

# Iliad: human condition

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



In Homer's Iliad, the human condition of life and death are being depicted, while we see how people lived their life in Greek culture. In Book 18, the great warrior Akhilleus loses his good friend Patroklos in the midst of battle, and with him he had Akilleus' shield. Akhilleus' mother goes to get another shield for her son from the great G/D, Hephaestus, and the Greek icon was born. The shield is made out of, "durable fine bronze and tin... with silver and... honorable gold," while it depicts incredible images of the everyday life, while really focusing in on the earth, sea, and sky. Hephaestus includes images of the: celebrations of life and the joy that comes with it, and how injustices go in the world in order to show the positive and negative aspects of life at that time. The shield reveals images of the loving nature of people in everyday life and during special occasions, while at the same time showing the respect people have for their all mighty G/D's, and also acknowledging the importance of the simplistic and important life of an ordinary farmer. Homer begins with a scene from a wedding where people are lighting torches out of happiness, men are dancing and singing, and everyone seems to be having a thoroughly good time. The shield does not simply show people smiling, but rather, "here young men and the most desired young girls were dancing, linked touching each other's wrists, the girls in linen, in soft gowns... the girls wore garlands, and the men had daggers golden-hilted, hung on silver lanyards." The intimacy of young men and women dancing while holding each other, and the way that they are dressed with fine clothing for the occasion represents the good things of life on the shield. Homer's use of superior elements like "gold" and "silver" when describing the men's daggers and women's lanyards, shows that

Hephaestus wanted people to not overlook that image because he felt it was important that we realize that the good times were present during that time, and it was not just all war on terror. The same way Hephaestus uses gold and silver to make draw the viewer into the image, he also brilliantly makes the grey-eyed goddess, “ Pallas Athena, [with] figured gold, golden trappings, both magnificent in arms, as the gods are, in high relief, while men were small beside them. ” The “ high relief” means that while Hephaestus was sculpting the shield, he made the actual figure of Athena more three-dimensional so she stuck out, in order to gain the feeling of importance like she very well deserved. Hephaestus obviously is in favor of the G/D’s making the humans less three-dimensional so they were not the first thing that caught the viewers eye when looking at the shield, but rather the G/D’s. Hephaestus stresses the joy and fulfillment of life while still appreciating certain things when making the shield, but creates the elaborate part on the shield to give homage too the farmers, who, where he used depictions of, “ soft terrain, freshly plowed, ... [and] broad field, and many plowmen here and there upon it... They made their turns-around, then up the furrows drove again, eager to reach the deep fields limit...” This image leads us to believe that Hephaestus must of thought highly of the simplistic life of a farmer, but yet the bar-none importance of their duty in life, providing for everyone in the town. In contrast to the joys and things in life that Hephaestus wanted people to appreciate when looking at the shield, Hephaestus also uses some dark, and unjust images, portraying criminal activity and how some people are born corrupt. After Homer describes the first city, which was filled with dancing and singing at the wedding, he talks

about the second city where they were dealing with anarchy. Everyone in the city, went to the market place to watch, “ two men at odds over satisfaction owed for a murder done: one claimed that all was paid, and publicly declared it; his opponent turned the reparation down, and both demanded a verdict from an arbiter, as people clamored in support of each, and criers restrained the crowd...” The horrific images of knowing that one man is lying about murdering a human being, and being ok with it as he is tried by the common people, shows the injustice of the world at that time, and represents the evils that life presents. For someone to actually agree with an innocent person when he is being accused of your crime, while people are crying and screaming around you, who most likely know you are lying, is just appalling. In addition to the scenes of literal injustice being shown, more criminal activity takes place as it was, “ Wartime then; around the other city were emplaced two columns of besiegers, bright in arms, as yet divided on which plan they liked: whether to sack the town, or treat for half of all the treasure stored in the citadel...” Once again, the image of people willing to go into a citadel, a holy and sacred haven, and steal valuable goods like pirates, show Hephaestus wants the shield to show the true reality of the world, and try and block out the bad things that go in life, but it is apparent that Hephaestus wanted to shed light on the true reality that was taking place at that time. Homer is using the shield to comment on the positive and negative aspects of that the ancient times. Hephaestus wanted nothing else but to have the most prized warrior in Akhilleus, whom he knew would take down Trojan by Trojan once the battle began to posses this immortal like shield, which represented the justice and injustices of life. Hephastous.

Akhilleus was a victim to both the joys and injustices in life, and it is incredibly fitting for a plethora of Trojans to have their last moment of survival looking at the inherently true depiction of life in the shield. The images on the shield allow the story to last through the centuries because its theme of the duality will always be relevant no matter the time period.