GORGIAS, AESCHYLUS, AND APATE.

I.

“But what Gorgias said on a swallow, when in its flight it had muted on him, was in the best style of tragedy; for he exclaimed: ‘Oh, fie Philomela’; for to a bird, indeed, the act was not unbecoming, to a young lady, however, it would have been. So . . . he reproached her neatly enough, speaking of her as what she had been, not as what she then was.”

This little tale is somewhat of a mystery; it seems to be taken from a comedy in which Gorgias is shown joking about a tragedy. Or again perhaps it really does represent a famous aperçu of Gorgias concerning the aischron, the horrible coarseness of some tragic Philomela. In either case, the anecdote confirms what we know on other evidence, namely that Gorgias was known to be interested in tragedy, particularly in Aeschylus. The evidence is unmistakable, and has never been disputed.

1 Aristotle, Rhet., III, 3, 1406 b 14 ff., in the translation of Theodore Buckley (London, 1872). Plutarch, Quaest. Conv., VIII, 727 e tells the same story, without commentary.—A portion of this paper was read at the Eighty-Fifth Meeting of the American Philological Association in New York City, Dec. 28, 1953.

2 Cf. above all the remark of Gorgias that Aeschylus’ Seven is a play “full of Ares”: B 24 Diels. All references to pre-Socratic writings in this paper are to the sixth edition of Diels (Berlin, 1952). For the tragic fragments, the references are to Nauck (Leipzig, 1889). The edition of Aeschylus used is that of G. Murray (Oxford, 1937).
In his commentary on the story, Aristotle makes a delicate distinction between the etiquette of the bird and the manners of the lady. But the mythical past—δὲ ἡμερὴ—with its overtones of timelessness reminds us that metamorphosis makes sense only if somehow the girl and the bird are one. Gorgias, or the comedian, was fully aware of that identity; without it the story loses its point. In myth, and in tragedy, the material is ambiguous. We move on more than one level simultaneously; one is the level of our daily experience: the bird which misbehaves. Another is that of the monstrous Philomela, less amenable to our senses, but perhaps the more valuable for it. All myth, therefore, presents itself as a complex pattern, as a two-faced proposition. It is likely to say one thing, and to mean another, and to give perfect expression to neither. Hence the notion, found early in Greek thought, that the poets are liars. In Plato’s words (Rep., 382 D): the myth-makers proceed by approximating fiction to truth. Only Plato thinks that this lying is a matter of ignorance or incapacity. Aristotle’s attitude is more charitable; following up where Hesiod had started, he singles out Homer for praise, for teaching the other poets how the lying must be done. Improbabilities, he suggests, are the poetic norm, and the good poet endeavours to “conceal the improbabilities (Odysseus’ setting ashore), his other excellences veiling their absurdity” (Poetics, 1460 a 35 ff.). All this is of course well known.

Aristotle remarks that Gorgias’ statement was in the best tragic style. It might not be amiss to remember that tragikos originally refers to goats. Some kind of tension between beast and man was undoubtedly involved in its earlier use, and this connotation of double entendre seems to have remained with it. It is difficult to pin down its precise meaning in some of the more important passages in which it occurs—excepting of course those passages which refer to tragedy specifically. In Plato’s Meno (76 E), for instance, where Socrates is called upon to

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2 Poetics, 1460 a 18. For the view, comparable to Plato’s, that Homer himself was deceived, cf. Heraclitus, B 56.

4 Cf. the subtle and untranslatable use of the word in Plato’s Cratylus, 408 C. Socrates is discussing τὸ πᾶς: οἰκοῖς τὸ μὲν ἀλήθετα αὐτοῦ λείον καὶ θείον καὶ ἄνω οἰκοῖν ἐν τοῖς θείοις, τὸ δὲ ψεύδος κάτω ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ τραχύ καὶ τραγικόν. ἐνταῦθα γὰρ πλείστοι οἱ μύθοι τε καὶ τὰ ψεύδη ἐστὶ, περὶ τὸν τραγικὸν βιον.
give his definition of colour, he promises to give an answer à la Gorgias. And when he has duly delivered himself of the chore, he adds: τραγική γάρ ἔστιν, ὧν Μένων, ἦ ἀπόκρισις; his answer, far from being a definition at all, was "tragic." Wilamowitz compares the passage with two others in the Republic (413 A, B and 545 E) and arrives at a meaning tantamount to aínigmatodes, "ambiguous," which is not too far removed from our "double entendre." ⁵ When Socrates' interlocutor confesses that he cannot follow the argument, Socrates is prepared to admit that he has expressed himself tragikós, obscurely (Rep., 413 A, B). Mental befuddlement seems to be the principal notion associated with this use of the word "tragic"; cf. similar instances in comedy. And always, there lurks behind it the suspicion of downright deceit.

Toward the end of his life, Robert Louis Stevenson wrote to Mr. Sidney Colvin: "No, I will not write a play for Irving nor for the devil. Can you not see that the work of falsification, which a play demands, is, of all tasks, the most ungrateful?" ⁶ It so happens there is an ancient critical term which corresponds to Stevenson's falsification; it is apate, the fruitful trickery of Gorgias. Plutarch records the orator's view that the one who uses apate is dikaioteros, ⁷ i.e. he plays the literary game more correctly than the one who does not. ⁸

It would be interesting to track down the subtle differences

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between *apate* and *pseudos* in early Greek thought. For the present, however, I should simply like to stress that the concept of *apate*, as it interests us here, is not concerned with the Platonic question of *noesis* versus *aisthesis*, or of the subjective versus the objective. Rather, *apate* has to do with the ancient question, precipitated as soon as the magic identity of names and things was given up: What is the relationship between things and names? Or, to put the same in abstract terms: is reality properly communicable?

It is indeed an ancient problem. Homer himself was dimly aware of it. Men, he tells us, speak one language, the gods another. Which is the right one? Perhaps neither? For, to make a really valid assertion, one that is irrevocable, undeceiving, complete (*οδί παλιώνετον ὁδός ἀπατήλον ὁδός ἀπελεύθην*) Zeus just nods his head (*Iliad*, I, 526). There is something about speech, apparently, which invites suspicion. Ordinarily, in the *Iliad*, *apate* is deceit, the deceit which is widely practiced by the gods, particularly the goddesses, but among men only by scoundrels. However, there are occasions when the usage of Gorgias is hinted at. In the final fight between Hector and Achilles, Athena disguises herself as Deiphobus; and when the spectre of Deiphobus vanishes, Hector exclaims: “Athena has deceived me” (*Iliad*, XXII, 299). Here is an instance where the notion “deceit” is tied up with the notion “disguise” or “misrep-
sentation.” The goddess has given herself as Deiphobus; she has used his shape to communicate falsely.\textsuperscript{12}

All this is of course only incipient and present by implication. Later, in the pre-Socratic philosophers, the issue becomes explicit. In Parmenides, \textit{onoma} is sometimes contrasted with the \textit{on}.\textsuperscript{13} And in a notorious passage he contrasts the “dependable speech about truth” with the “deceiving finery of words,” the \textit{kosmos epatheidos epéon}.\textsuperscript{14} Or again, \textit{kalein} has the meaning: to give a false name on the basis of a false belief; this we find in Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Empedocles.\textsuperscript{15} It is Heraclitus, however, who occupies himself most profoundly with the duplicity of language. He distinguishes \textit{logos} from \textit{epea} and \textit{onomata}; \textit{logos} stands both for the reality of the world and for the expression it finds in speech. It is the \textit{xynon} (B 2), the common bond, without which the various words and names are only quasi-approximations, unreliable, fragmentary.\textsuperscript{16}

Thus, if I may generalize, in archaic thought this is the situation: many names and words, it is thought, do not reproduce the nature of things. But under optimum conditions, i.e. in the mouth of the master poet or philosopher, reality does find its appropriate formulation in speech, and such speech is then called \textit{tetelesmenos}: complete. Later, such terms as \textit{orthoepeia} and \textit{orthotes}, particularly in Prodicus and Hippias, continue to

\textsuperscript{12} In many instances, the roots *\textit{apar}- and *\textit{kalept}- seem almost interchangeable. In all probability, however, there is a difference of perspective; the latter intimates a deliberate concealing of the thing behind the word, the former a deliberate shifting of the word away from the thing.
\textsuperscript{13} B 8, 38 ff., B 19, \textit{et al.}
\textsuperscript{14} B 8, 50-2. In this passage we find the distinction between \textit{logos}, which is true, and \textit{epea}, which are deceiving in as much as men have affixed them like stamps: B 19, 3. Cf. Heraclitus, B 93.
\textsuperscript{15} See Heinimann (above, note 10), pp. 48 ff.
\textsuperscript{16} For a brilliant discussion of this subject, cf. B. Snell, “Die Sprache Heraklits,” \textit{Hermes}, LXI (1926), pp. 368 f. Cf. also E. Hoffmann, \textit{Die Sprache und die archaische Logik} (Tuebingen, 1925), \textit{passim}. Hoffmann characterizes the views of Heraclitus and Parmenides as follows: for Heraclitus, the \textit{logos} properly images the becoming, the tension, owing to the synthetic and tensional nature of the sentence; the sentence, rather than the single word, reproduces the \textit{paltePAPOS armonia} of reality. For Parmenides, on the other hand, the \textit{logos} must image the thought, and the thought, expressing perfect identity, may grasp the being. Thus the \textit{logos} exhausts itself in the formula \textit{kétiv}.
testify to the same concept of the ideal commensurability of thing and speech. And Hermogenes' exposition of the stand of Cratylus in the opening paragraph of the Cratylus seems, in its confused way, a restatement of the same view.

But back to Heraclitus: "The Lord of Delphi neither speaks out nor conceals but gives a sign (semainei)." 17 Oracles and riddles, with their ambiguities and their comprehensiveness, are a potent form of the logos. We may compare what the author of the Hymn to Hermes says about the Thriai (the passage is corrupt, but this much is clear): they speak the truth in a state of intoxication induced by the eating of honey; whereas when they are sober they lie.18 Certain important realities, it seems, are not easily communicated; only riddles and paradoxes, the ambivalences of oracular utterance, will do justice to the logos. Ordinary speech is not equally tetelesmenos; it will never travel the whole depth of the logos. Heraclitus' own literary practice is of course the best witness to all this; the ancients said that, to read him without choking, one had to be a Delian diver (A 1, 12).

This is the intellectual situation against which we must picture the radical departure of Gorgias. In his early work On Not-Being, Gorgias advances his discovery that nothing can be described: even if anything is apprehensible, it is inexpressible and incommunicable to one's neighbour.19 Heraclitically speaking: to translate the cosmic logos, or any part of it, into a human

17 B 93, discussed by Snell (above, note 16), pp. 371 f. According to Snell, Heraclitus tries to get beyond speech qua giver of names. To put this differently: he tries to approach reality by using speech along lines hostile to its ostensible aims. Xenophanes, a more thorough-going sceptic, rejected the language of oracles (A 52), and ended up supporting opsis and historie, over against purely intellectual approaches; cf. H. Fraenkel, "Xenophanesstudien," Hermes, LX (1925), pp. 174 ff., an analysis of B 34.

18 Homeric Hymn, 4, 560-3. Somewhat earlier (lines 541 ff.) Apollo had stated that the validity and profitableness of his oracles to men depend on the character of the original omens: once more the same emphasis on the irrationality of oracular truth.

19 B 3 = Sextus Emp., Adv. Math., VII, 65; 83-6; cf. also (Aristotle), De Meliss. Xenoph. Gorg., 5, 1; 6, 21-6, cited by Untersteiner (above, note 7), pp. 56 ff. The same sentiment is hinted at in B 11a (Palaimedes), 35.
logos is not only difficult, it is impossible; human logos is as
distant from cosmic logos as are human epea or onomata.20

Generally, Gorgias' pamphlet, i.e. the original of the two
versions which we now possess, is seen as an epicheirema in the
Eleatic tradition. His technique of argumentation places him in
the company of Zeno and Melissus, and I would follow those
scholars (e.g. Nestle) who date the treatise of Gorgias slightly
earlier than those of the other two.21 Still, Norden showed up
the stylistic kinship between Gorgias and Heraclitus, and actu-
ally there is more than mere style to connect the thought of
the two. In a sense, Gorgias completes Heraclitus. Let us
assume that Heraclitus says: all is apate or pseudos, except the
logos; and even when this is revealed to men, they usually think
they are being deceived (cf. B 56: the riddle of the lice).
Gorgias rejoins: this logos of yours, especially when it is couched
in oracular darkness, is the greatest apate of them all. Speech is
at best a pseudo-statement, to use the positivist jargon. Epos
does not distort reality, for it has no measurable relationship
to it.

In On Not-Being, we are given to understand that by reality
Gorgias means largely sensible reality.22 Speech cannot repro-
duce this reality, or communicate it to others. What it can do
is to achieve certain effects in the souls of the listeners. Through
speech we are enabled to experience emotion at the sufferings or
joys of somebody else, as if we recognized that suffering by being
told about it.

This thesis, that speech is altogether unrelated to reality,
constitutes the final resolution of a difficulty already felt by
Homer. Its implications are immeasurable. For now for the
first time it is clearly recognized that speech is not a reflection
of things, not a mere tool or slave of description, but that it is
its own master. Logos is a great dynastes, as Gorgias has it
in his later Helen.23 Logos, whether prose or poetry—the two

21 W. Nestle, "Die Schrift des Gorgias 'Ueber die Natur oder ueber
das Nichtseinde',' Hermes, LVII (1922), pp. 551 ff.: the treatise was
written between 480 and 470. I hope to publish, in the not too-distant
future, a study of Gorgias' dates.
22 Cf. B 3, 79; 82; et al.
23 B 11, 8-14: the basic text for the present study. Most scholars
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are not distinguished in principle till later—is autonomous. It is a creator of its own reality; "it accomplishes the most divine things." Gorgias is quite explicit about this. But he is also fully aware of the consequences of his premise: if speech and reality are not commensurable, then those statements which convey to the audience the impression that they are being confronted with a new knowledge, i.e. those statements which seem to impart information, are by nature apatelo. All peitho, therefore, is apatelos, and that is its great glory.

To sum up: the term apate became prominent in the vocabulary of Gorgias because he placed a positive accent upon what prior to him had been regarded as a negative situation: the frequent discrepancy between words and things. It was because literature had till then—consciously or unconsciously—been considered a matter of description—this is of course the epic perspective—that Gorgias chose a negative term to stress his discovery of the autonomy of speech. Apate signals the supersession of the world of the logos in the place of the epic world of things.

That apate, in this pregnant sense, was perhaps already current in the early fifth century is shown by an anecdote about Simonides (Plutarch, De Poet. Aud., 15 D); he said about the

today are agreed that the Helen is a work of Gorgias, in spite of the strange reticence of Isocrates, 10, 14.

Cf. Hoffmann (above, note 16), pp. 28 ff., talking about the principles of Sophistic oratory: if speech does not "hit" the things, it may yet, if properly used, succeed in "hitting" the audience. This is the agonistic logos which does not compete "for" things, but "against" persons.

Cf. J. S. Mill, Letters, II, 358 (Jan. 11, 1854), quoted by M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (Oxford, 1953), p. 323: "Those who think themselves called upon, in the name of truth, to make war against illusions, do not perceive the distinction between an illusion and a delusion. A delusion is an erroneous opinion—it is believing a thing which is not. An illusion, on the contrary, . . . consists in extracting from a conception known not to be true, but which is better than the truth, the same benefit to the feelings which would be derived from it if it were a reality." Abrams, p. 324 compares Coleridge, Biogr. Lit., II, 107, and his doctrine of the willing suspension of disbelief.

For apate, cf. Gorgias, B 11, 8, and, if Untersteiner (above, note 7), p. 68 and Gercke are right, De Meliss. Xenoph. Gorg., 17: ei μὲν οὖδέν, τὰς ἀποδείξεις λέγει ἀπατῶν (λέγειν ἀπατάτα MSS).
Thessalians that they were too stupid to be deceived by him. Wilamowitz took this witticism away from Simonides and gave it to Gorgias; other scholars have followed suit. There is, however, no justification for this, and it is fairly evident that the anecdote accords well with one or two other things we know about the poet. Whether it was he, or Gorgias, or anybody else who prompted the new approach and bequeathed it to the Athenian writers is impossible to say, though I personally suspect that Gorgias and Aeschylus had every chance in the world to meet in Sicily. The important fact is that these notions were in the air; and fifth century tragedy profited from them immensely.

Let me hasten to admit, before I proceed, that apate as a literary principle, as Gorgias elaborates it in his Helen, is not just a reference to the relation between speech and the old epic reality. There are other dimensions to the term. For instance, it contains an element of divine deception: the poet is god-like, and may practice the kind of deception which in the Iliad was the prerogative of gods. Then we should keep in mind the Hesiodic Apate, daughter of Night and sister of Love (Theog., 224); the charms of sex, the thelkeria of the girdle of Aphrodite, convey a note of magic, or at least of seduction, which is not the least significant aspect of the Gorgianic apate. Rostagni in particular has dealt with the sophistic apate from this magic, or even medical, point of view. But I think it is fair to say, in the light of On Not-Being, that in Gorgias’ usage the logos is apatelos primarily in its relation to a supposed subject matter, and only secondarily in its effects upon the audience.

All this may, at least in part, explain why we witness a renaissance of myth in literature precisely at the time when the

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great enlightenment of the fifth century was beginning to make its impact felt. Why was it that after an early experimentation with historical topics, tragedy dropped such themes taken from empirical reality, and resorted exclusively to the old mythical material? Why was it that the style of Aeschylus tended increasingly in the direction of onkos, as Earp has shown us in his studies? One answer must surely be that the heritage of Heraclitus, on the one hand, with his stress on the idiom of the oracle, the riddle, the double entendre, the “unrealistic”; and the influence of apate, on the other, the emancipation of literature from the confines of empirical reality, allowed drama to achieve its particular telos, the use of language and music and movement and colour for avowedly non-descriptive purposes.

Now, in the Life of Aeschylus (?) we read that Aeschylus was not interested in achieving apate. And this is quite correct; for at the time this sentence was written, apate had come to mean “illusionism,” the artistic copying of the physical world, in the Platonic sense. Modern discussions of this passage, as far as I can see, tacitly assume that this was the meaning of the word in the fifth century also. Actually, the earliest occurrence of the term in the sense of the Vita is to be found in the Dissoi Logoi, probably a work of the fourth century: the best tragedian, or painter (the combination is significant) is he who does the most deceiving, by producing things close to the truth (3, 10). It is interesting to see that when the writer of the treatise wants to quote instances from the authors to document his use of the term, none of the examples cited squares with the meaning he gives to it.

31 ταῖς τε γὰρ δήσει καὶ τοῖς μῦθοι πρὸς ἐκπλήξιν τερατώδη μᾶλλον ἢ πρὸς ἀπάτην κέχριται. After apate had become identified with illusion in the sense of “realism,” pseudos was extended to denote the several varieties of artistic deception; cf. Plutarch, De Poet. Aud., 16 A ff. Apate is now sometimes used in the sense of “delusion.”
33 Perhaps we should say that prior to the Dissoi Logoi, the illusionistic implication of apate had not yet come out into the open. As for
So when the Vita says: he used spectacles and plots to achieve a tremendous ekplexis rather than apate, we should note that 5th century criticism would have been content to say: to achieve apate and ekplexis. Apate tells us something about the nature of tragedy; ekplexis tells us about its effect.

All this would seem to make drama into a kind of rhetoric. And that is precisely how the ancient critics regarded it. Plato says so in his Gorgias (502 D et al.). Aristotle often cites from tragedy when he wants to demonstrate canons of rhetoric.\(^{34}\) Some of the sophists in Plato's dialogues outline their pro-

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\(^{34}\) Of the three components of persuasion which Aristotle specifies (Rhet., I, 2, 3), i.e. the character of the speaker, the emotions of the audience, and the logic of the argument, the teachers of rhetoric prior to Aristotle, as he himself states, were primarily interested in the second, the shaping of the emotions of the audience. Aristotle, too, devotes a large portion of his treatise (II, 1-17) to an analysis of this aspect of rhetoric.
gramme of rhetoric in terms applicable also to dramatic performances. "People like to hear about the families of heroes and men, the founding of cities, and all that old stuff": this is Hippias complaining that he has to brush up on all those dead issues and put them into his orations, in order to appeal to the masses (Hippias Major, 285 D). Modern critics, notably I. A. Richards and Kenneth Burke, have once more asserted the rhetorical essence of drama: "And eloquence ... becomes the essence of art, while pity, tragedy, sweetness, humor, in short all the emotions which we experience in life proper, as non-artists, are simply the material on which eloquence may feed."  35
It is thus not surprising that wherever we find an early discussion of drama, the interest is primarily in techne. Pherecrates, in his Krapataloi (fr. 94), introduces Aeschylus as saying: I made techne into a big business before I handed it on to you. The same view about Aeschylus emerges from another story, related by Porphyry (De Abst., II, 18, 133). There the tragedian compares his own work with that of the older Tynnichus, and finds it less inspired but technically more accomplished. Even if we do not accept the story as genuine,36 it is nevertheless true that what we know of 5th and 4th century criticism largely deals with the technai of the writers.37 This interest is so striking that we may well ask why the early critics neglected to pay due attention to what is vulgarly called content or subject matter.38
Part of the answer at least may be discovered in a distinction which is fundamental in Aristotle's rhetoric, the distinction between πρὸς τὰ πράγματα and πρὸς τοὺς ἀκροάτας. A logos may be considered in two ways: in relation to the audience, and in relation to the subject matter.39 The philosopher is concerned

36 Sophocles' remark, Athenaeus, X, 428 F, only proves that Sophocles considered himself a more accomplished technician than Aeschylus.
37 The relevant texts may now be studied in L. Radermacher, Artium Scriptores (Reste der voraristotelischen Rhetorik), Wien. Sitzb., CCXXVII, Abh. 3 (Vienna, 1851).
38 It is in the nature of things that any adumbration of the tragic plot as such must involve uncertainty and approximation. Aristotle's definition, or rather description, of a dramatic plot (Poetics, 1453 a 12-17) is notoriously vague and has led to much speculation and critique.
39 Theophrastus was the first to articulate this distinction: frs.
with the latter, the poet and the orator with the former. It is instructive to note how, in this differentiation, the contact between poet and audience is almost felt to preclude any reference to subject matter. *Psychagogia* is all that counts, and everything the dramatist does is directed toward that aim. His first duty is to arouse the emotions of the people. Some of the authors were likely to overdo things, as in the celebrated case of the *Fall of Miletus*. But affect the people they must. It is obvious that this concentration upon the psychological effect of tragedy is merely the correlative of the realization that in its descriptive capacity tragedy is *apate*.

How does an author go about affecting other people’s emotions? 40 Aristotle says: by a representation of such basic human data as pity and fear. “Accurately conveyed emotion is the great fundamental in all good drama,” as one modern expert puts it. 41 The crucial word here is “accurately.” This does not mean that a realistic tale of everyday suffering will do. There is a difference between an argument, which is but a series of events, and a plot. The latter is an artistic scheme shaped precisely for the purpose of eliciting an emotional response from the audience. Toward the bringing about of this *ekplexis*, each play is endowed with its particular *ethos*, to borrow an expression of Suess. 42 It is this *ethos* which would have to be defined if we ask ourselves what a play is about. The answer must always be vague or unsatisfactory; the thousand and one futile attempts to outline the perfect tragedy, or even to define the meaning of tragedy, prove once again that the word is its own master, and that *apate* is at the very heart of the dramatic experience. For,
as Plato reminds us, tragedy does not teach, it merely persuades;\(^4^3\) and of this persuasion, i.e. of the things which happen in our souls, we cannot very well give a true account. A crowd cannot be taught. In the *Frogs* Dionysus, the crowd personified, agrees with Euripides that he has been deceived and bamboozled by Aeschylus (910, 921).\(^4^4\)

The irony is that it was left to the Socratic age to proclaim the didactic character of the poet’s ideal function: the \(\beta\varepsilon\lambda\varepsilon\iota\iota\nu\varsigma\ \pi\omicron\omega\epsilon\iota\nu\). This is clearly a sophistic concern. The sophists had a knack of looking at all poets, ancient and recent, as if they were forerunners and colleagues of themselves, with the same objectives and the same programme as the heralds of the enlightenment. Aristophanes inherited this way of looking at literature from the people whom he ostensibly, for the benefit of the mob, despises and ridicules. And so Euripides, in the *Frogs*, professes that poets are admired for two things: *nouthesia* and *dexiotes* (1009). *Nouthesia* is immediately explained, in straightforward sophist terminology; it is the \(\beta\varepsilon\lambda\varepsilon\iota\iota\nu\varsigma\ \pi\omicron\omega\epsilon\iota\nu\). But *dexiotes*, the remaining gauge of the poet’s achievement, is left without commentary, as if all members of the audience were expected to know what it meant. The “righthandedness” of the poet refers to his technical ability, his expertise in utilizing the tricks and stratagems of his craft. Whatever may be thought about the moral implications of his art, in the popular mind the

\(^4^3\) Characteristic passages in the *Gorgias*: 502 C-D, 455 A, and 462 C

where the same thing is said of rhetoric. For the didactic hypothesis, cf. Wilamowitz (above, note 5), I, pp. 477 f., 482; also T. B. L. Webster, “Greek Theories of Art and Literature,” *C. Q.*, XXXIII (1939), p. 171, and M. Pohlenz, “Die Anfaenge der griechischen Poetik,” *Gött. Nachr.*, 1920, pp. 162-3, 178 who attempts to show that fifth century criticism expects a primarily didactic function from drama. B. Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Oxford, 1953), p. 315 (ch. 6, note 4) turns against the notion of the dramatist as a teacher. The latest discussion of the problem is found in A. W. Gomme, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History* (Berkeley, 1954), ch. 3. It may be asked what is the Greek for “Erzieher seines Volkes”?\(^4^4\)

\(^4^4\) A distinction should perhaps be made between teaching through words, the sophistic ideal, and teaching through \(\mu\omicron\nu\alpha\sigma\iota\kappa\eta\), i.e. the kind of teaching which Plato envisages in the *Laws*, and Aristotle in *Politics*, VIII. Even along the latter lines, tragedy cannot be expected to teach as effectively as non-dramatic dances and music, with their direct kinesthetic impact.
tragedian is above all a clever craftsman rather than the teacher of a doctrine or a truth. Dramatic poetry is an art rather than a science. Or, again Platonically speaking, it is the special glory of tragedy that it is analogous to cookery rather than to medicine.

Tragedy, then, is not designed to convey moral instruction. It does not describe empirical facts. It generates emotions, and it does this by using words in a manner which strikes the obtuse mind as obscurantist, and which the lover of tragedy praises as ambiguous, complex, Heraclitean. The story of the swallow and the young lady takes us into a world of paradoxes and riddles and obliqueness. Apate demands this.

For a critical appreciation of Aeschylus, I would suggest, we should take apate in three different ways. On the one hand, there is the fact that all tragedy must be, realistically speaking, apate. Here we may trace the means whereby Aeschylus removes the area of his plot from the concrete realities of his time and place. With this, the central apate as we might call it, we need not concern ourselves for our present purposes. Second, there are the incongruities, or infractions upon the rule of probability, which result from the tragedian’s effort to create a unified ethos for his play under the aegis of the central apate. Often these incongruities are deliberate. Wilamowitz was somewhat startled by the fact that it is Clytemnestra who dwells on the crimes which Agamemnon and Menelaus perpetrated in Troy. He considered it “quite improper” that she was made to speak these lines, and concluded that she told the story because it had to be told, and it did not really matter much who told it. “Never again was there such naive dramaturgy.” One may

45 Abrams (above, note 25), p. 329: Wordsworth considered himself a teacher, and said: “Every great poet is a teacher; I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing.” But from other statements it becomes clear that the moral purpose of the poem, in the act of composition itself, is neither deliberate nor doctrinal. Poetry, by sensitizing, purifying, and strengthening the feelings, directly makes us better.—This comes close to the second half of Gorgias’ statement about apate (B 23): . . . καὶ δ’ ἄπαθεις σοφότερος τού μὴ ἄπαθήκεινος. Cf. also T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays 1917-1932 (New York, 1932), p. 33.

46 In the language of Heraclitus: the logos of the play is achieved in the harmony of the whole; the individual statements and scenes operate as obstacles to the understanding; they are meaningless epea.

question this; one may feel that the assignment of the lines to
the queen is most effective. However, Wilamowitz was perfectly
right in proposing that the individual \textit{ethos} is not allowed to
conflict with the total \textit{ethos}.\footnote{T. von Wilamowitz, \textit{Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles} (Berlin,
1917), did yeoman service in showing that drama cannot be approached
with the tools of a criminal investigation. Lately a reaction has set
in against some of his findings, particularly his view, no doubt exag-
gerated, that the poet did not devise his characters with the intent of
creating an impression of living human beings (pp. 40 ff.). E. Howald,
who followed in Tycho's footsteps, in his \textit{Die griechische Tragoedie}
(Munich, 1930) emphasizes the emotional effect upon the audience.
However, in his treatment the emotional impact is narrowed down to a
purely kinetic experience. Nor can I go along with his view that the
momentary impact of each scene counts more than the total impression
of the play.}

A character may say 1) what the character in that particular situation would be likely to say, or
2) what is needed to sustain the over-all \textit{ethos} aimed at arousing
a specific emotional reaction from the audience. Schadewaldt
has shown us that the great kommos in the \textit{Choephor\i} has this
second function; the song is more important to the play than
the attitudes of the individual actors.\footnote{W. Schadewaldt, "Der Kommos in Aischylos' Choephoren," \textit{Hermes}, LXVII (1932), pp. 312-54. The fact that the characters must
abide by the rules of the play's \textit{ethos} is not always sufficiently recog-
ized. To take one example, F. Solmsen, in his \textit{Hesiod and Aeschylus}
(Ithaca, 1949), p. 220 feels that "Aeschylus (in the \textit{Eumenides}) has
travelled a long way since the production of the \textit{Seven Against Thebes};
the potentialities inherent in the earlier play have become actualities."}

By this Solmsen appears to mean that Eteocles had to die, but Orestes
was saved, because Aeschylus had meanwhile recognized the saving
strength of the community. This may be called the chronological
fallacy; cf. below, note 76.
spectators from recognizing the presence of the first and the second.50 Here is an example: In the Persians, Xerxes is shown to be hybristikos, whereas Darius is pictured as a relatively benevolent king who knew enough to stay home rather than make unsuccessful war on the Greeks. This is a patent distortion of the historical truth, as the audience knew only too well: a case of central apate. They allowed themselves to be tricked, however, for the sake of the larger pleasure flowing from the action as a whole. Without that distortion, the play would have been truer, perhaps, in the historical sense, but it would have been too true to achieve the expected tragic effect.

Now the hybris of Xerxes is pressed so hard throughout the play that some of the audience, more prosaically inclined than others, might have been expected to ask in what way Xerxes really was so much more hybristikos than other military leaders. To obviate this kind of question, Aeschylus springs his third apate. Usually it takes the form of an overpowering image. There are many examples, perhaps the most impressive of them being the Bridge across the Hellespont. By again and again riveting the attention of the spectators upon this absorbing parable of the crossing of a natural barrier, the author adds to the depth and the seeming plausibility of the sinfulness of Xerxes.51 In the Prometheus, the secret about the marriage of Zeus is a similar stratagem. Some of the most famous Aeschylean formulations have this function, among others, that they serve as devices for the breaking down, or rather the obviating, of intellectual reservations.52

50 This is not to say, of course, that the three types of apate can always be neatly distinguished in practice.

51 Many assertions of hybris, based as they are on rather flimsy grounds (flimsy from the point of view of the realistic ethics of the time) require this sort of symbolic bolstering to become tragically effective. A similar use of the symbol is to be found in Antigone's double burial of her brother. The handful of dust saves the action from being exposed as a nonsense ritual. Is there a connexion here with the Freudian theory that dream symbols have a therapeutic and stabilizing function?

52 When comedy set itself the task of deflating tragedy, it proceeded merely to show up the various degrees of apate inherent in the venerable dramas. On the whole, Aristophanes has an easier time with Aeschylus than with Euripides, and so he is the fonder of him. For Euripides
In the second part of this paper, the attempt will be made to explore the critical possibilities opened up by *apate* within one narrow area of Aeschylean art.

II.

The last few years have witnessed a number of remarkable re-interpretations of Sophocles and Euripides, with particular emphasis on the role of the gods in their plays. Many old prejudices have been removed, and many true and moving things have been said about the purposes of the two dramatists. Perhaps, however, it is not entirely fortunate that many of the critics have used Aeschylus as the fixed point from which to stake out their new approaches. Some of the antiquated notions which were proved to do less than justice to the younger writers have remained more firmly attached than ever to Aeschylus. What is the nature of Euripides' alleged agnosticism? May Sophocles be called a conservative in religious matters? Whatever the answer to these questions, one could always be sure that Aeschylus served as the foil against which the revisions were made to stand out. For Aeschylus, most agree, wrote religious drama; he is concerned with justifying the ways of god to man; he has a theological creed.53

had committed the unforgivable crime of stealing Aristophanes' thunder, either by reducing the element of *apate* in his plays to less obvious proportions, or by parodying it, or by replacing it with logical means, as in the recognition scene of the *Electra*. In his epiphanies, on the other hand, he makes *apate* open for all to see.

Generally, discussions of Aeschylus' religion take two different shapes. Either they concentrate on the religious beliefs upon which he builds his plots; or they deal with him as a deliberate theologian of considerable stature. One term commonly heard in this connexion is "theodicy." This transfer of a concept from the discourses of Leibnitz and Kant to the theater of Aeschylus is symptomatic of the strange and undeserved fate which has befallen the dramatist. A theodicy is a "vindication of the divine providence or government in view of the existence of evil." There is no such word as theodicy in Greek. True, the philosophers, especially the Neo-Platonists, dealt with very much the same problem. There is evidence that Leibnitz was indebted on this score to Plotinus. Plotinus (Enn., II, 9) argues against the Gnostics; his contention is that evil ceases to worry us if only we look steadily at the whole and recognize its function in it. There is a note of apology in the very concept of a theodicy. Does Aeschylus defend the reign of the gods? Against whom? To himself?

Actually, judging from some of the modern commentaries, this would not seem unlikely. One eminent critic speaks of a "reaffirmation of belief in the divine government of the world." It seems all the more likely because we are told that Aeschylus inherited this mission to vindicate the divine rule from his predecessors, particularly Solon. But it should be noted that Solon's poetry, by virtue of the genre and the medium in which it is expressed, bears an autobiographical and confessional stamp, well suited to project his searching nature, whereas Aeschylus wrote plays. Solon practices historia, Aeschylus builds a new (London, 1950), pp. 102-4; W. F. J. Knight, "The Aeschylean Universe," J. H. S., LXIII (1943), pp. 15-20; also Kuhn (above, this note), pp. 22-3. Perhaps the sanest approach, as so often, is that of M. Croiset, Histoire de la littérature grecque, III (Paris, 1899), pp. 183, 185 ff. However, their caveats have been little heeded.


J. Hastings (ed.), Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, XII (1922), s. v.


Ibid., pp. 255, 258.
Interestingly enough, wherever Aeschylus' theodicy is taken up, the same characters are always called to the witness stand: Io, Prometheus, Orestes. But what about Pelasgus, or Eteocles, or Xerxes? These figures do not easily fit into any theological system.

The notion that Aeschylus had a theology presents, somewhat paradoxically, a last vestige of Verrallism. Verrall, for one, was quite convinced that some kind of religious confession underlay the work of Aeschylus. Of course, he warned, there was nothing old-fashioned about him; as a religious thinker, as in all else, he "shows a strong genius for . . . invention." His ideas, that is to say, were his own. In a way this was a long step forward from the 19th century view which recognized a sceptical Euripides against a hopelessly antediluvian Aeschylus. Gilbert Murray, too, shows respect for Aeschylus' intellectual capacity: "... The Greek tragedians as a whole were poets of ideas, and of bold ideas; poets like Milton or Shelley or Goethe or Victor Hugo, not like Shakespeare, Scott, Ovid, or the Homeric poets." The names in this roster, and their arrangement, may cause some surprise. But, more important, with his view that Aeschylus is one of the great thinkers in the history of literature, Murray goes against the recorded opinion of Aristotle who feels (Rhet., III, 1, 3; 9) that in the older school of drama, the baroque quality of the language hid a singular poverty of thought. The passage seems to imply that the history of tragedy was the development from meaningless bluster to thoughtful discourse. It might be argued that this refers only to the predecessors of Aeschylus, that it was he, in fact, who first kindled the light of systematic reflection in this species. But this is quite openly ruled out by what Aristophanes does to the figure of Aeschylus in the Frogs. To the Aristophanic Aeschylus, we might apply the lines chanted by the chorus in the Agamemnon (1030 ff.):

With heart groaning in darkness

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59 For Solon's antagonism to drama, and his objections to Thespis, cf. Diog. Laert., I, 59; cf. also Plutarch, Solon, 29.
60 A. W. Verrall (ed. and tr.), Aeschylus: Eumenides (1908), pp. xiii, xliii.
And flames devouring the mind
Stinging pain is all;
What hope ever to sunder web from woof?  62

But, to say that Aeschylus was not a systematic conceptual thinker, does this not detract from the value of his work? We need not go so far as to say with George Boas: "Ideas in poetry are usually stale and false."  63 Perhaps T. S. Eliot, who puts it more delicately, is a better guide: "The people who think that Shakespeare thought, are always people who are not engaged in writing poetry, but who are engaged in thinking." Shakespeare "was occupied with turning human actions into poetry... None of the plays of Shakespeare has a 'meaning,' although it would be equally false to say that a play of Shakespeare is meaningless. All great poetry gives the illusion of a view of life. When we enter into the world of Homer, or Sophocles,... we incline to believe that we are apprehending something that can be expressed intellectually; for every precise emotion tends towards intellectual formulation."  64

If Aeschylus was not a thinker, a theologian, what was his attitude, as a playwright, to the gods? It is only to be expected that he was in many ways influenced by the religious traditions of his age. E. Fraenkel reminds us of Aristotle's dictum that in the earliest tragedy the chorus would enter with a song to the gods.  65 This convention has clearly left its impact on the initial hymns of the Suppliants, the Seven, and the Agamemnon. Perhaps the similarity of structure exhibited by the first odes in the Suppliants, Persians, and Agamemnon—two compensatory halves, separated by an abstract middle piece dealing with the force and guidance of the gods—is due to a like tradition established before Aeschylus' own time. It is obvious that the ritual features of the old Dionysiac drama would not be entirely cast

62 νῦν δὲ ὑπὸ σκότῳ βρέμει / θυμαλητή τε καὶ οδὴν ἐπελπυμέ-να ποτὲ καίρων ἐκτολπεύεσιν / ζωπτυρομένας φεροῖς.
64 Eliot (above, note 45), pp. 115-16; cf. also his words about Donne, p. 118. Also, M. P. Nilsson, Geschichte der griech. Religion, I (Munich, 1941), p. 711: Aeschylus faithfully clung to the tradition; he was a poet, not a systematic thinker, not a prophet.
off. But such vestiges, even where they are utilized in the highly personal style of Aeschylus, do not help us much to characterize his religion.

Nor should it surprise us that Aeschylus echoes some of the religious attitudes brought into currency by Hesiod, Solon, or Xenophanes. These were men who, for the most part, had definite views on religious questions, views which gradually came to be accepted by many people of intelligence, to colour their thinking and speech. Aeschylus, too, picked up many of their themes, because they were useful to him for what he wanted to express. But that is different from saying that Aeschylus started from the mythical and poetic tradition, found inconsistencies or difficulties in it, and dealt with them in a critical manner.66

To start with, Aeschylus fills the stage with people. These people are usually Greek, and since they must do as Greeks do, they pray to Greek deities. Their deities, in conformity with the preferences of the day, are demons as often as they are gods celestial; the kommos of the Choephoroi eloquently testifies to this.67 They are invoked, and discussed, and many of them actually present themselves on the stage.68 But the personal appearances of the gods tell us even less about Aeschylus' own religious attitudes than what his characters say about them. They are found in the plays because they are part of the original myths which the audiences demanded to see re-enacted.

For one important piece of evidence, we must again turn to the Frogs. Does Aristophanes tell us anything about the religious import of the plays? No, in the critical battle between the tragedians, not one word is lost about this aspect of the art

66 This is the premise of F. Solmsen, "Strata of Greek Religion in Aeschylus," Harv. Theol. Rev., XLVI (1947), pp. 211-26 who, along with Rose (above, note 53), has done most to clarify the picture by distinguishing various uses of the gods in Aeschylus.

67 Cf. also fr. 156, now lines 15 and 16 of the Niobe papyrus, with its Jehovah-like aspect of the deity which shocked Plato so much (Rep., II, 380 A). Rose (above, note 53), p. 7 tries to render it innocuous by having it spoken by Niobe or one of her associates; but are not all lines in a drama spoken by one character or another, none of whom is identifiable with the author? Cf. below, note 74.

68 E. Mueller, De Graecorum deorum partibus tragicis (Giessen, 1910), ch. I gives a list of the gods appearing in Aeschylus' plays. The papyri have changed the situation somewhat.
of Aeschylus. He is praised for his patriotism, for his weightiness, his social virtues, and so forth. But Euripides' modernism is not set off against an Aeschylean devoutness. However, just before the contestants close in on each other, they are invited to call upon their respective gods (885 ff.). Euripides prays to his Sophistic nonsense deities, while Aeschylus turns to—not Zeus, as we might suppose, or even Dionysus, but Demeter and her mysteries. Why Demeter? Because Aeschylus comes from Eleusis, and for no other reason. There is the famous story that Aeschylus at one time violated the secret of the mysteries, and that he was acquitted when he proved that he did so without knowing it. This tale has been used to assert Aeschylus' pre-occupation with religion and theology. Actually, it rather proves the opposite, namely that in assembling his material for his plays he ransacked even the storehouse of the mysteries, classified material as it were, without undue scruples. There is nothing to suggest that there was an especially profound association between him and the cult of Demeter.

We should keep in mind that we are concerned with Aeschylus the dramatist, not Aeschylus the man; not the confessor, but the artist, the deceiver, the creator of precise emotions. This is a ticklish distinction. How far may one go in separating the views of the author from the views expressed by the characters in his plays? Wilamowitz was convinced that the verses on Zeus in the parodos of the Suppliants, presumably the earliest writing of Aeschylus we have, announce not the beliefs of the chorus, but the personal creed of the poet stepping before his people as a

69 P. Amandry, Annuaire de l'Institut (Brussels, Université Libre, 1949), pp. 27-41.

70 A. Nauck (cf. above, note 2), p. 28 collects the evidence. The story seems to be related to the supposed remarks of Sophocles, Athenaeus, X, 428 F (cf. above, note 36) where Aeschylus' instinctive genius is similarly stressed. Both anecdotes operate with the notion of an unthinking creation of literature, a notion of which there is little evidence before Democritus. Thus some doubt must be attached to their genuineness.

71 The didaskalia of the Suppliants recently published in P. Oxy., XX (no. 2256, fr. 3) may ultimately revise the traditional dating, but the question is still sub judice; in support of the new late dating, see E. G. Turner, C. R., IV (1954), pp. 20-4; for a sceptical view, cf. Ehrenberg (above, note 53), p. 3.
religious teacher. According to him, the chorus shifts away from its particular role in the play and, speaking out of character, becomes a mouthpiece for the author. Such a procedure, as we noted above, might mean little more than that, in his desire to effect the ethos of the play, the author has not considered it necessary to distribute thoughts and characters in keeping with the Aristotelian canon of appropriateness. That there are theological overtones, particularly in vv. 86-110, is true. They stress the perfection and the ease, the effortless repose of Zeus. Now, Zeus teleios, the undisturbed accomplisher of objectives, occupies the imagination of many a tragic character. What more perfect foil than this Xenophanean conceit—absorbed by Aeschylus as he absorbed so much else—for the breathless, imperilled girls whose telos stands under a great cloud? The picture of Zeus drawn in these lines is demanded by the intention of the scene, and the play, and thus again tells us nothing about the writer's own convictions.

Aristotle, in a well-known section which applies to tragedy as well as to the epic, remarks (Poetics, 1460 a 7'): the poet himself should speak as little as possible. As so often, Aristotle is a reasonably safe guide to follow. If we don't, we must fall victim to the biographical fallacy, according to which we can read an artist's own intellectual progress directly from the pronouncements of his characters. Surely fifth century drama, with its archaic traditions and its reliance on audience control, is the

72 Wilamowitz (above, note 32), pp. 31-2; also 240-1.
73 Snell (above, note 53), p. 45.
74 Rose (above, note 53), p. 12 suggests that if a certain statement is voiced by a god, or a semi-divine person such as Darius, we may assume that it expresses Aeschylus' own opinion (cf. the complementary fallacy referred to above, note 67). Actually, the divine personages express the most divergent opinions in the various plays and parts of plays.
75 Schmid (above, note 53), II, p. 105 contends that, whereas Sophocles prefers to express his views through a choral passage resembling a parabasis, Aeschylus always preserves the semblance of dramatic objectivity.
76 E. Fraenkel (above, note 65), p. 13 compares two lines about Zeus, one in the Suppliants and one in the Agamemnon, and deduces from their difference an advance in theological thinking: "Only now, in the song of the Agamemnon, is the ultimate depth of tragic religiosity opened up." Cf. Solmsen's statement about Aeschylus' religious prog-
very last literature which would respond to that type of critical treatment.

Let us, then, cease to think about Aeschylus as a wrestler with religious problems, or as the prophet of a new profound creed. Zeus, for him, was not a metaphysical reality, or an abstract problem of apologetics, but a living myth which could be employed to produce a richer portrayal of the irrational situation which is the concern of tragedy. Aeschylus thinks about the gods—exactly as he thinks about red carpets, and shield blazons, and gigantic scales, and chariots and snakes and fires, and all the other things which make life exciting and handsome and dignified. Anyway, the gods lived in Athens; for the people, no undertaking was complete without their participation in it, especially if the business in question stood under communal auspices. An author who wanted to put across a dramatic plot needed the gods as much as he needed all the other figures and symbols and props and tacit assumptions which contribute to the effect of the play.

The gods, as used in tragedy, make for poetic completeness. The theologian deals with a set of propositions concerning the divine without which, according to him, certain human events could not be explained. Aeschylus is not interested in human events such as theologians think about; he wants no explanations, no ultimate causes. For him the gods constitute a mise en scène, a colourful backdrop against which the life of the drama can be seen more fully, but which precipitates no food for speculation—at least not until the advent of Euripides. The gods help to achieve that three-dimensional quality, that meaningful obscurity which in the Gorgias anecdote was achieved by...
the intrusion of Philomela. They are an instrument of the poet's *apate*, that art of deceiving whereby the flat reproduction of reality is discarded in favour of a literary reality.

Moreover, *apate* permits Aeschylus to fortify himself behind the sanction of the gods where a bald account would be attended by moral risk. In the *Persians* (353 f.) the tale of Themistocles' ruse at Salamis is polished up, and as it were made socially and aesthetically respectable, by the simple introduction: "The whole trouble started, my queen, when an avenger or evil demon appeared from somewhere." Thus the audience, whatever their ideas about the right or wrong of their leader's diplomacy, are at once conditioned to see the incident in a light which by itself it certainly does not merit. The suggestive "it had to happen" and the disarming "from somewhere" obviate any undesirable inquiry into motives and ethical standards. It would be wrong to say that Aeschylus merely embellishes certain facets of the plot with divine names; he does not supply the gods by way of an afterthought. On the contrary, the gods reveal themselves to him as part of the thing he wishes to say. His control over them is the same as his control over most of his material.78

The divine curse which hangs over a house is not the cause of its catastrophe; it is the tragic vehicle which allows the spectator to become wholly absorbed in the disaster. The deity is the necessary metaphor, the functional, mood-generating symbol without which no poet could hope to reach his audience. Even

78 On occasion, for no apparent reason, Aeschylus chooses to dispense with the divine apparatus. A passage like *Agam.*, 369 ff. is couched in religious terminology, whereas a similar section, *Agam.*, 750 ff., is not. In the former he says that those who offend the taboos suffer punishment in the end: the theme which Plutarch later elaborated. In the latter we learn that wealth with justice does not entail suffering. Both passages are argumentative; the chorus turns against views held by others. But the language of the former is more strictly religious; the name of Zeus opens the strophe, and a mention of the altar of Justice closes it. The other passage is more secularly turned, although it is framed by verses whose religious tone is equally as prominent as in lines 369 ff. What dramaturgic reasons prompted Aeschylus to use two different frames of reference here? Presumably no definitive answer to this can be given, but it would evidently be absurd to assume that Aeschylus has meanwhile changed his views about the gods, and their competence in human affairs.
the sophists who attacked certain aspects of religion, or even doubted the existence of the gods, used these gods for their promotional ends, to communicate with the people on their level. That is not to say that Aeschylus condescended. There are types of literature which do not require this organic metaphor; Thucydides was satisfied with an appeal to *tyche*. But poetry, and particularly drama, was traditionally stretched in a religious frame. This is not a difference in ideology so much as a difference in vocabulary. It was Euripides’ decision to read too much into the vocabulary, to take the metaphor as an everyday reality, which led to the *Ion* and the downfall of classical tragedy.

It follows from this that, as metaphors, correlate to the material and the medium, the gods are largely at the author’s discretion. Whatever private worship the poet may have favoured, or whatever his personal philosophical interests, when it was a matter of using the gods in his plays, Aeschylus was, within the limits of mythology, bound only by the dictates of his dramatic purposes. He could not make Apollo the son of Poseidon, just as he could not marry Clytemnestra to anyone but Agamemnon. Moreover each deity, through its role in Homer or cult, carries with it a certain emotional climate, an ambience, which is suited to only a limited number of uses in the action. Artemis is fitting enough as a keeper of the *temenos* where the Suppliants take refuge; \(^79\) she will not do on occasions when Hera is more appropriate. But the question of a personal creed does not enter the picture at all.

For a better understanding of how Aeschylus handles his gods, it is especially useful to study the functions he assigns to Zeus. The father of the gods should hold a particular interest for us, for it is Zeus whose prominence in the plays has in the past induced scholars to conceive of an Aeschylean theodicy. Now if theology is defined to presuppose commitment and precision, then, ironically enough, Aeschylus’ use of Zeus is frequently downright anti-theological. To give one example: in fr. 86 someone says that Apollo’s oracles actually derive from Zeus. Oracles, like curses, and like the gods themselves, are necessary in tragedy to achieve *ekplexis*. Traditionally oracles are the property of Apollo. If the oracles, as required by the

\(^78\) Wilamowitz (above, note 32), pp. 5-6.
plot, are shocking in their destructiveness, the philanthropic standing of the god may suffer in the process, as it undoubtedly does in many dramas. To take the edge off his involvement in the curse, to save him from too close a proximity to the Furies, Aeschylus makes him a subaltern, and puts Zeus over him. For Zeus had no reputation to lose; in the minds of the Athenians, who knew Zeus largely from literature rather than cult, Zeus was everything, and nothing. He was big enough, and vague enough, to absorb both good and evil in his cosmic personality, and to serve as a buffer for his fellow gods. Thus, in this case at least, Aeschylus avails himself of Zeus to avoid a religious commitment.

But this is not the only instance of its kind. For here we have one of the chief reasons why Zeus is so prominent in Aeschylus: because the emotional and conceptual climate with which his figure endows a scene or an ode is less articulate, less clear cut, than that of any other god. The mention of Zeus suggests greatness, and majesty, and splendour, and masculine strength. Aphrodite, and Athena, and Apollo, and the others who feature in the plays each embrace a great many aspects of life, but there are other aspects with which the audience would not associate them. Zeus, however—and this is nothing new, but derives straight from Homer, and is reinforced by the special character of the worship of Olympian Zeus in Athens—thrones above all in brilliant opacity. To have him in a drama, therefore, ensures a maximum of poetic effect, and a minimum of obligation.

A rough compilation of the occurrences of Zeus in Aeschylus' preserved plays gives us the following results. To begin with, it is evident that in some of the plays Zeus plays a vastly more prominent role than in others. In the Persians I have counted barely five references to the god. Various reasons may be adduced for this peculiarity. For one, the play deals with Persians

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80 I have not counted the passages where Zeus is merely mentioned in the patronymic of one of his offspring: e.g. Athena, daughter of Zeus. However, where such a child is not a deity of Homeric myth (e.g. Justice, daughter of Zeus) the occurrence has been noted, for there the name of Zeus is manipulated so as to confirm and dignify the alleged progeny. References to the Zeus of the Underworld have been discounted. Nor have I examined the Prometheus, in the hope that my findings may throw some light on the problems of that play in turn.
rather than Greeks, and too many references to Zeus would spoil the outlandish flavour of the piece.\textsuperscript{81} Another explanation, probably the more valid one, is that in the \textit{Persians} we have a play in which the facts, so far from being left to the poet's own manipulation, are predetermined by history, and the people know it. The stories of myth are always something of a problem for the understanding; there is too much of the improbable in them, and the poet has to muster all his reserves of stage-craft and vocabulary to make them palatable. But the recent war was history; no need to appeal to an inscrutable fate, refracted in the person of Zeus. On the other hand, the very historicity of the action was dangerous too; hence the stress on the bridge across the straits, hence the curse, hence Darius rising from his tomb.

At the other extreme stands the \textit{Suppliants}; Gorgias might well have called it a play full of Zeus. There are three capacities in which the god is employed in this play: as an object of prayer, as the great protector (these two uses naturally coincide in most of the cases), and as the ancestor of Io. That the girls, frightened, harassed, and homeless, should pray to the god who already in Homer figures as the protector of strangers is only to be expected. And once Aeschylus had decided to use the story of Io as the mythical paradigm of the plot, the frequent mention of her divine lover and rescuer was inevitable. Here we have three of the most important uses of Zeus in drama: as the object of prayer, i.e. as the sky god called to witness and summoned to help (this use is absent from the \textit{Eumenides}); as the guardian of the underdog (not in \textit{Persians}); and as a god of mythology (not in \textit{Persians}).

There are two other major categories: Zeus \textit{teleios}, and Zeus the Leveller. Zeus \textit{teleios} is the personal avatar of fate or accomplishment or realization; he is the author's plot externalized, unerring as the plot itself. When the Danaids, or their servants (\textit{Suppl.}, 1048-9) sing: There is no stepping afoul of the great measureless plan of Zeus! the meaning, cut and dried, is simply: the story is exactly as the author wanted it.\textsuperscript{82} But, of course,

\textsuperscript{81} Cf. also J. G. Griffiths, \textit{C. P.}, XLVIII (1953), p. 152: the chorus conceive of their king—provided that he remains successful—as a god.

\textsuperscript{82} Διός οδ παρβατός ξετιν / μεγάλα φην ἄφερας.
there is all the difference in the world between the two ways of putting it. As for Zeus the Leveller, who is in a fashion related to Zeus the accomplisher, we find him now as the Punisher, then as the Rewarder, or again, more abstractly, as the god of Justice. I would also put the Warner, the god of moderation, in this same class. A good example of the Leveller occurs in the *Persians* (827-8): “Zeus is at hand to punish overreaching thoughts, a savage auditor.” 83 Whereas Zeus *teleios* is a symbol of the plot as a whole in its sweep toward the climax, Zeus the Leveller heralds what we might call the matrix for the heroic action, the precarious balance with its unpredictable swings of the pendulum, within which the great deed rises like a Bergsonian intensification of energy, giving the lie to the mock-physics of its environment. Zeus is this balance. Before the catastrophe breaks, Zeus appears as the patron of justice, or as the counsellor of moderation and wisdom; when it has broken, he has become the punisher to some, the rewarder to others.

Except for a few occurrences of Zeus as a local cult deity, or as the patron of some sphere of activity, such as public speaking, these uses of Zeus would seem to account for practically all instances. 84 There are, however, a few passages—six or seven at most—in which Zeus is discussed or called upon in abstract terms, as a Xenophanean omnipotent divinity. 85 The passage in the *Agamemnon* (160 ff.) is perhaps the most famous. Fraenkel recognized that it does not constitute a prayer; 86 but his own view that we have here a hymn of praise sung by a group less narrowly defined than the troop of ancient courtiers—in other

83 Ζεὺς τοι κολασθής τῶν ὑπερκόμπων ἀγαν / φρονημάτων ἑπετίν, ἐθνὸς βαρὸς.

84 It is instructive to study a passage like *Choephori*, 783-8, in which various functions of Zeus are combined to introduce a choral ode and, with their cumulative effect, to raise the audience’s expectation that the climax is not far off.

85 Not in *Persians*, *Seven*, *Choephori*. The principal passages are *Agam.*, 160 ff., *Eum.*, 650 ff., *Suppl.*, 92 ff. and 592 ff. Cf. also fr. 70, with its extravagant meteorological overtones. It is passages like these which have lent support to those who speak of a theodicy; cf. Rose (above, note 53), pp. 4 ff.; E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon* (Oxford, 1950), II, pp. 99 ff., based on his article (above, note 65) about the *Agamemnon* passage.

86 Fraenkel (above, note 85), II, p. 113.
words, that this is in the nature of a parabasis, and therefore voices the author's own views concerning the function and greatness of Zeus—this interpretation must now be questioned.

Let us look at the passage in detail, always with the inevitable reservation that a paraphrase catches little of the dramatic intention. In lines 140-59, the chorus reports the words of Calchas concerning the attitude of Artemis toward the expedition; as is so often the case with pronouncements of seers and prophets, these words are full of ambiguity and foreboding, at one and the same time promising and cautioning against a speedy accomplishment of the goal of the expedition. It is on this note of perplexity, mixed of confidence and apprehension—and with the well-known outcome of the myth always ready to claim the awareness of the audience—that the chorus turns to an apostrophe of Zeus. First they emphasize his obscurity, his abstractness, his limitlessness; the language used is that of the philosophers and scientists. The antistrophe dwells on the greatness of Zeus, this time in terms of the Hesiodic succession. Thus both philosophy and mythology have been put under obligation for this appraisal of Zeus. In lines 176-81, we find an elaboration of the symbol of the great Warner: τὸ φρονεῖν, πάθει μάθος, σωφροσύνη are said to emanate directly from the nature of his sovereignty. Thus, in their perplexity about the situation at Aulis, the chorus looks to the soothing influence of the tranquil, unshaken Zeus, with his insistence on restraint and circumspection. But the chorus is merely the conveyor of these ideas; it is the audience which, through the evocation of that image, is for a few seconds almost relieved in its fear for the Atridae. Does not Zeus, with his wisdom and strength, stand behind them? But then, with the menacing ambiguity of the transitional lines (183-4) in which mercy and violence are balanced in cosmic confusion, the truth begins to emerge. What is the use of such injunctions as πάθει μάθος and circumspection and know thyself, if the dilemma of the human agent leaves him no scope for restraint? Agamemnon must act on his own; there is no divine directive of any substance to guide him. All alone he

87 The passage is too long, and in many spots too uncertain textually, to reprint here.

comes face to face with what we have called the precarious balance, the great universal obscurity which makes of every man a potential sufferer. Zeus ὁσις ποτε ἦστιν, Zeus is hidden from sight, because the future is incalculable, and that is the only real truth about him. Everything else is at best bitter irony, doubly bitter because the audience accepts each sentiment at face value. Zeus calls for restraint, they are told; Agamemnon acts as he must, and suffers as he must for it; does not that mean that he did not practice the obligatory self-control?

The great "abstract" discussion of Zeus, therefore, has a very important dramatic function. The recapitulation of the developments at Aulis is momentarily interrupted, at the point of Agamemnon's hopeless decision, to evoke a false picture of security in Zeus, and to underscore the enigma of the universal order, while at the same time holding out such make-believe panacées as sophrosyne and the like. After this, the action proceeds with greater poignancy, with a more massive sense of frustration and disaster than would have been possible without this intercalation of the divine metaphor blown up to its most deceiving proportions.89

The Eumenides presents the spectacle of Zeus dikaios, justice writ large, dissolving into its constituents. The result is a contest between two animated metaphors or camps of metaphors, between the forces of Erinyes and Eleos, until justice is tempered with mercy.90 It has been said that Dike who "always comes through" is the basic idea and basic issue in the plays of Aeschylus.91 Actually, Dike does not so much answer an abstract principle of justice prescribing an ideal course of action—com-

89 Fraenkel (above, note 85), II, pp. 111-12, in discussing lines 182-3, proposes the view that, by juxtaposing χάρις and βιαίος, Aeschylus proclaimed a metaphysical theory. "In our first impression the suffering ordained by God seems anything but χάρις; it is only in its results, in what we learn by it, that it proves to be a favour." But this is hard to maintain. What we have here is a kind of Heraclitean oxymoron, closely related to the πάθει μάθος theme. And is not πάθει μάθος Aeschylus' "deceitful" version of πάθει ἀμαθία? Certainly, once a tragic hero has been caught by his petition, he is in no position to learn, nor are others able to learn from his fate, because Zeus "cannot be coordinated."

90 For a fine discussion of Dike in Aeschylus, see Kranz (above, note 77), p. 47.

91 Cf. Solmsen (above, note 66), p. 221.
parable to the Platonic "good"—as it corresponds to the notion of the social norm, of regularity, of things turning out as in the light of human experience they are likely to be of least disservice to all, or simply of things turning out as they usually do. The Zeus of the Psychostasia, perhaps the most impressive embodiment of Dike, merely determines what everyone knew to be the facts of the myth. We may assume—although future papyri may teach us differently—that his decision was not greatly influenced by the juridical claims, or the moral rights, of the interested mothers. A similar situation prevails in the Eumenides. The problem of Orestes is no more soluble when lifted into the sphere of the gods than it would be in purely human terms. That is why it informs a tragedy. In the end it is a political legend which seemingly provides the solution.

It has been suggested that in the Eumenides we witness a reconciliation between god and man, or that the action is carried out on the two levels, the divine and the human, simultaneously. This is, of course, the theological approach; according to it, the question is always: What is the relation of man's actions to the world government of the gods? Against this, we must insist that the dramatic plot is concerned only with the human predicament, with the blindness and the heroic strength of man. So, if in the Eumenides the gods become protagonists, after two long acts of lurking behind the humans, the understanding is that in this last part of the trilogy, the fate of individual men has become less crucial, and the social crisis as such is brought out into the limelight. The more a plot is conceived in terms of general human behaviour, the more openly the gods intrude themselves onto the stage. Where the action is presented as a struggle between individuals, the gods fade into the background. The theme of the Eumenides is static and

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92 For 


95 Kranz (above, note 77), p. 61.

impersonal, not one of vital action, but of deliberation and decision. And just as, at critical junctures, Plato has recourse to divine myths to describe or rather approach a truth which is indescribable, likewise the last word about the tragic dilemma and its "solution" can be expressed only in the form of dramatic abstractions, through the gods. And again, just as Plato's myths never solve anything, but merely hint at wider vistas while creating the illusion of satisfaction, so the divine comedy of the *Eumenides* 97 is far from providing an answer to anything.98

It has often been remarked that the procedure of Apollo at the trial leaves much to be desired in the way of judicial fairness and presentation of evidence. Instead of an open-minded debate, we have a succession of sophistries which were no doubt copied from contemporary legal manoeuvres. Thus, instead of a "self-transcendence of the tragic within tragedy" 99 Aeschylus gives us an example of the practical posing to solve the insoluble. In the *Eumenides*, the lifting of the *tisis* goes against the very grain of the tragic proceedings which lead up to it. The acquittal of Orestes and the conversion of the goddesses are but a pseudo-solution. That is all the tragedian, the poet, the non-theologian is prepared to give us. But precisely because it is, from the rational point of view, so unconvincing, it has to be buttressed with powerful references and, in part, to be cleverly argued in order to be accepted by the audience. The outcome is what Dodds would refer to as an over-determined solution. God is piled upon god, and all sorts of conjuring devices, from binding chants to an institutional *aition*, are marshalled to see to it that the unlikely solution is driven home with the force of truth. Euripides has his *deus ex machina*; Aeschylus employs a galaxy

97 Reinhardt (above, note 53), pp. 152 ff. speaks of a "Goettermimus"; he refers to the convention, dating from Homer, that divine contests must always be officially comic.

98 Contrast Jaeger's view (above, note 57), p. 260 that "the knot, which no human wit could loosen, is cut by a divine miracle of grace . . ." Cf. also Kuhn (above, note 53), p. 35. K. Latte, *A. f. R.*, XX (1921), p. 279 seems to me to come closer to the truth when he says: "Orestes is cleansed, but the Furies continue to pursue him; it is doubtful whether Aeschylus himself was entirely satisfied with the final solution which the tradition of the tale forced upon him." This is, however, seen too pessimistically.

99 Kuhn (above, note 53), II, p. 63.
of the gods to achieve the same effect. That is the crowning move of his artistic apate. The change of the Erinyes into Gracious Divinities is not a theological proposition, but a manipulation of religious ideas, and a very violent manipulation at that, toward dramatic and purely dramatic ends. Theologically speaking the whole business is not only unbelievable but crude; as witnessed on the stage, what audience would not surrender themselves to the impact of the spectacle, particularly since it seems to coincide with their hopes, and remove their apprehensions?

Seen in this light, the old question whether the gods in Aeschylus undergo a development or not—a question often asked in connexion with the Zeus of the Prometheia—becomes meaningless. For Zeus, and the Furies, are not independent entities but the author's means of sketching the human predicament. It is instructive to note that in Aeschylus' plays "the gods appear as actors and agents but not as far as we know as sufferers," excepting of course such minor figures as Thetis and Eos and the Heliades whose tears were fixed by the literary past. The gods are not involved in the drama as humans are. Weeping gods are largely a concern of comedy. Tragedy may, or may not, have started as a passion play about a suffering god. The fact is that in historical times, a human hero had taken the place of Dionysus or whoever is assumed to have been the original victim, and with that the religious fixation of tragedy became deflected. Consequently, whenever we do find the gods playing a part in drama, they are there less as a heritage of the ritual past, than as a component in the author's artistic design.

100 A similar view is expressed by Reinhardt (above, note 53), p. 58. 101 Solmsen (above, note 49), p. 158. 102 It is unfortunate that Aeschylus' Dionysian plays are lost; the fragments indicate that there were at least eleven plays concerned with Dionysus in one way or another; cf. Murray (above, note 61), pp. 145, 153 ff. Cf. H. J. Mette, Supplementum Aeschyleum (Berlin, 1939), p. 17 who proposes a trilogy of Semele, Pentheus, Xantriai. But lest it be assumed that Aeschylus must have exhibited his religion in those plays, it is useful to remember that we learn considerably less about Euripides' views from his tragic Bacchae than from his melodramatic Ion. In the former play, Dionysus is not implicated in the tragic dilemma, though he appears on the stage; in the latter, Apollo is, though he does not put in an appearance.
Again I do not want to leave the impression that I consider the gods extraneous to the essence of drama. They are important within the tragic vocabulary because of the age-old belief that τὰ ἄνθρωπεια are insignificant by comparison with τὰ θεῖα. We are reminded that the command “know thyself” then carried the meaning “know that thou art mortal.” But “the peculiar problem of the divine in Aeschylus arises from an ambiguity; on the one hand, the gods continue to be objects of simple faith, and are thought to direct all human affairs; on the other, it is felt that in the deepest sense of reality, man is on his own.” Aeschylus exploits this contradiction for his own ends. He used the gods to say something profound and indefinable about man, and his audiences allowed themselves to be swayed by his formulation, although no doubt they could not have told where, in the complex scheme of dramatized myth, apate leaves off and truth begins.

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