



No Regrets: Remorse in Classical Antiquity

Laurel Fulkerson

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No Regrets: Remorse in Classical Antiquity is the first sustained study examining the circumstances under which the emotions of remorse and regret were manifested in Greek and Roman public life. Despite a still-common notion that remorse is a modern, monotheistic emotion, it argues that remorse did in fact exist in pre-Christian antiquity. By discussing the standard lexical denotations of remorse, Fulkerson shows how its parameters were rather different from its modern counterpart. Remorse in the ancient world was normally not expressed by high-status individuals, but by their inferiors, notably women, the young, and subjects of tyrants, nor was it redemptive, but often served to show defect of character. Through a series of examples, especially poetic, historical, and philosophical texts, this book demonstrates this was so because of the very high value placed on consistency of character in the ancient world. High-status men, in particular, faced constant challenges to their position, and maintaining at least the appearance of uniformity was essential to their successful functioning. The redemptive aspects of remorse, of learning from one's mistakes, were thus nearly absent in the ancient world.

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