

KATERINA SYNODINOU

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ZEUS AND ATHENA IN THE *ILIAD*

After his injury by Diomedes at the instigation and with the active participation of Athena, Ares retreats to Olympus and complains bitterly to Zeus about his daughter. It is worth while to quote his words<sup>1</sup>:

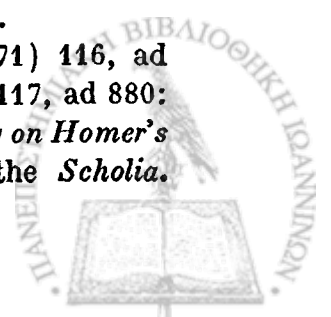
Zeū πάτερ, οὐ νεμεσίζῃ ὄρῶν τάδε καρτερὰ ἔργα;  
αἰεὶ τοι ῥίγιστα θεοὶ τετληότες εἰμὲν  
ἀλλήλων ἰότητι, χάριν ἄνδρεςσι φέροντες.  
σοὶ πάντες μαχόμεσθα· σὺ γὰρ τέκες ἄφρονα κούρην,  
οὐλομένην, ἣ τ' αἰὲν ἀήσυλα ἔργα μέμηλεν.  
ἄλλοι μὲν γὰρ πάντες, ὅσοι θεοὶ εἰς ἔν Ὀλύμπῳ,  
σοὶ τ' ἐπιπείθονται καὶ δεδμημέσθα ἕκαστος·  
ταύτην δ' οὔτ' ἐπεὶ προτιβάλλεαι οὔτε τι ἔργῳ,  
ἀλλ' ἀνιεῖς, ἐπεὶ αὐτὸς ἐγείναιο παῖδ' ἀτδῆλον (5. 872-80).

What is particularly striking in this stream of grievances is the image of a Zeus who unlike his authoritarian behaviour to other gods is presented as unusually yielding to his crazy daughter: not only does he not constrain her by word or by deed but he lets her do whatever she wants to do. The reason, according to Ares, for Zeus' exceptional attitude to Athena is his paternal relationship with her, as Ares emphasizes twice in the above cited passage, whatever the exact meaning of his words σὺ γὰρ τέκες ἄφρονα κούρην (875) and ἐπεὶ αὐτὸς ἐγείναιο παῖδ' ἀτδῆλον (880).

The same words have been taken as evidence that Homer knew or alluded to the special birth of Athena from Zeus' head which along with the whole tirade of Ares against her points to the close relationship between father and daughter<sup>2</sup>, a relationship undisputed in the myth in gen-

1. I quote from the Oxford edition by D. B. Monro - T. W. Allen, 31920.

2. See H. Erbse, ed. *Scholia Graeca in Homeri Iliadem*, II (Berolini, 1971) 146, ad 875a:...καὶ ὅτι ἐμφαίνει ὡς ἐκ μόνου τοῦ Διὸς γενομένης τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, and p. 117, ad 880: νῦν γὰρ τὸ αὐτὸς ἀντὶ τοῦ μόνου φησὶν...See also M.M. Willcock, *A Commentary on Homer's Iliad: Books I-VI* (London, 1970) 185, ad 875, who seems to agree with the *Scholia*.



eral<sup>1</sup>. But whether or not Homer was familiar with such a version of Athena's birth which Hesiod is the first to tell us explicitly in the *Theogony* is not of primary importance from our point of view. Doubtless the poet's words are not conclusive on this question and at any rate he does not focus on it<sup>2</sup>. As things stand, however, even if we do not take into consideration the legend of Athena's birth, the passage of Ares under discussion constitutes convincing evidence of the close relationship between Zeus and Athena, but we should add, on the condition that what is claimed there must be confirmed by the cumulative evidence from the *Iliad* referring to the same relationship. Obviously if things are not quite so, we are obliged to modulate somewhat our stand and to attempt to find an explanation of the apparently conflicting data.

Let us begin from the context within which Ares is speaking. As we mentioned above, the god is protesting to his father Zeus for his injury by Diomedes, in which Athena played a decisive role. It is not a matter of no consequence for the god of war to be wounded and humiliated by a

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For the close relationship of Zeus and Athena on the basis of the above evidence see, for example, W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, I, 1 (Leipzig, 1884-1886) col. 675; Dümmler, 'Athena', *RE*, II<sup>2</sup> (Stuttgart, 1896) col. 1942; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, transl. by John Raffan (Oxford, 1985, 1977) 142; Ι.Θ. Κακριδής, 'Η Αθηνά', *Ελληνική Μυθολογία: Οι Θεοί*, 2 (Αθήνα, 1986) 100.

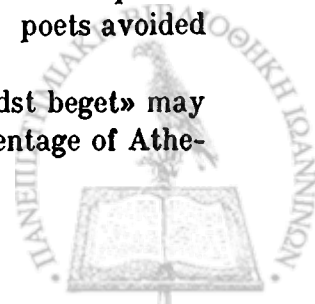
See also M. v. d. Valk, «'Αθηνάκη, 'Αθήνη», *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos* (Göttingen, 1955), col. 212, who stresses the bond between father and daughter on the basis of Ares' words (5.879f.) and other evidence from the *Iliad* as well (she sits beside him [24.100] and wears his weapons [5.736ff., 8.387ff.]).

1. See, for example, O. Kern, *Die Religion der Griechen*, I (Berlin, 1926) 186; Walter F. Otto, *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion*, transl. by Moses Hadas (New York, 1978, 1954) 54; Walter Pötscher, «Athene», *Gymnasium* 70 (1963) 533; Friedrich Focke, «Pallas Athene», *Saeculum* 4 (1953) 404.

2. See N. O. Brown «The birth of Athena», *TAPhA* 83 (1952) 140-3, who after close scrutiny of the arguments for Homer's knowledge of the myth comes to the conclusion that the positive evidence brought forward by scholars to support such a knowledge is 'quite unsubstantial'. On the contrary he is of the opinion that the peculiar birth of Athena should be considered one of the mythological innovations by Hesiod.

In a middle position U. von Wilamowitz - Moellendorff, «Athena», *Kleine Schriften*, V2 (Berlin - Amsterdam, 1971, 1921) 42, maintains that Homer was acquainted with this myth, although he does not mention it because the Ionian poets avoided such stories which did not fit with the humanity of gods.

See also Leaf, p. 253, ad 880, who observes that «thou thyself didst beget» may be used simply for emphasis without the implication of Zeus' sole parentage of Athena.

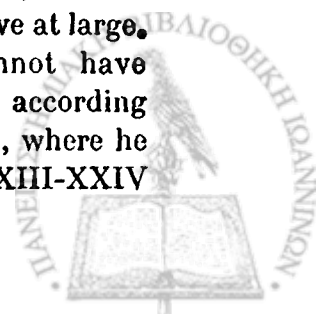


mortal. Certainly he has every reason in the world to be hostile to Athena, the protectress and helper of the hero, and to try to present her to Zeus in the most unfavourable light possible: under these circumstances we should not be surprised at any exaggerations on his part. Is really Zeus so exceptionally yielding and submissive to Athena in the *Iliad* as Ares would have us believe? But Athena, we may observe, in the scene under discussion (Ares' injury) acted with Zeus' approval, a fact which may throw some doubt on the general validity of Ares' contentions. More concretely, Zeus himself advised Hera to stir up Athena against Ares who was fighting on the side of the Trojans (5. 764ff.). Athena then acted with Zeus' consent in bringing about Ares' wounding and humiliation. The necessary corollary is that at least this one case by itself cannot constitute conclusive evidence for the alleged permissiveness of Zeus to his favourite daughter.

Let us turn now and look closely at the other instances from the *Iliad* which may or may not affirm further the complaints of Ares concerning Zeus' yielding attitude to Athena. Sometimes indeed Athena operates in accord with her father, but, we should notice, in those cases she functions as his agent to accomplish his will. Thus ostensibly fulfilling a request of Hera he sends Athena to incite the Trojans to transgress the oaths and to join battle again with the Achaeans (4. 64ff.). On another occasion he advises his grudging wife to stir up Athena against Ares, who is used to inflict harsh pains on him (5.762ff.). Again Zeus sends her to rekindle the battle around Patroclus' body by inflaming the Achaeans, for he has changed his mind about the war (17. 543ff.)<sup>1</sup>. Once more Athena is the envoy of Zeus to distil nectar and ambrosia in Achilles' chest so that he would not remain foodless after the death of Patroclus (19. 342 ff.). Finally he animates his daughter to come to the assistance of Achilles in his deadly fight with Hector (22. 186f.).

In the above cases there is an admirable coincidence and coordination between the will both of Athena and Zeus. In fact we are told explicitly three times that the goddess was eager to act before Zeus' instructions to do so (4.73, 19. 349, 22. 177). Upon receiving his commands, however, it is her own initiative how to implement them. Zeus seems to trust

1. Following Zenodotus modern commentators athetize lines 17. 545-6, on the ground of certain inconsistencies between these two verses and the narrative at large. That is, they point out that the descent of Athena from Olympus cannot have been at the bidding of Zeus who is still on Mount Ida (594). In addition, according to them, an alleged change of his mind (546) is at variance with line 596, where he still grants victory to the Trojans. See D. B. Monro, *Homer: Iliad, Books XIII-XXIV*



the competence of his daughter. When Athena then operates as the executor of Zeus' will, she is in harmony with her father. Such a state of affairs is of course far from Ares' accusation of the absolute permissiveness and indulgence of Zeus to his daughter. As a war goddess Athena operates under the authority of Zeus, reserving for herself the role of the inferior divinity who is assigned to carry out the designs of the superior, the supreme in this case, god<sup>1</sup>. Consequently the only thing we are warranted to say is that provided their wishes coincide there is an effective and agreeable cooperation between father and daughter.

Furthermore, twice in the *Iliad* Zeus seems to make concessions to Athena and in fact in the one instance to yield to her will. Moved by the spectacle of Hector who is chased by Achilles around the walls of the city the father of gods laments for him and asks the gods whether or not they should save his life (22. 168ff.). To Athena's cautious objections to this suggestion Zeus hastens to assure her:

θάρσει, Τριτογένεια, φίλον τέκος· οὐ νό τι θυμῷ  
 πρόφρονι μυθέομαι, ἐθέλω δέ τοι ἥπιος εἶναι·  
 ἔρξον ὕπη δὴ τοι νόος ἔπλετο, μηδ' ἔτ' ἐρώει (22. 183-5).

Zeus, it is true, speaks here in a fatherly fashion; mildness is a paternal quality, characteristic of the father towards his children as well as of the king towards his subjects<sup>2</sup>. More important, he clearly allows her to do as she pleases. In his suggestion, however, to save Hector, Zeus made a proposal, apparently with no intention of carrying it out<sup>3</sup>, for the simple reason that the whole scheme of the war would have been annulled. Consequently such an expression of courtesy on the part of her father does not imply that he grants her absolute freedom to indulge in her whims as Ares contends.

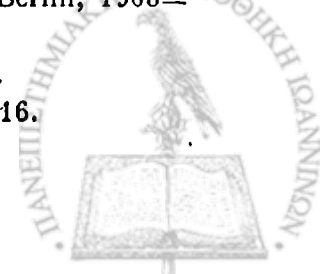
Once more Zeus uses a couplet (8. 39f.) identical to the above cited verses (22. 183f.) in order to reassure Athena after he had threatened with physical abuse all the gods to prevent them getting involved in the battle either for the Achaeans' or the Trojans' sake (8. 1ff.). This couplet is his reply to Athena, who, at last, conceding Zeus his invincible might and assuring him of their obedience to his will, nonetheless, asks with all due

(Oxford, <sup>1</sup>1888, <sup>4</sup>1897, repr. 1964) 333, ad 543ff.; Walter Leaf, ed. *The Iliad*, II, 252, ad 545; Walter Leaf - M. A. Bayfield, ed. *The Iliad of Homer*, II (London, 1962, <sup>1</sup>4898) 424, ad 545-6; F. Ameis - C. Hentze, *Homers Ilias* (Leipzig - Berlin, 1908 = Amsterdam, 1965) 92, ad 545.

1. Karl Reinhardt, *Die Ilias und ihr Dichter* (Göttingen, 1961) 68.

2. J. de Romilly, *La douceur dans la pensée grecque* (Paris, 1979) 16.

3. See also Leaf, ed. *The Iliad*, I, p. 335, ad 39.



respect<sup>1</sup> his permission to put some good counsel on the mind of the Achaeans so that not all of them would perish (8. 31ff.). Following his violent threats his mild answer to her comes as a surprise, especially if we take into consideration that Zeus meant what he said when he was thundering his threats against all and sundry. What is happening then? Shall we follow the *Scholia* which consider Zeus' soft words ironic?<sup>2</sup> Or should we align ourselves with the modern commentators who agreeing with Aristarchus athetize the whole passage of Athena's appeal to Zeus and his reply to her (8. 28-40), mainly on the ground that it is almost entirely composed of lines from other passages and that it destroys, as they think, the effect of the previous speech of Zeus?<sup>3</sup> But of course, by now, we have learnt not only to tolerate but also to expect such repetitions in the epic.

On the other hand James M. Redfield sees in the diplomatic answer of Zeus to Athena the efforts «of a ruler who is trying to satisfy one part of his constituency [that is Thetis] without losing the support of the other»<sup>4</sup>. More to the point, in my opinion, is the explanation of Karl Reinhardt who in the somewhat elusive words of Zeus perceives his ultimate intention not to destroy the Achaeans, although temporarily supports the Trojans in order to fulfil his promise to Thetis. In other words, according to him, Zeus conceals what reveals later on to Hera in regard to his plans for the war (8. 473ff.)<sup>5</sup>.

Be that as it may, from our point of view it is relevant that Zeus, in spite of his violent threats to prevent the gods intervening on either side in the battlefield, is quite eager to employ mild language in his address to Athena. Such behaviour, we may say, indicates a kind of fatherly concern, but it is far from demonstrating any excess of Zeus' indulgence to his daughter. To make it clear we need only take into account, as we will see, his attitude to her when Athena did dare to disregard her father's command not to take part in the fighting.

The above examples, then, constitute the evidence of a cooperation and a closeness between father and daughter. But, whatever significance we may attach to them, they are not enough to bear out Ares' contentions

1. See also *Scholia*, II (Berolini, 1971) 305, ad 30: 'Αθηνᾶ δὲ μετὰ αἰδοῦς τῷ πατρὶ διαλέγεται μετριώτερον, οὐχ ὡς ἡ Ἥρα φεγγυμένη.

2. *Scholia*, p. 307, ad 40a.

3. See Leaf, I, p. 335, ad 28; Ameis - Hentze, p. 42, ad 39.40; D. B. Monro, *Hommer: Iliad, Books I-XII* (Oxford, impression of 1963, 1884) 329, ad 28-40.

4. James M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector* (Chicago and London, 1975) 137.

5. Reinhardt, p. 152.



concerning an overall permissive attitude of Zeus towards Athena in the *Iliad*. More important, such an image of their relationship is one-sided. There is also the other side of it, which reveals some other qualities in the celebrated bond of father and daughter.

To begin with, even at relaxed moments, she is cautious not to irritate the supreme god<sup>1</sup> as when she is teasing him quite innocently after Aphrodite's injury by Diomedes and her flight to her mother Dione (5. 418). More emphatically, on the pretext of avoiding Zeus' wrath she succeeds in persuading Ares to retreat from the battlefield so that the Achaeans bent the Trojans back (5. 30ff.). Although at this point Zeus had not yet forbidden the participation of the gods in the battle it is not without significance that Athena opted for this sort of argument in her effort to make Ares withdraw. Confirmation of how realistic is Athena's fear of the rage of Zeus is her successful attempt to dissuade Ares from avenging the death of his son, Ascalaphus. Following Hera's deception of Zeus, when he is already enraged, Athena in strong terms points out to him that it would be a crazy thing to do anything like this, for not only he himself but also the other gods would suffer the severe consequences of disobeying Zeus' will (15. 128ff.). Clearly then for Athena her father's wrath is a serious matter and not something to disregard or to play around with. Not surprisingly, under the circumstances, Ares, the god of war, abandoned his intention of avenging the death of his own son. Surely Athena does not exclude herself from her warning to Ares, as we could expect, if we had taken literally the complaints of Ares about the permissiveness of Zeus towards his daughter!

Furhermore, although she gets angry against Zeus, Athena dares not to express in some way or to verbalize her feelings. Thus, after his promise to Thetis, Zeus was trying to provoke Athena and Hera in order to be held responsible for the breach of the truce and the resuming of the fighting. To this purpose he suggests to the gods, without intention of carrying out his proposals, whether or not they should reconcile Menelaus and Paris so that Troy would remain intact and Menelaus would take back Helen (4.1ff.). Athena's response to these provocations, which conflict with her hatred for Troy, is, except for some murmuring along with Hera, quite pathetic:

ἤτοι Ἀθηναίη ἀκέων ἦν οὐδέ τι εἶπε,  
σκυζομένη Διὶ πατρί, χόλος δέ μιν ἄγριος ἦρει (4. 22-3).

1. Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ ῥά τί μοι κεχολώσεται, ὅττι κεν εἶπω; (5. 421).



«In a daughterly fashion»<sup>1</sup> she keeps silent repressing her wild anger. Once more Athena behaves in the same manner submitting to Zeus' threats of physical violence against Hera and herself, for they dared ignore his prohibition and started to help their favourites, the Achaeans. After their immediate retreat Zeus did not recoil from laughing at and talking ironically to them about their alleged fatigue in the battlefield (8.447ff.). In spite of her frustration Athena remained again silent, seized though she was by wild anger (8.459-60). Were she spoiled by her father, she would at least have released her resentment against him instead of keeping it suppressed at her expense<sup>2</sup>. Athena however does not even go that far. Her quiet wrath (a contradiction in terms?) is an unmistakable sign of the authoritarian rule and by extension of the oppression in which Zeus submits his 'beloved' daughter as well.

Direct confirmation of Zeus' determination to impose his will upon all gods without exceptions is his reaction as soon as he perceived that Athena and Hera were on their way to help the Achaeans, contrary to his expressed orders. He was enraged and he sent Iris to bring them back on the force of appalling threats of physical violence:

ὦδε γὰρ ἐξερέω, τὸ δὲ καὶ τετελεσμένον ἔσται·  
 γυιώσω μὲν σφωῖν ὑφ' ἄρμασιν ὠκέας ἵππους,  
 αὐτὰς δ' ἐκ δίφρου βαλέω κατὰ θ' ἄρματα ἄζω·  
 οὐδέ κεν ἐς δεκάτους περιτελλομένους ἐνιαυτοὺς  
 ἔλκε' ἀπαλθήσεσθον, ἅ κεν μάρπτῃσι κεραυνός·  
 ὄφρα ἰδῆ γλαυκῶπις ὅτ' ἂν ᾗ πατρὶ μάχῃται.  
 "Ἡρῆ δ' οὐ τι τόσον νεμεσίζομαι οὐδὲ χολοῦμαι·  
 αἰεὶ γὰρ μοι ἔωθεν ἐνικλᾶν ὅττι κεν εἶπω (8.401-8).

In spite of his mild words to Athena, as we saw above, exactly after his warning to all gods not to take part in the battle, Zeus is deadly serious in his threats against his wife and daughter once they dared disregard him. Characteristically Zeus in contrast to constant disobedience of Hera did not expect Athena's 'rebellion' and for this reason he is more angry against her. From his words—and his surprise—we gather that Athena submits usually to his will. Once, however, she disobeyed him 'she will know what it is to fight with her father'<sup>3</sup>. The same shock at Athena's

1. G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, I, 1-4 (Cambridge, 1985) 338, ad 23.

2. See also Johannes Irmscher, *Götterzorn bei Homer* (Leipzig, 1950) 18, who discussing the verb σφίζεσθαι points out that it characterizes a suppressed grudge which is not discharged and for this reason it lasts longer and causes sorrow to whomever feels that way.

3. See also G. M. Calhoun, «Zeus the Father in Homer», *TAPHΑ* 66 (1935) 13, who observes that Zeus' command is pointed more for Athena than for Hera and

disobedience we may detect in Iris' announcement to them of the 'message' of Zeus. In this case Iris steps out of her character as messenger passing judgment on the incident on account of which Aristarchus, followed by modern commentators, rejected her pertinent verses<sup>1</sup>:

ὄφρα ἰδῆς, γλαυκῶπι, ὅτ' ἂν σῶ πατρὶ μάχηαι.

...

ἀλλὰ σὺ γ' αἰνοτάτη, κύον ἀδεές, εἰ ἕτερόν γε  
τολήσεις Διὸς ἄντα πελώριον ἔγχρος ἀεῖραι (8. 420-4).

Far then from not paying heed to Athena either by word or by deed, as Ares generalizes in his grievances, Zeus is eager to retain and assert his undisputable control<sup>2</sup> upon the divine family, his daughter not excluded, however the means he will use in order to obtain it. For her part Athena (and Hera) not only obeys and submits immediately to Zeus' terrorism to come back but in addition she tolerates without protest the insulting remarks of Iris<sup>3</sup>. It goes without saying that both Iris' insolence and Athena's humiliating silence have something to do with the attitude of Zeus to his daughter.

So far we have seen that the general conduct of both Athena and Zeus in their relationship in the *Iliad* is at odds with the alleged contentions of Ares about the exceptional behaviour of Zeus towards Athena. In addition, she herself has the opportunity to verbalize how she feels and how she perceives her father's role in regard to her. When Hera, despite the ugly threats of her husband (8. 5 ff.), tried to persuade Athena to engage battle with her for the Achaeans' sake (8. 352 ff.), before accepting the invitation and by way of justifying her readiness to join forces with Hera, Athena criticizes severely Zeus in general and his attitude to her in particular:

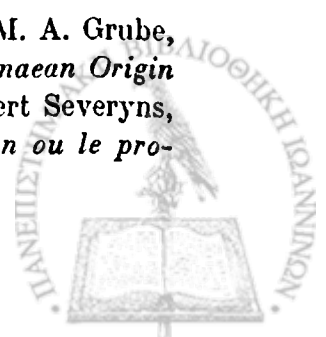
ἀλλὰ πατὴρ οὐμὸς φρεσὶ μαίνεται οὐκ ἀγαθῆσι,  
σχέτλιος, αἰὲν ἄλιτρός, ἐμῶν μενέων ἀπερωεύς (8. 360-1).

suggests, based on other indications as well, that Zeus figures in the *Iliad* as *οἰκοῖο ἀναξ* in a patriarchal family.

1. Leaf, I, p. 360, ad 420-4; Leaf-Bayfield, I, p. 440, ad 420-4; Ameis - Hentze, I, p. 69, ad 420-4; Monro, I, p. 335, ad 420-424.

2. For the supreme might of Zeus in general see, for example, G. M. A. Grube, «The Gods of Homer», *Phoenix* 5 (1951) 64; M. P. Nilsson, *The Mycenaean Origin of Greek Mythology* (New York, 1963, 1932) 245-6, and *passim*; Albert Severyns, *Les Dieux D'Homère* (Paris, 1966) 4; Suzanne Saïd, *Sophiste et tyran ou le problème du Prométhée enchaîné* (Paris, 1985) 235-45, and *passim*.

3. Reinhardt, p. 147.





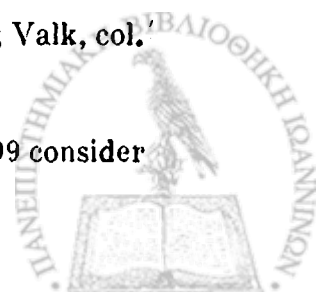
Athena's resentment towards Zeus is expressed in strong terms indeed: for her he is furious in his evil mind, hard, wicked and above all the thwarter of her wishes<sup>1</sup>. In addition she goes on and charges Zeus for ingratitude, because he forgot her past services to him when he asked her to help his son Heracles, and yielded to Thetis' entreaty to punish the Achaeans for the insult Agamemnon inflicted against Achilles (8. 361ff.). Bitterly Athena is aware that sooner or later he would need again her help and then he would use a sweet tongue<sup>2</sup>. Evidently, Athena feels not only repressed but also exploited by her father. Even the paternal courtesies of Zeus are seen by her as a means to obtain easily her cooperation to carry out his affairs. Such an image of the relationship between father and daughter is in direct contradiction to the image of the same relationship provided by Ares, as we saw at the beginning of this article. One could, of course, object to this by putting forward the same argument we employed to meet Ares' contentions: that is, Athena's expression of discontent and frustration comes as a response to the present situation which is Zeus' prohibition and the setback of her favourites, the Achaeans by the Trojans. But the cumulative effect of the evidence we have seen so far indicates that what always determines Zeus' mind is how to impose his will, even if he has to obstruct, to threaten or to frustrate his daughter as well.

Another more general objection might be that the tension between Athena and Zeus is due to the temporary change in the perspective of the war brought about by Zeus' promise to Thetis to honour her son with the consequence that for the time being father and daughter found themselves in different camps. But we have, I think, the privilege to argue only on the basis of the evidence provided by the poem. Outside the poem any other inferences on our part seem rather arbitrary. And the evidence we have advanced so far clearly focuses on the tension and ambivalence in the relationship between Zeus and Athena.

Under the circumstances we need not be surprised at the old story of Zeus' danger and salvation by Thetis the way the Scholiasts are who try to find some plausible explanation — the allegorical one not excluded<sup>3</sup>—in order to justify the plot by Hera, Poseidon and Athena to fasten

1. See also W. Krause, «Zeus und Moira bei Homer», *WS* 64 (1949) 25; Valk, col. 216.

2. ἔσται μὲν ὅτ' ἂν αὖτε φίλην γλαυκώπιδα εἶπη (8. 373).

3. See *Scholia*, I, pp. 113-5, ad 399-406; Leaf-Bayfield, I, p. 291, ad 399 consider it 'particularly strange to find Athene in revolt against her father...'.  


Zeus and the successful intervention of Thetis by calling Briareos to help the supreme god (1. 394ff.).

Whatever the origin of this story—if it is not an invention of Homer<sup>1</sup>—it is not so much at odds with the entire image of the relationship between Zeus and Athena in the *Iliad*. Its main characteristic, as we have seen thus far, is not the unconditioned indulgence of Zeus to Athena but the authoritarian imposition of his will by any means on the one hand and her resultant submission on the other. The obverse side of this is predictably the frustration and resentment of Athena towards her father, which might justify and explain any hostile act of her against Zeus, like the one recalled by Thetis to him. Such a story, however, belongs to the past. In the reality of the *Iliad* Athena is careful<sup>2</sup>—more cautious let us say than Hera—in her dealings with Zeus. Thus she never takes the initiative, like Hera, to contravene her father's will and once induced by his wife to do so she surrendered to him without resistance. On the other hand, when there are not conflicting 'interests' between father and daughter, then their cooperation is close enough. In fact in these cases Athena takes the initiative herself and from these we are mainly acquainted with the majestic goddess so familiar to us from the *Iliad*. The necessary precondition of this, however, is Zeus' approval and sanction. So, in conclusion, we may maintain that before we hasten to adopt Ares' account of the relationship between father and daughter in the *Iliad* we would do better to take into consideration as well the tense and ambivalent dimension in their otherwise harmonious relationship, which is precisely what makes it alive and exciting from the reader's point of view.

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See also M. M. Willcock, «Mythological Paradeigma in the *Iliad*, CQ 14 (1964) 143-4, who pointing out the difficulties of ancient and modern commentators in interpreting the various details of the myth, comes to this conclusion: «It is precisely because these are the three gods who support the Greeks in the *Iliad*, and who *would therefore most wish to prevent Zeus acceding to Thetis' request*, that they are made the opponents of Zeus in the invented myth.»

1. Willcock, p. 26, ad 396-406: «This story of a revolt on Olympos, which Thetis helped to prevent by bringing Briareos - Aigaion to defend Zeus, is not attested anywhere else. Every consideration makes it probable that we have here the free invention of the poet, not an allusion to pre-existing myth». See also Kirk, pp. 93-4, ad 399, 400, who expresses a similar view.

2. See also Pötscher, p. 533.

