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Agamemnon's Decision: Freedom and Folly in Aeschylus

In 1956 Lloyd-Jones published an article challenging the dominant view of Aeschylus as a religious thinker, and in 1962 followed this up with a second dealing with the problems presented by Agamemnon's decision, in the first choral ode of the *Agamemnon*, to kill his daughter. A number of other scholars, especially in England, have entered the debate. My reason for further contributing to it is that I feel a more acceptable overall understanding of Aeschylus' intention can be obtained by combining the insights of several scholars, by relaxing somewhat the demands of strict logic, by comparing the poet's practice in other plays, and by analyzing more closely than has yet been done the vital stanzas of the first ode in which the decision is made. My views are in many respects similar to those which have been expressed by Lloyd-Jones and Lesky, but with modifications which I think are of some importance.[1]

The questions about Agamemnon's decision are obvious enough. Can we think that he has a free choice of alternatives? If so, is it a choice between alternatives both of which are disastrous? Or has he no free choice, and does Zeus, or Necessity, force him to choose one way, and then later punish him for so doing? Is he *guilty* of anything, and if so, of what? If he in fact makes a choice, and it leads to his death, is it because of his misjudgement, his *hamartia*, his personality, his folly, the guilt he inherited from his father? Is he a devout man, subordinating his personal feelings to undertake a mission ordered by his God? A patriot, sacrificing his daughter for the good of his country? Does Aeschylus even realize he is posing a problem?

More specifically: at what point in the stanzas describing his decision (*Ag.* 205–223) is his choice made? What is the meaning of his change of mind? or perhaps his *double* change of mind? Does Atê appear before he makes up his mind, or afterwards? Is Infatuation the reason he makes such a terrible choice, or the punishment for making it? The question of Agamemnon's freedom to choose, and the nature of his folly (if that is what it is) in making his choice, affect our view of his murder later on, of the meaning of the trilogy as a whole, and of the theology of the poet.

Like most of us, Aeschylus may not have been completely clear-headed and logical about the roots of human action. But a poet who wrote plays dealing with matters human and divine must have had views about their interrelationship; these views are (*pace* Pope[2]) likely to be discernible in his plays; and they may well (*pace* Herington[3]) be fairly consistent, since the probability is that he did not change his attitude to life fundamentally after reaching maturity. His ideas, particularly in the areas of human responsibility and the possibility of prediction of the future, may be, however, considerably different from what we think is rational. Without questioning the poet in a way he could not have understood, or bringing in logical ideas of fate and freewill which only developed later, we must attempt to define the areas of vagueness or inconsistency.[4]

In his 1962 article Lloyd-Jones argues that Agamemnon is forced to choose between two crimes; and Zeus punishes him for Atreus' guilt by sending Atê to take away his wits and making him choose to sacrifice his daughter. Hammond denies that the inherited guilt from Atreus is important, and thinks Agamemnon has a real choice, and this choice alters his personality. Lesky addresses the larger question of the significance ascribed by Aeschylus to personal human decisions, and concludes that Agamemnon, like King Pelasgus in the *Suppliants*, makes a personal decision for which he must take the responsibility, but he makes it under the pressures of the situation; he further stresses that the external necessity which forces the choice brings with it a passionate desire for the action chosen, not only in Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia but also in Eteocles' decision in the *Seven* and Orestes' in the *Choephoroe* (he does not further explore the nature of this desire). Peradotto, in an article making other important contributions to our understanding of the parodos, likewise feels Agamemnon has freedom to choose, but emphasises that his choice depends on his character (*êthos*) rather than on external pressures; this is to a large extent denied by de Romilly, who stresses that Aeschylus, though seeing human motives and divine justice working towards the same end, is silent about the psychological motivation involved (in contrast to Herodotus) and does not tell us why characters act as they do and what part is ambition, what is constraint. Dover has gone further in suggesting that the lack of clarity about the springs of human action is intended by the poet, who regards such actions as inherently irrational, though this does not absolve the agents from responsibility for them. Lebeck in her important book returns to some extent to Lloyd-Jones's idea, and holds that Agamemnon is already guilty of hereditary pollution and pays the penalty for it after he has himself freely chosen to commit a similar crime; but Atê and hybris appear *after* his decision. By contrast, Fontenrose denies that Zeus wants Agamemnon punished at all, either for killing his daughter, for the bloodshed at Troy, or for Atreus' sin.[5]

In the following, I shall first review decisions made by characters in Aeschylus' other plays, and especially the role of Atê; does she seem to strike because of a wrong decision, or to *cause* the wrong decision? And what can be seen of the characters' motivations? With these results in mind, I shall then consider in detail the meaning of the two stanzas in the parodos of the *Agamemnon* in which the king's decision is described.

The *Persians* brings out clearly the incontrovertible nature of Xerxes' hybris. But what exactly is the gods' part? At what point does Atê, or the god, touch his wits and affect his judgement?

In the first few lines of the play (3–4) the wealth of Persia is juxtaposed with a foreboding of trouble, which passes into grief for the sons of Persia absent on land and sea. Then becoming more explicit, in Aeschylus' manner, the chorus state the concrete underlying fact; their impetuous (*thourios*) king, like a very god (*isotheos phôs*), trusting to his commanders,[6] has launched an attack both by land and sea, and thrown a yoke over the neck of the Hellespont (65–80). They celebrate Xerxes' power, proclaim with a truth they do not realize that no one can constrain with strong coils the irresistible wave of the sea (90), and lead on immediately into the obvious religious issue; what mortal can escape the guile of the god? for fawning, kindly infatuation leads him aside into her snare (93–100). For the gods long ago granted Persia dominion over the land, and now they have learned to cross the sea too (101–114).[7] The ode concludes with further words of fear and grief, and a recapitulation of the specific action of crossing the bridge over the sea.

These same basic themes are now taken up by the Queen. She is fearful lest the *olbos* built by Darius with the gods' help be overthrown by the Persians' great *ploutos*. Her forebodings are even clearer than those of the chorus, and show the hand of god already at work; for she has had a dream which portends trouble. After the short account of Athens, there follows the terrible news (stressing the part played by the gods[8]), the lament (which blames Xerxes and the *ships* of the Greeks[9]), and the evocation of the shade of Darius. His speech makes everything clear (like those of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*, and the ode at *Seven* 720–791), and confirms the previous forebodings of the chorus and Queen. The Hellespont-crossing *was* a god-sent folly, a mortal man's effort to overpower all the gods, a disease of the mind of the impetuous young king,[10] a folly fulfilling the old oracles, doubtless proclaimed by those who foresaw that Persia's prosperity must in time make her vulnerable to disaster,[11] though the disaster had been postponed by the wisdom of Xerxes' predecessors (765–781). For this hybris and godless arrogance further punishment remains;[12] hybris has blossomed forth into Atê, "disaster" (821–822).[13] Let no one despise the gifts god has given and desire more, through *thrasos* like this (831, cf. 744), or his *olbos* may be destroyed, for Zeus punishes overweening pride. An ode celebrating Darius' own great achievements then prepares for the contrast with the subsequent arrival of the ruined and tattered Xerxes.

Did the god affect his judgement and thus cause his hybristic act, and then punish him for it? Were his wits touched by Atê *before* he crossed the Hellespont, or after? I think the question does not admit of a precise answer. The way Aeschylus sees it, Xerxes was in an especially vulnerable position, because of the great prosperity of Persia coupled with his own youthful impetuosity and his desire to emulate his forefathers. Inevitably Temptation came, in the shape of "fawning" Atê (97–98). This Atê is clearly not the undeserved blow of god; the temptation was inevitable, for one in his situation, and we know that he succumbed. So he burst the bounds of Persia's land empire, yoked the Hellespont, and thus committed great hybris (through *thrasos*); and we know that infatuation must have seized him; for this was the act of a madman, one whose wits have been touched. We know that god and Atê do not overlook a chance to tempt a man who is predisposed to fall—*ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χὼ θεὸς συνάπτεται* (742). And when disaster strikes, we know that this is punishment for his mad folly. It is useless to push the question further.[14] Aeschylus does not probe further into theodicy. Here he does not go beyond Solon's

> *τίκτει γὰρ κόρος ὕβριν, ὅταν πολὺς ὄλβος ἕπηται*
> *ἀνθρώποις ὁπόσοις μὴ νόος ἄρτιος ᾖ.* (6.3–4 West)[15]

In the *Seven*, the onset of Atê takes place onstage before our eyes. Early in the play (69–73) Eteocles, hearing of the attack of the heroes, prays to the Curse and powerful Erinys of his father not to destroy the city. Almost certainly in the preceding play of the trilogy the curse of

Oedipus upon his sons had been pronounced. After this preliminary statement of the theme comes the long build-up as the Messenger announces in turn the six champions threatening the six gates, and Eteocles names a defender for each. Then comes the revelation that the seventh attacker is Polynices. Eteocles knows that the curse of his father has been fulfilled—*ὤμοι, πατρὸς δὴ νῦν ἀραὶ τελεσφόροι*—and the hatred of the gods against the race further revealed (653–655). But lamentation serves no purpose; he will fight his brother. The chorus warn him of the eternal pollution he will incur, warn him not to be swept away by heart-destroying, war-craving Atê, warn him to shun the onset of evil *erôs*. Eteocles declares (for the first time in this play) that it is the anger of Phoebus against the whole race of Laius (691), and the chorus repeat their warning against this too-savage *himeros* for the unholy bloodshed. Eteocles, however, refers again to the curse of his father, speaks of his evil dreams (710–711, of course sent by the gods, like that of Atossa), and defying the pleadings of the chorus goes off to his doom.[16]

A long choral ode follows, performing the same function as the shade of Darius and Cassandra, setting the agony of the present disaster against the wider frame of the wrongdoing of the past (720–791). For the first time in this play the precise terms of Oedipus' angry curse are specified:[17] the steel has allotted them enough land for a grave; new pollution is piled upon old evils. They tell of the old defiance by Laius of Apollo's warnings, his folly in begetting his son Oedipus, that son's parricide and incest, and the dangers this has brought upon the city. Finally they return to the immediate concern, their dread that Oedipus' curse on his sons is about to be fulfilled. The Messenger returns and assures them that the city is saved, but Apollo has repaid Laius' old folly and the brothers are dead. The final dirges are full of the Curse, the Erinys, and Atê.[18]

We should not ask if Eteocles is guilty, or even if he has a free choice in deciding whether or not to fight his brother and die with him. The essential point is that he is not an ordinary man; like Xerxes, he is vulnerable, predisposed to be tempted, to yield to *erôs*, and to fall into disaster, this time not because of wealth and youthful impetuosity but because of the curse of Oedipus his father and the earlier wrongdoing in Laius' house.[19] Of course Atê does not omit to offer such a man the opportunity to fall into disaster, and of course he takes it. There is really no question of guilt or innocence, or of any other possible choice; when the time is ripe the thing will come about. One cannot say that Atê *causes* his decision; she provides the temptation, she accompanies his fall, she will carry the disaster through to the end; she does not excuse it. After he has made his fatal step, we realise that with such an ancestry the outcome could not be otherwise; Eteocles has been doomed since he was born into such a house. The gods need not be vindictive or cruel—they have no alternative either, since mercy is not one of their attributes; after Laius' foolishness (or perhaps crime—we do not know the circumstances of Apollo's warning in the early part of the trilogy) there can be no outcome but calamity.[20]

In the case of King Pelasgus of the *Suppliants* there is no question of infatuation. He has to make a difficult decision, after a protracted dilemma, between two hard courses. In this his situation is parallel to that of Agamemnon, and the agony of the choice is stressed at great length; but in Pelasgus' case it is clear that his choice is a rational decision, without influence from Atê or Peithô, and there are no forebodings of his personal doom.[21]

Again there is an early statement of the essential point; in this case, the power of Zeus and in particular the anger of Zeus Hikesios (parodos *passim*, 347, 385–386). In the long scene of his dilemma, the king sees that if he gives the suppliants up to their enemies he will create a heavy *alastôr* for his house (412–416). The chorus emphasize that his decision will remain for himself and his children. He still hesitates, seeing the *anangkê* to stir up a great war with one side or the other; there is no way out without disaster (442). Hopelessly, he concludes "May it turn out well, though I don't expect it to" (454). Then a new consideration is introduced; the chorus threaten to hang themselves on the images of the gods, and the king eloquently restates his dilemma; evils flood upon him, he is adrift upon a sea of Atê (clearly "disaster" here, not "infatuation")[22] with no harbor (470–471). On the one hand is boundless defilement, on the other a war shedding men's blood for the sake of women. He is constrained by *anangkê:* this time not the necessity of making a decision (439) but the necessity of respecting the anger of Zeus Hikesios (478), most to be feared of all things. He makes his decision for the suppliants. In spite of his stress on the necessity of a democratic decision by the citizens there is no doubt that he has made up his own mind, unaffected by Peithô, Atê, or Curse.[23] If his death came in the following play, it seems it must have come without guilt or blame—an exceptional case in Aeschylus' surviving plays.[24]

Pelasgus is thus in a different situation from Xerxes, Eteocles, or (as I shall argue below) Agamemnon, because he is not vulnerable and so far as we know is not destroyed because of his decision. The parallel with the *Agamemnon* is limited to the necessity (*anangkê*) of making a hard decision.

The *Prometheus* I shall not consider, because the special circumstances of the prophecy known only to Prometheus, upon which the plot of the play depends, may make the nature of *anangkê* peculiar to this play. Of lost plays, the *Niobe* fragment[25] is in agreement with the idea that infatuation takes hold of a man who is in some way vulnerable and tempts him into disaster; the *aitia* which god produces for men when he wishes the destruction of a house would be some kind of Peithô (or *erôs*), preceding Atê, and the occasion might well be the hybris of Niobe and probably of her father Tantalus too. Amphion, whose house is destroyed, may have been less guilty but involved by association. The line from an unknown play, φιλεῖ δὲ τῷ κάμνοντι συσπεύδειν θεός,[26] might well mean not "God loves to help him who strives to help himself" (as H. W. Smyth has it) but something like "when a man is in trouble (or vulnerable), the god is wont to lead him on to final ruin."

In the *Agamemnon*, the first infatuated act of the doomed man to be described is the sacrifice of his daughter; later we shall hear of his deeds at Troy and shall witness his temptation by his wife and his treading of the purple tapestries. This will be a parallel to Xerxes' yoking of the Hellespont and attempt at land empire beyond it, and Eteocles' facing of the pollution of killing his brother. In the other cases, Aeschylus prepared the minds of his audience for the disaster to follow by the forebodings raised in the minds of the Persian councillors and the Queen by Xerxes' sea-crossing and the great wealth of Persia, and by Eteocles' mention early in the play of the Curse and Erinys of his father. Is there any such preparation in the *Agamemnon*, any indication prior to Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice Iphigenia that he is vulnerable, and so liable to temptation, infatuation and ruin?

It could be argued that the audience must be expected to know of the Curse of Atreus, to be brought out so effectively by Cassandra, just as they must know of Clytemnestra's plan to murder her husband and King if the ironies of her speeches before the dénouement are to have real effect. But even apart from that, an atmosphere of foreboding is set by the Watchman's sinister hints, and the idea of wrong and folly is conveyed early in the entrance anapaests of the Chorus, as they speak of the weary struggles of Greek and Trojan alike for the sake of a promiscuous woman (60–67). The gods' anger is unappeasable (69–71).[27] Moreover, I agree with Peradotto and Lebeck that there are allusions in the chorus' words which indicate, in the oblique, poetic style characteristic of Aeschylus' introduction of his themes, that the crime of Atreus is weighing upon the King.[28] The simile of the vultures, presented immediately after the statement of the initiation of the expedition by the two sons of Atreus, speaks in terms of exceptional grief for children and shrill-voiced lamentation, expressions which (as has long been observed[29]) better suit the loss of children by Thyestes (and by the citizens of Argos) than Menelaus' loss of Helen. This same emphasis on the destruction of innocent young things marks the later omen of the killing of the hare and her young by the eagles, identified by Calchas with the sons of Atreus. The mention of sacrifice (137) and the feast (138) reinforces this implication;[30] Aeschylus is suggesting the deaths not only of the innocent people of Troy and of Iphigenia, but also of the innocent children of Thyestes. Finally, the overpowering lines which end the seer's interpretation of the omen are heavy with this old sin as well as with the immediate trouble: "Only may the goddess not bring about for the Greeks contrary winds and long delay for their idle ships, seeking a further sacrifice,[31] unknown before, unfeasted, builder of strife grown within the house, violator of husband's rights; for there dwells still a dread Wrath within the house, ever re-arising, unforgetting, full of guile, to avenge on the children the deaths of children" (149–155).[32]

So the hereditary guilt in the house of Atreus rears its great shadow (like the Curse of Oedipus in the *Seven*), as the seer prays that contrary winds may not come; Zeus is invoked; but the contrary winds begin, the fleet is delayed, and its leader waits without reproach (186).[33] The flower of the Greeks withers and wearies; and Calchas cries out another remedy. Atreus' heirs are plunged into horror and grief. Then Aeschylus, in a brilliant stroke, has the chorus give us Agamemnon's own words (206–217). Let us look at them carefully.[34]

> *βαρεῖα μὲν κὴρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι,*
> *βαρεῖα δ' εἰ τέκνον δαΐξω, δόμων ἄγαλμα,*
> *μιαίνων παρθενοσφάγοισιν ῥείθροις*
> *πατρῴους χέρας πέλας βωμοῦ·* (206–210)

The choice is between two evils, articulated clearly, as in the *Suppliants*. *Pithesthai* means to obey Calchas, Artemis, perhaps even Zeus too, though I do not think Aeschylus ever raises the issue of whether Agamemnon knows he is Zeus' agent.[35] The emphasis is laid not on the command of Zeus to punish Troy, but on the horror of the proposed sacrifice, both as hideous to a father's feelings and as the defilement of shedding kindred blood—and a maiden's blood at that. As Dodds says, "The considerations which influence him are purely human, and surely he *believes* himself to be making a choice between them."[36]

> *τί τῶνδ' ἄνευ κακῶν;* (211)

Aeschylus has placed his character in the ultimate tragic situation, faced with a choice which must bring disaster whichever path he chooses. Lesky well compares Pelasgus' words in a similar situation, *οὐδαμοῦ λιμὴν κακῶν* (*Supp.* 471).[37] Here Agamemnon still knows the sacrifice is *wrong.*

πῶς λιπόναυς γένωμαι ξυμμχίας ἁμαρτών; (212–213)

Most scholars agree[38] that this indicates the thought which unbalances the poised alternatives, in the same way as the threat of the suppliants to hang themselves on the images of the gods did for the King in the *Suppliants.* Aeschylus thinks of Agamemnon as making up his mind *here.*

παυσανέμου γὰρ θυσίας παρθενίου θ' αἵματος
ὀργᾷ περιόργως ἐπιθυμεῖν θέμις. (214–217)

Fraenkel renders "(I cannot), for it is right and lawful that one should with over-impassioned passion crave the sacrifice to stay the winds, the blood of the virgin. (It shall be done)." Wilamowitz took the passion to be that of Agamemnon: "zu dem Blute der Jungfrau, zum windstillenden Opfer treibt es mich unwiderstehlich. Wär' es denn Sünde zu folgen?"[39] Lloyd-Jones, with Page,[40] says "That they should desire with passion exceeding passion a sacrifice to still the winds, a sacrifice of maiden's blood, is right in the sight of heaven." Fraenkel steers a rather uneasy course between, and notes "we should perhaps recognise that the absence of a definite subject [to *epithumein*] is intentional. Agamemnon chooses a phrase which includes both his companions and himself." But if we think back to the "*fawning* infatuation" which afflicted Xerxes, the wicked, savage *erôs* which marked the onset of "heart-destroying, war-craving infatuation" in the case of Eteocles, I think we shall find it hard not to feel that this "over-impassioned passion" for the blood of a virgin can only be the sign that infatuation is close at hand; it is *not* Themis, it is Atê—or more precisely, her agent Peithô. Once again the opportunity for a disastrous decision has been laid before a vulnerable man; he has just produced a reason for falling into the trap; and Temptation has led the way for Infatuation and eventual disaster. This is the *erôs haimatoloichos* arising from the daimôn of the race (1477–1488).

εὖ γὰρ εἴη. (217)

With irony, he is made to express his hope for a good outcome; he will be similarly cautious as he decides later on to tread on the purple tapestries (946–947). There is similar irony in the same expression when made by the Queen in the *Persians* (228) and (so far as we can yet see) by the chorus of the *Agamemnon* (121 = 139 = 159); the King's wish in the *Suppliants* (454) is a little different in tone, as his decision has not yet been made.

ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδυ λέπαδνον
φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῆ τροπαίαν ἄναγνον ἀνίερον,
τόθεν τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω.
βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις τάλαινα
παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων. (218–224)

Here I think the account of Agamemnon's actions and thoughts is not *continued*, but *repeated*; after the direct speech, the chorus explain what has happened in their own words. In those of Fraenkel, "And when he had slipped his neck through the strap of compulsion's yoke, and the wind of his purpose had veered about and blew impious, impure, unholy, from that moment he reversed his mind and turned to utter recklessness." This is rather obscure, and might almost be taken to mean that Agamenon changed his mind *twice*.

Let us start with one part where we are on firm ground. The "impious, impure, unholy" *tropaian*, "change of wind," *must* refer to his decision to sacrifice his daughter. Then does this mean a change of *mind*, that at one time he intended *not* to sacrifice her? We have no hint of this in the preceding stanza, and vacillation in the mind of Agamemnon has no textual support there. I think that Aeschylus, after the manner of poets, is alluding to more than one thing at a time, and is using wind imagery, which indicates trouble, to refer in addition to the literal result of Agamemnon's decision; there *is* a change of wind, and the unfavorable wind which held the fleet at Aulis will blow fair after the sacrifice; but because of the dreadful nature of the means by which the change will be achieved it is an impious, impure, unholy change of wind that he "breathed forth from his mind." It is not a change in his *decision*.[41]

What about the other "change"—*τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω*? We do not possess many examples of *metegnô*; but Fraenkel, in a note to the only other use of this verb in Aeschylus, defends the text at that place in these words: "to pass from a normal state of mind into a condition in which he is ready to commit a crime, a man must have undergone a *metagnônai*."[42] Let us accept exactly that meaning here; Agamemnon did not just change his mind in the usual sense in our language, or "reverse his mind," he changed his mind from that of a normal (though vulnerable, and cursed-by-inheritance) man into that of an infatuated man, one capable of all recklessness. In other words, Atê came upon him, now that he had made the fatal decision, just as she did upon Xerxes and Eteocles. The next sentence says just this, as clearly as possible: "for evil-counselling, foul Infatuation (*parakopa*), the beginning of woe, drives men to *thrasos*."

We still have not explained "the strap of compulsion's yoke." Does it mean that Agamemnon was compelled to choose in the way he did? If so, what did the decision mean which we thought he made in the preceding stanza? Lesky[43] compares the necessity here to that called upon by the King in the *Suppliants*, when he says, after the chorus have threatened to hang themselves, "it is necessary to fear the anger of Zeus, the god of suppliants" (478–479). But earlier in that play the King has also spoken of the necessity of choosing between two harsh alternatives, of making enemies of one side or the other (438–439), and that, I think, is a better parallel to this phrase in the *Agamemnon*. Agamemnon took upon himself not the necessity of choosing one particular option, but *the necessity of making a choice between the two terrible alternatives*. He took up the lure which "fawning Atê," Peithô, laid before him, and accepted the necessity of making a choice *by making the choice*, on considerations given in his own words: "How can I fail in my duty to the alliance and thus become a deserter of the fleet?" (212–213, Fraenkel's tr.). Then Infatuation, *parakopa*, who had counselled the evil (*aischromêtis*), seizes him; she emboldens him with the recklessness (*thrasunei*), not to make the decision—that has already been done—but to carry out the sacrifice.[44]

ἔτλα δ' οὖν θυτὴρ γενέσθαι θυγατρός,
γυναικοποίνων πολέμων ἀρωγὰν
καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν. (225–227)

And so, in his usual way, Aeschylus concludes with the simple statement of what he has painted beforehand with the colors of imagery and dramatic first-person speech. Now firmly in the grip of Atê, Agamemnon has the temerity to go through with his decision and sacrifice his daughter for the sake of a war to avenge Helen.

As I have said before, I take the sense of these two stanzas to be not consecutive, but more nearly concurrent. Agamemnon presents his dilemma and his decision in his own words, and the chorus then go over again what has happened as the poet wants us to interpret it. Let me give the sense of the two stanzas:

"King Agamemnon, heir to the Curse of Atreus, said; 'It is terrible not to do what the seer says the goddess demands, but terrible too is the agony, loss and defilement of sacrificing my daughter. There is no way of avoiding suffering. How [he went on] can I bear the shame of deserting my ship, of betraying the alliance I have made?' And he fell into Temptation, into mad desire for the sacrifice that would set free his expedition. So, when he had taken upon himself the necessity of making this awful choice, blowing forth from his resolution an impious, impure, unholy change in the delaying winds, he brought about a change in his mind too and became a man of utter recklessness. For men are emboldened by evil-counselling, foul infatuation, the beginning of woe. And so, he could now bear to carry out his appalling decision, and become the sacrificer of his own daughter [*another* murder of an innocent child!] as a propitiation for a war fought to avenge the abduction of an adulterous woman."

I have purposely left out of account a few passages in the *Agamemnon*, subsequent to the first chorus, which show similar themes and may fairly be used to elucidate the less explicit ideas in that ode. Let us consider them here.

The anapaests at the start of the second choral ode (355ff) speak of the destruction of Troy by Zeus Xenios. The first lyric stanza (367–372) begins by asserting that the gods pay heed to those who trample the *charis* of holy things. Then comes a textually corrupt passage, which includes mention of the family (*eggonois* 374), rashness (*atolmêtôn* or *tolmê* 375), violence (*Arê* 375), criminal excess (μεῖζον ἢ δικαίως 375) and overmuch wealth (377–378). These ideas are restated more simply, in Aeschylus' fashion, in the last four lines of the stanza (381–384); wealth is no defense against the *koros* of a man who scorns *dikê*. Wealth, as in the *Persae*, makes a man vulnerable to hybris and subsequent disaster.

The coming of disaster in such cases is analyzed in the following stanza. Destructive Peithô, the irresistible agent ("child") of Atê, who planned it thus (*proboulou*), seizes upon him, and then there is no escape from ruin.[45] In the remainder of the stanza this is repeated in a memorable image. A vessel of inferior bronze, in which the copper and tin alloy has also an admixture of lead, darkens under rubbing and wear and reveals its fault by its black hue. So Paris, weakened by overmuch wealth (carefully stressed in the preceding stanza), when tested by Temptation, showed his flaw and carried off the wife of his host, outraging Zeus Xenios. So Agamemnon too, bearer of inherited guilt, at the time of stress yielded, with a result described in the pathetic scene at the end of the parodos.

The following ode (681–781) speaks first of Helen, and how she became the cause of destruction to the old city of Priam. Then in the third and fourth stanzas (717–736) Aeschylus puts this in the form of another striking image. The lion-cub, a pretty plaything when young, in the fulness of time reveals its true inherited nature (ἦθος τὸ πρὸς τοκέων 727) and returns the love and care it has received by bloody slaughter within the house; it becomes, by god's will, a priest of Atê (735).[46] Though here primarily applied to Helen herself and the ruin she has brought upon Troy, I think (with Knox[47]) that the image also applies to Agamemnon himself and the guilt he inherited from his forebears.

After a further stanza on Helen's marriage, restating the theme of a thing of charm becoming an Erinys of destruction (737–749), Aeschylus puts it all in simple terms. His view is not that prosperity (*olbos*) and good fortune bring destruction, but that an act of impiety, an old hybris, when the time comes bears a new hybris in human evils (765–766), and (here the text is uncertain) an irresistible *thrasos* and Atê in the house. The former crime of hybris brings to birth later actions of similar wrongdoing (*eidomenas tokeusin* 771). So Aeschylus speaks of generations of hybris here, meaning of course generations of men, and the inheritance of sin, reaffirming Agamemnon's inherited guilt and his vulnerability. (Because of the uncertainty of the text, the precise way in which Atê is involved cannot be clearly discerned.) After a further stanza on the power of *dikê*, Agamemnon enters, together with Cassandra—the sign both of his triumph and his folly—to demonstrate before our eyes the theme which has now been so often enunciated.

The reasons for the decision that we now see made by Agamemnon, to yield to Clytemnestra's importunities and tread on the crimson tapestries, are disputed.[48] As in the first choral ode, Aeschylus has not clearly presented the mental processes of his character. Some points are, however, obvious enough: (i) to walk on the tapestries is dangerous (*epiphthonon* 921), like a barbarian (919, 935–936), a thing for gods, not men (922–925), violates moderation (927–930), and is likely to upset the people of Argos (937–938); (ii) Agamemnon agrees to do it, but is nevertheless still in fear of the resentment of the gods (944–947) and of despoiling the house of its wealth (948–949); (iii) he yields because of the temptation of Clytemnestra (the whole scene, and especially her final plea *πιθοῦ . . . παρεὶς ἑκών*).[49] I would say that Agamemnon has again fallen victim to Peithô, now incarnate in Clytemnestra; his condition will be summed up by Cassandra in the next scene:

> *οὐκ οἶδεν οἷα γλῶσσα μισητῆς κυνὸς*
> *λείξασα κἀκτείνασα φαιδρὸν οὖς δίκην*
> *ἄτης λαθραίου τεύξεται κακῇ τύχῃ* (1228–1230)

When he treads the crimson tapestries, he is in the state of folly or recklessness induced by Atê. To ask if he has been in this condition ever since the sacrifice of Iphigenia, or has somehow refreshed it in the tapestry scene, is not a real question; Aeschylus is not relating history, but presenting to us by the different techniques at his disposal the same essential idea of inherited guilt, temptation, criminal folly, and ruin. He has related an example from the past; he now shows us another in the present; and even before its completion he will begin (through Cassandra) to indicate that there may well be others to come.

I might add that I take Agamemnon's subsequent mention of Cassandra, the "flower of the booty," sitting in captivity in her priestess' robes, as drawing attention to this visible embodiment of his impiety in destroying the altars of Troy (341–342 [note *erôs*], 527, and cf. *Persians* 810–811) and defiling their priestess (γυναικὸς τῆσδε λυμαντήριος 1438). And before the death of the sinner she will present, more vividly than any chorus could, the wrong-doing in generations past that has exposed him to the onset of these trials.

I shall not attempt to draw similar examples from the rest of the trilogy, because I think that in the later plays Aeschylus intentionally alters the principles upon which he is shaping his action. Orestes, when he makes his decision to kill his mother, is not infatuated or stricken down by Atê, and—here I differ from Lesky[50]—I do not feel that the desire which drives him to murder his mother is the same as the "over-impassioned passion" which affected Agamemnon, or the savage desire which made Eteocles confront his brother. In the case of Orestes, I think we have a good man, like Pelasgus in the *Suppliants*, who is forced into a hideous action not by the operations of Atê and Peithô on a man vulnerable through inherited guilt, a curse, or dangerous wealth, but by acceptable human motives and the divinely sanctioned demands of justice; and this leads him, not into mad folly and deserved disaster, but into a situation which is clearly and intolerably unjust. Then in the final play action is taken by the design of Zeus, i.e. the institution of a law court, to ensure that Orestes will not be doomed and (much more important) that through the proper judicial processes of the State no single individual will again be called upon to perform such retributive action and shoulder its consequences.

If the ideas of Aeschylus about human folly and wrongdoing in the *Persians*, *Seven* and *Agamemnon* are as I have presented them above, they are very like those of Solon a hundred years and more earlier. This has recently been stated by Page and Lloyd-Jones.[51] In Solon's *Hymn to the Muses* (13 West, 1 Diehl) the ideas are expressed in the same terms; the *ploutos* that men seek with hybris comes unwillingly, *persuaded* by dishonest acts, and Atê swiftly joins in. She grows great from a small beginning, and sooner or later Zeus sees to the punishment of the sinner or his children. (That *peithomenos* here [line 12] may have the same sinister connotations as in Aeschylus is shown by χρήμασι πειθόμενοι, ἀδίκοις ἔργμασι πειθόμενοι, where Linforth translates "because they yield to the temptation of. . . ."[52]) The idea is repeated at the end of the *Hymn* and in other poems.[53]

There is the difference, however, that Solon did not (so far as we know) depict the way in which Atê works; there is no mention of *thrasos* in his surviving verses, he may not have been so confident as Aeschylus that it is not *olbos* alone, but *ploutos* plus hybris, that leads to disaster,[54] and he does not really present the psychological state of the sinner. That the emphasis on the passions of the wrongdoer is a fifth-century contribution is suggested by the close parallel between Aeschylus' depiction of Peithô and *erôs* working on the vulnerable man, and the description of the incurable power of *erôs* and *elpis* on the minds of both the impoverished and the affluent which Thucydides (3.45.4–5) puts into the mouth of Diodotus: ἡ μὲν πενία ἀνάγκῃ τὴν τόλμαν παρέχουσα, ἡ δ' ἐξουσία ὕβρει τὴν πλεονεξίαν καὶ φρονήματι, αἱ δ' ἄλλαι ξυντυχίαι ὀργῇ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ὡς ἑκάστη τις κατέχεται ὑπ' ἀνηκέστου τινὸς κρείσσονος ἐξάγουσιν ἐς τοὺς κινδύνους. ἥ τε ἐλπὶς καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἐπὶ παντί, ὁ μὲν ἡγούμενος, ἡ δ' ἐφεπομένη, καὶ ὁ μὲν τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν ἐκφροντίζων, ἡ δὲ τὴν εὐπορίαν τῆς τύχης ὑποτιθεῖσα, πλεῖστα βλάπτουσι. . . . *Anangkê*, *tolmê*, *hybris*, *orgê*, *erôs*, all are here, and as Solmsen says, "This is a remarkable admission of the supra-human, quasi-demonic power that passions, moods, emotions, or whatever we may call these irrational forces exert."[55]

In the *Agamemnon* I think that Aeschylus is in fact presenting, not a Zeus who forces an innocent man to make a decision and then destroys him for it, but a real world like that of Solon where a man in a high position is liable to fall into arrogance, especially if he has overmuch wealth, a Curse, or a deadly heritage of wrongdoing behind him. And he is, of course, held responsible for his actions, which is what Aeschylus understood by freewill.[56] But this is not the end of Aeschylus' thought, because before the trilogy is over we have seen the consequences of man's wrongdoing forcibly limited by the powers and institutions of the democratic state. Solon had seen this too:

Εὐνομίη δ' εὔκοσμα καὶ ἄρτια πάντ' ἀποφαίνει,
  καὶ θαμὰ τοῖς ἀδίκοις ἀμφιτίθησι πέδας·
τραχέα λειαίνει, παύει κόρον, ὕβριν ἀμαυροῖ,
  αὑαίνει δ' ἄτης ἄνθεα φυόμενα. (4 West, 3 Diehl 32–35)

But it was left to Aeschylus to show on the stage first the man of inherited guilt who, because of it, in a situation of terrible choice had the mad folly to incur terrible pollution and make his ruin inevitable; then to conclude his drama with the age-old superstitious fear of the hideous agents of divine punishment transformed into the healthy and essential fear of transgressing the proper laws and institutions of civilized fifth-century Athens.

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Notes

A version of this paper was read at a meeting of the California Classical Association (Northern Section) held at Berkeley in November 1975. I am grateful to Professor Marsh McCall Jr. for his comments on the final draft.

[1] H. Lloyd-Jones, "Zeus in Aeschylus," *JHS* 76 (1956) 55–67; "The Guilt of Agamemnon," *CQ* 12 (1962) 187–199 (hereafter "Guilt"). His views are also expressed in his review of K. von Fritz, *Antike und Moderne Tragödie* (*Gnomon* 34 [1962] 737–747), in his book *The Justice of Zeus* (Berkeley 1971) and in his translation and commentary on the *Oresteia* (Englewood Cliffs 1970). A. Lesky, "Decision and Responsibility in the Tragedy of Aeschylus," *JHS* 86 (1966) 78–85 (hereafter "Decision") and also "Eteokles in den Sieben gegen Theben," *WS* 74 (1961) 5–17, esp. 15–17. In many ways my views are like those published seventy years ago by Walter Headlam (*Cambridge Praelections* 99–137 [Cambridge 1906]) and F.M. Cornford (*Thucydides Mythistoricus* [London 1970]) esp. 153–163.

[2] M. W. M. Pope, "Merciful heavens? A Question in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," *JHS* 94 (1974) 100–113, esp. 113.

[3] C.J. Herington, *The Author of the Prometheus Bound* (Austin 1970) 76–78.

[4] K. J. Dover, "Some Neglected Aspects of Agamemnon's Dilemma," *JHS* 93 (1973) 58–69, is especially good on the differences between the Greek attitude to human responsibility and our own.

[5] (I have limited this summary to significant work published after 1961). Lloyd-Jones, "Guilt"; N. G. L. Hammond, "Personal Freedom and its Limitations in the *Oresteia*," *JHS* 85 (1965) 42–55; Lesky, "Decision"; J. J. Peradotto, "The Omen of the Eagles and the *ΗΘΟΣ* of Agamemnon," *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 237–263; J. de Romilly, "Vengeance humaine et vengeance divine: remarques sur l'Orestie d'Eschyle," *Das Altertum* (*Festschr. W. Schadewaldt* [Stuttgart 1970] 65–77; Dover (above, note 4); Anne Lebeck, *The Oresteia* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971); J. Fontenrose, "Men and Gods in the *Oresteia*," *TAPA* 102 (1971) 71–109.

[6] Considering the importance of Peithô in Aeschylus' work, I wonder if *pepoithôs* (77), "trusting," has some connotations also of "persuaded by." Cf. n. 20.

[7] Modern commentators do not indicate that 90 can refer to the yoking of the Hellespont as well as to the wave of men hurled against Greece, but the ambiguity is in Aeschylus' manner (cf. W.B. Stanford, *Ambiguity in Greek Literature* [Oxford 1939] 137–162). Murray brought it out in his translation:

> "In whom, then, confide ye, to withstand the armèd flood,
> Put his gyves upon the storm and enchain the rushing tide?"

In 93–114 I here follow the MSS order of lines, with Page (*OCT* 1972), A.J. Podlecki (*The Persians* [Englewood Cliffs 1970]) and W. C. Scott (*GRBS* 9 [1968] 259–266). I would however prefer Müller's transposition of 93–100 to follow 101–114, with H. D. Broadhead (*Persae of Aeschylus* [Cambridge 1960]), H.J. Rose (*Commentary on the Surviving Plays of Aeschylus* [Amsterdam 1958]), and most recently R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Zeus in the *Persae*," *JHS* 93 (1973) 210–219, esp. 211 (an article which expresses, much better and more fully, a view similar to mine). This makes the mention of *philophrôn . . . potisainousa . . . Ata* (95–7) follow immediately upon the sea-crossing (106–114); *gar* (101) then refers to the account of Xerxes' power (81–92), and *tauta* (115) nicely picks up the thought of 93–100. It could be argued, however, that *philophrôn* and *potisainousa* follow better directly upon the confident language of 81–92, and the point does not affect my argument. In either case, Aeschylus follows his usual technique, reflecting upon the facts (93–101) after presenting them (101–114, or 65–92). I cannot agree with Podlecki (note to 93–100) that "the primary application here is to the Greeks;" this kind of irony seems to me foreign to Aeschylus, and against the whole sombre tone of this ode. Scott (who gives earlier bibliography) objects to the "loose connection between the account of Persian military excellence and the forebodings of future defeat" if the transposition is adopted (p. 260), but I feel it is the juxtaposition of *power* and *danger* which is constant in Aeschylus' thought. In view of 8–20 and 115–139

I cannot agree that the chorus are "supremely confident that the war has been well-planned and that the power of Persia is fully capable of winning an impressive victory" (Scott p. 262). Broadhead's notes (pp. 54–7) seem to me to overstress an unwanted distinction between the Persian ships and the Hellespont-crossing (the ships are mentioned because Xerxes will be defeated by *ships*, cf. esp. lines 560–562, in responsion with Xerxes' name in 550–552), but on the whole I agree with his view of the thought here. As Winnington-Ingram points out (215–216), the yoking of the Hellespont of course also symbolizes the yoke of slavery on Greece, as presented also in the Queen's dream.

[8] Lines 345–347, 353–354, 362, 373, 454–455, 472, 495–496, 514, 532–536.

[9] Punctuating after *cheras* in 564, against Page (*OCT*) but with Murray (*OCT*^{2} 1955) and Broadhead, partly in order to keep the balance with the punctuation of the strophe. The apparent switch from ships of the Persians in 560 to those of the Greeks in 561–562 has caused comment (see Broadhead and Podlecki *ad. loc.*), but as Broadhead implies the point is again that a sea-expedition is going beyond the limits for Persia. Could there be some reference to the bridge of boats in the strange word *baris* (554)?

[10] *Thourios* 717, 754; *neos* 744, 782.

[11] Podlecki calls these oracles "a new and unexpected element in the story," (note to 739), but the latter epithet is too strong; after the forebodings of the chorus, the Queen's dream and omen, and the emphasis on the part played by the gods in Xerxes' defeat, it is natural that there should have been oracles about the disaster too. It is hardly material to ask if Aeschylus actually knew of any of those quoted by Broadhead.

[12] The sacking of the temples (811–812) is a further example of Xerxes' folly, only to be expected after he has once been seized by Atê; cf. the misdeeds of Agamemnon at Troy and after his return home (below).

[13] The first paragraph of Broadhead's note on 821–822 seems to me correct, but I cannot agree with his view in the second paragraph. The main, first hybris of Xerxes is the Hellespont-crossing, a sign of the infatuation by which he had been seized; its outcome, its "blossom," its harvest, must be disaster, for which Aeschylus again uses Atê, as in e.g. *Suppliants* 470.

[14] Though we base our arguments on the same passages of the text, my interpretation differs from that of M. Gagarin (*Aeschylean Drama* [Berkeley 1976] 29–56) in that he sees Persia's prosperity and disaster as the main theme of the play, whereas I take her wealth as the background of Xerxes' hybris and fall. I take Darius' condemnation of Xerxes' actions as the view of the poet, while Gagarin specifically rejects this (p. 52). I feel my view better accounts for the attitudes of the chorus, the Queen, and Darius, and especially for the final appearance of Xerxes in distress; the Athenians knew they had defeated Xerxes, not brought about "the fall of Persia as a whole" (Gagarin 43). I also differ from Podlecki (Xerxes "was in a real sense driven to disaster by some power outside his control" (op. cit., 14]) and Scott, who says that if the transposition of 93–100 were adopted (as I prefer) "the chorus would be expressing its belief in a world where men are trapped and gods are willful tyrants" (*op. cit.*, 264). This seems to me to leave out of account the fears and forebodings, dreams and omens presaging disaster—not to mention Darius' oracles—and the blame for the calamity heaped openly on Xerxes by his father and the chorus and diverted to his advisers by his fond mother (753–758). Broadhead's note on 114 is: "*It is not true that a man may not escape from Atê's toils.* What he can hardly escape is Delusion's onset and the snares of Infatuation, and what he certainly cannot escape is the *consequences* of his infatuation; but that he may free himself from the infatuation itself is obvious from the words of Darius . . . (831) . . . (cf. 932)." I would prefer to say that a man in Xerxes' position cannot escape the approach of temptation, "kindly, fawning Atê," and once he has yielded to her beguilements there is no escape from the Infatuation (100) which causes actions which will bring disaster (so W. Jaeger, *Paideia* I [English tr.,^{2} New York 1945] 258). The chorus are terribly afraid that his yoking of the sea is just this kind of infatuated action; later we learn that they are right, and a further reason is supplied (in addition to the stress on Persia's wealth) by the words *thourios* and *neos*. Whether another man in Xerxes' position could have repelled Atê's onset is not

what the play is about. The adjuration that Xerxes should watch his ways better in future (831) I take to be not a general statement that an infatuated man may free himself (as Broadhead does), but a particular application of the general lesson just enunciated, topical for Aeschylus' audience: "he'd better not try it again!" Athens, like Poseidon, did not bear the yoke for long.

[15] Foreshadowings of minor techniques of the poet, as well as the thought, link the play to the *Agamemnon*. The Queen, in agony of mind, hopes that all may turn out well (228); the doer must suffer (813); the destruction of temples is a sign of infatuation and disastrous for the conqueror (811–812); and the favor of god is seen as a changing wind (942–943, see Broadhead *ad loc.*).

[16] A bibliographical survey of the many recent articles on the *Seven* is given in the first footnote of G. M. Kirkwood, "Eteocles Oiakostrophos," *Phoenix* 23 (1969) 9–25; earlier reviews are included in the articles of L. Golden (*CP* 59 [1964] 79–89), Podlecki (*TAPA* 95 [1964] 283–299) and B. Otis (*GRBS* 3 [1960] 153–174]. The view I take is similar to that of F. Solmsen (*TAPA* 68 [1937] 197–211)—an article which cleared up many misapprehensions—except that he sees the change in Eteocles' mind brought about by the revelation that he must fight his brother as the work of the Erinys, the executor of Oedipus' curse. I would go further than this and see beyond the Erinys also Atê and her attendants—not Peithô here, but *erôs* and *himeros* (see n. 19). In a similar way, Helen in the second chorus of the *Agamemnon* is called an Erinys, but Atê and Peithô still play a large part. This view has already been stated by A. Lesky (both articles cited in n. 1 above) and Lloyd-Jones (*Gnomon* 34 [1962] 740–742). Both these scholars draw the parallels with Agamemnon's decision, and show the weaknesses in the argument of Wolff and Patzer (*HSCP* 63 [1958] 89–95, 97–119). Other recent articles express different views on Eteocles' character in the early part of the play. I am afraid I cannot agree with Brooks Otis' view that we have in the play "a conflict of two rights which is resolved by the Olympians at Eteocles' expense" (*op. cit.*, 156) and that the chorus is mistaken in attributing his decision to a *kakos erôs* (166–167). It seems to me hazardous to divorce the words of this chorus from the meaning of the author at the climax of the play, and I feel the horrible words of Eteocles ("brother against brother, enemy against enemy" [674–675]) followed immediately by the chorus' warning to "Oedipus' son" against what he plans, make it clear that his is a true "evil passion" into which he will fall because of the Curse. Otis thinks Eteocles is conscious of and accepts his position, while I feel his mind is affected by *erôs*, as part of the workings of the Curse and Atê, when he makes his decision.

[17] In 725 I would prefer to read κατάρας Οἰδιπόδα βλαψίφρονας, but the emendation has found no favor with editors since Hartung put it into his text in 1853 (as βλαψίφρονας τ' Οἰδιπόδα κατάρας). As Hartung comments, it is the Curse itself which is the mind-destroyer. Headlam (*op. cit.*, n. 1) 117 speaks of *atê blapsiphrôn*, unfortunately without classical precedent.

[18] The Curse, 832, 841, 894, 945, 954, 1017; Erinys, 868, 886, 898, 977 = 989, 1055; Atê 956, 1001.

[19] I think it correct to equate *erôs* here with Peithô. We ourselves would think of persuasion as something exerted by B upon A, and of desire as something felt by A for B. But temptation, which is one meaning of Peithô, even for us implies some involvement of both A and B, and shows more clearly the close connection with desire. Aeschylus joins Peithô with *pothos* and *erôs* in *Supp.* 1038–1042, and uses *erôs* in connection with Agamemnon's folly at Troy (341) and in sacrificing his daughter (*erôs haimatoloichos*, 1477–8; I take this as referring to Agamemnon as much as—or more than—to Clytemnestra, against Cornford [*op. cit.*, n. 1] 161, though generally his discussion here is good).

[20] Again there are motifs foreshadowing those of the *Agamemnon;* change of winds for change of fortune (705–708); no purification is possible for shedding of kindred blood (681). Peithô may possibly be alluded to in *pepoithôs* (672; cf. n. 6 above).

[21] On conjectures about the fate of Pelasgus in the rest of the trilogy see A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' Supplices* (Cambridge 1969) 198–202. Winnington-Ingram suggests strongly that he died in the second play, but on grounds of convenience to the plot, not the moral ideas of the poet (*JHS* 81 [1961] 141–152).

[22] Perhaps I separate these two meanings of Atê too distinctly, but I do not think it affects the argument. On the whole problem of Atê see R.D. Dawe, "Some reflection on Atê and Hamartia," *HSCP* 72 (1967) 89–123, and references there to earlier literature. Dawe's analysis of the *Persians* and *Seven* is compatible with mine; on his interpretation of *Agamemnon* 218–223, see n. 44.

[23] B. Snell, *Aischylos und das Handeln im Drama* (*Philologus Supp.* 20, Leipzig 1938) 58f, considers that the decision is made essentially by the people, not the King. I find this hard to accept, but if correct it does not affect my argument as we know he uses Peithô to win over the Argives and thus must have made up his own mind first.

[24] In this play Peithô only appears in good guise, helping to win over the citizens (623). Again there is storm imagery to suggest trouble (166–167). As Snell (*op. cit.*, n. 23) 52 said, much emphasis is laid on the hybris of the Egyptians; H.G. Robertson counted nineteen references to it in the play (*CR* 50 [1936] 107 n. 2).

[25] Fr. 1 Page (*Select Papyri* III [London 1941]), 277 Lloyd-Jones (Appendix to *Aeschylus* II, ed. H.W. Smyth [London 1957], 273 Mette (*Die Fragmente der Tragödien des Aischylos* [Berlin 1959]).

[26] Fr. 223 Smyth, 673 Mette.

[27] Though only touched on here, the idea foreshadows (in Aeschylus' usual style) the heavy stress later laid on the loss of the youth of Greece (427–455, also 109, 461–462; see Peradotto [*op. cit.*, n. 5] 254–255). I cannot agree with those who feel Agamemnon's cause is just (or at least that Aeschylus is here presenting it in that way); so especially Dover ("that the enterprise itself was righteous the chorus do assert," *op. cit.*, n. 4, 65) and Lloyd-Jones, "Guilt," 188.

[28] Peradotto esp. 246–8, Lebeck 31 ("The prophecy of Calchas contains allusion to all that which is developed in the vision of Cassandra"), 33–36 (both cited in n. 5 above). On the other side, denying any reference to the Curse of Atreus until Cassandra's words, are Lloyd-Jones ("Cassandra supplies us . . . with the vital piece of information that gives the missing clue for which we have so long been seeking" ["Guilt," 198]—but this is not Aeschylus' way), Hammond ("Aeschylus does not mention anything like 'the curse' until the *Agamemnon* is two-thirds done!" [*op. cit.*, n. 5, 42]), and now Gagarin (*op. cit.*, n. 14, 62–64). On this "proleptic introduction and gradual development" of a theme or image in Aeschylus cf. Lebeck 1 and 169 n. 1.

[29] E.g. E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950), note on line 50 *paidôn*, "*pais* is not used elsewhere of the young of beasts," and on 57 *goon*, "'especially lamentation for the dead,' as Passow rightly says." He does not comment on the significance of the choice of these words.

[30] Cf. Peradotto, 246–247; Lebeck, 34.

[31] "Since Stanley much misdirected learning and ingenuity has been spent on the explanation of *heteran*: Ahrens even dragged in the *epulae Thyesteae*" (Fraenkel, on 151). I would support Ahrens.

[32] Fraenkel's only apparent reference to *teknopoinos* (note to 154 *palinortos*, "The guilty—or their children—draw breath . . . the mênis is finished") seems to restrict the meaning to "avenging on the children." Thomson is better: "the meaning of the final *teknopoinos* is deliberately left in doubt—is it payment of a child, for a child or to a child?" (*The Oresteia of Aeschylus*² [Amsterdam and Prague 1966] on 154–155). I would add also "avenging through children (Agamemnon and Aegisthus, Orestes and Electra)," and extend "on the children" to those four, as well as taking the children avenged to include those of Thyestes as well as Iphigenia (not to mention the Greeks and Trojans killed at Troy). The lines deserve the widest possible interpretation, in the same style as Knox's interpretation of the lioncub image later in the play (*CP* 47 [1952] 17–25). This is the way Aeschylus works.

[33] I take 187 to refer to the unfavorable wind holding the fleet at Aulis; so Fraenkel's translation. There is no veering of the wind here, as Agamemnon is not yet hesitating about the sacrifice. Scott (*TAPA* 97 [1966] 463–464) sees symbolical significance in this line ("Agamemnon complying with the will of Zeus and organizing the expedition does not resist the

will of fortune—he co-operates with it"); he may be right. Peradotto takes *sumpneôn* of Agamemnon's final yielding, which must go too far—he does not yet know what to yield to (*AJP* 85 [1964] 383, and *Time and the Pattern of Change in Aeschylus' Oresteia* [microfilm, Ann Arbor 1963] 175).

[34] In setting out the Greek (text of Fraenkel) I have sometimes followed the phrases rather than the metrical colometry.

[35] Perhaps *pithesthai* also hints at the presence of Peithô. As A. Rivière points out, Agamemnon has seen the omen of the eagles and heard Calchas' interpretation, but Aeschylus does not mention that *here* and we should be cautious about introducing it ("Remarques sur le 'nécessaire' et la 'nécessité' chez Eschyle," *REG* 81 [1968] 12).

[36] "Morals and Politics in the 'Oresteia'", *PCPS* 6 (1960) 28.

[37] "Decision," 81.

[38] So Fraenkel *ad loc.*, Lesky "Decision" 81, Hammond 47.

[39] *Griechische Tragôdien* ubers. von U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf II (9th ed., Berlin 1922).

[40] "Guilt," 191, J.D. Denniston and D. Page, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1957) *ad loc.* (with Bamberger's emendation). Thomson's rejection of *epithumein* as a gloss on *organ* is plausible (Rose feels the same way), but even with his drastically-emended reading I would still consider Agamemnon the subject of the infinitive. Winnington-Ingram (*BICS* 21 [1974] 4–5) has recently suggested Artemis may be the subject, but this is rather strained.

[41] *Tropaia* in metaphorical usage seems to mean a change of wind, not a veering or alternating wind; see Fraenkel *ad loc.* and LSJ. *Contra* Dodds (*op. cit.*, n. 36) 28. Scott (*op. cit.*, n. 33) 464 also takes *tropaian* in literal as well as metaphorical sense ("he breathes out from his own mind the change of the wind"), though I do not agree with what he says about its compulsion.

[42] Vol. II, 128 n. 1. B.M.W. Knox, "Second Thoughts in Greek Tragedy," *GRBS* 7 (1966) 213–232, discusses this passage (220 n. 22) and concludes that the phrase means a change from indecision to decision, but I do not see that this suits either the context of the passage or the other use in Aeschylus. Closest to my own view is Lloyd-Jones, who translates (without comment) "his mind changes to a temper of utter ruthlessness" (*The Oresteia* [Englewood Cliffs 1970] 28). Dodds (*op. cit.*, n. 36) 28 speaks of a change of mind in the sense of hesitation.

[43] "Decision," 81–2: "It is *anangkê* to the king of Argos to avoid the anger of the Zeus of the suppliants. And Agamemnon, it is said, after making his decision took the yoke of *anangkê* upon him." C.H. Reeves has good things to say about *anangkê* (*CJ* 55 [1960] 170–171), and is right in saying Agamemnon has to choose, but not (I think) in adding that he has to choose as he does. On the precise meaning of the word, G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (Ithaca 1972) 60–61 is also interesting. Winnington-Ingram's statement, "It is by his decision that he takes on the yoke-strap of necessity and loses the freedom he had when he chose" (*op. cit.*, n. 40, 5), I take to refer to his decision to make the sacrifice, not to accept the responsibility of making a choice.

[44] Dawe (*op. cit.*, n. 22, 109–110) emphasizes that *parakopa follows* Agamemnon's submission to the yoke of necessity, but goes on to misinterpret (in my opinion) *aischromêtis* and *prôtopêmôn* by connecting them with his decision. They refer to the *temptation*, like *proboulou . . . Atês* in 386 (see below). Atê sends her agents ahead of her. As T.C.W. Stinton says, correcting Dawe, "The outrage in Agamemnon's act lies not in his decision to kill Iphigeneia, but in his bringing himself to do so" (*CQ* 25 [1975] 245)—this is *parakopa*. The transposition Dawe proposes, partly to solve his difficulty (*Eranos* 64 [1966] 1–21: 145–159, 192–217, 160–191, 218–227) separates Agamemnon's words from the chorus' explanation of them by inserting the Zeus-hymn and the stanza 184–191. It seems to me that the latter stanza would lose all its force in the transposition.

[45] Winnington-Ingram (*op. cit.*, n. 40) 6–8 has good remarks on Peithô here and the dangers of Troy's prosperity. He suggests, very cautiously, that the priority of Atê to her "child" Peithô might be accounted for by taking Paris' sin to be his judgement of the three goddesses. I do not see that this is necessary; Peithô is the means by which Atê works, her agent, and so Atê is her superior, her parent. The epithet of Atê, *proboulou*, is consistent with this.

[46] Headlam well pointed out that in the strophe the word corresponding to the *Atas* of the antistrophe is *sainôn* (*op. cit.*, n. 1, 120).

[47] *Op. cit.*, n. 32. He says Agamemnon "reverted to the temper of his forebears, Atreus and Pelops" (21) and "this connects the parable with the race of Pelops, where in each generation the evil shown in the race comes out," but does not go into the precise nature of this inheritance. Peradotto's fine article (*op. cit.*, n. 5) presents a view in some ways parallel with mine, but the stress he lays in his last pages (256–261) on the *êthos* of the Atreidae seems to me much too fourth-century for Aeschylus, despite the use of the word in this passage. O. L. Smith's view on the importance of character is rather like this (*Eranos* 71 [1973] 1–11).

[48] Headlam (*op. cit.* n. 1) and E.T. Owen (*Harmony of Aeschylus* [Toronto 1950] 80ff) are closest to my own view. Fraenkel's idea that Agamemnon "appears as the true gentleman he always is" (note to 944f) has not won acceptance. Page's opinion that "it is simply because he is at the mercy of his own vanity and arrogance" (note to 931ff) is partly right, but omits to give account of the origins of this hybris. Lloyd-Jones ("Guilt," 195–196) I think is correct in following H. Gundert (*Festschr. W.H. Schuchhardt* [Baden-Baden 1960] 69–78) in saying that Agamemnon yields because Zeus has sent Atê to take away his wits, and also in refuting Gundert's view that Agamemnon has no hybris and is essentially innocent; his summing-up, "In one sense Agamemnon is guilty; Page has shown that he utters words that are bound to bring down on him divine envy. . . . Yet in a certain sense he is innocent; he acts as he does because Zeus has taken away his wits. But why has Zeus done so? For the same reason as at Aulis; because of the curse . . . Agamemnon succumbs, vanquished by the irresistible persuasion of Helen's sister, the destined instrument of his destruction . . . " (197) differs from my view only in that I see Atê, infatuation, seizing Agamemnon only after Peithô has done her work, not incapacitating his judgement before he makes the decision. Lebeck (*op. cit.* n. 5) 74–77 is very good on the implications of this scene.

[49] In the decisions of Agamemnon in the parodos and Pelasgus in the *Suppliants* Aeschylus presents poised alternatives, followed by a final factor that upsets the balance and so leads to a decision. The three verses of Pylades play the same part in the *Choephoroe*. If we are to see the same technique here, it must be Clytemnestra's final verse (943) that turns the scale, and with its mention of temptation and voluntary yielding it well reinforces the view I am expressing. Headlam (*op. cit.* n. 1) 131 stresses the importance of *pithou* and *hekôn*.

[50] Lesky has suggested ("Decision" 84–5, and other articles mentioned there) that during the great commos of the *Choephoroe* Orestes comes to *desire* to murder his mother. Admittedly he speaks of the *himeroi* that drive him on—the god's commands, the suffering of his father, the loss of his rightful possessions. He is impelled by the oracle (270) and the Erinys arising from his father's blood (283–284), and of course is driven from his wits at the end of the play. But there are important differences from the fatal decisions that we have seen in the *Persians*, *Seven* and *Agamemnon*. In Orestes, there is no indication of hybris, *thrasos* or *tolmê;* though Atê is often mentioned, it means (both before and after the murder) the ruin of the house generally, and the murder itself is once *anepimomphon atan* (831); Peithô (726) I take as *assisting* Orestes, not tempting him, as it assisted Pelasgus (*Supp.* 623) and will assist Athena (*Eum.* 794, 829, 885); and the Curse (*pace* Lesky, *WS* 74 [1961] 16) is only said to be on Orestes by Clytemnestra on hearing the false news of his death, a dubious testimony (692). Certain themes (Zeus punishes the transgressor, the doer must suffer, etc.) run throughout the trilogy; others are brought in only when required (the guilt of Agamemnon, old versus new gods), and among these latter I would include the hereditary guilt or Curse and the working of Atê through Peithô. Perhaps, as Dodds suggests (*op. cit.*, n. 36, 30), the difference is due to the fact that Orestes knows and accepts the divine purpose, whereas Agamemnon and Clytemnestra were unconscious and guilty agents.

[51] Page, note to 757–762; Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 76 (1956) 65.

[52] Fr. 4 West, 3 Diehl, 6 and 11. I.M. Linforth, *Solon the Athenian* (*UCPCP* 6 [Berkeley 1919]) 141.

[53] Fr. 4 West, 3 Diehl 5–10, 11; fr. 6 West 3–4 = 5 Diehl 9–10.

[54] I take Atê in the *Hymn* to mean "disaster," with G. Müller, "Der homerische Atê-begriff und Solons Musenelegie," *Navicula Chiloniensis* (*Festschr. F. Jacoby* [Leiden 1956] 1–55), against H. Fränkel, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums* (New York 1951) 307–313. R. Lattimore, "The First Elegy of Solon," *AJP* 68 (1947) 161–179, points out the ambiguity at the end of the Hymn about whether too much greed for wealth, or just wealth itself, breeds Atê, and wonders if Aeschylus had this passage in mind when he wrote *Agamemnon* 750–762. A. W. Allen, "Solon's Prayer to the Muses," *TAPA* 80 (1949) 50–65, well stresses the importance of wisdom in determining what limit should be set.

[55] *Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment* (Princeton 1975) 129; see his whole section on "Empirical psychology and realistic generalization."

[56] This is in agreement with the view of A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford 1960) 120–124.