NOTES ON THE *BACCHAE*[1]

242-7

> ἐκεῖνος εἶναί φησι Διόνυσον θεόν,
> ἐκεῖνος ἐν μηρῶι ποτ' ἐρράφθαι Διός,
> ὃς ἐκπυροῦται λαμπάσιν κεραυνίαις
> σὺν μητρί, Δίους ὅτι γάμους ἐψεύσατο.   245
> ταῦτ' οὐχὶ δεινῆς ἀγχόνης ἐστ' ἄξια,
> ὕβρεις ὑβρίζειν, ὅστις ἐστιν ὁ ξένος;

In 246 we should, as Dodds suggests, get rid of the feeble δεινῆς and adopt Mau's δεινὰ κἀγχόνης. (Dodds suggests that K was misread as IC and the resulting δειναῖς was 'corrected' to δεινῆς.) Verdenius, *Mnemos.* 41 (1988), 254, defends the reading of the MSS., saying that δεινῆς serves to distinguish the noose of punishment from that of suicide, but this is untenable: why is one noose more 'terrible' than the other, and who on hearing 'worthy of the terrible noose' would draw conclusions about it that could not be drawn from 'worthy of the noose'? The question raised about the kind of noose is important (see below) but cannot be answered by these means.

    There are indications of more serious trouble in 247. Wilamowitz thought it interpolated, and though Dodds does not agree, he considers it 'a little weak'. Its weakness comes, I think, from the fact that the sense is incomplete. It is not that ὕβρεις ὑβρίζειν is in need of an adjective: Dodds cites four similar phrases (*H.F.* 708 and 741, *Hel.* 785, *I.A.* 961) where it has none. Rather, in the sentence 'Are these things not monstrous and worthy of the noose, to commit outrages, whoever the stranger is?' what is needed is, first, an indication of the person or thing against which the outrage is committed; and, second, a more plausible connection between the infinitive and what precedes it than the bare apposition with ταῦτα given in our MSS. As Dodds says, interpolation would be motiveless here, and since the sense of 247 is incomplete, it would be more economical to assume that a verse has dropped out after 246, e.g.

> ταῦτ' οὐχὶ δεινὰ κἀγχόνης ἐστ' ἄξια,
> ⟨εἰ τόνδε χαίροντ' ἐς πόλιν παρήσομεν⟩
> ὕβρεις ὑβρίζειν, ὅστις ἐστιν ὁ ξένος;

This suggestion also removes a further anomaly: in almost every other place in Euripides where the word ἀγχόνη is used (*Hcld.* 243–6, where note also the 'minatory' future condition, *Hip.* 777, *Andr.* 816, *Hel.* 200, 299, *Pho.* 333, fr. 1070.2 and cf. *Alc.* 227–9; the exceptions are *H.F.* 154 and the dubious fr. 362.26) the reference is to the noose of the suicide, not to that of the executioner. That is not its invariable meaning (see Dawe on *O.T.* 1374) but it is the meaning ἀγχόνης ἄξια and similar expressions have in comedy (Ar. *Ach.* 125) and oratory (Aeschin. 2.38). In the *Acharnians* passage, frustration figures as the motive for (putative) suicide, in Aeschines being ignored, at *Hcld.* 246 shame at being unable to defend one's land against the depredations of foreigners. This last is especially close to our passage. Pentheus says 'If we cannot prevent this stranger from insulting us, should we not end it all?'

302–5

Ἄρεώς τε μοῖραν μεταλαβὼν ἔχει τινά·
στρατὸν γὰρ ἐν ὅπλοις ὄντα κἀπὶ τάξεσιν
φόβος διεπτόησε πρὶν λόγχης θιγεῖν.
μανία δὲ καὶ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ Διονύσου πάρα.

'This panic comes from Dionysus.' 'This too is a madness from Dionysus.' In one or the other fashion do most translators render 305. The first, as a literal version, is obviously impossible: if μανία is the subject and a form of οὗτος modifies it as an attributive adjective, that form must be feminine. The second is more defensible, for obviously τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἀρετή is good Greek, and it is possible to take Διονύσου πάρα as an attributive modifier of μανία: see J. Diggle, *Studies in the Text of Euripides* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 69–70 and 28–9, for the prepositional phrase, even without a definite article to help, in place of an attributive adjective. (Note, however, that in most of his examples the prepositional phrase stands next to the noun it modifies.) Still, the logic of the passage – not an enumeration of madnesses but of the manifestations of Dionysus – leads us to expect the meaning 'This too is from Dionysus', making the prepositional phrase into the self-subsistent predicate. We can have this at the trifling cost of changing a single letter and altering the punctuation:

στρατὸν γὰρ ἐν ὅπλοις ὄντα κἀπὶ τάξεσιν
φόβος διεπτόησε πρὶν λόγχης θιγεῖν
μανία τε· καὶ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ Διονύσου πάρα.

φόβος ... μανία τε is hendiadys for 'panic'. For the second element of a hendiadys[2] connected by τε after several intervening words, see *Ion* 1194–5, δρόσου ... Βιβλίνου τε πώματος.

890–6

                                        οὐ
γὰρ κρεῖσσόν ποτε τῶν νόμων
γιγνώσκειν χρὴ καὶ μελετᾶν.
κοῦφα γὰρ δαπάνα νομί-
    ζειν ἰσχὺν τόδ' ἔχειν,
ὅ τι ποτ' ἄρα τὸ δαιμόνιον,
τό τ' ἐν χρόνωι μακρῶι νόμιμον   895
    ἀεὶ φύσει τε πεφυκός.

893 τόδ' Heath: τ' P: τάδ' Willink *CQ* n.s. 16 (1966), 231

This passage has been much discussed in recent years. The purpose of this note is to show that there is no good reason not to accept the text of P (with either Heath's τόδ' or Willink's τάδ' at 893) and the interpretation of Sandys. The objections are based on a misunderstanding, not of the text but of the intellectual climate for which the play was written. In particular, I wish to cast doubt on the belief that Euripides could not have made his chorus of Bacchants identify 'what in long ages is always lawful' with 'what is grounded in nature' because the influence of the Sophistic Movement had made this identification problematical.

Sandys' translation reads: 'It costs but little to hold that *that* has (sovereign) power, whate'er it be that is more than mortal, and in the long ages is upheld by law and grounded in nature.' In order to anticipate one objection I shall later mention, I would introduce a friendly amendment, in the direction of greater literalness, after

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[2] See D. Sansone, 'On Hendiadys in Greek', *Glotta* 62 (1984), 16–26.

the second comma, so that the whole reads: 'It costs but little to hold that *that* has (sovereign) power, whate'er it be that is more than mortal and that over the length of ages is always lawful and grounded in nature.'

Dodds objects to this as creating a single category of things that are (a) divine, (b) upheld by law, and (c) grounded in nature. Dodds argues that (b) and (c) were regularly contrasted by Euripides' contemporaries, and that neither of them could naturally be equated with (a). This is mistaken, as I will show below. It leads Dodds to translate as follows: 'and to consider what has been accepted through long ages (to be) an eternal truth (ἀεί) and grounded in nature'. This takes ἀεί as an adjective, not impossible but, with the verb 'to be' omitted, rather difficult.

R. D. Dawe[3] adds his own objections to Sandys ('This translation omits ἀεί altogether, and renders τό τε νόμιμον as if it were νόμιμόν τε', an objection my friendly amendment is designed to meet) but cannot agree with Dodds. Like me he finds ἀεὶ φύσει τε πεφυκὸς sc. εἶναι an awkward predicate. (He might also have added that to say 'What has been going on for a long time is eternal' is a blatant *non sequitur*). His solution is to read αἰνεῖν for ἀεί: 'It costs little enough to believe in the power of whatever the divine may be, and to *accept* what has been the custom over a long period of time and is naturally born in us.'[4] Dawe claims further that Dodds' objection to linking the lawful with the natural is without force. He says that 'the concepts are not so much linked, or identified, as merged'. He concedes that Sandys' translation, with his own quite similar friendly amendment, may be right, but finds that τόδε followed not by one but by two or three ideas lacks 'crispness', which his own text is intended to supply.

Since Dawe is the first since Sandys to get the essentials right, it seems ungrateful not to follow him in writing αἰνεῖν for ἀεί. I do not do so, not because it is at all a terrible thing to add four upright strokes and two diagonals to the text of Euripides (whatever some critics may think) but because there are less strenuous ways to achieve crispness. If the discrepancy between Heath's τόδ' (for P's τ') and the plurality of ideas it introduces is the problem, a more economical solution is Willink's τάδ', it being more attractive to change the part of the text that is already conjectural than to add another conjecture. For a quite similar τάδε see 378.

Dawe has performed a service by answering an objection that has bedevilled the discussion of this passage and should never have been made. But his contribution is likely to be ignored by those who reject his conjecture, either for the reason given above or from a general distrust of emendation. Let me therefore argue at greater length that he is right. In Sandys' translation the passage makes the kind of straightforward and common-sense statement that one would expect from a chorus of worshippers trying to commend in a general way[5] the worship of the gods and piety: it costs but little to believe in the validity and authority of what is divine, always lawful over the long stretch of time, and grounded in nature. (This is precisely the *quod semper et ubique* argument that most apologists for religion turn to at one time

[3] R. D. Dawe, *RhM* 123 (1980), 223–4.

[4] The last person to write on this problem, M. Neuburg, *AJP* 107 (1986), 251–2, wants to take τόδ' as appositive to ἰσχύν: 'It costs but little to hold that whatever the divine may be has this as its strength: that which has been instituted by much time, and that which has always existed by nature.' But surely the Greek for 'to have this as its strength' is ἰσχὺν τήνδ' ἔχειν.

[5] These lines are not an apologia for Dionysiac religion per se but, as their context shows, an argument for piety in general and against impiety. Cf. the way that the Chorus and Teiresias commend the worship of Dionysus as 'what is always lawful' (71) and 'the usages and practices of the lowly mass of people' (430–1) and disparage irreligion as 'living outside the laws' (331), 'lawless folly' (387), and (slightly different) 'practices that are outside of justice' (1009–10).

or another.) The identity, or at least the close relatedness, of these three concepts is simply taken for granted. Sophistication is not wanted or needed here. Dodds has them *arguing* that what is customary over a long period of time is in fact an eternal verity grounded in nature, that *nomos* is *phusis*,[6] but this is altogether too donnish for the context. Even if the whole culture is agog with new ideas about the opposition between convention and nature, we do not expect that the hymnic utterances of proselytizing devotees will address this distinction.

It was in fact perfectly natural and not paradoxical in the latter half of the fifth century to identify νόμος with the gods and to speak of its eternity. Antigone, for example, in her famous speech *Ant.* 450ff. asserts that the divinity of immemorial custom is evident from the fact that it has been the custom not just yesterday and today but always (cf. ἀεί in *Ba.* 896), and that no one can say when it arose.

> οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε,
> οὐδ᾽ ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη
> τοιούσδ᾽ ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥρισεν νόμους·
> οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾠόμην τὰ σὰ
> κηρύγμαθ᾽, ὥστ᾽ ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν
> νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ᾽ ὑπερδραμεῖν·
> οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ᾽ ἀεί ποτε
> ζῆι ταῦτα, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.

As for the third element, φύσις, consider *O.T.* 863–72:

> εἴ μοι ξυνείη φέροντι μοῖρα τὰν
>   εὔσεπτον ἁγνείαν λόγων
> ἔργων τε πάντων, ὧν νόμοι πρόκεινται
> ὑψίποδες, οὐρανίαι 'ν
>   αἰθέρι τεκνωθέντες, ὧν Ὄλυμπος
> πατὴρ μόνος, οὐδέ νιν
> θνατὰ φύσις ἀνέρων
> ἔτικτεν, οὐδὲ μήποτε λάθα κατακοιμάσηι.
> μέγας ἐν τούτοις θεός, οὐδὲ γηράσκει.

Holiness in word and deed is established by 'high-footed laws' begotten on high, whose father is Olympus, not the φύσις ἀνέρων. This surely implies that some other φύσις, either that of the gods or φύσις in general, is the reason for their strength.

But, someone will object, these examples are from Sophocles, not Euripides, and it is the latter who is thought to be the more susceptible to new currents of thought. Surely a chorus of worshippers in Euripides is more likely than one in Sophocles to give utterance to this distinction. Yet although traces of fifth-century intellectual debate are visible in many of his plays, on this particular point he seems to have been scarcely affected. In all of his plays and fragments I can find only one instance where φύσις and νόμος are contrasted to the disparagement of νόμος.[7] I therefore find no

[6] Neuburg has them anatomizing the divine into '*a combination of* nomos *and* phusis' (emphasis original).

[7] See especially V. Ehrenberg, 'Die Anfänge des griechischen Naturrechts', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 35 (1923), 119–43, who shows (138–43) that Euripides' language is unaffected by this antithesis and that νόμος is never in Euripides 'the *merely* conventional': 'Tatsächlich finden wir in Euripides, obwohl es immer wieder behauptet wird, die eindeutige Gegenüberstellung νόμωι-φύσει nicht ein einziges Mal'. Fr. 920 N² seems to be the only exception, but whoever said 'My nature willed it, that cares not for laws' may not have intended to emphasize the conventionality of those laws but merely the strength of his own natural inclination. I discuss this subject with reference to *Hec.* 798ff. in *The Heroic Muse* (Baltimore, 1987), pp. 144–5 nn. 53 and 56. Note too that in Herodotus νόμος is not merely the conventional but has a considerable element of natural validity, so that 'he lay with her in an unnatural way' (1.61.1) is ἐμίσγετό οἱ οὐ κατὰ νόμον. All this is in spite of the consciousness that customs differ: see Pindar fr. 215, a reference I owe to Dr Dawe.

compelling reason to object to the Chorus' identification of the divine with 'what is over the length of ages always lawful and grounded in nature'. Sandys had it right. There is also a moral here: the speed of cultural change and the pace at which new ideas percolate down from philosophers and other intellectuals into the society at large can easily be overestimated for Greek antiquity. One tends to assimilate the fifth century to the pace of the twentieth. Tragedy is an essentially popular, not an intellectual, genre, and the application of *Geistesgeschichte* to it can be too clever by half. Why make the Asian bacchants over into the image of philosophers when they have elsewhere shown no trace of this kind of speculation?

1240–7

$$\sigma\grave{v}\ \delta\acute{\epsilon},\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\tau\epsilon\rho,\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}\xi\alpha\iota\ \chi\epsilon\rho o\hat{\iota}\nu\cdot \qquad\qquad 1240$$
γαυρούμενος δὲ τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἀγρεύμασιν
κάλει φίλους ἐς δαῖτα· μακάριος γὰρ εἶ,
μακάριος, ἡμῶν τοιάδ' ἐξειργασμένων.
KA. ὦ πένθος οὐ μετρητὸν οὐδ' οἷόν τ' ἰδεῖν,
φόνον ταλαίναις χερσὶν ἐξειργασμένων.   1245
καλὸν τὸ θῦμα καταβαλοῦσα δαίμοσιν
ἐπὶ δαῖτα Θήβας τάσδε κἀμὲ παρακαλεῖς.

There are two reasons for thinking that the text here is not sound, (a) the grammar of 1244 and (b) the curious genitive absolute of 1245.

(a) 'O grief that cannot be measured, that cannot be looked upon.' That is what 1244 ought to, but cannot, mean. For οἷός τε is never used in the way that this passage requires. ὦ ἰχθύες οὐχ οἷοί τ' ἀριθμεῖν can mean only 'O fish that cannot count', and I have searched in vain the indices, lexica, and concordances to Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Thucydides, Xenophon, Antiphon, Andocides, and Lysias without finding any example to show that it might mean 'O fish that cannot be counted'.[8] What is required is οἷός τε modifying a noun as in 1244 (obviously it is no good citing the impersonal usage as in *Alc.* 487, *Med.* 237, etc.), construed with an active infinitive, but with the meaning of the phrase passive. There are none. I conclude that 1244 as transmitted must mean 'O grief that cannot be measured, that cannot see'.[9]

(b) A further difficulty, but also a valuable clue about the solution, is in 1245. The genitive absolute with genitive subject omitted occurs occasionally in tragedy, but the examples I have found are mostly a single passive or intransitive participle and rarely more than a single word: Aesch. *Sept.* 274, *Sup.* 123 (text uncertain), *Eu.* 772; Soph. *O.T.* 838, *El.* 1344; Eur. *Andr.* 998 (the example at Aesch. *Cho.* 644–5 is dubious). Suspicions about the phrase φόνον ταλαίναις χερσὶν ἐξειργασμένων, four words, transitive participle, direct object, and dative of means, are not quieted by being told 'cf. ξυντυχόντων, Aesch. *Eu.* 772'. Dr Dawe *per litteras* suggests emendation: φόνων ταλαίναις χερσὶν ἐξειργασμένων, with the participle passive and the whole taken as constituent genitive. Though both the passive and the plural are somewhat unexpected, this is a possibility.

If we wanted, however, to deal with both problems together, what should our diagnosis be? We might think of interpolation: Middendorf already proposed to

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[8] Defence should start, as Dr Dawe pointed out to me, with K.-G. II 15 An. 13 where expressions like ἄξιον ἰδεῖν, 'worthy to *be* seen', are discussed. In the absence, however, of evidence that οἷός τε was so used, we must look on our passage with suspicion.

[9] It is also odd that for 'to look on' Euripides chose a word that normally means 'to *see*'. Grégoire's Budé translation is unusually frank: 'O douleur sans mesure, et qu'on ne saurait *voir*!' (emphasis mine).

delete 1245, and Willink *per litteras* suggests extending the deletion to include 1244. But it is hard to discover a motive for interpolation. Even more telling, there is no motive for the bizarre wording of 1245. An interpolator who has gone so far as to borrow ἐξειργασμένων from 1243 would take his cue from that line and put in a genitive noun: nothing could be simpler for such a person than to cobble together something on the lines of μίασμαθ᾽ ὑμῶν τοιάδ᾽ ἐξειργασμένων, and it seems rather improbable that an interpolator would produce something so bizarre and nonsensical. We should consider, instead, the strong possibility that something is missing before 1245.

The only change in the transmitted wording urgently required by this hypothesis is to disjoin μετρητόν from οἷόν τ᾽ ἰδεῖν since if the latter is genuine it cannot be parallel to the former. And while it is conceivable that οὐδέ is being used in a non-connective sense ('not even'), it would be simplest to change it to οὐχ, which might easily have been changed to οὐδ᾽ once the omission of a line or two caused a scribe to think that πένθος had two parallel predicates.

As to the filling of the lacuna, we are more fortunate than usual. We know on this hypothesis that it contained the subject of the genitive absolute, e.g. σοῦ γε συγγόνων τε σῶν. But we also have one other invaluable clue. On two other occasions in this play the word πένθος has been used, once explicitly and once by clear implication (367, 508) as the *etymon* of Pentheus' name. (Cf. also Chaeremon, TrGF 71 F 4, Πενθεὺς ἐσομένης συμφορᾶς ἐπώνυμος.) Now, at the climax of the play, we see Pentheus' head on Agave's thyrsus, and Cadmus says ὦ πένθος. While it is conceivable that Euripides left it to the audience to make this connection, I would guess that he made it for them, e.g.

ὦ πένθος οὐ μετρητόν· οὐχ οἷόν τ᾽ ἰδεῖν	1244
⟨Πενθεὺς ἀνίας ὡς ἄρ᾽ ἦν ἐπώνυμος;	1244a
καλὴ μὲν ἄγρα, σοῦ γε συγγόνων τε σῶν⟩	1244b
φόνον ταλαίναις χερσὶν ἐξειργασμένων,	1245
καλὸν δὲ θῦμα καταβαλοῦσα δαίμοσιν	1246
ἐπὶ δαῖτα Θήβας τάσδε κἀμὲ παρακαλεῖς.	1247

Cadmus' 1244b and 1246–7 pick up Agave's 1241 (cf. 1237) and 1242. I have, in Housman's instructively paradoxical phrase, timorously altered 1246 when I might without temerity have defended it. The absence of a connective might have been defended by reference to *Ba.* 243 and to the numerous other examples of asyndeton in anaphora cited by D. Fehling, *Die Wiederholungsfiguren und ihr Gebrauch bei den Griechen vor Gorgias* (Berlin, 1969), pp. 210–12. Still, since none of the tragic examples involves anaphora of an 'ordinary' adjective, i.e. not a demonstrative, εἷς, or πᾶς, I have preferred to err on the side of caution and have supposed that an original δέ was corrupted to τό some time before or after the loss of the lines I postulate. For an etymology of this type, where the word is explained by a synonym of the actual *etymon*, see 508 and the Chaeremon fragment quoted above (Pentheus from δυστυχεῖν and συμφορά respectively), *Ion* 9 (Athens from Pallas), 802 (Ion from ἀντᾶν), *I.T.* 32 (Thoas from ὠκύς), and *Hel.* 13 (Theonoe from τὰ θεῖα ἐπίστασθαι).

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