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CONTENT-BASED AND EXTRATEXTUAL REASONS ARGUING FOR A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SOPHOCLES' *ANTIGONE*

Abstract: The aim of the paper is to outline the main objections raised against psychological interpretation and demonstrate that this approach is nevertheless a prerequisite for any relevant interpretation of Greek tragedy, exemplified here by Sophocles' *Antigone*. The author argues that the psychological dimension is an integral component of the artistic whole, important for the audience's understanding of individual characters and of the dramatic action. His argumentation rests on the *content* of the utterances by which the characters describe their own or others' mental acts relevant to the dramatic reality. In addition, he attempts to show the role of the original staging conventions, especially the use of masks, in creating the illusion of the characters as entities with psychological lives of their own.

1. Introduction

Over the last three centuries, Sophocles' *Antigone* has been "one of the most widely read, translated, performed, discussed, adapted and admired of all classical Greek texts".[1] In addition to being the subject of close philological readings, the play has inspired poets, playwrights, writers[2] and composers[3] of the most diverse profiles and aesthetic orientations, as well as prompted the interpretations of some of the period's most eminent philosophers and theoreticians.[4] Moreover,

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[1] Griffith (1999) vii.

[2] Among the most famous authors writing in German are Friedrich Hölderlin, Berthold Brecht, Rolf Hochhut and Heinrich Böll; among those writing in French, Jean Cocteau and Jean Anouilh; the best-known representative of authors writing in English is probably Athol Fugard. The key work of late 20th-century Slovene drama, *Antigona* by Dominik Smole, is likewise closely linked to Sophocles' text in both content and ideas.

[3] For example F. Mendelssohn, C. Saint-Saëns, A. Honegger, M. Theodorakis, C. Orff.

[4] To mention but the most influential ones: G. W. F. Hegel (*Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *Aesthetik* II; *Philosophie der Religion*), S. Kierkegaard (*Enten-Eller*), M. Heidegger, G. Lukács (*Die Seele und die Formen*), J. Lacan (*The ethics of psychoanalysis, 1959–1960: the seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII*).

considering the number of theatre productions which were staged in the 20th century,[5] we might even talk about a "stage renaissance of Sophocles' *Antigone*".[6] Thus it comes as no surprise that one of the most comprehensive modern monographs on this text, Oudemans' and Lardinois' seminal anthropological study *Tragic Ambiguity*, should conclude with the emphatic observation "that the *Antigone* is part of our innermost being" (yet at the same time "beyond our reach", having been conceived in a context of notions about the world and life vastly different from ours[7]), which could hardly be claimed of any other ancient Greek play. Of course one may not agree with the interpretation of *Antigone* as put forward in *Tragic Ambiguity*, since the key categories of Oudemans' and Lardinois' interpretation – the ancients' interconnected cosmology as opposed to our separative cosmology – are, after all, merely two possible models of explaining the hermeneutic problems engendered by the collision of Sophocles' (Greek) world on the one hand and our world on the other. Nevertheless, their attempt is yet another testimony to the living presence and relevance of Sophocles' tragedy (and its symbolism) in contemporary Western culture:[8] to its challenging interpretative elusiveness, which remains as vivid as ever, impelling us to seek ever new approaches and arousing ever new discontent.[9] To recapitulate by paraphrasing

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[5] See, especially for the German-speaking areas, the catalogue of theatre productions and adaptations compiled by Maria Schadewaldt-Meyer, in Schadewaldt (1974) 143ff.

[6] C. Zimmermann (1993) 1.

[7] Oudemans and Lardinois (1987) 236.

[8] This topic is discussed most extensively by Steiner (1984).

[9] Cf. Oudemans and Lardinois (1987) 236: "It [sc. *Antigone*, note by B. S.] is a blank in our cosmology which has no power either to propagate or to dislocate it. Our inability to experience this gap in our cosmology is not a tragedy, because our separative life is untragic." However, I have some reservations about this conclusion (as well as about several other methods and findings of the study), since the authors' thesis that "there is no supra-cultural point of view from which gains and losses can be totted up" (236) in fact undermines their assertion that "the *Antigone* is beyond our reach". How could we, as members of a "separative culture", ever apprehend a "cosmology of interconnectedness"? And, failing to apprehend it, how could we ever become reliable judges of the differences between two distinct cosmological perceptions of *Antigone*'s characters and issues? Perhaps the principal hermeneutic problem is analogous to the one underlined in E. D. Hirsch's review of Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode* (1965): the interpreter cannot link his own horizon to the author's without somehow "reaching" the latter. The question, however, of how an interpreter from an epoch of separative cosmology might "reach" a work from an epoch of interconnected culture is left largely unaddressed by Oudemans and Lardinois, despite their extensive discussion of the differences between the two cosmologies. Nor do they explain how such a work can still hold any interest for the separative culture at all, if the epochs are separated by an unbridgeable divide. Do we continue to examine it purely under the influence of tradition, because it

the concise observation of Mark Griffith: "In the modern era, hundreds of books and articles have discussed what is the lesson we should learn from the play. No consensus has emerged."[10] Clearly, the interconnection between *Antigone* and the foundations of European civilisation, strengthened by tradition, runs so deep that it poses ever new hermeneutic problems even in today's fast-changing socio-historical and anthropological context.[11]

Despite the plurality of interpretative approaches, however, there is one feature that emerges clearly: the latest decades have seen the focus of studies in Greek tragedy, including *Antigone*, shift to the social (or culturological) context.[12] As a consequence, the treatment of character psychology has been relegated to the background. This, of course, is not to say that the latest period has not produced studies and commentaries which have expanded and elaborated significantly our knowledge of character psychology in Greek tragedy in gene-

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belongs to the literary canon? Or is it all an "epoch-making" *misunderstanding*: do we consider its features challenging for our separative culture too by a mere coincidence? Do these *seeming* features encourage us to read our own anachronistic notions into the text? Should we even see in this *semblance* a work of metaphysic ambiguous power? In short, the assumption of an "unbridgeable distance between separative and interconnected culture" makes it very difficult to justify the genuine relevance of an ancient work for our time, even of an *Antigone*.

[10] Griffith (1999) 28.

[11] It should be noted here that all modern reworkings and productions of the Antigone myth, as well as most scholarly discussions, are based on Sophocles' play. Yet the issues of the myth's origins, of Sophocles' "mythopoeia" and of his influence on other ancient treatments of the story are as important as they are complex: according to C. Zimmermann's seminal study of these problems, "die beiden *Antigone*-Tragödien des Euripides und des Astydamas zeigen unter der großen Zahl anderer Quellen, in denen Antigone erscheint, ein von Sophokles stark abweichendes Bild Antigones, so daß sich die Frage nach den anderen antiken Gestalten Antigones schon deshalb stellt, um die Bedeutung der sophokleischen *Antigone* für die antike Rezeption zu klären" (1993, cf. p. 2). Cf. also West (1999) esp. 128–29.

[12] This shift is wittily described by Jasper Griffin (1999a). According to his account, the mid-20th century saw a complete prevalence of *literary* criticism in the interpretation of Greek tragedy, which was followed by the first "cautious" analyses of the historical or sociological aspects (as in Ehrenberg's 1954 work on *Sophocles and Pericles*). Griffin goes on to exclaim: "Since then, what a change there has been! Clio, Muse of history, has moved massively into the territory of her tragic sister Melpomene. [...] So completely has the fashion changed that the question seems now to be, not whether tragedy is political, but exactly how its obviously political purpose is to be defined" (73–74). Further on (76), commenting on D. Feeney's statement that "[t]he current dominant model is J.-P. Vernant's 'democratic moment', the intimate bond between the novel artistic and political institutions" ('Review of Easterling (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge 1997', *TLS* 29, May 1998, 11), Griffin even says that "this approach shows signs of having hardened from a consensus almost into an orthodoxy".

ral[13] and *Antigone* in particular.[14] The aim of my paper is to outline the main objections raised against psychological interpretation (section 2.) and demonstrate that this approach is nevertheless a prerequisite for any relevant interpretation of Greek tragedy, exemplified here by Sophocles' *Antigone*. My argumentation rests on the *content* of the utterances by which the characters describe their own or others' mental acts and states with some influence on the course of events or the evaluation of actions, other characters, etc. – in short, the mental acts relevant to the dramatic reality (sections 3.1.1.–3.1.4.).[15] In addition, I attempt to show the role of the original staging conventions, especially the use of masks, in creating the characters' psychological dimension (section 3.2.).[16]

2. Anthropological criticism of the psychological interpretation

The interpretations of Sophocles' tragedies (and indeed ancient drama in general) which assume that dramatic characters may be credited with psychological traits, and that these represent a criterion by which both the characters and the structure of the play may be judged, have been harshly criticised from a number of aspects. Going back at least to the influential treatise on Sophocles' dramatic technique by Tycho Wilamowitz-Moellendorf,[17] this critical tradition peaked in the second half of the 20th century, by which time it had of course adopted other starting-points, methods and arguments.[18] Its heyday

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[13] For example P. E. Easterling's studies of character in Aeschylus (1973) and Sophocles (1977), as well as her 1990 treatise on the construction of character, where she largely revises her earlier opinions; see also Gould (1978), Halliwell (1990), Goldhill (1990), Gill (1990 and 1996), Seidensticker (2005) 66–87.

[14] For example Gelie (1972), Benardete (1975, 1975a, 1975b), Winnington-Ingram (1980) 91–149, 164–72, Blundell (1989) 106–48, Foley (1996); cf. also the Introduction (1–68) and commentary in Griffith (1999).

[15] The fact that, according to Ingarden (1973) 161, 221, "declarative senten-ces appearing in a literary work" have "quasi-judgmental character", while dramatic characters possess "only external habitus of reality", significantly restricts the psychological dimension but does not destroy it. Cf. also Gould (1978); Waldock (1951) 11–24.

[16] Still other reasons arguing for a psychological interpretation may be found in the element of *style* as defined by the hermeneutics theory, which is unique to every literary work. But as an account of these far exceeds the framework of the present treatise, they will be presented separately, in my forthcoming paper 'Herme-neutics, Phenomenology, (Post)structuralism and the Psychologic Intepretation of Greek Tragedy: Sophocles' *Antigone* as an Example'.

[17] Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1917).

[18] Wilamowitz-Moellendorf's theory was rejected by a number of eminent philologists from traditional viewpoints, for example by Lesky (1972³) 204, Gellie (1963) 241, von Fritz (1962) 228f., and most methodically by Easterling (1977).

was boosted by the rise of anthropological interpretative methods, when, to put it concisely, "the reaction against the preoccupation with character in ancient drama so common in the nineteenth century [...] discouraged psychologising interpretations".[19] The revolt against the psychological approach in interpreting ancient tragedy had been triggered by dozens of different interpretations, all vainly seeking to reconcile the contradictory elements within individual plays,[20] by anachronistic negative criticism and even by dubious editorial interference with the text.[21] However, while this revolt was in many respects justified and led to new, deeper hermeneutic insights, it is itself problematic for two reasons, at least in its "harder" variants. Firstly, its advocates turn the arguments properly used only against a specific type of psychological interpretation (the one which places character psychology in the centre of the playwright's interest)[22] against *the psychological approach to Sophoclean (and Greek) drama in general*, that is, against perceiving *character psychology* as a relevant element of the structure of ancient drama or its reading. The deficiencies of this argument will be addressed later (in sections 3.1.1.–3.1.4., which examine the content-based reasons for taking the characters' psychological dimensions into account), when I will also define the kind of psychological interpretation which I advocate. Secondly, what appears problematic are certain anthropological arguments against the suitability of *the psychological approach to ancient*

Others, however, have acknowledged its merits in transcending the traditional psychological approach, notably Lloyd-Jones (1972) and Heath (1987) 74 n. 63. When applied to Aeschylus, "Tychoism" even enjoyed a revival in its harder form, cf. Dawe (1963) 21–62. Recently, a "moderate Tychoism" appears to have become a methodological inspiration again, both in the interpretation of Sophocles, cf. Neuburg (1990) esp. 63–65, and of Attic tragedy in general, cf. des Bouvrie (1990) 103–4.

[19] Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1997) 81.

[20] Cf. Dawe (1963) 21.

[21] The most notorious case of such editorial interference must be the marking of (some or all of) vv. 904–20 in *Antigone* as spurious. The philological controversy about their authenticity has a long history, replete with different arguments and methodological approaches. For a survey of varying opinions on their authenticity, including a bibliography, see Hester (1971) 55–58; for a bibliography of the later studies, see Murnaghan (1986) 192 n. 1. For a critical analysis of the opinions *pro et contra* see Slezák (1981), who not only catalogues and assesses the traditional points of philological argumentation, but also displays great lucidity in setting out criteria which cannot be ignored by any relevant study of this problem. Cf. also Neuburg (1990), Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (1997) 81, and Rösler (1993).

[22] This type of interpretation, very common in the 19th century, is characterised by seeing in "character portrayal the main element in dramatic art; and by character portrayal critics usually meant a minute psychological analysis", to borrow the pregnant definition by Lloyd-Jones (1972) 214.

literature in general, which project the (impoverished) psychology of literary characters on to their flesh-and-blood contemporaries, subsequently explaining the schematic and truncated psychology of the characters with the "real" historical situation. Such criticism of the psychological approach is methodologically questionable, as well as open to objections based on an analysis of the action.

A common denominator of many contemporary anthropological approaches is their emphasis on the differentness, strangeness, otherness of the ancients in relation to the moderns, rather than on the similarities and continuities. Stressing the differentness of ancient Greeks culture had valuable and far-reaching consequences for the understanding of the tragic character: "character", "mind", "human nature" were no longer considered cross-cultural "essential truths", but, to paraphrase Goldhill, inventions.[23] Still, some classical philologists went too far in believing, for example, that the Homeric lack of a word denoting the psychological category of 'self', or a unitary concept of mind, suggests a lack of this *concept* in the world of Homeric epic poetry and – by even more dubious extrapolation – even in the world of its creation.[24] In addition to noting the dubious quality of this method, S. Halliwell has recently demonstrated how certain passages from the *Iliad*, for example, defy understanding unless a mentally integral process or experience is assumed for the individual characters.[25] Moreover, J. C. Kamerbeek had noted much earlier in a well-argued study that while two of the key elements of Sophoclean art, the "individual" (which should be understood as a psychological category as well) and the "norm", lack precise equivalents in 5th-century Greek, Sophocles' plays hardly admit an adequate reading without these concepts.[26]

Similarly, some anthropologists have attempted to show that when classical tragedy developed and flowered, the psychological constitution of man in ancient Greece still differed radically from that of the modern man.[27] In dramatic characters, this difference allegedly came to the fore particularly in the issue of their free will: A. Rivier, whose arguments provided the basis for J.-P.Vernant, criticised B.

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[23] Goldhill (1986) 198.

[24] Adkins (1970) 22, 23, Snell (1955); cf. also Dodds (1951) 16.

[25] Halliwell (1990) 37–38.

[26] Kamerbeek (1967) 79–90.

[27] See especially one of the most influential sociologists of (ancient) literature, J.-P. Vernant (1972), who argues, taking up I. Meyerson's theories, that man's psychological functions are not universal or constant.

Snell's[28] and A. Lesky's[29] theories of the double "determination" of Aeschylus' heroes, showing convincingly that their decisions could not be interpreted as free choices following the pattern reflection–choice–decision. Rather, they stem from a recognition of necessity (ἀνάγκη), so that Aeschylus' heroes cannot be credited yet with free will in the Thomistic or Kantian sense. It is important to note, however, that Rivier is never carried away into problematic generalisations, nor does he extend his observations to the Greeks in general, but prudently limits his "anthropologie eschylienne" to literary characters.[30] Yet accurate as this analysis may be in a narrow historical and philosophical framework, it pays perhaps too little attention to the specifics of tragic discourse – to its linguistic and generic limitations and to its purpose, delimited by a cult context in which the Attic tragedians reflected man's position in society and cosmos and his psychology.

Almost all extant Greek tragedies portray the power of the gods over humans, forming a range of varied judgments about it. Indeed, this power may be the most conspicuous red thread running through all the works. It is linked to the "metatheatrical", cult framework of tragedy, where the emphasis is naturally not on man's autonomy but on its very opposite – man's dependence on a transcendent reality represented by the gods. Yet an Aeschylus character – to stay within the framework of Rivier's interpretation – nevertheless "gives us definite signs of being free"; his freedom is admittedly a conditional one and his will bound,[31] but they must be viewed in the context of Aeschylus' theocentric vision.[32] Each of the characters used to illustrate Rivier's theses (Pelasgus, Agamemnon, Orestes) is caught in an extreme existential predicament and faced with an unavoidable choice between imposed alternatives; each chooses the one on which divine sanctions bear the more obviously or directly. While such decisions are not autonomous, they nevertheless involve a profound reflection

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[28] Snell (1928).

[29] Lesky (1961), (1966).

[30] Rivier (1968). Interestingly, Rivier's precise argumentation is mentioned neither in Sommerstein's (1996) excellent monograph on Aeschylus' tragedy nor in Gill's (1996) comprehensive study on the problems of personality in Greek epic poetry, tragedy and philosophy – an issue which is closely linked to the problem of free will as well.

[31] Rivier (1968) 39. The issue of free will in Aeschylus, particularly the so-called "Agamemnon's dilemma", has been the subject of numerous different interpretations; for a concise survey, see Conacher (1987) 85–96 and Sommerstein (1996) 355–66.

[32] Rivier (1968) 16 n. 39.

on one's circumstances, which includes human *self-reflection* and *self-perception* against a background of experiencing the divine *tremendum*.[33] Moreover, although imposed by strong external pressure, the self-reflection and decision are not automatic but require at least some active involvemnet of the character, so that they never take place without his participation (a character's *reflection*, or an exercise of the *mind and will*, is suggested by the word choice: δεῖ τοι βαθείας φροντίδος σωτηρίου, *Supplices* 407; φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῆ τροπαίαν [...] τὸ παντόλμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω, *Agamemnon* 218–20; ἅπαντας ἐχθροὺς τῶν θεῶν ἡγοῦ πλέον, *Choephoroe* 902). It is only through such (self-)reflection that the characters gain an insight into themselves and thus into the necessity (ἀνάγκη) with which they are faced. Indeed, an important ideological cult function of tragedy may have been to suggest, through presenting such human predicaments, that people should reflect on their dependence on the gods.

3. The reasons in favour of interpreting Greek tragic characters psychologically

3.1. Content-based reasons

3.1.1. The "dramaturgical" argument from the characters' freedom of choice

Since the present treatise is not concerned primarily with the psychology of Aeschylus' characters, this theme must be abandoned now. The tragedies of Sophocles, on the other hand, yield examples where the cause of an action clearly lies in one of the characters, in *his or her specific (not necessary)* response to the challenge of a dramatic situation where the divine requirements are far less transparent. Indeed, this very obscurity and the consequent desire of the characters to remove it in a way propel the action forward. Let us cite but a few examples. Impressed by Philoctetes' agony, Neoptolemus changes his initial determination to help Odysseus bring the hero before Troy. While Philoctetes' agony is an external cause of Neoptolemus' change of heart, it is by no means ἀνάγκη, an ineluctable external necessity as encountered in the plays of Aeschylus. Neoptolemus changes his decision (μεταγνῶναι, 1270) and restores Philoctetes' bow to the hero because he will henceforth prize honesty above wisdom (ἀλλ᾽ + εἰ δίκαια, τῶν σοφῶν κρείσσω τάδε, 1246); this

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[33] Rivier (1968) 38.

action, however, is motivated by compassion (cf. *Ph.* 965f.[34]), which is a strictly "inner", psychological cause. Thus Neoptolemus undergoes an inner transformation, refusing the mission entrusted to him by the Greek army although he knows it to be supported by divine prophecy.[35] Another case in point is Deianira in the *Trachiniae*, who – influenced by an intolerable external situation caused by Eros or Aphrodite (545–51) – *decides* to have recourse to magic. We may call it her "decision" because she could have acted differently: turning to the chorus for advice in a moment of hesitation (despite her recently expressed doubt in the women's experience, cf. 141–53), she explicitly states that she is prepared to abandon the act (εἰ δὲ μή, πεπαύσομαι, 587) if the chorus should view it as audacious or sinful (μάταιον, *loc. cit.*). In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the minor characters, although familiar with Apollo's oracle and the plight of Thebes, increasingly attempt to steer the hero away from the truth about Laius' murderer as it grows clearer to them, even though they stand to lose_less – even Iocasta – by its revelation than Oedipus does. These characters include not only people with ordinary human limitations, such as Iocasta or the shepherd, but even the seer Tiresias, who is – as suggested by the context – an "officially" recognised and unquestionable authority on the interpretation of divine messages. Oedipus, by contrast, wants to follow the divine command unconditionally, repeatedly rejecting their advice to abandon the search (cf. 320–49; 1054–71; 1144–85) as they have done themselves in spite of exhortations (222–43). His response is different because he has a different set (or hierarchy) of values, taking the oracle's words as a command which will brook no compromise or delay. And finally, a particularly fine example of how significant a personal decision (that is, a psychological act) may be for the development of the dramatic action is found precisely in *Antigone*. The initial resolutions of the heroine and Ismene represent explicit decisions (προαίρεσις) made by dramatic characters; even Ismene does not deny that her decision ultimately rests with her, although she stresses the pressure of external circumstances. The sisters stand in

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[34] ἐμοὶ μὲν οἶκτος δεινὸς ἐμπέπτωκέ τις\/ τοῦδ' ἀνδρὸς οὐ νῦν πρῶτον, ἀλλα καὶ πάλαι. Significantly, Neoptolemus describes this compassion as a psychological factor which has long been working within him (ἀλλὰ καὶ πάλαι). thus suggesting a parallel between his inner struggle of conflicting values and the external dramatic action.

[35] Neoptolemus' φύσις, referred to by Philoctetes as the true source of his honesty (see vv. 1310–13), cannot be considered an external factor although it is a supra-personal, hereditary influence on his character. In a sense, *Philoctetes* is a portrayal of Neoptolemus' transformation resulting from his inner struggle. He must demonstrate (ἔδειξας) his φύσις. that is. realise its ethical potential through his actions.

an identical "external" relation to Polynices and have an identical social and sexual status (Antigone's engagement to Haemon is irrelevant in this context), so that they diverge only in their different views on the necessity of Polynices' burial, or rather, their different *decisions* about it: σὺ μὲν γὰρ εἵλουζῆν, ἐγὼ δὲ καθανεῖν (555).[36]

The "dramaturgical" argument concerning the characters' free will is merely one of the content-based arguments which could be listed in favour of applying a psychological interpretation to Greek tragic characters. I will continue by discussing two other, more general ones, which I find the most important.

3.1.2. Psychological experiences – a fundamental component of the existence of dramatic characters

The existence of dramatic characters (or literary characters, if Greek plays are merely read) largely consists of their psychological traits, especially emotions such as fear, anger, hate, love, pain, pity, etc. On the one hand, these traits are important evidence of the value system upheld by a given character, by the group to which he or she belongs, or by the entire πόλιϙ, thus representing a kind of key which facilitates orientation in the values of the society portrayed. But more than that, they are by themselves an integral aesthetic component of a drama piece. By ignoring them the critic impoverishes the play, achieving a similar effect as by depriving a poem of its linguistic artistry – when, according to Plato, the poem comes to resemble faces young but plain, whose bloom has already faded.[37]

3.1.3. Psychological continuity – the prerequisite for a character's acquisition of knowledge

The key vocabulary of most tragedies, *Antigone* included, comprises such words as γνῶναι, μαθεῖν, ἰδεῖν and other expressions with a similar meaning ("learn" – namely the truth, divine will or the like): cognition-related words which reflect the tacit assumption that the dramatic characters undergo a *cognitive process* (cf. e. g. *Ant.* 1272; *OT* 1085, 1068, 1155; *Trach.* 459, 749, 934, 1171). This process

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[36] This raises an interesting question, which, however, falls outside the scope of the present treatise: are the sisters' different decisions merely two ways of striving for the same *telos*, which is desired by both (cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1113 b 3–5), or do they spring from a difference in the *telos* itself, thus implying different value horizons? Ismene's standpoint seems to favour the former, Antigone's the latter interpretation.

[37] *Republic* X 601 b.

usually forms the very core of a tragedy, but it can take place only if *a certain psychological continuity of the dramatic character is ensured*. The character must be perceived as the same throughout the play, in all the *epeisodia* which may seemingly lack connection from other aspects.[38]

Furthermore, the assumption about the "psychological unity of the character" enables a simple explanation of the obvious fact that a dramatic character's existence cannot be reduced to the representation of a social or cosmological force, nor to a mere nexus of loosely connected, unconnected or even conflicting functions in the framework of the various themes addressed in the play.[39] In fact, the conflict between various functions can result in great "dramaturgical fecundity", in an inner dynamic of the characters which may be sometimes perceived as an insoluble, "tragic" paradox (e. g. Oidipus in *OT* as both rescuer and destroyer of Thebes and of himself). The prerequisite is, of course, that the *dramatis persona* be interpreted as a quasi-real human figure, that is, a fully-fledged human being, sketched at least in his or her basic outlines and subject to a variety of impulses, which enable him or her to fulfil a variety of psychologically justified, or well-motivated, dramaturgical functions.[40] In the specific situation portrayed in the play, some of these impulses also create a psychologically understandable, convincing tension and confrontation within the character. A good example of such complexity is Haemon. In contrast to Tiresias, Haemon informs his father about the public admiration for Antigone's deed (cf. 733: Θήβης τῆςδ' ὁμόπτολις λέως),[41] and in this function he is an advocate of practical wisdom, a herald of rational behaviour.[42] On the other hand, however, he is also Antigone's fiancé and as such a victim of Eros: he goes to his death manifesting clear symptoms of madness.[43] The dramatic situation, however,

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[38] In this sense. the assumption about an "abiding seat of consciousness" of the dramatic characters, which is rejected by J. Jones (1962) 196 as "entirely unSophoclean". actually turns out to be an indispensable element of any meaningful interpretation.

[39] Cf. Neuburg's (1990) thematic analysis of *Antigone*.

[40] That is, her type of existence is acknowledged as a real existence, which, however includes as "represented objectivity only the external habitus of reality, which does not intend to be taken altogether seriously", cf. Ingarden (1973) 221.

[41] The truth or falsehood of his claims cannot be conclusively determined on the basis of the text itself; cf. Ronnet (1969) 84: Sourvinou-Invood (1989) 146: Easterling (1990) 98.

[42] Cf. Nussbaum (1986) 80–81.

[43] Cf. vv. 1231–36: Haemon's behaviour as described in these lines is explicitly interpreted as a symptom of insanity by Jebb (1906). *ad* 1232. and Griffith (1999), *ad* 1228–30 and 1233–34.

brings the two functions together: in endeavouring to save his be-
trothed, Haemon promotes the observance of divine laws, fulfils the
demands of practical wisdom, and acts for his father' s good. At the
same time, however, he has to hide his personal motive (love) behind
supra-personal, »ethic« reasons. Regardless of whether his concern
for his father is interpreted as genuine or not, his inner life reveals
great complexity, dynamism, and individuality, and it is for this reason
that it possesses psychological credibility as well as vast cosmological
and ethical implications.[44]

The play *Antigone* contains several other examples of the same
kind: how, for instance, could Antigone after her reversal be "unable
to renounce her previous principles and to recede from her position"[45]
if her character lacked clear psychological continuity? The same, of
course, applies to Creon: the dramatic peak of his existence is the
change of his decision concerning Polynices and Antigone, the mo-
ment when he has to change his "heart" (μόλις μὲν, *καρδίας* δ'
ἐξίσταμαι / τὸ δρᾶν, 1105–6).[46]

The issue under discussion, however, concerns more than the
characters' psychological continuity. What matters is also that they are
not merely *representations of cosmological categories*[47] but entities
experiencing intense inner struggles – struggles irreducible purely to
conflicts between cosmological forces or social patterns. Their indi-
vidual psychological reality remains an indispensable part of their
identities, one which enables a confrontation between personal and
supra-personal forces to take place at all. An essential feature of
tragedies is precisely their portrayal of the protagonists' "inner strug-
gles", doubts and uncertainties. Therefore I can hardly agree with the
observation that Antigone and Creon turn into "maniacs, living in their
idiosyncratic worlds".[48] In this case they could not experience any

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[44] The most obvious dramaturgical function of Haemon's role undoubtedly
lies in his close link to both protagonists, which makes their relationship even more
complex and their conflict even more radical. But his *individual character traits*
allow him to fulfil yet another function: to raise the question of a just government
explicitly and from a new viewpoint (cf. 211–14). These individual traits should
also be considered in any interpretation of the role of Eros in *Antigone*, cf. Linforth
(1961) 219. Lloyd-Jones (1962), Winnington-Ingram (1980) 92–98, and Benardete
(1975b) 180.

[45] Oudemans and Lardinois (1987) 189.

[46] Cf. Jebb (1906), Kamerbeek (1978), and especially Griffith (1999), *ad loc.*
Griffith translates καρδίας δ' ἐξίσταμαι as "I do retract from my heart's <resol-
ve>" (p. 312).

[47] Cf. Oudemans and Lardinois (1987) 180.

[48] *Ibid.*

doubts, still less any reversal or transformation (and the same applies to Haemon). From this point of view, the problem of Antigone's reversal is a particularly telling one.[49] Clearly, she persists to the end in her original decision to bury her brother, which she considers an honourable act, pleasing to the gods (cf. vv. 96–97). Yet her last words convey a hint of doubt (cf. βίᾳ πολιτῶν, v. 907 in the controversial passage, and especially vv. 920–28). Does she really "acknowledge that she has transgressed divine law", but is "despite this *anagnorisis* unable to accept the order as it is"?[50] But if so, why? "Because she is unable to abandon Polyneices? Because her self-willed temper has not left her?"[51] Even if we accept this interpretation, which attributes Antigone's ambivalence to the ambiguous power ruling the world, the manifestation of her ambivalence is primarily a psychological one (through the feelings of "cosmic" and social isolation, cf. vv. 850–52 and 876–82 respectively; cf. also the chorus' comment in vv. 929–30). A close reading, however, appears to point to a different conclusion altogether: Antigone still believes that her understanding of divine will and laws is the right one, while her hypothesis in vv. 925–26 may be an indirect expression of her belief that the will of the gods lies beyond the grasp of human conjectures – a belief which even leads her to allow the possibility that she might be wrong.[52] In other words: she does not confess to having transgressed divine law, but allows, in her unconditional obedience to the unwritten laws and her openness to transcendent divine will, that she may have acted counter to the latter, although her inner evidence (the only "medium" of divine will in the play until the appearance of Tiresias) tells her otherwise. In her extremely difficult circumstances, her utter desolation (see the following section on dramatic climate), this is expressed as almost agonising doubt (cf. the rapid change of her attitude from vv. 921–24 to 942–43). Her questions (921–23) may be understood as expressions

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[49] The complexity of Antigone's experience is in fact revealed even earlier. e.g. in v. 551, where she comments on her mockery of Ismene with the words ἀλγοῦσα μὲν δῆτ᾽, εἰ γελῶ γὸ, ἐν σοὶ γελῶ.

[50] Oudemans and Lardinois (1987) 192.

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Cf. W. Jens (1967) 308, Bultmann (1967) 312. Griffith (1999) 281. *ad* 925–28, notes that this is conveyed by her very language: "The introductory particles make clear that the alternatives are not of equal plausibility. ἀλλά marks the break-off from the questioning tenor of 921–24, but then μὲν οὖν emphasizes (as often) the prospect of a more probable sequel (here εἰ δ᾽ ...)." Judging by the formal parallel quoted (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 496–501), however, the phrase μὲν οὖν suggests a *more relevant* sequel rather than a "more probable" one.

of her multi-layered state of mind at the given moment rather than as rhetorical ones.[53]

Her "wisdom" lies in her acknowledgment of death – the absolute human limitation in *Antigone* (361–62) and in (Sophoclean) tragedy in general[54] – as the only truly valid way of cognition: παθόντες ἂν ξυγγνοῖμεν ἡμαρτηκότεφ. This is the fundamental difference between her and Creon, who claims indisputable knowledge of divine will (cf. 282–89, 520; sarcastically in 777–80, 1039–44) and is insensible to the "transcendence of death which brings opponents together and calls human relationships into question".[55] Creon's appeals to the gods[56] are "functional", designed to invest his political principles with greater authority. Antigone, by contrast, derives her own (political) principles from unquestionable divine authority, which is above political relations and values. If in so doing she attributes particular significance to the family,[57] she does not attempt to support the rights of the latter by means of divine authority; it is because the sacred tradition, which includes the unwritten laws on the burial of the dead, was strongest in the smaller communities – in the family, *fratria*, *demos*. Yet this sacred tradition is by no means limited to the family, nor is it simply a funeral rite: as evidenced by all Sophoclean plays, unwritten divine laws govern the whole world.[58]

I am not suggesting that Greek tragedians laid greater emphasis on the individual characters' psychological dramas than on the world's

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[53] According to Kamerbeek (1978) 161, *ad loc.*, the possibility that she might not be right is "unthinkable" to Antigone, which is why her words here are "at most scornfully concessive". Antigone is thus perceived as no less self-assured and caustic than in her scene with Creon (vv. 384–581). In my view, however, such an interpretation diminishes her tragic stature and the dramatic quality of her faith in divine justice, whose silence she has just bemoaned (921–24). The tone of her last words is perhaps best described by R. Bultmann (1967) 323: "In ihrem letzten Wort vereinen sich Stolz des Rechtsbewußtseins und vorwurfsvolle Klage."

[54] Cf. for example *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1528–30, *Trachiniae* 1–3 and 1173, *Oedipus Coloneus* 1124–227.

[55] Schaerer (1958) 176. Schmitt (1988) 10, while lucidly noting that Creon confuses his own principles and the well-being of the πόλις ("das Wohl der Stadt mit der Demonstration und Bewährung seiner rechten Handlungsmaximen verwechselt"), fails to perceive that this confusion results from his (mistaken) religious views, particularly his (mis)understanding of Hades and its transcendent power. According to R. Bultmann (1967) 322, "wer die unteren Götter ehrt, der handelt eben damit für die Polis und so handelt er in echtem Sinne für die Dike, die 'Genossin der Götter drunten'", whereas Creon does not acknowledge Hades as "das Leben beanspruchende und bestimmende Macht".

[56] For example in vv. 184, 198–202, 280–89, 514, 516.

[57] For example in vv. 37–38, 45–46, 511, 517, 897–903.

[58] Cf. Ehrenberg (1954) 36.

social and cosmological dimensions revealed in them. What I wish to point out is that a cosmological force (which is sometimes, as in the case of Eros, manifested as an "inner", psychological impulse as well), a god or demon, always takes hold of the specific psychological totality of a dramatic character, who responds and confronts it individually. Since a character's psychological "totality" is a reflection of its own physical and social determinants, it might almost be considered a "person" – a "person" who has had an existence even before the beginning of the play. This is particularly important in the case of Sophocles' tragic protagonists, who are often "shown in the perspective of the past".[59] Although tragedies illustrate the workings of universal forces, with the consequence that their moral has (more or less) universal implications, any adequate interpretation must take into account the characters' psychologically individualised responses.

3.1.4. Dramatic climate – a psychological element of drama

A psychological interpretation based on the assumption that dramatic characters possess a psychological identity enables us to explain some of their "illogical" traits with the concept of "dramatic climate". Although dramatic climate is a speculative, intangible element of the play, its existence can be established well enough if we define the psychological constitution of dramatic characters by taking as the starting-point a basic psychological realism, the main tenets of which I have borrowed from S. Halliwell:[60] (a) acknowledging the psychological identity of the individual, regardless of its social, gender-related and cultural determinants; (b) acknowledging at least a minimum capability of the individual to choose and direct his actions; (c) the existence of the most rudimentary rational criteria; (d) the concept of man's responsibility for his actions, which includes the concept that they may be ethically (un)worthy.

I use the term "dramatic climate" to describe a complex of varying size and structure, consisting of factors which exert an *indirect* influence on the characters' beliefs about themselves and others, as well as on their decisions and actions. Thus it indicates the state of mind prevailing in a given section of the quasi-real society represented onstage, which affects the psychological and ethical predispositions of the individual characters. The term does not refer simply to the string of events which lead an individual *directly* and *overtly* to some

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[59] Cf. Kamerbeek (1967) 85.
[60] Halliwell (1990) 35.

decision or act,[61] but primarily to the recurrence of certain phenomena (such as statements, threats of violence, moral pressures, or secret knowledge) and their invisible "accumulation", which operates in the background, prompting an abrupt mental change or impulse.

Consider Creon's reaction to Haemon's parting words (762–65) and enraged departure. True, the tyrant shows an indignant indifference to what his son may do, and confirms his decision (cf. 580–81) to execute *both* nieces (768–69).[62] On being asked by the chorus, however, if he will really execute them both, he changes his mind, "reprieves" Ismene, and commends the chorus for its good sense (εὖ γὰρ οὖν λέγεις). The chorus leader's question is no more than tinged with surprise, perhaps even barely perceptible discontent; such indirect expression of reservations is as much distance from Creon's stance as the chorus is capable of at this point.[63] So why should he, οὖ ὄμμα δεινὸν ἀνδρὶ δημότη, adopt a different course at the mild suggestion of the chorus? Has he not just flown into a rage when his son reproached him – albeit with a rhetorical reservation – with lack of wisdom (οὐκ εὖ φρονεῖν) for doggedly sticking to his decision? The fact that he begins to recognise the differences[64] between the sisters and will not insist on the most extreme measures is a sign of his incipient inner change;[65] indeed, the latter may even be the reason why he changes the form of Antigone's execution.[66] The notion of

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[61] Euripides' play *Iphigenia in Aulide* could be considered a special case: according to Knox (1985) 326, its distinctive feature is "a series of swift and sudden changes of decision which is unparalleled in ancient drama" and by which "the audience has been subliminally prepared for Iphigenia's volte-face". On the one hand, the changes of decision reflect the extremely delicate situation and perhaps also the original mental instability of the characters; on the other, they create an atmosphere of general uncertainty, which affects the characters in its turn. This atmosphere serves as a perfect foil for Iphigenia's decision to make the sacrifice – a decision by which the uncertainty is finally transcended.

[62] Even though Antigone is the only one to have actually violated Creon's edict, Ismene's *moral* support of her sister (536–37) has been enough for Creon to sentence her to death as well (cf. 489–90, 531–35, 577–81, 769).

[63] Similarly in vv. 211–14 (cf. Winnington-Ingram, 1980, 137 n. 60), 278–79.

[64] Cf. 771: οὐ τήν γε μὴ θιγοῦσαν. This description of Ismene also contains the reason why Creon changes his decision about her. cf. Oudemans and Lardinois (1987) 184: "Creon distinguishes Antigone from Ismene who is released because she has not touched the body."

[65] Cf. Griffith (1999) 252. *ad* 766–80.

[66] Creon himself gives no reason for changing the form of the execution; cf. Rohdich (1980) 136, who mentions this as one of the possible explanations: "Mag die Abänderung der Strafe <...> als die aufkeimende Scheu sich <namely Antigone, n. B. S.> direkt an ihr zu vergreifen zu deuten sein ..." Whatever the reason, Creon's decision has an important dramaturgical function: it causes a delay in which the catastrophe could still be prevented. should he change his mind.

dramatic climate enables a highly complex interpretation of the causes underlying these changes: the succession of confrontations has struck the first crack in the wall of Creon's initial determination. Inexorable and sarcastic as he appears again in the last scene with Antigone (883–943), untouched as his decisiveness may seem, the first seeds of doubt, unseen as yet, have been planted. And in this state he will meet Tiresias.

Dramatic climate, which exerts a considerable influence on the major and minor characters' actions and, above all, on the changes in their attitude to the central problem of the play – indeed, even to life and the world in general – is often closely linked in Greek tragedy to the preceding mythological context. The most typical Sophoclean example is Odysseus in the *Ajax*. His character in the play presents a stark contrast to his figure in the pre-dramatic reality, yet the latter is of the utmost importance to the plot. While Odysseus reveals himself at the very beginning of the play in a very different light from what the other characters, such as Ajax, remember of him (and presumably from what the original recipients of the play expected), the cause, or at least an important catalyst, of this transformation may be sought in the terrible introductory scene: Athena depriving Ajax of his reason, which is witnessed by Odysseus.

All dramatic characters are of course unique both in their character traits and their dramatic situation. The dramatic climate which affects them, prompting their transformation and responses, is thus unique to each play as well. This highly individual character of each dramatic climate makes any generalisation about its influences impossible; the latter can only be assessed in the context of all the factors joining in a given play.

3.2. Extratextual reasons: staging conventions

It is only through stage production that dramatic works such as Greek tragedies come fully "alive", that is, realise their existential possibilities. The actual "message" of the play depends on the individual production, which necessarily realises only part of its potential; different realisations can emphasise different semantic potentials of the text and consequently different social implications, depending on the director's sensitivity and purpose.[67] Thus even masks and costu-

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[67] In contemporary literary criticism, these facts are of course generally recognised. Among the interpreters of Greek tragedy, the significance of stage production was emphasised already by E. Howald (1930), according to whose thesis the crucial element of tragedy is the "Momentanwirkung": its artistic harmony is

mes, which are not elements of a literary work, form an integral part of a play as an event. In the view of Aristotle, the "spectacle" (ὄψιφ),[68] under which these two elements may be subsumed, did not belong to the true essence of the playwright's art, and its preparation was the stage designer's task rather than the poet's.[69] Yet if ancient testimonies are to be believed, the authors of early and classical tragedy undertook innovations in the field of ὄψις as well.[70] If they were indeed not only text-writers but διδάσκαλοι,[71] their business would have been with drama as performance, that is, with drama in more or less all the dimensions which are being unveiled by the contemporary

only constituted through the spectator's experience, that is, through the immediate performance. In underlining this factor, Howald also stresses the importance of reception to the holistic constitution of a play, drawing attention to the analysis of the audience's *Erwartungshorizont* (for a criticism of his views cf. des Bouvrie, 1990, 98).

[68] This term is used by Aristotle in the plural form as well (see the following note): according to A. Gudeman (1934) 190, *ad loc.*, he employs it to refer to "die Bühnenrequisiten im allgemeinen, also die Kostüme der Schauspieler und Choreuten, die Masken, den Kothurn und ähnliches". For a more detailed analysis of its meaning in the *Poetics*, see Halliwell (1998) 66–68 and esp. 337–43.

[69] *Poetics* 1450 b 16–20: ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μέν, *ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς* [....] ἔτι δὲ κυριωτέρα περὶ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν τῶν ὄψεων ἡ τοῦ σκευοποιοῦ τέχνη τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν ἐστιν. Cf. the comment in Halliwell (1998) 64: "Although *denying that theatrical spectacle is strictly part of the dramatist's art*, Aristotle does describe it as 'stirring' or 'seductive' [italics B. S.]."

[70] These reports include Aristotle's *Poetics* 1449 a 18f., according to which it was Sophocles who introduced not only a third actor but scenery as well. But cf. the later report by Vitruvius, *De architectura* VII, *praef.* § 11 (= *TrGF* III, T 85 Radt), which ascribes the introduction of scenery to Agatharchus of Samos: his work is said to have prompted Anaxagoras and Democritus to their studies of perspective. According to Vitruvius, he introduced this theatrical innovation *Aeschylo docente*, which is subject to various interpretations: the phrase refers whether to his collaboration with Aeschylus in the last period of the latter's life (Di Benedetto and Medda (1997) 16–17), or to new productions of Aeschylus' tragedies in the second half of the 5th century (cf. Lesky, 1972, 264 and the bibliography cited *ibid.*). Among the reports concerning masks in particular, we may mention the lexicon *Suidas*, which ascribes the invention of the mask to Thespis, stating that he began by painting his face with white lead for performances but later made a simple linen mask for himself, s. v. Θέσπις (= *TrGF* I, 1 T 1, 4–6 Snell). Moreover, *Suidas* ascribes to Phrynichus the introduction of a γυναικεῖον πρόσωπον, a female character or/and mask, s. v. Φρύνιχος (= *TrGF* I, 3 T 1, 3–4 Snell), and to Aeschylus the invention of a painted mask for the performance of the *Eumenides*, s. v. Αἰσχύλος (= *TrGF* III, T2, 4–5). For the effect of this latter innovation cf. also *Vita Aesch.* § 9 (= *TrGF* III, T 1, 30–32 Radt) and Poll. *Onomasticon* IV 110 (= *TrGF* III, T 66 Radt).

[71] The διδάσκαλος "normally not only coached the chorus and actors in the dialogues, singing and dancing (which included the coaching of the αὐλητής), but was at the same time the author, music composer, choreographer, dramaturg, the director who chose the costumes, masks, and stage effects, and at the beginning also the leading actor. Specialisation only begins to emerge from the 460s onward," cf. Sommerstein (2000) 20.

ontology of art. What matters to my thesis is that even certain extra-textual elements (especially masks) may accustom the spectators to apprehending dramatic characters as entities with psychological lives of their own, thereby guiding them at least part of the way to a psychological interpretation. Such apprehension was not hindered by the relatively week identification of the actor with the dramatic character, which resulted from his playing as many as three roles per piece (which was another reason for his use of different masks).[72]

The reason is that masks, even of gods and demigods (and to a certain extent also costumes, although these play a minor role here[73]), represent a human or at least anthropomorphic face which bears the expression – no matter how schematised – of an "inner", that is, psychological activity. Although the use of masks precludes the expressive play of the features,[74] it nevertheless creates – in interaction with the text, costumes, scenery, the actors' gestures, dance and music – an impression of the characters as entities with an inner, "psychological" life, which is one of the mainstays of the dramatic world.[75] This holds true regardless of whether we accept Vernant's thesis "that tragic mask is human mask whose function is aesthetic, not religious".[76] Even if the mask is understood primarily as a central element of the link between tragedy and cult,[77] or even if its role is interpreted more intricately still as a link between the present and the past,[78] its effect is a certain "anthropomorphisation" of the dramatic characters.

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[72] Cf. Heiden (1993).

[73] According to des Bouvrie (1990) 92, "there is archeological evidence for the use of costumes from a date preceding the inclusion of drama in the official cult of Dionysos. The use of masks before that date is less certain."

[74] Cf. the illustrative remark by des Bouvrie (1990) 92: "Facial expressions were lost by the use of masks, but they would have been lost in any case considering the distance between actor and audience."

[75] For a detailed description of masks in the classical period and of their consequences for the play (such as blocking the facial expression of the psychological content while providing information about the character's age, gender, and even nationality), as well as for historical sources on this topic, see Di Benedetto and Medda (1997) 176–82; for a description of the costumes, see *ibid.* 182–91.

[76] Vernant (1988) 181–88.

[77] Cf. Calame (1986) 85–100, (1989).

[78] Cf. Calame (1996) 27–28: "It is the *sine qua non* for the theatrical dramatization of a narrative belonging to the legendary tradition or to the recent past of a civic community assembled in the sanctuary of Dionysus Eleutherus in the *hic et nunc* of the spectacle through which the dramatization takes place. [...] The function of the classical Athenian mask is first to dissimulate, and only secondly to identify. It 'shifts' the voice and gaze of the hero, for the mouth and eyes are the two organs which correspond to holes in the mask's surface: they let the voice and gaze of the actor appear to the spectators, beyond the hero he is miming. The mask creates a confrontation between the dramatic action and the public."

4. Conclusion

The dramatic characters, represented by actors with their bodies, gestures and speech, develop a psychological dimension of varying prominence, which may contribute more or less to the artistic whole of the play. In Greek tragedy, this contribution was certainly more peripheral than in Shakespearean drama, let alone the theatre of Romanticism or Naturalism. Nevertheless, as I have attempted to show, the psychological life of the characters does play a significant role in Sophocles' *Antigone* (and, *mutatis mutandis*, in other Greek tragedies as well), so that the scant attention paid to it in the dominant current model of anthropological interpretation hardly seems justified. The psychological dimension is an integral component of the artistic whole, important for the audience's understanding of individual characters and of the dramatic action. It is most clearly expressed through the characters' utterances and their psychological continuity, which enables the key events (recognising truths, making decisions) to take place. The illusion of the characters as entities with psychological lives of their own was further supported by the original staging conventions, such as the use of masks (although considerably less than in naturalistic staging), which reinforced the significance of the psychological dimension.

This is not to claim that the portrayal of the characters' inner lives is the central function of Greek tragedy, or that all the bizarre and extreme states experienced by the tragic heroes can be fully explained by general (in practice often anachronistically conceived) psychological categories and patterns. On the contrary: their experiences show the complexity, dynamism and unpredictability of the human psyche, illustrating at each re-reading or new performance the Theban elders' pronouncement on man (*Antigone* 332–33): κοὐδὲν ἀνθρώπου δεινότερον πέλει.

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