

who was mean spirited and politically foolish. He tried to avoid paying his debt to the gods and refused hospitality to Jason and Hercules. Troy, for all its power and elegance, has smudges on its reputation. Excellence, and therefore victory, is clearly on the side of the Greeks.

However, the Trojans must display sufficient excellence to provide glory to their conquerors. And so they do. Indeed, they are good enough to inspire later civilizations to make them into their ancestral heroes. This is a wonderful irony of the Troy stories--the winners become transmuted into losers, and the losers into winners, in the great culture wars of later civilizations.

The *Iliad* can be difficult for modern readers, because it tells of an archaic, heroic, violent world whose values are strange to us and whose heroes behave badly by our standards. The *Iliad* is a violent poem about brutality, none more brutal than Achilles. Their excellence is in their pursuit of fame and honor, in their intelligence, leadership and friendships, and in their killing skills. Their anger is passionate, brutal, at times whipped into mad frenzy by the gods. Homer describes battles in carefully anatomical, formulaic detail; the spear goes in the liver and out the nostrils, the body drops to the dust, the corpses pile up, men die over one priceless, worthless, woman, Helen, who ran off with the worthless Trojan Prince Paris.

The *Iliad* is about escalating anger and its final bitter resolution. It starts with the pointless, impious anger of Agamemnon at the priest Chryseis, who tries to ransom his daughter with appropriate treasure. Next is the righteous anger of Chryseis at Agamemnon for refusing to accept the ransom and return his daughter. Chryseis invokes Apollo, who starts the plague, which kills the Greeks. Then there is the mutual anger of Agamemnon and Achilles as

Sparta had a special type of slaves called helots. Helots were Messenians enslaved during the Messenian Wars by the state and assigned to families where they were forced to stay. Helots raised food and did household chores so that women could concentrate on raising strong children while men could devote their time to training as hoplites. Their masters treated them harshly (every Spartiate male had to kill a helot as a right of passage), and helots often resorted to slave rebellions.

At least in the Archaic Period, the fragmentary nature of ancient Greece, with many competing city-states, increased the frequency of conflict, but conversely limited the scale of warfare. Unable to maintain professional armies, the city-states relied on their own citizens to fight. This inevitably reduced the potential duration of campaigns, as citizens would need to return to their own professions (especially in the case of, for example, farmers). Campaigns would therefore often be restricted to summer. When battles occurred, they were usually set piece and intended to be decisive. Casualties were slight compared to later battles, rarely amounting to more than 5% of the losing side, but the slain often included the most prominent citizens and generals who led from the front.

The scale and scope of warfare in ancient Greece changed dramatically as a result of the Greco-Persian Wars. To fight the enormous armies of the Achaemenid Empire was effectively beyond the capabilities of a single city-state. The eventual triumph of the Greeks was achieved by alliances of city-states (the exact composition changing over time), allowing the pooling of resources and division of labor. Although alliances between city states occurred before this time, nothing on this scale had been seen before. The rise of Athens and Sparta as pre-eminent powers during this conflict led directly to the Peloponnesian War, which saw further development of the nature of warfare, strategy and tactics. Fought between leagues of cities dominated by Athens and Sparta, the increased manpower and financial

resources increased the scale, and allowed the diversification of warfare. Set-piece battles during the Peloponnesian war proved indecisive and instead there was increased reliance on attritionary strategies, naval battle and blockades and sieges. These changes greatly increased the number of casualties and the disruption of Greek society.

Ancient Greek philosophy focused on the role of reason and inquiry. In many ways, it had an important influence on modern philosophy, as well as modern science. Clear unbroken lines of influence lead from ancient Greek and Hellenistic philosophers, to medieval Muslim philosophers and Islamic scientists, to the European Renaissance and Enlightenment, to the secular sciences of the modern day.

Neither reason nor inquiry began with the Greeks. Defining the difference between the Greek quest for knowledge and the quests of the elder civilizations, such as the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians, has long been a topic of study by theorists of civilization.

Ancient Greek society placed considerable emphasis upon literature. Many authors consider the western literary tradition to have begun with the epic poems *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, which remain giants in the literary canon for their skillful and vivid depictions of war and peace, honor and disgrace, love and hatred. Notable among later Greek poets was Sappho, who defined, in many ways, lyric poetry as a genre.

A playwright named Aeschylus changed Western literature forever when he introduced the ideas of dialogue and interacting characters to playwriting. In doing so, he essentially invented "drama": his *Oresteia* trilogy of plays is seen as his crowning achievement. Other refiners of playwriting were Sophocles and Euripides. Sophocles is credited with skillfully developing irony as a literary technique; most famously in his play *Oedipus the King*. Euripides, conversely, used plays to challenge societal norms and mores—

The hero is also a literary figure, of course, but here, too, we need caution so that we do not misapply our own cultural ideas and standards to the ancient Greek hero. A key part to the narrative of the hero's life is that s/he undergoes some sort of ordeal. The hero, who is mortal, not immortal like the gods, must suffer during his or her lifetime, and, significantly, must die. Only after death can the hero receive immortalization in cult and in song.

The hero must struggle against the fear of death, in order to achieve the most perfect death. Such a perfect moment must be recorded in song, kleos. Kleos means 'glory, fame, that which is heard'; OR, 'the poem or song that conveys glory, fame, that which is heard'). To say it another way: this word kleos was used to refer to both the medium and the message of the glory of heroes.

Within the *Iliad* itself, Achilles is acutely aware of the possibility of receiving kleos. In *Iliad* 9, Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoinix come to Achilles to try to convince him to return to fighting. They find him singing kleos andron 'the glories of men' (*Iliad* 9.189). Achilles is acting as poet, singing songs about his own deeds. After they relate to him all the riches and prizes that Agamemnon is offering if he will return to battle, Achilles replies by saying what is at stake for him and what his choice means. He says at *Iliad* (9. 410-416):

My mother Thetis tells me that there are two ways in which I may meet my end [telos]. If I stay here and fight, I shall lose my safe homecoming [nostos] but I will have a glory [kleos] that is unwilting [aphthiton]: whereas if I go home my glory [kleos] will die, but it will be a long time before the outcome [telos] of death shall take me.

Achilles already knows the consequences of his decision to reject the option of a safe homecoming. He is in the process of deciding to choose the other option: he will stay at Troy and continue to fight in the Trojan War. This choice will result in his death, and he knows it,

of a human side, in that he is afraid of dying in war, he loves his wife and family, and does not at first want to accept his fate, Achilles is in fact the more human one. He uses both his human emotions and the warrior code that he learned since childhood appropriately and in proportion, so that there is the least friction between the two and so that the resulting actions are indeed admirable and praiseworthy. He is able to construct a perfect formula containing both the heroic code and the human mind that presents the most ideal result. Achilles seems to have successfully navigated his way through the heroic progression in this manner. Thus both Hector and Achilles behave as heroes throughout the Iliad. While they both try to win glory in war for their families, their country, and themselves, they both have certain strengths and weaknesses in their character which dictate their very different courses of action and their thoughts. They are both presented with conflicts and dilemmas throughout the story, the resolutions of which must be made using both their intuitive human side and their aggressive heroic side, and it appears as if Achilles meets with the most success in this difficult task. Therefore, the heroic warrior code and the human conscience present certain contradictions to which the characters must respond in order to survive and in order to achieve their goals.

CHAPTER SIX: HUMANISM IN *ILLIAD*

The warrior's pursuit of kleos is much for the individual himself. They are motivated by the impermanence of their lives, and want to gain glory to have an everlasting recognition in society. They attempt to gain recognition by accomplishing incredible feats in war, in which they risk their lives. Yet, they prize lifeless glory to the extent where they will sacrifice their lives for it. Patroclus death was caused by his strive for glory. He recklessly charges into the Trojan lines, "blind in his fatal frenzy"(435), and disobeying Achilles orders not to. Although glory is beneficial to the warrior himself, their death impacts many others. Achilles grieves for Patroclus, even after he avenges him, as "he longed for Patroclus' manhood"(588). Patroclus' life may be worth sacrificing for him, but it has much more significance to those dear to him. The Iliad not only demonstrates the value of life, but also challenges the warrior culture as it reveals that the desire for glory causes the downfall of Patroclus and many other warriors.

The way this Epic is told amplifies the significance of life. In The Iliad, the deaths of the many soldiers are told in a detailed structure. Alcathous is one of the many soldiers who were only mentioned once – at the time of his death:

And here was a royal kill, the son of Aesyetes, the hero Alcathous, son-in-law to Anchises, wed to his eldest daughter, Hippodamia ... Her father and noble mother loved her dearly, the pride of their halls excelling all her age in beauty, works of the loom and good clear sense. So the bravest man in the broad realm of Troy took her hand in marriage, true, the very man Poseidon crushed at the hands of Idomeneus here... as Idomeneus stabbed him square in the chest and split the bronze plate that cased his ribs... (355)

Although Alcathous was not important to the plot of The Iliad, he as a person is notably described. The single paragraph that describes him consists of his name, lineage,

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