

AESCHYLUS AND THE ORIGINS OF DRAMA *

How far is Aeschylus an archaic poet and to what extent is he an innovator? This is the subject I should like to discuss. To sum up, and in relation to former studies of mine, I would stress the fact that there are a series of archaisms in Aeschylus, either in content or form:

- a) *Content*: A recurrence of «divine» myths dealing with the gods. A recurrence of the theme of the death of the hero. The theme of punishment for the proud who violate religious taboos. Recurrence of the conflicts which affect the collectivity represented by the chorus, and that of solutions of transaction or equilibrium with a «happy ending»
- b) *Form*: The following are all indisputable archaisms: the absence, at times, of a prologue, and the presence of epirhematic *agones* with intervention of the chorus, as likewise of lyrical dialogues between the chorus and one or two actors.

Then there is an element which, to my mind, is archaic with respect to subsequent tragic dramatists, but which is at heart the result of an innovation: the trilogy which enables the dramatist to develop conflicts which would otherwise be unrepresentable on account of the limited elements at the poet's disposal.

I believe that the following may also be considered as innovations: the acceptance of the influence of the themes and philosophy of epic and lyric, the depth treatment of the theme of the hero and the development of the great political themes, all with epic undertones. Likewise, the complex, varied use of inherited structural units, at the service of the development of tragic themes, as I have attempted to explain elsewhere.

1. THE FACTS OF THE PROBLEM

Gilbert Murray's excellent study on Aeschylus, which, despite having been published in 1940 still keeps its original freshness intact, is a real challenge to anyone who attempts to approach the ancient poet of Eleusis once more. Its title is *Aeschylus, The Creator of Tragedy*. This

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title faithfully reflects the English hellenist's central idea: that Aeschylus was the true creator of Tragedy as we understand it today, on account of three fundamental reasons. These three reasons are as follows: *semnótes*, or the elevation of his language and style; the lavishness of his staging and scenography; and the depth of his thought.

As againsts this thesis of Aeschylus' modernity within the history of Tragedy, that of his archaism has at times been put forward. Thus, when Kitto¹ considers the tragedy of situation to be dominant in Aeschylus and hence characteristic of his archaism, the tragedy of situation being centred on the destiny of the chorus: one could trace a line that progresses from the *Suppliants* to the *Orestiad* with increasing dramatic intensity and a progressive insistence on the problems of the heroic individual. Or, if one recalls my previous book on the origin of Tragedy², one will realize that I stress Aeschylus' archaism in it with regard to a series of formal aspects.

This is not, of course, a matter that can be decided in black and white. Aeschylus is certainly placed among the first tragic dramatists on the one hand, and Sophocles and Euripides on the other (although between Aeschylus' first success and Sophocles' first there is a mere lapse of time that stretches from 484 to 468 B.C.). Yet we should not imagine any linear evolution; suffice it to say that Kitto's placing of the *Suppliants* as Aeschylus' first work within this type of evolution has been refuted, as is known, by the remains of a didascalia that makes one date the work after 467 B.C. I myself, together with archaic formal elements in Aeschylus, have postulated that the two actors of his oldest works was a forced basis which restrained the older freedom in which each member of the chorus occasionally became an actor and participated in the dialogue; the three actors of Sophocles and in the *Orestiad* itself would therefore represent a return to a greater freedom and archaism. Moreover, the linked trilogy would likewise be an innovation of Aeschylus', brought about precisely on account of the limited dramatic possibilities offered by only two actors. The return to independent works within free trilogies would thus be one more harking back to the archaic.

In all truth, ideas of Aeschylus' drama as a huge, decisive leap forwards and of a staggered evolution from Thespis to Aeschylus, from Aeschylus to Sophocles and from Sophocles to Euripides, depend on

¹ *Form and Meaning in Drama*, 2nd. ed. London 1960.

² *Fiesta, Comedia y Tragedia. Sobre los orígenes griegos del teatro*. Barcelona 1972 (Eng. trans.: *Festival, Comedy and Tragedy. The Greek Origins of Theatre*, Leiden, Brill, 1975).

Aristotle's views and those of other ancient theorists. When Murray speaks of Aeschylus as the true «creator» of Tragedy, he sets him against the «little myths» and «ridiculous language» of which Aristotle spoke; Murray did no more than centre on our tragic dramatist the supposed «step» from the *satyrikón* to tragedy³. On the other hand, older authors have repeatedly mentioned the innovations of the successive tragedies, for example, with regard to the number of actors.

Obviously, I believe that the subject of Aeschylus' originality with regard to his predecessors and that of his real or supposed archaism with regard to his followers is subject to many doubts: above all, on account of our scant knowledge of Aeschylus' predecessors, of his followers and of Aeschylus himself. However, some advance may be made, albeit with no endeavour to exhaust the subject or to offer outright, definite solutions. To this end, the first thing to be done is, I believe, to disregard the ancient precedents, particularly Aristotle's. I am not going to repeat here the criticisms I made in my above-mentioned book on the theory of the origin of Tragedy in satirical drama or on what the *satyrikón* meant: his theory contradicts the very Aristotelian approach that Tragedy is by definition the «serious» genre and not the comic one, and I believe it has no other basis but the etymology of the word «tragedy» as coming from the famous *tragoi* or satires.

I will merely state that Aristotle's own assertion is far more useful in the sense that tragedy comes «from the soloists (*exárkhontes*) of the dithyramb», as long as we understand by this the lyrical dialogue in general between the chorus and main characters of same (chorus leader, individual chorus members, actors). This in fact is because the lyrical dialogue and epirheme in which the chorus and these other individual characters take part are particularly frequent in Aeschylus. However, it is in fact the analysis of form and content of Aeschylus' tragedies that have been preserved and of those of other tragic dramatists, even of the comedies, that may allow us to come to conclusions of a historical nature on the origins and evolution of Athenian drama. This is what I endeavoured to do in my above-mentioned book, following the footsteps of other authors. Yet I concentrated basically there on the origins of drama, as I said before. Our subject is now a different one: that of placing Aeschylus in relation to these origins and within this evolution.

For the first thing to be said is that Murray's statement should, in any case, be taken «cum mica salis»: as a stimulating and even pro-

³ Cf. *Poetics*, 1449a, 19-21.

vocative title. Tragedy was created before Aeschylus and not because ancient scholars said so. The works preserved by Aeschylus' predecessors such as Thespis, Choerilus or Phrynichus would not at all be out of place in either Aeschylus himself or in his followers. Subjects such as *Phorbas or the Games in Honour of Pelias*, and *Pentheus* (Thespis), *Alope* (Choerilus), *The Egyptians*, *The Danaides*, *Alcestis*, *The Women of Pleuron*, *The Siege of Miletus* (Phrynichus) dramatize the old epic-lyric themes around the death of the hero, sometimes within an aetiological context in Attica (*Alope*); Phrynichus even precedes Aeschylus, as is known, in the treatment of contemporary heroic and tragic history (*The Siege of Miletus*).

Tragedy had been founded before Aeschylus; the traditional date of 535-34 B.C. for Thespis' first success need not on any account be put to doubt. For me, the starting-point is to be found in choruses which were specialized in these heroic themes and which, without losing their ritual nature, created a repertoire of ever-renewed works, as had happened previously with the lyrical genre. On the other hand, these choruses developed the well-known innovation of making one or more of the chorus-members independently dialogue with the chorus and of giving them their «own name»: that is, they were made actors. Perhaps, Pisystratus and Thespis did no more than use a pre-existent tradition to give greater splendour to the recently founded Dionysiac festivals. Whilst they did innovate, they nevertheless began with chorals of a dialogical and mimetic type that were specialized in heroic and threnetic themes.

I will not go into this point of view here, neither will I argue in favour of it: on the one hand because it is a subject that I have discussed in detail elsewhere, as mentioned above; on the other because it is merely a starting-point for my present dissertation.

As I said above, the problem is that of Aeschylus' originality. This is no easy problem. It should be noted that there is tragedy prior to Thespis and then the tragedy of Thespis and his followers. Aeschylus comes after them, and it is said that he made his first success in 484 B.C., yet that his oldest preserved work, the *Persians*, dates from 472 B.C.; that is from some 60 years after Thespis. This is a void or hiatus that we must fill in with our scant means. On the other hand, it so happens that Sophocles was present on the Athenian stage as from 468 B.C., that is, at a date prior to works of Aeschylus' such as the *Seven*, the *Suppliants*, the *Orestiad* and, doubtless, the *Prometheus*: that is to say, before all preserved works of Aeschylus except the *Persians*, which, as is well known, is a somewhat anomalous work.

Yet, on the other hand, the Sophocles who theoretically might have influenced almost the whole of our Aeschylus, has been totally lost: the oldest work of Sophocles that has come down to us, *Antigone*, is, as is known, from 442-41 B.C. (the oldest dated one, *Ajax*, is perhaps earlier than this). These are the almost hopeless data on the problem.

2. AESCHYLUS' ARCHAISM

The central themes of Aeschylus' tragedies were already included in religious and heroic legend; one might even say, in the case of a theme from contemporary history such as that of the Persian defeat in the Median Wars, that it depends on an already existing tradition of interpreting the facts.

In the first place, one should note the frequency in Aeschylus of «divine» themes. In his dionysiac tragedies —now lost— we find the theme of the offenders of the gods —a Pentheus, a Lycurgus— punished by same. Within his preserved works, *Prometheus* began a trilogy which told Zeus' punishment of the rebel Titan, before the reconciliation. In other tragedies the theme is that of Zeus and Io (in *Prometheus* and *Suppliants*), that of Apollo and Cassandra (in *Agamemnon*), that of Orestes and the Erinyes (in *Eumenides*). In the lost tragedies one finds other comparable themes (that of Phaeton, that of Niobe, etc.). In the other tragic dramatists, these themes tend to disappear, the dionysiac themes being the greatest exception. From the data at our disposal, it is quite clear that these latter figured in rituals in which action choruses of the Bacchae participated, as there would likewise be choruses of Erinyes or Eumenides, agricultural divinities⁴. On the other hand, the «divine» themes must generally have been incorporated into their repertoire by the first tragic dramatists, for they are more frequent in Aeschylus than in his followers and were kept within the tradition of the Comedy, which parodied tragic themes.

As far as specifically tragic themes are concerned, those which refer to human participants in the conflict and not divine ones, it has already been said that it is certain they were not introduced by Aeschylus: they are essential to Tragedy right from its origins. They represent the theme of suffering and death, the theme of a change of power, that of the lament of the chorus for their dying king. This schema is so essential that it was transferred to the *Persians*, which celebrates a victory

⁴ Cf. *Fiesta...* cit., p. 412 ff.

in the true sense: Xerxes is a sort of tragic hero, great and remote, afflicted by *hybris* and bewept. For the tragic theme of death is substituted by that of failure and humiliation. It should be noted that Aeschylus tends to keep the theme of death, except where the action takes place among the gods, who do not die (in *Prometheus*). Yet the *Persians* proves that he had already begun to find an equivalent. On the other hand, the underlying conception of this work, in general terms common to that of Herodotus' *Histories* and to a whole theory which goes back at least to Archilochus and Solon, on guilt and punishment, is prior to Aeschylus. There is no need to recall, on the other hand, that this latter had in Phrynichus a precedent to his insertion of a contemporary theme within a tragic scheme.

Thus, Aeschylus inherited what was essential to his themes, not only in the details of same, but in their interpretation within a religious ideology that implied the theme of punishment of the proud who violated the old religious taboos: the man or woman of blood, the «conqueror of cities», he who uses violence against those of his own blood (*Supplicants*), he who denies the natural law of love, etc. Family bonds which are not respected, unjust violence forbidden by the gods, are essential themes in Aeschylus; and they fall within the oldest schemas which relate religion to human destiny.

In Aeschylus' works we come across archaic rituals precisely in connection with these themes. We see Agamemnon and Darius intervening from the realm of shadows, at the call of the living, in order to re-establish usurped order or to explain this re-establishment. Or the Erinyes pursuing the matricide or the Danaides pleading at the altars and threatening to hang themselves there if they are not aided in defending their bodies against the violence of their cousins. Or we see the funeral rite which closes the *Seven* —the last work in the trilogy—. And we have the prayers of the chorus to Zeus and other gods to punish the guilty or defend the besieged city, as in fact happens. All this is profoundly archaic. The ritual motives, in fact, predominate over more modern ones in Aeschylus' choruses, these latter being derived from the former and appearing with growing frequency in later tragic dramatists.

However, the theme of suffering and death, of a change of power and the punishment of a man, the hero, who is in any case a great man and mourned, are not the only inherited features. They are really themes which appear within a wider context. The context of liberation, of the anguishing problem that affects a collectivity, and of the final reconciliation, are all absolutely essential in Aeschylus and less so in

his followers. They are, moreover, contexts which can only be understood on the strength of the characteristics of the agricultural festival, in which drama was born. For the winter or spring agricultural festival, in Greece as everywhere, was centred on the theme of renovation with the arrival of the new god or the new victor, on the end of misfortune, death and bad weather. All this referred to the city or to collectivities within it, according to the type of festival: men, women, young people, the worshippers of such-and-such a god, the members of this or that tribe. As I have explained elsewhere, it should be noted that these themes or contexts are also essential to Comedy, born within an identical ethos and which only differs from Tragedy in a different highlighting of the same conflict, the same change, the same liberation.

In those works of Aeschylus known to us there is always or almost always that type of conflict which affects a collectivity, the chorus, and a quest in order to put to rights a situation of decadence or misfortune or ruin of the old natural order, which is at the end attained.

The Danaïdes are persecuted by the violence of their cousins, the sons of Egypt, and freed from same by Pelasgus: or Argos or Thebes are involved in the consequences of a putrid victory or a fratricidal confrontation or in atrocious crimes: only the death of the guilty brings liberation. This theme, weakened when transferred to a different situation, leaves its stamp on even the *Persians*.

However, this triumph of the new forces is sometimes modified by what we might term a transaction, as has often been observed. The Erinyes and Athene seal their peace and the future and abundance of Athens is to be derived from it: it is almost an ending for comedy. Men and women seal their peace at the end of the trilogy of the Danaïdes, thanks to Hypermestra, who respects her husband's life. There is a final equilibrium in the last work preserved from the trilogy of the *Seven*: the two brothers die, Thebes finds liberation. And of course there is the same equilibrium at the end of the trilogy of Prometheus, in which the Titan is pardoned and the order of Zeus maintained and perfected.

Aeschylus' tragedy, in fact, ended happily from the point of view of the collectivity: there was a liberation and a new equilibrium between warring forces, albeit both justified. As I said above, this is a legacy from the ancient festival and is common to Comedy. As I mention Comedy here, I should like to say that Aeschylus' tragic schemas are not so rigid from another point of view as those of later tragic dramatists. Inside his works, Aeschylus mixes «comic» and popular elements, above all when characters from the people speak, such as

the Guardian of *Agamemnon* or the Nurse of *Choephoroi*. In the older festival —as in life itself— the tragic and comic were mingled. Tragedy, from its very beginnings, imposed a separation of the two, which is the most original aspect of Greek drama. Yet in Aeschylus, this separation is still not a radical one. It later became more and more so, although Euripides at times returns to a mixed genre, or tragi-comic one.

The ancient myths and rituals are more present in Aeschylus than in the tragic dramatists who followed him. Yet at the same time, another part of Aeschylus' archaism is due to the limitations mentioned above, which were for him a forced basis. Some of them always prevailed: thus the archon gave each tragic dramatist only one chorus with which to organize the work, although he might to this end have to divide it in two as Aeschylus did at the end of the *Suppliants* (choruses of suppliants and servants) and as Euripides did on several occasions. As is known, the relative restraint on actors was loosened. Aeschylus had to work through almost the whole of his career with only two, basically one who played the Chorus Spokesman (Eteocles, Prometheus, Danaus) and another who played the diverse secondary characters. Even when, in the *Orestiad*, the poet was able to count upon three actors, he essentially remained at the previous stage: in the triangular scenes there is hardly any free dialogue among the three actors (thus in the scene with Athene-Apollo-Orestes-chorus in *Choephoroi*).

As I said above, Aeschylean tragedy «of situation» basically depends on this fact of having to work with only the two above-mentioned actors. This is paradoxical: it is a «modern» limitation (in relation to the rituals), but it is an archaism with regard to more recent tragic dramatists —who by their innovation are once more closer to the ancient freedom of working with several «soloists» who sometimes become independent of the chorus—. Moreover, this archaism, which is based on an innovation, generates another: the tragedy of situation, which has its own rules and values, and which should be studied on its own terms.

In the field of form, Aeschylus likewise offers undeniable archaisms. I have already mentioned the ritual chorals, which later survived although less frequently. It is a well-known fact that there are two works without a prologue: the *Suppliants* and the *Persians*. And the prologue of pure rhesis in *Agamemnon*. Of course, there are more complex prologues.

The most notable archaisms are not these, however. To my mind, they are in the first place, the epirhematic *agones* with the intervention of the chorus: the chorus usually sings and the actor recites (but in the Cassandra scene from *Agamemnon*, it is the other way round, choral epirheme / Cassandra). At times, these are true *agones* of persecution or physical confrontation, as between the Eumenides and Orestes or between the Suppliants and the Egyptian Herald. They are a continuation of older rituals. But there are others of persuasion, as between the chorus and Eteocles in the *Seven*, and then, others with broader themes, for example, in the *Persians* between the chorus and the messenger, the chorus and Darius.

Secondly, one should stress several lyrical dialogues, above all the threnetic ones, in which the chorus and one or two actors participate (Electra and Orestes, Antigone and Ismene, Atossa and Xerxes). The structure of these *kommoi*, with their astrophic elements, their refrains, the fragmentation of their strophes, etc., should, I believe, be considered as extremely archaic.

Another archaic element are what I have elsewhere⁵ called series: for example, the scenes in which the choral is followed by an intervention from the chorus leader and then by a dialogue (generally a stichic one) between this latter and a character who arrives on the scene (sometimes with a rhesis from this latter in between). This type of unity usually serves to present some fresh piece of news brought from outside, but may also present an *agon*.

Naturally, the elements of form and content are not independent of each other but work together: they are at the service of the same dramatic intention to the extent that this is archaic and, of course, to the extent in which it has already evolved.

For the rest, it would be mistaken to attribute all the archaic elements to Aeschylus and all the evolved ones to the other two tragic dramatists. It is enough to think of those archaisms in Euripides not to be found in Aeschylus, for example, the *deus ex machina*.

3. EVOLVED ELEMENTS IN AESCHYLUS

If we begin once more with content, one should first and foremost consider the strong literary influence Aeschylus incorporated into the ritual elements and into the tragic schema which was present in both ritual and literature.

⁵ On this and other units, see *Fiesta...* cit., p. 271 ff.

In the first place, Homeric epic in the broadest sense of the word, is what is most outstanding in this influence. Its presence in Aeschylus is far greater than it may be in Sophocles and Euripides. It is not merely that Aeschylus wrote a trilogy on the theme of the *Iliad* and another on that of the *Odyssey*, as is well known. There is also another trilogy on the death of Ajax and there are isolated tragedies on Philoctetes, Memnon, Sarpedon, Palamedes and Iphigenia. There are also works derived from post-Homeric epic poetry and also from Stesichorus: apart from the *Orestiad* on the family of the Atridae and the *Seven* and tragedies prior to this on the Theban legend, there was another trilogy on the subject of the mothers of the Seven, another on the legend of Heracles, etc.

Aeschylus worked on the basis of the great epic literature, both Homeric and non-Homeric, and on Stesichorus' epic-like lyrical poetry, in which a series of his themes were anticipated (sometimes with differences in the details). Yet he also worked on lyrical poetry in general. The whole of his philosophy as to divine power and human weakness, the punishment of the unjust man, etc., is not comprehensible without the precedents of Archilochus, Solon and choral lyrical poetry (as well as Hesiod). Even echoes of Heraclitus are certainly to be found: his «Zeus, whoever he may be, if it pleases him to be thus named» in the «Hymn to Zeus» of the *Agamemnon* is very close to the god who in Heraclitus «wishes and does not wish to be called Zeus» (fr. 32).

The pure and simple traditional tragic themes of the suffering hero who dies through the infraction of some divine rule or through direct confrontation with some god is now enlarged upon with all the wealth of detail of the epic literary tradition. They are, moreover, to be interpreted in the light of a religious philosophy which has its precedents in lyrical poetry. Whilst it is true that tragedy cannot be accepted as a sort of laboratory synthesis between Doric chorals and Ionic trimeters, it is no less true that traditional ritual lyrical poetry, on which it is based, was enriched by literary lyrical poetry, normally non-dialogical. If, as I believe, agonal epirhemes and threnetic lyrical dialogues come from dialogical lyrical poetry and traditional popular mimetics, it is no less true that the conceptual depth of the great chorals inherits and develops previous monodic lyrical and choral poetry brilliantly. If Aristotle's statement on how tragedy should «become solemn» has any basis at all within the tragedies preserved from his time, he must have referred to this.

The ideological development of Aeschylus' tragedy could be said to take place in two different directions: a depth-treatment of the individual theme of the hero, and the great political and moral themes.

Although the theme of the hero is already to be found in epic, however much this latter may tend to disregard the more sombre aspects of his nature, and although it is of course in subsequent literature and in the rituals, it is in Aeschylus that he offers profoundly individual features for the first time, being, if one can say so, of an individualistic tragicness. For Aeschylus goes far beyond the simple schema of grandeur, *hybris* and punishment. Eteocles is already an individualized hero, the first truly human individual seen from within to tread the Greek stage, as far as we can judge. Even when he is compared to an Achilles or a Hector, we can see that he is a totally different person. Achilles and Hector choose between life and glory or duty: it is a clear, black-and-white choice. But Eteocles is far more complex. The just and unjust aspects of his behaviour are inextricably mingled; he must die in order to save his city, he being its king and defender. There is the same mixture, the same humanity in Agamemnon. «What decision is free of evil?» The words of Agamemnon in the play of this name (211) could be the motto for the description of the hero's actions and of human action in general.

All this means a remarkable development that can hardly be attributed to an earlier tragic dramatist than Aeschylus: the most profound depths of individual man appear in him for the first time to us. Yet at the same time, and just as the theme of the tragic hero receives these refinements, these advances, from the tragedy of situation with its themes of liberation, the collective and the equilibrium between counterposed forces, Aeschylus gives rise to the political tragedy and the ethical tragedy.

In fact, Aeschylus' tragedy is first and foremost political tragedy. It is not simply tragedy on the collective or community theme, but on strictly political themes, sometimes in the general sense and, according to some who have perceived contemporary allusions (I believe rightly so), in a far more concrete and precise sense. It is the conflict between liberty and authority that is time and again set before our eyes, with a caution against excesses either way. In context, this is sometimes approached from the antithesis of democracy as against tyranny and sometimes from the other antithesis of respect for other nations and aggressive, imperialistic policies. The facts are so clear in the *Suppliants*, *Prometheus*, *Agamemnon*, etc., that it is not worth giving fuller examples.

A motto such as «neither anarchy nor tyranny» (*Eumenides* 696), the «democratic» conduct of a king like Pelasgus in the *Suppliants* and Agamemnon's falsely democratic behaviour in his promise in the play of his name, the abuse of power by Agamemnon himself, or by Eteocles or the suppliants themselves, viewed in an unfavourable light, all this and more shows that the Aeschylean concept of reconciliation, of the synthesis of the old and the new, a traditional concept in renovation festivals, in fact, as the agricultural festival in which drama originated may be classified, is now redefined. It has all been transferred to the political plane, both in general terms and probably in contemporary terms as well: in relation, as is known, to themes such as that of the reform of the Areopagus by Ephialtes or the war with Persia and Sparta.

Of course, Phrynicus could deal with a political theme in his *Siege of Miletus*. Yet it would not seem possible that themes of internal policy could have been dealt with except during the last days of the regime of Cimon, and after this latter's downfall.

However, these political themes are, for Aeschylus, ethical, moral and even religious ones at the same time. Yet there should be a more detailed discussion of how the theory of the reconciliation of authority and liberty which is Aeschylean democracy and which I have elsewhere⁶ termed religious democracy, is reflected in a steady, moderate and pious type of human being who is ready to face risk for the sake of justice. This is a non-heroic type of human being—one heroic in a new sense—but, on account of this very fact, one who is more open to the future. We could say that it is Aeschylus' ideal, incarnated in a character such as Pelasgus of the *Suppliants* or Darius himself in the *Persians*.

Nevertheless, the drama of counterposed forces which in Aeschylus runs *paripassu* to that of counterposed human wills and temperaments, can only be expounded in two ways by him. One, thanks to the long choruses which reflect on the «situations» brought about by the encounters between the main character and the secondary one or ones. The other, by the observation of the conflict of said forces throughout time, from generation to generation. That is, through the formula of the linked trilogy.

As I stated above, the limitations which hindered Aeschylus had the advantage, as usually occurs, of opening up a new dramatic product which both surpassed and made use of them. This is the tragedy of situation. Yet this type of tragedy in turn, if it is to give way to the

⁶ *Ilustración y Política en la Grecia clásica*. Madrid 1966, p. 155 ff.

action properly, needs a prolongation in several situations: the trilogy. Only in stages can one perceive, for example, how the forces which operate and oppose each other in the *Agamemnon* manage to echo each other and become modified in successive stages, that is, in *Choephoroi* and *Eumenides*. Only thus can the conflict be solved between Zeus and Prometheus or between the Danaides and the children of Egypt.

I believe that these are some of the innovations that may be attributed to Aeschylus: this naturally on the basis of his archaisms, of the limitations to which he was subjected and the influences from previous epic and lyrical poetry. However, one should not consider that the tragic dramatists who followed him did so in a straight, continuous line. At times Aeschylus exhausted certain possibilities and his followers returned to open up paths. For example, with the aid of three actors, they exploited the older tragedy more in the sense of action than in Aeschylus. They thus renounced the linked trilogy and concentrated more on the individual human problems and the description of characters than on the great ideological conflicts between contrasting and complementary forces. Or, within this ideology, they explored other fields together with the theme of punishment for injustice, such as that of the inscrutability of divine action or the inherent, inexplicable tragedy of the human estate.

After this, one should return to the formal elements, to the more complex combinations of same which are later retained and developed in later tragic dramatists. For example, certain complex ensembles in which the chorus, chorus leader and one or two actors participate in fixed, stable combinations. Or in the epirhematic scenes followed by other stichic ones which continue them. But it would perhaps be of more interest to draw my readers' attention to the structure of entire tragedies, with their skillful organization that is graduated and insistent, anticipating, recalling, making the tension grow until the moment of outburst and climax; mixing units such as the *agon* and the threnody (in the scene of the chorus and Clytemnestra in the *Agamemnon*) or the song of victory and the threnody (in one of the chorals from the *Seven*).

I believe that the structural analysis of the tragedies, from points of view which, whilst formal, at the same time imply content for they display how and with what intentions the poet structures same, is of great help understanding what is most original in Aeschylus. I once tried it in the case of *Agramemnon*⁷ and I am not going to go into

⁷ «Struttura formale ed intenzione poetica dell'Agamennone di Esquilo», *Dioniso* 48, 1977, pp. 91-121.

detail of what I said there. I merely wish to add that a structural study of the different tragedies can reveal constants in the organization of same which, compared to other constants in Sophocles or Euripides, may help us to penetrate into the problem of originality in Aeschylus.

Together with this analysis of content, one should not, however, forget the study of scenography and staging: its quality between the grandiose and the ingenuous, the archaic and the exotic which Murray pointed out. I have no doubt that, starting from small, village rituals, Aeschylus boldly advanced along a new course. I am not going to give examples of a subject which deserves fuller treatment. This is a course which, like others, was developed by Aeschylus and then abandoned, at least to a certain extent, by his more classical and restrained followers.

With all these innovations, together with his archaisms, Aeschylus remained above all a poet of the city, of the city festival. He was wise in all those great problems which connect man to God, a master of religion and humanity, yet not only individual but collective humanity, although it is quite clear that he discovered the path to knowledge of what is tragic in man. To sum up, as Aristophanes clearly shows in the *Frogs*, he is a poet, a *sophós*, who above all instructs the city. In fact, all the great Greek poets did this. But Aeschylus perhaps stressed this aspect more than any other. He taught his fellows how to understand the unstable equilibrium between the forces that operate in the divine and human worlds to suggest a new model which, although it is based on the tragic, surpassed it. For the rest, he was in this a model not only for the people of Athens but also for other tragic dramatists.

There was, in fact, a continuity after Aeschylus as there was likewise, in certain aspects, a break. The sense of the archaic, the strange, the terrible, has never been displayed so clearly as in his works, neither has the conclusion that this tragic situation of individual man and the city can be controlled by teaching through pain. In this, Aeschylus is less tragic than Sophocles and Euripides. I believe that this less tragic being is one of his traditional archaic elements which were fecundated through the synthesis with the ancient poetry of Hesiod and Solon.

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