

## Second Thoughts in Greek Tragedy

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“**I**N HUMAN LIFE,” says the Nurse in Euripides’ *Hippolytus* (435–6), “second thoughts are somehow wiser.” Like many another character in Euripidean tragedy, she has just changed her mind, and, in true Euripidean style, she justifies her action with a generalization. It is not a generalization which would have recommended itself to Aeschylus and Sophocles; before Euripides, change of mind is a rare phenomenon on the tragic stage.<sup>1</sup>

Aeschylus, as Bruno Snell has demonstrated, broke new ground in Greek poetry with his explicit presentation of a conscious human choice between alternatives, a free human decision which commits its taker to a tragic course.<sup>2</sup> The responsibility the hero thus assumes, and the complex relation of his choice to the will of the gods and his own heredity, allow little scope for a change of mind. Aeschylean drama is linear; its principal figures, their decision once made, pursue their chosen course to the bitter end.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Persians*, which is the tragedy of a whole people rather than an individual, and which furthermore works through retrospect and prophecy rather than through present action, a change of mind is excluded by the nature of the dramatic organization. In the *Seven against Thebes*, Eteocles, at the end of a slow, almost static, preparation, makes his swift decision to fight against his brother; it is a decision, but not a change of mind—he had already decided to fight in person at one of the gates (282) and the gate where Polynices awaits him is the last remaining assignment. Once he has announced his passionate

<sup>1</sup> This article is concerned not with fundamental change of character nor with regret for past action (*μετάγνοια, μεταμέλεια*), but solely with ‘change of mind’ understood as the dramatic presentation and formulation of a new decision or attitude which supplants and reverses a previously determined course of action.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bruno Snell, *Aischylos und das Handeln im Drama* [*Philol. Supplementb.* 20, Heft 1] (Leipzig 1928); *The Discovery of the Mind*, trans. T. G. Rosenmeyer, (Cambridge [Mass.] 1953) 101–108; *Scenes from Greek Drama* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964) 1–22.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Snell, *Discovery* 107: “Pelagus, Achilles, Eteocles, Orestes, all the Aeschylean heroes cannot be made to swerve from their course of action, however powerful the motives operating against it may be.”

and fatal decision, the chorus tries to persuade him to change his mind, but without success. He sticks to his resolve, which is also the working of his father's curse. In the *Suppliants* there are no changes of mind. The chorus, in its unshakeable determination to avoid marriage with the sons of Aegyptus, is one of the most demonically inflexible characters in Aeschylean tragedy. The King of Argos makes his hard decision, but once it is made he does not waver; he defies the herald of Aegyptus, and, as we know from other accounts, stakes his life on the issue, and loses it.

In the *Agamemnon* Clytemnestra's concealed purpose is the line along which the action inexorably moves: there will be no wavering in the heart of the woman who plans like a man. Agamemnon, however, after announcing emphatically that he will not walk on the tapestries spread before him (921ff) yields to her persuasion and changes his mind. In the *Choephoroe* Orestes hesitates when his mother bares her breast before his avenging sword—"Pylades, what shall I do? τί δράσω;"—but Pylades' three lines extinguish any hope that he will spare her. The *Eumenides* however, ends with a dramatic change of mind; the Erinyes, persuaded by Athena, exchange their baleful threats against the Athenian land and people for hymns of blessing. The Erinyes, of course, are not human beings; neither is the hero of *Prometheus Bound*. He is one of the most inflexible figures in all Greek tragedy, but, although he will not change his mind, the action of the play consists of a series of attempts to make him do so, by persuasion, guile (the Oceanus scene) and force. The play, in fact, presents a Sophoclean hero in a Sophoclean situation, a hero whose greatness lies in his steadfastness and who is subjected, unsuccessfully, to tremendous pressure to make him change his mind.<sup>4</sup>

The mainspring of Sophoclean tragedy is the hero's stubborn refusal to change no matter what force, persuasion or deceit is used against him.<sup>5</sup> Ajax does not change his mind; though Tecmessa and the chorus think, for a short while, that he has. In the famous speech which has caused so much controversy, he contemplates the possibility, but in terms so negative that there is never for a moment any room for doubt that he rejects it.<sup>6</sup> Electra, and Oedipus, in the two

<sup>4</sup> Cf. B. M. W. Knox, *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1964) 45-50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 8-44.

<sup>6</sup> T. B. L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles* (Oxford 1936) 96-7, and Sir Maurice

plays named after him, resist all attempts to make them change their minds on important issues (though Oedipus, unlike Electra, makes minor concessions).<sup>7</sup> Antigone resists even greater pressure without flinching, but her antagonist Creon, whose speeches are as full of heroically inflexible formulas as hers, finally cracks, surrenders, and changes.<sup>8</sup> In the *Philoctetes* (a very late play, 409) the hero is so stubborn that it takes a god come down from heaven to make him change his mind, though in the same play young Neoptolemus does completely reverse himself and Odysseus is so flexible that he seems to be infinitely changeable.

In Aeschylus and Sophocles, then, a change of mind is a rare phenomenon; when it does occur, it is either attributed to a secondary character or affects a secondary issue. The two older poets apparently found a change of mind either difficult to manage or downright undesirable on their tragic stage: it did not fit the tragic situations which they created and explored. The idea has to be expressed, of course, especially by Sophocles, in whose heroic plays the attempt to change the hero's mind is the mainspring of the action, but it is remarkable that the ordinary prose words for changing one's mind (*μεταγινώσκω, μεταβάλλομαι, μεταβουλεύω* etc.)<sup>9</sup> hardly ever appear. Instead, the idea is expressed by phrases which present a change of mind not as a personal decision but as something imposed from outside or else in pejorative metaphors which suggest that it is a thing to be avoided, above all by heroes.<sup>10</sup>

The harshest of those expressions which suggest that a change of mind is imposed, not spontaneous, are drawn from the vocabulary of war. The change may be designated as conquest or domination. When Clytemnestra urges Agamemnon to walk on the tapestries she has spread for him, she tells him, "For those who are wealthy and powerful it is a fitting thing to be conquered": *τοῖς δ' ὀλβίοις γε*

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Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford 1944) 39–43, seem to be alone in their conviction that Ajax seriously renounces his intention to kill himself.

<sup>7</sup> OT 669, OC 1204–5.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Knox, *The Heroic Temper* 67–75; Hans Diller, "Über das Selbstbewusstsein der sophokleischen Personen," *Wiener Studien* 69 (1956) 82–3.

<sup>9</sup> *μεταγινώσκω* Hdt. 1.40, 86, 7.15; Th. 1.44, 3.58. *μεταβάλλομαι* Hdt. 5.75; Th. 1.71, 8.73, 90. *μεταβουλεύομαι* Hdt. 1.156, 7.12, 8.57. *μετανοέω* does not occur in extant tragedy (though Heimsoeth tried to introduce it at E. IA 1207).

<sup>10</sup> I omit consideration of words which mean 'cease from', etc. (*λήγω, παύομαι, μεθίημι*); they imply a change of mind but do not explicitly present the substitution of a new course of action.

καὶ τὸ νικᾶσθαι πρέπει (941). And when the king gives way to her imperious will, he echoes her metaphor: "Since I have been subdued to obey you in this matter . . ." ἐπεὶ δ' ἀκούειν σου κατέστραμμαι τάδε . . . (956).<sup>11</sup> When the chorus urges Ajax to reconsider his decision for suicide, they say: "Grant to your friends victory over your mind" —δὸς ἀνδράσιν φίλοις γνώμης κρατῆσαι (483–4). "Such men as this," says Tecmessa in an appeal to the chorus, "are conquered by the words of friends" —φίλων γὰρ οἱ τοιοῦδε νικῶνται λόγοις (330).<sup>12</sup> Odysseus, in the same play, says to Agamemnon: "You are victorious, if you are conquered by your friends" —κρατεῖς τοι τῶν φίλων νικώμενος (1353). And old Oedipus at Colonus, prevailed on by his daughters to see his son Polynices, says to them: "You conquer me by your speech" νικᾷτέ με λέγοντες (1204–5).

Similar to this military metaphor is the Sophoclean formula which is the keynote of all six of the heroic plays—the summons to the hero to yield, to surrender, εἶκειν, ὑπέικειν etc.<sup>13</sup> The demand is made to Ajax, Antigone, Philoctetes, Electra and Oedipus, and in each case it is answered with defiance. But there is one character in Sophocles who does surrender to the pressure of circumstance, Creon, in the *Antigone*. He is urged to surrender by his son Haemon, to be like the tree that yields to the river in flood (ὑπέικει 713), unlike the sailor who does not yield to the wind, (ὑπέικει μηδέν 716), and Tiresias bids him "surrender to the dead man" (εἶκε τῷ θανόντι 1029). He refuses with heroic firmness, but in the end he does yield; and when he does, it is a swift and sudden collapse. "To yield is a dreadful thing"—τὸ δ' εἰκαθεῖν γὰρ δεινόν (1096), he says, but yield he must. "I shall obey," πείσομαι (1099). But this word really means 'I shall be persuaded', and it is indistinguishable in Greek from the future tense of the verb πάσχω—I shall suffer, something will be done to me.' He finds it hard to surrender—μόλις μὲν—but he will "resign his heart's wish"—καρδίας δ' ἐξίσταμαι (1105), a word found in prose with connotations such as 'resign from office', 'give place to others' and even 'degenerate'.<sup>14</sup> "My thought," says Creon finally, "has been turned (ἐπεστράφη) in this direction." The passive nature of these formulas

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Eduard Fraenkel, *Aeschylus, Agamemnon* (Oxford 1950) *ad loc.*

<sup>12</sup> The last word of the line is φίλοι in all the Mss; Bodleian c89 records a variant λόγοις, which is found also in Stobaeus. W. B. Stanford, *Sophocles' Ajax* (London 1963) *ad loc.* argues for φίλοι, but cf. the review in *Phoenix* 18 (1964) 84.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Knox, *The Heroic Temper* 15–17; H. Diller, 75ff.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. e.g. Th. 2.63, 4.28; S. Ph. 1053, Aj. 672; Pl. R. 380d.

for change of mind recalls the only use in early Sophoclean drama of a form of the normal prose word *μεταγινώσκω*. The chorus of the *Ajax*, in ignorant jubilation, declares that Ajax "has been converted from his anger"—*μετανεγνώσθη* (717); the complex compound *μεταναγινώσκω* occurs only here in extant Greek and the passive of *μεταγινώσκω* does not seem to occur at all. In both cases, Creon and Ajax, the simple ways of expressing the concept of change of mind which lay ready to hand in everyday language seem to be deliberately avoided; the expressions used convey by their awkward distortion of plain speech the strain which a change of mind imposes on the tragic character.

There are other words which present change of mind as something imposed in even more violent metaphors. "Love," sings the chorus of the *Antigone*, "you wrench aside the minds of the just to injustice"—*δικαίων ἀδίκους φρένας παρασπᾶς* (791-2). And Oedipus at Colonus is reassured by Antigone that Polynices will not "violently wrench him aside from his purpose" *οὐ . . . σε . . . πρὸς βίαν παρασπάσει γνώμης* (1185-6). In a similar phrase Creon in the *Antigone* speaks of money which "warps honest minds to set themselves to shameful actions" *παραλλάσσει φρένας* (288).

A more gentle form of pressure to produce change (apart from the neutral and frequent *πείθω*, 'to persuade') is the metaphor of 'enchantment, bewitchment'. This is how the Erinyes announce their change of mind towards Athens. After the repeated persuasive speeches of Athena, they explore her offer and then move towards acceptance. "I think you will charm me, and I turn from anger"—*θέλξειν μ' ἔοικας καὶ μεθίσταμαι κότου* (900). Here a normal prosaic word (*μεθίσταμαι*) appears (the only time it does appear in this sense in Aeschylus)<sup>15</sup> but it is introduced by the metaphor of enchantment. Antigone at Colonus urges Oedipus to listen to his son: "When men are given advice, their nature is enchanted by the incantations of those they love"—*νουθετούμενοι φίλων ἐπωδαῖς ἐξεπάδονται φύσιν* (1193-4).<sup>16</sup> Prometheus protests that Zeus will not "enchant" him "with the honey-tongued incantations of persuasion," *μ' οὔτι μελιγλώσσοις πειθοῦς ἐπαιδαῖσιν θέλξει* (172-3), and Athena, in her litany of persuasive

<sup>15</sup> It does not occur in Sophocles in this sense.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ellendt-Genthe, *Lexicon Sophocleum* (Berlin 1872) s.v. *ἐξεπάδω*: Accusat. additur quod *mutatio animi facta significatur, velut sagae et praestigiatores ipsam rerum naturam convertere credebantur.*

appeals to the Erinyes, speaks of the “honied enchantments” of her tongue, γλώσσης ἐμῆς μείλιγμα καὶ θελκτῆριον (886).

A second class of expressions presents a change of mind in pejorative metaphors. Eteocles rejects the chorus’ appeal to avoid the fight with his brother as “blunting” the keen edge of purpose. “I am a sharp edge, you will not blunt it with words”—τεθηγμένον τοί μ’ οὐκ ἀπαμβλυνεῖς λόγοις (716). When Prometheus prophesies the murder of their husbands by the Danaids, he speaks of one who will change her mind: “One of the daughters love will charm not to kill her bedmate, the edge of her purpose will be blunted”—μίαν δὲ παίδων ἴμερος θέλξει τὸ μὴ κτεῖναι ξύνευνον ἀλλ’ ἀπαμβλυνθήσεται γνώμην (865–7). And Oedipus at Thebes reproaches the chorus for urging him to spare Creon’s life: “You blunt the edge of my heart”: τοῦμόν . . . καταμβλύνων κέαρ (688). “To bend” is another such metaphor. “Zeus,” says the chorus of the *Prometheus Bound*, “has set his mind unbending,” θέμενος ἄγναμπτον νόον (163), but he is no more unbending than his great adversary: “None of this will bend me,” γνάμφει γὰρ οὐδὲν τῶνδέ μ’ (995), Prometheus replies to Hermes. He will not be “moistened” either: τέγγη γὰρ οὐδὲν (1008) says Hermes to Prometheus. The metaphor suggests softening by moisture as well as tears. “Nor are you softened by prayers,” οὐδὲ μαλθάσση λιταῖς, he continues, using a metaphor drawn from softness of touch (of fabrics, flowers, etc.) and this metaphor (formations of μαλθακός, μαλακός) is very frequent. “Zeus will be soft-hearted some day,” μαλακογνώμων (188), says Prometheus, predicting his adversary’s defeat. “Zeus is not softened by such words,” οὐχὶ μαλθακίζεται (952), says Hermes, and Kratos accuses Hephaestus when he feels pity for Prometheus with the words: “You grow soft,” σὺ μαλθακίζου (79).<sup>17</sup> “In the gods’ name, soften,” πρὸς θεῶν μαλάσσου says Tecmessa to Ajax (594), but a fragment of a lost Sophoclean play gives the proper heroic answer: “The heart of noble men does not grow soft”—ἀνδρῶν γὰρ ἐσθλῶν στέρνον οὐ μαλάσσεται.<sup>18</sup>

The words μαλακός, μαλθακός and their derivatives often suggest, in fifth century usage,<sup>19</sup> effeminacy, and sometimes this suggestion that a change of mind is unmanly is made more explicit. “I shall not

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also A. PV 379 εἴαν τις ἐν καιρῷ γε μαλθάσση κέαρ.

<sup>18</sup> Pearson fr.195 (\**Ἐπίγονοι*).

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of the words in an earlier period cf. Max Treu, *Von Homer zur Lyrik* (Munich 1955) 183–88.

become woman-minded," *θηλύνους γενήσομαι*, says Prometheus (1003); and Ajax in his monologue despises himself for the momentary weakness stirred in him by Tecmessa's appeal: "My mouth was made effeminate by this woman here"—*ἐθηλύνθην στόμα πρὸς τῆσδε τῆς γυναικός* (651–2). Similar to these expressions is the conception of a change of mind as 'corruption' or 'destruction': "Know this," says Agamemnon, as Clytemnestra bids him walk on the tapestries, "that I shall not corrupt my purpose"—*γνώμην μὲν ἴσθι μὴ διαφθεροῦντ' ἐμέ* (932).<sup>20</sup>

This list is not complete (and I have reserved for later discussion some expressions which need special treatment), but it is representative, and the general picture is clear. A change of mind appears in Aeschylean and Sophoclean drama as something imposed and hence a sign of weakness, or it is expressed in pejorative metaphors—in any case, it is rarely presented on stage.<sup>21</sup>

One material reason for this feature of early tragedy may well have been the actor's mask. With the face of the tragic character fixed in one mould which announces his station and essential characteristic, without the play of facial expression which we take for granted on the stage, rapid emotional change and swift shift of purpose must have been difficult to present clearly in the vast theater of Dionysus. This however was only an inhibiting, not a prohibiting factor, for Euripides overcame the difficulty; but it may help partially to explain the relative inflexibility of resolve and consistency of purpose in pre-Euripidean tragedy. But there are deeper causes. They lie in the poets' conception of human nature and heroic action and the place of these things in the cosmic framework.

In Aeschylus there are many interweaving strands in the fabric of human action. Eteocles' decision to fight his brother at the seventh gate is his own personal choice; we can see its motive in the bitter hatred he reveals in his great speech. It is also the product of chance—

<sup>20</sup> Although Fraenkel is undoubtedly right in his interpretation of *παρὰ γνώμην* in 931, there does not seem to be any reason (except Fraenkel's admiration for the "gentilezza of the utterances of the king and queen") why 932 should not mean 'I will not change my mind'. In fact the only parallels, *E. Med.* 1055 *χεῖρα δ' οὐ διαφθερῶ* and *Hipp.* 389 *διαφθερεῖν* (on which cf. W. S. Barrett, *Euripides Hippolytos* [Oxford 1964] *ad loc.*) clearly refer to a change of mind.

<sup>21</sup> There are some phrases which do not fit either of these categories but yet betray by the very complication of their expression the difficulty posed for the poet by the content. For example *S. Ph.* 1191–2 *τί βέξοντες ἀλλοκότῳ γνώμα τῶν πάρος ὧν προφαίνεις*; which really means "To do what? Have you changed your mind?" and *Aj.* 736 *νέας βουλὰς νέοισιν ἐγκαταζεύξας τρόποις*. (*ἐγκαταζεύγνυμι* seems to occur only here.)

for he might have chosen to fight at any one of the gates; and chance, in Aeschylus, is the working of the will of Zeus. It is also the action of the curse his father pronounced on both his sons. In such a complex pattern of individual will, divine dispensation and hereditary curse, there is little room for change of mind. And indeed the only significant change of mind in Aeschylean drama is that of the Erinyes who, though also subject to the mysterious processes of the will of Zeus, are not human at all.<sup>22</sup>

The inflexible resolution of the Sophoclean hero stems from a different conception, the aristocratic idea of a man's *φύσις*, his 'nature'. "Physis," says Albin Lesky, "is a man's permanent possession, his inalienable and unchanging inheritance . . . what man inherited through his descent determined his essence once and for all."<sup>23</sup> In the *Philoctetes* (409 B.C.) Sophocles gives us, in the person of a secondary character, Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, a picture of a man who betrays his *φύσις*, though he returns to it before the play is over. In this play, and in connection with this character, some of the phrases used to express the phenomenon of change of mind, though they are still not the neutral, prosaic formulas Euripides had been using for many years, are yet devoid of the pejorative connotations usual elsewhere in

<sup>22</sup> At *A. Ag.* 218ff the chorus describes Agamemnon's dilemma and decision at Aulis; the phrase *φρονεῖν μετέγνω* employs a normal prosaic word meaning 'change one's mind'. But the context makes it quite clear that this is not a change of mind from one decision to another, but from indecision to decision. "(He) decided instead to entertain thoughts of the utmost audacity . . ." is the paraphrase suggested by J. D. Denniston and D. L. Page, *Aeschylus Agamemnon* (Oxford 1957) on 221. Fraenkel's translation—"he reversed his mind"—implies that he had previously decided *not* to sacrifice Iphigenia, and of this decision there is no trace in the text. In fact Agamemnon states this alternative in terms which make it clear that he rejects it—"the possibility is dismissed as unpractical" as Page puts it (p. xxvi). Fraenkel formulates the meaning of *μετέγνω* more precisely in his note on 221; in his explanation of *A. Supp.* 110 (II.219 n.1) he says: "to pass from a normal state of mind into a condition in which he is ready to commit a crime, a man must have undergone a *μεταγνώσκειν* . . ." The only other occurrence of this word in Aeschylus (*μεταγνώσκειν* *Supp.* 110) is also puzzling. In the context *ἄταν δ' ἀπάτα μεταγνώσκειν* cannot mean "he has changed his mind to his own infatuation and destruction . . ." (Fraenkel on *Ag.* 221) but must mean simply "resolving on infatuation etc." This is in fact how it is taken by the authorities Fraenkel cites: N. Wecklein, *Aischylos, Die Schutz flehenden* (Leipzig 1902) *ad loc.*, "er hat sich . . . statt zum Heilsamen zu seinem Verderben entschlossen"; Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Aischylos Interpretationen* (Berlin 1914) 31 n.3, "entscheidet sich das falsche urteil der menschen für ἄτη." Buecheler's interpretation (*RhM* 41 [1886] 8), in which according to Fraenkel "the passage is rightly explained," suffers from his insistence that *ἄτη* means loss of a lawsuit (as opposed to *νίκη*); he renders "damnum tulisse ita eos poenitet non ut peccare caveant sed ut porro nitantur ad fraudem."

The context in both passages seems to suggest that for Aeschylus *μεταγνώσκειν* does not mean 'to change one's mind' but something like 'to decide one way instead of the other'.

<sup>23</sup> Albin Lesky, *Die Griechische Tragödie*<sup>2</sup> (Stuttgart 1958) 163.



Sophoclean drama. "Curse you," says Philoctetes to the young man. "No, not yet, not until I learn if you will transfer your purpose back again," εἰ καὶ πάλιν γνώμην μετοίσεις (961-2). "Is it not possible," says Neoptolemus to Philoctetes, "to change one's mind back again?" μεταγνώμαι πάλιν; (1270). The reason for these neutral formulas is clear: Neoptolemus' change of mind is desirable. It is a change of mind *back* (πάλιν) to a position he should never have deserted, his reintegration in the heroic mould of his father Achilles. "Everything is difficult," he says earlier, "when one leaves behind his own φύσις and does what is not appropriate to it" (902-3).<sup>24</sup> He returns to it and is welcomed by Philoctetes as his father's son. "You have shown the φύσις from which you sprang" (1310-11). This return to heroic standards is in startling contrast to the attitude of the third principal figure in the play, Odysseus, who has no φύσις at all. "Where such men are needed, such a man am I," οὐ γὰρ τοιούτων δεῖ, τοιοῦτός εἰμι' ἐγώ (1049); he is whatever the changing circumstances demand. He can be anything because he is nothing, and he disappears ignominiously from the play running away from the arrows of Philoctetes (1305-7).<sup>25</sup> He is not mentioned in the final speech of Heracles, who reserves his blessing for the young man who has recovered his heroic constancy and the sick hero who changed his mind only at the last moment at the express command of a god.<sup>26</sup>

When the *Philoctetes* was first produced, Euripides had been Sophocles' competitor at the annual tragic festival for more than forty years.<sup>27</sup> There is no historical gap between them; in fact the younger poet was the first to die and Sophocles wore dark clothes at the proagon in 406 to mourn his rival's death. But in the earliest Euripidean play we have, the *Alcestis* (438), we can sense a complete change of atmosphere.

Admetus, the Thessalian king, the generous host *par excellence*, changes his mind in spectacular fashion, and it is emphasized for us by emphatic verbal repetitions. To mark his mourning for the wife who dies in his place he promises her never to marry again, to put an end

<sup>24</sup> For a comic version of the same thought cf. Ar. V. 1457 τὸ γὰρ ἀποστῆναι χαλεπὸν φύσεος ἢν ἔχει τις αἰεί.

<sup>25</sup> As he had previously retreated before the prospect of combat with Neoptolemus (1257).

<sup>26</sup> Philoctetes' change of mind is expressed in the old formula, "I shall not disobey your words," οὐκ ἀπιθήσω 1447.

<sup>27</sup> He first competed in the Dionysia in 455 (with the *Peliades*) and was awarded third prize. Cf. the "Life", L. Meridier, *Euripide I*<sup>4</sup> (Paris 1956) 2.

to revels, *παύσω δὲ κώμους* (343), to gatherings of friends drinking together *συμποτῶν θ' ὀμιλίας* (343), to wearing of garlands and to music which has filled his house, *στεφάνους τε μούσαν θ' ἢ κατέϊχ' ἔμοῦς δόμους* (344). His wife consoles him. "Time" she says, "will soften you," *χρόνος μαλάξει σ'* (381). And it does. In the very next scene he welcomes into his house a friend, Heracles, who proceeds to revel (*κώμου* 804), drink (*πίνει* 757), wear a garland (*στέφει δὲ κράτα* 759), and make music—drunken music, for he "howls out of tune" (*ἄμωσ' ὑλακτῶν* 760). And before the play is over Admetus accepts from Heracles an unidentified veiled young woman in a scene that suggests a marriage ceremonial. "Time will soften you," *χρόνος μαλάξει* (1085), says Heracles, as Alcestis had said before him. But of course the veiled woman is Alcestis back from the dead, so the play has a happy ending.

The formula for change of mind, *μαλάσσω*, is the familiar pejorative metaphor of the heroic tradition but here it has a new content. Far from describing an attack on an iron determination, it expresses a new reality. The underlying assumption is that Admetus not only can change his mind but probably will. And he does. We are in a different dramatic world, no longer a heroic one.

The *Alcestis* is a substitute for a satyr play, but with the *Medea* (431) we are in an unmistakably tragic atmosphere; the central figure is built along Sophoclean lines, a dominating forceful personality whose purpose, once fixed, nothing can move, not the appeals of the chorus nor the screams of her children. Nothing can move her, but her resolution can be shaken; not by any external agency or circumstance but by the conflicting passions in her own soul. The play from the very beginning emphasizes the instability of human decisions. The nurse, for instance, regales us with some sociological reflections about changing one's mind—it is hard for the upper classes. "The spirit of royal persons is a strange and terrible thing: they have no discipline and much power, and they find it hard to change their tempers."

δεινὰ τυράννων λήματα καὶ πως  
120 ὀλίγ' ἀρχόμενοι πολλὰ κρατοῦντες  
χαλεπῶς ὄργας μεταβάλλουσιν.

This is the first appearance of this word *μεταβάλλω* in this sense in extant Greek tragedy.<sup>28</sup> It is one of the most frequent prose words for

<sup>28</sup> Not in Aeschylus, once in Sophocles (*El.* 1262) but in the sense of 'exchange'.

'change', especially change of mind, and as we shall see, it is one of Euripides' favorite words, together with its abstract noun *μεταβολή*. Unlike the metaphorical words generally used in such a context by Aeschylus and Sophocles, *μεταβάλλω* has no connotation of softening, weakening, yielding or the like: it is a neutral word which accepts the phenomenon it describes as natural and normal.<sup>29</sup>

Creon announces Medea's sentence of immediate exile in uncompromising terms, ruling out any possibility of reprieve. "It is better to earn your hatred now than to be softened and later lament loudly"—*κρείσσον δέ μοι νῦν πρὸς σ' ἀπεχθέσθαι . . . ἢ μαλθακισθένθ' ὕστερον μέγα στένειν* (290–91). But 'softened' he is. "My spirit is not at all that of a king," *ἦκιστα τοῦμόν λῆμ' ἔφυ τυραννικόν* (348), he says, unconsciously echoing the nurse's reflections on royal tempers.

Creon changes his mind (and to his cost), but Medea resists Jason's appeals to self-interest and good sense. When she wishes for love rather than wealth (598–9), he suggests a different formula, introducing it with the words "Why don't you change your wish?" *οἶσθ' ὡς μετεύξαι*; (600). This verbal compound may very well be a Euripidean invention; at any rate, it does not appear elsewhere in the whole of Greek literature as we have it.<sup>30</sup> In the next scene Medea appears to change her mind: it is part of her plan to lure Jason into the trap. She confesses with apparent humility that she was wrong and has now come to better thoughts. *φάμεν κακῶς φρονεῖν τότ' ἄλλ' ἄμεινον νῦν βεβούλευμαι τάδε* (892–3). "My anger," she says, "has changed"—*μεθέστηκεν χόλος* (898). Jason takes up her word. "Your heart," he says, "has changed for the better," *ἐς τὸ λῶον σὸν μεθέστηκεν κέαρ* (911). This word *μεθίστημι* is another of the normal prose words used for change;<sup>31</sup> it occurs rarely in this sense in Aeschylus and Sophocles<sup>32</sup> and first appears fully at home in the verse of Euripides.<sup>33</sup>

This whole scene, with Medea's feigned change of mind brilliantly acted out to deceive Jason, her manoeuvre to assure herself of Jason's love for the children, (she calls them out of the house to embrace him [895] and then hears him speak with pride and love of the great future

<sup>29</sup> It is common in Aristophanes: *μεταβάλλεσθαι τοὺς τρόπους* V. 1461, *Ra.* 734, *Pl.* 36.

<sup>30</sup> Similar in meaning is the phrase *ἀπέυχου . . . πάλιν* *Hipp.* 891.

<sup>31</sup> *E.g.* *Hdt.* 1.65, 118; *Th.* 4.76, 6.89, 8.48; and *cf.* *Ar. Eq.* 397, *V.* 748, 1451, *Pl.* 365, 994.

<sup>32</sup> *A. Eu.* 900, *Pers.* 158; *S. fr.* 646.6. In *Ant.* 718 *μετάστασιν δίδου*—introduced by *εἶκε* (*cf.* *Jebb ad loc.*)

<sup>33</sup> *E.g.* *Alc.* 174, *Heracl.* 487, 796, 935, *Ion* 1506, *Ba.* 296 etc.

he will ensure for them [914ff]), and her unfeigned sorrow when this reaction on his part finally seals their death warrant (922ff)—this complex fabric of lies and truth (the lies believed, the truth unrecognized) shows an extraordinary dramatic ingenuity. It is the first time in our extant plays that a feigned change of mind is used to impose on another character, and it shows not only brilliant technique but also a new view of human nature. It has no precedent (unless with some critics we take Ajax's great speech as a deliberate attempt to deceive Tecmessa and the chorus);<sup>34</sup> but it had imitators. Surely Sophocles, in the scenes where Neoptolemus feigns initial reluctance to take Philoctetes aboard ship before consenting (519–525) and repeats the deception when Philoctetes urges immediate departure (635–45), had learned from this scene of the *Medea*.

Medea has pretended to change her mind, but when the moment comes to crown the deaths of Creon and his daughter with the murder of the children, she hesitates, and this is no pretense. The pressure on her to change her mind is not from without but from within; the form is soliloquy, not dialogue.<sup>35</sup> Like Orestes faced with his mother, she wavers, but, unlike him, needs no Pylades to bring her back to her purpose. In this famous speech Euripides is breaking new dramatic ground; he shows us a heroic soul at cross-purposes with itself. She uses Orestes' words: "What shall I do?" τί δράσω; (1042). And her courage fails. "Farewell, my former plans." χαιρέτω βουλεύματα τὰ πρόσθεν (1044–5). And once again, "Farewell, my plans," χαιρέτω βουλεύματα (1048). What restores her resolution is not the voice of a god or his human spokesman but the thought that she will be a laughing-stock to her enemies if her plans for revenge fail. She exclaims at her own cowardice in admitting "soft words," μαλθακοὺς λόγους (1052), to her heart. She will not "weaken, corrupt" (διαφθερῶ 1055) her hand.

But once again the sight of the children is too much for her feelings and she falters a second time. This time however, she recognizes the struggle in her own soul, for it is to her θυμός, her passion, that she appeals for the children's lives. "No, my passionate heart, do not do

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Knox, "The *Ajax* of Sophocles," *HSCP* 65 (1961) 11–18. Stanford sums up recent discussion in Appendix D, *op.cit.* 280–88. Cf. also the review in *Phoenix* 18 (1964) 82–3.

<sup>35</sup> The classic discussion of this monologue is W. Schadewalt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch* (Berlin 1926) 193ff. For some salutary corrections to the *geistesgeschichtliche* inferences often drawn from this speech see Eilhard Schlesinger, "Zu Euripides' *Medea*," *Hermes* 94 (1966) 28ff.

this" . . . μὴ δῆτα θυμέ . . . (1056). The appeal is refused, her *θυμός* takes full control, and now she swears by the avengers below in Hades that the children will die. And with no further hesitation she bids them a poignant farewell; the next time she sees them it will be with sword in hand [1278].

This speech was undoubtedly a new experience for the Athenian audience. The dramatic wavering back and forth between alternatives—four complete changes of purpose in less than twenty lines—marks the beginning of an entirely new style of dramatic presentation. Even six years later, in the *Acharnians*, Aristophanes is still regaling the audience with parodies of this speech. Dicaeopolis nerves himself for his ordeal with an address to his *θυμός*: "Forward now, my passionate soul, *πρόβαινε νῦν ὦ θυμέ*. Here's the starting line. You hesitate, do you? Drink your dose of Euripides down and take off! Good, that's right. And now, O suffering heart, be off in the same direction . . ." (483–486).

It is excellent fooling, but shows clearly that the scene in the *Medea* had made an indelible and disturbing impression. It has on modern critics too. Bergk<sup>36</sup> (and Wecklein was inclined to approve)<sup>37</sup> wanted to cut out the second half of the speech and leave only two changes of mind instead of four.

Medea pretends to change her mind, and then, at the critical moment falters in her purpose, but she overcomes her doubts and sweeps on to her revenge. But in the *Hippolytus*, produced three years later (428), the classical ideal of heroic *φύσις* is completely dissolved. The characters of this play change their minds in a bewildering criss-cross pattern which works out to their destruction and the fulfilment of Aphrodite's revenge.<sup>38</sup> Phaedra has made a heroic resolve—to die rather than reveal her love for Hippolytus. The Nurse, even before she begins what is to be a successful attempt to break that resolve, gives us the first explicit formulation of the new Euripidean view of human nature and conduct, the unheroic creed. "That one's behavior in life should be rigid (strict, exact) brings, they say, disaster rather

<sup>36</sup> Theodor Bergk, *Griechische Literaturgeschichte* III (Berlin 1884) 512 n.140, "der Schluss der Monologes der Medea (1056–1080) nur die Gedanken wiederholt welche schon vorher ausgesprochen waren; dies ist weit mehr geeignet den Eindruck abzuschwächen als zu steigern."

<sup>37</sup> Cf. N. Wecklein, *Euripides, Medea*<sup>3</sup> (Leipzig 1891) 26–30 (two versions of the *Medea*) and p. 150 on vv.1056–80.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Knox, "The *Hippolytus* of Euripides," *YCS* 13 (1952) 3–31.

than joy," *βιότου δ' ἀτρεκεῖς ἐπιτηδεύσεις φασὶ σφάλλειν πλέον ἢ τέρπειν* (261–2). "The Nurse," says Barrett, rightly, "produces this maxim simply apropos the present question of sticking to one's friends through thick and thin. But Euripides (not the Nurse) has another application in mind: Phaedra's present trouble is the result of sticking to her principles, of her refusing to give way to her love . . ." The Nurse's attack begins. Phaedra is to "loosen the path of her thoughts," *λύσσασα . . . γνώμης ὁδόν* (290), and the Nurse, abandoning the incorrect path along which she followed Phaedra before, will turn to another, better word, *ἐπ' ἄλλον εἶμι βελτίω λόγον* (292). A chance mention of the name Hippolytus breaks Phaedra's silence, and soon the truth is out. The Nurse who was so sure *λόγος*, speech, reason, would solve the problem (297–9), now abandons herself to despair and wishes for death (353–7). But Phaedra, still resolved to die, now has the comfort of speech and pours out her story to the sympathetic ear of the chorus. She is still resolved; she states her principles in full confidence that she will never betray them. "Since this is how I think, there is no charm (*φαρμάκω*) that could make me desert them (*διαφθερεῖν*) so as to think the opposite," *ὥστε τοῦμπαλιν πεσεῖν φρενῶν* (388–90). She is wrong; and with magnificent poetic economy Euripides has contrived that what she rejected in the old metaphor 'to change her mind through a charm', *φαρμάκω διαφθερεῖν* comes about in fact: it is the Nurse's promise of a love-charm which engineers her weak consent to her own betrayal (516).

The Nurse recovers from her dejection; she changes her mind and presents us with a more explicit version of her previous generalization. "In mortal life second thoughts are somehow wiser"—*κἂν βροτοῖς αἱ δευτεραί πως φροντίδες σοφώτεραι* (435–6). It does not look as if they are. Phaedra's second thoughts, and the Nurse's, lead straight to disaster. Hippolytus, in a famous line, threatens to break his oath of silence but then changes his mind; his second thoughts seal his death-warrant, for when Phaedra dies by the rope and accuses him in a letter to Theseus (third thoughts! *καινῶν λόγων* 688), he has no means of defense. Theseus has his second thoughts much too late: he calls down Poseidon's fatal curse on his son before he even questions him. "Take that prayer back," *ἀπέυχου . . . πάλιν* (981), cries the chorus, but he will not, and Aphrodite's purpose is fulfilled.

The chorus, lamenting the fate of Hippolytus, who remained true to the oath he had sworn, comes to the same conclusion as the Nurse,

and echoes the key word of her speech. "May my thoughts be neither rigid (*ἀτρεκής*) nor false. May I change my ways easily (*ρόδια δ' ἤθεα . . . μεταβαλλομένα*) to fit the next day's span . . ." (1115–6).

This is an astonishing statement to come from the mouth of a tragic chorus. A choral ode is not of course to be lightly taken as the meaning of the play; it is a part of the total dramatic structure. But this stasimon is especially emphatic. It is the last one in the play; it is apparently sung by two choruses, one of men and one of women,<sup>39</sup> in responsion, and its moving, eloquent phrases bear directly on a central theme of the play which has been repeatedly introduced by the actors. Though it does not proclaim the time-serving creed of the Odysseus of the *Philoctetes*—"My thoughts be neither rigid *nor false*"—it certainly abandons heroic consistency and the aristocratic ideal of human *φύσις*. Like many another stasimon in Greek tragedy, it questions the dispositions of the gods and emphasizes that the life of man is nothing but change; what is new is the doctrine that human nature too is and must be nothing but change, in constant adaptation to circumstances.

In all of the plays which follow the *Hippolytus* the instability of the world is paralleled by the instability of the human beings who live in it. The words for change of mind, those new prosaic words which Euripides introduced into tragic diction, occur from play to play. Change is the mode of operation of the universe, of chance, *τύχη*, of the gods; *μεταβολή*—a word which occurs with increasing frequency in Thucydides' account of the war as it pursues its course—is the key word of later Euripidean tragedy. "O Chance," says Ion when he discovers the strange story of his life, "you who have through change brought it about that tens of thousands of mortals suffer misfortune and then again fare prosperously . . ."

ὦ μεταβαλοῦσα μυρίους ἤδη βροτῶν  
καὶ δυστυχῆσαι καθίς αἶ πράξει καλῶς  
τύχη (1512–14)

Change is painful—*αἶ μεταβολαὶ λυπηρόν* (*HF* 1292); it is also sweet—*μεταβολὴ πάντων γλυκὴ* (*Orestes* 234). A whole range of words new in the mouths of tragic actors and chorus is employed to express the shifting, various nature of the world we live in: *μεταπίπτω*, *μετατίθημι*

<sup>39</sup> See Barrett's full discussion *ad loc.*

etc.<sup>40</sup>—one of them, *περιπετής*, appears for the first time in tragedy in the sense of ‘turning round, reversing’ in *Andromache* 982, *περιπετείς τύχας*, a forerunner of Aristotle’s celebrated formula *περιπέτεια*.

The gods, like the universe they direct, are changeable too. Poseidon accuses Athena in the *Troades* prologue: “Why do you leap so now to one temper, now to another?”—*τί δ’ ὦδε πηδᾶς ἄλλοτ’ εἰς ἄλλους τρόπους*; (67). Later in the play, Hecuba, without benefit of this conversation, correctly guesses the nature of the universe: “Chance events, like a man who quickly changes his mind,<sup>41</sup> leap now here, now there”—*τοῖς τρόποις γὰρ αἱ τύχαι, ἔμπληκτος ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἄλλοτ’ ἄλλοσε πηδῶσιν* (1204–6). And the chorus of the *Helen* sings of the dilemma faced by the thinker who tries to determine the nature of the gods, when “he sees the various dispensations of heaven leaping first here and then there and back again with contrary and unlooked-for results”—

1140 . . . τὰ θεῶν ἔσορᾶ  
 δεῦρο καὶ αὖθις ἐκείσε  
 καὶ πάλιν ἀντιλόγοις  
 πηδῶντ’ ἀνελπίστοις τύχαις;

The action of men in such a world is described in similar terms. The neutral, factual words for changing one’s mind, *μεθιστάναι*, *μετατίθεσθαι*, *μεταβάλλεσθαι* occur frequently. In *Suppliants* 1083 we are given another version of the Nurse’s *δεύτεραι φροντίδες*: “by later counsel we are set right,” *γνώμαισιν ὑστέραισιν ἐξορθούμεθα*. The *Andromache* (1003–4) gives us the nearest Greek equivalent of our phrase ‘change of mind’—*μετάστασις γνώμης*—and in the *Orestes* even the word *μεταβουλεύομαι*<sup>42</sup> is fitted, not, it is true, into iambic trimeters, but into trochaic tetrameter. Orestes, playing his contemptible game of cat and mouse with the Phrygian slave, spares his life, but then pretends to change his mind—*ἀλλὰ μεταβεβουλευσόμεσθα* 1526. In the *Bacchae*

<sup>40</sup> *μεταπίπτω* *Alc.* 913, *Ion* 412, *IA* 502 (not in Aeschylus or Sophocles but *cf.* *Ar.* V. 1454, *Av.* 627). *μετατίθημι* *Or.* 254, *IA* 388, *Rh.* 131, (not in Aeschylus, once in *S. Ph.* 515 but in an unusual sense, *cf.* Jebb *ad loc.*)

<sup>41</sup> For this meaning of *ἔμπληκτος* (which the context demands) see LSJ *s.v.* 2 and *cf.* esp. *S. Aj.* 1358. The modern editors and translators are almost unanimous in their interpretation of the word as ‘crazed, mad’. *E.g.* Barnes (1788) ‘veluti furens homo’, Paley (1892) ‘crazy’, Tyrrell (1921) ‘like an idiot’, Lattimore (1959) ‘a madman’. L. Parmentier and H. Grégoire, *Euripide* IV (Paris 1959), have the correct translation ‘un homme fantasque’, which is the ancient explanation too, *cf.* *S ad loc.* (Schwartz II p.374).

<sup>42</sup> Not in Aeschylus or Sophocles but already in Homer *Od.* 5.286 *μετεβούλευσαν θεοὶ ἄλλως*. *Cf.* *Hdt.* 1.156, *Ar. Ach.* 632.



these same formulas for change of mind are used with a new and terrible content; under Dionysiac possession and in their recovery from it the characters 'change their mind' in more than one sense of the phrase. "I approve of your change of mind," αἰνῶ δ' ὅτι μεθέστηκας φρενῶν (944), says Dionysus to Pentheus;<sup>43</sup> more is involved than a normal change of mind, for Pentheus' next words are: "Couldn't I carry on my shoulders the valleys of Cithaeron, Bacchants and all?" And so in the reverse process, when Agave recovers from her Bacchic frenzy to realize that the lion's head she carries is the head of her son—"I have become somehow sane," γίγνομαι δέ πως ἔννοος, she says, "changed from my former mind," μετασταθείσα τῶν πάρος φρενῶν (1269-70).

The *Bacchae* was one of the final group of plays Euripides wrote just before his death in Macedonia; the other one which has survived is the *Iphigenia in Aulis*. And in this play Euripides fills his stage with human beings who react to changing circumstance with swift and frequent changes of mind which are presented not as deviations from a heroic standard but as normal human behavior.

The one thing everybody knows about this play is that Aristotle disapproved of it. "In connection with characters, there are four things that should be aimed at . . .," he says in the *Poetics* (1454a26). "The fourth is consistency (τὸ ὁμαλόν). For even if the person being imitated is of an inconsistent sort and that kind of character has been posited,<sup>44</sup> still he should be consistently inconsistent (ὁμαλῶς ἀνώμαλον). An example . . . of inconsistency is the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, for the girl who makes the speech of supplication bears no resemblance to the later one."

This comment of Aristotle is not surprising, for in his discussion of tragedy one of the things he does not seem to make allowance for is that the hero or heroine might change their mind.<sup>45</sup> But one cannot help feeling that he might have picked a better example, for Iphigenia's change of mind has been well prepared for in Euripides' play—it comes as the climax of a series of swift and sudden changes of decision which is unparalleled in ancient drama.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Cf. E. R. Dodds, *Euripides Bacchae*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1960) *ad loc.*

<sup>44</sup> ὑπορεθῆ with R. Kassel, *Aristotelis De Arte Poetica Liber* (Oxford 1965).

<sup>45</sup> Horace makes explicit the underlying assumption of the Aristotelian passage: *sibi convenientia finge . . . servetur ad imum qualis ab incepto processerit et sibi constet* (AP 119, 126-7).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Markland's brilliant note on E. IA 1375.

Agamemnon, at night in the camp at Aulis, has been writing a letter. The old man who speaks to him in the prologue describes his actions. "You are writing a letter, this one you hold in your hand now. You erase over and again the same written words, you seal it and open it again, and throw the tablet to the ground . . ." (35–9). Agamemnon explains to his servant the whole story—the demand for Iphigenia's sacrifice, the plot to entice her to Aulis with a false story of marriage to Achilles, and the letter he himself wrote to Clytemnestra with instructions to send her daughter to the camp. But he has changed his mind. "What I wrote then was wrong. I have rewritten it well, to the opposite effect," *αὐθις μεταγράφω καλῶς πάλιν* (108).<sup>47</sup> And he sends the old man off to Argos with the counter order—to keep Iphigenia at home.

The word *μεταγράφω* occurs only here in tragedy and this has been seized on as one more proof of fourth-century interpolation or revision for the fourth-century stage.<sup>48</sup> It proves nothing at all. This word *μεταγράφω* is the normal fifth-century word for 'to correct a draft, to rewrite', and if it does not occur elsewhere that is most likely because no one before Euripides wanted to have one of his principal characters write two or more versions of an important letter.

Menelaus intercepts the new letter and faces his brother with what he regards as evidence of treachery. In the excited, brilliantly written trochaic dialogue which follows, the attack on and defense of Agamemnon's change of mind shows, through the naturalness of the language and the ease of the swift transitions, that in this last play Euripides handles with faultless ease the problem of presenting on the tragic stage human beings who twist and turn, leap from one position to another—men 'not as they should be, but as they are'.

Menelaus' furious assault paints Agamemnon as a vacillating trickster. "Your thoughts are crooked, one thing now, another then, yet another soon"—*πλόγια γὰρ φρονεῖς, τὰ μὲν νῦν, τὰ δὲ πάλαι, τὰ δ' αὐτίκα* (332). "Your mind is not stable," *νοῦς δέ γ' οὐ βέβαιος* (334). He reproaches his brother for the change that high office has produced in him. When he campaigned for the command of the Achaean host, he was humble and approachable—"but then, when you got the

<sup>47</sup> Reading, with J. Jackson, *Marginalia Scaenica* (Oxford 1955) 209, *Μενέλεως* (ἐγώ) θ'. ἀ δ' οὐ | καλῶς τότ', αὐθις μεταγράφω καλῶς πάλιν—a correction of Vitelli, incorrectly reported by Murray (who seems to have reproduced the mistake of E. B. England).

<sup>48</sup> Denys L. Page, *Actors' Interpolations in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 1934) 138.

command, you changed to different ways," *μεταβαλὼν ἄλλους τρόπους* (343). The good man, says Menelaus, should not, when in high office, "change his ways," *τοὺς τρόπους μεθιστάναι* (346), but should be "reliable," *βέβαιον* (347). The indictment proceeds. When the fleet was held up at Aulis, Agamemnon was in despair and confusion but when Calchas prophesied that the sacrifice of Iphigenia would speed the fleet to Troy, he was joyful, and sent a letter summoning his daughter. "And now I have caught you turning back," *ὑποστρέψας λέλησαι* "changing what you wrote to something else," *μεταβαλὼν ἄλλας γραφάς* (363).

It is a powerful speech, and, apart from personal attacks on Menelaus (which Agamemnon does not omit), there is only one real answer: that the change of mind was justified. And Agamemnon finally says so. "If I made a bad decision then and later changed to good counsel, am I therefore mad?" *εἰ δ' ἐγὼ γνοὺς πρόσθεν οὐκ εὖ μετετέθην εὐβουλίαν, μαίνομαι;* (388-9).

The quarrel is interrupted by the arrival of a messenger; Iphigenia, Orestes and Clytemnestra have arrived at Aulis. The first letter has done its work and Agamemnon has no way out now—he is under 'the yoke of necessity' *ἀνάγκης ζεύγματ'* (443). But his laments are interrupted by Menelaus. The man who so bitterly attacked Agamemnon's instability of purpose, who praised the 'reliable' mind, has suddenly changed his attitude. "I stand apart from what I said before"—*τῶν παλαιῶν ἐξαφίσταμαι λόγων* (479). Disperse the fleet, he says, let it sail home from Aulis (495). "Have I changed from my fierce words?" *ἀλλ' ἐς μεταβολὰς ἦλθον ἀπὸ δεινῶν λόγων;* "What has happened to me is natural," *εἰκὸς πέπονθα*. "I have changed over to feel love for my brother"—*τὸν ὁμόθεν πεφυκότα στέργων μετέπεσον*. And then, in a generalization which justifies his conduct: "Such changes are not the mark of the evil man," *ἀνδρὸς οὐ κακοῦ τροπαὶ τοιαίδε* (500-504).

But nothing can save Iphigenia now; the army insists on her sacrifice, as Agamemnon well knows. Clytemnestra makes one last attempt to save her, by enlisting the aid of Achilles, the prototype of heroic *φύσις*. He promises to defend her, to defy the army. But in this play even the greatest hero of them all is a different man. After promises, made in high astounding terms, he advises Clytemnestra to make one last attempt to persuade Agamemnon to change his mind. "What prudent advice!" she says to him, *ὡς σώφρον' εἶπας* (1024). Nobody ever had occasion to speak like that to Achilles before.

When, later, he comes in pursued by his own troops, there is clearly no way out. And Iphigenia, who earlier in the play made her marvellous speech of supplication to Agamemnon begging for her life—"Had I the speech of Orpheus, father," *εἰ μὲν τὸν Ὀρφέως εἶχον ὦ πάτερ λόγον* (1211ff)—now changes her mind and resolves to die willingly—*καθθανεῖν δέ μοι δέδοκται* (1375). Inconsistent? It is one more change of mind, no more violent than those we have seen earlier in the play. And if Aristotle means that it is unmotivated (and his statement has been so interpreted) he has overlooked something. Right from the beginning of the play, through the speeches of the actors and the lyrics of the chorus, Euripides has emphasized the Panhellenic nature of the expedition, presenting it as a holy war of all Greece united against the barbarians. This is the content of Iphigenia's speech (1378–1400). In 406 B.C. it was a theme heard in many quarters in a Greece ravaged by internecine war,<sup>49</sup> and when Iphigenia states it so simply and nobly there can have been few in the audience who did not feel its power.

Achilles, overcome with admiration at Iphigenia's courage, offers to protect her if she should change her mind again—*ἴσως γὰρ κἄν μεταγνοίης τάδε* (1424). He seems to expect that she will, but she does not, and goes off to what she fully expects will be her death.

It is typical of the paradoxical nature of Euripidean drama that the poet who in his plays destroyed the old ideal of heroic *φύσις*, the god-given unchangeable nature of a great individual, and filled his stage with irresolute changeable human beings in whom we can more easily recognize ourselves, should in this last play have presented us with a truly heroic action which springs not from stubborn resolution but from a change of mind.

CENTER FOR HELLENIC STUDIES  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. e.g. Ar. *Lys.* 1133–4 *ἐχθρῶν παρόντων βαρβάρων στρατεύματι* | *\*Ἕλληνας ἄνδρας καὶ πόλεις ἀπόλλυτε*; X. *HG* 1.6 (Callicratidas in the Aegean, 407 B.C.); and see R. Goossens, *Euripide et Athènes* (Brussels 1962) 683ff.