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Does Achilles Forgive in the *Iliad*? The Archaic Origins of the Virtue of Forgivingness*

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In *Before Forgiveness*, David Konstan argues that the modern concept of interpersonal forgiveness was absent from Western thought until the early modern period. However, by “the modern” concept of the term, Konstan means one specific modern conception of forgiveness: that articulated by Griswold in *Forgiveness*, a conception unique amongst modern scholarship in its narrow, revisionary and prescriptive nature. In this paper I consider Konstan’s argument with respect to archaic Greece. I argue that, even when we limit ourselves to Griswold’s conception of interpersonal forgiveness, and to the two Iliadic examples considered by Konstan, there is more room for interpersonal forgiveness in the *Iliad* than Konstan would have us believe. I will show that examination of Achilles’ renunciation of his resentment at Agamemnon in *Iliad* 18 and Priam in *Iliad* 24 reveals the earliest depiction in Western literature of the virtue of forgivingness.

In *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Investigation*, Charles Griswold claims that the classical Greek philosophers did not uphold interpersonal forgiveness as a moral ideal (2007a:2–19). David Konstan defends Griswold’s claim, contending that not only did the classical Greek philosophers not value interpersonal forgiveness, but that the very concept of interpersonal forgiveness was absent from archaic Greece, the Hebrew Bible and early Judeo-Christianity (2010).¹ Indeed, Konstan goes even

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¹ A distinction must be drawn between claims regarding the evaluation of ethical concepts in specific contexts, and claims regarding the possession of those ethical concepts in the first place. Griswold offers a version of the former claim with respect to the classical Greek philosophers, claiming that “[Plato] had the concept of forgiveness, or at least the resources needed for the concept, but did not count forgiveness as a commendable quality” (2007b:269). Konstan, by contrast, offers a version of the latter claim with respect to ancient Greece and Rome, that is, that “the modern concept of forgiveness, in

further, arguing that “the modern concept of forgiveness, in the full and rich sense of the term”, is not present until Kant paves the way for it with his insistence of human moral autonomy; and systematic treatments of it do not begin to appear until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (2010:152). However, by “the modern”, “full” and “rich” sense of the term, Konstan means one specific modern conception of forgiveness: that articulated by Griswold in the aforementioned work. Far from being “the” modern conception of forgiveness, Griswold’s is one of many, and Konstan does little to defend his subscription to it. Moreover, Griswold’s is a conception of forgiveness almost unparalleled in the modern scholarship in its narrow, revisionary, and prescriptive nature, and is thus unrepresentative of modern conceptions of forgiveness.² It is therefore hardly surprising that, after defining modern forgiveness in such restrictive terms, Konstan concludes that it was absent in any time before the early modern period.³

In this paper, I consider Konstan’s argument that archaic Greece, as depicted in Homer’s *Iliad*, lacked the modern concept of interpersonal forgiveness.⁴ There is, of course, no reason to assume that archaic Greece necessarily shared our ethical concepts. Nor is there any reason to think that any historical conceptions of interpersonal forgiveness must conform to our own. However, the claim that archaic Greece lacked the concept of interpersonal forgiveness is certainly surprising, and one that deserves much deliberation. It may prove to be the case that archaic Greece lacked the concept of interpersonal forgiveness, but my argument in this paper is that Konstan does not give us good reason to accept this. Certainly, Konstan succeeds in proving that archaic Greece lacked *Griswold’s* conception of paradigmatic interpersonal forgiveness. However, as we will see, Griswold’s conception of forgiveness is so narrow and

the full or rich sense of the term, did not exist in classical antiquity, that is, in ancient Greece or Rome, or at all events that it played no role whatever in the ethical thinking of those societies” (2010:ix). As the focus of this paper is on Konstan’s claim, I will be looking not at whether Homeric man did value interpersonal forgiveness, or whether it is possible for interpersonal forgiveness to have been valued within the *Iliad’s* warrior ethos, but at whether the concept of interpersonal forgiveness existed in Homer’s thought-world.

For a partial rejection of this claim with respect to Aristotle, see Sadler, 2009; and for a rejection of this claim with respect to Judeo-Christianity, see Bash, 2007. Martha Nussbaum, while accepting Griswold’s account of forgiveness, agrees with Bash on this point (2016:272, n. 2).

² For less prescriptive contemporary accounts of forgiveness see, for example: Allais, 2013; Pettigrove, 2012; Russell, 2016; and Garrard & McNaughton, 2003. These scholars reject Griswold’s contention that morally admirable forgiveness requires the fulfillment of such conditions as apology, compensation, and moral reform.

For criticisms of Griswold’s account of forgiveness see, for example: Allais, 2013; Huget, 2012; Morton, 2010; Moody-Adams, 2010 and 2015; Prusak, 2009; and Wettstein, 2010. See also Griswold’s reply to a number of these critics (2010).

³ Douglas Cairns (2011) and Leo Zaibert (2012) express criticisms similar to mine in their respective reviews of Konstan’s monograph.

⁴ Page duBois takes up and defends Konstan’s claim with respect to archaic and ancient Greece in “Achilles, Psammenitus, and Antigone: Forgiveness in Homer and Beyond” (2012). However, as her focus is on the historicity of the emotion of empathy, her paper will not be considered here.

demanding, that Konstan's conclusion in an inquiry into the origins of forgiveness regarding its absence is of limited utility. While I do not subscribe to Griswold's conception of forgiveness, I will not be arguing against it in this paper. Rather, I will be arguing that even when we subscribe to Griswold's conception, and even when we limit ourselves to the Iliadic examples discussed by Konstan — Achilles' renunciation of his anger towards Agamemnon in Book 18, and towards Priam in Book 24 — we can see that there is more room for forgiveness in Homer's epics than Konstan would have us believe. After offering an exposition of Griswold's account of the virtue of forgiveness, and enumerating the conditions that attach to it, I will proceed to examine the two Iliadic examples considered by Konstan. I will conclude that what we see in the Iliadic examples is the origin of the virtue of forgiveness.

Let us first consider Griswold's conception of interpersonal forgiveness. Griswold conceives of forgiveness as a virtue — forgivingness — consisting in an Aristotelian mean between the deficiency of hard-heartedness and the excess of servility with respect to anger or resentment (2007a:18).⁵ Hard-heartedness, he contends, is associated with other vices such as pride and arrogance, while servility bespeaks the lack of proper self-respect and the failure to take wrongdoing seriously. Forgivingness, by contrast, is associated with the virtues of self-command, understanding, and trust (2007a:43); requires good judgement; and results from proper habituation over time (2007a:18). The paradigmatic or ideal expression of the virtue of forgivingness is subject to a number of conditions that bind the victim and the wrong-doer respectively. For forgiveness in the full sense to occur, Griswold argues that the victim must do the following: forswear revenge; moderate her resentment; commit to completely relinquishing this resentment; reframe the wrongdoer by ceasing to identify her with the wrongdoing; reframe herself by ceasing to identify with the person wronged, which requires compassion, sympathy and the recognition of shared humanity; and finally, communicate this forgiveness to the offender (2007a:54–58).

The offender must in turn fulfill the following conditions: acknowledge responsibility for the wrongdoing; repudiate it; express regret for it; commit to being someone who does not commit such deeds; manifest understanding of the gravity of the wrongdoing; and, in communicating this regret to the victim, offer a narrative account of the wrongdoing explaining why she is not to be identified with her action (2007a: 49–51).⁶ The fulfillment of all of these conditions constitutes perfect or paradigmatic forgiveness, in the sense that, explains Griswold, “were it possible for all of the conditions pertaining to the paradigm to be fulfilled, we would wish for them to be so” (2007a:xvi).⁷ At the core of this paradigmatic forgiveness is a transformation on the

⁵ For a sustained argument for, and treatment of, this virtue, see Roberts, 1995.

⁶ For a rejection of Griswold's conception of forgiveness with respect to its dyadic nature, see Moody-Adams, 2010 and 2015; and for a rejection of Griswold's conditional conception of forgiveness, see Prusak, 2009.

⁷ For a criticism of Griswold's distinction between paradigmatic and marginal instances of forgiveness, see Morton, 2010 and Wettstein, 2010.

part of both offender and victim. The offender's transformation consists in a change of heart with respect to wrongdoing in question, as a result of which the offender is no longer the kind of person to commit such a wrongdoing (2007a:56). The victim's transformation, realised through a sympathetic identification with the offender, consists in "seeing the offender in a new light", which is to say, reframing her in such a way that she is no longer completely identified with her wrongdoing (2007a:57). It is only when each of these conditions has been fulfilled that we can say that perfect forgiveness has occurred. We are now in a position to see just how narrow and revisionary Griswold's conception of interpersonal forgiveness is. For example, it precludes from qualifying as forgiveness such things as: unconditional forgiveness; forgiveness of the unrepentant; forgiveness of the dead; forgiveness despite the victim being unable to completely overcome her resentment towards the offender; and third-party forgiveness. It is thus unrepresentative of many contemporary popular and scholarly beliefs concerning forgiveness.

Having surveyed Griswold's conception of forgiveness, let us now turn to the Iliadic examples, starting with that of Achilles and Agamemnon. The *Iliad* opens with the wrath of Achilles: Agamemnon has stolen Achilles' war prize Briseis and, as a result, Achilles nurses his wrath at Agamemnon throughout the majority of the *Iliad*, refusing to return to the battlefield to fight for the Achaeans. As a result, hoards of Achaeans are slaughtered and the tide of battle turns in the Trojans' favour. However, Achilles does eventually renounce his resentment in *Iliad* 18, and returns to the battlefield. Does this renunciation qualify as forgiveness? Konstan thinks not. One interpretation, which Konstan rejects, is that Achilles' renunciation fails to qualify as forgiveness because, while Agamemnon has offered Achilles ample compensation, it is not entirely clear whether he has sufficiently acknowledged his wrongdoing and apologised for it (2010:61). Consider Agamemnon's speech to Achilles in *Iliad* 19:

This is the word the Achaians have spoken often against me / and found fault with me in it, yet I am not responsible / but Zeus is, and Destiny, and Erinys the mist-walking / who in assembly caught my heart in the savage delusion / on that day when I myself stripped from him the prize of Achilleus. / But what could I do? It is the god who accomplishes all things. / Delusion is the elder daughter of Zeus, the accursed / who deludes all.

...

So I in my time, when tall Hektor of the shining helm / was forever destroying the Argives against the sterns of their vessels, / could not forget Delusion, the way I was first deluded. / But since I was deluded and Zeus took my wits away from me, / I am willing to make all things good and give back gifts in abundance. (*Il.* 19.85–138)⁸

Whether or not one thinks that Agamemnon's words constitute an apology — the first of Griswold's conditions for the offender — will depend, among other things,

⁸ All translations of Homer's *Iliad* are taken from Lattimore, 1951. All ancient Greek texts are taken from the respective Loeb editions.

on whether one thinks that Homeric man can both blame an action on blinding, god-sent delusion — *atē* — while at the same time acknowledging responsibility for it.⁹ Without doubt, Achilles does not think that *atē* absolves Agamemnon from responsibility, and nor does Agamemnon think that it releases him from the obligation to compensate Achilles. Looking at Agamemnon's speech from the perspective of another of Griswold's conditions for the offender — a point left unexplored by Konstan — by drawing attention to the role of *atē* in his wrongdoing, Agamemnon could be seen to be offering something of a narrative account of the wrongdoing and an explanation for why he is not to be identified, at least completely, with it. That is, Agamemnon could be saying: I am not to be identified with the taking of Briseis because I was quite literally not in my right mind. If we take this to be the case, however, we cannot also accept that Agamemnon fully accepted responsibility for his wrongdoing.

On Konstan's interpretation, however, the reason that Achilles' renunciation of his resentment fails to qualify as forgiveness is not because Agamemnon did not offer a satisfactory apology but rather, because "a more powerful emotion — his grief at the loss of Patroclus — has driven out his resentment" (2010:61). This argument has strong textual support, as evidenced by the following speech of Achilles', uttered upon learning of Patroclus' death:¹⁰

[W]hy, I wish that strife would vanish away from among gods and mortals, / and gall, which makes a man grow angry for all his great mind, / that gall of anger that swarms like smoke inside of a man's heart / and becomes a thing sweeter to him by far than the dripping of honey. / So it was here that the lord of men Agamemnon angered me. / Still, we will let this all be a thing of the past, and for all our / sorrow beat down by force the anger deeply within us. (*Il.* 18.107–113)

However, while Konstan might be right that it is grief that drives out Achilles' resentment, is he right that the moderation of resentment by emotions such as grief cannot qualify as forgiveness? Konstan does not defend or elaborate on his claim here, but he can be seen to be following Griswold in the following way. Griswold, like most contemporary commentators on forgiveness, thinks that not every way of overcoming resentment is going to qualify as forgiveness. For example, the victim who overcomes her resentment by forgetting the wrongdoing in question, or forcing it from her mind, cannot be said to have forgiven her offender. According to Griswold, it is only when resentment is moderated or overcome by reasons, specifically *moral* reasons, that forgiveness can be said to have occurred.¹¹ He gives the following as

⁹ This is a question much-debated in classical scholarship that cannot be properly addressed here.

¹⁰ It also has the support of the scholia. Konstan quotes the scholiast [bT] ad *Il.* 18.122–13 thus: "Of the two emotions besetting Achilles' soul, anger [*orgē*] and grief [*lupē*], one wins out. ... For the emotion involving Patroclus is strongest of all, and so it is necessary to abandon his wrath [*mēnis*] and to avenge himself on his enemies" (*ibid.*, 25 n. 25).

¹¹ Contemporary scholars such as Pamela Hieronymi agree with Griswold that reason must do the work of moderating resentment, but do not follow Griswold in limiting reason to "moral reasons"

an explanation of what he means by moral reasons “it [being] the right or virtuous thing to do” (2007a:54). We see Konstan appealing to such a moral reason when he claims that the time for forgiveness was back in *Iliad* 9, and that by the time of *Iliad* 18 the question of forgiveness has become “moot” (2010:61). The reason that Konstan offers for this is that in *Iliad* 9, Agamemnon had, via his embassies, offered Achilles compensation in the form of gifts and the hand of one of his daughters in marriage (2010:60). As Agamemnon had originally wronged Achilles by publicly calling into question his heroic virtue and preeminence among the Achaeans, Agamemnon’s offer of compensation could be seen to be a moral reason for Achilles to forgive, insofar as it affirms Achilles’ heroic virtue. What we do not see, then, in Achilles’ renunciation of his resentment at Agamemnon is Griswoldian forgiveness. What we might see, however, is perhaps the earliest articulation in Western thought of one of Griswold’s conditions: the offender’s narrative account of her wrongdoing.

More importantly, in this speech we see the most poignant expression of the depth of Achilles’ wrath at Agamemnon which, though overcome now by his more intense sorrow, still burns dully within him. But it is the “incomparable” expression of the ubiquitous human struggle to forgive in this passage that Griswold finds most striking (2007a:xiii). Indeed, it is with this speech of Achilles that Griswold chooses to open his monograph, preceding it with the words:

Who among us has not longed to be forgiven? Nearly everyone has suffered the bitter injustice of wrongdoing. Who has not struggled to forgive? Revenge impulsively surges in response to wrong, and becomes perversely delicious to those possessed by it. ... Homer’s Achilles captured the agony of our predicament incomparably well. (2007a:xiii)

How can Griswold, whose own account of forgiveness precludes the possibility that Achilles’ renunciation of his resentment is a manifestation of forgiveness, cite this as capturing the struggle to forgive?

Griswold clearly sees this passage as illuminative of the contemporary forgiveness discourse. I want to suggest that one way in which this passage is illuminating is that it is one of the earliest depictions available to us of the vice of unforgivingness. Consider Griswold’s sketch of the hard-hearted, unforgiving person:

We justly blame a person who is unable to forgive, when forgiveness is warranted, and judge that person as hard-hearted. The person who finds all wrong unforgivable seems imprisoned by the past, unable to grow, confined by the harsh bonds of resentment. He or she might also strike us as rather too proud, even arrogant, and as frozen in the uncompromising attitude. (2007a:xiv)

(2001). Scholars such as Luke Russell (2016) and Lucy Allais (2008), however, oppose Griswold in this, arguing that the work of moderating resentment is not exclusive to reasons, but that the moderation of resentment by other emotions, such as grief, might also qualify as forgiveness (2016). It is therefore a possibility, from the perspective of some modern conceptions of interpersonal forgiveness, for Achilles’ renunciation of his resentment towards Agamemnon, insofar as it is replaced by grief, to count as forgiveness.

This could very well be a character portrait of Achilles himself. Of all the Homeric characters to look to for the virtue of forgivingness, Achilles is — at least for most of the *Iliad* — one of the worst. While Achilles undoubtedly has good reasons for resenting Agamemnon, as the *Iliad* progresses and the tide of war turns in favour of the Trojans, new reasons come into play and one might suggest, as many Iliadic characters do, that Achilles is blameworthy for not being responsive to them. Such criticisms of Achilles in the *Iliad* focus on his hard-heartedness, pride, arrogance and pitilessness. For example, in *Iliad* 24 Apollo criticises Achilles' mind for lacking the quality of pliability (*oute noēma gnampton*, 40–41), that is, for having a blameworthy hardness to it and for the arrogance of his *thumos* (*agēnori thumōi*, 42).¹² This rebuke is prompted by Achilles' persistence in wreaking revenge on Hector for slaughtering his beloved Patroclus for nine days after Hector has actually died. In it we hear an echo of Hector's dying words, in which he also condemns Achilles' psychological state, accusing him of having a heart of iron in his chest (*sidēreos en phresi thumos*, 22.357). Achilles has just refused to fulfill Hector's dying wish of returning his corpse to his mother and father for the proper burial rites that would enable him to be received into the afterlife. He threatens the dying Hector, saying that he wished he could hack his flesh away and eat it raw (22.346–348), and taunts him with the knowledge that his corpse will soon be nothing more than carrion for wild beasts of prey (22.345–354). And, again, in the embassy of *Iliad* 9 it is Achilles' heart that is the focus of Phoenix's rebuke: "Then, Achilleus, beat down your great anger. / It is not yours to have a pitiless heart [*nēlees ētor*]. The very immortals / can be moved [*streptoi*]; their virtue and honour and strength are greater than ours are, / and yet with libations and with savour men turn back even the immortals / in supplication, when any man does wrong and transgresses" (9.496–501). Achilles' refusal to be moved by Agamemnon's offer of compensation is, Phoenix argues, impious in its pridefulness. Why should Achilles have such a pitiless heart, if even the gods can be moved to pardon those who have offended them?

In the first Iliadic example considered by Konstan, then, we do not find interpersonal forgiveness according to Griswold. However, what we do find in Achilles' refusal to renounce his resentment at Agamemnon throughout most of the *Iliad*, is a depiction of the vice of unforgivingness. The existence of the vice of unforgivingness suggests the existence of its opposite, forgivingness; otherwise according to which criteria is Achilles thought to be morally blameworthy by Apollo and Phoenix? What we find in Konstan's second Iliadic example, I will suggest, is an Achilles who has progressed slightly along the virtue spectrum from unforgivingness towards forgivingness.

¹² Apollo's rebuke is found in the following speech to the gods: "No, you gods; your desire is to help this cursed Achilleus / within whose breast there are no feelings of justice, nor can / his mind be bent [*oute noēma gnampton*], but his purposes are fierce, like a lion / who when he has given way to his own great strength and his haughty / spirit [*agēnori thumōi*], goes among the flocks of men, to devour them" (*Il.* 24.39–43).

The second Iliadic scene discussed by Konstan is that between Achilles and Priam in *Iliad* 24. The gods have sent Priam to Achilles' tent to beseech him to cease his maltreatment of Hector's corpse and return it to the Trojans to be buried:

Tall Priam / came in unseen by the other men and stood close beside him / and caught the knees of Achilleus in his arms, and kissed the hands / that were dangerous and manslaughtering and had killed so many of his sons. ... /... Priam spoke to him in the words of a suppliant: / 'Achilleus like the gods, remember your father, one who / is of years like mine, and on the door-sill of sorrowful old age. / And they who dwell nearby encompass him and afflict him, / nor is there any to defend him against the wrath, the destruction.' (24.476–489)

This act of supplication recalls to mind the last person to attempt to supplicate Achilles, the dying Hector, as well as the savagery of Achilles' response to him. We are therefore suitably shocked when Achilles responds to Priam's supplication not with anger, but by taking Priam's hand and raising him from his humble position at Achilles' feet:

[Achilleus] rose from his chair, and took the old man by the hand, and set him / on his feet again, in pity for the grey head and the grey beard, / and spoke to him and addressed him in winged words: 'Ah, unlucky, / surely you have had much evil to endure in your spirit'. (*Il.* 24.515–518)

Achilles not only agrees to Priam's request but invites the old man to partake of a meal with him in order to discuss how long Priam would like a cessation of hostilities so that Hector may receive the proper burial rites.

This instance of Achilles' renunciation of his resentment is even less likely to fulfill Griswold's forgiveness conditions than the previous example. Achilles surely does not foreswear revenge completely, proceeding to fight against the Trojans after the end of the temporary truce. Nor does Achilles wholly succeed in moderating his resentment against Priam, let alone commit to fully relinquishing it. Achilles' control of his anger is tenuous at best: he responds to Priam's reference to compensation with anger, warning Priam not to provoke him (24.559–570); he earns himself a comparison to a lion as he bounds off to tend to Hector's corpse (24.572); and he takes pains not to let Priam see the corpse before it has been washed and anointed, lest Priam's grief brim over and Achilles' rage follow suit, resulting in Achilles taking Priam's life (24.582–586). However, recalling Griswold's contention that the virtue of forgivingness is associated with the virtues of self-command, understanding and trust, here we see Achilles show an uncharacteristic degree of self-command. Moreover, it is not even clear how to structure this scene along the lines of a traditional forgiveness interaction. Achilles is clearly in the wrong having spent the previous nine days trailing the corpse of Priam's son around the city behind his chariot, but it is Priam who humbles himself before Achilles here. Could Priam be the wrongdoer from Achilles' perspective insofar as he fathered the man who killed Achilles' beloved?

It is perhaps strange, then, that Konstan would choose to examine a scene so unlikely to qualify as Griswoldian forgiveness. However, just as Griswold thinks that

Achilles' renunciation of his anger at Agamemnon illuminates contemporary forgiveness discourse, so too does he think this interaction between Achilles and Priam is worth contemplating. Specifically, Griswold thinks this scene is worth contemplating insofar as it acts as a "touchstone" for the elements of shared humanity, pity, sympathy requisite for forgiveness (2007a:xxii); indeed, Griswold returns to this interaction frequently throughout *Forgiveness*. As noted above, it is the sympathetic identification of the victim with the offender that is at the heart of the victim's transformation in the dyadic relationship of forgiveness. Griswold contends:

The encounter between Achilles and Priam is one of the most compelling depictions in all of Western literature of the recognition of shared humanity. ... There is no question of forgiveness or reconciliation, no talk about who is right or wrong, no talk about injury or justice. Yet they do recognize each other's humanity. First, each is reminded by the other of loved ones; Priam puts Achilles in mind of his own father, and he weeps for him; Achilles reminds Priam of Hector, and he too grieves. They participate in analogous webs of human attachment and recognize that as the case: just as you are a father, so I have a father; as I am a father, you have a father; just as I am a son, so you have a son. We may not care for each other, but we each care for our kin, and know what care is. There are analogous ties of concern, of misery, of rootedness in and love of one's homeland. (2007a:77)

In this encounter, we see Griswold's reframing condition poignantly realised, each character ceasing to identify the other exclusively with his wrongdoing. Priam ceases to identify Achilles exclusively with the murderer of his son and mutilator of his corpse to such an extent that he is able to share a meal with him and marvel at the hero's stature and beauty (24.629–630).

Achilles too succeeds in reframing Priam, ceasing to see Priam as his enemy, as the father of the man who slaughtered his beloved Patroclus, and coming to see him as someone worth listening to (24.633).¹³ More importantly, Achilles is able to see that he and Priam are fellow human beings, united in their sorrow and their vulnerability to the whims of the gods.¹⁴ This is a starkly different Achilles from the hard-hearted, proud, arrogant and pitiless Achilles we encountered earlier. What differentiates this Achilles from the earlier one is his experience of suffering, not merely his own suffering from the loss of his beloved Patroclus, but his participation in the suffering of others, such as his father. Again we find ourselves facing the question of whether

¹³ "But when they had put aside their desire for eating and drinking, / Priam, son of Dardanos, gazed upon Achilleus, wondering / at his size and beauty, for he seemed like an outright vision / of gods. Achilleus in turn gazed on Dardanian Priam / and wondered, as he saw his brave looks and listened to him talking" (24.628–632).

¹⁴ Achilles responds to Priam's grief with the words: "Such is the way the gods spun life for unfortunate mortals, / that we live in unhappiness, but the gods themselves have no sorrows. / There are two urns that stand on the door-sill of Zeus. They are unlike / for the gifts they bestow: an urn of evils, an urn of blessings. / If Zeus who delights in thunder mingles these and bestows them / on man, he shifts, and moves now in evil, again in good fortune. / But when Zeus bestows from the urn of sorrows, he makes a failure / of man ..." (24.525–531).

emotions such as grief can do the work of moderating resentment. It is through his suffering that Achilles is able to feel sympathy for Priam. In *Iliad* 24, we see an Achilles who, far from being trapped in the solipsism of pride and arrogance, is able both to participate in the suffering of others and see things from the perspective of others, showing understanding, another of the virtues Griswold associates with forgivingness. Recall that in Priam's first words to Achilles he entreated him to remember his father, adding that the two men stand on the door-sill of old age together (24.486–487). Hearing these words, Achilles weeps alongside Priam. Through his grief at his father's frailty and defencelessness, Achilles is able to move beyond his own sorrow, and participate in that of another father: Priam. He is, moreover, able to see himself through Priam's eyes, as having been the cause of immense grief to Priam and his family (24.541–551), a point also made by Griswold (2007a:78). While Achilles is certainly no exemplar of the virtue of forgivingness, we can see from his encounter with Priam that he is no longer characterised so much by unforgivingness as he once was.

It is clear that Konstan is right to conclude that neither of the *Iliadic* encounters qualifies as paradigmatic examples of interpersonal forgiveness as conceived by Griswold. That said, it is hard to think of many examples that Griswold would accept as manifesting perfect forgiveness. In this paper, I have shown that even when we limit our discussion to Griswold's account of forgiveness, there is more room for interpersonal forgiveness in the *Iliad* than Konstan would have us believe. Indeed, even though Griswold argues that interpersonal forgiveness was not valued by the classical Greek philosophers, he is reluctant to claim that they lacked the concept of it. Griswold expresses his reluctance thus:

Ancient pagan notions of forgiveness are a vast and poorly studied topic. That such notions existed is more than merely probable. The vocabulary for them was in place, along with a cluster of related notions — pardon, mercy, pity, compassion, apology, debt, relief, excuse, among others — as was a sophisticated understanding of the emotions (in particular, retributive anger) to which forgiveness somehow responds. (2007a:1)¹⁵

I join Griswold and urge scholars to resist accepting Konstan's denial of forgiveness, Griswoldian or otherwise, in archaic Greece. Since Griswold's monograph, there has been a welcome flourishing of scholarship on interpersonal forgiveness in various ancient societies, although we are yet to see one on archaic Greece.¹⁶ That such a study is necessary can be seen even from the brief discussion of it here.

¹⁵ Griswold continues: "Similarly, the ends that forgiveness proposes, such as reconciliation, peace, and certainly the forswearing of revenge, were well understood. I very much doubt that there existed a single view on any of these topics (something like 'the ancient pagan view'), though establishing that point would require a careful and comprehensive study of ancient literature, law court speeches and jurisprudence, the writings of the historians and physicians, and of course the philosophical texts. As is true in respect of other ideas, it would not surprise if the philosophers rejected or modified common views about forgiveness and related notions. Nonetheless, such notions did circulate in pre-Christian pagan thought and culture (counting here the Roman as well as the Greek), contrary to common wisdom" (2007a:1).

¹⁶ For example, see: Harbsmeier (2011) on ancient China; Dover (1991) on ancient Greece; Krašovec (1999) on ancient Israel; Ramelli (2011) on early Christianity; and Romilly (1995) on Greek tragedy.

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