before birth the very curse which rested upon him. It may be that we were all destined to direct our first sexual impulses towards our mothers, and our first impulses of hatred and violence towards our fathers; our dreams convince us that we were.'[14] Perhaps they do; but Freud did not ascribe his interpretation of the myth to Sophocles, and it is not the interpretation I have in mind. Is there not in the poet's view a much wider sense in which every man is Oedipus? If every man could tear away the last veils of illusion, if he could see human life as time and the gods see it, would he not see that against that tremendous background all the generations of men are as if they had not been, *isa kai to mēden zōsas* (1187)? That was how Odysseus saw it when he had conversed with Athena, the embodiment of divine wisdom. 'In Ajax' condition', he says, 'I recognize my own: I perceive that all men living are but appearance or unsubstantial shadow.'[15]

So far as I can judge, on this matter Sophocles' deepest feelings did not change. The same view of the human condition which is made explicit in his earliest extant play is implicit not only in the *Oedipus Rex* but in the *Oedipus Coloneus*, in the great speech where Oedipus draws the bitter conclusion from his life's experience and in the famous ode on old age.[16] Whether this vision of man's estate is true or false I do not know, but it ought to be comprehensible to a generation which relishes the plays of Samuel Beckett. I do not wish to describe it as a 'message'. But I find in it an enlargement of sensibility. And that is all I ask of any dramatist.

15

AMBIGUITY AND REVERSAL: ON THE ENIGMATIC STRUCTURE OF *OEDIPUS REX*

JEAN-PIERRE VERNANT

In his 1939 study of ambiguity in Greek literature, W. B. Stanford notes that from the point of view of amphibology, *Oedipus Rex* occupies a special position as a model.[1] No literary genre in antiquity, in fact, uses so abundantly as tragedy expressions of double meaning, and *Oedipus Rex* includes more than twice as many ambiguous forms as the other plays of Sophocles (fifty, according to the table that Hug drew up in 1872).[2] The problem, however, is less one of a quantitative order than of nature and function. All the Greek tragedians had recourse to ambiguity as a means of expression and as a mode of thought. But double meaning assumes quite a different role according to its place in the economy of the play and the level of language where the tragic poets situate it.

It can be a matter of ambiguity in vocabulary, corresponding to what Aristotle calls *homōnumia* (lexical ambiguity); this type of ambiguity is made possible by the vacillations or contradictions of language.[3] The playwright plays with them to translate his tragic vision of a world divided against itself, torn by contradictions. In the mouths of several characters, the same words take on different or opposed meanings, because their semantic value is not the same in the religious, legal, political, and common languages.[4] Thus, for Antigone, *nomos* designates the opposite of what Creon himself, in the circumstances in which he is placed, also calls *nomos*.[5] For the young girl the word means religious rule; for Creon, an edict promulgated by the head of the state. And indeed, the semantic field of *nomos* is sufficiently extended to cover, among others, both of these meanings.[6] Ambiguity then translates the tension between certain values felt as irreconcilable in spite of their homonymy. The words exchanged in the theatrical space, instead of establishing communication

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and agreement between the characters, on the contrary underline the impermeability of minds, the freezing of character; they mark the barriers which separate the protagonists, and they trace the lines of conflict. Each hero, enclosed in the universe which is his own, gives a word a meaning, a single meaning. Against this unilaterality, another unilaterality clashes violently. Tragic irony may consist in showing how, in the course of the action, the hero finds himself literally 'taken at his word', a word which turns itself against him in bringing him the bitter experience of the meaning which he insisted on not recognizing.[7] It is only over the heads of the characters, between the author and the spectator, that another dialogue is woven, where language recovers its property of communication and almost its transparency. But what transmits the tragic message, when it is understood, is precisely that in the words exchanged between men there exist zones of opacity and incommunicability. In the moment when, on stage, he sees the protagonists adhering exclusively to one meaning and, thus blinded, lose themselves or tear each other apart, the spectator is led to understand that there are in reality two possible meanings or more. The tragic message becomes intelligible to him to the extent that, wrested from his former certainties and limitations, he realizes the ambiguity of words, of values, of the human condition. Recognizing the universe as full of conflict, opening himself to a problematic vision of the world, he makes himself embody the tragic consciousness through the spectacle.

The *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus may provide good examples of another type of tragic ambiguity. Implications are used in a completely conscious way by certain characters in this play to conceal in the discourse which they address to their interlocutor a second discourse, contrary to the first, a discourse whose meaning is perceptible only to those persons, actors, or audience having necessary information.[8] Welcoming Agamemnon at the threshold of his palace, Clytemnestra uses this double-keyed language: it sounds agreeably like a token of love and of conjugal fidelity in the ears of her husband; but, already equivocal for the chorus, which has a presentiment of an obscure threat, it reveals itself as completely sinister to the spectator, who easily deciphers in it the plan for death which she has contrived against her husband.[9] The ambiguity no longer marks the conflict of values but the duplicity of a character. An almost demonic duplicity: the same discourse, the same words which entice Agamemnon into the trap by concealing the danger at the same time proclaim to the world the crime about to be perpetrated. And because the queen, in the hate which she vows to her spouse, turns herself into the instrument of divine justice in the course of the play, the secret language hidden in the words of her welcome has oracular value. In

speaking of the death of the king, she, like a prophet, makes it inevitable. What Agamemnon cannot understand in the words of Clytemnestra is then the very truth of what is said. Formulated aloud, this word acquires all the executive force of a curse; it inscribes into being, in advance and forever, what is enunciated by her. To the ambiguity of the discourse of the queen corresponds exactly the ambiguity of the symbolic values attached to the purple carpet spread out by her in front of the king and on which she persuades him to walk. When he enters into his palace, as Clytemnestra invites him to in terms which evoke at the same time quite another dwelling, these are indeed the doors of Hades through which, without knowing it, Agamemnon passes. When he places his bare foot on the 'sumptuous fabrics', with which the ground has been strewn, the road of purple given birth beneath his steps is in no way, as he imagines it, an almost too elevated consecration of his glory, but is instead a way to deliver him over to the infernal powers, to pledge him to death without remission, that 'red' death which comes to him in the same 'sumptuous fabric' prepared by Clytemnestra for taking him in a trap as in a net.[10]

The ambiguity which one finds in *Oedipus Rex* is quite different. It concerns neither an opposition of values nor duplicity on the part of the character who is leading the action and delights in playing with his victim. In the drama where he is the victim, Oedipus, and Oedipus alone, leads the 'play'. Nothing except his stubborn will to unmask the guilty, the lofty idea which he has of his burden, of his capacities, of his judgment (his *gnomē*), his passionate desire to know the truth at any price – nothing obliges him to push the inquiry to its end. Teiresias, Jocasta, the Shepherd try successively to stop him. In vain. He is not a man to content himself with half measures, to accommodate himself to compromise. Oedipus goes to the end. And at the end of the road which he has traced against all opposition, Oedipus discovers that in leading the play from beginning to end it is he himself, from the beginning to end, who has been played. Thus in the moment when he knows himself responsible for making his unhappiness, he will be able to accuse the gods of having prepared all, done all.[11] The equivocation in the words of Oedipus corresponds to the ambiguous status which is conferred on him in the play and upon which the whole tragedy is constructed. When Oedipus speaks, he sometimes says another thing or the opposite of what he says. The ambiguity of his words translates not the duplicity of his character, which is all of a piece, but more profoundly the duality of his being. Oedipus is double. He constitutes by himself a riddle whose meaning he will guess only by discovering himself in every respect the opposite of what he believed himself and seemed to be. Oedipus does not hear the

secret discourse which is established, without his knowing it, at the heart of his own discourse. And no witness to the drama on the scene, apart from Teiresias, is any more capable than he of perceiving it. It is the gods who send back to Oedipus, as an echo to certain of his words, his own discourse, deformed or turned around.[12] And this inverted echo, which sounds like a sinister burst of laughter, is in reality a rectification. What Oedipus says without wishing to, without understanding it, constitutes the only authentic truth of his words. The double dimension of Oedipus' language reproduces, then, in an inverted form, the double dimension of the language of the gods as it is expressed in the enigmatic form of the oracle. The gods know and speak the truth, but they make it known by giving it expression in words which seem to men to say something quite different. Oedipus neither knows nor says the truth, but the words he uses to say something other than truth make this truth clear, without his knowledge, in a way shocking for anyone who has the gift of double hearing, as the diviner has double vision. The language of Oedipus thus appears as the place where two different discourses weave themselves and confront each other in the same language: a human discourse, a divine discourse. In the beginning, the two discourses are quite distinct, as if cut off one from the other; at the end of the play, when all is made clear, the two discourses are rejoined; the riddle is solved. On the tiers of the theater, the spectators occupy a privileged situation which permits them, like the gods, to understand at the same time the two opposed discourses and to follow their confrontation from one end to the other, through the play.

We understand then why, from the point of view of amphibology, *Oedipus Rex* has exemplary significance: Aristotle, recalling that the two constitutive elements of tragic plot are, besides the 'pathetic', recognition (*anagnōrisis*) and *peripeteia* – that is, the reversal of the action to its opposite (*eis to enantion tōn prattomenōn metabolē*) – notes that the recognition in *Oedipus Rex* is the most beautiful because it coincides with the *peripeteia*.[13] The recognition which Oedipus brings about in fact bears on no one but Oedipus. And this final identification of the hero by himself constitutes a complete reversal of the action, in the two meanings which one can give to Aristotle's formula (which is not itself free of ambiguity): the situation of Oedipus, by the very act of recognition, is revealed as contrary to what it was previously; Oedipus' action ends up with the opposite result from that aimed at. At the opening of the play, the Corinthian stranger, decipherer of riddles, savior of Thebes, installed at the head of the city, whom the people venerate as the equal of a god for his knowledge and his devotion to the state, must face a new riddle, that of the death of the former king. Who killed

Laius? At the end of the investigation, the judge discovers himself identical with the assassin. Behind the progressive elucidation of the detective riddle, which forms the thread of the tragic action, what is being played out in fact is the recognition by Oedipus of his identity. When he appears for the first time, at the opening of the play, to announce to the supplicants his resolution to discover the criminal at any cost, and his certainty of success, he expresses himself in terms whose ambiguity underlines the presence, behind the question which he hopes to answer (who killed Laius?), of another problem (who is Oedipus?). In going back in his turn, the king declares proudly, 'I will bring this to light again [*egō phanō*].'[14] The scholiast does not fail to observe that there is in this *egō phanō* something concealed, something Oedipus does not mean, but which the spectator understands, 'since all will be discovered in Oedipus himself [*epei to pan en autō phanēsetai*].' *Egō phanō*: 'it is I who will bring the criminal to light,' but also 'I myself will discover myself criminal.'

What then is Oedipus? Like his own discourse, like the word of the oracle, Oedipus is double, enigmatic. From the beginning to the end of the play he remains psychologically and morally the same: a man of action and of decision, with courage nothing can beat down, with conquering intelligence, a man to whom one can impute no moral fault, no deliberate oversight of justice. But without knowing it, without having asked for or deserved it, the character of Oedipus in all his dimensions – social, religious, human – is the reverse of what he appears at the head of the city. The Corinthian stranger is in reality a native of Thebes; the decipherer of riddles, a riddle which he cannot decipher; the judge, a criminal; the clairvoyant, a blind man; the savior of the city, its damnation. Oedipus, he who for all is renowned (8), the first of men (33), noblest of men (46), the man of power, of intelligence, of honors, of wealth, finds himself the last, the most unhappy (1204-6, 1296 ff., 1396 ff.), and the worst of men (1365), a sinner (1398), a festering foulness (1396), object of horror to his equals (1306), hated by the gods (1345), reduced to beggary and exile (455, 1518).

Two features underline the significance of this 'reversal' of Oedipus' condition. In the first words he addresses to him, the priest of Zeus makes Oedipus in some way the equal of the gods: *isoumenos theoisi* (31). When the riddle is solved, the chorus recognizes in Oedipus the model of a human life which, through this paradigm, appears equal to nothingness: *isa kai to mēden* (1187-88). At the start Oedipus is the clairvoyant mind, the lucid intelligence which, without anyone's aid, without the help of a god or an omen, knew how to guess, by the resources of his *gnomē* alone, the riddle of the Sphinx. He has only scorn

for the blind gaze of the diviner whose eyes are closed to the light of the sun and whose life, according to his own expression, 'is one long night' (374). But when the shadows are dispelled, so that all is made clear (1182), when light bears on Oedipus, it is then precisely that he sees day for the last time. As soon as Oedipus is 'elucidated', found out (1213), offered to the eyes of all as a spectacle of horror (1397), it is no longer possible for him to see or to be seen. The Thebans turn their eyes away from him (1303–5), incapable of looking in the face of this evil which is a 'terrible sight for men to see' (1298), this grief of which one can bear neither the telling nor the sight (1312). And if Oedipus blinds himself, it is, as he explains (1370 ff.), because it has become impossible for him to support the gaze of another human creature among the living and the dead. If he could have, he would also have stopped his ears to wall himself in a solitude cut off from the society of men. The light which the gods projected on Oedipus is too bright for mortal eye to gaze on. It casts Oedipus out from this world, made for the light of the sun, the human glance, social contact. It restores him to the solitary world of night, where Teiresias lives, who has himself paid with his eyes for the gift of double sight, the access to the other light, the blinding and terrible light of the divine.

Considered from the point of view of men, Oedipus is the clairvoyant leader, equal to the gods; considered from the point of view of the gods, he appears blind, equal to nothing. The turning around of the action, like the ambiguity of the language, marks the duplicity of a human condition which, like a riddle, invites two opposite interpretations. Human language is inverted when the gods speak through it. No matter how great, just, happy one may be, the human condition is reversed as soon as one measures it against the gods. Oedipus had 'shot his bolt beyond the others and won the prize of happiness complete' (1197 ff.). But in the eye of the Immortals, he who raises himself to the highest is also the lowest. Oedipus the blessed touches the bottom of unhappiness: 'What man', sings the chorus, 'what man on earth wins more of happiness than a seeming and after that turning away? Oedipus, you are my pattern of this, Oedipus, you and your fate! Luckless Oedipus, whom of all men I envy not at all.'[15]

If such is indeed the meaning of the tragedy, as Hellenists agree, we will recognize that *Oedipus Rex* is not only centered on the theme of the riddle, but that in its presentation, its development, its denouement, the play itself is constructed as a riddle.[16] The ambiguity, the recognition, the peripeteia, homologous with each other, are equally integrated into the enigmatic structure of the work. The keystone of the tragic architecture, the model which serves as matrix to its tragic organization and

to its language, is reversal, that is, that formal scheme by which positive values are inverted to negative values when one passes from one to the other of the two planes, human and divine, which tragedy unites and opposes, just as a riddle, according to Aristotle's definition, joins together irreconcilable terms.[17]

Through this logical scheme of inversion, corresponding to the ambiguous mode of thought proper to tragedy, an instruction of a particular type is proposed to the spectators: man is not a being which we can describe or define; he is a problem, a riddle whose double meanings we have never finished deciphering. The meaning of the work depends neither on psychology nor on mortality; it is of a specifically tragic order.[18] Parricide and incest correspond neither to Oedipus' character, to his *ēthos*, nor to a moral fault, *adikia*, for which he might be responsible. If he kills his father, if he sleeps with his mother, it is not because, more or less obscurely, he hates the first or is in love with the second. For those whom he believes to be his true, his only parents, Merope and Polybus, Oedipus has feelings of filial tenderness. When he kills Laius, it is in legitimate defense against a stranger who struck him first; when he marries Jocasta, it is a marriage without affection, which the city of Thebes imposes on him with a stranger in order to permit his accession to the throne, as recompense for his exploit: 'Though I did not know, Thebes married me to evil; Fate and I were joined there. . . . I thought of her as my reward. Ah, would I had never won it! Would I had never served the State that day!'[19] As Oedipus declares, in committing parricide and incest, neither his person (*sōma*) nor his acts (*erga*) are at issue; in reality, he himself has done nothing (*ouk erexa*).[20] Or rather, during his action its meaning, unknown to him and without his having anything to do with it, reversed itself. Legitimate defense became parricide; marriage, consecrating his glory, incest. Innocent and pure from the point of view of human law, he is guilty and contaminated from the religious point of view. What he accomplished, without knowing it, without evil purpose or felonious intent, is nonetheless the most terrible wrong conceivable against the sacred order which governs human life. Like those birds which eat birds' flesh, to recall the expression of Aeschylus,[21] he is twice satiated with his own flesh, first by spilling paternal blood, then by uniting himself to maternal blood. Oedipus thus finds himself, by a divine curse as gratuitous as the election from which the other heroes of legend profit, cut off from the social bond, thrown outside humanity. He is from then on *apolis*; he incarnates the figure of the excluded. In his solitude, he appears at once not yet human, a wild beast, a savage monster, and beyond the human, bearer of a formidable religious qualification, like a *daimōn*. His stain, like his *āgos*, is only the reverse side of

the supernatural power which is concentrated in him in order to destroy him: at the same time as contaminated, he is sacred and saint, *hieros* and *eusebēs*.[22] To the city which will welcome him, to the earth which will hold his corpse, he will bring the pledge of the greatest blessings.

This play of inversion is expressed, by other stylistic and dramatic procedures besides that of ambiguity, in particular by what Bernard Knox calls a 'reversal' in the use of the same terms in the course of the tragic action.[23] The reader is referred to his fine study of which we will recall only a few examples. A first form of this reversal consists in using, to characterize the status of Oedipus, a vocabulary the values of which are systematically inverted when they pass from active to passive. Oedipus is presented as a hunter on the trail, tracking down and startling the wild animal (111, 221, 475 ff.) which wanders on the mountain, hastened into flight by the hunt (467), hidden away far from humans (479–80). But in his hunt, the hunter at length finds himself the game: hunted by the terrible curse of his parents (417). Oedipus wanders and bellows like a wild animal (1260, 1265) before putting out his eyes and fleeing into the wild mountains of Cithairon (1451).

Oedipus leads an investigation, at the same time judiciary and scientific, which is underlined by the repeated use of the verb *zētein*.[24] But the investigator is also the object of the investigation, the *zēton* is also the *zētoumenon*;[25] like the examiner, the questioner[26] is also the answer to the question (1180–81). Oedipus is the discoverer[27] and the object of the discovery (1026, 1213), that very one who is discovered (*heuriskomai*, 1397). He is the doctor using a medicinal vocabulary to speak of the evil from which the city is suffering, but he is also the sick man (61, 674) and the sickness (1294, 1389, 1396–97).

Another form of reversal is the following: the terms which designate Oedipus at the height of his glory detach themselves from him one by one to come to rest on the gods; the grandeur of Oedipus vanishes in proportion as, in contrast with his, that of the gods is affirmed. At line 14 the priest of Zeus, in his first words, addresses himself to Oedipus as sovereign: *kratunōn*; at 903 the chorus implores Zeus as sovereign: *ō kratunōn*. At 47 the Thebans call Oedipus savior: *sōtēr*; at 150 it is Apollo who is invoked as savior (*paustērios*) to put a stop to the evil, as Oedipus formerly had put a 'stop' to the Sphinx (397). At line 236 Oedipus gives orders as master of the power and of the throne (*egō kratē te kai thronous nemō*); at 200 the chorus implores Zeus 'the Lord of lightning' (*astrapan kratē nemōn*). At 441 Oedipus recalls the exploit which made him great (*megas*); at 871 the chorus recalls that in the celestial laws resides a great (*megas*) god who does not age. That dominion (*archē*) which Oedipus prides himself in exercising (259, 380), the

chorus recognizes as forever immortal between the hands of Zeus (905). That help (*alkē*) which the priest at 42 asks of Zeus, the chorus implores Athena, at 189, to give to them. In the first line of the tragedy, Oedipus addresses himself to the suppliants as a father speaks to his children; but at 198, to destroy the pestilence of the city, it is on Zeus that the chorus confers the title of father: *ō zeu pater*.

Even the name of Oedipus invites these effects of reversal. Ambiguous, it bears in it the same enigmatic character which marks the whole tragedy. Oedipus is the man with the swollen (*oidos*) foot, an infirmity which recalls the cursed child, rejected by his parents, exposed to die in savage nature. But as Oedipus, he is also the man who knows (*oida*) the riddle of the foot, who succeeds in deciphering, without misconstruing it,[28] the 'oracle' of the sinister prophetess, of the Sphinx with the dark song (1200, 130).[29] And this knowledge enthrones in Thebes the foreign hero, establishes him in the place of the legitimate kings. The double meaning of *Oidipous* is found again at the interior of the name itself in the opposition between the first two syllables and the third, *Oida*: 'I know', one of the master words in the mouth of Oedipus triumphant, Oedipus the tyrant.[30] *Pous*: 'the foot' – the mark imposed since birth on him whose destiny is to finish as he began, excluded, like the savage beast which his *foot* makes flee (468), whom his *foot* isolates from humans, in the vain hope of escaping the oracles (479 ff.), pursued by the curse with the terrible *foot* (417) for having transgressed the sacred laws with his lifted foot (866), and incapable from then on of extricating his foot from the evils into which he has precipitated himself by raising himself to the height of power.[31] The whole tragedy of Oedipus is thus contained in the play to which the riddle of his name lends itself. To that wise, knowing master of Thebes, whom happy omen protects, is at every point opposed the cursed infant, the Swollen Foot cast out of his fatherland. But in order for Oedipus really to know who he is, the first of the two characters which he initially assumed must be inverted until it turns into the second.

The knowledge of Oedipus, when he deciphers the riddle of the Sphinx, bears in a certain fashion on himself. What is the being, asks the sinister songstress, who is at once *dipous, tripous, tetrapous*? For *Oidipous*, the mystery is only in appearance; it is about him surely, it is about man. But this answer is knowledge only in appearance; it masks the true problem: what then is man, what is Oedipus? The pseudo-response of Oedipus opens to him the high gates of Thebes. But in installing him at the head of the state, this answer realizes, by hiding it from him, his true identity as parricide and committer of incest. To penetrate his own mystery is for Oedipus to recognize in the stranger who reigns in Thebes

the formerly rejected child of the land. This identification, instead of definitively uniting Oedipus with his fatherland, instead of fixing him on the throne which he occupies from then on not as a foreign tyrant but as the legitimate son of the king, turns him into a monster whom it is necessary to expel forever from the city, to cut off from the human world.

Venerated as the equal of a god, uncontested master of justice, holding in his hands the health of the whole city – such, placed above other men, is the character of Oedipus the Wise, who at the end of the play is reversed, projected into an opposite figure: at the last rung of disgrace appears Oedipus-Swollen Foot, abominable contamination, concentrating in himself all the impurity of the world. The divine king, purifier and savior of his people, rejoins the contaminated criminal whom it is necessary to expel like a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat, so that the city, pure again, may be saved.

It is in fact by means of the axis occupied at the summit by the divine king, at its base by the *pharmakos*, that the series of reversals takes place which affects the character of Oedipus and makes of the hero the 'paradigm' of ambiguous man, of tragic man.

The quasi-divine aspect of the majestic figure who advances on the threshold of his palace, at the beginning of the tragedy, has not escaped the commentators. Already the ancient scholiast noted in his commentary at line 16 that the suppliants come to the altars of the royal house as to the altars of a god. The expression which the priest of Zeus uses, 'You see us assembled near your altars', seems so heavy with meaning that Oedipus himself asks: 'Why do you hold yourselves thus crouched in a ritual attitude of supplication towards me, with your boughs crowned with fillets?' This veneration towards a man whom one places higher than man because he saved the city 'with God's assistance' (39) because he has been revealed by supernatural favor as the *Tuchē*, the 'happy omen' (52) of the city, is maintained from one end of the play to the other. Even after the double contamination of Oedipus has been revealed, the chorus celebrates nonetheless as its savior this man whom it calls 'my king', 'standing a tower against death for my land' (1201). At the very moment when it evokes the inexpiable crimes of the unhappy one, the chorus concludes, 'To speak directly, I drew my breath from you at the first and so now I lull my mouth to sleep with your name' (1222-23).

But it is at the crucial moment of the play, when the fate of Oedipus rests on the razor's edge, that the polarity between the status of the demigod and that of scapegoat reveals itself most clearly. What is the situation at that point? We know already that Oedipus may be the murderer of Laius: the symmetry of the oracles given on the one hand

to Oedipus, on the other to Laius and Jocasta, increases the anxiety that grips the heart of the protagonists and the Theban notables. The messenger from Corinth arrives in the midst of all this. He announces that Oedipus is not the son of those whom he believes to be his parents, that he is a foundling; he has himself taken him from the hands of a shepherd on Cithairon. Jocasta, to whom all is clear by now, begs Oedipus not to push the investigation further. Oedipus refuses. The queen then addresses this last warning to him: 'Unhappy one, may you never know who you are!' But once again the tyrant of Thebes is mistaken about the meaning of what Oedipus is. He thinks the queen fears that the base origin of the foundling will be disclosed and that her marriage will be revealed as a misalliance with someone less than nothing, a slave, son of a slave to the third generation (1062). It is precisely then that Oedipus draws himself up – in his battered soul, the announcement of the messenger brings forth a mad hope which the chorus shares and which it expresses joyously in its song. Oedipus proclaims himself son of *Tuchē*, of happy omen, who, reversing his situation in the course of the years from the 'little' one he was, has made himself 'great' (*mikron kai megan*: 1083), that is to say, has transformed the deformed, foundling child into the wise master of Thebes. Irony of words: Oedipus is not the son of *Tuchē*; as Teiresias predicted, he is her victim (442), and the reversal is produced in the inverse sense, bringing the great Oedipus back to what is lowest, back from the god's equal to the equal of nothing.

However, the illusion of Oedipus and the chorus is understandable. The exposed child can be a reject which one wants to get rid of, a deformed monster or lowly slave. But he can also be a hero with an exceptional destiny. Saved from death, victor of the test imposed on him by his birth, the excluded one reveals himself elect, invested with supernatural powers.[32] Having returned triumphant to the country which excluded him, he will no longer live there as an ordinary citizen, but as absolute master, reigning over his subjects in the manner of a god among men. That is why the theme of exposure figures in almost all the Greek legends of heroes. If Oedipus was rejected at birth, cut off from his human lineage, it is doubtless, as the chorus imagines, because he is the son of some god, of the nymphs of Cithairon, of Pan or of Apollo, of Hermes or of Dionysus (1086-1109).

This mythic image of the hero exposed and saved, rejected and returning as victor, continues in a transposed form, in a certain representation of the *turannos*. Like the hero, the tyrant accedes to royalty by an indirect route, outside the legitimate lineage; like him, he qualifies himself for power by his acts, his exploits. He reigns, not by virtue of

his blood, but by his own virtues: he is the son of his deeds and of happy omen at the same time. The supreme power which he, outside of ordinary norms, was able to conquer places him, for good and bad, above other men, above the laws.[33] According to the just remark of Bernard Knox, the comparison of tyranny with the power of the gods (gods defined for the Greeks as 'the strongest', 'the most powerful') is a commonplace of the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries. Euripides and Plato agree in speaking of *turannis isotheos*, of tyranny equal to deity, inasmuch as it is absolute power to do all one wishes, to permit oneself everything.[34]

The other face of Oedipus, complementary and opposed (his appearance as scapegoat), has not been so clearly defined by the commentators. We have seen that Oedipus, at the end of the tragedy, is cast out from Thebes as one expels the *homo piacularis* in order to 'ward off the contamination [*to agos elaunein*]'.[35] But Louis Gernet established the relationship of the tragic theme with the Athenian ritual of the *pharmakos* in a more precise way.[36]

Thebes suffers from a *loimos* which according to the traditional schema is manifested by a drying up of the sources of fecundity; earth, flocks, women bear no more, while pestilence decimates the living. Sterility, sickness, death are experienced as the same power of contamination, a *miasma* which has disrupted the normal course of life. It is a matter then of discovering the criminal who *is* the stain of the city, its *agos*, in order to get rid of the evil through him. This is what is known to have happened in Athens, in the seventh century, when to expiate the impious murder of Kylon, the Alcmeonids were expelled and declared impure and sacrilegious (*enageis kai alitērioi*).[37]

But there also exists, in Athens as in other Greek cities, an annual rite which aims at periodically expelling the contamination accumulated in the course of the past year. 'It is the custom in Athens', reports Eladios of Byzantium, 'to parade two *pharmakoi* for purification, one for the men, the other for the women.'[38] According to the legend, the origin of the rite lay in the impious murder committed by the Athenians on the person of Androgeos the Cretan: to get rid of the *loimos* set off by the crime, the custom of a recurrent purification by the *pharmakos* was instituted. The ceremony took place on the first day of the holiday of the Thargelia, the sixth of the month *Thargeliōn*.[39] The two *pharmakoi*, wearing necklaces of dried figs (black or white according to the sex they represented), were paraded through the whole city; they were struck on the genitals with squill bulbs, figs, and other wild plants,[40] then they were expelled; perhaps, at least at the beginning, they were even put to death by stoning, the corpses burnt, the ashes dispersed.[41]

How were the *pharmakoi* chosen? Everything leads us to believe that they were recruited from the dregs of the population, among the *kakourgoi*, jailbirds, designated by their misdeeds, their physical ugliness, their base condition, their vile and repugnant occupation, as inferior beings, degraded, *phauloi*, the rejects of society. Aristophanes, in the *Frogs*, opposes to the well-born citizens, wise, just, honest, who are like the good money of the city, the bad pieces of copper, 'foreign, red-haired, beggars born from beggars', the latest arrivals, whom the city would not have accepted easily at random even as *pharmakoi*.[42] Tzetzes, citing the fragments of the poet Hipponax, notes that when a *loimos* struck a city, the most wretched of all (*amorphoteron*) was chosen as *katharmos* and *pharmakos* of the diseased city.[43] At Leucas, they took for purification a man condemned to death. At Marseilles, some wretch offered himself as 'cure all'. He thus gained a year of life, supported at public expense. At the end of the year he was paraded around the city with solemn curses so that the transgressions of the community would fall on him.[44] So the image of the *pharmakos* comes quite naturally to Lysias' mind when he wishes to denounce to the judges the repugnant foulness of a person like Andocides, impious, sacrilegious, informer and traitor, exiled from city to city, and seemingly marked in his miseries by the finger of god. To condemn Andocides 'is to purify the city, liberate it from contamination, expel the *pharmakos*.'[45]

The Athenian Thargelia included another panel. With the expulsion of the *pharmakos*, it associated another ritual which took place on the seventh of the month, the day dedicated to Apollo. They dedicated to the divinity the first fruits of the earth in the form of the *Thargēlos*, a cake and a pot filled with seeds of all kinds.[46] But the central element of the holiday was the carrying of the *eiresiōnē*, a branch of olive or laurel ribboned with wool, garnished with fruits, with cakes, with little flasks of oil and wine.[47] Young boys paraded these 'maypoles' across the city. They placed them at the threshold of the temple of Apollo, they hung them at the doors of private houses (*pros apotropēn limou*) to avert famine.[48] The *eiresiōnē* in Attica, at Samos, Delos, and Rhodes, the *kōpō* at Thebes, signify springtime renewal. Accompanied by songs and by an offering of gifts, their procession consecrates the end of the old season and inaugurates the young new year under the sign of the gift, of abundance, of health.[49] Society's need, by dismissing those which have faded during the year, to reinvigorate the forces of fecundity on which its life depends appears clearly in the Athenian rite. The *eiresiōnē* remains attached to the houses' doors where it fades and dries until the day of the Thargelia when the new year's green one replaces it.[50]

But the renewal symbolized by the *eiresiōnē* cannot be produced

unless all contaminations of the group have been cast off, unless earth and men have been made pure. As Plutarch[51] recalls, the first fruits of all kinds which decorate the *eiresiōnē* commemorate the end of the *aphoria*, the sterility which struck the soil of Attica as punishment for the murder of Androgeos, that murder which the expulsion of the *pharmakos* ought precisely to expiate. The major role of the *eiresiōnē* in the Thargelia explains what Hesychius glosses *thargēlos: hē hiketēria*, because, in its form and function, the *eiresiōnē* is nothing but a suppliant's branch.[52]

These are precisely the *hiketeriai*, these suppliants' branches crowned with wool, which, at the beginning of Sophocles' play, the representatives of the Theban youth, grouped in classes by age, children and very young people, parade up to the gates of the royal palace and set down in front of the altar of Apollo to ward off the *loimos* oppressing the city. Another indication permits us to define more precisely the ritual scenario evoked by the first scene of the tragedy. Twice it is recalled that the city resounds with 'groans and hymns and incense' (5,186). The paean is normally a joyous song of victory and of thanksgiving. It is opposed to the threnody, a song of mourning, a plaintive melody. But we know from a scholiast of the *Iliad* that there exists another type of paean, that which is sung 'to end evils or in order that they not occur.'[53] This cathartic paean, whose memory was kept alive by the Pythagoreans in particular, also takes the form of a threnody, according to the scholiast. This is the paean mixed with sobs of which the tragedy speaks. This purifying song is used at a very precise moment of the religious calendar, at that turning of the year which spring represents, when, at the threshold of summer, the period of human undertakings begins: harvests, navigation, war.[54] Situated in May, before the beginning of the harvests, the Thargelia belong to this complex of spring holidays.

These details must have imposed on the spectators of the tragedy the comparison with the Athenian ritual so much the more easily in that Oedipus is presented implicitly as the *agos*, whose contamination it is necessary to expel.[55] From his first words he defines himself, without wishing to, in terms that evoke the character of the scapegoat: 'I know', he says to the suppliants, 'you are all sick, yet there is not one of you, sick though you are, that is as sick as I myself. Your several sorrows each have single scope and touch but one of you. My spirit [*psuchē*] groans for city and myself and you at once' (59-64). And a little further on: 'the grief I bear, I bear it more for these [others] than for my own heart' (93-94). Oedipus is wrong: this evil, to which Creon immediately gives its real name in calling it *miasma* (97), is precisely his own. But in being wrong he says, unknowingly, the truth. Because he is himself, as

miasma, the *agos* of the city, Oedipus indeed carries the weight of all the unhappiness which overwhelms his fellow citizens.

Divine king – pharmakos: such are the two faces of Oedipus, which constitute him as a riddle by uniting two figures in him, as in an expression with double meaning, the one the inverse of the other. Sophocles attributes a general significance to this inversion in Oedipus' nature. The hero is the model of the human condition. But Sophocles did not have to invent the polarity between the king and the scapegoat (a polarity which the tragedy situates at the very heart of the character of Oedipus). It was inscribed in the religious practice and in the social thought of the Greeks. The poet simply lent it a new significance in making it the symbol of man and of his fundamental ambiguity. If Sophocles chose the couple *turannos – pharmakos* to illustrate what we have called the theme of reversal, it is because in their opposition these two persons appear symmetrical and in certain respects interchangeable. Both appear as *individuals* responsible for the *collective* health of the group. In Homer and Hesiod, the fecundity of the earth, of the flocks, of women depends on the person of the king, offspring of Zeus. If he shows himself irreproachable (*amumōn*), in his sovereign justice, everything prospers in his city;[56] if he errs, it is the *whole city* which pays for the fault of one man. The son of Cronos makes unhappiness fall back on all, *limos* and *loimos*, famine and plague all together: men die, women cease to give birth, the flocks no longer reproduce.[57] Thus the normal solution, when the divine scourge strikes a people, is to sacrifice the king. If he is the master of fecundity, and it dries up, it is because his power as sovereign is in some way reversed; his justice has become crime, his virtue contamination, the best (*aristos*) has become the worst (*kakistos*). The legends of Lycurgus, of Athamas, of Oinocles thus require, for the expulsion of *loimos*, the stoning of the king, his ritual sacrifice, or failing that, the sacrifice of his son. But sometimes the painful role of unworthy king, of sovereign in reverse, is delegated to a member of the community. The king unburdens himself on an individual who like an inverted image represents everything negative in his person. Such is the *pharmakos*: double of the king, but in reverse, like those sovereigns at carnival crowned at holiday time, when order is set upside down, social hierarchies reversed: sexual prohibitions are lifted, theft becomes legal, the slaves take their masters' place, the women trade their clothes with men; then the throne must be occupied by the basest, ugliest, most ridiculous, most criminal of men. But, the holiday once ended, the counter-king is expelled or put to death, dragging with him all the disorder which he incarnates and of which the community is purged at one blow.

In classical Athens, the rite of the Thargelia still makes clear certain traits, in the person of the *pharmakos*, which evoke the figure of the sovereign, master of fecundity.[58] The horrible person who must incarnate contamination is supported at the cost of the state, nourished on especially pure foods: fruits, cheese, consecrated cake of *maza*.[59] If in the course of the procession he is decorated, like the *eiresiōnē*, with necklaces of figs and branches, and struck on the sexual parts with squill bulbs, it is because he possesses a beneficent virtue of fecundity. His contamination is a religious designation which can be used in a beneficent sense. Like that of Oedipus, his *agos* make him a *katharmos*, a *katharsios*, a purifier. Moreover, his person's ambiguity is marked even in the etiological accounts which claim to explain the foundation of the rite. To the version of Helladios of Byzantium which we have cited is opposed that of Diogenes Laertius and of Athenaeus:[60] when Epimenides purified Athens of the *loimos* caused by the murder of Kylon, two young people, one named Cratinos, seem to have made a voluntary gift of their persons to purify the land which had nourished them. These two young people are presented, not as the refuse of society, but as the flower of Athenian youth. According to Tzetzes, as we have seen, they choose as *pharmakos* a particularly ugly being (*amorphoteros*); according to Athenaeus, Cratinus was, on the contrary, a very handsome adolescent (*meirakion eumorphon*).

The symmetry of the *pharmakos* and the legendary king, the first assuming a role below analogous to that which the second plays on high, perhaps casts light on the institution of ostracism whose character J. Carcopino has shown to be strange in many respects.[61] In the framework of the Greek city, there is no longer, as we know, a place for the person of the king, master of fecundity. When Athenian ostracism was instituted at the end of the sixth century, it is the figure of the tyrant who inherited, transposed, certain of the religious aspects belonging to the former sovereign. Ostracism aims as a rule at getting rid of that citizen who, raised too high, threatens to accede to the tyranny. But, in this completely positive form, the explanation cannot take account of the institution's archaic features. It functions every year, doubtless between the sixth and the eighth prytaneion, following rules contrary to the ordinary procedures of political and legal life. Ostracism is a judgment which aims at 'ridding the city' of a citizen by a temporary exile of ten years.[62] It is pronounced outside the tribunals, by the assembly, without there having been a public denunciation or even accusation against anyone. A first preliminary session decides by the raising of hands if the procedure of ostracism will take place or not for the year in progress. No name is pronounced, no debate takes place. If those

voting have declared themselves favorable, the assembly is called back again in exceptional session some time later. It sits in the agora and not, as usual, on the Pnyx. To proceed to the real vote, each participant inscribes the name of his choice on a potsherd. This time no debate either: no name is proposed. There is neither accusation nor defense. The vote takes place without there being any appeal to reason, political or judicial. Everything is organized to give to the popular feeling which the Greeks call *phthonos*[63] (both envy and religious mistrust in regard to one who rises too high, succeeds too well) the occasion to manifest itself in the most spontaneous and unanimous form (it requires at least six thousand voters), outside all rule of law, all rational justification. For what is the ostracized reproached but for those same superiorities which raise him above the common and for his fortune, too great, which threatens to attract divine prosecution to the city. The fear of tyranny is mixed with a deeper apprehension of a religious kind, in regard to someone who puts the whole group in danger. As Solon writes: 'A city perishes by its overly great men [*andrōn d'ek megalōn polis ollutai*].'[64]

The development which Aristotle assigns to ostracism is in this regard characteristic.[65] If a being goes beyond the common level in virtue and in political capacity, he says, he cannot be accepted on a footing of equality with the other citizens: 'Such a being in fact will naturally be like a god among men.' That is why, Aristotle adds, the democratic states instituted ostracism. In doing so, they followed the example of the myth: the Argonauts abandoned Heracles for an analogous motive. The ship Argo refused to carry him like the other passengers because of his excessive weight. And Aristotle concludes that things are in this matter as in the arts and sciences: 'A master of a chorus would not permit among his singers one whose voice would surpass in force and beauty all the rest of the chorus.'

How could the city admit into its heart one who, like Oedipus, 'has shot his bolt beyond the others' and has become *isotheos*? When it establishes ostracism, it creates an institution whose role is symmetrical to and the inverse of the ritual of the Thargelia. In the person of the ostracized, the city expels what in it is too elevated, what incarnates the evil which can come to it from above. In the evil of the *pharmakos*, it expels what is vilest in itself, what incarnates the evil that menaces it from below.[66] By this double and complementary rejection it delimits itself in relation to what is not yet known and what transcends the known: it takes the proper measure of the human in opposition on one side to the divine and heroic, on the other to the bestial and monstrous.

What the city thus realizes spontaneously in the play of its institutions Aristotle expresses in a fully conscious and deliberate way in his political

theory. Man, he writes, is by nature a political animal; he then who finds himself by nature *apolis* is either *phaulos*, 'a degraded being, a subman', or *kreittōn ē anthrōpos*, 'above humanity, more powerful than man'. Such a man, Aristotle continues, is 'like an isolated pawn in a checkers game [*ate per azux ōn hōsper en pettois*].' And the philosopher comes back to the same idea a little further on, when he notes that one who cannot live in a community 'is not at all part of the city and finds himself by consequence either a brute beast, or a god [*ē thērion ē theos*].'[67]

It is the very status of Oedipus, in his double and contradictory aspect, which finds itself thus defined: above and below the human, hero more powerful than man, equal to god, and at the same moment brute beast rejected in the world solitude of the mountains.

But Aristotle's remark goes further. It permits us to understand the role of parricide and incest in the reversal which makes the equal of god and the equal of nothing coincide in the person of Oedipus. These two crimes constitute in effect an attack on the fundamental rules of a checkers game where each piece is situated, by its relation to others, in a determinate place on the checkers board of the city.[68] By making himself guilty of them, Oedipus has shuffled the cards, mixed up positions and pawns: he finds himself from then on out of the game. By his parricide, followed by incest, he installs himself in the place occupied by his father; he mingles, in Jocasta, mother and wife; he identifies himself at the same time with Laius (as Jocasta's husband) and with his own children (of whom he is at the same time father and brother), mixing together three generations of the line. Sophocles underlines this equalization, this identification of what ought to remain distinct and separate, with an insistence which has sometimes shocked moderns but which the interpreter must take fully into account. He does it with a verbal play centered on the words *homos* and *isos* (like and equal), with their compounds. Even before knowing anything of his true origin, Oedipus defines himself, in his relation to Laius, as sharing the same bed and having a *homosporon* (260) wife. In his mouth the word means that he 'sows' the same wife whom Laius 'sowed' before him; but at line 460 Teiresias takes up the term again to give it its true value: he announces to Oedipus that he will discover himself to be at once the murderer of his father and his *homosporos*, his cosower (1209-12). *Homosporos* ordinarily has another meaning: born from the same sowing, relative of the same stock. In fact, Oedipus, without knowing it, is of the same stock, just as much of Laius as of Jocasta. The equalization of Oedipus and his sons is expressed in a series of brutal images: the father has sown his sons where he was sown; Jocasta is a wife, not-wife but mother whose furrow produced in a double harvest both father and children; Oedipus has sown her who engendered him, from the place where he was himself sown, and from the same furrows, from these 'equal' furrows, he has received his children.[69] But it is Teiresias who gives all its tragic weight to this vocabulary of equality when he addresses himself to Oedipus in these terms: there will come evils 'establishing a grim equality between you and your children' (425). The identification of Oedipus with his own father and his own children, the assimilation in Jocasta of mother and wife, make Oedipus equal to himself, that is, they make him an *agos*, a being *apolis*, without common dimensions, without equality with other men, and who, believing himself equal to a god, finds himself finally equal to nothing.[70] The tyrant *isotheos* no more recognizes than could a wild beast the rules of the game which are the foundation of the human city.[71] Among the gods, who form a single family, incest is not prohibited. Cronos and Zeus attacked and dethroned their father. Like them, the tyrant can believe that everything is permitted him. Plato calls him 'parricide'[72] and compares him to a man who, by virtue of a magic ring, would have the freedom to infringe the most sacred rules with impunity: to kill whomever he wishes, unite with whoever pleases him, 'master of any action, like a god among men'.[73] Wild beasts are also not bound to respect the interdicts on which the society of men rests. They are not, like the gods, above the laws through an excess of power; they are beneath the laws, through a lack of *logos*.[74] Dio Chrysostom reports the ironic remark of Diogenes on the subject of Oedipus: 'Oedipus bewails being at the same time the father and brother of his children, the husband and son of his wife; but about that cocks are not indignant, nor dogs, nor any bird.'[75] Among them there is neither brother, father, husband, son, nor wife.[76] Like the isolated pieces in the checkers game, they live without rules, without knowing difference or equality in the confusion of *anomia*.[77]

Out of the game, excluded from the city, rejected from the human by incest and parricide, Oedipus is revealed, at the end of the tragedy, incidental to the monstrous being evoked by the riddle whose solution he thought himself to have found in his pride as 'sage'. What is the creature with one voice, asked the Sphinx, who has two, three, and four feet? The question presented, confused, and mixed together the three ages through which man travels successively and which he can know only one after another: child when he walks on all fours, adult when he holds himself firmly on his two legs, old man helping himself with his staff. In identifying himself all at once with his young children and his old father, Oedipus, man with two feet, effaces the boundaries which ought to keep the father rigorously separated from the sons and from

the grandfather, in order that each human generation occupy in the course of time and in the order of the city the place assigned to it. Last tragic reversal: it is his victory over the Sphinx which makes of Oedipus not the answer which he guessed, but the very question which was asked of him, not a man like the others, but a creature of confusion and chaos, the only one, we are told, of all those who go on the earth, in the air and the waters, to 'change his nature' instead of keeping it distinct.[78] Formulated by the Sphinx, the riddle of man thus admits of a solution, but one which turns itself back against the conqueror of the monster, the decipherer of riddles, to make him appear himself as a monster, a man in the form of a riddle, a riddle this time without an answer.

From our analysis of *Oedipus Rex* we can draw some conclusions. In the first place, there is a model which the tragedy puts to work on all the levels where it deploys itself: in language, with its multiple stylistic procedures; in the structure of the dramatic account where recognition and peripeteia coincide; in the theme of Oedipus' destiny; in the very person of the hero. This model is not given somewhere in the form of an image, a notion, a complex of feelings. It is a pure operative scheme of reversal, a rule of ambiguous logic. But this form has, in the tragedy, a content. To capture the countenance of Oedipus, paradigm of the double man, of man reversed, the rule is incarnated in the reversal which transforms the divine king into a scapegoat.

Second, if the complementary opposition between the *turannos* and the *pharmakos*, on which Sophocles plays, is indeed, as it seemed to us, present in the institutions and in the political theory of the Ancients, does the tragedy do anything but reflect a structure already given in the society and in common thought? We think, on the contrary, that, far from presenting a reflection of it, the tragedy calls it into question. In social practice and theory, the polar structure of superhuman and subhuman aims at delineating in its specific features the field of human life as defined by the ensemble of *nomoi* which characterize it. The subhuman and superhuman correspond only as two lines which neatly draw the boundaries within which man finds himself enclosed. On the contrary, in Sophocles, superhuman and subhuman are joined and are mixed together in the same person. And as this person is the model of man, all limits which would permit one to delineate human life, to fix unequivocally its status, are erased. When he wishes, like Oedipus, to pursue the investigation of what he is, man discovers himself enigmatic, without stability or a domain proper to him, without fixed connection, without defined essence, oscillating between the equal of a god and the equal of nothing. His real greatness consists in the very thing which expresses his enigmatic nature: the question.

Finally, the most difficult thing perhaps is not to restore, as we have tried to do, its authentic meaning to the tragedy, that meaning which it had for the Greeks of the fifth century, but to understand the counter-meanings which it has invited, or rather, how it has lent itself to so many counter-meanings. Whence comes this relative malleability of the work of art, which is also its youth and its perpetuity? If the true strength of the tragedy is in the last analysis this form of reversal which comes into play like a logical schema, we understand that the dramatic account remains open to diverse interpretations and that *Oedipus Rex* could be charged with a new meaning to precisely that extent that through the history of Western thought the problem of the ambiguity in man has been displaced, has changed terrain, and the riddle of human existence has been formulated in other terms than it was for the Greek tragedians.

5. See Froma I. Zeitlin, 'The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*', *Arethusa* 11, (1978), 149–84.

6. See in general Emile Benvéniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris, 1969), i, 212–15, 217–22.

7. Ibid., i, 222.

8. The relation of the phratry to the significant political unit of the deme under Cleisthenes is not entirely clear. There seems to have been some overlap, and the phratries had some political significance: see W. K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1968), 92, 95–7.

9. See Lacey, 90–9.

10. For Greek views of filiation in the mid-fifth century and their relation to these issues see Zeitlin, *passim*, esp. 168–74 with the references in the notes on pp. 180–1.

11. For these contradictions in Creon's use of the family as a model of civic order (cf. 659 ff.) see Seth Benardete, 'A Reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*, II', *Interpretation* 5.1 (1975), 32–5.

12. See Zeitlin, 160 ff.

13. See Seth Benardete, 'A Reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*, I', *Interpretation* 4.3 (1975), 152, 176, 183.

14. See e.g. 51–2, 56–7, 146, 172 of the two brothers; 864–5 of Oedipus' incest. Compounds in *auto-* also mark Antigone's defiant burial of her brother: 503, 696, and also 821, 875, 900. Note Creon's use of *autocheir* in 306 to brand the criminal nature of the burial. Cf. also 700, 1175, 1315, and Benardete (above, n.13), 149; Kamerbeek on 49–52 and 172; B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper*, Sather Classical Lectures 35 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1964), 79; W. H. Will, '*Autadelphos* in the *Antigone* and the *Eumenides*', *Studies presented to D. M. Robinson* (St. Louis, 1951), 553–8. For *koinos* of the family curse cf. 146. The word also describes Antigone's exclusive allegiance to kin ties in 539 and 546. Contrast Creon's political usage ('common decree', 162) and the larger sense of the word beyond the perspectives of both protagonists in 1024, 1049, 1120.

15. The two passages contain the only occurrences of *splanchna* in this sense in the extant Sophocles. The word occurs one other time, in a different sense, at *Ajax* 995.

16. Note also Creon's use of *physis* as a criterion of authority in 727; contrast Haemon in 721. Goheen, 89 remarks Antigone's 'instinctive identification of *physis* and *nomos* as part of her identification of herself with a final order of things that is partly natural and partly divine.'

E. R. Dodds: On Misunderstanding the Oedipus Rex (pp. 177–188)

1. For the full evidence see O. Hey's exhaustive examination of the usage of these words, *Philol.* 83 (1927), 1–17; 137–63. Cf. also K. von Fritz, *Antike und moderne Tragödie* (Berlin, 1962), 1 ff.

2. The danger is exemplified by Mr P. H. Vellacott's article, 'The Guilt of Oedipus', which appeared in *Greece and Rome* 11 (1964), 137–48, shortly after my talk was delivered. By treating Oedipus as a historical personage and examining his career from the 'common-sense' standpoint of a prosecuting counsel Mr Vellacott has no difficulty in showing that Oedipus must have guessed the true story of his birth long before the point at which the play opens – and guiltily done nothing about it. Sophocles, according to Mr Vellacott, realized this, but unfortunately could not present the situation in these terms because 'such a conception was impossible to express in the conventional forms of tragedy'; so for most of the time he reluctantly fell back on 'the popular concept of an innocent Oedipus lured by Fate into a disastrous trap'. We are left to conclude either that the play is a botched compromise or else that the common sense of the law-courts is not after all the best yardstick by which to measure myth.

3. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (London, Modern Library, 1938), 108.

4. A. W. Gomme, *More Essays in Greek History and Literature* (Oxford, 1962), 211.

5. B. M. W. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes* (Yale, 1957), 39.

6. C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford, 1944), ch. v.

7. Herodotus I. 45. Cf. H. Funke, *Die sogenannte tragische Schuld* (Diss. Köln, 1963), 105 ff.

8. A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1951), 158, 168.

9. G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca, 1958), 271.

10. C. H. Whitman, *Sophocles* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), 133–5.

11. V. Ehrenberg, *Sophocles and Pericles* (Oxford, 1954), 141 ff.

12. B. M. W. Knox, op. cit. ch. ii.

13. Heraclitus, fr. 102.

14. Sigmund Freud, op. cit. 109.

15. *Ajax* 124–6.

16. *O.C.* 607–15; 1211–49.

Jean-Pierre Vernant: Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of Oedipus Rex (pp. 189–209)

1. *Ambiguity in Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1939), 163–73.

2. A. Hug, 'Der Doppelsinn in Sophokles Oedipus Koenig', *Philologus*, 31 (1872), 66–84.

3. 'Nouns are finite in number, while things are infinite. So it is inevitable that a single noun has several meanings.' Aristotle, *De Sophisticis Elenchis*, 1, 165a 11.

4. See Euripides, *Phoen.* 499–502: 'If all men saw the fair and wise the same men would not have debaters' double strife. But nothing is like or even among men except the name they give – which is not the fact' (tr. Elizabeth Wyckoff, in *Euripides V*, ed. David Grene and Richard Lattimore [New York, 1968]).

5. The same ambiguity appears in the other terms which hold a major place in the texture of the work: *dikē, philos* and *philia, kerdos, timē, orgē, deinos*. Cf. R. F. Goheen, *The Imagery of Sophocles' Antigone* (Princeton, 1951), and C. P. Segal, 'Sophocles' Praise of Man and the Conflicts of the Antigone', *Arion*, 3, 2 (1964), 46–66.

6. Benvéniste, in his *Noms d'agent et noms d'action en indo-européen* (Paris, 1948), 79–80, has shown that *nemein* retains the idea of a regular attribution, of an apportionment ruled by the authority of customary law. This meaning takes account of the two great series in the semantic history of the root **nem. Nomos*, regular attribution, rule of usage, custom, religious rite, divine or civic law, convention; *nomos*, territorial attribution fixed by custom, pastureland, province. The expression *ta nomizomena* designates the whole of what is owed to the gods;

ta nomima, the rules with religious or political value; *ta nomismata*, the customs or coinage having circulation in a city.

7. In the *Antigone*, at line 1481, Creon condemns the young girl who has transgressed 'the established *nomoi*'. Toward the end of the play, at 1113, disturbed by the threats of Teiresias, he swears to respect from then on 'the established *nomoi*'. But from the one expression to the other, *nomos* has changed meaning. At line 481 Creon uses it as a synonym of *Kerugma*, a public edict proclaimed by the head of the city; at 1113, the word has found again, in the mouth of Creon, the meaning which Antigone gave it at the start: religious law, funeral ritual.

8. As the Watchman says: 'For those who know, I speak, for those who do not know, on purpose, I hide myself [or, I forget: *lēthomai*]' (38–9). We find a good example of amphibologic dexterity at line 137: almost every word is susceptible to a double interpretation. We can understand 'massacring a trembling hare with her brood before she has given birth' and also 'sacrificing a poor trembling creature, his own daughter, at the front of the army'.

9. Cf. Stanford, 137–62. Some examples: in her first words, Clytemnestra, recalling the sufferings she has known in the absence of her husband, declares that if Agamemnon had received as many wounds as rumour had it, 'his body would have more holes than a net of mesh' (868). The expression has a sinister irony: it is exactly in this way that the king is going to die, caught in the net of death (1115), the web with no exit, the fishnet (1382) that she, with Aegisthus, stretches around him (1110) – the gates, *pulai* (604), the dwellings, *domata* (911), to which she alludes several times are not those of the palace, as those who hear believe, but, according to the established expression, those of Hades (1211). When she affirms that the King regains in her *gunaika pistēn, domatōn kuna*, she says in reality the opposite of what she seems to: *gunaik' apistēn*, a faithless woman, who has behaved like a bitch (606–7). As the scholiast remarks, *kuōn* (bitch) means a woman who has more than one man. When she evokes Zeus as *Teleios*, the Zeus by whom all is achieved, in order that he accomplish (*telei*) her wishes (973–74), it is not of the Zeus of the happy return that she thinks, as one might imagine, but of the funerary Zeus, master of death 'who ends all'.

10. We may compare lines 910, 921, 936, 946, 949 on the one hand, and 960–1, 1383, 1390 on the other, and we will note the sinister play on words *eimatōn baphas* (960), dyeing of cloths, which evokes *haimatōn baphas*, dyeing of blood. (Cf. *Choephoroi*, 1010–1213.) We know that in Homer blood and death are called *porphureoi*. According to Artemidorus Onirocriticus, 1.77 (p. 84, 2–4, Pack): 'The color purple has a certain affinity with death.' Cf. Louis Gernet, *Problèmes de la couleur* (Paris, 1957), 321–4.

11. Cf. R. P. Winnington-Ingram, 'Tragedy and Greek Archaic Thought', in *Classical Drama and its Influence: Essays Presented to H. D. F. Kitto*, ed. M. J. Anderson (London, 1965), 31–50.

12. Here again we will send the reader back to the work of Stanford and to the commentaries of R. Jebb, *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1887), and of J. C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles; Commentaries*, Pt. 4, *The Oedipus Tyrannus* (Leiden, 1967). We will mention only a few examples. Creon has just spoken of the brigands, in the plural, who killed Laius. Oedipus responds: how would the murderer (*ho lēstēs*) have been able to commit this act without complicity? (124). The scholiast notes: 'Oedipus thinks of his brother-in-law.' But by this singular, Oedipus, without knowing it, condemns himself. As he will recognize a little further on (842–7), if there were murderers, he is not guilty, but if there was one single man, the crime is evidently chargeable to him. At lines 137–41, there are three

ambiguities: (1) In dispelling the contamination, he does it not for faraway friends, but himself, for himself – he does not understand how well he speaks. (2) The murderer of the king could be tempted to lift his hand against him; in fact, Oedipus strikes out his own eyes. (3) In coming to help Laius, he serves his own cause – no, he will destroy himself. The whole passage 258–65, with its conclusion, 'For these reasons, as if Laius were my father, I will fight for him' is ambiguous. The phrase 'If his lineage had not aborted' also means 'If his lineage had not been sworn to a destiny of unhappiness'. At 501, the threat of Oedipus to Creon, 'If you believe that you will attack a relative without paying for it, you deceive yourself', turns against Oedipus himself: he will pay for the murder of his father. At 512–73, a double meaning: 'He would not have claimed that I killed Laius', but also 'He would not have revealed that I killed Laius.' At 928, the position of *hēde*, between *mētēr* and *tōn teknōn*, brings together *gunē* and *mētēr*: his wife, who is also his mother. At 955–6: 'He announces to you that your father Polybus is dead'; but also, 'He announces to you that your father is not Polybus, but a dead man.' At 1183, Oedipus wishes for death and cries out, 'O light, would that I have seen you for the last time!' But *phōs* has two meanings in Greek: light of life, light of day. It is the meaning which Oedipus does not mean to say which will come true.

13. *Poetics*, 1452a, 32–33.

14. 132. All subsequent references to the play, with line numbers included parenthetically in the body of the essay, are taken from the translations by David Grene, in *Sophocles I*, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago, 1954).

15. Ibid., 1190–6. In this sense tragedy, since before Plato, runs counter to the point of view of Protagoras and of the 'philosophy of enlightnment' developed by the Sophists in the fifth century. Far from man's being the measure of all things, it is god who is the measure of man, as of the rest. Cf. Bernard Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes: Sophocles' Tragic Hero and His Time* (New Haven, 1957), 150 ff., 184.

16. Cf. again, E. R. Dodds, 'On Misunderstanding the *Oedipus Rex*', *Greece and Rome*, 2nd Series, 13 (1966), 37–49.

17. *Poetics*, 1458a, 26. We may compare this scheme of reversal with that which one finds in the thoughts of Heraclitus, especially fr. 88, expressed by the verb *metapiptein*. Cf. Clémence Ramnoux, *Héraclite ou L'homme entre les choses et les mots* (Paris, 1959), 33 ff., 329.

18. Concerning this specificity of the tragic message, see 'Tensions et ambiguités dans la tragédie', in *Mythe et Tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1973), 23.

19. *O.C.* tr. Robert Fitzgerald, in *Sophocles I*, ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago, 1954), 525, 539–40.

20. Ibid., 265 ff., 521 ff., 539.

21. *Suppliants*, 226.

22. *O.C.* 287.

23. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes*, 138.

24. *O.T.* 278, 362, 450, 658–59, 1112.

25. Cf. Plutarch, *De Curiositate*, 522c, and *O.T.* 362, 450, 658–59, 1112.

26. *O.T. skopein*: 68, 291, 407, 564; *historein*: 1150.

27. Ibid., *heurein, heuretēs*: 68, 108, 120, 440, 1050.

28. Euripides, *Phoen.* 45.

29. Ibid., 1505–6.

30. *O.T.* 58–9, 84, 105, 397; cf. also 43.

31. Ibid., 876. See Knox. *Oedipus at Thebes*, pp. 182–4. Upon arrival, the messenger from Corinth asks: 'Do you know where Oedipus is?' As Knox observes,

the three lines 924–6 end on the name of Oedipus and on the interrogative adverb *hopou*, which gives: *mathoim' hopou-Oidipou-hōpou*. 'These violent puns', writes Knox, 'suggesting a fantastic conjugation of a verb "to know where" formed from the name of the hero who, as Teiresias told him, does not know where he is (413–14) – this is the ironic laughter of the gods whom Oedipus "excludes" in his search for the truth.'

32. Cf. Marie Delcourt, *Oedipe ou la légende du conquérant* (1944), where this theme is amply developed and where its place in the Oedipus myth is well shown.

33. Including the matrimonial laws recognized as the norm by the city. In 'Mariage de tyrans', in *Hommage à Lucien LeFevre* (1954), 41–53, Louis Gernet, recalling that the prestige of the tyrant originates in the past in many of its aspects and that his excess has models in legend, observes that 'for Periander the mythical theme of incest with the mother was raked up again. This mother is called *Krateia*, which means sovereignty.'

34. *The Trojan Women*, 1169; *Republic*, 568, 360 bd.

35. On Oedipus *agos*, see 1427; and also 656, 921, with comments of Kamerbeek, *Plays of Sophocles*, on these passages.

36. In a course taught at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes but which has not been published; see now J. P. Guépin, *The Tragic Paradox* (Amsterdam, 1968), 89 ff. Delcourt, *Oedipe*, 30–7, underlined the relations between the rite of exposure and that of the scapegoat.

37. Herodotus V. 70.71; Thucydides I. 126–7.

38. Photius, *Biblioteca*, 534 (Behber), cf. Hesychius, s.v.

39. The sixth of Thargelion, birthday of Socrates, is, Diogenes Laertius tells us (2. 44), the day on which the Athenians 'purify the city'.

40. Photius, *Biblioteca*; Hesychius, s.v. *kradiēs nomous*: Tzetzes. *Chiliades* V. 729; Hipponax, frs. 4 and 5, Bergk.

41. Scholia to Aristophanes. *Frogs*, 730, *Knights*, 1133. Suda, s.v. *pharmakos*, Harpocration, citing Istros, s.v. *pharmakos*, Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, V. 736.

42. Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 730–4.

43. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*. The scholiast at Aristophanes, *Knights*, 1133, writes that the Athenians supported, to serve them as *pharmaloi*, people extremely *ageneis kai achrestous*, of low origin, wrongdoers; the scholiast at *Frogs*, 703, that they sacrificed, to drive away the famine, *tous phaulous kai para tēs phuseōs epiboul-euomenous*, beings degraded and deformed (literally: those who have been mistreated by nature); cf. Delcourt, *Oedipe*, 31 n. 2.

44. Leucas: Strabo. 10.9, p. 452; Photius, s.v. *Leukatēs*. Massilia: Petronius in Servius, *ad En.*, 3. 57; Lactantius Placidus, *Comment. Stat. Theb.*, 10, 793.

45. *Against Andocides*, 108. 4: *Tēn polin kathairein kai apodiopompeisthai kai pharmakon apopempein*. Lysias uses a religious vocabulary. On *diopompein*, *apodiopompeisthai*, *apopempein* and the rites of expulsion, the *pompaia*, cf. Eustathius, *ad Odys.*, 22, 481. In *O.T.* at 696, the choryphaeos, after the quarrel which has opposed Creon and Oedipus, wishes the latter to remain the 'happy guide' of the city, *eupompos*. On this point also, the reversal will be complete: the leader will be led back, the *eupompos* will be the object of the *pompaia*, of the *apopempsis*.

46. Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.*, 717 d; Hesychius, s.v. *Thargēlia* Schol. to Aristophanes, *Plutus*, 1055, and *Knights*, 729, Athenaeus, 114 a, Eustathius, *ad Il.*, 9. 530.

47. On the *eiresiōne*, cf. Eustathius, *ad Il.* 1283, 7, *Schol. to Aristophanes*, *Plutus*, 1055; *Et. Magnum*, s.v. *eiresiōnē*; Hesychius, s.v. *Koruthalia*; Suda, s.v. *Diakonion*; Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*, 22.

48. *Sch. Aristophanes, Plutus*, 1055, *Sch. Aristophanes, Knights*, 728: *hoi men gar phasin hoti limou, hoi de hoti loimou*. Eustathius, *ad. Il.*, 1283, *apostrophē limou*. In the religious calendar, the *eiresionē* occurs again in the month *Puanepsiōn*, at the time of the holiday of the Oschophoria. The month of *Puanepsiōn* marks the end of the summer season as the month Thargeliōn (or the month immediately preceding *Mounichiōn*) marks its beginning. The ritual offering of the *puanion* (Athenaeus, 648 b) on the seventh of the month of autumn corresponds to the offering of the *Thargelos* on the seventh of the month of spring: in both cases, it involves a *panspermia*, a porridge of all the seeds of the earth's fruit. In the same way, the springtime procession of the *eiresiōnē* corresponds in the myth to the departure of Theseus (Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*, 18, 1 and 2), its autumnal procession to the return of the same hero (ibid., 22, 5–7). Cf. L. Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin, 1932), 198–201, 224–6; H. Jeanmaire, *Couroi et Couretes*, (Paris, 1939), 312–13, 347 ff.; J. and L. Robert. *Rev. Et. Grec.*, 62 (1949), 106.

49. Talisman of fertility, the *eiresiōnē* is sometimes called, like the *Thargelos*, *euetēria*, *hygieia*, prosperity and health. The scholiast at Aristophanes, *Knights*, 728, notes that the seasons, *hai hōrai*, are 'attached to the branches'. Plato, *Symposium*, 188 a, writes that when the seasons allow just measure in their ordering (relationships of dry and humid, of hot and cold), they bring to man, animals, plants *euetēria* and *hugieia*; when on the contrary there is *hubris* in their mutual relations, *loimoi* appear, numerous sicknesses, which come over animals and plants also. The *loimos* manifests a disorder of the seasons close enough to the disorder of human conduct that the second may aso draw in the first; the rite of the *pharmakos* realizes the expulsion of human disorder; the *eiresiōnē* symbolizes the return to the good order of the seasons. In both cases, it is *anomia* which is averted.

50. Aristophanes, *Knights*, 728, and the *Scholion, Plutus*, 1054. 'The least spark would set it aflame like an old *eiresiōnē*' (*Wasps*, 399). We can compare the drying out of the spring bough with the drying out of the earth and men, in the case of *limos* (*limos*, famine, is often associated with *auchmos*, dryness). Hipponax, cursing his enemy Boupalos, this *agos* whose expulsion he desires, would like to see him *xēros limō*, dried out from hunger, paraded like a *pharmakos* and like him whipped seven times on his genitals.

51. Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*, 22, 6–7. Cf. 18, 1: after the murder of Androgeos 'the divinity ruined the land, striking it with sterility and sicknesses, drying up the rivers.'

52. Hesychius, s.v. *Thargēlia*: *kai tēn hiketērian ekaloun Thargēlon*, cf. also Plutarch, *Life of Theseus*, 22, 6 and 18, 1; Eusathius, *ad Il.* 1283, 6.

53. *Schol. Victor. ad Iliad.*, 10, 391: 'Paean: that which one sings to end evils and in order that none occur. Primitive music was related not only to banquets and dancing but also to the threnodies. It was still honored during the time of the Pythagoreans, who called it purification (*katharsis*).' Cf. also Aeschylus, *Agam.*, 645; *Choephori*, 150–1; *Sept.*, 868, 915 ff. Cf. L. Delatte, 'Note sur un fragment de Stesichore', *L'Antiquité classique*, 7, No. 1 (1938), 23–9. Albert Severyns, *Recherches sur la Chrestomathie de Proclos*, ii (Liège, 1938), 125 ff.

54. L. Delatte, 'Note sur un fragment'; Stesichorus, Fv. 37, Bergk = 14 Diehl, Iamblichus, *V.P.*, 110, Deubner; Aristoxenos of Tarentum, fr. 117 Wehrli: 'To the inhabitants of Locris and Rhegium who consulted the oracle to learn how to cure the madness of their women, the god answered that it was necessary to sing paeans

in the spring for sixty days.' On the importance of spring, which is less a season like the others than a break in time, marking at the same time the renewal of the products of the earth and the depletion of human reserves in this critical moment of 'welding' of one agricultural year to the other, cf. Alcman, fr. 56 D = 137 Ed.: 'The Seasons (Zeus) made them three, summer, winter, autumn as the third, and a fourth, spring, when everything flowers and grows but one cannot eat his fill.'

55. *O.T.* 1427; see n. 35 above.

56. Homer, *Od.*, 19, 109 ff.; Hesiod, *Works*, 225 ff.

57. Hesiod, *Works*, 238 ff.

58. On this double aspect of the *pharmakos*, cf. Lewis Richard Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*, iv (Oxford, 1907), 280–1.

59. Suda, s.v. *Pharmakous*, Hipponax, Fr. 7 (Bergk); Servius, *ad Aen.*, 3, 57, Lactantius Placidus, *Comment. Stat. Theb.*, 10, 793: *publicis sumptibus alebatur purioribus cibis.*

60. Diogenes Laertius, 1, 110; Athenaeus, 602 cd.

61. J. Carcopino, *L'Ostracisme athenien* (1935). The principal texts are conveniently assembled in the work of A. Calderini, *L'Ostracismo* (Como, 1945). We owe to Gernet the idea of the comparison between the institution of ostracism and the rite of the *pharmakos*.

62. *Methistasthai tēs polēos*, cf. *Et. Magnum*, s.v. *ex ostrakismos*, Photius, s.v. *ostrakismos*.

63. We note, in *O.T.* the presence of the theme of *phthonos*, in regard to the one who is at the head of the city; see 380 ff.

64. 'It is from the storm-cloud that snow and hail strike. Thunder issues from the resplendent lightning. It is from men too great that the ruin of the city comes.' Solon, Fr. 9–10 (Edmonds).

65. *Politics*, III, 1284 a 3 ff.

66. In a lecture which he gave in February, 1958, at the *Centre d'études sociologiques*, but which has not been published, Louis Gernet noted that between the two opposed poles of the *pharmakos* and the ostracized there is occasionally produced, in the play of the institutions, something like a short circuit. Such was the case in the last application Athens knew of ostracism. In 417 there were two persons of the first rank whom one might expect to see designated by the vote. The two confederates acting in concert succeeded in having the ostracism fall on a third thief, Hyperbolos, a demagogue of low rank, generally hated and despised. Hyperbolos was thus ostracized but, as Gernet observed, ostracism was not taken up again; horror-stricken by this 'shunting error', which underlined at the same time the polarity and the symmetry of the *pharmakos* and the ostracized, the Athenians were forever disgusted with the institution.

67. *Politics*, 1, 1253 a 2–7. To define the degraded being, the subman, Aristotle uses the same *phaulos* which the scholiast uses to characterize the *pharmakos*. On the opposition brute beast – hero or god, cf. *Nic. Ethics*, 7. 1145 a 15 ff: 'As to the status opposed to bestiality, one could doubtless not do better than to speak of super-virtue, heroic and divine, in short. If it is rare to find a divine man . . . bestiality is no less rare among men.'

68. In the expression of Aristotle which we quoted conforming to the usual translation, 'like an isolated pawn in a checkers game', there is not only opposition between *azux*, an odd counter, and *pettoi* or *pessoi*, the normal pawns which the players use. Cf. J. Treheux, 'Sur le sens des adjectifs *peridzux* et *peridzugos*', *Revue de Philologie*, 32 (1958), 89. In fact, in the category of games which the Greeks designated by the verb *pesseuein*, there is one to which they gave the name *polis*. According to Suetonius, '*polis* is also a type of dice in which the adversaries took pawns, placed as in checkers (*petteutikōs*) on squares marked off by crossed lines. Not without wit, they called cities (*poleis*) the squares thus marked off and dogs (*kunes*) the pawns which were opposed to each other.' According to Pollux 'the game where one moves many pawns is a checkers board, provided with squares, marked off by lines. They call the board *polis*, the pawns *kunes*.' Cf. J. Taillardat, *Suetone: Des termes injurieux. Des Jeux grecs* (Paris, 1957), 154–5. If Aristotle, in order to define the *apolis* individual, refers to chess, it is because, in the Greek game, the checkers board which marks off the positions and the respective moves of the pawns is susceptible, as its name indicates, of representing the order of the *polis*.

69. Cf. 1256–7, 1485, 1496–8: *k'ak tōn isōn ektēsasth'humas, hōnper autos exephu.*

70. On this 'nonequality' of Oedipus in relation to the other Thebans, among whom some, like Teiresias and Creon, claim the right to equal status opposite him, cf. 61, 408–9, 544, 579 and 581, 630. The last wish the fallen Oedipus expresses concerning his children is that Creon 'not make them equal with myself in wretchedness' (1507).

71. 'One cannot speak of virtue apropos God any more than of vice apropos a beast: the perfection of God has more honor than virtue and the wickedness of the beast is of another kind than vice.' Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics*, 7, 1145 a 25.

72. *Republic*, 569 b.

73. Ibid., 360 c. It is in this context that it is necessary, we believe, to understand the second *stasimon* (863–911) about which very diverse interpretations have been proposed. It is the only moment when the chorus adopts a negative attitude with regard to Oedipus – tyrant; but the criticisms which they associate with the *hubris* of the tyrant appear entirely displaced in the case of Oedipus, who would really be the last, for instance, to profit from his situation to reap 'gains without justice' (889). In fact, the chorus' words concern not the person of Oedipus, but his status 'apart' within the city. The feelings of quasi-religious veneration with regard to this man who is more than a man are transformed into horror as soon as Oedipus reveals himself as the one who could formerly have committed a crime, and who seems today no longer to lend credence to the divine oracles. In this case, the *isotheos* no longer appears as the guide to whom one can abandon himself, but as a creature unbridled and lawless, a master who can venture all, permit himself all.

74. *Logos*, word and reason, is what makes man the only 'political animal'. The beasts have only a voice, while 'discourse serves to express the useful and harmful, and, as a result, the just and the not-just: because it is the proper character of man in relation with the other animals to be the only one to have the consciousness of the just and the non-just, and other moral notions, and it is the community of these feelings which engenders family and city.' Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 1253 10–18.

75. Dio Chrysost., 10, 29; cf. Knox, *Oedipus at Thebes*, 206; cf. also Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 7, 386–7: 'Menephron had to couple with his mother, as wild animals do!' Cf. also 10, 324–31.

76. At the beginning of the tragedy, Oedipus strives to integrate himself into the line of the Labdacids, from which, as a foreigner, he feels himself distanced (cf. 137–41, 258–68); as Knox writes, 'The resounding, half-envious recital of Laius'

royal genealogy emphasizes Oedipus' deep-seated feeling of inadequacy in the matter of birth . . . and he tries, in his speech, to insert himself into the honorable line of Theban kings' (56). But his unhappiness resides not in the too great difference which separates him from the legitimate line, but in his belonging to this very line. Oedipus worries also about a base origin which would make him unworthy of Jocasta. But there again his unhappiness springs not from too much distance but from too close proximity, from the complete absence of difference between the lines of the spouses. Worse than a misalliance, this marriage is incest.

77. Bestiality implies not only a lack of *logos* and of *nomos*, it is also defined as a state of 'confusion' where all is jumbled and mixed by change: Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 450; Euripides, *Suppliant Women*, 201.

78. Cf. the argument of Euripides' *Phoenicians: allasei de phuēn monon.*

R. P. Winnington-Ingram: The Electra of Sophocles: Prolegomena to an Interpretation (pp. 210–216)

1. Cf. Headlam in G. Thomson, *The Oresteia of Aeschylus*, ii, 217; J. T. Sheppard in *Class. Rev.* 41, 2–9.

2. C. H. Whitman, *Sophocles*, 161.

3. Detailed references and argument will be found in *Journ. Hell. Stud.* 74, 16 ff. and *Gnomon* 23, 414 ff.

4. *Journ. Hell. Stud.* 74, 16 ff.

5. Words of intellectual or quasi-intellectual content are also prominent in the debates between Electra and Chrysothemis, particularly between 1013 and 1057, where we find no less than seventeen terms which imply (more or less) rational consideration. But what determines the different attitudes of the two sisters in the same circumstances is certainly not the validity of their intellectual processes so much as a difference of *physis* (nature). But this important theme cannot be pursued here. The 'intellectual' words of the dialogue are picked up at the beginning of the stasimon; and we should note that the filial piety of the birds, which wins them the description of 'wisest' (1058), is a matter of instinct and not of reason.

6. Having made Clytemnestra angry, she becomes calmer herself.

7. Sophocles here opens a window upon sinister possibilities, just as, in the *O.C.*, he ends with Antigone preparing to play her part in the *Antigone*. The similarity is only not precise in so far as the approaching fate of Antigone has the greater certainty.

8. Cf. *Cho.* 577 f.

P. E. Easterling: Philoctetes and Modern Criticism (pp. 217–228)

1. Following the trail blazed by Tycho von Wilamowitz in 1917 (*Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles*).

2. D. B. Robinson, 'Topics in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*', *Class. Quart.* 19 (1969), 47.

3. C. M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (1944), 261 ff.

4. W. Steidle, *Studien zum antiken Drama* (1968), 169 ff.

5. Op. cit. 178.

6. O. Taplin, 'Significant actions in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*', *Gk. Rom. Byz. Stud.* 12 (1971), 27 ff.

7. D. Seale, 'The element of surprise in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*', *Bull. Inst. Class. Stud.* 19 (1972), 94 ff.

8. A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (1951), ch. X.

9. G. H. Gellie, *Sophocles: a Reading* (1972), 144.

10. A. F. Garvie, 'Deceit, violence, and persuasion in the *Philoctetes*', *Studi Classici in Onore de Quintino Cataudella*, vol. i (1972), 213 ff. J.-U. Schmidt, *Sophokles Philoktet, eine Strukturanalyse* (1973), 249 ff. also analyses the play into three phases although his interpretation differs in detail.

11. Art. cit. 214.

12. Schmidt, op. cit. (n. 10 above), 221 ff.

13. Cf. Schmidt, 234 ff.

14. O. Zwierlein, review of Steidle, in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 222 (1970), 208 ff.

15. Cf. Taplin, art. cit. (n. 6 above), 39.

16. Op. cit. (n. 4 above), 187; cf. Schmidt, op. cit. (n. 10 above), 247.

17. Art. cit. (n. 2 above), 55.

18. J. Kott, *The Eating of the Gods* (1974), 162 ff. The quotation is from p. 169.

19. J. P. Poe, *Heroism and Divine Justice in Sophocles' Philoctetes* (1974) = *Mnemosyne* Suppl. 34. The quotation is from p. 51.

20. P. Vidal-Naquet, 'Le Philoctète de Sophocle' in J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (1973), 161 ff.

21. C. Campbell, 'A Theophany,' *Theoria to Theory* 6 (1972), 82 f.

22. Schmidt, op. cit. (n. 10 above), 94, brings out the importance of 410–52 for making these standards clear; Philoctetes' hostility is confined to the *kakoi* of the Greek army.

23. Cf. B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper* (1964), 139.

24. 796 f.; 861; 945 ff. (cf. 1018; 1030).

25. 182 ff.; 265 ff.; 279 ff.; 311 ff.; 691 ff.

26. 631 ff.; 791 ff.; 1043 f.; 1113 ff.

27. Cf. 624 f., 1198 f. and the passages cited in n. 24 above. Knox, op. cit. (n. 23 above), 141.

28. Op. cit. (n. 10 above), 246.

29. Op. cit. (n. 9 above), 157.

30. Cf. Taplin, art. cit. (n. 6 above), 37; Schmidt, op. cit. (n. 10 above), 231; 246.

31. Art. cit. (n. 20 above), 179.

32. Art. cit. (n. 21 above), 81 ff.

33. An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the triennial conference of the Greek and Roman Societies on 31 July 1975. I am grateful for the criticisms and suggestions which were put forward in the discussion following the paper.

Cedric H. Whitman: Apocalypse: Oedipus at Colonus (pp. 229–243)

1. Cf. *O.C.* 7, 22, 437 f.; 580; in Creon's case, it has failed to teach wisdom, 930 f. See also on the *Electra*, and notes 25–6.

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