

**NEGLECTED WARNINGS IN THE *ILIAD*: A STUDY IN CHARACTERIZATION**

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# NEGLECTED WARNINGS IN THE *ILIAD*: A STUDY IN CHARACTERIZATION

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A neglected warning is a narrative sequence consisting of three moves: a credible warning is issued, the recipient disregards it, and he suffers some calamity as a result. Neglected warnings are common in folklore and literature. They have been studied closely in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Sophocles, but not in Homer. The little that has been said about neglected warnings in his poetry focuses on the recurring traits of warners and recipients and lacks consensus. Attempting to remedy the situation, this dissertation systematically investigates how the *Iliad*'s twelve neglected warnings help characterize members of both groups.

Warners and recipients turn out to be distinct character types. All the examples feature a warner who is male, wise, old, actively benevolent, and sympathetic. Furthermore, warners are very often paternal or prophetic. Sometimes one or more attributes are insinuated by the poet rather than being literally true. Recipients, by contrast, are always young men who are selfishly ambitious, bold, and reckless. Thus, a strong contrast in characterization obtains across examples. In addition, Homer consistently pairs one warner with one recipient, and recipients frequently recover in some way from the disasters that they provoke.

These conclusions augment or correct existing observations about the neglected warning pattern in Homer. The results also support a previously unsubstantiated claim that it derives from folklore. Specifically, the *Iliad*'s warners correspond to a stock character in folktales known as the Wise Old Man. For their part, neglectful recipients closely resemble the type of

the disobedient hero, which occurs especially in cautionary tales. Some widely attested folktale plots are built around interaction between a Wise Old Man figure and a disobedient hero who experiences misfortune by disregarding the elder's advice. The overall scenario may well have been incorporated into the Greek poetic tradition, serving as a basis for the standard features of neglected warnings in the *Iliad*. Directions for further research are suggested.

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## **PREFACE**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A neglected warning is a narrative sequence consisting of three moves: a warning is issued, the recipient disregards it, and he suffers some sort of calamity as a result. Neglected warnings occur frequently in literature and folklore.<sup>1</sup> A well-known example is the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. As Vergil relates it, Orpheus is instructed not to look back at Eurydice while they make their way from the underworld. Overcome by passion, he forgets the warning, looks, and loses her forever.<sup>2</sup>

The *Iliad* has a dozen disregarded warnings. The aim of this dissertation is to study how they contribute to characterization. What traits of advisors do neglected warnings illuminate? What traits of recipients? Are the characteristics of each group similar across examples, or do they vary? These and related matters will be addressed. Before the investigation can begin, though, it is necessary to review scholarship about warnings in Homer, account for the selection of examples to be examined, and briefly discuss the values of Homeric society in relation to giving and receiving advice. An overview of the dissertation's remaining chapters will complete this introduction.

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<sup>1</sup> On neglected warnings in folklore, see Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 26-28; Lüthi, *European Folktale*, 75-76; and Tatar, *Off With Their Heads!*, 22-42. On such episodes in drama, see Polti, *Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, 61-64. Although these writers use their own terms for the neglected warning sequence, all describe a narrative structure that amounts to the same thing. Given the overall familiarity of folklorists and literary scholars with disregarded warnings, it is surprising that nobody from either group has produced a general study of the topic.

<sup>2</sup> *Georgics* 4.485-98.



Given the general frequency of neglected warnings, it is not surprising that they are well represented in Greek literature. Such warnings have, in fact, been the focus of investigation in several authors. Herodotus has attracted the most attention.<sup>3</sup> The pattern has also been studied in Thucydides and Sophocles.<sup>4</sup> When it comes to Homer, however, scholars have little to say about disregarded warnings, and they agree on even less. The most that the literature affords is brief remarks on selected warnings, in studies devoted to other matters. Nevertheless, the little that has been said is helpful background for the present study and will be now be summarized.

Probably the first to comment explicitly on the neglected warning pattern in Homer is Bischoff. Although he is primarily concerned with the pattern's manifestations in Herodotus, he devotes several pages to its Homeric antecedents. Bischoff recognizes that neglected warnings have their characteristic threefold structure in Homer. In addition, he generalizes that Homeric warners are wise elders, who are no longer able to fight, while those whom they caution are young, impulsive men.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately this account exaggerates. In the *Iliad* alone there are three counterexamples. Achilles, who is younger than Patroclus, warns his friend not to fight all the way to Troy. Patroclus does not heed the warning and is killed by Hector. Similarly, Poulydamas, who is the same age as Hector, warns the Trojan chief on two different occasions to retreat. Hector ignores the warning each time, and each time a massacre of the Trojans ensues. It is not always the case, then, that disregarded warners in Homer are literally older than those whom they caution, let alone elderly.

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<sup>3</sup> Highlights include Bischoff, *Der Warner bei Herodot*; Lattimore, "Wise Adviser in Herodotus"; and more recently Shapiro, *Role of Advice in Herodotus* "Histories."

<sup>4</sup> On neglected warnings in Thucydides, see Hunter, *Thucydides the Artful Reporter*, 123-48; Marinatos, "Nicias as a Wise Advisor"; and Pelling, "Thucydides' Archidamus and Herodotus' Artabanus." Lardinois, "Traces of the Adviser Figure" discusses neglected warnings in Sophocles.

<sup>5</sup> See Bischoff, *Der Warner bei Herodot*, 1-5.

Fenik is also aware of neglected warnings. In a chapter on divine anger in the *Odyssey*, he notes that Aegisthus, Odysseus's crew, and the suitors all receive credible warnings that they neglect to their great detriment. For Fenik, the examples illustrate the "motif of wise advice disregarded."<sup>6</sup> What this expression designates, of course, is the neglected warning pattern. In addition to identifying its threefold structure, Fenik observes that warners in the *Odyssey* are always wise and that neglectful recipients exhibit reckless folly to one degree or another.<sup>7</sup>

In a short article on folly and delusion in Homer, Hooker discusses some of the same examples from the *Odyssey* as Fenik does. Like Fenik, he identifies the neglected warning pattern in his own terms, "advice given—advice not comprehended or not heeded—disaster to the person advised."<sup>8</sup> Hooker believes that this narrative sequence accounts for much of the reckless behavior in the *Odyssey*. He also believes that it is borrowed from folklore. The latter claim is not substantiated, but it has considerable merit. This will become clear in the concluding chapter. For now what matters is that Hooker accurately identifies the neglecting warning pattern's structure, notes that warners are always wise, and allows misunderstanding and heedlessness as motives for recipients.

West, too, observes neglected warnings in Homer. In his new commentary on the *Iliad*, he remarks, "It is a typical storyteller's motif that someone who is to suffer disaster rejects the warnings of a seer or wise counselor and imputes base motives to him."<sup>9</sup> West makes this observation in relation to one of the warnings from Poulydamas that Hector rejects. West characterizes Achilles' warning to Patroclus, which is also disregarded with disastrous results, as

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<sup>6</sup> *Studies in the Odyssey*, 210, 217.

<sup>7</sup> *Studies in the Odyssey*, 209-19.

<sup>8</sup> "Odyssey and Iliad," 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Making of the Iliad*, ad 12.211-15.

another instance of the same motif.<sup>10</sup> Whether one calls it a motif, a device, or something else, it is clear that West finds occurrences of the neglected warning pattern in Homer. Besides identifying the pattern's tripartite structure, West holds that warners are typically wise or prophetic. For their part, neglectful recipients are willful and attribute bad intentions to advisors.

Others who discuss warnings in Homer say much that is of interest in its own right but nothing that is useful for the present investigation. Dürbeck, for example, compares a warning in the *Aethiopis* with a similar one in the *Iliad*. In each case, Thetis tells Achilles not to fight another warrior. Each time Achilles disobeys, making his death imminent. Dürbeck shows how a contradiction results from Thetis's warning in the *Aethiopis* and how Homer avoids the same inconsistency.<sup>11</sup> The neglected warning pattern that Achilles illustrates is neither noted nor explored.

Taking a different tack, Davidson examines a group of related warnings in the *Odyssey*. All of them occur after Odysseus returns home and emphasize the need for speedy action in a given situation.<sup>12</sup> Davidson's overall concern is to show how these warnings serve as models for similar advice in tragedy. Therefore, his otherwise interesting study contributes nothing to understanding the disregarded warning pattern in Homer.

Schofield discusses several of the *Iliad*'s neglected warnings as they relate to εὐβουλία or good counsel. Taking M. I. Finley to task, he shows not only that the poem's heroic code leaves room for rational discussion but also that excellence in counsel is a recognized virtue of Homeric chieftains.<sup>13</sup> Schofield understandably analyzes neglected warnings for their moral and

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<sup>10</sup> *Making of the Iliad*, ad 16.87-96.

<sup>11</sup> See Dürbeck, "Genese einer Unstimmigkeit," 9-11.

<sup>12</sup> See Davidson, "Beware of the Danger," 17-19.

<sup>13</sup> See Schofield, "Euboulia," 6-31.

psychological implications rather than as instances of a narrative pattern. As a result, his insightful article is of no help here.

The foregoing review of scholarship leads to two basic observations. First, discussion of disregarded warnings in Homer is indeed limited. No doubt this is what prompts Shapiro, whose concern is with advice in Herodotus, to claim that the question of Homeric precedents for a Herodotean-type warner would repay further study.<sup>14</sup> To date nobody has responded to her call, which alone goes a long way toward justifying the present investigation.

Second, the little that has been written about neglected warnings in Homer demonstrates considerable lack of consensus. There is agreement that the pattern has a threefold structure consisting of warning, disregard, and calamity. In addition, the opinions surveyed concur that warners are wise. Beyond this, divergence reigns as to the pattern's subsidiary features. West is unique by allowing the warner to be prophetic. He also stands alone in maintaining that recipients impute base motives to their advisors. Bischoff claims that the warner is always elderly, but nobody seconds. As to the form that neglect can take, only Hooker admits misunderstanding. Fenik, by contrast, believes that disregard stems from reckless folly. Moreover, it is by no means clear that this is the same thing as rejection, which West acknowledges, or heedlessness, which Hooker also allows. In sum, scholars do not say much about the neglected warning pattern in Homer. What they do say deals largely with the traits of warners and recipients and is far from unanimous. Given this state of affairs, it is appropriate for a comprehensive investigation of disregarded warnings in the *Iliad* to focus on how members of the two groups are characterized. Besides resolving existing disagreements, studying how

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<sup>14</sup> See Shapiro, *Role of Advice*, 49.

neglected warnings illuminate character could reveal aspects of the principals that to date have not been appreciated.

Granted that the projected study seems promising, why should it be restricted to the *Iliad*? The question is especially relevant given that more than one critic has commented on neglected warnings in the *Odyssey*. An important reason to focus on just one epic is that both together present too many episodes to be studied carefully in a single dissertation. It is likely that in-depth analysis would have to be sacrificed. Moreover, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have fundamentally different thematic orientations. The latter ends happily for the protagonist and his family, but the former concludes with the full expectation of more bloodshed and misery. The *Iliad* is essentially tragic compared to the *Odyssey*. These differences increase the danger of superficiality if the neglected warnings of both poems were to be considered in the same limited space. For now, then, one epic must be chosen.

There is good reason for selecting the *Iliad*. Of Homer's two epics, it is fundamental. Longinus, to be sure, exaggerates the *Iliad*'s importance when he states that the *Odyssey* is nothing more than an epilogue to it.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it is true that the *Odyssey* would be inconceivable without the *Iliad* as background.<sup>16</sup> Given the *Iliad*'s priority, focusing on it makes sense if the dissertation cannot adequately treat the neglected warnings of both poems. Beginning at the beginning, in other words, is likely to yield the best results.

So far this chapter has reviewed relevant scholarship and defined the topic of study more precisely. Now some words are in order about the examples to be discussed. Identifying warnings in the *Iliad* or any other literary work is not straightforward. The meaning of the word *warning* might seem obvious at first, but uncertainty arises as soon as one begins to reflect about

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<sup>15</sup> *Subl.*, IX.12.

<sup>16</sup> Silk, *Iliad*, 95-96.

the matter. What is the difference between sound advice and a warning? Why are some warnings phrased as commands, but others not? Is a spoken warning essentially the same as a written one? These and similar questions await anyone looking to provide a rigorous explication of the word. Dictionary definitions reflect the confusion and are therefore of only limited value. In addition, no academic discipline has a clear, consistent notion of what it means to be a warning. Uncertainty about the word's meaning is even greater at the interdisciplinary level.<sup>17</sup>

Those who have studied disregarded warnings in other Greek authors offer little assistance in the matter. Lattimore probably comes closest to describing the act of warning itself. He claims that the neglected warning pattern in Herodotus typically features a "sage elder who tries to halt headstrong action in a chief; he is in general pessimistic, negative, unheeded, and right."<sup>18</sup> This generalization implicitly defines a warning as an attempt to prevent headstrong action. Ordinary experience, however, shows that there is more to the story. Yelling "Look out below!" to someone in the path of a falling object does not aim to prevent impetuous behavior, but it is surely a warning. Clearly, Lattimore's conception of warnings is not general enough, which makes it unsuitable for studying them in Homer.<sup>19</sup>

Probably the biggest obstacle to understanding the nature of warnings is that they are highly context-dependent. If a woman at a party says, "It's really quite late," she might simply be making a statement of fact. If she says the same words to her husband, however, she could be expressing a request ("Let's go home") or delivering a subtle warning ("You'll feel rotten in the morning if we don't").<sup>20</sup> In this scenario, as in so many others, the speaker's knowledge and

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<sup>17</sup> See Dumas, "Adequacy of Cigarette Package Warnings," 314.

<sup>18</sup> Lattimore, "Wise Adviser in Herodotus," 24.

<sup>19</sup> Lardinois, "Traces of the Adviser Figure," 24-30 improves upon Lattimore's description but also does not take into account the act of warning as such.

<sup>20</sup> On the example, see Searle, *Speech Acts*, 70-71.

intentions make all the difference. Nonverbal or contextual considerations, in other words, are critical to constituting a warning. Approaches to the subject that do not take this reality into account are bound to be unsatisfactory.

Among systematic attempts to understand warnings, speech act theory has arguably paid the closest attention to contextual issues. As a field of study, speech act theory is situated between linguistics and philosophy. The approach has little to do with dictionary definitions of words but instead focuses on nonverbal factors that shape meaning. A very recent synthesis of speech act theorists' work on warnings maintains that this type of utterance exhibits five essential features. Accordingly, any warning deserving of the name will be:

- Warranted. The advisor must have good reason to believe that something undesirable is likely to happen to the recipient.
- Benevolent. A warning is protective and well-intentioned, even if the warner is detached or anonymous. Active emotional involvement is not required.
- Hortatory. A warning may communicate new information, but it is primarily a call to action (including passive functions such as reflection). Mere predictions about the future do not count as warnings.
- Negative. Warnings tend to be expressed in negative language, i.e., as not-doing rather than as doing. If the language is positive, there will be an equivalent negative formulation. Thus, "Wear a coat!" has the same cautionary force as "Don't forget to wear a coat!"
- Hypothetical. Warnings are also usually expressed as if-then statements. A warning not formulated as a conditional should be able to be rephrased as one. Thus, the example just given is equivalent to something like "If you don't wear a coat, something bad might happen."<sup>21</sup>

A warning must have all five characteristics in order to achieve its purpose. Because nonverbal considerations are so critical for identifying warnings, only episodes from the *Iliad* that conform to speech act theory's understanding of these utterances will be studied.

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<sup>21</sup> Summarized from Goddard, *Semantic Analysis*, 143-44.

Now that the act of warning has been clarified, listing the examples that the dissertation will examine is possible. The *Iliad* features a total of twelve episodes in which the neglectful recipient of a warning meets disaster:

- Chryses (1.17-21) warns Agamemnon to return his daughter. Agamemnon contemptuously rejects the warning, and a plague follows.
- Nestor (1.274-84) warns Agamemnon not to take Achilles' prize. Agamemnon ignores the admonition. Achilles withdraws from battle, and the Trojans gain the upper hand.
- Merops (2.830-34) warns his two sons not to go to Troy. They ignore him and are later killed by Diomedes. Their story bears on warnings that Achilles neglects.
- Pandarus's father (5.197-205) warns him to take a chariot to Troy. Pandarus takes his bow instead and is also killed by Diomedes. This story, too, relates to warnings neglected by Achilles.
- Peleus (9.252-59) warns Achilles to curb his proud spirit and avoid strife. By rejecting Agamemnon's embassy, Achilles neglects the warning and earns the contempt of his peers.
- Phoenix (9.502-14) warns Achilles that obstinacy leads to blind judgment. Achilles persists in his wrath against Agamemnon, irrationally sends Patroclus into battle alone, and is soon deprived of him.
- Menoetius (11.785-90) warns Patroclus to exercise a good influence on Achilles at Troy. Patroclus ignores the instructions and unwittingly maneuvers himself into a death trap.
- Achilles (16.83-96) warns Patroclus to return as soon as he has driven the Trojans from the ships. Patroclus instead fights all the way to Troy and is killed by Hector.
- Asius (12.108-17) ignores a warning from Poulydamas to enter the Achaean camp on foot and is killed as a result.
- Poulydamas (12.210-29) sees an unfavorable omen and urges Hector to retreat, but Hector refuses. Patroclus subsequently takes to the field and decimates the Trojans.
- Poulydamas (18.254-83) urges Hector to retreat a second time, but Hector again refuses. The Trojans are crushed when Achilles resumes fighting.
- Priam (22.38-76) warns Hector not to face Achilles alone. Hector remains outside the walls of Troy and is soon killed.



The absence of certain episodes from this list might seem puzzling at first. For instance, Achilles' horse Xanthus seems to caution him in vain about his impending death. As Achilles is preparing to rejoin battle, the horse relates that a god and a mortal in concert will soon subdue him. (19.404-17). Achilles resumes fighting anyhow and perishes not long afterwards. Has he neglected a warning? Although it might seem so, Achilles has not actually received a call to action. The most that his horse does is predict the future and relate the circumstances of Patroclus's death. Because Xanthus's words lack the hortatory dimension characteristic of genuine warnings, they do not constitute one. Consequently, the example cannot receive further consideration.

Another scene that must be excluded is the well-known exchange between Andromache and Hector. When the two encounter each other in Troy, Andromache urges Hector not to return to the battlefield. She insists that he will die if he does (6.407-10). Hector nevertheless goes back and is eventually killed by Achilles. Here, too, it would be incorrect to maintain that a warning has been neglected. Andromache's words are sincere and charged with emotion, but she does not have good reason for what she claims. She is not skilled in military matters, as Hector implies when he tells her to leave warfare to men (6.490-93), nor does she possess the wisdom of old age. Moreover, there is no evidence that she is divinely inspired. To all appearances, Andromache has no basis for believing that harm to Hector is inevitable if he resumes fighting. Because she fails the criterion of warranted belief, it would be more accurate to say that she implores or begs rather than warns.

As the cases of Xanthus and Andromache show, not every remark in the *Iliad* that seems like a warning really is one. Rigorously applying speech act theory's understanding of warnings limits the total number of examples. This also explains why no instances of boasting between

warriors appear on the list. Such utterances are neither protective nor well-intentioned and hence count as threats more than as warnings. Furthermore, boasts often go unfulfilled,<sup>22</sup> but neglected warnings always result in disaster.

Do twelve examples amount to a lot or a little in a poem as long and as complex as the *Iliad*? The answer depends on the standard of comparison. Type scenes, which also consist of recurring narrative sequences, would seem to be a natural point of reference. On the high side, the poem has nineteen scenes in which a disguised god visits one or more mortal characters.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, there are only five scenes in which someone is prompted to swear an oath.<sup>24</sup> If these figures are anything to go by, neglected warnings occur with moderate frequency.

With the list of examples accounted for, two matters remain to be discussed. One is the status of the warner, and the other is the manner in which the examples cluster. Casually browsing the list reveals that for the most part advisors embody traditional authority roles. Nestor, for instance, is a wise elder. In this respect, he socially outranks the recipient of his warning, Agamemnon. Similarly, several advisors have paternal authority over those whom they warn. These and other traditional roles have important implications for characterization, as will be clear after a brief digression on the world depicted in the *Iliad*.

It is generally agreed that Homeric society is very traditional.<sup>25</sup> As such it is oriented toward the past. Ancestral custom is not only a received heritage but also one that directs action in the present. Proper conduct is equated with observing well-established precedents. Similarly, an individual's place in society and the privileges and duties accompanying his status are not subject to negotiation. All this is not to suggest that members of Homeric society are unthinking

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<sup>22</sup> See Duckworth, *Foreshadowing and Suspense*, 23-34.

<sup>23</sup> See Seward, *Divine Disguise*, 5-9.

<sup>24</sup> See Arend, *Typischen Scenen*, 122-23.

<sup>25</sup> See among others Finley, *World of Odysseus*, 123; and Havelock, *Muse Learns to Write*, 58-59.

or incapable of deliberation. What is claimed instead is that custom exerts a strong, pervasive influence on their actions. Tradition functions as a revered, dependable guide rather than as an intellectual straightjacket.

Where custom is the dominant social value, a warning will be credible largely because it comes from a recognized authority. The warrior's traditional role, rather than analysis or debate, is what grounds his advice in others' eyes. It follows that deliberately neglecting the advice is tantamount to rejecting the authority role that purports to warrant it. Hence any character in the *Iliad* who intentionally disregards a sound warning will appear in a doubly negative light. He will seem foolish for neglecting good advice and presumptuous for setting himself against tradition. The point bears emphasizing. If custom sometimes constrains the individual, it also helps support his identity and guarantees certain opportunities and protections. Tradition gives as well as limits. For these reasons, characters who willfully disregard the warnings of traditional authorities will appear boldly antisocial.<sup>26</sup>

It is not surprising that the poem's neglectful recipients should seem so unsympathetic. Characters in fiction often fail to appeal when they disregard warnings. In cautionary tales, for instance, idle curiosity or stubbornness usually prompts neglect.<sup>27</sup> Such motives hardly leave the recipients looking good. At the same time, it is important to note that the *Iliad*'s neglectful recipients are not necessarily unattractive overall. The investigation will show that Achilles is unsympathetic when he ignores a warning from Peleus, a traditional authority if ever there was

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<sup>26</sup> These observations are not weakened by the heroic code that permeates the *Iliad*. Homeric warriors are, to be sure, committed primarily to furthering their own honor. However, the pursuit of glory does not trump other customary values. Due respect still must be accorded to others, and a hero is always expected to do what is proper in a situation as opposed to what he simply pleases. Ordinarily this arrangement will entail respecting the advice of authority figures. See Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 152-54; and Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* 25.

<sup>27</sup> See Tatar, *Off With Their Heads!*, 25.

one. Nevertheless, the hero appears generous and thoughtful during his interview with Priam. Similarly, it will be argued that Patroclus is recklessly ambitious for disregarding warnings from both his father and Achilles. This contrasts sharply with depictions of him elsewhere in the poem. Indeed, critics generally consider Patroclus gentle, amiable, and kind. That he can be as inordinately self-serving as some other characters is a further tribute to Homer's keen understanding of human nature.

Browsing the list of examples also reveals that they group in a particular manner. Each episode pertains to either Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, or Hector. This is probably not coincidental. They are, after all, the four most important characters in the *Iliad*. Allowing them to experience disaster due to their own neglect presumably holds listeners' interest more than the fates of lesser figures do. The manner in which the examples cluster provides a convenient guide for organizing the rest of the dissertation. Chapter 2 discusses warnings neglected by Agamemnon. In chapter 3, warnings neglected by Achilles are examined. Chapter 4 discusses warnings that Patroclus disregards, and chapter 5 looks at those neglected by Hector. Conclusions and possibilities for further research are presented in chapter 6. In the end, it will be clear that the *Iliad*'s disregarded warnings are vehicles for highlighting some significant, recurring character traits of both advisors and recipients.

For the sake of specificity and consistency in treating the examples, each will be approached with the following questions in mind:

- What traditional authority role(s) does the warner embody?
- What is the basis for his warning?
- Is his benevolence detached or active and emotional?
- How is the warning a call to action, an attempt to influence behavior?

- How does the warner react to rejection of his advice?
- What other factors contribute to listeners' overall impression of him?
- How is the recipient's neglect manifested?
- What is the particular motive for it?
- What else casts him in a bad light at the time of his neglect?
- How does he react to the disaster that he provokes?

In a few instances, one or more of these questions will remain unaddressed owing to a lack of pertinent information in the poem.

This chapter has laid the groundwork for examining how the *Iliad*'s neglected warnings contribute to characterization. Limited discussion of disregarded warnings in Homer and the potential to resolve some scholarly disagreements make the study promising. In addition, examples have been selected that meet the criteria identified by speech act theory for warnings. It is clear, furthermore, that the values of Homeric society will play a role in the characterization of neglectful recipients. Throughout the dissertation, the *Iliad* is quoted according to Allen's third Oxford edition. Translations of indented Greek passages are provided in footnotes and come from the prose version of Lang, Leaf, and Myers. Several advantages recommend it. Above all, it follows the original about as closely as English idiom allows. Moreover, the translation is in the public domain and is somewhat of a classic in its own right.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> On the last point, see Steiner, *Homer in English*, 195.

## II. WARNINGS NEGLECTED BY AGAMEMNON

There are two disregarded warnings in the first book of the *Iliad*. Each features Agamemnon as the neglectful recipient. Other similarities are present as well. Above all, the episodes illuminate many characteristics of the warners and their addressee. It will be instructive, therefore, to examine the two examples in sequence.

The first neglected warning occurs during the poem's opening scene. There Chryses, a priest of Apollo, visits the Achaean camp in order to ransom Chryseis, his daughter. Taken captive by the Achaeans, she is the war prize of their commander in chief, Agamemnon. Chryses offers handsome payment for his daughter. In addition, he tactfully indicates that failure to deliver her will offend Apollo:

Ἀτρεΐδαι τε καὶ ἄλλοι ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί,  
ὕμῃν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες  
ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ' οἴκαδ' ἰκέσθαι·  
παῖδα δ' ἐμοὶ λύσαιτε φίλην, τὰ δ' ἄποινα δέχεσθαι,  
ἄζόμενοι Διὸς υἱὸν ἐκηβόλον Ἀπόλλωνα (1.17-21).<sup>29</sup>

Agamemnon rejects the plea and its implied warning. He tells Chryses sternly to leave and never return. The old man complies, but on his way back he prays to Apollo for revenge. The god responds by sending a plague upon the Achaeans, which kills them in large numbers for nine

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<sup>29</sup> Ye sons of Atreus and all ye well-greaved Achaians, now may the gods that dwell in the mansions of Olympus grant you to lay waste the city of Priam, and to fare happily homeward; only set ye my dear child free, and accept the ransom in reverence to the son of Zeus, far-darting Apollo.

days straight. Agamemnon himself does not take sick. The plot requires that he live, so it is logical to punish his impiety by killing off many of those whom he needs for success at Troy.<sup>30</sup>

The warning is subtle, to be sure, but many have recognized it.<sup>31</sup> Chryses states that the Achaeans, meaning really Agamemnon, will show proper reverence for Apollo by returning Chryseis. The clear implication is that failure to comply will offend the god and lead to trouble. As a suppliant, Chryses dare not antagonize. No doubt this is why he issues a warning that is veiled.<sup>32</sup> Pope certainly detects a cautionary note in the priest's words. In his translation, he has Chryses refer to Apollo as "avenging," which makes the warning more explicit.<sup>33</sup>

Although it might not seem so at first, Agamemnon is the real recipient of the warning. Chryses formally entreats the entire army and especially the two sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus: καὶ λίσσεται πάντας Ἀχαιοῦς, / Ἀτρεΐδα δὲ μάλιστα δῶω, κοσμήτορε λαῶν (1.15-16). However, for all intents and purposes Agamemnon is the sole addressee. That is because only he is in a position to grant Chryses' request. As with all war captives, Chryseis's redemption depends on the consent of her new owner, Agamemnon.<sup>34</sup> This custom alone, which Chryses surely knows, entails that his message is aimed at Agamemnon despite appearances of a general address.

Politically speaking, too, Agamemnon is the real decision maker in this situation. The assembled soldiers are not empowered to act independently.<sup>35</sup> The most that the army can do is shout support for the petition. Menelaus says nothing, nor is anything reported about him.

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<sup>30</sup> See Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 178.

<sup>31</sup> See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* ad 1.21; and Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar,* ad 1.17-21.

<sup>32</sup> Like Tiresias cautioning the proud and powerful Oedipus, Chryses is in a situation that requires him to mute his warning. Unlike Tiresias, however, Chryses is not so roundabout as to compromise clarity. Compare Oedipus's complaint that Tiresias is speaking to him in riddles (Sophocles, *OT* 439).

<sup>33</sup> "If Mercy fail, yet let my presents move, / And dread avenging Phoebus, son of Jove" (his vv. 29-30).

<sup>34</sup> See Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar,* ad 1.13.

<sup>35</sup> See Barker, *Entering the Agon,* 35 n. 20.

Evidently he is deferring to his older brother. Because Agamemnon is senior, he enjoys greater authority in this matter as in any other.<sup>36</sup> But being the sole decision maker entails that Agamemnon is the true audience for Chryses' message and its implicit warning.

The scene's dramatic structure reinforces this interpretation. Only Chryses and Agamemnon have speaking parts. The army gives an inarticulate shout, which is merely reported, and Menelaus is silent. These circumstances throw Chryses and Agamemnon into relief, creating the impression that only they really matter. Homer prepares the audience for this pairing before the action begins, signaling that just one son of Atreus will dishonor the priest: οὐνεκα τὸν Χρῦσιν ἡτίμασεν ἀρητῆρα / Ἀτρεΐδης (1.11-12). It stands to reason, therefore, that everyone else at the assembly is insignificant dramatically. In this way, too, Homer succeeds in opposing one warner to effectively one recipient.<sup>37</sup>

Now that Chryses' warning and Agamemnon's role as recipient have been clarified, the character of each man can be explored. Chryses embodies several traditional authority roles. First, he is a priest of Apollo. Chryses comes to the Achaean camp carrying a priestly staff or scepter (1.14-15).<sup>38</sup> Moreover, he names the god he serves (1.21). Agamemnon acknowledges Chryses' role when he orders him to leave, explicitly associating the insignia of his office with the god:

μή σε γέρον κοίλῃσιν ἐγὼ παρὰ νηυσὶ κιχείω  
ἢ νῦν δηθύνοντ' ἢ ὕστερον αὐτίς ἰόντα,

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<sup>36</sup> See Eustathius *ad* 1.24: "Ὅτι οὐ λέγει ὁ ποιητὴς ὡς οὐκ Ἀτρεΐδαις ἦνδανεν ὁ τοῦ Χρύσου λόγος, ἀλλὰ τῷ Ἀτρεΐδῃ, τῷ Ἀγαμέμνονι δηλαδή. αὐτὸς γὰρ καὶ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, ὡς εἰκός, προεῖχεν οἷα πρεσβύτερος. ὡς γὰρ καὶ Ἡρόδοτός φησι νομιζόμενα ἥγουν νομιζόμενον ἔστι παρὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων τὸν πρεσβύτερον ἄρχειν."

<sup>37</sup> Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 176 notes that Chryses does not touch Agamemnon's knees or chin, as one would expect a Homeric suppliant to do. By considering only Agamemnon worthy of this gesture, Edwards, too, understands that he is Chryses' real audience.

<sup>38</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary, ad loc.*



μή νύ τοι οὐ χραίσμη σκῆπτρον καὶ στέμμα θεοῖο (1. 26-28).<sup>39</sup>

As a priest Chryses has a special claim to αἰδώς or respect.<sup>40</sup> That is because the gods take offense easily. Insulting a priest is tantamount to insulting the god he serves.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Agamemnon's affront to Chryses qua priest is the specific cause of the ensuing disaster.

In addition, Chryses is a suppliant. As Gould observes, the old man's appeal is not presented in language typically used for the act of supplication.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Homer clearly signals Chryses' petitionary status to both the characters and the audience. The poet is careful to mention that Chryses carries his priestly fillets instead of wearing them (1.14). In this way, he openly abases himself, as any suppliant must do.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, Chryses brings extraordinary ransom (ὑπερείσι' ἄποινα, 1.13) for his daughter. The suppliant Priam will do the same in order to recover Hector's body from Achilles. Also instructive is the verb λίσσεται (1.15), which characterizes the overall manner in which Chryses presents his case. In the *Iliad*, this verb has strong associations with supplication.<sup>44</sup> It is noteworthy, too, that some of the poem's ancient readers thought of Chryses as a suppliant. For example, Plato, *Resp.* 393d refers to him as a ἱκέτης.

In the story world, the role of suppliant has a certain authority of its own. Although suppliants in battle are not usually spared in the *Iliad*,<sup>45</sup> off the battlefield the act of supplication imposes strong moral obligations on the person entreated. The proper response in Homeric epic

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<sup>39</sup> Let me not find thee, old man, amid the hollow ships, whether tarrying now or returning again hereafter, lest the staff and fillet of the god avail thee naught.

<sup>40</sup> See Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar*, ad 1.23.

<sup>41</sup> See Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 32; and Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 130.

<sup>42</sup> See Gould, "Hiketeia," 74.

<sup>43</sup> See Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, 25-26.

<sup>44</sup> See Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar*, ad 1.15.

<sup>45</sup> See Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, 53-55; and Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* 31.

is to grant the petitioner's request.<sup>46</sup> This principle is memorably illustrated by Achilles' treatment of Priam. Zeus orders Achilles to respect whoever brings ransom for Hector's body, and Achilles immediately agrees to do so (24.133-40). That he keeps his word, amid much emotional turmoil, is largely a testimony to his sense of proper conduct.<sup>47</sup>

Besides being a priest and a suppliant, Chryses is elderly. Agamemnon calls him γέρον at the beginning of his reply (1.26). Homer confirms the priest's old age by referring to him both as ὁ γέρων (1.33) and as ὁ γεραιὸς (1.35). In the world of the *Iliad*, advanced years ordinarily entail wisdom.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Agamemnon is also dealing with someone more insightful than himself.

Homer gives listeners grounds of their own for considering Chryses wise. He informs the audience, but not the characters, that the old man is prophetic. This special talent is not mentioned directly, but it is evident from the poet's remarks. When Homer introduces Chryses, he calls him an ἀρητιῆρα (1.11), a term for professional priests in the *Iliad*.<sup>49</sup> However, when the Achaeans raise a shout on Chryses' behalf, the poet refers to him as a ἱερῆα (1.23). The second word for priest has strong prophetic overtones. This is clear when Achilles proposes consulting an expert in the mantic arts to determine the cause of the plague. He mentions several different possibilities:

ἀλλ' ἄγε δὴ τινα μάντιν ἐρείομεν ἢ ἱερῆα  
ἢ καὶ ὄνειροπόλον, καὶ γάρ τ' ὄναρ ἐκ Διὸς ἐστίν,

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<sup>46</sup> See Gould, "Hiketeia," 78-82.

<sup>47</sup> Zeus confirms Achilles' propriety when he says, οὔτε γάρ ἐστ' ἄφρων οὔτ' ἄσκοπος οὔτ' ἀλιτήμων, / ἀλλὰ μάλ' ἐνδυκέως ἰκέτεω πεφιδήσεται ἀνδρός (24.157-58).

<sup>48</sup> See Dickson, *Nestor*, 10-20. The belief that wisdom accompanies old age is reflected, for example, in Poseidon's remark that he as the elder knows more than Apollo (21.440).

<sup>49</sup> See Snell, *Lexikon*, s.v. ἀρητιῆρ. Note, however, the entry's claim that there is no significant difference between ἀρητιῆρ and ἱερεύς, which the present discussion contradicts.

ὅς κ' εἴποι ὅ τι τόσσον ἐχώσατο Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων... (1.62-64).<sup>50</sup>

Achilles clearly thinks that, along with seers and interpreters of dreams, a ἱερεὺς is able to ascertain the will of the gods.<sup>51</sup>

Priam expresses the same belief. At first Hecuba, his wife, opposes his plan to ransom Hector's body from Achilles. Priam counters that he has been instructed to do so by a goddess. He also states that he would not take the message seriously if it had come from a human authority:

εἰ μὲν γάρ τις μ' ἄλλος ἐπιχθονίων ἐκέλευεν,  
ἢ οἱ μάντιές εἰσι θυοσκόοι ἢ ἱερῆες,  
ψεῦδός κεν φαῖμεν καὶ νοσφιζοίμεθα μᾶλλον (24.220-22).<sup>52</sup>

Priam allows that a ἱερεὺς could have instructed him to go ransom the body. That he would not have believed the advice is beside the point. What matters for now is that Priam does not assert that the revelations of μάντιές or ἱερῆες are always untrustworthy. In other words, he believes that a ἱερεὺς can in principle discern the gods' will. It follows that Chryses, who is one, should possess prophetic insight.

Homer's audience must have been impressed by Chryses' talent. Prophecy and divination were central to Greek religion from the earliest times.<sup>53</sup> The importance of the mantic arts in Homer's day is attested by his younger contemporary Hesiod. In the *Works and Days*, which is full of practical advice, Hesiod states that a man is happy and lucky who, among other things, discerns the omens of birds (vv. 826-28). Given such reverence for prophecy, the *Iliad's*

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<sup>50</sup> But come, let us now inquire of some soothsayer or priest, yea, or an interpreter of dreams—seeing that a dream too is of Zeus—who shall say wherefore Phoebus Apollo is so wroth...

<sup>51</sup> Porphyry explains that the Homeric ἱερεὺς prophesies on the basis of sacrifices. See the AbT scholia on vv. 1.62-63b.

<sup>52</sup> Were it some other and a child of earth that bade me this, whether some seer or of the priests that divine from sacrifice, then would we declare it false and have no part therein.

<sup>53</sup> See Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 23, 47; and Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 111.

original audience would have considered Chryses wise not only because of his old age but also because of his special insight.

The traditional roles that Chryses instantiates are priest, suppliant, wise elder, and, by implication, prophet. Some other characteristics about him are worth noting, too. One is his benevolence toward the Achaeans. Chryses wishes them victory against Troy and a safe trip home. Perhaps he says this in order to curry favor for his petition. In any event, Chryses' warning is protective and well-intentioned. It is also more than disinterested. He seems genuinely to care that the Achaeans avoid Apollo's wrath. Pope senses as much when he observes that the old man speaks like one who appears to foresee the Achaeans' misery and exhorts them to shun it.<sup>54</sup> Chryses' concern for the Achaeans is probably due to contempt for the Trojans. As the exegetical scholia suggest, Chryses is against them because they have caused evils for him and everyone else in the region.<sup>55</sup> Disgust with Troy leads to active benevolence on his part for the invaders.

Chryses' goodwill is not rewarded. Agamemnon refuses his request and orders him to leave. The priest reacts with timidity. He does not attempt to counter Agamemnon's remarks or to make a second appeal. Instead Chryses is seized with fear and leaves the camp in silence (1.33-34). His acquiescence contrasts sharply with the reactions of some other characters in Greek literature whose warnings are rejected. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, for example, the prophet Tiresias warns Creon to permit burial for Polynices. Creon refuses, accusing Tiresias of collusion. Tiresias responds angrily with accusations of his own, although to no immediate avail.<sup>56</sup> Old and blind, Tiresias is just as powerless against Creon as Chryses is against

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<sup>54</sup> Comment on his vv. 1.23-30.

<sup>55</sup> b scholia *ad* 1.18-19.

<sup>56</sup> vv. 1029-90.

Agamemnon. Nevertheless, Tiresias expresses his frustration forcefully while Chryses is timidly silent.

Chryses is certainly sympathetic in the scene. The vulnerability of his old age endears him naturally. So does the extraordinary ransom that he offers (1.13). He is obviously a devoted parent who will do whatever is necessary to rescue his child. Chryses' timidity in the face of Agamemnon's behavior also elicits support from listeners. One cannot help sympathizing with a petitioner frightened into utter silence. Feelings of solidarity are also natural given Chryses' benevolence toward the Achaeans. Seeing his good intentions spurned makes him appear even more worthy. For all these reasons, the audience will find Chryses a very sympathetic figure.

Homer's positive depiction of Chryses stands in contrast to how he portrays Agamemnon. Because Chryses is a professional priest, possesses the wisdom of old age, and is a suppliant, his petition and its implied warning should be credible in Agamemnon's eyes. The values of the *Iliad* require as much. Nevertheless, Agamemnon rejects the warning outright. Kirk believes that he fails to grasp it,<sup>57</sup> but misunderstanding is unlikely. The assembled soldiers understand the meaning behind Chryses' tactfully chosen words. They raise a shout, Homer comments, precisely so that the priest will be accorded proper respect and his ransom accepted: Ἔνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες ἐπυφήμεσαν Ἀχαιοὶ / αἰδεῖσθαι θ' ἱερῆα καὶ ἀγλαὰ δέχθαι ἅποινα (1.22-23). The infinitives αἰδεῖσθαι and δέχθαι depend on ἐπυφήμεσαν and function datively. In other words, the soldiers assent to the acts of reverencing and receiving.<sup>58</sup> Showing reverence in this instance means releasing Chryseis. Because only Agamemnon is in a position to do that, the

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<sup>57</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 1.17-21.

<sup>58</sup> See Leaf and Bayfield, *Commentary*, ad 1.23.

army is essentially instructing him to do so.<sup>59</sup> Evidently everyone else comprehends that it would be a serious mistake to dishonor Chryses.

If the rest of the army grasps the import of Chryses' words, it is improbable that Agamemnon alone fails to understand. He must be deliberately neglecting the implied warning. Homer supplies a clear motive for his doing so. When the poet foreshadows the encounter between Chryses and Agamemnon, he states that a son of Atreus will dishonor the priest. The verb that Homer uses for this act is ἠτίμασεν (1.11), a denominative formed ultimately from τιμή.<sup>60</sup> The verb's alpha privative (present: ἀτιμάζω) signals loss of τιμή at the hands of another. Put briefly, Agamemnon takes τιμή from Chryses.

In the highly competitive world of the *Iliad*, τιμή refers to an individual's honor or social standing, and it is conceived as a finite good. A man can increase his τιμή only at the expense of someone else's.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, Agamemnon must believe that diminishing Chryses' honor will effect an increase in his own. Motivated to make his already considerable τιμή seem even more compelling to all present, Agamemnon at once disparages a priest, wise elder, and suppliant by ignoring the warning. The apparent confidence with which he does so is astonishing given the importance in his society of all three traditional roles.

In fact, Agamemnon is so self-assured that he is arrogant. Besides rejecting Chryses' petition outright, he taunts the old man, telling him that Chryseis will grow old back in Argos, performing housework and serving him as a concubine (1.29-31). This is sadistic bullying, as

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<sup>59</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 4.401-2, according to whom Agamemnon "is urged . . . to 'respect the priest.'"

<sup>60</sup> See Chantraine, *Dict. étym.*, s.v. τιμή.

<sup>61</sup> See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* 24-25. Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 150-51 describes the pursuit of honor as a "zero-sum game."

one commentator rightly observes.<sup>62</sup> Agamemnon is also gratuitous when he threatens Chryses. The elderly priest has to be a non-combatant.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, Agamemnon's reply ends with a threat to his safety.<sup>64</sup> He tells Chryses bluntly, ἀλλ' ἴθι, μή μ' ἐρέθιζε, σαώτερος ὥς κε νέηαι (1.32). There can be no reasonable basis for threatening the person of someone rendered harmless by old age. Overestimating his own position or resources, Agamemnon evidently thinks that he is above the demands of etiquette and adds insult to injury. Further evidence of overconfidence is the fact that he stands alone in denying Chryses. The commander gives not even a hint of considering his men's resounding endorsement, which bespeaks contempt for them as well. The conclusion is clear. In spite of all that Agamemnon knows about Chryses and the situation, he arrogantly neglects the warning against offending Apollo, in pursuit of greater τιμή.<sup>65</sup>

It remains to discuss Agamemnon's reaction to the calamity that he provokes. After the plague has raged for nine days, the Achaeans hold another assembly. The prophet Calchas explains Apollo's displeasure, declaring that Chryseis must be returned if the pestilence is to end (1.93-100). When Agamemnon hears this, he rails at Calchas, calling him a prophet of doom who never predicts anything good (1.106-08). The charge is preposterous. It was Calchas who prophesied victory for the Achaeans at Aulis (2.321-29), and it was he who guided their ships safely to Troy (1.71-72). Agamemnon's abusive reaction to Calchas recalls his harsh words to Chryses, who also gave him advice that he found inconvenient.

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<sup>62</sup> See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* ad 1.29. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, 55 characterizes Agamemnon's overall treatment of Chryses as "brutal."

<sup>63</sup> The elders of Troy no longer fight but pass their time sitting upon the city's wall and talking (3.146-53). If their advanced years excuse the Trojan elders from fighting, then the same will hold for Chryses. On priests as non-combatants generally in Homer, see Leaf and Bayfield, *Commentary*, ad 16.604.

<sup>64</sup> Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar*, ad 1.26-32 observes that the directive to leave is crowned "mit einer kaum mehr verhüllten Todes-Androhung."

<sup>65</sup> On Agamemnon's gross impropriety in the scene, see Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 177.

The reaction probably also belies a large measure of shame and embarrassment, which many would naturally feel in the circumstances. Agamemnon's prestige as commander in chief depends on taking Troy.<sup>66</sup> A precondition for capturing the city, of course, is a strong army. Yet the plague is so severe, as Achilles remarks, that the Achaeans may well have to go home without accomplishing their mission (1.59-61). This is certainly not the outcome that Agamemnon expected when he refused Chryses. Instead, the commander must now agonize over the real possibility of being branded a failure. Hence one can well imagine the mortification that he must feel upon hearing that he is responsible for his own predicament. One can also imagine that Agamemnon desperately wants to escape the feeling. An all too common way of diffusing negative emotions engendered by bad tidings is to resent the bearer of them.<sup>67</sup> It must be something like this dynamic that prompts Agamemnon to lash out at Calchas. Whatever its cause, though, Agamemnon's tantrum does not speak well of him as a leader. An effective commander would be less reactive.

Despite this weakness of character, Agamemnon's response to the catastrophe is not entirely negative. He does, after all, agree to give up Chryseis. Moreover, Agamemnon says that he is doing so for the good of the army (1.116-17). The concession might seem minor, coming as it does from a commander who has recently caused his men so much misery.

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<sup>66</sup> This is clear from his remarks when he tests the army in a later episode:

αἰσχρὸν γὰρ τόδε γ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι  
 μὰψ οὐτῷ τοιόνδε τοσόνδε τε λαὸν Ἀχαιῶν  
 ἄπρηκτον πόλεμον πολεμίζειν ἢδὲ μάχεσθαι  
 ἀνδράσι παυροτέροις, τέλος δ' οὐ πῶ τι πέφανται (2.119-22).

(Shame is this even for them that come after to hear; how so goodly and great a folk of the Achaeans thus vainly warred a bootless war, and fought scantier enemies, and no end thereof is yet seen.)

<sup>67</sup> A well-known expression of this sentiment is Sophocles, *Antigone* 277: στέργει γὰρ οὐδεὶς ἄγγελον κακῶν ἐπῶν.



Nevertheless, it shows that Agamemnon is more pragmatic than he is self-absorbed. Obsessed with perverse objectives, some leaders are simply impervious to reality. Nazi Germany, for instance, was occupied and largely in ruins before capitulating. The prospect of certain defeat could not induce its leaders to abandon their reckless ambitions sooner.<sup>68</sup> Fortunately for the Achaeans, Agamemnon is not so dogged. He acknowledges that there is a serious problem and has the presence of mind to accept Calchas's solution, even though it puts him in an awkward position. In short, Agamemnon redeems himself somewhat by taking a practical, realistic approach to ending the catastrophe.

The warning issued by Chryses and neglected by Agamemnon reveals a good deal about the character of each. The priest appears sympathetic because of his old age, deep concern for his daughter, and benevolence toward the invaders who have captured her. That he is intimidated into total silence by Agamemnon only increases listeners' regard for him. Agamemnon, by contrast, is a largely negative figure. By ignoring Chryses' warning, he demonstrates disregard for several traditional authority roles that ground it. At the heart of this disregard is an antisocial belief that pursuing honor takes precedence over custom. As if this were not bad enough, Agamemnon is downright arrogant toward Chryses. He also shows weakness of character in his initial reaction to the disaster, when he attacks Calchas. The picture, however, is not entirely negative. After this outburst, Agamemnon demonstrates that he is able to resolve a self-made crisis realistically. Whatever failings he might have, he is at least not stubbornly oblivious to the error of his ways.

The next warning to be considered is one of the *Iliad*'s most famous. At the height of the plague, the Achaeans hold another assembly. After he berates Calchas, Agamemnon agrees to

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<sup>68</sup> Denying undesirable circumstances is not uncommon among political leaders. Owen, "Hubris Syndrome," 428-32 discusses the behavior in several British and American heads of state.

give up Chryseis. However, he insists on a compensatory prize. This prompts a quarrel with Achilles, which takes up the rest of the scene. As their dispute grows worse, Agamemnon threatens to take away Briseis, Achilles' war prize, to replace Chryseis. An enraged Achilles considers killing Agamemnon but is stopped by Athena. Eventually Nestor, another Achaean leader, rises and speaks, warning Agamemnon not to take Briseis and Achilles to show proper respect to the commander in chief:

ἀλλὰ πίθεσθε καὶ ὕμμες, ἐπεὶ πείθεσθαι ἄμεινον·  
μήτε σὺ τόνδ' ἀγαθὸς περ ἔων ἀποαίρεο κούρην,  
ἀλλ' ἔα ὣς οἱ πρῶτα δόσαν γέρας υἷες Ἀχαιῶν·  
μήτε σὺ Πηλεΐδῃ 'θελ' ἐρίζεσθαι βασιλῆϊ  
ἀντιβίην, ἐπεὶ οὐ ποθ' ὁμοίης ἔμμορε τιμῆς  
σκηπτοῦχος βασιλεύς, ᾧ τε Ζεὺς κῦδος ἔδωκεν.  
εἰ δὲ σὺ καρτερός ἐσσι θεὰ δέ σε γείνατο μήτηρ,  
ἀλλ' ὅ γε φέρτερός ἐστιν ἐπεὶ πλεόνεσσιν ἀνάσσει.  
Ἄτρεΐδῃ σὺ δὲ παῦε τεδὸν μένος· αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε  
λίσσομ' Ἀχιλλεῖ μεθέμεν χόλον, ὃς μέγα πᾶσιν  
ἔρκος Ἀχαιοῖσιν πέλεται πολέμοιο κακοῖο (1.274-84).<sup>69</sup>

The warning has no apparent effect on Agamemnon. Soon after the assembly, he makes good on his threat to take Briseis, which causes Achilles to withdraw from the war. A series of disastrous consequences ensues for the Achaean side. Indeed, the negative impact of the disregarded warning extends throughout most of the *Iliad*.

The example brings out many facets of Nestor's character. First of all, his advanced years make him a wise elder. When Homer introduces Nestor, he remarks:

τῷ δ' ἤδη δύο μὲν γενεαὶ μερόπων ἀνθρώπων  
ἐφθίαθ', οἳ οἱ πρόσθεν ἅμα τράφεν ἡδ' ἐγένοντο

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<sup>69</sup> Even so hearken ye also, for better is it to hearken. Neither do thou, though thou art very great, seize from him his damsel, but leave her as she was given at the first by the sons of the Achaeans to be a meed of honour; nor do thou, son of Peleus, think to strive with a king, might against might; seeing that no common honour pertaineth to a sceptred king to whom Zeus apportioneth glory. Though thou be strong, and a goddess mother bare thee, yet his is the greater place, for he is king over more. And thou, Atreides, abate thy fury; nay, it is even I that beseech thee to let go thine anger with Achilles, who is made unto all the Achaeans a mighty bulwark of evil war.

ἐν Πύλῳ ἡγαθέη, μετὰ δὲ τριτάτοισιν ἄνασσεν (1.250-52).<sup>70</sup>

The king of Pylos has outlived his father's generation and his own and now rules over that of his children. He is thus a full generation older than the other Achaean leaders. Given the values of the story world, Nestor's extraordinary old age must entail considerable wisdom. He thus counts as a traditional authority figure.

Nestor is also distinguished because of his exploits as a young man. Before issuing his warning, he describes his glorious past. Nestor relates that he fought together with the mightiest warriors upon the earth, men who battled and destroyed the centaurs (1.266-70). Fantastic creatures are not directly present in the *Iliad*,<sup>71</sup> so Nestor's earlier activities connect him to a realm that seems otherworldly. Being a remnant of the remote, legendary past is not in itself an authority role. Nevertheless, this status confers at least informal credibility. Nestor implies as much when he says that warriors better than Agamemnon and Achilles heeded his advice when he was young (1.260-74). In the eyes of the other characters, then, Nestor is both a legendary warrior and a wise elder.

The poet gives listeners evidence of their own for Nestor's wisdom. As Nestor is about to begin speaking, Homer observes:

... τοῖσι δὲ Νέστωρ  
ἡδυεπὴς ἀνόρουσε λιγὺς Πυλίων ἀγορητής,  
τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδὴ (1.247-49).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Two generations of mortal men already had he seen perish, that had been of old time born and nurtured with him in goodly Pylos, and he was king among the third.

<sup>71</sup> On the poem's general avoidance of the bizarre and the fantastic, see Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, 165-67; and Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 137-38.

<sup>72</sup> Then in their midst rose up Nestor, pleasant of speech, the clear-voiced orator of the Pylians, he from whose tongue flowed discourse sweeter than honey.

The expressions μέλιτος γλυκίων and ἡδυεπής attest to superb speaking skills on the old man's part. Moreover, the adjective ἡδυεπής occurs only here in Homer. That by itself enhances Nestor's distinctiveness.

Even more significant, though, is the Indo-European lineage of ἡδυεπής.<sup>73</sup> Parallel formations in Avestan and Sanskrit, based on cognates of ἡδύς and ἔπος, associate sweetness of speech very closely with the divine realm. At *Yasna* 29.8, one of the beneficent immortals exhorts Ahura Mazda, the supreme god, to bestow *hudemêṃ vaxedhrahya* 'sweetness of speech' on Zarathustra for his role as prophet and founder of the Zoroastrian religion. A related expression, *svādmānaṃ vācaḥ*, designates the quality at *Rig-Veda* 2.21.6. There the hymn's anonymous narrator, who vows to proclaim Indra's heroic deeds, prays to the god for various gifts, including sweet speech.

Given the comparative evidence, it is not surprising that *Hom. Hymn* 32.2 calls the Muses ἡδυεπεῖς. Hesiod, *Theog.* 965 and 1021 also attributes sweet speech to them, using an expanded form of the compound, ἡδυέπειαι. In all three cases, the Muses are invoked to help a poet sing about specialized subject matter. That is because the Muses, as daughters of Zeus, are able to disclose privileged information to mortals. Consistent with the evidence from Avestan and Sanskrit, ἡδυεπής in early Greek epic designates a faculty that is divine in origin and revelatory in function. Used of Nestor, who is certainly not a god, the epithet logically implies that he is prophetic. For listeners familiar with epic diction, the warning to Agamemnon must seem as good as divinely inspired. This, too, contributes to their perception that Nestor is wise.

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<sup>73</sup> On the epithet in detail, see Schmitt, *Dichtersprache*, 254-57; and Floyd, "Resurrection of Indo-European Poetics," 187-90.

Besides being wise and legendary, Nestor is deeply concerned about the war effort and his fellow countrymen. The urgency of his words to Agamemnon demonstrates his active benevolence. Nestor begins by exhorting him not to take Briseis. Next he addresses Achilles, counseling him to behave like the subordinate that he is. Nestor then makes an emphatic return to Agamemnon, in part by completing a ring composition of the A-B-A pattern.<sup>74</sup> This has the effect of highlighting Agamemnon as the primary recipient of Nestor's advice. In addition, Nestor delivers blunt injunctions to Agamemnon (μήτε σὺ ἀποαίρεο, σὺ δὲ παῦε) but only a personal request to Achilles (αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε λίσσομ'). The stronger language for Agamemnon conveys a greater sense of urgency than do Nestor's words to his other addressee. The ending of any speech is a rhetorically emphatic position, and Nestor takes advantage of the fact. He closes with a reference to Achilles, in the third person, as a strong source of defense for all the Achaeans. Because it is naturally marked, this comment must remind Agamemnon of Achilles' importance for success in the war and that it would be unwise to alienate him.<sup>75</sup> All these details combine to make Nestor's remarks to Agamemnon urgent. Nestor is clearly straining to influence his behavior for the good. To describe the warning as actively benevolent would almost be an understatement.

Agamemnon's reaction to the warning is not uniform, and Nestor's own behavior varies accordingly. In his initial response, Agamemnon is non-committal. He tells Nestor:

ναὶ δὴ ταῦτά γε πάντα γέρον κατὰ μοῖραν ἔειπες·  
 ἀλλ' ὅδ' ἀνὴρ ἐθέλει περὶ πάντων ἔμμεναι ἄλλων,  
 πάντων μὲν κρατέειν ἐθέλει, πάντεσσι δ' ἀνάσσειν,  
 πᾶσι δὲ σημαίνειν, ἅ τιν' οὐ πείσεσθαι ὀΐω·  
 εἰ δέ μιν αἰχμητὴν ἔθεσαν θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες

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<sup>74</sup> On the features of Nestor's speech discussed here, see Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 1.282-84.

<sup>75</sup> Pope certainly understands Nestor's reference this way, which he translates, "Forbid it Gods! Achilles should be lost, / The pride of Greece, and bulwark of our host" (his 1.374-75).

τοὔνεκά οἱ προθέουσιν ὀνείδεα μυθήσασθαι; (1.286-91)<sup>76</sup>

If Agamemnon believes that everything Nestor said is fitting, then presumably he finds the warning plausible. However, Agamemnon quickly resorts to complaints about Achilles' insubordination, and he ignores the diplomatic distinction that Nestor drew between φέρτερός for himself and καρτερός for Achilles.<sup>77</sup> Agamemnon's overall reaction is ambivalent, so it is not clear whether he will heed the warning.

Agamemnon's ambivalence probably explains why Nestor does not pursue his point about Briseis. In fact, the old man says nothing else during the scene. Given Agamemnon's irascibility, Nestor might worry that a further appeal could backfire. Perhaps, too, he figures that Agamemnon will come around after he has had time to reflect about the matter. In any event, Nestor's complete silence in the face of Agamemnon's reply recalls similar behavior from Chryses, and in a comparable situation.

Soon after the assembly, Agamemnon dispatches two heralds to take Briseis from Achilles (1.320-25). By doing so he decisively neglects Nestor's warning. The immediate consequences are familiar enough that they can be passed over here. Later, after hostilities resume and the tide of battle has turned against the Achaeans, Agamemnon holds a strategy session in his tent with the other chieftains. Nestor is the first to speak. In contrast to his silence when Agamemnon first reacts to the warning, Nestor is vocal in criticizing his rejection of it:

οὐ γάρ τις νόον ἄλλος ἀμείνονα τοῦδε νοήσει  
οἷον ἐγὼ νοέω ἡμὲν πάλαι ἦδ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν  
ἐξ ἔτι τοῦ ὅτε διογενὲς Βρισηΐδα κούρην  
χωομένου Ἀχιλλῆος ἔβης κλισίηθεν ἀπούρας

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<sup>76</sup> Yea verily, old man, all this thou sayest is according unto right. But this fellow would be above all others, he would be lord of all and king among all and captain to all; wherein I deem none will hearken to him. Though the immortal gods made him a spearman, do they therefore put revilings in his mouth for him to utter?

<sup>77</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 1.286-91.

οὐ τι καθ' ἡμέτερόν γε νόον· μάλα γάρ τοι ἔγωγε  
πόλλ' ἀπεμυθεόμην· σὺ δὲ σῶ μεγαλήτορι θυμῷ  
εἴξας ἄνδρα φέριστον, ὃν ἄθάνατοί περ ἔτισαν,  
ἡτίμησας, ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχεις γέρας· (9.104-11).<sup>78</sup>

Nestor recalls how strongly he advocated against taking Briseis and accuses Agamemnon of neglecting the advice out of sheer pride. If only the commander had done as advised, Nestor implies, all would be well. It is almost as though Nestor were saying “I told you so!” to a child injured from disobeying. Consequently, his remarks seem condescending and self-righteous.

But this is no time to be a know-it-all, and pointing fingers in a crisis seldom helps. Nestor realizes as much and quickly displays his better side by proposing a pragmatic solution to the Achaeans' predicament. Achilles, he urges, should be given compensatory gifts for Briseis and treated to the gentle words of his peers. This, Nestor believes, will induce him to rejoin battle. In Homeric society, offering material compensation is the accepted way to right a wrong.<sup>79</sup> Respectful of the mores of his world, Nestor suggests a solution fully in harmony with them. He is clearly taking a practical approach to the problem.

Nestor is also pragmatic enough to appreciate Achilles' volatile personality. After Agamemnon agrees to compensation, Nestor selects the envoys who will convey the offer to Achilles. He chooses Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax (9.165-70). For Achilles they are the dearest of the Achaeans, despite his anger at Agamemnon (9.197-98). If anyone can persuade Achilles to accept Agamemnon's gifts and resume fighting, Nestor's hand-picked ambassadors surely

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<sup>78</sup> No other man shall have a more excellent thought than this that I bear in mind from old time even until now, since the day when thou, O heaven-sprung king, didst go and take the damsel Briseis from angry Achilles' hut by no consent of ours. Nay, I right heartily dissuaded thee; but thou yieldedst to thy proud spirit, and dishonouredst a man of valour whom even the immortals honoured; for thou didst take and keepest from him his meed of valour.

<sup>79</sup> See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* 147; and Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 216.

can. Thus Nestor demonstrates pragmatism once again. Despite his initial lapse into self-righteousness, Nestor has the practical sense required to salvage a very bad situation.

Nestor is sympathetic overall in relation to the warning that he delivers. He certainly garners respect for intervening in order to try and resolve the quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. Nestor's deep concern for the Achaeans' success, evident in the urgency of his words to Agamemnon, also makes him likeable. So does his prudent silence after Agamemnon reacts ambivalently to the warning. Although Nestor indulges in self-righteousness when he later criticizes disregard of his advice, he quickly recovers and proposes practical measures for the crisis facing the Achaeans. Nestor's pragmatism, along with other positive traits of his that the neglected warning brings out, leaves him in a good light.

The episode also illuminates Agamemnon's character significantly. The fact that Nestor is a wise elder should make the commander think twice before ignoring his warning. So should the general esteem in which Agamemnon holds Nestor. As order is being restored after the stampede to the ships, Agamemnon proclaims that he would quickly win the war if he had ten advisors such as Nestor (2.370-74). Agamemnon knows, then, that not only a traditional authority figure is advising him against taking Briseis but also one whose advice he ordinarily values. Agamemnon's refusal to obey so credible a warning demonstrates how secure he feels in the stance that he has adopted.

In fact, Agamemnon is confident to the point of being arrogant. This is evident shortly before the warning and not long after the assembly ends. As tempers rise during the quarrel, Achilles threatens to go home. Instead of taking him seriously, Agamemnon taunts him, saying:

φεῦγε μάλ' εἴ τοι θυμὸς ἐπέσσεται, οὐδέ σ' ἔγωγε  
λίσσομαι εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο μένειν· πάρ' ἔμοιγε καὶ ἄλλοι



οἳ κέ με τιμήσουσι, μάλιστα δὲ μητίετα Ζεύς (1.173-75).<sup>80</sup>

Belittling his best fighter in this very public way evidences too much self-assurance. Agamemnon is overestimating his other resources, even presuming on Zeus's favor. Athena confirms that Agamemnon is arrogant. When she orders Achilles not to kill him, she promises extraordinary compensation for Agamemnon's outrage:

ὧδε γὰρ ἐξερέω, τὸ δὲ καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται·  
καὶ ποτέ τοι τρὶς τόσσα παρέσσειται ἀγλαὰ δῶρα  
ὔβριος εἵνεκα τῆσδε· σὺ δ' ἴσχεο, πεῖθεο δ' ἡμῖν (1.212-14).<sup>81</sup>

Athena's mention of ὕβρις is especially significant, because it shows that she considers Agamemnon's behavior wanton.<sup>82</sup> Coupled with Agamemnon's own words during the quarrel, Athena's leave no doubt that he is overbearing.

Agamemnon's arrogance is also apparent when he decisively disregards Nestor's warning. Soon after the assembly, Agamemnon sends heralds to appropriate Briseis. His instructions to them are brief but revealing:

ἔρχεσθον κλισίην Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος·  
χειρὸς ἐλόντ' ἀγέμεν Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον·  
εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώησιν ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἔλωμαι  
ἐλθὼν σὺν πλεόνεσσι· τό οἱ καὶ ρίγιον ἔσται (1.322-25).<sup>83</sup>

Agamemnon states that he is likely to go with a posse and take Briseis himself if Achilles does not surrender her.<sup>84</sup> Given what Achilles said during the assembly, this remark is gratuitous.

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<sup>80</sup> Yea, flee, if thy soul be set thereon. It is not I that beseech thee to tarry for my sake; I have others by my side that shall do me honour, and above all Zeus, lord of counsel.

<sup>81</sup> For thus will I say to thee, and so it shall be fulfilled; hereafter shall goodly gifts come to thee, yea in threefold measure, by reason of this despite; hold thou thine hand, and hearken to us.

<sup>82</sup> On ὕβρις in early Greek epic, see Snell, *Lexikon*, s.v.

<sup>83</sup> Go ye to the tent of Achilles Peleus' son, and take Briseis of the fair cheeks by the hand and lead her hither; and if he give her not, then will I myself go, and more with me, and seize her; and that will be yet more grievous for him.

There is little reason to fear that Achilles will resist. His final speech during the quarrel includes a solemn assurance that he will not resort to violence in order to keep Briseis:

ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι·  
χερσὶ μὲν οὐ τοι ἔγωγε μαχήσομαι εἵνεκα κούρης  
οὔτε σοὶ οὔτε τῷ ἄλλῳ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἀφέλεσθέ γε δόντες·  
τῶν δ' ἄλλων ἅ μοι ἐστὶ θοῇ παρὰ νηὶ μελαίνῃ  
τῶν οὐκ ἂν τι φέροις ἀνελὼν ἀέκοντος ἐμεῖο·  
εἰ δ' ἄγε μὴν πείρησαι ἵνα γνῶωσι καὶ οἶδε·  
αἶψά τοι αἶψα κελαινὸν ἐρώησει περὶ δουρί (1.297-303).<sup>85</sup>

In Homer, the whole of v. 297 is a formula for introducing declarations of an especially serious nature.<sup>86</sup> Accordingly, Achilles makes a strong commitment to refrain from violence in connection with Briseis, regardless of what he says about his other possessions.<sup>87</sup>

The seriousness of Achilles' commitment is underscored by the aorist ἀφέλεσθέ (1.299), which has proleptic force.<sup>88</sup> When Achilles utters the word, Briseis has not yet been taken away from him. However, he imagines the deed as already done and conveys the notion with an aorist. Achilles' thoughts are in the future, where he sees the removal of Briseis as a *fait accompli*. The utter resignation expressed by ἀφέλεσθέ should make the other characters take seriously Achilles' pledge not to fight for Briseis. Instead of doing so, Agamemnon threatens to take the girl himself. Because the remark is clearly unwarranted, he is indulging in a fantasy about his

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<sup>84</sup> Goodwin, *Moods and Tenses*, 97-98 notes that the Homeric subjunctive with κέ has a sense between that of the optative with ἄν and that of the simple future indicative. Accordingly, Agamemnon says something along the lines of "I am likely to take."

<sup>85</sup> This, moreover, will I say to thee, and do thou lay it to thy heart. Know that not by violence will I strive for the damsel's sake, neither with thee nor any other; ye gave and ye have taken away. But of all else that is mine beside my fleet black ship, thereof shalt thou not take anything or bear it away against my will. Yea, go to now, make trial, that all these may see; forthwith thy dark blood shall gush about my spear.

<sup>86</sup> See Wieniewski, "La technique d'annoncer," 118.

<sup>87</sup> As Pope observes, commenting on his v. 1.339, "Achilles promises not to fight for Briseis if she should be sent for."

<sup>88</sup> The form seems to trouble Zenodotus, who would rather read ἐπεὶ ῥ' ἐθέλεις ἀφελέσθαι. However, there is no warrant in the manuscripts for this wording, and it is unnecessary. On the proleptic use of the aorist in Homer, see Monro, *Grammar*, 66-67. On appropriateness of the second person plural, see Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar*, *ad loc.*

own power. Agamemnon is simply grandiose at the critical moment when he neglects Nestor's warning.

What could lead Agamemnon to behave so overbearingly? In later episodes, both he and Achilles invoke ἄτη as the reason for neglecting Nestor's warning.<sup>89</sup> A temporary state of mind, Homeric ἄτη is spontaneous, impulsive, and irrational. It is a sort of blindness, causing its victim to act in ways that are self-injurious.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps ἄτη does lie at the root of Agamemnon's disregard. A more immediate cause, though, is evident from both his words and others'. Agamemnon threatens to take Briseis specifically so that Achilles will appreciate how much mightier he is and so that nobody else will dare challenge his authority openly (1.181-87). By framing his rationale in these terms, Agamemnon evidently believes that Achilles has compromised his τιμή or social standing. When Agamemnon responds to Nestor's tactful intervention, he articulates the same point of view. Achilles, he says, would like to be above all others, to rule all, and to give orders to all (1.286-89). Encroachment on his honor is intolerable for the leader of the Achaean forces. Because τιμή is a zero-sum game in Homer, Agamemnon attempts to shore up his honor by diminishing the perceived usurper's.<sup>91</sup>

This is certainly how some other characters regard the matter. Thetis, when she supplicates Zeus on her son's behalf, declares that Agamemnon has dishonored him. She pinpoints the offense with the verb ἡτίμησεν (1.507), another denominative formed from τιμή.<sup>92</sup> This verb, too, denotes taking honor from someone. One might expect Achilles' mother to construe the situation in a manner that makes him the wronged party. Much later, however,

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<sup>89</sup> See 1.412 (Achilles), 9.115-20 (Agamemnon), 19.86-138 (Agamemnon), and 19.270-75 (Achilles).

<sup>90</sup> See Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 1-27; and Finkelberg, "Patterns of Human Error," 16-25.

<sup>91</sup> See Donlan, "Homer's Agamemnon," 110-11. On τιμή as the basis for the whole dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles, see Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 1.175-76.

<sup>92</sup> See Chantraine, *Dict. étym.*, s.v. τιμή. ἡτίμησεν, spoken by Thetis, is the first aorist of ἁτιμάω. The first aorist of ἁτιμάω is ἡτίμασα and is used of Agamemnon's behavior toward Chryses (1.11).

Nestor characterizes Agamemnon's appropriation of Briseis with the same verb (9.111). The wise elder's relative objectivity confirms that Agamemnon is motivated by self-regard. Perceiving his social standing compromised by Achilles, Agamemnon counteracts the damage by assaulting Achilles' τιμή.

The disaster that results from neglecting Nestor's warning reveals other aspects of Agamemnon's character. One is his ineffectiveness as a leader. A foretaste of the catastrophe comes when Agamemnon tests his troops after the false dream sent by Zeus. As soon as he proposes that the Achaeans go home, they run for the ships without hesitation (2.142-54). Demoralized by Agamemnon's treatment of Achilles and his withdrawal, the army no longer feels committed to the war or its leader.<sup>93</sup> As Agamemnon stands alone, left behind in a cloud of dust (2.150-51), he seems powerless to reverse the situation. Indeed, only intervention by Athena prevents the Achaeans from sailing home prematurely (2.155-81).

Agamemnon's ineffectiveness is also prominent when real disaster strikes. After hostilities with the Trojans resume, the Achaeans do well at first. By the second day of fighting, however, the tide has turned, and they are being badly beaten. Agamemnon is so fearful of utter defeat that he prays to Zeus to grant the army at least a safe escape (8.242-44). That evening a despondent Agamemnon, in another assembly, proposes abandoning the mission and fleeing with the ships (9.17-28). For this suggestion he is soundly rebuked by Diomedes, whose words the rest of the army applauds (9.32-51). Nestor later suggests offering Achilles gifts if he will resume fighting, and Agamemnon readily agrees. Instead of taking the initiative to find a solution to the crisis, Agamemnon has to have one handed to him. This is not a hallmark of effective leadership.

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<sup>93</sup> See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* ad 2.222; and Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar,* ad 1.327.

In a subsequent episode, after several Achaean chieftains have been badly wounded, Agamemnon again expresses despair and proposes fleeing with the ships (14.44-48, 65-81). Agamemnon must repeatedly endure the agonizing possibility of a disgraceful return home or even worse. Such anguish is exactly what Achilles hopes Zeus will bring about (1.407-12). Of course, this result is hardly what Agamemnon expects when he neglects Nestor's warning. In an ironic turn of circumstances, the commander is driven to despair who so confidently thought he was advancing his honor against Achilles.<sup>94</sup>

To his credit, Agamemnon recognizes the value of Nestor's proposal to compensate Achilles and adopts it on the spot. He admits that he was foolish for taking Briseis and then pledges staggering reparations, including marriage ties and rule over seven dependent cities (9.115-57). Agamemnon's offer might not seem all that meritorious, seeing that he was the one who alienated Achilles in the first place. However, it bears mentioning again that not every leader acknowledges his mistakes or takes steps to rectify them. Prompted by Nestor, Agamemnon does both, which makes him appear not entirely negative in connection with the warning that he disregards.

This chapter has examined the *Iliad*'s first two neglected warnings, which turn out to have much in common. Both feature a wise elder cautioning an impervious Agamemnon. Chryses and Nestor are sympathetic warners. Old age makes each venerable, and each is actively benevolent. Chryses especially elicits support owing to his parental devotion, self-abasement as a suppliant, and brutal mistreatment by Agamemnon. Moreover, Homer implies that both warners are prophetic. The insinuation is directed at the audience, over the heads of the characters. Knowing that Chryses and Nestor have special insight is a further guarantee of their

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<sup>94</sup> On grandiosity and despair as alternating sides of Agamemnon's character, see Donlan, "Homer's Agamemnon," 109-115; and Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, 70-73.

wisdom for listeners. It also helps give the audience an ironic perspective on Agamemnon's short-sightedness when he disregards the warnings.

Compared to the advisors, Agamemnon is much less likeable. Confident beyond reason in each case, he ignores a sound warning, and disaster follows. In both instances, Agamemnon's neglect is motivated by misplaced self-regard. He attempts to maintain or increase his social standing by disregarding traditional authorities whose advice should be *prima facie* credible for him. In addition, Agamemnon demonstrates ineffective leadership when he assails Calchas for his explanation of the plague and when he has to be handed a solution for the crisis resulting from Achilles' absence. Agamemnon's repeated expressions of despair are also a weakness of character. Nevertheless, there is a bright spot. The commander is realistic enough both times to follow the suggested way out of the dilemma. Making a mistake, as Tiresias tells Creon, is not so terrible in itself; only the person who stubbornly persists in his error incurs the charge of folly.<sup>95</sup> Because Agamemnon attempts to remedy his mistakes, the picture of him that emerges from the two episodes examined in this chapter is not completely negative.

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<sup>95</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone*, 1023-28.

### III. WARNINGS NEGLECTED BY ACHILLES

Like Agamemnon, Achilles neglects two important warnings. Also like Agamemnon, he displays significant aspects of his character in doing so. Important traits of those who warn Achilles also come to light. It turns out that much of what can be said about Agamemnon and his two advisors also applies to Achilles and his. At the same time, Homer's realization of the neglected warning pattern is still distinctive in the episodes to be studied in this chapter.

In a discussion of warnings neglected by Achilles, it might seem odd to begin with two little-known allies of the Trojans. However, their circumstances help illuminate his. Adrastus and Amphius, sons of Merops, lead the contingent from Adresteia. They participate in the war against the wishes of their father, a prophet who tries to dissuade them from going. The brothers appear only twice in the *Iliad*. The first time is in the catalogue of Trojan allies:

Οἱ δ' Ἀδρήστειάν τ' εἶχον καὶ δῆμον Ἀπαισοῦ  
καὶ Πιτύειαν ἔχον καὶ Τηρείης ὄρος αἰπύ,  
τῶν ἦρχ' Ἀδρηστός τε καὶ Ἄμφιος λινοθώρηξ  
υἷε δύω Μέροπος Περκωσίου, ὃς περὶ πάντων  
ἦδεε μαντοσύνας, οὐδὲ οὖς παῖδας ἔασκε  
στείχειν ἐς πόλεμον φθισήνορα· τὼ δέ οἱ οὐ τι  
πειθέσθην· κῆρες γὰρ ἄγον μέλανος θανάτοιο (2.828-34).<sup>96</sup>

Homer repeats this anecdote much later, using almost the same language, when Diomedes kills the two (11.328-34). Thus, the forebodings of Merops prove all too accurate.

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<sup>96</sup> And of them that possessed Adresteia and the land of Apaisos and possessed Pityeia and the steep hill of Tereia, of these Adrestos was captain, and Amphios of the linen corslet, the two sons of Merops of Perkote, that beyond all men knew soothsaying, and would have hindered his children marching to murderous war. But they gave him no heed, for the fates of black death led them on.

The anecdote sheds light on some important characteristics of Merops and his sons. Merops himself embodies two traditional authority roles. He is a prophet, which effectively guarantees wisdom. Homer emphasizes the soundness of Merops's wisdom by telling listeners, but not the characters, that he is skilled beyond all men in the art of prophecy (2.831-32). For the audience, this disclosure makes the brothers' predicted ruin more certain than if an undistinguished prophet had cautioned them.

Merops is also an authority figure in his capacity as the father of Adrastus and Amphius. Filial obligations carry much weight in Homer. The bond between fathers and sons is often depicted as the closest of all.<sup>97</sup> No doubt it is parental concern that prompts Merops to warn his sons against going to Troy. He must foresee that they will be seriously harmed if they participate in the war.<sup>98</sup> Although the anecdote relates nothing else about Merops, his fatherly protectiveness alone makes him a sympathetic figure. The advice that he gives his sons is clearly well-intentioned.

Merops's paternal and prophetic roles should be compelling enough to deter his sons. Indeed, either role by itself should be capable of doing so. Filial piety obligates Adrastus and Amphius to respect their father's wishes. The story world's reverence for prophecy entails that his special insight should also restrain them.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, the two brothers neglect their father's warning. Furthermore, Homer makes it clear that they do so willfully. The phrase οὐ τι πειθέσθην reveals that they have no regard at all (τι) for Merops's words.

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<sup>97</sup> See Jones, *Homers "Iliad,"* ad 22.59.

<sup>98</sup> See Latacz, *Gesamtkommentar*, ad 2.834. Pope's translation brings out the warning's basis in prophecy: "Old Merops' Sons; whom, skill'd in fates to come, / The Sire forewarn'd, and prophecy'd their doom" (his vv. 1008-09).

<sup>99</sup> On general respect for prophecy and omen in the *Iliad*, see Kaufman, *Prophecy in Archaic Greek Epic*, 30-104.



Rejecting the warning outright bespeaks a large measure of confidence. By violating their filial duty, Adrastus and Amphius show that they trust their own judgment more than a fundamental social relationship. Ignoring a credible prophet, as Merops certainly is, also indicates considerable self-assurance. In this respect, the brothers' behavior parallels Agamemnon's when he confidently ignores warnings grounded by custom.

Homer does not specify a motive for the brothers' self-assured disregard, but it is easy to supply one. The Achaeans are required to serve at Troy or pay a penalty.<sup>100</sup> The Trojans' allies, by contrast, are not so constrained. Sarpedon, the commander of the Lycian contingent, makes this clear when he complains to Hector that the Trojans are not fighting as vigorously as their allies:

ἡμεῖς δὲ μαχόμεσθ' οἳ πέρ τ' ἐπίκουροι ἔνειμεν.  
καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼν ἐπίκουρος ἐὼν μάλα τηλόθεν ἦκω·  
τηλοῦ γὰρ Λυκίῃ Ξάνθῳ ἔπι δινῆεντι,  
ἔνθ' ἄλογόν τε φίλῃν ἔλιπον καὶ νήπιον υἱόν,  
καδ δὲ κτήματα πολλά, τὰ ἔλδεται ὅς κ' ἐπιδευής.  
ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς Λυκίους ὀτρύνω καὶ μέμον' αὐτὸς  
ἀνδρὶ μαχήσασθαι· ἀτὰρ οὐ τί μοι ἐνθάδε τοῖον  
οἶόν κ' ἢ ἐφάριεν Ἀχαιοὶ ἢ κεν ἄγοιεν·  
τύνη δ' ἔστηκας, ἀτὰρ οὐδ' ἄλλοισι κελεύεις  
λαοῖσιν μενέμεν καὶ ἀμυνέμεναι ὥρεσσι (5.477-86).<sup>101</sup>

Sarpedon reminds Hector that he is far from home, has left behind a wife and infant son, and is not being personally menaced by the Achaeans. This is not the sort of language that one would expect from a warrior compelled to fight at Troy. In fact, Sarpedon's remarks give the distinct

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<sup>100</sup> Euchenor, for example, avoids a heavy fine by deciding to join the expedition (13.669), and Echeolus wins exemption from service by giving Agamemnon a mare (23.296-99).

<sup>101</sup> And we are fighting that are but allies among you. Yea I being an ally am come from very far; far off is Lykia upon eddying Xanthos, where I left my dear wife and infant son, and left my great wealth that each one coveteth that is in need. Yet for all that I urge on my Lykians, and myself am eager to fight my man, though here is naught of mine such as the Achaians might plunder or harry. But thou standest, nay thou dost not even urge all thine hosts to abide and guard their wives.

impression that he and his men are there to do the Trojans a favor.<sup>102</sup> It follows that Adrastus and Amphiaraus are also at Troy voluntarily.

Sarpedon's insinuation of altruism, as one might expect, is disingenuous. If the allies are fighting of their own volition, then it is most likely because they hope to advance their honor. The pursuit of honor is paramount for the Homeric warrior, whether he is fighting by choice or by necessity.<sup>103</sup> Sarpedon says as much in a later episode. When he is encouraging his cousin Glaucus, he observes:

ὦ πέπον εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε  
αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε  
ἔσσεσθ', οὔτε κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην  
οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν·  
νῦν δ' ἔμπηξ γὰρ κῆρες ἐφ' ἐστῶσιν θανάτοιο  
μυρίαί, ἅς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βροτὸν οὐδ' ὑπαλύξαι,  
ἴομεν ἢ ἐτ' εὖχος ὀρέξομεν ἢ ἐτις ἡμῖν. (12.322-28).<sup>104</sup>

This, in a nutshell, is the warrior's creed. Attaining honor and glory is all that makes his brief life meaningful and distinctive in the eyes of others.<sup>105</sup> It stands to reason, therefore, that the Trojans' allies are supporting them not only freely but also in the hope of winning glory.

Seen in this light, the decision of Adrastus and Amphiaraus to join the war reveals that they are not only confident but also ambitious. The two are therefore unsympathetic. It is bad enough that they neglect Merops's paternal and prophetic authority by showing no regard at all for his warning. That they do so for purely self-serving reasons intensifies the negative picture

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<sup>102</sup> Compare Pandarus's claim that he joined the war in order to oblige Hector, φέρων χάριν Ἑκτορι δίῳ (5.211). These, too, are scarcely the words of someone required to aid the Trojans.

<sup>103</sup> As Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* 24 observes, "Heroes act like heroes whatever the circumstances; they do not *have* to be defending their own people to perform heroics." See also his remarks *ad* 5.471.

<sup>104</sup> Ah, friend, if once escaped from this battle we were for ever to be ageless and immortal, neither would I fight myself in the foremost ranks, nor would I send thee into the war that giveth men renown, but now—for assuredly ten thousand fates of death do every way beset us, and these no mortal may escape nor avoid—now let us go forward, whether we shall give glory to other men, or others to us.

<sup>105</sup> See Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 70-71.

of them. Accordingly, the characterization of the two brothers stands in sharp contrast to that of their father. Merops's parental concern is positive and admirable, but his sons' self-serving disregard is unattractive. Juxtaposing these contrasting characteristics in the same brief anecdote underscores the differences between them, which only increases lack of identification with Adrastus and Amphius. Indeed, when they are killed by Diomedes, one almost has the feeling that they are receiving their just deserts. Certainly the exegetical scholia view the matter this way. As a comment about the two brothers states, Homer punishes with death those who disobey their fathers or despise prophecy.<sup>106</sup>

The anecdote about Merops's sons resembles in several respects the neglected warnings already discussed. Adrastus and Amphius, like Agamemnon, are driven by ambition and are unduly self-assured when they ignore a credible warning. All three recipients also share a disregard for traditional institutions, which should have made them heed the important advice that they received. A significant difference, though, is the part that filial piety plays in the case of Adrastus and Amphius. This element does not enter into Agamemnon's neglect. Filial piety will play an important part in some warnings yet to be examined, including the two that Achilles disregards. In this manner, the story of Merops's sons helps prepare for those later episodes.

Pandarus, another ally of the Trojans, is certainly better known than Merops's sons. He breaks the truce between the Achaeans and the Trojans by shooting Menelaus with an arrow (4.104-40). To his discouragement, Menelaus receives only a flesh wound. After hostilities resume, Pandarus shoots an arrow at Diomedes as he is wreaking havoc among the Trojans. Diomedes is not injured fatally. In frustration, Pandarus exclaims that his bow is worthless. He

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<sup>106</sup> See the bT scholia *ad* 11.331-32, οὔτε ἀπειθεῖν πατράσιν ἀξιοῖ οὔτε μαντικῆς καταφρονεῖν, θανάτῳ τοὺς τοῦτο δράσαντας κολάζων. Eustathius makes a similar comment *ad* 2.828-34, καὶ ὄρα, οἷον τὸ μὴ πείθεσθαι πατράσιν εὐ εἰδόσιν.

tells Aeneas that he should have heeded his father, Lycaon, and come to Troy with horses and a chariot:

ἦ μὲν μοι μάλα πολλὰ γέρων αἰχμητὰ Λυκάων  
ἐρχομένῳ ἐπέτελλε δόμοις ἔνι ποιητοῖσιν·  
ἵπποισιν μ' ἐκέλευε καὶ ἄρμασιν ἐμβεβαῶτα  
ἀρχεῦν Τρώεσσι κατὰ κρατερὰς ὑσμίνας·  
ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην· ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν·  
ἵππων φειδόμενος, μή μοι δευοίατο φορβῆς  
ἀνδρῶν εἰλομένων εἰωθότες ἔδμεναι ἄδην.  
ὥς λίπον, αὐτὰρ πεζὸς ἐς Ἴλιον εἰλήλουθα  
τόξοισιν πίσυνος· τὰ δέ μ' οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλον ὀνήσειν (5.197-205).<sup>107</sup>

Aeneas resolves to pursue Diomedes and invites Pandarus to share his chariot. He gives Pandarus the choice of driving or fighting. Pandarus believes that Aeneas's horses will respond better to the master they know than to a stranger. This is an important consideration. If the horses were to become unmanageable, as Pandarus says, it could well give Diomedes an opportunity to kill both Aeneas and himself. Consequently, Pandarus opts to attack with his spear once Diomedes is within range (5.217-38). The confrontation between them is brief, and Diomedes easily dispatches Pandarus.

There is a definite connection between Pandarus's death and neglect of his father's instructions. If Pandarus had brought his own chariot to Troy, he would not need to share someone else's at the critical point when Diomedes is rampaging. As a result, Pandarus would not be faced with the dilemma of driving unfamiliar horses or fighting a warrior better than himself.<sup>108</sup> Not having his own chariot, in other words, severely limits Pandarus's options in the

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<sup>107</sup> Moreover Lykaon the aged spearman at my departing laid instant charge upon me in our well-built house; he bade me mount horse and chariot to lead the Trojans in the violent mellay; but I obeyed him not—far better had that been!—but spared the horses lest in the great crowd of men they should lack fodder that had been wont to feed their fill. Therefore I left them and am come on foot to Ilios, trusting to my bow; and now must my bow not help me!

<sup>108</sup> West, *Making of the "Iliad,"* ad 5.218-38 notes that Aeneas is indisputably a better warrior than Pandarus and would therefore be the proper match for Diomedes.

situation. He feels constrained to make a choice that proves fatal. Although the chain of causality might not be immediately clear, Pandarus brings ruin upon himself by neglecting his father's warning.

The neglected warning illuminates some significant characteristics of both the advisor and the recipient. Like Merops, Lycaon embodies two traditional authority roles. Owing to his advanced years (γέρον, v. 197), he is a wise elder. As Pandarus's father, he enjoys additional authority from the obligations of filial piety. Furthermore, Lycaon is a caring parent. This can be inferred from a comment in the exegetical scholia. Pandarus states that he did not bring horses and a chariot to Troy because he was worried that there would not be enough for the animals to eat. The scholia suggest instead that Pandarus was greedy and compromised his own safety simply to save money on fodder.<sup>109</sup> The comment takes it for granted that a warrior with his own chariot will be more secure than one without.<sup>110</sup> In all likelihood, then, Lycaon advises his son to take a chariot to Troy for safety's sake. Like any good parent, Lycaon seems to have his son's well-being in mind. This quality makes him a sympathetic figure.

In the world of the *Iliad*, Lycaon's authority roles as father and wise elder should make his admonition credible in his son's eyes. By neglecting the warning, therefore, Pandarus shows disregard for the traditional roles that ground it. This alone puts him in a bad light. That his neglect may well stem from greed makes him seem even worse. The negative picture of Pandarus that emerges from the episode is consistent with how he appears earlier in the poem. When Athena tempts him to break the truce, she tells Pandarus that he will acquire glorious gifts

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<sup>109</sup> bT scholia, ad 5.193: κερτομεῖ αὐτοῦ τὸ φιλάργυρον ὥς ἀμελοῦντος τῆς ἰδίας σωτηρίας ἀναλωμάτων φειδοῖ.

<sup>110</sup> A chariot certainly makes for greater safety on the battlefield. It provides a quick means of escape in case of injury or if the tide of fighting turns. A chariot's elevation also affords protection when its occupants are facing men on the ground. See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* 41-42; and Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 168.

and fame by killing Menelaus (4.93-103). Sacred oaths guarantee the truce. Nevertheless, Pandarus disregards this time-honored institution as well. Evidently motivated by ambition for material gain and renown, he impiously shoots the Achaean chieftain. It is not surprising, then, to learn that self-serving reasons also led Pandarus to disregard tradition and neglect his father's warning. If Lycaon's parental concern makes him likeable, Pandarus is unattractive for his self-centered disregard of custom.

Pandarus's overall circumstances are similar to those of Merops's sons. Like them, he receives a warning from his father and neglects it to his great detriment. In each case selfishness of one sort or another motivates disregard. At a general level, then, the two stories illustrate the same point: a son who neglects paternal caution for self-serving reasons is likely to suffer misfortune. In this manner, the importance of filial piety is underscored early in the *Iliad*. After hearing about Merops's sons and Pandarus, listeners will naturally expect other disobedient sons to get into trouble. The significance of this expectation in relation to Achilles will become clear presently.

After hostilities with the Trojans resume, the Achaeans do well at first. By the second day of fighting, however, the tide has turned, and they are being badly beaten. Agamemnon is so fearful of utter defeat that he prays to Zeus to grant the army at least a safe escape (8.242-44). That evening a desperate Agamemnon holds a strategy session with his advisors. Nestor proposes offering Achilles compensatory gifts for Briseis if he will rejoin the war, and Agamemnon readily agrees. Phoenix, Odysseus, and Ajax are selected to convey the offer to Achilles (9.163-70).

Achilles receives the delegation warmly. After they have feasted, Odysseus is the first to speak. Among his other points, he reminds Achilles of a warning that his father gave him before he departed for Troy:

ὃ πέπον ἦ μὲν σοί γε πατὴρ ἐπετέλλετο Πηλεὺς  
ἥματι τῷ ὅτε σ' ἐκ Φθίης Ἀγαμέμνονι πέμπε·  
τέκνον ἐμὸν κάρτος μὲν Ἀθηναίη τε καὶ Ἥρη  
δώσουσ' αἶ κ' ἐθέλωσι, σὺ δὲ μεγαλήτορα θυμὸν  
ἴσχειν ἐν στήθεσσι· φιλοφροσύνη γὰρ ἀμείνων·  
ληγέμεναι δ' ἔριδος κακομηχάνου, ὄφρα σε μᾶλλον  
τίωσ' Ἀργείων ἡμὲν νέοι ἢ δὲ γέροντες.  
ὥς ἐπέτελλ' ὁ γέρων, σὺ δὲ λήθεται· ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν  
παύε', ἔα δὲ χόλον θυμαλγέα· (9.252-260).<sup>111</sup>

Odysseus introduces Peleus's remarks saying σοί γε πατὴρ ἐπετέλλετο Πηλεὺς, and immediately after them he observes ὥς ἐπέτελλ' ὁ γέρων. The verb ἐπιτέλλω conveys seriousness. The same verb is used of Agamemnon's stern injunction to the priest Chryses (1.25) and of Zeus's orders to the deceptive dream for Agamemnon (2.10). There can be no doubt, then, that Peleus's words are to be understood as solemn advice.<sup>112</sup>

Peleus tells Achilles that the Argives will honor him more if he curbs his proud spirit and refrains from strife. It follows that Achilles should receive little or no esteem if he is contentious.<sup>113</sup> This is precisely what happens after he refuses to be reconciled to Agamemnon. Ajax, the last of the envoys to speak, accuses Achilles of being cruel, pitiless, indifferent to his

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<sup>111</sup> Friend, surely to thee thy father Peleus gave commandment the day he sent thee to Agamemnon forth from Phthia: 'My son, strength shall Athene and Hera give thee if they will; but do thou refrain thy proud soul in thy breast, for gentlemindedness is the better part; and withdraw from mischievous strife, that so the Argives may honour thee the more, both young and old.' Thus the old man charged thee, but thou forgettest. Yet cease now at the last, and eschew thy grievous wrath.

<sup>112</sup> Odysseus is certainly in a position to recall the speech. Both he and Nestor were present when it was spoken (11.765-81). Odysseus's account, however, differs from Nestor's later in the poem (11.783-84). The two reports do not contradict one another and may therefore be considered complementary, each witness choosing to relate those details that are most relevant to his purpose. See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* ad 9.252.

<sup>113</sup> See Ameis-Hentze, *Homers "Ilias,"* ad 9.257.

comrades' affection, implacable, and downright evil (9.624-42). Back in Agamemnon's tent, Odysseus informs the commander and the other Achaean leaders of Achilles' refusal. Diomedes then comments that it was a mistake to offer Achilles such splendid gifts. Achilles, he maintains, is haughty by nature, and the embassy has made him far more so (9.697-700). The assembled leaders all applaud Diomedes' words, meaning they share his dim view of Achilles (9.710). The people whom Achilles respects most in the army have grown contemptuous of him.

This is the sort of situation from which Peleus meant to protect Achilles. Furthermore, it is all too predictable based on the experiences of Merops's sons and Pandarus. Because they neglect paternal warnings with disastrous results, the expectation is in place that Achilles will get into trouble for doing the same. His discomfiture is not as severe as death, to be sure, which they suffer. Nevertheless, Achilles' isolation from the rest of the army is damaging and every bit as real.

Odysseus quotes Peleus's warning verbatim. No doubt he does so in order to help soften Achilles. Direct quotation makes the warning more palpable than if it were paraphrased or merely alluded to. As a result, Peleus is more present to mind for Achilles, which heightens the emotional pressure on him to accept Agamemnon's offer.<sup>114</sup> In other words, Odysseus is simply a stand-in for the real warner. It is worth emphasizing, too, that Achilles finds himself in trouble not because he has forgotten Peleus's warning, as Odysseus claims (9.259), but because he persists in neglecting it after he has been reminded. Thus, Achilles still counts as a willful recipient who brings about his own difficulties.

The scene reveals a good deal about the characters of both father and son. In the first place, Peleus instantiates several traditional authority roles. He is elderly (γέρον, 9.259), which

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<sup>114</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 9.251-58.



obligates Achilles to recognize him as wiser. Peleus's paternal role also renders Achilles naturally subordinate. Filial duty aside, Achilles enjoys a close, affectionate relationship with his father (24.507-42). Their emotional bond ought to confer considerable weight on Peleus's instructions as well.

Furthermore, Peleus is no ordinary mortal. Although Achilles is exceptional, his father is even more so. Because the gods favored Peleus highly, they gave him glorious gifts from birth, and he excels all men in prosperity and wealth (24.534-37). He has also had the extraordinary privilege of marrying the goddess Thetis. All the gods attended their wedding feast and brought gifts (24.55-63). Peleus received divinely made armor (18.78-87) and even two immortal horses, Balius and Xanthus, which Achilles has brought to Troy. In a separate incident, the wise centaur Cheiron gives Peleus an ashen spear, which only father and son are capable of wielding (19.387-91). Perhaps not all these details were familiar to Homer's audience, but surely enough were known so as to conjure up the image of a superhuman father.<sup>115</sup> That image gives listeners grounds of their own for finding Peleus's warning compelling

In addition to his traditional roles, Peleus is a sympathetic figure. Although his advice to Achilles is solemn, it is marked by affection. Peleus's short speech begins with τέκνον ἐμὸν, which is an expression of endearment. Besides being affectionate, Peleus is motivated by deep parental concern. He evidently knows his son's character and hopes to spare him unnecessary difficulties during the expedition. Therefore, a caring Peleus earnestly dissuades Achilles from being proud and contentious. Peleus's emotional engagement and apprehension make him actively benevolent as a warner. This, in turn, disposes the audience favorably toward him.

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<sup>115</sup> On Peleus as a figure well known to Homer's listeners, see Kirk, *Songs of Homer*, 118-19; and Slatkin, *Power of Thetis*, 53-84.

Peleus's old age and loneliness back in Thessaly (24.540-42) only increase listeners' sympathy for him.

Important characteristics of Achilles also come to light in connection with the warning. Odysseus tells him that he has forgotten his father's words (σὺ δὲ λήθεται, 9.259). Achilles does not contradict the remark, so it must be accurate.<sup>116</sup> Forgetting is certainly plausible. Peleus warns Achilles shortly before he departs for Troy, which makes the advice ten years old. Experience shows that a decade is long enough for many people to forget important information. In addition, Achilles' deep resentment toward Agamemnon could well be distracting him.<sup>117</sup>

If Achilles forgets the warning until he is reminded, he persists in neglecting it with full awareness. Peleus warned Achilles to cease from strife, but Achilles contemptuously rejects the lavish reparation that Agamemnon offers in order to be reconciled. Peleus also warned his son to curb his proud spirit, but Achilles' haughtiness only increases as a result of Agamemnon's overture, as Diomedes later observes. Peleus's traditional authority roles should be enough to make his directive credible in Achilles' eyes. By disregarding it, therefore, Achilles also demonstrates disregard for the authority that grounds the advice. Neglecting so much at once entails that Achilles is very confident in his decision.

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<sup>116</sup> Pope goes too far in rendering the final sentence of Odysseus's reminder, "This now-despised advice thy father gave; / Ah! check thy anger; and be truly brave" (his vv.338-39). Because Achilles is just now being reminded of the advice, it is premature to say that he despises it. One would more appropriately call the warning despised after Achilles recalls it and still does not heed it, as in fact occurs.

<sup>117</sup> Some maintain that Homeric characters lack well integrated mental and emotional functions, which can lead them to neglect important advice. For instance, Stockinger, *Vorzeichen*, 174 argues that the psychological effect of advice is exhausted when it is received and hence does not inform a character's subsequent behavior. This explanation does not square with common sense. Practically everyone has forgotten something important due to the lapse of time or a distraction. Few, however, would conclude from the experience that the mental or emotional force of the information fully dissipated when it was first received.

Although forgetting Peleus's warning after ten years is plausible, it is unlikely that Achilles has already forgotten the guarantee that Athena gave him when she intervened in the quarrel. Ordering him not to kill Agamemnon, Athena sweetens the injunction by promising Achilles that someday he will receive three times as many splendid gifts for the one that Agamemnon is threatening to appropriate (1.213-14). Certainly the compensation that Agamemnon's embassy is offering fits the bill. At least the other Achaean chieftains consider the proposed gifts more than enough.<sup>118</sup> Yet Achilles seems not to realize that Athena's guarantee is being fulfilled before his very eyes. Or does he?

When Athena intervenes in the quarrel, Achilles is seized with wonder (1.199). Given the highly charged nature of the encounter, her words must have made an impression on him too deep to forget easily. Moreover, only about two weeks have passed since they spoke. This fact also argues against forgetting. If it is hard to believe that Achilles has forgotten Athena's promise, then a likelier conclusion is that he simply does not want to see it fulfilled at this point. Agamemnon, in his view, has not suffered nearly enough humiliation for taking Briseis.<sup>119</sup> Until that happens, no amount of compensation will satisfy Achilles (9.379-87). Consequently, he does not factor even the assurances of a divine patroness into his response to the envoys. Achilles is confident enough in his own position to neglect not only his father's authority, old age, and superhuman status but also the solemn guarantee of a tutelary deity.

The same details that reveal Achilles' confidence also make him appear unsympathetic. Disregarding the instructions of his elderly father is damning enough. Ignoring the promise of a goddess who routinely looks out for him bespeaks ingratitude and verges on impiety. Given

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<sup>118</sup> See the comments of Nestor (9.164), Ajax (9.636-39), and Diomedes (9.699).

<sup>119</sup> See Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 223; and Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 9.387.

Achilles' infractions against several authority roles that the story world values, listeners must have found the hero unappealing by the end of his response to Odysseus.

Achilles leaves no doubt as to the reason for his refusal. Soon after Agamemnon takes Briseis, Achilles is seen sitting beside his ships in a wrathful state (1.488). He is in the same frame of mind when the envoys arrive. As he greets them, one of the first things that he mentions is his wrath (9.198). It is not surprising, therefore, that Achilles cites his seething anger as the motive for rejecting Agamemnon's offer. When Achilles responds to Ajax, the last envoy to speak, he says:

Αἴαν διογενὲς Τελαμώνιε κοίρανε λαῶν  
πάντ' ἅ τί μοι κατὰ θυμὸν εἰσαο μνηστήσασθαι·  
ἀλλὰ μοι οἰδάνεται κραδίη χόλῳ ὅππότε κείνων  
μνησομαι ὥς μ' ἄστυφλον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν  
Ἀτρεΐδης ὥς εἴ τιν' ἀτίμητον μετανάστην (9.644-48).<sup>120</sup>

Behind Achilles' anger lies a profound sense of stolen honor. He believes that Agamemnon has thoroughly disgraced him. When Achilles replies to Odysseus, to take another instance, he repeatedly mentions the outrage that he has suffered.<sup>121</sup>

Having lost considerable honor at Agamemnon's hands, Achilles is determined to get it back. This is the point of Thetis's appeal to Zeus to honor her son. The Trojans are to press the Achaeans hard until they accord Achilles proper τιμή (1.508-10). In Achilles' view, that will happen only when Agamemnon has been utterly humiliated.<sup>122</sup> In short, Achilles' relentless determination to recover his lost honor is what ultimately prompts him to reject Agamemnon's

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<sup>120</sup> Aias sprung of Zeus, thou son of Telamon, prince of the folk, thou seemest to speak all this almost after mine own mind; but my heart swelleth with wrath as oft as I bethink me of those things, how Atreides entreated me arrogantly among the Argives, as though I were some worthless sojourner.

<sup>121</sup> See 9.334-36, 344-45, 367-69, and 386-87.

<sup>122</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 9.387.

compensation, neglecting Peleus's warning in the process. Achilles has obviously decided that his τιμή is more important.

The character traits of Achilles that the neglected warning brings out are forgetfulness, disregard for custom, excessive confidence, and relentless preoccupation with social standing. All but the first of these are inherently negative. Achilles' violation of filial duty, disregard for old age, and near impiety toward Athena necessarily place him in an unfavorable light. That he behaves so with much self-assurance and out of ambition for personal advancement makes him even less sympathetic. Given Peleus's active benevolence, Achilles' neglect of filial piety is particularly grievous. All in all, then, the characterization of Achilles and his father is both strong and complementary. The very positive portrait of the one underscores the negative depiction of the other.

The final warning to be examined in this chapter also occurs during the embassy to Achilles. After Odysseus speaks, Achilles adamantly rejects Agamemnon's offer of compensation and declares that he will leave for home the following morning. He also states that he will take Phoenix, one of the other envoys, if he wishes to go along. The next person to speak is Phoenix himself, who tries to persuade Achilles to reconsider his decision. Among the main points that Phoenix makes, he warns Achilles that obduracy could well get him into trouble:

καὶ γάρ τε λιταί εἰσι Διὸς κοῦραι μέγαλοιο  
χωλαί τε ῥυσαί τε παραβλῶπές τ' ὀφθαλμῶ,  
αἷ ῥά τε καὶ μετόπισθ' ἄτης ἀλέγουσι κιοῦσαι.  
ἦ δ' ἄτη σθεναρή τε καὶ ἀρτίπος, οὐνεκα πάσας  
πολλὸν ὑπεκπροθέει, φθάνει δέ τε πᾶσαν ἐπ' αἶαν  
βλάπτουσ' ἀνθρώπους· αἷ δ' ἐξακέονται ὀπίσσω.  
ὃς μὲν τ' αἰδέσεται κούρας Διὸς ἄσπον ἰούσας,  
τὸν δὲ μέγ' ὤνησαν καὶ τ' ἔκλυον εὐχομένοιο·  
ὃς δέ κ' ἀνήνηται καὶ τε στερεῶς ἀποείπη,  
λίσσονται δ' ἄρα ταί γε Δία Κρονίωνα κιοῦσαι

τῷ ἄτην ἄμ' ἔπεσθαι, ἵνα βλαφθεὶς ἀποτίσῃ.  
ἀλλ' Ἀχιλεῦ πόρε καὶ σὺ Διὸς κούρησιν ἔπεσθαι  
τιμὴν, ἣ τ' ἄλλων περ ἐπιγνάμπτει νόον ἐσθλῶν.  
εἰ μὲν γὰρ μὴ δῶρα φέροι τὰ δ' ὀπισθ' ὀνομάζοι  
Ἀτρεΐδης, ἀλλ' αἰὲν ἐπιζαφελῶς χαλεπαῖνοι,  
οὐκ ἂν ἐγωγέ σε μῆνιν ἀπορρίψαντα κελοίμην  
Ἀργείοισιν ἀμυνέμεναι χατέουσί περ ἔμπης· (9.502-18).<sup>123</sup>

Phoenix alerts Achilles that ἄτη is likely to afflict him if he persists in refusing Agamemnon's earnest petition. Despite the prospect of blind judgment and the self-injurious behavior that it engenders, Achilles ignores this warning as well. He flatly refuses a second time to be reconciled.

The dire consequences predicted by Phoenix are swift in coming. The next day a deluded Achilles sends Patroclus into battle by himself, a decision that causes his dear friend to be killed by Hector.<sup>124</sup> The death of Patroclus is an emotional disaster for Achilles. It stirs him even more deeply than Agamemnon's appropriation of Briseis. Achilles grieves for Patroclus from the point when he learns about his death until his last appearance in the *Iliad*, where he weeps for his friend during the meeting with Priam (24.509-12).

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<sup>123</sup> Moreover Prayers of penitence are daughters of great Zeus, halting and wrinkled and of eyes askance, that have their task withal to go in the steps of Sin. For Sin is strong and fleet of foot, wherefore she far outrunneth all prayers, and goeth before them over all the earth making men fall, and Prayers follow behind to heal the harm. Now whosoever reverenceth Zeus' daughters when they draw near, him they greatly bless and hear his petitions; but when one denieth them and stiffly refuseth, then depart they and make prayer unto Zeus the son of Kronos that sin may come upon such an one, that he may fall and pay the price. Nay, Achilles, look thou too that there attend upon the daughters of Zeus the reverence that bendeth the heart of all men that be right-minded. For if Atreides brought thee not gifts and foretold thee not more hereafter, but were ever furiously wroth, then I were not he that should bid thee cast aside thine anger and save the Argives, even in their sore need of thee.

<sup>124</sup> Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 9.502-12 maintains that Homer "never suggests or makes Achilles suggest that subsequent events were brought about by ἄτη overcoming him." This is incorrect. At 14.141, Poseidon states that Achilles has no understanding at all, οὐ οἱ ἐνὶ φρένες οὐδ' ἠβαιαί. By convention, lack of φρένες signals irrational folly or delusion. See Willcock, "*Iliad*" of Homer, ad 9.377. Given Poseidon's remark, Homer does indeed suggest that Achilles is blind prior to dispatching Patroclus. On ἄτη as the reason for sending Patroclus into battle alone, see Leaf and Bayfield, *Iliad*, ad 9.510-12; Willcock, "*Iliad*" of Homer, ad 9.512; and Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad"*, 226.

As in previous examples, the neglected warning highlights some important characteristics of both the advisor and the recipient. Phoenix, like so many other warners, is elderly (γέρον, 9.432). He can therefore be assumed to possess the wisdom of old age. Furthermore, Phoenix functions as another father to Achilles. He helped raise Achilles (9.485-94), and Achilles feels much affection for him (9.613-16). Achilles even calls Phoenix ἄττα γεραίη (9.607), which Pope aptly renders, “My second father, and my rev’rend guide” (his 9.714).

Achilles’ relationship with Phoenix at Troy is more than emotional, however. Peleus sent Phoenix along specifically to watch over Achilles and instruct him (9.437-43). This gives Phoenix a strong claim on Achilles. Moreover, as Peleus’s deputy Phoenix evokes the superhuman aura of Achilles’ natural father. By association, Phoenix assumes some of that aura in the present scene. For listeners, this lends credibility to his warning beyond what his advanced years confer. In addition, after hearing the stories of Merops’s sons and Pandarus, the audience will expect other sons who disregard paternal advice to meet disaster. Therefore, when Achilles neglects the warning of his surrogate father, it seems fairly certain that misfortune beyond the contempt of the army will befall him.

It is important to remember, too, that Agamemnon’s ambassadors are suppliants.<sup>125</sup> Phoenix underscores their status by mentioning the Λιταί, personified prayers of sorrow and repentance. The envoys, he implies, are like the Λιταί and have come in a solemn attempt to right a wrong. Because this act of supplication takes place off the battlefield and promises generous compensation, Achilles is obligated by custom to honor it.<sup>126</sup> Phoenix’s traditional

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<sup>125</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 9.501; and Jones, *Homer’s “Iliad,”* ad 9.502-14.

<sup>126</sup> His refusal to do so helps explain Ajax’s exasperation. The last envoy to speak, Ajax observes that Achilles is being offered more than enough recompense and that even blood guilt can be expiated by proper supplication (9.632-39).

roles are, then, multiple. According to the values of the *Iliad*, he derives authority from being a wise elder, surrogate father, and petitioner.

Phoenix obviously intends to protect Achilles from harm. He does not want his charge to become blind in judgment (βλαφθεῖς, 9.512), with all the perils that such a mindset would entail. Therefore, Phoenix actively dissuades Achilles from stubbornness, which, he believes, leads to delusion.<sup>127</sup> Because Phoenix is trying to shield Achilles, he demonstrates the same sort of active benevolence that Peleus does when he warns his son. This makes Phoenix sympathetic. Furthermore, he is affectionate toward Achilles. Twice Phoenix calls him φίλον τέκος (9.437,444), a clear term of endearment. Phoenix's father-like affection, along with his old age, adds to listeners' sympathy for him.

Despite his fatherly role, Phoenix is no more successful with his warning than Odysseus was by repeating Peleus's. After Phoenix has finished speaking, Achilles again refuses Agamemnon's offer. Moreover, Achilles demeans Phoenix. He tells him bluntly that he must not seek to further Agamemnon's objectives. Instead, Achilles declares, Phoenix should be devoted to himself alone: καλόν τοι σὺν ἐμοὶ τὸν κήδην ὅς κ' ἐμὲ κήδη (9.615). This sharp reminder to Phoenix of his role as a retainer may well be the cause of his ensuing silence. Alternatively, Phoenix might figure that the vehemence of Achilles' replies to Odysseus and himself makes it pointless for the time being to pursue reconciliation. In any case, the old man says nothing further in the scene and spends the night as Achilles instructs him to do (9.617-22). Like Chryses and Nestor, Phoenix acquiesces to the outright rejection of his warning.

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<sup>127</sup> Apparently vv. 508-12 is the only place where Homer considers ἄτη a predictable phenomenon, let alone a deserved punishment. Elsewhere in the two epics, ἄτη befalls individuals randomly, at least from a human standpoint. See Hooker, "*Odyssey and Iliad*," 5-9; and Finkelberg, "Patterns of Human Error," 15-25.



The scene sheds light on some important qualities of Achilles, too. As a wise elder, suppliant, and Peleus's deputy, Phoenix should certainly be a credible warner for Achilles. Nevertheless, Achilles tells him that he has no need at all (τί) of Agamemnon's gifts because Zeus has honored him (9.607-10).<sup>128</sup> In saying so, Achilles not only disregards Phoenix's warning about stubbornness but also the traditional authority roles that ought to make it compelling. This twofold disregard effectively negates Achilles' fond words for Phoenix. It indicates, furthermore, considerable confidence on Achilles' part. In fact, he is so self-assured that he does not seem to realize that rejecting the gifts will isolate him socially and that Zeus's favor will come with a steep price.

The extent of Achilles' confidence is also evident from his repeated expressions of contempt for Agamemnon during the embassy.<sup>129</sup> Based on observations in the exegetical scholia, a convincing case can be made that Peleus has sent Achilles to Troy as the charge not only of Phoenix but also of Agamemnon. In effect, Peleus intends the commander in chief to be Achilles' second surrogate father.<sup>130</sup> Therefore, if Achilles were complying with Peleus's will, he would moderate his criticism of Agamemnon and accept the generous offer of reconciliation. Instead, Achilles disregards his natural father's intentions a second time during the embassy by rejecting Phoenix's appeal. Achilles' stubborn behavior illustrates once more just how self-assured he must feel about the position he has taken.

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<sup>128</sup> Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 9.608-9 observes that the hero's words sound much like Agamemnon's during the quarrel, when he tells Achilles to go home if he wishes. Agamemnon claims that others, and especially Zeus, will give him honor, *πάρ' ἔμοιγε καὶ ἄλλοι / οἳ κέ με τιμήσουσι, μάλιστα δὲ μητίετα Ζεὺς* (1.174-75).

<sup>129</sup> As part of his response to Odysseus, for example, Achilles declares that Agamemnon is always clothed in shamelessness, is as greedy as a dog, and has offered gifts that are both hateful and worthless (9.369-78).

<sup>130</sup> See Avery, "Achilles' Third Father," 391-96. Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 124 n. 26 also considers a paternal relationship between Agamemnon and Achilles.

The manner in which Phoenix's warning brings together Achilles' three father figures bears emphasizing. At the beginning of his speech, Phoenix depicts himself as a surrogate father, alludes to Agamemnon's comparable role, and names Peleus, who has made Achilles their joint charge (9.437-45). Achilles is alienated from all three by the end of the envoys' visit. Neglecting Phoenix's warning corresponds to rejecting Agamemnon's compensation, and both acts correlate with disregard for Peleus's intentions. This threefold alienation, as Schein observes, is an important element in Homer's characterization of Achilles.<sup>131</sup> It underscores the hero's loneliness and, by implication, the overly ambitious pursuit of honor that is responsible for it. Besides these circumstances, characteristics of Achilles that emerge in connection with Phoenix's warning are disregard for custom, especially filial duty; manipulation, in the case of Phoenix; obduracy; and confidence that is both exaggerated and, in the case of Zeus's favor, downright naïve. The combined result of these qualities is a character who is less than appealing. Achilles seems about as unlikeable in the scene as Phoenix is sympathetic.

Achilles' reaction to the disaster that he precipitates is twofold. On the one hand, he suffers profound grief over the loss of Patroclus. When Achilles first hears that he is dead, he throws himself to the ground, tears at his hair, and groans so loudly that his mother hears him at the bottom of the sea (18.22-38). In the days that follow, Achilles weeps frequently, and he has no interest at all in food or women (24.128-31). On the other hand, Achilles displays extraordinary ferocity in the face of the calamity. He resolves to kill Hector, even though he knows that it will cost him his own life. After Achilles resumes fighting, he slays so many Trojans in his fierceness that the river Scamander is choked by all the corpses (21.218-21). Eventually Achilles kills Hector as well. He mistreats the body to the point that the gods become

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<sup>131</sup> See Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 107.

annoyed and intervene. Achilles' ferocity in response to the death of Patroclus is no less strong than the profound grief that he feels for his friend.

Although Achilles' excessive fury does not brighten his appearance in the *Iliad*, his grief for Patroclus is moving and reveals a selfless side of the hero that has not been much in evidence. Moreover, resolving to avenge Patroclus is the one practical measure that Achilles can take to mitigate the calamity. Killing Hector will not bring Patroclus back, of course, but it will effect a sense of justice. In this regard Achilles redeems himself to a degree for neglecting Phoenix's warning. Like Agamemnon in comparable circumstances, Achilles accepts the calamity at hand soon enough and addresses it pragmatically. Achilles' pragmatism is all the more noteworthy given his knowledge that it will lead to his death. Consequently, the overall picture of him that emerges in relation to the neglected warning is less negative than when he first rejects it.

This chapter has examined four more neglected warnings in the *Iliad*. Homer's approach to characterization is essentially the same in all. In each case, a strong contrast is drawn between the character of the advisor and that of the recipient. Merops, Lycaon, Peleus, and Phoenix are portrayed as parentally concerned, eager to avert disaster from loved ones. Their active benevolence makes them sympathetic.

If the four warners appear in a positive light, those whom they try to protect seem much less attractive. All the recipients are motivated by a strong ambition for honor. Moreover, each prefers this self-serving pursuit to respecting the authority roles that should lead him to heed the warning that he receives. When each neglects a warning, therefore, he evidences considerable confidence. This combination of strong self-assurance, single-minded devotion to private gain, and blatant disregard for custom makes the recipients unattractive by the story world's values.

Because of the marked differences in characterization, the advisors act as foils to the respective recipients. The positive traits of the former emphasize the negative qualities of the latter. This is also how Chryses and Agamemnon appear in relation to one another and how Nestor and Agamemnon come off during the quarrel.

Some other parallels in characterization are also worth mentioning. Three of the four warnings will seem supernaturally vouchsafed to the audience. Homer states explicitly that Merops is a prophet without peers. For his part, Peleus appears as a superhuman figure because of listeners' familiarity with the poetic tradition. By association so does his deputy at Troy, Phoenix. As a result of these larger-than-life qualifications, listeners have grounds of their own for taking all three advisors seriously. Homer gives the audience a perspective on the warnings that the characters do not have, which heightens its sense that neglect will lead to disaster.

In addition, all four warners are at least a full generation older than those whom they advise. Lycaon, Peleus, and Phoenix are explicitly identified as elderly and hence count as wise by experience. All four warners are father figures, too. This characteristic bears emphasizing, because it does not figure in the two warnings that Agamemnon neglects. The stories of Merops's sons and Pandarus show early in the *Iliad* the importance of heeding paternal caution. As a result, listeners expect that other sons who disregard such advice will also get into trouble. The expectation is validated and thereby strengthened when Achilles neglects Peleus's warning and incurs the contempt of his peers. This, in turn, makes the audience fairly certain of another bad outcome when Achilles ignores the warning of his second father, Phoenix. In short, the element of filial piety connects several apparently disparate scenes in the *Iliad* while at the same time shaping listeners' anticipation. After hearing the four episodes discussed in this chapter, the

audience will fully expect that any other character who behaves like Merops's sons, Pandarus, or Achilles will end up in similarly unpleasant circumstances.

#### IV. WARNINGS NEGLECTED BY PATROCLUS

Like his good friend Achilles, Patroclus neglects two important warnings. In the first instance, he disregards paternal advice. Achilles does the same thing during Agamemnon's unsuccessful embassy. The two examples, it will be seen, have much in common. In the second instance, Patroclus disregards a warning from Achilles himself. Willfulness motivates Patroclus's neglect both times. As a result, he appears in a less favorable light than he is ordinarily discussed. The "nice guy" of Homeric criticism turns out to exhibit the same self-serving tendencies as other characters in the *Iliad* who disregard sound warnings.

Early on the third day of fighting, Achilles sees Nestor bringing Machaon from the field. Achilles summons Patroclus and instructs him to go see what is happening. After Patroclus finds Nestor, the old man tells him about the army's desperate situation. The best Achaean warriors have been wounded and can no longer fight. Nestor then launches into a long digression about the exploits of his youth.

At length Nestor also recalls the day when he and Odysseus visited Peleus's house to recruit Achilles and Patroclus for the war. The young men were eager to participate, and they received solemn parting advice from their fathers. As Nestor recounts the scene, Menoetius instructed Patroclus to exercise a good influence on Achilles:

σοὶ δ' αὖθ' ὧδ' ἐπέτελλε Μενόϊτιος Ἴκτορος υἱός·  
τέκνον ἐμὸν γενεῇ μὲν ὑπέρτερός ἐστιν Ἀχιλλεύς,  
πρεσβύτερος δὲ σύ ἐσσι· βίη δ' ὃ γε πολλὸν ἀμείνων.  
ἀλλ' εὖ οἱ φάσθαι πυκινὸν ἔπος ἢ δ' ὑποθέσθαι

καί οἱ σημαίνειν· ὃ δὲ πείσεται εἰς ἀγαθόν περ.  
 ὥς ἐπέτελλ' ὃ γέρων, σὺ δὲ λήθεται· ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν  
 ταῦτ' εἶποις Ἀχιλῆϊ δαΐφρονι αἷ κε πίθηται.  
 τίς δ' οἶδ' εἴ κέν οἱ σὺν δαίμονι θυμὸν ὀρίναις  
 παρειπών; ἀγαθὴ δὲ παραίφασίς ἐστὶν ἐταίρου (11.785-93).<sup>132</sup>

The infinitive φάσθαι functions as a positive imperative. Patroclus is to speak words of wisdom (ποκινὸν ἔπος) to Achilles, as needed, during their stay at Troy.<sup>133</sup> The infinitives ὑποθέσθαι and σημαίνειν also function as positive imperatives and require counseling or directing of some sort. In short, Menoetius warns Patroclus to be a prudent guide for Achilles. After reminding Patroclus of his father's warning, Nestor exhorts him to fulfill it even at this late hour (ἀλλ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν).

As a result of meeting Nestor, Patroclus initially aims to urge Achilles to resume fighting. He says to Eurypylos, on his way back from Nestor's quarters, αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε / σπεύσομαι εἰς Ἀχιλῆα, ἵν' ὀτρύνω πολεμίζειν (15.401-2). Thanks to Nestor, Patroclus has an alternative plan in case Achilles is avoiding battle because of an untoward oracle. In that event, Patroclus is to borrow Achilles' armor and lead the Myrmidon contingent into battle himself. One way or the other, the Achaeans will find some much needed relief.

Patroclus returns to Achilles' tent but in fact makes no attempt to persuade him to rejoin battle. Instead, he berates Achilles to the point of abuse. Patroclus tells him that he is impossible to deal with, pitiless, and harsh. In addition, he charges, Achilles' valor is only baneful, and his real parents are a towering cliff and the grey sea (16.29-35). This is hardly the

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<sup>132</sup> But to thee did Menoitios thus give command, the son of Aktor: 'My child, of lineage is Achilles higher than thou, and thou art elder, but in might he is better far. But do thou speak to him well a word of wisdom, and put it to him gently, and show him what things he should do, and he will obey thee to his profit.' So did the old man give thee command, but thou art forgetful. Nay, but even now speak thou thus and thus to wise-hearted Achilles, if perchance he will obey thee. Who knows but that, God helping, thou mightst stir his spirit with thy persuading? And good is the persuasion of a friend.

<sup>133</sup> Ameis-Hentze, *Homers "Ilias,"* ad 11.788 maintains that this and the other two imperatives in Menoetius's speech "geben Vorschriften für die ganze Zeit des Kriegszuges."

sort of counsel that Menoetius had in mind when he instructed his son to exercise a good influence on Achilles.<sup>134</sup> Patroclus's remarks resemble Ajax's stinging denunciation of Achilles, during the embassy, far more than they do friendly advice. Therefore, Patroclus is still neglecting his father's instructions.

Immediately after his litany of accusations, Patroclus asks to lead the Myrmidons into battle wearing Achilles' armor. Achilles agrees, and Patroclus soon departs. He enjoys a string of victories but is eventually killed by Hector. Menoetius had told Patroclus to give Achilles good advice at Troy, yet Patroclus disregards his father's words even after he has been reminded of them. In doing so, he unwittingly maneuvers himself into a death trap. Indeed, if Patroclus were to fulfill his father's charge, he would persuade Achilles to take up arms as Nestor urges. As Achilles' charioteer, Patroclus would never be far from him on the battlefield.<sup>135</sup> Were Patroclus to fight as well, Achilles would presumably still be nearby.<sup>136</sup> No Trojan would dare come close enough to wound Patroclus for fear of his friend.<sup>137</sup> Hence Patroclus would most likely avoid death for the time being.<sup>138</sup>

As Nestor reports Menoetius's advice, it was delivered to Patroclus alone. This is confirmed by the singular forms τέκνον, σὺ, and ἔσσι in Menoetius's speech. When the warning is repeated, there are still only one advisor and one recipient. Like Odysseus reporting Peleus's

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<sup>134</sup> Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 11.790-91 does not believe that Patroclus's remarks can fairly be described as παραίφασις, which Nestor urges, echoing Menoetius. Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 257 finds Patroclus "bitterly reproachful."

<sup>135</sup> See 5.243-50 for an example of a charioteer who remains close at hand during the fighting.

<sup>136</sup> Pindar, *Ol.* 9.70-79 pictures Achilles and Patroclus fighting side by side ever since encountering the Mysians, on their way to Troy.

<sup>137</sup> Hector, for instance, remains safely near the city's walls when Achilles is fighting (9.352-54).

<sup>138</sup> Zeus has already disclosed that Patroclus will die in battle, as noted previously. This knowledge is refreshed when Achilles summons Patroclus to go see whom Nestor is bringing from the field. As Patroclus comes outside to receive Achilles' instructions, Homer observes that this was the beginning of evil for him, κακοῦ δ' ἄρα οἱ πέλεν ἀρχή (11.604).



warning, Nestor quotes the advice verbatim. The scholia observe that this detail makes it seem as though Menoetius himself is present and addressing his son.<sup>139</sup> Nestor is merely a stand-in for the father. Surely one effect on Patroclus is that he feels a stronger obligation to counsel Achilles than a paraphrase of his father's advice would induce. By appearing as Menoetius's proxy, Nestor exercises considerable moral pressure on Patroclus to do as he admonishes.<sup>140</sup>

The neglected warning highlights much about the warner and the recipient. Menoetius, to begin with, embodies two traditional authority roles. Nestor refers to him as an old man (γέρων, 11.790), which entails that Menoetius is wise by experience. Moreover, Menoetius has paternal authority over Patroclus. He exercises this role in positive ways. First, Menoetius is affectionate. His warning begins with τέκνον ἐμὸν, an obvious expression of endearment. In addition, Menoetius has shown deep concern for his son in the past. After Patroclus accidentally killed a childhood playmate (23.83-88), Menoetius arranged for him to live in exile, with Peleus.

Menoetius demonstrates comparable concern in the present scene. When Nestor repeats the warning, he prefaces it by saying ὃδ' ἐπέτελλε Μενόϊτιος (11.785), and he immediately follows it with ὡς ἐπέτελλ' ὁ γέρων (11.790). In both instances, the verb ἐπιτέλλω signals solemn exhorting. Because Menoetius is not simply giving casual advice, his words must spring from some deeply held concern or apprehension. As a long-time affiliate of Peleus's household, Menoetius will have a good understanding of Achilles' temperament and will know that it must be carefully guided. This alone could account for Menoetius's anxiety. He also communicates concern when he tells Patroclus that Achilles will follow his guidance εἰς ἀγαθὸν περ (11.789). The precise meaning of the prepositional phrase is uncertain. Some, thinking that it refers to

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<sup>139</sup> bT scholia, *ad* 11.786-89: ὅσα ἐβούλετο τῷ Πατρόκλῳ παραινεῖν, ταῦτα ποιεῖ τὸν Μενόϊτιον ὑποτιθέμενον, ὡς καὶ τῷ Ἀχιλλεῖ ὁ Ὀδυσσεὺς ...καὶ ἀμφοτέρωδε δέοντως, ἵνα μὴ δόξωσιν οἱ ἀκούοντες μήτε Ὀδυσσεῖα μήτε Νέστορα τοὺς λέγοντας, ἀλλὰ τὸν πατέρα.

<sup>140</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, *ad* 11.786-89.

Achilles alone, render it “for his own good.”<sup>141</sup> Others believe that it has a wider application and translate it as “for the best.”<sup>142</sup> Whatever the expression’s exact meaning is, it shows that Menoetius instructs his son in the hope of effecting a positive state of affairs. The implication is that a less desirable one will result from neglecting the advice. Menoetius is, then, being protective. This active benevolence makes him a likeable advisor. His fatherly affection and general concern for Patroclus naturally increase the sympathy that listeners feel for him.

Menoetius’s warning should be convincing in his son’s eyes. In the traditional society of the *Iliad*, young men such as Patroclus are expected to defer to the old age, wisdom, and paternal authority that Menoetius embodies. Why, then, does Patroclus neglect his father’s warning? Nestor tells Patroclus that he has forgotten it (σὺ δὲ λήθῃαι, 11.790). Patroclus does not dispute the claim, so forgetting must account for his initial neglect. Like Achilles, Patroclus receives paternal instructions shortly before departing for Troy. After ten long years away from home, it would be easy to forget them. Many people forget important information in less time. In addition, the continuing turmoil from Achilles’ quarrel with Agamemnon could well have distracted Patroclus from the advice.

However, Patroclus continues to disregard his father’s warning even after he has been reminded of it. That he forgets a second time is unlikely. When he is returning from Nestor’s tent and encounters Eurypylus, he declares that he is going to try to rouse Achilles to fight (15.401-2). Evidently Patroclus has not forgotten the warning, or Nestor’s application of it, by that point. At the beginning of the next book, when Patroclus is back with Achilles, he makes no attempt to persuade him to rejoin battle. He does, however, present Nestor’s alternative proposal to pose as Achilles, using almost the same language as Nestor does (16.36-45). Persuading

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<sup>141</sup> Leaf and Bayfield, *Iliad*, ad 11.789.

<sup>142</sup> Jones, *Homers “Iliad,”* ad 11.788.

Achilles to fight is the most important aspect of Nestor's counsel and would fulfill Menoetius's charge.<sup>143</sup> It would be very odd for Patroclus to remember the less important part of what Nestor recommends, and nearly verbatim at that, but not the more significant details. In all likelihood, therefore, Patroclus is deliberately neglecting his father's instructions. Sometime after talking with Eurypylus, he must have changed his mind about exercising a positive influence on Achilles.<sup>144</sup>

Of course, deliberate neglect puts Patroclus in a bad light. By choosing to ignore the warning, he seems indifferent at best to the old age, wisdom, and fatherly authority that should make it compelling for him. Members of traditional societies do not violate custom lightly, so Patroclus's indifference presupposes that he is very confident in the position that he has adopted.

Homer does not provide a motive for Patroclus's bold disregard, but it is easy enough to infer one. As noted in previous examples, a Homeric hero's chief concern is increasing his social standing through exploits in war. Patroclus is no exception. Nestor and Odysseus find him eager to go to Troy when they visit Peleus's house (11.782). Pope's translation brings out this detail nicely, describing both Achilles and Patroclus as "fierce for fame" (his 11.913). Because Patroclus has high hopes of attaining glory, the prospect of posing as Achilles and of capitalizing on the Trojans' ensuing consternation must seem more attractive than the quiet task of persuading him to resume fighting.

Also worth mentioning is the difference in social status between Achilles and Patroclus. Although Patroclus is older and is supposed to guide Achilles, he has been Achilles' personal

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<sup>143</sup> On persuading Achilles as Nestor's main point, see Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 15.390-404.

<sup>144</sup> Some analysts believe that Nestor's suggestion to lead the Myrmidons into battle (11.794-803) is interpolated from Patroclus's speech to Achilles (16.36-45). Otherwise, the argument goes, Patroclus's remarks there would be "merely repeated by rote like a lesson" and would "lose all their grace." See Leaf and Bayfield, *Iliad*, ad 11.794-803. In fact, the repetition serves a definite artistic purpose by showing that Patroclus could not have forgotten the first and more important part of Nestor's admonition.

attendant for a long time (23.89-90). After many years in a subordinate role, what retainer would not be tempted to play the master for a day, if given the chance? What Achaean warrior, moreover, would not be enticed to stand in for their army's greatest fighter? Patroclus's ambition, then, is most likely twofold. He aims to increase his own fame and to bask in the glory of being someone he is not. Allured in these ways, Patroclus persists in disregarding his father's warning and his friend's best interests.

That Patroclus disregards Menoetius's warning out of self-serving ambition and pretense reduces sympathy for him even more. Put another way, the contrast in characterization between the warrior and the recipient is strong. Patroclus seems rather unlikeable at this point in the story compared to his father. As usually happens with foil characters, Menoetius's sympathetic qualities have the effect of highlighting Patroclus's negative ones. It is typical for critics to describe Patroclus as gentle, amiable, and kind.<sup>145</sup> When he neglects his father's warning, however, Patroclus appears otherwise. He evidently prefers advancing his own selfish ends to respecting the traditional authority roles that ground the advice. This is certainly not the picture of a sympathetic, kind-hearted person.

A similar profile of Patroclus emerges in the next example. The Achaean camp is enclosed by a defensive wall that was built after hostilities resumed (7.436-41). Immediately outside the wall is a ditch, and on the other side of the ditch is the open plain.<sup>146</sup> As Patroclus is returning from the errand on which Achilles sent him, the Trojans penetrate the wall and pour around the ships, intending to burn them. Soon thereafter Patroclus, now back at Achilles's quarters, asks to lead the Myrmidons into battle alone.

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<sup>145</sup> See, for instance, Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, 73; and Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 34-35.

<sup>146</sup> See Jones, *Homers "Iliad,"* ad 16.380.

Achilles agrees to his friend's proposal and then outlines how he should proceed.

Patroclus is to fight only until the ships are safe rather than pressing the Trojans as far as he can:

πειθεο δ' ὥς τοι ἐγὼ μύθου τέλος ἐν φρεσὶ θείῳ,  
ὥς ἂν μοι τιμὴν μεγάλην καὶ κῦδος ἄρῃαι  
πρὸς πάντων Δαναῶν, ἀτὰρ οἱ περικαλλέα κούρην  
ἄψ ἀπονάσσωσιν, ποτὶ δ' ἀγλαὰ δῶρα πόρωσιν.  
ἐκ νηῶν ἐλάσας ἰέναι πάλιν· εἰ δέ κεν αὖ τοι  
δῶη κῦδος ἀρέσθαι ἐρίγδουπος πόσις Ἥρης,  
μὴ σὺ γ' ἄνευθεν ἐμεῖο λιλαίεσθαι πολεμίζειν  
Τρωσὶ φιλοπτολέμοισιν· ἀτιμότερον δέ με θήσεις·  
μὴ δ' ἐπαγγαλλόμενος πολέμῳ καὶ δηϊοτῇτι  
Τρῶας ἐναιρόμενος προτὶ Ἴλιον ἡγεμονεύειν,  
μή τις ἀπ' Οὐλύμποιο θεῶν αἰιγενετάων  
ἐμβήῃ· μάλα τούς γε φιλεῖ ἐκάεργος Ἀπόλλων·  
ἀλλὰ πάλιν τρωπᾶσθαι, ἐπὴν φάος ἐν νήεσσι  
θήῃς, τοὺς δ' ἔτ' ἔαν πεδῖον κάτα δηριάσθαι (16.83-96).<sup>147</sup>

Achilles draws a distinction between the camp and the plain in his final sentence, where ἐν νήεσσι stands in opposition to πεδῖον κάτα. The contrast is emphatic,<sup>148</sup> and it will prove important for appreciating Achilles' instructions.

Presently the ship of Protesilaus is set on fire. Seeing the flames, Achilles urges his friend to arm for battle (16.124-29). Patroclus leads the Myrmidons in a counter-attack, and the Trojans are repelled with relative ease. Before long, they are fleeing the camp in disarray. Hector even abandons his men in order to escape (16.364-71). Drawn by Achilles's immortal horses, the chariot of Patroclus leaps over the ditch as he pursues the retreating Trojans. Out on

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<sup>147</sup> But do thou obey, even as I shall put into thy mind the end of my commandment, that in my sight thou mayst win great honour and fame of all the Danaans, and they may give me back again the fairest maiden, and thereto add splendid gifts. When thou hast driven them from the ships, return, and even if the loud-thundering lord of Hera grant thee to win glory, yet long not thou apart from me to fight with the war-loving Trojans; thereby wilt thou minish mine honour. Neither do thou, exulting in war and strife, and slaying the Trojans, lead on toward Ilios, lest one of the eternal gods from Olympus come against thee; right dearly doth Apollo the Far-darter love them. Nay, return back when thou hast brought safety to the ships, and suffer the rest to fight along the plain.

<sup>148</sup> See Ameis-Hentze, *Homers "Ilias,"* ad 16.95.

the plain, he overtakes their foremost battalions, trapping the entire enemy force between the camp and the river Scamander. Herded together in this manner, the Trojans are easy prey.

The ships are certainly safe by this point, but Patroclus neglects the directive to return. As the fighting continues, he slays Sarpedon, Zeus's son. Emboldened by this victory, Patroclus presses on toward Troy. There he assaults the city's walls three times before Apollo warns him off. Patroclus continues fighting far from the ships until Apollo intervenes a second time, stunning him and knocking off his armor. This leaves him vulnerable to a stab in the back from Euphorbus and, finally, to a mortal wound from Hector (16.786-822). Patroclus receives cautionary advice, disregards it, and loses his life as a direct result.

Achilles's warning and Patroclus's reaction to it reveal a good deal about the two characters. Like other disregarded warners in the *Iliad*, Achilles instantiates traditional authority roles. First, he is the commander of the Myrmidon contingent, which obligates Patroclus to follow his instructions.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, Achilles is a local chieftain or βασιλεύς (1.176). This makes him superior to Patroclus in the socio-political realm. Achilles also outranks his friend in the private sphere. Patroclus is a retainer and was assigned to be Achilles' attendant from an early age (23.82-92). Achilles' traditional roles as commander, chieftain, and patron require the lesser Patroclus to take his advice to heart.

The fabled friendship between the two only strengthens Achilles' authority. Friendship in the story world has obligations of its own, after all. An exasperated Ajax makes this point toward the end of the embassy, when he declares:

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<sup>149</sup> Achilles prefaces his warning with the sentence *πείθεο δ' ὥς τοι ἐγὼ μύθου τέλος ἐν φρεσὶ θεῖω* (16.83). The middle imperative *πείθεο* makes it clear that he expects compliance. His use of *μῦθος* is also telling. The word in this context does not denote news or information but something more like 'bidding' or 'instruction.' (See the commentaries of Willcock and Leaf and Bayfield *ad loc.*) Hence the sum (*τέλος*) of what Achilles aims to impart is clearly directive.

... αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς  
ἄγριον ἐν στήθεσσι θέτο μεγαλήτορα θυμὸν  
σχέτλιος, οὐδὲ μετατρέπεται φιλότιτος ἑταίρων  
τῆς ἧ μιν παρὰ νηυσὶν ἐτίομεν ἔξοχον ἄλλων (9.628-31).<sup>150</sup>

Ajax claims that Achilles has no regard for his companions' affection, which led them to honor him handsomely in the past. The clear implication is that a friendly gesture requires one in return.<sup>151</sup> Put another way, Homeric friends will oblige one another whenever they can. It follows that Patroclus should attempt to win glory for Achilles, as requested, by strictly limiting his engagement with the Trojans. To act otherwise would be to neglect the duties of friendship.

By custom Achilles easily has enough authority for his warning to be credible in Patroclus's eyes. In addition, Homer provides listeners with several reasons of their own for considering Achilles' concern well-founded. As the best Achaean warrior, Achilles will possess a keen sense of what is safe on the battlefield, especially for a lesser fighter such as Patroclus. This practical knowledge is bolstered by Achilles' unique relationship with the gods. He not only is the son of the goddess Thetis but is also divinely descended on his father's side. Peleus is the son of Aeacus, a direct descendant of Zeus, and of Aegina, a daughter of the river god Asopus. Peleus's mother is the mountain nymph Endeis. Among mortals in the *Iliad*, Achilles stands alone in having so many divine ancestors.

Probably owing to this lineage, Achilles shares knowledge with the gods that other mortals lack. His mother, for instance, visits him frequently to relate the other gods' designs (17.408-9 and 24.72-3). Moreover, only Achilles among human characters routinely perceives the gods' presence, whether they are disguised or not.<sup>152</sup> He even knows that Apollo could pose

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<sup>150</sup> But Achilles hath wrought his proud soul to fury within him—stubborn man, that recketh naught of his comrades' love, wherein we worshipped him beyond all men amid the ships.

<sup>151</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 9.630; and Jones, *Homers "Iliad,"* ad 9.640.

<sup>152</sup> See Turkeltaub, "Perceiving Iliadic Gods," 69-74.

a threat to Patroclus if he goes too far in fighting the Trojans. In addition to his military prowess, Achilles' special knowledge about the gods makes him seem wise enough to the audience to caution Patroclus.

Homer is less direct in other disclosures that point to Achilles' wisdom. By careful insinuation, the poet casts him as practically divine and parental. The first word of the *Iliad*, μῆνιν, announces that the poem's overall theme is the wrath of Achilles. The word does more than that, however. Scholars are agreed that in early Greek epic it signals, above all, wrath of divine proportions. It is therefore instructive that Achilles is the only human being of whom μῆνις is predicated in either Homer or Hesiod. The two also reserve verbs derived from μῆνις almost exclusively for Achilles. Closely associating the hero with divine wrath has the effect of elevating him from the confines of human existence toward the realm of the divine.<sup>153</sup> It is almost as though Achilles were a god himself.

The poet capitalizes on this effect when Achilles and Patroclus are conversing. In the same speech in which Achilles delivers the warning, he first rehearses the details of his grudge against Agamemnon. Achilles mentions his anger toward the commander twice, the first time using the verb κεχολῶσθαι (16.61) and the second time with the noun μηνιθμόν (16.62). Mention of the wrath twice in as many lines probably suffices to evoke its superhuman significance for listeners. Occurrence of the noun μηνιθμόν, which both sounds like μῆνις and means the same thing, makes this even likelier. In short, Homer intimates right before the warning to Patroclus that Achilles is virtually divine. Because the gods know the future, listeners will assume that Achilles can see specific danger for Patroclus if he goes too far in fighting, and hence they will believe that he has good reason to caution his friend.

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<sup>153</sup> See Watkins, "On ΜΗΝΙΣ," 688-90.



Homer also insinuates that Achilles has a parental relationship with Patroclus. The motif of parent and child pervades the similes that describe them. Achilles normally is cast as the protective parent and Patroclus as the protected party.<sup>154</sup> Such a comparison occurs shortly before Achilles warns Patroclus. Returning from his errand to Nestor, Patroclus approaches Achilles shedding hot tears. Achilles asks him why he is crying and says that he resembles a small child importuning its mother until she picks it up (16.7-11). Achilles' tenderness upon seeing his friend's misery corresponds to the mother's reaction, who in her fondness for the child takes it into her arms.<sup>155</sup> In figurative terms, then, Patroclus is a child, and Achilles is his caring parent. Although Achilles is the younger of the two, the simile's strong parental associations make him seem significantly older. A little later in the scene, therefore, Achilles appears more like a parent warning a younger person than he does a friend cautioning a friend.

Owing to the different disclosures that Homer makes about Achilles, the hero seems to possess the wisdom necessary to ground his warning. In addition, Achilles appears sympathetic. He expresses deep concern for Patroclus in several ways. One of the most obvious is the wording of his instructions. The infinitives in vv. 87, 89, 92, 95, and 96 all function as imperatives. Taken together, they create an air of urgency. The urgency is heightened by the collocation *σὺ γ'*, where the pronoun is emphatic because it is not grammatically necessary. It becomes more so in combination with the intensifying particle *γάρ*. Urgency is very often a response to perceived danger, so Achilles' pressing language seems to signal a sense of peril on

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<sup>154</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 16.7-10.

<sup>155</sup> Pope's translation brings out the correspondence nicely:

Not more the mother's soul that infant warms,  
Clung to her knees, and reaching at her arms,  
Than thou hast mine! Oh tell me, to what end  
Thy melting sorrows thus pursue thy friend? (16.13-16)

his part. He expresses danger more clearly when he raises the prospect of intervention by Apollo, who is hostile to the Achaeans. Overall, then, Achilles' instructions convey serious concern for Patroclus.

This assessment does not suffer from Achilles' continuing preoccupation with his honor. When he first responds to Patroclus, Achilles mentions Agamemnon's insult at length, saying that he has suffered terrible grief due to it and comparing himself to an alien with no rights (16.49-59). Moreover, Achilles instructs Patroclus not to fight the Trojans in a way that might diminish his honor even more (16.90). If Patroclus is to win Achilles glory by demonstrating how sorely he is needed, then he dare not achieve exceptional glory for himself. Hence it might appear that Achilles circumscribes his friend's mission more for his own selfish ends than for any other reason.

Despite this impression, Achilles' chief concern is for the safety of Patroclus. This becomes clear when he mentions potential danger from Apollo. It becomes even clearer when he offers a libation to Zeus. The meticulous care with which Achilles unwraps and cleanses his ritual chalice brings out his anxiety for his friend's welfare (16.220-32).<sup>156</sup> So does Achilles' specific request to Zeus that Patroclus return safely (16.246-48). In fact, Achilles mentions himself less than Patroclus in the prayer accompanying the libation, which again shows that his foremost concern is for his friend. For all these reasons, Achilles' advice to Patroclus is more than simply well-intentioned. It is strongly and actively benevolent.

Achilles' deep concern for Patroclus makes him appear sympathetic in the scene. This is a significant development in Homer's characterization of Achilles. Ever since he vehemently rejected Agamemnon's embassy, he has seemed inordinately self-absorbed and heartless. Now a

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<sup>156</sup> See Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 258-61.

more caring, selfless side of him begins to emerge. Additional sympathy for Achilles results from his relative reasonableness, a trait that has not been seen much until now. When he refrains from killing Agamemnon during their quarrel, it is only because Athena forbids him from doing so. Similarly, a headstrong Achilles rejects the embassy despite sound warnings and the pleas of friends. Allowing Patroclus to command the Myrmidons, by contrast, demonstrates that Achilles is capable of balancing the needs of others against his own. In a move that is face-saving yet substantive, he assists his weary countrymen while continuing to refrain from battle himself. Along with concern for Patroclus, Achilles' willingness to compromise helps make him more likeable than he was previously.

If Achilles is sympathetic, Patroclus appears much less so. At first it seems that he will heed Achilles' warning. As Patroclus is leading the Myrmidons into battle, he exhorts them in a brief speech:

Μυρμιδόνες ἔταροι Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος  
άνερες ἔστε φίλοι, μνήσασθε δὲ θούριδος ἀλκῆς,  
ὥς ἂν Πηλεΐδην τιμήσομεν, ὃς μέγ' ἄριστος  
Ἀργείων παρὰ νηυσὶ καὶ ἀγγέμαχοι θεράποντες,  
γνῶ δὲ καὶ Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺν κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων  
ἦν ἄτην, ὃ τ' ἄριστον Ἀχαιῶν οὐδὲν ἔτισεν (16.269-74).<sup>157</sup>

Patroclus's remarks show that he is intent on using the attack to restore Achilles' honor.<sup>158</sup> He implicitly commits himself to doing only what is necessary to save the ships, which will teach the Achaeans how desperately they need Achilles. Soon after his speech, however, Patroclus changes his mind.

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<sup>157</sup> Myrmidons, ye comrades of Achilles son of Peleus, be men, my friends, and be mindful of your impetuous valour, that so we may win honour for the son of Peleus, that is far the bravest of the Argives by the ships, and whose close-fighting squires are the best. And let wide-ruling Agamemnon the son of Atreus learn his own blindness of heart, in that he nothing honoured the best of the Achaians.

<sup>158</sup> Jones, *Homers "Iliad,"* ad 16.273-74.

When the Trojans realize that they are facing superior might, they make a hasty, disorganized retreat across the ditch. Patroclus crosses in vigorous pursuit (16.380-83). By now the Achaean ships are safe. Patroclus has accomplished his modest mission and presumably should return. Moreover, by crossing the ditch he is now on the open plain. Achilles warned him to leave the fighting there to others (16.96). It follows that Patroclus should not linger on the plain, yet he remains there and proceeds to box in the Trojans between the river and the camp.

Some do not think that this constitutes neglect of the warning. Patroclus herds the Trojans together by cutting off their foremost battalions and then driving the entire enemy force back toward the defensive wall. By moving in that direction, it has been claimed, Patroclus is still heeding the warning. In effect he is returning as instructed.<sup>159</sup> Another view that Patroclus's neglect comes later pinpoints it to pursuing the Trojans after he is emboldened by killing Sarpedon.<sup>160</sup>

Against these views, several considerations support a conservative understanding of Achilles' words. As noted above, he draws a sharp distinction between the camp and the plain. Achilles appears to imagine the two as mutually exclusive. Moreover, he tells Patroclus to let others do the fighting on the plain. But if Patroclus should not fight there, then logically the only place where he may do so is within the camp. The geographic dichotomy that Achilles envisions necessarily restricts his friend's activity to the near side of the ditch.

This position gains support from a comment about Achilles in the exegetical scholia: ἀπελάσας, φησί, μόνον τῶν νεῶν ἴεσο τῆδε.<sup>161</sup> The commentator understands that Patroclus is to

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<sup>159</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 394-98.

<sup>160</sup> See Ameis-Hentze, *Homers "Ilias,"* introductory note to book 16.

<sup>161</sup> bT scholia, ad 16.87a.

repel the Trojans from literally just (μόνον) the ships. The imperative ἵεσο, a middle form of ἵεναι, means ‘hasten,’ or ‘hurry.’ Obviously Patroclus will not be able to engage the Trojans on the plain if he is supposed to drive them away from only the ships and then rush back to his friend. Pope takes a similar view. Achilles, he states, “expressly forbids” Patroclus to aid the Achaeans any more “than barely to put out the fires, and secure his own and his friend’s return.”<sup>162</sup> Doing nothing more than barely extinguishing the flames of the burning ship also precludes any substantial engagement with the Trojans outside the camp.

If the interpretations of Pope and the scholia seem overly strict, one need only consider Patroclus’s thinking as he crosses the ditch. Homer makes it clear that he is preoccupied at that point:

ἀντικρὺ δ’ ἄρα τάφρον ὑπέρθορον ὠκέες ἵπποι  
 ἄμβροτοι, οὓς Πηλῆϊ θεοὶ δόσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα,  
 πρόσσω ἰέμενοι, ἐπὶ δ’ Ἑκτορι κέκλετο θυμός·  
 ἵετο γὰρ βαλέειν· τὸν δ’ ἔκφερον ὠκέες ἵπποι (16. 380-83).<sup>163</sup>

Patroclus seems to take no thought of his comrades or his location. His sole focus is on killing Hector. Killing the best Trojan warrior would bring Patroclus exceptional glory. It would also render Achilles redundant. Without Hector, the Trojans would soon succumb. Superior fighters such as Ajax and Diomedes would decimate them largely unchecked. Because the Achaeans could expect to prevail without Achilles, they would have no incentive to entice him to rejoin the war, and he would never receive restitution for Briseis. Achilles would remain robbed of his

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<sup>162</sup> Prefatory note to his translation of book 16.

<sup>163</sup> But straight over the ditch, in forward flight, leaped the swift immortal horses that the gods gave for glorious gifts to Peleus. And the heart of Patroklos urged him against Hector, for he was eager to smite him, but his swift steeds bore Hector forth and away.

honor and be permanently marginalized.<sup>164</sup> This is not the state of affairs that he charged Patroclus to bring about.

Surely Patroclus, himself an experienced warrior, understands as much. Why, then, is he intent on killing Hector? The likeliest explanation is that he is committed to advancing his own honor more than Achilles'. Despite his exhortation to the Myrmidons to win Achilles glory, Patroclus now seems beholden to his own ambition for fame. That desire must be so strong that it prompts him to ignore Achilles' warning.

Sometimes warnings are neglected because they have been forgotten. For several reasons, it is unlikely that Patroclus forgets this one. First, Achilles mentions it three times in his presence. When Achilles outlines his friend's mission, he warns him twice to return after securing the ships (16.87 and 95-96). Furthermore, he recalls the instructions when he prays to Zeus for Patroclus's safe return (16.246-48). After hearing the major details of an assignment three times in a single day, any subordinate of normal intelligence could be expected to remember them. Achilles' instructions are straightforward, which also makes them memorable. In addition, no more than a few hours elapse between hearing the warning and neglecting it. It is plausible that Patroclus forgets a warning from his father delivered ten years ago. It is not credible that he forgets one as critical and as fresh as Achilles'.

Infatuation can also be ruled out as a reason for neglect. Homer does, it is true, report that Patroclus is deluded shortly after he kills Sarpedon:

Πάτροκλος δ' ἵπποισι καὶ Αὐτομέδοντι κελεύσας  
Τρῶας καὶ Λυκίους μετεκίαθε, καὶ μέγ' ἀάσθη  
νήπιος· εἰ δὲ ἔπος Πηληϊάδαο φύλαξεν  
ἦ τ' ἂν ὑπέκφυγε κῆρα κακὴν μέλανος θανάτοιο (16.684-87).<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* ad 16.80-100 envisions a similar outcome in the event that Patroclus should take Troy by himself.

Because delusion is a state or condition, the aorist ἄσθη is ingressive. Patroclus has just now entered into a deluded state.<sup>166</sup> This entails that all his acts through slaying Sarpedon have been free from blindness and therefore voluntary. Accordingly, when Patroclus crosses the ditch hoping to kill Hector, he is deliberately choosing to ignore Achilles' warning. When he lingers on the plain, hemming the Trojans in, he must know that he is persisting in his neglect.

Even after Patroclus becomes deluded, he demonstrates significant freedom of judgment. He advances all the way to the walls of Troy, which he assaults three times before Apollo orders him to stop. Patroclus obeys and gives ground considerably, ἀνεχάζετο πολλὸν ὀπίσσω (16.710).<sup>167</sup> Given that he complies, Patroclus is evidently not so blind as to misconstrue the danger that Apollo poses. It follows that he still probably possesses enough clarity to observe Achilles' warning. Indeed, if Patroclus needed to be reminded of it, encountering Apollo surely does so. The god tells him that he is not fated to take Troy, which Achilles specifically warned Patroclus not to attempt. Nevertheless, Patroclus still does not retreat to the ships.<sup>168</sup>

If Patroclus does not neglect Achilles' warning out of forgetfulness or blindness, then conscious disregard is the likeliest motive. None other than Achilles validates this conclusion. When he begins to fear that Patroclus is dead, he remarks:

ἦ μάλα δὴ τέθνηκε Μενoitίου ἄλκιμος υἱὸς

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<sup>165</sup> But Patroklos cried to his horses and Automedon, and after the Trojans and Lykians went he, and so was blindly forgetful, in his witlessness, for if he had kept the saying of the son of Peleus, verily he should have escaped the evil fate of black death.

<sup>166</sup> Ameis-Hentze, *Homers "Ilias," ad loc.* conveys this aptly with "und verfiel (damit) einer argen Verblendung."

<sup>167</sup> Zenodotus and some manuscripts prefer τῑθὸν ὀπίσσω. What matters here, however, is not the amount that Patroclus yields but that he has the presence of mind to do so at all.

<sup>168</sup> Patroclus's behavior is a good example of double motivation. Ever since he crossed the ditch, he has been acting for his own glory. Delusion (ἄτη), which is always divinely sent in Homer, simply strengthens the tendency. In that sense Zeus and Patroclus are both responsible for the disastrous outcome. See Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 263-64; and Jones, *Homers "Iliad," ad loc.* 16.685-91.

σχέτλιος· ἦ τ' ἐκέλευον ἀπωσάμενον δῆϊον πῦρ  
ἄψ ἐπὶ νῆας ἵμεν, μηδ' Ἑκτορι ἴφι μάχεσθαι (18.12-14).<sup>169</sup>

Achilles says that Patroclus is σχέτλιος for not heeding his advice.<sup>170</sup> As a close friend since childhood, Achilles is well acquainted with Patroclus's ways. Calling him σχέτλιος can therefore be taken at face value. The adjective is often translated here as 'obstinate,' 'stubborn,' or the like.<sup>171</sup> Stubbornness, of course, is by nature deliberate. Accordingly, Achilles implies that Patroclus has willfully ignored the warning.

Killing Hector would win Patroclus great renown at Achilles' expense. Yet this is exactly what Achilles believes he attempted to do. Evidently Achilles knows that Patroclus is capable of yielding to ambition, even to the point of disadvantaging a close friend, and figures that he has done so. That Hector actually attacks Patroclus is immaterial. What matters is Achilles' assessment of his friend's character. Consistent with the other evidence presented here, that assessment supports the view that Patroclus, like Agamemnon and Achilles himself, becomes stubbornly attached to furthering his own reputation.

Ignoring the warning entails disregard for everything that should make it compelling in Patroclus's eyes. He neglects the obligations both of friendship and of his status as a military subordinate, social inferior, and retainer. Such behavior certainly points to considerable self-assurance on Patroclus's part. Given the story world's respect for traditional roles, it also makes him appear unattractive. Patroclus seems even less sympathetic once one realizes that his disregard of custom is driven by self-serving ambition. Positive developments in the characterization of Achilles undercut sympathy for Patroclus still more. At a time when Achilles

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<sup>169</sup> Surely now must Menoitios' valiant son be dead—foolhardy! surely I bade him when he should have beaten off the fire of the foe to come back to the ships nor with Hector fight again.

<sup>170</sup> Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 18.12-14 observes that the adjective is explained by the next sentence.

<sup>171</sup> See, for example, the commentaries of Jones, Willcock, and Leaf and Bayfield *ad loc.*



begins to display heartfelt concern for others and willingness to compromise, Patroclus resorts to selfish opportunism. The contrast between warner and recipient highlights Patroclus's negative traits, thereby making him appear about as negative in the episode as Achilles is positive.

Unlike some other neglectful recipients in the *Iliad*, Patroclus has an opportunity to react to the catastrophe that he brings upon himself. He receives a mortal wound from Hector, but he does not die immediately. During his remaining moments, Patroclus experiences extraordinary perception. First, he correctly articulates that Apollo and Euphorbus were instrumental in his ruin and that Hector played only a tertiary role. Moreover, Patroclus tells Hector that he will be killed very soon by Achilles (16.843-54). The Greeks believed that those about to die enjoyed prophetic insight.<sup>172</sup> Hector demonstrates this when he asks Patroclus in reply τί νύ μοι μαντεύεαι αἰπὸν ὄλεθρον; (16.859). Because the dying Patroclus appears prophetic, the audience's impression of him improves somewhat. Supernatural insight elevates Patroclus above the realm of the ordinary, thereby conferring a sort of dignity on him. Thus the overall picture of Patroclus in connection with Achilles' warning is not completely negative.

This chapter has discussed two warnings disregarded by Patroclus. One is issued by his father, and the other comes from Achilles. In each instance, the warning is well-founded according to the traditional values of the *Iliad*. Moreover, by insinuating divinity and parenthood, Homer gives listeners reasons of their own for taking Achilles' warning seriously. Both warners demonstrate affection and urgent concern for the recipient and therefore come across as likeable. Patroclus, by contrast, boldly disregards custom each time and is driven by reckless ambition. In his unattractiveness, he resembles Agamemnon and Achilles when they neglect credible warnings.

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<sup>172</sup> See Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 178, 289.

The unfavorable light in which Patroclus appears both times differs from the standard conception of him in scholarship. Critics tend to discuss Patroclus in glowing terms. Besides considering him gentle, kind, and amiable, some even maintain that he is Homer's favorite character.<sup>173</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that Jones thinks Patroclus "is all selfless nobility"<sup>174</sup> as he begs Achilles to enter the fray alone. If the foregoing discussion has shown anything, it is that such praise must be seriously tempered. No character who disregards his father's authority, old age, and wisdom can elicit only sympathy. As a result, Patroclus appears less than likeable when he ignores Menoetius's warning to counsel Achilles. Similarly, feelings of a purely positive sort do not arise for Patroclus when he puts selfish ambition above the traditional duties that should make him heed Achilles' advice.

All this is not to suggest that Patroclus is a negative character overall or to deny that Homer invites sympathy for him at places in book 16.<sup>175</sup> Instead, the observations offered here aim to correct the one-sided understanding of Patroclus that is so often encountered. Quite simply, his neglect of two important warnings demonstrates that Patroclus is a more complex figure than the "nice guy" of scholarship. At the same time, one can only speculate to what extent a morally ambiguous Patroclus is the poet's invention. All that can be said with reasonable certainty is that Homer did not create the character out of whole cloth.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> See, for example, Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 264.

<sup>174</sup> *Homers "Iliad,"* 223.

<sup>175</sup> For references, see Edwards, *Poet of the "Iliad,"* 264; and Jones, *Homers "Iliad,"* 223-24.

<sup>176</sup> There is no significant mythological tradition for Patroclus independent of the *Iliad*. Nothing in either the Epic Cycle or the visual arts suggests that he was a figure of any consequence before Homer. Nevertheless, oral poetry is inherently conservative, and the name and epithets of Patroclus are fully integrated into the *Iliad*'s formulaic style. Moreover, when Homer first mentions him, it is in passing and only by way of his patronymic (1.307). These details strongly suggest that Patroclus is a traditional character, albeit a less important one than some others. See Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 27-28.

## V. WARNINGS NEGLECTED BY HECTOR

This chapter examines the *Iliad*'s remaining disregarded warnings. There are four in all. In three of them, Hector is the neglectful recipient. In one, it is Asius. An ally of the Trojans, Asius is certainly a minor figure. Nevertheless, his reaction to a sound warning from Poulydamas helps prepare for Hector's responses to warnings that he receives from the same advisor. In this respect, Asius stands to Hector as Merops's sons and Pandarus do to Achilles. The poem's final neglected warning, from Priam to Hector, reintroduces the theme of filial piety, thereby connecting the example to others in which fatherly advice is prominent.

Early on the third day of fighting, the Trojans are so successful that they reach the Achaeans' camp. The camp is surrounded by a defensive wall, and the wall is surrounded by a wide trench. As the Trojans are about to cross the trench, Poulydamas warns them to do so on foot rather than in their chariots. He argues that horses and chariots would be a serious encumbrance should the Trojans need to retreat after they are on the other side:

εἰ δέ χ' ὑποστρέψωσι, παλῖωξις δὲ γένηται  
ἐκ νηῶν καὶ τάφρῳ ἐνιπλήξωμεν ὀρυκτῇ,  
οὐκέτ' ἔπειτ' οἴω οὐδ' ἄγγελον ἀπονέεσθαι  
ἄψορρον προτὶ ἄστυ ἐλιχθέντων ὑπ' Ἀχαιῶν.  
ἀλλ' ἄγεθ' ὥς ἂν ἐγὼ εἴπω πειθώμεθα πάντες·  
ἵππους μὲν θεράποντες ἐρυκόντων ἐπὶ τάφρῳ,  
αὐτοὶ δὲ πρυλέες σὺν τεύχεσι θωρηχθέντες  
Ἔκτορι πάντες ἐπώμεθ' ἀολλέες· αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιοὶ  
οὐ μενέουσ' εἰ δὴ σφιν ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἐφήπται (12.71-79).<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> But and if they turn again, and we flee back from among the ships, and rush into the delved ditch, then methinks that not even one from among us to bear the tidings will win back to the city before the force of

Hector, the Trojan commander, accepts the advice and gets down from his chariot. All the other Trojan chieftains follow suit except Asius.

As the rest prepare to cross the trench on foot, Asius leads his men in their chariots toward the left wing of the camp. Once there, he forces his way through an open gate (12.108-74). Asius does not proceed far into the camp, however. He is met with fierce resistance and is eventually killed by Idomeneus (13.383-93).

By ignoring Poulydamas's warning, Asius brings about his own death. Once he is inside the gate, he dismounts and attempts to fight on foot. At that point Asius is in front of his horses and chariot. His charioteer follows so closely that Asius can feel the horses breathing on his shoulders (13.384-86). Their proximity severely limits Asius's maneuvering room.<sup>178</sup> As a result, Idomeneus is able to cast a spear first and kill him. Asius's horses and chariot prove to be the encumbrance that Poulydamas rightly warned about.

The disregarded warning illuminates some significant character traits of both Poulydamas and Asius. Unlike the warners previously discussed, Poulydamas does not embody any traditional authority roles. Events prove his cautionary advice correct, to be sure, but there is nothing obvious about him that grounds it. Poulydamas is a young man, like Hector (18.251), so he will not possess the wisdom of the elderly. In addition, he is only one of many lieutenants fighting on the Trojan side. He has no natural authority over the others. Nevertheless, Poulydamas has good reason for saying what he does. None other than the poet himself

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the Achaians when they rally. But come as I declare, let us all obey. Let our squires hold the horses by the dyke, while we being harnessed in our gear as foot soldiers follow all together with Hector, and the Achaians will not withstand us, if indeed the bands of death be made fast upon them.

<sup>178</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 13.383-401. Ameis-Hentze, *Homers "Ilias,"* ad 13.385 imagines that Asius's horses are "dicht hinter ihm."

confirms this. Homer reports that the warning is prudent counsel, μῦθος ἀπήμων (12.80).<sup>179</sup> Furthermore, he calls Asius foolish for neglecting it (νήπιος, 12.113). If Asius is foolhardy for disregarding the warning, then its author must be just the opposite. In Homer's eyes, then, Poulydamas is wise, even if his wisdom is not vouchsafed by custom. The audience necessarily shares this perception of the omniscient narrator.

Poulydamas is sympathetic as well as wise. His advice is emphatic, which conveys strong apprehension. Poulydamas begins by saying that it is sheer folly to attempt to cross the ditch in chariots (ἄφραδέως, 12.62). This is strong language, but it illustrates the extent of Poulydamas's concern. When he subsequently imagines what might happen to the Trojans if they should enter the camp mounted, Poulydamas insists that none would survive a rout by the enemy. Indeed, he maintains, not even a messenger would make it back safely to Troy to report the dire news. This dismal picture is also emphatic and again highlights the apprehension that Poulydamas feels. Because he is so deeply concerned about the well-being of the Trojans and their allies, Poulydamas's warning is more than simply well-intentioned. It is as actively benevolent as it is forceful.

Asius, by contrast, is an unattractive figure. Poulydamas embodies no recognized authority roles, so Asius does not disrespect him seriously by ignoring the warning. However, Asius does demonstrate blameworthy disregard for Hector. The Trojan commander dismounts immediately upon hearing Poulydamas's advice. When the other Trojans see Hector, they all do the same thing (12.81-83). Evidently they consider themselves obliged to follow his lead. Consequently, Asius's failure to do so constitutes insubordination. Certainly the exegetical

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<sup>179</sup> The adjective ἀπήμων defies exact translation. Snell, *Lexikon*, s.v. suggests "Schaden verhindernd" in connection with μῦθος. Along these lines, Poulydamas's advice would count as prudent in the sense that it wards off danger.

scholia believe so, calling him τὸν ἀπειθοῦντα.<sup>180</sup> By disregarding his commander, Asius of course appears in a bad light. In addition, he must be very bold to be the only Trojan chieftain in the scene who effectively disobeys orders.

What could prompt Asius to commit so daring an act of insubordination? Some suggest that he disobeys because he is too proud of his horses to leave them behind.<sup>181</sup> Homer relates that they are large and tawny, attributes that presumably make them a prized possession (12.96-97). Moreover, the poet predicts that Asius will not return from the ships glorying in his horses and chariot, ἵπποισιν καὶ ὄχεσφιν ἀγαλλόμενος (12.113-115). The remark implies vanity if it implies anything. It is possible, then, that Asius is simply too proud of his fine horses to part with them.

There is a better explanation for his disobedience, however. The extra speed of Asius's chariot gives him initial success at penetrating the Achaeans' defenses.<sup>182</sup> This, in turn, puts him in a better position to attain glory compared to the other Trojans. It is clear that Asius is ambitious enough to try to get an advantage over even his own. As he is leading his men toward the open gate, Homer observes that he is ἰθὺς φρονέων (12.124). The expression signals unfaltering purpose.<sup>183</sup> Later, when the Trojans and Achaeans are locked in fierce combat, Homer states that both sides fought with unwavering determination, ἰθὺς φρόνεον (13.135). If Asius displays the same sort of single-mindedness, then it most likely means that he is quite ambitious for fame.

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<sup>180</sup> bT scholia *ad* 12.110a1-2.

<sup>181</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, *ad* 13.383-401. Compare a remark in the T scholia, *ad* 13.386-87, according to which Asius meets death because he is overly fond of his horses, ὅτι περὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἐπτόητο.

<sup>182</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, *ad* 13.383-401.

<sup>183</sup> See Leaf and Bayfield, *Iliad*, *ad* 12.124.

Confirmation of this view comes after Asius encounters strong resistance inside the Achaean camp. He prays to Zeus, complaining that he is not being successful and bitterly accusing the Olympian of promising him better (12.164-72). The language of Asius's prayer evidences profound frustration. As a rule, frustration is deeper the higher the hopes are that go unfulfilled. It follows that Asius has high expectations for himself when he sets out to assault the defensive wall. That ambition best accounts for why he goes in a chariot, disregarding both his commander and Poulydamas's warning in the same selfish decision.

Asius's bold disobedience casts him in a negative light to begin with. That it is motivated by self-serving ambition makes him all the more unsympathetic. His fate, in fact, seems entirely appropriate to his reckless, insubordinate behavior. As Pope observes, Asius's death is poetic justice for despising wise counsel and reproaching Zeus.<sup>184</sup> In terms of characterization, then, the neglected warning features another pair of strongly contrasting principals. Listeners identify with the circumspect, actively benevolent Poulydamas while finding Asius unattractive.

While Asius is forcing his way through the open gate, Hector and his contingent do not manage even to cross the ditch. Although Hector's men are the bravest among the Trojan forces, they hesitate because of a frightful omen (12.197-99). As they are about to cross over, an eagle appears, clutching in its talons a snake that is still alive and struggling. The snake writhes backward and bites the eagle near the neck. Stung with pain, the bird drops it into the middle of the Trojan throng and flies away with a loud cry (12.200-7).

Poulydamas quickly approaches Hector and advises against entering the Achaean camp:

μὴ ἴομεν Δαναοῖσι μαχησόμενοι περὶ νηῶν.  
ὥδε γὰρ ἐκτελέεσθαι ὀΐομαι, εἰ ἔτεόν γε

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<sup>184</sup> Comment on his 12.127.

Τρωσὶν ὃδ' ὄρνις ἦλθε περησέμεναι μεμαῶσιν  
αἰετὸς ὑψιπέτης ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ λαὸν ἐέργων  
φοινήμεντα δράκοντα φέρων ὀνύχεσσι πέλωρον  
ζών· ἄφαρ δ' ἀφέηκε πάρος φίλα οἰκί' ἰκέσθαι,  
οὐδ' ἐτέλεσσε φέρων δόμεναι τεκέεσσιν ἐοῖσιν.  
ὥς ἡμεῖς, εἴ πέρ τε πύλας καὶ τεῖχος Ἀχαιῶν  
ῥηξόμεθα σθένει μεγάλῳ, εἴξωσι δ' Ἀχαιοί,  
οὐ κόσμῳ παρὰ ναῦφιν ἐλευσόμεθ' αὐτὰ κέλευθα·  
πολλοὺς γὰρ Τρώων καταλείψομεν, οὓς κεν Ἀχαιοὶ  
χαλκῷ δηώσωσιν ἀμυνόμενοι περὶ νηῶν.  
ᾧδὲ χ' ὑποκρίναιτο θεοπρόπος, ὃς σάφα θυμῷ  
εἰδείη τεράων καὶ οἱ πειθοίατο λαοί (12.216-29).<sup>185</sup>

In Poulydamas's view, the omen portends disaster for the Trojans. He warns that even if they succeed in breaking through the defensive wall, many will be killed inside the camp and the rest will barely escape. Hector contemptuously rejects the warning and advances. Having been promised by Zeus that he will prevail against the Achaeans, Hector sees no reason to take the omen seriously.

At length, the Trojans pour into the camp, and they even get close enough to the ships to set one on fire (16.122-23). In response, Patroclus leads the Myrmidons into battle. They easily repel the Trojans, who fall into a disorganized retreat. The Achaeans pursue them onto the open plain and slaughter many. By disregarding Poulydamas's warning, Hector clearly precipitates a catastrophe for his side.

Poulydamas's warning and Hector's reaction to it reveal a good deal about both characters. Once again, Poulydamas appears prudent, even though his wisdom is not grounded

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<sup>185</sup> Let us not advance and fight with the Danaans for the ships. For even thus, methinks, the end will be, if indeed this bird hath come for the Trojans when they were eager to cross the dyke, this eagle of lofty flight, skirting the host on the left hand, bearing in his talons a blood-red monstrous snake, yet living; then straightway left he hold of him, before he reached his own nest, nor brought him home in the end to give to his nestlings. Even so shall we, though we burst with mighty force the gates and wall of the Achaians, and the Achaians give ground, even so we shall return in disarray from the ships by the way we came; for many of the Trojans shall we leave behind, whom the Achaians will slay with the sword, in defence of the ships. Even so would a soothsayer interpret that in his heart had clear knowledge of omens, and whom the people obeyed.



by traditional authority roles. Indeed, he acknowledges at the end of his warning that he is not a recognized seer. The poet himself, however, vouches for what Poulydamas's modest status cannot. First, Homer states that the bird sign is from Zeus (12.209). This entails that Poulydamas correctly recognizes the omen as such and is not simply being carried away by his imagination. Homer also confirms the dire interpretation. The Trojans shudder when they see the writhing snake lying in their midst (12.208-9). Evidently they sense danger, even if Poulydamas is the only one to articulate it.

These two disclosures give the audience confidence in Poulydamas's warning. So does the fact that he accurately urged the Trojans to enter the Achaean camp on foot, as the fate of Asius proves. Furthermore, bird signs in the *Iliad* never fail, and those who reject them do so to their detriment.<sup>186</sup> If this pattern was a standard feature of the poetic tradition, then the original audience would have had another reason to hear wisdom in Poulydamas's words.

Besides being wise, Poulydamas is sympathetic. He begins by recalling that Hector has often criticized his advice. Nevertheless, Poulydamas tells him, he intends to speak as seems best (12.215). This is a courageous statement, given that Hector is his superior. Poulydamas must be so concerned about the current situation that he is emboldened to say what he thinks. In addition, Poulydamas paints a grim picture of what is in store if his advice is not taken. He imagines that the Trojans will not simply retreat across the ditch but will do so in utter disarray. Poulydamas also foresees that many of them will perish inside the camp as the Achaeans defend their ships. Because of its sobering details, the image that Poulydamas conjures up is emphatic. That forcefulness points to serious concern on his part. In other words, Poulydamas lets Hector know in no uncertain terms how apprehensive he is of a catastrophic outcome. Accordingly, the

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<sup>186</sup> See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* ad 12.200.

warning stems from strong, active benevolence. This, coupled with Poulydamas's courage in the scene, makes him a sympathetic character.

By comparison, Hector comes off as unlikeable. Poulydamas instantiates no traditional authority roles, so Hector disrespects none when he rejects the warning. However, he does display impious disregard for the institution of prophecy. On behalf of Zeus, Iris promised Hector earlier that he would push the Achaeans right back to their ships (11.195-209). Mistaking the guarantee as absolute and straightforward, Hector finds no reason to construe the eagle and snake as a qualification. In addition, though, he dismisses bird signs in general:

τὴν δ' οἰωνοῖσι τανυπτερύγεσσι κελεύεις  
πείθεσθαι, τῶν οὐ τι μετατρέπομ' οὐδ' ἀλεγίζω  
εἴτ' ἐπὶ δεξι' ἴωσι πρὸς ἥϊ τ' ἡέλιόν τε,  
εἴτ' ἐπ' ἀριστερὰ τοί γε ποτὶ ζόφον ἡερόεντα (12.237-40).<sup>187</sup>

Hector's sweeping condemnation of the mantic arts is a serious transgression against the values of the story world. As a result, he necessarily places himself in an unfavorable light. As one commentator observes, Hector's bold words would represent a fatal delusion to any pious mind.<sup>188</sup>

The extent of Hector's boldness can be inferred from his respect for prophecy elsewhere in the *Iliad*. On the first day after hostilities resume, Hector twice accepts advice from his brother Helenus, who is a prophet. The first time, Helenus tells him to go back to Troy and encourage their mother to supplicate Athena. Hector does so readily (6.73-105). The second time, Helenus tells Hector that he is not fated to die yet and that he should therefore challenge one of the Achaean champions to a duel. Again Hector promptly complies (7.43-91). Hector's

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<sup>187</sup> But thou bidst us be obedient to birds long of wing, whereto I give no heed, nor take any care thereof, whether they fare to the right, to the dawn and to the sun, or to the left, to mist and darkness.

<sup>188</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 12.237-43. Willcock, "*Iliad*" of Homer, ad 12.238 maintains that Hector's scorn for omens is "hardly sensible, and borders on blindness or delusion."

demonstrated respect for prophecy on these earlier occasions reflects how much his thinking has moved in the direction of overconfidence when he expresses general contempt for omens.

Hector seems even less likeable when he threatens Poulydamas. Toward the end of his scornful response, the Trojan commander moots that Poulydamas is afraid to assault the Achaean camp and has issued the warning in order to conceal his cowardice:

τίπτε σὺ δειδοικας πόλεμον καὶ δηϊοτῆτα;  
εἴ περ γάρ τ' ἄλλοι γε περὶ κτεινόμεθα πάντες  
νηυσὶν ἐπ' Ἀργείων, σοὶ δ' οὐ δέος ἔστ' ἀπολέσθαι·  
οὐ γάρ τοι κραδίη μενεδήϊος οὐδὲ μαχίμων.  
εἰ δὲ σὺ δηϊοτῆτος ἀφέξῃαι, ἤε τιν' ἄλλον  
παρφάμενος ἐπέεσσιν ἀποτρέψεις πολέμοιο,  
αὐτίκ' ἐμῷ ὑπὸ δουρὶ τυπεῖς ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσεις (12.244-50).<sup>189</sup>

Hector is obviously jumping to conclusions. He unreasonably assumes that nothing but fear could be motivating Poulydamas. Worse yet, his snap judgment leads him to threaten Poulydamas with death if he should act on the alleged cowardice or infect others with it. This threat is rash and irrational. Indeed, in subsequent episodes Poulydamas distinguishes himself more than once on the battlefield.<sup>190</sup>

Given Hector's strident reply, it is not surprising that Poulydamas says nothing further about the omen or anything else. Like Chryses before a menacing Agamemnon, Poulydamas has been intimidated into silence. This is another mark against Hector. He is a bully as well as impious and too self-assured. The combination of qualities cannot help but prejudice listeners against him. The audience will be even more distressed that all this bad behavior is prompted by the prospect of great glory. Simplistically confident in Zeus's promise of victory, Hector's

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<sup>189</sup> And wherefore dost thou fear war and battle? For if all the rest of us be slain by the ships of the Argives, yet needst thou not fear to perish, for thy heart is not warlike, nor enduring in battle. But if thou dost hold aloof from the fight, or winnest any other with thy words to turn him from war, straightway by my spear shalt thou be smitten, and lose thy life.

<sup>190</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 12.247-50 for examples.

ambition gets the better of him, leading him to arrogantly disregard tradition and abuse his best advisor. If Poulydamas is quite sympathetic in the scene, Hector is the exact opposite.

The cumulative weight of the evidence presented here contradicts a more positive view of Hector's response that one sometimes encounters. Redfield, for instance, believes that rejection of Poulydamas's warning is a noble error and engages listeners' sympathy. Hector's mistake is the sort "that a good man would make."<sup>191</sup> Granted that Hector is a commander on a battlefield and under the pressure of the situation, it does not follow that his reckless overconfidence and selfish ambition are venial. Indeed, what is most required in any military leader, at any time, is level-headedness and a sense of the greater good. Hector clearly does not evidence these qualities when he neglects Poulydamas's warning.

The third day of combat features not only the assault on the Achaeans' wall, but also the *aristeia* of Patroclus, his death, and a fierce struggle over his body. After sunset puts an end to the day's fighting, the Trojans hold an assembly. Poulydamas, fearing that Achilles will soon rejoin the war, advises retreating to the safety of the city:

ἀλλ' ἴομεν προτὶ ἄστυ, πίθεσθέ μοι· ὧδε γὰρ ἔσται·  
νῦν μὲν νύξ ἀπέπαυσε ποδῶκεα Πηλεΐωνα  
ἀμβροσίη· εἰ δ' ἄμμε κιχήσεται ἐνθάδ' ἐόντας  
αὔριον ὀρμηθεὶς σὺν τεύχεσιν, εὖ νύ τις αὐτὸν  
γνώσεται· ἀσπασίως γὰρ ἀφίξεται Ἴλιον ἱρήν  
ὅς κε φύγη, πολλοὺς δὲ κύνες καὶ γῦπες ἔδονται  
Τρώων· αἱ γὰρ δὴ μοι ἀπ' οὔρατος ὧδε γένοιτο (18.266-72).<sup>192</sup>

Hector angrily rejects the warning, still confident in Zeus's guarantee that he will win glory at the ships and pen the Achaeans beside the sea (18.293-95).

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<sup>191</sup> Redfield, *Nature and Culture*, 146.

<sup>192</sup> Now go we up to our fastness; hearken unto me, for thus will it be. Now hath divine night stayed the fleet son of Peleus, but if tomorrow fullarmed for the onset he shall light upon us abiding here, well shall each know that it is he, for gladly will whosoever fleeth win to sacred Ilios, and many of the men of Troy shall dogs and vultures devour—far be that from my ear.

The following morning, Achilles' mother brings him a new suit of armor. The hero and Agamemnon are publicly reconciled, and the Achaeans take to the field. Fierce to avenge Patroclus, Achilles massacres the Trojans. Those who survive beat a hasty retreat to the city. At one point, Apollo even has to distract Achilles so that the Trojans can escape safely (19.599-607). Clearly, Hector has caused the very calamity against which Poulydamas cautioned him.

In this episode as well, the neglected warning highlights some important traits of the two principals. Homer once again compensates for Poulydamas's lack of traditional authority by giving listeners unmistakable signs of his wisdom. When Poulydamas is introduced in the scene, the poet observes that he is *πεπνυμένος* (18.249). In early Greek epic, this adjective denotes someone who is intelligent, if not sagacious.<sup>193</sup> Next Homer states that Poulydamas *ὄρα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω* (18.250). Although the expression is infrequent in Homeric poetry, it always denotes the wisdom of old age.<sup>194</sup> Therefore, Homer insinuates that Poulydamas possesses wisdom that is well in advance of his years. Besides saying explicitly that Poulydamas is intelligent, Homer portrays him figuratively as a wise elder.<sup>195</sup>

Further evidence for Poulydamas's wisdom comes after Hector responds to the warning. The Trojans applaud their leader's resolve to press on. Homer calls them foolish for doing so and says that Athena has taken away their wits (18.310-11). This certainly speaks well of Poulydamas's advice. Furthermore, the poet comments that Hector's decision is downright bad but that Poulydamas's counsel is good: *Ἑκτορι μὲν γὰρ ἐπήνησαν κακὰ μητιόωντι, / Πουλυδάμαντι δ' ἄρ' οὐ τις ὅς ἐσθλὴν φράζετο βουλὴν* (18.312-13). After all the disclosures

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<sup>193</sup> See Snell, *Lexikon*, s.v. *πέπνυμαι*.

<sup>194</sup> For examples and discussion, see Dickson, *Nestor*, 17; and Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 18.249-50.

<sup>195</sup> As Poulydamas is being introduced, the audience learns that he and Hector are the same age. Homer also observes *ἀλλ' ὃ μὲν ἄρ' μύθοισιν, ὃ δ' ἔγχεῖ πολλὸν ἐνίκᾳ* (18.252). West, *Making of the "Iliad,"* ad 18.249-52 takes this comment as another signal that Poulydamas will offer wise advice.

about Poulydamas that Homer makes in the scene, listeners should have no doubt that his warning is well grounded. When they recall that Poulydamas has issued two correct warnings already, they will be even more convinced that the current one is wise.

In addition to being wise, Poulydamas again appears sympathetic. Right before he begins to speak, Homer comments that he is ἐϋφρονέων (18.253). The expression is conventional and denotes good intentions.<sup>196</sup> Moreover, Poulydamas's benevolence is strong. As he does in the previous examples, he draws a grim picture of what will happen if his advice is not taken. First, Poulydamas predicts that Achilles will inflict heavy casualties on the Trojans. The losses will be so great that anyone who manages to reach the city will be welcomed with joy. Next Poulydamas says that many of the fallen will be devoured by dogs and vultures (18.268-72). The scenario that he imagines is so disturbing that Poulydamas says he would never want to hear the tale of it.

All these details add up to a very powerful image. Poulydamas conjures it up no doubt in order to reinforce his warning. If he is so determined to persuade that he resorts to forceful imagery, then he must be quite anxious about the Trojans' current circumstances. Such concern indicates strong, active benevolence on Poulydamas's part and therefore makes him likeable.

Hector, by comparison, appears unsympathetic. In this episode, too, he intimidates Poulydamas into silence. Hector insists that he will not permit any Trojan to heed the warning, and he calls Poulydamas a fool for proposing it (18.295-96). After this harsh repudiation, it is understandable that Poulydamas acquiesces and says nothing further. Besides bullying him, Hector insinuates that the warning stems from Poulydamas's concern for his possessions. Poulydamas, he implies, is so attached to his wealth that he would rather be in the city protecting

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<sup>196</sup> See Snell, *Lexikon*, s.v. φρονέω.

it than on the plain risking his life (18.300-2).<sup>197</sup> Here again, Hector jumps to conclusions. He does not even consider the possibility that Poulydamas's motives might be altruistic. By judging his advisor in this manner, Hector comes across as rash and unthinking.

Hector's reckless boldness is evident in other ways. First, he glosses over the fact that Zeus's promise of victory was good for only one day (11.206-9). Now that the sun has set, the guarantee is off. Nevertheless, Hector imagines that he will reach the ships again the next day (18.303-6). Hector even boasts that he will stand against Achilles if he resumes fighting. The claim is preposterous, given that Hector has always fought close to the walls of Troy when Achilles was on the battlefield (9.352-54). Clearly, Hector has become arrogantly infatuated with the day's successes.<sup>198</sup> His arrogance has been evident before,<sup>199</sup> but with these remarks it reaches a climax.

As if this were not bad enough, listeners are reminded that Hector is acting for self-serving reasons. When he boasts that he will face Achilles, he notes that one or the other of them is going to win a great victory, ἢ κε φέρησι μέγα κράτος, ἢ κε φερούμην (18.308). The remark points to high hopes on Hector's part. His misguided belief that Zeus will still grant him glory by the ships further illustrates the extent to which ambition is driving Hector.

The characteristics of Hector that the neglected warning illustrates are bullying, reckless confidence, and selfish ambition. These traits contrast sharply with Poulydamas's wisdom and benevolence. The disparity has even led one critic to suggest that Poulydamas exists in the *Iliad*

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<sup>197</sup> See Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 18.300-2; and Pope's comment on his 18.349.

<sup>198</sup> See Fenik, *Typical Battle Scenes*, 211-12.

<sup>199</sup> Kirk, *Commentary*, ad 18.284-309 provides a list of examples.

solely to underscore Hector's negative side.<sup>200</sup> In any case, the differences between the two are so strong that Hector is about as unattractive as Poulydamas is sympathetic.

Hector retreats to the city with the other Trojans but remains outside, in front of the Scaean gates, firmly resolved to fight Achilles man to man (22.35-36). All the while Priam is watching from the wall. When he sees Achilles approaching, he implores his son to come inside, with everyone else:

Ἔκτορ μὴ μοι μίμνε φίλον τέκος ἀνέρα τοῦτον  
οἷος ἄνευθ' ἄλλων, ἵνα μὴ τάχα πότμον ἐπίσπης  
Πηλεΐωνι δαμείς, ἐπεὶ ἧ πολὺ φέρτερός ἐστι... (22.38-40).<sup>201</sup>

Hector is not moved by his father's warning and continues to wait for Achilles. When Achilles arrives, Hector is struck with fear and tries to escape. He runs around Troy three times, with Achilles close behind. After Athena deceives Hector, he regains his courage and faces Achilles. In the ensuing contest, the Trojan commander is killed. By ignoring Priam's warning, Hector irrevocably seals his own fate.

Hector's mother, Hecuba, also warns him from the wall. Her speech follows right after Priam's. Hecuba's remarks are brief by comparison, and she adds nothing substantially new. In both speeches, the main point is that Hector is no match for Achilles and that he should come inside immediately. Hecuba's warning can thus be considered supplementary to Priam's rather than separate. In other words, Hector essentially receives one warning, and for all practical purposes it is from his father.

As in previous examples, important aspects of both the warner's character and the neglectful recipient's come to light. Priam has good reason for cautioning Hector. First, Priam

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<sup>200</sup> See Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 185.

<sup>201</sup> Hector, beloved son, I pray thee await not this man alone with none beside thee, lest thou quickly meet thy doom, slain by the son of Peleus, since he is mightier far.



is elderly (γέρων, 22.33), which guarantees him the wisdom of old age. Evidently realizing as much, Pope refers to Priam in this scene as “the sage” (his 22.43). It will also be recalled that Priam is described as wise relatively early in the *Iliad*. Before the duel between Menelaus and Paris, Priam is summoned to swear an oath to its terms. Menelaus’s rationale for bringing him is that he looks both before and after, ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω / λεύσσει (3.109-10). As discussed above, this is a formula in Homer that designates the wisdom of the elderly.

The poet gives listeners their own reason for believing that Priam’s warning is wise. He implies that the Trojan king is prophetic. When Priam sees Achilles approaching, the hero’s bronze armor is gleaming brightly:

Τὸν δ’ ὁ γέρων Πρίαμος πρῶτος ἶδεν ὀφθαλμοῖσι  
παμφαίνονθ’ ὥς τ’ ἀστέρ’ ἐπεσσύμενον πεδίοιο,  
ὅς ῥά τ’ ὀπώρης εἴσιν, ἀρίζηλοι δέ οἱ αὐγαὶ  
φαίνονται πολλοῖσι μετ’ ἀστράσι νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ,  
ὃν τε κύν’ Ὀρίωνος ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλέουσι.  
λαμπρότατος μὲν ὃ γ’ ἐστί, κακὸν δέ τε σῆμα τέτυκται,  
καὶ τε φέρει πολλὸν πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν·  
ὥς τοῦ χαλκὸς ἔλαμπε περὶ στήθεσσι θεόντος (22.25-32).<sup>202</sup>

Homer likens the brightness of Achilles’ armor to that of the Dog Star, the most brilliant of stars. Comparison does not stop there, however. In the immediately preceding lines, Homer says that Achilles is speeding toward Troy like a prize-winning race horse. The star simile maintains that sense of swiftness. The gleaming hero is said both to rush across the plain (ἐπεσσύμενον) and to run (θέοντος). This combination of rapid movement and celestial brightness makes Achilles figuratively a shooting star rather than simply an ordinary one.

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<sup>202</sup> Him the old man Priam first beheld as he sped across the plain, blazing as the star that cometh forth at harvest-time, and plain seen his rays shine forth amid the host of stars in the darkness of night, the star whose name men call Orion's Dog. Brightest of all is he, yet for an evil sign is he set, and bringeth much fever upon hapless men. Even so on Achilles' breast the bronze gleamed as he ran.

The movements of ordinary stars are regular and often correlate with particular changes in the weather. Thus Homer observes that the Dog Star predictably harbinger severe heat. Shooting stars, by contrast, are spontaneous and hence have no fixed significance. In a society that believes in omens, each shooting star must be interpreted by a skilled diviner. This is clear when Athena appears as a shooting star shortly before the truce is broken. Soldiers on both sides realize that they are seeing an omen, but they do not know whether it portends lasting peace or renewed hostilities (4.73-84).

If Achilles is metaphorically a shooting star, it follows that his significance, too, will need to be interpreted. Priam does so. As the first to see Achilles, he groans, beats his head, and exhorts Hector to come inside (22.33-37). Priam recognizes that this shooting star portends evil. At the metaphorical level, then, the old man is a diviner who correctly construes a sign.<sup>203</sup> In subtly casting Priam as a seer, Homer insinuates that he has extraordinary insight. This, at least as much as Priam's traditional authority roles, convinces listeners that his warning to Hector is prudent.

Priam is certainly sympathetic. His affection toward Hector is clear. When Priam begins addressing his son, he calls him φίλον τέκος (22.38). Later in the same speech, Priam refers to Hector as ἐμὸν τέκος (22.56). Both expressions convey fond feelings. In addition, Priam demonstrates all the concern of a caring parent. He worries deeply that Hector will meet his end if he faces Achilles alone, and he says so explicitly several times (22.39, 55, and 58). Priam also believes that Troy will fall if Hector is killed. The picture that the king draws after an Achaean victory includes his own dogs devouring his corpse (22.59-76). The imagery of Priam in death is

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<sup>203</sup> On Achilles as a "bad omen" in Priam's view, see De Jong, "*Iliad*" Book XXII, ad 25-32.

pathetic. Along with his fatherly affection and concern, it makes listeners identify closely with him.

Compared to his father, Hector is unattractive. From a societal perspective, the warning that he receives is grounded by Priam's elderly wisdom and paternal role. Priam also enjoys the authority of a suppliant. Although he is unable formally to entreat Hector, by touching him, he supplicates his son from the wall. This is signaled by Priam's use of the imperative ἐλέησον (22.59).<sup>204</sup> Priam's body language—beating his head, tearing at his hair, and lifting up his hands—also signals supplication at a distance.<sup>205</sup> His three authority roles in combination should certainly make Priam's warning cogent for Hector, but they do not.<sup>206</sup> Consequently, when Hector ignores it, he shows disrespect for these traditional roles as well. Such blatant disregard for custom naturally makes Hector unsympathetic. He is evidently so confident in own views as to contravene the basic values of his society.

Hector, in fact, is recklessly self-assured. His assessment of his current circumstances proves as much. After he has decided to remain outside the city, Hector says to himself εἶδομεν ὀπποτέρῳ κεν Ὀλύμπιος εὖχος ὀρέξῃ (22.130). Framing his thoughts in this manner, the Trojan commander obviously believes that he stands an honest chance by himself against Achilles. The day's events alone should convince him otherwise. Hector must have witnessed the carnage wrought by Achilles' ferocity. In addition, he faced Achilles unsuccessfully only a short while ago. The encounter went so badly for Hector that Apollo had to intervene and save him (20.419-44). These are strong factual reasons for heeding Priam's warning. Indeed, if everyone else on the Trojan side flees behind the wall, then that must be the sensible thing to do. Moreover,

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<sup>204</sup> See Jones, *Homer's "Iliad,"* ad 22.34.

<sup>205</sup> See De Jong, *"Iliad" Book XXII,* ad 33-91.

<sup>206</sup> Leaf and Bayfield, *Commentary,* ad 22.98 observe that Hector "does not take the least notice of the moving appeals of his father and mother."

Priam substantiates his warning by reminding Hector that Achilles has deprived him of many other brave sons (22.44-45). Because all this objective information does not sway Hector, he must be self-assured to the point of being unrealistic. To believe that he has a hope against Achilles is simply bold recklessness, which contributes to a negative image of Hector in the scene.

Behind Hector's recklessness is the recognition that his honor has been compromised. As he is pondering whether to remain outside the wall or not, Hector tells himself that he will face reproaches if he goes within. He especially fears criticism from Poulydamas:

ὦ μοι ἐγών, εἰ μὲν κε πύλας καὶ τείχεα δύω,  
Πουλυδάμας μοι πρῶτος ἐλεγχείην ἀναθήσει,  
ὅς μ' ἐκέλευε Τρῳσὶ ποτὶ πτόλιν ἡγήσασθαι  
νύχθ' ὑπο τήνδ' ὅλοῃν ὅτε τ' ὤρετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.  
ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην· ἦ τ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦεν.  
νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ὤλεσα λαὸν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἐμῇσιν,  
αἰδέομαι Τρῶας καὶ Τρῳάδας ἐλκεσιπέπλους,  
μή ποτέ τις εἴπησι κακώτερος ἄλλος ἐμεῖο·  
Ἔκτωρ ἦφι βίηφι πιθήσας ὤλεσε λαόν.  
ὥς ἐρέουσιν· ἐμοὶ δὲ τότ' ἂν πολὺ κέρδιον εἴη  
ἄντην ἢ Ἀχιλῆα κατακτείναντα νέεσθαι,  
ἢ κεν αὐτῷ ὀλέσθαι ἐὺκλειῶς πρὸ πόλης (22.99-110).<sup>207</sup>

When Hector rejected Poulydamas's warning to retreat to the city, he set the stage for a massacre of the Trojans. For this reason, Hector says that he feels shame and would rather die honorably before Troy, if it comes to that, than go inside.

Granted that Homeric warriors normally have high regard for themselves and their reputations, Hector's devotion to fame is inordinate. Desiring to recoup lost honor, he places

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<sup>207</sup> Ay me, if I go within the gates and walls, Polydamas will be first to bring reproach against me, since he bade me lead the Trojans to the city during this ruinous night, when noble Achilles arose. But I regarded him not, yet surely it had been better far. And now that I have undone the host by my wantonness, I am ashamed before the men of Troy and women of trailing robes, lest at any time some worse man than I shall say: 'Hector by trusting his own might undid the host.' So will they speak; then to me would it be better far to face Achilles and either slay him and go home, or myself die gloriously before the city.

himself in a situation that he has plenty of reasons for knowing is untenable. As the scholia remark, Hector hopes to cure one evil by means of another, thereby demonstrating how misplaced his love of honor is.<sup>208</sup>

Further proof of Hector's unwholesome obsession with glory is his fear of being criticized by lesser men (22.106). Pope astutely observes, "'Tis remarkable that he does not say, he fears the insults of the braver Trojans, but of the most worthless only.'" <sup>209</sup> Indeed, why should Hector care what lesser men say about him? Such men, Pope notes, are quick to blame and always try to drag outstanding figures down to their level. It would make more sense for Hector to be concerned about what Trojans of comparable merit, such as Aeneas or Glaucus, have to say about him. That Hector even considers the opinions of the mediocre shows how unreasonably ambitious he is to impress.

Taking a more positive view of Hector, some suggest that his decision to face Achilles is prompted partly by patriotism.<sup>210</sup> To fight Achilles alone at this point is to defend Troy, which is laudable. Against such claims it may be noted that Hector's only stated motive for remaining outside the city is a strong desire to repair his honor. Moreover, he ignores an explicit appeal to consult the interests of his country. When Priam exhorts him to withdraw, he tells Hector that he will save the Trojan men and women by doing so (22.56-58). Priam implies that Hector is Troy's most important defender and that his death now would spell ruin for the city.<sup>211</sup> Hector disregards this reason to come inside as much as he does the others that Priam gives him. He does not even consider that Troy might fare better with him on the other side of the wall. This response is hardly patriotic. Indeed, it is further evidence that excessive ambition causes Hector

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<sup>208</sup> bT scholia, *ad* 22.99-130, δείκνυσι δὲ ὅσον κακὸν ἡ φιλοτιμία ... κακὸν γὰρ κακῷ ἠθέλησεν ἰάσασθαι.

<sup>209</sup> Comment on his 22.138.

<sup>210</sup> See, for example, Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 186; and Greenhalgh, "Patriotism in the Homeric World," 529.

<sup>211</sup> See De Jong, "*Iliad*" Book XXII, *ad* 56-76.

to throw caution to the wind, as he boldly neglects overwhelming factual evidence about his circumstances and the traditional roles that ground Priam's warning.

Subsequent events counteract Hector's lack of appeal to a degree. When he is mortally wounded, he does not die immediately. During Hector's remaining moments, he pleads with Achilles not to mistreat his body. Achilles flatly refuses, taunting Hector that he will be utterly devoured by dogs and birds (22.337-54). Regardless of his past behavior, Hector's dying plea is moving. Achilles' ruthless response also elicits sympathy for his victim. In addition, Hector experiences an instant of intense clarity, in which he foresees that Paris and Apollo in concert will bring about Achilles' death (22.358-60). This supernatural experience elevates Hector above the mundane and thereby confers a certain amount of dignity on him.<sup>212</sup> The audience's negative picture of Hector is, then, mitigated. Although he still seems unsympathetic when he disregards Priam's warning, Hector's response to the catastrophe that he brings upon himself redeems him somewhat. In this way, the neglected warning shows that Hector is morally ambiguous.

This chapter has examined several neglected warnings in the *Iliad* that pertain to Hector. They have much in common. The warners, Poulydamas and Priam, are wise and strongly benevolent. Furthermore, Priam is elderly, and Poulydamas seems figuratively old when Homer comments that he looks both ahead and behind. The poet also insinuates that Priam is prophetic by having him interpret a metaphorical shooting star. In contrast to those whom they advise, both warners are sympathetic. Thus they function as foils to the respective recipients.

Asius, the first to disregard a warning from Poulydamas, is bold, reckless, and selfishly ambitious. The measure of his overconfidence is his disobedience of Hector, a sure violation of

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<sup>212</sup> On the general belief in the Graeco-Roman world that people about to die had prophetic powers, see Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 178, 289.

custom. For his part, Hector displays the same negative characteristics when he neglects warnings from Poulydamas and Priam. Disregarding Priam's warning entails violation of filial duty in addition to some other traditional obligations. When sons neglect paternal warnings earlier in the *Iliad*, they always get into trouble. Therefore, the audience expects that the same will happen to Hector, quite aside from predictions of his death.

Reintroducing the theme of filial piety also contributes to a negative image of Hector. Listeners naturally associate him with Merops's sons and Pandarus, who seem fully deserving of what befalls them. Because this detail and so many others cast Hector in a bad light, it is difficult to discern patriotism in his decision to face Achilles before Troy, just as it is difficult to excuse his reaction to Poulydamas's first warning as the result of pressure in combat. Nevertheless, the picture of Hector in the final episode is not completely negative. As he is dying, his moving appeal to Achilles and the dignity of his prophetic insight leave listeners feeling more sympathetic toward Hector than they do at the point when he ignores Priam's warning.

## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter will review and summarize observations made in the course of examining the *Iliad*'s twelve neglected warnings. Several generalizations about the episodes will then be possible. First, it will be clear that disregarded warners and their recipients constitute two distinct character types. Members of each group exhibit a consistent combination of traits across the examples studied. These findings allow augmentation and in some respects correction of what has been claimed until now about the generic features of neglected warnings in Homer. The results also point strongly to an origin in folklore for the pattern as it occurs in the *Iliad*. At the same time, it will be evident that Homer is not overly constrained by types and patterns but constructs the poem's neglected warnings with ingenuity and variety. Suggestions for further research are made at appropriate places throughout the chapter.

Disregarded warners in the *Iliad* number ten in all: Chryses, Nestor, Merops, Lycaon, Peleus, Phoenix, Menoetius, Achilles, Poulydamas (three times), and Priam. All are male. In addition, all are significantly older than those whom they advise. Often a warner is called old (γέρων), as in the cases of Chryses, Nestor, Lycaon, Peleus, Phoenix, Menoetius, and Priam. In other instances, advanced years can be inferred. Homer says nothing about the age of Merops, yet he must be at least a full generation older than the adult sons whom he cautions. Achilles and Poulydamas are not literally older than the corresponding recipients. Nevertheless, Achilles comes off as older than Patroclus because of parent-like affection and protectiveness. Similarly,



Poulydamas seems to be well in advance of his years when Homer describes him with an honorific formula used of elderly men. Thus, all disregarded warners in the *Iliad* are either literally or figuratively mature.

According to the values of the story world, old age and wisdom are closely associated. Each neglected warner therefore counts as wise. As a traditional role, the status of wise elder carries considerable authority and should make a warner's advice credible in the eyes of other characters. All ten warners are also actively benevolent. Speech act theory stipulates that a warning need be only well-intentioned in order to achieve its purpose. The warner himself can be detached or even anonymous. Warners in the *Iliad*, however, are always very engaged. In most instances, the language that they use conveys urgency and deep concern. Some warners, such as Poulydamas and Priam, go so far as to express their anxiety with gruesome imagery. If for no other reason, all the warners appear sympathetic because of their strong desire to avert danger and their emotional involvement.

In addition to these fixed characteristics, others occur frequently among warners. Most striking perhaps is the number of fathers who caution a son. The list includes Merops, Lycaon, Peleus, Menoetius, and Priam. Chryses may also be counted among these biological fathers, although he obviously does not warn his own offspring. Phoenix is a father figure when he warns Achilles, and Achilles himself is portrayed as parental in relation to Patroclus. Nestor, because of his extreme old age, can arguably be construed as patriarchal when he cautions Agamemnon. Clearly, a distinct paternal motif figures strongly in the *Iliad*'s neglected warnings.

Another noteworthy feature that most warners share is communion with the supernatural. Homer states explicitly that Merops is a prophet. He subtly attributes an extraordinary status to

several others who deliver warnings. Chryses, Nestor, Peleus, Phoenix, Achilles, and Priam all seem prophetic or superhuman in the respective scenes. Their special insight is insinuated to the audience, over the heads of the other characters. One effect is to give listeners strong grounds of their own for taking the warnings seriously.

Each disregarded warner is a traditional authority figure by virtue of being older and wiser than the recipient. Some warners have additional authority roles. Chryses is a suppliant and a priest; Merops is a prophet as well as a father; and Priam is both a father and a suppliant. Moreover, some warners possess traits beyond active benevolence that make them attractive. The fatherly affection that Peleus, Menoetius, and Priam express for their sons when they warn them is poignant. So is the prudent silence that Chryses, Phoenix, and Poulydamas observe when their warnings are harshly rejected.

Reviewing the traits exhibited by neglected warners in the *Iliad* leads to two generalizations. First, warners are always male, elderly or significantly older than the recipient, wise, actively benevolent, and sympathetic. Second, they are for the most part paternal and prophetic. Owing to this consistently recurring handful of traits, warners are a distinct character type. Furthermore, they may possess more than one traditional authority role that grounds their advice and traits besides strong benevolence that contribute to their appeal.

The *Iliad* also features a total of eight neglectful recipients: Agamemnon (twice), Merops's two sons, Pandarus, Achilles (twice), Patroclus (twice), Asius, and Hector (three times). Members of this group, too, have certain features in common. Each receives a warning from an advisor who embodies at least one traditional authority role, and each neglects the advice deliberately. By choosing to disregard the warning, the recipient shows disrespect for the authority that should make it compelling in his eyes. Disrespect, in turn, signals considerable

audacity. The world depicted in the *Iliad* is very traditional. In such a society, one does not disregard custom lightly.<sup>213</sup> Consequently, the measure of the recipient's boldness is his willingness to neglect the traditional authority behind the warning that he receives. Of course, such bold disregard for custom does not leave him looking good relative to the story world.

The characteristic audacity of neglectful recipients stems from ambition. It is understandable that characters in a poem about a war should be motivated by the pursuit of honor. Neglectful recipients in the *Iliad*, however, are inordinately devoted to it. Overcome by excessive ambition for τιμή, the neglectful recipient is emboldened to a dangerous degree. He becomes too self-assured in his own position or resources and then is reckless and unrealistic. In this frame of mind, the recipient is prone to disregard cautionary advice. It is bad enough that he breaks with tradition when he neglects a warning. That he does so ultimately out of selfish ambition makes him appear even less sympathetic.<sup>214</sup>

There are usually additional reasons that cast neglectful recipients in a bad light. Achilles seems not only boldly ambitious but also downright arrogant when he rejects Agamemnon's embassy. Although the hero is being offered staggering compensation, he declares that he would not accept twenty times as much to be reconciled (9.379). Agamemnon himself comes across as a sadistic bully in his reply to Chryses. Hector, too, exhibits a bullying streak when he threatens Poulydamas's life. Perhaps most unsettling is the breach of filial duty that most neglectful recipients commit. Because the bond between fathers and sons is strong in the *Iliad* overall, blatant disregard for the advice of affectionate, worried father figures seems especially unattractive.

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<sup>213</sup> See Oakeshott, "Tower of Babel," 59-79.

<sup>214</sup> See the discussion in chapter 1 about socially imposed limits on the pursuit of glory.

Like those who warn them in vain, neglectful recipients in the *Iliad* clearly constitute a distinct character type. They are always young, very bold, selfishly ambitious, reckless, and unsympathetic. All this is not to say, however, that neglectful recipients are unappealing absolutely. Agamemnon, Achilles, Patroclus, and Hector all react in a dignified way to the crises that they provoke. This mitigates the negative picture of each that emerges at the point when he disregards a warning. In addition, all four characters appear respectable, if not admirable, in other episodes of the poem. Agamemnon publicly admits responsibility for alienating Achilles, Achilles is compassionate toward Priam, Patroclus has tended to the wounded Eurypylus, and Hector has displayed tenderness when he meets his wife and infant son. The fact that a character makes a bad impression when he neglects a warning does not entail that Homer's depiction of him is consistently negative.

Much has been said in this section about character types. For the sake of balance, it is important to observe that Homer's characterization of the figures studied is far from mechanical. In most cases, the warner's old age is stated by someone as a literal fact. In the cases of Achilles and Poulydamas, by contrast, maturity is insinuated by the poet, and in Merops's case it must be inferred. Similarly, some warners who are fathers exhibit parental affection, but Lycaon and Merops do not. Merops, furthermore, is a seer by profession, while several other warners appear prophetic only by suggestion.

Homer is also imaginative in how he depicts neglectful recipients. Agamemnon and Hector bully their respective advisors into silence. Achilles does something similar to Phoenix, but he seems less obnoxious. It helps that he does not threaten violence, as the other two do. Taking a totally different approach, Patroclus does not verbally reject Achilles' warning. Instead, Homer gives the audience clues as to what is happening in his mind. There is also

variety in how recipients react to the disasters that they precipitate. Agamemnon and Achilles take pragmatic steps to address their predicaments that are consistent with the norms of heroic society. Patroclus and Hector, on the other hand, can only deliver somber predictions during their dying moments. Other recipients, such as Pandarus, have no opportunity to react at all. Although neglected warnings in the *Iliad* exhibit a consistent set of features, it is evident that Homer is not constrained by the pattern to depict warners and recipients in a perfunctory manner. On the contrary, the flexibility and creativity of his characterization is just what one would expect from so great a poet.

The introductory chapter puts forward two main reasons for studying neglected warnings in the *Iliad*. One has to do with scholarly disagreement about the pattern's subsidiary features. Everyone who has commented on disregarded warnings in Homer concurs that they have a tripartite narrative structure (warning, disregard, catastrophe) and that the warner is wise. Beyond this there is no consensus. The findings of this investigation provide a partial basis for one, augmenting and in some respects correcting what has been claimed until now.

Bischoff, it will be recalled, maintains that the Homeric warner is always an old man. This is literally true for only seven of the ten advisors examined. Of the other three, Merops might be only a generation older than his sons. Achilles and Poulydamas are both definitely young, but Homer makes them seem significantly older by various insinuations. Consequently, it would be more accurate to say that the *Iliad*'s neglected warners are *depicted* as much older than those whom they counsel.

West is unique among scholars in allowing prophecy as a basis for warnings that go unheeded. The evidence certainly supports him. Merops is called a prophet, and superhuman insight is subtly attributed to Chryses, Nestor, Achilles, and Priam. All these advisors deliver

warnings that prove accurate. West is mistaken, however, in maintaining that neglectful recipients impute base motives to their advisors. This occurs in only two of the twelve episodes examined, when Hector accuses Poulydamas of cowardice on one occasion and of greed on another.

Opinion varies as to the reason for the neglectful recipient's behavior. Hooker attributes it to either misunderstanding or heedlessness. None of the examples studied supports the former explanation. Everyone who disregards a warning in the *Iliad* receives advice that is clear, comprehensible, and often emphatic. In addition, no recipient shows signs of misunderstanding. Even Chryses' subtle warning must be clear to Agamemnon, given that the entire Achaean army agrees to giving the priest what he requests.

If misunderstanding is never a cause for the neglectful recipient's behavior, Hooker's second explanation, heedlessness, comes closer to the truth. As discussion of the examples has shown, the motivation of each neglectful recipient stems from inordinate ambition for honor. This leads to excessive boldness, which in turn leads to reckless, unrealistic rejection of the warning. These three stages interlock, so it would be a mistake to isolate any one of them as the reason for disregard. Hooker, then, identifies a moment in the overall process of neglecting warnings in the *Iliad*. The same applies to Fenik, who specifies reckless folly as the sole reason for neglect, and to West, who identifies only conscious rejection.

The present study's findings advance understanding of neglected warnings in Homer a good deal. Some scholarly opinions about their generic features have been shown incorrect. Others have been confirmed or, by taking the finer details of context into account, usefully qualified. The result is a fuller, more precise picture of the pattern than has been available until now. Of course, a truly complete understanding of the subject requires examining neglected

warnings in the *Odyssey* as well. Both Fenik and Hooker have noted several in the poem, and there may well be more. It would certainly be interesting to know whether the *Odyssey*'s disregarded warnings exhibit the same standard features as those in the *Iliad*. If they do not, an even more interesting pursuit would be trying to determine why there are differences. Owing to its fruitfulness, the approach used here for studying disregarded warnings recommends itself for investigating them in the *Odyssey*.

The other main reason for undertaking this investigation was Shapiro's call to study Homeric antecedents to the warner figures that appear so often in Herodotus. The results partly answer her call. It will be more fully answered after neglected warnings in the *Odyssey* have also been systematically examined. In the meantime, it is clear that disregarded warners in the *Iliad* instantiate a well-delineated character type. One could, therefore, compare the generic Iliadic warner with warners in Herodotus or indeed in any other Greek author. The similarities and differences might be illuminating. Comparison seems all the more inviting at this stage given that neglected warnings in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Sophocles have already been described in general terms.<sup>215</sup> At the very least, one might compare those generalizations with the ones made here.

The dissertation has addressed the two major needs in scholarship that justified undertaking it, but there is more to say. It turns out that the neglected warning pattern in the *Iliad* is not Homer's invention. Hooker maintains that the *Odyssey*'s disregarded warnings derive from folktales. This is a distinct possibility. Homer's substantial debt to folklore is well

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<sup>215</sup> See Lattimore, "Wise Adviser in Herodotus," 24; Marinatos, "Nicias as a Wise Advisor," 308; and Lardinois, "Traces of the Adviser Figure," 29.

documented,<sup>216</sup> and neglected warnings occur often in the international corpus. However, Hooker does not cite scholarly support for his claim, nor does he really develop it himself. The results of the present study do not remedy that gap. They do, however, show that the recurring features of the *Iliad*'s neglected warnings most likely originate in folklore. In order to appreciate how this is so, a digression about the nature of folktales is necessary.

Scholarship ordinarily refers to the central character in a folktale as the hero. In most tales, the hero sets out on a journey, encounters obstacles, overcomes them, and emerges a better person in some significant respect. The journey is very often a literal one, but it may also be figurative. Furthermore, a hero generally encounters helpers along the way. These benignant figures vary widely. One type that will be familiar to most readers is talking animals.<sup>217</sup>

Another type of helper that occurs frequently is the Wise Old Man. Known from folktales around the world, the Wise Old Man is more than just sagacious, mature, and male. He is normally protective and well-disposed toward the story's hero. Very often the Wise Old Man has supernatural associations and hence may be a wizard, seer, priest, or related figure. Sometimes he is even a god. The Wise Old Man's standard role is to give the hero advice for his journey, including warnings as appropriate. Amulets or other charms are sometimes provided, too. Because he is protective and actively assists the hero, the Wise Old Man is ordinarily a sympathetic figure.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> See, for example, Carpenter, *Folk Tale, Fiction and Saga in the Homeric Epics*; Page, *Folktales in Homer's "Odyssey"*; and more recently Hansen, "Homer and the Folktale."

<sup>217</sup> On the general features of folktales, see Propp, *Morphology*, 25-65; and Campbell, *Thousand Faces*, 245-51.

<sup>218</sup> On the character type, see De Rose, "Wise Old Man/Woman," 342-45. As De Rose observes, wise elders who help are sometimes women, such as Cinderella's fairy godmother or the kindly Spider Woman of Navajo mythology. On the role of advice more generally in folktales, see Lüthi, *European Folktale*, 72-76.



Heroes, like those who help them, come in different varieties. Some heroes are reluctant to undertake their journey, while others are quite willing.<sup>219</sup> Heroes can also be classified as seekers or victims. The former go in search of a significant object, whereas the latter have been seized or banished from home.<sup>220</sup> A more specific type of hero occurs in cautionary tales. Such stories feature some prohibition or taboo, which the hero neglects to his detriment. The hero is routinely a child or a young adult. He disobeys out of sheer willfulness, which normally takes the form of idle curiosity or obstinacy. In other words, the hero boldly desires to have his own way. This combination of youth, ambition, and audacity makes him behave recklessly. As a result, he seems unattractive in addition to suffering.<sup>221</sup>

One of the better known disobedient heroes is Bluebeard's wife. In this tale, a nameless young woman marries a wealthy gentleman with a mysterious blue beard. Shortly after their wedding, Bluebeard must travel far away on business. He gives his wife full run of a lavish home in the country but orders her in the strongest terms not to enter a certain room. Her ambition to know what lies behind the forbidden door increases steadily. In a moment of rashness, she rudely abandons guests and hurries off to explore the room. What she finds there are the bodies of Bluebeard's former wives. Upon his return, Bluebeard detects the transgression. He is just about to kill his current wife as punishment when her two brothers come to the rescue.<sup>222</sup>

The sympathetic Wise Old Man and the unattractive, disobedient hero constitute a natural combination. Folktales have a liking for extreme contrasts in characterization. Characters tend to be "completely beautiful and good or completely ugly and bad; they are either poor or rich,

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<sup>219</sup> See Campbell, *Thousand Faces*, 59-68.

<sup>220</sup> See Propp, *Morphology*, 36-39.

<sup>221</sup> On these and other aspects of cautionary tales, see Tatar, *Off With Their Heads!*, 22-42.

<sup>222</sup> For the version of the story summarized here, see Opie and Opie, *Classic Fairy Tales*, 137-41.

spoiled or cast out, very industrious or completely lazy.”<sup>223</sup> In addition, it is common for contrasting characters to interact with each other.<sup>224</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, folktales sometimes pair the positive qualities of the Wise Old Man with the negative ones of the disobedient hero.

This is illustrated by the numerous reflexes of a story pattern entitled “The Father’s Precepts Disregarded” and numbered 910A in the standard inventory of tale types.<sup>225</sup> The basic story begins with a dying man giving three precepts to his son, which are framed as prohibitions or warnings. The son disregards them, usually driven to test them or because he thinks they are nonsensical, and suffers misfortune. As a result of his experience, he realizes that his father’s precepts were indeed wise. In this plot pattern, the dying father obviously exemplifies the Wise Old Man, and the son matches the profile of the disobedient hero.

The same pairing occurs in tale type 413, “The Stolen Clothing” (previously “Marriage by Stealing Clothing”).<sup>226</sup> Attested in Europe, North Africa, and Asia, this plot features a youth who encounters a holy man in the forest. The hero is told not to go in a certain direction, but he does so anyhow and sees three beautiful maidens bathing. The holy man agrees to help him, turns him into a bird, and instructs him to steal the clothes of one of the bathing girls. He also warns the young hero not to look back under any circumstances. The hero does look back and is burned to a pile of ashes. The holy man restores him, and on his second attempt the hero is

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<sup>223</sup> Lüthi, *European Folktale*, 34.

<sup>224</sup> See Thompson, *Folktale*, 456.

<sup>225</sup> See Uther, *International Folktales*, type 910A. Tale types are basic plots from which storytellers throughout the ages have constructed their tales. A tale type is an abstraction, as opposed to the specific stories (variants) that reflect it. See Lüthi, *European Folktale*, 120-21; and Hansen, “Homer and the Folktale,” 444.

<sup>226</sup> See Uther, *International Folktales*, type 413.

successful. Here, too, a Wise Old Man figure is matched with a hero who neglects his advice and gets into trouble.<sup>227</sup>

Especially in the European tradition, folktales normally end on a happy note.<sup>228</sup> People under magic spells are disenchanted, the unpromising son wins great wealth or a kingdom, and lovers are reunited and live happily ever after. Even heroes who bring disaster upon themselves through disobedience are often revived or restored.<sup>229</sup> Bluebeard's wife, for example, is saved by her brothers at the last minute. Little Red Riding Hood, who strays from the path through the forest, is cut out of the wolf's belly by a hunter and vows never to disobey her mother again.<sup>230</sup> The happy ending is, then, a standard feature of folktales. A final feature of them worth noting is a limit on the number of characters. For the most part, only two are present in a scene at the same time. Even if there are more characters, only two of them are active simultaneously.<sup>231</sup>

There are many points of correspondence between the folktale elements just discussed and the neglected warnings examined in this study. First, disregarded warners in the *Iliad* fit the type of the Wise Old Man. All the warners are male, significantly older than those whom they counsel, prudent, actively benevolent, and sympathetic. These are the exact same characteristics that describe the Wise Old Man. In addition, most of the warners have some supernatural association. So do many folklore characters who exemplify the Wise Old Man archetype. The

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<sup>227</sup> Hansen, *Ariadne's Thread*, is an excellent compilation and discussion of folktale material in classical literature. The work does not, however, mention tale type 413 or 910A.

<sup>228</sup> See Röhrich, *Folktales and Reality*, 43-51.

<sup>229</sup> See Tatar, *Off With Their Heads!*, 25.

<sup>230</sup> See Grimm and Grimm, *Complete Fairy Tales*, 101-105.

<sup>231</sup> See Thompson, *Folktale*, 456.

paternal aspect of nearly every warner is a further parallel to the protectiveness and benevolence typical of the Wise Old Man.<sup>232</sup>

Moreover, the *Iliad*'s neglectful recipients are very much like the disobedient heroes of cautionary tales. Disobedient heroes are young, daring, ambitious to advance their own ends, and reckless. In their egocentricity, they deliberately ignore prohibitions or taboos and suffer the consequences. Every neglectful recipient in the *Iliad* evidences the same set of traits. Each recipient, as a result, seems about as unsympathetic at the time of his neglect as his advisor is likeable. This consistently strong contrast in characterization constitutes another point of correspondence with folktales, which favor extremes among the *dramatis personae* and in which contrasting characters commonly interact. Based on tale types 413 and 910A, folklore even knows the specific pairing of a warner who is mature, prudent, and sympathetic with a recipient who is young, reckless, and unappealing, just as happens time after time in the *Iliad*.

Because the folktale strongly favors a happy ending, even heroes who bring ruin upon themselves often recoup. Half of the *Iliad*'s neglectful recipients recover in some sense, too. Apollo's plague causes considerable loss of life among the Achaeans, but Agamemnon reverses the catastrophe by returning Chryseis. Achilles irrationally sends Patroclus into battle alone and loses him. He redeems the situation somewhat by resolving to avenge his friend's death. Both Patroclus and Hector, during their dying moments, experience exceptional clarity into their circumstances and prophesy revenge against the killer. This not only confers dignity on them but also allows each to have some sense of ultimate triumph. The poem's other four neglectful

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<sup>232</sup> One might well expect the warners in a story about a war to be men. Nevertheless, there are several articulate, dynamic women in the *Iliad* who could conceivably fill the role. That they are all excluded suggests a conscious choice on Homer's part. The decision is understandable if he is aiming to mold warners after the Wise Old Man archetype. (Hecuba, as previously discussed, is not a warner in her own right since her role is largely to second Priam's admonition to Hector.)

recipients—Merops’s sons, Pandarus, and Asius—die immediately as part of the catastrophes that they provoke and therefore have no opportunity to recoup. This is probably due to the fact that they are all minor characters and therefore are of less interest dramatically or for the plot. In any event, their lack of recovery does not argue against a close correspondence with folktales, because not every disobedient folklore hero is restored.

Yet another parallel to folklore is the *Iliad*’s characteristic pairing of one warner with one recipient. In most cases the match is so straightforward that it does not merit comment. In others, however, Homer effects it more subtly. Chryses formally addresses the entire Achaean army, but the finer details of the scene make it clear that he is really warning Agamemnon. Odysseus quotes Peleus’s warning verbatim to Achilles, which makes it seem as though the old man is present and speaking directly to his son. Nestor also functions as a stand-in when he reminds Patroclus of Menoetius’s advice, and the effect is the same. Even in the less obvious instances, then, the poem’s neglected warnings parallel the folkloric convention of only two active characters in a scene.

The points of correspondence between the *Iliad*’s neglected warning pattern and folklore are too numerous and of too many kinds to be coincidental. It follows that independent genesis can be ruled out. Either the standard features of the poem’s disregarded warnings derive from folklore, or folklore adopted the array from Homer. The former explanation is far likelier.

First, there is the fact of inertia. As several eminent folklorists have noted, it is always easier for storytellers to borrow than it is to invent.<sup>233</sup> Homer illustrates this principle well. Roughly a dozen distinctive stories in his poetry have analogues in the international folktale tradition, including motifs, the basic building blocks of tales, and complete, involved story

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<sup>233</sup> See Hansen, *Ariadne’s Thread*, 4.

patterns. Scholars agree that neither the simple elements nor the complex ones are traceable to Homer. Instead, the poet must have reworked folklore material that was in circulation or that had already been incorporated into the Greek poetic repertoire.<sup>234</sup> The *Iliad*'s neglected warning pattern is neither as simple as a motif nor as complex as a full-fledged tale type. However, Homer's tendency to borrow both motifs and tale types from folklore makes it likely that he did the same thing in the case of this intermediate narrative structure, rather than inventing it.

In addition, folklore provides models that Homer could have adapted. Tale types 413 and 910A both display the exact combination of features that recur in the *Iliad*'s disregarded warnings. In each type, a Wise Old Man character is matched with a reckless, young hero. The hero disregards the wise elder's cautionary advice, gets into trouble as a result, but is eventually restored. Sympathy for the warner and relative dislike for the hero follow from strongly contrasting characterization. Because these traits exhaust the standard features of the *Iliad*'s neglected warnings, either tale type is a plausible source for the pattern.

It might be objected that many tale types are attested only in modern folktale collections. This is the case with type 413, and type 910A is first documented in medieval poetry. How, therefore, is it possible to know whether reflexes of either were familiar to Homer or his Greek predecessors? While it is true that a large number of story patterns are not attested before modern times, folklorists generally agree that tale types are both archaic and persistent by nature.<sup>235</sup> One may reasonably conjecture, therefore, that types 413, 910A, and the like were known to ancient bards.

Granted that the *Iliad*'s neglected warning pattern derives from folklore, it remains to determine how the borrowing occurred. One possible route of transmission is from the Near

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<sup>234</sup> See Hansen, "Homer and the Folktale," 459-61.

<sup>235</sup> See Hansen, "Homer and the Folktale," 444.

East. In the Hebrew Bible, God warns Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge. They disobey, are caught, and are expelled from Eden as punishment.<sup>236</sup> The Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh also includes a neglected warning. In that episode, Gilgamesh's closest friend, Enkidu, proposes visiting the underworld. Gilgamesh warns him not to attract any attention to himself while he is there. Enkidu rashly ignores the warning and ends up a captive of the dead.<sup>237</sup>

There is general agreement that the Near East exercised considerable influence on early Greek epic.<sup>238</sup> Because disregarded warnings occur in Near Eastern sources much earlier than Homer, the *Iliad*'s neglected warning pattern might be yet another borrowing from that region. Another possibility is that the pattern is inherited from the Indo-European tradition. It, too, looms large in the poetry of Homer and Hesiod. Pursuing these two avenues could help complete the overall picture of Homer's debt to his predecessors.

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<sup>236</sup> Genesis 3: 1-24.

<sup>237</sup> See Gardner, *Gilgamesh*, 253-61.

<sup>238</sup> See, for example, Schein, *Mortal Hero*, 16-17; and Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, xv. The latter provides numerous references to scholarship as well as a brief discussion the subject.

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