

BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS

A STORY WITHIN A STORY:

**HOW ZOON POLITIKON BECAME REBORN IN ACHILLES OF
THE ILIAD**

BACHELOR THESIS

Bratislava, 2012

Roman Korenek

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Roman Korenek

Sworn Statement about Originality of the Thesis

I solemnly swear that this thesis is my own work; created by me only with help of the thesis supervisor and that I have marked all quotations and sources used in the text.

In Bratislava, 31st July 2012

Roman Korenek

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I would like to voice my thanks to Mr. Matthew Post, for his relentless support and advice during the creation of this work and to Mrs. Holečková for her patience. And also I owe a thank you to my family and friends, who were always there when I needed them.

Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to illuminate the mysterious transformation that ancient Greek society underwent - from savage tribes to the tightly knitted community of the *polis*. For centuries after the fall of Mycenaean civilization, Greeks were in an intellectually dormant state in which no progress in political organization or high culture was present. They had degraded into scattered groups of farmers, herders and raiders. The grand proficiency in craftsmanship, indicating a high level of cultural development and so manifest during the Mycenaean Age, only slowly started to find its way back to the objects of day-to-day use. This gradual process symbolized the renaissance of the spirit of Greek people, which settled down in the *polis*, the basis of our civilization.

This paper's main premise is that by examination and comparison of the Achilles in Homer's *Iliad* and Aristotle's account of *polis*, both on a historical background, is possible to find a link between the "Dark Age" society and the society of *polis*. And that this link can then be used to explain the evolution in thinking that eventually led to establishment of *polis*.

This thesis is divided into four major chapters. The first chapter will provide the known general historical and archeological background, which will be utilized in subsequent chapters. The second chapter will generally focus on Aristotle's account of *polis*. The third chapter will debate Homer as a poet, his style and other important factors. And finally the fourth chapter will concentrate on the interpretation of Achilles' storyline in the *Iliad*.

Abstrakt

Autor práce: Roman Korenek

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Cieľom tejto práce je osvetliť záhadnú premenu starovekej Gréckej spoločnosti – z divochov na úzko spätú komunitu *polis*. Po storočia po páde Mykénskej civilizácie, boli Gréci v intelektuálnom spánku, v ktorom sa nedial pokrok ani v politickej organizácii a ani vo vysokej kultúre. Zdegradovali do roztrúsených skupín farmárov, pastierov a nájazdníkov. Vysoká zručnosť v remeslách, ktorá naznačovala vysoký stupeň kultúrneho rozvoja, ktorý bol tak zjavný počas Mykénskej doby, si začal iba pomaly hľadať cestu späť do objektov každodennej spotreby. Tento postupný proces symbolizoval, znovuzrodenie v duchu Gréckych ľudí, ktorí sa usadili v *polis*, v základe našej civilizácie.

Hlavnou premisou tohto diela je, že skúmaním a porovnávaním Achilla z Homérovej *Iliady* a Aristotelovho popisu *polis*, oboje na historickom pozadí, je možné nájsť spojenie medzi spoločnosťou „Doby temna“ a spoločnosťou *polis*. A zároveň, že sa túto spojitosť dá použiť na vysvetlenie evolúcie v myslení, ktoré nakoniec viedlo k založeniu *polis*.

Táto práca je rozdelená do štyroch hlavných kapitol. Prvá kapitola poskytne hlavné historické a archeologické pozadie, ktoré bude využité v nasledujúcich kapitolách. Druhá kapitola sa hlavne sústreďí na Aristotelov popis *polis*. Tretia kapitola bude rozoberať Homéra ako básnika, jeho štýl a iné dôležité faktory. A nakoniec štvrtá kapitola, ktorá sa sústreďí na interpretáciu Achillovho príbehu v *Iliade*.

Preface

Many times, during last decades, one could encounter critiques of Western civilization. They eventually became more audible and a lot of intellectual attention was focused on them.

The arts are stagnant, they recycle old topics, without any real contribution, they became a consumer commodity as opposed to a force that traditionally influenced society and its heading. The recent financial crisis in the US and current Euro crisis in the EU speak for themselves when it comes to economy. Europe's idleness and United States' impotency in the UN, where they are again and again countered by Russia and China, are grim indications when it comes to politics. And in the realm of morals it seems that the universality of human rights is jeopardized as many voices (mostly from countries that did not undergo the separation of church and state, such as some Muslim countries) claim that secularism is an unavoidable prerequisite for their application. There is yet one convincing counterargument to be heard from the Western side of discussion.

Historically all great cultures went through several stages of development and flourishing, before their inevitable decline. Thinking that Western culture is different, that there is no downfall ahead would be naïve. It is true that West has shown again and again remarkable ability to adapt, however that was in a world where its culture was the game setting force. In other words it just adapted to changes of itself. It was able to not fall apart because some part of it became radicalized. Examples for this are plentiful; all new philosophical, artistic and scientific revolutions that reshaped society, started as radicalizations. But now we have entered a time in our history where foreign cultures have major impact on our lives and the lives of our posterity. In order to deal with these alien influences and cultures, the West needs to be united or else it will dissolve into smaller and smaller groups, making room for another culture, a stronger one, to become dominant. Do not get me wrong on this, I am no xenophobe and actually I would welcome a change in which the sick and decaying would be replaced by the fresh and healthy, no matter if this turn of the tide would cost my culture its position. But I have to admit it would be extremely satisfying to

see at least once in my lifetime Western culture united for some common good, productive, creative, deserving its leadership position.

When examining something it is always good to research its background or history. I find the starting point of Western culture in Ancient Greece. Therefore I have focused on what was it that made Greek society so extremely creative and successful. Even now, millennia later elements of their culture (architecture, drama, philosophy, etc.) are being taught at most higher education institutions throughout the world.

Their culture peaked during a period of a few hundred years when Greece was divided into relatively small city-states, *polis*. Each of these communities had their own government and laws that were created by its inhabitants (or inhabitant in case of one man tyrannies). From this variety came to be most of governmental systems that we know today. In fact it might be not too daring to say that all systems that we know of now have some roots in or connection to *polis*.

Some might say that the reason these people were so successful lies in slavery, that they simply had so much free time that they might as well have done something with it. However, in our society bigger portion of the population has more leisure than any society before us had. So I have decided to find out what made *polis* tick.

After a brief confrontation with history books, I have posed myself an even more interesting question. How did they get out of the “Dark Age” period? “Dark Age” was several hundred years long period of stagnation after a decline of a major civilization. Then quite surprisingly *poleis* started to appear. There was no major event that would explain it, nor was there any strong influence from the outside. They have sprung up, as if after a long and natural process, which was not apparent on the outside.

I have also found out that Homer’s epics the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written approximately in the same time as *poleis* appeared. Making a link was not hard and the literature dealing with Homer confirmed my suspicion that Homer is a

great source on the pre-*polis* society. Following on that I have needed a well-known source on the *polis* itself, which I have found in Aristotle.

So the decision was made to compare findings about “Dark Age” society in literature dealing with this period combined with Homer’s account with Aristotle.

The ultimate goal was to find what enabled in hearts and minds of “Dark Age” population that marvelous transition into *polis*. This information could be then used to help solve the problems of our society. If we can understand the underlying processes in formation of a great civilization, maybe we could apply this knowledge to revitalize, reinvigorate the Western culture. Moreover these findings would be beneficial to the field itself as there is little consent in the scientific community about why had this transition happened.

In my endeavor I have been assisted by Mr. Matthew Post, who helped me to find my way in this intricate period of history, which at first has to always be overwhelming.

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Introduction

To work with the selected thesis was at many times difficult. For example in the first chapter of this paper, we will deal with historical background to our topic. There are a lot of facts that has to be presented, in order to ease our understanding of the following chapters. Once we will get there one can easily notice that there is the same source used as a reference, over and over again. That is of course weird as plurality in sources is rarely a bad thing. However in this case it was.

Once again, the only goal of the first chapter is to build up for the rest of the thesis. Devoting space to an elaborate discussion about the various opinions in the field to finally choose one and then move onto yet another point of dispute would amount for a whole thesis on its own. Therefore after several failed attempts to make it brief, yet still informative, a different approach was selected. Concerning the historical facts I have avoided discussion about topics that are not yet settled. Also I have decided to use only one source for this chapter. I chose a textbook that is specifically concerned with Ancient Greece to assure that there are only experts among the authors (and by the way, they are major names in the field, as I came to find out). And as a result the first chapter does exactly what it is supposed to do: to smoothly ease the reader into the problematic.

The problematic itself that we are dealing with in the rest of the work is always *polis* in one respect or another. Either we will discuss *polis* directly, as in second chapter, or we will discuss topics in relation to it. Ultimately the goal is to find out where *polis* came from, what were the people that established it like. In other words how and in what were they different from those who lived for hundreds of years in tribal chiefdoms?

This is important to find out for our own sakes, as answering what once moved people from stagnation into such a rapid progress, could be a very valuable knowledge in both our present and future.

Chapter I – History:

The splendor of Mycenaeans, the wane of chiefdoms

This introduction to Greek history is unable to do justice to the exhaustive topic it is concerned with. Regrettably, it has to be trimmed down to simply suit the needs of this work. In a thesis that would be primarily concerned with history the intuitive period to start with would be the Stone Age or the early Bronze Age, however for our cause it is best to enter the stream of time during the period before Mycenaean culture; the culture itself lasted from about 1600 to 1200 BC.

The set goal here is to prepare my reader for the consequent chapters. That is to portray the actual historical difference between the high culture of the Mycenaean world and the drop to the savage rule of chiefdoms. At the same time this chapter aims to give the necessary background to understand how the heroes of the *Iliad* became so idealized, that they are no longer humans (in the conventional meaning of the word), by the time they reach Homeric audience.

Mycenaean culture is a common label denominating the shared cultural elements of the separate Greek city-states (Pomeroy, Donlan, Burstein & Roberts, 1999, p. 18). Mycenae was the major power during this period, militarily, economically and culturally. However it would be incorrect to fall under the impression that it had exercised its rule over all of the Greek city-states. The territory they have directly controlled was relatively small, but it was their sphere of influence that made them into the hegemonic power in Greece, they became.

Three gradual influences were combined in creation of Mycenaean civilization. Though strongly interconnected and though there would be no mistake in presenting them as a gradual process, I will introduce them as separate agents. The reason for this is that distinctive parts of each influence remain unchanged and are still perceptible in the resulting Mycenaean civilization.

First of all around 2000 BC Greece endured a populous immigration of Indo-European Greek speakers. They have brought with themselves the Greek language, more developed metallurgy and crafts, and a new religion with Zeus as their main

deity. It is currently believed that the indigenous Greek population and Indo-Europeans were much alike, therefore consecutive assimilation was relatively quick and absolute. The new people born out of this intertwining held the elements of both cultures. However, some parts of the Indo-European heritage as the Greek language and religion became dominant. In the coming period rise in population and its consequent diffusion as well as new, strengthened intercourse with foreign cultures took place. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, p. 10 & 11)

The second decisive influence made its way through the new contacts with the highly developed civilizations of the Near East. The new trade opportunities enabled social stratification of the society. The newly emerged royalty and nobility amassed huge amounts of wealth that were displayed in the royal palace and noble houses respectively. The influence of Egypt was prominent in crafts and arts. However Greeks, especially those inhabiting Crete were able to enrich it with their own inputs. The Greek city-states adopted and modified the Near Eastern palace economy. In this type of economic organization the royal palace is made into uncontested center of the realm economically, militarily and politically. Furthermore the Greek palace is also thought to serve as the religious center, as no specifically religious buildings from this period have been found in Greek settled soil. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, p. 14)

Knossos, located on Crete, was the first successfully developed city-state out of this influence. It has become a significant player among the Mediterranean powers; also it is the third major influence (and predecessor) to Mycenaean civilization. At the brink of 19th century a great archeological breakthrough was made by Englishman Arthur Evans, as he discovered the remains of Knossos' palace complex. He named the civilization, which built it, the Minoan culture. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, p. 12)

After establishing dominance among other smaller city-states on Crete, Knossos went ahead and created a network of trade routes that covered most of the Mediterranean. Similarly to political and military centralization of the city-state into the royal palace, also the production and storage of goods was mainly done in the palace. Managing the kingdom and the movement of huge quantities of goods and resources (whether for redistribution to the local population or for trade) necessitated a vast bureaucracy, which in turn needed a script. Though the script (named by

archeologists Linear A) yet remains to be translated, it is believed that it was used “for keeping the economic records” (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 13).

Trading with foreign powers of course meant a huge influx of wealth, which in turn further deepened the difference of lifestyles of groups of people in the social hierarchy. The top tier of society (royal family and nobles) enjoyed a life filled with “enormous luxury” (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 14), as they were the ones keeping the profits from trading and labor. The laborers, or the economically lower part of society, remained in living conditions that were no different from the past. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 14)

We have some external signs of how developed the Minoan culture was. For example, judging from the palace of Knossos, their architecture was complex and detailed. The inhabitants could enjoy running water and waste disposal (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 15). What is, however more important for us are Minoan paintings. Contrary to the foreign (Egypt, Near East) depictions of rulers as great conquerors, Minoans were more concerned with everyday life, nature. The royal palace then was not a monument to the royal family, but rather “a place of beauty and charm” (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 15).

It is believed that due to trade and the level of development of Minoan culture, they were able to effect a strong influence outside of Crete. For example the isle of Thera showed many elements that had been adopted from Crete; however their culture also showed features that were distinct to them. This is an indication that Thera was not conquered or colonized by Minoans, rather that they were peacefully influenced. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 17) Minoan peacefulness was their downfall, as we move further in history and we center our attention on Mycenae.

Around 2000 BC Minoan influence slowly began to spread on the mainland Greece, as new contacts were established. There a new power was rising, the Mycenae, they have adopted Minoan economical system and some other cultural elements, but it was very important that they did not share Minoan peacefulness. Circa 1500 BC Mycenae conquered Knossos, they did not destroy it. Crete in that time would be a prized possession in any realm, so they have rather removed the ruling elites of the island and established themselves on top of the local hierarchy. The

Minoan culture assimilated into the, now dominant, Mycenaean culture, which spread throughout the Greek speaking world and gave name to a whole period in history of Ancient Greece. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 18-19)

Mycenaean culture developed its own script, which was found on about three thousand clay tablets, by Mr. Evans during his archeological endeavors in Knossos. Though the script was different from Linear A it was most likely a more developed version of it, therefore Mr. Evans named it Linear B. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 19-20) Though, the sets of tablets that have been found are predominantly concerned with the administration of palace, when combined with later findings on mainland Greece, the archeologists are able to provide us with good amount of information about how the Mycenaean society functioned.

For our purposes let us mention just a few important points. First of all, the later Mycenaean (1400-1200 BC) palace resembled more a medieval castle than the Minoan palace. As mentioned Minoan palace was the bustling center (almost literally) of the kingdom, it was the main structure, around which the city developed, a huge house of the royal family enveloped by smaller less pompous houses of the inhabitants of the city. The Mycenaean palace, though similar in many aspects was, had clearly developed a new function, it became a defensive structure. It was often built on a hill, protected by walls, which were, in case of danger, ready to shelter people from the surrounding otherwise unprotected city. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 22-23)

The iconography on the mural paintings found inside of the palaces signifies the war spiritedness of Mycenaean people. The paintings often portray hunting, combat, weapons and other topics connected with war. Even the impressive walls surrounding the palace themselves were built to demonstrate ruler's greatness. Pomeroy et al. (1999) mentions that: "the later Greeks referred to them as Cyclopean walls, so massive that they could only have been built by the mythical race of giant Cyclopes" (p. 24).

Other archeological evidence, however, speaks a different story. Even though the warriors were glorified and held in high regard a fully blown war was a rarity. In order to explain why there were so few major wars we need to explain the constitution of Mycenaean kingdoms.

There used to be a belief that a pan-Hellenic kingdom existed, however there is no tangible evidence for that. Rather, it seems that there were several independent kingdoms, which mostly formed within the natural geographical features of Greece. On top of such a kingdom was the *wanax* a supreme ruler. Below him were several types of military and government related officials. I will mention only one of these official positions, as we will come back to it later, and that is the title of *pasireu*. Pomeroy et al. (1999) explains that, *pasireu* probably “have been in charge of affairs at the town and village level” (p. 29).

Not all kingdoms were structured identically; there could have been a varying degree of independence of the outlying cities and villages. But based on how widely the Mycenaean culture spread and how dominant it was, it is safe to assume that all Greek kingdoms of that period were formed similarly. One of the local rulers somehow gained the upper hand and then either convinced or forced others to pledge their loyalty to him, effectively establishing a kingdom composed of smaller kingdoms. However, it is necessary to point out that it is likely that in some kingdoms the centralization of power met its limits at the pledge of loyalty and never moved beyond that. That means that, indeed, the local rulers were socially subjects to the *wanax*, but otherwise remained independent. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 25)

Let us now move back to the military. The army was led by *wanax*, while the military officers were from amongst the nobility and the ordinary troops were levies from cities and villages (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 34-35). Therefore a long lasting war would be catastrophic for the agriculture and economy of the kingdom. Following this we can easily explain that most frequently armed conflicts were simple raids of enemy territory, there was little incentive in conquering territory as it would require long lasting sieges of the magnificent palaces. Since the walls of the palaces were with their level of siege technology practically impenetrable, the only viable tactics would be to starve out the population within the walls. This could, however, take months as the palaces also served as storages of food.

This relative stability led to a development of a culture that enjoyed high level of artistic and crafting proficiency, combined with complex organization and bureaucracy that was able to track every item in the storages of palaces. Never before

was a culture so advanced and sophisticated formed on Greek soil. But like all civilizations, even the Mycenaean had to end.

Details of the twilight of Mycenaean civilization remain veiled in uncertainty. What we know for sure is that around 1200 BC Mycenaean kingdoms (and in fact all major Mediterranean civilizations) had to face a new powerful treat, the raids of group referred to as the Sea Peoples (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 37). Supposedly they were a collection of raiding parties from all over the Mediterranean, we do not know how many of them there was, or what drove them to suddenly resolve to plunder. However we know that during just a few decades most of Greek major cities were raided, which started a collapse of the whole civilization. It might have been the lack of trade that necessarily took place after both land and naval trade routes became dangerous, or it could have started infighting for power within kingdoms, or simply the established system had inherent faults that it could no longer handle, when the situation so drastically changed. Whatever the most contributing factor was, the resulting huge drop in population, migration for safer, but often less fertile land and constant internal or external conflicts dissolved the social and governmental structures. All this combined spelled the inevitable end of Mycenaean culture. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 37 – 40)

As a side note it is interesting to point out that Troy was destroyed, around this time (1250 – 1200 BC). However we do not know who did it. It could very well be the Achaeans (which would be the combined armies of Mycenaean kingdoms), as described by Homer, some other group, or combination of both that did it. (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 36)

Finally, we can move on to the so-called “Dark Ages” (1150 – 700 BC) of Ancient Greek world. This period, as any other dark age, bears its name, because there are very few sources, besides archeological findings.

Alongside of the devolution of Mycenaean kingdoms, did also devolve the societal arrangements that were advanced by the disappearing system. No more could one find the splendid houses of nobility, there in fact was no nobility remaining. At first had the villages and small cities that gained full freedom and independence. Each was ruled by a remnant of the Mycenaean bureaucracy: a *pasireu*. The word losing its

previous meaning, translated into later Greek alphabet changed into *basileus* (Pomeroy et al., 1999, 47). Even though the translation of *basileus* would be “the king” as Pomeroy et al. (1999) writes “it would be misleading, however, to call the Dark Age leaders ‘kings’” (Pomeroy et al., 1999, *ibid.*). They were no more than what they were in times Mycenaean kingdoms: mayors, local leaders. The best word that really expresses their status would be “chieftain”, which would signify the fact that the position of *basileus* was rarely hereditary (and if it was then much later) and that even though a *basileus* received social veneration, he would never wield so much power as a *wanax* could.

Let us now jump into the late “Dark Age” (circa 800 BC). This period is of special interest to us as this is the period which is partially portrayed in Homer’s epics (which were composed between 750 – 720 BC). This might be surprising as the Trojan War took place some four hundred years prior. However, the audience to which the story was presented to had to be familiar with the everyday experience of the characters, in order to accept the supernatural features the characters were endowed with, as is concisely put by Kurt A. Raaflaub (2006):

...audiences would have no problems in accepting the heroes’ superhuman feats and endurance, but they would insist on realism in matters of everyday life: how things were done ... and how people interacted with each other, privately and communally. Such realism was needed to enable the listeners to identify with the main problems and dilemmas played out before them on the heroic level, without being distracted by practical matters. (p. 457)

Therefore it is commonly believed that the society portrayed in Homeric literature is actually a society he and his contemporaries had to have some basic knowledge of. Building on that assumption, it could not have been older than just a few generations, Pomeroy et al. (1999) claims that it should be “somewhere around 800 BC” (p. 53-54).

In this period the societal organization developed into fully fledged chiefdoms. In this time of slow societal renewal once again power becomes more centralized, though still just a shadow of the Mycenaean kingdoms. And here also it is very useful to take a look at how the society became organized.

It is important to remark that raiding was an important element of this society. On one hand it provided space for attaining glory and personal honor, while on the other hand it rendered another opportunity of earning one's livelihood in a world of scarcity. Therefore the whole chiefdom was organized in this spirit. Of course the common farmers and herders were present, however those endowed with enough skill, spirit and will were formed into a war party with the chieftain as their commander.

The chieftains used the old title of *basileus*, which became hereditary on the male side of the family. However as Pomeroy et al. (1999) points out: "inheritance alone is not enough; the young chief must also be competent to fulfill his role, which is to lead his people in war and peace." (p. 55). This means that he also needed to gain the obedience from his subjects. So a chieftain's position was secured only by the right of his excellence, he could have been lawfully challenged for his position throughout his life. Therefore he needed to be skilled both in the arts of war and speech.

A typical chiefdom would have one paramount *basileus*, who was the ruler of the *demos* (a territory including its inhabitants) would command a war party of his own, and he would also be in charge of the *basilei* (plural of *basileus*), who would command their own hosts. The *basilei* were a collection of leaders from other villages (or smaller chiefdoms) who would for one reason or another choose to follow the paramount *basileus*. It was important that relationship between the paramount *basileus* and *basilei* was largely on reciprocity and mutual respect. We will deal with topic more on the next chapter and when we arrive to the point at which we begin to deal directly with the text of the *Iliad* (Chapter 4 of this paper).

Here, at the end of this chapter, we leave the strictly historical part of this thesis and we move our focus on the problematic of *polis*. In this chapter we have been able to examine the extraordinary history of rise and fall of a civilization which set the scene for the cruel, though exciting world of Homer's *Iliad*.

Chapter II – Polis:

Good life in a community

As with all words of foreign or distant origin, one should make sure that he knows their true meaning, before using them. Therefore at the beginning of this chapter will be a short passage dealing with the word “*polis*”, after which it should be easier to make clearer what kind of *polis* will we search for. After that we will, with Aristotle’s help, try to find the necessary attributes such *polis* has to have, this will be done in order to make our job easier later when we will conduct a similar search inside the *Iliad*. Afterwards we will examine the factors that held this group of people in a working community. And finally we will briefly return to the *basilei* of “Dark Age”.

John K. Davies in his article “The ‘Origins of the Greek Polis’: Where should we be looking?”, is warning his readers about the usage of the term “*polis*”. He explains that there are two substantial reasons for being cautious. One side of the problem is that the term *polis* does not denote a clear and unchangeable object. He argues that it is a very unclear notion that has been used to cover various types of settlements to the extent of the Persian Empire (Davies 2005, p. 14). The other side of the problem is that it could be used in a way that is not inclusive enough. He continues that according to Aristotelian definition all kinds of political regimes such as monarchies would be left out (Davies 2005, *ibid.*). Let us quote a relevant passage from Aristotle himself to prove Davies’ point: “The rule of a household is a monarchy, for every house is under one head: whereas constitutional rule is a government of freemen and equals.” (Aristotle, p. 11). Without much explanation one can clearly see that Aristotle would not denote monarchy as a *polis*. Finally let me quote Davies on his offered solution: “A term such as ‘microstate’ (German *Kleinstaat*) begs no questions, includes all Greek polities, and is greatly preferable.” (Davies 2005, *ibid.*).

Though Davies’ argument is agreeable in contemporary study of Ancient Greece as a whole, it would make no sense for this paper to give up the term *polis* and substitute it by “microstate” or any other similar word. In fact we will be working

precisely with the Aristotelian definition of the word, as it the most accurate description of the high societal arrangement of which establishment is the object of study of this thesis.

However before consulting Aristotle let us take Francois de Polignac's (1995), definition of the *polis* in its early stage as a starting point. For him *polis* is "a social entity founded upon a network of relations between the various members of a territorial community, all of whom are involved in the emergence of a new form of social cohesion" (p. 78). In other, simpler, words *polis* is a group of people on a given territory who are engaged in creating a new type of community. This is important to keep in mind as we are now shifting our focus on Aristotle.

To be more precise we will now concentrate on Aristotle's work *Politics*. From the point of view of history the factual value of Aristotle's account of how *polis* was established is nowadays negligible. Thanks to the archeological evidence, scientific methods and resources that we have now available, is our factual knowledge, in many respects, more extensive and accurate, than Aristotle's could have been. However along the way he can provide us with much needed insight into how Greeks themselves understood the pinnacle of their civilization some four hundred years later after it was actually established. Therefore we can use the relevant passages in *Politics* to identify the most fundamental elements and factors that were contributing to preservation of *polis* throughout the time. These in turn had to be present in a more primitive form even at the very beginning when first *poleis* were formed.

For Aristotle the basic and natural prerequisite for any larger communion of humans is the existence of family (*oikos*, though a more appropriate equivalent of this word in English would be "household"). The *oikos* was composed of the father, wife, children and slaves (Aristotle, Jowett 1999 p. 4). Aristotle presents *oikos* as the basic self-sufficient (in necessities to support life) economical unit: "The family is the association established by nature for the supply of men's everyday wants ..." (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, *ibid.*). He then continues that once the basic needs are met, and several families come together, they establish a village. And consequently several villages unite into a "single complete community" (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, p. 5).

Aristotle emphasizes that this whole process happens naturally, if so and the grouping into larger communities indeed comes naturally, then also living in such communities should also be natural to human beings. Therefore he proclaims that human is a political animal (*zoon politikon*), political in sense of belonging into a community a social animal. However that one who “by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity ... the natural outcast is forthwith a lover of war ...” (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, *ibid.*). This is a crucial passage as we can clearly see that Aristotle greatly favors peaceful coexistence and cooperation to individualism. For which let us provide even more evidence in the following quote: “... the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part...” (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, p. 6).

Keeping this in mind let us turn to another passage previously in the text that will greatly help us move on: “... the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life.” (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, p. 5). To clearly understand Aristotle’s account of the *polis* we have to explain why living a “good life” is a desirable thing and why it is so tightly connected to community.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, in the beginning, Aristotle searches for what is good, especially inquiring into what is good for men. He makes an argument that happiness is the chief good, as no one wants happiness “... for anything other than itself.” (Aristotle, Ross 1999 p. 10). Further down the page he states that “Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.” (Aristotle, Ross 1999, *ibid.*). This means that happiness is the ultimate good for human beings; it is an end in itself, the goal of all human endeavors.

Aristotle then moves forward and he inquires into the “function of man”. For better understanding, function of man on the same principle as “the function of a lyre-player is to play the lyre” (Aristotle, Ross 1999, p.11). Later on the same page he arrives to a conclusion that the function of a man is to lead a “... certain kind of life, and this is to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle ...” (Aristotle, Ross 1999, *ibid.*).

Finally we arrive at the point where Aristotle unveils what he has in mind. He says that in order to attain the ultimate human good (happiness) is to lead a life that is

an “activity of soul in accordance with virtue ...” (Aristotle, Ross 1999, *ibid.*). To attain the good life then is to constantly and repeatedly act virtuous throughout one’s life, until the very end, as virtue leads to happiness.

However let us not confuse happiness with a pleasant amusement. Aristotle prudently warns that “... we are injured rather than benefited by them, since we are led to neglect our bodies and our property.” (Aristotle, Ross 1999, p. 172). Therefore the happiness that is aimed at by human action is not of this “amusement” kind. On the contrary only virtue leads to happiness as mentioned above.

Things get more complicated as Aristotle reveals that there are two types of virtue and a short quote will explain to us, what they are and what are their characteristics:

Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, ... (Aristotle, Ross 1999, p. 20)

So in order to develop one’s virtue(s) one needs to be taught (which one can do on one’s own, however it should be much better to be trained in it by someone more experienced, for start, at least) and one needs to practice it. These two are of course inseparable and should be done at the same time. But what is the one underlying requirement for being virtuous? Other people, repeated interaction with other people in which one can develop one’s virtue.

Therefore we can now easily explain why it is natural for human beings to be in a community. We need other people in order to be virtuous, happy and to have a good life. Without it, we are “...either a beast or a god ...” (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, p.6).

The *polis* then, is once again, a natural result of a process that leads to human happiness. In light of this knowledge also *zoon politikon* now signifies something much deeper, than the original social animal. For Aristotle and people living in the *polis*, in his time, *zoon politikon* is not an attribute it is an expression of their very beings and of the very meaning of their existence. The feeling of solidarity can be sensed from Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges’ (2001) claim that: “At Athens the law made it the duty of the first magistrate of the city to see that no family should become

extinct.” (p. 38). Of course this law had to be of a later date; however it is very interesting to imagine that the community cares enough to establish such a law.

The community of *polis* is a platform for happiness and for human excellence (in virtue), but for a collective happiness and collective excellence. In order to achieve individual happiness citizens inside the *polis* need to cooperate. Their individual excellence had to always be subordinated and used for the good of the whole, however for this to be possible they had to have a strong sense of belonging. Aristotle explains how it was possible: “... justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society.” (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, p. 6). In this sense of justice Aristotle means “just” in its universal sense: “... the lawful and the fair ...”, while by the unjust “... the unlawful and the unfair ...” (Aristotle, Ross 1999, p. 72).

This notion that men combined should define laws and what is fair is something that came along with the *polis*. The *basilei* and their people before that did not have this understanding. However they had something in common. Both of these groups of people were striving for excellence, though very differently.

In the *polis* the goal was to live a good life, individually and as a group, as it would be impossible to live a good life without others. In that was their pursuit of excellence. However they had to minimize the opportunity for personal glory. The reason for that is simple: men defined the justice together and as Aristotle writes: “All men think justice to be a sort of equality ...” (Aristotle, Jowett 1999, p. 68). Therefore if they ought to be a community of equals they had to transfer the glory from themselves individually to their collective work, the *polis* itself, or better said its laws (since that is what constitutes the *polis*). Donlan (2005) nicely illustrates the situation:

... the leadership lost ideological authority in the transition from the chiefdom to the city-state. Though the laws had majesty, the magistracies did not. The polis-leaders inherited none of the charisma that had attached to the figure of a basileus; the new governmental roles were intentionally depersonalized and functional posts ... (p. 23-24)

The “Dark Age” *basilei* on the other hand would never give their share of glory. They were focused on their personal excellence, every one of them on his own. From the point of view of *polis* this individualism would not make sense. Even Thucydides in his great work “The History of Peloponnesian War” praises the

importance of community, as he seems to be disappointed with his ancestors for their lack of cooperation: "... the whole people, were before the Trojan war prevented by their want of strength and the absence of mutual intercourse from displaying any collective action." (Thucydides, Crawley 1950, p. 3).

Let us now concentrate on the "Dark Age" period again, and let us demonstrate on the title of *basileus* how was the whole society dependent on personal excellence of a few, along with how the element of *zoon politikon* though present was underdeveloped compared to the *polis*.

The *basileus* had no great power over his *demos* as they were to a great degree independent of him. Though his title was much respected because of the tradition that has been linked to it, he was not untouchable. His relationship to his subjects had to be reciprocal. He simply did not have the means to rule against the opinion of the masses as for example the Mycenaean kings could have. As Donlan (2005) wrote:

Rulership of restrictive and punitive kind, according to sociologists, comes about when, and only when, first of all the leaders control the sources and distribution of wealth, and thus can offer or withhold the means of subsistence, and second, when they possess some organized means of physical coercion, and thus can directly force mass obedience. (p. 22)

A "Dark Age" *basileus* had neither. Since the end of Mycenaean civilization also spelled a major drop in population Donlan, quite logically, assumes that "... there was much unused and underused land ..." (Donlan 2005, p. 22). Following that I completely agree with Donlan, that it would be hard to imagine that in such abundance of means of production the farmers would be economically dependent on *basilei*. When it comes to the 'physical coercion' it is important to consider that the army, *basileus* commanded, was composed of three parts. His personal companions (*hetairoi*), rank and file soldiers from the *demos* and the subject *basilei* with their *hetairoi*. Of course the main body of the army was the soldiers levied from *demos*. And once again it is quite hard to imagine that they would repress their own people at the command of *basileus*, the reason to think that is that the *basileus*' authority was simply too low to convince the soldiers to coerce their own families, friends and neighbors. As already mentioned his status was based only on respect for the tradition his title represented and more importantly the general opinion of his person. Donlan (2005) put it this way:

The office of basileus embodied what Max Weber called 'traditional authority'. ... The effectiveness of a given leader depended to a significant degree on his 'charismatic authority' (Weber again), the belief of the followers in the leader's special personal qualities and capacities. (p. 23)

On the case of *basileus* we can see how important was the personal excellency for a good, functioning government in both civil and military life. As the *basileus* had to take personal responsibility for what happened to his people, because they could as a last resort rebel against him, though it was extremely rare that they would. This responsibility was diluted only by the fact that *boulē* (in our case the council made of *basilei*) could be partially blamed. However, "The paramount *basileus* presided and had the determining voice in the discussions" Pomeroy et al., 1999, p. 58). Therefore a *basileus* had to be an extraordinarily ambidextrous individual. He had to show prowess in battle, commanding skills in leading the army, governmental and administrative skills in peace and he had to be a marvelous leader and speaker.

Though "Dark Age" society lived together in a community, they were more like a chain of independent islands, though united in being a community. The *zoon politikon* in this society was more autonomous and more self-centered than in *polis*. Ultimately this meant that the priorities in lives of "Dark Age" period people were also different, and following that so was the human excellency they pursued.

In this chapter we had used Aristotle's work to explain what *polis* and people living in it were like and we have made a brief comparison of them with the "Dark Age" *basilei* on an available historical account. We have found that though they all strived for advancement and perfection, the people of *polis* wanted it for the community as a whole, while in "Dark Age" it was a thing very personal and individual. However this is not sufficient as we need to look deeper into their souls for our comparison to be satisfactory. To really discover the differences and the change that Ancient Greeks underwent in their transformation from chiefdoms to *poleis*.

We will now move on to a short detour, in which we will deal with who Homer was, when and how he wrote, before we move on to Chapter IV in which we will explore Homer's Iliad in search for a more detailed account of who and what kinds of people the *basilei* of "Dark Age" were.

Chapter III – Homer:

Who? When? How?

In this chapter we will look at the sources available to us, to find who Homer was, when he most likely lived and we will have a short discussion about how the works, he is credited for, came to existence.

The personage of Homer is shrouded in mystery; however we have some general knowledge about him. Pomeroy et al. (1999) offers us this information about his origin: “Tradition had it that he was an Ionian, from Smyrna or Chios ...” and he also proclaims that even though sources vary about his time of birth “... most them [are] before 700BC according to our reckoning of time.” (p. 51-52).

There is also an ongoing discussion about whether Homer was blind or not, as some sources are indicating that he might have been. As an example, let us use Thucydides, who quotes from a hymn to Apollo, which he ascribes to Homer, who in turn allegedly “alludes to himself” in it:

*Well, may Apollo keep you all! and so,
Sweethearts, good-bye-yet tell me not I go
Out from your hearts; and if in after hours
Some other wanderer in this world of ours
Touch at your shores, and ask your maidens here
Who sings the songs the sweetest to your ear,
Think of me then, and answer with a smile,
'A blind old man of Scio's rocky isle.'* (Thucydides, Crawley 1950, p. 243)

The question whether Homer was or was not blind is, however marginal as it does not change anything about the fact that he is the author of *Illiad*, *Odyssey*, and various other, lesser works. Along the same lines goes the question whether he could write or not, since both of these questions change only the fact that if he could write those by himself or he needed help of a hired scribe. His authorship in its peculiar way is now undeniable. But let us move on to his style of work and how the epics came to world.

The way how *Illiad* and *Odyssey* were composed puzzled experts for hundreds of years, Edzard Visser (2006) writes that the scientific inquiry into Homer's work started as early as 1795, when F. A. Wolf published, "... a treatise written to prove that Homer's poems were full of structural illogicalities and inconsistencies." (Visser 2006, p. 430). Of course, due to the proportion and unprecedented quality of the epics, even the men of antiquity ventured into study of Homer's work.

Nowadays the most widely accepted theory about the composition of Homer's epics is the "oral-formulaic theory". This theory is the work of Milman Parry, who conducted an on-ground research in former Yugoslavia, where he interviewed a local illiterate oral poet, who performed some of the Slavic epic-heroic poetry (which in its extent was comparable to Homer's epics). Pomeroy et al. (1999) explains that "It turned out that the singer had not learned and memorized the poem, but was rather composing, or more correctly 'recomposing' it as he went along." (p. 52). This meant that even though the stories of the epics were handed down to Homer the formulation and wording of them bear a strong mark of his personal artistry.

Also it is important to note that Homer, in order to deal with the requirements of the complicated hexameter (in which the epics were worded), used fixed formulas. These were explained by Michael Meier-Brügger (2006) as „certain nouns, in combination with certain epithets ...“ (p. 419), such as "swift-footed Achilleus" (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p.78). A noun could have more than one epithet attached to it, therefore Homer could choose which one to use, or even not use any so the verse in question would fit into the metric requirements of hexameter. Therefore in many places in the text of the epics one can be confronted with a seemingly random epithet that has no connection to the plot or action that is currently in the text.

We have already briefly touched (in the first chapter) the last important point we need to ponder. It is Homer's relevance to actual history. Raaflaub (2006) writes that:

... the epics are not really about history. Nor is the Iliad really about the Trojan War. History and the war merely provide the context in which, under the poet's careful guidance, major dramas of human relations, dilemmas, failures, and successes unfold.(p. 449)

So we should not use the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* as a historical source in a manner we would use Thucydides. It was written as poetry, an epic, about people, in which Homer's brilliant insight into human nature reflected. Of course there are aspects from history that are useful, but their source and reliability are uncertain. Visser (2006) concisely summarizes what Homer's knowledge of the history could have been:

... the different myths told him that there was once a time when the buildings were more impressive, the kings ruled over larger regions than just one polis, the relations between the rulers were much closer and the adventures were more impressive. (p. 436)

We have now introduced Homer and the oral-formulaic theory, which to a great extent explains some questions in regard to the *Iliad* and generally how Homer composed the epics. Even though we have learned that Homer should be used with caution as a historical source, he is still irreplaceable when one tries to understand the *psyche* of "Dark Age" *basilei* which we will attempt in the next chapter.

Chapter IV – Iliad: To a beast and back again

In this chapter we will be concerned with comparison of the *polis* as portrayed by Aristotle (Chapter II) and epic heroes (“Dark Age” *basileis*) as found in Homer’s Iliad. Our first point of interest will Achilles’ and Agamemnon’s dispute in Book I, with special focus on Achilles’ departure from the Achaean army. Then we will look into Achilles’ reunion with the Achaeans after Patroklos’ death, Achilles’ *aristeia* and subsequently the returning of Hector’s body to Priam. Here we will be working with Books XVIII, XIX, XX and XXIV.

Immediately in the beginning of Book One of the *Iliad* Homer reveals the main element of the whole story: “... the anger of Peleus’ son Achilleus and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians ...”. (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 75). Indeed the bottomless anger of Achilles will be the cause of many pains (not exclusively Achaean) during the course of *Iliad*. It will also be the central point of this chapter, as Achilles is the perfect character for our purpose.

Further into Book One, the readers find themselves inside the Achaean camp, which has been disturbed by the arrival of Chryses a priest of Apollo. He is a Trojan, therefore the enemy of the Achaeans. His reason for being in the camp was to ransom his daughter, who had been previously captured. The response from most of the Achaeans was following: “... the Achaians cried out in favor that the priest be respected and the shining ransom be taken ...” (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 75). However Agamemnon the leader of Achaeans refused and insulted the old Chryses along the way. That is an interesting point as Agamemnon went ahead without council openly against the general opinion. He should have accepted the ransom, it was a bold, however dangerous move.

Let us digress a little to remind us why it was dangerous. In Chapter II we have discussed that the paramount *basileus* (which Agamemnon in a sense was) had little true power he could exercise over others. All the heroes in the *Iliad* are fighting the war with him because they are bound by an oath to him, not because he has direct power over them. When Pomeroy et al. (1999) writes about the importance of

relationships in “Dark Age” society he mentions that “A leader who keeps more than he deserves or distributes prizes unfairly risks losing the respect of his followers. To a chief, being called ‘greedy’ is almost as devastating an insult as being called ‘cowardly’.” (p. 57). We will see in a while that this is precisely what will happen, nearly costing Agamemnon his life.

Chryses being the priest of Apollo prayed for punishment of the Achaeans. And it was granted. Apollo struck the Achaean camp with plague, which lasted nine days, until Achilles summoned “... the people to assembly ...” (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p.76). On that assembly a prophet explained what the reason for the plague is and he appealed to Agamemnon to return Chryses’ daughter. Agamemnon showed resentment, but maybe trying to repair his previous fault consented, however under one condition. He would be compensated (by Achaeans) for the loss of the girl in question, as he thought about her highly: “... I like her better than Klytaimnestra my own wife, for in truth she is in no way inferior ...” (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 78).

Achilles replied, calling Agamemnon “... greediest for gain of all men ...” (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 78), that all loot has been divided, so there is none to compensate him from. It is interesting that Achilles, cleverly, called Agamemnon greedy, as it can be understood in two different ways. On one hand we had already mentioned that being called greedy would be a grave insult. On the other hand “greediest for gain of all men” as a whole could be in fact a compliment. Gain does not have to be necessarily understood in terms of loot and Achilles also acknowledges that Agamemnon is best at something; he acknowledges his excellence in something.

However Agamemnon fearing that by losing his prize, he would also lose his honor, which would further worsen his position, still demands a compensation “... according to [his] desire ...” (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 78). Achilles, as his anger starts to take hold of him, now openly calls Agamemnon greedy: “O wrapped in shamelessness, with your mind forever on profit ...” (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 79). Furthermore Achilles threatens to go home, abandoning the army. Agamemnon encourages him to do so, however he also says that he will take Briseis (Achilles’ prize) for himself, as a gesture to humiliate Achilles. Humiliating Achilles would greatly help strengthening Agamemnon’s position as Achilles is far more excellent fighter, than Agamemnon is (in fact than anybody is). Agamemnon’s wording is

fierce and one might catch that he is not only speaking to Achilles, but he also sends a message to all those present at the assembly:

*... I shall take the fair-cheeked Briseis,
your prize, I myself going to your shelter, that you may learn well
how much greater I am than you, and another man may shrink back
from likening himself to me and contending against me.*

(Homer, Lattimore 2011,
p. 80)

Achilles' in his anger wants to kill Agamemnon; however Pallas Athena appeared and talked him out of it. Achilles then at least continues in insulting Agamemnon, calling him a coward: "Never once have you taken courage in your heart to arm with your people for battle ..." (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 81). And finally gravely dishonored by Agamemnon, Achilles sits down.

As a result of this dispute Achilles withdraws from the army and the main camp. He does not leave home as he did threaten however he refuses to fight, and indeed after Book One he does not appear for a long time. This is a very crucial moment for us and I would like to start putting the pieces together.

Raaflaub (2006) claims that the Achaean encampment was in fact a kind of *polis*:

... [Achaean] army eventually turns its bridgehead at the edge of the Trojan plain into a fortified camp. Thereby it is assimilated to the central settlement of a polis. True, it is an improvised one, limited to the time of the war, and unusual because of the absence of families, but even much later the polis was perceived as movable and defined as a community of men, and otherwise this one had all the characteristics of such a settlement: streets and alleys, division into quarters, squares for sacrifices and rituals, a market place, an agora for assemblies and other communal events, walls, and gates. (p. 459)

I would agree with Raaflaub to the extent that this encampment does indeed share many external features and attributes of a *polis*, however it misses the most important ingredient, the citizens of a *polis*, as we had described in Chapter II.

However the Achaean encampment is a community and as we had discussed in Chapter II the element of *zoon politikon* was present in "Dark Ages", even if it was underdeveloped compared to *polis*.

What Achilles does, by withdrawing from the army is both metaphorically and literally exiling himself from the community that Achaeans were. Literally he did because indeed he removed his body physically from the vicinity of the encampment. And metaphorically because by his nature (his tragic flaw of anger) he chose to live outside of the community, making him, by Aristotles' definition, "either beast or god". He was related to the gods, but was not one of them; he was, in fact, too much of a mortal. That leaves us with beast. And there is plenty of evidence further in the *Iliad* that his anger did, in fact, turned him into a beast.

His anger leads him to ask his divine mother Thetis to in turn ask Zeus to side with the Trojans so that Achaeans would start to lose the war and will have to realize how significant he is for their victory. She reveals to that Achilles' destiny is to dye young: "Now it has befallen that your life must be brief and bitter beyond all men's." (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 86). She eventually succeeds in convincing Zeus. And indeed Achaeans unable to score decisive victory are succumbing to the Trojan pressure.

A lot later in the *Iliad*, in Book Eighteen Achilleus' wish comes to haunt him, as he learns the news that his friend Patroklos died in battle by Hektor's hand. Afterwards he speaks with his mother again, realizing that Zeus answered his plea, and also that he is to be blamed for Patroklos' death:

*My mother, all these things the Olympian brought to accomplishment.
But what pleasure is this to me, since my dear companion has perished,
Patroklos, whom I loved beyond all other companions ...*

(Homer, Lattimore 2011,
p. 398)

Thetis confides to Achilles that he will die soon after Hektor. Achilles' reply is: "I must die soon then; since I was not to stand by my companion when he was killed." (Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 399). This is very important as Achilles could at any time leave at his ship and go home, however now in this point he had given up this possibility. He chose honor over his own life, even when he knew that he might have only a few days left, he decided to avenge his fallen companion. His anger now shifts from Agamemnon to Hektor.

In Book Nineteen Achilles joins the Achaean forces seeking to make peace with Agamemnon. The words he utters speak much about his frame of mind:

*Son of Atreus [Agamemnon], was this after all the better way for
both, for you and me, that we, for all our hearts' sorrow,
quarreled together for the sake of a girl in soul-perishing hatred?
I wish Artemis had killed her beside the ships with an arrow
on that day when I destroyed Lyrnessos and took her.*

(Homer, Lattimore 2011,
p. 415)

It is interesting how now that his anger shifted Achilles has no problem to forgive Agamemnon, though recently he was ready to kill him for the humiliation. Also Briseis no longer matters to him. Achilles is very egoistic, not ashamed a bit for the insults that he threw at Agamemnon, not sorry at all. He is ignorant to everybody else, blinded, driven by his wrath, arrogant. John Alvis (1995) sees Achilles in this respect, as following: “In relation to his people, Achilles allows himself the prerogatives one associates with divine beings, placing the satisfaction of his resentment above the welfare of the army, putting himself beyond the reach of ordinary means of propitiation ...” (p. 9).

It is also important to add that this is the point at which Aristotle physically reenters the Achaean community; however there is still a long way to go, in order to reenter it with his mind.

The next book is about Achilles' *aristeia*, which in epics is the finest moment of a warrior. Achilles singlehandedly routes the whole Trojan army. This is where his fury is almost divine. He is invincible. This is in fact the moment in which the excellence of the character reaches its full potential; this is what a “Dark Age” *basileus*, better put hero, would aim for his whole life. He is magnificent in the combat, tireless, fueled by his wrath. As Seth Benardete (2005) put it: “That Achilles harmoniously unites two virtues that usually cannot even fit together, stamina and speed, constitutes the miracle of his excellence...” (p. 48). This one moment will immortalize him, in the memory of people. I will provide one quotation to illustrate, how terrifying a beast Achilles became:

... so before great-hearted Achilleus the single-foot horses

*trampled alike dead men and shields, and the axle under
the chariot was all splashed with blood and the rails which encircled
the chariot, struck by flying drops from the feet of the horses,
from the running rims of the wheels. The son of Peleus was straining
to win glory, his invincible hands spattered with bloody filth.*

(Homer, Lattimore 2011,
p. 439)

Finally we will skip to the last book of the *Iliad*. It is not the case that the skipped books would not be interesting, but they are not so important for this thesis. In Book Twenty-four, Priam, the lord of Troy, comes to Achilles asking for his son's, (Hektor) body. Achilles had previously killed Hektor, but it did not satisfy his anger, therefore he also, in his sadness and fury, dishonored the body, by dragging it, behind his chariot, in front of the walls of Troy.

Achilles' interaction with Priam is crucial for both this paper and *Iliad* itself. Priam is in the position of a broken father. He has lost many of his sons and he knows that Troy will lose the war. There is something so humane and tragic about him that he is even able to break Achilles' anger, finally freeing Achilles from his bestiality. I think the part when this happens is this:

*Honour then the gods, Achilleus, and take pity upon me
remembering your father, yet I am still more pitiful;
I have gone through what no other mortal on earth has gone through;
I put my lips to the hands of the man who has killed my children.'
So he spoke, and stirred in the other a passion of grieving
for his own father. He took the old man's hand and pushed him
gently away, and the two remembered, as Priam sat huddled
at the feet of Achilleus and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor
and Achilleus wept now for his own father, now again
for Patroklos.*

(Homer, Lattimore 2011, p. 510-511)

Though it was indicated in previous books that Achilles might yet save his humanity, it is only here that it becomes certain that his anger subsides and leaves

him. Here at this point Achilles returns to the community of men, which he left in the first book. The connection that Achilles made with Priam here was only possible, because Achilles' own father will soon too experience the loss of his son. Achilles is destined to die shortly after Hektor. He knows very well that he is not returning home. He did attain honor and glory, he proved his undeniable excellence, however the immortality that he gained by it will not be of the kind that he will be able to enjoy.

Achilles came to this story as a *zoon politikon*, a part of a community that sprung up on the shores of Troy. After the argument with Agamemnon he withdrew from it, causing pain, suffering and death of many of his brethren. His bottomless anger drove him to do terrible things. And even though he had gained his glory and fame, he still returned to the community, the *zoon politikon* in him won. It is of great importance to state that even the best of the best *basilei* needed a community to belong in, even a hero, demigod. That is why *polis* could eventually win and be regarded as superior. Aristotle was in his account of *zoon politikon* right, it is natural, all too much natural to resist, uniting in communities of equals and then together striving for a good life.

Now, let us move on to the Conclusion of this thesis, in which we will tie up loose ends and summarize our findings, as right now they are dispersed among the chapters.

Conclusion:

The goal of this thesis was to find what it was that changed in hearts and minds of the “Dark Age” people that enabled them to form the *polis*.

We first made an inquiry into the historical and archaeological sources in order to establish a background for our search. Though it might have been tedious at times it was necessary. Without it too much of context from the subsequent chapters would be missing. In the third chapter we added some extra knowledge about Homer, but especially important was the realization that the epic poetry we are dealing with has in many aspects its historical relevance, though it should not be used as an exclusively historical source.

However the second and the fourth chapters are the pillars of this work. In the second chapter we had used Aristotle’s work to identify the main attributes of *polis*. They were the tightly-knitted community, of equals, that collectively strive for a good life, which is only possible by constant, repeated acting in accordance with virtue. And we have compared it against the historical account of “Dark Ages” and the interpretation of *Iliad*.

We arrived at the conclusion that both communities shared the Aristotelian *zoon politikon*, which is the connection, between them, we were looking for. People as “political” or “social” animals were much more developed in *polis*. Furthermore we have uncovered that strive for personal excellence, the self-centeredness and egoism of the “Dark Age” *basilei* was what stood in the way of *polis*.

Finally our excursion to *Iliad* had affirmed that even though the social conventions and the excellence of individuals (*basilei*) were what held the society together, they were not enough. The heroes (as well as the real world *basilei*) lived only for themselves; each life lived then was a life wasted. There was continuity from chieftain to chieftain but no progress, the children were not better off than the parents, the society stagnated. Only when people subordinated the interest of individual to that of the community, and gave up being heroes, only then could one of the greatest civilizations, in history, be born.

Resumé:

V prvej kapitole, tejto práce, sa dozvedáme o histórii Antického Grécka. Začíname skúmať cestu ktorá viedla k sformovaniu sa tzv. Mykénskej kultúry, ktorá dominovala Peloponézskemu polostrovu približne v rozmedzí rokov 1600 do 1200 pnl. Sú identifikované tri základné vplyvy, ktoré pomohli vzniku Mykénskej kultúry.

Prvým z nich je imigrácia grécky hovoriacich Indoeurópanov, ktorá prebehla približne okolo roku 2000 pnl. Druhým z nich je kontakt s vyspelými civilizáciami blízkeho východu, od ktorého prevzali mnohé elementy ich kultúry. Tretím je Minoiská kultúra, ktorá vznikla na Kréte. Existujú silné dôkazy, ktoré podporujú teóriu, že Minoiská kultúra mala silný vplyv na kontinentálne Grécko. V rámci jej vplyvu sa v Mykénách formovala nová kultúra, ktorá prevzala veľa elementov z tej Minoiskej. Okolo roku 1500 pnl. Mykény dobyli Krétu a postupne sa Mykénska kultúra, ktorá si už stihla vytvoriť silné vlastné elementy, stala dominantnou, tak ako na Kréte, tak aj na Peloponézskom polostrove.

Na čele tradičného kráľovstva Mykénskej kultúry stál *wanax*. Vládol centralizovane z paláca mocnou a prepracovanou byrokraciou. Za spomienku stojí jeden post z tejto byrokratickej siete a to je *pasireu*, čo bola funkcia starostu, každá dedina, alebo menšie osídlenie mali vlastného *pasireu*.

Okolo roku 1200 pnl. museli Mykénske kráľovstvá čeliť hrozbe tzv. Morských ľudí, čo boli skupiny nájazdníkov z rôznych národov Stredozemia. Mykénske kráľovstvá tento nápor nevydržali a rozpadli sa. Nastala „Doba temna“ (pretože z nej máme málo prameňov).

Z *pasireu* sa vyvinul *basileus*, ktorý bol vládcom na omnoho menšom území, aké mali Mykénske kráľovstvá. Tento *basileus* mal pod sebou niekoľko *basilei* (plurál od *basileus*), ktorí vládli svojim malým územiám, ale prisahali vernosť hlavnému *basileus*. Toto zriadenie by sa dalo prirovnať k náčelníctvu.

Medzi rokmi 750 – 720 pnl. Homér napísal svoje dva eposy *Iliada* a *Odysea*. Je všeobecne uznávané, že v nich postihuje realie spoločnosti len o niekoľko generácií staršej ako bol on sám. Nie teda Mykénske kráľovstvá.

V druhej kapitole sa zaoberáme samotnou *polis*. Primárne sa tam sústreďíme na Aristotelove diela „Politika“ a „Etika Nikomachova“. Skúmaním týchto diel prichádzame na to, že *polis* je taká komunita ľudí, ktorá sa snaží o „šťastný život“, ktorý môže dosiahnuť len neustálym a opakovaným konaním v súlade s cnosťou.

Aristotel nám taktiež predstavuje aj svoj koncept *zoon politikon*, že človek je spoločenské alebo teda politické zviera. Vďaka tomu, že človek taký je, je preňho prirodzené žiť v komunite, a teda vznik *polis*, ktorá je najvyššou formou komunity je taktiež vec prirodzená.

Aj ľudia z „Doby temna“ aj občania *polis* sa snažili dosiahnuť určitú excelenciu. Rozdiel je v tom že občania *polis* na to potrebovali jeden druhého a aby spoločne ju mohli dosiahnuť v žití „šťastného života“, zatiaľ čo ľudia z „Doby temna“ sa snažili každý zvlášť, egoisticky a individuálne dosiahnuť excelenciu, ktorá sa prevažne týkala boja, alebo čo sa mieru týka vo vodcovských schopnostiach.

V tretej kapitole sa venujeme Homérovi. Pravdepodobne sa narodil niekedy pred rokom 700 pnl. Stále nie je jasné či bol Homér slepý, alebo nie. Nie je to však podstatné, vzhľadom na zistenia, ktoré sa v tomto obore podarilo získať.

Podľa všetkého bol Homér orálny básnik. Momentálne všeobecne najuznávanejšia teória tvrdí, že originálne Homér svoje eposy prednášal, a až neskôr ich zapísal. Nepamätal si ich však naspamäť, vedel len hlavné dejové línie a popri tom ako ich prednášal si báseň v hlave komponoval. Mal to uľahčené tým, že existovali zaužívané formule, ktoré pozostávali z podstatného mena a nejakého prívlastku. Tieto formule potom mohol používať, alebo ich vynechať tak aby udržal rytmus básne.

V štvrtej kapitole sa dostávame k interpretácii *Iliady* na ktorej je sa snažíme potvrdiť si premisy o ľuďoch z „Doby temna“, ktoré sme získali z druhej kapitoly. Zamieravame sa hlavne na Achillea a jeho dejovú líniu ktorá je súčasne svojou dôležitosťou aj centrálnou líniou celej *Iliady*.

V Achillovom konflikte s Agamemnónom, ktorý je o jedno otrocké dievča, vidíme Achillov rastúci hnev, urážky lietajúce z jednej strany na druhú, až kým to nevyvrcholí Achillovým odchodom od Agamemnónovej armády. Achilles neodíde úplne, len sa utiahne preč. Toto symbolizuje jeho odchod zo spoločnosti, respektíve komunity o ktorej hovoril Aristoteles. Achilles si želá aby Trójanania vyhrali nad Agamemnónom, aby si Achajci uvedomili ako veľmi ho potrebujú.

Po dlhom skoku v príbehu dopredu sa dostávame do bodu, kde v boji s Trójanmi umiera Achillov spoločník, Patrokles. Achilles si uvedomuje, že síce dosiahol, čo chcel (Achajci prehrávajú), ale nechcel to za túto cenu. Jeho hnev sa obráti na Hektora (syna vládata Tróje Priama), ktorý zabil Patrokla. Achilles sa udobrí s Agamemnónom, ale na celej scéne je silný motív Achillovej ľahostajnosti k svojmu okoliu. Teraz len rukou mávne nad konfliktom s Agamemnónom, ktorý preňho predtým toľko znamenal. Achilles je zožieraný svojím hnevom, voči Hektorovi a mimo to ho už nikto živý nezaujíma. Postupne sa mení na zviera.

Nadchádza chvíľa Achillovej *aristeia*, čo je v eposoch chvíľa najväčšej excelencie postavy v boji. Achilles zaženie Trójsku armádu, celý výjav sa končí tak, že je pokrytý krvou a je hrôzostrašný.

Znova sa presunieme v príbehu ďalej až ku samému koncu kde sa Achillovi vráti späť jeho ľudskosť keď si Priam príde vypýtať Hektorove zohavené telo (Achilles ho už medzitým stihol zabiť). Dôležitý je tu moment kedy Achilles pochopí strašný osud Priamov. Achillovi bolo prorokované, že umrie krátko po smrti Hektora. No a teraz keď vidí Priamov smútok, pripomína mu to jeho vlastného otca, ktorý onedlho tiež stratí syna.

Na Iliade sme si demonštrovali, že *zoon politikon* ako ho Aristoteles popisuje, je to puto medzi ľuďmi „Doby temna“ a obdobia *polis*. Achilles vystúpi zo spoločnosti, stane sa zvierat'om, ale nakoniec sa do nej zase vráti, pretože ako Aristoteles správne tvrdí *polis* výsledkom prirodzeného procesu. V „Dobe temna“ boli ľudia zameraní len na seba a na príklade Achilla je vidno, že to pre nich príliš nefungovalo. Spoločnosť stagnovala. Až keď sa ľudia vzdali túžby byť hrdinami a spojili sa vo svojej snahe „žiť dobrý život“ vznikla *polis* vrchol stáročného vývoja.

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