



## **The *Iliada* and its heroes: an analysis of the Greek's formative ideals<sup>1</sup>**

*Iliada* e seus heróis: uma análise dos ideais formativos dos gregos

La *Iliada* y sus héroes: un análisis de los ideales formativos de los griegos

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### **Abstract**

Homer has always been the inspirator and father of the Greek *paideia*. A focus on the *Iliad*, whose heroes are the social agents required by archaic Greek society, evidences that Homer's perspective on human perfection deals with integral formation/education through which the aristocratic young man should develop a sound and healthy body and a noble soul. In the divine and heroic example, a reference in archaic formation/education, the erstwhile model virtues are represented, namely, goodness, nobleness, pride and love of the gods. The noble hero, depicted by Homer, stubbornly struggles to be better, above his peers, exceptional, the first in war and in the Olympic Games. The Homer's *paideia* is not merely the root of traditional classical pedagogy but also the base of later pedagogical concepts.

**Keywords:** Homer. Archaic Education. Hero.

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## Resumo

Homero, desde sempre, é considerado inspirador e pai da *paideia* grega. Focalizando-se na *Ilíada*, cujos heróis representam o agente social necessário à sociedade grega arcaica, coloca-se em evidência que a perspectiva de Homero quanto à perfeição humana é a da formação/educação integral, por meio da qual o jovem aristocrata deveria desenvolver um corpo vigoroso e saudável e nobreza de alma. No exemplo divino-heroico, referencial da formação/educação arcaica, estão representadas as virtudes modelares de então: a bondade, a nobreza, o orgulho e o amor aos deuses. O herói cavaleiresco, representado por Homero luta obstinadamente para ser o melhor, “superior” aos pares, excepcional, o primeiro na guerra e na olimpíada. Conclui-se que a *paideia* homérica não foi apenas a base da tradição pedagógica clássica, mas também de concepções pedagógicas posteriores.

**Palavra-chave:** Homero. Educação. Herói.

## Resumen

Homero siempre ha sido el inspirador y padre de la *paideia* griega. Un enfoque en la *Ilíada*, cuyos héroes son los agentes sociales requeridos por la arcaica sociedad griega, evidencia que la perspectiva de Homero sobre la perfección humana se ocupa de la formación/educación integral a través de la cual el joven aristocrático debe desarrollar un cuerpo fuerte y sano y un alma noble. En el ejemplo divino y heroico, una referencia en la formación/educación arcaica, se representan las virtudes del antiguo modelo: la bondad, la nobleza, el orgullo y el amor a los dioses. El noble héroe, representado por Homero, lucha obstinadamente por ser mejor, encima de sus compañeros, excepcional, el primero en las luchas y en los Juegos Olímpicos. La *paideia* del Homero no es simplemente la raíz de la pedagogía clásica tradicional, sino también la base de conceptos pedagógicos posteriores.

**Palabras clave:** Homero. Educación Arcaica. Héroe.

## Introduction

The origins of educational and formative practice by the Greeks hail back to the beginning of their culture, conventionally called the Archaic Period. Although shrouded in the mists of time, Homer's poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, bring to light heroic Greece and reveal its people's creative and formation spirit. Thought to be the most ancient documents in Western Culture (GALINO, 1973), the poems have become a heritage for the History of Education with regard to this period.

Formational and educational practice in the two poems is based on the concept of virtue, with close relationships with the values and interests of an aristocratic society. However, the hero's ideal formation, the ideal man, even on the common basis of virtue, is considered in different manners in the Homeric songs. In each song, the author develops a specific formational and educational referential: in the scenery, in the plot, in the style, in the idiosyncrasies and the aims of the heroes, the author expresses his concern to comply with society, the traditional archaic aristocracy.

In the *Iliad*, there is a focus on the virtue of the warrior hero. The attributions of courage, strength, boldness, bravery, wisdom, love and enthusiasm in war are awarded to the model of the ideal man. In war exercises, the hero makes it a point in showing his achievements and conquests in the battlefield for all to see (RIBEIRO; LUCERO; GONTIJO, 2008) within the space where he completes and fulfills himself as a hero and as a reference.

In the *Odyssey*, the author sings the post-war hero, his return voyage to his native land, and his achievements. A replacement occurs, or rather, the excellence of war practices is substituted by a different act, the dominion of language, beautiful and cunning words that persuade, convince and beguile. The hero who has the right speech, at the best moment, is praised (RIBEIRO; LUCERO; GONTIJO, 2008): every occasion required the elaboration of speech, arguments, means of persuasion for the solution of issues that presented themselves at the moment.

Current paper analyzes the *Iliad* to discover references and directions on the ideals within the formation of the warring man. It takes into account that the poem is the first attempt for the education of the Greek young man in the Archaic Period when life was based on war, spoils and looting. The paper's aim is to analyze the *Iliad* as an essential stance in discussions on the education of the ideal Greek who fulfilled his heroic role in the society of the period.

In the *Iliad*, the ancient legendary tradition which represents the main values of the people of the period is investigated by the poet's creative capacities which are admirable in their almost naïve sensitiveness, albeit thoughtful, reflexive and seasoned by poetic experience (GALINO, 1973, p. 117). Due to such qualities, one may search, discover and surprisingly find the most hidden traces on the formation of people in that particular aristocratic and court community at the dawn of culture.

Among the Greeks, education was the heritage of the aristocracy, the holder of political power and the warrant of culture. On the other hand, society's lower sectors, the popular masses, serving the aristocracy within a patriarchal relationship, lived at the margins of society and did not have any access to rights. A life lived in elegant idleness, free from labor, provided an opportunity for aristocratic young people to the benefits of first-class education in the exercise of war and in the political conduction of the community. Education in Homeric society prepared the aristocratic man, the *aristoi*, whose courtly features complied with the demands of the time.

This type of archaic pedagogy was based on the ideal of human perfection, or rather, the aristocratic young man would receive full education and would be able to develop a strong and healthy body and nobility of spirit. The divine-heroic example is very much evident in the Homeric poems, a reference to an education for the body and spirit. Gods and heroes, superior beings, supermen, were models to be followed and imitated. The young man was planned to excel, to be the best, the highest, the most acknowledged, the depository of an everlasting universal honor.

One should mention the *astoi*, whose excellence and highest nobility was their greatest and courtly aim. In other words, their target was to achieve the hero's highest place, the conquest of a glorious worldly respectability among their equals, among their kin and in their community since aristocratic society had no perspective in a life beyond the grave (GALINO, 1973, p.118).

By such an idea, the Elysian Plains did not symbolize paradise, but the domain of uncertainties brought forth by the unknown, represented by death. This boiled down to destruction, annihilation, the final point of life.

The above may also explain the hero's insatiable desire to live fully his fate and meet, in his fulfillment, the source of overflowing joy. For such an aim, the hero was prepared for personal sacrifice in his search for honor, to consecrate his name by fame, and make him immortal. Life, celebrated and lived with intensity, was not so important when high heroic values were weighed. That is why the opportunity to achieve the aim for which the hero was educated and which should be pursued throughout his existence was never rejected. It was not personal glory that triggered his acts, but the enchantment, happiness and honor of having experienced absolute beauty, of having reached the realms of the ideal of perfection, of complete fulfillment. The spiritualism of ethical thinking that placed a marked pride in man's humanism is thus evident.

Fullness that characterized *areté* as the education process of aristocratic man, the man who considered himself the ideal man, is thus described. The achievement of such educational ideal, man's perfection, required unceasing struggle, since, only through it, it would be possible to reach the desired aim. The struggle brought forth his virtue. Death was desired and valued when it accomplished the hero's fate (GALINO, 1973, p. 117-119) and only through such a result *areté* achieved its full meaning, as represented in the Homeric poems.

### **Tones and meanings of the Homeric *areté***

The concept *areté* has important clues for a discussion on the ends, aims and characteristics of Homeric education. This ideal which represents the aim of man's education within the mythical period in which heroic strength and bravery were highlighted, may be perceived in the *Iliad*, a witness of the educational conscience of aristocracy in the Homeric period.

A careful analysis of such a fertile and multifaced concept, central within the formation of Greek aristocracy in the *Iliad* brings forth all its multiplicity of meanings and tones. The two basic aspects in the formation/education of the hero (the technical aspect or *techné* and the ethical aspect, by *areté*) are basic in the court's formation/educational process. Enabling himself for action and argumentation, Homeric man sought an ideal life style, a mixture of warrior and courtier. The distinction lies in the organization of the concept of the Greek *paidéia*. The technical aspect of education comprises: 1) physical and sporting preparation (sports, physical exercises and the capacity in the use of weapons), and refers to the aim of physical *areté*; 2) spiritual and cultural preparation (musical arts, singing, dancing, playing on the lyre and other musical instruments), the dominion of language (expressing oneself with elegance and preiseness) and experience of life (knowing how to live, living with others and "transiting")

throughout life, all refer to the aim of spiritual *areté*). The ethical aspect comprises education in certain attitudes and the acquisition of virtues, such as goodness, nobility, pride, fear and reverence of the gods (REDONDO; LASPALAS, 1997).

Although in the *Iliad* Homer did not give a detailed idea of ethics, he revealed a set of values that communicated and crisscrossed, manifesting a progressive opening for the future and giving importance to these values in the behavior of the ideal man (FREITAS, 2007, p. 105). He revealed the hero in his mode of being, habits and relationships with the environment and the social milieu. One should point that, in the absence of effective ethical principles, when revealing the dynamics of superhuman expressions, he inspired the formation/education of many generations in Greek society (SCHÜLER, 1985, p. 15).

Among the values highlighted by the poet one should mention honor, glory, a life dedicated to war (COSTA JUNIOR, 2012, p. 29), even if the price was a short life, albeit full: “[...] the hero’s choice for a short and glorious life, propitiated by a ‘beautiful death’ on the battlefield, derives from the awareness of the ephemerality of human life and from the ‘metaphysical dimension of heroic honor’” (ROSA, 2016, p. 20). War ethics is, however, individualistic, motivated by honor and glory (COSTA JUNIOR, 2012), which should be pursued through the hero’s bravery, courage and valor. Consequently, dignified by heroic acts, a privilege of aristocratic man, he becomes the best and the highest.

The above-mentioned values of the court hero comprise the stubborn struggle to be better, to be above all the others, to be underscored among equals, to be exceptional, to be the first in battle and in games. It implies in the relevance of emulation and the spirit of competition in mythical formation/education. The hero, consequently, develops *megalopsychia* (greatness in spirit) to assume the agonistic ideal of life in which lies implicitly a peculiar ascetic concept of triumph and self-overcoming.

The full and balanced profile of such formation/education for the body and the spirit was later called *kalokagathia*, an untranslatable term which expresses the educational ideal for Greek aristocracy of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and which was partially assimilated by Athenian democracy, giving fulness to the Greek *paidéia* (REDONDO & LASPALAS, 1997).

Homer’s *paidéia* is not an external model but it is rather based on being and on man’s nature. Formation and education enable the natural trend for improvement, for the grandeur of the spirit, for the humanization of man, making him better.

Duty, pride of belonging to a certain class, love and pursual of glory pushed forward the heroic *paidéia*. Consequently, formation/education aimed at involving aristocratic man to place himself among the best (the *aristoi*) and prepared him to be excellent on the battlefield, to be strong, brave and courageous for combat, for war ethics and for the convincing eloquence in the *ágora* (SOARES; VIEIRA, 2009).

Courage, bravery and fearlessness were values proper to aristocratic man who was underscored and socially placed. His highest distinctions were struggles and victories, or rather, the contents and the spring of his existence (JAEGER, 1996). When Homer exalts aristocratic man, he attributes to him model virtues, such as honor, friendship, loyalty, hospitality, eloquence and respect. These are also due to the foe when the latter shows such virtues (SCHÜLER, 1985).

Virtue somewhat identifies in the other his own value and reflects in him his own qualities, inherent to the dignified and glorified hero among the Greeks (ROSA, 2016). Such awareness may be acquired only when the hero is acknowledged by society in which he is inserted.

Homer associated the idea of man to the idea of virtue which somewhat defined man. Virtue is thus a quality proper to aristocratic man, typical of the dominating sector of society, and which may be solely developed by men who covertly possessed it as a gift from the gods (ANDERY; MICHELETTO; SÉRIO 1996).

Homer's great concern was honor. Due to honor, conflicts developed, battles were engaged, fates were decided and commitments broken (SCHÜLER, 1985). The Greeks started a long and bloody war against the Trojans because of the honor of Menelaus, king of Sparta, who had been offended by Paris, a prince of Troy, who seduced the beautiful Helen. The embodiment of heroic ideals (the model hero), Achilles, son of Peleus, king of Phthia, and the goddess Thetis, was slighted when Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae and supreme commander of the Greek forces, robbed the pretty Briseis, a prey of war, and withdrew from the battlefield. Due to his response to the offense against his honor by Agamemnon, Achilles opposed the heroes' law and, moved by anger, posited an extreme stance and endangered the whole Greek army.

From the heroic aristocracy's point of view, the denial of honor resulted in great tragedy. That is the reason why honor should be vindicated and rehabilitated according to tradition. The whole social order of that period was based on mutual respect between equals. Evidently it could not be different: the more famous was the hero, the more was his honor's requirements. It was something almost natural to vindicate it by service dedicated to the social good. When this principle, endeared by the Greeks, was shattered and Achilles's 'prey of war' was stolen, Agamemnon, the first of the heroes and 'king of kings', commander-in-chief of the Greek army, publicly dismissed the right of ownership, legitimately conquered, and, consequently, the honor of one of the most respected members. The crime had to be atoned. Besides denying Achilles's honor conquered by heroic deeds, Agamemnon's attitudes corresponded to a new manifestation of power, represented by oppression, or rather, the denial of values consecrated by tradition (REDONDO; LASPALAS, 1997).

However, this was not relevant at the moment. What actually was important was the degree of offence implicit in the denial of an honor which corresponded to a higher *areté*.

Further, Homer provided Achilles with contradictory feelings and behaviors. On the one hand, the hero was very much aware of the limits imposed on man by the gods. Bravery, eloquence, the embodiment of all heroic ideals, a deep respect for military and social hierarchy belong to Achilles. If this were not so, he would have killed Agamemnon when he demanded Briseis. On the other hand, when he was overcome by rage and anger, he endangered the whole Greek army which was absolutely contrary to the basics of heroic formation/education. In the wake of Agamemnon's threat to have the 'slave' or of the embassy sent by the king to comply with the threat, Achilles, in a state of fury and rage, denounced vehemently the gains accumulated by the king when spoils were shared. In fact, the sharing of spoils and booty obeyed the laws of social status and not to personal bravery. The first step by Achilles to vindicate his honor was a prayer to his mother so that she would punish Agamemnon for taking his 'property', now symbolic, without taking into consideration the price to be paid: punishment of the entire Greek force. This fact distanced him from the heroic virtue of loyalty, fidelity and compromise with equals.

In the case of his oscillating behavior, Achilles has a notion of limits which are renewed even in conflicting situations. This is evident in his dialogue with Patroclus prior to his friend and pupil's going to mortal combat with Hector. Doubtlessly, the construction of his mythical personality is attributed to the Mycenaean loyalty that projects to Olympus the similarity with human society, based on rigid hierarchy (ROBERT, 1998).

As a counterpoint to Agamemnon and Achilles, Homer introduced Nestor, the king of Pylos, who due to age-earned serenity and wisdom, discussed the conflicts between them. His stance is a contrast to impulsive, tempestuous and impetuous youth and shows himself to be the bearer of the ideal of moderation in which lie all the virtues appreciated by the Greeks whose harmonization, valorization and elevation towards a higher moral and civil fullness were relevant to the person who was destined to give commands (SCIACCA, 1966, p. 68).

Confronting one by the imposition of power and the other by anger, while warning them of unwanted behavior, the old man presented such virtues as arguments to tell the kings to return to the peace that was required at the moment for the benefit of the Greeks. The old councilor insisted on the heroes' unwanted attitude, the behavior and the practice denied by the Greeks: his words meant to invite them to behavior proper to the *aristoi*, whose responsibility was the leadership among them.

Besides honor, Homer attributed one of the first places to friendship. Because of friendship, the contradictory Achilles forgot his anger towards Agamemnon and decided to return to the battlefield to revenge Patroclus who had fallen in combat with Hector, the main Trojan warrior. Aroused by friendship to his beloved friend, he shunned the anger caused by wounded honor and gave the enemy a spectacular defeat. For the second time, Achilles almost disrupted another ethical code highly prized by heroes: when he killed Hector, he thought of mutilating his body, an attitude that would go against heroic ethics precisely because the other was the ideal opponent, his antithesis (BOWRA, 1983).

In the *Iliad*, Achilles is not the only model hero who stands out for bravery among the best Greek heroes: Troy has its heroes, full of courage and virtues in the mystic world of heroic figures. This may partly explain Homer's special attention to Hector, the lord of all heroic valor, standing out among the Trojan, respected by the Greeks, even though this fact does not exempt him from being an unlucky hero. Aware of his fate, he accepted death: due to his civic responsibility, he would die for his country, he would do his duty and show his honor, bravery and dignity in the face of destiny (SCIACCA, 1966). The mortal hero, adorned with qualities proper to man, had moments of doubt and fear. However, his bravery was inspired by love of his country. Further, Hector was a worthy husband and father, a loved son, who felt duty as a human responsibility, a virtue that Achilles did not know (ROBERT, 1998). Hector is a human hero and his condition as hero is legitimate due to his warring characteristics. He is a normal man, son of human beings and not the offspring of a mortal with a deity. He is not a demigod as Achilles, the offspring of a nereid (SOARES; VIEIRA, 2009). Hector, loved and admired, knew how to fight bravely, even in a situation of inferiority, due to his duty, against forces which were beyond human. In fact, he did not much benefit from the glory of battles.

Death hovered over him, as the prayer of king Priam and queen Hecuba, his parents, and that of his wife Andromache showed. Similarly, there was warning of his friend Polidamas, or rather, to protect himself within the city walls for his own life and that of the Trojans.

In spite of his angst, Hector decided to fight Achilles. When he saw his opponent, he perceived the disadvantage and fled. He was then persecuted by the main Greek hero. Among contradictory feelings, fear and glory, his decision to go to combat was potentialized by Athena's guile and disguise. When he perceived that he had been deceived by the goddess, he knew that his end was near, his hour had arrived, according to the will of the gods, and he had to face it as he had been prepared and educated for. The heir of honor-legitimated values, he was aware of duty without the dishonor of a coward behavior (SCHILLING, s/d). Cowardness did not exist in the hero's education/formation.

In his decision, Hector sought excellence as a warrior. However, in his concern for personal glory, he did not shun his parents, his people, his country. His glory lay in collective glory, his people's and his family's, just the opposite of Achilles, the bloody warrior who fights for himself and for his personal glory. Homer thus insists on Hector's humanity (SOARES; VIEIRA, 2009).

The disadvantages in the conflict between Achilles and Hector are given: the greatest of the Greek heroes did not protest when the goddess Athena personally directed the arrows and coordinated the blows of the sword.

In the epic dedicated to Achilles's glory, the highest point lies when the hero assumed only the least attitudes. This boils down to a murder and a non-show of force, ability and resistance. From the start of the fight, Achilles signaled to the archers not to direct their arrows on the opponent so that he himself would receive the glory. He did not manifest any rebuke against the partial goddess who offered him victory in the struggle. Many years before, his father had told him that his victory would be a gift of Hera and Athena, with only his administration of impulsiveness on his part (ROBERT, 1998).

Hector is Achilles's antithesis. He was planned to be the opponent of the perfect hero, corresponding to his excellence. Olympus did not conspire towards his favor; on the contrary, he was fated to die at the hands of Achilles. In the specific case of Hector, in the struggle between the heroes, defeat was not in itself an unlucky occurrence and the duel was not an effective proof of virility. The epic meaning of fate hindered it. A man dies when fate or the gods desire his death. The hero has the duty to fight with honor, or rather, he had to be the most terrible to his foe, without debasing basic conventions. Fear was something unthinkable for the hero, even though Hector resisted in fighting Achilles. This may be interpreted as an unwanted emotion sent by a particular god. What really mattered was the duel, the manner by which one faced the enemy, giving wounds for wounds, the way by which one proceeded for the onslaught, how to invest against the opponent, triumphantly stripping him of his armor or facing the agony of fateful death, taking an opportunity in the last moment of life to say one more word of noble challenge (KIRK, 1962, p. 373). All these would confirm one's bravery, courage and value, following the statute of the heroes mythicized by tradition.

In the struggle between the warrior armed with weapons produced by man and the hero armed with the artifacts wrought in the divine factories, the result cannot be otherwise: man is defeated; Hector is routed (BOWRA, 1983). The treatment that Homer gave to the model Trojan warrior may be understood as the most ancient manifestation of impartiality and even that of moral superiority embodied by Greek society (ROCHA PEREIRA, 1998).

Hector's death and Achilles's efforts to profane his body made Priam, king of the Trojans and father of the Trojan hero, anxious to recover the body and give it due funeral honor. At night, he sought Achilles's tent and his prayers, based on Hector's bravery, made father and son worthy of obtaining the respect of the first of the Greek heroes.

Homer highlights within the formation/education process the reverential respect, proper to the hero, even to foes when they show model virtues. Achilles's fury was not mitigated by the presents given by the suffering father nor did his gifts make him return the body of the brave son, prince Hector, who fell in his struggle with the hero protected by Athena and Hera.

Fatherly feelings surmounted the image of the enemy king (SCHÜLER, 1985). The hero became humanized before the broken, humiliated and defenseless father, albeit royalty. Achilles became sensitive to the painful words and expressions of that proud man who did not shun to humiliate himself before his enemy and kiss the hands that had slaughtered his son. After taking on himself a primitive cruelty, the Olympus-protected hero gave a meal to Priam, gave him the trophy, Hector's wept body, his most valent enemy, clean and perfumed (ROCHA PEREIRA, 1998). Further, he conceded a 12-day truce to the king so that Hector's funeral rites could be celebrated.

The profusion of feelings and emotions that distinguished the meeting between Priam and Achilles reveals the breaking up of divisions between men in war and an appreciation of life, and the establishment of a moral limit above the differences between winners and losers (SCIACCA, 1966). We have men marked by the same human suffering, making them equal, broken by the definitive and irreparable loss of loved ones.



Hospitality for supplicants and guests stands out in the list of the hero's ideal behaviors with regard to social life. It was highly elegant to defend someone who needed protection and who showed the classical attitude of petition: "touching the beard with the right hand and the knees with the left one". The Greek act presented the certainty of receiving shelter in distant places, especially in exile or in flight from one's country.

Hospitality brought forth a link for moral order between guest and host, above military duty, projecting itself beyond generations (ROCHA PEREIRA, 1998). It is the dialogue between Glaucus, prince of Argos, and Diomedes, king of Tyrent, when they were preparing themselves for battle:

Hippolocus begat me. I claim to be his son, and he sent me to Troy with strict instructions: Ever to excel, to do better than others, and to bring glory to my forebears, who indeed were the noblest in Ephyra and in vast Lycia. This is my ancestry; this is the blood I am proud to inherit. Thus did he speak, and the heart of Diomedes of the great war cry was glad. He planted his spear in the ground, and spoke to him with friendly words. Then, he said, you are an old friend of my father's house. Great Oineus once entertained Bellerophon the blameless for twenty days, and the two exchanged presents. [...] Henceforth, however, I must be your host in middle Argos, [225] and you mine in Lycia, if I should ever go to that place (HOMERO, 1978, p. 109-110).

The identification of their respective families prior to engagement in war, as was their habit, acknowledges that an ancestor of Glaucus was the guest of Diomedes's forebear. Consequently, the fight is suspended and, giving witness and sealing old friendship, the opponents exchange arms:

Let us avoid one another's spears even during a general engagement; there are many noble Trojans and allies whom I can kill, if I overtake them and the gods deliver them into my hand; so again with yourself, there are many Achaeans whose lives you may take if you can; we two, then, will exchange armor, that all present may know of the old ties that subsist between us (HOMERO, 1978, p. 110).

The same statute for social conviviality was not observed by Paris who seduced Helen within the domestic environment of the host husband. Although the prince's crime has been lined to theft and piracy, he was reproved by public conscience for the usurpation of honor aggravated by the violation of the king of Sparta's hospitality who also had to be punished. The punished was extended to all Troy which was thought to be also blamed for the bad behavior of Paris. The latter neither gave any satisfaction nor sent back the adulterous wife (REYES, 2000). Troy would answer for the prince's blame and pay for the break of protocol by the blood of its inhabitants.

The hero's virtue was not merely expressed on the battlefield where courage, bravery, force and wielding of arms united for the fulness of human prowess. It also manifested itself in the assembly with the participation of all the warriors, in which all important decisions, even tacitly, were taken (SCHÜLER, 1985). The assembly was the place of speech and persuasion. It was in the assembly, the *aristoi's* place of privilege, that the heroes were fulfilled.

It may partially explain lame Thersites's speech in which he vehemently criticizes the princes, particularly Agamemnon, and give a voice to the unfortunate people (SHULLER, 1985), silenced because of the order imposed by Greek society.

Son of Atreus, what's your problem now, what more do you need? Your huts are filled with bronze, crowded with women, the pick of the spoils we Achaeans grant you when we sack a city. Is it gold you want now, the ransom for his son some horse-taming Trojan shall bring you out of Ilium, the son that I or some other Achaean have bound and led away? Or a young girl to sleep with, one for you alone? Is it right for our leader to wrong us in this way? Fools, shameful weaklings, Achaean women, since you're no longer men, home then with our ships, and leave this fellow here, at Troy, to contemplate his prizes, let him learn how much he depends on us, this man who insulted Achilles, a better man than he, by arrogantly snatching his prize. Surely Achilles has a heart free of anger, to accept it; or, son of Atreus, that insolent act would be your last' (HOMERO, 1978, p. 34).

Although a man of the people is here forwarded, Theristes's protest was silenced by Ithaca's king Ulysses's force and violence, in a gesture for the legitimization of institutional power.

Take care what you say, Thersites, so eloquent, so reckless, take care when you challenge princes, alone. None baser than you followed the Atreidae to Troy, so you least of all should sound a king's name on your tongue, slandering our leaders, with your eye on home. No one knows how this thing will end, whether we Greeks will return in triumph or not. Go on then, pour scorn on Agamemnon, our leader, the son of Atreus, for the gifts you yourselves gave him: make free with your mockery. But let me tell you this, and be sure: if I find you playing the fool like this again, then let my head be parted from my shoulders, and Telemachus be no son of mine, if I don't lay hands on you, strip you bare of cloak and tunic, all that hides your nakedness, drive you from here, and send you wailing to the swift ships, shamed by a hail of blows' (HOMERO, 1978, p. 35).

Even if Ulysses, the authentic representative of the mythical aristocracy of whom Homer sang their heroic deeds, neutralized the cursing Thersites, showing that the main segment of Greek society still maintained its power, the episode reveals that it was impossible to shut up the first manifestations and attack that which began to emerge.

So that one may perceive the importance of bravery and its consequences, Homer attached attributes to the warriors' name, even though some were insignificant or mentioned only momentarily, according to the long list in the Second Rhapsody of the *Iliad*. Due to his exhaustive prolixity, Homer gives homage to hundreds of anonymous warriors. As they are acknowledged, these men retire from the scene, felled by an honorable wound, and give place to other brave warriors. The warriors who failed to show any dignified deed were merely remembered at their last hour when they were dying.

However, Homer's concern was the aristocratic man represented mythically by the hero. Embodying the supreme ideal of human *areté*, he becomes the highest example of humanity since he had overcome what was low and despicable.

The excellence of the formation process lies within the above-mentioned spheres: the ability of dealing with weapons and the logic argumentation and fluence of speech.

An essential issue in heroic formation/education is the search for an equilibrium for action and well-managed discourse, or rather, to enable one for life and cultivate one's spirit. Achilles, the authentic representative of such higher *areté*, unites the capacity of Ulysses, master of discourse, and Ajax's expertise, the man of action (SCHÜLER, 1985). This equilibrium exists in the speech of Phoenix, Achilles's preceptor:

The old warrior Peleus sent me with you, on the day in which he sent you, still a child, from Phthya to Agamemnon [...] He thus sent me to teach you all things: to be a good orator of words and a good executor of deeds (HOMERO, 1978, p. 158-159).

Phoenix records his old pedagogical responsibility with regard to Achilles, according to the hero's father: to educate him in words and deeds, in argumentation and in the management of weapons, to be wise in council, in the intuition in life, in the dominion on the other by the power of the word. Further, virile courage, physical strength to triumph over the enemy, worthiness of honor, respect and esteem of peers. In fact, the hero had to be the lord of the *areté*, distinguishing himself by his excellence in war and in speech (SCIACCA, 1966).

In the dialogue with his old pupil, deeply humiliated by Agamemnon, the old preceptor, whilst planning to break down Achilles's stubborn decision to abandon the Greek army, and calling him to reason to stand up to great vigor, designed the ideal man that mythical society wanted to educate. When he reminded him of the past, the old preceptor instigated him to examine once more the main virtues and values of mythical education and formation which he had abandoned because of his anger when he had assumed an anti-heroic attitude (SCHÜLER, 2004). Such haughty attitude would have disastrous results for the Greeks. The wise master wanted to place his proud disciple within the domains of the just measure, the consecrated virtue of Greek culture. The failure of the mission would result in a tragic outcome caused by the hero's irreducible will.

Phoenix's speech took a lot of time to impress the Greeks of other periods and it became the most ancient formulation for the model of man that would be a response towards the necessities of Greek society in its attempt to involve the totality of the human profile (SCHÜLER, 1985). It became a constant among the Greeks even during the period of erudition and rhetoric. It highlights the joy of deeds in heroic times in opposition to the present time marked by words but lacking in action (JAEGER, 1996).

In Homer, warlike deeds stimulate men and provide them with non-required abilities in day-to-day activities. It is the aristocratic ideology which despises manual work (REDONDO; LASPALAS, 1997). The model characteristic of the Homeric model does not imply that there was a rationalization of the education issue. Rationalization occurred at another period with the practice of reflection and the analysis of the formation ideal. The Greeks thought that the exemplificatory force of an archetype was required so that formation/education would be legitimate and efficient. In fact, the Greeks attributed educational responsibility to artists since they perceived in art an illimited power of spiritual conversion, called psychogogy, or the guidance of the spirit (JAEGER, 1996, p. 63). Consequently, Aristophanes insisted that, as masters are to pupils, so should poets be to adults:

The poet should place as veil on what is unseemly and avoid exposure to the light of day and its presentation in the scene. The tragic poet is made for the adult age as the preceptor is for childhood (ARISTÓFANES, 1996, p. 264).

From Aristophanes's intuition and representation of *paideia*, Poetry is the original formative/educational motor of Greek culture and was overcome only through time, first by Law and then by Philosophy and Rhetoric.

Consequently, the project of *paidea* was to make the hero a good, prudent and reflective councilor; a good, persuasive and conscious speaker; a capable executive, a man of action. Thus, the Greek concept of *logos* was built; the *logos* as thought, word and action with a dual meaning: work and deed, *agere* and *facere* were constructed in the conceptual and terminological dimension of the Latin world (REDONDO & LASPALAS, 1997).

Therefore, Homer placed man at the center of the universe and made action go around him. He placed the hero, the man, outstanding for his performance in the world and for his relationship with the others.

### Final considerations

The Homeric narratives and, particularly in the case of current paper, the *Iliad*, reveal a formation/education plan consecrated by tradition that Homer was the educator of Greece, as Plato acknowledged.

Homer's poem dignified the model of man, the ideal of noble warriors as required by an aristocratic society. The hero was capable of eloquence and the management of arms, in assemblies and counseling, and in deeds in times of war. The hero was efficacious in his behavior, practice and in deeds of court life, lover of war, even though this would cost him his life and a glorious death.

Always contradictory, Achilles, the main Greek hero, frequently disrupted the protocol of the heroes. Later on, he would reconsider the facts and go back to the aims of his formation/education and to the rigid rules that guided the heroic educational formation. The acknowledgement of his valor depended on the will of his peers, and on the benevolence and protection of the gods. The aim of his existence was excellence by which he offered his life to warrant honor and perpetuate his glory by a 'beautiful death'. Achilles represents the most ancient elaboration of the ideal Greek formation/education in all its completeness. In his person, words and deeds were at the service of virtue, differently from the period of decadence, fertile in words but poor in deeds.

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