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ACHILLES AND THE COMMUNITY

Achilles' anger and vengeance are directed against his own allies, that is, the Achaeans, although it was not the army as a community that offended him. It was only Agamemnon who – using his supreme power – humiliated „the best of the Achaeans” by depriving him of his part of the *geras* (*price, plunder*). Agamemnon abused Achilles' authority, fame and honour which are all-important values of the Greek heroes. It should be noted that it is not the financial value of the goods that matters but the violation of the code of honour. Although Briseis is a beautiful slave-girl, one can be quite sure that even if it were only a carved wooden cup, Achilles' anger and vengeance would be exactly the same. This is confirmed by the fact that when calls his mother in tears on the seashore, he uses the expression:

Ὡς φάτο δάκρυ χέων, τοῦ δ' ἔκλυε πότνια μήτηρ
(1, 356)

He never refers to his emotional attachment to Briseis, let alone love. In the 9th Book, Achilles' oracle concerning the Achaean army is fulfilled:

ἦ ποτ' Ἀχιλλῆος ποθ' ἴζεται υἱας Ἀχαιῶν
οὐμ παντας·
(1.240–241)

It is Nestor who, slightly re-writing his own role in the Agamemnon-Achilles conflict, turns to Agamemnon in the council of general:

οὐ γάρ τις νόον ἄλλος ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοήσει
οἷον ἐγὼ νοέω ἡμὲν πάλαι ἠδ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν
ἐξ ἔτι τοῦ ὅτε διογενὲς Βρισηίδα κούρη
χωομένου Ἀχιλλῆος ἔβης κλισίῃδεν ἀπούρας
οὔ τι καθ' ἡμέτερόν γε νόον· μάλα γάρ τοι ἐγωγε
πόλλ' ἀπεμυθεόμην· σὺ δὲ σῶ μεγαλήτορι θυμῷ
εἷξας ἄνδρα φέριστον, ὃν ἀθάνατοί περ ἔτισαν
ἠτίμησας, ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχεις γέρας·

(9,104–111).”

The reader will remember that in the 1st Book Nestor was careful enough not to oppose Agamemnon's will. Nestor's speech there was rather a sober compromise than an approval of Achilles' position. But for us this is not an important issue. During the actual crisis, Nestor delivers his speech in the name of the community accusing Agamemnon. He demands in the name of the community that Agamemnon should apologize to Achilles for the crime he had committed.

But Nestor's speech is much ado about nothing. Agamemnon is already aware of what he would call a mistake, not a crime. Now he would like to conciliate and pacify Achilles with gifts. He offers, among other things, golden bowls, horses, seven slave-women, and at the end of the list we find the most important item:

τὰς μὲν οἱ δώσω, μετὰ δ' ἔσσεται ἦν τότ' ἀπηύρων
κούρη Βρισηῆος· ἐπὶ δὲ μέγαν ὄρκον ὁμοῦμαι
μὴ ποτε τῆς εὐνής ἐπιβήμεναι ἠδὲ μιγῆναι,
ἢ θέμις ἀνδρῶπων πέλει ἀνδρῶν ἠδὲ γυναικῶν.
(9,131–134)

We read these lines with surprise, and cannot help asking the question: what was this all about? However, the surprise is only temporary. Agamemnon's behaviour is a part of a larger pattern, that is, a part of the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon. Briseis is nothing but a tool in this conflict, a tool that can be used to humiliate the hero. We are not told why Agamemnon behaved the way he did. (Was there, perhaps, no time? His life had not been uneventful since he had taken the girl from Achilles. Or was he careful enough not to have time for Briseis? In any case, he self-restraint comes now very handy.) This is, however, not the real problem. Acting from the position of power, Agamemnon deprived Achilles of what he had looked upon as his own.

Agamemnon's account is biased in a subtle but important way. He suggests that – since he gives the girl back untouched – nothing has really happened. This argument is unjust, because it creates the illusion that Achilles' anger and vengeance were a consequence of his feelings toward the girl. If anybody, it is precisely Agamemnon who should know that this argument is quite invalid in Achilles' system of values. Agamemnon did not deprive him of his lover but his possession. Within the heroes' world of values, Agamemnon's offence is rather serious. He makes a skilful but desperate attempt to re-classify the girl from the category of „plunder” to that of the „loved ones.”

When Phoenix, a member of the conciliatory delegation, repeats Agamemnon's word in front of Achilles, his response, the violent rejection of the offer, is absolutely logical in his own system of values. In his long monologue, Achilles mentions Briseis only once, without even mentioning her name. He despises Agamemnon sudden burst of generosity:

ἄλλα δ' ἀριστήεσσι δίδου γέρα καὶ βασιλεῦσι·
τοῖσι μὲν ἔμπεδα κείται, ἐμεῦ δ' ἀπὸ μούνου Ἀχαιῶν
εἴλετ', ἔχει δ' ἄλοχον θυμαρέα· τῆ παριαύων
(9,334–337)

By speaking of the girl as „geras,” (*price*) he denies any emotional attachment to her. At the same time, it is equally clear that responds to Agamemnon's biased argument with a similar biased argument. Agamemnon has mixed emotions into a story based on the values of the heroes. So be it. But then this is a characteristic feature of Agamemnon's usual hypocrisy, and it can be shown that the leader of the army is telling lies. This seems to be Achilles' interpretation when he suggests that Agamemnon should make love to the girl, which was proudly denied by Agamemnon. The extent to which Briseis has been to Achilles is revealed by his words when the two leaders are finally reconciled:

Ἄτρεϊδῆ ἡ ἄρ τι τόδ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἄρειον
 ἔπλετο σοὶ καὶ ἐμοί, ὃ τε νῶϊ περ ἀχνυμένῳ κῆρ
 θυμοβόρῳ ἔριδι μενεήναμεν εἴνεκα κούρης
 τὴν ὄφελ' ἐν νήεσσι κατακτάμεν Ἄρτεμις ἰῶ
 ἥματι τῷ ὅτ' ἐγὼν ἐλόμην Λυρνησοῶν ὀλέσσας·
 (19,56–61)

By that time, Patroklos is dead, which begins a new era for him. His vision is blurred by his wish for vengeance for his beloved friend. The phenomena around him acquire a new meaning: the words and deeds that postpone his way to Hector become mere obstacles. This explains his unexpectedly rude words about the girl who made him no harm. Achilles wants to put an end to the superfluous digressions, because he has more urgent matters to attend. His haste appears when Agamemnon announces all the gifts one by one, in an annoyingly long speech teeming with mythological references. Achilles response is this:

δῶρα μὲν αἶ κ' ἐδέλησθα παρασχέμεν, ὡς ἐπεικές,
 ἢ τ' ἐχέμεν παρὰ σοί· νῦν δὲ μνησώμεθα χάρῃς
 αἰψα μάλ'· οὐ γὰρ χρῆ κλοτοπεύειν ἐνθάδ' ἐόντας
 οὐδὲ διατρίβειν· ἔτι γὰρ μέγα ἔργον ἄρεκτον·
 (19,147–151)

From this time on, Achilles' and Briseis' stories are separated. This is a paradoxical, poetic situation. When she finally gets back to Achilles, their distance proves to be unbridgeable. Achilles simply ignores her. They do not meet or talk to one another.

Neither the fact of giving her back, nor the actual content of Agamemnon's oath are important, since now Achilles does not have to be won over to the fight.

Achilles expresses his sorrow with deeds. The mourning his friend makes him run amok. He mourns him with murder.

Briseis turns up in the last Book of the epic:

οἱ μὲν ἄρ' ἐν προδόμῳ δόμου αὐτόθι κοιμήσαντο
 κῆρυξ καὶ Πρίαμος πυκινὰ φρεσὶ μῆδε' ἔχοντες,

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς εὐδε μυχῶ κλισίης εὐπήκτου·
τῷ δὲ Βρισηῖς παρελέξατο καλλιπάρηος.

(24,673–676)

Achilles is now at peace with the world, and has no anger in his heart. Hector is dead, the Trojan war will be finished in the background, but he has nothing to do with that. Neither the Achaeans, nor the Trojans can be the targets of his vengeance. He made peace even with Priamus supplicant for the body of his son, and the peace of the world has been restored.

Has it really? This is the first peaceful night for Achilles, peaceful like ones that have preceded his conflict with Agamemnon. With Briseis lying in the same bed, the final scene suggest the restoration of the order of the world, and it is in this scene that we last see the hero. Achilles falling asleep beside his slave-girl will not wake up in the Iliad. The last one hundred and thirty lines are about the Troy, the mourning of Hector, and the preparations of his burial ceremony. The scene (Achilles and Briseis lying side by side) is far from being idyllic. Between the conflict with Agamemnon and the final night, there were fifty-two days of anger, fight and vengeance. The Achilles who returns to Briseis' bed has no future. His days are numbered. When he decided to revenge Patroclus, he has chosen eternal fame instead of longevity. His decision was only motivated by his loss of Patroclus, that is, the only relationship that gave meaning to his life. When we Achilles and Briseis side by side, we see two lonely and tragic people who have no future.

Achilles' story in the Iliad started with Briseis, and it is with her that it ends. It is only now, when everything is over, that the two people who have become the main characters of the epic for different reasons can meet. This delayed meeting may bring about their calm??, perhaps even love.

The question is whether Achilles' relationship with the community has changed. The answer to this question requires the investigation of the last third of the epic, the undoubtable hero of which is Achilles himself.

Patroclus is dead, which means that the world has changed for Achilles. His vengeance is no longer directed at Agamemnon or the Achaean community but the murderer of his friend, the Trojan Hector. This turns the story into the story of the Trojan war. Achilles will kill Hector depriving Troy of the only hero that can defend it. Achilles deed opens the way to the triumph of the Achaeans – which triumph he will not see, and which is not narrated by the epic.

It should be emphasized that Achilles has absolutely no problems with the Trojans:

οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ Τρώων ἔνεκ' ἤλυθον αἰχμητῶν
δεῦρο μαχησόμενος, ἐπεὶ οὐ τί μοι αἴτιοι εἰσιν·
οὐ γὰρ πάποτ' ἐμὰς βούς ἤλασαν οὐδὲ μὲν ἵππους,
(1,152–154).

The consequence, however, of his individual vengeance is that the Achaeans win the war, and destroy Troy. But this should not mislead us: Achilles never becomes a member of the Achaean community. He always acts and makes his decisions independently of anybody.

Still, he is the last to know: the whole Book 17 narrates the fight around Patroclus' body! When he learns the news, his behaviour changes instantaneously:

ὦ μοι ἔγωγε, τί τ' ἄγε αὖτις κἀγὼ κομώμεντες Ἀχαιοὶ
 ἠΰθι μοι τὰ θεῶν ἐπέπλεον ἄνακτα κλυτὰ τεύχεα θυμῷ,
 ὡς ποτὲ μοι ἠΰνην θειῆς φέροντο καὶ μοι ἐπιπύ-
 λουσι δόρυ καὶ ἄσπερον ἔριζωποτος ἐπιτό-
 χηδον ἔπειτα τοῦ ἄλκιμονος ἠλίοιο.
 ἦ μάλα δὴ τέρβηκε Μενοιτιάου ἄλκιμος υἱός
 Ὀχρεΐλαιος ἦ τ' ἐκλάευσεν ἀπωσάμενον δῆϊον Πύρ-
 ρῳ ἐπὶ νῆας ἦεν, ἠγὼ δ' ἔκτοδ' ἰφὶ μάχῃ σέθεναι.

(18, 6–14)

We are going to investigate the consequences of Achilles' decisions and deeds from the time when at the beginning of Book 18 Antilochos breaks the news of Patroclus' death. This is the time that it becomes certain that his friend is dead. This is something he has known deep down for a long time:

powerful hatred, the one for Hector.

Why? What does he still want? There is no textual explanation for this. Nor is needed any. Achilles is like a statue, he is unmovable. His hatred for Agamemnon cannot be cancelled by the apology of the community, it is cancelled by another, an even more

conchiority gifts at his feet. But he would not back down...
 the Trojans is a matter of time, Agamemnon is sorry for what he has done, his envious lay
 become a reality. The Achaeans take up a defensive position at the ships, the final victory of
 consider his oath – is fulfilled in Book 9, because everything he asked from his mother
 His vengeance will never waver. His vengeance against the Achaeans – if we

emotions separate him from the community.

temper, divine origin, special features, divine support, and – especially – the depth of his
 is outside the community, and cannot become an ordinary member of the community. His
 means that everything and everybody is measured in terms of the relationship with him. He
 important role in the plot of the epic. He integrates the community from the outside, which
 concern his absence from or participation in the fight. His loneliness and separation have an

He is the only person in the epic who always makes his decisions alone, whether they

consulting other leaders.

decides to give back the body of Hector, he makes the decision alone without advice or
 twelve young Trojans alone. Nobody is with him in the final scene of the epic, and when he
 alone, and he organizes the funeral games of Patroclus alone (Book 23). Finally, he kill the
 chance against him. It is not accidental that he always goes to fight alone. He kills Hector
 a community with laws and values of its own. First of all, he is an army. Nobody has a
 Although it may sound like a paradox, he is a community consisting of one person.

(19, 326-330)

ἦ τὸν δὲ Ζεύς μοι εἴ τι γέβηται φίλος υἱός,
εἴ που εἴ τι ζῶει γέ Νεοπτόλεμος θεοειδής,
πρὶν μὲν γὰρ μοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι βάλαι
οἶον εἶναι φθίσσασθαι ἅπ' Ἀγέρος ἱπποπόιοι
αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ Τροίῃ, οὐδ' ἐπεὶ φθίην δὲ νεοῦμαι,

(19, 321-323)

... οὐ μὲν γὰρ τι κακώτερον ἄλλο πάσσοιμι,
οὐδ' εἴ κεν τοῦ πατρὸς ἀποφθίμην οἶο πύδοιμην,
ὅς που υἱὸν φθίηφι τέγγειν κάρτα δακρυόων εἴβηει
χρῆται τοιοῦδ' υἱός...

(18, 81-83)

Ἰάτροκλος, τὸν ἐγὼ παρὲν πάλαιον εἶπαιον
ἰὸν εἶναι κεν φάλαγγ' ἰὸν ἀπώλεσα, τεύχεα δ' ἔκτωρ
δῆλωας ἀπεδύσαι πελώρια θάρσα ἰδούσθαι

This all does not matter. The significance of this new vengeance is shown by the fact that it is more important than his life. Achilles, who has always been guided by his emotions, is now finally separated from the community by his sorrow for his most-beloved friend. At first blush, it may sound somewhat surprising that it is the loss of a friend that makes the greatest hero to mourn his friend with his own death. However, if we consider the significance of the relationship that has been lost, we can understand Achilles. Books 18 and 19 show the relationship that is so important for Achilles that it makes his life full. The mourning makes him confess about *his love*:

(18, 95-96)

κόρυμπος δὲ μοι τέκος εἶσομαι, οἱ ἀγορεύεις
αὐτίκα γὰρ τοι εἴπειτα μετ' ἔκτορα πότμος ἔτοπος.

no use:
It is now that Achilles' mourning begins, and the mourning will become the decisive characteristic of the last part of the epic. In the light of the tragedy he can see how blind and selfish he was to reduce all his actions to the vengeance against Agamemnon (18, 101-111). What changes is the target of his vengeance. Now it is Hector. Theis' warning is of

(18, 22-25)

Ἦς φάτο, τὸν δ' ἄχεος νεφέλη ἐκάλυψε μέλαινα
ἀμφοτέρησι δὲ χερούσιν ἔλαιν ἀιδάδεσσα
χέουτο κακὰ κεν φάλαγγ', χαρτεῖν δ' ἦτοχυνε πρὸσωπον
νεκταρῶν δὲ χιτῶνι μέλαινα ἄμφιζῆαυε τέφρην.

Only those can understand Achilles who have already been in love. It is quite obvious that Achilles feels that Patroclus was closer to him than anybody else. He looks upon Patroclus' life as more important than that of his father or that of his son. More important than his own life. Only this can explain why Achilles runs amok in Book 19, which will eventually lead to a self-destruction.

An entirely new story begins. It may seem that the story of Briseis was only the preparation of what is really important, of the epic of vengeance in which Achilles enters the stage again. In his funeral speech which can be seen either as a program or a proposition, the hero tells briefly the story that will unfold:

νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν Πάτροκλε σεῦ ὕστερος εἶμ' ὑπὸ γαίαν,
οὐ σε προῖν κτεριῶ πρὶν γ' Ἔκτορος ἐνθάδ' ἐνεΐκαι
τεύχεα καὶ κεφαλὴν μεγαθύμου σοῖο φονῆας·
δώδεκα δὲ προπάραιθε πυρῆς ἀποδειροτομήσω
Τρώων ἀγλαὰ τέκνα σέθεν καταμένοιο χολωθεῖς.
(18, 333–337)

The presentation of the content foretells the destructive consequences of Achilles' anger, just like in Book 1. As we shall see, Achilles carries out the program meticulously.

His way to revenge leads him necessarily to the Achaean army and community. Despite his enormous strength, he cannot alone challenge the Trojan army. To some extent, say as a background phenomenon, he needs the presence of the Achaean army, as well as that of the Trojan army. Hector will obviously not fight him in a duel, and we shall see that it will require a divine trick to make him face Achilles. The morale of the Achaeans, on the other hand, is not terribly high. Without Achilles, they can only continue the hopeless battles.

The two interests – that of the Achaeans which is to plunder Troy and to get back Helen, and that of Achilles – happen to coincide. But we should not forget what he said about the war in Book 1:

οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ Τρώων ἔνεκ' ἤλυθον αἰχμητῶν
δεῦρο μαχησόμενος, ἐπεὶ οὐ τί μοι αἰτιοί εἰσιν·
οὐ γὰρ πώποτ' ἐμὰς βοῦς ἤλασαν οὐδὲ μὲν ἵππους,
οὐδέ ποτ' ἐν Φθίῃ ἐπιβῶλακι βωτιανείρῃ
καρπὸν ἐδηλήσαντ', ἐπεὶ ἢ μάλα πολλὰ μεταξὺ
οὐρεά τε σκιοέοντα θάλασσά τε ἠχῆεσσα·
ἀλλὰ σοὶ ὦ μέγ' ἀναιδὲς ἄμ' ἐσπόμεθ' ὄφρα σὺ χαίρης,
τιμὴν ἀρνύμενοι Μενελάω σοὶ τε κυνῶπα
πρὸς Τρώων· τῶν οὐ τι μετατρέπη οὐδ' ἀλεγίζεις·
(1, 152–160)

We have to bear these lines in mind, even though the situation has completely changed in the meantime. However, Achilles world-view and his assessment of the situation has changed. He looks upon the war as a sacrifice for individual purposes. At the beginning, it was

Agamemnon and Menelaus who profited from the war, not it is him. The community or the interest of the community never crosses his mind. The community is an alien concept to him, as well as a campaign for shared purposes.

His intention is to begin his own war, for which he must – to some extent – rely on the community that brought him to Troy. If the price is to accept temporarily the norms of the community, then he is willing to pay that price. The offence the community committed against him, that is, an unforgiveable offence against the values of the heroes, will thus become something that can be shrugged off.

His repentance is restricted to the possible minimum. He admits that it was a mistake to enter the conflict:

ὡς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ἔκ τ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπόλοιτο
καὶ χόλος, ὃς τ' ἐνέηκε πολύφρονά περ χαλεπήναι,
ὃς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένοιο
ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀέξεται ἤυτε καπνός·
ὡς ἐμὲ νῦν ἐχόλωσεν ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων.
(18, 107–111),

even though there is only one witness to this confession. It is his mother, Thetis. When speaking to Agamemnon, he refers to their conflict as an insignificant problem caused by a woman (19, 56–64), and he fails to mention his own responsibility. The way he continues his speech shows that he puts the problem aside only temporarily, because more important matters overshadow – but do not cancel – his anger against Agamemnon:

ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν προτετύχθαι ἕασομεν ἀχνύμενοί περ
θυμὸν ἐπὶ στήθεσσι φίλον δαμάσαντες ἀνάγκη·
νῦν δ' ἦτοι μὲν ἐγὼ παύω χόλον, οὐδέ τί με χρῆ
ἀσκελέως αἰεὶ μενεαίνεμεν·
(19, 65–68)

He does not take part in the life of the community after their reconciliation, which underlines his separation from the Achaeans. He keeps on urging them to fight (19, 68–71, 148–153, 199–202, 205–208, 275, 322–323). They disobey him in unison. They think that they have to follow the usual choreography – which is described by the Iliad as taking place both in the Achaeans' and the Trojans' camp – before the battle, that is, there must be a sacrifice and a common feast.

Ethnographers and sociologists have known the meaning of these rites for a long time. The purpose of the sacrifice is to win over the benevolence of the gods; the communal eating is, on the other hand, a part of the physical preparation for the battle, and both activities are supposed to be really communal, boosting their spiritual and physical unity.

Achilles is, however, ready to violate these eternal laws. If it was up to him, the Achaeans would be off to the battle-field immediately. Agamemnon and Odysseus take their

time to explain to him why these rites are indispensable, but all in vain. He considers them to be necessary evil.

He is simply missing from the next scene, and does not utter a word in the next fifty lines. Every second that keeps him from the battle is an unbearable delay for him. And when he finally speaks, he is as curt as possible:

Ζεῦ πάτερ ἢ μεγάλας ἄτας ἀνδρεσσι διδοῖσθα·
οὐκ ἂν δὴ ποτε θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι ἐμοῖσιν
Ἄτρείδης ὦρνε διαμπερές, οὐδέ κε κούρην
ἦγεν ἐμεῦ ἀέκοντος ἀμήχανος· ἀλλὰ ποθὶ Ζεὺς
ἦθελ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν θάνατον πολέεσσι γενέσθαι.
νῦν δ' ἔρχεσθ' ἐπὶ δεῖπνον, ἵνα ξυνάγωμεν Ἄρηα.
(19, 270–275)

He is visibly impatient.

The last sentence he says it all. Despite all his urging, his joining the community is shrouded in uncertainty. The predicate, that is the 2nd person plural predicate (*ærcesq'*), betrays that he does not look upon himself as part of the community, and he would not eat with his fellow-Achaean. Even the elderly Achaeans ask him in vain:

λίσσομαι, εἴ τις ἔμοιγε φίλων ἐπιπείθεθ' ἐταίρων,
μή με πρὶν σίτοιο κελεύετε μηδὲ ποτήτος
ἄσασθαι φίλον ἦτορ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἄχος αἰνὸν ἰκάνει·
δύντα δ' ἔς ἥλιον μενέω καὶ τλήσομαι ἔμπης.
(19, 305–308)

All the men who had important roles in the siege of Troy (the two sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus, Odysseus, Nestor, Idomeneus, and Phoinix) fail to persuade him to eat with them.

There is more to his refusal to eat than his fast due to his mourning would suggest. (Priamus also keeps fast while he does not get back the body of his son.) Even the gods observe his irrationality and self-destructive tendencies. Zeus sends Pallas Athene.:

τέκνον ἐμόν, δὴ πάμπαν ἀποίχεται ἀνδρὸς ἐῆος.
ἢ νύ τοι οὐκέτι πάγῃ μετὰ φρεσὶ μέμβλετ' Ἀχιλλεύς
κείνος ὃ γε προπάρουθε νεῶν ὀρθοκραϊράων
ἦσται ὀδυρόμενος ἔταρον φίλον· οἳ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι
οἴχονται μετὰ δεῖπνον, ὃ δ' ἄκμηνος καὶ ἄπαστος.
(19, 342–346)

What a perfect solution! Achilles, the hero on hunger strike, does not have to commit himself to the community, but he does not have to starve to death either. Artificial feeding saves lives. Of course, this is a unique intervention, and if you want to have it, you must be Achilles. The

goddess brings him the gods' special food, nectar and ambrosia, in the form of a shrieking bird so that ... ἵνα μή μιν λιμὸς ἀτερπῆς γούναθ' ἵκοιτο· (19, 354).

This is the compromise that enables Achilles to avoid being integrated into the community, and this shows at the same time to what extent the gods will interfere to keep him away from the community. The divine interference will also finalise his separation from the community. A semi-divine creature fed by the gods is not compatible with ordinary mortals. At the level of the myth, the divine interference reinforces Achilles' loneliness. So far, his anger and vengeance were interpretable in strictly human terms. The divine interference upsets the causal relationships, and will save Achilles for eternal loneliness. His fate is sealed: the gods help him triumph so that death will unavoidably strike him after he kills Hector. Even his horses warn him in vain:

καὶ λίην σ' ἔτι νῦν γε σαώσομεν ὄβριμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ·
ἀλλὰ τοι ἐγγύθεν ἤμαρ ὀλέθριον· οὐδέ τοι ἡμεῖς
αἵτιοι, ἀλλὰ θεός τε μέγας καὶ Μοῖρα κραταίῃ.
(19, 408–410)

All hell breaks loose in the next three Books. Even the beginning is ominous. Zeus gives the gods a completely free hand to take part in the fight (20, 23–27, 31–32). Forty lines narrate the gods' preparation for the fight. So far, we had occasional divine interference in the epic. The gods saved the beloved heroes from lethal peril – sometimes defying Zeus. Aphrodite saved Paris, Apollon and Poseidon Aineias. However, not even Zeus could save Sarpedon, although it is true that Hera exercised extreme moral pressure on him. This is a different situation now. They can interfere as they will, which makes an enormous mess. The gods are, by definition, immortal. Their risk is completely different from that of the mortals. There are divine wars in the mythology, even Zeus' rule goes back to winning such a war, but in such cases it was out of the question that mortal beings could play any role. What we see now is a strange war, parallel to the Trojan war.

The way Homer prepares the fight between Hector and Achilles is a classic example of the epic delay:

᾽Ως οἱ μὲν θεοὶ ἅντα θεῶν ἴσαν· αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
Ἐκτορος ἅντα μάλιστα λιλαίετο δύναι ὄμιλον
Πριαμίδεω·

(20, 75–78)

These lines are directly related – and parallel – to the gods' preparation for the battle. The divine interference which far exceeds those of the mortals appear en masse, without any restrictions. It is remarkable that from this perspective Achilles belongs to the same category as the gods. He used to send his envoy, that is, Patroclus, to fight, but now he personally turns up in the battle-field, upsetting the earlier balance of powers.

It will take a long time until Achilles can fight Hector. Before that he will have to kill literally innumerable Trojans. First of all, he encounters Aineias. This is a rather strange

victory. Aeneias is tricked into the fight by a god, Apollon, even though he knows that no mortal can win against Achilles, because:

αἰεὶ γὰρ πάρα εἶς γε θεῶν ὃς λοιγὸν ἀμύνει.
καὶ δ' ἄλλως τοῦγ' ἰδὺ βέλος πέτετ', οὐδ' ἀπολήγει
(20, 98–99)

It is Poseidon who ends their fight. Although Achilles wins, the gods will not let him kill the hero, the would-be founder of the city that will become Rome.

Achilles' amok begins in 20, 381. He is looking for Hector, and everything between him and Hector is a delay for him. As if he tried to compensate for the fifty days he spent doing nothing, now he cannot be stopped. His first four victims are more or less well described. One of them is Polydorus, the son of Priamus. Then he first meets Hector. It was due to the benevolence of Apollon that they did not meet earlier (20, 376–377). Despite all the warnings, Hector is bound to do something when Achilles kills his brother. He is now in a hopeless situation, of which he is very much aware:

οἶδα δ' ὅτι σὺ μὲν ἐσθλός, ἐγὼ δὲ σέθεν πολὺ χεῖρων.
(20, 434)

His situation is as hopeless as if he tried to fight a god. His only hope is that some of the gods may help him kill his opponent (20, 435–437).

But their fight cannot end so abruptly. And what seems to be their fight is, in fact something else. First, Athene who guards Achilles throws back Hector's spear, then Apollon covers Hector in mist to protect him from the murderous attacks of Achilles. So long as the gods fight instead of them, they cannot begin their own fight.

Achilles can see quite clearly what is going on, and he shows no signs of anger. He does not seem to care that Hector's death is somewhat postponed by the gods. He is still on a rampage: νῦν αὖ τοὺς ἄλλους ἐπιείσομαι, ὃν κε κιχέω. (20, 454). In 47 lines he kills ten more people. The enumeration of the victims is detached (for instance, the names of two victims are mentioned in the same line), displaying Homer's objectivity which goes as far as naturalism:

αἰχμῇ χαλκείῃ· ὃ δέ μιν μένε χεῖρα βαρυνθεῖς
πρόσθ' ὀρόων θάνατον· ὃ δὲ φασγάνῳ ἀρχένα θείνας
τῆλ' αὐτῇ πήληκι κάρη βάλε· μυελὸς αὐτε
σφονδυλίων ἔπαλθ', ὃ δ' ἐπὶ χθονὶ κείτο τανυσθεῖς.
(20, 480–483)

At the end of Book 20, Achilles' fury is compressed into the following image:

ὦς ὃ γε πάντη θύνη σὺν ἔνχει δαίμονι ἴσος
κτεινομένους ἐφέπων· ῥέε δ' αἵματι γαῖα μέλαινα
(20, 493–494)

No mathematical formula could describe Achilles' state of mind better. It shows the defining features of his character: the fury, the divine power, and the human-bestial bloodthirstiness.

Book 21 continues where the previous one ended. It is as if the same infinitely long sentence continued. It is only here in the epic that a Book begins with a paratactic sentence:

Ἄλλ' ὅτε δὴ πρόρον ἶξον εὐρρεῖος ποταμοῖο
(21, 1)

At the same time, the description of the bloodthirstiness acquires a new dimension, that of the gods. Achilles continues his running amok on the banks and in the water of the Zeus-begotten river which becomes red with the blood. It would not make sense here to give a list of the victims' names. It suffices to say:

ὦς ὑπ' Ἀχιλλῆος Ξάνθου βαθυδινηέντος
πλήτο ῥόος κελάδων ἐπιμῖξ ἵππων τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.
(21, 15–16)

This enormous carnage may hide the fact that Achilles is fighting alone. No Achaean name is mentioned. It is as if some kind of Achillean version of the Apollonian vengeance were re-enacted here. The Trojans cannot hide from his weapons, just like the Achaeans had no refuge from the arrows of Apollon in the first Book for nine long days.

Where is the Achaeans army now? They cannot be found because they are not needed any longer. The hero alone will win the war, or, to put it more precisely, his own war. Achilles, who is an army and a community – which is particularly obvious now – maintains his separation from any kind of community.

After the killing of another son of Priamus, Lykaon, he turns against the allies of the Trojans. The description of the massacre is the list of the victims' name. The rage of the hero creates a conflict even among the gods, a conflict that culminates in Hera beating up Artemis who is anxious for the fate of Troy. During that time:

... αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
Τρῶας ὁμῶς αὐτοῦς τ' ὄλεκεν καὶ μώνυχας ἵππους.
(21, 520–521)

It is startling – although there is an element of comic in the tragic scene – that the whole Trojan army flees into the castle from Achilles. Their safety is due to Apollon's trick who – in the figure of the champion Agenor – draws Achilles' attention to himself and away from the rest of the army:

τρέψας πὰρ ποταμὸν βαθυδιηέντα Σκάμανδρον
 τυτθὸν ὑπεκπροθέοντα· δόλω δ' ἄρ' ἔθελεγεν Ἄπόλλων
 ὡς αἰεὶ ἔλποίτο κιχήσεσθαι ποσὶν οἴσι·
 τόφρ' ἄλλοι Τρώες πεφοβημένοι ἦλθον ὀμίλῳ
 ἀσπάσιοι προτὶ ἄστν, πόλις δ' ἔμπλητο ἀλέντων.

(21, 603–607)

Even this last fight that never takes place emphasises how alien the community has become to Achilles. It is worth wondering why Agenor – a person who has absolutely no other role in the epic – is saved by Apollon when not even Zeus could save his son, Sarpedon. What kind of value is represented by Agenor? He is in a hopeless situation, just like anybody else. Achilles is much stronger than him. But he says something nobody else has pointed out. He opposes the ideology of the community with the rage of Achilles:

ἦ δὴ που μάλ' ἔολπας ἐνὶ φρεσὶ φαίδιμ' Ἄχιλλεῦ
 ἡματι τῷδε πόλιν πέρσειν Τρώων ἀγερώχων
 νηπύτι· ἦ τ' ἔτι πολλὰ τετεύχεται ἄλγε' ἐπ' αὐτῇ
 ἐν γάρ οἱ πολέες τε καὶ ἄλκιμοι ἀνέρες εἰμέν,
 οἳ καὶ πρόσθε φίλων τοκέων ἀλόχων τε καὶ υἱῶν
 Ἴλιον εἰρουόμεσθα· σὺ δ' ἐνθάδε πότμον ἐφέψεις
 ᾧδ' ἔκπαγλος ἐὼν καὶ θαρσαλέος πολεμιστῆς.

(21, 583–589)

He does not say that Troy cannot be occupied, or that he will not die. All he does is tell Achilles, the aggressor, the credo of the soldier who is defending his home and country. This statement silences Achilles. He cannot respond because the words come from a forgotten world, that is, from the world to which he had belonged before he was offended by Agamemnon and Hector. Now, Agenor's words cannot reach him, because he has no future, and he can only understand the words of vengeance and murder.

The climax and last chapter of the battle is the death of Hector which fulfils Achilles' vengeance. Only Hector and Achilles are left in the battle-field. But we should not forget about the Achaean army, the Achaean community. Homer describes them in one and a half line:

... αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὶ
 τεῖχος ἄσπον ἴσαν σάκε' ὤμοισι κλίναντες.

(22, 3–4)

This image – ironic perhaps? – betrays that what the army did was follow Achilles' one-man army. This says it all about the relationship of the two big units (the Achaeans and Achilles). The hero acts while the army follows him.

Will Troy fall? Does Achilles' vengeance urge him to capture the castle? That would mean the end of the war. For it should be obvious that no walls and no humans could stop him from doing that if he wished so. Why does it not happen?

This is where Homer speaks most unequivocally about the relationship of Achilles and the community. The Trojan war concerns only the community. If Achilles looked upon himself as a member of the community, he could crown his murders with taking Troy by storm. However, he does not want Troy, he only wants Hector. If Hector was in Troy, then we could say goodbye to the town of Priamus, because Achilles would not hesitate to ruin it only to kill the one who made him sad. If, however, Hector is outside, Achilles could not care less for the siege of Troy. In epic terms, this is also a delay, because – as we know perfectly well – the fate of Troy is destruction. Hector can only save Troy temporarily by confronting Achilles.

Hector must face Achilles alone, and he must accept the hopeless duel. His father (22, 38–76) and mother (22, 82–89) beg him in vain. Hector knows he must fight an opponent who:

μή μιν ἐγὼ μὲν ἴκωμαι ἰών, ὃ δέ μ' οὐκ ἐλεήσει
οὐδέ τί μ' αἰδέσεται, κτενέει δέ με γυμνὸν ἐόντα
αὐτῶς ὡς τε γυναῖκα, ἐπεὶ κ' ἀπὸ τεύχεα δύω.
οὐ μὲν πῶς νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης
(22, 123–126)

This is when the unequal fight begins between Achilles – who is like Ares – and Hector. The introductory description is quite characteristic. The event follows the well-known choreography: Hector flees Achilles, just like Apollon deceiving Achilles at the end of the previous book until Achilles finally reaches him. Not even the gods can save Hector this time. Athene, as if responding to Apollon's trick, assumes a human form to make him stop by providing false hope for him.

Hector's death differs from the previous kills only in form. Achilles honours his opponent by talking to him several times before executing him. Hector does not beg for mercy. He only wants Achilles to observe the rules of the heroes' ethical code:

ἀλλ' ἄγε δεῦρο θεοὺς ἐπιδώμεθα· τοὶ γὰρ ἄριστοι
μάρτυροί ἔσονται καὶ ἐπίσκοποι ἁρμονιάων·
οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ σ' ἔκπαγλον αἰεκιῶ, αἴ κεν ἐμοὶ Ζεὺς
δῶη καμμονίην, σὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀφέλωμαι·
ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ κέ σε συλήσω κλυτὰ τεύχε' Ἀχιλλεῦ
νεκρὸν Ἀχαιοῖσιν δώσω πάλιν· ὧς δὲ σὺ ρέζειν.
(22, 254–259)

However, he does not know that Achilles has no human respect, let alone heroic, for his opponent:

Ἔκτορ μή μοι ἄλαστε συνημοσύνας ἀγόρευε·
ὥς οὐκ ἔστι λέουσι καὶ ἀνδράσιν ὄρκια πιστά,
οὐδὲ λύκοι τε καὶ ἄρνες ὀμόφρονα θυμὸν ἔχουσιν,
ἀλλὰ κακὰ φρονέουσι διαμπερὲς ἀλλήλοισιν,
ὥς οὐκ ἔστ' ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ φιλήμεναι...

(22, 261–265)

These are horrible words. His chosen metaphor says that, while fighting Hector, until he revenges the death of Patroclus, Achilles does not look upon himself as a member of the human community. His relationship with the community is also described by Achilles' metaphor. What should a lion do in a human community? He refuses not only Hector but any human community.

Defeated and dying, Hector asks Achilles once more to give his body to his father. The refusal is rude to the point of being horrible:

αἶ γάρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνήη
ὦμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἔδμεναι, οἷα ἔσθρας,
ὥς οὐκ ἔστ' ὃς σῆς γε κύνας κεφαλῆς ἀπαλάλκοι,
οὐδ' εἴ κεν δεκάκις τε καὶ εἰκοσινήριτ' ἄποινα
στήσωσ' ἐνθάδ' ἄγοντες...

(22, 346–350)

No, Achilles cannot be accused of having cannibalistic tendencies – as some of the literary scholars have thought – because he will not devour Hector's body. However, it is certain that no other man's hatred are described in such terms in the epic.

And then it is all over. Suddenly, as if they were scavengers, the Achaean community emerges from the background:

... ἄλλοι δὲ περιδραμον υἱὲς Ἀχαιῶν,
οἱ καὶ θηήσαντο φυὴν καὶ εἶδος ἀγητὸν
Ἔκτορος· οὐδ' ἄρα οἱ τις ἀνουτητί γε παρέστη.

(22, 369–371)

This is, no doubt, the desecration of Hector's body:

ὦδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ μαλακώτερος ἀμφαφάασθαι
Ἔκτωρ ἦ ὅτε νῆας ἐνέπρησεν πυρὶ κηλέω

(22, 372–374)

Until Achilles' vengeance is fulfilled, nobody was near him. But now the battlefield is populated with the Achaeans, and he could be reintegrated into the community. The following scene begins as if we returned to the time in Book I, that is, to the time that preceded

Achilles' wrath, before the harmony of the Achaeans and Achilles was disrupted. Achilles sings the song of the common aims:

ὦ φίλοι Ἄργείων ἡγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες
ἐπεὶ δὴ τόνδ' ἄνδρα θεοὶ δαμάσασθαι ἔδωκαν,
ὃς κακὰ πόλλ' ἔρρεξεν ὅσ' οὐ σύμπαντες οἱ ἄλλοι,
εἰ δ' ἄγετ' ἀμφὶ πόλιν σὺν τεύχεσι πειρηθῶμεν,
ὄφρα κ' ἔτι γνῶμεν Τρώων νόον ὃν τιν' ἔχουσιν,
ἢ καταλείψουσιν πόλιν ἄκρην τοῦδε πεσόντος
ἢ μένειν μεμάσι καὶ Ἔκτορος οὐκέτ' ἔόντος.

(22, 378–384)

This is the voice of an authentic commander. Once Achilles makes up his mind, he is in a position of undoubtable authority. Where is Agamemnon, or any other Achaean leader now? We are expecting the Trojan war, the battle of the Achaeans and the Trojans to begin now, but Achilles changes his mind:

ἀλλὰ τί ἢ μοι ταῦτα φίλος διελέξατο θυμός
κεῖται παρ νήεσσι νέκυς ἄκλαυτος ἄναπτος
Πάτροκλος· τοῦ δ' οὐκ ἐπιλήσομαι, ὄφρ' ἂν ἔγωγε
ζωοῖσιν μετέω καὶ μοι φίλα γούνατ' ὀρώρη·
εἰ δὲ θανόντων περ καταλήθοντ' εἰν Ἄϊδαο
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ κείνι φίλου μεμνήσομ' ἑταίρου.
νῦν δ' ἄγ' αἰείδοντες παιήονα κούροι Ἀχαιῶν
νηυσὶν ἐπι γλαφυρήσι νεώμεθα, τότε δ' ἄγωμεν.
ἤράμεθα μέγα κῦδος· ἐπέφνομεν Ἔκτορα δῖον,
ὦ Τρώεας κατὰ ἄστυ θεῶ ὧς εὐχετόωντο.

(22, 385–394)

The plans have changed. Instead of Troy, the army is to go to the camp, instead of war, they are marching to peace.

Is then Achilles a member of the community after his victorious revenge? After a moment's hesitation, he still refuses to identify with the common goal, but Book 23 (Patroclus' funeral games) describes a hero who lives in, and organizes the activities of, the Achaean community.

Or at least it seems so. It is worth investigating his role in this Book which is explicitly devoted to communal activities. The funeral of the army's hero, the common mourning, just like the sacrifices and the common eating, are activities which are supposed to strengthen the community.

Achilles begins the common mourning with separating his own people, the Myrmidons from the Achaeans. They are the ones who should primarily mourn Patroclus. After the funeral song, he desecrates Hector's body again. Then he gives a generous meal to his fighters. By doing this, he seems to have taken an important step. He not only eats with the others, but initiated the communal eating.

The Myrmidons play an important role in Achilles' community-building efforts. He goes to sleep among them. The hero addresses the army by turning to Agamemnon:

ἠῶθεν δ' ὄτρυνον ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον
ὔλην τ' ἀξέμεναι παρά τε σχεῖν ὅσσ' ἐπεικῆς
νεκρὸν ἔχοντα νέεσθαι ὑπὸ ζόφον ἠερσέντα,
ὄφρ' ἦτοι τοῦτον μὲν ἐπιφλέγη ἀκάματον πῦρ
θᾶσσον ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν, λαοὶ δ' ἐπὶ ἔργα τράπωνται.
(23, 49–53)

However, something is missing from the preparations: the end of the war and the image of the community in the future. Patroclus' funeral is a milestone in Achilles' thoughts and deeds. What comes after that? He says: ...λαοὶ δ' ἐπὶ ἔργα τράπωνται (23, 53), but does not define what this should be. However, the Trojan war has not ended, the Achaeans have not achieved their common goal! Yes, but the war is over for Achilles. He would not kill another enemy soldier, nor would he do anything in order to help the siege of Troy. He is interested only in the funeral of Patroclus, which will finish his life (ἐπεὶ οὐ μ' ἔτι δεύτερον ᾧδε / ἴξετ' ἄχος κραδίην ὄφρα ζωοῖσι μετείω. 23, 46–47).

Book 23 is an extended form of mourning. It is as if Achilles wanted to show all the possible forms of mourning: he mourns for him several times: the Achaean army makes a funeral pyre, they sacrifice a host of animals, as well as twelve young Trojan soldiers, then Achilles secures the help of the God of winds, puts the ashes of Patroclus into a golden urn, and they make proper grave, and finally they start the funeral games.

This summary shows that the cause of the Trojan war is not promoted by anything in Book 23. We might say that the universal mourning stops the devastation of the war temporarily, and that Book 23 is a digression that presents the aspects of life which are free from the war – just like the description of Achilles' shield in book 18. But there is no return to the battlefield after Book 23, the outcome of the war is not told in Book 24.

Every aspect of the last two books can be explained in terms of Achilles' mourning. They are scenes of peace, mourning and reconciliation, because the story of the epic, the story of Achilles' wrath, the story of his war, is over. The outstanding members and leaders of the army Agamemnon can win precious trophies, but only competing against each other, and not by fighting the Trojans. After Achilles vengeance is fulfilled, things become calm and smooth. The loot becomes the prize which is donated by Achilles, the war becomes a game, the army turns into a number of competing teams.

During all this, Achilles is still and forever outside the community. He organises and directs Patroclus' funeral, but will set limits to the grief of others:

...τάδε δ' ἀμφὶ πονησόμεθ' οἷσι μάλιστα
κῆδεός ἐστι νέκυς· παρὰ δ' οἱ τ' ἀγοὶ ἄμμι μενότων.
(24, 159–160)

He does not take part in the games. Everybody knows that his strength and skill would deprive anybody else from the chance of winning. He is some kind of supreme judge – whose strength and power cannot be compared to those of anybody else – who directs, judges, punishes from above. His role among the humans is the same as that of Zeus among the gods. Just like Zeus interfered in the fate of Troy only by guiding the other gods, Achilles organises the funeral games by setting limits to his own strength. The funeral ceremony thus becomes an earthly copy of the war which is directed by Zeus.

Book 24 begins with a scene that confirms Achilles' loneliness:

Λῦτο δ' ἄγων, λαοὶ δὲ θοᾶς ἐπὶ νῆας ἕκαστοι
ἔσκιδναντ' ἰέναι. τοὶ μὲν δόρποιο μέδοντο
ὑπνου τε γλυκεροῦ ταρπήμεναι· αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς
κλαίει φίλου ἐτάρου μεμνημένος, οὐδέ μιν ὑπνος
ἦρει πανδαμάτωρ, ἀλλ' ἐστρέφεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα
Πατρόκλου ποθέων ἀνδροτήτά τε καὶ μένος ἧῦ,
(24, 1–6)

The hero is overwhelmed by mourning again and again. The mourning has the same intensity as hatred for Agamemnon, or vengeance for Hector. There is no way out from this emotion, because the hatred and the vengeance were directed against somebody else, but by mourning he is supposed to fight himself.

This emotion will not stop despite his efforts: he drags Hector's body in a monotonous ritual around Patroclus' grave three times for twelve days. Nor can he do any harm to the body, because it is guarded by the gods.

His wrath was only cancelled by his vengeance. But what could cancel his pain and mourning? Who or what could surpass that? The community did what it could. They shared his mourning but only to the extent he was willing to let them.

Achilles becomes even more lonely than he was at the time of his wrath or during the battle. In the past, there was, however, an event that helped the hero find the way out from an emotional state that seemed eternal and interminable. This was the appearance of Thetis. She appeared to the weeping hero twice, and helped him: she went to ask Zeus and had Hephaistos make new weapons for him.

She appears to him for the third time:

ἶξεν δ' ἐς κλισίην οὐ υἱέος· ἔνθ' ἄρα τόν γε
ὑρ' ἄδινά στενάχοντα· φίλοι δ' ἀμφ' αὐτὸν ἐταῖροι
ἔσομένως ἐπένοντο καὶ ἐντύνοντο ἄριστον·
τοῖσι δ' ὄϊς λάσιος μέγας ἐν κλισίῃ ἰέρευτο.
ἦ δὲ μάλ' ἄγχι αὐτοῖο καθέζετο πότνια μήτηρ,
χειρὶ τέ μιν κατέρεξεν ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζε·
τέκνον ἐμὸν τέο μέχρις ὄδυρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων
σὴν ἔδεται κραδίην μεμνημένος οὔτε τι σίτου

οὐτ' εὐνής ἀγαθὸν δὲ γυναικί περ ἐν φιλότῃ
 μίσησθ'· οὐ γάρ μοι δηρὸν βέη, ἀλλὰ τοι ἤδη
 ἄγχι παρέστηκεν θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή.
 ἀλλ' ἐμέθεν ξύνεξ ὦκα, Διὸς δέ τοι ἄγγελίς εἰμι·
 (24, 122–133)

Almost the same thing happens that had happened before. While the former appearances were followed by the stereotypical line: *"My child, why weepst thou? What sorrow hath come upon thy heart?"*, now she does not ask him „why”, but „how long”: *"My child, how long wilt thou devour thine heart with weeping and sorrowing, and wilt take no thought of food, neither of the couch? Good were it for thee even to have dalliance in a woman' embrace."* 127–131., which shows that her impatience is mingled with reprimand.

What kind of help does she – who knows the future! – offer now? To put it briefly: *eat, drink, and make love!* – because the day of your death is not far away. This is the advice that makes Achilles' loneliness complete: not even the gods can handle his mourning, not even his own mother understands his loneliness, and encourages – even orders him – to give Hector's body back. Zeus' order takes away what was left for him in the world of action, that is the routine of ritual desecration of Hector's body, his only exercise. And this is taken away now. He has nothing to say to Thetis. He barely shows that he would follow Zeus' order, then their last meeting ends in the formulaic:

τῆδ' εἴη· ὃς ἄποινα φέροι καὶ νεκρὸν ἄγοιτο,
 εἰ δὴ πρόφρονι θυμῷ Ὀλύμπιος αὐτὸς ἀνώγει.
 (24, 139–140)

which, in this case, does not mean anything.

There is only one final meeting for Achilles in the epic, but this is more important than any previous meeting. He must face Priamus, who was helped by the gods to reach his tent. He must obey Zeus' order, and give back Hector's body.

The scene is not free from tension just because there is nothing at stake. Achilles obeys Zeus, but how? The answer to this question adds the final touches to Achilles portrait.

First of all, he is surprised to see Priamus. Then they, the two great mourners of the epic, will reach an agreement very soon. Priamus touches a chord, the only chord, that will resonate in Achilles' soul. Priamus, fearing Achilles, reminds him of his own father, Peleus, but it is closer to the truth to say that the feeling is more important in the process of mourning than its actual content:

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς κλαίεν ἐὸν πατέρ', ἄλλοτε δ' αὐτε
 τῷ δὲ μνησαμένῳ ὃ μὲν Ἐκτορος ἀνδροφόνοιο
 κλαί' ἀδινὰ προπάραιδε ποδῶν Ἀχιλλῆος ἔλυσθεῖς,
 Πάτροκλον· τῶν δὲ στοναχὴ κατὰ δώματ' ὀρώρει.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥα γόοιο τετάρπετο διὸς Ἀχιλλεὺς...
 (24, 509–513)

How characteristic is this „wept for his own father, and now again for Patroclus”! Recalling his own father makes him sad, but this sadness is added to the ones he is already experiencing, that is, to his mourning. Nothing can create a sense of commonness like the discovery of the same feelings. Just like true love or hatred, these two people create a world of their own in their mourning, a world which not even a goddess-mother can reach. Achilles has already had such a world, the friendship with Patroclus. This was taken away by Hector, and by his superfluous wrath. Now he is surprised to see that another – and similarly closed – world can be created when Priamus becomes a partner in his world of mourning.

Finally there is nobody at Achilles' side. He has excluded the Achaeans himself, Patroclus has been taken away by force, his own mother has left him. Priamus broke into this final, infinite loneliness, and brought him understanding and common fate. Both will die soon. Priamus – after Hector's death – is without any support, while Paris' arrow is ready to find Achilles.

The commonness of fate with a single man – with the father of his arch-enemy... – instead of human community: this is what Achilles achieves in the epic.

It is no wonder, then, that Achilles apologises to Patroclus:

μη μοι Πάτροκλε σκυδμαινέμεν, αἵ κε πύθηαι
 εἰν Ἄϊδος περ ἐὼν ὅτι Ἔκτορα δῖον ἔλυσσας
 πατρὶ φίλω, ἐπεὶ οὐ μοι ἀεικέα δῶκεν ἄποινα.
 σοὶ δ' αὖ ἐγὼ καὶ τῶνδ' ἀποδάσσομαι ὅσος ἐπέοικεν.
 (24, 592–595)

It goes without saying that Achilles is not interested in what he gets from Priamus. It is more important that he would like Patroclus to share his new emotion

Priamus and Achilles say goodbye to each other as good friend – and will never meet again. The epic forbids Achilles to have a companion in his mourning for a long time. After all, it would be strange if the killer mourned with the family of the victim. The epic ends in Hector's funeral, but this is not Achilles' story any longer.

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