

The power of gods and fate in homer's iliad

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Gods are very powerful beings that possess abilities that are unknown to man. Also, they tend to interfere in mortal lives and influence their decisions. Even with the immense amount of powers that they do have, there is still one thing that they have no control over. That unstoppable thing is fate. Fate is something that is destined to happen. The gods cannot control what a certain person's fate is because it is determined by something outside of their realm of power. Since they can't control what it is, they do something else regarding it. I argue that Zeus and Athena's interference in Hector's death shows that even though fate is inescapable, the gods ultimately play a role in the execution and timing of it. Similar to many other mortals, Hector knows his fate and accepts it. However, he does not know the exact details of it. All he knows is that he will die in the war. Hector talks of fate saying "no one alive has ever escaped it... it's born with us the day we are born".

Fate is an unchangeable force that is inevitable for everyone. Even though they can't control what a person's fate is, they can try to prolong it and keep it from happening. Hector was with Ajax and the two would have "hacked each other if heralds of Zeus and men had not come rushing in". Hector was losing the battle with Ajax and could have died, but Zeus stepped in and stopped it from happening. Zeus prolonged Hector's fate and made it so that Hector could regain his strength and keep fighting. By intervening and not letting him die, Zeus helped Hector survive but he cannot escape his inevitable fate, which is his death. Zeus has the ability to influence the timing of when one's fate comes. In Book 22, Hector and Achilles finally get to fight. This will be their first and only fight because one is going to die. Both men know their fates, but do not know when they will actually happen.

Zeus sees the men fighting and sees that Hector is again losing, so he debates with the other gods " either we pluck the man from death and save his life or strike him down at last, here at Achilles' hands". Zeus is trying to decide whether or not he should again save Hector and prolong his fate from occurring. Zeus has this powerful golden scale that he decides to let weigh the fates of Achilles and Hector. The outcome was that " Zeus raised it high and down went Hector's day of doom, dragging him down the strong House of Death".

The scale showed that it was time for Hector's fate to come crashing down. Achilles could have been the one destined to die at this time, but Zeus's scale undoubtedly chose Hector. The time has come for Hector to finally die. Even though fate is set in stone and dictated at birth, gods can still have control over how that fate is carried out and executed. Now that the timing of Hector's fate has been determined by Zeus and his golden scale, the only thing left is for Hector to actually die. Athena plays a part in the execution of this. Hector is running from Achilles when Athena " taking the build and vibrant voice of Deiphobus stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Hector". She turns herself into one of Hector's brother and convinces him to stop running and to fight Achilles head on. Hector was running from Achilles and would have kept on until he ran out of energy and was killed, so Athena just stepped in and changed the situation. If she had not done that Hector and Achilles would have eventually fought and one of them would have died. However, it is impossible to know which one was going to die at that time if it weren't for Zeus's scales. Also, Athena just told Hector to stop running and fight. She isn't the one who killed him, she just helped the killing of him

come faster. In the end, his fate was to die by Achilles' hand, which is ultimately what happened. Hector's " soul went winging down to the House of Death, wailing his fate". All Athena did was aid in the execution of his death and will it forward. Hector knew his fate and that is was inescapable.

The god's divine intervention is important to the epic because their actions have helped seal the fates of the mortals. The gods know that no matter what they do to try and change one's fate, it won't matter because the end result has already been predetermined. All they can do is try to affect how it is reached. That is what Athena and Zeus did for Hector's fate. Zeus saved him from dying too early in the war. Then he thought about saving him again from his fate, but ultimately decided to let his scale decide if it was time for Hector's death. Lastly, Athena convicted Hector to stop running and fight, which in turn just accelerated the coming of his death. The gods never changed his fate with their interferences in his life, they just influenced how and when it came to happen. So, even though fate is uncontrollable and inevitable, the gods still have the ability to influence the execution and timing of it.