XI.—Tragedy and the Moral Frontier

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"The Greek tragic hero —," says a colleague whose field is French literature, "the hero of Greek tragedy shows no signs of having a conscience." This is paradoxical, for many heroes in Greek tragedy are decidedly conscientious people. But my friend is not wrong. The fact is — or so at least this essay will assert — that the hero of a Greek tragedy usually operates on the moral[1] frontier, where the rules are yet to be defined, or even to be discovered. Conscience, on the other hand, operates on the basis of known rules, whether those of society or of religious revelation. It is true, then, that conscience is not the main-spring of Greek tragic action; rather, the action represented is such as will suggest new rules of conduct, because new insight is offered into the state and capacity of human beings. But, if this is so, then the ultimate business of Greek tragedy is enlightenment and the development of thought and reason.

Now it is generally assumed that the business of tragedy is to deal, not with reason and thought, but with emotion. This view begins with Plato and Aristotle, and is carefully formulated by the latter (*Poet.* 1449B.27–28). There was an obvious reason for this insistence — Aristotle, like Plato, wished to insist that the correct method for exploring the moral frontier was not the traditional method of poetry, but the new scientific method of dialectic and philosophy. In addition, it is a reasonable conjecture that the poets of Aristotle's own day were better able to play upon emotions than to think profound thoughts — and after all, Aristotle's rules are a code for future use rather than an historical appreciation of fifth-century drama, which belonged to the ages. Later practice confirmed the Aristotelian view — e.g., in Shakespeare and Racine. With them, as far as my limited observation goes, one is so far from the moral frontier that the highest known insights (in the teachings of Jesus) are not drawn upon, but rather rules of conduct represent-

[1] I define the term "moral" as meaning "concerning conduct which is, or is intended to be, deliberate, calculated, and reasonable," and trust that the reader will accept this definition for the time being.

ing a kind of highest common factor of human moral reasoning, with the addition, to be sure, of certain bits of local color. And today we find that the view that emotion is the business of tragedy is still flourishing. For instance, Sir Maurice Bowra says:[2] "Authentic tragedy neither explains nor justifies, but creates a condition of mind in which grief transcends its own nature by its very extravagance. It appeals beyond the desire for rational order to an exalted acceptance of disorder and disaster." But this view underestimates both the actual achievement of the Athenian poets and the possibilities of the art of tragedy. To focus one's attention on the reasoning process in tragedy — the exploration of the moral frontier — is to be ready for two desirable, though disparate, accomplishments — first, the more adequate interpretation of the extant Athenian tragedies, and second, the promotion in our own time of the poetic approach to insight and reason.

A word of caution — do not take the above statements to mean that the business of tragedy is to moralize, or that emotion is to be disregarded. The plays of Seneca display the result of putting philosophy first; as drama they are deficient, although there is much to be said for them as popular essays expounding a philosophic system. The business of tragedy, as of high poetry as a whole, is the adjustment of emotion to reason; but thought and meditation there must be, or there is danger of a descent to the level of traditional opera, in which the *logos* is made a step-child to the music.

The great Athenian tragedy did better. Its use of emotion was to the end of clarification — a better grasp of the state of Man and of the next step which he must take. In this way, tragedy subserved a central belief and aspiration of the Greek nature — so profound an instinct that, as far as I know, it was never explicitly stated[3] — the belief that the proper status of Man is to be a completely independent moral agent, capable of confronting successfully whatever his environment thrusts at him, and of adjusting triumphantly, here and now, to the universe. Such moral *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency) was the Athenian ideal. That it was unapproached in actuality was of course evident. But the fifth century believed in setting up the *canon*, the extrapolated 100% man of whom all living men were partial, even fragmentary, realizations. The tragic poet did not,

[2] "Milton's *Samson Agonistes*," *Varia Variorum, Festgabe für Karl Reinhardt* (Münster-Köln 1952) 213.

[3] It is very nearly explicit in Socrates' rejection of the "unexamined" life, *Apology* 38a.

like the sculptor, embody his *canon* in a representation; but he surrounded the portrait of his heroes with shadow-lines, as it were, to show as in a glass darkly how the *canon* should look.

If we agree that this was the ideal of Athens in her great days, we need never again agonize over the meaning of *hamartia*, the tragic flaw. As a failure of the independent agent, a blunder is as deadly as a crime — and herein lies the importance, the necessity, of exploring the moral frontier.

Belief in the ideal of the independent agent carries with it certain postulates. First, the universe must be knowable and orderly — the basic postulate of modern science — otherwise intelligent action is impossible. Second, the universe must be impartial to Man. It need not be predominantly beneficent; indeed, one sometimes feels that an ancient Greek bristled at the thought of divine aid as a college student bristles at "paternalism," as though the grace of God were an impeachment of the competence of Man. Third, it was assumed that the perfect man would adjust to the realities of the universe. In speaking of the perfect man as an "independent" agent, one must concede that such independence is only relative; it does not extend to altering the universe. Arthur Miller's description[4] of the tragic conflict as "total onslaught by an individual against the seemingly stable cosmos surrounding us" does not apply to Athenian tragedy. In the process of adjustment, the pitfalls are on the one hand the traditional *hybris*, or crashing the boundaries, and on the other hand, the overcompliance, the moral defeatism, pilloried by Sophocles in that Odysseus who confronts Philoctetes. As a part of this adjustment to reality, the Athenian poets did not forget that man is "the kind of animal that belongs in a *polis*, a commonwealth." Few of the extant plays deal with political problems; but they commonly deal with individual conduct in a political setting, thereby guaranteeing the typical nature of the problem presented.[5] A fourth postulate of the Greek ideal and aspiration is that human nature has a considerable capacity for independent action. This postulate is accepted readily by Aeschylus and Sophocles; Euripides is inclined to question it, but chiefly on the ground that the individual is too entangled in society to be independent. Then too, Euripides likes to deny competence

[4] In his preface to "Death of a Salesman," as excerpted in the *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1949, sect. XI, p. 1.

[5] High rank also makes plausible the freedom of the hero to act independently.

to the traditionally strong, and assign it to the traditionally weak.[6]

If then the universe is knowable and orderly, and Man is to adjust to the order when known, several questions as to conduct will repeatedly spring up. What are the real and permanent rules of human conduct? How are they to be discovered? What is the relationship of obvious humanly-devised rules to the real rules? Just how does one apply the rules to the situation now confronting us? And finally one may ask, granting that we know the rules, how can we induce ourselves to comply?

The last question is the one with which Racine and Milton were concerned. It is not absent from Greek tragedy; *ate* is the oft-repeated word for a failure which often is a failure of will — a crucial failure to use one's head. But the Greek poets are also concerned with the prior questions.

This concern requires favorable external conditions if it is to express itself strongly. There must be an atmosphere of change, so that the questions will be raised frequently. There must be freedom from overpowering dogma, and from a conflict of beliefs so strong as to make any new statement of principle seem partisan.[7]

In the fifth century B.C., Athenian poets had these favorable circumstances. They also had a technique for moral research through drama. This began with the "historical" fact of the stories which they told. Thucydides did not boggle over including Minos and Agamemnon in historical reasoning. Of course the stories were not historical; they were literary, and hence potentially timeless. But their grip on the imagination gave them reality — that is, established acceptance. It is indicative that we today can accept Sophocles' *Antigone* as a datum for dramatic construction;[8] it indicates that vivid literary life is a sufficient equivalent for historicity. Achilles is more real to us than Menon, who was undoubtedly archon eponymous of Athens in the year 473/2 B.C.

The tragic poet began, then, with an historical fact. Thence he proceeded by a strictly logical sequence to his conclusion. By this,

[6] E.g., incompetence to Jason, Agamemnon, Achilles, Orestes, Electra; competence to Medea insofar as she is a typical housewife, to the peasant husband of Electra, and to heroic young girls — Macaria, Polyxena, Iphigenia. Cf. note 12.

[7] Partisan drama is not to be despised — witness Euripides' *Andromache* — but partisanship precludes exploration of the moral frontier, because it assumes that the moral frontier is known.

[8] In Anouilh's *Antigone*.

however, we do not mean that minor realistic logic of motivation, by which entrances and exits are all accounted for, and other details are wholly congruent. There is no objection to such logic; one of the magnificences of Sophocles is that he maintains the minor as well as the major logic; but to emphasize this minor logic, as Aristotle did, is to confess that drama has descended from the level of the *Iliad* to that of the *Odyssey*. Even consistency of characterization is not a *sine qua non* of the major logic. Thus it is no flaw in the *Agamemnon* that the feeble old chorus should suddenly become the stubborn citizenry of Argos.[9] The major logic which must be maintained is the logic of the underlying idea. This the Athenian poets will defend even against slight and picayune misconceptions; illustrations of this painstaking will be given later.[10] It is this strict adherence to logic which has led people to talk of Fate in Greek drama — very dangerous talk, since it leads to the misconception that emphasis is put on external circumstance, whereas the ideal of human competence is the true center of the poets' thought.

Logic of thought is not the only logic observed in the tragedies — there is also logic of emotional mood. The point of the play could be sent astray if the audience did not feel with the poet, as well as think after him.[11] As we mentioned above, it is this yoking of emotion with reason to create a lasting and energizing insight which is the business of tragedy as practised by the Athenians. Emotion is important; but it must not obscure logic. The poets of Athens were careful to cultivate a reasonable detachment in their audience, so that the view of the audience is always clearer than that of the characters, including (*a fortiori* as a rule) the chorus. Test-points for this detachment are the dramatic irony of Sophocles, and the judicial attitude of Euripides toward his characters, which means that he sympathizes with their misery, but is stern toward their success.[12]

[9] Cf. 72 with 1651 or 1652.

[10] Cf. below, 170–71 and 174.

[11] For illustrations, see below, 171 and 174. It seems likely that Euripides rewrote the *Hippolytus* because the audience failed to sympathize with his first Phaedra as much as he did, and hence mistook the whole play; cf. the Hypothesis, and *Frogs* 1043.

[12] Cf. the ending of the *Medea*, where Jason becomes an almost sympathetic character, and Medea becomes antipathetic; also Hippolytus before Theseus (antipathetic), the lack of a human "hero" (sympathetic character) in the *Bacchai*, and the fall of Hecuba at the end of the *Hecabe*. Cf. note 6.

The response of the audience, including the reader, should be an active one. But therein lies a difficulty. Sophocles, we know, responded to Aeschylus,[13] and, we suspect, to Euripides. Since then, similar responses have come from Rome and other literary centers, down to the playwrights of contemporary France. But these responses have consisted in retelling the story or adding a sequel. Now this is legitimate, laudable, essential — but it is not interpretation of the older works. We must not let our imagination blur the division-line between what the ancient poet said, and what he stirs us up to say for ourselves.[14]

To what degree, then, do the extant plays explore the moral frontier? There are some which do no more than display the validity of known rules. Aeschylus' *Persians* is one of these. This play asserts that the rule against *hybris*, familiar as concerning the individual, applies also to a state. That conduct valid for persons is also valid for states is an insight which is still largely unachieved by the human race, and to this extent we might credit Aeschylus with a moral advance. But the ruling principle is familiar. In the *Medea*, too, standard principles are involved. Jason is as near a villain as a Greek is allowed to be in the serious fifth-century drama; this shows that our verdict on the whole case will not be a matter of debate. The play is a good study in the major dramatic logic, which is displayed at the expense of the minor logic of motivation. Medea is, on the one hand, a typical housewife, and on the other, a barbarian sorceress. Her uniqueness is used solely to make clear her typicality by giving her complete freedom to be herself. So too the noted arbitrary coincidence of Aegeus' arrival serves the same purpose.[15] Meanwhile, Euripides takes care to emphasize the typicality of Medea — in part, at least, by the well known but perhaps underappreciated device of having sententious utterances delivered repeatedly by all hands.[16] Euripides, then, minimizes the

[13] Cf. Plutarch, *Progress in Virtue* 7 (79B).

[14] The reader is of course entitled to apply this critical principle to the present essay. An example of what should be avoided — the prevalent idea that Sophocles' *Antigone* presents the clash between the individual conscience (or religious duty) and the State. This is a good theme for a modern *Antigone*, but in my opinion it is not what is shown in Sophocles' play, nor was it possible in the fifth century, because religion and the State were indissolubly connected.

[15] See H. D. F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy* (London 1939) 196–97.

[16] E.g. lines 48 (nurse), 85–87 (pedagogue), 122–24 (nurse), 215–21, 516–19 (Medea), 569-73 (Jason), 965, 1080 (Medea), 1225–30 (messenger).

outlandishness of Medea — in sharp contrast to Robinson Jeffers, who seems chiefly interested in Medea because she is unique.[17]

In the lighter plays which are included under the traditional rubric of tragedy, the moral situation, as might be expected, is reasonably obvious, or is somewhat tentatively presented. So in the *Philoctetes*, *Electra* of Euripides, and *Phoenissai*, to arrange them in descending order of seriousness, the moral situation is clear, and in the *Orestes* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* it is sketched but not followed to a conclusion.[18]

Next in order of difficulty are those problems in which two standards of conduct clash. The *Ajax* and *Antigone* of Sophocles are clear examples — a use of the *men—de* construction in ideas. Both seem to have a contemporary reference; it is of some interest that Sophocles decides for the new type of character in the *Ajax*[19] and for the old in the *Antigone*, but for the less lonely and more socially attached in both.

These are dilemmas for which a preferred solution is indicated. Far more bitter is the dilemma with no good solution. Such is the tragedy of Pelasgus in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*.[20] This is the one extant play which should be called a drama of Fate.[21] In it occurs an incidental stroke of the poet's pen which piques curiosity. This is the decision of Pelasgus to consult his people as to the reception of the Danaids. Scholars have succumbed to the temptation to treat this as a quaint anachronism appealing to the democratic notions of the original audience. But it is more important than that. It guards the logic of the play. Pelasgus, presumably,

[17] Jeffers has no equivalent for the sententious utterances. He appears to want to improve the motivation, or minor logic, of the play (e.g., giving Aegeus a reason for being present, and having the chorus more active in the earlier part of the play) but to my taste these devices only make matters worse.

[18] The *Orestes* I take to be a study of aristocratic young fascists (i.e., self-righteous believers in violence belonging to the Right); this study is broken off by the melodramatic conclusion because the logical outcome couldn't happen to Orestes — and, more importantly, because Euripides couldn't make his point openly and directly in the partisan atmosphere of 408 B.C. The scene with the Phrygian modulates from serious drama to melodrama. In the *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the problem of individuals trapped in a social nexus is sketched; cf. below on the *Hecabe* and *Trojan Women*.

[19] I accept the view of Brown, "Pindar, Sophocles, and the Thirty Years Peace," *TAPA* 82 (1951) 15–28. Cf. also C. H. Whitman, *Sophocles: a study of heroic humanism* (Cambridge 1951) ch. 4, for a different and to my mind more arbitrary and less satisfying view.

[20] See Kitto (above, note 15) 7–30. For present purposes I disregard the play's status as the first act of the Danaids' drama, but see below, 173.

[21] For the *Heracles* as in a way a Fate-tragedy, see below, note 28.

suffered defeat and death. Was he wrong in his decision then? Should he after all have rejected the Danaids? Without the concurrence of the assembly we might think so; but the decision is not the mistake of the monarch, it is the choice of the *polis*. The king's dilemma was inescapable.

We might note in passing that the pressure upon Eteocles and Agamemnon was almost as overwhelming. Almost but not quite, for it is not Fate but their own nature which betrays them.[22]

From these heroes it is no long step to King Oedipus. Yet here there is a greater dilemma, for we feel that it is not a special circumstance, but the essential nature of the human predicament, that dooms Oedipus. We can speak of exploration of the moral frontier not in the sense that a principle is clarified or vindicated, but only in the sense that a sharply-drawn picture is painted of certain very real possibilities. Sophocles' Electra, too, faces a dilemma which, like Pelasgus', has no exit toward a better state, though unlike Pelasgus' it is an internal rather than an external dilemma.[23] One has only to read Thucydides to understand that contemporary circumstances might well have brought Sophocles to the view embodied in Electra; the view embodied in Oedipus is if anything darker, since Oedipus' problem is far less sharply focussed.

In the present state of our knowledge, we may have to include among the pictures of dilemma the *Seven*, because we lack what precedes, the *Prometheus*, because we lack its sequel, the *Women of Trachis*, and the *Heracles*. There is a suggestion of a resolution, emotionally but not intellectually, in the *Heracles* (cf. also note 28); but neither Heracles play has yet been made clear.[24] Perhaps performance of the plays would reveal their purport.

Next door to the plays of individual dilemma stand Euripides' plays of social discrepancy and chaos, two views of the same situation, the *Hecabe* and the *Trojan Women*. The first play has in its foreground the personal situation of Hecuba herself; she tries to

[22] Cf. *Seven* 690 f.; *Agamemnon* 186 f., 218–23.

[23] I assume, obviously, that the *Electra* is a tragedy, not a triumph. For commentary mostly on the other side, cf. L. A. Post, *From Homer to Menander* (Berkeley 1951) 301 f., note 10, and "Sophocles, Strategy, and the *Electra*," *CW* 46 (1953) 150–53. In the production of the *Electra* by the National Theatre at Athens in October, 1952, the final chorus was presented as a song of triumph, but gave the impression of being a complete *non sequitur*.

[24] I do not forget G. M. Kirkwood's excellent article, "The Dramatic Unity of Sophocles' *Trachiniai*," *TAPA* 72 (1941) 203–11, but I do not find that he presses his analysis as far as would serve our present purpose. On the *Heracles*, cf. note 28.

solve her problems, first by adhering to an established code, and later by catch-as-catch-can opportunism; neither method is successful, but the second is completely ruinous to herself.[25] Behind this individual drama is the social dilemma which drives unimpeachable men to engage in human sacrifice.[26] In the *Trojan Women* there is no distraction from this social involvement which frustrates and degrades the powerful and allows to the weak only the heroism of despair. Recognized moral values disappear in the quicksand of interrelationships. As with Thucydides, there is no suggestion that a code can be formulated to remedy the situation, but with the poet as with the historian, the implication is clear that such a code is indispensable to human welfare.

We have now considered plays which illustrate human rules of conduct, plays which arbitrate between codes, and plays which define certain human predicaments. There remain[27] several plays which indicate a line of moral advance — a positive exploration of the moral frontier. In some the line of advance is by faith, in others, by wisdom.

The contribution of Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, is most strongly a matter of faith. The world order is hardly less inscrutable here than in Oedipus' earlier history, though it now seems favorable to man. Certainly Oedipus has not changed in character. Indeed, therein lies, perhaps, one of the transfiguring touches of faith — that human nature, just as it is, is capable of establishing itself in the universe. The other touch of faith is the affirmation of the sheer vitality of human strength — it is, as Plato said, *athanatos*, the antithesis of death.[28] The characteristic Hellenism of this faith

[25] This is the analysis of G. M. Kirkwood, "Hecuba and Nomos," *TAPA* 78 (1947) 61–68.

[26] Cf. Schlesinger, "Two Notes on Euripides," *CP* 32 (1937) 68 f.

[27] I omit from mention certain plays of Euripides: the *Heracleidai* because it is enigmatic and perhaps incomplete, the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Rhesus*, *Ion*, *Helen*, *Alcestis*, and *Cyclops*, because they range from melodrama to farce, in the order given. For the *Andromache*, see note 7.

[28] *Phaedo* 106c-e. I. M. Linforth, "Religion and Drama in *Oedipus at Colonus*," *CPCP* 14.4 (1951) 75–102, gives a good analysis of the play, though one might question some details, e.g., his "principle that no liability is incurred by unintentional wrongdoing" (184); this is Oedipus' plea, not Sophocles' judgment; cf. Schlesinger, "Can We Moderns Write Tragedy?", *TAPA* 77 (1946) 7 f. Linforth makes a good point as to the major logic of the play being preferred to the minor at Oedipus' exit (175). The *Heracles* is a Euripidean equivalent of the *Oedipus at Colonus* according to the interpretation of D. W. Lucas, *The Greek Tragic Poets* (London 1950) 199–202. If I understand Mr. Lucas, he believes that Euripides has posed the question, "What shall a man do if he is ruined by a totally irrational accident, a flaw in the moral logic of the

consists in its acceptance of the world as it is, recognizing the evil, but finding that good outweighs the evil. So too in the *Agamemnon*, hardship is accepted as man's eternal portion, but even this evil is just and, at times at least, constructive (176–83). As the *Oresteia* proceeds and the gods take charge, their procedure is mysterious,[29] and the New Dispensation is, for poet and audience, a thing of the past; yet the implications are clear that beneficence is the work of the *polis* and that the cosmos, having moved from a harsher to a better justice, offers promise of good to come.

Since this belief in moral evolution seems to be deeply felt by Aeschylus, we may conjecture that the Danaid trilogy and especially the Prometheus sequence would confirm the suggestions of the *Oresteia* — suggestions which it seems somewhat frivolous to call optimistic, and yet which also have an inescapable claim to the term.

If a mood of faith is characteristic of Aeschylus, a state of intellectual clarity is equally characteristic of Euripides. So it is that, in spite of allowances which must be made for the profundity of the subjects as well as for the nature of poetry, one feels in the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchai* something of the blazing clarity of Greek sunlight. As the earlier play offers definitions of "Aphrodite" and of *sophrosyne*, so the later play is concerned with defining "Dionysus." Neither Aphrodite nor Dionysus are divine persons, except for purposes of poetic symbolism. Both are natural forces. Aphrodite seems quite easy to define — but as we follow Hippolytus, we see that Aphrodite is more than the biological urge, and is much like Lucretius' *Aeneadum genetrix*; she was no divine person, either; but the poet saluted her with the words *nec sine te . . . fit laetum neque amabile quicquam* (1.22 f.). So also Dionysus is more than wine and ecstasy, he is a great factor in human nature and its way of living. On the human level, *sophrosyne* is far more than Hippolytus' celibacy, or Phaedra's chastity, or the prudence that she proposes to teach her stepson (731). It is in the service of clarity that we are not allowed wholly to sympathize with Hippolytus, that Aphrodite and Dionysus explain that they are not Homeric gods, explicable in human terms,[30] and, to mention a minor but piquant matter which

universe?" Heracles' answer is, "Endure." Hera, who is not a force of nature, and is theologically impossible, is a symbol for inexplicable evil — a cosmic gremlin. This is the best explanation of the *Heracles* that I know, though fortified by no extant parallel in Euripides.

[29] See especially *Eumenides* 885–92.

[30] *Hippol.* 20; *Bacch.* 1349.

may seem an anomaly, that Theseus shows us what the workaday punishment of Hippolytus would have been, in case we distrust the symbolism of the magic wishes (893–98).

Euripides also saw his way to a positive view of the social group. We have noted above that he saw human values apparently overturned by the interlocking of social groups, though these values were hardly to be challenged where separate individuals were concerned; this moral chaos moved him deeply. But when he wrote the *Suppliants* he was prepared to present the *polis*, the commonwealth, as capable of living by a code. That Athens, not any individual, is the central character of this play is shown by the arrangement of the play's scenes, and especially by the debate on the *Führer* vs. the people as sovereign (409–62) — a debate irrelevant to the story of any person, but too conspicuous to be irrelevant to the theme of the play. The code of behavior for Athens is carefully defined. War and imperialism are roundly condemned through Adrastus; but the city is not to vegetate in Epicurean obscurity; it must act, not under some traditional compulsion by supplication, but of its own free will, to secure the observance by cities of the decencies.[31] However, we are not to think that war is good provided only it is successful or righteous; the triumph of Theseus is promptly overlaid by the catastrophe to the victims of war — a theme presented *fortissimo* in the Evadne-Iphis episode. At the end, Athena's astringent good sense reminds us that international arrangements are matters for precautions and contracts, not for chivalrous sentiment.[32] The whole play is a fascinating performance — careful thought clothed in a daringly unusual dramatic structure which dispenses with the ordinary links of the minor dramatic logic.[33]

[31] Cf. especially 195–249, 297–331; with the voluntary nature of the action, compare Pericles in Thucydides 2.40.4, "We acquire friends not by receiving favors, but by doing them." The contrast of these suppliants with Aeschylus' violent Danaids is worth noting.

[32] 1183–95. The rest of Athena's speech seems more like the usual, romantic *deus ex machina*, but there is irony in the story of the Epigonoi, when presented in this context, cf. 1147–49. Cf. the condemnation of Apollo by the Dioscuri, *Electra* 1245 f., though the urbane irony of this remark is less of a change of tone.

[33] The structure, like that of the *Trojan Women*, draws on the tradition of choral drama: compare the plays of Aeschylus, especially the *Prometheus*. The exploration of a nearly static situation is standard procedure in choral, or song, drama; strict logic of sequence is unnecessary, since all episodes refer to the central state of affairs, so that sequence is determined by mood; and characterization can be sketchy. In the *Suppliants*, characterization of individuals is only as much as is appropriate to minor characters; Athens, the central character, is portrayed partly through Theseus, hence his

In summary be it said that the instinct and intention of the Athenian poets was to think as well as to feel — constantly to insist that the poetic moment had significance as a part and an index of the cosmic pattern, while the business of mankind was to seek out that pattern so that life might be made to triumph. This attitude is perhaps the greatest legacy to us from these poets. They lived in a time of visible change — and so do we. They were, as nearly as members of a civic family may be, free to think and to say. We are less free, perhaps because our family ties to our fellow-citizens are less strong; but we have at least a choice between moral systems — a choice that might be made not polemically but in the interests of truth. Only the idiom of communication, which was so strikingly at the command of fifth-century Athenians, is yet to be discovered for us; the novel is perhaps an approach to it, but imperfect in several respects.

Today we have fallen into the assumption that the exploration of the moral frontier is to be accomplished by the scientific method only. But the history of the natural sciences shows that advances in that area have been made not only by the scientist, but by the technician on some occasions, and by the amateur on others. Perhaps it would be well to assume that the exploration of the moral frontier may also be conducted not only by the scientists (that is, the philosophers and scholars of religion), but by the technologists (that is, the psychologists and politicians), and even by the amateurs, that is, the students of the humanities and the men of imagination.

conspicuousness early in the play, and partly by the discussions, which to be sure go beyond the actual Athens to the sketched portrait of the perfect *polis*.