

THE
Hippolytus

The Mythological Prologue

The mythological approach which Euripides chooses in the *Hippolytus*, and certain ambiguities in which his symbolic use of myth involves him, have already been considered in the Introduction. We must now seek the clues by which that symbolism may be read: the devices by which the poet transforms a simple myth of divine vengeance (as it is represented in the prologue) by a goddess whose cult has been neglected, into a tragedy explicable in terms of human psychology.¹ Here perhaps the chief danger which besets the modern critic is that of overdoing the rationalistic interpretation which the play in many ways invites: we have already seen enough of Euripides' kaleidoscopic use of myth to beware of separating too rigorously the natural from the supernatural in his plots.² Phaedra's passion, for example, and her own reflections on it, are treated in terms so realistic and rational that we seem justified in viewing her part in the action in natural, as opposed to supernatural, terms. Nevertheless, if we ask why Phaedra has fallen helplessly and hopelessly in love with Hippolytus, we must accept the only answer which is given to us in the play: the mythical answer of the prologue, that Aphrodite has caused this as a means of vengeance on Hippolytus. Nor can we ignore this fact once we have finished with the prologue. The most important feature of Phaedra's characterization is her innocence (at least with regard to her passion for Hippolytus), for on this depends the injustice of Hippolytus' treatment of her: the many naturalistic devices by which the dramatist expounds that innocence are heavily supported by the impression in the back of the audience's mind that she is in some sense the pawn of Aphrodite.

¹For other views concerning the myth and its treatment in this play, see Appendix I to this chapter.

²See Appendix I, section 2.

It is this comparative lack of freedom which distinguishes Phaedra from tragic heroines such as Medea who is at the centre of her play and whose passionate nature is presented as an essential part of the tragic characterization, without recourse, on the dramatist's part, to any god. Nevertheless, it may be possible to restrict the helplessness of Phaedra to the simple fact that she is incurably in love with Hippolytus. In what she elects to do about it, she seems to show her own moral personality.

It is this single aspect of the myth's function in the *Hippolytus* which renders the play's "realism" faintly ambiguous. Apart from this necessary "pegging" of Phaedra as a helpless victim, the dramatist does take pains to limit the myth to its symbolic meaning and to expound the tragedy which overtakes Hippolytus as something more intimately connected with human experience than the anger of a spiteful goddess. To this end, Euripides employs several devices to weaken our literal acceptance of such a goddess and to strengthen our expectation of some catastrophe arising from the strictly human motivations of the play.

The first device, which is contained in the prologue, is a bold one and it is one which Euripides uses over and over again in his plays. It is the simple trick of ruining an idea by overstatement—in this case of casting doubt on the less credible features of a myth by an exaggerated emphasis upon them. The Aphrodite of the prologue, while she is presented as a being of awe-inspiring majesty and power (1-6), compares her outraged vanity to human feelings (7-8). Hippolytus' affront and her reaction to it she expresses in purely personal terms which carry no suggestion of any system of divine justice. ("I ruin those who have proud disdainful thoughts [*φρονόδσιν . . . μέγα*] towards me." [6; cf. 10-13, 21-22, 48-50]) She glories in her power to take swift vengeance on Hippolytus and openly admits, only to dismiss as of no account, the cruelty to Phaedra which her revenge involves: "Phaedra, though of good name she be, still must perish; for I'll not count the wrong to her of greater moment than the satisfaction to me of just vengeance on my enemies." (47-50)

Gods such as the Aphrodite of this prologue are much closer to the Homeric model than are the gods of the other Greek tragedians. If we observe the contrast between, on the one hand, this bludgeoning of the audience with the crudest form of divine motivation (simple "human" spite), and, on the other, the approaches of Aeschylus and Sophocles, surely we must see the effect which this neo-Homeric primitivism would have had on a fifth-century audience. (In their own cultural context, of course, the Homeric gods strike us as anything but primitive.) In the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, Zeus' effect on the action appears as part of his cosmic plan for justice, and though his will is apparent throughout

the play, it is referred to only in the veiled lyrical comments of the chorus whose mythological paradigms and hymns to Zeus allow us to see its application to the dramatic theme. In Sophocles, the subtle hints of the divine will moving behind the scenes, paralleling the human actions in such plays as the *Electra* and the *Antigone*, suggest, in a manner still less intrusive on the human action, a divine order of things harsher and less easily defined but no less cosmic and impersonal than that of the Aeschylean Zeus. Surely, then, Euripides' apparent retrogression, coming at the end of a tradition which had sought to save the mythological gods from such attacks as Xenophanes had made upon them,³ must be taken as an attempt to impugn, by a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*, the old anthropomorphism (which was by no means dead) and all its implications.⁴

There are, moreover, two additional hints in the prologue that Aphrodite as she is to function in the action of the play is more closely identifiable with human experience than the Olympian virago to whom we have been listening. One is the failure of the goddess (at v. 42) to tell us *how* Phaedra's secret will be revealed to Theseus—an omission which leaves room for the human motivation by which Hippolytus' downfall is actually to be secured. The other is the description of Hippolytus' affront to Aphrodite—no matter of prayers or votive offerings but of sex and marriage, which he totally rejects. Even in the prologue then, a hint of the real meaning of Aphrodite appears: thus offended, she *is* physical love, personified, not merely the goddess of it, and her vengeance means the disaster which ensues when man ignores this force.

Here and there throughout the action, in the asides of minor characters and in the occasional reflection of the Chorus, the poet provides several hints belying the crude anthropomorphism of the prologue. Thus, for example, the question raised in our minds by the gentle remonstrance of Hippolytus' servant ("Gods should be wiser [i.e., in the context, "more tolerant"] than men," 120) receives its answer in the Nurse's later comment, "Cypris all this time was not a god but something, if it exists, more powerful." (359-60) In the midst of the naturalistic action of the play, it is only the Chorus which sustains for the most part the mythological version of this power.

Hippolytus and Phaedra

The most fundamental technique whereby Euripides translates this myth of divine vengeance into a tragedy of human responsibility lies, of

³See Xenophanes, frgs. B 11-16, B 23-26, D-K.

⁴See Appendix I, section 3.

course, in the characterization of Hippolytus and Phaedra. Hippolytus is presented to us in three contexts: first on his own ground, as it were, in the company of his servant and of his fellow-devotees of Artemis (the huntsmen chorus), next, in relation to Phaedra, when he learns her secret from the Nurse, and finally in conflict with his father, Theseus, after Phaedra's death. In each passage, we find the same features of his character, emphasized by the repetition of certain thematic words. Of these three nerve-centres, the crucial one is revealed in the hero's reaction to the plight of Phaedra. It is for this reason that the dramatist takes such pains with the Queen's character and situation; while the nature and fate of Hippolytus form the central issue of the tragedy, it is only by an intimate and sympathetic understanding of Phaedra and her plight that we can see the culpable and fatal aspect of Hippolytus.

It is the parallel characterization of these two, Hippolytus and Phaedra, which informs the well-nigh perfect structure of the first half of this play,⁵ and it is this too which helps us to see the tragic outcome in human rather than in mythological terms. Each is presented first in isolation, then, without actually meeting, in fatal reaction to the other. After a brief but revealing introduction to Hippolytus come two long and agonizing scenes between Phaedra and her Nurse, leading to the first crisis of the play: the revelation of Phaedra's secret to Hippolytus. The hero's reaction to that secret is both the immediate result of the preceding episode and the fulfilment of earlier hints we have had about his character. Equally in accordance with "probability and necessity" is Phaedra's incrimination of Hippolytus, which follows: it is the immediate result of Hippolytus' treatment of her, and it is consistent with her earlier concern, which now becomes exacerbated, for *eukleia*, good reputation. After such tensions and their resolutions, the Theseus episode may be felt to contain an element of anticlimax, but at any rate the necessary and probable sequence of the action is just as clearly marked. Theseus' cursing and exile of his son is the direct result of Phaedra's incriminating letter, and Hippolytus' inability to defend himself springs

⁵This aspect of the *Hippolytus* has generally been much admired; see, for example, the eloquent appreciations of critics as diverse as André Rivier, *Essai sur le Tragique d'Euripide*, 64-65; Gilbert Norwood (usually a severe critic of Euripidean structure), *Essays on Euripidean Drama*, 74; R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Hippolytus: A Study in Causation," 171. This general agreement on the formal excellence of the *Hippolytus* tends to refute Kitto's view that it was when Euripides was not concerned with serious tragic ideas that his technical skill was most in evidence. (See Kitto, *G.T.*, 185-86, 312, 317.) It should be admitted, however, that Kitto appears to regard the *Hippolytus* as the closest of Euripides' tragedies to the Sophoclean dramatic style. (*ibid.*, 200; cf. 185)

from the two aspects of his character with which we are by now most familiar: his sense of honour (which prevents him from breaking his oath of secrecy to the Nurse) and his somewhat alienating quality of aloofness.

Our earliest impression of Hippolytus is in many ways a most favourable one.⁶ He first appears leading a band of hunters whose invocation to Artemis provides an aptly ironic transition between Aphrodite's prologue and the hero's own prayer to the rival goddess. In this prayer (Hippolytus is offering Artemis a laurel wreath from her sacred meadow), there is a youthful freshness, a wholehearted and confident enthusiasm which reminds one of a similar dedication in a later play: the happy commitment of Apollo's temple-boy in the *Ion*, before his disillusionment. Already, however, the sequence of thoughts suggests the canker in Hippolytus' virtue, and certain words which he uses to express them are soon to reappear in grimmer context. The garland for Artemis, the hero tells us, comes from an unsullied grove (73-74), watered by Reverence (*Aidôs*, 78), sacred to those who have by nature the gift of purity (*to sôphronein*, 79-80)—and of these few it is Hippolytus' right alone to make offerings to Artemis. Thus the "virginal imagery" first applied to nature is quickly related to moral purity and then to moral superiority and exclusiveness . . . "to me alone this special honour." (84)

The peculiarly Greek concept of *sôphrosynê* includes modesty, self-control (of which Hippolytus' special virtue, chastity, is but one aspect) and in general a balanced and temperate view of life; neither the exclusiveness of Hippolytus' worship nor the smugness which attends it quite fit the virtue to which he makes such special claims. As if to underline these hints in the prayer of Hippolytus come the timid questions of his servant. The latter leads Hippolytus to agree that *to semnon*, the quality of haughtiness, makes a man hated by men and gods alike, since both use the same conventions, *nomois* (93-98); hence Hippolytus himself is running risks in his proud disregard of Aphrodite, who is herself described as *semnê* (99, accepting the reading of the MSS).

Semnos, like *sôphrosynê*, is a term which is to recur significantly later in the play. (See, for example, vv. 957, 1064, 1364.) It has two aspects. It means "revered," "august," "holy," in its good or honorific sense, but it means "pompous," "haughty," "unapproachable," when it is used to describe men who are too conscious of their own excellence or

⁶See Rivier's excellent appreciation (*Essai*, 55-56) of the charm and positive virtue of Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis. However, the description is somewhat marred, to my way of thinking, by the critic's subsequent refusal (cf., for example, p. 69), to recognize any limitation to the hero's virtue.

importance. Perhaps it is in its "good" sense that the Servant uses it of Aphrodite (v. 99, following the reading of the MSS); certainly it is in this sense that Hippolytus uses it later of himself (1364), though with dramatically ironic overtones. But he who is *semnos* in the bad sense cannot, of course, be *sôphrôn*. Hippolytus' threatening reply to the Servant's warning ("Watch out lest your tongue be your ruin!" 100) and his disdain for Aphrodite in this passage, are clear indications of this dangerous quality in him, and his statement, "As in social preferences, some cherish some gods; others, others" (104) suggests the antithesis of that balanced view of life which true *sôphrosynê* entails.

The *agôn* of Phaedra is undoubtedly one of Euripides' most successful dramatizations of the conflict between passion and intellect, between blind impulse and moral insight. So sympathetic is the characterization of the Queen, so moving and convincing the presentation of her struggle, that critics have sometimes been led to regard her dramatic significance as equal to or even greater than that of Hippolytus himself.⁷ Clearly, then, any analysis of the play which treats Phaedra's role as secondary, a means to a further dramatic end, must explain what might appear to be a wanton expenditure of dramatic energy on the playwright's part.

Phaedra's situation has, in one respect at least, a greater dramatic potential than that of Hippolytus. It is she and not he who is engaged in an intense emotional struggle, for the tragedy of Hippolytus stems from the denial, the negation, of passion. We have, then, a practical reason for the prominence of Phaedra's role, and that prominence will be justified if the details of her struggle can be related to the tragic characterization of Hippolytus. In this connection, it is not Phaedra

⁷See, for example, D. Grene, "The Interpretation of the *Hippolytus* of Euripides," *CP*, XXXIV, 45-58. Grene's arguments have been effectively refuted by W. B. Stanford. "The *Hippolytus* of Euripides," *Hermathena*, LXIII, 11-17. More interesting than Grene's discussion, because more in keeping with the later development of the play, is Pohlenz' comment on Phaedra (*Griech. Trag.*, I, 269). While admitting that the play's unity depends on Hippolytus' fate and on the "*Gestalt*" of his character, Pohlenz compares the initially dominant role of Phaedra with that of Deianeira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, both in the break which her suicide makes in the play and in the whole new action which she introduces through the letter she leaves behind. The comparison with Deianeira is interesting in that it reminds us that here, as in certain of the so-called diptych plays of Sophocles, the fate of the tragic sufferer is inextricably bound up with the *agôn* of another character. This, however, is not quite the same thing as saying, as Lesky does, that our play is the tragedy of a double-fate (*Doppelschicksal*, A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, 167), a description which Winnington-Ingram ("Hippolytus," 181-82) quotes with approval, though *his* argument, like that of Pohlenz, places the final emphasis on Hippolytus.

herself, "for her own sake," but the moral integrity of Phaedra that claims our attention, for only by dramatizing the innocence and nobility of Phaedra can the poet dramatize the terrible injustice which the hero does her through his warped view of womankind. To this end, the responsibility of Phaedra for any "discreditable" matters which the plot requires is reduced to the minimum. Aphrodite on the mythological level and the Nurse on the human level are the agents relieving her of guilt. Through the one, she is "fixed" in a hopeless passion before the action of the play begins; through the other, her secret is betrayed without (in our eyes, at least) loss of honour to herself. Even so, between these poles of responsibility we have still to be convinced dramatically of the positive calibre of Phaedra's innocence and so of the enormity of Hippolytus' unjust tirade against her. Hence the account of Phaedra's struggle—all the moral resources of a noble character pitted against the force of her affliction—is presented with the vivid emotional realism proper to the human level of the play.

Phaedra's struggles are presented in two tense episodes (198–361, 373–524) between herself and the Nurse. Passion and hysteria govern the Queen throughout the first of these scenes; reason gains control in the second, particularly in the splendid speech (373–430) with which it opens. However, while the dramatist thus indicates the almost equal balance⁸ of these warring elements in Phaedra's soul, he saves his device from artificiality by a break-through of agonizing sanity in the midst of the hysterical scene at vv. 239–49, and again by a sudden (and fatal) diminuendo of self-control at the end of the second episode.

The effects of Phaedra's passion have already preceded her on-stage, like waves before a hurricane, in the excited gossip of the Chorus and (as she enters) in the grumbling flutter of the Nurse. In the second strophe the guesses of the Chorus (Could Artemis be troubling her? Or her husband's infidelity? Or bad news from Crete?) remind us, with unconscious irony, of both the human and the mythological aspects of the situation. (The Cretan motif is to recur significantly at vv. 337–41 and 752–60.) The Nurse's complaints on the other hand ("No sooner out than you want to go in again!" and so on, 181 ff.) vividly convey in contrast to the speaker's shambling gait the speed and restlessness of Phaedra's fevered pacing, indoors and out. So too the plodding literalness

⁸It is too readily assumed that Phaedra simply succumbs to her passion: e.g., by Pohlenz (in his contrast between Phaedra's mere "social morality" and Hippolytus' natural *sôphrosynê*): "She fails at the first strong temptation" (*Griech. Trag.*, I, 270); by Dodds (in "Euripides the Irrationalist," *CR*, XLIII [1929], 99 ff.), who takes Phaedra's experience as an example of the complete triumph of passion over reason.

of the Nurse's answers to her mistress ("What want you with the hunt? With fountain springs in the wilds? At home, we have a nice well-watered slope." 224-27, and the like), underline the hysterical intensity, the hidden meanings of the Queen's passionate pleadings.

What are we to make of the "mad" speeches of Phaedra in relation to the innocent and noble characterization which her function in the play requires? Insofar as Phaedra is clearly driven "out of her mind" in these speeches, they must, of course, illustrate the overwhelming power of the passion which has her in its grip. Phaedra herself, as she returns to sanity, feels it to have been a more than human force: "I was raving, overwhelmed by god-sent ruin." (241) On the other hand, the form which her hysteria has taken—mysterious pleadings for haunts and pursuits associated with Hippolytus—itself reflects some credit on the Queen. Though she cannot overcome her passion, she will not speak of it: its appearance disguised in these involuntary utterances is an index to the strength not only of her passion but of her suppression of it.

In the second half of this episode (284-361), the "virtuous characterization" of Phaedra becomes still more clearly marked, first in her explicit resolution to die (which she herself describes as "fashioning good from evil," 329-331) rather than reveal her secret, secondly (and paradoxically) in the manner and means by which the first—and fatal—breach in that secret is finally effected. It is surely a brilliant device to have Phaedra tempted from her silence only by an appeal to her virtue: the formal supplication of the Nurse. (325-35) And even after she has succumbed, her halting and indirect address, her references to her family ill-starred in love (337-43) and finally her inability to name Hippolytus (it is the Nurse who does so) all bespeak her desperate and outraged modesty. Surely no way could have been devised by which Phaedra, in saying what she should not, could have compromised her honour less.⁹

The strongly emotional introduction to Phaedra's plight reaches its

⁹Dodds ("The *Aidôs* of Phaedra, etc.," *CR*, XXXIX, 103) argues that here Phaedra is using her professed respect for the suppliant (which he equates in this context with the "bad *aidôs*" referred to at vv. 385-86) to give her an excuse for making the confession which she is in fact longing to make. This point may well be psychologically sound but it is not, if our reading of Phaedra's rôle in the play is correct, the one which Euripides wishes to make here. (Besides, it is difficult to see how the *aidôs* which Phaedra manifests here can *itself* be called a "pleasure," which is what Phaedra calls the "bad *aidôs*." At the most, if Dodd's interpretation of Phaedra's psychology is correct, it may be said to lead to pleasure in this specific case. This puzzling passage, vv. 383-86, will be considered more fully in Appendix II, section 2, to this chapter.

climax with the revelation of her secret and the shocked outcries of the Nurse and the Chorus. Phaedra's next speech (373-430), a reflective assessment of her situation and indeed of that of all erring mankind, stands in marked contrast to the preceding episode and to our first impressions of the Queen. Here the dramatist's presentation, hysterical cries followed by a magnificently controlled and philosophic discourse, must have reminded the audience of the way in which that more terrifying heroine, Medea, was presented a few years before. Despite the element of improbability involved, the device seems justified in the case of Phaedra: it provides us with an effective dramatization of the warring elements in Phaedra's soul and it is in this mortal struggle between reason and passion that the whole point of her characterization lies.

Phaedra's public address on human frailty may also (like Medea's address to the Corinthian women) be criticized on the score of dramatic relevance. There can be no question but that here as elsewhere Euripides is indulging his appetite, and perhaps that of his audience, for generalizations on ethics, psychology and the workings of the social organism.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Phaedra's speech keeps the general and the particular nicely balanced, and remarkably few of its philosophic points turn out to be irrelevant to the Queen's own case.

Phaedra finds laziness and the distraction of pleasures, rather than lack of judgment, to be the main causes of human corruption. (The argument reminds us, in its terms of reference, of various contemporary and near-contemporary debates among the philosophers.¹¹) Three only of the many pleasures are mentioned: long hours of gossip, idleness and *aidôs*, not in its good sense but in the sense of unhealthy interest in those matters for which we should feel shame.¹² The philosophic

¹⁰For a discussion of rhetorical generalizations in Euripides, based on contemporary attitudes, see J. H. Finley's interesting study, "Euripides and Thucydides," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XLIX, 30 ff.

¹¹In addition to the well-known Socratic-Platonic "equation" (in some dialectical contexts) of virtue and knowledge, one thinks of the several passages in which the Platonic Socrates considers pleasure in relation to the good, e.g., at *Protagoras* 351b-360b; *Gorgias*, 468e ff. and 495a-500a. (In the *Philebus*, the whole argument is concerned with that ethical trio, pleasure, understanding and the good, with which Phaedra too is concerned.) That such discussions were current in some form in Euripides' time seems highly probable not only from the "Socratic" evidence but also from certain references in the pre-Socratic tradition. (See, for example, the relation which emerges between pleasure, understanding and the Democritean "good" [*euthumiê*] from a study of Democritus frags. B 74, 188, 191, 211, 197, 119, 210-11, 33, cf. 172-73, 175, D-K, in that order.) See also Appendix II, section I, to this chapter.

¹²See Appendix II, section 2, to this chapter.

basis thus established, Phaedra turns to her own case: "Since this is how I happen to view these matters, it was out of the question that I should destroy my way of thought by any drug." (388-90) Phaedra means that even in her present state she still retains her knowledge of right and wrong, and of the temptations which cause men to forget this; the lofty dismissal of drugs is, of course, a nice piece of anticipatory irony. "When love bit me . . ." Phaedra proceeds to show how she sought to cure herself by her own philosophy. Now we see the point of the "three pleasures" which, from many, Phaedra has selected as the particular corrupters of good judgment. "Leisure": of this a Queen with an absent husband has a surfeit; "Gossip": Hippolytus is later to castigate the gossip of serving-women with their mistresses, and from what we hear from the Nurse we can imagine its pernicious nature; *aidōs*: in this case the sweet shame of Phaedra's secret passion for Hippolytus. First by silence (394), then by self-control (*τῷ σωφρονεῖν*, 399) Phaedra has tried to overcome these seductions (indeed we have seen these efforts and their effects in all that has gone before). When these failed, "the best plan seemed, to die—that men may see my noble, not my baser side." (401-4, slightly paraphrased)

Here for the first time we touch the mainspring of Phaedra's conduct, *reputation* (*eukleia*) and it is this which is the subject of the next little homily on which the speaker now embarks. (407-18) Now it is true that the attack on "noble houses" (409 ff.) as first providing ill repute and bad example for women in general, has a distinctly Euripidean ring, but once more we should note that the indignation does fit Phaedra's reasoning as well. At verse 419 we are brought sharply back to the primary concern of this conscientious Queen: the good name of her family—self, husband and sons alike—which she will go to any lengths to safeguard. In this final passage of the speech, the dramatic and rhetorical elements coalesce: generalizations in Euripides' most gnomic style abound, yet the ideas are closely related to the passionate virtue which dominates Phaedra as much as does Aphrodite's visitation.

For this, friends, is the point which seals my doom: never to be caught shaming my husband or the sons I bore him. . . . For this enslaves a man, however bold he be, to learn a father's or a mother's evil deeds. A just and upright mind: this alone, men say, is worth the price of life to him who has it. Time in its passage shows the world it's wicked, as a maid holds a mirror to her pretty face. Never with these may I be numbered. (419-30)

(The prophetic irony of this final pretty image, anticipating both Phaedra's degradation and the canker to be found in Hippolytus' maiden

virtue, rivals the more explicitly savage irony of Dionysus as he leads Pentheus to his "luxurious" doom at *Bacchae*, 965-70.)

Phaedra's speech provides us with a brilliant example of the theory and practice of moral action. Professor Dodds, in his comment on 375 ff., has seized on what he regards as the Euripidean view that "the evil in human life comes not from intellectual error but from a failure of the will," and argues that it is denied in this play "that enlightenment can make men good."¹³ Elsewhere, as we have seen, he uses this and similar passages in Euripides to suggest that, in stressing the uncontrollable forces of passion as the mainsprings of human activity, "Euripides the irrationalist" was setting himself against the Socratic equation of virtue and knowledge and declaring man, for all his knowledge and understanding, to be the helpless prey of forces quite beyond control of reason.¹⁴

Need Phaedra's views and her experience lead us to conclusions so extreme? It is true that the Queen's statements at 377 ff. place emphasis on the will rather than on the understanding in moral issues, yet the doctrine is not, perhaps, as anti-Socratic as it at first appears. In Plato's development of Socratic ethics, discrimination between pleasures is often the function of ethical judgment and, at least on the practical level with which Phaedra is concerned, error or wrong-doing is sometimes explained as due to the distraction of immediate and violent pleasures.¹⁵ Now if one does not submit to the temptations of pleasure which Phaedra mentions, but does the good one knows, then surely right judgment is one of the causes, though (in Phaedra's view) not in itself a sufficient cause, of that right action. If this is the Euripidean

¹³Dodds, "*Aidōs*," 102 and 103, respectively. In support of the latter statement, Dodds cites, in addition to Phaedra's views at 377 ff., the words of Hippolytus and of Theseus at 79-80, 916-20. However, there is nothing in the play to suggest that either Hippolytus or Theseus is to be regarded as a good judge concerning the real meaning and source of virtue; nor indeed do they fulfil Dodds' own criterion (described in "Euripides the Irrationalist," 98) of the kind of characters who may be regarded as expressing Euripidean views, to wit, those "who are like their author, thinkers." Phaedra "passes"; Hippolytus and Theseus surely do not.

¹⁴See Dodds, "Euripides the Irrationalist," 97-104, and note 8, above. Dodds cites *Medea* 1078 ff., and *Hipp.* 375 ff. as the chief instances in Euripides where *thumos* overcomes reason in Euripides, but he adds many other Euripidean passages which appear to him to demonstrate the "moral impotence of the reason." Cf. Pohlenz, *Griech. Trag.*, I, 273, who suggests some qualifications of the view that the passage at *Hipp.* 377 ff. is to be taken as a Euripidean polemic against the Socratic teaching concerning virtue and knowledge.

¹⁵See the references to Plato above, note 11. (Plato's statements on the relation of pleasure to the good vary, of course—as do Plato's statements on any subject—in accordance with the dialectical context.)

view, then it implies an amendment to, rather than a contradiction of, the Socratic position. If it be argued against this interpretation that Phaedra does not state the possibility of overcoming such temptations, surely Phaedra's own moral struggle refutes the argument, for it is *on the basis of the views expressed* (see vv. 388 ff. and 392 ff.) that she makes her three attempts to overcome her passion. In the first two of these attempts, she fails; then, ". . . when by these means I could not conquer Cypris, I resolved to die. . . ." (400-401) It might well be argued that *at this point* Phaedra has by no means lost her struggle against "passion"; indeed, left to herself, free of the Nurse's "good offices," she would have succeeded in preserving both honour and honesty in death. The reason why she is not allowed to do so is the dramatic one: *not* that the power of her guilty passion may be demonstrated but that Hippolytus, the tragic hero of this play, may become involved in just the way the theme and plot demands.

So far, then, Phaedra has been characterized as a woman of great integrity, moral insight and moral power, and the Nurse on the human level (like Aphrodite on the mythological level) is the chief instrument by which the dramatist relieves her of guilt, at least for as long as her innocence is important to the meaning of the play. By the exploitation of her sense of *aidôs*, the Nurse has already reached her mistress' well-guarded secret. Now (433-524), in contrast to her first shocked outcry, the Nurse seeks by fair means or foul to save her mistress' life. The interpretation of this passage is fundamental to the characterization of Phaedra and, in all probability, to the essential difference between this play and Euripides' earlier treatment of the myth.¹⁶

At vv. 433-81, the Nurse embarks on a strenuous attempt to persuade

¹⁶It is almost certain that in the earlier, lost *Hippolytus* of Euripides (the so-called *Hippolytos kaluptomenos*) Phaedra did give in to her passion, and it is at least probable that she herself made a declaration to her step-son. For this, the most obvious external evidence (which receives some support from the fragments) is the slighting reference by the "Aristophanic Aeschylus," at *Frogs* 1043 and 1053 ff., to the "strumpets" Phaedra and Sthenoboea whom Euripides had put onstage, and the observation in Aristophanes of Byzantium's *Hypothesis* to our *Hippolytus* (the so-called *Hippolytos Stephanias*) that in this play "what was unseemly and worthy of censure" in the first play was corrected. The evidence, both fragmentary and external, concerning Euripides' first *Hippolytus* and Sophocles' *Phaedra* (believed to have come between the two Euripidean versions) may best be studied from the excellent presentation in Barrett, 10-11, 18 ff., and (especially) 30-31; see also Méridier, *Euripide* II, 13 ff., and now Snell, chap. 2, especially 25 ff. and further references there given. Both Méridier and Snell place rather more confidence than does Barrett in Seneca's *Phaedra* as evidence for the content of Euripides' first *Hippolytus*.

Phaedra to yield to her passion for Hippolytus rather than to save her honour by suicide. The speech, though it contains one of Euripides' most striking "symbolic" descriptions of Aphrodite (447-50), soon descends to anthropomorphic tales of her power over her fellow-gods, and then to that basest perversion of mythology (in Euripides' as in Plato's view), the use of divine example as an excuse for men's wrong-doing. "What else is this than *hybris*, to seek to better even gods in virtue? Have the courage of your love! a god has willed it!" (474-76) The speech ends with a promise, wheedlingly vague in deference to Phaedra's scruples, of some remedy (*φάρμακον*) for this affliction by "charms and magic words." (478-79) However, Phaedra's resistance (486 ff.) stings the nurse to express her intentions more brutally: "No fine speeches need you, but the man!" (490-91)

The vehemence with which Phaedra rejects the Nurse's "ruinous but too fair-seeming arguments" (486 ff., cf. 498 ff., 503 ff.) shows that she scorns this abdication of human responsibility as do other noble characters in Euripides to whom mythological "justifications" or exonerations are offered.¹⁷ At the same time Phaedra's blending in three agonized replies of this rejection with the horrified fascination which she feels for the Nurse's suggestions illustrates in brilliant miniature the struggle between reason and passion which Phaedra herself, with such philosophic detachment, has previously described for us.

By the gods, no more! You speak too well these shameful things. My whole being is so constrained with passion that if you plead this shameful course so skilfully, I'll soon be mastered by the very thing I flee! (503-6)

At this point, then, the Queen, albeit with a struggle, has refused each fresh urging from her devil's advocate. But after the Nurse's speech at 507-15, she yields a grudging compliance at least to the point where the Nurse feels free to go indoors and speak with Hippolytus. What brings about the change?

My own view is that in these lines (507-15) the Nurse at least ostensibly proposes something different which Phaedra feels she can accept with less loss of honour than the blunt offer to procure Hippolytus.¹⁸

¹⁷Cf. Heracles' rejection (coupled with his own refutation of such "poets' tales" of divine misdemeanour) of Theseus' consolations, *Heracles* 1341 ff. and 1311-21 respectively. Cf. also Iphigenia's criticism, *I.T.* 389-91, of men who project their own evil impulses upon the gods.

¹⁸The present discussion is a summary of a more detailed discussion of *Hipp.* 505-17 and its context in my article, "A Problem in Euripides' *Hippolytus*," *TAPA*, XCII, 37-44.

In the earlier speeches, the Nurse has admitted "bed" and "pleasure" (495), however shameful ($\alpha\lambda\sigma\chi\rho$ ', 500) in the circumstances, to be a necessary part of the rescue operation. Now however she suddenly remembers certain soothing love-charms which she has in the house (509-10), "involving nothing base" ($\sigma\upsilon\rho$ ' $\epsilon\pi$ ' $\alpha\lambda\sigma\chi\rho\acute{o}\iota\varsigma$, 511) which will simply rid Phaedra of her love. All she needs in addition is some token from Hippolytus, either some word or some fragment of clothing. To this implied request for permission to seek out Hippolytus, Phaedra gives her hesitant and again hardly explicit consent (516-20), insisting only that the Nurse shall say nothing of her own plight to the youth.

Admittedly, a certain ambiguity hangs over this *entente* at which Phaedra and the Nurse finally arrive, and it cannot be completely explained either by the Nurse's dissimulation or by imperfectly suppressed traces of the "strumpet Phaedra" of the first edition of the play. Once a breach has been made in Phaedra's honourable silence, the fatal canker of gossip and discussion (which she herself has rightly feared) begins to work its poison on her and to eat away her self-control. Of this the poet only gives us hints, witnessing to his honest and subtle depiction of the human psyche. In all essentials he has, even to the end of this crucial scene, preserved the honour of the Queen.

The tirade of Hippolytus against women (616-68), when he hears from the Nurse of Phaedra's love, is another celebrated example of the set rhetorical discourse in Euripides. Here again the rhetoric takes its own time to reach the specific point at issue. After the shock effect of the opening rebuke to Zeus (who ought to *sell* babies and so to dispense with the need of women!) the misogynist settles down to a forensic indictment of "that monstrous growth," the female, from his particular point of view. No doubt Euripides enjoyed composing invective on such a lively theme, but, as in the case of Phaedra's dissertation (373-430), we should note that once again dramatic values are well served. Both the generalizing style and Hippolytus' fastidious postponement of reference to Phaedra herself, while they suit the poet's rhetorical purposes, also suit the character of the hero. Nor is the course of Hippolytus' rhetoric as undirected as it at first appears. Hippolytus' invective against marriage turns to invective against clever wives in particular (Phaedra is a clever woman) and against conniving servants . . . "like you, vile pimp, who come to bandy words about my father's sacred bed!" (651-52) (Even here, it is the effect on himself which seems most to affect Hippolytus: "I who feel sullied even in hearing this!" 655) Not until the final and so most emphatic part of the speech does Hippolytus mention Phaedra herself (662) and then only to turn from her in disgust in his final

repudiation of all womankind: "Let someone teach them to be chaste (*sôphronein*) or let me stamp on them for ever." (667-68)

The speech is a damning piece of self-characterization, but its effect depends also on the two powerful episodes which have preceded it. It is our awareness, emotional as well as intellectual, of the truth about Phaedra that lets us feel the full impact of Hippolytus' injustice in this vilification of all womankind to which the plight of Phaedra moves him. Here where the guilty passion of the Queen finally breaks on the hero's intolerant chastity, Hippolytus shows his *semnotês* most clearly—that haughty, one-sided virtue which will never listen or sympathize where it cannot condone. It is left for Phaedra later to express the qualities implicit in Hippolytus' speech, for it corrupts even her noble resolve to die:

... but in dying I will become a bane to that other one as well, that he may learn not to be so lofty about my woes; in sharing this my disease with me he will learn the true virtue of understanding [*σωφρονεῖν μαθήσεται*—the full implication of these words is admittedly untranslatable]. (728-31)

Thus it is the tirade of Hippolytus which leads Phaedra, partly in anger but mostly in fear for her own reputation, to write the suicide note incriminating Hippolytus as her seducer.¹⁹ The crucial decision (in a drama which some critics think concerns mere puppets of the gods) arises naturally from the characters of both the principal figures in it, each of whom in the single-minded pursuit of his special *aretê* misreads the other and causes the other's downfall. It is chiefly Phaedra's perpetual concern with reputation, rather than the passion that afflicts her, which causes her to incriminate Hippolytus, but it is Hippolytus' righteous and intolerant "virtue" which leads her to fear him as a

¹⁹In emphasizing Phaedra's concern for *eukleia* (which Hans Strohm, *Euripides* [Munich 1957] 104, n. 1, has even called "das wichtigste Leitmotiv des Dramas"), one should not, of course, ignore the subtle admixture of other motives including revenge, anger and the venom of frustrated love which, as various critics have argued, influence Phaedra as well. See, for example, Winnington-Ingram, "Hippolyte d'Euripide," 181; Méridier, "L'Hippolyte d'Euripide," 238-40. Some critics (e.g., G. M. A. Grube, *Drama of Euripides*, 185; W. Zurcher, *Die Darstellung des Menschen im Drama des Euripides* [Basel], 1947, 86) appear to regard revenge as the main motive here. Norwood, *Essays*, 86, is one of the few to discount it as an influence on Phaedra's decision. Whatever her motives, it must be admitted that this decision represents a considerable fall from grace on Phaedra's part, the first and only breach in the "noble" characterization for which we have been arguing; however, as we have already noted, the main dramatic purpose of that characterization in relation to Hippolytus has already been fulfilled by this time.

potential slanderer, and which, therefore, may be said to cause his own destruction.²⁰

The real tragedy, then, remains that of Hippolytus, at the end of the play as at the beginning—this much Aphrodite's prologue has indicated clearly. He who is *semnos* in the sense in which the Servant has hinted (93) that Hippolytus is *semnos*, cannot be *sôphrôn*. Hippolytus in mistaking the part of *sôphrosynê*, his special virtue, for the whole, has missed it altogether.

The working out of Hippolytus' doom through the long scene with Theseus and in the Messenger speech follows an inevitable sequence which is dramatically satisfying but which requires little in the way of comment. We should note however how neatly the scene between Theseus and Hippolytus complements the earlier impression of the hero. Granted the falsity of Hippolytus' situation and the injustice of Theseus' attack upon him, one suspects that some of the contumely which Theseus expresses represents a sort of backlog of annoyance with the irritating but till now quite unassailable virtue which Hippolytus has long manifested:

So you are that exceptional man who associates with gods! You are "the pure one" (*σώφρων*), are you? the one untouched (*ἀκήρατος*) by any evil? . . . Go then and play the impostor with your meatless food, your bread diet. . . . But now you've been found out! I say let all beware of such as these: they hunt their prey with pompous pious (*σεμνοῖς*) speeches, devising base schemes the while.
(948-57, in part)

Theseus' specific suspicions of his son's smug and haughty religiosity are, of course, quite unjustified. But that there is something amiss in the holy dedication of Hippolytus the whole tragedy reveals, and it is no accident that the very terms which have been used in the earlier characterization of Hippolytus should reappear in this indictment.²¹

The same technique is observable in certain lines of Hippolytus' defence. However much we may admire him for keeping his oath about Phaedra's secret love, his haughty exclusiveness ("I am not skilled to speak before the mob," 986), and his fatal insistence, "No man is more chaste (*σωφρονέστερος*) than I" (995—an opinion repeated with unfavourable comparison between Phaedra and himself at 1035), both give the lie to any claim to *sôphrosynê* in the full sense of the word. Hippolytus appeals with justice to his whole character and way of life as

²⁰Cf. Grube's fine description of Hippolytus as tragic hero (*Drama of Euripides*, 185), to which the present interpretation is much indebted.

²¹Cf. Norwood, *Essays*, 74-75 and Winington-Ingram, "Hippolytus," 186, for similar comments on Theseus' indictment of his son.

a defence against Phaedra's fatal slander. The irony is, of course, that it is just this fatal limitation in Hippolytus' view of life which has from the first ensured his tragic fall. Theseus' weary conclusion, "Alas! that self-righteousness (τὸ σεμνόν) of yours will be the death of me!" (1064), might be repeated with more literal truth by the hero of himself. To the bitter end, the dramatist will not let us forget this fatal quality in Hippolytus. After the catastrophe, with the curse of Theseus all but fulfilled, he cries to Zeus:

Zeus, do you see this? 'Tis I this holy (σεμνός) man, surpassing all in *sôphrosynê*, who now, with life destroyed, goes forth to Hades 'neath the earth.
(1363-67)

More Mythology:

The Catastrophe, the Chorus and the Epilogue

An exception to the human, even naturalistic motivation of this play's action appears in the manner in which the catastrophe is effected. In cursing Hippolytus, Theseus invokes the supernatural power of one of three effective curses (v. 888) granted to him by the god Poseidon, and it is undoubtedly Poseidon's fulfilment of Theseus' curse which causes Hippolytus' fatal accident when his horses bolt before the apparition of the sea-monster.

This sudden switch from the natural to the supernatural level, or *vice versa*, is a typical feature of Euripidean drama. In the *Medea*, where the motivation and the whole meaning of the action has been expressed in the strictly human terms of Medea's passionate character, the murderess makes use of magic unguents for the actual dispatch of her royal victims and makes her escape in the fiery chariot of the Sun-god. In the *Heracles*, after the dramatist has used a miraculous event from the world of mythology (Hera's maddening of Heracles) as an essential part of the plot, he allows the hero himself (at 1341 ff.) to kick away, at least for a moment, the whole mythological scaffolding to which such events belong. It can be argued that neither of these sudden and fleeting changes in perspective (though each has its own dramatic purpose) requires us to reject for the rest of the play the particular "basis of reality" which the dramatist has led us to accept for that play. The same is true in the present instance. All that needs to be expressed on the human level has been expressed before the actual catastrophe; thus the actual form of the catastrophe is not essential to its meaning. Here the poet's use of

the Trozenian tradition,²² as well as providing him with one of the most exciting messenger speeches in Greek tragedy, adds perhaps a subtle extension to the meaning of the tragedy. Plunging horses and suddenly appearing bulls can be used as symbols of human passions: it is tempting to see a daring piece of symbolism in the destruction of the chaste Hippolytus by the bolting of his own bull-maddened steeds.²³

Only by the Chorus is the mythological explanation of human sufferings kept consistently before our minds. Such imaginative treatment is well suited to the lyric portions of the play, yet even here we may note a certain progression, in successive odes, from literal and specific mention of divine visitations to a more general expression of the power in nature which such tales symbolize.

In the *parodos*, the Chorus guesses in mythological terms about the causes of Phaedra's mysterious trouble. ("Could it be Pan, or Hecate, who maddens you? . . . or Cybele? or Artemis for some forgotten sacrifice?" 141 ff.) Following the disclosure of Phaedra's passion, the Chorus sings, prettily at first, of the sweet delights of Eros . . . and then of the dangers which he brings. In the second strophic part of this ode, the Chorus turns from these generalized descriptions to specific mythological examples of *Aphrodite's* visitations: on Iole, wooed with fire and slaughter by Heracles (545-54) and on Semele, consumed by blazing epiphany of her lover Zeus (555-62): "Dread and yet sweet the goddess comes, like the honey-bee, a flutter—and a sting!" (563-64) It will be noted that these odes tend to move from the general to the particular, or from the vaguer to the more clearly conceived mythological idea. The child Eros, for example, was by this time much closer to being a poetic conceit than was the august image of Aphrodite; the very emphasis on his lack of cult, bewailed by the Chorus in the second strophe, reinforces this distinction.

The same shift from poetic generalities to specific instances of Aphrodite's cruel power is still more marked in the two lyrics which lament, respectively, the fates of Phaedra and Hippolytus. The first begins with an escapist motif: wings for flying to some distant, happier place. In the second half of the lyric, the image is applied to more specific and

²²According to the Trozenian, as opposed to the Athenian, version of the myth, the Trozenian god Poseidon, not the Athenian King Aegeus, was father of Theseus. See Barrett's edition, p. 2.

²³Compare the image of the disciplined and the lawless horses as "the beloved" is approached in Plato's *Phaedrus* 254a ff. Cf. also Winnington-Ingram's suggestion that the bull which excites Hippolytus' horses is a sexual symbol appropriate to the catastrophe of this play: Winnington-Ingram, "Hippolytus," 190, 196. Cf. also Dodds, "*Aidōs*," 103, on the "submerged desires" of Hippolytus.

sinister descriptions: to the white-winged Cretan ship (752 ff.) which brought ill-omened Phaedra to Greece, there to be smitten with the dread disease of Aphrodite.

Similarly the lament for Hippolytus begins (1102 ff.) with vague ponderings, aroused by the hero's fate, about the divine direction of life but turns in its second half (1131 ff.) to lament, in a passage of singular beauty, the once "sleepless Muse" of Hippolytus, now silenced, and to declare for the first time the Chorus' anger (1146) with the gods that such things should be. There are, however, some interesting distinctions to be made between the initial ponderings about the gods in this ode, particularly if those editors are right who argue (from the genders at 1105-7-11-18-20) that the first and second strophe are sung by the Chorus of Huntsmen, the antistrophes by the regular female Chorus. The former would then appear to regard Hippolytus' death as casting some doubt on the gods' care for men; the latter, on the other hand, pray for the sort of disposition which will see them through life's vicissitudes—and which avoids the dangers of "rigid conviction" (*δόξα . . . ἀτρικής*, 1115), like that of Hippolytus.²⁴

The final chorus (1268-81), like the first stasimon, is concerned exclusively with the power of Love (Eros, under the queenly governance of Aphrodite). Unlike the earlier ode, however, this chorus contains no specific myths relating Aphrodite's effects to various human sufferings; indeed, unlike any of the preceding choral treatments of Aphrodite or of Eros, there is no mention at all of the suffering she causes. Here for the first time the Chorus treats Love as a positive force whose fructifying power affects man as only one among the many creatures of the universe:

Love flies over the earth and over the deep-sounding briny sea; winged and shining like gold, he bewitches all whom he assails, maddening their hearts with his passion—wild dogs of the mountains, all the creatures of the sea and earth on which the fiery sun looks down—and men. You, Cypris, you alone rule over all these with princely power.²⁵ (1272-81)

So emphatically does this final chorus transcend the specifically anthropomorphic treatments by which myth usually illustrates the power of Aphrodite that the sudden return to the literal level of myth in the epilogue comes at first as something of a shock. However, the contrast

²⁴For views on the divided distribution of this lyric, see Murray (OCT) and Barrett (who opposes the distribution in a lengthy discussion) in their notes *ad loc.*

²⁵This symbolic view of Aphrodite and Eros has been anticipated by the Nurse at vv. 447-50—who is allowed more than one philosophic insight (cf. 359-61) in the midst of her cajoling.

between the simple anthropomorphism of Aphrodite's spite in the prologue and the real explanations of the play itself has already shown us in what spirit we are to take the mythological framework enclosing the tragic human action. Artemis, of course, tells us nothing that we do not "know" already: that Theseus was wrong in his hasty judgment of his son; that Phaedra perished "trying by reason to conquer Cypris" (1304), and that, fearful of her reputation, she incriminated Hippolytus when he learned her secret (it is interesting that Artemis blames, as we have done, the fatal breach in Phaedra's secrecy entirely upon the Nurse, v. 1305); that Hippolytus' honourable observance of his oath to the Nurse kept him from revealing the true situation to Theseus; and so on. Eventually Artemis reaches the point. Even Theseus, whom she spends so much time upbraiding, is, in a sense, not to blame at all. "For Cypris, fulfilling her own spite, willed that all this should come to pass." (1327-28)

There follows Artemis' exoneration of herself: the law (*nomos*) among the gods that no one of them may contravene the plans of another. (1328-30) Scholars have debated the theological soundness of this defence, but surely this is not the important point. Artemis' argument may or may not be acceptable on this the most literal level of myth, but Euripides has already shown us how much significance this level has for the real meanings of the play. His scornful repudiation of such shallow interpretations—the personal revenge of spiteful gods—is now repeated, briefly and ironically, in the kind of consolation he has Artemis offer to Hippolytus for the injustice which he has suffered at Aphrodite's hands: Artemis, too, will waste no time in taking vengeance on whomsoever Aphrodite holds most dear! (1420-22) A moment later, Hippolytus, showing more tolerance and justice than either one of these paper goddesses, forgives his father Theseus—a typical Euripidean comment on such divine morality and on the conception of the gods which it implies.²⁶

²⁶Both Spira (*Untersuchungen*, 85-93, and Knox (Yale Classical Studies, XIII, 3-31) emphasize the reconciliation of Hippolytus and Theseus as an important function of the epilogue: Spira, as a part of his thesis that the divine restoration of order and tranquillity is a characteristic function of the *deus-ex-machina* device in Euripides; Knox, with a more sensible emphasis on the "affirmation of purely human values in an inhuman universe." (p. 31)

Appendix I

The Myth and its Treatment: A Critique of Some Other Views

1. Numerous accounts of the various elements in the Hippolytus myth already exist, and since a thorough summary of the available evidence is now available in English in W. S. Barrett's edition of the *Hippolytus*, 1-15 (with an appendix on the relevant lost plays, 15-45), it would be redundant, if not impertinent, to add another. Any reconstruction of the tradition of this myth must be open to question at various points since the limited and highly elliptical evidence may often be interpreted in more than one way.

One such question should perhaps be raised here with regard to Barrett's account. Barrett puts almost exclusive emphasis on the human and secular aspects of the Hippolytus-Phaedra myth from its beginning, stressing its obvious affinity with such folk-tales as that of Bellerophon-Stheneboea and others concerning scorned adulteresses (in intention) and chaste youths. Consequently he makes very little of the role of Aphrodite in the myth in general or in Euripides' treatment of it and seems to imply that it is not until the present play (Euripides' second version of the Hippolytus theme) that she takes any part (and that a very perfunctory one, see Barrett pp. 15, 154-55) in the legend at all. This view of the background of the myth is possible, but on the whole, I think, unlikely. Here I prefer Séchans' view (*REG*, XXIV [1911], 105-51, esp. 120 ff.) that since there were shrines at Trozen for Artemis (Pausanias, II. 31-34) and for Aphrodite (three of them, Pausanias, I. 37.3, 6, 7), as well as for Hippolytus (whose development as a cult hero to whom brides sacrificed their hair is variously explained), then it seems probable that at least one pre-tragic version of the myth (whether the original one or not does not greatly matter) should have treated the

origin of the Hippolytus-Phaedra conflict as due to rivalry between the god of purity and the god of sexual love. (I am aware, of course, of the affinity between Hippolytus and Aphrodite in the "brides' cult" of Hippolytus, since it is only a matter of time until these same brides are worshipping Aphrodite in real earnest: hence, perhaps, the proximity of Hippolytus' and Aphrodite's temples in Trozen [Pausanias, II. 32.1-4, cited by Barrett, 3, 5]. Nevertheless it is not unlikely that the very different phases of experience represented by Hippolytus [and Artemis] should be crystallized as opposites in myth.) Séchan suggests that the original rivalry was between Aphrodite and Hippolytus and that the congeniality between what Hippolytus and Artemis represented caused imagination in the "anthropomorphic" period to fashion a tender affection between them. From here it is an easy step (though Séchan does not express it in quite these terms) to imagine the two rival goddesses, with Hippolytus reduced to the acolyte of Artemis, scoring over and taking vengeance on one another through their human devotees.

Neither of these two views can be proved conclusively, nor, perhaps, does it greatly matter for the interpretation of the play. Whatever the historical background, it is clear that Euripides wishes to imply such a typical "traditional" myth and then (whether or not he had imagined this version for his own purposes) to rationalize it in the manner and to the degree described in the text of this chapter. There is, as we shall see, one real dramatic advantage provided by the role of Aphrodite: it helps (whether "psychologically" or otherwise) in the establishment of Phaedra's innocence in our minds, and this, as Barrett rightly remarks (14-15), is surely one of the fundamental points in Euripides' play.

With regard to these and other points, I should observe that the text of the present chapter was written before the publication of Barrett's great edition and so, with the exception of a few added notes, references to this work are sadly lacking.

2. Perhaps the sharpest distinction between the supernatural myth and the human action in this drama has been made by Dodds: "The artist has wisely made this [mythological] framework detachable, so that we may, if we please, study this drama in isolation from its traditional setting." (Dodds, *CR*, 39 [1925] 104, n. 1) For similar views of the expendability of the gods of the prologue and epilogue for the understanding of the human action of this play, cf. Wilamowitz, in the introduction to his edition (Berlin 1891), 52; Pohlenz, *Griech. Trag.*, 272; Norwood, *Essays*, 74. However, as we shall see, some of these critics do indicate in what way "the divine" in this play has real significance for them.

At the other extreme is the approach which stresses the mythological motivation of this play to the nullification, if not the exclusion, of the free and responsible operation of the human will. A subtle defence of this view is to be found in B. M. Knox, "The *Hippolytus* of Euripides," *Yale Classical Studies* 13, 3-31. Knox takes the statements of the Prologue and Epilogue at their face value and regards the whole complex action of the play itself as an example of the illusory quality of human freedom and the "futility of moral choice." "The alternatives before these human beings [the four major characters in the play] . . . are chosen and rejected in a complicated pattern which shows the independent operation of five separate human wills producing a result desired by none of them, the consummation of Aphrodite's purpose." (p. 15)

However, the fact that all of the characters achieve by their combined actions a result which none of them (at least with the wisdom of hindsight) would want, proves not the lack of free will nor the futility of moral choice, but rather the *limitations* imposed on both, first, by the circumstances in which these characters are placed, and secondly, by the operation of the "free will and moral choice" of the other characters. Here we have, once again, the tragic situation compounded of freedom and necessity. And if it can be shown, at least as far as the tragic hero is concerned, that his particular contribution to the total result is illustrative of his whole character, then it will still be possible to say that his downfall is due, at least in part, to the kind of man he is.

With Knox's view we may compare that of A. Spira in *Untersuchungen zum Deus ex Machina bei Sophokles und Euripides*, 85-93. Spira's treatment of the play also stresses the divine plan toward which all movements of the characters are drawn. Thus he finds that the Prologue adds to the pathetic effect of the action, for with the knowledge gained from it we realize that men are being led to their fate in ignorance and blindness. Spira's account of the play, however, strikes one as even more "god-determined" than that of Knox, in that he pays less attention to the individual human motivations within the play. Comparable similarities and differences appear in their respective views of the epilogue: see p. 46, note 26. See also L. Méridier, *L'Hyppolyte d'Euripide*, 208, and G. Soury, *REG*, 56 (1943), 40-41, both of whom also regard the apparently free human activity in the play as, ultimately, the manifestation of the divine will which controls the action.

Perhaps the most reasonable compromise between the "mythological" and the secular or "psychological" interpretations of this tragedy, and particularly of Phaedra's passion, is to be found in Pohlenz' warning against the over-simplification of regarding Euripides' psychological

treatment as simply a rationalization of the divine. ". . . when unnatural desire enters so strongly into Phaedra's hitherto guiltless life . . . a modern rationalism might talk about 'elemental force'; the Greek fancied it otherwise: he perceived a divine power which was real enough, even if one could not grasp it with understanding." (*Griech. Trag.*, 273) Nevertheless, Pohlenz distinguishes the Euripidean attitude from the orthodox mythological view. He aptly compares the former with the attitude of Hippocrates, who strenuously resisted the priests in their attribution of epilepsy to a *daimon* and yet recognized epilepsy, like all other diseases, as divine in that nature itself was divine.

3. The widely differing reactions among scholars to Aphrodite's lines in the prologue should warn us of an element of subjectivity in any judgment which we may make of them. Contrast, for example, Grube, 196-97, who finds nothing in the presentation which seriously undermines "the reality" of the goddess, and Norwood, *Essays*, 103-5, whose remarks on the ultimate (and, on the poet's part, intentional) incredibility of the goddess *as she is presented in the Prologue* tend to support the estimate ventured in the text of this chapter. Now, any discussion of the treatment of the gods in Euripides must surely take into consideration the cultural climate in which that treatment is conceived. Thus when Grube (197) speaks of the details of Aphrodite's presentation in the *Hippolytus* as not "so inconsistent with the Greek idea of godhead as to require us to look for satirical intent," Norwood is perhaps justified in pointing out that "there was more than one Greek idea of godhead." (*Essays*, 104, n. 3) Grube's remark on the characteristics of Aphrodite in the *Hippolytus* prologue is, of course, true enough when the comparison is with Homer. That Homer *is* the comparison which Grube has constantly in mind is clear both from his defence in terms of Homeric comparisons of the "theology" of *Hipp.* 1328-34 (p. 192, n. 2), and from various remarks in his general chapter (4) on the gods in Euripides. (E.g., on pp. 41, 43, 44, especially the warning, ". . . we should never forget that Euripides and his contemporaries were brought up on Homer." p. 43)

It is not, then, Grube's comparison of the Euripidean and the Homeric gods which one finds troubling but the inference (both in the first passage quoted and throughout chapter 4 that for this reason we should not regard Euripides' picture of the gods as exceptional or suggestive of critical intent. As I have suggested earlier, it is this very exaggeration of the Homeric on the part of a fifth century intellectual, "well versed," as Grube admits (44) "in the new thought," which underlines Euripides' contempt for such personally vindictive anthropomorphic divinities.

Grube is, of course, right in insisting (46-47 and chaps. 4 and 16 throughout) on the reality and universality, to Euripides as to us, of the powers represented by Aphrodite and Dionysus, but he fails, I think, to distinguish sufficiently between this reality and the credibility of the excessively personal (and unpleasant) characterizations of so many of the Euripidean gods, including Aphrodite and Dionysus.

This objection cannot, I think, be circumvented by appealing (as Grube does) to the necessity for the dramatist to use "the mythological apparatus of his time" (44) or to represent the gods "in a manner intelligible in his day." (45) Such obligation surely does not explain Euripides' emphasis, which was greater than that of his less "advanced" colleagues, on those features of the mythological apparatus particularly uncongenial to contemporary thought. Moreover, the *kind* of criticism which I think this emphasis implies is not necessarily of the "laughing-up-one's-sleeve" variety which Grube (45) rightly declares to be inconsistent with the deep emotions proper to tragedy. It is only in the tragicomedies that the slyer sort of criticism appears—and neither here nor in the great tragedies such as the *Hippolytus* is the implicit criticism the main point of the play.

In general, though Grube mentions (42, 44) various Greek attempts (and Euripides' awareness of them) to "purify" the traditional conception of the gods, the critic actually takes little account of these circumstances when he defends the acceptability, at their face value, of the moral qualities of the Euripidean gods. Thus, to take one example, Grube reminds us that the Greek word *theos* "can be freely applied to all that is greater than man because it lasts forever" (41) and then uses this undoubted fact to suggest that to the Greeks of Euripides' day there was nothing startling about a god being "bad." However, the point surely is that Euripides and some of his contemporaries were attempting to show citizens bred on the traditional views which Grube cites so frequently that such conceptions of the gods *should* offend them. Specific passages can, I believe, be cited in support of this view, but let us first consider Grube's point about the use of the term *theos* as meaning simply "eternal." (41) Here we must surely make a distinction, at least for the mid-fifth century, between the term *theos* (or the adjective *theios*) as applied to specific authoritative Olympians and the same term as applied to anything exhibiting exceptional power, endurance or excellence, as well as to phenomena not readily explicable in terms of normal experience. That such a distinction is legitimate we see from the fact that Democritus, who must surely have paid little heed to the anthropomorphic system of gods, could still cheerfully use the word

theios as a term of approval or awe in the secondary, almost secular sense. (See, for example, Democritus frgs. B 112, B 129, D-K, and, for the derogation of τὰ θνητά, "the mortal" in the sense of "the transient" in the choice of pleasures, B 189.) Pohlenz (*Griech. Trag.*, I, 273, in the passage discussed above, section 2 of this appendix) makes precisely the same distinction between the mythological and the non-mythological in explaining what Hippocrates regarded as "divine." From this secondary and largely secular usage, it is an easy step to the more vulgar metaphorical usages of *theos* (and *theios* "divine"), some of which appear in the examples which Grube cites (42) as indicative of the non-moral connotations of the word. Such examples do not prove a great deal about contemporary attitudes to either the traditional or the emerging idea of godhood, except in a very few cases (*Hel.* 560?) where Euripides *may* be satirizing contemporary abuse of the term.

On the other hand, with regard to the narrower, more "theological" use of the term *theos*, by Grube's own admission "the religious teachers of Greece were . . . constantly trying to free the more respectable inhabitants of Olympus, and the word *Theos*, from the amorality of natural forces, which becomes immorality once the gods are endowed with human minds and personality." (42) The idea that Euripides contributed to this attempt at least in a negative way, by insisting that "if the gods do evil they are not gods" (*TGF*², 292, 7) Grube rejects both by his whole treatment of the gods in Euripides and in his specific comment on this fragment: "This fragment tells us only that one character in Euripides gave expression to this more Platonic conception, that the poet knew of it, not that it was his own." (43) But here Grube omits from the discussion several other passages in Euripides which point to the same conception, e.g., *Hippolytus* 120, *Bacchae* 1348, *I.T.* 389-91, *Heracles* 1341-46. Since the views expressed in these passages (which I discuss elsewhere in their various dramatic contexts) all contradict the mythical situation on which their plays are based but are nevertheless endorsed by the final effect which these plays have upon us, it seems reasonable to conclude that they are the poet's own.

To conclude this discussion, I should like to make it clear that I have no quarrel with Professor Grube's exposition of the *real* meaning of the gods and their influence in such plays as the *Hippolytus* and the *Bacchae*; indeed, my own reading of these plays has been greatly assisted by his penetrating and clearly expressed analyses. Rather, it is with the other side of the coin that I have been concerned in the present discussion, for, unlike Professor Grube, I believe that both in the *Hippolytus* and, by various methods, in other plays, Euripides is attacking and

satirizing the conventional and traditional mythological conceptions. Indeed, the new kind of reality standing behind the stage presences of Aphrodite and Artemis itself constitutes a criticism of the traditional mythological divinities who are motivated, like the on-stage goddesses of this play, by the baser human reactions of pique, jealousy and self-conceit. The point is well summed up by Professor Dodd's comment on these same gods in the *Hippolytus*:

From behind this transparent satire on the Olympians there emerges a deeper conception of Cypris and Artemis as eternal cosmic powers: the very point of the satire is that they must be interpreted as principles not as persons.
(“Euripides the Irrationalist,” 102)

Appendix II

Hippolytus 373-87

1. The general question whether or not Euripides was introducing a contemporary philosophic argument in this passage is still much debated: see, in addition to views of Dodds already cited, Barrett, 228 ff. and Bruno Snell, *Scenes from Greek Tragedy*, 48-69, especially 56 ff. (another study which, like Barrett's edition, appeared after the present chapter had been written). Barrett argues that no reference to contemporary philosophic debate is intended in the present passage, that Phaedra's account of human wrong-doing simply reflects that indecisiveness which he regards as the root of her trouble. Snell, taking issue with this view, argues on the contrary that Euripides is here answering a Socratic objection to the idea expressed in the *Medea* (1077-80) that one's *thumos* may force one to a course of action which one knows to be wrong. (Snell cites, in addition to Plato's early dialogues, the Xenophontic Socrates at *Memor.* 3. 9. 4.) However, it is not, perhaps, necessary to insist on so specific a philosophic debate to argue against Barrett that the terminology of the passage in question surely points to contemporary discussions, not necessarily restricted to the Socratic circle, about the relation of knowledge to the good. Nevertheless, Snell's argument should be read with attention, particularly that part which concerns the alleged novelty of the psychic struggles described in the *Medea* and *Hippolytus* respectively, and the distinctions between these two descriptions.

2. No one, so far as I know, has given a completely satisfactory account of *aidôs* in this passage. My own view is that "the bad *aidôs*" here regarded as a pleasure refers to the distracting enjoyment of "taboo" subjects which, when not treated with reverence, lead to shame. One such subject particularly relevant to Phaedra's situation is obviously

sex. However, I am aware that, beyond the use of τὰ αἰδοῖα in an explicit anatomical sense, parallel usages are lacking to support this view.

Various difficulties attend other explanations as well. The shortcomings in Dodds' ingenious theory have been suggested above (note 8). Méridier's simpler explanation lacks precision: "cette lâche complaisance aux entraînements du dehors qui fait oublier le devoir . . ." (*Euripide II, ad loc.*); this could surely refer to any enjoyable distraction and *aidôs* must mean more than that. Barrett seeks (not, I think, justifiably) to cut the Gordian knot by refusing to take Phaedra literally: "she adds *aidôs* to her list as an example not of ἡδονή but of something προτεθὲν ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ; she has (and so have the audience) forgotten the grammatical construction of the earlier parts of the list. . . ." (p. 230) This is surely a most improbable anacoluthon and one which would interrupt the whole sense of the passage concerning the familiar triangle of judgment or understanding, virtue and pleasure. Moreover, Barrett's own explanation (in the following note) of "the bad *aidôs*" as "diffidence or indecisiveness" seems to me (however well it may fit Barrett's view of Phaedra's own character) to reverse the idea of distraction from "the good we know but pursue not" with which Phaedra's homily has been concerned.