

PROFESSOR
NORWOOD

III

GOD AND MAN IN HIPPOLYTUS

THIS play is not only the most beautiful, the most pathetic and penetrating, among Euripides' extant works: it is also the most finely wrought and many-sided, therefore the most difficult for modern readers, who are almost compelled to discover in it puzzles non-existent for the Athenians who awarded it the first prize in the festival of 428 B.C. Above all, we are uncertain what the deities of the play really mean: does or does not the poet offer them as equally authentic with his human personages? Aphrodite in the prologue, Artemis in the epilogue, agree in perfectly definite language that to Aphrodite's anger is due all the woe here depicted; nevertheless, whereas some of us accept this, others deny it. Let us, then, attempt to secure clarity of thought and poise in appreciation by postponing theology and studying what the chief human *dramatis personae* actually say, do, and suffer. All three—Phaedra, Hippolytus, and Theseus—engage our affection, respect, sympathy, and compassion undeniably though in varying degrees. But all are far from blameless, and seem at least in virtue of their own characters to account for all the pain and misunderstanding.

Let us begin with Hippolytus. Such a man—not perhaps he himself, for the notion of the chaste Hippolytus was familiar, and most opinions are nothing more than acceptance of the established—such a man would have been censured by nearly all fifth-century Greeks for his outlook in general, not (of course) for his horror at the Nurse's disclosure. Theseus attack,¹ in a novel case, would have found the support of nearly everyone in the theatre. "Thou consort with gods as a man set apart? Thou chaste and innocent? Those boasts I disallow: gods are not foolish, nor am I. Now vaunt thyself, thou fleshless dietarian; and, loyal to St. Orpheus, play the devotee awed by the reck of copious scriptures! For thou art caught, ha!" It is all here, every gibe that the "plain blunt man" has always slung at the "superior person": the taking religion so seriously, the sanctimonious air, the giggling about special food and fussy little "devotional" books, the lofty language that cloaks grossness of life. So might a master of fox-hounds, when stung to the extreme, taunt a son given over

¹ Vv. 918-55 (I accept Weil's *tragic* in place of *otious*).

And at the thought of the flitting bee, purest of creatures,¹ at the sound of his own word *aidós*,² he passes to the soul's virginity, his own rapture of maiden communion with the chaste goddess. He is not announcing frigid allegory, but musing at once on two dear influences that make the music of his existence: his spiritual comradeship with Artemis, and the secluded peace suffusing forest and meadow; for these two are one, since the Queen of virgin life is the divine Huntress herself.

Upon this youth, lofty in rank, sundered from others by his religious ardour and by the unique favour of his goddess, in whom the narrowness of sympathy natural to his years is terribly reinforced by spiritual pride, descends a cloud of horror. His stepmother's nurse, in a disgusting yet pathetic interview at which we are left to guess, tells him that her mistress passionately desires him. We learn from Phaedra's tortured gasps that he is reviling the temptress, and in a moment, as she sinks down beside the door, he bursts forth, appealing to Earth and Sun against the iniquity, while the wretched attendant endeavours to secure his silence. After his first exclamations of fury, we observe that he is at point to deliver what we have been dreading, the connected statement or invective usual in Greek tragedy at such moments of crisis. Each man in the audience, aware that he could not handle it well, feels wretchedly certain that he could handle it better than Hippolytus. Unversed in such emotions as these, by no means fully accustomed even to intercourse with the world in general,³ capable of intolerance at the best of times,⁴ is this lad to hold forth on the shortcomings of Phaedra?

The speech more than answers our expectation. It exhibits the vulgarity of imagination that so often startles us in over-refined and fastidious natures when confronted by an emotional crisis. As Hippolytus' prayer to Artemis showed him at his best, in an ecstasy of religion, so does this preachment reveal of what he is capable in an ecstasy of self-righteousness. He begins, and continues, with a random sprawling tirade against female depravity. Here is no distinction between women like Phaedra and women like the Nurse: how, indeed, is he capable of knowing any? His only distinctions are rhetorical antitheses, which do for a moment compel him incidentally to mention good wives, who however spoil the blessing they confer by their "useless relatives".⁵ At last he reaches the point of

¹ *καθαρότατον γὰρ τὴν ἑσὶν ἡ μέλαινα* (schol.). Cp. Gow's note on Theoc. I. 106 f.

² *Ἄρτεμις Αἰδώς* appears on an Attic vase (P. Kretschmer, *Die griechischen Vaseninschriften* (1894), p. 197).

³ See his conversation with the old Huntsman (88-113).

⁴ Vv. 634-7. These lines are rejected by Wilkins and Murray. But they are not bad Greek, nor is their style un-Euripidean. True, they are irrelevant and silly; but

to "the millinery of ritualism". But it is the very worst that can be said of Hippolytus, for perversely enough he follows the hounds himself. Save for one thing, he is the Athenian ideal of an aristocrat. The difference lies in his vivid personal religion.

How much truth the sneers of Theseus contain it is hard to determine.¹ Nothing else in the play suggests that Hippolytus was an Orphic adept, still less that he took part in Bacchic "orgies", though he had been initiated at Eleusis,² as was for such a youth a matter of course in Euripides' own time. Artemis claims his whole worship, his life is inspired by her purity. Passionate absorption in this allegiance, joined to a natural exuberance of imagination, has produced in him a sense of personal companionship with the goddess. Whatever Hippolytus becomes when confronted with the sordidness and pain that lie in ambush for all the sons of men, this secret garden of his life remains inviolate.

For thee, my Queen, this garland have I twined
Of blossoms from that meadow virginal
Where neither shepherd dares his flock to graze
Nor has the scythe come thither; yet the bee
In spring-time haunts that grassy sanctuary
Watered by hermit-piety and awe.
No evil man, but he alone whose heart,
Unlearned else, is lit by purity
In all his ways, the flowers there may cull.
Ah, Queen beloved, for thy shining hair
Accept this crown from dedicated hands!
To me alone of all mankind is given
Converse to hold and company with thee,
Hearing thy voice, although the face be hid:
So may I close my life as it began.

Small wonder that the scholiasts ponder his meaning at great length! The prince has brought back from some grassy nook a garland for his Queen. The only creature, save himself, to venture thither is the bee. By the brook and amid woods and blossoms he has felt the besetting Power that we vaguely call 'Nature', and for which he uses the untranslatable word *aidós*. It is the coyness of natural beauty that has laid hold upon his imagination, the Presence described but never observed in all its lineaments as it glides beneath flower-petals or vanishes into the silvery mist of olive-branches, seductive yet not responding to the gesture of the soul.

¹ His language contains at any rate one word customary on his son's lips, *ἀντίπαρος*: it occurs twice in Hippolytus' salutation to Artemis.

² Vv. 24 ff.

his denunciation: "So didst thou too, base creature, come to me making traffic of my father's sacred bed! Thy speech will I cleanse away in streams of water, sluicing my ears." There he should have ceased. What he has said up to now might have been forgiven: this last thought reminds us simply and rather beautifully of his excuse, the shock that he has suffered. But, true to his type, he knows not when to stop. "How then could I be vile, who feel myself debauched by the mere words? . . ." At this point we feel that he has begun to listen to his own voice, and our pain becomes disgust. On that note he continues: "I tell thee, woman, 'tis my piety that saves thee: for, had I not been caught off my guard by a solemn oath, I should not have refrained from revealing this to my father." That is how, were he free,² he would deal with a dreadful family secret, crying it recklessly in the ears of the last person to whom it should be revealed, whose knowledge would do nothing but double the agony and make even more difficult of attainment the slow half-oblivion that is the only peace Phaedra can hope for. He continues: "But, as it is, I shall leave the house for so long as Theseus is abroad, and hold my peace." This, at any rate, is a satisfactory close, however late; his speech would have been infinitely better had it consisted of these two lines alone. But . . . this is *not* the close. Will he never cease? "With my father I shall return to watch how both thou and thy mistress face him, and shall know the savour of thy daring."³ This, surely, more than any other sentence of his, decides Phaedra not to die alone; and if ever vile taste deserved death, it is now. Hippolytus deliberately proposes to gloat. The piquancy of the contrast between Phaedra's passion, baffled but enduring, and his own staidness, of the complicated and unavowed intimacies wherein he is to revel blamelessly under the eyes of his unconscious father and tortured stepmother—all this he relishes delicately in prospect. If ever a man was damned by his virtues, that man was the son of Theseus.

Such is the provocation. The woman to whom it is offered has precisely the qualities, and finds herself in precisely the situation, that the poet is plainly not concerned here to depict the prince as logical or wise. Elsewhere (fr. 657) he voices our feeling: "Whoever generalizes about women to revile them individually is a blundering fool." Cp. *Hec.* 1183 f.

² Cp. Miss L. E. Mattheaci: "Had the inner or spiritual control been perfect in Hippolytus' nature, the question of the oath would have been almost indifferent. He could not, by nature, have taken part in spreading a moral evil over the area then was necessary." *Studies in Greek Tragedy* (1948), p. 94.

³ Contrast Racine, *Phèdre* II. vi. 6 f., where the prince, on the point of revealing the secret to Thétamène, breaks off:

guarantee her answering the challenge with fatal promptness. Phaedra is the most subtly and beautifully drawn character in Euripides, and we may congratulate ourselves, thanks to the structure and tone of our society, on thoroughly understanding Phaedra,¹ or at the worst understanding her better than did Aristophanes.² It was clear to Euripides, if to no one else in his day, that mere horror or mere disgust, even mere compassion, are of little help in understanding women like his heroine. His was perhaps the first European voice to insist that people must be blamed, if at all, for their conduct, not for their instincts. Instinct is the raw material of ethical existence, whether virtuous or depraved. To make war on it is self-damaging blindness in the society that undertakes the struggle. Passion, instead of shining forth as a fire, at the worst dangerous only to those who know not what fire is, will by the very force of its repression act as an explosive, destroying widely and indiscriminately.³ Euripides, without prejudice to his ultimate verdict on Phaedra's conduct (supposing he intends to give any verdict at all), is determined to study this painful old story and try to discover what kind of woman it can have been who did these things: what instincts prompted her, what means she took to control or use them, and what we may thus learn for the conduct of our own lives.

Asking, then, what known facts of human nature can have produced Phaedra, this good⁴ woman who despite her goodness commits suicide

¹ See Dodds's study of her psychological state (and that of Hippolytus) in *Class. Rev.* vol. XXXIX (1925), pp. 102-4.

² The celebrated scene in *Frogs* 1006-98 contains his most elaborate strictures on the women of Euripides. (Phaedra is cited by name, probably on the strength of the lost *Hippolytus Veiled*, as an example of Euripides' scandalous women, in *Thesm.* 153, 497, 546 ff., *Frogs* 1043 f., 1052 ff., and apparently in *Polyidos*, fr. 453.) These seem to us superficial and slightly vulgar, but there may perhaps be something on the other side. *Frogs* 1079 ff. do seem to reveal that Euripides' work was at times marked by morbid imagination and lubricity. But Aristophanes' known methods in caricature, together with our ignorance of *Silenos* and the earlier *Hippolytus*, forbid us to accept the suggestion unreservedly: Aristophanes' censure is no harsher than the first English criticisms of Ibsen. Still, it should be added that vv. 1050 f., concerning respectable women who had been driven to suicide by "your Bellerophons", read like an allusion to contemporary fact, however distorted.

³ Cp. Dodds (*sup.*, pp. 103 f.): "As Phaedra does violence to *aidós* in the name of *aidós* [see below, p. 81], so does Hippolytus to *σωφροσύνη* in the name of *σωφροσύνη*: each is the victim of his own and the other's submerged desires masquerading as morality. Complementary and interdependent, these are the two determining moments on which the rest of the action hangs. . . . In the formal aspect, it [*Hipp.*] is a representation of the interplay of two personalities, both of them 'nobler than we, but marred by some *ἀμαρτία*'; in conception, it is a study of the effects of conflict and repression in the sphere of sex."

⁴ Good but some would say that our own culture has distorted her character. Naturally.

ultimate and mysterious foundation, from the superstition that introduces "Heaven" at the first moment through intellectual sloth. Whether Phaedra's inherited trait is ultimately derived from a personal Aphroditic or not, it makes sudden *interference* by her unnecessary. We can therefore reasonably refer the queen's passion to "natural" causes.

Tragedy not seldom arises when great emotional energies, already in existence, are unleashed into clashing activity by the touch of accident. Phaedra's instinct is aided by this unpredictable but potent ally. It was no doing of hers or of the prince's that Theseus left Athens and brought Phaedra with him to Trozen, where she was again thrown into Hippolytus' society. In that retired little town occurred—they could not naturally be avoided—the long talks in which the queen took a trembling delight.¹ And again the force of accident² withdraws Theseus to a distance. This and other causes produce the weakening that involves her, not in offence against her husband, but in the Nurse's fatal revelation to Hippolytus. She is conscious that sin has been born with her; the thought arouses fascination as well as horror. She allowed herself in the past to toy with her passion, when she founded a shrine of the Love-Goddess at Athens for Hippolytus' sake,³ and even now she delicately feels the thrill stirring through her reluctance. The intensity of her struggle with desire has brought exhaustion. For two days she has tasted no food,⁴ and is now in a physical state that painfully increases her sensitiveness while undermining her will. This fact, that Phaedra is at the end of her bodily if not of her spiritual resources, should be borne steadily in mind throughout.⁵

¹ V. 384.

² Vv. 29-33. On this difficult passage see Verrall, *Class. Rev.*, vol. XV, p. 149 and Murray's note to his translation (pp. 77 f.). Racine (*Phèdre* I. iii. 125 ff.) has adroitly given this action a wholly different meaning:

Je reconnus Vénus et ses feux redoutables,
D'un sang qu'elle poursuit tourments inévitables.
Par des vœux assidus je crus les détourner.
Je lui bâtis un temple...

⁴ Vv. 135 ff.

⁵ Pain (*Études sur les tragiques grecs: Euripide* 7th ed. (1864), vol. II, p. 317), Willamowitz (*Analekten Euripidea*, p. 214) and A. Kalkmann (*De Hippolytis Euripidis* (1882), pp. 20 f.) forgot this, and far too severely judged her weakest moment (507-24). Kalkmann writes: "Servat speciem pudicitiae, attamen ab omni culpa liberari acquit, cum omnino ad nutrices simulationes descendat; quod ut palam fiat... poeta fingit Phaedram tam levicula et inutilia interrogantem. Aptum praeterea sibi parat hoc modo transitum ad ea, quae sequuntur; quibus dilucidius etiam vetit aspectus, quia mulier amans furtim nititur, aperitur. Nam cur illa animum ambigue semper respondentem et ad extremum per Venerem iuramentum non retinet?" That is not completely untrue but misleading; a harshly masculine condemnation: no one can appreciate Euripides who has no feminine sympathy. (Vv. 515 f. are a rebuke to Phaedra as a little girl quarrelling with her medicine.) Moreover the whole censure can be refuted

and by a lying message murders an innocent man, Euripides finds one cause in the legend. Lawless sexual passion is in the woman's veins. She knows and remembers only too well the history of her house. Early in the play she agonizes over the predisposition towards unchastity whereto these examples point: her confession to the Nurse begins in this key: "Ah, wretched mother, what strange love was thine!" (the bull-legend); "And thou, unhappy sister, wife of Dionysus!" (Ariadne in Naxos). To which the other replies, more to the purpose even than she imagines: "Child, what ails thee? Thou revilest kinswomen."¹ Phaedra unheeding goes on: "And I, the third—ill-starred, undone!" where "third", though by no means implying an inherited curse, does point to the dreadful appropriateness of the speaker's situation. She comes from Crete, "the Isle of awful Love";² and this sinister name occurs repeatedly.³ Phaedra, then, inherits an abnormal tendency to sexual passion: it is her tragedy that, whatever she may do, her mind is not free from it: "my hands are pure, my heart not undefiled."⁴ Hippolytus, also, seems to utter the poet's own thought much later.⁵

We are not, of course, to credit the dramatist with the common and mischievous error of supposing that construction of quasi-scientific phrases, like the "abnormal tendency" just mentioned, offers escape from theories of supernatural causation. We can still ask whence came this tendency. But we must distinguish the investigation that traces human feelings and acts to human history and excludes theology save as an

therefore, readers have differed in their judgements of her. Grube hints distaste (*The Drama of Euripides* (1941), p. 185, n. 2). Pohlenz condemns her for weak conventionalism (*Die griechische Tragödie* (1930), pp. 279, 281). Willamowitz is bitter and contemptuous (*Griechische Tragödien überliefert* (2nd ed.), vol. I, pp. 101-4); nevertheless he atones by an acute remark (p. 101) on her delirium: "Bilder, wie sie Ophelias Phantasie beherrschen, bringt in Phaidra der Wahnsinn nicht an die Oberfläche." Few have noted her instinctive outcry (672) after Hippolytus' urate: "I am rightly served!" (*ἐνίκονες δίκας*).

¹ V. 340: *τίμων, τί μήνομος; αὐτοῖονος κακοποδοῖς*. It seems less good to punctuate (as do Weil, Murray, etc.) with a question-mark at the end.

² Murray's phrase. Cp. Seneca, *Phaedra* 127:

Nulla Minois levi
Defuncta amore est: iungitur semper nefas.

D'Annunzio in his *Fedra* constantly calls the queen "la Cretese", and alludes often with horrible vigour to the crime of Pasiphae (especially Act I, 829 ff.).

³ Vv. 155, 372 (very emphatic), 719, 752-75. This last is a vital passage: note especially *αἰὲρ ὦν, οὐχ οὐδὲν ἐπάρων δέσιν φένας* *Ἀφροδίτας πόσι κατεχέουσθαι*. Aphroditic in the prologue calls Phaedra *εὐγενής* (26). It is significant that the deity to whom on one view—that life's vicissitudes are caused by sudden interruptions of gods—Phaedra's misery is to be attributed, obliterates the other view (about heredity).

⁵ V. 317.

⁴ V. 1034. See below, p. 80.

¹ A woman to whom part of the above description applies had been heard already in the Athenian theatre, bringing a moment of artless charm into the *Glaphorae*. = Shaw's *Cytherea* 1.

¹ A woman to whom part of the above description applies had been heard already in the Athenian theatre, bringing a moment of artless charm into the *Glaphorae*. = Shaw's *Calliope* 1.

recalls the lyrical side of the Nurse.

* Dodds (*ut sup.*) connects this passage with vv. 385 ff. about the two kinds of *aidōs*, which he explains convincingly. "At v. 244 *aidōs* saves Phaedra; at v. 335 it destroys her. . . . She appeals in vain for release from that [the Nurse's] compulsion, and then her resolution breaks: δάσω σέβας γὰρ χερσὶν αἰδοῦμαι τὸ σὸν. . . . Small wonder if in her succeeding agony of remorse and fear she recognises that *aidōs* can be an *αἴθερος οἶκισμα*, . . . she means . . . that the *aidōs* of v. 335 was *ἀκατος*: she has sacrificed to the conventional claim of the suppliant the deeper claim of her own spiritual integrity."

After this unseemly foolishness, she sits recovering herself until Phaedra has finished her confession to the Troezenian ladies. Then she rises to her height in the terrible and magnificent appeal wherewith she almost overbears her mistress. Her chief argument is drawn, with extraordinary art and vigour, from theology itself.

Thy love—why marvel thereat? 'Tis the tale
Of many. Wouldst thou slay thyself for love?
Good sooth! A guerdon strange, if lovers now
And evermore must meet such penalty!
Who shall withstand the Cyprian's rising flood?
Yield to her might, she comes with quietness:
Exalt thy pride and stand on niceties,
She huris thee pell-mell into ignominy.
Amid the heaven she walks, amid the spray
Of yon sea-billows: all life flows from her.
The seed is hers, and hers the passionate throe
Whence spring we all that walk the ways of earth.
Ask them that con the half-forgotten lore
Of elder time, and serve the Muse themselves.
They know how Zeus once pined for Semele,
How for love's sake the Goddess of the Dawn
Stooped from her radiant sphere to Cephalus
And stole him to the sky. Yet these abide
In Heaven, nor shun the converse of the gods,
Bowing, belike, to conquering circumstance.
And wilt not thou? Nay, if this law thou spurnest,
Thy sire, when he begat thee, should have writ
Some compact countersigned by gods unknown.

Next, she would have Phaedra contemplate the ways of mankind. How many agree to ignore, or even aid, irregular conduct! It is hopeless to aim

It is true, as Miss Mathari (*ut sup.*, p. 80) points out, that in her last sentence the Nurse "well describes the real meaning of Aphroditic when she says: 'K'priss, then, it seems, is no goddess, but whate'er there may be greater than a god.' " That hardly reflects the whole speech.

"There is only one reply conceivable, and she has already given it: "What-
ever gods may do, or men think, I must and will act so as still to respect
myself."¹ It is significant that, in a play which on the face of it recognizes
"the gods" as ruling human conduct, Phaedra's great speech (373-430)
should so plainly belie this view. "Cypris" is mentioned once or twice,²
but the whole passage makes it clear that she feels and faces her calamity
as purely human. Socrates was said³ to have brought philosophy down
from Heaven to earth when he concentrated his interest upon ethics; his
friend carries the same development forward by insisting that the centre
of ethics is to be found in Man himself. The endless question, whether
divine *fiat* or human conscience is the foundation of righteousness, has
been settled by Euripides for himself in the latter sense. Phaedra finds no
soul on which she can rely save her own: "I will tell thee also of my
spirit's journey". The whole speech deserves minute study for its precision
both of thought⁴ and of language. But what specially concerns us now is
this "journey" of her mind.

The diction is frigidly clear, almost bald. "When love stabbed me, I
took thought how to bear it most honourably. My first plan, then, was to
keep silent and conceal the malady, for the tongue is treacherous. . . .
My second thought was to bear folly well, conquering it with a chaste
heart. Thirdly, when I saw that by these means I was not attaining mastery
over Cypris, death seemed to me—and none shall gainsay it—the best
counsel." We who so often understand by "virtue" nothing nobler than
absence of sin, and are ever at a loss to translate that word *sophrosyne*
(corresponding to the "chaste heart" in the version just offered), may
here learn from this ancient sinner. *Sophrosyne* is no mere "temperance";
the refusal of self-indulgence: why else should Phaedra mention it as the

different and much simpler use of the verb.) *ἐνείργασμαι* means that Love has gained
power over her by working under the surface, as engineers undermine a town;
ἀναλωθήσεται expresses the helpless horror of the victim who sees first the apparently
solid earth and then her own feet slipping and sinking into the pit.

¹ Cp. vv. 415 ff. and her whole attitude, which accounts (as we shall see) for her
denunciation of Hippolytus.

² In v. 401, *Κύπρις* is surely a mere synonym for *ἔρωτα* (cp. 392) or *ἀνάσσει* (398).
ὡς δέσπονα πορνεία Κύπρις (v. 415) is of course more striking: but the most independent
thinkers slip back easily now and then into traditional language. Sometimes they at
once correct themselves: Hecuba (*Trö.* 469 ff.) sardonically says:

ὡ θεοί . . . κακοὶ μὲν ἀνακαλῶ τοὺς συμμάχους.
ἥμεις δ' ἔχει τὸ σῆμα καλῆσαντες θεούς,
ὅταν τις ἡμῶν δυστυχὴ λυβὴν τύχη.

³ Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* V. 4.

⁴ For instance, she carefully refutes (375-83) the Socratic identification of virtue
with knowledge.

too curiously at perfection: would we have tilers work with the deft
nicety of mosaic artists? If one's life shows more good than bad acts, a
mortal woman should be well satisfied. The sum is: "Nay, dear child,
quit thy evil mood and cease this insolence: for insolence it is, to seek
mastery over gods." Such is the moral deadlock to which we are reduced
by belief in the personal Olympians.¹ She ends with vague talk of in-
cantations, charms, and woman's cunning.

A marvellous speech! The attentive reader will observe how her
language rises and falls in dignity with the phases of her theme.² Later we
hear again the note of bustling good-natured coarseness,³ and the gross
misunderstanding that must have galled Phaedra unendurably: "If your
life had not been so entangled in distress, and you had happened to be a
chaste woman . . ." After the revelation to Hippolytus, she is swept away,
first by his scorn, then by the bitter invective of her mistress, and we hear
no more of her.⁴

To this appeal what reply or defiance can Phaedra offer? She herself
at once recognizes its dreadful eloquence (486-9) and owns its effect:

Nay, in God's name forbear! Thy words are fine,
Yet base withal. Love in my soul too well
Hath mined his way. Preach shame thus winningly,
And, foothold lost, the fate I shun engulfs me.⁵

¹ The position is to be found stated, more definitely than anywhere in Euripides, by
Terence, whose "hero" is encouraged to detestable conduct by seeing a picture of
Jupiter and Danae (*Eur.* 586 ff.). St. Augustine's comment on this (*Confessions* I. xvi)
is the most effective passage in his attack on the *flumen tartareum* of pagan education.
For other parallels to our passage see *Eur. Trö.* 933-50 (cp. 988), *Ar. Clouds* 1079 ff.,
and Menander *Eur.* fr. 187 (Kock).

² Note the plain style of vv. 433-45, which reaches downright colloquialism in *πῶς
δοκεῖς καθύβρισεν*, followed by the majestic description of the World-Goddess in vv.
447-50. Then at the change of argument come the two unadorned lines 451 f., with
the half-casual expression *αἰετοὶ τ' εἰὼν ἐν μούσῃς ἀεί*. Next, when she mentions the
romantic legends of the gods, we find charm and artifice, the *anaphora* *ἴσασαι μὲν . . .
ἴσασαι δέ . . .* and the *epitheton ornans* *καλλιδέγγυς*. So one might proceed to the end.

³ Vv. 490 f. are wellnigh indecently direct.

⁴ At v. 776, where a voice from within cries the news of Phaedra's suicide, the
scholiast writes: *τινὲς βούλονται τὴν τροφὴν τοῦτο αὐτὰ λέγειν, ὅσοι δὲ ἐξέγγελλον φάναι*.
It cannot have been an *exangelos*. Such speakers come forth with their news: here the
speaker goes on (786 f.) to say "lay out the corpse", etc.; but that is done within, for
only at v. 810 is the *exangelos* used. Whether the unseen person is a nameless attendant
or the Nurse it is impossible to determine; nor does it matter.

⁵ Vv. 503-5:

καὶ μὴ σε πρὸς θεῶν—εὐ λέγεις γὰρ, αἰσχρὰ δέ—
πέρι περιβίβης τανύδ'. ὅς ἐνείργασμαι μὲν εὖ
ψυχῇν ἔμαυτι, τὴν στήν δ' ἦν λέγεις καλῶς,
εἰς τανύδ' ὅ φέρω νῦν ἀναλωθήσασθαι.

The metaphor in these lines seems to have been missed. (*ἐνείργασμαι* in *Med.* 871 is a

second of her expedients, different from repression?¹ That first resource is negative virtue, confined to a refusal of sin. But the second is chastity sword in hand, the cherishing of instincts, emotions, and thoughts that not only restrain but fortify: a vibrant loyalty to husband and children,² but also, and even more, to one's own personality as utterly intimate and precious, whose annulment is damnation. Therefore, when these defences fail, there is, there can be, for such a woman as Phaedra no escape but death.

Hearing those chill words, we realize how empty of comfort life can at some hours show itself to those who reject formulas³ and face their own souls. Here is no thought of a saviour from without: the human spirit must struggle alone with an uncomprehended universe. Aeschylus had found a saviour in Zeus,⁴ as recreated by his own spiritual energy; Euripides finds no comfort in gods attested by legends that dim their splendour with weakness or ill deeds. In this speech, moreover, we find for the first time a really vivid portrayal of temptation at work, and a clear realization of conscience. In Medea's bosom the struggle is waged by two conflicting emotions. The sense of abstract Right, as a conception of the individual spirit and a guide of individual conduct, takes no part in her agonized perplexity. Here it dominates Phaedra. Sophocles understands well how duty can brace the soul to heroic life or death, but for him the sanction of duty lies in the will of external deities; for Euripides, conscience is sufficient as a moral law.

Yet this speech reveals fully but one side of Phaedra's nature.⁵ Pure

¹ Euripides is so determined to make the distinction clear that he actually numbers the methods: *ἡμέτερον, δεύτερον, τρίτον*. Nevertheless, students of this play have often been blind to it. Murray's translation renders it plainly. But Pohlenz, acute as he usually is, ignores it (p. 276). Wilamowitz is content to say (*Griechische Tragödien*, *übersetzt*, vol. I, p. 101): "Sie liebt die Tugend, wenigstens redet sie sehr viel davon." But Artemis (of all people) understands clearly, being in some sense a Greek: *γνώπτει δὲ πικρὰ τὴν Κῆρον νεωσύμνην* (1304).

² Wilamowitz writes (*ibid.*, p. 102): "Ihr Ruf ist tadellos. Aber ein innerliches Verhältnis hat sie zu Kindern und Mann nicht, geschweige zu etwas anderem." But see vv. 420-5, 720 f.—surely quite enough: however strong her feelings for Theseus and their children, a very natural *αἰδώς* would make her, situated as she is, reluctant to speak at length about them.

³ Pohlenz (p. 279), contrasting Phaedra with Medea, says: "Phaidras Natur ist Schwachheit, Abhängigkeit von fremdem Einfluß, von konventioneller Sittlichkeit, vom Urteil der Gesellschaft." That is unfair. She values her *repute*, and why not? But she prizes highest her own soul. Again, he says (p. 281): "... dieselbe Rücksicht auf das Urteil der Mitmenschen, die sie vorher auf der Bahn der Tugend erhielt, macht sie nachher zur Verleumderin." It is enough to reply (though one could say more) that she is determined to guard her children's happiness (421-5).

⁴ Obviously it is complex, as was remarked earlier. But Pohlenz writes too pedantically (pt. II, p. 76): "Den Gegensatz der beiden Phaidren kann man mit Termini der

reason, as she says (375 ff.), is not the only factor in life: "Often ere this, in other moods, have I pondered, during the long night-time, how man's life comes to ruin. I believe that unworthy conduct springs not from intellectual fault—sound sense is common enough—but that this is the way to look at it: we see and accept the right, but do not practise it, some from indolence, others through giving the first place, not to honour, but to some one of the many pleasures found in life. . . ." So she herself harbours strong instincts and passions. The whole action centres upon the fact that Hippolytus at his worst comes upon her when in complete despair and therefore at her deadliest. However incredible we may have thought the story, baldly told, of the destruction she works in her last hour, no sympathetic reader can fail to understand her behaviour when portrayed by this master of psychological drama. We can share her dread that the prince will reveal everything: "But come! I need to change the story. For yon man with anger-whetted heart will speak against me to his father of thy misdoing, will speak this sorrow to aged Pittheus and fill the whole land with shameful talk." Such is her plain reason for destroying Hippolytus in whatever way seems certain, however terrible.² She is mistaken in him, but his known character, his recent words, her own circumstances and emotions, all combine to persuade her that one course alone will save her good name and the happiness of her family. Revenge? She has little thought of that; but how humanly she relishes the reflection³ that Hippolytus will hereby learn a bitter lesson in *sophrosyne*! Theseus, although Euripides has given him two of the loveliest lines⁴ that he ever wrote—

ὅπως γὰρ ὡς τις ἐκ χειρὸν ἀδούτος εἴ,
μήδημι ἐς Αἰδου κραυγὴν ὀπίσθασά μοι—

späteren Philosophie (vgl. z. B. Plut. de virt. morali 445d ff.) dahin zusammenfassen, das die erste *αἰδώς* war, d. h. mit Denken und Fühlen dem einen Ziele zustrebe, die zweite *ἀπαρτίς*, in innerem Zwiespalt lebte." There are more than two parts in this woman, as in all of us.

¹ I do not apologize for offering these flat sentences instead of Murray's beautiful translation, because Euripides here writes in the most unadorned style possible to verse.

² Vv. 688-92. Racine (*Phèdre* IV. i), however, refuses to follow Euripides and assigns the slander against Hippolytus to the nurse Oenone, not to her mistress. But this makes Theseus more hasty and credulous than in Euripides, where he reads Phaedra's own testimony.

³ Vv. 728 ff. Miss Mathiaki (p. 103) makes a further point: "... he will realise her: she will impress herself on him for ever".

⁴ Vv. 828 f.: "Like a strange bird hast thou vanished out of my hands, swooping from me into the abode of Death." But one cannot hope to render the quiet pathos of lines which recall Sophocles at his most magical: it "vanishes" indeed from under the

is far less subtly studied and portrayed than the other characters, even the Nurse. That shows perfect control: the play would not bear, nor could we, a fully elaborated Theseus towards the close. But he contributes as much as anyone to the disastrous story,¹ despite the pathetic blindness wherewith he imputes his misery to some ancestor's sin (891 ff.). Hippolytus is the offspring of his youthful incontinence, as the king's own utterance reminds us,² if we are capable of forgetting it. Thus, when in later life he becomes a pillar of morality, his very marriage brings down upon his head the consequences of the past, in that his son and his wife are of nearly the same age. Theseus dimly knows this. During his altercation with Hippolytus he commands himself until the prince in despair cries out: "Ah, my unhappy mother! Ah, woe! birth! Never be any friend of mine a bastard!" Instantly he loses self-control: "Henchmen, drag him away!"

Responsible for Hippolytus' existence, is he responsible for his death also? If Poseidon's Gift of Prayers is genuine, and if Theseus believes in it, then he is fully responsible. If the Gift is a delusion, but if Theseus nevertheless believes in it, he cannot be responsible for his son's death, although he has the guilt of murderous intention. Most readers appear to think him practically his son's executioner, and the dying Hippolytus implies as much.³ But does he believe in the Gift?

At the first onset of horror he seems determined on taking Hippolytus' life. "Come, sire Poseidon, who didst long ago promise me three prayers: with one of these destroy my son; and may he not outlive this day, if thou hast granted me true prayers!"⁴ For the moment, of course, we take the last clause not as expressing doubt, only as a kind of ejaculation: "Keep thy promise!" But when the Chorus-Leader protests, he at once goes on: "No! Moreover I will drive him out of this land: he shall be smitten by one of two fates: either Poseidon will respect my prayers and send him in clumsy pen. Perhaps *τις* touches one most, hinting that Theseus has never really known his wife.

¹ It cannot, however, fairly be maintained that he does so by undue haste in believing Hippolytus guilty. Grube remarks (p. 189): "It is no accident that the king here [1059] uses the same words—*πᾶσι* *ἐγὼ* *χεύετον* *λέγω*—which Hippolytus used against Aphrodite in the earlier dialogue with his slave (113). They are hubristic here also. For this is Theseus' sin, that he trusts his dead wife's words too implicitly, and does not try to seek any proof." But Phaedra's suicide, and the letter, coupled with the fact (see below) that father and son have never been affectionate or even particularly friendly, makes the king's attitude (though not all his words) pardonable. Hippolytus urges delay, but that is because he knows himself innocent of the alleged crime. Artemis (1320 ff.) agrees with Grube; her claim to be heard shall be considered later.

² Vv. 967-9, where note the emphatic *ἐγώ*.
³ Vv. 1411-13.

⁴ Vv. 807 ff.

death to the house of Hades; or, cast out of this country and wandering in a foreign land, he shall drain life's bitterness." This, surely, pulls us up: Theseus feels unmistakable doubt.¹ Later he breaks off the terrible wrangle and pronounces his sentence: "Avant from this ground with all speed into exile and come no more to God-established Athens or the frontier of the land ruled by my sword." Not a hint of death to be met this very day! Later again, Hippolytus roundly tells him that, had their roles been interchanged, he would have slain his son Theseus and not been content with banishment. To this the king astonishingly replies: "How cheap a sentence! No such end shall be thine, for speedy death is easiest to a ruined man": he proceeds to dilate upon the woes of banishment. Even that does not suffice: no less than four times during the remainder of the scene he mentions exile, that being literally his last word. Later, when he learns from the Messenger that Hippolytus is at the point of death, his state of mind becomes (if possible) still more patent.² He does not cry: "Ha! Poseidon has heard my prayer!" but "By whose hand died he? Can he have quarrelled with some man whose wife he outraged as he outraged his father's?" The Messenger must tell him. "His own chariot-team was his death, and the prayers of thy lips, which thou utterdest against thy son to the Sea-God thy father."³ Thereupon he at last exclaims: "Ye gods, and Poseidon! How truly art thou my father, after all:⁴ for thou didst hear my imprecation."⁵

Theseus must be acquitted of intending his son's death. We have been astonished that throughout he utters no word of outraged fatherly love: "Didst thou, my son . . .?" The whole play shows that between these two men there has never been strong affection. But he really intended no

¹ Mainly because he has never before tested the Gift. The scholiasts, to be sure, assert thrice (on vv. 46, 888, 1349) that the Prayers were used to secure escape from Hades, escape from the labyrinth, and Hippolytus' death; and in two of these places say that Hippolytus' death is the third wish. Cicero, *De Off.* I. x, writes: *Ex tribus enim optatis, ut scribitur, hoc erat tertium, quod de Hippolyti interitu iratus optavit.* So Willamowitz (*Griechische Tragödien überetzt*, vol. I, p. 100) and Schmid (*Müller's Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*, Abt. VII, Teil 1, vol. 3 (Munich, 1940), p. 387). Nevertheless the three most distinguished successors of Euripides have made this prayer the first. In Seneca (*Phaedra* III. 115 ff.) Theseus absurdly says that even in Hell he did not use the Gift to obtain his deliverance, but waited for a serious occasion! Racine (*Phèdre* IV. ii. 35 ff.) was unwise enough to imitate him. D'Annunzio (*Fedra* II. 2665 f.) merely says "il primo". That they have Euripides with them is certain. Theseus' word *μή* (988) strongly implies it. Later Artemis says (1316) *ὦν τὴν μίαν παρῆλθες*, where the verb must mean that one or two, and *μίαν* that two, of the three remain unused.

² Vv. 1153-70.

³ Note the emphatic "thy" in v. 1167: *ἀπαί τε τοῦ σοῦ στόματος, ἃς οὐ σοῦ πατρὶ . . .*

⁴ The familiar idiom of *ἀπα* with the imperfect.

⁵ The belief thus attained endures of course throughout the finale.

more than a severity natural and (as it seems) quite justified. In his first dazed horror he breaks forth into the curse, but at once begins to forget it, because it was a cry of agony, not a judicial sentence. He has never believed seriously in the Gift; and at last, when it is apparently proved authentic, he lets fall words of astonishment as well as awe.

His quarrel with his son, their later reconciliation, and Artemis' converse with the dying man give us deeper insight into Hippolytus' soul.

Under his father's onslaught he makes a very poor impression: that we cannot deny. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that his "eager self-glorification, for it can hardly be called a defence, manages, through sheer blind lack of tact and sympathy, to insult both the dead woman and his furious father".¹ And we can agree to lament the contrast between his speeches to Theseus and "such beautiful lines as he knows so well how to utter *when alone*".² His awkward argumentation, his cumbrous affected rhetoric, repel us as they repel the king. But he has a perfect excuse: it should be needless to dwell upon his horror of Phaedra's passion, of her suicide, and of his father's affliction, coupled with his own inability to blurt out the truth so far as he knows it, and the distress awakened in him by a dawning sense of Phaedra's true character and the phases of her anguish. Moreover, as we have already noted, there has never been any strong affection between the two men. Hippolytus feels this, and clearly attributes it to his own illegitimacy. At the close of all they are reconciled, and most affecting; but the poet's faultless skill has avoided lyric metre.

To another also is Hippolytus reconciled. His heart now understands Phaedra, whom his intellect and temper had so arrogantly rejected. Her last utterance was the promise "he will learn sobriety of soul",³ which she meant in bitterness though it is fulfilled in sweetness. Hippolytus' newfound wisdom puts forth a few words⁴ of spiritual insight and beauty, flowers equal to those he offered his goddess earlier in this tragic day.

ἐσφρόνησεν οὐκ ἔχουσα σφρόνην,
ἤμεις δ' ἔχοντες οὐ καλῶς ἐχράμεθα.

Though chaste she could not live, yet chaste she died:
And I lived chaste, yet wrought amiss thereby.

¹ Grube, p. 189 (on vv. 989-1035). But where is the insult to his father, unless we mean that the point-making style is an insult? For that matter, Theseus has already (948 ff.) grossly insulted Hippolytus, though he may well be forgiven. By the insult to Phaedra, Grube means vv. 1034 f. (σφρόνησεν κτ.), as to which see below.

² Grube, p. 199 (his italics).

³ Yet another attempt to translate σφρόνησεν (731).

⁴ Vv. 1034 f. The aorist tense of ἐσφρόνησεν is to be taken as ingressive; cp. Dem. XXX. 33: ἐκείνω συνώλεσε.

He sees that Phaedra has saved her soul perforce: a true heroine, by destroying her life she has destroyed her passion. He sees too that his puritanical arrogance has persuaded her to discredit him utterly as she dies, lest it destroy her good repute, the loss of which would half-ruin her victory.

But to the gods he is not reconciled. When he knows that these disasters have been caused by Aphrodite, the grotesque but not surprising blasphemy springs from his lips: "Oh that humankind could lay a curse upon the gods!" At once he is silenced by Artemis' "Let be!" and her promise of vengeance on another mortal and of worship paid to Hippolytus by the maidens of Trozen. The communion of Artemis and her devoted follower is beautiful, but though he loves her, she loves not him.² If we listen closely we can hear her quiet yet firm repulse of his desire to be not only her follower but loved by her as a woman loves. When she explains that Aphrodite has destroyed him in malice he answers: "Us three hath Cyprus destroyed: I see it all." And he means, with the audacity of utter and innocent love, Phaedra, himself—and Artemis. This wild thought she sees and corrects: "Thy father, aye, and thee and his wife, all three." He answers, with sad submission to the rebuff: "Aye, also my father's woes I lament."³ This strange anguish appears again for an instant in his last words to her, Sophoclean in their poignant simplicity:

χαίρουσα καὶ οὐ στείγχε, παρθέν' ὀβέλα
μακρὰν δὲ λείπεις ῥαδίως ὀμνέαν.

Farewell thou too, blest Maid, and go thy way,
Thus lightly quitting long companionship.

An age ago (as it seems) the Nurse used a poignant word of mankind: εὐσφραres, "pining", yearning only to our sorrow. Aspiration towards complete understanding and fruition, wedded ever to disappointment, is the tale of Phaedra's heart and of every heart that would seize and hold elusive joy or beauty. Thus do she and Hippolytus share at last the same sad knowledge. For as she lost the beloved sight by stretching out vain

¹ We must not be misled by his later boasts when carried in at the point of death. He is protesting against Heaven's injustice; he cannot be expected to show discretion in his agony; and such recognition of one's own virtue is common form in Greek tragedy.

² The feeling meant by v. 1333 is of course quite different. W. F. Otto (*Die Götter Griechenlands* (1929), p. 104) rightly calls her "die Reine, die zum Entzücken hinreißt und doch nicht lieben kann".

³ Vv. 1401-5. That he includes Artemis, astonishing as the thought may seem, is proved by καὶ in v. 1405.

All this seems reasonable enough, so far. But Euripides has used his utmost skill to invest the story with an uncanny atmosphere. The subterranean rumbling is like "God's thunder" (1201): the unearthly wave "presses against Heaven";¹ blotting out the farther shore, and "advances" towards Hippolytus' chariot;² the bull is a "savage portent";³ whose bellowing filled all the land, whose look quelled the gaze.⁴ Most unnerving touch of all, though it comes up to the car, there ensues no physical contact between it and any person or thing: like a spectre, it works through the self-destroying acts to which its victims are impelled; even its bellow has ceased; at last it vanishes "I know not whither in the rocky earth".⁵ Are we not to conclude that Euripides offers us, as Virgil does at times,⁶ the choice between a natural and a supernatural explanation of a strange experience? They are (as it were) intertwined, neither being unmistakably endorsed by him.

This equivocal impression is strengthened by the diction: Euripides gives us a series of pleasant hints that we can, if so minded, read this splendid narrative as an essay in a kind of poetry whose atmosphere is more congenial to marvels than his own.⁷ On reading vv. 1223 ff.,

proved dimmer than his (*Phil. Quart.*, *ul. sup.*, p. 51)? Grube (p. 191) finds this "ingenious but unconvincing 'Verrallism'". It is certainly odd enough, but not unique. Pindar (*Ol.* XIII. 113) sings that the victories won by the Oligæthidae are too numerous to be seen: *μάσσον ἢ ὥς ἰδέμεν*. (So Sandys.) Mrs. Thorne in *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (chap. xiv) says: "You must excuse me, Major Granby, but Lady Hardtop is really too big for my powers of vision." Hippolytus, though he twice (1240 f., 1355 ff.) reproaches his horses, never mentions the far guiltier animal; nor does anyone else but the Messenger. Diodorus, who tells this story in some detail (IV. 62), omits the bull altogether and attributes Hippolytus' disaster to a contagion of distresses: *ἰσχυρὸς δὲ ἰσχυρῶν, ὡς ἤκουσε τὰ περὶ τῆς διαβολῆς, συνεχέθη τὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τῶν ἰσχυρῶν παραχθέντων καὶ ἐκταρασμένων αὐτὸν ἐκί.*

¹ Vv. 1206 f. "Unearthly" is Murray's excellent word for *ἑρπὸν*, which has the Homeric meaning "huge"—*ἀντὶ τοῦ μέγα* (schol.).

² V. 1212. *χρησέ* suggests purpose.

³ Contrast the absurd particularity of Seneca (*Phædra* 1056-48): its neck was blue, its forehead green, the horns parti-coloured, etc. So far from its being unseen or impossible to look at, the whole countryside is in panic, *ne suas pastor sequi meminit iuvenas*. Ovid (*Mét.* XV. 509 ff.) sensibly keeps much closer to Euripides.

⁴ It is not Verrall, but Weil, who remarks (on 1217): "Le tureau d'Euripide est-il un être réel ou un fantôme? On ne saurait le dire. Il ne touche ni le char, ni les chevaux, à plus fort raison n'est-il pas blessé par Hippolyte. Il ne fait que se montrer, il fascine, il agit par la terreur de sa présence, et il disparaît soudain, comme il était venu." It is exactly like the three *symbolical* wild beasts that terrify Dante (*Inferno*, Canto i).

⁵ E.g., in *Aen.* VII. 341-91, the Fury's attack and Amata's natural emotion are each enough, without the other, to explain the queen's conduct.

⁶ In Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 389 f., a parallel is drawn between the diction of *Macbeth* and the Player's speech in *Hamlet*. "He may have seen in the bloody story of Macbeth a subject suitable for treatment in a manner somewhat nearer to that

hands to the unapproachable, so does he in his dying hour find himself sundered from the Spirit that has given meaning and beauty to his life: what he has been to Phædra, that is Artemis to him.

The last sentence hints that we have completed our examination of the purely human drama, as we may perhaps call it, and must now ask what meaning, relevance, and value should be allowed to the divine elements of this tragedy.

Let us consider Poseidon first, as probably the easiest to appraise: for he does not appear in person, and is concerned with but one moment of the action. His Gift of Prayers has already been discussed, but only from Theseus' point of view: the king, we saw, does not definitely believe in it until his son's death convinces him of its reality. But does it in fact exist?

An uncompromising follower of Verrall¹ would find little difficulty in showing that the Gift is illusion. The only proof of it offered is the death of Hippolytus, which the Messenger, Theseus, Hippolytus, and Artemis agree in attributing to it: Poseidon sent the miraculous wave whence the bull emerged that caused the prince's horses to destroy their master. But why not assume a natural submarine earthquake, one familiar result of which is an immense wave bursting upon the nearest shore? And yet, is it easier to credit the coincidence of a natural event with the prayer of Theseus than to credit a miraculous answer? Is not the coincidence itself miraculous? Not miraculous, but amazing. In the course of many generations such coincidences occur and give rise to the myths: the men who accept them are uncritical, but they are not lunatics and therefore must have had some excuse for their acceptance.² As for the monster, why should it not be an ordinary wild bull—they were frequent enough in Greece—that has wandered down to the shore from the hills whither the Messenger saw it return (1248)? The myth-creating feat whereby it is said to emerge from the wave itself can be paralleled easily in folk-tales, such as that of the infant Merlin. The onlookers were predisposed by emotion and excitement³ to find marvels everywhere: we hear, for instance, that this creature was "a sight that vanquished the gaze".⁴

¹ As was I when last writing on this topic a good many years ago (*Phil. Quart.*, vol. XV (Jan. 1936), pp. 46-52). It is much to be regretted that Verrall himself published nothing on our play.

² And mentioned as familiar in, for example, Soph. *Ant.* 352.

³ Vv. 1175-81.

⁴ Vv. 1216 f.

κρείσσον θέγμα δεσφύων ἑταίρων.
εισπρῶσι δὲ

Or can these words mean rather: "When people looked at the bull he was too big to be seen": when the Messenger called his fellows' attention to the creature, their sight

αἱ δ' ἐνδακῶσαι στόμα πυριγενὴ γναθμοῖς
βία φέρουσαν, οὐτε ναυκλήρου χερσὶς
οὐδ' ἐπιποδίων οὐτε κολυγῶν ὄχων
μεταστρέφουσαι,

we feel at once that here is an unusual jewelling of the language: *πυριγενὴ* and *κολυγῶν* are notable instances of the *epitheton ornans*.¹ To these may be added *ἀκτῆς κυμαδέγμονος* in the very first line, *ἐλποδόβους ἀκτῆς* and *τηγνῶν ἱμάντων*, together with others, such as *ἑπποὺς ζυγηφόρους* and *φόβος νεανυκός*, which are in this connexion of doubtful value. In v. 1247 the phrase *δύστηνον τέρας* has excited objection:² to call the fatal bull an "unhappy miracle" may be natural in a critic, as the preceding pages have hinted; but not in the speaker. *δύστηνον* should apparently mean "guilty", but seems to have that sense nowhere else in Euripides. Now, can we point to anyone who writes brilliantly elegant narrative, studded with ornamental epithets? Is there any dramatist in whom Euripides can be supposed to have taken keen interest, who combined poetic genius with a commonplace theology, who believed for example that human curses could enlist for their fulfilment the omnipotence of gods? The brilliance that irradiates this narrative is largely due to adroit imitation of Sophocles: such things as *στόμα πυριγενὴ* and *κολυγῶν ὄχων* cannot but recall *ἐπιστοχῶν χρυσόφωνον ἠέλιον*³ and many other phrases. The evidence of *δύστηνον τέρας* is at least equally striking.⁴ The whole narrative, though not at all points Sophoclean—to this we shall return shortly—has, then, a distinct flavour of that poet. We know that this version of *Hippolytus* is a rewriting of an earlier work, which was marred by certain "improprieties".⁵ Perhaps critics had held up the example of Sophocles' *Phaëdra* of Seneca, or of the English Senecan plays familiar to him in his youth, than was the manner of his own mature tragedies.

¹ Schmid (p. 427, n. 1) reports on the authority of K. H. Meyer (Dis. Münster, 1913, 69, 1) that of Euripidean plays *Hecuba* has the largest (*Heraclidae* the smallest) number of *epitheta ornantia*. My remarks here are inspired by nothing more scientific than an impression renewed each time I read this narrative: *ἐκρυφθεν* counts for much more than one ingredient in a percentage. Of course such things occur elsewhere in Euripides. The most striking (*Heraclidae* 65 f.) is Sophoclean not in its diction but in its imaginative quality:

ἔχων τυραννίδ', ἥς μακρὰι λόγχοι πέρι
πῶδ' ἔρποντο σῶματ' εἰς εὐδαίμονα.

² Paley, followed by Hadley, calls it "very inappropriate".

³ *Il.* 8.47. For *τηγνῶν ἱμάντων* (1245) cp. *Soph. El.* 747, *τηγνῶν ἱμάντων*—and (see below) *Il.* X. 567, *ἐπμητοῖαν ἱμάντων*.

⁴ Cp. *Soph. El.* 121: *ὦ παῖ καὶ δύστηνονάτας Ἥλέκτρα ματρός*, and Jebb's note. *El.* 806, which he quotes, is a still clearer example.

⁵ The shorter Hypothesis says: *ἐμφαίνεται δὲ ὑστερος γεγραμμένος τὸ γὰρ ἀρκετὸς καὶ κατηγορίας ἄξιον ἐν τούτῳ διωρθεῖσθαι τῷ δράματι*. Unfortunately this seems to be all that

before the offender's eyes; perhaps he heard comments of Sophocles himself like that reported by Aristotle.¹ Euripides seems to have answered brightly: 'Very well: you shall have an edifying and beautiful play. I will even give you a Family Curse. The gods shall appear to rule the action, and though the Spirit of Olympian Religion may not wear continuously the facial expression that you have in mind, at any rate the language shall be of the finest quality.' This language is seen at its best in the narrative before us. There is just enough² of Sophocles to convey a demure little acknowledgement of the Laureate's pre-eminence. But Euripides goes farther. The style is Sophoclean with a delightful admixture of more distinct archaism than Sophocles, so far as we know, saw fit to employ.

Near the beginning occur the lines (1196 f.):

τὴν εὐθὺς Ἄργους κἀνταύτας ὁδόν,
εἰσόμεσθα δεσπότην

"we followed our master along the road leading directly to Argos and Epidauria". The use of *εὐθὺς* startles one, since *εὐθύς* is the only form known in Attic for this prepositional meaning. It has defied emendation.³ Has Euripides, then, written bad Greek? No: this is bad Attic; but Homer can say *εὐθὺς Διομήδεος, εὐθὺς κίεν οἶκον*, and so forth freely. The Athenian is simply marking the obsolete opinions of the speaker by a touch of obsolete idiom.⁴ In a moment we find this:

ἔθεν τις ἡχὴ χθόνιος ὡς βροντῇ Διὸς
βαρὺν βρόμον μεθήκε...

we can affirm with confidence. Scholars disagree as to which came first, *Phaëdra* or the second *Hippolytus*. In any case "we know little or nothing of the *Phaëdra* of Sophocles which helps us to discover its character" (Pearson, *The Fragments of Sophocles*, ad loc.).

¹ See p. 14 above.

² Pohlenz (p. 279) would make an important addition, of a completely different type. "Der äussere Aufbau des Stückes erinnert an sophokleische Kunst": despite *Hippolytus*' continued presence and importance, *Phaëdra* dominates the interest throughout, introducing by her letter an entirely new action. But may we confidently describe this method as Sophoclean? Alcestis was probably created before *Deianira*, whom Pohlenz names as an example.

³ Photius objected to it as a solecism. Hartung and Blaydes wished to read *τὴν εὐθύς Ἄργους*, but the misplacement of *τε* is objectionable. Dindorf would write *τὴν εὐθὺς Ἄργους*, with an incredible hiatus. If ugliness is to be allowed, why not *εὐθὺς κέργους*? In *I.A.* 1356 the manuscripts give *κέργους*.

⁴ A charming instance of this method is provided by *Heraclidae* 539 ff., where Iolaus, who believes *Heraclides* a son of Zeus, uses antique language to *Heraclides*' daughter:

ὦ τέκνον, οὐκ ἔστ' ἀλλοθεν τὸ σὸν κάρα,
ἀλλ' ἐξ ἐκείνου σπέρμα τῆς θείας φρενὸς
πέφυκας Ἡρακλῆος.

The Homeric form *Ἡρακλῆος* was "emended" by Eimsley to *Ἡράκλειος*.

The strong alliteration strikes our ear as an archaic device, recalling such things (far better than this, no doubt) as *χύτο χαμαι χολάδες*¹ and *πυχθὰ τε καὶ περπαχθὰ δέσχεσθαι ἀνέμοιο*.² Later we find the Homeric *ἱερός*.³ This antique patina is preserved by similar devices, slight but definite, throughout the story. In v. 1218, *εὐδὺς δὲ πάλοισ δεινὸς ἐμπιπτεὶ φόβος*, the last word has not only its Attic meaning of "fear", but also the Homeric, "stampede". The horses are not merely terrified: they begin to bolt.⁴ Later appears the most surprisingly archaic word, *ἐκρυφθεν*.⁵ And all this, we should remember, in a passage copied and recopied by scribes who regarded it as meant for good poetical Attic. We may well surmise that many other antique features have been obliterated by "obvious corrections".⁶

Nothing more need be said of the Messenger's speech in general or of Poseidon in particular, whose Gift of Prayers and its outcome we may view with as much awe as our temperament and taste in drama may suggest.⁷ It has no clear bearing upon the theology of our play.

So far, then, we have studied a drama purely human, however solemn and affecting, an example upon a conspicuous stage to remind us that sorrow falls upon man not only through transgressions that he could avoid, but also through good-nature, as in the pleadings of the Nurse, and actually through his virtues, like the insistent chastity of Hippolytus and the self-respect that brought Phaedra to destroy the man who might injure her good name. Such is the first impression made by these events. Well may the women of Troezen exclaim⁸ that the bread of Man is

¹ *Il.* IV, 526.

² *Od.* IX, 71.

³ See above, p. 92.

⁴ This is plain from the way in which the experienced (1219 f.) driver behind them deals with the φόβος. Instead of soothing them with his voice "he snatched the reins and pulled like a sailor on the oar, fastening the thongs round his waist". That the team has already broken from a walk into a gallop is proved moreover by the non-interference of the grooms, who have hitherto been walking at the horses' heads (see vv. 1196, 1243 f.).

⁵ V, 1247. Nauck's suggestion, *ἐκρυφθαι* δὲ φρονέας, and Weil's *ὄχος δ' ἐκρυφθή* do little more (so poor are they) than emphasize the correctness of the received text.

⁶ See Murray's *apparatus* for *εὐδους* and *αἰώνιος* in v. 76. Some manuscripts give *ἀπβλάντων* (accepted by Valckenae) in v. 1189. Perhaps in v. 1197 *ἔβης* (cp. p. 94 above) should be read in place of *εὐδὺς*. Modern editors admit only when compelled even the one epic licence regularly allowed in such *πίπτει*. All read *χρῆται* in v. 1212, where *χρῆται* (= *ἐχέμεν*) might well stand. See further Verrall's note on *Agamemnon* 582, where he reads *Τροίην* after the Laurentian MS.

⁷ "Poseidon does not appear in this story as a god of any special significance. His 'gift of prayers' . . . is a mere piece of mythological mechanism used to enhance the dramatic effectiveness of Theseus cursing his son." Grube, p. 178, n. 2.

⁸ V, 367: *ὦ πόποι τρέφοντες βροτοὺς*. So Spencer writes (*Daphniaida*, 375): "My bread shall be the anguish of my soul."

sorrow! Entangling his feet in his righteousness no less than in his sin, he stumbles unceasingly: *διέβλαπται βίος*. All seems chaos; and, if ever he fancies that it has begun to grow coherent and intelligible, the Universe appears organized for the defeat, not the encouragement, of human effort towards good. Does solace lurk anywhere in Euripides' presentation? At once we turn our eyes to the theological background. Does he set the story in a new perspective?

Artemis baffles us at first and perhaps to the close, inspiring us with a strange blend of annoyance, amusement, and admiration. Instead of contenting herself with the speech of solace and prophecy which, though marvellously beautiful, can be matched technically elsewhere, or with conversation of a frigid explanatory tenor, which also is familiar, she joins with Hippolytus in what one is tempted to call a quite human talk. By her greeting to the wounded prince,

Unhappy man, disaster's yoke-fellow,
Slain by thine own nobility of soul!

and by her other words of sympathy does she not become a regular "character of the play"? What are we to think of her?

Again and again she speaks words unsurpassed in loveliness by any that our poet has left us. "Excessive beauty of speech", however, as we are warned by this very drama,¹ "is the ruin of society and the family." It is just as often a menace to clear thought. If we are to appraise the dramatic and personal value of the goddess, we shall be well advised to look into the substance as well as the manner of her speeches. Artemis is the spirit presiding over wild free animal life, over the solitudes untouched by scythe or grazing sheep, and over human hearts as virginal.² She is no mighty exponent of divine dispensation like the Delphian Apollo; she cannot claim Athena's sovereign intellect. It is with misgiving, then, that we find her lightly assuming the right to speak with authority like theirs.

On-so-simple a topic as classical mythology—simple at any rate for gods—Artemis proves sadly uninstructed. She names Theseus the son of Aegeus (1282 f.), whereas the king himself calls Poseidon his father. Though the goddess should be better informed than the mortal, who has indeed known moments of doubt concerning his divine parentage,³ yet

¹ Vv. 486 f.:

τοῦτ' ἔσθ' ὃ θνητῶν εὖ πάλειοι οἰκουμένης
δόμους τ' ἀπόλλυσ', οἱ κακοὶ λίαν λόγοι.

² Otto (*ut sup.*, pp. 102-15) deals fully and most attractively with this.

³ Vv. 1169 f. See above, pp. 88 f., and cp. Isocrates, *Helen* 211c: *Θησεύς, ὁ λεγόμενος μὲν Αἰγέως, γενόμενος δ' ἐκ Ποσειδῶνος*.

the prompt fulfillment wrought by the sea-god, when invoked as Theseus' father, ought (one would suppose) to convince Artemis that she is mistaken, although her address is no casual periphrasis, but marked as a compliment by the word *ἐνταρπιδαν*: "upon thee do I call, son of a noble sire, even Aegeus". A blunder it certainly is, for to our amazement Artemis herself, when discussing the Gift of Prayers, changes her mind (1315): "Art aware that thou hast three certain gifts *from thy father*?" This emendation might be satisfactory, were it not that she changes her mind again¹ when she has forgotten the point. Her self-contradictions are intelligible enough, however stupid. Stories of men to whom tradition gave two fathers, a god and a mortal, were familiar; and *Heracles* in particular gains overpowering effect from the ambiguity. Artemis belongs to an age, to a state of mind, which felt no need to solve the puzzle: indeed saw no puzzle.² For critical minds in a later age she is a crude anachronism.

The same nullity clings to her moral judgements. As soon as she appears, her mouth is filled with grim taunts concerning the ruin that Theseus' folly has caused, and with suggestions as to suicide or trans-formation into a bird, since he is not fit to live among righteous men. On this easy theme she waxes copious, calling her wretched auditor a villain and laying upon him complete responsibility for his son's fate. She even brings in Poseidon, who (if we are to believe her) agrees in condemning the use to which the Gift of Prayers has been put. In a moment, however, we learn that the extraordinary openness of mind wherewith she examines Theseus' parentage extends to his conduct. No sooner has he uttered his second desperate groan than Artemis makes a complete *volte-face*:³ Cyprius alone is responsible; Theseus' ignorance exonerates him; it

¹ V. 1431: *ὡ γέναιον τέκνον Αἰγέως*.

² In the Homeric *Hymn to the Dioscuri*, they are called *Διὸς κόρυες* in the first line and *Τυρδαρίδες* in the second. On Ibycus fr. 3, 20 ff. (Dietl) see Sir Maurice Bowra (*Greek Lyric Poetry* (1936), p. 267): "Here mythology is confounded. Agamemnon is made both the son of Pleisthenes and of Atreus. The two versions were current in the sixth century. . . . Ibycus gaily combines the two competing fathers in the same sentence, and it is hard to resist the feeling that this happy disregard of accuracy is deliberate. By it Ibycus indicates that he is no longer concerned with mythology. For all he cares, Agamemnon may be the son of both." Bacchylides (XVI. 15 f.) calls Theseus *Πανδίωνος ἔκγονος* (Pandion being Aegeus' father), though the whole point of the dihyramb is that Theseus is Poseidon's son and proves it by his diving adventure. (Jebb on v. 36 writes: "The key to the confused legend is that Aegeus and Poseidon were originally identical.")

³ Vc. 1325-37. This ineptitude can, it is true, be matched. In *Rhesus* the Muse first (893 f., 946 ff.) blames Odysseus and Diomedes for her son's death, then (938 ff.) lays the guilt on Athena and acquits the two Greeks. But in the last passage her language shows that she is half-hysterical.

is natural to err when the gods send error. The aged Huntsman of Hippolytus opines that the gods ought to be wiser than men; his hinted doubt must have been strengthened by Artemis' essays in ethical philosophy.

When, therefore, she proceeds to say "for gods there stands a law as follows", announcing a statement (*ex cathedra*, of course) on theology, we feel that we should prefer not to listen. The "law" proves to be this: "None seeks to thwart the eagerness of another's will: we ever stand aside. For, be sure, had I not feared Zeus, never would I have incurred the shame of permitting a man to die who of all mortals is dearest to me."¹ Aphrodite, we gather, by conceiving murderous wrath against Hippolytus, secures what can only be called an option on his life, and therefore Artemis can do nothing to save him. All might have been well if she had "got in first", warning her sister betimes that the prince was dearest to her of all mankind, and that she desired his continued society with "eagerness of will". The truth is that Artemis has heard something of what philosophers say about *moira* and the allotted spheres of individual deities,² but her studies have been hurried and defective. *Moira* is a system of government, not the establishment of anarchy; but in her ardour to explain she does not hesitate to saddle Zeus himself with this curious doctrine.³ However that may be, granted anarchy, she intends to enjoy it: though she may not save Hippolytus, she can and will destroy Adonis, the favourite of Aphrodite. Let heart-broken father and dying son console themselves with that!

If her hearers do accept this revelation, they find on second thoughts that they have its proclaimer herself against them; for whatever mortals may think about the Gift of Prayers, Artemis a moment ago has clearly taken it for genuine. But what would Poseidon have done had Theseus used it to impose on him some act which interfered with the "enthusiastic wish" of another deity? Indeed, according to one account⁴ he availed himself of the Gift to win his own return from Hades. If that is not trespass upon another god's prerogative and sphere, where shall such

¹ Vc. 1328 ff. The awkward phrase *προθυμία τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ* is oddly like the contorted language of an examinee struggling to recall his lecture-notes: "the keenness of one who has got a wish". Artemis is completely out of her depth.

² See F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (1912), pp. 15 ff., etc.

³ V. 1331. *Ζῆνε μὴ φοβουμένη*. Grube (192 f.) emphasizes this brief phrase, expanding it thus: "We must suppose that Zeus had granted Aphrodite's demand for vengeance on Hippolytus, and that therefore Artemis was afraid of his displeasure if she should venture to interfere." Why, then, does not Aphrodite in the prologue quote this vital permission instead of using the accents of unchallenged sovereignty?

It is scarcely worth while to add that this "law" is flouted in *Iliad* 27-36—and indeed by Ovid (*Trist.* V. iii. 45 f.).

⁴ So the scholiasts; see above, p. 88, n. 1.

trespass be found? But no misgiving disturbs Artemis: the celestial Monroe Doctrine and the unconditional grant of Poseidon do not clash in her thought. Why? Because her being, power, and importance, her very meaning, belong to the world of instinct and emotion: she has naught to do with any system, or even idea, of rational congruity.

For, if she believes in the Gift wherewith she upbraids Theseus, why does she not call on him to follow that belief, which he now shares with her? Why should he not, having learned his son's innocence, instantly offer another prayer that shall reverse the doom? Has Theseus another chance? Has he in the past used his two other prayers, or has he not?¹ Before Artemis appears the point troubles no one; and if by any chance it had been thrust upon our attention, we should have replied: "It matters nothing with which prayer Theseus has doomed his son: he intends his death and has so secured it." In the epilogue all is changed. Theseus has vindicated righteousness and the ways of Heaven, so he thinks. But Artemis' first speech reveals his error. He is overwhelmed beyond speech: only a single groan escapes him. We are numb with grief for him . . . but—is there not some way . . . ? Then Artemis plunges forward (1313 ff.): "Knowest thou of three certain prayers given by thy father?" The callous jauntiness of her tone would enrage auditors less preoccupied; but she brings hope. The *three* Prayers! Is there another chance? First, by the emphasis of position and assonance she throws two words to the front:

ἀρ' ὁλοθα πατρός τρεῖς
ἀράς ἔχων σαρφεῖς;

"Three Prayers, Theseus, not one only! And all certain of fulfilment!" Of course; but has he any part of the Gift still unused? She continues: "One of those prayers hast thou—oh, base!—taken out for thine own son's ruin." Her language makes it certain that Theseus has today for the first time made use of the Gift. Our agonized suspense, then, is over: let him restore Hippolytus,² and on the instant! Nothing has been heard

¹ He has, in fact, two prayers still available; see above, p. 88, n. 1.

² We need not trouble ourselves with the fact that, if the Prayers are certain, Hippolytus *must* die: the second Prayer could bring him back to life.

If one suggested further that the third Prayer should restore Phaedra also, the reader would be disgusted with a notion so painful and absurd. (That is in fact true of the proposal about Hippolytus also.) This shows what is wrong with the Gift altogether. The fundamental triviality of such a conception means death to sound dramatic art, and indeed to any good art. One need scarcely add that Euripides disregards the story (Virgil, *Aen.* VII. 705 ff.) in which Hippolytus was restored as Virbius by Artemis.

See further A. Lesky (*Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 1930, 1169) and H. Herter, "Theseus

of any law against redressing the effect of one Prayer by a second.¹ But not a word about this obvious remedy falls from the lips that have just revealed its possibility. Artemis is content to ramble on, forgetting her own fierce condemnation of Theseus, with welcome but unexpected friendliness discussing his innocence as a victim of Aphrodite and of Phaedra, expounding the "option" system aforesaid, the sympathy of Heaven with righteous men, and the destruction meted out to wrongdoers. Whatever be the truth concerning the Gift, she who here describes it cannot see the plain meaning of her own description.

Such, so far as we have read, is Euripides' account of "the goddess Artemis". She has not defended her favourite, nor can she save him now, her sole attempt at energy being a promise to destroy another innocent person later. We may believe if we can that the promise will be fulfilled, supposing she remembers it in an hour's time. She can discuss nothing intelligently, knowing and understanding just enough to expose her own futility. Any woman in Athens would have cried: "Raise thy voice again, Theseus, in a second and better prayer."² So far, Artemis shows herself not a goddess or a fiend, not even an imbecile: she is a nullity, a radiant emptiness.

But radiant she is. When we pass from her scene with Theseus to her conversation with his dying son we breathe an air in which our fault-finding expires. Think again of Hippolytus' greeting:

ἔα:

ὦ θεῖον δδμήης πνεῦμα· καὶ γὰρ ἐν κακοῖς
ὡν ἡθόλην σοῦ κἀνεκονόησθην δέμας·
ἔστ' ἐν τόποισι τοιούτῳ Ἄρτεμις θεά.

Ah! . . .

Celestial fragrance! In the depth of woe
I feel thy presence and forget my pain.

Upon this ground stands heavenly Artemis.

der Athenae" (*Rhein. Mus.*, n.f., vol. LXXXVIII (1939), pp. 314 ff.): the criticism that neither the reader nor Artemis can think of such reversal by a second prayer is surely to be answered by asking why, then, does the poet put such suggestive words into Artemis' mouth? Cp. n. 2, below.

¹ This use of the Gift appears to be frequent. A coarse but neat poem of Prior illustrates the idea excellently. Mr. Charles Morgan quotes a more decorous version. *Reflections in a Mirror*, Second Series (1946), p. 79.

Schlegel writes à propos of Racine's play: "Il pouvait révoquer ses vœux adressés à Neptune." *Comparaison entre la Phèdre de Racine et celle d'Euripide*, *Œuvres*, etc. (Leipzig, 1846), vol. II, p. 404.

² The Chorus-Leader exclaims (891): "O king, in Heaven's name revoke this prayer!"

Or listen to his wistful adieu, where heartbreak quivers into music: χαίρουσα καὶ οὐ στενέω, and the rest. Hardly less magical are those lines¹ in which Artemis herself, that Artemis whom we have mocked, promises to her dying acolyte an immortality of sad yet beautiful remembrance.

But, hapless youth, on thee will I bestow

Majestic honours paid by Trozen town

In recompense of these calamities.

Damsels unwedded shall their tresses shear

For thee on marriage-eyes through endless time,

Rich harvest offering of tears and woe.

Virgins shall tune their solemn minstrelsy

For ever, nor shall Phaedra's love of thee

Fall into silence and be named no more.

In face of this, must we not struggle to forget our earlier rebukes?

No: the absurdity and the loveliness are equally undeniable. Such contrasts are an essential of Euripides' mind and art.² They distress many of us so gravely that we strive to ignore one of the clashing elements: the absurdity, as a rule. But that will not serve: what he has written he has written. All the great Attic writers, who have never been surpassed as artists no less conscious than successful, understood clearly how much virtue lay in fine language. They did not believe that splendid phrasing compensated for badness of heart or weakness of head. Euripides seems to enjoy bestowing literary excellence, as a kind of sardonic apology, upon characters who despite their language, sometimes indeed by means of it, are unconsciously but fatally condemning themselves. How eloquent is Jason's reproof of Medea's ingratitude, how moving Admetus' language to his wife about bringing her back from Hades, how trenchant Menelaus' attack upon Agamemnon's mean ambition in the Aulid *Iphigenia*! The irony that Euripides traced in the Universe thus left strange marks upon his style. Hardly any other writer has combined such mastery of eloquence with such implacable distrust of it; but a parallel can be found in a playwright who not seldom reminds us of Euripides: Bernard Shaw, whose most notable exploit³ of this kind occurs early in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, where the noble address beginning "Hail, Sphinx!

¹ Vv. 1423-30. Their charm is increased for readers who compare them with other passages (e.g., *Androm.* 1243 ff., *Ion* 1575 ff.) which technically serve the same action-logical purpose.

² See the first essay above, especially pp. 21-23, 45-47.

³ Other good examples are found in the first act of *John Bull's Other Island*—and often elsewhere, for pricking bubbles is one of Shaw's chief amusements and chief services.

Salutation from Julius Caesar!" is followed by a charmingly absurd anticlimax.

What, then, becomes of the epilogue to which Artemis so strangely but so powerfully contributes? Condemn as we will her intellectual feebleness, we think quite otherwise of her emotional quality and meaning: on that side she is entirely credible as a goddess and (apart altogether from the beauty of her speech) by no means devoid¹ of both dignity and charm. Moreover, the structural function of this scene should be noted: Consider the epilogue of *Orestes*. Not only is Apollo incredible in himself: the reconciliation that he produces is incredible too, and would remain incredible if produced by some agency both intelligible and intelligent. Expunge Apollo with all his spuriousness and replace him by Solon or Pericles uttering the soundest argumentative eloquence: you are no nearer to procuring Orestes and Electra pardon from Argos for the murder of Clytemnestra or to persuading Menelaus that a marriage between Hermione and Orestes is desirable or even tolerable. So in *Ion*: what plain and believable piece of information (whether conveyed by Athena or by a human friend) can be imagined that is capable of inducing a man, with Ion's character and in Ion's situation, to renounce his purpose, turn away from the temple-door and leave unprobed the divine statements he suspects to be lies? *Orestes* and *Ion* are melodramas: that is all.² In *Hippolytus*, a genuine tragedy, Theseus and his son are as natural, as vivid and convincing, at the close as throughout. *Theseus' opinions and language*, of course, have changed completely; but to cause this nothing was needed save a simple and credible piece of information: that Phaedra's dying message is a falsehood. And it is the *dea ex machina* who brings about this perfect close.

Artemis, then, must be accepted as a genuine *dramatis persona*, no less authentic than Hippolytus himself: so much, and no more. It does not follow that Euripides himself believed in her personal existence: while

¹ Her admirable qualities have, however, been somewhat exaggerated by sensitive scholars. P. Decharme (*Euripide et l'esprit de son théâtre* (1893), p. 388) writes of "Artemis qui voudrait pleurer, qui regrette que sa divinité l'en empêche". This points to v. 1396, less outspoken than the French. Certainly she holds Hippolytus dear (1333, 1398); but we must not drift into thinking her a victim of the calamity, as Hippolytus tries to believe her (see above, pp. 90 f.). Professor S. M. Adams (*Gloss. Rer.*, vol. XLIX (1935), pp. 118 f.) seeks to excuse her roughness to Theseus, and asserts that she "alters the attitude of Hippolytus" (yes: but only his attitude to his father). He sums up thus: "What Artemis does for Hippolytus she does also for the play. Pain and resentment fade, leaving behind them pity." Much of the agony vanishes, but both sorrow and indignation remain (1453-66); and the assumption is due not to Artemis' qualities but to her revelation of the truth about Phaedra, a revelation dictated by the poet who would reconcile the two men.

² See above, pp. 23-30.

writing this particular play he "puts her in", and thereby no more commits himself to belief in her divinity than Dickens commits himself to belief in a person called Christmas Past, or than Shakespeare (or whoever wrote that portion of *Cymbeline*) commits himself to belief in Jupiter. Indeed, we here light upon the reason for the absurdities in Artemis' remarks on theology, on Theseus' parentage and criminal folly. Speaking *ex calidra*, she reveals herself as utterly spurious, a survival from days of uncontrolled superstition. But as Hippolytus' beloved companion she is authentic and divine. Euripides makes her thus real simply because she has complete reality for his hero: that reality is a basic fact of his play.

But why does he allow this disconcerting clash in his presentation of her? Having chosen to use artistically a person in whom he does not believe, why does he not treat her with more discretion? He would have found no difficulty, and we should have taken far more pleasure, in an Artemis who did not make us uneasy, who remained quietly emotional throughout, never allowing the question of brains to arise. The answer is simple but unusual. It may be worded in several ways. "Take what genius gives you and be thankful." Euripides is a notoriously uneven playwright." "He never read Aristotle: if in the course of composition a quaint fancy struck him, down it went into the play, and a fig for consistency!" Anyone who considers the prim expostulations uttered by the Spirit of Frenzy against Hera's injustice,¹ or the ode in *Electra* that so gracefully tells the legend of the Golden Lamb only to brand it in the final stanza as a lie,² and other such gambols, will agree that Euripides, in the deepest sense of the words, wrote his dramas to suit himself. Such discord in the presentation of Artemis (like many other discords in his work) is, then, best explained by recognizing that Euripides was a philosopher as well as a poet, and that the two sides of his nature often show themselves in frank opposition. Even when he presents a goddess as a needed and impressive participant in the dramatic action, he allows his irrelevant rationalism to hang upon her a label saying: "This is merely a puppet at which you need look only for a moment: it will soon be tossed back into the box and forgotten."

If we turn now at length to Aphrodite, the contrast between her and Artemis is clear and impressive, perhaps shocking, in character, emotions, aims, and significance for mankind. Nevertheless, they are alike in this, that Euripides has used the same strange method of portraying them.

Aphrodite, who speaks to none of her victims, is at first displayed by her soliloquy as a tremendous figure: making no claim upon our love or

¹ *Iheracles* 643 ff.

² *El. Cg* 8 ff.

admiration, she is yet a goddess in her power, her will, her import for us and our world. In her might and relentless cruelty there dwells "something of the sea" that gave her birth and across which Phaedra, dogged by her unseen curse,¹ voyaged from Crete. There seems nothing irrational in such a Being, so imagined, and we are to believe (are we not?) that she and her like do rule the Universe. But as we hear her speech to the end doubt steadily grows. Why should this eternal omnipresent Power concern herself with times and places, opportunity and machine-tion? Why this profusion of detail about the petty human creatures whose strength means to her no more than their happiness? Instead of this artful precise arrangement of the snare, surely the mere emanation² of her will should suffice to humble Hippolytus, to shrivel him on the instant. But the world-goddess who awed us in the opening sinks before the end to language that, except for its neat style, might have been uttered by some malicious abigail of the Athenian court.³ Euripides, we

¹ *V. 756-62*. It can hardly be doubted that Murray has rightly understood this weird passage: otherwise the second sentence is condemned to flatness surely impossible in so wonderful an ode. He translates:

And there, where Munychus fronts the brine,
Crept by the shore-flung cables' line,
The curse from the Cretan water!

His note runs: "A curse or spell must have come with her from Crete. It was difficult for a curse to come from one country to another. Exactly like infection, it had to be somehow carried. The women suggest that it came with Phaedra in the ship, and then, when the ship was moored in Munychia, the old harbour of Athens, it crawled up the cables to the shore."

On the whole ode see H. F. Graham's attractive paper (*Class. Jour.*, vol. XLII (1947), pp. 275 f.).

² It was pleasant to find my thought anticipated by D'Annunzio. In *Fedra* I. 799 ff. Phaedra huris passionate defiance at the silent goddess, but suddenly collapses:

No. Ti cedo. Invitta,
invitta sei. Mi snodi le ginocchia,
mi dirompi la spina
sol con la sguardo.

Cp. *Tr. 985 f.* (of Aphrodite):

οὐκ ἂν μένουσ' ἀν' ἡσυχάς α' ἐν οὐρανῷ
αἰετὰς Ἀμύκλας ἤγαγεν πρὸς Ἴλιον; . . .

³ So in Apulcius (*Met. IV. 84*) this same goddess (as it happens), while describing herself as *elementarum origo initialis*, grumbles venomously against the mortal girl Psyche.

Grube, however, writes (p. 197): "The reality of her existence is so clear that the details of the presentation are relatively unimportant, nor are these so inconsistent with the Greek idea of godhead as to require us to look for satirical intent." But there was more than one Greek idea of godhead. Euripides begins with the Aeschylean: his goddess shows at first no less majesty than Athena in the *Eumenides*. Can we imagine Athena proceeding to describe a programme like Aphrodite's? The presentation here contradicts not only other ideas, but itself also.

poetical imagination has done its work, what then? As man grows mature, his moral sense intervenes and applies to these Beings the standards of conduct that he has evolved, often condemning them, on their record, as unworthy of respect. Such is the price paid for indulging the poetical imagination before it begins to be curbed by the moral imagination. That sexual passion often causes anguish and sin, though a terrible fact, need not endanger religion; that personal gods, possessing knowledge, power, emotion, and will, should work such evil makes the Universe a nightmare.

But now Euripides enters, wielding yet another instrument that his fellows have here forgotten to use: the intellect. 'What these gods (according to legend and other fancies) say, do, and command others to do proves them not evil gods or idiot gods, but simply no gods at all.¹ Let us put them back into their rightful place. They are forces, blind forces; to worship them is to embrace ruin. What, then, are we to do in face of them? Some we must endure as best we may: who can bridle the hurricane or defy the earthquake? But others there are that we cannot indeed annul, yet may learn to bridle and turn into the means of good: man's own passions, the instincts of his heart, the energies of his own body.' Independent entirely of man's control, Aphrodite is a figure to darken the sun and make life a torture-chamber. Entirely subdued to his will, such instincts or powers become nerveless slaves, leaving his life a mechanical round of caseful accomplishment. But neither of these propositions is the fact, and herein lies, not only the tragedy of Euripides, but the tragedy of all dramatists, indeed the very marrow of life as a high enterprise worthy of human acceptance. That our fates are in our hands but ever and anon leap from the careless fingers, that our instincts may be harnessed but must never be chained however frightful the consequences of their complete enfranchisement—this it is that makes life an art, not a science on the one hand or a chaos on the other.

If these ideas concerning Artemis and Aphrodite are sound, we should not find it difficult to answer the query, Where lies the source of this play's action: in the deities or in the mortals? Scholars have offered very different replies. At one extreme stands Méridier, who writes: "It would be a complete misunderstanding of the spirit of the drama to see in it a human action flanked at each end by two artificial apparitions. *Hippolytus is a religious tragedy* . . . that is a vital point and cannot be too strongly emphasized."² Schmid adds that the mortal characters are mere "supers"

¹ Cp. fr. 286 and 292, especially the famous last line: *εἰ θεοὶ τι δρᾶσιν αἰσχροῖ, οὐκ αἰσὶν θεοὶ*.

² *L'Hippolyte d'Euripide* (1931), p. 206 (his italics). Kitto says: ". . . the real unity

see, presents Aphrodite, as he presents Artemis, by a method reminding us of Theseus' odd wish¹ that every man had two voices, one to contradict the other. Like her sister, Aphrodite is used by the playwright as a genuine character of his tragedy, but at the same moment labelled by the philosopher as a spurious deity.

Here is no confusion of thought or aim. He did not believe that the traditional gods existed: for him they merely symbolized the permanent facts of the Universe and of human life.² No doubt drama, by its very nature, is compelled to use persons whom the spectator can accept as in some degree resembling himself. Nevertheless 'Artemis' meant for Euripides not a wondrous female figure, but the unfettered energy of non-human existence, and "the splendour of the God-haunted countryside". She is the life, withdrawn and rapturous, followed by dedicated human beings who are embarrassed among men and women but find their true selves by consorting with what others feebly and briefly call 'Nature', rendering their human hearts fit for this companionship by a chastened life, an *aresis* that seems to others stupidity or pride. Such a man, thus ill at ease in the market-place, thus serenely blissful in woodland or secluded meadow, thus proud under the world's eyes, was the son of Theseus and the tameless Amazon.

'Aphrodite', far better understood by Theseus and by most others, stands for the quenchless instinct that heaves itself ceaselessly outward, the creative stress that urges all animal life and must be served with gladness by Man, its highest offspring. It speaks to him with the most intimate and urgent voice of all, summing in one appeal the vitality, the colour, the charm and significance of all that surrounds his way. But soon a change passes over his spirit, a change unavoidable because he is a creature swayed not only by instinct but also by imagination, conscience, and intellect. He begins to imagine this dominant stress as a Person whose will lies irresistibly upon him: Aphrodite the Sea-Queen, wonderful and ruthless like the ocean, bringing joy or pain with indifferent hands. On other forces, too, thus moulding his life he confers personality. But when

¹ Vv. 925-31.

² So much, of course, has often been said. Euripides' own contemporary Prodicus voiced it plainly (Sext. Emp. IX. 18). For our own day it suffices to quote Pohlenz (p. 283): "Euripides glaubt nicht an die Aphrodite der Volksreligion, die zur Befriedigung eigener Rachsucht Unschuldige schuldig macht, glaubt schwerlich an ein persönliches Wesen, das solche Leidenenschaft im Menschen hervorruft. Aber die Macht, mit der diese den Menschen zwingt, kennt der Herzenskinder wie kein anderer, und für den Gestalter war es ein einzigartiger Vorteil, wenn er die Götter des Volksglaubens einführen konnte, die sofort in jedem Zuschauer bestimmte plastische Vorstellungen erzeugte."

without knowing it, and "are therefore freed from all personal guilt". At the other extreme Wilamowitz writes that Aphrodite is unnecessary to our understanding of the action; to suppose that the human deeds and suffering are due to God or fate or accident is a blunder unworthy of refutation: the mortal characters are fully responsible for their own conduct.² Two views may be added that lie between these extremes. Lesky³ is rather closer to the second: there are two planes of action—gods working above, events happening in human lives below. Grube's view is nearer to the first: "... the main conflict is not the struggle in Phaedra's heart, it is not even that between her and Hippolytus; rather it is between Aphrodite, with her representatives, the nurse, Phaedra, later Theseus, on the one hand, and Artemis-Hippolytus on the other."⁴

Our present study suggests yet another view. On the face of it, there are two sequences of action: the divine and the human. These are in cold theory separable, and they cannot both be completely true. If the first is authentic, Phaedra and the others must join the "puppets of fate";⁵ those

lies not in [Phaedra's] fate but in what Aphrodite is doing.... The logic of the plot and the unity of the action obviously reside in the underlying conception and not in the tragic mind of either Phaedra or Hippolytus." *Greek Tragedy* (1939), p. 204.

² P. 384.

³ *Griechische Tragödien übersetzt*, vol. I, pp. 109 f., e.g.: "Diese Menschen haben ihre Handlungen selbst zu verantworten, sind ihrer Geschichte Urheber selbst, genau so weit wie wir Menschen es überhaupt sind."

⁴ *Die griechische Tragödie* (1938), p. 158. (He points to a parallel in 'Apollonius' description of Medea's love-story.) His theory attributes to the whole complex work the Virgilian treatment of details mentioned above (p. 92).

⁵ P. 19. He makes it plain that he thinks Aphrodite and Artemis altogether pre-dominant. The passage quoted above proceeds: "Aphrodite's attack is in two distinct waves, of which the first culminates in Hippolytus' interview with the nurse, the second in his first scene with Theseus...." And in pp. 182 f., he ably exhibits the manner in which the goddesses are kept in our minds throughout: that is remarkable, true; but the human actors are vastly more prominent.

⁶ This topic is best studied in Sophocles. Oedipus commits two frightful acts. Why? He does not intend them. Nevertheless (so we often say) he is condemned by Heaven to commit them: if that is true, he is "a puppet of fate". But it is not true. Sophocles shows clearly that Oedipus' acts arise from his character, from the deeds of other human beings, and from accident. In their origin they are precisely like the acts of everyone else. What, then, of Heaven's alleged *fat*? The idea that the gods force such conduct upon him is plainly false. When their oracle speaks, he is not only unborn: he is not even conceived (cp. *Oed. Col.* 964-73, and Jebb's note on 972). Therefore the gods are not commanding him, in the genuine sense of the word "command"; for he can neither obey nor disobey, since he does not exist. They are only prophesying: the oracle is not a *fat*, but a *fat*. (In *O.T.* 788-93, $\chi\rho\alpha\iota\eta$ is shown by the following future optatives to mean "I was to", in the sense of mere statement, as in 1110 f. and often. To that passage *O.T.* 1329 f.: $\delta\ \kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\ \epsilon\kappa\alpha\kappa\alpha\ \rho\epsilon\lambda\alpha\omega\ \epsilon\mu\acute{\epsilon}$, refers in language distorted by the speaker's agony.) Thus we find ourselves outside the problem of fate and free will, envisaging a different matter: divine foreknowledge, not divine

notorious phantoms that would make tragic art impossible, and owe whatever English¹ vogue they have mostly to the aberration of our greatest novelist.² The "divine sequence" must therefore be rejected: even if we were to grant that Euripides anywhere accepts the "puppet" theory, we could not believe it here. Would he have lavished all his powers on the greatest feats of characterization that he ever achieved, only to imply in the end that character counts for nothing in human fortunes? Therefore the second "sequence" only is authentic, forming of itself the body of the play. The "divine sequence", then, must be one of three things. Is it a mere irresponsible flourish like the Fairy Queen in the old Christmas pantomimes? That description may suit some of Euripides' work, like Thetis in *Andromache* and the Twin Brethren in *Helen*; it is utterly unsuitable to this tragedy. Is it a transparent imposture, such as Verrall believed Euripides to have written for sundry other plays, whether to make them fit for the religious festival or to avoid accusations of impiety? That is less absurd, but cannot be seriously alleged, if only because Artemis, during part of her appearance, acts as a technically normal *dramatis persona*. We must accept the third possibility, that it is a comment on the "human sequence".

But that human story has been told in human language of a precision, a clearness and beauty rarely equalled. What comment or development can it need? For us, perhaps, none. For the poet's own place and time surely some addition, or he would not have given it. Let us note that whereas this tragedy gained the first prize, *Medea*,³ produced only three years before, was placed third. Both plays are immensely effective: what can have caused such a difference in the awards? Had it been some striking event or action or experience of the poet's own, irrelevant to dramatic art but providing a curious anecdote, we should find it somewhere in the subsequent literature. Since that is lacking, we are justified in assuming that Athens esteemed *Hippolytus* far more than *Medea*.⁴ Why?

At that point we may reasonably imitate Sophocles and probe no farther: his play is based on a mystery that must be left a mystery; its action is human.

¹ Upon other students and writers the paramount influence has no doubt been that of Schlegel, who in his *Comparison* (p. 387) calls fatality the "pensée fondamentale et source dans la tragédie grecque".

² It is plain from, for example, the famous ending of *Tas* and his own entry, in *Who's Who*, of the year in which he began to study Aeschylus, that Thomas Hardy thought he derived his notion of the divine government from Greek tragedy.

³ One would be glad to draw in here the earlier *Hippolytus* (*Kalamoi*) and Sophocles' *Phaedra* (see above, pp. 93 f.); but it is better to resist the temptation, as we know too little of them.

⁴ Schmitz (p. 346) will have it that we cannot tell what the public thought of our tragedy in 428 B.C., because two plays of the victorious trilogy are lost. Why did they

In both we find masterly characterization, superb tragic power, terrible crime springing from a woman's agonized resentment of masculine callousness and complacency. But *Medea* contains no god¹ or goddess: we must understand Medea and Jason purely by means of their own (and our own) experience and characters. For fifth-century spectators the task, it seems, was at that moment too great, being (as regards Medea) too novel. Three years later, Euripides demanded less of an audience mostly not at ease with general ideas, not alert to realize passions in the abstract as forces no less powerful in Athens than in Corinth and the East. That is a constant weakness of popular imagination, which must set ideas upon two legs if it is to make anything of them: hence the mythology of Uncle Sam, John Bull, and Santa Claus. In *Hippolytus* Euripides supplied what the earlier play lacked. By introducing the persons Aphrodite and Artemis he irresistibly led his hearers to view Phaedra, Hippolytus, and Theseus as not only vivid and exciting people but also as types of humanity and therefore capable of a more intimate, more permanent, appeal to each man and woman on the benches.

He thus performed in a manner peculiar to himself the miracle that all great dramatists perform, who by universalizing their characters make them more intelligible and more real than one's next-door neighbour. For him the process meant using mythological figures that were ready to his hand because familiar to Athenians as objects of awe and worship. That he himself did not believe in those deities mattered nothing: they were only instruments employed in a complex artistic work that was not theological but human from top to bottom. The method proved successful. By awarding him the first prize his countrymen showed that they understood his new method in dramatic art. Thereafter he felt able to address them as adepts who would instantly take his meaning. Later works make this plain. Contrast the elaborate presentation of Aphrodite and her meaning here with Hecuba's curt and merciless rationalism in the *Troades*. When Helen excuses her elopement with Paris by alleging the compulsion of Aphrodite, Hecuba answers: "My son was most glorious in beauty, and your mind at the sight of him became the love-goddess."² disappear, if they were in the public view as good as or better than *Hippolytus*? Moreover, as he himself remarks, Aristophanes echoes *Hippolytus* in the *Knights*, *Wasps* and *Frogs*; the second Argument, too, says τὸ δράμα τῶν ἡρώων.

¹ In vv. 1321 f. she tells Jason that her grandfather the Sun-God has given her a chariot; but (like Poseidon) he does not appear, and does not help to explain any aspect of the tragedy.

² Vv. 987 f.:

ἦν οὐκὸς υἱὸς καλλὸς ἐμπειρέστατος,
ὁ σὸς δ' ἴδων νῦν τοὺς ἐρωήθη λίμπης.

Few would have understood such a quick slashing-away of pretentious verbiage¹ had not our play already been heard, pondered, and discussed.²

This tragedy, then, is entirely human. Very well: why did Euripides write it? He was urged by two thoughts, from which as he worked one magnificent conception emerged.

The first is the grim muddle that we make of life, no less by our virtues than by our faults. At times, indeed, one may wonder which are the faults and which the virtues. Hippolytus' holiness becomes one source of Phaedra's despair and so of her dreadful letter, another being her own valiant self-respect, and her love for her children yet another. We have no need of supernatural interference! But over this hope-abandoned landscape the poet's other thought sheds a transfiguring light. True it may be that if we look only at morality, at ignorance and folly, ponder nothing but the outcome of conscious effort, we shall condemn life as a woeful labyrinth into which we have been hustled at birth. But, in spite of all, men cling to life by an instinct that outfaces reason and finds joy in survival. This instinct means that mere existence is good, not evil: beneath all defeat, more ultimate even than right and wrong, endures the simplest and greatest of all victories, that we *are*. It is the very heart of poetry: all poetry that transcends mere verse, whatever else it may neglect or fail to achieve, declares for us and strengthens in us the zest of being alive.

This at once explains the paradox that we enjoy tragedy. Often we cannot easily tell how the pleasure is created: but in *Hippolytus* we can see the method plainly enough. Euripides has used language that makes the whole story extremely *interesting*, indeed (to use a word still more hackneyed) thrilling: we follow the play with an eagerness that the events, if otherwise portrayed, might well have failed to arouse. He has made it beautiful also, beyond any other of his extant works, despite the evil wherewith it is loaded. His mighty hand keeps the balance even. Aphrodite's hideous speech is at once followed by Hippolytus' prayer to his own goddess, radiant at once with poetic loveliness and that fusion of emotion with intellect whence springs the true religious mood. Artemis

¹ The same *ad hoc* theology is aired by Jason (*Med.* 327 ff.) but ignored by Medea, unlike Hecuba.

² Aristophanes would of himself be a sufficient witness that Euripides was thought to have trained his audience in sound appreciation of tragedy: see especially *Frogs* 957, 971-9. A distorted echo of these discussions is uttered by the widow who complains that her business as a florist has gone down more than 50 per cent since Euripides persuaded "the gentlemen" (τοὺς ἀνδρες) that the gods do not exist (*Thesm.* 445 ff.).

herself utters over him whatever consolations she can give in words so entrancing as to seem well purchased by the death of the body. Even Theseus at his darkest moment can magically transmute anguish into poetry. No less constantly do the lyrics quiver with this sense that life's beauty glows everywhere about us. News of Phaedra's illness has reached the Trozenian women not, as in *Medea*, from the spring whereby old men sit at chess, but from a pool below the cliff-face down which gushes water of the remote ocean. Here at once is heard the insistence on romantic beauty and the hint of far peaceful regions so exquisitely sung in the ode that dreams of Adriatic waters and the apple-boughs of fairyland. But this beauty is fragile, the glow is fringed with darkness. The song just mentioned passes back from the Hesperides to dreadful bodings of Phaedra's self-inflicted death. So the Nurse too utters a weird trance-like expression of life's mingled sweetness, yearning, and pain. Euripides shirks nothing.