

Assuaging Rage:
Remorse, Repentance and Forgiveness in the Classical World.¹

"forgiveness is a variable human process and a practice
with culturally distinct versions"²

In the second book of Aristotle's Rhetoric, which provides the most extensive analysis of the emotions that has survived from ancient Greece, the first emotion to be examined in detail is anger (ὀργή); following this, Aristotle devotes a section to *πραότης* or *πρᾶυνσις*, "calmness" or "calming down," which he treats as the emotion opposite to anger. As many critics have observed, calmness does not sound much like an emotion; however, if we think of the *πρόθη* as responses to the behavior of others which have the effect of altering our judgments, which is the way Aristotle himself defines them (adding that they must be accompanied by pleasure and pain), then we can more easily see why the elimination of anger might also figure in Aristotle's inventory of the passions.

In this section, Aristotle discusses various ways of appeasing another person's anger. First of all, given that anger (or ὀργή), as Aristotle defines it, is a response to a slight or belittlement, and since, as he points out, "a slight is a voluntary thing," it follows that people are peaceably disposed "toward those who do not belittle them, or who do so involuntarily, or who at least seem like that" (2.3, 1380a10-12). Thus, you should try to show that you meant just the opposite, or that however you behaved toward the other person you also behave toward yourself,

¹ This paper is the text (equipped with a few footnotes) of the talk I delivered as invited foreign speaker at the annual conference of the Canadian Classical Association/ Société Canadienne des Études Classiques, held in Montréal on 12-14 May 2008; I am most grateful to the organizers of the conference for the invitation, and also to the editors of Phoenix for inviting me to publish it in this journal. I wish to thank Charles Griswold and the participants in the Liberty Fund colloquium on Forgiveness, held in San Francisco on 14-17 June 2007, for many helpful insights into the subject of forgiveness. The discussion of Menander's Samia is drawn in part from the keynote address that I was invited to give at the graduate student colloquium on anger, held on 16-17 March 2007, under the sponsorship of the Classics Department at the University of Western Ontario; I thank the participants in that conference for many useful comments. A much shorter version of this talk was presented, in Spanish, at the meeting of the Sociedad Española de Estudios Clásicos, held in Valencia on 22-26 October 2007, and will appear in the acts of that conference under the title, "Apaciguando la cólera: Remordimiento, arrepentimiento, y perdón en el mundo clásico."

² Margaret Urban Walker, Moral Repair: Reconstructing Moral Relations after Wrongdoing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 152.

since, as Aristotle says, people do not normally belittle themselves. He then adds that our anger is lessened toward those who admit that they were wrong and show that they regret it (1380a14: καὶ τοῖς ὁμολογοῦσι καὶ μεταμελομένοις). For, Aristotle explains, it is as though they have paid the penalty for the pain that they caused you.

Now, Aristotle would seem to be recommending that, to assuage anger, one should apologize and express remorse, and by implication ask forgiveness of the person who has been offended. But in fact the situation is not so clear. For he goes on to offer as evidence of the effectiveness of such an approach the treatment of slaves who have aroused the ire of their masters: "we rather punish those who talk back and deny what they have done, but we leave off being angry at those who confess that they are being justly punished" (1380a17-19). Aristotle explains that, by denying what is obvious, the slave seems to be acting shamelessly, and shamelessness in turn resembles contempt -- which Aristotle identifies as one of the major stimuli to anger, since contempt is nothing other than a kind of belittlement. So too, Aristotle says, we give over anger toward those who adopt a humble attitude (ταπεινοῦμενοι), since this is a sign that they are beneath us and so fear us, and "no one belittles a person he fears" (1380a24). In the same way, we tend to relax our anger against those who beg and plead, since in doing so they humble themselves. Clearly, Aristotle is not so much interested in the sincere expression of regret or remorse, which might elicit forgiveness, as he is in the demonstration that any hint of insult was unintentional, since, by abasing yourself, you openly exhibit your recognition of the other person's superiority -- and this is just the opposite of a slight. Furthermore, Aristotle notes that it is not just humility that allays anger: a show of strength can do so as well. As Aristotle puts it, "it is impossible to be afraid and be angry at the same time" (1380a33-34). That is the way to treat anger on the part of a slave, for example, should a slave ever presume to feel or show such a proud sentiment.

Aristotle's analysis of the appeasement of anger is, as we see, focused entirely on relations of status and power, which is in accord with his conception of anger as a consequence exclusively of a slight or diminishment. His analysis thus has little to do with forgiving an admitted wrong, and indeed he makes no mention here of pardon or συγγνώμη. This is not surprising, given that, in the Rhetoric (1.6, 1358b32-33), Aristotle asserts a litigant in court "would never concede that he has done wrong, for if he did there would be no need for a trial" --

nor for forgiveness. In the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle notes that *συνγνώμη* is appropriate when people act either under external compulsion, which includes conditions beyond the strength of any human being to resist (1110a24-26), or else in excusable ignorance of the facts or circumstances (1109b18-1111a2). Both these cases fall under the category of involuntary acts (1109b30-32), and so do not involve guilt or exoneration. In a similar way, Aristotle later observes that we are more inclined to pardon people who surrender to those desires that are natural and common to all (1149b4-6), since they are presumably irresistible.

Today, the idea of forgiveness is understood to entail the voluntary surrender of anger and the desire for retribution precisely when anger is deserved: we do not forgive involuntary acts, but rather excuse them. Thus, the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary gives as the definition of the verb "forgive": "to give up resentment of or claim to requital," and "to cease to feel resentment against (an offender)" (I leave aside the special sense of remission of debts). As Vladimir Jankélévitch writes in his book entitled Forgiveness, "the scandal of forgiveness and the folly of love have it in common that their object is someone that does not 'merit' it."³ In an article entitled "Plato and Forgiveness as a Virtue", Charles Griswold observes: "To forgive someone ... assumes their responsibility for the wrongdoing. Indeed, part of what makes forgiveness so interesting is that it represents a change in the moral relation between wrongdoer and wronged that accepts the fact that wrong was indeed done, and done (in some sense) voluntarily."⁴ Griswold goes on to state that "To forgive is to forswear not only revenge, but also anger (either by giving up anger or by putting oneself on the road to giving up warranted anger)." For Aristotle, however, anger is by definition the desire to avenge an insult (Rhetoric 2.2, 1378a31-33), and it is not assuaged until the damage to one's status or reputation (*δόξα*) is repaired: for this is just what revenge (*τιμωρία*) aims to accomplish. The slave who admits that he did wrong, in Aristotle's example, is not altering the moral relation between himself and his master: he is simply demonstrating a proper respect for the master's superior status.

There were, of course, other philosophical schools in classical antiquity, but none seems to have taken much of an interest in forgiveness. Griswold, in the above-cited article, remarks

³ Vladimir Jankélévitch, Forgiveness, Eng. trans. by Andrew Kelley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) p. 94.

⁴ Charles Griswold, "Plato and Forgiveness as a Virtue," Ancient Philosophy 21 (2007) 269-87; see also Charles L. Griswold, Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

that "Plato never sees it as a virtue or commendable quality -- certainly not one of any significance" (279). The reason for Plato's neglect, according to Griswold, is that a good person is invulnerable to harm, and so has nothing to forgive; and since he will himself not hurt others voluntarily, neither will he be in need of forgiveness. The Stoics, in turn, regarded anger, like other passions, as unbecoming to a sage (Chrysippus' defined ὀργή as "the desire to take vengeance against one who is believed to have committed a wrong contrary to one's deserts," SVF 3.395 = Stobaeus 2.91.10). A wise man will disdain a slight on the part of a fool, as the Stoics called those who fell short of virtue. But this does not mean that he will be inclined to forgiveness, for that would be to ignore the claims of justice: in effect, to condone the crime. Seneca, in his treatise on clemency, asks: "Why will a wise person not forgive [ignoscet]?" And he explains, "Pardon [venia] is the remission of a deserved penalty." But the wise man acts according to what is due, and so he will not remit the penalty for an intentional wrong (De clementia 2.7.1). Seneca does allow that a sage will spare (parcet) an offender, and try to improve him (corriget); and thus "he will act as though he forgave, but he will not forgive, since he who forgives confesses that he has failed to do something that should be done" (2.7.2).

Musonius Rufus, a Stoicizing philosopher who was a contemporary of Seneca's, sees as proper to a philosopher a mild and humane temper, and a disposition to pardon any offenses against himself (ὥστε συνγνώμης ἄξιοῦν εἴ τις πλημμελήσειεν εἰς αὐτόν, 10), rather than go to trial. For although by doing so he may seem to be defending himself, in truth he betrays his own inconsistency, since the philosopher claims that "a good man cannot be wronged by a bad man, and yet he brings charges as if he believed that he, though a good man, were being wronged by people who are wicked." The Socratic premise of the argument obviates the need for forgiveness.

What happens when one forgives an acknowledged wrong? Are the Stoics right that forgiveness is incompatible with justice? To escape the paradox, modern accounts of forgiveness generally seek to specify the conditions under which it is reasonable or appropriate to absolve an offender. Thus Alice MacLachlan, in her doctoral dissertation entitled The Nature and Limits of Forgiveness (Boston University, 2008), affirms: "We forgive for reasons, and these reasons are subject to moral evaluation; there are better and worse reasons to forgive"; but this

does not mean that "what was done is no longer wrongful."⁵ Charles Griswold too states that "forgiveness responds to reasons.... It is, as we say, earned, or due; and those reasons have to do with (among other things) steps taken by the offender, and the nature of the injury done. Forgiving cannot be forgetting, or 'getting over' anger by any means whatever" (2007 : 276). Very well, but what are the conditions that warrant forgiveness, and how does forgiveness respond to them? Most generally, the process of forgiveness -- for it is best conceived as a process -- involves the following stages. First, there must be honest remorse on the part of the wrong-doer or offender; this may be expressed, for example, as an apology. Second, there must be evidence of repentance, that is, not just regret but the intention to change or reform; in recognizing that what he did was wrong, the offender achieves a new moral insight and character. Third, there is required a corresponding change of heart in the forgiver -- as Alice MacLachlan notes, "The idea of forgiveness as a change of heart is the image most commonly alluded to by contemporary philosophers writing on the subject" (p. 57). The result is that the forgiver does not excuse or forget the injury, but sees it as something pertaining to a past that no longer holds sway over the present. Thus, following an idea developed by Hannah Arendt (in The Human Condition), MacLachlan concludes that "forgiveness 'undoes' or transforms the wrong" (p. 40).

Consistent with their lack of interest in forgiveness as a virtue, the classical philosophers -- and indeed, classical writers generally -- seem to have had little interest in the themes of remorse or repentance. In his recent book on the Roman emotions, Robert Kaster explains that one of the characteristics of remorse is "a seeking of forgiveness, as a prelude to reintegration in a community," and he concludes, after a thorough study of Latin paenitentia and related words, that Tertullian was right to deny that true remorse, that is "a change of heart that leads one to seek purgation and forgiveness," was known to pre-Christian Romans.⁶ David Winston likewise affirms that "Greek philosophy generally had little interest in the feelings of regret or remorse that may at times lead an individual to a fundamental reassessment of his former life path,"⁷ in

⁵ Alice MacLachlan, The Nature and Limits of Forgiveness (diss. Boston University, 2008) pp. 16, 18.

⁶ Robert Kaster, Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp. 80, 81.

⁷ David Winston, "Judaism and Hellenism: Hidden Tensions in Philo's Thought," Studia Philonica Annual 2 (1990) p. 4.

contrast to the Jewish tradition, in which repentance played a fundamental role. Philo of Alexandria, for example, devoted a section of his treatise On Virtues (175-86) precisely to the sentiment of μετάνοια. And yet, as I have argued elsewhere,⁸ even Philo, cognizant as he was of the classical Greek philosophical tradition, assigns a secondary status to μετάνοια as a virtue, precisely because it depends upon a prior error; just as health is the greatest good for the body, and recovery next best, so too repentance "is not ranked in the first and highest class of goods, but as winning second prize in the next class" (176). Contrast the fully developed conception of repentance as moral transformation in the treatise "On Repentance" by Moses Maimonides: "What is repentance? It is that the sinner shall desert his wrong doing, remove it from his thoughts and determine in his heart not to do it again."⁹ Maimonides insists that "the penitent should cry continually before the Lord with tears and supplications..., and isolate himself completely from the sin he has committed"; and he goes so far as to suggest that "he may change his name as if to say 'I am another person, not the man who did those things...!' He may leave his home because exile atones for evil as it leads to humility and a lowly spirit" (sec. 4, p. 112). Maimonides is clearly imagining a thoroughgoing transformation in the character of the wrongdoer, to the point of a change of identity. To be sure, he recommends a posture of humility and self-abasement; but the purpose is not to enhance the status of the injured party, but to enable the penitent to achieve a new self. Correspondingly there must be a transformation or conversion in the heart of the forgiver: "A man is forbidden to be cruel and must be conciliatory; he should be easily appeased, and hard to make angry and, when a wrongdoer begs his forgiveness, he ought to forgive with a whole heart and willing spirit" (10, p. 113).

Much of the language here is reminiscent of Christian attitudes toward penitence and forgiveness, and one may recognize in the background the biblical conception of sinful humanity and a merciful God who forgives us despite our weaknesses and errors, provided that we turn to Him -- "convert" in the literal sense of the term -- with our entire mind and heart. This conception has even been enshrined in modern law, at least until quite recently. I quote from the Código Penal of Spain (Decreto 14 septiembre 1973): "Extenuation due to repentance, which has

⁸ David Konstan, "Philo's De virtutibus in the Perspective of Classical Greek Philosophy," Studia Philonica Annual 18 (2006) 59-72.

⁹ Cited from the translation by H.M. Russell and Rabbi J. Weinberg, The Book of Knowledge: From the Mishneh Torah of Maimonides (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1983) sec. 2.2, p. 111.

a religious and moral dimension, subjectively requires the manifestation of an ethical-psychological state of soul in the offender that changes his perverse criminal will for a 'sound' one, as a result of an act of inner personal contrition deriving from a felt grief and regret and from his self-condemnation." The article specifies further that "repentance ... demands grief or regret of a moral nature, similar to the contrition of Christian theologians, along with self-condemnation." The attenuation of guilt that such repentance enables seems to unite pardon in the judicial sense with a personal kind of forgiveness that looks to an inner change of character in the offender.

The new "Ley orgánica 10/1995, de 23 de noviembre, del código penal" represents a reaction against the religious conception of repentance, and the attendant notion of forgiveness, in the older code. Thus, we read concerning confession: "One must be truthful in the sense that one must recount sincerely all that has happened in so far as he is aware, without concealing anything of importance and without adding false information so as to exculpate oneself or others." The new code further explains: "Extenuation on the basis of spontaneous repentance has, beginning with the 1995 reform of the Penal Code, a markedly objective character, inasmuch as it attends exclusively to the fact of whether -- within the conditions of the law -- the relevant behavior favoring the administration of justice is realized ..., thereby replacing the moral grounds represented by the demand for an urge to spontaneous repentance with a more objective criterion."¹⁰

Outside of Spain, this anxiety over the implications of confession, as enshrined in mediaeval law, found expression still earlier. Annalise Acorn cites the Baron de Montesquieu's The Spirit of the Laws (1752):

It is one abuse of this tribunal [Courts of Human Justice] that, of two persons accused of the same crime, he who denies is condemned to die; and he who confesses avoids the punishment. This has its source in monastic ideas, where he who denies seems in a state of impenitence and damnation; and he who confesses, in a state of repentance and salvation. But a distinction of this kind can have no relation to human tribunals. Human justice, which sees only the actions, has but one compact with men, namely, that of

¹⁰ I am grateful to Luis Francisco Nieto Guzmán de Lázaro for having called my attention to these texts.

innocence; divine justice, which sees the thoughts, has two, that of innocence and repentance.¹¹

But is it true that the Greeks and Romans of the pre-Christian era had no comparable concept of forgiveness and moral transformation, and supposed that the appeasement of anger and the relinquishing of revenge were solely a matter of restoring the dignity of the injured party, assuming that a wise man could indeed be harmed? Did remorse and repentance play no significant role in the process of reconciliation between enemies? And, if not, did the Greeks and Romans have some moral equivalent to forgiveness in their vocabulary and ethical system?

To approach an answer to these questions, let us turn to some texts -- not philosophical, now, but literary, where we can perhaps see forgiveness at work. The *Iliad* provides a classic case of the renunciation of anger, when Achilles gives over his wrath against Agamemnon and rejoins the battle to avenge the death of his friend Patroclus. Does he forgive Agamemnon? Many modern critics have thought that he does not. The time for forgiveness, had Achilles been so disposed, was when Agamemnon offered him countless gifts, via the embassy of Odysseus, Ajax and Nestor. But at that time Achilles rejected the offer of reconciliation, still angry at the way that Agamemnon had insulted him before the rest of the Achaeans. Some have supposed that Agamemnon's offer was something like a buy-out, an effort to purchase Achilles' favor without a proper apology or recognition of his own guilt, with appropriate gestures of remorse and repentance. They find support for this interpretation in Agamemnon's insistence that Achilles defer to his superior status (9.160-61): "Let him yield to me to the degree that I am more kingly (βασιλεύτερος) and claim to be greater in lineage," words that Odysseus discreetly suppresses when he repeats Agamemnon's message; and also in Achilles' curt remark that "he is as hateful to me as the gates of Hades who hides one thing in his mind but says another" (9.312-13), as though Achilles intuited the real attitude of Agamemnon (compare his sarcastic suggestion that some other Achaean wed Agamemnon's daughter -- one who is "kinglier" than he, 9.391-92), although these words may simply be Achilles' way of preparing his friends for his own forthright rejection of their plea. Achilles, on this reading, refuses to forgive the wrong

¹¹ Book 26, "Of Laws in Relation to the Order of Things Which They Determine," Chapter 12, "That Human Courts of Justice Should Not Be Regulated by the Maxims of Those Tribunals Which Relate to the Other Life, Continued," available online at <http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol.htm>. Cf. Annalise Acorn, "'Sumimasen, I'm Sorry': Apology in Dispute Resolution in North America and Japan" *Aichigakuin Law Review* 48 (2007) 131-161.

done to him, because the proper conditions for granting forgiveness have not been met. When he finally does become reconciled with Agamemnon, it will be because a more powerful emotion -- his grief at the loss of Patroclus -- has driven out his resentment at the insult he suffered, and the question of forgiveness has become moot.¹² But we may also read Achilles' response as simply revealing the depth of his mortification for the way he was humiliated by Agamemnon, which will take him more time to overcome. While it is true that he rejoins the Achaean army to avenge Patroclus, he is also ready now to be reconciled with Agamemnon. In any case, it seems forced to interpret Achilles' reaction in terms of values, such as remorse and forgiveness, which are not foregrounded in the poem itself.

The Odyssey is hardly the place to look for the foreswearing of revenge, but there is one episode that might suggest that forgiveness has occurred: I am thinking of the domestic tranquillity that appears to reign in the palace of Menelaus, who seems to have given over whatever rancor he may have entertained over Helen's elopement with Paris. It is impossible to know whether their reconciliation is based on sincere repentance on her part, or a change of heart on his. In the Iliad, Menelaus and the other Greeks seem to regard Helen as a possession to be recovered rather than as an errant wife deserving punishment; back in Sparta, her promptness to serve her husband and his guests a draught of nepenthe to dull their sorrows (4.219-32) suggests that the couple have agreed to forget the past. As Griswold observes, however, "forgiving cannot be forgetting."

Nor is there much forgiving in evidence in tragedy. This is not the place to do a survey of uses of the term *συνγνώμη*, which in any case would not be terribly revealing, since it embraces a wide range of meanings, including sympathy and judicial pardon, among which it is not easy to distinguish the sense of forgiveness. In those plays in which the reconciliation of antagonistic parties is represented, such as Aeschylus' Eumenides or Sophocles' Philoctetes, forgiveness does not seem to be at issue: no one admits to guilt or offers an apology, there are no gestures of remorse, no sign of a change of heart toward the offender. Odysseus' sense of pity toward the mad Ajax in Sophocles' drama induces him to overlook Ajax's attempt to kill him and

¹² Compare the interpretation of the scholiast [bT] ad Il. 18.112-13: "of the two emotions besetting Achilles' soul, anger [ὄργη] and grief [λύπη], one wins out.... For the emotion involving Patroclus is strongest of all, and so it is necessary to abandon his wrath [μῆτις] and avenge himself on his enemies."

the other Achaean leaders, and to challenge vigorously the determination of Agamemnon and Menelaus to deny him a proper burial. Of course, since Ajax is dead, there is no question of an apology for what he planned, nor was there any sign of remorse on his part while he was still alive. Odysseus bases his argument on the laws of the gods and the duty to respect a noble warrior in death (1343-45), thereby sidestepping the matter of Ajax's wrongful act, or attempted act.

The genre in which forgiveness, or something like forgiveness, plays the greatest role is New Comedy. Since there is time for only a single example, I have chosen Menander's Samia, which is particularly rich in scenes of reconciliation. To remind you of the plot, two Athenian men, Demeas and Niceratus, have been travelling abroad. In their absence, Demeas' adopted son, Moschion, has raped the daughter of Niceratus, as a result of which she became pregnant and gave birth to a child. In fear of their parents' reaction, they conspire with Chrysis, Demeas' concubine, to pretend that the baby is hers and that Demeas is its father. This too poses a problem: she is a concubine and a foreigner -- from Samos, as the title indicates -- and Demeas has no reason to wish to raise a child of hers. Nevertheless, Chrysis rightly predicts that he will get over it, since he is in love with her, and "this quickly leads even the most anger-prone person to reconciliation" (82-83: τοῦτο δ' εἰς διαλλαγὰς ἄγει τάχιστα καὶ τὸν ὀργιλώτατον). When he finds out what has happened, Demeas is indeed furious: "It seems that, unbenownst to me, I have a lawfully wedded hetaira [γαμετὴν ἑταίραν]" (130-31). He declares that he is not one to raise a bastard son [νόθος, 136] for someone else, and that he is prepared to cast Chrysis out of the house. Moschion, however, objects: "which of us is a bastard, by the gods, and which legitimate, given that we are born human?" (137-38). The following bit is mutilated, and so we cannot tell what further arguments the boy may have offered, but Demeas is ultimately persuaded to relent. What explains his calming down?

Chrysis' offense, in Demeas' view, consists in having nursed the infant rather than expose it. In so doing, she behaved as if she and Demeas were social equals -- husband and wife instead of Athenian citizen and foreign concubine -- and that she had the right to decide the baby's fate. This is in effect to demean Demeas; hence, his rage. Two factors, in turn, work to mollify him. First, there is his love for Chrysis, which, as Chrysis predicts, softens him. As Aristotle remarks in the Rhetoric: "we do not render judgments in the same way when we are in pain or rejoicing,

or when we love or hate" (1356a15-16). Second, there is Moschion's argument that the child is as good as legitimate: hence, Chrysis' behavior -- and by implication her own status -- are less inappropriate than they seemed. This is a radical claim, since it undermines one of the fundamental social distinctions in classical Athens, that between citizen and non-citizen, and Demeas is understandably amazed at it. Still, he gives in. Has he forgiven Chrysis? It is hard to say. If he accepts Moschion's argument, then he has changed his mind about the nature of the offense, and no wrong was done. More likely, he is conciliating his beloved step-son and his mistress, and simply swallows his irritation.

However, a greater shock is in store for Demeas. For when he accidentally overhears his old nurse say that the real father of the child is Moschion, he concludes that Moschion had an affair with Chrysis during his absence. At first, he explores the possibility that he may be leaping to a mistaken conclusion -- a good Aristotelian strategy for allaying anger. Addressing himself to the audience as if they were judges he declares: "I am not yet upset. For I know the boy, by the gods, and he has always been well behaved until now and as respectful as possible toward me." Yet the evidence of what he has heard seems indisputable, and he ends up beside himself with rage (εξέστηχ' ὄλωσ, 279). Nevertheless, he still seeks ways of exonerating his son: "Why are you shouting, you fool? Control yourself, bear up. Moschion has not wronged you" (327-28). He reasons that Moschion did not act deliberately, since in that case he would have opposed the idea of marrying Niceratus' daughter; but in fact, he consented at once, when Demeas proposed the idea to him. Moschion, he adds, was doubtless drunk and not in control of himself (340: οὐκ ὄντ' ἐν ἑαυτοῦ) when Chrysis seduced him; besides, he is still young -- another mitigating factor in regard to anger. Demeas repeats that it is not at all plausible (πιθανόν, 343) that a youth who was always well-behaved and modest should treat his own father badly, "even if he was ten-times over adopted, and not my own son by birth: for I look not to this, but to his character [τρόπος]" (346-47). Demeas is here applying something like the logic that Moschion employed to persuade him to condone Chrysis' decision to keep the child. Unfortunately, it works to opposite effect. Having convinced himself of Moschion's innocence, Demeas turns violently against Chrysis: it is she who is "responsible for what happened" (338). "You must be a man," he admonishes himself: "forget your desire [πόθος], stop being in love" (349-50). He resolves to expel Chrysis from his house, while keeping the real cause concealed

for his son's sake, pretending that the reason is her presumptuousness in raising the child (374-75).

In pacifying his anger toward his son, Demeas convinces himself of the boy's innocence: a young man is easy prey for an experienced courtesan, and to resist her charms would be, as Aristotle puts it, beyond the powers of a human being (NE 1110a25). Demeas, then, does not so much forgive as exonerate Moschion in this episode.

But Demeas' problems are not over. When Moschion, unaware of Demeas' suspicions, pleads vigorously in behalf of Chrysis, Demeas concludes that he is joining Chrysis in wronging him (συναδικεῖ, 456). Hence, he must have been a willing partner in the affair. Moschion, aware of Demeas' growing agitation, declares: "it is not right to give everything over to anger," to which Niceratus adds: "he's right" (462-63). Bursting with rage (475), Demeas finally blurts out that he knows the child is Moschion's. But, Moschion, supposing that Demeas knows the whole truth, declares that what he did is nothing terrible -- tens of thousands have done likewise (485-87). Finally, he catches on to his father's error (522), and reveals that the mother is Niceratus' daughter. With this, Demeas' anger against his son and Chrysis evanesces, since he realizes that both are innocent of any offense against him.

Now it is Niceratus's turn to be furious. When Demeas tries to protect the infant, the two old men almost come to blows, as Niceratus concludes that Demeas has wronged him and was in on the scheme from the beginning (582-84). This is untrue, of course, but there is no way of denying that Moschion was at fault. The only way to appease Niceratus' rage is for Moschion to marry the girl (586, 599), and this indeed sets matters right.¹³ Forgiveness is beside the point.

We come now to the final act -- and a further surprise. Moschion is furious, now that he has reflected on the matter (cf. λογισμός, 620), that his father suspected him of sleeping with Chrysis (620-21). Only his passion (ἔρως) for Niceratus' daughter, he says, prevents him from leaving Athens for good and entering military service in remotest Bactria: once again, love serves to inhibit anger and revenge. Nevertheless, he desires some vengeance, if only in words, and so he pretends that he is off to the wars: this way he can give his father a fright (φοβῆσαι,

¹³ Cf. the approving comment of Diogenianus in Plutarch's Quaestiones convivales 712C: "In all his [i.e., Menander's] plays there is no passionate love for a male youth, and the violation of virgins ends up decently in marriage."

635), so that he will hesitate to treat him unfairly (ἀγνώμονεϊν, 637) in the future. When Demeas appears, he neither begs Moschion to stay nor dismisses him angrily (as Moschion had feared, 682-84). Rather, he acknowledges that Moschion has reason to be angry and hurt at having been wrongly accused (694-96), but he goes on to call Moschion's attention to the circumstances of the case (ἀλλ' ἐκεῖν' ὁμῶς θεώρει, 697). Here, then, is something new: Demeas frankly admits that he was in the wrong. Is he appealing for forgiveness? Let us take a closer look at his arguments.

Demeas first reminds Moschion that he is his father, and that he reared him from childhood: since Demeas gave him all that was pleasant in his life, Moschion should also put up with something painful. This is a plea for fairness, not a denial of guilt, and Demeas again flatly confesses: "I accused you unjustly: I was deluded, wrong, out of my mind" (702-03). Demeas next points out that even when he believed the worst of Moschion he kept it to himself, whereas Moschion is making his father's mistake public; thus Moschion's response is immoderate. Demeas does not challenge his reason for being angry, only his readiness to advertise a family quarrel to their enemies. Finally, Demeas urges Moschion not to dwell on the memory of a single day and forget all the rest. With this, he ends his apology, concluding that a son should obey his father willingly, not reluctantly.

Demeas clearly confesses his error. However, he alleges extenuating circumstances, and points out that his reaction was moderate -- unlike Moschion's now. Finally, he makes a claim to filial respect, which is the more compelling in that Demeas had always treated his adopted son generously. Doubtless, Demeas regrets his behavior; but does he repent of it? And does Moschion in turn experience a change of heart? It is impossible to evaluate the effect of his arguments on Moschion, because at this point Niceratus appears, furious that Moschion is about to make off and abandon the girl he got with child. Harry Sandbach (Gomme and Sandbach 1973: 628 ad 713ff.) explains the action as follows:

Demeas' speech puts Moschion in a difficult position. There is no answer to the accusations that he has allowed one incident to outweigh many years' good treatment, and that he has been ready to injure his father's reputation, while his father had done all he could to preserve that of his son. Reason requires that he should abandon his dramatic pose and apologize. But this is a thing that Moschion, like many young men, would find

very hard. He is saved by the sudden appearance of Nikeratos, which relieves him from the necessity of an immediate reply.¹⁴

As Sandbach reads the scene, Demeas has in effect turned the tables on Moschion, and put him in the position of the wrong-doer; thus, it is Moschion, rather than Demeas, who should be apologizing and asking his father to forgive him. If this is right, then Demeas has pulled a neat trick, defending himself by exposing a greater fault on the part of his son. In any case, Demeas finally convinces Niceratus that Moschion is indeed prepared to marry his daughter, and asks him to bring out the bride. With this, Moschion says, rather impertinently: "If you'd done this right away, you wouldn't have had the bother of playing the philosopher just now" (724-25). We are reminded of his earlier claim that his real motive for not leaving home is his passion for Niceratus' daughter, not consideration for his own father.

Does Moschion realize that he was wrong to be so angry with his father? Sandbach's view that it is he who ought to apologize is not entirely satisfactory, since Demeas has admitted that he was at fault: his earlier accusation can be seen as a slight against Moschion's character which Moschion had reason to resent. If Moschion does come to take a different view of his father's behavior, and so give up his anger, I imagine it is because Demeas, in confessing that he was at fault, has humbled himself, and this, as Aristotle points out, is an effective means of reducing ire. Though he insists on filial piety, he nevertheless treats his son as an equal, recognizing that he has as much right to be angry when insulted as he, Demeas, has. By demanding this show of respect, moreover, Moschion demonstrates that he is now a man, ready to assume the responsibilities of a married head of household -- it is this, indeed, that makes sense of the addition of the final act, which otherwise has the appearance of an arbitrary coda to the principal action of the play. The Samia concludes with a satisfying reconciliation between father and son, but the appeasement of anger continues to rest upon a proper regard for status and authority. As a moral basis for the giving over of anger, it works. But it is different, I believe, from the modern paradigm of remorse, repentance, and forgiveness.

¹⁴ A.W. Gomme and F.H. Sandbach, eds., Menander: A Commentary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 628 ad vv. 713ff.