Ramus 44 (1&2) p.95–114 © Aureal Publications 2015.
doi:10.1017/rmu.2015.5

'ANGER SWEETER THAN DRIPPING HONEY': VIOLENCE AS A PROBLEM IN THE *ILIAD*

William G. Thalmann

Remarkably in a poem so concerned with warfare, there are prominent moments in the *Iliad* when it seems possible that the Trojan War can be settled and peace restored: for example, Agamemnon's three proposals that the Akhaians abandon the war and go home (Books 2, 9, and 14), the truce and single combat in Book 3, and the proposal in the Trojan assembly of Book 7 that Helen be returned to Menelaos. These episodes form a pattern of resistance, or potential counter-narrative, to what would otherwise seem a relentless progression to Troy's destruction. For the most part, therefore, they occur relatively early in the poem, when the course of events seems less determined than it does later. But twice in the late books, a character says something that, if pursued, might have led to peace. These later moments are striking because they occur even after the death of Patroklos, when alternatives to war and destruction appear to have been stripped away, and because they arise when Akhilleus has recognized something essential about human vulnerability. In both cases, the possibility of peace glimmers only faintly and then fades. But that it is raised at all so late in the narrative exemplifies how the *Iliad* makes a problem of violence while depicting it.

Expressing to Thetis his feelings of guilt for the death of Patroklos, Akhilleus exclaims,[1]

> ὡς ἔρις ἔκ τε θεῶν ἔκ τ' ἀνθρώπων ἀπόλοιτο
> καὶ χόλος, ὅς τ' ἐφέηκε πολύφρονά περ χαλεπῆναι,
> ὅς τε πολὺ γλυκίων μέλιτος καταλειβομένοιο
> ἀνδρῶν ἐν στήθεσσιν ἀέξεται ἠύτε καπνός,
> ὡς ἐμὲ νῦν ἐχόλωσεν ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων.
>
> (*Il.* 18.107-11)

> I wish that conflict [*eris*] would perish from among gods and mortals
> and anger [*kholos*], which impels even a reflective man to be harsh,
> which, far sweeter than down-dripping honey,
> swells in men's chests like smoke,
> as the king of men Agamemnon angered [*ekholōsen*] me just now.

These lines are famous and much discussed, but I would like to make two points about them. The first is the obvious one that Akhilleus vividly expresses the

1. I have used M.L. West's Teubner edition of the poem (1998-2000). Except where noted, all translations are my own.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

experience of being angry: anger as a bodily sensation, its seductive sweetness and at the same time its power to blind the one it has seized to the implications and consequences of what he is about to do under its spell,[2] and the feeling of being driven by an impulse beyond one's control to behave in uncharacteristic ways. Anger 'impels even a reflective man to be harsh',[3] and Agamemnon 'angered' Akhilleus, as though his anger were involuntary, something done to him.[4]

My second point is in tension with the first. If Akhilleus were to follow the logic of his insight about the seductive but destructive nature of anger—if, that is, he were to apply to the present circumstances the lesson he has learned from his quarrel with Agamemnon about the consequences of anger—he might abandon or at least limit the revenge he proposes to take against Hektor and Troy. In that case, Hektor might survive to fight defensively from within Troy as Andromakhe has urged him to do (advice soon to be repeated by Poulydamas). Akhilleus would then not be killed himself, the war would return to a stalemate, and Troy might not be sacked. That the story could take this course is not inconceivable, untraditional though it would be; Akhilleus in these lines shows a remarkable ability to stand aside from his actions and think about them, just as there are signs throughout the *Iliad* of his capacity for being thoughtful (πολύφρων). But Akhilleus does not pursue the consequences of his own understanding. In fact, the speech in which these lines are embedded show him in the grip of anger, *kholos*, and fierce to pursue his quarrel, *eris*,[5] with the Trojans to murderous extremes, even while he recognizes the dangers of such wrath. In context, the lines appear as a confession of helplessness before *eris* and *kholos*: in fact, they have not perished from among gods and mortals, and there is no way of eliminating them. 'Let us let these things be bygones, even though aggrieved', Akhilleus continues after the lines quoted, 'repressing by necessity the fury [*thumos*] in our chest'. But he is talking about his quarrel

2. This must be at least one implication of the comparison of anger to smoke; see Edwards (1991), 161.

3. As Afroditi Angelopoulou reminds me, this phrase is repeated from *Il.* 9.553f., in Phoinix' story of Meleagros. Phoinix has experienced the consequences of anger in his own family (*Il.* 9.463). These echoes in the past of Akhilleus' present situation show how firmly rooted *eris* and *kholos* are among humankind.

4. Cf. the bT scholium on *Il.* 18.111: ἠρέμα παραπολογεῖται ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ ὅτι ἄλλος αἴτιος τῆς ὀργῆς κατέστη ('he is subtly implying in his own defense that someone else was to blame for his anger').

5. I use *eris* in this connection because the word can refer to war between as well as within communities and appears with this meaning a number of times in the *Iliad* (Thalmann [2004], 368). Akhilleus goes on to talk about what he wants to do to the Trojans in general as well as to Hektor. The word is not used by the narrator of Akhilleus' conflict with Hektor, possibly because the competitive dimension of *eris* is submerged or lacking in this case (I am grateful to Erwin Cook for this point), although Hektor uses it of his imminent single combat with Akhilleus (*Il.* 22.129). For *eris* in connection with the poem's final battle between Akhaians and Trojans, see *Il.* 20.48 and possibly 20.55 (depending on the reference of αὐτοῖς). Akhilleus himself uses the related verb ἐρίζειν of his fight with Asteropaios at the river (*Il.* 21.185).

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with Agamemnon. Then, after accepting that his death will come soon after Hektor's as Thetis has prophesied, he ends his speech by picturing the Trojan women wiping the tears from their cheeks and moaning in grief for the men he will have killed when he returns to battle and wins glory (*kleos, Il.* 18.121-25). The detail of his imaginings shows how eager he is to fight and kill.[6] His insight is finally limited; he seems not to see, or not to care, that his condemnation of strife and anger can apply to what he longs to do. When he uses Herakles as a paradigm of mortals' subjection to fate (*Il.* 18.117-19), he says that Herakles was also a victim of Hera's anger ('but fate overcame him, and the inflexible *kholos* of Hera'); Herakles' story also demonstrates how destructive this emotion's consequences can be. The subject of anger, Akhilleus identifies self-destructively with its most famous victim; he will inflict but then suffer violent death. He can indeed control his wrath against Agamemnon, but only when it has found a new object, Hektor and the Trojans. According to Akhilleus, humans are helpless against these forces.

The other moment when events might take a different course comes near the end of the poem. Asked by Akhilleus how many days he will need for Hektor's funeral, Priam replies that he will need eleven days. 'And on the twelfth we will fight, εἴ περ ἀνάγκη' ('if in fact we must', *Il.* 24.667). In his reply, Akhilleus ignores that qualification, that wistful protasis, 'if in fact we must': 'These things will be as you command, aged Priam,' he says. 'I will hold back the war for as long as you order.' These curt two lines are the last words he speaks to the enemy king in whom he has seen the image of his own aged and soon-to-be-bereft father, and the last he speaks in the entire poem. With them, he seals his own, and Priam's, and Troy's, and so many of the other Greeks', fate.[7]

For just a moment so brief that it is easily missed,[8] Priam opens a subversive possibility. What if the sympathy that grew on this night between these two men were to extend itself to encompass the Akhaian army and the Trojans? What if the two sides just made peace? Was Helen, was Menelaos' personal and the Akhaians' collective honor, worth all the bloodshed in the past ten years and about to come? Suppose that the mortals in this story decided that they were not. The Akhaians—Akhilleus included—would have returned home, possibly to lives of peace; Troy and the Trojans would have survived. And the later

6. Cf. the bT scholium on *Il.* 18.122-24: ἤδη ὑπ' ὄψιν λαμβάνει τὰ ἀκολουθήσοντα τοῖς πολεμίοις δεινά, ὥσπερ ἐμπιπλάμενος τῆς ἐκ τῶν πολεμίων τιμωρίας διὰ τῆς ἐλπίδος ('he already is envisioning the terrible things to come for the enemy, as though sated by anticipation with revenge exacted from them').

7. For a Homeric parallel for one party to a conversation rejecting an undesired alternative to a course of action that is being discussed by simply ignoring it when the other has raised it, see *Od.* 7.308-33. Alkinoos offers Odysseus Nausikaa's hand in marriage and a home on Skheria as an alternative to passage home to Ithaka. Odysseus limits his reply to a delighted acceptance of the second offer.

8. Richardson (1993), for example, passes over it in silence.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Greeks, for whom the sack of a city in fact stood at the head of their historical and cultural tradition, would have had a different paradigm to follow. There would have been no *Trojan Women* of Euripides, no founding myth of the Roman Empire for Vergil to use (or at least not this one). Why doesn't this feel possible?

There are different kinds of answers. As far as we can tell, the pre-Iliadic tradition demanded that Troy be sacked, so that the course the narrative must take coincides with 'fate' as viewed from within the poem.[9] Accordingly, Akhilleus is not a man of peace, and his fate awaits him after Hektor's. Within the poem, Troy's doom was sealed (or re-sealed) in Book 4, when Zeus, not with complete seriousness perhaps, suggested to Hera that they let the outcome of the duel between Paris and Menelaos settle the war, was rebuffed, and accepted the moral charade of sending Athena to get Pandaros to break the truce, so that Troy, in some formal sense at least, deserved punishment. Perhaps also we take the sack of Troy for granted because it is assumed by so much of the later poetic, artistic, and cultural traditions. And our culture seems to assume that war is an inevitable part of life; the American military, for example, once defined peace as 'permanent pre-hostility',[10] and when I ask students to give a positive definition of peace (that is, not just 'absence of war'), they are invariably stumped.

But even while its narrative must finally point toward Troy's destruction, the *Iliad* raises questions about violence and aggression and the emotions that provoke them and that they call forth, treats them as problems, and offers an analysis of them. It makes us want to ask, what is it about human nature, about the gods, about the world, that makes Troy's destruction seem the only possible outcome? Is Akhilleus right that humans are at the mercy of their destructive passions? Can human violence be controlled, and if not tamed at least directed into socially constructive forms? These questions would have been of more than passing interest in the emerging polis of the late eighth century BCE or shortly thereafter, as I hope to suggest.

Perhaps because violence is such an obvious theme in the *Iliad*, discussions of it tend to come from non-classicists. Simone Weil's eloquent essay, 'The *Iliad* or the Poem of Force', will come immediately to mind. Like many readers, I think that she misses a lot in arguing that the poem shows 'the subordination of the human soul to force'; and rather than treat violence as a quasi-independent force, as she (like Akhilleus) does, I prefer to conceive of it as something people do to one another, as a process with social and political implications, a medium, often, of relations between individuals, between groups in a community,

9. See Elmer (2013), 151-53.

10. According to Shifferd (2011), 58, the phrase was first used in 1982 by then-Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to describe the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and was then adopted by the military as a definition of peace. In 1984, the National Council of Teachers of English conferred a Doublespeak Award on it. The phrase is, of course, meaningless: a permanent condition cannot be pre-anything. The confused thinking that it reflects is dangerous because it rules out serious consideration of how to establish peace and avoid war.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

between communities, and between mortals and gods. But I do follow Weil in believing that the *Iliad* does not glorify violence for the entertainment of an audience that reveled in it, but raises deep and serious questions about it and is profoundly sympathetic towards its victims.[11] Jonathan Shay, like Weil, studies the psychological effects of warfare on soldiers, in this case combat trauma, which he sees as already portrayed in the *Iliad.*[12] Because of his interests, he leaves the questions that the poem raises about the causes of violence relatively undeveloped. Caroline Alexander's *The War that Killed Akhilleus*, which has drawn a wide readership, directly concerns the violence of warfare but—driven perhaps by her well-meant condemnation of such violence—ignores the complexity of the *Iliad*'s treatment of it.[13] John Gittings, more attentive to that complexity, correctly traces events in the poem that imply the possibility of peace.[14] I would not agree, however, with his suggestion that such passages represent a more 'advanced' stratum in the poem, with scenes of violence representing a more 'primitive' martial epic tradition, or that the violent and the peaceful in the poem are separable. To me they seem intertwined,[15] and by focusing on combat and related scenes I hope to show how even through them the poem raises questions about violence. Jonathan Gottschall makes use of evolutionary biology and game theory to argue that Homeric warriors, in engaging in violence, are choosing, without knowing it, the best strategy to ensure reproductive success.[16] Right or wrong, this is a description from a perspective outside the poem. My concern here is to consider how the *Iliad* shows what a world conditioned by violence looks like from the inside and what it suggests the implications are for human life and society.

The poem vividly conveys the experience of suffering and inflicting violence. Consider, for example, the richness of the vocabulary that epic poetry deploys to describe combat and its various aspects. Just the nouns by themselves, independently of the affective overtones given them by various epithets, help us appreciate this richness. There are general words for battle, perhaps with differing emotional coloring, such as μάχη, πόλεμος, ὑσμίνη, φύλοπις, and the more pointed ἔρις, but other words describe various aspects: δαίς and δηιοτής, hostility (perhaps originally 'the conflagration of war') or more concretely slaughter, the latter more bluntly designated by ἀνδροκτασίη; πόνος, and sometimes ἄεθλος, as the toil of battle (μῶλος may belong here too if it is related to the Latin *moles*; it often

11. For a balanced assessment of Weil's essay in the context of her other writings, see Holoka (2002).

12. Shay (1994).

13. Alexander (2009)

14. Gittings (2012), 39-47.

15. It is symptomatic of this difference that Gittings (2012), 44, mentions Akhilleus' wish that strife and anger perish as a passing 'moment of introspection' opposed to violence, whereas I read it as an insight that paradoxically opens the way to more killing by expressing a passive helplessness before anger.

16. Gottschall (2008).

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

has a local meaning: 'the place where men labor in battle'); combat as movement (ἰωκή and ἰωχμός, attack or pursuit; παλίωξις, retreat; φόβος and φύζα, rout or panic); μόθος, the tumult of fighting, which leads into words for the crowds and confusion of massed combat, ὅμιλος, οὐλαμός, κλόνος, and κυδοιμός, the latter two often signifying confusion and panic. A number of words express the noise of battle and complement descriptions of the glint of armor in the sun: ὀρυμαγδός, κτύπος, ὅμαδος (often a noisy throng of warriors), ῥοίζος (the whizzing of arrows), battle cries and shouts (ἀυτή, ἰαχή, ἐνοπή), φλοῖσβος, κέλαδος, and (in Hesiod) κόναβος. Through a kind of synaesthesia, some of these sound-words can denote the place of battle. And finally there are the common words for psychological states in combat, or perhaps better, the effect of combat on the personality: for example, ἀλκή,[17] war strength or spirit, often with θοῦρις as an epithet but originally, it seems, referring to defensive strength; χάρμη, joy in battle; μένος, ranging from courage to battle frenzy (as in μένος Ἄρηος, *Il.* 18.264, or θυμοβόρου ἔριδος μένος, *Il.* 7.210); or λύσσα, madness—all of these implying a recognition of the altered state of consciousness produced by acts of violence, and so how humans perpetuate violence either as single individuals in the form of berserker behavior (or *aristeiai*)[18] or by calling forth reciprocal violence in others. Even when we allow for the needs of the formular system, this extensive and differentiated vocabulary implies an acute understanding of what people do in situations of extreme violence, when their humanity can be stretched thin.[19]

Then there are the 'personifications' of warfare and its aspects. These often appear in groups at critical turning points in the *Iliad*'s action. In Book 4, when the battle is first being joined, the armies march toward each other, the Trojans urged on by Ares and the Achaeans by Athena. With them are Eris, 'sister and companion of Ares', and Deimos, 'Terror', and Phobos, 'Rout' (*Il.* 4.439-43). These two are Ares' sons by Aphrodite in the *Theogony* (934-37), and possibly in the *Iliad* as well.[20] They are depicted as Ares' charioteers in *Iliad* 15.119f. and on Herakles' shield (*Aspis* 195f.), where they and Ares later step off the shield into real life as the narrative portrays it: they lift Ares into the chariot after Herakles wounds him and transport him to Olympos (*Aspis* 463-66). The wounding of Ares—by Herakles in the *Aspis* and by Diomedes in *Iliad* 5— seems to express revenge on behalf of humankind on the god who is felt to inflict war on them, or on the fact of war itself, and so frustration at

17. On this word, see Collins (1998), especially his statement that in its aggressive form it 'is stylized as a central organizing principle of the military world in Homeric poetry. Not merely one in a series, *alkē* defines the man who has committed his being to total war' (14).

18. Cf. Shay (1994), 77-99.

19. I have studied these words with the aid of the *TLG*, and then checked my results against the various articles in the *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* and Trümpy (1950).

20. In the *Iliad* only Phobos is explicitly said to be Ares' son (*Il.* 13.298-300), but he and Deimos appear together several times and form a complementary pair, so that they are apparently assumed to be brothers.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

endlessly recurring situations of violence, although fighting violence with violence contains a certain paradox. And Ares is never finally contained. Herakles recalls how he wounded Ares in Pylos before their present confrontation (*Aspis* 359-67), and Dione tells Aphrodite that Otos and Ephialtes imprisoned him in a bronze jar, and he would have perished had not Hermes stolen him (*Il.* 5.385-91). The spirit of war almost died; but of course it is immortal. In that same speech Dione says that it was Hades whom Herakles wounded at Pylos. That each story is a variant of the other might suggest an equivalency between war and death—one that is also implied in Ares' name if it is related to ἀρή (the *Aspis* plays on the similarity of sound at least). Ares is interesting too because, alone of the gods, he has switched sides in the Trojan War. Athena gives that as the reason for Diomedes to wound him (*Il.* 5.831-35), and she reproaches him with it again when she wounds him and then Aphrodite (*Il.* 21.412-14). Perhaps this fickleness expresses the shifts in success between the two sides in combat, as suggested, for instance, by the formula μάχης ἐτεραλκέα νίκην.[21]

At *Iliad* 5.590-95, when Hektor leads the ranks of Trojans to attack Antilokhos and Menelaos, who have gone on a rampage, Ares leads them with Enyo, who is holding Κυδοιμὸν ἀναιδέα δηιοτῆτος, 'Battle-Uproar shameless [in the sphere of] carnage.'[22] Then, when she is about to get Diomedes to renew his *aristeia* and wound Ares, Athena has an arming scene, during which she puts on the aegis. Depicted on it are Phobos, Eris, Alke, Ioke, and a Gorgoneion. On her helmet are 'the foot soldiers of a hundred cities' (*Il.* 5.738-44). When Agamemnon has his arming scene that announces his *aristeia* (*Il.* 11.36f.), his shield has the Gorgon, Deimos, and Phobos.

These figures that embody aspects of warfare may seem allegorical at times, as when Eris is said to be small at first but later to touch the sky with her head while her feet are planted on the earth (*Il.* 4.442f.). They also have an important narrative function. At critical points in the battle narratives, when the fighting is about to begin or to take an important turn, or is getting particularly fierce, they provide a shorthand summing up. They embody the actions and feelings that human beings unleash in situations of hostility. But they are more than signifiers. They are powers believed to be at work in human affairs alongside the major gods but not normally visible to human actors.[23] They are deeply engaged in the fighting and killing, active in favor of each side in turn, just as the major gods themselves are divided and fight. Violent behavior is something that gods and mortals have in common; it knits the two worlds together.

21. *Il.* 7.26, 8.171, 15.738, 16.362, 17.627.

22. Kirk's translation (Kirk [1990], 119). I follow Kirk and depart from West in treating Κυδοιμός as a personification and capitalizing the initial letter.

23. That there is thought to be such a further dimension to reality is suggested when Athena removes the mist from Diomedes' eyes so that he can distinguish between gods and mortals (*Il.* 5.127f.).

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Agamemnon's arming is part of an elaborate scene of preparation for the long day's fighting that will culminate in Hektor's killing of Patroklos and the battle over his corpse (Books 11-17). Its importance is heralded by the arrival of Eris, who stands on Odysseus' ship in the middle of the Akhaian camp and shouts:

> ἔνθα στᾶσ' ἤυσε θεὰ μέγα τε δεινόν τε
> ὄρθι', Ἀχαιοῖσιν δὲ μέγα σθένος ἔμβαλ' ἑκάστῳ
> καρδίῃ, ἄλληκτον πολεμίζεμεν ἠδὲ μάχεσθαι·
> τοῖσι δ' ἄφαρ πόλεμος γλυκίων γένετ' ἠὲ νέεσθαι
> ἐν νηυσὶ γλαφυρῇσι φίλην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.
>
> (*Il.* 11.10-14)

> Standing there, the goddess shouted loudly and terribly
> at high pitch, and she cast great strength into the Akhaians, each of them,
> in his heart, to wage war and fight without ceasing.
> And to them war immediately became sweeter than to go home
> in the hollow ships to their own paternal land.

This is the *Iliad*'s way of telling us why men do something that in everyday circumstances they might find repellent: fight, kill, and risk death themselves. It is an altered mental state that enables them to do so, and that makes them enthusiastic for battle—enthusiastic in the literal sense of ἔνθεοι, possessed or having a god within them, here the spirit of the goddess of competitive strife herself. The effect on them of Eris' shout is sudden and immediate (ἄφαρ). The passage is surely describing the upsurge of energy and passion that makes people act violently. The result is that fighting is 'sweeter' to them than homecoming—the same adjective that Akhilleus later uses of anger, which he associates with *eris*. The last two lines of the quotation recall Agamemnon's test of the army in Book 2, when, at his suggestion that the troops go home, they stampede to launch the ships. They are, at that point, not primed for war, but that happens through a human process that produces an altered psychological state in them. It begins with the beating of Thersites, is developed by Odysseus,[24] Nestor, and Agamemnon in their speeches of rebuke and exhortation, and is completed by Athena's marshaling of the army, which has the same effect as Eris' shout (*Il.* 2.451-54 = 11.11-14). It is important to connect these two scenes, the one showing how the dynamics of masses and leaders can dispose men to violence, the other showing the same phenomenon as the result of Eris' intervention. Together the scenes suggest that war is not simply imposed from without. Human meets divine motivation; the aggressive energies latent in humans

24. On the methods used in Odysseus' speech, see Cook (2003), 180-82.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

match the divine violence that conditions the Iliadic world. Thus the 'dew soaked with blood' that Zeus pours down from on high as the two armies group for battle (*Il.* 11.53-55) will find its counterpart in the blood that flows from men's bodies after the battle starts (*Il.* 11.164) and later: for example, in *Il.* 20.493-503, when Akhilleus' horses trample the shields and corpses of his victims like bulls trampling barley to husk it. The chariot's axle and rails are spattered with drops of blood kicked up by their hooves and by the wheels, Akhilleus' hands are spattered with gore, and the earth streams with blood.

More clearly psychological than the intervention of powers like Eris is the effect of armor on warriors in two moments of the narrative that correspond to one another. When Hektor puts on Akhilleus' armor that he stripped from Patroklos, the spirit of war (ἄρης)[25] enters him and his body is filled with war-strength (*Il.* 17.210-12).[26] The audience can appreciate how far he is beyond rational calculation about the odds for his survival because immediately before this point Zeus has given his pitying speech, foreseeing his death (*Il.* 17.198-208). Then, when Thetis puts before Akhilleus' feet the new armor that Hephaistos has made, at the sight the other Myrmidons tremble, but increased anger (χόλος) enters Akhilleus, his eyes flash terribly like fire, and he takes delight holding the god's splendid gifts in his hands (*Il.* 19.12-18). Similarly, when he first puts it on and tests its fit and how well he can run in it, the armor is like wings and he feels uplifted (*Il.* 19.384-86). Putting on armor that conceals the body and above all the face separates a man from the normal relations of life and his usual identity and makes him something other, exalted and eager to fight and kill. This is suggested particularly by the gleam of warriors' armor as they come together in battle, which the poem emphasizes again and again as a regular part of the spectacle of combat.[27]

This altered mental state helps explain why warriors fight and actually take pleasure in battle (χάρμη, which might strike us as a paradoxical notion until we understand the *Iliad*'s acute analysis of violence). Stirred up by Poseidon, the two Aiases are 'exultant in joy of combat, which the god placed in their *thumos*' (χάρμη γηθόσυνοι, τήν σφιν θεὸς ἔμβαλε θυμῷ, *Il.* 13.83). Immediately before this line, Telamonian Aias vividly describes his longing to fight as a bodily experience: his hands itch to curl around the spear, battle-strength (μένος) surges within him, and his feet cannot stay still (*Il.* 13.77-79).[28]

25. Unlike most editors, West prints the initial letter of this word in the lower case rather than capitalizing it. I think there is much to be said for this choice, although if we view the word as a proper name the passage is another example of one becoming possessed or ἔνθεος.

26. With characteristic astuteness, Eustathios links Hektor putting on this armor with the same act by Patroklos and by Akhilleus before him, and comments that just as Patroklos 'entered' the armor so Ares (or *ares*) entered him. See Collins' excellent discussion of *Il.* 17.210-12 (Collins [1998], 17-27), which examines what it means to be possessed by a god (ἔνθεος) and discusses Eustathios' comment.

27. The helmet's role in marking the separation between one's peacetime and wartime identities and personalities has been established in Hektor's scene with his son Astyanax (*Il.* 6.466-75).

28. Note Janko's comment on these lines (Janko [1992], 53): 'Aias' words are full of μένος, since μαιμάω, μενοινάω, ἄμοτον and μεμαώς are all from that root.'

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As with violence itself, human and divine feelings correspond: the gods take pleasure in watching mortals kill each other.[29] As the two armies clash at the beginning of the fateful third day's battle, Eris rejoices (χαῖρε, *Il.* 11.73). She is the only divinity now on the battlefield. The rest of the gods sit in their houses on Olympos, resentful of Zeus because he has forbidden them to interfere (there is discord among the gods too). Zeus takes no notice of them but sits apart 'exulting in his splendor [κύδει γαίων], looking upon the city of the Trojans and the ships of the Akhaians and the flash of bronze and men killing and perishing' (*Il.* 11.81-83). The phrase κύδει γαίων refers to the radiance of success, at once an enhanced feeling of self-esteem and a (re)affirmation of one's standing in the eyes of others.[30] The gods, who have the same concern as mortals with honor and standing (if anything, to a more intense degree), need constant assurance of their power. The same phrase occurs at *Il.* 8.51f., when Zeus watches at the beginning of the previous day's fighting.[31] Later, when he allows the other gods back to the battlefield, Zeus, sitting on Olympos, laughs to himself in joy at seeing 'the gods clashing in *eris*' (*Il.* 21.389f.). When he lifted the ban, he announced his intention of taking pleasure in the sight of gods and mortals fighting (ἔνθ' ὀρόων φρένα τέρψομαι, *Il.* 20.23), even though he also had the more serious motive of keeping Akhilleus from sacking Troy that day. Other gods can be similarly entertained; having decided to end the first day's battle with a duel, Athena and Apollo sit in an oak tree to watch, 'taking delight in mortals' (ἀνδράσι τερπόμενοι, *Il.* 7.58-61). Ancient commentators had difficulty with Zeus's 'apparent malevolence',[32] but it makes sense once one sees how divine violence and human violence are mutually implicated.

At the same time, mortals try in various ways to limit warfare and set boundaries on ferocity.[33] The kinds of feelings Aias describes are temporary surges that come and go; often they are prompted by a god, Poseidon in Aias' case, Athena in the case of Diomedes' *aristeia* in Book 5. In other well-known episodes, men strive on the battlefield to preserve some degree of civilized norms even in relation to the enemy, even though their purpose is to kill. Glaukos and Diomedes maintain relations of guest friendship across the barrier of hostility, and until Patroklos' death, Akhilleus was accustomed to spare the lives of his prisoners and hold them for ransom. In the final book, Akhilleus sees his own father in his aged enemy Priam, and the two share a scene of compassion and understanding.

29. Pleasure is not the only emotion the gods feel on watching mortal affairs (see Griffin [1980], 179-204, who discusses the full range of their responses as audience), but it is especially aroused in them by scenes of general combat.

30. 'Un rayonnement de puissance' (Chantraine [1999], 595, *s.v.* κῦδος). The participle is related to γάνυμαι, 'gleam' and then 'sparkle with joy', and also to γηθόσυνος, as in *Il.* 13.83, quoted above (Chantraine, *s.v.* γάνυμαι). Note Griffin's comment on divine and mortal laughter at the sufferings of others (Griffin [1980], 183): 'This mirth proceeds from a delighted sense of one's own superiority'.

31. On this passage see Griffin (1980), 180f., although he does not discuss the implications of the phrase κύδει γαίων.

32. Richardson (1993), 87 (on *Il.* 21.388-90). Cf. Griffin (1980), 183.

33. On this topic see especially Lynn-George (1996).

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

But the scene does not cancel or offset the violence of the war. It is a response to violence, is called forth by it, and would not take place without the resulting loss and grief. And it is perfectly balanced between the humaneness aroused by Akhilleus' and Priam's common sorrow and the knowledge that the war will continue and both of them will perish, notwithstanding Priam's hint that there might be an alternative.

Excessive reveling in warfare can be condemned. There is satiety of all things, says Menelaos over a fallen enemy, 'but the Trojans are insatiable of battle' (*Il.* 13.636-38).[34] Homeric warriors are supposed to be prudently courageous. As van Wees has argued, their mentality is essentially pragmatic, focused on '"common-sense" self-preservation as opposed to "fanatic" self-sacrifice'.[35] Nor is their motive in fighting only individual glory; a high value is put on cooperative efforts and mutual support, especially in battle.[36] On the other hand, this need for group cohesiveness can be in tension with the equally strong need of individuals to assert and protect their honor, and in war cooperation shows itself between warriors on the same side. Between opposing armies matters are different, although even here there are limits on the violence; corpses do not actually get fed to dogs and birds, for instance, although the threat is made often enough, and Akhilleus' mistreatment of Hektor's corpse is finally too much for most of the gods (with three exceptions, *Il.* 24.22-54). Still, the violence between enemies can spiral out of control, as it does in Akhilleus' rampage in Books 20–22 (during which eels and fish do eat Trojan corpses), just as violence is always a danger within communities because of the heroes' sensitivity to slights and quickness to anger.[37] As with warfare, so with the warriors themselves: they are fiercely protective of their honor, quick to avenge any real or perceived slight, and so likely to explode in passionate and destructive anger.[38]

34. Of course, we should take account of the context of these words and the rhetorical effect Menelaos is aiming at. In a boast over an enemy one has killed, it is good strategy to blame the other side. When a warrior tries to intimidate an opponent, he uses the opposite strategy. So when Hektor, facing Ajax in the duel of Book 7, boasts of his warrior prowess, he describes it with martial zest (*Il.* 7.233-43).

35. van Wees (1996), 58. The whole article gives a balanced assessment of Homeric warriors' motives for fighting. See also Collins (1998), 69. An excellent example of a warrior's interest in self-preservation is the speech by Telamonian Aias at *Il.* 17.238-45 (he fears not so much for Patroklos' corpse as for his own head). It may make a difference, however, that he and Menelaos are fighting to defend Patroklos' body rather than attacking aggressively. Hektor for his part wants to gain possession of the corpse so that he can cut off the head and feed the rest to the dogs (*Il.* 17.125-27, 18.175-77).

36. van Wees (1996), 13-29; Allan and Cairns (2011), 138; Graziosi and Haubold (2003), on ἠνορέη, 'manliness' in a positive sense, as opposed to ἀγηνορίη, 'excessive manliness', which is considered a negative quality so that the word is used pejoratively.

37. See Deacy (2000), on Athena and Ares as each embodying the contradictory nature of war: 'controlled and defensive violence, but also violence that is wild and aggressive' (294).

38. Most (2003) shows how even a generous feeling like pity can be implicated with anger in the *Iliad*, when a warrior, pitying a comrade who has been killed, is inspired by anger against the killer and seeks revenge. Cf. Nagy's argument that in Hesiod's account of the races of mortals (*W&D* 106-201), the fourth race (heroes) corresponds to the positive aspects of the Homeric hero, the third (bronze) to his 'recessive dark side' (Nagy [1979], 151-73; quotation from 159). I think that this dark side is not very recessive, however. Cf. also Clarke (2004b), 80.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

As the *Iliad* proceeds, the causes of the war (Helen's theft, the anger of some of the gods against Troy) and its purposes (the destruction of Troy, revenge for Patroklos) multiply, and even the plan of Zeus seems to have more than one possible purpose. The problem is not that the Trojan War is meaningless: it has too many possible meanings and goals, which vary according to the perspective one adopts. It will find an end—of sorts—in the sack of Troy, but with its retardations and reversals the *Iliad*'s narrative takes a roundabout path toward even that goal (and stops short of it). But even from the relatively limited perspective of this outcome, the war's purpose, which is a question that hangs over the poem's first four books especially,[39] becomes harder and harder to discern, along with its direction. The war began as an attack on a city to avenge a wrong and to restore honor, but it now takes on a grimly reciprocal quality, with aggressors and defenders leveled with each other. The reverses that they suffer because of Akhilleus' withdrawal mean that the Akhaians have to fight to defend their ships and wall, and their encampment takes on the character of a besieged city.[40] The Trojans, in defending their city, go on the offensive in an attempt to burn the ships and kill all their enemy. The switch in roles is especially noticeable when Patroklos' corpse becomes the focus of battle in Book 17. The Akhaians fight to defend the body from the mutilation that the Trojans fight to inflict. Hektor's aggressive role is underscored when he puts on Akhilleus' armor; at the same time, that act foreshadows Akhilleus' return to battle, Hektor's death, and therefore a re-reversal of roles between Trojans and Akhaians (*Il.* 17.198-208). A similar sign of the Akhaians' defensive situation, but also of the way this will be reversed with the return of Akhilleus to battle, is that, when he appears at the wall, the flames from the golden cloud Athena puts around his head are compared to beacons from a besieged island city at night to summon help from neighbors (*Il.* 18.203-14). This simile should be read along with the one at *Iliad* 21.522-25, where Akhilleus, now on the offensive, inflicts suffering on the Trojans that is compared to the suffering of those whose city is burning under the wrath of the gods—a clear anticipation of Troy's fate.

This blurring of roles contributes to a more general feeling in the poem of cycles of violence that everyone must try to cope with and that no one can help. Odysseus expresses a feeling that war endlessly recurs when he rebukes Agamemnon for proposing to flee Troy. Don't give orders to us, he says, 'to whom Zeus has given it to unwind bitter wars from youth to old age, until [or so that, ὄφρα] we each die' (*Il.* 14.85-87). The conjunction is ambiguous. If it means 'until', Odysseus is expressing the function of the heroes (or aristocratic elite) that Sarpedon also describes in his famous speech to Glaukos at *Iliad* 12.309-28: they live to fight until death in order to defend or enhance the

39. Why, for example, does it take Zeus's deception of Agamemnon in Book 2 to re-start the fighting when the Akhaians clearly want to go home? Why should the war not be settled by Menelaos' defeat of Paris in Book 3?

40. Rabel (1997), 107-12.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

community, in return for material advantages and privileges in a reciprocal relationship with the people. Violence in behalf of the community, that is, has a socially cohesive function, although it also generally means the death of the heroes (which is partly compensated for by *kleos*, the other reason Sarpedon gives for fighting).[41] If, on the other hand, the conjunction means 'so that' and introduces a purpose clause, Odysseus' words open a window on to divine malevolence that is also to be found elsewhere in the tradition: Zeus imposes war, the Trojan War in particular, in order to kill the heroes, and this raises questions of what the plan of Zeus, the Διὸς βουλή of *Iliad* 1.5, is—or rather, of the various senses it can have.[42]

The reversals by which the Akhaians and Trojans take on these inversely symmetrical roles are, of course, a result of Zeus's plan to honor Akhilleus by giving victory to the Trojans for a while. In the longer term, Troy will fall, and one of the things that ensures this outcome is the death of Hektor, which is linked in a causal chain to Akhilleus' withdrawal from battle and the shorter-term plan of Zeus. But Troy's destruction will involve, if it does not necessitate, Akhilleus' death, which is linked temporally if not causally with the death of Hektor and which is part of Zeus's larger design. So even here there are equivalences between the two sides. The further meanings that seem to lie behind the phrase 'plan of Zeus'—a plan to relieve the earth of over-population, as in the beginning of the *Cypria*, or to end the race of heroes, as in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*[43]—entail the final effacement of differences between the attackers and defenders, between the original wrongdoer and those who seek redress.

My point is that situations of violence, although they may begin with a well-defined offense and retaliation, seem to widen and to become too big for any mortal to control. Everyone seems caught up in such situations and compelled to behave violently. Homer's image for this is the growth of Eris, who is small at first, but whose head finally reaches the heavens (*Il.* 4.440-43), and the successively widening senses of the 'plan of Zeus' also express it. Distinctions become blurred and the parties to conflict become leveled with one another in identically destructive behavior until someone eventually wins. And even the victors suffer, as the tales of difficult and sometimes fatal *nostoi* or homecomings show. But we should not conclude that violence is an independent force, as Weil depicts it. Violence is something humans do to each other; it arises in social and cultural interactions. It may be rooted in innate aggressive tendencies, but it is sometimes controlled and sometimes facilitated by social and political forms.

41. See especially Redfield (1994), 99-103.

42. See Scodel (1982), 47f., who opts for a purpose clause, although I would not follow her in limiting the 'plan of Zeus' to his agreement with Thetis to let the Trojans win for a while in order to honor Akhilleus.

43. *Cypria* fr. 1 Allen; Hes. fr. 204.95-104. The phrase 'plan of Zeus' at *Il.* 1.5 will bear this more comprehensive sense as well as the one immediately pertinent to the plot of the *Iliad*, as its occurrence in the *Cypria* fragment shows.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

So, at least, violence appears from the perspective of the actors within the *Iliad*'s narrative. But from a broader, cosmologic viewpoint, this violence is not necessarily random or purposeless. Sheila Murnaghan has argued that the various possible meanings of the 'plan of Zeus' are operative in the background of the poem, that the deaths of mortal heroes entailed in the wider as well as the narrower senses of the plan serve the purpose of sustaining Zeus's supremacy, and that he and the other gods need continuing cycles of mortals' deaths as recurrent confirmation of their own immortality. From this point of view, mortals only seem to be pursuing their own projects; Zeus is the master-planner, and no matter how *ad hoc* and inefficient his plan appears within the poem's narrative it has this larger, grim coherence.[44] This thesis has great explanatory power. It gives full resonance to the phrase that describes Zeus as he watches mortal combat, 'exulting in his splendor'. It explains the effacement of differences between the two sides of a conflict: in Zeus's wider perspective they no longer matter. It helps explain why the *Iliad* does not end with the destruction of Troy. The sack of the city, from this perspective, is not so much the culmination of a long story as a striking episode in a continuing violent cosmological process. Murnaghan's argument also casts the various ways of limiting violence in a new light, as ensuring the survival of the human race beyond the deaths of individuals so that mortals can continue to die to ensure the gods' power and immortality. At the same time, the qualities evoked in such scenes as the final meeting between Akhilleus and Priam become all the more valuable as expressions of human solidarity in the face of an inhuman world. We can also appreciate how superbly the *Iliad* balances short-term and long-term perspectives and plays them off against one another.[45] The plan of Zeus to honor Akhilleus through Akhaian losses but to destroy Troy seems to unfold in an improvisatory and barely coherent way, but in the long run it appears as a way to prolong the war and take more human lives. This is a murderous design, but Zeus is acting the way a god by his nature is supposed to. In sum, the vista upon human and cosmic history that the ambiguity of the phrase 'the plan of Zeus' opens up shows that violence is at the heart of what a god is and what a mortal is, that these identities are founded on violence.[46]

44. Murnaghan (1997), building especially on Slatkin (1986 and 1991). Cf. also Scodel (1982). On the ambiguity of the 'plan of Zeus' in the *Iliad* poem, see also Marks (2002) and Elmer (2013), 155-59. My argument would dovetail with their view that this indeterminacy is a sign of the *Iliad*'s absorption and supersession of epichoric traditions: a Panhellenic perspective could well entail a broad view of violence as universal because of the longer sweep of divine and human history it encompassed (see next note).

45. On these various perspectives, see especially Elmer (2013), 157f. There are, as he says, actually three perspectives: a short-term plan to aid the Trojans against the Akhaians, which corresponds to what Apollo would like the narrative of the *Iliad* to be (the safety of Troy); a medium-term plan for the sack of Troy, which corresponds to what Hera and Athena want the narrative to be; and a long-term plan for the destruction of Trojans *and* Akhaians.

46. I am not, however, reducing these identities to violence. What it means to be human is also defined by the 'structures of care' that Lynn-George (1996) eloquently describes. But it is also reductive of the *Iliad*'s complex vision to ignore the violence with which these qualities, as I have said, are deeply implicated.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Because of its apparently self-perpetuating nature, questions of the origins of violence and responsibility for it can be tricky. The tradition reflected in the *Cypria* locates the Trojan War's origin in the *eris* that broke out among the gods at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. The judgment of Paris and his theft of Helen redirected this *eris* from the divine to the human community, which was then divided by events that led to the Trojan War.[47] Then, in Book 1 of the *Iliad*, conflict over a woman that repeats the issue between Akhaians and Trojans breaks out in the Akhaian camp. Like the gods, the Akhaians attempt to cope with *eris* by turning it outward in renewed fighting against an external enemy, the Trojans, after uniting internally through the scapegoating of Thersites. But that still leaves the wrath of Akhilleus, and so this expedient is not wholly successful, as it is not for the gods, who are divided into Akhaian and Trojan factions. Once the division internal to the Akhaians is healed in Book 19, the *eris* within the human community results, although it does not end, in the destruction of Troy.

There is, then, a sort of chain reaction from the wedding of Peleus and Thetis to the sack of Troy, with the gods imposing violence on mortals or violence spilling over from gods to humans, but this formulation leaves out human agency. The divine action finds a response in mortals. Neither the Trojan War nor the quarrel over Briseis would have taken place, or have taken place so readily, without the extremely high value placed by Homeric society on honor.[48] Whatever aggression exists in humans is unleashed at the slightest threat to a person's honor, and retaliation calls forth further retaliation. The gods do set the scene, but both mortals and gods behave violently. And violence spreads from the gods only to rebound to them, reaching a crescendo when Zeus sends the gods back to the battlefield, where they will fight each other in *Iliad* 21. Violent conflict among mortals originating among the gods now calls forth renewed violent conflict among the gods. But there is an interesting difference. When the gods finally come to blows in Book 21, some refrain from actually fighting and when the others pair off to duel the results are merely comic (*Il.* 21.383-513). They have to be; serious combat among the gods would threaten the whole cosmic order. This is hinted at in the fight between Hephaistos and the river Skamandros, which suggests the elemental struggle between fire and water. The danger has been made explicit, however, when Zeus first sends the gods to battle and they urge on their mortal surrogates. Zeus thunders dreadfully, Poseidon shakes earth and mountains, Troy and the Akhaian ships, and the king of the dead, Hades, leaps from his throne far below and shrieks in fear that the earthquake

47. Cook (2012), xxvii-xxix, suggests a wider context: the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, the judgment of Paris, and the Trojan War are displacements onto humanity of the *eris* of the cosmogonic combat myth (so that *eris*, I would add, is at the heart of the world order).

48. On honor as one of the motivations 'that make human beings complicit in their own destruction', see Murnaghan (1997), 29-32. I discussed the dynamics of masculine honor in Homeric society in Thalmann (1998), 115-70.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

will tear open the earth and expose his terrible dank home to gods and mortals (*Il.* 20.54-65). This threat that the world will come undone appears to be a theme in narratives of divine combat; it occurs in Hesiod's accounts of Zeus's struggles against the Titans and Typhoeus (*Theog.* 700-05, 844-52).

If divine violence has to be limited to preserve the cosmos, matters are somewhat different among mortals, although here too it never gets completely out of bounds. Akhilleus' fight in and with the river probably represents the extreme, but his helplessness against the river marks the limit not only of his strength but also of the destruction of which humans are capable. Life in divine and human society must and does go on, although it is always threatened by violence. Within the *Iliad* and in later Greek tradition, the Trojan War is a high point of destructiveness, one that seems deliberately contrived by the gods. Zeus's purpose in sending the other gods back to battle is to provide a check on Akhilleus, who is so furiously angry at Hektor that he might otherwise sack Troy on this day, 'beyond fate'. And so Zeus 'aroused persistent war' (*Il.* 20.26-31). Similarly, Zeus wonders whether he should let Hektor kill Patroklos during the fight over Sarpedon's corpse or if he should postpone that death 'and increase steep suffering for still more men', and decides to do the latter, allowing Patroklos to push the Trojans back to the city and 'take away the lives of many' (*Il.* 16.644-55). Patroklos will die and Troy will be sacked, but there is no use rushing to those results; deferring the fated outcome will destroy many more heroes.[49]

But the intervention of Eris in the wedding of Peleus and Thetis is only a cause of the Trojan War, not the origin of human or divine violence, and so not the ultimate cause of the war either. Eris already existed before that wedding, and was a goddess.[50] Nor is it possible to foresee an end to violence in the epic tradition (and even beyond). After the destruction of Troy it continues in the quarrel (*eris*) that breaks out among the Akhaian victors (*Od.* 3.130-36); notice that it moves from being directed outward at the now-defeated enemy to dividing the Akhaian community internally, the reverse of the direction it takes in the first two books of the *Iliad*.[51] It seems that when conflict ends in one place it will break out in another. The violence continues in the Akhaians' difficult returns—including that of Odysseus.

It is worth considering briefly the last books of the *Odyssey*, because that poem continues the story of violence from the *Iliad* and brings it to a conclusion, although a merely wishful one. When Odysseus kills the suitors in Book 22, he is, of course, punishing them not only for threatening his honor and position in family and society, but also for blatant violations of the norms of hospitality,

49. Cf. Murnaghan (1997), 28. Marks (2002), 9, points out that Akhilleus' withdrawal from battle also serves the purpose of killing heroes—Akhaians as well as Trojans.

50. Hes. *Theog.* 225.

51. For correspondences between Nestor's narrative of the quarrel at the end of the war and the quarrel in *Iliad* 1, see Elmer (2013), 42.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which are under the protection of Zeus. From this point of view we have the justified violence of a theodicy. But from another perspective his revenge is paradoxical.[52] The conflict of men over a desirable woman represents the situation of the Trojan War, and Book 1 of the *Iliad*, brought once again into the community and in fact into the house, where competitive relations are supposed to be suspended. When Odysseus shoots Antinoos as the suitor is raising the wine cup to his lips and when Antinoos in his death throes kicks over the table and the food is defiled (*Od.* 22.8-21), we read poetic justice, of course; but the civility of the meal and the institution of hospitality are also overthrown, as they are in Agamemnon's murder (*Od.* 11.405-20, especially 419f.). Righteous revenge carries an inevitable stain of violence. The avenger, though justified, becomes like the offender he punishes: it was not left to the Attic tragedians to discover this fact. And of course the act of vengeance calls forth revenge in turn, especially in the 'self-help' conditions of Homeric society and under the requirements of honor. So Odysseus and Telemakhos have to face the suitors' kinsmen in battle. And so we seem to confront another spiral of violent conflict, but for Athena's intervention. In the ferocity of Odysseus' revenge—again, however justified—and in the flare-up of violence within him at the very end (*Od.* 24.537f.), the poem may also be showing the difficulty of a warrior returning to home and peace after the extreme conditions of combat—a problem we are all too familiar with in the wake of Viet Nam and Iraq. That the situation between Odysseus and the suitors replicates that between the two sides at Troy suggests that the battle in *Odyssey* 22 represents a prolongation of the violence at Troy, now in the particularly deadly form of violence within Odysseus' community and within his house. The only end to these cycles of violence is utopian: Athena's peace-making at the end of the poem. Contrived and wishful though this conclusion is, I think it is honest. Its character suggests that there can be no human solution to problems of violence and revenge.[53] Otherwise, the *Odyssey* cannot imagine a resolution of the problem of violence, any more than the *Iliad* can.

One of the things the Homeric poems tell us, then, is that violence is inextricably part of human culture and society. And this poses a problem, of which the poems make us acutely aware: if violence is so engrained in human beings, how can a social order exist, let alone flourish? The challenge for a society is not simply to limit or contain violence, but also to turn its citizens' aggressive energies to positive use—creative, not merely destructive violence. The

52. On what follows see Thalmann (1998), 178f., 231f., 283f. Cook (1999), 164-67, brings out very well the ambivalence of the revenge and within the character of Odysseus, especially with reference to the similes at the conclusion of his victory over the suitors.

53. Aiskhylos' *Oresteia* will later suggest that some progress can be made against these problems in the institution of the lawcourt as a way of limiting violence in the form of reciprocal revenge. Otherwise, it recommends the usual partial remedy of avoiding internal strife and promoting civic unity by collectively turning enmity against those outside the community. Or so I read *Eum.* 976-87 (especially καὶ στυγεῖν μιᾷ φρενί, 'and to hate with one mind').

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Homeric poems show us ways of managing possible violence. In the first place, from the perspective of a community, it makes a great deal of difference where violence is directed. Just as cooperation among comrades in battle is highly valued, as we have seen,[54] the organization of Homeric society seems designed to limit violence within the community and turn it outward against other communities. Here I have in mind not only Book 2 of the *Iliad*, but all those plundering raids between communities that both poems recall. Booty acquired in this way increases a successful warrior's wealth and prestige and is thus fundamental to the formation and maintenance of social hierarchies. So this externally directed violence contributes to internal order and social structure.

It is perhaps this distinction between outward and internal conflict that enables Akhilleus, in the passage with which we began, to perceive so clearly the error of his quarrel with Agamemnon but to ignore the ways in which his insight might apply also to the Trojan War. But if internal strife is especially loathed,[55] the *Iliad*, as we have seen, also presents a complicated view of war between communities. And the boundary between the two is porous and anything but fixed. As with the quarrel of *Iliad* 1, the *eris* among the victorious Akhaians immediately after the sack of Troy, and Odysseus' revenge on the suitors, external violence is all too easily imported into the community; and when mortals are seen as a single community as opposed to the gods, the distinction vanishes and all warfare is internal.[56] These matters, as we have seen, are no different for the gods.

Still, there are ways to channel aggression into socially creative forms. Competition for honor shapes the basic dynamics of Homeric society and takes various forms: for example, competition between men to benefit their community, games of all sorts, and bride contests (in which, in a rather brutal sense, women play a central role in maintaining the social order). These competitions form and affirm hierarchies and play a basic role in the social structure. They are, however, risky. Games, for instance, are a domesticated form of warfare,[57] as the setting of the games for Patroklos within the *Iliad* makes clear. Competition can be peaceful, but it also threatens to turn violent, especially because of the supreme importance of masculine honor. Consider, for instance, in the games for Patroklos, the way Idomeneus and Oilean Ajax almost come to blows over who is ahead in the chariot race, the delicate negotiation between Antilokhos

54. In fact, the high value placed on cooperation seems to be a response to the problem of how a society in which violence plays a constitutive role can survive; a publicly shared ideal of internal cohesion helps check violence. Cf. Ulf's argument that the need to avoid internal strife and foster unity is primary in Homeric ethics (1990), although I would not follow him in concluding from this that the poems are informed by a 'Demos-Ethik' rather than an 'Adels-Ethik'.

55. Cf., for example, Nestor's words at *Il.* 9.63f.: ἀφρήτωρ ἀθέμιστος ἀνέστιός ἐστιν ἐκεῖνος / ὃς πολέμου ἔραται ἐπιδημίοο κρυόεντος ('unworthy of community, law, and hearth is that man who is in love with war within the community that chills one with horror').

56. For an example, see Elmer (2012).

57. I discussed this point at some length in Thalmann (1998), 133-40, and Thalmann (2004). One omission from my bibliography there, I now find, was Beidelman (1989), who describes athletic contests as 'domesticated combat' (131; I am grateful to Erwin Cook for this reference).

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and Menelaos that is necessary to settle peacefully their dispute over the outcome of that race, and the way the match in armor between Diomedes and Telamonian Ajax almost turns deadly. Or consider the way the contest of the bow in *Odyssey* 21 turns into the battle against the suitors, just as the bride competition over Helen, narrated in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, is followed by the Trojan War, the origin of which follows abruptly—partway into a line—after the contest (Hes. fr. 204.95).

As these examples show, there are lines of continuity between certain social practices that are domesticated forms of violence turned to constructive ends and the open and destructive violence of the battlefield. There are various directions we might go in thinking about this connection. Margo Kitts, for example, has argued for a direct relation, effected through 'metaphorical transformations', between oath-taking scenes in the *Iliad*, with animal sacrifice—violence intended to settle conflicts—and certain battlefield killings.[58] We might also think of Bourdieu's 'symbolic violence', which maintains social order by reinforcing unequal relations and stands in place of actual violence.[59] As Homer and Hesiod both show, Zeus's cosmic order is founded on violence and maintained by it. His constant companions after his victory over the Titans are Kratos and Biē (Hes. *Theog*. 401), who also personify the very qualities by which men win in games (*Theog*. 435-38)—another sign that athletic competition is actually controlled violence. Zeus has, of course, overthrown the Titans violently and he keeps them in Tartaros by force, under guard by the Hundred-Handers (*Theog*. 729-35). He keeps the gods in order, if uneasily so, through narratives of occasions when he used force on them and through threats to do so again (*Il*. 8.5-27, 15.18-30). If the divine order is a projection of certain aspects of human society, it clarifies what exists among mortals in more disguised form—in this case the violence at the heart of social order, constructive but always potentially, and sometimes actually, destructive.

So violence both is accommodated in Homeric society and remains a constant problem. I want to end by suggesting that there is an important reason for the Homeric poems to examine the various aspects of violence as deeply as they do. They use heroic myth to depict partial solutions to a problem that surely confronted the polis as it emerged and as it developed over the succeeding centuries: namely, how to limit violence and even turn it to social advantage so that the polis could survive and even flourish. The poems offer their audiences ways of thinking about violence through their subtle and sophisticated representation of its many forms, and so a poetic performance enabled its listeners to consider

58. Kitts (2005).

59. Bourdieu (1977), 183-97. Cf. Žižek (2008), 1f., on the distinction between subjective and objective violence, the former being the direct, physical form of violence that I have mainly focused on here, the latter the violence exerted by social and economic formations that he argues underlie subjective violence. Conversely, 'positive peace' (as opposed to 'negative peace'—the absence of war) would be the elimination of structures of inequality in world society and the equal sharing of power and wealth. See Gittings (2012), 1-3, with bibliography.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press

problems central to their own society from the distant and clarifying perspective of heroic society. And these epics speak profoundly to problems connected with violence that we continue to face today.

I am not claiming that violence is all that the Homeric epics are about. They are about many things and richly repay all kinds of readings. But I am claiming that violence is not just part of the background, but is a fundamental part of the poems' depiction of what human beings do and what human beings are. It is so obviously there that it is easy to take it for granted. But to be attentive to it as a problem and to understand its importance within the context of the emerging polis, I would suggest, hugely enriches our reading of both epics.[60]

University of Southern California
thalmann@usc.edu

60. It is a pleasure to thank the editors, Helen Morales and Sara Lindheim, for organizing the conference at which an earlier version of this paper was presented, the Classics Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara, for its hospitality on that occasion, and the participants in the conference for a lively and helpful discussion. Warm thanks are also due to Russell Pascatore, Afroditi Angelopoulou, and Erwin Cook for reading drafts of the paper. I benefited enormously from their comments in improving it. I am of course responsible for flaws that remain.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rmu.2015.5 Published online by Cambridge University Press