Empathy in *Iliad* 24

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In recent years, an interdisciplinary subfield sometimes called Empathy Studies has become central to the literature on diversity, equity and inclusion.[2] Yet empathy remains an elusive concept, easier praised than implemented or understood. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines empathy as "the ability to understand and appreciate another person's feelings, experience, etc." That ultimate hedging "et cetera," unusual for the *OED*, reflects a longstanding lack of consensus on empathy's components, processes, and outcomes.[3] We know it when we feel it, or don't – but not how it works, or doesn't. Freud could add little to the discussion beyond calling empathy a blend of "obscure emotional forces."[4] Moral philosophers regret that "empathy… has now been mixed up with technology, morality, and even politics," creating a "conceptual confusion," surmountable only "by returning to the original meaning of empathy," if we could but know it.[5] Alas, laments psychologist Robert Katz, there are "no complete accounts of empathic understanding which might serve as models for detailed analysis."[6]

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[2]Hammond and Kim, 14. Coplan notes the centrality of empathy in topics including political campaigns, autism-spectrum disorders, psychopathy, political ideology, medical care, ethics and moral development, justice and the courts, gender differences, engagement with art and media, therapeutic methods in clinical psychology, mirror neurons, and theory of mind (2011, 4–5). Paul Bloom found "over fifteen hundred books on amazon.com with empathy in their title or subtitle" (2016, 19). My JSTOR search on 9 March 2024 identified 1642 academic journal articles with "empathy" in the *title.*

[3]*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "empathy, n."

[4]Freud, *Heimlichkeit* 275, in Katz 1963, 75.

[5]Englander and Ferrarello 2023, 8; Coplan 2011, 4.

[6]Katz 1963, 39; he asserts also (186) at that there are "no formulas [of empathy] which have been validated."

But in fact, we *do* have a fulsome original account for detailed analysis. In Book 24 of the *Iliad*, when King Priam of Troy kisses the hands of Achilles, "the man who killed my son," Achilles breaks down and cries with Priam, seeing things from his enemy's point of view.[7] The two hundred lines of the Achilles-Priam scene have been called one of the most moving moments in all of literature,[8] and the episode has a claim to being the earliest *sustained* representation of empathy.[9] Although the ancient Greeks lacked a term for empathy,[10] Nagy and others have recently argued that *eleos*, often translated as "pity," really means something more like empathy.[11] Priam's supplication of Achilles, in any case, provides a model that is empathic,

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[7]Homer, *Iliad* 24.468–672. Line references are from the Oxford Classical Text (Monro 1902), accessed at https://homer.library.northwestern.edu/html/application.html.

[8]Sandstrom calls the Achilles-Priam encounter "one of the sublimest scenes" (1924, 30); Weil calls it "a miraculous thing" (2008, ¶ 81); to Glenn it is "undoubtedly one of the most moving scenes in the *Iliad*, or, indeed, in all literature" (1971, 20–21); to Nagler, it is not only "among the greatest achievements in Greek literature," but "the best and historically most important consolatio in Western literature" (1974, 250, 272); for Redfield, "there is no more poignant moment" (1975, quoted at 1973, 124); Mueller lauds "the sublimity of the scene, which virtually every reader of the *Iliad* has acknowledged (2009, 71); to Richardson, the "satisfying and moving" scene is among those aspects of the *Iliad* "which lead us to regard this as one of the greatest works of European literature still today" (1993,, 273, 15–16); Knox offers that "no one doubts the emotional coherence of this great scene" (1998, 1); to Nagy, it contains "one of the most beautiful passages in the *Iliad*" (2023, "Hour 8 Text H: Discussion"); Brügger (2017, vii) calls it "undoubtedly one of the most touching and stimulating sections of heroic epic."

[9]The *Gilgamesh* poems, and an 11th-century BCE Egyptian inscription, contain brief adversions to empathy, but nothing like the 200+ lines of sustained dramatization we find in *Iliad* 24. See Appendix.

[10]The later Greek word *empatheia*, from which the English word empathy (via German) derives, means much affected *by* or *at* a thing, rather than *with* or *for* it (Liddell and Scott 1888, 254, q.v., *empathís*), and thus (e.g., in Plutarch) has negative rather than positive connotations: Being impassioned, or *empassioned*, is ethically dangerous, for, as Heraclitus says, "it is hard to fight against impulse; whatever it wishes, it buys at the expense of the soul" (Frag. 85, Freeman 1968, 30). The earlier Homeric *empazoumi* is closer to our conception of empathy but still different, meaning more broadly "to care about, regard, concern oneself with," i.e., to have in mind (Cunliffe 2024, 126). Thus *Iliad* 16.50: oute theopropiês *empazomai* hên tinaoida, "I have not any prophecy in mind that I know of." The term appears more often in the *Odyssey*; e.g., oute theopropiês *empazomai*, hên tina mêtêr, "nor *care about* any prophecy" (1.415); oute theopropiês *empazometh*', hên su, geraie, mutheai akraanton, "nor do we *care about* an oracle that you, old man, may tell of" (2.221); rhapteis, oud' hiketas *empazeai*, "and pay no *regard* to suppliants" (16.422); and especially in the form *empazeo muthôn*, "care about words": soi d' autôi meletô, kai emôn *empazeo* muthôn, "keep this in your mind and *concern yourself* with my words" (1.305); ei d' age nun xuniei kai emôn *empazeo* muthôn, "come now, hear and *care about* my words" (1.271); hôs ar' ephan mnêstêres, ho d' ouk *empazeto* muthôn, "so said the suitors, but he didn't *care about* their words" (17.488); hôs ephat' Antinoos: ho d' ar' ouk *empazeto* muthôn, "so said Antinous, but Telemachus didn't *heed* his words" (20.275); hôs ephasan mnêstêres: ho d' ouk *empazeto* muthôn, "so said the suitors, but he didn't *heed* their words" (20.384).

[11]Most recently Grethlein 2024, 45-46, 53, 87. Walton contends that "the Greek concept [of *eleos*] seems more like what we would call empathy or sympathy than [pity]" (1997, 51); Nagy expresses a similar opinion, discussing the meaning of *eleos* in Aristotle's definition of tragedy (*Poetics* 1449b24–28). "I'm a little worried about the English translation, pity … Maybe if we thought about all of this in terms of empathy it would be better … Empathy is putting emotion from one place to another. So if a hero, who is a larger than life person, is experiencing

early, and detailed.[12] What, then, might a study of this episode tell us about the psychodynamics of humane understanding?

This paper addresses that question. In brief, my analysis finds a five-fold model of empathy. The five parts are: (1) Morality; (2) Epiphany; (3) Proximity; (4) Similarity; and (5) Solidarity. While all five elements catalyze Achilles' empathy for Priam, Homeric epic weights the special Solidarity produced through satiety and feasting. And so, after delineating the five elements, I'll consider this solidarity of satiety in some detail, and sketch some possibly related avenues for future research into intergroup understanding.

Morality

Empathy is a virtue in the universal moral code that Zeus enforces as king of the gods.[14] The Olympians themselves feel *eleos*, and—compared to humans, who empathize mainly with

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larger than life emotions … then we the notional group who come together in Athenian drama … have empathy for the hero" (Nagy 2023, Hour 8, "Mentality of Re-enactment at Festivals"). Platt adopts this reading of *eleos* in noting "Priam's surprising empathy for Peleus," adding that "Achilles shows particular empathy" for Priam in the Niobe parable (2024, 280, 281). Brügger (2017, 37) notes that in early epic, the Greek word family *ele-* (here *eleos*) denotes not so much the impulse of the subject (*eleos*) as the resulting impulse for action (have *eleos*) directed at an object (human, animal, god). Cf. Nagy 2020, 230; Crotty 1994, 9, 11; Konstan 1985, 8, 29, 42, 78; Planalp 1999, 64; Richardson 1993, 272, and, much earlier, before the term empathy came into wide English use, the expansive construction of pity in Sandstrom 1924, 24, 27, 43. Variants of οἰκτείρω seem equivalent to *eleos* = empathy or compassion (Brügger 2017, 194) but are rarer (only at *Iliad* 16.5, 23.534, 23.548, 24.516) and do not appear in the *Odyssey*.

[12]The empathic content of the Achilles-Priam scene is widely remarked in the ample literature on *Iliad* 24. Priam finds an Achilles who can "feel empathy for his fellow creatures" (Nagler 1974, 274); the scene's primary elements are "ethical evaluation and empathy" (Hogan 2001, 121); *Iliad* 24 conveys "empathy for different sides of an experience," since "these hard-bitten heroes … have an empathetic side that's important" (Nagy 2023, Hour 9, "Echoes of Lament"); one takeaway from "the end of the *Iliad,* where Achilles and Priam are sharing their stories," is that "if an epic cannot make you empathize with the suffering of people… it's not a real epic" (Nagy 2023, Hour 9, "Return of Odysseus"). Among synonymic interpretations, Achilles feels "love and solidarity" (Schein 1984, 153); he can "understand and feel for human suffering" (Macleod 1982, 8); he can "appreciate the similarity of another's experience to his own" (Crotty 1994, 79).

[14]Following here Graziosi and Haubold, who find (2005, 131–132, 141–142) that Apollo's speech to the Olympians (*Iliad* 24.33–54), and Achilles' speeches to Priam (24.528–538, 635–642), codify an emergent universal morality. I consider Long 1970 and others to have satisfactorily answered the objections of Adkins 1960 to the idea that Homeric poetry expressed a coherent morality as we understand this term. See more recently, e.g., Allan 2006, Ahrensdorf 2017 and 2022. Macleod (1982, 14), avers that (a) "it is pity [eleos] which is at the heart of Homer's conception of poetry," yet adds that (b) "If they [the gods] pity at all the human condition as such, it is with the feelings of a detached observer," and (c) the gods are "in the last analysis, indifferent to them [humans]" (ibid.). I

family and close friends[15]—the gods have empathic superpowers. They can understand and appreciate mortals' feelings because they know everything.[16] The gods not only empathize with humans,[17] but love those on both sides of a war in which the gods themselves take sides.[18] They find the violation of funeral rites especially offensive, because this shows lack of *eleos* for the feelings of the deceased's families and friends.[19] When Achilles desecrates the corpse of Hektor and denies him burial, moral outrage prompts the gods to intervene.

The resulting change in Achilles is remarkable, because for most of the *Iliad* he has been a merciless man. When his king, Agamemnon, offends him, Achilles shows a deadly lack of *eleos* for his own people.[20] And after Hektor kills his best friend, Patroklos, Achilles goes

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agree with (a), but consider (b) and (c) too strong. The *eleos* of the gods as a reason for their intervention is a pronounced theme of the *Iliad*'s last book (24.23, 174, 301, 332), where "pity is the most effective motivation on both the divine and human planes" (Brügger 2017, 37). Rutherford emphasizes that at both *Iliad* 24.23ff and *Odyssey* 1.19ff, "a majority of gods pity a human's situation," describing the gods' attitude as "belated but real generosity" (2001, 131). Note additionally the stock-phrase "I am a messenger of Zeus, who far away cares much for you and is pitiful" (Διὸς δέ τοι ἄγγελός εἰμι,ὃς σεῦ ἄνευθεν ἐὼν μέγα κήδεται ἠδ' ἐλεαίρει), conveyed to humans by gods who appear to them (*Iliad* 2.26-27, 2.63-4, 24.173-4). A divine "expression of care or concern" is the first of three standard elements in divine-messenger type scene, followed by self-identification of the divine messenger and delivery of the unlikely or forbidding message (Foley 1991, 161).

[15]Menelaos "knew in his heart how his brother [Agamemnon] was suffering" (*Iliad* 1.409); Agamemnon knows the loyalty of Odysseus' intentions in his breast: "Your thoughts are my thoughts" (4.360–361); terrible pain for his dead charioteer clouds Hektor's heart (8.124).

[16]As both Achilles and the poet-narrator note (*Iliad* 1.395, 2.485).

[17]Poseidon feels *eleos* for the Achaians being broken by the Trojans and intervenes to rouse them and spur their battalions to strength (*Iliad* 13.15–125); the river-god Skamandros pities the murdered Trojans clogging his shoals and whips up his waves against Achilles (21.205–327), justifying Apollo's strophe that Achilles offends the earth itself (24.154). Zeus, moved by Agamemnon's tears, decides that the Achaians should "be safe, and not destroyed" (8.245–246), and his heart is so "saddened for Hektor" that he asks the other gods "to consider whether we shall save him from death" (22.174–175).

[18]Athene intervenes to prevent Achilles killing Agamemnon because Hera "loved both men alike in her heart and cared for them equally" (*Iliad* 1.195–96) and heralds intervene to stop the duel between Hektor and Ajax, because "Zeus the cloud-gatherer has love for both of you" (7.280). Zeus so pities both parties in deliberation over the fates of Sarpedon (16.431–161) and Hektor (22.166–187) that he considers overriding fate to save them; and at key junctures, the king of the gods can only decide between the Achaians and Trojans, or Hektor and Achilles, by weighing their fates in his golden scales (8.68–74, 22.208–213).

[19]Redfield 1975, 221; Segal 1971, 59; Muellner 1996, 32–33, 169.

[20]Achilles sulks in his tent for most of the epic, though his people can hardly win without him; indeed, that is precisely the point he wants to make in asking Zeus to "pen the Achaians back by the shore and the stems of their ships amid much slaughter" (*Iliad* 1.409–410).

berserk.[21] By taunting those he kills and refusing them burial,[22] by cutting the throats of twelve Trojan children,[23] by abusing Hektor's corpse[24] and wishing even to eat him raw,[25] Achilles puts himself outside human culture.[26] He is "like some inhuman being,"[27] with "no decency in his heart," [28] for "there is no feeling in him, not even a little."[29] So dehumanized is Achilles that he can be swayed only by a trumping principle, such as the appearance of a god.

In due course a god appears. Seeing Achilles drag Hektor's body around the walls of Troy from the back of a chariot, Apollo is moved with compassion.[31] He protects the corpse from harm, covering it with a magic shield,[32] and implores the other gods to intervene, indicting Achilles like a prosecutor.[33] Because Achilles has become a beast and "murdered *eleos*,"[34] the Olympians should help Hektor's father, Priam, retrieve the corpse for proper burial and memorialization. Zeus hatches a plan to do just that.[35] Not even Athena and Hera, who favor Achilles, can defend his abuse of Hektor's corpse.[36] The assembly of the gods in Book 24 thus establishes empathy as a divinely mandated moral imperative.[37]

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[21]Setting up his later reversal, Achilles explicitly states that no amount of ransom will induce him to return Hektor's body (*Iliad* 22.349–354). After the reversal, after caring for Hektor's body, Achilles cries out to Patroklos in reassurance and apology (24.592–595).

[22]Quintessentially, Achilles to Lykaon at *Iliad* 21.91–114, and to Hektor at 22.345-348.

[23]Achilles addressing the deceased Patroklos at 23.21–23. Perversely, cutting the children's throats may have seemed to wrathful Achilles an act of empathy, wishing Patroklos would do the same for him: "All that Achilles can do to express his love is express his hatred" (Schein 1984, 154).

[24]At *Iliad* 24.15–18.

[25]Achilles to Hektor at *Iliad* 22.347.

[26]The Cyclops episode in the *Odyssey* presents cannibalism as the antithesis of civilization, and in Hesiod the rejection of cannibalism distinguishes humans, who have justice (dike), from "fish and wild beasts and winged birds" who "eat one another" (*Works and Days* 276-280); cf. Schein 1984, 15.

[27]As the poet-narrator says of Achilles at *Iliad* 21.227, calling him "daimoni."

[28]Apollo to the other gods at *Iliad* 24.39–40.

[29]Poseidon to Agamemnon at *Iliad* 14.141.

[31]*Iliad* 24.18–21.

[32]*Iliad* 24.18–20.

[33]At *Iliad* 24.18–54.

[34]Apollo to the Olympians at *Iliad* 24.40.

[35]At *Iliad* 24.65–76.

[36]*Iliad* 24.53–64.

[37]Foley (1991, 161) notes that without the authority of Zeus, both Achilleus's and Priam's actions in Iliad 24 would appear illogical and unmotivated.

But for humans to actually empathize with each other, it is not enough for empathy to *be* right in general. Humans must also *see* it is right to empathize with a particular person in a particular case.[38] This brings us to a second principal aspect of empathy in *Iliad* 24: Epiphany.

Epiphany

The Achilles-Priam meeting is arranged through epiphanies of the divine will, conveyed by Iris, a personification of the rainbow.[39] At Zeus' behest, Iris launches a double action to unite Achilles and Priam.[40] In other words, for empathy to occur, both parties must be summoned to it by what we might call the angels of their better nature.

A first epiphany is triggered when Iris discloses Zeus' will to Achilles' goddess-mother, Thetis.[41] Because her son is doomed to a short, if glorious, life, Thetis is grieving in a grotto beneath the sea.[42] Prefiguring the influence that parenthood will have in creating empathy,[43] Thetis appears to Achilles and tells him he must return Hektor's corpse to his parents.[44] Achilles instantly agrees,[45] heeding the will of Zeus, but does not yet *feel* empathy.[46] So, something more is needed.

To this end, a second epiphany comes when Iris visits Priam, telling him to supplicate Achilles for the return of Hector. This scene models empathy in two key ways. First, Iris says

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[38]Grasping that a general moral principle applies in a particular case would presumably be an essential prerequisite of empathy in the Homeric universe, but this epiphany need not come literally from the gods. Epiphany could simply be moral insight (wisdom), perhaps induced by *ainos* in mediation. In *Iliad* 24 this insight comes from the gods, and perhaps it must in other such hard cases; however, as Gagarin notes, "with the exception of Achilles' treatment of Priam in Book 24 there is little evidence in the *Iliad* that this sense of pity might extend to one's enemies" (1987, 301). I thank Tom Nelson for prodding me to sharpen my thinking on this point.

[39]Knight 1968, 109.

[40]*Iliad* 24.143–87; Richardson 1993, 284.

[41]*Iliad* 24.77–122.

[42]Sandstrom 1924, 26.

[43]Whitman 1958, 219.

[44]Wilson 2023, 706.

[45]"So be it. The man who brings the ransom can take the body, if the Olympian himself in all earnest wishes it" (Achilles to Thetis at *Iliad* 24.138–139).

[46]*Iliad* 24.139–140.

that Zeus "feels *eleos* for you," anticipating an insight of later moral philosophers: One who suffers will crave others' empathy.[47] Second, an instruction to "soften" Achilles' heart with gifts[48] embeds empathy in a semaphore of social cues.

A third epiphany occurs before Priam travels to the enemy camp, when he prays to find *eleos* there.[49] The object of empathy must be vulnerable, but cannot display that weakness without some reason to hope. Zeus gives Priam that reason in a bird of omen, affirming that a mission to Achilles will succeed.[50]

Proximity

As psychologists know, empathy occurs most readily when people meet face-to-face.[51] The ancients, too, understood this: Aristotle noted that *eleos* presupposes proximity.[52] Yet proximity is a fraught part of the process, because people who do not empathize with each other will try to avoid contact.

For that reason, empathizing in the present means getting over the past. Approaching the enemy camp, Priam must pass the *sēma*, or tomb, of his grandfather Ilus, the founder of Troy.[53]

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[47] *Iliad* 24.174; cf. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 22.

[48] *Iliad* 24.172–176.

[49] *Iliad* 24.299–313.

[50] *Iliad* 24.314–321.

[51] The postulation of proximity as an ingredient in empathy is generally called Contact Theory. See Allport 1979, 262–279; Gurin and Nagda 2006, 20–24; Wagner 2006, 380–390; McClendon 1974, 47–65; Katz 1963, 40; Lynch 1998.

[52] "It is when the sufferings of others are close to us that they excite our *eleos* … the setting of their misfortunes before our eyes, makes their misfortunes seem close to ourselves" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1386a28–1386b1, tr. Roberts). Fortenbaugh notes that Aristotle groups *eleos* with indignation and attributes both to good character, a reading that accords with Apollo and Zeus condemning Achilles for lacking *eleos* (2008, 83). Later, cf. Cicero, *De Amicita*, v. 19: "For it seems clear to me that we were so created that between us all there exists a certain tie which strengthens with our proximity to each other. Therefore, fellow countrymen are preferred to foreigners and relatives to strangers, for with them Nature herself engenders friendship, but it is one that is lacking in constancy" (*Sic enim mihi perspicere videor, ita natos esse nos, ut inter omnis esset societas quaedam, maior autem, ut quisque proxime accederet. Itaque cives potiores quam peregrini, propinqui quam alieni; cum his enim amicitiam natura ipsa peperit, sed ea non satis habet firmitatis*).

[53] *Iliad* 20.232; Willcock 1976, KL 1968.

To ransom his son, Priam must literally "get past the past." Achilles, likewise, must stop mourning his dead friend, Patroklos, whose name means "he who has the glory of the ancestors."[54] Here, as elsewhere in Homeric poetry, a desire to live in the past correlates to death.[55]

Recognizing the difficulty of what Priam does, Zeus sends help. Appearing as a young prince,[56] the god Hermes addresses Priam as "father," and Priam calls him "dear child," underscoring again the humane influence of parent-child relations.[57] Hermes then uses his magic wand to put Achilles' guards to sleep,[58] suggesting that we must overcome psychological "defenses" to achieve empathy. Scholars have deemed this journey a *katabasis*,[59] suggesting that something must "die" in us before we can empathize with those who are radically "other."

At Achilles' hut, Hermes leaves Priam to face Achilles alone.[60] Hermes says that a god cannot receive a human welcome,[61] but this is not true: Telemachos, for instance, entertains Athena.[62] Hermes must leave the scene because two men, brought into proximity, must now do work which these humans themselves must do.[63]

Similarity

The Achilles-Priam encounter involves the fourth condition for empathy: similarity.

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[54]Nagy 2020, KL 1699.

[55]Both in Odysseus' visit to the underworld and in his temptation by the Sirens, "he has to get over Troy" (Nagy 2023, Hour 10, on *Odyssey* 12.184–191). "It was in the land of the dead that [Odysseus] could relive the saga of Troy, with his fellow-veterans … Those days are over, and he must look forward to the future, not backward to the past" (Knox 1996, 42, on *Odyssey*, Book 11).

[56]*Iliad* 24.331–348.

[57]*Iliad* 24.358–371.

[58]*Iliad* 24.343–344, 445–446.

[59]Whitman 1958, 217; Mueller 2009, 74; Willcock 1976, KL 4578; Nagler 1974, 270; Jáuregui 2011.

[60]Lynn-George 1996, 12.

[61]*Iliad* 24.463–464.

[62]*Odyssey*, Book 1, esp. 123-149.

[63]Macleod, *Iliad*, 1; Lynn-George 1996, 12; Prier 1989, 173.

Eleos requires seeing another's troubles as similar to one's own.[64] Aristotle noted that we empathize with those we resemble, because we infer that what befalls them can befall us.[65] Recent psychological research concurs that we empathize most with those of our own class or with similar experiences.[66] Yet empathy can also arise from analogy.[67] As Nagy puts it: "Achilles really hates Priam, and really hates Hektor even more. But … he starts thinking, well, Hektor has a father, and I have a father. Look at the way that father is grieving. So analogies are ways in which you can connect."[68]

"Think of your father," Priam says as he clasps Achilles' knees, "an old man like I am, at the cruel edge of old age. … Have *eleos* for me, remembering your own father. … I have endured to do what no other mortal man on earth has done. I have brought to my lips the hands of the man who killed my son."[69] With these words Priam breaks the wrath of Achilles. The young warrior takes the old king by the hand, and both men weep in remembrance. As Priam cries for his son, and Achilles cries for his own father and for Patroklos, the sound of their wailing fills the house.[70] Achilles then helps Priam to his feet and consoles him by discoursing on their common humanity.[71]

He begins by echoing and sympathizing with Priam's description of his misfortunes,[72] showing that understands Priam's situation and his feelings. "Poor man, you have surely endured

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[64]Macleod 1982, 5, citing Sophocles, *Ajax* 121–126; *Oedipus at Colonus* 560–568; Herodotus, 1.86.6; Thucydides 5.90–91; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1385b13ff.

[65]Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1386a25–7; cf. Thucydides 3.40.3: "It is right to render *eleos* to those who are similar."

[66]Katz 1963, 56; Konstan 1985, 138–140; Solomon 1993, 207.

[67]Aristotle, in *Poetics* 1459a, calls metaphor "an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars."

[68]Nagy 2023, Hour 9, "Echoes of Lament in a Song about Homecoming." On metaphor and empathy, see also Cohen 1997, 1999, 2009.

[69]*Iliad* 24.484–506.

[70]*Iliad* 24.507–551.

[71]*Iliad* 24.518–571, 24.598–620.

[72]*Iliad* 24.493–501.

many sorrows in your heart. How could you bear to come … into the eyes of a man who has killed many of your brave sons?"[73] This intelligibility of another's emotions is precisely what moral philosophers have recently suggested as a defining feature of empathy.[74]

Achilles then notes their shared human vulnerability, contrasting the fates of mortals and the carefree gods. Human beings, in order not to threaten to be greater than their divine parents, cannot live forever.[75] Acceptance of this similarity in predicament conduces to empathy. How we are to get through this life of ours "with death in our eye"?[76] In *Iliad* 24, the answer is contained in the question. Universal *morality* comes from universal *mortality*.[77] When our projects are equally futile, and all lives ultimately tragic, we might as well be kind to each other while we can. Achilles, accordingly, backs his words to Priam with kind acts. He oversees the washing of Hektor's body, and personally places it on Priam's wagon.[79]

Yet for the former enemies to bond fully, one last element remains.

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[73] *Iliad* 24.518ff.

[74] Bailey 2022, 2, defining empathy as "the direct apprehension of the intelligibility of others' emotions." See also Coplan 2001, 13-15, on "other-oriented perspective taking."

[75] Achilles is the cardinal case: he had to be born to a mortal father in order not to be able to overthrow Zeus. Slatkin 2011, 85.

[76] As Boswell famously asked Hume. Quoted in Ignatieff 1984, 7.

[77] Thus Griffin (1980, 69) notes that "as the great enemies Priam and Achilles meet and weep together, we see the community of suffering which links all men, even conqueror and captive, slayer and father of the slain." This idea of a common ethics rooted in a common condition was influential in later Greek lyric and tragic poetry. Pindar echoes the Fable of the Jars (*Pythian 3* 380-82, transmuting *Iliad* 24.527-28; analysis at Nelson 2023, 316-17. Sophocles, too, riffs on the common experience of suffering shared by all mortals and on the mixture of ills and occasional goods doled out unevenly by inscrutable gods. "I pity his wretchedness, though he is my enemy, for the terrible yoke of blindness that is on him," says Odysseus in Sophocles' *Ajax*. "I think of him, yet also of myself; for I see the true state of all of us that live—phantoms we are, no more, and weightless shadow" (*Ajax* 121-6, tr. Moore 1957). .Or, as Theseus says in *Oedipus at Colonus*: "I know I am only a man; I have no more to hope for in the end than you have (564-9). Given the antiquity of these themes, I cannot agree with Michael Ignatieff (1998, 40), who calls "the idea that we have obligations to human beings beyond our borders simply because we belong to the same species a recent invention."

[79] *Iliad* 24.480–517, 572–597.

Solidarity

Achilles cooks Priam a meal. What is more, he personally carves and serves the meat—an honor he has previously reserved for the "the men I love best."[80] Sharing this meal symbolizes the fifth element of empathy, a feeling of human solidarity. This solidarity is a function of what some have called the "creatural " aspects of our condition.[81] Homeric empathy typically emerges just after ritual feasting marked by the phrase, *autar epei posios kai edêtuos ex eron hento*, "when they had put aside their desire for eating and drinking." This phrase appears twenty-one times in Homeric poetry—seven times in the *Iliad*, fourteen in the *Odyssey*—and each occurrence prefigures a representation of empathy.[82] Can examining this satiety-phrase help us understand how feasting builds empathy in Homeric poetry?[83] The thrust of previous scholarship would suggest that the answer is no.[84] The typical commentary just calls the satiety phrase a

[80]Exactly the same language is used at 9.216–17 and 24.625–26 (and *only* in these two scenes): The therapon (Patroklos/Automedon) "took the bread and set it out on the table in fair baskets, while Achilleus served the meats" (*trapezêi kalois en kaneoisin atar krea neimen Achilleus*). In the earlier case, Achilles had carved, plated, and served the meat, for "those who have come beneath my roof are the men that I love best, who even to this my anger are dearest of all the Achaians" (*ê philoi andres hikaneton ê ti mala chreô, hoi moi skuzomenôi per Achaiôn philtatoi eston*, 9.197–198). By serving the meat to Priam personally, while his therapon serves the bread, Achilles is honoring Priam—the enemy leader—as only his philoi ("the men I love best") have been honored.

[81]Nagler 1974 , 286; Lynn-George 1996, 17.

[82]See Tables 1 and 2. On empathy and satiety I am indebted to the insights of John Miles Foley, who postulated that Homeric feasting has a mediatory and conciliatory function, because sharing a meal results in a particular emotional closeness (1991, 174–189). Mueller (2009, 156) finds the satiety-phrase the third most frequent whole-line repetition in Homeric poetry, after "thus they talked with each other" (24x) and "when early and rosy-fingered dawn appeared" (22x). He finds, further, that "the meal and feasting scenes are the most extended web of repeated lines shared between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*" (162). If so, then we may speak of these as the *typical type-scenes,* and their meanings as *typically* Homeric. Edwards 1986 argues that statistical profiles must always include variant readings; cf. Foley 1990, x. For analysis of the ten variant phrasings of feasting (eight with satiety and two without), see Table 2. Reece (1993, 62) cites 22 occurrences of the satiety phrase, apparently counting its mention in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (3.514).

[83]In the Homeric context, feasting is most commonly discussed in connection with xenia, especially insofar as Polyphemus and Ithacan suitors are depicted as violating ritual norms. So far as I have seen, the ample literature on archaic feasting (e.g., Bendall 2004, 105-35; Hayden 2001, 23-64; Palaima 2004, 217-46; Wright 2004) does not discuss the Homeric satiety-phrase per se.

[84]Durante (1976, 155f) traces the satiety-phrase to the early-Homeric Aeolian stratum, citing the archaic vocabulary, tmesis, and the specifically Aeolic (Lesbian) ερος. West (1988b, 164) accepts Durante's inference "that the Aeolic poets had already developed an ample manner, a technique of alternating battle scenes with description of routine activities, sacrifices and meals, with whatever came after them, discussions, retirement for the night, etc." An equivalent of the satiety-phrase appears in the Hittite text CTH 321, c. 1650-1200 BCE: "Then the serpent came

"formulaic" line.[85] Verbatim repetition is said to denote either a bardic lack of care, or phrasing for the sake of meter.[86]

I see it differently. While analyzing all 21 instances of the satiety-marker would take me beyond my time and topic, I'd like to note one important pattern in passing. In Homeric poetry, the satiety-phrase occurs only among the protagonists. In the seven *Iliadic* cases, it occurs only on the Achaean side, although the Trojans also feast.[94] Five of the seven scenes involve Achilles and two involve Agamemnon, either directly or by implication. Since the *Iliad* is fundamentally about their feud, we may say that the satiety phrase is used *only* to stitch the book's major plot-theme. This pattern holds, too, in the *Odyssey*, which confines the satiety-phrase to Odysseus and Telemachos, although the suitors also flagrantly feast.[95] Eight of the *Odyssean* satiety-instances involve Telemachus; five involve Odysseus; and one involves them both together. As in the *Iliad*, the satiety phrase is used *only* to stitch the epic's major theme, in this case the reunification

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up together with [his children], and they ate and drank – they drank all the vessels and were sated" (¶ 11, tr. Beckman 1982, 8).

[85]To Stanford, the satiety-phrase is a formula "common in Homer" (1947, 221); to C. W. Macleod, "the conventional description of the meal" (1982, 142); to Schein, "the formulaic conclusion of a meal" (2022, 179). To Reece the phrase is "the normal conclusion for a feast of any kind," and "the only formal element used… in Homer to describe secular feasting scenes," which functions as a transition to the post-feast activities" (1993, 62, 24)). Bowie (2013, 222) notes that "these lines occur regularly in the description of a feast in Homer and appear to have a long pedigree," but does not trace the lineage; nor does M. L. West, who, despite noting the line's antiquity (1988b, 164), just calls it a "very common formulation" (1988a, 95). Neither Leaf 1900 nor Richardson 1993 gloss the phrase.

[86]Cf. Milman Parry's contention that traditional aspects of Homeric poetry encode no meaning in the usual sense of the word and so we can retrieve none (Parry 1971, 171–2, 249–50). As Bakker (2013) summarizes the influence of the Parry-Lord conception, repetitions were thought to be without poetic or even semantic significance (9), because the production and distribution of phrases are a more or less random process (159); repetition is not significant in itself, since it is simply the consequence of a system of versification that is to a certain extent automated (158). Thus, e.g., Mueller (2009) calls feast-scene repetitions "cutting and pasting" (160). Graziosi and Haubold argue against the view that formulas "are simply there to help the bard fill the line with the right number of long and short syllables" (2005, 7); the formula "Zeus the son of Cronus," they argue, is not just a way of getting to the end of a line without taking too long over it (ibid, 9).

[94]Presumably Trojans and minor characters are equally sated, but the poem uses the satiety-formula only to serve its central poetic purpose. Priam participates in the associated empathizing, it is true, but only when he enters the Achaean camp.

[95]Although the antagonists also feast – the suitors ostentatiously, and the Cyclops barbarically – their consumption is never marked by the satiety-phrase, and they never empathize.

of father and son to reclaim their home. In other words, Homeric poetry does not deploy the satiety-phrase casually, or for the sake of meter. Instead, feasting is symbolic, moral, and integrated with narrative ingenuity into a matrix of meaning.[96]

The correlation of satiety with empathy is especially striking. As detailed in Table 1, empathy is induced in the *Iliad*, on average, seven lines after the satiety-phrase; in the *Odyssey*, nine lines after it.[97] The distance between this phrase and representations of empathy is remarkably consistent. Only three outliers in the double-digits inflate the average: More often, satiety precedes explicit references to *eleos* or like-mindedness by one-to-three lines.[98] An example is in *Iliad* 9, where, three lines after eating with Ajax, Achilles nearly accedes to his plea for moderation, saying: "All that you have said seems much after my own feeling."[99] For Homeric humans, the quickest way to a kind *thumos* is through a sated *gaster*.[100] The archaic Greeks knew that a meal shared to satiety induces empathy, something neuroscience only proved seven years ago.[101]

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[96]Jasper Griffin's view, backed also by Nagy and Pratt. See Griffin 1995, 86; Pratt (2024, 281) notes "the symbolic importance of eating in particular." Nagy (1992, 270-71) emphasizes the political importance of apportioning meat, citing, e.g.., Theognis 677-78 and Solon F.47-10 W (F3 GP).

[97]Table 1. The phrase also occurs once in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, 3.514, where empathy emerges 18 lines after the satiety-phrase. On the psychology of empathy in the *Hymn*, via choral song and dance, see Peponi 2009, 60–68; Nagy 1996, 80–81; and Nagy 2008, 2§27 2Ⓢ5.

[98]As representations of empathy, I count any indication of like-mindedness (*homophrosunêisin*), including changes of attitude toward another (from anger to "delight in the heart," or from unity to division); expressions of *eleos*; the intelligibility of others' emptions (asking a bard to stop when his song saddens someone); weeping or desire for weeping at another's misfortune; wonder or appreciation for the excellence of another; increases in trust; caring or instructing others to care for someone; inviting reminiscence; expressing *philia* for each other; vocalizing what it's like to stand in someone's shoes; and consoling someone who is upset. See Table 1.

[99]*panta ti moi kata thumon eeisô muthêsasthai, Iliad* 9.645.

[100]I thank Egbert Bakker for drawing my attention to the importance of the *éron* in the satiety-phrase, in the sense of a craving that has been eliminated, and for noting that *gastḗr* itself connotes a craving/urge/need antithetical to empathy, so that removal of the need conduces to a positive disposition.

[101]Tuulari et al., 2017, 8284–8291, find that eating stimulates brain's endogenous opioid system to signal pleasure and satiety. Eating a delicious pizza led to significant increase of pleasant feelings, whereas consumption of calorie-matched nutritional drink did not. However, both types of meals induced significant release of endogenous opioids in the brain. The study found that a significant amount of endorphins was released in the entire brain after eating the pizza and, surprisingly, even more were released after the consumption of the tasteless nutritional drink. The magnitude of the opioid release was independent of the pleasure associated with eating. According to the

What explains this ineluctable correlation, among ancients who lacked neuroscience? One path to an answer was mapped by John Miles Foley, who found that Homeric feasting has a mediatory and conciliatory function.[102] The standard four-part pattern, in *Iliad* 24 and elsewhere in Homeric poetry, is (1) Assembly; (2) Preparation; (3) Feast, and (4) Mediation.[103] In Foley's model, the satiety-phrase is a "resonant sign"[104] that serves as the "canonical" closure of the Feast and the transition to Meditation of a problem. The Meditation often involves a moral fable or *ainos,* such as, in *Iliad* 24, the story of Niobe or the Fable of the Jars.[105] For this reason, satiety never precedes a *decrease* in empathy. To the contrary, the words *autar epei posios kai edêtuos ex eron hento* are always followed by a statement or display of humane understanding.[106]

And so, just one line after they put aside their desire for eating and drinking, Achilles and Priam seal their solidarity with stares of mutual wonder.[107] They view each other as Hephaestus promised that mortals would view the shield of Achilles—as if they were products of divine

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researchers, it is likely that the endogenous opioid system regulates both feelings of pleasure and satiety. The study was conducted using positron emission tomography (PET); the participants were injected with a radioactive compound binding to their brain's opioid receptors; and radioactivity in the brain was measured three times with the PET camera: after a palatable meal (pizza), after a non-palatable meal (liquid meal) and after an overnight fast.

[102]Foley 1991, 174-189; Foley 1999, 171-174, 271-273; cf. Brügger 2017, 230. I also follow Graziosi and Haubold (2005, 8) in seeking the meaning rather than the metric and mnemonic functions of traditional expressions.

[103]See the analysis at Foley 1991, 175; cf. Dickson 1990. In Foley 1999 (KL 4205), the full Feast sequence involves five parts: (1) the Assembly of a host and guest(s); (2) Preparation (sacrifice, prayer, purification and/or seating the guest(s); (3) actions that constitute feasting; (4) the satisfaction of the guest(s); (5) and some kind of mediation. In *Iliad* 1, for instance, the Assembly—often a forum for deliberation—takes on its customary form with the opening tableau of a father offering a ransom for his child. This sequence transitions to the ritual of Purification (the hecatomb, 1. 442ff.), which is succeeded by a Feast (1. 458ff.) and culminates in Mediation, represented by the successful return of Chryseis. *Iliad* 19 mirrors this progression: the Assembly grapples with the issue of Achilleus's reentry into the fray of battle. Wisely, Odysseus proposes a feast to fortify the troops' spirits and readiness for the inevitable combat.

[104]Foley 1999, KL 4254.

[105]Foley 1991, 187. Later Foley (1999, KL 4521) seems to find some correlation between presence/absence of the satiety-phrase, and the completion/abrogation of the mediation (empathic-humane-communitarian) function of the feast-ritual; but, he does not subject this hypothesis to statistical analysis.

[106]By comparison, the mention of a divinity or a parent-child relation occur in only two thirds of the satiety-scenes; a special guest is honored in less than half; the type of animal eaten is specified in only a third; libations are poured, and equal shares mentioned, in less than a third; songs, prayers, music are present in fewer still. (Analysis of the scenes rostered in Table 1).

[107]*Iliad* 24.628–632.

art.[108] The analogy is apt. Because divine morality and epiphany have brought Achilles and Priam into proximity, they grasp their similarity and feel solidarity.

Conclusions

These archaic moral dynamics delineate three aspects of empathy that remain relevant today. First, empathy is a transcendent ethical principle. When we lose our empathy, we lose moral standing and metaphysical favor. Second, when achieved, empathy is wondrous. Humans are most divine when most humane. But third, empathy between humans is not easy. Both parties to it require external priming, or moral messaging. It takes two to empathize—and for Achilles and Priam, it takes more than that. It takes five gods to make these two humans empathize.[109] If we take Milette Gaifman's formulation, and see divine attributes as visual epithets, empathy requires a bow and a lyre; a rainbow; silver feet; gold sandals; a magic staff with two snakes curled around it—and all the superpowers those attributes imply.[110] The Olympians are working together like the Justice League. This is a heavy lift.

But why shouldn't it be? If we accept the views of one school of scholars on *Iliad* 24, the gods are bringing a new moral order to humankind.[111] These bloodthirsty warriors have been taunting their victims as they send them down to Hades, dragging their corpses through the dirt—and now they are weeping together and cooking each other dinner. Nagy and others have

[108]Schein 1984, 141–162.

[109]Some scholars, like Cedric Whitman (1958, 217–218), would even say it takes six gods to resolve the wrath of Achilles, seeing Achilles himself in the Priam scene as a figuration of Hades, Lord of the Dead. Cf. Jáuregui 2011, 37–68.

[110]Gaifman 2024, 250.

[111]The moral-revolution school of interpretation includes, e.g., Weil 2009, passim, lauding a moral revolution prefiguring Christianity in the divine rejection of the abuse of force (see esp. ¶ 33, 36); Whitman 1958, 216, discerning a "new outlook upon humanity)"; Frye 1957, 319, hailing the discovery of moral objectivity; Graziosi and Haubold, seeing "a crucial moment in the development of human society" (2005,119). For *Iliad* 24 as the "first great embodiment of humanism" (West 1997, 338), see also Gresseth 1975, 16, and Burkert 1992, 117f.

suggested that the moral revolution in the Achilles-Priam scene is so profound that it will take another epic, the *Odyssey*, to work out the implications.[112]

Perhaps we still have not worked out the implications even now. Two points, especially, seem to me to merit more study. First: What is the relation between diversity and empathy? If empathy *requires* similarity, but diversity *decreases* similarity, are the two goals at odds? If so, that need not mean that we must choose one over the other. But it might mean that we must manage the tension between them.[113]

Second: What can we make of the Homeric connection between eating and empathy? Is there a lesson here that we can apply today? For instance, could some part of the $15 billion which our institutions spend annually on diversity training be productively allocated by today's Olympians—our corporate executives—to give people from different backgrounds money to just go out and share a meal?[114]

With classics as a discipline pressed to prove its relevance, the relevance of Homeric poetry to current debates has an obvious utility. Yet any neo-Homeric model of empathy must bridge some archaic concepts whose relevance is not self-evident. One is the model of human behavior implicit in *Iliad* 24. Today, we often model human agency with reference to external structures, such as economic class or systemic prejudice. But the role we ascribe to outside forces was attributed in Homeric poetry to the gods, as Simone Weil noted. Writing during a war that killed 85 million people, she reflected: "There is no need of gods or conspiracies to make men rush headlong into the most absurd disasters. Human nature suffices."[115]

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[112]On *Iliad* 24 as moral prelude to the *Odyssey*, see, e.g., Rutherford 2001, 129-32; Finley 1978, 140; Nagy, "Introduction," in Crotty 1994, x; Konstan 1985, 159; Lynn-George 1988, 252; Macleod 1982, viii, 45; Nagler 1974, 264; Redfield 1975, 286 n. 81; Richardson 1993, 19, 22–23, 273; Crotty 1994, 23, 70.

[113]Cf. Katzenstein, 2016; Boisjoly 2006; Cameron 2019.

[114]The $15 billion estimate is in McKinsey and Company 2023.

[115]Weil 2015, 270.

But in *Iliad* 24, human nature alone cannot suffice to repair the disastrous damage it has created. At least, not until human nature is *seen* as human nature—as an element common to all mortals because of our mortality.[116] This is just what Achilles says to Priam to console him, and it is what moves Achilles to cry tears that connect with the universe.[117] Attaining this transcendent perspective makes Achilles more heroic than anything he does in battle.

Why the gods themselves must be involved in this process raises an interesting final point. In *Iliad* 24, the Olympians are necessary but not sufficient to make Achilles empathize. Even if they lead him to this transformation, it is still Achilles himself who must realize his humanity in becoming humane. But, as is so often in life, the hardest part of any hard thing is just getting started. In this sense, divine intervention in *Iliad* 24 supplies what Ralph Waldo Emerson called our chief lack in life: "Somebody who shall make us do what we can."[118]

[116]Cf. Graziosi and Haubold 2005, 131–132, 141–142, stressing that Apollo's speech to the Olympians (*Iliad* 24.33–54), and Achilles' speeches to Priam (24.528–538, 24.635–642), codify an emergent universal morality.

[117]Virgil's Aeneas, contemplating Achilles and Priam, at *Aeneid* 1.462: *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt*; the translation is Nagy's (2020, 230).

[118]Emerson 1860.

Table 1: The Satiety-Formula and Empathy

Satiety	Empathy	Details	# Lines between
		Iliad	
1.469	1.474	Because Agamemnon lacks *eleos* for Apollo's priest, Apollo lacks eleos for the Achaeans until, as a result of the feast, the god has "delight in his heart."	5
2.432	2.441	Before satiety, the Achaeans are divided; after (via Nestor), they are united.	9
7.323	7.731	From *eleos* for "the doings of men," Apollo and Athene collaborate to stop Hektor and Ajax from fighting, since Zeus loves and feels *eleos* for both.	8
9.92	9.95	Achilles' emotions become intelligible to Agamemnon, who agrees to supplicate him and offer compensation.	3
9.222	9.225	Ajax urges Achilles, "Turn your heart to kindness," and Achilles is touched: Saying, "All that you have said seems much after my own feeling," he is mentally reunited with all the Achaeans except Agamemnon.	3
23.57	23.72	Achilles' distress induces in Myrmidons the empathic desire for weeping.	18
24.628	24.629	Achilles and Priam stare at each other in mutual wonder and admiration.	1
			Avg: 7
		Odyssey	
1.150	1.156	Interpersonal connection increases as Telemachus leans in to Mentor (Athena), "holding his head close so others couldn't hear him."	6
3.67	3.92	Telemachus adverts to "*eleos* or concern for my feelings," and Nestor says of Odysseus that "we seemed to share a single mind, so well did we agree."	25
3.473	3.476	Nestor commands his company to care for Telemachus.	3
4.68	4.70	Menelaus' *eleos* for his comrades produces empathic contagion, until Helen mixes a forgetting-potion. NB: All 5 ingredients of empathy represented here.	2
8.72	8.83	Odysseus weeps when a bard sings about how he and Achilles argued.	11
8.485	8.521	Odysseus cries as a bard relates the episode of the Trojan horse, and Alcinous, noting Odysseus' grief, asks the bard to stop.	36
12.308	12.309	Odysseus and his men weep for their comrades whom Scylla has eaten.	1
14.454	14.559	Since he "care[s] for him so much" as "a long-suffering suppliant," Eumaeus gives Odysseus the cloak off his back.	5
15.143	15.148	Telemachus rejoices in like-mindedness (*homophrosunêisin*) with Nestor's son.	5
15.303	15.304	Noting the empathic, almost parental way Odysseus' mother treated Eumaeus, he (Eumaeus) invites Odysseus to reminisce over food and wine.	1
15.501	15.506	Telemachus arranges for the care of his men, leading to a modest cycle of empathic contagion, in which the parties express their *philia* for each other.	6
16.55	16.66	Odysseus vocalizes the empathy he feels for Telemachus, imagining what it's like to stand in his shoes. The tears run down his cheeks to the ground.	11
16.480	17.10	Telemachus expresses empathy for the beggar (Odysseus) and asks Eumaeus to make sure he gets fed.	11
17.99	17.102	When Penelope adverts to her pain for the lost Odysseus, Telemachus consoles her by relating how empathically Nestor and Helen treated him (Telemachus).	3
			Avg: 9

Table 2: Variant -Phrasings: Feasting/Satiety and Empathy

Satiety (or Non-)	Empathy (or Non-)	Details	# Lines between
		Iliad	
11.780	11.805	Satiety predicated by Nestor, of himself, Peleus, Achilles and Patroklos (αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ τάρπημεν ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος); empathy represented (in Patroklos).	25
19.167	19.187	Satiety predicated (by Odysseus, in speech, hypothetically, of men generally: *hos de k'anêr oinoio koressamenos kai edôdês andrasi dusmeneessi panêmerios polemizêi, tharsaleon nu hoi êtor eni phresin*); a cooperative attitude represented (in Agamemnon).	20
			Avg: 22.5
		Odyssey	
5.95	5.97	Satiety predicated (αὐτὰρ ἐπε δείπνησε καὶ ἤραρε θυμὸν ἐδωδῇ). Intimacy increased (between Hermes and Calypso); lack of empathy predicated (by Calypso, of the gods, at 5.118); empathy represented (and explained: "I'm thinking of and will advise the things I'd have in mind even for myself, should such a need come upon me (*autêi mêdoimên, hote me chreiô toson hikoi*). For I have some sense of what is fair, and I myself don't have a heart of iron in my chest, but one of compassion [*eleêmôn*]" (5.188-191).	2
5.201	5.203	Satiety predicated (*autar epei tarpêmen edêtuos êde potêtos);* empathy represented (in Calypso, toward Odysseus): "Do you wish to go homeward this way… to your beloved fatherland? Then, fare you well."	2
(9.87)	(9.93)	Satiety <u>not</u> predicated (by Odysseus, of his men: αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ σίτοιό τ' ἐπασσάμεθ' ἠδὲ ποτῆτος). An extreme <u>lack</u> of empathy represented (among Odysseus' men who eat the Lotus): His men forget their companions and their families (cf. Helen's forgetting-potion in *Od*. 4).	(6)
(10.58)	(10.70)	Satiety <u>not</u> predicated (by Odysseus, of self/men: αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ σίτοιό τ' ἐπασσάμεθ' ἠδὲ ποτῆτος). <u>Lack</u> of empathy, in Aeolus): "Get off this island immediately! The world holds no one more damnable than you."	(12)
14.46	14.47	Satiety mentioned, as a goal (*sitou kai oinoio koressamenos kata thumon*), not yet a fact (by Eumaeus), who then treats Odysseus kindly, explaining that "strangers and beggars all come in Zeus' name" (*pros gar Dios eisin hapantes xeinoi te ptôchoi te*, 5.57-58).	1
14.111	14.112	Satiety predicated (αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ5 δείπνησε καὶ ἤραρε θυμὸν ἐδωδῇ). Empathy represented: "Eumaeus filled the cup… and gave it to [Odysseus], quite full of wine. He accepted it and was glad at heart, and, voicing winged words, he said to him: 'Friend [*ô phile*]…'" (14.118).	1
17.603	17.620	Satiety predicated (πλησάμενος δ' ἄρα θυμὸν ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος). Empathy represented (perhaps deceptively or insincerely, in Odysseus, toward Irus): "I don't grudge what anyone may give you, however much it is. This threshold will hold us both and you shouldn't mind if people give me things since, I take it, *you are a tramp like myself and we are both dependent on the gods* for a living" (18.15-19).	17
24.489	24.532	Satiety predicated (οἱ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν σίτοιο μελίφρονος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο); empathy represented (among fighting Ithacans, after 43 lines).	43
			Avg: 10.5

Appendix: Earlier Examples of Empathy

If empathy is not, contrary to what some have said, a "recent invention,"[129] how far back can we trace it? We do have mentions of empathic understanding prior to the *Iliad*, but in the works examined for this study I found no earlier sustained representations. The most fulsome earlier mention – linked, suggestively, to satiety – would seem to be a single-sentence Egyptian inscription recording a Hittite princess' marriage to Ramses II, who died in 1213 BCE: "They ate and drank together, being of one heart like brothers ... for peace and brotherhood were between them."[130]

A still earlier but even briefer mention of humane understanding may exist in the Sumerian versions of *Gilgamesh*. In Sandars' translation, the defeated forest-monster Humbaba "took [Gilgamesh] by the hand and led him to his house, so that the heart of Gilgamesh was moved with compassion."[131] In the Babylonian versions of the epic, however, Gilgamesh does not show compassion toward Humbaba: He is "appalled" by Humbaba's appeals and threats but then "came to himself,"[132] or he is "dismayed by the curse of Humbaba" but otherwise resolute.[133] Even in the Sumerian story, Gilgamesh's behavior in the scene suggests that he did not, in fact, feel toward Humbaba what Achilles felt for Priam: After hearing Humbaba beg for his life, Gilgamesh "took the axe in his hand, he drew the sword from his belt, and he struck Humbaba with a thrust of the sword to the neck."[134] The killing of Humbaba suggests that

[129]Ignatieff (1998, 4-5): "The idea that we might have obligations to human beings beyond our borders simply because we belong to the same species is a recent invention, the result of our awakening to the shame of having done so little to help the millions of strangers who died in this [the 20th] century's experiments in terror and extermination."

[130]ANET3, 358, quoted in Griffin 1980, 16.

[131]Sandars 1960, 24.

[132]Mitchell 2004, 127.

[133]Davis 2014, 43.

[134]Sandars 1960, 20–21.

Achilles' "love and solidarity" toward Priam offers not an appropriation of Sumerian ethics, but a "distinctively Iliadic vision,"[135] perhaps even "an index of new values."[136]

M. L. West, however, teases out some parallels between the Achilles-Priam scene in *Iliad* 24 and Gilgamesh's encounter with Ut-napishti, a famous hero from an elder generation who has obtained immortality. When Gilgamesh comes face to face with him, he expects to fight him, but instead is surprised to find that Ut-napishti is not other. "I look at you, Ut-napishti, and your form is not other – you are just like me – indeed you yourself are not other –you are just like me!"[137] During this meeting, Gilgamesh realizes that his own lot is the common one of all mankind, for reasons that adumbrate the Parable of the Jars in *Iliad* 24. The great gods assembled, and "Mami, maker of destinies, fixed fates for them: The gods gave humans life and death, but did not reveal which day you will die."[138] West reflects that Gilagmesh, like Achilles, "arrives at this state of philosophic acceptance as the result of conversing with an older man whom he had thought of as 'other' but whom (he is made to realize) is actually a mirror of himself. And it is the achievement of this state of mind that marks the conclusion of the story" in both epics.[139] The Ut-napishti-scene may not constitute a dramatic representation of empathy on the scale of the *Iliad*, yet it checks the boxes of Proximity, Similarity and Solidarity, which I have argued are core to the Homeric mechanics of empathy. Further, the emphasis on non-othering coheres neatly with the hermeneutics of empathy in Western literature, theology and art, succinctly summarized by Karl Morrison as the idea that "I Am You."[140]

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[135]Schein 1984, 153.
[136]Mueller 2009, 74.
[137]*Gilgamesh* XI.1-4, tr. Helle, p. 100; cf. West 1997, 346.
[138]*Gilgamesh* X.319-22, tr. Helle, p. 99; cf. West 1997, 347.
[139]West 1997, 347.
[140]Morrison 1988, xx.

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