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# Sophrosyne in Aeschylus

Konstantinos Karathanasis  
*Washington University in St. Louis*

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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS  
Department of Classics

*Sophrosyne* in Aeschylus  
by  
Konstantinos Karathanasis

A thesis presented to  
the Graduate School  
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partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree  
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments..... iii

Introduction..... 1

Chapter 1: The *Persians*..... 8

Chapter 2: The *Seven against Thebes* ..... 20

Chapter 3: The *Suppliants*..... 31

Chapter 4: The *Oresteia*..... 37

Conclusions..... 59

Appendix 1..... 66

Appendix 2..... 68

Works Cited ..... 70

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Konstantinos Karathanasis

*Washington University in St. Louis*

*May 2017*

# Introduction

...the characteristically Greek quality of *sophrosyné* —a quality whose metaphysical basis was the Greek view of the meaning of all life...

Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*

The question that must be addressed at the outset of a study named “Σωφροσύνη in Aeschylus” is of course: what is the meaning of σωφροσύνη? Let it be said that the long history of the term in Greek literature —starting from its very beginning as we know it<sup>1</sup>— does not allow for an easy answer. The etymology of σωφροσύνη is straightforward: *σάος* (adj.) = safe and sound + *φρήν* (n.) = seat of intellectual activity,<sup>2</sup> but the translation “safe and sound thinking” hardly makes any sense without considering the context of an utterance. Thus, if one turns to the categorizations of lexicography, the traditional definitions, as established by the LSJ, span from “*soundness of mind, prudence, discretion,*” to “*moderation in sensual desires, self-control, temperance,*” and “*a moderate form of government*” in a political sense.<sup>3</sup> These definitions reveal a peculiarity in the term’s semantics, since some of them are descriptive, but also have connotations of value judgement. Like any term that denotes mental activity, and particularly one that combines implications of intellect and morality, σωφροσύνη is notoriously difficult to translate in a monolectic way. An example of such a difficulty in modern English would be an attempt to give a definition of the term “wise” —everyone would say that it denotes a positive

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<sup>1</sup> The first instances of σωφροσύνη appear in Homer; cf. *Il.*21.462; *Od.*4.158; 23.13; 23.30.

<sup>2</sup> For the etymology, see Chantraine<sup>4,2</sup> (1980), s.v. *σώφρων*, where he echoes the LSJ definitions arguing that *σώφρων* denotes a person “à l’ esprit sain, intact,” d’où “sage, qui se domine, tempérant” (1980<sup>4,2</sup>). For φρήν/ -ες, Sullivan stresses the fact that in literature older than Aeschylus the “chief activity of *phrenes* appears to be intellectual... they seem very much associated with situations of choice and decision. When possibilities have to be weighed or when uncertainties in various ways of proceeding exist, it is in *phrenes* that someone acts” (1997, 14). Accordingly, Sullivan demonstrates that in Aeschylus the φρένες are likewise connected with intellectual activity (ib. 13-21 and Appendix A).

<sup>3</sup> See LSJ s.v. σωφροσύνη.

value in its literal sense, but no two people would agree on its quality. Therefore, even though “no single English word adequately translates *sophrosyne*,”<sup>4</sup> the fact that the term denotes an intellectual activity of positive value is one step towards its definition.

In Greek antiquity, this untranslatable term is of high cultural significance, but its long history also entails a continuous expansion of its semantics. Accordingly, the scholarly works of de Vries (1943), North (1966), and Rademaker (2005) have attempted to conduct wide-ranging semasiological surveys on σωφροσύνη in Greek literature. These works are valuable for our understanding of the concept’s semantics, as well as its relevance to other cultural concepts, but they are bound to suffer from certain restrictions. As a consequence of their extensive scope, they all devote the greatest part of their analyses to authors and genres primarily concerned with σωφροσύνη and its theorization, such as Plato’s philosophical dialogues. Nevertheless, as North notes in her early chapter on tragedy, “the first great flowering of *sophrosyne* in Greek literature occurs in the work of the tragic poets,”<sup>5</sup> and this remark perhaps anticipates the question as to what is so important about σωφροσύνη in Greek tragedy.

The present study examines the cultural concept of σωφροσύνη in the context of Aeschylean tragedy. The difficulties in any endeavor to pin down the semantics of a cultural idea in a specific author are many, and de Vries aptly reminds us that:<sup>6</sup>

Dans une étude de ce genre il faut tenir compte du caractère du genre littéraire dans lequel se trouve tel ou tel mot. On voudrait pouvoir faire une distinction entre l’usage commun de la langue et celui de certain genre et de certains auteurs.

In this regard, de Vries, North, and Rademaker have adequately illuminated the semasiological history of σωφροσύνη, and the various ways this history is reflected in the genre of tragedy. What

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<sup>4</sup> Mikalson (1991), 290 n.96. Because I adopt Mikalson’s position on the untranslatability of the term, σωφροσύνη is not translated in this study.

<sup>5</sup> North (1966), 32.

<sup>6</sup> de Vries (1943), 82.

is presently attempted is an illumination of the ways in which Aeschylus put such a culturally loaded term to the service of his artistic medium. This study is not a further evaluation, or refinement, of the semantics of σωφροσύνη in Aeschylus, but it is rather a study of the term's thematic significance in Aeschylean tragedy. Therefore, the following analysis aims to decipher the message conveyed through the treatment of σωφροσύνη in the works of the earliest surviving dramatist of Athenian democracy.

The three major general studies on σωφροσύνη in Greek literature offer invaluable perspectives for the consideration of the term in Aeschylus. In his discussion, de Vries argues that σωφροσύνη is a concept of both religious and social connotations, as he claims that “σώφρων est quiconque à l'égard des dieux ou des hommes, observe les limites qui lui ont été imposées.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the σώφρονες of Aeschylean tragedy are aware of their status in relation to superiors and act in ways that respect the limits set upon them. In the same vein, North claims that the essence of Aeschylean σωφροσύνη is the observance of limits and connects it with the Delphic adages of γνῶθι σαυτόν and μηδέν ἄγαν;<sup>8</sup> namely, the awareness of the absolute power of the gods that restrains excessive behavior. Considering that excessive behavior in Aeschylus usually infringes divinely ordained limits, North stresses that Aeschylean σωφροσύνη is principally religious and pertains to the conflict between σωφροσύνη and ὕβρις, as committed by mortals who do not think mortal thoughts.<sup>9</sup> Even though 11 out of the total 21 instances of σωφροσύνη cognates in Aeschylus appear within a religious context,<sup>10</sup> the overemphasis on the religious perspective in

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<sup>7</sup> de Vries (1943), 85. This sense, de Vries claims (90), also predominates in Thucydides (1.84; 3.37; 5.100, 101; 6.78; 8.24), but in its secular aspect.

<sup>8</sup> For the intersection of σωφροσύνη with Delphic cult, see Jaeger (1946), 167.

<sup>9</sup> See North (1966), 35-6. North's conclusion touches on one of Darius' theological aphorisms in *Pers.* 820 ὡς οὐχ ὑπέρφευ θνητὸν ὄντα χρὴ φρονεῖν. The relationship between σωφροσύνη and ὕβρις is also discussed in de Vries (1943), 86 and 100.

<sup>10</sup> For a catalogue of the cognates of σωφροσύνη in Aeschylus, see Appendix 1. For σωφροσύνη in a religious context, see especially *Pers.* 829; *Sept.* 186, 568, 610; *Supp.* 710; *Ag.* 181, 351; *Ch.* 140; *Eu.* 44, 521, 1000. The great



his works misrepresents the term's significance, which extends beyond religion and into the sphere of politics. Contrary to North, de Vries does not downplay the socio-political aspect of Aeschylean σωφροσύνη; a still greater sensitivity in this regard is found in the study of Rademaker, who focuses on the continuities in the semasiological history of the term. In the Homeric epics, Rademaker argues, σωφροσύνη is related to the idea of obedience: in all its limited occurrences in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, "the 'other-regarding' notions of quiet and obedient behaviour versus a superior are, directly or indirectly, activated in the context."<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, in archaic poetry, produced in the environment of the aristocratic *polis*, σωφροσύνη assimilates new political ideals and eventually emerges as the obedient quietness of the non-elites towards their social superiors, as well as the abstinence of the ruling elites from injustice.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, in view of the various connotations of σωφροσύνη that Aeschylus inherited from literary predecessors, Rademaker notes that those of respect for the gods, abstinence from undue aggression, obedience (for the socially inferior), restraint of emotion, and quietness (for women) remain the same.<sup>13</sup>

Considering the above arguments, there is one dimension in the semantics of σωφροσύνη that must be emphasized. The three studies on the term in effect imply that σωφροσύνη primarily expresses an internalized process that allows individuals to understand their status in relation to superiors. The result of this process is visible in the behavior of the individual, which is assessed as σώφρων or not σώφρων according to its compliance with the limitations set by those superiors. Thus, σωφροσύνη appears to be inextricably bonded since its original conception with the idea of

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emphasis that North puts on the theological aspect of σωφροσύνη seems to stem from older portrayals of Aeschylus as a theologian; for example, see Rose (1946).

<sup>11</sup> Rademaker (2005), 74.

<sup>12</sup> *ib.* 75-97. The term σωφροσύνη and its cognates appear in Pindar, Theognis, and Bacchylides, who see σωφροσύνη as the prerequisite for social order; this is also observed by North (1966), 9-24.

<sup>13</sup> Rademaker (2005), 99-121. In his study, Rademaker categorizes the instances of σωφροσύνη in these prototypical uses, as he employs the "network model" developed for semantic description in the theoretical apparatus of Cognitive Grammar; for his network on Aeschylus, see *ib.* 281.

status within a hierarchy, and manifests itself on two fundamental levels: the religious and the social one. On the one hand, there is a certain σωφροσύνη that defines the relationship between mortals and immortals, and this religious aspect of the term in Greek tragedy has been adequately explored. In his study of popular religion in tragedy, Mikalson observes that “piety is essentially ‘safe and sound thinking’ [σωφροσύνη] about the gods,” while this “safe and sound thinking” is nothing more than the recognition of a god’s τιμή (i.e. a god’s function, as well as the honor deriving from it).<sup>14</sup> The process that Mikalson describes is that the mental capacity allowing mortals to perceive the cosmos (φρήν), also enables them to understand their inferiority next to divine sublimity (τιμή); thus, a *sound* mind (σωφρονεῖν) is the one resolved to hold gods in their proper honor (τιμή).<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, regarding the social aspect of σωφροσύνη, ancient Greek society had its own various stratifications (upper-lower class, male-female, parent-child etc.), which entail different modes of behavioral propriety. Accordingly, social σωφροσύνη is also connected with the notion of status, while its predominant aspects in Aeschylean tragedy concern the interactions between non-elite and elite males,<sup>16</sup> per the class stratification embedded in the σωφροσύνη of archaic poetry, and between males and females.

At this point, the student of Greek tragedy is faced with a paradox. If the semasiological core of σωφροσύνη is structured on the notion of status, how does the extensive use of an inherently aristocratic term fit in the artistic milieu of a democratic *polis*? In view of that,

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<sup>14</sup> Mikalson (1991), 182.

<sup>15</sup> For the importance of σωφροσύνη in Greek tragedy and the way it bears upon contemporary popular religion, see Mikalson (1991), 165-202. Mikalson is a major proponent of the idea that Greek religious piety was a product of reasoning. In his analysis of piety and impiety in tragedy, he aptly demonstrates that any insulting or transgressive behavior towards the divine is expressed in terms of mental damage; a folly blinding mortals to their designated status in the cosmos and eventually leading to ὕβρις.

<sup>16</sup> For the significance of what I would like to call social σωφροσύνη, in the context of class-defined interaction, a passage from Lysias is illuminating; cf. 24.17 οἱ μὲν γὰρ πλούσιοι τοῖς χρήμασιν ἐξωνοῦνται τοὺς κινδύνους, οἱ δὲ πένητες ὑπὸ τῆς παρούσης ἀπορίας σωφρονεῖν ἀναγκάζονται. For a discussion of the connection between wealth and hubris, as well as poverty and σωφροσύνη in democratic Athens, see Ober (1989), 208-12.

Rademaker recognizes that there is something radically different in the treatment of σωφροσύνη in the works of Athenian dramatists: a criticism of the term's firm association with aristocratic politics, bequeathed by archaic poetry. Rademaker considers an instance of Aeschylean σωφροσύνη a striking manifestation of this criticism. Specifically, when the placated Erinyes exclaim after the institution of the Areopagus that the Athenian citizens have come to acquire σωφροσύνη (*Eu.*1000), Rademaker reads a “rare but striking use of σωφροσύνη in an unequivocal piece of democratic, pro-Athenian propaganda.”<sup>17</sup> To discern propaganda behind the extravagant praise of democratic institutions, as the only liberation from gory retaliatory justice and the guarantee of social stability, seems perfectly justified. As we shall see, however, the most striking aspect of σωφροσύνη in the above passage is not the rarity of its use in such a context, but rather the political environment in which Aeschylus places its manifestation at the end of a trilogy, where σωφροσύνη is desperately sought from its beginning. Although Rademaker argues for a criticism of the aristocratic nuances of σωφροσύνη in Athenian drama, his analysis of this criticism in Aeschylus is confined to the *Eumenides*. In fact, the politically critical use of a concept loaded with cultural significance in Aeschylean tragedy is far more extensive than the extant studies on σωφροσύνη seem to suggest.

In the following study of Aeschylus' tragedies and his treatment of σωφροσύνη, the emphasis shall be on the evaluation of the surrounding context, as well as the way that the mechanics surrounding hierarchy in the term's semantics operate. The main argument is that σωφροσύνη always appears as the status-based behavioral propriety of individuals within a hierarchy, but this propriety is variously problematized in different plays. Additionally, it is argued that this problematization pertains primarily to the frailty of σωφροσύνη in political systems where

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<sup>17</sup> ib. 100. On this passage, North equally recognizes a distinct political message (1966, 45).

the individual possesses ultimate power, since the combination of autocracy and lack of social control dangerously blurs the social and the religious hierarchal boundaries. The examination of Aeschylus' plays takes place in chronological order of production, allowing for the clearest possible picture of the ideological horizon that σωφροσύνη forms for his work.<sup>18</sup> In the *Persians*, Darius makes an appeal to σωφροσύνη for the rehabilitation of Xerxes' awareness of his status with respect to the gods, seeing that his presumptuousness has led him to insult them and devastate the Persian empire. On the other hand, the *Seven against Thebes* is a contest for monarchy between Eteocles and Polyneices, where both appeal to σωφροσύνη but their actions contest it. The *Suppliants* is the only play where no character seriously deviates from σωφροσύνη, but the insistence on its necessity in view of the Danaids' integration into a Greek proto-democratic *polis* sheds light on the political agenda of Aeschylus. Finally, the *Oresteia* represents the dysfunctional mechanism of retaliatory justice in conjunction with the problematic aspects of a monarchic society in terms of σωφροσύνη. Thus, if we accept that "tragedy is born when myth starts to be considered in the point of view of a citizen,"<sup>19</sup> Aeschylean tragedy seems to question whether σωφροσύνη can find a non-problematic application in the context of a social structure where the individual is above the community. In response to that, Aeschylus openly suggests that democracy is a more appealing answer to this quest for a political system that has the potential to guarantee that a society treads on the salutary path of σωφροσύνη.

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<sup>18</sup> The *Prometheus Bound* is not part of the present study, and the reason is my agreement with Griffith (1977 and 1983), who has proven that this is not an Aeschylean play. Even if one is not convinced by Griffith's thorough arguments on linguistic, metrical, and technical details, West's arguments on the un-Aeschylean theology of the play strike a definitive blow against its authenticity (1990b, 62-4). For more arguments against the Aeschylean authorship, see Bees (1993). In the *Prometheus Bound*, σωφροσύνη appears only once and in a context of status-based behavioral propriety, which —as we shall see— can pass as Aeschylean; it is when Hermes advises the fettered Titan to show obedience and submit to Zeus (*PV.982 καὶ μὴν σύ γ' οὔπω σωφρονεῖν ἐπίστασαι*).

<sup>19</sup> Vernant & Vidal-Naquet (1990), 33.

## Chapter 1: The *Persians*

As the earliest surviving tragedy of Aeschylus, the *Persians* is a benchmark for the use of σωφροσύνη, for it introduces us to the essential ideas related to the concept in Aeschylean thought. The young Persian monarch, Xerxes, has just suffered humiliating defeat across the Aegean Sea, and as the play builds up to his return, Xerxes' actions are evaluated by the ghost of his father, Darius, who stresses his son's lack of σωφροσύνη. In this chapter, it will be argued that while σωφροσύνη refers to the necessity of religious propriety for mortals, Xerxes' deviance from this propriety is intimately connected with his role as a monarch. Accordingly, this sets the ground for a political problematization, since a monarch's lack of σωφροσύνη towards the gods is presented as the result of mishandled political circumstances. A problematic aspect of the play, however, is that the single occurrence of σωφροσύνη in the play appears within a notable crux. This has prompted a textual debate, which involves some scholarly emendations that remove σωφροσύνη from the *Persians* altogether. Consequently, before any attempts to elaborate on the significance of the term, it is necessary to establish that σωφροσύνη does in fact appear in the text.

In the second half of the play, after the announcement of Xerxes' defeat in Greece, the Chorus of Persian elders invoke the ghost of Darius, who solicits the reason for his summoning and the lamentations within the royal court. Queen Atossa steps forward and relates to her late husband the disaster of Xerxes' vast military expedition. Darius recognizes in his son's actions the fulfillment of old prophecies (739-41) and laments the results of Xerxes' youthful impetuosity (744 νέωι θράσει). Before leaving the stage, the old king requests from his former advisors that they instruct his son with prudent advice (829-31), and West's text reads as follows:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All text citations for Aeschylus come from West (1990), unless otherwise stated.

πρὸς ταῦτ' ἐκεῖνον σωφρονεῖν κεχρημένοι  
πινύσκειτ' εὐλόγοισι νουθετήμασιν,  
λήξαι θεοβλαβοῦνθ' ὑπερκόμπω θράσει.

Accordingly, beseeching him to be σώφρων,  
instruct him with prudent advice to cease being  
profane through swaggering rashness.

829 κεχρημένον Φ<sup>79</sup> Γ<sup>79</sup> Υ<sup>ac</sup> construitur sicut  
χρήζοντες

The MSS read σωφρονεῖν κεχρημένοι in 829, but some of the old scholiasts favor σωφρονεῖν κεχρημένον, which is also the original reading in Y.<sup>2</sup> Considering the importance of the phrase for the conclusion of Darius' speech, the correct reading for this line has been the subject of a long-standing debate, as both variants generate textual difficulties.

Although the MSS agree on the infinitive, emendation has been directed at σωφρονεῖν, as well as κεχρημένοι, in attempts to accommodate the syntactical needs of χράομαι, which can govern various lexical categories dependent on the intended sense. The soundest emendations for σωφρονεῖν in terms of language, but not plausible in terms of context, have been proposed by Stewart and Broadhead. Reading 829 as a reference to the prudence of the elders, Stewart proposes τῶι φρονεῖν κεχρημένοι, “you being wise,” supplying thus χράομαι with the dative necessary to give the sense of “enjoy, have.”<sup>3</sup> This reading, however, is refuted by multiple editors on the grounds that the emphasis of the present passage seems to be on the prudence that Xerxes lacks, rather than the one that the elders might have.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Broadhead argues against both

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<sup>2</sup> West dates Y to the 14<sup>th</sup> (Lugd. Batav. Voss. gr. Q4A), the commentary under Φ to the 12<sup>th</sup>, and I (Athous Ἰβήρων 209) between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>3</sup> Stewart (1961), ad loc. For the proposed sense, see LSJ s.v. χράω (B), C3. This argument is based on a direct juxtaposition with the Homeric formula φρεσὶ γὰρ κέχρητ' ἀγαθήσιν. Nevertheless, the Homeric formula appears in the *Odyssey* as a positive evaluation of a previously described behavior; the marital fidelity of Clytemnestra (3.266), the religious piety of Eumaeus (14.421), and the flattering wooing of Amphinomus (16.398). On the contrary, if one accepts κεχρημένοι in the present context, τῶι φρονεῖν would be a prerequisite for the proposed course of action (πινύσκετε).

<sup>4</sup> See West (1990b), 88, and Garvie (2009), ad loc. Perhaps a reference to the wisdom of the Chorus can be understood as a counterbalance to the catastrophic influence of the κακοί that originally urged Xerxes to launch the expedition to prove himself better than his father (753-8). Nevertheless, arguing against Housman's (1888) equivalent reading of σωφρόνῃ κεχρημένοι, Broadhead notes: “It seems doubtful, however, whether at the moment Darius is impressed with the wisdom of a Chorus that in 795 entertained the possibility of sending a better equipped expedition against Greece” (1960, ad loc).

σωφρονεῖν and κεχρημένοι, proposing ὡς φρενῶν κεχρημένον, “as one that lacks wisdom,” supplying a genitive that ascribes to χράομαι the sense of “to be in want, lack.”<sup>5</sup> Although Broadhead’s emendation is syntactically sound,<sup>6</sup> a careful consideration of Aeschylean poetics prompts its rejection. The φρένες, as the organ of intellectual activity, are nowhere presented in Aeschylus as being absent from one’s body, except during infancy and after death.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it seems that there should be no doubt in accepting σωφρονεῖν bona fide.

The problem that remains is to decide on the form of the participle accompanying the infinitive. Here critics are split between κεχρημένοι, κεχρημένον (masc.), and κεχρημένον (neut.). In defense of the choice of κεχρημένοι in his edition, while reading the sense of the phrase as “requiring, beseeching him to be sensible,” West argues that χράομαι substitutes here for χρήζω and notes that the two verbs commonly have an overlap of semantics.<sup>8</sup> Although this would give good sense, the proposal is highly controversial, and West admits that there is no parallel in Greek literature for such a use of χράομαι governing an accusative (ἐκεῖνον) plus an infinitive

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<sup>5</sup> For the proposed sense, see LSJ s.v. χράω (B), C2, construed exclusively with genitive. This emendation echoes a much older reading by Butler, who likewise proposed τοῦ φρονεῖν κεχρημένον, “*prudētiaē indigentem*” (1816, ad loc.). Broadhead hastily interpolated this reading in a post-revision state of his commentary and justified his change of mind by connecting the sense in 829 with Darius’ previous references to the proper function of the φρένες; cf. *Pers.* 725 φρεῦ, μέγας τις ἦλθε δαίμων, ὥστε μὴ φρονεῖν καλῶς; 750-1 πῶς τάδ’ οὐ νόσος φρενῶν / εἶχε παῖδ’ ἐμόν;; 769 φρένες γὰρ αὐτοῦ θυμὸν ὠϊακοστρόφουν; 782 Ξέρξης δ’ ἐμὸς παῖς ὦν νέος νέα φρονεῖ. Notice, however, that all these references describe the way a φρήν affects one’s behavior, or is itself affected, in a positive or negative manner, not its absence from one’s body; for Broadhead’s original emendation see below.

<sup>6</sup> Garvie (2009) obelizes the text, but endorses Butler’s and Broadhead’s (n.5) emendations as “worth considering” in view of their syntactical soundness.

<sup>7</sup> For the φρένες as a mental capacity of the sensible human being, see the respective chapter in Sullivan (1997), and especially her Appendix A. The only two examples of absence of φρένες are in the *Choephoroi*, when Orestes refers to his mother’s futile libations to her husband, a dead person without φρένες, and when Orestes’ nurse recounts his rearing as an infant without φρένες; cf. *Ch.* 515-6 θανόντι δ’ οὐ φρονοῦντι δειλαία χάρις / ἐπέμπετ’; 751-3 καὶ πολλὰ καὶ μοχθήρ’ ἀνωφέλητ’ ἐμοὶ / τλάσῃ· τὸ μὴ φρονοῦν γὰρ ὡσπερὶ βοτὸν / τρέφειν ἀνάγκη, πῶς γὰρ οὐ; τρόποι φρενός. As a matter of fact, in Aeschylus mortals are *set* on the road of φρονεῖν by Zeus (*Ag.* 176-7 τὸν φρονεῖν βροτοὺς ὁδῶ- / σαντα), in a way that is compulsory (*Ag.* 180-1 καὶ παρ’ ἄ-/ κοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν). It could perhaps be argued that Xerxes lacks φρένες in his inclination towards a childish impulsivity (782 παῖς νέος ἐὼν νέα φρονεῖ), thus justifying κεχρημένον. Nevertheless, given that all MSS read σωφρονεῖν, the emendation of the infinitive goes against fundamental principles of textual criticism.

<sup>8</sup> See LSJ s.v. χρήζω 2b, “c. acc. pers. et inf., ask or desire that one should do a thing.”

(σωφρονεῖν).<sup>9</sup> Hall is another proponent of κεχρημένοι, but she argues that it governs νουθετήμασιν, while πινύσκετε governs σωφρονεῖν and λῆξαι. The sense would thus be: “use sensible words of warning to admonish Xerxes to behave temperately and stop offending the gods,” but this reading does not yield sound syntax.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in consideration of the various problems that arise from κεχρημένοι, it appears that the masculine plural form is not a plausible option for the present passage.

Although the choice of κεχρημένον provides better alternatives, a decision must be made as to whether it should be taken as masculine or neuter. Under the choice of the masculine accusative, the passage has been ascribed two different senses. According to Mazon, it reads “puisque Xerxès est si pauvre de sens,” but χράομαι in the sense of “to be in want, lack” is not construed with an infinitive.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, in the LSJ entry for χράομαι the present passage is classified under the sense “consult a god or oracle” as a unique case for classical Greek, which gives the sense “being divinely warned to be temperate.”<sup>12</sup> Consequently, Xerxes is turned into a recipient of the oracles mentioned by Darius in 739-40.<sup>13</sup> In this light, Sidgwick reads: “now therefore, as he (Xerxes) has been warned to be prudent, admonish him, &c.,” arguing that χράομαι can be used equally for divine oracles and orders.<sup>14</sup> This reading, however, has met with the disapproval of critics who stress the logical leap in assuming that Xerxes had any prior knowledge

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<sup>9</sup> West (1990b).

<sup>10</sup> See Hall (1996), ad loc. Garvie (2009) rightfully claims that “the word-order is awkward, as is the double infinitive unconnected by καί, requiring perhaps that we understand ὥστε before λῆξαι.”

<sup>11</sup> Mazon (2002). West (1990b) is the first to refute this reading and Garvie (2009) follows suit. For this same reason, an alternative of σωφρονεῖν κεχρημένοι, as “you, lacking σωφροσύνη,” is not presently considered.

<sup>12</sup> See LSJ χράω (B), A3.

<sup>13</sup> cf. *Pers.* 739-40 φεῦ· ταχεῖά γ’ ἦλθε χρησμῶν πρᾶξις, εἰς δὲ παῖδ’ ἐμὸν / Ζεὺς ἀπέσκηψεν τελευτήν θεσφάτων; 800-2 παῦροι γε πολλῶν, εἴ τι πιστεῦσαι θεῶν / χρῆ θεσφάτοισιν, ἐς τὰ νῦν πεπραγμένα / βλέψαντα.

<sup>14</sup> Sidgwick (1906), ad loc., citing *P.O.* 2.71-2 ἐν δὲ Πυθῶνι χρησθὲν / παλαίφατον τέλεσεν, and *Th.* 3.96.1 χρησθὲν αὐτῷ ἐν Νεμέᾳ τοῦτο παθεῖν to support the connection between 829 and 739-40.



of the old oracles to which Darius makes but a brief mention.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it appears that *κεχρημένον* as a masculine accusative is unable to provide a sound reading in terms of both syntax and context.

In his edition, Broadhead originally maintained the syntactical soundness of *κεχρημένον* as an absolute neuter accusative, drawing a parallel with a similar syntactical structure in the *Agamemnon*, where Aegisthus reproaches the rebelliousness of the Chorus during a time that *σωφροσύνη* is enjoined (1620 *σωφρονεῖν εἰρημένον*).<sup>16</sup> Connecting thus 829 with the preceding lines, where Darius describes Zeus' punitive disposition towards presumptuousness,<sup>17</sup> Broadhead argues that *χρᾶν* is used here within a wider meaning than its usual connotations of oracular responses.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, an objection to this reading of *σωφρονεῖν κεχρημένον* (neut.) is the peculiarity of ascribing to *χράομαι* the sense “to be ordained by a god.” This objection, however, would be insubstantial, given that Broadhead does make a case for an infinitive accompanying *χράομαι* representing the command given by an oracle.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the case is made stronger by the syntactical parallel of *σωφρονεῖν εἰρημένον*, where *σωφροσύνη* is ordained by a mortal. In other words, although *χρᾶν* is found only in the active voice denoting the command of a god,<sup>20</sup> it would not be preposterous to assume that *κεχρημένον* and *εἰρημένον* are parallels, but the former

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<sup>15</sup> Broadhead (1960) postulates that “these oracles were predictions of future happenings, so that any ‘warning’ would be implicit, not explicit.” Moreover, as Garvie (2009) argues, “we have heard nothing about oracles that warned Xerxes against the expedition.”

<sup>16</sup> Sidgwick (1906) also cites *Ag.1620* as a parallel to *Pers.829*.

<sup>17</sup> *Pers.827-8* Ζεὺς τοι κολαστῆς τῶν ὑπερκόμπων ἄγαν / φρονημάτων ἔπεστιν, εὐθνος βαρὺς.

<sup>18</sup> The parallel provided by Broadhead is *P.O.7.92* σάφα δαεῖς ἅ τέ οἱ πατέρων ὀρθαὶ φρένες ἐξ ἀγαθῶν ἔχρεον. Garvie (2009) opposes the parallelism, considering that the passage in Pindar is way more straightforward. On the other hand, Rademaker impugns Broadhead's interpretation of *κεχρημένον* on the grounds that “the verb would have to be followed by either a declaration of what was about to happen, or a rather more practical instruction as to what to do: *σωφρονεῖν* will hardly fit as the content of the instruction of an oracle” (2005, 101 n.1). However, the parallel in *Ag.1620* seems to refute this objection, given that *σωφρονεῖν* would give perfect sense even if Aegisthus never elaborated on the torture of the Chorus.

<sup>19</sup> cf. *Hdt.7.178* καὶ σφι ἐχρήσθη ἀνέμοισι εὐχεσθαι.

<sup>20</sup> See LSJ *χράω* (B), A1.

clearly distinguishes the speaker's status while expressing within the same syntactical structure the command of a god, instead of that of a mortal.<sup>21</sup>

In view of the above, considering that Broadhead makes the strongest case in terms of syntactical soundness, his text is adopted here:

πρὸς ταῦτ' ἐκεῖνον, σωφρονεῖν κεχημένον, πινύσκειτ' εὐλόγοισι νουθετήμασιν, λῆξαι θεοβλαβοῦνθ' ὑπερκόμπῳ θράσει.	Accordingly, since σωφροσύνη is divinely ordained, instruct him with sensible advice to cease being profane through swaggering rashness.
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The impersonal nature of the parenthetical clause suggests that σωφροσύνη refers to the appointed bounds of mortals as ordained by the gods, whom Xerxes has not only neglected, but also insulted in his presumptuousness.<sup>22</sup> Darius apparently deduces from the description of his son's behavior that he has become oblivious to his status in the hierarchy of the cosmos; hence he needs to be reminded of the subservience that mortals should exhibit towards the gods. Considering the severe attitude of Zeus towards ὑπέγκομπα φρονήματα (827-8), Darius' appeal to the divinely ordained σωφροσύνη, in his desire to restrain Xerxes' ὑπέγκομπον θράσος from further insulting the gods, is a call to propriety. Therefore, it appears that σωφροσύνη in the *Persians* squares with the proposed definition of the term in the introduction of this study as the positive value term for the result of a mental process that dictates one's behavioral propriety in relation to hierarchal limitations.

Aeschylus' portrayal of monarchy in the *Persians* offers a unique insight into the origin of Xerxes' lack of σωφροσύνη and his ensuing deviance from religious propriety. The fact that men

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<sup>21</sup> For a god directly commanding a mortal in Aeschylus, cf. *Eu.*203 ἔχρησα ποινὰς τοῦ πατρὸς πράξει, where Apollo himself admits that he commanded Orestes to kill Clytemnestra. To stress the need for an oracle, as the necessary medium for a divine command to be expressed, seems to me unjustifiably and pointlessly pedantic with respect to Aeschylean poetics. In this light, Broadhead claims that "fair sense is obtained if we understand the *v.l.* κεχημένον (or κεχησμένον) to mean 'it having been declared' (by the gods, presumably) 'that moderation must be observed' (cf. σωφρονεῖν εἰρημένον *Ag.*1620)."

<sup>22</sup> On this point, de Vries accurately compares *Ag.*1664 σώφρονος γνώμης [δ'] ἁμαρτῶν τὸν κρατοῦντά <λοιδορεῖς>, arguing that "le vers 831 λῆξαι θεοβλαβοῦνθ' ὑπερκόμπῳ θράσει explique nettement en quoi consiste ici le σωφρονεῖν. Cela va beaucoup plus loin que le 'prudentem, sanae mentis esse' ... et se rapporte à l'attitude vis-à-vis des dieux." (1943, 86).

exhibit σωφροσύνη in recognition of their proper status in a hierarchy indicates that a mechanism of comparison operates behind one's σώφρων behavior: one recognizes their inferiority or inferiority by comparing themselves to others. The figure of the monarch, however, stands on the apex of the social pyramid and has no superiors to contrast himself with on the human level. According to Darius, Zeus has bestowed the rule of Asia on a single man, giving him the scepter of authority (764 σκῆπτρον εὐθυντήριον), while the Asiatic monarch is beyond anyone's control. As Atossa claims, regardless of the outcome of her son's expedition, Xerxes remains the indisputable ruler of the Persian empire without any liability to its people (213-4 οὐχ ὑπεύθυνος πόλει, / σωθεῖς δ' ὁμοίως τῆσδε κοιρανεῖ χθονός). This lack of accountability, the εὐθυνα, of the one holding an εὐθυντήριον σκῆπτρον is a pivotal factor behind Xerxes' lack of σωφροσύνη towards the gods. As Goldhill observes:<sup>23</sup>

The Persian king is οὐχ ὑπεύθυνος πόλει. To be ὑπεύθυνος and specifically ὑπεύθυνος πόλει is the mark of the Athenian political system. It is the mark of monarchy to be without such checks.

The wielder of Asia's εὐθυντήριον σκῆπτρον is in a situation of constant peril, since he can easily fall into the delusion of being equal to the gods, and the odds of this happening are dangerously high, given the elevation of the Persian monarchs to divine status by their subjects.<sup>24</sup> In this light, although Xerxes is the one perpetrating impious βλάβαι against the gods out of blindness to the hierarchal barrier that would avert a σώφρων mortal from comparing himself to them,<sup>25</sup> the origin of such a behavior seems to be subtly ascribed to the frailty of a political system that enables it.

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<sup>23</sup> Goldhill (1988), 191.

<sup>24</sup> cf. *Pers.* 74-80, 150-2, 157-8, 621, 634, 641, 655, 711. For this excessive glorification being the result of Greek misinterpretation of Persian customs, see Garvie (2009), ad loc.

<sup>25</sup> See Papadimitropoulos (2008), 454, where he notes that "it is [not] far-fetched to suppose that Xerxes, basing himself on the power of his vast army and navy, *does* feel equal to the gods, a feeling dangerous in itself, as every Greek knew."

A depiction of the above complex can be seen in the yoking imagery that pervades the entire play. In the *parodos*, the Chorus express Xerxes' expedition in terms of an attempt to "force the yoke of slavery on Greece" (50 ζυγὸν ἀμφιβαλεῖν δούλιον Ἑλλάδι), during which a yoke is also imposed on the neck of the sea (72 ζυγὸν ἀμφιβαλῶν ἀυχέτι πόντου). Subsequently, the most important aspect of the yoking imagery manifests itself in Atossa's dream, in which Xerxes tries to calm two magnificent women, a Greek and a Persian, by attempting to yoke them under his chariot (190-2 ἄρμασιν δ' ὕπο / ζεύγνυσιν αὐτῶ καὶ λέπαδν' ἐπ' ἀυχένων / τίθησι). As one would expect, the Greek woman is insubordinate and breaks the yoke in half (196 ζυγὸν θραύει μέσον), but what passes almost unnoticed in the dream's commotion is the eager submission of the Persian one (193 εἶχεν εὐαρκτον στόμα).<sup>26</sup> Apparently, the eager subordination of the Persian people to the rule of their monarch, as symbolized by the "mare" in the dream, impairs the ability of Xerxes to discern any limitations in his capacity to "yoke" subjects under his autocratic rule. This is corroborated in the recognition of the Hellespont's "yoking" as a sign of hubris by Darius,<sup>27</sup> who shudders before his son's audacity to treat Poseidon as if he were his slave (745-50). Consequently, the yoking metaphor that runs in the background of the play not only exemplifies Xerxes' lack of σωφροσύνη, but also reveals the empowering mechanism behind it; namely, a political system with such an extreme divergence in terms of social hierarchy that it renders the individual on the upper echelons susceptible to a delusion of status mobility in the hierarchy of the cosmos.

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<sup>26</sup> Other than typifying Xerxes' rule, the yoking metaphor seems to have further political nuances. When the news of Xerxes' humiliating defeat arrives in the court, the Chorus express their disapproval towards the utter waste of the royal power (589-90 βασιλεία / γὰρ διόλωλεν ἰσχύς), given that this will incite the rebelliousness of the people now that "the yoke of power is broken" (594 ὡς ἐλύθη ζυγὸν ἀλκᾶς). Apparently, the reaction of the Greek "mare" during the yoking scene in Atossa's dream can be equally imitated by the submissive Persian one when the presumptuous "charioteer" is brought low.

<sup>27</sup> Conacher (1974), 158, and Papadimitropoulos (2008), 456, are correct in claiming that the bridging of the Hellespont is a symbol of and not hubris per se. For a discussion of Xerxes' hubris see below.

As a monarch, Xerxes becomes negligent towards his position in the cosmic status quo, he exhibits an utter lack of σωφροσύνη, and eventually he perpetrates βλάβαι against the gods. This concatenation of events manifests itself in Xerxes' invasion of Greece, the motive of which is traced in his hubris. Darius asserts that the heaps of Persian soldiers' corpses in Plataea shall be a monument to the necessity of refraining from transgressive thoughts, since the whole expedition was the result of "hubris that blossomed and yielded a crop of ruin" (818-22). The connection drawn between hubris and σωφροσύνη in the present context is not an uncommon one in Greek tragedy. "Since piety is *sophrosyne* concerning the gods (περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς)," Mikalson explains, "we might expect impiety to be *hybris* περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς."<sup>28</sup> In view of that, there seems to be an interplay between Xerxes' lack of σωφροσύνη and his hubris, as expressed in Darius' various censorious remarks.

During his final speech, Darius claims that the sinister fate of the Persian army has come "in requital for their hubris and godless disposition," since they have plundered the statues of the gods and set their temples ablaze without any compunction (808-12). This has prompted the interpretation of the hubris on Xerxes' part in direct relation to the profane deeds of his army.<sup>29</sup> However, the hubris of the army seems to be a mere byproduct of the hubris of their king; if a mortal that offends the gods leads an army, the disregard of his soldiers towards all things sacred is but a mirror image of his own behavior. Under this rationale, Papadimitropoulos argues that Xerxes becomes hubristic in his attempt to surpass his father by obliterating Athens—the city that destroyed the Persian army in the past (244)—in order to rebut the κακοί rebuking him for

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<sup>28</sup> See Mikalson (1991), 182-3. For the antonymic relationship between σωφροσύνη and hubris, see also de Vries (1943), 85; MacDowell (1976), 21; Rademaker (2005), 243-4.

<sup>29</sup> See Hall (1996), ad 808.

ἀνανδρία in comparison to Darius (753-8).<sup>30</sup> Xerxes greedily strives for his personal triumph and this “is a vital part of his *hubris*, because to this aim he devotes all of Asia’s military forces,” and thus acts in a manner inconsonant with the tenet of μηδὲν ἄγαν.<sup>31</sup> A further dimension can be added to this remark, considering MacDowell’s observation that “*hybris* has various causes and manifestations, but fundamentally it is having energy or power and misusing it self-indulgently.”<sup>32</sup> In the combined perspectives of Papadimitropoulos and MacDowell, it appears that Xerxes’ *hubris* is the self-indulgent abuse of his power, which is the multitude of subjects constituting his army,<sup>33</sup> in a vain pursuit of self-aggrandizement. If Xerxes’ *hubris* is the vain desire for self-aggrandizement that encompasses perfunctory carnage, what allows him to pursue this desire is a submissive society that yields to his whims. Therefore, it seems that the monarchic society not only endangers religious σωφροσύνη, but also facilitates *hubris*, since Xerxes is obviously enabled to engage in the *hubristic* behavior examined above by virtue of his position as a monarch.

At the same time, although one could accuse Aeschylus of blunt pro-democratic propaganda, the view of monarchy in the *Persians* is not one-dimensional. As a matter of fact, a monarch *can* be σώφρων towards the gods *and* avoid *hubris*, but it is necessary for him to remember that regardless of his elevated status in the social hierarchy, he should always be cognizant of his mortal status in the cosmic one. Xerxes has brought upon himself the hatred of the gods by mishandling his status as a monarch and becoming oblivious to the need of

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<sup>30</sup> See Papadimitropoulos (2008), 452, where he also argues that that the soldiers’ *hubris* cannot account for the *hubris* that Xerxes is presently charged with. In addition, Papadimitropoulos refutes Conacher (1974), 164, who argues that Xerxes’ *hubris* was his extensive imperialistic agenda, as well as Fisher (1992), 260-1, who proposes the bridging of the Hellespont instead.

<sup>31</sup> *ib.* 454. Papadimitropoulos recognizes that Xerxes’ behavior is transgressive towards the Delphic adages (457), but does not pay any particular attention to the implications of Darius’ appeal to σωφροσύνη, the metaphysical basis of which is directly connected with the principles behind γνῶθι σαυτόν and μηδὲν ἄγαν.

<sup>32</sup> MacDowell (1976), 30.

<sup>33</sup> It is clear throughout the play that the authority of the Persian monarchy is predominantly based on its vast military power; cf. *Pers.* 6-15, 21-64, 74-80, 87-92, 165-9, 249-52, 584-97, 714-6, 731-3, 859-62, 918-30.

subordination to them. On the contrary, Xerxes' predecessors on the throne were not of the same disposition. This becomes clear in Darius' catalogue of former Persian kings, where the two most praiseworthy cases are Cyrus and Darius himself. The former was "a blessed man, who gave peace to all those he cared for during his rule" (768-9), while "no god resented him in his wise disposition" (772 εὐφρῶν ἔφϋ). On the other hand, Darius was an avid warlord, but he never inflicted any harm as great as his son's (780-1), something that perhaps indicates that his aspirations were not driven by hubris. On that account, Darius deplors Xerxes' youthful impetuosity and his negligence towards his father's instructions (782-3 παῖς νέος ἐὼν νέα φρονεῖ, / κοῦ μνημονεύει τὰς ἐμὰς ἐπιστολάς). All former Persian monarchs "who have held this sovereign power," Darius says, "could not be held responsible for such a calamity" as the one Xerxes has brought (785-6).<sup>34</sup> In this contrast between the two examples of good kings with Xerxes, it seems that the latter draws upon himself the divine resentment that Cyrus and Darius never did, exactly because he strived for glory that is beyond mortal bounds as he fell into the delusion of thinking himself as an equal to the gods.

In this perspective, the *Persians* is an example of a tragedy that lays out certain problems pervading the institution of monarchy. In the political environment in which Aeschylus puts Xerxes, he proves unable to resist the temptation of taking his elevated social status at face value and treating the gods not even as his equals, but rather as his inferiors. In view of that, it seems that Aeschylus problematizes the ability of the individual in a position of power to resist the temptation of defying the σωφροσύνη ordained by the gods. Therefore, it appears that the *Persians* is the first example of the problematization that surrounds σωφροσύνη in the political environment of the monarchic society, where the power entrusted to and mishandled by the individual is

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<sup>34</sup> The Chorus made such a comparison between Xerxes and Darius earlier on; cf. 555-7 τίπτε Δαρεῖος μὲν οὕτω τότε ἀβλαβῆς ἐπῆν / τόξαρχος πολίηταις, / Σουσίδος φίλος ἄκτωρ;

eventually the source of both personal and communal tragedy. In regard to the deviation of the *Persians* from the typical mythological content of tragedy, it has been argued that the cultural message of the play is focused on drawing the distinctive line between Greeks and barbarians.<sup>35</sup> The submissive Persian “mare” in Atossa’s dream is the exact opposite of her unruly Greek counterpart; the Greeks, the Chorus tell us, are neither slaves nor subjects of any man (242 οὔτινος δοῦλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδ’ ὑπήκοοι). The fundamental difference between the two contrasted worlds, however, is mainly political, and this seems to be the reason why the Persian wars provided the Athenian tragedians with material apt for their genre. Aeschylus brings on stage a society and a king that is not so different from the ones known from Greek myth: societies trapped within the whims of absolute rulers, whose abuse of power culminates in their lack of σωφροσύνη; a paradigm that recurs in the *Seven against Thebes* and the *Agamemnon*.

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<sup>35</sup> Goldhill (1988), 192-3, and later Hall (1989), 62-98.



## Chapter 2: The *Seven against Thebes*

The second extant play of Aeschylus is the well-known pride of the poet's Aristophanean persona, who exults in the creation of a drama Ἄρεως μεστόν.<sup>1</sup> The sounds of war provide the atmospheric white noise for most of Aeschylus' plays, but the war waged in the background of the *Seven* is a civil one, and its gruesome conclusion is the mutual fratricide of Oedipus' sons. Polyneices, under the auspices of his father-in-law, Adrastus, amasses an army of Argives and marches against his fatherland to reclaim the throne from his brother, Eteocles. As the army gathers outside the gates of Thebes, Aeschylus dramatizes the events within the walls, where a Chorus of maidens laments the ominous fate of the city. At the same time, Eteocles prepares the city's defenses and strategically positions the Theban chieftains against the Argive ones, based on his scout's report of their respective armament. In this embattled atmosphere, Eteocles claims to be σώφρων towards the gods, whereas Polyneices bears a shield that advertises his own σωφροσύνη. Accordingly, the semantic horizon of σωφροσύνη introduced in the previous chapter, regarding the religious propriety of the monarch, is further problematized in the *Seven*, as the monarchic aspirations of the two brothers and σωφροσύνη are in fact irreconcilable. This is corroborated by the fact that in their desire for the throne both Eteocles and Polyneices are prepared to commit the impious crime of fratricide. In this perspective, the falsehood of the brothers' claims to σωφροσύνη is more prominently displayed in the presence of Amphiaraus, who embodies the quintessence of the concept and thus becomes a counterexample to the fratricidal protagonists.

Eteocles is the first to assert his σωφροσύνη in an altercation with the Chorus, who frantically call upon the gods in supplication during their *parodos*, as the menacing tumult outside

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<sup>1</sup> Ar. *Ra.*1021.

the walls paralyzes them with fear (78-180).<sup>2</sup> In view of their conduct, which is deemed improper, harmful for the city, and demoralizing for the army, Eteocles says (182-6):

ὕμᾱς ἐρωτῶ, θρέμματ' οὐκ ἀνασχετά,  
ἢ ταῦτ' ἄριστα καὶ πόλῃ σωτήρια  
στρατῶι τε θάρσος τῶιδε πυργηρουμένῳι,  
βρέτη πεσοῦσας πρὸς πολισσούχων θεῶν  
αὔειν, λακάζειν, σωφρόνων μισήματα;

I am asking you, insufferable creatures, whether this is best and salutary for the city, or heartening for our beleaguered army: shrieking and howling while lain before the statues of the city's gods —a behavior detestable to the σῶφρονες?

The characterization σωφρόνων μισήματα (186),<sup>3</sup> plainly indicates that Eteocles' indignation stems from his assumption that the maidens lack σωφροσύνη, especially with a view towards religious propriety.<sup>4</sup> The maidens do confer τιμή upon the gods, but Eteocles objects to their perception of the mode of interaction between gods and mortals. As Giordano-Zecharya observes, Eteocles embodies the hoplitic civic religiosity that is based on a *do ut des* attitude expressed in εὐχαί, whereas the Chorus utterly surrender themselves to divine providence through a blind devoutness expressed in λιταί.<sup>5</sup> In other words, Eteocles believes that the gods will not defend a city if its people make no real effort to defend it (216-8); thus, he attempts to align the Chorus' prayers with his own, for the gods to grant them victory in order to get their temples adorned with spoils from the enemy (264-86).

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<sup>2</sup> The emotional state of the Chorus is evident in their singing; dochmiacs dominate the *parodos*. For a discussion on the significance of meter in conjunction with the Chorus' deviance from proper ritual behavior, see Stehle (2005).

<sup>3</sup> The position of μισήματα in the sentence creates a certain ambiguity regarding its case. It has been argued that taking it as an internal accusative would “give the sentence a much more effective shape than a vocative;” Hutchinson (1985), ad loc. In the accusative, μισήματα would function as an appositive to the preceding infinitives (αὔειν, λακάζειν), whereas in the vocative it would refer to the Chorus. In the MSS, most scholiasts opt for the accusative, but in the scholia of certain MSS we read: “τὸ σωφρόνων μισήματα ἢ πρὸς τὸ αὔειν λακάζειν ἐστίν, ἤγουν ἂ οἱ σῶφρονες —τὸ αὔειν λέγω καὶ τὸ λακάζειν— μισοῦσιν, ἢ οὕτω· ὃ θρέμματα οὐκ ἀνασχετά, μισήματα τῶν σωφρόνων;” see Smith (1982), 94. At any rate, it seems that what makes the Chorus θρέμματα οὐκ ἀνασχετά in the eyes of Eteocles is exactly their αὔειν and λακάζειν, thus the soundest choice is to take μισήματα as an accusative.

<sup>4</sup> Considering that Eteocles' reaction is triggered by the clamorous fatalistic supplications, it appears that his religiousness is distinct from that of the Chorus. As Brown notes, the irreconcilability of the Chorus' piety and Eteocles' practicality is what sets off their overall conflict (1977, 300-6).

<sup>5</sup> Giordano-Zecharya (2006), 59-67. In view of Eteocles' religiosity, although Podlecki's unfavorable criticism of his character is in many respects sound, the accusation of impiety towards the Olympian gods out of alignment with chthonic divinities seems stretched (1964, 284-88). Brown is most probably right in impugning this accusation, as he claims that Eteocles is “not impious but merely sensible” (1977, 300).

Other than advertising himself as a model of religious σωφροσύνη, this call to propriety also reveals a sociopolitical aspect of σωφροσύνη. In view of the characterization of the Chorus as σωφρόνων μισήματα, Gagarin notes:<sup>6</sup>

The usual translation of these last two words is something like “hated by all sensible people,” but the additional sense of discipline and obedience, often present in *sōphrōn*, is undoubtedly in Eteocles’ mind here. He is angered by the chorus’ failure to be properly disciplined and obedient to his command, and considers such behavior “hateful to those who are disciplined.”

Undoubtedly, Eteocles regards himself as properly disciplined towards the gods, and wishes to inculcate the same kind of discipline in the Chorus.<sup>7</sup> This notion of discipline, however, also extends in the social realm, as Eteocles demands propriety towards not only the gods, but also himself as the king of Thebes; thus, considering that there is no space for female intervention in strictly male undertakings like public matters outside the house (200-2), warfare, and propitiatory sacrifices (230-2),<sup>8</sup> he commands the women to be silent and return to their houses.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, these appeals to religious and social propriety are only partly successful in disciplining the Chorus, who go on to sing their *stasimon* in fear of what the future holds (287).

As the narrative moves towards the shield scene, the scout that brings news from the enemy camp uses σωφροσύνη to describe the only pious chieftain in the army of Polyneices. This is Amphiaraus, who shows proper respect for the gods, whereas all his fellows exhibit disturbingly hubristic attitudes. Tydeus’ shield bears the *ὑπέρφρον σῆμα* (387) of the starry sky with a full moon in the center; a most haughty device (391 *ὑπερκόμποις σαγαῖς*). Capaneus’

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<sup>6</sup> Gagarin (1976), 153.

<sup>7</sup> In this perspective, Eteocles seems to be using the plural σωφρόνων to reinforce the idea that he expresses the Theban people collectively. Accordingly, he poses not only as the religiously σώφρων ruler of the Thebes, but also as the mouthpiece of a community that practices σωφροσύνη under his rule.

<sup>8</sup> Eteocles echoes the rigid gender roles already defined in Homer; cf. *Il.*6.487-93. For a detailed discussion of social limitations for females as imposed by the Greek gender system, see Cantarella (1987), 39-51.

<sup>9</sup> For requests for silence, see 200-86 *passim*. According to Rademaker, “Eteocles here poses as the reliable, calm leader of the city... even though the very vehemence of his rebuke raises the question whether he is σώφρων as he pretends” (2005, 113).

presumptuousness is beyond mortal limits (425 ...ὁ κόμπος δ' οὐ κατ' ἄνθρωπον φρονεῖ), as he boastfully claims that even Zeus cannot stop him from sacking the city (427-9).<sup>10</sup> Eteocles' blazon depicts a soldier climbing a ladder to the top of the enemy's wall, and the inscription has him say that not even Ares can throw him off (467-9). Hippomedon, the chieftain stationed against the gate of Pallas Onca, carries a shield depicting Typhon, the infamous challenger of Zeus' rule; a blazon that induces, as Eteocles claims, the hate of Pallas herself against his hubris (502 ἀνδρὸς ἐχθαίρουσ' ὕβριν). Parthenopaeus, the Arcadian, swears by his spear, which he holds dearer than a god (529-30), to sack the city by force;<sup>11</sup> in response to this report, Eteocles once again notes the unholy vaunts of the enemy (551 ἀνοσίους κομπάσματος). The boasts of these impious men (566 ἀνοσίων ἀνδρῶν) plainly suggest their lack of σωφροσύνη, even though this is not directly expressed. The Argive chieftains are neglectful of their place in the cosmic status quo, they do not confer proper τιμή on the gods, and even dare to challenge their power. Amphiarus, on the other hand, is introduced in the narrative sequence as the most σώφρων of men (568 ἄνδρα σωφρονέστατον). Consequently, "the contrast with the other champions is established at once,"<sup>12</sup> and it is essentially a contrast of religious σωφροσύνη, which Amphiarus attests by his blank shield (590-4).

By the end of the report on Amphiarus, Eteocles reaffirms the scout's original praise, claiming that the prophet is a σώφρων, δίκαιος, ἀγαθός, εὐσεβῆς ἀνὴρ (610).<sup>13</sup> This evaluation of the seer seems to be based not only on his religiousness, but also his strong objections to the whole

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<sup>10</sup> Like the Aegyptiads in the *Suppliants*, Capaneus is said to treat gods with contempt (441 θεοὺς ἀτίζων) and such behavior invites retribution; cf. *Supp.* 733 θεοὺς ἀτίζων τις βροτῶν δώσει δίκην.

<sup>11</sup> It is perhaps compelling to read, as does Hutchinson (1985), ἦ μὴν λαπάξιν ἄστο Καδμείων βίαι / Διός, τόδ' αὐδαὶ μητρὸς ἐξ ὄρεσκόου for 531-2, but West makes a very good case for ἦ μὴν λαπάξιν ἄστο Καδμείων βίαι. / Ἄρεως τόδ' αὐδαὶ μητρὸς ἐξ ὄρεσκόου, as it avoids the repetition of Capaneus' boast; see West (1990b), 115-6.

<sup>12</sup> Hutchinson (1985), ad 568.

<sup>13</sup> For an excellent discussion on the function of the scout's report on Amphiarus as a counterargument to Eteocles' claims about the necessity imposed by his father's curse, see DeVito (1999).

campaign. Amphiaraus abhors the godlessness of besieging one's fatherland and its native gods with a foreign army (580-3), and in view of Polyneices' disregard for his future subjects, he protests (584-6):

μητρόσ τε πηγὴν τίς κατασβέσει δίκη;    What claim of justice shall dry up the maternal  
πατρίς δε γαῖα σῆς ὑπὸ σπουδῆς δορι    spring? How shall your fatherland, captured by  
ἀλοῦσα πῶς σοι ζύμμαχος γενήσεται;    the spear out of ambition, be your ally?

With this pair of rhetorical questions, Amphiaraus underlines the present controversy between cause and action, for Polyneices asserts that his restitution on the throne of Thebes is a matter of justice, but has apparently forgotten what is the essence of being a king. In Amphiaraus' words, to "dry up the maternal spring" is to massacre the people, whose support and obedience Polyneices requires if he is to rule Thebes. Despite his opposition, however, Amphiaraus by implication endorses the justice of Polyneices' claim, since his censure concerns the siege of one's own fatherland, not the attack against one's own brother.<sup>14</sup> The eldest of Oedipus' sons might be reckless in his desire for his father's throne, but his desire is nonetheless legitimate.<sup>15</sup> Amphiaraus thus brings to the fore the excruciating moral question as to whether the end justifies the means, since the disregard of Polyneices for the welfare of his fatherland is a major foil to his claim for restitution to the throne. Polyneices seems to be obsessed with his kingship rather than his kingdom, but he has nonetheless a claim to justice that even the all-σώφρων Amphiaraus cannot deny.

Eventually, the shield scene climaxes with the description of Polyneices as the attacker of the seventh gate, and along with this description comes the final reference to σωφροσύνη. After relating Polyneices' boasts and threats against his brother, the scout describes the blazon on his

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<sup>14</sup> See Orwin (1980), 189, and Adkins (1982), 52-4.

<sup>15</sup> See Sommerstein (2010), 85-6, where he argues that the seniority of Polyneices is his strongest advocate in his feud with Eteocles, as well as the reason why Amphiaraus endorses the justice of his claim to the throne.

shield, which depicts an armed man and a woman leading the way in front of him. This woman is the goddess Justice, the scout continues, and the letters on the shield have her say that she shall restore the man to his city and his father's halls (645-8).<sup>16</sup> The symbolism is obvious. Polyneices is the armed man that Justice leads back to his fatherland to claim his patrimony.<sup>17</sup> The striking aspect of the scout's description is the way he details Justice leading Polyneices as σωφρόνως ἡγουμένη, which Rademaker reads as a description of the goddess' figure.<sup>18</sup> As seen before, however, the value judgement in σωφροσύνη is applicable to actions and behaviors of people that observe the limitations of their status. Thus, using the term to pass value judgement on the corporeality of an artefact's figure would be abnormal, given the lack of elaboration regarding the referent.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, considering that the figure on the shield is a goddess and not an ordinary woman, the typical female σωφροσύνη, as expressed by Eteocles earlier in the play, can hardly be applicable in the present context.

To understand the phrase σωφρόνως ἡγουμένη, one should examine it as part of an interpretation of Polyneices' blazon through the focalization of the scout, in the same manner of all the previous shield descriptions.<sup>20</sup> The adverb σωφρόνως is a value judgment of the scout on

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<sup>16</sup> The elaborate "talking" shields described by the scout have in fact no direct archaeological parallels. The archaeological evidence for writing on shields is exclusively in a dedicatory context; see Berman (2007), 63 n.2.

<sup>17</sup> On the identification of the man on the shield with the man carrying it, see Zeitlin (2009), 94-5.

<sup>18</sup> See Rademaker (2005), 104-5. In this passage, the adverb σωφρόνως is glossed by different scholiasts as either orderly (εὐτάκτως), honorably and orderly (σεμνῶς καὶ εὐτάκτως), or decorously (κοσμίως); see Smith (1982), 283. These glosses seem to be influenced by one of the definition of σωφροσύνη found in Plato; cf. *Charm.*159b σωφροσύνη εἶναι τὸ κοσμίως πάντα πράττειν καὶ ἡσυχῆι, ἐν τε ταῖς ὁδοῖς βαδίζειν καὶ διαλέγεσθαι, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὡσαύτως ποιεῖν. Nevertheless, Aeschylus clearly distinguishes between general decorous quietness and σωφροσύνη; cf. *Supp.*723 ἄλλ' ἡσύχως χρῆ καὶ σεσωφρονισμένως.

<sup>19</sup> Hutchinson (1985), ad loc., notes that "the visible σωφροσύνη of the maiden reflects the spiritual σωφροσύνη of the goddess." This can be hardly convincing, and the parallels Hutchinson cites are problematic. Specifically, in *X. Ages.*6.7 ἡσύχως δ' ὥσπερ ἂν παρθένος ἢ σωφρονεστάτη προβαίνοι, the adverb ἡσύχως is both cause and effect of the maiden's σωφροσύνη, and the same thing applies to *Ar. Lys.*473 ἐπεὶ θέλω ἰγὼ σωφρόνως ὥσπερ κόρη καθῆσθαι for the σωφροσύνη of the willingly sequestered young woman.

<sup>20</sup> cf. *Sept.*480 κόμπαζ' ἐπ' ἄλλωι, μηδέ μοι φθόνει λέγων. Eteocles is aware that the scout is the one ranting (κομπάζειν) about the chieftains, based of course on the presumptuousness their armaments exhibit; see Hutchinson (1985), ad 480.

the figure of Justice, which applies to the personified abstraction of the shield-bearer's claim, rather than the corporeality of the figure itself. In other words, reading σωφροσύνη as the status-based behavioral propriety in one's actions, the scout uses the term to describe the way Polyneices would have the figure representing his claim of legitimacy forged.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the Justice depicted on the shield might be one followed in a headstrong manner, but she is nonetheless leading her protégé in accordance with the merits of his status as the eldest son of Oedipus; namely, σωφρόνως.

By the end of the report, Eteocles loses his temper in an abrupt way, deviating from his former composure. Solmsen argues that this is the point where Oedipus' curse gains utter control over him,<sup>22</sup> but this agitation is perhaps the outcome of Eteocles having an overdue revelation. If the just Amphiaraus sees no injustice in Polyneices' claim, and the blazon-censoring scout sees nothing censurable with the blazon of the instigator of the siege, Eteocles has nothing left to his defense other than to challenge the justice of his brother. Subsequently, in his inability to rebut his brother's claim, Eteocles asserts that Justice never attended Polyneices in his life, and she would be false to her name if she allied herself with an all daring man (670-1). Putting trust in the absolutism of this assertion (672 τούτοις πεποιθώς), he decides to stand against Polyneices; who else has, he asks, a better right (673 τίς ἄλλος μᾶλλον ἐνδικώτερος;)?<sup>23</sup> In view of that, Roisman insightfully argues:<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This remark seems to add a further dimension to the figure of Justice, which can neither be deduced from the depiction itself, nor presented as a boast of Polyneices. Considering that Polyneices' armament—in contrast to the ones of the first five chieftains—is devoid of any negative value judgments, it appears that the scout is actually making an implicit comment in favor of his cause. This argument builds on Roisman's observations regarding the interpretive function of the scout, whose reports pose moral and rhetorical challenges to Eteocles. In the case of the report on his brother, however, "instead of denying outright that Dike could afford Polyneices any possible assistance, on the grounds of the harm Polyneices wishes to bring on Thebes, [Eteocles] declares him unfit on the grounds of undefined personal characteristics" (1990, 35).

<sup>22</sup> See Solmsen (1937).

<sup>23</sup> To this ultimate assertion of being just, a parallel from the *Suppliants* puts the action in the perspective of Aeschylean morality. Specifically, when the Danaids claim that Justice protects her champions, the Argive king responds: "she does, if she was a comrade all along" (344 εἴπερ γ' ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πραγμάτων κοινωνὸς ἦν). Of course, such a comradeship can hardly be adduced for Eteocles.

<sup>24</sup> Roisman (1990), 35-6.

He never explains why Dike would not lend a hand to a person like Polyneices. He uses the term ἐνδικώτερος (673), in a most limited personal way: he is justified in fighting his brother because both of them are leaders, brothers, and foes. Eteocles does not tell us, however, why his own cause is more just than Polyneices'. All we are told is that Dike would never consort with a man like Polyneices.

Therefore, there seems to be ample space for skepticism when it comes to Eteocles' claim to justice, while his pursuit of this justice entails a change in his religious disposition that also taints his earlier claim to σωφροσύνη.

In the first part of the play, the actions of Eteocles vividly suggest that his claim to religious σωφροσύνη holds true to a certain degree, but to be convinced by his claim to justice, or to take Eteocles' side in the fraternal feud, is to be deceived by a charade.<sup>25</sup> Despite his appearance as a king genuinely pious and concerned about Thebes and its citizens during this moment of crisis, the responsibility of Eteocles for the incitement of this crisis cannot be overlooked. Since the *Seven* is the only surviving play of the tetralogy, there can be no certain definition of the causality behind the brothers' dispute. In the surviving tragic tradition on the Theban cycle, however, Polyneices is always the one whose right to the throne is infringed,<sup>26</sup> and in the *Seven* he is likewise the one unjustly exiled.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, Eteocles is in no way blameless for the situation at hand, but the silence of all Theban citizens on his culpability is striking; neither the Chorus, nor later the scout

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<sup>25</sup> For views of Eteocles as an innocent victim of necessity, see Solmsen (1937), 200-7; Cameron (1971), 13; 25-6, 40; Lawrence (2004) passim. Additionally, even though he recognizes Eteocles' part in the quarrel, von Fritz systematically downplays his culpability for the incitement of the war by contrasting his sense of responsibility with Polyneices' rashness; see von Fritz "Eteocles in *Seven against Thebes*," in Lloyd (2007), 146-7, 166-73.

<sup>26</sup> In Sophocles, Eteocles exiles Polyneices and usurps the throne; S.*OC*.361-84, 1284-345. In Euripides, the two brothers have an agreement on alternate kingship, which Eteocles breaks out of desire for exclusivity; E. *Ph*.56-87, 357-525. This agreement appears to be a Euripidean innovation to the tradition; see Sommerstein (2010), 85-6.

<sup>27</sup> *Sept*.637-8 ἢ ζῶντ' ἀτιμαστῆρα τῶς ἀνδρηλάτην / φυγῆι τὸν αὐτὸν τόνδε τείσασθαι τρόπον, 979 ἔδειξατ' ἐκ φυγᾶς ἐμοί. In the earliest surviving testimonies on the Theban cycle, Polyneices is the one that incurs Oedipus' curse on both his sons by serving him a meal on Laius' table; cf. Bernabé (1987), *Thebais* fr.2-3. This incident could have been used to justify Polyneices' exile in other versions of the myth, but there is no evidence to entertain the possibility of Aeschylus presenting this exile as a well-deserved treatment in his tetralogy.



say anything about the trouble that Eteocles has caused to Thebes because of the way he treated his brother. Nevertheless, as Orwin insightfully notes:<sup>28</sup>

If it is that Eteocles is blameless before Polyneices, it rests upon a misreading of the evidence. We must not conclude that Eteocles is guiltless from his failure to accuse himself. Nor is it decisive that while he still lives no one else accuses him, when “no one else” consists of an underling and some terrified maidens to whom courage comes only much later in the drama.

The utter silence regarding Eteocles’ part of the blame early on proves not his innocence, but rather his iron rule —something repeatedly demonstrated during his dialogue with the Chorus. Regardless of how one chooses to assess the character of Eteocles in the dispute with his brother,<sup>29</sup> his unjust treatment of Polyneices is the avowed *casus belli*.

Similarly, Eteocles’ religious σωφοσύνη is contested by his impious resolution to become a fratricide for the sake of his throne and incur pollution. Eteocles justifies the decision to meet his brother in battle by resorting to fatalism and blaming Oedipus’ curse (652-5):

ὦ θεομανές τε καὶ θεῶν μέγα στύγος, ὦ πανδάκρυτον ἄμὸν Οἰδίπου γένος· ὦ μοι, πατὴρ δὴ νῦν ἀραὶ τελεσφόροι.	Oh, my family, maddened and greatly hated by the gods, the race of Oedipus, soaked in tears. Alas, my father’s curses now come to fulfillment.
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This fatalism, however, can hardly be convincing, since “it is not really Fate or the Erinyes alone that brings about the duel, but Eteocles’ belief that the curse must come true which causes him to choose as he does.”<sup>30</sup> Even when the Chorus attempt to dissuade him, stressing the irredeemable religious pollution of fratricide (682 οὐκ ἔστι γῆρας τοῦδε τοῦ μιάσματος), Eteocles once again resorts to unconvincing fatalism, claiming that “the god hastens the deed” (689 ἐπεὶ τὸ πρᾶγμα

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<sup>28</sup> Orwin (1980), 189.

<sup>29</sup> The fact that Eteocles has been unjust is not a de facto vindication of Polyneices, who threatens the entirety of the Theban population with massacre for the sake of an interfamilial dispute. Although he is not the legitimate king of Thebes, as Polyneices asserts (631-41), Eteocles maintains that he acts in the best interest of the Theban people (cf. *Sept.*1-20, 30-9, 264-86). Eteocles’ awareness of his civic responsibility is aptly expressed through the ship metaphor that pervades the play; cf. *Sept.*2-3, 62-5, 208-10, 283, 595, 652, 992. For an analysis of Eteocles’ self-portrayal as a good leader, see Kirkwood (1969), 18-20.

<sup>30</sup> Cameron (1970), 109.

κάρτ' ἐπισπέρχει θεός).<sup>31</sup> Therefore, it appears that the challenge of his rule is enough to bring Eteocles' religious σωφροσύνη on its head, for sovereign ambitions seem to weigh for him more heavily than religious propriety. This holds equally true for Polyneikes, who seeks to either kill or exile his brother (636-8), while also leading a host of impious followers. As in the case of Xerxes and his soldiers in the *Persians*, the impiety of the Argives seems to be the reflection of their leader's disposition. This manifests in the description of the boasts and blazons of Polyneices' captains in the shield scene, which clearly echoes Darius' speech, especially regarding the load of ὑπέρ- compounds that exemplified the excessiveness stemming from the lack of σωφροσύνη.<sup>32</sup>

In retrospect, it seems that the *Seven* evokes the semantics of σωφροσύνη from the *Persians*, but also expands on its significance. Xerxes was a presumptuous monarch who led a vast expedition in pursuit of self-aggrandizement, during which he became impious towards the gods and neglectful towards his subjects. Likewise, with indifference towards the civic chaos that ensues from their conflicting claims, Eteocles and Polyneices strive for their father's throne, while being mutually willing to commit a crime of impiety that incurs the gravest of religious pollutions.

After the play reaches its climax with the news on the mutual fratricide, the reaction of the Chorus is indicative of the brothers' image in the eyes of the Thebans. The maidens lament both brothers as “demolishers of their paternal halls and achievers of bitter monarchies” (882-3 ἐρειψίτοιχοι καὶ πικρὰς μοναρχίας / ἰδόντες), commenting thus on the motivation of both brothers, which was no other than the desire for exclusivity on the throne. Consequently, the first two plays of the Aeschylean corpus have already set for σωφροσύνη a semantic as well as thematic horizon.

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<sup>31</sup> The student of Aeschylus cannot help but discern the echo of the scene during Xerxes' return in the *Persians*, and especially Darius' theological aphorism that “the god lends a hand to the one that hastens himself” (742 ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χὼ θεὸς συνάπτεται).

<sup>32</sup> cf. Sept.387 ὑπέρφρον σῆμα, 391 ὑπερκόμποις σαγαῖς, 425 ὁ κόμπος δ' οὐ κατ' ἄνθρωπον φρονεῖ, 502 ἀνδρὸς ἐχθαίρουσ' ὕβριν; *Pers.*749-50 θνητὸς ὢν θεῶν τε πάντων ᾤετ', οὐκ εὐβουλίᾳ, / καὶ Ποσειδῶνος κρατήσιν... 808 ὕβρεως ἄποινα καθέων φρονημάτων, 820 ὡς οὐχ ὑπέρφευ θνητὸν ὄντα χρῆ φρονεῖν, 827-8 Ζεὺς τοι κολαστῆς τῶν ὑπερκόμπων ἄγαν / φρονημάτων ἔπεστιν, εὐθυνοσ βαρύς.

In both plays the term has connotations of status-based behavioral propriety, which applies equally towards religious and social hierarchies. Moreover, in both plays the monarch proves to be an intrinsically problematic figure in terms of σωφροσύνη, with a manifest proclivity towards delusions of majesty, which in turn induce impiety and civic catastrophes. Amphiaraus seems to be the first exception to this pattern, but more exceptions are to follow in a further expansion of the term's thematics in the *Suppliants* and the *Oresteia*, especially in the sphere of political discourse.

## Chapter 3: The *Suppliants*

As the earliest surviving enactment of a diplomatic crisis, the *Suppliants* introduces a new perspective on σωφροσύνη in Aeschylean tragedy. In their attempt to avoid a marriage of familial endogamy, the daughters of Danaus flee from Egypt, along with their father, and seek refuge in Argos. Under Danaus' scrupulous advice, the Danaids come forward in supplication and ask the Argive king, Pelasgus, for protection from their persecuting cousins, the Aegyptiads. The crisis that Pelasgus is called to resolve has a double edge. On the one hand, Greek custom dictates that suppliants are to be protected in the name of Zeus Hikesios. On the other hand, if the Aegyptiads have a formal claim on the Danaids by Egyptian law, a refusal to surrender the maidens can only be expected to result in retaliation. In view of that, references to σωφροσύνη in this play are made exclusively by Danaus and pertain to the appropriate conduct of the suppliant maidens, insofar as they plead such a precarious case being themselves foreigners. Therefore, σωφροσύνη in the *Suppliants* continues to connote a status-based behavioral propriety, but this time regarding the status of a foreigner and especially a woman in the Greek world.<sup>1</sup> Although the term does not seem to be as important for the moral evaluation of characters as in previous plays, it appears that Aeschylus uses σωφροσύνη in this play with a specific political agenda in mind as he stresses its importance for a democratic society.

The opening scene features one of the longest prologues in Aeschylean drama, where the Danaids introduce themselves and relate their misfortunes and lineage. The identification of the maidens is established when they refer to their father, who has been the adviser of their plans (11

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<sup>1</sup> Female σωφροσύνη consists of specific ideals, which remain essentially unaltered throughout antiquity; namely, chastity, modesty, self-control, and obedience. See North (1966), 1 n.2, 21.

Δαναὸς δὲ πατὴρ καὶ βούλαρχος).<sup>2</sup> As an Argive squadron approaches, the first words uttered by Danaus are indeed advice for his daughters, as they are told to keep their wits about them and follow his reasoned instructions (176-7 φρονεῖν χρή· ξὺν φρονοῦντι δ' ἤκετε / πιστῶι γέροντι), in order to avoid further misfortunes. The instructions to the maidens concern their mode of supplication; they should respond to questions with plaintive and lugubrious words that reveal their neediness, as befits strangers (194-5 ὡς ἐπήλυδας πρέπει). Above all, Danaus adds (197-9):<sup>3</sup>

φθογγῆι δ' ἐπέσθω πρῶτα μὲν τὸ μὴ θρασύ,	Let no audacity follow your words, and let the
τὸ μὴ μάταιον δ' ἐκ ἄμετώπων σωφρόνων	forehead of faces with σωφροσύνη, along with
ἴτω προσώπων ὄμματος παρ' ἡσύχου.	the serenity of the eyes, affirm your solemnity.

Danaus points at the capacity of facial expressions to indicate one's σωφροσύνη, and we are perhaps to understand a reference to a lowered gaze that would exhibit the submissiveness of a supplicating party. Apparently, Danaus understands that their favorable treatment depends on a demonstration of awareness regarding the status of a suppliant, and especially a band of female ones. His last words are indicative: “remember to be submissive,” Danaus exclaims, “you are a needy, foreign, fugitive; bold speech does not beseem the ones of inferior standing” (202-3). The Danaids endorse the rationality of their father's advice and promise to act accordingly (204 φρονούντως πρὸς φρονοῦντας ἐννέπεις).

When Pelasgus enters the stage, he marvels at the Danaids' barbaric raiment and the way they dispense with the formalities that define proper conduct for foreigners (234-45). As soon as they are asked where they hail from, the Danaids attempt to establish their connection with Argos by attesting their descent from Io. Consequently, the Argive king admits that they have a share in

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<sup>2</sup> For the ambiguities surrounding the adjectives that introduce Danaus in the narrative, especially regarding his role as the instigator of the Aegyptiads' assassination later in the tetralogy, see Sommerstein (1977), 67.

<sup>3</sup> The Medicean MS reads σωφρονῶν, but all editors agree on a reaccentuation to σωφρόνων that restores the soundness of the text. The μετώπω, however, is both superfluous and beyond any certain emendation. For the citation, I choose to read the text of Friis Johansen & Whittle, who also give an account of the various editorial conjectures on this frustrating crux (1980, ad 198). Regardless of how we choose to deal with μετώπω, our understanding of the text is not inhibited; see Rademaker (2005), 114-5.

the land (325). Nevertheless, when the maidens reveal the purpose of their travel from Egypt, he realizes that providing them with asylum could be a cause of war (342); thus, the Danaids attempt to reassure the king that the justice of their cause guarantees that Justice will be his champion. Nonetheless, Pelasgus doubts their allegation (343-4) and is deeply skeptical about a decision that will force the people under his rule into the terrible dilemma of either defying Zeus Hikesios or getting involved in unforeseen bloodshed. Pelasgus' scruples bring his thoughts back to the alleged legitimacy of the Danaids' cause, and thus he requests proof that Egyptian law does not endorse the authority of the Aegyptiads over them (387-91). Instead of a response, the Danaids once again resort to allegations that Justice is on their side.<sup>4</sup> As a result, Pelasgus proclaims that he cannot decide the issue at hand without harm and thus resolves to resign (438-44). After hearing that, the Danaids threaten to pollute the altars of the gods by hanging themselves from their statues (455-67).<sup>5</sup> Apparently, the self-control advised by Danaus earlier on is utterly neglected in the prospect of their asylum being rejected, which instills a paralyzing fear in the women (513 δυσφορεῖν φόβωι φρένα).

Eventually, Danaus is sent to the city in order to plead their cause with the entire citizen body, and succeeds in receiving the unanimous vote of the Argives in favor of granting asylum to the suppliants (605-8). Immediately upon this news, the Danaids start praying for Argos and its citizens (625-709), treading on the path of σωφοσύνη. They pray for plague and civil war to stay away from the city, and for the youth not to be destroyed by Ares; for altars to teem with offerings

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<sup>4</sup> The supplication of the Danaids could certainly be rejected, given the negative consequences of its success for the Argives. Therefore, the constitutional complications that Pelasgus puts forward seem to be a warranted and genuine issue to be considered; for unsuccessful supplications, see Gould (1973), 80-2. In this regard, the fact that the Danaids never refute a legal compulsion at their expense perhaps indicates that by Egyptian law their cousins indeed have authority over them; see Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980), ad 387-91. In addition, when the Egyptian herald appears on stage, he also pushes the legitimacy of his otherwise outrageous behavior; cf. *Supp.*916-37.

<sup>5</sup> The threat of the Danaids to kill themselves and bring pollution on the supplicated party is exceptional in terms of threats made by suppliants. The use of threats by a supplicating party is an admittedly rare phenomenon, but it always appears within the context of successful supplications; see Naiden (2006), 84-5.

and new defenders to be always born for the land; for Artemis Hecate to protect women giving birth, and equally Apollo Lykeios the young men; for Zeus to bring crops to perfection and flocks to great multitude; for singers to compose good songs at the altars; for citizens to protect the common welfare and foreigners, honor the native gods and their parents.<sup>6</sup> Danaus expresses his approval and commends the σωφροσύνη of his daughters (710 εὐχὰς μὲν αἰνῶ τάσδε σώφρονας, φίλαι), as their prayers “dispense with the violent threats that they had used before in favour of a benevolent calm.”<sup>7</sup> Accordingly, when the ships of the Aegyptiads can be seen approaching in the distance, Danaus advises his daughters to remain within the constraints of σωφροσύνη (724 ἡσύχως χρῆ καὶ σεσωφρονησμένως), as there is no reason to resort once again to actions that would challenge the behavioral propriety of their status. Terror starts seizing the Danaids (738), but Danaus reassures them that the vote and courage of the Argives is a secure bulwark.

The play eventually reaches its climax when an Egyptian herald attempts to drag the Danaids back to the shore and return them to their cousins. Pelasgus defends the supplicating party as per the city’s decision and announces that they are free to move into the city. As the Danaids consider the housing options offered, Danaus has a last piece of advice, which pertains —once again— to the need for σωφροσύνη, as he has one more σωφρόνισμα for his daughters to heed (992). Specifically, Danaus recognizes that the assimilation of refugees to a new community takes time, and the process is easier if the refugees adopt local customs. In the case of the maiden Danaids, the behavioral propriety that Danaus urges them to keep up refers to their chastity, as he warns them about the disastrous results that the loss of their virginity would incur. Therefore, his

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<sup>6</sup> Reverence for foreigners, gods, and parents are traditionally considered the three written laws of Justice; cf. *Supp.*708-9 and *Eu.*269-72, 538-48.

<sup>7</sup> Rademaker (2005), 115-6.

final words before leaving the stage underline the significance of this aspect of social σωφροσύνη (1012-3):

μόνον φύλαξαι τάσδ' ἐπιστολάς πατρός,      Only keep in mind these instructions of your  
τὸ σωφρονεῖν τιμῶσα τοῦ βίου πλέον.      father, and value σωφροσύνη more than life itself.

This final remark of course refers to sexual reticence,<sup>8</sup> and σωφρονεῖν “is here for the first time used to describe the behavior proper to unmarried women.”<sup>9</sup>

In retrospect, although σωφροσύνη in the *Suppliants* may not be the pivot of moral evaluation as in previous plays, it seems that it is revealing for an important political perspective on Aeschylean drama. In order to understand this perspective, one has to focus on the most striking peculiarity of the play; namely, the “anachronism” of its political setting.<sup>10</sup> In other words, although Pelasgus is a king, who has a dominion that exceeds the typical geographical space of a *polis* (249-73), he systematically refuses to take authoritarian decisions in the manner of Xerxes or Eteocles, even when the Danaids try to undermine the political power of the citizen-body (370-5). As Easterling puts it:<sup>11</sup>

The Chorus, brought up in Egypt, and therefore familiar with the model of the Eastern potentate, assume that Pelasgus can do as he chooses without consultation; but Pelasgus insists that the people be involved, and it becomes clear, when at length he has arrived at a decision, that the issue is not settled until the people have ratified it.

The significance of this political paradox of the *Suppliants* and the political portrayal of the Danaids have been analyzed in terms of Aeschylean dramatics. On the one hand, Garvie argues that the peculiar proto-democratic constitutional monarchy of Argos has a unique dramatic value, since the dilemma of Pelasgus, between protecting the citizens of Argos or the suppliants of the

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<sup>8</sup> See Friis Johansen & Whittle (1980), ad loc.

<sup>9</sup> North (1966), 37.

<sup>10</sup> It has been argued that the term anachronism is not applicable to the artistry of the tragedians. Accordingly, the proto-democratic regime of the Archaic Age Argos in the *Suppliants* is no exception, since “anachronism cannot be equated with artistic incongruity;” see Burian, P. “Pelasgus and Politics in the Danaid Trilogy,” in Lloyd (2007), 200-2.

<sup>11</sup> Easterling (1985), 2.



gods, is exactly what makes him a tragic persona.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, Hall reads the portrayal of the Danaids along the lines of tragedy's rhetoric of "otherness" and the "cultural importance of defining democracy by comparison with barbarian monarchy or tyranny."<sup>13</sup>

In view of the above remarks, it seems that σωφροσύνη in the *Suppliants* is the bearer of an implicit political message. In Greek terms, the "barbarian" Danaids would certainly require σωφροσύνη to be accepted in *any* society, regardless of its political regime. Although the necessity of σωφροσύνη presently pertains to the Greek world, the fact that the representative Greek society is portrayed as a proto-democratic one does not seem haphazard. The non-coincidental aspect of this portrayal is corroborated by the fact that this connection between σωφροσύνη and democracy recurs in the *Oresteia*. Specifically, in the *Eumenides*, the democratic process instituted by Athena, who acts as another Pelasgus by resorting to democratic arbitration,<sup>14</sup> is hailed as the quintessence of σωφροσύνη. In Aeschylus, whenever a society is praised for its communal decisions, these decisions are the product of democratic processes. Therefore, in the portrayal of a society that democratically decides to protect suppliants at its own cost, the Athenian dramatist emphasizes the σωφροσύνη required from the suppliants to become its members.

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<sup>12</sup> See Garvie (2006), 150-4, and Burian (n.10), 208-10. The fact that Pelasgus refrains from deciding the matter at hand has been also read as a "process of transferring the responsibility to decide;" see Zelnick-Abramovitz (1998), 570-1.

<sup>13</sup> See Hall (1989), 190-200.

<sup>14</sup> Although the word itself is never used, periphrastic allusion to δημοκρατία are found throughout the play; cf. *Supp.* 398, 488, 601-4, 623-4.

## Chapter 4: The *Oresteia*

The final chapter of this study is devoted to σωφροσύνη in the entirety of the *Oresteia*, since the unique completeness of the trilogy allows for an overview of the development of its main theme, which is directly related to the term. The main theme of the trilogy is justice, and what Aeschylus dramatizes is the shift in its administration from the individualistic *lex talionis* to civic juridical process. This developmental process takes place along an almost kaleidoscopic traverse across political milieus. In the *Agamemnon*, the city of Argos is under Agamemnon's absolute monarchy, which is replaced in the end by the tyranny of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Subsequently, in the *Libation Bearers*, the two tyrants are deposed by Orestes, and the play ends with the pursuit of the matricide by the Erinyes and a city in utter political disarray. In the *Eumenides*, the vicious cycle of crime and revenge is eventually broken in Athens, where Athena—as the queen of the city (*Eu.*288)—acts as another Pelasgus by passing her juridical power to the court of the Areopagus, which acquits Orestes in a democratic juridical process. Accordingly, σωφροσύνη appears in key moments, connecting the dysfunctional individualism pervading the custom of retaliation with the excess in behavior that the individual is susceptible to develop when occupying the highest rank in the social hierarchy of a monarchic society. In the first two plays, σωφροσύνη pertains primarily to the distorted self-image of individuals in terms of justice, and the dysfunctional relationship between communal welfare and personal revenge. Finally, in the *Eumenides*, where no single individual presides over the societal chain of command in the *polis* of Athens, the society is praised for the σωφροσύνη that the democratic mechanism of administering justice enforces on both individual and community.

In the *Agamemnon*, σωφροσύνη is the key for our understanding of the Chorus' evaluation of Agamemnon. Thus, the term appears initially in the *parodos*, where the Argive elders lay out

the greatest problem of their king's actions. Ten years have passed since the Greek army left for Troy in retaliation for Helen's elopement. The two Atreids raised a battle cry from the depths of their heart, like two birds of prey robbed of their nestlings (47-54). As a god from above would respond to the birds' painful shrieks by sending an ὑστερόποιον Ἐρινόν to avenge the loss of their nestlings, so Zeus Xenios sent the Atreids against Paris for the sake of a wanton woman, sacrificing Greeks and Trojans alike (60-7). The avenging expedition of the Atreids, however, did not start as auspiciously as the alleged motive to avenge Zeus Xenios would demand. In fact, the choral song changes to a mournful tune<sup>1</sup> as the elders recollect the omen that sped the expedition, along with Calchas' enunciation of its terrible ambivalence (145 δεξιὰ μὲν, κατάμομφα δὲ φάσματα †στρουθῶν†). Seeing two eagles devouring a pregnant hare, Calchas predicted the success of the campaign. Nevertheless, sensing Artemis' anger with the eagles' "sacrifice" of the hare, the seer feared lest the army's departure was hindered in demand of another sacrifice: a harbinger of a μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποιος (155).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, a highly problematic aspect of Agamemnon's actions is his decision to offer this ominous sacrifice, despite his knowledge of the terrible consequences.

As the narrative progresses towards the climax of Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his daughter, the Chorus become overladen with anxiety and find themselves in need of some comfort.

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<sup>1</sup> For the repeated cry of αἴλιος (121, 139, 159), see Fraenkel<sup>2</sup> (1950), ad 121.

<sup>2</sup> The cause of Artemis' anger has been—and probably will continue to be—a matter of heated debate, which this study does not aspire to resolve. Both the symbol and the symbolized in the omen have attributes worthy of resentment. Therefore, scholars have ascribed the reason for the goddess' wrath either to the literal aspect of the omen (i.e. the killing of the pregnant hare), the past crime of Atreus, or the deaths of innocent Trojans; see Lloyd-Jones (1956), (1962), and (1987); Kitto (1960), 1-39; Whallon (1961); Hammond (1965); Peradotto (1969); Lawrence (1976); Kyriakou (2011), 105-10. The most important aspect of the obscure etiology of Iphigeneia's sacrifice is that Aeschylus does not mention or allude to the traditions associated with it. In the summary of the *Cypria* (Procl.*Chr.*80.41-9), we learn that Agamemnon offended Artemis by boasting of his archery skills, while in later sources he avoids fulfilling his promise to offer the goddess the most beautiful animal of his herds (*S.El.*558-76; *Eur.IT.*20-33, 209-17). The hushing of the traditional etiology seems to serve—although obscurely—an artistic purpose, since the anger of the goddess gets connected with present events rather than past offenses; see Fraenkel<sup>2</sup> (1950), 99, and Peradotto (1969), 243-8.

Consequently, they dart into an invocation to Zeus (160-83), as they seek to relieve themselves from a “vain burden of anxiety” (165-6 εἰ τὸ μάταν ἀπὸ φροντίδος ἄχθος / χρῆ βαλεῖν ἐτητύμως). This sudden divergence in the narrative, along with the cryptic language of 160-83, has rendered this invocation—the so-called Hymn to Zeus—one of the most discussed passages in Aeschylean tragedy. Taking this into consideration, the Hymn demands a diligent analysis, since at the final stanza and right before resuming their narrative, the Chorus refer to σωφροσύνη for the first time in the trilogy (179-83):<sup>3</sup>

στάζει δ' ἀνθ' ὕπνου πρὸ καρδίας μνησιπήμων πόνος· καὶ παρ' ἄ- κοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν· δαιμόνων δέ που χάρις βίαιος σέλμα σεμνὸν ἡμένων.	There drips before the heart, instead of sleep, a pain reminiscent of calamity; σωφροσύνη is inculcated even in the unwilling. Surely, there comes a certain coercive favor from the gods, who sit on the august bench of the helmsman.
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In view of the obscure gnomic content of this stanza, some further attention to the motive and the purpose behind the Hymn is required, if we are to understand who are the people referred to as ἄκοντες and also appreciate the significance of σωφροσύνη in the Chorus' moral evaluation of them.

As seen above, the motive for the Hymn is explicitly stated in the first stanza (160-6) as the vain anxiety that afflicts the Chorus. But what is the nature of this anxiety? Two possible answers arise immediately from the context of the Hymn.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, although Calchas

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<sup>3</sup> For this citation, I choose the text of Denniston-Page, who make a strong case for Turnebus' emendation of βιῶως in 182; see Denniston-Page (1957), ad loc. The major debate around 182-3, however, concerns the substitution of the enclitic που of some MSS with the interrogative ποῦ attested in M, thus making the end of the Hymn a pessimistic denial of the gods' χάρις. For the original proposal, see Pope (1974). This proposal has found some support amongst scholars; see West's (1990) edition and Willink (2004), 45-6. Nevertheless, Pope's pessimistic reading has received ample criticism; see Booth (1976) and Raeburn-Thomas (2011), 88. On that point, Conacher claims that “to read the sentence at vv. 182-183 as a despairing question about all the generations of the gods... surely makes nonsense of all that has gone before: first, of the Chorus' point (163-166) that only Zeus can help cast off the vain burden from the mind and second, of the Chorus' careful distinction (174-178) of the special contribution of Zeus in contrast with his predecessors” (1976, 331-2).

<sup>4</sup> Regarding the Hymn's place in the *parodos*, Dawe (1966) has made a renowned proposal for a transposition of 160-83 after 217, arguing that the Hymn's current position has a flimsy connection with the context. Although Dawe makes certain ingenious remarks, his overall argument is not convincing, given the utterly unorthodox defiance of the principles of textual criticism. For a well-thought counterargument on the level of interpretation, see Bergson (1967).

prophesied the capture of Troy (126-30), the war has been terribly prolonged, and the outcome is still uncertain (67-8).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, as the narrative looks forward to the adverse winds and the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, there seems to be a certain unease for the unfulfilled ominous part of Calchas' prophecy,<sup>6</sup> "whose arts do not fail fulfillment" (249). In other words, if the foreseen winds came true, so must the *μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποιος*. Next to those explanations, Smith identifies the Chorus' anxiety with their continuing inability "to understand [Iphigeneia's killing] as an effect corresponding in some way to an adequate cause."<sup>7</sup> In view of this wide spectrum of interpretations, Schenker is perhaps right to suggest that to choose one explanation over another is misleading, since the ill-defined apprehension in 163-6 "creates a general mood of gloom and foreboding, all of it centered on Agamemnon and the Greek expedition to Troy."<sup>8</sup> In fact, it seems that the concerns of the Chorus are focused on the common denominator behind the aforementioned situations, and that is the suffering involved in mortal affairs, either in terms of war casualties or divinely imposed punishment for one's crimes. Therefore, the purpose of the Hymn is a relief from such an anxiety, and the elders seek it in an invocation of Zeus, since he is the latest divine ruler—as we are told in the Hymn's second stanza (167-75)—and thereby the god that presides over the flow of destiny.

In the third stanza of the Hymn (176-83), the Chorus elaborate on the reason why Zeus is identified as a source of relief (176-8); it is he who set humanity on the road of cognition (*φρονεῖν*) and established by law the capacity of human intellect to advance through suffering (*πάθει μάθος*).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For the identification of the elders' source of anxiety with the concern about the welfare of the army, see Gagarin (1976), 139-50.

<sup>6</sup> So Denniston-Page (1957), ad 160ff.

<sup>7</sup> Smith (1980), 16. In the same vein, Lloyd-Jones argued that the Chorus face a dilemma, since "Zeus has sent the Atreidae against the Trojans, but Zeus will concede to Artemis her demand for vengeance against the tearers of the hare" (1956, 61).

<sup>8</sup> Schenker (1994), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Before Zeus, in terms of traditional Greek cosmology, humans had no need of intellect, for they lived under Cronus in a safe and carefree utopia, where their needs were met automatically. Therefore, as Sommerstein observes,

One cannot help but wonder about the kind of relief brought by this reflection. Philology cannot provide an answer to such a deeply religious question, but the anthropological analyses of myth-based religious systems can help us put it in perspective. Specifically, in a world where humans think of themselves as bound to suffer,<sup>10</sup> the chaotic web of causality behind their suffering, which is not always justified, induces an existential anxiety. Accordingly, this anxiety naturally creates a feeling of powerlessness and passivity, which can be nonetheless relieved by putting confidence in some sort of ultimate purpose. As Lévi-Strauss puts it:<sup>11</sup>

[contrary to scientific thinking] myth is unsuccessful in giving man more material power over the environment. However, it gives man, very importantly, the illusion that he can understand the universe and that he *does* understand the universe.

In the present case, the Chorus do not try to fathom the cosmos, but they anxiously seek to understand the causality of the disturbing events in Aulis. Thus, the “vain burden” (165) of their anxiety “may easily be understood as the fruitless search for an ultimate cause by the limited human intellect.”<sup>12</sup> If the Chorus feel a relief in contemplating Zeus’ power, it is the purpose that *he* gave to suffering; namely, the intellectual advancement of humanity. Consequently, the recollection of Zeus’ supremacy, in his role as the guarantor of a meaningfulness behind the painful human existence, seems to restore the emotional stability required for the elders to resume their narrative.

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“[b]efore Zeus, the law *πάθει μάθος*, even if it was theoretically true, was ineffective (*ἄκυρον*), vacuous, trivial... Zeus, by introducing suffering, for the first time made the law actually operative” (2010, 184).

<sup>10</sup> As is evident throughout archaic poetry, Greek religiousness overall is not based on a belief of divine love towards humanity. The Homeric Zeus fills the urns of human destiny by using two kinds of material: one taken from the jar of evils and the other from the jar of blessings. A mixture of the two is the usual allotment, but while filling an urn solely with evils is considered a likely possibility, the contrary is never mentioned (*Il.*24.525-30). In Hesiod, the gods hide the means of life from humans and impose on them a life of toil (*Op.*42). Accordingly, Dover describes the relief coming from the Hymn as “the feeling of liberation which comes from mature acknowledgement of the limitation of one’s own powers, not the euphoria induced by trust in an infinitely good deity” (1973, 63).

<sup>11</sup> Lévi-Strauss (1995), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Golden (1961), 164.

In the last five lines of the third stanza (179-83), where σωφροσύνη comes to the elders' mind, the Hymn's dense gnomic content shifts from generality to particularity. The Chorus interject that "a pain reminiscent of calamity" has been depriving them of sleep (179-80),<sup>13</sup> and conclude with a reference to individuals that are unwilling to act with σωφροσύνη. This reference, however, has proved to be a conundrum for the scholarly discussions of the passage—a conundrum that results from the attempt to link σωφρονεῖν with the theological doctrine of πάθει μάθος.<sup>14</sup> Taking σωφροσύνη to stand for generic "wisdom," scholars have time and again noted that no wisdom comes through suffering in the *Oresteia*;<sup>15</sup> hence, reading σωφροσύνη as wisdom, prudence, or anything of the sort, barely enhances our understanding of the Hymn's finale. On that account, the scholarly attempts—scanty as they are—to interpret σωφρονεῖν in 181<sup>16</sup> pay no attention to the aspect of semantics that this study on Aeschylean σωφροσύνη has so far highlighted as pivotal. In all of Aeschylus' plays so far, the semantic nuances of the term always function as a positive value judgement for one's status-based behavioral propriety within a

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<sup>13</sup> For the interpretation of these lines as a reference back to the Chorus' own feelings, and not a general gnomic utterance, see Lebeck (1971), 26 n.3; Gagarin (1976), 143; Schenker (1994), 6. Reading these lines as a topical reference is not a matter of mere personal choice, since the imagery invoked also has direct dramatic significance. As established in the watchman's prologue (1-39 passim), it is the middle of the night, and while Clytemnestra and the watchman have many reasons to be awake, it appears that the Argive elders are unable to sleep because a μνησιτήμων πόνος στάζει δ' ἀνθ' ὕπνου πρὸ καρδίας.

<sup>14</sup> For a lighthearted account of the bewilderment regarding this stanza, see Sommerstein (2010), 164-70.

<sup>15</sup> So Denniston-Page (1957), ad 184 ff., where they express their frustration with the doctrine's application to Agamemnon and other characters. Equally, Smith notes that "the striking thing about wisdom and suffering in the *Oresteia* is their separation" (1980, 23).

<sup>16</sup> In his pessimistic reading of the Hymn, arguing against the discernment of any divine gifts by the Chorus, Pope argues that "it is possible, but not likely, that the word σωφρονεῖν connotes wisdom in anything resembling the way we are accustomed to use the term, that is to say a faculty or virtue possessed and exercised in freedom" (1974, 107). Attempting to counter Pope's reading, Booth maintained that the Chorus indeed praise the gifts of Zeus to humanity, since man "learns 'sense' after suffering tragic catastrophe... [and] σωφρονεῖν means 'to see sense,' 'to be sensible;'" (1976, 225). On the other hand, Schenker takes 180-3 as a "universalizing commentary" and argues that even to the elders, "unwilling though they are, comes the clear recognition that under the universal law of Zeus, their king and countrymen must suffer the consequences of their actions" (1994, 7). The most striking aspect of all the above arguments is that they are expressed without quoting any supporting scholarship. This is hardly surprising, as even Fraenkel's magisterial commentary has no notes on the meaning of 180-1.

hierarchy. Therefore, instead of asking whom the Chorus see as unwilling to act prudently, we would be better off asking whom they see as unwilling to conform to the propriety of their status.

To answer this question, one should discern the hierarchy presently alluded to behind σωφροσύνη, and as the reference to the helmsman's bench in 183 clearly suggests, this seems to be the one between gods and mortals. The Chorus seem to try to convince themselves that the suffering of the ἄκοντας will compulsorily lead to their correction and advancement due to the divine favor of intellect. Nevertheless, a question still remains: who are the mortals that acted impertinently towards the gods? Denniston-Page argue that this is Paris and the Trojans that abet him, since they have transgressed the customary laws of Zeus Xenios.<sup>17</sup> But this answer hardly explains the μνησιπήμων πόνοσ of the Chorus, since the elders can hardly be anxious as to whether Paris will learn how to behave towards the gods. On the contrary, 179-83 seem to reflect on the immediate context, as the μνησιπήμων quality of the Chorus' πόνοσ echoes the μνάμων Μῆνις (155) of the prophecy and foreshadows Agamemnon's παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων (223).

When the narrative for the events in Aulis resumes, it becomes clear that Paris is not the only one that has offended the gods. After the decision to sacrifice Iphigeneia, the judgment on Agamemnon's character is unusually direct for the Chorus, who exclaim (218-27):

ἐπεὶ δ' ἀνάγκας ἔδω λέπαδνον  
φρενὸς πνέων δυσσεβῆ τροπαίαν  
ἄναγνον ἀνίερρον, τόθεν  
τὸ παντότολμον φρονεῖν μετέγνω.  
βροτοὺς θρασύνει γὰρ αἰσχρόμητις  
τάλαινα παρακοπὰ πρωτοπήμων· ἔτλα δ' οὔν  
θυτῆρ γενέσθαι  
θυγατρὸς, γυναικοποιῶν  
πολέμων ἀρωγὰν  
καὶ προτέλεια ναῶν.

But when he put his neck under the yoke of necessity —breathing forth the profane, unholy, unsanctified wind of his mind— he henceforth veered his disposition to uttermost audacity. For wretched infatuation emboldens mortals: this counsellor of shameful deeds and pioneer of calamity. He thereupon endured sacrificing his daughter to further a war of revenge over a woman and offer preliminary rites for the fleet's departure.

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<sup>17</sup> Denniston-Page (1957), ad 61.



Agamemnon’s disposition is emphatically characterized as impious (219-20), while the decision to perform a filicidal sacrifice is considered the gruesome manifestation of his impiety.<sup>18</sup> The most important aspect of this criticism, however, is what the Chorus identify as the source of Agamemnon’s impious conduct: the *πρωτοπήμων παρακοπά*. Fraenkel remarks that 222-3 evoke a central theme of Aeschylean dramaturgy and draws a connection with the *Persians* (97-9), where we read:

φιλόφρων γὰρ <ποτι>σαίνουσα τὸ πρῶτον παράγει βροτὸν εἰς ἄρκυστ<ατ> Ἴατα· τόθεν οὐκ ἔστιν ὑπὲρ θνατὸν ἀλύξαντα φυγεῖν.	Infatuation leads a man in a place beset with nets, fawning on him at first with friendly intent; no mortal can overleap his way out henceforth.
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“[I]t is perhaps no accident,” Fraenkel argues, “that in the surviving plays of Aeschylus τόθεν only occurs in these two passages, which are so closely akin in thought.”<sup>19</sup> The thought in the *Persians*, as Garvie explains, is a “man’s quest for excessive success and prosperity,”<sup>20</sup> which in the case of Xerxes —coupled with his lack of *σωφροσύνη*— induced an impious behavior. Accordingly, it seems that Agamemnon’s *παρακοπά* is an excessive desire to pursue his cause regardless of the cost, which is here set by Artemis as an action that would turn Agamemnon’s piety on its head. The gods seem to be testing whether the professedly all-pious king of Argos shall prove his real character —the character that he inherits from his father, Atreus, whose sacrifice of his nephews mirrors the sacrifice now asked from Agamemnon.<sup>21</sup> The test eventually proves that Agamemnon

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<sup>18</sup> Scholarly criticism on the sacrifice stands divided. Zeitlin argues that behind the sacrifices in the *Oresteia* we see “the distortion of the relationship between gods and men which results in impiety” (1965, 498). On the other hand, Dover maintains that “Agamemnon took the course which most people with Greek values and presuppositions would have felt bound to regard as dictated by honour, justice, piety and the overriding obligation to subordinate one’s own life and the lives of one’s dependents to the common good” (1973, 66). Finally, Pucci takes the middle road by reading into the demand for the sacrifice a means of divine persuasion, while noting that the Chorus “emphasize the father’s awful daring in sacrificing his daughter... nevertheless, they demonstrate a certain amount of unreasonableness and even violence in their disregard of Artemis’ demand” (1992, 524). Regardless of how one chooses to evaluate the act of the sacrifice, the Chorus are explicit about their own moral judgement.

<sup>19</sup> Fraenkel<sup>2</sup> (1950), ad 223.

<sup>20</sup> Garvie (2009), ad 93-100.

<sup>21</sup> See Peradotto (1969), 249-61. When Cassandra appears on stage the complex of inherited ἦθος is brought forcibly to the fore (1085-99, 1178-97). For the artful expression of this complex in the lion parable (717-36), see Knox (1952).

is a true child of Atreus; namely, an impious dynast that would stop at nothing to achieve his personal goals.<sup>22</sup>

In retrospect, it seems that the pain that keeps the elders awake at night is the prospect of the chastisement of Calchas' prophecy, but this chastisement is not applicable exclusively to Agamemnon. Although he is the primary referent, the king of Argos is just one of the ἄκοντες σωφρονεῖν, since he is not alone in his warmongering lust. Even if the peer pressure of the φιλόμαχοι βραβῆς (230) is just an alleged motive behind Agamemnon's decision to sacrifice his daughter, no real opposition against the impiety of the act was ever voiced by his followers. The Chorus do know that the mortals who disregard the gods will suffer in their unwillingness to act with σωφροσύνη, but the belief in an ultimate correction through their suffering later proves to be wishful thinking. Most of the Greek army is lost in the middle of the Aegean Sea, in a way that the army's herald announcing the return of the king ascribes to pure divine anger (648-80), while Agamemnon is also destined to meet his demise.

At the end of the brooding *parodos*, Clytemnestra delivers the news brought by the fire beacons and brings the narrative back on track with the dramatic present. The Chorus cannot hold their tears hearing that Troy has fallen (270), thus confirming that the outcome of the war was indeed afflicting their thoughts. Nonetheless, Clytemnestra reminds them that the safe return of the army still depends on the soldiers' proper conduct. Should they act reverently towards the gods in Troy, and not allow the prospect of gain to overcome the proper reverence for things sacred, the Argives shall return safely;<sup>23</sup> "these are," says Clytemnestra, "the thoughts of a woman" (338-48). To this sensible assessment of the war's outcome, the Chorus respond: "lady, you speak wisely,

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion on the substance of Agamemnon's famous dilemma (206-17) and the alleged divine coercion that some scholars ascribe to the Trojan War, see Appendix 2.

<sup>23</sup> Once again, Aeschylean language creates echo chambers as Clytemnestra's κέρδεσιν νικωμένους (342) is resounding in the background of the herald's retrospective aphorism νικᾷ τὸ κέρδος, πῆμα δ' οὐκ ἀντιρρέπει (574).

like a σώφρων man” (351). This is a point of elegant irony, since the ascription of σωφροσύνη is directed towards one of the least deserving characters of Aeschylean drama. Clytemnestra utterly lacks the kind of σωφροσύνη specifically associated with a good woman, since she does not conform to any of the traditional notions of gender-based behavioral propriety. The religious σωφροσύνη invoked in her remark, however, draws a significant parallel between the Argive army and the sacrilegious army of Xerxes in the *Persians*. In the first chapter of this study, it was argued that the hubristic conduct of the Persian soldiers was the physical extension of Xerxes’ own hubris out of lack of σωφροσύνη. The infamous profanities of the Greeks during the sack of Troy,<sup>24</sup> as implied in the herald’s account of Troy’s utter destruction (527-32), seem to have the same source; namely, a leader’s lack of σωφροσύνη towards the gods, which eventually passes on to his subordinates.<sup>25</sup> Contrary to Xerxes, Agamemnon’s initial lack of σωφροσύνη is not the product of presumptuous despotic overambitions, but rather his blind zeal for revenge.

On that account, the *parodos* also showcases the thematic similarities between the *Agamemnon* and the *Seven* in terms of σωφροσύνη and political leadership. As in the case of Polyneices and the Δίκη on his shield, Agamemnon is next to his brother the ἀντίδικος (41) of Paris and claims Zeus Xenios as his advocate in a dispute.<sup>26</sup> In the same manner, as Polyneices’ claims to justice could not be reconciled with his actions, the claims of Agamemnon can hardly be

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<sup>24</sup> For an account of Priam’s death —although a suppliant of Zeus Herkeios— at the hands of Neoptolemus, as well as Cassandra’s rape by Ajax the Lesser while clasping the statue of Athena, see *Apollod.Epit.5.21-2* and *Paus.10.31.2*.

<sup>25</sup> The portrayals of Agamemnon and Xerxes are unmistakably similar in many ways. The yoking metaphor used throughout the *Persians*, which implicitly suggested Xerxes’ monarchic presumptuousness, is applied by the herald to Agamemnon; cf. 529-31 τοιόνδε Τροίαι περιβαλὼν ζευκτήριον / ἄναξ Ἀτρείδης πρέσβυς εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ / ἦκει. The most significant parallel is of course drawn during the famous carpet scene (914-57), where despite his initial inhibitions Agamemnon eventually proves that he has taken up an “Oriental despot’s pomp;” see Lanahan (1974), 24-5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ag.810-11* πρῶτον μὲν Ἄργος καὶ θεοὺς ἐγγωρίους / δίκη προσειπεῖν, τοὺς ἐμοὶ μεταίτιους. For the significance of μεταίτιος in expressing the equal responsibility of the human and the divine factor for the Trojan War, see Fraenkel<sup>2</sup> (1950), ad 811.

reconciled with his impiety and the “angered talk of citizens that equals a publicly ordained curse” (456-7) back home.<sup>27</sup> A central theme of the *Seven*, as seen in Amphiaraus’ objections to the claims of Polyneices (*Sept.*580-9), was whether the end justifies the means. In the case of Agamemnon, the Chorus clearly express their criticism against the means, but also against the end of their king’s ambitions: the retrieval of a wanton woman.<sup>28</sup> Like Polyneices, Agamemnon has a serious lack of σωφροσύνη towards the gods, since he decides to pursue his cause even under the burden of impiety, as well as against all considerations of communal welfare.

In the very beginning of the play, the Chorus presented the framework of the administration of justice in the metaphor of the ὑστερόποιος Ἐρινύς (45-57) that follows crimes. Consequently, Agamemnon’s crime finds its Erinys in Clytemnestra, who not only calls upon the Justice, the Ruin and the Erinys of Iphigeneia as her accomplices (1431-3), but also proclaims herself the incarnation of the mighty old spirit of Vengeance that inhabits the house of Atreus (1501-4). Hearing these allegations, the Chorus find themselves frustrated and unable to retort with any censure, since they cannot fathom the conflicting claims of just revenge (1560-6):

<p>ὄνειδος ἦκει τόδ’ ἀντ’ ὀνειδούς,          δύσμαχα δ’ ἔστι κρῖναι.          φέρει φέροντ’, ἐκτίνει δ’ ὁ καίνων·          μίμνει δὲ μίμνοντος ἐν θρόνῳ Διὸς          παθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα· θέσμιον γάρ.          τίς ἂν γονὰν &lt;ἄ&gt;ραῖον ἐκβάλῃ δόμων;          κεκόλληται γένος πρὸς ἅται.</p>	<p>Blame goes against blame, and it is a hard          struggle to judge the situation. The ravager          gets ravaged, the killer pays in full. It stays          firm, since Zeus remains on his throne, that          the doer shall suffer; for it is law. Who          shall rid the house of the curse’s seed? The          entire race is stuck to ruin.</p>
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In the same vein, moments later, Aegisthus claims that Justice herself led him back in revenge of Atreus’ crimes against Thyestes (1605-12).<sup>29</sup> To the claims of Aegisthus, however, the Chorus

<sup>27</sup> The curse forms under the talk of angry citizens, who have been receiving the ashes of their dear ones from Troy (*Ag.*429-74).

<sup>28</sup> The disapproval of the elders for Agamemnon’s decision to wage a war of many casualties for the sake of Helen’s retrieval is a recurrent topic, even when Agamemnon himself appears on stage; cf. *Ag.*60-8, 225-7, 445-49, 799-804.

<sup>29</sup> This is a direct parallel with the *Seven*, especially on the level of language; cf. *Sept.*647 κατάξω δ’ ἄνδρα τόνδε, *Ag.*1607 τραφέντα δ’ αὐθις ἢ Δίκη κατήγαγεν.

respond with sheer aggressiveness, since they refuse to accept the tyrannical rule of a coward over Argos (1633-5), but they selectively ignore Cassandra's prophecy for the πωινή of Thyestes' children (1219-26).

Despite the protests of the elders, the death of Agamemnon brings the monarchy of Argos to an end, as his two murderers institute an imperious tyranny. The self-assertiveness of both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus manifests itself in their violent threats against the Chorus' unwillingness to exhibit σωφροσύνη towards the new status quo. Once again, the term is used to denote the expected behavioral propriety of the socially inferior. Therefore, as the insubordination of the elders excites the tyrants' aggressiveness, Clytemnestra warns them that should their violent resistance fail, they shall have a belated lesson in σωφροσύνη (1425 γνώση διδαχθεῖς ὄψε γούν τὸ σωφρονεῖν). In the same manner, Aegisthus threatens them with torture (1617-24), which shall teach them in their old age how to behave per their superiors' commands (1620 σωφρονεῖν εἰρημένον), and eventually he loses his patience with their stubborn resistance that he deems devoid of σωφροσύνη (1664 σώφρονος γνώμης [δ'] ἄμαρτῶν τὸν κρατοῦντά <λοιδορεῖς>).<sup>30</sup>

A striking aspect in this portrayal of the tyrant duo is its direct connection with the theme of σωφροσύνη that runs through the entire play. In the *parodos*, Agamemnon was portrayed as the monarch who fails to understand what his status towards the gods is and goes on to act with the gravest impiety. In view of this mortal delusion and its foreseen consequences, the Chorus reckoned that the gods shall bring the ones led astray from status awareness back to the ways of σωφροσύνη. Correspondingly, Agamemnon's murderers rise to power by assuming the role of the avenger, and in doing so they not only continue the vicious circle of revenge, but also exhibit an utter disregard for the community. In view of that, the lack of σωφροσύνη of the murderous couple

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<sup>30</sup> Even though certain restoration of 1664 seems improbable, the corruption does not seriously impede our understanding; see Frankel<sup>2</sup> (1950), ad loc.

falls within a familiar pattern, especially as they liken themselves to the status of the ones “seated on the august bench of command” in the Hymn. In a masterful Aeschylean cross-reference, Aegisthus rebukes the Chorus for being insolent towards the ones who sit on the helmsman’s bench, whereas they themselves occupy the benches of the rowers (1617-8 σὺ ταῦτα φωνεῖς νεπτέραι προσήμενος / κόπηι, κρατούντων τῶν ἐπὶ ζυγῶι δορός;).<sup>31</sup> The idea of excessive haughtiness, coupled with the disregard for the community, is connected once again with sovereign power, something already familiar from transgressors of σωφροσύνη such as Xerxes. Therefore, as the play reaches its finale, Argos is left in a state of violent unrest induced by a royal family whose members are impious, as well as dangerous in their obsessive and uncontrolled self-righteousness.

In the *Libation Bearers*, σωφροσύνη is not as prominent as in the first part of the trilogy; in fact, it appears only once, in Electra’s prayers over her father’s tomb.<sup>32</sup> An important aspect of this play is the fact that the labyrinthine problems of morality that previously framed Agamemnon’s actions now belong to the past. On the contrary, the murder of Agamemnon — previously recognized as a χώρας μίασμα καὶ θεῶν ἐγχωρίων (Ag.1645)— is for the second part of the trilogy the predominant point of reference in terms of moral evaluation.<sup>33</sup> The play opens with Orestes’ prayer for support in his plan to avenge his father (18-9), cut short by the entrance of Electra and the Chorus of house slaves. The slave women talk about the χάρις ἀχάριτος of the

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<sup>31</sup> This idea is again expressed later in the trilogy, echoing the Hymn’s σεμνὸν σέλημα of the gods; Ch.975 σεμνοὶ μὲν ἦσαν ἐν θρόνοις τόθ’ ἦμενοι.

<sup>32</sup> The part of the second stasimon where σωφροσύνη seemingly reappears (785-7, δὸς †τύχας τυχεῖν δέ μου / κυρίως τὰ σωφροσυνευ† / μαιομένοις ιδεῖν) is hopelessly corrupt, and the most recent editors soberly choose to obelize it. For a detailed discussion of the various emendations, out of which the most probable ones remove any notions of σωφροσύνη, see Garvie (1986), ad loc. In the apparatus of his edition, Page (1972) notes: “*textum foedissime depravatam praebet M; necesse est aut tradita obelis scatentia repraesentare aut textum coniecturis incertissimis plenum legentibus offerre. hoc praetuli.*” In the same vein, I choose to omit 785-7 from this study.

<sup>33</sup> In view of Electra’s recognition of Iphigeneia’s terrible sacrifice (242), the fact that Orestes invokes Zeus by saying: “καὶ τοῦ θυτῆρος καὶ σε τιμῶντος μέγα / πατρὸς νεοσσοῦς τούσδ’ ἀποφθείρας πόθεν / ἔξεις ὁμοίας χειρὸς εὐθόινον γέρας;” (255-7) makes the patriarchal focus of the trilogy seem crude.

propitiatory libations sent by Clytemnestra, the δύσθεος γυνά (44-6). The impiety of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus is time and again emphasized,<sup>34</sup> to the point where Agamemnon's crimes become "no longer dramatically relevant"<sup>35</sup> for the protagonists of the play. Therefore, with an exclusive focus on her mother's deeds, Electra pours the libations contrary to her request, and while doing so she makes an appeal to σωφροσύνη. Instead of conciliation, Electra asks her father's spirit to assist in Orestes' return and grant her more σωφροσύνη, and piety in her actions, than her mother (140-1 αὐτῆι τέ μοι δὸς σωφρονεστέραν πολὺ / μητρὸς γενέσθαι χειρὰ τ' εὐσεβεστέραν).

Regarding this dual request, it is assumed that Electra is thinking of chastity (σωφρονεστέραν), in contrast to her mother's adultery, and the terrible murder of her father (χειρὰ τ' εὐσεβεστέραν),<sup>36</sup> but such an interpretation seems arbitrary. First, regarding the reference to Clytemnestra's adultery, it has been noted that the adultery per se has minor significance in the trilogy.<sup>37</sup> Thus, it seems that σωφροσύνη here is more closely related to Clytemnestra's defiance of the prescribed gender roles of the patriarchal Greek society, and primarily the one that wants women to be under the jurisdiction of a κύριος.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, regarding the connection

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<sup>34</sup> cf. *Ch.*71-4, 241, 376-9, 429-38, 525, 594-601, 637-8, 644-5, 942-5, 1027-8.

<sup>35</sup> Garvie (1986), ad 242. These lines are the only reference to the sacrifice of Iphigeneia in the play. As Garvie insightfully notes, the fact that Clytemnestra never pleads the sacrifice as her motive is telling, as she "must be presented simply as the criminal who deserves her punishment." On the contrary, Agamemnon is systematically praised; cf. 354-62, 556, 1071-2.

<sup>36</sup> So Garvie (1986).

<sup>37</sup> Bowen rightfully claims that, other than the passing references in *Ag.*856-7, 1204, 1439, 1441, and *Ch.*916-7, Aeschylus makes "virtually no use of sexual relations as a theme" (1986, 51).

<sup>38</sup> The term κύριος expresses a specific function of the Greek male gender role, which translates in a male's responsibility of regulating the lives of the females of his οἶκος. Originally, a woman's κύριος was her father, later her husband, and in the case of widowhood her son or closest male relative. In other words, a Greek woman's life oscillated between the κυριότητα of males; for a full discussion on the cultural concept, see Schaps (1998). In view of that, it is striking that in the first *stasimon* the Chorus juxtapose Clytemnestra's crime to the crimes of Althaea, Scylla, and the Lemnian women; for the mythological references, see Garvie (1986), ad 585-651. The murder cases respectively refer to the murder of a son, a father, and husbands; namely, all possible κύριοι of a woman's life. Accordingly, in her ἀνδρόβουλον κέαρ (*Ag.*11) Clytemnestra rids herself of her husband and sends away her only son, leaving no κύριοι to control her, given that we do not know if her father, Tyndareus, is alive. Given his cowardly passivity, Aegisthus can hardly be considered a κύριος of Clytemnestra, and this is corroborated by the fact that they rule Argos on equal terms; cf. *Ch.*304, 973-4, 1047. For an elaborate discussion of Clytemnestra's androgynous nature in the *Oresteia*, see Zeitlin (1978).

between εὐσέβεια and Agamemnon's murder, it should be objected that the description of human affairs never appears in terms of εὐσέβεια in Greek drama;<sup>39</sup> thus, the referent of χεῖρά εὐσεβεστέρων cannot be the murder of Agamemnon, simply because he is a human, not a god. What Electra has in mind is exactly the χώρας μίασμα καὶ θεῶν ἐγγωρίων (Ag.1645) that her mother, the δύσθεος γυνά (44-6), has brought upon the city of Argos. The ultimate purpose of Electra's prayer is for an avenger to show up and pay Agamemnon's murderers back in their own coin, as retaliatory justice demands (143-4). Despite the recognition of Clytemnestra's impious actions, the disastrous self-righteousness, which has been the motive of all previous crimes, still resonates in the background. The vengeful lust that dominates the hearts of Electra and the Chorus (106-23) makes it obvious that the impasse of the self-administered retaliation is not yet realized, while this lust is further excited after Orestes reveals the divine will that demands the retaliation, along with the consequences of his failure to comply (269-305).

As it happens, Orestes is the only true victim of tragic necessity in the *Oresteia*, given that his murderous pollution is a product of divine compulsion. Regardless of Apollo's command, however, Orestes still hesitates before striking a deathblow to his mother (899), only to be reminded by Pylades that the gods are not to be made one's enemies (900-2). At this point, it is striking that Orestes must decide between two expressions of σωφροσύνη. On the one hand, there is σωφροσύνη towards the sanctity of the parental figure and the dreadful Erinyes that preside over intrafamilial slaughter. On the other hand, there is σωφροσύνη towards Apollo, who ordains Clytemnestra's death at Orestes' hands (269-74), and the horrendous paternal Erinyes of Agamemnon (282-3). Looking back to the Hymn to Zeus, the son of Agamemnon is the only member of the royal family that belongs to the ἐκόντας instead of the ἄκοντας σωφρονεῖν. Yet his

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<sup>39</sup> See Mikalson (1991), 181-2. The Aeschylean εὐσέβεια is no exception; cf. *Sept.*344, 602, 610; *Supp.*852, 340, 419, 852, 941; *Ag.*338, 372; *Ch.*122; *Eu.*1019.



situation demonstrates that even for those willing to be *σώφρονες*, the *lex talionis* —with its vicious cycles, like the one Orestes finds himself in— renders *σωφροσύνη* an impossibility.

Orestes chooses to be *σώφρων* towards Apollo instead of his mother, thus honoring the sanctity of the gods over the sanctity of the parental figure. In view of that, the first appearance of a cognate of *σωφροσύνη* in the *Eumenides* reminds us this choice. Pythia finds Orestes at the altar of Apollo, holding his bloody sword and an olive branch that is adorned *σωφρόνως* with the paraphernalia of supplication (44).<sup>40</sup> Considering that the cost for Orestes' devoutness was the murder of his mother —an act certainly devoid of *σωφροσύνη*— Pythia's remark sounds almost ironic. Nevertheless, Orestes' Olympian-oriented *σωφροσύνη* will eventually prove to be a far sounder criterion for the administration of justice than the self-centered, individualistic retaliation, the only limit of which is supposed to be the *σωφροσύνη* towards the Erinyes, whose *τιμή* is to forestall kindred murder.

In the case of Clytemnestra, the opening scene of the *Eumenides* reveals an unexpected aspect of religious *σωφροσύνη*. The apparition of the late queen laments the dishonor that she suffers amongst the dead (95-102), and seeing the Erinyes in a state of torpor, she goads them on to pursue her son by rebuking their neglect for her past offerings and sacrifices (106-16). Before she disappears, Clytemnestra exclaims (135-6):

ἄλγησον ἦπαρ ἐνδίκους ὀνειδέσιν·            Feel the pain of rightful reproaches in your gut;  
τοῖς σώφροσιν γὰρ ἀντίκεντρα γίγνεται.        to the ones with *σωφροσύνη* they are like a goad.

With certain amazement at the crudeness of Clytemnestra's reprimand, Rademaker notes that these lines present us with "surely the most strikingly paradoxical use of the word *σώφρων* in the entire

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<sup>40</sup> *Eu.*43-5 ἔχοντ' ἐλαίας θ' ὑπιγένητον κλάδον / λήνει μεγίστοι σωφρόνως ἐστεμμένον, / ἀργῆτι μαλλῶν· τῆιδε γὰρ τρανῶς ἐρῶ. Sommerstein (1989, ad loc.) notes that Orestes "supplicates in the proper manner and with due reverence, like a σεμνὸς προσίκτωρ (441)." The respect (*σέβας*) towards the oracle of Apollo betrays the humbleness felt by the suppliant; the value of *σωφροσύνη* at 44 is attributed to Orestes through hypallage. For a note on the peculiarity of *σωφρόνως* in apposition to *μεγίστοι*, see West (1990b), 271-2.

trilogy, [for] Clytemnestra treats the Eumenides as if they were a bunch of servants who fail to do as they are told by their master.”<sup>41</sup> This reading, however, seems to be misleading, since the fact

that the gods have certain obligations towards mortals is expressed earlier by Orestes, who tells

Apollo (85-7):

ἄναξ Ἄπολλον, οἶσθα μὲν τὸ μὴ ἀδικεῖν· ἐπεὶ δ' ἐπίσται, καὶ τὸ μὴ ἀμελεῖν μάθε. σθένος δὲ ποιεῖν εὖ φερέγγυον τὸ σόν.	Lord Apollo, you know how to avoid being unjust; since you know this all too well, learn to not be neglectful. I trust upon your power for my well-being.
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Accordingly, Apollo later expresses his fears about Orestes' case (233-4):

δεινὴ γὰρ ἐν βροτοῖσι κὰν θεοῖς πέλει τοῦ προστροπαίου μῆνις, εἰ προδῶι σφ' ἐκών.	For the wrath of the suppliant is terrible amongst both mortals and gods, if they betray him willingly.
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Next to these remarks, it should be noted that the apparition of Clytemnestra is now above the status of a mere mortal. Like the other apparition of Aeschylean tragedy, Darius, who becomes *ισοδαίμων* (*Pers.*634) after his death, Clytemnestra seems to occupy a similar position. As a result, she argues that the Erinyes disregard her *τιμή* by allowing her to wander dishonored among the dead (95 ἐγὼ δ' ὑφ' ὑμῶν ᾧδ' ἀπητιμασμένη).

In view of her ascension to quasi-divine status, Clytemnestra appeals to the *σωφροσύνη* of the Erinyes, her *ἔγκοτοι κόνεες* (*Ch.*1054), since they belong in the same hierarchy. In this respect, it is no wonder that she uses the blindness of the self-righteous *lex talionis* as the basis of her appeal, since the Erinyes are equally blind in their one-dimensional perception of justice to the chaos that retaliation has so far produced. As a matter of fact, *σωφροσύνη* has a place even in the rhetoric of these horrid demons, as they claim that (517-25):<sup>42</sup>

ἔσθ' ὅπου τὸ δεινὸν εὖ, καὶ φρενῶν ἐπίσκοπον δεῖμ' ἄνω καθήμενον· ξυμφέρει σωφρονεῖν ὑπὸ στένει.	There is a proper place for the dreadful, and for fear to sit upon the mind as its overseer; it is beneficial for <i>σωφροσύνη</i> to come under painful compulsion.
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<sup>41</sup> Rademaker (2005), 120.

<sup>42</sup> For the subtle interpretation of the *φάος καρδίας* (522-3) as an expression for one's dreams, where "suppressed fear and anxiety manifest themselves," see West (1990b), 286.

τίς δὲ μηδὲν ἐν φάει	Who then —city or man alike—
καρδίας δέος τρέφων —	shall revere Justice, without
ἢ πόλις, βροτός θ' ὁμοί-	breeding any awe in the light of
ως — ἔτ' ἂν σέβῃ Δίκαν;	his heart?

This is the reaction of the Erinyes to Athena's proposal for deciding Orestes' case through adjudication, arguing for the necessity of fear when it comes to matters of justice. It should be noted that the Erinyes do not speak of justice in its entirety, but rather the intrafamilial felonies that strictly belong to their jurisdiction.<sup>43</sup> In their mind, the deterrent of ὄμαιμος ἀθέντης φόνοσ (212) is the fear that depends on the awareness of one's status, since the τιμή of these relentless goddesses is the limitation of retaliation (227-8). In other words, it is not just the sanctity of the parental figure that should deter someone from killing their parents, but also the reverence towards the τιμή of goddesses that guarantee the parents' protection from abusive children.

There is, however, an apparent contradiction in what the Erinyes say about the atrocious consequences of anarchy (494-516) and their belief that their awe-inspiring τιμή is the bulwark for mortals to have μήτ' ἀνάρχετον βίον / μήτε δεσποτούμενον (526-7). As one would expect, the efficiency of their τιμή against despotism is given no further comment, since for the spectator of the *Oresteia* the greatest foil to the claim of the Erinyes is that their terrorizing office deterred neither Atreus from butchering his nephews, nor Agamemnon from sacrificing his daughter,<sup>44</sup> in both cases an intrafamilial crime committed by a despot.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the fear of the Erinyes has time and again proven to be dysfunctional in the trilogy. Despite the inefficacy of fear towards the

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<sup>43</sup> *Eu.*210-4, 604-5.

<sup>44</sup> Although the silence regarding Iphigeneia's sacrifice after the end of the *Agamemnon* is striking, it seems to be the result of a certain dramatic necessity. In his reconstruction of *Proteus*, Griffith argues that the satyr-play of the *Oresteia* presented the traditional version of the myth, where Iphigeneia was never actually sacrificed; thus, "the 'theodicy' of the *Oresteia* [becomes] a little more palatable, if it is finally revealed in the fourth play... that Iphigeneia is after all —and as half-expected— safe and sound" (2002, 243).

<sup>45</sup> The children of Thyestes were slain in revenge for his seduction of Atreus' wife; the πρόταρχος ἄτη (*Ag.*1191-7). On the other hand, the term δεσπότης is regularly used to refer to the royal family members; cf. *Ag.*32, 1043, 1225; *Ch.*54, 82, 153, 157, 770, 875.

Erinyes to deter intrafamilial crimes in the house of Atreus, however, the element of fear is adopted by Athena. The goddess in fact echoes the words of the Erinyes during her inauguration speech for the Areopagus, but this time transposed into the citizen body of the Athenians. Athena proclaims that upon the Areopagus, respect and inborn fear of the citizens shall prevent injustice (690-2 ἐν δὲ τῷ σέβας / ἀστῶν φόβος τε ξυγγενῆς τὸ μὴ ἀδικεῖν σχήσει τόδ’),<sup>46</sup> and equally the citizens’ fear of the Areopagus shall guarantee the prevention of anarchy and despotism (696-9). Consequently, the administration of justice passes on to the collective, instead of being in the hands of self-righteous sovereigns.

In the juridical process that follows, the Erinyes are the losers. Despite their vehement reactions to the acquitting result of the voting process, however, they give in to their newly conferred τιμαί and recognize the significance of the newly instituted custom. After asking them to remain as citizens of Athens in eternity, Athena promises that their dreadful office will in fact remain intact (903-37); thus, while uttering blessings for the city, the Erinyes —now Eumenides— exclaim (997-1002):<sup>47</sup>

χαίρετ’, ἀστικὸς λεώς,  
 ἵκταρ ἦμενοι Διός  
 παρθένου φίλας φίλοι,  
 σωφρονοῦντες ἐν χρόνῳ·  
 Παλλάδος δ’ ὑπὸ πτεροῖς  
 ὄντας ἄζεται πατήρ.

Farewell, people of the city,  
 seated close to Zeus, friends of  
 the beloved virgin, gaining  
 σωφροσύνη with the passage  
 of time. Pallas’ father reveres  
 the ones under her wings.

The σωφροσύνη of the Athenian citizens seems to harken back to the ship-governing metaphor of the Hymn to Zeus, which has been so far evoked in key political moments of the trilogy. At this point, however, there is a textual controversy. In 1998, West accepts Bothe’s emendation of ἦμενοι

<sup>46</sup> These lines can read “the Areopagites’ fear of the citizens,” as well as “the citizens’ fear of the Areopagus.” Sommerstein insightfully notes that the ambiguity is deliberate, since “the ‘radical’ and the ‘reactionary’ [in the audience] can both interpret Athena’s words in a manner they will find congenial,” but he favors the “radical” reading as it better suits ἐν δὲ τῷ (1989, ad 690-2).

<sup>47</sup> Text citation from Sommerstein (1989).

to ἡμένας,<sup>48</sup> which would make the Athenian sit close to Zeus' virgin daughter rather than Zeus himself. On the other hand, Chiasson has defended the MSS tradition by tracing the thematic connection of the passage with the Hymn to Zeus, arguing that “Aeschylus may have chosen to enthrone the Athenians next to Zeus in order to recall and reverse with the greatest possible emphasis the ominous image that marks the end of the Zeus Hymn.”<sup>49</sup>

From this perspective, Chiasson provides an insightful interpretation of σωφροσύνη in 1000 and its wider implications in the *Oresteia*, arguing that:<sup>50</sup>

It is the role of the Areopagus in restraining citizens from injustice, emphasized by the goddess in her foundation speech at 690-93, that allows us to appreciate how Athenian wisdom (σωφρονοῦντες ἐν χρόνῳ, 1000) surpasses the wisdom (σωφρονεῖν, Ag.181) imposed upon men in the Zeus Hymn. In the earlier passage σωφροσύνη represents the punishment of wrongdoing inflicted by a violent god upon humans unwilling to respect him, while in the later passage Athenian respect for Zeus (ideally) prevents injustice in the first place, and precludes the need for punishment.

Nevertheless, the institution of the Areopagus does not solely depend on piety to hold injustice among mortals in check. As Athena indeed emphasizes in 690-3, the transposition of administering justice from the hands of one person —especially those of a self-entitled despot— to the collective of a community involves a preventative respect, or fear, of both gods *and* mortals. Thus, the democratic judicial system of the Athenian *polis* necessitates a status awareness on both the religious and the social level; namely, a unique combination of social and religious σωφροσύνη. Consequently, the result of this political advancement is the inculcation of the quintessence of σωφροσύνη, and should the Athenians adhere to this system, they will be indeed σωφρονοῦντες ἐν χρόνῳ.<sup>51</sup> In this perspective, the democratic reform of administering justice leads not only to

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<sup>48</sup> See West (1990).

<sup>49</sup> Chiasson (1999/2000), 154.

<sup>50</sup> *ib.* 152.

<sup>51</sup> In his commentary, Sommerstein notes that the prepositional phrase ἐν χρόνῳ normally means “eventually, at last, in course of time” (cf. *Supp.*139, 938; *Ag.*857; *Ch.*1040; *Eu.*498), and explains that the implications are either that 1) the Athenians are contrasted by the Erinyes with all other humans, or that 2) the Athenians learn σωφροσύνη “in proper time” without the need of suffering (1989, ad 1000). In his article, Chiasson argues for the first reading,

piety, but also to a conditional elevation of man close to the gods. Certainly, Zeus shall preside over justice, but as long as mortals preserve a political system where god and human community inspire equal respect, they shall be seated close to him in mutual reverence.

The end of the *Oresteia* coincides with the end of a simultaneous progress that revolved around the pivot of σωφροσύνη. The political transformation of human society went hand in hand with the transformation of the idea of justice, while it was slowly realized by both gods and mortals that religious σωφροσύνη should necessarily be coupled with social σωφροσύνη, if justice is to be effectively operative. The *Agamemnon* sets the scene for the problematic aspect of the *lex talionis*, as administered by self-righteous sovereigns with utter disregard for social and religious propriety, to emerge. On the one hand, a monarch that obsesses over his personal ambitions reaches the point where he readily submits himself to the παντότολμον. On the other hand, the self-righteous retaliation of Agamemnon's punishers brings to the fore the delusions of superhuman status that the monarchic society can cultivate. The rise of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra to the throne of Argos was the rise of a domineering tyranny of άνόσιοι, eventually deposed by the only real proxy of the gods. Finally, the descent of the Erinyes upon Orestes signaled the clash of old and new principles; a contrast that is less related to religion than it is to politics. When the dispute between the representatives of the new and the old status quo comes to Athens, the divine queen of Athens refrains from deciding the matter by herself, and like another Pelasgus in the *Suppliants*, she makes the administration of justice not a matter of the individual, but a matter of the community. The importance of σωφροσύνη in the trilogy is reflected in the way it portrays the causality behind the events that propel the entire plot, for the dysfunctionality of justice is mainly based on the ability

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since "the placement of mere mortals at Zeus' side would be extraordinary indeed, but... the Athenians are being represented as indeed extraordinary mortals" (1999/2000, 153). Sommerstein later endorses Chiasson's analysis and admits that his second reading of έν χρόνοι was mistaken (2010, 188).

of sovereigns to act in an unrestrained manner that lacks σωφροσύνη on all levels. This chapter was an attempt to demonstrate the grandeur of Aeschylean poetics in fathoming how a dignified non-democratic idea, the status-based behavioral propriety of σωφροσύνη, finds a far better implementation outside the environment of aristocratic individualism.

## Conclusions

The present study on σωφροσύνη in Aeschylus has been following the principles of structuralism regarding the definition of the term's semantics, engaging in "the quest for the invariant, or for the invariant elements among superficial differences."<sup>1</sup> In view of that, it has already been argued in the introduction that σωφροσύνη is presently examined as the positive value term for someone's status-based behavioral propriety within a hierarchy. After examining all the occurrences of the cognates of σωφροσύνη in the Aeschylean corpus, this definition is not only confirmed, but also appears to be necessary for our understanding of this culturally significant term. Accordingly, by looking closely at occurrences such as *Pers.*829, *Sept.*645, *Ag.*181, *Ch.*140, and *Eu.*1000, it has been demonstrated that by reading into σωφροσύνη something as pointlessly general as "wisdom" or "prudence" the obscurity of Aeschylean poetry is hardly illuminated. On the contrary, the invariant element of the term's semantics emerged as the status-based behavioral propriety expected from humans in all different polarized hierarchy structures of their existence; for example, those of god and mortal, king and subject, male and female, supplicated and suppliant, as well as parent and child.

In the *Persians*, the appeal to σωφροσύνη illuminates the problems that surround the figure of the monarch, who might be superior next to his subjects, but should in turn be σώφρων towards the gods. Xerxes forgets his inferiority next to the gods and eventually insults them by assuming a hubristic disposition. This problematic relationship between a monarch and the gods, however, is directly influenced by the lack of bottom-up societal control within the monarchic regime. The elevation of the Persian monarchs to divine status and the lack of any social control over their

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<sup>1</sup> Lévi-Strauss (1995), 8.



decisions creates a political milieu that is disturbingly dangerous for the individual seated on the top of the social pyramid. Nonetheless, the fact that Xerxes takes an advantage that is readily offered to him is his individual mistake —this is his ἄμαρτία, as Aristotle would put it (*Poet.*1453a). Darius' catalogue of good monarchs demonstrates where exactly Xerxes missed the mark, since they showed religious σωφροσύνη by revering the gods as well as concern for their subjects. Therefore, Xerxes' mistake was to allow himself to fall into the delusion that having no social peers makes you a god.

The *Seven against Thebes* is another example of the highly problematic relationship between sovereigns in a monarchic society and σωφροσύνη. In this play, even though monarchs are not deified in an oriental fashion, they still have a distorted understanding of what constitutes σωφροσύνη. Eteocles and Polyneices appropriate σωφροσύνη, either directly or indirectly, in their claims to what they think proper for their status; the former demands respect and obedience from the Chorus, whereas the latter demands his restitution to the throne. Nevertheless, Aeschylus is once again presenting a sovereign figure that possesses σωφροσύνη, and this time not by implication, like Cyrus and Darius in the *Persians*, but explicitly. Amphiaraus is portrayed as the quintessentially σώφρων figure, since he realizes that mortals should be reverent towards the gods, but also that kings should be considerate towards their subjects.

For the first time in the *Seven*, female σωφροσύνη appears in Eteocles' rebukes against the Chorus of maidens, who are asked to behave according to what Eteocles thinks proper towards the gods and himself. The theme of female σωφροσύνη is further elaborated in the *Suppliants*, where Danaus —another σώφρων figure by implication— advises his daughters as to how to achieve their protection and smooth integration in the society of Argos. As seen in the respective chapter, status-based propriety is the main referent of σωφροσύνη when it comes to Danaus' admonitions.

Danaus —at least for the trilogy’s surviving part<sup>2</sup>— is the σώφρων leader of a group of refugees, who knows all too well how their gender and status prescribes their behavior, in contrast to their pursuers, who disregard the Argives, their king, and the gods of Argos altogether. Next to the keen interest on gender, σωφροσύνη in the *Suppliants* reveals parts of Aeschylus’ pro-democratic agenda, as σωφροσύνη for prospective citizenry is necessitated in the context of an anachronistically proto-democratic society.

In the *Oresteia*, all the status polarities in the previous tragedies are coming into play, plus the status polarity of parent-child. The complexity of the trilogy in terms of σωφροσύνη is the result of the term’s intimate connection with the dysfunctional administration of justice. Aeschylus portrays the catastrophic potential of retaliatory justice, when taken into the hands of individuals who lack σωφροσύνη. Once again, the people without σωφροσύνη are the scions of royal families, whose social status allows for an extravagant amount of power that is channeled with complete disregard for the people of Argos and eventually with impiety. The vicious cycle of crime and revenge, renewed endlessly by self-entitled sovereigns, is eventually broken in Athens by a democratic institution that exhibits the social and religious σωφροσύνη that are lacking in the top echelons of the monarchic society.

Considering this brief overview, it appears that σωφροσύνη in Aeschylean tragedy is mostly defined by its opposite. This study has been for the most part devoted to examining the lack of σωφροσύνη, either in its religious or social aspect, by the main characters of each play. On the other hand, the characters credited with σωφροσύνη, either directly or by implication, serve as a

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<sup>2</sup> The scholarly debate on the nature of the Danaid tetralogy is too long and too speculative to be addressed at present, while there seems to be no certainty regarding the content of the plays that followed the *Suppliants*. Nevertheless, there is good reason to assume that Danaus is not just a wise old father that protects his daughters from his nephews. In his extensive discussion on the trilogy, Garvie notes that there is a certain tradition that wants Danaus receiving an oracle that one of his sons-in-law would kill him; thus, he seems to be the instigator of the impending murder of the Aegyptiads. See Garvie (2006), 163-204.

useful benchmark. Taking a closer look at the demographics of σωφροσύνη, the expressly σώφρονες characters of Aeschylus are Amphiaraus and Orestes, while Danaus indirectly proclaims himself as one. On the other hand, σώφρονες characters by implication are Darius, Cyrus, and Pelasgus. Finally, the Athenians citizens in the *Oresteia* represent the apogee of social and religious σωφροσύνη. Except for Orestes and the characters of the *Suppliants*, all individual mortal Aeschylean characters that effectively shape the tragic plot with their actions —Xerxes, Eteocles, Polyneices, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus— do in fact belong in two specific categories: they lack σωφροσύνη and are of sovereign status.

Taking the above into consideration, it appears that Aeschylean σωφροσύνη not only exhibits a certain invariability in terms of semantics, but also operates within a limited horizon in terms of thematics. Specifically, almost none of the monarch-protagonists in Aeschylean tragedy has σωφροσύνη. As a matter of fact, Aeschylus systematically problematizes the ability of the socially unrestrained individuals to remain within the boundaries of their status as members of a community, and eventually their status as mortals. Consequently, it seems that σωφροσύνη is an integral part of Aeschylus' political vocabulary, since the term exemplifies the dysfunctional aspects of political regimes that have no control mechanisms for the ones dominating the social chain of command. In view of that, Sommerstein argues:<sup>3</sup>

The one political element that all Aeschylus' surviving plays share is the contrast between the powerful, self-interested individual in control of a state, and the community which ought to be in control of itself... Consistently in Aeschylus the well-being of communities is threatened by the irresponsible acts of powerful individuals and sustained by the collective action of ordinary people.

What Sommerstein defines as the political leaders' irresponsibility is exemplified in the way they interact with status-based propriety. For the most part, the threat that communities face in

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<sup>3</sup> Sommerstein (2010b), 298-9.

Aeschylus is the unsound status awareness of their leaders, which manifests in their overbearing rule, or their impiety towards the gods, or both. Therefore, it seems that there is an intention behind Aeschylus' use of σωφροσύνη, and this is to turn the concept on its head by insistently presenting the dangers introduced by political environments of extreme inequalities. As seen in the course of this study, these dangers for σωφροσύνη lurk in the alluring status delusions that political systems with excessive divergence in social hierarchy nurture for the individuals on the upper echelons.

Considering that the rhetoric of Aeschylean σωφροσύνη focuses on the individual in power, it is striking that this kind of individual is for the most part the one that has nothing to do with it. In view of that, the symbolic value of the monarch becomes highly significant. "In tragedy, as in early Greek myth and literature generally," Segal argues, "the king occupies the point of symbolic intersection between the human and the divine, the natural and supernatural worlds."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the figure of the monarch is the medium between gods and mortals, and if the Greek gods are interested in mortals —as they are— then the mediation of a monarch that has no cognizance of his status towards them becomes exceedingly problematic. The usual problem that arises from this ill communication with the gods is that entire communities fall victim to the whims of the powerful individual. Therefore, it seems that σωφροσύνη in Aeschylus has a special role in underlining the problematics of the political structure of monarchy; something that indeed makes the message behind its use political. Certainly, the term "political" is opaque, especially regarding its application to tragedy and its artistic purpose,<sup>5</sup> but if a political message is to be defined, this should be as MacLeod defines the political aspect of tragedy; namely, the concern "with humans being in a πόλις."<sup>6</sup> In these terms, it is no coincidence that the Aeschylean monarch is a

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<sup>4</sup> Segal, C. "Greek Tragedy and Society," in Euben (1986), 51.

<sup>5</sup> For a magisterial account of the various political readings of Greek tragedy and the conflicts between them, see Saïd (1998), 277-84.

<sup>6</sup> MacLeod (1982), 132.

characteristically problematic figure in terms of σωφροσύνη, while the term finds its most congenial home in the democratic Athens of the *Eumenides*.

It could be argued, as Rademaker does, that the praise of democracy in the *Oresteia* is part of a blatant pro-Athenian propaganda, but the overall treatment of σωφροσύνη in Aeschylus would lend support to a general political perspective, rather than an Athenocentric one. In the *Eumenides*, the Athenians are warned to respect the Areopagus if they want to preserve its potency as a guardian of their city (690-706); thus, the σωφροσύνη of Athens is strictly contingent on its democratic identity. Therefore, Aeschylus describes the ideal society of σωφροσύνη as the one that moves through collective actions rather than individual whims. This seems to be part of a criticism of non-democratic social structures, since the mechanism of contrast that reinforces one's conformity with the ways of σωφροσύνη is non-operative in a society where humans are excessively unequal. To put it another way, if σωφροσύνη is to know one's place in contrast to superiors, the monarchs of mythical past and historic present stand at the topmost level of social stratification; thus, having no one to compare themselves to, they disregard their subjects or even start acting in ways that intervene with the τιμή of the gods. The problematic behavior of the monarch, however, is not portrayed as a single person's fault. With a view towards the *Oresteia*, "it is obvious that the *dēmos*, the citizen body, are a presence whose importance, in political terms, both Clytemnestra and Agamemnon acknowledge," Podlecki argues, "although neither give the impression of taking the people's influence seriously into account as a determinant factor of his or her own actions."<sup>7</sup> It is not that a monarch cannot have σωφροσύνη, but what Aeschylean tragedy propagates is the idea that the σωφροσύνη of a society is better guaranteed if the individual is held in check by equal reverence towards gods and fellow mortals.

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<sup>7</sup> Podlecki, J. A., "Polis and Monarch in Early Attic Tragedy," in Euben (1986), 93.

In retrospect, the great emphasis that North placed on the religious aspect of Aeschylean σωφροσύνη is justified, but this one-dimensional approach does not do full justice to the greater significance of the term in Aeschylean poetics. Admittedly, religion is a pivotal part of Aeschylus' tragedies, but so is the political drama that ensues from his characters' problematic religiousness. In Aeschylus, to not confer proper τιμή on the gods and the lack of εὐσέβεια are directly related to the lack of σωφροσύνη, which is the propellant of his tragic plots.

In addition to its religious aspect, Aeschylus also presents gender-based σωφροσύνη. The female, as a being plagued by the ideological constraints of inferiority in all spheres of existence in Greek society, is of great interest to the tragedian. In terms of σωφροσύνη, Aeschylus' female characters seem to be used as paradigms of conflict on the social level. Just as the male characters introduce chaos when they fall into status delusions, so do the female characters, especially Clytemnestra.

Next to those perspectives, Aeschylus is especially interested in the connection between σωφροσύνη and politics. The tragedies of the earliest surviving dramatist of democratic Athens seem to be devoted to an idealized theorization of democracy, which is praised for its underlying ideology. Consequently, Aeschylus portrays the Athenian regime that resulted from the radical political movements of the 5<sup>th</sup> century as the only structure that can guarantee a social function based on σωφροσύνη, thus saving human society from the menace of a life in anarchy or despotism.

# Appendix 1

## ΣΩΦΡΟΣΥΝΗ IN AESCHYLUS

Below is a list of all the cognates of σωφροσύνη in Aeschylus. The columns of the list are divided in order of 1) passage, 2) quotation, 3) speaker, 4) person referred to, and 5) notes on the context. Next to the entries in column 4, there is a mark noting whether the referred person possesses (+), lacks (-), or is admonished to have (ad.) σωφροσύνη.

<u>Passage:</u>	<u>Quotation:</u>	<u>Speaker:</u>	<u>Person referred to:</u> (+) has σωφρ. (-) lacks σωφρ. (ad.) admonished to have σωφρ.	<u>Notes:</u>
<i>Pers.</i> 829	πρὸς ταῦτ' ἐκεῖνον, σωφρονεῖν κεχρημένον	Darius	Xerxes -	The Chorus is asked to advise Xerxes to stop his god-insulting rashness.
<i>Sept.</i> 186	αὔειν, λακάζειν, σωφρόνων μισήματα	Eteocles	Chorus -	Eteocles rebukes the Chorus for their frantic behavior.
568	ἕκτον λέγομι' ἄν ἄνδρα σωφρονέστατον	Scout	Amphiaraus +	The scout's report on Amphiaraus.
610	σώφρων δίκαιος ἀγαθὸς εὐσεβῆς ἀνὴρ	Eteocles	Amphiaraus +	Eteocles endorses Amphiaraus' reported virtues.
645	ἄγει γυνή τις σωφρόνως ἡγουμένη	Scout	Justice +	The blazon of Polyneices' shield: Justice leads a warrior back home.
<i>Supp.</i> 198	τὸ μὴ μάταιον δ' ἐκ ἑμετώπω† σωφρόνων	Danaus	Danaids (ad.)	The Danaids are advised on how to behave during their supplication.
710	εὐχὰς μὲν αἰνῶ τάσδε σώφρονας, φίλαι	Danaus	Danaids +	Danaus praises his daughters' prayers.
724	ἀλλ' ἡσύχως χρῆ καὶ σεσωφρονισμένως	Danaus	Danaids (ad.)	As the Egyptians arrive, the Danaids are told to behave.
992	πολλοῖσιν ἄλλοις σωφρονίσμασιν πατρὸς	Danaus	Danaus +	The Danaids are urged to preserve their chastity.

1013	τὸ σωφρονεῖν τιμῶσα τοῦ βίου πλέον	Danaus	Danaids (ad.)	Danaus on the value of chastity.
Ag.180-1	καὶ παρ' ἄ- κοντας ἦλθε σωφρονεῖν	Chorus	Agamemnon <sup>1</sup> -	The Chorus' religious disquisition on Agamemnon's enterprise.
351	γύναι, κατ' ἄνδρα σώφρον' εὐφρόνως λέγεις	Chorus	Clytemnestra +	The Chorus praise Clytemnestra's piety.
1425	γνώσῃ διδαχθεὶς ὄψε γούν τὸ σωφρονεῖν	Clytemnestra	Chorus -	Clytemnestra attempts to restrain the rebelliousness of the Chorus.
1620	σωφρονεῖν εἰρημένον	Aegisthus	Chorus -	Aegisthus commands the Chorus to behave.
1664	σώφρονος γνώμης [δ'] ἁμαρτῶν τὸν κρατοῦντά <λοιδορεῖς>	Aegisthus	Chorus -	Aegisthus grows indignant with the Chorus' insubordination.
Ch.140-1	αὐτῇ τέ μοι δὸς σωφρονεστέραν πολὺ μητρὸς γενέσθαι χεῖρά τ' εὐσεβεστέραν	Electra	Clytemnestra -	Electra asks her late father that she become better than her mother.
786	δὸς ἴτύχας τυχεῖν δέ μου κυρίως τὰ σωφροσυνευῖ μαιομένοις ἰδεῖν	Chorus	Orestes (?)	loc. incertus
Eu.43-4	ἔχοντ' ἐλαίας θ' ὑπιγέννητον κλάδον λήνει μεγίστῳ σωφρόνως ἕστεμμένον	Pythia	Orestes +	Orestes' proper supplication to Apollo's altar.
136	τοῖς σώφροσιν γὰρ ἀντίκεντρα γίγνεται	Clytemnestra	Erinyes	Clytemnestra rebukes the sleeping Erinyes.
520-1	ξυμφέρει σωφρονεῖν ὑπὸ στένει	Erinyes	Mortals	The Erinyes assert the usefulness of suffering.
1000	σωφρονοῦντες ἐν χρόνῳ	Erinyes	Athenians +	The Athenian citizens are praised after the institution of Areopagus.
[Prom.983]	καὶ μὴν σύ γ' οὐπω σωφρονεῖν ἐπίστασαι	Hermes	Prometheus -	Hermes demands Prometheus show obedience towards Zeus.

<sup>1</sup> For my conclusion that in the gnomic expression the chorus alludes to Agamemnon, see my discussion of the passage in Chapter 4.



## Appendix 2

### AGAMEMNON'S DILEMMA

Whether Agamemnon's motive in avenging Zeus Xenios is honest is a question that is not answered in the text. Nevertheless, the early portrayal of the Argive monarch seems to be heavily leaning towards dishonesty, as Agamemnon's piety towards Zeus Xenios seems to be more of an excuse rather than the real motive for his desire to besiege Troy. Consequently, it is more than justified to question whether in 206-17 Agamemnon is indeed facing a dilemma.

After Calchas proclaims the necessity of Iphigeneia's sacrifice for the departure of the armada (198-202), in the soliloquy where Agamemnon exposes what is identified as his dilemma, he ponders that it is grievous to comply with Artemis' demand and stain his hands with the blood of his child (206-10). Nevertheless, it seems that deserting the armada and losing his alliance weighs more heavily on his conscience, while he assumes that the gathered army would naturally (θέμις) desire the sacrifice (211-7). During this crucial moment, Agamemnon fails to play his strongest card for the justification of his expedition, as Zeus Xenios has no place in his crude rationalization. Apparently, it is neither piety nor divine compulsion that forces the hand of Agamemnon, who brashly prays "may all be well" (217 εὖ γὰρ εἶη) even though Calchas had already prophesied that the only thing *bound* to go well is the siege of Troy (126-30). Thus, the Argive king is not called to solve any dilemma,<sup>2</sup> since the two options weighted are not the same. On the one hand, there is a sacrifice of utter impiety with the well-known consequences of a Μῆνις

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<sup>2</sup> As Zak argues: "The actors in the house of Atreus are too ready to concede the triumph of evil. The opportunity to search for and discover a way out of their dilemmas is not absent or forbidden to them, it is squandered by their thoughtless pieties. The corrective to their primitive theologies is Heidegger's aphorism: questioning is the piety of thought" (1995, 39).

τεκνόποινος (145-55). On the other hand, there is the loss of a military alliance without any threatening consequences.<sup>3</sup> As Peradotto accurately observes:<sup>4</sup>

At Aulis Agamemnon experiences the existential limitations not only of the particular principle of justice involved in vengeance for violations of hospitality, but of the outmoded quest for heroic ζῆλος. His free decision to sacrifice Iphigeneia is a dramatic refusal to honour those limitations, and by it he incurs a punishment more ineluctable than that which he himself inflicts upon Paris.

Agamemnon seems to be weighing two mutually exclusive options and chooses the only one that is impious, as well as assuredly ominous.

This remark is of course directly contradicting the argument of Denniston-Page, who claim that “Zeus himself commanded Agamemnon to sail to Troy.”<sup>5</sup> Agamemnon was never commanded to sail to Troy as Orestes was commanded to kill Clytemnestra; thus, the text does not support a religious necessity behind Iphigeneia’s sacrifice, and if he had any dilemma the Chorus certainly imply that it was the wrong kind. At least for the elders of the Chorus, Agamemnon should never have decided in favor of continuing with the war.

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<sup>3</sup> At this point, Agamemnon reveals that his drive is an incessant desire for power and prestige; see Sommerstein (2010b), 258-61.

<sup>4</sup> Peradotto (1969), 257.

<sup>5</sup> Denniston & Page (1957), xv. The same opinion is upheld by scholars who deny Agamemnon the agency of his own free will; see Whallon (1961), 83-8; Lesky (1966), 82-3; Lebeck (1971), 7-16; Fontenrose (1971), 72-8; Ewans (1975), 26. On the other hand, numerous scholars impugn the fatalistic interpretation of Agamemnon’s actions; see Fraenkel<sup>2</sup> (1950), 99; Kitto (1960), 1-21; Dodds (1960), 27-9, and (1973), 54-63; Peradotto (1969), 249-52; Dover (1973), 65; Sansone (1975), 32; Tyrrell (1976), 331-4; Edwards (1977), 27-38; Gantz (1983), 75-86; Sommerstein (2010b), 260.

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