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## Achilleus: Immortal Glory through Humanity

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Achilleus:  
Immortal Glory through Humanity

Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
of Bard College

by  
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For Duncan,  
You will always be missed.

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Max and Noah, why not?

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ὁ μέγας δὲ κίνδυνος ἄναλκιν οὐ φῶταλαμβάνει.  
θανεῖν δ' οἷσιν ἀνάγκα, τί κέ τις ἀνώνυμον  
γῆρας ἐν σκότῳ καθήμενος ἔψοι μάταν, ἀπάντων καλῶν ἄμμορος;<sup>1</sup>

It is not to weaklings the great risks will yield.

We all have to die down here. Why squat scared in the shade?  
Why stew away old age in obscurity, owning not a single thing that is fine?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pindar Olympian 1.81-83.

<sup>2</sup> Mullen 1.81-83.

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## The Plan of the Poet

The tragic course of Achilles' rage, his final recognition of human values, this is the guiding theme of the poem, and it is developed against a background of violence and death.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the *Iliad* plan (*βουλή*<sup>4</sup>) of Zeus is used to describe the outcome of actions and events. In the ideology of the heroes of the *Iliad* everything is done according to what has been set up by Zeus to happen. Thus the events of the Trojan War occur by the 'plan of Zeus'. The *Iliad* itself, however, occurs by the 'plan of the poet'. From Book I.1 all the way until Book XXIV.805 the 'plan of the poet' is playing out. It is the design of Homer that Achilleus be immortalized in forever in the *Iliad* because of what occurs in the *Iliad* itself.

The setting of the *Iliad* is the Trojan War, but the *Iliad* is not the retelling of the events of the war. The *Iliad* is the story of Achilleus' growth. "When Achilles joined the Trojan expedition, his assumptions about himself and the actions before him differed little, we presume, from those of the other princes"<sup>5</sup>. Before the events of the *Iliad* Achilleus had no reason to question the assumptions of his society, but this quickly changes. Achilleus enters the *Iliad* with the same mentality as the rest of the Achaians, but as the epic progresses Achilleus grows to become his own man. Achilleus' growth begins in Book I:

The whole quarrel with Agamemnon was merely the match that lit a fire,  
the impetus which drove Achilles from the simple assumptions of the

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<sup>3</sup> Knox 1990. 147.

<sup>4</sup> βουλή - plan, will, intention

<sup>5</sup> Whitman 1958. 182.

other princely heroes onto the path where heroism means the search for the dignity and meaning of the self.<sup>6</sup>

“...it is only in the last two books of the Iliad, where Homer frames the new insight, that the character of Achilles achieves its end”<sup>7</sup>. Achilleus only comes to the end of his growth at the close of the epic, days before his own death.

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<sup>6</sup> Whitman 1958. 193.

<sup>7</sup> Whitman 1958. 213.



## Chapter 1: What Separates Heroes from Warriors

The *Iliad* traces almost clinically the stages of Achilles' development. More than tragedy, epic makes real use of time; whereas Oedipus, for instance, reveals himself before our eyes, Achilles creates himself in the course of the poem...Tragedy, especially that of Sophocles, slowly uncovers a character which is complete from start to finish, but Achilles is actually not complete until the poem is complete. He is learning all the time. He is learning the meaning of his original choice...<sup>8</sup>

Character development is an important aspect of any book, but in the *Iliad* the only character who truly develops is Achilleus (Ἀχιλλεύς)<sup>9</sup>. Before his development, Achilleus embodied what the great warriors of the *Iliad* strive to be, a great hero. There are several common ideals which the warriors in the Homeric epic the *Iliad* strive to embody. These ideals are what the warriors of the *Iliad* believe make them something greater than their companions: battle strength, courage (ἀνδρεία), closeness to the gods, honor (τιμῆ), and blunt honesty. Loyalty to your ruler and your community, and personal integrity are two other important virtues (ἀρεταί), but they can often stand in conflict with one another. Warriors who embody these ideals epitomize the norm of what it means to be a hero in the eyes of the warriors in the *Iliad*. The twenty four books of the Homeric epic show the development of Achilleus, maturing beyond the norm of the hero only moments before his imminent death: "Achilles will achieve a

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<sup>8</sup> Whitman 1958. 187-188.

<sup>9</sup> My approach to the character development of Achilles is principally through a study of the narrative in all the scenes in which he appears. A complementary approach would be the study of the uniqueness of his language (in Greek) in comparison to the language of the other speakers and of the poet. As a help to those who might wish to approach such a linguistic study, I have added as an appendix: a review on the principal studies of the topic of Achilles' unique language.

maturity, a seasonality, at the moment in the *Iliad* when he comes to terms with his own impending heroic death”<sup>10</sup>.

### i. The Common Heroes

The first characteristic of any character in the *Iliad* who can even be considered to be called a hero is his battle strength. The heroes of the *Iliad* are deadly, powerful, even godlike, warriors. One such warrior who can claim to be one of the strongest of the Achaians (*Ἀχαιοί*) is Diomedes (*Διομήδης*). After Achilles withdrew himself from battle, Diomedes fought on the forefront for several books, especially in Book V. In Book V, the *aristeia* (*ἀριστεία*) of Diomedes is revealed as he defeats each strong foe he encounters: “next he killed Astynooos and Hypeiron”<sup>11</sup>, “and went on after Polyidos and Abas”<sup>12</sup>, “the two sons of Phainops, Xanthos and Thoon”<sup>13</sup>, “next he killed two children of Dardanian Priam / who were in a single chariot, Echelon and Chromios”<sup>14</sup>, and Aineias<sup>15</sup>. Most impressive of all, though, is the fact that Diomedes fearlessly attacks gods, going so far as to injure two of them. Diomedes stabs Aphrodite (*Ἀφροδίτη*) as she protected her son, Aineias:

Tydeus made a thrust against the soft hand with the bronze spear,  
and the spear tore the skin driven clean on through the immortal  
robe that the very Graces had woven for her carefully,

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<sup>10</sup> Nagy 2013. 47.

<sup>11</sup> Lattimore 2011, V.144.

<sup>12</sup> Lattimore 2011. V.148.

<sup>13</sup> Lattimore 2011. V.152.

<sup>14</sup> Lattimore 2011. V.159-160.

<sup>15</sup> Lattimore 2011. V.305.

over the palm's base; and blood immortal flowed from the goddess, ichor, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities<sup>16</sup>.

It is no simple feat for Diomedes to harm Aphrodite: Aphrodite may not be a goddess known for her prowess in battle, but she is, nonetheless, one of the great Olympians. Much more impressive, though, is when Diomedes inflicts a great wound upon the war god, Ares (Ἄρης):

...Ares lunged first over the yoke and the reins of his horses with the bronze spear, furious to take the life from him. But the goddess gray-eyed Athene in her hand catching the spear pushed it away from the car, so he missed and stabbed vainly. After him Diomedes of the great war cry drove forward with the bronze spear; and Pallas Athene, leaning in on it, drove it into the depth of the belly where the war belt girt him<sup>17</sup>.

Diomedes, a mortal man, has now injured both Aphrodite and Ares, two of the great Olympian gods.

It is important to point out, however, that Diomedes did not injure Ares on his own, he had help from the goddess Athene (Ἀθήνη). Athene helped drive the spear into Ares. Even before helping him drive the spear against Ares, Athene granted him strength against the Trojans:

There to Tydeus' son Diomedes Pallas Athene granted strength and daring, that he might be conspicuous among all the Argives and win the glory of valor. She made weariless fire blaze from his shield and helmet like that star of the waning summer who beyond all stars rises bathed in the ocean stream to glitter in brilliance<sup>18</sup>.

Diomedes, powerful as he may be, did not complete the feats from his own strength alone, he had the favor of Pallas Athene. Does this make him less of a hero? No. Being

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<sup>16</sup> Lattimore 2011. V.336-340.

<sup>17</sup> Lattimore 2011. V.851-857.

<sup>18</sup> Lattimore 2011. V.1-6.

close to the gods, receiving their favor, is another quality which the greatest heroes of the *Iliad* share: “the gods are concerned with their fate”<sup>19</sup>. Diomedes has the favor of Athene here and those who see him know this because of the fire which Athene has set ablaze from the shield and helmet of Diomedes.

Other heroes have the favor of the gods too: several Trojans have the favor of Apollo (*Ἀπόλλων*), Poseidon (*Ποσειδῶν*) helps Aineias, and even the great Achilles did not complete the great feats he achieves in the *Iliad* alone, he had the favor of multiple gods. Thetis (*Θέτις*), Athene, Hephaistos (*Ἥφαιστος*), and even Zeus (*Ζεύς*) himself help Achilles in the *Iliad*. The great battle strength which the heroes use to defeat enemies for glory is often assisted, either directly or indirectly, by divine gods. Warriors in the *Iliad* do not rise above their comrades-in-arms without the aid of some god at some point: “no mortal...is allowed to achieve greatness without divine assistance”<sup>20</sup>.

But what are great battle strength and the favor of the gods without courage? Courage is another important virtue of any warrior who can claim the title of hero. Several warriors in the *Iliad* describe the duty of courage. In Book VI Hektor (*Ἑκτωρ*) describes the idea of shame to his wife Andromache; without courage there is nothing but shame: “...yet I would feel deep shame / before the Trojans, and the Trojan women with trailing garments, / if like a coward I were to shrink aside from the fighting”<sup>21</sup>. Odysseus (*Ὀδυσσεύς*) further develops the ideal of courage in Book XI, stating the necessity for courage in order to gain honor:

Since I know that it is the cowards who walk out of the fighting,

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<sup>19</sup> Benardete 1963. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Bassett 1933. 43.

<sup>21</sup> Lattimore 2011. VI.441-443.

but if one is to win honour in battle, he must by all means stand his ground strongly, whether he be struck or strike down another<sup>22</sup>.

Fleeing from battle is cowardice and causes great shame, but fighting courageously, win or loss, leads to honor.

Sarpedon takes the idea of the necessity of courage further than Hektor and Odysseus when he speaks with Glaukos in Book XII:

Glaukos, why is it you and I are honored before others with pride of place, the choice meats and the filled wine cups in Lykia, and all men look on us as if we were immortals, and we are appointed a great piece of land by the banks of Xanthos, good land, orchard and vineyard, and ploughland for the planting of wheat? Therefore it is our duty in the forefront of the Lykians to take our stand, and bear our part of the blazing of battle, so that a man of the close-armored Lykians may say of us:

...  
But now seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them, let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others<sup>23</sup>.

Sarpedon further unpacks the ideal of courage, transforming it from a virtue into a duty. Courage is the duty of the strongest warriors to fight on the frontlines of the battle, putting their lives on the line for the sake of the great honor which their companions bestow upon them. As Sarpedon says, it is the duty of those who are honored to earn that honor by fighting courageously, putting their lives on the line against opponents who also put their lives on the line, fighting on equal ground for the chance of honor. For warriors in the *Iliad* it is so very important to earn the honor they are given by their peers because honor holds so much importance in their lives.

Honor is, perhaps, the most important thing in the world to the warriors of the *Iliad*; without honor life seems meaningless. For Achaean heroes in the *Iliad*, one's

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<sup>22</sup> Lattimore 2011. XI.408-410.

<sup>23</sup> Lattimore 2011. XII.310-318, 326-328.

honor is defined as the esteem of one's peers, usually in the form of material wealth. For the Achaians that materialized 'honor' is distributed by their king, Agamemnon (*Ἀγαμέμνων*). All battle prizes come to Agamemnon and, after taking his great share of the spoils, he distributes those prizes to the warriors who won them. This distribution of honor is such an important theme in the *Iliad* because it is the basis for the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon. In Book I, Agamemnon publicly takes back the one war prize that he bestowed upon Achilles, Briseis (*Βρισηΐς*), along with the honor she represents:

...but 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...<sup>24</sup>

Achilleus has done the brunt of the fighting up until this point, but rather than being honored himself for his actions, it is Agamemnon alone whom he honors<sup>25</sup>. Achilleus himself is rewarded with little:

Always the greater part of the painful fighting is the work of  
My hands; but when the time comes to distribute the booty  
Yours is far the greater reward, and I with some small thing  
Yet dear to me go back to my ships when I am weary from fighting<sup>26</sup>

Achilleus was not given a fair share of the honor owed to him and he now realizes that everyone dies the same, regardless of honor:

...there was no gratitude given  
for fighting incessantly forever against your enemies.  
Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the same if he fights hard.  
We are all held in a single honor, the brave with the weaklings.  
A man dies still if he has done nothing, as one who has done much.  
Nothing is won for me, now that my heart has gone through its afflictions

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<sup>24</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.184-186.

<sup>25</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.171.

<sup>26</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.165-168.

in forever setting my life on the hazard of battle<sup>27</sup>.

If no honor is to be won by fighting, then the deaths of every man are equal; dying in courageous battle and dying of old age in your homeland provide the same fate. Warriors fight for the sake of honor because even if they die in battle their honor can last long past their lives. Their honor is the honor of their family, and for some their honor becomes everlasting glory (*κλέος*), being passed on from generation to generation through the words of men in epic poetry. Without the promise of honor, there is no reason for a warrior to put his life on the line in battle, so Achilles withdraws from battle.

The importance of honor comes up again when Achilles later describes the two fates his mother, Thetis, told him he has:

For my mother Thetis the goddess of the silver feet tells me  
I carry two sorts of destiny toward the day of my death. Either,  
if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,  
my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting;  
but if I return home to the beloved land of my fathers,  
the excellence of my glory is gone, but there will be a long life  
left for me, and my end in death will not come to me quickly<sup>28</sup>.

Achilles states his two possible fates: fight courageously and die with everlasting glory (*κλέος ἄφθιτον*) or flee and live a long but inglorious life. Achilles states these fates as though they were his alone, but, in truth, they apply to all the warriors in the *Iliad*: each warrior has the option to fight for honor or go home ingloriously. The fate of Achilles, in reality, is the same as that of every other warrior in battle. The only difference is that he is promised that his glory would be 'immortal' through his victory (*Νίκη*) in battle rather than the fleeting honor most warriors earn. Warriors choose to

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<sup>27</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.316-322.

<sup>28</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.410-416.

fight courageously for that promised honor rather than to live ingloriously: to be a warrior means to choose a courageous death, not a disgraceful life.

Another trait which heroes must have is the virtue of blunt honesty. In the *Iliad*, those warriors who are honest are painted in a much better image than those who are not. One such example of a hero who speaks his mind is Hektor. As is seen in Book III when he berates Paris, also known as Alexander (*Ἀλέξανδρος*) for his cowardice and shameful ways, Hector speaks his mind openly:

Evil Paris, beautiful, woman-crazy, cajoling,  
better had you never been born, or killed unwedded.  
Truly I could have wished it so; it would be far better  
than to have you with us to our shame, for others to sneer at.

...

And now you would not stand up against warlike Menelaos?  
Thus you would learn of the man whose blossoming wife you have taken<sup>29</sup>.

Hektor scolds Paris for his shameful lifestyle and lack of courage: Paris is too cowardly to even face the man he wronged. Paris started the war by taking the wife of Menelaos (*Μενέλαος*), Helen (*Ἑλένη*), but he will take no responsibility for it. Hektor's upfrontness with his words, his willingness to speak his mind, is a heroic quality which few other heroes in the *Iliad* share with Hektor. The heroes of the *Iliad* who are portrayed most positively are the heroes like Hektor, who is neither afraid to speak his mind directly nor willing to "hide[s] one thing in the depths of his heart, and speak[s] forth another"<sup>30</sup>. In Book IX, Telamonian Aias (*Αἴας*), Achilles' cousin<sup>31</sup>, is also portrayed as someone who speaks directly.

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<sup>29</sup> Lattimore 2011. III.39-42, 52-53.

<sup>30</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.313.

<sup>31</sup> His father, Telamon, is the brother of Achilles' brother, Peleus.



In his review of Seth Benardete's paper "Achilles and Hector: The Homeric Hero", Bryan Warnick points out that "Benardete shows that the Homeric heroes must align themselves with multiple ideals and that these ideals cannot easily coexist"<sup>32</sup>. This concept of Benardete becomes evident in the conflict between two qualities which are clearly important to being a hero in the *Iliad*: loyalty to your community and personal integrity. Though loyalty is an important trait of any great warrior, so too is independence: "the heroes depend on their communities for honor and prestige, yet they must also stand independent from their communities in important ways". Honor is given by your community, so without a community there is no honor. The necessity of the community for your honor, however, does not mean that the loyalty to your community is an absolute.

Hektor has this internal conflict between loyalty and individuality. He is in conflict as to whether to stay back from fighting Achilles one-on-one, which is in the best interest of his community, or to face him head on courageously, which is what he must do as a courageous hero with personal integrity, "Hektor would be shamed by a lack of courage in failing to meet Achilles, but meeting Achilles means that he violates his responsibility to his city"<sup>33</sup>. Hektor has a duty to protect Troy, a duty which he cannot fulfill if he fights Achilles; however, since he is a warrior, he must also be courageous, so he should run out to fight Achilles as he advances towards the walls of Troy. This is the eternal conflict within each warrior, to do your duty as a warrior for your community or to do your duty as a prideful, honor-seeking individual.

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<sup>32</sup> Warnick 2006. 117.

<sup>33</sup> Warnick 2006. 118.

## ii. Achilleus

These are all the ideals which Achilleus embodies as a hero in the *Iliad*: battle strength, courage, honor, honesty, loyalty, and personal integrity. “Achilles is a hero in a world of heroes; he is of the same cast as they are”<sup>34</sup>. Achilleus is no different from the other heroes of the *Iliad*, he strives for the same things and embodies the same ideals, but even still his preeminence amongst others is known. Other ‘heroes’ in the *Iliad* are famous for their virtue in one of these ideals, but Achilleus surpasses them all: “He holds within himself all the heroic virtues that are given singly to others (he has the swiftness of Oilean and the strength of Telamonian Ajax), but his excellence is still the sum of theirs”<sup>35</sup>.

Achilleus is the “best of the Achaeans”; whereas other warriors are known for their singular heroic virtue, whether it be speed, strength, or anything else, Achilleus exceeds them all. Achilles is the greatest in every virtue. Because Achilleus is superior in all the virtues of heroism he is truly is the “best of the Achaians”<sup>36</sup>. In order to see the greatness of Achilleus, “we must first be presented with the common warrior”<sup>37</sup>. They should not be degraded to the status of ‘common warriors’, but heroes such as Diomedes, Aias, and Hektor first demonstrate the virtues in which Achilleus, being the “best of the Achaians”, surpasses everyone.

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<sup>34</sup> Benardete 1963. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Benardete 1963. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.244 and I.412.

<sup>37</sup> Benardete 1963. 1.

Achilleus is certainly the strongest hero in the *Iliad*. The superiority of Achilleus is evident by the drastic changes in the battle once he goes into self imposed exile. Though several other heroes, especially Diomedes and Aias, fight off the Trojans for a while, no hero is nearly as mighty as Achilleus, and, as Patroklos (Πάτροκλος) points out in book XVI, eventually each hero falls:

...such grief has fallen upon the Achaians.  
For all those who were before the bravest in battle  
are lying up among the ships with arrow or spear wounds.  
The son of Tydeus, strong Diomedes, was hit by an arrow,  
and Odysseus has a pike wound, and Agamemnon the spear-famed,  
and Eurypylos has been wounded in the thigh with an arrow<sup>38</sup>.

The superiority of Achilleus is proven: each of the other great heroes has been injured in battle. Zeus himself speaks of the strength of Achilleus in Book XX, how even battling alone Achilleus can fight off all of the Trojans:

...if we leave Achilleus alone to fight with the Trojans  
they will not even for a little hold off swift-footed Peleion.  
For even before now they would tremble whenever they saw him,  
and now, when his heart is grieved and angered for his companion's  
death, I fear against destiny he may storm their fortress<sup>39</sup>.

Zeus knows the might of Achilleus, if left alone his reentrance into the war will drive back all of the Trojans. Zeus goes as far as to allow the gods to enter the battle to slow down Achilleus, fighting for the Achaians or the Trojans, whichever they desire. When he joins the battle Achilleus promptly defeats Aineias, followed by Lycaon, and finally, in Book XXII, godlike Hektor. Achilleus proves himself the greatest hero in the *Iliad* in Book XXII when he slays Hektor, seemingly easily. No other hero could defeat Hektor. Hector fought on par with Aias in two duels, and defeated Patroklos, but Achilleus

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<sup>38</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.22-27.

<sup>39</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.26-30.

swiftly defeated Hektor in one on one combat, proving his superiority when it comes to battle strength.

Additionally, Achilles is courageous. Achilles is the strongest of warriors and he backs up his strength with his equally strong courage. Achilles runs from no battle, going so far as to lash out at his own 'superior', his king Agamemnon, and his entire community, to fight the greatest Trojans heroes, and even the Skamandros (Σκάμανδρος), or Xanthus (Ξάνθος), river. Achilles fears no battle and he is rarely driven back. Achilles is held back only twice in the entire in the entire epic: in Book XXI when he is almost drowned by the Skamandros river and by Apollo. Only the power of the gods is a match for him. Achilles is truly the "greatest of the Achaians" when it comes to combat.

Achilles, like the other great heroes of the *Iliad*, is close to the gods. Achilles is born of a god, he is the son of the goddess Thetis. Achilles is further related to the gods: the grandfather of his father, Peleus (Πηλεύς), was Zeus himself, so Achilles is both related to the goddess Thetis as well as Zeus himself. His closeness to the gods is also seen in how much the gods support him. Hephaistos supports Achilles in Book XVIII by forging him new armor<sup>40</sup>, armor so splendid and godly that none of the other Myrmidons (Μυρμιδόνες) could even bare to look at it:

The goddess spoke so, and set down the armor on the ground  
before Achilles, and all its elaboration clashed loudly.  
Trembling took hold of all the Myrmidons. None had the courage  
to look straight at it. They were afraid of it. Only Achilles  
looked, and as he looked the anger came harder upon him  
and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids, like sunflare.

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<sup>40</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.468-616.

He was glad, holding in his hands the shining gifts of Hephaistos<sup>41</sup>.

The splendor godliness of the armor struck horror into the other Myrmidons, but for Achilleus it only brought out his godly anger, preparing him for battle. Additionally, Zeus answer his prayers and promises more to him than any other hero in the *Iliad*: Zeus grants his hate-filled prayer against the Achaians for their dishonoring of him, he grants his wish that Patroklos drive back the Trojans, and he grants him victory over Hektor in battle. Being the “best of the Achaians”, Achilleus is more beloved by Zeus, ‘the best of the Olympians’, than anyone else.

Furthermore, before the start of the *Iliad*, Achilleus is honored, but not fairly so. This is the basis of much of the anger of Achilleus. We know little of what honor he has, but the one war prize we know that he received was Briseis. Achilleus though “best of the Achaians” is nonetheless unhonored, in the form of war prizes, by the Achaians. The one war prize we know Achilleus was given, Briseis, is taken back from him by Agamemnon in a public spectacle meant to humiliate him. Agamemnon’s taking back of his honor is what triggers the godly wrath of Achilleus and makes him remove himself from the war. Agamemnon’s revoking of Achilleus’ honor, by taking Briseis, is the catalyst which causes him to develop. If Agamemnon did not dishonor him, Achilleus would have simply gone on fighting. If not for the dishonoring of Achilleus none of the events of the *Iliad* would have occurred.

Honesty, too, is important to Achilleus. In Book IX, during the embassy scene, Achilleus makes clear how he feels about those who do not speak honestly:

For as I detest the doorways of Death, I detest that man, who

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<sup>41</sup> Lattimore 2011. XIX.14-18.

hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks forth another<sup>42</sup>.

ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Ἄϊδαο πύλῃσιν  
ὅς χ' ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη.<sup>43</sup>

When Achilles says this in response to Odysseus, he is, presumably, describing how he feels about Agamemnon. Achilles, however, is also slyly describing how he feels about Odysseus, someone who is famous for his dishonesty and trickery. Achilles can see that Odysseus is hiding something from him, he is not speaking the full truth. This is further evident because until Odysseus forced himself into the conversation, Achilles refused to even acknowledge his presence, speaking only to Aias and Phoinix (*Φοῖνιξ*), using dual constructions:

Then swift-footed Achilles welcomed the two men and spoke:  
“Welcome, truly you two are friends who have come and I need you very much, even in my anger you are the dearest to me of the Achaians”<sup>44</sup>.

τὼ καὶ δεικνύμενος προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς:  
ἄχαιετον: ἦ φίλοι ἄνδρες ἰκάνετον ἦ τι μάλα χρεώ,  
οἷ μοι σκυζομένω περ Ἀχαιῶν φίλτατοὶ ἔστον<sup>45</sup>.

Achilles uses the dual construction here to show that he is speaking only to two of the three men present. He refuses to acknowledge Odysseus, showing his enmity towards Odysseus, a man who famously “hides something different in his heart, but says another”. As Gregory Nagy says in his book *The Best of the Achaeans*: “the exclusion of Odysseus in the dual greeting would serve to remind the audience of the enmity between him and Achilles”<sup>46</sup>. Unlike in the the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is not praised in the

<sup>42</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.312-313.

<sup>43</sup> Homer IX.312-313.

<sup>44</sup> My own translation - IX.196-198.

<sup>45</sup> Homer IX.196-198.

<sup>46</sup> Nagy 1979. 3.19.

*Iliad* for his trickery: he is, in fact, given a negative image throughout much of the epic because of it. Liars, like Odysseus, are not praised, but the warriors in the *Iliad* who are praised happen to be those who are upfront with their minds.

Two other important virtues to heroes are loyalty to your community and personal integrity. These virtues can often be in conflict, as is seen in Achilles. Achilles is torn between his desire for honor from his community, and his hatred for Agamemnon and those members of the community who have dishonored him by not sticking up for him.

Benardete points out persuasively, then, how the hero is in a no-win situation. A strict integrity with regard to one ideal compromises another ideal...Achilles could have properly aided his comrades-in-arms, but doing so would have shown weakness in his dispute with Agamemnon.<sup>47</sup>

Achilles is stuck between the necessity of his community and his hatred for that same community.

Achilles embodies all of these virtues of heroism at the start of the *Iliad*, until his conflict with Agamemnon he is the ideal hero in the eyes of other heroes. This is the template from which Achilles is able to develop from when Agamemnon triggers the conflict in Book I. From the beginning of his conflict with Agamemnon in Book I Achilles continues to develop until Book XXIV, when he comes face to face with Priam (*Πρίαμος*). In that final moment of the *Iliad*, on the eve of his demise, the true growth of Achilles is made clear.

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<sup>47</sup> Warnick 2006. 118.

## Chapter 2: The Inner Struggle of Achilles

Μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος  
 οὐλομένην, ἣ μυρὶ Ἀχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε,  
 πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν  
 ἡρώων...  
 ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε  
 Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.<sup>48</sup>

Anger [*mēnis*], goddess, sing it, of Achilles son of Peleus  
 disastrous [*oulomenē*] anger that made countless pains [*algea*] for the Achaeans,  
 and many steadfast lives [*psūkhai*] it drove down to Hādēs,  
 heroes' lives...

sing starting from the point where the two-I now see it-first had a falling out, engaging  
 in strife [*eris*],

I mean, [Agamemnon] the son of Atreus, lord of men, and radiant Achilles.<sup>49</sup>

The Achilles that enters the *Iliad* in Book I is a different man from the Achilles that exits the *Iliad* in Book XXIV. Achilles develops constantly from Books I to XXIV, something which differentiates him from every other character in the epic. No one in the *Iliad* develops except Achilles, every other characters enters Book I the same as how they leave in Book XXIV. Agamemnon is an arrogant, hubristic, and narcissistic king in Book I and he is an arrogant, hubristic, and narcissistic king at the end of the epic. Priam is a compassionate and wise ruler at both the beginning and the end of the *Iliad*. Achilles alone exits the epic a truly changed man, greater than simply the 'best of the Achaians'.

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<sup>48</sup> Homer I.1-4, 6-7.

<sup>49</sup> Nagy 2013. 14.



### i. The Two Children of Gods

Achilleus enter Book I of the *Iliad* as the ideal hero in the eyes of his comrades, embodying all the virtues of heroism that the Achaians expect of heroes. Achilleus, however, soon begins to change. In his essay entitled *Achilles*, Bernard Knox says that “there are in the *Iliad* two human beings who are godlike, Achilles and Helen”<sup>50</sup>. Both Achilleus and Helen are the children of gods, Achilleus the son of Thetis and Helen the daughter of Zeus, and both are tragic figures, but they enter the *Iliad* at different points in their lives:

One of them has already come to a bitter recognition of human stature and moral responsibility when the poem begins. Helen, the cause of the war, is so preeminent in her sphere, so far beyond in her beauty, her power to enchant men that she is a sort of Aphrodite. In her own element she is irresistible...When she left with Paris she acted like a god, with no thought of anything but the fulfillment of her own desire, the exercise of her own power, the demands of her own nature.<sup>51</sup>

Nine years before the *Iliad*, Helen caused the Trojan War with her selfish desires, but she has also already come to her grim realization by the time she is introduced in the epic:

But Helen has come at last to a full realization of the suffering she has caused; too late to undo it, but at least she can herself in the context of humankind and shudder at her own responsibility...She had ceased to be a mere existence, an unchanging blind self. She has become human and can feel the sorrow, the regret that no human being escapes.<sup>52</sup>

By the start of the *Iliad* Helen has come to the full realization that she is no more than a human, she is subject to all the sorrows of humanity and she is responsible for much of the current suffering of humanity.

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<sup>50</sup> Knox 1990. 129.

<sup>51</sup> Knox 1990. 129.

<sup>52</sup> Knox 1990. 130.

Achilleus, on the other hand, has not come to the level of self-awareness that Helen has. During Book I of the *Iliad*, Achilleus is introduced at the beginning of his process of self-consciousness: it takes the events of the entire epic for him to come to this self-awareness:

The *Iliad* shows us the origin, course and consequences of his wrath, his imprisonment in a godlike, lonely, heroic fury from which all the rest of the world is excluded, and also his return to human stature. The road to this final release is long and grim, strewn with the corpses of many a Greek and Trojan, and it leads finally to his own death.<sup>53</sup>

Achilleus begins this process of coming to understand himself in Book I when Agamemnon triggers his anger in the council.

## ii. The Beginning of the Conflict

Achilleus, as the “most terrifying of all men”<sup>54</sup>, is the only man strong and brave enough to call out Agamemnon for his greed, responding to him in council: “Son of Atreus, most lordly, greediest of gain of all men”<sup>55</sup>. Achilleus sparks his quarrel with Agamemnon by calling him greedy and pointing out that he, as well as the rest of the Achaians, only came to Troy for his sake and Menelaos’, the Trojans have done him no harm:

O wrapped in shamelessness, with your mind forever on profit,  
 how shall any one of the Achaians readily obey you  
 either to go on a journey or to fight men strongly in battle?  
 I for my part did not come here for the sake for the sake of the Trojan  
 spearmen to fight against them, since to me they have done nothing.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Knox 1990.130.

<sup>54</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.146.

<sup>55</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.122.

<sup>56</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.149-153.

Achilleus may have started the quarrel, but Agamemnon intensifies it by publicly humiliating and dishonoring Achilleus, taking back his war-prize Briseis, “a gift of the sons of the Achaians”<sup>57</sup>.

What really escalates the anger of Achilleus, however, is the fact that his comrades did not come to his aid. Achilleus has stood up for the rest of the Achaians, but they did not reciprocate. It is because his comrades did not stand up for him that he calls them “nonentities”<sup>58</sup>, and then separates himself from the war and the Achaians. He is angry with Agamemnon for the dishonor he has done him and he is angry with his comrades for their weakness. In his final remarks during the council in Book I, Achilleus says that he will not fight for the sake of Helen “since you take her away who gave her”. In the greek Achilleus uses the plural *ἀφέλεσθέ* for “you take her away”, making it evident that he does not just blames Agamemnon for his dishonor, he also blames rest the of the Achaians.

Achilleus sets off the process of his coming to understand himself by separating himself from his society, refusing to fight for or associate with the Achaians who have insulted his honor. Achilleus must now figure out who he is other than simply another Greek hero. Nonetheless, Achilleus has a long road in front of him before he can make his self-realization in Book XXIV: he must first leave his humanity, so that he can regain it later on. In leaving his humanity behind, Achilleus cause much suffering for both his society and himself. This begins when he calls for his mother Thetis to have Zeus aid the Trojans:

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<sup>57</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.162.

<sup>58</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.231.

Sit beside him and take his knees and remind him of these things  
 Now, if perhaps he might be willing to help the Trojans,  
 And pin the Achaians back against the ships and the water,  
 Dying, so that thus they may all profit of their own king,  
 That Atreus' son wide-ruling Agamemnon may recognize  
 His madness, that he did no honor to the best of the Achaians.<sup>59</sup>

Achilleus has fallen into a deep rage, going so far as to ask Zeus to slaughter his fellow Achaians. Achilleus, ironically, does not see that his 'madness' is far greater than that of Agamemnon; whereas Agamemnon simply overstepped his bounds in his public humiliation of Achilleus, Achilleus removed himself from his humanity when he called to Zeus for the death of his comrades. He is no longer the compassionate hero the audience expects him to be. Achilleus, here, must give into his anger. Achilleus now falls out of humanity, going into a beastlike berserker state, paralyzed by his anger, in order that he may later re-enter humanity as something greater than the ideal Achaian hero, as defined by the other Achaians. When he emerges from this berserker state in Book XXIV, Achilleus will be a new, better man.

### iii. Confused Achilleus

After Achilleus removed himself from the war in Book I we see nothing of him until Odysseus, Phoinix, and Aias come to his camp as an embassy from Agamemnon. During the embassy we see different sides to Achilleus as we first see him and as he responds differently to each of the ambassadors. These different sides show that Achilleus is still growing, he does not know what what he wants to do.

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<sup>59</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.407-412.

When Odysseus, Phoinix, and Aias come upon his encampment in Book IX, Achilles shows an unexpected new side to himself, one that is not simply paralyzed by anger:

Now they came beside the shelters and ships of the Myrmidons  
and they found Achilles delighting his heart in a lyre, clear-sounding,  
splendid and carefully wrought, with a bridge of silver upon it,  
which he won out of the spoils when he ruined Eetion's city.  
With this he was pleasuring his heart, and singing of men's fame,  
as Patroklos was sitting over against him, alone, in silence...<sup>60</sup>

We see the softer side of Achilles here. He is not just an angry warrior, he can set aside his rage to delight in the soft tones of his lyre, he can still find 'pleasure in his heart', not just rage. This scene also establishes two more important things. Achilles sings on a lyre that he won from 'Eetion's city'. Eetion (*Ἠετίων*) was the king of Cilician Thebe and the father of Andromache (*Ἀνδρομάχη*), the wife of Hektor. This is the first mention of an actual victory of Achilles in battle, against Hektor's father-in-law of all people: this passive detail establishes Achilles as a hero in deed. The other important relationship established is that of his closeness to Patroklos. Patroklos is the only person Achilles allows to be near him in his rage. Though Patroklos is silent in this scene, his closeness to Achilles is still evident.

When Achilles finishes "delighting his heart" on Eetion's lyre, the ambassadors step forward, Odysseus in front, Phoinix and Aias behind. Achilles greets his them, but only his friends:

Then swift-footed Achilles welcomed the two men and spoke:  
"Welcome, truly you two are friends who have come and I need you very much,  
even in my anger you are the dearest to me of the Achaians."<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.185-190.

<sup>61</sup> My own translation - IX.196-198.

τὼ καὶ δεικνύμενος προσέφη πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς:  
 ‘χαίρετον: ἦ φίλοι ἄνδρες ἰκάνετον ἦ τι μάλα χρεώ,  
 οἷ μοι σκυζομένω περ Ἀχαιῶν φίλτατοὶ ἔστον.<sup>62</sup>

Here Achilles uses the dual construction when greeting them to show that he is speaking only to his friends, Phoinix and Aias. Achilles initially entirely ignores the presence of Odysseus, showing that he does not consider him a friend.

Achilleus, however, is forced to confront Odysseus when Odysseus cuts in front of his fellow ambassadors to speak first. Odysseus, though, does nothing other than reignite Achilleus’ anger, speaking on behalf of Agamemnon. Achilleus responds to Odysseus with one of the best known passages of the *Iliad*:

For as I detest the doorways of Death, I detest that man, who  
 hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks forth another.  
 But I will speak to you the way it seems best to me: neither  
 do I think the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, will persuade me,  
 nor the rest of the Danaans, since there was no gratitude given  
 For fighting incessantly forever against your enemies.<sup>63</sup>

ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὁμῶς Ἀἴδαο πύλῃσιν  
 ὅς χ’ ἕτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη.  
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν ἐρέω ὥς μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἄριστα:  
 οὔτ’ ἔμεγ’ Ἀτρεΐδην Ἀγαμέμνονα πεισέμεν οἴω  
 οὔτ’ ἄλλους Δαναούς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἄρα τις χάρις ἦεν  
 μάρνασθαι δηῖοισιν ἐπ’ ἀνδράσι νωλεμὲς αἰεὶ.<sup>64</sup>

The anger of Achilleus is reignited here as he describes his hatred of liars. He also points out that it is too late for Agamemnon, “nor the rest of the Danaans”, to convince him to return to battle. Agamemnon has already insulted and humiliated Achilleus, just because he now offers him prizes in compensation it does not change the past or how

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<sup>62</sup> Homer IX.196-198.

<sup>63</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.313-317.

<sup>64</sup> Homer IX.313-317.

he now feels at all. Achilles realizes that accepting these prizes now would not change anything, Agamemnon has not changed how he thinks of Achilles. If Achilles accepts the offer from Agamemnon, then he would only be further demeaned, he would be accepting the authority of Agamemnon as his superior.

It is because Agamemnon has not changed his thinking that Achilles rages. Achilles goes on to respond to Odysseus that he will not fight and that he will be sailing away from Troy tomorrow:

But, now I am unwilling to fight against brilliant Hektor;  
tomorrow, when I have sacrificed to Zeus and to all gods,  
And loaded well my ships, and rowed out onto the sea water,  
You will see, if you have a mind to it and if it concerns you,  
My ships in the dawn at sea on the Hellespont where the fish swarm  
And my men manning them with good will to row...<sup>65</sup>

Achilles is currently minded to never return to battle, he plans to sail back to his homeland in the morning with his fellow Myrmidons, who also want to return home, rowing “with good will”. He does, however, show that he cares deeply for another of his comrades other than Patroklos. Achilles he cares for the aged Phoinix:

...Let Phoinix  
remain here with us and sleep here, so that tomorrow  
he may come with us in our ships to the beloved land of our fathers,  
if he will; but I will never use force to hold him.<sup>66</sup>

Phoinix helped raise Achilles, he is important to him and, as such, he wants him to return home with him alive. This is the first time that Achilles shows forgiveness to one of his comrades: it shows that his anger is surprisingly not without limit.

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<sup>65</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.356-361.

<sup>66</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.426-429.

The next ambassador to speak is Phoinix. Unlike Odysseus who spoke on behalf of Agamemnon, Phoinix speaks emotionally, on behalf of all the Achaians, not just Agamemnon. In his speech Phoinix appeals to Achilles as his child, since he raised him as his own: "...godlike Achilles, I made you all that you are now, / and loved you out of my heart"<sup>67</sup>, "...it was you, godlike Achilles, I made / my own child"<sup>68</sup>. Phoinix appeals to his humanity, and tells the story of Meleagros, so as to show him what comes from unceasing anger. But not even Phoinix can sway Achilles because Achilles is now no longer concerned with humanity, much less human honor, because he is honored by Zeus:

Phoinix my father, aged, illustrious, such honor is a thing  
I need not. I think I am honored already in Zeus' ordinance  
which will hold me here beside my curved ships as long as life's wind  
stays in my breast...<sup>69</sup>

Phoinix has accomplished nothing in his supplication to Achilles. As long as Achilles has the honor of Zeus, what need is there for him to fight for the honor of men? Achilles has not changed his mind to sail away in the morning. Achilles is only more determined to take Phoinix away from Agamemnon and back home:

Stop confusing my heart with lamentation and sorrow  
for the favor of great Atreides. It does not become you  
to love this man, for fear you turn hateful to me, who love you.  
It should be your pride with me to hurt whoever shall hurt me.  
Be king equally with me; take half of my honor.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.485-486.

<sup>68</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.494-495.

<sup>69</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.607-610.

<sup>70</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.612-616.



Achilleus is still bitter that his friends did not stand up to Agamemnon on his behalf, but he is willing to let that anger go for Phoinix, who is like a father to him. This important scene of not wanting to be angered by a father figure will later be paralleled in the final, most important scene of Achilleus' personal growth, when Priam comes to him in Book XXIV. Nonetheless, there is still much suffering that Achilleus must endure before he comes to self consciousness.

The final ambassador that tries to get Achilleus let go of his anger is his cousin, Telamonian Aias. Aias speaks quite differently from Odysseus and Phoinix though, he is not an elegant speaker, so he keeps his speech short and direct. Aias speaks to Achilleus as his peer. Aias, along with the other Achaians, has honored him and yet in his anger Achilleus cares not for the past honors he received from friends:

...I think that nothing will be accomplished  
by argument on this errand...  
...seeing that Achilleus  
has made savage the proud-hearted spirit within his body.  
He is hard, and does not remember that friends' affection  
wherein we honored him by the ships, far beyond all others.  
Pitiless.<sup>71</sup>

Achilleus has been honored "far beyond all others" by his peers, but, in his rage, he is only focusing on his recent dishonor. Though they have been cowards, unwilling to stand up to Agamemnon for Achilleus, his friends have still been good to him for the last nine years of the war. Nevertheless, he will not allow them to continue to honor him, which is what he claims he desires, because he has removed himself from battle and society. Achilleus is too stubborn to let go of his anger.

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<sup>71</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.625-626, 628-632.

Although he did not convince Achilles to accept the offerings from Agamemnon and rejoin the battle, Aias did sway Achilles more than Odysseus or Phoinix. Aias is most like Achilles, Achilles thinks similarly to him: “Son of Telamon, seed of Zeus, Aias, lord of people: / all that you have said seems spoken after my own mind”<sup>72</sup>. Because Aias is most similar to Achilles, it makes sense that he would have the greatest effect on him. It is because Aias speaks with a sentiment that Achilles shares that Achilles changes his mind. Though still unwilling to fight for Agamemnon, Achilles will not sail home in the morning:

Do you then go back to him, and take him this message:  
that I shall not think again of the bloody fighting  
until such time as the son of wise Priam, Hektor the brilliant,  
comes all the way to the ships of the Myrmidons, and their shelters,  
slaughtering the Argives, and shall darken with fire our vessels.  
But around my own shelter, I think, and beside my black ship  
Hektor will be held, though he be very hungry for battle.<sup>73</sup>

Achilles has not let go of his anger, but, here, he makes no mention of sailing homeward in the morning. Rather than speaking of his sail homeward, in his final response to the ambassadors Achilles makes the first mention of the conditions on which he will return to battle. Achilles will return to battle when Hektor has defeated the Argives and comes to him beside his ‘dark ship’. This change in his response proves that Achilles has not made up his mind: he is confused about whether he desires to stay or to go, and his willingness to stay until Hektor leaves him no choice but to fight shows that at least some part of him still wants to fight. Achilles is simply unable to rejoin the battle because it would mean giving into the authority of Agamemnon.

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<sup>72</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.644-645.

<sup>73</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.649-655.

Another shift in Achilles' thinking is seen during the embassy. Achilles is seen to have changed his view of Briseis. In Book I Achilles described Briseis as his "prize"<sup>74</sup>, she was nothing more than a gift of honor given to him by his companions. Though Achilles won Briseis with his spear, he now views Briseis as more than just a warprize, he goes as far as to describe Briseis as "the bride of my heart"<sup>75</sup> (*ἄλοχον θυμαρέα*). Later we learn that Patroklos likely had a part in this shift of view. In Book XIX, when she laments over Patroklos' corpse, Briseis mentions that Patroklos promised to convince Achilles to make Briseis his "wedded lawful wife"<sup>76</sup>. Achilles has changed how he sees Briseis, now that he does not have her, he has realized that she is more than a simple gift of honor to him, he loves her.

#### iv. The Curiosity of Achilles

After the embassy of Book IX Achilles is unseen in Book X, but in Book XI Achilles shows that he cannot stay completely cut off from society. Though cut off from the fighting, Achilles is still curious as to what is happening:

Now swift-footed brilliant Achilles saw him and watched him,  
for he was standing on the stern of his huge-hollowed vessel  
looking out over the sheer war work and the sorrowful onrush.<sup>77</sup>

Furthermore, it is evident that Achilles is concerned with his society again. Achilles himself cannot leave his camp to see what is happening. To leave his camp would show his weakness in wanting to be part of society, so Achilles sends Patroklos in his

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<sup>74</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.161.

<sup>75</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.336.

<sup>76</sup> Lattimore 2011. XIX.298.

<sup>77</sup> Lattimore 2011. XI.598-600.

stead<sup>78</sup>. Achilleus sends Patroklos to discover the identity of the injured man he sees being carried because he looked like Machaon<sup>79</sup>. He believes that if it is true that Machaon was wounded, then the Achaians will finally come begging to him<sup>80</sup>. Machaon was the healer for the Achaians, so they would require a new healer if he was injured. Achilleus was trained by the wise centaur Cheiron (*Χείρων*) to heal people<sup>81</sup>, so it would follow that that he is the logical replacement for Machaon. This shows that Achilleus is changing, he has not completely removed himself from his society, he still desires to know what is happening.

#### v. Patroklos as Achilleus

After the events of Book XI, Achilleus is once again not seen for several books. He returns in Book XVI for one of the pivotal moments of the epic and his development. At the opening of Book XVI Patroklos, by the advice of Nestor<sup>82</sup> (*Νέστωρ*), comes crying to Achilleus, appealing to him to allow him to put on his armor<sup>83</sup> and battle in his stead because the Trojans have gained ground on the Achaians and “there is little breathing space in the fighting”<sup>84</sup>. In his response to Patroklos, Achilleus, after speaking of the harm Agamemnon has done to him, finally speaks of letting go of his anger. Nevertheless, even now he cannot rejoin the battle:

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<sup>78</sup> This is paralleled later when Achilleus send Patroklos to battle in his stead.

<sup>79</sup> Lattimore 2011. XI.612.

<sup>80</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.608-609.

<sup>81</sup> Lattimore 2011. XI.831.

<sup>82</sup> Lattimore 2011. XI.789-799.

<sup>83</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.40.

<sup>84</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.43.

Still, we will let all this be a thing of the past; and it was not  
 in my heart to be angry forever; and yet I have said  
 I would not give over my anger until that time came  
 When the fighting with all its clamor came up to my own ships.<sup>85</sup>

Achilleus is no longer focused on his anger for Agamemnon, his attention has turned to his crying friend. Patroklos convinces Achilleus to leave behind his rage and help his comrades, but nonetheless Achilleus has only recently declared in the embassy that he would only return to battle if Hektor reached the ships of the Myrmidons. Achilleus himself, therefore, cannot go to battle. He can, however, still send Patroklos to battle in his stead, wearing his armor: “So do you draw my glorious armor about your shoulders; / lead the Myrmidons whose delight is battle into the fighting”<sup>86</sup>. Sending Patroklos to battle “allows Achilles, moved as he may actually be by the sufferings of his friends, to maintain in the eyes of all his exterior detachment and indifference”<sup>87</sup>.

Bernard Knox says that throughout Achilleus’ speech to Patroklos “confused emotions are at war within him. What does he really want?...Perhaps he does not know himself at this moment”<sup>88</sup>. Achilleus denies knowledge of his fate, he speaks of letting go of his anger for the dishonor Agamemnon has done to him, of regaining Briseis<sup>89</sup>, and how Patroklos both honors<sup>90</sup> (*τιμῆν*) and dishonors<sup>91</sup> (*ἀτιμότερον*) him by fighting the Trojans. It is not clear what Achilleus truly wants from Patroklos. Does he want him

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<sup>85</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.60-63.

<sup>86</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.64-65.

<sup>87</sup> Whitman 1958. 195.

<sup>88</sup> Knox 1990. 137.

<sup>89</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.85-86.

<sup>90</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.84.

<sup>91</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.89-90.

to push back the Trojans and win him honor, or does he want him to stay back from the Trojans lest Achilles be dishonored in some way? Achilles is confused, he is still unsure of himself here and he will stay so until he is forced to face the consequences of his actions in Book XVIII.

Nevertheless, Achilles is not aware of his confusion. He now claims that he is letting go of the past: he says that it is no longer his hatred of Agamemnon that keeps him from fighting, it is his promise to Aias during the embassy. Achilles cannot join the battle himself, so he now allows Patroklos wearing his armor to lead the Myrmidons into battle in his stead, so that he may push back the Trojans. This is a decision that causes him more suffering than he could ever know. It is his allowance of Patroklos to go to battle which causes the rest of the events of the epic and which eventually leads to Achilles coming to self-consciousness in Book XXIV. If not for Achilles allowing Patroklos to don his armor and go to battle, Patroklos never would have gone too far in fighting Hektor and he would not have died. Nevertheless, at the end of Book XVI Hektor kills Patroklos in battle: "...so / Hektor, Priam's son, with a close spear-stroke stripped the life / from the fighting son of Menoitios, who had killed so many..."<sup>92</sup>. It is the death of Patroklos at the end of Book XVI that acts as the catalyst for the process of coming to understand himself which Achilles is going through.

#### vi. Achilles falls back into his anger

Now, still in a self imposed exile, Achilles must face his greatest trial yet: the death of the person he loves most, Patroklos. Hektor kills Patroklos in Book XVI leading to the destructive anger of Achilles that will eventually lead to the demise of Troy.

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<sup>92</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVI.826-828.

Even before he is told by the son of Nestor, Antilochos (*Ἀντίλοχος*), of the death of Patroklos, Achilleus seems aware of what has happened:

...my mother once made it clear to me, when she told me  
 how while I yet lived the bravest of all the Myrmidons  
 must leave the light of the sun beneath the hands of the Trojans.  
 Surely, then, the strong son of Menoitios has perished.  
 Unhappy! and yet I told him, once he had beaten the fierce fire  
 Off, to come back to the ships, not fight in strength against Hektor.<sup>93</sup>

Achilleus can feel that the prophecy of his mother has come to fruition. Nonetheless, the full weight of what that means has not yet hit him, he is simply stating what has likely happened. Once Antilochos comes with the actualized news of the death of Patroklos, however, Achilleus has a much different reaction. Achilleus breaks down in unbearable grief:

He spoke, and the black cloud of sorrow closed on Achilleus.  
 In both hands he caught up the grimy dust, and poured it  
 over his head and face, and fouled his handsome countenance,  
 and the black ashes were scattered over his immortal tunic.  
 And he himself, mightily in his might, in the dust lay  
 at length, and took and tore at his hair with his hands, and defiled it.<sup>94</sup>

ὥς φάτο, τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα:  
 ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερσὶν ἐλὼν κόνιν αἰθαλόεσσαν  
 χεύατο κὰκ κεφαλῆς, χαρίεν δ' ἤσχυνε πρόσωπον:  
 25νεκταρέω δὲ χιτῶνι μέλαιν' ἀμφίζανε τέφρη.  
 αὐτὸς δ' ἐν κονίησι μέγας μεγαλωστί τανυσθεὶς  
 κείτο, φίλησι δὲ χερσὶ κόμην ἤσχυνε δαΐζων.<sup>95</sup>

Whereas Achilleus was filled with anger before, he has now been overcome by sorrow so great that he appears to be dead: “Homer uses the same word, *keimai*, for Patroklos

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<sup>93</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.9-14.

<sup>94</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.22-27.

<sup>95</sup> Homer XVIII.22-27.

falling dead in battle as for Achilles falling beside his body in grief"<sup>96</sup>. How Achilles deals with his despair is what has brought him fame and what eventually leads to an important, yet seemingly obvious, self realization: he is human and, therefore, he alone is responsible for the consequences of his actions.

His initial response to the death of his dear friend is to give in to his grief, Achilles wishes to die forthwith: "I must die soon, then; since I was not to stand by my companion / when he was killed"<sup>97</sup>. Achilles has failed his cherished friend. Achilles was going to share his honor with Patroklos, and, in return, Patroklos was supposed to be the one to return to Peleus in Achilles' stead, bringing news of his heroism and his honor back to his fatherland. But the plan of Achilles is not the plan of Zeus, it was not meant to be, and Achilles must now face the fact that he is not a god: he is human.

Achilles goes on to curse anger, especially his anger for Agamemnon, since it was that anger that caused the death of his companion:

...I wish that strife would vanish away from among gods and mortals,  
and gall, which makes a man grow angry for all his great mind,  
that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man's heart  
and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey.  
So it was here that the lord of men Agamemnon angered me.<sup>98</sup>

Achilles now realizes the wretchedness of his anger, but, unfortunately for him, this realization came too late. Achilles can only put aside his anger for Agamemnon because a stronger emotion has replaced it, his grief over the death of Patroklos: "...we will let all this be a thing of the past, and for all our / sorrow beat down by force the

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<sup>96</sup> Shay 1994. 51.

<sup>97</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.98-99.

<sup>98</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.107-111.



anger deeply within us”<sup>99</sup>. Achilleus must now right his wrong by avenging the death of Patroklos: “Now I shall go, to overtake that killer of a dear life, / Hektor”<sup>100</sup>.

Once again Achilleus cannot be persuaded: whereas before he could not be persuaded to fight for Agamemnon because of his anger, he now cannot be persuaded by his mother Thetis to stay out of the fighting: “Do not / hold me back from the fight, though you love me. You will not persuade me”<sup>101</sup>. Thetis, however, is able to delay Achilleus for a short time by promising to bring him unmatched arms forged by Hephaistos himself<sup>102</sup>. Achilleus will wait until morning to rejoin the battle, but in the morning he will return to battle with godly arms and a more uncontrollable than ever anger.

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<sup>99</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.112-113.

<sup>100</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.114-115.

<sup>101</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.125-126.

<sup>102</sup> Lattimore 2011. XVIII.136-137.

### Chapter 3: The Anger of Achilleus

This new phase of Achilles' anger consumes the hero in a paroxysm of self-destructiveness. His fiery rage plummets him into the depths of brutality, as he begins to view the enemy as the ultimate Other...This same pain, however, this same intense feeling of loss, will ultimately make the savage anger subside in a moment of heroic self-recognition that elevates Achilles to the highest realms of humanity, of humanism. At the end of the *Iliad*, as he begins to recognize the pain of his deadliest enemy, of the Other, he begins to achieve a true recognition of the Self.<sup>103</sup>

#### i. Merciless Fury

“Here is a man, finally, of unspeakable anger, an anger so intense that the poetry of the *Iliad* words it the same way that it words the anger of the gods, even of Zeus himself”<sup>104</sup>. The anger of Achilleus is unrelenting. At the beginning of Book XIX Achilleus received his new godly arms from his mother and his anger grew as he looked at them: “...as he looked the anger came harder upon him / and his eyes glittered terribly under his lids, like sunflare”<sup>105</sup>. His anger is growing, but its target has changed. Achilleus now redirects his anger towards Hektor, putting aside his anger for Agamemnon: “Now I am making an end of my anger. It does not become me / unrelentingly to rage on”<sup>106</sup>. This new rage is different from the last, it profoundly changes Achilleus, making him fall from his godlike stature to a beastlike one.

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<sup>103</sup> Nagy 2013. 13.

<sup>104</sup> Nagy 2013. 13.

<sup>105</sup> Lattimore 2011. XIX.16-17.

<sup>106</sup> Lattimore 2011. XIX.67-68.

The first change we see in Achilles is his view of Zeus. In his motivating speech to the Argives, Achilles blames Zeus for the turmoils of the Achaians:

Father Zeus, great are the delusions with which you visit men.  
Without you, the son of Atreus could never have stirred so  
the heart inside my will, and be in helplessness. No, but Zeus somehow  
wished that death should befall great numbers of the Achaians.<sup>107</sup>

Before the death of his dear friend, Achilles would never have questioned the gods nor blame them for his sorrows, but he has changed. Achilles no longer follows the will of the gods blindly, he knows the pain that the plan of Zeus can cause for men, especially himself.

Achilles now joins the battle, but he has not fully given into his rage, he is still merciful. In Book XX, when Achilles comes face to face with Aeneias he does not wish to harm him:

No, but I myself urge you to get back  
into the multitude, not stand to face me, before you  
take some harm. Once a thing has been done, the fool sees it.<sup>108</sup>

But Aeneias is the last man that Achilles will try to be merciful to, he will no longer allow those he comes face to face with to live. Achilles now mercilessly slaughters the Trojans, starting with the son of Otrynteus, Iphition<sup>109</sup>, whose body is then mutilated by the Achaians chariots<sup>110</sup>. With no delay at all, Achilles then kills the son of Antenor<sup>111</sup>,

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<sup>107</sup> Lattimore 2011. XIX.270-274.

<sup>108</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.196-198.

<sup>109</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.381-388.

<sup>110</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.394-395.

<sup>111</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.395-400.

as well as Hippodamas<sup>112</sup>, and a son of Priam, Polydoros<sup>113</sup>. Achilles has no mercy left in him, he will not take prisoners: he will slaughter any foe in front of him.

Finally, having killed his brother, Polydoros, Achilles forces Hektor to face him. In his rage, Achilles charges in to kill Hektor, but Apollo protects him four times<sup>114</sup>. The interference of Apollo, however, only makes Achilles more angry, he will kill whoever he “can overtake of the others”<sup>115</sup>. Achilles continues his ruthless charge, killing Dryops, Demouchos, Dardanos, and Laogonos<sup>116</sup>. Now that he has entered the battle, Achilles is unstoppable. Furthermore, Achilles proves that he will no longer be persuaded to spare the life of any Trojan:

Now Tros, Alastor's son: he had come up against Achilles' knees, to catch them and be spared and his life given to him if Achilles might take pity upon his youth and not kill him; fool, and did not see there would be no way to persuade him, since this was a man with no sweetness in his heart, and not kindly but in a strong fury; not Tros with his hands was reaching for the knees, bent on supplication, but he stabbed with his sword at the liver.<sup>117</sup>

Achilles has lost the humanity that he was once known for. Before the death of his beloved friend and his change, Achilles was known to be merciful to his defeated enemies:

Homer goes out of his way to emphasize Achilles' past practice of ransoming or selling prisoners rather than killing them. The former

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<sup>112</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.401-403.

<sup>113</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.407-418.

<sup>114</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.441-447.

<sup>115</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.454.

<sup>116</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.455-462.

<sup>117</sup> Lattimore 2011. XX.463-469.

Achilles stands out as quite the humanitarian, especially when compared to his fellow warriors.<sup>118</sup>

Achilleus was known to ransom his enemies rather than kill them, he is the only figure in the *Iliad* to be said to have ransomed a defeated foe. Furthermore, we later learn in Book XXIV, when Hektor's mother, Hekabe (*Ἑκάβη*), addresses the corpse of Hektor, that Achilleus even ransomed sons of Priam, mercifully letting them live:

...There were others  
of my sons whom at times swift-footed Achilleus captured,  
and he would sell them as slaves far across the unresting salt water  
into Samos, and Imbros, and Lemnos in the gloom of the mists.<sup>119</sup>

Achilleus had no personal ill will against the Trojans in the past, not even the sons of Priam.

Achilleus no longer cares about the lives of his enemies, he will not spare the life of any enemy: "when Achilles kills Tros...and later Lykaon as he begs to be ransomed, *Achilles explicitly acknowledges his change in character*<sup>120</sup>:

Poor fool, no longer speak to me of ransom, nor argue it.  
In the time before Patroklos came to the day of his destiny  
then it was the way of my heart's choice to be sparing  
of the Trojans, and many I took alive and disposed of them.  
Now there is not one who can escape death, if the gods send  
him against my hands in front of Ilion, not one  
of all the Trojans and beyond others the children of Priam.  
So, friend, you die also.<sup>121</sup>

Achilleus himself says that he has changed. In the past Achilleus would take prisoners and accept ransom for their return alive to their loved ones, but now he will kill any

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<sup>118</sup> Shay 1994. 30.

<sup>119</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.750-753.

<sup>120</sup> Shay 1994. 30.

<sup>121</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXI.99-106.

Trojan he faces. Whereas Achilles used to excel in his humanity and mercy before the events of the *Iliad*, he now has nothing but merciless anger. In his berserker state, Achilles killed so many Trojans that their corpses clogged the Skamandros river<sup>122</sup>.

## ii. Achilleus and Hektor

Finally, in Book XXII, Achilles has his fateful duel with Hektor. Before they duel Hektor acts honorably, entreating Achilles to act as he would toward his corpse::

Brutal as you are I will not defile you, if Zeus grants  
to me that I can wear you out, and take the life from you.  
But after I have stripped your glorious armor, Achilles,  
I will give your corpse back to the Achaians. Do you do likewise.<sup>123</sup>

Hektor wishes to treat the corpse of Achilles with respect if he is granted victory and he wants the same for his own corpse if Achilles is the victor. Hektor is acting how Achilles acted in the past, but Achilles is a changed man, he will not make any agreements with killer of his beloved Patroklos and he will make Hektor pay for the sorrows of his companions whom he killed<sup>124</sup>.

Achilleus, having gotten his vengeance in killing Hektor, now loses what little humanity he had left, not only will he not ransom the corpse of Hektor, he will defile it.

Responding to Hektor as he dies, Achilles says:

No more entreating of me, you dog, by knees or parents.  
I wish only that my spirit and fury would drive me  
to hack your meat away and eat it raw for the things that  
you have done to me. So there is no one who can hold the dogs off

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<sup>122</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXI.218-220.

<sup>123</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXII.256-259.

<sup>124</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXII.261-272.

from your head...<sup>125</sup>

There is now no trace left of the humanity Achilleus was once known for. Achilleus is now driven only by his anger: he has no more mercy, he will not ransom, and worst of all he will defile the corpse of Hektor.

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<sup>125</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXII.345-349.

#### Chapter 4: The *Kléos* of Achilles: his Return to Humanity

The human condition of mortality, with all its ordeals, defines heroic life itself. The certainty that one day you will die makes you human, distinct from animals who are unaware of their future death, and from the immortal gods. All the ordeals of the human condition culminate in the ultimate ordeal of a warrior hero's violent death in battle, detailed in all its ghastly varieties by the poetry of the *Iliad*.<sup>126</sup>

##### i. Achilles void of Humanity

Achilleus has gotten vengeance for Patroklos, he has slain Hektor. In the past Achilleus would have simply ransomed the corpse of his foe back to his family, he was even praised by Andromache in Book VI for his respect for those he killed, including her father Eetion:

It was brilliant Achilleus who slew my father, Eetion,  
when he stormed the strong-founded citadel of the Kilikians,  
Thebe of the towering gates. He killed Eetion  
but did not strip his armor, for his heart respected the dead man,  
but burned the body in all its elaborate war-gear  
and piled a grave mound over it...<sup>127</sup>

Achilleus used to do more than what was expected of him, treating the dead with the greatest of respect. Achilleus was not expected to leave Eetion with his arms after defeating him, the arms were his right as the victor. Achilleus was entitled to the arms of Eetion, they were his symbol of victory and honor, by not stripping them from his body he gave great respect to his fallen foe:

Enemy arms were legitimate spoils of war. In renouncing them, Achilles showed a generous, extra measure to this fallen enemy beyond what was required by what was required by conventional piety.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Nagy 2013. 10.

<sup>127</sup> Lattimore 2011. VI.414-419.

<sup>128</sup> Shay 1994. 29.



This was the Achilleus of the past, he gave his enemies the respect that he would wish for himself if he was slain in battle, giving their corpse honor in death through their burial rites. Compared to his fellow Achaians, Achilleus used to be a humanitarian<sup>129</sup>, respecting the lives of his enemies and the rites of his fallen foes, but since the death of Patroklos he no longer cares for the burial rites of his enemies. Achilleus has changed: “Achilles’ character has changed. Before, he was responsive to all *themis* for the dead, the cultural definition of “what’s right” toward enemy corpses<sup>130</sup>”.

“But the Achilles who gave Andromache’s father a funeral is not quite the same as the Achilles who dragged her husband by the heels before the Scaean Gates”<sup>131</sup>. Achilleus is no longer a humanitarian, he has no respect for the corpse of Hektor and he will bring great shame both upon him and on Hektor through his treatment of his corpse. In a rare moment, the author himself now condemns the actions of Achilleus, calling them shameful:

He spoke, and now thought of shameful treatment for glorious Hektor,  
in both of his feet at the back he made holes by the tendons  
in the space between ankle and heel, and drew thongs of ox-hide through  
them,  
and fastened them to the chariot so as to let the head drag,  
and mounted the chariot, and lifted the glorious armor inside it,  
then whipped the horses to a run, and they winged their way unreluctant.  
A cloud of dust rose where Hektor was dragged, his dark hair was falling  
about him, and all that head that was once so handsome was tumbled  
in the dust...<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Shay 1994. 29.

<sup>130</sup> Shay 1994. 29.

<sup>131</sup> Whitman 1958. 189.

<sup>132</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXII.395-403.

Achilleus purposely disgraces the body of his fallen foe, something that he would never have done before the death of Patroklos. Achilleus now uses a gift from the gods, his immortal horses, to degrade the body of Hektor by dragging him behind his chariot. He is denying Hektor his burial rites and performing an offence against the gods. Burial rites are a right ordained by the gods, by refusing to allow Hektor his god given burial rights he transgresses the word of the gods. Additionally, he commits another offence, allowing dogs to feed on the corpse<sup>133</sup>.

## ii. Achilleus, a changed man

Achilleus has given up his humanity, falling from godlike to beastlike, but he is not entirely lost. Achilleus has not let go of his anger: “his heart heart was still angered for his companion”<sup>134</sup>; however, he has let go of his anger for his comrades who dishonored him in council in Book I, and he now is part of his society once again. Achilleus, though still in his beastlike anger, now makes great changes. Achilleus has now returned to his society a greater man than before.

We see Achilleus fully returned to his society and his changed character through his behavior during the funeral games of Book XXIII:

This seems to be a different man. It is the great Achilles of the later aristocratic tradition, the man of princely courtesy and innate nobility visible in every aspect of his bearing and conduct, the Achilles who was raised by the centaur Chiron...As far as his fellow Achaeans are concerned, Achilles has broken out of the self-imposed prison of godlike unrelenting fury, reintegrated himself in society, returned to something like human feeling; he is part of the community again.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.21.

<sup>134</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.37.

<sup>135</sup> Knox 1990. 142-143.

The Achilles we see during the funeral games is a different man than the Achilles we see in the previous books of the *Iliad*, he is now level-headed Achilles, patient, and generous. This new Achilles is not the rash Achilles of Book I, starting conflicts in his rage, he now calmly ends conflicts peacefully and treats his comrades as he wished to be treated before the events of the *Iliad*.

In each competition of the funeral games Achilles proves himself to be a changed, better man. Achilles is no longer looking for honor, he now gives out the honor to the participants of the funeral games. From the first of the games, the chariot race, we see the generosity of Achilles, giving out prizes not just to the winner, but to all five participants:

First of all  
 he set forth the glorious prizes for speed of foot for the horsemen:  
 a woman faultless in the work of her hands to lead away  
 a tripod with ears and holding twenty-two measures  
 for the first prize; and for the second he set forth a six-year-old  
 unbroken mare who carried a mule foal within her.  
 Then for the third prize he set forth a splendid unfired  
 cauldron, which held four measures, with its natural gloss still upon it.  
 For the fourth place he set out two talents' weight of gold, and for  
 the fifth place set forth an unfired jar with two handles.<sup>136</sup>

Achilles dispenses honor to all five participants, not just the victors, since each fights bravely and competes to the best of their ability; whereas he was publicly dishonored by Agamemnon in Book I, Achilles now publicly doles out honor to all.

Not only does Achilles give out honors, he now also ends conflict. Whereas before he was quick to anger, starting fights because of the slightest indiscretion, he is

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<sup>136</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.261-270.

now diplomatic. Achilles is now adverse to conflicts among comrades, stopping them before they escalate:

So he spoke, and swift Aias, son of Oileus, was rising  
 up, angry in turn, to trade hard words with him. And now  
 the quarrel (ἔρις) between the two of them would have gone still further,  
 had not Achilles himself risen up and spoken between them:  
 “No longer now, Aias and Idomeneus, continue  
 to exchange this bitter and evil talk. It is not becoming.  
 If another acted so, you yourselves would be angry...”<sup>137</sup>

Achilleus now knows the wretchedness of anger and feuds between comrades, so he quickly ends the conflict between Oilean Aias and the lord of the Kretans, Idomeneus, before it can escalate. But this is not the only conflict Achilles ends during the funeral games, he also promptly ends the conflict about who should receive second prize for the chariot race.

Achilleus, believing him to be deserving of a prize, pities the son of Admetos even though he came in last place. He decides that even though Antilochos won second prize it should be given to Eumelos<sup>138</sup>. Antilochos, however, is quick to anger, and will not give up his prize. The Achilles of the past may have responded with anger in turn, but he now ends this conflict with a smile, giving Eumelos a different gift from his own tent. When he responds to Antilochos, Achilles smiles; this is the only time he smiles in the entirety of the text. Achilles is demonstrating that he cares deeply for Antilochos<sup>139</sup>, as he was one of his closest companions, but he is also showing that he

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<sup>137</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.488-494.

<sup>138</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.532-538.

<sup>139</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.556.

has grown: he is now no longer paralyzed by the death of Patroklos, stuck in his sorrow, Achilleus can now find some joy in life.

The now level-headed Achilleus ends one more conflict during the games. Achilleus swiftly stops the conflict over the prize for the final event of the funeral games. Agamemnon and Meriones were on the verge of conflict over the prize for the spear-throwing contest, but Achilleus resolved the issue before it could escalate, giving out honor to both of them, while also respecting the authority of Agamemnon:

Son of Atreus, for we know how much you surpass all others,  
by how much you are greatest for strength among the spear-throwers,  
therefore take this prize and keep it and go back to your hollow  
ships; but let us give the spear to the hero Meriones;  
if your own heart would have it this way, for so I invite you.<sup>140</sup>

Achilleus is now tactful, he ends the conflict by acting courteously to Agamemnon: he treats him as his superior, allowing Agamemnon to look good by giving Meriones the prize.

Additionally, Achilleus does not want unnecessary harm to come to his comrades. Whereas the other competitions had clear victors, the wrestling match between Telamonian Aias and Odysseus seemed like it could go on and on with no clear victor, so Achilleus had to step in:

...they would have sprung to their feet once more and wrestled a third fall,  
had not Achilleus himself stood up and spoken to stop them:  
“Wrestle no more now; do not wear yourselves out and get hurt.  
You have both won. Therefore take the prizes in equal division”.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.890-894.

<sup>141</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIII.733-737.

Any continued competition would only result in unwanted injury to Aias and Odysseus, so Achilles ends the wrestling match, preventing his comrades from harming one another meaninglessly. Furthermore, he prevents a conflict between Aias and Odysseus by dividing the prize equally between the two competitors.

Achilleus has now completely rejoined his society, caring for the health and honor of all his comrades, and ending conflicts before they escalate. The funeral games of Book XXIII serve to show us a new, level-headed Achilleus, but they also act to put the shameful treatment of the corpse of Hektor out of our minds:

All through the games he acts with a tact, diplomacy and generosity that seem to signal the end of his desperate isolation, his godlike self-absorption; we almost forget that Hector's corpse is still lying in the dust, tied to his chariot. But if we had forgotten we are soon reminded.<sup>142</sup>

Achilleus may have calmed down and let go of his anger for the Achaians, but he is still absorbed by sorrow for the death of his beloved Patroklos and his anger for Hektor. When the funeral games end, Achilleus remembers Patroklos and weeps, longing for his companionship:

Only Achilleus

wept still as he remembered his beloved companion, nor did sleep who subdues all come over him, but he tossed from one side to the other in longing for Patroklos, for his manhood and his great strength and all the actions he had seen to the end with him, and the hardships he had suffered: the wars of men; hard crossing of the big waters. Remembering all these things he let fall the swelling tears...<sup>143</sup>

Still mourning Patroklos, Achilleus continues to desecrate the corpse of Hektor each morning<sup>144</sup>. Achilleus is still paralyzed, stuck in his beastlike anger at Hektor: "so

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<sup>142</sup> Knox 1990. 143.

<sup>143</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.3-9.

<sup>144</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.15-18.

Achilleus in his standing fury outraged great Hektor”<sup>145</sup>. Achilleus remained paralyzed in obsessive repetition by his anger, dragging the body of Hektor daily, for twelve days until the gods intervened<sup>146</sup>. Apollo, too, talks of how Achilleus has changed:

No, you gods; your desire is to help this cursed Achilleus  
within whose breast there are no feelings of justice, nor can  
his mind be bent, but his purposes are fierce, like a lion  
who when he has given way to his own great strength and his haughty  
spirit, goes among the flocks of men, to devour them.  
So Achilleus has destroyed pity, and there is not in him  
any shame; which does much harm to men but profits them also.<sup>147</sup>

Achilleus has fallen from being godlike to being a beast, He has lost any sense of justice, and he has lost all awareness of the shame of his actions. Achilleus has reached his lowest point, and only the intervention of the gods and the unexpected arrival of Priam can return him to humanity.

### iii. Achilleus and Priam: Return to Humanity

At the request of Zeus, Thetis tells Achilleus that he must return the body of Hektor to Priam; Achilleus responds succinctly: “So be it. He can bring the ransom and take off the body, / if the Olympian himself so urgently bids it”<sup>148</sup>. Since the beginning of Book XIX when he received his new godly armor until Book XXIV Achilleus rages continuously against Hektor; however, the moment he is commanded by Zeus to end his shameless treatment of Hektor’s corpse Achilleus has a complete reversal. Achilleus is unreservedly loyal to Zeus, he does what he commands of him without any

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<sup>145</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.22.

<sup>146</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.31-76.

<sup>147</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.35-45.

<sup>148</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.139-140.

question, so he does what is commanded of him and agrees to accept ransom from Priam in exchange for the body of Hektor.

Though he has agreed to return Hektor to Priam, Achilles has not forgiven Hektor nor returned to his former self. It is not until Achilles comes face to face with Priam that he can be 'restored to full humanity':

What is needed to break the walls down, to restore him to full humanity, is the arrival in his tent not of the heralds whom he evidently expected to bring the ransom, but of Priam himself, alone, a suppliant in the night. And that unforeseen confrontation is what Zeus now moves to bring about.<sup>149</sup>

Having been brought safely to the Achaian camp by Hermes, Priam arrives in the middle of the night at the tent of Achilles in one of the most memorable and moving moments in the *Iliad*:

...Tall Priam

came in unseen by the other men and stood close beside him and caught the knees of Achilles in his arms, and kissed the hands that were dangerous and manslaughtering and had killed so many of his son. As when dense disaster closes on one who has murdered a man in his own land, and he comes to the country of others, to a man of substance, and wonder seizes on those who behold him, so Achilles wondered as he looked on Priam, a godlike man, and the rest of them wondered also, and looked at each other. "Achilleus like the gods, remember your father, one who is of years like mine, and on the door-sill of sorrowful old age..."<sup>150</sup>

"I put my lips to the hands of the man who has killed my children"<sup>151</sup>, "ἀνδρὸς παιδοφόνουιο ποτὶ στόμα χεῖρ' ὀρέγεσθαι"<sup>152</sup>. Priam must fall as low as he can, a

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<sup>149</sup> Knox 1990. 143-144.

<sup>150</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.476-487.

<sup>151</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.506.

<sup>152</sup> Homer XXIV. 506.



dignified king prostrating himself before the man most hateful to him. As Priam comes as a suppliant to the man who has slain so many of his sons, Priam and Achilles gaze upon each other in wonder in a moment of shared humanity. They look at one another, each admiring the godlike stature of the man in front of him. Both at the beginning and end of his speech to Achilles, Priam appeals to what is most important to him: his affection for his father:

To this end the Poet uses no Preamble, but breaks directly into that Circumstance which is most likely to mollify him, and the two first Words he utters are, *μηνσαι Πατρος*, see *thy Father, O Achilles, in me!* Nothing could be more happily imagin'd than this Entrance into his Speech; *Achilles* has everywhere been describ'd as bearing a great Affection to his Father, and by two Words the Poet recalls all the Tenderness that Love and Duty can suggest to an affectionate Son.<sup>153</sup>

Priam does not waste his words: he pleads directly to what is most important to Achilles, reminding him of his father, hoping that being an old man he might be pitied by Achilles for his similarities to his father.

“Achilles is looked upon by all as being fully ironhearted as Hades, and yet, when Priam appears in his hut, the immovable is moved”<sup>154</sup>. Priam is successful in his appeal to Achilles’ affection for his father: Achilles returns to his humanity by looking upon him, remembering his own aged father, Peleus, and pitying him:

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 lay huddled at the feet of Achilles and wept close for manslaughtering Hektor and Achilles wept now for his own father, now again for Patroklos<sup>155</sup>.

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<sup>153</sup> Pope 1967. 561.

<sup>154</sup> Whitman 1958. 218.

<sup>155</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.507-512.

Achilleus killed Priam's son and Priam is the father of the man who slew his beloved Patroklos, but even so they can put aside their differences to grieve together, Achilleus for his elderly father and Patroklos, and Priam for his son. These two men are enemies, they have caused great suffering for one another, but that does not mean that they cannot empathize with each other. Achilleus and Priam can lament together over the sorrows of their lives.

Achilleus further demonstrates that he has grown as a man by his response to the urgency with which Priam wants to receive the body of Hektor. Achilleus is no longer quick to be angered, he does not want to attack Priam for his rushing because he does not want to go against the orders of the gods:

You must not further make my spirit move in my sorrows,  
for fear, old sir, I might not let you alone in my shelter,  
suppliant as you are; and be guilty before the god's orders.<sup>156</sup>

τῶ νῦν μή μοι μάλλον ἐν ἄλγεσι θυμὸν ὀρίνης,  
μή σε γέρον οὐδ' αὐτὸν ἐνὶ κλισίῃσιν ἐάσω  
καὶ ἰκέτην περ ἑόντα, Διὸς δ' ἀλίτωμαι ἐφετμάς.<sup>157</sup>

Achilleus has been ordered by Zeus to return Hektor to Priam and he plans to do as he is commanded, but he does not want Priam to rush him. Though he is already minded to return the body<sup>158</sup>, Achilleus, nevertheless, has a good reason to delay giving Hektor's corpse to Priam:

And in handing over Hector's body at Priam's request, he will be obliged at the same time to give up his vengeance: for Hector's body has ultimately become the focus of all Achilles' grief and frustration upon his

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<sup>156</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.568-570.

<sup>157</sup> Homer XXIV.568-570.

<sup>158</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.560-561.

loss of Patroclus. Indeed, Achilles must forgo not only the body but also his grief.<sup>159</sup>

Having already slain Hektor, the only way left for Achilles to continue to grieve Patroklos is to dishonor the corpse of his foe. When giving the body to Priam, Achilles must also let go of his grief. This sudden passionate outburst in response to Priam is Achilles' final moment of anger in the *Iliad*:

...this is the last Sally of the Resentment of *Achilles*; and the Poet judiciously describes him moderating it by his own Reflection: So that his Reason now prevails over his Anger, and the Design of the Poem is fully executed.<sup>160</sup>

Achilleus is breaking from his hateful paralysis: letting go of his continued vengeance, and showing his new control over his anger.

Achilleus, however, has another reason for his sudden passionate outburst: sympathy for his aged suppliant.

Then Achilleus

called out to his serving-maids to wash the body and anoint it all over; but take it first aside, since otherwise Priam might see his son and in the heart's sorrow not hold in his anger at the sight, and the deep heart in Achilleus be shaken to anger; that he might not kill Priam and be guilty before the god's order.<sup>161</sup>

Achilleus does not want Priam to see the corpse of Hektor in its current condition, he does not want to hurt the old man, angering him, and he does not want to have to retaliate with anger in turn.

Achilleus is a changed man, he can now sympathize with his enemy and understand his own mortality:

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<sup>159</sup> Minchin 1986. 14.

<sup>160</sup> Pope 1967. 567.

<sup>161</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXIV.581-586.

This is a new Achilles, who can feel pity for others, see deep into their hearts and into his own. For the first time he shows self-knowledge and acts to prevent the calamity his violent temper might bring about. It is as near to self-criticism as he ever gets, but it marks the point at which he ceases to be godlike Achilles and becomes a human being in the full sense of the word.<sup>162</sup>

This scene demonstrates the culmination of twenty four books of the development of the character of Achilleus. In returning the corpse of Hektor to Priam, Achilleus redeems himself for his misdoing:

He has come at last to the level of humanity, and humanity at its best; he has forgotten himself and his wrongs in his sympathy for another man. It is late, only just in time, for when the fighting resumes, he will fall in his turn as his mother told him and as Hector prophesied with his dying breath...The poem ends, as it began, on the eve of battle.<sup>163</sup>

In the last moments of the *Iliad* Achilleus finally reaches the end of his development. It is only on the eve of his final battle that Achilleus comes to recognize his humanity and the responsibilities which that entails. His development is twofold: he accepts that he is only human and gains control of his anger.

Through the tragic events of the *Iliad*, Achilleus comes to accept his human status and what it means to be human. Achilleus has now finally come to the same “bitter recognition of human stature and moral responsibility”<sup>164</sup> that Helen came to before the events of the *Iliad*<sup>165</sup>, and with this recognition his development is complete: “He must come to terms with his grief, as should any mortal, and, in doing so, accept the fact that although he is the son of an immortal he is nevertheless a member of the

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<sup>162</sup> Knox 1990. 146.

<sup>163</sup> Knox 1990. 147.

<sup>164</sup> Knox 1990. 129.

<sup>165</sup> Knox 1990. 130.

human race”<sup>166</sup>. Though the child of an immortal, Achilles is mortal, and he carries all the responsibility for his actions that mortals have. Achilles behaved like a god when he refused to let go of his anger for Agamemnon, but unlike a god his actions have repercussions that he is responsible for: he now realizes that it was his refusal to cease from his anger at Agamemnon<sup>167</sup> that led to the death of his beloved companion. Achilles has finally accepted his responsibility as a human.

Additionally, Achilles has now come into control of his anger: his ‘Reason now prevails over his Anger’. Achilles has not let go of his anger, as Agamemnon said in Book I, Achilles is angry at his core: “forever quarreling is dear to your heart, and wars and battles”<sup>168</sup>. Achilles still angry, but now his anger does not paralyze him: anger no longer controls Achilles, he controls it. Achilles’ self-restraint is now stronger than his anger.

Achilles has now come to maturity: he has grown over the course of events in the *Iliad* to become a newer, better, level-headed Achilles. He is now aware and accepting of humanity, and his ‘Reason now prevails over his Anger’. Now that he has reached maturity, Achilles is now ready to face his fate, dying in battle as a mortal man in order to gain *kléos*: Achilles will choose the glory of epic song, which is a thing of art, over his own life, which is a thing of nature. The thing of art is destined to last forever, while his own life, as a thing of nature, is destined for death.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Minchin 1986. 14.

<sup>167</sup> His refusal in Book IX.

<sup>168</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.177.

<sup>169</sup> Nagy 2013. 31.

The final lines of the *Iliad* recount the funeral of Hektor, but the moment that the funeral ends, the fighting will resume, anticipating the death of Achilleus. “The poem ends, as it began, on the eve of battle”<sup>170</sup>, a battle from which Achilleus will never return.

So we end up where we started, with the hero Achilles. He chooses *kleos* over life itself, and he owes his heroic identity to this *kleos*. He achieves the major goal of the hero: to have his identity put permanently *on record* through *kleos*. For us, a common way to express this goal is to say: ‘You’ll go down in history.’ For the earliest periods of ancient Greece, the equivalent of this kind of ‘history’ is *kleos*.<sup>171</sup>

So let us take one last look at the *kleos* of Achilleus: the *Iliad*.

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<sup>170</sup> Knox 1990. 147.

<sup>171</sup> Nagy 2013. 47.

The Kleos of Achilles: the *Iliad*

In the *Iliad*...the question even arises as to what is the greater glory, and to whom can it come. It is naive to think that Homer celebrates all his heroes equally simply because his epithets do. The keen principle of dramatic selection is constantly at work in his exploration of the meaning of heroism...many are called to the heroic trial, but...only one is chosen.<sup>172</sup>

Throughout the *Iliad* many heroes are 'called to the heroic trial'. Diomedes<sup>173</sup>, Hektor<sup>174</sup>, Agamemnon<sup>175</sup>, and Patroklos<sup>176</sup> are each given opportunities to win greater glory in their respective *aristeia*. Each of these men was called upon, but each failed in the end. In the end 'only one [hero] is chosen': Achilles. Though all of the heroes of the *Iliad* win honor, the only hero whom the poet, Homer, deems worthy of the highest *kleos* is Achilles.

Achilles is the only hero of the *Iliad* who is deserving of 'greater glory'. In Book IX, Achilles, speaking of his dual fates, describes the *kleos* he believes he can win by staying and fighting:

...εἰ μὲν κ' αὖθι μένων Τρώων πόλιν ἀμφιμάχωμαι,  
ὤλετο μὲν μοι νόστος, ἀτὰρ κλέος ἄφθιτον ἔσται...<sup>177</sup>

...if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans,

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<sup>172</sup> Whitman 1958. 164.

<sup>173</sup> Book V.

<sup>174</sup> Book VIII.

<sup>175</sup> Book XI.

<sup>176</sup> Book XVI.

<sup>177</sup> Homer IX.412-413.

my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting...<sup>178</sup>

Achilleus believes that he will win *kleos* through his fighting, but he is mistaken about the nature of *kleos*.

*Kleos* originally meant “that which is heard”<sup>179</sup>, but it became much more than that. *Kleos* became the power of the poet: “He passes on the kléos, let us call it the ‘glory,’ of heroes...In a word, the Hellenic poet is the master of kléos”<sup>180</sup>. The *kleos* of Achilleus does not come from battle, but from his development as a human being. Achilleus is, of course, remembered as the strongest hero in the *Iliad*, but what has been immortalized is not simply his strength, it is his humanity.

If *kleos* came simply from victory in battle, then the *Iliad* need not have been composed, since Achilleus had already proven himself in battle before the events of the *Iliad*. “Achilles is a hero in a world of heroes”<sup>181</sup>, but his victories in battle, though splendid, do not grant him his distinct glory. The *kleos* of Achilleus comes not from his strength, but from his growth as a member of humanity. Achilleus rises above the other heroes of the *Iliad* winning ‘greater glory’ because he is the only hero to exit the epic a truly changed man. Achilleus is the only figure in the entirety of the *Iliad* to have grown between its start and its end. Achilleus’ personal growth is what differentiates him from the other heroes of the epic, it is the reason Homer grants him glory.

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<sup>178</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.412-413.

<sup>179</sup> Nagy 1979. 16.

<sup>180</sup> Nagy 1979. 16.

<sup>181</sup> Benardete 1963. 1.



“...the Wrath of the hero is a search for himself which is complete only when the poem is complete”<sup>182</sup>. The anger for which Achilles is so famous is what caused his suffering and triggered his special kind of growth. From the moment his godly wrath is set off by Agamemnon in Book I, Achilles is constantly developing. It is not until the time that he comes to control his anger in Book XXIV that his “search for himself” can end. As Cedric Whitman says in his book *Homer and the Homeric Tradition*: “The highest heroes are not men of delusion. They are men of clarity and purity...”<sup>183</sup>. In the final moments of the *Iliad*, coming face to face with Priam, Achilles reaches a point of “clarity and purity”. Talking to Priam Achilles reaches that point of purity, sympathizing with the old king over their shared humanity and suffering. In that very moment of purity, Achilles finally comes to understand himself clearly, his mortality, his responsibility for his actions, and his anger. Achilles comes to the end of his growth only briefly before his own death, since the epic ends on the eve of a battle from which Achilles will not return.

The character of someone cannot be judged until his life is over. This is a concept similar to Solon’s concept of happiness: “...until he is dead, you had better refrain from calling him happy”<sup>184</sup>. Aristotle elaborates on Solon’s concept of happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “It needs a complete life because life includes many reversals of fortune, good and bad, and the most prosperous person may fall into a terrible disaster in old age, as the Trojan stories tell us about Priam”<sup>185</sup>. Judgment of

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<sup>182</sup> Whitman 1958. 197.

<sup>183</sup> Whitman 1958. 199.

<sup>184</sup> Herodotus 2008. I.32.

<sup>185</sup> Aristotle 2000. 1100a.6-8.

happiness must be saved until no reversals of fortune can happen. Thus Priam, having lived a long and prosperous life, is judged unhappy because at the end of his life his fortune, his prosperity and his children, were taken away from him.

In the same way that fortune is constantly changing, character does not stop changing until one's death. The *kleos* of Achilleus comes from this very fact that the character of Achilleus in Book XXIV is drastically different from the Achilleus in Book I. We do not remember Achilleus as the man driven to anger over materialized honor at the outset of the epic, but rather the man who shares a moment of deepest humanity with the aged Priam only days before the death of each.

Thus the plan of the poet comes to fruition. Achilleus comes to gain *kleos* through his development, a development unique to him in the epic. The *Iliad* itself, the retelling of how Achilleus came to earn his *kleos*, is the *kleos* of Achilleus.

## Appendix

### The Language of Achilles

*The Language of Achilles* by Adam Parry was the first essay to introduce the idea of the uniqueness of Achilles as a speaker. Parry describes the language of the Iliad, “The formulaic character of Homer’s language means that everything in the world is regularly presented as all men (all men within the poem, that is) commonly perceive it. The style of Homer emphasizes constantly the accepted attitude toward each thing in the world, and this makes for a great unity of experience”<sup>186</sup>. The Iliadic world is unified in its language, men use the same language to say the same things, “Men say the same things about the same things, and so the world, from its most concrete to its most metaphysical parts, is one”<sup>187</sup>. According to Parry, Achilles is unique because only he does not accept the common *Iliadic* language; he does so because he does not agree with the ‘accepted world’ of the Iliad, “Achilles is thus the one Homeric hero who does not accept the common language, and feels that it does not correspond to reality”<sup>188</sup>.

Parry goes on to explain that Homer “has no language, no terms, in which to express this kind of basic disillusionment with society and the external world”<sup>189</sup>. According to Parry, Homer does not ‘create’ a language of his own, he uses the common “poetic diction” that has already existed in the Greek world, therefore the narrator and the characters of the Iliad can only speak with the accepted language

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<sup>186</sup> Parry 1956. 3.

<sup>187</sup> Parry 1956. 4.

<sup>188</sup> Parry 1956. 6.

<sup>189</sup> Parry 1956. 6.

“which reflects the assumptions of heroic society”<sup>190</sup>. Because the figures in the Iliad only have the common language to express themselves with, “Achilles has no language with which to express his disillusionment”<sup>191</sup>. Nonetheless, Parry says that Achilleus is able to express his disillusionment by ‘misusing’ the language that is available to him, speaking passionately and confused<sup>192</sup>, and by asking “questions that cannot be answered and mak[ing] demands that cannot be met”<sup>193</sup>. Thus Parry claims that Achilleus is unique in his language, but only in so far as he ‘misuses’ the common language.

I both agree and disagree with Parry’s declarations. I agree that Achilleus is unique in his language and that he does not agree with the ‘accepted world’ of the Iliad, but I do not agree that he does so by ‘misusing’ the language available to him. I believe that Achilleus is not confused, rather than ‘misusing’ the language available to him, Achilleus elevates the language, speaking more poetically, such as in the tent scene of Book IX when he uses metaphors to describe his anger for Agamemnon, using phrases that only the narrator and the gods use, and by turning his back to the ‘accepted world’ of the Iliad. In his paper *Aidos in the Language of Achilles*, David B. Claus agrees that Achilles is not speaking in a confused manner, “...the relationship of Achilles’ speech to the presence of such meaning in the heroic code the sequence of its ideas and images is not “passionate” and “confused,” as Parry calls it<sup>194</sup>, but

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<sup>190</sup> Parry 1956. 6.

<sup>191</sup> Parry 1956. 6.

<sup>192</sup> Parry 1956. 5.

<sup>193</sup> Parry 1956.6.

<sup>194</sup> Parry 1956. 5.

purposeful and lucid. Virtually all that he says in the speech conforms to the intangible standards which he feels the code demands of himself and of others, and places him therefore within heroic society - as he believes it ought to be in any case - not against it"<sup>195</sup>. Achilleus there, according to Claus, is not confused when he speaks, nor is he against the 'common' heroic society of the Iliad, rather he speaks clearly and with great purpose, and he speaks and acts according to what he believes the 'code' (presumably the heroic code) demands on him.

The next scholar to write about the language of Achilleus is James C. Hogan in his paper *Double πρίν and the Language of Achilles*. In his paper, Hogan describes the double usage of πρίν, explaining that "since the double usage does not affect the syntax, it is evidently a purely stylistic device"<sup>196</sup>. The only figures other than Achilleus to use the double usage of πρίν are Zeus and Hektor<sup>197</sup>, additionally Zeus uses the double usage mainly in reference to Achilleus, making predictions, and Hektor only uses it when, having slain Patroklos, he speaks for Achilleus<sup>198</sup>.

The next paper on the subject of the speech of Achilleus is *Speech as a Personality Symbol: The Case of Achilles*, by Paul Friedrich and James Redfield. Friedrich and Redfield begin their paper,

We contend that Achilles in the Iliad is characterized by individual speech patterns. Students, even on quite an elementary level, often note that his speech stands out, as have specialists in the language for over two millennia. Yet we do not find agree as to the differentia - intuitive responses include: 'He's more forceful', 'harder to scan', 'uses odd

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<sup>195</sup> Claus 1975. 24.

<sup>196</sup> Hogan 1976. 305.

<sup>197</sup> Hogan 1976. 306.

<sup>198</sup> Hogan 1976. 308.

words', and 'just feels different'. Why has this ancient and intriguing question remained unsolved?<sup>199</sup>

Friedrich and Redfield go on to describe Parry's paper and Claus' criticism of the paper, denying that the "heroes in general experience their world as congruous or non-problematic"<sup>200</sup>. Claus states that Achilles "becomes alienated from his community in an attempt to remain true to the code the community has taught him"<sup>201</sup>.

The first important point Friedrich and Redfield make is that the Iliad is complete, "Since we were studying a literary work, we were able to draw a sample which was essentially TOTAL. The language of Achilles, for our purposes, is represented by what Achilles says in the Iliad...The poet of the Iliad gave Achilles just those speeches, and the manner of speaking, appropriate to the unfolding dramatic needs of that work; the result is not a sample but a complete character, as created"<sup>202</sup>.

Friedrich and Redfield go on to list the lines of Achilles in the Iliad,

1. Achilles' quarrel with Agamemnon: I.53-305
2. his prayer to Thetis: I.348-430
3. his reception of the embassy: IX.182-668
4. his sending Patroclus to battle: XVI.1-100, 124-256
5. his reception of the news of Patroclus' death: XVIII.1-137
6. his reconciliation with Agamemnon: XIX.40-276
7. his unfolding struggle with the river: XXI.1-297
8. his confrontation with Hector: XII.248-404
9. his conduct of the funeral of Patroclus: XXIII.1-257
10. his ransoming of Hector's body: XXIV.468-676.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 265.

<sup>200</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 267.

<sup>201</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 267.

<sup>202</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 268.

<sup>203</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 269.

Achilleus “dominates the poem”<sup>204</sup> through only 897 lines. Friedrich and Redfield point out that though “The natives, the characters in the Iliad, tell us that Achilles is a somewhat ineffective speaker”<sup>205</sup>. “This judgement on Achilles, made within the poem, is in contrast (we would submit) to the experience of nearly every reader of the poem: Achilles is the most effective speaker, and most of the memorable speeches are his”<sup>206</sup>. Achilleus is an effective and unique speaker in several ways. One such unique quality of Achilleus’ speech is his richness of detail, such as when he describes the scepter<sup>207</sup>: “he sketches an unforgettable vignette of its origins and functions”<sup>208</sup>. Another unique aspect of “Achilles’ speech is his ability vividly to depict hypothetical images - things he has not experienced in an empirical sense, but which he predicts and foresees”<sup>209</sup>, such as when he describes how he will sail home on tomorrow<sup>210</sup>, and when he describes what will happen to the corpse of Lycaon<sup>211</sup>. Friedrich and Redfield do state that other figures in the Iliad do speak with richness of detail and with hypothetical images, but no other speaker does so so often nor as well.

Friedrich and Redfield then go on to speak about a specific rhetorical device of Achilleus. “An important (although little studied) rule of Homeric syntax requires each clause in continuous discourse to be united to its predecessor by at least one

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<sup>204</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 269.

<sup>205</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 270.

<sup>206</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 271.

<sup>207</sup> Lattimore 2011. I.234-239.

<sup>208</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 272.

<sup>209</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 273.

<sup>210</sup> Lattimore 2011. IX.356-363.

<sup>211</sup> Lattimore 2011. XXI.122-127.

connector or 'link'...Against this strong rule for linkage between one clause and the next, only about three percent of clauses are unlinked; these are said to be 'in asyndeton', and are, of course, highly marked...Asyndeton is significantly more frequent in the speeches of Achilles: 42 vs. 29 instances"<sup>212</sup>. Though he is not the only speaker to speak 'in asyndeton', Achilleus does so far more often than any other speaker in the Iliad. Furthermore, "There are actually fewer imperatives (including hortatory subjunctives, aoristic prohibition subjunctives, and infinitives for imperatives) in Achilles' speeches than in the counter-sample; but Achilles' imperatives are in asyndeton 12 times, as against 5 times in the counter-sample"<sup>213</sup>.

There are several other linguistic constructions Achilleus uses more often than other figures in the Iliad. Achilleus speaks very emotionally, using far more subjunctives than other characters, "133 vs. 80 instances (not counting subjunctives used for imperatives)"<sup>214</sup>, "he tends to pile vocative on vocative"<sup>215</sup>, he has a tendency of using epithets and titles when addressing others<sup>216</sup>, he freely uses 'terms of abuse'<sup>217</sup>, and he commonly uses emotive particles and the enclitic *moi*<sup>218</sup>.

The next scholar to write about the language of Achilleus is Stephen Scully in his paper *The Language of Achilles: The ΟΧΘΗΣΑΣ Formulas*. In his paper Scully discusses the *οχθήσας* formula used by figures in the Iliad when making important

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<sup>212</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 279.

<sup>213</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 279.

<sup>214</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 280.

<sup>215</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 280.

<sup>216</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 280.

<sup>217</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 281.

<sup>218</sup> Friedrich and Redfield 1978. 282.



decisions, a formula which “introduces four significant speeches of Achilles”<sup>219</sup> from Books 16-20. Before Books 16-20, the οχθήσας formulas “exclusively introduced the decisions of the gods (three of Zeus, two of Poseidon)”<sup>220</sup>. “The speeches of Achilles introduced by οχθήσας occur in circumstances that closely echo those described above for Zeus and Poseidon”<sup>221</sup>; this is one such example of how Achilleus is unique in his speech in the Iliad, using a formulaic introduction for his speeches that is usually reserved for the gods. Furthermore, the οχθήσας formulaic introduction which Achilles and Zeus use suggests that they “understand the magnitude of their decisions”<sup>222</sup>, “In the radiance of this awareness, Achilles, mortal as he is, takes a step towards the omniscience of Zeus”<sup>223</sup>. “Achilles alone can understand and live on terms familiar to Zeus and the other gods. Both his soliloquies and οχθήσας addresses to others manifest that wider perspective and personal detachment associated with Olympian vision...he is lifted up out of the common language and suspended between man and god...Such a suspension between man and god is not unexpected since from the first word of the poem the hero, through his wrath, has been associated with the divine”<sup>224</sup>. The first line of the poem begins with the word ‘μῆνιν’, a term most often associated with the anger of the gods, but here is used for the anger of Achilleus. Here, once again, Achilleus is associated with the gods. Thus Achilleus is unique in that his manner of speaking and his anger are closely associated with the gods.

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<sup>219</sup> Scully 1984. 21.

<sup>220</sup> Scully 1984. 21

<sup>221</sup> Scully 1984. 21.

<sup>222</sup> Scully 1984. 21.

<sup>223</sup> Scully 1984. 22.

<sup>224</sup> Scully 1984. 24.

The next scholar to discuss the language of Achilles is Richard P. Martin in his book *The Language of Heroes; Speech and Performance in the Iliad*. Martin begins his chapter on the language of Achilles by going through the scholarship done by Parry, and Redfield and Friedrich. Martin agrees with much of the scholarship of previous papers, speaking of how Achilles freely uses terms of abuse<sup>225</sup> and he speaks abstractly<sup>226</sup>. Martin, like Parry, believes in a traditional system of speech within the Iliad, stating that, for the most part, “almost all of Achilles’ great speech is traditional, in terms of dogmatic or syntagmatic. That is, the speech is traditional, in terms of the Iliad itself”<sup>227</sup>. Though he uses traditional speech, Achilles uses the traditional methods of speech irregularly, such as when he “uses the conventions normal for speaking about one’s relations with outsiders when he talks about his own commander. We can see this as a creative reshaping at two levels: familiar speech-genre is redeployed for new effect; and thus, Achilles appears as a skillful manipulator of the conventional, a rhetorician”<sup>228</sup>.

Furthermore, Martin claims that Achilles is unique in the mimicry that is found in his speech. According to Martin, there are three levels to the mimicry of Achilles’ speech, “Achilles in his speech picks up the language of those who have addressed him”<sup>229</sup>, “Achilles implicitly adopts the tone of Zeus himself; at least, the poet composes with the idea that the hero and the god speak alike”<sup>230</sup>, and “Achilles also

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<sup>225</sup> Martin 1989. 177.

<sup>226</sup> Martin 1989. 183.

<sup>227</sup> Martin 1989. 166.

<sup>228</sup> Martin 1989. 173.

<sup>229</sup> Martin 1989. 175.

<sup>230</sup> Martin 1989. 191.

mimics the poet's own voice in his use of smaller phrase units and single words"<sup>231</sup>. Thus Achilles is unique in that he mimics the speech of those he is talking with, and he speaks in a similar manner to the poet (the narrator) and Zeus.

One last paper on the subject of Achilles' speech is *Negative Πρίν Clauses and the Rhetoric of Achilles*, by John R. Wilson. Like Hogan, Wilson focuses on πρίν clauses in the Iliad. Rather than discussing the double usage of πρίν, Wilson discusses the negative πρίν clauses. According to Wilson there is a total of 18 negative πρίν clauses "that set up the conditions of action or inaction for a hero or a god. These are all directly or indirectly connected with Achilles. In three instances, however, πρίν clauses appear even after an absolute negation (9.379ff., 22.262ff., 24.550f.). These 'illogical' πρίν clauses are all spoken by Achilles and suit the special character of his rhetoric"<sup>232</sup>. Achilles is, throughout the Iliad, forceful with his language, and thus it is understandable that he, uniquely, uses an 'absolute negation'.

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<sup>231</sup> Martin 1989. 193.

<sup>232</sup> Hogan 1991. 175.

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