

## **Unraveling the Psyche of Achilles and Historical Narrative: A Psychoanalysis of the Heroic Complex in Homer's Iliad**

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### **Abstract**

*This article presents a psychoanalytic exploration of Achilles' character in Homer's Iliad, departing from traditional heroic analyses. The study employs Freudian and Jungian frameworks to uncover the complex psychological nuances underlying Achilles' actions and motivations. The research combines textual and psychoanalytical to provide a comprehensive understanding of Achilles' psyche. It examines key relationships and events in the epic, including his conflicts with Agamemnon and Hector, his grief over Patroclus' death, and his interaction with Priam. The authors argue that Achilles' apparent pride and defiance mask deeper emotional and psychological afflictions. They explore the tension between his divine and mortal aspects, as well as the influence of unconscious motivations on his behavior. By unraveling the complexities of Achilles' character, this research aims to offer new insights into the themes of heroism, human nature, and the psychological impact of war as portrayed in this significant historical narrative.*

### **Key Words**

Achilles, Historical Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Homer, Iliad, Freud, Jung

### **1.0 Introduction**

This article is aimed at critically examining the description of the character of Achilles in the 8th Century B.C Poem Iliad. Traditionally, Achilles character has always been synonymous with pride, prowess and defiance. However, we opine that his character holds much more depth and complexity. The apparent monotony of his grandeur coupled with his obsessive disdain of oblivion, is merely a smoke screen for the triviality of his emotional and psychological afflictions. The god among men was haunted by mortal afflictions and psychological nuances. Departing from conventional analyses of heroism, this thesis embarks on a psychoanalytic exploration of Achilles' character, employing Freudian and Jungian frameworks to unveil the intricate workings of his psyche. The research delves into the significance of the Iliad in Greek literature, emphasizing its portrayal of human conditions, heroism, and the repercussions of war. Central to this epic narrative is Achilles,

whose multifaceted persona extends beyond the bounds of traditional hero archetypes. While *The Iliad* mixes myth and history, its portrayal of human conflict, politics, and war reflects how ancient Greeks understood their past. The objectives of the article aim to unravel the unconscious motivations propelling Achilles' narrative and explore the broader implications of his odyssey within the archetypal journey.

This research transcends traditional literary analysis by incorporating an eclectic method that fuses textual and psychoanalytical analyses.

That two fates bear me on to the day of death.

If I hold out here and I lay siege to Troy,  
my journey home is gone, but my glory never dies.

If I voyage back to the fatherland I love,

my pride, my glory dies .... (Lines 410-412, Book 9, Fagles 1990)

With these words, Achilles denies Odysseus' appeal to bolster the Greek ranks. His response here depicts that Agamemnon's effrontery did not solely cause the vehemence of his apparent pretentiousness; fear was also a stimulus. Homer's epic *The Iliad* narrates the story of Achilles, who is hailed as a supra-human among mere mortals. His valor is as enviable as his battle prowess is unmatched. This larger-than-life persona transcends him to a deity, robbing him of all the empathetic cushions accessible to a human being; making him the subject of envy and spite, not love or sympathy. On the outside, his persona is untarnished, but deep inside he is merely a mortal. However, beneath this tough appearance is a compound reality of feelings, stress, and psychological complexities that influence his decisions and behavior throughout the narrative. This thesis conducts a psychoanalytic inquiry into the character of Achilles within Homer's *Iliad*, transcending conventional analyses of heroism. Employing Freudian and Jungian frameworks, the study unveils the intricate web of Achilles' psyche, exploring his internal conflicts, motivations, and interpersonal dynamics. Achilles, the son of Thetis, a sea nymph, and Peleus, a mortal king, was destined for greatness. Thetis, aware of Achilles' fate to die young but gloriously in the Trojan War, attempted to protect him by dipping him in the river Styx, making him invulnerable except for his heel, by which she held him. His relationship with his mother was both loving and complicated due to her attempts to shield him from harm. Patroclus, his closest companion, was more than a friend; their bond was akin to brothers. Patroclus provided unwavering support to Achilles and was tragically killed in battle by Hector, leading to Achilles' intense grief and rage. Briseis was a Trojan captive awarded to Achilles as a prize. Their relationship was marked by turmoil when Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek forces, took Briseis from Achilles, sparking his anger and withdrawal from the war. His loss of Briseis led to a profound sense of dishonor.

Achilles' strained relationship with Agamemnon stemmed from their conflict over Briseis but also highlighted their contrasting leadership styles and pride. This conflict resulted in Achilles withdrawing from the war, which significantly impacted the Greek forces. On the other hand, Hector, the Trojan prince and warrior, became Achilles' foremost adversary because he killed Patroclus. Their clashes were legendary, culminating in Hector's killing of Patroclus and Achilles' subsequent vengeful pursuit and slaying of Hector, leading to Hector's tragic death. Priam, the king of Troy and Hector's father, approached Achilles in desperation to retrieve Hector's body. This encounter humanized Achilles as he empathized with

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Priam's grief, leading to a poignant moment of shared mourning and reconciliation between the two enemies. Achilles' relationships with these key figures including Patroclus, Briseis, Thetis, Agamemnon, Hector, and Priam shaped his character, highlighting his strengths, vulnerabilities, and the complexities of honor, love, grief, and the cost of war within the epic narrative of the Iliad.

Central to the analysis is the exploration of the Heroic Complex in Achilles. Freudian analysis uncovers the interplay of id, ego, and superego, unraveling defense mechanisms and repression as key mechanisms shaping the hero's narrative. Jungian analysis brings forward the archetypal symbols and themes, connecting Achilles to universal patterns within the collective unconscious.

### **1.1 Introducing the Iliad and its Significance in Greek Literature**

The Iliad, attributed to the ancient Greek poet Homer, stands as a cornerstone of classical literature, offering a profound exploration of the human condition, heroism, and the

consequences of war. Composed around the 8th century BCE, this epic poem holds an esteemed place in the canon of Western literature and is a foundational work of ancient Greek civilization. At its core, the Iliad narrates the pivotal events of the Trojan War, an epic conflict between the Greeks and Trojans. The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of divine intervention, with gods and goddesses actively participating in the lives of mortals. Central to the narrative is the figure of Achilles, the greatest warrior of the Greeks, whose wrath becomes a focal point for exploring the complexities of honor, pride, and mortality.

The significance of the Iliad lies not only in its narrative grandeur but also in its profound thematic depth. It delves into the psychological landscape of its characters, offering insights into the hero's internal struggles and the emotional toll of war. Moreover, the Iliad is an enduring testament to the power of oral tradition, as it was originally recited and passed down through generations before being transcribed.

In the realm of classical studies, the Iliad remains a subject of scholarly fascination, with interpretations evolving across centuries. Its characters, themes, and moral quandaries continue to captivate scholars, making it a perennial source for interdisciplinary exploration. As a foundational text, the Iliad transcends temporal and cultural boundaries, inviting continual analysis and interpretation, making it an inexhaustible reservoir for the study of Greek literature and the complexities of the human experience.

### **1.2 Establish the Importance of Psychoanalyzing Achilles to Unveil the Depths of his character**

The importance of psychoanalyzing Achilles within the context of the Iliad rests on the premise that unraveling the depths of his character goes beyond traditional literary analysis, offering profound insights into the complexities of human nature, heroism, and the psychological dynamics at play in ancient Greek literature.

Achilles, as the central figure in Homer's epic, embodies a mosaic of emotions, conflicts, and motivations that extend beyond the conventional hero archetype. While traditional analyses have often focused on his martial prowess and external deeds, psychoanalysis provides a unique lens through which to penetrate the layers of his psyche. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic framework, encompassing concepts

such as the id, ego, and superego, allows for an exploration of Achilles' unconscious motivations, desires, and internal struggles.

Moreover, psychoanalysis introduces a nuanced understanding of Achilles' relationships, particularly with figures like Patroclus and Thetis. Caroline Alexander's exploration in *The War That Killed Achilles* underscores the emotional intricacies of these relationships, revealing a more vulnerable and human side to the hero. The importance of this psychoanalytic approach is underscored by its potential to bridge the gap between the timeless themes of the Iliad and contemporary psychological theories. It provides a framework to comprehend Achilles not merely as a legendary warrior but as a complex, reflective individual struggling with existential questions, mortality, and the dynamics of power and authority.

A significant piece of literature, Homer's Iliad has Achilles as the primary protagonist in the narrative. This study explains the enduring value of historical narrative in modern psychological discourse in addition to developing our understanding of the heroic tale itself. The study of a classical hero such as Achilles using Freudian and Jungian theory expands the field of psychoanalysis beyond the confines of clinical settings.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the psychological effects of Achilles' demigod position, emphasizing the interaction between his divine ancestry and mortal emotions as understood through Freudian and Jungian concepts. They explore the identity dynamics, heroic complex, societal expectations of being a warrior, and the psychological damage caused by dichotomy within Achilles' character, a juxtaposition of his godly essence and the vulnerabilities inherent in his humanity. This approach gains prominence through its focus on two central research questions, guiding the exploration towards achieving specific research aims including (a) Firstly, the research endeavors to scrutinize the driving forces behind Achilles' actions by posing questions that probe his unconscious motivations. How do Freudian concepts such as the id, ego, and superego manifest within Achilles, shaping his behavior on and off the battlefield? This query delves into the intricacies of his psyche, aiming to unearth the unconscious desires and conflicts that propel the hero's narrative (b) Secondly, extending to the broader implications of the Heroic Complex within the Iliad, how does Achilles navigate the archetypal journey, and what psychological toll does this hero's odyssey exact upon him? These inquiries guide the analysis beyond mere character study, aiming to uncover universal patterns and themes that resonate across time and culture.

Exploring ancient Greek tragedies from a psychological standpoint has been instrumental in unveiling the intricate workings of the human mind within these narratives. A seminal contribution, Norman Holland's broader insights in *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (1966), offer profound perspectives on understanding the psychological depths of characters in timeless tragedies. While not directly focused on Greek tragedy, Norman Holland's work in

Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare contributes significantly to the broader application of psychoanalytic theories in literature. Holland extends Freud's psychoanalytic

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concepts to Shakespearean tragedies, emphasizing the relevance of psychological perspectives in

understanding characters and their motivations.

### 2.1 Psychological Approaches to Achille

Achilles' theatrical performances and exaggerated emotions come from this inherent bond with the divine, where the lines between mortal limitations and divine ability blur. Because of his godlike status, Achilles frequently behaves in ways that go beyond what is expected of him. He intensifies his emotions, amplifies his reactions, and gives his deeds a level of intensity that is beyond what is possible for a mortal to possess. Psychoanalysis paints an image of the person as imperfect and conflicted in his relationship with society, shaped by yet opposed to cultural expectations. Achilles is a perfect example of the conflict and ambiguity that exist in his nature. His behavior and appearance reveal a complicated person who has been shaped by society being a warrior yet he struggles with his emotions and psychological afflictions.

Psychoanalysis is a science with very specific boundaries that it was designed to operate within. The patient's associations are the limiting requirements for dream interpretation; without them, Freud made it obvious, that dream interpretation was merely an exercise at most. Although we may determine intentions and feelings from his actions and connections, our understanding is constrained by the lack of direct access to Achilles' inner monologue.

In the context of the Iliad, Achilles' relentless pursuit of greatness embodies a bipolar logic, showcasing a paradigmatic illustration. This quest for excellence, similar to what can be interpreted as the pursuit of the supremely idealistic approach, is inherently entwined with a sense of intense pleasure or fulfillment but also contains elements of destruction.

Achilles is certainly more sensitive and volatile because of his pain over Patroclus and his unresolved rage towards Hector and Agamemnon. His emotional responses are intensified by his unresolved fury against those who have mistreated him and his sadness over Patroclus. Because these traumas are recent, their effects are more noticeable in the way he manages his emotions and relationships. The grief over Patroclus intensifies Achilles' emotional responses. His anger, sorrow, and even moments of tenderness become more pronounced, reflecting the depth of his emotional investment in their relationship. Achilles' unresolved anger towards Hector and Agamemnon further adds to the complexity of his emotional state. His conflict with Agamemnon, which initially led to his withdrawal from the Trojan War, and his burning desire for vengeance against Hector, who killed Patroclus, become sources of unbridled rage. The death of Patroclus, Achilles' closest

companion, at the hands of Hector becomes the focal point of Achilles' intense rage and desire for revenge.

Psychoanalysis can be seen as a kind of lifelong learning, and thinking thus does not necessarily mean that the search for self-knowledge is inconsistent. At the very least, life education is imparting knowledge on how one's past influences one's present to improve future coping mechanisms. Achilles's current actions and feelings are profoundly affected by his past experiences, which include his bond with Patroclus, his confrontations with Agamemnon, his love for Briseis, the death of Hector, and returning Hector's dead body to Priam. His feeling of vengeance and treatment to Hector's body after killing him was personal since he had killed Achilles beloved companion Patroclus and his grudge with Agamemnon was fueled when he took away Briseis (a war captive) from Achilles. Psychoanalysis is a way to explore the hidden depths of a person's mind to determine the underlying reasons and motivate elements of their actions, feelings, and ideas. Its objective is to shed light on the unconscious tendencies and hidden intentions that drive behaviors and responses, impacting life's dynamics and supporting human development. Holland's approach involves the psychoanalytic examination of Shakespearean characters, exploring their subconscious motivations, desires, and conflicts. By drawing parallels between Freudian theories and Shakespeare's characters, Holland underscores the universality of human experiences depicted in classical tragedies. His work highlights the adaptability of psychoanalytic frameworks across diverse literary traditions, showcasing their relevance beyond specific cultural contexts.

Exploring Achilles through the lenses of narcissism and masochism offers a different perspective on his character within the narrative. Narcissism, with its focus on self-admiration and validation, could shed light on Achilles' pride and self-worth, which played pivotal roles in his actions during the Trojan War. Masochism, although to a lesser extent, might offer insights into his willingness to endure emotional pain and suffering, especially after the loss of Patroclus. After the death of Patroclus, Achilles willingly plunges himself into profound grief. He not only mourns the loss but also embraces the emotional pain as a reflection of his deep connection to Patroclus.

According to Milton, the two most reasonable human emotions are anger and laughter because they are concerned with justice and proportion. Achilles's rage draws attention to its complexity. Though it starts out as a reaction to a particular injustice, it develops into a more comprehensive statement of his pride and his pursuit of honor. It is becoming more difficult to distinguish between the quest for prestige and respect on a personal level.

## **2.2 Achilles' Relationships and their Influence on his Psyche**

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Achilles states clearly that nothing could change his mind until Agamemnon made up for the whole of the grave transgression that grieves him, even if the latter gave presents so abundant, that they matched the amount of sand and dust in Book 20. This signifies the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon which began when Agamemnon, took Achilles' war prize, Briseis, as a way to compensate for his own loss. Achilles had Briseis under his supervision as a war captive, after his altercation with Agamemnon he left the war and due to the absence of his greatest warrior Agamemnon had terribly lost a lot of his men during the war and he took Briseis from Achilles afterwards to entertain himself after an unpleasant defeat. Achilles took it personally since Briseis was his war captive and his ego was hurt when the king took away Briseis. This act deeply wounded Achilles' pride and honor, leading him to hold personal grudge with Agamemnon and refusing to fight alongside Greeks. This declaration encapsulates Achilles' unyielding stance, driven by an overwhelming sense of injustice and wounded honor. His demand for recompense is not merely material but a cry for the restoration of his bruised dignity and the acknowledgment of the grievous offense inflicted upon him by Agamemnon. The vivid imagery of gifts as many as sand and dust signifies the futility of attempts to appease him through material offerings, emphasizing that no amount of wealth or appeasement can relieve the deep-seated rage and hurt lodged within his heart.

According to Freud's Theory of Psychoanalysis, anxiety triggers the defensive

mechanism. Anxiety is indicative of a painful feeling that alerts the ego to the risks ahead. Defenses kick in if fear suggests there's a chance the initial undesirable urges could surface again. Freud's theory helps us understand Achilles' defensive actions as responses to the anxiety triggered by his emotional turmoil and the risks, he perceives in continuing the war. It showcases how his behaviors serve as protective measures against the distressing emotions he's struggling with.

Achilles restates his excuse for not participating in battle: Briseis has been taken by Agamemnon. Even while each repetition in its context brings up images of a violent and spiteful hero, the combined effect of his wailing and sighing tends to cast him in a humorous light. Since he lost his Briseis, Achilles is devastated. A Freudian analysis may uncover underlying unconscious impulses, unsolved conflicts, or deeper emotional anguish that led to Achilles' disproportionate response to the loss of Briseis, even though on the surface his reaction may seem exaggerated or even humorous. Furthermore, it is possible that according to Freud's theory, the meaning of Briseis is a metaphor for Achilles' pride, authority, or standing in society as a warrior. Achilles' intense emotional reaction could result from losing her since it could jeopardize his sense of masculinity or self-worth rather than just losing Briseis while he was being protective of her during the war as interpreted in Book 2, lines 780-790 "After fighting until he was exhausted at Lyrnessus, the brilliant runner Achilles rested amid his ships, furious over Briseis, the maiden with shining hair, the treasure he had taken from Lymessus". Briseis is described as the girl with

lustrous hair, a prize claimed by Achilles after his exhaustive battle at Lyrnessus. The fact that she is depicted as a prize, won through Achilles' martial prowess, immediately associates her with the concept of honor and status in the warrior culture of the time. Being Achilles' alter ego, Patroclus, who left the fight with him, has returned to the battle and inevitably calls for Achilles' presence. Achilles' position has now become even more vague. Previously, he was both in and above the conflict, observing it; thereafter, he was inside the battle, waiting to observe the impact of his proxy entrance. Now he finds out the effect: Hector Achilles is well aware that killing Hector will bring him honor. However, what does Hector's death mean? The Iliad indeed tells the tale of "the wrath of Achilles," but this wrath is not the same as the other, or rather, it is not directed toward the same thing even though it originates from the same faculty. Even though Achilles' anger was first thought to be limited to Hector, it could also be a cover for deeper internal tensions or feelings. The act of retaliation could be a symptom of hidden emotions or unspoken feelings, possibly connected to the complexities of life, death, or the existential importance of his deeds.

### **2.3 Psychoanalysis and Greek Mythology**

Carl Jung's seminal work *Man and His Symbols* (1964) contributes significantly to the understanding of Greek mythology from a psychological perspective. Jungian theory explores the depths of the collective unconscious, unearthing archetypes and symbols that resonate across cultures and epochs. Within Greek mythology, Jung identifies enduring symbols that reflect universal human experiences, shedding light on the psychological

underpinnings of mythological narratives. By examining myths through the lens of the collective unconscious, Jung unveils the timeless relevance of these narratives and their profound impact on the human psyche.

Christopher Booker's *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (2004) offers a comprehensive analysis of narrative structures and their underlying psychological motifs. While not exclusively centered on Greek mythology, Booker's exploration of storytelling archetypes provides a framework to understand the hero's journey and its relevance to human psychology. Through the lens of these seven fundamental plots, Booker dissects the Hero's Journey archetype, a theme prominently featured in Greek mythology, including Achilles' narrative in the Iliad. Booker's insights illuminate the psychological resonance of heroic tales, emphasizing their enduring impact on storytelling and the human imagination.

The exploration of Achilles' psyche in the Iliad necessitates an eclectic methodological approach that integrates psychoanalytic theory with textual and visual analysis. This section outlines the research methods employed to unravel the Heroic Complex, understand



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interpersonal dynamics, and delve into the implications for broader themes of heroism and the human condition. The article consists of two research questions:

1. How do the interplay and dominance of Freudian psychological elements, specifically, the id, ego, and superego, manifest within Achilles' psyche, influencing his conduct in the heat of battle and in his interpersonal relationships throughout the Iliad narrative?
2. In what ways does Achilles' journey through the archetypal Heroic Complex within the Iliad shape his psyche, reflecting universal themes of human struggle and heroism?

### **3.1 Psychoanalytic Framework:**

#### **a. Freudian and Jungian Analysis:**

The foundation of this methodology lies in integrating Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories. Freud's tripartite structure of the psyche — id, ego, and superego — provides a framework to analyze the conscious and unconscious motivations driving Achilles' actions. Jung's archetypal theories extend this analysis to explore universal symbols and themes present in the hero's narrative. By applying these theories, the research seeks to unearth the unconscious layers of Achilles' character.

#### **b. Literary Application of Psychoanalytic Concepts:**

The methodology involves a meticulous examination of the Iliad using psychoanalytic concepts. Specific attention is given to Achilles' emotional conflicts, moments of vulnerability, and the symbolism embedded in the narrative. Achilles' psychology is defined by his hero complex, which is characterized by a deep-seated drive for accomplishment and recognition.

Freud's defense mechanisms and Jung's archetypal analysis help understand the hero complex, which is represented by his conflicts with ego, pride, and the desire for eternal glory within the story of the Iliad.

### **3.2 Textual Analysis:**

The primary source for this analysis is Homer's Iliad translated by Robert Fagles and Introduction and notes by Bernard Knox (1990). The methodology involves a close reading of the text, paying particular attention to passages that reveal Achilles' emotional state,

relationships, and internal conflicts. Excerpts and quotations from the text are analyzed in the context of psychoanalytic concepts to unveil the nuances of the hero's psyche. Secondary source includes *The War That Killed Achilles* (2009)

serve as complementary texts for the analysis of Achilles' relationships. It provides insights into the emotional dynamics between Achilles, Patroclus, enriching the psychoanalytic exploration with nuanced perspectives on interpersonal relationships.

#### Achilles' Internal Turmoil and Emotional States

Robert Fagles's translation of Homer's *Iliad* serves as a pivotal source in uncovering Achilles' emotional spectrum and internal conflicts. Close scrutiny of specific passages reveals Achilles' profound emotional turmoil. For instance, in Book 9, Achilles wrestles with a profound dilemma, torn between the glory of war and the desire for a peaceful life. His words "two fates bear me on to the day of death," depict his inner conflict, driven by fear and the looming specter of mortality. This inner turmoil echoes Freudian notions of conflict between the id and superego, where his desire for glory (id) clashes with his moral considerations and mortality (superego).

Achilles' relationships, notably with Patroclus and Thetis, stand as pivotal elements shaping his emotional landscape. Caroline Alexander's *The War That Killed Achilles* (2009) enrich the analysis of these relationships. Achilles' bond with Patroclus transcends the

conventional warrior camaraderie, revealing layers of emotional depth and vulnerability. Fagles' translation in Book 16 showcases Achilles' profound grief and rage after Patroclus' death. This moment elucidates Freudian theories on mourning and defense mechanisms, where Achilles' intense grief leads to a vengeful pursuit, emblematic of his id-driven emotions. When Patroclus is killed by Hector, Achilles' reaction is visceral. He experiences a depth of sorrow that transcends typical warrior camaraderie, showcasing an emotional depth rarely seen in him before. His grief is all-consuming, where he mourns Patroclus. With a terrible agony in his heart, Achilles groaningly uttered, "What are you saying, Son of Peleus, man of tears? Though all of my colleagues were close, I loved Patroclus more than any other, and my spirit is broken and my heart bleeds for him" Line 1-18 of Book 18. This overwhelming grief triggers a profound rage within Achilles, driving him to seek vengeance against Hector, the one

responsible for Patroclus' death.

According to Freud mourning as a process of dealing with the loss of a loved one. In mourning, individuals gradually detach their emotional ties to the deceased, allowing them to redirect their emotional energy towards new relationships and activities. However, this process can be complex and may involve stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. In the context of Achilles in the *Iliad*, his intense grief over Patroclus' death triggers defense mechanisms that align with Freudian theory. His initial reaction of denial and disbelief is followed by

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overwhelming sorrow and rage. The vengeance-driven pursuit of Hector becomes a form of displacement, channeling his grief and anger into a singular purpose, avenging Patroclus.

### **Relevance of Psychoanalytic Interpretation**

Freudian concepts, such as the id, ego, and superego, resonate deeply in ancient texts like the Iliad. Achilles' id-driven actions, rooted in primal desires for vengeance and glory, intertwine with his superego's moral dilemmas, creating an intricate psychological landscape. In Freudian terms, the superego represents the moral component of the psyche, incorporating societal norms, values, and moral standards. Achilles is admired by the Greek forces being their best warrior and leaving the battle due to his personal grudge with Agamemnon puts him in a moral dilemma towards the expectations of Greek forces. The Freudian defense mechanisms, particularly repression, elucidate the unspoken conflicts within Achilles' psyche, transcending temporal boundaries and mirroring universal human struggles. Jungian archetypes present in ancient texts offer timeless insights into human psychology. Achilles embodies archetypal figures like the hero and the wounded healer, reflecting universal patterns within the collective unconscious. His journey mirrors the hero's odyssey, a narrative that echoes across cultures and epochs, resonating with individuals across time.

By intertwining textual excerpts with psychoanalytic concepts, Achilles' psyche emerges as a mosaic of conflicting emotions, desires, and defense mechanisms. Fagles' translation unveils Achilles' complex emotional states, his wrath, grief, and eventual reconciliation. These emotional fluctuations align with Freudian ideas on the id's impulses, ego's mediation, and superego's moral conflicts, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of his character. The psychoanalytic exploration of Achilles' psyche using Fagles' translation accentuates the timeless relevance of Freudian and Jungian theories. It illuminates how ancient literary works, even as early as Homer's epic, encapsulate psychological complexities related to contemporary human experiences. The Heroic Complex within Achilles' character becomes a conduit for

understanding universal human emotions and internal struggles across temporal and cultural boundaries. Understanding the heroic complex in Achilles offers insights into universal human emotions and internal conflicts that transcend time and culture. It allows to explore the intricate layers of human experiences such as grief, rage, compassion, and the yearning for recognition or significance, all of which are embedded within the hero's journey.

### **Emotional Dynamics in Achilles' Relationships**

The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus transcends conventional notions of camaraderie, delving into a realm of deep emotional connection and shared vulnerabilities. Their bond, revealed through Homer's Iliad and complemented by

Caroline Alexander's *The War That Killed Achilles* (2009), exemplifies emotional intimacy that extends beyond friendship. Achilles' profound grief at Patroclus' demise, portrayed in Robert Fagles' translation, showcases an emotional depth suggesting a bond beyond mere companionship. This emotional devastation as quoted in Book 18, lines 25-30

Achilles saw a dark cloud of grief descend upon him.

He covered his head with a layer of soot and  
dirt that he was reaching for with both hands.

Stained his attractive face, and

Black ash fell onto his brand-new deerskin battle shirt.

Achilles was overpowered, sprawled in the dust,

and he tore his hair and contaminated it with his own hands as he lay there

This sense of devastation evokes Freudian theories on mourning and defense mechanisms, highlighting Achilles' raw and intense emotional response that propels him into vengeful actions towards Hector as quoted in Book 18, line 130-135 "Let the past remain the past. It's done, exactly. Even though I'm in pain, I'm going to fight it down with all of my might. However, I'm going to confront that murderer now". The passage reflects Achilles' internal struggle to cope with the profound grief resulting from the death of Patroclus and his subsequent determination to seek vengeance against Hector. A pivotal moment in the evolution of Achilles' character is depicted. His acknowledgment of the past and the decision to confront Hector demonstrate a psychological complexity that goes beyond a one-dimensional portrayal of grief. It reflects a transformative process where grief and pain are channeled into a proactive and vengeful pursuit.

Achilles' relationship with Agamemnon embodies a conflict-ridden dynamic

characterized by power struggle for Achilles for not compromising his warrior persona and wounded pride once Briseis was taken away by Agamemnon. Their confrontations, depicted vividly in Homer's text and supported by Bernard Knox's *The Heroic Temper* (1990), underscore Achilles' resistance against authority and his struggle for recognition and respect. The clash of egos and assertions of power between these figures symbolizes deeper psychological tensions rooted in pride and honor.

Contrasting his tumultuous relationship with Agamemnon quoted in Book 1 lines 122-352, Achilles' interactions with Hector quoted in Book 22, lines 200-400, epitomized in the *Iliad*, reveal complex emotions beyond mere animosity. Hector

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becomes more than an adversary since he killed his beloved Patroclus; he represents Achilles' mirror image, evoking reflection and contemplation on the essence of heroism and fate. This nuanced relationship underscores the humanization of both characters, transcending the boundaries of mere enmity.

The portrayal of Achilles' love for Briseis, depicted in Book 24, line 790 "So deep within his robust, well-constructed lodge, Achilles slept with Briseis, radiant in beauty, by his side" hints at Achilles' emotional vulnerabilities and affections. His intense emotions for Briseis, despite their complicated circumstances, shed light on Achilles' capacity for love and emotional attachment, juxtaposed against his reputation as a formidable warrior. Freudian ideas on love and desire can be employed to understand the complexities of Achilles' emotional connections, highlighting the contrast between his intense emotions and warrior persona (Wilkinson 141-142). In Freudian theory, the libido, the life force associated with sexual energy plays a significant role. When sexual desires encounter obstacles or frustrations, they can be redirected or sublimated into other forms of emotional connections, such as romantic love or deep emotional attachments.

This redirection of Achilles' initial sexual desires or possessiveness for Briseis, due to the thwarting of those desires, could have potentially led to a deeper emotional attachment or concern for her well-being. Although the text doesn't provide extensive exploration, Freud's concept allows for the consideration that the initial thwarted desires may have contributed to a shift in their relationship from one primarily focused on sexual possession to a more nuanced emotional connection, such as concern, empathy, or protection, albeit within the constraints of the narrative.

### **Implications for Heroism and the Human Condition**

The portrayal of Achilles in Homer's Iliad challenges conventional perceptions of heroism, presenting him as a multifaceted character with profound psychological depths. The conventional image of a hero as an unwavering, invulnerable figure is disrupted through Achilles' vulnerabilities, emotional complexities, and moral dilemmas.

Achilles emerges as a hero not solely defined by his martial prowess but as a figure navigating intricate emotional landscapes. The exploration of his internal conflicts, emotional vulnerabilities, and the complexities of his relationships, especially with Patroclus and Briseis, complicates the archetype of a heroic figure. Caroline Alexander's *The War That Killed Achilles* (2009) delves into Achilles' emotional complexity and vulnerability, showcasing his multifaceted nature beyond the traditional portrayal of an invincible hero. Alexander offers insights into Achilles' internal conflicts, shedding light on his fears, grief, and emotional turmoil, humanizing him in the eyes of the reader.

Achilles has taken Hector's life. As in his encounter with Agamemnon, he has prevailed in this epic's pivotal fight. The dramatic focus of the Iliad was Achilles' rage, which has since been retired and rendered "concealed." Convention dictates that the Iliad will undoubtedly conclude here with the victorious return of its vindicated hero. This unexpected turn challenges the conventional heroic narrative by revealing Achilles' internal growth and moral complexity. The resolution is not simply in triumph on the battlefield but in Achilles' evolution as a character, displaying qualities of empathy and understanding. The ending of the Iliad, therefore, emphasizes the complexities of human emotions, the cost of war, and the transformative power of compassion, qualities that transcend mere victory in battle and underscore the deeper themes of the epic. Achilles' transformation from a wrathful, grief-stricken warrior to a more reflective and empathetic individual challenges the notion of a static hero. His internal growth is marked by a heightened awareness of his own vulnerabilities, a deeper understanding of the human condition, and a willingness to confront the emotional complexities that define his character.

The reinterpretation of Achilles as a complex hero expands the discourse on heroism, emphasizing the human aspects of legendary figures. His emotional struggles, vulnerabilities, and intricate relationships present a hero whose strength lies not only in physical prowess but also in navigating the complexities of the human experience. Achilles' portrayal in the Iliad, examined through a psychoanalytic lens and complemented by contemporary interpretations, challenges traditional notions of heroism. His character's depth and complexities offer a broader understanding of heroism, highlighting its multifaceted nature and its intrinsic connection to the human condition. Achilles' portrayal in the Iliad challenges traditional notions of heroism by presenting a character of remarkable depth and complexity. In Robert Fagles' translation of the Iliad, Achilles is depicted not merely as a conventional hero but as a figure deeply affected by emotions, vulnerabilities, and internal conflicts. This complexity challenges the stereotypical heroic archetype and reveals Achilles' humanity. For instance, in Book 9, lines 308-311, Achilles expresses his inner turmoil: "My heart aches to stay here and work as a common warrior for this master a guy of little importance " This excerpt showcases Achilles' internal conflict between the desire for glory and the recognition of the fleeting nature of life. His admission that a humble life might be preferable to a glorified but short-lived existence challenges the traditional hero's pursuit of everlasting fame.

A hired hand is a better place to be alive than a monarch of kings among dead people.

These reimagining paves the way for a more nuanced and empathetic view of heroes,

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emphasizing their emotional intricacies and human vulnerabilities as integral components of their heroic journey. Achilles' character in the Iliad struggles with the dichotomy of mortality and immortality, a conflict that shapes his decisions and emotions. His confrontation with the concept of death becomes a central motif in understanding his actions and motivations. The loss of Patroclus, his dear companion, triggers an emotional response that forces Achilles to confront his own mortality. This event catalyzes a transformation in his character, propelling him into a relentless pursuit of vengeance.

Achilles' pursuit of glory, even at the cost of his life, reflects his desire for

immortalization through heroic deeds. His refusal to accept a long, uneventful life and instead choosing a short but illustrious existence showcases his belief in the immortality of reputation.

The duality of mortality and immortality becomes a driving force behind Achilles' actions, underlining the complexity of his character and the intricate interplay between the temporal and eternal.

The integration of textual analysis and psychoanalytic concepts underscores the timelessness of Achilles' emotional struggles, his nuanced relationships, and his profound impact on the discourse of heroism. This multidimensional exploration bridges historical narrative with psychological discourse, offering profound insights into the complexities of human nature, identity, and the enduring influence of ancient epics on the human psyche. Achilles emerges not just as a character in an ancient epic but as a timeless emblem of human struggles, embodying the profound complexities inherent in the human experience.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the multidimensional exploration of Achilles' character showcases the enduring relevance of Freudian and Jungian theories in understanding the depths of human psychology depicted in historical narrative. The integration of diverse analytical approaches illuminates Achilles' inner world, underscoring the timelessness of his emotional struggles and interpersonal dynamics. His outward appearance exudes an aura of superhuman qualities, yet at his core, he is inherently and tragically mortal. At the crux of his larger-than-life image lay the tragic essence of mortality. Externally, he projected an immaculate façade of godlike attributes, yet concealed within, the core of his being resonated with the vulnerabilities and limitations inherent to mortals. Despite the grandeur surrounding his persona, an undeniable human fragility persisted within, obscured by the brilliance of his heroic stature. This paradoxical dichotomy between his revered, almost divine exterior and the subtle, concealed humanity within served as the enigmatic foundation shaping his character. This interdisciplinary study bridges ancient literature with psychological discourse, offering profound insights into the intricacies of the human

experience as portrayed in Homer's epic tale of heroism, war, and the human condition.



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