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The Supernatural in the Tragedies of Euripides as Illustrated in Prayers, Curses, Oaths, Oracles, Prophecies, Dreams, and Visions

Ernest Heinrich Klotsche

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THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE TRAGEDIES OF EURIPIDES AS ILLUSTRATED IN PRAYERS, CURSES, OATHS, ORACLES, PROPHECIES, DREAMS, AND VISIONS

BY ERNEST HEINRICH KLOTSCHKE

The spirit of the Greek drama is preëminently religious. Not only in its beginnings, but throughout the most flourishing period of its history, it was in intimate connection with the supernatural which entered into its very heart, and constituted one of its essential elements. The theatrical representations at Athens, even in the days of Euripides and Aristophanes, were constituent parts of a great religious celebration.

The presence of the supernatural element in Greek tragedy involved a definite attitude toward it on the part of each individual dramatist. The strength of personality which Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides possessed made them voice their own conceptions concerning the supernatural.

Æschylus, himself profoundly religious, accepted the popular religion unhesitatingly trying to reconcile it with the more advanced conceptions of his time, by purifying its grossness and harmonizing its various inconsistencies, thus imparting to the religion a new intense vitality. The moral government of all things, the misery and mystery of sin, the power and mysterious dealings of the gods, their terrible and inscrutable wrath, their certain vengeance upon sinners form the background of his thought. A

sublime imagination lifts him to a region where the great forces of the universe seem to be close about him. No poet has surpassed him in his power of creative imagination, by which he brings a whole world of mythical figures into being. With amazing impressiveness he presents the dim borderland between the material and the spiritual. With dreams and visions he deals habitually and brings them into his dramatic fabric with consummate skill. At times in his reference to the divine power of Zeus he almost approaches a stern and sombre monotheism. "One God above all, who directs all, who is the cause of all" (Ag., 163, 1485).

Sophocles, on the other hand, has no profound interest in the supernatural, but accepts it as a traditional feature of tragedy. Though he is by no means unconscious of the discordant elements in human life and destiny, he firmly believes in the goodness and the justice of the Gods, not attempting to solve a problem in theodicy. His interest is primarily in the conflict of human passions, set before us in definite characters. Behind the mortal passions, however, are the gods, and with an original and skilful use of the supernatural elements he makes them really contribute to the whole design, without allowing them to overpower the mortal participants.

A man of a different spirit, and, although contemporary with Sophocles, a man of a different world, is *Euripides*. The old world was dying, the new world was not yet born. It was an age of intellectual growth, but of religious decay, when most men were disengaging themselves from their traditional belief. The popular religion—the very foundation of tragedy—had been undermined. Scepticism had begun to be busy with the legends which that religion consecrated. Neither Gods nor heroes commanded all the old unquestioning faith, and yet the old religion still kept a real hold on the minds even of the most thoughtful. Under these circumstances the duty of the tragic poet was one of some difficulty, especially as far as the handling of the supernatural in tragedy was concerned. Sophocles remaining true to the old faith in the Gods of his age and nation preserves an outward acquiescence in the traditional beliefs, while Euripides, ap-

proaching tradition with the liberal frankness of the new age, is by no means favorable to the established religion which had served the two older dramatists so well; and yet in his tragedies supernatural manifestations play just as important a part as in those of his predecessors. This fact occasions surprise, indeed, and certainly demands discussion.

It is peculiarly difficult to estimate correctly the moral and religious views of Euripides. He is an elusive poet, not easy to comprehend. Many even of his fellow-countrymen failed to understand him, and modern critics, since the middle of the eighteenth century until a recent period, have generally considered him not only a bad poet, but a bad man; and yet no other Greek poet, except Homer, has made so deep and lasting an impression on ancient and modern literature. Despite the jibes of Aristophanes who declared that Euripides' poetry died along with him (*Frogs*, 869), and vehemently refused him recognition even in Hades, Euripides after his death was universally regarded as a great poet. The Greek tragic poets of the succeeding centuries patterned their plays upon his. At Rome he was early made known through the translations of Ennius and had a marked influence upon the Roman drama. Poets in all ages have thought well of him and he has generally been the favorite with modern authors and dramatists far more than Æschylus and Sophocles. Milton felt and expressed great admiration for him. Racine, Alfieri, Browning, Goethe, and others were influenced by the ancient poet and imitated him. He was not only a favorite with the masses in ancient times, he appeals to the reader of to-day as well; and this fact is in part doubtless due to his modern treatment of the same human interests that are alive for us to-day.

Concerning the religious sentiments of Euripides the late Dr. Verrall in his "*Euripides the Rationalist*," "*Essays on Four Plays of Euripides*," and "*The Bacchantes of Euripides*" has at great length and with much subtlety made an ingenious attempt to prove that Euripides was a destructive thinker, "a sceptic of the aggressive type," who wrote his plays with the intention of attacking the traditional religion, but in order to avoid posing as an open enemy to the state religion, attempted to accomplish his

ends by handling the supernatural elements as unconvincing or even ridiculous.

It is true, Euripides often represents the Gods in an unfavorable light, and has no real reverence for them; but how far the poet speaks in his own name or lets the characters in his drama speak is sometimes hard to decide; on the other hand, as for example in the "Bacchæ," and, to a certain extent, in the "Suppliants," he most closely adheres to the method of using the supernatural adopted by his predecessors. His handling of the supernatural reveals a spirit of open-mindedness and vacillation which makes it difficult to define correctly his religious views. But he deserves a hearing not only as the poetical interpreter of the age of the sophists, but especially as one who bears witness to the religious ideas of his time.

Our search will be conducted in a limited sphere. It does not treat of the theology of Euripides in general, but of the supernatural in his tragedies as illustrated in prayers, curses, oaths, oracles, prophecies, dreams, and visions.

Before proceeding to the collection and study of the various examples it may be said that our material will be collected from the eighteen extant plays and remaining fragments of Euripides' works, excluding the "Rhesus," which has come down to us under his name, but is now almost universally recognized as spurious.

I. THE ALCESTIS

The earliest of the extant plays of Euripides, the "Alcestis," which was brought out in 438 B.C. as the fourth play of a tetralogy, contributes for our discussion only a few examples of the poet's handling of the supernatural element.

The character of Alcestis, the heroine of the piece, her heroic self-sacrifice, her conjugal love and motherly care are depicted with overpowering pathos in a fervent *prayer* offered before the altar of Hestia, the Goddess of the family-hearth and the home:

Alc. 163-69:

δέσποιν', ἐγὼ γὰρ ἔρχομαι κατὰ χθονός,
πανύστατόν σε προσπίτνουσ' αἰτήσομαι,
τέκν' ὀρφανεῦσαι τάμ', καὶ τῷ μὲν φίλῃν

σύζευξον ἄλοχον, τῇ δὲ γενναῖον πόσιν.
μηδ' ὥσπερ αὐτῶν ἡ τεκοῦσ' ἀπόλλυμαι
θανεῖν ἁώρους παῖδας, ἀλλ' εὐδαίμονας
ἐν γῇ πατρὶα τερπνὸν ἐκπλήσσαι βίον.

"Queen, for I pass beneath the earth, I fall
Before thee now, and nevermore, and pray:—
Be mother to my orphans: mate with him
A loving wife, with her a noble husband.
Nor as their mother dieth, so may they,
My children, die untimely, but with weal
In the home-land fill up a life of bliss."

It is worth noticing that the poet does not expose Alcestis to view in the act of prayer, as though the situation were too solemn to be exhibited before the eyes of the spectators. We learn Alcestis' prayer from her handmaid who describes in most affecting terms her mistress's farewell to the beloved home.

A somewhat different mode of handling the supernatural element is found in a *prayer* of the chorus representing the friends of Admetus:

Alc. 213-25:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τίς ἂν πῶς πόρος πᾶ
γένουι, κ. τ. λ.
ὦναξ Παιάν,
ἔξευρε μηχανήν τιν' Ἀδμήτῳ κακῶν,
πόριζε δὴ πόριζε. καὶ πάρος γὰρ
τοῦδ' ἐφεῦρες, καὶ νῦν
λυτήριος ἐκ θανάτου γενοῦ,
φόνιον δ' ἀπόπασσον Αἰδαν.

"O Zeus, for our lords is there naught but despair?
No path through the tangle of evils, no loosing of chains that
have bound them?
... yet uplift we in prayer
Our hands to the Gods, for that power from the days everlasting
hath crowned them.
O Healer-king,
Find thou for Admetus the balm of relief, for the captive
deliverance!
Vouchsafe it, vouchsafe it, for heretofore
Hast thou found out a way; even now once more
Pluck back our beloved from Hades' door,
Strike down Death's hand red-reeking with gore!"

We should expect that Admetus' friends having heard of the predicted fate of Alcestis, instead of praying desperately: "O Zeus! O Healer-king!" would have acted and hurried to rescue the queen from her fate and tell her and Admetus that the "fatal day" will bring no further harm whatever. Their way of acting can be explained only by assuming that they were entirely under the influence of the traditional belief in oracular prediction.

A notable specimen of *vision* is found in the following verses where Alcestis in language exceedingly pathetic describes the apparition of Charon and Hades:

Alc. 252-63:

ὄρῳ δίκωπον ὄρῳ σκάφος
 νεκρῶν δὲ πορθμεὺς
 ἔχων χερ' ἐπὶ κοντῷ Χάρων μ' ἤδη καλεῖ; κ. τ. λ.
 ἄγει μ' ἄγει μέ τις, οὐχ ὄρεῖς;
 νεκρῶν ἐς αὐτὰν
 ὑπ' ὀφρύσι κυνανυγέσι βλέπων πτερωτὸς "Αἰδᾶς
 τί ρέξεις; μέθες. οἶαν
 ὁδὸν ἃ δειλαιότατα προβαλῶ.

"I see the boat with the oars twin-sweeping,
 And his hand on the pole as in haste aye keeping,
 Charon, the Ferryman calleth, 'What ho, wilt thou linger and
 linger?
 Hasten,—'tis thou dost delay me!' he crieth with beckoning
 finger.

One haleth me—haleth me hence to the mansion
 Of the dead!—dost thou mark not the darkling expansion
 Of the pinions of Hades, the blaze of his eyes 'neath their
 caverns out-glaring!
 What wouldst thou?—Unhand me!—In anguish and pain by
 what path am I faring!"

A "vision" is that which is seen otherwise than by the ordinary sight; it may be an imaginary, supernatural, or prophetic sight. In this case it is an imaginary vision. While none of those present are aware of the apparition, Alcestis hears the Ferryman call her and sees winged Hades beckon. Such fancies are nothing unusual in a woman who is approaching inevitable death and has gone already through a prolonged series of fatiguing devotions and harrowing farewells, from weakness to exhaustion, and

finally to hallucination. Dying persons often imagine that they see flitting forms, and appeal to others whether they are not equally conscious of their presence, as Alcestis asks: *οὐχ ὁρᾷς*; (259). That the poet, however, uses such visions as supernatural manifestations may be demanded by the traditional belief and dramatic propriety. Such supernatural manifestations, which often recur in connection with tragedy, always appeal to an interest in the unseen deeply rooted in human nature. Even in the most sceptical lingers a certain respect for such matters.

In the prologue Apollo proclaims an *oracle* of the Parcae:

Alc. 12-14:

"Αδμητον ἄδην τὸν παραντικ' ἐκφυγεῖν,
ἄλλον διαλλάξαντα τοῖς κάτω νεκρόν.

"Admetus shall escape the imminent death
If he for ransom gives another life."

and making use of his prescience he *predicts* that Heracles shall rescue the heroic Alcestis from the grave and the arm of death, thus revealing the dénouement of the drama:

Alc. 65-69:

ἦ μὴν σὺ πείσει καί περ ὦμος ὦν ἄγαν'
τοῖος Φέρητος εἰσι πρὸς δόμους ἀνὴρ,
Εὐρυσθέως πέμψαντος ἵππειον μέγα
ὄχημα Θρη'κης ἐκ τόπων δυσχειμέρων,
ὃς δὲ ξενωθείς τοῖσδ' ἐν Ἀδμήτου δόμοις
βίη γυναῖκα τήνδε σ' ἐξαιρήσεται.

"Surely thou shalt forbear, though ruthless thou,
So mighty a man to Phères' hall shall come,
Sent of Eurystheus forth, the courser-car
From wintry-dreary lands of Thrace to bring.
Guest-welcomed in Admetus' palace here
By force yon woman shall he wrest from thee."

The fulfillment of this *prophecy*, namely the return of Alcestis from death to life is the central theme of the play. But the prediction itself is of religious importance; it appeals to the religious instinct and offers an assurance that the just are in the hands of God.

2. THE MEDEA

The "Medea" was acted in 431 B.C. We may grant that the play is not a faultless one, but even the detractors of Euripides cannot deny it the excellence of true tragic pathos. The character of the heroine of the play, her ardent temperament, her proud and daring spirit are also portrayed in the *prayers and curses* which the poet puts into her mouth.

Medea in utter distress imprecates death upon herself:

Med. 144-48:

αἰαῖ,
διὰ μου κεφαλᾶς φλόξ οὐρανία
βαίη τί δέ μοι ζῆν ἐτι κέρδος;
φεῦ φεῦ' θανάτῳ καταλυσάιμαν
βιοτὰν στυγερὰν προλιπούσα.

"Would God that the flame of lightning from heaven descending,
descending,
Might burn through mine head!—for in living wherein any
more is my gain?
Alas and alas! Would God I might bring to an ending, an
ending,
The life that I loathe, and behind me might cast all its burden
of pain!"

The chorus on comprehending the cause of her distress appeal to the Gods and speak words of consolation:

Med. 149 ff.:

ἄιες, ὦ Ζεῦ καὶ γὰ καὶ φῶς,
ἄχᾶν οἶαν ἂ δύστανος
μέλπει νύμφα; κ. τ. λ.

"O Zeus, Earth, Light, did ye hear her,
How waileth the woe-laden breath
Of the bride in unhappiest plight? etc."

Then Medea appeals to Artemis in the matter of her marriage imprecating destruction and ruin upon Jason, her forsworn husband:

Med. 160-65:

ὦ μεγάλα θεῖμ καὶ πότνι' Ἀρτεμι,
λεῖσσεθ' ἂ πάσχω, μεγάλοις ὄρκοις
ἐνδησαμένα τὸν κατάρατον

πόσιν; ὃν ποτ' ἐγὼ νύμφαν τ' εἶδουμ'
αὐτοῖς μελάρροισ διακναιομένους,
οἷ γ' ἐμέ πρόσθεν τολμῶσ' ἀδικεῖν.

"O Lady of Justice, O Artemis' Majesty, see it, O see it—
Look on the wrongs I suffer, by oaths everlasting who tied
The soul of mine husband, that never from the curse he might
free it, nor free it
From your vengeance! O may I behold him at last, even him
and his bride,
Them, and these halls therewithal, all shattered in ruin, in
ruin!—"

Cf. also Med. 332:

Ζεῦ, μὴ λάθοι σε τῶνδ' ὅς αἴτιος κακῶν.

"Zeus, Zeus, forget not him who is cause of this!"

After a bitter reproach against her husband's unmanliness
Medea expostulates with Zeus:

Med. 516-19:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τί δὴ χρυσοῦ μὲν ὅς κίβδηλος ᾖ
τεκμήρι' ἀνθρώποισιν ὥπασας σαφῆ,
ἀνδρῶν δ' ὅτ' ἔχῃ τὸν κακὸν διειδέναι,
οὐδεὶς χαρακτήρ ἐμπέφυκε σώματι;

"O Zeus, ah wherefore hast thou given to men
Plain signs for gold which is but counterfeit,
But no assay-mark nature graven shows
On man's form, to discern the base withal?"

The chorus fully aware that the fatal act of Medea's killing
her own children cannot be prevented by any human interference,
call on the holy Earth which is about to sustain the pollution of
blood, and the Sun, that grandsire of the wretched woman not to
allow her to murder her children:

Med. 1251-60:

ὦ Γᾶ τε καὶ παμφαῆς
ἄκτις Ἀελίου, κατίδ' ἴδετε τὰν
ὀλομένα γυναικα, πρὶν φοινίαν
τέκνοις προσβαλεῖν χερ' αὐτοκτόνον; κ. τ. λ.

"O Eearth, O all-revealing splendour
Of the Sun, look down on a woman accurst,
Or ever she slake the murder-thirst
Of a mother whose hands would smite the tender
Fruit of her womb.

But thou, O heaven-begotten glory,
 Restrain her, refrain her: the wretched, the gory
 Erinyes by demons dogged, we implore thee,
 Snatch thou from yon home! etc."

An earnest and impassioned *invocation* of the Gods is made by Jason on account of his children murdered by Medea:

Med. 1405-07:

Ζεῦ, τὰδ' ἀκούεις ὥς ἀπελαινόμεθ',
 οἷά τε πάσχομεν ἐκ τῆς μυσαρᾶς
 καὶ παιδοφόνου τῆσδε λεαίνης; κ. τ. λ.

"O Zeus, dost thou hear it, how spurned I am?—
 What outrage I suffer of yonder abhorred
 Child-murderess, yonder tigress-dam? etc."

On Medea he pronounces an *imprecation*:

Med. 1327-29:

ἔργον τλᾶσα δυσσεβέστατον. ὀλοιο.

"Thus hast thou wrought . . .
 Now ruin seize thee!"

Med. 1388-90:

ἀλλὰ σ' Ἐρινὺς ὀλέσειε τέκνων φονία τε Δίκη.

"Now the Fury-avenger of children smite thee,
 And Justice that looketh on murder requite thee!"

A curse presupposes the supernatural as well as a prayer. A curse is a wish expressed in words that evil may befall a certain person. The wish may be expressed by a God or spirit, in which case it is wish, will, and fact in one; or it may be an appeal to another supernatural person to execute it. Euripides makes dramatic use of curses not only because they were survivals from the past, but also because the supernatural element connected with imprecations had evidently still a hold upon the popular imagination.

Wherever reference to *oath* is made in our play the religious binding force of the oath is assumed and the perjurer considered a cursed villain. Medea is amazed at the perjurer Jason:

Med. 492-95:

ὄρκων δὲ φρούδη πίστις, οὐδ' ἔχω μαθεῖν
εἰ θεοὺς νομίζεις τοὺς τότε' οὐκ ἄρχειν ἔτι,
ἢ καινὰ κείσθαι θέσμι' ἀνθρώποις τὰ νῦν.
ἐπεὶ σύννοισθ' ἄ γ' εἰς ἔμ' οὐκ εὐορκος ὦν.

"But faith of oaths hath vanished. I know not
Whether thou deem'st the olden Gods yet rule,
Or that new laws are now ordained for men.
For thine heart speaks thee unto me forsworn."

Indignant at Jason's perfidy the chorus exclaims:

Med. 439-40:

βέβακε δ' ὄρκων χάρις, οὐδ' ἔτ' αἰδῶς
Ἑλλάδι τᾷ μεγάλῃ μένει, αἰθερία δ' ἀνέπτα.

"Disannulled is the spell of the oath: no shame for the broken
troth

In Hellas the wide doth remain, but heavenward its flight hath
it taken."

At the conclusion of the play Medea declares Jason as forsaken
by the Gods, who will not heed his request because he is for-
sworn:

Med. 1391-92:

τίς δὲ κλίνει σου θεὸς ἢ δαίμων,
τοῦ ψευδόρκου καὶ ξειναπάτου;

"What God or what spirit will heed thy request,
Caitiff forsworn, who betrayest the guest?"

Medea demands an oath of Ægeus in order to attain a safe
refuge after having carried her designs into effect:

Med. 731-32:

ἔσται τὰδ'; ἀλλὰ πίστις εἰ γένοιτό μοι
τούτων, ἔχοιμ' ἂν πάντα πρὸς σέθεν καλῶς.

"So be it. Yet, were oath-pledge given for this
To me, then had I all I would of thee."

Med. 735-36:

... τοῦτοις δ', ὀρκίῳσι μὲν ζυγείς,
ἀγουνσιν οὐ μεθεῖ' ἂν ἐκ γαίας ἐμέ.

"Oath-bound, thou couldst never yield me
To these, when they drag me from the land."

Ægeus takes the oath:

Med. 752-53:

δμνυμι Γῆν καὶ λαμπρὸν Ἥλιου φάος
θεοὺς τε πάντας ἔμμενέιν ἃ σου κλέω.

"By Earth, the Sun's pure majesty, and all
The Gods, I swear to abide by this thou hast said."

Medea asks him: What do you imprecate on yourself to suffer if you do not abide by this oath?

Med. 754:

. . . τί δ' ὄρκῳ τῷδε μὴ ἑμμένων πάθους;

"For broken troth what penalty?"

Ægeus answers:

Med. 755:

ἃ τοῖσι δυσσεβοῦσι γίγνεται βροτῶν.

"The worst that scourgeth God-despising men."

The oaths of Jason by which Medea was induced to cross from Asia to Europe are represented as a person or supernatural power which brought her:

Med. 206-10:

τὸν ἐν λέχει προδόταν κακόννυμφον
θεοκλυτεῖ δ' ἄδικα παθοῦσα
τὰν Ζανὸς ὄρκίαν θέμις,
ἃ νυν ἔβασεν κ. τ. λ.

". . . the traitor to love who with false vows caught her
Who in strength of her wrongs chideth Heaven, assailing
The Oath-queen of Zeus, who with cords all prevailing
Forth haled her, and brought her o'er, etc."

The "Oath-queen," *i.e.*, who watches over the fulfillment of oaths. Themis caused Medea to cross over, because the latter believed in the oaths of Jason.

Among the Greeks, as among the ancients generally, the oath, regarded as a divine institution, had a sacred character. When the Gods had been called to witness, one's obligation was absolute. Zeus was called Ζεὺς ὄρκιος (Hipp., 1025), the "guardian of oaths," or ταμίης ὄρκῳ (Med., 170), the "steward of oaths,"

who punishes men who break them. In the *βουλευτήριον* at Olympia there was a statue of Ζεὺς ὄρκιος with a thunderbolt in each hand. (Paus. V, 24, 9).

As regards the formula of oath sometimes a prayer of a somewhat conventional form constitutes the oath, but besides these instances we find in the tragedies of Euripides as well as in Greek literature in general numerous examples of well-marked formulas of oath, which are mostly references to deities, as "by Zeus;" "I call Zeus to witness," *ναὶ μὰ Δία· πρὸς θεῶν ἴστω Ζεὺς· συμμάρτυρσι θεοῖς*. Med. 619: *δαίμονας μαρτύρομαι*.

Med. 21-22:

*βοᾷ μὲν ὄρκους, ἀνακαλεῖ δὲ δεξιᾶς
πίστιν μεγίστην, καὶ θεοὺς μαρτύρεται.*

βοᾷ ὄρκους implies the calling for the vengeance due to broken oath; *δεξιᾶς πίστις* is used of plighting troth by the hand.

Med. 412-13:

... θεῶν δ' οὐκέτι πίστις ἄραρε.

θεῶν πίστις is the appeal to the Gods as witnesses of a pledge, or faith plighted in the sight of the Gods.

Sometimes a curse is invoked on himself by the swearer that he may perish if he fails to keep his oath, as Med. 755. The Greeks usually swore by a divinity that was in some way connected with the subject of discourse. So Medea (395) swears by Hekate, the patroness not only of witches, but of all who compounded poisons, philters, etc. Medea figures throughout the play as a magician and accomplishes her vengeance largely through the aid of sorcery.

An *oracle* is mentioned in vv. 666 ff. Ægeus has been to Delphi to inquire how he may be blessed with offspring. He is on his way to Pittheus to consult him on the meaning of the obscure oracle. The God had said:

Med. 679 and 681:

*ἄσκοῦ με τὸν προύχοντα μὴ λῦσαι πόδα,
πρὶν ἂν πατρῶαν αὖθις ἐστὶαν μόλω.*

"Loose not the wine-skin's forward-jutting foot,
Till to the hearth ancestral back thou come."

This oracle adds nothing particular to our search, except that it is a striking instance of an obscure and ambiguous oracle. Its real meaning being "to preserve continence till his return home"; but ἀσκού λῦσαι πόδα also signified "to untie the foot-skin of a wine-bag."

3. THE HIPPOLYTUS

In the "Hippolytus" we meet with several remarkable features of the supernatural element. The subject of the play is the vengeance which Aphrodite, the Goddess of love, exacts from the hero after whom the play is named. The prologue is spoken by Aphrodite. She tells us that she is wroth against Hippolytus, because he has slighted her in word and deed; then she goes on to declare her intention of avenging herself by a plot involving Phædra's destruction as well as his.

"Theseus shall know this thing; all bared shall be:
And him that is my foe his sire shall slay
By curses, whose fulfilment the Sea-king
Poseidon gave to Theseus in this boon—
To ask three things of him, nor pray in vain.
And she shall die—O yea, her, name unstained,
Yet Phædra dies: I will not so regard
Her pain, as not to visit on my foes
Such penalty as is mine honour's due.
But,—forasmuch as Theseus' son I see
Yonder draw near, forsaking hunting's toil,
Hippolytus,—forth will I from this place.
Ha, a great press of henchmen following shout
Honouring with songs the Goddess Artemis!
He knows not Hades' gates wide flung for him,
And this day's light the last his eyes shall see."

(42-58.)

By means of this prediction—as is usually the case in the prologues of Euripides—the spectators are made familiar beforehand with the subject of the play. In the opening scene the hero of the play enters with attendant huntsmen whom he exhorts to extol the praise of Artemis. They respond in the lofty strain:

Hipp. 61-72:

πότνια πότνια σεμονοτάτα,
Ζανὸς γένεθλον,
χαῖρε χαῖρέ μοι, ὦ κόρα κ. τ. λ.

'O Majesty, Daughter of Zeus, dread Queen,
I hail thee, Artemis, now,
O Leto's Daughter, O Zeus's child,
Loveliest far of the Undeiled!
In that great Home of the Mighty Father,
The palace of Zeus, mid the glory-sheen
Of gold—there dwellest thou.
O fairest, to theeward in greeting I call,
Artemis, fairest of Maidens that gather
In Olympus' hall!"

Then Hippolytus offers a garland of flowers to Artemis; hence our play is sometimes called "Stephanephorus," the "wreath-bearer."

Hipp. 73-87:

σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκηράτου
λειμώνος, ὃ δέσποινα, κοσμήσας φέρω,
ἐνθ' οὔτε ποιμὴν ἀξιοῖ φέρειν βοτὰ
οὔτ' ἡλθέ πω σίδηρος, ἀλλ' ἀκήρατον κ. τ. λ.

"For thee this woven garland from a mead
Unsullied have I twined, O Queen, and bring.
There never shepherd dares to feed his flock,
Nor steel of sickle came: only the bee
Roveth the springtide mead undesecrate:
And Reverence watereth it with river-dews.

Now Queen, dear Queen, receive this anadem
From reverent hand to deck thy golden hair;
For to me sole of men this grace is given,
That I be with thee, converse hold with thee,
Hearing thy voice, yet seeing not thy face.
And may I end life's race as I began."

In this beautiful prayer the poet portrays with exquisite skill the ideal of a chaste and pious character. Hippolytus' piety is as untainted as his purity.

The Old Nurse who tries in vain to persuade Hippolytus to worship Aphrodite steps up to the altar of that Goddess whose

statue or symbol, like that of Artemis, was on the stage, and utters the following prayer:

Hipp. 114-20:

ἡμεῖς δέ, τοὺς νέους γὰρ οὐ μιμητέον,
φρονούντες οὕτως ὥς πρέπει δούλους λέγειν,
προσευξόμεσθα τοῖσι σοῖς ἀγάλμασι,
δέσποινα κύπρι.
κ. τ. λ.

"But we—who must not tread in steps of youth—
With whispered humbleness most meet for thralls
Make supplication to thine images,
Queen Cypris. It beseems thee to forgive,
If one that bears through youth a vehement heart
Speak folly. Be as though thou heardest not;
For wiser Gods should be than mortal men."

The same sentiment of piety and devotion as in the prayer of Hippolytus in vv. 73-87 is expressed in the words in which he addresses his favorite Goddess, when he knew that his fate was sealed:

Hipp. 1092-94:

ὦ φίλτάτη μοι δαιμόνων Λητοῦς κόρη
σύνθακε συγκύναγε, φευξόμεσθα δὴ
κλεινὰς Ἀθήνας.

"Dearest of Gods to me, O Leto's Child,
Companion, fellow-huntress, I shall flee
Athens the glorious."

The end soon comes, and the dying Hippolytus is brought home. In lamentations loud and deep he calls on Death, the healer:

Hipp. 1373-76:

καὶ μοι Θάνατος Παιὼν ἔλθοι.
προσάπολλντέ μ' ἄλλντερόν δυοδαίμον'.
ἀμφιτόμου λόγχας ἔραμαι
διαμοιρᾶσαι.

"Give ye sleep unto me,
Death-salve for my pain,
The sleep of the sword for the wretched—I long, oh I long to
be slain."

Then suddenly is he aware of the presence of Artemis. A mar-

vellous fragrance reveals her presence, and the dying youth momentarily revives and addresses the Goddess to whom he is faithful unto death:

Hipp. 1391-93:

ὦ θεῖον ὀσμῆς πνεῦμα· καὶ γὰρ ἐν κακοῖς
ὦν ἥσθδμην σου κἀρεκουφίσθην δέμας·
ἔστ' ἐν τόποισι τοισὶδ' Ἀρτεμις θεά;

"Ah, perfume-breath celestial!—mid my pains
I feel thee, and mine anguish is assuaged.
Lo in this place the Goddess Artemis!"

But the same pious, innocent Hippolytus being keenly conscious of the injustice of his fate pours out his grief to the Gods:

Hipp. 1060-61:

ὦ θεοί, τί δῆτα τοῦμὸν οὐ λῶ στόμα,
δοῦς γ' ὑφ' ὑμῶν, οὗς σέβω διόλλυμαι;

"O Gods, why can I not unlock my lips,
Who am destroyed by you whom I revere?"

and cries out as he dies:

Hipp. 1363-69:

Ζεῦ Ζεῦ, τὰδ' ὄρᾳς;
δδ' ὁ σεμνὸς ἐγὼ καὶ θεοσέπτωρ,
δδ' ὁ σωφροσύνη πάντας ὑπερσχωῶν
προὔπτω ἐς Αἴδην στείχω κατὰ γῆς,
ὀλέσας βίωτον μόχθους δ' ἄλλως
τῆς εὐσεβίας
εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἐπόνησα.

"Ah Zeus hast thou seen?
Innocent I, ever fearing the Gods, who was wholly heart-clean
Above all men beside,—
Lo, how I am thrust
Unto Hades, to hide
My life in the dust!
All vainly I revered God, and in vain unto man was I just."

The chorus, too, though confessing they derive consolation from a belief in the care of the Gods, declare that on looking at the chances and changes of human life, they fail to get a clear view of the dealings of providence:

"When faith overfloweth my mind, God's providence all-embracing
Banisheth griefs: but when doubt whispereth 'Ah but to know!'

No clue through the tangle I find of fate and of life for my tracing:

There is ever a change and many a change,
And the mutable fortune of men evermore sways to and fro
Over limitless range.

Ah, would the Gods hear prayer! etc." (Hipp. 1102 ff.)

The prayer which Euripides puts into the mouth of Hippolytus (1363-69) not only shows lack of consistency in drawing the character of Hippolytus, but it also illustrates how ready Euripides is to discredit the religion he did not believe in. Here the question arises: Why, if Artemis so loved Hippolytus, did she not interfere to save him? In vv. 1327 ff. she explains why she could not prevent the deed, for there is a law of the Gods not to oppose one another:

Hipp. 1325-30:

... ἀλλ' ὁμος
ἔρ' ἔστι σοὶ καὶ τῶνδε συγγνώμης τυχεῖν.
Κύπρις γὰρ ἤθελ' ὥστε γίνεσθαι τάδε,
πληροῦσα θυμόν. θεοῖσι δ' ὧδ' ἔχει νόμος·
οὐδεὶς ἀπαντᾶν βούλεται προθυμίᾳ
τῇ τοῦ θέλοντος, ἀλλ' ἀφιστάμεσθ' αἶει.

This explanation given by Artemis well fits Prof. Jebb's noteworthy conception of our play. According to him the whole action of the play is made to turn on the jealous feud between Aphrodite, the Goddess of love, and Artemis, the Goddess of chastity. "The natural agency of human passion is now replaced by a supernatural machinery; the slain son and the bereaved father are no longer the martyrs of sin, the tragic witnesses of an inexorable law; rather they and Phædra are alike the puppets of a divine caprice, the scapegoat of an Olympian quarrel in which they have no concern." (Jebb on Euripides in *Encycl. Britannica*.)

Some examples of *imprecations or curses* occur in our play. Phædra pronounces a curse on the Nurse who without the queen's knowledge and consent has revealed to Hippolytus the whole situation:

Hipp. 682-86:

ὦ παγκακίστη καὶ φίλων διαφθορεῦ,
οἷ' εἰργάσω με. Ζεὺς σε γεννήτωρ ἐμὸς
πρόρριζον ἐκτρίβειεν οὐτάσας πυρὶ. κ. τ. λ.

"Vilest of vile! destroyer of thy friends!
How hast thou ruined me! May Zeus my sire
Smite thee with flame, blast thee to nothingness!
Did I not tell thee—not divine thy purpose?"

Another example is found in vv. 887 ff., where Hippolytus charged by Theseus with the crime of having made dishonorable proposals to Phædra, is cursed by his father with a fatal curse:

Hipp. 887 ff.:

ἀλλ' ὦ πάτερ Πόσειδον, ἃς ἐμοὶ ποτε
ἄρ' ὑπέσχον τρεῖς, μὲν κατέργασαι
τούτων ἐμὸν παῖδ', ἡμέραν δὲ μὴ φύγοι
τήνδ', εἴπερ ἡμῖν ὥπασας σαφεῖς ἄρας.
ἢ γὰρ Ποσειδῶν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἄϊδου πύλας
θανόντα πέμψει τὰς ἐμὰς ἄρας σέβων,
ἢ τῆσδε χώρας ἐκπεσὼν ἀλώμενος
ξένην ἐπ' αἶαν λυπρὸν ἀντλήσει βίον.

"Father Poseidon, thou didst promise me
Three curses once. Do thou with one of these
Destroy my son: may he not escape this day,
If soothfast curses thou hast granted me.

Either Poseidon, reverencing my prayers,
Shall slay and speed him unto Hades' halls,
Or, banished from this land, a vagabond
On strange shores shall he drain life's bitter dregs."

With this passage compare vv. 44 ff., where Aphrodite predicts this curse:

"And him that is my foe his sire shall slay
By curses, whose fulfillment the Sea-king
Poseidon gave to Theseus in this boon—
To ask three things of him, nor pray in vain."

and vv. 1173 ff., where the messenger brings the news of the fulfillment of the curse.

Hippolytus asserts his innocence imprecating Zeus' punishment upon himself in case he is guilty:

Hipp. 1191-93:

Ζεῦ, μηκέτ' εἶην, εἰ κακὸς πέφυκ' ἀνὴρ.
αἰσθούτο δ' ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀτιμάζει πατήρ
ἦτοι θανόντας ἢ φάος δεδορκότας.

"Zeus, may I die if I a villain am!
May my sire know that he is wronging me,
When I am dead, if not while I see light!"

Finally the innocent Hippolytus being deadly wounded cries out:

Hipp. 1415:

φεῦ εἴδ' ἦν ἀραῶν δαίμοσιν βροτῶν γένος.

"O that men's curses could but strike the Gods!"

The same innocent, pious Hippolytus who according to his own words had "ever revered and feared the Gods," wishes that the human race had the power of bringing curses on the Gods! What greater condemnation of the traditional Gods could there be than this!

In the well known passage v. 612 Euripides seems to express doubt as to the sanctity of *oath*. When the Nurse adjured Hippolytus by his oath not to betray her wretched mistress he exclaims in his fury:

Hipp. 612:

ἢ γλῶσσ' ὁμῶμοχ', ἢ δὲ φρήν ἀνώμοτος.

"My tongue has sworn: no oath is on my soul."

Cicero who renders this celebrated line: *Juravi lingua, mentem injuratam gero* (De Off. III, 29), defends the sentiment. Aristophanes parodies it in several passages (Arist. Acharn. 398-99; Frogs 102; 1471; and Thesm. 275-76). The comic poet, like many others, misrepresents this line of Euripides, as though he justified the breach of an uttered oath on the plea of a mental reservation. This verse is also said to have brought upon Euripides the charge of impiety (Arist. Rhet. III, 15). That the poet intended to imperil the respect due to oaths, is an unjust and absurd accusation. First of all it is always precarious to judge a dramatic poet by the excited utterances of his characters; and then, if this verse is read in its proper place and interpreted in its

context, it is easily explained. Phædra's nurse before she informs Hippolytus of the passion which Phædra has conceived for him, makes the young man promise not to reveal the secret she is about to communicate to him. Having made the promise under oath Hippolytus declares that if he were not *bound by his oath* he would unhesitatingly reveal the whole truth to his father, Theseus. This shows that the utterance in v. 612 is nothing but a sudden outburst of self-reproach on the part of a youth of stainless purity, indignant at having been entrapped into a verbal oath of whose true meaning he was at the time utterly ignorant. Paley considers it uncertain whether Hippolytus spoke these words in earnest or merely to frighten the Nurse. But whatever may be said to explain this line, we know that Hippolytus feels himself bound by the oath:

Hipp. 656-58:

εὖ δ' ἴσθι, τοῦμόν σ' εὐσεβὲς σώζει, γύναι·
εἰ μὴ γὰρ ὅρκους θεῶν ἀφρακτος ἢ ῥέδην,
οὐκ ἂν ποτ' ἔσχον μὴ οὐ τάδ' ἐξειπεῖν πατρί.

"Woman, I fear God: know, that saveth thee.
For, had I not by oaths been trapped unawares,
I had ne'er forborne to tell this to my sire,"

and at the conclusion of the play, we find him bearing his father's unjust resentment, and even exile and death, rather than violate this very oath, which he declares in 612 to be no oath at all:

Hipp. 1062-63:

οὐ δὴ τὰ πάντως οὐ πίδοιμ' ἂν οὓς με δεῖ,
μάτην δ' ἂν ὅρκους συγχέαιμ' οὓς ὤμοσα.

"No!—whom I need persuade, I should not so,
And all for naught should break the oaths I swore!"

And Artemis bears testimony to Hippolytus' faithfulness in the following words:

Hipp. 1306-09:

ἢ σὺ δὲ ὅρκων παιδὶ σημαίνει νόσον.
δ' ὥσπερ ὦν δίκαιος οὐκ ἐφέσπετο
λόγοισιν, οὐδ' αὖ πρὸς σέθεν κακούμενος
ὅρκων ἀφέϊλε πιστῶν, εὐσεβὲς γεγάς.

"... her nurse

Told under oath-seal to thy son her pangs:
 He, even as was righteous, would not heed
 The tempting; no, nor when sore-wronged of thee
 Broke he the oath's pledge, for he feared the Gods."

Taken in its context v. 612 may, indeed, be justified; but the formula itself is objectionable on account of the possible abuse of its application. When Euripides distinguished between the tongue that pronounces the formula of the oath and the mind that does or does not acquiesce in the words pronounced, he did certainly not intend to express doubt as to the sanctity of oaths or even justify perjury, but intended to distinguish between valid and invalid oaths thus attempting to goad people to reflection. We may, however, well imagine that the Greeks in Euripides' days, who were nourished on the idea that the formula of oath, when pronounced, was absolutely binding, were scandalized when they heard in the theatre that oaths might be discriminated according to the circumstances under which they were made.

The following oath of the chorus is important for the sequel of the play. It prevents the chorus from revealing to Theseus the truth about the relations of Hippolytus and Phædra and saving Hippolytus:

Hipp. 713-14:

δμνυμι σεμνήν Ἀρτεμιν Διὸς κόρην,
 μηδὲν κακῶν σὼν εἰς φάος δείξειν ποτέ.

"I swear by reverend Artemis, Zeus' child,
 Never to bare to light of thine ills aught."

The formula Ἀρτεμιν Διὸς κόρην was suggested by the statue of Artemis, which stood on the stage.

Euripides had no regard for the function of *soothsayers or prophets*. He evidently considers them as public impostors and attacks them whenever opportunity offers. Hippolytus driven from Attica by his father, complains that he has been exiled without a trial, without proof of the crime of which he is accused, and without consultation of the soothsayers:

Hipp. 1055-56:

οὐδ' ὄρκον οὐδὲ πίστιν οὐδὲ μάντεων
 φήμας ἐλέγξας ἄκριτον ἐκβαλεῖς με γῆς;

"Nor oath, nor pledge, nor prophet's utterance
Wilt test, but cast me forth the land untried?"

and Theseus replies with no respect for the art of *ornithomancy*:

Hipp. 1057-59:

ἡ δέλτος ἥδε κληῖρον οὐ δεδεγμένη
κατηγορεῖ σου πιστά· τοὺς δ' ὑπὲρ κάρᾳ
φοιτῶντας ὄρνεις πόλλ' ἐγὼ χαίρειν λέγω.

"This tablet, though it bear no prophet's sign,
Acuseth thee, not lieth: but the birds
That roam o'erhead—I wave them long farewell."

NB. In vv. 616 ff. Hippolytus expostulates with Zeus and lays the blame on him that woman is man's scourge:

"Why hast thou given a home beneath the sun,
Zeus, unto woman, specious curse to man? etc."

The whole passage is a sally of doubtful sincerity, and since it is not so much an invective against Zeus as an invective—and perhaps the most bitter piece of an invective—against women, it is of little importance in regard to the poet's handling of the supernatural element.

4. THE HECUBA

The "Hecuba" (about 425 B.C.) treats of the revenge of Hecuba, the widowed queen of Priam, of Polymestor, king of Thrace, who had murdered her youngest son Polydorus, after her daughter Polyxena had already been sacrificed by the Greeks to the shade of Achilles.

Hecuba appears on the stage and declares that she has been driven from within her tent in alarm at a *vision*. The vision was the ghost of her murdered son, Polydorus, whom she believes to be safe and well in Thrace. She adds that she also has been warned by an *ominous dream* about her daughter Polyxena. From these apparitions she infers that some misfortune is impending over both her children and is anxious to consult her prophetic children, Cassandra and Helenus, as to the purport of these supernatural manifestations. Besides this vision and this

dream a previous appearance of Achilles' ghost over his tomb had added to the alarm and confusion.

Hec. 68-78:

ὦ στεροπὰ Διός, ὦ σκοτία νύξ,
τί ποτ' αἶρομαι ἔννυχος οὕτω
δείμασι φάσμασι; ὦ πότνια Χθών, κ. τ. λ.

"O lightning splendour of Zeus, O mirk of the night,
Why quake I for visions in slumber that haunt me
With terrors with phantoms? O Earth's majestic might,
Mother of dreams that hover in dusk-winged flight,
I cry to the vision of darkness 'Avaunt thee!'—
The dream of my son who was sent into Thrace to be saved
from the slaughter,
The dream that I saw of Polyxena's doom,
Which I saw, which I knew, which abideth to daunt me."

Hec. 90 ff.:

εἶδον γὰρ βαλιὰν ἑλαφον λύκου αἵμονι χαλᾷ
σφαζομένην, ἀπ' ἐμῶν γονάτων σπασθεῖσαν ἀνάγκῃ οἰκτρῶς.

"For a dappled fawn I beheld which a wolf's red fangs were
tearing,
Which he dragged from my knees, whereto she had clung in
her piteous despairing."

Hecuba reflects again on the apparition of her son:

Hec. 702-06:

ὦ μοι, αἰαῖ, ἔμαθον ἐνύπνιον ὁμμάτων
ἐμῶν ὄψιν, οὗ με παρέβα φά-
σμα μελανόπτερον,
ἀν' ἐσείδον ἀμφὶ σ',
ὦ τέκνον, οὐκέτ' ὄντα Διὸς ἐν φάει.

"Woe's me, I discern it, the vision that blasted my sight!
Neither flitted unheeded that black-winged phantom of night,
Which I saw, which revealed that my son was no more of the
light."

Doubtless, Euripides employs such supernatural element of dreams and visions as a survival of a primitive belief. But the predominant reason for employing supernatural apparitions and manifestations in tragedy, especially where a serious effect is aimed at, is the desire of the poet to arouse terror. The fear of ghosts and the fear resulting from dreams, is, of course, vague

and hard to define, but the feeling is rooted deeply in the human soul that there are such supernatural forces and that they are of doubtful friendliness to man. Hence Euripides calls Earth "the Mother of dreams" regarding dreams as sent up from the recesses of the earth, *i.e.*, from Hades; therefore they are "black-winged," *i.e.*, gloomy and of evil portent.

Different types of prayers occur in the "Hecuba." In utter distress Hecuba fervently implores the Gods to spare her children:

Hec. 79-80:

ὦ χθόνιοι θεοί, σῶσατε παῖδ' ἐμόν,
ὃς μόνος οἴκων ἔγκυρ' ἐμῶν.

"Gods of the Underworld save ye my son,
Mine house's anchor, its only one."

Hec. 96-97:

ἀπ' ἐμᾶς οὖν ἀπ' ἐμᾶς τόδε παιδὸς
πέμψατε, δαίμονες, ἱκετεύω.

"O Gods, I am suppliant before you!—In any wise turn, I implore you,
This fate from the child of my womb!"

Euripides, who sometimes seems to deny or call in question the existence of the Gods, makes Talthybius moralize on the strange dispensations of heaven and the caprice of fortune:

Hec. 488-91:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τί λέξω; πότερά σ' ἀνθρώπους ὄρᾱν;
ἢ δόξαν ἄλλως τήνδε κεκτηῖσθαι μάτην
ψευδῆ, δοκοῦντας δαιμόνων εἶναι γένος,
τύχην δὲ πάντα τὰν βροτοῖς ἐπισκοπεῖν;

"What shall I say, Zeus?—that thou look'st on men?
Or that this fancy false we vainly hold
For nought, who deem there is a race of Gods,
While chance controlleth all things among men?"

In conformity with this sentiment the poet makes Polymestor say:

Hec. 958-60:

φρίβρουσι δ' αὐτὰ θεοὶ πάλιν τε καὶ πρόσω
ταραγμὸν ἐντιθέντες, ὥς ἀγνωσίᾳ
σέβωμεν αὐτοὺς.

"All things the Gods confound, hurl this way and that,

Turmoiling all, that we, foreknowing nought,
May worship them."

Prayers to the dead are of frequent occurrence in Euripides. Achilles' son attempts to propitiate his father's ghost by sacrifice and prayer and all the host joined in that prayer:

Hec. 534 ff.:

ὦ παῖ Πηλέως, πατήρ δ' ἐμός,
δέξαι χόας μου τάσδε κ. τ. λ.

"Son of Peleus, father mine,
Accept from me these drops propitiatory,
Ghost-raising. Draw thou nigh to drink pure blood
Dark-welling from a maid. We give it thee,
The host and I. Gracious to us be thou; etc."

Invocations of the dead presuppose that the departed soul, though beneath the earth, still has the semblance of existence and the power of hearing. In this case the spirit of the dead was not only thought to be propitiated by the sacrifice, but actually to taste it.

Polymestor having obtained *an oracle* from the Thracian seer Dionysus foretells to Hecuba that she shall die by a fall from a mast after having been changed into the canine species, and to Agamemnon that he will die by the hand of his wife:

Hec. 1261 ff.:

κρήνη μὲν οὖν πεσοῦσαν ἐκ καρχησίων κ. τ. λ.

"Nay, but shall whelm thee fallen from the mast.

Yea—slay him too, upswinging high the axe."

5. THE ANDROMACHE

The "Andromache" was not acted at Athens in the author's life-time. Its plot belongs to the same division of the Trojan affairs as the "Hecuba" and the "Troades," viz., the fortune of the captives after the destruction of their city. The "Andromache" is by no means one of the best plays of Euripides. It also contributes only a few examples to our discussion, but those few are characteristic of the poet's handling the supernatural element.

Orestes, who *prays* to his patron God:

Andr. 900:

ὦ Φοῖβ' ἀκέστωρ, πημάτων δολὴς λύσις.

"O Healer Phœbus, grant from woes release!"

assumes that the Gods do wrong; in the following verse (901) he asks Hermione:

"What ails thee? Art thou wronged of Gods or men?"

and Hermione answers in the affirmative:

"Of myself partly, partly of my lord,
In part of some God: ruin is everywhere!"

In the choral ode (1009 ff.) the divine founders of Troy, Apollo and Poseidon, are upbraided for having abandoned to destruction their once beloved city:

Andr. 1009-16:

ὦ Φοῖβε πυργώσας
τὸν ἐν Ἰλίῳ εὐτειχῇ πάγον κ. τ. λ.
τάλαιαν μεθεῖτε Τροίαν;

"O Phœbus, who gavest to Ilium glory
Of diadem-towers on her hights,—and O Master
Of Sea-depths, whose grey-gleaming steeds o'er the hoary
Surf-ridges speed,—to the War-god, The Waster
With spears, for what cause for a spoil did he cast her,
Whom your own hands had fashioned, dishonoured to lie
In wretchedness, wretchedness—her that was Troy?"

In the famous speech which the poet puts into the mouth of Andromache, and in which he expresses his own dislike of the Spartans, he pronounces an *imprecation* on that people:

Andr. 451-53:

οὐ λέγοντες ἄλλα μὲν
γλώσση, φρονοῦντες δ' ἄλλ' ἐφευρίσκεσθ' αἰεὶ;
ἔλοισθε.

"Convicted liars, saying
This with the tongue, while still your hearts mean that,
Now ruin seize ye!"

The *oracle-god* is portrayed as a pitiless character, who con-

demns Neoptolemus to death when engaged in expiating a small offence thus seeking by prayer and sacrifice to assuage the wrath of the God:

Andr. 1161-65:

τοιαῦθ' ὁ τοῖς ἄλλοισι θεοπίζων ἀναξ,
ὁ τῶν δικαίων πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις κριτής,
δίκας δίδόντα παῖδ' ἔδρασ' Ἀχιλλέως.
ἐμνημόνευσε δ' ὥσπερ ἄνθρωπος κακὸς
παλαιὰ νείκη πῶς ἂν οὖν εἴη σοφός;

"Thus he that giveth oracles to the world,
He that is judge to all men of the right,
Hath wreaked revenge upon Achilles' son,—
Yea, hath remembered, like some evil man,
An old, old feud! How then shall he be wise?"

The satire in these lines so freely reflecting on the alleged justice, impartiality, and wisdom of Apollo is in keeping with the poet's attitude elsewhere; cf. *Ion* 436 ff. The poet's enemies of old were delighted with the handle which such passages offered against him. (*Arist. Thesm.* 450.)

6. THE ION

The "*Ion*"—chronologically placed somewhere between 424-421 B.C.—may safely be called one of the most perfect and beautiful of the Greek tragedies. The young *Ion* is a priest at the temple of Delphi when *Xuthus* and his wife *Creusa*, daughter of *Erechtheus*, come to inquire of the God concerning their childlessness; and it is discovered that *Ion* is the son of *Creusa* by the God *Apollo*.

The "*Ion*" represents the supernatural, and especially the oracle-god in as unpleasant a light as possible.

In a monody of remarkable beauty, and full of pure-minded and devout sentiments *Ion* describes with enthusiasm the pleasure, he takes in the service of *Apollo*, his patron god, vv. 82-183. To quote only:

Ion 128-43:

καλὸν γε τὸν πόνον, ὦ
Φοῖβε, σοὶ πρό δόμων λατρεύω κ. τ. λ.

"'Tis my glory, the service I render

In thy portals, O Phœbus, to thee!
 I honour thy prophet-shrine.
 Proud labour is mine—it is thine!
 I am thrall to the Gods divine:
 Not to men, but Immortals, I tender
 My bondage; 'tis glorious and free:
 Never faintness shall fall upon me
 For my father thee, Phœbus, I praise,
 Who hast nurtured me all my days:
 My begetter, mine help, my defender
 This temple's Phœbus shall be.
 O Healer, O Healer-king.
 Let blessing on blessing upring
 Unto Leto's Son as I sing!"

There are few things more charming in Greek literature than the picture of Ion's childlike innocence and priestly sanctity which Euripides portrays in these lines. Ion reminds one strongly of the boy Samuel whose ministrations are painted with so exquisite a grace in the Old Testament. But as soon as Ion hears of the God's deed he breaks forth in this wise:

Ion 436-51:

*νουθετητός δέ μοι
 Φοῖβος, τί πάσχει· παρθένου βίη γαμῶν
 προδίδωσι, κ. τ. λ.*

"... Yet must I plead
 With Phœbus—what ails him? He ravisheth
 Maids, and forsakes; begetteth babes by stealth,
 And heeds not, though they die. Do thou not so!
 Being strong, be righteous. For what man soe'er
 Transgresseth, the Gods visit this on him.
 How were it just then that ye should enact
 For men laws, and yourselves work lawlessness?
 For if—it could not be, yet put it so—
 Ye should pay mulct to men for lawless lust,
 Thou, the Sea-king, and Zeus the Lord of Heaven,
 Paying for wrongs should make your temples void.
 For, following pleasure past all wisdom's bounds,
 Ye work unrighteousness. Unjust it were
 To call men vile, if we but imitate
 What Gods deem good:—they are vile who teach us this."

For the same sentiment cf. Creusa's words,

vv. 249 ff.:

"... looking on Apollo's dwelling place,
I traversed o'er an ancient memory's track:
Afar my thoughts were, and my body here,
Ah, wrongs of women!—wrongful-reckless deeds
Of Gods! For justice where shall we make suit,
If 'tis our Lord's injustice crushes us?"

Again she charges Apollo with injustice

Ion 384 ff.:

ὦ Φοῖβε, κακεῖ κἀνθάδ' οὐ δίκαιος εἶ κ. τ. λ.

"O Phœbus, there and here unjust art thou
Unto the absent one whose plea is here.
Thou shouldst have saved thine own, yet didst not save; etc."

and in the violent invectives vv. 881 ff. she cannot find sufficient imprecations wherewith to curse before Heaven the "ravisher-bridegroom" (911) who has made her mother.

These passages not only show that the poet requires the Gods to teach by example and not merely by precept in order to furnish a moral standard for humanity, but these verses also illustrate how ready Euripides is to bring forward with great force the grosser side of the Greek legend, and to discredit the religion with which he is not at all in inner harmony. Toward the end of the play, however,—as in other tragedies of Euripides, where the Gods are most severely assailed,—the conduct of the God is vindicated by Athena who speaks for her brother, vv. 1595 ff. "Well hath Apollo all things done: etc.;" and Creusa finally admits the justice of Apollo:

"Here me: Phœbus praise I, whom I praised not in mine hour
of grief,

For that whom he set at naught, his child, to me he now re-
stores, etc."

and the chorus insists at the end that the God's ways are not our ways, and that their seeming injustices are made good in due time:

Ion 1619-21:

ὦ Διὸς Λητοῦς τ' Ἀπολλων, χαῖρ' ὅτε δ' ἐλαύνεται κ. τ. λ.

"Zeus' and Leto's Son Apollo, hail! Let him to powers divine
Render homage undismayed, whose house affliction's buffets
smite:

For the good at last shall overcome, at last attain their right;
But the evil, by their nature's law, on good shall never light."

Creusa's prayer in vv. 410 ff. is characteristic on account of its ambiguity:

Ion 410-12:

ὦ πότνια Φοίβου μήτηρ, εἰ γὰρ αἰσῶς
ἔλθοιμεν, ἃ τε νῶν συμβόλαια πρόσθεν ἦν
ἐς παῖδα τὸν σόν, μεταπέσοι βελτίονα.

"Queen, Phœbus' mother, grant our home-return
Prosperous: all our dealings heretofore
Touching thy son, to happier issue fall!"

With this prayer Creusa intentionally deceives her husband. She secretly refers to the relation between herself and Apollo, while Xuthus is to take νῶν for himself and his wife, the συμβόλαια being the sacrifices which they two had formerly made to Apollo for children.

Two other prayers of less importance to our investigation may be mentioned here. The choral ode in vv. 1048 ff. opens as a prayer to Hekate, the Goddess of sorcery and secret poisoning. She is invoked to direct to a favorable issue the stealthy attempt on Ion's life:

"Goddess of Highways, Demeter's Daughter,
Queen of the nightmare-darkness-ranger,
Guide thou the hand that for noontide slaughter
Shall fill the chalice, my lady's avenger, etc."

The prayer of the chorus in vv. 452 ff. is an invocation to Athena and Artemis to intercede with their brother in favor of the ancient royal house of Erechtheus:

"My Queen, at whose birth-tide was given
Of the Lady of Travail-pang
No help, hear, Pallas, my prayer, etc."

The *Delphic oracle and the Delphic God* are exhibited in a very unfavorable light in our play. Apollo is represented as a seducer of women, who attempts to hide his misdeeds by means of fraudulent response:

Ion 365-67:

πῶς ὁ θεὸς ὃ λαθεῖν βούλεται μαντεύσεται;
εἵπερ καθίζει τρίποδα κοινὸν Ἑλλάδος.
αἰσχύνεται τὸ πρᾶγμα· μὴ ἔλεγχέ νιν.

Ion: "How should the God reveal that he would hide?"

Creusa: "How not?—his is the nation's oracle."

Ion: "His shame the deed is. Question not of him."

In other words: the God will never reveal in the oracle secrets against himself. Therefore the seer Trophonius

"... took not on him to forestall the word
Of Phœbus. This he said—nor thou nor I
Childless shall wend home from the oracle."
(vv. 407-09.)

The following verses refer to the ambiguity of Apollo's oracle:

Ion 787-88:

ὅτῳ ξυναντήσειεν ἐκ ναοῦ συνδείς
πρώτῳ πόσις σὸς, παῖδ' ἔδωκ' αὐτῷ θεός.

"Whomso thy lord should first meet as he passed
From the God's fane, the God gave him for son."

According to vv. 537, 775, and 788 the God's oracle was: *δίδωμί σοι τὸν παῖδα*, thus leaving it ambiguous whether the boy was the son of Xuthus or his own son. Therefore Creusa says:

Ion 1534-36:

πεφυκέναι μὲν οὐχί, δωρεῖται δέ σε
αὐτοῦ γεγῶτα· καὶ γὰρ ἂν φίλος φίλῳ
δοίῃ τὸν αὐτοῦ παῖδα δεσπότην δόμων.

"Nay, not begotten; but his gift art thou,
Sprung from himself,—as friend to friend should give
His own son, that his house might have an heir."

and Ion asks:

Ion 1537-38:

ὁ θεὸς ἀληθὲς ἢ μάτην μαντεύεται;
ἐμοῦ ταρασσεί, μήτηρ, εἰκότως φρένα.

"Is the God true?—or doeth his oracle lie?
Mother, my soul it troubleth: well it may."

"Loxias" = "Apollo" was according to the popular derivation "the God of crooked answers," because his oracles were *λόξια* "crooked" and so ambiguous.

At the end after Apollo's plot has been discovered, Athena comes to speak for her brother, who is ashamed to appear in person, lest he be reproached for the manner in which he has managed affairs:

Ion 1556-58:

Παλλὰς, δρόμῳ σπέυσας Ἀπόλλωνος πάρα,
ὅς ἐς μὲν ὄψιν σφῶν μολεῖν οὐκ ἤξιον,
μὴ τῶν πάρουθε μέμψις εἰς μέσον μόλη.

"I Pallas from Apollo speed in haste,
Who deigned not to reveal him to your sight,
Else must he chide you for things overpast."

Literally translated the last line reads: "lest blame for former things should come between" referring to Apollo's conduct in the past.

The poet's usual contempt for the art of *divination* is expressed in the following verses:

Ion 374-77:

εἰς γὰρ τοσούτον ἀμαθίας ἔλθοιμεν ἄν,
εἰ τοὺς θεοὺς ἄκοντας ἐκπονήσομεν
φράζειν ἂ μὴ θέλουσιν ἢ προβωμίῳις
σφαγαῖσι μῆλων ἢ δι οἰωνῶν πτεροῖς.

"For, to what height of folly should we reach
If in the God's despite we wrest their will,
By sacrifice of sheep on altars, or
By flight of birds, to tell what they would veil."

7. THE SUPPLICES

The "Supplices" is almost entirely free from sceptical and irreligious sentiments and replete with respect for the Gods. The

short prologue from Æthra is really an indirect *prayer* to Demeter at Eleusis:

Suppl. 1-7:

Δήμητερ ἐστιοῦχ' Ἐλευσίνος χθονὸς
τῇσδ' κ. τ. λ.

"Demeter, warder of Eleusis-land
And ye which keep and serve the Goddess' fanes,
Grant me and my son Theseus prosperous days,
Grant them to Athens and to Pittheus' land,
Where in a happy home my sire nursed me,
Æthra, and gave me to Pandion's son
Ægeus, to wife, by Loxias' oracle."

Theseus, who denies the old saying "that evil more abounds with men than good" (vv. 196-97), expresses his gratitude toward divine Providence:

"Praise to the God who shaped in order's mould
Our lives redeemed from chaos and the brute,
First, by implanting reason, giving then
The tongue, world-herald, to interpret speech;
Earth's fruit for food, for nurturing thereof
Raindrops from heaven, to feed earth's fosterlings,
And water her green bosom; therewithal
Shelter from storms, and shadow from the heat,
Sea-tracking ships, that traffic might be ours
With fellow-men of that which each land lacks"
(vv. 201-10);

and his firm belief in *divination*:

Suppl. 211-13:

ἀ δ' ἔστ' ἄσημα κοῦ σαφῇ, γιγνώσκομεν
εἰς πῦρ βλέποντες, καὶ κατὰ σπλάγχχνων πτυχὰς
μάντις προσημαίνουσιν οἰωνῶν τ' ἄπο.

"And for invisible things or dimly seen,
Soothsayers watch the flame, the liver's folds,
Or from the birds divine the things to be."

Cf. also vv. 155 ff., where Theseus asks Adrastus:

Suppl. 155:

"Didst seek to seers, and gaze on altar flames?"

and Adrastus confesses:

"Ah me! thou pressest me where most I erred!" (156.)

In vv. 627 ff. Euripides lets the chorus appeal to Zeus:

Suppl. 627-30:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τὰς παλαιομάτορος
παιδαγόνε πόριος Ἰνάχου.
πόλει μοι ξύμμαχος
γενοῦ τᾷδ' εὐμενής.

"Zeus, hear us, whose offspring was born of yore
Of Inachus-daughter, the heifer-maid!
Oh be our champion thou,
To our city be gracious now!"

Adrastus professes that humanity is in close dependence upon Zeus:

Suppl. 734-36:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τί δῆτα τοὺς τάλαιπώρους βροτοὺς
φρονεῖν λέγουσι; σοῦ γὰρ ἐξηρτήμεθα
δρῶμεν τε τοιαῦθ' ἂν σὺ τυγχάνης θέλων.

"Zeus, wherefore do they say that wretched man
Is wise? For lo, we hang upon thy skirts,
And that we do, it is but as thou wilt."

If things go as Heaven has ordained, no wonder that the same Adrastus admits that prayer is of no avail. He leaves the suppliant-bough on the altar as a protest that his prayer has been slighted, and exclaims:

Suppl. 260-62:

θεοὺς τε καὶ γῆν τὴν τε πυρφόρον θεᾶν
Δήμητρα θέμεναι μάρτυρ' ἡλίου τε φῶς,
ὥς οὐδὲν ἡμῖν ἥρκεσαν λιταὶ θεῶν.

"Calling to witness heaven and earth, Demeter,
Fire-bearing Goddess, and the Sun-god's light,
That naught our prayers unto the Gods availed."

Athena who comes in *ex machina*, bids Theseus not to surrender the bodies of the seven chieftains without their pledging themselves ever after to be faithful to Athens, and promising, under the most solemn *imprecations*, never to invade the Attic

territory. She prescribes the ritual of the *oath*, vv. 1183-1226. Theseus as well as the chorus express their willingness to obey:

Theseus:

Suppl. 1227-31:

δέσπουν' Ἀθάνα, πείσομαι λόγοισι σοῖς·
κ. τ. λ.

"Athena, Queen, thy words will I obey:
Thou guidest me ever that I may not err.
Him will I bind with oaths: only do thou
Still lead me aright; for gracious while thou are
To Athens, shall we ever safely dwell."

Chorus:

Suppl. 1232-35:

στείχωμεν, Ἀδρασθ', ὅρκια δῶμεν
τῷδ' ἀνδρὶ πόλει τ'· ἄξια δ' ἡμῖν
προμεροχθήκασι σέβασθαι.

"On pass we, Adrastus, and take oath-plight
Unto Theseus and Athens. That worship requite
Their travail for us, is meet and right."

8. THE HERACLEIDÆ

In the "Heracleidæ" Demophon, king of Athens, informs Iolus that they who have charge of ancient *oracles* declare, one and all, that success in the pending conflict can only be assured by sacrificing to Ceres the maiden daughter of an illustrious sire:

Heracl. 403-09:

χρησμών δ' αἰδοὺς πάντας εἰς ἐν ἀλίσας
ἤλεγξα κ. τ. λ.

"All prophecy-chanters have I caused to meet,
Into old public oracles have I searched,
And secret, for salvation of this land.
And, mid their manifold diversities,
In one thing glares the sense of all the same:—
They bid me to Demeter's Daughter slay
A maiden of a high-born father sprung."

In compliance with this oracle, Macaria offers herself a willing victim for the welfare of the state, vv. 500 ff.

Another oracle is proclaimed by the captured Eurystheus who

foretells the future destiny of those who are now triumphant over him:

Heracl. 1026-29:

κτεῖν', οὐ παραιτοῦμαι σε· κ. τ. λ.
χρησμῷ παλαιῷ Λοξίου δωρήσομαι, κ. τ. λ.

"Slay: I ask not thy grace. But I bestow
On Athens, who hath spared, who shamed to slay me
An ancient oracle of Loxias,
Which in far days shall bless her more than seems."

His prophecy is accepted by all as a revelation vv. 1053 ff.:

"I also consent. On, henchman-train
March on with the doomed. No blood-guilt stain,
Proceeding of us, on our kings shall remain."

The words of Alcmena uttered against her divine lover, Zeus, are in mitigated form a cruel reproach for the past:

Heracl. 869-72:

ὦ Ζεῦ, χρόνῳ μὲν τὰμ' ἐπεσκέψω κακά,
χάριν δ' ὅμως σοι τῶν πεπραγμένων ἔχω·
καὶ παῖδα τὸν ἐμὸν πρόσθεν οὐ δοκοῦσ' ἐγὼ
θεοῖς ὀμιλεῖν νῦν ἐπίσταμαι σαφῶς.

"Zeus, late on mine affliction hast thou looked;
Yet thank I thee for all that thou hast wrought.
Now know I of a surety that my son
Dwelleth with Gods:—ere this I thought not so."

See also her discreet complaints in vv. 718-19:

"Never of me shall ill be said of Zeus;
But is he just to me-ward? Himself knows!"

9. THE HERCULES FURENS

The "Hercules Furens" is, as regards the supernatural element in the play, a condemnation through Hera and Zeus of the whole system of Gods. To the poet's favorite subject—accusation of the Gods for their alleged injustice and immorality—is made allusion in the invocation of the chorus:

H. F. 798 ff.:

ὦ λέκτρων δύο συγγενεῖς
εὐναί, κ. τ. λ.

"Hail to the couch where the spousals divine
 With the mortal were blended,
 Where for love of the Lady of Perseus' line
 Zeus' glory descended! etc."

It finds explicit expression in the characteristic passage in which Amphitryon expostulates with Zeus on account of his seduction of Alcmena, and his desertion of Hercules:

H. F. 339-47:

ὦ Ζεῦ, μάτην ἄρ' ὁμόγαμόν σ' ἐκτησάμην,
 μάτην δὲ παιδὸς γονέ' ἐμοῦ σ' ἐκλήζομεν
 σὺ δ' ἦσθ' ἄρ' ἦσσον ἢ δόκεις εἶναι φίλος.
 ἀρετῇ σε νικῶ θνητὸς ὦν θεὸν μέγαν·
 παῖδας γὰρ οὐ προῦδωκα τοῖς Ἡρακλέους.
 σὺ δ' εἰς μὲν εὐνὰς κρύφιος ἠπίστω μολεῖν,
 τάλλότηρια λέκτρα δόντος οὐδενὸς λαβών,
 σώζεις δὲ τοὺς σοὺς οὐκ ἐπίστασαι φίλους.
 ἀμαθὴς τις εἰ θεός, εἰ δίκαιος οὐκ ἔφης.

"Zeus, for my couch-mate gained I thee in vain,
 Named thee in vain co-father of my son.
 Less than thou seemedst art thou friend to us!
 Mortal, in worth thy godhead I outdo:
 Hercules' sons have I abandoned not.
 Cunning wast thou to steal unto my couch,—
 To filch another's right none tendered thee,—
 Yet know'st not how to save thy dear ones now!
 Thine is unwisdom, or injustice thine."

In the following verses Amphitryon cries to Zeus:

H. F. 497-502:

ἐγὼ δέ σ', ὦ Ζεῦ, χεῖρ' ἐς οὐρανὸν δικῶν
 αὐδῶ, τέκνοισιν εἰ τι τοισίδ' ὠφελεῖν
 μέλλεις, ἀμύνειν, κ. τ. λ.

"But I, O Zeus, with hand to heaven upcast,
 Cry—if for these babes thou hast any help,
 Save them; for soon thou nothing shalt avail.
 Yet oft hast thou been prayed: in vain I toil;
 For now, meseems, we cannot choose but die."

For the same sentiment see also Ion 436 ff. and Heracl. 718 ff. and H. F. 212: "If Zeus to us were righteously inclined."

Nor does Hera command our respect. The poet represents her as solely responsible for the undeserved sufferings of the great benefactor of humanity:

H. F. 1127-28:

A: ὦ Ζεῦ, παρ' Ἡρας ἄρ' ὄρᾳς θρόνων τάδε;

H: ἀλλ' ἢ τι κεῖθεν πολέμιον πεπόνθαμεν;

A: "Zeus seest thou this bolt from Hera's throne?"

H: "Ha; have I suffered mischief of her hate?"

Hera drives Hercules mad and makes him slayer of his own innocent children, all because of the Goddess's jealousy of Zeus. In reference to her fierce resentment the chorus exclaim:

H. F. 888-90:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τὸ σὸν γένος ἄγονον αὐτίκα
λυσσάδες ὠμοβρώτες ἀποινόδικοι δίκαι
κακοῖσιν ἐκπετάσουσιν.

"Ah misery! Zeus, mad vengeance ravenous-wild
Straightway, athirst for requital, with evils on evils piled,
Shall trample thy son unto dust, as though he were not thy
child."

Such a Goddess has no claim on the adoration of men. No wonder that Hercules when the dreadful truth is brought home to him, cries:

H. F. 1307-10:

τοιαύτη θεῶ
τίς ἂν προσεύχοιτο; ἢ γυναικὸς εἵνεκα
λέκτρων φθονοῦσα Ζηνὶ τοὺς εὐεργέτας
Ἑλλάδος ἀπώλεσ' οὐδὲν ὄντας αἰτίους.

"To such a Goddess
Who shall pray now?—who, for a woman's sake
Jealous of Zeus, from Hellas hath cut off
Her benefactors, guiltless though they were!"

"Dare not with thine admonitions trammel Hera's schemes and
mine!" (885)

is Iris's answer to Lyssa who appeals in vain for mercy:

H. F. 847-54:

παρανέσαι δέ, πρὶν σφαλεῖσαν εἰσιδεῖν,
Ἡρᾷ θέλω σοὶ τ', κ. τ. λ.

"Fain would I plead with Hera and with thee,
Ere she have erred, if ye will heed my words.
This man, against whose house ye thrust me on,
Nor on the earth is fameless, nor in heaven.

The pathless land, the wild sea, hath he tamed,
And the God's honours hath alone restored,
When these by impious men were overthrown.
Therefore I plead, devise no monstrous wrong."

That Hercules is the object of divine resentment is also implied in Iris' answer to the chorus' appeal to Pæan:

H. F. 820-21:

ὤναξ Παιάν,
ἀπότροπος γένειό μοι πημάτων.

"Healer, to thee,
O King to avert from me yon bane I pray!"

Iris: "Fear not: this is the child of Night ye see,
Madness, grey sires: I, handmaid of the Gods,
Iris. We come not for your city's hurt;
Only on one man's house do we make war—
His, whom Zeus' and Alcmena's son they call.
For, till he had ended all his bitter toils,
Fate shielded him, and Father Zeus would not
That I, or Hera, wrought him ever harm.
But now he has toiled Eurystheus' labours through,
Hera will stain him with the blood of kin,
That he shall slay his sons: her will is mine."

(vv. 822-32.)

If this is the principle on which Olympus is organized we need not wonder that the Olympians turn a deaf ear to the prayers of suffering mankind and that things go wrong on earth. This is the idea which the poet through such passages—intentionally or unintentionally—suggests.

Hercules who is believed to be in Hades is invoked by Megara to appear:

H. F. 490-96:

ὦ φίλτατ', εἴ τις φθόγγος εἰσακούεται
θνητῶν παρ' Αἰδῆ, σοὶ τὰδ', Ἡράκλεις, λέγω κ. τ. λ.

"Dear love,—if any in Hades of the dead
Can hear,—I cry this to thee, Hercules:
Thy sire, thy sons, are dying; doomed am I,
I, once through thee called blest in all men's eyes.
Help!—come!—Though as a shadow, yet appear!"

Thy coming as a dream-shape would suffice
To daunt the cravens who would slay thy sons!"

Then Hercules is suddenly seen, and though he has in fact returned bodily from the nether world, he is at first taken for a spectre who has come at the bidding of Megara; but soon she becomes aware that it is no "dream," but Hercules himself:

"'Tis he who lay, we heard, beneath the earth,
Except in broad day we behold a dream!
What say I?—see they dreams, these yearning eyes?
This is none other, ancient, than thy son.
Boys, hither!—hang upon your father's cloak.
Speed ye, unhand him not; for this is he,
Your helper he, no worse than Saviour Zeus."
(vv. 516-22.)

Megara in invoking Hercules in Hades expresses her belief in an invisible world, with which mortals have commerce.

10. THE IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

Iphigenia who had been doomed to die at Aulis for the Greeks had been snatched from that death by Artemis and had become priestess of the Goddess at the Tauris shrine where human victims were immolated. On landing among the Tauri two strangers were captured by the inhabitants and sentenced to die at the altar according to custom. Iphigenia discovers in them her brother Orestes and his friend Pylades. They plan not only escape for all, but also means of conveying away the statue of the Goddess, which was the special end of their mission. They are recaptured and finally delivered by Athena who commands Thoas, king of the land, to permit their departure.

A god-fearing herdman in Taurica who first notices the two fugitives, Orestes and Pylades, takes them for Gods, or for the two Dioscuri, or two of the Neried nymphs, and prays to them:

I. T. 270-74:

ὦ ποτὶς παῖ Λευκοθέας, νεῶν φύλαξ,
δέσποτα Παλαῖμον, ἔλως ἡμῖν γενοῦ,
εἴτ' οὖν ἐπ' ἅκταις θάσσετον Διοσκόρω,
ἢ Νηρέως ἀγάλμαθ', ὃς τὸν εὐγενῆ
ἔτικτε πεντήκοντα Νηρηΐδων χορόν.

"Guardian of ships, Sea-queen Leucothea's son
O Lord Palæmon, gracious be to us;
Or ye, Twin Brethren, if ye yonder sit;
Or Nereus' darlings, born to him of whom
That company of fifty Nereids sprang."

Here the poet adopts the natural expressions of superstitious Greek seamen. Leucothea and Palæmon were sea-gods beneficent to mariners.

Iphigenia pleads with Artemis to rescue her and her two countrymen or else "Phœbus' lips must lose their truth to mortal men, through thee!"

I. T. 1082-88:

ὦ πότνι', ἥπερ μ' Ἀβλίδος κατὰ πτυχὰς
δευνῆς ἔσωσας κ. τ. λ.

"O Goddess-queen, who erst by Aulis' clefts
Didst save me from my sire's dread murderous hand,
Save me now too with these; else Loxias' words
Through thee shall be no more believed of men.
But graciously come forth this barbarous land
To Athens. It beseems thee not to dwell
Here, when so blest a city may be thine."

and again she prays to Artemis:

I. T. 1398-1402:

ὦ Λητοῦς κόρη,
σώσόν με τὴν σὴν ἱερίαν κ. τ. λ.

"Leto's Child, O Maid,
Save me, thy priestess! Bring me unto Greece
From alien land; forgive my theft of thee!
Thy brother, Goddess, dost thou also love:
O then believe that I too love my kin!"

Iphigenia inquires after her enemies, first of all Helen, then Calchas the seer who had died on his way from Troy, and finally Odysseus who with others had plotted the immolation of Iphigenia. She pronounces a *curse* on Odysseus:

I. T. 535:

ὀλοῖτο, νόστου μήποτ' εἰς πάτραν τύχων.

"Now ruin seize him! Never win he home!"

Iphigenia requests her brother to take her home or

"Else to thine house will I become a *curse*, Orestes."

I. T. 277-78:

ἢ σοῖς ἀραῖα δώμασιν γενήσομαι,
Ὀρέσθ', κ. τ. λ.

alluding to the influence of the vengeful, haunting spirit of a wronged person.

In the following lines we have a striking example of a *prayer* which is used to deceive others. Iphigenia prays to Artemis:

I. T. 1230-33:

ὦ Διὸς Λητοῦς τ' ἄνασσα παρθέν', ἣν νίψω φόνον
τῶνδε καὶ θύσωμεν οὐχρῇ, καθαρὸν οἰκήσεις δόμον,
εὐτυχεῖς δ' ἡμεῖς ἐσόμεθα. τᾶλλα δ' οὐ λέγουσ', ὅμως
τοῖς τὰ πλείον' εἰδόσιν θεοῖς σοὶ τε σημαίνω, θεά.

"Queen, O child of Zeus and Leto, so the guilt from these I lave,
So I sacrifice where meet is, stainless temple shalt thou have:
Blest withal shall we be—more I say not, yet to Gods who know
All, and Goddess, unto thee, mine heart's desire I plainly show."

The ambiguous meaning of this prayer is apparent to the spectator, but not to the party for whose hearing it is intended. King Thoas, a devout man and zealous for the honor of the Goddess, is persuaded by Iphigenia that not only the two strangers, but the image of the Goddess itself requires purification. So he is easily induced to send the captives to the sea-shore, while Iphigenia follows with the image to perform, as Thoas supposes, the solemn rite of lustration, but in reality to take ship and transport the image to Greece. It is at this occasion that Iphigenia utters the equivocal prayer in the hearing of the king. The last words of the prayer "more I say not, etc.," are of course said aside. What the barbarian king understands of the priestess and her charge, duly reinstated in the purged temple, means to the spectators of the scene *Athens* and the *deliverance of Iphigenia*.

That the will of Heaven must be carried out is finally admitted even by Thoas who says:

I. T. 1475-76:

ἄνασσ' Ἀθάνα, τοῖσι τῶν θεῶν λόγοις
δοῖς κλέων ἄπιστος, οὐκ ὁρθῶς φρονεῖ.

"Athena, Queen, who hears the words of Gods,
And disobeyeth them, is sense-bereft."

Pylades under a solemn *oath* promises Iphigenia to present the document written by Iphigenia, to Orestes, or in case the document be lost to deliver the message to Orestes in person; while Iphigenia promises to send Pylades home unhurt, 735 ff. The solemn ceremony is concluded with the usual *self-imprecation* in case of violating the covenant:

I. T. 747-52:

Π: τίν' οὖν ἐπόμενος τοισίδ' ὄρκιον θεῶν;

I: Ἀρτεμιν, ἐν ἣσπερ δώμασιν τιμὰς ἔχω.

Π: ἐγὼ δ' ἀνακτά γ' οὐρανοῦ, σεμνὸν Δία.

I: εἰ δ' ἐκλιπὼν τὸν ὄρκον ἀδικοῖς ἐμέ;

Π: ἀνοστος εἶην· τί δὲ σὺ, μὴ σώσασά με;

I: μήποτε κατ' Ἄργος ζῶσ' ἔχνος θείην ποδός.

P: "What God dost take to witness this thine oath?"

I: "Artemis, in whose fane I hold mine office."

P: "And I by Heaven's King, reverend Zeus."

I: "What if thou fail thine oath, and do me wrong?"

P: "May I return not. If *thou* save me not?—"

I: "Alive in Argos may I ne'er set foot."

cf. also Medea 754.

Iphigenia implores the chorus to keep silence about her plan to save her brother and herself. The chorus, consisting of captured Greek women who were spared by the Taurians for a life of servitude, promise under *oath*:

I. T. 1076-77:

ὥς ἔκ γ' ἐμοῦ σοι πάντα σιγηθήσεται,

ἴστω μέγας Ζεὺς, ὦν ἐπισκῆπτεις πέρι.

"I will keep silence touching all the things

Whereof thou chargest me: great Zeus be witness."

Orestes impressed with the danger into which he has come through *Apollo's oracle* upbraids the God for having led him again into a net, when he had looked for a happy termination of his toils:

I. T. 77-94:

ὦ Φοῖβε, ποῖ μ' αὖ τήνδ' ἐς ἄρκυν ἤγαγες

χρήσας, κ. τ. λ.

"Phœbus, why is thy word again my snare,
When I have slain my mother, and avenged
My sire? From tired Fiends Fiends take up the chase,
And exiled drive me, outcast from my land,
In many a wild race doubling to and fro.
To thee I came and asked how might I win
My whirling madness' goal, my troubles' end,
Wherein I travailed, roving Hellas through.
Thou badst me go unto the Taurian coasts
Where Artemis, thy sister hath her altars,
And take the Goddess' image, which, men say,
Here fell into this temple out of heaven,
And, winning it by craft or happy chance,
All danger braved, to the Athenians' land
To give it—nought beyond was bidden me;—
This done, should I have respite from my toils.
Hither I came, obedient to thy words,
To a strange land and cheerless."

Orestes had slain his mother in obedience to an oracle of Apollo. Pursued by the Furies in consequence of this deed, a second oracle had directed him to Athens to be tried before the court of Areopagus. The votes for and against were equal, but though Athena thereby declared him acquitted he did not escape the continued persecution of the Furies. Again Orestes sought counsel of Apollo at Delphi. He was bidden to convey to Attica from the land of the Taurians the image of Artemis worshipped there, with the promise that his sufferings shall end. He sails with his faithful friend Pylades to perform this exploit. At their arrival at Taurica Orestes learns from Pylades that strangers are sacrificed at the temple of Artemis. He then impressed with the danger of their position appeals to Artemis, 77 ff.

But Orestes who thus impeached the God is reprimanded by Pylades not to speak evil of the oracle of the God:

I. T. 105—

τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ δὲ χρησμὸν οὐ κακιστέον.

"Nor craven may we be to the oracle."

Then we hear Orestes say:

I. T. 118 ff.:

. . . οὐ γὰρ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ γ' αἴτιον γενήσεται
 πεσεῖν ἄκρατον θέσφατον· τολμητέον κ. τ. λ.

"Best withdraw ourselves

Unto a place where we shall lurk unseen.

For, if his oracle fall unto the ground,

The God's fault shall it not be. We must dare,

Since for young men toil knoweth no excuse."

Orestes seems to mean that if we do not all we can, it will be our own fault if the oracle prove vain. But Orestes invariably comes around to his sceptical grievances and inveighs against the injustice of the oracle-god:

I. T. 711-15:

ἡμᾶς δ' ὁ Φοῖβος μάντις ὧν ἐψέσασατο·
 τέχνην δὲ θέμενος κ. τ. λ.

"Me Phœbus, prophet though he be deceived,

And by a cunning shift from Argos drave

Afar, for shame of those his prophecies.

I gave up all to him, obeyed his words,

My mother slew—and perish now myself!"

Orestes calls Apollo "prophet" = *μάντις* which had come to be an unpopular title at the time our play was written. Then he charges the God with a stratagem (*τέχνην δὲ θέμενος*) to put him out of the way that the falseness of his oracle might not be known, the first oracle commanding matricide having proved a mistake, cf. 77 ff. Again Orestes declares openly his judgment of the God:

I. T. 723:

τὰ Φοίβου δ' οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ μ' ἔπη.

"Phœbus' words avail me nothing now."

But despite all the bitter attacks Orestes has made upon the justice of the oracle-god, towards the end of the play the oracle is proved right. This is nothing unusual in Euripides. In those of his tragedies where the Olympians appear in the most unfavorable light, their conduct is generally vindicated in the end. It seems that in the "Iphigenia in Tauris" the poet intended to make the spectators feel that the oracle of Apollo, ordaining the

removal of the statue, ought not to seem fulfilled through stratagem and theft. So he represents Orestes no longer as the despondent sceptic, but makes him argue that if their undertaking is in harmony with the will of Artemis, it is also in harmony with the will of Apollo, for a conflict between the will of Apollo and the will of Artemis is impossible.

I. T. 1012-15:

εἰ πρόσαντες ἦν τόδε
 Ἀρτέμιδι, πῶς ἂν Λοξίας ἐθέσπισε
 κομίσαι μ' ἄγαλμα θεᾶς πόλισμα Παλλάδος
 καὶ σὸν πρόσωπον εἰσιδεῖν.

"Hear mine opinion—if this thing displease
 Artemis, how had Loxias bidden me
 To bear her statue unto Pallas' burg—
 Yea, see thy face?"

This passage presents a difficulty, namely, that the meeting of the brother and sister (καὶ σὸν πρόσωπον εἰσιδεῖν) is not intimated in the words of the God, vv. 77 ff. Palay, Seidler, and others assume that Apollo had not expressly said that Orestes would see his sister; he had probably used σύγγονος (v. 86) ambiguously. The oracle probably was: ἐνθα σύγγονος βωμοὺς ἔχει, thus applying either to Apollo's sister Artemis, or to Orestes' sister Iphigenia. Others suppose a lacuna in the text before the words: καὶ σὸν πρόσωπον εἰσιδεῖν. Verrall sees in the words: καὶ σὸν πρός: κ. τ. λ. a kind of a *pia fraus*. Orestes adds them, because "he naturally feels that, as things turn out, the oracle *ought* to have said—then *must* have said—then *did* say doubtless—or at any rate mean, that he was to meet his sister." This interpretation does not take into account Athena's words:

I. T. 1438-42:

πεπρωμένος γὰρ θεσφότοισι Λοξίου
 δεῦρ ἦλθ' Ὀρέστης, τὸν τ' Ἐρινύων χόλον
 φεύγων ἀδελφῆς τ' Ἀργος εἰσπέψων δέμας
 ἄγαλμά· τ' ἱερὸν εἰς ἐμὴν ἄζων χθόνα.

"For foreordained by Loxias' oracles,
 Orestes came, to escape the Erinyes' wrath,
 And lead his sister unto Argos home,
 And bear the sacred image to my land,
 So to win respite from his present woes."

If we compare these words with v. 1015: καὶ σὸν πρόσωπον εἰσιδεῖν, it is evident that Orestes somehow or other had learned beforehand that he would meet his sister in Taurica. He either inferred this knowledge from the ambiguous σύγγονος or,—as is generally believed,—a portion of Orestes' argument has been lost from the text after v. 1014, by which he explained how he obtained his knowledge.

The seer Calchas interprets the burnt offerings to which Agamemnon had resorted in order to learn the will of Heaven, and proclaims his *prophecy*:

I. T. 18 ff.:

Ἄγαμεμνον, οὐ μὴ ναῦς ἀφορμήσῃ χθονός,
πρὶν ἂν κόρην σὴν Ἰφιγένειαν Ἀρτεμις
λάβῃ σφαγείσαν·

“Agamemnon, thou shalt not sail from the land
Ere Artemis receive thy daughter slain,
Iphigenia, . . .
Whom thou must offer.”

This time the seer safely escapes—strange though it is—the taunts Euripides always has in store for soothsayers.

From Iphigenia's lips we hear the recital of her *dream-vision*:

I. T. 42 ff.:

ἂ καὶνὰ δ' ἤκει νύξ φέρονσα φάσματα,
λέξω πρὸς αἰδέρ', εἰ τ' δὴ τόδ' ἔστ' ἄκος κ. τ. λ.

“Now the strange visions that the night has brought
To heaven I tell—if aught of help be there.
In sleep methought I had escaped this land
And dwelt in Argos. In my maiden-bower
I slept: then with an earthquake shook the ground.
I fled, I stood without, the cornice saw
Of the roof falling,—then, all crashing down,
Turret and basement, hurled was the house to earth.
. . . Now thus I read this dream of mine:
Dead is Orestes—him I sacrificed;—etc.”

It was held an effectual method of averting the fulfillment of evil dreams to come out into the open air and tell them to the sky, as Iphigenia here does with her sinister dream, λέξω πρὸς αἰθέρα. This dream-vision has convinced her that her brother Orestes

must be dead ; cf. also

I. T. 348-49:

νῦν δ' ἐξ' ὀνείρων οἶσιν ἡγριώμεθα,
δοκοῦσ' Ὀρέστην μηκέθ' ἥλιον βλέπειν.

"But now, from dreams whereby my heart is steeled,—
Who deem Orestes seeth light no more."—

and she has summoned her attendants to assist her in pouring a libation to him as to a spirit in Hades, vv. 61 ff.

By the knowledge of Iphigenia's delusion in supposing her brother dead the spectator is led to think mainly about the fate of Orestes when the arrival of the two strangers is announced. A similar device of an ominous dream by which the spectators are prepared for events to come has been adopted in the "Hecuba," where a vision of a dappled fawn torn from Hecuba's knees by a wolf, portends the sacrifice of Polyxena, Hec. 90 ff. Iphigenia here makes the mistake of interpreting the dream with reference to the past, while it was intended as a warning to her of the coming event. This trust in an ominous dream is ridiculed by Iphigenia ; when she hears that her brother lives, she cries :

I. T. 569:

ψευδεῖς ὄνειροι, χαίρετ'· οὐδὲν ἦτ' ἄρα.

"False dreams, avaunt! So then ye were but nought."

And Orestes who knows nothing of her dreams adapts his words to hers in a characteristic reflection of his own, at the same time directing his attack against the Gods especially Apollo whom he supposes to have deceived him, and the art of divination in general :

I. T. 570-75:

οὐδ' οἱ σοφοί γε δαίμονες κεκλημένοι
πτηνῶν ὀνείρων εἰσὶν ἀψευδέστεροι.

"Ay, and not even Gods, whom men call wise,
Are less deceitful than the fleeting dreams.
Utter confusion is in things divine
And human. Wise men grieve at this alone
When—rashness?—no, but faith in oracles
Brings ruin—how deep, they that prove it know."

Dreams obtained by dream-oracles are described by the poet as a kind of spurious and deceptive divination sent by Earth in vexation for her ejected daughter Themis who alone possessed the power of predicting the truth. In order to punish Apollo for the deposition of her daughter Themis, Earth instituted a dream-oracle which was consulted by sleeping upon the ground by the shrine. Here, Earth sent up dreams, which deluded mankind, who trusted more to the predictions derived from dreams than to the oracles themselves.

I. T. 1259 ff.:

Θέμιν δ' ἐπεὶ γᾶς ἰὼν
παῖδ' ἀπενάσσατο Λα-
τῶος ἀπὸ ζαθέων
χρηστηρίων, νύχια κ. τ. λ.

"But the Child of the Earth did his coming make
Of her birthright dispossessed,
For the oracle-sceptre of Themis he brake:
Wherefore the Earth from her breast,
To make of his pride a derision, sent forth dream-vision on
vision,
Whereby to sons of men the things that had been ere then,
And the things for the God's decision
Yet waiting beyond our ken,
Through the darkness of slumber she spake, and from
Phœbus—in fierce heart-ache
Of jealous wrath for her daughter's sake—
His honor so did she wrest."

Thereupon Apollo appeals to Zeus to stop the baneful power of Earth, 1270 ff. Zeus puts an end to the nightly visions and confirms Apollo's authority:

I. T. 1277-83:

παῦσεν νυχίους ὀνείρους,
ἀπὸ δὲ λαθούναν
νυκτωπὸν ἐξείλεν βροτῶν, κ. τ. λ.

"And he made an end to the voices of night;
For he took from mortals the dream-visitations,
Truth's shadows upfloating from Earth's dark womb;
And he sealed by an everlasting right
Loxias' honours, that all men might

Trust wholly his word, when the thronging nations
Bowed at the throne where he sang fate's doom."

This theme is peculiarly in harmony with the plot of the play which turns on Apollo's oracle being proved right in the end, and Iphigenia's dream wrong. The choral ode vv. 1234 ff. celebrates the institution of that oracle, and the abolition of the ancient dream-oracles. The ode closes with a glorification of "Apollo's clear prophetic song" in contrast with "the divination of darkness" at Delphi:

I. T. 1251-58:

ἐκaves, ὦ Φοῖβε, μαν-
τελων δ' ἐπέβας ζαθέων, κ. τ. λ.

"Thou, Phœbus, didst slay him, didst take for thine
The oracle's lordship, the right divine,
And still on the tripod of gold are keeping
Thy session, dispensing to us, to the race
Of men, revelation of heaven's design,
From thy throne of truth, from the secret shrine,
By the streams through Castaly's cleft up-sweeping,
Where the heart of the world is thy dwelling-place."

II. THE TROADES

The "Troades" is a vivid picture of the miseries endured by noble Trojan dames—Hecuba, Andromache, Cassandra—immediately after the capture of Troy. Measured by the usage of the stage the piece is not a perfect play, but it is full of tragic scenes,—less a drama than a pathetic spectacle. The concluding scene, where the captive women, allotted as slaves to different masters, leave Troy in flames behind them, and are led towards the ships, is truly grand. Euripides produced the "Troades" when the great fleet of the Athenians was getting ready to sail for the conquering of Sicily (415), as though he were foreboding this fatal expedition that brought Athens to her doom. Murray, therefore, calls the "Troades" "the work rather of a prophet than a mere artist," and we may add: the work of a prophet whose words are life and truth in our days as well as in the days of Euripides. Never can a great tragedy seem more real to us, than the "Tro-

jan Women," at this moment of the history of the world. To the people of the present day might the prophetess Cassandra speak her message just as well as to those nearly three thousand years ago:

"Sooth, he were best shun war, whoso is wise:
If war must be, his country's crown of pride
Is death heroic, craven death her shame."

(400-02.)

And Poseidon, when mourning over the fall of Troy, has the same to say of the terrors of war, which we have to say of them to-day:

"Fool, that in sack of towns lays temples waste,
And tombs, the sanctuaries of the dead!
He, sowing desolation, reaps destruction."

(95-97.)

Euripides generally employs a God, through whom the prediction of the future in the finales of his tragedies is made. In the "Troades" he uses the more impressive method of a mortal soothsayer to reveal the future. Cassandra in a state of frenzy comes on the stage (308), singing a wild strain on her supposed nuptials with the Argive king. Then she imparts to Hecuba a long prophecy. She sees the vision of Agamemnon's body—murdered by his wife—and other impending events. Talthybius intervenes and receives a summary of the future wanderings of Odysseus. Finally she declares that she will come a victress to Hades after the death of herself and Agamemnon: vv. 353-460.

At times Euripides is openly iconoclastic in dealing with current religious practice. Even prayer and sacrifices are sometimes regarded as of doubtful aid. A striking instance is found in the *prayer* which he puts into the mouth of Hecuba:

Tr. 469-71:

ὦ θεοί· κακοῦς μὲν ἀνακαλῶ τοὺς συμμάχους,
ὅμως δ' ἔχει τι σχῆμα κυκλήσκειν θεοῖς,
ὅταν τις ἡμῶν δυστυχῇ λάβῃ τύχην.

"O Gods! to sorry helpers I appeal;
Yet to invoke the Gods hath some fair show
When child of man on evil fortune lights."

A bold sentiment, indeed, plainly indicating a disbelief in the popular theology! The same idea recurs in the following verses where Hecuba says:

Tr. 1280-81:

*ὦ θεοί. καὶ τί τοὺς θεοὺς καλῶ;
καὶ πρὶν γὰρ οὐκ ἤκουσαν ἀνακαλούμενοι.*

"O ye Gods!—why call I on the Gods?
For called on heretofore they hearkened not!"

and vv. 1240 ff. she says:

"Nought was in Heaven's design, save woes to me
And Troy, above all cities loathed of them.
In vain we sacrificed!"

In these passages is expressed the inmost theme of the whole play, a search for an answer to the question: if the righteous are not treated better in this life than the wicked, if injustice triumphs over justice, what must we think of the Gods? "Such Gods are as a matter of fact the moral inferiors to good men, and Euripides will never blind his eyes to their inferiority; and as soon as people see that their God is bad, they tend to cease believing in his existence at all." (Murray, *Troj. Women.*)

The same thought that the Gods turn a deaf ear to the cries of mankind in distress finds expression in the following choral ode:

Tr. 1060 ff.:

*οὕτω δὲ τὸν ἐν Ἰλίῳ
ναὸν . . . προῦδωκας . . . ὦ Ζεῦ, . . . ἀναξ
οὐράνιον ἔδραν ἑπιβεβῶς
αἰθέρα τ' ἐμᾶς πόλεος ὀλομένης, κ. τ. λ.*

"So then thy temple in Troy fair-gleaming,
And thine altar of incense heavenward steaming
Hast thou rendered up to our foes Achæan,
O Zeus, and the flame of our sacrificing, etc. . . .
Dost thou care, O King, I muse, heart-aching,—
Thou who sittest on high in the far blue heaven
Enthroned,—that my city to ruin is given, etc."

Long before Euripides Homer had represented Zeus as *αἰθέρι ναίων*, cf. *Iliad* II, 412. In vv 1078-79 Euripides shows us Zeus enthroned on his celestial seat and on ether, while in other pas-

sages he confounds the dweller in the ether with his dwelling so that ether and Zeus are one, cf. *Fragm.* 596, 869, 935.

The curious prayer of Hecuba shows how vacillating Euripides' view on this subject was:

Tr. 884-88:

ὦ γῆς ὄχημα κατὰ γῆς ἔχων ἔδραν,
ὅστις ποτ' εἰ σὺ, δυστόπαστος εἰδέναι,
Zeus, εἴτ' ἀνάγκη φύσεος εἴτε νοῦς βροτῶν,
προσηνέξαμην σε· πάντα γὰρ δι' ἀψόφου
βαίνων κελεύθου κατὰ δίκην τὰ θνήτ' ἄγεις.

"O Earth's Upbearer, thou whose throne is Earth,
Whoe'er thou be, O past our finding out,
Zeus, be thou Nature's law, or Mind of Man,
Thee I invoke; for, treading soundless paths,
To Justice' goal thou bring'st all mortal things."

The audience may well have echoed Menelaus' exclamation:

Tr. 889:

τί δ' ἔστιν; εὐχὰς ὡς ἐκαίνισας θεῶν.

"How now?—what strange prayer this unto the Gods?"

This prayer was of a new kind, indeed! Zeus had never heard its like.—What do we find in it? All through the play Hecuba is a woman of remarkable intellectual power and of fearless thought. She treats the Olympian Gods as beings that have betrayed her, and whose names she scarcely deigns to speak. Zeus, if there is such a being at all, is either the air, that both sustains the earth and rests upon it, or the irresistible power of nature to produce all things after a certain law; or else intellect, or, rather the directing agency which ordains all things from the first and which exists in the soul of every man. She is far from denying the existence of a divine power, and yet in her prayer she rejects all current polytheism. In the first place we have in this prayer the poet's customary identification of Zeus with ether. Here we notice the influence of Anaximenes and especially of Diogenes of Apollonia. The theory that the earth is supported by the air is ascribed by Plutarch (*Mor.* 896 E) to Anaximenes, and by Aristotle (*De Cælo* II, 13) to Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, and Democritus. The following words of Anaximenes imply this view:

"Even as our soul, which is air, holds us together, so breath (*πνεῦμα*) and air encompass the whole universe." The doctrine that the supreme Godhead is the Air is ascribed by Cicero in *De Nat. Deor.* I, 29, to Diogenes of Apollonia. Diogenes deified air and spoke of it as omnipresent. It is by virtue of its intelligence, according to Diogenes, that "the element of Air steers all things and has power over all things." Then in line 886 Euripides gives us a pantheistic interpretation of Zeus. The divine principle, which the common people in ignorance of its nature call Zeus, shows itself as intellect in the mind of man (*νοῦς βροτῶν*), and as necessary and immutable law in nature (*ἀνάγκη φύσεως*), of which he says *Alc.* 965: that above it there is nothing (*κρείσσον οὐδὲν ἀνάγκης*); cf. also *Helen* 514; *δεινῆς ἀνάγκης οὐδὲν ἰσχύειν πλέον*. This pantheism finds expression elsewhere in Euripides' poetry. In *Fragm.* 935 he identifies divinity with all embracing ether:

"Seest thou the boundless ether there on high,
That folds the earth around with dewy arms?
This deem thou Zeus, this reckon one with God."

Cf. also *Fragm.* 596. Such utterances explain how Aristophanes should have accused Euripides of convincing men that there are no Gods. Finally in the last verse of the prayer the poet characterizes the divine reason as world-ruling Justice. To Euripides Justice and God are one, cf. also *El.* 771:

"Gods! All-seeing Justice thou hast come at last!"

Euripides conceives of Justice as a quasi-personal being, the "Weltgeist" or "Weltvernunft" as the German critic Nestle calls it in his "Euripides," a being not transcendent but immanent in all things, forming and directing all things to universal harmony. This idea which preëminently pervades the dramas of Sophocles was generally not carried out by Euripides and reconciled with the inequality of the distribution of blessings and evils among men. So also Hecuba's prayer breathes discord rather than harmony. "If there is any explanation, any justice, she will be content and give worship (*προσηυξάμην σε*), but it seems that there is not."

12. THE HELENA

This play is founded on a strange variation of the Helen-legend, in which Helen was borne away by Hermes to Egypt and detained there, while only a wraith of Helen passed to Troy. She lived like a true wife in Egypt until Menelaus rescued her from Theoclymenus, king of the land, and brought her safely back to Greece.

The play is not one of the poet's happier efforts; it furnishes, however, considerable material of the supernatural element.

Helen's *prayer* to Hera and Aphrodite is a fine and impressive one inspired by the energy of despair:

Hel. 1093 ff.:

ὦ πότνι' ἢ Δίοισιν ἐν λέκτροις
 "Ἡρα, δὴ' οἰκτρῷ φῶτ' ἀνάψυξον πόνων,
 αἰτούμεθ' ὀρθὰς ὠλένας πρὸς οὐρανὸν κ. τ. λ.

"O Queen, who retest on the couch of Zeus,
 Hera, to hapless twain grant pause from ills,
 We pray, with arms flung upward to the sky,
 Thy mansion wrought with arabesque of stars.
 And thou, by mine hand winner of beauty's prize,
 Cypris, Dione's child, destroy me not!
 Enough the scathe thou hast done me heretofore,
 Lending my name, not me, to alien men:
 But let me die, if 'tis thy will to slay,
 In homeland, etc."

Of the same character is Menelaus' prayer to Poseidon:

Hel. 1584-87:

ὦ ναίων ἄλα
 πότνιε Πόσειδον κ. τ. λ.

"... O Sea-abider
 Poseidon, and ye, Nereus's daughters pure,
 Me bring ye and my wife to Nauplia's shores,
 Safe from this land."

Menelaus sends another impressive prayer to Zeus, in which he points out that he had acted toward the Gods the part of a pious man, yet he adds, as if upbraiding them for their present neglect: "Not endless ills I merit."

Hel. 1441-51:

ὦ Ζεῦ, πατήρ τε καὶ σοφὸς κλήζει θεός,
 . . . ὀφείλω δ' οὐκ αἰεὶ πρᾶσσειν κακῶς κ. τ. λ.

"Zeus, Father art thou called, and the Wise God:
Look upon us, and from our woes redeem;
And as we drag our fortunes up the steep,
Lay to thine hand: a finger-touch from thee,
And good-speed's haven long desired we win.
Suffice our travail heretofore endured.
Oft have ye been invoked, ye Gods, to hear
My joys and griefs: no endless ills I merit,
But in plain paths to tread. Grant this one boon,
And happy shall ye make me all my days."

The prayer of the chorus tends to the same purport:

Hel. 855-56:

ὦ θεοί, γενέσθω δὴ ποτ' εὐτυχὲς γένος
τὸ Ταντάλειον καὶ μεταστήτω κακῶν.

"Gods, grant at least fair fortune to the line
Of Tantalus, and rescuing from ills!"

Menelaus prays to his dead father-in-law, and to Hades. He is well aware that though the dead cannot restore Helen, the request will not be altogether vain:

Hel. 926 ff.:

ὦ γέρον, ὃς οἰκεῖς τόνδε λάϊνον τάφον,
ἀπόδος, ἀπαιτῶ τὴν ἐμὴν δάμαρτά σε, κ. τ. λ.

"O ancient, dweller in this tomb of stone,
Restore thy trust: I claim of thee my wife,
Sent hither of Zeus to thee, to ward for me.
Thou who art dead, canst ne'er restore, I know:
But this thy child will think scorn that her sire,
Glorious of old, from the underworld invoked
Have infamy, etc.
O Hades, on thy championship I call,
... render back my wife."

The prophetess Theonoë advises Helen to pray to the Gods, vv. 1024 ff., and to address to her dead father the following prayer:

Hel. 1028-29:

σὺ δ', ὦ θανών μοι πάτερ, ὅσον γ' ἐγὼ σθένω,
οὔποτε κεκλήσει δυσσεβῆς ἀντ' εὐσεβοῦς.

"And thou, dead sire, so far as in me lies,
Impious for righteous ne'er shalt be misnamed."

It is against the art of *soothsaying* and those who make it their business of interpreting the flight of birds and other signs of the divine will, that the attacks of Euripides are more especially directed, and for the common trust in omens and prophecies he has only ridicule. At Athens especially prophecies sprang up like mushrooms. Soothsayers of all sorts plied a lively trade and were regarded as "fond of money." Even Sophocles, who treats them and their predictions with respect and even with awe, alludes to this notorious quality of the soothsayers, Antig. 1055, where Creon says to Teiresias:

τὸ μαντικὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος.

"The race of seers is ever fond of money."

Euripides defines the *μάντ* to be "one who speaks few truths, but many lies" (Iph. A. 957), and his most bitter invective against the art of divination is contained in our play:

Hel. 744-57:

ἀλλὰ τοι τὰ μάντεων
ἐσεῖδον ὡς φαῦλ' ἐστὶ καὶ ψευδῶν πλέα.
οὐκ ἦν ἄρ' ὄγκις οὐδὲν ἐμπύρου φλογός
οὐδὲ πτερωτῶν φθέγματ'· εὐηθες δὲ τοι
τὸ καὶ δοκεῖν ὄρνιθας ὠφελεῖν βροτοῖς.

κ. τ. λ.

τί δῆτα μαντενόμεθα; τοῖς θεοῖσι χρῆν
θύοντας αἰτεῖν ἀγαθὰ, μαντείας δ' εἶν.
βίου γὰρ ἄλλως δέλεαρ ἠὲρέθη τόδε,
κούδεις ἐπλοῦτησ' ἐμπύροισιν ἀργός ὦν.
γνώμη δ' ἀρίστη μάντις ἢ τ' εὐβουλία.

"... But the lore of seers,
How vain it is I see, how full of lies.
Utterly naught then were the altar-flames,
The voices of winged things! Sheer folly this
Even to dream that birds may help mankind.
Calchas told not, nor gave sign to the host,
Yet saw, when for a cloud's sake died his friends:
Not Helenus told; but Troy for nought was stormed!
'Yea, for the Gods forbade,' thou mightest say.
Why seek ye then to seers? With sacrifice
To Gods, ask blessings: let soothsayings be,
They were but as a bait for greed devised:
No sluggard getteth wealth through divination.
Sound wit, with prudence, is the seer of seers."

As the tragedy of "Helen" was played in 412 shortly after the Sicilian expedition which had ended so disastrously, it is probable that Euripides directed these invectives against the soothsayers whom he regarded as mischievous tools in the hands of the war party, and who as such had especially urged the people to undertake the expedition. Euripides was not the only one who attacked this "worthless class of idlers"; cf. the scene in Arist. Birds, 959-991.

Beside this well-known passage where the poet so violently attacks the art of divination, we have in the same play other passages regarding the same object, where Euripides follows the traditional belief and represents Theonoë, the prophetess and sister of Theoclymenus, as a true oracle possessing supernatural knowledge. Referring to her Helen says:

Hel. 819:

ἔστ' ἐνδον αὐτῷ ξύμμαχος θεοῖς ἴση.

"An ally wise as Gods he hath within."

and Helen again asserts:

Hel. 861-62:

ἀποῦσα γάρ σε καὶ παροῦσ' ἀφιγμένον
δεῦρ ὀδεν.

"Present or absent still she knows of thee,
How thou art come."

From the sequel of the play we know that the prophetess controls Destiny; Theonoë herself declares:

Hel. 887 ff.:

τέλος δ' ἐφ' ἡμῖν, εἴθ' ἂν βούλεται Κύπρις
κ. τ. λ.

"The issue rests with me—to tell my brother,
As Cypris wills, thy presence, ruining thee,
Or, standing Hera's ally, save thy life, etc."

Theonoë chooses to save Menelaus and Helen, and the decision of the Gods follows that of the prophetess.

Allusion to *vision* is made when Helen, aware of the unreality of the Trojan Helen, exclaims:

Hel. 119:

σκοπεῖτε μὴ δόκησιν εἶχετ' ἐκ θεῶν.

"What if he nursed a heaven-sent phantasy?"

and when Menelaus exclaims:

Hel. 569:

ὦ φωσφόρ' Ἑκάτη, πέμπε φάσματ' εὐμενῇ.

"Light-bearer Hecate, send gracious visions!"

Menelaus appeals to Hecate, since spectres and phantoms were regarded as the attendants of that Goddess.

Respect for the word of an *oath* is expressed by Menelaus:

Hel. 977-79:

ὄρκους κεκλήμεθ', ὥς μάθης, κ. τ. λ.

"Know, maiden, I have bound me by an oath

To dare thy brother, first, unto the fight:

Then he or I must die, my word is passed."

An example of a *curse-oath* is contained in

Hel. 835-41:

E: ἀλλ' ἄγνων ὄρκον σὸν κάρα κατώμοσα

M: τί φῆς; θανείσθαι κοῦποτ' ἀλλάξειν λέχη;

E: ταῦτ' ὧ ξίφει γε κέλομαι δὲ σοῦ πέλας.

M: ἐπὶ τοῖσδε τοίνυν δεξιᾷς ἐμῆς θίγε.

E: ψαύω, θανόντος σοῦ τόδ' ἐκλείψειν φάος.

M: κἀγὼ στερηθεὶς σοῦ τελευτήσω βίον.

H: "Nay, by thine head I swear a solemn oath—"

M: "How?—Wilt thou die ere thou desert thy lord?"

H: "Yea, by thy sword: beside thee will I lie."

M: "Then, for this pledge, lay thou thine hand in mine."

H: "I clasp—I swear to perish if thou fall."

M: "And I, of thee bereft, to end my life."

Helen when swearing invokes the river Eurotas to witness:

Hel. 348 ff.:

σὲ γὰρ ἐκάλεσα, σὲ δὲ κατόμοσα,

τὸν ὑδρόεντα δόνακι χλωρὸν Εὐρώταν, κ. τ. λ.

"Thee I invoke, I swear by thy name,

O river with ripple-washed reed-beds green,

Eurotas!—if true was the word that came

That my lord on the earth is no more seen."

13. THE PHŒNISSÆ

The subject of the "Phœnissæ" is the same as that of the Æschylean play: "The Seven against Thebes," namely, the war of succession between Polyneices and Eteocles.

Iocaste who speaks the prologue *prays* for her two sons, Polyneices and Eteocles:

Phœn. 84-87:

ἀλλ' ὦ φαεινὰς οὐρανοῦ ναίων πτυχὰς
 Ζεῦ, σῶσον ἡμᾶς, δὸς δὲ σύμβασιν τέκνοις.
 χρὴ δ' εἰ σοφὸς πέφυκας, οὐκ ἔαν βροτὸν
 τὸν αὐτὸν ἀεὶ δυστυχῇ καθεστάναι.

"O dweller Zeus in heaven's veiling light,
 Save us, grant reconciling to my sons!
 Thou oughtest not, so thou be wise, to leave
 The same man overcome to be unblest."

In Antigone's prayer addressed to Nemesis:

Phœn. 182 ff.:

Νέμεσι καὶ Διὸς βαρύβρομοι βρονταί,
 κεραυνῶν τε φῶς αἰθαλόεν, σὺ τοι
 μεγαλαγορίαν ὑπεράνορα κοιμίζεις.

"O Nemesis, O ye thunders rolling deep
 Of Zeus, thou flaming light of his levin,
 Overweening vaunts dost thou hush into endless sleep!"

the imprecation is implied: "the haughty boastings of man dost thou silence; mayest thou silence his!" *i.e.*, Capaneus'. Then Antigone appeals to Artemis:

Phœn. 190-92:

μήποτε μήποτε τάνδ', ὦ πότνια, κ. τ. λ.,
 Ἄρτεμι, δουλοσύναν τλαίην.

"Never, ah, never, O Artemis Queen,
 Zeus' child with tresses of golden sheen,
 Bowed under bondage may I be seen!"

The chorus appeal to the Gods to reconcile the two brothers:

Phœn. 586-87:

ὦ θεοί, γένοισθε τῶνδ' ἀπότροποι κακῶν
 καὶ ξύμβασιν τιν' Οἰδίπου τέκνοις δότε.

"Ah Gods, be ye averters of these ills,
 And set at one the sons of Œdipus!"

Polyneices having resigned and abjured his native Gods, prays to the Argive Hera, whose votary he had become, to assist him in slaying his brother :

Phœn. 1365-68:

ὦ πότνι' Ἥρα, σὸς γάρ εἰμ', ἐπεὶ γάμοις
 ἔγχευ' Ἀδράστου παῖδα καὶ ναίω χθόνα,
 δὸς μοι κτανεῖν ἀδελφόν, ἀντήρη δ' ἐμὴν
 καθαίματ' ὤσαι δεξιὰν νικηφόρον.

"Queen Hera,—for thine am I since I wed
 Adrastus' child, and dwell within thy land,—
 Grant me to slay my brother, and to stain
 My warring hands with blood of victory!"

Eteocles prays to Pallas:

Phœn. 1373-76:

ὦ Διὸς κόρη,
 δὸς ἔγχος ἡμῖν καλλίνικον ἐκ χειρὸς
 εἰς στέρν' ἀδελφοῦ τῆσδ' ἀπ' ὠλένης βαλεῖν
 κτανεῖν θ' ὃς ἦλθε πατρίδα πορθήσων ἐμὴν.

"... Daughter of Zeus,
 Grant that the conquering spear, of mine hand sped,
 Yea, from this arm, may smite my brother's breast,
 And slay him who hath come to waste my land!"

The two brothers met their doom owing to a *curse* pronounced upon them by their father. In a fit of anger Œdipus had pronounced on his sons that they might share the kingdom with the sword:

Phœn. 67-68:

ἀράς ἀρᾶται παισὶν ἀνοσιωτάτας,
 θηκτῷ σιδήρῳ δῶμα διαλαχεῖν τόδε.

"A curse most impious hurled he at his sons,
 That they might share their heritage with the sword."

They fearing the accomplishment of the curse had agreed to rule by turns for a year:

"They terror-stricken lest, if they should dwell
 Together, Gods might bring the curse to pass,
 Made covenant that Polyneices first,
 The younger, self-exiled, should leave the land,

That Eteocles, tarrying wear the crown
One year—then change." (vv. 69-74.)

See also 474-75; and 624, where the mother Iocaste admonishes her sons:

"Flee, O flee your father's curses!"

See also 765 and 1355. The fate imprecated upon the sons of Œdipus is inevitable although the two sons fancied they could outwit the Gods:

"And Œdipus' sons, who fain had cloaked it over
With time, as though they could outrun the Gods,
In folly erred" (vv. 872-74).

The chorus exclaim:

Phoen. 1425-26:

φεῦ φεῦ, κακῶν σῶν, Οἰδίπου, σ' ὄσων στένω·
τὰς σὰς δ' ἄρ' αἶς ἔοικεν ἐκπλῆσαι θεός.

"Alas! I wail thy sore griefs, Œdipus!
Thy malisons, I wot, hath God fulfilled."

From these passages we learn that destiny can be aroused by the human will in a curse, and in this case the curse becomes a part of destiny and sways the fate of its victims. In vv. 1595 ff. Œdipus speaks of a hereditary transmission of the curse which works down to the grandchildren and even utterly extirpates a race:

Phoen. 1608-14:

κτανὼν δ' ἔμαντοῦ πατέρ' ὁ δυσδαίμων ἐγὼ
εἰς μητρὸς ἤλθον τῆς ταλαιπώρου λέχος,
παῖδάς τ' ἀδελφοὺς ἔτεκεν, οὓς ἀπώλεσα.
ἄρ' αἶς παραλαβὼν Λαίου καὶ παισὶ δούς. κ. τ. λ.

"So mine own father did I slay, and came,—
Ah wretch!—unto mine hapless mother's couch.
Sons I begat, my brethren, and destroyed,
Passing to them the curse of Laius.
For not so witless am I from the birth,
As to devise these things against mine eyes
And my sons' life, but by the finger of God."

Cf. also Æsch. Eum. 934 ff. The Greeks modified their theory of the hereditary transmission of a curse by arguing that each generation commits new sins.

The poet's opinion in regard to the importance of *dreams* is illustrated by the following simile. The feeble trembling feet of Œdipus are like a dream in respect of strength:

Phœn. 1721-22:

τᾷδε τᾷδε βᾶθι μοι,
τᾷδε τᾷδε πόδα τίθει κ. τ. λ.

"Let thy feet follow hither mine hand,
O strengthless as dream of the night!"

A few examples of oath are found in our play. Polyneices calls the Gods to witness that it is against his own will to take up arms against his relation:

Phœn. 433-34:

θεοὺς δ' ἐπώμοσ' ὡς ἀκουσίως
τοῖς φιλτάτοις ἑκούσιν ἡράμην δόρυ.

"And, by the Gods I swear, unwillingly
I lift the spear against my father's house."

Polyneices expresses his indignation at his brother Eteocles who has not kept what he had promised under oath:

Phœn. 481-83:

δὲ δ' αἰνέσας ταῦθ' ὀρκίους τε δοὺς θεοῦς,
ἔδρασεν οὐδὲν ὧν ὑπέσχετ', κ. τ. λ.

"And he consented, in the God's sight swore,
Yet no whit keepeth troth, but holdeth still
The kingship and mine half the heritage."

and angrily proceeds:

Phœn. 491-93:

μάρτυρας δὲ τῶνδε δαίμονας καλῶ,
ὡς πάντα πρᾶσσων σὺν δίκῃ, δίκης ἄτερ
ἀποστεροῦμαι πατρίδος ἀνοσιώτατα.

"... I call the Gods to witness this—
That, wholly dealing justly, robbed am I
Of fatherland, unjustly, impiously."

and again he exclaims :

Phoen. 626-27 :

τὴν δὲ θρέψασάν με γαῖαν καὶ θεοὺς μαρτύρομαι
ὥς ἄτιμος οἰκτρὰ πάσχων ἐξελαύνομαι χθονός, κ. τ. λ.

"I call to witness earth that nursed me, witness Gods in heaven,
How with shame and piteous usage from the home-land I am
driven, etc."

For oath in general see vv. 1240-41 :

"On these terms made they truce, and in mid-space
The chiefs took oaths whereby they should abide."

As regards the prophecies and oracles in our play the poet's usual vacillation is obvious. On the one hand he treats the subject in harmony with the popular belief and shows that oracles are inexorably fulfilled; on the other hand he shows his wonted contempt for the prophets and their functions. So he makes Œdipus profess that Phœbus' oracles inevitably come true :

Phoen. 1595-99 :

ἄγονον Ἀπόλλων Λαῖψ μ' ἐθέσπισε κ. τ. λ.

"Ere from my mother's womb I came to light,
Phœbus to Laius spake me, yet unborn,
My father's murderer—etc."

and Phoen. 1703 and 05 :

νῦν χρησμός, ὦ παῖ, Λοξίου περαίνεται.
ἐν ταῖς Ἀθήναις κατθανεῖν μ' ἀλώμενον.

"Now, child, doth Loxias' oracle come to pass,
That I, a wanderer, should in Athens die."

The choral ode vv. 638 ff. relates the fulfillment of the oracle which enjoined Cadmus to found a city wherever a heifer driven from a certain herd should throw itself upon the ground :

Phoen. 640-42 :

μόσχος ἀδάμαντον πέσημα
δίκε τελεσφόρον διδούσα
χρησμόν, οὗ κατοικίσαι κ. τ. λ.

"That so was accomplished the oracle spoken
When the God for the place of his rest gave token, etc."

The oracle contained in vv. 409 ff. is an example that oracles present an inevitable future in terms that are dim, ambiguous, equivocal, ironical:

Phoen. 409 and 411:

ἐχρησ' Ἀδράστῳ Λοξίας χρησμών τινα.
κάπρῳ λέοντί θ' ἀρμόσαι παίδων γάμους.

"To Adrastus Loxias spake an oracle:
'Thy daughters wed to a lion and a boar.'"

Eteocles who formerly had mocked at the seer Teiresias admits that he cannot dispense with the seer's advice concerning an important undertaking:

Phoen. 766:

ἐν δ' ἐστὶν ἡμῖν ἀργόν, εἴ τι θέσφατον
οἰωνόμαντις Τειρεσίας ἔχει φράσαι,
τοῦδ' ἐκπυθέσθαι ταῦτ' . . .
ἐγὼ δὲ τέχνην μαντικὴν ἐμεμφάμην κ. τ. λ.

"One thing abides undone, to ask the seer
Teiresias touching this, if aught he hath
Of oracles to tell. . . .
But the seer's art in time past have I mocked
Unto his face; so he may bear me grudge."

The aged seer Teiresias led by his daughter enters the stage saying:

Phoen. 838-40:

κλήρους τέ μοι φύλασσε παρθένῳ χερσί, κ. τ. λ.

"Guard in thy maiden hand the augury-lots
Which, when I marked the bodings of the birds,
In the holy seat I took, where I divine."

The "augury-lots" (κλήρους) are the notes which the seer had written down after having observed the flight of the birds.

Teiresias claims to have secured through the art of divination the victory for Athens over Eleusis and displays as his reward a golden crown, the first-fruits of the spoil:

Phoen. 854-58:

. . . καὶ τόνδε χρυσοῦν στέφανον, ὥς ὄρᾳς, ἔχω
λαβὼν ἀπαρχὰς πολεμίων σκυλευμάτων.

"There too was war, against Eumolpus' spear,
Where I to Cecrops' sons gave victory.
This crown of gold, as thou mayst see, have I
As firstfruits of the foemen's spoil received."

Then Teiresias being urged to declare the truth, affirms that the sole hope of the safety of Thebes lies in the sacrifice of Creon's only son, Menœcus:

Phœn. 911-14:

ἄκουε δὴ νῦν θεσφάτων ἐμῶν ὁδόν.
σφάξαι Μενοικῇ τόνδε δεῖ σ' ὑπὲρ πάτρας
σὸν παῖδ', ἐπειδὴ τὴν τύχην αὐτὸς καλεῖς.

"Hear then the tenor of mine oracle,
What deed of yours shall save the Thebans town.
Menœcus must thou slay for fatherland,
Thy son—since thou thyself demandest fate."

Teiresias leaves the stage with the following characteristic words upon his lips:

Phœn. 954-59:

ὅστις δ' ἐμπύρῳ χρήται τέχνη,
μάταιος ἦν μὲν ἐχθρὰ σημήνας τύχην,
πικρὸς καθέστηχ' οἷς ἂν οἰωνοσκοπῇ.
ψευδὴ δ' ὑπ' οἴκτου τοῖσι χρωμένοις λέγων
ἀδικεῖ τὰ τῶν θεῶν. Φοῖβον ἀνθρώποις μόνον
χρῆν θεσπιφδεῖν, ὃς δέδοικεν οὐδένα.

"... Who uses the diviner's art
Is foolish. If he heraldeth ill things,
He is loathed of those to whom he prophecies.
If pitying them that seek to him, he lie,
He wrongs the Gods. Sole prophet unto men
Ought Phœbus to have been, who feareth none."

Euripides renders his condemnation of the soothsayers most effective when he makes the aged seer himself confess that soothsayers often do not dare to tell the truth to those that consult them and therefore are compelled to cheat their clients in order not to give offence. No wonder that Creon says to his son:

Phœn. 971:

ἀόλαστ' ἑάσας μάντεων θεσπίσματα.

"Heed not the reckless words of soothsayers."

14. THE ELECTRA

The "Electra," produced about 413, treats of the same subject as the "Choëphoræ" of Æschylus, and the "Electra" of Sophocles, namely the return of Orestes from exile, and his revenge upon Clytemnestra.

The chorus admonish Electra to worship the Gods and pray to them:

El. 194-97:

μὴ τιμῶσα θεούς, κρατή-
σειν ἐχθρῶν; οὔτοι στοναχαῖς,
ἀλλ' εὐχαῖσι θεούς σεβί-
ζουσ' ἔξεις εὐαμερίαν, ὦ παῖ.

"If thou give honour not to Gods, shall bring
Thy foes low?—reverencing
The Gods with prayers, not groans, shalt thou obtain
Clear shining after rain."

but Electra answers:

El. 198-200:

οὐδεὶς θεῶν ἐνοπίας κλύει
τᾶς δυσδαίμονος, οὐ παλαι-
ῶν πατρὸς σφαγιασμῶν.

"No God regards a wretch's cries,
Nor heeds old flames of sacrifice
Once on my father's altar burning."

and yet in her distress she prays desperately:

El. 221:

ὦ Φοῖβ' Ἀπολλον, προσπίτνω σε μὴ θανεῖν.

"Phœbus, I pray thee that I be not slain!"

Electra is exhorted by the Old Man to pray to the Gods:

El. 563 and 565:

ὦ πόσνι, εὖχου, θύγατερ Ἠλέκτρα, θεοῖς
λαβεῖν φίλον θησαυρόν, δν φαίνει θεός.

"Daughter, Electra—princess!—pray to the Gods—
To win the precious treasure God reveals!"

and she replies:

El. 566:

ἰδοὺ, καλῶ θεοὺς.

"Lo, I invoke them."

The prayer in vv. 671 ff. which is according to Murray's arrangement in turn recited by Orestes, Electra, and the Old Man, contains also an invocation of the dead:

El. 671-83:

O. ὦ Ζεῦ πατρώε καὶ τροπαῖ' ἐχθρῶν ἐμῶν,

H. οἴκτειρέ θ' ἡμᾶς, οἴκτρα γὰρ πεπόνθαμεν, κ. τ. λ.

O. "My father's God, Zeus, smiter of my foes,"

E. "Pity us: pitiful our wrongs have been."

O. M. "Yea, pity those whose lineage is of thee!"

E. "Queen of Mycenæ's altars, Hera, help!"

O. "Grant to us victory, if we claim the right."

O. M. "Grant for their father vengeance unto these!"

E. "O Earth, O Queen, on whom I lay mine hands,"

O. "Father, by foul wrong dweller 'neath the earth,"

O. M. "Help, help them, these thy children best-beloved,"

O. "Come! bring all those thy battle-helpers slain"

E. "All them whose spears with thee laid Phrygians low,"

O. M. "Yea, all which hate defilers impious!"

O. "Hear'st thou, O foully-entreated of my mother?"

This prayer to the dead father presupposes the presence of the spirit of the dead, his sympathy and co-öperation with the surviving kinsmen. Electra asserts (v. 684):

"Our sire hears all, I know."

In the following invocation of the Gods Electra identifies the Gods with world-ruling Justice:

El. 771:

ὦ θεοί, Δίκη τε πάνθ' ὀρώσ', ἥλθές ποτε.

"Gods! All-seeing Justice thou hast come at last!"

Orestes has come by divine command to avenge his father's death:

El. 87-89:

ἀφ' ἑγμαι δ' ἐκ θεοῦ χρηστηρίων κ. τ. λ.

" . . . At Phœbus' oracle-hest I come
 To Argos' soil, none privy thereunto,
 To pay my father's murderers murder-wage."

Orestes expresses his belief in Apollo's oracles, but has no regard for the tribe of soothsayers:

El. 399-400:

Λοξίου γὰρ ἔμπεδοι
 χρησμοί, βροτῶν δὲ μαντικὴν χαίρειν ἔω.

" . . . ; for Loxias' oracles
 Fail not. Of men's soothsaying will I none."

In the end of the play the Dioscuri suddenly appear and abuse Apollo on account of his oracle which has brought about the dreadful events, but he is their superior and therefore they cannot speak too plainly:

El. 1296-97:

Φοῖβω τήνδ' ἀναθήσω
 πρᾶξιν φονίαν.

" . . . for on Phœbus I lay the guilt
 Of the blood thou hast spilt, etc."

Likewise lays Orestes the responsibility for the murder of Clytemnestra and its consequences at the door of Apollo:

El. 971 and 973:

ὦ Φοῖβε, πολλήν γ' ἀμαθίαν ἐδέσπισας,
 ὅστις μ' ἔχρησας μητέρ', ἦν οὐ χρῆν, κτανεῖν.

" O Phœbus, folly exceeding was thine hest—
 Who against nature bad'st me slay my mother!"

and El. 1190-96:

ὦ Φοῖβ', ἀνύμνησας δίκαν, κ. τ. λ.

" Phœbus, the deed didst thou commend
 Aye whispering 'Justice.' Thou hast bared
 The deeds of darkness, and made end,
 Through Greece, of lust that murder dared.
 But me what land shall shield? What friend,
 What righteous man shall bear to see
 The slayer of his mother—me?"

15. THE ORESTES

The Orestes was acted in 408. The first part of the play tells us that after the murder of Aigisthus and Clytemnestra Orestes was haunted by the Furies. In torment thereof he continued six days. Then both, Orestes and Electra were condemned to death by the Argive people. The later portion of the play contains the intrigues for their rescue and the final achievement for their deliverance.

Orestes desires to pray at the grave of his father :

Or. 796-97 :

*καί με πρὸς τύμβον πόρευσον πατρός,
ὥς νῦν ἱκετεύσω με σώσαι.*

"Even to my father's grave-mound guide me on.
I would pray him to deliver."

Orestes, Electra, and Pylades pray to Agamemnon in Hades :

Or. 1225 ff. :

O. ὦ δῶμα ναιῶν νυκτὸς ὀρφναίας πάτερ, κ. τ. λ.

H. ὦ πάτερ, ἰκοῦ δῆτ', εἰ κλύεις εἴσω χθονὸς
τέκνων καλούντων, οἳ σέθεν θνήσκουσ' ὕπερ.

II. ὦ συγγένεια πατρός ἐμοῦ, κάμῃς λιτάς,
'Αγάμεμνον, εἰσάκουσον, ἔκωσον τέκνα.

O. "Father, who dwellest in dark halls of night,
Thy son Orestes bids thee come to help
Those in sore need. For thy sake suffer I
Wrongfully—by thy brother am betrayed,
Though I wrought righteousness. I fain would seize
His wife, and slay: be thou our help therein!"

E. "Come, father, come, if thou in earth's embrace
Hearest thy children cry, who die for thee!"

P. "My father's kinsman, to my prayers withal,
Agamemnon, hearken; save thy children thou! etc."

and Pylades adds :

Or. 1240-43 :

*παύσασθε, καὶ πρὸς ἔργον ἐξορῶμεθα.
εἴπερ γὰρ εἴσω γῆς ἀκοντίζουσ' ἀραί,
κλύει. σὺ δ', ὦ Ζεῦ πρόγονε καὶ Δίκῃς σέβας,
δότ' εὐτυχῆσαι τῶδ' ἐμοὶ τε τῇδέ τε.*

"Cease ye, and let us haste unto the deed;
For if prayers, javelin-like, pierce earth, he hears.

Forefather Zeus, and Justice' majesty,
To him, to me, to her, grant happy speed!"

Electra prays:

Or. 1299-1300:

ὦ Διός, ὦ Διὸς ἀέναον κράτος,
ἔλθ' ἐπίκουρον ἐμοῖσι φίλοισι πάντως.

"O power of Zeus, of Zeus,—eternal power,
Come, aid my friends in this supremest hour!"

Electra pronounces a curse on Helen:

Or. 130-31:

θεοὶ σε μισήσειαν, ὧς μ' ἀπώλεσας
καὶ τόνδε πᾶσάν θ' Ἑλλάδα.

"...—still the Helen of old!
God's hate be on thee, who hast ruined me,
My brother, and all Hellas!"

Only one instance of *oath* is found in our play:

Or. 1516-17:

Ο. ὅμοσον, εἰ δὲ μὴ, κτενῶ σε, μὴ λέγειν ἐμὴν χάριν.
Φ. τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν κατώμοσ', ἣν ἂν εὐορκοῖμ' ἐγώ.

O. "Swear—or I will slay thee,—that thou speakest not to
pleasure me.

Phr. By my life I swear—an oath I sure should honour sacredly."

In the prologue Electra asserts that the *oracle-god* is guilty of the most unholy thing, the most abominable deed:

Or. 28-31:

Φοίβου δ' ἀδικίαν μὲν τί δεῖ κατηγορεῖν;
πέιθει δ' Ὀρέστην μητέρ' ἢ σφ' ἐγείνατο
κτείνει, πρὸς οὐχ ἅπαντας εὐκλείαν φέρον.
ὅμως δ' ἀπέκτειν' οὐκ ἀπειθήσας θεῶ.

"What boots it to lay wrong to Phoebus' charge,
Who thrust Orestes on to slay the mother
That bare him?—few but cry shame on the deed,
Though in obedience to the God he slew."

Line 30 means literally translated "a deed that does not bring to all the idea that this was creditable in a God," *i.e.*, "that brings discredit to him with some."

That Phœbus was the real author of the deed is admitted by Helen:

Or. 76:

εἰς Φοῖβον ἀναφέρουσα τὴν ἀμαρτίαν.

"Since upon Phœbus all thy sin I lay, etc."

Apollo's oracle is called an unjust one by Electra:

Or. 162-64:

ἄδικος ἄδικα τότ' ἄρ' ἔλακεν ἔλακεν, ἀπό-
φονον δτ' ἐπὶ τρίποδι Θέμιδος ἄρ' ἐδίκασε
φόνον ὁ Λοξίας ἐμᾶς ματέρος.

"Wrongful was he who uttered that wrongful rede
When Loxias, thronged on the tripod of Themis, decreed
The death of my mother, a foul unnatural deed!"

And Orestes exclaims:

Or. 275-76:

τί δῆτα μέλλει'; ἐξακρίζ'ετ' αἰθέρα
πτεροῖς· τὰ Φοῖβου δ' αἰτιάσθε θέσφατα.

"Why tarry ye? Soar to the welkin's height
On wings! There rail on Phœbus' oracles!"

and he continues:

Or. 285-87:

Λοξία δὲ μέφομαι,
ὅστις μ' ἐπάρας ἔργον ἀνοσιώτατον.
τοῖς μὲν λόγοις ἠψφρανε, τοῖς δ' ἔργοισιν οὐ.

"... Loxias I blame,
Who to a deed accursed thrust me on,
And cheered me still with words, but not with deeds."

Orestes, when seized with madness, in his lucid intervals again and again blames the God for the deed:

Or. 414 ff.:

Ο. ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἀναφορά τῆς ξυμφορᾶς
Φοῖβος, κελεύσας μητρός ἐκπράξαι φόνον.
Μ. ἀμαθέστερός γ' ὢν τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τῆς δίκης
Ο. δουλεύομεν θεοῖς, ὃ τι ποτ' εἰσὶν οἱ θεοί.
Μ. κατ' οὐκ ἀμύνει Λοξίας τοῖς σοῖς κακοῖς;
Ο. μέλλει· τὸ θείον δ' ἔστι τοιοῦτον φύσει.

Ο. "Yet can I cast my burden of affliction

On Phœbus, who bade spill my mother's blood."
 M. "Sore lack was his of justice and of right!"
 O. "The God's thralls are we—whatsoever Gods be."
 M. "And doth not Loxias shield thee in thine ills?"
 O. "He tarrieth long—such is the God's wont still."

Or. 591-96:

Ἀπόλλων δὲ μεσομφάλους ἕδρας
 ναίων βροτοῖσι στόμα νέμει σαφέστατον,
 ὃ πειθόμεσθα πάνθ' ὅσ' ἂν κείνος λέγῃ,
 τοῦτ' ὃν πειθόμενος τὴν τεκοῦσαν ἔκτανον.
 ἐκείνον ἡγήσθ' ἀνόσιον καὶ κτείνετε·
 ἐκεῖνος ἡμαρτ', οὐκ ἐγώ.

"... Apollo at earth's navel-throne
 Gives most true revelation unto men,
 Whom we obey in whatsoever he saith.
 Obeying him, my mother did I slay.
 Account ye *him* unholy: yea, slay him!
 He sinned, not I."

After the poet has thoroughly censured the oracle-god for his injustice the play concludes with the usual justification of Apollo's wisdom. Apollo himself appears and gives his oracles as to how affairs should be managed, vv. 1625-65. Orestes perfectly satisfied addresses Apollo:

Or. 1666-67:

ὦ Λοξία μαντεῖε σὼν θεσπισμάτων·
 οὐ ψευδόμαντις ἦσθ' ἄρ', ἀλλ' ἐτήτυμος.

"Hail, Prophet Loxias, to thine oracles!
 No lying prophet wert thou then, but true."

and Or. 1680-81:

κἀγὼ τοιούτος· σπένδομαι δὲ συμφοραῖς,
 Μενέλαε, καὶ σοῖς, Λοξία, θεσπίσμασιν.

"I am as he to my fate reconciled,
 To Menelaus, and thine oracles."

The prophet Glaucus, from whom Menelaus learned the news of his brother's fate, is called the "unerring God":

Or. 362 ff.:

... Νηρέως προφήτης Γλαῦκος ἀψευδὴς θεός, κ. τ. λ.

"... from the waves
 The shipman's seer, the unerring God, the son

of Nereus, Glaucus, made it known to me:
 'Thy brother, Menelaus, lieth dead, etc.'"

The word *προφήτης*, however, does not necessarily imply the power of predicting; *προφήτης* is properly an interpreter or speaker for another, as Apollo was the prophet of Zeus and Glaucus of Nereus.

Reference to *dreams* is made in

Or. 618:

ὀνείρατ' ἀγγέλλουσα τὰγαμέμνονος.

"Telling of dreams from Agamemnon sent."

This verse is generally considered as spurious. Paley thinks that the notion was borrowed from dreams of vengeance sent to Clytemnestra by Agamemnon as described in the "Choephoroi" of Æschylus and in Sophocles' *Electra* 425; it is not elsewhere alluded to by Euripides.

In the extremely fine passage vv. 255 ff., which must have been truly terrific when impersonated by a good actor, we have the famous *vision* of Orestes who sees the Furies by his side:

Or. 255-57:

*ὦ μήτηρ, ἱκετεύω σε, μὴ 'πίσειέ μοι
 τὰς αἱματωποῦς καὶ δρακοντῶδεις κόρας.
 αὐταὶ γὰρ αὐταὶ πλησίον θρώσκουσί μου.*

"Mother!—beseech thee, hark not thou on me
 Yon maidens gory-eyed and snaky-haired!

Lo there!—lo there! They are nigh, they leap on me!"

At this moment Orestes in his delirium makes a violent effort to leap from his couch; Therefore Electra, his sister, who sits by his bed and administers to him with the most tender affection assuages him saying:

Or. 258-59:

*μὲν', ὦ ταλαίπωρ', ἀτρέμα σοῖς ἐν δεινίοις·
 ὀρᾷς γὰρ οὐδὲν ὧν δοκεῖς σάφ' εἶδέναι.*

"Stay, hapless one, unshuddering on thy couch:
 Nought of thy vivid vision seest thou."

In these lines we have a striking example how Euripides manages

the supernatural in contrast with Æschylus. According to the latter the Furies are real deities, living persons of objective existence, who even come upon the stage to torture the murderer. According to Euripides Orestes in his delirium fancies he sees the forms of the Furies pursuing him, while Electra expresses her disbelief in the visible presence of them. She admits that a fancied illness is as afflicting to the patient, as a real one, but insists that the illness is nothing but a vision that haunts the brain of a delirious man:

Or. 311-15:

ἀλλὰ κλίνων εἰς εὐνὴν δέμας,
καὶ μὴ τὸ ταρβοῦν κάκφοβοῦν σ' ἐκ δεμνίων
ἄγαν ἀποδέχου, μένε δ' ἐπὶ στρωτοῦ λέχους.
κἂν μὴ νοσήs γάρ, ἀλλὰ δοξάζεις νοσεῖν
κάματος βροτοῖσιν ἀπορίετε γίγνεται.

"... But lay thee down,
And heed not terrors overmuch, that scare
Thee from thy couch, but on thy bed abide.
For, though thy sickness be but of the brain,
This is affliction, this despair, to men."

16. THE IPHIGENIA AT AULIS

The "Iphigenia at Aulis" was acted after the death of Euripides. Its subject forms a prelude to the "Iphigenia in Tauris." Calchas the prophet had proclaimed—and he was backed by Odysseus and Menelaus—that Artemis claims the sacrifice of Iphigenia, eldest daughter of Agamemnon, before the adverse winds can fall. Iphigenia, doomed by her father to die at Aulis, is miraculously saved by the Goddess and removed to another land, the Tauric Chersonese.

As in the "Hippolytus" so also in the "Iphigenia at Aulis," a characteristic passage is contained, where Euripides refers to an *oath* which is invalid. This is the oath sworn to Tyndareus by Helen's suitors:

I. A. 390 ff.:

ᾧμοσαν τὸν Τυνδάρειον ὄρκον οἱ κακόφρονες
φιλόγαμοι μνηστῆρες . . .
οὓς λαβὼν στράτευ' ἔτοιμοι δ' εἰσὶ μωρίᾳ φρενῶν.

"Those infatuate marriage-craving suitors swore an oath indeed
Unto Tyndareus; . . .
Lead them thou—O these are ready in the folly of their soul!"

This oath was invalid because it was extorted on a false pretense:

I. A. 66-67:

ἐπεὶ δ' ἐπιστάθησαν ἐμπέδως, γέρων
ὑπῆλθεν αὐτοὺς Τυνδάρεως πυκνῇ φρενί, κ. τ. λ.

"So when they had pledged them thus, and cunningly
Old Tyndareus had by craft outwitted them, etc."

The oath was taken under the usual solemn forms of swearing and an imprecation of harm to him who should fail in his obligation was added, (ἐπαράσασθαι):

I. A. 57-65:

καὶ νῦν εἰσῆλθεν τάδε,
ὄρκους συνάψαι δεξιὰς τε συμβαλεῖν κ. τ. λ.

" . . . and this thing came into his mind,
That each to each the suitors should make oath,
And clasp right hands, and with burnt sacrifice
Should pour drink-offerings, and swear to this:—
Whose wife soever Tyndareus' child should be,
Him to defend: if any from her home
Stole her and fled, and thrust her lord aside,
To march against him, and to raze his town,
Hellene or alien, with their mailed array."

The suitors had taken the oath because each hoped to be the husband of Helen; and since they were bound by this oath they had to take the consequences of their folly and join the Trojan expedition, and so fulfil their oath. In taking such an oath they are called *κακόφρονες* "infatuate," vv. 390-91. But Euripides adds that while men may be in the dark about the validity or invalidity of oaths the Godhead well knows how to distinguish those which are valid from those which are not:

I. A. 395-96:

οὐ γὰρ ἀσύνετον τὸ θεῖον, ἀλλ' ἔχει συνιέναι
τοὺς κακῶς παγέντας ὄρκους καὶ κατηνγκασμένους.

"God is not an undiscerning judge; his eyes are keen to try
Oaths exacted by constraint, and troth-plight held unrighteously."

Menelaus under a solemn oath by his and Agamemnon's ancestors declares that he no longer desires to possess a bad wife at the cost of a good brother's happiness:

I. A. 473 ff.:

Πέλοπα κατόμνυμ', ὅς πατήρ τοῦμοῦ πατρός
τοῦ σοῦ τ' ἐκλήθη, τὸν τεκόντα τ' Ἀτρεά,
κ. τ. λ.

"I swear by Pelops, of my sire and thine
Named father, and by Atreus our own sire,
That from mine heart's core I will speak to thee,
To serve no end, but all mine inmost thought, etc."

Likewise Achilles, when swearing, invokes his ancestor:

I. A. 948-50:

μὰ τὸν δι' ὕγρων κυμάτων τετραμμένον
Νηρέα, φντούργον Θέτιδος ἥ μ' ἐγένετο,
οὐχ ἄψεται σῆς θυγατρὸς Ἀγαμέμνων ἀναξ.

"No, by the foster-son of Ocean's waves,
Nereus, the sire of Thetis who bare me,
King Agamemnon shall not touch thy child."

The poet's dislike for *seers* also finds expression in our play:

I. A. 520-21:

τὸ μαντικὸν πᾶν σπέρμα φιλότιμον κακόν.
κοῦδεν γ' ἀρεστὸν οὐδὲ χρήσιμον παρόν.

Agam. "The whole seer-tribe is an ambitious curse."

Menel. "Abominable and useless,—*while alive*."

Cf. also El. 400; Hel. 755; I. T. 574.

Achilles bitterly asks:

I. A. 956:

τίς δὲ μάντις ἔστ' ἀνὴρ;

"What is a seer?"

and answers his own question:

I. A. 957-58:

ὅς ὀλίγ' ἀληθῆ, πολλὰ δὲ ψευδῆ λέγει
τυχῶν· ὅταν δὲ μὴ τύχη, διοίχεται.

"A man who speaks few truths, but many lies,
When his shafts hit, who is ruined if he miss."

(*I.e.*, he loses all credit when he fails.)

17. THE BACCHÆ

The "Bacchæ" was composed or completed during the residence of Euripides with Archelaus in Macedonia and in all probability was the work of his latest years. It brings before us the conflict between divine power claiming its due recognition (Dionysus), and human arrogance denying that claim (Pentheus). The play details the miserable end of Pentheus, who stands alone in obstinate resistance to the worship of Dionysus. A devout and religious tone is predominant throughout this play. The splendid choral odes of the "Bacchanals," their passionate cries and wild ecstatic prayers express the one theme of pious devotion in varying forms following the development of the action.

The chorus in an *ecstatic prayer* call the Goddess of Sanctity to listen to the impious language of Pentheus:

Bacch. 370 ff.:

Ὅσια πάντα θεῶν,
Ὅσια δ' ἂ κατὰ γῆν
χρυσέαν πτέρυγα φέρεις, κ. τ. λ.

"O Sanctity, thou who dost bear dominion
Over Gods, yet low as this earthly ground,
Unto usward, stoopest thy golden pinion,—
Hear'st thou the words of the king, and the sound
Of his blast of defiance, of Pentheus assailing
The Clamour-king?—hear'st thou this blasphemous railing
On Semele's son, who is foremost found
Of the Blest in the festival beauty-crowned? etc."

In the spirit of Bacchic frenzy the chorus invoke the God:

Bacch. 414-15:

ἐκεῖσ' ἄγε με, Βρόμιε Βρόμιε, κ. τ. λ.

"... Thitherward lead me, O Clamour-king!
O Revel-god, guide where the Graces abide
And Desire,—where danceth, of no man denied,
The Bacchanal ring."

The chorus call upon the God to come and check the insolence of the king:

Bacch. 550 ff.:

ἑσορᾷς τάδ', ὦ Διὸς παῖ
Διόνυσε, σοὺς προφῆτας κ. τ. λ.

" . . . Son of Zeus, are his deeds of thine eye un beholden,
 Dionysus?—thy prophets with tyranny wrestling in struggle and
 strain?
 Sweep down the slope of Olympus, uptossing thy thyrsus golden:
 Come to us, King, and the murderer's insolent fury refrain, etc."

Having called upon the hounds of Madness to arouse the
 Mænads against Pentheus, the godless intruder into their sacred
 rites, the chorus invoke Justice and the presence of the God
 himself:

Bacch. 1012-23:

ἵτω δίκαια φανερός, ἵτω ξυψηφόρος κ. τ. λ.
 ἦθ', ὦ Βάκχε, κ. τ. λ.

"Justice, draw nigh us, draw nigh, with the sword of avenging
 appear:
 Slay the unrighteous, the seed of Echion, the earth-born, and
 shear
 Clean through his throat; for he feareth not God, neither law
 doth he fear."

"O Dionysus, reveal thee!—appear as a bull to behold,
 Or be thou seen as dragon, a monster of heads manifold,
 Or as a lion with splendours of flame round the limbs of him
 rolled.
 Come to us, Bacchus, and smiling in mockery compass him
 around
 Now with the toils of destruction, and so shall the hunter be
 bound,
 Trapped mid the throng of the Mænads, the quarry his questing
 hath found."

Since the "Bacchæ" apparently breathe a more religious spirit
 than most of the earlier dramas of Euripides, scholars have often
 maintained that the play is a sort of recantation on the part of the
 poet, "a reactionary manifesto in favour of orthodoxy." In the
 judgment of G. Murray this is a "view which hardly merits refu-
 tation." Even in the "Bacchæ," towards the close of the play in
 the colloquy between Agave and Dionysus, Euripides does not
 shrink from exposing the imperfections of the legend and repre-
 senting the Gods in an obnoxious light:

Bacch. 1344-49:

- A. Διόνυσσε, λισσόμεσθ' ἄ σ', ἡδικήκαμεν.
 Δ. ὅψ' ἐμάθεθ' ἡμᾶς, ὅτε δ' ἐχρῆν, οὐκ ᾔδετε.
 A. ἐγνώκαμεν ταῦτ'· ἀλλ' ἐπεξέρχει λίαν.
 Δ. καὶ γὰρ πρὸς ὑμῶν θεὸς γεγώς ὑβριζόμεν.
 A. ὀργὰς πρέπει θεοὺς οὐχ ὁμοιοῦσθαι βροτοῖς.
 Δ. πάλαι τὰδε Ζεὺς οὐμὸς ἐπένευσεν πατὴρ.
 A. "Dionysus, we beseech thee!—we have sinned."
 D. "Too late ye know me, who knew not in your hour."
 A. "We know it—but thy vengeance passeth bounds."
 D. "I am a God: ye did despise to me."
 A. "It fits not that in wrath Gods be as men."
 D. "Long since my father Zeus ordained this so."

Dionysus possesses *prophetic* knowledge and predicts future events. No doubt, some verses of Dionysus' speech have been lost at the end of the play. The portion preserved begins with his prophecy of the weird transformation of Cadmus:

Bacch. 1330 ff.:

δράκων γενήσεται μεταβαλὼν, κ. τ. λ.
 χρησμὸς ὡς λέγει Διὸς, κ. τ. λ.

"Thou to a serpent shalt be changed; thy wife, etc.
 . . . Zeus' oracle saith, etc."

Teiresias, the prophet of Apollo, describes Dionysus as a God possessed of oracular power and prophetic madness:

Bacch. 298-99:

μάντις δ' ὁ δαίμων ὄδ'· τὸ γὰρ βακχεύσιμον
 καὶ τὸ μανιώδες μαντικὴν πολλὴν ἔχει.

"A prophet is this God: the Bacchic frenzy
 And ecstasy are full-fraught with prophecy."

cf. also Hec. 1267:

ὁ Θρηξὶ μάντις εἶπε Διώνυσος τὰδε.

Dramatically appropriate in the lips of the aged seer Teiresias is the conservative tone in which he protests against rationalizing and speculating about the Gods, as if our reason were capable of dealing with the question, vv. 200 ff.

"'Tis not for us to reason touching Gods.
 Traditions of our fathers, old as time,

We hold: no reasoning shall cast them down,—
No, though of subtlest wit our wisdom spring, etc.”

We cannot, however, unreservedly accept the seer as the spokesman of the opinion of the poet, who, as appears from passages in other plays, had no great love for prophets and soothsayers; and even a play of such a religious character as the “Bacchæ” contains a strong invective against the diviners: The taunts of venality which Euripides in vv. 255 ff. allows to be flung at Teiresias by Pentheus,—taunts which remain unanswered by the seer, may well make us hesitate in accepting the prophet as the exponent of the poet’s own opinion in vv. 200 ff. Pentheus severely attacks Teiresias:

Bacch. 255-57:

σὺ ταῦτ’ ἔπεισας, Τειρεσία· τόνδ’ αὖ θέλεις
τὸν δαίμον’ ἀνθρώποισιν εἰσφέρειν νέον
σκοπεῖν πτερωτοὺς κάμπύρων μισθοὺς φέρειν.

“Thou didst, Teiresias, draw him to this:
’Tis thou wouldst foist this new God upon men
For augury and divination’s wage!”

The service of a new God was pretty sure to bring with it some new profits from the credulous, especially as Dionysus was an oracular God. The function of the soothsayer seems to have been held in small repute among the contemporaries of Euripides, and passages like these (see also Hipp. 1059; Ion 374-8; Hel. 744-57; El. 400; Phœn. 772; I. A. 520; and Frgm. 793) reflect the feeling of the day. Such censure of false prophets, so common in Euripides, is doubtless due to the conduct of the mendicant soothsayers and jugglers of the time.

For formula of oath see:

Bacch. 534-35:

ἔτι ναὶ τὰν βοτρυνώδη
Διονύσου χάριν οἶσας.

“... I swear by the full-clustered
Grace of the vine Dionysian.”

The Greeks usually called a divinity to witness that was connected with the subject of discourse.

18. THE CYCLOPS

The "Cyclops" is the only extant example of a satyric drama. Although the play brings us into contact with customs and modes of religious worship of a period long before Euripides, it furnishes very little material for our search of the supernatural.

Odysseus *prays* to Athena and Zeus:

Cycl. 350-55:

ὦ Παλλὰς, ὦ δέσποινα Διογενὲς θεά, κ. τ. λ.

Ζεῦ ξένι' ὅρα τάδ' κ. τ. λ.

"O Pallas, Child of Zeus, O Heavenly Queen,
Help, help me now, for never have I been,
Mid all Troy's travail, in such strait as this!
Oh, this is peril's bottomless abyss!
O Dweller in the starry Halls of Light,
Zeus, thou Guest-champion, look upon my plight!
If thou regard not, vainly we confess
Thy godhead, Zeus, who art mere nothingness!"

For the same thought see:

Cycl. 375-76:

ὦ Ζεῦ, τί λέξω, δειν' ἰδὼν ἀντρῶν ἔσω
κού πιστά, μύθοις εἰκότ' οὐδ' ἔργοις βροτῶν;

"O God, that cave!—that mine eyes should behold
Horrors incredible, etc."

Odysseus also appeals to Hephæstus, the presiding God of Etna to help him in getting rid of the Cyclops who is a pest to the island:

Cycl. 599-607:

"Ἡφαίστ' ἀναξ Αἰτναΐε, γέγονος κακοῦ
λαμπρὸν πυρώσας ὅμμ' ἀπαλλάχθῃθ' ἄπαξ,
κ. τ. λ.

"O Fire-god, king of Etna, burn away
The eye of thy vile neighbour, and for aye
Rid thee of him! O child of black Night, Sleep,
On this god-hated brute in full power leap!
Bring not Odysseus and his crew to naught,
After these glorious toils in Ilium wrought,
Through one who gives to God nor man a thought!"

Else must we think that Chance bears rule in heaven,
That lordship over Gods to her is given."

The drunken Silenus pronounces *curses* on Odysseus and his comrades:

Cycl. 261:

κακῶς γὰρ ἐξόλοιο.

"... devil take you!"

Cycl. 268-69:

ἢ κακῶς οὔτοι κακοὶ
οἱ παῖδες ἀπόλουντο.

"... Else—may they go to hell
These bad boys!"

Silenus swears "by all the gods and little fishes" that he has not sold the lambs of Cyclops:

Cycl. 262 ff.:

μὰ τὸν Ποσειδῶ τὸν τεκόντα σ', ὦ Κύκλωψ,
μὰ τὸν μέγαν Τρίτωνα καὶ τὸν Νηρέα,
μὰ τὴν Καλυψὶά τὰς τε Νηρέως κόρας,
μὰ θ' ἱερὰ κύματ' ἰχθύων τε πᾶν γένος,
ἀπώμοσ', κ. τ. λ.

"By the Sea-god your father, Sir, I vow,
By mighty Triton, Nereus, Lord of Waters,
Calypso, and all Nereus' pretty daughters,
By every holy wave that swings and swishes—
In short, by all the gods and little fishes
I swear—... etc."

19. THE FRAGMENTS

In the Fragments of Euripides the following prayers and invocations are contained:

fr. 123:

ὦ θεοί, τίν' εἰς γῆν βαρβάρων ἀφίγμεθα κ. τ. λ.

"O Gods, what barbarous land have we reached! etc."

Fr. 132:

σὺ δ' ὦ τύραννε θεῶν τε κἀνθρώπων Ἔρως, κ. τ. λ.

"Eros, thou mistress of the Gods and men, etc."

fr. 177:

ὦ παῖ Διώνης, ὥς ἔφυς μέγας θεός,
Διώνυσε, θνητοῖς τ' οὐδαμῶς ὑποστατός.

"O Dionysus, Dione's son, how great a God hast thou become,
in no wise inferior to mortals!"

fr. 705 contains an invocation addressed to Apollo:

ὦ Φοῖβ' Ἀπολλων Λύκιε, τί ποτέ μ' ἐργάσει;

fr. 867 one addressed to Ahprodite:

ὦ Κύπρις, ὥς ἡδεῖα καὶ μοχθηρὸς εἶ.

The following beautiful fragment contains a praise of the world-pervading reason or intelligence:

fr. 596:

σὲ τὸν αὐτοφυῆ τὸν ἐν αἰθερίῳ
ῥύμβῳ πάντων φύσιν ἐμπλέξανθ',
ὃν περὶ μὲν φῶς, περὶ δ' ὀρφναῖα
νύξ αἰολόχρως, ἀκριτὸς τ' ἄστρον
δῆλος ἐνδελειχῶς ἀμφιχορεύει.

"Thee, self-begotten, who, in ether rolled
Ceaselessly round, by mystic links dost blend
The nature of all things, whom veils enfold
Of light, of dark night flecked with gleams of gold.
Of star-hosts dancing round thee without end."

Cf. also fr. 935:

"Seest thou the boundless ether there on high,
That folds the earth around with dewy arms?
This deem thou Zeus, this reckon one with God."

and fr. 869:

ἀλλ' αἰθὴρ τίκτει σε, κόρα,
Ζεὺς δὲ ἀνθρώποις ὀνομάζεται.

"Maiden, 'twas Ether gave thee birth,
Who is named Zeus by sons of earth."

(See also pages 80 ff. on Troad. 884-88.)

In another fragment we read:

fr. 938:

καὶ Γαῖα μήτηρ· Ἔστίαν δέ σ' οἱ σοφοὶ
βροτῶν καλοῦσιν ἡμένην ἐν αἰθέρι.

"O mother Earth, the wise of mortals call thee Hestia whose seat is in the sky."

The vague belief of the poet finds expression in the following prayer:

fr. 904:

σοὶ τῷ πάντων μεδέοντι χοῆν
πέλανόν τε φέρω, Ζεὺς εἴτ' Ἀΐδης
ὀνομαζόμενος στέργεις· σὺ δέ μοι
θυσίαν ἄπυρον παγκαρπέας
δέξαι πλήρη προχυνθείσαν.
σὺ γὰρ ἔν τε θεοῖς τοῖς οὐρανίδαῖς
σκήπτρον τὸ Διὸς μεταχειρίζων
χθονίων θ' Ἀΐδῃ μετέχεις ἀρχῆς.
πέμψον δ' ἐς φῶς ψυχὰς ἐνέρων
τοῖς βουλομένοις ἄθλους προμαθεῖν κ. τ. λ.

"To thee, ruler of all things, whether thou choosest to be named Zeus or Hades, I bring libation and offerings, etc. . . . thou, who art wielding the sceptre among the Gods in heaven and rulest among the Gods in Hades send souls of those beneath the earth up to light to those who are eager to know the origin of troubles and the source of evils, etc."

Perhaps line 9 should be read:

πέμψον μὲν φῶς ψυχαῖς ἀνέρων.

"Send light to the souls of men!"

The following two examples are taken from the fragmenta dubia et spuria of Euripides:

fr. 1104 ascribes to Zeus omniscience and omnipresence:

ὦ Ζεῦ πανόπτα καὶ κατόπτα πανταχοῦ.

fr. 1094 contains a prayer addressed to Athena,—“almost the only Goddess,” as J. Adam says, “from whom the poet refrains his sacrilegious hand”:

ὦ τοῦ μεγίστου Ζηνὸς ἄλκιμον τέκος
Παλλάς, τί δρώμεν κ. τ. λ.

“O Pallas, thou mighty Child of great Zeus, what shall we do?”

In his “Danaë” the poet makes one of his characters declaim the following prayer to gold:

fr. 326:

ὦ χρυσέ, δεξιῶμα κάλλιστον βροτοῖς,
ὥς οὔτε μήτηρ ἡδονὰς τοιάσδ' ἔχει,
οὐ παῖδες ἀνθρώποισιν, οὐ φίλος πατήρ,
οἷας σὺ χοῖ σέ δώμασιν κεκτημένοι.
εἰ δ' ἡ Κύπρις τοιοῦτον ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄρᾳ,
οὐ θαῦμ' ἔρωτας μυρίους αὐτὴν ἔχειν.

"O Gold, most beautiful delight of mortals! Neither their mother, nor their children, nor their father enjoy such pleasures as thou and those who possess thee. If Cypris has such (splendor) in her eyes, no wonder that she has a thousand lovers!"

This eulogy of gold was undoubtedly meant by the poet to be ironical. But the Athenian public was scandalized by such an utterance which seemed opposed to the traditional belief, and, as Seneca tells us, rose at these words and would have driven the actor and the play from the stage had Euripides not come out and announced that the actor was going to be punished for the godless utterance he had made. Seneca Epist. 115: . . . totus populus ad eiciendum et actorem et carmen consurrexit uno impetu, donec Euripides in medium ipse prosiluit petens ut expectarent viderentque quem admirator auri exitum faceret.

Although Euripides stood aloof from public life he missed no opportunity to declare his love for liberty and his hatred of absolute power. Upon tyranny and all those who are in sympathy with it he pronounces a curse:

fr. 277:

κακῶς δ' ὀλοῦντο πάντες οἱ τυρραννίδι
χαίρουσιν ὀλίγη τ' ἐν πόλει μοναρχία.

"Cursed be all those who rejoice to see the city in the hands of a single man or under the yoke of a few men!"

Prayer to the dead is in vain:

fr. 336:

δοκεῖς τὸν Ἅιδην σῶν τι φροντίζειν γόων
καὶ παῖδ' ἀνήσειν τὸν σόν, εἰ θέλοις στένειν;
παῦσαι· κ. τ. λ.

"Do you believe that Hades heeds thy lamentations,
. . . and sends up thy sons? Be silent! etc."

For similar thought see fr. 454, where we read about Hercules:

"For if he dwelleth in the underworld
Midst those that are no more, he is strengthless all."

and fr. 536:

"... All who have died
Are shadows and dust: nothingness fades to nothingness."

These passages are striking examples of the contradictions which are so common in Euripides. For the poet's opposite view on the subject cf. El. 677 ff.; Hec. 534-41; Troad. 1302, 1307.

Reference to *oath* is made:

fr. 491:

ὀμνῶμι δ' ἱερὸν αἰθέρ', οἴκησιν Διός.

"I swear by holy Ether, the dwelling of Zeus."

and fr. 1030:

συγγνώμονάς τοι τοὺς θεοὺς εἶναι δοκεῖς,
ὅταν τις ὀρκῷ θάνατον ἐκφυγεῖν θέλῃ;

"Dost thou believe the Gods are disposed to pardon, if someone wishes to escape death by oath?"

Zeus is called the most truthful *μάντις* among the Gods,

fr. 875:

Ζεὺς ἐν θεοῖσι μάντις ἀψευδέστατος
καὶ τέλος αὐτὸς ἔχει.

Melanippe is described as one who proclaimed unerring prophecies:

fr. 485:

ἢ πρῶτα μὲν τὰ θεῖα προμαντεύσατο
χρησμοῖσι σαφέσιν ἀστέρων ἐπ' ἀντολαῖς

The following fragments are in keeping with the poet's usual contempt for soothsayers:

fr. 963:

μάντις δ' ἄριστος ὅστις εἰκάζει καλῶς.

"The best seer is he who guesses well."

and fr. 793:

τί δῆτα θάκοις μαντικοῖς ἐνήμεροι
σαφῶς διόμνυσθ' εἰδέναι τὰ δαιμόνων;

οὐ τῶνδε χειρώνακτες ἄνθρωποι λόγων·
ὅστις γὰρ αὐχεῖ θεῶν ἐπίστασθαι πέρι,
οὐδὲν τι μᾶλλον οἶδεν ἢ πείθειν λέγων.

"Why do you, who hold prophetic seats, declare that you have perfect knowledge of things divine? There are no diviners! For he who pretends to know the will of Heaven only knows how to deceive by his talk."

SUMMARY RESULT OF THE PRECEDING DISCUSSION

Even after having carefully examined all the available material on the subject the difficulty still remains to reach tenable conclusions in regard to the poet's view of the supernatural. For all his lucidity of language, Euripides is not lucid about his ideas especially in connection with the supernatural. No wonder that few subjects connected with Euripides have attracted the attention of scholars more than his religious views, and that the scholars do not agree among themselves in answering the question: What position does the poet take up with reference to the supernatural? "As a thinker," says Murray, "he is even to this day treated almost as a personal enemy by scholars of orthodox and conformist minds; defended, idealized, and sometimes transformed beyond recognition by various champions of rebellion and the free intellect." Schlegel advises: "We may distinguish in him a two-fold character, *the poet*, whose productions were consecrated to a religious solemnity, who stood under the protection of religion, and who therefore, on his part, was bound to honor it, and *the sophist* with his philosophical dicta, who endeavoured to insinuate his sceptical opinions and doubts into the fabulous marvels of religion from which he derived the subjects of his plays." Schlegel's view is right, if we grant his premises, viz., that the poet's insinuating of sceptical opinions and doubts is of set purpose; and even then the question is left to be answered: Where speaks the poet, and where the sophist?—Donaldson, in his "Theatre of the Greeks" briefly describes Euripides as "altogether devoid of religious feelings," while Haigh characterizes the poet's mind "as essentially of a religious and meditative cast."—According to the theory lately propounded by Dr. Verrall our poet is the "sceptic" and "rationalist" whose plays are a covert but intended attack on the popular religion, bearing one meaning to

the multitude and another to the "advanced thinkers" of the day. "The orthodoxy is pretended fiction, a mere theatrical trick, required in the first instance, and to some extent throughout, by the peculiar conditions of the tragic stage at Athens, but maintained in part out of a natural love for duplicity, ambiguity, irony, and the play of meaning, which was characteristic of the people and the time" (Euripides the Rationalist, pp. 231-232). But if Euripides really was concealing a rationalistic doctrine under the garb of his drama, we can hardly imagine how this would have escaped the scrutiny of the most keen-eyed and merciless of critics, Aristophanes. Nor can we understand that for more than two thousand years none of all the painstaking students has been able to penetrate the disguise, which Dr. Verrall has discovered in the works of Euripides. There can be no doubt that the opinion of modern scholars has been influenced by Aristophanes who presents Euripides as a proselyting atheist. Yet the comic poet must not be mistaken for a historian, and his manifest exaggerations should have put professional critics on their guard, all the more as he swung his comic lash over Euripides with special vigor because of personal feeling.

To do Euripides justice we must first of all realize that he was the child of a particular age. He lived in a time of general dissolution when everything in the moral, religious, and social life was fluctuating. It was the age of the *sophists* with their agnosticism on the one hand and their virtual atheism on the other. Protagoras had been expelled from Athens for his free-thinking. To quote his own words: "About the Gods I am unable to affirm either that they exist or that they do not exist, nor what they are like." Prodicus declared that the so-called Gods were only personifications of those objects which experience had found beneficial to the life of man: Demeter was only the apotheosis of bread, as Dionysus of wine, Poseidon of water, Hephæstus of fire, and so forth. With these men Euripides was contemporary, and he undoubtedly acquainted himself with their thoughts on nature, man, and God. Then the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) in its bearings on religious ideas was also of vital importance. In time of distress and misfortune, men often begin to reconsider

the foundations of their beliefs. One fate appeared for the righteous and the wicked, for those that sacrificed and for those that sacrificed not. This bitter experience had shaken the already weakened joints of the ancestral religious structure, and finally the old beliefs themselves went by the board.

Euripides is above all others the spokesman of his time, the poet in whom the spirit of revolt against the older conceptions of the supernatural appears. How far the dissolution of the traditional beliefs had proceeded in his time is difficult to say. It is, however, probable that his attacks on the religion of the masses were preceded by other attacks. At any rate, people's minds in Euripides' days were prepared to hear, even in the theatre, doubt cast on what concerned the Gods; and when Euripides approached religious tradition with scepticism and liberal frankness he was supported by the spirit of the time in which he lived.

Here the question arises: If Euripides was so at variance with the traditional beliefs, why then did he make such frequent use of the supernatural in his tragedies? It is possible, though not very probable, that one of his reasons was to counteract the popular prejudice against his supposed atheism. The main reason, however, was that he could not put aside the historic atmosphere of the Attic drama. Tradition and dramatic propriety compelled him to take his themes from the myths and heroic legends, however abhorrent many of these must have been to him. No one in Euripides' days could have broken free from these traditions; in attempting to do so he must have wrecked either his fame or his art. And above all we must not forget that Euripides was a dramatic poet and not a theological teacher. His task was rather to interest than to instruct, not to inculcate certain sceptical views and theological criticism, but to give to the people the pleasure which a good tragedy can afford.

We must, moreover, always bear in mind that it will not do to take, without discrimination, all the views which his characters maintain for the reflective opinion of the dramatic poet. Frequently these views are contradictory and necessarily vary according to the dramatis personæ and to the dramatic situation.

But after all due allowances have been made it cannot be

denied that Euripides through his characters and choruses, not only now and then, but throughout his tragedies, expresses views on the supernatural with evident satisfaction, and in a language that leaves no doubt that these views are dear to him and reflect his own thought.

Euripides' characters often appeal to the Gods in *prayer*, and some of their prayers are of the finest type expressing the profound sentiments of a devout and godly soul. But side by side with this kind of prayers are others of an entirely opposite character—and these are by no means the exception but the rule. Our poet often employs prayers which are nothing but expressions of disbelief in the use and value of prayer. Others are in reality no prayers at all, but mere expostulations, invectives, maledictions, and blasphemies hurled against the Gods. That this is the prevailing attitude of the poet towards the Gods of Greek mythology has sufficiently been illustrated by various examples in the preceding discussion. But how do we account for this extent of the poet's iconoclasm?

It has been maintained that Euripides was an atheist, hence his violent attack against the traditional beliefs which he considered nothing but superstitions and follies. I venture to say that he was not in any sense an atheist. The often quoted fragment from the "Bellerophontes":

fr. 288:

φησὶν τις εἶναι δῆτ' ἐν οὐρανῷ θεούς;
οὐκ εἶσιν, οὐκ εἶσιν.

"Doth any say that there are Gods in heaven?
Nay there are none!"

does not prove the atheism of Euripides any more than Prometheus' maledictions against Zeus prove the impiety of Æschylus. Bellerophontes like Prometheus is godless, and for his godlessness is blasted by the thunderbolt. We must also take into account that a radical denial of the Gods would have been impossible in an Athenian theatre in the days of Euripides.

In denying the Gods of Greek mythology our poet does not deny the existence of divine powers altogether; but as to what these

divine powers really are he does not make any positive suggestions. He speaks of God and of the Gods promiscuously. The question whether polytheism or monotheism never roused his interest. At times his conception of the divine being is that of a pantheist, at times that of an agnostic. But "whoever Zeus may be," *ὅστις ὁ Ζεὺς*, H. F. 1263; fr. 483; whether he be Ether, or Necessity, or Mind, or Justice,—“whatever Gods be,” Or. 418: *ὁ τι ποτ' εἶσιν οἱ θεοί*—there is but one thing which Euripides demands as an essential quality in a divinity, namely, that it must be morally blameless and absolutely just. The common people endowed the Gods with all the human passions. This unreasonableness and immorality of popular beliefs was exceedingly repugnant to Euripides. He makes Iphigenia say, I. T. 385 ff.:

“It cannot be that Zeus' bride Leto bare
Such folly. Nay, I hold unworthy credence
The banquet given of Tantalus to the Gods,—
As though the Gods could savour a child's flesh!
Even so, this folk, themselves man-murderers,
Charge on their Goddess their own sin, I ween;
For I believe that none of Gods is vile!”

and one of the poet's characters in the “Bellerophon” declares:

fr. 294, 7:

εἰ θεοί τι δρώσιν αἰσχρόν, οὐκ εἶσιν θεοί.

“If the Gods do aught base, then they are not Gods.”

This latter declaration is according to the German scholar, Nestle, the basic principle of Euripides' whole attack upon the Gods of Greek mythology. Over against this verse of Euripides Nestle sets the following verse of Sophocles:

fr. 226, 4:

αἰσχρόν μὲν οὐδὲν ὧν ἰφηγούνται θεοί,

“Nothing to which the Gods lead men is base,”

and points out what both poets have in common with each other and in what they differ from one another. Common to both is the assumption “that God and sin are mutually exclusive terms”;

but they differ in the conclusion which they draw from this assumption. Sophocles infers: Everything the Gods do is right, no matter how it may seem to us ("even if they bid thee travel beyond the right" (ἐξω δίκης). Euripides draws the opposite conclusion: The sinful Gods of mythology are no Gods at all.

Furthermore, Euripides, as contrasted with Sophocles, could not reconcile the baffling spectacle of injustice triumphing over justice with a belief in the existence of just beings such as he held the Gods must be. The cruel inequality of the distribution of blessings and evils among men leads him sometimes to doubt the providential government of the world in any sense of the term.

These conceptions that the popular Gods are devoid of justice, and that there is no divine justice in the government of the world, fully explain the poet's attitude to represent these Gods, whenever opportunity offers, in an unfavorable, obnoxious, and shameful light, thus holding forth what a miserable set of deities men had formed for themselves out of their own imagination.

Euripides makes frequent use of *prayers addressed to the dead*. Such prayers presuppose at least the existence and presence of the spirit of the dead. In this respect Euripides seems, at first thought, to share the views of the two older dramatists who believed in immortality and a future life; but in reality his many reflections on the subject are of such a conflicting and confusing character that they do not give us any consistent views on the possibility of a future life. Even the prayer of Megara addressed to Hercules in Hades begins with a sceptical remark:

"Dear love,—if any in Hades of the dead
Can hear,—I cry this to thee, Hercules!"

See page 60, H. F. 490 ff.; see also page 130, frgg. 336, 454, 536. Euripides' reflections on life beyond the grave reveal the same inconsistent views which we are everywhere to witness in connection with his handling of the supernatural element.

Curses as well as prayers presuppose the existence of some supernatural power to execute for man his heart's expressed desire. All three tragic poets furnish examples where destiny is

aroused and set in motion by human will in the curse. The beliefs in the intervention of protecting and punishing supernatural powers, inherited curses, and evil destinies play an important part in the tragedies of Æschylus, but according to him it is not a blind fate with which man has to deal; he is only blinded and hastened to destruction when he has voluntarily made an evil choice:

Pers. 742:

ἀλλ' ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χῶ θεὸς συνάπτεται.

"When the fool to folly hasteth, God shall speed him to his fall."

According to Sophocles destiny as the mere expression of the will of the Godhead is just. Œdipus, for example, when informed of the evil in store acts "neither seeing nor inquiring" (οὐδ' ὁρῶν οὐδ' ἱστορῶν) in killing his father and marrying his mother. It is the shortsightedness of man rather than the deception of God which brings him to ruin. Most of the curses in the tragedies of Euripides are imprecations common in the every day life of the Greeks, and they throw but little light on our question regarding the supernatural. But where he refers to hereditary or family curses, as in the "Hippolytus" and the "Phœnissæ," he makes them a part of inevitable fate. In conformity with his conception of the providential government of the world he identifies them with unknown forces that, past human control, bring man to ruin.

That Euripides did not intend to cast doubt on the sacred character of *oaths* has already been stated; for the two examples in question see I. A. 394 ff., and Hipp. 612. In reference to the general outcry against the latter passage Mahaffy with indignation expresses his doubt "whether any criticism, ancient or modern, contains among its myriad injustices, whether of negligence, ignorance, or deliberate malice, a more flagrantly absurd accusation." (Classical Greek Literature, Vol. I, page 335.) Euripides throughout his plays shows a deep regard for the sanctity of oath, but as a profound and advanced thinker he rejects the narrow and unintelligent formalism of the herd. It is not the mere formula of oath which when once pronounced is absolutely binding, even though one be not able to keep one's word. In the

opinion of Euripides only that oath is valid and binding that has been made deliberately and without constraint.

In Greek life *oracles and prophecies* played a considerable part. Belief in divination was particularly strong in the hours of political crisis and national peril, as *e.g.*, during the Peloponnesian War where people were so uncertain about the future the Gods held in store for them. The Greek writers reflect the influence of divination in various ways. How important a figure it cut in Greek thought and life is shown especially by the prominence which Æschylus assigns to divination in Prometheus 484 ff.

Oracles and Prophecies are also of frequent occurrence in the tragedies of Euripides and yet the poet has no regard for the art of divination. Only one of his characters speaks favorably of soothsaying,—Theseus in the "Supplikes" (211 ff.), and he is certainly not the medium of the poet's thought. His own thought on the subject finds expression in nearly all his tragedies. Unsparingly he attacks the "ambitious breed" of soothsayers, who are impostors, and whose art is a lying art. And his attacks upon oracles and divination are made the more effective by presenting the oracle-god himself in the most shameful light. It is, however, not only the worthless and doubtful character of the seers themselves that provokes Euripides to assail the diviners. The basic principle of his attack must be sought in the poet's conception of divination in general. See Hel. 744 ff.; I. A. 957; fr. 793; 963. The knowledge to read the thoughts of the Gods is not within the reach of mortals. Those who pretend to possess this knowledge deceive people by their talk. The inscrutable ways of Heaven are past finding out and therefore divination cannot reveal them. It is at this point that Euripides is principally at variance with his predecessors as far as divination is concerned.

The same spirit of the free-thinker, in contrast with the two older dramatists, is revealed in Euripides' handling of *dreams and visions*. The belief in the divine and prophetic character of dreams and visions is universal throughout Greek literature. In Homer the sender of dreams is Zeus, Il. II, 4 ff. Æschylus

believed that in sleep the human mind is open to influences which in waking moments are denied:

Eum. 104-5:

εὐδονσα γὰρ φρὴν ὄμμασιν λαμπρύνεται,
ἐν ἡμέρᾳ δὲ μοῖρ' ἀπρόσκοπος βροτῶν.

"For oft in sleep comes light upon the soul,
But in the day their fate is hid from men."

He also includes the discovery of the rules of oneiromancy among the important things for which mankind are indebted to Prometheus (485). Euripides following the traditional belief employs dreams and visions in his dramas. Their usage was too well established and they were also too convenient to be given up altogether. He introduces them especially where a pathetic or serious effect is aimed at in tragedy, but at the same time he leaves no doubt as to his own opinion about dreams and visions. In his eyes they belong not to the world of reality, but to the world of illusion. Whatever warrant of truth they have lies in their native power of attraction and in the response which they call out from unprejudiced feeling. Dreams and visions according to Euripides are natural phenomena without any supernatural background; see I. T. 569, 570-75; Or. 255; Alc. 252 ff.

All his life Euripides had been deeply perplexed on the subject of the supernatural, and he found himself no nearer to the truth at the end than he was at the beginning. It has often been maintained that towards the close of his life he has drawn nearer to the religion of his fathers. The only monument of this alleged change is that remarkable play, the "Bacchæ" which has been considered a recantation, or at least an attempt on the part of the poet "to put himself right with the public in matters on which he had been misunderstood" (J. E. Sandys, *The Bacchæ of Euripides*, *Introd.*, p. lxxxix). That this play written in the home of Dionysus, whose worship was intimately connected with the origin and development of the Greek drama, deals predominantly with religious matters, such as the Dionysiac possession, divine madness, and enthusiasm, is only natural. But despite the religious character of the play the handling of the supernatural as

illustrated in prayer and divination in the "Bacchæ" is in keeping with the poet's general attitude toward the supernatural. Even if we accept the view held by C. H. Moore and James Adam that Dionysus in the play "stands for the spirit of enthusiasm in the ancient Greek meaning of the word," and "that the principal lesson of the drama is to be found in the words: *Not with knowledge is wisdom bought* (395), that is, there is something stronger and greater than reason in the life of man, namely enthusiasm, inspiration,"—the indisputable fact still remains that our poet even in the "Bacchæ" relapses into the old iconoclastic manner.

Euripides marks a transition-period. He stands between traditional belief, which still retained its hold over the minds of the common people, and modern thought, which had already awakened and enlightened the minds of many thinking men. He has not altogether thrown off the shackles of tradition, nor has he stepped into the freedom of a new belief. Himself a tragic poet and an advanced and philosophical thinker he is at a double disadvantage. Constrained by the unwritten laws of Greek tragedy he could not sever all connection with the past. Like his predecessors he had to take the subjects for his plays from the myths and heroic legends, but in contrast with the two older tragedians he used his themes as the old forms which he filled with a new spirit. He had to put new wine into old bottles.

But the new wine bursts the outworn bottles. If we consider that Euripides for nearly half a century presented, before all Athens in the theatre, again and again, his modern conceptions of the supernatural, it is out of question that he helped hurry to complete overthrow the falling superstition of Olympus and thus contributed even more than the sophists to the dissolution of the ancient beliefs. In this negative or destructive aspect of his teaching Euripides closely resembles the great satirist of the second century A.D., Lucian of Samosata, who far more openly than Euripides professes the scorn of irrational belief and unsparingly drives the pagan Gods from their thrones in the minds of thinking men. But the Church—strange to say!—did not consider him an ally but an enemy of Christianity, who, according to Suidas, in

the everlasting hell-fire along with Satan shall suffer for the harm he has done the cause of Christ; while the destructive teaching of Euripides beguiled some of the Fathers of the Church to the point of believing that he was a sort of forerunner of Christianity.

As regards the positive or constructive side of Euripides' conceptions of the supernatural he offers no decided or settled convictions, but "he raises," as James Adam says, "nearly all the fundamental questions which men will always ask and never fully answer." He presents problems rather than principles. Æschylus sets forth the operation of great principles. Sophocles portrays great characters. Euripides presents great problems. With a higher type of the supernatural than that of the traditional mythology constantly in view he calls the attention of his fellow-men to the imperfections of the customary belief in order to goad them to reflection.

Euripides is one of the great religious poets of the world, and it is only right and proper that James Adam in his "Religious Teachers of Greece" dedicated an entire chapter to our poet. He is even more than this: not only a religious poet whose mind, like a mirror, reflects the religious ideas of his time, but also a prophet whose message proclaims the morning of a new era.

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