In this passage, Phoenix, a father-figure to Achilles, tries to convince him to re-enter the war by drawing on old childhood memories. The passage is roughly divided into two parts: first (lines 485-494), Phoenix recounts his memories, and second (494-501), he entreats Achilles to give up his anger.

Here, Phoenix speaks in the “time-honored manner of the aged retainer, fondly remembering the hero at an unheroic age,” just as the Nurse does in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 1, Scene 3 (Kirk).

**τοσοῦτον ἐθήκα:** literally “made you as great (as you are),” i.e. “reared you.” Because Phoenix’s part in Achilles' childhood is not consistent with the conventional legend, which has Achilles raised by the centaur Cheiron
after his mother Thetis deserted his father Peleus, this episode could possibly be composed independently by the poet, since it is a clear departure from the established mythology; or, perhaps this is just another instance of Homer intentionally ignoring earlier myths to suit his own story (Leaf, Kirk).

486 ἐκ θυμοῦ φιλέων: This is exactly what Achilles says in I.343 when he refers to his feelings for Briseis. Kirk is unconvinced that this echo is intentional or what its significance is. Perhaps, since it occurs in the same scene, the repetition is merely meant to provide some continuity between the characters, their speeches, and their feelings, even if there is no overt comparison to Achilles' feelings for Briseis and Phoenix's feelings for Achilles.

This line features parallel syntax that balances the line.

488-489 In the Odyssey (16.443-4), there is a similar description of a baby being fed while sitting on someone's knee. The fact that Phoenix sat Achilles on his knees emphasizes his position as a cherished family friend, not a servant (Kirk).

489 ὄψου: partitive genitive. ὄψον, τό, anything eaten along with bread, especially meat (Benner).
προταμὼν: “cutting you the first morsel”
ἐπισχών: “holding to your lips”
The food which Phoenix fed to Achilles might be similar to what Astyanax, Hector's infant son, ate as described in X.500-501, i.e. marrow and sheep's fat (Benner).

491 οἴνου: partitive genitive, “spurting out some of the wine”
νηπιέῃ: This word means “behavior expected of a νήπιος,” with many various connotations depending on each use (Kirk). Here, it would not seem to have the connotation of foolishness or stupidity, as babies are not commonly referred to as stupid because they are not fully developed. Perhaps “helplessness” or “childishness” is more fitting here.

492 πολλὰ πάθον καὶ πολλὰ μόγησα: This structure and wording generally refers to the sufferings of war, so the effect here, where it refers to the care of a child, is comic, but this comedic sense changes to the “pathos of blighted hope,” as most readers will be aware that Achilles will not survive to repay Phoenix (Kirk).

493 ὅ: = ὅτα, refers to τὰ at the beginning of the line, “reflecting on this, that the gods were not minded to bring into being any offspring of my own” (Leaf).
Because of Phoenix's past sins, the gods would not give Phoenix any children.

494-495 These two lines both feature enjambment, and are the only two lines in this passage to do so. Since this occurs right as Phoenix is changing subject from his reminiscences to his more focused entreaty, it can be seen as a marker of Phoenix's heightened emotion at this point in his speech.

495 ποιεύμην: “I strove to make...”
ἀμύνῃς: subjunctive, not optative, because the wish is still in force. See A.559 and B.4 for similar constructions (Leaf).
There is an element of role-reversal present; as Phoenix helped the young Achilles years ago, he asks Achilles to help him and the rest of the Greeks now. This “parental” theme ties into a simile from earlier in this scene (I.323-397): when Achilles replied to Odysseus, he compared his position in the Greek forces to that of a mother bird feeding her young.

496 δάμασον: from δαμάζειν. This is a “powerful word appropriate for mastering violent heroic emotions.” It takes θυμός, “the seat of passion to which Achilles has yielded,” as its object in a similar context in 19.66.

497 στρεπτοί: “capable of being bent by prayer”
Because, as Phoenix notes, even the gods can be swayed, Achilles' refusal to bend emphasizes how he views himself as a god (able to have μῆνις, etc.) or even something greater, now that he refuses to be placated.

498 ἀρετὴ: “majesty, supremacy in the widest sense.” This word seems never to be used by Homer regarding moral supremacy, only regarding power, etc. (Leaf).

499 καὶ μὲν τοὺς: “yet even them,” i.e. if even the gods can be swayed by prayers, a man should be moved even more.

500 This line is a spondaic line; the fifth foot is a spondee rather than a dactyl. This occurs only rarely in Homer.

501 λισσόμενοι: This word is not used anywhere else in the poem to describe mortals approaching a god; εἰσχόμενοι (praying) would be more usual. This word is striking here because even though it explicitly describes mortals praying to a god, it implicitly refers to the actions of the Greeks in their attempts to sway Achilles. They are not merely asking him to return to battle, but actually supplicating him, which is a serious procedure. Now, Achilles'
refusal is much more significant, as he is not just saying “no,” but actually rejecting suppliants (Kirk).
Commentaries Consulted:

