Dearness and death in the *Iliad*

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**Abstract:** Readers have often pointed out that representations of dying warriors in the *Iliad*, despite the impersonal, unreflective, heterodiegetic form of narration, are typically suffused with a certain pathos. What do we mean by “pathos” in this context? It is argued that we are referring to a group of distinguishable emotions related to affiliative attachment, elicited by a number of recurring motifs or situation types. Characters perceived as dear and as embodying dear principles are vulnerable, suffer and die, eliciting tenderness, compassion and grief, but also being moved and poignancy. Conceptualizations and expressions of these emotions in the Homeric text are discussed. It is further argued that the recurrent appeals to these emotions throughout the poem cannot be defended against the charge of sentimentality by merely referring to the “noble restraint” manifested by the narrator’s dispassionate tone in this context. The ruptured affiliative bonds that form the basis for this pathos are not contemplated in an isolated, undisturbed fashion, but they are crucially presented as existing in opposition to other kinds of affective motivations that push and pull the Homeric heroes in other directions. Dearness makes a brave but futile stand against other values, pleasures and desires that also endow heroic life with meaning, especially the quest for eternal fame.

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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Eric Cullhed (born 1985) specializes in the history of ancient literary criticism, aesthetic values in ancient Greece and Rome, and the philosophy and history of emotions. Cullhed studied Greek and Latin philology at Stockholm University, Uppsala University and Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. He received his Ph.D. in Greek from Uppsala University in 2014, and was promoted to Associate Professor (Docent) at the same institution in 2018. He is currently Pro Futura Scientia Research Fellow at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study and co-general editor of *Eustathius Online* (Brill, Leiden). This article is part of a larger endeavor to contribute to the ongoing interdisciplinary debate on how to define the emotion which speakers of English sometimes—but never always nor exclusively—refer to when declaring that they are “moved” or “touched”. Previous publications from this project include “What Evokes Being Moved” (*Emotion Review* 11, 2019).

**PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT**

For almost three millennia, a continuous stream of new generations of readers have encountered and enjoyed the *Iliad*, an epic poem that derives from the Greek song culture that flourished in the eighth century BCE, depicting a decisive phase in the Trojan war. Critics have often pointed out that one of the great merits of the poem is the “pathos” that permeates the scenes in which warriors on both sides of the conflict are killed. What do we mean by pathos in this context? Characters perceived as dear and as embodying dear principles are vulnerable, suffer and die, eliciting a group of distinguishable emotions related to affiliative attachment. We feel tenderness, compassion and grief, but also the emotion that speakers of English usually refer to when they say that they are “moved” or “touched”.

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1. "Objective" pathos recipes in the *Iliad*

The lost Greek epic *Cypria* began with an ecological crisis. The godlike heroic race had turned out too grand, too rich, too prosperous. Earth groaned under the weight of overpopulation and, in order to alleviate her pain, Zeus decided to send destruction on mankind in the form of armed conflict (West, 2013, p. 66). The myth of the Trojan War was not about the triumph of the good over the wicked; it was about a whole species of human beings marching towards extinction.

In the *Iliad* too, the will of Zeus is that countless Trojan and Achaeian strong souls should be hurled down to Hades. For the most part, the representation of these deaths will not take the form of a thrilling flow of bloodshed or a satisfying oscillation between suspense and relief as some likable protagonist precariously struggles and gloriously prevails over an obnoxious or faceless enemy. Every life matters and every moment of death is as necessary as it is painful. In the din of battle, Kebriones' forehead is smashed to pieces by a stone,

and many sharp spears were driven home about Kebriones
and many feathered arrows sprung from the bowstrings, many
great throwing stones pounded against the shields, as they fought on
hard over his body, as he in the turning dust lay
mightily in his might, his horsemanship all forgotten (*Iliad* 16.772–6, here and henceforth quoted from Lattimore, 1951; when necessary, the Greek is quoted from; West, 1998–2000).

Iphidamas, a boy from Thrace had married his cousin Theano but was forced to leave the nuptial rejoicings and depart for Troy. Agamemnon tore the spear out of his hands,

struck the neck with his sword, and unstrung him.
So Iphidamas fell there and went into the brazen slumber,
unhappy, who came to help his own people, and left his young wife
a bride, and had known no delight from her yet, and given much for her (11.240–3)

Agamemnon also butchers Bienor and Oïleus, stabbing he latter warrior in the face so that his brain “was all spattered forth” within the helmet,

and Agamemnon the lord of men left them lying there
and their white bodies showing, since he had stripped off their tunics (11.99–100).

The narrator reveals no shock or compassion for what occurs but appears to speak, as Friedrich Schiller put it, “as if he bore no heart in his bosom” (On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry from 1794–1795, ed. Hinderer & Dahlstrom, 1993, p. 199). We should avoid making a straw man out of the subsequent generations of nineteenth-century critics for the position that Homer was a purely objective, impersonal imitator of nature. These readers readily admitted that the singer “himself was indubitably moved, but it is not his being moved that he puts on display” (Atterbom, 1866, p. 45: “sångaren var vid denna teckning tårfylld, själv rört, men det är icke sin rörelse han visar”). Yet, it was not until the latter half of the twentieth century that literary scholars attempted to specify more clearly the structures by which the superficially dispassionate account is tinged with implicit subjective colorings through a particular selection or restriction of narrative information (see discussion in Conte, 2007, p. 25 n. 2).

In his seminal essay “Homerid Pathos and Objectivity” (1976, 1980), Jasper Griffin noted that readers in antiquity had been sensitive to this aspect of the text. The concluding words on Kebriones lying in the whirl of dust, for example, were found “pleasing and flowing all around with passion” by ancient scholars (καὶ ἡδῆς ἐπεφώνησε καὶ περιπαθῶς, *bt-scholium on the Iliad* 16.775a, here and henceforth quoted from Erbse, 1969–1977). Inspired by such reactions, Griffin
(1976) argued that even if these scenes take the form of mere statements of fact about the previous biographies and unfolding deaths of minor characters, the details we are provided with have a predictable effect on the reader. This effect, he argued, is not “vividness”, “authenticity” or “variation” (e.g. bT-scholia on the Iliad 4.473–79 and 5.68b on authenticity; 5.70c and 11.104–5 on variation; 5.81 on vividness; for a more generous reading of these notes as calling attention to the “bright unbearable reality” of the Iliadic death scenes, see Oswald, 2011, p. 1). More on the mark, Griffin argued, were the comments in the same sources on the emotional import of the facts that the poet provides. When Eurypylus slays “brilliant Hypsenor”, cutting “the arm’s weight from him, so that the hand dropped bleeding to the ground” (T-scholiwm on the Iliad 5.81), when Orsilochos and Krethon are killed “as two young lions”, crashing “now to the ground as if they were two tall pine trees”, a commentator noted that the poet “augmented the passion by showing that they where young and that they were twins, moving the listener to compassion” (ἡδύσησα το πάθος καὶ ὅτι ἡμώντες καὶ ὅτι διδύμαι ἦσαν δηλώσας, καὶ εἰς αὐτούς κινεῖ τὸν ἀκροατὴν, T-scholium on the Iliad 550a–b). In other words, the poet of the Iliad is a master of the objective correlate, of dealing with emotions not by naming them, expressing them or representing their physiology or phenomenology, but by finding “a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion” (Eliot, 1921, p. 92). But what ingredients are included in these formulae, and what “particular emotions” do they produce?

In order to avoid “maudlin or baseless subjectivity of judgment” (Griffin, 1976, p. 162), Griffin devised a method that did not presuppose the transhistorical validity of his own or the scholiasts’ intuitions about the emotional significance of the passages under consideration. This method consisted in distinguishing a set of motifs that appear alone or in clusters not only when the narrator speaks in the dispassionate mode, but also in explicitly emotional embedded speeches, such as boastful taunts against enemies or tearful laments for fallen friends. For instance, in one moment Glaukos ridicules Hector for being unable to help his comrades “who for your sake, far from their friends and the land of their fathers, are wearing their lives away” (ll. 16.539–40, added emphasis). In another moment, when Patroklos sees that Eurypylus is badly wounded, he “looks at him in pity” (δίων ὠκεῖερ) and speaks “lamenting” or “compassionately” (ὁλοφρόμενος). “Poor wretches, you leaders and men of counsel among the Danaans, was it your fate then, far from your friends and the land of your fathers, to glut with your shining fat the running dogs here in Troy land?” (ll. 11.816–18, added emphasis). Accordingly, when we find the epic narrator briefly and factually stating that Hippothoos fell “far from fertile Larisa” (ll. 17.301), it seems safe to assume that this biographical fact is intended to evoke a similar response as in the two previous passages. Besides “far from home”, the intrinsically emotional motifs identified by Griffin (1976) include “brothers falling together”, “youth/beauty brought low”, “near helpless friends”, “suffering in one’s own country”, “lack of care after death”, “unrecognizable in death and mutilation”, “widowed wife and orphaned child”, “young husband”, “bereaved parents”, “pathetic ignorance”, “short life/doom” and “the vanity of all human efforts”.

Griffin’s study stands out as an example of methodologically robust affective narratology avant la lettre, in that it employs text-internal analysis in order to connect a series of readily identifiable situation types to emic emotion concepts and/or emotional reactions attested in the Homeric text itself. In the context of the present special issue on how the study of literature and literary practices can be informed by and—ideally—contribute to cognitive science, I would like to address two sets of theoretical questions that arise when we reconsider Griffin’s study from this perspective. The first set of questions concerns the extent to which the analysis of the “objective pathos” of the Iliad can be refined in the light of systematic theoretical research on what kind of processes emotions are, on their cultural contingency and by what criteria different emotion types can be differentiated from one another. The aim of Griffin’s method was to avoid relying on introspection in order to detect the emotional significance of the passages to which he calls attention. However, a glance at the reception of these passages reveal that Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and modern
readers have all been intuitively sensitive to the effect that Griffin describes (besides the ancient and medieval scholiasts that Griffin himself quotes, see Cullhed & Iordanoglou, 2019). Is it possible to claim that these motifs evoke the same or at least very similar affective responses in readers from different cultural contexts spread out across almost three millennia? Moreover, what does “pathos” mean in this context? Is it a single emotion, a set of related emotions, or does every motif elicit its own emotion? Different from other contributions to this special issue, focussing on the feeling-based atmosphere of the fictional world (see Christiansen) or readers’ emotional engagements (see Skjerdingstad and Tangerås; Polvinen and Sklar), this article will hence foreground character-based emotions.

The second issue concerns Griffin’s strongly positive evaluation of the feature in question. He attributed the greatness of the *Iliad* to its consistently tragic view on human life and death, but he also realized that the appeal to mawkish emotions was open to the charge of sentimentality. It is the dispassionate style, he argued, that “preserves the poem from sentimentality on the one hand and sadism on the other” (Griffin, 1976, p. 186). There is an assumption that pathos—as long as it is communicated with restrained “objectivity”—equals greatness, but in this regard too we should avoid a “baseless subjectivity of judgment”. How does pathos contribute to the aesthetic success of the poem?

2. Making sense of emotions

What is meant by “pathos”? The *Oxford English Dictionary* (s.v. 2) defines it as “a quality which evokes pity, sadness, or tenderness”. What kind of psychological processes do these three terms denote? We would say that pity, sadness, and tenderness are three members of the category “emotions”, but what are emotions, and how can one emotion be distinguished from another? After centuries of debate, philosophers and psychologists offer no firm answers to these questions of definition. There is, however, a broad consensus that our thinking on the matter has to accommodate the fact that emotions are not only visceral disturbances, but also evaluative, motivational and socio-culturally contingent mental/bodily states (for a wide-ranging survey, see Scarantino, 2016). Let us focus initially on the first three of these aspects and address the important issue of cultural variation separately.

Emotions are embodied, but unlike e.g. gustatory delights, body aches, thirst or hunger, they can—at least retrospectively—be assessed as to whether they fit their objects. Under normal circumstances it is irrational to fear something that is not dangerous, to feel shame about a successful achievement that has augmented one’s esteem, or to envy oneself. Furthermore, fear, shame and envy also involve different kinds of adaptive behaviors depending on circumstances. Fear prioritizes and allocates the necessary metabolic support to achieve the goal of avoiding danger, shame the goal of withdrawing from social interaction in order to fend off judgment and punishment, and envy the goal of equalizing the imbalance between oneself and more fortunate others, be it by dragging them down or improving oneself.

These three features are integrated in different ways by different theories about the nature of emotions, often privileging one of them at the expense of leaving another insufficiently explained. Some approaches locate the evaluative aspect on the level of content and regard the phenomenological and motivational components as separate. For instance, the belief-desire theory holds that, in fear, I believe that the dog is dangerous and desire to flee (Marks, 1982); judgmentalism that I judge it to be dangerous (Solomon, 1988); perceptualism that I perceive it as dangerous (Tappolet, 2016). Embodied appraisal theory, on the other hand, identifies the evaluative aspect with bodily feelings and regards motivation as separate: in fear, I find myself undergoing bodily changes that alert me of danger, since they have been set up to be set off by this relational property (Prinz, 2004). Other accounts identifies the evaluative and bodily aspects with the action tendency. The attitudinal theory, for instance, holds that emotions are attitudes—i.e. mental states on par with e.g. beliefs and desires—in which we feel our body prepared to act in a certain (implicitly evaluative) way: in fear, I feel my body prepared to act as to escape
something—apparently something dangerous (Deonna & Teroni, 2015, 2017; see also the motivational theory of emotions in Scarantino, 2014, and the theory of emotions as enactions of imperatival affordances in Shargel & Prinz, 2018). For our purposes it seems unnecessary to commit to any of these accounts as long as we address all three diagnostic features of emotions and keep in mind that their integration is still an open, difficult question.

It was also stated at the outset that emotions are culturally contingent. The three examples invoked so far—“fear”, “shame” and “envy”—are English vernacular words. When we traverse linguistic, cultural and historical borders and use them as names for etic analytical categories we need a definition, e.g., “let fear be any emotion that reacts to danger and motivates actions to avoid danger.” When we use such etic concepts when interpreting emic emotion terms in temporally and/or geographically distant cultures, or to name emotions that actors in such cultures evidently undergo and express but lack an emic lexeme for (see Lively & Heise, 2014, pp. 68–69), historians, anthropologists and sociologists would readily point out that many essential facts about the phenomenon get lost in translation. This is not simply a matter of stable natural processes being labeled, framed, promoted/repressed, evaluated and grouped differently by different societies, groups and individuals. Not only social constructionists but also many basic emotion theorists will agree that the three aforementioned diagnostic features of emotions are subject to considerable plasticity. Emotions serve to solve abstract problems and hence they are flexible both on the “input” and “output” side of the process: what counts as e.g. dangerous/to-be-avoided is subject to learning, and an emotion’s action tendencies do not involve a cascade of involuntary actions but rather a situationally adaptive state of action readiness (Scarantino, 2015). Fear of a spider will motivate different actions in order to avoid that perceived danger compared to fear that we are going to miss a train. For these reasons—along with the equally important contextual factors mentioned above—it is not surprising that two emotions in different languages that we consider largely equivalent will be different in phenomenology too (see e.g. Mesquita, Frijda, & Scherer, 1997; Mesquita & Leu, 2007).

It is the task of historians to identify and highlight such specificities and explain how and why they differ and change. It is not self-evident, however, that the critical and hermeneutic enterprise to analyze, understand and evaluate artifacts of the past shares this aim. The historicist agenda of interpretation prescribes that “we must transpose ourselves into the spirit of the age, think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance toward historical objectivity”, but the hermeneutic hermeneutician insists on “temporal distance as a positive and productive condition enabling understanding” (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 297). From this perspective the aim of interpretation, including that of literary texts, is not merely to reconstruct the historical horizon of the artifact (see also Kukkonen in this volume). Rather, it is only in encountering the past and the distant that we can come to know our own horizon, and “understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves” (Gadamer, 1960/2004, p. 305, emphasis in the original). Becoming aware of discrepancies between one’s own overall emotionality and that represented in and/or presupposed by an historical artifact is an important step of this process, but it is equally valuable to pay attention to commonality. The existence of such common features “is shown by the very possibility of translation, of communication between individuals of different cultures, despite all the misunderstandings that may occur” (Ogarkova, Borgeaud, & Scherer, 2009, p. 350). Acknowledging this does not require that we reject social constructionism about emotions; neither can any amount of observable cross-cultural similarities in itself provide evidence for innateness. Warning against dogmatic adherence to any of said positions, Solomon, 1997, pp. 298–299) pointed out that

[It is a simple fact about all of us that we are born into families, we are initially helpless and extremely vulnerable, we are prone to pain, to injury, to illness, we need food, water, sleep, air to breath and protection from the harsher elements of nature. Thus ideas of dependency, familiarity, perhaps, kinship, fear, hope as well as the appetites would seem to be “natural” in an obvious sense and plausibly universal. Moving quickly into the realm of philosophy, we are all going to die, and we know that we are going to die. [...] Emotions may be
“constructed” but they are constructed out of something, from raw material that is, first of all, to be found in human experience, in the human body and in the human condition.

The poet of the Iliad opens by asking the muse to sing about an emotion, about the mēnis of Achilles. The situations that evoke this emotion involve an offense; its motivational aspect involves sulking and wild bursts of aggression in order to retaliate against the offense; its visceral phenomenology is characterized by Achilles as being filled with gall “that swarms like smoke inside of a man’s heart and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey.” (Iliad 18.109–10). This kind of emotion is hardly unintelligible for us: we readily identify it as “anger”, “rage” or “resentment”. However, closer scrutiny reveals that mēnis does not encompass responses to any offense but seems to be restricted to offenses involving breaches of rules of divine origin that regulate everything from the cosmic hierarchy down to the division and reciprocal exchange of goods. In this sense, mēnis is not just a psychological phenomenon in an individual organism but a divine sanction deterring actions that threaten to disrupt the social and cosmic order (see Muellner, 1996, pp. 32–37).

This suggests that we need begin by defining the subcategories of “pathos” offered by the OED—pity, sadness and tenderness—in terms of what kind of evaluative judgments they betoken and what action tendencies they involve; second, we need to seek emic counterparts to them in the Iliad; third, we need to connect them to the recurring motifs that Griffin (1976) identified.

3. Sadness, compassion and tenderness

For our purposes here, I understand sadness to be an emotion in response to an irrevocable loss of something valuable, motivating withdrawal and the expression of distress. The indifference or even satisfaction that audiences feel for the falling henchmen of an evil villain illustrates how easy it is to mute sadness by ignoring or ascribing a negative value to lives that are extinguished. One way to perceive the value of a life is to apprehend it as “grievable”, as part of a social fabric in which the loss will matter (cf. Butler, 2009, p. 14–16). As stated at the outset of this essay, the poet normally refuses to let any moment of death slip by as an insignificant or joyous event. We are nearly always offered at least a patronymic: “the son of Eumedes”, “the bastard son of Priam” and so on, but the poet also tends to linger for a verse or two on the dying hero’s place of birth and early life, his father, mother, brother, wife and the people he lorded over (on these images of care in the Iliad, see Lynn-George, 1996; Mills, 2000). Occasionally the impact of the death on these loved ones is explicitly elaborated by placing them on the battle field, as when Harpalion draws his last breath while his comrades carry his wounded body, “and his father, weeping tears, walked beside them” (13.658). A similar effect occurs when the despair of helpless fellow warriors is described. When Agamemnon kills Isos and Antiphos, he is compared to a lion brutally lacerating two innocent fawns, while their mother stands at a distance, unable to help, shivering and sweating before she flees with a pounding heart (11.101–121). The poet can also offer us glimpses into the future, as in the frequent remarks that the parents were left without a guardian to protect and care for them in old age, or more elaborately, as when Diomedes goes after two brothers:

Now he went after the two sons of Phainops, Xanthos and Thoon, full grown both, but Phainops was stricken in sorrowful old age nor could breed another son to leave among his possessions. There he killed these two and took away the dear life from them both, leaving to their father lamentation and sorrowful affliction, since he was not to welcome them home from the fighting alive still; and remoter kinsmen shared his possessions. (5.151–58)

It has also been suggested that we are encouraged to see Patroklos’ last moments on the battle field and death through the eyes of his closest friend Achilles (Allen-Hornblower, 2016, pp. 76–78). In any case, by constantly addressing Patroklos in the second person—“Then, Patroklos, you said to him … ” or “Then, Patroclus, the end of your life was shown forth”—the poet shifts from an I-It to an I-Thou relationship with the character, effectively bringing him into the circle of our concern.
We thus apprehend the death as an irrevocable loss of something that is dear, and the tears (dakrya, myromai), wailing (goos) and pains (achnymai, odyromai) as symptoms of an emotion that is interpretable as sadness or grief.

In understand pity or compassion as an emotion in response to the distress of someone whose welfare we value, motivating actions to alleviate that distress. It should be distinguished from related phenomena where the subject feels with rather than for someone else, such as mind reading, bodily and/or neural mimicry or imagining how one would feel in the other’s situation, although such processes can all lead to compassion (see Batson, 2011, pp. 11–20). We previously saw that the narrator describes Patroklos’ actions with the verbs oiktirō and olophyrō when the hero laments that his Achaean comrades fall far from their friends and native lands, and that their corpses are mutilated and devoured by dogs (Il. 11.816–18). The poet himself also calls Iphidamas oiktros (11.242) in a passage that combines a string of motifs including “far from home”, “widowed wife”, “young husband”, “bereaved parents”, “short life/doom” and “the vanity of all human efforts”. We also find the word eleos used interchangeably with these terms. For instance, the fact that Zeus feels eleos for Sarpedon (16.531) can also be expressed by stating that his heart olophyretai this doomed son of his (16.449). These terms refer to a negatively valanced emotion that responds to the suffering of others. It motivates the expression of this distress, as when e.g. Patroklos’ cries for the suffering of the Achaean before Achilles (16.5). It also motivates actions to help or console the person in need, as when e.g. Poseidon feels eleos for the suffering Achaean whereby his heart “drives and orders him” to help them (15.43–44). It can also lead to third-party anger, as when Poseidon feels eleos for the Achaean and is filled with resentment (enemessa) against Zeus (13.14). It is clearly the appropriate emotion in response to situations where a warrior desperately calls out for help to his companions; when he is fully conscious and awaits the final blow (e.g. 17.476); when he bites the bronze with his teeth (5.75), tears the dust with his nails (e.g. 13.507), screams (5.58), falls heavily and hears the armor clattering all about (e.g. 5.42).

Eleos does not stop at death, making way for withdrawn sadness and mourning, since the corpse of a warrior is perceived as being in need of a proper funeral (Patroklos’ corpse: 23.108; Hector’s corpse: 24.18). Hence it motivates anger in order to retrieve the body of fallen warriors from the enemy, as when the Achaean Lykomedes feels eleos for his fallen friend Leokritos and retaliates by killing the Trojan Apisao, which in turn causes Asteropaios to feel eleos for Apisao and attack the Greeks (17.344–53). Similarly, Menelaos feels eleos and makes a rash attack after Aeneas kills Kretton and Orsilochos (5.574). The same occurs with Aias when he sees Anchialos and Menestheus “killed in a single chariot” (5.610). Eleos is a sign that the emoter cares about (kédoma) the person in need or holds him dear (philos; see Kim, 2000, pp. 35–56; Allen-Hornblower, 2016, pp. 20–21). It is the emotion that the gods feel for the distress of heroes who have offered them plenty of sacrifices in the past (8.202; 16.450), whereas they lack eleos for their enemies (7.26). Zeus notably feels eleos for warriors on both sides: for Hector as death draws near (15.12; 22.168–173) and for Achilles (19.340); for Sarpedon and for Patroklos (16.431). It can also be evoked as proof of love: Andromache repeatedly asks Hector if he feel no eleos for her and their child Astyanax (6.407; 6.431) as he leaves for battle. When she famously “smiles through tears” (δακρυόεν γελάσασα) as Hector holds their child in his arms and prays for a bright future, he feels eleos and consoles her (6.484). Priam and Hecuba likewise invokes Hector’s eleos for his dear parents when they ask him not to face Achilles (22.37; 59; 83). It can also be used in less drastic circumstances, as when Nestor asks Diomedes to rally the troops “if you have eleos for me” (10.175), i.e. “if you care about me” or “please”.

This status of eleos as a symptom of philia and manifestation of kēdesthai of dearness, attachment or caring and lack of eleos as one of hatefulness, antagonism or disregard, is central to the Iliad as a whole. After Agamemnon’s insult Achilles shows no eleos for his Achaean comrades (9.300; 11.665), but only for his close friend Patroklos (16.5). After the latter hero’s death Achilles returns to battle and slaughters Trojans without eleos (20.465; 21.74 and 106; 21.146; 24.42). Therefore, when Priam steals into the Achaean camp in order to ransom Hector’s body he prays to
Zeus that he will miraculously be received as a philos and hence an object of eleos (24.309). This is only attainable through a particular kind of empathy: Achilles identifies him with his own dear father and can thus feel eleos for his suffering in old age (24.502–516).

Caring as a prerequisite for compassion is easily forgotten because of the widespread modern canonization of valuing all life and hence feeling compassion with distant suffering as an important moral virtue (for the historical background of this ideal, see Frevert, 2011, pp. 160–204). Yet, it is clear that most human beings positively value the welfare of some more than others, and even place a negative value on the welfare of enemies. However, we must ask: what do we mean by “valuing” in this context? One can value the welfare of a plant or animal because the crops, milk, eggs and meat that they yield have an instrumental and hedonic value. A security guard can value the welfare of people simply because protecting them is perceived as a duty imposed by an authority and a source of income. A tyrant can value the welfare of his subjects out of fear for the consequences of their discontent. Yet, apart from such motivations, we also have a capacity to place an intrinsic value on the welfare of others, primarily one’s own kin and friends but also complete strangers, given the right framing and conditions. Compassion is thus bound up with the two fundamental complex emotional dispositions or “sentiments” that we might call love, caring or affiliative attachment on the one hand, and hate or antagonism on the other. They are not momentary emotions but enduring affective bonds that manifest themselves through the triggering of different emotions under similar circumstances depending on the subject’s sentiment in respect to the object: the loss of a hated person will cause relief and satisfaction, whereas the death of a dear person will cause sadness. Similarly, the suffering and need of a hated person will cause schadenfreude, whereas the suffering of a dear person will cause compassion.

We have seen, however, that grief is not merely a symptom of an antecedent sentiment, but that the very apprehension of a life as “grievable”, that is, as dear to someone with whom we are invited to empathize, can increase the degree to which we care about the dying warrior. It is likewise possible that compassion is not merely a symptom of dearness plus suffering, but that the perception of suffering can kindle and contribute to the overall sentiment. In the Iliad, Eumelos falls from his chariot during the race in honor of Patroklos and scrapes his elbows and face, “his eyes filled with tears, and the springing voice was held fast within him.” (23.396–7). Later when he is the last competitor to cross the finish line, Achilles feels oiktos for him (23.534) and wants to award him second place, which arouses accusations of unfairness: Achilles acts on compassion and holds him dear (philos; 23.548). His concern appears to be kindled and intensified by the signs of suffering. A similar direct effect of suffering seems to be attributable to the descriptions of brutality in the death scenes:

Idomeneus stabbed Erymas in the mouth with the pitiless bronze, so that the brazen spearhead smashed its way clean through below the brain in an upward stroke, and the white bones splintered, and the teeth were shaken out with the stroke and both eyes filled up with blood, and gaping he blew a spray of blood through the nostrils and through his mouth, and death in a dark mist closed in about him. (Il. 16.345–50)

Unlike most other warriors we are told nothing about Erymas besides his name, and yet the lingering vivid depiction of his spectacularly painful death and the embodied resonance it is likely to generate (see Gallese & Sinigaglia, 2018) make us sensitive to his suffering in a way that demands some measure of compassion.

I understand tenderness as an emotion in response to vulnerability, often the vulnerability specific to immature creatures, even in the absence of suffering, motivating affectionate and nurturing behavior (see Lishner, Batson, & Huss, 2011). It appears to promote the kind of positive sentiment we have been discussing so far. Stronger compassion is elicited by suffering in creatures with infant-like features compared to creatures who lack them (Lishner, Oceja, Stocks, & Zaspel, 2008). I can think of no obvious emic emotion term in the Iliad, but we could cite, for instance, Hector’s silent smile when he encounters his son, “without a care in his mind,
just a baby, the beloved son of Hector, like a beautiful star” (παιδ’ ἐπὶ καλπὼ ἔχουσ’ ἀταλάφρονα νήπιον αὐτώς/ἐκτορίδην ἁγαστήν ἀλάκτων ἀστέρι καλώ, 6.400–1). The link with compassion is also clear in the depiction of a divine omen where a snake devours eight baby sparrows “after they had chirped pitifully” (ἆλευνα κατησθείε τετριγώτας, 2.314). A similar mixture of vulnerability and suffering seems to be present when warriors are slaughtered like helpless fawns crunched in the jaws of a lion (11.103–21); when a warrior wriggles in pain like a worm (13.654); or when he misjudges his strength, taunts a superior adversary or is unable to foresee that death is drawing near. Consider Nastes, who “came like a girl (ἡτε κούρη) to the fighting in golden raiment, poor baby (νήπιοι)” (II. 2.872–3). He was killed by Achilles at Troy.

To conclude this section, the pathos evoked by death scenes in the Iliad unsurprisingly includes sadness, tenderness and compassion, and these appear to participate in a virtuous circle in respect to the reader’s affiliative attachment to the represented characters. We care about them because they are presented as beloved-and-lost, vulnerable and suffering, and the fact that we care about them in turn makes us more sensitive to this loss, vulnerability and suffering.

Can this definition of pathos exhaust the contents of the motifs that Griffin (1976) calls attention to? Many of them clearly emphasize loss, vulnerability or need, including “far from home”, “brothers falling together”, “near helpless friends”, “suffering in one’s own country”, “lack of care after death”, “unrecognizable in death and mutilation”, “widowed wife and orphaned child”, “young husband”, “bereaved parents”, “pathetic ignorance” and “short life/doom”. But it is less clear that any of these emotions is an appropriate reaction to “beauty brought low” or “the vanity of all human efforts”, and Griffin offers no examples of explicitly emotional first-person speeches in which they occur. Let us consider these two motifs closer.

4. Being moved
The poet does not only stress that the falling warriors are beloved, vulnerable and suffer, but also that they are young, strong, excellent and beautiful. Their hair, “lovely as the Graces, is splattered with blood, those braided locks caught waspwise in gold and silver.” (II. 17.51–52). They are often likened to stately trees or tender flowers, bending in the rain, trampled or cut down in their prime:

Gorgythion the blameless, hit in the chest by an arrow;
Gorgythion whose mother was lovely Kastianeira,
Priam’s bride from Aisyme, with the form of a goddess.
He bent drooping his head to one side, as a garden poppy
bends beneath the weight of its yield and the rains of springtime (8.303–7)

This is the motif that Griffin calls “beauty brought low”, but it is important to stress that there is a synesthesia of values at work: the warriors are beautiful in death, but also good hunters, good craftsmen, good rulers and good warriors. They fall not only like flowers but also like towers, rich, tall and brave, fighting on the front line. Kekriones lies in the whirl of dust, “mightily in his might” (17.776). In some cases, ancient commentators felt that the poet goes too far. Axylos, more hospitable than any other man in the world, a friend of all humanity, is quickly slain by Diomedes (6.12–19). Here, ancient commentators complained about the lack of justice in Homer (bT-Scholia on the Iliad 6.12–19).

Priam employs this motif as the opposite of a pitiable death of an old man in his famous appeal to Hector:

For a young man all is decorous (ἐπέοικεν)
when he is cut down in battle and torn with the sharp bronze, and lies there dead, and though dead still all that shows about him is beautiful (καλά);
but when an old man is dead and down, and the dogs mutilate
the grey head and the grey beard and the parts that are secret,
this, for all sad mortality, is the sight most pitiful (οἰκτισατον). (22.71–76)
If not oiktos or compassion, what emotion does the apprehension of beauty, bravery, prowess and strength in the light of the destruction of a warrior who embodies these qualities elicit? We find the motif when Menelaos rouses his companions to fight for Patroklos corpse “because he was always gentle (meilichos) to all men” (17.671), and when Briseis laments the death of the same warrior, recalling that he was always gentle (meilichos) to her (19.300). Andromache regrets that Hector did not die in bed, turning to her one last time and leaving a few words to remember during her endless days of weeping for him (24.742–745). A sweet memory like that would be inestimable for a mourner. Hekabe is next to speak and calls Hector her “dearest” (phititate) child by far; dear (philos) to the gods, who have cared for him (kêdonto) even in death, keeping his body intact and fresh (24.748–59). Finally, Helen speaks, addressing Hector as the “dearest” (phititate) among Paris’ brothers, who was always “gentle and dear, but all others cold to me” (ἡπίος αὐξε φίλος, πάντες δὲ μὲ πεφρίκασιν, 24.775). When we consider such tearful laments we see that they in fact have two differentiable focal points: not only the loss of a dear life, but also the dearness of a lost life. Yet, emotional reactions involving apprehensions of something as dear can also occur without any current loss. In the Odyssey, Menelaos tells us that Agamemnon, at his return from Troy, “stepped rejoicing on the soil of his country/and stroked the ground with his hand and kissed it, and his thronging/hot tears streamed down, so dear to him was the sight (aspasiōs ide) of his country” (4.521–523). In a famous simile in the same poem, Odysseus reveals his identity to his Phaeacian host when he melts in tears “as a woman weeps, lying over the body/of her dear (philos) husband, who fell fighting for her city and people as he tried to beat off the pitiless day from city and children” (8.523–525). What elicits these tears? A singer’s tale about Odysseus’ own exploits in Troy; about the wooden horse and the Achaean victory that he achieved. He sheds tears not for a loss but for the manifestation of his own glory and fame as “Odysseus the sacker of cities”. The same could be said about the tears shed at the many reunions in the Odyssey, e.g. when Odysseus companion’s cry as they see their leader returning alive from Circe’s house, skipping like dairy calves around their mother (10.410–19) or when Telemanachus is reunited with Odysseus (16.190). Virtues can also be invoked in these contexts, as when Odysseus sheds tears for his old dog Argos and recalls his former beauty, speed and strength (17.304–327). Odysseus and Penelope cry when they are reunited, but Odysseus’ “desire for tears” peaks when his wife offers a display of her intelligence and faithfulness in cleverly putting his identity to the test; he “weeps, embracing his heart-pleasing wife, careful in mind” (κλαίε δ’ ἔχων ἀλοχόν θυμαρέα κέδν’ εἰδώλιαν, Οδ. 23.232).

How should we interpret these emotional reactions? They respond to the fact that the object is “dear” (philos) and/or that it instantiates certain virtues (beauty, prowess, gentleness, intelligence etc.), not only in contexts of loss but also of recovery and relief, and the main action tendency involved is to communicate this evaluation and, if possible, embrace the object rather than withdraw in sadness. We should consider the possibility that we are faced with a counterpart to the emotion that speakers of English sometimes—but neither always nor exclusively—refer to when declaring that they are “moved” or “touched” (see the recent comprehensive review of this literature by Zickfeld, Schubert, Seibt, & Fiske, 2019). Scholars disagree about how to characterize what elicits this emotion. Some have claimed that being moved is evoked by “the positivity or goodness of a specific core positive value’s presence” (Deonna, 2018, p. 63; see also Cova, Deonna, & Sander, 2017). For instance, we may react with surprise, joy and gratitude to an unexpected gift or act of kindness, but we are “moved” only to the extent that we respond to the goodness of the generosity of the act itself (on the condition, of course, that generosity is embraced as a core value by the emooter). Applied to the tearful reactions in Homer under consideration, this theory would posit that they are responses (1) to the goodness of the core values beauty, prowess, gentleness etc. in the cases I have connected to “virtues”, and (2) to the goodness of the core values love, family etc. in the cases I have connected to “dearness”. Rivaling accounts, however, provide a narrower definition of the eliciting conditions, claiming that being moved is not elicited by any core value, but only by “scenarios that have a particularly strong bearing on attachment-related issues”, including “pro-social norms and self-ideals” (Menninghaus et al., 2015, p. 12), or “when a communal sharing relationship [as opposed to authority ranking, equality matching
or market pricing] is suddenly intensified” (Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt, 2017, p. 87–88). Again, applied to the scenes in Homer, we would say that they depict responses (1) to attachment related issues or intensifications of communal sharing in the cases I have connected to “dearness”, and (2) to values or ideals that are related to attachment or communal sharing the cases I have connected to “virtues”.

The obvious problem with the latter hypothesis is that e.g. “beauty”, “willpower” or “prowess” are not primarily suggestive of, nor conducive to, affiliative attachment or communal sharing, and yet manifestations of these values have been proven to elicit this emotion, albeit less intensely compared to manifestations of “love” (Landmann, Cova & Hess, 2019; Strick & van Soolingen, 2018). Elsewhere, however, I have argued that the results of these experiments do not leave us with the core-value hypothesis as our only option (Cullhed, 2019). We can reconcile the intuitions and observations made by the three aforementioned groups of researchers by positing that being moved is evoked by the apprehension of dearness: either the dearness of specific people and places (as in reunions or Agamemnon’s homecoming) or the dearness of certain principles or ideas manifested by a person or a place (beauty, prowess, gentleness etc.). The notion that we commit to certain values through the same kind of affective bond that connects us to concrete objects of affiliative attachment (children, parents, friends, childhood homes, and so on) has previously been put forward by Moll and de Oliveira-souza (2009).

The affective affinity between our attachments to dear people and the ideas we call core values could elucidate the consolatory function of the epitaphic commonplace that “the person X is gone but the memory of X, and the principles and qualities that X embodied, lives on”. It is difficult to imagine a funeral oration that solely focuses on loss and its disastrous consequences. Just as in the laments for Patroclus or Hector, attention will eventually shift from death itself to life and fond memories about the diseased and especially his or her good qualities. We are offered enduring surrogates for the non-fungible, dear individual that is no longer available: memories and objects like a tomb stone, but also abstract ideas that are associated with the person that has passed away. This “moving” shift from loss to the dearness of what is lost is also an important element in the pathos we are trying to define.

5. Transience and glory
Another motif listed by Griffin (1976) but never connected to an emic emotion concept or expression is the “the vanity of all human efforts”. In the aforementioned case with beloved, generous Axylos the poet comments: “Yet there was none of these now to stand before him and keep off the sad destruction” (6.16–17); at other times the message emerges in the situation itself. Some warriors have prophets for fathers who had foretold their death (i.e. death is unavoidable), others had prophets for fathers who had not foretold their death (i.e. human matters are uncertain but death comes to us all), and many warriors are slain over the bodies they have gloriously killed or bravely tried to save (i.e. death comes even to the killer, or even to the strong and brave). Indeed, the theme of “beauty/goodness brought low” always implies this motif. When Kebriones, again, lies in the dust, “his horsemanship all forgotten”—like Phlebas who “forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell”—this serves to remind us of the truism that in death all human pursuits are in vain. What kind of emotion do apprehensions of transience or mortality elicit? Ancient rhetorical theorists suggested that “‘commonplaces’ which set forth the power of fortune over all men and the fragility of the human race” would naturally make an auditor mild and merciful; move him, we might say, and prepare him for compassion (Cicero, On Invention 1.55 in Hubbell, 1949). Recent socioemotional selectivity theory likewise ascribes the altruism and tendency among older adults to commit to enduring goals and values to their growing awareness of finitude; of unavoidable future loss due to the ephemerality of existence (see the review in Moss & Wilson, 2018). It is conceivable that the poignant reminders of transience offered by the poet makes us apprehend the dearness of values such as familial love, youth and beauty in the light of the fleetingness of their manifestations. For the heroes, however, it strengthens their commitment to a specific value, that of undying fame. Achilles
reflects on the fact that death is unavoidable when he decides to return to battle and eventually die, but not before acquiring glory for himself and leaving grieving widows within the walls of Troy (18.224–25). Later on, when the Trojan warrior Lykaon begs for mercy, Achilles refuses to spare his life:

So, friend, you die also. Why all this clamour about it? Patroklos also is dead, who was better by far than you are. Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid and born of a great father, and the mother who bore me immortal? Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny. and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime, when some man in the fighting will take the life from me also either with a spearcast or an arrow flown from the bowstring. (21.196–113)

At these words, Lykaon’s knees and heart are “loosened”, he drops his sword and sits down with his hands spread out, seemingly accepting the inevitable. Achilles and his beauty, ancestry and prowess are ephemeral things; they must yield to the heroic duty to “win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others” (Iliad 12.328). Fame is the only truly enduring surrogate for life in the heroic world and we must not forget its primacy. Every flashing sword that makes its way through the armor and body of the slain and every spear or arrow that hits its target exemplifies a warrior’s superiority. The killer too is always mentioned by name, and described as radiant, strong, fast, high-hearted and godlike. There is something literally superhuman about them, as in the famous scene where Aias the great famously kills a man by hurling a rock at him, and it is noted that “A man could not easily hold it, not even if he were very strong, in both hands, of men such as men are now” (12.381–3). Furthermore, the more beloved, strong, beautiful and lamented that the fallen warriors are, they greater is the glory that the victorious killer gains. When Hector slays Mycenean Periphetes, it is highlighted that this man excelled over his own father in all kinds of excellent qualities, and he was one of the foremost among all the Myceneans in speed, prowess on the battlefield and intelligence; “so he then placed exceptional glory in the palm of Hector’s hand” (Il. 16.644).

This excellence can only be gained through hatred and mercilessness, not through caring and pity. Menelaos almost spares Adrestus and is about to capture him alive but Agamemnon arrives and changes Manalaos’ mind. They should let none of the Trojans escape, “not even the child that a mother carries still in her womb” (6.58–59). When Odysseus captures the spy Dolon and questions him, his knees are shaking, he reveals everything and begs for his life, but Odysseus decapitates him “and Dolon’s head still speaking dropped in the dust.” (10.457). The killers are pitiless or merciless (ameiliktos or nēlēs), epithets otherwise used about radiant and destructive but cold and lifeless bronze weapons (e.g. 13.501) and the day of one’s death (e.g. 11.587).

Griffin (1976, p. 180) recognized that the Iliad’s appeal to pathos is vulnerable to the charge of sentimentality, and argued that the objective style preserves the poem from this vice. However, Homer’s “noble restraint” is not merely a matter of style. The pathetic motifs in the death scenes illustrate, as Seth Schein put it (2016, 5), “the cost in human terms of heroic achievement.” Like Zeus, the audience is invited to care about the lives of the Achaeans as well as the Trojans, but never forget that their loss and suffering are necessary. The attachments and evanescent manifestations of values like youth and beauty are not contemplated in an isolated and undisturbed, and hence a misrepresenting and sentimental fashion (cf. Winston, 1992; Cova & Deonna, 2014, p. 464). Rather, they are presented as existing alongside and in opposition to other kinds of affective motivations that push and pull the Homeric heroes in other directions. Caring and compassion occasionally shine forth, as in Hector’s meeting with his wife and son, or in Achilles’ miraculous perception of Priam as philos, but we all know that the heroic race is bound for death and glory. Dearness does not triumph in these scenes; it makes a brave but futile stance in a loosing battle against the harsh precepts of heroic duty. It is in this wondrous posture of sacrifice; of letting impermanent manifestations of dearness yield to glory and eternal fame that the pathos of the Iliad lies.
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