

XI. "Zeus, whoever he is . . ."

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The continuing attempt by scholars to understand the role played by Zeus in Aeschylean theology has resulted in two violently different and mutually exclusive interpretations of Aeschylus' attitude toward the supreme Greek god. One group of interpreters looks upon Aeschylus' Zeus as a deity who, whatever his original nature may have been, developed ultimately into a god of justice, mercy and grace. The Zeus envisioned by these scholars resembles very closely the Judaic-Christian concept of God and has a highly developed morality associated with him.¹ This view has been rejected by some of the ablest modern scholars who have directed strong and effective criticism at it. They have shown the lack of any textual evidence for a conversion of Zeus from an obviously cruel and vicious god into one supporting, by his power and grace, an advanced and highly developed morality. They have pointed out specific and very clear evidence for Zeus' cruelty and violence in the *Prometheus Bound* and in the *Oresteia* and have shown that, with the lack of any textual evidence for the conversion or evolution of Zeus, we are required to accept the existence of cruelty and violence as an essential part of Zeus' character.² In the absence of any textual evidence and because of the many cogent arguments based on the logic and probability of the situation, we must reject the position of those scholars who make Aeschylus' Zeus resemble the Judaic-Christian concept of God. The alternative hypothesis presented to us by those scholars who do not accept the view given above is that Aeschylus' Zeus is really nothing more than a primitive, anthropomorphic conception that is rooted in the unsophisticated Hesiodic theology developed

¹ For representative statements of this point of view see A. D. Fitton-Brown, "Prometheia," *JHS* 79 (1959) 52-60; G. Murray, *Aeschylus: The Creator of Tragedy* (Oxford 1940) 108-10; H. W. Smyth, *Aeschylean Tragedy* (Berkeley 1924) 120-21; F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca 1949) 153-66.

² See the persuasive arguments made on this point by both H. Lloyd-Jones, "Zeus in Aeschylus," *JHS* 56 (1956) 57, 66; and K. Reinhardt, *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe* (Bern 1949) 68-76.

hundreds of years earlier. This latter hypothesis is the one which is currently most in favor.³ It conceives of Aeschylus' Zeus not only as primitive and anthropomorphic but as an arbitrary, confused and self-contradictory deity practicing violence and crime one moment and insisting on the obedience of men and gods to the principles of justice in the next. The scholars who hold this view recognize the petty insignificance to which they have reduced Zeus; and they are forced to justify their interpretation by asserting that, although Aeschylus was a sublime poet and brilliant dramatist, in the field of theology he was merely a backward and naïve thinker.⁴ This is a view which has great importance for our ultimate evaluation of Aeschylus, and we are obligated to make a critical review of the evidence for it before accepting it as valid.

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the plot of the *Agamemnon* by those scholars who seek to interpret Aeschylus' view of Zeus as primitive and anthropomorphic. It is my intention in this paper to make some contribution to the solution of the problem of Zeus' role in Aeschylean theology by presenting a detailed analysis of the evidence bearing on Zeus in this play.

Professor Denys Page in the introduction to his edition of this play has presented what we may call the orthodox interpretation of the role of Zeus in Aeschylus in clear and unequivocal terms. As any further analysis of the problem must take into consideration Prof. Page's arguments, it is important to summarize them here. Prof. Page speaks of Zeus in general in his introduction; but as his remarks appear in an edition of the *Agamemnon*, we have every right to expect that they have special reference to the Zeus of this play. Of Aeschylus' general theological attitude Prof. Page says the following:

Innumerable superstitions darkened and dominated the lives of men, even the most intelligent; and in this respect Aeschylus was certainly not in advance of his time. For him, the ministers of the

³ It is at least the one which has received the most serious recent endorsement. For a particularly eloquent statement of this view see the edition of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* by J. D. Denniston and D. Page (Oxford 1957) xiii-xvi. See also Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 65-67. I know of no attempt, subsequent to the publication of the views of these scholars, to refute their position.

⁴ Thus Prof. Page (above, note 3) xv writes that, "Aeschylus is first and foremost a great poet and a most powerful dramatist: the faculty of acute or profound thought is not among his gifts."

divine will are a diverse and jealous brood, and Zeus appears indifferent to the conflict of their claims. The crime of Orestes was enjoined by Apollo at the command of Zeus; who nevertheless authorized the Furies to exact retribution. Zeus himself commanded Agamemnon to sail to Troy; but looked on with stoical calm while his daughter Artemis prevented Agamemnon from sailing except at the cost of inexpressible crime, the killing of Iphigeneia.⁵

In such a situation Page sees "much that is crude, and much that is confused," and he despairs of finding any kind of coherent theology or philosophy in Aeschylus. Page's interpretation of the essential nature of Aeschylus' Zeus is most clearly given by him in the following words:

We must be on our guard against the temptation to believe that his gods and demons are represented as being laws or forces of a spiritual kind; in truth he gives them human shape and many human qualities. All, except Zeus, may walk on earth, and all may be manifest to human sight. We are told that they have eyes to see and ears to hear; what clothes they wear, and by what means they travel. Zeus himself has human shape, is seated on a throne in a palace like a mortal tyrant; has bow and arrows, weighs in actual scales. Even he was once a character in an Aeschylean play.⁶

Thus for Page, Aeschylus is a superstitious and naïve thinker who believes in a primitive and anthropomorphic Zeus. The immediate problem with Page's analysis is that no specific textual evidence is cited to justify this position. In the preface to his edition of the *Agamemnon*, however, Page acknowledges the co-operation of several other scholars in developing the views of Aeschylean theology that are presented in the introduction. In the published work of one of these cooperating scholars, Prof. H. Lloyd-Jones, specific textual evidence for certain anthropomorphic characteristics of Zeus is given.⁷ The similarity in thought that is evident between the statements made on this subject by Lloyd-Jones and Page clearly indicates that it was the evidence assembled by the former scholar which Page drew on to support his interpretation of Aeschylus' conception of Zeus.⁸ Lloyd-Jones substan-

⁵ Page (above, note 3) xiv-xv.

⁶ Page (above, note 3) xv.

⁷ Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 65.

⁸ Page uses exactly the same categories of anthropomorphic qualities which Lloyd-Jones employs: references to the bodily form of the gods, to their means of transportation and to the weapons they use. Both scholars make the same point about Zeus'

tiates his view that Aeschylus had a primitive, anthropomorphic notion of Zeus by citing certain passages which indicate that the gods have human form, which describe the ways in which they travel and which tell us the weapons they use in battle. One highly significant fact emerges, however, from an examination of the passages he cites. None of these passages comes from the *Agamemnon*.⁹ Page's interpretation of the Zeus of the *Agamemnon* as an anthropomorphic deity is therefore open to question since neither he nor Lloyd-Jones cites any textual evidence in support of it from that play itself. It therefore becomes necessary for us to undertake a detailed and thorough review of the evidence bearing on Zeus in the *Agamemnon* to see exactly what conception of this god Aeschylus actually had.

A reading of the text of the play shows that it contains twenty-two references to Zeus. An analysis of these references yields important information which is not in accord with the orthodox interpretation of Aeschylus' theology.

Almost the entire body of references to Zeus in this play, some twenty in number, identify him with some physical or spiritual force in the world. Thus there are references to Zeus as an agricultural deity responsible for the ripening of crops and for the fruitfulness of the earth (970, 1014). There are references to Zeus as the guardian of specific moral and spiritual qualities. For example, he is described as the bringer of justice and retribution against transgressors of the moral order (56, 526); he is described appearance in a play and both contrast Aeschylean theology with the ideas of Xenophanes and Heraclitus. Since their thought on these points is so similar and since Page acknowledges Lloyd-Jones' contribution in his Preface, we may assume that Page's judgments rest, at least in large measure, on the same evidence as that assembled by Lloyd-Jones.

⁹ Even the few passages which Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 65, notes 35 and 36, cites from other plays of Aeschylus are subject to a reasonable metaphorical interpretation instead of the literal one which he makes. To speak of the weapons or even the parts of the body of one's gods is not necessarily to believe in their literal existence. The concept of deity is so august, supreme and infinite that it is only through metaphor and symbol that man with his finite intellect can apprehend it. Thus in the famous American Civil War hymn, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, we find the following lines: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord./He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,/He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword,/His truth is marching on." I think that not very many of those who have sung these lines have been compelled to take them literally. The lines are clearly metaphorical and vividly indicate divine power. It will be argued in this paper that the references to the parts of the body or the weapons of the gods in Aeschylus are precisely of this type and that there is significant evidence that they are not meant to be taken literally.

as the protector of the rights of hospitality (61–62, 362, 748) and as the defender of the hearth (704). Most, however, of the twenty references to Zeus as a force in the universe describe him simply as a god who accomplishes all of the visible effects in the world. Thus the chorus and the herald honor Zeus as the source of the victory at Troy and of the safe return of the army (355–66, 508–17, 575–82);¹⁰ the chorus declares Zeus to be the source of royal power (43) as well as of that power which prevents the dead from returning to life (1018–24); the source of human fortune and misfortune is traced back to Zeus (367, 1036, 1424)¹¹ as is the source of that power by which man extricates himself from difficulties (677). All of these indications of Zeus as the accomplishing force in the universe are clearly and unequivocally confirmed by the epithets which herald Zeus as the “Accomplisher” (973) and as “The Cause of All, the Doer of All” (1486). The confirmation of this view of Zeus reaches its culmination in the rhetorical questions asked by the chorus: “For what is accomplished for men without Zeus? What of these things is not divinely ordained (1487–88)?” These questions clarify the meaning of the words spoken earlier by the chorus in honor of Zeus (160–84). The Zeus worshipped somewhat mysteriously in those lines is now clearly seen as the ultimate causal agent in the universe. The tracing back of all of the proximate causes of human actions and natural events leads to a mysterious first cause that is beyond the ability of the human intellect to apprehend. This first cause the chorus is willing to call “Zeus, whatever its name may be”; and it is clear that the Zeus who is described in these terms is an impersonal force or power who is in no sense represented in anthropomorphic terms.

A highly significant point about this force or power which we call Zeus is that he is invoked with equal sincerity by the chorus, who call upon him to protect the conventional moral order, and by Clytemnestra, who begs him to assist her in the crime of murdering her husband (973). This clearly indicates that the force Zeus

¹⁰ The reference to Zeus as the “highest of the land” at line 509 is a fairly general one. The context in which it occurs shows, however, that the herald is thinking about his safe return home, and his invocation of Zeus and Apollo indicates his feeling that they are responsible for this last piece of good fortune after all the suffering they imposed upon him at Troy.

¹¹ The reference in line 1424 is literally to *theos* who is, in the context, most easily and clearly understood to be Zeus.

represents is neither moral nor immoral but rather amoral. Zeus is simply force, whatever accomplishes, whatever has an effect. He is in the very words of the chorus the “Cause of All” and the “Doer of All.”

Twenty of the twenty-two references to Zeus in the *Agamemnon* fit into the categories discussed above and do not admit, as we have shown, of an anthropomorphic interpretation. There are, however, two references to Zeus in this play which, although they are not mentioned by Lloyd-Jones, are open to a possible anthropomorphic interpretation. The first of these occurs at line 469, where it is indicated that a thunderbolt is hurled by Zeus at those who prosper excessively. The second occurs at line 1563 and tells us that the law “the doer must suffer” will remain in force as long as Zeus remains on his throne. These two references so different in character from all of the others in the play are the only textual evidence that Prof. Page can cite from the *Agamemnon* itself to justify his view that Aeschylus’ Zeus is an anthropomorphic deity.¹² Even here, however, we are entitled to register some objections to considering the thunderbolt and throne images as actually anthropomorphic in character. In the diction of any poet we find the use of highly imaginative and metaphorical language. In the *Agamemnon* many vivid examples of such diction can be found. I should like to cite here three illustrative examples:

ξυνώμοσαν γάρ, ὄντες ἔχθιστοι τὸ πρίν,
πῦρ καὶ θάλασσα, καὶ τὰ πίστ’ ἔδειξάτην
φθείροντε τὸν δύστηνον Ἀργείων στρατόν. (650–52)

¹² In this regard we must mention an extremely important reference to Zeus at lines 362 ff. where he, as we have already seen, is described as the protector of the rights of hospitality. The chorus goes on to tell us that Zeus had for a long time stretched his bow against Alexander. Here, indeed, is a reference to a bow, but it is not one which, I think, Prof. Page could cite in support of his anthropomorphic view of Aeschylus’ Zeus. In fact it is the strongest possible evidence against his position. The reference to the bow comes immediately after night has been described as having hurled a net over Troy. The net of night and the bow of Zeus are parallel metaphors, and there is no warrant for taking one more literally than the other. We also know, clearly, that the actual agents involved in the destroying of Troy and punishing of Paris were Agamemnon and his army. Thus Zeus’ bow must be a metaphor for the destructive forces that were unleashed against Troy. Since we have here a clear and indisputable example of an anthropomorphic quality being used in a metaphorical sense, I do not include it in the same category as the other possibly anthropomorphic references to Zeus discussed in this paragraph. Because of the clear metaphorical character of this reference to Zeus’ bow we should be wary of accepting a literal interpretation of similar expressions elsewhere in Aeschylus.

εἰ δ' οὖν τις ἀκτὶς ἡλίου νιν ἱστορεῖ
 χλωρόν τε καὶ βλέποντα . . . (676–77)
 δαίμονος χηλῇ βαρεῖα δυστυχῶς πεπληγμένοι. (1660)

Certainly no critic would argue for a literal interpretation of any of the above lines. No one would accuse Aeschylus of literally believing that fire and water could conclude an alliance, or that the rays of the sun could “seek out” a person in any but a metaphorical sense, or that he envisioned demons as oxen with heavy hoofs trampling on miserable human beings. It is clearly the very essence of the poet’s art to interpret reality in metaphorical terms. If we grant the poet’s right to speak of the sun and the sea in metaphorical terms, then we must also recognize the possibility of his speaking of Zeus and the other gods in these terms.¹³ The thunderbolt is a vivid symbol for divine vengeance, and the description of Zeus remaining on his throne is a poetic way of expressing the notion of the duration of divine power. When we recall that these two images are used in the general context of some twenty clearly non-anthropomorphic references to Zeus, we have considerable justification for considering them to be nothing more than metaphors of the type used by the poet regularly throughout the play.

Thus we have established that there is no adequate evidence supporting the view that the Zeus of the *Agamemnon* is a primitive, anthropomorphic deity. The evidence for anthropomorphism which Page used, we have seen, comes exclusively from plays other than the *Agamemnon*. In the *Agamemnon* itself, contrary to what Page says in his introduction, nothing whatever is stated about Zeus’ human form, his mode of travel, his appearance to human sight, his clothes, his use of actual scales, or his possession of a bow and arrows. A bow is, indeed, mentioned at line 364 but in an indisputably metaphorical sense which contradicts

¹³ There is only one major incident in the *Agamemnon* in which we have an actual example of anthropomorphic activity on the part of the gods. This concerns the description given by Cassandra of her seduction by Apollo. This incident is part of the mythical background of the play, just as many of the details of the expedition against Troy are part of a traditional story upon which Aeschylus drew for this play. The story of Cassandra and Apollo was one, therefore, to which an audience steeped in the traditional legend might well have expected some reference. This incident, however, is totally irrelevant to the principal theological problems explored in the *Oresteia*, which deal with the complicated fate of the House of Atreus. Cassandra is involved tragically, but only incidentally, in the major theme of the play. Thus the story of Apollo’s relationship to Cassandra does not have any central significance in the major theological problems raised by the events in the *Oresteia*.

rather than supports Page's anthropomorphic interpretation of Aeschylus' Zeus.¹⁴ The two references to Zeus' thunderbolt and his throne have been cited, and their probable metaphorical character has been discussed. In re-evaluating the evidence from the *Agamemnon* itself we have seen that twenty of the twenty-two references to Zeus in the play are entirely devoid of anthropomorphic content and simply describe Zeus as that force or power which accomplishes all of the visible effects in the universe.

Aeschylus' Zeus thus turns out to be a very different type of deity from the primitive, anthropomorphic god posited by Page and others. We have seen that the Zeus of the *Agamemnon* is regularly identified as the force that is ultimately responsible for the occurrence of all events in the world. Let us take any situation which might happen. It may be a bountiful crop, a safe return from war or the murder of a husband by his wife. In the *Agamemnon* Zeus is held ultimately responsible for the occurrence of all of these events. Now these occurrences have proximate causes which are usually quite clear to the human intellect. The chain of causes and effects, however, when pursued further back ultimately recedes into mystery, at least as far as human intelligence goes. The ultimate cause of any event is forever eluding the mind of man, but nevertheless he, almost of necessity, maintains a faith in it. Zeus fulfils the function of ultimate cause for Aeschylus, and his belief in such a cause is summed up by the chorus of the *Agamemnon* in the line “What without Zeus is accomplished for man?” Since the limitations on man's reason forbid him to know the essential nature of this ultimate cause, all that man can do is to recognize its existence by naming it. It is in this sense that we are to understand the lines:

Ζεύς, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ τὸδ' αὖ-
τῳ φίλον κεκλημένῳ,
τοῦτό νιν προσενέπω.
οὐκ ἔχω προσεικάσαι
πάντ' ἐπισταθμώμενος
πλήν Διός, εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος
χρῆ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμῳ.¹⁵ (160-66)

¹⁴ See the discussion in note 12 above.

¹⁵ For a highly perceptive and profound interpretation of the meaning of the phrase “Zeus, whoever he is . . .” see E. Fraenkel (*Agamemnon* [Oxford 1950] 2.99-100). In view of Fraenkel's analysis, the interpretation of this passage given by Lloyd-Jones (above, note 2) 61-62 is not very convincing.

Thus the chorus expresses its faith in an ultimate power in the universe and attaches a name to it by which it may address and approach it. The "vain burden" referred to by the chorus may easily be understood as the fruitless search for an ultimate cause by the limited human intellect.¹⁶ The naming of Zeus puts an end to this fruitless search. Substantiating proof for this view of the chorus' attitude toward Zeus may be found in their reference to him already quoted, at line 1486, as the "Cause of All" and the "Doer of All." In this sense, then, Zeus is a spiritual conception in that he symbolizes all of the effecting, all of the accomplishing forces in the universe. To say, however, that he is portrayed as a spiritual force is not in any sense to assert that he represents an advanced morality of the Judaic-Christian type.¹⁷ The fact that Clytemnestra can, with utter sincerity, invoke the aid of Zeus in accomplishing her crime has already been cited as significant evidence against this point of view. On the contrary, Zeus is a name used to symbolize all of the forces of the universe whether they accomplish moral or immoral ends from man's point of view. The Zeus of Aeschylus is an impersonal, amoral force representing

¹⁶ For a perceptive analysis of the meaning of the term "vain burden," see again Fraenkel (above, note 15) 102-3.

¹⁷ The concept of Zeus as a spiritual force has been advanced by other scholars. M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I (München 1941) 711, writes, "Oft werden die Allmacht und die Gerechtigkeit des Zeus gemeinsam verherrlicht; er vollzieht die ausgleichende Gerechtigkeit, er wird als derjenige bezeichnet, der alles bewirkt. Seine Macht wird so gesteigert, dass er an einer Stelle mehr als ein Prinzip denn als ein persönlicher Gott erscheint." H. D. F. Kitto, in a paper appearing in *La notion du divin depuis Homère jusqu'à Platon* (Geneva 1952) 188, interprets Aeschylus' Zeus as "the spirit of progress." While this is a spiritual interpretation of Zeus, it fails to recognize and account for the patently destructive and harmful aspects of Zeus' character that are clearly pointed out in the *Oresteia* and in the *Prometheus Bound*. Associated with the question of the spiritual quality of Zeus is the question of monotheism. The case for a monotheistic interpretation of Zeus is stated by H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Literature* (London 1956) 159, who writes, "Practically, Aeschylus was a monotheist, not that he denied the existence of other deities, for we may gather that quite apart from mythology he was ready enough to admit the reality of such beings as Athena or Apollo, but that he subordinates all else to Zeus, including the gods who were before him, Uranos and Kronos." In the *Agamemnon*, with the sole exception of the story of Apollo's seduction of Cassandra which has already been discussed, the lesser gods are referred to as symbols of power in the same way as Zeus is. See for example lines 55-56. Thus the concept of divinity appears to be for Aeschylus the concept of power. There are many limited expressions of this power in one direction or area, and these are symbolized by the names of the Olympian gods who are subordinate to Zeus. Unlimited, ultimate, primal power which is the first cause of all things is, however, symbolized by the name Zeus. The equation of ultimate power with Zeus is, indeed, as Rose points out, the equivalent, in practical terms, of monotheism.

universal power in its fullest, most naked form. Whatever happens in the world, moral or immoral, must ultimately be traced back to Zeus the Accomplisher.

Zeus understood in this way, as the name attached to that power which accomplishes its purposes, which works its inevitable effects in the universe, is freed from the contradictory, puzzling and absurd behavior which the anthropomorphic interpretation imposes upon him. In a passage quoted earlier in this paper Page pointed out the enigmatic and self-contradictory actions of Zeus in regard to the events of the *Agamemnon*. If these actions are considered as the product of a mind analogous to, although greater than, the human mind, then they are of course absurd and self-contradictory; and the god identified with them must share in their absurdity. If, however, Zeus is understood as a symbol of the ultimate cause of all events in the world, then we have a sophisticated conception of deity that is free from absurdity and self-contradiction.

If we understand Zeus in this way, then we can understand more fully the highly significant point made by Aeschylus in the *Oresteia* about the relationship of man to god. In the *Agamemnon*, as Page so well points out, Zeus is at odds with himself, sometimes inciting an action and then bringing retribution to bear on the doer of that action. The various gods take different sides in the play, and every human agent can call on some god for support for his actions. The moral atmosphere surrounding the play is chaotic, and the actions of the gods complicate rather than undo the chaos. In the court scene of the *Eumenides*, however, Aeschylus does provide a solution for the complicated moral problems raised in the *Oresteia*. It is of the utmost importance that we understand the nature of Aeschylus' solution if we are to understand his real attitude to the gods. In the *Eumenides* Aeschylus describes the establishment of a court to settle the complex questions of guilt and innocence raised by the history of the House of Atreus. It is highly significant that the court which is to decide a question that Zeus himself and the whole race of Olympian gods are unable to settle is composed of a group of human beings under the guardianship of Athena. A human court under the protection of a goddess who, if we look at her symbolically rather than literally, represents wisdom and understanding, is to settle the complex moral questions which have eluded solution by

the gods.¹⁸ This human court is, furthermore, to have in its power for all future time the authority to make decisions in matters of this type. I submit that if Aeschylus were a naïve, primitive religious thinker, he would never have authorized the transfer of the authority for solving complex moral problems from the gods to a human agency relying on reason and wisdom. Aeschylus' solution as given here actually heralds the breakdown of naïve religious thought. It places in the hands of man the ultimate responsibility of deciding moral questions in human society while recognizing the existence of an ultimate divine cause of all events in the world. It is the same solution that is given in the *Prometheus Bound*, where it is predicted that Zeus, who symbolizes the totality of power in the universe, must eventually yield to Prometheus, who represents the forces of civilization. The symbolism of this play indicates that man, the recipient of Prometheus' civilizing gifts, can use them to influence the way in which the protective and destructive forces represented by Zeus affect his life.¹⁹ In the *Oresteia* and the *Prometheus Bound* Aeschylus has elevated man to a position of full responsibility for his actions and for the judgment of his actions, thus emancipating him from a naïve dependence on the unclear and manifestly self-contradictory will of the gods.

Prof. Page has, however, written as follows of Aeschylus' theology:

Nowhere is there any awareness of what profounder thinkers had been preaching for many years: reading the meagre fragments of Xenophanes and Heracleitus, we should naturally suppose that Aeschylus must have lived long before them, so much more penetrating is their insight into the nature of the world and mind of man.²⁰

On the basis of the evidence cited in this paper we may take exception to this evaluation of Aeschylus' religious thought.

Now, like the shepherd who comes to unravel the mystery of Oedipus' birth, I am on the verge of saying fearful words—certainly they are highly unorthodox ones. Aeschylus clearly emerges from this analysis not as a naïve, primitive religious

¹⁸ In the *Eumenides* Athena declares at lines 470 ff. that the affair is too great for her to settle by herself, and she summons the aid of a human court.

¹⁹ For an analysis of the theological implications of the *Prometheus Bound*, see my article "Zeus the Protector and Zeus the Destroyer" to be published in a forthcoming issue of *CP*.

²⁰ Page (above, note 3) xv.

thinker but rather as a humanist, a rationalist and as an eminently fitting companion to the great minds who stamped fifth century Athens with its unique, unquenchable brilliance. Aeschylus' humanism is seen in the emphasis he places on human responsibility for action and judgment in the *Oresteia* and in the *Prometheus Bound*. His rationalism and his sophisticated thought are seen in his intellectual conception of Zeus as an impersonal force governing the universe who is known to us only by the effects he produces in the world. Beyond the fact that Zeus is the ultimate cause of all events which occur in the world, Aeschylus does not attempt to tell us much, if anything, about his nature. Perhaps, however, he has told us all that can be told in the majestic hymn chanted to Zeus by the chorus early in the play:

Ζεύς, ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν, εἰ τόδ' ἀν-
τῷ φίλον κεκλημένῳ,
τοῦτό νιν προσεννέπω. (160-62)