THE PROBLEM OF LYING AND DECEIT AND THE TWO VOICES OF EURIPIDES' *HIPPOLYTUS* 925–31

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It is especially in the post-Homeric poets that we note the growth of interest in the problem of lying and deceit, and we find them seeking for tests and criteria to distinguish character, in particular the character of a loyal and trustworthy friend. Within this poetic context some elaborated what we may call truth-fantasies, or imagined systems wherein men could not be deceived and could detect a friend when they saw one. The early elegiac poet Theognis of Megara, who often counselled his protegé Cyrnus to consort with the good (e.g., Theognis 37–38), devotes a number of lines to the problem of discernment. He comments that it is easier to discover counterfeit gold and silver than to detect "that which the god has made the most counterfeit of all for mortals" (κιβδηλότατον), the deceitful heart of a false friend (119–28).[1] This "deceitful heart in the breast" is again the subject of an early Attic skolion preserved in a collection by Athenaeus of Naucratis:[2] If we could somehow see into a person's νοῦς, says the anonymous poet, we would know whether to take him as a true friend. The same idea is

> To see what sort of person each one is
> It should be given to open up his heart,
> Reveal his mind, and close it up again,
> And thus to know a friend without deceit.

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[1] For the text, see M. L. West, *Iambi et elegi graeci ante Alexandrum cantati*, I (Oxford 1971) 179–80. On the touchstone (βάσανος) to distinguish a true friend, see Theognis 415–18, 450, and 1105–6.

[2] Preserved in Athenaeus 15.694d–e (=fr. 889 *PMG*); see also the comments of C. M. Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford 1936) 430, and D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (London 1967) 450.

reflected in an old Greek tale, found in Aesop and in Lucian,[3] about the censorious Momos, who blamed Prometheus for not making a man's heart visible so that one could see whether he were lying or telling the truth.

In the dramas of Euripides the problem of malicious lying and deceit becomes acute, and he reveals a constant interest in discovering a criterion of trustworthiness in human character. Can we tell from a person's exterior that he can be trusted? In Medea's attempt to understand the motives of the perfidious Jason (*Medea* 516–19), she invokes Zeus in a passage that is reminiscent of Theognis' advice to young Cyrnus:[4]

> O Zeus, why in the case of counterfeit gold
> You gave to mortals sure ways of knowing,
> And yet in men there is no outward mark
> By which to tell the vicious from the good?

Gold can be tested "by fire and by the stone," as the scholiast on the passage reminds us; and Medea is undoubtedly alluding to the slab of dark stone on which counterfeit gold was supposed to leave a yellow streak, the touchstone or βάσανος referred to by Theognis. So here Medea is seeking a moral τεκμήριον (517), a word in this context used elsewhere in Euripides;[5] and the χαρακτήρ expressed the external form, probably the "honest exterior" which some ancient writers thought to be a guarantee of loyalty and trustworthiness, a way of judging true friends from false;[6] the question of detecting lies, especially malicious

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[3] For the Aesopian fable, see A. Hausrath, *Corpus fabularum Aesopicarum* (I.1, ed. H. Hunger, Leipzig 1970) 102, pp. 128–29; Momos objects that Prometheus did not "hang the heart on the outside." In Lucian, *Hermotimus* 20, as Lycinus tells the story, Momos is critical because the god "had not made windows in the chest that could be opened to let everyone see a man's thoughts and desires, and also know whether he were lying or telling the truth."

[4] See D. L. Page, *Euripides: Medea* (Oxford 1961) 110–11.

[5] For a similar use, see Euripides fr. 329 (Nauck), cited by Stobaeus from the *Danaë*: "Ah, how fitting it is for the good to have a noble stamp (τεκμήριον) everywhere, to reveal their goodness of soul!" The lines may well have been spoken to Danaë by the Chorus: see T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides* (London 1967) 95. Again, young Ion, on first seeing Creusa, though he does not recognize her, exclaims: "You have nobility, and your bearing (σχῆμα) is a token of your character" (τρόπων τεκμήριον, *Ion* 237–38).

[6] On χαρακτήρ in Euripides, see F. Will, *Glotta* 39 (1960–61) 233–38. Demosthenes, *Against Stephanus* 45.68–69, reflects the assumptions of the common man when he

ones, is tacitly implied. The theme is again taken up in the second stasimon of the *Heracles*, written perhaps some years later,[7] at a point in the play just after Heracles' arrival home after his journeys. The Chorus of elderly men are complaining of the miseries of old age and touch on the idea of a second life (655–72):

> If the gods had wisdom and intelligence by human standards,[8]
> The good would have a second youth as a clear sign of their
>   righteousness.
> After death they could return again to the brightness of the sun,
> And run a second course; whereas the ignoble
> Would have but a single life. Then we could tell the good
> From the wicked, just as amid the clouds sailors
> See the number of the stars. But as it is
> The gods have given us no secure standard
> To discern the evil from the good,
> And the cycle of time only enhances wealth.

Here the "secure standard" (ὅρος σαφής, 669–70), the external mark, to distinguish evil men from the good would be this second existence, given "as a clear sign of their righteousness" (χαρακτῆρ' ἀρετᾶς, 659). Euripides offers us a novel variant on the myth of reincarnation; but it must be admitted that the Chorus here sing in a mood of fantasy whose logic is difficult to follow. For though the good would shine out like the stars in the nightly heavens (667–68) in their second time around, how could one distinguish the evil from the good in their first, normal existence? The implications remain most unclear.

But Euripides' most provocative passage comes from the *Hippolytus*, produced in its second version (as *H. the Garland-Bearer*) in the spring of 428 B.C. Theseus, on returning to Trozen after a long absence, finds his wife Phaedra a suicide with a damning message in her hand. In the *agon* that follows between Theseus and his son, dismayed at

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speaks of the approachability of those "who are cheerful and walk in a simple and natural way," as opposed to those who are affected and morose. On the importance of certain *signa* and *notae* in choosing one's friends, see Cicero, *De amicitia* 62.

[7] Very likely, on the metrical evidence, between 416 and 409 B.C.: see Webster (above, note 5) 5, though others would place it earlier, like W. Arrowsmith, *Complete Greek Tragedies: Euripides* II (ed. Grene and Lattimore, Chicago 1956) 57–58.

[8] That is, κατ' ἄνδρας; some scholars, less correctly, translate, "wisdom and intelligence *over men*."

what he believes to be Hippolytus' perfidy, Theseus cries out (*Hip-polytus* 925–31):[9]

> Ah, there should be laid down for mortals a sure test
> Of their friends, some way to discern their hearts, to tell
> Which one is true and which is not; all men should have
> Two voices, one a just voice, and the other ordinary,
> So that when the one intended malice it could be refuted
> By the just voice—and we would not be deceived.

Though commentators have linked the concept of the "sure test" (τεκμήριον σαφές, 925–26) in this passage with Medea's lines on the counterfeit coin,[10] the theory here placed in the mouth of Theseus has not received the attention it deserves in the light of Euripides' search for an infallible criterion of honesty. Here, in a passage quite unique in Greek tragedy, Theseus suggests that everyone should have two φωναί (voices, or tones of voice): one, the just voice, and the other, ὅπως ἐτύγχανεν (929), "however it happened to be."[11] The phrase describing the second voice has occasioned some natural difficulty. The Italian commentator, M. Ragone, took it to mean, "whether it [the voice] be good or evil;" and A. G. Westerbrink, perhaps following the scholia on the passage, understood the phrase merely as a euphemism for the evil voice.[12] The French scholars Henri Weil[13] and Louis Méridier[14] took it as a vague or indefinite reference to any kind of voice: provided we recognize the just voice, the other voice does not matter; and so the expression seems to have been understood by

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[9] See W. S. Barrett, *Euripides: Hippolytos* (Oxford 1969) *ad loc.*

[10] For the scholia, see E. Schwartz, *Scholia in Euripidem* II (Berlin 1891) 105.9–14. Among the commentators on the passage, besides Barrett, see F. A. Paley, *Euripides* I (London 1872²); J. P. Mahaffy and J. B. Bury, *The Hippolytus of Euripides* (London 1881); H. Weil, *Sept tragédies d'Euripide* (Paris 1905³); L. Méridier, *Euripide* II (Paris 1956); M. Ragone, *Euripide: Ippolito* (Naples 1968); A. G. Westerbrink, *Euripides' Hippolytus* (Leiden 1970).

[11] The construction would appear to be a present unreal relative conditional clause, on which see H. W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge 1956) 577.

[12] The scholia understand a man to have two permanent voices, "a just voice and a lying one, so that whenever the deceitful voice tries to tell a lie, it is convicted by the just one." See Ragone (above, note 10) 111; Westerbrink 50.

[13] Weil (above, note 10) 66.

[14] Méridier (above, note 10) 65, note 1.

LSJ.[15]   The versatile English commentator, F. A. Paley, was non-committal, translating, "according to the circumstances,"[16] although this may be on the right track.   More accurately Barrett translates, "as it happened to be."[17]   But it would seem that the idea of indefiniteness is secondary, and that, on analogy with the phrase οὐδ' ὡς ἔτυχε ("in no ordinary way," cf. *LSJ*, s.v.), the expression here should be further explained as "whatever voice the person *normally happened to have*" (e.g., as man, woman, and so on).   Thus there is nothing especially remarkable about this voice, the person's *ordinary* voice, as there is with the just voice, which is somehow recognizably different from the other.   By such an explanation the meaning of the verb becomes clear.

But when we have clarified this distinction between the ordinary voice and the just voice, our difficulties are not yet over.   Just how does the playwright imagine the just voice to function, or, to put it another way, what is the model which lies behind his novel hypothesis?   On analogy with the *Medea* and *Heracles* passages the just voice must somehow have a sure stamp, a clear criterion, which would forever solve the problem of lying and deceit.   And so Mahaffy and Bury, in their commentary on *Hippolytus*, suggested that "the just voice should have a fixed sound, by which as a standard every other kind of voice could be tested,"[18] though here they seem to be going farther than the text itself demands.

The first and perhaps simplest solution is the one suggested by the scholiast on the passage and implied by Westerbrink and, conceivably, Mahaffy and Bury.   It is that a person would have one voice (or tone of voice) for lying and another for telling the truth. But this would make more demands on the just voice, the extraordinary voice, than seems strictly necessary.   For, if a man's normal voice were used for *lying* only, he would then be using his just voice more often than his ordinary one—unless, of course, we are cynically

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[15] See s.v. τυγχάνω, A I.3, here translating "just anyhow," which does not do justice to the context.

[16] Paley (above, note 10) 219, explaining, "whenever men dissemble, there ought to be one kind or tone of voice, and another which declares the truth."

[17] Barrett 340, explaining, "the extra voice, of course, is required only in case the other is dishonest." This seems exactly right.

[18] Mahaffy-Bury (above, note 10) 89.

to suppose that we lie more often than we tell the truth. On the whole, then, this first solution, despite its antiquity, seems unacceptable. A second and more subtle solution (suggested by Barrett in his commentary) makes less demands on the just voice. On this theory a man would speak in his normal voice *both* for true and for lying statements; the just voice would come into play only when he lies, confuting the previous statement or asserting the truth as the need demands.

A third solution may be suggested on an analogy with what has sometimes been called the "guilty tone of voice." Experience suggests that, with unpracticed liars, one can often tell when they are not telling the truth by the wavering or unconvincing tone of voice. And so, if this is what Euripides is thinking of, a man would speak the truth in his normal tone of voice; but when he lied he would do so in a tone of voice so different from the normal that he would be self-refuting; we would always know when he is lying. But it might be objected that the refutation in this case is by the tone of voice and not by a distinct statement (as most scholars have assumed), or that the solution is too close to man's ordinary behavior to justify Euripides' fantasy.

Now of these three possible theories it is the second which would seem the best understanding of the text; and yet it is not yet clear how the just voice would derive its authority, its stamp of truth. Thus we might supplement our second solution by means of a more preternatural analogy. Man's extra, occasional voice might be oracular, like the voice of the oracles at Delphi, Didyma, Claros, or any of the numerous other (especially Apolline) sanctuaries scattered throughout the ancient world. We have an example of a mysterious, authoritative voice in Euripides' *Andromache* (1147–48), as the Messenger tells of the "terrible and chilling cry from the depths of the temple" that rallied the Delphians to slay the beleaguered Neoptolemus within Apollo's shrine.[19] If this is the analogy Euripides had in mind, the just voice would function in more or less the same way in everyone, by branding a previous statement as untrue, or simply by asserting the truth on its own oracular authority.

But perhaps the best solution is taken from the practice of a group

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[19] See P. T. Stevens, *Euripides: Andromache* (Oxford 1971) 233 *ad loc.*

of fifth-century ventriloquist seers called ἐγγαστρίμυθοι;[20] the most famous of these was Eurycles of Athens, who had a school of disciples known as the Eurycleidai.[21]   Aristophanes speaks of him (it is hard to say whether in mockery or grudging respect) in the *Wasps*, produced at the Lenaea of 422 B.C.   In the *parabasis* of the play (1019–20)[22] the poet imagines himself as

> Imitating the prophetic insight of Eurycles
> By getting into the bellies of others
> And having them utter a flood of comic jests.

According to our sources, Eurycles and his followers apparently had the gift of a secondary or daemonic voice, which either issued from their mouths (or somehow from their persons) in the manner of an oracle— as Plato, Plutarch, and Lucian suggest[23]—or else was projected into others, as seems clear from the comment of Aristophanes.   The second practice, it may be remarked, was often associated with necromancy, in the trick of supposedly making dead bodies or spirits speak;[24] but the secondary voice was probably also projected into statues, trees, or other sacred objects.   Our evidence suggests that Eurycles was prominent at Athens in the third quarter of the fifth century; in any case it would have been before the production of the

[20] See *LSJ*, s.v.; cf. K. Schneider, "Ventriloquus," *RE* 8 A (1955) 819.

[21] See J. Kirchner, "Eurykles," *RE* 6 (1907) 1330. The *hapax legomenon* στερνόμαντις of Sophocles fr. 59 Pearson suggests that the playwright may also have been acquainted with the seer's activity; Athenaeus I.19e mentions a statue erected in the Athenian theatre to a certain Eurycleides next to that of Aeschylus, and since jugglers and magicians are mentioned in the context, Eurycles must be intended, of whom Athenaeus or his source obviously did not approve.

[22] See W. J. M. Starkie, *The Wasps of Aristophanes* (London 1897) 310–11; thus *Wasps* 1020 seems wrongly suspected by J. van Leeuwen, *Vespae* (Leiden 1898) 113. The scholia on the passage speak of Eurycles as a ventriloquist-seer of Athens, "prophecying the truth by the power of the daemon within him:" F. Dübner, *Scholia graeca in Aristophanem* (Paris 1883) 158.31; cf. W. G. Rutherford, *Scholia Aristophanica* II (London 1896) 422.

[23] Plato, *Sophist* 252c, speaks of philosophers who contradict themselves: "They do not need others to refute them, but, as the saying is, they go about with their enemy within ready to contradict, carrying him about as one speaking inside of them, like that strange fellow Eurycles." Plutarch in his *Decay of Oracles* (*Moralia* 414e) mentions that some thought it unworthy of the god to enter into the bodies of prophets, "after the manner of the ventriloquist seers prompting their speech and using their mouths and voices as his instruments." Cf. also Lucian, *Lexiphanes* 20.

[24] See Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité* I (Paris 1879; repr. Brussels 1963) 338, and note.

Wasps in 422 B.C., and therefore not far from the time of Euripides'
Hippolytus, produced some six years before. In any case it seems clear
that Eurycles and his followers claimed two voices, one their ordinary
one, and the other a prophetic or daemonic one, which they had
apparently learned to project in the manner of a modern medium or
ventriloquist, though normally, we are given to understand, in a
religious context. Thus we would have a good contemporary
parallel for the two voices proposed by Theseus in the *Hippolytus*
passage, the just or contradicting voice emerging solemnly in the man-
ner of the ventriloquist seers, and therefore with a kind of infallible
stamp of its own.

   In conclusion, Euripides' vision must be examined within the context
of the ancient poets' long concern with the problem of trustworthiness
and credibility in human relationships. Our study makes it clear that,
though Euripides had little confidence in any popular belief in an
"honest exterior" as a safeguard against lying and deceit, he took
refuge in a number of unreal hypotheses, among which the theory of
the two voices was the most unique. Of this, though many of the
suggested solutions are possible, the oracular or ventriloquist model is
probably the best explanation within the fifth-century Athenian con-
text. And yet we cannot expect Euripides' fantasies to be worked
out to the last logical detail. For example, one is tempted to ask, is
such a daemonic voice (if this is the model) always to be trusted? Still,
even if Euripides gave no credence to such prophetic phenomena,
there would be nothing to prevent him from borrowing them as an
analogy for the unique system devised in the *Hippolytus* to offer men
an apparently infallible safeguard against the age-old problem of
lying and deceit.