic context of the Iliad, and a few explanatory notes. In total more than 24 hours of spoken Greek, 26 hours of streaming video with text and illustrations, additional interviews affording a glimpse into the process of creating the monumental edition, and 3,236 pages of text; that is, six volumes of 270 A3-sheets, each weighing 3.37 kilogrammes and containing 540 pages of text, for each language edition.

What are you seeking funding for, and how can I contribute?

We need funding to complete the edition, including a re-recording of the first rhapsody with added emphasis on vibrancy of narration and improving scholarly accuracy and depth. To round off the listening experience it is also desirable to add captivating sound effects, insofar as it supports and never interferes with the narration. Finally we need to complete the illustration programme which has already been conceived in detail.

There are nine classes of contributions, each is linked to the reward of receiving a special copy of the edition. The standalone first volume is a one-time offer exclusively given to backers. The complete edition, six deluxe volumes, audio and video, can be purchased only together for €990.

The sole opportunity for substantial discount exists for subscriptions pledged in the Thetis class.

Contributor Classes offering the exclusive stand-alone first volume, with their rewards:

The Achilles class is a pledge of €50, which will get you a membership of the European Society for Homeric Studies, and a hardcover copy of the first volume. Choose between translations in English, German, Italian, Spanish, Danish and modern Greek.

The Hektor class is a pledge of €75, which will get you a membership, a hardcover copy of the first volume, and an audio CD with a one-hour audiobook in the original ancient Greek, recorded authentically for the first time in the history of the world.

The Priamos class is a pledge of €100, which will get you a membership, a hardcover copy of the first volume, an audio CD with one-hour audiobook, and a DVD with the text of the edition scrolling to follow the progress of the narration in a combined performance, and extras including a documentary and interviews with the men who made the edition.

The Agamemnon class is a pledge of €125, which will get you a membership, a hardcover copy of volume one, an audio CD with one-hour audiobook, a DVD with combined performance and extra documentary and interviews, a large deluxe black-and-copper poster-sized map of the Iliad in Greek and English, signed personally by the authors.
The Nestor class is a pledge of €150, which will get you a membership, a hardcover copy of volume one, an audio CD with one-hour audiobook, a DVD with combined performance and extra documentary and interviews, a large deluxe map signed by the authors, an extra book with the pure ancient Greek text, and your name inscribed in the honorary mentions concluding the sixth and final volume.

The following are the Grand Classes:

The Thetis class is a pledge of €800, which will get you a membership and secure your exclusive subscription copy of the entire universal edition: Six deluxe volumes, a CD and DVD with more than 26 hours of pristine audio recordings of the whole Iliad, extra video documentary and interviews, deluxe map and book with pure ancient Greek text, and your name inscribed in the honorary mentions. Edition will be signed.

The Hephaistos class is a pledge of €2500, which will get you the rewards of the Thetis class. You will receive exclusively the Royal Edition, identical to the Editio Princeps dedicated to Their Majesties the Queen of Denmark, and the King of Hellenes, featuring brilliant gold and silver lettering throughout the 3,236 pages.

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