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978-0-521-19388-7 - Homer on the Gods and Human Virtue: Creating the Foundations of Classical Civilization

Peter J. Ahrensdorf

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## HOMER ON THE GODS AND HUMAN VIRTUE

### *Creating the Foundations of Classical Civilization*

This book seeks to restore Homer to his rightful place among the principal figures in the history of political and moral philosophy. Through this fresh and provocative analysis of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Peter J. Ahrensdorf examines Homer's understanding of the best life, the nature of the divine, and the nature of human excellence. According to Ahrensdorf, Homer teaches that human greatness eclipses that of the gods; that the contemplative and compassionate singer ultimately surpasses the heroic warrior in grandeur; and that it is the courageously questioning Achilles, not the loyal Hector or even the wily Odysseus, who comes closest to the humane wisdom of Homer himself. Thanks to Homer, two of the distinctive features of Greek civilization are its extraordinary celebration of human excellence, as can be seen in Greek athletics, sculpture, and nudity, and its singular questioning of the divine, as can be seen in Greek philosophy.

PETER J. AHRENSDORF is the James Sprunt Professor of Political Science and an affiliated professor of classics at Davidson College. He is the author of *Greek Tragedy and Political Philosophy: Rationalism and Religion in Sophocles' Theban Plays* and *The Death of Socrates and the Life of Philosophy: An Interpretation of Plato's Phaedo*; the coauthor of *Justice Among Nations: On the Moral Basis of Power and Peace*; and the cotranslator of *Sophocles' Theban Plays*. He is also the author of many articles and essays on Plato, Thucydides, Hobbes, Sophocles, Sarmiento, and Homer. Ahrensdorf has received a Fulbright scholarship to study and teach in Argentina, two National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships, five Earhart Foundation fellowship research grants, a Boswell Faculty fellowship, and the Hunter-Hamilton Love of Teaching Award from Davidson College.

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