

Introduction Part 1

Why Should We Care about Homer?

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Introduction Part 1

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This reading come from the Cave's
The Best of Homer's Odyssey.

Note: This "Introduction" to Homer's *Odyssey* was written years before Christopher Nolan's film *The Odyssey* was released in July 2026. The reader should be aware that Homer's *Odyssey* is different—and often significantly different—from Nolan's film in terms of its narrative structure, themes, and some characters.

LET'S FACE IT. Homer has fallen on hard times. Very few read the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* anymore. When most people hear the name Homer, they think of Homer Simpson—the same yellow cartoon character that invades the screen upon doing a simple image search for "Homer." For the online Urban Dictionary, *this* Homer is synonymous with an "American Bonehead." *D'oh.*

Others may recall the nineteenth century American painter Winslow Homer, who is famous for his landscapes. It's possible diehard baseball fans will mistake the word for a homerun. *There it goes . . . it's*

flying . . . a homer over the right field fence. A small number may remember their childhood hometown of Homer, New York, named after the poet. Others may have been to Homer, Alaska, christened for the late nineteenth century gold seeker Homer Pennock. It's now the halibut fishing capital of the world, and, according to the city's website, it is "quickly becoming known as the Eco and Adventure tourism capital of Alaska."

But Homer, the ancient poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*?

Sure, most have heard of (or even read about)

Odysseus' renowned adventures, including the man-eating Cyclops and the stunningly beautiful but deceptive Sirens. Or of Helen's legendary beauty. Or of the Trojan Horse that brought down a whole city. Or of the broader Trojan War—thanks to Brad Pitt in Wolfgang Petersen's epic film *Troy*, or the far more re-

cent Netflix-BBC version, *Troy: Fall of a City*. But fewer and fewer people know the full story of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, let alone anything about Homer.

It is the goal of The Classics Cave's rendition of Homer's *Odyssey* to change that. If only a little. And if only beginning with *you*.

Why Should We Care about Homer?

Go back a few thousand years and Homer was the best thing on television, the hottest new album, or the summer blockbuster. The great Cambridge classics scholar Moses Finley once claimed that "if a Greek owned any books—that is, papyrus rolls—he was almost as likely to own the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as anything from the rest of Greek literature."¹ Homer was the thing to have, the thing to know about, and the thing to love.

The first reason we should care about Homer, then, is because millions of others deeply cared about him for well over a thousand years.

Everyone who was anyone in ancient Greece name-dropped Homer in their own works. To give a handful, there was the epinician poet Pindar; the earliest historians Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon; the encyclopedic philosopher Aristotle; and the orators Isocrates, Aeschines, and Demosthenes. Plato, perhaps Europe's greatest philosopher of all, dropped his name the most, though, citing Homer over fifty times in his dialogues and letters. Later Greek authors, such as the geographer Strabo, the essayist and biographer Plutarch, and the Stoic philosopher Epictetus, did the same.

Although we don't literally see Homer's name in other Greek literature, we may nevertheless easily spot his spirit and influence. Take the Spartan Tyrtaeus' seventh century BC notions of courage; or Sappho of Mytilene's conception of great poetry early in the next century (she, by the way, positively compared herself to Homer); or Simonides' pessimism regarding the flux of life late in the same century; or the tragic content of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides during what has been called the Golden Age of Athens in the fifth century BC. A few anonymous authors even wrote humorous Ho-

meric-style epics pitting frogs against mice, or cats against the same mortal enemy. In the latter, a mouse army gathers against a cat after the cat kills their intrepid mouse hero, Trixos. Regretfully, we don't know how the story ends as we only have a few fragmentary passages. Still, it goes to show how much the ancient world appreciated and imitated Homer.

To give a specific example regarding how adored Homer was, there was the philosopher Socrates (fifth century BC), who was, we may confidently assert, addicted to the poet throughout his life thanks to the immense pleasure he felt in hearing or reading Homer's emotionally powerful poems. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates readily admits that "a certain love and respect for Homer possessed me from the time I was a child to now."² Did you hear that? Homer's poetry *owned* Socrates; it had him by the head and heart!

Observing Homer's rather flatline status now, at least the appearance thereof, it is hard to believe that anyone, let alone someone with the creative and revolutionary mind of Socrates, could have been addicted to him. But Socrates wasn't the only one utterly enamored with Homer. No, the poet was incredibly important to everyone in the ancient world. For centuries ancient Greeks read and listened to him, memorized his lines, and used his poetry to make arguments. In short, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* influenced their feelings, thinking, speech, and behavior, and so the way they navigated and endured life. There was a passage of Homer for everything—healthcare, warfare, politics, business, education, rhetoric, culture, and every other aspect of public and private life.

This is the second reason we should care about Homer. More than anyone else, Homer formed the

Greek mind, shaped Greek sensibilities, inspired Greek culture, and encouraged Greek behavior. It was common for ancient Greeks to spend years studying the poet and, therefore, to be profoundly influenced by him. Diogenes Laertius reports that Menedemus, one of Socrates' students, "applied himself to the study of Homer."³ He wasn't the only one. We know that others memorized large portions of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in order to improve themselves. The Athenian Niceratus, the son of Nicias, for example, told Socrates that he was happy that his "father was careful to see me develop into a good man." By good, we should understand noble and brave. Describing how this development came about, he revealed that, "As a means to this end, he had me learn every word of Homer." He did so, apparently, by listening to the recitation of Homer's poems "nearly every day," as Xenophon reports. Yet more. As Socrates explains, Niceratus not only learned the literal words of the poem but their "deeper sense," that is, what they really meant.⁴ Similarly, the fifth century BC epinician poet Pindar recommended the memorization of and adherence to Homer's wisdom. "And among the sayings of Homer, treat this one with care and observe it."⁵

Given Greece's leading educators at the time, this appreciation of Homer only makes sense. For the wealthy and those with influence—men like Niceratus' father, Nicias—these teachers were the sophists, a group of educator-philosophers that dominated Greek learning during the fifth century BC. Interestingly, Plato (through Glaucon) labels Homer himself a sophist in the *Republic*.⁶

According to Werner Jaeger, the author of the landmark history of Greek education, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, the "sophists regarded Homer as an encyclopedia of human wisdom . . . a mine of prudential wisdom for the conduct of life."⁷ In this way, ancient Greeks looked upon Homer's works as ancient Indians did the similarly encyclopedic *Mahabharata* or ancient Hebrews the Old Testament (the *Tanakh*). Socrates, for example, reports that "some men claim that Homer and the other poets know all human arts and skills—everything having to do with

human virtue and vice." He later goes on to say that there are certain "Homer enthusiasts" who "declare that Homer has been the educator of Greece, and that for the education and government of humans, we should take him up and learn from him, and that we should build up our entire lives with the assistance of this poet."⁸

The point is that Homer was Greece's chief educator and coach. The first century AD Stoic philosopher Heraclitus recognized Homer's influence at every time and on every aspect of life: "From the very earliest infancy, young children are nursed in their learning by Homer . . . it may be said that the same limit is set to both Homer and life."⁹ The Roman orator and educator Quintilian put it this way: "As Achilles is among warriors, so Homer is beyond all comparison among poets. . . . He has given us a model and an inspiration for every branch of eloquence."¹⁰

Recent assessments of Homer's influence have reached similar conclusions. In his classic work on Greek religion, Walter Burkert explains that "to be a Greek was to be educated, and the foundation of all education was Homer."¹¹ In a short book describing his own academic interests and life, the influential Bernard Knox observes that since the Greeks had no authoritative religious text, they would oftentimes appeal to Homer and the other poets "on questions of conduct and belief."¹² In his own work, Cambridge archaeologist Anthony Snodgrass concurs, noting that "there was one huge sphere of action where Homer was widely held to be an infallible guide, and that was good conduct. Not only poets, but politicians, teachers, and thinkers were happy to inculcate a code of behavior that was derived from Homer." Again, Snodgrass reveals that "we know of relatively late compilations which actually spelled out in detail how Homer could be used as a guide for every sphere of life."¹³

The last observation leads us to the third reason why we should care about Homer. Imitating the ancients and the many who lived after them in the Medieval (both Latin and Greek-Byzantine), Renaissance, and early modern world, we can learn much from Homer about how to live and flourish today. I

heartily agree with the University of Chicago's James Redfield, who admits, "I find much truth in the Homeric way of seeing the world."¹⁴ In my mind, the truth in the Homeric way is the raw material that may be utilized by us to think about and practice the good life. Not only did Homer help ancient men and women live better lives but if we let him, he can show us the way, too.¹⁵ Along with independent scholar and writer Adam Nicholson, we can accept Homer as "the most truly reliable voice I had ever known," and as "a guidebook to life," even as "a kind of scripture"—in short, as "a source of wisdom" (about which Nicholson at one point admits that, after encountering Homer anew in midlife, he "felt like asking, 'Why has no one told me about this before?'").¹⁶

Some may find this suggestion absurd—that we can learn much from Homer about how to live and flourish today. That's fine. The truth is that not everyone appreciated Homer in the ancient world. This was particularly true for some during the early centuries of the Christian Church. Theophilus, for instance, the second century bishop of Antioch (in present-day Turkey), questioned the point or profit of Homer, who, he claimed, "deceived many."¹⁷ About the same time, Justin Martyr suggested that Homer's "Odysseus made a virtue of vice."¹⁸ And, perhaps most horrible of all for aspiring orators, St. Augustine, the outstanding Christian theologian and bishop of Hippo, judged Homer dull—this despite the fact that Homer was frequently and positively referenced in ancient Greek and Latin textbooks of composition and rhetoric (for instance, in his *Exercises*, Aelius Theon [first century AD] explains that "we praise Homer first because of his ability to attribute the right words to each of the characters he introduces").¹⁹

But let's not forget that the first Christians were not only following their own theological tradition but also the example of earlier Greek critics. For instance, the sixth century BC poet and philosopher Xenophanes criticized Homer for "attributing to the gods all things that are shameful and a reproach among mankind: theft, adultery, and mutual deception."²⁰ A bit later the enigmatic philosopher Heraclitus declared that "Homer deserved to be chased out of the assem-

bly and beaten with rods."²¹ And recall that Socrates (or Plato through him), though he loved and learned from him, felt he had to give up the pleasure of Homer for something better—that is, philosophy. In fact, in an early instance of European censorship and editing for the political common good, Socrates wanted to cut out parts of Homer or get rid of him all together. No matter how enjoyable he was, Socrates felt this would be better for everyone. Even though he admitted that "Homer was the best of the poets," he concluded that a truly healthy city could not admit him or similar poetry within its walls. "For if the city gives itself over to the sweet and salty Muse in lyric songs or epic poetry," he warned, "then pleasure and pain will rule your city instead of custom and the law and . . . the best possible deliberations."²² So it was that his was a call for the sober clear-mindedness of water over the intoxicating euphoria of wine—a call for sanity in place of addiction.

Fortunately—as we've already noted—everyone's view was not negative. Some early Christian theologians, for example, used Homer's tales as grist for the mill of delivering moral lessons. Take the significant fourth century bishop of Caesarea, St. Basil the Great, who is counted among the chief teachers for both Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians. In contrast to Justin Martyr, who saw nothing but vice in Odysseus (the chief hero of Homer's *Odyssey*), Basil approvingly reveals, "I myself have heard a man, who is skillful at closely examining the mind and meaning of a poet, say that all Homer's poetry is a commendation of virtue. And with Homer, everything apart from what is incidental leads to this end." He goes on to explore how Odysseus was, in his interaction with Nausicaa and the Phaeacians, an encouragement toward virtue.²³

This idea—that "all Homer's poetry is a commendation of virtue"—was nothing new. In his work on Basil, Oxford classics professor N.G. Wilson concludes that, in his claim about Homer and virtue, Basil was likely referencing Horace (first century BC) or Dio Chrysostom (first century AD).²⁴ We see, for instance, a strong admiration for the moral side of Homer's poems in Horace's second epistle. There he explains to the Roman politician Lollius that he has been going

over the “writer of the Trojan War [Homer], who teaches more clearly, and better than [the Stoic] Chrysippus and [the Platonist] Crantor, what is honorable, what is shameful, what is profitable, and what is not so.”²⁵ As for Dio Chrysostom, he asserts in one discourse that “since everything Homer wrote is both beneficial and useful, it would be a vast undertaking to go through everything he has said about virtue and vice.” In another discourse comparing Homer and Socrates, Dio explains that “both were devoted to and spoke about the same things . . . human virtue and vice, and things done poorly, and things done well, and truth and deceit, and how the many have only opinions while the wise have true knowledge.” Finally, he cites Alexander the Great’s view of Homer with approbation, that “Homer is a marvelous and truly divine herald of virtue.”²⁶

Before moving on, we should briefly note that the “Homer is about virtue” thesis is one that had deep roots. In his third century AD *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius reports that “Favorinus in his *Miscellaneous History* says that Anaxagoras [fifth century BC] was the first to maintain that Homer treats of virtue and justice in his poems.”²⁷ And recall Socrates’ report that “some men claim that Homer and the other poets know all human arts and skills—everything having to do with human virtue and vice.”

The big question, of course, is this: why did it matter so much to the ancients that Homer was singing or writing about virtue? It did for the same reason that certain literature matters to us today. Considering the many reasons why we read, somewhere toward the top of the list is that we read for know-how and wisdom. Most importantly, we read to know how best to live. It was this “how best to live” that ancient Greeks were interested in. They wanted to have the best, to do the best, and to be the best.

To understand this, we need to take a brief detour into the land of language. The Greek word for “best,” *aristos*, is etymologically related to the word for “virtue” or “excellence,” *aretē*, which is, in turn, related to *aretaō*, meaning “to thrive, to prosper” and “to flourish.” To complete the circle and to answer the ques-

tion, then, the Greeks devoured Homer to find out how to flourish as human beings, to thrive and prosper. All that to say they wanted to be virtuous or the best, to be outstanding.

But we should understand that the Greek term *aretē* shifted significantly in meaning during the millennium following Homer (roughly from c. 700 BC to 300 AD).²⁸ During that time, we see *aretē* in non-animate things as well as animals, human beings, and gods. As for humans, it could mean anything from valor, courage, success, and merit, to moral or ethical goodness having to do with the perfection of the soul (such as wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice). So, when we read that “Homer is all about *aretē*,” we must keep in mind what the one making the claim would have meant by *aretē*. Regardless, each believed Homer was a profitable guide to virtue, to excellence.

In general, and for one reason or another, Homer was looked on favorably by those in the later ancient world. Among the many Romans who adored Homer, Virgil was perhaps his greatest admirer, writing his own epic poem, the *Aeneid*, in the manner of the poet. Well over a millennium after Homer’s poems were first written down, the Neo-Platonic philosopher Proclus (fifth century AD), who wrote a commentary on them, declared that Homer’s epic cycle was a “compendium of ‘useful literary knowledge.’”²⁹

A thousand years later, Homer continued to shape Greek (and Byzantine Roman) thinking and life down to the end of the Byzantine Empire, when its capital, Constantinople, fell to Ottoman Turk canons in 1453.³⁰ And even though Homer’s pull lessened during the western Middle Ages, the desire and admiration for his poetry strongly returned during the Renaissance and the following centuries. For instance, in his 1605 work *The Advancement of Learning*, the scientist and philosopher Francis Bacon remarks on the staying power of Homer’s epics relative to seemingly far more durable human creations: “The verses of Homer have continued twenty-five hundred years, or more, without the loss of a syllable or letter, during which the infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities have been decayed and demolished.” In *The Art of Poetry* (1674), Nicholas Boileau-Despreaux declares “Homer’s book

... a delightful treasure,” advising his readers to “love his writings with a sincere love.” A century and a half later, Thomas Love Peacock judges Homer and his age “the golden age of poetry” in his *The Four Ages of Poetry* (1820). Finally, in his *Thoughts on English Prosody*, Thomas Jefferson similarly recognizes Homer’s ongoing power to please:

When young, any composition pleases which unites a little sense, some imagination, and some rhythm, in doses however small. But as we advance in life these things fall off one by one, and I suspect that we are left at last with only Homer and Virgil, and perhaps with Homer alone.

The title page of George Chapman’s 1616 translation of the “whole of Homer” suggests that Homer was the “prince of poets.” As prince, he went on to oversee, as it were—through the influence of the Romans—the flourishing of European literature. As a later commentator wrote, without Homer “there would be neither an *Aeneid*, [Dante’s] *Divine Comedy*, [Milton’s] *Paradise Lost*, nor the comic epics of Ariosto or Pope or Byron.”³¹ During the last five-hundred years, Homer has universally inspired admiration in Europe.³²

Homer was important to many until recently when there was a sharp decline in interest some fifty to one hundred years ago. Writing just after World War II, W.H. Auden judged that “the days when classical studies were the core of higher learning have now passed.”³³ Homer included. For several reasons, George Chapman’s prince has been buried under a mound of other authors, concerns, approaches, and ways of thinking about life.

But let me say it again: The Classics Cave hopes to change that.

If nothing else, we should care about Homer because his poems are the earliest Greek literature we possess. Consequently, they most clearly reveal the earliest feelings, thoughts, and behavior of this dynamic people that profoundly influenced the Romans, who, in turn, influenced every other European kingdom and nation-state. And whether for good or ill—doubtlessly both, though on balance for good—Europe went on to influence American culture and thus, directly or indirectly, the culture of most peoples.

These early Homeric Greek “first words,” and the feelings, thoughts, and actions or behavior they reveal, are somewhat like those we have, however well-formed or not, when we first wake up in the morning—the feelings and thoughts that guide the rest of the day. To leave off with them—to forget them—would be like forgetting why we are doing whatever we are doing *right now* on *this* day. Have you ever had that feeling? Well, the same can happen to all of us, collectively. Why are we here? Why do we feel as we do? Why are we thinking *this* among all possible thoughts? Why are we doing *this*? Behaving *this* way? Reading Homer will help us remember our first feelings and thoughts, and how we first behaved. And perhaps if we carefully look at the beginning, we will feel a bit more comfortable with who we are now, and we’ll know how to better trudge forward in the minutes and hours to come in this long human day.³⁴

What were we doing? Oh yeah, *that*. So with Homer in hand—Homer the adored, Homer the culture-creator, Homer the life-guide, and Homer manifesting some of our first words, feelings, thoughts, and behavior—let’s confidently move ahead, knowing we are engaged with someone whose work truly matters.

So ends “Introduction Part 1: Why Should We Care about Homer?” **See you in the next item**, “Introduction Part 2: Basic Facts about Homer.”

NOTES

¹ Moses Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York: The New York Review of Books), 12. See also Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 194 ff.

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² For Socrates' admission and what he has to say about Homer, see Plato, *Republic* 10.595b-c. For Socrates, Homer was "the beginning of the poetic tribe" and "the first teacher and beginner of all these beauties of tragedy." Still, he level-headedly asserts that "we must not honor a man above truth, but, as I say, speak our minds." More recently, but similarly relative to addiction, Adam Nicholson has explained that "Homer-love feels like a disease" (*Why Homer Matters*, 32).

³ See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 2.133.

⁴ See Xenophon, *Symposium* 3.5-6. Socrates goes on to explain that Niceratus "overlooked nothing valuable or worthwhile in the poems."

⁵ See Pindar, *Pythian* 4.277-278.

⁶ See Plato, *Republic* 10.596d. In this case, the label was no compliment. In Plato's *Theaetetus* 152e ff., Socrates calls Homer and his sophist allies the philosophers of flux or becoming. Since Plato preferred being to becoming, this assessment was tantamount to saying that the sophists didn't know what they were talking about.

⁷ Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, vol. 1, trans. Gilbert Highet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 296.

⁸ See Plato, *Republic* 10.598d-e and 606e. In this case, the Greek words for virtue (*aretē*) and vice (*kakia*) may also be given as "excellence" and "mediocrity" or "success" and "failure."

⁹ Heraclitus, *Homeric Problems* 1.5-7. Cited in Richard Hunter, "Homer and Greek Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 235.

¹⁰ Quintilian, *Institutes* 10.2.

¹¹ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 120.

¹² Bernard Knox, *The Oldest Dead White European Males and Other Reflections on the Classics* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1993), 94.

¹³ Anthony Snodgrass, *Homer and the Artists: Text and Picture in Early Greek Art*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2, 4, 6.

¹⁴ James M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*. Expanded edition. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), xv.

¹⁵ For how this may be the case, see *The Wisdom & Way of Homer: Pocket Edition* and *Homer Workbook & Journal* (Sugar Land: The Classics Cave, 2022).

¹⁶ See Adam Nicholson, *Why Homer Matters* (New York: Picador, 2014), 11, 32. For Nicholson, this "scripture" is "for me, an ancient book, full of urgent imperatives and ancient meanings . . . to be puzzled out" (32). Similar to Nicholson, though in different terms, for William E. Gladstone, the long-time, on-again-off-again nineteenth century prime minister of Great Britain, "Homer was," as Richard Jenkins explains in *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (1980), "quite literally, a sacred book." This conclusion fit well with the general Victorian view that "Homer had been the Bible of the Greeks." Indeed, Homer (and other Greeks) was a "preparation for the gospel," whose "religion contained memories of God's revelation to primitive man" (202-204).

¹⁷ See Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 3.1-2.

¹⁸ See Justin Martyr, *Discourse to the Greeks* 1.

¹⁹ For St. Augustine's response, see Cathy Gere, *The Tomb of Agamemnon: Mycenae and the Search for a Hero* (London: Profile Books, 2007), 5.

²⁰ Xenophanes, fragment 11, in Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers: A Complete Translation of the Fragments in Diels* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948).

²¹ Reported by Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 9.1.

²² Plato, *Republic* 10.607a.

²³ See Basil the Great (here slightly modified) in the Cave's *The Best of Basil the Great on Reading Literature and Education* (2021), 54. Commenting on the scene when Odysseus, naked, is introduced to the beautiful Phaeacian princess, Nausicaa, Basil observes that "Homer portrays Odysseus as adorned with virtue instead of clothing" (54). Therefore, he concludes, there was no shame in being seen naked. What other moral points or comparisons does Basil find in Homer? Elsewhere, to give a few examples, in his *Letter* 147 to Aburgius, he compares the unsettling plight of the prefect Maximus to Odysseus' own, "who had great wealth, but returned [from the Trojan War and his adventures] stripped of everything." In *Letter* 148 to Trajan, he mentions "the *Iliad* of misfortune in which Maximus is involved."

²⁴ *Saint Basil on Literature*, ed. N.G. Wilson (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1975), 52. For the whole of Basil's text, see his short work, *How to Benefit from Reading Greek Literature*, found in the Cave's *The Best of Basil the Great on Reading Literature and*

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Education (2021).

²⁵ Horace, *Letter 2*.

²⁶ Dio Chrysostom, *On Homer* 53.11 (or 36.11); *On Homer and Socrates* 54.9 (or 38.9); *On Kingship* 2.6.

²⁷ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.11.

²⁸ To understand how the Greek understanding of *aretē* shifted during this time, see *Aretē: Excellence or Virtue — What the Ancient Greeks Thought and Said about Aretē* (Sugar Land: The Classics Cave, 2021).

²⁹ For Proclus, see Caroline Alexander, *The War that Killed Achilles: The True Story of the Iliad* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), 13.

³⁰ For the influence, see, for instance, N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1996).

³¹ W.H. Auden, ed., *The Portable Greek Reader* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), 10.

³² This was particularly true during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. See, for instance, “Homer and the Edwardians,” in R.M. Ogilvie, *Latin and Greek: A History of the Influence of the Classics on English Life from 1600 to 1918* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964).

³³ W.H. Auden, ed., *The Portable Greek Reader*, 3.

³⁴ It goes without saying that other examples of early world literature are also vitally important to the project of knowing who we are as humans and how we are joined together as a human family. Not only is there the literature of Greece and Rome but there is that hailing from ancient China, India, and the Near East, as well as (though recorded much later) the great variety of Native American and early European literature, Aboriginal storytelling, and the rich narrative tradition originating with the many peoples of Africa.



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