COMMENTS ON AN INTERPRETATION OF AESCHYLUS, *AGAMEMNON* 182–183

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PROFESSOR MAURICE POPE has observed in a recent article[1] that almost all modern editors and commentators have taken *Agamemnon* 182–183 as a statement summing up the "consolation" for suffering which the Chorus expounds in the so-called "hymn to Zeus" (160–183). If we read δαιμόνων δέ που χάρις βιαίως/σέλμα σεμνὸν ἡμένων (= F Tr, the same reading as M and V, the oldest MSS, except for the deletion of the accent over που), the sentence may be translated: "There is, I think, a blessing from the gods, who, using force, sit on the dread bench of the helmsman" (Fraenkel). If Turnebus' emendation (βίαιος for βιαίως) is accepted (as in Murray's revised *OCT* [1955], Denniston and Page [1957] and Page's *OCT* [1972], we may translate, "There is, I think, a grace that comes by violence from the gods/seated upon the dread bench of the helmsman" (Lloyd-Jones).[2] Professor Pope rejects both these texts and meanings. He retains βιαίως of the MSS and also retains ποῦ interrogative, as in M and V, noting that Wecklein (in his edition of 1885) is the only editor in modern times to have done so. The decision as to whether we read που enclitic or ποῦ interrogative ("Where is there favour from the gods, etc.?") in this sentence is clearly of crucial importance in assessing the mood of the Chorus in this part of the parados, and may (some would argue) affect the view which we are directed to take of the gods in the coming trilogy.

Pope's arguments against F Tr (που enclitic, βιαίως unemended) may be summarized as follows: that the sentence contravenes Aeschylean (and Homeric and Hesiodic) usage (according to which που enclitic occurs with the verb expressed), and that it also contravenes fifth century poetic usage in general (according to which, when που enclitic does occur without a verb expressed, the copula, with an expressed subject and predicate, is normally understood). The exceptions, Pope notes, are "ει-clauses" (which may, indeed, be regarded as forming a special case, since they frequently omit the verb) and occurrences in Euripidean stichomythia, where the verb may be supplied from the preceding line. In Euripides' *Helena*, 95 (πῶς; οὔ τί που σῷ φασγάνῳ βίον στερεῖς;) we find the only instance

[1]Maurice Pope, "Merciful Heavens? A Question in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*," *JHS* 94 (1974) 100–113. (I should like to acknowledge several valuable criticisms, corrections, and suggestions made by two anonymous Readers of an earlier draft of my "Comments" and implemented in the present article.)

[2]H. Lloyd-Jones, *Agamemnon by Aeschylus. A translation with Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1970) 26.

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of που enclitic where a finite verb is understood from the preceding line.

Thus to retain που enclitic and βιαίως, we must either ignore (as Fraenkel apparently does) the lack of a parallel for this use of που with ἐστί understood and no predicate, or we must attempt to construct a rather dubious parallel to the exception cited in *Helena* 95 by imagining ἦλθε to be understood (with a backward glance at ἦλθε in the preceding line) in v. 182. The latter is, perhaps, rather a desperate remedy which no editor or translator (with the possible exception of Douglas Young, whose translation is a shade ambiguous here)[3] has, so far as I know, ventured to suggest. (If ἦλθε were to be understood, then βιαίως could, of course, modify it and the difficulty of taking βιαίως with ἠμένων—as Fraenkel and others do, but note Denniston-Page's objections *ad loc.*—is removed.) Even so, the comparison which one might make between the construction thus achieved and the use of που enclitic at *Helena* 95 is still a limping one, since it is obviously much easier to understand a verb from a preceding verse in stichomythia and since, moreover, που does not stand alone in the Euripidean passage but is in combination with οὔ τί, in a question.

So far, then, Pope's arguments against the reading in F Tr would seem to lead us (though not to force us) to acceptance of Turnebus' emendation βίαιος for βιαίως, since (with ἐστί understood) this provision of a predicate adjective would bring the use of που enclitic into line with fifth century poetic usage. However, against this emendation, Pope advances three objections: (a) that observed errors of ω for ο do not usually involve a change of accent in the word concerned;[4] (b) that χάρις (ἐστι) βίαιος is a contradiction; (c) that δαιμόνων must refer to all previous generations of gods just mentioned (since δαίμονες is never a restrictive term in Aeschylus and "never excludes any previously mentioned deity or category of divine beings").

None of these arguments is very compelling: (a) errors of ω for ο which involve a change of accent *do* occur (see Pope's own citations); besides, neither arguments based on accentuation nor, even, arguments based on distinctions between ω and ο are, in a paleographical context, very convincing;[5] (b) the statement is not, in its context, a contradiction, since

[3]Cf. Douglas Young *The Oresteia* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman 1974) 8, and his textual note, 158, indicating that he reads βιαίως.

[4]Pope (103–105) bases his argument on a count taken from Dawe's collation against the second OCT edition of Aeschylus, *PV* (1955) and on Fraenkel's edition of Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950).

[5]Confusion between ŏ and ô must have been fairly common in early copies of tragic texts: it is possible, indeed, that the original texts of the *Agamemnon* were written in Attic and not in the Ionic script to which we owe the characters ω/Ω. If so, *biaiŏs* and *biaiôs* would originally have been indistinguishable in unaccented written form. (This argument is admittedly an uncertain one, since we do not know in what script the earliest tragic texts were written. Though the Ionic alphabet was not officially adopted at

the Chorus has just been at pains to show how, paradoxical as it may sound, it is true: "learning through suffering" (v. 178) is the obvious example of the favour or grace that is a harsh favour. (As for the verbal paradox, this is surely typical of Aeschylus' style; compare, among other examples, *PV* 545); (c) the previous generations of the gods (Ouranos and Kronos) are surely excluded from the δαίμονες presently described by the Chorus in that they have been *overthrown* (168–172) and so cannot possibly be described as σέλμα σεμνὸν ἡμένων.[6]

Perhaps all that we may conclude from the foregoing discussion of Professor Pope's argument so far is that no absolutely compelling case can be made, simply from the text of this sentence (182–183) in isolation, against reading που as enclitic: Pope has indeed shown that there are serious (though not, perhaps, insuperable) difficulties in taking που as enclitic if we retain βιαίως; he has, on the other hand, been less convincing in his arguments that βιαίως must be retained, against Turnebus' emendation βίαιος. Thus the decision between ποῦ interrogative and που enclitic must finally be based on our view of the comparative appropriateness to the context of the two quite different meanings which result. If the bitter rhetorical question, δαιμόνων δέ ποῦ χάρις βιαίως/σέλμα σεμνὸν ἡμένων; (the oldest reading, in M and V) makes better sense in that context than the alternative statement of tentative optimism, then Professor Pope is, of course, quite right to insist on its retention. It is, however, in this part of his argument (107–113) that Professor Pope, despite his eloquent plea for an utterly pessimistic view of man's lot in the *Oresteia*, is least convincing.

Athens until 403/2 B.C., it was no doubt predominant in Greece for literary purposes well before that time. Scholars tend to attribute its increased popularity at Athens to the itinerant Sophists in the second half of the fifth century B.C. See Rudolf Pfeiffer, *A History of Classical Scholarship* [Oxford 1968] 28–30 and references there given.) Pope's argument about accents in the case of "wrong omegas" would not, of course, be relevant if omega was erroneously written for omicron before the introduction of accents in the Alexandrian period. Moreover, even on its own ground, Professor Pope's argument is by no means decisive: he cites (104, note 2) several instances of errors of omega for omicron, where changes of accents *are* involved, in MSS of *PV* and *Ag.* These include one in *PV*(M) at v. 428, one in *Ag.* (F Tr) at v. 477 and one in several MSS, including *primitus* M, at *PV* 647. (See Page's *app. crit.* [OCT 1972] for full information on the readings in this last example).

[6]Headlam, one of the few editors to consider (in his note to v. 192 in his edition [Cambridge 1910]) the possibility of reading ποῦ interrogative and βιαίως, suggests that, in that case, δαιμόνων would refer only to Ouranos and Kronos, and that the purpose of the lines would be "to contrast the gentle and spiritual mode existing under the reign of Zeus with the turbulent rule of Ouranos and Kronos." But it is hard to see how the Chorus could refer without warning (except for the word βιαίως, which, Headlam suggests, distinguishes their activities from those of Zeus) to gods who have been overthrown in the preceding strophe. (Headlam does, however, print Turnebus' emendation in his text.)

Let us view the larger context. The Chorus, before turning to Zeus at vv. 160 ff., has just completed its account of Calchas' interpretation, with its sinister epilogue, of the omen of the eagles' feasting on the pregnant hare. Still ringing in the audience's ears is the prophet's grim deprecation of the renewal of the family curse by "another lawless and inedible (ἄδαιτον) sacrifice, an architect of strife clinging to the race, not fearing the husband . . ." (151–154). The account ends with the refrain, "Cry pity, pity, but may the good prevail" (159).

From this the Chorus turns, in one of those abrupt switches typical of Aeschylus' dramatic use of lyric, to sing of Zeus as the only one on whom it can think of calling[7] "if it is really to cast the vain burden of care from its mind" (163–166). There follows a brief but striking description of the overthrows of Ouranos by Kronos and of Kronos by Zeus (168–172) and then, in the same number of lines (174–178), a celebration of the quality of Zeus which separates him from his predecessors: that he has led men to use their reason (φρονεῖν . . . ὀδώσαντα), laying it down that learning by suffering (πάθει μάθος) is the rule (κυρίως ἔχειν). With Zeus' contribution so carefully distinguished by the Chorus, it is clear that vv. 182–183, with which the passage ends, must be read as a tentative description of the "relief from the burden of care" for which the Chorus was looking (165 ff.) when it first turned to ponder the ways of Zeus. Either of the two versions (depending on whether we read βιαίως or βίαιος) quoted on the first page of this article admirably suits this context.

On the other hand, to read the sentence at vv. 182–183 as a despairing question about all the generations of the gods ("Where, then, is there favour from the gods seated unjustly[8] etc. . . ."), as Professor Pope

[7]The sense ("I can find nothing to compare with Zeus except Zeus . . . ') if not the syntax of this expression at 163 ff. is clear enough. Denniston and Page's explanation of the syntax is, perhaps, the clearest, namely that the coherent statement οὐκ ἔχω προσεικάσαι [*sc.* οὐδὲν Διί] ("I am not able to compare anything to Zeus . . ." is interrupted, before the last two words are expressed, by πάντ' ἐπισταθμώμενος/πλὴν Διός.

A rather larger question, concerning the relevance of this whole passage (the so-called "hymn to Zeus") at this point in the parodos has been raised by Mr R. D. Dawe (*Eranos* 64 [1966] 1–21). He argues (2) that there is not (as Fraenkel has claimed in his edition 2.113) a clear allusion at vv. 150 ff. to Artemis demanding the sacrifice of Iphigenia and that "We are still therefore far from the point of utter ἀμηχανία" (4). Dawe finds that point only in the actual dilemma of Agamemnon and so would transpose "the hymn to Zeus" to follow vv. 192–217. (Vv. 184–191 are also included in this transposition for reasons which take us rather beyond the point relevant to our passage.) L. Bergson, *Eranos* 65 (1967) 12–24, argues, against Dawe and with Fraenkel, that there *is* a clear reference to the Aulis-Artemis situation at *Ag.* 140–159; hence, a point of utter ἀμηχανία, prompting the hymn to Zeus, has already been reached. Dawe's argument would, in my opinion, be convincing only if he could show that there was *no* backward reference, no point of ἀμηχανία (not simply not the backward reference which *he* would like to see) in the hymn to Zeus, and this he has failed to do.

[8]I agree with Professor Pope that βιαίως may not be an unsuitable word to qualify

would take it, surely makes nonsense of all that has gone before: first, of the Chorus' point (163–166) that only Zeus can help cast off the vain burden from the mind and second, of the Chorus' careful distinction (174–178) of the special contribution of Zeus in contrast with his predecessors.

We turn next to some interpretative difficulties which Professor Pope finds with "the affirmative version" of *Ag.* 182–183. If (as the affirmative version implies) the divine χάρις has reference only to Zeus, "what [asks Professor Pope, 111] is the relevance in mentioning Ouranos and Kronos?" The most obvious relevance of this "mention" is, of course, the one which Pope rejects as "very complicated," namely the point of contrast between Zeus and the earlier gods, for it is Zeus alone who put man on the road to using his intelligence and so to learn through suffering. I do not find this evolutionary view of the gods "very complicated," but whether it is or is not, it is what the Greek (176–178) tells us. To this point of relevance one might add a further, complementary suggestion, more open to the charge of subjective interpretation. It is possible to see the divine overthrows, with Zeus hailed as the truly victorious (note 174) winner of the third throw (τρια/κτῆρος, 171–172) as a specific anticipation of the sequence of bloodshed (Iphigenia, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra) in this trilogy, and of its resolution, its "advance through suffering," in the establishment of a homicide court in the final play. However, to accept this view one must also be prepared to accept the view that the poet at times speaks through the Chorus, providing the audience with hints, insights, and anticipations of a more precise nature than the Chorus itself would be capable of.

Next, we must consider two lexical points by which Professor Pope (107 ff.) seeks to support his pessimistic view that no "wisdom learnt through suffering" is to be found in the so-called "hymn to Zeus," let alone in the Aeschylean universe. One should note, in passing, a certain cunning in this part of the argument: Professor Pope cannot deny the presence of "knowledge" or "learning" (μάθος) in this context, since it is plainly there (v. 177). The strategy, then, is to assail first σωφρονεῖν (181), then φρονεῖν (176), both words which tend to take their precise significance from their context, and then, *before* considering their present context (πάθει μάθος, 177), to assign to them their most negative significance—for σωφρονεῖν, mere "constraint," "disciplining," and for φρονεῖν, mere "awareness," "consciousness." Even so, the device is not entirely

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ἡμένων, but I would question his statement that the word βιαίως is "equivalent to παραφύσιν or παραδίκην" (106). These elements may, of course, often be present in an action where βιαίως is used as a qualifier but an element of violence or force must surely always be present. It is present in the two passages (*Eum.* 555, *Supp.* 821) cited by Professor Pope, though in the first of these passages it is not the subject of the verb who exerts the violence.

successful. *Of course*, when Clytemnestra (*Ag.* 1425) and Aegisthus (*Ag.* 1620) and Hermes (*PV* 982) use σωφρονεῖν in speaking to their enemies, the disciplinary aspect of the word is paramount (though even here, some element of "wisdom acquired" in the disciplining process is not entirely absent). But in other less "forcing" contexts, the idea of acquiring wisdom is paramount in the term σωφρονεῖν: this is certainly true of its use at *Eum.* 1000, where the converted Erinyes speak of the citizens of Athens as σωφρωνοῦντες ἐν χρόνῳ in just that context of "wisdom achieved," at the end of the trilogy, to which I have already referred; the same overtone is present, though in a harsher context in the use of σωφρονεῖν at *Eum.* 520–521, where the Erinyes utter their warning (ξυμφέρει/σωφρονεῖν ὑπὸ στένει) about the importance of τὸ δεινόν (517) for instilling a proper reverence for justice (δίκαν, 525) in state and individual alike.[9]

Similar criticisms may be made of Professor Pope's treatment of φρονεῖν (176) in this passage. The conclusion which we seem entitled to draw from the nine unqualified uses of φρονεῖν and its cognates in Aeschylus (cited by Pope) is that this term, even more than σωφρονεῖν, takes its coloration, within certain definite limits, from its context. For the most part the uses fall into two main groups. In one group (a) the meaning suggested implies little more than active consciousness, awareness; it is, for example, what a dead man (*Cho.* 517) or an animal or a very young baby (*Cho.* 753) *lacks*. (Cf. also frg. 399N = 677 Mette, where the term also suggests a sort of least common denominator of rational human activity, and *Eum.* 115, where it means little more than "Wake up!", "Come to your senses!") In the second group (b), on the other hand, φρονεῖν carries the clear suggestion of a specific use of the mind, often to some particular (sometimes 'moral') purpose; see, for example, the four similar uses at *Supp.* 176 (bis) and 204 (bis), where, as the context shows, the word implies *prudence*, including modest behaviour, on the part of the suppliant maidens (cf. 197 ff.), and foresight (προμηθία 178), on the part of their royal father. With these latter passages we may compare also the use at *Sept.* 807, where, as again the context shows, φρονοῦσα means "using one's head," "sobering up," "avoiding panic."

Thus φρονεῖν in Aeschylean usage would appear to have a certain blandness exploitable by critics as well as by poets. Professor Pope's observation (p. 108) that, used absolutely, "the word carries the same broad

[9] ξυμφέρει/σωφρονεῖν ὑπὸ στένει (*Eum.* 520–521): the whole passage (517–525) really needs to be read to garner the force of σωφρονεῖν, which again includes a positive, not merely a restrictive, element. Indeed, this ode includes some of the Erinyes' more philosophic utterances, some of them, perhaps, a shade out of character for the Erinyes as we have seen them thus far in the play. Such passages cast doubt on the somewhat doctrinaire view that we must always think of the Chorus as expressing exclusively its own views and never, to any degree, those of the poet himself.

meaning" in all the nine occurrences cited, is an oversimplification which turns out to be misleading without qualification and without a satisfactory statement of what certain different uses of the term have in common. The common point is the denotation of rational activity, but the important (contextually determined) *distinction* between the two kinds of usage is, as we have seen, the denotation of rational activity as a sort of lowest common denominator of human consciousness or awareness, and, on the other hand, the denotation of rational activity directed to a certain end in more or less specified circumstances. Pope's statement, "The concept which would seem to explain all of these occurrences is that of using one's faculties as a grown-up human being . . ." (108), is close to being a description of the first of these two usages. It fails to do justice to the use of φρονεῖν in the present passage, where the context—πάθει μάθος—clearly marks it as belonging to the second usage. Certainly this context precludes the most generalized, almost "passive" meaning which Pope gives to φρονεῖν in the passage: " 'Zeus who has put men in the way of being men', that is to say, 'who has given us consciousness' " (109). Nor does his reference to the "evolutionary passage" in the *PV* (443–444 ff.) help his argument here: there it was Prometheus, not Zeus, who (in a very different context) made men φρενῶν ἐπηβόλους; there, Zeus wished to do away with men entirely (cf. *PV* 232–233).

We may turn finally to Professor Pope's difficulty with Zeus' "gift of wisdom learnt through suffering", to wit, "Who learns what?" Initially (107), Pope simply agrees with Denniston and Page: obviously, Agamemnon does not "learn," and the view that others are supposed to learn from Agamemnon's example is dismissed as "plainly unsatisfactory." However, Pope returns to this general question of "others learning" (however "untragic" he may regard this) in his general defence, at the end of his paper, of his pessimistic view of the trilogy as a whole. Somewhat perversely, he "disproves" the existence of "an ethical or sociological advance," even in the *Eumenides*, by looking for it in the wrong places and, not finding it, by implying then that it does not exist. Thus he argues that "the virtues of justice, persuasion and negotiation exist for the characters of the *Agamemnon* . . . just as much as they exist in the *Eumenides*" (111) and that "Brute force is by no means abjured by the new gods in the *Eumenides*, let alone by Athena" (112). But in the *Agamemnon*, πειθώ appears in an *evil* form in the Chorus' account of the temptation of Paris (*Ag.* 385 ff., cf. 717 ff., the "lion-cub image") and in Clytemnestra's temptation of Agamemnon to tread the purple (*Ag.* 931 ff.). In the *Eumenides*, it appears in its most sanctified form (ἀλλ' εἰ μὲν ἀγνόν ἐστί σοι Πειθοῦς σέβας . . . , *Eum.* 885) as Athena finally wins over the Furies to their new and positive role as guardians of the *polis* rather

than as vampires of familial bloodshed. As for Pope's example of "brute force . . . by no means abjured", two points should be made. First, Athena does not win over the Furies by her gentle hint concerning Zeus' thunder-bolt (827–828): the Furies keep up their vehement opposition for more than sixty lines after this, until v. 892 (where, in my view, it is Athena's final promise that they will be "property holders" at Athens [note τῆσδε γαμόρῳ χθονός, 890] which ultimately does the trick). Second, the continuing presence of τὸ δεινόν, and the fear of such retribution for wrong-doing, are very much a part of the new order which Athena ushers in. (Cf. *Eum.* 690–706: here Athena's emphasis on such disciplinary features is very reminiscent of the Erinyes' own insistence on τὸ δεινόν [517] for the preservation of justice in the individual and in the state.) That this element of discipline is, nevertheless, a part of a *new* order is shown by the fact that Athena mentions it as she establishes her new court for homicide (681–706): reverence and its kinsman, fear (690–691), are to be the necessary support of the Areopagus, whose functions extend, at least symbolically, to that of "guardian of the land" (φρούρημα γῆς, 706). It is clearly this court, the Areopagus, and the kind of civic morality which Athena envisions as supporting it, which embody the "ethical advance," at the end of the trilogy, which Professor Pope would deny. Part and parcel with this is the conversion of the Erinyes (no longer needed, because of the new court, in their "vampire role" in blood vengeance) to tutelary guardians of the state, rewarding justice in its citizens (*Eum.* 988–995; cf. 907–912), though still evoking the necessary "reverence and fear" (see above) in citizens and court alike (*Eum.* 932–37; 949–55)[10]. Both Athena's words at *Eum.* 988–995 and 907–912 and the blessing imprecated by the Erinyes themselves (921 ff., 938 ff., 956 ff.) clearly indicate the transformation of these awful deities.

Those who find no "ethical advance" in the *Eumenides* and no fundamental change from the old ("Erinyes") order of homicide begetting homicide, must be hard put to explain the point of Athena's speech at 681 ff. and, indeed, the final third of the play (794–1047), which is devoted to Athena's conversion of the Erinyes. This is, in my view, the πάθει μάθος anticipated at *Ag.* 177 ff. If it be objected that "two plays later" is a long time to wait for the application of the doctrine, it may be answered that the themes in this closely connected trilogy flow clearly from one play to the following one, and so on through. Finally, Professor Pope's deroga-

[10]The first of these passages (932–937) does provide some difficulty in that Athena, in her reminders of the dread powers of the Erinyes, harks back to their capacity for visiting on sons the sins of their fathers. The passage should not, however, be taken as limiting the powers of the Areopagus in the matter of homicide, since these have been clearly indicated at 681 ff. (Note ἔσται δὲ καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν, 683; αἰεὶ, 684.)

tion of learning by vicarious suffering, "You suffer, I learn," as neither noble nor tragic (107) is really a vulgarization of the thematic sequence of the trilogy. A King has suffered and a people or a state learns—eventually. For in the final phase of *Eumenides*, Orestes and even the house of Atreus have faded into the background and the Athenian *polis* has become the centre of interest both for us and for the poet. But the wisdom reaped by the *polis* and its citizens is presented as the result of the long *pathos* of individuals and family in the house of Atreus.

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