

Lecture Mr. Hein van Oorschot

Summary by Brian Parker and Frank Marcus

Hein van Oorschot took us back to ancient Greece and Troy where Homer portrays heroic conflict, each side admiring the other and self esteem is undamaged by defeat. No PTSD here! Achilles broke the ethos of combat dignity in the desecration of the body of the defeated Hector. The norm today is perhaps closer to Achilles – disrespect for an enemy especially in the ambiguities of asymmetric warfare and where he employs atrocity as a matter of policy. Perspective from home may be support the soldier but not the cause, thereby weakening the "heroic" aspect of conflict.

The changing meaning of freedom was explored:

- Post WWII – 1945 to 1960 – Personal experience recalled the perils and hardships of war and the celebration of freedom from them was tangible, readily defined and universally experienced.
- 1960 to 1980 – The first generation emerged who had lived in the shadow of WWII but not suffered directly from it and did not know the same relief. Their sense of freedom was expressed in a right to protest, criticize and organize.
- 1980 to 2012 – Individualism and unrestrained freedom to follow self-interest, unchecked free expression and rejection of authority defined freedom as doing whatever you want! The commemoration of war dead therefore becomes ambiguous, the self esteem of the soldier is diminished and families suffer by association.

Freedom must be reclothed with integrity in order that its true values may be appreciated and its reality experienced.

Achilles in Vietnam, a book about the killings in Vietnam and Vietnam Veterans with PTSS Lecturer compares their experiences with the Iliad of Homer. Main point. If you read Homer the story is about heroes, heroism and proud to be in combat with the enemy. Even the looser can therefore be proud having to fight such an enormous enemy.

One incident. Achilles loses his military dignity fighting Hector, angry as he is because of the dead of Patrocles.

The writer makes a connection with the Vietnam War, where soldiers are not supported by the nation, because the people don't support the war. There is no glorious war.

Hein van Oorschot's son was in Afghanistan and experienced the same. He lost two colleagues and saw the discussion in Holland about leaving the mission. He had a lot of trouble accepting this decision. He also didn't have a lot of esteem to the Taliban. But he kept his human dignity and respected the enemy.

As a member of the National committee 4 and 5 May he experienced a discussion about changes in the western society. He sees three periods.

First is 1945 - 1960. Well fed people, glad with their freedom. In the 60 years the new generation didn't know the war from their own experience. The concept changed.

Many people were anti warfare and anti army. It was the flower power time, with strong people movements to protest against nuclear weapons. But the community feeling got lost and made place for more individualism, with no respect for other people.

Some statements. If war is not glorious it will be much more difficult to keep up human dignity. We need more mental load to encourage. Soldiers should get more respect for their work from

society.

We need a new balanced concept of freedom.