Literature and Arts C-14
Concepts of the Hero in Greek Civilization

Volume 2

Professor: Gregory Nagy

Sourcebook

Produced in consultation with the Perseus Project and with the editorial assistance of Miriam Carlisle, Irene Convey, Casey Dué, Mary Ebbott, David Elmer, Madeleine Goh, Marianne Hopman, Thomas E. Jenkins, Brian Jobe, Christine Kim, Irene Peirano, Joycelyn Peyton, Timothy Power, Lynn Sawlivich, and Sarah-Neel Smith
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NOTES ON ATHENIAN TRAGEDY

BY GREGORY NAGY

In considering the traditions of drama, it is important to keep in mind that the medium of drama in general and tragedy in particular was the central context for the evolution of traditions in poetry, song, and dance in Athens. The primary setting was a synthetic festival in honor of the god Dionysus, known as the City Dionysia (or Great Dionysia), the significance of which is captured in the following brief description:

The importance of the festival was derived not only from the performances of dramatic and lyric poetry but from the fact that it was open to the whole Hellenic world and was an effective advertisement of the wealth and power and public spirit of Athens, no less than of the artistic and literary leadership of her sons. By the end of March the winter was over, the seas were navigable, and strangers came to Athens from all parts for business or pleasure.¹

From the text of Aristophanes *Birds* 786-789, we witness the central program of the City Dionysia in a given year, 414 BC: three days, each taken up with three tragedies, one satyric drama, and one comedy.

In the highly complex institution of the Athenian dramatic festivals, those who perform are the *khoros* ‘chorus’, the song-and-dance ensemble, and the so-called first, second, and third actors. The *khoros* ‘chorus’ in Athenian drama perform by singing and dancing to the musical accompaniment of a reed (pipe), while the actors perform by reciting their parts, without musical accompaniment. In Athens, the *khorēgos* ‘chorus-leader’ is no longer a performer: he has become differentiated as a contemporary non-performer, who organizes and subsidizes both the composition and the performance. Meanwhile, the differentiated function of a *performing* chorus-leader is further differentiated by another split in functions, with a marked “first actor” on one hand and an unmarked chorus-leader on the other. This further differentiation is represented in the story that tells of the primordial dramaturge Thespis and his “invention” of the first actor. The dialogue between the Thespian “first actor” and the chorus-leader would be a differentiation of the dialogue between an undifferentiated *khorēgos* ‘chorus-leader’ and the chorus. Finally, there are yet further stages of differentiation with the “invention” of the “second actor,” attributed to Aeschylus, and of a “third actor,” attributed to Sophocles. The first actor used to be the same person as the composer. Such was the situation with Aeschylus, whereas with Sophocles there is further differentiation between composer and actor, in the Sophocles tradition has it, ceased to act.²

The chorus represents a “go-between” or “twilight zone” between the heroes of the there-and-then and the audience of the here-and-now, which happens to be, in the case of the dramas that we are reading, Athens in the 5th century.³ The chorus reacts *both* as if it were the audience itself and as if they were eyewitness contemporaries of the heroes. The members of the chorus, who sang and danced the roles of groups such as old men or young girls who are “on the scene” in the mythical world of heroes, are non-professionals, whereas the actors (the first, second, and third actor), who spoke the parts of the main characters, are professionals. For Athenian society, the ritual emphasis is on the experience of the

² In earlier stages of his career, Sophocles reportedly accompanied himself on the lyre when he played the role of Thamyras in the play *Thamyras*, and he played the ball with great skill when he played the role of Nausikaa in the *Nausikaa* (Athenaeus 1.20ef).
³ In Athenian tragedy, as in the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, all main characters are heroes. That includes Phaedra, of course.
pre-adult chorus and, through them, of the adult audience (many of whom had once been members of the chorus themselves): there is a high value placed on the experience of the chorus-members, which is regarded as simultaneously civic and deeply personal, in undergoing the educational process of performing in the chorus of a tragedy. In Athens, the “cast parties” were focused on the chorus-members, not on the actors.

The chorus-members in the seasonally-recurring Athenian dramatic festivals are the young élite, citizens-in-the-making, but they are at the moment of their performance still marginal to society: they are selected from an age-class of pre-adult males, not yet of civic age. (In ancient Greek society, choruses were not exclusively male. In various other ritual events of various city-states, including Athens, the chorus-members could also be selected from age-classes of pre-adult females rather than males.) The members of the chorus in Athenian tragedy act out marginal members of society in the world of heroes, such as old men, young girls, prisoners of war, and the like. Their acting out such roles conforms to the function of the chorus as an educational collectivization of experience. Their educational experience in the chorus is like a stylized rite of passage, which leads from the marginality of their present status into the eventual centrality of their future status as citizens. In tragedy, the focus of attention is the heroes, played by the actors. The hero, and his or her suffering, which is called pathos, is central. The witnesses to this suffering, as played by the chorus, are marginal. They get involved in the experience of the hero, but they also have an element of distance from the hero, in their links to the here-and-now of the audience.

What is passive pathos or action experienced by the hero within the world of tragedy is active drāma, that is, sacrifice and the performance of ritual, from the standpoint of the outer world that frames it. This outer world is constituted by the audience of the theater, who become engaged in the drāma and who thereby participate in the inner world that is the pathos of the hero.

The audience, through the chorus, reacts to the experience of the hero, and this reaction translates into the personal experience of an individual in bringing the world of heroes into synchrony with the world of the individual’s present-day society. These worlds share the stages of life that an individual passes through, such as birth, death, youth, adulthood, marriage, having children, divorce, growing old, death, and a hoped-for rebirth. They also share the various ordeals in passing from one stage to another, such as the primal pain of being born, the intensity of playing games, the thrill of sexuality, the pangs of falling in love, the toils of hunting, the labor of giving birth, the exertion of athletics, the shock of combat, the tedium of aging, the throes of dying, and so on. The chorus reacts to such ordeals on the part of the hero. In this way, a chorus-member can be made to experience, to feel personally, the painful process of “growing up” by performing in the chorus, which is acting on behalf of the adult audience in reacting, through the ritual experience of song and dance, to a given mythical action experienced by a given hero of drama.

The Greek word mimesis designates the reenactment, through ritual, of the events of myth. In the case of a highly stylized ritual complex like Athenian drama, the reenactment is equivalent to acting out the roles of mythical figures. The acting out can take place on the level of speech alone, or else, on the level of speech combined with bodily movement, that is, dance: hence the force of pros ‘corresponding to’ in the expression pros ta pathea autou ‘corresponding to his sufferings [pathea, pl. of pathos]’ at Herodotus 5.67.5, describing the dancing by tragikoi khoroi ‘tragic choruses’, at the polis of Sikyon in the time of the tyrant Kleisthenes, in reenactment of the pathea ‘sufferings’ of the hero Adrastos. The fundamental meaning of mimēsis, to repeat, is that of reenacting the events of myth. By extension, however, mimēsis can designate not only the reenacting of the myth but also the present reenacting of previous reenactments in that the newest instance of reenacting has as its model, cumulatively, all the older instances of performing the myth as well as the “original” instance of the myth itself, mimēsis is a current “imitation” of earlier reenactments.
This line of thought corresponds to the celebrated description of *mimēsis* in the *Poetics* of Aristotle as the mental process of identifying the representing “this” in the ritual of acting the drama with the represented “that” in the myth that is being acted out by the drama: in Greek this mental process is expressed thus: *houtos ekeinos* ‘this is that!’ (1448b17). Such a mental process, Aristotle goes on to say, is itself a source of pleasure (1448b11, 13, 18). This pleasure is not incompatible with an anthropological understanding of ritual:

Fixed rhythm, fixed pitch are conducive to the performance of joint social activity. Indeed, those who resist yielding to this constraining influence are likely to suffer from a marked unpleasant restlessness. In comparison, the experience of constraint of a peculiar kind acting upon a collaborator induces in him, when he yields himself to it, the pleasure of self-surrender.⁴

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Upon the roof of the palace of Agamemnon at Argos.

Watchman
I ask the gods for release from these ordeals [ponoi] of mine, throughout this long year’s watch, in which, lying upon the palace roof of the Atreidai, upon my bent arm, like a dog, I have learned to know well the gathering of the night’s stars, those radiant potentates conspicuous in the firmament, 5 bringers of winter and summer to mankind.

So now I am still watching for the signal [sumbolon] of the flame, the gleaming fire that is to bring news from Troy and 10 tidings of its capture. For thus commands my Queen, woman in passionate heart and man in strength of purpose. And whenever I make here my bed, restless and dank with dew and unvisited by dreams - for instead of sleep fear stands ever by my side, 15 so that I cannot close my eyelids fast in sleep - and whenever I care to sing or hum (and thus apply an antidote of song to ward off drowsiness), then my tears start forth, as I bewail the fortunes of this house of ours, not ordered for the best as in days gone by. 20 But tonight may there come a happy release from these ordeals [ponoi] of mine! May the fire with its glad tidings flash through the gloom!

The signal fire suddenly flashes out.

Oh welcome, you blaze in the night, a light as if of day, you harbinger of the setting up [kata-stasis] of many khoroi in Argos in thanksgiving for this glad event!

25 Iou! Iou! To Agamemnon’s Queen I thus make a signal [sēmainein] to rise from her bed, and as quickly as she can to utter in a proper way [euphēmein]5 in her palace halls a shout of ololu in welcome of this fire, if the city of Ilion 30 truly is taken, as this beacon unmistakably announces. And I will join the khoros in a prelude upon my own account; for my lord’s lucky roll of the dice I shall count to my own score, now that this beacon has thrown me triple six. Ah well, may the master of the house come home and may 35 I clasp his welcome hand in mine! For the rest I stay silent; a great ox stands upon my tongue - yet the house itself, could it but speak, might tell a plain enough tale; since, for my part, by my own choice I have words for those who know, and to those who do not know, I am without memory.

He descends by an inner stairway. The chorus of Argive Elders enters.

Chorus

40 This is now the tenth year since Priam’s mighty adversary, King Menelaus, and with him King Agamemnon, the mighty pair of Atreus’ sons, joined in honor of throne and scepter by Zeus, 45 set forth

5 The word euphēmein means ‘utter in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘be silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.
from this land with an army of a thousand ships manned by Argives, a warrior force to champion their cause. Loud rang the battle-cry they uttered in their rage, just as eagles scream which, 50 in lonely grief for their brood, rowing with the oars of their wings, wheel high over their nests, because they have wasted the toil [ponos] of guarding their nurslings' nest.

55 But some one of the powers supreme - Apollo perhaps or Pan, or Zeus - hears the shrill wailing scream of the clamorous birds, these sojourners in his realm, and against the transgressors sends an Erinys\(^6\) at last though late. 60 Even so Zeus, whose power is over all, Zeus lord of xenoi, sends the sons of Atreus against Alexander, so that for the sake of a woman with many a husband he may inflict many and wearying struggles - when the knee is pressed in the dust and 65 the spear is splintered in the onset - on Danaans and on Trojans alike. The case now stands where it stands - it moves to fulfillment [telos] at its destined end. Not by offerings burned in secret, not by secret libations, 70 not by tears, shall man soften the stubborn wrath of unsanctified sacrifices.

But we, incapable of service by reason of our aged frame, discarded from that martial mustering of long ago, wait here at home, 75 supporting on our canes a strength like a child's. For just as the vigor of youth, leaping up within the breast, is like that of old age, since the war-god is not in his place; so extreme age, its leaves 80 already withering, goes its way on triple feet, and, no better than a child, wanders, a dream that is dreamed by day.

But, O daughter of Tyndareos, Queen Clytemnestra, 85 what has happened? What news do you have? On what intelligence and convinced by what report do you send abroad your messengers to command sacrifice? For all the gods our city worships, the gods supreme, the gods below, 90 the gods of the sky and of the agora, have their altars ablaze with offerings. Now here, now there, the flames rise high as the sky, yielding 95 to the soft and guileless persuasion of holy ointment, the sacrificial oil itself brought from the inner chambers of the palace. Of all this declare whatever you can and dare reveal, and be a healer of my uneasy heart. 100 This now at one moment bodes ill, while then again hope, shining with kindly light from the sacrifices, wards off the biting care of the sorrow that gnaws my heart.

strope 1

I have the authority to proclaim the augury of power [kratos] given on their way 105 to princely men - since my age still breathes Persuasion upon me from the gods, the strength of song - how the twin-throned power [kratos] of the Achaeans, 110 the single-minded captains of Hellas' youth, with avenging spear and arm against the Teucrian land, was sent off by the inspiriting omen appearing to the kings of the ships - kingly birds, 115 one black, one white of tail, near the palace, on the spear-hand, in a conspicuous place, devouring a hare with offspring unborn 120 caught in the last effort to escape.

Sing the song of woe, the song of woe, but may the good prevail!

antistrophe 1

Then the wise seer of the host, noticing how the two warlike sons of Atreus were two in temper, recognized the devourers of the hare as the leaders of the army, and 125 thus interpreted the portent and spoke: “In time those who here issue forth shall seize Priam's town, and fate shall violently ravage before its towered walls all the public store of cattle. 130 Only may no jealous god-sent wrath glower upon the embattled host, the mighty bit forged for Troy's mouth, and strike it before it reaches its goal! 135 For, in her pity, holy Artemis is angry at the winged hounds of her father, for they sacrifice a

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\(^6\) An Erinys (pl. Erinyes) is a Fury, a supernatural personification of the vengeful anger stored up in those who died.
wretched timorous thing, together with her young, before she has brought them forth. An abomination to her is the eagles' feast.”

Sing the song of woe, the song of woe, but may the good prevail!

epode 140 “Although, O Lovely One, you are so gracious to the tender whelps of fierce lions, and take delight in the suckling young of every wild creature that roams the field, promise that the issue be brought to pass in accordance with these signs [sumbola], portents 145 auspicious yet filled with ill. And I implore Paean, the healer, that she may not raise adverse gales with long delay to stay the Danaan fleet from putting forth, 150 urging another sacrifice, one that knows no law, unsuited for feast, worker of family strife, dissolving wife’s reverence for husband. For there abides mēnis - 155 terrible, not to be suppressed, a treacherous guardian of the home, a wrath that never forgets and that exacts vengeance for a child.”

Such utterances of doom, derived from auguries on the march, together with many blessings, did Kalkhas proclaim to the royal house; and in accord with this.

Sing the song of woe, the song of woe, but may the good prevail!

strophe 2 160 Zeus, whoever he may be - if by this name it pleases him to be invoked, by this name I call to him - as I weigh all things in the balance, I have nothing to compare 165 save “Zeus,” if in truth I must cast aside this vain burden from my heart.

antistrophe 2 He who once was mighty, swelling with insolence for every fight, 170 he shall not even be named as having ever existed; and he who arose later, he has met his overthrower and is past and gone. But whoever, heartily taking thought beforehand, sings a victory song for Zeus, 175 he shall gain wisdom altogether.

strophe 3 Zeus, who sets mortals on the path to understanding, Zeus, who has established this as a fixed law: “Learning comes by suffering [pathos].” But even as the ordeal [ponos], bringing memory of pain, drips over the mind in sleep, 180 so equilibrium [being σφήν] comes to men, whether they want it or not. Violent, it seems to me, is the kharis of daimones enthroned upon their awesome seats.

antistrophe 3 So then the captain of the Achaean ships, the elder of the two - 185 holding no seer at fault, bending to the adverse blasts of fortune, when the Achaean people, on the shore over against Khalkis 190 in the region where Aulis’ tides surge to and fro, were very distressed by opposing winds and failing stores;

strophe 4 and the breezes that blew from the Strymon, bringing harmful leisure, hunger, and tribulation of spirit in a cruel port, idle wandering of men, and sparing neither ship 195 nor cable, began, by doubling the season of their stay, to rub away and wither the flower of Argos; and when the seer, pointing to Artemis as cause, proclaimed to the chieftains another remedy, 200 more oppressive even than the bitter storm, so that the sons of Atreus struck the ground with their canes and did not stifle their tears -

antistrophe 4 205 then the elder king spoke and said: “It is a hard fate to refuse obedience, and hard, if I must slay my child, the glory of my home, and at the altar-side stain 210 a father’s hand with streams of virgin’s blood.

Which of these courses is not filled with evil? How can I become a deserter to my fleet and fail my allies in arms? 215 For that they should with all too impassioned passion crave a sacrifice to lull the winds - even a virgin’s blood - stands within their right. May all be for the best.”
But when he had donned the yoke of Necessity, with veering of mind, \(220\) impious, unholy, unsanctified, from then he changed his intention and began to conceive that deed of uttermost audacity. For wretched delusion, counselor of ill, primal source of woe, makes man bold. So then he hardened his heart to sacrifice his daughter \(225\) so that he might further a war waged to avenge a woman, and as an offering for the voyaging of a fleet!

For her supplications, her cries of “Father,” and her virgin life, \(230\) the commanders in their eagerness for war cared nothing. Her father, after a prayer, told his ministers to raise her - fallen about her robes, she lay face-down \(235\) in supplication with all her thumos - to lift her like a young goat, high above the altar; and with a gag upon her lovely mouth to hold back the shouted curse against her house -

by the bit's strong and stifling might. Then, as she shed to earth her saffron robe, she \(240\) struck each of her sacrificers with a glance from her eyes beseeching pity, looking as if in a drawing, wishing she could speak; for she had often sung where men met at her father’s hospitable table, \(245\) and with her virgin voice would lovingly honor her dear father’s prayer for blessing at the third libation.

What happened next I did not see and do not tell.\(^7\) The art of Kalkhas was not unfulfilled. \(250\) Justice [\(dikē\)] inclines her scales so that wisdom comes at the price of suffering [\(pathos\)]. But the future, that you shall know when it occurs; till then, leave it be - it is just as someone weeping ahead of time. Clear it will come, together with the light of dawn.

Clytemnestra enters.

\(255\) But as for what shall follow, may the issue be happy, even as she wishes, our sole guardian here, the bulwark of the Apian land, who stands nearest to our lord. I have come, Clytemnestra, in obedience to your royal power [\(kratos\)], for it is \(dikē\) to do homage to the consort of a sovereign prince \(260\) when her lord’s throne is tenantless. Now whether the news you have heard is good or ill, and you do make sacrifice with hopes that herald gladness, I wish to hear; yet, if you would keep silence, I make no complaint.

Clytemnestra
As herald of gladness, with the proverb, \(265\) “May Dawn be born from her mother Night!” You shall hear joyful news surpassing all your hopes: the Argives have taken Priam’s town!

Chorus
What have you said? The meaning of your words has escaped me, so incredible they seemed.

Clytemnestra
I said that Troy is in the hands of the Achaeans. Is my meaning clear?

Chorus
\(270\) Joy steals over me, and it challenges my tears.

\(^7\) Refusal to visualize and verbalize is what \(mustērion\) requires when outside the sacred context.
Clytemnestra
Sure enough, for your eye betrays your loyal heart.

Chorus
What then is the proof? Have you evidence of this?

Clytemnestra
I have, indeed; unless some god has played me false.

Chorus
Do you believe the persuasive visions of dreams?

Clytemnestra
275 I would not heed the fancies of a slumbering brain.

Chorus
But can it be some pleasing rumor that has fed your hopes? Clytemnestra
Truly you scorn my understanding as if it were a child’s.

Chorus
But at what time was the city destroyed?

Clytemnestra
In the night, I say, that has but now given birth to this day here.

Chorus
280 And what messenger could reach here with such speed?

Clytemnestra
Hephaistos, from Ida speeding forth his brilliant blaze. Beacon passed beacon on to us by courier-flame:
Ida, to the crag of Hermes in Lemnos; to the mighty blaze upon the island succeeded, third, 285 the
summit of Athos sacred to Zeus; and, soaring high aloft so as to leap across the sea, the flame, traveling
joyously onward in its strength...

[There is a gap in the text.]

...the pinewood torch, its golden-beamed light, as another sun, passing the message on to the
watchtowers of Makistos. 290 He, delaying not nor carelessly overcome by sleep, did not neglect his part
as messenger. Far over Euripos’ stream came the beacon-light and signaled [sēmainein] to the watchmen
on Messapion. They, kindling a heap of 295 withered heather, lit up their answering blaze and sped the
message on. The flame, now gathering strength and in no way dimmed, like a radiant moon overleaped
the plain of Asopos to Kithairon’s ridges, and roused another relay of missive fire. 300 Nor did the
warders there disdain the far-flung light, but made a blaze higher than their commands. Across Gorgopis’
water shot the light, reached the mount of Aigiplanktos, and urged the ordinance of fire to make no
delay. 305 Kindling high with unstinted force a mighty beard of flame, they sped it forward so that, as it
blazed, it passed even the headland that looks upon the Saronic gulf; until it swooped down when it
reached the lookout, near to our city, upon the peak of Arakhnaion; and 310 next upon this roof of the Atreidai it leapt, this very fire not undescended from the Idaean flame.
Such are the torch-bearers I have arranged - in succession one to the other completing the course; and the victor is he who ran both first and last. 315 This is the kind of proof and token [symbolon] I give you, the message of my lord from Troy to me.

Chorus
Lady, my prayers of thanksgiving to the gods I will offer soon. But as I would like to hear and satisfy my wonder at your tale straight through to the end, so may you tell it yet again.

Clytemnestra
320 This day the Achaeans hold Troy. Within the town there sounds loud, I believe, a clamor of voices that will not blend. Pour vinegar and oil into the same vessel and you will say that, as foes, they keep apart; so the cries of vanquished and victors greet the ear, 325 distinct as their fortunes are diverse. Those, flung upon the corpses of their husbands and their brothers, children upon the bodies of their aged fathers who gave them life, bewail from lips no longer free the death of their most philoi, while these - 330 a night of restless labor [ponos] after battle sets them down famished to breakfast on such fare as the town affords; not faring according to rank, but as each man has drawn his lot by chance. 335
And even now they are quartered in the captured Trojan homes, delivered from the frosts and dew of the naked sky, and like happy men will sleep all the night without a guard.

Now if they are reverent towards the gods of the town - those of the conquered land - and towards their shrines, 340 the captors shall not be made captives in their turn. Only may no mad impulse first assail the army, overmastered by greed, to pillage what they should not! For to win the salvation [sōtēria] of nostos they need to travel back the other length of their double course. 345 But even if, without having offended the gods, our troops should reach home, the grievous suffering of the dead might still remain awake - if no fresh disaster happens. These are my woman’s words; but may the good prevail clearly for all to see! 350 For, choosing thus, I have chosen the enjoyment of many a blessing.

Chorus
Lady, you speak as wisely as a balanced [sōphrōn] man. And, for my part, now that I have listened to your certain proofs, I prepare to address due prayers of thanksgiving to the gods; for a success has been achieved that is not without timē in return [kharis] for the ordeal [ponos].

anapests
355 Hail, sovereign Zeus, and you kindly Night, possessor of the great kosmoi, you who cast your meshed snare upon the towered walls of Troy, so that neither old nor young could overleap 360 the huge enslaving net of all-conquering Atē. I revere great Zeus of xenoi - he who has brought this to pass. He long kept his bow bent against Alexander 365 until his bolt would neither fall short of the mark nor, flying beyond the stars, be launched in vain.

strophe 1
“The stroke of Zeus” they may call it; his hand can be traced there. As he determines, so he acts. Someone said 370 that the gods do not trouble themselves to remember mortals who trample underfoot the kharis of inviolable sanctities. But that man was impious!
Now it stands revealed! 375 The penalty for reckless crime is ruin when men breathe a spirit of arrogance above just measure, because their mansions teem with more abundance than is good for them. But let there be such wealth as brings no distress, enough to satisfy 380 a sensible man. For riches do not protect the man who in his insatiability [koros] has kicked the mighty altar of dikē into obscurity.
Agamemnon

antistrophe 1

385 Perverse Persuasion, the overmastering child of designing Atē, drives men on; and every remedy is futile. His evil is not hidden; it shines forth, a baleful gleam. 390 Like base metal beneath the touchstone’s rub, when tested he shows the blackness of his grain - for he is like a child who chases a winged bird - 395 and upon his people he brings a taint against which there is no defense. No god listens to his prayers. The man associated with such deeds, him they destroy in his unrighteousness.

And such was Paris, who came 400 to the house of the sons of Atreus and dishonored the hospitality of his host by stealing away a wedded wife.

strophe 2

405 But she, bequeathing to her people the clang of shield and spear and army of fleets, and bringing to Ilion destruction in place of dowry, with light step she passed through the gates - daring a deed undearable. Then loud wailed the spokesmen [prophētēs pl.] of the house, crying, 410 “Alas, alas, for the home, the home, and for the princes! Alas for the husband’s bed and the impress of her form so dear! He sits apart in the anguish of his grief, silent, dishonored but making no reproach. In his yearning for her who sped beyond the sea, 415 a phantom will seem to be lord of the house. The pleasure [kharios] of fair-formed statues is hateful to him; and in the hunger of his eyes all loveliness [Aphrodite] is departed.

antistrophe 2

420 Apparitions causing sorrow [penthos] come to him in dreams, bringing only vain kharios; for vainly, whenever in his imagination a man sees delights, 425 immediately the vision, slipping through his arms, is gone, winging its flight along the paths of sleep.” Such are the sorrows [akhos pl.] at hearth and home, but there are sorrows surpassing these; and at large, in every house of all who went forth together from the land of Hellas, 430 unbearable grief [penthos pl.] is seen. Many things pierce the heart. Each knows whom he sent forth. But to the home of each come 435 urns and ashes, not living men.

strophe 3

440 Ares barters the bodies of men for gold; he holds his balance in the contest of the spear; and 440 back from Ilion to their loved ones he sends a heavy dust passed through his burning, a dust cried over with plenteous tears, in place of men sending well-made urns with ashes. 445 So they lament, praising now this one: “How skilled in battle!” now that one: “Fallen nobly in the carnage”. “For another’s wife,” some mutter in secret, and 450 grief charged with resentment spreads stealthily against the sons of Atreus, champions in the strife. But there far from home, around the city’s walls, those in their beauty’s bloom have graves in Ilion - 455 the enemy’s soil has covered its conquerors.

antistrophe 3

Dangerous is a people’s voice charged with anger - it acts as a curse of publicly ratified doom. 460 In anxious fear I wait to hear something shrouded still in gloom. The gods are not blind to men with blood upon their hands. In the end the black Spirits of Vengeance [Erinyes] bring to obscurity that one who has prospered by renouncing dikē and 465 wear down his fortunes by reverse. Once a man is among the unseen, there is no more help for him. Glory in excess is fraught with peril; 470 the lofty peak is struck by Zeus’ thunderbolt. I choose prosperity [olbos] unassailed by envy. May I not be a sacker of cities, and may I not myself be despoiled and live to see my own life in another’s power!

epode

- 475 Heralded by a beacon of good tidings a swift report has spread throughout the town. Yet whether it is true, or some deception of the gods, who knows?
- Who is so childish or so bereft of sense, 480 once he has let his heart be fired by sudden news of a beacon fire, to despair if the story change?
- It is just like a woman’s eager nature to yield assent to pleasing news before yet the truth is clear.
Over credulous, a woman’s mind has boundaries open to quick encroachment; but quick to perish is kleos spread by a woman.

Clytemnestra
We shall soon know about this passing on of flaming lights and beacon signals and fires, whether they perhaps are true or whether, dream-like, this light’s glad coming has beguiled our senses. Look! There, I see approaching from the shore a herald crowned with boughs of olive. The thirsty dust, consorting sister of the mud, assures me that neither by pantomime nor by kindling a flame of mountain wood will he signal with smoke of fire. Either in plain words he will bid us to rejoice the more, or else - but I have little love for the report opposite to this! May still further good be added to the good that has appeared!

Chorus
Whoever makes this prayer with other intent toward the polis, let him reap himself the fruit of his misguided purpose!

A Herald enters.

Herald
All hail, soil of Argos, land of my fathers! On this happy day in the tenth year I have come to you. Many hopes have shattered, one only have I seen fulfilled; for I never dared to dream that here in this land of Argos I should die and have due portion of burial most philos to me. Now blessings on the land, blessings on the light of the sun, and blessed be Zeus, the land’s Most High, and the Pythian lord; and may he launch no more his shafts against us. Enough of your hostility did you display by Scamander’s banks; but now, in other mood, be our savior and our healer, O lord Apollo. And the gods of the gathering, I greet them all; him, too, my own patron, Hermes, beloved herald, of heralds all revered; and the cult-heroes who sent us forth - I pray that they may receive back in kindliness the remnant of the host which has escaped the spear.

Hail, halls of our Kings, beloved roofs, and you august seats, and you daimones that face the sun, if ever you did in days gone by, now after long lapse of years, with gladness in your eyes give fine welcome to your King. For bearing light in darkness to you and to all assembled here alike, he has returned - Agamemnon, our King. Oh, greet him well, as is right, since he has uprooted Troy with the mattock of Zeus the Avenger, with which her soil has been upturned. Demolished are the altars and the shrines of her gods; and the seed of her whole land has been wasted utterly. Upon the neck of Troy he has cast such a yoke. Now he has come home, our King, Atreus’ elder son, a fortunate man, worthy of honor beyond all living men. For neither Paris nor his partner city can boast that the deed was greater than the suffering. Convicted for robbery and for theft as well, he has lost the plunder and has razed in utter destruction his father’s house and even the land. The sons of Priam have paid a twofold penalty for their errors.

Chorus
Joy to you, Herald from the Achaean host!

Herald
I do rejoice. I will no longer refuse to die, if that pleases the gods.
Chorus
540 Was it yearning for this your fatherland that wore you out?

Herald
Yes, so that my eyes are filled with tears for joy.

Chorus
It was then a pleasing malady from which you suffered.

Herald
How so? Teach me, and I shall master what you say.

Chorus
You were smitten with desire for those who returned your love.

Herald
545 Do you mean that our land longed for the longing host?

Chorus
So longed that often from a darkly brooding spirit I have sighed.

Herald
Where did this gloom of melancholy upon your spirit come from?

Chorus
Long since have I found silence an antidote to harm.

Herald
How so? Did you fear anyone when our princes were gone?

Chorus
550 In such fear that now, in your own words, even death would be a great favor [kharis].

Herald
Yes, all’s well, well ended. Yet, of what occurred in the long years, one might well say that part fell out happily, and part in turn amiss. But who, unless he is a god, is free from suffering all his days? 555 For were I to recount our hardships and our wretched quarters, the scanty space and the sorry berths - what did we not have to complain of? Then again, ashore, there was still worse to loathe; for we had to lie down close to the enemy’s walls, 560 and the drizzling from the sky and the dews from the meadows distilled upon us, working constant destruction to our clothes and filling our hair with vermin.

And if one were to tell of the wintry cold, past all enduring, when Ida’s snow slew the birds; 565 or of the heat, when upon his waveless noonday couch, windless the sea [pontos] sank to sleep - but why should we bewail all this? Our ordeal [ponos] is past; past for the dead so that they will never care even to wake to life again. 570 Why should we count the number of the slain, or why should the living feel pain at their past harsh fortunes? Our misfortunes should, in my opinion, bid us a long farewell. For us, the remnant of the Argive host, the gain has the advantage and the loss does not bear down the scale; 575 so that, as
we speed over land and sea, it is fitting that we on this bright day make this boast: “The Argive army, having taken Troy at last, has nailed up these spoils to be a glory for the gods throughout Hellas in their shrines from days of old.” 580 Whoever hears the story of these deeds must extol the city and the leaders of her host; and the kharis of Zeus that brought them to accomplishment shall receive its due measure of gratitude. There, you have heard all that I have to say.

Chorus
Your words have proved me wrong. I do not deny it; for the old have ever enough youth to learn aright. 585 But these tidings should have most interest for the household and Clytemnestra, and at the same time enrich me.

Clytemnestra enters.

Clytemnestra
I raised a shout of triumph in my joy long before this, when the first flaming messenger arrived by night, telling that Ilion was captured and overthrown. 590 Then there were some who chided me and said: “Are you so convinced by beacon-fires as to think that Troy has now been sacked? Truly, it is just like a woman to be elated in heart.” By such taunts I was made to seem as if my wits were wandering. Nevertheless I still held on with my sacrifice, and throughout all the quarters of the city, according to their womanly custom, 595 they uttered in a proper way [euphēmein] a shout of happy praise while in the shrines of the gods they lulled to rest the fragrant spice-fed flame.

So now why should you rehearse to me the account at length? From the King himself I shall hear the whole tale; 600 but I should hasten to welcome my honored lord best on his return. For what joy is sweeter in a woman’s eyes than to unbar the gates for her husband when the god has given him salvation from war? Give this message to my lord: 605 let him come with all speed, his country’s fond desire, come to find at home his wife faithful, even as he left her, a watchdog of his house, loyal to him, a foe to those who wish him ill; yes, for the rest, unchanged in every part; 610 in all this length of time never having broken any seal [sēmantērion]. Of pleasure from any other man or of scandalous repute I know no more than of dyeing bronze.

She exits.

Herald
A boast like this, loaded full with truth [alētheia], does not shame the speech of a noble wife.

Chorus
615 Thus has she spoken for your schooling, but speciously for those that can interpret right. But, Herald, say - I want to hear of Menelaus. Has he, our land’s own power [kratos], achieved a nostos and a way of salvation back home?

Herald
620 It would be impossible to report false news as fair so that those I love should take pleasure for long.

Chorus
Oh if only you could tell tidings true [alēthēs] yet good! It is not easy to conceal when true and good are split apart.
Herald
The prince was swept from the sight of the Achaean host, 625 himself, and his ship likewise. I speak no lies.

Chorus
Did he put forth in sight of all from Ilion, or did a storm, distressing all in common, snatch him from the fleet?

Herald
Like master Bowman you have hit the mark; a long tale of distress have you told in brief.

Chorus
630 Did the general voice of other voyagers bring news of him as alive or dead?

Herald
None knows to give clear report of this - except only the Sun that fosters life upon the earth.

Chorus
How then do you say 635 the storm rose by the anger of the daimones upon the naval host and passed away?

Herald
An auspiciously spoken-of euphēmos day one should not pollute with a tale of misfortune - the timē due to the gods keeps them apart. When a messenger with gloomy countenance reports to a people dire disaster of its army's rout - 640 one common wound inflicted on the polis, while from many a home many a victim is devoted to death by the two-handled whip beloved of Ares, destruction [aē] double-armed, a gory pair - when, I say, he is packed with woes like this, 645 he should sing the triumph-song of the Avenging Spirits [Erinys].

But when one comes with glad news of salvation [sōtēria] to a city rejoicing in its happiness - how shall I mix fair with foul in telling of the storm, not unprompted by the gods' mēnis, that broke upon the Achaean? 650 For fire and sea, beforehand bitterest of foes, swore alliance and as proof destroyed the unhappy Argive army. In the nighttime arose the mischief from the cruel swells. Beneath blasts from Thrace ship dashed against ship; 655 and they, gored violently by the furious hurricane and rush of pelting rain, were swept out of sight by the whirling gust of an evil shepherd. But when the radiant light of the sun rose we beheld the Aegean flowering with corpses 660 of Achaean men and wreckage of ships. Ourselves, however, and our ship, its hull unshattered, some power, divine not human, preserved by stealth or intercession, laying hand upon its helm; and Fortune the Savior [sōtēr] chose to sit aboard our craft 665 so that it should neither take in the swelling surf at anchorage nor drive upon a rock-bound coast. Then, having escaped Hades of the sea [pontos], in the clear bright day, scarce crediting our fortune, we brooded in anxious thought over our latest pathos, 670 our fleet distressed and sorely buffeted. So now, if any of them still draw the breath of life, they speak of us as lost - and why should they not? We think the same of them. But may all turn out for the best! For Menelaus, indeed - 675 first and foremost expect him to return. At least if some beam of the sun investigates and finds [historeîn] him alive and well, by the design of Zeus, who has not yet decided utterly to destroy the family, there is some hope that he will come home again. 680 Hearing so much, be assured that you hear the truth [alēthēs].
He exits.

Chorus

strope 1

Who can have given a name so altogether true - was it some power invisible guiding his tongue aright by forecasting of destiny? - who named that bride of the spear and source of strife with the name of Helen? For, true to her name, a Hell she proved to ships, Hell to men, Hell to city, when stepping forth from her luxuriant [habros] and costly-curtained bower, she sailed the sea before the breath of earth-born Zephyros. And after her a goodly host of warrior huntsmen followed on the oars' vanished track in pursuit of a quarry that had beached its boat on Simoeis' leafy banks - in a conflict [eris] to end in blood.

antistrope 1

To Ilion, its purpose fulfilling, the goddess Mēnis brought a marriage rightly named a mourning, exacting in later requital for the dishonor done to hospitality and to Zeus, the partaker of the hearth, upon those who with loud voice celebrated the song in honor of the bride, even the bridegroom's kin to whom it fell that day to raise the marriage-hymn. But Priam's city has learned, in her old age, an altered strain, and now, I trust, wails a loud song, full of lamentation, calling Paris "evil-wed"; for she has borne the burden of a life in which everything was destroyed, a life full of lamentation because of the wretch ed slaughter of her sons.

strope 2

Even so a man reared in his house a lion's whelp, robbed of its mother's milk yet still desiring the breast. Gentle it was in the prelude of its life, kindly to children, and a delight to the old. Much did it get, held in arms like a nursling child, with its bright eye turned toward his hand, and fawning under compulsion of its belly's need.

antistrope 2

But brought to full growth by time it demonstrated [verb of apodeixis] the nature it had from its parents. Unbidden, in return [khari], for its fostering, it prepared a feast with a slaughter of destruction inflicted on the flocks; so that the house was defiled with blood, and they that lived there could not control their anguish, and great was the carnage far and wide. A priest of Derangement, by order of a god, it was reared in the house.

strope 3

At first, I would say, there came to Ilion the spirit of unruffled calm, a delicate ornament of wealth, a darter of soft glances from the eye, love's flower that stings the heart. Then, swerving from her course, she brought her marriage to a bitter end, sped on to the children of Priam under escort of Zeus, the warder of host and guest, ruining her sojourn and her companions, a vengeful Fury [Erinys] to be lamented by mourning brides.

antistrope 3

A venerable utterance proclaimed of old has been fashioned among mankind: the prosperity of man, when it has come to fulfillment, engenders offspring and does not die childless, and from his good fortune there springs up insatiable misery. But I hold my own mind and think apart from other men. It is the evil deed that afterwards begets more iniquity like its own breed; but when a house has straight dikē, the lot of its children is blessed always.

8 The Greek word houtōs translated here as 'even so' conventionally introduces an ainos.
Agamemnon

strope 4

But an old Hubris tends to give birth, 765 in evil men, sooner or later, at the fated hour of birth, to a young Hubris and that irresistible, unconquerable, unholy daimôn, Recklessness, 770 and black spirits of Derangement [atē] upon the household, which resemble their parents.

antistrophe 4

But dikē shines in smoke-begrimed dwellings 775 and esteems the virtuous man. From gilded mansions, where men’s hands are foul, she departs with averted eyes and makes her way to pure homes; she does not worship the power 780 of wealth stamped counterfeit [parā-sēmos] by the praise [ainos] of men, and she guides all things to their proper end.

Enter Agamemnon and Kassandra, in a chariot, with a numerous retinue.

anapests

All hail, my King, sacker of Troy, offspring of Atreus! 785 How shall I greet you? How shall I do you homage, not overshooting or running short of the due measure of kharis? Many of mortal men put appearance before truth and thereby transgress dikē. 790 Every one is ready to heave a sigh over the unfortunate, but no sting of true sorrow reaches the heart; and in seeming sympathy they join in others’ joy, forcing their faces into smiles. 795 But whoever is a discerning shepherd of his flock cannot be deceived by men’s eyes which, while they feign loyalty of heart, only fawn upon him with watery affection [philotēs]. Now in the past, when you marshaled the army in Helen’s cause, 800 you were depicted in my eyes - for I will not hide it from you - most ungracefully and as not rightly guiding the helm of your mind in seeking through your sacrifices to bring courage to dying men. 805 But now, from the depth of my heart and with no lack of love...

[There is a gap in the text.]

...their ordeal [ponos] is joy to those who have won success. In course of time you shall learn by enquiry which ones of the citizens have with dikē, and which ones with no true aim, served as guardians of the city.

Agamemnon

810 Argos first, as is dikē and proper, I greet, and her local gods who have helped me to my nostos and to the justice [dikē] I exacted from Priam’s city. For listening to no pleadings [dikē pl.] by word of mouth, without dissenting voice, they cast into the 815 bloody urn their ballots for the murderous destroying of Ilion; but to the urn of acquittal that no hand filled, Hope alone drew near. The smoke even now is a proper signal [eu-sēmos] of the city’s fall. The blasts of Destruction [atē] still live, and 820 the embers, as they die, breathe forth rich fumes of wealth. For this success we should render to the gods a return in ever-mindful kharis, seeing that we have thrown round the city the toils of vengeance, and in a woman’s cause it has been laid low by the fierce Argive beast, 825 brood of the horse, a shield-armed folk, that launched its leap when the Pleiades waned. Vaulting over its towered walls, the ravenging lion lapped up his fill of the blood of turannoi.

For the gods then I have stretched out this prelude. 830 But, touching your sentiments - which I heard and still bear in memory - I both agree and you have in me an advocate. For few there are among men in whom it is inborn to admire without envy the good fortune of a philos. For the venom of malevolence settles upon the heart and 835 doubles the burden of him who suffers from that plague: he is himself weighed down by his own calamity, and groans to see another’s prosperity [olbos]. From knowledge - for
well I know the mirror of companionship - I may call an image of a shade 840 those who feigned exceeding loyalty to me. Only Odysseus, the very man who sailed against his will, once harnessed, proved my zealous yoke-fellow. This I affirm of him whether he is alive or dead.

But, for the rest, in what concerns the polis and public worship, 845 we shall appoint public debates in assembly [agōnes] and consider. Where all goes well, we must take counsel so that it may long endure; but whenever there is need of healing remedy, we will by kind appliance of cautery or the knife 850 endeavor to avert the mischief of the disease.

And now I will pass to my palace halls and to my household hearth, and first of all pay greeting to the gods. They who sent me forth have brought me home again. May victory, now that it has attended me, remain ever with me constant to the end!

He descends from his chariot. Clytemnestra enters, attended by maidservants carrying purple tapestries.

Clytemnestra
855 Citizens of Argos, you Elders present here, I shall not be ashamed to confess in your presence my fondness for my husband - with time diffidence dies away in humans.

Untaught by others, I can tell of my own weary life 860 all the long while this my lord was beneath Ilion’s walls. First and foremost, it is a terrible evil for a wife to sit forlorn at home, severed from her husband, forever hearing malignant rumors manifold, and for one messenger after another 865 to come bearing tidings of disaster, each worse than the last, and cry them to the household. And as for wounds, had my lord received so many as rumor kept pouring into the house, no net would have been pierced so full of holes as he. Or if he had died as often as reports claimed, 870 then truly he might have had three bodies - a second Geryon - and have boasted of having taken on him a triple cover of earth - ample that above; of that below I speak not - one death for each different shape. Because of such malignant tales as these, 875 many times others have had to loose the high-hung halter from my neck, held in its strong grip. It is for this reason, in fact, that our boy, Orestes, does not stand here beside me, as he should - he in whom are authorized the pledges of my love and yours. Nor should you think this strange. 880 For he is in the protecting care of our well-intentioned ally, Strophios of Phocis, who warned me of trouble on two scores - your own peril beneath Ilion’s walls, and then the chance that the people in clamorous revolt might overturn the Council, as it is natural 885 for men to trample all the more upon the fallen. Truly such an excuse supports no guile.

As for myself, the welling fountains of my tears are utterly dried up - not a drop remains. In nightlong vigils my eyes are sore 890 with weeping for the beacon-lights set for you but always neglected. The faint whirl of the buzzing gnat often woke me from dreams in which I beheld more of your sufferings [pathos pl.] than the time of sleep could have compassed.

895 But now, having borne all this, my mind freed from its sorrow [penthos], I would hail my lord here as the watchdog of the fold, the savior [sōtēr] forestay of the ship, firm-based pillar of the lofty roof, only-begotten son of a father, or land glimpsed by men at sea beyond their hope, 900 dawn most fair to look upon after storm, the gushing stream to thirsty wayfarer - sweet is it to escape all stress of need. Such truly are the greetings of which I deem him worthy. But let envy be far removed, since many were the ills 905 we endured before. And now, I pray you, philos, dismount from your car, but do not set on common earth the foot, my lord, that has trampled upon Ilion.
To her attendants.

Why this loitering, women, to whom I have assigned the task to strew with tapestries the place where he shall go? 910 Quick! With purple let his path be strewn, that dikē may usher him into a home he never hoped to see. The rest my unslumbering vigilance shall order duly - if it please the god - even as is ordained.

Agamemnon
Offspring of Leda, guardian of my house, 915 your ainos fits well with my absence; for you have drawn it out to ample length. But becoming praise - this prize should rightly proceed from other lips. For the rest, treat me not as if I were a woman, in a luxuriant [habros] manner, nor, like some barbarian, 920 grovel before me with widemouthed acclaim; and do not draw down envy upon my path by strewing it with tapestries. It is the gods we must honor thus; but it is not possible for a mortal to tread upon embroidered fineries without fear. 925 I tell you to revere me not as a god, but as a man. Footmats and embroideries sound diverse in the voice of Rumor; to think no folly is the best gift of the gods. Only when man's life comes full circle [telos] in prosperity dare we pronounce him blessed [elixios]; 930 and if I may act in all things as I do now, I have good confidence.

Clytemnestra
Come now, do not speak so contrary to my purpose.

Agamemnon
Purpose! Be assured that I shall not weaken mine.

Clytemnestra
You must in fear have vowed to the gods thus to act.

Agamemnon
With full knowledge I pronounced this my definitive word [telos], if ever man did.

Clytemnestra
935 What do you suppose that Priam would have done, if he had achieved your triumph?

Agamemnon
He would have set foot upon the embroideries, I certainly believe.

Clytemnestra
Then do not be ashamed of mortal reproach.

Agamemnon
And yet a people’s voice is a mighty power.

Clytemnestra
True, yet he who is unenvied is unenviable.

Agamemnon
940 Surely it is not woman’s part to long for fighting.
Clytemnestra
True, but it is seemly for the fortunate \( \text{olbioi} \) to yield the victory.

Agamemnon
What? Is this the kind of victory in strife that you prize?

Clytemnestra
Oh yield! Yet of your own free will entrust the victory to me.

Agamemnon
Well, if you will have your way, 945 quick, let some one loose my sandals, which, slavelike, serve the treading of my foot! As I walk upon these purple vestments may I not be struck from afar by any glance of the gods' jealous eye. A terrible shame it is for one's foot to mar the resources of the house by wasting wealth and costly woven work.

950 So much for this. Receive this foreign girl into the house with kindness. A god from afar looks graciously upon a gentle master; for no one freely takes the yoke of slavery. But she, 955 the choicest flower of rich treasure, has followed in my train, my army's gift. Since I have been subdued and must listen to you in this, I will tread upon a purple pathway as I pass to my palace halls.

Clytemnestra
There is the sea - and who shall drain it dry? - producing stain of abundant purple, costly as silver 960 and ever fresh, with which to dye our clothes; and of these our house, through the gods, has ample store; it knows no poverty. Vestments enough I would have devoted to be trampled underfoot had it been so ordered in the seat of oracles 965 when I was devising a ransom for your life \( \text{psukhē} \). For if the root still lives, leaves come again to the house and spread their over-reaching shade against the scorching dog star Sirius; so, now that you have come to hearth \( \text{hestia} \) and home, it signals \( \text{sēmainein} \) that warmth has come in wintertime; 970 and again, when Zeus makes wine from the bitter grape, then immediately there is coolness in the house when its rightful lord occupies his halls.

Agamemnon enters the palace.

O Zeus, Zeus, you who bring things to fulfillment \( \text{telos} \), fulfill my prayers! May you see to that which you mean to fulfill!

She exits.

Chorus

975 Why does this terror so persistently hover standing before my prophetic heart? Why does my song, unbidden and unfed, chant strains of augury? Why does assuring confidence not sit on my heart's throne 980 and spurn the terror like an uninterpretable dream? But Time has collected the sands of the shore upon the cables cast thereon 985 when the shipborn army sped forth for Ilion.

antistrophe 1

Of their \( \text{nostos} \) I learn with my own eyes and need no other witness. 990 Yet still my \( \text{thumos} \) within me, self-taught \( \text{auto-didaktos} \), intones the lyreless dirge of the Avenging Spirit \( \text{Erinys} \), and cannot wholly
win its customary confidence of hope. 995 Not for nothing is my bosom disquieted as my heart throbs within my justly fearful phrenes in eddying tides that warn of some event. But I pray that my expectation may fall out false 1000 and not come to fulfillment.

strophe 2

Truly blooming health does not rest content within its due bounds; for disease ever presses close against it, its neighbor with a common wall. 1005 So human fortune, when holding onward in straight course, strikes upon a hidden reef. And yet, if with a well-measured throw, caution heaves overboard 1010 a portion of the gathered wealth, the whole house, with woe overladen, does not founder nor engulf the hull. Truly the generous gift from Zeus, 1015 rich and derived from yearly furrows, makes an end of the plague of famine.

antistrophe 2

But a man’s blood, once it has first fallen by murder to earth 1020 in a dark tide - who by magic spell shall call it back? Even he who possessed the skill to raise from the dead - did not Zeus make an end of him as warning? 1025 And unless one fate ordained of the gods restrains another fate from winning the advantage, my heart would outstrip my tongue and pour forth its fears; 1030 but, as it is, it mutters only in the dark, distressed and hopeless ever to unravel anything in time when my phrēn is aflame.

Clytemnestra enters.

Clytemnestra

1035 Get inside, you too, Kassandra; since it is not with mēnis that Zeus has appointed you to share the holy water of a house where you may take your stand, with many another slave, at the altar of the god who guards its wealth. Get down from the car and do not be too proud; 1040 for even Alkmene’s son,10 men say, once endured to be sold and to eat the bread of slavery. But if such fortune should of necessity fall to the lot of any, there is good cause for gratitude [kharis] in having masters of ancient wealth; for they who, beyond their hope, have reaped a rich harvest of possessions, 1045 are cruel to their slaves in every way, even exceeding due measure. You have from us such usage as custom [nomos] warrants.

Chorus

To Kassandra.

It is to you she has been speaking and clearly. Since you are in the toils of destiny, perhaps you will obey, if you are so inclined; but perhaps you will not.

Clytemnestra

1050 Well, if her language is not strange and foreign, even as a swallow’s, I must speak within her comprehension and move her to comply.

Chorus

Go with her. With things as they now stand, she gives you the best. Do as she bids and leave your seat in the car.

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9 Asklepios, son of Apollo and father of the Iliadic physician Makhaon (Iliad II 731, IV 194), in one tradition raised Hippolytus from the dead and was struck by a thunderbolt.

10 Herakles once sold himself as a slave to Omphale, queen of Lydia, to purify himself of the murder of Iphitos.
Clytemnestra
1055 I have no time to waste with this woman here outside; for already the victims stand by the central hearth awaiting the sacrifice - a grace [kharis] we never expected to be ours. As for you, if you will take any part, make no delay. 1060 But if, failing to understand, you do not catch my meaning, then, instead of speech, make a sign with your barbarian hand.

Chorus
It is an interpreter [hermēneus] and a plain one that the stranger seems to need. She bears herself like a wild creature newly captured.

Clytemnestra
No, she is mad and listens to her wild mood, 1065 since she has come here from a newly captured city, and does not know how to tolerate the bit until she has foamed away her fretfulness in blood. No! I will waste no more words upon her to be insulted thus.

She exits.

Chorus
But I will not be angry, since I pity her. 1070 Come, unhappy one, leave the car; yield to necessity and take upon you this novel yoke.

Kassandra
Woe, woe, woe! O Apollo, O Apollo!

Chorus
Wherefore your cry of “woe” in Loxias’11 name? 1075 He is not the kind of god that has to do with mourners.

Kassandra
Woe, woe, woe! O Apollo, O Apollo!

Chorus
Once more with ill-omened words she cries to the god who should not be present at times of lamentation.

Kassandra
1080 Apollo, Apollo! God of the Ways, my destroyer! For you have destroyed me this second time utterly.

Chorus
I think that she is about to prophesy about her own miseries. The divine gift still abides even in the phrēn of one enslaved.

11 Apollo’s.
Agamemnon

Kassandra

antistrophe 2

1085 Apollo, Apollo! God of the Ways, my destroyer! Ah, what way is this that you have brought me? To what house?

Chorus
To that of Atreus’ sons. If you do not perceive this, I’ll tell it to you. And you shall not say that it is untrue.

Kassandra

strophe 3

1090 No, no, rather to a god-hating house, a house that knows many a horrible butchery of kin, a slaughter-house of men and a floor swimming with blood.

Chorus
The stranger seems keen-scented as a hound; she is on the trail where she will discover blood.

Kassandra

antistrophe 3

1095 Here is the evidence in which I put my trust! Behold those babies bewailing their own butchery and their roasted flesh eaten by their father!

Chorus
Your kleos for reading the future had reached our ears; but we have no need of spokesmen [prophētēs pl.] here.

Kassandra

strophe 4

1100 Alas, what can she be planning? What is this fresh woe [akhos] she contrives here within, what monstrous, monstrous horror, unbearable to philoi, beyond all remedy? And help stands far away!

Chorus
1105 These prophesying pass my comprehension; but the former I understood - the whole city rings with them.

Kassandra

antistrophe 4

Ah, damned woman, will you do this thing? Your husband, the partner of your bed, when you have cheered him with the bath, will you - how shall I tell the end [telos]? 1110 Soon it will be done. Now this hand, now that, she stretches forth!

Chorus
Not yet do I comprehend; for now, after riddles [ainigma pl.], I am bewildered by dark oracles.
Kassandra

strophe 5

Ah! Ah! What apparition is this? 1115 Is it a net of death? No, it is a snare that shares his bed, that shares the guilt of murder. Let the fatal group [stasis], insatiable [without koros] against the family, raise a shout of jubilance over a victim accursed!

Chorus

What Spirit of Vengeance [Erinys] is this that you bid 1120 raise its voice over this house? Your words do not cheer me. Back to my heart surge the drops of my pallid blood, even as when they drip from a mortal wound, ebbing away as life’s beams sink low; and Destruction [atê] comes speedily.

Kassandra

antistrophe 5

1125 Ah, ah, see there, see there! Keep the bull from his mate! She has caught him in the robe and gores him with the crafty device of her black horn! He falls in a vessel of water! It is of doom wrought by guile in a murderous cauldron that I am telling you.

Chorus

1130 I cannot boast that I am a keen judge of prophecies; but these, I think, spell some evil. But from prophecies what word of good ever comes to mortals? Through terms of evil their wordy arts 1135 bring men to know fear chanted in prophetic strains.

Kassandra

strophe 6

Alas, alas, the sorrow of my ill-starred doom! For it is my own suffering [pathos], crowning the cup, that I bewail. Ah, to what end did you bring me here, unhappy as I am? For nothing except to die - and not alone. What else?

Chorus

1140 Frenzied in phrenes you are, by some god possessed, and you wail in wild strains your own fate, like that brown bird that never ceases making lament - alas! - and in the misery of her phrenes moans Itys, Itys, 1145 throughout all her days abounding in sorrow, the nightingale.12

Kassandra

antistrophe 6

Ah, fate of the clear-voiced nightingale! The gods clothed her in a winged form and gave to her a sweet life without tears. But for me waits destruction by the two-edged sword.

Chorus

1150 From where come these vain pangs of prophecy that assail you? And why do you mold to melody these terrors with dismal cries blended with piercing strains? How do you know the bounds of the path of your 1155 ill-boding prophecy?

12 Procne served her husband Tereus the flesh of their son Itys in revenge for Tereus’ rape of her sister Philomela. Tereus pursued them, and the gods saved Procne by turning her into a nightingale forever lamenting her dead son Itys (Itylos in the Odyssey).
Kassandra

strope 7

Ah, the marriage, the marriage of Paris, that destroyed his philoi! Ah me, Scamander, my native stream! Upon your banks in bygone days, unhappy maid, was I nurtured with fostering care; 1160 but now by Cocytus and the banks of Acheron, 13 I think, I soon must chant my prophecies.

Chorus

What words are these you utter, words all too plain? A newborn child hearing them could understand. I am smitten with a deadly pain, while, 1165 by reason of your cruel fortune, you cry aloud your pitiful moans that break my heart to hear.

Kassandra

antistrophe 7

O the ordeals [ponoi], the ordeals [ponoi] of my city utterly destroyed! Alas, the sacrifices my father offered, the many pasturing cattle slain to save its towers! 1170 Yet they provided no remedy to save the city from suffering even as it has; and I, my noos at boiling point, must soon fall to the ground.

Chorus

Your present speech chimes with your former strain. 1175 Surely some malignant spirit, falling upon you with heavy swoop, moves you to chant your piteous woes fraught with death. But the end I am helpless to discover.

Kassandra

And now, no more shall my prophecy peer forth from behind a veil like a new-wedded bride; 1180 but it will rush upon me clear as a fresh wind blowing against the sun’s uprising so as to dash against its rays, like a wave, a woe far mightier than mine. No more by riddles [ainigma pl.]will I put knowledge in your phrenes. And bear me witness, as, running close behind, 1185 I scent the track of crimes done long ago. For from this roof never departs a khoros chanting in unison, but singing not a happy tune; for it tells not of good. And so, gorged on human blood, so as to be the more emboldened, a reveling band [kômos] of kindred Furies [Erinyes] haunts the house, 1190 hard to drive away. Lodged within its halls they sing their hymn, the primal atê; and, each in turn, they spurn with loathing a brother’s bed, for they bitterly spurn the one who defiled it. 14 Have I missed the mark, or, like a true archer, do I strike my quarry? 1195 Or am I prophet of lies, a door-to-door babbler? Bear witness upon your oath that I know the deeds of error, ancient in story, of this house.

Chorus

How could an oath, a pledge although given in honor, effect any cure? Yet I marvel at you that, 1200 though bred beyond the sea [pontos], you speak truth of a foreign polis, even as if you had been present there.

Kassandra

The seer Apollo appointed me to this office.

13 Rivers of the Underworld.
14 Thyestes committed adultery with Aeroppe, wife of Atreus.
Chorus
Can it be that he, a god, was smitten with desire?

Kassandra
Before now I was ashamed [aidōs] to speak of this.

Chorus
In prosperity everyone becomes delicate [habros].

Kassandra
Oh, but he wrestled me down, breathing down ardent pleasure [kharis] on me.

Chorus
Did you in due course come to the rite of marriage?

Kassandra
I consented to Loxias but broke my word.

Chorus
Were you already possessed by the art inspired of the god?

Kassandra
Already I prophesied to my countrymen all their sufferings [pathos pl.].

Chorus
How came it then that you were unharmed by Loxias’ wrath?

Kassandra
Ever since that fault I could persuade no one of anything.

Chorus
And yet to us at least the prophecies you utter seem true enough.

Kassandra
Ah, ah! Oh, oh, the agony! Once more the dreadful ordeal [ponos] of true prophecy whirls and distracts me with its ill-boding onset. Do you see them there - sitting before the house - young creatures like phantoms of dreams? Children, they seem, slaughtered by their own kindred. Their hands full of the meat of their own flesh; they are clear to my sight, holding their vitals and their inward parts - piteous burden! - which their father tasted. For this cause I tell you that a strengthless lion, wallowing in his bed, plots vengeance, a watchman waiting - ah me! - for my master’s coming home - yes, my master, for I must bear the yoke of slavery. The commander of the fleet and the over Thrower of Ilion little knows what deeds shall be brought to evil accomplishment by the hateful hound, whose tongue licked his hand, who stretched forth her ears in gladness, like treacherous Atē. Such boldness has she - a woman to slay a man. What odious monster shall I fitly call her? An Amphisbaina? Or a Scylla,
tenanting the rocks, a pest to mariners, 1235 a raging, devil’s mother, breathing relentless war against her philoi? And how the all-daring woman raised a shout of triumph, as when the battle turns, while she feigned joy at the salvation [sōtēria] of nostos! And yet, it is all one, whether or not I am believed. What does it matter? 1240 What is to come, will come. And soon you yourself, present here, shall with great pity pronounce me all too true [alēthēs] a prophetess.

Chorus
Thyestes’ banquet on his children’s flesh I understood, and I tremble. Terror possesses me as I hear the truth [alēthēs], nothing fashioned out of falsehood to resemble truth. 1245 But as for the rest I heard I am thrown off the track.

Kassandra
I say you shall look upon Agamemnon dead.

Chorus
Lull your speech, miserable girl, making it euphēmos.\(^\text{16}\)

Kassandra
Over what I tell no healing god presides.

Chorus
No, if it is to be; but may it not be so!

Kassandra
1250 You do but pray; their business is to slay.

Chorus
What man is he that contrived this woe [akhos]?

Kassandra
Surely you must have missed the meaning of my prophecies.

Chorus
I do not understand the scheme of him who is to do the deed.

Kassandra
And yet all too well I understand the Greek language.

Chorus
1255 So, too, do the Pythian oracles; yet they are hard to understand.

Kassandra
Oh, oh! What fire! It comes upon me! Woe, woe! Lykeian Apollo! Ah me, ah me! This two-footed lioness, who mates with a wolf in the absence of the noble lion, 1260 will slay me, miserable as I am. As if brewing a drug, she vows that with her wrath she will mix requital for me too, while she whets her sword

\(^{16}\) See previous note on *euphēmos*. 
against her husband, to take murderous vengeance for bringing me here. Why then do I bear these mockeries of myself, 1265 this wand, these prophetic chaplets on my neck?

Breaking her wand, she throws it and the other insignia of her prophetic office upon the ground, and tramples them underfoot.

You at least I will destroy before I die myself. To destruction with you! And fallen there, thus do I repay you. Enrich with doom some other in my place. Look, Apollo himself is stripping me 1270 of my prophetic garb - he that saw me mocked to bitter scorn, even in this bravery, by friends turned foes, with one accord, in vain - but, like some wandering vagabond, called “beggar,” “wretch,” “starveling,” I bore it all. 1275 And now the prophet, having undone me, his prophetess, has brought me to this lethal pass. Instead of my father’s altar a block awaits me, where I am to be butchered in a hot and bloody sacrifice. Yet, we shall not die without vengeance [time] from the gods; 1280 for there shall come in turn another, our avenger, a scion of the family, to slay his mother and exact requital for his sire; an exile, a wanderer, a stranger from this land, he shall return to put the coping-stone upon these unspeakable derangements [atai] of his house. For the gods have sworn a mighty oath 1285 that his slain father’s outstretched corpse shall bring him home. Why then thus raise my voice in pitiful lament? Since first I saw the city of Ilion fare how it has fared, while her captors, by the gods’ sentence, are coming to such an end, 1290 I will go in and meet my fate. I will dare to die. This door I greet as the gates of Death. And I pray that, dealt a mortal stroke, without a struggle, my life-blood ebbing away in easy death, I may close these eyes.

Chorus
1295 O woman, very pitiful and very sophē, long has been your speech. But if, in truth, you have knowledge of your own death, how can you step with calm courage to the altar like an ox, driven by the god?

Kassandra
There is no escape; no, my friends, there is none any more.

Chorus
1300 Yet he that is last has the advantage in respect of time.

Kassandra
The day has come; flight would profit me but little.

Chorus
Well, be assured, you are brave suffering with courageous phrēn.

Kassandra
None who is happy is commended thus.

Chorus
Yet surely to die with kleos is a grace [kharis] for mortals.

Kassandra
1305 Alas for you, my father, and for your noble children!
She starts back in horror.

**Chorus**
What ails you? What terror turns you back?

**Kassandra**
Alas, alas!

**Chorus**
Why do you cry “alas”? Unless perhaps there is some horror in your *phrenes*.

**Kassandra**
This house stinks of blood-dripping slaughter.

**Chorus**
1310 And what of that? It is just the savor of victims at the hearth.

**Kassandra**
It is like a breath from a charnel house.

**Chorus**
You are not speaking of proud Syrian incense for the house.

**Kassandra**
Nay, I will go to bewail also within the palace my own and Agamemnon’s fate. Enough of life! 1315 Alas, my friends, not with vain terror do I shrink, as a bird that fears a bush. After I am dead, bear witness for me of this - when for me, a woman, another woman shall be slain, and for an ill-wedded man another man shall fall. 1320 I claim this from you as my *xenos* now that I am about to die.

**Chorus**
Poor woman, I pity you for your death foretold.

**Kassandra**
Yet once more I would like to speak, but not a dirge. I pray to the sun, in the presence of his latest light, that my enemies may at the same time pay to my avengers a bloody penalty for 1325 slaughtering a slave, an easy prey. Alas for human fortune! When prosperous, a mere shadow can overturn it; if misfortune strikes, the dash of a wet sponge blots out the drawing. 1330 And this last I deem far more pitable than that.

*She enters the palace.*

**Chorus**
It is the nature of all human kind to be unsatisfied with prosperity. From stately halls no one bars it with warning voice that utters the words “Enter no more.” 1335 So the Blessed Ones [*makares*] have granted to our prince to capture Priam’s town; and, divinely-honored, he returns to his home. Yet if he now must pay the penalty for the blood shed by others before him, and by dying for the dead 1340 he is to bring to
pass retribution of other deaths, what mortal man, on hearing this, can boast that he was born with an unharmful daimōn?

_A shriek is heard from within._

**Agamemnon**
Alas! I am struck deep with a mortal blow!

**Chorus**
Silence! Who is this that cries out, wounded by a mortal blow?

**Agamemnon**
1345 And once again, alas! I am struck by a second blow.

**Chorus**
- The deed is done, it seems - to judge by the groans of the King. But come, let us take counsel together if there is perhaps some safe plan of action.
- I tell you my advice: summon the townsfolk to bring rescue here to the palace.
- To my thinking we must burst in and charge them with the deed while the sword is still dripping in their hands.
- I, too, am for taking part in some such plan, and vote for action of some sort. It is no time to keep on delaying.
- It is plain. Their opening act 1355 is the signal [sēmeion pl.] of a plan to set up a tyranny in the polis.
- Yes, because we are wasting time, while they, trampling underfoot the kles of Delay, allow their hands no slumber.
- I know not what plan I could hit on to propose. It is the doer’s part likewise to do the planning.
- 1360 I too am of this mind, for I know no way to bring the dead back to life by mere words.
- What? To prolong our lives shall we thus submit to the rule of those defilers of the house?
- No, it is not to be endured. No, death would be better, 1365 for that would be a milder lot than tyranny.
- And shall we, upon the evidence of mere groans, divine that the man is dead?
- We should be sure of the facts before we indulge our wrath. For surmise differs from assurance.
- 1370 I am supported on all sides to approve this course: that we get clear assurance how it stands with Atreus’ son.

_The bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra are disclosed, with Clytemnestra standing beside them._

**Clytemnestra**
Much have I said before to serve my need and I shall feel no shame to contradict it now. For how else could one, devising hate against enemies [ekhthroi] 1375 who bear the semblance of philoi, fence the snares of ruin too high to be overleaped? This is the agōn of an ancient feud, pondered by me of old, and it has come - however long delayed. I stand where I dealt the blow; my purpose is achieved. 1380 Thus have I done the deed - deny it I will not. Round him, as if to catch a haul of fish, I cast an impassable net - fatal wealth of robe - so that he should neither escape nor ward off doom. Twice I struck him, and with two groans 1385 his limbs relaxed. Once he had fallen, I dealt him yet a third stroke as a prayer of gratitude [kharis] to the infernal Zeus, the savior [spatho] of the dead. Fallen thus, he gasped away his thumos, and as he breathed forth quick spurts of blood, 1390 he struck me with dark drops of gory dew;
while I rejoiced no less than the sown earth is gladdened in the sky's refreshing rain at the birthtime of the flower buds.

Since this is so, old men of Argos, rejoice, if you would rejoice; as for me, I glory in the deed. \(1395\) And had it been a fitting act to pour libations on the corpse, over him this would have been done with dikē. With dikē and then some! With so many accursed lies has he filled the mixing-bowl in his own house, and now he has come home and himself drained it to the dregs.

**Chorus**

We are shocked at your tongue, how bold-mouthed you are, \(1400\) that over your husband you can utter such a boastful speech.

**Clytemnestra**

You are testing me as if I were a witless woman. But my heart does not quail, and I say to you who know it well - and whether you wish to praise or to blame me, it is all one - here is Agamemnon, \(1405\) my husband, now a corpse, the work of this right hand, an artisan of dikē. So stands the case.

**Chorus**

Woman, what poisonous herb nourished by the earth have you tasted, what potion drawn from the flowing sea, that you have taken upon yourself this maddened rage and the loud curses voiced by the community \([dēmos]\)? \(1410\) You have cast him off; you have cut him off; and out from the \(polis\) you shall be cast, a burden of hatred to your people.

**Clytemnestra**

It's now that you would doom me to exile from the \(polis\), to the hatred of my people and the curses of the \(dēmos\); though then you had nothing to urge against him that lies here. And yet he, \(1415\) caring no more than if it had been a beast that perished - though sheep were plenty in his fleecy folds - he sacrificed his own child, she whom I bore with most \(philos\) travail, to charm the winds of Thrace. Is it not he whom you should have banished from this land \(1420\) in requital for his polluting deed? No! When you arraign what I have done, you are a stern judge. Well, I warn you: threaten me thus on the understanding that I am prepared, conditions equal, to let you lord it over me if you shall vanquish me by force. But if a god shall bring the contrary to pass, \(1425\) you shall learn equilibrium \([sōphroneîn]\) though taught the lesson late.

**Chorus**

You are proud of spirit, and your speech is overbearing. Even as your \(phrēn\) is maddened by your deed of blood, upon your face a stain of blood shows full plain to behold. Bereft of all honor, forsaken of \(philoi\), \(1430\) you shall hereafter atone for stroke with stroke.

**Clytemnestra**

Listen then to this too, this the righteous sanction on my oath: I swear by dikē, exacted for my child, by \(Atē\), and by the Erinyes, to whom I sacrificed that man, that my expectations do not tread for me the halls of fear, \(1435\) so long as the fire upon my hearth is kindled by Aegisthus, loyal in \(phrenes\) to me as in days gone by. For he is no slight shield of confidence to me. Here lies the man who did me wrong, plaything of each Khrysēis at Ilion; \(1440\) and here she lies, his captive, and auguress, and concubine, his oracular faithful whore, yet equally familiar with the seamen's benches. The pair has met no undeserved fate. For
he lies thus; while she, who, like a swan, 1445 has sung her last lament in death, lies here, his beloved; but to me she has brought for my bed an added relish of delight.

Chorus

strophe 2

Alas! Ah, that some fate, free from excess of pain, nor yet lingering, 1450 might come full soon and bring to us everlasting and endless sleep, now that our most gracious guardian has been laid low, who in a woman’s cause had much endured and by a woman’s hand has lost his life. 1455 O Helen, distorted in noos, who did yourself alone push over the brink these many lives [psukhai], these lives exceeding many, beneath the walls of Troy. Now you have bedecked yourself with your final crown, that shall long last in memory, 1460 because of blood not to be washed away. Truly in those days Eris, an affliction that has subdued our lord, dwelt in the house.

Clytemnestra

anapests

Do not burden yourself with thoughts such as these, nor invoke upon yourself the fate of death. Nor yet turn your wrath upon Helen, 1465 and deem her a slayer of men, as if she alone had pushed over the brink many a Danaan life [psukhe] and had wrought anguish past all cure.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

O daimōn who falls upon this house and Tantalus’ two descendants, 1470 you who by the hands of women wield a power [kratos] matching their temper, a rule bitter to my psukhe! Perched over his body like a hateful raven, in hoarse notes she chants her song of triumph.

Clytemnestra

anapests

1475 Now you have corrected the judgment of your lips in that you conjure up the thrice-gorged daimōn of this family. 17 For by him the lust for lapping blood is fostered in the mouth; so before 1480 the ancient woe [akhos] is healed, there is fresh blood.

Chorus

strophe 3

So you speak words of praise [ainos] about a mighty daimōn, haunting the house, and heavy in his mēnis - alas, alas! - an evil tale of catastrophic fate insatiable [without koros]; 1485 woe, woe, done by the will of Zeus, author of all, worker of all! For what is brought to pass for mortal men save by the will of Zeus? What of this is not wrought by god?

Alas, alas, my King, my King, 1490 how shall I bewail you? How to voice my phrēn that is dear [philē] to you? To lie in this spider’s web, breathing forth your life in an impious death! Alas, to lie on this ignoble bed, struck down in treacherous death wrought 1495 by a weapon of double edge wielded by your own wife’s hand!

17 Referring to the three generations of the family’s curse: Tantalus served his son Pelops to the gods and was punished as in Odyssey xi 582f.; Pelops’ son Atreus; Atreus’ son Agamemnon.
Clytemnestra

Do you affirm this deed is mine? Do not imagine that I am Agamemnon’s spouse. A phantom resembling that corpse’s wife, the ancient bitter evil spirit of Atreus, that grim banqueter, has offered him in payment, sacrificing a full-grown victim in vengeance for those slain children.

Chorus

That you are not responsible [aitios] for this murder - who will bear you witness? How could anyone do so? And yet the avenger from his father might well be your accomplice. By force amid streams of kindred blood black Ares presses on to where he shall grant vengeance for the gore of children served for meat.

Alas, alas, my King, my King, how shall I bewail you? How to voice my phrēn that is dear [philē] to you? To lie in this spider’s web, breathing forth your life in an impious death! Alas, to lie on this ignoble bed, struck down in treacherous death wrought by a weapon of double edge wielded by your own wife’s hand!

Clytemnestra

I do not think he met an ignoble death. Did he not himself by treachery bring ruin [atē] on his house? Yet, as he has suffered - worthy prize of worthy deed - for what he did to my sweet flower, shoot sprung from him, the much-bewailed Iphigeneia, let him make no great boasts in the halls of Hades, since with death dealt him by the sword he has paid for what he first began.

Chorus

Bereft of any ready expedient of thought, I am bewildered where to turn now that the house is tottering. I fear the beating storm of bloody rain that shakes the house; no longer does it descend in drops. Yet on other whetstones Destiny [Moira] is sharpening justice [dikē] for another evil deed.

O Earth, Earth, if only you had taken me to yourself before I ever lived to see my lord occupying a lowly bed of a silver-sided bath! Who shall bury him? Who shall lament him? Will you harden your heart to do this - you who have slain your own husband - to lament for him and crown your unholy work with a kharis without kharis to his psukhē, atoning for your monstrous deeds? And who, as with tears he utters praise [ai̇nos] over the godlike man’s grave, shall sorrow in truth [aïtheia] of phrenes?

Clytemnestra

To care for that duty is no concern of yours. By our hands down he fell, down to death, and down below shall we bury him - but not with wailings from his household. No! Iphigeneia, his daughter, as is due, shall meet her father lovingly at the swift-flowing ford of sorrows [akhes pl.], and shall fling her arms around him and kiss him.
Agamemnon

Chorus

1560 Reproach thus meets reproof in turn - hard is the struggle to decide. The spoiler is despoiled, the slayer pays penalty. Yet, while Zeus remains on his throne, it remains true: “The doer suffers [paskhein].” For it is divine law. 1565 Who can cast from out the house the seed of the curse? The family is bound fast in calamity [atē].

Clytemnestra

You have touched with truth [alētheia] upon this oracular saying. As for me, however, I am willing to make a sworn compact with the daimōn of the Pleisthenidaı18 1570 that I will be content with what is done, hard to endure though it is. Henceforth he shall leave this house and bring tribulation upon some other family by murder of kin. A small part of the wealth is fully enough for me, if I may but rid these halls 1575 of the frenzy of mutual murder.

Aegisthus enters with armed guards.

Aegisthus

Hail gracious light of the day of retribution! At last the hour has come when I can say that the gods who avenge mortal men look down from on high upon the sorrows [akhos pl.] of earth - 1580 now that, to my joy, I behold this man lying here in a robe spun by the Avenging Spirits [Erinyes] and making full payment for the deeds contrived in craft by his father’s hand.

For Atreus, lord of this land, this man’s father, challenged in his sovereignty [kratos], drove forth from polis and from home Thyestes, who - to speak it clearly - was my father 1585 and his own brother. And when he had come back as a suppliant to his hearth, unhappy Thyestes secured such safety for his lot as not himself to suffer death and stain with his blood his native soi 1590. But Atreus, the godless father of this slain man, with welcome more hearty than kind, on the pretence that he was cheerfully celebrating a happy day by serving meat, served up to my father a banquet of his own children’s flesh. 1595 The toes and fingers he broke off...

[Some lines are missing.]

...sitting apart. And when unknowingly my father had quickly taken servings that he did not recognize, he ate a meal which, as you see, has proved fatal to his family. Now, discovering his unhallowed deed, he uttered a great cry, reeled back, vomiting forth the slaughtered flesh, and invoked 1600 an unbearable curse upon the line of Pelops, kicking the banquet table to aid his curse: “Thus perish all the family of Pleisthenes!” This is the reason that you see this man fallen here. I am he who planned this murder with dikē. For together with my hapless father he drove me out, 1605 me his third child, still a baby in swaddling clothes. But grown to manhood, dikē has brought me back again. Exile though I was, I laid my hand upon my enemy, compassing every device of cunning to his ruin. 1610 So even death would be sweet to me now that I behold him in the net of dikē.

18 Pleisthenes was an ancestor of Agamemnon.
Chorus
Agamemnon, hubris amid distress I do not honor. You say that of your own intent you slew this man and did alone plot this pitiful murder. I tell you in the hour of dikē that you yourself - be sure of that - will not escape the people’s curses and death by stoning at their hand.

Aegisthus
You speak like that, you who sit at the lower oar when those upon the higher bench control the ship? Old as you are, you shall learn how bitter it is at your age to be schooled when equilibrium (sōphronein) is the lesson set before you. Bonds and the pangs of hunger are far the best doctors of the phrenes when it comes to instructing the old. Do you have eyes and lack understanding? Do not kick against the goads lest you strike to your own hurt.

Chorus
Woman that you are! Skulking at home and awaiting the return of the men from war, all the while defiling a hero’s bed, did you contrive this death against a warrior chief?

Aegisthus
These words of yours likewise shall prove a source of tears. The tongue of Orpheus is quite the opposite of yours. He led all things by the rapture of his voice; but you, who have stirred our wrath by your silly yelping, shall be led off yourself. You will appear tamer when put down by force.

Chorus
As if you could ever truly be turannos here in Argos, you who did contrive this one’s death, and then had not the courage to do this deed of murder with your own hand!

Aegisthus
Because to ensnare him was clearly the woman’s part; I was suspect as his enemy of old. However, with his money I shall endeavor to control the citizens; and whoever is unruly, him I’ll yoke with a heavy collar - and he shall be no well-fed trace-horse! No! Loathsome hunger that lives with darkness shall see him turned gentle.

Chorus
Why then, in the baseness of your psukhē, did you not kill him yourself, but leave his slaying to a woman, a plague to her country and her country’s gods? Oh, does Orestes perhaps still behold the light, that, with favoring fortune, he may come home and be the slayer of this pair with victory complete?

Aegisthus
Since you plan to act and speak like that, you shall be taught a lesson soon.

Chorus
On guard, my philoi company, the task is close at hand.

Aegisthus
On guard, then! Let every one make ready his sword with hand on hilt.
Chorus
My hand, too, is laid on my sword-hilt, and I do not shrink from death.

Aegisthus
"Death for yourself," you say. We accept the omen. We welcome fortune’s test.

Clytemnestra
No, most philos of men, let us work no further evils. 1655 Even these are many to reap, a wretched harvest. Of woe we have enough; let us have no bloodshed. Old men, go back to your homes, and yield in time to destiny before you come to harm. What we did had to be done. But should this trouble prove enough, we will accept it, 1660 sorely battered as we are by the heavy hand of a daimôn. Such is a woman’s counsel, if any care to learn from it.

Aegisthus
But to think that these men should let their wanton tongues thus blossom into speech against me and cast about such insults, putting their fortune [daimôn] to the test! To reject balanced [sōphrōn] counsel and insult their master!

Chorus
1665 It would not be like men of Argos to cringe before a man as low as you.

Aegisthus
Ha! I will visit you with vengeance yet in days to come.

Chorus
Not if a daimôn shall guide Orestes to return home.

Aegisthus
From my own experience I know that exiles feed on hope.

Chorus
Keep on, grow fat while polluting dikē, since you can.

Aegisthus
1670 Know that you shall atone to me for your insolent folly.

Chorus
Brag in your bravery like a cock beside his hen.

Clytemnestra
Ignore their idle barking. You and I will be masters of this house and order it aright.
At the tomb of Agamemnon. Orestes and Pylades enter.

**Orestes**

Hermes of the nether world, you who guard the powers [kratos] of the ancestors, prove yourself my savior [sōtēr] and ally, I entreat you, now that I have come to this land and returned from exile. On this mounded grave I cry out to my father to hearken, 5 to hear me...

[There is a gap in the text.]

[Look, I bring] a lock of hair to Inakhos¹⁹ in compensation for his care, and here, a second, in token of my grief [penthos]. For I was not present, father, to lament your death, nor did I stretch forth my hand to bear your corpse.

10 What is this I see? What is this throng of women that advances, marked by their sable cloaks? To what calamity should I set this down? Is it some new sorrow that befalls our house? Or am I right to suppose that for my father’s sake they bear 15 these libations to appease the powers below? It can only be for this cause: for indeed I think my own sister Electra is approaching, distinguished by her bitter grief [penthos]. Oh grant me, Zeus, to avenge my father’s death, and may you be my willing ally! 20 Pylades, let us stand apart, that I may know clearly what this band of suppliant women intends.

They exit. Electra enters accompanied by women carrying libations.

**Chorus**

Sent forth from the palace I have come to convey libations to the sound of sharp blows of my hands. My cheek is marked with bloody gashes 25 where my nails have cut fresh furrows. And yet through all my life [aiōn] my heart is fed with lamentation. Rips are torn by my griefs through the linen web of my garment, torn in the cloth that covers my breast, 30 the cloth of robes struck for the sake of my mirthless misfortunes.

For with a hair-raising shriek, the seer [mantis] of dreams for our house, breathing wrath out of sleep, 35 uttered a cry of terror in the untimely [a-(h)ōr-os] part of night from the heart of the palace, a cry that fell heavily on the women’s quarter. And those who sort out [krinein] these dreams, bound under pledge, cried out from the god 40 that those beneath the earth cast furious reproaches and rage against their murderers.

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¹⁹ The river-god of Argos.
Intending to ward off evil with such a graceless grace [kharis], 45 O mother Earth, she sends me forth, godless woman that she is. But I am afraid to utter the words she charged me to speak. For what atonement [lutron] is there for blood fallen to earth? Ah, hearth of utter grief! 50 Ah, house laid low in ruin! Sunless darkness, loathed by men, enshrouds our house due to the death of its master.

antistrophe 2

55 The awe of majesty once unconquered, unvanquished, irresistible in war, that penetrated the ears and phrēn of the people, is now cast off. But there is still fear. And prosperity - 60 this, among mortals, is a god and more than a god. But the balance of dikē keeps watch: swiftly it descends on those in the light; sometimes pain [akhos] waits for those who linger on the frontier of twilight; 65 and others are claimed by strengthless night.

strophe 3

Because of blood drunk up by the fostering earth, the vengeful gore lies clotted and will not dissolve away. Grievous calamity [ate] distracts the guilty [aitios] man till he is steeped in utter misery.

antistrophe 3

70 But for the violator of a bridal chamber there is no cure. And though all streams flow in one course to cleanse the blood from a polluted hand, they rush in vain.

epode

75 For since the gods laid constraining doom about my polis and led me from my father’s house to a slave’s lot, it is fitting for me to govern my bitter hate, even against my will [phrenes], 80 and submit to the wishes of my masters, whether just [dikaia] or unjust. But I weep beneath my veil over the senseless fate of my lord, my heart chilled by secret grief [penthos].

Electra

You handmaidens who set our house in order, 85 since you are here as my attendants in this rite of supplication, give me your counsel on this: what should I say while I pour these offerings of sorrow? How shall I find gracious words, how shall I entreat my father? Shall I say that I bring these offerings to a philos husband from a philē wife - 90 from my own mother? I do not have the assurance for that, nor do I know what I should say as I pour this mixed offering onto my father’s tomb. Or shall I speak the words that men are accustomed [nomos] to use: “To those who send these honors may he return benefits” - a gift, indeed, to match their evil?

95 Or, in silence and dishonor, even as my father perished, shall I pour them out for the earth to drink and then retrace my steps, like one who carries refuse away from a rite, hurling the vessel from me with averted eyes? 100 In this, philai, be my fellow-counselors. For we cherish a common hatred within our house. Do not hide your counsel in your hearts in fear of anyone. For the portion of fate awaits both the free man and the man enslaved by another’s hand. 105 If you have a better course to urge, speak!

Chorus

In reverence for your father’s tomb, as if it were an altar, I will speak my thoughts from the heart [phrēn], since you command me.

Electra

Speak, even as you revere my father’s grave.

Chorus

While you pour, utter benedictions for loyal hearts.
Electra
110 And to what _philoi_ should I address them?

Chorus
First to yourself, then to whoever hates Aegisthus.

Electra
Then for myself and for you also shall I make this prayer?

Chorus
That is for you, using your judgment, to consider now for yourself.

Electra
Then whom else should I add to our company [stasis]?\(^{20}\)

Chorus
115 Remember Orestes, though he is still away from home.

Electra
Well said! You have indeed admonished me thoughtfully [with _phrenes_].

Chorus
For the guilty [aitioi] murderers now, mindful of -

Electra
What should I say? Instruct my inexperience, prescribe the form.

Chorus
Pray that some _daimon_ or some mortal may come to them -

Electra
120 As judge or as avenger, do you mean?

Chorus
Say in plain speech, “One who will take life for life.”

Electra
And is it right for me to ask this of the gods?

Chorus
How could it not be right to repay an enemy with ills?

Electra
Supreme herald [kērux] of the realm above and the realm below, O Hermes of the nether world, come to my aid, 125 summon to me the _daimones_ beneath the earth to hear my prayers, spirits that watch over my...

\(^{20}\) In the metaphorical sense of ‘division’.
father’s house, and Earth herself, who gives birth to all things, and having nurtured them receives their increase in turn. And meanwhile, as I pour these lustral offerings to the dead, 130 I invoke my father: “Have pity both on me and on philos Orestes! How shall we rule our own house? For now we wander like beggars, bartered away by her who bore us, by her who in exchange got as her mate Aegisthus, who was her accomplice in your murder. 135 As for me, I am no better than a slave, Orestes is an outcast from his inheritance, while they in their insolence revel openly in the winnings of your labors [ponoi]. But that Orestes may come home with good fortune I pray to you, father: Oh, hearken to me! 140 And as for myself, grant that I may prove far more circumspect [sôphrôn] than my mother and more reverent in deed.

I utter these prayers on our behalf, but I ask that your avenger appear to our foes, father, and that your killers may be killed in just retribution [dikê]. 145 So I interrupt my prayer for good to offer them this prayer for evil. But be a bearer of blessings for us to the upper world, with the help of the gods and Earth and dikê crowned with victory.”

She pours out the libations.

Such are my prayers, and over them I pour out these libations. 150 It is the proper custom [nomos] for you to crown them with lamentations, raising your voices in a chant for the dead.

Chorus
Pour forth your tears, splashing as they fall for our fallen lord, to accompany this protection against evil, this charm for the good 155 against the loathsome pollution. Hear me, oh hear me, my honored lord, out of the darkness of your phrēn.

Woe, woe, woe! 160 Oh for a man mighty with the spear to deliver our house, an Ares, brandishing in the fight the springing Scythian bow and wielding his hilted sword in close combat.

Electra discovers the lock of Orestes’ hair.

Electra
My father has by now received the libations, which the earth has drunk. 165 But take your share of this startling utterance [muthos].

Chorus
Speak - but my heart is dancing with fear.

Electra
I see here a lock cut as an offering for the tomb.

Chorus
A man’s, or a deep-girdled maiden’s?

Electra
170 That is open to conjecture - anyone may guess.

Chorus
How then? Let my age be taught by your youth.

**Electra**
There is no one who could have cut it but myself.

**Chorus**
Then they are enemies [*ekhthroi*] who thought it fit to express grief [*penthos*] with a lock of hair.

**Electra**
And further, in appearance it is very much like...

**Chorus**
175 Whose lock? This is what I would like to know.

**Electra**
It is very much like my own in appearance.

**Chorus**
Then can this be a secret offering from Orestes?

**Electra**
It is his curling locks that it most resembles.

**Chorus**
But how did he dare to come here?

**Electra**
180 He has merely sent this cut lock as a favor [*khari*] to his father.

**Chorus**
What you say is no less a cause of tears for me, if he will never again set foot on this land.

**Electra**
Over my heart, too, there sweeps a surge of bitterness, and I am struck as if a sword had run me through. 185 From my eyes thirsty drops of a stormy flood fall unchecked at the sight of this tress. For how can I expect to find that someone else, some townsman, owns this lock? Nor yet in truth did she clip it from her head, the murderess, 190 my own mother, who has assumed godless *phrenes* regarding her children that ill accords with the name of mother. But as for me, how am I to assent to this outright, that it adorned the head of Orestes, the most *philos* to me of all mortals? No, hope is merely flattering me.

Ah, woe! 195 If only, like a messenger, it had a voice that has *phrenes* in it, so that I would not be tossed by my distracted thoughts. Rather it would plainly bid me to spurn this tress, if it was severed from a hated head. Or if it were a kinsman’s, he would share my grief [*penthos*] 200 as an adornment to this tomb and a tribute [*timē*] to my father.
But I invoke the gods, who know by what storms we are tossed like seafarers. Yet if I am fated to reach salvation [sotêria], a great stock may come from a little seed.

205 And look! Another proof! Footprints matching each other - and like my own! Yes, here are the outlines of two sets of feet, his own and some companion’s. 210 The heels and the imprints of the tendons agree in proportion with my own tracks. I am in torment, my phrenes are in a whirl!

_Orestes enters._

_Orestes_
Give recognition to the gods that your prayers have found fulfillment [telos], and pray that success may attend you in the future.

_Electra_
What? Have I succeeded now by the will of the daimones?

_Orestes_
215 You have come to the sight of what you have long prayed for.

_Electra_
And do you know whom among mortals I was invoking?

_Orestes_
I know that you are pining for Orestes.

_Electra_
Then how have I found an answer to my prayers?

_Orestes_
Here I am. Search for no other philos than me.

_Electra_
220 But surely, stranger, you are weaving some snare about me?

_Orestes_
Then I am devising plots against myself.

_Electra_
No, you wish to mock my distress.

_Orestes_
Then my own also, if yours.

_Electra_
Am I then to address you as Orestes in truth?

_Orestes_
225 No, even though you see him in me, you are slow to learn. Yet at the sight of this tress cut in mourning, and when you were scrutinizing the footprints of my tracks, your thought took wings and you knew you had found me. Put the lock of hair, your own brother’s, in the spot it was cut from, 230 and observe how it matches the hair on your head. And see this piece of weaving, your handiwork, the strokes of the blade and the beasts in the design. Control yourself! Do not stray in your phrenes with joy! For I know that our most philoi kin are bitter foes to us both.

Electra

235 O most philon object of care in your father’s house, its hope of the seed of a savior [sōtēr] longed for with tears, trust in your prowess and you will win back your father’s house. O delightful eyes that have four parts of love for me: for I must call you father; 240 and to you falls the love I should bear my mother, she whom I hate with complete dikē; and the love I bore my sister, victim of a pitiless sacrifice; and you were my faithful brother, bringing me your reverence. May Might [kratos] and dikē, 245 with Zeus, supreme over all, in the third place, lend you their aid!

Orestes

O Zeus, O Zeus, become a sacred observer [theōros] of our cause! Behold the orphaned brood of a father eagle that perished in the meshes, in the coils of a fierce viper. They are utterly orphaned, 250 gripped by the famine of hunger: for they are not grown to full strength [telos] to bring their father’s quarry to the nest. So you see both me and poor Electra here, children bereft of their father, both outcasts alike from our home. 255 If you destroy these nestlings of a father who made sacrifice and gave you great tīmē, from what like hand will you receive the homage of rich feasts? Destroy the brood of the eagle and you cannot again send signals [sēmata] that mortals will trust; 260 nor, if this royal stock should wither utterly away, will it serve your altars on days when oxen are sacrificed. Oh foster [komizein] it, and you may raise our house from low estate to great, though now it seems utterly overthrown.

Chorus

O children, O saviors [sōtēres] of your father’s hearth, 265 speak not so loud, children, in case someone should overhear and report all this to our masters merely for the sake of rumor. May I some day see them dead in the ooze of flaming pitch!

Orestes

Surely he will not abandon me, the mighty oracle of Loxias,21 270 who urged me to brave this peril to the end and loudly proclaims calamities [atai] that chill the warmth of my heart, if I do not take vengeance on those who are guilty [aitioi] of my father’s murder. He said that, enraged like a bull by the loss of my possessions, I should kill them in requital just as they killed. 275 And he declared that otherwise I should pay the debt myself with my philē psukhē, after many grievous sufferings. For he spoke revealing to mortals the wrath of malignant powers from underneath the earth, and telling of plagues: 280 leprous ulcers that mount with fierce fangs on the flesh and eat away its primal nature; and how a white down should sprout up on the diseased place. And he spoke of other assaults of the Furies [Erinyes] that are destined to be brought to fulfillment [telos] from paternal blood. 285 For the dark bolt of the infernal powers, who are stirred by kindred victims calling for vengeance, and madness, and groundless terrors out of the night, torment and harass a man, and he sees clearly, though he moves his eyebrows in the dark. 290 And with his body marred by the brazen scourge, he is even chased in exile from his polis. And the god declared that to such as these it is not allowed to have a part either in the ceremonial cup or in

21 Apollo.
Libation Bearers

the cordial libation; his father’s mēnis, though unseen, bars him from the altar; no one receives him with timē or lodges with him; 295 and at last, despised by all, bereft of philoi, he perishes, turned into a mummy [tarikhos], in a most pitiful fashion, by a death that wastes him utterly away.

Must I not put my trust in oracles such as these? Yet even if I do not trust them, the deed must still be done. For many impulses conspire to one conclusion. 300 Besides the god’s command, my keen grief [penthos] for my father, and also the lack of property, and that my countrymen, who have the greatest kleos of mortals, who overthrew Troy with a spirit [phrēn] that is renowned, should not be subjected so to a pair of women. 305 For he has a woman’s mind [phrēn], or if not, it will soon be found out.

Chorus

You mighty Fates [Moirai], through the power of Zeus grant fulfillment there where what is just [dikaion] now turns. “For a word of hate 310 let a word of hate be said,” dikē cries out as she exacts the debt, “and for a murderous stroke let a murderous stroke be paid.” “Let him suffer [paskhein] what he himself has done,” says the muthos of three generations.

Orestes

315 O father, unhappy father, by what word or deed of mine can I succeed in sailing from far away to you, where your resting-place holds you, a light to oppose your darkness? 320 Yet a lament that gives kleos to the Atreidai who once possessed our house is none the less a joyous service [kharites].

Chorus

My child, the fire’s ravening jaw 325 does not overwhelm the phrenes of one who is dead, but sooner or later he reveals what stirs him. The murdered man has his dirge; the guilty man is revealed. 330 Justified lament for fathers and for parents, when raised loud and strong, makes its search everywhere.

Electra

Hear then, O father, our expressions of grief [penthos] in the midst of plentiful tears. Look, your two children mourn you 335 in a lament [thrēnos] over your tomb. As suppliants and exiles as well they have sought a haven at your burial place. What of these things is good, what free of evil? Is it not hopeless to wrestle against doom [ate]? 

Chorus

340 Yet the god, if it so pleases him, may still turn our sounds to more joyfully sounding strains. In place of laments [thrēnoi] over a tomb, a song of triumph within the royal halls will welcome back [komizein] a reunited philos.

Orestes

345 Ah, my father, if only beneath Ilion’s walls you had been slain, slashed by some Lycian spearman! Then you would have left a good kleos for your children in their halls, and in their maturity you would have made their lives admired by men. 350 And in a land beyond the sea [pontos] you would have found a tomb heaped high with earth, no heavy burden for your house to bear -
Chorus

antistrophe 2

- Philoi there below to your philoi who nobly fell, 355 a ruler with august timē, distinguished even beneath the earth, and minister of the mightiest gods who rule as turannoi in the nether world. 360 For in your life you were a king of those who have the power to assign the portion of death, and who wield the staff all mortals obey.

Electra

antistrophe 3

No, not even beneath the walls of Troy, father, would I wish you to have perished [root phthi-] and to be entombed beside Scamander’s waters 365 among the rest of the host slain by the spear. I wish rather that his murderers had been killed by their own loved ones, just as they killed you, so that someone in a distant land 370 who knew nothing of these present troubles [ponoi] should learn of their fatal doom.

Chorus

anapests

In this, my child, your wish is better than gold. It surpasses great good fortune, even that of the supremely blessed Hyperboreans, for it is easy to wish. 375 But now the lash of this double scourge comes home: our cause already has its champions beneath the earth, while the hands of our loathsome opponents, though they have the mastery, are unholy. The children have won the day.

Orestes

strophe 4

380 This has pierced the earth and reached your ear22 as if it were an arrow. O Zeus, O Zeus, who send doom [atē] as punishment, sooner or later, up from below onto the reckless and wicked deeds done by the hands of mortals. 385 And yet it will come to fulfillment [telos] for our father’s sake.

Chorus

strophe 5

May it be mine to raise a hearty shout in triumph over the man when he is stabbed and over the woman as she perishes! Why should I try to keep hidden what nevertheless hovers before my phrēn? 390 Full against the prow of my heart the thumos blows keen in rancorous hate.

Electra

antistrophe 4

And when will mighty Zeus, blossoming on both his father’s and mother’s side, bring down his hand on them 395 and split their heads open? Let it be a pledge to the land! After injustice I demand dikē as my right. Hear, O Earth, and you powers below with your timē!

Chorus

400 And it is the eternal law [nomos] that drops of blood spilled on the ground demand yet more blood. Murder cries out on the Fury [Erinys], which from those killed before brings one atē in the wake of another atē.

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22 The ear of Agamemnon.
Libation Bearers

Orestes

405 Alas, you sovereign tyrannies of the world below, behold, you potent Curses of the slain, behold the remnants of the line of Atreus in their plight of helplessness, cast out from house and home, bereft of timē. Which way can we turn, O Zeus?

Chorus

410 But again my philon heart throbs as I hear this pitiful lament. At once I am devoid of hope and my insides are darkened at the words I hear. 415 But when hope once again lifts and strengthens me, it puts away my grief [akhos] and dawns brightly on me.

Electra

To what could we more fittingly appeal than to those very griefs [akhos pl.] we have endured [paskhein] from the woman herself who bore us? 420 She may fawn upon us, but they are past all soothing. For like a wolf with its savage phrenes, the thumos we have acquired from our mother is implacable.

Chorus

On my breast I beat a dirge from Aryan lands in just the same fashion as a Cissian wailing woman. 425 With clenched fists, raining blows thick and fast, my outstretched hands could be seen descending from above, from far above, now on this side, now on that, till my battered and wretched head resounded with the strokes.

Electra

430 Away with you, cruel and utterly brazen mother! You dared to give your husband a most cruel burial: unmourned, without lamentation [penthos], a king unattended by his people.

Orestes

Ah me, all your deeds are done without timē. 435 Yet with the help of the daimones, and with the help of my own hands, will she not atone for the loss of timē that she inflicted on my father? Let me only take her life, then let me die!

Chorus

Yes, and I would have you know he was brutally mutilated. 440 And even as she buried him in this way, she acted with intent to make the manner of his death a burden on your life past all power to bear. You hear the story of the outrageous loss of timē inflicted on your father.

Electra

My father was murdered just as you say. But all the while I was kept sequestered, 445 deprived of timē, accounted a worthless thing. Kenneled in my room as if I were a vicious cur, I gave free vent to my
streaming tears, which came more readily than laughter, as in my concealment I poured out my lament in plentiful weeping. 450 Hear my tale [muthos] and inscribe it on your phrenes.

Chorus

antistrophe 8
Yes, let it sink deep into your ears, with a serene [hēsukhos] dance-step of the phrenes. So far things are so. But you yourself be eager to resolve what is to follow. 455 You must enter the contest with inflexible wrath.

Orestes

strope 10
Father, I call on you; side with your philoi!

Electra

And I in tears join my voice to his.

Chorus

antistrophe 10
And let all our company [stasis] blend our voices to echo the prayer. Hear! Come to the light! 460 Side with us against our enemies!

Orestes

Ares will encounter Ares; dikē will encounter dikē.

Electra

O you gods, bring the plea to fulfillment with dikē!

Chorus

strope 11
A shudder steals over me as I hear these prayers. Doom has long been waiting, 465 but it will come in answer to those who pray.

Ah, inbred trouble [ponos] and bloody stroke of ruin [atē] without a tune [mousa]! Ah, lamentable and grievous sorrows! 470 Ah, the unstaunched pain!

antistrophe 11
Our house has a cure to heal these woes, a cure not from outside, from the hands of others, but from itself, by fierce, bloody eris. 475 This hymn is for the gods beneath the earth.

anapests
O you blessed powers below [khthonioi], hear this supplication of ours, and with favorable phrenes send forth to these children your aid for victory!

Orestes

O father, who perished by a death unbefitting a king [turannos], 480 grant in answer to my prayer the power [kratos] over your halls!

Electra

23 In the metaphorical sense of ‘division’.
And I too, father, have a like request of you: to escape when I have wrought great destruction on Aegisthus.

Orestes
Yes, for then the customary funeral feasts of men would be established in your honor. But otherwise, at the rich and savory banquet of burnt offerings made to the earth, you will be without a portion of time.

Electra
And I will likewise at my wedding offer libations to you out of the fullness of my inheritance from my father’s house, and before all else I will hold this tomb of yours in the highest honor.

Orestes
O Earth, send up my father to watch my battle!

Electra
490 O Persephone, grant us indeed a glorious accession to power [kratos]!

Orestes
Father, remember the bath where you were robbed of life.

Electra
And remember how they devised a strange net to cast about you.

Orestes
You were caught, my father, in fetters forged by no smith’s hand.

Electra
And in a fabric shamefully devised.

Orestes
495 Father, are you not roused by taunts such as these?

Electra
Are you not raising that most philon head of yours?

Orestes
Either send dikē as ally to your philoi, or grant us in turn to get a similar power [kratos] over them, if indeed after defeat you would in turn win victory.

Electra
500 So listen, father, to this last appeal of mine as you behold these fledglings crouching at your tomb. Have compassion on a song of lament performed by a woman and by a man as well, and let not this seed of Pelops’ line be blotted out: for then, in spite of death, you are not dead. 505 For children are voices of salvation [sōēria] to a man, though he is dead; like corks, they buoy up the net, saving [sōzein] the flaxen cord from out of the deep. Hear! For your own sake we make this lament. By honoring this plea of ours you save [sōzein] yourself.
Chorus
510 In truth you have drawn out this plea of yours to your own content in showing honor [timeē] to this unlamented tomb. As for the rest, since your phrēn is rightly set on action, put your fortune [daīmōn] to the test and get to your work at once.

Orestes
It will be so. But it is not off the track to inquire 515 from what motive she came to send her libations, seeking too late to make amends [timeē] for an irremediable experience [pathos]. They would be a sorry return [kharis] to send to the dead who have no phrenes: I cannot guess what they mean. The gifts are too paltry for her offense [hamartia]. 520 For though a man may pour out all he has in atonement for one deed of blood, it is wasted effort. So the saying goes. If indeed you know, tell me: I wish to learn.

Chorus
I know, my child, for I was there. It was because she was shaken by dreams and wandering terrors of the night 525 that she sent these offerings, godless woman that she is.

Orestes
And have you learned the nature of the dream so as to tell it properly?

Chorus
She dreamed she gave birth to a serpent: that is her own account.

Orestes
And where does the tale come full circle [telos], where is it completed?

Chorus
She laid it to rest as if it were a child, in swaddling clothes.

Orestes
530 What food did it crave, the newborn viper?

Chorus
In her dream she offered it her own breast.

Orestes
Surely her nipple was not unwounded by the loathsome beast?

Chorus
No: it drew in clotted blood with the milk.

Orestes
Truly this vision is not without meaning!

Chorus
Then from out of her sleep she raised a shriek and awoke appalled, and many lamps that had been blinded in the darkness flared up in the house to cheer our mistress. Then she sent these libations for the dead in the hope that they might be an effective cure for her distress.

Orestes

I pray to this earth and to my father’s grave that this dream may come to its fulfillment [telos] in me. As I sort it out [krinein], it fits at every point. For if the snake left the same place as I; if it was furnished with my swaddling clothes; 545 if it sought to open its mouth to take the breast that nourished me and mixed the philon milk with clotted blood while she shrieked for terror at this pathos, then surely, as she has nourished an ominous thing of horror, she must die by bia. 550 For I, turned serpent, am her killer, as this dream declares.

Chorus

I choose your reading of this portent. Let it be so. As for the rest, give your philoi their parts. Tell some what to do, others what to leave undone.

Orestes

It is a simple tale [muthos]. My sister must go inside, 555 and I say solemnly [aineîn] that she must keep concealed this pact with me, so that as by craft they killed a man of timē, so by craft they may likewise be caught and perish in the very same snare, even as Loxias made the decree [phēmē], lord Apollo, the seer [mantis] who has never before been false.

560 In the guise of a stranger [xenos], one fully equipped, I will come to the outer gate, and with me Pylades, whom you see here, as a guest [xenos] and ally of the house. Both of us will speak the speech of Parnassus, imitating [mimeîsthai] the voice of a Phocian tongue. 565 And in case none of the keepers of the door will welcome us with a radiant heart on the plea that the house is afflicted with trouble by daimones, then we will wait so that anyone passing the house will consider and say: “Why then does Aegisthus have his door shut on his suppliant, 570 if in fact he is at home and knows?”

But if I indeed pass the outermost threshold of the gate and find that man sitting on my father’s throne, or if then coming face to face with me he lifts and casts down his eyes, know well: 575 before he can even say “Of what land is this stranger [xenos]?” I will skewer him with my swift sword and lay him dead. The fury [Erinys] that has no fill of slaughter shall for her third and crowning drink unmixed blood!

Now, Electra, you keep strict watch over what happens inside the house, 580 so that our plans may fit together well. And you [the Chorus], I solemnly say [epaineîn] to you: best keep a tongue that is euphēmos24: be silent when there is need and speak only what the occasion demands. As for the rest, I call on him to cast his glance this way and direct the contest [agôn] of the sword for me.

Orestes, Pylades, and Electra exit.

Chorus

24 The word euphēmos means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.
585 Many are the sorrows \( [\text{akhos} \text{ pl.}] \), dread and appalling, bred of earth, and the embrace of the sea [\( \text{pontos} \)] teems with hateful monsters. Likewise between the sky and the earth lights hung high in the air draw near; 590 and winged things and things that walk the earth can also tell of the stormy wrath of whirlwinds.

antistrophe 1

But who can tell of man’s overweening \( \text{phrenes} \), 595 and of the reckless passions of women hardened of \( \text{phrenes} \), partners of the woes \( [\text{atē} \text{ pl.}] \) of mortals? 600 Inordinate passion, having \( \text{kratos} \) over the female, gains a fatal victory over the wedded unions of beasts and men alike.

strophe 2

Let whoever is not flighty in his wits know this, when he has learned 605 of the device of a lit brand contrived by Théstios’ heartless daughter.\(^{25}\) She destroyed her own child by burning the charred brand of the same age as he, when, coming from his mother’s womb, he cried out, 610 and it aged in pace with him through his life to the day decreed by fate.

antistrophe 2

And there is in stories another murderous virgin to be loathed,\(^{26}\) 615 who ruined a \( \text{philos} \) at the bidding of his enemies, when, lured by Minos’ gift, the Cretan necklace forged of gold, she with her dog’s heart 620 despoiled Nisos of his immortal lock as he drew breath in unsuspecting sleep. And Hermes overtook him.

strophe 3

But since I have recalled tales of pitiless ordeals [\( \text{ponoi} \)], it is the right time to tell of a marriage void of love, 625 an abomination to houses, and the plots devised by a wife’s \( \text{phrenes} \) against her warrior lord, against her lord revered with reason by his foes. But I honor the hearths of homes not heated by passion’s fires, 630 and in woman a spirit that shrinks from audacious deeds.

antistrophe 3

Indeed the Lemnian evil\(^{27}\) holds first place among evils in story: it has long been told with groans as an abominable calamity. Men compare each new horror to Lemnian troubles; 635 and because of a woeful deed abhorred by the gods a race has disappeared, cast out in infamy from among mortals. For no man reveres what is hated by the gods. Is there one of these tales I have gathered that I cite without \( \text{dikē} \)?:

strophe 4

But the keen and bitter sword is near the breast 640 and drives home its blow at the bidding of \( \text{dikē} \). For truly the injustice of him who has unjustly transgressed the sovereign majesty of Zeus 645 lies on the ground trampled under foot.

antistrophe 4

The anvil of \( \text{dikē} \) is planted firm. Destiny fashions her arms and forges her sword quickly, and the famed and deeply brooding Fury [\( \text{Erinys} \)] is bringing the son into our house, 650 to requite at last the pollution of bloodshed long ago.

\(^{25}\) Althaia was the daughter of Théstios, king of Aetolia, and the wife of Oineus. When her son Meleager was a week old, the Fates appeared to her and declared that her son would die when the brand on the hearth was consumed by fire. Althaia took the brand and put it in a chest; but when Meleager, grown to manhood, slew her brothers, she threw it into the fire and her son died. (See \( \text{Iliad} \) IX 529-99 for a different version of the Meleager story.)

\(^{26}\) Nisos was besieged in his \( \text{polis} \) of Megara by Minos, king of Crete. Nisos’ daughter Scylla, in love with Minos, cut from the head of her father the purple hair on which his life depended, and he was slain by the Cretans.

\(^{27}\) The women of Lemnos, jealous of Thracian slave-women, killed their husbands, so that when the Argonauts visited the island they found no men.
Orestes and Pylades enter with attendants before the palace.

Orestes

Boy! Boy! Hear my knocking at the outer door! Who is inside? Boy! Boy! I say again, who is at home? 655

Again for the third time I call for some one to come out of the house, if there is welcoming [philon] to strangers [xenoi] by Aegisthus.

Servant

Yes, yes, I hear. Of what land is the stranger [xenos], and whence?

Orestes

Announce me to the masters of the house, for it is in fact to them that I come bearing news. 660 And hurry, since the chariot of night is speeding on with darkness, and it is time [hōra] for wayfarers to drop anchor in some house friendly to all guests [xenoi]. Tell some one to come forth who has authority [telos]

over the house, the mistress in charge. 665 But the master would be more fitting, for then no delicacy [aidōs] in speaking makes words obscure: man speaks boldly to man and reveals [sēmainein] his meaning without reserve.

The Servant withdraws. Clytemnestra appears at the door with a maidservant in attendance.

Clytemnestra

Strangers [xenoi], you have only to declare your need, for we have everything that suits this house: 670 warm baths, beds to charm away fatigue [ponoi], and the presence of honest [dikaia] faces. But if there is another matter requiring graver counsel, that is the concern of men, and we will communicate with them.

Orestes

I am a stranger [xenos], a Daulian from Phocis. 675 As I was on my way, carrying my pack on business of my own to Argos, just as I ended my journey here, a man, a stranger to me as I to him, fell in with me, and inquired [historeîn] about my destination and told me his. He was Strophios, a Phocian - for as we talked I learned his name - and he said to me, 680 “Stranger, since in any case you are bound for Argos, keep my message in mind with the utmost dikē and tell his parents that Orestes is dead, and by no means let it escape you. Whether his philoi decide to bring him home or to bury him in the land of his sojourn, a foreigner [xenos] utterly forever, 685 convey their wishes back to me. In the meantime a bronze urn contains the ashes of a man rightly lamented.” This much I tell you as I heard it. Whether by any chance I am speaking to those with whom the question rests and whose concern it is, I do not know. 690 But his parent should know.

Clytemnestra

Oh no! Your story spells our utter undoing. O curse that haunts this house, so hard to wrestle down: how far forward you look! Even what was laid well out of harm’s way you bring down with your well-aimed shafts from far off, 695 and you strip me of philoi, utterly wretched as I am. And now Orestes: he was indeed prudent in saving [komizein] his foot from the mire of destruction, but now you portray as fled what was once the one hope in our house of a cure for its evil revelry [bakkheia].

Orestes
As for me, I am sure that with hosts [xenoi] so prosperous [eudaimones] I would rather have been made known and been treated as guest [xenos] for favorable news. For where is goodwill greater than from guest [xeno] to host [xenoi]? Yet to my mind it would have been irreverent not to fulfill for philoi 705 a charge like this when I was bound by promise and hospitality [xenia] pledged to me.

Clytemnestra
But rest assured you will receive no less a reward than you deserve nor be the less welcome [philos] to this house: someone else might just as well have brought your message [angelia]. 710 But it is the proper occasion [kairos] when strangers [xenoi] who have been traveling on a long day’s journey should have their proper entertainment.

To her attendant.

Conduct him to the rooms where the men are lodged properly as guests [xenoi], him and his attendants here and his fellow-traveler, and let them be tended to there as is proper in our house. 715 I give the word [aineîn] that you do this as you shall be held to strict account. Meantime I will communicate this matter to the master of the house, and since we have no lack of philoi we will confer on this occurrence.

All withdraw except the Chorus.

Chorus
Ah, philai handmaidens of the house, 720 low long will it be before we display the power that lies in our mouths to do Orestes service?

O reverend earth, and revered barrow raised high that now lies on the royal corpse of the commander of the fleet, 725 now hear me, now lend me aid! Now is the hour for Persuasion with her guile to join forces with him, and for Hermes of the nether world [khthonios], he who works in stealth, to direct this ordeal [agon] of the deadly sword.

Orestes’ Nurse enters.

730 Our stranger [xenos], I think, is working something no good: for over there I see Orestes’ nurse all in tears. Cilissian slave-woman! Where are you going? Why as you set foot in the palace gate have you grief as your unhired companion?

Nurse
My mistress commands me to summon Aegisthus for the strangers in all haste, 735 so that he may come and learn more clearly, from man to man, these tidings that have just arrived. Indeed, before the servants, behind eyes that feigned grief [penthos] she hid her laughter over what has occurred fortunately for her. But the utterance [phēme] so plainly delivered by the strangers [xenoi] 740 means utter ruin for this house. I expect that when he hears it he will rejoice in his noos to know the tale [muthos]. Miserable woman that I am! How the old unbearable troubles of every sort 745 that occurred in this house of Atreus have always made my heart ache within my breast! But never yet have I endured a blow like this. All the other troubles I bore patiently, but my philos Orestes, on whom I spent my life [psukhē], 750 whom I received from his mother at birth and nursed, and the many and troublesome tasks, fruitless for all my enduring them, when his loud and urgent cries broke my rest... For one must nurse
that little thing, which doesn’t yet have any phrenes, as if it were a grazing animal, of course one must, by following its twists and turns that lead toward a phrēn. For while it is still a baby in swaddling clothes, it has no speech at all, whether hunger moves it, or thirst perhaps, or the call of need: children’s young insides work their own relief. I would be the seer [mantis] who anticipates these needs. Yet many a time, I think, having to wash the child’s linen because of my own errors, laundress and nurse had the same function [telos]. It was I who, with these two handicrafts, received Orestes from his father’s hands. And now, wretch that I am, I hear that he is dead. But I am on my way to fetch the man who wrought destruction on our house, and he will be glad enough to hear this news.

Chorus
How does she tell him to come prepared?

Nurse
How prepared? Say it again so that I may catch your meaning better.

Chorus
With his guards or perhaps unattended?

Nurse
She tells him to come with his retinue of spearmen.

Chorus
Well, do not give this message to our loathed master, but with all haste and with a joyous heart tell him to come himself, alone, so that he may be told without alarm. For in the mouth of a messenger an oblique message is made straight.

Nurse
What? Are you gladdened by the present news?

Chorus
Why not, if Zeus at last may cause our ill wind to change?

Nurse
But how can that be? Orestes, the hope of our house, is gone.

Chorus
Not yet; he would be an inept seer [mantis] who would so interpret.

Nurse
What are you saying? Do you know something beyond what has been told?

Chorus
Go, deliver your message! Do what you are asked to do! The gods take care of what they take care of.

Nurse
Well, I will go and do your bidding. With the gods’ blessing may everything turn out for the best!
She exits.

Chorus

Now at my supplication, O Zeus, father of the Olympian gods, 785 grant that the fortunes of our house be firmly established, so that those who rightly desire the rule of order may behold it. Every word of mine has been uttered in dikē. O Zeus, may you safeguard it!

790 O Zeus, set him who is within the palace before his enemies [ekthroi], since, if you exalt him, he will gladly pay you with double and triple recompense.

Know that the orphaned colt of a philos man 795 is harnessed to the chariot of distress. And by setting bounds to his course may you grant that we see him keep a steady pace through this race and win the goal in the straining stride of a gallop.

And you who within the house inhabit the inner chamber that exults in its wealth, hear me, you gods, who share your phrenes with us! By a new judgment [dikē] redeem the blood of deeds done long ago. 805 May aged Murder cease begetting offspring in our house!

And you who occupy the mighty, gorgeously built cavern, 28 grant that the man’s house may lift up its eyes again in joy, and that with glad eyes 810 it may behold from under its veil of gloom the radiant light of freedom.

May Maia’s son, 29 as he with dikē should, lend his aid, for no one can better bring to fulfillment a sea-voyage on a favoring course, 815 when he is willing to do so. But by his mysterious utterance he brings darkness over men’s eyes by night, and by day he is no more clear at all.

And then at last with a loud voice we shall sing 820 a song of the deliverance of our house, the song that women raise when the wind has a fair setting [stasis], and not the shrill tune [nomos] of those who mourn: “Things are going well for the polis. 825 This grows to profit [kerdos] for me, for me, and calamity [atē] holds off from my philoi.”

But may you with good courage, when the part of action comes, cry out loud the name “Father” when she exclaims “Son,” 830 and bring to completion the ruin [atē] that is beyond blame.

Raise up the spirit of Perseus 30 within my phrenes. And for your philoi below the earth, and for those above, exact a return [kharis] for their dire wrath 835 by working bloody ruin [atē] in our house and obliterating the guilt [aitia] of murder.

Aegisthus enters.

Aegisthus

28 The inner sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi was a narrow cave or vault in which, over a cleft, stood a tripod covered by a slab on which sat the Pythia, priestess of Apollo.
29 Hermes.
30 Perseus, famous for slaying the Medusa, was the grandson of Akrisios, an earlier Argive king.
I have come not unasked but summoned by a messenger. I heard startling news told by some strangers [xenoi] 840 who have arrived, tidings far from welcome: the death of Orestes. To lay this too upon our house would be a fearful burden when it is still festering and galled by the wound inflicted by an earlier murder. How can I believe these things are true [alēthea]? 845 Or is it merely a panic-stricken report spread by women which leaps up to die away in nothingness? What can you tell me of this to make it clear to my phrēn?

Chorus
We heard the tale, it is true. But go inside and inquire of the strangers [xenoi]. The certainty of messengers’ [angeloi] reports 850 is nothing compared with one’s own interrogation of the man himself.

Aegisthus
I wish to see the messenger [angelos] and put him to the test again - whether he himself was present at the death or merely repeats from vague reports what he has heard. No! Be sure he cannot deceive a phrēn that is endowed with eyes.

He exits.

Chorus
855 O Zeus, O Zeus, what should I say? Where shall I begin this prayer of mine, this appeal to the gods? How in my loyal zeal can I succeed in finding words to match need? Now is the moment 860 when the bloodstained edges of the blades that lay men low are utterly forever to destroy the house of Agamemnon. Or else, kindling a flaming light in the cause of freedom, Orestes will win both the rule over his realm 865 and the wealth [olbos] of his fathers. Our god-like Orestes, with no one to assist him, is now to meet with two in such a contest. And may it be to triumph!

A shriek is heard from within.

Aegisthus
Oh! Oh! O woe!

Chorus
870 Ah! Ah! Alas! What is happening? What is being accomplished for our house? Let us stand apart while the matter is being brought to fulfillment [telos] so that we may be considered not responsible [aitioi] in these ills. For the outcome [telos] of the fighting has just now been made formal.
A servant of Aegisthus rushes in.

Servant
875 O woe, oh utter woe! My master is slain! O woe! I cry yet again, for the third time. Aegisthus is no more! Come, with all speed! Unbar and open the women’s door! And a strong arm indeed is needed, 880 but not to help him who is already slain: what good is there in that? Help! Help! Am I shouting to the deaf and fruitlessly wasting my voice on people who are asleep? Where has Clytemnestra gone? What is she doing? Her own neck, near the razor’s edge, is now ready to fall, in all justice [dike], beneath the stroke.

Clytemnestra hurries in unattended.
Clytemnestra
885 What is this? What cry for help are you raising in our house?

Servant
I tell you the dead are killing the living.31

Clytemnestra
Ah! Indeed I have understood the utterance [epos], sorting it out from the riddling [ainigma pl.]. We are to perish by treachery, just as we committed murder. Someone give me a battle-axe, and quickly!

The Servant rushes out.

890 Let us know if we are victors or vanquished: for we have come even to this point of evil.

The door opens displaying Orestes standing over the corpse of Aegisthus, with Pylades nearby.

Orestes
It is you I seek. This one here has had enough.

Clytemnestra
Oh no! My most philos, valiant Aegisthus! You are dead!

Orestes
You love your man? Then you will lie in the same grave, 895 and you will never abandon him in death.

Clytemnestra
Wait, my son! Have respect [aidōs], child, for this breast at which many times while sleeping you sucked with toothless gums the nourishing milk.

Orestes
Pylades, what shall I do? Shall I spare my mother out of aidōs?

Pylades
900 What then will become in the future of Loxias’ oracles [manteuma pl.] declared at Delphi, and of our sworn pact? Count all men your enemies rather than the gods.

Orestes
I judge you victor: you give me good advice [par-ainesis].

To Clytemnestra.

Come this way! I mean to kill you by his very side. 905 For while he lived, you thought him better than my father. Sleep with him in death, since you love him but hate the man you were bound to love.

31 The Greek admits either meaning: ‘the dead are killing the living man’ or ‘the living man is killing the dead’.
Clytemnestra
It was I who nourished you, and with you I would grow old.

Orestes
What! Murder my father and then make your home with me?

Clytemnestra
910 Fate, my child, must share the blame [aitía] for this.

Orestes
And fate now brings this destiny to pass.

Clytemnestra
Have you no regard for a parent’s curse, my son?

Orestes
You brought me to birth and yet you cast me out to misery.

Clytemnestra
No, surely I did not cast you out in sending you to the house of an ally.

Orestes
915 I was sold in disgrace, though I was born of a free father.

Clytemnestra
Then where is the price I got for you?

Orestes
I am ashamed to reproach you with that outright.

Clytemnestra
But do not fail to proclaim the follies of that father of yours as well.

Orestes
Do not accuse him who went through ordeals [ponoi] while you sat idle at home.

Clytemnestra
920 It is a grief for women to be deprived of a husband, my child.

Orestes
Yes, but it is the husband’s toil that supports them while they sit at home.

Clytemnestra
You seem resolved, my child, to kill your mother.

Orestes
You will kill yourself, not I.
**Clytemnestra**
Take care: beware the hounds of wrath that avenge a mother.

**Orestes**
925 And how shall I escape my father’s if I leave this undone?

**Clytemnestra**
I see that though living I mourn in vain before a tomb.

**Orestes**
Yes, for my father’s fate has marked out this destiny for you.

**Clytemnestra**
Oh no! I myself bore and nourished this serpent!

**Orestes**
Yes, the terror from your dream was indeed a prophet [mantís]. 930 You killed him whom you should not; so suffer [paskhein] what should not be.

He forces Clytemnestra inside; Pylades follows.

**Chorus**
Truly I grieve even for these in their twofold downfall. Yet since long-suffering Orestes has reached the peak of many deeds of blood, we would rather have it so, that the eye of the house should not be utterly lost.

**strophe 1**
935 As to Priam and his sons dikē came at last in crushing retribution, so to Agamemnon’s house came a twofold lion, twofold slaughter. The exile, the suppliant of Delphi, has fulfilled his course to the utmost, 940 justly urged on by counsels from the gods.

Oh raise a shout of triumph over the escape of our master’s house from its misery and the wasting of its wealth by two who were unclean, 945 its grievous fortune!

**antistrophe 1**
And he has come whose part is the crafty vengeance of stealthy attack, and in the battle his hand was guided by her who is a genuine [etumos] daughter of Zeus, breathing murderous wrath on her foes. 950 We mortals aim true to the mark when we call her dikē.

**strophe 2**
The commands proclaimed loudly by Loxias, tenant of the mighty cavern shrine of Parnassus, assail 955 with guileless guile the mischief now become inveterate. May the divine prevail: that I not serve kakoi! 960 It is right to revere the rule of the sky-dwellers.

Look, the light has come, and I am freed from the cruel curb that restrained our household. House, rise up! You have lain too long prostrate on the ground.

**antistrophe 2**
965 But soon time that accomplishes all will pass the portals of our house, and then all pollution will be expelled from the hearth by cleansing rites that drive out calamity [atê]. The dice of fortune will turn as they fall and lie with faces all lovely to behold, 970 favorably disposed to whoever stays in our house.

The doors open, revealing Orestes and Pylades standing over the bodies of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus.

**Orestes**

Behold this pair of royalty [turannis], oppressors of the land, who murdered my father and ransacked my 975 house! They were majestic then, when they sat on their thrones, and are philoi to each other even now, as one may judge by their suffering [pathos pl.], and their oath holds true to their pledges. Together they vowed a league of death against my unhappy father, and together they vowed to die, and they have kept their promise well.

*He displays the robe.*

980 But now regard again, you who hear this account of ills, the device for binding my unhappy father, with which his hands were manacled, his feet fettered. Spread it out! Stand around in a circle, and display this integument for a man, that he may see - 985 not mine, but he who surveys all this, the Sun - that he may see the impious work of my own mother, that he may be my witness in court that I pursued this death, my own mother’s, with justice [dikê]. I do not speak of Aegisthus’ death: 990 for he has suffered, as is the custom [nomos], the penalty [dikê] prescribed for adulterers.

But she who devised this abhorrent deed against her husband, whose children she bore, a burden under her girdle, a burden once philon, but now an enemy [ekhthros], as it seems: what do you think of her? Had she been born a seasnake or a viper, 995 I think her very touch without her bite would have caused anyone else to rot, if boldness and phrenes without dikê could do so.

What name shall I give it, however tactful I may be? A trap for a wild beast? Or a shroud for a corpse in his bier, wrapped around his feet? No, rather it is a net: 1000 you might call it a hunting net, or robes to entangle a man’s feet. This would be the kind of thing a highwayman might posses, who deceives strangers [xeni] and earns his living by robbery, and with this cunning snare he might kill many men and warm his own phrēn greatly.

1005 May such a woman not live with me in my house! Before that may the gods grant me to perish childless!

**Chorus**

Alas! Alas! Sorrowful work! You were done in by a wretched death. Alas! Alas! And also for the survivor suffering [pathos] blossoms.

**Orestes**

1010 Did she do the deed or not? This is my witness, dyed by Aegisthus’ sword. This is a stain of blood that helps time to spoil the many tinctures of embroidered fabric.

Now at last I praise [aîneîn] him. Now at last I am present to lament him, 1015 as I address this web that wrought my father’s death. Yet I grieve for the deed and the suffering [pathos] and for my whole lineage [genos]. My victory is an unenviable pollution.
Libation Bearers

Chorus

No mortal being shall pass his life unpunished, free from all suffering to the end. Alas! Alas! 1020 One tribulation comes today, another tomorrow.

Orestes

So that you may know, I do not know how it will reach fulfillment [telos]; I think I am a charioteer driving my team far beyond the course. For my ungoverned phrenes are whirling me away overmastered, and at my heart fear 1025 is ready to sing and dance to a tune of wrath. But while I am still in control of my phrenes, I proclaim like a herald [kērx] to those who hold me philos: I hereby declare [phēmi] that not without dikē did I slay my mother, that father-killing pollution [miasma], that thing loathed by the gods.

And for the spells that gave me the courage for this deed 1030 I count Loxias, the mantis of Delphi, my chief source. It was he who declared that, if I did this thing, I would be beyond responsibility [aitia] for evildoing. But if I refrained - I will not name the penalty; for no bowshot could reach such a height of anguish.

And now observe me, how armed with this branch and wreath I go as a suppliant, an outcast for the shedding of kindred blood, 1035 to the temple set square on the navel of the earth, the precinct of Loxias, and to the bright fire that is called imperishable [aphthiton]. To no other hearth did Loxias bid me turn. 1040 And as to the manner in which this evil deed was done, I charge all men of Argos in time to come to bear me witness. I go forth a wanderer, estranged [apo-xenos] from this land, leaving this repute behind, in life or death.

Chorus

And you have done well. Therefore do not yoke your tongue 1045 to an ill-omened speech [phēmē], nor let your lips give vent to evil foreboding, since you have freed the whole realm of Argos by lopping off the heads of two serpents with a fortunate stroke.

Orestes

Ah, ah! You slave women, look at them there: like Gorgons, wrapped in sable garments, 1050 entwined with swarming snakes! I can stay no longer.

Chorus

What visions disturb you, most philos of sons to your father? Wait, do not be all overcome by fear.

Orestes

To me these are no imagined troubles. For there indeed are the hounds of wrath to avenge my mother.

Chorus

1055 It is that the blood is still fresh on your hands; this is the cause of the disorder that assails your phrenes.

Orestes

O lord Apollo, look! Now they come in troops, and from their eyes they drip loathsome blood!

32 Within the sacred precinct of Delphi there was an ‘eternal flame’.
There is only one kind of purification [katharmos] for you: the touch of Loxias 1060 will set you free from this affliction.

You do not see them, but I see them. I am driven out and can stay no longer!

He rushes out.

Then may blessings go with you, and may the god watch with favorable phrenes over you and guard you with timely fortunes!

Look! Now again, for the third time, has the tempest of this clan burst on the royal house and come to fulfillment [telos]. First, at the beginning, came the cruel woes of children slain for food; 1070 next, the suffering [pathos] of a man, a king, when the warlord of the Achaeans perished, murdered in his bath. And now, once again, there has come from somewhere a third, a savior [sōtēr], or shall I say a doom? 1075 Oh when will it bring its work to completion, when will the fury of calamity [atē], lulled to rest, find an end and cease?
Pythia
I give highest honor among the gods to Earth, the first seer [mantis]; and after her Themis, for she was the second to take the office of seer [manteion] that belonged to her mother, so goes the tale. Third, with Themis willing, and with no compulsion [bia], another Titan, child of Earth, Phoebe, took her office here. She then bestowed it as birth-gift upon Phoebus [Apollo], who has a name derived from Phoebe. When Phoebus left behind the sea and the rocks of Delos and landed on Pallas' ship-frequented shores, he came to this land and the temples of Parnassus. The children of Hephaistos, road-builders, who make the wilderness tame, accompanied him and honored him greatly. The people, too, truly celebrated his coming, and Delphos, helmsman and lord of the land. Zeus made Phoebus’ phrēn inspired with the skill of becoming possessed by the gods [enthos] and established him as the fourth seer [mantis] on this throne; and Loxias is the declarer [prophetēs] of Zeus his father.

20 I begin by invoking these gods. Pallas who stands before the temple also is especially honored in my words, and I worship the Nymphs who live on the hollow Korykian crag, the delight of birds and haunt of daimones. Bromios has held the region - I do not forget him - since he, as a god, led the Bacchants in war, and contrived for Pentheus to die as a hare dies. I call on the streams of Pleistos and the power [kratos] of Poseidon, and mightiest Zeus who brings prayers to fulfillment [telos], and I take my seat as seer [mantis] upon my throne. Now grant that I enjoy the best fortune, far better than I enjoyed on my previous entrances to the temple. And if there are any Hellenes, let them come in turn by lot, as is the custom. I speak as a seer [mantis], whichever way the god leads.

She enters the temple and returns in terror.

Horrors, horrible to tell and to see, have sent me back from the house of Loxias, so that I have no strength and I cannot stand straight. I am running on my hands and knees, not with quickness of limb; for a frightened old woman is nothing, or rather she is like a child.

I was going to the inner shrine, decked with wreaths, and then I saw on top of the Omphalos a man abominable to the gods, in the attitude of a suppliant, his hands dripping gore, holding a sword freshly drawn from a wound, and an olive-branch, from the top of the tree, crowned in a balanced way with a long strand of shining white wool; this much I can relate clearly.

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33 The chief priestess of Apollo at Delphi was known in the fifth century as the Pythia.
34 Phoibos/Phoiē (Phoebus/Phoebe) means ‘radiant like the sun’.
35 Pallas is a cult-title of Athena throughout this play.
36 The Athenians. Hephaistos and Earth herself were the parents of the hero Erikhthonios, in some versions identified with Erekhtheus, ancestor of the Athenians.
37 The name Omphalos ‘navel’ was given by the Delphians to a stone in the inmost sanctuary of Apollo, which they regarded as marking the exact center of the earth.
In front of the man sitting on the throne, an awesome band of women sleeps. Not women, but Gorgons I mean, although I would not compare them to the forms of Gorgons. 50 Once before I saw a picture of Gorgons carrying off the feast of Phineus - but these here, at least as far as I can see, are wingless, black, totally loathsome; they snore with sharp snorts, they drip vile tears from their eyes; 55 their appearance [kosmos] is not fit [dikaios] to go either to the statues of the gods or to the homes of men. I have never seen this species nor the land that boasts of rearing this breed with impunity and does not grieve its labor [ponos] afterwards.

60 Let what is to come now be the concern of the master of the house, powerful Loxias himself. He is a mantis of healing, a diviner of portents, and a purifier of homes for others.

She exits. The temple doors open, revealing Apollo standing over Orestes at the omphalos. Nearby the Furies are asleep, and Hermes stands in the background.

Apollo
No, I will not abandon you. I am your guardian all the way to the telos, 65 standing near and far away, I will not be kind to your enemies. So now you see these mad women overcome, these loathsome maidens have fallen asleep - 70 old women, ancient children, with whom no god, no man, no beast ever consorts. They were born for evil, and since then they live in evil gloom and in Tartaros under the earth, hateful to men and to the Olympian gods. All the same, try to get away and do not lose heart. 75 For they will drive you on even as you go across the wide land, always in places where wanderers walk, beyond the sea [pontos] and the island cities. Do not grow weary brooding on your ordeal [ponos], but when you have come to the polis of Pallas, 80 sit yourself down and clasp in your arms the ancient wooden image of the goddess. And there we shall find judges for your case and have spellbinding and effective muthoi to release you from your labors [ponoi] completely. For I persuaded you to kill your mother.

Orestes
85 Lord Apollo, you do not know how to be without dikê; and, since you are capable, also learn not to neglect. For your power to do good is dependable.

Apollo
Remember, do not let fear conquer your phrenes. 90 Hermes, my blood brother, born of the same father, keep watch and, true to your name, be his Escort, 38 shepherding this suppliant of mine; Zeus honors the respect of those who are outside the protection of laws [nomoi], and this respect brings to mortals a fate that leads to a good outcome. He exits. Orestes departs escorted by Hermes. The Ghost of Clytemnestra appears.

Ghost Of Clytemnestra
You would sleep! Aha! Yet what need is there of sleepers? 95 Because of you I am dishonored in this way among the other dead; the reproach of those I killed never leaves me while I am among the dead, and I wander in disgrace. I declare to you that I endure much blame [aitia] because of them. 100 And yet, while I suffer [paskhein] so cruelly from my most philoi, no daimôn has mênis on my behalf, although I was

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38 Hermes is the guide of the living on their journeys, and the conductor of the psukhai of the dead on their journey to the Underworld.
slaughtered at the hands of a matricide. See these gashes in my heart, and from where they came! For the sleeping *phrēn* is lit up with eyes, 105 but in the daytime it does not see the fate of mortals.

You really have lapped up many of my libations - wineless libations, offerings unmixed with wine for the dead, and I have offered solemn nocturnal banquets upon a hearth of fire at a time [hōra] not shared with any other god. 110 I see all this trampled under foot. He is gone, escaping like a fawn, lightly like that, from the middle of a place surrounded with snares. He rushed out mocking you. Hear me, since I plead for my *psukhē*. 115 Activate your *phrenes*, goddesses of the underworld! In a dream I, Clytemnestra, am calling you.

**Chorus** *(Muttering)*

**Ghost Of Clytemnestra**
Mutter, if you will! But the man is gone, fled far away. For his friends are not like mine!

**Chorus 120** *(Muttering)*

**Ghost Of Clytemnestra**
You are too drowsy and do not pity my suffering [pathos]. The murderer of his mother, Orestes, is gone!

**Chorus** *(Moaning)*

**Ghost Of Clytemnestra**
You moan, you sleep - will you not get up quickly? 125 Are you supposed to be doing anything but working evil?

**Chorus** *(Sharp moaning twice)*

**Ghost Of Clytemnestra**
Sleep and labor [ponos], real conspirators, have sapped the strength of the dreadful dragon.

**Chorus**
130 Catch him! Catch him! Catch him! Catch him! Take heed!

**Ghost Of Clytemnestra**
In a dream you are hunting your prey, and are barking like a dog after a scent, never leaving off the pursuit. What are you doing? Get up; do not let ponos overcome you, and do not ignore my misery because you have given in to sleep. 135 Sting your heart with reproaches that have dikē; for reproach goads those who are sōphrones. Send after him a gust of bloody breath, waste him with the vapor, with the fire from your guts - after him! - waste him with a second chase.

*The Ghost of Clytemnestra disappears; the Furies awake.*

**Chorus**
- 140 Awake! Wake her up, as I wake you. Still asleep? Get up, shake off sleep, let us see if any part of this beginning is in vain.

*strophe 1*
- Oh, oh! Alas! We have suffered \textit{paskhein}, sisters.
- Indeed I have suffered \textit{paskhein} much and all in vain. 145 We have suffered \textit{paskhein} an experience \textit{pathos} hard to heal, oh! unbearable evil. Our prey has escaped from our nets and is gone. I was overcome by sleep and lost my prey.

\textit{antistrophe 1}

Oh! Child of Zeus, you have become wily, 150 and you, a youth, have ridden down elder female \textit{daimones}, by honoring the suppliant, a godless man and bitter to his parents; though you are a god, you have stolen away a man that killed his mother. Who will say that any of this was done with \textit{dike}?

\textit{strophe 2}

155 Reproach comes to me in a dream, like a charioteer with goad grasped in the middle, and strikes me under my \textit{phrenes}, under my vitals. 160 I can feel the cruel, so cruel chill of the people's destroying scourge.

\textit{antistrophe 2}

They do this sort of thing, the younger gods, who have power far beyond \textit{dike}. A throne dripping blood, 165 about its foot, about its head, I can see the omphalos defiled with a terrible pollution of blood.

\textit{strophe 3}

170 Though he is a \textit{mantis} - he urges himself and directs himself - he has defiled his sanctuary with a family pollution \textit{miasma}; contrary to the custom \textit{nomos} of the gods, he respects the rights of humans and causes the ancient rights to decay.

\textit{antistrophe 3}

Indeed he brings distress to me, but him he shall not deliver; 175 although he escapes to the places beneath the earth, never will he be free. A suppliant himself, he will suffer in his life another vengeance on account of his family.

\textit{Apollo enters from the inner sanctuary.}

\textbf{Apollo}

Out of my temple at once, I order you. 180 Be gone, quit my sanctuary of the seer’s \textit{mantis} art, 180 or else you might be struck by a flying, winged, glistening snake shot forth from a golden bow-string, and then you would spit out black foam from your lungs in pain, vomiting the clotted blood you have drawn. 185 It is not proper for you to approach this house. So, go to those places where for punishment \textit{dikai} they chop off heads, gouge out eyes, slit throats, and where young men’s virility is ruined by destruction of their seed, where there are mutilations and stonings, and where men who are impaled beneath the spine 190 moan long and piteously. Do you hear - the feasts you love makes you detestable to the gods? The whole fashion of your form shows it. It is reasonable for creatures like you to dwell in the den of a blood-drinking lion, 195 but not to rub your filth on everything you touch in this oracular shrine. Be gone, you flock without a shepherd! No god is the beloved shepherd of such a flock.

\textbf{Chorus}

Lord Apollo, hear our reply in turn. You yourself are not just partly responsible \textit{aitios} for these crimes, 200 but you alone have done it all and so you are totally to blame \textit{aitios}.

\textbf{Apollo}

What do you mean? Spin out your story a little longer.

\textbf{Chorus}

Through your oracle, you directed the stranger to kill his mother.
Apollo
Through my oracle, I directed him to exact vengeance for his father. What of it?

Chorus
And then you agreed to take the fresh blood on yourself.

Apollo
205 Yes, I ordered him to turn for expiation to this house.

Chorus
And then do you truly revile us who accompanied him?

Apollo
You are not fit to approach this house.

Chorus
But it’s our duty -

Apollo
What is the *timē* here? Boast of your fine reward!

Chorus
210 We drive matricides from their homes.

Apollo
What about a wife who kills her husband?

Chorus
That would not be murder of relative by blood.

Apollo
Indeed you damage the *timē* that is due to the social contracts of Hera, who brings *tēlos*, and of Zeus. You slight them. 215 Aphrodite, too, is cast aside, bereft of *timē* because of your argument, Aphrodite who is the source of all things that are most *phila* to mortal men. For marriage between man and woman is ordained by fate and is better protected by *dikē* than an oath. If you release those who kill each other 220 and neither exact a penalty nor punish them with wrath, then I claim that you are without *dikē* in hunting down Orestes. For I know that you are very concerned about some murders, but you are more serene [*hēsukhōi*] even to those who openly commit others. But the goddess Pallas will handle the judgment [*dikai*] of these cases.

Chorus
225 I will never, never let that man go!

Apollo
Pursue him then and get more trouble [*ponos*] for yourself.
Chorus
Do not cut short my timai with your argument.

Apollo
I would not have anything to do with your timai.

Chorus
All the same you are said to be very important at the throne of Zeus. 230 But as for me - since a mother’s blood leads me, I will pursue justice [dikai] against this man and even now I am on his track.

They exit.

Apollo
And I will aid the suppliant and rescue him! For the mēnis of the suppliant would be awesome to mortals and gods, if I intentionally abandoned him.

He enters the sanctuary. The scene changes to Athens, before the temple of Athena. Hermes enters with Orestes, who embraces the image of the goddess.

Orestes
235 Queen Athena, at Loxias’ command I have come. Receive an accursed wretch kindly. I am not a suppliant for purification, my hand is not unclean, but my guilt’s edge has already been blunted and worn away at other temples and among men. 240 I have traveled on land and sea alike, and I have kept [sōzein] the commands of Loxias’ oracle: now I approach your house and wooden statue, goddess. Here will I keep watch and await the telos of dikē.

The Furies enter.

Chorus
Aha! This is a clear sign of the man. 245 Follow the clues of the voiceless informant. For as a hound tracks a wounded fawn, so we track him by the drops of blood. My lungs are heaving from many tiring struggles; I have visited every corner of the earth, 250 and I have come over the sea [pontos] in wingless flight, pursuing him, no slower than a ship. And now, he cowers here somewhere. The smell of human blood greets me.

Look! Look again! 255 Look everywhere, so that the matricide will not escape our notice and leave his debt unpaid!

Yes, here he is again with a defense; he has wrapped his arms around the wooden statue of the immortal goddess, 260 and he wants to be tried for his deeds.

But it is not possible; a mother’s blood upon the earth is hard to requite - alas, the quick liquid has been poured on the ground and is gone.

In return you must allow me to suck the blood red gore 265 from your live limbs. I would feed on you - a gruesome drink!
Eumenides

I will lance you alive and drag you down under the earth so that you repay your mother’s murder with equal anguish.

You will see if any other mortal commits an offense 270 that dishonors a god or a xenos or his philoi parents - each has a worthy claim to dikē.

For Hades is a mighty judge of mortals under the earth, 275 and he observes everything with his recording phrēn.

Orestes
Schooled in misery, I know many purification rituals, and I know when it is dikē to speak and similarly when to be silent; and in this case, I have been ordered to speak by a sophos teacher. 280 For the blood slumbers and fades from my hand - the pollution [miāisma] of matricide is washed away; while the blood was still fresh, it was driven away at the hearth of the god Phoebus by expiatory sacrifices of swine. It would be a long story to tell from the beginning, 285 how many people I visited with no harm from the meeting. As time grows old, it purifies all things alike.

So now with a pure mouth, in a manner that is euphēmos, 39 I invoke Athena, lady of the land, to come to my aid. Without the spear, she will win 290 me, my land, and the good faith of the Argive people, as faithful allies in dikē and for all time. Whether in the Libyan regions of the world or near the waters of Triton, her native stream, whether she is in action or at rest, aiding those who are philoi to her, 295 or whether, like a bold marshal, she is surveying the Phlegraean plain, oh, let her come - she hears even from far away because she is a goddess - and may she be my deliverer from these troubles!

Chorus
No, be sure, not Apollo nor Athena’s strength 300 would save you from perishing abandoned, you who do not know joy in your phrenes - you will be sucked dry of blood by daimones, a shadow.

You do not answer - you scorn my words, you who are a victim fattened and dedicated to me? 305 You will be a living feast for me, even though you will not be slain at an altar; now you will hear my hymn, a spell for you.

Come now, let us also join in the khoros, since it seems good to make our hateful song [mousa] known 310 and to show how our group [stasis] distributes positions among men. We believe that we give straight dikē. No mēnis from us will stealthily come over a man who shows his hands are clean, 315 and he will go through life unharmed; but whoever commits an offense, as this man has, and hides his blood-stained hands, we are reliable witnesses against him, and we are avengers of bloodshed, 320 coming to the aid of the dead as we appear in the fullness of time [telos].

O mother Night, hear me, mother who gave birth to me, so that I would work retribution for the blind and the seeing. For Leto’s son has deprived me of timē 325 by snatching away this cowering wretch, who is a suitable expiation for his mother’s blood.

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39 The word euphēmos means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.
40 Where the Olympian gods battled the Giants.
I sing this song over the sacrificial victim, a frenzied, wild, song, 330 injurious to the phrēn, the hymn of the Furies [Erinyes], a spell to bind the phrenes, a song not tuned to the lyre, a song that withers mortals.

antistrophe 1

Relentless destiny spun out our fate 335 so that we continuously have the duty to pursue mortals who are saddled with fruitless kin-murders, to pursue them until they go under the earth, and even when they die, 340 they are not really free.

I sing this song over the sacrificial victim, a frenzied, wild, song, injurious to the phrēn, the hymn of the Furies [Erinyes], a spell to bind the phrenes, a song not tuned to the lyre, 345 a song that withers mortals.

strophe 2

These duties were granted to us at birth, and it was also granted that the deathless gods hold back their hands from us, and none of them 350 shares a table with us as a companion at a feast; and I have neither lot nor portion of their pure white ceremonial robes...

For we undertake to ruin any house, 355 where domestic violence [Ares] kills someone philos. We speed after the killer like this; we waste him away, even though he is strong, because of the fresh blood.

antistrophe 2

360 And we are eager to take these cares away from others, and to establish immunity from the gods for our concerns, so that no trial will ever begin; 365 for Zeus has banished us, a blood-dripping, hateful race, from his council.

strophe 3

And men’s reputations, which are proud and lofty under the sky, waste away and dwindle beneath the earth, in deprivation of timē, 370 when we, the black-robed Furies [Erinyes], attack and dance our hostile dance.

For surely I make a great leap from above and bring down the heavy-falling force of my foot; 375 my limbs trip even swift runners - unendurable atē.

antistrophe 3

But when he falls because of his heedless outrage, he does not know it; for pollution hovers over a man in this kind of darkness, and mournful rumor 380 announces that a murky mist envelops his house.

strophe 4

For it waits. We are skilled in plotting, powerful in bringing things to pass [telos], and we remember evil deeds - we are awesome and hard for mortals to appease. 385 Though we pursue our appointed office, we are disenfranchised, without timē, and we stand apart from the gods in sunless light - we make the road rugged and steep for the seeing and the blind alike.

antistrophe 4

What mortal does not stand in awe of these things 390 and tremble, when he hears the law enacted by destiny, the law ordained by the gods for perfect fulfillment [telos]? My prerogative is ancient, I do not meet with dishonor, 395 although I have a post under the earth and in sunless gloom.

Athena enters wearing the aegis.

Athena

I heard a voice calling from afar, from the Scamander, where I was taking possession of the land, which the leaders and chiefs of the Achaeans assigned to me, 400 a great portion of their spear-won spoil, to be all mine forever, a choice gift to Theseus’ sons.41 From there I have come, driving my tireless foot,

41 What Athena says here confirms Athenian political claims: early in the sixth century, the Athenians
without wings, with the folds of the aegis rustling. 405 I yoked this chariot to lively colts. I am not afraid to see a strange group in my land, but it is a wonder to my eyes! Who in the world are you? I address you all together - both you, xenos, sitting at my image, 410 and you, who are like no race of humans, nor like any that was ever seen by the gods among the goddesses, or that resembles mortal forms. But it is not right [dikaios] for neighbors to speak ill off a blameless man, and divine law [themis] stands aloof.

**Chorus**

415 Daughter of Zeus, you will hear it all in brief. We are the eternal children of Night. We are called Curses at home beneath the earth.

**Athena**

I know your family and your name.

**Chorus**

You will soon learn my timai.

**Athena**

420 I would understand, if someone would tell the story clearly.

**Chorus**

We drive murderers from their homes.

**Athena**

And where is the end of exile for a killer?

**Chorus**

Where happiness is not a custom [nomos].

**Athena**

Would you drive this man with your shrieks into such exile?

**Chorus**

425 Yes, for he thought he was worthy to be his mother's murderer.

**Athena**

Were there other compulsions, or did he fear someone else's wrath?

**Chorus**

Where is there a spur so keen that it drives a man to kill his mother?

**Athena**

Two parties are present, but only half the argument.

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had taken possession of Sigeion, near ancient Troy. Sigeion had earlier been possessed by the city of Mytilene (on Lesbos). The Athenian possession is equated here with Athena's possession.
But he would not accept our oath, nor would he be willing to give one.

Athena
430 You prefer to have a reputation for dikē rather than to have dikē itself.

Chorus
How so? Explain. For you are not lacking in sophia.

Athena
I maintain that deeds without dikē do not win with oaths.

Chorus
Well then, put him to the test, and sort out [krinein] a straight judgment [dikē].

Athena
Then would you turn over the decision [telos] of responsibility [aitia] to me?

Chorus
435 Why not? We honor you because you are worthy yourself and of worthy parentage.

Athena
What do you want to say to this, xenos, for your part? After you name your country, your family and your fortunes, then defend yourself against this charge, if in fact you trust in dikē 440 and if you sit guarding this statue near my hearth, as a sacred suppliant, like Ixion. 42 To all this give me a plain answer.

Orestes
Lady Athena, first of all I will relieve you of the anxiety that your last words suggested. 445 I am not a suppliant in need of purification, nor is there pollution on my hands as I sit near your statue. I will give you a hard evidence of this. It is the custom [nomos] for a man who is polluted by bloodguilt to be speechless until he is sprinkled with blood 450 from the slaughter of a newborn victim, from a sacrifice that expiates a man’s blood. Long since at other temples we have performed these expiatory rites both by victims and by flowing streams. Therefore, I declare that this trouble is out of the way. As to my family, you shall soon learn how it is. 455 I am an Argive; my father - you rightly inquire [historeîn] about him - was Agamemnon, the commander of the naval forces; along with him, you made Troy, the polis of Ilion, into no polis. He did not die nobly, after he came home; but my mother with her black phrenes killed him 460 after she covered him with an intricately embroidered net, which bears witness to his murder in the bath. And when I came back home - after being an exile previously - I slew the woman who gave birth to me - I will not deny it - as the price for the murder of my philos father. 465 Together with me Loxias shares in being guilty [aitios] for this deed, because he goaded my heart by telling me that I would suffer if I did not hurt those who are responsible [aitioi] for his death. You sort out [krinein] whether I acted with dikē or not; in any case, however I fare with you, I solemnly approve [aineîn] it.

Athena

42 Ixion, king of the Lapiths, murdered the father of his bride, and was given purification by Zeus after having been denied by the other gods. Cf. 718.
The case is too great, if any mortal thinks that he will pass judgment on it; no, it is not right even for me to set the penalties for murder that is followed by quick mēnis, especially since you had already performed the necessary rites, and when you came to my temple you were a pure and harmless suppliant; 475 so I respect you, since you do not bring offence to my city. Yet these women have a duty that is not to be dismissed lightly; and if they do not win this case, the venom of their phrenes will fall upon the ground, an intolerable, perpetual plague.

These are the choices: either to let them stay or to drive them away - both are disastrous and impossible. But since this case has been brought here, I will select homicide judges who will be bound by oath, and I will establish this tribunal for all time. 485 Summon your witnesses, collect your arguments, and the sworn evidence to support your case [dikē]. I will come back, after I sort out [krinein] the best of my townsmen, and then they will decide this case on the basis of truth, after they take an oath that they will give a verdict with phrenes of dikē.

She exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

Now this will mean the destruction of the new laws, if the dikē and harm of this matricide wins the case. Immediately all mortals will become accustomed to license because of this deed; 495 and in the future, many parents will endure the suffering [pathos] of real wounds and death at the hands of their children.

For the wrath of the Furies 500 who keep watch upon mortals will not follow deeds, but I will let loose death in every form. One person shall learn his own fortune or release from pain from another person, as he anticipates his neighbor’s evil fate; 505 and some poor wretch will advise uncertain cures in vain.

Do not let anyone who is struck by misfortune make an appeal and cry aloud, “dikē!” “Thrones of the Furies [Eρίνης]!” Some father, perhaps, or mother in new pathos will lament piteously, 515 since the house of dikē is now falling.

antistrophe 1

There is a time when fear is good and must sit as a guardian of the phrenes. 520 It is profitable to achieve equilibrium [sóφrōneîn] through suffering. But who, if he did not educate his heart in fear, either polis or mortal man, 525 would still honor dikē in the same way?

strophe 2

Do not approve [aîneîn] a lawless life nor a life of tyrannical repression. The god grants power [kratos] to all in the middle rank, 530 but he treats other matters in different ways. I measure my words: hubris is truly the child of impiety, 535 but prosperity [olbos] arises from the health of phrenes, prosperity that is prayed-for and philos to all.

antistrophe 2

I command you to respect the altar of dikē forever, and do not spurn it, 540 do not tread on it with your godless foot because you are motivated by profit; for punishment will come upon you. The appointed cycle [telos] remains. 545 Therefore, let a man prefer respect for his parents, as is good, and show respect to the xenoi of his house.

strophe 4

Whoever is dikaios willingly and without compulsion, he will not be without prosperity [olbos]; utter destruction will never befall him. But I say that the man who boldly transgresses dikē and who does all
sorts of evil things. 555 in time, he will surely trim his sails, when ordeals [ponos] break over him and the boom is splintered.

antistrophe 4

He will call on those who do not hear, when he is struggling in the midst of the whirling waters. 560 The daimón laughs at a hot-headed man, after it has seen him boasting that this would never happen to him, now when he is powerless to relieve his distress and unable to surmount the cresting wave; shipwrecking the prosperity of his earlier life on the reef of dikē, 565 and he perishes unwept, unseen.

Athena enters in procession with a Herald and the jury of the Areopagus.

Athena
Herald, give the signal and restrain the crowd. Let the piercing Tyrrhenian trumpet, filled with human breath, send forth its loud blare to the crowd! 570 For while this council-hall is filling, it is good to be silent, it is good for the whole polis to learn my ordinances for time everlasting, and for these plaintiffs, too, so that dikē will be well-served.

Apollo enters.

Chorus
Lord Apollo, take charge of your business. 575 Explain how you are involved in this affair.

Apollo
I have come both to bear witness - for this man was a suppliant according to custom [nomos], and a guest of my sanctuary, and I am his purifier from bloodshed - and I come in person to be his advocate. I have the responsibility [aitia] 580 for the murder of his mother.

To Athena.

Bring the case before the court, and, as best you can, accomplish dikē.

Athena To the Furies.
It is for you to make the speech [muthos] - I am only bringing the case [dikē] before the council; for the prosecutor gives an account first and correctly explains the case from the beginning.

Chorus
585 We are many, but we shall speak briefly.

To Orestes.

Answer in turn, pitting word against word. Tell first if you murdered your mother.

Orestes
I killed her. There is no denial of this.

Chorus
This is already one of the three falls that win the match.
Orestes
590 You boast over a man who is not down yet.

Chorus
You still must tell how you committed the murder.

Orestes
I will answer: I wounded her neck with a drawn sword in my hand.

Chorus
By whom were you persuaded and whose advice did you follow?

Orestes
I followed the commands of this god here; he is my witness.

Chorus
595 The mantis directed you to kill your mother?

Orestes
Yes; up till now I have never blamed my fortune.

Chorus
But if the jury’s vote condemns you, you will change your tune soon enough.

Orestes
I have good confidence. My father will send defenders from his grave.

Chorus
Rely on the dead now, after you have killed your mother!

Orestes
600 I do, for she was twice afflicted with pollution [miasma].

Chorus
How so? Explain this to the judges.

Orestes
She murdered her husband, and she killed my father.

Chorus
So, that is why you are alive, and she is free in her death.

Orestes
But why did you not drive her into exile, while she still lived?

Chorus
605 The man she killed was not related to her by blood.
Orestes
Then am I my mother’s kin by blood?

Chorus
How could she have nurtured you, murderer, within her skirts? Do you reject a most philon blood-tie with your mother?

Orestes
Please, Apollo, give your testimony now. Explain on my behalf, 610 whether I killed her with dikē. For we do not deny that I did the deed as is. But decide whether or not the bloodshed was, in your thinking [phrēn], just [dikaion], so that I can make a supporting statement.

Apollo
I will speak with dikē before you, Athena’s great tribunal. 615 Since I am a mantis, I will not lie. I have never yet, on my throne of the mantis, said anything about a man or woman or polis, that Zeus, the father of the Olympians, did not command me to say.

I instruct you to understand how strong this dikē is, 620 but also to obey the will of my father; for an oath is not more powerful than Zeus.

Chorus
Zeus - as you say - granted you this oracular command, to tell this Orestes to avenge his father’s murder, but not to respect his mother’s timai at all?

Apollo
625 It is not at all the same thing - to kill a noble-born man who is invested with a god-given scepter, and to kill him this way, by a woman’s hand, not in a rush of bow shots, as if he were killed by an Amazon, but as you will hear, Pallas, and the judges 630 who are empanelled to decide this case by vote.

She gladly received him home after the expedition, after he had succeeded for the most part; then, when he was going into the bath, as he stepped onto the edge, she draped a cloak around the bath 635 and trammeled him in the tangle of an embroidered robe, and cut him down.

Thus the man’s fate is told to you, a man who was in every way worthy of respect, who was a commander of the fleet. I have described her as such a woman, to whet the indignation of the people who are appointed to decide this case [dikē].

Chorus
640 Zeus gives preferred honor to a father’s death, according to your argument; yet he himself bound his aged father, Kronos. How is it that your argument does not contradict these facts?

Turning to the judges.

I give this evidence on my own behalf for you to hear.
Apollo
Monsters, totally loathsome, hated by the gods! 645 Zeus could undo the shackles, there is a remedy for bondage, and many means of release. But after the dust has absorbed a dead man’s blood, there is no resurrection [anastasis]. My father created no magic spells for that, 650 although he arranges everything else, and turning it all upside down with his power, does not cost him a breath.

Chorus
See how you advocate acquittal for him! After he has poured out his mother’s blood on the ground, should he then live in his father’s house in Argos? 655 Which of the city’s altars shall he use? What brotherhood will allow him to use its ritual washing water?

Apollo
I will explain this, too, and notice how precisely I speak. The mother of her so-called child is not the parent, but she only nurtures the newly sown embryo. 660 The male who mounts is the one who generates the child, whereas she, like a host [xenē] for a guest [xenos], provides salvation [sōzein] for the seedling,43 so that divine power does not harm it. And I will offer you a sure proof of this argument: a father can exist without a mother. A witness is here at hand, the child of Olympian Zeus, 665 who was not nurtured in the darkness of a womb, and she is such a seedling as no goddess could produce.

For my part, Pallas, in other matters and as I am able, I will make your city and your people great; I have sent this man as suppliant to your sanctuary 670 so that he will be a pledge for all time, and so that you might win him as an ally, goddess, and those that come after him, and so that later generations of Athenians would remain contented with these pledges.

Athena
Shall I now command these jurors to cast a vote of dikē according to their understanding of the case? 675 Has enough been said?

Chorus
All our arrows have already been shot. But I am waiting to hear how the trial is decided.

Athena
What else would you do?

To Apollo and Orestes.

As for you, how can I arrange things so that I will not be blamed?

Apollo
You have heard what you have heard; 680 and as you cast your ballots, keep the oath sacred in your hearts, xenoi.

Athena

43 The word ernos ‘seedling’ here is found also in the lamentation of Thetis over the mortality of her son Achilles in Iliad XVIII 58: ‘and he shot up like a seedling’. See Nagy, Best of the Achaeans p.182.
Comply with my decree now, people of Attica, as you judge [krinein] the first trial [dikai] for bloodshed. In the future this council of jurors will always exist for the people of Aegeus. 685 And this Hill of Ares [Areopagus], which was the position and the camp of the Amazons when they came here because of a grudge against Theseus, and they invaded with their army, and built a newly-founded rival polis with high towers, and dedicated their city to Ares; the name of this rock comes from that event; 690 it is called the Hill of Ares. The townspeople’s reverence for this hill - and fear, her kinsman - will prevent them from acting unjustly both day and night alike, so long as my citizens do not revise their laws [nomoi] by adding evil to them; if you pollute clear water with filth, 695 you will never find a drink.

I advise my citizens not to support and respect anarchy or tyrannical oppression, and not to drive all fear out of the city. For who among mortal men, if he fears nothing, behaves with dike? 700 If you with dikē fear reverence, you will have a defense for your land and the salvation [sōtēria] of your polis, such as none of mankind has, either among the Scythians or in Pelops’ realm. I establish this tribunal, and it will be untouched by desire for profit [kerdos], 705 worthy of reverence, quick to anger, a guard of the land, awake on behalf of those who sleep.

I have given you advice [par-ainesis], my citizens, at length about the future; but now you must rise, take a ballot, and make a decision [dianōsĩs] about the case [dikē] 710 under the sacred obligation of your oath. The word has been spoken.

The judges rise and cast their ballots.

Chorus
And listen! I advise you not to deprive us of timē in any way, since our presence can oppress your land.

Apollo
I command you to stand in awe of oracles, mine and Zeus’, and not to let them be unfulfilled.

Chorus
715 Although it is not your duty, you give approval to deeds of bloodshed. You as mantis will speak the words of a mantis but no longer keep them unpolluted.

Apollo
Then was my father mistaken in his decisions about Ixion’s supplication in the first case of bloodshed?

Chorus
You do argue! But if I do not get dikē, 720 I will visit this land as a burdensome guest.

Apollo
But you have no timē among either the younger or the elder deities alike. I will win.

Chorus
You did this same sort of thing in the house of Pheres, when you persuaded the Fates to make mortal men unwilting [aphthitoi].

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44 To atone for the murder of the dragon at Delphi, Apollo was compelled by Zeus to serve as a slave in the house of Admetus, son of Pheres. When it was time for Admetus to die, Apollo, in gratitude for his
Apollo
725 Is it not right [dikaion] to benefit a man who honors you, especially when he is in need?

Chorus
You made the old balance of power wilt when you beguiled the ancient goddesses with wine.

Apollo
Since you do not have the fullness [telos] of dikē, 730 you are spitting out venom that is not hard for your enemies to bear.

Chorus
Although you, a youth ride roughshod over me, an elder female, I am still waiting to hear the decision of the case [dikē], since I have not decided whether to be angry at this polis.

Athena
It is my duty to decide [krinein] the last judgment [dikē], 735 and I cast my vote for Orestes. For there was no mother who gave me birth. In every way I approve [aineîn] what is male, with all my thumos. I am very much on the father’s side. Therefore, I will not award greater timē to the death of a woman 740 who killed her husband, the guardian of the house. Orestes wins, even if he is judged [krinein] by an equal vote.
Toss the ballots out of the urns, as quickly as possible, you jurors who have been assigned this office [telos].

The ballots are counted.

Orestes
O Phoebus Apollo! How will the trial [agōn] be decided [krinein]?

Chorus
745 O Night, our dark Mother, are you watching this?

Orestes
Now I will meet my end by hanging - or I will see the light.

Chorus
We will either perish or maintain our timai in the future.

Apollo
Correctly count by fives the ballots that are cast out of the urns, xenoi, and feel the fear that keeps you from violating dikē in the division of the votes. 750 Great suffering comes from a lack of attention, and a single ballot has often set straight a house.
Eumenides

The results are shown to Athena.

*Athena*
This man is acquitted on the charge [dikē] of bloodshed, for the number of casts is equal.

*Orestes*
Pallas, you have saved [sōzein] my house! You have restored me to my home [oikos] when I was deprived of my fatherland. The Hellenes will say, “A man of Argos has an abode [oikeîn] again on the property of his ancestors, by the grace of Pallas and of Loxias and of that third god, the one who brings everything to fulfillment, the Sōtēr” - the one who respected my ancestral destiny, and saved [sōzein] me, when he saw who was defending my mother’s interests.

I will return to my home now, after I swear an oath to this land and to your people for the future and for all time to come, that no captain of my land will ever come here and bring a well-equipped spear against them. For when we ourselves are in our graves, if anyone transgresses our oaths, we will enforce them by inflicting extraordinary failures on the transgressors, by giving them heartless marches and ill-omened ocean voyages, so that pain [ponos] will make them feel regret. But while the men of the future stay on the straight course, they will always give timē to the city of Pallas with their allied spear, and we will remain more well disposed to them.

775 And so farewell - you and the people who live in your polis. May you have power, inescapable for your enemies in the fight, and salvation [sōtēria] and victory with the spear!

*Orestes and Apollo exit.*

*Chorus*

Younger gods, you have ridden down the ancient laws [nomoi] and snatched them from my hands! And I, wretched, deeply angry, and without timē in this land, alas, I will let venom fly from my heart, venom that brings sorrow [penthos] in return for penthos, drops of venom that the land cannot endure. A blight will come from the venom that destroys leaves and destroys children, a blight that speeds over the plain and casts pollution on the land to destroy mortals. O dikē, dikē! I groan. What shall I do? I am the laughing-stock of the citizens. I have suffered [paskhein] unbearably. Ah, unfortunate daughters of Night, you have the sorrow [penthos] of a great blight on your timē!

*Athena*
Be persuaded by me not to bear the decision with heavy grief. For you are not defeated; the trial [dikē] resulted in an equal vote, which is in truth [alētheia] no blight on your timē, since clear testimony from Zeus was available, and the one who spoke the oracle gave evidence proving that Orestes should not suffer harm, despite his actions. Do not be angry, do not hurl your heavy rage on this land, do not make the land fruitless, letting loose your heart’s poison with its fierce sharpness that eats away the seeds. For I do promise you with all dikē that you shall have sanctuaries and sacred hollows in this land of dikē, where you will sit on bright thrones at your hearths, worshipped with timē by the citizens here.

*Chorus*

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84
Younger gods, you have ridden down the ancient nomoi and have snatched them from my hands! 810 And I wretched, deeply angry, and without timē in this land, alas, I will let venom fly from my heart, venom that brings penthos in return for penthos, drops of venom that the land cannot endure. 815 A blight will come from the venom that destroys leaves and destroys children, a blight that speeds over the plain and casts pollution on the land to destroy mortals. O dikē, dikē! I groan. What shall I do? I am the laughing-stock of the citizens. 820 I have suffered [paskhein] unbearably. Ah, unfortunate daughters of Night, you have the penthos of a great blight on your timē!

Athena
You are not without timē, goddesses, so do not be moved by your excessive rage 825 to make the land cursed for mortals. I also rely on Zeus - what need is there to mention that? - and I alone of the gods know the keys to the house where his thunderbolt is kept safe. But there is no need of it. So be obedient to me 830 and do not make empty threats against the land; do not threaten that all things bearing fruit will not prosper. Calm the dark waves of your bitter passion, now that you are honored with reverence and abide [oikeîn] together with me; when you have the first-fruits of this great land 835 as burnt sacrifices on behalf of children and of conjugal rites [telos pl.], you will approve [ep-aineîn] my words forever.

Chorus
strophe 2
That I should suffer [paskhein] this, alas! That I, who have ancient phrenes, should live beneath the earth, alas, bereft of timē and unclean! 840 I am breathing menos and all possible rage. Oh, alas, earth! What is coming over me, what anguish steals into my heart! Hear my heart, mother night, for the deceptions of the gods are hard to fight, and they have nearly deprived me of my ancient timai.

Athena
I will indulge your anger since you are older, and in that respect you are surely more sophē than I; 850 yet Zeus has also granted me good phrenes. But as for you, if you go to a foreign land, you will come to love this land - I forewarn you. For as time flows on, the years will be full of timē for these citizens. And you, if you have a seat of timē 855 at the house of Erekhtheus, will be honored by a multitude of men and women and you will have more honor than you would ever have from other mortals. So do not set on my land whetstones that hone my peoples’ desire for bloodshed, harmful to young hearts, 860 crazed with passions not of wine; and do not make my people like fighting-cocks so that they kill each other in bold, internecine war. Let there be war from abroad, and without stint, 865 wars that bring a fierce desire for good kleos; but I say there will be no bird-fights in my abode [oikos]. I make it possible for you to choose to do good and to be treated [paskhein] well and with good timē, to share in this land that is most philē to the gods.

Chorus
antistrophe 2
870 That I should suffer [paskhein] this, alas! That I, who have ancient phrenes, should live beneath the earth, alas, bereft of timē and unclean! I am breathing menos and all possible rage. Oh, alas, earth! 875 What is coming over me, what anguish steals into my heart! Hear my heart, mother night, for the deceptions of the gods are hard to fight, 880 and they have nearly deprived me of my ancient timai.
No, I will grow tired of telling you about these benefits - you’ll never be able to say that you, an ancient goddess, went away deprived of your *timē* because of me, a younger goddess, and by the mortal inhabitants of this *polis*, and that you were bereft of *xenia* in this land. But if you give holy reverence to Persuasion and the honey of my speech is sweet, then you will surely remain here. But if you do not want to stay, it would be contrary to *dikē* for you to inflict *mēnis* or rage or harm on the people in this city. For it is possible for you to have a share of the land with *dikē* and with full *timē*.

**Chorus**
Lady Athena, tell me what place will I have?

**Athena**
Your place will be free from pain and misery - please accept it.

**Chorus**
Say that I have accepted it, what honor awaits me?

**Athena**

895 No house will flourish without you.

**Chorus**
Will you let me be so strong?

**Athena**
Yes, for we give straight fortune to people who honor us.

**Chorus**
And will you give me a pledge for all time?

**Athena**
My word is as good as the accomplishment [*telos*] of my deed.

**Chorus**

900 You seem to enchant me, and I am not angry anymore.

**Athena**
Then stay in the land and you will gain *philoi*.

**Chorus**
What hymns then do you want me to sing for this land?

**Athena**
Sing hymns that are not about evil victory, but hymns of the land and the waters of the sea [*pontos*] and the sky; and sing that the gusts of wind will blow over this land in the sun, and that the fruit of the earth and offspring of the beasts of the field will flourish abundantly for my citizens and will not fail in the course of time, and that there will be the salvation [*sōtēria*] of human seed. May you be ready to weed out those who do not worship well; for I, like a gardener, cherish the race [*genos*] of these *dikaioi* people, exempt as it is from sorrow [*penthos*].
Eumenides

These are your duties. I will not stand for it if this polis, which is victorious in well-known martial contests [agōnes], 915 is not honored among mortals.

Chorus

I will accept a common abode [oikos] with Pallas, and I will not deprive of timē a polis which is a fortress of the gods for omnipotent Zeus and Ares, a city which has glory 920 in defending the altars of the Hellenic daimones. I pray for the city and give a favorable prophecy, that the joyous light of the sun 925 will cause profitable fortunes to rise rushing from the earth.

Athena

I act with favorable phrenes toward my citizens, when I settle here these great daimones who are hard to appease. 930 For their duty is to manage everything among mortals. Yet a man who has not found them grievous does not know where the strokes of fortune come from in life. For the errors of earlier generations 935 drag him to these divinities; silent ruin and hateful wrath level him to the dust, even as he boasts.

Chorus

May no hurtful wind destroy the trees - I declare my reciprocity [kharis] - and may no burning heat steal the buds from plants, 940 nor exceed its limit; may the earth nurture the thriving flocks that bear double births in season; 945 and may the rich produce of the earth always pay the Hermes-found gift 45 of the daimones.

Athena

Do you hear, guard of my polis, the things she will accomplish? 950 For the Lady Erinys is very powerful, both with the deathless gods and with those below the earth, and with mankind, in getting things done clearly and with proper fulfillment [telos]; she causes songs for some people, 955 but for others a life dimmed by tears.

Chorus

I forbid manslaughter and fates that are unseasonal [a-(h)ōr-os]; i grant to maidens 960 a life of lawful marriage with your husbands; you, divine Fates [Moirai], our sisters by the same mother, daimones who distribute in a straight way, take part in every house, 965 at every time, and enforce the presence of dikē, you most honored of gods everywhere!

Athena

I rejoice that you are bringing these things to fulfillment for my land with favorable phrenes; 970 I love the eyes of Persuasion, who guided my tongue and mouth against the fierce refusal of these deities. But Zeus of the assembly [agora] has prevailed. 975 Our rivalry [eris] in doing good always wins.

45 Hermes is the god of lucky finds. The Athenians have precious metals in mind, especially silver.
Eumenides

Chorus  

antistrophe 2

I pray that discord [stasis], that insatiable evil, may never rage in this polis, 980 and that the dust which drinks the black blood of citizens may never seize greedily upon disasters [atai] of vengeance in the polis - disasters in which blood is shed in requital for blood. May the citizens share joy instead, 985 in a disposition [dianoia] of mutual esteem, and may they hate with one phrēn; for this cures many ills for mortals.

Athena

anapests

Do they have the phrenes to follow the path of good speech? 990 Out of these terrible appearances I see great profit coming to these citizens; for, if you always give great timē, with good phrenes, to the good goddesses, and guide your land and city down the straight path of dikē in every way, 995 you surely will shine.

Chorus

strophe 3

Rejoice, rejoice in the wealth allotted to you by fate. Rejoice, people of the city, as you sit near to Zeus; you are the philoi of the philē maiden, 1000 you who learn balance [sōphronē] in the fullness of time. The father stands in awe of you, since you are under the wings of Pallas.

Athena

anapests

You, too, rejoice; but I must go ahead to give you a presentation [apodeixis] of your dwellings 1005 in the sacred [hieros] light of these escorts. Go, speed beneath the earth with these solemn offerings and keep atē away from the land, but send what is profitable for the victory of the polis. 1010 Lead on, you who live in the polis, children of Kranaos; lead these females who have come from abroad to share in my abode [oikos] here. Let the citizens have a good disposition [dianoia] in good deeds.

Chorus

antistrophe 3

Rejoice, rejoice I say again, 1015 all you in the polis, both daimones and mortals who live in the polis of Pallas; if you respect well my taking up an abode [oikos] in the city, 1020 you will not blame the chances of your life.

Athena

I approve [ainein] the words [muthoi] of your vows, and I will escort you by the light of gleaming torches to the places below and beneath the earth, with the attendant women who with dikē guard my wooden statue. 1025 For the eye of the whole land of Theseus will come forth, an ensemble of kleos, comprised of children, women, and a band of female elders.

Give them timē by wearing robes dyed crimson, and let the torches’ light lead the march, 1030 so that the company of our land, with good phrenes, will manifest itself for the rest of time in fortune that brings prosperity to men.

46 Kranaos was a mythical founder of the ‘rocky city’ (kranaos ‘rocky’), a favorite name of Athens.
Chorus Of The Processional Escort

strope 1
Go to your home with good phrenes under a good escort, mighty lovers of timē, childless children of Night - 1035 be euphēmoi, all you who dwell in this land!

antistrophe 1
Under the primeval caverns you win much reverence in timai and sacrifices - be euphēmoi, the whole country in unison!

strope 2
1040 Be propitious and show straight phrenes to the land; come here, venerable goddesses, and delight in the flame-fed torch along the road - cry ololu in joyous song and dance!

antistrophe 2
The treaties between foreigners who settle here and Pallas’ citizens will last for all time. 1045 Zeus who sees all and Fate have come down to lend support - cry ololu in joyous song!

47 See the previous note on euphēmos.
Eteokles

Dwellers of the city of Kadmos, at the signal given by time and season must speak the ruler who sets the course and steers the ship of state with his hand upon the tiller and guarding his eye against sleep. For if all goes well, men give thanks to the god, [5] but if misfortune strikes (may it not happen!) the name Eteokles would be the subject of song [humnos] for many lips - a prelude to a curse from street to street, a lament of ruin. May Zeus the Averter prove his name right here in Kadmos’ citadel! [10]

It is necessary for you - young men who haven’t reached the peak of adolescence [hēbē], also men gone past the prime [hōra] and past the increase of the begetting seed, also those whom youth and manhood well combined make ready for action - to help the city [15] and altars of the gods who guard our land so that our sacred worship will never be blotted out. We must also give due to our most dear [philē] Mother Earth and to her brood. [20] For she it was who called to duty your growing youth, was patient of the effort, and cherished you in the gracious lap of the land, both to plant the hearth and bear the shield in loyal service, for a day like this.

Until today the god oversees our cause; for, though long besieged, we have struck the enemy hard with our counterattacks. [25] But now the seer - the feeder of the birds, whose unerring craft and prophetic skill [tekhnē] of ear and mind divines their bird-calls, without the help of fire - he foretells, by the mastery of his art, that during the night the Achaeans formed a plan to attack our walls.

[30] Rise up, then, and rush to the battlements, the gates, the towers! Arm yourselves, put on your breastplates, take your stand on the floorings of the towers, and brace yourselves for sudden attack at the gates. [35] And do not be afraid of the hordes sent against you from afar: some god will bring a good end [telos]. For my part I have sent forth scouts to observe their camp, and I am confident that they will not fail at their task. When I hear their news, I will have no fear of our enemy’s deceit.

Scout

Eteokles, most powerful king of Kadmos’ people, I have come from the camp of the Argives with clear [saphēs] knowledge. [40] These things I have seen with my own eyes. Seven warriors over there, mighty chieftains, have shed blood from a bull into the crimsoned concavity of a shield and immersed their hands into the gore of sacrifice, [45] swearing by Ares, by Enyo the war-goddess, and Fear who delights in bloodshed, either to raze the walls of Kadmos or to drench the land of their enemy with their own blood. Then, as memorials of themselves for their parents far off at home, [50] they attached with their own hands garlands to the chariot of Adrastos, crying silently. Their spirit glowed with an iron resolve, looking fiercely as lions do before attacking. But you will soon see them yourself, and no amount of fear can delay their coming. [55] As I was leaving, I saw them casting lots to decide how each of them would lead his own band against which gate. Select and deploy, then, your own very best men at the gates, and do so with whatever speed you can muster. For now, full-armed, the army of the Argives is coming! [60] The dust swirls up, and from their panting war-horses white foamy flakes bedew the plain like snow.
You must protect the city, like a skilled steersman of a ship, before the wind-blast of Ares comes rushing upon us! Listen to the roar of the great landstorm with its waves of men! [65] Seize the occasion, whatever is the quickest. As for all else, I will keep a watchful eye and guard you from harm, informing you about all that goes on with the clarity [saphēniea] of my words.

Eteokles
O Zeus and Earth and gods who guard our city! [70] And you too, my father’s curse [ārā], you Fury [Erinys] with your baneful might! I pray that you spare this city. Do not uproot it by violence of the enemy! For here, from home and hearth, rings the language of Hellas. [75] Forbid that the yoke of slavery should ever low this land of freedom, the city of Kadmos! Be our strength [alkē]! My hopes are spoken as the common good. A city that is saved gives honor to its gods [daimones]!

The chorus of Theban women enters.

Chorus
I wail in the stress of my terror, and shrill are my cries of grief [akhos]. The enemy rolls forth from their camp like a tidal wave, and onward they rush! [80] Their chariot-drivers are swift in the forefront, the dust rises up to the sky, a mute signal of doom, a messenger more clear [saphēs] than a cry! Trampled under hooves, my native land sends forth a groan to my ears. As a torrent rushing down a mountain, the roar thunders and echoes and nears! The doom is unloosened and comes! O gods, O goddesses, prevent it from falling upon us! The sign for their attack is given - they stream to the walls from outside, [90] with gleaming shields and keen for battle. Who will save us? Which one of the gods or goddesses will protect us? [95] What statues of gods [daimones] shall I seek to supplicate in my terror? O gods high-throned in bliss, let us touch your sacred statues. Why do we delay as we wail? [100] Can you hear it? Shield clashes on shield as they come, and now, right now, is the hour for the votive robes [peploi] and garlands! My eyes see the flash of the sword, the clang of many a spear! Will you hand over to them, O Ares, your own primordial land, O god [daimōn] of the golden helmet? Look down upon us, we pray, upon the land that you had made near and dear [philē] to yourself.

strope 1
O protecting gods, in pity look upon your people! [110] Save us, our group of suppliant maidens, from the doom and despair of the slave. For the cresting wave of the enemy is approaching, their rush is the rush of a wave rolled on [115] by the breath of Ares! Father Zeus, you who have the power of fulfillment [telos] of everything, hear us and save us [120] from the grasp of the Argives’ might! To the ramparts of Kadmos they crowd, and the bits clenched in the teeth of the war-horses clatter destruction. [125] Seven high chieftains of war, with spear and with armor bold, are set, by the law of the lottery, to storm the seven gates of our citadel!

antistrophe 1
Be near and dear [phile] to us in battle, [130] O Pallas [= Athena], O Zeus-born maiden of might! O lord of horses and the sea, may your trident be uplifted [135] to strike in eager desire for battle, Poseidon! O Ares, come down, in fatherly presence revealed [enargēs], to rescue the city of Harmonia! [140] You, too, Kypris [= Aphrodite]! We are descended from your blood, from you, the primal mother of our lineage. To you we cry out with our prayers, [145] that they may be divinely heard. You, too, O lord of wolves [= Lykeios, = Apollo], to scare back the foe, make your cry as a wolf’s howl wild, you, O child of Leto, prepare your bow and arrows!

strope 2
Ai ai ai! I hear the rattle of chariots all around the city walls, and the creak of the squealing axles! O Hera, our lady! Artemis, near and dear [philē]! The air all around is raging with spears. What is going to happen to our city? To what kind of end [telos] is the god taking us?

Ai ai ai! The blast of the terrible stones upon the ridges of our walls is not held back, and at the gates is the brazen clash of the shields. Apollo, you who are near and dear [philōs]! Help us! You too, O daughter of Zeus, blessed queen Onkā⁴⁸ [Athena]! You who guide the wavering battle to a holy outcome [telos], be with us today! Come down and stand in front of the city, protecting the sevenfold gates!

O gods and goddesses, you who can bring fulfillment [telos] of our land’s protection! We pray that you will not hand over our war-worn citadel to a host of warriors whose speech is alien to us! Listen to our call, the call of maidens, with our hands held high in prayer for justice [dikē].

Eteokles (addressing the Chorus)
You insufferable beings! How is this best for the city’s salvation [sōtēria] and helpful to our besieged army [arkhē] to fling yourselves before the statues of our gods, screaming and bewailing in fear? You are hateful to those who have self-control [sōphrones]. In times of trouble and in times of peace may I never have to live together with the breed of womankind. Where womankind holds power [kratos], her insolence is unbearable, and where womankind nurtures fear, an even greater evil dominates both house and city! Just look at you! The sight of your fleeing feet and the sounds of your fears have spread within our city walls a panic that takes away the breath of life [psukhē]. Our ruin inside these walls is the greatest boon for the enemies outside! That is what you get when you live in the same place with womankind. If anyone fails to heed my rule [arkhē] - whether it be man, or woman, or whatever is in between these two camps - a death sentence shall decide their doom, and there will be no escape from an execution by stoning. Let a woman’s voice not be heard in deliberations of state! For it is the man who must ponder matters outside the home. A woman should not give public counsel. Even inside the home, there is always the worry that she will do something bad. Did you hear me or not - or do I address the deaf?

Chorus
O near and dear [philōn] child of Oedipus! I am afraid as I hear the rumbling sound “otobonotobon” of the chariot-wheels. The axles turn and squeal; woe to us, as fire-welded bridles ring out!

Eteokles
When a ship is in distress and far out at sea, did ever a sailor find salvation [sōtēria] by abandoning the helm [arkhē] in order to invoke the sacred statue at the prow?

Chorus
Ah, but I fled to the statues and called on the gods [daimones] as the noise of the blizzard roared at the gates. I was confident in the gods. I felt in my fear that I was lifted up into the air, [melesthai] soaring in the

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⁴⁸ This cult-title Onkā is a distinctly Theban epithet for worshipping the goddess Athena.
direction of my prayers to the blessed ones. Oh, if they would grant protection to the city! You should pray that they defend the towers from the spears of the enemy.

Eteokles
Do these kinds of things come from gods? But people say that gods abandon cities when they fall!

Chorus
Ah, let me die before I ever see [220] this assembly of gods depart as the enemy rush in and set a burning flame to our entire citadel!

Eteokles
Do not invoke the gods when you engage in evil counsel. As they say, Obedience to authority [arkhē] is a mother of Success [225] and wife of the Savior [Sōtēr].

Chorus
Yes, she is. But mightier still is the power of the god. Whenever there is misfortune, it helps even those are resourceless, resurrecting them from harsh pain as the heavy, hanging clouds dissipate.

Eteokles
[230] It is for men to make sacrifice and interpret omens, approaching the gods, when the time of war is at hand. As women, you must be silent and stay indoors.

Chorus
We are part of the city unconquered by the grace of the gods and our ramparts ward off the hordes of the enemy! [235] What kind of divine sanction [nemesis] could be provoked by what I say?

Eteokles
I do not begrudge you the right to give honor [timē] to the family of the gods. But you must not make our men have base feelings in their minds. Be calm in your emotions, and do not show too much fear.

Chorus
It was because I heard the shouts flying in the air and the crashing sound of the battle that I rushed up to the heights of our citadel, [240] on my terrified way to the holy place of honor [timē].

Eteokles
If you now hear the noise of the dying and the wounded, do not shriek and scream with lamentations, for Ares feeds on the gore of mortal men.

Chorus
[245] Now I hear the snorting of the war-horses!

Eteokles
If you hear it, do not hear it in a way that is much too evident [emphanēs].

Chorus
Listen how the earth rumbles, as they surround us in a circle!
Eteokles
It is enough if I am here, with plans prepared to circle around them.

Chorus
I am afraid! The battering at the gates is getting louder and louder!

Eteokles
[250] Will you be quiet? Or else the city may hear!

Chorus
O guardians of the walls! Do not surrender!

Eteokles
Be quiet! Face destruction in silence.

Chorus
O you gods of our city, do not let me become a captive slave!

Eteokles
With your cries, you bring slavery upon me and the whole city.

Chorus
[255] Zeus, strong with your blows, turn your bolt against the enemy!

Eteokles
Zeus, what did you do by giving us the breed of women!

Chorus
A pitiful thing! But men become the same when their city is captured!

Eteokles
What? You are hanging on to the statues of the gods, and yet wailing your lament of despair?

Chorus
When you are losing your spirit for life [psukhé], fear takes hold of the tongue.

Eteokles
[260] What I ask of you is not heavy: give me your aid in the fulfillment [telos] of what I have to do.

Chorus
Tell me right away, and I will know.

Eteokles
Here it is: be silent, you poor women! Do not create fear for those who are near and dear [philoi].

Chorus
Starting from right now, I am silent. I will suffer along with everyone else the fate that is to come.
Eteokles

I prefer these word to those other words of yours. [265] In addition, move away from those statues and pray for something better, that the gods may be on our side! Then, hearing my prayers as well, ring out the female cry of triumph, sacred and benign: "ololu." Yes, utter the formula that Hellas knows, the positive shout beside the altars, [270] for this is a clear encouragement to the near and dear [philoi] and alarm to the enemy. I swear this to all gods that guard our walls, lords of the plain or guardians of places where people gather, and to the springs of Dirke and the stream of Ismenos: if we are fortunate and our city is saved, [275] we will pour out on our altars the blood of sheep and cattle for the gods, and adorn their holy homes with trophies of victory in front of our shrines - breastplates and helmets that once our enemy wore, spear-shattered now! May your prayers be such, women, to the gods - away with your urge to lament! [280] Away with wild and pointless cries! They are of no avail against the fate that is to come! But I will return with six chosen men, and I myself will make the seventh. I will confront the enemy in the grand style of war, stationing them at the sevenfold gates. This I will do [285] even before the alert and clear-voiced battle-scouts hasten here to inflame our counsel with the need for action.

Chorus

strope 1

The tune of his words is on my mind, and yet, in its deep darkness, my heart's fear can find no sleep! Melodies of worry come next to my heart, kindling fears beyond control, [290] foretelling the doom that may descend from the great host of warriors surrounding our walls. So too a poor dove trembles for fear of snakes [drakōn pl.] that threaten her helpless nestlings. [295] The enemy is massing, in full force. They slither toward the towers. What is to become of me? They climb in a throng, and we are hemmed in. [300] On the guardians of our city a shower of missiles comes hurling down! O gods born of Zeus! Rescue the city and army of Kadmos in any way you can, I pray!

antistrophe 1

What nobler land shall ever be yours, [305] if you hand over to the enemy the deep rich soil and Dirke's spring, [310] the nursing stream that Poseidon and the children of Tethys gave? Arise and save us! [315] Inflict derangement [atē] on the ranks that surround us. Make them fling their arms on the ground in terror and die in carnage! Give glory [kudos] to these your citizens. [320] Come, heed our piercing cries of lament [gooi] and take your stand as enthroned guardians of our land!

strope 2

What a sorrow and a pity it will be if this primordial city should sink to be a slave of the spear, to dust and to ashes gone down - at the hands of Achaean men and through the will of the gods. [325] I see a city destroyed and defiled and losing its honor [time], with its women becoming the prize of the battle. I see them being pulled by the locks of their hair - ee! ee! - young and old women alike, as if they were war-horses held by the mane. Their veils are all ripped and torn. [330] The whole city screams as one, emptied of its population. Then I hear the scream refracted into many different voices of lament, the manifold wail of despair. I shake as I foresee the doom that is to be.

antistrophe 2

Woeful it is, [335] if the inviolate flower of maidenhood is ripped savagely by the enemy without wedding rites, to make a hateful journey from their homes! Alas for the hate and the horror! How to say it? Less hateful by far is the doom to be slain by the sword, cut down in the carnage of war! For many - ee! ee! - many are the sorrows when the enemy has mounted the wall. [340] There is confusion and

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49 The masculine politai, meaning 'citizens' in prose, can be taken as 'inhabitants of the city' here. The wording of the chorus implies that women are politai as well.
terror and flame, and the dark smoke broods over all. Wild is the war-god’s breath, as in frenzy of conquest he rushes ahead and with the blast of his breath pollutes the reverence of things most holy.

strope 3

[345] Up to the citadel rise the clash and the din of battle. The dragnet of war is closing in, and the spear is in the heart. Drenched in blood, young mothers wail aloud for children at their breast [350] who scream and die! Young men and women, but they do not escape the pursuer. In his greed he thrusts and grasps and feeds. As the looting goes on, each looter invites the others to the feast of hate. [355] And now the banquet is ready: seize, rend, and tear! I have the words to describe what happens after this.

antistrophe 3

And all the vegetation of earth is wasted, tossed to the ground - a vision hateful to all! The grieving wives see it all heaped up and gone to ruin. [360] Earth’s gifts are spoiled and exhausted, and they waste away to nothingness. And you, grieving young maidens, you are handed over - fresh horror at your hearts - to the power of those who cut down the blossoms! [365] You are now captive slaves of your ravishers, and the night brings rites [telos] that you abhor. Woe, woe for you. After all your grief and sorrow, there is now more to come.

But look, my dear [philai] companions! The scout, who had departed from here to observe the enemy, [370] comes back on swift feet with news. And the child of Oedipus is here, on the other side. It all fits together, like the parts of a chariot. He wants to learn the spy’s report. His heart is even more eager than his foot is swift!

Scout

[375] I have scanned the enemy well, and I know which chief drew the lot for each gate. Tydeus, with his battle-cry, is already thundering at the gate of Proitos. The seer [mantis = Amphiaraos] restrains him, not letting him cross the stream of Ismenos, since the sacrifices are not turning out well. [380] But Tydeus, mad with lust for blood and battle, makes noontime thunder as he roars like a dragon [drakōn]. He casts insults [oneidos] at the prophet-son of Oikles [= Amphiaraos]: “You are skilled [sophos],” he tells him, “but you appease War with your lack of life-spirit [psukhē], as you hold back from death!” Such vituperation he shouts, making the triple plumes that shade his helmet blow in the wind like the mane of a war-horse. [385] Around the rim of his shield the bronze bells clang and reverberate with a terrible tone. On the shield he has this proud sign [sēma]: it is the sky, inlaid with blazing stars. At the center glows brightly a full moon, the eye of night, the first and lordliest star. With his boastful armor, he clamors by the stream-bank, wild for war, like a war-horse panting grimly on his bit, chafing for the trumpet’s blast! Whom will you set against him? [395] When the gate of Proitos yields, who can repel his rushing onslaught?

Eteokles

No adornment [kosmos] on an enemy’s shield will make me afraid! Such signs [sēma pl.] cannot cause wounds. Without a spear, his plumes and bells cannot sting like a snake. [400] And this night that you say is on his shield, reaching the sky, ablaze with stars, may it prove a seer [mantis] without sense [noos]. For, if night falls upon his eyes in death, that high-boasting sign [sēma] of his will prove its own truth. With the arts of a seer [mantis] he will verify his own insolence [hubris]. I will set against his power the

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50 This word drakōn can be translated as ‘snake, serpent’ in other contexts, as at verse 291 above. For a positive version of the image of a drakōn, see the description of the image on the shield of the hero Alkmaion in Pindar’s Pythian 8 (the Greek expression translated as ‘patterned snake’ there is poikilos drakōn).
loyal son of Astakos [= Melanippos] as guard of the gate, who gives honor [timē] to the throne of Respect [aiskhune] and loathes arrogant speech. He spurns what is shameful and a lack of cowardice is dear [philon] to him. His roots go back to those warriors whom Ares spared, the men who were sown [= Spartoi].\(^{51}\) He is truly a native son of the Earth, and he is Melanippos. What he will do today depends on the dice of Ares.\(^{415}\) But his cause has the sanction of Justice [dikē], who urges him on to guard as son his motherland from wrong.

**Chorus**
Then may the gods give good fortune to our champion, sent forth with justice [dikē] to dare war's terrible arbitration! But I shudder\(^{420}\) when I think I might see only the bloody remains of those who fought for the city.

**Scout**
So let him go off, then, and may the gods’ help be his! Next, Kapanes comes to lead the attack at the gate named after Electra. He is a giant [gigas] more huge even than Tydeus,\(^{425}\) and more than human in his boasting. May fate prevent his threat against our walls! “Whether the god is willing or unwilling” - such his boast - “I will destroy this city. Even if the daughter of Zeus [= Athena] swoops down to earth and stands in my path, she will not withstand me.”\(^{430}\) As for the flashes of lightning and the stroke of the thunderbolt, he compares them to mere noontime rays. He has on his shield as a sign [sēma] a naked man bearing fire, and the flame of his torch flares within his grasp, prepared for violence. And there are letters of gold on it, sounding out these words “I will burn the city.”\(^{435}\) Whom will you send out to stand up to such a man?\(^{52}\) What man will face that boasting figure and not tremble?

**Eteokles**
There is a gain [kerdos] here, added to another gain [kerdos]! For us a boast that is false will be good, as it will be refuted by a tongue that is true [alēthēs].\(^{440}\) Kapanes threatens, poised to act. He defies the gods and exercises his mouth in frenzied ecstasy as he sends forth toward the sky, though he is mortal, storming words that shout at Zeus. I am confident that the fire-bearing thunderbolt\(^{445}\) will come down with justice [dikē] on him in life, not in a picture, during the heatstrokes of the midday sun. Against his boasts, with their reckless mouthings, has been stationed a man of strength [bia] who is burning [aithōn] with his willpower [lēma]: he is Polyphontes, a sturdy fortress,\(^{450}\) through the good intentions [noos] of Artemis and the other gods. Now, tell me, who was assigned the next gate by lot?

**Chorus**
May he perish, whoever boasts [ep-eukhesthai] audaciously against our city. May the thunderbolt stop him before he mounts\(^{53}\) my house,\(^{455}\) driving the foals from their stables with his over-boasting spear!

**Scout**

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\(^{51}\) According to a local foundation-myth of Thebes, Kadmos, the founder of the city, sowed the Earth with the teeth of a dragon he killed. Impregnated with the dragon’s teeth, the Earth gave birth to primordial warriors, who immediately started fighting each other at the instigation of Ares. Those that survived the mutual slaughter were called the Spartoi, warriors who were ‘sown’ in the Earth.

\(^{52}\) The Greek word phōtē is ambiguous here and elsewhere: in non-accusative contexts it can be “misunderstood” to mean ‘light’.

\(^{53}\) The verb eis-thoreîn means either ‘leap upon’ on ‘inseminate’.
I continue what I have to say. Eteoklos got the third place in the lottery of the inverted helmet’s brazen rim. He and his company are arrayed against the Neistae gate. He drives his chariot-mares around, who chafe at their headbands, eager to charge at the gates. Snorting the full breath of arrogance, their nostrils whistle with a barbaric sound. There is nothing humble about the workmanship of his shield: on it is a fully-armed man who climbs a scaling ladder, from rung to rung, up a hostile tower, seeking to destroy and slay. And he roars with the syllables of the letters on his shield, shouting that even Ares cannot cast him down from the wall. Send against this man someone strong enough to prevent the slave’s yoke from our city.

Eteokles
I will indeed send such a man. And may good fortune be ours. As you see, he is being sent off, with our own words of self-praise safely in his hands. He is Megareus, the seed of Creon, descended from those who were sown in the Earth. He will not shrink from guarding the gates, nor fear the maddened horses’ frenzied neigh. If he dies, he will have nobly repaid his debt of nurture to the Earth that gave him birth. Otherwise, he will cut two warriors down - both Eteoklos and the figure that he carries around on his shield. He will capture those two and also the tower that is pictured, and these war-prizes he will offer as an adornment for his father’s house. Announce the next one, and do not be sparing with what you tell me.

Chorus
I pray that he meet with good fortune, as he fights for my home, while our enemies meet with misfortune.

With raving heart they shout out great boasts. May Zeus the lord of sanctions look at them in anger.

Scout
Next, at the gate of Athena Onkā, stands a fourth man roaring. It is the figure of Hippomedon! What a mighty imprint! I shuddered, I won’t deny it, as I looked at the huge disk - I speak of the circle that is the shield. No cheap craftsman of signs is he who made that work of art on that shield! The figure is the Typhon: from his flame-breathing mouth he emits lurid smoke, the multicolor sister of fire. The flattened edgework, going round the whole in a circle, makes strong support for coiling snakes that grow erect above the concave of the shield. Loud rang the warrior’s voice with shouts of “alala.” He is in an altered state, having the god inside him, and that god is Ares. Responding to this own martial strength, he goes into the mode of Bacchus and becomes like a female possessed, with looks that frighten. One must be alert and on guard in challenging this man. He is already there at the gates, boasting. He is Terror in the flesh.

Eteokles

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54 This word skhēma (meaning the ‘holding’ of a position or a stance) can have the technical meaning of a ‘pose’ in a dance (that is, a meaningful moment that is freeze-framed by the eye during the motion of the dance). Such a skhēma or ‘scheme’ or ‘figure’ can be captured in a representation, as in a picture (compare the photographer’s expression: ‘hold it right there!’).

55 The tupos or ‘type’ is something visual that is ‘pressed on’ or ‘imprinted’ or ‘impressed’ on a surface.

56 The adjective entheos means ‘having the god inside’; a derivative is enthouíasmos ‘seizure by the god’. In martial contexts, entheos refers to the state of being berserk.
Seven Against Thebes

Our goddess Pallas Onkā [= Athena], guardian of the city, planting her foot firmly by her gate, will repel the insolence [hubris] of this man. It is like repelling the snake [drakōn] of a bad storm, to protect the young birds in the nest. [505] Stationed against this man is the man Hyperbios, the gallant son of Oinops. He is chosen to confront this antagonist, ready to seek his fate in a crisis of fortune [tukhē]. In form, in heart [thumos], and in skill of arms, he is faultless. It makes sense that Hermes has matched these two. [510] Confronted shall they stand, the shield of each bearing the image of opposing gods: one man holds aloft his Typhon, breathing fire, while on the other’s shield is seated Zeus, calm and strong, aflame with a bolt in his hand - Zeus, seen by all, and never yet seen to fail! [515] Surely humans are parallel to gods [daimones]: we are on the side of the winners, and the enemy, on the side of the defeated. Zeus held the upper hand against Typhon, [520] and if things match up with the signs [sēma], then Hyperbios will have Zeus as savior [sōtēr], since he has him on his shield.

Chorus
I am confident that he who is not near and dear, having the figure of a chthonic god [daimōn] as an anti-imprint [anti-tupos] for Zeus on his shield, [525] will shatter his skull in front of the gate.

Scout
May it happen this way! Now I say the fifth man, set against our fifth man, at the Northern, gate, right in front of the tomb of Amphion the son of Zeus. This antagonist swears by the point of his spear, [530] which he worships instead of a god and values more than his own eyes. His oath is this: he solemnly swears to capture by force [bia] the citadel of the Kadmeians. The pretty-faced seedling of Ares and of a mountain nymph for a mother, a man-child of a man, he declares this, as he goes around with down newly grown on his cheek. [535] His seasonal time [hōra] is in blossom, and his body hairs are starting to grow thick and fast. He is savage, however, in his thoughts [phronēma], presenting a fierce look that does not match his maidenly name. [540] Not without boasting does he take his stand at the gate. On that round brazen shield of his, that projection [problēma] of the human body in the shape of a circle [kuklos], is the Sphinx, infamy [oneidos] of our city, whose meal is raw human flesh. She is figured in high relief, clamped on the shield, and thus he carries her gleaming body as a weapon. And in her claws she has seized a man from the ranks of the people of Kadmos, and in this way he [= Parthenopaios] carries him around as well. This is the man that gets hit most of the time when they shoot missiles at the shield. [545] So our antagonist is here, a merchant in war: he is ready to make good trades of death for life, in fierce exchange for his long wayfaring. He is Parthenopaios of Arcadia, a resident alien in Argos, who is paying back that city for having nurtured him so beautifully. Just take a look at him! There he is, making threats against our towers. May the god refuse bring his words to reality.

Eteokles
[550] May they meet the doom they hope to bring - they and their impious boasts - from those on high! So should they sink, hurled down to deepest death! This antagonist, whom you describe as Arcadian, is faced by one who does not boast. His hand is the true witness to what he really does. [555] He is Aktor, brother of the man named before [= Hyperbios]. He will not let boasts stream through our gates to

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57 The god Hermes has the attribute of explaining the rationale of things that had previously seemed undeciphered, undecoded. Hence the term hermeneutics.
58 The epithet khthonios ‘chthonic’ means literally ‘earth-bound’ or ‘abiding under the earth’.
59 That is, the monster Typhon.
60 This hero’s name, Parthenopaios (the actual naming is postponed until verse 547), means ‘having the looks of a maiden.’
nourish our despair without a blow. Nor will he give way to the one who bears on his hostile shield the savage picture of the loathsome beast [= the Sphinx]. [560] Blocked at the gate, she [= the Sphinx] will blame the man who strives to thrust her forward, when she feels the crash of blows thick and fast, up to the city wall. With the will of the gods, I say things that will be true [alēthea].

Chorus
Straight to my heart the boasting goes, and, quick with terror, on my head rises my hair [565] at the sound of those who rave wildly, impiously! If the gods are really gods, to them I pray: destroy them as they stand on this earth.

Scout
I would now say who is the sixth man. He is more self-controlled [sōphrōn] and the best in might [alkē], a seer. He is the powerful force, Amphiaraos. He is stationed at the gate Homoloides. He reviles powerful Tydeus - that killer of men, that man who storms the city - as the greatest teacher of evil things for Argos, as the one who evokes the Fury [Erinys], the attendant of violent death [575] who plans all these evils for Adrastos. Yes, and with eyes upturned and an expression full of scorn,61 he blames your brother Polynieikes, assigning to his name a two-way outcome [teleutē] as he calls out to him: [580]

“The name tells of such a deed, one so dear to the gods, so beautiful to hear and for later generations to retell! And what is this story? That Polynieikes was seeking to destroy the city of his fathers and the temples of its gods, and brought against it an alien army of foreign enemies. What judgment [dikē] can stop the fountain of maternal blood as it gushes forth? [585] How will your fatherland, once it is stormed by your ardent malice and destroyed, ever again join forces with you?” As for me, I know it is my destiny to have my blood enrich this earth - blood of a seer in the earth of the enemy. Now, let us go forth to the battle! This destiny, it is my hope, is not without honor [timē].”[590]

Such things the seer [mantis] spoke in serenity, holding up his shield all made of bronze. There was no sign [sēma] in the middle of the circle [kuklos]. That is because he wants not to seem to be the best but to be the best. And through the power of his mind [phrēn] he reaps the harvest from a deep rich furrow that makes cherished thoughts of good counsel grow and flourish. [595] Against this man I advise [ep-aineîn] that you send the most skilled [sophos] and noble of opponents. Formidable is he who reverences the gods.

Eteokles
Alas for the bird of omens that matches mortal men, linking the just [dikaios] and the impious in one! [600] In everything that happens, there is nothing worse than this: companionship with men of evil heart. It is a baneful harvest. Let no one gather it.

The field of derangement [ate] produces death. Sometimes a pious man who goes aboard a ship with hot-headed sailors, a crew of evildoers, will perish along with their evil company, spat out by the gods. [605] Or a man who is just [dikaios], consort ing with those who are hostile to guest-strangers [xenoi] and unmindful of the gods, is destroyed unfairly [= beyond dikē], as if he were one with them. Caught in their company, he is struck by the god’s whip that extends to them all. So also the seer [mantis] - I speak of the

61 That is, full of sarcasm.
62 It is a fact that in historical times there was a hero-cult of the Argive Amphiaraos on Theban soil. See also Pindar, Pythian 8: here too the seer is directly ‘quoted’.
son of Oikles - [610] the moderate [sōphrōn], just [dikaios], noble, and pious man, the great spokesman [prophētēs] of omens, was found in the company of unholy men, men who were too boastful to be wise! Long is their journey, and they return home no more. He will be dragged down along with them, since Zeus wishes it so. [615] He will not, so I sense, assail the gate - not because of lack of heart [rhumos] or failure of willpower [lēma] but because he knows to what end [teleutē] their struggle in battle will lead, if indeed the harvest of fulfillment will come in the prophetic words of Loxias [= Apollo]. It is dear to him to keep his silence rather than speak things that hit the mark. [620] Nevertheless, even against him we will station a man, the powerful Lasthenes, as guardian of the gate. He is hostile to strangers, an old man in his thinking [noos]. But he has the flesh of a young man in the prime [hēbē] of his bloom, and an eye that is matched in swiftness by his feet. Quick too is his hand, to attack the spot unprotected between shield and spear. [625] But the good fortune of mortals is a gift of the god.

Chorus
Hear, you gods, our just [dikaios] entreaties! Save, save the city! Turn away the spear. Send fear against the enemy! Let them fall out of the towers, [630] struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus.

Scout
Last, let me say who is the seventh man stationed at the seventh gate. It is your very own brother. Hear how he curses [ārâsthāi] and imprecates [kat-eukhešthai] against the city’s fortunes [rukhē]. He boasts that he will mount the towers from which he had been banished and will shout all over the land [635] the wild exulting cry of victory - "the city is taken!" Then he will clash his sword with yours, giving and taking death in close embrace. Or, if you escape, you will cast upon yourself, robber of his honor and his home, the doom of exile such as he has borne. [640] So he shouts, invoking the gods who guard the lineage and the fatherland, as observers of the cursing entreaties that produce the force which is Polyneikes in person. He has a newly-made shield, in the shape of a beautiful circle [kuklos]. The workmanship on it is a twofold sign [sēma]. [645] You can see a woman [gunē] who is leading, in a way that is self-controlled [sōphrōn], the figure of a warrior made of gold. “So, now you see, it is the goddess Justice [dikē],” he declares: “just as the letters on the shield tell you: ‘I will restore this man to power, and he will possess the city, having the right to come and go as he pleases in the halls of his ancestors.’” Such are the words of invention coming out of those letters. [650] Now you must know whom to send against this last opponent. I have spoken - and you cannot find a flaw in my reporting. Now you must know how to steer the ship of the city.

Eteokles
Oh that man, driven mad by the gods! O great abomination of the gods! And woe for us, the lamentable line of Oedipus. [655] Oimol! Alas, that in this house our father’s curses [ārai] must now find fulfillment [telos]! But it is forbidden to weep and wail. I do not want the birth of an even stronger lament [goos], hard to bear. For as this Polyneikes, named all too well, [66] soon we will know how these signs [epi-sēma] on the shield will have their fulfillment [telos]. [660] We will see whether the gold-made signs [sēma pl.] on his shield, in their mad boasting and derangement of the senses, will restore him to power in his home! For if Justice [dikē], the maiden daughter of Zeus, had stood by his deeds and thoughts, then perhaps this could have been! Yet never, from the day he reached the light, fleeing from the darkness [skotos] of his mother’s womb, [665] never in childhood, nor in youthful prime, nor when his chin was gathering its beard, has the goddess Justice [dikē] looked upon him and claimed him as her own. Therefore I do not think that she stands ready now to aid him in this outrage on his home! [670] The goddess Justice [dikē]

\[63\] In Greek, polu- (poly-) means ‘many’ and neikos means ‘quarrel’.  

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would be named falsely, in all justice [dike], if she had intercourse\textsuperscript{64} with a man who dares all in his thoughts. Confident in these things, I will go forth and confront him. Who has a claim more just [en-dikos]? As a ruler against a ruler, a brother against a brother, \textsuperscript{675} an enemy against an enemy, I will take my stand. Someone quickly bring my greaves, my spear, my protection against flying missiles.

**Leader of the Chorus**
O most near and dear [philos] of men, child of Oedipus, in your anger do not become like the man whose name sounds out the most evil omen! \textsuperscript{680} It is enough that Kadmos’ people battle hand-to-hand with the Argive host of warriors, for there is blood that can purge that stain! But when brother deals death upon brother, not even time itself can expiate the pollution [miasma].

**Eteokles**
If someone can bear with utter baseness without incurring disgrace [aiskhuné], let it be. Honor is the only advantage [kerdos] that the dead can have, nothing else. \textsuperscript{685} You cannot tell me that bad and disgraceful things combined can bring any words of good praise [kleos].

**Chorus**
What is your raving desire, my child? Do not be carried away by the lust and derangement [atē] of the spear. Throw away the beginning of an evil passion [erōs].

**Eteokles**
No, since the god presses ahead for our doom, let the house of Laios, loathed and scorned by Phoebus Apollo, \textsuperscript{690} follow the wind of its destiny and win its great inheritance, the troubled waters of Cocytus [= Wailing].

**Chorus**
Savage is your craving - craving for kindred and forbidden blood to be outpoured. It is a corrupt sacrifice, a bitter harvest of murderous enmities!

**Eteokles**
\textsuperscript{695} How hateful is my own [philos] father’s wretched curse [ārā] that predicts gain [kerdos] and then doom - a ghastly curse that comes to roost on my unweeping eyes.

**Chorus**
Do not be urged on by the curse! No one will dare call you a coward, since you have ordered your life well. \textsuperscript{700} The Fury [Erinys] with her black aegis will go out from these halls, once the gods welcome a votive offering from your hands.

**Eteokles**
The gods! I think the gods have already stopped being mindful of me. A thing of wonder it is, this kharis\textsuperscript{66} that comes from me, the doomed one.\textsuperscript{67} Why should I any longer try to appease a destiny of destruction?

\textsuperscript{64} The Greek verb sun-einai ‘be with’ can mean ‘have social intercourse’ or ‘have sexual intercourse’.
\textsuperscript{65} Kokytos is pictured as a river in Hades.
\textsuperscript{66} Often translated as ‘grace’ or ‘favor’, kharis denotes a beautiful and pleasurable state of give and take.
\textsuperscript{67} The tone of the speaker’s words here is sarcastic.
Chorus
But wait for the moment when it stands in front of you! For the daimōn may be deflected from its will with a changing gust of milder mood, tempering its blast. But now it is still seething.

Eteokles
Yes, the curses of Oedipus made it boil over. All too true are the visions of phantasms coming out of my dreams - visions of dividing up the property of our father!

Chorus
Obey the women, though you feel no closeness to them.

Eteokles
Say what may be possible, and do not speak at length.

Chorus
Do not go forth to guard the seventh gate!

Eteokles
Words shall not blunt the edge of my resolve.

Chorus
Yet the god can give honor even to a victory that is base.

Eteokles
That is a saying not welcome to a man of armor.

Chorus
Shall your own brother’s blood be the flowers that you pluck for your garland of victory?

Eteokles
You cannot escape the misfortune the gods give you.

Chorus
I shudder in dread of the goddess who destroys dynasties. She is not like other gods. The all-truthful seer of evils, she is the Fury of a father’s cursing. She is about to bring to fulfillment the curses of Oedipus, whose mind was thrown off course. This discord, destroyer of his children, is pressing ahead.

And strange is the lord of strife, who cleaves the birthright in two - the edged thing, born of the north, the steel that is savage and keen, dividing in bitter dispute the lot of the children. They shall not
Seven Against Thebes

have the wide lowland, the realm of their father, but only enough for the dead to inherit, the pitiful space of a grave!

strope 2

Ah, but when kin meets kin, when father and child, unknowing, [735] are defiled by shedding common blood, and when the pit of death devours it, drinking the clotted blood, the gory dye - Who, who can purify this? Who can cleanse pollution, [740] where the ancient bane rises and reeks again?

antistrophe 2

I tell of an ancient transgression, one that brings swift punishment [poinē]. On the children of the child came a new heritage of evil. [745] For thrice Apollo spoke this divine word, from the central shrine of Delphi, to Laios: you must die childless! Only this way can you save [sōzein] the city.

strope 3

[750] Overpowered by a lack of good counsel concerning things near and dear, he begot Oedipus, the fateful parricide, who sowed on the sacred seed-plot of his own mother’s womb [755] a root of blood, the doom for his house! Lured by derangement [para-noia], they came unto their wedded shame.

antistrophe 3

And now the swelling surge of fate approaches - one wave sinks and the next, [760] three times as big, towers high and dark above the ship of our city. The towers are about to fall. If our kings go down in the storm, [765] I fear that the city will be destroyed.

strope 4

Curses [āraī], the ancient and portending fulfillment [telos], bring heavy freight of grief: rich stores of merchandise overload the deck. Near, nearer comes the destruction, [770] and then the wealth [olbos] is all lost for the merchants.

antistrophe 4

Whom did the gods, whom did each citizen in crowded assemblies, [775] hold in such honor as much as Oedipus, when he freed the countryside from that female blight preying on men?

strope 5

But when, in the fullness of days, the wretch found out about his miserable marriage, [780] he brought to fulfillment [telos] a twofold horror with his own father-killing hand, in the frenzied despair of his heart. He veered from his better judgment. [785] And his tongue cast bitter curses [āraī] on his children for the nourishment they dared to withhold:

antistrophe 5

that they should divide their possessions with iron, not gold, in their hands. [790] And now, a shudder runs through me: I fear that the Fury [Erinys] will trace back her steps and bring these things to fulfillment [telos].

Scout

Be of courage, you daughters nourished on mothers’ milk. Behold! Our city stands, saved from the yoke of slavery: the boasts of overweening men are silent now, [795] and the city-state sails beneath a bright sky, nor did it get flooded by a single wave. The towers and the gates stand secure, each with a single champion’s trusty protection. At six of the gates we hold a victory assured. [800] But, at the seventh, the god that on the seventh day was born, lord Apollo, has taken up his position, bringing to the house of Oedipus the fulfillment for the ancient errors committed by Laios.
Chorus
What further grief besets our city?

Scout
The city stands safe - but oh, the two princes...
[805] ...are dead, self-killed by each others' hands.

Chorus
Who? What did you say? I am distraught with fear.

Scout
Hear now, and this time think! The sons of Oedipus...

Chorus
Ah, I feel I am a seer [mantis] of their doom.

Scout
There are no two ways about it. They are destroyed.

Chorus
[810] Are they lying dead out there? Tell the full horror.

Scout
Did hands meet hands more close than brotherly? The daimôn came in common to each, blotting out the lineage ill-starred! Now mix your exultation and your tears, [815] over a city saved, while its lords, twin leaders of the fight, have parcelled out with arbitration forged by Scythian steel the full division of their fatherland. Now they shall have their due of land, a twofold grave, as their father's curse [eukhē] required. [820] Thus the city has been saved, but the earth has drunk blood of twin princes slain by each other.

Chorus
O mighty Zeus and guardian gods [daimonès], the strength and support of Kadmos' towers! [825] Shall I send forth a joyous cry, hail to the lord of good fortune renewed? Or weep the misbegotten pair, born to a fatal destiny, each numbered now among the slain, each dying in ill fortitude, [830] both truly named [eteoklēs pl.], both men of many quarrels [poluneikeis pl.].?68 O dark and all-prevailing curse [ārā], that broods over Oedipus and all his line, numbing my heart with mortal chill! Ah me, like a frenzied [thuias] female devotee of Bacchus, [835] I put together for the tomb this song [melos] of mine, which only tells of doom. Dead are they, dead! In their own blood they lie. Ill-omened is the song that hails our victory! [840] The words of the father who cursed [eukheštai] his children have not faltered, not failed! Nothing, Laios, did your stubborn choice accomplish - first to beget the child and then, then to kill him for the city's sake. For nothing can blunt nor mar the words of the oracle. [845] Children! By disbelief you erred - yet in wild weeping came fulfillment! These things are evident of themselves. The speech of the

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68 Now the twins' identities have merged even in their names. Eteoklēs means 'having a true name/glory', while Polu-neikeis means 'having many quarrels'. Putting both names in the plural (eteokleeis and poluneikeis) is the equivalent of neutralizing the distinctions between the two twins.
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messenger is fitting. A twofold sorrow, twofold strife of brothers - each brave! [850] In double doom did these sorrows [pathos pl.] reach fulfillment [telos]. How shall I speak it? Alas, my sisters! May your laments [goos pl.] be the wind for sailing, [855] may the smiting of your brows with your hands become the splash of oars, bringing the boat to Acheron's dim shores. It passes always with its darkened sail, on its uncharted voyage and sunless path, far from your beams, Apollo, god of light - that melancholy boat, [860] bound for a landing that is common to all, the harbor of the dark!

Look up, look there! From the palace come Antigone and Ismene, on their last, saddest errand, to sing a lament [thrēnos] of doleful sound, with agony of equal pain over their slain brothers, [865] Their sisterly sobs are swelling, heart with rent heart according well in grief for those who fought and died. Yet, before they utter their grief, we must sing the sinister-sounding song [humnos] of the Fury [Erinys] and afterwards the hateful victory-song of Hades.

[870] O you most bereaved of sisters, of all those who fasten the girdle around their dresses! I weep and I mourn. There is no deceitful pretending in my mind [phrēn] that I sing truly my song of lament.

[875] Oh, you sad men! You were unpersuaded by those who were near and dear [philoi]. You were not worn down by all the misfortunes. Wretches, you seized your ancestral homes, and it required strength [alkē].

[880] Alas for the home and heritage. They brought a baneful doom, and death for wage! One was striving to force his way through tottering walls, while the other claimed the rule in bitter arrogance. Both alike, even now and here, have concluded their pursuit, with steel for arbiter! [885] And behold, Our Lady the Fury [Erinys] of Oedipus, their father, has brought his curse to an accomplishment that is all too true [alēthēs]. Each was struck on the left side - see them there lying dead - the children of one womb, slain by a mutual doom. Alas for their fate! the murderous combat, the horror of the house, the curse [ārā pl.] of ancient bloodshed, now repaid! [890] Yes, deep and to the heart the deathblow fell, edged by their ineffable feud - by the grim curse, their sire did imprecate discord and deadly hate! [900] Listen, how the city and its towers lament - how the Earth mourns that held them for its own! Their possessions await their successors. The were dreaded in dividing things among themselves. [905] which led to their quarrel [neikos] and the final outcome [telos] of their death. They strove to part the heritage in two halves, giving to each a gain. Yet that which struck the balance in the strife, the arbitrating sword, is hateful to those who loved the two. [910] Without grace [kharis] is Ares, who severed each from life.

Here they lie by the stroke of steel, the stroke of steel that brought them their share of an ancestral tomb. [915] Alas, a piercing song of lament [goos], a rending groan, a cry of sorrow heartfelt! Over the dead princes, brothers, we sing weighty lament of pity, mixed not with gladness but with true tears, poured from a soul that knows no joy. [920] Their onslaught was brave, and stern their blow against citizens, against foreign enemies. Now they are cut down. [925] Beyond all women upon earth woe, woe for her who gave them birth. Unknowingly, she married her son, and the children of that marriage-bed each grew in the very same womb. Now, each of the two by his brother's hand lies dead

[930] Yes, from one seed they sprang, and by one fate their heritage is desolate. The heart's division sundered claim from claim, in frenzied strife [eris], and death came from their feud [neikos]. [935] Now their hate has been laid to rest, and their life-stream has been poured out, staining with blood the earth with crimson dye. Behold, from one blood they sprang, and now they are lying in one blood.
[940] A grievous arbiter of quarrels [neikos pl.] was given the two of them - the stranger from the North, the sharp, dividing sword, fresh from the forge and fire. The treacherous Ares gave then an evil award and brought their father's curse [ārā] to a true [alēthēs] realization. [945] They have their portion - each his lot of grief [akhos], given from the gods on high. Yes, the piled-up wealth of the fatherland, for their tomb, shall lie underneath them. [950] Alas, alas! with flowers of fame your home you proudly glorified, but in the end the curses [ārā] gathered round. With foreboding chants shrieking, in wild defeat and disarray. And now, behold, you are dead. [955] The marker of Derangement [atē] stands at the gate. There the daimōn observed the brothers' fall then finally his activity came to an end.

[960] By striking you were struck. You killed - and were killed - by the spear of each other, and now you lie on the ground. Savage were your deeds, and savage was your deaths.

Take voice, O my sorrow! Flow, tear upon tear! Lay the slain by the slayer. [965] They are made one as they lie there. My mind goes mad with laments [goos pl.], and we mourn over the prey of the spear! [970] Ah, woe for your ending, made unbrotherly. And woe for the battle that you fought. The doom of a mutual slaughter brought you to your grave. Ah, twofold the sorrow - the heard and the seen! [975] And double the tide of our tears as we stand by our brothers in death and wail for our love. O grievous the fate that follows the wrong that was done.

O Destiny, Our Lady the shade [skia] of Oedipus, your vengeance is severe! You are the dark Fury [Erinys], and your power is great. [980]

O dark were the sorrows that exile has known! He slew, but returned not alive. He struck down a brother, but fell, cut down in the moment of triumph. [985] O lineage accursed, O doom and despair! Alas, for their quarrel. And woe! for their pitiful end, who once were our love.

O grievous the fate that follows the wrong that was done. [990]

O Destiny, Our Lady the shade [skia] of Oedipus, your vengeance is severe! You are the dark Fury [Erinys], and your power is great.

You have learned by proof! [995] At once and as one, O brothers beloved, you were consigned to death. You came to the strife of the sword, and behold! you are both overthrown! [1000]

O grievous the tale is, and grievous their fall, to the house, to the land, and to me. [1005] Ah, gods! I regret the curse and the derangement!

O children distraught, killed in your madness! Shall you rest with old kings in your abodes? [1010] Alas for the wrath of your father if he finds you laid by his side!

**Herald**

I bear the command to tell to one and all what has been approved and is now law, ruled by the counselors of the city of Kadmos. For Eteokles, it is decreed that he shall be buried with care in the earth so dear to him, because he hated those who hated us, [1015] and, with all duties blamelessly performed according to the sacred ritual of his ancestors, he met such an end as gains our city's gratitude - with auspices that ennable death. I have been ordered to speak about the man in this way. But of his brother Polynike, this: that he be cast out unburied, for the dogs [1020] to rend and tear: for he would have dared to
destroy the land of the Kadmeians, had it not been for the gods of our ancestors, who aided our
country and opposed his attack by way of his brother’s spear. To Eteokles, though dead, shall
consecration come! Against him stood this wretch, and brought a horde of foreign enemy to besiege our
city. He therefore deserves what is to come, a dishonorable burial in the stomachs of birds. No
women-wailers to escort his corpse, nor build his tomb nor sing his lament anew - he shall lie
dishonored, unattended, cast away. [1030] This is what our State ordains for these brothers.

Antigone
To those who rule over the city of Kadmos, I declare that I will bury my brother’s corpse and risk your
wrath and what may come of it! [1035] I am not ashamed to set my will against the city. How dreadful is
this common bloodline from which we are born, offspring of a wretched mother and an ill-starred father.
Therefore, O my soul [psikhē], since you still live, take your willing share in this outrage in aid of him
who has no will, [1040] living as he is with the dead! Never shall the wolves with their ravenous
stomachs tear and devour him: let this be no one’s decree! Though a weak woman [gune], I will devise a
burial with a covering of earth carried in the folds of my linen robe. [1045] I myself will cover him, let no
one decree the contrary. Take heart, I shall devise the means for action.

Herald
I charge you not to flout the city’s law!

Antigone
I charge you not to make useless proclamations!

Herald
[1050] The citizens are stern after the recent fear of death.

Antigone
Let them be unyielding! He shall not remain unburied.

Herald
What? You will honor the city’s enemy with burial?

Antigone
The matter of his honor has already been decided by the gods.

Herald
True - till he put this land in jeopardy.

Antigone
[1055] His rights usurped, he answered wrong with wrong.

Herald
No, but for one man’s error he raised his hand against the city.

Antigone
Among the gods Strife has the last word.
I shall bury him; do not go on at length.
Herald
Your will is your own. But I forbid the deed.

Chorus
[1060] Exulting Fates and Furies [Erinyes], you who have destroyed the house of Oedipus both root and branch! What will I suffer? What shall I do? What shall I plan? How shall I dare to refrain from weeping or following Polyneikes’ funeral rites?[1065]

Yet I shrink back in fear of the city’s will [lēma]! O Eteokles, you shall have full rites and mourners at your grave. But your wretched brother shall depart without weeping or lament [goos], mourned by only one sister? [1070] Who can obey such a decree?

First Half-Chorus
Let the city carry out its will [lēma] concerning those who lament Polyneikes. We will join the funeral procession and bury him together with her. [1075] For we share this common grief [akhos]. What the city praises as just [dikaia] changes from one generation to the next.

Second Half-Chorus
But we will accompany Eteokles’ corpse to the grave, doing what the city praises as just [dikaia]. [1080] For he protected our city along with the blessed gods and mighty Zeus from being overturned by a savage wave of foreign men.
OEDIPUS AT COLONUS

BY SOPHOCLES

TRANSLATION OF R. C. JEBB
REVISED BY ROGER CERAGIOLI
FURTHER REVISED BY GREGORY NAGY

Oedipus
Child of a blind old man, Antigone, to what region have we come, or to what polis of men? Who will entertain the wandering Oedipus today with scanty gifts? 5 Little do I crave, and obtain still less than that little, and with that I am content. For patience is the lesson of suffering [pathos], and of the long years upon me, and lastly of a noble mind. My child, if you see any resting-place, 10 either on profane ground or by groves of the gods, stop me and set me down, so that we may inquire where we are. We have come to learn as strangers [xenoi] from the townsmen, and to bring to fulfillment [telos] whatever we hear.

Antigone
Father, toil-worn Oedipus, the towers that 15 ring the polis, to judge by sight, are far off; and this place is sacred [hieros], to judge from its appearance: laurel, olive, and vine grow thick-set; and a feathered crowd of nightingales makes music within. So sit here on this unshaped stone; 20 you have traveled a long way for an old man.

Oedipus
Seat me, then, and watch over the blind.

Antigone
If time can teach, I need not learn that.

Oedipus
Can you tell me, now, where we have arrived?

Antigone
Athens I know, but not this place.

Oedipus
25 Yes, so much every traveler told us.

Antigone
Well, shall I go and learn what the spot is called?

Oedipus
Yes, child, if indeed it is inhabited [oikein].
Antigone
It surely is inhabited [oikeîn]. But I think there is no need - I see a man nearby.

Oedipus
30 Setting off and coming toward us?

Antigone
He is at our side already. Speak whatever seems timely to you, for the man is here.

A Xenos enters, a man of Colonus.

Oedipus
Xenos, hearing from this maiden, who has sight both for herself and for me, 35 that you have arrived as a scout of good fortune for the solving of our doubts...

Xenos
Now, before you inquire [historeîn] of me at length, leave this seat. You occupy ground which it is unholy to tread upon.

Oedipus
And what is this ground? To which of the gods is it sacred?

Xenos
Ground inviolable, on which no one may dwell [oikeîn]. The dread 40 goddesses hold it, the daughters of Earth and Darkness.

Oedipus
Who are they? Whose awful name might I hear and invoke in prayer?

Xenos
The all-seeing Eumenides the people here would call them: but other names please elsewhere.

Oedipus
Then graciously may they receive their suppliant! 45 Never again will I depart from my seat in this land.

Xenos
What does this mean?

Oedipus
The watchword of my fate.

Xenos
I dare not remove you without warrant from the polis, until I report what I am doing.
Oedipus
Now by the gods, xenos, do not deny me, hapless wanderer as you see, 50 the timē of the knowledge for which I beg you.

Xenos
Indicate [sēmainein] to me, and you will not be without timē from me.

Oedipus
What, then, is the place that we have entered?

Xenos
All that I myself know, you will hear and learn. This whole place is sacred [hieros]; 55 august Poseidon holds it, and in it lives the fire-bearing god, the Titan Prometheus. But as for the spot on which you tread, it is called the Bronze Threshold of this land, the Staff of Athens. And the neighboring fields claim Colonus, the horse-rider, for their ancient ruler; 60 and all the people bear his name in common as their own. Such, you see, xenos, are these haunts. They receive their timē not through story, but rather through our living with them.

Oedipus
Are there indeed dwellers in this region?

Xenos
65 Yes indeed, the namesakes of that god there [Colonus].

Oedipus
Have they a king? Or does speaking [in assembly] rest with the masses?

Xenos
These parts are ruled by the king in the city.

Oedipus
And who is he that is sovereign in counsel and in might?

Xenos
Theseus he is called, son of Aegeus who was before him.

Oedipus
70 Could a messenger go to him from among you?

Xenos
With what aim? To speak, or to prepare his coming?

Oedipus
So that by a small service he [Theseus] may find a great gain.
Xenos
And what help can come from one who cannot see?

Oedipus
In all that I speak there will be vision.

Xenos
75 Take care now, xenos, that you come to no harm; for you are noble, if I may judge by your looks, leaving your fortune [daimōn] aside. Stay here, where I found you, until I go and tell these things to the people of this deme [dēmos] - not in the city. 80 They will decide for you whether you should stay or go back.

The Xenos exits.

Oedipus
My child, has the xenos left us?

Antigone
He is gone, and so you can speak what you wish, father, fully serene [hēsukhos], knowing that I alone am near.

Oedipus
Ladies of dread aspect, since your seat is 85 the first in this land at which I have bent my knee, show yourselves not ungracious to Phoebus or to myself; who, when he proclaimed that doom of many woes, spoke to me of this rest after long years: on reaching my goal in a land where I should find a seat of the Awful Goddesses 90 and a shelter for xenoi, there I should profitably close my weary life, through my having fixed my abode [oikos] there, for those who received me, but ruin [atē] for those who sent me forth, who drove me away. And he went on to warn me that signs [sēmata] of these things would come, 95 in earthquake, or in thunder, or in the lightning of Zeus. Now I perceive that in this journey some trusty omen from you has surely led me home to this grove; never otherwise could I have met with you, first of all, in my wanderings - I, in my sobriety, with you who touch no wine, 100 - or taken this august seat not shaped by men. Then, goddesses, according to the word of Apollo, give me at last some way to accomplish and close my course - unless, perhaps, I seem too lowly, 105 enslaved as I am evermore to woes the sorest on the earth. Hear, sweet daughters of primeval Darkness! Hear, you that are called the city of great Athena, Athens, given most timē of all cities! Pity this poor ghost of the man Oedipus! 110 For in truth it is the former living body no more.

Antigone
Hush! Here come some aged men to spy out your resting-place.

Oedipus
I will be mute. But hide me in the grove, apart from the road, till I learn 115 how these men will speak. For in learning is the safeguard of our course.

They exit. The Chorus of elders of Colonus enters.
Chorus

Look! Who was he, then? Where is he staying? Where has he rushed from this place, man most insatiable [without koros] among all who live? Scan the ground, look well, press the search everywhere. A wanderer that old man must have been, a wanderer, not a dweller in the land; otherwise he never would have advanced into this untrodden grove of the maidens with whom none may strive. Their name we tremble to speak, we pass them by with eyes turned away, mouthing the words, without sound or word, with a phrēn that is euphēmos. But now it’s said that one has come who reveres them not at all; and him I cannot yet discern, though I look round all the sacred space [temenos], nor do I know where to find his lodging.

Oedipus steps forward with Antigone.

Oedipus

Behold the man you seek! for in sound is my sight, as the saying goes.

Chorus

Oh! Oh! Fearful he is to see, and fearful to hear!

Oedipus

Do not regard me, I beg you, as a lawless man.

Chorus

Zeus defend us! who may this old man be?

Oedipus

Not so wholly of the best fate that you would pronounce him happy, guardians of this land! It’s plain; otherwise I would not be creeping, as you see, by the eyes of others, and buoying my strength upon weakness [of my daughter].

Chorus

Alas! were you sightless even from birth? Evil have been your days, and many, it appears. But at least if I can help it, you shall not add this curse to your lot. You go too far - too far! That your rash steps may intrude on the field of this voiceless, grassy glade, where the waters of the mixing bowl blend their stream with the flow of honeyed offerings, beware, unhappiest of xenoi. Retire! Withdraw! Let a wide space part us. Do you hear, toil-worn wanderer? If you have anything to say in converse with us, leave forbidden ground, and speak where it is custom [nomos] for all; but, till then, refrain.

Oedipus

Daughter, to what counsel shall we incline?

69 The word euphēmos means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.
Antigone
My father, we must behave just as the townspeople do, listening and giving way where it is necessary.

Oedipus
Then give me your hand.

Antigone
I lay it in yours.

Oedipus
Xenoi, let me not suffer a violation of dikē. 175 when I have trusted in you, and have passed from my refuge!

Chorus
strophe 2
Never, old man, never will any one remove you from your resting-place here against your will.

Oedipus moves forward.

Oedipus
Further, then?

Chorus
Come still further.

Oedipus
Further?

Chorus
180 Lead him onward, maiden, for you hear us and obey.

Antigone
Come, follow this way with your dark steps, father, as I lead you.

Chorus
A xenos in a foreign land, 185 poor man, bear to detest what the polis holds steadfastly as not philos, and to reverence what she holds as philos!

Oedipus
Lead me, then, child, to a spot where I may speak and listen within piety’s domain, 190 and let us not wage war with necessity.

Chorus
antistrophe 2
There! Do not incline your steps beyond that ledge of bedrock.
Oedipus
This far?

Chorus
Enough, I say.

Oedipus
195 Shall I sit down?

Chorus
Yes, move sideways and crouch low on the edge of the rock.

Antigone
200 Father, this is my task: in serenity [hēsukhīa]...

Oedipus
Ah me! ah me!

Antigone
...to fit step to step, and lean your aged frame upon my philos arm.

Oedipus
Woe for the disaster [atē] of a phrēn gone bad!

Antigone seats him on the rock.

Chorus
Ah, poor man, since now you are at ease, speak! What is your lineage among mortals? With what name are you led on your path of labors [ponoi]? 205 What fatherland can you tell us of?

Oedipus
Xenoi, I am without polis, but do not...

Chorus
What is this that you forbid, old man?

Oedipus
210 Do not, do not ask me who I am! Seek nor probe no further!

Chorus
What does this mean?

Oedipus
Horrid the birth...
Chorus
Speak!

Oedipus
My child - ah me! - what shall I say?

Chorus
What is your lineage, xenos; speak! And who is your father?

Oedipus
Woe is me! What will I experience [paskhein], my child?

Antigone
Speak, for you are driven to the verge.

Oedipus
Then speak I will. I have no way to hide it.

Chorus
You two make a long delay. Come, hasten!

Oedipus
Do you know of a son of Laios?

Chorus
Oh!

Oedipus
...and of the family of the Labdakidai?

Chorus
O Zeus!

Oedipus
...and of the pitiful Oedipus?

Chorus
You are he?

Oedipus
Have no fear of any words that I speak...

Chorus
Ah, no, no!
Oedipus
Unhappy that I am!

Chorus
Oh, oh!

Oedipus
Daughter, what is about to befall?

Chorus
Out with you! Forth from the land!

Oedipus
And your promise - to what fulfillment will you bring it?

Chorus
No man is visited by the punishment of fate if he requites deeds which were first experienced [paskhein] by him. Deceit on the one part matches deceits on the other, and gives labor [ponos] instead of reward [kharis]. And you - back with you! Out from your seat! Away from my land with all speed, that you may not fasten some heavier burden on my polis!

Antigone
Xenoi whose phrenes have respect [aidōs], since you have not allowed my aged father - knowing, as you do, the rumor of his unintended deeds - pity at least my poor self, I implore you, who supplicate you for my father alone. I beg you with eyes that can still look on your own, like one sprung from your own blood, that this sufferer may find respect [aidōs]. On you, as on a god, we depend in our misery. But come, grant the favor [kharis] for which we hardly dare hope! I implore you by everything that you hold philos at home: by child, by wife, or treasure, or god! Look well and you will not find the mortal who, if a god should lead him on, could escape.

Chorus
Feel sure, daughter of Oedipus, that we pity you and him alike for your misfortune; but dreading the punishment of the gods, we could not say anything beyond what we have now said to you.

Oedipus
What help comes, then, of repute or fair fame, if it ends in idle breath; seeing that Athens, as men say, is god-fearing beyond all, and alone has the power to save [sōzein] the outraged xenos, and alone the power to succor him? And where are these things for me, when, after making me rise up from this rocky seat, you then drive me from the land, afraid of my name alone? Not, surely, afraid of my person or of my acts; since my acts, at least, have been in suffering [paskhein] rather than doing - if I must mention the tale of my mother and my father, because of which you fear me. That know I full well. And yet how was I innately evil [kakos]? I, who was merely requiting a wrong that I suffered [paskhein], so that, had I been acting with knowledge, even then I could not be accounted kakos. But, as it was, all unknowing I went where I went - while they who made me suffer [paskhein] knowingly sought my ruin. Therefore, xenoi, I beseech you by the gods: just as you made me leave my seat, so save [sōzein] me, and do not, while you render timē to the gods, consider those gods to be fools. But rather consider that they look
on the god-fearing man 280 and on the godless, and that never yet has an impious man found escape. With the help of those gods, do not becloud the good fortune [εὐδαιμονία] of Athens by paying service to unholy deeds. As you have received the suppliant under your pledge, 285 rescue me and guard me to the end; nor treat me without ῥήμα when you look on this face unlovely to behold, for I have come to you as one holy [ἱερός] and pious, bearing comfort for this people. But when the master is come, 290 whoever is your leader, then you will hear and know all; meanwhile show yourselves in no way κακός.

Chorus
The thoughts you urge, old man, must needs move awe; they have been set forth in grave words. 295 But I am content that the rulers of our country should judge in this case.

Oedipus
And where, xenoi, is the lord of this realm?

Chorus
He is at the city of his fathers in our land. The messenger who sent us here has gone to fetch him.

Oedipus
Do you think that he will have any regard or care for the blind man, 300 so as to come here himself?

Chorus
Yes, surely, as soon as he learns of your name.

Oedipus
Who is there to bring him that utterance [επός]?

Chorus
The way is long, and many stories [επέα] from travelers often wander about. When he hears them, he will soon be with us, never fear. 305 For your name, old man, has been loudly trumpeted through all lands, so that even if he is taking his ease, and slow to move, when he hears of you he will swiftly arrive.

Oedipus
Well, may he come with good fortune both for his own πόλις and for me! What noble man [εσθλός] is not his own φίλος?

Antigone
310 O Zeus! What shall I say? What shall I think, my father?

Oedipus
What is it, Antigone, my child?

Antigone
I see a woman coming towards us, mounted on a colt of Etna; she wears a Thessalian bonnet to screen her face from the sun. 315 What shall I say? Is it she, or is it not? Does my judgment err? Yes - no - I cannot tell - ah me! It is no other, yes! She greets me with bright glances 320 as she draws near, and makes a signal [σήμαινειν]. Here is Ismene, clearly, and no other before me.
Oedipus
What’s that you say, my child?

Antigone
That I see your daughter, my sister. By her voice right away you can know her.

Ismene enters.

Ismene
Father and sister, names most sweet to me! How hard it was to find you! And how hard now to look upon you for my tears!

Oedipus
My child, have you come?

Ismene
Father, your fate is sad to see!

Oedipus
Are you with us, my child?

Ismene
Not without toil, indeed, for myself.

Oedipus
Touch me, my daughter!

Ismene
I give a hand to each at once.

Oedipus
Ah my children, my sisters!

Ismene
Alas, twice-wretched life!

Oedipus
Her life and mine?

Ismene
And mine, wretched me, makes a third.

Oedipus
Child, why have you come?
Oedipus at Colonus

Ismene
Through concern for you, father.

Oedipus
Through longing to see me?

Ismene
Yes, and to bring you news by my own mouth, with the only faithful servant that I had.

Oedipus
335 And where are the young men, your brothers, in our ordeal [ponos]?

Ismene
They are where they are; their circumstances now are terrible.

Oedipus
True image of the customs [nomoi] of Egypt that they show in their spirit and their life! For there the men sit weaving in the house, 340 but the wives go forth to win the daily bread. And in your case, my daughters, those to whom these labors [ponoi] belonged keep the house at home like maidens, while you two, in their place, bear your poor father’s labors [ponoi]. 345 The one, from the time when her youth was past and she came into her strength, has always been this old man’s guide in weary wanderings, often roaming, hungry and barefoot, through the wild woods, often battered by rains and scorching sun. 350 And the comforts of home, poor girl, she holds in the second place, so long as her father should have her care. And you, my child, in former days came forth, bringing your father, unknown to the Kadmeians, all the mantis-delivered words that had been given concerning Oedipus. 355 You became a faithful guardian on my behalf, when I was being driven from the land. Now, in turn, what report [muthos] have you brought your father, Ismene? On what mission have you set forth from home? For you do not come empty-handed, I know well, 360 or without some cause of fear for me.

Ismene
The sufferings [pathos] that I bore [paskhein], father, in seeking where you dwelt, I will pass by; I would not renew the pain in the recital. 365 But the evils that now beset your ill-fated sons - it is of these that I have come to indicate [sēmainein]. At first it was their decision that the throne should be left to Creon, and the city spared pollution, when they thought calmly about the ancient blight on our family, 370 and how it has clung to your unfortunate house. But now, moved by some god and by an erring phrēn, an evil strife [eris] has seized them - thrice-deluded! - to grasp at rule and the power of a turannos. And the younger son has stripped the elder, Polyneikes, of the throne, 375 and has driven him from his fatherland. But he, as the widespread rumor says among us, has gone to the valley of Argos as an exile, and is taking to himself a novel kinship, and warriors for his philoi, intending that he shall soon get hold of the Kadmeian land with timē, 380 or mount to the sky. These are not empty words, my father, but terrible deeds; and where the gods will have pity on your ordeal [ponoi], I cannot tell.

Oedipus
385 What, had you come to hope that the gods would ever have concern enough for me to give me salvation [sōtēria]?
Ismene
Yes, that is my hope, father, from the present words of the mantis.

Oedipus
What are they? What has been prophesied, my child?

Ismene
That you will be desired some day, in life and death, by the men of that land, for their safety’s sake.

Oedipus
And who could profit from such a one as I?

Ismene
Their power, it is said, proves to be in your hands.

Oedipus
When I no longer exist, then I am a man?

Ismene
Yes, for the gods now raise you up; but before they worked your ruin.

Oedipus
395 It is a paltry thing to lift age, when youth was ruined.

Ismene
Well, know at least that Creon will come to you on this account - and soon, not late.

Oedipus
With what purpose, daughter? Interpret that to me.

Ismene
To plant you near the Kadmeian land, so that they may have you in their power, 400 while you may not set foot within their borders.

Oedipus
And how can I profit them while I rest beyond their gates?

Ismene
Your tomb contains a curse for them, if it should suffer misfortune.

Oedipus
I need no god to help my wits so far.
Ismene
For this reason, therefore, they wish to get you as their neighbor; 405 but in a place where you would not have power [kratos] over yourself.

Oedipus
Will they really cover me in Theban dust?

Ismene
No, the guilt of related blood debars you, father.

Oedipus
Then never will they become my masters.

Ismene
Some day then this will be a grief for the Kadmeians.

Oedipus
410 In what conjunction of events, my child?

Ismene
Under the power of your anger, when they stand at your tomb.

Oedipus
And who has told you this, my child?

Ismene
Sacred envoys [theôroi], from the Delphian hearth.

Oedipus
And has Phoebus indeed spoken this concerning me?

Ismene
415 So say the men who have come back to Thebes.

Oedipus
Has either of my sons heard this?

Ismene
Yes, both have heard it, and know it well.

Oedipus
And then those worst of sons, aware of this, preferred the tyranny to the wish of recalling me?

Ismene
420 It grieves me to hear this, but I must bear it.
Oedipus
Then may the gods not quench their fated strife [eris], and may it fall to me to decide this war on which they are now setting their hands, raising spear against spear! 425 For then neither would he who now holds the scepter and the throne survive, nor would the exile ever return; seeing that when I, their father, was being thrust without timē from my country, they did not stop or defend me. No, they saw me sent forth homeless, 430 and heard the crier proclaim my sentence of exile. Perhaps you will say that that was my own wish then, and that the polis fittingly granted me that gift. Not so! For on that first day, when my thumos seethed, 435 and my sweetest wish was for death - indeed, death by stoning - no one was found to help me in that desire. But after a time, when all my anguish was now softened, and when I began to feel that my thumos had been excessive in punishing those past errors, 440 then it was that the polis set about to drive me by force from the land, after all that time. And my sons, when they had the strength to bring help - sons to their own father - they would not do it. For lack of one little word [epos] from them, I was left to wander, an outcast and a beggar evermore. 445 Instead, it is from these, maidens as they are, insofar as nature enables the m, that I obtain my daily food, and a shelter in the land, and the aid of family. Their brothers have bartered their father for the throne, the scepter of power, and the tyranny of the realm. 450 No, never will they win Oedipus for an ally, nor will good ever come to them from this reign at Thebes; that I know, when I hear this maiden's mantis-delivered words and reflect on the old prophecies stored in my own mind, which Phoebus has fulfilled for me at last. 455 Therefore let them send Creon to seek me - or whoever else is mighty in Thebes. For if you, xenoi, with the help of the dread goddesses who reign in your deme, are willing to defend me, you will obtain a great savior [sōtēr] for this polis, 460 and trouble [ponoi] for my enemies.

Chorus
You are worthy of compassion, Oedipus, both you and these maidens. And since to this plea you append your power to be sōtēr of our land, I wish to advise you for your advantage.

Oedipus
Most philoi, be my patrons [proxenoi], and I will bring everything to fulfillment [telos].

Chorus
Then make atonement to these daimones, to whom you have come first, and on whose ground you have trespassed.

Oedipus
With what rites? Instruct me, xenoi.

Chorus
First, from an ever-flowing spring bring holy [hierai] drink-offerings, borne in ritually pure hands.

Oedipus
And when I have gotten this unmixed draught?

Chorus
There are bowls, the work of a skilled craftsman; crown their edges and the handles at either side.
Oedipus
With olive branches, or woolen cloths, or in what way?

Chorus
475 Take the freshly-shorn wool of an ewe-lamb.

Oedipus
Good; and then to what last rite [telos] shall I proceed?

Chorus
Pour the drink-offerings, with your face to the dawn.

Oedipus
Shall I pour them with these vessels of which you speak?

Chorus
Yes, in three streams; but the last vessel...

Oedipus
480 With what shall I fill this, before I set it down? Teach me this also.

Chorus
With water and honey; but add no wine.

Oedipus
And when the ground under the dark shade has drunk these?

Chorus
Three times lay on it nine branches of olive with both your hands, and meanwhile make this prayer.

Oedipus
485 I wish to hear this prayer; it is the most important part.

Chorus
We call them Eumenides, so that with well-wishing menos they may receive the suppliant as his saviors [sōters]. Let this be your prayer, or of whoever prays for you. Speak inaudibly, and do not lift up your voice; then retire, without looking behind. 490 If you should do this, I would be bold enough to come to your aid; but otherwise, xenos, I would fear for you.

Oedipus
Daughters, do you hear these xenoi who dwell nearby?

Antigone
We have listened. Tell us what to do.
Oedipus

495 I cannot make the trip; for I am disabled by lack of strength and lack of sight, twin evils. But let one of you two go and do these things. For I think that one psukhē suffices to pay this debt for ten thousand, if it comes with good will. 500 Act, then, with speed. But don’t abandon me, for my body wouldn’t have the strength to move, without help or a guiding hand.

Ismene

Then I will go to perform the rite; but where I am to find the place - this I wish to learn.

Chorus

505 On the further side of this grove, xenē. And if you have need of anything, there is a guardian of the place. He will direct you.

Ismene

Off to my task. But you, Antigone, watch our father here. In the case of parents, if we have labor [ponos], we must not keep a memory it.

Ismene exits.

Chorus

510 Terrible it is, xenos, to arouse the old woe that has for so long been laid to rest: and yet I yearn to hear...

Oedipus

What now?

Chorus

...of that grief-filled anguish, cureless, with which you have wrestled.

Oedipus

515 By your hospitality [xenia], do not uncover the shame that I have suffered [paskhein]!

Chorus

Seeing that the tale is wide-spread and in no way weakens, I wish, friend, to hear it aright.

Oedipus

Ah me!

Chorus

Grant the favor, I beg!

Oedipus

Alas, alas!
Chorus

520 Grant my wish, as I have granted yours to the full.

**Oedipus**

I have suffered the greatest evils, xenoi - suffered it through unintended deeds - may the god know it! No part was of my own choice.

Chorus

But in what way?

**Oedipus**

525 In an evil marriage, the polis bound me, all unknowing, to disaster [atē].

Chorus

Is it true, as I hear, that you made your mother the partner of your bed, to its infamy?

**Oedipus**

Ah me! These words, xenoi, are like death to my ears. And those two maidens of mine...

Chorus

530 What will you say?

**Oedipus**

...two daughters - two curses [atē]...

Chorus

O Zeus!

**Oedipus**

...of me begotten, sprang from the travail of the womb that bore me too.

Chorus

These, then, are at once your daughters, and...

**Oedipus**

535...sisters, indeed, of their father.

Chorus

Oh!

**Oedipus**

Indeed, woes untold sweep back upon my soul!
Chorus
You have suffered [paskhein]...

Oedipus
I have suffered [paskhein] woes grievous to bear.

Chorus
You have done...

Oedipus
I have not done it!

Chorus
How?

Oedipus
540 A gift was given to me - O, wretched that I am, if only I had never won from the polis that gift for my services!

Chorus
Cursed man! What of this? Did you commit the murder... antistrophe 2

Oedipus
What now? What would you learn?

Chorus
...of your father?

Oedipus
Oh! oh! a second stab - wound on wound!

Chorus
545 You killed...

Oedipus
I killed - yet have I a plea...

Chorus
What can you plead?

Oedipus
...a plea of dikē.

Chorus
What?
Oedipus
I will tell you: I slew without noos and perished utterly. Pure before the law [nomos], without knowledge of my act, I have come to this pass!

Chorus
Look, there comes our lord, Theseus son of Aegeus, 550 at the sound of your voice, to do that for which he was summoned.

Theseus enters.

Theseus
Through hearing from many in the past about the bloody marring of your sight, I recognized it was you, son of Laios; and now on coming here, through sight I am more fully certain. 555 For your clothing and that heart-rending face alike assure me that it is you. And in all compassion I ask you, ill-fated Oedipus, with what petition to the polis and to me have you taken your place here, you and the poor maiden at your side. Declare it. Dire indeed must be the fortune which you tell, 560 for me to stand aloof from it; since I know that I myself also was reared in exile, just as you, and that in foreign lands I wrestled with perils to my life, like no other man. 565 Never, then, would I turn aside from a xenos, such as you are now, or refuse to help in his salvation [sôtería]. For I know well that I am a man, and that my portion of tomorrow is no greater than yours.

Oedipus
Theseus, in a few words your nobleness has come to such a point 570 that I need not be ashamed [aidós] of a brief speech. You have said who I am, from what father I am sprung, and from what land I have come; and so nothing else remains for me but to speak my wish, and the tale is told.

Theseus
575 Then inform me of this very thing, so that I may learn it.

Oedipus
I come to offer you my care-worn body as a gift - not one fine to look on, but the gains from it are better than beauty.

Theseus
And what gain do you claim to have brought?

Oedipus
580 Hereafter you may learn it - but not yet.

Theseus
At what time, then, will the benefit become clear?

Oedipus
When I am dead, and you have given me burial.
Theseus
You crave life's last service; but for all between you have no memory, or no care.

Oedipus
585 Indeed, for by that service I gather in all the rest.

Theseus
This favor [kharis] you crave from me is brief indeed.

Oedipus
Yet take care; the struggle here is no light one. No, indeed.

Theseus
Do you mean in respect to your sons, or to me?

Oedipus
They will compel you to convey me there [to Thebes].

Theseus
590 But if you are willing, then exile is not becoming.

Oedipus
No, when I was willing, they refused.

Theseus
Foolish man, anger [thumos] amidst woes is not suitable.

Oedipus
When you have heard my story, admonish; till then, forbear.

Theseus
Speak. I must not pronounce without knowledge.

Oedipus
595 I have suffered [paskhein], Theseus, terrible woes upon woes.

Theseus
Will you speak of the ancient trouble of your family?

Oedipus
No, indeed; that is gossiped throughout Hellas.

Theseus
How, then, do you suffer beyond other men?
Oedipus
The circumstance is this: from my country I have been driven by my own sons; and I may not return, since I am guilty of a father's blood.

Theseus
Why would they have you brought back, if you must dwell apart?

Oedipus
The word of the god will compel them.

Theseus
What suffering do they fear from the oracles?

Oedipus
That they must be struck down in this land.

Theseus
And how should bitterness come between them and me?

Oedipus
Most philos son of Aegaeus, to the gods alone old age and death never come, but everything else sinks into chaos from time which overpowers all. Earth's strength wilts, and so too the strength of the body; trust dies, distrust is born; and the same spirit is never steadfast among philoi, or between polis and polis. For some now, for others tomorrow sweet feelings turn to bitter, and then once more to being philos. And if now the sun shines brightly between Thebes and you, yet time in his course gives birth to days and nights untold, in which from a small cause they will scatter with the spear today's pledges of concord. Then one day my slumbering and buried corpse, cold in death, will drink their warm blood, if Zeus is still Zeus, and Phoebus, the son of Zeus, speaks clear. But, since I would not break silence concerning utterances that must not be disturbed, allow me to cease where I began. Only keep your own pledge good, and never will you say that in vain you welcomed Oedipus to be a dweller in this land - if indeed the gods do not deceive me.

Chorus
Lord, from the first this man has shown a will to give telos to these utterances, or similar ones, for our land.

Theseus
Who, then, would reject the goodwill of such a one? To whom, first, the hearth of a spear-xenos is always available on our side, by reciprocal right; then too he has come as a suppliant to our daimones, paying no small recompense to this land and to me. In reverence for these claims, I will never spurn his kharis, and I will establish an abode for him as a citizen in the land. And if it is the pleasure of the xenos to remain here, I will command you to protect him; or, if it pleases him, to come with me. This way or that, Oedipus, you may choose; your desire will be mine.

Oedipus
O Zeus, may you be good to men such as these!
Theseus
What is your wish, then? Will you come to my house?

Oedipus
Yes, I would, if it were divinely ordained [Themis]. But this is the place...

Theseus
645 What will you do here? Speak, for I will not hinder you.

Oedipus
...where I will have power [kratos] over those who cast me out.

Theseus
The promised gift of your presence would be great.

Oedipus
It shall be, if you keep your pledge with me.

Theseus
Have courage concerning me; never will I betray you.

Oedipus
650 I will not bind you with an oath as if a base man.

Theseus
Well, you would win nothing more than by my word.

Oedipus
What will you do, then?

Theseus
What is it that you fear?
Oedipus
Men will come...

Theseus
But these men here will see to that.

Oedipus
Beware that if you leave me...

Theseus
Don’t instruct me in my duties.

Oedipus
655 Fear constrains me...
Theseus
My heart feels no fear.

Oedipus
You don’t know the threats...

Theseus
I know that none will lead you from here against my will. Often threats have blustered in men’s thumos with words [epea] loud and vain; but when the noos comes to itself once more, 660 the threats have vanished. For those men, too, perhaps - yes, even if in boldness they have spoken dreadful things of bringing you back, the voyage here will prove long and hard to sail. Now I advise [par-aineîn] you, apart from any decision of mine, to be of a good courage, 665 if indeed Phoebus has been your escort here. Even if I am not present, still my name, I know, will shield you from suffering [paskheîn] harm.

Theseus exits.

Chorus
Xenos, in this land of fine horses you have come to earth’s fairest home, the shining Colonus [Kolônos].
670 Here the nightingale, a constant guest, trills her clear note under the trees of green glades, dwelling amid the wine-dark ivy 675 and the god’s inviolate foliage, rich in berries and fruit, unvisited by sun, un vexed by the wind of any storm. Here the reveler Dionysus ever walks the ground, 680 companion of the nymphs that nursed him.

And, fed on heavenly dew, the narcissus blooms day by day with its fair clusters; it is the ancient garland [stephanos] of the Great Goddesses. 685 And the crocus blooms with a golden gleam. Nor do the ever-flowing springs diminish, from which the waters of Cephisus wander, and each day with pure 690 current it moves over the plains of the land’s swelling bosom, making things fertile. Nor have the khoroi of the Muses shunned this place, nor Aphrodite of the golden rein.

And there is a thing such as I have not heard of on Asian ground, 695 nor as ever yet born in the great Dorian isle of Pelops: a plant unconquered, self-renewing, causing terror to destructive enemies. 700 It greatly flourishes in this land - the gray-leaved olive, nurturer of children. Youth can not harm it by the ravages of his hand, nor can any who lives with old age. For the sleepless eye 705 of Zeus Morios [guard of the sacred olive trees], watches over it, and gray-eyed Athena.

And I have another praise [aînos] to tell for this polis our mother, 710 the gift of a great daimôn, a glory most great: the might of horses, the might of colts, and the might of the sea. For you, son of Kronos, lord Poseidon, have set her on the throne of this pride, 715 by establishing first in our roads the bit that cures the rage of horses. And the shapely oar, well-fitted for the sea, in flying past the land leaps to follow the hundred-footed Nereids.

Antigone
720 Land that gets praise [ep-aînos] above all lands, now it is your task to make those bright praises seen in deeds!
Oedipus
What strange new thing has befallen, my daughter?

Antigone
Creon there draws near us, and not without followers, father.

Oedipus
Ah, most philoi old men, now give me 725 the final proof of my safety [sôêria]!

Chorus
Courage! It will be yours. For even if I am aged, this country's strength has not grown old.

Creon enters with attendants.

Creon
Gentlemen, noble dwellers [oikêtores] in this land, I see from your eyes that a sudden fear has troubled you at my coming: 730 but do not shrink back from me, and let no bad utterance [epos] escape you. I am here with no thought of force; I am old, and I know that the polis to which I have come is mighty, if any in Hellas has might. 735 No, I have been sent, aged as I am, to plead with this man to return with me to the land of Kadmos. I am not one man's envoy, but have a mandate from all our people; since it belonged to me, by tie of family, beyond all other Thebans to show grief [penthos] over his woes. 740 Unhappy Oedipus, hear us, and come back to your home [oikos]! With dikê you are summoned by all the Kadmeians, and most of all by me, just as I - unless I am the most kakos of all men born - feel most sorrow for your woes, old man, 745 when I see you, unhappy as you are, a xenos and a wanderer evermore, roaming in beggary, with one handmaid for your support. Ah me, I had not thought that she could fall to such a depth of misery as that to which she has fallen - 750 this poor girl! - as she tends forever your dark life amid poverty; in ripe youth, but unwed: a prize for the first passerby to seize. Is it not a cruel reproach - ala! - that I have cast at you, and me, and all our family? 755 But indeed an open shame cannot be hidden. Oedipus, in the name of your ancestral gods, listen to me! Hide it, and consent to return to the city and the house of your ancestors, after bidding a kind farewell to this polis. For she is worthy; yet your own city has a right [dikê] to claim your reverence, 760 since it was she that nurtured you long ago.

Oedipus
You who will dare anything, who from any just [dikaios] plea would derive a crafty trick, why do you make this attempt on me, and seek once more to snare me in your trap where I would feel most grief? 765 Long ago, when I labored under the sickness of my self-made evils, and I yearned to be cast out of the land, you refused to grant the favor [kharis]. But when my fierce anger had spent its force, and seclusion in the house was sweet to me, 770 it was then that you thrust me from the house and cast me from the land. And this common tie of family that you mention - that was not at all philon to you then. Now, in turn, when you see that I have a welcome with good noos from this polis and all her nation, you try to pluck me away, wrapping your cruel thoughts in soft words. 775 And yet what pleasure do you find in this, in treating me as philos against my will? As if a man should refuse you a gift, bring you no aid, when you continually begged for it; but after your thumos was sated with your desires, he should grant it then, when the favor [kharis] could bring no gratitude [kharis] 780 - would you not find your delight in this empty? Yet such is the nature of your own offers to me: noble [esthla] in appearance, but in substance ignoble [kaka]. And I will declare it to these men too, to show you up as kakos. You have come
to get me, 785 not to bring me to my home [oikos], but to plant me near your borders, so that your polis might escape uninjured by evils from this land. That fate is not for you, but this one: the brooding of my vengeful spirit on your land forever; and for my sons, this heirloom: 790 just so much soil in my realm in which to die. Do I not have more phrenes than you in the fortunes of Thebes? Yes, far wiser, by as much as the sources of my knowledge are truer: Phoebus I mean, and his father, Zeus himself. But you have come here with fraud on your lips, yes, 795 and with a tongue keener than the edge of a sword; yet by their use you may well reap more sorrow than salvation [sōtēria]. Still, since I know that I cannot persuade you of this, go! Allow us to live on here; for even in this plight our life would not be bad if we should be content with it.

Creon
800 Which of us, do you think, suffers most in this exchange - I by your action, or you by your own?

Oedipus
For me, it is enough if your pleading fails both with me and with these men nearby.

Creon
Unhappy man, will you let everyone see that even in your years you have gained no phrenes? 805 Must you live on to disgrace your old age?

Oedipus
You have a clever tongue, but I know no just [dikaios] man who can produce from every side a pretty speech.

Creon
Words may be many, and yet not to the point.

Oedipus
As if yours, indeed, were few, but on the mark.

Creon
810 They cannot be, not for one whose noos is such as yours.

Oedipus
Begone! I will say it for these men too. And do not besiege me with a jealous watch where I am destined to remain.

Creon
I call these men, and not you, to witness the tenor of your words to your philoi. And if I ever catch you...

Oedipus
815 And who could catch me against the will of these allies?

Creon
I promise you, soon you’ll smart without that.
Oedipus
Where is the deed which backs that threatening word?

Creon
One of your two daughters I have myself just seized and sent away. The other I will drag off forthwith.

Oedipus
820 Oh no!

Creon
You'll soon find more to weep about.

Oedipus
You have my child?

Creon
And I will have this one in no long time.

Oedipus
Oh! Xenoi, what will you do? Will you betray me? Will you not drive the godless man from this land?

Chorus
Depart, stranger! Quick! 825 Your present deed is not just [dikaios], nor the deed which you have done.

Creon
To his attendants.
It’s time for you to drag this girl off against her will, if she will not go freely.

Antigone
Wretched that I am! Where can I flee? Where find help from gods or men?

Chorus
What are you doing, xenos?

Creon
830 I will not touch this man, but her who is mine.

Oedipus
Lords of the land!

Chorus
Xenos, you are acting without dikē.

Creon
With dikē.
Chorus
How?

Creon
I take my own.

He lays his hand on Antigone.

Oedipus
Oh, polis!

Chorus
What are you doing, xenos? Release her! Your strength and ours will soon come to the test.

Creon
Stand back!

Chorus
Not while this is your purpose.

Creon
There will be war with the polis [of Thebes] for you, if you harm me.

Oedipus
Did I not say so?

Chorus
Unhand the girl at once!

Creon
Don’t make commands where you are not the master.

Chorus
Let go, I tell you!

Creon
To his guards, who seize Antigone.
And I tell you: be off!

Chorus
Help, men of Colonus, bring help! The polis, our polis, is attacked by force! Come to our aid!

Antigone
I am being dragged away in misery. Xenoi, xenoi!
Oedipus
845 My child, where are you?

Antigone
I am led off by force.

Oedipus
Give me your hand, my child!

Antigone
I am helpless.

Creon
Away with you!

Oedipus
I am wretched, wretched!

The guards exit with Antigone.

Creon
So those two staffs will never again support your path. 850 But since you wish to overcome your country and your philoi, whose will I, though turannos as well, am here discharging, then I wish you victory. For in time, I am sure, you will come to recognize all this, that now too as in time past, it is you who have done yourself no good, by indulging your anger despite your philoi. 855 This has always been your ruin.

Chorus
Stop there, xenos!

Creon
Hands off, I say!

Chorus
I will not let go, unless you give back the maidens.

Creon
Then you’ll soon give the polis a more valuable prize, for I’ll lay hands on more than those two girls.

Chorus
860 What! What do you intend?

Creon
This man here will be my captive.

Chorus
A valiant threat!
Creon
It will be done immediately.

Chorus
Indeed, unless the ruler of this realm prevents you.

Oedipus
Voice of shamelessness! Will you really lay hands on me?

Creon
Be silent, I say!

Oedipus
865 No! May the daimones of this place grant me to utter this further curse! Most kakos of men, when these eyes were dark, you wrenched from me the helpless one who was my eyesight and made off with her by force. Therefore to you and to your race may the Sun, the god who sees all things, grant in time an old age such as mine!

Creon
Do you see this, people of the land?

Oedipus
They see both you and me. They know in their phrenes that I have suffered [paskhein] in deeds, and my defense is mere words.

Creon
I will not check my thumos. Though I am alone 875 and slow with age, I’ll take this man by force. antistrophe

Oedipus
Ah, my wretchedness!

Chorus
What arrogance you have come with, xenos, if you think you will achieve this!

Creon
I will.

Chorus
Then I think this polis no longer exists.

Creon
880 For men who are dikaioi, the weak vanquishes the strong.

Oedipus
Do you hear his words?
Oedipus at Colonus

Chorus
Yes, but he will not bring them to telos.

Creon
Zeus knows perhaps, but you do not.

Chorus
This is hubris!

Creon
Hubris which you must bear.

Chorus
Hear people, hear rulers of the land! Come quickly, come! These men are on their way to cross our borders!
Theseus enters.

Theseus
What is this shout? What is the trouble? What fear has moved you to stop my sacrifice at the altar to the sea-god, the lord of your Colonus? Speak, so that I may know the situation; for that is why I have sped here more swiftly than was pleasant.

Oedipus
Most philos of men! I know your voice. Terrible are the things I have just suffered at the hands of this man here.

Theseus
What things are these? And who has pained you? Speak!

Oedipus
Creon, whom you see here, has torn from me my children - my only two.

Theseus
What’s that you say?

Oedipus
You have heard what wrongs I have suffered.

Theseus
Hurry, one of you attendants, to the altars there, and order the people to leave the sacrifice and race on foot and by horse full speed, to the region where the two highways meet, so that the maidens may not pass, and I not become a mockery to this xenos as one worsted by force. Quick, I say, away with you! As for this man, if my anger went as far as he deserves, I would not let him go uninjured from my hand. But now, just such law as he himself has brought will be the rule for his correction.
You will never leave this land until you bring those maidens and produce them in my sight. For your action is a disgrace to me, and to your own ancestors, and to your country. You have come to a polis that practices dikē and sanctions nothing without law, yet you have spurned her lawful authorities and made this violent assault. You are taking captives at will and subjugating them by force, as if you believed that my polis was void of men, or manned by slaves, and that I counted for nothing. Yet it was not Thebes that trained you to be kakos. Thebes is not accustomed to rearing men without dikē, nor would she praise [ep-aineîn] you, if she learned that you are despoiling me, and despoiling the gods, when by force you drive off their unfortunate suppliants. If my foot were upon your land, never would I drag off or lead away someone without permission from the ruler of the land, whoever he might be - no, even if my claim had the most dikē of all. I would know how a xenos ought to live among citizens. But you are disgracing a polis that does not deserve it: your own, and your years, despite their fullness, bring you an old age barren of noos. Now, I have said before, and I say it once again: let the maidens be brought here speedily, unless you wish to be an unwilling transferred occupant, by force, of an abode [oikos] in this country. These are the words of my lips; my noos is in accord.

Chorus
Do you see your plight, xenos? You are judged dikaios by where you are from, but your deeds are found to be evil [kaka].

Creon
It is not because I thought this polis void of men, son of Aegeus, or of counsel, as you say, that I have done this deed; but because I judged that its people could never be so zealous for my relatives as to support them against my will. And I knew that this people would not receive a parricide and a polluted man, a man whose unholy marriage - a marriage with children - had been found out. Such wisdom, I knew, was immemorial on the Areopagus, which does not allow such wanderers to dwell within this polis. Trusting in that, I sought to take this prize. And I would not have done so, had he not been calling down bitter curses on me and on my race. As I suffered wrong in this way, I judged that I had a right to this requital. For thumos knows no old age, until death comes; the dead alone feel no galling pain. In response to this, you will do what pleases you; for, though my case is dikaios, the lack of aid makes me weak. Yet in the face of your actions, despite my age, I will endeavor to pay you back.

Oedipus
Arrogance without respect [aidōs], where do you think this hubris falls - on my old age, or on your own? Bloodshed, incest, misery - all this your tongue has launched against me, and all this I have borne in my wretchedness by no choice of mine. For this was philon to the gods, who felt mēnis, perhaps, with my family from of old. Taking me alone, you could not find a reproach for any crime, in retribution for which I was driven to commit these errs against myself and against my kin. Tell me now: if, by the voice of an oracle, some divine doom was coming on my father, that he should die by a son's hand, how could you justly reproach me with this, when I was then unborn, when no father had yet begotten me, no mother's womb conceived me? But if, having been born to misery - as I was born - I came to blows with my father and slew him, ignorant of what I was doing and to whom, how could you reasonably blame the unwitting deed? And my mother - wretch, do you feel no shame in forcing me to speak of her marriage, when she was your sister, and when it was such as I will now tell? For I will not be silent, when you have gone so far in impious speech.

Yes, she was my mother, yes - alas, for my miseries! I did not know it, nor did she, and to her shame she bore children to the son whom she had borne. But one thing, at least, I know: that you willingly
revile her and me, but I did not willingly marry her, and I do not willingly speak now. No, I will not be called kakos on account of this marriage, nor in the slaying of my father, which you charge me with again and again in bitter insult. 990 Answer just one thing of those about which I inquire [historeîn]. If, here and now, someone should come up and try to murder you - you, the dikaios one - would you ask if the murderer was your father, or would you revenge yourself on him immediately? 995 I think that if your life is philon to you, you would requite the one who is guilty [aitios], and not look around for a justification. Such then were the evils into which I came, led by the gods; and to them, I think, my father's psukhē, could it come back to life, would not contradict me. 1000 But you are not dikaios; you are one who considers it a fine thing to make every sort of utterance [epos], both those which are sanctioned and those which are forbidden - such are your taunts against me in the presence of these men. And to you it seems a fine thing to flatter the renowned Theseus, and Athens, saying how well-established an abode [oikos] it is. 1005 Yet while giving such generous praise [ep-ainos], you forget that if any land knows how to worship the gods with timai, this land excels in that. It is from her that you had planned to steal me, a suppliant and an old man, and tried to seize me, having already carried off my daughters. 1010 Therefore I now call on the goddesses here, I supplicate them, I beseech them with prayers, to bring me help and to fight on my behalf, that you may learn well what kind of men this polis is guarded by.

Chorus
The xenos is a good man, lord. 1015 His fate has been accursed, but it is worthy of our aid.

Theseus
Enough of words. The doers of the deed are in flight, while we, those who suffer [paskhein], stand still.

Creon
What order, then, do you have for a powerless man?

Theseus
Guide the way on the path to them while I escort you, 1020 in order that if you are keeping the maidens whom we seek in these lands, you yourself may reveal them to me. But if your men are fleeing with the spoils in their grasp, we may spare our trouble; the chase is for others, from whom they will never escape out of this land to thank their gods. 1025 Come, lead the way! And know that the captor has been captured; fate has seized you as you hunted. Gains got by guile without dikē are not saved [sōzein]. And you will have no ally in your purpose; for I well know that it is not without accomplice or resource that you have come to such 1030 hubris, from the daring mood which has inspired you here. There was someone you were trusting in when you did these deeds. This I must consider, and I must not make this polis weaker than one man.

Does your noos pick up on any of these things? 1035 Or do these words seem as empty as the warnings given when you were laying your plans?

Creon
Say what you wish while you are here; I will not object. But at home I too will know how to act.

Theseus
Make your threats, then, but go forward. As for you, Oedipus, stay here in peace with my pledge that, unless I die beforehand, 1040 I will not cease until I put you in possession of your children.
Oedipus at Colonus

Oedipus
May you have recompense [kharis], Theseus, for your nobleness and for your observance of dikē in caring for me!

Theseus exits with attendants and Creon.

Chorus

Oh, to be where the enemy, turned to fight, 1045 will soon join in Ares’ clash of bronze, by the shores of Apollo, perhaps, or by that torch-lit beach 1050 where the Great Goddesses maintain awesome rites [telos pl.] for mortals on whose lips the ministering Eumolpidai70 have laid the golden seal of silence. There, I think, the war-rousing 1055 Theseus and the two maiden sisters with soon meet within our borders, amid the war-cry of resisting men!

Or perhaps they will soon draw near to the pastures on the west of Oea’s snowy rock, 1060 fleeing on young horses or in chariots racing full speed. He will be caught! 1065 Terrible is the neighboring Ares, terrible the might of the followers of Theseus. Yes, the steel of every bridle flashes, 1070 and against their opponents our whole cavalry charges forward, who give timē to Athena, Our Lady of the Horses, and to the earth-girdling god of the sea [pontos], the philos son of Rhea.

Is the battle now or yet to be? 1075 For somehow my mind presages to me that soon I will meet the maidens who have suffered fearfully, who have found fearful suffering [pathos pl.] at the hands of a kinsman.

Today Zeus will bring something to telos. 1080 I am a mantis who predicts noble struggles [esthloi agōnes]. Oh, to be a dove with the strength and swiftness of a whirlwind, that I might reach an airy cloud, and hang my gaze above the agōnes!

1085 Hear, all-ruling lord of the sky, all-seeing Zeus! Grant to the guardians of this land to achieve with triumphant might the capture that gives the prize into their hands! And may your daughter too bring it to telos, dread Pallas Athena! 1090 And Apollo, the hunter, and his sister, who follows the spotted, swift-footed deer - I wish that they would come, a double help 1095 to this land and to its people.

Wanderer xenos, you will not say your watcher was a false mantis, for I see your daughters once again drawing near.

Oedipus
Where? Where? What’s that? What do you mean?

Antigone and Ismene enter with Theseus and his attendants.

Antigone
Father, father, 1100 I wish some god would grant that your eyes might see this most noble [aristos] man, who has brought us here to you!

70 The priests in charge of the rites of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis.
Oedipus
My child, are you really here?

Antigone
Yes, for these strong arms have saved [sōzein] us - Theseus and his most philoi followers.

Oedipus
Come here, my children, to your father! 1105 Grant me your embrace - restored beyond all hope!

Antigone
We shall grant your wish, for we crave the favor [kharis] we bestow.

Oedipus
Where, then, where are you?

Antigone
Here we are, approaching you together.

Oedipus
Most philai offspring!

Antigone
Everything is philon to its parent.

Oedipus
Supports of a man -

Antigone
Ill-fated as he is ill-fated.

Oedipus
1110 I hold my most philai. Now, if I should die, I would not be wholly wretched, since you have come to me. Press close to me on either side, children, cling to your father, and rest from your wandering, so desolate, so grievous! 1115 And tell me what has happened as briefly as you can, since brief speech suffices for young maidens.

Antigone
Here is the one who saves us [sōzein]: you should hear the story from him, father, and the deed will be brief for you and me.

Oedipus
Xenos, do not be amazed at my persistence, if I prolong my words to my children, 1120 found again beyond my hope. I well know that my present joy in them has come to me from you, and you alone, for you - and not any other mortal - have saved [sōzein] them. May the gods grant to you my wish, 1125 both to you yourself and to this land; for among you, above all mankind, I have found the fear of god, the spirit of decency, and lips that tell no lie. I know these things, and I repay them with these words; for what I have, I have through you, and no one else. 1130 Stretch out to me your right hand, lord, that I may
touch it; and if it is *themis*, let me kiss [verb of *philos*] your cheek. But what am I saying? Wretched as I have become, how could I consent to touch a man in whom no stain of evils has made its abode [*oikos*]? I will not touch you - nor will I allow it, if you do consent. They alone, who know them, can share these burdens. Receive my greeting where you stand, and in the future too give me your care, with all *dikē*, as you have given it up to this hour.

**Theseus**

I feel no amazement, if you have had a lengthy conversation 1140 from joy in these children, or if your first concern has been for their words rather than for me. Indeed, there is nothing to vex me in that. Not with words so much as deeds would I add luster to my life. You have this proof: 1145 I have cheated you in none of my sworn promises, old man. Here am I, with the maidens living, uninjured by those threats. As to how the *ağōn* was won, what need have I vainly to boast of what you will learn from these two when you are together? 1150 But there is a matter that has just presented itself to me, as I came here. Give me your counsel regarding it; for, though it is small, it is food for wonder. And mortal man must consider nothing beneath his concern.

**Oedipus**

1155 What is it, son of Aegeus? Tell me; I myself know nothing of what you inquire.

**Theseus**

They say a man - not from your *polis*, yet of your family - has somehow thrown himself down, as a suppliant, at our altar of Poseidon, where I was sacrificing when I first set out here.

**Oedipus**

1160 What land does he come form? What does he desire by his supplication?

**Theseus**

I know one thing only: they tell me he asks you for a chance to deliver a brief speech [*muthos*], a thing of no great burden.

**Oedipus**

On what topic? That suppliant state is of no small account.

**Theseus**

He asks, they say, no more than that he may confer with you, 1165 and return unharmed from his journey here.

**Oedipus**

Who can he be that implores the god in this way?

**Theseus**

Consider whether there is anyone in your family at Argos, who might desire this favor from you.

**Oedipus**

Most *philos*, say no more!
Theseus
What is wrong?

Oedipus
1170 Don’t ask me for...

Theseus
For what? Speak!

Oedipus
From hearing these things I know who the suppliant is.

Theseus
And who can he be, that I should have an objection to him?

Oedipus
My son, lord, a hated son whose words would vex my ear like the words of no man besides.

Theseus
1175 What? Can you not listen, without doing what you do not wish to do? Why does it pain you to hear him?

Oedipus
Lord, that voice has become most hateful to his father. Do not constrain me to yield in this.

Theseus
But consider whether his suppliant state constrains you; 1180 what if you have a duty of respect for the god?

Antigone
Father, listen to me, though I am young who will advise [paraineîn]. Allow this man here to give favor [kharis] to his own phrēn and to the god as he wishes, and for your daughters’ sake allow our brother to come. 1185 He will not tear you by force from your resolve - never fear - with such words as will not be for your good. What harm can there be in listening to words? Deeds wickedly devised, as you know, are betrayed by speech. You sired him, 1190 so, even if he wrongs you with the most impious of wrongs, father, it is not right [themis] for you to wrong him in return. Let him come! Other men too have kakoi offspring and a sharp thumos, but they hear advice and are charmed from their mood by the gentle spells of philoi. 1195 Look to the past, away from the present; consider all the pains that you have suffered [paskhein] through your father and mother. If you consider those things, I know well that you will perceive that the coming to telos of an evil thumos is evil. Your reasons to reflect on this are not trivial, 1200 bereft of your unseeing eyes. Yield to us! It is not a fine thing for those seeking just things [dikaia] to keep asking; nor is it good that a man should experience [paskhein] good treatment, and thereafter not know how to requite it.
Oedipus at Colonus

**Oedipus**
My child, by your pleading you overcome me; but your pleasure here is my grief. 1205 Still, let it be as is *philon* to you. Only, if that man is to come here, *xenos*, let no one ever become master over my *psukhē*.

**Theseus**
Once only do I need hear such words, and no more, old man. I do not want to boast, 1210 but you may feel sure that you are saved [adj. of *sōter*], if indeed one of the gods is meanwhile saving [sōzein] me.

*Theseus* exits.

**Chorus**

*strophe*
Whoever craves the longer length of life, not content to desire a moderate span, him I will judge with no uncertainty: he clings to folly. 1215 For the long years lay in deposit many things nearer to pain than joy; but as for your delights, you will find them nowhere, when someone's life has fallen beyond the fitting period. 1220 The Helper comes at last to all alike, when the fate of Hades is suddenly revealed, without marriage-song, or lyre, or *khoroi*: Death at the coming to *telos*.

*antistrophe*
1225 Not to be born is, beyond all estimation, best; but when a man has seen the light of day, this is next best by far, that with utmost speed he should go back from where he came. For when he has seen youth go by, with its easy letting-go of *phrenes*, 1230 what hard affliction is foreign to him, what ordeals [*kamatoi*] does he not know? Killings, strife [*stasis* pl.], eris, battles, 1235 and envy. Last of all falls to his lot old age, blamed, drained of power [*kratos*], unsociable, without *philoi*, wherein dwells [*oikeîn*] every misery among miseries.

*epode*
In such years is this poor man here, not I alone. 1240 Like some cape that fronts the north which is lashed on every side by the waves of winter, so he also is fiercely lashed evermore by the dread disasters [*atai*] that break on him like the surf, some from the region of the setting sun, 1245 some from that of its rising, some in the realm of its noon-time rays, some from the gloom-wrapped hills of the North.

**Antigone**
Look, the *xenos*, it seems, is coming here to us. 1250 Yes, without attendants, father, with tears streaming from his eyes.

**Oedipus**
Who is he?

**Antigone**
The very man who was in our thoughts from the first. Polyneikes has come to us.

*Polyneikes enters.*

**Polyneikes**
Ah me, what should I do? Should I weep first 1255 for my own woes, sisters, or for those of my father here, in his old age? I have found him in a foreign [*xenē*] land, here with you two as an exile, clad in such garments as these. Their filth, a thing contrary to *philoi*, has resided with the old man for long. 1260
wasting his flesh; while above the sightless eyes the unkempt hair flutters in the breeze; and matching with these things, it seems, is the food that he carries, sustenance for his poor stomach.

Wretch that I am! I learn all this too late. 1265 And I bear witness that I have proved the most kakos of men in all that concerns care for you; from my own lips hear what I am. But seeing that Zeus himself in all his actions has Aidôs beside him to share his throne, may she come to your aid too, father. For the errors committed can be healed, 1270 but can never be made worse.

Why are you silent? Speak, father. Don’t turn away from me. Don’t you have any answer at all for me? Will you dismiss me without a word, without timê, and not tell me why you have mênis? 1275 Seed of this man, my sisters, you at least must try to move our father’s implacable, inexorable silence, so that he may not send me away like this, without timê and with no word [epos] in return, when I am the suppliant of the god.

Antigone
1280 Tell him yourself, unhappy man, what you have come to seek. When words flow, you know, they may give joy, or incite anger or pity, and so they may give a voice to the mute.

Polyneikes
Then I will speak boldly, for you give me excellent guidance, 1285 first claiming the help of the god himself, from whose altar the king of this land raised me to come to you, with a guaranty to speak and hear, and go my way unharmed. And I wish these pledges, xenoi, to be kept with me by you, and by my sisters here, and by my father. 1290 But now I want to tell you, father, why I came. I have been driven as an exile from my fatherland, because, as eldest-born, I thought it right to sit on your sovereign throne. 1295 Therefore Eteokles, though the younger, thrust me from the land, when he had neither defeated me by an argument of law, nor made a trial of might and deed. He brought over the polis by persuasion. The cause [aitia] of this, I claim, is most of all the curse [Erinys] on your house; 1300 I also hear this from soothsayers. For when I came to Dorian Argos, I made Adrastos my father-in-law. And I bound to me by oath all men of the Apian land who are foremost in their renown for war, 1305 so that with their aid I might collect the seven armies of spearmen against Thebes, and die in the cause of dikê, or drive the doers of this wrong from the land. All right then, why have I come to you now? Bearing prayers of supplication, father, in person to you, 1310 my own prayers and those of my allies, who now with seven armies behind their seven spears have set their blockade around the plain of Thebes. One such is swift-speared Amphiarao, a matchless warrior, and a matchless diviner; 1315 then comes the son of Oineus, Aetolian Tydeus; Eteoklos is third, of Argive birth; the fourth, Hippomedon, is sent by Talaos, his father; while Kapanes, the fifth, boasts that he will burn Thebes to the ground with fire; and sixth, Arcadian Parthenopaios rushes to the war. 1320 He is named for that virgin 71 of long ago from whose marriage in later time he was born, the trusty son of Atalanta. Last come I, your son - or if not yours, then the offspring of an evil fate, but yours at least in name - 1325 leading the fearless army of Argos to Thebes. It is we who implore you, father, every one of us, by your daughters here and by your psukhê, begging you to forgo your fierce mênis against me, as I go forth to punish my brother, 1330 who has expelled me and robbed me of my fatherland. For if anything trustworthy comes from oracles, they said that whomever you join in alliance will have victorious power [kratos]. Then, by the streams of water and gods of our race, I ask you to listen and to yield. 1335 I am a beggar and a xenos, as you are yourself; by paying court to others both you and I have an abode [oikos], obtaining by lot the same daimôn. But he is turannos at

71 Parthenopaios means ‘having the looks of the maiden [parthenos]’.
home - wretched me! - and in his luxuriance [habrosunē] laughs at you and me alike. 1340 But if you join as ally to my phrēn, with little trouble [ponos] or time I will scatter his strength to the winds, so that I will bring you home and set you in your own house, and set me in mine, when I have cast him out by force. If you are with me, then I can make this boast; but without you 1345 I cannot even be saved [sōzein].

Chorus
For the sake of him who has sent this man, Oedipus, speak what seems good to you, before you send him away.

Oedipus
Guardians of this land, if it were not Theseus who had sent him here to me, thinking it right [dikaion] that he should hear my response, 1350 then never would he have heard my prophetic voice [omphē]. But now he will be graced with it, before he goes, and hear from me such words as never will gladden his life. 1355 Most kakos of men, when you had the scepter and the throne, which now your brother has in Thebes, you drove me, your own father, into exile; and by depriving me of the polis you caused me to wear this clothing at whose sight you weep, now that you have come to the same state of misery as I. 1360 The time for tears is past. I must bear this burden as long as I live, and keep you before my mind as a murderer. For it is you that have made me subject to this anguish; it is you that have thrust me out, and because of you I wander, begging my daily bread from strangers. 1365 And had these daughters not been born to me to be my comfort, in truth I would be dead, for lack of help from you. But now these girls save [sōzein] me; they are my nurses; they are men, not women, in sharing my ordeal [ponos]. But you are from another and are no sons of mine. 1370 Therefore the daimōn looks upon you - not yet as he soon will look, if indeed those armies of yours are moving against Thebes. There is no way in which you can ever overthrow that polis. Before that you will fall, tainted by the pollution [miasma] of bloodshed, and so too your brother. 1375 Such curses as my heart before now sent up against you both, I now invoke to fight for me, in order that you may think it fit to revere your parents and not to treat utterly without timē your father, because he who begot such sons is blind. It was not my daughters here who did this. 1380 This supplication of yours, and this throne of yours, will lie in the power [kratos] of my curses, if indeed dikē, revealed long ago, sits beside Zeus, to share his throne through sanction of primordial laws [nomoi]. But off to perdition with you, abhorred by me and unfathered! 1385 Take these curses which I call down on you, most kakos of the kakoi: may you never have power [kratos] over your native land, and may you never have a nostos to the valley of Argos; I pray that you die by a related hand, and slay him by whom you have been driven out. This is my prayer. 1390 And I call on the hateful darkness of Tartaros that your father shares, to take you into another abode [oikos]; and I call on the she-daimones of this place, and I call on Ares, who has set dreadful hatred in you both. Go with these words in your ear; 1395 go and announce to all the Kadmeians, and to your own faithful allies, that Oedipus has distributed such portions to his sons.

Chorus
Polyneikes, in your past travels I take no joy. Now go back with speed.

Polyneikes
Alas, for my journey and my failed attempt! Alas, for my companions! 1400 Such is the telos of the road on which we set out from Argos - wretched me! - such an end, that I cannot even mention it to any of my companions or turn them back, but must go in silence to meet this fate. 1405 But you, daughters of this man and my sisters, since you hear these hard curses of a father, do not - if this father's curses are to reach a telos and you find some way of nostos to Thebes - do not, I beg you by the gods, leave me without
timē, 1410 but give me burial and due funeral rites. So the praise [ēp-ainos] which you now win from this man here for your ordeals [ponoi] will be increased by another praise no less, through your care for me.

**Antigone**
Polyneikes, I beseech you, hear me in one thing!

**Polyneikes**
1415 What is it, most philē Antigone? Speak!

**Antigone**
Turn your force back to Argos as quickly as may be, and do not destroy both yourself and your polis.

**Polyneikes**
No, it is not possible. For how could I lead the same force again, when once I had shrunk back?

**Antigone**
1420 But why, my brother, must your thumos rise again? What gain will come to you from destroying your native land?

**Polyneikes**
It is shameful to be in exile, and to be mocked in this way by my brother, when I am eldest-born.

**Antigone**
Do you see to what sure fulfillment the words of this man who speaks like a mantis are leading, 1425 who declares mutual death for you two?

**Polyneikes**
Yes, for he wishes it. But I must not yield.

**Antigone**
Ah, wretched me! But who will dare follow you, when he hears what prophecies this man has uttered?

**Polyneikes**
1430 I will not report ill-tidings; a good leader should tell the better news, and not the worse.

**Antigone**
Is this then your fixed decision, my brother?

**Polyneikes**
Yes, and do not detain me. This path now will be my destiny, ill-fated and evil, because of my father here and his Furies [Erinyes]. But as for you two, 1435 may Zeus grant you good things, if you bring these things to telos for me when I am dead, since in life you will see me no more. Now release me, and farewell; for never again will you behold me living.

**Antigone**
Ah, wretched that I am!
Polyneikes
Do not mourn for me.

Antigone
And who would not mourn you, brother, when you are hurrying off to a death foreseen?

Polyneikes
If it is fated, then I must die.

Antigone
No, no, listen to my prayer!

Polyneikes
Do not plead for what must not be.

Antigone
Then I, indeed, am utterly wretched, if I must lose you!

Polyneikes
It rests with the daimôn, this way or that. But as for you two, I pray to the gods that you may never meet with evil; for in all men’s eyes you do not deserve to suffer. Polyneikes exits.

Chorus
Behold, new ills of heavy fate have newly come from the blind xenos, unless, perhaps, fate is finding its goal. I cannot say that a purpose of the daimones is ever vain. Time sees all things forever, and raises up some things, then on the next day raises others back up again. The sky resounds! Zeus!

Thunder.

Oedipus
Children, children! If there is any man still here, send him forth to bring back Theseus, most noble [aristos] in all respects.

Antigone
And what, father, is the purpose of your summons?

Oedipus
This winged thunder of Zeus will soon lead me to Hades. So send someone with speed.
Thunder.

Chorus

Listen! With a louder noise this one crashes down unspeakably, 1465 hurled by Zeus! The hair of my head stands up for fear, my thumos is dismayed; for again the lightning flashes in the sky. What telos does it release? 1470 I fear it, for never does it fly forth in vain, or without misfortune. O great Sky! O Zeus!

Oedipus

Children, the appointed coming to the telos of life has reached this man; he can turn from it no more.

Antigone

How do you know? By what means do you understand this?

Oedipus

1475 I know it well. But let some one go, I pray you, as quickly as he can, and bring back the lord of this land.

Thunder.

Chorus

Look! Look! Once again the piercing din is around us! 1480 Be merciful, daimōn, be merciful, if you are bringing anything of gloom for the land which is our mother! May I find you well disposed, and may I not, because I have cared for a man accursed, somehow obtain a profitless return [kharis]! 1485 Lord Zeus, to you I cry!

Oedipus

Is the man near? Will he find me still in possession of my psukhē, children, and master of my phrenes?

Antigone

And what is the pledge that you would like to have firm in your phrēn?

Oedipus

In return for his benefits, 1490 I would grant him the coming to telos of the favor [kharis] that I promised.

Chorus

Hurry, my son, come to us! If you chance to be in the glade sacrificing an ox to the sea-god Poseidon, 1495 then come! For the xenos thinks you worthy, you and your polis and your philoi, to receive thanks [kharis] with dīkē in return for benefits experienced [paskhein]. Hasten quickly, lord!

Theseus enters.
What din is this that once more rings forth from you all, from my people as clearly as from our 
exenos? Can a thunderbolt from Zeus be the cause, or rushing hail in its fierce onset? When the god sends
such a storm, foreboding of every sort may find a place.

Lord, you have appeared at my desire, and to you some god granted noble [ēsthē] fortune at this
coming.

And what new thing has now occurred, son of Laios?

My life hangs in the balance; and I wish to die without cheating you and this polis of what I solemnly
declared [sun-ainēn].

And what is the proof of your fate that you depend on?

The gods themselves are heralds [kērux pl.] in announcing the news to me, nor do they cheat me of any of
the appointed signs [sēmata].

What makes these things clear? Tell me, old man.

The thunder, crash after crash; the lightning, flash after flash, hurled from the unconquered hand.

I am persuaded, for in much I find you a prophet whose voice is not false. Then say what must be done.

I will expound myself, son of Aegeus, the treasures which will be laid up for this polis, such as age can
never hurt. Immediately, with no hand to guide me, I will be leader to the place where I must die.
But as to that place, never reveal it to another man, neither where it is hidden, nor in what region it lies,
so that it may be an eternal defense for you, better than many shields, better than the spear of neighbors
which brings relief. But as for mysteries which speech may not profane, you will learn them
yourself when you come to that place alone, since I cannot declare them either to any of these people, or
even to my own children, though I love them. Save [sōzein] them always to yourself, and when you
reach the end [telos] of living, indicate [sēmainein] them to your eldest son alone, and let him reveal them
to his successor in turn forever. In this way you will inhabit [oikeîn] this polis unscathed by the men born
of the Dragon’s teeth. Countless cities commit hubris, even though their neighbor commits no
wrong. For the gods are slow to punish, yet they are sure, when men scorn holiness and turn to frenzy.
Do not desire to experience [paskhein] this, son of Aegeus! But you know such things as these without my
teaching. Let us now set forth to that place - the divine summons urges me - and hesitate no
longer.
Children, follow me. For now in turn it is I that shine forth wondrously as a leader for you, as you were your father’s. Onward. Do not touch me, but 1545 allow me unaided to find the holy [hieros] tomb where it is my fate [moira] to be secreted away in this land. This way, here, come this way! Hermes the Conductor and the goddess of the dead lead me in this direction. Light of day, no light to me, once you were mine, 1550 but now my body feels you for the last time! For now go to hide the coming to telos of my life in the house of Hades. But you, most philos of xenoi, may you yourself have a good daimon, and this land, and your followers. In your prosperity, 1555 remember me in my death, and be fortunate evermore.

He exits, followed by his daughters, Theseus, and attendants.

Chorus

If it is themis for me with prayer to adore the Unseen Goddess [Persephone], and you, Lord of the Dead, then hear me, Aidoneus, Aidoneus [Hades]! 1560 Grant that without labor [ponos], without a fate arousing heavy grief [akhos], the xenos may pass to the all-concealing fields of the dead below, and to the Stygian house. 1565 Many were the sorrows that came to him without cause, but a daimon that is just [dikaios] will lift him up again.

A Messenger enters.

Messenger
Citizens, my news might be summed up most briefly thus: Oedipus is dead. 1580 But the muthos of the happening cannot be told in brief words, as the deeds done there were not brief.

Chorus
Is he gone, the unfortunate man?

Messenger
You may be sure that he has obtained his eternal life.

Chorus
1585 How? By a fate divine and without labor [ponos], the poor man?

Messenger
In that you touch upon what is indeed worthy of wonder. How he departed from here, you yourself must know since you were here: with no one of his philoi as guide, but rather with himself leading the way for us all. 1590 When he had come to the Descending Way, which is bound by steps of bronze to earth’s deep roots, he paused at one of the many branching paths near the hollow crater72 in the rock, where the

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72 The Greek word krater means ‘mixing-bowl’ and, by extension, ‘crater’.  

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faithful covenant of Theseus and Perithoös has its memorial. He stood midway between that basin and the Thorikios Rock, and between the hollow pear-tree and the marble tomb; then he sat down and loosened his filthy clothing. And then he called his daughters, and bade them bring water from some flowing source, so that he might wash and make a drink-offering. They went to the hill which was in view, the hill of Demeter of the tender plants, and in a short time brought what their father had commanded. Then they washed him and dressed him, as is the custom. But when all his desire was fulfilled, and nothing that he required was still undone, then Zeus of the Underworld sent forth his thunder, and the maidens shuddered as they heard. They fell weeping at their father’s knees, and did not cease from beating their breast, and from wailing loud. When he heard their sudden bitter cry, he put his arms around them and said: “My children, on this day your father no longer exists. Now I have perished utterly, and no longer will you bear the burden of tending me, which was no light one, I well know, my children. Yet just one word turns all those toils to nothing: you have been treated as philai by no one more than by this man; and now you will have me with you no longer, through all your days to come.” In this way, clinging close to one another, the father and his daughters sobbed and wept. But when they came to the end of their crying, and the sound of wailing went forth no more, there was a silence; suddenly a voice called aloud to him, so that everyone felt the hair on their heads stand up from the sudden terror. The god called him again and again: “Oedipus! You, over there, Oedipus! Why do you delay our going? Too long you have been lingering.”

And when he perceived that he was called by the god, he asked that lord Theseus should come to him; and when he did, he said: “Philos, give me the sworn pledge of your right hand for my children; and you, my daughters, for him. Give your solemn word never to betray them by your own free will, but always to bring to a telos whatever is in your phrenes for their benefit.” And he, as a man of noble spirit, without lamentation swore to give his solemn word to his xenos. When Theseus had done this, immediately Oedipus felt for his children with blind hands, and said: “Children, you must bear up nobly in your phrenes and depart from this place; do not consider it right to look upon what is not themis, or to hear such speech as you may not hear. Go in haste; let only Theseus be entitled to remain to learn of those things that are done.” So he spoke, and every one of us listened; with streaming tears and mourning we followed the maidens away. But when we had gone off, very soon we looked back and saw that Oedipus was nowhere any more and our lord was alone, holding his hand in front of his face to screen his eyes, as if he had seen some terrifying sight, one that no one could endure to behold. And then after a short time, we saw him adore together the earth and Olympus of the gods in the same prayer. But by what fate Oedipus perished, no man can tell, except Theseus alone. It was no fiery thunderbolt of the god that removed him, nor any rising of a gust of wind from the pontos; it was either an escort from the gods, or else the dark world of the dead gaped open, with good noos, to receive him. The man passed away without lamentation or sickness or suffering, and beyond all mortal men he was wondrous.

Chorus

Where are his daughters and the escort of their philoi?

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73 Theseus and Perithoös journeyed together to the Underworld, but only Theseus was able to return.
74 Meaning ‘Leaping Rock’; Thorikios is apparently derived from thoros ‘leaping; semen’.
75 The epithet eukholos ‘of the tender plants’ is related to khloë ‘growth of tender plants’, which is related to the epithet of Demeter, Khloë = Chloe. This epithet is also a name, as in the ancient erotic novel Daphnis and Chloe.
76 The verb drân means ‘do’ or ‘perform ritual, sacrifice’.
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**Messenger**
Not far away; the sounds of mourning indicate [sēmainein] plainly that they are approaching.  
*Antigone, Ismene, and attendants enter.*

**Antigone**
1670 Ah me, ah me! Now, indeed, is it for us to bewail in full the curse on our blood - ill-fated sisters as we are - deriving from our father! In former time we bore the long ordeal [ponos] without pause, 1675 and now at the last we bring to tell a sight and experience [pathos] that baffle reason.

**Chorus**
What is it?

**Antigone**
It is possible to conjecture, *philoi*.

**Chorus**
He is gone?

**Antigone**
Precisely in the way you could most wish for: indeed, neither Ares took him, nor the sea [pontos], 1680 but instead he was snatched away to the fields which no one may see, carried along by some swift, strange doom. Wretched me! For us a night like death has descended on our eyes; 1685 how shall we find our hard livelihood, roaming to some far land, or on the waves of the sea [pontos]?

**Ismene**
I do not know. If only murderous Hades would join me in death to my aged father! 1690 Wretched me! I cannot live the life that must be mine.

**Chorus**
Best of daughters, you both must bear the will of the gods. Do not be inflamed with too much grief; 1695 what you have encountered is not to be blamed.

**Antigone**
antistrophe 1
There is longing even for woes. What was in no way *philon* was *philon*, so long as I held him in my embrace. 1700 Father, *philos*, clothed in the darkness of the underworld forever! Never in your absence will you not be *philos* to me and to my sister here.

**Chorus**
He fared...

**Antigone**
He fared as he desired.
Chorus
1705 In what way?

Antigone
He died on the foreign [xene] ground that he desired; he has his well-shaded bed beneath the ground for ever; and he did not leave behind unwept sorrow [penthos]. With these weeping eyes, father, I lament you; 1710 nor do I know how in my wretchedness I must still my grief [akhos] for you that is so immense. Alas! You wanted to die in a foreign [xene] land, but you died without me near.

Ismene
Wretched me! What fate 1715 awaits you and me, philē, orphaned as we are of our father?

Chorus
1720 Cease from your grief [akhos], philai, since he has discharged his telos in a way that is blessed [olbios]. No one is beyond the reach of evil.

Antigone
Philē, let us hasten back.

Ismene
1725 To do what deed?

Antigone
A longing fills my soul...

Ismene
For what?

Antigone
To see the netherworld home.

Ismene
Of whom?

Antigone
Wretched me! Of our father.

Ismene
And how can this be themis? Surely you understand?

Antigone
1730 Why this rebuke?

Ismene
And surely you know this, too...
Antigone
What more would you tell me?

Ismene
That he perished without a tomb, apart from everyone.

Antigone
Lead me there, and then kill me, too.

Ismene
Unhappy me! Abandoned and helpless, 1735 where am I now to live my wretched life [aiōn]?

Chorus
antistrophe 2
Philai, do not be afraid.

Antigone
But where shall I flee?

Chorus
Already a refuge has been found...

Antigone
What do you mean?

Chorus
1740...that no harm befall you.

Antigone
I feel...

Chorus
What are you thinking?

Antigone
How we are to go home, I cannot tell.

Chorus
Do not seek to go.

Antigone
Trouble surrounds us.

Chorus
And previously it bore heavily.
Oedipus at Colonus

Antigone
1745 Then it was desperate, but now even crueler.

Chorus
Vast, then, is the sea of your troubles.

Antigone
Alas, alas! Zeus, where shall we turn? 1750 To what last hope does the daimōn now drive us?

Theseus enters.

Theseus
Cease your lament, children! Where the grace [kharis] of the nether night is stored up, there is no room for public sorrow [penthos]; nemesis would follow.

Antigone
Son of Aegeus, we supplicate you!

Theseus
1755 To obtain what desire, my children?

Antigone
We want look with our own eyes upon our father’s tomb.

Theseus
It is not themis to go there.

Antigone
What do you mean, lord, ruler of Athens?

Theseus
1760 Children, he told me that no one should draw near that place, or approach with prayer the holy [hiera] tomb in which he sleeps. He said that, so long as I saw to this, I would always keep the country free from pain. 1765 The daimōn heard me say these things, as did the all-seeing Oath of Zeus.

Antigone
If this is his noos, we must be content with it. 1770 Send us to ancient Thebes, in case we may somehow stop the bloodshed that threatens our brothers.

Theseus
I will do both this and whatever other favorable service I can, for you 1775 and for the newly-departed under the earth, according to reciprocity [kharis]. I am bound to spare no pains.

Chorus
Cease; raise up the lamentation no further. These things are established firm
Before the palace of Oedipus in Thebes. SUPPLIANTS ARE SEATED AT THE ALTARS. Oedipus enters.

Oedipus
My children, latest-born wards of old Kadmos, why do you sit before me thus with wreathed branches of suppliants, while the city reeks with incense, rings with prayers for health and cries of woe? I did not think it right, my children, to hear these things from the mouths of others, and have come here myself, Oedipus, with kleos among all people. Tell me, venerable old man since it is proper that you speak for these - in what mood you sit here, one of fear or of desire? Be sure that I will gladly give you all my help. I would be hard-hearted indeed if I did not pity such suppliants as these.

Priest of Zeus
Oedipus, ruler of my land, you see the age of those who sit on your altars: some, nestlings still too tender for flight; others, bowed with age, priests of Zeus like me; and some, these here, the chosen youth. The rest of the folk sit with wreathed branches in the agora, and before the twin temples of Athena, and where Ismenos gives answer by fire. The polis, as you yourself see, is now sorely buffeted, and can no longer lift her head from beneath the angry waves of death. A blight has befallen the fruitful blossoms of the land, the herds among the pastures, the barren pangs of women. And the flaming god, a most hateful plague, has swooped upon us, and ravages the polis; he lays waste to the house of Kadmos, but enriches Hades with groans and tears. It is not because we rank you with the gods that I and these children are suppliants at your hearth, but because we deem you the first among men in life’s common chances and in dealings with the daimones. Coming to the city of the Kadmeians, you freed us of the tax that we rendered to the hard songstress, and when you knew no more than anyone else, nor had you been taught, but rather by the assistance of a god, as the story goes, you uplifted our life. Now, Oedipus, most powerful, we, your suppliants, beseech you to find some succor for us, whether you hear it from some divine omen, or learn of it from some mortal. For I see that the outcome of the counsels of experienced men most often have effect. Come, best aristos among mortals, resurrect our polis! Come, take care, since now this land gives you kleos as its savior for your former zeal. Let it not be our memory of your reign that we were first set up straight and then cast down; resurrect this polis so that it falls no more! With good omen you provided us that past happiness; show yourself the same now too, since if you are to rule this land just as you do now, it is better to be lord of men than of a wasteland. Neither tower nor ship is anything, if it is empty and no men dwell within.

Oedipus
My piteous children, I know quite well the desires with which you have come; I know well that you all are sick, and though you are sick I know well that there is not one of you who is as sick as I. Your pain

77 By solving the riddle of the Sphinx.
78 The verb anorthoûn means either ‘cause to stand up straight’ or, mystically, ‘resurrect’.
79 The idiom is es orthon ‘into a straight position’.
80 Again, anorthoûn.
comes on each of you for himself alone, and for no other, but my \( \text{psukhē} \) groans at once for the \( \text{polis} \), for myself, and for you. 65 You are not awakening me from sleep; no, be sure that I have wept many tears, gone many ways in the wanderings of my thought. I have made use of the only remedy which I could find after close consideration: I sent my wife’s brother 70 Creon, Menoikeus’ son, to Apollo’s Pythian residence in order to learn what we might do or say to protect this \( \text{polis} \). And now, when the lapse of days is reckoned, I’m troubled about what he is doing, for he tarries oddly 75 beyond the fitting length of time. But when he arrives, I will be \( \text{kakos} \) if do not perform all that the god reveals.

**Priest**

You have spoken opportunistically, since at this time these people here indicate \( \text{sēmaineīn} \) that Creon is drawing near.

**Oedipus**

80 Lord Apollo, may he come to us in the brightness of saving \( \text{sōtēr} \) fortune, even as his face is bright!

**Priest**

He seems to bring comfort, since otherwise he would not be coming thickly crowned with berry-laden bay.

**Oedipus**

We will soon know: he is in range of hearing.

To Creon.

85 Lord, my relation, child of Menoikeus, what news have you brought us from the god?

**Creon**

Good news. I tell you that even troubles hard to bear will end in perfect peace if they find the right issue.

**Oedipus**

But what kind of answer \( \text{epos} \) was there? So far your words make me 90 neither bold nor fearful.

**Creon**

If you want to hear in the presence of these people, I am ready to speak: otherwise we can go inside.

**Oedipus**

Speak to all. The sorrow \( \text{penthos} \) that I bear for these is more than for my own life \( \text{psukhē} \).

**Creon**

95 I will tell you what I heard form the god. Phoebus our lord clearly bids us to drive out the defilement \( \text{miasma} \), which he said was harbored in this land, and not to nourish it so that it cannot be healed.

**Oedipus**

With what sort of purification? What is the manner of the misfortune?

**Creon**

100 By banishing the man, or by paying back bloodshed with bloodshed, since it is this blood which brings the tempest on our \( \text{polis} \).
Oedipus Tyrannos

Oedipus
And who is the man whose fate he thus reveals?

Creon
Laios, my lord, was leader of our land before you directed\textsuperscript{81} this polis.

Oedipus
105 I know it well - by hearsay, for I never saw him.

Creon
He was slain, and the god now bids us to take vengeance on his murderers, whoever they are.

Oedipus
Where on earth are they? Where shall the dim track of this old guilt [\textit{aitia}] be found?

Creon
110 In this land, the god said. What is sought after can be caught; only that which is not watched escapes.

Oedipus
Was it in the house, or in the field, or on foreign soil that Laios met his bloody end?

Creon
He left our land, as he said, as an emissary [\textit{the\ddot{o}ros}] to Delphi. 115 And once he had set forth, he never again returned.

Oedipus
And was there none to tell? Was there no traveling companion who saw the deed, from whom tidings might have been gained and used?

Creon
All perished, save one who fled in fear, and could tell with assurance only one thing of all that he saw.

Oedipus
120 And what was that? One thing might hold the clue to many, if we could only get a small beginning for hope.

Creon
He said that robbers fell upon them, not in one man's might, but with a force of many.

Oedipus
How then, unless some intrigue had been worked with bribes 125 from here in Thebes, would the robber have been so bold?

\textsuperscript{81} The verb\textit{ euthunein} 'direct' literally means 'make straight'.
Creon
Such things were surmised. But once Laios was slain no avenger arose amid our evils.

Oedipus
But when tyranny had fallen in this way, what evil prevented a full search?

Creon
The riddling Sphinx had led us to let things that were obscure go, and to investigate what was at our feet.

Oedipus
I will start afresh, and once more cast light on these things. Worthily has Phoebus Apollo - and worthily have you - bestowed this care on the cause of the dead. And so, as is dikē, you will find me leagued with you in seeking vengeance for this land, and for the god as well. I will dispel this taint not on behalf of far-off philoi, but on my own behalf. For whoever slew Laios might wish to take vengeance on me also with a hand as fierce. Therefore by avenging Laios I serve myself. Come, my children, as quickly as possible rise from the altar-steps, and lift these suppliant boughs. Let someone summon here Kadmos’ people, warning them that I will leave nothing untried. With the god’s help our good fortune - or our fall - will stand revealed.

Priest
My children, let us rise. What we came to seek, this man promises of his own accord. And may Phoebus, who sent these oracles, come to us as savior and deliverer from the pestilence.

The Chorus of Theban elders enters.

Chorus
O sweetly-speaking message of Zeus, in what spirit have you come to glorious Thebes from golden Pytho? I am on the rack, terror shakes my phrēn, O Delian healer to whom wild cries rise, in holy fear of you, wondering what thing you will work for me, perchance unknown before, perchance renewed with the revolving seasons. Tell me, immortal Voice, child of golden Hope.

First I call on you, daughter of Zeus, immortal Athena, and on your sister, Artemis, guardian of our earth, who sits on her throne of good kleos above the circle of our agora, and on far-shooting Apollo: O shine forth for me, my three-fold help against death! If ever before you drove a fiery pest from our borders to stop disasters rushing upon our polis, come now also!

Alas, countless are the sorrows I bear! A plague is on all our people, and thought can find no weapon for defense. The fruits of the glorious earth do not grow; by no birth of offspring do women surmount the labors in which they shriek. You can see life after life speed away, like a bird on the wing, swifter than irresistible fire, to the shore of the western god.

With such deaths past numbering, the polis perishes. Unpitied, her children lie on the ground, spreading pestilence, with no one to mourn them. Meanwhile young wives and gray-haired mothers raise a wail at the steps of the altars, some here, some there, and groan in supplication for their
terrible pains [ponoi]. The prayers to the Healer ring clear, and with them the voice of lamentation. For which things, golden daughter of Zeus, send us the bright face of comfort.

strope 3

190 Grant that the fierce god of death, who now, without the bronze of shields, yet amidst cries as though of battle, wraps me in the flames of his onset, may turn his back in speedy flight from our land, borne by a favorable wind to the great chamber of Amphitrite, 195 or to the Thracian waves, those waters where no xenoi find haven. For if night leaves anything undone, it comes to fulfillment [telos] by day. You who wield the 200 powers [kratos pl.] of fiery lightning, Zeus our father, slay him beneath your thunderbolt.

antistrophe 3

Lykeian Lord, would that the shafts from your bent bow’s string of woven gold might 205 go forth in their might, our champions in the face of the foe, and the flashing fires of Artemis too, with which she darts through the Lycian hills. I call him whose locks are bound with gold, 210 who is named with the name of this land, ruddy Dionysus to whom Bacchants cry, to draw near with the blaze of his shining torch, 215 our ally against the god without timē among the gods.

Oedipus

You pray. And in answer to your prayer, if you will give a loyal reception to my words [epea], and minister to your own disease, you may hope to find succor and relief from woes. These words I will speak publicly, as one who was a stranger [xenos] to the report, 220 a stranger to the deed. I would not go far on the trail if I were tracing it alone, without a clue [sumbolon]. But as it is - since it was only after the event that I was counted a Theban among Thebans - to you, Kadmeians all, I do thus proclaim:

Whoever of you knows 225 by whom Laios son of Labdakos was slain, I bid him to indicate [sēmainein] all to me. And if he is afraid, I order him to remove the danger of the charge from his path by denouncing himself; he will suffer no other punishment, but will only leave this land, unhurt. 230 If anyone knows the assassin to be an alien, from another land, let him not keep silent. I will make him profit [kerdos], and my gratitude [kharis] shall rest with him besides. But if he keeps silent, if anyone, through fear, seeks to screen himself or a philos from my pronouncement [epos], 235 then hear what I shall do. I charge you that no resident of this land, of which I hold the royal power [kratos], receive or address that murderer, whoever he is, or make him a partner in prayer or sacrifice, 240 or give him a share of the lustral rite. Ban him from your houses, all of you, knowing that this is the pollution [miasma], as the oracle of the Pythian god has recently shown to me. In this way 245 I am an ally to the daimōn and to the dead man. And I pray solemnly that the slayer, whoever he is, whether he has gotten away alone or with partners, may wear out his unblest life evilly as he is evil [kakos]. And for myself I pray that if he should, 250 with my knowledge, become a resident of my house, I may suffer [paskhein] the same things which I have just called down on others. I order you to make all these words come to fulfillment [telos], for my sake, for the sake of the god, and for the sake of our land, thus blasted with barrenness by angry heaven.

Even if the matter had not been urged upon us by a god, 255 it still would not have been fit that you should leave the guilt thus unpunished, when one so noble - and he your king - had perished. You should have searched it out. But now, since I hold the powers which he once held, 260 possessing his bed and the wife who bore his children, and since, had his hope of offspring [genos] not been unsuccessful, children born of one mother would have tied us with a common bond - as it was, fate swooped upon his head - I will uphold this cause, as though it were that of my own father, 265 and will leave no stone unturned in my search for the one who shed the blood, for the honor of the son of Labdakos - and son of Polydoros and of Kadmos before him and of Agenor of old.
And for those who do not obey me, I pray that the gods 270 send them neither harvest of the earth nor fruit of the womb, but that they perish by the present fate, or by one still worse. But to all you other Kadmeians who are satisfied by these things, may dikē, our ally, 275 and all the gods be gracious always.

Chorus
As you have put me under oath, on my oath, my lord, I will speak. I am not the slayer, nor can I reveal him. As for the investigation, it was for Phoebus, who enjoined it, to tell us who wrought the deed.

Oedipus
280 Justly [dikaia] said. But no man on earth can force the gods to do what they do not want.

Chorus
I would like to say what seems to me the next best course.

Oedipus
And if there is a third course, do not hesitate to reveal it.

Chorus
I know that our lord Teiresias is the seer most like our 285 lord Apollo; from him, my lord, an investigator might learn most clearly about these affairs.

Oedipus
Not even this have I left uncared for. On Creon’s suggestion, I sent a man to bring him. And I’ve been wondering for some time why he is not here.

Chorus
290 Indeed - his skill apart - the words [epea] are but faint and old.

Oedipus
What sort are they? I am investigating every tale.

Chorus
He was said to have been killed by some wayfarers.

Oedipus
I too have heard that. But no one sees the one who did it.

Chorus
If he knows what fear is, he will not hesitate to come forward when he 295 hears your curses, so dire are they.

Oedipus
When a man does not shrink from a deed, neither is he scared by a word.

Chorus
But there is no one to convict him. For here they bring at last the godlike seer [mantis], the only man in whom what is true [alēthēs] lives.
Teiresias enters, led by a boy.

**Oedipus**

300 Teiresias, whose soul grasps all things, that which may be told and that which is unspeakable, the secrets of heaven and the affairs of the earth - you feel with your phrēn, though you cannot see, what a huge plague haunts our polis. From which, great prophet, we find you to be our protector and only savior [sētēr]. 305 Now, Phoebus - if indeed you have not heard the reports - has sent answer to our question that the only way to rid ourselves of this pest that afflicts us is to discover the slayers of Laios, and then to slay or banish them from our land. 310 Do not, then, begrudge us the voice of the birds or any other path of the knowledge of the seer [mantis], but save yourself and your polis, save me, save all that is damaged by the defilement [miasma] of the dead. We are in your hands, and man’s noblest labor [ponos] is to help others 315 to the best of his means and powers.

**Teiresias**

Alas, how terrible it is to have phrenes when it does not benefit those who have it. I knew this well, but let it slip from mind; otherwise I would not have come here.

**Oedipus**

What now? How disheartened you have come!

**Teiresias**

320 Let me go home. For you will bear your own burden to the end, and I will bear mine, if you consent.

**Oedipus**

Your words are strange and unkindly to the polis which nurtured you, since you withhold this response.

**Teiresias**

I see that you, for your part, speak what is off the mark [kairos]. 325 Therefore do not speak, so I will not suffer [paskhein] the same.

**Oedipus**

For the love of the gods, don’t turn away, if you have phrenes; we all implore you on our knees as suppliants.

**Teiresias**

All of you lack phrenes. Never will I reveal my evils - not to call them yours.

**Oedipus**

330 What are you saying? Do you know the secret and refuse to tell it? Will you betray and destroy the polis?

**Teiresias**

I will grieve neither myself nor you. Why do you ask these things in vain? You will not learn the answers from me.
Oedipus
You would anger a stone! Most kakos of the kakoi, will you not speak out? Can nothing touch you? Will you never come to an end [telos]?

Teiresias
You find fault with my anger, but you do not perceive your own that lives with you; no, you blame me.

Oedipus
Who would not be angry hearing such words [epea], with which you now are slighting the polis?

Teiresias
Though future will come of itself, though I shroud it in silence.

Oedipus
Since it must come anyway, it is right that you tell it to me.

Teiresias
I will speak no further; rage, if you wish, with the fiercest wrath your thumos knows.

Oedipus
In my anger I will not spare to speak all my thoughts. Know that you seem to me to have helped in plotting the deed, and to have done it, short of performing the actual murder with your own hands; if you had eye-sight, I would have said that you had done even this by yourself.

Teiresias
True [alēthēs]? I order you to abide by your own decree, and from this day forth not to speak to these men or to me, since you are the accursed defiler of this land.

Oedipus
So brazen with your blustering taunt? Where do you think to escape to?

Teiresias
I have escaped. There is strength in my truth [alēthēs].

Oedipus
Who taught you this? Not your skill, at any rate.

Teiresias
You yourself. For you spurred me on to speak against my will.

Oedipus
What did you say? Speak again, so I may learn it better.

Teiresias
Did you not understand before, or are you talking to test me?
Oedipus
I cannot say I understood fully. Tell me again.

Teiresias
I say that you are the killer of the man whose slayer you seek.

Oedipus
Now you will regret that you have said such dire words twice.

Teiresias
Should I tell you more, that you might get more angry?

Oedipus
Say as much as you want; it will be said in vain.

Teiresias
I say that you have been living in unguessed shame with your most philos, and do not see to what woe you have come.

Oedipus
Do think that you will always be able to speak like this without smarting for it?

Teiresias
If indeed there is any strength in truth [αἱθεὶς].

Oedipus
There is, except for you. You do not have that strength, since you are maimed in your ears, in your noos, and in your eyes.

Teiresias
And you are a poor wretch to utter taunts that every man here will soon hurl at you.

Oedipus
Night, endless night has you in her keeping, so that you can never hurt me 375 nor any man that sees the light of the sun.

Teiresias
No, it is not your fate to fall at my hands, since Apollo, to whom this matter is a concern, is sufficient.

Oedipus
Are these Creon’s devices, or your own?

Teiresias
Creon is no trouble for you; you are your own.
Oedipus

380 O wealth, and tyranny, and skill surpassing skill in life’s keen rivalries, how great is the envy in your keeping, if, for the sake of this power which the polis has entrusted to me, a gift unsought, 385 Creon the trustworthy, Creon my old philos, has crept upon me by stealth, yearning to overthrow me, and has suborned such a scheming juggler as this, a tricky quack, who has eyes only for gain [kerdos], but is blind in his art!

390 Come, tell me, where have you proved yourself a seer [mantis]? Why, when the watchful dog who wove dark song was here, did you say nothing to free the people? Yet the riddle [ainigma] was not for the first comer to read: there was need for the help of a mantis, 395 and you were discovered not to have this art, either from birds, or as known from some god. But rather I, Oedipus the ignorant, stopped her, having attained the answer through my wit alone, untaught by birds. It is I whom you are trying to oust, thinking that 400 you will have great influence in Creon’s court. But I think that you and the one who plotted these things will rue your zeal to purge the land; if you did not seem to be an old man, you would have learned at the cost of your suffering [pathos] what sort of phrenes you have.

Chorus

To our way of thinking, these words, both his and yours, Oedipus, 405 have been said in anger. We have no need of this, but rather we must seek how we shall best discharge the mantis-delivered words of the god.

Teiresias

Though you are turannos, the right of reply must be deemed the same for both; over that I have power [kratos]. 410 For I do not live as your slave, but as Loxias’. I will not stand enrolled under Creon for my patron. And I tell you, since you have taunted my blindness, that though you have sight, you do not see what evil you are in, nor where you dwell, nor with whom. 415 Do you know who your parents are? You have been an unwitting enemy to your own people, both in the Underworld and on the earth above. And the double lash of your mother’s and your father’s curse will one day drive you from this land in dreadful haste, with darkness upon those eyes of yours which now can see. 420 What place will be harbor to your cries, what part of all Kithairon will not ring with them soon, when you have learned the meaning of the nuptials in which, within that house, you found a fatal haven, after a voyage so fair? And you have not guessed a throng of other evils, 425 which will bring you level with you true self and with your own children. Therefore heap your scorn upon Creon and upon my message; no man will ever be crushed more miserably than you.

Oedipus

Are these taunts to be endured from him? 430 Be gone, to your ruin, be gone this instant! Will you not turn your back and leave this house?

Teiresias

I would not have come if you had not called me.

Oedipus

I did not know you would speak foolishly, for otherwise it would have been a long time before I summoned you to my home.
Teiresias
435 I was born like this - as you think, a fool, but in the opinion of the parents who bore you, quite in control of the phrenes.

Oedipus
What parents? Wait. What man is my sire?

Teiresias
This day will reveal your birth and bring your ruin.

Oedipus
What riddles [ainigma pl.], what dark words you always say.

Teiresias
440 Are you not the best at unraveling mysteries?

Oedipus
Reproach me in what you will find me to be great.

Teiresias
Yet it was just that fortune that undid you.

Oedipus
But if it saved [sōzein] this polis, I care not.

Teiresias
I take my leave. You, boy, lead me.

Oedipus
445 Yes, let him take you; here you are a hindrance, a source of trouble. When you have gone, you will vex me no more.

Teiresias
I will go when I have performed the errand for which I came, fearless to your frown; you can never destroy me. I tell you that the man whom you have been seeking this long while, 450 uttering threats and proclaiming a search into the murder of Laios, is here, apparently an emigrant stranger [xenos], but soon to be found a native of Thebes, unhappy about his fortune. A blind man, though now he sees, 455 a beggar, though now rich, he will make his way to a foreign land, feeling the ground before him with his staff. And he will be discovered to be at once brother and father of the children with whom he consorts; son and husband of the woman who bore him; 460 heir to his father's bed, shedder of his father's blood. So go in and evaluate this, and if you find that I am wrong, say then that I have no phrenes in the art of the mantis.

They exit.
Chorus

strophe 1

Who is he who the divine voice from the Delphian rock has said 465 wrought with blood-red hands horrors that no tongue can tell? It is time [hōra] that he ply in flight a foot stronger than the feet of storm-swift steeds. 470 The son of Zeus is springing upon him with fiery lightning, and with him come the dread unerring Fates.

antistrophe 1

Recently the message has flashed forth from snowy Parnassus 475 to make all search for the unknown man. He wanders under cover of the wild wood, among caves and rocks, fierce as a bull, wretched and forlorn on his joyless path, still seeking to separate himself from the words of the mantis revealed at the central shrine of the earth. 480 But that doom ever lives, ever flits around him.

strophe 2

The wise augur moves me, neither approving nor denying, with dread, with dread indeed. 485 I am at a loss what to say. I am fluttered with expectations, seeing neither the present nor the future clearly. Never in past days or in these have I heard how the house of Labdakos 490 or the son of Polybos had any quarrel with one another that I could bring as proof 495 in assailing the public reputation of Oedipus, seeking to avenge the line of Labdakos for the undiscovered murder.

antistrophe 2

Zeus and Apollo indeed are perceptive [sunetoi] and know the affairs of the earth. 500 But there is no true test [alēthēs krisis] of whether a mortal mantis attains more knowledge than I do, though man may surpass man in wisdom [sophia]. 505 But until I see the word made good, I will never assent when men blame Oedipus. Before all eyes the winged maiden came against him once upon a time, and he was seen to be sophos, 510 and bore the test in welcome service to the polis. Never, therefore, will he be judged guilty of evil my phrenes.

Creon enters.

Creon

Fellow-citizens, having learned that Oedipus the turannos accuses me and makes terrible utterances [epea] against me, I have come, indignant. 515 If he thinks that in the present troubles he has suffered [paskhein] from me, by word or by deed, anything harmful, in truth I desire not my full term of years, when I must bear such blame as this. The wrong of this rumor 520 touches me not in one point alone, but has the largest scope, if I am to be called a kakis in the polis, kakis by you and by my philoi.

Chorus

But perhaps this taunt came under the stress of anger, rather from the purpose of his phrenes.

Creon

525 Was it said that my counsels had brought the mantis to utter his falsehoods?

Chorus

Such things were said - I don’t know with what meaning.

Creon

And was this charge laid against me with steady eyes and steady phrēn?
Chorus
530 I don’t know. I see not what my masters do. But here comes our lord from the house.

Oedipus enters.

Oedipus
You, how did you get here? Are you so boldfaced that you have come to my house, you who are manifestly the murderer of its master, 535 the palpable thief of my tyranny? Come, tell me, in the name of the gods, was it cowardice or folly which you saw in me and which led you to plot this thing? Did you think that I would not notice this deed of yours creeping upon me by stealth, or that if I became aware of it I would not ward it off? 540 Is your attempt not foolish, to seek the tyranny without followers or philoi — a prize which followers and property must win?

Creon
Mark me now: hear a fair reply in answer to your words, and then judge for yourself on the basis of knowledge.

Oedipus
545 You are apt in speech, but I am poor at learning from you, since I have found you a malignant foe.

Creon
Now hear first how I will explain this very thing.

Oedipus
One thing — that you are not evil [kakos] — don’t bother to explain to me.

Creon
If you think that stubbornness 550 without noos is a good gift, you do not have your phrenes straight.

Oedipus
If you think you can wrong a kinsman and escape the dikē, then you do not have phrenes.

Creon
Justly said, I grant you; but tell me what the wrong is that you say you are suffering [paskhein] at my hands.

Oedipus
555 Did you, or did you not, advise me to send for that revered mantis?

Creon
Even now I am of the same mind.

Oedipus
How long is it, then, since Laios...
**Creon**
Did what? My noos fails me.

**Oedipus**
560 Was swept out of sight by deadly violence.

**Creon**
The count of years would run far into the past.

**Oedipus**
Did this *mantis* possess this skill in those days?

**Creon**
He was *sophos* as now, and held in equal *timē*.

**Oedipus**
Did he make mention of me at that time?

**Creon**
565 Never, certainly, when I was within hearing.

**Oedipus**
Did you never investigate the murder?

**Creon**
Due search we held, of course; we learned nothing.

**Oedipus**
And how was it that this *sophos* man did not tell this story then.

**Creon**
I do not know; where I lack *phrenes* it is my custom to be silent.

**Oedipus**
570 This much, at least, you know, and could declare with insight enough.

**Creon**
What is that? If I know it, I will not deny.

**Oedipus**
That, if he had not conferred with you, he would never have named me as Laios’ slayer.

**Creon**
If he says this, you know best; but I deem it just [*dikaios*] 575 to learn from you as much as you have from me now.
Oedipus Tyrannos

Oedipus
.Learn your fill. I will never be convicted as a murderer.

Creon
Say, then - have you married my sister?

Oedipus
That inquiry [historia] allows no denial.

Creon
And you rule the land as she does, with equal sway?

Oedipus
580 She obtains from me all that she wishes.

Creon
And do I not rank as a third peer of you two?

Oedipus
It’s just there that you are seen to be an evil [kakos] philos.

Creon
Not so, if you would reason with your heart as I do with mine. Weigh this first: whether you think that anyone would 585 choose to rule amid terrors rather than in unruffled peace, granted that he is to have the same powers [kratos pl.]. Now I, for one, have by nature no yearning to be turannos rather than to do the deeds of a turannos, and neither does any man I know who understands how to have moderation [sōphrosunē]. 590 For now I attain everything from you without fear, but, if I were ruler myself, I would have to do much even against my own pleasure.

How then could tyranny be sweeter for me to have than painless rule and influence? Not yet am I so misguided 595 that I desire anything besides the good which brings gain [kerdos]. Now every man has a greeting for me; now all that have a request of you crave to speak with me, since therein lies all their hope of success. Why then should I resign these things and take those others? 600 No noos will become kakos while it has good phrenes. No, I am no lover of such policy, and if another put it into action, I could never bear to go along with him. And, in proof of this, first go to Pytho, and ask whether I brought a true report of the oracle. 605 Then next, if you have found that I have planned anything in concert with the soothsayer, take and slay me, by the sentence not of one mouth, but of two - of my own no less than yours. But do not assume me guilty [aitios] on unproved surmise. It is not just to judge the bad good at random, 610 nor the good bad. I count it a like thing for a man to cast off a true philos as to cast away the life in his own bosom, which he most loves. You will surely learn about these affairs in time, since time alone reveals a dikaios man. 615 But you can discern a bad man even in one day alone.

Chorus
He has spoken well, my lord, for one who is taking care not to fall; those who are quick in phrenes are not sure.
Oedipus
When the stealthy plotter is moving on me quickly, I, too, must be quick in my counterplot. If I await him at leisure [hāsukhia], his ends will have been gained, and mine lost.

Creon
What do you want then? To banish me from the land?

Oedipus
Hardly. I desire your death, not your exile, so that I might show what a thing is envy.

Creon
625 Are you resolved not to yield or believe?

Oedipus
[Oedipus’ response is missing.]

Creon
I see you are not in possession of phrenes.

Oedipus
Sane, at least, in my own interest.

Creon
But you should be so in mine also.

Oedipus
You are kakos.

Creon
But if you understand nothing?

Oedipus
Still I must rule.

Creon
Not if you rule badly.

Oedipus
O polis, polis!

Creon
630 The polis is mine too, not yours alone.

Chorus
Cease, lords. Just in time I see Iocasta coming from the house, with whose help you should resolve your present feud.
Iocasta enters.

Iocasta
Misguided men, why have you raised such foolish strife [stasis] of tongues? Are you not ashamed, while the land is so sick, to stir up ills of your own? Come, go into the house - and you, Creon, go to yours - and stop making so much of a petty grief.

Creon
Kinswoman, Oedipus your husband wants to do one of two terrible evils to me, either to thrust me from the land of my fathers or to arrest and slay me.

Oedipus
Yes indeed, for I have caught him, lady, working evil against my person with his evil craft.

Creon
May I get no benefit, but perish accursed, if I have done any of the things of which you charge me.

Iocasta
In the name of the gods, believe it, Oedipus; first have respect [aidōs] for this oath of the gods, then for me, and for these men who stand before you.

Chorus
Consent, have phrenes, listen, my lord. I beg you.

Oedipus
What would you have me grant you?

Chorus
Respect him who was in the past not inept [nēpios], and who now is strong in his oath.

Oedipus
Do you understand what you crave?

Chorus
I do.

Oedipus
Tell me what you mean.

Chorus
That you should never use an unproved rumor to cast a dishonoring charge on the philos who has bound himself with a curse.

Oedipus
Then be very sure that when you seek this you are seeking death or exile from this land.
Chorus
660 No, by the god foremost among all the gods, by the Sun! Without gods, without philoi, may I die the worst possible death, if I have this thought in my phrenes! 665 But my unhappy soul is worn by the withering of the land, as well as by the thought that our old woes should be crowned by new ones arising from the two of you.

Oedipus
Then let him go, though I am surely doomed to death, 670 or to be thrust without timē from the land by force. Your words, not his, move me to compassion.

Chorus
You are truly sullen in yielding, as you are vehement in the excesses of your thumos. But such natures are 675 justly most difficult for themselves to bear.

Oedipus
Then will you not be gone and leave me in peace?

Creon
I will go on my way. I have found you undiscerning, but in the view of these men I am just.

Creon exits.

Chorus
Woman, why do you hesitate to take this man into the house?

Iocasta
680 I will, when I have learned what has happened.

Chorus
Blind suspicion arose, bred of talk, and injustice inflicts wounds.

Iocasta
On both sides?

Chorus
Yes.

Iocasta
And what was the story?

Chorus
685 It is enough, I think, enough, when our land is already vexed, that the matter should rest where it ceased.
Oedipus
Do you see to what you have come, though noble [agathos] in intention, in seeking to relax and blunt my zeal?

Chorus
Lord, I have said it more than once: 690 be sure that I would be shown to be a madman, bankrupt in sane counsel [phrenes], if ever I forsake you, who gave a true course to my philē country when it was 695 distraught with pains [ponoi], and who now are likely to prove our prospering guide.

Iocasta
In the name of the gods, tell me, lord, the reason that you have conceived this steadfast mēnis.

Oedipus
700 That I will do, for I respect you, wife, above these men. Creon is the cause, and the plots he has laid against me.

Iocasta
Come, tell me how the quarrel began.

Oedipus
He says that I am the murderer of Laios.

Iocasta
On his own knowledge or on hearsay from another?

Oedipus
705 He has made a rascal mantis his mouth-piece; as for himself, he keeps his lips wholly pure.

Iocasta
Then absolve yourself of the things about which you are speaking. Listen to me, and take comfort in learning that nothing of mortal birth is a partaker in the art of the mantis. 710 I will give you a pithy indication [sēmeía] of this: An oracle came to Laios once - I will not say from Phoebus himself, but from his ministers - saying that he would suffer his fate at the hands of the child to be born to him and me. 715 And he - as the rumor goes - was murdered one day by strange [xenoi] robbers at a place where the three highways meet. The child's birth was not yet three days past, when Laios pinned his ankles together and had it thrown, by others' hands, on a remote mountain. 720 So, in that case, Apollo did not bring it to pass that the child should become the slayer of his father, or that Laios should suffer [paskhein] that which he feared: death at the hands of his child; thus the messages of the seer's art had foretold. Pay them no regard. Whatever necessary event 725 the god seeks, he himself will easily bring to light.

Oedipus
What restlessness of psukhē, wife, what tumult has come upon my phrenes since I heard you speak!

Iocasta
What anxiety has startled you, that you say this?
Oedipus
I thought that I heard this from you: that Laios 730 was slain where the three roads meet.

Iocasta
Yes, that was the report, and it has not yet ceased.

Oedipus
And where is the place where this event [pathos] occurred?

Iocasta
The land is called Phocis; the branching forks lead to the same spot from Delphi and from Daulia.

Oedipus
735 And how much time has passed since these events took place?

Iocasta
The news was announced to the polis shortly before you were first seen in power over this land.

Oedipus
O Zeus, what have you decreed to do to me?

Iocasta
Why, Oedipus, does this matter weigh upon your heart?

Oedipus
740 Don’t ask me yet. Tell me rather what stature Laios had, and how ripe his manhood was.

Iocasta
He was tall - the silver just lightly strewn among his hair - and his form was not greatly unlike your own.

Oedipus
Unhappy that I am! I think that I have 745 laid myself under a terrible curse without realizing it.

Iocasta
How do you mean? I tremble when I look at you, my lord.

Oedipus
I have dread fears that the mantis can see. But you will reveal the matter better if you tell me one thing more.

Iocasta
Indeed, though I tremble, I will hear and answer all that you ask.

Oedipus
750 Did he go with a small force, or like a chieftain, with many armed followers?
Iocastā
Five they were in all - a herald [kērux] among them - and there was one carriage which bore Laios.

Oedipus
755 Alas! It's all clear now! Who gave you these tidings, lady?

Iocastā
A servant, the only survivor who returned home.

Oedipus
Is he perchance in the house now?

Iocastā
No. Soon after he returned and found you holding power [kratos pl.] in Laios’ stead, 760 he pleaded with me, with hand laid on mine, to send him to the fields, to the pastures of the flocks, that he might be far from the sight of this city. And I sent him; he was worthy, for a slave, to win even a larger favor [kharis] than that.

Oedipus
765 Then may he return to us without delay!

Iocastā
That is easy. But why do you enjoin this?

Oedipus
I fear, lady, that my words have been rash, and therefore I wish to behold him.

Iocastā
He will come. But I think that 770 I too have a claim to learn what lies heavy on your heart, my lord.

Oedipus
It will not be kept from you, now that my foreboding have advanced so far. To whom more than to you would I speak in suffering such a fortune as this? My father was Polybos of Corinth, 775 my mother the Dorian Merope. I was considered the greatest man among the townspeople there, until a chance befell me, worthy of wonder, though not worthy of my own haste regarding it. At a banquet, a man drunk with wine 780 cast it at me that I was not the true son of my father. And I, vexed, restrained myself for that day as best as I could, but on the next went to my mother and father and questioned them. They were angry at the one who had let this taunt fly. 785 So I had comfort about them, but the matter rankled in my heart, for such a rumor still spread widely. I went to Delphi without my parents’ knowledge, and Phoebus sent me forth without giving me the timē of the knowledge for which I had come, 790 but in his response set forth other things, full of sorrow and terror and woe: that I was fated to defile my mother’s bed, that I would reveal to men a brood which they could not endure to behold, and that I would slay the father that sired me. When I heard this, I turned in flight from the land of Corinth, 795 from then on thinking of it only by its position under the stars, to some spot where I should never see fulfillment [telos] of the infamies foretold in my evil doom. And on my way I came to the land in which you say that this turannos perished. 800 Now, wife, I will tell you the truth [alēθēs]. When on my journey I was near those
three roads, there I met a herald [kērux], and a man in a carriage drawn by colts, as you have described. The leader and the old man 805 himself tried to thrust me by force from the path. Then, in anger, I struck the one pushing me aside, the driver, and when the old man saw this, he watched for the moment I was passing, and from his carriage, brought his double goad full down on my head. 810 Yet he was paid back with interest: with one swift blow from the staff in this hand he rolled right out of the carriage onto his back. I slew every one of them. But if this xenos had any tie of kinship to Laios, 815 who is now more wretched than this man before you? What mortal could be proved more hateful to heaven? No xenos, no citizen, is allowed to receive him at home, it is unlawful for anyone to accost him, and all must push him from their homes. And this - this curse - 820 was laid on me by no other mouth than my own. And I pollute the bed of the slain man with my hands by which he perished. Am I now kakos? Oh, am I not utterly unclean, seeing that I must be banished, and in banishment neither see my own people, 825 nor set foot in my own land, or else be joined in wedlock to my mother, and slay my father Polybos, who sired and reared me. Then would he not speak correctly about Oedipus, who judged these things to be sent down by some cruel daimôn? 830 Forbid, forbid, you pure and awful gods, that I should ever see that day! No, may I be swept away from all men, before I see myself visited with that brand of doom.

Chorus
To us, lord, these things are fraught with fear. Yet have hope, until at least you have gained full knowledge 835 from the one who saw the deed.

Oedipus
I have, in truth, this much hope alone: I await the man summoned from the pastures.

Iocasta
And what do you want from him when he appears?

Oedipus
I will tell you. If his story is found 840 to tally with yours, I will stand clear of suffering [pathos].

Iocasta
And what special note did you hear from me?

Oedipus
You said that he spoke of Laios as slain by robbers. If he still speaks of several as before, I was not the slayer: 845 a solitary man could not be considered the same as that band. But if he names one lonely wayfarer, then beyond doubt this deed is leaning in my direction.

Iocasta
Be assured that thus the story [epos] was first told. He cannot revoke that, 850 for the polis heard it, not I alone. But even if he should diverge somewhat from his former story, never, lord, can he show that the murder of Laios is justly [dikaia] square with the prophecy, for Loxias plainly said that he was to die at the hand of my child. 855 How was it then that that poor innocent never slew him, but perished first? So henceforth, as far as the words of a mantis are concerned, I would not look to my right hand or my left.

Oedipus
You judge well. But nevertheless send someone to fetch the peasant, 860 and neglect not this matter.
Iocasta
I will send without delay. But let us go into the house: nothing will I do save what is philon to you.

They go into the palace.

Chorus

May fate [moira] still find me winning the praise of reverent purity in all words and 865 deeds sanctioned by those laws [nomoi] of range sublime, called into life through the high clear sky, whose father is Olympus alone. The mortal nature of men did not beget them, 870 nor shall oblivion ever lay them to sleep: the god is mighty in them, and he grows not old.

Antistrope 1

Hubris breeds the turannos. Hubris, once vainly stuffed with wealth 875 that is not proper or good for it, when it has scaled the topmost ramparts, is hurled to a dire doom, where no use of the feet serves to good advantage. But I pray that the god never 880 quell such rivalry as benefits the polis. The god I will ever hold for our protector.

Strophe 2

But if any man walks haughtily in deed or word, 885 with no fear of dikē, no reverence for the images of daimones, may an evil fate seize him for his ill-starred pride, if he will not get his profit [kerdos] with dikē, 890 or avoid unholy deeds, but seeks to lay profaning hands on things untouchable. Where such things occur, what mortal shall boast any more that he can ward off the arrow of the gods from his psukhē? 895

If such deeds are held in timē, why should I be part of the khoros?

Antistrope 2

No longer will I go reverently to the earth’s central and inviolate shrine, no more to Abae’s temple or to Olympia, 900 if these oracles do not fit the outcome, so that all mortals shall point at them with their fingers. 905 No, wielder of power - if thus you are rightly called - Zeus, Lord of all, may it not escape you and your deathless power! The old prophecies concerning Laios are fading; already men annul them, and nowhere is Apollo glorified with timai; 910 the worship of the gods is perishing.

Iocasta enters.

Iocasta

Lords of the land, the thought has come to me to visit the shrines of the daimones, with this wreathed branch and these gifts of incense in my hands. For Oedipus excites his thumos excessively with all sorts of griefs, 915 and does not judge the new things from the old, like a man of noos, but is under the control of the speaker, if he speaks of frightful things. Since I can do no good by counsel, to you, Lykeian Apollo - for you are nearest - 920 I have come as a suppliant with these symbols of prayer, that you may find us some riddance from uncleanness. For now we are all afraid looking upon him, like those who see the pilot [kubernētēs] of their ship stricken with panic.

A messenger enters.

Messenger

Can you tell me, xenoi, where 925 the palace of the turannos Oedipus is? Or better still, tell me where he himself is, if you know.
Chorus
This is his dwelling, and he himself, xenos, is within. This woman here is the mother of his children.

Messenger
Then may she be ever fortunate [olbia] in a prosperous [olbios] home, 930 since she is his spouse in ritual fullness [telos].

Iocasta
May you be likewise, xenos; your fair greeting deserves this. But say what you have come to seek or to indicate [sēmainein].

Messenger
Good tidings, woman, for your house and your husband.

Iocasta
935 What are they? From whom have you come?

Messenger
From Corinth, and at the message I will give now you will doubtless rejoice, yet haply grieve.

Iocasta
What is it? Why has it this double potency?

Messenger
The people will make him turannos of the 940 Isthmian land, as it was said there.

Iocasta
How then? Is the aged Polybos no longer in power [kratos]?

Messenger
No. For death holds him in the tomb.

Iocasta
What do you mean? Is Polybos dead, old man?

Messenger
If I am not speaking the truth [alēthēs], I am content to die.

Iocasta
945 Handmaid, away with all speed, and tell this to your master! O you mantis-delivered words of the gods, where do you stand now? It is this man that Oedipus long feared he would slay. And now this man has died in the course of destiny, not by his hand.
Oedipus enters.

Oedipus
950 Iocasta, most philē wife, why have you summoned me forth from these doors?

Iocasta
Hear this man, and judge, as you listen, to what the awful mantis-delivered words have come.

Oedipus
Who is he and what news does he have for me?

Iocasta
955 He comes from Corinth to tell you that your father Polybos lives no longer, but has perished.

Oedipus
How, xenos? You be the one who indicates [sêmainein] it.

Messenger
If I must first make these tidings plain, know indeed that he is dead and gone.

Oedipus
960 By treachery, or from illness?

Messenger
A light tilt of the scale brings the aged to their rest.

Oedipus
Ah, he died, it seems, of sickness?

Messenger
Yes, and of the long years that he had lived.

Oedipus
Alas, alas! Why indeed, my wife, should one look to the 965 hearth of the Pythian mantis, or to the birds that scream above our heads, who declared that I was doomed to slay my sire? But he is dead, and lies beneath the earth, and here I am, not having put my hand to any spear - unless, perhaps, he was killed by longing for me; 970 thus I would be the cause of his death. But the oracles as they stand Polybos has swept with him to his rest in Hades. They are worth nothing.

Iocasta
Did I not long ago foretell this to you?

Oedipus
You did, but I was mislead by my fear.
Iocasta
975 Now no longer keep any of those things in your thumos.

Oedipus
But surely I must fear my mother’s bed.

Iocasta
What should a mortal man fear, for whom the decrees of Fortune are supreme, and who has clear foresight of nothing? It is best to live at random, as one may. 980 But fear not that you will wed your mother. Many men before now have so fared in dreams. But he to whom these things are as though nothing bears his life most easily.

Oedipus
All these words of yours would have been well said, 985 were my mother not alive. But as it is, since she lives, I must necessarily fear, though you speak well.

Iocasta
Your father’s death is a great sign for us to take cheer.

Oedipus
Great, I know. But my fear is of her who lives.

Messenger
And who is the woman about whom you fear?

Oedipus
990 Merope, old man, the consort of Polybos.

Messenger
And what is it in her that moves your fear?

Oedipus
A heaven-sent mantis-delivered word of dread import, xenos.

Messenger
Lawful, or unlawful, for another to know?

Oedipus
Lawful, surely. Loxias once said that I was 995 doomed to marry my own mother, and to shed with my own hands my father’s blood. For which reasons I long shirked my home in Corinth - with a happy outcome, to be sure, but still it is sweet to see the face of one’s parents.

Messenger
1000 Was it really for fear of this that you became an exile from that polis?
Oedipus
And because I did not wish, old man, to be the murderer of my father.

Messenger
Why did I not release you from this fear right away, lord? After all, I have come here with a noos that is favorable to you.

Oedipus
And you would get a worthy return [kharis] from me.

Messenger
1005 Why, that is the biggest reason for my coming, so that I would do well because of your coming back home.

Oedipus
But I would never go back to them, from whose seed I originate.

Messenger
My child, it is in a good way that you are unaware of what you are doing.

Oedipus
How do you mean, old man. I ask you by the gods, inform me!

Messenger
1010 If it is on account of these that you shun going home.

Oedipus
Fearing that the message of Phoebus may have a clear outcome.

Messenger
Is it that you fear contracting a pollution [miasma] from those whose seed gave you birth?

Oedipus
That’s it, old man! That is what gives me eternal fear.

Messenger
Do you know, then, that your fears are wholly vain?

Oedipus
1015 How so, if I was born of those parents?

Messenger
Because you had no family tie in common with Polybos.

Oedipus
What are you saying? Was Polybos not my sire?
Messenger
Just as much, and no more, than he who speaks to you.

Oedipus
And how can my sire be level with him who is as though nothing to me?

Messenger
1020 No, he fathered you not at all, any more than I.

Oedipus
How, then, did he call me his son?

Messenger
Long ago he received you as a gift from my hands.

Oedipus
And yet he loved me so dearly, who came from another’s hand?

Messenger
His former childlessness won him over.

Oedipus
1025 And had you bought me or found me by chance, when you gave me to him?

Messenger
I found you in Kithairon’s winding glens.

Oedipus
And why were you roaming those regions?

Messenger
I was in charge of mountain flocks.

Oedipus
You were a shepherd, a vagrant hireling?

Messenger
1030 But your savior [sōtēr], my son, in that time.

Oedipus
And what was my pain when you took me in your arms?

Messenger
The ankles of your feet might bear witness.
Oedipus
Ah me, why do you speak of that old woe?

Messenger
I freed you when you had your ankles pinned together.

Oedipus
It was a dread brand of shame that I took from my cradle.

Messenger
So much that from that fortune you were called by that name which you still bear.

Oedipus
Oh, in the name of the gods, was the deed my mother’s or father’s? Speak!

Messenger
I know not. He who gave you to me knows better of that than I.

Oedipus
What, you got me from another? You did not light on me yourself?

Messenger
No. Another shepherd gave you to me.

Oedipus
Who was he? Can you tell clearly?

Messenger
I think he was said to be one of the household of Laios.

Oedipus
The τυράννος who ruled this country long ago?

Messenger
The same. The man was a herdsman in his service.

Oedipus
Is he still alive, that I might see him?

Messenger
You natives of this country should know best.

Oedipus
Is there any of you here present that knows the herdsman of whom he speaks, having seen him either in the pastures or here in town? Indicate [σῆμανεῖν]! The time [καιρός] has come for these things to be revealed at long last.
Chorus
I think he speaks of no other than the peasant you already wanted to see. But Iocasta herself might best tell you that.

Oedipus
Wife, do you know in your noos the one whom we summoned lately? 1055 Is it of him that this man speaks?

Iocasta
Why ask of whom he spoke? Regard it not - waste not a thought on what he said - it would be vain.

Oedipus
It must not happen, with such clues [sêmeia] in my grasp, that I should fail to bring my origin [genos] to light.

Iocasta
1060 For the gods’ sake, if you have any care for your own life, forgo this search! My anguish is enough.

Oedipus
Be of good courage. Even if I should be found the son of a servile mother - a slave by three descents - you will not be proved base [kakē].

Iocasta
Hear me, I implore you: do not do this.

Oedipus
1065 I will not hear of not discovering the whole truth.

Iocasta
Yet I wish you well; I counsel you for the best.

Oedipus
These best counsels, then, vex my patience.

Iocasta
Ill-fated man, may you never know who you are!

Oedipus
Go, some one, fetch me the herdsman. 1070 Leave this woman to glory in her wealthy ancestry [genos].

Iocasta
Alas, alas, miserable man - that word alone can I say to you - and no other word ever again!

She rushes from the palace.
Chorus
Why has this woman gone, Oedipus, rushing off in wild grief? I fear a storm of evils will soon break forth from this silence.

Oedipus
Break forth what will! Be my seed ever so lowly, I crave to learn it. That woman perhaps - for she is proud with more than a woman’s pride - feels ashamed of my lowly birth [genos]. But I, who hold myself son of Fortune that gives good, will not be left without timē. She is the mother from whom I spring, and the months, my kinsmen, have marked me sometimes lowly, sometimes great. Such being my heritage, never more can I prove false to it, and not search out the secret of my birth [genos].

Chorus
If I am a mantis or wise of heart, Kithairon, you will not fail - by heaven, you will not - to know at tomorrow’s full moon that Oedipus honors you as native to him, as his nurse, and his mother, and that you are celebrated in our khoros, because you are well-pleasing to our turannos. O Phoebus, to whom we cry, may these things find favor in your sight!

Who was it, my son, who of the race whose years are many, that bore you in wedlock with Pan, the mountain-roaming father? Or was it a bride of Loxias that bore you? For philai to him are all the upland pastures. Or perhaps it was Kyllene’s lord, the god of the Bacchants, dweller on the hill-tops, that received you, a new-born joy, from one of the Nymphs of Helikon, with whom he most often sports.

Oedipus
Elders, if it is right for me, who have never met the man, to guess, I think I see the herdsman of whom we have been long in quest. In his venerable old age he tallies with this man’s years, and moreover I recognize those who bring him, I think, as servants of mine. But perhaps you have an advantage in knowledge over me, if you have seen the herdsman before.

Chorus
Yes, I know him, be sure. He was in the service of Laios - trusty as any shepherd.

The herdsman is brought in.

Oedipus
I ask you first, Corinthian xenos, if this is the man you mean.

Messenger
He is, the one you are looking at.

Oedipus
You, old man - look this way and answer all that I ask - were you once in the service of Laios?

Servant [therapōn]
I was - not a bought slave, but reared in his house.
Oedipus
Employed in what labor, or what way of life?

Servant
1125 For the better part of my life I tended the flocks.

Oedipus
And what regions did you most frequently haunt?

Servant
Sometimes Kithairon, sometimes the neighboring ground.

Oedipus
Are you aware of ever having seen this man in these parts?

Servant
Doing what? What man do you mean?

Oedipus
1130 This man here. Have you ever met him before?

Servant
Not so that I could speak at once from memory.

Messenger
And no wonder, master. But I will bring clear recollection to his ignorance. I am sure he knows well of the time we spent together in the region of Kithairon 1135 for six-month periods, from spring to Arktouros, he with two flocks, and I with one. And then for the winter I used to drive my flock to my own fold, and he took his to the fold of Laios. 1140 Did any of this happen as I tell it, or did it not?

Servant
You speak the truth [alēthēs], though it was long ago.

Messenger
Come, tell me now: do you remember having given me a boy in those days, to be reared as my own foster-son?

Servant
What now? Why do you inquire [historeîn] about this?

Messenger
1145 This man, my friend, is he who then was young.

Servant
Plague seize you. Be silent once and for all.
Oedipus
Rebuke him not, old man. Your words need rebuking more than his.

Servant
And in what way, most noble master, do I offend?

Oedipus
In not telling of the boy of whom he inquires [historeîn].

Servant
He speaks without knowledge, but labors [poneîn] in vain.

Oedipus
You will not speak as a favor [kharis], but you will in pain.

Servant
No, in the name of the gods, do not mistreat an old man.

Oedipus
Ho, some one - tie his hands behind him this instant!

Servant
Alas, why? What do you want to learn?

Oedipus
Did you give this man the child about whom he inquires [historeîn]?

Servant
I did. Would that I had perished that day!

Oedipus
Well, you will come to that, unless you say whatever has dîkē in it.

Servant
But if I speak I will be destroyed all the more.

Oedipus
This man is bent, I think, on more delays.

Servant
No, no! I said before that I gave it to him.

Oedipus
Where did you get it from? From your own house, or from another?
Servant
It was not my own; I received it from another.

Oedipus
From whom of the citizens here? From what home?

Servant
1165 For the love of the gods, master, inquire [historeîn] no more!

Oedipus
You are lost if I have to question you again.

Servant
It was a child, then, of the house of Laios.

Oedipus
A slave? Or one of his own family [genos]?

Servant
Alas! I am on the dreaded brink of speech.

Oedipus
1170 And I of hearing; I must hear nevertheless.

Servant
You must know then, that it was said to be his own child. But your wife within could say best how these matters lie.

Oedipus
How? Did she give it to you?

Servant
Yes, my lord.

Oedipus
For what purpose?

Servant
That I should do away with it.

Oedipus
1175 Her own child, the wretched woman?

Servant
Yes, from fear of the evil prophecies.
Oedipus Tyrannos

Oedipus
What were they?

Servant
The tale ran that he would slay his father.

Oedipus
Why, then, did you give him to this old man?

Servant
Out of pity, master, thinking that he would carry him to another land, from where he himself came. But he saved [sözein] him for the direst woes. For if you are what this man says, be certain that you were born ill-fated.

Oedipus
Oh, oh! All brought to pass, all true. Light, may I now look on you for the last time - I who have been found to be accursed in birth, accursed in wedlock, accursed in the shedding of blood.

He rushes into the palace.

Chorus
Alas, generations of mortals, how mere a shadow I count your life! Where, where is the mortal who attains a happiness [eudaimonia] which is more than apparent and doomed to fall away to nothing? The example [paradeigma] of your fortune [daimôn] warns me - yours, unhappy Oedipus - to call no earthly creature blessed.

For he, O Zeus, shot his shaft with peerless skill, and won the prize of an entirely happy prosperity [eudaimôn olbos], having slain the maiden with crooked talons who sang darkly. He arose for our land like a tower against death. And from that time, Oedipus, you have been called our king, and have been given timē supremely, holding sway in great Thebes.

But now whose story is more grievous in men's ears? Who is a more wretched slave to troubles [ponoi] and fierce calamities [atai], with all his life reversed? Alas, renowned Oedipus! The same bounteous harbor was sufficient for you, both as child and as father, to make your nuptial couch in. Oh, how can the soil in which your father sowed, unhappy man, have endured you in silence for so long?

Time the all-seeing has found you out against your will, and he judges the monstrous marriage in which parent and child have long been one. Alas, child of Laios, would that I had never seen you! I wail as one who pours a dirge from his lips. It was you who gave me new life, to speak directly, and through you darkness has fallen upon my eyes.
Oedipus Tyrannos

A second messenger enters, from the palace.

Second Messenger
You who receive most timē in this land, what deeds you will hear, what deeds you will behold, what burden of suffering [penthos] will be yours, 1225 if, true to your genos, you still care for the house of Labdakos. For I think that neither the Istrōs nor the Phasis could wash this house clean, so many are the evils that it shrouds, or will soon bring to light, wrought not unwittingly, but on purpose. 1230 And those griefs smart the most which are seen to be of our own choice.

Chorus
The troubles which we knew before are far from being easy to bear. Besides them, what do you have to announce?

Second Messenger
This is the shortest tale to tell and hear: 1235 our divine Iocasta is dead.

Chorus
Alas, wretched woman! From what cause [aitīa]?

Second Messenger
By her own hand. The worst pain of that which has happened is not for you, since you do not behold the events. Nevertheless, so far as my memory serves, 1240 you will learn that unhappy woman’s suffering [pathos].

When, frantic, she passed within the vestibule, she rushed straight towards her marriage couch, clutching her hair with the fingers of both hands. Once within the chamber, 1245 she dashed the doors together behind her, then called on the name of Laios, long since a corpse, mindful of that son, born long ago, by whose hand the father was slain, leaving the mother to breed accursed offspring with his own. And she bewailed the wedlock in which, wretched woman, she had given birth to a twofold brood, 1250 husband by husband, children by her child. And how she perished is more than I know. For with a shriek Oedipus burst in, and did not allow us to watch her woe until the end; on him, as he rushed around, our eyes were set. 1255 To and fro he went, asking us to give him a sword, asking where he could find the wife who was no wife, but a mother whose womb had born both him and his children. And in his frenzy a daimōn was his guide, for it was none of us mortals who were near. 1260 With a dread cry, as though some one beckoned him on, he sprang at the double doors, forced the bending bolts from the sockets, and rushed into the room. There we beheld the woman hanging by the neck in a twisted noose of swinging cords. 1265 And when he saw her, with a dread deep cry he released the halter by which she hung. And when the hapless woman was stretched out on the ground, then the sequel was horrible to see: for he tore from her raiment the golden brooches with which she had decorated herself, 1270 and lifting them struck his own eye-balls, uttering words like these: “No longer will you behold such evils as I was suffering [paskhein] and performing! Long enough have you looked on those whom you ought never to have seen, having failed in the knowledge of those whom I yearned to know—henceforth you shall be dark!” 1275 With such a dire refrain, he struck his eyes with raised hand not once but often. At each blow the bloody eye-balls bedewed his beard, and did not send forth sluggish drops of gore, but all at once a dark shower of blood came down like hail. 1280 These mingled evils have broken forth upon the heads of them both, not of one alone, on husband and wife together. Their old prosperity [olbos] was once
true prosperity, and justly [dikaia] so. But now on this day there is lamentation, atē, death, disgrace; of all the evils 1285 that can be named, not one is missing.

**Chorus**
And does the sufferer have any respite from evil now?

**Second Messenger**
He cries for some one to unbar the gates and show to all the Kadmeians his father’s slayer, his mother’s - the words must not pass my lips - 1290 in order to banish himself from the land and not to remain in the palace under the curse that he himself pronounced. And yet he lacks strength, and one to guide his steps, for the anguish is more than he can bear. He will soon show this to you: look, the bars of the gates are withdrawn, 1295 and soon you will behold a sight which even he who abhors it must pity.

*Oedipus enters, dripping with gore.*

**Chorus**
O dread suffering [pathos] for men to see, O most dreadful of all that I have set my eyes on! Unhappy one, what madness has come upon you? 1300 What daimōn, with a leap of more than mortal range, has made your ill-fated destiny his prey? Alas, alas, you hapless man! I cannot even look on you, though there is much I desire to ask, much I desire to learn, 1305 much that draws my wistful gaze; with such a shuddering do you fill me!

**Oedipus**
Woe is me! Alas, alas, wretched that I am! Where, where am I carried in my misery? 1310 How is my voice swept abroad on the wings of the air? Oh, daimōn, how far you have sprung!

**Chorus**
To a dread place, dire in men’s ears, dire in their sight.

**Oedipus**
Oh horror of darkness that enfolds me, unspeakable visitant, 1315 restless, sped by a wind too fair! Oh me! and once again, Oh me! How my soul is pierced by the stab of these goads and by the memory of evils!

**Chorus**
No wonder that amidst these woes 1320 you endure sorrow [penthos] and bear double evils.

**Oedipus**
Ah, philos, you still are steadfast in your care for me, you still have patience to tend the blind man! Ah me! 1325 Your presence is not hidden from me - no, blind though I am, nevertheless I know your voice full well.

**Chorus**
Man of dread deeds, how could you extinquish [marainein] your vision in this way? Who among the daimones urged you on?
It was Apollo, philoi, Apollo 1330 who gave telos to these evil, evil sufferings [pathos pl.] of mine. But the hand that struck my eyes was none other than my own, wretched that I am! 1335 Why was I to see, when sight showed me nothing sweet?

These things were just as you say.

What, philoi, can I behold any more, what can I love, what greeting can touch my ear with joy? Hurry, philoi, 1340 lead me from this place, lead me away, the utterly lost, 1345 the thrice-accursed, the mortal most hated by heaven!

Wretched alike for your misfortune and for your noos of it, would that I had never known you!

Perish the man, whoever he was, that freed me in the past years from the cruel shackle on my feet - a deed bringing no gratitude [kharis]! Had I died then, 1355 I would not have been so sore a grief [akhos] to my philoi and to my own self.

I too would have it thus.

In this way I would not have come to shed my father's blood, or been known among men as the spouse of the woman from whom I was born. 1360 Now I am forsaken by the gods, son of a defiled mother, successor to the bed of the man who gave me my own wretched being; 1365 if there is a woe surpassing woe, it has become Oedipus' lot.

I know not how I can say that you have counseled well; you would have been better dead than living and blind.

Don't tell me that things have not been best done in this way; 1370 give me counsel no more. If I had sight, I know not with what eyes I could even have looked on my father, when I came to the house of Hades, or on my miserable mother, since against both I have committed such crimes as hanging myself could not punish. 1375 But do you think that the sight of children, born as mine were, was lovely for me to look upon? No, no, never lovely to my eyes! No, neither was this city with its towering walls, nor the sacred statues of the daimones, since I, thrice wretched that I am - 1380 I, noblest of the sons of Thebes - have doomed myself to know these no more, by my own command that all should reject the impious one, the one whom the gods have revealed as unholy, a member of Laios' own family [genos]? After baring such a stain upon myself, 1385 was I to look with steady eyes on these people? Not in the least! Were there a way to choke the fount of hearing, I would not have hesitated to make a fast prison of this wretched frame, so that I should have known neither sight nor sound. 1390 It is sweet that our thought should
dwell beyond the sphere of evils. Alas, Kithairon, why did you provide a shelter for me? When I was given to you, why did you not slay me straightaway, that I might never reveal to men whence I am born? Ah, Polybos, ah, Corinth, and you that was called the ancient house of my father, how fair-seeming was I your nursling, and what evils were festering underneat! Now I am found kakos, and born from evils [kaka]. You three roads, and you secret glen, you, thicket, and narrow way where three paths met - you who drank my father’s blood from my own hands - do you remember, perhaps, what deeds I have performed in your sight, and then what fresh deeds I went on to do when I came here? O marriage ritual [telos], you gave me birth, and when you had brought me forth, you again bore children to your child, you created an incestuous kinship of fathers, brothers, sons, brides, wives, and mothers - all the foulest deeds that are wrought among men! But it is improper to name what it is improper to do - hurry, for the love of the gods, hide me somewhere beyond the land, or slay me, or cast me into the sea, where you will never behold me any longer! Approach - deign to lay your hands on a wretched man - listen and fear not: my woes can rest on no other mortal.

Chorus
But here is Creon in good time to plan and perform that which you request. He alone is left to guard the land in your place.

Oedipus
Ah me, what word [epos] will I speak to him? What claim to credence can be shown on my part? For in the past I have proved to be wholly kakos to him.

Creon enters.

Creon
I have not come to mock or reproach you with any past evils.

To the Attendants.
But you, if you no longer respect the children of men, revere at least the all-nurturing flame of our lord the Sun, and do not show so openly such a pollution as this, one which neither earth, nor holy rain, nor the light can welcome. Take him into the house as quickly as you can: it best accords with reverence that relations alone, members of the family, should see and hear these woes.

Oedipus
By the gods - since you have done a gentle violence to my prediction, coming as a most noble [aristos] man to me, a man most kakos - grant me a favor: I will speak for your own good, not mine.

Creon
And what do you wish so eagerly to get from me?

Oedipus
Cast me out of this land with all speed, to a place where no mortal shall be found to greet me.

Creon
This I could have done, to be sure, except I craved first to learn from the god all my duty.
Oedipus Tyrannos

Oedipus
1440 But his behest has been set forth in full: to let me perish, the parricide, unholy one that I am.

Creon
Thus it was said. But since we have come to such a pass, it is better to learn clearly what should be done.

Oedipus
Will you, then, seek a response on behalf of such a wretch as I?

Creon
1445 Yes, for even you yourself will now surely put faith in the god.

Oedipus
Yes. And on you I lay this charge, to you I make this entreaty: give to the woman within such burial as you wish - you will properly render the last rites to your own. But never let this city of my father be condemned 1450 to have me dwelling within, as long as I live. No, allow me to live in the hills, where Kithairon, famed as mine, sits, which my mother and father, while they lived, fixed as my appointed tomb, so that I may die according to the decree of those who sought to slay me. 1455 And yet I know this much, that neither sickness nor anything else can destroy me; for I would never have been saved [sōzein] from death, except in order to suffer some terrible evil. Let my fate [moira] go where it will. Regarding my children, Creon, I beg you to take no care of my sons: 1460 they are men, so they will never lack the means to live wherever they may be. My two girls, poor hapless ones - who never knew my table spread separately, or lacked their father’s presence, but always had a share of all that reached my hands - 1465 I implore you to take care of them. And, if you can, allow me to touch them with my hands, and to indulge my grief for these woes. Grant it, lord, grant it, noble in birth. Ah, if I could but once touch them with my hands, I would think that I had them 1470 just as when I had sight.

Antigone and Ismene are led in.

What’s this? By the gods, can it be my loved ones that I hear sobbing? Can Creon have taken pity on me and sent my children, my darlings? 1475 Am I right?

Creon
You are. I have brought this about, for I knew the joy which you have long had from them - the joy you now have.

Oedipus
Bless you, and for this errand may a daimōn prove a kinder guardian to you than it has to me. 1480 My children, where are you? Come, here, here to the hands of the one whose mother was your own, the hands that have made your father’s once bright eyes to be such orbs as these - he who, seeing nothing, inquiring [historeîn] not at all, 1485 became your father by her from whom he was born! For you also do I weep, though I cannot see you, when I think of the bitter life that men will make you live in days to come. To what company of the citizens will you go, to what festival, 1490 from which you will not return home in tears, instead of participating [being a theōros] in the festivities? But when you reach a ripe age for marriage, who shall he be, who shall be the man, my daughters, to hazard taking upon himself the reproaches 1495 that will certainly be baneful to my offspring and yours? What misery is lacking? Your
father killed his own father, and begot you from the same place he himself was born! 1500\ Such are the taunts that will be cast at you. And who then will you wed? The man does not live - no, it cannot be, my children, but you will wither in barren maidenhood. Son of Menoikeus, hear me: since you are the only father left to them - we, their parents, are both gone - 1505\ do not allow them to wander poor and unwed, for they are your own relations, and do not abase them to the level of my woes. But pity them, seeing them deprived of everything at such an age, except for you. 1510\ Promise, noble man, and touch them with your hand. To you, children, I would have given much advice [parainesis], if your phrenes were mature. But now pray that you may live where occasion allows, and that the life which is your lot may be happier than your father’s.

**Creon**

1515\ Your grief has had a sufficient scope; pass into the house.

**Oedipus**

I must obey, though I do it in no way gladly.

**Creon**

Yes, for all things are good at the right time.

**Oedipus**

Do you know on what terms I will go?

**Creon**

You will tell me, and then I will know when I have heard them.

**Oedipus**

See that you send me to dwell outside this land.

**Creon**

You ask for what the god must give.

**Oedipus**

But to the gods I have become most hateful.

**Creon**

Then you will quickly get your wish.

**Oedipus**

So you consent?

**Creon**

It is not my way to say idly what I do not mean.

**Oedipus**

1520\ Then it is time to lead me away.
Creon
Come, then, but let your children go.

Oedipus
No, do not take them from me!

Creon
Do not wish to be master in all things; the mastery which you did attain has not followed you through life.

They all exit into the palace.

Chorus
Inhabitants of our native Thebes, behold, this is Oedipus, 1525 who knew the riddles [ainigma pl.] of great renown [kleos], and was a most mighty man. What citizen did not gaze on his fortune with envy? See into what a stormy sea of troubles he has come! Therefore, while our eyes wait to see the day of telos, we must call no mortal blessed [olbios] until 1530 he has crossed life’s border without having suffered [paskhein] any pain.
Before the royal palace at Trozen. A statue of Aphrodite stands on one side; a statue of Artemis on the other. The goddess Aphrodite appears alone.

**Aphrodite**

Powerful among mortals am I and not without reputation, I am called the goddess Kypris even in heaven. And those who dwell within the limits of the Pontos and the bounds of Atlas and who behold the light of the sun, whoever of those respects my power, to them I pay special honor; but I bring to ruin whoever has little regard for my greatness. For this feeling exists by nature even among the gods: they find pleasure when they are given timē by humans. I will soon prove the truth [alētheia] of my words [muthoi].

For the son of Theseus and an Amazon, Hippolytus, who was raised by Pittheus, alone among the citizens of Trozen, says that I am the most kakē of the daimones. He scorns the nuptial bed and takes no notice of marriage, but to Artemis, the sister of Phoebus and daughter of Zeus, he gives timē and believes that she is the greatest of the daimones. Through the green wood he always joins with his virgin goddess and clears wild animals from the land with the help of his swift hounds, since he has come upon company which is beyond mortal.

But I don’t begrudge him these things just now, since what concern are they to me? However, for the errors he has committed against me I will have vengeance on Hippolytus on this very day, and since I accomplished many things some time ago I don’t need to go to much effort [ponos]. For once, having gone from the palace of Pittheus for witnessing and initiation into the solemn rites of the Mysteries, he came to Athens, the land of Pandion, where the noble wife of his father, Phaedra, saw him and was seized at heart with terrible desire, through my contrivance. And during that time, before she came to Trozen, near the rock of Pallas and within view of this land, she founded a temple to Kypris, loving a foreign love, and she gave a name for all time to the goddess as she is established in that sacred space: “Our Lady of Horses Unbridled [hippo-luto].” But now Theseus has left the Kekropian land, fleeing the pollution for the blood of the sons of Pallas, and he has sailed here with his wife since he consented to a yearlong exile abroad. Here she mourns and is struck by pangs of passion and, wretched, she perishes in silence, and none of her servants shares the knowledge of her affliction. But her secret passion ought not to end up in this way, for I will point out the matter to Theseus and everything will become clear. And this young man, who is hostile to me, his own father will kill with the curse which Poseidon, the lord of the sea [pontos], granted as a prize to Theseus, that he might pray three times to the god and not pray in vain; but Phaedra shall perish, although with good kleos, since I shall not give timē to her misery before I take such dikē against my enemies as to have satisfaction. But now I see Hippolytus, the son of Theseus, on his way here straight from the labors of the hunt; I will get out of the way. A great reveling band [kōmos] of his attendants are following behind and singing joyously with him, and they give timē to the goddess Artemis with hymns. He does not know that the gates of Hades are standing open, and that he is looking on his final daylight.

Aphrodite vanishes. Hippolytus and his hunting attendants enter, singing. They move to the altar of Artemis.
Hippolytus
Come here, come singing to the heavenly daughter of Zeus, Artemis, whose concern we are.

Hippolytus and Attendants
Lady, most revered lady, daughter of Zeus, welcome, Artemis, welcome, daughter of Leto and Zeus, you who are the most beautiful by far among the virgins, and in mighty heaven you dwell in the richly-gilded palace of Zeus. Welcome most beautiful, most beautiful throughout Olympus!

Hippolytus
For you, goddess, I bring this woven wreath, culled from a virgin meadow, where it is not fit for the shepherd to pasture his flocks, nor has iron yet come there, but unspoiled still in springtime the bees fly through this meadow. Aidōs tends it with pure river water, and those who by their nature always use moderation in all things, instead of having learned it, they can pick flowers, but it is not lawful for the kakos. Philē mistress, for your golden locks accept this headband from my reverent hand. I alone among mortals have this privilege: I keep company with you and make conversation, hearing your voice although not seeing your face. So let it be that I reach the telos of my life just as I began it.

Attendant [therapōn]
Lord, since we ought to call upon the gods as our lords, would you accept some well-meant advice from me?

Hippolytus
Surely, for otherwise I should not appear to be sophos.

Attendant
Do you know the law which is established among mortals?

Hippolytus
I don’t know; but what are you getting at?

Attendant
The law is to hate what is proud and not philon to all.

Hippolytus
And rightly, too, for is not the proud among mortals oppressive?

Attendant
But there is a certain grace in courtesy?

Hippolytus
Very much, and also profit with little cost.

Attendant
Do you think the same holds among the gods as well?
Hippolytus
I suppose so, since we mortals draw our laws [nomoi] from the gods.

Attendant
Why then do you neglect to address a proud daimôn?

Hippolytus
Whom do you mean? Watch that your tongue doesn’t trip.

Attendant
Kypris herself, who is stationed above your gates.

Hippolytus
I greet her from afar, since I am pure.

Attendant
Yet she is a holy goddess far renowned [epi-sēmos] on earth.

Hippolytus
No god who is miraculous by night pleases me.

Attendant
My son, we ought to avail ourselves of the timai which daimones confer.

Hippolytus
Each, among gods and humans alike, has his own concern.

Attendant
I wish you happiness [eudaimonia] and as much noos as you need.

Hippolytus
Go in, attendants, and within the house prepare food, since after the hunt 110 a full table is always a delight. You ought also to rub down the horses, so that I may yoke them to the chariot and give them proper exercise when I have had my fill, and to your goddess Kypris I bid a long farewell. Hippolytus goes into the palace, followed by all the attendants except the leader, who prays before the statue of Aphrodite.

Attendant
Since we ought not to imitate the young, 115 with sober mind and as is fitting for a slave to speak, I will offer up my prayer to your image, mistress Kypris. You should have forgiveness for all, even for one who in the eager spirit of youth utters vain words against you; pretend that you don’t hear him, since the gods must be more sophoi than mortals.

He goes into the palace. The chorus of Trojanian women enter.
Hippolytus

Chorus

strope 1
There is a rock which is said to drip water from the stream of Okeanos, sending forth a fixed stream for dipping water-jars. 125 It was there that my friend [philē] was washing purple robes in the river’s stream and spreading them upon the back of a warm sunny rock. 130 From there the rumor first came to me of my mistress,

antistrophe 1
how wasting away on her sickbed she keeps herself within the house, and a thin veil shadows her blond head. 135 This is the third day, I hear, that her lips have not touched food, and she keeps her body pure from the grain of Demeter, 140 eager to hide her sorrow [penthos] and to put into the cheerless harbor of death.

strope 2
Dear Phaedra, are you possessed either by Pan or Hekate, or do you wander because of the devoted Korybantes or the mountain mother? 145 Have you committed an error offending Artemis of Diktynna, with her wild beasts, and are wasting for neglect of her unoffered sacrifices? For she ranges through the sea, as well as over the islands of the sea, 150 upon the watery eddies of the brine.

antistrophe 2
Or your husband, the well-born ruler of the sons of Erekhtheus, does someone in the palace cherish him in a union hidden from your bed? 155 Or has someone sailing from Crete reached the harbor most welcome to sailors, bringing a report to the queen, and in distress over her sufferings [pathos pl.] 160 her psukhē is tied down to her bed?

epode
In women’s difficult tuning [harmonia],82 a bad, wretched sort of helplessness [amēkhania] often makes its abode, arising both from birth pains and irrationality. 165 This breeze once shot through my womb, but I called upon the heavenly helper in labor, the guardian of the arrows, Artemis, and she, much envied, always comes to me with the help of the gods. 170 But look here, the aged Nurse before the palace doors is bringing her from the house, though on her brow the gloomy cloud deepens. My psukhē longs to know what it is, and 175 why the queen, with changed complexion, wastes away.

The Nurse and Phaedra enter from the palace.

Nurse
The woes and the hateful illnesses of mortals! What shall I do? What not do? Here is your sunlight, here the bright air. Now outside of the palace 180 is your sickbed, for your every word was to come here, but soon enough you will be eager for your bedroom again, since, taking pleasure in nothing, you will quickly become helpless. Whatever is present does not please you, but that which is absent you think more dear. 185 It is better to be ill than to care for the ill, for one is a single trouble, but to the other is attached both heartsickness and labor [ponos] with one’s hands. The whole of human life is full of pain, 190 and there is no rest from trouble [ponoi]. But if there is anything more philon than life, darkness hides it in the clouds in its embrace, and we show ourselves to be wretchedly in love with that thing which glistens on the earth, 195 because of inexperience of any other life, and the things which lie below the earth are unrevealed. On tales [muthoi] we vainly drift.

82 The metaphor is that women are like a stringed instrument, in need of tuning [harmonia] or balance.
Phaedra
Lift my body, keep my head steady; the fastenings of my limbs are unstrung. 200 Raise my shapely arms, attendants, my headdress is heavy to wear, take it away, let my hair fall over my shoulders.

Nurse
Be brave, child, do not toss your body so harshly; 205 you will bear your sickness more easily in peace [hēσukhīa] and with noble will. It is necessary for mortals to suffer.

Phaedra
Alas! Would that from a dewy fountain I might draw a draught of pure water for myself, 210 and lying beneath the poplars in a grassy meadow I might rest.

Nurse
My child, what are you saying? Will you not say such things in public, casting out words borne on madness?

Phaedra
215 Take me to the mountains - I will go to the woods and to the pine trees, where the beast-killing hounds tread, and where they approach the dappled deer. By the gods, I long to shout to the dogs, 220 and by my fair hair to cast a Thessalian spear, holding a barbed dart in my hand.

Nurse
Why, my child, are you anxious for these things? Why is the hunt your concern? 225 And why do you long for the flowing spring when nearby, next to these towers, there is a watery hill, from which you might have a drink?

Phaedra
Artemis of sea-beaten Limna, goddess of the racecourse thuddering with horses’ hooves, 230 would that I were on your plains curbing Venetian steeds!

Nurse
Why again, in madness, have you cast out this utterance [epos]? One moment you were going to the hills and set your desire for the hunt, 235 but now on the waveless sands you wish for horses. These things are worth much prophesying; which of the gods drives your from your course and strikes aside your phrenes, child?

Phaedra
Wretched me, what have I done? 240 Where have I strayed from good sense? I have gone mad and fallen by derangement [atē] from a daimōn. Woe is me! Nurse, cover my head again; I feel shame [aidōs] for what I have said. 245 Hide me! Tears fall from my eyes, and for shame my face is turned away. Although it is painful to come to one’s senses, to be mad is evil; dying in ignorance rules.

Nurse
250 I cover you, but when will death cover my body? Long life teaches me much, that mortals ought to pledge themselves to moderate ties of philia, 255 and not that which goes to the core of the psukhē, easy to be loosed from one’s phrenes, either to be pushed away or drawn tight, since for one psukhē to grieve
for two is a heavy burden, just as I feel pain for her. To pursue a strict course in life, men say, causes disappointment more than pleasure and is more at odds with health. Therefore I recommend “Nothing in excess” more than “Too much.” And wise people will agree with me.

Chorus
Old woman, faithful nurse of our queen, we see the sorry plight of Phaedra, but her distress is a thing without a clue; we would like to learn and hear of it from you.

Nurse
I don’t know, although I question her, for she does not want to say.

Chorus
Not even what the source of these sorrows are?

Nurse
The answer is the same, since she is silent on all things.

Chorus
How weak and wasted her body is.

Nurse
Why not? It is the third day she has gone without food.

Chorus
Is it because of some derangement, or is she trying to die?

Nurse
I don’t know, but surely fasting will lead to the end of her life.

Chorus
It is remarkable that this satisfies her husband.

Nurse
She hides her sorrow from him and says that she is not ill.

Chorus
Can he not judge from seeing her face?

Nurse
He happens to be away from this country now.

Chorus
Why not press her, in an effort to learn her disease and the straying of her phrenes?

Nurse
I have tried everything and accomplished nothing. Yet not even now will I relax my zeal, so that if you stay, you too will witness how devoted I am by nature to an unhappy mistress. Come, philē child, let
us both forget our former words, and you be more mild, 290 smoothing your sullen brow and your current of thought, and I, if in some way I have not understood you, will change my way and will find some better course. If you are sick with ills that cannot be named, there are women here to set your sickness straight. 295 But if your trouble can be made known to males, speak, so that it can be told to doctors. Come then, why so silent? You ought not to remain quiet, child, but scold me, if I say something amiss, or agree if these things are spoken well. 300 One word, one look this way. Ah me! Women, we toil at these labors [ponos] in vain, we are as far away as ever, for she was not softened by my arguments before, and now she is not persuaded either. Be more stubborn than the sea, 305 but know that if you die you are a traitor to your sons, for they will not have a share of their father’s estate. By the horse-riding Amazon queen, who bore a son to be master to yours, a bastard, though he believes himself to be noble, you know him well: Hippolytus.

**Phaedra**

Oh! Oh!

**Nurse**

310 Does this touch you?

**Phaedra**

You destroy me, Nurse. By the gods, I beg you not to mention this man’s name again.

**Nurse**

There now. You are yourself, but although sensible, you still do not wish to help your children and save your life.

**Phaedra**

315 I love my children, but I am tossed by another storm of fate.

**Nurse**

Child, are your hands pure of bloodshed?

**Phaedra**

My hands are pure, it is my *phrenes* that are polluted.

**Nurse**

Through a wrong done by some enemy [ekthros]?

**Phaedra**

One who is *philos* destroys me, one unwilling as myself.

**Nurse**

320 Has Theseus wronged you somehow?

**Phaedra**

Never may I be seen doing him harm.
Nurse
Then what strange thing is it that drives you to your death?

Phaedra
Leave me alone to make my mistakes, since my error is not against you.

Nurse
Never willingly. But if I fail, it will be at your door.

Phaedra
325 What are you doing? Are you trying force in clasping my hand?

Nurse
Yes, and also your knees, nor will I loose my hold.

Phaedra
Alas, for you these things would also be evil, if you should learn them.

Nurse
What is a greater evil for me than failing to win you?

Phaedra
You would perish. But this matter brings me timē.

Nurse
330 Even so you conceal it, though what I beg to know is something good.

Phaedra
I do, since out of disgraceful things I am devising noble [esthla].

Nurse
By speaking of it, then you would appear with even more timē.

Phaedra
Go away, by the gods, and let go of my hand.

Nurse
I will not, since the gift which is mine you deny.

Phaedra
335 I will give it, since I feel respect [aídōs] for your reverent hand.

Nurse
From now on I will be quiet, and instead it will be for you to speak.
Phaedra
Oh, wretched mother, what a love was yours!

Nurse
Her love for the bull\(^\text{83}\), child, is that what you mean?

Phaedra
And you, my wretched sister, wife of Dionysus\(^\text{84}\)

Nurse
340 Child, what troubles you? Why do you speak ill of your family?

Phaedra
I am third to suffer, and in the same way I am also undone.

Nurse
I am amazed by you, where will this history lead?

Phaedra
Since long ago we are unfortunate, it is not new.

Nurse
I have learned nothing more of what I want to hear.

Phaedra
345 Ah, would that you could say what I have to tell!

Nurse
I am no prophet to judge for sure what is unclear.

Phaedra
What is it they mean when they talk of people being in love?

Nurse
At once the sweetest and bitterest thing, my child.

Phaedra
I will only find the latter half.

\(^{83}\) Phaedra’s mother was Pasiphae, wife of King Minos of Crete and mother of the Minotaur, a creature half-man and half-bull.

\(^{84}\) Phaedra’s sister was Ariadne, who ran away with Theseus after helping him kill the Minotaur in the labyrinth. When Theseus abandoned her on Naxos, she was rescued by Dionysus. In another version, she was already the wife of Dionysus, and Artemis killed her for running away with Theseus.
Nurse
350 What are you saying, my child? Are you in love with some man?

Phaedra
The Amazon’s son, whoever he may be.

Nurse
Hippolytus, you mean?

Phaedra
It was you, not I, that said his name.

Nurse
Ah me! What are you saying, my child? You destroy me. Women, this is unbearable, I cannot bear to live.
355 Hateful is the day, hateful the light I see. I give up this body, I will cast it off, and in dying I will cease from living. Farewell, I am no longer. Although unwilling, those who are balanced \( \varsigma \phi \rho \nu \psi \) have passions for evils. Kypris is no goddess, 360 but something far greater than a god, for she has been the ruin of this woman, and of me, and of this whole house.

Chorus
O, did you take note, did you hear our queen \([t u r \alpha \nu \mu o s]\) crying out her unhappy and unheard-of suffering? Would that I might perish, \( \varphi \iota \lambda \varepsilon \), 365 before I reach your state of mind! O horrible woe for these miseries, and woe for the troubles \([p o n o i]\) on which mortals feed! You are destroyed, now that you have brought your evils to light. What awaits you during the hours of this day? 370 Some strange event will come to pass in this house. There is no longer any clue \([s \varepsilon \mu a]\) where your fortunes from Kypris will set, unhappy daughter of Crete.

Phaedra
Women of Trozen, who dwell here in the extreme front of Pelops’ land, 375 often before now in the long hours of the night I used to wonder why the life of mortals is spoiled. And it seems to me that it is not by the mind’s nature that they do wrong, for there are many who have good sense. We must view it in this light: 380 we understand and we can discern what is right, but we don’t always accomplish it, some from sloth, others from preferring pleasure of some kind or other to duty. There are many pleasures in life, long talks and leisure, a base enjoyment, 385 and \( \alpha \iota \delta \omega s \), of which there are two kinds: one not evil, the other a curse to families. But if the proper time for each were clearly known, then these two would not have the same letters. So then, since I have made up my mind on these points, I am not about to change it because of some drug, 390 to reach a contrary point of view. And I will tell you, too, the way my judgment went. When love wounded me, I considered how I might bear it best. So from that day on, I began to hide in silence what I suffered. 395 For there is no trusting the tongue, or the alien thoughts of men who know how to admonish yet have countless miseries of their own. Next I strove to bear my folly nobly in an effort to master it by self-control \([s \omega \phi \rho \rho \rho \nu \epsilon \iota \epsilon \iota n]\). 400 Finally when I failed by these means to subdue Kypris, it seemed best to die, and none could speak against my plan. For just as I would not have my good acts escape notice, so I would not have many to witness the disgraceful ones. 405 I knew the deed and the malady were of poor \( k l e o s \), and in addition to these things I knew that I was a woman, an object of hate to all. Curses on the wife, whoever was the first to shame her marriage bed with other men. It was from noble families 410 that all this evil began to spread among women. For when shameful
things appear right to those who are noble [esthloi], then surely it seems good to the kakoi as well. I hate those women who are moderate [sophrones] when they talk, while in secret they carry on reckless deeds.

415 How then, lady Kypris, my mistress, do these women look their husbands in the face without fearing that the night, their accomplice, or the walls of the house may find a voice? It is this thing which causes me to die, philai, 420 so that I may never be found to disgrace my husband nor the children I bore. But let them grow up, free to speak and act, and let them dwell in glorious Athens, with good kleos from their mother. It would enslave a man, even one who was stouthearted, 425 if he should learn the evils of his mother or father. This alone they say can stand to compete in life: a good and just mind, in whomever these are found. For time reveals the kakoi among men, just as a mirror set before a young maid; 430 among these may I never be seen.

Chorus
Ah, how good equilibrium [sophron] is, wherever it is found, which bears as fruit noble repute among mortals.

Nurse
Mistress, your misfortune, just now told, struck me at first with dreadful fear, 435 but now I consider that I was rash; among mortals second thoughts are somehow more sophoi. What you have suffered is not unusual nor unreasonable; the passion of Kypris has struck you. You are in love, what wonder? So are many more. 440 Do you then because of love destroy your psukhe? There is little gain then for those who are in love and those yet to love, if they must die. For Kypris in her might is more than men can bear; peacefully she seeks those who are yielding. 445 but when she finds someone arrogant and proud, she takes him and insults him unbelievably. Her path is in the sky and on the ocean’s surges; from her all nature springs. She is the one who sows the seeds of love and grants desire, 450 to which all of us on earth owe our being. Those who have writings of old, or who are themselves inspired by the Muses, know how Zeus once was in love with Semele, 455 and they know how once the beautiful, shining goddess of Dawn stole Kephalos to heaven because of love; and yet in heaven they still dwell and so do not avoid the god of love; they are content, I imagine, to yield to their misfortune. But you, why not yield? It ought to have been on special terms 460 that your father begat you, or with different gods for masters, if you will not content yourself with these laws. How many sensible people do you think, when they see their marriage-bed sullied, pretend they do not see? How many fathers, when their sons have gone astray, 465 assist them in love? Among the sophoi, unattractive things go unnoticed. Mortals should not excessively perfect their lives, for not even the roof with which a house is covered would you complete precisely. 470 Now since you have fallen into such a plight, how can you best escape it? If you have more good than misery, being human, you should be doing fairly well. Cease, philê child, from your evil thoughts. Cease having hubris, for it is nothing else but hubris, 475 your wish to be better than the daimones. Face your love, this is the god’s will. Though you are ailing, somehow turn your ill to good. There are charms and spells which soothe, some cure for your disease will be found, 480 but men would surely seek it out for a long time unless we women find the means.

Chorus
Phaedra, although she speaks more aptly in your present misfortune, still I praise [aineîn] you; yet this praise [ainos] may sound more harsh to you 485 and more painful than her advice.

Phaedra
This is what destroys well-run cities and the homes of men, words too well put; we should not speak to please the ear but to find what leads to good kleos.
**Nurse**

490 Why do you make solemn speeches? It is not well-worded phrases that you need, but a man. Immediately he must learn and he should be frankly told. If you were not in such a crisis, or were in balance [sōphrōn], 495 never for the sake of the bed and its pleasures would I have urged you on this course; but now there is a great agōn to save your life, so this is not blameworthy.

**Phaedra**

What you propose is awful! Keep quiet and never utter those disgraceful words again.

**Nurse**

500 Disgraceful, maybe, but better for you than fine words. Better this deed, if it will save your life, than a mere name, which you take pride in and die for.

**Phaedra**

Oh, I beseech you by the gods! You speak well, but what you say is disgraceful. Go no further, since through my desire I am made ready in my psukhē, 505 and if you should use specious words for these disgraceful matters, I will give way to the very thing I am trying to escape.

**Nurse**

If this is how it seems to you, it is best not to have erred; but as it is, hear me, for that is second best. I have in the house charms to soothe your love; 510 I only just now thought of it. These will cure you of your malady, on no disgraceful terms and with your phrenes unhurt, if you will not be cowardly [kakē]. But from the one desired it is necessary to take some token, either a lock of hair or piece of clothing, 515 and from the two to unite them as one pleasure [kharis].

**Phaedra**

Is your drug a salve or a potion?

**Nurse**

I cannot tell; be content, my child, to profit by it and ask no questions.

**Phaedra**

I am afraid that you will prove too sophē for me.

**Nurse**

You would be afraid of anything. But what scares you?

**Phaedra**

520 That you may indicate something to Theseus' son.

**Nurse**

Leave it to me child, I will set everything aright. Lady Kypris, my mistress, you alone be my accomplice. For the rest of my purpose it will be enough to speak to my philoi inside.

*The Nurse goes into the palace.*
Chorus

525 Love, Love, who drips desire upon the eyes, and brings sweet grace [kharis] into the psukhē against whom he camps, never appear to me with evil, nor come without measure. 530 Neither fire nor meteor hurls a mightier bolt than Aphrodite’s shaft shot by the hands of Love, the child of Zeus.

antistrophe 1

535 In vain by the banks of Alpheus, in vain within the Pythian shrines of Phoebus, does Hellas heap up slaughtered steers, while we neglect to worship Love, the turannos of men, 540 who holds the key to Aphrodite’s sweetest chamber, but when he comes, he lays waste to mortals and casts them through all sorts of misfortune.

strophe 2

545 There was that maiden in Oikhalia, a filly unwed, a husbandless virgin still, whom, unyoking from Eurytos’ house 550 like some running Naiad or Bacchant, amidst blood and smoke and murderous marital vows, Kypris gave as bride to Herakles, the son of Alkmene. 85 What a wretched wedding hymn!

antistrophe 2

555 O sacred walls of Thebes, O mouth of the fountain of Dirke, you could testify what course Kypris follows. 560 For in an engulfing lightning-bolt she lay the mother of twice-born Dionysus to rest in murderous death, though she was still a bride. The dread goddess inspires all things, flying about like a bee.

Phaedra stands listening at the door of the palace.

Phaedra

565 Be quiet, women, I am undone.

Chorus

What is it, Phaedra, that scares you within the house?

Phaedra

Hold still, let me hear what they are saying inside.

Chorus

I am quiet. This is surely the prelude to evil.

Phaedra

570 Oh my! How awful are my sufferings [pathos]!

Chorus

What cry do you make? What are you shouting? Say what frightens you, woman, overwhelming your phrenes.

Phaedra

575 I am destroyed. Stand here at the door and listen to the noise spreading through the house.

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85 To win Iole, daughter of Eurytos, Herakles destroyed her city and killed her family.
Chorus
You are by the door, it is for you to note the talk conveyed within the house. 580 Then tell me, tell me what evil has arisen.

Phaedra
It is the son of the horse-loving Amazon, Hippolytus, uttering terrible, evil words on my servant.

Chorus
585 I hear the cry, but I cannot tell clearly; it is through the door that the sound reached you.

Phaedra
Yes, yes, he plainly calls her a matchmaker of evil, 590 and says that she betrays her master’s bed.

Chorus
Woe is me for these evils! You are betrayed, philē. What counsel will I give you? Your secrets have been revealed, you are utterly destroyed. 595 Alas, betrayed by a philos!

Phaedra
She has destroyed me in speaking of my misfortune; it was meant kindly, since she was trying to cure my illness, but it was not right.

Chorus
What now? What will you do, having suffered [paskhein] this state of helplessness [amēkhania]?

Phaedra
I know but one way: to die as soon as possible, 600 this is the only cure for my present woes.

Hippolytus bursts out of the palace, followed closely by the nurse.

Hippolytus
O mother earth and sun’s expanse! What words unfit for speech I have heard!

Nurse
Be quiet, child, before someone hears your shouting.

Hippolytus
I cannot hear such awful words and keep quiet.

Nurse
605 I implore you by your strong right arm.

Hippolytus
Let go of my hand and don’t touch my clothes!

Nurse
By your knees I beg you, don’t destroy me utterly.
Hippolytus
Why, if, as you say, you have said nothing wrong?

Nurse
This tale [muthos], child, was not for everyone to hear.

Hippolytus
Surely fair words are fairer when told to many.

Nurse
You would not dishonor your oath.

Hippolytus
My tongue did swear an oath, but not my phrenes.

Nurse
Child, what will you do? Destroy your philoi?

Hippolytus
No one without dikē is philos to me.

Nurse
Forgive, child; to err is human nature.

Hippolytus
Zeus, why did you set women to dwell in the light of the sun to be a false evil to the human race? If you wished to multiply the mortal race [genos], you need not accomplish it by means of women, but instead in your temples mortals should lay down bronze or silver or a sum of gold to buy their sons, each man in proportion to his wealth, and so in independence they would live at home, free from women. It is clear from the following how great an evil a woman is: the very father who begot and nurtured her then pays a dowry and settles her elsewhere to be rid of the trouble. Then the husband who takes the plant of doom [ate] into his house happily lavishes a fine display on his sorry idol and struggles to keep her in dresses, poor fellow, squandering his house’s wealth [olbos]. It is easiest for him to have a cipher as a wife, except that a simple woman set up in a house is no benefit. But it is the sophē woman I hate, for I would not have in my house a woman who knew more than she need, since Kypris breeds more mischief-making in sophai women, while the resourceless [amēkhanos] woman is kept from folly by her shallow intelligence. It ought to be that servants have no access to women; wild beasts should live with them, who bite, not talk, so that they could not speak to anyone, nor be answered back by them. But as it is, evil women [kakai] plot evils within the house, and their servants broadcast it outside. So you, kakē, have come to invite me to my father’s untouchable bed. I will wash away your words in running streams, dashing the water in my ears. How could I be so kakos, when just hearing of it I feel myself polluted? Rest assured, woman, that it is my piety alone which saves you. For if I had not been taken unawares by oaths before the gods, I would not have been able to keep myself from telling all to my father. Now I will keep away from the house while Theseus is abroad, and I will keep my tongue quiet. But when my father returns I will watch how you face him, both you and your mistress. May you perish! I can never satisfy my hatred for women, even though some say that I always speak
of it, for somehow they are always kakai. Either let someone prove them balanced [sōphrones], or let me still trample on them forever.

Hippolytus exits.

Phaedra
Oh, the cruel, unhappy fate of women! 670 What craft, what argument have we to untie the knot of a word, when we have slipped? I have met with dikē. O earth and light of day, how can I escape fate? How will I conceal my misfortunes, philai? 675 What god will appear to help me, what mortal will take my part or help me in unrighteousness? The present pathos moves across my life, and there is no escape. I am the most wretched of all women.

Chorus
680 Alas, it is done, your servant’s schemes have gone awry, mistress, and it bodes poorly.

Phaedra
Worst in all ways, destroyer of your philoi, what you have done to me! May Zeus, my ancestor, strike you with his bolt and uproot you utterly! 685 Didn’t I tell you, foreseeing your intent [phrenes], to keep quiet on the very matter which is now bringing me the name of kake? But you would not be still, and thus I will not be buried with good kleos. Now I need to plan anew. In the keenness of his fury, 690 he will tell his father of my error and the aged Pittheus of my misfortune, and fill the whole land with stories to my great disgrace. May you perish, and whoever else is eager to do service for unwilling philoi in ways not good!

Nurse
695 Mistress, you may blame my bad works, for sorrow’s sting overpowers your judgment. Yet I can answer you in the face of this, if you will accept what I have to say. I raised you and have good noos for you, but in seeking to find a cure for your illness I found what I did not want. 700 Had I succeeded, I would have been considered sophē; for the credit we get for phrenes is measured by our success.

Phaedra
Are these things just [dikaia] or sufficient - to wound me and then come to terms in words?

Nurse
We dwell on this too long. I did not show moderation [sōphrosunē], 705 but it is still possible to be saved [sōzein] from your troubles, my child.

Phaedra
Be euphēmos! 86 Even before you did not advise me well, and your attempted scheme was evil. Now get out of my way and see to your own affairs. I will take care of myself well enough.

The nurse goes into the palace.

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86 The word euphēmos means ‘uttering in a proper way’ when it is applied in a sacred context; it means ‘silent’ when it is applied in a non-sacred context.
But you, noble daughters of Trozen, promise me what I ask: hide in silence what you have heard today.

**Chorus**

I swear, by holy Artemis, never to bring your woes to the light of day.

**Phaedra**

You have spoken well. But I, with all my thought, have only one remedy for my misfortune, so that I can give a life of *kleos* to my children and find myself some help as matters stand. I will never bring shame on my Cretan home, nor will I, to save one poor *psukhē*, face Theseus after my disgrace.

**Chorus**

What irreparable evil are you planning?

**Phaedra**

To die - but in what way I must still consider.

**Chorus**

Don’t speak ill-omened words.

**Phaedra**

You also advise me well. Today I will gladden Kypris, my destroyer, by giving up my *psukhē*, and so I will be vanquished by bitter love. But in dying I will be a misery to someone else, that he may learn not to exult at my misfortunes; when he comes to share my suffering, he will learn to be moderate.

*Phaedra enters the palace.*

**Chorus**

Would that I were beneath some steep cavern, where a god might make me into a bird amid the winged flocks! Away I would soar over the waves of the Adriatic sea and to the waters of the river Eridanos, where the unhappy sisters in their grief for Phaethon drip into the purplish swell the amber brilliance of their tears.

Then might I reach the apple-bearing shores of the singing Hesperides, where the ruler of the sea no longer gives a path for sailors over the deep, dark waters, and find there the holy boundary of heaven which Atlas holds, and the ambrosial fountains which well up by the couch of Zeus, and where the sacred earth, bestower of good things, increases the happiness of the gods.

White-winged Cretan boat, which brought my queen through the roaring ocean waves from her prosperous home, to have the joy of a most marriage; surely evil omens from either port were with that ship both from Crete, when she winged her way to glorious Athens, and when the crew made fast its twisted cable ends upon the beach of Mounikhos, and stepped out onto the land.

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*Phaethon was the son of Helios, the sun. He lost control of his father’s chariot, so Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt.*
So it was that her *phrenes* were crushed 765 by the cruel affliction of unholy passion sent by Aphrodite, and overwhelmed by bitter grief; 770 she will tie a noose around her white neck from the rafters of her bridal chamber, since she feels *aidōs* for her hateful *daimōn*, and choosing instead the report of good reputation, 775 she strives in this way to rid her *phrenes* of passion's sting.

*Within the palace.*

**Nurse**
O, help! Come quick, help, whoever is near the palace - our mistress has hanged herself, Theseus' wife!

**Chorus**
Alas, the deed is done. The royal woman is no more, she is hung in a dangling noose.

**Nurse**
780 Why don't you hurry? Someone bring a two-edged knife to cut this from her neck.

**Chorus**
*Philai,* what shall we do? Do you think we should go into the house and loose the queen from the tight-drawn noose? Why should we? Aren't there young menservants here? 785 It is not safe in life to do too much.

**Nurse**
Lay out the sorry corpse, straighten the limbs; this was surely a bitter way to keep my master's house.

**Chorus**
She is dead, poor lady, so it seems. Already they are laying out her corpse.

*Theseus and his retinue have entered unnoticed.*

**Theseus**
790 Women, can you tell me what the uproar in the palace means, since a mournful sound from the servants reached my hearing? None of my household thought it worthwhile to open the palace gates in welcome to receive me, though I have just come from being a witness [*theōros*] to what the oracle said. Nothing has suddenly happened to old Pittheus? 795 He is well advanced in years, yet I would still be mournful should he leave this house.

**Chorus**
It is not the fate of the old which concerns you; it is the young whose death will bring you pain.

**Theseus**
Oh no! I am not robbed of the life of one of my children?

**Chorus**
800 They live; but cruelest of all for you, their mother is dead.
Theseus
What, my wife dead? By what fate?

Chorus
She fastened a strangling noose around her neck.

Theseus
Was she chilled by grief or some misfortune?

Chorus
I know only this, Theseus, for I have just arrived at your house to express grief over your misfortunes.

Theseus
Oh, why have I crowned my head with woven garlands when my being witness to the oracle has meant such misfortune? Unbar the doors of the gates, servants, unloose their fastenings, so that I can see the bitter sight of my wife whose death is death to me.

The doors of the palace open, revealing the corpse.

Chorus
Oh, how wretched are the woes that you suffered! What you have done is enough to overthrow this family. Ah, the daring of it! Dying violently and by unnatural means, the desperate effort of your own poor hand. Who cast this shadow over your life, poor woman?

Theseus
Oh, I am full of pain. I have suffered the greatest of my miseries. Fate, how heavily you have settled on me and my house, inflicting from some avenging god a nameless stain. It is the destruction of my life, making it unlivable. I see such a wide sea of troubles that I can never swim to shore again, nor get through the tide of my misfortune. With what words will I come to address the fate of your deep suffering, poor wife? You are like a bird vanished from my hand, so swiftly did you leap from me to Hades. Alas, this is surely a bitter, bitter sight. It must be a fate sent by the daimones for the errors of an ancestor, which I bring on myself from some far source.

Chorus
These sufferings do not come to you alone, lord; you have lost a cherished wife just like many others.

Theseus
Below the earth, below the darkness, in the shadow of death, I long to make my home, now that I am robbed of your most company. You have destroyed me more than yourself. Where did it come from, the fatal stroke that reached your heart? Who will say what happened, or does the palace merely shelter a useless crowd of my servants? Your death is such grief to me, such is the pain that I now see in my house, intolerable beyond words. I am ruined, my house is desolate, and my children orphaned. You have left us, left us, best of all women who behold the light of the sun and the starry moon.
Chorus
Poor man, so great is the misfortune of your house. My eyes are wet with streams of tears to see your fate. 855 But the grief on top of this one has long been making me shudder.

Theseus
Look, what is this? There is some tablet here hanging from her philē wrist. Does it have something new to signal [sēmainein] for me? Surely she has written a message bidding me to care for our marriage and children. 860 Take heart, poor wife, no woman will come into the bed or house of Theseus as a wife. Seeing the stamp of my dead wife’s golden seal warms my heart; untwisting the seal 865 I will see what the tablet has to say.

Chorus
Alas, here is yet another evil in the succession which the god sends. Seeing what has happened, my life is no longer livable, 870 for I declare that the house of my turannoi is ruined; it no longer exists. O daimōn, if it be at all possible, I pray that you not overthrow the household! Hear me as I beseech you! For like a seer I see a bird-omen coming from something evil.

Theseus
O horror! Misfortune upon misfortune, 875 and still they come, too deep for words, too heavy to bear.

Chorus
What is it? Speak, if I may share in it.

Theseus
This letter cries out, it cries out insufferable things. Where can I flee this burden of woes? I am gone, destroyed. Such a song I have seen in this writing, 880 giving voice to horror.

Chorus
Your words reveal evils yet to come.

Theseus
I can no longer keep this accursed tale within the gateway of my lips, though it is cruel. Listen, polis of Trozen: 885 Hippolytus has dared to enter my bed by force, and so to treat without timē the august eye of Zeus. Therefore, Poseidon my father, of the three prayers which you once promised to me, answer one of them against my son: do not let him escape this day, 890 if in fact these prayers were truly offered.

Chorus
My lord, by the gods, I beg you to take back your words, for in future you will know your error. Believe me.

Theseus
It cannot be. Furthermore I will banish him from this land, so that he will be struck down by one of these two fates: 895 either Poseidon, out of respect for my prayer, will cast his dead body into the house of Hades; or, exiled from this land, wandering as a stranger, upon some foreign land he will live out his sorry life.
Chorus
Here comes your son Hippolytus now, just in time; 900 dismiss your evil anger, and consider what is best for your house.

Hippolytus
I have come with haste, father, since I heard your cry. I don’t know the reason for your call, but I would like to hear of it.

905 Ah! What is this? Your wife is dead. How strange this is. I only just left her, it was but a moment ago that she looked upon the light. How did she come to suffer [paskhéin] this? In what way did she die? 910 Father, I want to learn of this from you. Do you still remain quiet? Silence does no good in a time of evils. 915 It is not just [dikaión] to conceal your misfortunes from your philoi, and even more than philoi, father.

Theseus
Humans, many are the errors you commit in vain. Why teach your countless crafts, why scheme and seek to find a way for everything, while one thing you don’t know nor have you made your own: 920 a way to teach those without noos to have phrenes.

Hippolytus
You speak of a very master in his craft, a man who can force to think well people who don’t think at all. But this is not the time to speak in subtleties, father; I fear your tongue runs wild because of your misery.

Theseus
925 There ought to be some token for people to test their philoi, a touchstone of their phrenes, for the ascertaining [diagnōsis] of which philos is true [alēthēs] and which is not; and everyone should have two voices, a just [dikaios] one in addition to whatever he should happen to have, 930 so that the honest voice could refute its opposite, and then we would not be deceived.

Hippolytus
Surely some philos who slanders me now holds your attention, so I am now accused, although guiltless. I am amazed, for your words astound me; 935 surely you are out of your phrenes.

Theseus
940 There, oh the phrēn of mortals, to what lengths it will go! What limit will its bold assurance have? If it goes on growing as man’s life advances, and if each successor outdoes his predecessor in villainy, 940 then it will be necessary for the gods to add another sphere to the world, which will have room for the kakoi and not dikaioi. Look at this man, my own son, who has disgraced my bed 945 and is clearly proven to be most kakos by my dead wife. Since I am already polluted by you, look your father in the face. Are you the man who joins with the gods, as though superior? You are moderate [sōphrēn] and uncontaminated by evil? 950 I would not believe your claims and be guilty then of attributing ignorance to the gods. Go and boast now, advertise your psukhē-less foods, 88 and with Orpheus as your leader enjoy Bacchic revels in honor of those elusive writings. Now you are caught. 955 I warn everyone to avoid such men; they hunt with fine

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88 Devotees of Orpheus practiced vegetarianism.
words and all the while are scheming villainy. She is dead; do you think that this will save you? By this you are condemned most of all, most kakos. 960 What oaths, what words are better than this letter, that might acquit you? You will say that she hated you, and that the bastard is by nature at odds with the freeborn. You would say then that she was a bad bargainer with her life, 965 if to satisfy her hate for you she lost what was most phila to her. And might you say that stupidity is not found in men but exists by nature in women? Yet young men in their prime are no more secure than women when Kypris stirs their phrenes, 970 but their male sex comes as a benefit to them. Yet why now do I struggle with words when the corpse that lies here is the surest witness? Begone from this land at once, and never set foot again in god-built Athens, 975 nor anywhere in the boundaries of my rule. If I submit to you, having suffered your outrage, then Sinis, the robber of the Isthmus, will no longer bear witness that I killed him but say that my boasts are idle; nor will the Skironian rocks, 980 say what a burden I was to kakoi.

Chorus
I don’t think that I can call any mortal fortunate, for the first has turned and now is last.

Hippolytus
Father, your menos and the intensity of your phrenes are terrible. Although your arguments are well put, if one lays them bare, your charge is no good. I have little skill in speaking before a crowd; I am more sophos with my own contemporaries and small groups. But this is fate: those whom the sophoi dislike are more skilled in addressing a crowd. 990 Yet it is necessary in the present circumstance to break my silence. First I will speak of the point which you used at first to undermine me so that I might not respond. You see this sunlight and earth? There is no man here, 995 though you may now say otherwise, who is more moderate [sōphrōn] than I. First, I know how to reverence the gods, and to adopt as philoi those who do not attempt injustices, and who have aidōs of suggesting anything base or of returning kindness with disgrace. 1000 To mock my philoi, father, is not my way either: I am the same behind their backs as to their face. The crime in which you think to have caught me I am up to this moment untouched by, for my body is still pure of sexual love. I know nothing of its practice except what I have heard or seen in pictures. 1005 I am not even eager to look at these since my psukhē is virginal. My moderation [sōphrosunē] may not persuade you; well then, it is necessary for you to show how I was corrupted. Was Phaedra the most beautiful woman? 1010 Or did I hope to have your house by taking your wife in marriage and so have you r possessions? I would surely then have been a fool and out of my phrenes. Then will you say that being turannos is sweet to men who are balanced [sōphrones]? I say not, 1015 since monarchy is only pleasing to those whose phrenes are impure. I would rather be first at all the games [agōnes] in Hellas, but second in the polis, and in this way to enjoy always good fortune among my most noble [aristoi] philoi. There it is possible to be happy, and the absence of danger 1020 gives a more powerful pleasure [kharis] than tyranny. There is one more thing I have not said, but the rest you have heard. If there were a witness to my worth, or if I were contesting Phaedra still alive, you would see who is evil by reviewing the facts. 1025 But as it is, I swear by Zeus, the god of oaths, and by the ground on which we stand, that I never touched your wife, nor would I wish to, nor would I conceive the thought. May I die without kleos and nameless, 1030 and let neither sea [pontos] nor land receive my flesh when I am dead, if I am a kakos man. I don’t know if she destroyed herself through fear, but more than this it is not lawful [themis] for me to say. She remained in balance [sōphrōn], although she was not balanced [sōphrosunē] by nature; 1035 I am in balance [sōphrosunē], but I have not used it well.

89 Skiron used to hurl his victims off the cliffs that received his name after he was killed by Theseus.
Chorus
The oath you speak by the gods sufficiently refutes the charge; it is a strong pledge.

Theseus
Does he think he is some sorcerer or enchanter, to think he can first treat his father without timē, and then by his cool talk master my psukhē?

Hippolytus
These same things amaze me in you too, father. For if you were my son and I your father, I would have killed you and not punished you with banishment, if you saw fit to lay hands on my wife.

Theseus
1045 Your remark is worthy of you. No, you will not die in this way that you pronounce for yourself, for a swift death is an easy end for wretchedness. Exiled from your fatherland, you will live out your miserable life wandering in a foreign land.

Hippolytus
1050 Oh, what will you do? Banish me without even waiting for the evidence of time on my behalf?

Theseus
Indeed, beyond the Pontos, beyond the bounds of Atlas, if I could, so much do I despise the sight of you.

Hippolytus
1055 What! Banish me untried, without even testing my oath, the pledge I offer, the voice of seers?

Theseus
This letter here, though it bears no seers’ signs, denounces your pledges; as for birds that fly over head, I bid them a long farewell.

Hippolytus
1060 Oh gods, why don’t I unlock my lips, since I am ruined by you though I still reverence you? No, I won’t, since not even then would I persuade those whom I must, and in vain I would break the oath I swore.

Theseus
Your righteousness is more than I can bear. 1065 Get out of this land as soon as possible.

Hippolytus
Where, in my misery, can I turn? What house can I enter as guest [xenos], exiled on such a grave charge?

Theseus
Whoever enjoys receiving as guests [xenoi] corrupters of wives and partners in evil.

Hippolytus
1070 This wounds my heart and brings me close to tears, that I should appear so kakos and you believe me so.
Theseus
Your cries and forethought should have come before you dared to bring hubris to your father’s wife.

Hippolytus
Oh house! Would that you could find a voice 1075 to testify for me, if I were a kakos man.

Theseus
Wisely you run to a voiceless witness; this deed here is voiceless too, but it clearly proves your guilt.

Hippolytus
If only I could stand outside myself and look; then I would weep to see the evil I suffer [paskhein].

Theseus
1080 It is your character to honor yourself far more than your parents, as it would be right [dikaios] for you to do.

Hippolytus
Unhappy mother! Bitter birth! Let none of my philoi suffer to be born a bastard.

Theseus
Why don’t you drag him away, servants? 1085 Didn’t you hear me proclaim his exile long ago?

Hippolytus
Whoever lays a hand on me will regret it. If this is what your thumos desires, force me from this land yourself.

Theseus
I will, if you don’t obey my words. I feel no pity come over me for your exile.

Hippolytus
1090 It is fixed then, so it seems. I am wretched, for although I know well these things here, I know no way to indicate them.

Most philē daimōn of all to me, daughter of Leto, partner and comrade in the chase, I am exiled from glorious Athens. Farewell, polis, and land of Erekhtheus; 1095 farewell, Trozen, you hold the many happinesses [eudaimonias] of youth. Looking at you for the last time I bid farewell. Come, young men, companions of my country, greet me kindly and escort me from this land. 1100 Never will you behold another man so moderate [sôphron] as I am, even if I seem otherwise to my father.

Hippolytus exits with many followers. Theseus enters the palace.

Chorus
When I consider how much the gods care for human beings, my grief is lessened, 1105 yet, though I cherish a hidden hope for some understanding, I fall short of it when I look at the fortunes and deeds of mortals. For change succeeds change, 1110 and man’s life is variable and ever shifting.
May fate grant me this prayer from the gods: good fortune followed by prosperity [olbos], and a thumos free from pain. 1115 And let me not hold opinions which are too strict nor counterfeit [para-sēmos], but lightly changing my ways day by day, let me have good fortune throughout my life.

My phrenes are no longer clear, I see things which I never expected, since the bright star of Hellenic Athens 1125 I now see driven to a foreign land because of his father’s anger, O sands of the city’s shores, O mountain oaks where he used to hunt with his fleet hounds 1130 together with the goddess Diktynna.

No longer will he mount behind his yoke of Venetian steeds, filling the course around Limna with the sound of trained horses’ hooves. 1135 And the sleepless music below the strings of the lyre will cease in his father’s palace, and the resting places of Artemis will go without garlands throughout the deep green meadow. And by your exile the rivalry for your bridal bed among the unwed girls is lost.

Meanwhile, with tears at your unhappy fate, I will live out my own sad destiny. Poor mother, 1145 who gave you life in vain, I rage at the gods. Linked Graces [Kharites], why do you send him from his homeland innocent of this ruinous damage [atē]? Look, I see an attendant of Hippolytus with a troubled expression hastening towards the palace.

A messenger enters.

**Messenger**

Women, where can I find the king of this land, Theseus? If you know, indicate [sēmainein] to me. 1155 Is he inside the palace?

**Chorus**

Here he is coming out of the palace now.

**Theseus enters.**

**Messenger**

Theseus, the news I bring is a matter of concern for you, and for the citizens who dwell in Athens and within the bounds of the land of Trozen.

**Theseus**

1160 What is it? Has some new calamity overtaken these two neighboring cities?

**Messenger**

Hippolytus is no more, to speak just a word [epos]; although he still sees the light of day, he is in a slender balance.

**Theseus**

At whose hands? Did some man come to blows with him, 1165 whose wife he disgraced by force, just as his father’s?
**Hippolytus**

**Messenger**
It was his own chariot that killed him, and the curses that you uttered against him, when you prayed to your father Poseidon, lord of the *pontos*, to kill your son.

**Theseus**
O gods! Poseidon, you are truly my father, 1170 since you heard my curse! How did he perish? Tell me how the hammer of *dikē* fell on him for his crime against me.

**Messenger**
Hard by the wave-beaten shore we were combing out the horse’s manes, and we were weeping, 1175 for a messenger had come to say that Hippolytus was harshly exiled by you and would never set foot on this land again. Then Hippolytus himself came to us on the beach with the same tearful song, and with him was a countless throng of *philoi*, who followed after. 1180 In time he stopped his lament and spoke: “Why do I grieve over this when my father’s words must be obeyed? Servants, harness my horses to the chariot, for this *polis* is no longer mine.” 1185 Thereupon each one of us hastened, and faster than you could say, the horses were readied and standing by our master’s side. Then he caught up the reins from the chariot rail while fitting his feet into place. 1190 But first with outspread hands he called on the gods: “Zeus, let me live no longer if I am *kakos*, and let my father learn how he treats me without *timē* once I am dead, if not when I still see the light.” By now he had taken up the whip and goaded the horses, 1195 while we attendants, near the reins, kept up with him along the road that leads straight to Argos and Epidaurus. Just as we were coming to a lonely spot, a strip of sand beyond the borders of this country, 1200 sloping right to the Saronic gulf, there came a rumbling sound from the earth, like the thunder of Zeus, and a deep roar issued forth that was horrible to hear; the horses raised their heads up to heaven and pricked their ears, and among us there was wild fear to know the source of the sound. 1205 Then, as we gazed toward the wave-beaten shore, we saw a tremendous wave reaching to heaven, so that from our view the cliffs of Skiron vanished, for it hid the Isthmus and the rocks of Asklepios. 1210 The wave swelled and frothed with a crest of foam, and from the raging sea it made its way to shore where the four-horse chariot was. And in the moment that the mighty wave broke, it issued forth a wild bull, 1215 whose bellowing filled the whole land with frightful echoes, a sight too awful, as it seemed to us who witnessed it. A terrible panic seized the horses at once, but our master, who was quite used to the horses’ ways, 1220 pulled back as a sailor pulls on an oar, leaning back on the reins with all of his weight; but the horses biting into the forged bits with their jaws wildly bore him on, regardless of their master’s guiding hand or rein or jointed car. Whenever he would take the reins and steer for softer ground, the bull would appear in front to turn him back again, making his horses mad with terror, 1230 but if in their frantic rage they ran toward the rocks, the bull would draw near the chariot rail, keeping up with them, until, suddenly dashing the wheel against a stone, he overturned and wrecked the car. Then there was confusion everywhere, 1235 wheel naves and axle pins were thrown into the air, while poor Hippolytus, entangled in the reins, was dragged along, bound by a stubborn knot, his own head dashed against the rocks, his flesh torn while he cried out terribly: 1240 “Horses reared in my own stables, stop; don’t wipe me out! Father, your pitiless curse! Is there anyone who will save a most noble *aristos* man?” Many of us wanted to help, but we were left behind. At last he got himself free 1245 and fell from the knot of the reins, I don’t know how, and there was still a faint breath of life in him; but the horses disappeared, and that portentous bull, over the rocky ground, I can’t say where. I am just a slave in your house, lord, 1250 and yet I will never be able to believe that your son is *kakos*, not even if the whole race [genos] of women should hang themselves, or if someone should fill with writing every pine tree grown on Mount Ida. I know that Hippolytus is noble [*esthlos*].
Hippolytus

Chorus
1255 Alas, a misfortune of new evils is accomplished; there is no escape from fate and necessity.

Theseus
1260 In my hatred for the man who suffered [paskhein] these things, at first I was glad at your words, but now because of respect [aidôs] for the gods and for him, since he is my son, I feel neither joy nor sorrow at his woes.

Messenger
1265 What then? Do we bring him here? What should we do to please your phrên? Consider this, if you will take my advice: don’t be harsh to your son in his sorry state.

Theseus
1270 Bring him here, so that I can see him with my own eyes and condemn him with words and with this misfortune from the daimones, since he has denied that he abused my wife.

The messenger exits.

Chorus
1275 Kypris, you guide the unyielding phrenes of gods and mortals, together with Love, who on painted wing embraces his victims in swift flight. He flies over the land and over the resounding salty sea [pontos], on golden wings, maddening the hearts and beguiling the senses of all whom he attacks: mountain-bred cubs, creatures of the sea, and whomever else the earth nourishes under the light of the sun, including men. 1280 Kypris, you alone have this royal timê, to rule them all together.

Artemis herself appears.

Artemis
1285 Noble son of Aegeus, I bid you listen; it is I, Artemis, the daughter of Leto, who speaks. Theseus, why, poor man, do you rejoice over this news, when you have killed your own son impiously, believing in the false tales [muthoi] of your wife though they were unproven? Clear now is your ruin atē from this. 1290 Why do you not hide your body in disgrace in the blackness below the earth, or trading this life for wings take off and fly away from your misery? Among agathoi men you now have no share in life. Listen, Theseus, to the state of your misfortune. Although it can do no good, still I wish to pain you, for I came with this intent: to show you your son’s just phrenes so that he might die with good kleos, and also the mad passion and, in some sense, the nobleness of your wife. For she was cruelly stung with a passion for your son by that goddess who is most hostile to those who take pleasure in virginity. Though she tried to conquer her passion by resolution, nevertheless she fell, thanks to the schemes of her nurse, who against her will revealed [sêmaineîn] her malady to your son under oath. But he would have none of her advice, as was right [dikaios], and not even when you abused him did he take back his oath, for he was pious. 1310 But Phaedra, in fear of being found out, wrote that deceitful note and destroyed your son by guile, though you believed her.

Theseus
1315 Oh no!
Artemis

Does my story [muthos] hurt you? Be quiet a little longer; hear what follows so that you can lament even more. 1315 Do you know those three prayers from your father which have certain result? You have now used one of them pitifully on your own son instead of against some enemy. Your father of the sea [pontos] meant kindly, but he granted what was necessary, since he had promised. 1320 Now you have shown yourself to be kakos both to him and me, since you would not wait for proof or the utterances of seers; you did not make inquiries nor did you take time for consideration, but with undue haste you cast curses against your son and killed him.

Theseus

1325 Goddess, let me die.

Artemis

You have done an awful thing, yet it is still possible for you to have forgiveness even for this. For it was Kypris who willed these things to be, in order to satisfy her own thumos. This is law amongst the gods: none is allowed to oppose the will of another, 1330 but we stand ever aloof. Know well that if I did not fear Zeus, I would never have come to the disgrace of allowing the man most philos to me of all mortals to die. 1335 As for your mistake, in the first place your ignorance absolves you of its being evil, but also that your wife, when she died, was lavish in her use of arguments to persuade your phrenes. On you especially these misfortunes burst, but they are grievous to me as well. The gods take no pleasure when the righteous die, 1340 but the kakoi we destroy utterly, their children and their homes.

Chorus

Look, here he comes now, poor thing, his youthful skin and fair head shamefully abused. Oh, the pain [ponos] of the household, 1345 what twofold sorrow [penthos] has fallen on your halls from the gods!

Hippolytus enters, carried by his attendants.

Hippolytus

Oh, I am wretched, I have been undone by the unjust [a-dikos] curses of my unjust [a-dikos] father. 1350 I am thoroughly destroyed. Pains shoot through my head, and there is a throbbing against my brain. Enough, let me give up my body. 1355 Pitiful horses, nourished by my own hand, you are my ruin and my death. By the gods, servants, handle my wounded flesh gently. 1360 Who is standing on my right side? Support me carefully and lead me steadily, with a evil daimôn and cursed by my mistaken father. Zeus, do you see these things? I am your reverent worshipper, 1365 the man who surpasses everyone in moderation [sōphrosunē]; now I am on my way to Hades, and my life is completely lost; in vain did I struggle to respect men piously. 1370 Oh, oh, the pain is on me, let me go, wretched as I am, and let death come to me. Kill me at last and end my sufferings. 1375 I want a two-edged sword to cut with and to lay down my life. Wretched curse of my father! The crimes of bloody kinsmen, 1380 ancestors of old, now come forth without delay and are upon me. But why, since I am not guilty [aitios] of any evil? 1385 How will I give up my life without suffering [pathos]? I wish dark Hades, lord of the night, would lay me in my misery to rest.

Artemis

Poor boy, you are yoked to such misfortune! 1390 The nobility of your phrenes has destroyed you.
Hippolytus
O, the divine scent! Even in my misery I sense you and feel relief; she is here, in this very place, my goddess Artemis.

Artemis
She is, poor boy, the goddess most philē to you.

Hippolytus
1395 You see me, my mistress, in my suffering?

Artemis
I see you, but it is not themis for me to shed a tear.

Hippolytus
1400 There is none to lead the hunt or serve you.

Artemis
None now, yet even in death I love you still.

Hippolytus
There is none to groom your horses nor be the guardian of your image.

Artemis
1405 It was Kypris who devised this evil.

Hippolytus
Ah! Now I know the daimōn who has destroyed me.

Artemis
She was jealous of her slighted timē and angered by your sōphrosunē.

Hippolytus
One, I see, has destroyed three.

Artemis
Yes, your father, you, and third, your father’s wife.

Hippolytus
1405 Then I mourn the bad luck of my father also.

Artemis
He was deceived by the plotting of the daimōn.

Hippolytus
O father, the misery of your misfortune!
Theseus
I am ruined, son, life holds no pleasure [kharis] for me.

Hippolytus
I mourn for you, in your mistake, more than for myself.

Theseus
1410 If I could I would die in your place, my son.

Hippolytus
The gifts from your father Poseidon are bitter.

Theseus
I wish my lips had never spoken those words.

Hippolytus
But why? You would have killed me anyway, so enraged were you then.

Theseus
Because of the gods I was mistaken in my resolve.

Hippolytus
1415 Would that the race [genos] of mortals were a curse to the daimones.

Artemis
Enough! Even when you are under the dark of the earth, the wrath of the goddess Kypris will not, despite her zeal, fall on you unavenged. I give you this as recompense [kharis] for your noble and righteous phrēn. 1420 By my own hand and with these unerring arrows I will take vengeance against whichever mortal is most philos to her. To you, poor sufferer, in recompense for these miseries, I will grant the greatest timai in the polis of Trozen: 1425 unwed girls before marriage will cut off their hair for you, and through the length of time [aiōn] you will harvest the sorrows [penthos pl.] of their tears. It will be the care of the virgin girls to make songs about you, 1430 and so Phaedra’s love for you will not fade away unremembered and remain a secret. You, son of old Aegeus, take your son in your arms and embrace him, since you have destroyed him against your will. Human beings are bound to commit wrongs when the gods put it in their way. 1435 And Hippolytus, I warn you not to hate your father, for in this death you meet your own fate. Now farewell, since it is not themis for me to look on the dying and to pollute my eyes with the last gasps of death; already I see that you are full of this evil.

Artemis vanishes.

Hippolytus
1440 Farewell, blessed [olbia] virgin, go now! How easily you leave behind our long association! As you wish, I let go of the quarrel with my father, for even before I used to obey your wishes. Already the darkness is settling on my eyes. 1445 Take me, father, and make straight my body.
Hippolytus

Theseus
O my son, what are you doing to me, ill-fated as I am?

Hippolytus
I am lost, even now I see the gates of death.

Theseus
Do you leave me behind with stained hands?

Hippolytus
No, no, I free you of my murder.

Theseus
1450 What are you saying? You release me from your bloodshed?

Hippolytus
Artemis, mistress of the bow, I call as my witness.

Theseus
Most philos, how noble you show yourself to be to your father.

Hippolytus
Farewell to you, a long farewell, father.

Theseus
Alas for your reverent and noble phrēn!

Hippolytus
1455 Pray that your lawful sons are such men.

Theseus
Don’t leave me, son, be strong.

Hippolytus
I have no more strength. I am gone, father; cover my face quickly with my robe.

Theseus
Glorious Athens, land of Athena, 1460 what a man you have lost! Often I will recall your evils, Kypris.

Chorus
This shared akhos has come unexpectedly on all our citizens. There will be a great shower of tears, 1465 for reports worthy of penthos about great men have a strong hold upon us.
Introduction: Herakles is gone to the underworld, where he was sent by Eurystheus to drag to light the triple headed dog Cerberus. Lykos, king of Thebes, certain that the enterprise will prove fatal to the hero, seizes on his three sons, together with their mother Megara, and grandfather Amphitryon, in order to allay his fears of their popularity and influence by killing them.

[The scene is at Thebes, before the Palace of Herakles.]

AMPHITRYON, MEGARA, CHORUS

Amphitryon
Who among mortals does not know the one who shared his bed with Zeus, the Argive Amphitryon? Alkaios was his sire, From Perseus sprung, and Herakles his son.
He held his seat in Thebes, where from the earth
Up rose the dragon race, of which race [genos] only a few
Mars spared: their great descendants in the city [polis]
Of Kadmos flourished: Creon, of their line,
Son of Menoikeus, was king of this land.
And Creon was father of Megara here
To her the sons of Thebes attuned their flutes
And wedding hymns, when to my house
The illustrious Herakles with festive joy
Led her his bride. But leaving Thebes, my residence,
And this Megara, and the alliance formed through her, my son desired
To fix his seat at Argus, and in the city walls [polis]
Raised by the Cyclopes⁹⁰: exiled from there I fled, having killed Elektryon,⁹¹ To alleviate my misfortunes, and wishing to inhabit his fatherland, high rewards he offered to Eurystheus, to civilize the earth, whether he was prompted by the goads of Hera, or by necessity.
The other toils he achieved with hard labor;
But for the last, to Hades’ dreary abode
Through the dark jaws of Tainaros he went,
To drag the triple-headed dog to light: from there he has not returned.
Yet in Thebes remains the story of times of old,

⁹⁰ The Cyclopes were the builders of the walls of Mycenae and Tiryns. They built the walls with unhewn stones so large that two mules yoked could not move the smallest of them.
⁹¹ Mestor and Elektryon were sons of Perseus.
that Lykos once, wedded to Dirke,
held his awful reign over the seven towers of Thebes,
before the sons of Zeus, Amphion and his brother Zethos,
the so-called white colts, were monarchs [verb of τυράννος]
of the land.
His son, who bears his father’s name,
(no Theban, but coming from Euboea),
killed Creon, and having killed him now rules the land,
having fallen on this city when it was sick with strife [στασὶς].
We, to Creon’s blood allied, because of this, it seems
draw our greatest miseries: for, while my son,
is in the innermost part of the earth below,
this king, the potent Lykos, wishes to destroy
the sons of Herakles, to slay his wife,
And, that by murder may be quenched,
Me too, a weak old man, (if somehow I can
be numbered among men); lest, when they become men
they should achieve vengeance [δίκη], for their mother’s family.
I, (for my son left me in his house,
to guard his children when down the earth’s
dark steep he took his way),
To save them from impending ruin, here
Sit, with their mother, at this altar, raised to Zeus, the high savior [σωτήρ],
which my son erected as a generous monument
Of his victorious spear, when his strong arm subdued the Minyai.92
Wanting all things, food and drink, and clothing,
We keep these seats in this sanctuary, on the bare uncovered ground
we make our beds; for our house closed shut
Against us, here we sit at a loss for safety [σωτηρία].
Of my friends [φίλοι], I see some who were not such;
and they, who are indeed my true friends, are powerless to help.
Among men such is the influence of calamity
Which never may he know, whoever wished
Even the least good to me; it proves false friends [φίλοι].
O venerable man, who once destroyed the Taphian towers,93
the leader of the famous Theban force,
what darkness hides the councils of the gods from mortal eyes!
To me no joy devolves from all my father’s fortune:
who once was blessed with all the pride of wealth [ολβος];
he once ruled, which inflamed the long spears
To rage against the bosom of the great;
He once had children : me he gave in marriage to your son,
to be the illustrious wife of Herakles.

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92 The Thebans had been paying tribute to Erginos, king of the Minyai.
93 Amphitryon, to avenge the death of the sons of Elektryon, had carried on the war against the Taphians, called also Teleboans, and demolished their towns.
These blessings in his death vanished at once; 70
now you, old man, and I are about to die;
and these too, the sons of Herakles, whom, beneath my wings
I preserve [sōzein] like the parent bird that puts her young under her.
These in turn question me, ‘O Mother, tell us, 75
Where on earth has our father gone?
What is he doing? when will he return?’ Helpless in their youth
they ask for their parent: to divert their minds, I speak
The words of comfort, and admiring see,
whenever the gates resound, their ready feet
start forward, to fall at their father’s knees.
But now what hope or means of safety [sōtēria] do you deem easy, venerable man? for I look to you. 80
For neither from this land by secret flight can we escape;
each avenue is held by guards too strong for us;
nor in our friends [philoi] do we have hope in salvation [sōtēria] if your thoughts suggest anything,
Propose it; let not instant death overtake us.

**Amphitryon**
Daughter, it is no easy or slight task
To advise earnestly without ordeal [ponos]:
Since we are weak, let us just delay.

**Megara**
Have you need of more pain, or do you so love life? 90

**Amphitryon**
I rejoice in heaven’s sweet light, and cherish hope.

**Megara**
And I: yet vain is hope, old man, where hope must fail.

**Amphitryon**
In their delays ills [kaka] find a remedy.

**Megara**
The time in delay is painful, and afflicts me.

**Amphitryon**
Some prosperous course may yet be opened, daughter, 95
for you and me to escape these present evils [kaka]:
My son, your husband, may perhaps yet return.
But remain calm, and from your children’s eyes
Dry those flowing tears; calm them with stories,
A soothing, but a wretched fallacy.
For even the sufferings of mortals waste away,
and the blasts of storms do not keep their strength always
The fortunate are not fortunate to the end [telos];
Everything changes and is different from before.
The best [aristos] man is the one who always trusts in hope; the coward gives up.

CHORUS OF OLD MEN OF THEBES

Leaning on my staff I come, to the high roofed halls and the old-man's home
Like the swan, foretelling ill
I come to pour the mournful songs.
Nothing except words [epea] is left me now;
A lifeless vision of the night I seem,
The phantom of a dream
Though these words tremble, yet friendly shall they flow.
Unhappy orphans, for you are without a father's guardian power
You poor old man, and you afflicted woman,
How is your heart with bitter anguish pained
For your lost husband is kept in Hades' house!

Do not hurry my feeble frame,
As up the craggy steep
Faintly and slowly on I creep
like the colt drawing the heavy cart:
And, as I go with infirm step,
gently lead this heavy burden;
Support me by the robe and by the hand;
I, an old man, will support an old man,
Just as a young man, when I grasped the youthful spear and shield;
I was there together in the toils [ponos] of my agemates and brought no disgrace on my fatherland.

Behold these boys; how stern their brow,
Their father's spirit
flashing from their eyes;
They too his hapless fortune know,
As they his manly grace retain.
O Greece, if bereft of these,
what firm allies,
you will lose.

But, I see the monarch of this land,
Lykos, advancing to this house. He's here.
LYKOS, AMPHITRYON, MEGARA, CHORUS.

Lykos
If I might ask the father and the wife
Of Herakles, (and of course I may, since
I am your master, find out what I want to know),
In what confiding do you seek to prolong your life?
What hope presents itself? Why do you expect not to die?
Do you think that from the realms of Hades, where he lies,
The sire of these will come? Thus you raise your grief,
Since you must die so unbecomingly -
you, who many an empty boast has spread through Greece,
that Zeus once shared thy bed, and gave this strange son birth:
and you, who you are called the wife of the bravest [aristos] man!
Yet by your husband what illustrious deed has been achieved,
if he destroyed and slew the marsh-bred Hydra,
or Nemean beast, which in his nets he caught,
saying he grasped it in his arms, and strangled it?
On this presume you to contend with me? Is it for this
the sons of Herakles ought not to die?
Who, with no merit, held the reputation of daring courage,
that with beasts he fought, in naught besides his prowess proved:
his left hand never knew to raise the shield;
Never came near the spear, but held the bow,
a coward’s weapon, and was always ready for flight;
no proof of manhood, none of daring courage is the bow,
best shown by him, who, remaining steadfast, dares to face
the rapid spear and the furrowed wounds it cuts.
Think not, old man, what now I do takes rise from insolence,
but caution: well I know I slew
her father Creon, and possess his throne:
I therefore have no use for these boys to grow up,
and leave them to revenge [take dikē on] my deeds.

Amphitryon
May Zeus protect his son, for that to Zeus
belongs: it shall be my part to refute with my words
his ignorance about you, Herakles; for never
will I bear to hear you defamed. And first
The charge of cowardice (shame on the tongue
That brought so vile a charge!) will I disprove,
And call the gods to witness. Let me ask
The thunder, and the flaming car of Zeus,
ascending in which he, in the giant sons
of Earth his winged arrows deep infixed,
And shared the glorious triumph of the gods.
To Pholoë go, O you basest [superlative of kakos] of kings,
and ask the four-hoofed monsters of the centaur race [genos],
What man they judge the bravest:
whom would they name, but my son?
Ask the Euboean Dirke,94 which nurtured you:
it would not sound your praise, for you have done
nothing noble [esthlon] to which your country might bear witness.
But wisdom's prime invention, the arrow-bearing quiver,
you blame: hear me now, and become wise [sophos]:
the man arrayed in arms is to his arms a slave,
and, if stationed near the weak-hearted,
through their cowardice he perishes;
or if he should break his spear, what has he to protect him
from the carnage, his valor thus disarmed?
But he who grasps the skilful-aiming bow
has in his hand the one best thing: even if he sends
a thousand arrows against the breast of others,
himself from death defends; and, his stand held distant,
pours his vengeance on his foes,
Who fall by unseen wounds, himself secure,
Nor to their arms exposed: for in the fight
This is especially wise [sophon], to annoy
The enemies, saving [sôzein] your own body.
These are my arguments, in refutation of yours
concerning the points you made.
But why do you wish to kill these boys?
What have they done to you? Yet I consider you wise [sophos]
in this one thing
that, being the coward [kakos] you are, you fear the offspring
of the brave [aristos]. Yet this on us is hard,
that we must die on account of your cowardice,
when you should suffer at the hands of us, your betters,
Were Zeus with righteous [dikaios] thought attentive to us.
If you wish to hold the scepter of this land,
Permit us to leave this country as exiles.
You should do nothing with violence [bia], or you shall
suffer violence [bia]
when the god shall change the direction of the winds.
O Theban land, (for on you as well
I will pour my just reproaches),
is this how you defend Herakles and his sons?
Yet he advanced alone against all the Minyai in arms,
And let the eye of Thebes see freedom.
Nor, Greece, do you deserve my praise, nor ever will I keep
silent at your baseness [superlative of kakos] to my son:
you should, in aid of these poor boys, come bringing

94 Lykos was a Euboean.
fire, spears, arms, in return for their father’s toils of clearing sea and land from its monsters.
But, O children, neither the state [polis] of Thebes, Nor Greece will defend you. To me, a friend [philos] but a weak one, you turn, but I am nothing but a sounding tongue: For the strength I once had has left me, trembling with age, my languid nerves without vigor. If I now were young, and there were might in this body, I would grasp the spear and stain those blond locks with blood so that I might see you flee beyond the bounds of the Atlantic, in fear of my lance.

Chorus
Are not the good [agathoi], though slow to opprobrious words, often provoked by wrongs to give them vent?

Lykos
Speak against me whatever proud words you want, My actions will be harsh to you in return for your words. Go, woodsmen, some to Helikon, some to the valleys of Parnassus; having gone there cut the trunks of oak, and bear them to the city [polis]; pile them you each way this altar round, set them on fire, And burn those wretches there; that they may know Their Creon dead no longer rules in these realms, but I am now the lord of Thebes. And you, old men, who dare oppose me and my will, do not groan for the sons of Herakles alone but also for the ruin that will fall On your own house; you will remember then That you are slaves to my despotic power [turannis].

Chorus
You, offspring of the earth, whom Mars of old Sowed, when the dragon’s furious jaws he bared, Will not each raise the staff that his right hand Supports, and dash it against this man’s bleeding head, Who, not a Theban, over my land and people Most basely [superlative of kakos] rules, alien though he be?

Yet never will you rejoice being despot over me, nor will you possess what my hand earned with toil Go back from where you came, commit your outrage [hubris] there; while I live, never will you kill The sons of Herakles; for not so far lies he concealed beneath the earth that he forsakes his sons. Since you hold sway here in this land, having destroyed it,
he who has helped it does not receive his worthy due.

Much I avail my friends [philoi] by all the zeal
I show the dead, when friends [philoi] are wanted most.
O my right hand, how you long to grasp the spear!
But the desire is lost in weakness.
Else I would stop you from calling me a slave
with glory [kleos] might we then inhabit this our Thebes,
in which you now delight. For the city [polis] does not think well
which shakes with base sedition [stasis] and ill counsels;
else it would not have acquired you as despot.

Megara

Old men, I praise [verb of ainos] you; for on account of
friends [philoi] must have a just [dikaia] resentment.
Yet in our cause let not your anger rise against your despots,
don’t suffer anything. And you, Amphitryon,
hear now my opinion, if I seem to speak anything worthwhile.
I love my children; how can I but love them,
Whom I brought forth, and cherished with fond care?
And to die I think is terrible; yet him,
who strives against necessity, I deem but ill advised.
But we, since we must die, we should not die
consumed by fire, letting our enemies [ekthroi] laugh at us:
to me death is a better evil [kakon];
and to the honor of our house we owe much.
The glory [kleos] of the powerful spear is yours;
let not that glory be tarnished by your death through fear.
My well-famed [with good kleos] husband needs no witness
that he would not wish to save [sôzein] his sons,
if they gain a poor reputation from it. For the well-born
suffer from the disgrace of their children;
nor shall I refuse to emulate my noble husband.
See now how much I esteem your hope.
Do you think that from the realms below your son will come?
Who of the dead has come back again from Hades?
Or do you think that this one [Lykos] will relent to words?
Not at all. One must flee a boorish enemy [ekthros]
to the wise, whose minds are trained well, we submit,
For there a modest [aidôs] gentleness we find.
My mind suggests, if we prevail to save
My sons by exile, what a wretched state
Is safety [sôteria] with distressful poverty
Since from the face of such a guest [xenos] each friend [philos]
will turn,
nor longer than a single day behold him with a pleasant eye.
Then dare to die with us, since death awaits you anyway.
We call forth, old man, the nobleness of your soul,
He, who strives against the fortunes sent by the gods,
strives but to show his foolishness;
for the necessary ill will come; no one can stop it.

Chorus
If, while my arm retained its vigorous force,
This insult [hubris] had been offered, I with ease would have repelled it;
But now I am nothing. It is yours then, Amphitryon, to look to it,
How best to drive back the impending ill.

Amphitryon
Not abject fear, nor fond desire of life keeps me
from death, but I wish for my son
To save [sōzēin] his sons - it seems I am in love with the impossible.
See, the neck is ready for your sword,
kill me, hurl me from the rock:
Grant me one favor [kharis], lord, I beg you;
Kill me, and kill her, the wretched mother, first
so that we not behold the children’s death, the unhallowed sight;
nor, while their warm blood flows, hear them call on their mother,
and on me their father’s father: for the rest, if you are eager
do it. We have no power to rescue us from death.

Megara
I am your suppliant too; to grace [kharis] add grace [kharis],
And merit thanks for both: permit me, king,
Opening the doors, which now are shut against us,
To array [verb of kosmos] my children in the dress of death;
giving them at least a scanty portion from their father’s house.

Lykos
Well, so be it. Attendants, open the house.
Go in, array [verb of kosmos] yourselves; I begrudge you not your robes.
When you are dressed with such attire [kosmos] as suits you,
I will come, and send you to the dark realms below.

Megara
Come then, my sons, let your unhappy steps
Attend your mother to your father’s house over which others
have power and have seized his wealth; the name as yet remains with us.

Amphitryon
In vain, O Zeus, did I share my wife with you.
In vain am I called together with you the father of this son;
You are less a friend [philos] than you seem to be. Mortal as I am, in virtue [aretē] I surpass you, a mighty god; for I have not betrayed the sons of Herakles.
Well did you know to come by stealth to my marriage-bed, to invade a bed not yours, no leave obtained; 345
But you do not know to save [sōzein] your friends [philoi]. You are an ignorant god or you are by nature not just [dikaios].

Chorus
The lament for Linos after the strophe
song for success Phoebus sings, drawing his golden plectrum 350
over the beautiful voiced seven string lyre [kithara].
But I sing of the one who went below the earth
Whether I call him the son of Zeus
Or child of Amphitryon
I wish to sing a crown of his
toils through eulogy,
the striving for excellence [aretē] of his labors [ponoi]
are a glory to the dead.

First the sacred forest of Zeus he cleared
And he slew the lion 360
When over his manly limbs the victor wore
The tawny beast's shaggy hide,
Terrific with its yawning jaws upon his head.

Next with many a shaft winged antistrophe
from his fatal bow, he slew the savage
mountain band of Centaurs
and laid the bleeding monsters low,
The lovely rapids of Peneus knew him
and large stretches of uncultivated plains,
Pelion abodes and
neighboring Omole's deep caves;
pouring out from where with pine torches
in their hand, the Thessalian land
their cavalry tames.

The spotted hind, that reared with pride 375
the golden antlers of its head,
And wasted Oene's groves,
he chased, he seized, he bound,
A trophy to the huntress goddess.
He yoked the mares of Diomedes to the car,
And taught their mouths the iron bit to bear:
Unreined, and pawing in their gore-stained stalls
Greedy of human flesh for food,
And drank with savage joy their blood:
These steeds, the silver-flowing Hebrós passed,
He drove its farther bank beside,
Where to the ocean wave, with headlong haste,
laboring [ponos] for the tyrant [turannos] of Mycenae.

Near the Malian headlands
next to the waters of Anauros
He slew Kyknos, the xenos killer,
Piercing him with his shafts, in blood he lies,
And gives the avenged stranger rest.

To the rich gardens near the Hesperides,
Where still the tuneful sisters pour the strain
He came. He plucked the ambrosial fruit that grew
shining on the boughs of gold.
In vain the watchful dragon wreathed around
His spires voluminous and vast;
The fiery-scaled guard he slew.
To the wide ocean’s foaming gulfs he passed,
making them calm for mortals in ships.

Beneath the center of the skies,
he made his hands the foundation
going to Atlas’ home
And on his patient shoulders bears
The starry mansions of the gods.

Over the black Euxine’s crashing waves
He sought the Amazonian cavalry,
In martial ranks arranged along the coast
at Maiotis, where many rivers meet.
Who of his friends [philoi], their country’s pride,
Did not in arms arise, to attend their chief?
The golden robes, the girdle of the queen
were his dangerous quarry.
Greece took the illustrious spoils
of the barbarian girl, and
it is preserved [sōzein] in Mycenae.

The horrid Hydra’s hundred heads,
Hell-hound of Lerna, armed with flames,
he cut off each one.
Coated with whose venom
His shafts killed the triple-bodied Geryon,
the herdsman of Erytheia.

He won prizes in many other races
And glorious conquest crowned his brow;
But now, his last of toils [ponoi], he sailed to Hades’
realms below: Unhappy, from that mournful shore,
Never, ah! never to come back again.
Far from his house each faithless friend [philoi] is fled.
The boat of Charon his sons awaits,
along that godless, unjust [without dikē] road
from which one never return.
Your house looks to your hands,
though you are not here.

If I had the strength of my youth
and could shake my spear in battle
with my fellow Theban agemates,
I would stand forward and protect your sons
with courage, but youth and strength
are withered here and I have them no longer.

Chorus
But I see them wearing
the robes of death,
the sons of the once great Herakles,
and his much-loved [philē] wife,
Leading her children coupled at her side
By the same chain of fate, and the old father of Herakles;
I am wretched,
I am not able to hold back the tears
pouring yet from my old eyes.

MEGARA and her sons, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS

Megara
Come now: what priest, what butcher of the afflicted,
What bloody murderer of my wretched life [psukhē]
leads these ready victims to the home Hades?
Alas, my sons, ill-matched beneath the yoke,
The old, the young, the mothers, are we led to death.
O miserable fate, that awaits me and my sons,
whom never shall my eyes again behold!
I brought you forth, I nurtured you, to be insulted [hubris],

MEGARA and her sons, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS
scorned and murdered by your foes [ekthroi].
Alas, much have my hopes of glory failed me,
which I hope due to your father’s words.
To you [speaking to one of her sons], your father now gone
would have assigned Argos,
you would have had the seat of proud Eurystheus,
the rich and productive fields of Pelasgia,
throwing over your head the robe of the beast,
the lion’s skin, in which he himself was armed.
And you [another son] were to be leader of chariot-loving Thebes
enriched with your mother’s realms
since you once persuaded your father to do so;
and in thy hand in jest he placed
his protective and cunningly wrought club.
On you [the third son] Oikhalia’s towers, subdued once
by his far-wounding bow, he promised to bestow:
thus his three sons with three empires [turannis].
your father would have lifted you up, planning
great things for your manhood.
And I for your brides chose
The most illustrious, and formed alliances at Athens,
at Sparta, and at Thebes, so that, anchored thus,
your honorable lives might bid defiance to each rising storm.
These hopes are vanished: fortune, ever changing in her course
now gives the Fates instead of brides to you;
to me, wretched me, I have tears for a nuptial bath;
your grandfather here prepares the wedding feast,
considering Hades your father-in-law: the alliance now is bitter.
Oh me! which shall I first, which last
Clasp to my bosom? which with fondness kiss,
And which embrace? Or, like the yellow-winged bee,
shall I collect the griefs of each, and bring them all
Into one store, and there condense the tear?
O thou most loved [most philos], if any voice is heard
among the dead in Hades, to you, Herakles, I speak,
Your father dies, your sons, and I too perish,
 once by mortals called happy because of you:
hurry, come, aid us, and let your shade appear to me.
Your coming is enough, even if you come as a dream.
For they are evil [kakoi] who would slay your sons.

**Amphitryon**
Perform whatever to the infernal powers is due, woman
I , O Zeus, stretching my hands to heaven,
I call you: if you intend to help these children,
defend them now; your aid soon will not avail them at all.
how often have I invoked you, but I labor [ponos] in vain.
Of necessity, then, it seems we must die.
O old men, brief are the affairs of life;
pass then its course in sweet tranquility,
nor grieve yourselves from morning to night:
time knows not to preserve [sōzein] hope;
but, rushes on with its own concerns, and flies away
Look at me, conspicuous once among men,
and doer of well-known deeds; but in one day fortune
taken it from me, just like a feather in the breeze.
Neither great wealth [olbos], nor reputation is known to be
secure and lasting for anyone. Farewell, for now, my agemates,
you see your friend [philos] for the very last time.

Megara
Look!
O venerable man, do I spy my dearest [most philos] or what do I see?

Amphitryon
I do not know, daughter; I am speechless.

Megara
Yes, it is he, who we had heard was held beneath the earth,
unless we see some dream in the clear light of day.
What am I saying? What sort of dream do I see so anxiously?
This is none other than your son, old man.
Come, children, hang upon your father's robes
Go to him, quickly go; don't linger:
Not Zeus himself could be a better savior [sōtēr] for you.

HERAKLES, MEGARA, SONS, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

Herakles
I greet you, fair house! My pillared hearth, hail!
With pleasure, reascending to the light, I see you again.
Well, what may this mean? Before the house I see my sons,
their heads wrapped in the dress of death;
and, amid a crowd of men, my wife;
my father, too, in tears at some misfortune.
Near them will I stand and ask the cause.
Tell me, wife, what new affliction has befallen my house?

Megara
O most dear [most philos] of men! O light coming to your father
you have come, you are safe [sōzein], returning to your friends [philoi]
in their time of need.

Herakles
What are you saying? Into what kind of disturbance have I come, father?

**Megara**
We are perishing. - Pardon me, old man,
If first I snatch the words that should be yours.  
The female is more pitiful than the male,  
and he was about to kill my children, and I was destroyed.

**Herakles**
By Apollo, what sort of story begins like this?

**Megara**
Dead are my brothers, and my aged father.

**Herakles**
How was this done? by whom? what hostile spear?

**Megara**
By Lykos, potent monarch of this land.

**Herakles**
Opposed by the arms of all or was the land afflicted?

**Megara**
By faction [*stasis*]; now he holds power over the seven gates  
of Thebes.

**Herakles:**
What terror reached you and my old father’s age?

**Megara**
He intends to kill you father and me and your sons.

**Herakles**
What? Did he fear the orphan weakness of my sons?

**Megara**
Lest at some time they should avenge Creon’s death.

**Herakles**
But why this dress [*kosmos*], which suits the infernal powers?

**Megara**
We wear these coverings in preparation for our deaths.

**Herakles:** Should you by force [*bia*] have died? Wretched me!
Megara
We were bereft of friends [philoi]: we heard you were dead.

Herakles
From what were your minds overwhelmed with this despair?

Megara
The heralds of Eurystheus brought these tidings.

Herakles
Why then did you leave my house [oikos] and household gods?

Megara: We were forced [bia]; your father was dragged from his bed.

Herakles:
Did not shame [aidōs] check such rude affront to age?

Megara
Shame [aidōs]? Lykos lives far from that goddess.

Herakles:
Were we so destitute of friends [philoi] while I was away?

Megara
Who is a friend [philos] to the unfortunate?

Herakles
Are thus my battles with the Minyai slighted?

Megara
Misfortune, as I said, has no friend [philos].

Herakles:
Will you not cast these coverings of Hades from your heads, and look upon the light, your eyes rejoicing with that sweet exchange from the dark gloom below? I (for this work requires my hands) will first go and utterly destroy the house of this new tyrant [turannos], ripping his unholy head and hurl it to the hungry dogs as prey; however many Thebans requite my good service with evil, this victorious club shall punish; those that fly, my winged shafts shall reach, until all Ismenos is choked with the dead and Dirke rolls her silver tide with blood discolored.
Herakles

Whom should I protect more than my wife,
my father, and my sons? Farewell, my labors [ponoi]:
in vain I have I achieved them for others more than these;
yet I must die in their defense, since for their father
They were to die. Or shall we say it is good
that I met the Hydra in battle, and the lion
sent by Eurystheus, but to keep my sons from death
I will not labor ardently? Ah! may I then be called
The glorious-conquering Herakles no more.

Chorus
Just [dikaia] it is for the father to guard his sons,
His aged father, and wedded wife.

Amphitryon
It is for you, my son, to be a friend [philos] to friends [philoi]
and to hate your enemies [ekthra]. But don’t act too hastily.

Herakles:
In what way do I act faster than I should, father?

Amphitryon
The king has many allies who are poor,
but extolled as rich [olbios], and so appearing:
these have raised seditious tumults [stasis], and destroyed
the city [polis],
to plunder their neighbors; all their own wealth
wasted away in foul intemperance and sloth.
You were seen coming here: be cautious then,
lest by this band you perish in ambush.

Herakles:
I do not care if the whole city [polis] saw me.
But seeing a bird in an inauspicious place,
I knew some ordeal [ponos] had befallen my house,
and so my entrance was with studied secrecy.

Amphitryon
Excellent! Go then, and address Hestia,
look upon your paternal home.
The tyrant soon will come with intent
to slay your wife, your sons, and to murder me.
For you waiting there, everything will come
With safety gained; but don’t arouse
The city [polis], son, till this deed be well achieved.

Herakles
I will this, for you have spoken well. I will go in the house
After this tedious absence, having come up from the sunless courts
Of Hades’ queen below; and first I will salute
With reverent awe the gods beneath my roof.

**Amphitryon**
Did you indeed to Hades’ house descend, son? 610

**Herakles**
And dragged the triple-headed dog to light.

**Amphitryon**
Subdued with a fight, or by the goddess given?

**Herakles**
With a fight: I was lucky enough to see the mysteries.

**Amphitryon**
And is the beast in Eurystheus’ house?

**Herakles**
Hermion in the grove of Chthonia holds him. 615

**Amphitryon**
Knows not Eurystheus your return to light?

**Herakles**
He knows it not: my zeal first led me here.

**Amphitryon**
Why the delay in your stay under the earth?

**Herakles**
To rescue Theseus from Hades, father.

**Amphitryon**
Where is he? Has he gone to his native land? 620

**Herakles**
To Athens he is gone, with joy escaped those gloomy shades.
But come, my sons, attend your father into his house.
You enter now with fairer expectations
than you left it. Take courage then,
no longer pour this stream of tears.
And you, my wife, gather your presence of mind [psukhē];
tremble no more, nor hang upon my robes;  
I have no wings, nor will I flee my friends [philoi].  
Ah, they hold me yet, still hanging upon my robes.  
How close you came to death!  
I will lead you, taking you in my hands  
like a ship that tows little boats behind it. For I do not refuse  
the care of my sons. This feeling is common to all mortals  
Both the better off and those who have nothing love  
their children: there may be differences in property;  
some abound, some have want, but for their children all have  
equal love.

Chorus
Youth is dear [philon] to me  
But age lies on my head a burden  
Heavier than all the rocks of Aetna,  
over my eyes  
a darkness conceals the light.  
Not for the wealth [olbos]  
of Asia’s tyrant [turannos],  
Not for a house full of gold,  
Would I trade youth:  
it is the best in prosperity [olbos],  
but also beautiful in poverty.  
This cumbrous, sad, funereal age  
I hate: would that it would flow  
out with the waves  
and never come to the  
homes and cities [polis] of mortals,  
but let it by carried off always  
on wings through the air!  
If the gods were wise  
and understood men  
they would bring a second youth,  
as a visible mark on those who  
display excellence [arete],  
and dying, would come  
back to the light of the sun again  
to run a double course  
Not so the base: their youthful hour,  
Once fled, should be recalled no more:  
and in this way you might know the bad [kakoi]  
from the good [agathoi] men  
like stars appearing through clouds,  
give the sailors their direction.  
But now no distinctive mark is given  
to the useful and to the base [kakoi].
All are driven down one rolling age,
exalting wealth alone.

I will not leave off from the Graces [Kharites] mingled with the Muses,  
the sweetest union.  
May I not live without the Muses,  
but may I always be garlanded.  
Still as an old man I sing  
the song of Memory [Mnēmē]  
Still the victory song  
of Herakles I sing,  
as long as Bromios is a giver of wine  
and the tortoise shell lyre of seven tones  
and Libyan flute play the tune,  
I shall not cease from  
the Muses who made me dance!

The Delian maidens sing a paean around the temple’s splendid gate  
for the beautiful son of Leto  
and the beautiful choruses whirl in dancing.  
Paeans at your gates  
I will sing like a swan  
a gray-haired singer  
with aging jaws,  
for this is good for hymns.  
Surpassing all in his excellence [aretē],  
the noble son of Zeus,  
with great toil has made  
life tranquil for mortals  
having destroyed the horrible beasts.

LYKOS, AMPHITRYON, CHORUS

Lykos  
At length, Amphitryon, you have come out from the house.  
Tedious the time you spend to array [kosmos] yourselves  
In the dark robes and ornaments of death.  
But hurry, call forth the children and the wife  
Of Herakles to appear before the house: now I claim the terms,  
That unreluctant you submit to die.

Amphitryon  
In my afflictions, king, you pursue me with rigorous speed,  
and in death add insult [hubris] to wrong?  
It is necessary for you, if you are in power, to be more moderate
in haste.
Since you impose a necessity that we die,
we must submit, and what seems best to you must be done.

Lykos
Where is Megara? Where the children of Alkmene’s son?

Amphitryon
I think, if from the doors I guess aright.

Lykos
What is it? What proof do you have of what you think?

Amphitryon
She sits as a suppliant before her hallowed gods

Lykos
As a suppliant she sits in vain to save [sōzein] her life.

Amphitryon
And calls in vain her husband who has died.

Lykos
He is not here and never will he come.

Amphitryon
Never, unless some god restores him to us.

Lykos
Go to her then, and lead her from the house.

Amphitryon
Then I would be an accomplice to her murder.

Lykos
Then I will, Since such is your thought,
I, who have no vain fears, will bring them forth,
the mother and the sons. You, my attendants, follow;
that, relieved from all our toils [ponos], with pleasure we may rest.

AMPHITRYON, CHORUS

Amphitryon
Go, then, if you must go! The rest, perhaps,
will be a care to someone else. Since you committed evil,
look for evil in return. Old men, for good
he goes, and rushes on the net
Staked round with swords, the all-evil [all kakos] thinking
to kill those inside. I will go, and see his corpse
fall: an enemy [ekhthros] dying holds some pleasure,
When vengeance [dikē] catches up to him for his deeds.

**Chorus**

A reversal of evils [kaka]!  
The once great king
turns his life back to Hades
O justice [dikē], and the
back-flowing river of the gods.

At last you have arrived where
with death you will pay the penalty [dikē]
for committing outrageous wrongs [hubris]
on your betters

Joy have thrown out tears,
he has come back, the lord of this land,
a thing which earlier I had no hope in my mind [phrēn]
of experiencing [paskhein].
But, old men, let us see if
the matters inside the house
are happening as I want them to.

**Lykos [within]**

Ah me! Ah me!

**Chorus**

The music arising inside the house
is dear [philos] to my ears
Death is not far off: he cries, he cries,
The proud king groans, the prelude to his death.

**Lykos[within]**

O land of Thebes, I am destroyed by a trick.

**Chorus**

Then die. Bear then this retribution,
punishment [dikē] for thy deeds.
What mortal man shall by lawlessness [no nomoi]
dare to violate the gods, and foolishly say that
they have no power?
Old men, the unholy man is no longer.
There is silence in the house: let us turn to dances [khoroi]
My friends [philoi] have succeeded as I hoped.
Let there be dances - dances [khoroi] and feasts throughout the holy citadel of Thebes. There has been a change from tears, and A change of fortune bids the exulting song arise, For low the mighty tyrant lies. The our earlier king has come, leaving the banks of Acheron. Hope has come beyond expectations!

The gods, the gods take care of the unjust [the not dikaios] and listen to the reverent. Gold and good fortune carry away mortals from their senses [phrēn] bringing along unjust [not dike] power No man dares to look at the change of time. Having given up law [nomos] in favor of lawlessness he shatters the black chariot of prosperity [olbos].

O Ismenos, come bearing crowns And, Thebes, through all seven-gated city may festive dance and song resound Hurry, lovely Dirke, from your silver spring: and come, daughters of Asopos, leaving your father’s water; bring the Nymphs as fellow singers for the victorious contest [agōn] of Herakles. O wooded rock of Pythia and the homes of the Helikonian Muses Give to my town the joy-resounding song; where the race [genos] of sown men appeared, a band with shields of bronze, whose children’s children still inhabit this land a blessed light to Thebes!

O marriage bed shared by two One a mortal, the other Zeus, who came to the bed of the bride descended from Perseus. How true you marriage already long ago, O Zeus, appeared to be beyond all doubt. Time has shown the brilliant
Herakles

strength of Herakles.
Who has come out of the earth
leaving the dark home and Hades’ bedroom.
You are a better king [turannos] to me
than the baseness of that lord,
which now the contest of sword-bearing struggles [agōnes]
makes apparent to the beholder
if what is just [dikaion]
is still pleasing to the gods.

IRIS, LYSSA, CHORUS

Chorus
Ah me! Look!
Have we come to the same violence of fear,
old men, what sort of apparition do I see above the house?
Flee, flee, my friends;
to your slow steps add speed; get out of the way.
O lord Apollo,
Avert whatever ill this omen bodes.

Iris
Take heart, old men, beholding her,
Lyssa, the progeny of Night, and me, Iris, the servant of the gods.
No evil to the town [polis] do we bring,
but war against the house of one man,
whom fame reports the son of Zeus and your Alkmene.
While he was finishing his bitter struggles [athlos],
necessity protected [sözein] him nor would his father
Zeus ever allow me, or Hera, to do him ill.
Since he has finished Eurystheus’ mandates,
Hera wills that he bathe his hands afresh in blood,
his children’s blood; and I assent.
Hurry, and relentlessly seize his heart,
unwedded daughter of black Night,
Drive madness on this man, and child-murdering
confusion in his mind [phrēn]. Make his feet
leap and let him float in blood, until over the waves
Of Acheron he wafts that beauteous band
Of sons, which like a garland wreath around him,
Slain by his hand: so let him know the rage of Hera,
and learn mine. The gods indeed will be nothing
and mortals considered great, if he does not pay this penalty [dikē].

Lyssa
Illustrious is my lineage, sprung from Night
My mother, and the blood of Ouranos;
And this my office, never to by admired by friends [philoi],
I have no joy coming to dear [philoi] mortals.
But I wish to warn you and Hera, before I see you
Rush headlong on this wrong, if you will obey my words.
This man, into whose house you send me, is not
unknown to fame [without sēma], either on earth or among the gods. 
The earth untrod by human step, the monster-teeming sea,
he tamed, and he alone restored the honors of the gods,
which were by impious men trod under foot.
Thus I cannot advise you to plan these great evils.

Iris
Don’t you admonish the schemes of Hera and me.

Lyssa
I am directing you to the better path instead of the evil [kakos] one.

Iris
The wife of Zeus did not send you here to be balanced [sōphrōn].

Lyssa
I call you, Helios to witness, that I do what I wish not to do.
But if indeed the will of Hera I must execute and yours, with speed;
I will go: neither the vexed sea, that roars beneath its waves,
The rocking earthquake, or the thunder’s rage and blasts of winds,
are like the violence which I drives into the breast of Herakles:
I will rend these solid walls, I will desolate his house,
but first I will slay his sons, and he that kills them shall not know
They are his sons that fall beneath his hands, until he leaves off
from my rage [lyssa].
And see, now at the doors he shakes his locks, and rolls
In silence his distorted Gorgon eyes,
his breathing is not balanced [sōphrōn]: like a bull
Dreadful in the assault he roars, and calls the Stygian Furies,
he howls with noisy fury, like dogs rushing on the hunt.
I will dance you even more quickly and I will play the flute of terror.
But to Olympus, radiant Iris, speed your noble feet;
while I into this house of Herakles will hasten unseen.

Chorus
Lament, O Thebes; cut down is
the flower of the city [polis],
the offspring of Zeus.
Unhappy Greece, mourn, for you have lost
the patron of mankind; he now dances to the flutes
of murderous frenzy [lyssa].
The Gorgon progeny of Night, Lyssa,
With mournful rage ascends her car,  
With hissing serpents wreathes her horrid hair,  
And glares pernicious lightening from her eyes.  
Quickly the daimōn changes good fortune  
Soon the children will breathe their last at the hands of their father.  

**Amphitryon:** [within]  
Oh horror!

**Chorus**  
Zeus, your offspring [genos] is now without offspring;  
unjust [not dikē] retribution has spread out  
flesh eating frenzy [lyssa] with evils [kaka].

**Amphitryon**  
[within] Oh roofs!

**Chorus**  
Now begins the dreadful dance without drums,  
without the grace [kharis] of the thyrsos of Bromios.

**Amphitryon**  
[within] Oh house!

**Chorus**  
Blood will be poured for a libation  
not the wine of Dionysus.

**Amphitryon**  
[within] Flee, children, get out!

**Chorus**  
Hostile, hostile is the song played on the flutes,  
The chase is the hunt for children.  
For Lyssa will not in vain  
rave [bakkheuein] in this house.

**Amphitryon [within]**  
Woe, woe.

**Chorus**  
Oh no, how I groan for the old man  
his father, and the mother who gave birth

---

95 This verb derives from the name Bacchus, a name from the god Dionysus. Notice how in this drama it can mean either a divine raving - or a maddened frenzy.
and brought up her children in vain.
Behold, behold,
The wild storm shakes the house,
the roof is falling in!

**Amphitryon**
Ah, ah, what, child of Zeus, are you doing to the house?
Pallas, you are sending hellish ruin on the house
as you once did upon Enkelados.

**MESSENGER, CHORUS**

**MESSENGER**
O Thebans white with age -

**CHORUS**
What is this shout that calls us?

**MESSENGER**
Within the house are deeds that will not be forgotten.

**CHORUS**
will bring no other prophet [mantis] -

**MESSENGER**
The boys are dead.

**CHORUS**
Ah, let me weep their fate

**MESSENGER**
Let your tears flow, there is much cause for tears.

**CHORUS**
Horrible murder, horrible the father’s hands.

**MESSENGER**
What we have suffered [paskhein] is beyond the power of words.

**CHORUS**
How was this mournful ruin [atē] of the sons,
this ruin [atē] from the father? Tell in what way
from the gods these furious evils [kaka]
rushed on the house.
How did destruction end her bloody work?

**MESSENGER**
Before the altar of high Zeus the holy [hieros] rites
Were now prepared to purify the ground of the house
Where Herakles killed the tyrant and thrown his corpse.
His sons had formed a beauteous cluster round,
His father, and Megara: the basket was taken in a circle
around the altar, and we said nothing unholy.
Ready to bear the torch in his right hand,\textsuperscript{96} Alkmene’s son,
and plunge it in the water basin, he stood silent: as long as he paused, his children’s eyes
were fixed upon him. But then he was no longer the same,
but wildly his distorted eyeballs glared,
Their nerves all bulged with blood,
and down his beard dropped foam:
then with a horrid laugh he cried,-
"Why, father, do I perform the sacrifice before I have slain Eurystheus,
twice to kindle this purifying flame, and twice the toil [ponos]?
These efforts could be a single labor for my hands.
Whenever I bring Eurystheus’ head here,
in addition to those now dead, then I will purify my hands.
Now pour it on the ground, and cast each hallowed vase aside!
Who will bring me my bow? And who my other weapon?
I am going against Mycenae: I need to take
crowbars and picks: from their deep base I will heave
The well compacted ramparts, though by Cyclopean hands built.’ Then issuing forth, he said
His car was there, though there he had no car;
He said he mounted, and, as if he lashed
His coursers forward, waved his hand; a sight
Ridiculous, yet dreadful. We stood there
Each darting a glance at the other, and one asks,
"Is our lord playing with is, or is he mad?"
Then he wandered up and down through the house:
stopping in the middle of the men’s quarters, he said it was
the town of Nisus, though he waked inside his house.
Then stretched along the pavement, as if there
the banquet was prepared: after some short stay, he continued on,
and the hall he called the wood-fringed Isthmus;
there, having stripped his body of clothes,
he wrested with nothing, and declared
He had obtained a glorious victory,
But over unreal foes. Then he shouted dreadful threats
Against Eurystheus, for he thought himself now at Mycenae.
But his father here touched his strong hand, and thus addressed him:
“O son, what are you suffering [paskhein]? What kind of journey

\textsuperscript{96} This was the ceremony of hallowing the purifying water: the sacrificer took a lighted brand from the altar and plunged it into the water.
is this? Has not the blood of those, who you just now killed,  970
caused you this frenzy [bakkheuein]? But he, who thought
The father of Eurystheus, struck with fear, came as a suppliant to him, 975
thrust him off, and from his quiver draws his shafts
Prepared against his sons, thinking that he was slaying
those of Eurystheus; they, wild with fright, 980
Ran in different directions; one, to hide in the robes
Of his unhappy mother; one to the shade of a pillar;
the other flew under the altar, like a bird.
Their mother cries, “What are you doing? You are their father! 985
Are you killing your sons?” The elder man, the attendants cry aloud.
But he, as his son around the pillar winds,
With dreadful steps turns opposite to meet him,
And strikes him to the heart: backwards he fell,
And stained with his blood the marble column as he died. 990
And Herakles shouted with triumph and said this:
“One of Eurystheus’ young lies here in death 995
By me, paying for his father’s hatred [ekhthra].”
Then he stretched his bow against another son:
beneath the altar this one lay and hoped to lie concealed.
The unhappy boy sprang toward his father’s knees, 1000
preventing the blow and threw his arms around his neck,
and cried,
“O dearest [most philos] father, listen, do not kill me,
I am your, your child, you are not killing one of Eurystheus’.” 1005
But he grimly rolled his Gorgon-glaring eye.
And, as the boy pressed too close to let the arrow fly,
as one smites iron on the anvil, on his golden tresses
He dashed the fatal club, and crushed the bone.
Having destroyed the second son, he goes to add
the third victim to these two; but the unhappy mother 1010
Had earlier taken the boy within the house,
And closed the doors. As though he stormed the walls
Raised by the Cyclops, he assaulted, rent,
And burst the shattered posts, then with one shaft
Transfixed his wife and son; from there
he rushed to slay his elderly father:
but now an image came: Pallas, conspicuous 1015
to the sight, her crested helm waved above her
against the breast of Herakles she hurled a stone,
which checked his murderous rage, and laid him
Stretched, in a torpid slumber: on the ground
He fell against a pillar’s shattered mass,
Crushed in the ruin of the house beneath
Its base; we helped his father bound him fast,
with cords and confined him to the pillar, closely chained,
That, when his sleep leaves him, he may do
No farther deed of horror: there he lies,
Wretched, having slain his sons and wife,
Not in a blessed eudaimōn repose; I know of no mortal
who is more wretched in his ordeals [athlos].

Chorus
There was a murder which Argolid rock held,
committed by the daughters of Danaos
famous yet unbelievable to Greece
but this surpasses and goes beyond the evils [kaka]
done then, this deed of the wretched son of Zeus.

It is said that Procne killed her only child
sacrificing him to the Muses,
but you killed three children, O destructive one,
by begetting them you assisted the frenzied lyssa] fates.

With what groaning or lament
or song of the dead or dance of Hades
shall I mourn?
Alas, alas,
look, the great doors
of the high-gated house are opening.
Oh my,
look, the wretched children lie
before the unhappy father,
sleeping a terrible sleep after the murder of his children.
The chains are around him, the supports
bound with many knots
around the body of Herakles,
fixed to the column of the house.
Like some bird lamenting the fledgling labors of its young,
the aged father comes with slow feet
following bitter steps he is here.

AMPHITRYON, CHORUS.

Amphitryon
Hush, aged citizens of Thebes,
Be silent; will you not permit him, lulled to sleep,
to lose the memory of his evils [kaka]?

Chorus
I groan for you with tears, old sir,
and for your children and the one who had glorious victory.

Amphitryon
Move farther away
Remove: no noise, no cry
that may disturb his deep repose,
and raise him from his bed. 1050

Chorus
Ah, this slaughter -

Amphitryon
Ah, you are only hurting me more.

Chorus
-poured out, heaped up!

Amphitryon
Will you not keep still in your lament, old men?
Or else he may burst his bonds, 1055
and rising in his rage destroy the city [polis],
destroy his father, and break down this house?

Chorus
That cannot, cannot be.

Amphitryon
Be silent: How he breathes will I observe.
Hush; let me listen. 1060

Chorus
Is he sleeping?

Amphitryon
Yes, he sleeps a ruinous sleep, who slew his children,
slew his wife, destroyed beneath his whizzing shafts.

Chorus
Now wail.

Amphitryon
I wail the ruin of his sons. 1065

Chorus
And I, ah me! lament your son, old man.

Amphitryon
Silence, I pray you, silence:
see, he stirs, he turns himself:
I will hide myself away,
and lie concealed in darkness. 1070

Chorus
Be not afraid; night hangs upon the eyelids of your son.

Amphitryon
Behold, behold: oppressed by all these ills [kaka],
It grieves me not to leave
the light of life.
But should he kill me, his father,
on these ills [kaka] he would heap ills [kaka],
and to these Furies add a parent’s blood. 1075

Chorus
Better for you to have died when rising in vengeance
for the murdered brothers of your wife,
you sacked the famous citadel of the Taphians. 1080

Amphitryon
Flee, flee, my aged friends, far from the house,
get away: flee the raging man
who is now awake;
soon adding another murder on murder
he will rave [bakkheuein] through the streets of Thebes. 1085

Chorus
Why with such fury is your hate, O Zeus, inflamed against
your son? Why have you brought him into a sea of troubles [kaka]?

Herakles
Ah! I breathe, I see, what I should see,
the air, the earth, and these rays of the sun. 1090
As on tumultuous waves and tempests my mind [phrēn]
whirls and heaves. My breath is hot,
Deep, and irregular, not right in its rhythm.
Look, why am I like a moored ship,
With cords around my youthful chest and arms,
Why to this shattered pillar am I bound?
And I have corpses lying nearby.
My winged arrows are scattered on the ground, and my bow
which before would hang by my side
To guard [sōzein] me, by me they too were guarded [sōzein]. 1100
Have I returned to Hades, and measure back
The gloomy course appointed by Eurystheus?
But neither the rock of Sisyphus I see,
Nor Hades, nor the scepter of the daughter of Demeter.
I am astounded, and where I am I have no idea. 1105
Is any of my friends [philoi] near, or far off,  
who will dispel this cloud that darkens over my senses?  
For I know nothing clearly of what is usual.

**Amphitryon**  
My aged friends, shall I go near my ills [kaka]?

**Chorus**  
I will go with you, nor in misfortune forsake you.  

**Herakles**  
My father, why these tears? Why do you hide  
your eyes? Why keep distant from your beloved [philos] son?

**Amphitryon**  
My son! for you are mine, even committing evil deeds.

**Herakles**  
What have I done, thus to cause your tears?

**Amphitryon**  
That, which even if a god should learn about, he would mourn.  

**Herakles:**  
Your phrase is great, but speaks not what the cause.

**Amphitryon**  
You yourself see it, if now you are in command of your mind [phrēn].

**Herakles**  
Say what new ill is marked upon my life.

**Amphitryon**  
If you are no longer a bacchant of Hades, I would tell you.

**Herakles**  
Oh no, distrust and darkness yet are in your words.

**Amphitryon**  
I looking to see if your senses yet are sound.

**Herakles**  
I don’t remember [mnēmē] being frenzied [bakkheuein] in my mind [phrēn].

**Amphitryon**  
My aged friends, shall I unbind my son?
Herakles
And say who bound me and disgraced me so.

Amphitryon
Know this much of your miseries [kaka]: let the rest go. 1125

Herakles
I will be silent to learn what I wish to.

Amphitryon
O Zeus, from Hera’s seat do you see this?

Herakles:
Have we again suffered [paskhein] hostility from her?

Amphitryon
Let the goddess be, and support your own ills.

Herakles
I am ruined. What misfortune will you tell me? 1130

Amphitryon
Look here, behold the bodies of your sons.

Herakles
Ah me unhappy, what wretched sight is this?

Amphitryon
Against your weak sons this war you waged.

Herakles:
Of what war do you speak? Who has destroyed them?

Amphitryon
You, and your bow, and some cause [aìtios] from the gods. 1135

Herakles:
What are you saying? Have I done this dreadful deed?

Amphitryon
You were in a frenzy. You ask for terrible answers.

Herakles
And am I also the murderer of my wife?

Amphitryon
All are the actions of your hand alone.

**Herakles:**
Ah me! A cloud of sorrow hangs around me.

**Amphitryon**
And for this I groan over your fortune.

**Herakles:**
And in my frenzy I shattered my house?

**Amphitryon**
Only one thing I know: in all things you are wretched.

**Herakles:**
Where did this ruin-working frenzy seize me?

**Amphitryon**
There, at the altar’s purifying flames.

**Herakles**
Wretch that I am, why should I spare my life [psukhē],
stained with the slaughter of my dear, dear [philos] sons?
Should I not rather cast me from the height of some steep rock,
or plunge my sword into my heart
to be the avenger [dikastēs] of my children’s blood,
or give this body to the flames, to purge away
The guilt that stains my hated life?
But to prevent my deadly purposes,
See, Theseus comes, my kinsman and my friend [philos].
I shall be seen; and stand as a detested child-murderer,
in the sight of those guests [xenoī] he holds most dear [philos].
What shall I do? In what dark solitude conceal my evils [kaka]?
O had I wings, or could I sink beneath the sheltering earth!
But let me hide my head, close muffled in my robes.
For I am ashamed of these foul deeds [kaka];
nor, splattered with this guilty blood
do I wish to pollute [make kakos] the innocent.

**THESEUS, AMPHITRYON, HERAKLES, CHORUS.**

**Theseus**
I have come with others, those who on Asopos’ banks
Their station hold, the armed youth of the Athenian land,
Bearing this allied spear to aid your son, reverend sir.
For the report has come to the city [polis] of Erekhtheus
That having seized the scepter of this land,
Lykos with war assaults you: to repay
With grateful zeal what to my friend Herakles is due,
Who freed me from the realms below, I come,
If I may do anything, or this confederate force may be of use.
Alas! why is this ground thus covered with the dead?
Are my intentions thus frustrated? Have I, for these recent ills,
arrived too late? Who killed these boys?
Whose wife do I behold lying here?
For children do not fight in battle lines with the spear,
But I have found some fresh calamity [kakon].

**Amphitryon**
O lord of the olive bearing mount.

**Theseus**
Why do you address me with this mournful voice?

**Amphitryon**
We have suffered [paskhein] dreadful sufferings [pathos] at the hands
of the gods.

**Theseus**
What boys are these, over whom your sorrows flow?

**Amphitryon**
My wretched son’s: their father he;
his hands with their blood stained.

**Theseus**
Turn your voice to happier words.

**Amphitryon**
You command what I wish.

**Theseus**
O, you have told me dreadful things.

**Amphitryon**
At once we are ruined, ruined.

**Theseus**: What are you saying? What has he done?

**Amphitryon**
By frenzy’s potion whirled, drugged with the hundred-headed Hydra’s venom.
Theseus
This is an ordeal [agon] sent by Hera. But who is he, that sits among the dead?

Amphitryon
This is my son, much laboring [ponos], who went with his giant-slaying spear to fight on the Phlegraean plain along with the gods.

Theseus
Ah, what mortal ever was born to greater woe [with a bad daimôn]?

Amphitryon
You would never know any mortal man more exercised in toils, more exposed to dangers.

Theseus
But why does he hide his wretched head in his robes?

Amphitryon
He feels shame [aidōs] to behold your face, his friend, his relative, amid the blood of his slaughtered children.

Theseus
I came to mourn with him: uncover him.

Amphitryon
Remove, my son, this covering from your eyes; Throw it aside, show your face to the sun. A fellow struggler, a counterweight to your tears, is here. I beseech you, low at your knees I fall, and grasp your hand and beard, a supplicant, while down my aged cheek flow tears. My son, restrain the wild lion’s rage [thumos], Which impelled you to unholy, bloody deeds, wishing to add evils [kaka] to evils, child.

Theseus
Come now: to you, whose wretched seat Is on the ground, I speak: show to your friends [philoi] your face. No darkness has a cloud so black, Which can conceal the misery of your troubles [kaka]. Why do you wave your hand at me, to signify terror? As though you words would bring pollution on me? I’m not concerned about sharing in your misfortune,
for once I had good fortune with you. Memory will recall
the time when from the gloomy dead your hand brought me
to the light.
I hate those who let the impression of a friend’s [philos]
kind deeds [khāris] fade from their heart; and they, who wish to share
His prosperous gale, but will not sail with unfortunate friends [philoi].

Stand up, unveil your wretched head
And look upon us. Whoever of mortals is noble,
he bears the calamities sent by the gods and does not refuse.

**Herakles**
Theseus, have you seen this agony [agōn] of my sons?

**Theseus**
I heard, I saw the ills [kaka] you have pointed out to me.

**Herakles**
Why then have you unveiled me to the sun

**Theseus**
Why not? Can mortal man pollute the gods?

**Herakles**
Flee, unhappy man, my polluting guilt.

**Theseus**
There is no stain of guilt for friends [philoi] from friends [philoi].

**Herakles**
I thank you. I am not ashamed that I helped you once.

**Theseus**
And I, for being treated [paskhein] well, now pity you.

**Herakles**
I am pitiable: I have slain my sons.

**Theseus**
You, for your grace [khāris] in others’ ills, I mourn.

**Herakles**
Whom have you known with greater troubles?

**Theseus**
Your vast misfortunes reach from earth to heaven.
Herakles
I therefore am prepared, and fixed to die.

Theseus
And do you think your threats are a care to the daimones?

Herakles
The gods regard not me, nor I the gods.

Theseus
Hold your tongue; lest speaking great things you suffer [paskhein] greater.

Herakles
I now am full of troubles [kaka], and can contain no more.

Theseus
What will you do? Where does your rage transport you?

Herakles
Dead, the very place from where I came, I go under the earth.

Theseus
This is the language of an ordinary person.

Herakles
You, being free from misfortunes free, cannot counsel me.

Theseus
Does the much enduring Herakles say this?

Herakles
He had not suffered so much; there is a limit to endurance.

Theseus
The benefactor, the great friend [philos] to mortals?

Herakles
They do not at all avail me; Hera triumphs here.

Theseus
Greece will not allow you to die so rashly.

Herakles:
Now hear me, so that I may refute with arguments
All your advice: I will prove to you,
That neither now, nor in times past, has my life been any kind of life.
My father was one, who, having slain my mother’s aged father, 
With the pollution of that blood upon him, 
Wedded Alkmene, and my birth from her I draw. 1260
When the foundations of a race [genos] are not well laid, 
all that arises from it must be unfortunate. 
Then Zeus, whoever Zeus may be, begot me, with the hate 
of Hera ever hostile. (You, old man, don’t be grieved at my words, 
for I consider you, not Zeus, my father.) 1265
While I was still at the breast, two hideous serpents, 
sent by Hera to destroy me, rolled their spires 
within my cradle. When my age advanced 
To youth’s fresh bloom, why should I speak of the toils 
I then suffered? What lions, what dire forms 1270
of triple Typhons, or what giants, what of monstrous 
banded in the Centaurs’ war, did I not subdue? 
The Hydra, rayed around with heads 
still sprouting from the sword, I slew. 
These, and a thousand other toils [ponoi] endured, 1275
to the dark regions of the dead I went, 
to drag the three-headed dog to light, the one that guards 
the gate of Hades, at the command of stern Eurystheus. 
This last bloody labor [pons] I dared (Wretch that I am!), 
the murder of my sons; I have crowned my house with ills, 
I have come to this point of necessity, at my beloved [philos] 
Thebes I cannot dwell. Where would I stay? 
To what temple, what assembly of my friends 
Can I go? My disaster [ate] is unapproachable. 1280
Should I go to Argos? How, since I am banished from my 
home land? 1285
Should I seek refuge in another state [polis], then, 
where malignant eyes would scowl on me when known, 
and tongues goad me with bitter reproaches: 
‘Is this not the son of Zeus, who once killed his sons 
and wife?’ Then chase me out with curses on my head. 
And to the man, who once was called blessed, 1290
mournful is the change; but to him, who has always 
had it bad, grieves nothing, as though he were born to misfortune. 
I think I have come to this point of misfortune: 
The earth will cry aloud, forbidding me 
To touch her soil; and the sea will not let me pass, 
Nor any spring from where rivers flow. Thus like Ixion’s, 
on the whirling wheel in chains, will be my state. 
And this would be best [aristos], that no Greek might behold me, 
With whom in better days I have been happy [olbios]. 1300
Why therefore should I live? What profit [kerdos] were it 
To gain a useless and unholy life?
Herakles

Let the proud wife of Zeus in triumph dance,
And shake the pavement of the Olympian house.
Her will she has accomplished: she has torn
From his firm base the noblest man of Greece,
rending him to pieces. To such a goddess
who would pay his vows? That for a woman,
jealous of the bed of Zeus, has crushed the innocent [not aitios],
whose deeds were glorious, and benevolent to Greece?

Theseus

This ordeal [agôn] from none other daimôn proceeds
Than from the wife of Zeus. You perceive this well.
To counsel others is an easier task than to suffer [paskhein] evils:
yet none of mortal men escape unhurt by fortune,
nor do the gods, unless the stories of the singers are false.
Have they not committed adultery, to which no law [nomos]
assents? Have they not bound with chains
Their fathers in pursuit of power [turannis]? Yet they hold
Their homes [oikoi] on Olympus, even thought they err [hamartanein].
What will you say, if you, a mortal born, too proudly
should contend against adverse fortune, but not so the gods?
Retire from Thebes, in accordance with the law [nomos];
follow together with me to the towers of Pallas.
There your hands from this pollution will I cleanse,
and give you a home, and no small share of my wealth.
What presents from my country I received for saving [sôzein]
their death-devoted youth by killing the Cretan bull,
these I will give to you. Through all the land to me
are hallowed fields allotted; these, for the rest of your life,
shall be called after your name by mortals;
and when you die, going to the halls of Hades
With solemn rites and stately monuments
the whole Athenian city [polis] will honor you.
This beautiful crown of good fame [kleos] will my citizens win
from the Greeks, that they helped a noble [esthlos] man.
And I will return this favor [kharis] to you for that
of my salvation [sôteria]; for now you have need of friends [philoi],
[He has no need of friends [philoi] when the gods honor him
for the help of the god is enough for whatever he wishes.]

Herakles

Ah me! all this is beside my ills [kaka].
I think not of the gods, as having committed adultery, which is not right [themis], nor as oppressed with chains:
I have never thought this worthy, nor ever will
believe that one lords it over the others.
The god, who is indeed a god, needs nothing:
These are the wretched stories of the bards. 
I have considered, though oppressed with griefs [kaka], 
whether I would be a coward by quitting life. 
For whoever does not sustain misfortune, 
Will not sustain the attack of human weapons. 
No; I will rise superior to my fate, and go to your city [polis]; 
for your bounteous gifts receive my thanks [kharis]. 
But I endured a thousand rugged toils [ponoi] 
which I never refused, nor from my eyes, 
ever dropped a tear; and never did I think 
That I should come to this, and pour my griefs out in tears. 
But now, it seems, I must be a slave to fortune.  

Well let it be so. You see my exile, old man; 
you see my hands stained with my children’s blood. 
Give them a tomb and all the honors of the dead 
weeping over them (since the law [nomos] forbids me). 
Recline them on their mother’s breast, and give 
This sad communion to her arms, which I unhappily 
destroyed, not willingly. When you have hidden their bodies in the 
earth, 
Dwell in this city [polis]; wretched though you may be. 
Strengthen your soul [psukhē] to bear my miseries [kaka]. 

Alas, my sons! The author of your life, your father, 
has destroyed you: not at all did you benefit from my honors 
which my arms with toil acquired, the glory [good kleos] 
of your father, that noblest of possessions. 

You, my pitiable wife, I likewise have destroyed, 
ill recompense for your faithful keeping [sōzein] of my marital bed, 
And all your long domestic vigilance: 
For you my sorrows flow, and for my sons, and for myself: 
how wretched are my deeds that rend me 
from my children and my wife! Mournful is this last 
embrace. Where are my weapons, my mournful associates? 
Should I bear them still or cast them from me? What shall I resolve? 
If at my side they hang, will they not say, 
“With us you killed your wife, your children; when you hold us 
your hold your children’s murderers.” If I were to carry them yet, 
what shall I answer? But stripped of my arms, 
with which I have achieved great deeds throughout Greece, 
will I die shamefully exposing myself to my enemies [ekthroi]? 
They must not then be left behind, but be wretchedly kept [sōzein]. 
I must ask one thing, Theseus: help me take 
this monster dog of hell to Argos 
lest, if I go alone, my sorrows for my sons overwhelm me.
O land of Kadmeians, citizens of Thebes,  
cut your hair, mourn together, go to the tomb  
of my sons. Speaking as one lament together all the dead,  
and me: one ruin on us all is fallen,  
Crushed by one cruel stroke of Hera’s rage.

Theseus  
Rise up, wretched man; enough tears have flowed.

Herakles  
I cannot; torpid are my stiffened joints.

Theseus  
Misfortunes cast the strongest to the ground.

Herakles:  
Would that I were stone, insensible of evils [kaka]!

Theseus  
Stop: give your hand to your helping friend [philos].

Herakles  
But don’t let the blood defile your clothes.

Theseus  
Lose not a thought on that; I am not ashamed.

Herakles:  
Bereft of my sons, I have a son in you.

Theseus  
Put your arm around my neck, and I will guide your steps.

Herakles: A friendly [philion] pair, but one a complete wretch.  
O reverend man, a friend [philos] like this man one must have.

Amphitryon  
Blessed in her sons is the land that gave him birth.

Herakles  
Theseus, turn me back, that I may see my sons.

Theseus  
Is that dear sight a charm to ease your pain?

Herakles
I wish it, leaning on my father’s breast.

**Amphitryon**
Lean here, my son: that wish is dear [φιλά] to me.

**Theseus**
Do you thus have no memory [μνημή] of your labors [πονοί]? 1410

**Herakles**
All I have endured of hardship [κακά] is less than this.

**Theseus**
If someone sees you acting like a woman, he would not praise you.

**Herakles**
Do I live so abject in your eyes? I didn’t seem so before.

**Theseus**
Very much so. Being sick, you are not the famous Herakles.

**Herakles**
What sort of man were you when you were in trouble [κακά] in the regions below the earth? 1415

**Theseus**
I was the least of all men in courage.

**Herakles:**
Then how can you say that I am debased in my troubles [κακά]?

**Theseus**
Let’s go.

**Herakles**
Farewell, aged sir.

**Amphitryon**
And to you, my son, farewell.

**Herakles**
Entomb my children, as I told you.

**Amphitryon**
And me, my son, who shall entomb me?

**Herakles**
I will.
Herakles

Amphitryon
When will you come?

Herakles
When you have buried my children.

Amphitryon.
But how?

Herakles
I will have them brought from Thebes to Athens.
But my ill-starred sons lay in the earth:
for me, who on my house brought ruin with shame,
I will follow Theseus like a boat towed in his wake.
Unwise is he, who prefers wealth or power
1425
to the rich treasure of a good [agathos] friend [philos].

Chorus
We go in pity and grief,
Losing in you our greatest friend [philos].
Dionysus
I am Dionysus, the child of Zeus, and I have come to this land of the Thebans, where Kadmos’ daughter Semele once bore me, delivered by a lightning-blast. Having assumed a mortal form in place of my divine one, 5 I am here at the fountains of Dirke and the water of Ismenos. Here near the palace I see the tomb of my thunder-stricken mother and the remains of her abode, smoldering with the still living flame of Zeus’ fire, Hera’s everlasting hubris against my mother. 10 I praise Kadmos, who has made this place hallowed, the shrine of his daughter, which now I have covered all around with the cluster-bearing grapevine.

I have left the rich lands of the Lydians and Phrygians, the sunny plains of the Persians, and 15 the walls of Bactria, passing over the harsh land of the Medes, and fertile Arabia, and all of Asia which lies along the coast of the sea, its beautifully-towered cities replete with a mixture of Hellenes and barbarians. 20 In Hellenic territory I have come here to Thebes first, having already established my khoroi and mysteries in those other lands so that I might be a daimôn manifest among mortals, and have raised my cry here, fitting a fawn-skin to my body and 25 taking a thyrsos in my hand, a dart of ivy. For my mother’s sisters - the very ones for whom it was least becoming - claimed that I was not the child of Zeus, but that Semele had conceived a child from a mortal father and then blamed her sexual misconduct on Zeus, 30 Kadmos’ plot, for which reason they claim that Zeus killed her, because she had told a false tale about her marriage. Therefore have I driven them from the house with frenzy, and they dwell in the mountains, out of their phrenes; and I have given them the compulsion to wear the outfit of my mysteries. All the female offspring of the house of Kadmos, 35 as many as are women, I have made to leave the house with madness, and they, mingled with the sons of Kadmos, sit on roofless rocks beneath green pines. It is necessary that this polis learn, even though it should not wish to, 40 that it is not an initiate into my Bacchic rites, and that I plead the case of my mother, Semele, in making myself manifest to mortals as a daimôn, whom she bore to Zeus.

Kadmos then gave his office and his tyranny to Pentheus, his daughter’s son, 45 who fights against the gods in my person and drives me away from treaties, never making mention of me in his prayers. For which reasons I will show him and all the Thebans that I am a god. And when I have arranged the situation here to my satisfaction I will move on to another land, 50 revealing myself. But if ever the polis of Thebes should in anger seek to drive the Bacchae down from the mountains with arms, I, leading on my Maenads, will join battle with them. For these reasons I have assumed a mortal form, altering my shape into the nature of a man. 55 My sacred band, you women who have left Tmolos, the bulwark of Lydia, whom I have brought from among the barbarians as assistants and companions for myself, raise up your kettle-drums, the native instruments of the polis of the Phrygians, the invention of mother Rhea and myself, 60 and going about the palace of Pentheus beat them, so that Kadmos’ polis might see. I myself will go off to the folds of Kithairon, where the Bacchae are, and will join in their khoroi.

Dionysus vanishes. The Chorus of the Bacchae enters.
Chorus

Having passed through sacred [hieros] Tmolos, coming from the land of Asia, I celebrate in honor of Bromios, a sweet labor [ponos] and an ordeal [kamatos] easily borne, crying “Evohe” for Bacchus. Who is in the way? Who is in the way? Who? Let him get out of the way indoors, and let everyone keep his mouth pure, 70 being euphemos. For now I will celebrate Dionysus with hymns, at all times according to proper custom.

strophe 1

Blessed is he who keeps his life pure, with a good daimon and knowing the rites of the gods, and who has his psukhē initiated into the Bacchic revelry, dancing in inspired frenzy 75 over the mountains with holy purifications, and who, revering the mysteries of great mother Kybele, brandishing the thyrsos, 80 garlanded with ivy, serves as attendant [therapōn] to Dionysus. Go, Bacchae, go, Bacchae, bringing home the god Bromios, himself child of a god, 85 from the Phrygian mountains to the broad public spaces, suitable for khoroi, in Hellas; Bromios,

antistrophe 1

whom once his mother bore, 90 casting him from her stomach as she was struck by Zeus’ thunder while in the compulsions of birth pains, leaving life from the stroke of a thunderbolt. Immediately Zeus, Kronos’ son, 95 received him in a chamber fitted for birth, and having covered him in his thigh shut him up with golden clasps out of Hera’s sight. He bore forth 100 the bull-horned god when the Fates [Moirai] had brought him to telos, and he garlanded him with crowns of snakes, for which reason Maenads cloak their wild prey over their locks.

strophe 2

Oh Thebes, nurse of Semele, crown yourself with ivy, flourish with the verdant yew which bears beautiful fruit, and consecrate yourself with twigs of oak 110 or fir. Adorn your garments of spotted fawn-skin with fleeces of white sheep, and consecrate the thyroi [narthēx pl.], marks of hubris. Immediately all the earth will join in the khoroi - 115 he becomes Bromios whoever leads the sacred band of women - to the mountain, to the mountain, where the female crowd awaits, having been goaded away from their weaving by Dionysus.

antistrophe 2

Oh secret chamber of the Kouretes and you divine Cretan caves, parents of Zeus, where the Korybantes with their triple helmets 125 invented this circle, covered with stretched hide, and mixing it in their excited Bacchic dances with the sweet-voiced breath of Phrygian pipes, they handed it over to Rhea, an instrument resounding with the revel songs of the Bacchae. 130 Nearby, raving Satyrs went through the rites of the mother goddess. And they added the khoroi of the biennial festivals, in which Dionysus rejoices.

epode

He is sweet in the mountains, whenever after running in the sacred band he falls on the ground, wearing the sacred [hieron] garment of fawn-skin, hunting the blood of the slain goat, the pleasure [kharis] of living flesh devoured, rushing to the 140 Phrygian, the Lydian mountains, and the leader of the dance is Bromios. Evohe! The plain flows with milk, it flows with wine, it flows with the nectar of bees. 145 Like the smoke of Syrian incense, the Bacchic one, raising high the fiery flame from the pine torch, like the smoke of Syrian incense, bursts forth from the narthēx, arousing the stragglers with his racing and khoroi, agitating them with his cries, 150 tossing his luxuriant [trupheros] hair to the air. And among the Maenad cries his voice rings deep: “Onward, Bacchants, onward Bacchants, with the luxury of Tmolos that flows with gold, 155 sing and dance of Dionysus, accompanied by the heavy beats of kettle-drums, glorifying the god of delight with Phrygian shouts and cries, 160 when the sweet-sounding sacred [hieros] pipe sings out the sacred [hiera] tunes 165 for those who wander to the mountain, to the
mountain!” And the Bacchant, rejoicing like a foal with its mother, rouses her swift foot in a gamboling dance.

_Teiresias enters._

**Teiresias**

170 Who is at the gates? Call from the house Kadmos, son of Agenor, who left the _polis_ of Sidon and fortified this city of the Thebans with towers. Let someone go and announce that Teiresias is looking for him. He knows why I have come and 175 what agreement I, an old man, have made with him, older yet: to twine the thyrsoi, to wear fawn-skins, and to crown our heads with ivy shoots.

_Kadmos enters._

**Kadmos**

Most _philos_, from inside the house I heard and recognized your wise [sophē] voice - the voice of a sophos man - 180 and have come with this equipment of the god. To the best of our abilities we must extol him, the child of my daughter. Where is it necessary to take the _khoros_, where must we put our feet and 185 shake our grey heads? Lead me, an old man, Teiresias, yourself old. For you are sophos. And so I would not tire night or day striking the ground with the thyrsos. Gladly I have forgotten that we are old.

_Teiresias_  
Then you and I are experiencing [paskhein] the same thing, 190 for I too feel young and will try to join the _khoros_.

**Kadmos**  
Then we will go to the mountain in a chariot.

_Teiresias_  
But in this way the god would not have equal _timē_.

**Kadmos**  
I, an old man, will lead you like a pupil, though you are an old man.

_Teiresias_  
The god will lead us there without ordeal.

**Kadmos**  
195 Are we the only ones in the polis who will join the _khoros_ in Dionysus’ honor?

_Teiresias_  
We alone are sensible, all the others foolish.

**Kadmos**  
Delay is long. Take hold of my hand.

_Teiresias_  
Here, take hold, and join your hand with mine.
Kadmos
Having been born mortal, I do not scorn the gods.

Teiresias
200 In the eyes of the daimones we mortals do not act with wisdom [sophia]. Our ancestral traditions, which we have held throughout our lives, no argument will overturn, not even if something sophon should be discovered by the depths of our phrenes. Will anyone say that I, who am about to join the khoros with my head covered in ivy, 205 do not respect old age? For the god has made no distinction as to whether it is right for men young or old to join the khoros, but wishes to have timai and be extolled equally by all, setting no one apart.

Kadmos
210 Since you do not see the light of the sun here, Teiresias, I will be for you a spokesman [prophētēs] about what is happening. Pentheus, child of Ekhion, to whom I have given control [kratos] of this land, is coming here to the house now in all haste. How he quivers with excitement! What new matter will he tell us?

Pentheus enters.

Pentheus
215 I was away from this land when I heard of the new evils throughout this polis, that our women have left our homes in contrived Bacchic rites, and rush about in the shadowy mountains, honoring with khoroi this new daimōn 220 Dionysus, whoever he is. I hear that mixing-bowls stand full in the midst of their assemblies, and that each woman, flying to secrecy in different directions, yields to the embraces of men, on the pretext that they are Maenads worshipping. 225 They consider Aphrodite of greater priority than Dionysus.

Servants keep as many of them as I have caught in the public buildings with their hands chained. I will hunt from the mountains all that are missing, Ino and Agaue, who bore me to Ekhion, and 230 Autonoe, the mother of Aktaion. And having bound them in iron fetters, I will soon make them stop this criminal Bacchic activity. They say that a certain stranger [xenos] has come, a sorcerer from the Lydian land, with the locks of his tawny hair smelling sweetly, 235 having in his eyes the wine-dark graces [kharites] of Aphrodite. He stays with the young girls during the evenings and nights, alluring them with joyful mysteries. If I catch him within this house, 240 by cutting his head from his body I will stop him from beating his thyrsos and shaking his hair.

That’s the man who claims that Dionysus is a god; that’s the man who claims that Dionysus was once stitched into the thigh of Zeus, Dionysus, who was in reality burnt along with his mother by the flame of lightning, 245 because she had falsely claimed to have married Zeus. Is this not worthy of a terrible death by hanging, that he, whoever this xenos is, commits such acts of hubris?

But here is another wonder: I see the seer Teiresias clothed in dappled fawn-skins 250 along with my mother’s father - a great absurdity - raging about with a thyrsos [narthēx]. I want to deny that I see your old age devoid of sense. Won’t you cast away the ivy? 255 Will you not, father of my mother, free your hand of the thyrsos? You urged these things, Teiresias. Do you wish, introducing this new daimōn to humans, to examine birds and receive rewards of sacrifices? If your hoary old age did not protect you, you would sit in the midst of the Bacchants 260 for introducing wicked rites. For where women have the delight of the grape at a feast, I say that none of their rites is healthy any longer.
Bacchae

Chorus
Oh, what impiety! Xenos, don’t you reverence the gods and Kadmos who sowed the earth-born crop? Do you, the child of Ekhion, disgrace your ancestry [genos]?

Teiresias
Whenever a sophos man takes a good occasion for his speech, it is not a great task to speak well. You have a fluent tongue as though you are sensible, but there is no sense in your words. A bold and powerful man, one capable of speaking well, becomes a kakos citizen if he lacks sense. Nor can I express how great this new god, whom you scorn, will be throughout Hellas. Two things, young man, have supremacy among humans: The goddess Demeter - she is the earth, but call her whatever name you wish - nourishes mortals with dry food. But he who came then, the offspring of Semele, invented a rival, the wet drink of the grape, and introduced it to mortals. It releases wretched mortals from their pains, whenever they are filled with the stream of the vine, and gives them sleep, a means of forgetting their daily woes. There is no other cure for pains [ponoi]. He, himself a god, is poured out in offerings to the gods, so that through him men have their good things.

And do you laugh at him, because he was sewn up in Zeus’ thigh? I will teach you that this is well: when Zeus snatched him from the fire of lightning, and led the child as a god to Olympus, Hera wished to banish him from the sky. Zeus devised a counter-plan in a manner worthy of a god. Having broken a part of the air that surrounds the earth, he gave this to Hera as a pledge, protecting the real Dionysus from her quarreling. Mortals say that in time he was nourished in the thigh of Zeus; because a god was hostage to the goddess Hera, by changing his name they composed the story. But this daimōn is a prophet, for Bacchic revelry and madness have in them much prophetic skill. Whenever the god enters a body in full force, he makes the maddened tell the future. He also possesses some of the fate [moira] of Ares. For terror sometimes strikes an army under arms and in its ranks before it even touches a spear - this too is a frenzy from Dionysus. You will see him also on the rocks of Delphi, bounding with torches through the highland between the two peaks, leaping and shaking the Bacchic branch, mighty throughout Hellas. But believe me, Pentheus. Do not dare to claim that might has power [kratos] among humans, nor think that you have any phrenes at all, even if you believe so: your mind is sick. Receive the god into your land, pour libations to him, celebrate the Bacchic rites, and garland your head.

Dionysus will not compel the women to be moderate [sōphrones] in regard to Kypris [Aphrodite], but it is right to look for this attribute in their natures. She who is naturally sōphrōn will not be corrupted in Bacchic revelry. Do you see? You rejoice whenever many people are at your gates, and the polis extols the name of Pentheus. He too, I think, delights in receiving timē. Kadmos, whom you mock, and I will crown our heads with ivy and dance, a hoary yoke-team - still we must join the khoros. I will not be persuaded by your words to fight with the god. You are mad in a most grievous way, and you will not be cured by drugs, though your illness is surely due to drugs.

Chorus
Old man, you do not shame Phoebus with your words; by giving timē to Dionysus, a great god, you are balanced [sōphrōn].

Kadmos
Child, Teiresias has given you good recommendations. Dwell with us, not apart from the laws. Now you flit about and are not being clear in your thinking. Even if, as you say, he is not a god, call him one:
tell a glorious falsehood, 335 so that Semele might seem to have given birth to a god, and our family [genos] might have timē.

You see the wretched fate of Aktaion (Actaeon), who was torn apart in the meadows by the blood-thirsty hounds he had raised, 340 having boasted that he was better at hunting than Artemis. May you not suffer [paskhein] this! Come, let me crown your head with ivy; give timē to the god along with us.

**Pentheus**

Do not lay a hand on me! Go off and be a Bacchant, but don’t wipe your foolishness off on me. I will prosecute the case [dikē] of this 345 teacher of your folly. Let someone go as quickly as possible to the seat where he watches the flights of birds and overturn it with levers, completely confounding everything; 350 release his garlands to the winds and storms. In this way I will especially grieve his heart. And some of you hunt throughout the city for this effeminate xenos, who introduces a new disease to the women and pollutes our beds. 355 If you catch him, bring him here bound, so that he might suffer as punishment a death by stoning, thus having seen a bitter Bacchic revelry in Thebes.

**Teiresias**

O wretched man, how little you know what you are saying! You are mad now, and even before you were out of your phrenes. Let us go, Kadmos, and 360 let us beg the god, on behalf of this man, though he is savage, and on behalf of the polis, to inflict no new evil. But follow me with the ivy-clad staff, and try to support my body, and I will attempt to support yours; 365 it would be shameful for two old men to fall. Still, let come what may, we must serve Dionysus, the son of Zeus. But Pentheus will bring penthos to your house, Kadmos; this I say not on the basis of my prophetic art, but rather from my judgment of the situation. For a foolish man says foolish things.

**Teiresias and Kadmos exit.**

**Chorus**

**strophe 1**

370 Holiness, lady of the gods, Holiness, who bear your golden wings across the face of the earth, do you hear this from Pentheus? Do you hear this unholy 375 hubris against Bromios, the child of Semele, the first daimōn at well-garlanded banquets [euphrosunai]? He holds this office, to introduce people into the sacred company of khoroi, 380 to laugh to the accompaniment of the pipes, and to bring an end to cares, whenever the delight of the grape comes forth in the feasts of the gods, and in ivy-bearing banquets 385 the goblet surrounds men with sleep.

**antistrophe 1**

Misfortune is the end result [telos] of unbridled mouths and lawless folly. The life of serenity [hé sukhiā] 390 and sense remains unshaken and supports households. Though they dwell far off in the heavens, the gods see mortal affairs. 395 It is not wisdom [sophia] to be overly sophos, and to think things unbefitting mortal men. Life is short, and in it he who pursues great things does not achieve that which is present. In my opinion, these are the ways of mad and 400 ill-counseling men.

**strophe 2**

Would that I could go to Cyprus, the island of Aphrodite, where the Loves dwell, who charm 405 mortals’ hearts, and to Paphos, fertilized without rain by the streams of a foreign river flowing with a hundred mouths. Lead me, Bromios, daimōn of joy who leads the Bacchae, 410 to Pieria, beautiful seat of the Muses, the holy slope of Olympus. 415 There are the Graces [Kharites], there is desire, there it is divinely ordained [themis] for the Bacchae to celebrate their rites.
The daimôn, the son of Zeus, rejoices in banquets, and Peace, 420 which brings prosperity, goddess who nourishes youths, is philē to him. He gives an equal delight from wine, banishing grief, to the wealthy [olbios] and to the less fortunate. He hates whoever does not care about this: 425 to live day and philai nights in blessedness and to keep his wise phrēn and intellect away from over-curious men. 430 What the common multitude thinks and practices, that I would accept.

An attendant enters.

Attendant [therapōn]  
Pentheus, we have come here, having caught the prey 435 for which you sent us, nor has our work been in vain. This beast was docile to us and did not withdraw in flight, but yielded willingly. He did not turn pale or change the wine-bright complexion of his cheek, but laughed and allowed us to bind him and lead him away. 440 He remained still, making my work easy, and I in shame said, “Xenos, I do not willingly lead you away, but I am under Pentheus’ orders.” The Bacchae whom you shut up, carrying them off and binding them in chains in the public prison, 445 have gone off, freed from their bonds, and are gamboling in the meadows, calling to the god Bromios. The chains fell off their feet by themselves, and keys opened the doors without the aid of a human hand. This man has come to Thebes full of many wonders. 450 You must take care of the rest.

Pentheus  
Release his hands. Caught in these nets he is not quick enough to escape me. But your body is not ill-formed, xenos, for relations with women, the reason you have come to Thebes; 455 your hair is long - for you are no wrestler - cascading along your cheek, full of desire; you have white skin, carefully made up, for by avoiding the sun’s rays and remaining in the shade you hunt after Aphrodite with your beauty. 460 First tell me what is your ancestry [genos]?

Dionysus  
I can tell you this easily, without boasting. I suppose you are familiar with flowery Tmolos.

Pentheus  
I know of it; it surrounds the city of Sardis.

Dionysus  
I am from there, and Lydia is my fatherland

Pentheus  
465 Why do you bring these rites to Hellas?

Dionysus  
Dionysus, the child of Zeus, persuaded us.

Pentheus  
Is there a Zeus who begets new gods there?

Dionysus  
No, but Zeus who married Semele here.
Pentheus
Did he bring you under his spell at night, or in your sight?

Dionysus
Seeing me just as I saw him, he gave me sacred rites.

Pentheus
What form do your rites have?

Dionysus
They cannot be told to mortals uninitiated in Bacchic revelry.

Pentheus
How do they benefit those who participate?

Dionysus
It is not right [themis] for you to hear, but they are worth knowing.

Pentheus
You have coined this story well, so that I desire to hear.

Dionysus
The rites are hostile to whoever practices impiety.

Pentheus
Are you saying that you saw clearly what the god was like?

Dionysus
He was whatever sort he wanted be; I did not order this.

Pentheus
You contrived this well also, though speaking mere nonsense.

Dionysus
One will seem to be foolish if he speaks wise things [sophα] to a senseless man.

Pentheus
Did you come here first with this daímōn?

Dionysus
All the barbarians celebrate these rites.

Pentheus
Certainly, for their phrenes are far worse than the Hellenes’.

Dionysus
Better in this at any rate; but their laws are different.

**Pentheus**

485 Do you perform the sacred rites [hiera] by night or by day?

**Dionysus**

Mostly by night; darkness conveys awe.

**Pentheus**

This is treacherous towards women, and unsound.

**Dionysus**

Even during the day you can find what is shameful.

**Pentheus**

You must pay the penalty [dike] for your evil devices.

**Dionysus**

490 And you for your ignorance and impiety toward the god.

**Pentheus**

How bold and practiced in speaking the Bacchant is!

**Dionysus**

Tell me what I must suffer [paskhein]. What terrible thing will you do to me?

**Pentheus**

First I will cut off your luxuriant [habros] hair.

**Dionysus**

My hair is sacred [hieros]. I am growing it for the god.

**Pentheus**

495 Next give me this thyrsos from your hands.

**Dionysus**

Take it from me yourself. I bear it as the emblem of Dionysus.

**Pentheus**

We will keep you in prison.

**Dionysus**

The daimon himself will release me, whenever I want.

**Pentheus**

When you call him, that is, standing among the Bacchae.
Dionysus
500 Even now he sees, from close up, what I suffer [paskhein].

Pentheus
Where is he? He is not visible to my eyes.

Dionysus
Near me, but you, being impious, do not see him.

Pentheus
Seize him, he insults me and Thebes!

Dionysus
I warn you not to bind me, since I am balanced [sōphrōn] and you are not.

Pentheus
505 And I, more powerful than you, bid them to bind you.

Dionysus
You do not know how you live, or what you are doing, or who you are.

Pentheus
I am Pentheus, son of Ekhion and Agaue.

Dionysus
You are well suited to be miserable in your name.

Pentheus
Go!

To the attendants.
Shut him up near the horse stable, 510 so that he may see only darkness.

To Dionysus.
Join the khoros there. These women whom you have led here as accomplices to your evils we will either sell or, stopping them from making this noise and beating leather skins, make slaves for our looms.

Dionysus
515 I will go, since I need not suffer [paskhein] that which is not necessary. But

Dionysus, who you claim does not exist, will pursue you for this hubris. For in treating us without dikē you are leading him into chains.

Dionysus is led away by the attendants. Pentheus exits into the palace.

Chorus
Daughter of Akhelōios, venerable Dirke, happy virgin, you once received the child of Zeus in your streams, when Zeus his father snatched him up from the immortal fire and saved him in his thigh, crying out: “Go, Dithyrambus, enter this my masculine womb. I will make you illustrious, Dionysus, in Thebes, so that they will call you by this name.” But you, blessed Dirke, reject me, though I revel on your banks in garland-bearing companies of women. Why do you refuse me, why do you flee me? I swear by the cluster-bearing grace of Dionysus’ vine that you will have a care for Bromios.

What rage, what rage does the earth-born race show, and Pentheus, descended of old from a serpent, sired by earth-born Ekhion, a fierce monster, not a mortal man, like a bloody giant to fight against the gods! He will soon bind me, the handmaid of Bromios, in chains, and he already holds my fellow-reveler within the house, hidden away in a dark prison. Do you see this, Dionysus, son of Zeus: your spokesmen in the dangers of restraint? Come, lord, down from Olympus, brandishing your golden thyrsos, and check the hubris of this murderous man.

Where on Nysa, which nourishes wild beast, or on Korykian height, do you lead with your thyrsos the bands of revelers? Perhaps in the thickly wooded chambers of Olympus, where Orpheus once led together trees by playing songs on his lyre. Blessed Pieria, the Joyful one reveres you and will come to set you singing and dancing in khōroi of revelry; having crossed the swiftly-flowing Axion he will bring the whirling Maenads, leaving father Lydia, giver of prosperity and happiness to mortals, who they say fertilizes the land of beautiful horses with its fairest streams.

Dionysus enters.

Dionysus
Io! Hear my voice, hear it, Io Bacchae, Io Bacchae.

Chorus
Who is here, who? From what quarter did the voice of the Joyful one summon me?

Dionysus
Io! Io! I say again; it is I, the child of Zeus and Semele.

Chorus
Io! Io! My master, my master! Come then to our band, Bromios.

Dionysus
Shake this place, sovereign Spirit of Earthquake!

Chorus
- Oh! Oh! Soon the palace of Pentheus will be shaken in ruin!
- Bacchus is in the halls! Revere him!
- We revere him!
- Did you see these stone lintels on the pillars falling apart? Bromios shouts in victory inside the palace!

Dionysus
Light the fiery lamp of lightning! Burn, burn Pentheus’ household!
Chorus
Oh! Oh! Do you not see the fire, do you not perceive, about the sacred [hieron] tomb of Semele, the flame that Zeus’ thunderbolt left? 600 Throw to the ground your trembling bodies, Maenads, cast them down, for our lord, Zeus’ offspring, is approaching the palace, turning everything upside down.

Dionysus
Barbarian women, 605 have you fallen on the ground so stricken with fear? You have, so it seems, felt Dionysus shaking the house of Pentheus. But get up, and, take courage, putting a stop to your trembling.

Chorus
Oh greatest light for us in our joyful revelry, how happy I am to see you, I who was alone and desolate before.

Dionysus
610 Did you despair when I was sent to fall into Pentheus’ dark dungeon?

Chorus
Of course. What guardian did I have, if you were to suffer a disaster? But how were you freed from the impious man?

Dionysus
I saved myself easily, without trouble.

Chorus
615 Did he not tie your hands in binding knots?

Dionysus
In this too I mocked him, since thinking that he was chaining me he neither touched nor handled me, but fed on hopes. He found a bull by the stable where he shut me up, and threw shackles around its legs and hooves, 620 breathing out thumos, dripping sweat from his body, biting his lips. And I, present nearby, sat serenely [hēsukhos] and looked on. Meanwhile, Bacchus came; he shook the house and set fire to his mother’s tomb. When Pentheus saw this, 625 he ran here and there, thinking that the house was burning, and ordered the slaves to bring water; every servant was at work, toiling in vain.

Then he let this labor drop and, on the grounds that I had escaped, snatching a dark sword he rushed into the house. Then Bromios, so it seems to me - I can only give my opinion - 630 created a phantom in the courtyard. Pentheus rushed at it, stabbing at the shining air, as though slaughtering me. Besides this, Bacchus inflicted other damage on him. He knocked his house to the ground, and everything shattered into pieces, while Pentheus saw how bitter for him were the chains meant for me. 635 Letting slip the sword, he is exhausted from his cut and thrust. For he, a mortal man, dared to fight with a god.

Now I have left the house and come to you serenely [hēsukhos], with no thought of Pentheus. But I think - I hear the tramping of feet in the house - he will soon come out to the front of the house. 640 What will he say now? I will suffer him easily, even if he comes boasting greatly. A sophos man must practice good temper that is moderate [sōphrōn].
Bacchae

*Pentheus enters.*

**Pentheus**

I have suffered [*paskhein*] a terrible disaster: the stranger, who was recently imprisoned, has escaped me. Ah! *645* Here is the man. What is this? How do you appear in front of the house, having come out?

**Dionysus**

Stop. Calm down your anger.

**Pentheus**

How have you escaped your chains and come outside?

**Dionysus**

Did I not say - or did you not hear - that someone would deliver me?

**Pentheus**

*650* Who? You are always introducing strange explanations.

**Dionysus**

He who produces the grape vine for mortals.

**Pentheus**

[ *Pentheus’ response is missing.*]

**Dionysus**

His glory lies in your scorn.

**Pentheus**

Close up all the towers.

**Dionysus**

Why? Do gods not pass even over walls?

**Pentheus**

*655* You are very sophos, at least in all save what you should be sophos in.

**Dionysus**

I was born sophos in all that I should be.

*A messenger enters.*

Listen first to the words of this man, who has come from the mountain to bring you some message. We will wait; we won’t flee.

**Messenger**

*660* Pentheus, ruler of this land of Thebes, I have come from Kithairon, where the bright flakes of white snow never melt.
Bacchae

Pentheus
What important news do you bring?

Messenger
Having seen the holy Bacchants, who 665 goaded to madness have darted from this land with their fair feet, I have come to tell you and the polis, lord, that they are doing awesome and unbelievable things. I wish to hear whether I should tell you freely the situation there or whether I should repress my report, 670 for I fear, lord, the quickness of your phrenes, your keen temper and your overly royal disposition.

Pentheus
Speak, since you will have full immunity from me. It is not right to be angry with the just [dikaios]. The more you tell me terrible things about the Bacchants, 675 the more I will punish this one here who taught the women these tricks.

Messenger
I was just driving the herd of cattle up the hill, at the time when the sun sends forth its rays, warming the earth. 680 I saw three companies of women’s khoroi, one of which Autonoe led, the second your mother Agaue, and the third khoros, Ino. All were asleep, their bodies relaxed, some resting their backs against pine foliage, 685 others in a ἱπποκρήνη manner laying their heads at random on the oak leaves, not, as you say, drunk with the goblet and the sound of the pipe, hunting out Kypris through the woods in solitude.

Your mother raised a cry, 690 standing in the midst of the Bacchants, to wake them from sleep, when she heard the lowing of the horned cattle. And they threw deep sleep from their eyes and sprang upright - a marvel of orderliness to behold - old, young, and still unmarried virgins. 695 First they let their hair loose over their shoulders, and as many of them as had released the fastenings of their knots, secured their fawn-skins, girding the dappled hides with serpents licking their jaws, and some, as many as had abandoned their new-born infants and had their breasts still swollen, holding in their arms a gazelle or wild wolf-pup 700 gave them white milk. They put on garlands of ivy, and oak, and flowering yew. One took her thyrsos [narthēx] and struck it against a rock, 705 whence a dewy stream of water sprang forth. Another let her thyrsos strike the ground, and there the god sent forth a stream of wine. All who desired the white drink scratched the earth with the tips of their fingers and obtained springs of milk. 710 Sweet streams of honey dripped from their ivy thyrsoi. Had you been present and seen this, you would have approached with prayers the god whom you now blame.

We herdsmen and shepherds gathered in order to 715 wrangle [give eris] with one another concerning this strange behavior, full of marvel. Someone, a wanderer about the city and practiced in speaking, said to us all: “You who inhabit the holy plains of the mountains, shall we hunt 720 Pentheus’ mother Agaue out from the Bacchic revelry and put the king under obligation [kharis] to us?” We agreed to the idea, and lay down in ambush, hiding ourselves in the foliage of bushes. They, at the appointed hour, began to wave the thyrsos in their revelries, calling on 725 Iacchus with united voice, the son of Zeus, Bromios. The whole mountain reveled along with them and even the beasts, and nothing was unmoved by their running. Agaue happened to be leaping near me, and I sprang forth to snatch her, 730 abandoning the thicket where I had hidden my body. But she cried out: “My fleet hounds, we are hunted by these men; follow me! Follow armed with your thyrsoi in your hands!”
We fled and escaped 735 being torn apart by the Bacchants, but they, unarmed, sprang on the heifers browsing the grass. You could have seen one rending asunder a fatted lowing calf, while others tore apart cows. 740 You could have seen ribs or cloven hooves tossed all about; caught in the trees they dripped, dabbled in gore. Bulls who formerly with hubris showed their fury with their horns had their bodies cut to the ground, 745 dragged down by the countless hands of young girls. The garment of flesh was torn apart faster then you could blink your royal eyes. And aloft like birds in their course, they proceeded along the level plains, which produce the 750 bountiful Theban crops by the streams of the Asopos. Falling like attacking soldiers upon Hysiai and Erythrai, towns situated below Kithairon, they set everything in disorder. They snatched children from their homes. 755 At the same time, whatever they put on their shoulders, whether bronze or iron, was not held on by bonds, but did not fall to the ground. They carried fire on their locks, but it did not burn them. Some people in rage took up arms, being plundered by the Bacchants, 760 the sight of which was terrible to behold, lord. For the men’s pointed spears drew no blood, but the women, hurling the thyrsoi from their hands, kept wounding them and turned them to flight - women did this to men, not without the help of some god! 765 They returned to whence they had come, to the very fountains which the god had sent forth for them, and washed off the blood, and snakes cleaned the drops from the women’s cheeks with their tongues.

770 Receive then this daimōn, whoever he is, into this polis, master. For he is great in other respects, and they say that he even gives to mortals the grape that brings relief from cares. Without wine there is no longer Kypris or any other delightful thing for humans.

Chorus
775 I fear to speak freely to the turannos, but I will speak nevertheless. Dionysus is inferior to none of the gods.

Pentheus
Already like fire does this hubris of the Bacchae blaze up, a great source of reproach for the Hellenes. 780 But we must not hesitate. Go to the gates of Electra, bid all the shield-bearers and riders of swift horses to assemble, as well as all who brandish the light shield and pluck bowstrings with their hands, so that we can make an assault against the Bacchae. 785 For it is all too much if we suffer [paskhein] what we are suffering [paskhein] at the hands of women.

Dionysus
Pentheus, though you hear my words you obey not at all. I say that it is not right for me to suffer [paskhein] at your hands and for you to raise arms against me the god; you must be serene [hēsukhos] instead. 790 Bromios will not allow you to remove the Bacchae from the joyful mountains.

Pentheus
Do not instruct me, but be content in your escape from prison. Or shall I bring punishment upon you again?

Dionysus
As a mortal I would sacrifice to the god rather 795 than kick against the goads in anger.

Pentheus
I will sacrifice, slaughtering the women as they deserve, in the glens of Kithairon.
Bacchae

Dionysus
You will all flee. And it will be a source of shame that you turn your bronze shield in flight from the thyrsoi of the Bacchae.

Pentheus
800 This *xenos* with whom we are wrestling is impossible and will be quiet neither suffering [*paskhein*] nor acting.

Dionysus
Friend, you can still settle this situation satisfactorily.

Pentheus
Doing what? By being a slave to my servants?

Dionysus
Without arms I will bring the women here.

Pentheus
805 Alas! You are contriving this as a trick against me.

Dionysus
What sort of trick is it if I wish to save you?

Pentheus
You have conspired in common, so that you may have your revelry forever.

Dionysus
I certainly did, with the god, that is.

Pentheus
Bring me my armor. And you keep quiet.

Dionysus
810 Wait! Do you wish to see the women sitting in the mountains?

Pentheus
Certainly. I’d pay an enormous amount of gold to see them.

Dionysus
Why do you want this so badly?

Pentheus
I would be sorry to see them in their drunkenness.

Dionysus
815 But would you see gladly what is grievous to you?
Pentheus
To be sure, sitting quietly under the pines.

Dionysus
But they will track you down, even if you go in secret.

Pentheus
You are right; I will go openly.

Dionysus
Shall I guide you? Will you attempt the journey?

Pentheus
820 Lead me as quickly as possible. I grudge you the time.

Dionysus
Put clothes of eastern linen on your body then.

Pentheus
What is this? Shall I then, instead of a man, be reckoned among the women?

Dionysus
So that they don’t kill you if you appear there as a man.

Pentheus
Again you speak correctly; how sophos you have been all along.

Dionysus
825 Dionysus gave me this education.

Pentheus
How can these things which you advise me so well be done?

Dionysus
I will go inside and dress you.

Pentheus
In what clothing? Female? But shame [aidōs] holds me back.

Dionysus
Are you no longer eager to view the Maenads?

Pentheus
830 What attire do you bid me to put on my body?
I will spread out your hair at length on your head.

**Pentheus**  
What is the second part of my outfit?

**Dionysus**  
A robe down to your feet. And you will wear a headband.

**Pentheus**  
And what else will you add to this for me?

**Dionysus**  
835 A thyrsos in your hand, and dappled fawn-skin.

**Pentheus**  
I could not possibly put on a woman’s dress.

**Dionysus**  
But you will shed blood if you join battle with the Bacchae.

**Pentheus**  
True. We must go first and spy.

**Dionysus**  
This is more sophos than hunting trouble with trouble.

**Pentheus**  
840 How will I go through the city without being seen by the Thebans?

**Dionysus**  
We will go on deserted roads. I will lead you.

**Pentheus**  
Anything is better than to be mocked by the Bacchae. Let us two go into the house, and I will consider what seems best.

**Dionysus**  
We can do what we like. I am at your service for anything.

**Pentheus**  
845 I will go in. For I will either go bearing arms, or I will obey your guidance.

*He exits.*

**Dionysus**  
Women, the man is caught in our net. He will reach the Bacchae, where he will pay the penalty [dikē] with his death. Dionysus, now it is your task. You are not far off. 850 Let us punish him: first drive him
out of his phrenes, send upon him a dizzying madness, since if he is of sound phrenes he will not consent to wear women’s clothing, but he will put it on in insanity. I want him to be a source of laughter to the Thebans, led through the city in 855 women’s guise after making such terrible threats in the past. But now I will go to dress Pentheus in the garb he will wear to the house of Hades, slaughtered by his mother’s hands. He will recognize the son of Zeus, 860 Dionysus, who was born in full a god, the most terrible and yet most mild to men.

Chorus
I shall move my white foot in the night-long khoroi, aroused to a frenzy, 865 tossing my exposed throat to the dewy air, like a fawn sporting in the green pleasures of the meadow, when it has escaped the terrifying hunt beyond the cordon of beaters over the 870 well-woven nets, and the hunter hastens his dogs on their call, while she, with great exertion and a storm-swift running, leaps through the plain by the bank of the river, rejoicing in her isolation from men and 875 in the branches of the shadowy woods. What is wisdom [sophon]? Or what finer prize do the gods give to mortals than to hold one’s hand 880 in victory over the head of one’s enemies? What is beautiful is always philon.

Dionysus
You there! Yes, I’m talking to you, the one who is so eager to see the things that should not be seen and who hurries to accomplish things that cannot be hurried. I’m talking to you, Pentheus. Come out from inside the palace. Let me have a good look at you wearing the costume of a woman who is a Maenad Bacchant, spying on your mother and her company.

Pentheus emerges.
The way you are shaped, you look like one of the daughters of Kadmos.

Pentheus
What is this? I think I see two suns, and two images of Thebes, the seven-gated polis. 920 And you seem to lead us like a bull and horns seem to have sprouted on your head. Were you ever before a beast? You have certainly now become a bull.

Dionysus
The god accompanies us, now at truce with us, though formerly not propitious. Now you see what it is right for you to see.
Pentheus
925 So how do I look? Don’t I strike the dancing pose [stasis] of Ino or the pose struck by my mother Agaue?

Dionysus
Looking at you I think I see them right now. Oh, but look... This strand of hair [plokamos] here is out of place. It stands out, not the way I had secured it underneath the headband [mitra].

Pentheus
930 While I was inside, I was shaking it [= the strand of hair] forward and backward, and, in the Bacchic spirit, I displaced it [= the strand of hair], moving it out of place.

Dionysus
Then I, whose concern it is to attend you, will arrange it [= the strand of hair] all over again. Come on, keep your head straight.

Pentheus
You see it [= the strand of hair]? There it is! You arrange it for me. I can see I’m really depending on you.

Dionysus
935 And your waistband has come loose. It’s not in the right order, the way the pleats of your peplos. extend down around your ankles

Pentheus
That’s the way it seems from my angle as well. At least, down around my right foot, but, on this other side, the peplos does extend in a straight line down around the tendon.

Dionysus
I really do think you will consider me the foremost among those dear to you 940 when, contrary to your expectations, you see the Bacchants in full control of themselves.

Pentheus
So which will it be? Shall I hold the thyrsos with my right hand or with this other one? Which is the way I will look more like a Bacchant?

Dionysus
You must hold it in your right hand and, at the same time, with your right foot you must make an upward motion. I approve of the way you have shifted in your thinking.

Pentheus
945 Couldn’t I carry on my shoulders the folds of Kithairon, Bacchae and all?

Dionysus
You could if you should so wish. Your earlier phrenes were not sound, but now they are the way they should be.

Pentheus
Shall we bring levers, 950 or throwing a shoulder or arm under the mountain tops shall I lift them up with my hands?
Dionysus
Please don’t destroy the seats of the Nymphs and the place where Pan plays his pipe.

Pentheus
You’re right. The women are not to be taken by force; I’ll hide in the pines.

Dionysus
955 You will hide yourself in hiding as you should be hidden, coming as a crafty spy on the Maenads.

Pentheus
I imagine that they are in the bushes held in the closest grips of love, like birds.

Dionysus
You have been sent as a guard against this very event. 960 Perhaps you will catch them, if you yourself are not caught before.

Pentheus
Bring me through the midst of the Theban land. I am the only Theban who dares to perform this deed.

Dionysus
You alone enter the struggle for this polis, you alone. Therefore the ordeals [agônes] which have to be await you. 965 Follow me. I am your saving [sôter] guide; another will lead you down from there.

Pentheus
Yes, my mother.

Dionysus
And you will be remarkable [having a sêma] to all.

Pentheus
I am going for this reason.

Dionysus
You will return here being carried...

Pentheus
You allude to my luxuriance [habrotês].

Dionysus
...in the arms of your mother.

Pentheus
You even will compel me to be in luxury [truphê].

Dionysus
Yes indeed, with such luxury [*truphē*].

**Pentheus**
I am undertaking worthy deeds.

**Dionysus**
You are terrifying, terrifying, and you go to terrifying sufferings [*pathos*], with the result that you will attain a kleos that reaches heaven. Extend your hands, Agaue, and you too, her sisters, daughters of Kadmos. I lead the youth 975 to this great *agōn*, and Bromios and I will be the victors. The rest the affair itself will signal [*sēmainein*].

*Dionysus and Pentheus exit.*

**Chorus**

*Strophe*
Go to the mountain, go, fleet hounds of Madness, where the daughters of Kadmos hold their company, and goad them 980 against the mad spy on the Maenads, the one dressed in women’s garb. His mother first will see him from a smooth rock or crag, as he lies in ambush, and she will cry out to the Maenads: 985 “Who is this seeker of the mountain-going Kadmeians who has come to the mountain, to the mountain, Bacchae? Who bore him? For he was not born from a woman’s blood, but is the offspring of some lioness 990 or of Libyan Gorgons.” Let manifest *dikē* go forth, let it go with sword in hand, slay with a blow through the throat this 995 godless, lawless, unjust, earth-born offspring of Ekhion.

*Antistrope*
He with wicked plan and unjust disposition regarding your rites, Bacchus, and those of your mother, comes with raving heart 1000 and mad disposition to overcome by force what is invincible. The balance [*sōphrosune*] for his purposes is death, that accepts no excuses when the affairs of the gods are concerned. To act like a mortal - this is a life that is free from pain. 1005 I do not envy the *sophon*, but rejoice in seeking it. But other things are great and manifest. Oh, that life might flow towards the good, cultivating pure and pious things day and night, giving *timē* to the gods, 1010 banishing customs outside of *dikē*. Let manifest *dikē* go forth, let it go with sword in hand, slay with a blow through the throat this 1015 godless, lawless, unjust, earth-born offspring of Ekhion.

*Epode*
Reveal yourself as a bull or many-headed serpent or raging lion in appearance. 1020 Go, Bacchus, with smiling face throw a deadly noose around the neck of this hunter of the Bacchae as he falls beneath the flock of Maenads.

*A Messenger enters.*

**Second Messenger**
House once fortunate in Hellas, 1025 house of the Sidonian old man who once sowed in the ground the earth-born harvest of the serpent Ophis, how I groan for you, though I am but a slave. But still the masters’ affairs are of concern to good servants.

**Chorus**
What’s the matter? Do you bring some news from the Bacchae?

**Messenger**
1030 Pentheus, the child of Ekhion, is dead.
Chorus
Lord Bacchus, truly you appear to be a great god.

Messenger
What do you mean? Why have you said this? Do you rejoice at the misfortunes of my masters, woman?

Chorus
I, a xenē, rejoice in barbarian strains; 1035 no longer do I cower in fear of chains.

Messenger
Do you think Thebes so devoid of men?

Chorus
Bacchus, Bacchus, not Thebes, holds power [kratos] over me.

Messenger
You may be forgiven, 1040 but it is not good to rejoice at troubles once they have actually taken place, women.

Chorus
Speak. Tell me what kind of death he died, the man without dikē, who contrived things without dikē.

Messenger
When we left the settlements of the Theban land and crossed the streams of Asopos, 1045 we began to ascend the heights of Kithairon, Pentheus and I - for I was following my master - and the xenos, who was the conductor of our mission. First we sat in a grassy vale, 1050 keeping our feet and voice quiet, so that we might see them without being seen. There was a little valley surrounded by precipices, wet with water, shaded by pine trees, where the Maenads were sitting, their hands busy with delightful labors [ponoi]. Some of them were 1055 again crowning the wilted thyrsos, making it leafy with ivy, while some, like colts freed from the dappled yoke, were singing a Bacchic tune to one another. Pentheus, that unhappy man, said, not seeing the crowd of women: "Xenos, 1060 from where we are standing I cannot see these false Maenads. But on the banks of the ravine, ascending a lofty pine, I might view properly the shameful acts of the Maenads." And then I saw the xenos perform a marvel. Seizing hold of the lofty topmost branch of a pine tree, 1065 he drew it down, down, down to the black ground. It was bent just as a bow or a curved wheel, when it is marked out by a compass, describes a circular course; in this way the xenos drew the mountain bough and bent it to the earth, doing what no mortal could. 1070 He sat Pentheus down on the pine branch, and released it gently from his hands, taking care not to shake him off. The pine stood firmly upright into the sky, with my master seated on its back. 1075 He was seen by the Maenads more than he saw them. He was just becoming visible sitting on the tree up above, and the xenos was no longer anywhere to be seen, when a voice, Dionysus, I guess, cried out from the air: "Young women, 1080 I bring the one who has made you and me and my rites a laughing-stock. Punish him!" And as he said this a light of holy fire was placed between heaven and earth.

The air became quiet and the woody glen 1085 kept its leaves silent, nor would you have heard the sounds of animals. The women, not having heard the sound clearly, stood upright and looked all around.
He repeated his order, and when the daughters of Kadmos recognized the clear command of Bacchus, 1090 they - mother Agaue, her sisters, and all other Bacchae - began to move rapidly, no slower than doves, running eagerly with their feet. They leapt through the torrent-streaming valley and mountain cliffs, frantic with the inspiration of the god. 1095 When they saw my master sitting in the pine, first they climbed a rock towering opposite the tree and began to hurl at him large rocks violently thrown. At the same time he was fired upon by branches of fir, and other women hurled their thyrsoi through the air 1100 at Pentheus, a sad target indeed. But they did not reach him, for the wretched man, completely confounded, sat at a height too great for their eagerness. Finally they shattered, as though with a thunder-bolt, some oak branches and began to tear up the roots of the tree with these ironless levers. 1105 When they did not succeed in their toils, Agaue said: “Come, standing round in a circle, seize each a branch, Maenads, so that we may catch this inaccessible beast, and so that he does not make public the secret khoroi of the god.” They applied countless hands 1110 to the pine and dragged it up from the earth. Pentheus falls crashing to the ground from his lofty seat, wailing greatly; for he knew he was near doom.

His own mother, as priestess, began the slaughter, 1115 and fell upon him. He threw the miter from his head so that wretched Agaue might recognize and not kill him. Touching her cheek, he said: “It is I, mother, your son Pentheus, whom you bore in the house of Ekhion. 1120 Pity me, mother! Do not kill me, your child, for my errors!”

But she, foaming at the mouth and rolling her eyes all about, with her phrenes not as they should be, was under the control of Bacchus, and he did not convince her. 1125 Seizing his left arm at the elbow and propping her foot against the unfortunate man’s side, she tore out his shoulder, not by her own strength, but with the god providing assistance to her hands. Ino began to work on the other side, 1130 tearing his flesh, while Autonoe and the rest of the crowd pressed on. All were making noise together, and he groaned to the extent that he had life left in him, while they shouted in victory. One of them started to carry an arm, another a leg, boots and all. His ribs were stripped bare 1135 by their tearings. The whole band, hands bloodied, started playing a game of catch with Pentheus’ flesh.

His body lies scattered in pieces, parts of him in the rugged rocks, others caught in the deep foliage of the woods; the search for them is not easy. 1140 The miserable head, which his mother happened to take in her hands, she fixed on the end of a thyrsos and carries through the midst of Kithairon like that of a wild lion, leaving behind her sisters among the Maenads’ khoroi. She comes inside these walls, preening herself on the ill-fated prey 1145, calling upon Bacchus, her fellow hunter, her accomplice in the chase, the victor, in whose service she wins a triumph of tears.

And as for me, I will depart out of the way of this disaster before Agaue reaches the house. 1150 Balance [sōphronēn] and reverence for the affairs of the gods is best. I think this is the most sophon possession for mortals’ use.

Chorus
Let us honor Bacchus with the khoroi, let us cry out what has happened. 1155 Pentheus, descendant of the serpent, who assumed female garb and beautiful thyrsos [narthēx] - certain death - and a bull was the leader of his calamity. 1160 Kadmeian Bacchae, you have accomplished a glorious victory, but one that brings woe and tears. It is a fine agon to cover one’s dripping hands with the blood of one’s own son. 1165 But I see Pentheus’ mother Agaue coming home, her eyes contorted; receive the triumphal procession [kōmos] of the god of joy!
Agaue rushes in, carrying the head of Pentheus.

Agaue
Asian Bacchae...

Chorus
Why do you urge me?

Agaue
We bring home from the mountain a freshly cut tendril, our blessed prey.

Chorus
I see it and will accept you as a fellow member of the procession [kōmos].

Agaue
I caught this young wild lion cub without snares, as you can see.

Chorus
From what wilderness?

Agaue
Kithairon...

Chorus
Kithairon?

Agaue
...slew him.

Chorus
Who is she who struck him?

Agaue
The prize is mine first. I am called blessed Agaue by the worshippers.

Chorus
Who else?

Agaue
Kadmos’ other...

Chorus
Kadmos’ what?
Kadmos’ other offspring lay hold of this beast after me. This is a lucky catch!

**Chorus**
[The chorus’ response is missing.]

**Agaue**
Share in the feast then.

**Chorus**
What? I share in the feast, wretched woman?

**Agaue**
1185 The bull is young; he has just recently grown a downy cheek under the crest of his hair.

**Chorus**
Yes, his hair looks like a wild beast’s.

**Agaue**
Bacchus, a sophos huntsman, 1190 wisely set the Maenads against this beast.

**Chorus**
Our lord is hunter.

**Agaue**
Do you approve of this?

**Chorus**
I do.

**Agaue**
Soon the Kadmeians...

**Chorus**
1195 And your son Pentheus, too...

**Agaue**
...will praise his mother who has caught this lion-like catch.

**Chorus**
Extraordinary.

**Agaue**
And extraordinarily caught.

**Chorus**
Are you proud?

**Agaue**
I am delighted, for I have performed great, great, conspicuous deeds on this hunt.

Chorus
1200 Now show the citizens, wretched woman, the prize which you have brought in victory.

Agaue
You who dwell in this fair-towered city of the Theban land, come to see this catch which we the daughters of Kadmos hunted down, 1205 not with thonged Thessalian javelins, or with nets, but with the white-armed edges of our hands. Should huntsmen boast when they use in vain the work of spearmakers? We caught and tore apart the limbs of this beast with our very own hands. Where is my old father? Let him approach. Where is my son Pentheus? Let him raise a ladder against the house so that he can ascend and affix to the triglyphs this lion’s head which I have captured and brought back.

Enter Kadmos and his servants, carrying the remains of Pentheus’ body.

Kadmos
Follow me, carrying the miserable burden of Pentheus, follow me, attendants, before the house. There I am bringing this body of his, exhausted from countless searches, for I discovered it torn apart in the folds of Kithairon. 1220 I picked up nothing in the same place, and it was lying in the woods where discovery was difficult. I heard of my daughters’ bold deeds when I had already come within the walls of the city on my return from the Bacchae with old Teiresias. 1225 I turned back to the mountain and now bring back the child who was killed by the Maenads. I saw Autonoe, who once bore Aktaion to Aristaios, and Ino with her, both in the thickets, still mad, wretched creatures. 1230 But someone told me that Agaue was coming here with Bacchic foot, and this was correct, for I see her - not a happy [eudaimōn] sight!

Agaue
Father, you may boast a great boast, that you have sired daughters the best by far of all mortals. 1235 I mean all of them, but myself in particular, who have left my shuttle at the loom and gone on to bigger things: to catch wild animals with my two hands. I carry the trophy of these noble feats [aristeia] in my arms, as you see, 1240 so that it may hang from your house. And you, father, receive it in your hands. Preening yourself in my catch, summon your philoi to a feast. For you are blessed, blessed indeed, now that I have performed these deeds.

Kadmos
Oh, penthos beyond measuring, one which I cannot stand to see, 1245 since you have committed murder with miserable hands! Having cast down a fine sacrificial victim to the daimones, you invite Thebes and me to a banquet. Alas, first for your woes, then for my own! With dikē, yet too severely, lord Bromios has destroyed us, 1250 though he is a member of our own family.

Agaue
How morose and sullen in its countenance is man’s old age. I hope that my son is a good hunter, taking after his mother, when he goes after wild beasts together with the young men of Thebes. 1255 But all he can do is fight with the gods. You must admonish him, father. Who will call him here to my sight, so that he may see how happy [eudaimōn] I am?

Kadmos
Alas, alas! When you realize what you have done you will suffer a 1260 terrible pain. But if you remain time and again in the state you are in now, though hardly fortunate you will not imagine that you have encountered disaster.

_Agaue_
But what of these matters is not good, or what is painful?

_Kadmos_
First cast your eye to the sky.

_Agaue_
1265 Well, why did you tell me to look at it?

_Kadmos_
Is it still the same, or does it appear to have changed?

_Agaue_
It is brighter than before and more translucent.

_Kadmos_
Is your _psukhē_ still quivering?

_Agaue_
I don’t understand your utterance [epos], for I have become somehow 1270 sobered, changing from my former _phrenes_.

_Kadmos_
Can you hear and respond clearly?

_Agaue_
How I forget what I said before, father!

_Kadmos_
To whose house did you come in marriage?

_Agaue_
You gave me, as they say, to Ekhion, one of the Spartoi.

_Kadmos_
1275 What son did you bear to your husband in the house?

_Agaue_
Pentheus, from my union with his father.

_Kadmos_
Whose head do you hold in your hands?
Agaue
A lion’s, as they who hunted him down said.

Kadmos
Examine it correctly then; it takes but little effort to see.

Agaue
1280 Alas! What do I see? What is this that I carry in my hands?

Kadmos
Look at it and learn more clearly.

Agaue
I see the greatest pain, wretched that I am.

Kadmos
Does it look at all like a lion?

Agaue
No, but I, wretched, hold the head of Pentheus.

Kadmos
1285 Mourned by me before you recognized him.

Agaue
Who killed him? How did he come into my hands?

Kadmos
Miserable truth [alētheia], how inopportune you arrive!

Agaue
Tell me. My heart leaps awaiting what is to come.

Kadmos
You and your sisters killed him.

Agaue
1290 Where did he die? Was it here at home, or in what place?

Kadmos
Where formerly dogs divided Aktaion among themselves.

Agaue
And why did this miserable man go to Kithairon?

Kadmos
He went to mock the god and your revelry.
Agaue
But in what way did we go there?

Kadmos
1295 You were mad, and the whole city was frantic with Bacchus.

Agaue
Dionysus destroyed us - now I understand.

Kadmos
He was wronged with hubris: you did not consider him a god.

Agaue
And where is the most philon body of my child, father?

Kadmos
I have tracked it with difficulty and brought it back.

Agaue
1300 Are its joints laid properly together?

Kadmos
[Kadmos’ response is missing from our text.]

Agaue
What part had Pentheus in my folly?

Kadmos
He, just like you, did not revere the god, who therefore joined all in one ruin, both you and this one here, and thus destroyed the house and me. 1305 I did not beget male children, and I see this offspring of your womb, wretched woman, most miserably and disgracefully slain. He was the hope of our line - you, child, who supported the house, son of my daughter, 1310 an object of fearful reverence for the polis. Seeing you, no one wished to treat the old man with hubris, for you would have taken fitting dikē. But now I, great Kadmos, who sowed and reaped a most beautiful crop, the Theban people, will be banished from the house without timē. 1315 Most philos of men - though you are dead I still count you among my most philoi - child, no longer will you address and embrace me, your mother's father, touching my chin with your hand and 1320 saying: “Who treats you without dikē and timē, old man? Who vexes and troubles your heart? Tell me, father, so that I can punish the one who does you wrong.” But now I am miserable, while you are wretched, your mother pitiful, and your relatives wretched. 1325 If anyone scorns the daimones, let him look to the death of this man and acknowledge them.

Chorus
I grieve for you, Kadmos. Your daughter’s child has the dikē he deserved, but it is grievous to you.

Agaue
Father, you see how much my situation has turned around.
[The next 50 lines are missing, in which Dionysus returns to Thebes triumphant.]

**Dionysus**  To *Kadmos.*

1330 Changing your form, you will become a dragon, and your wife Harmonia, Ares’ daughter, whom you, though mortal, took in marriage, will be turned into a beast, and will receive in exchange the form of a serpent. And as the oracle of Zeus says, you will drive along with your wife a pair of heifers, ruling over barbarians. **1335** You will sack many cities with a force of countless numbers. And when they plunder the oracle of Apollo, they will have a miserable *nostos,* but Ares will protect you and Harmonia and will settle your life in the land of the blessed. **1340** So say I, Dionysus, born not from a mortal father, but from Zeus. If you had known how to be balanced [sōphrōn] when you did not wish to, you would have acquired Zeus’ offspring as an ally, and would now be fortunate [eudaimōn].

**Kadmos**

Dionysus, we beseech you, we have acted without *dikē.*

**Dionysus**

1345 You have learned it too late; you did not know it when you should have.

**Kadmos**

Now we know, but you go too far against us.

**Dionysus**

I, a god by birth, was insulted by your *hubris.*

**Kadmos**

Gods should not resemble mortals in their anger.

**Dionysus**

My father Zeus decreed this long ago.

**Agaue**

1350 Alas! A miserable exile has been decreed for us, old man.

**Dionysus**

Why then do you delay what must necessarily be?

**Kadmos**

Child, what a terrible misery has befallen us - you, your brothers and sisters, and wretched me. I shall go as an aged immigrant to the barbarians. **1355** Still, it is foretold that I shall bring into Hellas a motley barbarian army. I, leading their spears, endowed with the fierce nature of a serpent, will lead my wife Harmonia, daughter of Ares, against the altars and tombs of Hellas. **1360** I will neither rest from my evils in my misery, nor will I sail over the downward-flowing Acheron and be at peace [hēsukhos].

**Agaue**

Oh father, I will go into exile deprived of you.
Kadmos
Why do you embrace me with your hands, child, like a white swan does its exhausted parent?

Agaue
Where can I turn, banished from my fatherland?

Agaue
Farewell, home! Farewell, polis of my forefathers! In misfortune I leave you, an exile from my bedchamber.

Kadmos
Go now, child, to the land of Aristaios.

Agaue
I bemoan you, father.

Kadmos
And I you, child, and I weep for your sisters.

Agaue
Terribly indeed has lord Dionysus brought this suffering to your home.

Dionysus
I suffered [paskhein] terrible things at your hands, and my name was without honor in Thebes.

Agaue
Farewell, my father.

Kadmos
Farewell, unhappy daughter. With difficulty indeed would you reach this “faring well”!

Agaue
Lead me, escorts, where I may take comfort in my pitiful sisters as companions to my exile. May I go where accursed Kithairon may not see me, nor I see Kithairon with my eyes, nor where a memorial of a Bacchic thrysos has been dedicated; let these concern other Bacchae.

Chorus
Many are the forms of things of the daimones, and the gods bring many things to pass unexpectedly. What is expected does not come to telos, and a god finds a way for the unexpected. So too has this affair turned out.
Bacchae
1. Poetics 1448b4-19 (Mimesis)

Two causes seem to give rise to poetry as a whole, and these are natural. Mimesis \([\text{mimēsis}]\) is innate in human beings from childhood, and they differ from the other animals in that the human is the most mimetic \([\text{mimētikos}]\) and begins its education through mimesis. All human beings take pleasure in mimesis, and there happens to be proof of this in practice: we take pleasure in looking upon the most exact images of the very things we find grievous to look at, such as shapes of the most despised beasts or corpses. The reason for this is that understanding is very pleasurable not only for philosophers, but equally for all people - although they take part in this only superficially. Therefore they enjoy seeing images, because while viewing they perceive and infer what each thing is, along the lines of “this is that.” But if you happen not to have seen the thing already, the thing of mimesis \([\text{mimēma}]\) causes pleasure not in that way but by its workmanship or color or some such cause.

2. Poetics 1449b24-28 (Catharsis)

Tragedy is the mimesis of a serious and complete action that has magnitude, with seasoned speech. ... The mimesis is done by those who perform \([\text{drân}]\) instead of through narrative, bringing about through pity and fear the purification \([\text{katharsis}]\) of such emotions \([\text{pathos} \text{pl.}]\).

3. Poetics 1451a36-b11 (Poetry and History)

It is clear from what has been said that the task of the poet is not to tell what happened, but to tell the sort of thing that would happen and what is possible according to likelihood or necessity. The historian and the poet differ not by whether they use meter or not - it would be possible to turn the works of Herodotus into meter and it would no less be history, with or without meter. The difference is that the historian tells what happened, while the poet tells the sort of thing that would happen. Therefore poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history. Poetry speaks more of generalities ["things with respect to the whole"], while history speaks of particulars ["things each one at a time"]. The general deals with what sort of man happens by likelihood or necessity to say or do what sort of thing - this is what poetry aims at, adding names later. The particular deals with what Alcibiades did or what happened \([\text{paskhein}]\) to him.

4. Poetics 1453a17-22 (Subject Matter)

At first the poets used to go through whatever plots \([\text{muthoi}]\) they chanced upon, but now the finest tragedies are composed about a few dynasties, such as the ones about Alkmaion, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephos, and all the others to whom it happened that they suffered \([\text{paskhein}]\) or did \([\text{poieîn}]\) terrible things.

5. Politics 1342a8-15 (Catharsis)
We see from sacred songs that whenever those who are in a state of *enthousiasmos* [= being *enteos* ‘possessed’ = ‘having a *theos* (god) inside] use songs that stir up the *psukhē*, they are put into a condition as if they had undergone a medical treatment and *katharsis*. People liable to pity or fear must experience the same thing - and other generally emotional [*pathētikoi*] people, as much as is appropriate for each. All of them attain some *katharsis* and are pleasantly relieved.

6. *Rhetoric* 1371a31-b10 (Mimesis)

Both understanding and wonder are, for the most part, pleasurable. In wonder there is the desire to understand... Since both understanding and wonder are pleasurable, it is necessary that a work of mimesis also be pleasurable, like painting, sculpture, poetry, and everything that is well represented [*mimeîsthai*], even if the thing represented [*mimeîsthai*] is not in itself pleasurable. For it is not there that the pleasure lies, but in the inference “this is that.” What happens as a result is that we understand something.
Book 1: Croesus

This is the making public [apodexis] of the inquiry [historia] of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, so that what arises from human essence not become faded by time, and that great and wondrous deeds, some performed by the Hellenes, some by the barbarians, not lose their kleos, including for what cause [aitia] they waged war against each other.

1. The learned men [logioi] of the Persians say that the Phoenicians were responsible [aitioi] for the quarrel. When these men came from the sea called Red to this sea and settled in the place which they now inhabit, they immediately engaged in long voyages, carrying Egyptian and Assyrian cargoes and reaching, among other places, Argos. At that time Argos in all ways surpassed the people in what is now called Hellas. The Phoenicians arrived at this Argos and laid out their merchandise. On the fifth or sixth day after their arrival, when they had sold almost everything, there came down to the sea many women, including the daughter of the king. Her name was Io, daughter of Inakhos, and the Hellenes say the same thing. As they stood along the stern of the ship buying the merchandise they most desired, the Phoenicians gave the signal and rushed at them. Most of the women got away, but Io was carried off with some others. They put them aboard the ship and sailed away to Egypt.

2. The Persians say that Io came to Egypt in this way - but the Hellenes do not - and that this was the first of the injustices. They say that after this some of the Hellenes - they are unable to relate the names - landed at Tyre in Phoenicia and carried off Europa, the daughter of the king. These would be the Cretans. So they got even with each other, but afterwards the Hellenes were responsible [aitioi] for the second injustice. They sailed across to Aia in Colchis and to the river Phasis, and when they had accomplished the other things they had gone there for, they carried off Medea, the daughter of the king. The Colchian king sent a herald to Hellas and requested compensation [dikai] for the abduction and demanded back his daughter. The Hellenes answered that they had not been given compensation for the abduction of Argive Io, so they themselves would not give it.

3. They say that, in the second generation after this, Alexander the son of Priam heard of these things and wished to have a wife from Hellas by way of abduction, supposing that he would not pay the penalty, since they had not. So he stole Helen, and the Hellenes at first saw fit to send messengers and demand the return of Helen and compensation for the abduction. When they made these demands, they were reproached with the abduction of Medea: that they themselves had neither given compensation nor returned her when demanded, yet they wished to have compensation from others.

4. Up to this point there were only thefts of women from each other, but after this the Hellenes were greatly to blame [aitioi], for they invaded Asia before the Persians invaded Europe. The Persians say they consider carrying off women to be the work of unjust men, but only foolish men seriously seek vengeance for women who have been carried off. Reasonable [sōphrones] men, they say, pay no heed at all to the abduction of women, for it is clear that they would not be abducted unless they wanted it. The Persians say that the men from Asia took no account of their women who had been abducted, but the Hellenes, because of a woman of Lacedaemon, mounted a great expedition, then came to Asia and

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97 Herodotus means that the Phoenicians came from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea and settled in the area of modern Lebanon.

98 Herodotus uses ‘Spartans’ and ‘Lacedaemonians’ almost interchangeably. Sparta is the leading city of Lacedaemonia. Lacedaemonia and Laconia are alternate names for the same region in the Peloponnese.
destroyed the empire of Priam. From then on they have always considered the Hellenic nation to be their enemy. The Persians claim Asia and the barbarian nations inhabiting it as their own, but they consider Europe and the Hellenic nation as separate.

5. This is how the Persians say it was, and they find the sack of Troy to be the beginning of their hostility toward the Hellenes. The Phoenicians do not agree with the Persians about Io. They say that they did not resort to abduction when they carried her to Egypt, but that she had sex with the captain of the ship in Argos. When she learned that she was pregnant, out of respect for her parents she voluntarily sailed with the Phoenicians so that she not be found out. This is what the Persians and Phoenicians say. Concerning these things, I am not going to say that they were so or otherwise, but I will indicate the one who I myself know first began unjust deeds against the Hellenes. I will go on further in my account, treating equally of great and small cities of humankind, for many of those that were great in the past have become small, and those that were great in my day were formerly small. Knowing that human good fortune never remains in the same state, I will mention both equally.

6. Croesus was Lydian in genos, the son of Alyattes, and turannos of the nations this side of the river Halys, which flows from the south between the Syrians and Paphlagonians and towards the north enters the sea called the Euxine. This Croesus was the first of the barbarians we know of to reduce some of the Hellenes to payment of tribute and to attach others to himself as philoi. He subdued the Ionians and Aeolians and Dorians in Asia, and made friends of the Lacedaemonians. Before the rule of Croesus all Hellenes were free. The expedition of the Kimmerians which reached Ionia before the time of Croesus was not a conquest of the cities, but plundering on the run.

7. In the following way the kingship belonging to the Herakleidai passed over to the lineage of Croesus, called the Mermnadai. Kandaules, whom the Hellenes call Myrsilos, was the turannos of Sardis and the descendant of Alkaios son of Herakles. Agron son of Ninos son of Belos son of Alkaios was the first of the Herakleidai to be king of Sardis, Kandaules son of Myrsos the last. The kings of this country before Agron were descendants of Lydos son of Atys, from whom the entire people is called Lydian; previously it was called Meian. From them the Herakleidai received the kingship and held sway due to an oracle. They were the offspring of Herakles and a female slave of Iardanos, and ruled for 22 generations, 505 years, son inheriting rule from his father, up to Kandaules son of Myrsos.

8. This Kandaules conceived a passion for his own wife, and in his passion he considered his wife to be the most beautiful of all women. There was one of his bodyguard he was especially pleased with, Gyges son of Daskylos, and he used to share with this Gyges even his most important affairs, including great praise of the beauty of his wife, since he thought it so. After a little while - for it was fated to go badly for Kandaules - he said to Gyges: “I do not think you believe me when I talk of the beauty of my wife, since people trust their ears less than their eyes. Find a way to see her naked.” Gyges cried out loudly and said, “Master, what unsound word do you speak, commanding me to see my mistress naked? When a woman takes off her clothes she takes off her shame with them. Long ago men discovered many good things, from which it is necessary to learn. Among them is this one: let each look to his own. I believe that she is the most beautiful of all women, and I ask you not to request what is unlawful.”

9. He said this trying to get out of it, fearful that some evil might happen to him from it. Kandaules answered, “Take heart, Gyges. Do not be afraid of me, that I am making this speech to test you, nor of my wife, that she may harm you in some way. I will work it so that she will not even know that she has been

99 The basic idea is ‘friendly to xeno’. The Black Sea was given that name by the Hellenes in an effort to tame this hostile region. Compare the myth of the Symplegades, the crashing rocks at its entrance, in Euripides’ Medea.

100 Herakleidai means literally ‘sons of Herakles’.
seen by you. In the room in which we sleep, I will place you behind the open door. After I go in, my wife will also come to bed. There is a chair near the entrance, and on it she will put each of her clothes as she takes them off, giving you the opportunity to see her at your leisure. When she walks from the chair to the bed and has her back to you, take care then that she not see you going out the door.”

10. Since he could not get out of it, he was ready. When Kandaules felt it was time for bed, he led Gyges into the room. Immediately afterwards his wife came in, and Gyges watched her as she entered and took off her clothes. As she went to the bed, her back was to him and out he crept. But the woman saw him as he was going out. Understanding what her husband had done, she did not cry out, although disgraced, nor did she seem to notice, intending to punish Kandaules. Among the Lydians, as among almost all other barbarians, to be seen naked carries the greatest disgrace, even for a man.

11. She held her peace then as if she had noticed nothing. But as soon as it was day, she made ready those of her servants she considered most faithful to her and summoned Gyges. He did not think she knew anything of what had been done and came when summoned, for it was his custom even before this to attend on the queen whenever she called. When Gyges arrived, the woman said: “Now, Gyges, I offer you the choice of taking one of two roads open to you. Either kill Kandaules and take possession of both me and the kingship of the Lydians, or you yourself must die on the spot, so that you may not in the future obey Kandaules in everything and see what you should not see. Either he who planned this must perish, or you, who saw me naked and acted unlawfully.” For a while Gyges was astonished at what she had said, but then he pleaded with her not to bind him by the necessity of making such a choice. But he did not persuade her, and he saw the necessity truly before him either to kill his master or to himself be killed by others. He chose his own survival. He asked, “Since you compel me to kill my master against my will, come, let me hear in what way we will attack him.” She answered, “The onset will be from the same room in which he displayed me naked, and the attack will be in his sleep.”

12. They prepared the plot and night came on. Gyges was not released, and there was no escape for him at all: either he or Kandaules must die. He followed the woman into the chamber, and she gave him a dagger and hid him behind the same door. Later, when Kandaules was asleep, Gyges crept out and killed him, taking possession of his wife and his kingship. Archilochus of Paros, who lived at the same time, mentioned Gyges in an iambic trimeter.

13. He took possession of the kingship and was confirmed by the Delphic oracle. The Lydians were indignant at the death of Kandaules and took up arms, but the partisans of Gyges and the rest of the Lydians made an agreement that if the oracle answered that he was king of the Lydians then he would be king, but if not he would give the rule back to the Herakleidai. The oracle answered yes and in this way Gyges became king. But the Pythia\textsuperscript{101} added that vengeance would come on behalf of the Herakleidai in the fifth generation after Gyges. The Lydians and their kings took no account of this epos until it came to telos.

14. In this way the Mermnadai robbed the Herakleidai of possession of the tyranny. When Gyges became turannos, he sent offerings to Delphi, and not just a few. Most of the silver offerings in Delphi are his, and besides the silver he dedicated an immense amount of gold, including the golden bowls dedicated there, 6 in number, which are very much deserving of mention. These stand in the treasury of the Corinthians and have a weight of 30 talents.\textsuperscript{102} To speak the truth, the treasury does not belong to the state of the Corinthians, but to Kypselos son of Eetion. This Gyges is the first barbarian we know of to make offerings to Delphi after Midas son of Gordias, king of Phrygia. Midas dedicated the royal throne on which he sat when giving judgment, and it is worth seeing. This throne stands in the very same place as the bowls of Gyges. The gold and silver that Gyges dedicated is called Gygian by the Delphians, named

\textsuperscript{101} Priestess of Apollo at Delphi.

\textsuperscript{102} One talent weighs approximately 57 pounds.
after its dedicator. As soon as Gyges took power, he invaded Miletus and Smyrna and captured the city of Colophon, but there was no other great deed by him. He was king 38 years, and having said this much we will leave him.

15. I will mention Ardy's son of Gyges, who was king after Gyges. He captured Priene and invaded Miletus. When he was turannos of Sardis, the Kimmerians were driven from their homeland by the Scythians and reached Asia, capturing Sardis except for the acropolis.

16. Ardy's was king for 49 years. Sadyattes son of Ardy succeeded him and was king for 12 years. Alyattes son of Sadyattes succeeded him. He waged war with Cyaxares, the descendant of Deioces, and the Medes, drove the Kimmerians out of Asia, captured Smyrna and its colony Colophon, and invaded Klaazomenai. But he did not come off as he wished in this, for he stumbled greatly. During his rule he performed the following deeds most worth telling:

17. He fought with the Milesians, inheriting the war from his father. He marched against Miletus and besieged it in this way: whenever the crops in the land were ripe, he invaded, marching to the syrinx and the lyre and the bass and treble pipe. Reaching Milesian land, he did not tear down the houses in the fields nor burn them nor rip off their doors, but left them standing throughout the country. He destroyed the trees and the crops in the land, then departed back again. Since the Milesians controlled the sea, there was no chance for the army in a siege. The Lydian did not tear down the houses so that the Milesians would have a place to set out from to plant and work the land, and so that when he invaded he would have something to plunder after their work.

18. He carried on the war by doing this for eleven years, during which the Milesians suffered two great disasters, fighting in Limeneion in their own country and in the plain of Maeander. For six of these eleven years Sadyattes son of Ardy still ruled the Lydians and invaded the Milesian land, for he was the one who started the war. For the five years following these six, Alyattes son of Sadyattes carried on the war which, as I have shown previously, he had inherited from his father, and conducted it strenuously. None of the Ionians helped lighten this war for the Milesians, except only the Chians. They were repaying an equal service when they gave their help, for the Milesians had earlier helped the Chians wage war against the Erythraeans.

19. In the twelfth year, when the crops were set afire by the army, the following affair happened: As soon as a fire was set in the crops, it was driven by the wind and set alight the temple of Athena called Assesia. The temple caught fire and burned completely. At the time no one paid any attention, but after the army reached Sardis Alyattes fell sick. His illness became chronic and he sent messengers to Delphi, either because someone advised him to or because it seemed a good idea to him to send and ask the god about his sickness. When they arrived at Delphi, the Pythia said she would not answer them until they rebuilt the temple of Athena which they had burnt at Assesos in the Milesian country.

20. I know this was so because I heard it from the Delphians. To this the Milesians add that Periander son of Kypselos, who was a very great xenos of Thrasyboulos, the turannos of Miletus at that time, learned of the answer given to Alyattes and sent a messenger to disclose it, so that Thrasyboulos might be forewarned and make plans for the present circumstances. This is how the Milesians say it was.

21. When this was announced to Alyattes, he immediately sent a herald to Miletus, wishing to make a truce with Thrasyboulos and the Milesians for as long as it took to build the temple. The messenger went to Miletus, but Thrasyboulos knew clearly the whole story beforehand and saw what Alyattes was going to do, so he contrived the following: he piled up in the agora all the grain there was in the city, both his own and private, and proclaimed that when he gave the signal everyone should drink and indulge in revelry together.

Shepherd's pipe.
22. He acted thus and gave this command so that the herald from Sardis might see the great store of grain heaped up and the men in festivity and report it to Alyattes. And that is what happened. The herald saw these things and imparted his instructions from the Lydian to Thrasyboulos, then returned to Sardis. I learn that the reconciliation came about for no other reason. Alyattes had supposed there was great famine in Miletus and the people were worn down to the most extreme misery, but he heard from the herald returning from Miletus a report opposite to his expectation. Then there was a reconciliation between them, with conditions that they become each other’s xenoi and allies. Alyattes built two temples to Athena in Assesos instead of one, and he recovered from his sickness. This is how it was for Alyattes concerning his war against the Milesians and Thrasyboulos.

23. Periander, the man who revealed the oracle to Thrasyboulos, was the son of Kypselos. Periander was turannos of Corinth. The Corinthians say that the greatest marvel occurred in his lifetime, and the Lesbians agree with them. They say that Arion of Methymna was carried ashore at Tainaron on a dolphin. He was a singer second to none in his time, and he is the first man we know of to compose the dithyramb and name it and teach it in Corinth.

24. They say that this Arion, who spent the greater part of his time with Periander, desired to sail to Italy and Sicily on a tour, and after making a lot of money wished to come back to Corinth. He set out from Tarentum, hiring a ship of Corinthian men since he trusted no one more than the Corinthians. But in the open sea they plotted to throw Arion overboard and take his money. He comprehended the plot and pleaded with them, offering to surrender his money and begging for his life. But he did not persuade them, and the sailors ordered him either to kill himself so that he could meet with burial on land, or to jump into the sea immediately. He was left helpless by these threats and begged them, since they had so decided, to allow him to stand on deck in full dress and sing. He promised to kill himself after singing. They were pleased at the prospect of hearing the best singer in the world, so they withdrew from the stern to the middle of the ship. He put on his outfit and took up his lyre, stood on the deck and repeated the “shrill” tune. When the song was over, he threw himself into the sea just as he was, full dress and all, and the men sailed off to Corinth. But they say a dolphin took him on its back and carried him ashore at Tainaron. He climbed off and went to Corinth, still in his outfit, and upon arriving related everything that had happened. Periander in disbelief kept him under guard without release and waited intently for the sailors. After they arrived, they were summoned and questioned whether they had any news of Arion. When they said he was safe in Italy and they had left him doing fine in Tarentum, Arion appeared to them just as he was when he jumped overboard. They were dumbfounded and no longer able to deny it under cross-examination. Both the Corinthians and the Lesbians say this, and at Tainaron there is a bronze dedication of Arion, not very big, a man on a dolphin.

25. Alyattes the Lydian waged war against the Milesians and later died after being king for 57 years. When he recovered from his illness, he became the second of his house to make offerings to Delphi: a large silver bowl and a stand of welded iron, worthy of seeing among all the offerings at Delphi, the work of Glaukos of Chios, who alone of all men invented the welding of iron.

26. When Alyattes died, Croesus son of Alyattes inherited the kingship at age 35, and the Ephesians were the first of the Hellenes he attacked. Thereupon the Ephesians under siege by him dedicated the polis to Artemis by tying a rope from her temple to the city wall. The distance between the old polis which was then besieged and the temple is seven stadia. These were the first, but afterwards Croesus attacked each of the Ionians and Aeolians in turn, bringing different charges against each. When he was able to find a serious charge he brought it, but against some of them he brought even trivial charges.

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104 A special form of song and dance performed by a khoros.
105 One stadion equals 600 feet.
27. When the Hellenes in Asia had been reduced to payment of tribute, he then formed a plan to make ships and attack the islanders. When he had everything ready for shipbuilding, some say that Bias of Priene, others Pittakos of Mytilene, arrived at Sardis and stopped the shipbuilding when Croesus asked him if there was any news about Hellas, and he said, “O King, the islanders are buying up 10,000 horses and intend to make an expedition against Sardis and against you.” Croesus hoped that he was speaking the truth and said, “If only the gods would put it into the minds of the islanders to come against the sons of Lydians with horses!” He replied by saying, “O King, you appear to me to pray heartily to capture the islanders on horseback on the mainland, and your hope is reasonable. But what else do you think the islanders are praying for, as soon as they learned that you were going to build ships against them, than to capture the Lydians on the sea, so that they may punish you on behalf of the Hellenes living on the mainland whom you hold enslaved?” Croesus was mightily pleased by his point and obeyed him, for he seemed to speak shrewdly. So he stopped the shipbuilding, and in this way he established friendly relations [xenia] with the Ionians who inhabit the islands.

28. As time passed, almost all the nations living this side of the Halys were subdued. Except for the Cilicians and Lycians, Croesus held all the others in subjection to himself. These are as follows: Lydians, Phrygians, Mysians, Mariandynians, Chalybes, Paphlagonians, Thynian and Bithynian Thracians, Carians, Ionians, Dorians, Aeolians, Pamphylians.

29. Croesus had subdued all these peoples and added them to the Lydian empire. His capital Sardis was at the height of its wealth, and to it came, one by one, all the wise men of Hellas, including Solon the Athenian. He was spending ten years abroad after having made laws [nomoi] for the Athenians at their request. He sailed away on the pretext of seeing the world, but the real reason was not to have to repeal any of the laws he had made. The Athenians could not do this on their own, having sworn by the strongest oaths to observe for ten years whatever laws Solon gave them.

30. So for that reason, and to see the world, Solon went to visit Amasis in Egypt and then to Croesus in Sardis. When he got there, Croesus entertained him in the palace, and on the third or fourth day Croesus told his servants to show Solon around his treasures. After Solon had seen and thought over how great and fortunate [olbios] they were, Croesus found the opportunity to say, “Athenian xenos, we have heard much about your wisdom [sophia] and your wanderings, that you have gone all over the world philosophizing, so now I desire to ask you who is the most olbios man you have seen.” Croesus asked this question expecting the answer to be himself, but Solon, instead of flattering him, told it as it was and said, “O King, it is Tellos the Athenian.” Croesus marveled at what he had said and replied sharply, “In what way do you judge [krinein] Tellos to be the most olbios?” Solon said, “Tellos was from a prosperous polis and his children were good and noble [agathoi]. He saw them all have children of their own, and all of these survived. His life was well off by our standards, and his death was most distinguished: when the Athenians were fighting their neighbors in Eleusis, he came to help, routed the enemy, and died most beautifully. The Athenians buried him at public expense on the spot where he fell and gave him much timē.”

31. When Solon had provoked him by saying that the affairs of Tellos were so olbios, Croesus asked who he thought was next, fully expecting to win second prize. Solon answered, “Kleobis and Biton.” They were Argive in genos, they had enough to live on, and on top of this they had great bodily strength. Both were prize-winning athletes [athlophoroi], and this story is told about them: There was a festival of Hera in Argos, and their mother absolutely had to be conveyed to the sacred precinct by a team of oxen. But their oxen had not come back from the fields in time [hōra], so the youths took the yoke upon their own shoulders under constraint of time [hōra]. They drew the wagon, with their mother riding atop it, traveling 45 stadia until they arrived at the sacred precinct. When they had done this and had been seen

106 The word translated as ‘seeing the world’ is theòria.
by the entire gathering, their lives came to the best fulfillment [ariston telos], and in their case the god
made clear that for human beings it is better to be dead than to live. The Argive men stood around the
youths and congratulated them on their strength; the Argive women congratulated their mother for
having such children. She was overjoyed at the feat and at the praise, so she stood before the image and
prayed that the goddess might grant the best thing for humanity to her children Kleobis and Biton, who
had given great timē to the goddess. After this prayer they sacrificed and feasted. The youths then lay
down in the sacred precinct and went to sleep, and they never got up again; they remained in the pose
that they had assumed in reaching their telos. The Argives made and dedicated at Delphi statues of them,
since they were aristoi.”

32. Thus Solon granted second place in happiness [eudaimonia] to these men. Croesus got angry and
said, “Athenian xenos, do you so much despise our eudaimonia that you do not even make us worthy of
commoners?” Solon replied, “Croesus, you ask me about human affairs, and I know that the divine is
entirely grudging and troublesome to us. In a long span of time it is possible to see many things that you
do not want to, and to suffer them, too. I set the limit of a man’s life at 70 years; these 70 years have
25,200 days, leaving out the intercalary month. But if you make every other year longer by one month, so
that the seasons [hōrai] agree opportunely, then there are 35 intercalary months during the 70 years, and
from these months there are 1,050 days. Out of all these days in the 70 years, all 26,250 of them, not one
brings anything at all like another. So, Croesus, a human life is entirely accident. To me you seem to be
very rich and to be king of many people, but I cannot answer your question before I hear that your life
came to a good telos. The very rich man is not more olbios than the man who has only his daily needs,
unless he chances to have his life come to telos with all well. Many very rich men are not olbiosi, many of
moderate means are lucky. The man who is very rich but not olbios surpasses the lucky man in only two
ways, while the latter surpasses the rich but not olbios in many. The rich man is more capable of fulfilling
his appetites and of bearing a great disaster [atē] that falls upon him, but the other surpasses him in these
ways: he is not so able to bear atē or appetite as is the rich man, but his luck keeps these things away
from him, and he is free from deformity and disease, has no experience of miseries, and has fine children
and good looks. If on top of all this his life comes to a good telos, then this is the one you are looking for,
the one worthy to be called olbios. But refrain from calling him olbios before he dies; call him lucky. It is
impossible for one who is only human to get all these things at the same time, just as no land is self-
sufficient in what it produces. Each country has one thing but lacks another; whichever has the most is
best. Just so no human being is self-sufficient; each person has one thing but lacks another. Whoever
passes through life with most of them and then comes to the telos of his life favorably is the one who, in
my opinion, O King, deserves to bear this name. It is necessary to see the reaching of telos in every affair,
for the god promises prosperity [olbos] to many people and then utterly ruins them.”

33. By saying this, Solon did not at all please Croesus, who sent him away and took no further account
of him. He thought Solon a great fool because he disregarded present good things and advised him to
look to the reaching of telos in every affair.

34. But after Solon went away, great nemesis from a god seized Croesus, I guess because he considered
himself to be the most olbios of all men. Soon a dream stood over him in his sleep, which revealed to him
the truth of what was going to happen concerning his son. Croesus had two sons, one of whom was
disabled, being mute, but the other was by far the first among his peers in all respects. This one’s name
was Atys. The dream foretold to Croesus that he would lose this Atys when he was struck by an iron
spearpoint. When he awoke and thought this over, he took great fright and had his son marry, and
although he had been accustomed to lead the Lydian forces he never sent him out to such an event, and
he removed from the men’s quarters the javelins and spears and all such things which people make use
of in war, and piled them in the chambers, so that one hanging above his son might not fall on him.
35. While he had his hands full with his son’s marriage, there came to Sardis a man beset by misfortune and with unclean hands, a Phrygian by birth, royal in *genos*. This man entered Croesus’ house and asked to receive purification according to the local customs [*nomoi*], and Croesus purified him. There is a similar ritual of purification for the Lydians and the Hellenes. When Croesus had performed the accustomed rites, he asked where he was from and who he was, saying as follows: “My fellow, who are you and where in Phrygia do you come from to become my suppliant? What man or woman have you murdered?” He answered, “O King, I am the son of Gordias son of Midas, my name is Adrastos, and I have killed my own brother unintentionally. I have come here exiled by my father and deprived of all my goods.” Croesus answered him with these words: “You are the descendant of men who are *philoi* and you have come to *philoi*. You will lack nothing while you remain in our house. By bearing this misfortune as lightly as possible you will profit best.”

36. So he dwelled in Croesus’ house, and in this same time a huge monster boar appeared on Mount Olympus, the one in Mysia. This boar repeatedly rushed down from that mountain and laid waste the crops and fields of the Mysians, and often the Mysians marched out against him and did him no harm, but instead suffered hurt from him. Finally messengers of the Mysians came to Croesus and said, “O King, an enormous monster boar has arisen in our country and lays waste our crops and fields. We are unable to catch it, for all our eagerness. So now we ask you to send with us your son and carefully chosen young men and dogs, so that we may drive it from our country.” They asked for these things, but Croesus remembered the words of the dream and said, “Do not mention my son again. I would never send him with you. He is a newlywed and is busy with that. However, I will send carefully chosen men of the Lydians and a pack of hunting dogs, and I will command those who go to be most eager to work with you to drive the beast from your country.”

37. Thus he answered. The Mysians were satisfied with these things, but Croesus’ son had heard what the Mysians asked and came in. When Croesus refused to send his son with them, the youth spoke to him as follows: “Father, once it used to be most good and noble for us to go regularly to wars and hunting and enjoy good repute. But now you keep me shut out from both of these, though you have never seen any cowardice or lack of *thumos* in me. How am I to look now as I go to and from the *agora*? What sort of person do I seem to the people of the *polis*, what sort to my newly-wedded wife? What sort of husband will she think she lives with? So either let me go to the hunt, or persuade me by word that these things are better for me done in this way.”

38. Croesus answered, “Son, I do this not because I have seen any cowardice or anything else displeasing in you, but because a vision of a dream stood over me in my sleep and said that you would be short-lived, and that I would lose you by an iron spearpoint. Because of this vision I hastened your marriage and I do not send you on our undertakings, keeping guard so that I might be able somehow to steal you away in my lifetime. You are my only son. I do not consider the other, disabled one to be mine.”

39. The youth answered, “I forgive you, father, for keeping me under guard, since you saw such a vision. But the dream has escaped you, and it is right for me to show you what you do not understand. You say that the dream said I would die by an iron spearpoint. What kind of hands does a boar have, what iron spearpoint which you fear? If the dream had said to you that I would die by a tusk or by anything else that resembles a boar, you would have to do as you are doing. But it said by a spearpoint. Since our battle is not against men, let me go.”

40. Croesus answered, “Son, you win by declaring your interpretation of the dream. So, since I have been persuaded by you, I change my mind and allow you to go to the hunt.”

41. After saying this, Croesus summoned the Phrygian Adrastos, and said to him when he arrived: “Adrastos, I purified you when you were struck by a dreadful misfortune, and I did not blame you for it. I have entertained you in my house and provided all your expenses. Since I have done you all this good, you ought to repay me with good deeds. So now I request you to be the guard of my son as he sets out for
the hunt, in case any evil-doing robbers appear to you on the road bent on mischief. In addition, you ought to go where you may shine forth by your deeds. This is your heritage, and you are strong enough besides.”

42. Adrastos answered, “O King, I would not otherwise have gone to this contest [athlos]. It is unseemly for a man involved in such a misfortune to go among his comrades who fare well, nor is the desire present, and for many reasons I would have restrained myself. But now, since you are insistent and it is necessary to show you kharis - for I ought to repay you with good deeds - I am ready to do this. Expect your son, whom you bid me to guard, to return home to you unharmed, so far as it concerns his guard.”

43. After he answered Croesus with these words, they then went out furnished with both carefully chosen young men and dogs. They reached Mount Olympus and searched for the beast, and when they found it they stood around it in a circle and threw their javelins at it. Then the xenos, the one purified of murder, called Adrastos, threw his javelin at the boar and missed it, but hit Croesus’ son. So he was struck by a spearpoint and fulfilled the prophecy of the dream. A messenger ran to announce to Croesus what had happened, and when he reached Sardis he told him of the battle with the boar and of the death of his son.

44. Croesus was greatly distressed at the death of his son, and considered it all the more terrible because the man he himself had purified of murder had killed him. Terribly incensed by the misfortune, he invoked Zeus the god of purification, calling to witness what he had suffered at the hands of his xenos, and he invoked Zeus the god of the hearth and the god of friendship, calling the same god by these names. He invoked Zeus of the hearth because he had entertained the xenos in his house without knowing he was keeping his son’s murderer, and Zeus of friendship because he had sent him as a guard but had found him to be his greatest enemy.

45. Then the Lydians arrived bearing the corpse, and his murderer followed behind. This one stood before the corpse and surrendered himself to Croesus, stretching out his hands and bidding him slit his throat over the corpse. He mentioned his own earlier misfortune and said that on top of that he had destroyed his purifier and that life was not worth living. Croesus heard this and had pity on Adrastos, even though he was in so much misery of his own, and said to him, “Xenos, I have full compensation from you, since you sentence yourself to death. It is not you who are to blame [aitios] for this evil to me, except so far as you did it unintentionally. I suppose it is one of the gods, who long ago foretold to me what was going to be.” Croesus then buried his own son as was fitting. But Adrastos, son of Gordias son of Minos, the one who became the murderer of his own brother, the murderer of his purifier, when it was quiet around the sēma, recognizing that he was the most gravely unfortunate man that he knew of, slit his own throat over the tomb.

46. Croesus, bereft of his son, sat in great sorrow [penthos] for two years. But later the empire of Astyages son of Cyaxares was destroyed by Cyrus son of Cambyses, and the affairs of the Persians were on the rise, making Croesus lay aside his penthos. He deliberated how it might be possible to destroy their increasing power before the Persians became great. After forming this intention, he immediately tested the oracles in Hellas and the one in Libya, sending separate messengers to each, some going to Delphi, some to Abai in Phocis, some to Dodona. Others were sent to the oracles of Amphiarao and of Trophonios, still others to the Brankhidai in the region of Miletus. These are the Hellenic oracles Croesus sent to for consultation; he sent other messengers to Ammon in Libya to make inquiry. He sent all these messengers to test what the oracles thought, so that if they were discovered to think the truth, he would next send messengers and ask if he should attempt an expedition against the Persians.

47. He gave the Lydians these orders when he sent them to test the oracles: They should count the days for all the time from the day they set out from Sardis, and on the hundredth day make inquiry of the oracles, asking what Croesus son of Alyattes, king of the Lydians, happened to be doing. They should write down whatever each of the oracles responded and report it to him. No one says what the rest of the
oracles responded, but at Delphi, as soon as the Lydians entered the hall to make inquiry of the god and asked what they had been ordered, the Pythia spoke thus in hexameter:

\[\text{I know [oida] the number of the sands and the measure of the sea. I understand the mute and I hear the one who does not speak. The smell has come to my senses of a hard-shelled tortoise, boiling with meat of lamb, where bronze is spread below, bronze set above.}\]

48. The Pythia gave this response and the Lydians wrote it down and went away to Sardis. When the other messengers who had been sent around were present with their oracles, then Croesus unrolled each of them and read what was written. None of them pleased him, but when he heard the one from Delphi he immediately accepted it with a prayer, considering the only true oracle to be the one in Delphi, because it had discovered what he had been doing. For when he sent the messengers around to the oracles, he watched for the right day and contrived the following: devising something that would be impossible to discover or guess, he cut up a tortoise and a lamb and boiled them together himself in a bronze cauldron and put a bronze lid on it.

49. This was the answer Croesus received from Delphi. Concerning the answer of the oracle of Amphiparos, I am not able to say what answer was given to the Lydians as they performed the accustomed rites of the sacred precinct, for this is not reported, except that he believed that he also possessed this response that was not false.

50. Then he tired to propitiate the god in Delphi with great sacrifices. He sacrificed 3,000 of all kinds of sacrificial beasts, and he heaped up gilded and silver-plated couches, golden bowls, purple cloaks and tunics, and burned them on a great pyre, hoping to win the god over even more with these things, and he commanded all the Lydians to sacrifice everything of these that each one could. After the sacrifice, he melted down an immense amount of gold and made bricks of it, making them six hands in length, three hands in width, and one hand in height, 117 in number, four of them of refined gold, each weighing two and a half talents, the rest of white gold, two talents in weight. He also had fashioned the statue of a lion, of refined gold, with a weight of ten talents. When the temple in Delphi burned, this lion fell off the bricks - for it stood upon these - and now lies in the treasury of the Corinthians, weighing six and a half talents, for three and a half talents melted off.

51. Croesus completed these things and sent them to Delphi, along with many others: two bowls great in size, gold and silver; the golden one lies on your right as you enter the temple, the silver one on your left. These were also moved at the time of the temple's burning, and the golden one lies in the treasury of the Klazomenians, weighing eight and a half talents, and twelve minae besides, while the silver one lies in the corner of the forecourt, holding 600 amphorae. The Delphians mix wine in it at the Feast of Theophania. The Delphians say it is the work of Theodoros of Samos, and I think so, for it does not seem to me to be an everyday work. He also sent four jars which stand in the treasury of the Corinthians, and he dedicated two sprinklers, gold and silver. On the golden one “from the Lacedaemonians” is written, claiming that it is their offering, but they do not speak correctly; this too is from Croesus, and one of the Delphians wrote the inscription wishing to please the Lacedaemonians. I know his name but will not mention it. The boy through whose hand water flows is from the Lacedaemonians, but neither of the sprinklers is. Along with these Croesus sent many other remarkable offerings, and circular silver basins, and also the golden statue of a woman, of three cubits, which the Delphians say is a statue of Croesus’ baker-woman. In addition, Croesus dedicated his own wife’s necklaces and girdles.
52. That is what he sent to Delphi. To Amphiaraos, learning of his achievement [aretē] and his suffering, he offered a shield of gold all over and a spear of solid gold, the shaft and the point equally of gold. Both of these were lying down to my day in Thebes, in the temple of Ismenian Apollo of the Thebans.

53. Croesus instructed those of the Lydians who were going to bring these gifts to the sacred precincts to ask the oracles if he should march against the Persians and if he should attach any army of men to himself as philoi. Arriving where they had been sent, the Lydians made the offerings and inquired of the oracles by saying, “Croesus, king of the Lydians and other nations, has decided that these oracles are the only ones among men, and has given you gifts worthy of your discoveries. Now he asks if he should march against the Persians and if he should attach any army of men to himself as allies.” So they asked, and the responses of both oracles agreed, prophesying to Croesus that if he marched against the Persians he would destroy a great empire. They advised him to find out who were the most powerful of the Hellenes and gain them as philoi.

54. When Croesus heard the reported oracles, he was overjoyed by the responses. Completely expecting to destroy the empire of Cyrus, he sent again to Pytho and, after learning their number, made a gift to the Delphians of two staters of gold for each man. The Delphians in turn granted to Croesus and the Lydians first consultation, exemption from fees, front-row seats, and the right for anyone who wished to become a Delphian for all time.

55. After making this gift to the Delphians, Croesus consulted the oracle a third time. Since he had received the truth from the oracle, he used it to the full. He made this inquiry of the oracle: whether his monarchy would last a long time. The Pythia responded to him as follows:

When a mule becomes king of the Medes, then, graceful-footed Lydian, flee along the Hermos of many pebbles, do not stay, do not feel any shame about being kakos.

56. Croesus was pleased most of all by the coming of this utterance [epos], for he supposed that a mule would never become king of the Medes instead of a man, and that he and his offspring would never cease from rule. Then he deliberated and made inquiry whom he should gain as philoi as being the most powerful of the Hellenes. He discovered by inquiry that the Lacedaemonians excelled in the Dorian genos and the Athenians in the Ionian. These were the eminent peoples, the Ionian originally Pelasgian, the Dorian a Hellenic people. The Pelasgian people have never yet left their country, while the Hellenic have wandered greatly, for in the time of King Deukalion they inhabited the land of Phthia, but in the time of Doros son of Hellen they lived in the land that has the mountains Ossa and Olympus overlooking it, called Histiaian. When they were driven from Histiaia by the Kadmeians, they dwelled in Pindos in the land called Makednian. From there they migrated again into Dryopis, and from Dryopis they came into the Peloponnese and were called Dorians.

57. I cannot say exactly what language the Pelasgians spoke. But if I must make an inference from the Pelasgians who still exist, who inhabit the polis of Kreston beyond the Tyrrhenoi and once bordered the people now called Dorian, at that time inhabiting the land now called Thessalian; from the Pelasgians who lived in Plakia and Skylake on the Hellespont and came to live with the Athenians; and from all the other Pelasgian cities which changed their names - if I must make an inference from these, the Pelasgians were speakers of a barbarian language. If all the Pelasgian people were such, then the Athenian people, since they were Pelasgian, besides changing their name to Hellenes also learned a new language. For the Krestonians do not speak the same language as any of the people who now live around them, nor do the

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107 The oracle of Amphiaraos was thought to issue pronouncements by way of the spirit of the hero Amphiaraos, one of the Seven against Thebes.
108 That is, the holy of holies at Delphi.
Plakienoi, but they do speak the same language as each other, making clear that they maintain the
dialect which they brought with them when they migrated to these countries.

58. It seems clear to me that the Hellenic peoples have always used the same language since they came
into existence. But they were weak when they were separate from the Pelasgians. Starting from a small
beginning they have increased into a multitude of peoples, as they were joined chiefly by the Pelasgians,
and also by numerous other barbarian peoples. Furthermore, it seems to me that the Pelasgian people
never greatly increased when they were barbarian.

59. Of these peoples Croesus learned that the Attic\textsuperscript{109} was repressed and divided by Peisistratos son of
Hippokrates, who at that time was turannos of the Athenians. When Hippokrates as a private citizen was
observing the Olympics, a great portent appeared to him: as he was performing the sacrifices, the
cauldrons standing full of meat and water boiled up and started to overflow without fire. Khilon the
Lacedaemonian was there and saw the portent, and advised Hippokrates: first, not to bring a wife of
child-bearing years into his house; second, if he had a wife, to divorce her; and if he had a son, to disown
him. Khilon gave this advice, but Hippokrates refused to obey it. Afterwards was born to him Peisistratos,
the one who aimed at the tyranny and instituted a third faction [stasis], when the coast people and the
plain people of the Athenians were at strife [stasis]. Megakles son of Alkmaion was chief of the coast
people; Lycurgus son of Aristolaides was chief of the plain. Peisistratos collected partisans, claiming to be
chief of the hill people, then contrived as follows: he wounded himself and his mules and then drove his
team into the agora as if escaping from his personal enemies [ekhthroi], who wished to kill him as he rode
into the country. He asked for a guard from the people [dēmos], since he had gained a good reputation in
the expedition against Megara by capturing Nisaia and performing other great deeds. The dēmos of the
Athenians was deceived and granted that he select men from the townspeople, who became not the
spear-bearers\textsuperscript{110} of Peisistratos but his club-bearers, for they followed behind him holding wooden
clubs.\textsuperscript{111} They set in motion a revolution, with Peisistratos as leader, and took possession of the
acropolis. Then Peisistratos ruled the Athenians without disturbing the existing timai or changing the
laws. He governed the polis according to the established constitution, ordering it in a good manner.

60. Not much later the partisans of Megakles and Lycurgus came to an agreement and drove him out.
In this way had Peisistratos taken possession of Athens for the first time, gaining the tyranny and losing
it, since it was not yet strongly rooted. Those who drove out Peisistratos quarreled with each other all
over again. Megakles was hard pressed by the strife and sent a message to Peisistratos to ask if he wished
take Megakles’ daughter as his wife in return for the tyranny. Peisistratos consented to the offer and
agreed on those terms. For his return they devised by far the most simpleminded thing I have ever found
- since from olden days the Hellenic people have been distinguished from the barbarian for being more
clever and further removed from foolish simplemindedness - especially if they devised such things
among the Athenians, who are said to be the first among the Hellenes in sophia. In the Paianian deme was
a woman whose name was Phye,\textsuperscript{112} falling three fingers short of being four cubits tall, and beautiful
besides. They fitted this woman in full armor, mounted her on a chariot, showed her the bearing she
should assume to look most becoming, and rode into town, sending heralds on ahead who spoke as
instructed when they arrived in town, saying, “Athenians, welcome back Peisistratos, to whom Athena
herself has given most timē among men. She is bringing him back to her own acropolis.” They went
around saying this, and immediately the rumor reached the people that Athena was bringing back

\textsuperscript{109} The adjective ‘Attic’ and the place-name ‘Attica’ refer to the territory of Athens.
\textsuperscript{110} The usual word for bodyguards.
\textsuperscript{111} The hero Herakles was traditionally pictured as brandishing a wooden club.
\textsuperscript{112} The name can be translated as something like ‘Natural Grandeur/Beauty’.
Peisistratos. The people in the city believed the woman to be the goddess herself and worshipped her, though human, and accepted Peisistratos.

61. Peisistratos regained the tyranny in the way I have told and married Megakles’ daughter according to the agreement made with Megakles. Since he already had grown-up sons and the Alkmaionidai were said to be under a curse,\(^{113}\) he was unwilling to have children from his new bride and had sex with her in an unaccustomed\(^{114}\) manner. The woman kept this hidden at first, but later she told her mother - I do not know whether she asked - who told her husband. Megakles was indignant at being treated without timē by Peisistratos. All in a huff he reconciled his hostility with the factions. Peisistratos learned what was being done against him and got entirely out of the country, and, reaching Eretria, he took counsel with his sons. The opinion of Hippias to take back possession of the tyranny prevailed, and then they collected gifts from the cities which were under some obligation to them. Many offered a large sum, but the Thebans surpassed all in giving money. Later, to speak briefly, time passed and everything was ready for their return. Argive mercenaries arrived from the Peloponnese, and a man of Naxos whose name was Lygdamis came as a volunteer, offering the greatest eagerness and bringing money and men.

62. In the eleventh year they set out from Eretria and made their comeback. The first place in Attica\(^{115}\) they took was Marathon. While they were encamped in this place, partisans from the city came to them, and from the people trickled in others who found tyranny more welcome than freedom. These were mustered. For as long as Peisistratos was collecting money, and later when he held Marathon, the Athenians of the city took no account of him, but when they learned that he was marching from Marathon toward the city, then they marched out against him. They went in full force against the returning exiles, and since the men with Peisistratos started from Marathon and went toward the city, they met when they reached the sacred precinct of Athena of Pallene, taking up opposite positions. There by divine guidance Amphylitós the Akarnanian, a diviner, was close by Peisistratos, went up to him, and gave the following oracle in hexameter:

The throw is made, the net is spread, the fishes will dart in the moonlit night.

63. He pronounced this for him under inspiration. Peisistratos understood the oracle, said that he accepted the prophecy, and led out his army. The Athenians from the city had then been having breakfast, and after breakfast some of them were playing dice, some were sleeping. The men with Peisistratos burst upon the Athenians and routed them. As they were fleeing, Peisistratos then devised a very clever [sophos] plan to prevent the Athenians from regrouping and to keep them scattered. He mounted his sons on horseback and sent them ahead. They caught up with the fleeing men and spoke as instructed by Peisistratos, bidding each to take heart and to go off to his own home.

64. The Athenians obeyed, and in this way Peisistratos got possession of Athens for the third time. He rooted his tyranny with many mercenaries and with revenues of money, some domestic, some coming in from the river Strymon. He took as hostages the sons of the Athenians who had stayed behind and not gone immediately into exile and placed them in Naxos, for he had conquered it, too, by war and handed it over to Lygdamis. In addition to these things, he purified the island of Delos according to the oracles. He purified it in this way: he dug up the corpses from all the country within sight of the sacred precinct and transferred them to another part of Delos. And Peisistratos was turannos of Athens, while some of the Athenians had fallen in the battle, and others were exiles from their country along with the Alkmaionidai.

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\(^{113}\) Megakles belonged to the lineage of the Alkmaionidai.

\(^{114}\) That is, contrary to nomos.

\(^{115}\) The name Attica defines the territory of Athens.
65. So Croesus learned that at that time such problems were oppressing the Athenians, but that the Lacedaemonians had escaped from the greatest evils and had mastered the Tegeans in war. In the kingship of Leon and Hegesikles at Sparta, the Lacedaemonians were successful in all their other wars but met disaster only against the Tegeans. Before this they had been the worst-governed of nearly all the Hellenes and had had no dealings with xenoi, but they changed to good government in this way: Lycurgus, a man of reputation among the Spartans, went to the oracle at Delphi. As soon as he entered the hall, the priestess said in hexameter:

You have come to my rich temple, Lycurgus, philos to Zeus and to all who have Olympian homes. I am in doubt whether to pronounce you human or god, but I think rather you are a god, Lycurgus.

Some say that the Pythia also declared to him the constitution [kosmos] that now exists at Sparta, but the Lacedaemonians themselves say that Lycurgus brought it from Crete when he was guardian of his nephew Leobotes, the Spartan king. Once he became guardian he changed all the laws and took care that no one transgressed the new ones. Lycurgus afterwards established their affairs of war: the sworn divisions, the bands of 30, the common meals; also the ephors and the council of elders.

66. Thus they changed their bad laws to good ones, and when Lycurgus died they established a sacred precinct for him and now worship him greatly. Since they had good land and many men, they immediately flourished and prospered. They were not content to live in peace, but, confident that they were stronger than the Arcadians, they asked the oracle at Delphi about gaining all the Arcadian land. She replied in hexameter:

You ask me for Arcadia? You ask too much; I grant it not. There are many men in Arcadia, eaters of acorns, who will hinder you. But I grudge you not. I will give you Tegea to beat with your feet in dancing, and to measure its fair plain with a rope.

When the Lacedaemonians heard the oracle reported, they left the other Arcadians alone and marched on Tegea carrying chains, relying on the deceptive oracle. They were confident they would enslave the Tegeans, but they were defeated in battle. Those taken alive were bound in the very chains they had brought with them, and they measured the Tegean plain with a rope by working the fields. The chains in which they were bound were still preserved in my day, hanging around the temple of Athena Alea.

67. In the previous war the Lacedaemonians continually contended poorly in battle against the Tegeans, but in the time of Croesus and the kingship of Anaxandrides and Ariston in Lacedaemon the Spartans had gained the upper hand. This is how: When they kept being defeated by the Tegeans, they sent ambassadors to Delphi to ask which god they should propitiate to prevail against the Tegeans in war. The Pythia responded that they should bring back the bones of Orestes son of Agamemnon. When they were unable to discover Orestes’ tomb, they sent once more to the god to ask where he was buried. The Pythia responded in hexameter to the messengers:

There is a place Tegea in the smooth plain of Arcadia, where two winds blow under strong compulsion. Blow lies upon blow, woe upon woe. There the life-giving earth covers over the son of Agamemnon. Bring him back and you will be the patrons of Tegea.

When the Lacedaemonians heard this, they were no closer to discovery, though they looked everywhere. Finally it was found by Likhes, who was one of the Spartans who are called “doers of good deeds.” These men are those citizens who retire from the knights, the five oldest each year. They have to spend the year in which they retire from the knights being sent here and there by the Spartan state, never resting in their efforts.
68. It was Likhes, one of these men, who found the tomb in Tegea by a combination of luck and sophia. At that time there was free access to Tegea, so he went into a workshop and watched iron being forged, standing there in amazement at what he saw done. The smith perceived that he was amazed, so he stopped what he was doing and said, “Laconian xenos, if you had seen what I saw, then you would really be amazed, since you marvel so at ironworking. I wanted to dig a well in the courtyard here, and in my digging I hit upon a coffin seven cubits long. I could not believe that there had ever been men taller than now, so I opened it and saw that the corpse was just as long as the coffin. I measured it and then reburied it.” So the smith told what he had seen, and Likhes thought over what was said and reckoned that this was Orestes, according to the oracle. In the smith’s two bellows he found the winds, hammer and anvil were blow upon blow, and the forging of iron was woe upon woe, since he figured that iron was discovered as an evil for the human race. After reasoning this out, he went back to Sparta and told the Lacedaemonians everything. They invented some counterfeit charge against him and sent him into exile. Coming to Tegea, he explained his misfortune to the smith and tried to rent the courtyard there. He dug up the grave and collected the bones, then hurried off to Sparta with them. Ever since then, whenever they made trial of each other, the Lacedaemonians were far superior, and they had already subdued most of the Peloponnesian.

69. Croesus learned all this and sent messengers bearing gifts to Sparta to request an alliance, ordering what they must say. They arrived and said, “We have been sent by Croesus, king of the Lydians and other nations, who says, ‘Lacedaemonians, the god delivered an oracle that I should gain the Hellene as philos, and I learn that you are chief of Hellas. So I invite you according to the oracle, wishing to become philos and allied without trick or deceit.’” Croesus made this proclamation through messengers, and the Lacedaemonians, who had themselves heard the oracle that Croesus had received, were pleased by the arrival of the Lydians and swore oaths of xenia and alliance. They had already received some benefits from Croesus previously: the Lacedaemonians had sent men to Sardis to buy gold, wanting to use it for the statue of Apollo which now stands in Thornax in Laconia; when they tried to buy it, Croesus gave it to them as a present.

70. For this reason the Lacedaemonians accepted the alliance, and because he had selected them out of all the Hellenes and chosen them as philoi. They were ready at his demand. They also made a bronze bowl containing 300 amphorae, filling the outside around the lip with pictures, and conveyed it to him, wishing to give a gift to Croesus in turn. This bowl never reached Sardis, for two conflicting reasons related as follows: The Lacedaemonians say that when the bowl was off Samos on its way to Sardis, the Samians learned of it, sailed out in their long ships, and stole it. But the Samians say that when the Lacedaemonians conveying the bowl were too late and learned that Sardis and Croesus had been captured, they sold the bowl in Samos; some private citizens bought it and dedicated it in the sacred precinct of Hera. Perhaps those who sold it would say when they arrived in Sparta that they had been robbed by the Samians.

71. So it was concerning the bowl. Croesus misinterpreted the oracle and invaded Cappadocia, expecting to destroy Cyrus and the empire of the Persians. While Croesus was making his preparations to march against the Persians, one of the Lydians, who even before this was considered sophos, and after this pronouncement had the greatest name among the Lydians, gave Croesus this advice - his name was Sandanis: “O King, you are preparing to march against men who wear leather trousers, and the rest of their clothes are leather. They eat not as much as they want, but as much as they have, for they possess a rugged country. Furthermore, they do not use wine, they drink water; and they do not have figs to eat, or anything else that is good. So if you conquer them, what will you rob from people who have nothing? But if you are conquered, understand how many good things you will throw away. Once they have had a taste of our good things, they will cling to them and it will be impossible to drive them away. I thank [give
Croesus

khāris to] the gods that they do not put it into the Persians’ heads to march against the Lydians.” So he spoke, but he did not persuade Croesus. Before conquering the Lydians, the Persians had no luxury or anything good at all.

72. The Cappadocians are called Syrians by the Hellenes. These Syrians were subject to the Medes before the Persians ruled, and then to Cyrus. The boundary of the Median empire and the Lydian was the Halys river, which flows from the Armenian range through the Cilicians. Then it flows keeping the Matienoi on its right and the Phrygians on the other side. Passing by these, it flows up toward the north where it skirts the Cappadocian Syrians and on the left the Paphlagonians. Thus the Halys river cuts off nearly all the lower part of Asia, from the sea opposite Cyprus to the Euxine. This is the neck of this whole country; a man traveling light uses five days on the journey across.

73. Croesus marched into Cappadocia for the following reasons: out of desire for land he wished to add to his own territory, but chiefly he trusted in the oracle and wanted vengeance on Cyrus for Astyages. Astyages son of Cyaxares was Croesus’ brother-in-law and king of the Medes, but Cyrus son of Cambyses held him in subjection. He became Croesus’ brother-in-law in this way: A band of Scythian nomads who were involved in a dispute retreated into Median land. At that time Cyaxares son of Phraortes son of Deioces was turannos of the Medes. At first he treated these Scythians well, since they were suppliants, and he thought so much of them that he handed over his sons to them to learn their language and their art of the bow. As time passed the Scythians continually went out hunting and always brought something back, but once it happened that they did not catch anything. They came home empty-handed and Cyaxares treated them very roughly and insultingly, for he was sharp-tempered, as he showed. When they were treated by Cyaxares this way, they considered it undeserved, so they planned to cut to pieces one of his sons who was being taught among them and to prepare him as they usually prepared the beasts, then bring him in and give him to Cyaxares as game, and once they had done it to travel as fast as possible to Alyattes son of Sadyattes in Sardis. So it happened. Cyaxares and the guests who were present ate the meat, and the Scythians after doing this became suppliants of Alyattes.

74. After this, since Alyattes would not surrender the Scythians to Cyrus when he demanded them back, there was war between the Lydians and the Medes for five years, during which the Medes many times defeated the Lydians and the Lydians many times defeated the Medes. They even fought a night-battle: They were waging war equally when during a battle in the sixth year it happened that, while the battle was raging, day suddenly became night. Thales of Miletus had predicted to the Ionians that this eclipse would occur, setting as the date the year in which the eclipse indeed happened. When the Lydians and the Medes saw it become night instead of day, they ceased from battle and both were more anxious to have peace. The ones who reconciled them were Syennesis the Cilician and Labynetos the Babylonian. They were the ones who insisted there be oaths between them and had them make an exchange of marriages. They decided that Alyattes should give his daughter Aryenis to Astyages, the son of Cyaxares, for treaties are unlikely to remain firm without firm necessity. These nations swear the same oaths as the Hellenes, and in addition they cut their arms at the surface and lick each other’s blood.

75. So Cyrus held this Astyages in subjection, his own mother’s father, for a reason which I will declare in a later account. Having this complaint against Cyrus, Croesus sent to the oracles asking if he should march against the Persians. When an ambiguous oracle arrived, he thought that the oracle was on his side and marched against the territory of the Persians. When Croesus reached the Halys river, he then transported his army across the existing bridges. So I report, but the more common story among the Hellenes is that Thales of Miletus got them across. It is said that Croesus was at a loss as to how the army would cross the river, for at that time these bridges did not exist. Thales was present in the camp and devised a way to make the river, which was flowing on the army’s left side, also to flow on its right. He did this in the following way: starting above the camp, he dug a deep trench, making it crescent-shaped, so that in this way the river, turned from its former channel, might take the encamped army from the
back, then pass the camp and flow back into its former course. The result was that as soon as the river
was split it became fordable on both sides. Some people say that the former channel was completely
dried up, but I do not agree. How in that case could they have crossed it on their way back?

76. Croesus crossed with this army and reached the place called Pteria in Cappadocia. Pteria is the
strongest place in that country and lies approximately in a line with Sinope on the Euxine sea. He
camped there and devastated the plots of the Syrians. He captured the city of the Pterians and enslaved
them, and he captured all its outlying towns and drove the people from their homes, though they had in
no way wronged him. Cyrus collected his own army and took along all the people who lived between as
he went to meet Croesus. But before he rushed to lead out his army, he sent heralds to the Ionians trying
to get them to revolt from Croesus, but the Ionians were not persuaded. Cyrus arrived and camped
opposite Croesus, and they made trials of each other’s strength in the Pterian country. A fierce battle
took place and many fell on both sides, but in the end neither prevailed and they parted when night
came on. In this way both armies contended.

77. Croesus found fault with his own army on account of its number, for the army he had in battle was
much smaller than that of Cyrus. Finding this fault, he marched away to Sardis when Cyrus did not
attempt an advance on the next day. He intended to summon the Egyptians according to their oath, for
he had made an alliance with Amasis, king of Egypt, even before he had with the Lacedaemonians; also to
summon the Babylonians, with whom an alliance had been made - at that time Labynetos was turannos
of the Babylonians; and to instruct the Lacedaemonians to be present at the appointed time. After he had
collected these and assembled his own army, he intended to pass the winter and to march against the
Persians at the break of spring. With this in mind he reached Sardis and sent heralds to instruct that
according to the terms of alliance they should gather in Sardis on the fifth month. From his present army
that had fought with the Persians, he released and scattered all that were his xenoi, for he never expected
that after such evenly-matched fighting Cyrus would march on Sardis.

78. While Croesus was considering these things, the environs of the city became filled with snakes. At
their appearance the horses regularly left off feeding in their usual pastures and devoured them. When
Croesus saw this, he thought it was a portent, as indeed it was. He immediately sent messengers to the
country of the Telmessian interpreters. They reached the place and learned from the Telmessians what
the portent intended to mean [sēmainein], but they did not succeed in announcing it to Croesus, for
before they sailed back to Sardis Croesus had been captured. The Telmessians interpreted it in this way:
Croesus must expect a foreign army to come against the country, and at its arrival it would conquer the
native inhabitants. They said that the snake was a child of the earth, but the horse was an enemy and a
newcomer. The Telmessians gave this answer to Croesus when he had already been

79. As soon as Croesus marched away after the battle that had taken place in Pteria, Cyrus learned that
he had gone and that he was going to disband his army. He took counsel and found it his business to
march on Sardis as quickly as he could, before the forces of the Lydians were gathered a second time.
When he had so resolved, he acted with speed: he marched his army into Lydia and came to Croesus as
his own messenger. Then Croesus fell into great despair, since his affairs had turned out contrary to the
expectation he had firmly held. Nevertheless, he led the Lydians into battle. At that time there was no
nation in Asia more manly or more valiant than the Lydian. Their method of battle was on horseback:
they carried long spears and were good at riding.

80. They met on the plain in front of the city of Sardis. It is large and bare, and through it flow many
rivers, including the Hyllos. These rush together into the largest, called the Hermos, which flows from
the sacred mountain of Mother Dindyme and enters the sea near the polis of Phocaea. When Cyrus saw
the Lydians marshaled for battle, he dreaded their cavalry and did as follows by the advice of Harpagos, a
man of Media: he gathered all the camels that followed his own army carrying provisions and baggage,
removed their loads, and mounted on them men who had been equipped in the outfit of cavalry. After equipping them, he commanded them to go in advance of the rest of the army against Croesus’ cavalry. He ordered the infantry to follow the camel-corps and arranged all his cavalry behind the footsoldiers. When all his men were drawn up, he ordered them to kill unsparringly every one of the other Lydians who came in the way, but not to kill Croesus, even if he defended himself when caught. He gave these orders and stationed the camels opposite the cavalry for this reason: the horse is afraid of the camel and cannot bear either to see the look of it or to smell its odor. He thus devised for this very reason: so that Croesus would have no use of the cavalry by which the Lydian was intending to distinguish himself. When they met in battle, as soon as the horses smelled the camels and saw them, they wheeled back, and Croesus’ hope was destroyed. But even then the Lydians were not cowards: when they understood what was happening, they jumped from the horses and fought the Persians on foot. In time, after many men fell on both sides, the Lydians were routed. They were trapped inside the wall and besieged by the Persians.

81. They were in a state of siege. Croesus expected that the siege would last a long time and sent out from the wall other messengers to the allied states. The earlier ones had been sent to instruct them to gather at Sardis on the fifth month, but he sent these out to ask them to come and help as quickly as possible since Croesus was under siege.

82. He sent to the other allied states and to the Lacedaemonians. At this very time strife [eris] had befallen the Spartans themselves, with the Argives over the country called Thyrea. The Lacedaemonians held possession of this Thyrea after cutting it off from the territory of the Argolid. The country as far as Malea toward the west belonged to the Argives, both the land on the mainland and the island of Kythera and the rest of the islands. When the Argives marched out to their land that was being cut off, they negotiated and agreed that 300 of each side would do battle and that the country would belong to the side that won. The majority of each army withdrew to its own land and did not remain while they fought, so that, if the armies were present, the others would not help their own men if they saw them being defeated. They made this agreement and departed. Specially chosen men from each side were left behind and started fighting. They were evenly matched and fought until out of 600 men three were left, Alkenor and Khromios of the Argives and Orthyades of the Lacedaemonians. These men were left when night came on. The two of the Argives ran to Argos as victors, but Orthyades of the Lacedaemonians stripped the corpses of the Argives, carried their weapons to his own camp, and kept his post. On the next day both sides arrived and learned what had happened. For a while each side claimed that they were the winners, one side saying that more of their men had survived, the other side declaring they had fled and that their own man had remained and stripped the corpses of the other side. Finally from this conflict they came to blows and did battle, and after many men fell on both sides the Lacedaemonians prevailed. Ever since this time the Argives cut their hair short, previously wearing it long under compulsion, and they made a law [nomos] and pronounced a curse that no Argive man could let his hair grow, nor their wives wear gold, until they win back Thyrea. The Lacedaemonians made a law opposite to this, to wear their hair long after this time, though before this they had not worn long hair. They say that the one who survived from the 300, Orthyades, felt disgraced to return home to Sparta when all the men in his company had perished, and killed himself there in Thyrea.

83. While these affairs prevailed among the Spartans, the herald from Sardis came and asked them to aid Croesus who was under siege. Still, when they heard the herald, they were eager to help. They had already made their preparations, and their ships were ready, when there came another message that the wall of the Lydians was captured and that Croesus was taken prisoner. So they greatly lamented and stopped their preparations.

84. In this way Sardis was captured: On the fourteenth day that Croesus was under siege, Cyrus sent horsemen through his army proclaiming that he would give gifts to the first man to mount the wall.
Afterwards the army made the attempt without success. Then, after the others had stopped, a man of Mardia tried to climb up - his name was Hyroiades - on that part of the acropolis where no guard had been posted. There was no fear that it ever be taken from that part, for there the acropolis is an impregnable precipice. This was the only place where Meles, the former king of Sardis, did not carry around the lion which his concubine gave birth to. The Telmessians had determined that Sardis would be impossible to capture if this lion was carried around the wall. Meles had carried the lion around the rest of the wall in the vulnerable part of the acropolis, but he had ignored this part as being an impregnable precipice. It is located in the part of the city that faces Tmolos. This Hyroiades of Mardia on the previous day had seen one of the Lydians climb down this part of the acropolis after his helmet that had rolled down from above and retrieve it. He observed this and put it in his thumos. Then he himself climbed up, and other Persians climbed up after him. Many of them mounted the wall, and in this way Sardis was captured and the whole city sacked.

85. This is what happened to Croesus himself: He had a son, whom I mentioned previously, sound of body in other respects, but mute. In his by-gone prosperity Croesus had done everything for him, thinking up many things and even sending to Delphi to consult the oracle about him. The Pythia said to him the following:

Lydian in genos, king of many, very inept [nēpios] Croesus, do not wish to hear in your palace the voice, so much prayed for, of your son speaking. It would be much better for you otherwise. He will first speak on a day that is not blessed [olbios].

When the wall had been taken, one of the Persians went ahead to kill Croesus without recognizing him. Croesus saw him coming but paid no heed under his present misfortune, for it made no difference to him to die by the blow. But when this mute son saw the Persian coming on, from fear and misery he burst into speech, saying, “Fellow, do not kill Croesus.” This was the first utterance he ever made, and afterwards he spoke for the rest of his life.

86. The Persians gained Sardis and took Croesus prisoner. Croesus had ruled 14 years and been besieged 14 days. According to the oracle, he had destroyed his own great empire. The Persians took him and brought him to Cyrus, who erected a pyre and mounted Croesus atop it, bound in chains, with twice seven sons of the Lydians beside him. Cyrus may have intended to sacrifice him as a victory-offering to some god, or he may have wished to fulfill a vow, or perhaps he had heard that Croesus was god-fearing and put him atop the pyre to find out if some daimōn would deliver him from being burned alive. So Cyrus did this. As Croesus stood on the pyre, although he was in such great misery, it occurred to him that Solon had spoken with a god’s help when he said that no one among the living is olbios. When this occurred to him, he heaved a deep sigh and groaned aloud after a long silence, calling out three times the name Solon. Cyrus heard and ordered the interpreters to ask Croesus whom he was invoking. They approached and asked, but Croesus was silent at their questioning, until finally they forced him and he said, “I would prefer to great wealth his coming into discourse with all turannoi.” Since what he said was unintelligible, they again asked what he had said, persistently importuning him. He explained that first Solon the Athenian had come and seen all his fortune [olbos] and spoken as if he despaired it. Now everything had turned out for him as Solon had said, speaking no more of himself than of every human being, especially those who think themselves olbioi. While Croesus was relating all this, the pyre had been lit and the edges were on fire. When Cyrus heard from the interpreters what Croesus said, he changed his mind and considered that he, a human being, was burning alive another human being, one not inferior to himself in good fortune [eudaimonia]. In addition, he feared retribution, reflecting how there is nothing stable in human affairs. He ordered that the blazing fire be extinguished as quickly as possible, and that Croesus and those with him be taken down, but despite their efforts they could not master the fire.
87. Then the Lydians say that Croesus understood Cyrus’ change of mind, and when he saw everyone trying to extinguish the fire but unable to check it, he invoked Apollo, crying out that if Apollo had ever been given any gift with khāris by him, let him offer help and deliver him from the present evil. Thus he in tears invoked the god, and suddenly out of a clear and windless sky clouds came together, a storm broke, and it rained violently, extinguishing the pyre. Thus Cyrus perceived that Croesus was philos to a god and an agathos man. He had him brought down from the pyre and asked, “Croesus, who on earth persuaded you to wage war against my land and become my enemy instead of my philos?” He replied, “O King, I acted thus for your good fortune [eu’daimonía], but for my own misfortune [kakodaimonía]. The god of the Hellenes is responsible [aitios] for this by inciting me to wage war. No one is so senseless as to choose war over peace. In peace, sons bury their fathers; in war, fathers bury their sons. I suppose it was philon to a daimōn that this be so.”

88. Thus he spoke, and Cyrus freed him and sat him nearby, treating him with much respect. Cyrus and all around marveled greatly at Croesus. He was sunk in reflection and remained quiet. Then he turned and saw the Persians plundering the city of the Lydians and said, “O King, should I at present tell you what I really think or be silent?” Cyrus bade him take courage and say whatever he wished. He answered him by saying, “What is it that this great crowd is doing with great eagerness?” Cyrus said, “They are sacking your polis and plundering your property.” Croesus answered, “It is neither my polis nor my property that they are sacking. I no longer have any share in these things. What they are robbing and plundering is yours.”

89. Cyrus thought over what Croesus had said, dismissed the others, and asked Croesus what he foresaw for him in what was being done. Croesus said, “Since the gods have given me to you as your slave, I think it right for me to tell you if I see anything further. The Persians have hubris by nature and lack wealth. So if you allow them to pillage and gain great wealth, this is what you may expect from them: expect that whoever of them gains the most will rise in rebellion against you. Now if what I say pleases you, do this: place guards from your bodyguard at all the gates, who will take the goods from those who are carrying them out, by saying that it is necessary for them to give a tithe to Zeus. You will not be hated by them for taking their things by force, and they will admit that you are acting justly and willingly surrender it.”

90. Cyrus heard this and was exceedingly pleased, since it seemed like good advice. He praised [verb of ainos] him greatly and instructed his bodyguards to perform what Croesus had advised. He said to Croesus: “Since you, a king, are ready to perform useful deeds and words [epea], ask for whatever gift you wish to be yours on the spot.” Croesus said, “Master, you will give me the greatest khāris if you allow me to send these fetters to the god of the Hellenes, to whom I gave most timē among the gods, and ask if it is his custom [nomos] to deceive those who treat him well.” Cyrus asked what he was pleading for with this request. Croesus told again his whole intention and the answers of the oracles and especially his offerings, saying that he had marched against the Persians incited by the oracle. He said this and ended by again pleading to be allowed to reproach the god for it. Cyrus laughed and said, “You shall get this from me, Croesus, and everything else you ask for on every occasion.” When Croesus heard this, he sent some Lydians to Delphi, instructing them to place the fetters on the threshold of the temple and then to ask the god if he was not ashamed of inciting Croesus by the oracles to march against the Persians to put down the power of Cyrus, from which these were the victory-offerings, and to display the fetters at this point. He instructed them to ask these things, and also whether it was the custom for Hellenic gods to be without khāris.

91. It is said that after the Lydians had arrived and spoken their instructions, the Pythia said to them, “It is impossible even for a god to escape his destined fate [moira]. Croesus has expiated the crime of his ancestor five generations previous, who was the bodyguard of the Herakleidai but obeyed a woman’s trick, murdered his master, and then took his master’s timē, though it did not at all belong to him.
Loxias\textsuperscript{116} was eager that the disaster of Sardis happen in the time of Croesus’ children and not in that of Croesus himself, but he could not divert the Fates [Moirai], though he did give kharis to him and accomplish as much as they would concede. He was able to put off the capture of Sardis for three years; let Croesus know that he is captured this many years later than was fated. Second, he helped him when he was being burned. Concerning the oracle that was given, Croesus does not rightly complain. Loxias foretold to him that if he marched against the Persians he would destroy a great empire. Thereupon, if he was going to take counsel carefully, he should have sent and asked whether his own or Cyrus’ empire was meant. Since he neither understood what was said nor asked again, let him declare himself to blame [aitios]. When he consulted the oracle for the final time, he also did not understand the answer that Loxias gave him about the mule. Cyrus was this mule, for he was born of two people not from the same nation. His mother was more noble [agathē], his father inferior: she was a Mede and the daughter of Astyages, the king of the Medes, while he was a Persian and under their rule, beneath them in all respects, and lived with a woman who was his master.” The Pythia gave this answer to the Lydians, which they carried back to Sardis and announced to Croesus. When he heard it, he confessed that the mistake was his own and not the god’s.

\textsuperscript{116} The title of Apollo at Delphi.
After the fall of Lydia, the Persians conquered the rest of Asia Minor. The citizens of Phocaea abandoned their city and sailed away to their colony in Corsica, where they fought with the neighboring peoples.

167. The Carthaginians and the Tyrrenians drew lots for the men from the Phocaean ships destroyed in Kyrnos. The people of Agylla won most of them and led them out and stoned them to death. But later everything from Agylla that passed by the place where the stoned Phocaeans lay, whether flocks or beasts of burden or people, became twisted and lame and apoplexied. When the Agyllans sent to Delphi to atone for their offense, the Pythia told them to make great offerings to the Phocaeans and to institute an agôn of gymnastics and horse races. The Agyllans still maintain these practices. Thus these Phocaeans met their death, but the others who fled to Rhegion set out from there and founded a polis in Oinotria which is now called Hyele. They founded it after learning from a man of Posidonia that when the Pythia gave her oracle, she meant to institute the worship of the hero Kyrnos, not to colonize the island Kyrnos. Thus it was concerning Ionian Phocaea.

Book 1: Timesios

168. The people of Teos, like the Phocaenians, abandoned their native land rather than endure slavery. When the Persian general Harpagos captured their wall by building a mound, they embarked upon their ships and sailed away to Thrace. There they founded the polis of Abdera, which Timesios of Klazomenai had previously established, but he had been driven out by the Thracians and got no benefit from it. He now receives from the Teians in Abdera the timai of a hero.

Book 2: Herakles

44. I saw in Tyre in Phoenicia another sacred precinct of Herakles, of the Herakles called Thasian. I also went to Thasos, where I discovered a sacred precinct that had been established by the Phoenicians when they sailed looking for Europa and settled Thasos. Now this was five generations before Herakles son of Amphitryon was born in Hellas, so my inquiry plainly shows that Herakles is an ancient god. I think that those Hellenes act most correctly who have established and perform two worships of Herakles, sacrificing to one as an immortal, called Olympian, and making offerings to the other as a hero.

Book 2: Hesiod, Homer

53. Where each of the gods came from, whether they had always existed, and what outward forms they had, the Hellenes did not know until just yesterday or the day before, so to speak. I think that Hesiod and Homer were 400 years older than me, and no more, and it is they who made the theogony for the Hellenes. They gave names to the gods, apportioned their timai and functions, and declared their

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117 Kyrnos is modern Corsica. Also Kyrnos is the name of a son of Herakles. The men from the ship were now prisoners of war.
118 The verb is enagizein ‘to make offerings to a dead hero, to participate in the pollution of’, from agos ‘pollution’.
119 The verb ktizein means both ‘found a city’ and ‘institute a cult’.
120 Verb enagizein.
outward forms. The poets who are said to be earlier than these men I think are later.\textsuperscript{121} This part involving Hesiod and Homer is my own opinion.

**Book 5: Philippos**

47. Philippos of Kroton, the son of Boutakides, also followed Dorieus the Spartan when he went to found a colony in Sicily, and was killed along with him by the Phoenicians and the Egestans. He had been banished from Kroton when he became engaged to the daughter of Telys of Sybaris, but was cheated of his marriage and sailed away to Kyrene. There he joined the Spartan expedition, providing a ship and men at his own expense. Philippos was an Olympic victor and the handsomest Hellene of his day. Because of his beauty he received from the people of Egesta a thing they grant to no one else: they erected a hero’s shrine over his grave and propitiate him with sacrifices.

**Book 5: Adrastos**

67. When Kleisthenes, \textit{turanos} of Sikyon, made war upon the Argives, he made the rhapsodes \textit{[rhapsōidoi]} in Sikyon stop performing in \textit{agōn}, because Argos and the Argives are everywhere hymned so much in the Homeric \textit{epea}.\textsuperscript{122} He also desired to expel from the land the hero whose shrine was in the \textit{agora} of Sikyon, Adrastos son of Talaos, because he was an Argive. But when he went to Delphi to ask the oracle if he should expel him, the Pythia responded by saying that Adrastos was king of the Sikyonians, but Kleisthenes was just a stone-thrower. The god did not let him do as he wished, so he returned home and tried to think of a way to make Adrastos leave on his own. He thought he had found it, so he sent to Thebes in Boeotia and said that he wanted to bring to Sikyon Melanippos son of Astakos.\textsuperscript{123} The Thebans agreed. He brought in Melanippos and appointed a precinct for him, setting him up in the strongest part of the prytaneion.\textsuperscript{124} I should add that Kleisthenes did this because Melanippos had been most hostile [\textit{ekhthros}] to Adrastos, who had killed his brother Mekisteus and his son-in-law Tydeus.\textsuperscript{125} After he appointed the precinct, Kleisthenes took the sacrifices and festivals away from Adrastos and gave them to Melanippos. The Sikyonians were accustomed to give Adrastos very great \textit{timē} because the country had once belonged to Polybos, his maternal grandfather. Polybos had no son, so at his death he gave the rule to Adrastos. So the Sikyonians gave him many \textit{timai}, including tragic \textit{khoroi} corresponding to his sufferings [\textit{pathos} pl.]. They gave this \textit{timē} not to Dionysus but to Adrastos. Kleisthenes, however, gave the \textit{khoroi} to Dionysus, and all the rest of the sacrifices to Melanippos.

**Book 5: Onesilaos**

\textit{In 499 the Ionians revolted from Persia.}

104. All the Cyprians, except for the Amathusians, voluntarily joined the Ionians in revolt against the Medes. Onesilaos\textsuperscript{126} son of Khersis son of Siromos son of Euelthon was the younger brother of Gorgos, king of Salamis in Cyprus. This man even previously had urged Gorgos to revolt from the king of Persia, but once he learned that the Ionians had rebelled he tried most urgently to get him to do it. When he

\textsuperscript{121} Such as Orpheus and Linos.
\textsuperscript{122} The epic tradition that was banned in Sikyon may have been an equivalent of our \textit{Iliad} and \textit{Odyssey}. Or it may have been along the lines of a \textit{Seven against Thebes} narrative.
\textsuperscript{123} Herodotus means the corpse of the hero Melanippos.
\textsuperscript{124} The equivalent of a town hall, which is being set aside here as the sacred space for hero cult.
\textsuperscript{125} The story of Melanippos and Tydeus was part of the \textit{Seven against Thebes} epic tradition.
\textsuperscript{126} His name means ‘he who benefits the people’.
could not persuade Gorgos, Onesilaos and his partisans watched for him to go out from the city of the Salaminians, then shut him outside the gates. Gorgos, deprived of his polis, went into exile among the Medes. Onesilaos ruled Salamis and persuaded all the Cyprians to rebel; all, that is, except the Amathusians. When they chose not to obey, he besieged them.

110. Later the Persians came to the plain of Salamis. The Cyprian kings arranged the Cyprians in order, matching them against the opposing soldiers, and picked out the best of the men of Salamis and Soloi against the Persians. Onesilaos voluntarily took his position against Artybios, the Persian general.

111. Artybios rode a horse taught to rear up against an armed man. Onesilaos had a squire who was Carian in genos, highly reputed in warfare and otherwise full of courage. When he learned of the horse, Onesilaos said to his squire, “I have learned that Artybios’ horse rears up and kills with his feet and mouth any man he attacks. So you consider and tell me now whether you wish to watch for your chance and strike Artybios or his horse.” His squire said, “My king, I am ready to do either or both or anything you command. But I will speak out what seems to me to be most fitting for your affairs. I say that a king and a general ought to attack a king and a general. If you lay low your man the general, it is a great thing for you. Secondly, if he lays you low - may it not happen! - the misfortune is halved by dying at the hands of a worthy man. And we servants ought to attack other servants, and that horse. Have no fear of his tricks. I promise that he never again shall rise up against any man.”

112. Thus he spoke, and immediately the armies joined battle on land and sea. By sea the Ionians achieved excellence that day and defeated the Phoenicians; among them the Samians were aristoi. On land, when the armies came together and fell upon each other in battle, this is what happened to the generals: When Artybios on his horse attacked him, Onesilaos, by arrangement with his squire, struck Artybios as he bore down on him. Then when the horse kicked at Onesilaos’ shield, the Carian struck with his sickle and cut off its feet. Thus the Persian general Artybios fell there together with his horse.

113. While the others fought, Stesenor, tyrant of Kourion, played traitor, taking not a small force of men with him. The Kourians are said to be Argive colonists. As soon as the Kourians went over, the Salaminian war-chariots did the same. Once this happened the Persians defeated the Cyprians, and in the rout of the army many men fell, including Onesilaos son of Khersis, the one who had caused the revolt of the Cyprians, and Aristocyprus son of Philocyprus, king of Soloi. This Philocyprus was the one whom Solon, coming to Cyprus, praised [verb of ainos] most among the turannoi.

114. Because he had besieged them, the Amathusians cut off Onesilaos’ head and brought it to Amathous, where they hung it above the gates. As it hung there empty, a swarm of bees entered it and filled it with honeycomb. When they sought advice about this event, an oracle told them to take the head down and bury it, and to make annual sacrifice to Onesilaos as a hero, saying that it would be better for them if they did this. The Amathusians did as they were told and still perform these rites in my day.

Book 6: Miltiades

34. Until the Phoenicians subdued the Chersonese for the Persians, Miltiades son of Kimon son of Stesagoras was turannos there. Miltiades son of Kypselos had gained the rule earlier in this way: The Thracian Dolonkoi were crushed in war by the Apsinthians, so they sent their kings to Delphi to inquire about the war. The Pythia answered that they should bring to their land as founder the first man who invites them to hospitality [xenia] after they leave the sacred precinct. But as the Dolonkoi passed through Phocis and Boeotia, going along the Sacred Way, no one invited them, so they turned toward Athens.

35. At that time in Athens, Peisistratos held all power, but Miltiades son of Kypselos also had great influence. His house was rich enough to maintain four-horse chariot teams, and he traced his earliest descent to Aiakos and Aigina, though his later ancestry was Athenian. Philaios son of Ajax was the first of
that house to be an Athenian. Miltiades was sitting on his porch when he saw the Dolonkoi go by with their foreign clothing and spears, so he called out to them, and when they came over he invited them in for lodging and hospitality [xenia]. They accepted, and after he gave them xenia, they revealed all the story of the oracle to him and asked him to obey the god. He was persuaded as soon as he heard their speech, for he was tired of Peisistratos’ rule and wanted to get out of the way. He immediately set out for Delphi to ask the oracle if he should do what the Dolonkoi asked of him.

36. The Pythia also bade him do so. Then Miltiades son of Kypselos, previously an Olympic victor in the four-horse chariot races, recruited any Athenian who wanted to take part in the expedition, sailed off with the Dolonkoi, and took possession of their land. Those who brought him appointed him turannos. His first act was to wall off the isthmus of the Chersonese from the polis of Kardia across to Paktye, so that the Apsinthians not be able to harm them by making inroads into their land. The isthmus is 36 stadia across, and to the south of the isthmus the Chersonese is 420 stadia in length.

37. After Miltiades had pushed away the Apsinthians by walling off the neck of the Chersonese, he made war first on the people of Lampsakos, but the Lampsakenians laid an ambush and took him prisoner. However, Miltiades stood high in the opinion of Croesus the Lydian, and when Croesus heard what had happened he sent to the Lampsakenians and commanded them to release Miltiades. If they did not do so, he threatened to wipe them out like a pine tree. The Lampsakenians went astray in their counsels as to what the utterance [epos] meant with which Croesus had threatened them, saying he would waste them like a pine tree, until at last one of the elders understood and said what it was: the pine is the only tree that once cut down never sends out any shoots; it is utterly destroyed. So out of fear of Croesus the Lampsakenians released Miltiades and let him go.

38. So he escaped by the intervention of Croesus, but he later died childless and left his rule and property to Stesagoras, the son of his half-brother Kimon. Since his coming to telos, the people of the Chersonese offer sacrifices to him as their founder, as is customary [nomos], instituting an agôn of horse races and gymnastics. No one from Lampsakos is allowed to compete in this agôn.

Book 6: Helen, Astrabakos

Sparta had two kings from rival families that traced their descent from Herakles.

61. While Kleomenes was in Aigina working for the common good of Hellas, Demaretos slandered him, not out of care for the Aiginetans, but out of jealousy and envy. Once Kleomenes returned home from Aigina, he planned to remove Demaretos from his kingship, using the following affair as a pretext against him: Ariston, king of Sparta, had married twice but had no children. He did not allow that he was to blame [aitios], so he married a third time. This is how it came about: He had among the Spartans a philos to whom he was especially attached. This man’s wife was by far the most beautiful woman in Sparta, but she who was now most beautiful had once been the ugliest. Her nurse considered her inferior looks and how she was of wealthy [olbioi] people yet unattractive, and, seeing how the parents felt her appearance to be a great misfortune, she contrived to carry her every day to the sacred precinct of Helen, which is in the place called Therapne, beyond the sacred precinct of Phoebus. Every time the nurse carried the child there, she set her beside the image and beseeched the goddess to release the child from her ugliness. Once as she was leaving the sacred precinct, it is said that a woman appeared to her and asked her what she was carrying in her arms. The nurse said she was carrying a child and the woman bade her show it to her, but she refused, saying that the parents had forbidden her to show it to anyone. But the woman strongly bade her show it to her, and when the nurse saw how important it was to her, she showed her the child. The woman stroked the child’s head and said that she would be the most beautiful woman in
all Sparta. From that day her looks changed, and when she reached the right age [hōra] for marriage, Agetos son of Alkeides married her. This man was Ariston’s philos.

62. So love for this woman pricked Ariston, and he contrived as follows: he promised to give his friend any one thing out of all he owned, whatever Agetos might choose, and he bade his friend make him the same promise. Agetos had no fear about his wife, seeing that Ariston was already married, so he agreed and they took oaths on these terms. Ariston gave Agetos whatever it was that he chose out of all his treasures, and then, seeking equal recompense from him, tried to take his friend’s wife. Agetos said that he had agreed to anything but that, but he was forced by his oath and by the deceitful trick to let his wife be taken.

63. In this way Ariston married his third wife, after divorcing the second one. But his new wife gave birth to Demaretos too soon, before ten [lunar] months had passed. When one of his servants announced to him as he sat in council with the ephors that he had a son, Ariston, knowing the time of the marriage, counted up the months on his fingers and swore on oath, “It is not mine.” The ephors heard this but did not make anything of it. When the boy grew up, Ariston regretted having said that, for he firmly believed Demaretos to be his own son. He named him Demaretos because before his birth all the Spartan populace had prayed that Ariston, the man most highly esteemed out of all the kings of Sparta, might have a son. Thus he was named Demaretos, which means “answer to the people’s prayer.”

64. Time passed and Ariston died, so Demaretos held the kingship. But it seems that these matters had to become known and cause Demaretos to lose his kingship. He had already fallen out with Kleomenes when he had brought the army back from Eleusis, and now they were even more at odds when Kleomenes crossed over after the Aiginetans who were Medizing.127

65. Kleomenes wanted revenge, so he made a deal with Leotykhides son of Menares son of Agis, of the same family as Demaretos. The deal was that Leotykhides would go with Kleomenes against the Aiginetans if he became king. Leotykhides had already become strongly hostile [ekthros] to Demaretos for the following reason: Leotykhides was betrothed to Perkalos, daughter of Demarmenos, but Demaretos plotted and robbed him of his marriage, stealing Perkalos and marrying her first. From this affair Leotykhides had hostility against Demaretos, so at Kleomenes’ instigation he took an oath against him, saying that he was not king of the Spartans by right, since he was not Ariston’s son. After making this oath, he prosecuted him, recalling that utterance [epos] which Ariston had made when the servant told him he had a son, and he counted up the months and swore that it was not his. Taking his stand on this saying, Leotykhides declared that Demaretos was not Ariston’s son and that he was not rightly king of Sparta, bringing as witnesses the ephors who had been sitting beside Ariston and heard him say this.

66. They fell to quarreling, so the Spartans resolved to ask the oracle at Delphi if Demaretos was the son of Ariston. At Kleomenes’ instigation this was revealed to the Pythia. He had won over a man of great influence among the Delphians, Kobon son of Aristophantos, and Kobon persuaded the priestess, Periallos, to say what Kleomenes wanted her to. When the ambassadors asked if Demaretos was the son of Ariston, the Pythia judged [krinein] that he was not. All this got out later; Kobon was exiled from Delphi, and Periallos was deposed from her office [tīmē].

67. So it was concerning Demaretos’ loss of the kingship, and from Sparta he went into exile among the Medes128 because of the following reproach: After he was deposed from the kingship he was elected to office. When it was the time of the Gymnopaidia, Leotykhides, now king in his place, saw him in the audience and, as a joke and an insult, sent a messenger to him to ask what it was like to hold office after being king. He was grieved by the question and said that he had experience of both, while Leotykhides

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127 Herodotus regularly uses this word for ‘taking the Persian side, and frequently uses ‘Mede’ for ‘Persian’, since the Persians took over the empire of the Medes.

128 Meaning the Persians, as often in the subsequent narrative.
Hero Cults

did not, and that this question would be the beginning for Sparta of either immense misery [kakotēs] or immense happiness [eudaimonia]. He said this, covered his head, left the theater, and went home, where he immediately made preparations and sacrificed an ox to Zeus. Then he summoned his mother.

68. When she came in, he put some of the entrails in her hands and entreated her, saying, “Mother, appealing to Zeus of the household and to all the other gods, I beseech you to tell me the truth. Who is my father? Tell me the straight story. Leotykhides said in our quarrel that you were already pregnant by your former husband when you came to Ariston. Others say more foolishly that you went in to one of the servants, the ass-keeper, and that I am his son. I adjure you by the gods to speak what is true. If you have done anything of what they say, you are not the only one; you are in company with many women. There is much talk at Sparta that Ariston did not have child-bearing seed in him, or his former wives would have given him children.”

69. Thus he spoke. His mother answered, “My son, since you adjure me by entreaties to speak the truth, I will speak out to you all that is true. On the third night after Ariston brought me to his house, a phantom resembling him came to me. It slept with me and then put on me the garlands which it had. It went away, and when Ariston came in later and saw me with the garlands which it had, he asked who gave them to me. I said he did, but he denied it. I swore an oath that just a little while before he had come in and slept with me and given me the garlands, and I said it was not good of him to deny it. When he saw me swearing, he perceived that this was some divine affair. For the garlands had clearly come from the hero’s precinct that is established at the courtyard doors, which they call the precinct of Astrabakos, and the seers responded that this was the same hero who had come to me. Thus, my son, you have all you want to know. Either you are from this hero and Astrabakos the hero is your father, or Ariston is, for I conceived you that night. As for how your enemies chiefly attack you, saying that Ariston himself, when your birth was announced, denied in front of a large audience that you were his because the ten months had not yet been completed, he uttered that hastily, out of ignorance of such things. Some women give birth after nine months or seven months; not all complete the ten months. I gave birth to you, my son, after seven months. A little later Ariston himself recognized that he had blurted out that utterance because of thoughtlessness. Do not believe other stories about your manner of birth. May the wife of Leotykhides himself, and the wives of the others who say these things, give birth to children fathered by ass-keepers.”
In 490 the Persians under Darius invaded the Hellenic mainland.

102. After subduing Eretria, the Persians waited a few days and then sailed away to the land of Attica, pressing ahead in expectation of doing to the Athenians exactly what they had done to the Eretrians. Marathon was the place in Attica most suitable for riding horses and closest to Eretria, so Hippias son of Peisistratos led them there.

103. When the Athenians learned this, they too marched out to Marathon, with ten generals leading them. The tenth was Miltiades, and it had befallen his father Kimon son of Stesagoras to be banished from Athens by Peisistratos son of Hippokrates. While in exile he happened to take the Olympic prize in the four-horse chariot race, and by taking this victory he won the same prize as his half-brother Miltiades. In the next Olympics he won with the same horses but permitted Peisistratos to be heralded, and by resigning the victory to him he came back from exile to his own property under truce. After taking yet another Olympics with the same horses, it befell him to be murdered by Peisistratos’ sons, since Peisistratos was no longer living. They murdered him by placing men in ambush at night near the prytaneion. Kimon was buried in front of the city, across the road called “Through the Hollow”, and buried opposite him are the mares who won the three Olympic prizes. The mares of Euagoras the Laconian did the same as these, but none others. Stesagoras, the elder of Kimon’s sons, was then being brought up with his uncle Miltiades in the Chersonese. The younger was with Kimon at Athens, and he took the name Miltiades from Miltiades the founder of the Chersonese.

104. It was this Miltiades who was now Athenian general, after coming from the Chersonese and escaping a two-fold death. The Phoenicians pursued him as far as Imbros, considering it of great importance to catch him and bring him to the king. He got away from them, but when he reached his own country and thought he was safe his personal enemies met him next. They brought him to court and prosecuted him for tyranny in the Chersonese, but he was acquitted and appointed Athenian general, elected by the community [dēmos].

105. While still in the city, the generals first sent to Sparta the herald Philippides, an Athenian and a long-distance runner who made that his calling. As Philippides himself said at the time that he brought the message to the Athenians, when he was in the Parthenian mountain above Tegea he encountered Pan. Pan shouted Philippides’ name and bade him ask the Athenians why they paid him no attention, though he was well-disposed toward the Athenians, had often been of service to them, and would be in the future. The Athenians believed that these things were true, and when they became prosperous they established a sacred precinct of Pan beneath the Acropolis. Ever since that message they propitiate him with annual sacrifices and a torch-race.

106. This Philippides was in Sparta on the day after leaving the city of Athens, that time when he was sent by the generals and said that Pan had appeared to him. He came to the magistrates and said, “Lacedaemonians, the Athenians ask you to come to their aid and not allow the most ancient polis among the Hellenes to fall into slavery at the hands of the barbarians. Even now Eretria has been enslaved, and Hellas has become weaker by an important polis.” He told them what he had been ordered to say, and they resolved to send help to the Athenians, but they could not do this immediately, for they were unwilling to break the law [nomos]. It was the ninth day of the rising month, and they said that on the ninth they could not go out to war until the moon’s circle was full.

129 Hippias succeeded his father [cf. 1.59-64] as turannos of Athens, until he was driven out and fled to Persia.
107. So they waited for the full moon, while the barbarians were guided to Marathon by Hippias son of Peisistratos. The previous night Hippias had a dream in which he slept with his mother. He supposed from the dream that he would return from exile to Athens, recover his rule, and end his days an old man in his own country. Thus he reckoned from the dream. Then as guide he disembarked the slaves from Eretria onto the island of the Styrians called Aigilia, and brought to anchor the ships that had put ashore at Marathon, then marshaled the barbarians who had disembarked onto land. As he was tending to this, he happened to sneeze and cough more violently than usual. Since he was an elderly man, most of his teeth were loose, and he lost one of them by the force of his cough. It fell into the sand and he put great effort into looking for it, but the tooth could not be found. He groaned aloud and said to those standing by him: “This land is not ours and we will not be able to subdue it. My tooth holds whatever share of it was mine.”

108. Hippias supposed that the dream had in this way come true. As the Athenians were marshaled in the sacred space of Herakles, the Plataeans came to help them in full force. The Plataeans had put themselves under the protection of the Athenians, and the Athenians had undergone many labors on their behalf. This is how they did it: When the Plataeans were pressed by the Thebans, they first tried to put themselves under the protection of Kleomenes son of Anaxandrides and the Lacedaemonians, who happened to be there. But they did not accept them, saying, “We live too far away and our help would be cold comfort to you. You could be enslaved many times over before any of us heard about it. We advise you to put yourselves under the protection of the Athenians, since they are your neighbors and men not bad [kakoi] at giving help.” The Lacedaemonians gave this advice not so much out of good will toward the Plataeans as wishing to cause trouble for the Athenians with the Boeotians. So the Lacedaemonians gave this advice to the Plataeans, who did not disobey it. When the Athenians were making sacrifices to the twelve gods, they sat at the altar as suppliants and put themselves under protection. When the Thebans heard this they marched against the Plataeans, but the Athenians came to their aid. As they were about to join battle, the Corinthians, who happened to be there, prevented them and brought about a reconciliation. Both sides appealed to their arbitration, so they fixed the boundaries of the country on condition that the Thebans leave alone those Boeotians who were unwilling to be enrolled as Boeotian. After rendering this decision, the Corinthians departed. The Boeotians attacked the Athenians as they were leaving but were defeated in battle, and the Athenians went beyond the boundaries the Corinthians had made for the Plataeans, fixing the Asopos river as the boundary for the Thebans in the direction of Plataea and Hysiai. So the Plataeans had put themselves under the protection of the Athenians in the aforesaid manner, and now came to help at Marathon.

109. The Athenian generals were of divided opinion, some advising not to fight because they were too few to attack the army of the Medes; others, including Miltiades, advising to fight. Thus they were at odds, and the inferior plan prevailed. An eleventh man had a vote, chosen by lot to be polemarch of Athens, and by ancient custom the Athenians had made his vote of equal weight with the generals. Kallimakhos of Aphidnai was polemarch at this time. Miltiades approached him and said, “Kallimakhos, it is now in your hands to enslave Athens or make it free, and thereby leave behind for all posterity a memorial such as not even Harmodios and Aristogeiton left. Now the Athenians have come to their greatest danger since they first came into being, and, if we surrender, it is clear what we will suffer when handed over to Hippias. But if the polis prevails, it will take first place among Hellenic cities. I will tell you how this can happen, and how the deciding voice on these matters has devolved upon you. The ten generals are of divided opinion, some urging to attack, others urging not to. If we do not attack now, I expect that great strife [stasis] will fall upon and shake the spirit of the Athenians, leading them to

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131 Meaning the Persians, as often in Herodotus.
132 Famous tyrannicides who assassinated Hipparhkos, brother of Hippias.
Medize. But if we attack now, before any corruption befalls the Athenians, we can win the battle, if the
gods are fair. All this concerns and depends on you in this way: if you vote with me, your country will be
free and your polis the first in Hellas. But if you side with those eager to avoid battle, you will have the
opposite to all the good things I enumerated."

110. By saying this Miltiades won over Kallimakhos. The polemarch’s vote was counted in and the
decision to attack was ratified. Thereafter the generals who had voted to fight turned the presidency
over to Miltiades as each one’s day came in turn. He accepted the office but did not make an attack until
it was his own day to preside.

111. When the presidency came round to him, he arrayed the Athenians for battle, with the polemarch
Kallimakhos commanding the right wing, since it was then the Athenian law [nomos] for the polemarch
to hold the right wing. He led, and the other tribes [phulai] were numbered out in succession next to each
other. The Plataeans were marshaled last, holding the left wing. Ever since that battle, when the
Athenians are conducting sacrifices at the festivals every fourth year, the Athenian herald prays for good
things for the Athenians and Plataeans together. As the Athenians were marshaled at Marathon, it
happened that their line of battle was as long as the line of the Medes. The center, where the line was
weakest, was only a few ranks deep, but each wing was strong in numbers.

112. When they had been set in order and the sacrifices were favorable, the Athenians were let go and
charged the barbarians at a run. The space between the armies was no less than eight stadia. The
Persians saw them running to attack and prepared to receive them, thinking the Athenians absolutely
crazy, since they saw how few of them there were and that they ran up so fast without either cavalry or
archers. So the barbarians imagined, but when the Athenians all together fell upon the barbarians they
fought memorably. These are the first Hellenes we know of to employ running against the enemy. They
are also the first to endure looking at Median dress and men wearing it, for up until then just hearing the
name of the Medes caused the Hellenes to panic.

113. They fought a long time in Marathon. In the center of the line the barbarians prevailed, where the
Persians and Sakai were arrayed. The barbarians prevailed there and broke through in pursuit inland,
but on each wing the Athenians and Plataeans prevailed. In victory they let the routed barbarians flee,
and brought the wings together to fight those who had broken through the center. The Athenians
prevailed, then followed the fleeing Persians and struck them down. When they reached the sea they
asked for fire and laid hold of the Persian ships.

114. In this ordeal [ponos] Kallimakhos the polemarch was slain, an agathos man, and of the generals
Stesilaos son of Thrasylaos died. Kyngeiros133 son of Euphorion fell there, his hand cut off with an axe
as he grabbed a ship’s figurehead. Many other famous Athenians also fell there.

115. In this way the Athenians mastered seven ships. The barbarians pushed off with the rest, picked
up the Eretrian slaves from the island where they had left them, and sailed around Sounion hoping to get
to the city before the Athenians. There was an accusation at Athens that they devised this by a plan of
the Alkmaionidai, who were said to have arranged to hold up a shield as a signal once the Persians
were in their ships.

116. They sailed around Sounion, but the Athenians marched back to defend the city as fast as their
feet could carry them and got there ahead of the barbarians. Coming from the sacred space of Herakles in
Marathon, they pitched camp in the sacred space of Herakles in Kynosarges. The barbarians lay at anchor
off Phaleron, the Athenian naval port at that time. After riding anchor there, they sailed their ships back
to Asia.

117. In the battle at Marathon about 6,400 men of the barbarians were killed, and 192 Athenians; that
many fell on each side. The following marvel happened there: an Athenian, Epizelos son of Kouphagoras,

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133 Brother of Aeschylus. Aeschylus himself fought at Marathon.
was fighting as an agathos man in the battle when he was deprived of his sight, though struck or hit nowhere on his body, and from that time on he spent the rest of his life in blindness. I have heard that he tells this story about his experience: he saw opposing him a tall armed man, whose beard overshadowed his shield, but the phantom passed him by and killed the man next to him. I hear that this is the story Epizelos tells.

**Book 7: Artachaees**

In preparation for a second invasion, the Persians, now under Xerxes, dug a canal around Mt. Athos to avoid the storms on its seaward side.

117. While Xerxes was at Akanthos, it happened that Artachaees, overseer of the digging of the canal, fell sick and died. He was highly esteemed by Xerxes and Achaemenid134 in genos. He was the tallest man in Persia, being just four fingers short of five royal cubits, and had the loudest voice on earth. Xerxes was deeply distressed by his death and gave him a magnificent funeral and burial, with the whole army raising a mound over his grave. Because of an oracle, the people of Akanthos sacrifice to Artachaees as a hero, invoking him by name. Thus King Xerxes lamented the death of Artachaees.

**Book 7: Talthybios**

133. Xerxes did not send to Athens and Sparta to demand earth,135 because earlier Darius had sent heralds on this same mission, and when they made the demand, the Athenians threw them into a pit and the Spartans cast them into a well, bidding them carry earth and water to the king from there. Therefore Xerxes did not send men to make the demand. I am unable to say what calamitous event befell the Athenians for treating the heralds this way, unless it was the devastation of their land and polis, but I do not think the treatment of the heralds caused that.

134. But the mēnis of Talthybios, herald of Agamemnon, did fall upon the Lacedaemonians. In Sparta there is a sacred precinct of Talthybios, and descendants of Talthybios called the Talthybiadai, who are granted the office of conducting all embassies from Sparta. Afterwards the Spartans could get no favorable sacrifices, and this went on for a long time. In grief and dismay, the Lacedaemonians held frequent assemblies and issued proclamation for one of the Lacedaemonians to volunteer to die on Sparta’s behalf. Two Spartans of good birth and highest attainment in wealth, Sperthias son of Aneristos and Boulis son of Nikolaos, volunteered to pay the penalty to Xerxes for Darius’ heralds who had been killed in Sparta. So the Spartans sent them away to the Medes to die.

135. The bravery of these men deserves admiration, as do their utterances [epea]. On their way to Susa, the Persian capital, they came to Hydarnes, a Persian by genos and the general of the coastal inhabitants in Asia, who gave them hospitality [xenia] and feasted them. Treating them as guests [xenoi], he asked, “Men of Lacedaemon, why do you avoid being philoi of the king? You can look at me and my affairs and see that the king knows how to give timē to men who are agathoi. If you would just give yourselves to the king, since you are reputed by him to be agathoi, each of you would rule the land of Hellas by the king’s gift.” To this they answered, “The advice you give us is not equally good, since you speak partly from knowledge, partly from ignorance. You know about being a slave, but you have no experience of freedom, even to know if it is sweet or not. If you tried it, you would advise us to fight for it not only with spears, but even with axes.” Thus they answered Hydarnes.

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134 The Achaemenids were the Persian royal family.
135 Earth and water were tokens of submission.
136. They went from there up to Susa. When they had an audience with the king, the bodyguards commanded them to fall on their knees and bow before the king. They tried to use force, but the Spartans said they would never do it, even if they were pushed onto their heads, since it was not their custom [nomos] to bow to a human being and that was not their reason for coming. So they got out of doing that, and then said, “King of the Medes, the Lacedaemonians have sent us to pay the penalty for the heralds who were killed in Sparta.” Xerxes replied magnanimously that he would not be like the Lacedaemonians, who confound the customs of all humanity by killing heralds. He said he would not do what he blamed in others, nor would he free the Lacedaemonians from guilt by killing these two.

137. At first the mēnis of Talthybios relented against the Spartans once they did this, even though Sperthias and Boulis returned home. But long afterwards the Lacedaemonians say that it awoke again during the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians. In my opinion, what most clearly involved divine intervention in the affair is this: as was just [dikaios], the mēnis of Talthybios fell upon messengers and did not abate until it was fulfilled. That it fell upon the sons of those men who went up to the king to appease the mēnis - upon Nikolas son of Boulis and Aneristos son of Sperthias - makes it clear to me that the affair involved divine intervention. Aneristos was the one who landed at Tirynthian Halieis and captured it with the crew of a merchant ship. These two were sent as messengers by the Lacedaemonians to Asia, but at Bisanthe in the Hellespont they were betrayed by Sitalkes son of Teres, king of the Thracians, and by Nymphodoros son of Pytheas, of Abdera. They were taken prisoner and carried away to Attica, where the Athenians executed them, and with them Aristeas son of Adeimantos, a Corinthian. This happened many years after the king’s expedition.136 I now go back to my former narrative.

Book 7: Thetis

In 480 the Persians invaded, coming by land to Thermopylae and by sea to Magnesia, across from the Hellenic fleet at Artemision.

188. The Persian fleet put to sea and reached the beach of the Magnesian land, between the polis of Kasthanaia and the headland of Sepias.137 The first ships to arrive moored close to land, with the others after them at anchor; since the beach was not large, they lay at anchor in rows eight ships deep out into the sea [pontos]. Thus they spent the night, but at dawn out of a clear and windless sky a storm descended upon them and the sea began to boil. A strong east wind blew, which the people living in those parts call Hellespontiēs. Those who felt the wind rising or had proper mooring dragged their ships up on shore ahead of the storm and so survived with their ships. But the wind carried those ships caught out in the open against the rocks called the Ovens at Pelion or onto the beach. Some ships were wrecked on the headland of Sepia, others were cast ashore at the polis of Meliboia or at Kasthanaia. The storm was indeed unbearable.

189. The story is told that because of an oracle the Athenians invoked Boreas, the north wind, to help them, since another oracle told them to summon their son-in-law as an ally. According to the Hellenic story, Boreas had an Attic wife, Oreithyia, the daughter of Erekhtheus, ancient king of Athens. Because of this connection, so the tale goes, the Athenians reckoned Boreas to be their son-in-law. They were stationed off Khalkis in Euboea, and when they saw the storm rising, they then, if they had not already, sacrificed to and called upon Boreas and Oreithyia to help them by destroying the barbarian fleet, just as before at Athos. I cannot say whether this was the cause of Boreas falling upon the barbarians as they lay

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136 In 430, during the Peloponnesian War, 50 years later.
137 Meaning ‘the place of the sepia’. It was here, according to epic tradition, that Peleus and Thetis conceived Achilles.
at anchor, but the Athenians say that he had come to their aid before and that he was the agent this time. When they went home they founded a sacred precinct of Boreas beside the Ilissos river.

190. They say that at the very least no fewer than 400 ships were destroyed in this ordeal [ponos], along with innumerable men and abundant property. This shipwreck proved useful to Ameinokles son of Kretines, a man of Magnesia who owned land around Sepias, for he later picked up many gold and silver cups cast up on shore, found the Persian treasures, and acquired other untold wealth. Although he became very rich from his gleanings, he did not enjoy luck in everything, for even he was grieved by a dreadful calamity when his son was murdered.

191. There was no counting how many grain-ships and other vessels were destroyed. The generals of the fleet were afraid that the Thessalians might attack them now that they were in a bad situation, so they built a high palisade out of the wreckage. The storm lasted three days. Finally the Magi made offerings and cast spells upon the wind, sacrificing also to Thetis and the Nereids. Thus they made the wind stop on the fourth day, or perhaps it died down on its own. They sacrificed to Thetis after hearing from the Ionians the story that it was at this place that Peleus had abducted her, and that all the headland of Sepias belonged to her and to the other Nereids.

192. So on the fourth day the storm ceased. On the second day after the storm began, the scouts stationed on the headlands of Euboea ran down and told the Hellenes all about the shipwreck. After hearing this they prayed to Poseidon as their savior [sōtēr] and poured libations, then hurried to Artemision hoping to find few ships opposing them. So they came a second time to Artemision and made their station there. Ever since then up to the present they are accustomed to call Poseidon their sōtēr.
Thermopylae

Book 7: Thermopylae

201. King Xerxes lay encamped in Trakhis in Malis, and the Hellenes in the pass. This place is called Thermopylae by most of the Hellenes, but by the natives and their neighbors Pylai. Each lay encamped in these places. Xerxes was master of everything to the north from Trakhis, and the Hellenes of all that lay toward the south on the mainland.

202. The Hellenes that awaited the Persians in that place were these: 300 Spartan armed men; 1,000 from Tegea and Mantinea, half from each place; 120 from Orkhomenos in Arcadia and 1,000 from the rest of Arcadia; that many Arcadians, 400 from Corinth, 200 from Phlius, and 80 Mycenaeans. These were the Peloponnesians present; from Boeotia there were 700 Thespians and 400 Thebans.

203. In addition, the Opuntian Locrians had come in full force at the summons, and 1,000 Phocians. The Hellenes had summoned them by messengers who told them that this was only the advance guard, that the rest of the allies were expected any day now, and that the sea was being watched, with the Athenians and Aiginetans and all those enrolled in the fleet on guard. There was nothing for them to be afraid of. The invader of Hellas was not a god but a human being, and there was not, and never would be, any mortal on whom some amount of misery was not bestowed from the start at birth, with the greatest men taking the largest share. The one marching against them was certain to fall from pride, since he was a mortal. When they heard this, the Locrians and Phocians marched to Trakhis to help.

204. Each city had its own general, but the one most admired and the leader of the whole army was a Lacedaemonian, Leonidas son of Anaxandrides son of Leon son of Eurykratides son of Anaxandros son of Eurykrates son of Polydoros son of Alkamenes son of Teleklos son of Arkhelaos son of Hegasilaos son of Doryssos son of Leobotes son of Ekhestratos son of Agis son of Eurysthenes son of Aristodemos son of Aristomakhos son of Kleodaios son of Hyllos son of Herakles. Leonidas had gained the kingship at Sparta unexpectedly.

205. Having two elder brothers, Kleomenes and Dorieus, he had renounced all thought of the kingship, but Kleomenes had died without male offspring, and Dorieus was also no longer alive, having met his end in Sicily. Thus the succession fell to Leonidas, because he was older than Anaxandrides’ youngest son Kleombrotos and had married Kleomenes’ daughter. He now came to Thermopylae with the appointed 300 he had selected, all of whom had sons. He also brought those Thebans whom I counted among the number, whose general was Leontiades son of Eurymakhos. Leonidas took pains to bring only the Thebans among the Hellenes, because they were strongly accused of Medizing. So he summoned them to the war wishing to know whether they would send their men with him or openly refuse the Hellenic alliance. They sent the men but were really on the other side.

206. The Spartans sent these men with Leonidas on ahead so that the rest of the allies would see them and march, instead of Medizing like the others if they learned that the Spartans were delaying. At present the Feast of the Karneia was in their way, but once they had completed the festival, they intended to leave a garrison at Sparta and march out in full force with all speed. The rest of the allies planned to do likewise, for the Olympiad coincided with these events. Thus they sent their advance guard, not expecting the war at Thermopylae to be decided so quickly.

207. So they intended, but the Hellenes at Thermopylae, when the Persians drew near the pass, fearfully took counsel whether to depart. The rest of the Peloponnesians were for returning to the Peloponnese and guarding the isthmus, but the Phocians and Locrians were greatly angered by this

138 ‘The Gates’ - since it served as the entrance into Greece from the north. Thermopylae means ‘the Hot Gates’, from the warm springs there.
counsel. Leonidas voted to remain where they were and send messengers to the cities, bidding them send help, since they were too few to ward off the army of the Medes.

208. While they thus debated, Xerxes sent a mounted scout to see how many there were and what they were doing, for while he was still in Thessaly he had heard that a small army was gathered there and that its leaders were Lacedaemonians, including Leonidas, a Herakleid \(^{139}\) in _genos_. Riding up to the camp, the horseman watched and spied out the place, but he could not see the whole camp, for it was impossible to see those posted inside the wall they had rebuilt and were guarding. He did take note of those outside, whose arms lay in front of the wall, and it chanced that at that time the Lacedaemonians were posted there. He saw some of the men exercising naked and others combing their hair. He marveled at the sight and perceived their numbers. When he had observed it all carefully, he rode back undisturbed, since no one pursued him or paid him any attention at all. So he returned and told Xerxes all that he had seen.

209. When Xerxes heard that, he could not comprehend the reality that the Lacedaemonians were preparing to kill or be killed to the best of their ability. What they did appeared laughable to him, so he sent for Demaretos the son of Ariston, who was in his camp, and when he came asked him about each of these matters, wanting to understand what it was that the Lacedaemonians were doing. Demaretos said, “You have already heard about these men from me, when we were setting out for Hellas. But when you heard, you mocked me, though I told you how I saw these affairs turning out. For it is my greatest aim, O King, to exercise truth in your presence. Hear me now. These men have come to fight us for the pass, and for that they are preparing. This is their custom [nomos]: when they are about to risk their _psukhai_, they carefully arrange their hair. Know that if you overcome these men and those remaining behind at Sparta, there is no other on earth that will raise its hands to withstand you, my King. You are now attacking the fairest kingdom in Hellas and men who are _aristoi_.” What he said seemed completely incredible to Xerxes, so he then asked how they would fight against his army, being so few. Demaretos answered, “My King, take me for a liar if this does not turn out as I say.” So he spoke, but he did not persuade Xerxes.

210. He let four days go by, expecting them to run away at any minute. They did not leave, and it seemed to him that they stayed out of folly and shamelessness. On the fifth day he got angry and sent the Medes and Cissians against them, bidding them take them prisoner and bring them into his presence. The Medes bore down upon the Hellenes and attacked. Many fell, but others attacked in turn, and they were not driven off, though they suffered terrible disaster. They made it clear to everyone, especially to the king himself, that among so many people there were few real men. The battle lasted all day.

211. After the Medes were roughly handled they retired, and the Persians whom the king called Immortals attacked in turn, led by Hydarnes. It was thought that they would easily accomplish the task, but when they joined battle with the Hellenes they fared neither better nor worse than the Median army, since they used shorter spears than the Hellenes and could not use their numbers fighting in a narrow space. The Lacedaemonians fought memorably, showing themselves skilled fighters amidst unskilled on many occasions, as when they would turn their backs and feign flight all together. The barbarians would see them fleeing and give chase with shouting and noise, but when the Lacedaemonians were overtaken they would turn to face the barbarians and overthrow innumerable Persians. A few of the Spartans themselves were also slain. When the Persians could gain no inch of the pass, attacking by companies and in every other fashion, they withdrew.

212. During these assaults in the battle, it is said that the king as he watched jumped up three times from the throne in fear for his army. Thus they contended, and on the next day the barbarians fought no better. They joined battle supposing that their enemies, being so few, were now disabled by wounds and could no longer resist. But the Hellenes stood ordered in ranks by nation and each of them fought in

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\(^{139}\) That is, one of the Herakleidai, descendants of Herakles.
Thermopylae

The king was at a loss how to deal with the present difficulty. Ephialtes son of Eurydemos, a Malian, thinking he would get a great reward from the king, came to speak with him and told him of the path leading over the mountain to Thermopylae. Thus he caused the destruction of the Hellenes remaining there. Later he fled into Thessaly in fear of the Lacedaemonians, and in exile a price was put on his head by the Pylagoroi, when the Amphiktyons assembled at Pylai. Still later he returned from exile to Antikyra and was killed by Athenades, a Trakhinian. Athenades slew Ephialtes for a different reason, which I will tell later in my history, but he was given no less timē by the Lacedaemonians. In this way Ephialtes was later killed.

There is another story told, that Onetes son of Phanagoras, a Karystian, and Korydallos of Antikyra are the ones who gave the king this information and guided the Persians around the mountain, but I find it totally incredible. One must judge by the fact that the Pylagoroi set a price not on Onetes and Korydallos but on Ephialtes the Trakhinian, and I suppose they had exact knowledge. And we know that Ephialtes was banished on this charge. Onetes, though not a Malian, might have known the path if he had often come to that country, but Ephialtes was the one who guided them along the path around the mountain. I write him down as the one who was responsible [aitios].

Xerxes was pleased by what Ephialtes promised to accomplish. He immediately became overjoyed and sent out Hydarnes and the men under Hydarnes’ command, who set forth from the camp at about lamp-lighting time. This path had been discovered by the native Malians, who used it to guide the Thessalians into Phocis when the Phocians had fenced off the pass with a wall and were sheltered from the war. So, long ago, the Malians had discovered that the pass was in no way a good thing.

The path is as follows: It begins at the river Asopos as it flows through the ravine, and this mountain and the path have the same name, Anopaia. This Anopaia stretches along the ridge of the mountain and ends at Alpenos, the Locrian polis nearest to Malis, near the rock called Blackbuttock and the seats of the Kerkopes, where it is narrowest.

Of this nature was the path. The Persians crossed the Asopos and traveled all night along this path, with the Oetaean mountains on their right and the Trakhinian on their left. At dawn they came to the summit of the pass. In this part of the mountain 1,000 armed men of the Phocians were on watch, as I have already shown, defending their own country and guarding the path. The lower pass was held by those I have mentioned, but the Phocians had voluntarily promised Leonidas to guard the path over the mountain.

The Phocians learned in the following way that the Persians had climbed up: They had ascended without the Phocians’ notice because the mountain was entirely covered with oak trees. Though there was no wind, a great noise arose like leaves being trodden underfoot. The Phocians jumped up and began to put on their arms, and in a moment the barbarians were there. When they saw the men arming themselves, they were amazed, for they had supposed that no opposition would appear, but they had now met with an army. Hydarnes feared that the Phocians might be Lacedaemonians and asked Ephialtes what country the army was from. When he learned with certainty, he arrayed the Persians for battle. The Phocians, assailed by thick showers of arrows and supposing that the Persians had set out against them from the start, fled away to the top of the mountain and prepared to be destroyed. So they thought, but the Persians with Ephialtes and Hydarnes paid no attention to the Phocians and went down the mountain as fast as possible.

140 The Amphictyonic League was a religious association of numerous Hellenic states, whose emissaries were called Pylagoroi, since they held their agora at Pylai.
219. The seer [mantis] Megistias, after examining the sacrifices, first told the Hellenes at Thermopylae that death was coming to them with the dawn. Then deserters came who announced the circuit made by the Persians. These gave their reports [sēmainein] while it was still night; a third report came from the watchers running down from the heights when day dawned. The Hellenes then took counsel, but their opinions were divided. Some advised not to leave their post, but others spoke against them. They eventually parted, some taking their departure and dispersing each to their own cities, others preparing to remain there with Leonidas.

220. It is said that Leonidas himself sent them away, concerned lest they be killed, but felt it not fitting for himself and the Spartans to desert that post which they had come to defend at the beginning. But I tend more to believe that when Leonidas perceived that the allies were dispirited and unwilling to run all risks with him, he bade them depart. But it was not good for him to leave: if he remained, he would leave a name of great kleos, and the good fortune [eudaimonia] of Sparta would not be blotted out. When the Spartans had asked the oracle about this war as soon as it first arose, the Pythia prophesied to them that either Lacedaemon would be destroyed by the barbarians or their king would be killed. She gave them this answer in hexameter verse [epea], running as follows:

For you, inhabitants of wide-wayed Sparta, either your great and glorious city must be wasted by Persian men, or if not that, then the bound of Lacedaemon must mourn a dead king, from Herakles' line. The menos of bulls or lions will not restrain him with opposing force, for he has the menos of Zeus. I declare that he will not be restrained until he utterly tears apart one of these.

Considering this and wishing to lay up kleos for the Spartans alone, he sent away the allies rather than have them leave in disorder after divided counsels.

221. Not the least proof I have of this is that Leonidas publicly dismissed the seer who attended the expedition, lest he die with them. This was Megistias the Akarnanian, said to be descended from Melampous, the one who told from the sacrifices what was going to happen to them. He was dismissed but did not leave, instead sending away his only son who was also with the army.

222. Those allies who were dismissed went off in obedience to Leonidas, only the Thespians and Thebans remaining with the Lacedaemonians. The Thebans remained against their will and desire, for Leonidas kept them as hostages. The Thespians very gladly remained, saying they would not abandon Leonidas and those with him by leaving; instead they would stay and die with them. Their general was Demophilos son of Diadromes.

223. Xerxes made libation at sunrise and waited till about mid-morning, then made his assault. Ephialtes had advised this, for the descent from the mountain is more direct and the way is much shorter than the circuit and ascent. Xerxes and his barbarians attacked, but Leonidas and his Hellenes, knowing they were going to their deaths, advanced now much farther than before into the wider part of the pass. In all the previous days they had sallied out into the narrow way and fought there, guarding the defensive wall. But now they joined battle outside the narrows and many of the barbarians fell, for the leaders of the companies beat everyone with whips from behind, urging them ever forward. Many of them were pushed into the sea and drowned; far more were trampled alive by each other, with no regard for who perished. Since the Hellenes knew that they must die at the hands of those who had come around the mountain, they displayed the greatest strength they had against the barbarians, fighting recklessly and desperately.

224. By this time most of them had had their spears broken and were killing the Persians with swords. Leonidas fell in that ordeal [ponos], an aristas man, and with him other famous Spartans, whose names I have learned since they were worthy men. Indeed, I have learned the names of all 300. Many famous Persians also fell there, including two sons of Darius, Abrokomes and Hyperanthes, born to Darius by
Phratagune daughter of Artanes. Artanes was the brother of king Darius, and son of Hystaspes son of Arsames. When he gave his daughter in marriage to Darius, he gave his whole house as dowry, since she was his only child.

225. So two brothers of Xerxes fought and fell there. There was a great struggle between the Persians and Lacedaemonians over Leonidas' body, until the Hellenes by their achievement [aretē] dragged it away and routed their enemies four times. The battle went on until the men with Ephialtes arrived. When the Hellenes saw that they had come, at that point the struggle turned, for they retired back to the narrow part of the way, passed behind the wall, and took their position crowded together on the hill, all except the Thebans. This hill is at the mouth of the pass, where now stands the stone lion in honor of Leonidas. In that place they defended themselves with swords, if they still had them, and with hands and teeth. The barbarians buried them with missiles, some attacking from the front and throwing down the defensive wall, others surrounding them on all sides.

226. Thus were the Lacedaemonians and Thespians, and the Spartan Dienekes is said to have been aristos. They say that he made this saying [epos] before they joined battle with the Medes: He had learned from a Trakhinian that there were so many of the barbarians that when they shot their missiles, the sun was hidden by the multitude of their arrows. He was not at all disturbed by this and made light of the multitude of the Medes, saying that their Trakhinian xenos brought them good news. If the Medes hid the sun, they could fight them in the shade instead of out in the sun. This epos and others like it they say Dienekes the Lacedaemonian left behind as a memorial.

227. Next after him two Lacedaemonian brothers, Alpheus and Maron, sons of Orsiphantos, are said to have been aristoi. The Thespian who gained most renown was one whose name was Dithyrambos son of Harmatides.

228. There is an inscription written over these men, who were buried where they fell, and over those who died before the others went away dismissed by Leonidas. It reads as follows:

Here four thousand from the Peloponnese once fought three million.

That inscription is for them all, but the Spartans have their own:

Xenos, go tell the Spartans that we lie here obedient to their commands.

That one is to the Lacedaemonians, this one to the seer [mantis]:

This is a monument to Megistias who has kleos, slain by the Medes who crossed the Sperkheios river. The mantis well knew his coming doom, but bore not to abandon the leaders of Sparta.

Except for the seer's inscription, the Amphiktyons are the ones who honored them with inscriptions and pillars. That of the seer Megistias was inscribed by Simonides son of Leoprepes for the sake of xenía.

229. It is said that two of these 300, Eurytos and Aristodemos, could have agreed with each other either to come home safe together to Sparta, since Leonidas had dismissed them from the camp and they were lying at Alpenoi very sick of ophthalmia, or to die with the others, if they were unwilling to return home. They could have done either of these things, but they could not agree and had different intentions. When Eurytos learned of the Persians' circuit, he demanded his armor and put it on, then bade his helot lead him to the fighting. The helot led him there and fled away, and he rushed into the fray and was killed.

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141 The premier lyric poet of this era,
142 The Helots were inhabitants of Messenia and Laconia held as serfs by the Spartans.
But Aristodemos lost his *psukhē*¹⁴³ and stayed behind. Now if Aristodemos alone had been sick and returned to Sparta, or if they had they both made the trip, I think the Spartans would have had no *mēnis* against them. But when one of them died, and the other had the same excuse but was unwilling to die, the Spartans had no choice but to have great *mēnis* at Aristodemos.

230. Some say that in this way and by this excuse Aristodemos came home safe to Sparta. Others say that he had been sent out of the camp as a messenger and could have come back in time for the battle but chose not to, staying behind on the road and so surviving, while his fellow-messenger arrived at the battle and was killed.

231. When Aristodemos returned to Lacedaemon, he was disgraced and without *timē*. He was deprived of *timē* in this way: no Spartan would give him fire or speak with him, and they taunted him by calling him Aristodemos the Trembler. But in the battle at Plataea he made up for all the blame brought against him.

232. It is said that another of the 300 survived because he was sent as a messenger to Thessaly. His name was Pantites. Returning to Sparta, he was deprived of *timē* and hanged himself.

233. The Thebans, whose general was Leontiades, fought against the king's army as long as they were with the Hellenes and under compulsion. But when they saw the Persian side prevailing and the Hellenes with Leonidas hurrying toward the hill, they split off and approached the barbarians, holding out their hands. With the most true words ever spoken, they explained that they were Medizers, had been among the first to give earth and water to the king, had come to Thermopylae under constraint, and were guiltless of the harm done to the king. By this plea they saved their lives, and the Thessalians bore witness to their words. But they were not completely lucky. When the barbarians got hold of them as they approached, they even killed some of them as they drew near. Most of them were branded by Xerxes' command with the king's markings, starting with the general Leontiades. His son Eurymakhos long afterwards was murdered by the Plataeans when, as general of 400 Thebans, he seized the city of Plataea. Thus fought the Hellenes at Thermopylae.

**Book 8: Phylakos and Autonoos**

*After their victory at Thermopylae, all central Hellas lay open to the Persians.*

36. When the people of Delphi heard of the barbarians' approach, they fell into great terror. In their fear they asked the oracle about the sacred [hierai] property, if they should bury it underground or carry it away to another country. The god forbade them to move it, saying that he was able to guard his own. When the Delphians heard this, they then took thought for themselves. They sent their children and women across to Akhaia, while most of the men climbed up to the peaks of Parnassos and carried their goods up to the Korykian cave, and others retired to Amphissa in Locris. All the Delphians abandoned the city except for 60 men and the minister of the oracle.

37. When the barbarians came near in their approach and saw the sacred precinct from afar, the minister of the oracle, whose name was Akeratos, saw that the sacred weapons, which are unholy for any man to touch, had been carried out of the hall and placed in front of the temple, so he went to tell the Delphians who were there about this portent. When the barbarians in their haste had come to a spot near the sacred precinct of Athena Pronaia, they received portents even greater than the one before. It is a very great marvel that weapons of war should by themselves appear lying outside in front of the temple, but what happened next is the most marvelous of all portents ever. When the barbarians came near the

¹⁴³ That is, he lost his nerve.
sacred precinct of Athena Pronaia, thunderbolts fell upon them from heaven, two peaks broke off Parnassos and rushed at them with a terrible noise, hitting many of them, and a shout and war-cry came from the sacred precinct of Pronaia.

38. When all this happened at once, panic fell upon the barbarians. The Delphians saw them fleeing and came down in pursuit, killing quite a number of them. The survivors fled straight to Boeotia, and I have learned that the barbarians who got home said they saw still other divine occurrences: two armed men, larger than human, followed in pursuit, killing them.

39. The Delphians say that these two are native heroes, Phylakos\textsuperscript{144} and Autonoos\textsuperscript{145}. Their areas are near the sacred precinct, that of Phylakos right by the road above the sacred precinct of Athena Pronaia, that of Autonoos near the spring Kastalia, under the peak of Hyampeia. The rocks that fell from Parnassos were still there in my day, lying in the sacred precinct of Athena Pronaia, where they crashed down upon the barbarians. This was the departure of those men from the sacred precinct.

\textsuperscript{144} Literally, 'Guardian'.

\textsuperscript{145} Literally, 'He who has his own noos'.
40. At the request of the Athenians, the fleet of the Hellenes came from Artemision and put in at Salamis. The Athenians requested them to put in at Salamis so that they could bring their children and women out of Attica and also take counsel what they should do. They had been disappointed in their plans, so they were going to hold a council about the current state of affairs. They expected to find the full forces of the Peloponnesians in Boeotia awaiting the barbarian, but they found no such thing. They learned that they were fortifying the Isthmus instead and considered the defense of the Peloponnesian the most important thing, disregarding all the rest. When the Athenians learned this, they asked the fleet to put in at Salamis.

41. While the others put in at Salamis, the Athenians landed in their own country. When they arrived they made a proclamation that every Athenian should save his children and servants as he best could. Thereupon most of them sent their households to Trozen, and some to Aigina and Salamis. They were anxious to get everything out safely because they wished to obey the oracle, and also not least because of this: The Athenians say that a great snake lives in the sacred precinct guarding the acropolis. They say this and even put out monthly offerings for it as if it really existed. The monthly offering is a honey-cake. In all the time before this the honey-cake had been consumed, but this time it was untouched. When the priestess indicated [sēmaineîn] this, the Athenians were all the more eager to abandon the polis, since the goddess had deserted the acropolis. When they had removed everything to safety they returned to the camp.

42. When those from Artemision had put in at Salamis, the rest of the Hellenic fleet learned of this and streamed in from Trozen, for they had been commanded to assemble at Pogon, the harbor of Trozen. Many more ships assembled now than had fought at Artemision, and from more cities. The admiral was the same as at Artemision, Eurybiades son of Eurykleides, a Spartan but not of royal family. The ships provided by the Athenians were by far the most numerous and the most seaworthy.

43. The following took part in the war: From the Peloponnese, the Lacedaemonians provided 16 ships; the Corinthians the same number as at Artemision; the Sikyonians furnished 15 ships, the Epidaurians 10, the Trozenians 5, the Hermioneans 3. All of these except the Hermioneans are Dorian and Macedonian and had last come from Erineos and Pindos and the Dryopian region. The Hermioneans are Dryopians, driven out of the country now called Doris by Herakles and the Malians.

44. These were the Peloponnesians who took part in the war. From the mainland outside the Peloponnesian came the following: The Athenians provided more than all the rest, 180 ships, alone, since the Plataeans did not fight with the Athenians at Salamis for this reason: when the Hellenes departed from Artemision and were off Khalkis, the Plataeans landed on the opposite shore of Boeotia and attended to the removal of their households, and in bringing these to safety they were left behind. The Athenians, while the Pelasgians ruled what is now called Hellas, had been Pelasgians, bearing the name of Kranaoi. When Kekrops was their king they were called Kekropidai, and when Erekhtheus succeeded to the rule they changed their name and became Athenians, but when Ion son of Xouthos was commander of the Athenian army they were called after him Ionians.

45. The Megarians provided the same number as at Artemision. The Ambraciots came to help with 7 ships, and the Leucadians, who are Dorians from Corinth, with 3.

146 The Isthmus of Corinth is the narrow strip of land that connects the Peloponnesian with mainland Greece. Thus the Peloponnesian is almost an island, and its name means ‘the island [nēsos] of Pelops’.
147 It was common in local Greek religious practice to conceptualize the spirit of the dead hero as a snake.
46. Of the islanders, the Aiginetans provided 30 ships. They had other manned ships, but they guarded their own land with these and fought at Salamis with the 30 most seaworthy. The Aiginetans are Dorians from Epidaurus and their island was formerly called Oinone. After the Aiginetans came the Khalkidians with the 20 ships from Artemision, and the Eretrians with the same 7; these are Ionians. Next were the Keians, Ionians from Athens, with the same ships as before. The Naxians provided 4 ships. They had been sent by their fellow citizens to the Persians, like the rest of the islanders, but they disregarded their orders and came to the Hellenes at the urging of Demokritos, an esteemed man among the townsmen and at that time captain of a trireme. The Naxians are Ionians descended from Athens. The Styrians provided the same number of ships as at Artemision, and the Kythnians one trireme and a 50-oared boat; these are both Dryopians. The Seriphians and Siphnians and Melians also took part, since they were the only islanders who had not given earth and water to the barbarian.

47. All these people who live this side of Thesprotia and the Acheron river took part in the war. The Thesprotians border on the Ambraciots and Leucadians, who were the ones who came from the most distant countries to take part in the war. The only ones living beyond these to help Hellas in its danger were the Krotonians, with one ship. Its captain was Phayllos, three times victor in the Pythian games. The Krotonians are Achaeans by gens.

48. All of these came to the war providing triremes, except the Melians and Siphnians and Seriphians, who brought fifty-oared boats. The Melians, from Lacedaemon by gens, provided two; the Siphnians and Seriphians, who are Ionians from Athens, one each. The total number of ships, besides the fifty-oared boats, was 378.

49. When the generals from the aforementioned cities met at Salamis, they held a council and Eurybiades proposed that whoever wanted should give his opinion on what place under their control was most suitable for a sea battle. Attica was already lost, and he proposed they consider the places that were left. The consensus of most of the speakers was to sail to the Isthmus and fight at sea for the Peloponnese, giving this reason: if they were defeated in the fight at Salamis they would be besieged on an island, where no help could come to them, but if they were at the Isthmus they could get ashore to their own lands.

50. While the generals from the Peloponnese considered this argument, an Athenian came with the message that the barbarian had reached Attica and it was all laid waste by fire. The army with Xerxes had made its way through Boeotia and burned the polis of the Thespians, who had abandoned it and gone to the Peloponnese, and Plataea likewise. Now they had come to Athens and were devastating everything there. They burnt Thespiae and Plataea because they learned from the Thebans that they had not Medized.

51. Since the crossing of the Hellespont, where the barbarians began their journey, they had spent one month there crossing into Europe and in three more months were in Attica, when Kalliades was archon at Athens. When they took the city it was deserted, but in the sacred precinct they found a few Athenians, stewards of the sacred precinct and poor people, who defended themselves against the assault by fencing the acropolis with doors and logs. They had not withdrawn to Salamis out of poverty, but also because they thought they had found out the meaning of the oracle the Pythia had given, that the wooden wall would be impregnable. They believed that according to the oracle this, not the ships, was the refuge.

52. The Persians took up a position on the hill opposite the acropolis, which the Athenians call the Areopagus, and besieged them in this way: they wrapped arrows in tow and set them on fire, then shot them at the barricade. Still the besieged Athenians defended themselves, although they had come to extreme misery and their barricade had failed them. When the Peisistratidai proposed terms of

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148 Kroton was a Hellenic polis in Italy. Cf. Herodotus 5.47 on Philippos.
surrender they would not listen, but contrived defenses such as rolling down boulders onto the barbarians when they came near the gates. For a long time Xerxes was at a loss, unable to capture them.

53. But in time a way out of their difficulties was revealed to the barbarians, since by the oracle all the mainland of Attica had to become subject to the Persians. In front of the acropolis, and behind the gates and the ascent, was a place where no one was on guard, since no one thought any man could get up that way. But here some men climbed up, near the sacred precinct of Kekrops’ daughter Aglauros, though the place was a sheer cliff. When the Athenians saw that they had ascended to the acropolis, some threw themselves off the wall and were killed, and others fled into the chamber. The Persians who had come up first turned to the gates, got them open, and murdered the suppliants. When all had been laid low, they plundered the sacred precinct and set fire to the entire acropolis.

54. Thus Xerxes took complete possession of Athens, and he sent a horseman to Susa to announce his present success to Artabanos. On the day after the messenger was sent, he called together the Athenian exiles who accompanied him and bade them go up to the acropolis and perform sacrifices in their own way. He gave this order after having a dream, or because he felt remorse after burning the sacred precinct. The Athenian exiles did as they were commanded.

55. I will tell why I have mentioned this. In that acropolis is a shrine of Erekhtheus, called the “Earthborn,” and in the shrine are an olive tree and a pool of salt water.149 The story among the Athenians is that they were set there by Poseidon and Athena as tokens when they contended for the land. It befell the olive tree to be burned by the barbarians with the rest of the sacred precinct, but on the day after its burning, when the Athenians bidden by the king to sacrifice went up to the sacred precinct, they saw a shoot of about a cubit’s length sprung from the stump, and they reported this.150

56. When these happenings concerning the Athenian acropolis were announced to the Hellenes at Salamis, some of the Peloponnesian generals became so alarmed that they did not even wait for the proposed matter to be decided, but jumped into their ships and hoisted their sails for flight. Those left behind resolved that the fleet should fight for the Isthmus. Night fell and they dissolved the assembly and boarded their ships.

57. When Themistokles returned to his ship, Mnesiphilos, an Athenian, asked him what had been decided. Learning from him that they had resolved to sail to the Isthmus and fight for the Peloponnese, he said, “If they put out from Salamis, you will no longer be fighting for one country. Each will make his way to his own polis, and neither Eurybiades nor any other man will be able to keep them from disbanding the army. Hellas will be destroyed by bad planning. If there is any way at all that you could persuade Eurybiades to change his decision and remain here, go try to undo this resolution.”

58. This advice greatly pleased Themistokles. He made no answer and went to the ship of Eurybiades. When he got there he said he wanted to talk with him on a matter of common interest, so Eurybiades bade him come aboard and say what he wanted. Themistokles sat next to him and told him all that he had heard from Mnesiphilos, pretending it was his own idea and adding a lot. Finally by his entreaty he persuaded him to disembark and gather the generals for a council of war.

59. When they were assembled, before Eurybiades had a chance to put forward the reason he had called the generals together, Themistokles argued vehemently since his request was so earnest. While he was speaking, the Corinthian general Adeimantos son of Okytos said, “Themistokles, at the agônes those

149 The hero Erekhtheus, mentioned in Iliad II 547, was worshipped as the proto-Athenian by the Athenians.
150 More on Erekhtheus in Nagy, Best of the Achaeans, pp. 182-183. The verb anatrekhein ‘spring up’, applied here to the shoot of olive, is the same verb applied in Iliad XVIII 56 / 437 to the sudden growth-spurt of Achilles.
who start before the signal are beaten with rods.” Themistokles said in justification, “Those left behind win no crown.”

60. Thus he answered the Corinthian mildly. He then said to Eurybiades nothing of what he had said before, how if they put out from Salamis they would flee different ways, for it would not be fit for him to accuse the allies in their presence. Instead he relied on a different argument and said, “It is in your hands to save Hellas, if you will obey me and remain here to fight, and not obey the words of these others and move your ships back to the Isthmus. Compare each plan after you have heard. If you join battle at the Isthmus, you will fight in the open sea where it is least to our advantage, since our ships are heavier and fewer in number. You will also lose Salamis and Megara and Aigina, even if we succeed in all else. Their land army will accompany their fleet, and so you will lead them to the Peloponnese and risk all Hellas. But if you do what I say, you will find it useful in these ways: First, by engaging many ships with our few in the strait, we shall win a great victory, if the war turn out reasonably, for it is to our advantage to fight in a strait and to their advantage to fight in a wide area. Second, Salamis will survive, where we have carried our children and women to safety. It also has in it something you are very fond of: by remaining here you will be fighting for the Peloponnese just as much as at the Isthmus, and you will not lead them to the Peloponnese, if you are sensible. If what I expect happens and we win the victory with our ships, you will not have the barbarians upon you at the Isthmus. They will advance no further than Attica and depart in disorder, and we shall profit by the survival of Megara and Aigina and Salamis, where it is prophesied that we will prevail against our enemies. Men usually succeed when they have reasonable plans. They do not if their plans are unreasonable, and the god does not assent to human intentions.”

61. As Themistokles said this, Adeimantos the Corinthian attacked him again, advising that a man without a country should keep quiet and that Eurybiades should not ask the vote of a man without a polis. He advised Themistokles to contribute his opinion when he provided a polis, attacking him in this way because Athens was captured and occupied. This time Themistokles spoke many bad words against him and the Corinthians, declaring that so long as they had 200 manned ships the Athenians had both a polis and a land greater than theirs, and that none of the Hellenes could repel them if they attacked.

62. He declared this and turned his argument to Eurybiades, saying more vehemently than before, “If you remain here, by staying you will be an agathos man. If not, you will ruin Hellas. All our strength for war is in our ships, so listen to me. If you do not do this, we will immediately gather up our households and travel to Siris in Italy, which has been ours since ancient times, and the prophecies say we must found a colony there. You will remember these words when you are without such allies.”

63. When Themistokles said this, Eurybiades changed his mind. I think he did so chiefly out of fear that the Athenians might desert them if they set sail for the Isthmus. If the Athenians left, the rest would be no match for the enemy, so he made the choice to remain there and fight.

64. After this skirmish of pronouncements, since Eurybiades had so resolved, the men at Salamis prepared to fight where they were. At sunrise on the next day there was an earthquake on land and sea, and they resolved to pray to the gods and summon the Aiakidai as allies.\footnote{Aiakidai = ‘descendants of Aiakos’; the hero Aiakos was considered by the people of Aigina to be the ancestor of the human race in Aigina. See the notes on Pindar, Pythian 8. Two of Aiakos’ sons were Telamon and Peleus. Telamon was father of Aias=Ajax, Peleus was father of Achilles. Ajax and Telamon were worshipped by the people of Salamis as their local heroes. Aiakos was not only the stylized ancestor of the population of Aigina (by way of being considered the ancestor of the elite of the polis, who presumably claimed to represent the whole population): he was also the “real” ancestor of some of the greatest epic heroes of Homeric poetry.} When they had so resolved, they did as follows: they prayed to all the gods, called Ajax and Telamon to come straight from Salamis, and sent a ship to Aigina for Aiakos and the other Aiakidai.

151
65. Dikaios son of Theokides, an Athenian exile who had become important among the Medes, said that at the time when the land of Attica was being laid waste by Xerxes’ army and there were no Athenians in the country, he was with Demaretos the Lacedaemonian on the Thriasian plain and saw advancing from Eleusis a cloud of dust as if raised by the feet of about 30,000 men. They marveled at what men might be raising such a cloud of dust and immediately heard a cry. The cry seemed to be the “iacchus” of the mysteries, and when Demaretos, ignorant of the rites of Eleusis, asked him what was making this sound, Dikaios said, “Demaretos, there is no way that some great disaster will not befall the king’s army. Since Attica is deserted, it is obvious that this voice is divine and comes from Eleusis to help the Athenians and their allies. If it descends upon the Peloponnese, the king himself and his army on the mainland will be endangered. But if it turns towards the ships at Salamis, the king will be in danger of losing his fleet. Every year the Athenians observe this festival for the Mother and the Maiden, and any Athenian or other Hellene who wishes is initiated. The voice which you hear is the ‘iacchus’ they cry at this festival.”

To this Demaretos replied, “Keep silent and tell this to no one else. If these words of yours are reported to the king, you will lose your head, and neither I nor any other man will be able to save you, so hold your peace. The gods will see to the army.” Thus he advised, and after the dust and the cry came a cloud, which rose aloft and floated away towards Salamis to the camp of the Hellenes. In this way they understood that Xerxes’ fleet was going to be destroyed. Dikaios son of Theokides used to say this, appealing to Demaretos and others as witnesses.

66. When those stationed with Xerxes’ fleet had been to see the Laconian disaster at Thermopylae, they crossed over from Trakhis to Histiaia, waited three days, and then sailed through the Euripos, and in three more days they were at Phaleron, the port of Athens. I think no less a number invaded Athens by land and sea than came to Sepias and Thermopylae. Those killed by the storm, at Thermopylae, and in the naval battles at Artemision, I offset with those who did not yet follow the king: the Melians and Dorians and Locrians and the whole force of Boeotia except the Thespians and Plataeans; and the Karystians and Andrians and Tenians and all the rest of the islanders, except the five cities whose names I previously mentioned. The farther into Hellas the Persian advanced, the more nations followed him.

67. All these came to Athens except the Parians. The Parians stayed behind in Kythnos watching to see which way the war turned out. When the rest of them reached Phaleron, Xerxes himself went down to the ships, wishing to mix with the sailors and hear their opinions. He came and sat on his throne, and present at his summons were the despots of all the nations and the company leaders from the fleet. They sat according to the timē the king had granted each of them, first the king of Sidon, then the king of Tyre, then the rest. When they sat in order one after another, Xerxes sent Mardonios to test each by asking if they should fight at sea.

68. Mardonios went about questioning them, starting with the Sidonian, and all the others were unanimous, advising to fight at sea, but Artemisia said, “Tell the king, Mardonios, that I, who neither was most cowardly in the sea battles of Euboea nor performed the least feats of arms, say this: ‘Master, it is right for me to declare my real opinion, what I think to be best for your cause. And I say to you this: Spare your ships, and do not fight at sea. Their men are as much stronger than your men by sea as men are stronger than women. Why is it so necessary for you to risk everything by fighting at sea? Do you not possess Athens, for which you set out on this march, and do you not have the rest of Hellas? No

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152 Demeter and Persephone.
153 Iakkhos (iacchus) is the cult name of Dionysus in the context of the festival for the Mother and the Maiden.
154 In this narrative, Herodotus makes use of the fact that the name of Dikaios happens to mean ‘man of dikē’.
155 Queen of the Carians, ruler of Halicarnassus. Her name happens to mean: ‘the woman of Artemis’.
one stands in your way. Those who opposed you have got what they deserved. I will tell you how I think the affairs of your enemies will turn out: If you do not hurry to fight at sea, but keep your ships here and stay near land, or even advance into the Peloponnese, then, my lord, you will easily accomplish what you intended when you came here. The Hellenes are not able to hold out against you for a long time, but you will scatter them, and they will each flee to their own cities. I have learned that they have no food on this island, and it is not likely, if you lead your army against the Peloponnese, that those of them who have come from there will sit still, nor will they care to fight at sea for Athens. But if you hurry to fight at sea immediately, I fear that your fleet if worsted may also injure your army on land. In addition, my King, take this to heart: Good people’s slaves tend to be kakoi, and the slaves of kakoi tend to be good. You, who are aristos among men, have kakoi slaves, who are accounted your allies, the Egyptians and Cyprians and Cilicians and Pamphylians, who are of no use at all.”

69. When she said this to Mardonios, all who were well-disposed toward Artemisia lamented her words, thinking she would suffer some evil from the king because she advised against fighting at sea. Those who were jealous and envied her, because she was given timē among the chief of all the allies, were glad at her answer, thinking she would be killed. But when the counsels were reported to Xerxes, he was greatly pleased by Artemisia’s opinion. Even before this he had considered her of excellent character, and now he praised her much more highly. Still he ordered that the majority be obeyed, for he believed that at Euboea they had purposely fought as kakoi because he was not there. This time he had made preparations to see the battle in person.

70. When the command to put out to sea was given, they set sail for Salamis and were marshaled in line at leisure. There was not enough daylight left for them to fight, since night came on, so they made preparations for the next day. Fear and dread possessed the Hellenes, especially those from the Peloponnese. They were afraid because they were stationed in Salamis and were about to fight at sea on behalf of the land of the Athenians, and if they were defeated they would be trapped on an island and besieged, leaving their own land unguarded.

71. That very night the land army of the barbarians began marching to the Peloponnese. Yet every possible device had been used to prevent the barbarians from invading by the mainland. As soon as the Peloponnnesians learned that Leonidas and his men at Thermopylae were dead, they ran together from their cities and took up their position at the Isthmus. Their general was Kleombrotos son of Anaxandrides, the brother of Leonidas. When they were in position at the Isthmus, they demolished the Skironian road and then, after resolving in council, built a wall across the Isthmus. Since there were many tens of thousands and everyone worked, the task was completed, as they brought in stones and bricks and logs and baskets full of sand. At no moment of the day or night did those who had marched out there rest from their work.

72. These were the Hellenes who marched out in full force to the Peloponnese. Yet every possible device had been used to prevent the barbarians from invading by the mainland. As soon as the Peloponnnesians learned that Leonidas and his men at Thermopylae were dead, they ran together from their cities and took up their position at the Isthmus. Their general was Kleombrotos son of Anaxandrides, the brother of Leonidas. When they were in position at the Isthmus, they demolished the Skironian road and then, after resolving in council, built a wall across the Isthmus. Since there were many tens of thousands and everyone worked, the task was completed, as they brought in stones and bricks and logs and baskets full of sand. At no moment of the day or night did those who had marched out there rest from their work.

73. Seven nations inhabit the Peloponnese. Two of these are aboriginal and are now settled in the land where they lived in the old days, the Arcadians and the Kynourians. One nation, the Achaean, has never left the Peloponnese, but it has left its own country and inhabits another nation’s land. The four remaining nations of the seven are immigrants, the Dorians and Aetolians and Dryopians and Lemnians. The Dorians have many famous cities, the Aetolians only Elis, the Dryopians Hermione and Asine near Laconian Kardamyle, the Lemnians all the Paroreatai. The Kynourians are aboriginal and seem to be the only Ionians, but they have been Dorianized by time and by Argive rule. They are the Orneatai and the
perioikoi. All the remaining cities of these seven nations, except those I enumerated, stayed neutral. If I may speak freely, by staying neutral they Medized.

74. Those at the Isthmus were involved in so great a labor [ponos], since all they had was at stake and they did not expect the ships to win distinction. Those at Salamis heard of their labors but still were full of dread, fearing not for themselves but for the Peloponnese. For a time each man talked quietly to his neighbor, wondering at Eurybiades' folly, but finally it came out into the open. They held an assembly and talked at length on the same matters as before: some said they must sail away to the Peloponnese and risk battle for that country, not stay and fight for a captured land; but the Athenians and Aiginetans and Megarians said they must stay and defend themselves.

75. When the Peloponnesians were outvoting him, Themistokles secretly left the assembly, then sent a man by boat to the Median fleet after ordering him what to say. His name was Sikinnos, and he was Themistokles' servant and his sons' attendant. Later Themistokles enrolled him as a Thespian, when the Thespians were adopting citizens, and made him albios with wealth. He now came by boat and said to the generals of the barbarians, “The Athenian general has sent me without the knowledge of the other Hellenes. He is on the king's side and prefers that your affairs prevail, not the Hellenes’. I am to tell you that the Hellenes are terrified and plan flight, and you can now perform the finest deed of all if you do not allow them to escape. They are not of one mind and they will no longer oppose you. Instead you will see them fighting against themselves, those who are on your side against those who are not.” After indicating [sēmainein] this, he departed.

76. When they found the message credible, they first landed many of the Persians on the islet of Psyttalea, which lies between Salamis and the mainland. When it was midnight they brought their western wing in a circle towards Salamis, and those stationed at Keos and Kynosoura also put out to sea, occupying all the passage as far as Mounikhia with their ships. They launched their ships in this way so that the Hellenes would have no escape: they would be trapped at Salamis and pay the penalty for the battles at Artemision. The purpose of their landing Persians on the islet called Psyttalea was this: When the battle took place, it was chiefly there that the men and wrecks would be washed ashore, for the island lay in the path of the impending battle. The Persians would be able to save some of those who washed up and kill the others. They did this in silence lest their enemies hear, making their preparations at night without sleep.

77. I cannot say against oracles that they are not [alethēs], and I do not wish to try to discredit them when they speak plainly. Consider the following:

When they bridge the sacred [hieros] headland of golden-sworded Artemis and Kynosoura by the sea, after sacking shiny Athens in mad hope, divine dikē will extinguish mighty Koros, the son of Hubris, lusting terribly, thinking to devour all. Bronze will come together with bronze, and Ares will redden the sea [pontos] with blood. Then far-seeing Zeus and august Victory [Nike] will bring to Hellas the day of freedom.

Considering this, I dare to say nothing against Bakis concerning oracles when he speaks so plainly, nor will I consent to it by others.157

78. Among the generals at Salamis there was fierce argument. They did not yet know that the barbarians had encircled them with their ships, supposing them still marshaled in the place where they had seen them by day.

156 The perioikoi, ‘neighbors [of Sparta]’, were free inhabitants of Laconia, higher in status than the Helots, but lower than the Spartans themselves.

157 Bakis was the personification of a distinguished oracle.
79. As the generals disputed, Aristides son of Lysimakhos, an Athenian, crossed over from Aigina. Although he had been ostracized by the community [dēmos], as I learn of his character I have come to believe that he was the aristos and most dikaios man in Athens. This man stood at the assembly and called Themistokles out, although he was no philos of his, but his bitter enemy [ekhthros]. Because of the magnitude of the present evils, he deliberately forgot all that and called him out, wanting to talk to him. He had already heard that those from the Peloponnese were anxious to set sail for the Isthmus, so when Themistokles came out, Aristides said: “On all occasions and especially now our feud [stasis] must be over which of us will do our country more good deeds. I say that it is all the same for the Peloponnesians to speak much or little about sailing away from here, for I have seen with my own eyes that even if the Corinthians and Eurybiades himself wanted to, they would not be able to get out. We are encircled by the enemy. Go in and indicate [sēmainein] this to them.”

80. Themistokles answered, “Your exhortation is most useful and you bring good news. You have come as an eyewitness of just what I wanted to happen. Know that I am the cause of what the Medes are doing. When the Hellenes would not willingly enter battle, it was necessary to force them against their will. Since you have come bringing good news, announce it to them yourself. If I say these things, they will think I made it up and they will not believe that the barbarians are doing this. Go in yourself and indicate [sēmainein] how it stands. It would be best if they believe you when you tell [sēmainein] them, but if they find these things incredible it is all the same to us. They will not be able to run away, if indeed we are surrounded on all sides as you say.”

81. Aristides went in and told them, saying that he had come from Aigina and had barely got by the blockade when he sailed out, since all the Hellenic camp was surrounded by Xerxes’ ships. He advised them to prepare to defend themselves. He said this and left, and again a dispute arose among them. The majority of the generals did not believe the news.

82. While they were still held by disbelief, a trireme of Tenian deserters arrived, captained by Panaitios son of Sosimenes, which brought them the whole truth. For this deed the Tenians were engraved on the tripod at Delphi with those who had conquered the barbarian. With this ship that deserted at Salamis and the Lemnian which deserted earlier at Artemision, the Hellenic fleet reached its full number of 380 ships, for it had fallen short of the number by two ships.

83. When they found the words of the Tenians worthy of belief, the Hellenes prepared to fight at sea. As dawn glimmered they held an assembly of the fighting men, and Themistokles gave the best address among the others. His words [epea] all involved comparing the better and lesser elements in human nature and the human condition. He wrapped up his speech by advising them to choose the better of these, then gave the command to mount the ships. Just as they embarked, the trireme which had gone after the Aiakidai arrived from Aigina. Then the Hellenes set sail with all their ships, and as they were putting out to sea the barbarians immediately attacked them.

84. The rest of the Hellenes began to back water and tried to beach their ships, but Ameinias of Pallene, an Athenian, charged and rammed a ship. When his ship became entangled and could not get free, the others came to help Ameinias and joined battle. The Athenians say that the fighting at sea began this way, but the Aiginetans say that the ship which had been sent to Aigina after the Aiakidai was the one that started it. The story is also told that the phantom of a woman appeared to them, who cried commands loud enough for all the Hellenic fleet to hear, reproaching them first with, “Men possessed [daimonioi], how long will you still be backing water?”

85. The Phoenicians were marshaled against the Athenians, holding the western wing toward Eleusis. Against the Lacedaemonians were the Ionians, on the eastern wing toward Piraeus, and a few of them fought as kakoi according to Themistokles’ instructions, but the majority did not. I can list the names of many captains who captured Hellenic ships, but I will mention none except Theomestor son of Androdamas and Phylakos son of Histiaios, both Samians. I mention only these because Theomestor was
appointed despot of Samos by the Persians for this feat, and Phylakos was recorded as a benefactor of the king and granted much land. The king’s benefactors are called “orosangai” in the Persian language.

86. Thus it was concerning them. But the majority of the ships at Salamis were sunk, some destroyed by the Athenians, some by the Aiginetans. Since the Hellenes fought in order by line, but the barbarians were no longer in position and did nothing sensibly, it was likely to turn out as it did. Yet they were agathoi that day, much more agathoi than they had been at Euboea, for they all showed zeal out of fear of Xerxes, each one thinking that the king was watching him.

87. I cannot say exactly how each of the other barbarians or Hellenes fought, but this is what happened to Artemisia, and it gave her still higher esteem with the king: When the king’s side was all in commotion, at that time Artemisia’s ship was pursued by a ship of Attica. She could not escape, for other friendly ships were in front of her and hers was the nearest to the enemy. So she resolved to do something which did in fact benefit her: as she was pursued by the Attic ship, she charged and rammed a friendly ship, with a Kalyndian crew and Damasithumos himself, king of the Kalyndians, aboard. I cannot say if she had some quarrel with him while they were still at the Hellespont, or whether she did this on purpose or if the ship of the Kalyndians fell in her path by chance. But when she rammed and sank it, she had the luck of doing herself two good deeds: When the captain of the Attic ship saw her ram a ship with a barbarian crew, he decided that Artemisia’s ship was either Hellenic or a deserter from the barbarians fighting for them, so he turned away to deal with others.

88. Thus she happened to escape and not be destroyed, and it also turned out that the evil thing which she had done won her exceptional esteem from Xerxes. It is said that the king, as he watched the battle, saw her ship ram the other, and one of the bystanders said, “Master, do you see how well Artemisia contends in the agôn, and how she has sunk an enemy ship?” When he asked if the deed was truly Artemisia’s, they affirmed it, knowing reliably the insignia [sêma] of her ship, and they supposed that the ruined ship was an enemy. As I have said, all this happened to bring her luck, and also that no one from the Kalyndian ship survived to accuse her. It is said that Xerxes replied to what was told him, “My men have become women, and my women men.” They say this is what Xerxes said.

89. In this ordeal [ponos] the general Ariabignes died, son of Darius and the brother of Xerxes. Many other famous men of the Persians and Medes and other allies also died, but only a few Hellenes, since they knew how to swim. Those whose ships were sunk swam across to Salamis, unless they were killed in action, but many of the barbarians drowned in the sea since they did not know how to swim. Most of the ships were sunk when those in the front turned to flee, since those marshaled in the rear, as they tried to get forward with their ships so they too could display some feat to the king, ran afoul of their own side’s ships in flight.

90. It also happened in this commotion that certain Phoenicians whose ships had been destroyed came to the king and accused the Ionians of treason, saying that it was by their doing that the ships had been lost. It turned out that the Ionian generals were not put to death, and those Phoenicians who slandered them were rewarded as I will show. While they were still speaking, a Samothracian ship rammed an Attic ship. The Attic ship sank and an Aiginetan ship bore down and sank the Samothracian ship, but the Samothracians, being javelin-throwers, by pelting them with missiles knocked the fighters off the ship that had sunk theirs and boarded and seized it. This saved the Ionians. When Xerxes saw them performing this great feat, he turned to the Phoenicians and commanded that their heads be cut off, so that men who were kakoi might not slander those more agathoi. In his deep vexation he blamed everyone. Whenever Xerxes, as he sat beneath the mountain opposite Salamis which is called Aigaleos, saw one of his own men achieve some feat in the battle, he inquired who did it, and his scribes wrote down the captain’s name with his father and polis. The presence of Ariarrames, a Persian and a philos of the Ionians, contributed still more to this disaster of the Phoenicians.

91. Thus they dealt with the Phoenicians. The barbarians were routed and tried to flee by sailing out to Phaleron, but the Aiginetans lay in wait for them in the strait and then performed deeds worth telling.
The Athenians in the commotion destroyed those ships who either resisted or tried to flee, the Aiginetans those sailing out of the strait. Whoever escaped from the Athenians charged right into the Aiginetans.

92. The ships of Themistokles, as he was pursuing a ship, and of Polykritos son of Krios, an Aiginetan, then met. Polykritos had rammed a Sidonian ship, the one which had captured the Aiginetan ship that was on watch off Skiathos, and on it was Pytheas son of Iskhenoos, the one the Persians marveled at when severely wounded and kept aboard their ship because of his achievement [aretē]. This Sidonian ship carrying him with the Persians was now captured, so Pytheas came back safe to Aigina. When Polykritos saw the Attic ship, he recognized it by seeing the flagship’s insignia, so he shouted to Themistokles and mocked and reproached him concerning the Medizing of the Aiginetans. After ramming an enemy ship, Polykritos hurled these insults at Themistokles. The barbarians whose ships were still intact fled and reached Phaleron under cover of the land army.

93. In this battle the Hellenes with the best reputation as aristoi were the Aiginetans, then the Athenians. Among individuals they were Polykritos the Aiginetan and the Athenians Eumenes of Anagyros and Aminias of Pallene, the one who pursued Artemisia. If he had known she was in that ship, he would not have stopped before either capturing it or being captured himself. Thus the Athenian captains had been ordered, and there was a prize offered of 10,000 drachmas to whoever took her alive, since they were indignant that a woman waged war against Athens. But she escaped, as I said earlier, and the others whose ships survived were also in Phaleron.

94. The Athenians say that when the ships joined battle, the Corinthian general Adeimantos, struck with bewilderment and terror, hoisted his sails and fled away. When the Corinthians saw their flagship fleeing they took off in the same way, but when in their flight they were opposite the sacred precinct of Athena Skiras on Salamis, by divine providence a boat encountered them. No one appeared to have sent it, and the Corinthians knew nothing about the affairs of the fleet when it approached. They reckon the affair to involve the gods because when the boat came near the ships, the people on the boat said, “Adeimantos, you have turned your ships to flight and betrayed the Hellenes, but they are overcoming their enemies to the fulfillment of their prayers for victory.” Adeimantos did not believe them when they said this, so they spoke again, saying that they could be taken as hostages and killed if the Hellenes were not seen to be victorious. So he and the others turned their ships around and came to the fleet, but it was all over. The Athenians spread this rumor about them, but the Corinthians do not agree at all, and they consider themselves to have been among the foremost in the battle. The rest of Hellas bears them witness.

95. Aristides son of Lysimakhos, the Athenian whom I mentioned a little before this as an aristos man, did this in the commotion that arose at Salamis: taking many of the armed men who were arrayed along the shore of Salamis, he brought them across and landed them on the island of Psyttalea, and they slaughtered all the Persians who were on that islet.

96. When the battle was broken off, the Hellenes towed to Salamis as many of the wrecks as were still there and kept ready for another battle, supposing that the king could still make use of his surviving ships. A west wind had caught many of the wrecks and carried them to the shore in Attica called Kolias. Thus not only was all the rest of the oracle fulfilled which Bakis and Musaeus had spoken about this battle, but also what had been said many years before this in an oracle by Lysistratos, an Athenian soothsayer, concerning the wrecks carried to shore there. Its meaning had eluded all the Hellenes:

The Kolian women will cook with oars.

But this was to happen after the king had marched away.

97. When Xerxes understood the disaster that had happened, he feared that some of the Ionians might advise the Hellenes, if they did not themselves so intend, to sail to the Hellespont and destroy the
bridges. He would be trapped in Europe in danger of destruction, so he resolved on flight. He did not want to be detected either by the Hellenes or by his own men, so he attempted to build a dike across to Salamis, and joined together Phoenician cargo ships to be both a bridge and a wall, making preparations as if to fight another sea battle. All who saw him doing this confidently supposed that he had every intention of preparing to stay and fight there, but none of this eluded Mardonios, who had the most experience of the king's thoughts. While doing all this, Xerxes sent a messenger to Persia to announce the disaster.
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Xerxes retreated to Asia, leaving Mardonios and Artabazos in Boeotia in command of the Persian forces. In 479 the Persians and Hellenes met near Plataea.

58. When Mardonios learned that the Hellenes had gone away at night and he saw the place deserted, he summoned Thorax of Larissa and his brothers Eurypylos and Thrasydeios and said, “Sons of Aleuas, what will you say now when you see this place deserted? You their neighbors said the Lacedaemonians do not flee from battle, but are the first men in warfare. But earlier you saw them changing their posts, and now we all see that they ran away last night. When they had to fight in battle against those who are without falsehood aristoi among men, they showed that they are nobodies among all the Hellenic nobodies. Since you had no knowledge of the Persians, I can readily forgive you for praising those you did know something about. I am more surprised at Artabazos for dreading the Lacedaemonians and declaring that most cowardly opinion that we must strike camp and go to be besieged in the city of the Thebans. The king will hear of it from me. But we will speak of this some other time. For now, they must not be allowed to do this. We must pursue them until we catch them and make them pay the penalty for all they have done to the Persians.”

59. He said this and led the Persians at a run across the Asopos river in the tracks of the Hellenes, supposing them to be fleeing. He went after the Lacedaemonians and Tegeans alone, since because of the hills he did not see the Athenians making their way to the plain. When the remaining commanders of the barbarian companies saw the Persians setting out to pursue the Hellenes, they all immediately raised their standards and pursued as fast as each could, marshaled in no order or line. They advanced on the Hellenes in a confused uproar and expected to ravage them.

60. When the cavalry attacked, the Spartan commander Pausanias sent a messenger on horseback to the Athenians saying, “Men of Athens, while a great struggle is offered whether Hellas be free or enslaved, we Lacedaemonians and you Athenians are betrayed by our allies who ran away last night. I am resolved that what we must now do is fight in the way that will best defend each other. If the cavalry had first rushed against you, we and the Tegeans, who are with us and did not betray Hellas, would have had to come to your aid. But now, since all the cavalry has attacked us, you are right to come to the defense of the part that is most pressed. If something has befallen to make it impossible for you to come help, grant us the favor of sending us your archers. We know that since you have been by far the most zealous in this present war, you will also comply with this request.”

61. When the Athenians heard this, they started to march out to bring all the help they could, but the Hellenes who had taken the king’s side and were drawn up against them attacked them on their march. They could no longer bring help, since the enemy pressed and harassed them, so the Lacedaemonians and Tegeans were left to fight alone. The Lacedaemonians were 50,000 in number, including the light-armed men, the Tegeans, who never separated from the Lacedaemonians, 3,000. They offered sacrifice, since they were about to give battle to Mardonios and the army with him, but the sacrifices were not favorable. Meanwhile many of them fell and many more were wounded, for the Persians had made a barricade of their shields and were constantly shooting an immense number of arrows at them. As the Spartans were pressed and the sacrifices did not turn out, Pausanias looked towards the sacred precinct of Hera at Plataea and invoked the goddess, praying that they in no way be cheated of their hope.

62. While he was still praying, the Tegeans moved out in front and attacked the barbarians, and as soon as Pausanias’ prayer was finished the sacrifices became favorable to the Lacedaemonians. When at last this had happened, they too advanced on the Persians, and the Persians threw down their bows to meet them. The battle took place first near the shields, and after they fell there was violent fighting for a
long time right at the sacred precinct of Demeter. Finally there was hand-to-hand combat, for the barbarians had grabbed hold of the spears and snapped them off. The Persians were not inferior in courage and strength, but they were without armor and were also ignorant of tactics and unequal to their opponents in sophia. They jumped forward one at a time or joined together in groups of ten or more or fewer, and fell upon the Spartans only to be killed.

63. Wherever Mardonios happened to be, fighting from a white horse with 1,000 picked troops, the aristoi of the Persians, around him, there they pressed the enemy hardest. For as long as Mardonios was alive, they held out in their defense and laid low many of the Lacedaemonians. But when Mardonios was killed and the force marshaled around him, which was the strongest part of the army, also fell, the others fled and gave way before the Lacedaemonians. What caused them the most harm was that their clothing had no armor; they were naked as they fought against armored men.

64. There dikē for the murder of Leonidas was fulfilled by Mardonios for the Spartans according to the oracle, and the finest victory we know of was won by Pausanias son of Kleombrotos son of Anaxandrides. The names of his earlier ancestors have been told in the case of Leonidas, since they were the same for both. Mardonios was killed by Arimnestos, an important man in Sparta, who long after the Median war with 300 men gave battle in Stenykleros in time of war to all the Messenians and was killed along with the 300.

65. Back at Plataea, when the Persians were routed by the Lacedaemonians, they fled in disorder to their camp and to the wooden wall they had built in Theban territory. I marvel that although they fought near the grove of Demeter, not a single Persian was seen to enter the sacred precinct or die there, and most of them fell near the sacred precinct in unconsecrated ground. It is my opinion - if one ought to hold opinions about divine affairs - that the goddess herself did not let them in because they had burned the temple in Eleusis.

66. This is what the battle was like so far. Artabazos son of Pharnaces had from the very beginning disliked that Mardonios was left behind by the king, and now his advice not to offer battle had gotten nowhere, though he had strongly counseled against it. Since he was displeased by all the things Mardonios had done, he himself did this: He had no small force with him, about 40,000 men. When the battle took place, since he well knew what the outcome of the fight would be, Artabazos led the troops under his generalship out in battle array after commanding them all to go together wherever he led them when they saw him hurrying. He gave this command as if he were leading the army to battle, but as they advanced up the road he saw the Persians fleeing, so he no longer led his men in the same formation, but he ran by the quickest route in flight neither to the wooden wall nor to Thebes, but to Phocis, wanting to reach the Hellespont as quickly as possible.

67. So they fled in this way. Although all the other Hellenes on the king's side fought as kakoi on purpose, the Boeotians fought the Athenians for a long time. The Medizing Thebans had great zeal for the battle and did not fight as kakoi on purpose, so that 300 of them, the leading men and aristoi, fell there at the hands of the Athenians. But they too were routed and fled to Thebes, though not in the same way as the Persians and the whole crowd of the other allies who fled without any fight to the finish or any achievement at all.

68. That they all fled before even coming to grips with the enemy because they saw the Persians doing so proves to me that all the fortunes of the barbarians depended on the Persians. In this way they all fled, except the cavalry, including that of the Boeotians, which benefited those in flight by keeping close to the enemy and keeping their fleeing philoi out of reach of the Hellenes, who in victory pursued and slaughtered Xerxes’ men.

69. During this rout a message was carried to the other Hellenes marshaled near the sacred precinct of Hera and absent from the fight that there had been a battle and Pausanias’ men had won. When they heard this, without drawing themselves into formation, those with the Corinthians made their way
through the foothills at the base of the mountain along the road that bears straight for the sacred precinct of Demeter, and those with the Megarians and Phliasians traveled through the plain along the smoothest of the routes. When the Megarians and Phliasians came near the enemy, the Theban cavalry, whose commander was Asopodoros son of Timandros, saw them hurrying in disorder and rode their horses at them. They fell upon them and mowed down 600 of them, and riding in pursuit swept them back to Kithairon.

70. These died with no account taken of them. When the Persians and the rest of the throng fled to the wooden wall, they were able to mount the towers before the Lacedaemonians got there, and once on top they strengthened the wall as best they could. Then the Lacedaemonians approached and a fierce fight for the wall began. As long as the Athenians were absent, they defended themselves and got the better of the Lacedaemonians, who did not know how to assault a wall, but when the Athenians arrived the battle for the wall turned more violent and lasted a long time. Finally by their achievement [arete] and perseverance the Athenians mounted the wall and breached it, and the Hellenes poured in. The first to get inside the wall were the Tegeans, and it was they who plundered the tent of Mardonios, taking from it among other things the horses' manger, all of bronze and worth seeing. The Tegeans dedicated the manger of Mardonios in the temple of Athena Alea, but all the rest of what they took they brought to the same place as the other Hellenes. Once the wall had fallen, the barbarians no longer kept to their ranks, nor did anyone think of resistance as they wandered in distress, since there were myriads of panicked men trapped in a small space. The Hellenes were able to make such a slaughter that out of 300,000 men, minus the 40,000 which Artabazos fled with, not 3,000 survived. In all, there died in the battle 91 Lacedaemonians from Sparta, 17 Tegeans, and 52 Athenians.

71. Those who were aristoi among the barbarians were the Persian infantry and the cavalry of the Sakai, and of individual men it was said to be Mardonios. Among the Hellenes, the Tegeans and Athenians were agathoi, but it was the Lacedaemonians who excelled in achievement [aretê]. Since they all prevailed over those they fought against, I infer [semainein] this only by the fact that the Lacedaemonians attacked and defeated the strongest part of the enemy. In our opinion the man who was by far aristos was Aristodemos, who was in disgrace and without timê because he was the only one to return safe from Thermopylae. After him the Spartans Posidonios and Philokyon and Amompharetos were aristoi. Yet when there was talk of who was aristos, the Spartans present decided that Aristodemos had performed great deeds raging in battle and leaving his post because he clearly wished to die due to the guilt he had, but Posidonios had been agathos not wishing to die, and in that was the more agathos man. They may have said this out of envy, but except for Aristodemos all those whom I mentioned who died in the battle were held in timê. Because Aristodemos wished to die for the aforementioned reason, he was not given timê.

72. These were the most famous at Plataea. Kallikrates died outside the battle. He had come to the camp and was the handsomest man of all the Hellenes of that time, not only of the Lacedaemonians but also of all the other Hellenes. When Pausanias was sacrificing, he was wounded in the side by an arrow as he sat in his place. While the others fought, he was carried out and died a hard death, saying to Arimnestos the Plataean that what bothered him was not that he died for Hellas, but that he had not used his hand in battle and that he had performed no deed worthy of his zeal to perform it.

73. Among the Athenians, Sophanes son of Eutykhides from the deme of Decelea is said to have been of high repute. The Athenians say that the Deceleans once performed a deed useful for all time: when in the old days the Tyndaridai invaded the land of Attica to bring back Helen and were laying waste to the demes, not knowing where Helen had been hidden, they say that the Deceleans, or, as some say, Dekelos himself, because he was impatient at the hubris of Theseus and feared for the entire Athenian country, told them the whole story and guided them to Aphidnai, which Titakos, an original inhabitant, betrayed to the Tyndaridai. Ever since that deed the Dekeleans have enjoyed tax-free status and the front seats at
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Sparta, and this is still in effect: in the war that arose many years later between the Athenians and the Peloponnesians, when the Lacedaemonians plundered the rest of Attica they left Dekelea alone.

74. Sophanes, who then was aristos among the Athenians, was from that deme. Two stories are told about him. One says that he carried an iron anchor fastened by a bronze chain to the belt of his breastplate, and when he came near the enemy in his approach he would let it down, so that when the enemy fell upon him they would not be able to move him from his position. When the enemy were routed, he would weigh anchor and set off in pursuit. That is one story, but another is told at variance with the one previously narrated: on his shield, which he was always swaying round and round, he carried an anchor as the insignia [sēma], and not an iron one fastened from his breastplate.

75. Sophanes performed another splendid deed: when the Athenians were besieging Aigina, he challenged and killed Eurybates the Argive, a winner in the pentathlon. But much later it befell Sophanes, an agathos man, while he was an Athenian general with Leagros son of Glaukon, to be killed by the Edonians as he fought for the gold mines in Datos.

76. As soon as the barbarians had been mowed down by the Hellenes at Plataea, a woman came to them deserting from the enemy, the concubine of Pharandates son of Teaspis, a Persian. When she learned that the Persians had been destroyed and the Hellenes were victorious, she adorned herself along with her servants with many gold ornaments and the finest apparel she had, got down from her carriage, and went to the Lacedaemonians while they were still engaged in the slaughter. She saw Pausanias managing all that business, and since she already knew his name and country from having often heard of it, she recognized him as Pausanias, grasped his knees, and said, “King of Sparta, save me, your suppliant, from captive servitude. You have done me service so far by destroying these men who have no regard for daimones or gods. I am Koan in genos, daughter of Hegetorides son of Antagoras. The Persian took me from Kos by force and made me his wife.” He answered, “Woman, have no fear, both as my suppliant and if you are telling the truth and really are the daughter of Hegetorides of Kos, for he is my chief xenos among the inhabitants of those lands.” So he spoke, and he put her in the care of the ephors who were present, then later sent her to Aigina, where she wanted to go.

77. Right after the woman’s arrival the Mantineans got there, when it was all over. When they found they had come too late for the battle, they lamented greatly and declared that they deserved to be punished. Hearing that the Medes with Artabazos were in flight, they wanted to pursue them to Thessaly, but the Lacedaemonians advised against pursuing those in flight. They returned to their own country and banished the leaders of the army from the land. After the Mantineans came the Eleians, and the Eleians went away lamenting just like the Mantineans. When they got back home, they too exiled their leaders. That is what happened with the Mantineans and the Eleians.

78. In the camp of the Aiginetans at Plataea was Lampon son of Pytheas, a leading man among the Aiginetans. He rushed to Pausanias with a most unholy plan, and arriving there in haste said, “Son of Kleombrotos, you have accomplished a feat of extraordinary greatness and beauty, and a god has permitted you to deliver Hellas and lay up a store of kleos the greatest of all the Hellenes we know of. But do what remains to be done, and you will have an even greater reputation, and any barbarian will hereafter beware of initiating sinful deeds against the Hellenes. When Leonidas was killed at Thermopylae, Mardonios and Xerxes cut off his head and stuck it on a pole. If you pay them back in kind, you will be praised first by all the Spartans, then by all the other Hellenes. By impaling Mardonios you will take vengeance on your uncle Leonidas.” He said this expecting to gratify Pausanias, but he answered as follows:

79. “Aiginetan xenos, I am grateful for your good will and foresight, but you have missed the mark of good counsel. You exalted me on high, and my country and my deed, then you cast me down to nothingness by advising me to maltreat a corpse, saying I will have a better reputation if I do this. But it is more fitting for barbarians to do this than Hellenes, and we are indignant even when they do it. For
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this reason I would not please the Aiginetans or any others who find delight in these things. It is enough for me to please the Spartans by performing righteous deeds, and also by righteous speech. As for Leonidas, whom you bade me avenge, I declare he has been greatly avenged: with the countless psukhai of these men he and all the others who met their end at Thermopylae are given timē. Do not approach me again with such a plan nor give me counsel, and be grateful that you are unharmed.”

80. Lampon heard that answer and departed. Pausanias issued a proclamation that no one was to touch the spoils, and commanded the helots to bring together all the goods. They scattered through the camp and found tents adorned with gold and silver, gilded and silver-plated couches, and golden bowls and cups and other drinking vessels. They found sacks on the wagons and saw cauldrons of gold and silver in them. They stripped the bracelets and necklaces and golden daggers from the corpses as they lay, but they took no account of the many-colored clothing. The helots stole much of this and sold it to the Aiginetans, but they also showed as much of it as they could not hide. This was the beginning of great wealth for the Aiginetans, since they bought the gold from the helots as if it were bronze.

81. They collected the goods and set aside a tenth part for the god at Delphi. From this tithe they dedicated the golden tripod which stands on the bronze three-headed snake very close to the altar. They set aside another tithe for the god in Olympus, and from it dedicated the bronze Zeus of 10 cubits, and another to the god at the Isthmus, and from it was made the bronze Poseidon of 7 cubits. They set these aside, then divided the rest. Each took what he merited from the Persian concubines and gold and silver and other goods and beasts of burden. No one tells how much was set aside and granted to the aristoi among those at Plataea, but I suppose they did receive gifts. Ten of everything was set aside and granted to Pausanias; women, horses, talents of silver, camels, and likewise all the other goods.

82. This is also said to have happened: Xerxes in his flight from Hellas left behind all his furnishings for Mardonios. When Pausanias saw Mardonios’ establishment adorned with gold and silver and embroidered hangings, he ordered the bakers and cooks to prepare dinner in the same way as for Mardonios. When they had done as they were ordered, Pausanias looked at the gold and silver couches richly covered and the gold and silver tables and the magnificent preparation for dinner and was astounded at the good things set before him. For a joke he ordered his own servants to prepare a Laconian dinner, and when that meal was made there was a big difference between them. Pausanias laughed and summoned the Hellenic generals, and when they assembled Pausanias pointed to the preparation of each dinner and said, “Men of Hellas, I have brought you together because I wish to show you the folly of the Mede, who with this way of life came to rob us who live in poverty.” It is said that Pausanias spoke thus to the Hellenic generals.

83. Long after this many of the Plataeans found chests of gold and silver and other goods. The following things also came to light at a later time: The Plataeans had collected the bones into one place, and when the corpses had become bare of flesh, a skull was discovered that had no suture and was all of one bone, and a jawbone came to light with the upper jaw all of a single piece, both the incisors and molars all from a single bone. There also appeared the bones of a man five cubits tall.

84. On the next day Mardonios’ corpse disappeared. What man did it I cannot exactly say, but I have heard that many men of all nations have buried Mardonios, and I know that many have received great gifts from Artontes, Mardonios’ son, for that deed. But which of these was the one who made off with Mardonios’ corpse and buried it, I am unable to learn with certainty. Rumor has it that Dionysophanes, an Ephesian, buried Mardonios. In such a way he was buried.

85. After the Hellenes at Plataea had divided the spoils, they each buried their own men separately. The Lacedaemonians made three tombs, and there they buried their irenes, among whom were Posidonios and Amompharetos and Philokyon and Kallikrates. So in one of the tombs were the irenes, in

158 One of the classes of citizens at Sparta.
the other the rest of the Spartans, and in the third the helots. Thus they made their burials, and the
Tegeans buried theirs all together in a separate place. The Athenians also buried theirs together, and the
Megarians and Phliasians buried those killed by the cavalry. The tombs of all of these were full, but I have
learned that each of the others whose tombs are seen at Plataea, ashamed of their absence from the
battle, heaped up empty mounds for the sake of future generations. There is one there called the tomb of
the Aiginetans, and I hear that Kleades son of Autodikos, a Plataean and their proxenos,159 erected it at
the request of the Aiginetans ten years after the fact.

159 A man who in his own polis looked after the affairs of the citizens of another polis. He maintained xenia
with the entire foreign polis.
After Plataea the Hellenes defeated the enemy fleet at Mykale, driving the Persians from Europe. Herodotus ends his Histories with the following episode:

114. The Hellenes who had set out from Mykale for the Hellespont first came to anchor at Lekton, driven off course by the winds, then reached Abydos and found the bridges broken up which they thought they would find still intact. Since they had come to the Hellespont chiefly because of the bridges, the Peloponnesians with Leotykhides resolved to sail back to Hellas, but the Athenians and their general Xanthippos decided to remain there and attack the Chersonese. So the others sailed away, and the Athenians crossed over from Abydos to the Chersonese and besieged Sestos.

115. The native Aeolians held the place, and with them were the Persians and a great crowd of the other allies. When they heard that the Hellenes had come to the Hellespont, they came in from the outlying towns and met in Sestos, since its wall was the strongest in the area. Among them came the Persian Oiobazos from the polis of Kardia, carrying there with him the tackle of the bridges.

116. Xerxes' governor Artayktes, a Persian and a clever and impious man, was turannos of this province. He had deceived the king in his march on Athens by robbing from Elaious the property of Protesilaos son of Iphiklos. The grave of Protesilaos is at Elaious in the Chersonese, with a sacred precinct around it. There were many goods there: gold and silver bowls, bronze, apparel, and other dedicated offerings, all of which Artayktes carried off by the king's gift. He deceived Xerxes by saying, "Master, there is here the house [oikos] of a Hellene who waged war against your land, but he met with dikē and was killed. Give me his oikos so that all may know not to wage war against your land." He thought he would easily persuade Xerxes to give him a man's oikos by saying this, since Xerxes had no suspicion of what he really thought. When he said that Protesilaos waged war against the king's land, he had in mind that the Persians consider all Asia to belong to them and to their successive kings. So the king made him the gift, and he carried the goods from Elaious to Sestos, planting and farming the sacred precinct. Whenever he came to Elaious, he would even have sex with women in the sanctuary. When the Athenians besieged him in Sestos, he had made no preparations for a siege, not expecting the Hellenes at all, so that they attacked him off his guard.

117. As the siege continued into late autumn, the Athenians began to chafe at being away from home unable to capture the wall of Sestos. They asked the generals to lead them back home, but the generals said they would not do so until the wall was captured or the Athenian state summoned them. So they put up with the present state of affairs.

118. Those inside the wall had now reached such complete misery that they even boiled and ate the cords of their beds. When even those ran out, the Persians, including Artayktes and Oiobazos, ran away during the night, climbing down the rear of the wall where there were fewest of the enemy. When it was day, the people of the Chersonesus signaled from the towers what had happened and opened the gates for the Athenians. Most of them went in pursuit, while some took possession of the polis.

119. Oiobazos escaped into Thrace, but the Apsinthian Thracians caught him and sacrificed him to their native god in their way, killing those with him in a different way. Artayktes and his followers had set out in flight later, so they were caught a little beyond Aigospotamoi. They defended themselves for a long time until some were killed and the rest taken prisoner. The Hellenes bound them, including Artayktes and his son, and brought them to Sestos.

160 Father of Pericles.
120. The people of the Chersonesus say that a portent happened to one of the guards while he was roasting salted fish [tarikhoi]: the salted fish on the fire began to jump and writhe just like newly-caught fish. A crowd gathered in amazement, but when Artayktes saw the portent he called to the man roasting the salted fish and said, “Athenian xenos, have no fear of this portent; it has not been sent to you. Instead Protesilaos of Elaious indicates [sēmainein] to me that even when dead and dried [tarikhos] he holds power from the gods to punish one who treats him without dikē. I now wish to impose upon myself a ransom, paying to the god 100 talents in return for the property I took from the sacred precinct, and giving to the Athenians 200 talents for myself and my son, if I survive.” But this promise did not persuade the general Xanthippos. The people of Elaious, seeking vengeance for Protesilaos, asked that he be put to death, and the mind of the general inclined the same way. They led him to the point where Xerxes had bridged the strait, though some say they took him to the hill above the polis of Madytos, nailed him to a board, and hung him aloft, stoning his son to death before his eyes.

121. After they did this they sailed away to Hellas carrying many goods, including the tackle of the bridges to be dedicated in the sacred precincts. Nothing more than this happened that year.

122. The grandfather of this Artayktes who was crucified was Artembares, who expounded an argument to the Persians which they adopted and proposed to Cyrus, saying, “Since Zeus grants empire to the Persians, and among individuals to you, Cyrus, by deposing Astyages, let us emigrate from the small and rugged land we inhabit and take possession of a better one. Many such lands are our neighbors, and there are many further out, and if we take possession of one of them we will be more wonderful in more ways. It is reasonable for men in power to do this, and when will there ever be a better time than when we rule so many men and all of Asia?” Cyrus listened but did not admire the argument. He bade them do this, but he advised them to prepare to rule no longer but to be ruled instead, for from soft lands tend to come soft men, and the same land cannot produce wonderful fruits and men agathoi at warfare. The Persians confessed their error and took leave, bested by Cyrus’ opinion, and they chose to inhabit an unfertile land and rule rather than sow a plain and be slaves to others.

161 The noun tarikhos means ‘preserved by drying’. The description ‘preserved’ in the secular sense applies to a dried or salted fish; ‘preserved’ in the sacred sense applies to a mummified corpse.
How you have felt, O men of Athens, at hearing the speeches of my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that their persuasive words almost made me forget who I was - such was the effect of them; and yet they have hardly spoken a word of truth \(\text{alēthēs}\). But many as their falsehoods were, there was one of them which quite amazed me; - I mean when they told you to be upon your guard, and not to let yourselves be deceived \([17b]\) by the force of my eloquence. They ought to have been ashamed of saying this, because they were sure to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and displayed my deficiency; they certainly did appear to be most shameless in saying this, unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth \(\text{alēthēs}\); for then I do indeed admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have hardly uttered a word, or not more than a word, of truth \(\text{alēthēs}\); but you shall hear from me the whole truth \(\text{alēthēs}\): not, however, delivered after their manner, in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. No indeed! \([17c]\) but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am certain that this is right, and that at my time of life I ought not to be appearing before you, O men of Athens, in the character of a juvenile orator - let no one expect this of me. And I must beg of you to grant me one favor, which is this - If you hear me using the same words in my defense which I have been in the habit of using, and which most of you may have heard in the \textit{agōra}, and at the tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, \([17d]\) I would ask you not to be surprised at this, and not to interrupt me. For I am more than seventy years of age, and this is the first time that I have ever appeared in a court of law, and I am quite a stranger to the ways of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, \([18a]\) and after the fashion of his country; - that I think is not an unfair request. Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the justice \(\text{dikē}\) of my cause, and give heed to that: let the jury decide with their virtue \(\text{aretē}\) and the speaker speak truly \(\text{alēthēs}\).

And first, it's only right \([\text{full of dikē}]\) that I reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go to the later ones. \([18b]\) For I have had many accusers, who accused me of old, and their false \([\text{non-alēthēs}]\) charges have continued during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are these, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods \([\text{non-alēthēs}]\), telling of one Socrates, a wise \(\text{sophos}\) man, who speculated about the sky above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. \([18c]\) These are the accusers whom I dread; for they are the circulating of this rumor, and their hearers are too apt to fancy that speculators of this sort do not believe in the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they made them in days when you were impressionable - in childhood, or perhaps in youth - and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And, hardest of all, \([18d]\) their names I do not know and cannot tell; unless in the chance of a comic poet. But the main body of these slanderers who from envy and malice have wrought upon you - and there are some of them who are convinced themselves, and impart their convictions to others - all these, I say, are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and examine them, and therefore I must simply fight with shadows in my own defense, and examine when there is no one who answers. I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that...
my opponents are of two kinds - one recent, [18e] the other ancient; and I hope that you will see the propriety of my answering the latter first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Well, then, I will make my defense, and I will endeavor [19a] in the short time which is allowed to do away with this evil opinion of me which you have held for such a long time; and I hope I may succeed, if this be well for you and me, and that my words may find favor with you. But I know that to accomplish this is not easy - I quite see the nature of the task. Let the event be as the god wills: in obedience to the law [nomos] I make my defense.

I will begin at the beginning, and ask what the accusation is [19b] which has given rise to this slander of me, and which has encouraged Meletus to proceed against me. What do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit. “Socrates does nothing that is just [dikē]; he is a curious person, who searches into things under the earth and in the sky, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; [19c] and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.” That is the nature of the accusation, and that is what you have seen yourselves in the comedy of Aristophanes; who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, going about and saying that he can walk in the air, and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little - not that I mean to say anything disparaging of [literally: show no timē toward] anyone who is wise [sophos] about natural philosophy. I should be very sorry if Meletus could lay that to my charge. But the simple truth is, O Athenians, that I have nothing to do with these studies. [19d] Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me, and tell your neighbors whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon matters of this sort. ... You hear their answer. And from what they say of this you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money; [19e] that is no more true [alēthēs] than the other. Although, if a man is able to teach, I honor him for being paid. There is Gorgias of Leontini, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis, who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens [of the polis], by whom they might be taught for nothing, [20a] and come to them, whom they not only pay, but are thankful [full of kharis] if they may be allowed to pay them. There is actually a Parian wise man [sophos] residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way: - I met a man who has spent a world of money on the Sophists, Kallias the son of Hipponikos, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: “Kallias,” I said, “if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in [20b] finding someone to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses or a farmer probably who would improve and perfect [lit: make them more agathoi] them in their own proper virtue and excellence [aretē]; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there anyone who understands human and political virtue [aretē]? You must have thought about this as you have sons; is there anyone?” “There is,” he said. “Who is he?” said I, “and of what country? and what does he charge?” “Evenus the Parian,” he replied; “he is the man, and his charge is five coins.” Happy is Evenus, I said to myself, if he truly [alēthēs] [20c] has this knack, and teaches at such a modest charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

I dare say, Athenians, that someone among you will reply, “Why is this, Socrates, and what is the origin of these accusations of you: for there must have been something strange which you have been doing? All this great fame and talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell
us, then, [20d] why this is, as we should be sorry to judge hastily of you." Now I regard this as a fair [dikaios] challenge, and I will endeavor to explain to you the origin of my 'name' and of this evil fame. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth [alethēs]. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom [sophia] which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom [sophia], I reply, such wisdom [sophia] as is attainable by man, for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise [sophos]; [20e] whereas the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom [sophia], which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, O men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit, and will tell you about my wisdom [sophia] - whether I have any, and of what sort - and that witness shall be the god of Delphi. You must have known Chaerephon; [21a] he was early a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the exile of the people, and returned with you. Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle [manteuesthai] to tell him whether - as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt - he asked the oracle to tell him whether there was anyone wiser [more sophos] than I, and the Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser [more sophos.] Chaerephon is dead himself, but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of this story.

[21b] Why do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean? and what is the interpretation of this riddle [ainigma]? for I know that I have no wisdom [sophia], small or great. What can he mean when he says that I am the wisest [most sophos] of men? And yet he is a god and cannot lie; that would be against his nature [= themis does not allow it]. After a long consideration, I at last thought of a method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man sophos than myself, [21c] then I might go to the god with a refutation of the oracle [manteion] in my hand. I should say to him, “Here is a man who is more sophos than I am; but you said that I was the most sophos." Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of being wise [sophos] and observed to him - his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination - and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really sophos, although he was thought sophos by many, and more sophos still by himself; and I went and tried to explain to him that he thought himself sophos, but was not really sophos; [21d] and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good [agathos], I am better off than he is - for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows. I neither know nor think that I know. In this latter particular, then, I seem to be slightly more sophos than him. Then I went to another, who had still higher philosophical pretensions [dealing with sophia], [21e] and my conclusion was exactly the same. I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

After this I went to one man after another, being not unconscious of the enmity which I provoked, and I lamented and feared this: but necessity was laid upon me - the word of the god, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the oracle. [22a] And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog I swear! - for I must tell you the truth [alethēs] - the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that some inferior men were really wiser and better. I will tell you the tale of my wanderings and of the labors [ponoi], as I may call them, which I endured only to find at last the oracle [manteion] irrefutable. When I left the politicians, I went to the poets; tragic, dithyrambic, [22b] and all sorts. And there, I said to
myself, you will be detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them - thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to speak the true \(\text{alēthēs}\), but still I must say that there is hardly a person present who would not have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. That showed me in an instant that not by wisdom \(\text{sophia}\) \(\text{[22c]}\) do poets write poetry, but by a sort of genius and inspiration; they are like diviners \(\text{[theomantis plural]}\) or soothsayers who also say many fine \(\text{kala}\) things, but do not understand the meaning of them. And the poets appeared to me to be much in the same case \(\text{literally have the same pathos, experience}\); and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the most \text{sophos} of men in other things in which they were not \text{sophos}. So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

At last I went to the artisans, \(\text{[22d]}\) for I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine \(\text{kala}\) things; and in this I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were more \text{sophos} than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error \(\text{[hamartia]}\) as the poets; because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their \text{sophia} - \(\text{[22e]}\) therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, neither having their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and the oracle that I was better off as I was.

\(\text{[23a]}\) This investigation has led to my having many enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies, and I am called \text{sophos}, for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the \text{sophia} which I find wanting in others; but the truth is, O men of Athens, that the god only is \text{sophos}; and in this oracle he means to say that the \text{sophia} of men is little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, \(\text{[23b]}\) he is only using my name as an illustration, as if he said, He, O men, is the most \text{sophos}, who, like Socrates, knows that his \text{sophia} is in truth \(\text{[alēthēs]}\) worth nothing. And so I go my way, obedient to the god, and make inquisition into the \text{sophia} of anyone, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be \text{sophos}; and if he is not \text{sophos}, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and this occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, \(\text{[23c]}\) but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

There is another thing: - young men of the richer classes, who have not much to do, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me \(\text{[\text{do a mimēsis} of me]}\), and examine others themselves; there are plenty of persons, as they soon enough discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing; and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: \(\text{[23d]}\) they say that Socrates is someone who is most polluted, he corrupts young men - and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practice or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the ready-made charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretense of knowledge has been detected - which is the truth: \(\text{[23e]}\) and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic, and are all in battle array and have persuasive tongues, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon, have set upon me; Meletus, who has a quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the craftsmen; \(\text{[24a]}\) Lycon, on behalf of the rhetoricians: and
as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of this mass of calumny all in a moment. And this, O men of Athens, is the truth \( \text{alēthēs} \); I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet I know that this plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth \( \text{alēthēs} \)? - this is the occasion and reason of their slander of me, [24b] as you will find out either in this or in any future inquiry.

I have said enough in my defense against the first class of my accusers; I turn to the second class, who are headed by Meletus, that good \( \text{agathos} \) and patriotic man, as he calls himself. And now I will try to defend myself against them: these new accusers must also have their affidavit read. What do they say? Something of this sort: - That Socrates commits wrong \( \text{a-dika} \) deeds, and corrupts the young men, [24c] and he does not believe in the gods that the state \( \text{polis} \) believes in, but believes in other things having to do with \text{daimones} of his own. That is the sort of charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. He says that I do no justice \( \text{dikē} \), but corrupt the youth; but I say, O men of Athens, that Meletus does no justice \( \text{dikē} \), and the evil is that he makes a joke of a serious matter, and is too ready at bringing other men to trial \( \text{agōn} \) from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavor to prove.

Come here, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you. [24d] You think a great deal about the improvement of youth [= how youth can be made more \text{agathos}]?

Yes, I do.

Tell the judges, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the judges who their improver is. Observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and tell us who their improver is.

The laws \( \text{nomoi} \).

[24e] But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws \( \text{nomoi} \).

The judges, Socrates, who are present in court.

What do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and improve youth?

Certainly they are.

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

All of them.

By the goddess Hera, that is good news! There are plenty of improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience, - do they improve them?

[25a] Yes, they do.
And the councilors?

Yes, the councilors improve them.

But perhaps the members of the citizen assembly corrupt them? - or do they too improve them?

They improve them.

Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is that what you affirm?

That is what I strongly affirm.

I am very unfortunate if that is true. But suppose I ask you a question: Would you say that this also holds true in the case of horses? [25b] Does one man do them harm and all the world good? Is not the exact opposite of this true? One man is able to do them good, or at least not many; - the trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others who have to do with them rather injure them? Is not that true, Meletus, of horses, or any other animals? Yes, certainly. Whether you and Anytus say yes or no, that is no matter. Happy [with good daimón] indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their improvers. [25c] And you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is seen in your not caring about matters spoken of in this very indictment.

And now, Meletus, I must ask you another question: Which is better, to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; for that is a question which may be easily answered. Do not the good [agathoi] do their neighbors good [agathon], and the bad do them evil?

Certainly.

[25d] And is there anyone who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend; the law [nomos] requires you to answer - does anyone like to be injured?

Certainly not.

And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Intentionally, I say.

But you have just admitted that the good [agathoi] do their neighbors good [agathon], and the evil do them evil. [25e] Now is that a truth which your superior wisdom [greater sophia] has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him, and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too; - that is what you are saying, and of that you will never persuade me or any other human being. But either I do not corrupt them,[26a] or I corrupt them unintentionally, so that on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law [nomos] has no cognizance of unintentional
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offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally - no doubt I should; whereas you hated to converse with me or teach me, but you indicted me in this court, where the law [nomos] demands instruction, but punishment.

I have shown, Athenians, as I was saying, [26b] that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state [polis] acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies [daimones] in their stead. These are the lessons which corrupt the youth, as you say.

Yes, that I say emphatically.

Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! [26c] for I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach others to acknowledge some gods, and therefore do believe in gods and am not an entire atheist - this you do not lay to my charge; but only that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes - the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean to say that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

I mean the latter - that you are a complete atheist.

[26d] That is an extraordinary statement, Meletus. Why do you say that? Do you mean that I do not believe in the divinity of the sun or moon, which is the common creed of all men?

I assure you, judges, that he does not believe in them; for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.

Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras; and you have but a bad opinion of the judges, if you fancy them ignorant to such a degree as not to know that those doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras of Klazomenai, who is full of them. And these are the doctrines which the youth are said to learn of Socrates, when there are not infrequently exhibitions of them at the theatre (price of admission one drachma at the most); [26e] and they might cheaply purchase them, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father such eccentricities. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

You are a liar, Meletus, not believed even by yourself. For I cannot help thinking, O men of Athens, that Meletus is full of insolence [hubris] and impudent, and that he has written this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. [27a] Has he not compounded a riddle [ainigma], thinking to try me? He said to himself: - I shall see whether this sophos Socrates will discover my ingenious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them. For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them - but this surely is an exercise in playfulness.
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I should like you, O men of Athens, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his inconsistency; and do you, Meletus, answer. [27b] And I must remind you that you are not to interrupt me if I speak in my accustomed manner.

Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings? ... I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not be always trying to get up an interruption. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in reed-playing, and not in reed-players? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please answer the next question: [27c] Can a man believe in things having to do with daimones, and not in the daimones themselves?

He cannot.

I am glad that I have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court; nevertheless you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in things related to daimones - things new or old, no matter - at any rate, I believe in things related to daimones, as you say and swear in the affidavit. But if I believe in things related to daimones, I must believe in daimones or gods themselves - is not that true? Yes, that is true, for I may assume that your silence gives assent to that. Now what are daimones? [27d] Don’t we think that they are either gods or the children of gods?

Yes, that is true.

But this is just the ingenious riddle [aínigma] of which I was speaking: the daimones are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in daimones. For if the daimones are the illegitimate children of gods, whether by the Nymphs or by any other mothers, as is thought, that, as all men will allow, necessarily implies the existence of their parents. [27e] You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been devised by you as a way to charge me. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real [alēthēs] of which to accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same man can believe in things having to do with daimones and gods, and yet not believe that there are daimones themselves [28a] and gods and heroes [hērōes].

I have said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus. Any elaborate defense is unnecessary; but as I was saying before, I certainly have many enemies, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed; of that I am certain; - not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good [agathos] men, and will probably be the death of many more; [28b] there is no danger of my being the last of them.

Someone will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly [dikaíos] answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong [doing dikaia or not] acting the part of a good [agathos] man or of a bad [kakos]. [28c] Whereas, according to your view, the heroes who fell at Troy were not good for much, and the son of Thetis [= Achilles] above all, who altogether despised danger in comparison with disgrace; and when his goddess mother said to him, in his eagerness to slay Hector, that if he avenged [paid honor or timē to] his companion Patroklos, and slew Hector, he would die himself - "Fate," as she said, "waits
upon you next after Hector”; he, hearing this, utterly despised danger and death, [28d] and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live in dishonor [basely, like a kakos man], and not to avenge [give timē to] his friend. “Let me die next,” he replies, “and exact justice [dike] from the enemy, rather than abide here by the beaked ships, a scorn and a burden of the earth.” Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? For wherever a man’s place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by a commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything, but of disgrace. And this, O men of Athens, is a true saying [alēthēs].

Strange, indeed, would be my conduct, O men of Athens, [28e] if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidæa and Amphipolis and Delium, remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death; if, I say, now, when, as I conceive and imagine, the god orders me to fulfill the philosopher’s mission of searching into myself and other men, [29a] I were to desert my post through fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly [with dike] be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle [manteion] because I was afraid of death: then I should be fancying that I was sophos when I was not sophos. For this fear of death is indeed the pretense of sophia , and not real sophia, being the appearance of knowing the unknown; since no one knows whether death, which they in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil [kakos], may not be the greatest good [agathos]. [29b] Is there not here conceit of knowledge, which is a disgraceful sort of ignorance? And this is the point in which, as I think, I am superior to men in general, and in which I might perhaps fancy myself more sophos than other men, - that whereas I know but little of the world below, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether god or man, is evil [kakos] and dishonorable, and I will never fear or avoid a possible good rather than a certain evil. [29c] And therefore if you let me go now, and reject the counsels of Anytus, who said that if I were not put to death I ought not to have been prosecuted, and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words - if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and will let you off, but upon one condition, that are to inquire and speculate in this way any more, [29d] and that if you are caught doing this again you shall die; - if this was the condition on which you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I honor and love you; but I shall obey the god rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting anyone whom I meet after my manner, and convincing him, saying: O my friend, why do you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, you let me go, I should reply: Men of Athens, I ho
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Men of Athens, do not interrupt, but hear me; there was an agreement between us that you should hear me out. And I think that what I am going to say will do you good: for I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I beg that you will not do this. I would have you know that, if you kill such a one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Meletus and Anytus will not injure me: they cannot; for it is not in the nature of things [themis] [30d] that a bad man should injure a better than himself. I do not deny that he may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights [literally: rob his timē]; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is doing him a great injury: but in that I do not agree with him; for the evil of doing as Anytus is doing - of unjustly [without dikē] taking away another man's life - is greater far. And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the god, or lightly reject his boon by condemning me. [30e] For if you kill me you will not easily find another like me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, given to the state by the god; and the state is like a great and noble steed who is tardy in his motions owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which the god has given the state and [31a] all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. And as you will not easily find another like me, I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel irritated at being suddenly awakened when you are caught napping; and you may think that if you were to strike me dead, as Anytus advises, which you easily might, then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless the god in his care of you gives you another gadfly. And that I am given to you by the god is proved by this: - [31b] that if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns, or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually, like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard virtue [aretē]; this I say, would not be like human nature. And had I gained anything, or if my exhortations had been paid, there would have been some sense in that: but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say [31c] that I have ever exacted or sought pay of anyone; they have no witness of that. And I have a witness of the truth [alēthēs] of what I say; my poverty is a sufficient witness.

Someone may wonder why I go about in private, giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you the reason [aitia] for this. You have often heard me speak [31d] of something related to the gods and to the daimones, a voice, which comes to me, and is the thing that Meletus ridicules in the indictment. This thing I have had ever since I was a child: it is a voice which comes to me and always forbids me to do something which I am going to do, but never commands me to do anything, and this is what stands in the way of being engaged in matters of the state. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, O men of Athens, that if I had engaged in these matters, I would have perished long ago and done no good either to you [31e] or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth [alēthēs]: for the truth is that no man who goes to war with you or any other multitude, honestly struggling against the commission of unrighteousness and wrong in the state, will save [sōzein] his life; [32a] he who will really fight for the right, if he would be safe [sōzein] even for a little while, must have a private life and not a public one [= one concerned with the dēmos].

I can give you as proofs of this, not words only, but deeds, which you value more [give more timē to] than words. Let me tell you a passage of my own life, which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that if I had not yielded I should have died at once. I will tell you a story - tasteless, perhaps, and commonplace, but nevertheless true [alēthēs]. [32b] The only office of state which I ever held, O men of Athens, was that of councilor; the tribe Antiochis, which is my
tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginoussa; and you proposed to try them all together, which was illegal against the nomos, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytaneis who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against you; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and have me taken away, and you called and shouted, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather than take part in your injustice because I feared imprisonment and death. This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power, they sent for me and four others into the rotunda, and bade us bring Leon of Salamis, as they wanted to execute him. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in words only, but in deed, that if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my only fear was the fear of doing an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end.

Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I had led a public life, supposing that like a good man I had always supported the right and had made justice, as I ought, the first thing? No, indeed, men of Athens, neither I nor any other. But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are slanderously termed my disciples or to any other. For the truth is that I have no regular disciples: but if anyone likes to come and hear me while I am pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he may freely come. Nor do I converse with those who pay only, and not with those who do not pay; but anyone, whether he be rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my words; and whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, that cannot be my responsibility, as I never taught him anything. And if anyone says that he has ever learned or heard anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, I should like you to know that he is speaking an untruth.

But I shall be asked, Why do people delight in continually conversing with you? I have told you already, Athenians, the whole truth about this: they like to hear the cross-examination of the pretenders to wisdom; there is amusement in this. And this is a duty which the god has imposed upon me, as I am assured by oracles, visions, and in every sort of way in which the will of divine power was ever signified to anyone. This is true, O Athenians; or, if not true, would be soon refuted. For if I am really corrupting the youth, and have corrupted some of them already, those of them who have grown up and have become sensible that I gave them bad advice in the days of their youth should come forward as accusers and take their revenge; and if they do not like to come themselves, some of their relatives, fathers, brothers, or other kinsmen, should say what evil their families suffered at my hands. Now is their time. Many of them I see in the court. There is Crito, who is of the same age and of the same deme with myself; and there is Critobulus his son, whom I also see. Then again there is Lysanias of Sphettos, who is the father of Aeschines—he is present; and also there is Antiphon of Cephisus, who is the father of Epigenes; and there are the brothers of several who have associated with me. There is Niscostratus the son of Theodotides, and the brother of Theodotus (now Theodotus himself is dead, and therefore he, at any rate, will not seek to stop him); and there is Paralus the son of Demodokos, who had a brother Theages; and Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato is present; and Aeantodorus, who is the brother of Apollodorus, whom I also see. I might mention a great many others, any of whom Meletus should have produced as witnesses in the course of
his speech; and let him still produce them, if he has forgotten - I will make way for him. And let him say, if he has any testimony of the sort that he can produce. Nay, Athenians, the very opposite is the truth. For all these are ready to witness on behalf of the corrupter, of the destroyer of their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus call me; not the corrupted youth only - there might have been a motive for that - but their uncorrupted elder relatives. Why should they too support me with their testimony? Why, indeed, except for the sake of truth and justice [dikaios], and because they know that I am speaking the truth [alēthēs], and that Meletus is lying.

Well, Athenians, this and the like of this is nearly all the defense that I have to offer. Yet a word more. Perhaps there may be someone who is offended at me, when he calls to mind how he himself, on a similar or even a less serious occasion [agōn], had recourse to prayers and supplications with many tears, and how he produced his children in court, which was a moving spectacle, together with a posse of his relations and friends; whereas I, who am probably in danger of my life, will do none of these things. Perhaps this may come into his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at this. Now if there be such a person among you, which I am far from affirming, I may fairly reply to him: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not of wood or stone, as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons. O Athenians, three in number, one of whom is growing up, and the two others are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? Not from any self-will or disregard of you [- not showing timē]. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But my reason simply is that I feel such conduct to be discreditable to myself, and you, and the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, whether deserved or not, ought not to debase himself. At any rate, the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among you who are said to be superior in wisdom [sophia] and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; and I think that they were a dishonor to the state, and that any stranger coming in would say of them that the most eminent men of Athens, to whom the Athenians themselves give honor [timē] and command, are no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those of us who are of reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are more inclined to condemn, not the man who is quiet, but the man who gets up a doleful scene, and makes the city ridiculous.

But, setting aside the question of dishonor, there seems to be something wrong in petitioning a judge, and thus procuring an acquittal instead of informing and convincing him. For his duty is, not to make a present of justice [dikaios], but to give judgment [krinein]; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws [nomos], and not according to his own good pleasure; and neither he nor we should get into the habit of perjuring ourselves - there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonorable [without dikē] and impious and wrong, especially now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if, O men of Athens, by force of persuasion and entreaty, I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and convict myself, in my own defense, of not believing in them. But that is not the case; for I do believe that there are gods, and in a far higher sense than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to the god I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best [aristos] for you and me.
Socrates’ Proposal for his Sentence

There are many reasons why I am not grieved, O men of Athens, at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; for I had thought that the majority against me would have been far larger; but now, had thirty votes gone over to the other side, I should have been acquitted. And I may say that I have escaped Meletus. And I may say more; for without the assistance of Anytus and Lycon, he would not have had a fifth part of the votes, as the law requires, in which case he would have incurred a fine of a thousand drachmae, as is evident.

And so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, O men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is that which I ought to pay or to endure? What shall be done to the man who has never had the wit to be idle during his whole life; but has been careless of what the many care about - wealth, and family interests, and military offices, and speaking in the assembly, and magistracies, and plots, and parties. Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to follow in this way and be saved, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to everyone of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the state before he looks to the interests of the state; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions. What shall be done to such a one? Doubtless some good thing, O men of Athens, if he has his reward; and the good should be of a kind suitable to him. What would be a reward suitable to a poor man who is your benefactor, who desires leisure that he may instruct you? There can be no more fitting reward than maintenance in the Prytaneion, a reward which he deserves far more than the citizen who has won the prize at Olympia in the horse or chariot race, whether the chariots were drawn by two horses or by many. For I am in want, and he has enough; and he only gives you the appearance of happiness [with good daimon], and I give you the reality. And if I am to estimate the penalty justly, I say that maintenance in the Prytaneion is the just return.

Perhaps you may think that I am braving you in saying this, as in what I said before about the tears and prayers. But that is not the case. I speak rather because I am convinced that I never intentionally wronged anyone, although I cannot convince you of that - for we have had a short conversation only; but if there were a law at Athens, such as there is in other cities, that a capital cause should not be decided in one day, then I believe that I should have convinced you; but now the time is too short. I cannot in a moment refute great slanders; and, as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty. Why should I? Because I am afraid of the penalty of death which Meletus proposes? When I do not know whether death is a good or an evil, why should I propose a penalty which would certainly be an evil? Shall I say imprisonment? And why should I live in prison, and be the slave of the magistrates of the year - of the Eleven? Or shall the penalty be a fine, and imprisonment until the fine is paid? There is the same objection. I should have to lie in prison, for money I have none, and I cannot pay. And if I say exile (and this may possibly be the penalty which you will affix), I must indeed be blinded by...
the love of life if I were to consider that when you, who are my own citizens, [37d] cannot endure my
discourses and words, and have found them so grievous and odious that you would want to have done
with them, others are likely to endure me. No, indeed, men of Athens, that is not very likely. And what a
life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city, living in ever-changing exile, and always being
driven out! For I am quite sure that into whatever place I go, as here so also there, the young men will
come to me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their desire: [37e] and if I let them
come, their fathers and friends will drive me out for their sakes.

Someone will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go into a foreign
city, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer
to this. For if I tell you that this would be a disobedience to a divine command, and therefore that I cannot
hold my tongue, [38a] you will not believe that I am serious; and if I say again that the greatest good of
man is daily to converse about virtue [aretē], and all that concerning which you hear me examining myself
and others, and that the life which is unexamined is not worth living - that you are still less likely to
believe. And yet what I say is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you. Moreover, I
am not accustomed to think that I deserve any punishment [kakos]. [38b] Had I money I might have
proposed to give you what I had, and have been none the worse. But you see that I have none, and can
only ask you to proportion the fine to my means. However, I think that I could afford a coin, and therefore
I propose that penalty; Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus, my friends here, bid me say thirty coins,
and they will be the sureties. Well then, say thirty coins, let that be the penalty; for that they will be
ample security to you.

(The jury votes to condemn Socrates to death.)

Socrates' Comments on his Sentence

[38c] Not much time will be gained, O Athenians, in return for [= from the cause of, aitia] the evil
name which you will get from the detractors of the city [polis], who will say that you killed Socrates, a
sophos man; for they will call me wise even although I am not sophos when they want to reproach you. If
you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far
advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. [38d] I am speaking now only to those of
you who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them: You think that I was
convicted through deficiency of words - I mean, that if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone, nothing
unsaid, I might have gained an acquittal. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of
words - certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would
have liked me to address you, weeping and wailing and lamenting, [38e] and saying and doing many
things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I say, are unworthy of me. But
I thought that I ought not to do anything common or mean in the hour of danger: nor do I now repent of
the manner of my defense, and I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your
manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought any man to use every way of escaping death. For
often in battle there is no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his
pursuers, [39a] he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a
man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding
unrighteousness; [39b] for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner
has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness,
has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death, and they,
too, go their ways condemned by the truth [alēthēs] to suffer the penalty of villainy and wrong [non-dike];
and I must abide by my award - let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated, - and I think that they are well.

[39c] And now, O men who have condemned me, I want to prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and that is the hour in which men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who are my murderers, that immediately after my death punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; [39d] accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more severe with you, and you will be more offended at them. For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable; the easiest and noblest [kalos] way is not to be crushing others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter [manteuesthai] before my departure, to the judges who have condemned me.

[39e] Friends, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about this thing which has happened, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then awhile, for we may as well talk [diamuthologeîn = speak through muthos] with one another while there is time. [40a] You are my friends, and I should like to show you the meaning of this event which has happened to me. O my judges - for you I may truly call judges - I should like to tell you of a wonderful circumstance. Hitherto the oracular [mantikos] daimôn within me has constantly been in the habit of opposing me even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error about anything; and now as you see there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the last and worst evil. [40b] But the oracle made no sign [sêmeion] of opposition, either as I was leaving my house and going out in the morning, or when I was going up into this court, or while I was speaking, at anything which I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech; but now in nothing I either said or did touching this matter has the oracle opposed me. What do I take to be the explanation of this? I will tell you. I regard this as a proof that what has happened to me is a good [agathos], [40c] and that those of us who think that death [kakos] is an evil are in error. This is a great proof to me of what I am saying, for the customary sign [sêmeion] would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good [agathos].

Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good [agathos], for one of two things: - either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul [psukhê] from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, [40d] but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain [kerdos]. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king, [40e] will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death is like this, I say that to die is gain [kerdos]; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good [agathos], O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? [41a] If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true [alêthês] judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aiakos and Triptolemos, and other sons of gods who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse
with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? No, if this be true [a]eledhēs, let me die again and again. [41b] I, too, shall have a wonderful interest in a place where I can converse with Palamedes, and Ajax the son of Telamon, and other heroes of old, who have suffered death through an unjust [non-dikaios] judgment [krisis]; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own sufferings [pathos] with theirs. Above all, I shall be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in that; I shall find out who is sophos, and who pretends to be sophos, and is not. What would not a man give, O judges, to be able to examine the leader of the great Trojan expedition; [41c] or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or numberless others, men and women too! What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! For in that world they do not put a man to death for this; certainly not. For besides being happier in that world than in this, they will be immortal, if what is said is true [a]eledhēs].

Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth [a]eledhēs - [41d] that no evil [kakos] can happen to a good [agathos] man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. But I see clearly that to die and be released was better for me; and therefore the oracle gave no sign [sēmeion]. For which reason also, I am not angry with my accusers, or my condemners; they have done me no harm, although neither of them meant to do me any good; [41e] and for this I may gently blame them.

Still I have a favor to ask of them. When my sons are grown up, I would ask you, O my friends, to punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about virtue [aretē]; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing, - then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really nothing. [42a] And if you do this, I and my sons will have experienced [pathos] just [dikaios] treatment at your hands.

The hour [hōra] of departure has arrived, and we go our ways - I to die, and you to live. Which is better is known only to the god.
Persons of the Dialogue

PHAEDO, who is the narrator of the dialogue to ECHECRATES of Phlius

SOCRATES

APOLLODORUS

SIMMIAS

CEBES

CRITO

ATTENDANT OF THE PRISON

Scene

The Prison of Socrates.

PLACE OF THE NARRATION: Phlius.

Echecrates. [57a] Were you yourself, Phaedo, in the prison with Socrates on the day when he drank the poison [pharmakon]?

Phaedo. Yes, Echecrates, I was.

Ech. I wish that you would tell me about his death. What did he say in his last hours? We were informed that he died by taking poison, but no one knew anything more; for no Phliasian ever goes to Athens now, [57b] and a long time has elapsed since any Athenian found his way to Phlius, and therefore we had no clear account.

Phaed. [58a] Did you not hear of the proceedings at the trial?

Ech. Yes; someone told us about the trial, and we could not understand why, having been condemned, he was put to death, as appeared, not at the time, but long afterwards. What was the reason of this?

Phaed. An accident [tukhé], Echecrates. The reason was that the stern of the ship which the Athenians send to Delos happened to have been garlanded [stephein] on the day before he was tried.

Ech. What is this ship?

Phaed. This is the ship in which, as the Athenians say, Theseus went to Crete when he took with him the fourteen youths, [58b] and was the savior [sôzein] of them and of himself. And they were said to have vowed to Apollo at the time, that if they were saved [sôzein] they would make an annual pilgrimage [theôria] to Delos. Now this custom still continues, and the whole period of the pilgrimage [theôria] to and from Delos, [58c] beginning when the priest of Apollo garlands [stephein] the stern of the ship, is the
season of the theoria, during which the city is not allowed to be polluted by public executions; and often, when the vessel is detained by adverse winds, there may be a very considerable delay. As I was saying, the ship was garlanded [stephein] on the day before the trial, and this was the reason why Socrates lay in prison and was not put to death until long after he was condemned.

Ech. What was the manner of his death, Phaedo? What was said or done? And which of his friends had he with him? Or were they not allowed by the authorities to be present? And did he die alone?

Phaed. [58d] No; there were several of his friends with him.

Ech. If you have nothing to do, I wish that you would tell me what passed, as exactly as you can.

Phaed. I have nothing to do, and will try to gratify your wish. For to me, too, there is no greater pleasure than to have Socrates brought back into my memory [memnēsthai], whether I speak myself or hear another speak of him.

Ech. You will have listeners who are of the same mind with you, and I hope that you will be as exact as you can.

Phaed. [58e] I remember the strange feeling which came over me at being with him. For I could hardly believe that I was present at the death of a friend, and therefore I did not pity him, Echecrates; his mien and his language were so noble and fearless in the hour of death that to me he appeared blessed [eudaimōn]. I thought that in going to the other world he could not be without a divine call, and that he would be well off, [59a] if any man ever was, when he arrived there, and therefore I did not pity him as might seem natural at such a time. But neither could I feel the pleasure which I usually felt in philosophical discourse (for philosophy was the theme of which we spoke). I was pleased, and I was also pained, because I knew that he was soon to die, and this strange mixture of feeling was shared by us all; we were laughing and weeping by turns, especially the excitable Apollodorus - [59b] you know the sort of man?

Ech. Yes.

Phaed. He was quite overcome; and I myself and all of us were greatly moved.

Ech. Who were present?

Phaed. Of native Athenians there were, besides Apollodorus, Critobulus and his father Crito, Hermogenes, Epigenes, Aeschines, and Antisthenes; likewise Ctesippus of the deme of Paeania, Menexenus, and some others; but Plato, if I am not mistaken, was not feeling well.

Ech. [59c] Were there any strangers?

Phaed. Yes, there were; Simmias the Theban, and Cebes, and Phaedondes; Euclid and Terpison, who came from Megara.

Ech. And was Aristippus there, and Cleombrotus?
Phaedo

Phaed. No, they were said to be in Aegina.

Ech. Anyone else?

Phaed. I think that these were about all.

Ech. And what was the discourse of which you spoke?

Phaed. I will begin at the beginning, and endeavor to repeat the entire conversation. [59d] You must understand that we had been previously in the habit of assembling early in the morning at the court in which the trial was held, and which is not far from the prison. There we remained talking with one another until the opening of the prison doors (for they were not opened very early), and then went in and generally passed the day with Socrates. On the last morning the meeting was earlier than usual; [59e] this was owing to our having heard on the previous evening that the sacred ship had arrived from Delos, and therefore we agreed to meet very early at the accustomed place. On our going to the prison, the jailer who answered the door, instead of admitting us, came out and told us to wait and he would call us. “For the Eleven,” he said, “are now with Socrates; they are taking off his chains, and giving orders that he is to die today.” He soon returned and said that we might come in. [60a] On entering we found Socrates just released from chains, and Xanthippe, whom you know, sitting by him, and holding his child in her arms. When she saw us she uttered a cry and said, as women will: “O Socrates, this is the last time that either you will converse with your friends, or they with you.” Socrates turned to Crito and said: “Crito, let someone take her home.” Some of Crito’s people accordingly led her away, crying out and beating herself. [60b] And when she was gone, Socrates, sitting up on the couch, began to bend and rub his leg, saying, as he rubbed: “How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they never come to a man together, and yet he who pursues either of them is generally compelled to take the other. They are two, and yet they grow together out of one head or stem; [60c] and I cannot help thinking that if Aesop had noticed them, he would have made a fable [μυθος] about the god trying to reconcile their strife, and when he could not, he fastened their heads together; and this is the reason why when one comes the other follows, as I find in my own case pleasure comes following after the pain in my leg, which was caused by the chain.”

Upon this Cebes said: I am very glad indeed, Socrates, that you mentioned the name of Aesop. [60d] For that reminds me of a question which has been asked by others, and was asked of me only the day before yesterday by Evenus the poet, and as he will be sure to ask again, you may as well tell me what I should say to him, if you would like him to have an answer. He wanted to know why you who never before composed a line of poetry, now that you are in prison are putting Aesop into verse, and also composing a hymn in honor of Apollo. Tell him, Cebes, he replied, that I had no idea of rivaling him or his poems; [60e] which is the truth, for I knew that I could not do that. But I wanted to see whether I could engage with the holiness of certain dreams. In the course of my life I have often had intimations in dreams “that I should make music [μουσική].” The same dream came to me sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, but always saying the same or nearly the same words: Make and cultivate music [μουσική], said the dream. [61a] And hitherto I had imagined that this was only intended to exhort and encourage me in the study of philosophy, which has always been the pursuit of my life, and is the noblest and best of music [μουσική]. The dream was bidding me to do what I was already doing, in the same way that the competitor in a race
is called on by the spectators to run when he is already running. But I was not certain of this, as the dream might have meant music [mousike] in the popular sense of the word, and being under sentence of death, and the festival giving me a respite, I thought that I should be safer if I engaged with the holiness, and, in obedience to the dream, composed a few verses before I departed. And first I made a hymn [humnos] in honor of the god of the festival, and then considering that a poet, if he is really to be a poet or maker, should not only put words together but make stories [muthoi], and as I am not a maker of stories [muthologikos], I took some fables [muthoi] of Aesop, which I had ready at hand and knew, and turned them into verse. Tell Evenus this, and bid him be of good cheer; that I would have him come after me if he be a wise man, and not tarry; [61c] and that today I am likely to be going, for the Athenians say that I must.

Simmias said: What a message for such a man! Having been a frequent companion of his, I should say that, as far as I know him, he will never take your advice unless he is obliged.

Why, said Socrates, - is not Evenus a philosopher? I think that he is, said Simmias. Then he, or any man who has the spirit of philosophy, will be willing to die, though he will not take his own life, for that is held not to be right.

[61d] Here he changed his position, and put his legs off the couch on to the ground, and during the rest of the conversation he remained sitting.

Why do you say, inquired Cebes, that a man ought not to take his own life, but that the philosopher will be ready to follow the dying?

Socrates replied: And have you, Cebes and Simmias, who are acquainted with Philolaus, never heard him speak of this?

I never understood him, Socrates. My words, too, are only an echo; but I am very willing to say what I have heard: and indeed, [61e] as I am going to another place, I ought to be thinking and talking [= telling the muthos] of the nature of the journey which I am about to take. What can I do better in the interval between this and the setting of the sun?

Then tell me, Socrates, why is suicide held not to be right? as I have certainly heard Philolaus affirm when he was staying with us at Thebes: and there are others who say the same, [62a] although none of them has ever made me understand him.

But do your best, replied Socrates, and the day may come when you will understand. I suppose that you wonder why, as most things which are evil may be accidentally good, this is to be the only exception (for may not death, too, be better than life in some cases?), and why, when a man is better dead, he is not permitted to be his own benefactor, but must wait for the hand of another.

By Zeus! Yes, indeed, said Cebes, laughing, and speaking in his native Doric.

I admit the appearance of inconsistency, replied Socrates, [62b] but there may not be any real inconsistency after all in this. There is a doctrine uttered in secret that man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door of his prison and run away; this doctrine appears to be a great one, which I do not
quite understand. Yet I, too, believe that the gods are our guardians, and that we are a possession of theirs. Do you not agree?

Yes, I agree to that, said Cebe. [62c] And if one of your own possessions, an ox or an ass, for example took the liberty of putting himself out of the way when you had not indicated [sēmainein] your wish that he should die, would you not be angry with him, and would you not punish him if you could?

Certainly, replied Cebe.

Then there may be reason in saying that a man should wait, and not take his own life until the god summons him, as he is now summoning me.

Yes, Socrates, said Cebe, there is surely reason in that. And yet how can you reconcile this seemingly true belief that the god is our guardian and we his possessions, [62d] with that willingness to die which we were attributing to the philosopher? That the wisest of men should be willing to leave this service in which they are ruled by the gods who are the best of rulers is not reasonable, for surely no wise man thinks that when set at liberty he can take better care of himself than the gods take of him. A fool may perhaps think this - he may argue that he had better run away from his master, [62e] not considering that his duty is to remain to the end, and not to run away from the good, and that there is no sense in his running away. But the wise man will want to be ever with him who is better than himself. Now this, Socrates, is the reverse of what was just now said; for upon this view the wise man should sorrow and the fool rejoice at passing out of life.

[63a] The earnestness of Cebe seemed to please Socrates. Here, said he, turning to us, is a man who is always inquiring, and is not to be convinced all in a moment, nor by every argument.

And in this case, added Simmias, his objection does appear to me to have some force. For what can be the meaning of a truly wise man wanting to flee and lightly leave a master who is better than himself? And I rather imagine that Cebe is referring to you; he thinks that you are too ready to leave us, and too ready to leave the gods who, as you acknowledge, are our good rulers.

[63b] Yes, replied Socrates; there is reason in that. And this indictment you think that I ought to answer as if I were in court?

That is what we should like, said Simmias. Then I must try to make a better impression upon you than I did when defending myself before the jury. For I am quite ready to acknowledge, Simmias and Cebe, that I ought to be grieved at death, [63c] if I were not persuaded that I am going to other gods who are wise and good (of this I am as certain as I can be of anything of the sort) and to men departed (though I am not so certain of this), who are better than those whom I leave behind; and therefore I do not grieve as I might have done, for I have good hope that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and, as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than for the evil.

But do you mean to take away your thoughts with you, Socrates? said Simmias. Will you not communicate them to us? - [63d] the benefit is one in which we too may hope to share. Moreover, if you succeed in convincing us, that will be an answer to the charge against yourself.

I will do my best, replied Socrates. But you must first let me hear what Crito wants; he was going to say something to me.
Only this, Socrates, replied Crito: the attendant who is to give you the poison has been telling me that you are not to talk much, and he wants me to let you know this; for that by talking heat is increased, and this interferes with the action of the poison; those who excite themselves are sometimes obliged to drink the poison two or three times.

Then, said Socrates, let him mind his business and be prepared to give the poison two or three times, if necessary; that is all.

I was almost certain that you would say that, replied Crito; but I was obliged to satisfy him.

Never mind him, he said. And now I will make answer to you, O my judges, and show that he who has lived as a true philosopher has reason to be of good cheer when he is about to die, and that after death he may hope to receive the greatest good in the other world. And how this may be, Simmias and Cebes, I will endeavor to explain. For I deem that the true disciple of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that he is ever pursuing death and dying; and if this is true, why, having had the desire of death all his life long, should he regret the arrival of that which he has been always pursuing and desiring?

Simmias laughed and said: Though not in a laughing humor, I swear that I cannot help laughing when I think what the wicked world will say when they hear this. They will say that this is very true, and our people at home will agree with them in saying that the life which philosophers desire is truly death, and that they have found them out to be deserving of the death which they desire.

And they are right, Simmias, in saying this, with the exception of the words “They have found them out”; for they have not found out what is the nature of this death which the true philosopher desires, or how he deserves or desires death. But let us leave them and have a word with ourselves: Do we believe that there is such a thing as death?

To be sure, replied Simmias. And is this anything but the separation of psukhē and body? And being dead is the attainment of this separation; when the psukhē exists in itself, and is parted from the body and the body is parted from the psukhē - that is death?

Exactly: that and nothing else, he replied. And what do you say of another question, my friend, about which I should like to have your opinion, and the answer to which will probably throw light on our present inquiry: Do you think that the philosopher ought to care about the pleasures of eating and drinking?

Certainly not, answered Simmias. And what do you say of the pleasures of love - should he care about them?

By no means. And will he think much of the other ways of indulging the body - for example, the acquisition of costly raiment, or sandals, or other adornments of the body? Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise anything more than nature needs? What do you say?
I should say the true philosopher would despise them. Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the psukhē and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to be rid of the body and turn to the psukhē.

That is true. In matters of this sort philosophers, above all other men, may be observed in every sort of way [65a] to dissoever the psukhē from the body.

That is true. Whereas, Simmias, the rest of the world are of opinion that a life which has no bodily pleasures and no part in them is not worth having; but that he who thinks nothing of bodily pleasures is almost as though he were dead.

That is quite true. What again shall we say of the actual acquisition of knowledge? - is the body, if invited to share in the inquiry, a hinderer or a helper? [65b] I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not, as the poets are always telling us, inaccurate witnesses? And yet, if even they are inaccurate and indistinct, what is to be said of the other senses? - for you will allow that they are the best of them?

Certainly, he replied. Then when does the psukhē attain truth? - for in attempting to consider anything in company with the body it is obviously deceived.

[65c] Yes, that is true. Then must not existence be revealed to it in thought, if at all? Yes. And thought is best when the mind is gathered into itself and none of these things trouble it - neither sounds nor sights nor pain nor any pleasure - when it has as little as possible to do with the body, and has no bodily sense or feeling, but is aspiring after being?

That is true. [65d] And in this the philosopher dishonors the body; his psukhē runs away from the body and desires to be alone and by itself?

That is true. Well, but there is another thing, Simmias: Is there or is there not an absolute justice?

Assuredly there is. And an absolute beauty and absolute good? Of course. But did you ever behold any of them with your eyes? Certainly not. Or did you ever reach them with any other bodily sense? (and I speak not of these alone, but of absolute greatness, and health, and strength, [65e] and of the essence or true nature of everything). Has the reality of them ever been perceived by you through the bodily organs? Or rather, is not the nearest approach to the knowledge of their several natures made by him who so orders his intellectual vision as to have the most exact conception of the essence of that which he considers?

Certainly. And he attains to the knowledge of them in their highest purity who goes to each of them with the mind alone, not allowing when in the act of thought the intrusion or introduction of sight or any other sense in the company of reason, [66a] but with the very light of the mind in its clearness penetrates into the very fight of truth in each; he has got rid, as far as he can, of eyes and ears and of the whole body, which he conceives of only as a disturbing element, hindering the psukhē from the acquisition of knowledge when in company with it - is not this the sort of man who, if ever man did, is likely to attain the knowledge of existence?
There is admirable truth in that, Socrates, replied Simmias. And when they consider all this, must not true philosophers make a reflection, of which they will speak to one another in such words as these: We have found, they will say, a path of speculation which seems to bring us and the argument to the conclusion that while we are in the body, and while the psukhē is mingled with this mass of evil, our desire will not be satisfied, and our desire is of the truth. For the body is a source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food; and also is liable to diseases which overtake and impede us in the search after truth: and by filling us so full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies, and idols, and every sort of folly, prevents our ever having, as people say, so much as a thought. For whence come wars, and fighting, and factions? Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? For wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and in consequence of all these things the time which ought to be given to philosophy is lost. Moreover, if there is time and an inclination toward philosophy, yet the body introduces a turmoil and confusion and fear into the course of speculation, and hinders us from seeing the truth: and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body, and the psukhē in itself must behold all things in themselves: then I suppose that we shall attain that which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers, and that is wisdom, not while we live, but after death, as the argument indicates; for if while in company with the body the psukhē cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things seems to follow - either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the psukhē will be in itself alone and without the body. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body, and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when the god himself is pleased to release us. And then the foolishness of the body will be cleared away and we shall be pure and hold converse with other pure psukhai, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere; and this is surely the light of truth.

Certainly, Socrates. But if this is true, O my friend, then there is great hope that, going whither I go, I shall there be satisfied with that which has been the chief concern of you and me in our lives. And now that the hour of departure is appointed to me, this is the hope with which I depart, and not I only, but every man who believes that he has his mind purified.

Certainly, replied Simmias. And what is purification but the separation of the psukhē from the body, as I was saying before; the habit of the psukhē gathering and collecting itself into itself, out of all the courses of the body; the dwelling in its own place alone, as in another life, so also in this, as far as it can; the release of the psukhē from the chains of the body?

Very true, he said. And what is that which is termed death, but this very separation and release of the psukhē from the body?

To be sure, he said. And the true philosophers, and they only, study and are eager to release the psukhē. Is not the separation and release of the psukhē from the body their especial study? That is true. And as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, and yet feeling regret when death comes.

Certainly. Then, Simmias, as the true philosophers are ever studying death, to them, of all men, death is the least terrible. Look at the matter in this way: how inconsistent of them to have been always
enemies of the body, and wanting to have the psukhē alone, and when this is granted to them, to be
trembling and regretting; instead of rejoicing at their departing to that place where, when they arrive,
they hope to gain that which in life they loved [68a] (and this was wisdom), and at the same time to be
rid of the company of their enemy. Many a man has been willing to go to the world beyond in the hope of
seeing there an earthly love, or wife, or son, and conversing with them. And will he who is a true lover of
wisdom, and is persuaded in like manner [68b] that only in that other world over there can he worthily
enjoy it, still be regretful at death? Will he not depart with joy? Surely he will, my friend, if he be a true
philosopher. For he will have a firm conviction that there only, and nowhere else, he can find wisdom in
its purity. And if this be true, he would be very absurd, as I was saying, if he were to fear death.

He would, indeed, replied Simmias. And when you see a man who is feeling regretful at the
approach of death, is not his reluctance a sufficient proof that he is not a lover of wisdom, but a lover of
the body, [68c] and probably at the same time a lover of either money or power, or both?

That is very true, he replied. There is a virtue, Simmias, which is named courage. Is not that a
special attribute of the philosopher?

Certainly. Again, there is temperance. Is not the calm, and control, and disdain of the passions which
even the many call temperance, a quality belonging only to those who despise the body and live in
philosophy?

[68d] That is not to be denied. For the courage and temperance of other men, if you will consider
them, are really a contradiction.

How is that, Socrates? Well, he said, you are aware that death is regarded by men in general as a
great evil.

That is true, he said. And do not courageous men endure death because they are afraid of yet greater
evils?

That is true. Then all but the philosophers are courageous only from fear, and because they are afraid;
and yet that a man should be courageous from fear, is surely a strange thing.

[68e] Very true. And are not the temperate exactly in the same case? They are temperate because
they are intemperate - which may seem to be a contradiction, but is nevertheless the sort of thing which
happens with this foolish temperance. For there are pleasures which they must have, and are afraid of
losing; and therefore they abstain from one class of pleasures because they are overcome by another; and
whereas intemperance is defined as “being under the dominion of pleasure,” [69a] they overcome only
because they are overcome by pleasure. And that is what I mean by saying that they are temperate
through intemperance.

That appears to be true. Yet the exchange of one fear or pleasure or pain for another fear or pleasure
or pain, which are measured like coins, the greater with the less, is not the exchange of virtue. O my dear
Simmias, is there not one true coin for which all things ought to exchange? - [69b] and that is wisdom;
and only in exchange for this, and in company with this, is anything truly bought or sold, whether
courage or temperance or justice. And is not all true virtue the companion of wisdom, no matter what
fears or pleasures or other similar goods or evils may or may not attend it? But the virtue which is made
up of these goods, when they are severed from wisdom and exchanged with one another, is a shadow of
virtue only, nor is there any freedom or health or truth in it; but in the true exchange there is a purging
away of all these things, [69c] and temperance, and justice, and courage, and wisdom itself are a purgation of them. And I conceive that the founders of the mysteries [teleta] had a real meaning and were not mere triflers when they intimated in a figure [or 'riddle' = verb of ainigma] long ago that he who passes without initiation [amētos] and without ritual induction [atelestos, from verb of telos] into the house of Hades will live in a slough, but that he who arrives there after purification [= verb of katharsis] and induction [verb of telos] will then dwell [verb of oikos] with the gods. For many, as they say in the mysteries [teleta], are the bearers of the thyrsos [narthēx], but few are the bakkhoi [= devotees of Bacchus] - [69d] meaning, as I interpret the words, the true philosophers. In the number of whom I have been seeking, according to my ability, to find a place during my whole life; whether I have sought in a right way or not, and whether I have succeeded or not, I shall truly know in a little while, if the god will, when I myself arrive in the other world: that is my belief. And now, Simmias and Cebes, I have answered those who charge me with not grieving or feeling regretful at parting from you and my masters in this world; and I am right in having no regrets, [69e] for I believe that I shall find other masters and friends who are as good in the world beyond. But all men cannot believe this, and I shall be glad if my words have any more success with you than with the jurymen of the Athenians.

Cebes answered: I agree, Socrates, in the greater part of what you say. [70a] But in what relates to the psukhē, men are apt to be incredulous; they fear that when it leaves the body its place may be nowhere, and that on the very day of death it may be destroyed and perish - immediately on its release from the body, issuing forth like smoke or air and vanishing away into nothingness. For if it could only hold together and be itself after it was released from the evils of the body, [70b] there would be good reason to hope, Socrates, that what you say is true. But much persuasion [paramuthia = diversion by way of muthos] and many arguments are required in order to prove that when the man is dead the psukhē yet exists, and has any force of intelligence.

True, Cebes, said Socrates; and shall I suggest that we talk [diamuthologeîn = speak through muthos] a little of the probabilities of these things?

I am sure, said Cebes, that I should greatly like to know your opinion about them.

I reckon, said Socrates, that no one who heard me now, [70c] not even if he were one of my old enemies, the comic poets, could accuse me of idle talking about matters in which I have no concern. Let us, then, if you please, proceed with the inquiry.

Whether the psukhai of men after death are or are not in the world of Hades, is a question which may be argued in this manner: The ancient doctrine of which I have been speaking affirms that they go from this into the other world, and return hither, and are born from the dead. Now if this be true, and the living come from the dead, then our psukhai must be in the other world, [70d] for if not, how could they be born again? And this would be conclusive, if there were any real evidence that the living are only born from the dead; but if there is no evidence of this, then other arguments will have to be adduced.

That is very true, replied Cebes. Then let us consider this question, not in relation to man only, but in relation to animals generally, and to plants, and to everything of which there is generation, and the proof will be easier. [70e] Are not all things which have opposites generated out of their opposites? I mean such things as good and evil, just and unjust - and there are innumerable other opposites which are generated out of opposites. And I want to show that this holds universally of all opposites; I mean to say, for example, that anything which becomes greater must become greater after being less.
True. And that which becomes less [71a] must have been once greater and then become less.

Yes. And the weaker is generated from the stronger, and the swifter from the slower.

Very true. And the worse is from the better, and the more just is from the more unjust.

Of course. And is this true of all opposites? And are we convinced that all of them are generated out of opposites?

Yes. And in this universal opposition of all things, are there not also two intermediate processes which are ever going on, [71b] from one to the other, and back again; where there is a greater and a less there is also an intermediate process of increase and diminution, and that which grows is said to wax, and that which decays to wane?

Yes, he said. And there are many other processes, such as division and composition, cooling and heating, which equally involve a passage into and out of one another. And this holds of all opposites, even though not always expressed in words - they are generated out of one another, and there is a passing or process from one to the other of them?

[71c] Very true, he replied. Well, and is there not an opposite of life, as sleep is the opposite of waking?

True, he said. And what is that? Death, he answered. And these, then, are generated, if they are opposites, the one from the other, and have there their two intermediate processes also?

Of course. Now, said Socrates, I will analyze one of the two pairs of opposites which I have mentioned to you, and also its intermediate processes, and you shall analyze the other to me. The state of sleep is opposed to the state of waking, and out of sleeping waking is generated, and out of waking, sleeping, [71d] and the process of generation is in the one case falling asleep, and in the other waking up. Are you agreed about that?

Quite agreed. Then suppose that you analyze life and death to me in the same manner. Is not death opposed to life?

Yes. And they are generated one from the other? Yes. What is generated from life? Death. And what from death? I can only say in answer - life. Then the living, whether things or persons, Cebes, are generated from the dead?

[71e] That is clear, he replied. Then the inference is, that our psukhai are in the world below? That is true. And one of the two processes or generations is visible - for surely the act of dying is visible?

Surely, he said. And may not the other be inferred as the complement of nature, who is not to be supposed to go on one leg only? And if not, a corresponding process of generation in death must also be assigned to it?
Certainly, he replied. And what is that process? Revival. And revival, if there be such a thing, is the birth of the dead into the world of the living?

Quite true. Then there is a new way in which we arrive at the inference that the living come from the dead, just as the dead come from the living; and if this is true, then the psukhai of the dead must be in some place out of which they come again. And this, as I think, has been satisfactorily proved.

Yes, Socrates, he said; all this seems to flow necessarily out of our previous admissions.

And that these admissions are not unfair, Cebes, he said, may be shown, as I think, in this way: If generation were in a straight line only, and there were no compensation or circle in nature, no turn or return into one another, then you know that all things would at last have the same form and pass into the same state, and there would be no more generation of them.

What do you mean? he said. A simple thing enough, which I will illustrate by the case of sleep, he replied. You know that if there were no compensation of sleeping and waking, the story of the sleeping Endymion would in the end have no meaning, because all other things would be asleep, too, and he would not be thought of. Or if there were composition only, and no division of substances, then the chaos of Anaxagoras would come again. And in like manner, my dear Cebes, if all things which partook of life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death, and did not come to life again, all would at last die, and nothing would be alive - how could this be otherwise? For if the living spring from any others who are not the dead, and they die, must not all things at last be swallowed up in death?

There is no escape from that, Socrates, said Cebes; and I think that what you say is entirely true.

Yes, he said, Cebes, I entirely think so, too; and we are not walking in a vain imagination; but I am confident in the belief that there truly is such a thing as living again, and that the living spring from the dead, and that the psukhai of the dead are in existence, and that the good psukhai have a better portion than the evil.

Cebes added: Your favorite doctrine, Socrates, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we learned that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible unless our psukhē was in some place before existing in the human form; here, then, is another argument for the immortality of the psukhē.

But tell me, Cebes, said Simmias, interposing, what proofs are given of this doctrine of recollection? I am not very sure at this moment that I remember them.

One excellent proof, said Cebes, is afforded by questions. If you put a question to a person in a right way, he will give a true answer of himself; but how could he do this unless there were knowledge and right reason already in him? And this is most clearly shown when he is taken to a diagram or to anything of that sort.

But if, said Socrates, you are still incredulous, Simmias, I would ask you whether you may not agree with me when you look at the matter in another way; I mean, if you are still incredulous as to whether knowledge is recollection.
Incredulous, I am not, said Simmias; but I want to have this doctrine of recollection brought to my own recollection, and, from what Cebes has said, I am beginning to recollect and be convinced; but I should still like to hear what more you have to say.

[73c] This is what I would say, he replied: We should agree, if I am not mistaken, that what a man recollects he must have known at some previous time.

Very true. And what is the nature of this recollection? And, in asking this, I mean to ask whether, when a person has already seen or heard or in any way perceived anything, and he knows not only that, but something else of which he has not the same, but another knowledge, we may not fairly say that [73d] he recollects that which comes into his mind. Are we agreed about that?

What do you mean? I mean what I may illustrate by the following instance: The knowledge of a lyre is not the same as the knowledge of a man?

True. And yet what is the feeling of lovers when they recognize a lyre, or a garment, or anything else which the beloved has been in the habit of using? Do not they, from knowing the lyre, form in the mind’s eye an image of the youth to whom the lyre belongs? And this is recollection; and in the same way anyone who sees Simmias may remember Cebes; and there are endless other things of the same nature.

Yes, indeed, there are - endless, replied Simmias. [73e] And this sort of thing, he said, is recollection, and is most commonly a process of recovering that which has been forgotten through time and inattention.

Very true, he said. Well; and may you not also from seeing the picture of a horse or a lyre remember a man? And from the picture of Simmias, you may be led to remember Cebes?

True. Or you may also be led to the recollection of Simmias himself? [74a] True, he said. And in all these cases, the recollection may be derived from things either like or unlike?

That is true. And when the recollection is derived from like things, then there is sure to be another question, which is, whether the likeness of that which is recollected is in any way defective or not.

Very true, he said. And shall we proceed a step further, and affirm that there is such a thing as equality, not of wood with wood, or of stone with stone, but that, over and above this, there is equality in the abstract? Shall we affirm this?

[74b] Affirm, yes, and swear to it, replied Simmias, with all the confidence in life.

And do we know the nature of this abstract essence? To be sure, he said. And whence did we obtain this knowledge? Did we not see equalities of material things, such as pieces of wood and stones, and gather from them the idea of an equality which is different from them? - you will admit that? Or look at the matter again in this way: Do not the same pieces of wood or stone appear at one time equal, and at another time unequal?
That is certain. But are real equals ever unequal? Or is the idea of equality ever inequality?

[74c] That surely was never yet known, Socrates. Then these (so-called) equals are not the same with the idea of equality?

I should say, clearly not, Socrates. And yet from these equals, although differing from the idea of equality, you conceived and attained that idea?

Very true, he said. Which might be like, or might be unlike them? Yes. But that makes no difference; whenever from seeing one thing [74d] you conceived another, whether like or unlike, there must surely have been an act of recollection?

Very true. But what would you say of equal portions of wood and stone, or other material equals? And what is the impression produced by them? Are they equals in the same sense as absolute equality? Or do they fall short of this in a measure?

Yes, he said, in a very great measure, too. And must we not allow that when I or anyone look at any object, and perceive that the object aims at being some other thing, but falls short of, [74e] and cannot attain to it - he who makes this observation must have had previous knowledge of that to which, as he says, the other, although similar, was inferior?

Certainly. And has not this been our case in the matter of equals and of absolute equality?

Precisely. Then we must have known absolute equality [75a] previously to the time when we first saw the material equals, and reflected that all these apparent equals aim at this absolute equality, but fall short of it?

That is true. And we recognize also that this absolute equality has only been known, and can only be known, through the medium of sight or touch, or of some other sense. And this I would affirm of all such conceptions.

Yes, Socrates, as far as the argument is concerned, one of them is the same as the other.

And from the senses, then, is derived the knowledge that [75b] all sensible things aim at an idea of equality of which they fall short - is not that true?

Yes. Then before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way, we must have had a knowledge of absolute equality, or we could not have referred to that the equals which are derived from the senses - for to that they all aspire, and of that they fall short?

That, Socrates, is certainly to be inferred from the previous statements.

And did we not see and hear and acquire our other senses as soon as we were born?

[75c] Certainly. Then we must have acquired the knowledge of the ideal equal at some time previous to this?
Yes. That is to say, before we were born, I suppose? True. And if we acquired this knowledge before we were born, and were born having it, then we also knew before we were born and at the instant of birth not only equal or the greater or the less, but all other ideas; for we are not speaking only of equality absolute, but of beauty, goodness, justice, holiness, [75d] and all which we stamp with the name of essence in the dialectical process, when we ask and answer questions. Of all this we may certainly affirm that we acquired the knowledge before birth?

That is true. But if, after having acquired, we have not forgotten that which we acquired, then we must always have been born with knowledge, and shall always continue to know as long as life lasts - for knowing is the acquiring and retaining knowledge and not forgetting. Is not forgetting, Simmias, just the losing of knowledge?

Quite true, Socrates. [75e] But if the knowledge which we acquired before birth was lost by us at birth, and afterwards by the use of the senses we recovered that which we previously knew, will not that which we call learning be a process of recovering our knowledge, and may not this be rightly termed recollection by us?

Very true. For this is clear, [76a] that when we perceived something, either by the help of sight or hearing, or some other sense, there was no difficulty in receiving from this a conception of some other thing like or unlike which had been forgotten and which was associated with this; and therefore, as I was saying, one of two alternatives follows: either we had this knowledge at birth, and continued to know through life; or, after birth, those who are said to learn only remember, and learning is recollection only.

Yes, that is quite true, Socrates. And which alternative, Simmias, do you prefer? [76b] Had we the knowledge at our birth, or did we remember afterwards the things which we knew previously to our birth?

I cannot decide at the moment. At any rate you can decide whether he who has knowledge ought or ought not to be able to give a reason for what he knows.

Certainly, he ought. But do you think that every man is able to give a reason about these very matters of which we are speaking?

I wish that they could, Socrates, but I greatly fear that tomorrow at this time there will be no one able to give a reason worth having.

[76c] Then you are not of the opinion, Simmias, that all men know these things?

Certainly not. Then they are in process of recollecting that which they learned before.

Certainly. But when did our psukhai acquire this knowledge? - not since we were born as men?

Certainly not. And therefore previously? Yes. Then, Simmias, our psukhai must have existed before they were in the form of man - without bodies, and must have had intelligence.

Unless indeed you suppose, Socrates, that these notions were given us at the moment of birth; [76d] for this is the only time that remains.
Phaedo

Yes, my friend, but when did we lose them? For they are not in us when we are born - that is admitted. Did we lose them at the moment of receiving them, or at some other time?

No, Socrates. I perceive that I was unconsciously talking nonsense. Then may we not say, Simmias, that if, as we are always repeating, there is an absolute beauty, and goodness, and essence in general, and to this, [76e] which is now discovered to be a previous condition of our being, we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them - assuming this to have a prior existence, then our psukhai must have had a prior existence, but if not, there would be no force in the argument? There can be no doubt that if these absolute ideas existed before we were born, then our psukhai must have existed before we were born, and if not the ideas, then not the psukhê.

Yes, Socrates: I am convinced that there is precisely the same necessity for the existence of the psukhê before birth, [77a] and of the essence of which you are speaking; and the argument arrives at a result which happily agrees with my own notion. For there is nothing which to my mind is so evident as that beauty, goodness, and other notions of which you were just now speaking have a most real and absolute existence; and I am satisfied with the proof.

Well, but is Cebes equally satisfied? For I must convince him too.

I think, said Simmias, that Cebes is satisfied: although he is the most incredulous of mortals, yet I believe that he is convinced [77b] of the existence of the psukhê before birth. But that after death the psukhê will continue to exist is not yet proven even to my own satisfaction. I cannot get rid of the feeling of the many to which Cebes was referring - the feeling that when the man dies the psukhê may be scattered, and that this may be the end of it. For admitting that it may be generated and created in some other place, and may have existed before entering the human body, why after having entered in and gone out again may it not itself be destroyed and come to an end?

[77c] Very true, Simmias, said Cebes; that our psukhê existed before we were born was the first half of the argument, and this appears to have been proven; that the psukhê will exist after death as well as before birth is the other half of which the proof is still wanting, and has to be supplied.

But that proof, Simmias and Cebes, has been already given, said Socrates. if you put the two arguments together - I mean this and the former one, in which we admitted that everything living is born of the dead. For if the psukhê existed before birth, [77d] and in coming to life and being born can be born only from death and dying, must it not after death continue to exist, since it has to be born again? Surely the proof which you desire has been already furnished. Still I suspect that you and Simmias would be glad to probe the argument further; like children, you are haunted with a fear that when the psukhê leaves the body, the wind may really blow it away and scatter it; [77e] especially if a man should happen to die in stormy weather and not when the sky is calm.

Cebes answered with a smile: Then, Socrates, you must argue us out of our fears - and yet, strictly speaking, they are not our fears, but there is a child within us to whom death is a sort of hobgoblin; him too we must persuade not to be afraid when he is alone with him in the dark.

Socrates said: Let the voice of the charmer be applied daily until you have charmed him away.
[78a] And where shall we find a good charmer of our fears, Socrates, when you are gone?

Hellas, he replied, is a large place, Cebes, and has many good men, and there are barbarous races not a few: seek for him among them all, far and wide, sparing neither pains nor money; for there is no better way of using your money. And you must not forget to seek for him among yourselves too; for he is nowhere more likely to be found.

The search, replied Cebes, shall certainly be made. And now, if you please, let us return to the point of the argument at which we digressed.

[78b] By all means, replied Socrates; what else should I please? Very good, he said. Must we not, said Socrates, ask ourselves some question of this sort? What is that which, as we imagine, is liable to be scattered away, and about which we fear? and what again is that about which we have no fear? And then we may proceed to inquire whether that which suffers dispersion is or is not of the nature of psukhē - our hopes and fears as to our own psukhai will turn upon that.

That is true, he said. Now the compound [78c] or composite may be supposed to be naturally capable of being dissolved in like manner as of being compounded; but that which is uncompounded, and that only, must be, if anything is, indissoluble.

Yes; that is what I should imagine, said Cebes. And the uncompounded may be assumed to be the same and unchanging, where the compound is always changing and never the same?

That I also think, he said. Then now let us return to the previous discussion. [78d] Is that idea or essence, which in the dialectical process we define as essence of true existence - whether essence of equality, beauty, or anything else: are these essences, I say, liable at times to some degree of change? or are they each of them always what they are, having the same simple, self-existent and unchanging forms, and not admitting of variation at all, or in any way, or at any time?

They must be always the same, Socrates, replied Cebes. [78e] And what would you say of the many beautiful - whether men or horses or garments or any other things which may be called equal or beautiful - are they all unchanging and the same always, or quite the reverse? May they not rather be described as almost always changing and hardly ever the same either with themselves or with one another?

The latter, replied Cebes; they are always in a state of change. [79a] And these you can touch and see and perceive with the senses, but the unchanging things you can only perceive with the mind - they are invisible and are not seen?

That is very true, he said. Well, then, he added, let us suppose that there are two sorts of existences, one seen, the other unseen.

Let us suppose them. The seen is the changing, and the unseen is the unchanging. That may be also supposed. [79b] And, further, is not one part of us body, and the rest of us psukhē?
To be sure. And to which class may we say that the body is more alike and akin? Clearly to the seen: no one can doubt that. And is the psukhē seen or not seen? Not by man, Socrates. And by “seen” and “not seen” is meant by us that which is or is not visible to the eye of man?

Yes, to the eye of man. And what do we say of the psukhē? is that seen or not seen? Not seen. Unseen then? Yes. Then the psukhē is more like to the unseen, and the body to the seen? [79c] That is most certain, Socrates. And were we not saying long ago that the psukhē when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses) - were we not saying that the psukhē too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round it, and it is like a drunkard when under their influence?

Very true. But when returning into itself it reflects; [79d] then it passes into the realm of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are its kindred, and with them it ever lives, when it is by itself and is not let or hindered; then it ceases from its erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. And this state of the psukhē is called wisdom?

That is well and truly said, Socrates, he replied. And to which class is the psukhē more nearly alike and akin, [79e] as far as may be inferred from this argument, as well as from the preceding one?

I think, Socrates, that, in the opinion of everyone who follows the argument, the psukhē will be infinitely more like the unchangeable - even the most stupid person will not deny that.

And the body is more like the changing? Yes. Yet once more consider the matter in this light: When the psukhē [80a] and the body are united, then nature orders the psukhē to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve.

Now which of these two functions is akin to the divine? and which to the mortal? Does not the divine appear to you to be that which naturally orders and rules, and the mortal that which is subject and servant?

True. And which does the psukhē resemble? The psukhē resembles the divine and the body the mortal - there can be no doubt of that, Socrates.

Then reflect, Cebes: is not the conclusion of the whole matter this? - [80b] that the psukhē is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intelligible, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintelligible, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable. Can this, my dear Cebes. be denied?

No, indeed. But if this is true, then is not the body liable to speedy dissolution?

And is not the psukhē almost or altogether indissoluble? [80c] Certainly. And do you further observe, that after a man is dead, the body, which is the visible part of man, and has a visible framework, which is called a corpse, and which would naturally be dissolved and decomposed and dissipated, is not dissolved or decomposed at once, but may remain for a good while, if the constitution be sound at the time of death, and in season [hōra]? For the body when shrunk and embalmed, as is the custom in Egypt, may
remain almost entire through infinite ages; and even in decay, [80d] still there are some portions, such as the bones and ligaments, which are practically indestructible. You allow that?

Yes. And are we to suppose that the psukhē, which is invisible, in passing to the true Hades, which like it is invisible, and pure, and noble, and on its way to the good and wise god, whither, if the god will, my psukhē is also soon to go - that the psukhē, I repeat, if this be its nature and origin, is blown away and perishes immediately on quitting the body as the many say? [80e] That can never be, dear Simmias and Cebes. The truth rather is that the psukhē which is pure at departing draws after it no bodily taint, having never voluntarily had connection with the body, which it is ever avoiding, itself gathered into itself (for such abstraction has been the study of its life). And what does this mean but that it has been a true disciple of philosophy [81a] and has practiced how to die easily? And is not philosophy the practice of death?

Certainly. That psukhē, I say, itself invisible, departs to the invisible world to the divine and immortal and rational: thither arriving, it lives in bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills, and forever dwells, as they say of the initiated, in company with the gods. Is not this true, Cebes?

Yes, said Cebes, beyond a doubt. But the psukhē [81b] which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of its departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in love with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until it is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste and use for the purposes of his lusts - the psukhē, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy - do you suppose that such a psukhē as this [81c] will depart pure and unalloyed?

That is impossible, he replied. It is engrossed by the corporeal, which the continual association and constant care of the body have been made natural to it.

Very true. And this, my friend, may be conceived to be that heavy, weighty, earthy element of sight by which such a psukhē is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world, because it is afraid of the invisible and of the world below - [81d] prowling about tombs and sepulchres, in the neighborhood of which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of psukhai which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight and therefore visible.

That is very likely, Socrates. Yes, that is very likely, Cebes; and these must be the psukhai, not of the good, but of the evil, who are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life; [81e] and they continue to wander until the desire which haunts them is satisfied and they are imprisoned in another body. And they may be supposed to be fixed in the same natures which they had in their former life.

What natures do you mean, Socrates? I mean to say that men who have followed after gluttony, and wantonness, and drunkenness, and have had no thought of avoiding them, would pass into asses and animals of that sort. [82a] What do you think?

I think that exceedingly probable. And those who have chosen the portion of injustice, and tyranny, and violence, will pass into wolves, or into hawks and kites; whither else can we suppose them to go?
Phaedo

Yes, said Cebes: that is doubtless the place of natures such as theirs. And there is no difficulty, he said, in assigning to all of them places answering to their several natures and propensities?

There is not, he said. Even among them some are happier than others; and the happiest both in themselves and their place of abode are those who have practiced the civil and social virtues which are called temperance and justice, [82b] and are acquired by habit and attention without philosophy and mind.

Why are they the happiest? Because they may be expected to pass into some gentle, social nature which is like their own, such as that of bees or ants, or even back again into the form of man, and just and moderate men spring from them.

That is not impossible. But he who is a philosopher or lover of learning, and is entirely pure at departing, [82c] is alone permitted to reach the gods. And this is the reason, Simmias and Cebes, why the true votaries of philosophy abstain from all fleshly lusts, and endure and refuse to give themselves up to them - not because they fear poverty or the ruin of their families, like the lovers of money, and the world in general; nor like the lovers of power and honor, because they dread the dishonor or disgrace of evil deeds.

No, Socrates, that would not become them, said Cebes. No, indeed, he replied; [82d] and therefore they who have a care of their psukhai, and do not merely live in the fashions of the body, say farewell to all this; they will not walk in the ways of the blind: and when philosophy offers them purification and release from evil, they feel that they ought not to resist its influence, and to it they incline, and whither it leads they follow it.

What do you mean, Socrates? I will tell you, he said. The lovers of knowledge are conscious that their psukhai, when philosophy receives them, [82e] are simply fastened and glued to their bodies: the psukhē is only able to view existence through the bars of a prison, and not in its own nature; it is wallowing in the mire of all ignorance; and philosophy, seeing the terrible nature of its confinement, and that the captive through desire is led [83a] to conspire in its own captivity (for the lovers of knowledge are aware that this was the original state of the psukhē, and that when it was in this state philosophy received and gently counseled [paramutheîsthai = divert by way of muthos] it, and wanted to release it, pointing out to it that the eye is full of deceit, and also the ear and other senses, and persuading it to retire from them in all but the necessary use of them and to be gathered up and collected into itself, and to trust only to [83b] itself and its own intuitions of absolute existence, and mistrust that which comes to it through others and is subject to vicissitude) - philosophy shows it that this is visible and tangible, but that what it sees in its own nature is intellectual and invisible. And the psukhē of the true philosopher thinks that it ought not to resist this deliverance, and therefore abstains from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as it is able; reflecting that when a man has great joys or sorrows or fears or desires he suffers from them, not the sort of evil which might be anticipated - as, for example, the loss of his health or property, [83c] which he has sacrificed to his lusts - but he has suffered an evil greater far, which is the greatest and worst of all evils, and one of which he never thinks.

And what is that, Socrates? said Cebes. Why, this: When the feeling of pleasure or pain in the psukhē is most intense, all of us naturally suppose that the object of this intense feeling is then plainest and truest: but this is not the case.
Phaedo

[83d] Very true. And this is the state in which the psukhē is most enthralled by the body.

How is that? Why, because each pleasure and pain is a sort of nail which nails and rivets the psukhē to the body, and engrosses it and makes it believe that thing to be true which the body affirms to be true; and from agreeing with the body and having the same delights it is obliged to have the same habits and ways, and is not likely ever to be pure at its departure to the world below, but is always saturated with the body; so that it soon sinks into another body [83e] and there germinates and grows, and has therefore no part in the communion of the divine and pure and simple.

That is most true, Socrates, answered Cebes. And this, Cebes, is the reason why the true lovers of knowledge are temperate and brave; and not for the reason which the world gives.

[84a] Certainly not. Certainly not! For not in that way does the psukhē of a philosopher reason; it will not ask philosophy to release it in order that when released it may deliver itself up again to the thralldom of pleasures and pains, doing a work only to be undone again, weaving instead of unweaving its Penelope's web. But it will make itself a calm of passion and follow Reason, and dwell in it, beholding the true and divine (which is not matter of opinion), and thence derive nourishment. [84b] Thus it seeks to live while it lives, and after death it hopes to go to its own kindred and to be freed from human ills. Never fear, Simmias and Cebes, that a psukhē which has been thus nurtured and has had these pursuits, will at its departure from the body be scattered and blown away by the winds and be nowhere and nothing.

When Socrates had done speaking, for a considerable time there was silence; [84c] he himself and most of us appeared to be meditating on what had been said; only Cebes and Simmias spoke a few words to one another. And Socrates observing this asked them what they thought of the argument, and whether there was anything wanting? For, said he, much is still open to suspicion and attack, if anyone were disposed to sift the matter thoroughly. If you are talking of something else I would rather not interrupt you, but if you are still doubtful about the argument [84d] do not hesitate to say exactly what you think, and let us have anything better which you can suggest; and if I am likely to be of any use, allow me to help you.

Simmias said: I must confess, Socrates, that doubts did arise in our minds, and each of us was urging and inciting the other to put the question which he wanted to have answered and which neither of us liked to ask, fearing that our importunity might be troublesome under present circumstances.

Socrates smiled and said: [84e] O Simmias, how strange that is; I am not very likely to persuade other men that I do not regard my present situation as a misfortune, if I am unable to persuade you, and you will keep fancying that I am at all more troubled now than at any other time. Will you not allow that I have as much of a prophetic [mantikos] capacity in me as the swans? For they, when they perceive that they must die, having sung all their life long, [85a] do then sing more than ever, rejoicing in the thought that they are about to go away to the god whose ministers [θεράπων plural] they are. But men, because they are themselves afraid of death, slanderously affirm of the swans that they sing a lament at the last, not considering that no bird sings when cold, or hungry, or in pain, nor even the nightingale, nor the swallow, nor yet the hoopoe; which are said indeed to tune a song of sorrow, although I do not believe this to be true of them any more than of the swans. [85b] But because they are sacred to Apollo and have a prophetic [mantikos] capacity and anticipate the good things of another world, therefore they sing and
rejoice in that day more than they ever did before. And I, too, believing myself to be the consecrated minister of the same god, and a fellow minister [homo-doulos] with the swans, and thinking that I have received from my master a prophetic [mantikos] capacity that is not inferior to theirs, would not go out of life in a less happy state than the swans. Cease to mind then about this, but speak and ask anything which you like, while the eleven magistrates of Athens allow.

Well, Socrates, said Simmias, [85c] then I will tell you my difficulty, and Cebes will tell you his. For I dare say that you, Socrates, feel, as I do, how very hard or almost impossible is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these in the present life. And yet I should deem him a coward who did not prove what is said about them to the uttermost, or whose heart failed him before he had examined them on every side. For he should persevere until he has attained one of two things: either he should discover or learn the truth about them; or, if this is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human notions, [85d] and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life - not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of the god which will more surely and safely carry him. And now, as you bid me, I will venture to question you, as I should not like to reproach myself hereafter with not having said at the time what I think. For when I consider the matter either alone or with Cebes, the argument does certainly appear to me, Socrates, to be not sufficient.

[85e] Socrates answered: I dare say, my friend, that you may be right, but I should like to know in what respect the argument is not sufficient.

In this respect, replied Simmias: Might not a person use the same argument about tuning [harmonia] and the lyre - might he not say that tuning [harmonia] is a thing invisible, incorporeal, fair, divine, [86a] abiding in the lyre which is tuned, but that the lyre and the strings are matter and material, composite, earthy, and akin to mortality? And when someone breaks the lyre, or cuts and rends the strings, then he who takes this view would argue as you do, and on the same analogy, that the tuning [harmonia] survives and has not perished; for you cannot imagine, as we would say, that the lyre without the strings, and the broken strings themselves, remain, and yet that the tuning [harmonia], [86b] which is of godly and immortal nature and kindred, has perished - and perished too before the mortal. The tuning [harmonia], he would say, certainly exists somewhere, and the wood and strings will decay before that decays. For I suspect, Socrates, that the notion of the psukhē which we are all of us inclined to entertain, would also be yours, and that you too would conceive the body to be strung up, and held together, by the elements of hot and cold, wet and dry, and the like, [86c] and that the psukhē is the tuning [harmonia] or due proportionate admixture of them. And, if this is true, the inference clearly is that when the strings of the body are unduly loosened or overstrained through disorder or other injury, then the psukhē, though most divine, like other tunings [harmonia] of music or of the works of art, of course perishes at once, although the material remains of the body may last for a considerable time, [86d] until they are either decayed or burnt. Now if anyone maintained that the psukhē, being the tuning [harmonia] of the elements of the body, first perishes in that which is called death, how shall we answer him?

Socrates looked round at us as his manner was, and said, with a smile: Simmias has reason on his side; and why does not some one of you who is able than myself answer him? for there is force in his attack upon me. [86e] But perhaps, before we answer him, we had better also hear what Cebes has to say against the argument - this will give us time for reflection, and when both of them have spoken, we may either assent to them if their words appear to be in consonance with the truth, or if not, we may take up the other side, and argue with them. Please to tell me then, Cebes, he said, what was the difficulty which troubled you?
Cebes said: I will tell you. My feeling is that the argument is still in the same position, and open to the same objections which were urged before; [87a] for I am ready to admit that the existence of the psukhē before entering into the bodily form has been very ingeniously, and, as I may be allowed to say, quite sufficiently proven; but the existence of the psukhē after death is still, in my judgment, unproven. Now my objection is not the same as that of Simmias; for I am not disposed to deny that the psukhē is stronger and more lasting than the body, being of opinion that in all such respects the psukhē very far excels the body. Well, then, says the argument to me, why do you remain unconvinced? When you see that the weaker is still in existence after the man is dead, [87b] will you not admit that the more lasting must also be saved [sōzein] during the same period of time? Now I, like Simmias, must employ a figure; and I shall ask you to consider whether the figure is to the point. The parallel which I will suppose is that of an old weaver, who dies, and after his death somebody says: he is not dead, he must have been saved [= sōzein]; and he appeals to the coat which he himself wove and wore, and which is still whole and undecayed. And then he proceeds to ask of someone who is incredulous, [87c] whether a man lasts longer, or the coat which is in use and wear; and when he is answered that a man lasts far longer, thinks that he has thus certainly demonstrated the survival of the man, who is the more lasting, because the less lasting remains. But that, Simmias, as I would beg you to observe, is not the truth; everyone sees that he who talks thus is talking nonsense. For the truth is that this weaver, having worn and woven many such coats, [87d] though he outlived several of them, was himself outlived by the last; but this is surely very far from proving that a man is slighter and weaker than a coat. Now the relation of the body to the psukhē may be expressed in a similar figure; for you may say with reason that the psukhē is lasting, and the body weak and short-lived in comparison. And every psukhē may be said to wear out many bodies, especially in the course of a long life. For if while the man is alive the body deliquesces and decays, [87e] and yet the psukhē always weaves its garment anew and repairs the waste, then of course, when the psukhē perishes, it must have on its last garment, and this only will survive it; but then again when the psukhē is dead the body will at last show its native weakness, and soon pass into decay. And therefore this is an argument on which I would rather not rely [88a] as proving that the psukhē exists after death. For suppose that we grant even more than you affirm as within the range of possibility, and besides acknowledging that the psukhē existed before birth admit also that after death the psukhai of some are existing still, and will exist, and will be born and die again and again, and that there is a natural strength in the psukhē which will hold out and be born many times - for all this, we may be still inclined to think that it will weary in the labors of successive births, and may at last succumb in one of its deaths and utterly perish; [88b] and this death and dissolution of the body which brings destruction to the psukhē may be unknown to any of us, for no one of us can have had any experience of it: and if this be true, then I say that he who is confident in death has but a foolish confidence, unless he is able to prove that the psukhē is altogether immortal and imperishable. But if he is not able to prove this, he who is about to die will always have reason to fear that when the body is disunited, the psukhē also may utterly perish.

All of us, as we afterwards remarked to one another, [88c] had an unpleasant feeling at hearing them say this. When we had been so firmly convinced before, now to have our faith shaken seemed to introduce a confusion and uncertainty, not only into the previous argument, but into any future one; either we were not good judges, or there were no real grounds of belief.

Ech. There I feel with you - indeed I do, Phaedo, and when you were speaking, I was beginning to ask myself the same question: [88d] What argument can I ever trust again? For what could be more convincing than the argument of Socrates, which has now fallen into discredit? That the psukhē is a
tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) is a doctrine which has always had a wonderful attraction for me, and, when mentioned, came back to me at once, as my own original conviction. And now I must begin again and find another argument which will assure me that when the man is dead the \(\text{psukhē}\) dies not with him. Tell me, I beg, \(\text{Socrates}\) how did \(\text{Socrates}\) proceed? Did he appear to share the unpleasant feeling which you mention? or did he receive the interruption calmly and give a sufficient answer? Tell us, as exactly as you can, what passed.

\(\text{Phaedo}\). Often, \(\text{Echecrates}\), as I have admired \(\text{Socrates}\), I never admired him more than at that moment. \([89a]\) That he should be able to answer was nothing, but what astonished me was, first, the gentle and pleasant and approving manner in which he regarded the words of the young men, and then his quick sense of the wound which had been inflicted by the argument, and his ready application of the healing art. He might be compared to a general rallying his defeated and broken army, urging them to follow him and return to the field of argument.

\(\text{Ech.}\) How was that?

\(\text{Phaed.}\) You shall hear, for I was close to him on his right hand, seated on a sort of stool, \([89b]\) and he on a couch which was a good deal higher. Now he had a way of playing with my hair, and then he smoothed my head, and pressed the hair upon my neck, and said: Tomorrow, \(\text{Phaedo}\), I suppose that these fair locks of yours will be severed.

Yes, \(\text{Socrates}\), I suppose that they will, I replied. Not so if you will take my advice. What shall I do with them? I said. Today, he replied, and not tomorrow, if this argument dies and cannot be brought to life again \([\text{anabiōsasthai}]\) by us, you and I will both shave our locks; \([89c]\) and if I were you, and could not maintain my ground against \(\text{Simmias}\) and \(\text{Cebes}\), I would myself take an oath, like the Argives, not to wear hair any more until I had renewed the conflict and defeated them.

Yes, I said, but Herakles himself is said not to be a match for two. Summon me then, he said, and I will be your Iolaos until the sun goes down.

I summon you rather, I said, not as Herakles summoning Iolaos, but as Iolaos might summon Herakles.

That will be all the same, he said. But first let us take care that we avoid a danger.

And what is that? I said. \([89d]\) The danger of becoming misologists, he replied, which is one of the very worst things that can happen to us. For as there are misanthropists or haters of men, there are also misologists or haters of ideas, and both spring from the same cause, which is ignorance of the world. Misanthropy arises from the too great confidence of inexperience; you trust a man and think him altogether true and good and faithful, and then in a little while he turns out to be false and knavish; and then another and another, and when this has happened several times to a man, especially within the circle of his most trusted friends, as he deems them, \([89e]\) and he has often quarreled with them, he at last hates all men, and believes that no one has any good in him at all. I dare say that you must have observed this.
Yes, I said. And is not this discreditable? The reason is that a man, having to deal with other men, has no knowledge of them; for if he had knowledge he would have known the true state of the case, that few are the good and few the evil, [90a] and that the great majority are in the interval between them.

How do you mean? I said. I mean, he replied, as you might say of the very large and very small, that nothing is more uncommon than a very large or a very small man; and this applies generally to all extremes, whether of great and small, or swift and slow, or fair and foul, or black and white: and whether the instances you select be men or dogs or anything else, few are the extremes, but many are in the mean between them. Did you never observe this?

Yes, I said, I have. And do you not imagine, [90b] he said, that if there were a competition [agon] of evil, the first in evil would be found to be very few?

Yes, that is very likely, I said. Yes, that is very likely, he replied; not that in this respect arguments are like men - there I was led on by you to say more than I had intended; but the point of comparison was that when a simple man who has no skill in dialectics believes an argument to be true which he afterwards imagines to be false, whether really false or not, and then another and another, he has no longer any faith left, [90c] and great disputers, as you know, come to think, at last that they have grown to be the wisest of mankind; for they alone perceive the utter unsoundness and instability of all arguments, or, indeed, of all things, which, like the currents in the Euripus, are going up and down in never-ceasing ebb and flow.

That is quite true, I said. Yes, Phaedo, he replied, and very melancholy too, if there be such a thing as truth or certainty or power of knowing at all, [90d] that a man should have lighted upon some argument or other which at first seemed true and then turned out to be false, and instead of blaming himself and his own want of wit, because he is annoyed, should at last be too glad to transfer the blame from himself to arguments in general; and forever afterwards should hate and revile them, and lose the truth and knowledge of existence.

Yes, indeed, I said; that is very melancholy. Let us, then, in the first place, he said, [90e] be careful of admitting into our psukhai the notion that there is no truth or health or soundness in any arguments at all; but let us rather say that there is as yet no health in us, and that we must quit ourselves like men and do our best to gain health - you and all other men with a view to the whole of your future life, [91a] and I myself with a view to death. For at this moment I am sensible that I have not the temper of a philosopher; like the vulgar, I am only a partisan. For the partisan, when he is engaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions. And the difference between him and me at the present moment is only this - that whereas he seeks to convince his hearers that what he says is true, I am rather seeking to convince myself; to convince my hearers is a secondary matter with me. [91b] And do but see how much I gain by this. For if what I say is true, then I do well to be persuaded of the truth, but if there be nothing after death, still, during the short time that remains, I shall save my friends from lamentations, and my ignorance will not last, and therefore no harm will be done. This is the state of mind, Simmias and Cebes, in which I approach the argument. [91c] And I would ask you to be thinking of the truth and not of Socrates: agree with me, if I seem to you to be speaking the truth; or if not, withstand me might and main, that I may not deceive you as well as myself in my enthusiasm, and, like the bee, leave my sting in you before I die.
And now let us proceed, he said. And first of all let me be sure that I have in my mind what you were saying. Simmias, if I remember rightly, has fears and misgivings whether the psukhē, being in the form of tuning [harmonia], although a fairer and diviner thing than the body, [91d] may not perish first. On the other hand, Cebes appeared to grant that the psukhē was more lasting than the body, but he said that no one could know whether the psukhē, after having worn out many bodies, might not perish itself and leave its last body behind it; and that this is death, which is the destruction not of the body but of the psukhē, for in the body the work of destruction is ever going on. Are not these, Simmias and Cebes, the points which we have to consider?

[91e] They both agreed to this statement of them. He proceeded: And did you deny the force of the whole preceding argument, or of a part only? Of a part only, they replied. And what did you think, he said, of that part of the argument in which we said that knowledge was recollection only, and inferred from this that the psukhē must have previously existed somewhere else [92a] before it was enclosed in the body? Cebes said that he had been wonderfully impressed by that part of the argument, and that his conviction remained unshaken. Simmias agreed, and added that he himself could hardly imagine the possibility of his ever thinking differently about that.

But, rejoined Socrates, you will have to think differently, my Theban friend, if you still maintain that tuning [harmonia] is a compound, and that the psukhē is a tuning [harmonia] which is made out of strings set in the frame of the body; [92b] for you will surely never allow yourself to say that a tuning [harmonia] is prior to the elements which compose the tuning [harmonia].

No, Socrates, that is impossible. But do you not see that you are saying this when you say that the psukhē existed before it took the form and body of man, and was made up of elements which as yet had no existence? For tuning [harmonia] is not a sort of thing like the psukhē, as you suppose; but first the lyre, and the strings, and the sounds [92c] exist in a state of being out of tune, and then tuning [harmonia] is made last of all, and perishes first. And how can such a notion of the psukhē as this agree with the other?

Not at all, replied Simmias. And yet, he said, there surely ought to be tuning [harmonia] when tuning [harmonia] is the theme of discourse.

There ought, replied Simmias. But there is no tuning [harmonia], he said, in the two propositions that knowledge is recollection, and that the psukhē is a tuning [harmonia]. Which of them, then, will you retain?

I think, he replied, that I have a much stronger faith, Socrates, in the first of the two, which has been fully demonstrated to me, than in the latter, which has not been demonstrated at all, [92d] but rests only on probable and plausible grounds; and I know too well that these arguments from probabilities are impostors, and unless great caution is observed in the use of them they are apt to be deceptive - in geometry, and in other things too. But the doctrine of knowledge and recollection has been proven to me on trustworthy grounds; and the proof was that the psukhē must have existed before it came into the body, because to it belongs the essence of which the very name implies existence. [92e] Having, as I am convinced, rightly accepted this conclusion, and on sufficient grounds, I must, as I suppose, cease to argue or allow others to argue that the psukhē is a tuning [harmonia].
Let me put the matter, Simmias, he said, in another point of view: Do you imagine that a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) or any other composition can be in a state other than \([93a]\) that of the elements out of which it is compounded?

Certainly not. Or do or suffer anything other than they do or suffer? He agreed. Then a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) does not lead the parts or elements which make up the tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\), but only follows them.

He assented. For tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) cannot possibly have any motion, or sound, or other quality which is opposed to the parts.

That would be impossible, he replied. And does not every tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) depend upon the manner in which the elements are harmonized?

I do not understand you, he said. I mean to say that a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) admits of degrees, and is more of a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\), \([93b]\) and more completely a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\), when more completely harmonized, if that be possible; and less of a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\), and less completely a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\), when less harmonized.

True. But does the psukhē admit of degrees? or is one psukhē in the very least degree more or less, or more or less completely, a psukhē than another?

Not in the least. Yet surely one psukhē is said to have intelligence and virtue, and to be good, and another psukhē is said to have folly and vice, and to be an evil psukhē: and this is said truly?

\([93c]\) Yes, truly. But what will those who maintain the psukhē to be a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) say of this presence of virtue and vice in the psukhē? Will they say that there is another state of being in tune \([\text{harmonia}]\), and another state of being out of tune, and that the virtuous psukhē is tuned, and itself being a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) has another tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) within it, and that the vicious psukhē is untuned and has no tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) within it?

I cannot say, replied Simmias; but I suppose that something of that kind would be asserted by those who take this view.

And the admission is already made \([93d]\) that no psukhē is more a psukhē than another; and this is equivalent to admitting that tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) is not more or less tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\), or more or less completely a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\)?

Quite true. And that which is not more or less a tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\) is not more or less harmonized?

True. And that which is not more or less harmonized cannot have more or less of tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\), but only an equal tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\)?

Yes, an equal tuning \([\text{harmonia}]\). Then one psukhē not being more or less absolutely a psukhē than another, \([93e]\) is not more or less harmonized?
Exactly. And therefore has neither more nor less of tuning [harmonia] or of being out of tune? She has not. And having neither more nor less of tuning [harmonia] or of being out of tune, one psukhē has no more vice or virtue than another, if vice be the state of being out of tune and virtue the state of being in tune [harmonia]?

Not at all more. Or speaking more correctly, Simmias, if it is a tuning [harmonia], will never have any vice; because a tuning [harmonia], being absolutely a tuning [harmonia], has no part in that which is out of tune?

No. And therefore a psukhē which is absolutely a psukhē has no vice? How can it have, consistently with the preceding argument? Then, according to this, if the psukhai of all animals are equally and absolutely psukhai, they will be equally good?

I agree with you, Socrates, he said. And can all this be true, think you? he said; and are all these consequences admissible which nevertheless seem to follow from the assumption that the psukhē is a tuning [harmonia]?

Certainly not, he said. Once more, he said, what ruling principle is there of human things other than the psukhē, and especially the wise psukhē? Do you know of any?

Indeed, I do not. And is the psukhē in agreement with the affections of the body? or is it at variance with them? For example, when the body is hot and thirsty, does not the psukhē incline us against drinking? and when the body is hungry, against eating? And this is only one instance out of ten thousand of the opposition of the psukhē to the things of the body.

Very true. But we have already acknowledged that the psukhē, being a tuning [harmonia], can never utter a note at variance with the tensions and relaxations and vibrations and other affections of the strings out of which it is composed; it can only follow, it cannot lead them?

Yes, he said, we acknowledged that, certainly. And yet do we not now discover the psukhē to be doing the exact opposite - leading the elements of which it is believed to be composed; almost always opposing and coercing them in all sorts of ways throughout life, sometimes more violently with the pains of medicine and gymnastic; then again more gently; threatening and also reprimanding the desires, passions, fears, as if talking to a thing which is not itself, as Homer in the “Odyssey” represents Odysseus doing in the words,

“He beat his breast, and reproached his heart with this utterance [muthos]: Endure, my heart; far worse have thou endured!” Do you think that Homer could have written this under the idea that the psukhē is a tuning [harmonia] capable of being led by the affections of the body, and not rather of a nature which leads and masters them; and itself a far diviner thing than any tuning [harmonia]?

Yes, Socrates, I quite agree to that. Then, my friend, we can never be right in saying that the psukhē is a tuning [harmonia], for that would clearly contradict the divine Homer as well as ourselves.

True, he said. Thus much, said Socrates, of Harmonia, your Theban goddess, Cebes, who has not been ungracious to us, I think; but what shall I say to the Theban Kadmos, and how shall I propitiate him?
I think that you will discover a way of propitiating him, said Cebe; I am sure that you have answered the argument about tuning [harmonia] in a manner that I could never have expected. For when Simmias mentioned his objection, I quite imagined that no answer could be given to him, [95b] and therefore I was surprised at finding that his argument could not sustain the first onset of yours; and not impossibly the other, whom you call Kadmos, may share a similar fate.

Nay, my good friend, said Socrates, let us not boast, lest some evil eye should put to flight the word which I am about to speak. That, however, may be left in the hands of those above, while I draw near in Homeric fashion, and try the mettle of your words. Briefly, the sum of your objection is as follows: You want to have proven to you that the psukhē is imperishable [95c] and immortal, and you think that the philosopher who is confident in death has but a vain and foolish confidence, if he thinks that he will fare better than one who has led another sort of life, in the world below, unless he can prove this; and you say that the demonstration of the strength and divinity of the psukhē, and of its existence prior to our becoming men, does not necessarily imply its immortality. Granting that the psukhē is long-lived, and has known and done much in a former state, still it is not on that account immortal; [95d] and its entrance into the human form may be a sort of disease which is the beginning of dissolution, and may at last, after the toils of life are over, end in that which is called death. And whether the psukhē enters into the body once only or many times, that, as you would say, makes no difference in the fears of individuals. For any man, who is not devoid of natural feeling, has reason to fear, if he has no knowledge or proof of the psukhē’s immortality. [95e] That is what I suppose you to say, Cebe, which I designedly repeat, in order that nothing may escape us, and that you may, if you wish, add or subtract anything.

But, said Cebe, as far as I can see at present, I have nothing to add or subtract; you have expressed my meaning.

Socrates paused awhile, and seemed to be absorbed in reflection. At length he said: This is a very serious inquiry which you are raising, Cebe, involving the whole question of generation and corruption, [96a] about which I will, if you like, give you my own experience; and you can apply this, if you think that anything which I say will avail towards the solution of your difficulty.

I should very much like, said Cebe, to hear what you have to say.

Then I will tell you, said Socrates. When I was young, Cebe, I had a prodigious desire to know that department of philosophy which is called Natural Science; this appeared to me to have lofty aims, as being the science which has to do with the causes of things, and which teaches why a thing is, and is created and destroyed; [96b] and I was always agitating myself with the consideration of such questions as these: Is the growth of animals the result of some decay which the hot and cold principle contracts, as some have said? Is the blood the element with which we think, or the air, or the fire? or perhaps nothing of this sort - but the brain may be the originating power of the perceptions of hearing and sight and smell, and memory and opinion may come from them, and science may be based on memory and opinion when no longer in motion, but at rest. And then I went on to examine the decay of them, [96c] and then to the things of the sky above and the earth below, and at last I concluded that I was wholly incapable of these inquiries, as I will satisfactorily prove to you. For I was fascinated by them to such a degree that my eyes grew blind to things that I had seemed to myself, and also to others, to know quite well; and I forgot what I had before thought to be self-evident, that the growth of man is the result of eating and drinking; [96d] for when by the digestion of food flesh is added to flesh and bone to bone, and whenever there is
an aggregation of congenial elements, the lesser bulk becomes larger and the small man greater. Was not that a reasonable notion?

Yes, said Cebes. I think so. Well; but let me tell you something more. There was a time when I thought that I understood the meaning of greater and less pretty well; and when I saw a great man standing by a little one I fancied that one was taller than the other by a head; [96e] or one horse would appear to be greater than another horse: and still more clearly did I seem to perceive that ten is two more than eight, and that two cubits are more than one, because two is twice one.

And what is now your notion of such matters? said Cebes. I should be far enough from imagining, he replied, that I knew the cause of any of them, indeed I should, for I cannot satisfy myself that when one is added to one, the one to which the addition is made becomes two, [97a] or that the two units added together make two by reason of the addition. For I cannot understand how, when separated from the other, each of them was one and not two, and now, when they are brought together, the mere juxtaposition of them can be the cause of their becoming two: nor can I understand how the division of one is the way to make two; for then a different cause [97b] would produce the same effect - as in the former instance the addition and juxtaposition of one to one was the cause of two, in this the separation and subtraction of one from the other would be the cause. Nor am I any longer satisfied that I understand the reason why one or anything else either is generated or destroyed or is at all, but I have in my mind some confused notion of another method, and can never admit this.

Then I heard someone who had a book of Anaxagoras, as he said, [97c] out of which he read that mind was the disposer and cause of all, and I was quite delighted at the notion of this, which appeared admirable, and I said to myself: If mind is the disposer, mind will dispose all for the best, and put each particular in the best place; and I argued that if anyone desired to find out the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of anything, he must find out what state of being or suffering or doing was best for that thing, [97d] and therefore a man had only to consider the best for himself and others, and then he would also know the worse, for that the same science comprised both. And I rejoiced to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the causes of existence such as I desired, and I imagined that he would tell me first whether the earth is flat or round; [97e] and then he would further explain the cause and the necessity of this, and would teach me the nature of the best and show that this was best; and if he said that the earth was in the center, he would explain that this position was the best, and I should be satisfied if this were shown to me, [98a] and not want any other sort of cause. And I thought that I would then go and ask him about the sun and moon and stars, and that he would explain to me their comparative swiftness, and their returnings and various states, and how their several affections, active and passive, were all for the best. For I could not imagine that when he spoke of mind as the disposer of them, he would give any other account of their being as they are, except that this was best; [98b] and I thought when he had explained to me in detail the cause of each and the cause of all, he would go on to explain to me what was best for each and what was best for all. I had hopes which I would not have sold for much, and I seized the books and read them as fast as I could in my eagerness to know the better and the worse.

What hopes I had formed, and how grievously was I disappointed! As I proceeded, I found my philosopher altogether forsaking mind [98c] or any other principle of order, but having recourse to air, and ether, and water, and other eccentricities. I might compare him to a person who began by maintaining generally that mind is the cause of the actions of Socrates, but who, when he endeavored to explain the causes of my several actions in detail, went on to show that I sit here because my body is
made up of bones and muscles; and the bones, as he would say, are hard and have ligaments which divide them, [98d] and the muscles are elastic, and they cover the bones, which have also a covering or environment of flesh and skin which contains them; and as the bones are lifted at their joints by the contraction or relaxation of the muscles, I am able to bend my limbs, and this is why I am sitting here in a curved posture: that is what he would say, and he would have a similar explanation of my talking to you, which he would attribute to sound, and air, and hearing, and he would assign ten thousand other causes of the same sort, [98e] forgetting to mention the true cause, which is that the Athenians have thought fit to condemn me, and accordingly I have thought it better and more right to remain here and undergo my sentence; [99a] for I am inclined to think that these muscles and bones of mine would have gone off to Megara or Boeotia - by the dog of Egypt they would, if they had been guided only by their own idea of what was best, and if I had not chosen as the better and nobler part, instead of playing truant and running away, to undergo any punishment which the State inflicts. There is surely a strange confusion of causes and conditions in all this. It may be said, indeed, that without bones and muscles and the other parts of the body I cannot execute my purposes. But to say that I do as I do because of them, [99b] and that this is the way in which mind acts, and not from the choice of the best, is a very careless and idle mode of speaking. I wonder that they cannot distinguish the cause from the condition, which the many, feeling about in the dark, are always mistaking and misnaming. And thus one man makes a vortex all round and steadies the earth by the sky; another gives the air as a support to the earth, which is a sort of broad trough. [99c] Any power which in disposing them as they are disposes them for the best never enters into their minds, nor do they imagine that there is the power of a daimôn in that; they rather expect to find another Atlas of the world who is stronger and more everlasting and more containing than the good is, and are clearly of opinion that the obligatory and containing power of the good is as nothing; and yet this is the principle which I would want to learn if anyone would teach me. But as I have failed either to discover myself or to learn of anyone else, [99d] the nature of the best, I will exhibit to you, if you like, what I have found to be the second best mode of inquiring into the cause.

I should very much like to hear that, he replied. Socrates proceeded: I thought that as I had failed in the contemplation of true existence, I ought to be careful that I did not lose the eye of my psukhē; as people may injure their bodily eye by observing and gazing on the sun during an eclipse, unless they take the precaution of only looking at the image reflected in the water, [99e] or in some similar medium. That occurred to me, and I was afraid that my psukhē might be blinded altogether if I looked at things with my eyes or tried by the help of the senses to apprehend them. And I thought that I had better have recourse to ideas, and seek in them the truth of existence. I dare say that the simile [100a] is not perfect - for I am very far from admitting that he who contemplates existence through the medium of ideas, sees them only “through a glass darkly,” any more than he who sees them in their working and effects. However, this was the method which I adopted: I first assumed some principle which I judged to be the strongest, and then I affirmed as true whatever seemed to agree with this, whether relating to the cause or to anything else; and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue. But I should like to explain my meaning clearly, as I do not think that you understand me.

No, indeed, replied Cebes, not very well. [100b] There is nothing new, he said, in what I am about to tell you; but only what I have been always and everywhere repeating in the previous discussion and on other occasions: I want to show you the nature of that cause which has occupied my thoughts, and I shall have to go back to those familiar words which are in the mouth of everyone, and first of all assume that there is an absolute beauty and goodness and greatness, and the like; grant me this, and I hope to be able to show you the nature of the cause, and to prove [100c] the immortality of the psukhē.
Cebes said: You may proceed at once with the proof, as I readily grant you this.

Well, he said, then I should like to know whether you agree with me in the next step; for I cannot help thinking that if there be anything beautiful other than absolute beauty, that can only be beautiful in as far as it partakes of absolute beauty - and this I should say of everything. Do you agree in this notion of the cause?

Yes, he said, I agree. He proceeded: I know nothing and can understand nothing of any other of those wise causes which are alleged; and if a person says to me that the bloom of color, or form, or anything else of that sort is a source of beauty, I leave all that, which is only confusing to me, and simply and singly, and perhaps foolishly, hold and am assured in my own mind that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of beauty in whatever way or manner obtained; for as to the manner I am uncertain, but I stoutly contend that by beauty all beautiful things become beautiful. That appears to me to be the only safe answer that I can give, either to myself or to any other, and to that I cling, in the persuasion that I shall never be overthrown, and that I may safely answer to myself or any other that by beauty beautiful things become beautiful. Do you not agree to that?

Yes, I agree. And that by greatness only great things become great and greater, and by smallness the less becomes less.

True. Then if a person remarks that A is taller by a head than B, and B less by a head than A, you would refuse to admit this, and would stoutly contend that what you mean is only that the greater is greater by, and by reason of, greatness, and the less is less only by, or by reason of, smallness; and thus you would avoid the danger of saying that the greater is greater and the less by the measure of the head, which is the same in both, and would also avoid the monstrous absurdity of supposing that the greater man is greater by reason of the head, which is small. Would you not be afraid of that?

Indeed, I should, said Cebes, laughing. In like manner you would be afraid to say that ten exceeded eight by, and by reason of, two; but would say by, and by reason of, number; or that two cubits exceed one cubit not by a half, but by magnitude? - that is what you would say, for there is the same danger in both cases.

Very true, he said. Again, would you not be cautious of affirming that the addition of one to one, or the division of one, is the cause of two? And you would loudly asseverate that you know of no way in which anything comes into existence except by participation in its own proper essence, and consequently, as far as you know, the only cause of two is the participation in duality; that is the way to make two, and the participation in one is the way to make one. You would say: I will let alone puzzles of division and addition - wiser heads than mine may answer them; inexperienced as I am, and ready to start, as the proverb says, at my own shadow, I cannot afford to give up the sure ground of a principle. And if anyone assails you there, you would not mind him, or answer him until you had seen whether the consequences which follow agree with one another or not, and when you are further required to give an explanation of this principle, you would go on to assume a higher principle, and the best of the higher ones, until you found a resting-place; but you would not refuse the principle and the consequences in your reasoning like the Eristics - at least if you wanted to discover real existence. Not that this confusion signifies to them who never care or think about the matter at all, for they have the wit to be well pleased with themselves, however great may be the turmoil of their ideas. But you, if you are a philosopher, will, I believe, do as I say.
What you say is most true, said Simmias and Cebes, both speaking at once.

**Ech.** Yes, Phaedo; and I don’t wonder at their assenting. Anyone who has the least sense will acknowledge the wonderful clearness of Socrates’ reasoning.

**Phaedo.** Certainly, Echecrates; and that was the feeling of the whole company at the time.

**Ech.** Yes, and equally of ourselves, who were not of the company, and are now listening to your recital. But what followed?

**Phaedo.** After all this was admitted, and they had agreed [102b] about the existence of ideas and the participation in them of the other things which derive their names from them, Socrates, if I remember rightly, said:

This is your way of speaking; and yet when you say that Simmias is greater than Socrates and less than Phaedo, do you not predicate of Simmias both greatness and smallness?

Yes, I do. But still you allow that Simmias does not really exceed Socrates, as the words may seem to imply, because he is Simmias, [102c] but by reason of the size which he has; just as Simmias does not exceed Socrates because he is Simmias, any more than because Socrates is Socrates, but because he has smallness when compared with the greatness of Simmias?

True. And if Phaedo exceeds him in size, that is not because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has greatness relatively to Simmias, who is comparatively smaller?

That is true. And therefore Simmias is said to be great, and is also said to be small, because he is in a mean between them, [102d] exceeding the smallness of the one by his greatness, and allowing the greatness of the other to exceed his smallness. He added, laughing, I am speaking like a piece of writing [sungraphikós], but I believe that what I am now saying is true.

**Simmias** assented to this. The reason why I say this is that I want you to agree with me in thinking, not only that absolute greatness will never be great and also small, but that greatness in us or in the concrete will never admit the small or admit of being exceeded: instead of this, one of two things will happen - either the greater will fly or retire [102e] before the opposite, which is the less, or at the advance of the less will cease to exist; but will not, if allowing or admitting smallness, be changed by that; even as I, having received and admitted smallness when compared with Simmias, remain just as I was, and am the same small person. And as the idea of greatness cannot condescend ever to be or become small, in like manner the smallness in us cannot be or become great; nor can any other opposite which remains the same ever be or become its own opposite, [103a] but either passes away or perishes in the change.

That, replied Cebes, is quite my notion. One of the company, though I do not exactly remember which of them, on hearing this, said: I swear by the gods, is not this the direct contrary of what was admitted before - that out of the greater came the less and out of the less the greater, and that opposites are simply generated from opposites; whereas now this seems to be utterly denied.
Socrates inclined his head to the speaker and listened. [103b] I like your courage, he said, in reminding us of this. But you do not observe that there is a difference in the two cases. For then we were speaking of opposites in the concrete, and now of the essential opposite which, as is affirmed, neither in us nor in nature can ever be at variance with itself: then, my friend, we were speaking of things in which opposites are inherent and which are called after them, but now about the opposites which are inherent in them and which give their name to them; these essential opposites will never, as we maintain, [103c] admit of generation into or out of one another. At the same time, turning to Cebes, he said: Were you at all disconcerted, Cebes, at our friend’s objection?

That was not my feeling, said Cebes; and yet I cannot deny that I am apt to be disconcerted.

Then we are agreed after all, said Socrates, that the opposite will never in any case be opposed to itself?

To that we are quite agreed, he replied. Yet once more let me ask you to consider the question from another point of view, and see whether you agree with me: There is a thing which you term heat, and another thing which you term cold?

Certainly. But are they the same as fire and snow? [103d] Most assuredly not. Heat is not the same as fire, nor is cold the same as snow? No. And yet you will surely admit that when snow, as before said, is under the influence of heat, they will not remain snow and heat; but at the advance of the heat the snow will either retire or perish?

Very true, he replied. And the fire too at the advance of the cold will either retire or perish; and when the fire is under the influence of the cold, [103e] they will not remain, as before, fire and cold.

That is true, he said. And in some cases the name of the idea is not confined to the idea; but anything else which, not being the idea, exists only in the form of the idea, may also lay claim to it. I will try to make this clearer by an example: The odd number is always called by the name of odd?

Very true. But is this the only thing which is called odd? Are there not other things which have their own name, [104a] and yet are called odd, because, although not the same as oddness, they are never without oddness? - that is what I mean to ask - whether numbers such as the number three are not of the class of odd. And there are many other examples: would you not say, for example, that three may be called by its proper name, and also be called odd, which is not the same with three? and this may be said not only of three but also of five, and every alternate number - each of them without being oddness is odd, [104b] and in the same way two and four, and the whole series of alternate numbers, has every number even, without being evenness. Do you admit that?

Yes, he said, how can I deny that? Then now mark the point at which I am aiming: not only do essential opposites exclude one another, but also concrete things, which, although not in themselves opposed, contain opposites; these, I say, also reject the idea which is opposed to that which is contained in them, [104c] and at the advance of that they either perish or withdraw. There is the number three for example; will not that endure annihilation or anything sooner than be converted into an even number, remaining three?
Very true, said Cebes. And yet, he said, the number two is certainly not opposed to the number three?

It is not. Then not only do opposite ideas repel the advance of one another, but also there are other things which repel the approach of opposites.

That is quite true, he said. Suppose, he said, that we endeavor, if possible, to determine what these are.

By all means. Are they not, Cebes, such as compel the things of which they have possession, not only to take their own form, but also the form of some opposite?

What do you mean? I mean, as I was just now saying, and have no need to repeat to you, that those things which are possessed by the number three must not only be three in number, but must also be odd.

Quite true. And on this oddness, of which the number three has the impress, the opposite idea will never intrude?

No. And this impress was given by the odd principle? Yes. And to the odd is opposed the even? True. Then the idea of the even number will never arrive at three? No. Then three has no part in the even? None. Then the triad or number three is uneven? Very true. To return then to my distinction of natures which are not opposites, and yet do not admit opposites: as, in this instance, three, although not opposed to the even, does not any the more admit of the even, but always brings the opposite into play on the other side; or as two does not receive the odd, or fire the cold - from these examples (and there are many more of them) perhaps you may be able to arrive at the general conclusion that not only opposites will not receive opposites, but also that nothing which brings the opposite will admit the opposite of that which it brings in that to which it is brought. And here let me recapitulate - for there is no harm in repetition. The number five will not admit the nature of the even, any more than ten, which is the double of five, will admit the nature of the odd - the double, though not strictly opposed to the odd, rejects the odd altogether. Nor again will parts in the ratio of 3:2, nor any fraction in which there is a half, nor again in which there is a third, admit the notion of the whole, although they are not opposed to the whole. You will agree to that?

Yes, he said, I entirely agree and go along with you in that. And now, he said, I think that I may begin again; and to the question which I am about to ask I will beg you to give not the old safe answer, but another, of which I will offer you an example; and I hope that you will find in what has been just said another foundation which is as safe. I mean that if anyone asks you “what that is, the inherence of which makes the body hot,” you will reply not heat (this is what I call the safe and stupid answer), but fire, a far better answer, which we are now in a condition to give. Or if anyone asks you “why a body is diseased,” you will not say from disease, but from fever; and instead of saying that oddness is the cause of odd numbers, you will say that the monad is the cause of them: and so of things in general, as I dare say that you will understand sufficiently without my adducing any further examples.

Yes, he said, I quite understand you. Tell me, then, what is that the inherence of which will render the body alive?
The psukhē, he replied. [105d] And is this always the case? Yes, he said, of course. Then whatever the psukhē possesses, to that it comes bearing life? Yes, certainly. And is there any opposite to life? There is, he said. And what is that? Death. Then the psukhē, as has been acknowledged, will never receive the opposite of what it brings. And now, he said, what did we call that principle which repels the even?

The odd. And that principle which repels the musical, or the just? [105e] The unmusical, he said, and the unjust. And what do we call the principle which does not admit of death? The immortal, he said. And does the psukhē admit of death? No. Then the psukhē is immortal? Yes, he said. And may we say that this is proven? Yes, abundantly proven, Socrates, he replied. And supposing that the odd were imperishable, [106a] must not three be imperishable?

Of course. And if that which is cold were imperishable, when the warm principle came attacking the snow, must not the snow have retreated and stayed safe and sound [= adjective from sōzein] and unmelted - for it could never have perished, nor could it have remained and admitted the heat?

True, he said. Again, if the uncooling or warm principle were imperishable, the fire when assailed by cold would not have perished or have been extinguished, but would have gone away unaffected?

Certainly, he said. [106b] And the same may be said of the immortal: if the immortal is also imperishable, the psukhē when attacked by death cannot perish; for the preceding argument shows that the psukhē will not admit of death, or ever be dead, any more than three or the odd number will admit of the even, or fire or the heat in the fire, of the cold. Yet a person may say: “But although the odd will not become even at the approach of the even, why may not the odd perish and the even take the place of the odd?” Now to him who makes this objection, we cannot answer that the odd principle is imperishable; for this has not been acknowledged, but if this had been acknowledged, there would have been no difficulty in contending that at the approach of the even the odd principle and the number three took up their departure; and the same argument would have held good of fire and heat and any other thing.

Very true. And the same may be said of the immortal: if the immortal is also imperishable, then the psukhē will be imperishable as well as immortal; [106d] but if not, some other proof of its imperishability will have to be given.

No other proof is needed, he said; for if the immortal, being eternal, is liable to perish, then nothing is imperishable.

Yes, replied Socrates, all men will agree that the god, and the essential form of life, and the immortal in general, will never perish.

Yes, all men, he said - that is true; and what is more, gods, if I am not mistaken, as well as men.

Seeing then that the immortal is indestructible, [106e] must not the psukhē, if it is immortal, be also imperishable?

Most certainly. Then when death attacks a man, the mortal portion of him may be supposed to die, but the immortal goes out of the way of death and is preserved safe and sound?
Phaedo

True. Then, Cebes, [107a] beyond question the psukhē is immortal and imperishable, and our psukhai will truly exist in another world!

I am convinced, Socrates, said Cebes, and have nothing more to object; but if my friend Simmias, or anyone else, has any further objection, he had better speak out, and not keep silence, since I do not know how there can ever be a more fitting time to which he can defer the discussion, if there is anything which he wants to say or have said.

But I have nothing more to say, replied Simmias; nor do I see any room for uncertainty, except that which arises necessarily out of the greatness of the subject [107b] and the feebleness of man, and which I cannot help feeling.

Yes, Simmias, replied Socrates, that is well said: and more than that, first principles, even if they appear certain, should be carefully considered; and when they are satisfactorily ascertained, then, with a sort of hesitating confidence in human reason, you may, I think, follow the course of the argument; and if this is clear, there will be no need for any further inquiry.

That, he said, is true. But then, O my friends, he said, [107c] if the psukhē is really immortal, what care should be taken of it, not only in respect of the portion of time which is called life, but of eternity! And the danger of neglecting it from this point of view does indeed appear to be awful. If death had only been the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their psukhai. But now, as the psukhē plainly appears to be immortal, there is [107d] no release or salvation [sōteria] from evil except the attainment of the highest virtue and wisdom. For the psukhē when on its progress to the world below takes nothing with it but nurture and education; which are indeed said greatly to benefit or greatly to injure the departed, at the very beginning of its pilgrimage in the other world.

For after death, as they say, the daimôn that is within each individual, to whom he [= the daimôn] belonged in life, leads him to a certain place in which the dead are gathered together for judgment, whence they go into the world below, [107e] following the guide who is appointed to conduct them from this world to the other: and when they have there received their due and remained their time, another guide brings them back again after many revolutions of ages. Now this journey to the other world is not, as Aeschylus says in the “Telephus,” [108a] a single and straight path - no guide would be wanted for that, and no one could miss a single path; but there are many partings of the road, and windings, as I must infer from the rites and sacrifices which are offered to the gods below in places where three ways meet on earth. The wise and orderly psukhē is conscious of its situation and follows in the path; but the psukhē which desires the body, and which, as I was relating before, has long been fluttering about the lifeless frame and the world of sight, [108b] is after many struggles and many sufferings hardly and with violence carried away by its attendant daimôn, and when it arrives at the place where the other psukhai are gathered, if it be impure and have done impure deeds, or been concerned in foul murders or other crimes which are the brothers of these, and the works of brothers in crime - from that psukhē everyone flees and turns away; no one will be its companion, no one its guide, [108c] but alone it wanders in extremity of evil until certain times are fulfilled, and when they are fulfilled, it is borne irresistibly to its own fitting habitation; as every pure and just psukhē which has passed through life in the company and under the guidance of the gods has also its own proper home.
Now the earth has divers wonderful regions, and is indeed in nature and extent very unlike the notions of geographers, as I believe on the authority of one who shall be nameless.

What do you mean, Socrates? said Simmias. I have myself heard many descriptions of the earth, but I do not know in what you are putting your faith, and I should like to know.

Well, Simmias, replied Socrates, the recital of a tale does not, I think, require the art of Glaukos; and I know not that the art of Glaukos could prove the truth of my tale, which I myself should never be able to prove, and even if I could, I fear, Simmias, that my life would come to an end before the argument was completed. I may describe to you, however, the form and regions of the earth according to my conception of them.

That, said Simmias, will be enough. Well, then, he said, my conviction is that the earth is a round body in the center of the sky, and therefore has no need of air or any similar force as a support, but is kept there and hindered from falling or inclining any way by the equability of the surrounding sky and by its own equipoise. For that which, being in equipoise, is in the center of that which is equably diffused, will not incline any way in any degree, but will always remain in the same state and not deviate. And this is my first notion.

Which is surely a correct one, said Simmias. Also I believe that the earth is very vast, and that we who dwell in the region extending from the river Phasis to the Pillars of Herakles, along the borders of the sea, are just like ants or frogs about a marsh, and inhabit a small portion only, and that many others dwell in many like places. For I should say that in all parts of the earth there are hollows of various forms and sizes, into which the water and the mist and the air collect; and that the true earth is pure and in the pure sky, in which also are the stars - that is the sky which is commonly spoken of as the ether, of which this is but the sediment collecting in the hollows of the earth. But we who live in these hollows are deceived into the notion that we are dwelling above on the surface of the earth; which is just as if a creature who was at the bottom of the sea were to fancy that he was on the surface of the water, and that the sea was the sky through which he saw the sun and the other stars - he having never come to the surface by reason of his feebleness and sluggishness, and never lifted up his head and seen, nor ever heard from one who had seen, this region which is so much purer and fairer than his own. Now this is exactly our case: for we are dwelling in a hollow of the earth, and fancy that we are on the surface; and the air we call the sky, and in this we imagine that the stars move. But this is also owing to our feebleness and sluggishness, which prevent our reaching the surface of the air: for if any man could arrive at the exterior limit, or take the wings of a bird and fly upward, like a fish who puts his head out and sees this world, he would see a world beyond; and, if the nature of man could sustain the sight, he would acknowledge that this was the place of the true sky and the true light and the true stars. For this earth, and the stones, and the entire region which surrounds us, are spoilt and corroded, like the things in the sea which are corroded by the brine; for in the sea too there is hardly any noble or perfect growth, but clefts only, and sand, and an endless slough of mud: and even the shore is not to be compared to the fairer sights of this world. And greater far is the superiority of the other. Now of that upper earth which is under the sky, I can tell you a charming tale, which is well worth hearing.

And we, Socrates, replied Simmias, shall be charmed to listen to the tale. The tale, my friend, he said, is as follows: In the first place, the earth, when looked at from above, is like one of those balls which have leather coverings in twelve pieces, and is of divers colors, of which the colors which
painters use on earth are only a sample. [110c] But there the whole earth is made up of them, and they are brighter far and clearer than ours; there is a purple of wonderful luster, also the radiance of gold, and the white which is in the earth is whiter than any chalk or snow. Of these and other colors the earth is made up, and they are more in number and fairer than the eye of man has ever seen; and the very hollows (of which I was speaking) filled with air and water [110d] are seen like light flashing amid the other colors, and have a color of their own, which gives a sort of unity to the variety of earth. And in this fair region everything that grows - trees, and flowers, and fruits - is in a like degree fairer than any here; and there are hills, and stones in them in a like degree smoother, and more transparent, and fairer in color than our highly valued emeralds and sardonyx and [110e] jaspers, and other gems, which are but minute fragments of them: for there all the stones are like our precious stones, and fairer still. The reason of this is that they are pure, and not, like our precious stones, infected or corroded by the corrupt briny elements which coagulate among us, and which breed foulness and disease both in earth and stones, as well as in animals and plants. They are the jewels of the upper earth, which also shines with gold and [111a] silver and the like, and they are visible to sight and large and abundant and found in every region of the earth, and blessed is he who sees them. And upon the earth are animals and men, some in a middle region, others dwelling about the air as we dwell about the sea; others in islands which the air flows round, near the continent: and in a word, [111b] the air is used by them as the water and the sea are by us, and the ether is to them what the air is to us. Moreover, the temperament of their seasons [hōrai] is such that they have no disease, and live much longer than we do, and have sight and hearing and smell, and all the other senses, in far greater perfection, in the same degree that air is purer than water or the ether than air. Also they have temples and sacred places in which the gods really dwell, and they hear their voices and receive their oracular responses [manteia], and are conscious of them and hold converse with them, [111c] and they see the sun, moon, and stars as they really are, and their other blessedness is of a piece with this.

Such is the nature of the whole earth, and of the things which are around the earth; and there are divers regions in the hollows on the face of the globe everywhere, some of them deeper and also wider than that which we inhabit, [111d] others deeper and with a narrower opening than ours, and some are shallower and wider; all have numerous perforations, and passages broad and narrow in the interior of the earth, connecting them with one another; and there flows into and out of them, as into basins, a vast tide of water, and huge subterranean streams of perennial rivers, and springs hot and cold, and a great fire, and great rivers of fire, and streams of liquid mud, [111e] thin or thick (like the rivers of mud in Sicily, and the lava-streams which follow them), and the regions about which they happen to flow are filled up with them. And there is a sort of swing in the interior of the earth which moves all this up and down. Now the swing is in this wise: There is a chasm which is the vastest of them all, [112a] and pierces right through the whole earth; this is that which Homer describes in the words,

“Far off, where is the inmost depth beneath the earth”; and which he in other places, and many other poets, have called Tartaros. And the swing is caused by the streams flowing into and out of this chasm, and they each have the nature of the soil through which they flow. And the reason why the streams are always flowing in and out [112b] is that the watery element has no bed or bottom, and is surging and swinging up and down, and the surrounding wind and air do the same; they follow the water up and down, hither and thither, over the earth - just as in respiring the air is always in process of inhalation and exhalation; and the wind swinging with the water in and out produces fearful and irresistible blasts: [112c] when the waters retire with a rush into the lower parts of the earth, as they are called, they flow through the earth into those regions, and fill them up as with the alternate motion of a pump, and then when they leave those regions and rush back hither, they again fill the hollows here, and when these are
filled, flow through subterranean channels and find their way to their several places, forming seas, and lakes, and rivers, and springs. Thence they again enter the earth, [112d] some of them making a long circuit into many lands, others going to few places and those not distant, and again fall into Tartaros, some at a point a good deal lower than that at which they rose, and others not much lower, but all in some degree lower than the point of issue. And some burst forth again on the opposite side, and some on the same side, and some wind round the earth with one or many folds, like the coils of a serpent, and descend as far as they can, but always return and fall into the lake. [112e] The rivers on either side can descend only to the center and no further, for to the rivers on both sides the opposite side is a precipice.

Now these rivers are many, and mighty, and diverse, and there are four principal ones, of which the greatest and outermost is that called Okeanos, which flows round the earth in a circle; and in the opposite direction flows Acheron, which passes [113a] under the earth through desert places, into the Acherusian Lake: this is the lake to the shores of which the psukhai of the many go when they are dead, and after waiting an appointed time, which is to some a longer and to some a shorter time, they are sent back again to be born as animals. The third river rises between the two, and near the place of rising pours into a vast region of fire, and forms a lake larger than the Mediterranean Sea, boiling with water and mud; [113b] and proceeding muddy and turbid, and winding about the earth, comes, among other places, to the extremities of the Acherusian Lake, but mingles not with the waters of the lake, and after making many coils about the earth plunges into Tartaros at a deeper level. This is that Pyriphlegethon, as the stream is called, which throws up jets of fire in all sorts of places. The fourth river goes out on the opposite side, and falls first of all into a wild and savage region, which is all of a dark-blue color, like lapis lazuli; [113c] and this is that river which is called the Stygian River, and falls into and forms the Lake Styx, and after falling into the lake and receiving strange powers in the waters, passes under the earth, winding round in the opposite direction to Pyriphlegethon, and meeting in the Acherusian Lake from the opposite side. And the water of this river too mingles with no other, but flows round in a circle and falls into Tartaros over against Pyriphlegethon, and the name of this river, as the poet says, is Cocytus.

[113d] Such is the name of the other world; and when the dead arrive at the place to which the [daimon] of each severally conveys them, first of all they have sentence passed upon them, as they have lived well and piously or not. And those who appear to have lived neither well nor ill, go to the river Acheron, and mount such conveyances as they can get, and are carried in them to the lake, and there they dwell and are purified of their evil deeds, and suffer the penalty of the wrongs which they have done to others, and are absolved, [113e] and receive the rewards of their good deeds according to their deserts. But those who appear to be incurable by reason of the greatness of their crimes - who have committed many and terrible deeds of sacrilege, murders foul and violent, or the like - such are hurled into Tartaros, which is their suitable destiny, and they never come out. Those again who have committed crimes, which, although great, are not unpardonable - who in a moment of anger, for example, have done violence to a father or mother, [114a] and have repented for the remainder of their lives, or who have taken the life of another under like extenuating circumstances - these are plunged into Tartaros, the pains of which they are compelled to undergo for a year, but at the end of the year the wave casts them forth - mere homicides by way of Cocytus, parricides and matricides by Pyriphlegethon - and they are borne to the Lake of Acheron, and there they lift up their voices and call upon the victims whom they have slain or wronged, [114b] to have pity on them, and to receive them, and to let them come out of the river into the lake. And if they prevail, then they come forth and cease from their troubles; but if not, they are carried back again into Tartaros and from thence into the rivers unceasingly, until they obtain mercy from those whom they have wronged: for that is the sentence inflicted upon them by their judges. Those also who are remarkable for having led holy lives are released from this earthly prison, [114c]
and go to their pure home which is above, and dwell in the purer earth; and those who have duly purified themselves with philosophy live henceforth altogether without the body, in mansionsfairer far than these, which may not be described, and of which the time would fail me to tell.

Wherefore, Simmias, seeing all these things, what ought not we to do in order to obtain virtue and wisdom in this life? Fair is the prize [athlon], and the hope great.

[114d] I do not mean to affirm that the description which I have given of the psukhē and its mansions is exactly true - a man of sense ought hardly to say that. But I do say that, inasmuch as the psukhē is shown to be immortal, he may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these, which is the reason why lengthen out the tale [muthos]. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his psukhē, [114e] who has cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him, and rather hurtful in their effects, and has followed after the pleasures of knowledge in this life; who has adorned the psukhē in its own proper jewels, which are temperance, and justice, and [115a] courage, and nobility, and truth - in these arrayed it is ready to go on its journey to the world below, when its time comes. You, Simmias and Cebes, and all other men, will depart at some time or other. Me already, as the tragic poet would say, the voice of fate calls. Soon I must drink the poison; and I think that it is time [hōra] that I repair to the bath, in order that the women may not have the trouble of washing my body after I am dead.

When he had done speaking,Crito said: [115b] And have you any commands for us, Socrates - anything to say about your children, or any other matter in which we can serve you?

Nothing particular, he said: only, as I have always told you, I would have you look to yourselves; that is a service which you may always be doing to me and mine as well as to yourselves. And you need not make professions; for if you take no thought for yourselves, and walk not according to the precepts which I have given you, [115c] not now for the first time, the warmth of your professions will be of no avail.

We will do our best, said Crito. But in what way would you have us bury you?

In any way that you like; only you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not walk away from you. Then he turned to us, and added with a smile: I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking and conducting the argument; he fancies that I am the other Socrates whom he will soon see, a dead body - [115d] and he asks, How shall he bury me? And though I have spoken many words in the endeavor to show that when I have drunk the poison I shall leave you and go to the joys of the blessed - these words of mine, with which I comforted [paramutheîsthai = divert by way of muthos] you and myself, have had, I perceive, no effect upon Crito. And therefore I want you to be surety for me now, as he was surety for me at the trial: but let the promise be of another sort; for he was my surety to the judges that I would remain, but you must be my surety to him that I shall not remain, but go away and depart; [115e] and then he will suffer less at my death, and not be grieved when he sees my body being burned or buried. I would not have him sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the burial, Thus we lay out Socrates, or, Thus we follow him to the grave or bury him; for false words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the psukhē with evil. Be of good cheer, then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, [116a] and do with that as is usual, and as you think best.
When he had spoken these words, he arose and went into the bath chamber with Crito, who bade us wait; and we waited, talking and thinking of the subject of discourse, and also of the greatness of our sorrow; he was like a father of whom we were being bereaved, and we were about to pass the rest of our lives as orphans. When he had taken the bath [116b] his children were brought to him - (he had two young sons and an elder one); and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito; and he then dismissed them and returned to us.

Now the hour of sunset was near, for a good deal of time had passed while he was within. When he came out, he sat down with us again after his bath, but not much was said. Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, [116c] entered and stood by him, saying: To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison - indeed, I am sure that you will not be angry with me; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are the guilty cause. And so fare you well, and try to bear lightly what must needs be; you know my errand. [116d] Then bursting into tears he turned away and went out.

Socrates looked at him and said: I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid. Then, turning to us, he said, How charming the man is: since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good as could be to me, and now see how generously he sorrows for me. But we must do as he says, Crito; let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared: if not, let the attendant prepare some.

[116e] Yet, said Crito, the sun is still upon the hilltops, and many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him, he has eaten and drunk, and indulged in sensual delights; do not hasten then, there is still time.

Socrates said: Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in doing thus, for they think that they will gain by the delay; but I am right in not doing thus, [117a] for I do not think that I should gain anything by drinking the poison a little later; I should be sparing and saving a life which is already gone: I could only laugh at myself for this. Please then to do as I say, and not to refuse me.

Crito, when he heard this, made a sign to the servant, and the servant went in, and remained for some time, and then returned with the jailer carrying a cup of poison [pharmakon]. Socrates said: You, my good friend, who are experienced in these matters, shall give me directions how I am to proceed. The man answered: You have only to walk about [117b] until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act. At the same time he handed the cup to Socrates, who in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of color or feature, looking at the man with all his eyes, Echecrates, as his manner was, took the cup and said: What do you say about making a libation out of this cup to any god? May I, or not? The man answered: We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough. I understand, he said: [117c] yet I may and must pray to the gods to prosper my journey from this to that other world - may this, then, which is my prayer, be granted to me. Then holding the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. And hitherto most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept over myself, for certainly I was not weeping over him, [117d] but at the thought of my own calamity in having lost such a companion. Nor was I the first, for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up and moved away, and I followed; and at that
moment. Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, broke out in a loud cry which made cowards of us all. Socrates alone retained his calmness: What is this strange outcry? he said. I sent away the women mainly in order that they might not offend in this way, [117e] for I have heard that a man should die in peace. Be quiet, then, and have patience.

When we heard that, we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard and asked him if he could feel; and he said, no; and then his leg, [118a] and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. And he felt them himself, and said: When the poison reaches the heart, that will be the end. He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said (they were his last words) - he said: Crito, I owe the sacrifice of a rooster to Asklepios; will you remember to pay the debt? The debt shall be paid, said Crito: is there anything else? There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two a movement was heard, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend, whom I may truly call the wisest, and most just, and best of all the men whom I have ever known.
The sacrificing of an animal and the pouring of its blood into a pit is precisely the way to activate the consciousness of the hero in hero-cult. It is also the way to make up for the death of a hero in hero-cult. We know this from the rituals of hero cult as documented by sources like the ancient scholar Pausanias, who flourished in the second century of our era - over half a millennium after the time of Herodotus. Consider Pausanias’ description of initiation into the mysteries of the hero-cult of Trophonios. The oracle of the cult-hero Trophonios is mentioned already in Herodotus (paragraph 46 p. 16), who reports that Croesus had consulted the oracle of Trophonios, as well as the oracle of the cult-hero Amphiarao. Here are the words of Pausanias [9.39.5ff] :

When a man has made up his mind to descend to the oracle of Trophonios, he first lodges in a certain building [oikēma] for an appointed number of days, this being sacred to the Good Daimōn and to Good Fortune. While he lodges there, among other regulations for purity, he abstains from hot baths, bathing only in the river Hercyna. He has in plenty of meat from the sacrifices, for he who descends sacrifices to Trophonios himself and to the children of Trophonios, to Apollo also and to Kronos, to Zeus with the epithet King [Basileus], to Hera Charioteer, and to Demeter whom they name with the epithet Europea and say was the wetnurse of Trophonios.[9.35.6] At each sacrifice a diviner [mantis] is present, who examines the entrails of the sacrificial victim, and, after an inspection, prophesies to the person descending whether Trophonios will give him a kind and gracious reception.

The entrails of the other victims do not reveal the mind of Trophonios as much as a ram, which each inquirer sacrifices over a pit [bothros] on the night he descends, calling upon Agamedes. 164 Even though the previous sacrifices have appeared propitious, they don’t count unless the entrails of this ram indicate the same. If they agree, then the inquirer descends in good hope.

The procedure of the descent is this. [9.39.7] First, during the night, he is taken to the river Hercyna by two boys of the citizens about thirteen years old, named Hermai (= plural of “Hermes”), who, after taking him there, anoint him with oil and wash him. It is these who wash the descender, and do all the other necessary services as his attendant boys. After this he is taken by the priests, not at once to the oracle, but to fountains of water very near to each other. [9.39.8] Here he must drink water called the water of Forgetfulness [Lēthē], that he may forget all that he has been thinking of before, and afterwards he drinks of another water, the water of Memory [Mnēmosune], which causes him to remember what he sees after his descent. After looking at the image [agalma] which they say was made by Daedalus (it is not shown by the priests except to such as are going to visit Trophonios), having seen it, worshipped it and prayed, he proceeds to the oracle, dressed in a linen tunic, with ribbons tying it, and wearing the boots of the native locale. [9.39.9]

The oracle is on the mountain, beyond the grove. Around it is a circular basement of white marble, the circumference of which is about that of the smallest threshing floor, while its height is just short of two cubits. On the basement stand spikes, which, like the cross-bars holding them together, are of bronze, while a double door has been made through them. Within the enclosure is a chasm [khasma] in the earth, not natural, but artificially constructed after the most accurate masonry. [9.39.10]

The shape of this structure is like that of a bread oven. Its width across the middle one might guess to be about four cubits, and its depth also could not be estimated to extend to more than eight cubits. They

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164 Agamedes was the brother of Trophonios. In the corresponding myth, Agamedes died when the two brothers were buried alive, while Trophonios escaped; later, Trophonios experiences the mystical process of “engulfment”: Pausanias 9.37.5ff, quoted below.
have made no way of descent to the bottom, but when a man comes to Trophonios, they bring him a narrow, light ladder. After going down, he finds a hole between the floor and the structure. Its width appeared to be two spans, and its height one span. [9.39.11] The descender lies with his back on the ground, holding barley cakes [mazai] kneaded with honey, thrusts his feet into the hole, and himself follows, trying hard to get his knees into the hole. After his knees, the rest of his body is at once swiftly drawn in, just as the largest and most rapid river will catch a man in its eddy and carry him under. After this, those who have entered the shrine learn the future, not in one and the same way in all cases, but by sight sometimes and at other times by hearing.

The return upwards is by the same mouth, the feet darting out first. [9.39.12] They say that no one who has made the descent has been killed, save only one of the bodyguards of Demetrios. But they declare that he performed none of the usual rites in the sanctuary, and that he descended, not to consult the god but in the hope of stealing gold and silver from the shrine. It is said that the body of this man appeared in a different place, and was not cast out at the sacred mouth. Other tales are told about the man, but I have given the one most worthy of consideration. [9.39.13]

After his ascent from Trophonios, the inquirer is again taken in hand by the priests, who set him upon a chair called the Throne of Memory [mnēmosune], which stands not far from the shrine, and they ask of him, when seated there, all he has seen or learned. After gaining this information they then entrust him to his relatives. These lift him, paralyzed with terror and unconscious of both himself and his surroundings, and carry him to the building [oikēma] where he lodged before with Good Fortune and the Good Daimōn. Afterwards, however, he will recover all his faculties, and the power to laugh will return to him. [9.39.14]

What I write is not hearsay; I have myself inquired of Trophonios and seen other inquirers. Those who have descended into the shrine of Trophonios are obliged to dedicate a tablet on which is written all that each has heard or seen.

Now backtrack and read Pausanias’ description of the myth of Trophonios (9.37.5):

[The hero Erginos] married a young wife, and had children, Trophonios and Agamedes. Trophonios is said to have been a son of Apollo, not of Erginos. This I am inclined to believe, as does everyone who has gone to Trophonios to inquire of his oracle. They say that these, when they grew up, proved clever at building sanctuaries for the gods and palaces for men. For they built the temple for Apollo at Delphi and the treasury for Hyrieus. One of the stones in it they made so that they could take it away from the outside. So they kept on removing something from the treasury. Hyrieus was puzzled when he saw keys and seals untampered with, while the treasure kept on getting less. So he set over the vessels, in which were his silver and gold, snares or other devices, to catch any who should enter and try to steal the treasure. Agamedes entered and was caught in the trap, but Trophonios cut off his head, so that when day came his brother would not be tortured and inform on him that he was connected to the crime. The earth opened up and swallowed Trophonios at the point in the grove at Lebadeia where is what is called the pit [bothros] of Agamedes, and next to it is a stele.\(^{166}\)

\(^{165}\) Note that Pausanias considers the hero in the afterlife to be a theos ‘god’.

\(^{166}\) Notice the focal point of the myth and the ritual: it is a pit [bothros]. This pit marks the spot where the hero Trophonios was engulfed by the earth. It also marks the spot where the hero-worshipper sheds the blood of the ram that is sacrificed to the hero. The pouring of blood into a pit is a primary form of libation. Libation is in general the ritual pouring of a liquid, be it blood, wine, water, or whatever mixture. The blood establishes mental communion with the consciousness of the dead hero. In ancient Greek hero cults, it was believed that the blood of a sacrificed animal activates the consciousness of the
dead hero. In other contexts, the ritually correct pouring of libations in general can activate that consciousness.
Invocation

Let me begin to sing of the Muses of Helikon, who abide on the great and holy Mount Helikon. Around the deep-blue spring, with dainty feet, they dance, and around the altar of the mighty son of Kronos. Washing their tender skin in the waters of the Permessos or of the Horse’s Spring or of holy Olmeios, they set up their choral songs-and-dances on the highest point of Helikon. Beautiful and lovely, these songs-and-dances. They are nimble with their feet. Starting from there [the top of Helikon], they go about at night, sending forth a very beautiful voice, singing of Zeus the aegis-bearer and lady Hera of Argos, who walks about in golden sandals, and the daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus, Athena, and Phoebus Apollo and Artemis who shoots her arrows, and Poseidon, the earth-holder and earth-shaker, and the honorable Themis as well as Aphrodite, whose eyes go from side to side, and Hebe with the golden garland, and beautiful Dione, and Leto, Iapetos, and Kronos with his devious plans, and the Dawn [Eos] and the great Sun [Helios] and the bright Moon [Selene], and the Earth [Gaia] and great Okeanos and dark Night [Nyx], and the sacred genos of all the other immortals, who are forever.

One day, they [the Muses of Helikon] taught Hesiod a beautiful song as he was tending sheep at the foot of holy Helikon. This is the first thing that the goddesses said to me, the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus: “Shepherds abiding in the fields, base objects of reproach, mere bellies! We know how to say many false things that are just like real things [etuma]. But we know also, whenever we are willing, how to announce things that are alēthea.” Thus spoke the daughters of great Zeus, they whose words fit together. And they gave me a scepter, a shoot of thriving laurel, having plucked it. It was a sight to behold. And they breathed into me a voice that is divine, so that I could give kleos to the things that will be and the things that have been. And they called on me to sing about the genos of the blessed ones, who have always been, but to sing always of them [the Muses] both first and last [in the performance].

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167 The name Ἅσιος means ‘he who sends forth the voice’, corresponding to the description of the Muses themselves at lines 10, 43, 65, 67. The element -odos ‘voice’ of Ἅσιος is apparently cognate with audē ‘voice’, the word used at line 31 to designate what was ‘breathed’ into Hesiod by the Muses. 168 “Truth’, which itinerant would-be oral poets are ‘unwilling’ to tell because of their need for survival [Odyssey 14.124-125], may be ‘willingly’ conferred by the Muses ['whenever we are willing' at Theogony line 28]. We see here what can be taken as a manifesto of pan-Hellenic poetry, in that the poet Hesiod is to be freed from being a mere ‘belly’ - one who owes his survival to his local audience with its local traditions: all such local traditions are pseudea ‘falsehoods’ in face of the alēthea ‘true things’ that the Muses impart specially to Hesiod. The conceit inherent in the pan-Hellenic poetry of Hesiod is that this overarching tradition is capable of achieving something that is beyond the reach of individual local traditions.” - G. Nagy, Greek Mythology and Poetics (Ithaca 1990; paperback 1992) 45.

The pan-Hellenic nature of Hesiodic poetry is conveyed by the absolutist concept of alēthēs/alētheia ‘true/truth’ ['what is not subject to forgetting or mental disconnection', as expressed by lēth – ‘forget, be mentally disconnected’].
The Muses

35 But why should I care about those things that keep going around an oak or a rock? Listen! Let me begin with the Muses, who please Zeus the father with their song, pleasing his great noos as he abides in Olympus. They tell of things that are, that will be, and that were before, having their words fitted together as they sound forth. And their voice pours forth without ever being worn down, coming sweetly from their mouths. Glad is the palace of father Zeus the loud-thunderer over the delicate voice of the goddesses which reaches far and wide. It echoes against the peaks of snowy Olympus and the abodes of the immortals. And they send forth an immortal voice as they give kleos first to the genos of the gods, a matter of reverence, starting from the beginning, telling about who were generated from Earth [Gaia] and the vast Sky [Ouranos], and what gods, givers of good things, were born from them. Next, they sing of Zeus, father of gods and men, both when they begin and when they end their song. They sing how much he is the most important of the gods and the greatest in power. Then again, they sing of the genos of men and of the strong Giants, thus pleasing the noos of Zeus, who abides in Olympus.

They are the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus. They were born in Pieria. The father was Zeus, son of Kronos. Their mother, who mated with him, was Mnemosyne [Memory], who rules over the heights of Eleuther. 

They were born to be the forgetting of misfortunes and the cessation of worries. For nine nights did Zeus the Planner lie coupled with their mother, entering her holy bed, remote from the immortals. When a year was up, and the seasons came round as the months were waning and the many days were coming to fulfillment, she gave birth to nine daughters, all like-minded, who have song on their minds, in their breast. They have a thumos without worries. There they are, poised to descend from the topmost peak of snowy Olympus. That is where they have their bright dancing-places and their beautiful abodes. Near them the Kharites [Graces] and Himeros [Desire] have their abodes, amidst festivities. And they, sending forth a lovely voice, sing and make kleos for the norms [nomoi] and accustomed ways of all the immortals, as they send forth a lovely voice.

Anyway, back then, they went to Olympus, glorying in their beautiful voice with immortal song. And the dark earth resounded all around them as they sang, and the lovely stepping of their feet made a sound from below as they proceeded towards their father, the one who is king in the sky, with sole possession of the thunder and the gleaming thunderbolt, having defeated, with his power, Kronos his father. Each thing was well arranged by him, as he assigned the norms and marked out the timai for the immortals. These things, then, the Muses sang, they who have abodes in Olympus, the nine daughters begotten by great Zeus, Kleio [Clio] and Euterpe and Thaleia [Thalia, ‘Festivity’] and Melpomene and Terpsichore and Erato and Polyhymnia and Ourania [Urania] and Calliope [Calliope]. That one [Calliope] is the most important of them all, for she accompanies revered kings. Whosoever among sky-nourished kings is given timē by these daughters of great Zeus and is beheld by them when he is born, for such a man they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, and from his mouth flow sweet words. The people, all of them, look towards him as he sorts out the divine ordinances [themistes] by way of straight dikai. And he, speaking without stumbling and with his powers of understanding, can even put an end to a great quarrel [neikos]. It is for this reason that there are kings, kings with good phrenes,
Theogony

namely, because they can easily turn right around the [wrong] things that are done to people who are wronged in the agora. 90 They can do it by persuasion, using soft words. And when he [such a king] goes to an agōn, the people turn to him as if he were a god, with his gentle aiòs, and he stands out among the assembled. Such is the sacred gift of the Muses for humankind.

For it is because of the Muses and far-shooting Apollo 95 that there are singers [poets] and players of the lyre [kitharís] on this earth. And it is because of Zeus that there are kings. Blessed olbios is he whom the Muses love. And a sweet voice flows from his mouth. For when someone has sorrow [penthos] in his thumos beset by new worries and is distressed by sorrow in his heart, and when the singer [poet], 100 therapōn of the Muses, sings the klea of men who came before and the blessed gods who abide in Olympus, right away such a man forgets [lēth-] his troubled thoughts, and his cares he no longer remembers [mnē-]. Quickly the gifts of the goddesses turn him away from these things.

Be pleased and show your pleasure, children of Zeus, by giving me a lovely song. 105 Give kleos to the holy genos of the immortals who have always been, who were born of Ge [Gaia] and starry Ouranos and of dark Night - the gods who were nurtured by the salty Pontos. Tell how the gods and the earth were generated at the very beginning, and the rivers and the boundless pontos, seething with waves, 110 and the shining stars and the vast sky above. Tell of the gods, givers of good things, who were generated from them, and how the divided up their wealth and how each one chose his or her timē. 115 And how in the very beginning they came to possess Olympus with its many ridges. Tell me these things, Olympian Muses, you who abide in Olympus, 115 tell it from the beginning, about what was generated first from among them all.

The Cosmogony

First it was Chaos, and next broad-bosomed Earth, ever secure seat of all the immortals, who inhabit the peaks of snow-capped Olympus, and dark dim Tartaros in a recess of Earth having-broad-ways, 120 and Eros [Love], who is most beautiful among immortal gods, Eros that relaxes the limbs, and in the breasts of all gods and all men, subdues their reason and prudent counsel. But from Chaos were born Erebos and black Night; and from Night again sprang forth Aether and Day, 125 whom she bore after having conceived, by union with Erebos in love. And Earth bore first like to herself in size starry Sky, that he might shelter her around on all sides, that so she might be ever a secure seat for the blessed gods; and she brought forth vast mountains, lovely haunts of deities, 130 the Nymphs who dwell along the woodland hills. She too bore also the barren Sea, rushing with swollen stream, the Pontos, I mean, without delightsome love; but afterward, having bedded with Sky, she bore deep-eddying Okeanos, Koios and Kreios, Hyperion and Iapetos, 135 Thea and Rhea, Themis, Mnemosyne, and Phoebe with golden coronet, and lovely Tethys. And after these was born, youngest, wily Kronos, most savage of their children; and he hated his vigor-giving father.

Then brought she forth next the Kyklopes [Cyclopes], having an over-bearing spirit: 140 Brontes, and Steropes, and stout-hearted Arges, who gave to Zeus his thunder, and forged his lightnings. Now these were in other respects, it is true, like to gods, but a single eye was fixed in their mid-foreheads. And Kyklopes was their appropriate name, because 145 in their foreheads one circular eye was fixed. 173 Strength, biē, and contrivances were in their works. But again, from Earth and Sky sprung other three sons, great and mighty, scarce to be mentioned, Kottos and Briareus and Gyas, children exceeding proud. 150 From the shoulders of these moved actively a hundred

172 See the note on line 74.
173 Folk etymology from kuklos ‘circle’ and ops ‘eye’.
hands, not brooking approach, and to each above sturdy limbs there grew fifty heads from their shoulders.

Castration of Ouranos

Now monstrous strength is powerful, joined with vast size. For of as many sons as were born of Earth and Sky, 155 they were the fiercest, and were hated by their father from the very first: as soon as any of these was born, he would hide them all, and not send them up to the light, in a cave of the earth, and Sky exulted over the work of mischief, while huge Earth groaned from within, 160 straitened as she was; and she devised a subtle and evil scheme. For quickly having produced a stock of white iron, she forged a large sickle, and gave the word to her children and said encouragingly, though troubled in her heart: “Children of me and of a father madly violent, if you 165 would obey me, we shall avenge the baneful injury of your father; for he was the first that devised acts of indignity.” So spoke she, but fear seized on them all, nor did any of them speak; till, having gathered courage, great and wily Kronos addressed his dear mother thus in reply: 170 “Mother, this deed at any rate I will undertake and accomplish, since for our father, of detested name, I care not, for he was the first that devised acts of indignity.” Thus spoke he, and huge Earth rejoiced much at heart, and hid and planted him in ambush: in his hand she placed 175 a sickle with jagged teeth, and suggested to him all the stratagem. Then came vast Sky bringing Night with him, and, eager for love, brooded around Earth, and lay stretched on all sides: but his son from out his ambush grasped at him with his left hand, while in his right he took the huge sickle, long and jagged-toothed, and hastily 180 mowed off the genitals of his father, and threw them backwards to be carried away behind him.

Aphrodite

Not for no purpose did they slip from his hand; for as many gory drops as jetted forth from there, Earth received them all; and when the years rolled round, 185 she gave birth to stern Furies [Erinyes], and mighty Giants, gleaming in arms, with long spears in hand, and nymphs whom men call Ash-nymphs, [Meliai] over the boundless earth. But the genitals, as after first severing them with the steel, he had cast them into the heaving sea from the continent, 190 so kept drifting long time up and down the deep, and all around kept rising a white foam from the immortal flesh; and in it a maiden was nourished; first she drew near divine Kythera, and thence came next to wave-washed Cyprus. Then forth stepped an awesome, beauteous goddess; and beneath her delicate feet the grass throve around: 195 her gods and men name Aphrodite, the foam-sprung goddess, and fair-wreathed Kytherea - the first because she was nursed in foam, but Kytherea, because she touched at Kythera; and Cyprus-born, because she was born in wave-dashed Cyprus; 200 and lover of smiles, because she emerged out of the genitals. And her Eros accompanied and fair Desire followed, when first she was born, and came into the host of the gods. And from the beginning this honor has she, and this part has she obtained by lot among men and immortal gods, 205 the amorous converse of maidens, their smiles and wiles, their sweet delights, their love, and blandishment.

174 A play on the like-sounding forms meid- ‘smile’ and mēd(ea) ‘genitals’: philommeidēs means ‘lover of smiles’, while philommēdēs would mean ‘lover of genitals’.
Night and Her Children

Now those sons, their father, mighty Sky, called by surname Titans, upbraiding those whom he had himself begotten; and he was accustomed to say that, out-stretching their hands in recklessness, they had wrought 210 a grave act, but that there should be vengeance for it hereafter. Night bore also hateful Destiny, and black Fate, and Death; she bore Sleep likewise, she bore the tribe of dreams; these did the goddess, gloomy Night bear after union with none. Next again Blame [Mōmos], and Care full-of-woes, 215 and the Hesperides, whose care are the fair golden apples beyond the famous Okeanos, and trees yielding fruit; and she produced the Destinies [Moirai], and ruthlessly punishing Fates: Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who assign to men at their births to have good and evil; 220 who also pursue transgressions both of men and gods, nor do the goddesses ever cease from dread wrath, before they have repaid sore vengeance to him, whosoever shall have sinned. Then pernicious Night also bore Nemesis, a woe to mortal men; and after her she brought forth Fraud, and Wanton-love, 225 and mischievous Old Age, and stubborn-hearted Eris. But odious Eris gave birth to grievous Trouble, and Oblivion, and Famine, and tearful Woes, Contests and Slaughters, Fights and Homicides, Quarrelings [neikos pl.], Falsehoods, Words, Disputes, 230 Lawlessness and Atē, intimates one of the other, and the Oath, which most hurts men on the earth, whensoever one has sworn voluntarily a perjured oath.

Pontos and His Descendants

And Pontos begat trusty and truthful Nereus, eldest indeed of his children, but men call him old, 235 because he is unerring as well as mild, neither does he forget the laws, but knows just and gentle purposes. And next again, by union with Earth, great Thaumas, and strong Phorkys, and Keto with fair-cheek, and Eurybia, having in her breast a soul of adamant. 240 From Nereus and fair-haired Doris, daughter of Okeanos, perfect stream, sprung lovely daughters of goddesses in the barren sea: Proto, Eukrante, Sao, and Amphitrite; Eudora, Thetis, Galene, Glauke, 245 Kymothoe, Speio, Thoe, and charming Halia; graceful Melite, and Eulimene, and Agaue, Pasithea, Erato, and rosy-armed Eunike, Doto and Proto, Phereousa, and Dynamene, Nesaia, and Aktaia, and Protomedeia, Doris and Panope, and beauteous Galatea, lovely Hippothoe, and rosy-armed Hipponoe, and Kymothoe, who along with Kymatolege, and neat-ankled Amphitrite, calms with ease the waves on the misty sea, and the blasts of violent winds; 255 Kymo and Eione, and Halimede with beauteous wreath, and blithe Glaukonome, and Pontoporeia, Leiagora, Euagore, Laomedeia, Polynome, Autonoe, and Lysianassa, and Eurane, both lovely in shape and in beauty faultless, 260 and Psamathe, graceful in person, and divine Menippe, Neso, Eupompe, Themisto, Pronoe, and Nemertes, who has the mind of her immortal father. These were born of blameless Nereus, fifty maidens, versed in blameless labors.

265 And Thaumas wedded Electra, daughter of deep-flowing Okeanos: she bore rapid Iris, and the fair-tressed Harpies, Aello and Okypete, who accompany the wind-blasts and birds, with swift wings, for they fly high above the earth. 270 But to Phorkys next Keto of fair-cheek bore the Graiai, gray from their birth, whom in fact immortal gods as well as men walking on the ground call Graiai; namely, Pemphredo handsomely-clad, and Enyo of saffron-vestment, and the Gorgons, who dwell beyond famous Okeanos, 275 in the most remote quarter night-ward, where are the clear-voiced Hesperides, Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa having-suffered sadly. The latter was mortal, but they, the other two, were immortal and ageless, and it was with that one [Medusa] that the azure-haired god lay in the soft meadow, and amid the flowers of spring. 280 From her too when, as the tale is, Perseus had cut off the head, up sprang huge Khrysaor and the steed Pegasus. To the latter came
his name because he was born near the springs of Okeanos, while the other had a golden sword in his hands. And he indeed, winging his flight away, left Earth, the mother of flocks, 285 and came to the immortals; in Zeus's house he dwells, bearing to counselor Zeus thunder and lightning. But Khrysaor, by union with Kallirhoe, daughter of famous Okeanos, begat three-headed Geryon. Him indeed then mighty Herakles spoiled, 290 amidst his trailing-footed oxen in sea-girt Erythia, on the very day when he drove the broad-browed oxen to sacred Tiryns, having crossed the path of Okeanos, and having slain beyond famous Okeanos Orthos, and the herdsman Eurytion in a dusky stall.

295 And she brought forth another monster, irresistible, in no way like mortal men, or immortal gods, in a hollow cavern; the divine stubborn-hearted Echidna, half nymph, with dark eyes and fair cheeks; and half, on the other hand, a serpent huge, and terrible, and vast, 300 speckled, and flesh-devouring, beneath caves of sacred Earth. For there is her cavern, deep under a hollow rock, far from immortal gods as well as mortal men: there have the gods assigned to her famous abodes to inhabit. But she, the destructive Echidna, was confined in Arima beneath the earth, 305 a nym

But she [Echidna] bore Chimaera, breathing resistless fire, 320 fierce and huge, fleet-footed as well as strong; this monster had three heads: one indeed of a grim-visaged lion, one of a goat, and another of a serpent, a fierce dragon; in front a lion, a dragon behind, and in the midst a goat; breathing forth the dread strength of burning fire. 325 Her Pegasus slew and brave Bellerophon. But she, compelled by Orthos, brought forth in sooth the destructive Sphinx, a destruction to the Kadmeians; and the Nemean lion, whom Hera, Zeus's glorious consort, reared, and settled in the corn-lands of Nemea, a woe to mankind. 330 There abiding truly used he to devour the tribes of men, while he held sway over Tretos of Nemea, and over Apesas: but him the might of strong Herakles subdued. And Keto mingling in love with Phorkys, brought forth, as youngest-born, a terrible serpent, 335 which in hiding-places of dark earth, guards all-golden apples, in wide bounds. Such then is the brood of Keto and Phorkys.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Tethys and Okeanos

But Tethys to Okeanos bore eddying rivers, Nile and Alpheus, and deep-eddying Eridanos; Strymon, and Maeander and Istrus of-fair-stream, 340 Phasis, Rhesus, and Akhelōios with silvery-tide, Nessos, and Rhodios, Haliakmon and Heptaporos, Granikos, Aisepos, and divine Simoeis, Peneios, Hermos, and pleasant-flowing Kaikos; and vast Sangarios, Ladon, Parthenios, 345 Euenus, and Ardeskos and divine Skamandros. And she bore a sacred race of daughters, who with King Apollo and the rivers all earth over bring up men to manhood, and have this prerogative from Zeus, namely, Peitho, Admete, Ianthē, Electra, 350 Doris and Prymno, and goddess-like Urania, Hippo, and Klymene, Rhodia, and Kallirhoe, Zeuxo and Klytia, Iduia and Pasithoe, Plexaure, Galaxaure, lovely Dione, Melobosis, and Thoe, and fair Polydora, and 355 Kerkeis in nature amiable, and bright-eyed Plouto, Perseis, Ianeira, Akaste, and Xanthe, and winsome Petraia, Menesto, and
Europa, Metis, Eurynome, and saffron-robed Telesto, Krenaéis, Asia as well as desire-kindling Calypso, 360 Eudora, Tyche, Amphiro, and Okyrhoë, and Styx, who truly is eldest of them all. Now these were born eldest daughters of Okeanos and Tethys; there are, however, many others also: for thrice a thousand are the tapering-ankled Okeanos-nymphs, 365 who truly spreading far and near, bright children of the gods, haunt everywhere alike earth and the depths of the lake. And again, as many other rivers flowing with a ringing noise, sons of Okeanos, whom august Tethys bore. It would be hard for mortal man to tell the names of all of them, 370 but they who dwell around them know the names of each.

**Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Theia and Hyperion**

And Theia, overcome in the embrace of Hyperion, brought forth the great Sun, and bright Moon, and Dawn, that shines for all that-dwell-on-the-earth, and for immortal gods, who occupy the broad sky.

**Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Kreios and Eurybia**

375 Eurybia too, a goddess among goddesses, bore to Kreios, after union in love, huge Astraios, and Pallas, and Perses, who was transcendent in all knowledge. And to Astraios Dawn brought forth the strong-spirited winds, Argestes, Zephyr, swift-speeding Boreas, 380 and Notos, when she, a goddess, had mingled in love with a god. And after them the goddess of morning produced the star Morning Star, and the brilliant stars with which the sky is crowned. And Styx, daughter of Okeanos, after union with Pallas, bore within the house Zelos and beauteous-ankled Victory; 385 and she gave birth to Strength [Kratos] and Force [Bê], illustrious children, whose abode is not apart from Zeus, nor is there any seat, or any way, where the god does not go before them; but always they sit beside deep-thundering Zeus. For thus counseled Styx, imperishable Okeanos-nymph, 390 at the time when the Olympian Lightener summoned all the immortal gods to broad Olympus, and said that whoso of the gods would fight with him against the Titans, none of them would he rob of his rewards, but each should have the honor that he had earlier among the immortal gods. 395 And he said that anyone who was unhonored or ungifted by Kronos, he would establish in honor, and rewards, according to justice. Then first came imperishable Styx to Olympus along with her children through the counsels of her father. And Zeus honored her, and gave her exceeding gifts. 400 For he ordained her to be the great Oath-witness of the gods, and her children to be dwellers-with-her all their days. And even as he promises, he performed to them all for ever: for he has power and reigns mightily.

**Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Phoebe and Koios**

And next Phoebe came to the much-beloved couch of Koios: 405 then in truth having conceived, a goddess by love of a god, she bore dark-robed Leto, ever mild, gentle to mortals and immortal gods, mild from the beginning, most kindly within Olympus. And she bore renowned Asteria, whom once Perses 410 led to an ample palace to he called his bride.

**Hekatē**

And she, becoming pregnant, brought forth Hekatē, whom Zeus, the son of Kronos, honored beyond all and provided for her splendid gifts, to wit, to hold a share of earth and of barren sea. But she has obtained honor also from starry Sky, 415 and has been honored chiefly by immortal gods. For even now when anywhere some one of men upon-the-earth duly propitiates them by doing
worthy sacrifice, he calls on Hekatē; and abundant honor very speedily attends him, whose vows the goddess shall receive, that is to say, graciously, 420 and to him she presents wealth, for she has the power. For as many as were born of Earth and Sky, and received a share of honor, of all these she has the lot, neither did the son of Kronos force any portion from her, nor did he take away as many honors as she has obtained by lot among the elder gods, the Titans, 425 but she has them, as at the first the distribution was from the beginning. Nor, because she is sole-begotten, has the goddess obtained less of honor, and her prerogative on earth, and in the sky, and sea, but even still much more, seeing that Zeus honors her. And to whom she wills, she is greatly present, and benefits him, 430 and he is distinguished, whom she wants that way, in the assembly among the people; and when men arm for mortal-destroying war, then the goddess draws nigh to whom she will, kindly to proffer victory and to extend renown to them: and in judgment she sits beside august kings: 435 and propitiously again, when men contend in the games, there the goddess stands near these also, and helps them. And when he has conquered by strength and might, a man carries with ease a noble prize, and rejoicingly presents glory to his parents. Propitious is she also to be present with horsemen, whenever she wishes; 440 and to them who ply the rough silvery main; and they pray to Hekatē and the loud-sounding Earth-shaker. Easily too the glorious goddess presents an ample spoil, and easily is she accustomed to withdraw it when it is shown, that is, if she is so disposed in her mind. And propitious along with Hermes to increase the flock in the folds, 445 the herds of cattle, and the droves, and broad herds of goats, and flocks of fleecy sheep, if she chooses in her heart, she makes great from small, and is accustomed to make less from being many. Thus, in truth, though being sole-begotten from her mother, she has been honored with rewards amidst all the immortals. 450 And the son of Kronos made her the nursing-mother of children, who after her have beheld with their eyes the light of far-seeing Dawn. Thus is she from the beginning nursing-mother, and such are her honors.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Rhea and Kronos

Rhea too, embraced by Kronos, bore renowned children, Hestia, Demeter, and Hera of-the-golden-sandals, 455 and mighty Hades, who inhabits halls beneath the earth, having a ruthless heart; and loud-resounding Poseidon, and counseling Zeus, father of gods as well as men, by whose thunder also the broad earth quakes. And them indeed did huge Kronos devour, 460 namely, every one who came to the mother’s knees from her holy womb, with this intent, that none other of the illustrious sky-born might hold royal honor among the immortals. For he had heard from Earth and starry Sky that it was fated for him, strong though he was, to be subdued by his own child, 465 through the counsels of mighty Zeus: wherefore he did not keep a careless watch, but lying in wait for them, kept devouring his own sons; while a grief not-to-be-forgotten possessed Rhea. But when at length she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods as well as men, then it was that she essayed to supplicate her parents dear, 470 Earth and starry Sky, to contrive a plan how she might without observation bring forth her son, and avenge the furies of their father, against his children, whom great and wily Kronos devoured. And they duly heard and complied with their dear daughter, 475 and explained to her as much as it had been fated should come to pass concerning king Kronos, and his strong-hearted son. And they sent her to Lyktos, to the fertile tract of Crete, when she was about to bear the youngest of her sons, mighty Zeus: whom indeed vast earth received from her 480 to rear and nurture in broad Crete. Thereupon indeed came she, bearing him through the swift dark night, to Lyktos first, and took him in her hands and hid him in a deep cave, beneath the recesses of the divine earth, in the dense and wooded Aegean Mount.
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485 But to the great prince, the son of Sky, former sovereign of the gods, she gave a huge stone, having wrapped it in swaddling clothes: which he then took in his hands, and stowed away into his belly, wretch as he was, nor did he consider in his mind that against him for the future his own invincible and untroubled son was left instead of a stone, 490 who was shortly about to subdue him by strength of hand, and to drive him from his honors, and himself to reign among the immortals. Quickly then throve the spirit and beauteous limbs of the king, and, as years came round, having been beguiled by the wise counsels of Earth 495 huge Kronos, wily counselor, let loose again his offspring, having been conquered by the arts and strength of his son. And first he disgorged the stone, since he swallowed it last. This stone Zeus fixed down upon the earth with-its-broad-ways, in divine Pytho [Delphi], beneath the clefts of Parnassus, 500 to be a σῆma thereafter, a marvel to mortal men. Then he loosed from destructive bonds his father's brethren, the sons of Sky, whom his father had bound in his folly. And they showed gratitude to him for his kindnesses, and gave him the thunder, and the smoking bolt, 505 and lightning; but earlier huge Earth had hidden them; trusting on these, he rules over mortals and immortals.

Descendants of Ouranos: Children of Iapetos and Klymene

Iapetos, moreover, wedded the damsel Klymene, a fair-ankled Okeanos-daughter, and ascended into a common bed. And she bore him Atlas, a stout-hearted son, 510 and brought forth exceeding-famous Menoitios, and artful Prometheus, full of various wiles, and Epimetheus of-erring-mind, who was from the first an evil to gain-seeking men: for he first received from Zeus the clay-formed woman, a virgin. But the insolent Menoitios wide-seeing Zeus 515 thrust down to Erebos, having, stricken him with flaming lightning, on account of his arrogance, and overweening strength. But Atlas upholds broad Sky by strong necessity, before the clear-voiced Hesperides, standing on earth’s verge, with head and unwearied hands. 520 For this lot counseling Zeus apportioned to him.

Prometheus

And wily-minded Prometheus he bound in indissoluble bonds, with painful chains, having thrust them through the middle of a column. And he urged against him an eagle with-wings-outspread: but it kept feeding on his immortal liver, while it would increase to a like size 525 all-round by night, to what the eagle with-wings-outspread had eaten during the whole day before. This bird indeed Herakles, valiant son of fair-ankled Alkmene, slew, and repelled from the son of Iapetos the baneful pest, and released him from his anxieties, not against the wiles of high-reigning Olympian Zeus, 530 so that the kleos of Thebes-born Herakles might be yet more than before over the many-feeding earth. Thus he honors his very famous son, through veneration for him. And, though incensed, he [Zeus] ceased from the wrath which he was harboring because he [Herakles] strove in plans against the almighty son of Kronos.

Prometheus: Zeus’s Choice of the Sacrifice

535 When the gods and mortal men were contending at Mekone, then did he [Prometheus] set before him [Zeus] a huge ox, having divided it with ready mind, studying to deceive the wisdom of Zeus. For here, on the one hand, he deposited the flesh and entrails with rich fat on the hide, having covered it with the belly of the ox; and there, on the other hand, he laid down, 540 having well disposed them with subtle craft, the white bones of the ox, covering them with white fat. Then it was that the father of gods and men addressed him, “Son of Iapetos, far-famed among all kings,
how unfairly, good friend, you have divided the portions.” 545 Thus spoke rebukingly Zeus, skilled in imperishable counsels. And him in his turn wily Prometheus addressed, laughing low, but he was not forgetful of subtle craft: “Most glorious Zeus, greatest of ever-living gods, choose which of these your inclination within your breast bids you.” He spoke in subtlety: 550 but Zeus knowing imperishable counsels was aware, in fact, and not ignorant of his guile; and was boding in his heart evils to mortal men, which also were about to find accomplishment. Then with both hands he lifted up the white fat. But he was incensed in mind, and wrath came around him in spirit, 555 when he saw the white bones of the ox arranged with guileful art. And thenceforth the tribes of men on the earth burn to the immortals white bones on fragrant altars. Then cloud-compelling Zeus addressed him, greatly displeased: “Son of Iapetos, skilled in wise plans beyond all, 560 you do not, good sir, yet forget subtle craft.” Thus spoke in his wrath Zeus knowing imperishable counsels: from that time forward, ever mindful of the fraud, he did not give the strength of untiring fire to wretched mortal men, who dwell upon the earth. 565 But the good son of Iapetos cheated him, and stole the far-seen splendor of untiring fire in a hollow fennel-stalk; but it stung High-thundering Zeus to his heart’s core, and incensed his spirit, when he saw the radiance of fire conspicuous among men.

Prometheus: Pandora and the Lineage of Women

570 Forthwith then he fashioned evil for men in requital for the fire bestowed. For from the earth the famous Hephaistos, halting in both feet, fashioned the image of a modest maiden, through the counsels of the son of Kronos. And the goddess glancing-eyed Athena girded and arrayed her in silver-white raiment; 575 and from her head she held with her hands a curiously embroidered veil, a marvel to look upon: and Pallas Athena placed around her about her head lovely garlands fresh-budding with meadow-flowers, and around her head she set a golden coronet, which renowned Hephaistos lame with both feet had made himself, 580 having wrought it carefully by hand, out of compliment to Zeus his father. On it had been wrought many curious monsters, a marvel to view, as many as in great abundance the continent and the sea maintain. Many of these he introduced, and much elegance beam’d from it, of wondrous beauty, like to living animals gifted with sounds. 585 But when he had wrought a beauteous evil instead of good, he led her forth even where were the rest of gods and men, exulting as she was in the adornment of the gleaming-eyed daughter-of-a-strong-father: and wonder seized immortal gods as well as mortal men, when they beheld a deep snare, against which man’s craftiness is in vain.

590 From her is the race of tender women. For from her is a pernicious race. Tribes of women, a great source of hurt, dwell with mortal men, helpmates not in consuming poverty, but in surfeit. And as when in close-roofed hives bees 595 feed drones, sharers in bad works, the former through the whole day till sunset are busy day by day, and make white combs, while the latter, remaining within in the close-roofed hives, reap the labors of others for their own stomachs. 600 Just as to mortal men high-thundering Zeus gave women as an evil, accomplices of painful toils: another evil too did he provide instead of good; to wit whosoever shunning marriage and the ills that women work, declines to marry, and has come to old age pernicious, 605 through want of one to tend his final days; he lives not, it is true, in lack of subsistence, but, when he is dead, distant kindred divide his possessions; while to whomsoever, on the other hand, the lot of marriage shall have fallen, and he has had a good wife congenial to his heart, to him then forever ill contends with good to be with him: 610 but whoso finds a baneful breed, lives with an incessant care to spirit and heart within his breast, and it is an irremediable woe. Thus it is not possible to deceive or overreach the mind of Zeus, for neither did Prometheus, helpful son of Iapetos, 615 escape from beneath his severe wrath; but a great chain, by necessity, constrains him, very knowing though he is.
But when first their father became angry in spirit against Briareus, Kottos, and Gyes, he bound
them with a strong bond, admiring their overweening courage, and also their form 620 and bulk;
and he made them dwell beneath the roomy earth. Then they in grief dwelling beneath the earth,
sat at the verge, on the extremities of vast Earth, very long, afflicted, having a great woe at heart;
but them the son of Kronos, and other immortal gods, 625 whom fair-haired Rhea bore in the
embrace of Kronos, by the counsels of Earth brought up again to light: for she recounted to them at
large everything, how they should along with those [Titans] gain victory and splendid glory. Long
time then they fought, incurring soul-vexing toil, 630 the Titan gods and as many as were born
from Kronos, in opposition to each other in stout conflicts; the one side, the glorious Titans from
lofty Othrys, and the other, the gods, givers of good things, whom Rhea the fair-haired had borne to
Kronos, in union with him, from Olympus.

635 They then in soul-distressing battle, one party with the other, were fighting continuously
more than ten years. Nor was there any riddance or end of severe contention to either party, and
the completion of the war was extended equally to either. But when at length Zeus set before them
all things agreeable, 640 to wit, nectar and ambrosia, on which the gods themselves feed, a noble
spirit grew in the breasts of all. And when they had tasted the nectar and delightful ambrosia, then
at length the father of gods and men addressed them: “Hear me, illustrious children of Earth and
Sky, 645 that I may speak what my spirit within my breast prompts me to speak. For now a very
long space we are fighting, each in opposition to other, concerning victory and power, all our days,
the Titan gods and as many of us are sprung from Kronos. 650 Now you must show against the
Titans in deadly fight both mighty force and hands invincible, in gratitude for our mild loving-
kindness, namely, after how many sufferings you came back again to the light, from afflictive
bondage, through our counsels, from the murky gloom.” Thus he spoke; and him in turn blameless
Kottos addressed in answer: 655 “Excellent Lord, you do not tell things unlearned by us; but we too
are aware that your wisdom is excellent, and excellent your intellect, and that you have been to the
immortals an averter of terrible destruction. And back again, from harsh bonds, have we come from
the murky darkness, through your thoughtful care, 660 O royal son of Kronos, having experienced
treatment unhoped-for. Wherefore also now with steadfast purpose and prudent counsel we will
protect your might in dread conflict, fighting with the Titans in stout battles.”

Thus he spoke; and the gods, givers of good, approved, 665 when they had heard his speech: and
their spirit was eager for battle still more than before, and they stirred up unhappy strife all of
them, female as well as male, on that day, both Titan gods, and as many as had sprung from Kronos,
and they whom Zeus sent up to light from Erebos, beneath the earth, 670 terrible and strong,
having overweening biē. From the shoulders of these a hundred hands outsprang to all alike, and to
each fifty heads grew from their shoulders over their sturdy limbs. They then were pitted against
the Titans in deadly combat, 675 holding huge rocks in their sturdy hands. But the Titans on the
other side made strong their phalanxes with alacrity, and both sides were showing work of hand
and biē at the same time, and the boundless sea re-echoed terribly, and earth resounded loudly, and
the broad sky groaned, 680 being shaken, and vast Olympus was convulsed from its base under the
violence of the immortals, and a severe quaking came to murky Tartaros, namely, a hollow sound of
countless chase of feet, and of strong battle-strokes: to such an extent did they hurl groan-causing
weapons. 685 And the voice of both sides reached the starry sky as they cheered, for they came
together with a great war-cry.
No longer did Zeus restrain his fury, but then forthwith his heart was filled with fierceness, and he began also to exhibit all his bīē: then, from the sky and from Olympus 690 he went forth lightening continually, and the bolts close together with thunder and lightning flew duly from his sturdy hand, whirling a sacred flash, in frequent succession, while all-around life-giving Earth was crashing in conflagration, and the immense forests on all sides crackled loudly with fire. 695 All land was boiling, and the streams of Okeanos, and the barren sea. Hot vapor was circling the earth-born Titans, and the incessant blaze reached the divine dense-atmosphere, while flashing radiance of thunderbolt and lightning was bereaving their eyes of sight, strong though they were. 700 Fearful heat likewise possessed Chaos; and it seemed, to look at, face to face, with the eye, and to hear the sound with the ear, just as if earth and the broad sky from above were threatening to meet: for such an exceeding crash would have arisen from earth falling in ruins, and the sky dashing it down from above. 705 Such a din there rose when the gods clashed in strife. The winds too at the same time were stirring up quaking and dust together, thunder and lightning and smoking bolt, shafts of the mighty Zeus; and they were bearing shout and battle-cry into the midst, one of another; then a terrible noise 710 of dreadful strife was roused, strength of prowess was put forth, and the battle was inclined; but before that time assailing one another, they were fighting incessantly in stern conflict. Now the others among the first ranks roused the keen fight, Kottos, Briareus, and Gyes insatiable in war, 715 who truly were hurling from sturdy hands three hundred rocks close upon each other, and they had overshadowed the Titans with missiles, sent them beneath the broad-wayed earth, and bound them in painful bonds, having conquered them with their hands, over-haughty though they were, 720 as far beneath under earth as the sky is from the earth, for equal is the space from earth to murky Tartaros.

**Depiction of the Underworld**

For nine nights and days also would a brazen anvil be descending from the sky, and come on the tenth to the earth; and nine days as well as nights again would a brazen anvil be descending 725 from the earth, to reach on the tenth to Tartaros. Around it moreover a brazen fence has been forged, and about it Night is poured in three rows around the neck; but above spring the roots of Earth and barren Sea. There, under murky darkness, the Titan gods 730 lie hidden by the counsels of cloud-compelling Zeus in a dark, dreary place, where are the extremities of vast Earth. These may not go forth, for Poseidon has placed above them brazen gates, and a wall goes round them on both sides. There dwell Gyes, and Kottos, and high-spirited Briareus, 735 faithful guards of aegis-bearing Zeus. And there are the sources and boundaries of dusky Earth, of murky Tartaros, of barren Sea, and starry Sky, all in their order: boundaries oppressive and gloomy, which also even gods abhor, 740 a vast chasm, not even for a whole round of a year would one reach the ground, after having first been within the gates: but gusts of wind following one upon the other would bear him onward hither and thither, distressing him, and dreadful even to immortal gods is this prodigy.

There the dread abodes of gloomy Night 745 stand shrouded in dark clouds. In front of these the son of Iapetos stands and holds broad Sky, with his head and unwearied hands, unmovedly, where Night and Day also drawing near are accustomed to salute each other, as they cross the vast 750 brazen threshold. The one is about to go down within, while the other comes forth abroad, nor ever does the abode constrain both within; but constantly one at any rate being outside the dwelling, wanders over the earth, while the other again being within the abode, awaits the season of her journey, until it comes; 755 the one having a far-seeing light for men-on-the-earth, and the other, destructive Night, having Sleep, the brother of Death, in its hands, being shrouded in hazy mist. And there the sons of obscure Night hold their habitation, Sleep and Death, dread gods: nor ever
Theogony

does 760 the bright sun look upon them with his rays, as he ascends the sky, or descends from the sky. Of whom indeed the one tarries on the earth and the broad surface of the sea, silently and soothingly to men; but of the other, iron is the heart, and brazen is his 765 ruthless soul within his breast; and whosoever of men he may have first caught, he holds: and he is hostile even to immortal gods. There in the front stand the resounding abodes of the infernal god, of mighty Hades, and awesome Persephone besides; and a fierce dog keeps guard in front, a ruthless dog: 770 and he has an evil trick: those who enter he fawns upon with his tail and both ears alike, yet he allows them not to go forth back again, but lies in wait and devours whomsoever he may have caught going forth outside the gates of strong Hades and dread Persephone.

775 There too dwells a goddess odious to immortals, dread Styx, eldest daughter of back-flowing Oceanos: and apart from the gods she inhabits renowned dwellings vaulted by huge rocks; and round about on all sides they are strengthened to Sky by silver columns. 780 And seldom goes the fleet-footed daughter of Thaumas, Iris, on a message over the broad back of the sea, namely, when by chance strife and quarrel shall have arisen among the immortals: and whosoever of them that hold Olympian dwellings, utters falsehood, then also Zeus is accustomed to send Iris to bring 785 from far in a golden ewer the great oath of the gods, the renowned water, cold as it is, which also runs down from a steep and lofty rock; but in abundance beneath the roomy Earth flows a branch of Oceanos from the sacred river through black Night; and a tenth portion has been assigned to it. 790 In nine portions indeed, rolling around Earth and also the broad back of the Sea with silver whirlpools, he [Oceanos] falls into the brine; but the other part flows forth from a rock, a great bane to the gods. Whosoever of immortals that occupy the top of snowy Olympus, shall have offered of this as a libation, and sworn over it a false oath, 795 lies breathless until the completion of a year, nor ever comes near the repast of nectar and ambrosia, but also lies breathless and speechless on a strewn couch, and a baneful stupor over-shrouds him. But when he has fulfilled his malady until the full year, 800 then another after another more severe trouble succeeds for him.

And for nine years he is parted from the ever-living gods; nor ever does he mix with them in council nor in feasts for nine whole years; but in the tenth he mingles again in the assemblies of the gods immortal, who occupy Olympian dwellings. 805 Such a grave oath have the gods made the imperishable water of Styx, that ancient water, which also runs through a very rugged tract.

There too are the sources and boundaries of dusky Earth, and murky Tartaros, and barren Sea, and starry Sky, all in order; 810 boundaries oppressive and gloomy, which also even gods abhor. And there are gleaming gates and a brazen threshold, unshaken and fixed upon far-extending foundations, self-growing; and before it, outside of all the gods, beyond gloomy Chaos, the Titans dwell. 815 But the famed allies of loud-crashing Zeus inhabit dwellings under the foundations of the Oceanos, namely, Kottos and Gyes. Briareus indeed, for his part, strong as he was, deep-sounding Earth-shaker made his son-in-law, and gave him to wife his daughter Kymopolia.

Typhonomachy

820 But when Zeus had driven the Titans out from Sky, huge Earth bore her youngest-born son, Typhoeus, by the embrace of Tartaros, through golden Aphrodite. Whose hands, indeed, are apt for deeds on the score of strength, and untiring the feet of the strong god; and from his shoulders 825 there were a hundred heads of a serpent, a fierce dragon, playing with dusky tongues, and from the eyes in his wondrous heads fire was gleaming, as he looked keenly. In all his terrible heads, too, were voices 830 sending forth every kind of sound ineffable. For a while they would utter sounds, so as for the gods to understand, and at another time again the voice of a loud-bellowing bull,
untamable in force, and proud in utterance; at another time, again, that of a lion possessing a
daring spirit; at another yet again they would sound like to whelps, wondrous to hear; 835 and at
another he would hiss, and the lofty mountains resound.

And, in fact, it was then that there would have been done a deed past remedy, and he, yes, he,
would have reigned over mortals and immortals, unless the father of gods and men had quickly
observed him. Harshly then he thundered, and heavily, 840 and terribly the earth re-echoed
around; and the broad sky above, and the sea, and streams of Okeanos, and the abysses of earth. But
beneath his immortal feet vast Olympus trembled, as the king rose up, and earth groaned beneath.
And the heat from both caught the dark-colored sea, 845 both of the thunder and lightning, and
fire from the monster, the heat arising from the thunder-storms, winds, and burning lightning. And
all earth and sky and sea were boiling; and huge billows roared around the shores about and
around, beneath the violence of gods; and unallayed quaking arose. 850 Hades trembled, monarch
over the dead beneath; and the Titans under Tartaros, standing about Kronos, trembled also, on
account of the unceasing tumult and dreadful contention. But then Zeus had raised high his wrath,
and had taken his arms, his thunder and lightning, and smoking bolt, leapt up, 855 and smote him
from Olympus, and scorched all-around all the wondrous heads of the terrible monster. But when
at length he had quelled it, after having smitten it with blows, the monster fell down lamed, and
huge Earth groaned. But the flame from the lightning-blasted monster flashed forth 860 in the
mountain-hollows, hidden and rugged, when he was stricken, and much was the vast earth burnt
and melted by the boundless vapor, like pewter, heated by the craft of youths, and by the well-
bored melting-pit; or iron, which is the hardest of metals, 865 subdued in the dells of the mountain
by blazing fire, melts in the sacred earth beneath the hands of Hephaistos. So was earth melted in
the glare of burning fire. Then, troubled in spirit, he hurled him into wide Tartaros.

Now from Typhoeus is the strength of winds moist-blowing, 870 except the southwest, the
north, and Argestes, and Zephyr, who also indeed are a race from the gods, a great blessing to
mortals. But the others, being random gusts, breathe over the sea. And these falling upon the
darksome deep rage with baneful gusts, a great hurt to mortals; 875 and now here, now there they
blow, and scatter ships, and destroy sailors: nor is there any relief from ill to men, who encounter
them on the sea. But these again over the boundless flowery earth spoil the pleasant works of
earth-born men, 880 filling them with dust and wearisome uproar.

Descendants of Kronos: Children of Zeus

But when the blessed gods had fulfilled their labor, and contended with the Titans perforce on
the score of honors, then it was, I say, that they urged far-seeing Zeus, by the advice of Earth, to
rule and reign 885 over immortals: and he duly distributed honors amongst them. And Zeus, king
of the gods, made Metis first his wife; Metis, most wise of deities as well as mortal men. But when at
last she was about to give birth to Athena, gleaming-eyed goddess, then it was that having by deceit
beguiled her mind 890 with flattering words, he placed her [Mētis] within his own belly by the
advice of earth, and of starry Sky. For thus they persuaded him, lest other of ever-living gods
should possess sovereign honor in the room of Zeus. For of her [Mētis] it was fated that wise
children should be born: 895 first the glancing-eyed Tritonian maiden, having equal might and
prudent counsel with her father; and then she [Mētis] was going to give birth to a son, as king of
gods and men, with an overbearing spirit, if it had not been for the fact that Zeus deposited her
first in his own belly, 900 that the goddess might indicate to him both good and bad.
Next he wedded bright Themis, who bore the Hōrai: Eunomia, dikē, and blooming Peace, who care for their works for mortal men; and the Fates [Moirai], to whom counseling Zeus gives most honor, 905 Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who also give to men good and evil to possess. And Eurynome, daughter of Okeanos, having a very lovely form, bore him the fair-cheeked Kharites [Graces]: Aglaia, and Euphrosyne, and winsome Thalia; 910 from whose eyelids also as they gazed dropped Love, unnerving limbs, and sweetly too they look from under their brows. But he came to the couch of much-nourishing Demeter, who bore him white-armed Persephone; her whom Hades ravished from her mother: and sage Zeus gave her away. And next he was enamored of beautiful-haired 915 Mnemosyne, of whom were born to him the Muses nine, with-golden-fillets, to whom festivals, and the delight of song, are a pleasure. But Apollo and Artemis, rejoicing-in-arrows, a lovely off-spring beyond all the sky-dwellers, Leto 920 brought forth, after union in love with aegis-bearing Zeus. And last made he blooming Hera his spouse. She bore Hebe, and Ares, and Eileithuia, having been united in love with the king of gods and men. But by himself, from his head, he produced glancing-eyed Tritonis [Athena], 925 fierce, strife-stirring, army-leading, unsubdued, and awesome, to whom dins, and wars, and battle are a delight.

Descendants of Kronos: Hera’s Child, Hephaistos

And Hera, without having been united in love, brought forth famous Hephaistos, as she was furious and quarrelling with her husband; Hephaistos, distinguished in crafts from amongst all the sky-born.

Descendants of Kronos: Children of Poseidon

930 But from Amphitrite and the loud-roaring Earth-shaker sprang great and widely-powerful Triton, who occupies the depth of the sea, and inhabits golden houses beside his dear mother and his royal father, being a terrible god.

Descendants of Zeus

To shield-piercing Ares, however, Kytherea [Aphrodite] bore Fear and Terror, 935 formidable deities, who route dense phalanxes of men in horrid war, with the help of city-spoiler Ares; and Harmonia, whom high-spirited Kadmos [Kadmos] made his spouse. Then to Zeus Maia, daughter of Atlas, bore glorious Hermes, herald of immortals, having ascended his holy couch. 940 And to him Semele, daughter of Kadmos, bore an illustrious son, Dionysus briner of joys, after union in love, mortal though she was, an immortal. But now both are deities. And Alkmene after union in love with cloud-compelling Zeus bore Herakles the strong. 945 But Hephaistos, far-famed, crippled god, took to wife blooming Aglaia, youngest of the Kharites. And Dionysus, of golden hair, took for his blooming bride blond-tressed Ariadne, daughter of Minos. And her the son of Kronos made immortal, and unsusceptible of old age for him. And fair-ankled Alkmene’s valiant son, mighty Herakles, having accomplished grievous toils, 950 made Hebe, daughter of mighty Zeus and Hera-with-golden-sandals, his bashful wife in snowy Olympus: happy hero, who having achieved a great work, 955 dwells among the immortals uninjured and ageless evermore.

Circe and Medea

To the unwearied Sun the famous daughter of Okeanos, Perseis, bore Circe and king Aietes. And Aietes, son of man-enlightening Sun, 960 wedded beauteous-cheeked Iduia, daughter of Okeanos, perfect through golden Aphrodite, brought forth to him fair-ankled Medea.
Children of Immortal Goddesses and Mortal Men

Take pleasure [in my performance], gods dwelling in Olympian abodes, islands and continents, and briny Pontos within; and now Olympian Muses, sweet of speech, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, 965 sing you the generation of goddesses, as many as, having been united, though immortal, with mortal men, gave birth to children resembling gods. Demeter, divine among goddesses, after union in delightsome love, 970 bore Ploutos [Wealth] to the hero Iasios, in a thrice-plowed fallow field, in the fertile country of Crete, a kind god, who goes over all the earth, and the broad surface of the sea; and to him that has chanced upon him, and into whose hands he may have come, I say, he is accustomed to make rich, and presents to him much wealth [olbos]. 975 And to Kadmos, Harmonia, daughter of golden Aphrodite, bore Ino, Semele, and fair-cheeked Agaue, and Autonoe, whom Aristaos of-clustering-locks wedded, and Polydoros in tower-circled Thebes. But Kallirhoe, daughter of Oceanos, united to brave-hearted Khrysaor 980 in union of all-golden Aphrodite, bore a son the strongest of all mortals, Geryon, whom mighty Herakles slew, for the sake of the trailing-footed oxen in island Erytheia.

And to Tithonos Eos bore Memnon with-brazen-helm, 985 king of the Ethiopians, and the sovereign Emathion. But to Kephalos in truth she [Eos] produced an illustrious son, the brave Phaethon, comparable to the gods, whom, when young, in the tender flower of glorious youth, a lad, conscious only of young fancies, laughter-loving Aphrodite 990 snatched up, and rushed away, and she made him, in her sacred shrine, the temple-keeper of her inner sanctum, a radiant daimôn. And the daughter of Aietes, Zeus-descended king, Jason, son of Aison, by the counsels of ever-living gods, carried off from Aietes, after he had fulfilled the grievous toils, 995 which, being many in number, the great and overbearing king, insolent and reckless Pelias, doer of deeds of violence, imposed upon him. Which having achieved, after having toiled much, the son of Aison arrived at Iolkos, bearing in his fleet ship a dark-eyed maiden, and her he made his blooming bride. Yes, and she [Medea], 1000 having been yoked with Jason, shepherd of his people, bore a son Medeus, whom Chiron, son of Philyra, reared on the mountains; while the purpose of mighty Zeus was being fulfilled.

But of the daughters of Nereus, ancient sea-god, Psamathe, divine among goddesses, bore Phokos 1005 in the embrace of Aiakos, through golden Aphrodite; and the goddess Thetis, of the silver feet, yielding to Peleus, gave birth to Achilles the lion-hearted, who-broke-the-ranks-of-men. Fair-wreathed Kytherea [Aphrodite] too, blending in delightsome love with the hero Anchises, bore Aineias [Aeneas] 1010 on the peaks of many-valleyed, woody Ida. But Circe, daughter of the Sun, born-of-Hyperion, by the love of Odysseus of-enduring-heart, gave birth to Agrios and blameless and strong Latinus; Telegonos also she bore through golden Aphrodite. 1015 Now these, very far in a recess of sacred isles, reigned over all the very renowned Tyrrhenians. But Calypso, divine among goddesses, bore to Odysseus Nausithoös and Nausinoös after union in delightful love.

1020 These, though immortal, having been united with mortal men, gave birth to children like unto the gods. And now sing you the generation of women, you sweet-spoken Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus.
Muses of Pieria, you who make *kleos* with your songs,  
come and tell of Zeus, making a song about your father,  
on account of whom there are mortals both unworthy of talk and worthy,  
both worth speaking of and not - all on account of great Zeus.  

5  Easily he gives power, and just as easily he ruins the powerful.  
Easily he diminishes the distinguished, and magnifies the undistinguished.  
Easily he makes straight the crooked and withers the overweening  
- Zeus, the one who thunders on high, who lives in the highest abode.  

10  Heed me, seeing and hearing as you do, and with *dikē* make straight the *themistes*.  
While you do that, I am ready to tell genuine [*etētuma*] things to Perses.  
So then, the *genos* of the *Erides* was not a single one, but on Earth  
there are two of them. One is to be praised when a person takes note in his *noos*,  
but the other is to be blamed. They have the opposite kinds of *thumos*.  
One of them promotes evil war and strife,  
the wretched one! No mortal loves this one, but, by necessity,  
in accord with the will of the immortals, humans give *tīmē* to this burdensome *Eris*.  
As for the other one, she was the *first* of the two to be born of dark Night.  
And Zeus, seated on high, abiding in the aether, made her to be  
far better for men, rooted in Earth as she is.  

15  She rouses even the resourceless person to work.  
For when one man who needs work looks at another man  
who is rich, who strives to plow, to plant,  
to keep his household in order, then it is that neighbor envies neighbor,  
as the rich man is striving for his wealth. This *Eris* is good for mortals.  

20  Potter envies potter, carpenter envies carpenter.  
Beggar envies beggar, singer envies singer.  
You, Perses, must place these things in your *thumos*.  
Do not let the *Eris* who rejoices at others’ misfortunes keep your *thumos* away from work,  
as you skulk about looking and listening for occasions of quarreling [*neikea*] in the *agorā*.  

25  The *hōrā* for quarreling [*neikea*] and *agorai* is a short one indeed  
for anyone who does not have lasting supplies of life-sustenance
as provided by the hōrai. The Earth bears the sustenance, which is the grain of Demeter.

Feeding on this sustenance to the point of koros, you are ready to promote quarreling [neikos] and strife over the property of others. Well, you will not be getting a second chance to do what you are now doing. Without any further ado, let us settle between ourselves this quarrel [neikos] with straight dikai which, coming from Zeus, are the best.

Earlier, we divided up our inheritance, and then you seized and took away much more than was yours, thus increasing the glory of kings who devour gifts, who voluntarily render this dikē.

They are inept [nēpioi], not knowing how much the half is more than the total or how much of a good thing there is to be found in mallow or asphodel.

The gods had hidden away the true means of livelihood for humankind, and they still keep it that way. If it were otherwise, it would be easy for you to do in just one day all the work you need to do, and have enough to last you a year, idle though you would be.

Right away, you could store your steering-oar over the fireplace, and what you had plowed with your oxen or hard-working mules could go to waste. But Zeus hid it [the true means of livelihood for humankind], angry in his thoughts, because Prometheus, with crooked plans, deceived him.

For that reason he [Zeus] devised plans that were to be baneful for humankind.

And he [Zeus] hid fire. But [deceiving Zeus again] the good son of Iapetos [Prometheus] stole it for humankind from Zeus the Planner inside a hollow fennel-stalk, escaping the notice of Zeus the Thunderer.

Angered at him, Zeus, the cloud-gatherer, spoke:

“Son of Iapetos, knowing more schemes than anyone else, you rejoice over stealing the fire and over deceiving my thinking.

But a great pain awaits both you and future mankind.

To make up for the fire, I will give them an evil thing, in which they may all take their delight in their hearts, embracing this evil thing of their own making.”

Thus spoke the father of men and gods, and he laughed out loud.

Then he ordered Hephaistos, renowned all over, to shape some wet clay as soon as possible, and to put into it a human voice and strength, and to make it look like the immortal goddesses, with the beautiful and lovely appearance of a virgin. And he ordered Athena to teach her own craft to her, weaving a very intricate web.
And he ordered Aphrodite to shed golden charm over her head; also harsh longing, and anxieties that eat away at the limbs.

And he ordered Hermes, the messenger and Argos-killer, to put inside her an intent that is doglike and a temperament that is stealthy.

Zeus spoke, and the gods obeyed the Lord Son of Kronos.

Right away the famed Lame One shaped out of the clay of the Earth something that looked like a comely virgin - all on account of the will of Zeus, son of Kronos. Athena dressed her and tied her girdle, adorning her. And the goddesses who are named Kharites [Graces], as well as the Lady Peithō [Persuasion], placed golden necklaces on its skin, and the Hōrai, with their beautiful hair, plaited springtime garlands around her head. Pallas Athena placed on her skin every manner of ornament [kosmos]. And within her breast the messenger and Argos-killer fashioned falsehoods [pseudea], crafty words, and a stealthy disposition, according to the plans of Zeus the loud-thunderer. And the messenger of the gods put inside her a voice, and he called this woman Pandōra, because all the gods who abide in Olympus gave her as a gift [dōron], a pain for grain-eating men.

But when the gods completed this deception of sheer doom, against which there is no remedy, Father Zeus sent the famed Argos-killer to Epimetheus, the swift messenger of the gods, bringing the gift [dōron]. Nor did Epimetheus take notice [verb phrazesthai] how Prometheus had told him never to accept a gift [dōron] from Zeus the Olympian, but to send it right back, lest an evil thing happen to mortals. But he [Epimetheus] accepted it, and only then did he take note in his noos that he had an evil thing on his hands.

Before this, the various kinds of humanity lived on earth without evils and without harsh labor, without wretched diseases that give disasters to men.

But the woman took the great lid off the jar and scattered what was inside. She devised baneful anxieties for humankind. The only thing that stayed within the unbreakable contours of the jar was Elpis [Hope]. It did not fly out. Before it could, she put back the lid on top of the jar, according to the plans of aegis-bearing Zeus, the cloud-gatherer.
100 But as for the other things, countless baneful things, they are randomly scattered all over humankind.

Full is the earth of evils, full is the sea.

Diseases for humans are a day-to-day thing. Every night, they wander about at random, bringing evils upon mortals silently - for Zeus had taken away their voice.

105 So it is that there is no way to elude the intent [noos] of Zeus.

Now, if you are so disposed, I shall sum up for you another thing I have to say. I shall do it well, and with expertise, and you should put it in your thoughts.

Here it is: the gods and mortal humans have the same origins.

In the very beginning, a Golden Generation of shining-faced humans was made by the immortals who abide in Olympian homes.

They were in the time of Kronos, when he was king over the sky. They lived like gods, having a thumos without anxieties, without labor and woe. Nor did wretched old age weigh upon them. Their feet and hands did not change,

110 and they had good times [verb terpesthai] at feasts [thalmai], exempt from all evils.

And when they died, it was as if they were overcome by sleep. All manner of good things [esthla] belonged to them. And the grain-giving [root dōr-] earth, without prompting, bore produce aplenty. And they, placidly and in serenity [hēsukhīa], lived off their fields, amidst much material wealth.

115 They were rich in flocks, philoi to the blessed gods.

But when the earth covered over this Generation - they are daimones, according to the plans of great Zeus; they are noble [esthloi], earth-bound [epi-khthonioi], guardians [phulakes] of mortal humans, who stand guard, supervising dikai and wretched deeds;

120 they are invisible, roaming everywhere over the land, givers of wealth; and all this they have as befits the honor of kings.

Then a second Generation, a much worse one, the Silver one, was later made by the gods who abide in their Olympian homes.

They were like the Golden one neither in their nature nor in their power of perception [noēma].

125 As a boy, each would be raised for a hundred years by dear mother, sporting about, quite inept [nēpios], at home.

But when each boy was ready for puberty [hēbê] and was reaching the dividing-line of puberty [hēbê],

then they lived beyond that point only for a very short while, getting pains [algea]
on account of their acts of heedlessness [aphradiai].¹⁷⁵ For they were not able to keep reckless *hubris* away from each other. Nor were they willing to act as *therapontes* to the immortals or to sacrifice on the sacred altars of the Blessed Ones, as is *themis*. Then these men were hidden away from view by Zeus the son of Kronos, who was angry that they did not give *timai* to the blessed gods who abide in Olympus.

But when this Generation too was covered over by the earth - they are called the under-earth-bound [*hypo-khtonioi*],¹⁷⁶ the blessed [*makares*],¹⁷⁷ mortals; they are second in rank [to the Golden Generation], but nevertheless even they get *timē* - then Zeus the father made another Generation of mortal men, a third one. He made it of Bronze, not at all the like the Silver [Generation].

They came out of ash-trees, a terrifying and powerful race, who cared mostly for the lamentable works of Ares and for acts of *hubris*. And they did not eat grain, but they had the harsh *thumos* of adamant. They were forbidding. Great *biē* and powerful hands grew out of their shoulders, propped up on powerful legs.

Their armor was made of bronze, their houses were made of bronze. They had bronze implements. There was no iron, dark-colored. And they were overcome by the violence of their own hands, and they went to the dank house of chill Hades. So they went nameless. Dark death took hold of them, however terrifying they were, and they left behind the bright light of the sun.

But when this Generation too was covered over by the earth, Zeus made yet another Generation on earth, which nurtures many, a fourth one. This one, by contrast, had *dikē*. It was better.

It was the godlike generation of men who were *hērōes*, who are called *hēmitheoi* [demigods], the previous [to ours] generation over the boundless earth. These were overcome by evil war and the terrible din of battle.

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¹⁷⁵ This noun *aphradia* 'heedlessness' is derived from *phrazesthai* 'take note', a verb that designates the activity of *mētis*.

¹⁷⁶ This word is in opposition to *epi-khtonioi* 'earth-bound' at line 123; and that word is in opposition to the epithet of the gods, *ep-oouranioi* 'sky-bound'. Whereas *epi-khtonioi* does not exclude the category of *hypo-khtonioi*, in that they can be imagined as being either below the earth or simply earth-bound; the *hypo-khtonioi*, on the other hand, must be imagined as being below the earth.

¹⁷⁷ The Proclus commentary reads *phulakes* 'guardians'.
Some died at the walls of seven-gated Thebes, the land of Kadmos, as they fought over the sheep of Oedipus.
Others were taken by war over the great yawning stretches of sea to Troy, all on account of Helen with the beautiful hair.
Then they [this Generation] were covered over by the finality of death.

But they received, apart from other humans, a life and a place to live from Zeus the son of Kronos, who translated them to the edges of the earth, far away from the immortal gods. And Kronos is king over them.
And they live having a thumos without cares in the Islands of the Blessed [Makares], by the banks of the deep-swirling Okeanos.
They are blessed [olbioi] hērōes, for whom honey-sweet produce is given by the grain-giving earth three times a year.
If only I did not belong to the fifth men, but had either died before or were to be born in the future
For now is the Generation of Iron. What will now happen is that men will not even have a day or night free from toil and suffering.
They will be worn down, and the gods will give harsh cares.
Still, despite all this, even they will have some good mixed in with the bad.
But Zeus will destroy even this Generation of mortal men, when the time comes that children will be born with gray hair at their temples.
This will be a time when the father will not have equanimity with his children, nor the children with their father,

nor the guest [xenos] with his host, nor comrade with comrade.
Nor will a brother be philos, as he had been before.
Once men grow old, their sons will give them no timē.
They will reproach their parents, shouting at them with harsh words.
Wretches! Men who do not know about the retribution of the gods! Such men would not even give to their aging parents the honor that is their due.

These deciders of dikē by violence! They will destroy each other’s cities.
There will be no appreciation [kharis] for the man who swears correctly, for the man of dikē,

178 I interpret the mēn here as parallel to mēn at lines 122, 137, 141, 161, not to mēn at line 162 (pace West WD commentary p. 192).
179 In a longer version, as attested in a papyrus, this line, 169, is followed by four lines not attested elsewhere; in this version, these five lines, labeled 173a (= 169), 173b, 173c, 173d, 173e in West’s edition, follow line 173 (and 168 is followed by 170). These additional lines tell of the releasing of Kronos by Zeus and introduce the subject of the Fifth Generation.
for the agathos man. Instead, it will be the doer of evil deeds and the man of hubris that they will give timē to. In the grip of violence will be dikē and aidōs. The inferior man will harm the superior one, speaking with crooked words, under oath.

195 A constant companion of all of wretched humankind will be Envy, the badmouthing one, the one that delights over the misfortunes of others, the one with the hateful face.

And then, flying off to Olympus, away from the broad earth, covering their beautiful complexion with white veils, heading for the race of immortals and leaving humans behind,

200 Aidōs and Nemesis will depart. What will be left behind are baneful pains for mortal humans. And there will be nothing to ward off evil.

Now I will tell an ainos to kings, discerning as they presumably are.

This is what the hawk said to the nightingale, the one with the patterned voice, grasping her in his talons, carrying her far off into the clouds.

205 She in the meantime, pierced by the curved talons, was lamenting. But he spoke to her from his position of superior power:

“What daimōn makes you cry out this way? One who is far more powerful holds you fast. You will go wherever I take you, singer [poet] that you are. I can do what I wish with you: either make a meal out of you or let you go.

Foolish is the one who is ready to stand up to those who are more powerful.

Such a person is deprived of victory, suffering pains in addition to the disgrace of defeat.” So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the long-winged bird.

You, Perses, must listen to dikē, and you must not make hubris thrive.

For hubris is bad for the wretched mortal. A noble [esthlos] man cannot easily bear the burden, and he is weighed down under it [hubris], incurring Atai. It is better to go the other way, towards the things of dikē. The dikē comes out prevailing over hubris in the end. The inept [nēpios] person learns only by going through the experience.

Horkos [‘Oath’ personified] runs in pursuit, catching up with crooked dikai, and there is a clamor as dikē is dragged off by men who take her wherever they want, devourers of gifts, as they sort out, with crooked dikai, what is or is not themis. Weeping, she [dikē] pursues the city and the haunts of its inhabitants. Invisible, she brings evil upon men who exile her and apportion her so as to make her crooked.

225 As for those who render straight dikai for xenoi and for local people alike,
and who do not veer away from what is dikaiōn,
for them, their city flourishes, and the inhabitants blossom.
Peace, the nurturer of young men, ranges about the land, and never do they have
wretched war manifested for them by Zeus who sees far and wide.

230 Men who have straight dikē are never visited by Hunger
or by Atē. Instead, at feasts, they reap the rewards of the works that they industriously cared
about.
For them the earth bears much life-sustenance. On the mountains, the oak tree
bears acorns at the top and bees in the middle.
Their wooly sheep are laden with fleeces.

235 Their wives bear children resembling their fathers.
They flourish with all good things, without fail. And they do not have to find their way home
on ships, but the grain-giving land bears fruit.
But those who have evil hubris and wanton deeds on their minds
for them the son of Kronos, wide-seeing Zeus, marks out dikē.

240 Many times it happens that an entire polis suffers the consequences on account of just one evil
man who transgresses and plans reckless deeds.
For these men the son of Kronos brings down from the skies a great disaster,
famine along with pestilence. And the people waste away.
Their women do not give birth, and their households are depleted -
all on account of the plans of Zeus the Olympian. There will be a time when
Zeus will destroy their vast host of fighting men. Or he can exact retribution against them by
destroying their city-walls
or their ships sailing over the pontos.
You kings! Mark well, all of you,
this dikē. For nearby and present among humankind

250 are the immortals, and they take note of those who, with crooked dikai,
 oppress each other, not caring about the retribution of the gods.
They are countless - no, more, they are three times countless - ranging all over the earth,
nurturer of many.
They are the immortal ones, coming from Zeus, guardians [phulakes] of mortal men,
who watch over the dikai and guard against reckless deeds.

255 They are invisible, ranging everywhere over the land.
Then there is the virgin dikē, born of Zeus.
She has great esteem and aidōs among the gods who abide in Olympus.
Whenever someone does her harm, using crooked words,
right away she takes her place at the side of Zeus son of Kronos,
and she proclaims the noos of men that is without dikē, with the result that the people have to pay retribution
for the deeds of recklessness committed by their kings. These kings, having baneful thoughts in their noos,
pronounce dikai in a crooked way, making them veer and go astray.
You kings! Guard against these things and make straight your words,
you devourers of gifts! And put crooked dikai out of your mind completely.

The man who plans misfortune for another man is planning misfortune for himself.
A bad plan is the worst plan for the one who planned it.
The Eye of Zeus sees all and takes note of all in his noos.
If he so wishes, he will watch over the present situation. It does not escape his notice
what kind of dikē this present dikē is that the polis holds within itself.

The way things are now, I would not want myself or a son of mine to be a man of dikē in my dealings with men -
if it were true that a man of no dikē [justice] would have a dikē [judgment] going more his way -
that is, if it were true that it is a misfortune to be a man of dikē.
But my hope is that such a state of affairs has not yet been brought to pass by Zeus the Planner.\(^{180}\)

Perses! I call on you to put these things in your mind.

Heed dikē, and put biē completely out of your mind.
For this way [of biē] is the norm that Zeus has imposed
on the fish and beasts and winged birds,
that is, to eat each other. For they have no dikē.
But to humans he gave dikē, which is by far the best.

For if anyone stands ready to speak publicly the things of dikē,
with full awareness,\(^ {181}\) to him Zeus grants bliss [olbos].
But whoever knowingly swears a false oath as he bears witness,
lying, such a man harms dikē, bringing about a damage that cannot be compensated.
The future lineage of such a man will be left darkened over.

But the future lineage of a man who swears properly will be superior.

Inept [népios] Perses! As I speak to you, I have good thoughts in my noos towards you.
To be evil is an easy choice, and there are many ways to do it.

\(^{180}\) Cf. West WD commentary p. 225.
\(^{181}\) The use of *gignōskein* 'be aware' here is parallel to what we find in Theognis 670.
The way of evil is smooth and accessible.
But the immortal gods have put between them and us the sweat that goes with aretē.

The path towards it [aretē] is long and steep.
It is rough at first, but, as it reaches the top,
it finally becomes easy, hard as it was before.
The best man is the one who, unlike the others, takes note of everything in his noos,
marking well what is for the best in the future and in the fulfillment of time.

Noble [esthlos] is he who puts his trust in one who speaks what is genuine.
But whoever does not think with his noos nor listens to one who does,
taking it to his thumos, such a man is worthless.

Keep in mind what I urge you to do,
Perses, and get to work, you offshoot of Zeus, so that Hunger
may hate you, and that you may be loved by Demeter with the beautiful garlands,
the honorable one, and that she may fill your granary with life-sustenance.
Hunger is the natural companion of the utterly idle man.
Both gods and men begrudge helping such a man who is idle
in his life. He is similar in temperament to the stingless drones
who, idle as they are, waste away the hard work of the bees,
eating it all up. Let it be philon for you to make arrangements in moderation,
so that your granaries may be filled with seasonal life-sustenance.
It is from working that men get many sheep and wealth.
And it is by working that a man becomes more philos than other men to the immortals
and to mortals. They all hate the idle.
Working is no cause for reproach [oneidos]. Not working is cause for oneidos.
If you do work, the idle man will envy you
as you get wealthy. Your wealth is attended by aretē and god-given glory [kudos].
Whatever kind of daimōn you have, working is the better way,
if only you would turn your deranged thumos away from the property of others
and directed it towards work, as I urge you.
There is no genuine aidōs in looking after the needs of a man who is wanting.
Aidōs can be of great harm or benefit to men.
Aidōs goes with being poor. Brazenness goes with being wealthy.

Wealth is not to be seized by force. The god-given things of life are by far better.
For if someone takes hold of great wealth by force and violence,
or robs it by way of the tongue, as often
happens, whenever the sense for personal gain leads the noos of humans astray,
as the sense of Dishonorableness \([\textit{An-aideia}]\) drives away the sense of Honorableness \([\textit{Aidôs}]\),

325 then the gods, with the greatest of ease, blot over such a man, and they deplete his household,
and wealth stays with him for but a short time.
And whoever treats badly the suppliant and the \textit{xenos} as well,
or whoever enters the bed of his brother,
sleeping secretly with the brother’s wife, thus committing an act that veers from what is right,
or whoever heedlessly wrongs orphans,
or whoever directs against his own aged father at the threshold of old age
harsh words of quarreling \([\textit{neikos}]\),
either Zeus himself manifests his anger at such a man, or, in the end,
the man pays a harsh penalty in retribution.

330 But you should keep your deranged \textit{thumos} completely away from these things,
and, to the best of your ability, you must make sacrifice to the immortal gods,
in a holy and pure fashion, and you must burn splendid thigh-portions.
On other occasions, you must supplicate them with libations and with burnt offerings,
both when you go to bed and when the sacred light of dawn comes,
so that they may have a propitious heart and \textit{thumos} towards you.
This way, you will be buying the arable land of others, not the other way around.
Invite for a feast the man who is \textit{philos} to you; but the man who is an enemy \([\textit{ekhthros}]\), let him go.
The man who is most important to invite is the one who lives nearest to you.
For if some misfortune happens in any given place,

340 the neighbors come over in haste, ungirt, but the in-laws come girt.
A bad neighbor is as much a pain as a good one is a great boon.
Whoever has the good fortune to have a good neighbor has the good fortune of having \textit{timê}.
You will never lose as much as an ox if you have a good neighbor.
Have the grain measured out properly when you borrow from a neighbor, and pay it back properly
in the same measure or even better, if you can.
This way, when you are in need, you can find something to rely on.
Do not seek personal gain that is evil. Evil personal gain leads to some kind of \textit{atê} or other.
Be \textit{philos} to the one who is \textit{philos} to you, and seek the company of those who seek yours.
Give to the one who would give to you, and do not give to the one who would not.

350 One gives to the giver, and gives not to the one who gives not.
The act of Giving \([\textit{Dôs}]\) is good, while the act of Taking forcibly \([\textit{Harpax}]\) is bad, the giver of death.
Whoever willingly gives a gift, no matter how great,
rejoices in the giving and takes pleasure in his *thumos*.

But the man who seizes something [instead of having it as a gift], yielding to dishonorableness [anaideia],

no matter how small it is, it will freeze over the heart [of the person who is being robbed].

For even if you are storing things up just bit by bit,
even that would become a big thing if you do it often.

But whoever adds something to what is already there wards off burning-bright hunger.

Whatever is already stored up at home will not take care of a man.

At home it is better [for storing up more things], for outside it is risky.

It is a good thing to take from what is at hand, and it is a pain for the *thumos* to be without what is no longer at hand. And I urge you to take note of these things.

Take your fill when the jar [of wine] is up to the top or nearing the bottom,

and be sparing in the middle. Thrift is dreadful when you reach the bottom.

Let the wages that you agree upon be adequate for a man who is *philos* to you.

But get a witness - you can do it with a smile - even if you are dealing with your own brother.

Men have been undone both by being trusting and by not being so.

Let not a woman who dresses to show off her behind deceive your *noos*, cajoling you with her crafty words, ready to infest your granary.

Whoever puts his trust in a woman puts his trust in tricksters.

It is the best thing to have an only child to maintain the ancestral household.

That is the way that wealth can increase in the house.

Then, as an old man, you should leave behind one more young boy [apparently an only grandson] by the time you die.

But Zeus, if he wants to, can easily give untold wealth to a greater number of people.

The more attention to work there is by more people, the greater the surplus.

If the *thumos* within your *phrenes* yearns for wealth,

this is the way you should work, working on tasks one after another.

When the Pleiades rise above the horizon [just before sunrise],

that is the time to start reaping. When they set [just before sunrise], start plowing.

They are hidden for forty nights and forty days.

As that time of the year comes around again,

they appear for the first time when the iron [used for reaping] is getting sharpened.

This is the way it is done on the plains. But it is near the sea

that others live, while still others live in the glens of hillsides,

far away from the waves of the sea, abiding on a rich land.
When you sow, do it with your clothes stripped off. The same goes for when you drive your oxen as you plow.

And for when you reap. Do this if you want all the produce that you gather in from Demeter to be in season, so that all the crops may each grow in season. This way, you will avoid being in need in the future, having to go begging to the households of others - and accomplishing nothing.

Just the way it is now, as you come to me. But I will not give you anything. Thus I will add nothing to what you got in the first place.

Nothing more will be measured out for you. Get to work, you inept νεῖπος Perses!

Get to work on the tasks that the gods have marked out for humans, so that you will never have to feel pain in your thumos over your children and your wife as you go looking for life-sustenance by approaching one neighbor after the next, and they will not care.

For I can easily imagine that you could succeed twice, or maybe even three times. But if you keep on importuning them, you will not succeed in your quest. You can talk all you want, and it will be in vain.

No matter how your words range from one direction to the next, you will not succeed. So I urge you to make plans to pay off your debts and to ward off hunger.

The first thing is to have a farmhouse with a woman and an ox for plowing.

I do not mean a wife. I mean a woman that you own as a slave. Such a woman can help out while you plow with the oxen.

And you must make sure that you have all the property that you need in the household.

This way, you will not have to ask someone else to lend you this or that. While you are trying to talk someone into it who is unwilling,

the season will pass you by and your yield will be depleted.

And do not put things off till the next day or the day after.

For a man who is an idle worker will not fill his granary by putting things off. Attention to your work will make the yield increase.

The man who postpones work is always wrestling with the Spirits of Ἀτῆ.

When the power of the searing sun abates,

with its burning heat that makes men sweat, and when the autumn rains of mighty Zeus arrive, as the human complexion turns much lighter, and as the constellation Sirius starts to travel much less over the heads of death-bound mortals and starts to take much more enjoyment from the night,

then it is that wood is most worm-free when it is cut,
as the leaves fall to the earth from the branches.
Then it is that you should be mindful [memnēmenos] to cut wood, which is now the seasonal task.
Then you can cut out a three-foot length for a mortar and a three-cubit length for a pestle,
and a seven-foot length for an axle. That is the way that is fitting.

425 And if you make it eight feet, then you can cut out of it the head of a mallet.
Cut out a three-span length for the segment of an oxcart the length of ten quarter-feet.
There are also many kinds of wood used for bent shapes. When you find a tree with the shape of
a plow-base,
take it right home, whether you find it on a mountainside or in the field,
especially if it is holm-oak. Which is the most sturdy for oxen to plow with,
when the servant of Athena [a carpenter] fixes it to the stock of the plow
with pegs and fastens it to the yoke-pole.
And take the trouble to have two plows in the household,
one with a natural curve and another jointed into a curve. It is better this way.
This way, if you break the one, you have the other to hitch up to your oxen.

430 Yoke-poles made of laurel or elm-wood are the most worm-free.
The same goes for stocks made of oak and for plow-bases made of holm-oak. As for oxen, get two
males nine years old.
Their strength cannot be worn down,
since they are in their prime. They will be the best to do work with.
They will not get into a fight with each other right in the middle of plowing,
breaking the plow and making futile all the work done up to then.
Let the oxen be driven by a sturdy man of forty years.
For his meal, let him eat a loaf scored into eight portions and broken into four.
Let him make the furrow straight, paying close attention to his work
and not taking sidelong glances at his peers. Instead, let him keep
his thumos on his work. Someone else no younger than he would be just right
for spreading the grain around, avoiding oversowing.
A younger man would let his attention flutter towards his peers.
Mark well when you hear the sound of the crane,
sending forth her call from above, the same time every year.

450 She brings the σῆνα for plowing every year; and she marks
the season of rainy winter. And it stings the heart of the man who does not own oxen.
Then it is that you should give fodder to the horned oxen in their stalls.
For it is easy to say: “Give me two oxen and an oxcart.”
But it is easy to say no in reply: “There is work here to be done by my oxen.”
455 A man who fancies that he is rich will say: "Well then, build an oxcart!"

How inept he is! He does not even know that it takes a hundred pieces of wood to build an
oxcart.

The thing is to take care of first things first and to put one's own house in order.

When the time for plowing reveals itself for mortal men,

460 everyone must set out to work, servants and master alike,

plowing dry or moist land, according to the season.

Get to work early, so that your fields will yield produce in plenty.
Work over your fields in the spring. But fallow land broken up in the summer will not disappoint
you.

465 Sow on fallow land when it is still loose [from the rain].
Fallow land can be a talisman, warding off disaster.

Pray to Zeus of the Underground, and to holy Demeter,

470 that the sacred grain of Demeter may become heavy with ripeness,
as you begin the plowing, laying hold of the end of the plow-handle
and coming down on the backs of your oxen with a switch
as they pull at the yoke-pole with their strappings. Standing a bit further back,

the servant who has the mattock should give the birds grief

475 as he makes the seed disappear inside the earth. Good management is the best thing
for mortal men, while bad management is the worst.

So also with the grapes: they will be weighed down, teeming with their juices,
if the Olympian one himself grants a good ripening.

Then you can clear your wine-jars of cobwebs. And I expect that you

480 will take pleasure as you partake of the life-sustenance that is within your household.
And so you will be well off as you approach gray springtime, and you will not
be looking wistfully in the direction of others. Instead, it will be the other person who will be in
need of your help.

But if you plow the Zeus-given earth at the [winter] solstice,
you will reap squatting, having little to grasp in your hand,

485 binding the sheaves the wrong way. You will be covered with dust, an unhappy man.
You could fit into a basket everything you have to bring back. Few people indeed will marvel at
you.

The noos of Zeus is different at different times,

and it is hard for mortal men to take note of it in their noos.

For if you plow late, you could have this remedy that I will now tell you.

490 When the cuckoo first sounds its call amidst the leaves of the oak tree,
bringing pleasure to mortals throughout the boundless earth,
then it is that Zeus might rain on the third day, and it might not stop

till the water rises to a point where it does not quite spill over inside the imprint of an ox’s hoof.

490  And then it is that the one who plows late will compete with the early.
Keep all this well in your thumos, and do not fail to mark
the gray spring, when it comes, and the rain in season.
Pass by and do not go inside the abode of the smith and its heated lounge
in the season of winter, when the cold keeps men from their work in the field.

495  For it is at this time that a man who is not idle can make his household greatly thrive.
This way, the resourcelessness of evil winter will not seize you
with poverty, as you hold your emaciated hand down on your swollen foot.  
Many are the evils that an idle man, who keeps expecting that his empty hope will become the real thing,
in want of life-sustenance, takes to his thumos.
It is not a real hope that cares for a man who is in need,
as he sits around in a lounge while he has no adequate means.
Point out to your servants, even in the middle of the summer:
“Summer will not last forever; build your granaries.”
As for the month of Lenaion, bad days, all of them bad enough to take the hide off an ox,
make sure you take measures against it, along with its frosts,
which are wretched when the wind Boreas blows over the land,
which rushes across horse-breeding Thrace and then stirs up the wide sea
with a blast. And the earth and the forest roar.
Many oaks with their leaves on high, and many a thick fir
does it bring crashing down to earth, nourisher of many, in mountain glens,
as it sets down upon them while the whole immense forest resounds.
The beasts shudder, putting their tails under their genitals,
even those that have fur covering their skin. Even for them
the cold one [Boreas] blows right through them, shaggy-chested though they are.

505  He [Boreas] goes right through even the hide of an ox; even that will not stop it.
He blows through the fine hair of a goat. But not at all through the fleeces of sheep,
because their wool is thick:
the force of the wind Boreas does not blow through them. But it makes the old man all curved over.

182  In the Proclus commentary, there is a reference to a law, native to the city of Ephesus, to the effect that a child could not be exposed until the father’s feet were swollen.
Works and Days

And yet it does not blow through a tender-skinned maiden,
who stays indoors with her philē mother.
She has not yet learned the works of golden Aphrodite.
There she is: she has washed well her tender skin and anointed it with rich olive oil,
as she is lying down in the inner room of the household
on a winter’s day - while the Boneless One gnaws at his own foot
in his fireless house and wretched haunts.\(^\text{183}\)
The sun shows him no range to head towards.
Instead, it [the sun] comes and goes over the community and the city of dark-skinned men.
But it shines more tardily for all the Hellenes.
Then it is that the creatures of the forest, horned and unhorned alike,
gnash their teeth pitifully as they flee through the woods of the glens.
For all of them there is one thing in their phrenes:
how to find some cover in cozy nooks
in a hollow rock. Then, like a three-legged one,
whose back is broken down and whose head looks down upon the ground,
like such a one they range about, trying to escape the white snow.
At that time wear, as I bid you, something that will shield your skin,
a soft cloak and a tunic that reaches to the feet.
You must weave thick woof on a thin warp.
Wear this, and the hairs will not bristle,
standing on end all over your body.
As for your feet, fasten onto them tight-fitting boots made from the hide of a slaughtered ox.
Make them snug with felt on the inside.
When the frost comes around in due season, stitch together the skins of first-born goats
with the sinew of an ox. This way, you will have on your back
something to keep off the rain. And on your head
wear a shaped hat made of felt. This way, your ears will not get wet.
For the dawn is cold when the wind Boreas swoops down.
At dawn, a wheat-bearing mist, coming from the starry sky,
spreads upon the fields of men thus blessed, all over the land.
It draws its wetness from the ever-flowing rivers,
rising high over the earth with the help of a gust of wind.

\(^\text{183}\) It was a common belief that the octopus would eat its own ‘foot’ when it was starving. West WD commentary p. 289 comments: “The starved man squeezing his swollen foot would lead on to the octopus who nibbles his foot for lack of food.”
Sometimes it turns into rain, towards evening time,
and other times into wind, as Thracian Boreas drives the thick clouds.
Finish your work and get home before he [Boreas] comes,
so that a dark cloud, coming down from the sky, may not envelop you,
making your skin clammy as it soaks your clothes.
Avoid it, for this is the month that is most harsh.
It is wintry, harsh for livestock and harsh for men.
Then it is that your oxen should have half their usual share of food. But let the hired man have
the greater part of his portion.

For the nights, helpful as they may be, are long.
Keep these things in mind until the year comes full circle,
when the days and nights are the same length, when once again
Earth, the mother of all, bears her varied produce.
When Zeus has had sixty wintry days take their due course after the solstice,
then the star Arcturus [Watcher of the Bear] leaves the sacred stream of the Okeanos
and first rises at dusk above the horizon.
After him [Arcturus] rises the daughter of Pandion, the swallow, the one whose call sounds at
dawn.
She comes back to the light for humankind, as springtime begins anew.

Before she comes, prune the vines. It is better this way.
When the House-Carrier\textsuperscript{184} climbs up from the ground and onto the plants,
fleeing the Pleiades, then there should be no more digging of vineyards.
Instead, sharpen your sickles and wake your servants in the morning, to get them busy.
Avoid sitting down in shady places and sleeping till dawn
in the season of harvesting, when the sun scorches the skin.
At this time, exert yourself and bring home the produce,
getting up at dawn. This way, you will have sufficient life-sustenance.
For the period of dawn takes up a third part of a full day’s work.
Dawn gets you started on your journey, and it gets you started on your work.

When dawn appears, it gets many mortals started on their journeys
and it puts yokes on many oxen.
When the golden thistle is in bloom and the loud-sounding cicada,\textsuperscript{185}
perched on a tree, pours down his clearly-heard song

\textsuperscript{184} That is, the snail.
\textsuperscript{185} Sometimes wrongly translated as ‘grasshopper’. The same goes for the Aesop fable “The Grasshopper and the Ant,” which is really “The Cicada and the Ant” (no. 373 in the B.E. Perry edition).
incessantly from under his wings, in the season of summer, with all its labors,

then it is that goats are fattest, wine is best,

women are most wanton, and men are weakest;

for Sirius dries up their heads and their knee-caps,

and the skin gets dry from the heat. At this time, at long last,

let there be a shady place under a rock, wine from [Thracian] Biblos,

barley-cake soaked in milk, the milk of goats that are reaching the end of their lactation,

and the meat of a cow fed in the woods, one that has not yet calved,

and of first-born kid goats. That is the time to drink bright-colored wine,

sitting in the shade, having one’s heart sated with food,

turning one’s face towards the cooling Zephyr.

Then, from an ever-flowing spring that flows downward, untainted by mud,

pour a drink that is three parts water, but make the fourth part wine.

Get your servants busy with winnowing the sacred grain of Demeter,

when strong Orion first appears,

on a threshing-floor that is exposed to the winds and is smoothed over

Then, with a measure, store it in jars. And when you have finally

stored all your life-sustenance safely inside your house,

then I bid you to seek out and hire a man with no household of his own and a servant-woman

who has no children of her own.

A servant-woman with a little calf under her [a child to nurse] is a bad thing.

Take good care of the sharp-toothed dog. Do not begrudge him his food.

Otherwise, the man who sleeps by day [the robber] will take your possessions

Bring in the fodder and the chaff. This way, there will be enough

for your oxen and your mules. After that,

let your servants give a rest to their knees and unyoke your pair of oxen.

But when Orion and Sirius reach the middle of the sky [at dawn],

and when rosy-fingered Dawn sees Arcturus,

then it is, Perses, that you should cut off and take home all the grape-clusters.

Show them to the sun ten days and ten nights.

Then shade them over for five more, and, on the sixth, draw off into jars

the gifts of joyous Dionysus. But when

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186 West WD commentary p. 40 remarks: “Perses is not named again [after line 397] until the final paragraph of the agricultural section 609-17, and there only as a colourless vocative. He seems to be resurrected at this point precisely because it is the final paragraph. The vocative indicates that a particularly significant point has been reached, and it gives us a final reminder of the addressee’s identity.”
the Pleiades and the Hyades and strong Orion
begin to set, then it is that you should be mindful [memnêmenos] to plow
in season. And so the pleion\textsuperscript{187} may be lodged well and firmly under the earth.
But let us suppose that the desire for stormy navigation seizes you,
when the Pleiades, fleeing the strong and violent Orion,
plunge into the misty pontos,
and the blasts of winds of all kind rage.
At this time you must not have ships sailing the wine-colored sea.
Instead, be mindful [memnêmenos] to work the land, as I bid you.
Haul up your ship on dry land and pack it with stones
all over, which will stand up to the power of the winds blowing their dampness.
And pull out the plug of the bilge-drain; otherwise, the rain of Zeus will rot it
[the ship].
Put away in your house all the tackle and fittings,
and store neatly the wings [sails] of your pontos-traveling ship.
Hang up the well-made steering-oar over the smoke [of the fireplace].

And you yourself should wait until the time for seasonal navigation has come.\textsuperscript{188}
Then you can haul your ship back to the sea, and put cargo
safely into it, so that you may bring home with you some profit,
just as my father and yours, you inept Perses,
used to sail around in ships, lacking a genuine livelihood.

One day, he came to this place right here, having crossed a great stretch of pontos.
He left behind him the Aeolic [city of] Kyme, sailing on a dark-colored ship,
fleeing not wealth, not riches, not material bliss.
No, he was fleeing wretched poverty, which Zeus gives to men.
And he settled down near Helikon, in a settlement afflicted with human woes,
Asca by name. It is a place that is bad in the wintertime, difficult in the summertime. It is a
place that is never really good.
But you, Perses, you must be mindful [memnêmenos] of all the things that require work,
each to be done in season. That goes especially for navigation.
Praise the small ship, but put your cargo into a big one.
The greater the cargo, the more profit you can pile on top of profit -
provided the winds hold back their evil blasts.\textsuperscript{189}

\textsuperscript{187} At present there is no consensus about the meaning of this word. In this context, it may be understood as ‘seed’. I believe that it is connected with the name of the Pleiades and with a myth concerning a plunge by one of them beneath the horizon.
\textsuperscript{188} This right time is defined starting with line 663.
But if you turn your thumos, with its veering thoughts, towards trading by navigation, fleeing debts and joyless hunger, I will show you how to take measure of the raging sea, even though I have no skills in navigation or in ships.

For never yet have I sailed in a ship over the wide pontos, unless you count the time when I went to Euboea from Aulis, the place where, once upon a time, the Achaeans, having gathered together a mighty host of fighting men, were waiting out a storm. They had come from all over sacred Hellas and were heading for Troy, known for its beautiful women.

It was there that I, heading for the funeral games of warlike Amphidamas, crossed over to Khalkis. And there were many games and prizes arranged in advance by the sons of great-hearted Amphidamas. And I say solemnly that it was there [in Khalkis] that I won a contest in song and that I carried off as a victory prize a tripod with handles on it. And I dedicated this [tripod] to the Muses of Helikon, in the place where they first put me on the path of clear-sounding song.

This much is my experience in many-pegged ships. Even so, I will tell you the noos of aegis-bearing Zeus, for the Muses have taught me to sing a song that has no limitations on it. Fifty days after the [summer] solstice, towards the end of the labor-filled season of summer, that is when navigation is seasonal for mortals. Then your ship will not be wrecked and the sailors will not be destroyed by the sea, unless Poseidon the earth-shaker is intent upon doing so, or unless Zeus the king of the immortals wishes to destroy them. For the fulfillment of all things, both good and bad, is in their hands.

At this time the winds are well-defined and the pontos is not harsh.

At this time, you can be free from anxiety as you entrust your swift ship to the winds. Haul your ship down to the pontos and put in all your cargo. But exert yourself to get back home as quickly as possible,

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189 Lines 643-645 seem to me sarcastic in tone.
190 In Euboea.
191 There is a ‘son of Amphidamas’ mentioned in Iliad 23.87: he was killed by Patroklos in a fit of rage over a dice-game. It is on account of this deed that Patroklos had to leave his own household and to move in with Peleus.
192 Commentators follow H. Fränkel, Festschrift Wackernagel (1923) pp. 281f.
and do not wait for the time of the new wine and the autumn rains
675 and the approaching bad weather, with the terrible blasts of the wind Notos,
who stirs up the sea as he comes along with the rain of Zeus,
that plentiful autumn rain, and he makes the pontos harsh.
Another time of navigation for humankind is in the spring,
when a man first sees, as large a footprint as a crow
makes, leaves that are that size
680 on the top of the fig-tree. Then you are ready do embark upon the sea.
This, then, is the time of navigation in the spring. But I
do not recommend it. It is not pleasing to my thumos.
It is a matter of grasping at opportunities, and it is a difficult thing to avoid
misfortune. And yet, even these things
685 are done by men, in their acts of ignorance in matters of noos.
For wealth is life [psukhē] itself for wretched mortals.
It is a fearful thing to die among the waves. But I bid you
to take note of all these things in your phrenes, as I tell you.
Do not put all your means of livelihood inside hollow ships.
690 Leave the greater part behind, and put the lesser part in as cargo.
It is a fearful thing to happen upon a disaster among the waves of the pontos.
Just as it is a fearful thing to put too great a load on your oxcart,
thus breaking the axle and spoiling your haul.
Take care to keep things moderate. Timing [kairos] is best in all things.
695 Make sure that you are the right age [seasonal, having the right hōra] when you bring home a
wife to your house,
when you are not much less than thirty years old
nor much more than that. This is a seasonal marriage.
The wife should have four years after puberty, and then she can marry in the fifth year.
Marry a virgin, so that you may teach her the ways of affection.
700 Try your hardest to marry someone who lives near you.
And take a good look all around you, so that you will not marry someone who will become the
occasion for jokes by your neighbors.
There is no better possession for a man than a wife
who is good. And there is nothing worse than a bad one,
one who sneaks away the dinner for herself. The man, no matter how strong he may be,
is burned out by the fire of such a woman. No need for a torch! And she brings him to a raw old age.
Guard against the anger of the blessed immortals.
Do not make a comrade equal to a brother.
But if you do, you should not beat him to it by hurting him first.
And do not lie just to please your tongue. But if he wrongs you first,
either saying or doing something that is contrary to your thumos,
then be mindful [memnēmenos] to repay him double. But if he
takes you back into the state of being philoi, then is ready to offer dikē,
then accept him. A wretched man is he who makes different
philoi at different times. Let not your noos make into a lie your appearance [of friendship].

Avoid the reputation of having too many xenoi or none at all.
Or of being the companion of wretched people. Or of being one who brings a quarrel [neikos]
against noble people.
Do not ever bring yourself to reproaching [making oneidos against] a man for having baneful
poverty, the kind that eats away at the thumos.
It [the poverty] is sent by the blessed immortals.
The best treasure for mortals is a tongue that is sparing.
And the greatest kharis is a tongue that moves in moderation.
For if you say something bad, soon you will hear something spoken about you that is even
worse.
Do not be stormy at a banquet attended by many xenoi.
When it [a banquet] is a common effort, the gratification is very great and the expense is very
small.
Do not pour a libation of bright-colored wine to Zeus after dawn
with unwashed hands. Nor should you do so to any other immortal.
Otherwise, they will not heed your prayers but will spit them back.
Do not stand upright, with your face turned toward the sun, when you urinate.
Be mindful [memnēmenos] to do so after it [the sun] sets and before it rises.
And if you are traveling [at nighttime], do not urinate either on the road or off the road,
and do not get naked. The nights belong to the blessed ones [the gods].
The godly person, who knows what is sensible, does it squatting.
Or else, he goes to the wall of an enclosed court.
Do not expose your genitals, splattered with semen, inside your house
when you approach the fireplace. Avoid this.

When you return from a funeral where words of bad omen have been uttered,

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193 There is a striking parallel to this expression in the poetry of Sappho.
194 The word is duspemphelos, applied to ‘navigation’ at line 618 above. In the present context, it carries
with it the civic “ship of state” metaphor.
do not try to beget a descendant. But do so after a banquet of the gods. Do not ever cross the beautifully running streams of ever-flowing rivers on foot before you pray, keeping your eye on the beautiful streams and having washed your hands in the lovely clear water.

Whoever crosses a river with hands unwashed of wickedness incurs the anger of the gods, who will cause him pains in the future. From the five-branched one, at a festive banquet of the gods, do not cut the withered from the green with gleaming iron. Do not put the wine-pouring vessel on top of the wine-mixing vessel when people are drinking. For a baneful fate results in compensation for this.

When you build a house, do not leave it rough-hewn. Otherwise, a cawing crow may roost on it and make a croaking sound. From cauldrons that do not have the correct ritual words pronounced over them, do not take anything to eat or to wash with. For there is a retribution in compensation for these acts.

As for things that it is sacrilegious to disturb by moving, it is not good to let a twelve-year-old boy sit on them. It makes a man unmanly. Nor let a twelve-month-old boy do so. For here too a similar thing happens. A man should not wash himself in water that has been used by a woman for her ablutions. In the course of time, there is a baneful retribution in compensation for this act as well.

When you come upon sacrificial offerings all ablaze do not engage in mockery of the fire-ritual. The god is angry at this as well. Do not urinate into the streams of rivers that flow towards the sea, nor into springs. Avoid it at all costs. And do not relieve yourself into them. It is not a very good thing to do that.

Act this way, and you will avoid the ominous talk of men - a thing to be dreaded. For ominous talk is a bad thing. It gets off the ground easily,

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195 That is, the hand with five fingers. This is a kenning.
196 A vegetal metaphor for the cutting of the withered from the quick part of the fingernail.
197 In storage, the wine-pouring vessel is in fact customarily on top of the wine-mixing vessel. West WD commentary p. 340 remarks: “So the essence of the rule is that while the utensils are in use one must avoid an arrangement which is normal when they are not in use. The reason is unclear.” I think that the reason may not be quite so unclear. Note that the “normal” use is in a ritual context. In a ritual context, the meaning of a word or an act can be the symmetrical opposite of the meaning of the same word or act in a non-ritual context. For example, μόεν means ‘I have my eyes closed’ or ‘I have my mouth closed’ in a secular context and ‘I see a special vision’ or ‘I speak a special utterance’ in a ritual context.
198 The implication is that the person who comes upon the sacrifice here is a casual observer, not necessarily acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of the local ritual. In Menander Dyscolus 447ff, we find a brief reference to such idiosyncrasies.
very easily, but it is burdensome thing to bear, and it is hard to put aside. Ominous talk never completely dies down, since many will utter it. Ominous talk is even a god.

Take care to mark the days of the month, which come from Zeus, giving each day its due. Do this for your servants. The thirtieth day of the month is best for inspecting different kinds of work that have to be done and for apportioning food-supplies. This is the day that people spend by sorting out [krinein] what is alētheia and what is not.

For what I now tell you are the days of Zeus the Planner.

To begin with, the first, fourth, and the seventh are each a holy day - it was on the seventh that Leto gave birth to Apollo of the golden sword. So too the eighth and the ninth. And yet, these two days of the waxing part of the month are particularly good for various kinds of work by mortals.

The eleventh and the twelfth are both good for shearing sheep and for gathering the benign grain. But the twelfth is much better than the eleventh.

It is on that day that the spider, levitating in the air, spins its web in full day, while the Knowledgeable One amasses her pile.

199 In other words, you can think of it as a personified divine force.
200 First we had the “works”; now we have the “days.”
201 West WD commentary p. 351 remarks: “Civil calendars often fell out of step with the moon..., and it was on the 30th that errors arose. Each month had to be allowed either 29 or 30 days, but the last day was called triakas (or in Athens henē kai nea, ‘the old and the new’) in either case, the preceding day being omitted in a ‘hollow’ month. So it was always a question of when to have the 30th.” In other words, each polis had its own traditions about the calendar (West here calls these traditions “civil calendars”). At the time of the 30th, then, there is a crisis about arriving at a pan-Hellenic norm from the standpoint of each polis. This norm is conveyed here by the notion of alētheia ‘truth’ (see the note at Theogony line 28). [On the civic calendars of the various Greek city-states, see A. E. Samuel, Greek and Roman Chronology (Handb. d. Altertumswiss. I.7), 1972.]
202 The 30th may be a crisis point, varying from polis to polis, but the crisis leads to a shared pan-Hellenic perspective. The poet has blotted over the differences, simply noting that alētheia ‘truth’ is being sorted out [= is in a crisis: the verb is krinō on the 30th. After the 30th, it is possible to arrive at a fixed sequence of given days traditionally spent in given ways by all Hellenes (for the apparent exception in the 4-polis island of Keos, see the passages quoted by West p. 351). The poet will now highlight this fixed sequence, which is the pan-Hellenic perspective. Zeus, as the god who is the planner of the universe, is an appropriate symbol for the the organizing principle that underlies the pan-Hellenic perspective.
203 In the Odyssey, the new moon is the context for a festival of Apollo (xiv 162 = xix 307; xx 156, 276-278, xxi 258).
204 For example, Aphrodite was specially worshiped on this day.
205 The most important holy day of Apollo.
206 For example, the 8th at Athens was the day for honoring Poseidon and Theseus.
207 For example, the 9th at Athens inaugurated the City Dionysia.
208 That is, they may be holy days, but they are not necessarily holidays. This hedge suggests that the 8th and the 9th are less “pan-Hellenic” than the 1st, 4th, and 7th.
On that day a woman should set up her loom and get on with her work.

Avoid the thirteenth day of the waxing part of the month for beginning to sow. But it is the best day for getting your plants bedded in. The sixth day of the middle of the month is very unfavorable for plants, but it is good for giving birth to male descendants. As for females, it is not at all favorable either to be born at all on that day or to get married.

Nor is the first sixth day an appropriate one for a girl to be born. But, for gelding kid goats and sheep it is a kindly day. Also for making an enclosure for the sheep. It is good for the birth of a boy, but such a child will grow up liking to utter words of mocking reproach, which are lies, crafty words, and stealthy relations.\(^\text{211}\)

On the eighth day of the month geld the boar and the loud-roaring bull. Do the same with the work-enduring asses on the twelfth. On the Great Twentieth, a full day,\(^\text{212}\) a knowledgeable man should be born.\(^\text{213}\) Such a man is very sound in his noos.

The tenth is favorable for a boy to be born; for a girl, it is the fourth of the mid-month. On that day, sheep and shambling horned oxen, as well as the sharp-toothed dog and work-enduring asses, are to be tamed to the touch of the hand. But take care in your thumos to avoid the fourth of the beginning and ending of the month. Do not have your heart eaten away with troubles on this day, which is very much a day when the gods bring things to fulfillment.

On the fourth of the month bring home your wedded wife, having sorted out the bird-omens, which are best for doing this. Avoid fifth days. They are harsh and ominous. For they say that it was on the fifth that the Erinyes assisted at the birth of Horkos [Oath], to whom Eris gave birth, to be a pain to those who break an oath.

On the seventh of the mid-month cast the sacred grain of Demeter upon the smoothed-over threshing floor, looking carefully about you.

\(^{209}\) The waxing and waning of the day are in symmetry with the waxing and waning of the moon.

\(^{210}\) That is, the ant. See the note on the cicada at line 582.

\(^{211}\) The stealthy relations may include sexually suggestive “sweet-talk.” The features enumerated here are characteristic of a traditional persona such as Perses, or such as portrayed in the poetry of Archilochus.

\(^{212}\) See the note on line 778.

\(^{213}\) The characterization seems to suit the persona of Hesiod himself.
Have the woodman cut beams for the rooms in your house
and plenty of ship-timbers which are suitable for ships.
On the fourth, begin to build sleek ships.

The ninth of the mid-month is better when evening approaches.
But the first ninth is the most painless for humans.
It is good for conception and for being born
for man and woman alike. It is never a completely bad day.
Or again, few people know that the thrice-nine of the month is best
for opening a wine-jar and for putting yokes on the necks
of oxen, mules, and swift-footed horses,
or for hauling a swift ship with many oars down to the wine-colored pontos.
Few give it its alēthēs name.

Open your jar on the fourth. The fourth of the mid-month is the most holy of them all.

Again, few do it [give it its true name]. I mean the after-twenty [the twenty-first],
which is best
when dawn comes. As evening approaches, it is less good.
These, then, are the days, a great blessing for earth-bound men.
The others fall in between. There is no doom attached to them, and they bring nothing.
Different people praise different days, but few really know.

Sometimes the day is a step-mother, and sometimes it is a mother.
With respect to all of these days, eudaimōn and olbios is he who
knows all these things as he works the land, without being responsible to the immortals for any evil deed,
as he sorts out [krinein] the bird-omens, and as he avoids any acts of transgression.

214 The Hesiodic name 'thrice-nine' would be the pan-Hellenic designation, as implied by the word alēthēs. See the note about alētheia at line 768. Local designations of this day may have been subject to tabu. The number thrice-nine is particularly sacred: see the references collected by West WD commentary p. 361.
215 This interpretation differs from what is found in the standard editions.
216 Note again the periphrasis, as in the case of thrice-nine at line 814.
217 Here we see the localized perspective.
218 Here we see the pan-Hellenic perspective. The word ‘know’ is to be understood in the sense that we have seen at line 792.
219 This riddle can be better understood by reading Georges Dumézil, Camillus: A Study of Indo-European Religion as Roman History (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980).
Lord Apollo, son of Leto and Zeus, I will always have you
on my mind as I begin and as I end my song.
You will be my song in the beginning, in the end, and in the middle.
Hear my prayer and grant me the things that are noble [esthia].

Lord Phoebus Apollo! When the goddess, Lady Leto, gave birth to you
at the wheel-shaped lake, you O most beautiful of the immortal gods,
as she held on to the Palm Tree with her supple hands,
then it was that all Delos, indescribably and eternally, was filled
with an aroma of immortality; and the Earth smiled in all her enormity,
while the deep pontos of the gray Sea rejoiced.

Artemis, killer of beasts, daughter of Zeus! For you Agamemnon
established a sacred precinct at the time when he set sail for Troy with his swift ships.
Hear my prayer! Ward off the spirits of destruction!
For you this is a small thing to do, goddess. For me it is a big thing.

Muses and Graces [Kharites], daughters of Zeus! You were the ones
who once came to the wedding of Kadmos, and you sang this beautiful epos:
“What is beautiful is philon, what is not beautiful is not philon.”
That is the epos that came through their immortal mouths.

Kyrnos, let a seal be placed by me as I practice my sophia
upon these epea; that way they will never be stolen without detection,
and no one will substitute something inferior for the good [esthlon] that is there.
And everyone will say: “These are the epea of Theognis of Megara. His name is known among all men.”
But I am not yet able to please all the citizens.
Which is not surprising, son of Polypaos! Not even Zeus
can please everyone either by making rain or by withdrawing rain.
But I, having good intentions toward you, will give you the kind of advice
that I myself, Kyrnos, learned from the agathoi when I was still a boy.
Be aware! Do not drag the things of timē or aretē or wealth
in the direction of deeds that are base and shameful or without dikē.

Kyrnos, this polis is pregnant, and I fear that it will give birth to a man
who will be a straightener of our base hubris.
The citizens here are still moderate, but the leaders
have veered so as to fall into debasement [kakotēs].
Men who are agathoi, Kyrnos, have never yet ruined any polis,
but when the kakoi decide to behave with hubris,
and when they ruin the community [dēmos] and render judgments [dikai] in favor of things
without justice [dikē]

for the sake of profits [kerdea] and for the sake of power,
do not expect that polis to be peaceful for long,
not even if it is now in a state of much serenity [hēskhia],
when the kakoi decide on these things,
namely, kerdea entailing public damage.
From these things arise strife [stasis pl.] internecine killings [phonoi],
and tyrants [monarkhoi]. May this polis never decide to adopt these things!

My thumos! Keep turning and showing a new side of your versatile nature in each encounter
with every philos.

Keep mixing your temperament to match that of each philos.
Have the temperament of a complex octopus,
who always looks like whatever rock he has just clung to.
Now be like this; then, at another time, become someone else in your coloring.
It is true to say that sophia is better than being atropos.\(^2\)
I gave you wings with which over the boundless sea [pontos]
you will fly, soaring, and over all the earth,
with ease. You will be there at all banquets,
on the lips of many,
and young men will sing of you to the accompaniment of clear-sounding pipes,
delightful young men, in good arrangement [kosmos], beautifully and clearly.
And when you go under, down to the recesses of dark Earth
you will never, not even in death, lose kleos, but you will be on the minds of men,
having a name that is unwilting [aphthiton] forever,
Kyrnos, as you go about the land of the Hellenes and over their islands too,
crossing the unharvested fish-swarming sea [pontos];
and this time you will not be sitting on horseback, but you will be propelled
by the splendid gifts of the violet-garlanded Muses.
You will be a song for everyone who has song on his mind, both for those who are now and for
those who will be,
so long as there will be Earth and Sun.
But I do not even get a little respect from you,
and you deceive me with your words as if I were some small boy.

May Zeus grant me repayment of the philoi who love me,
and that I may have more power than my personal enemies [ekthroi].
Thus would I have the reputation of a god among men,
if my destined death overtakes me when I have exacted repayment.
O Zeus, Olympian, bring my timely prayer to its ultimate fulfillment!
Grant that I have something good happen in place of misfortunes.
But may I die if I find no respite from cares brought on by misfortunes.

\(^2\) That is, ‘having no versatility, having no power to turn’; cf. Odysseus at Od. i 1 as polutropos ‘having
much versatility, having many ways to turn’.
And may I give harm in return for harm.
For this is the way it was destined, and yet I see no repayment on the horizon,
no repayment of the men who robbed me of my possessions by force [bîē].
But I am a dog and I cross the stream
with its wintry torrent. I am about to exact repayment for everything,
May I drink their black blood! And may a noble [ēsthos] daimôn look on at all of this,
who may bring these things to their ultimate fulfillment, in accordance with my noos.

I fear, son of Polypaos, that hubris will destroy this polis
- the same hubris that destroyed the Centaurs, eaters of raw flesh.
I must render this dikê, Kyrnos, along the straight line of a carpenter’s rule and square,
and I must give to both sides their equitable share,
with the help of seers, portents, and burning sacrifice,
so that I may not incur shameful blame for veering.

My philoi betray me. A personal enemy [ekhthros] would have been no problem, since I could steer clear of him,
much as a helmsman [kubernêtês] steers clear of the reefs in the sea.

Ah, wretched Poverty! Why do you weigh upon my shoulders
and debase both my body and my noos?
Forcibly and against my will, you teach me many base and shameful things,
though I am one among men who understands what things are esthla and beautiful.

If I had the wealth, Simonides, that I used to have,
I would not be distressed as I am now at being together with the agathoi,
But now my possessions have passed me by, even though I was aware, and I am speechless
because of my lack of wealth, though I am aware of one single thing much better than many other things:
that we are now being carried along, with white sails lowered,
beyond the pontos of Melos, through the dark night,
and they refuse to bail, and the sea washes over
both sides of the ship. It is a difficult thing for anyone
to be saved, what with the things they are doing. They have deposed the kubernêtês,
the noble [ēsthos] one, who was standing guard, with expertise.
They seize wealth by force [bîē], and order [kosmos] has been destroyed.
There is no longer an equitable division of possessions, aimed at the collective interest,
but the carriers of merchandise rule, and the kakoi are on top of the agathoi.
Let these things be allusive utterances [ainigma pl.] hidden by me for the agathoi.
One could be aware of even future misfortune, if one is sophos.

A man who consults the Oracle must be more straight, Kyrnos, being on his guard,
than a carpenter’s pin and rule and square
- a man to whom the priestess of the god at Delphi
makes a response, revealing a sacred utterance from the opulent shrine.
You will not find any remedy left if you add anything,
810 nor will you escape from veering, in the eyes of the gods, if you take anything away.

834 Everything here has gone to the ravens and perdition. And not
836 one of the immortal and blessed gods is responsible to us for this, Kyrnos,
838 but the violence [biē] of men and their baneful desire for gain [kerdeā] and their hubris
839 have plummeted them from much good [agatha] into debasement [kakotēs].

856 Often has this polis, because of the kakotēs of its leaders,
858 run aground like a veering ship.

866 Kyrnos, this polis is pregnant, and I fear that it will give birth to a man
1082 who is a perpetrator of hubris, a leader of dire strife [stasis].

1104 Hubris has destroyed the Magnesians and Kolophon
1106 and Smyrna; and it will completely destroy all of you, too, Kyrnos!

1124 Do not remind me of my misfortunes! The kinds of things that happened to Odysseus have happened to me too.

1198 I heard, son of Polypaos, the sound of a bird making its resonant call,
1200 the bird that comes as a messenger of plowing for men,
1202 plowing in season. And it roused my somber heart,
1204 for other men now possess my flowery fields,
1206 and my mules no longer pull my curved plow
1208 all because of that other sea-voyage that is on one’s mind.

1218 I am Aithōn by birth, and I have an abode [oikos] in well-walled Thebes,
1220 since I have been exiled from my native land.

1230 The Corpse of the Sea is now calling me home.

1232 It is dead, but it calls with a mouth that is alive.
APPENDIX TO THEOGNIS

1. And another person is taught by the Olympian Muses their gifts, thus understanding the nature of delightful sophia. And yet another person is made a seer by lord Apollo the efficacious, and he is aware of a bad thing, even when it comes to a man from afar.

Solon F 13.51-54

2. In matters of great importance, it is difficult to please all.

Solon F 7

3. I wrote down the laws for kakos and agathos alike, fitting a straight dikē for each.

Solon F 36.18-20

4. But in an oligarchy, where many men are competing for aretē in public life, intense personal hatreds are bound to break out. For each of them wants to be on top and to have his proposals win the day, and so they end up having great hatreds against each other. From which arises strife [stasis pl.] from which in turn arises killing [phonos], from which in turn it all comes down to tyranny [monarkhia] - and in this there is proof for how superior is monarchy!

Herodotus 3.82.3

5. And we, men of overweening violence [biē], settled Kolophon, we leaders of baneful hubris.

Mimnermus F 9.3-4

6. But the noos of the leaders of the community [dēmos] is without dikē. What awaits them is the suffering of many pains because of a great hubris, For they do not understand how to check insatiability [koros], nor can they make kosmos for their existing merriment in the serenity [hēsukhia] of the banquet. They are wealthy, swayed by deeds without dikē, and not caring at all about sacred or public property, they steal from one another by forcible seizure, and they do not heed the holy institutions of dikē, who silently observes the present and the past, and who will in the future come to exact complete retribution.

Solon F 4.7-16

7. It is difficult to hold down someone who has risen too far up,
once it has happened, but now is the time for someone to take all precautions with his noos,

Solon F 9.5-6

8. And along the road of the Prytaneion is the hero-precinct of Ino, and around it is an enclosure made of stones, and there are olive-trees on top of it. And the people of Megara are the only ones of the Greeks who say that the corpse of Ino was washed ashore on a beach in their territory, and that Klēsō and Tauropolis found it and gave it a funeral - they were the daughters of Klēsōn son of Lelex; they also say that Ino was called Leukothea [White Goddess] in their country first, and that they have a yearly sacrifice to her.

Pausanias 1.42.7
Outside the gates of Thebes. Antigone and Ismene enter.

**Antigone**

Ismene, my sister, who came from the same womb as I did, do you know any evil out of all the evils bequeathed by Oedipus that Zeus will not fulfill for the two of us in our lifetime? There is nothing - no pain, no ruin [atē], 5 no shame, nor loss of timē - that I have not seen in your sufferings and mine. And now what is this new edict that they say the general has just decreed to the all the city? Do you know anything? Have you heard? Or does it escape you that 10 evils from our enemies [ekthroi] are on the march against our philoi?

**Ismene**

To me no report [muthos] of our philoi, Antigone, either bringing joy or bringing pain has come since we two were robbed of our two brothers who died in one day by a double blow. 15 And since the Argive army has fled during this night, I have learned nothing further, whether better fortune is mine, or further ruin [atē].

**Antigone**

I knew it well, so I was trying to bring you outside the courtyard gates to this end, that you alone might hear.

**Ismene**

20 Hear what? It is clear that you are brooding on some dark news.

**Antigone**

Why not? Hasn’t Creon destined our brothers, the one to honored burial, the other to unburied shame? Eteokles, they say, with due observance of right [dikē] and custom [nomos], he has laid in the earth 25 for his honor [timē] among the dead below. As for the poor corpse of Polyneikes, however, they say that an edict has been published to the townsman that no one shall bury him or mourn him, but instead leave him unwept, unentombed, for the birds a pleasing store 30 as they look to satisfy their hunger. Such, it is said, is the edict that the good Creon has laid down for you and for me - yes, for me - and it is said that he is coming here to proclaim it for the certain knowledge of those who do not already know. They say that he does not conduct this business lightly, 35 but whoever performs any of these rites, for him the fate appointed is death by public stoning among the entire polis. This is how things stand for you, and so you will soon show your nature, whether you are noble-minded, or the corrupt daughter of a noble line.

**Ismene**

Poor sister, if things have come to this, what would I profit 40 by loosening or tightening this knot?
Antigone

Consider whether you will share the toil and the task.

Ismene

What are you hazarding? What do you intend?

Antigone

Will you join your hand to mine in order to lift his corpse?

Ismene

You plan to bury him - when it is forbidden to the polis?

Antigone

45 Yes, he is my brother, and yours too, even if you wish it otherwise. I will never be convicted of betraying him.

Ismene

Hard girl! Even when Creon has forbidden it?

Antigone

No, he has no right to keep me from my own.

Ismene

Ah, no! Think, sister, how our father 50 perished in hatred and with loss of kleos, when, because of the crimes that he himself detected, he smashed both his eyes with self-blinding hand; then his mother-wife, two names in one, with a twisted noose destroyed her life; 55 lastly, our two brothers in a single day, both unhappy murderers of their own flesh and blood, worked with mutual hands their common doom. And now we, in turn - we two who have been left all alone - consider how much more miserably we will be destroyed, if in violence to the law [nomos] 60 we transgress against the decree or power of tyrants. No, we must remember, first, that ours is a woman’s nature, and accordingly not apt for battles against men; and next, that we are ruled by the more powerful, so that we must obey in these things and in things even more stinging. 65 I, therefore, will ask those below for pardon, since I am forced to this, and will obey those who have come to authority. It makes no sense [noos] to do what is fruitless.

Antigone

I would not encourage you - no, nor, even if you were sometime willing, 70 would I welcome you as my partner in this action. No, be whatever sort of sister pleases you. I will bury him - it would honor me to die while doing that. I shall rest with him, philē with philos, being a criminal for having performed a holy deed. For the time is greater 75 that I must serve the dead than the living, since in that world I will rest forever. But if you so choose, continue to take timē away from what the gods in timē have established.

Ismene

I do not take timē away from them. But to act in violation of the citizens’ will - of that I am by nature incapable.

Antigone
80 You can make that your pretext! Regardless, I will go now to heap a tomb over a brother who is most phiros to me.

Ismene

Oh no, unhappy sister! I fear for you!

Antigone

Do not tremble for me. Straighten out your own destiny.

Ismene

Then at least disclose the deed to no one before you do it. 85 Conceal it, instead, in secrecy - and so, too, will I.

Antigone

Go on! Denounce it! You will be far more hated for your silence, if you fail to proclaim these things to everyone.

Ismene

You have a hot heart for chilling deeds.

Antigone

I know that I please those whom I am most bound to please.

Ismene

90 Yes, if you will also have the power. But you crave the impossible.

Antigone

Why then, when my strength fails, I will have finished.

Ismene

An impossible hunt should not be tried in the first place.

Antigone

If you mean that, you will have my hatred, and you will be in all justice [dike] the enemy of the dead. 95 But leave me and the bad plan I have authored to suffer [paskhein] this terrible thing, for I won’t suffer [paskhein] anything so terrible that my death will lack honor.

Ismene

Go, then, if you so decide. And of this be sure: though your path is without noos, to your philoi you are phiros straight and true.

They exit.

The Chorus of Theban elders enters.

Chorus

strope 1
 Shaft of the sun, fairest light of all that have dawned on Thebes of the seven gates, you have shone forth at last, eye of golden day, advancing over Dirke’s streams! 105 You have goaded with a sharper bit the warrior of the white shield, who came from Argos in full armor, driving him to headlong retreat.

He set out against our land due to the strife-filled claims of Polyneikes, and like a screaming eagle he flew over into our land, covered by his snow-white wing, 115 with a mass of weapons and crested helmets.

He poised above our dwellings; he gaped around our sevenfold portals with spears thirsting for blood; but he left 120 before his jaws were ever glutted with our gore, or before the Fire-god’s pine-fed flame had seized our crown of towers. 125 So fierce was the crash of battle swelling about his back, a match too hard to win for the rival of the dragon.

For Zeus detests above all the boasts of a proud tongue. And when he saw them advancing in a swollen flood, 130 arrogant in their clanging gold, he dashed with brandished fire one who was already starting to shout victory when he had reached our ramparts.

Staggered, he fell to the earth with a crash, 135 torch in hand, a man possessed by the frenzy of the mad attack, who just now was raging against us with the blasts of his tempestuous hate. But his threats did not fare as he had hoped, and to the other enemies mighty Ares dispensed each their own dooms with hard blows, 140 Ares, our mighty ally at the turning-point.

For the seven captains, stationed against an equal number at the seven gates, left behind their brazen arms in tribute to Zeus the turner of battle - all but the accursed pair who, born of one father and one 145 mother, set against each other their spears, both victorious, and who now share in a common death.

But since Victory [Nike] whose name is glory has come to us, smiling in joy equal to the joy of chariot-rich Thebes, 150 let us make for ourselves forgetfulness after the wars of just now, and visit all the temples of the gods with night-long khoroi. And may Bacchus, who shakes the earth of Thebes, rule our dancing!

But look, the king of the land is coming here, Creon, the son of Menoikeus, our new ruler in accordance with the new circumstances fated by the gods. What policy is he setting in motion, 160 that he has proposed this special conference of elders, and summoned it by a general mandate?

Creon enters with attendants.

Creon

My fellow citizens! First, the gods, after tossing the fate of our polis on wild waves, have once more righted it. Second, I have ordered you through my messengers to come here 165 apart from all the rest, because I knew, first of all, how constant was your reverence for the power of the throne of Laios; how,
again, you were reverent, when Oedipus was guiding our city; and lastly, how, when he was dead, you still maintained loyal thoughts towards their children. 170 Since, then, these latter have fallen in one day by a twofold doom - each striking, each hacking, both with the stain of a brother’s murder - I now possess all the power and the throne according to my kinship with the dead. 175 It is impossible to know fully any man’s psukhē, phrenes, or judgment, until he has been seen in the baring light of rule and law-giving [nomoi]. For if anyone who directs the entire city does not cling to the best and wisest plans, 180 but because of some fear keeps his lips locked, then, in my judgment, he is and has long been the most cowardly traitor. And if any man thinks a philos more important than his fatherland, that man, I say, is of no account. Zeus, god who sees all things always, be my witness - 185 I would not be silent if I saw ruin [atē], instead of salvation [sōtēria], marching upon the citizens. Nor would I ever make a man who is hostile to my country a philos to myself, because I know this, that our country is the ship that brings us to salvation, and that only when 190 we sail her on a straight course can we make true philoi. Such are the rules [nomoi] by which I strengthen this city. Akin to these is the edict which I have now published to the citizenry concerning the sons of Oedipus: Eteokles, who fell fighting 195 in behalf of our city and who excelled all in battle, they shall entomb and on top of it add every sacred offering that descends to the noblest of the dead below. But as for his brother, Polyneikes, I mean, who on his return from exile wanted to burn to the ground 200 the city of his fathers and his family-line’s gods, and wanted to feed on kindred blood and lead the remnant into slavery - it has been proclaimed to the polis that no one shall give him funeral honors or lamentation, 205 but all must leave him unburied and a sight of shame, with his body there for birds and dogs to eat. This is my thinking, and never will I allow the traitor to stand in honor [timē] before those who have dikē. But whoever has good will to this polis, 210 he shall get timē from me in death as in life.

Chorus

That is your will, Creon, towards this city’s enemy and its friend. And the power is yours, I believe, to make use of every law [nomos] whatsoever, both concerning the dead and all us who live.

Creon

215 See, then, that you be guardians of my commands.

Chorus

Lay the weight of this task on some younger man.

Creon

That is not what I meant - the corpse’s guards are already in place.

Chorus

Then what is this other command that you would give?

Creon

That you not give way to the breakers of my commands.

Chorus

220 There is no one so foolish as to crave death.

Creon
I assure you, that is the wage for disobedience. Yet by just the hope of it, desire for gain [kerdos] has many times corrupted men.

_A Guard enters._

**Guard**

My lord, I will not say that I arrive breathless because of speed, or from the action of a swift foot. 225 For often I brought myself to a stop because of my thoughts, and wheeled round in my path to return. My _psukhē_ was telling me many things: “Fool, why do you go to where your arrival will mean your punishment?” “You wretch, are you dallying again? If Creon learns it 230 from another, must you not suffer for it?” So debating, I made my way unhurriedly, slow, and thus a short road was made long. At last, however, the view prevailed that I should come here to you. Even if my report brings no good, still will I tell you, 235 since I come with a good grip on one hope, that I can suffer [paskhein] nothing except what is my fate.

**Creon**

And what is it that so disheartens you?

**Guard**

I want to tell you first about myself: I did not do the deed, nor did I see the doer, 240 so it would be wrong that I should come to any harm.

**Creon**

Like a Bowman you aim well at your target from a distance, and all around you hedge yourself off well from the deed. It is clear that you have some unheard of thing to indicate [sēmainein].

**Guard**

That I do, for terrible news imposes great hesitation.

**Creon**

Then tell it, will you, and so unburdened go away?

**Guard**

245 Well, here it is. The corpse - some one has just given it burial and disappeared after sprinkling thirsty dust on the flesh and performing the other rites that piety demands.

**Creon**

What are you saying? What man dared do this?

**Guard**

I do not know. For there was no scar of a pickax to be seen there, 250 no earth thrown up by a mattock. The ground was hard and dry, unbroken, not rolled over by wheels. The doer was someone who left behind no sign [sēma]. When the first day-watchman showed it to us, a discomforting amazement fell on us all. 255 The dead man was veiled from us - not shut within a tomb, but a light cover of dust was on him, as if put there by the hand of one who shunned a curse. And no sign was visible that any beast of prey or any dog had approached or torn him. Then evil words flew thick and loud among us, 260 guard accusing guard. It would even have come to blows in the end, nor was there anyone there to prevent it: every man was the culprit, and no one was plainly guilty, while all disclaimed knowledge of the act. We
were ready to take red-hot iron in our hands, 265 to walk through fire and to swear oaths by the gods that we had neither done the deed, nor shared knowledge of the planning or the doing. At last, when there was nothing further for our investigating, someone spoke up and made us all bend our faces 270 in fear towards the earth. For we did not know how we could argue with him, nor yet prosper if we did what he said. His argument [muthos] was that the deed must be reported to you and not hidden. This view prevailed, and so it was that 275 the lot doomed miserable me to win this prize. So here I stand, as unwelcome to you as I am unwilling, I well know. For no man delights in the bearer of bad news.

Chorus

My lord, my thoughts have long been deliberating whether this deed is somehow the work of the gods?

Creon

280 Quiet, before your words truly fill me with rage, so that you not be found at the same time lacking in noos as well as being old. You say what is intolerable when you claim that daimones have concern for that corpse. Was it in excessive esteem [time] for his benefactions 285 that they sought to hide him, when he had come to burn their columned shrines, their sacred treasures and their land, and scatter its laws [nomoi] to the winds? Or do you see the gods honoring the wicked? It cannot be. No! From the very first 290 certain men of the city were chafing at this edict and muttering against me, tossing their heads in secret, and they did not keep their necks duly under the yoke in submission to me. By those men, I am certain, they were led astray and bribed to do this deed. 295 Nothing so evil as money ever grew to a custom [nomisma, from nomos] among men. This destroys cities, this drives men from their homes, this trains and warps honest phrenes to set themselves to works of shame, 300 this teaches people to practice villainies, and to know every act of unholiness. But all the men who did this job for hire have made sure that, sooner or later, they shall suffer the punishment [dike]. Now, as Zeus still has my reverence, know this well - 305 I tell you on my oath. If you do not find the very hand that made this burial, and reveal him before my eyes, mere death shall not suffice for you, not before, hung up alive, you have made this hubris plain, 310 so that hereafter you may thieve with better knowledge from where your gain [kerdos] should be received, and learn that it is best not to be fond of gain [kerdos] from any and every source. For you will find that ill-gotten gains bring more men to ruin [atē] than to safety [sōzein].

Guard

315 Will you allow me to speak? Or shall I just turn and go?

Creon

Don’t you know even now how much your voice sickens me?

Guard

Is the pain in your ears, or in your psukhe?

Creon

And why would you define the seat of my pain?

Guard

He who did it hurts your phrenes, but I, the ears.

Creon
God! How plain it is that you are a born babbler.

Guard
Perhaps, but never the author of this action.

Creon
Yes, and what is more, you sold your psukhē for silver.

Guard
Ah! It is truly sad when he the judge judges wrong.

Creon
Expound on “judgment” as you will. But, if you fail to show me the perpetrators of these crimes, you will avow that gain [kerdos] basely earned wreaks sorrows. Creon exits.

Guard
Well, may the man be found! That would be best. But, whether he be caught or not - for fortune must decide that - I assure you that you will not see me come here again. 330 Saved [sōzein] just now beyond hope and belief, I owe the gods great thanks [kharis]. The Guard exits.

Chorus

Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man. 335 This power spans the sea [pontos], even when it surges white before the gales of the south wind, and makes a path under swells that threaten to engulf him. Earth, too, the eldest of the gods, the unwilting [aphthitos], the unwearied, 340 he wears away to his own ends, turning the soil with the offspring of horses as the plows weave to and fro year after year.

antistrophe 1

The light-hearted tribe of birds 345 and the clans of wild beasts and the sea-brood of the sea [pontos] he snares in the meshes of his twisted nets, and he leads them captive, very-skilled man. He masters by his arts 350 the beast who dwells in the wilds and roams the hills. He tames the shaggy-maned horse, putting the yoke upon its neck, and tames the tireless mountain bull.

strophe 2

Speech and thought fast as the wind 355 and the moods that give order to a city he has taught himself, and how to flee the arrows of the inhospitable frost under clear skies and the arrows of the storming rain. 360 He has resource for everything. Lacking resource in nothing he strides towards what must come. From Death alone he shall procure no escape, but from hopeless diseases he has devised flights.

antistrophe 2
365 Possessing resourceful skill \textit{[sophon]}, a subtlety beyond expectation, he moves now to evil, now to good. When he honors the laws \textit{[nomoi]} of the land and the justice \textit{[dikē]} of the gods to which he is bound by oath, 370 he stands high in his city. But banned from his city is he who, thanks to his rashness, couples with disgrace. Never may he share my home, 375 never think my thoughts, who does these things!

\textit{The Guard enters, leading in Antigone.}

\textit{anapests}

What marvel sent by the \textit{daimones} is this? My noos goes in two different directions! I know her. How can I deny that this girl is Antigone? O unhappy child 380 of your unhappy father, of Oedipus! What can this mean? What! Surely they aren’t bringing you captive for disobeying the King’s laws \textit{[nomoi]} and being caught in foolishness?

\textbf{Guard}

Here she is, she did it. 385 We caught this one burying him. Where is Creon?

\textit{Creon enters from the palace.}

\textbf{Chorus}

There, he is coming from the house again at our need.

\textbf{Creon}

What is it? What has happened that makes my coming timely?

\textbf{Guard}

My lord, there is nothing that a man can rightly swear he will not do. For second thought belies one’s first intent. 390 I could have vowed that I would not ever be here again, due to your threats by which I had just been storm-tossed. But since this joy that exceeds and oversteps my hopes can be compared in fullness to no other pleasure, I am back - though it is contrary to my sworn oath - 395 bringing this girl who was caught giving burial and adornment \textit{[kosmos]} to the dead. This time there was no casting of lots. No, this piece of luck has fallen to me, and me alone. And now, my lord, as it pleases you, take her yourself, question her and convict her. But \textit{dikē} would see me 400 released free and clear from this trouble.

\textbf{Creon}

Your prisoner here - how and where did you take her?

\textbf{Guard}

She was burying the man. You know all there is to tell.

\textbf{Creon}

Are you clear and sure about what you are saying?

\textbf{Guard}

I am. I saw her burying the corpse that you 405 had forbidden to bury. Is that plain and sufficient proof?

\textbf{Creon}
And how was she observed? How taken in the act?

Guard

It happened like this. When we had come to the place with those fierce threats of yours still in our ears, we swept away all the dust that covered 410 the corpse and bared the damp body well. We then sat down on the brow of the hill to windward, fleeing the smell from him, lest it strike us. Each man was wide awake and kept his neighbor alert with torrents of threats, if any one should be careless of this labor [ponos]. 415 So time passed, until the disk of the sun stood bright in mid-sky and the heat began to burn. And then suddenly a whirlwind lifted from the earth a storm of dust, an akhos from the sky, and it filled the plain, marring all the foliage of the woods. 420 Soon the wide air was choked with it. We closed our eyes, and endured the plague from the gods. When, after a long while, this storm had passed, the girl was seen, and she wailed aloud with the sharp cry of a grieving bird, as when inside her empty 425 nest she sees the bed stripped of its nestlings. So she, too, when she saw the corpse bare, broke into a cry of lamentation and cursed with harsh curses those who had done it. Immediately she took thirsty dust in her hands 430 and from a pitcher of beaten bronze held high she crowned the dead with thrice-poured libations. We rushed forward when we saw it, and at once closed upon our quarry, who was not at all dismayed. We then charged her with her past and present doings, 435 but she made no denial of anything - at once to my joy and to my pain. For to have escaped from trouble oneself gives the greatest joy, but it stings to lead philoi to evil. Naturally, though, all such things are 440 of less account to me than my own salvation [sōtēria].

Creon

You, you with your face bent to the ground, do you admit, or deny that you did this?

Antigone

I declare it and make no denial.

Creon

To the Guard.

You can take yourself wherever you please, 445 free and clear of a heavy charge.

The Guard exits.

To Antigone.

You, however, tell me - not at length, but briefly - did you know that an edict had forbidden this?

Antigone

I knew it. How could I not? It was public.

Creon

And even so you dared overstep that law?

Antigone

450 Yes, since it was not Zeus that published that edict for me, and since not of that kind are the laws [nomoi] which dikē, who dwells with the gods below, established among men. Nor did I think that your decrees were of such force, that a mortal could override the unwritten 455 and unfailing statutes [nomima, from nomos] given us by the gods. For their life is not of today or yesterday, but for all time, and
no man knows when they were first put forth. Not for fear of any man’s pride was I about to owe a penalty \(\text{dike}\) to the gods for breaking these. 460 Die I must, that I knew well - how could I not? That is true even without your edicts. But if I am to die before my time, I count that a gain \(\text{kerdos}\). When anyone lives as I do, surrounded by evils, how can he not carry off profit \(\text{kerdos}\) by dying? 465 So for me to meet this doom is a grief of no account. But if I had endured that my mother’s son should in death lie an unburied corpse, that would have grieved me. Yet for this, I am not grieved. And if my present actions are foolish in your sight, 470 it may be that it is a fool who accuses me of folly.

**Chorus**

She shows herself the wild offspring of a wild father, and does not know how to bend before troubles.

**Creon**

Yet remember that over-hard spirits most often collapse. It is the stiffest iron, baked to 475 utter hardness in the fire, that you most often see snapped and shivered. And I have witnessed horses with great spirit disciplined by a small bit. For there is no place for pride, when one is his neighbors’ slave. 480 This girl was already practiced in hubris when she overstepped the laws \(\text{nomoi}\) that have been made public. And, that done, this now is a second hubris, that she glories in it and exults in her deed. In truth, then, I am no man, but she is, 485 if this power \(\text{kratos} \text{pl.}\) rests with her and brings no penalty. No! Whether she is my sister’s child, or nearer to me in blood than any of my kin that worship Zeus at the altar of our house, she and her sister will not escape a doom most harsh. For in truth 490 I charge that other with an equal share in the plotting of this burial. Call her out! I saw her inside just now, raving, and not in control of her \(\text{phrenes}\). Before the deed, the \text{thumos} frequently is convicted of stealthy crimes when conspirators are plotting depravity in the dark. 495 But, truly, I detest it, too, when one who has been caught in evil treachery then seeks to take pride in the crime.

**Antigone**

What more do you want than to capture and kill me?

**Creon**

I want nothing else. Having that, I have everything.

**Antigone**

Why then do you wait? In none of your words 500 is there anything that pleases me - and may there never be! Likewise to you as well my views must be displeasing. And yet, how could I have won a nobler kleos than by giving burial to my own brother? All here would admit that they approve, 505 if fear did not grip their tongues. But tyranny, having such a good \(\text{daimon}\), has the power to do and say whatever it pleases.

**Creon**

You alone out of all these Thebans see it that way.

**Antigone**

They do, too, but for you they hold their tongues.

**Creon**

510 Aren’t you ashamed that your beliefs differ from theirs?
Antigone
No, there is nothing shameful in respecting your own flesh and blood.

Creon
Wasn’t he your brother, too, who died in the opposite cause?

Antigone
A brother by the same mother and the same father.

Creon
Why, then, do you disrespect that one with this favor [kharis] of timē?

Antigone
515 The dead man will not support you in that.

Creon
Yes, he will, if you give him timē equally with the wicked one.

Antigone
It was his brother, not his slave, who died.

Creon
But he died ravaging this land, while he fell in its defense.

Antigone
Hades craves these customs [nomoi], nevertheless.

Creon
520 But the good man craves a portion not equal to that of a kakos.

Antigone
Who knows but that these actions are pure to those below?

Creon
You cannot be philos to someone you have hated, not even after death.

Antigone
It is not my nature to join in being hateful, but in being philē.

Creon
Then, go down to hell and be philē to them, 525 if you must. While I live, no woman will rule me.

Ismene is led in from the palace.

Chorus

anapests
Antigone

Look, here’s Ismene coming from the palace, shedding the tears of a loving sister. A cloud over her eyes mars her red-flushed face, and it breaks into rain on her comely cheek.

Creon

You who were lurking like a viper in my own house and secretly gulping up my life’s blood, while I was oblivious that I was nurturing two plagues, two revolutions against my throne - tell me now, will you also affirm your share in this burial, or will you forswear all knowledge of it?

Ismene

I performed the deed - as long as she concurs - and I share and carry the burden of guilt.

Antigone

No, dikē will not permit you to do this, since you were not willing to help with the deed, nor did I give you a part in it.

Ismene

But now with this sea of troubles around you, I am not ashamed to sail in a sea of suffering at your side.

Antigone

To who owns the deed, Hades and the dead are witnesses. A philē in words is not the type of philē I love.

Ismene

No, sister, do not strip me of death’s timē, but let me die with you and make due consecration to the dead.

Antigone

Do not share my death. Do not claim deeds to which you did not put your hand. My death will suffice.

Ismene

And how can life be philos to me, once I am deprived of you?

Antigone

Ask Creon. Your concern is for him.

Ismene

Why do you torture me like this, when it doesn’t help you?

Antigone

No, if I mock you, it is to my own pain that I do so.

Ismene

Tell me, how can I help you, even now?

Antigone

Save yourself. I do not grudge your escape.

Ismene
Ah, misery! Will I fall short of sharing your fate?

**Antigone**
555 Your choice was to live, mine to die.

**Ismene**
At least your choice was not made without my protests.

**Antigone**
One world approved your wisdom, another approved mine.

**Ismene**
Nevertheless, the offense [hamartia] is identical for both of us.

**Antigone**
Take heart! You live. But my *psukhē* has been long 560 in Death’s hands, so that I might serve the dead.

**Creon**
One of these maidens, I declare, has just revealed herself to be without *noos*, the other has displayed it from the moment of her birth.

**Ismene**
Yes, Creon. Whatever amount of reason nature may have given does not remain with those in evil straits, but goes astray.

**Creon**
565 Yours did, I know, when you chose evil actions with evil allies.

**Ismene**
What life would there be for me alone, without her presence?

**Creon**
Do not speak of her “presence”. She lives no longer.

**Ismene**
What? You will kill your own son’s bride?

**Creon**
Why not? There are other fields for him to plow.

**Ismene**
570 But not with such love as joined him to her.

**Creon**
I abhor an evil wife for my son.

**Antigone**
Haimon, most philos! How your father wrongs you!

**Creon**

Enough! Enough of you and of your marriage!

**Chorus**

Will you really cheat your son of this girl?

**Creon**

575 Death it is who ends these bridals for me.

**Chorus**

Then it seems that it is resolved that she will die.

**Creon**

Resolved, yes, by you and by me.

To the Attendants.

No more delay! Servants, take them inside! Hereafter they must be women, and not left at large. 580 For it is known that even the brave seek to flee, when they see Death now closing on their life.

*Antigone and Ismene are led out.*

**Chorus**

strophe 1

Blessed [eudaimones] are those whose lifespan [aiōn] has not tasted evil. For when a house has once been shaken by the gods, 585 no form of ruin [atē] is lacking, but it spreads over the bulk of the family-line, just as, when the surge is driven over the darkness of the sea [pontos] by the fierce breath of Thracian sea-winds, 590 it rolls up the black sand from the depths, and the wind-beaten headlands that front the blows of the storm give out a mournful roar.

antistrophe 1

I see that the ancient sorrows of the house of the Labdakidai 595 are heaped upon the sorrows of those who have wilted away [phthitoi]. Each generation does not set its family-line free, but some god hurls it down and the line has no release. For now that dazzling ray of hope that had been spread 600 over the last roots in the house of Oedipus - that hope, in its turn, is cut down by the blood-stained dust of the gods infernal and mindlessness in speech and Fury [Erinys] in the phrenes.

strophe 2

605 Your power, great Zeus - what human transgression can check it? Yours is power that neither Sleep, the all-ensnaring, nor the untiring months of the gods can defeat. Unaged through time, 610 you rule by your power and dwell thereby in the brilliant splendor of Olympus. And through the future, both near and distant, as through the past, shall this law [nomos] prevail: nothing that is vast comes to the life of mortals without ruin [atē].

antistrophe 2
615 See how that hope whose wanderings are so wide truly is a delight to many men, but to an equal number it is a false lure of light-headed desires. The deception comes to one who is wholly unaware until he burns his foot on a hot fire. 620 For with sophia did someone once reveal the maxim, which now has kleos, that evil at one time or another seems good, to him whose phrenes a god leads to ruin [atē]. 625 But for the briefest moment such a man fares free of destruction [atē].

But here is Haimon, the last of your offspring. Does he come grieving for the doom of Antigone, his promised bride, 630 and bitter for the deceived hope of their marriage?

Haimon enters.

Creon

We will soon know better than seers could tell us. My son, can it be that after hearing the final judgment concerning your betrothed, you have come in rage against your father? Or am I still philos to you, whatever I do?

Haimon

635 Father, I am yours, and you keep me upright with precepts good for me - precepts I shall follow. No marriage will be deemed by me more important than you when you guide me well.

Creon

640 Yes, my son, this is the spirit you should maintain in your heart: to stand behind your father’s will in all things. It is for this that men pray: to sire and raise in their homes children who are obedient, that they may require their father’s enemy with evil and give timē to his philos, just as their father does. 645 But the man who begets unhelpful children - what would you say that he has sown except struggles [ponoi] for himself and abundant exultation for his enemies? Never, then, my son, go reject your phrenes for pleasure on account of a woman, 650 knowing that this embrace soon becomes cold and brittle - an evil woman to share your bed and home. For what wound could strike deeper than a false philos? No, spit her out as if she were your most hostile enemy, let her go find a husband in Hades. 655 For since I caught her alone of all the polis in open defiance, I will not make myself a liar to my city. I will kill her. So let her call on Zeus who protects kindred blood. If I am to foster my own kin to spurn order, 660 surely I will do the same for others. For whoever shows his excellence in the case of his own household will be found righteous [dikaios] in his city as well. But if anyone oversteps and does hubris to the laws [nomoi], or thinks to dictate to those in power, 665 such a one will never win praise [epainos] from me. No, whomever the city may appoint, that man must be obeyed in matters small and great and in matters just [dikaia] and unjust. And I would feel confident that such a man would be a fine ruler no less than a good and willing subject, 670 and that beneath a hail of spears he would stand his ground where posted, a loyal [dikaios] and brave comrade in the battle line. But there is no evil worse than loss of control [anarkhia]. This destroys cities; this overturns homes; this breaks 675 the ranks of allied spears into headlong rout. But the lives of men who prosper upright, most of these have been saved by obedience to control. Therefore we must defend those who live in law and order [kosmos], and in no way can we let a woman defeat us. It is better to fall from power, if it is fated, by a man’s hand; 680 then we would not be called weaker than women.

Chorus

To us, unless our years have stolen our wit, you seem to say what you say wisely.
Haimon

Father, the gods implant reason [phrenes] in men, the highest of all things that we call our own. 685 For my part, to state how you are wrong to say those things is beyond my power and my desire, although another man, too, might have a useful thought. In any case, it is my natural duty to watch on your behalf all that men say, or do, or find to blame. 690 For the dread of your glance forbids the ordinary citizen to speak such words as would offend your ear. But I can hear these murmurs in the dark, how the city moans for this girl, saying: “No woman ever merited death less, none ever died so shamefully for deeds of such kleos as hers, who, when her own brother had fallen in bloody battle, would not leave him unburied to be devoured by savage dogs, or by any bird. Doesn’t she deserve to receive golden honor?” 700 Such is the rumor shrouded in darkness that silently spreads. For me, father, no possession [ktēma] is more precious than your prosperity. What, indeed, is a nobler ornament for children than the fair kleos of a thriving father, or for a father than that of his children? 705 Do not, then, bear one mood only in yourself: do not think that your word and no other, must be right. For if any man thinks that he alone is wise - that in speech or in mind he has no peer - such a psukhē, when laid open, is always found empty. 710 No, even when a man is sophos, it brings him no shame to learn many things, and not to be too rigid. You see how the trees that stand beside the torrential streams created by a winter storm yield to it and save their twigs, while the stiff and rigid perish root and all? 715 And in the same way the pilot who keeps the sheet of his sail taut and never slackens it, upsets his boat, and voyages thereafter with his decking underwater. Father, give way and allow a change in your thumos. For if even from me, a younger man, a worthy thought may be supplied, 720 by far the best thing, I believe, would be for men to be all-wise by nature. Otherwise - since most often it does not turn out that way - it is good to learn in addition from those who advise you well.

Chorus

My lord, it is honorable, if he speaks something appropriate, that you should learn from him 725 and that you, in turn, Haimon, should learn from your father. On both sides there have been wise words.

Creon

Men of my age - are we then to be schooled in wisdom by men of his?

Haimon

Yes, and in nothing that is not right [dikaios]. But if I am young, you should look to my conduct, not to my years.

Creon

730 Is it worthy conduct to honor those who are without order [kosmos]?

Haimon

I could not urge anyone to show respect for the wicked.

Creon

And isn’t she in the grasp of that disease?

Haimon

All the people of this city of Thebes deny it.
Creon
Shall Thebes prescribe to me how I must rule?

Haimon
735 See, there, how you have spoken so much like a child.

Creon
Am I to rule this land by the will of another than myself?

Haimon
That is no polis which belongs to one man.

Creon
Doesn’t the city by tradition [nomizein] belong to the man in power?

Haimon
You would make a fine monarch in a desert.

Creon
740 This boy seems to be fighting on the side of the woman.

Haimon
If you are a woman, for my concern is for you.

Creon
You traitor, attacking your father, laying charges [dikē] against him!

Haimon
Because I see you doing justice [dikaia] wrong.

Creon
Am I doing wrong when I respect my own prerogatives?

Haimon
745 Yes. You do not respect them, when you trample on the gods’ timai.

Creon
Polluted creature, submitting to a woman!

Haimon
You will never catch me submitting to shamelessness.

Creon
You do. Your every word, after all, pleads her case.

Haimon

221 From nomos.
And yours, and mine, and that of gods below.

Creon
750 You can never marry her, not while she’s still alive

Haimon
Then she will die, and in death destroy another.

Creon
What! Does your audacity run to open threats?

Haimon
How is it a threat to speak against empty plans?

Creon
You will regret your unwise [without phrenes] instructions in wisdom [phrenes].

Haimon
755 If you were not my father, I would have called you insane.

Creon
You woman’s slave, do not try to cajole me.

Haimon
Do you want to have your say and then have done without a reply?

Creon
Is this true [alēthes]? By Olympus above - know this well - you will have no joy for taunting me over and above your censures. 760 Bring out that hated thing, so that with him looking on she may die right now in her bridegroom’s presence at his side!

Haimon
No, not at my side will she die - don’t ever imagine it. Nor shall you ever look at me and set eyes on my face again. 765 Indulge in your madness now with whatever of your philoi can endure it.

Haimon exits.

Chorus
The man is gone, Lord Creon, in anger and haste. A young noos like that is ominous when it is in pain.

Creon
Let him do, let him plan, something more immense than befits a man. Good-bye to him! Still he will not save these two girls from death.

Chorus
770 Then the pair of them - you really have the intent [noos] to kill them both?

Creon
Not the one who did not put her hands to the burial. You are right.

Chorus

And by what mode of death do you mean to kill the other?

Creon

I will take her where the path is deserted, unvisited by men, and entomb her alive in a rocky vault, setting out a ration of food, but only as much as piety requires so that all the polis may escape defilement miasma. And praying there to Hades, the only god she worships, perhaps she will obtain immunity from death, or else will learn, at last, even this late, that it is fruitless labor ponos to revere the dead.

Creon exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

Love, the unconquered in battle, Love, you who descend upon riches, and watch the night through on a girl’s soft cheek, you roam over the sea pontos and among the homes of men in the wilds. Neither can any immortal escape you, nor any man whose life lasts for a day. He who has known you is driven to madness.

antistrophe 1

You seize the phrenes of just dikaioi men and drag them to injustice adikia, to their ruin. You it is who have incited this conflict of men whose flesh and blood are one. But victory belongs to radiant Desire swelling from the eyes of the sweet-bedded bride. Desire sits enthroned in power beside the mighty laws. For in all this divine Aphrodite plays her irresistible game.

Antigone enters under guard from the palace.

anapests

But now, witnessing this, I too am carried beyond the bounds of loyalty. The power fails me to keep back my streaming tears any longer, when I see Antigone making her way to the chamber where all are laid to rest, now her bridal chamber.

Antigone

strophe 1

Citizens of my fatherland, see me setting out on my last journey, looking at my last sunlight, and never again. No, Hades who lays all to rest leads me living to Acheron’s shore, though I have not had my due portion of the chant that brings the bride, nor has any hymn been mine for the crowning of marriage. Instead the lord of Acheron will be my groom.

Chorus

anapests
Then in kleos and with praise [epainos] you depart to that deep place of the dead, neither struck by 
wasting sickness, 820 nor having won the wages of the sword. No, guided by your own laws [nomoi] and 
still alive, unlike any mortal before, you will descend to Hades.

**Antigone**

antistrophe 1

I have heard how most sorrowfully perished the Phrygian stranger, daughter of Tantalos, 825 on steep 
Sipylos - how, like clinging ivy, the sprouting stone subdued her. And the rains, as men tell, do not leave 
her melting form, nor does the snow, 830 but beneath her weeping brows she dampens her neck. Most 
like hers is the daimōn-sent fate that leads me to my rest.

**Chorus**

anapests

Yet she was a goddess, as you know, and the offspring of gods, 835 while we are mortals and mortal-
born. Still it is a great thing for a woman who has died to have it said of her that she shared the lot of the 
godlike in her life, and afterwards, in death.

**Antigone**

strope 2

Ah, you mock me! In the name of our fathers’ gods, 840 why don’t you wait to inflict hubris on me until 
after I have gone, and not to my face, O my polis, and you, her wealthy citizens? Ah, spring of Dirke, and 
you holy ground of Thebes whose chariots are many, 845 you, at least, will bear me witness how unwapt 
by philoi, and by what laws [nomoi] I go to the rock-closed prison of my unheard-of tomb! Ah misery! 850 
I have no home among men or with the shades, no home with the living or with the dead.

**Chorus**

strope 3

You have rushed headlong to the far limits of daring, and against the high throne of dikē; 855 you have 
fallen, my daughter, fallen heavily. But in this ordeal [āthlos] you are paying for some ancestral wrong.

**Antigone**

antistrophe 2

You have touched on my most bitter thought 860 and moved my ever-renewed pity for my father and for 
entire doom ordained for us, the famed house of Labdakos. Oh, the disasters [atai] of our mother’s bed! 
Oh, the slumbers of the wretched mother at the side 865 of her own son, my own father! What manner of 
parents gave me my miserable being! It is to them that I go like this, accursed and unwed, to share their 
home. 870 Ah, my brother, the marriage you made was doomed, and by dying you killed me still alive!

**Chorus**

antistrophe 3
Antigone

Your pious action shows a certain reverence, but an offence against power [kratos] can in no way be tolerated by him who has power [kratos] in his keeping. 875 Your self-willed disposition is what has destroyed you.

Antigone

epode

Unwept, without philoi, without marriage-song, I am led in misery on this journey that cannot be put off. No longer is it permitted me, unhappy girl, 880 to look up at this sacred eye of the burning sun. But for my fate no tear is shed, no philoi moan in sorrow.

Creon enters.

Creon

Don’t you know that dirges and wailing before death would never come to an end, if it were allowed to make them freely? 885 Take her away now! And when you have enshrined her, as I proclaimed, in her covered tomb, leave her alone, deserted - let her decide whether she wishes to die or to live entombed in such a home. It makes no difference, since our hands are clean so far as regards this girl. 890 But no matter what, she will be stripped of her home here above.

Antigone

Tomb, bridal-chamber, deep-dug eternal abode [oikos] where I go to find my own, whom in the greatest numbers destruction has seized and Persephone has welcomed among the dead! 895 Last of them all, and in by far the most shameful circumstances, I will descend, even before the fated term of my life is spent. But I cherish strong hopes that I will arrive philē to my father, philē to you, Mother, and philē, Brother, to you. 900 For, when each of you died, with my own hands I washed and dressed you and poured drink-offerings at your graves. But now, Polyneikes, it is for tending your corpse that I win such reward as this. And yet I gave you honor [tīmē] rightly, as those who have phrenes will understand. 905 Never, if I had been a mother of children, or if a husband had been rotting after death, would I have taken that burden [ponos] upon myself in violation of the citizens’ will. For the sake of what law [nomos], you ask, do I say that? A husband lost, another might have been found, 910 and if bereft of a child, there could be a second from some other man. But when father and mother are hidden in Hades, no brother could ever bloom for me again. Such was the law [nomos] whereby I held you first in tīmē, but for that Creon judged me guilty of wrongdoing 915 and of dreadful outrage, dear brother! And now he leads me thus in his hands’ strong grasp, when I have enjoyed no marriage-bed or bridal song and have not received any portion of marriage or the nurture of children. But deserted by philoi, 920 in misery I go living to the hollow graves of the dead. What dikē of the daimones have I transgressed? Why should I look to the gods any more? What ally should I call out to, when by my reverence I have earned a name for irreverence? 925 Well, then, if these events please the gods, once I have suffered [paskhein] my doom I will come to know my error. But if the error lies with my judges, I could wish that they suffer [paskhein] no greater evils than they inflict, without dikē, on me.

Chorus

anapests
Still the same tempest of the *psukhê* grips this girl with the same fierce gusts.

**Creon**

Then because of this her guards will have reason to lament their slowness.

**Antigone**

Ah no! That command verges close on death.

**Creon**

I cannot console you with any hope that your doom is not to be fulfilled in that way.

**Antigone**

O city of my fathers, land of Thebes, and you gods, our ancestors! I am lead away now, there is no more delay! Look at me, you who are Thebes’ lords - look at the only remaining daughter of the house of your kings. See what I suffer, and at whose hands, because I revered reverence!

*Antigone is led away by the guards.*

**Chorus**

*strophe 1*

So too endured the beauty of Danae to change the light of the sky for brass-bound walls, and in that chamber, both burial and bridal, she was held in strict confinement. And yet was she from a lineage of *timê*, my daughter, and guarded a deposit of the seed of Zeus that had fallen in a golden rain. But dreadful is the mysterious power of fate: there is no deliverance from it by wealth or by war, by towered city, or dark, sea-beaten ships.

*antistrophe 1*

955 And the swift-raging son of Dryas, the Edonian king, was tamed in recompense for his frenzied insults, when, by the will of Dionysus, he was shut in a rocky prison. There the fierce and swelling force of his madness trickled away. That man came to know the god whom in his frenzy he had provoked with mockeries. For he had sought to quell the god-inspired women and the Bacchanalian fire, and he angered the Muses who love the flute.

*strophe 2*

And by the waters of the Dark Rocks, the waters of the twofold sea, are the shores of Bosporus and the Thracian city Salmydessos, where Ares, neighbor of that polis, saw the accursed, blinding wound inflicted on the two sons of Phineus by his savage wife. It was a wound that brought darkness to the hollows, making them crave vengeance for the eyes she crushed with her bloody hands and with her shuttle for a dagger.

*antistrophe 2*
Wasting away in their misery, they bewailed their miserable suffering [pathos] and their birth from their mother stripped of her marriage. But she traced her descent from the ancient line of the Erekhtheidai, and in far-distant caves she was raised amidst her father’s gusts. She was the child of Boreas, running swift as horses over the steep hills, a daughter of gods. Yet she, too, was assailed by the long-lived Fates, my child.

Teiresias enters, led by a boy.

Lords of Thebes, we have come on a shared journey, two scouting the way by the eyes of one. For this is the method of travel for the blind, using a guide.

What is it, old Teiresias? What is your news?

I will tell you. You, obey the seer [mantis].

It was not my habit before, to stand apart from your phrenes.

Therefore you captained this polis on an upright course.

995 I have experienced [paskhein] and can attest your benefits.

Realize that once more now you are poised on fortune’s razor-edge.

What do you mean? I shudder to hear you!

You will understand, when you hear the signs [sēmeía] revealed by my art. As I took my place on my old seat of augury 1000 where all birds regularly gather for me, I heard an unintelligible voice among them: they were screaming in dire frenzy that made their language foreign to me. I realized that they were ripping each other with their talons, murderously - the rush of their wings did not lack a signal [sēma].

Quickly, in fear, I tried burnt-sacrifice on a duly kindled altar, but from my offerings Hephaistos did not blaze. Instead juice that had sweated from the thigh-flesh trickled out onto the embers and smoked and sputtered; the gall was scattered high up in the air; and the streaming thighs lay bared of the fat that had been wrapped around them. Such was the failure of the rites that yielded no sign [sēma], as I learned from this boy. For he is my guide, as I am guide to others. 1015 And it is your phrēn that is the source of the sickness now afflicting the polis. For the altars of our city and our hearths have one and all been tainted by the birds and dogs with the carrion taken from the sadly-fallen son of Oedipus. And so the gods no more accept prayer and sacrifice at our hands, 1020 or the burning of thigh-meat, nor does
any bird sound out clear signs [sēma pl.] in its shrill cries, for they have tasted the fatness of a slain man’s blood. Think, therefore, on these things, my son. All men are liable to err. 1025 But when an error is made, that man is no longer unwise or unfortunate [without oblos] who heals the evil into which he has fallen and does not remain stubborn. Self-will, we know, invites the charge of foolishness. Concede the claim of the dead. Do not lash at the fallen. 1030 What prowess is it to kill the dead all over again? I have considered for your good, and what I advise is good. The sweetest thing is to learn from a good advisor when his advice is to your profit [kerdos].

Creon

Old man, you all shoot your arrows at me, like archers at their mark, and I am not safe 1035 even from the plottings of the seer’s divine art, but by their tribe I have long been bought and sold and made their merchandise. Turn your profits [kerdos], make your deals for the white gold of Sardis and the gold of India, if it pleases you, but you shall not cover that man with a grave, 1040 not even if the eagles of Zeus wish to snatch and carry him to be devoured at the god’s throne. No, not even then, for fear of that defilement [miasma], will I permit his burial, since I know with certainty that no mortal has the power to defile the gods. 1045 But the over-clever, old Teiresias, fall with a shameful fall, when they couch shameful thoughts in fine phrasing for the sake of gain [kerdos].

Teiresias

God! Does any man know, does any consider...

Creon

What’s this? What universal truth are you announcing?

Teiresias

1050 ...by how much the most precious of our possessions is the power to reason wisely?

Creon

By as much, I think, as senselessness is the greatest affliction.

Teiresias

Yet you came into being full of that disease.

Creon

I have no desire to trade insults with the seer.

Teiresias

Yet that is what you do in saying that I prophesy falsely.

Creon

1055 Yes, for the prophet-clan was ever fond of money.

Teiresias

And the family sprung from tyrants loves shameful desire for gain [kerdos].
Creon
Do you know that you speak so about your ruler?

Teiresias
I am aware, since through me you have saved [sőzein] this city.

Creon
You are a sophos seer, but fond of doing things without dikē.

Teiresias
1060 You will stir me to utter the dire secret in my phrenes.

Creon
Out with it! But only if it is not for gain that you speak it.

Teiresias
Indeed, I think I speak without mention of desire for gain [kerdos] - where you are concerned.

Creon
Be certain that you will not trade in my will [phrēn].

Teiresias
Then know, yes, know it well! You will not live through many more 1065 courses of the sun’s swift chariot, before you will give in return one sprung from your own loins, a corpse in requital for corpses. For you have thrust below one of those of the upper air, and without timē lodged a living psukhē in the grave, 1070 while you detain in this world that which belongs to the infernal gods, a corpse unburied, unmourned, unholy. In the dead you have no part, nor do the gods above, but in this you do them violence. For these crimes the avenging destroyers, 1075 the Furies [Erinyes] of Hades and of the gods, lie in ambush for you, waiting to seize you in these same sufferings. And look closely if I tell you this bribed by silver. A time not long to be delayed will reveal in your house wailing over men and over women. 1080 All the cities are stirred up in hostility, whose mangled corpses the dogs or the wild beasts or some winged bird buried, carrying an unholy stench to the polis that held each man’s hearth. There, now, are arrows for your heart - since you provoke me - 1085 launched at you, archer-like, in my anger. They fly true - you cannot run from their burning sting. Boy, lead me home, so that he may launch his thumos against younger men, and learn to keep a quieter tongue 1090 and a better noos within his phrenes than he now bears.

Teiresias exits.

Chorus
The man is gone, my lord, leaving dire prophecies behind. And for all the time that I have had this hair on my head, now white, once dark, I know that he has never been a false prophet to our polis.
I, too, know it well, and my phrenes are troubled. To yield is terrible, but, to resist, to strike my thumos with ruin [atê] - this, too, inspires terror.

Chorus
The moment, Creon, requires that you reason wisely.

Creon
What should I do, then? Speak, and I will obey.

Chorus
Go first and free the girl from her hollowed chamber. Then raise a tomb for the unburied dead.

Creon
And you recommend this? You think that I should yield?

Chorus
Yes, my lord, and with all possible speed. For harms sent from the gods swiftly cut short the follies of men.

Creon
Ah, it is a struggle, but I depart from my heart’s resolve and obey. We must not wage vain wars with necessity.

Chorus
Go, do these things and do not leave their performance to others.

Creon
Right away I'll go. Go, go, my servants, each and all of you! Take axes in your hands and hurry to that place there in view! But since my judgment has taken this turn, I will be there to set her free, as I myself confined her. I am held by the fear that it is best to keep the established laws [nomoi] to life’s very telos.

Chorus
strophe 1

God of many names, glory of the Kadmeian bride and offspring of loud-thundering Zeus, you who watch over far-famed Italy and reign in the valleys of Eleusinian Deo where all find welcome! O Bacchus, denizen of Thebes, the mother-city of your Bacchants, dweller by the wet stream of Ismenos on the soil of the sowing of the savage dragon’s teeth!

antistrophe 1

The smoky glare of torches sees you above the cliffs of the twin peaks, where the Korykian nymphs move inspired by your godhead, and Kastalia’s stream sees you, too. The ivy-mantled slopes of Nysa’s hills and the shore green with many-clustered vines send you, when, accompanied by the cries of your divine words, you visit the avenues of Thebes.

strophe 2
Thebes of all cities you hold foremost in τιμή, together with your lightning-struck mother. And now when all our people is held subject to a violent plague, come, we ask, with purifying feet over steep Parnassus, or over the groaning straits!

antistrophe 2

O khôrēgos [Leader of the khoros] of the stars whose breath is fire, Overseer of the voices in the night, son begotten of Zeus, appear, my lord, with your attendant Thyiads, who in night-long frenzy sing and dance you in the khoros as Iacchus the Giver!

A Messenger enters.

Messenger

1155 Neighbors of the house of Kadmos and of Amphion, there is no station of human life that I would ever praise or blame as being settled. Fortune sets upright and Fortune sinks the lucky and unlucky from day to day, and no one can prophesy to men concerning the order that has just been established. For Creon, as I saw it, was once blessed: he had saved this land of Kadmos from its enemies; and having won sole and total dominion in the land, he guided it on a straight course and flourished in his noble crop of children. And now all this has been lost. When a man has forfeited his pleasures, I do not reckon his existence as life, but consider him just a breathing corpse. Heap up riches in your house, if you wish! Live with a tyrant’s pomp! But if there is no joy along with all of that, I would not pay even the shadow of smoke for all the rest, compared with joy.

Chorus

What is this new grief for our princes that you have come to report?

Messenger

They are dead, and the living are guilty of the deaths.

Chorus

Who is the murderer? Who the murdered? Tell us.

Messenger

1175 Haimon is dead - his blood was shed by no strange hand.

Chorus

Was it his father’s, or his own?

Messenger

He did it by his own, in anger with his father for the murder.

Chorus

Ah, prophet, how true, then, you have proved your word!

Messenger

Knowing that these things are so, you must consider the rest.
Chorus

1180 Wait, I see the unhappy Eurydice, Creon's wife, nearby. She comes from the house either knowing of her son, or merely by chance.

Eurydice enters.

Eurydice

People of Thebes, I heard your words as I was on my way to the gates to address divine Athena with my prayers. 1185 Just as I was loosening the bolts of the gate to open it, the sound of a blow to our house struck my ear. In terror I sank back into the arms of my handmaids, and my senses fled. 1190 But repeat what your announcement [muthos] was, for I shall hear it with ears that are no strangers to sorrow.

Messenger

Philē mistress, I will tell what I witnessed and leave no word of the truth [alētheia] unspoken. For what good would it do that I should soothe you with words in which I must later be found false? 1195 The truth [alētheia] is always best. I attended your husband as his guide to the furthest part of the plain, where unpitied the body of Polyneikes, torn by dogs, still lay. After we had prayed to the goddess of the roads 1200 and to Pluto to restrain their anger in mercy, we washed him with pure washing, and with freshly-plucked boughs we burned what remains there were. Lastly we heaped a high-mounded tomb of his native earth. Afterwards we turned away to enter the maiden's stone-bedded 1205 bridal chamber, the caverned mansion of Hades' bride. From a distance, one of us servants heard a voice of loud wailing near that bride's unwept bed and came to signal [sēmainein] it to master Creon. And as he moved closer and closer, obscure signs [sēma] rising from a bitter cry surrounded him. 1210 He groaned and said in bitter lament, "Ah misery, am I now the prophet of evil? Am I going on the path most lined with grief of all that I have walked before? My son's voice greets me. Go, my servants, 1215 hurry closer, and when you have reached the tomb, enter the opening where the stones of the mound have been torn away, up to the cell's very mouth. See if it is Haimon's voice that I recognize, or if I am cheated by the gods." This search, at our desperate master's word, 1220 we went to make, and in the furthest part of the tomb we saw her hanging by the neck, fastened by a halter of fine linen threads, while he was embracing her with arms thrown around her waist, bewailing the loss of his bride to the spirits below, as well as his father's deeds, and his grief-filled marriage. 1225 But his father, when he saw him, cried aloud with a dreadful cry, and went in and called to him with a voice of wailing: "Ah, unhappy boy, what have you done! What kind of intent [noos] did you have? By what misfortune have you lost your reason? 1230 Come out, my son, I pray you, I beg you!" But the boy glared at him with savage eyes, spat in his face, and without a word in response drew his twin-edged sword. As his father rushed out in flight, he missed his aim. Then the ill-fated boy was enraged with himself 1235 and immediately stretched himself over his sword and drove it, half its length, into his side. Still conscious, he clapsed the maiden in his faint embrace, and, as he gasped, he shot onto her pale cheek a swift stream of oozing blood. 1240 Corpse enfolding corpse he lay, having won his wedding rites [telos pl.], poor boy, not here, but in Hades' palace, and having shown to mankind by how much the failure to reason wisely is the most severe of all afflictions assigned to humanity.

Eurydice rushes into the palace.

Chorus

What would you infer from this? The lady 1245 has turned back and gone without a word, either for good or for evil.
I, too, am startled. Still I am nourished by the hope that hearing the woes [akhos] of her son she thinks it unworthy to make her laments before the polis, but in the shelter of her home will set her handmaids to mourn the house’s sorrow [penthos]. 1250 For she is not inexperienced in judgment, that she should err.

I do not know. But to me a silence too strict seems to promise trouble just as much as a fruitless abundance of weeping.

I will find out whether she is not, in fact, hiding some repressed plan in the darkness of her passionate heart. 1255 I will go in, since you are right - in an excess of silence, too, there may be trouble.

The Messenger exits. Creon enters carrying the body of Haimon.

Look, here is our lord himself approaching, his hands grasping a visible reminder, a preeminent sēma indicating that his - if we may say it - and no one else’s, 1260 was the madness of this error.

Ah, the errors of unthinking phrenes, errors of rigidity, yielding death! Oh, you witnesses of the killers and the killed, both of one family-line! 1265 What deprivation of prosperity [olbos] comes from my reasonings! Haimon, you have died after a young life, youngest and last of my sons! Alas, alas! You have departed not by your foolishness, but by my own!

Ah, how late you seem to see the right [dikē]!

Ah, me! I have mastered the bitter lesson! But then, then, I think, some god struck me on my head with a crushing weight, and drove me into savage paths, 1275 - alas! - and overthrew my joy to be trampled on! Ah, the ordeals [ponoi] men must toil through!

My master, you have come, I think, like one whose hands are not empty, but who has a ready store: first, you carry that burden visible in your arms; 1280 second, you will soon look upon further sufferings inside your house.

What suffering is still to follow upon these sufferings?
Antigone

Messenger

Your wife is dead, true mother of that corpse, poor lady, by wounds newly cut.

Creon

antistrophe 1

O harbor of Hades, hard to purify! 1285 Why, why do you ruin me? Herald of evil, of grief [akhos], what word do you say? Ah, you have done in a dead man anew! What are you saying, boy? What is this you report to me 1290 Alas, alas! What new slaughter, my wife’s doom, is heaped upon this ruin?

Chorus

The sight is at hand. It is no longer hidden inside.

The doors of the palace are opened, disclosing the corpse of Eurydice.

Creon

antistrophe 2

Ah, misery! 1295 There I see a new, a second evil! What destiny, what, I ask, can still await me? I have just now taken my son in my arms, and now I see another corpse before me! 1300 Oh, tormented mother! Oh, my son!

Messenger

By the altar, with a sharp-whetted sword, she struck until her eyes went slack and dark. Before that she bewailed the noble fate of Megareus who died earlier, and then the fate of this boy, and also, with her last breath, 1305 she called down evil fortune upon you, the slayer of her sons.

Creon

strophe 3

Ah, no! I tremble with fear. Why does no one strike me full on my chest with a two-edged sword? 1310 I am miserable - alas! - and bathed in miserable anguish!

Messenger

Yes, because you are accused of responsibility [aitia] for both this son’s death, and the other’s, by her whose corpse you see.

Creon

What was the manner of the violent deed by which she departed?

Messenger

1315 Her own hand struck her to the heart upon learning her son’s sharply-lamented suffering [pathos].

Creon

strophe 4

Ah this guilt can never be fastened onto any other mortal so as to remove my own! It was I, yes, I, who killed you, I the wretch. 1320 I admit the truth. Lead me away, my servants, lead me from here with all haste, 1325 who am no more than a dead man!
Chorus

The course you recommend is to your gain [kerdos], if there can be gain [kerdos] amidst evil. What is briefest is best, when trouble lies at your feet.

Creon

antistrophe 3

Let it come, let it appear, that fairest of fates for me, 1330 that brings my final day, the fate supreme! Oh, let it come, so that I may never see tomorrow’s light!

Chorus

These things are in the future. We must see to present affairs. 1335 Fulfillment of these things rests in the hands where it should rest.

Creon

All that I crave, was summed in that prayer.

Chorus

Then pray no more; for mortals have no release from destined misfortune.

Creon

antistrophe 4

Lead me away, I beg you, a rash, useless man. 1340 I have murdered you, son, unwittingly, and you, too, my wife - the misery! I do not know which way I should look, or where I should seek support. All is 1345 amiss that is in my hands, and, again, a crushing fate has leapt upon my head.

Chorus

anapests

Sound thinking is provided as the chief part of happiness [eudaimonia], and our dealings with the gods 1350 must be in no way unholy. The great words of arrogant men have to make repayment with great blows, and in old age teach sound thinking.
GLOSSARY OF KEY GREEK WORDS

Depending on context, adjectives in -os (masc.), may be given with other endings:
-ē (fem.), -on (neut.), -oi (masc. pl.), -ai (fem. pl.), -a (neut. pl.).

agathos 'good, noble'
agōn, pl. agōnes 'coming together; contest; agony; ordeal; trial'
agora, pl. agorai 'public assembly, place of public assembly'
aidōs 'shame, sense of shame; sense of respect for others; honorableness'
aīnos 'authoritative utterance for and by a social group; praise; fable'; aīnigma 'riddle'
aītios 'responsible, guilty'; aītia 'responsibility, guilt; cause, case'
akhos 'grief, public expression of grief by way of lamentation or keening'
alēthēs (adjective) 'true, true things'; alētheia (noun) 'truth'
aphthito- unwilting, imperishable
aretē 'striving for a noble goal, for high ideals; noble goal, high ideals'
aristos 'best', superlative of agathos; aristēia: designates the hero's great epic moments that
demonstrate his being aristos
atē, pl. atai 'veering, aberration, derangement; disaster; punishment for disaster'
athlos (aethlos) 'contest, ordeal'; athlētēs 'athlete'
bia (biē in the language of Homeric poetry) 'force, violence'
daimōn, pl. daimones 'supernatural force (= unspecified god or hero) intervening in human life';
eudaimonia 'state of being blessed with a good daimōn'
dēmos, pl. dēmoi 'district, population of a district; community'
dikē, pl. dikai 'judgment (short-range); justicē (long-range)'; dikaios 'just'
epos, pl. epea 'utterance, poetic utterance'
eris 'strife, conflict'
esthios 'genuine, good, noble'; synonym of agathos
genos 'stock (“breeding”); generating [of something or someone]; generation'
hērōs, pl. hērōes 'hero'
hēsukhos 'serene'; hēsukhia 'state of being hēsukhos'
hieros 'sacred, holy'
hōra, pl. hōrai 'season, seasonality; time; timeliness'
hubris 'outrage' (etc.)
kakos 'bad, evil, base, worthless, ignoble'; kakotēs 'state of being kakos; debasement'
kerdos, pl. kerdea 'gain, profit; desire for gain; craft employed for gain; craftiness'
kharis, pl. kharites 'reciprocity, give-and-take, reciprocal relationship; initiation of reciprocal
relationship; the pleasure or beauty derived from reciprocity, from a reciprocal relationship;
gratification; grace, gracefulness; favor, favorableness'
khoros 'chorus' = 'group of singers/dancers'
kleos, pl. klea 'glory, fame (especially as conferred by poetry); that which is heard'
koroš 'being satiated; being insatiable'
kosmos 'arrangement, order, law and order, the social order, the universal order'
krinein 'sort out, separate, decide, judge'
lyssa 'rage, fury, frenzy'. This word is related to Lykos 'wolf', so the image is one of wolf-like rage.
Glossary of Greek Words

mantis (noun) ‘seer, prophet’; manteion (noun) ‘oracular response’; mantikos (adj.) ‘oracular, of a prophet’; manteuesthai (verb) ‘make a divination, prophesy, consult an oracle’
mēnis ‘supernatural anger’
menos ‘power, life-force, activation’ (divinely infused into cosmic forces, like fire and wind, or into heroes); a partial synonym of thumos; a partial synonym of mēnis
mētis ‘artifice, stratagem, cunning intelligence’
moira, pl. moirai ‘plot of land; portion; lot in life, fate, destiny’
muthos ‘special speech; special utterance; myth’
nemesis ‘the process whereby everyone gets what he or she deserves’
nomos, pl. nomoi ‘local custom; customary law; law’
noos: designates realm of consciousness, of rational functions; ‘intuition, perception’; principle that reintegrates thumos (or menos) and psukhē after death
nostos ‘return, homecoming; song about homecoming; return to light and life’
oikos ‘house, abode; resting place of cult hero; family line’; verb oikeîn ‘have an abode’
olbios ‘blessed, blissful; fortunate’; olbos ‘bliss’ (pictured as material security)
paskhein ‘suffer, experience, be treated [badly or well]’; pathos ‘suffering, experience’
penthos ‘grief, public expression of grief by way of lamentation or keening’
philos ‘friend’ (noun); ‘dear, near-and-dear, belonging to self’ (adjective); philotēs or philia ‘the state of being philos’
phrēn, pl. phrenes: physical localization of the thumos
polis ‘city, city-state’
ponos ‘ordeal, labor, pain’
pontos ‘sea’ (‘crossing’)
psukhē, pl. psukhai: synonym of thumos (or menos) at the moment of death; essence of life while one is alive; conveyor of identity while one is dead
sēma, pl. sēmata, also sēmeion ‘sign, signal, symbol; tomb’; sēmainein (verb) ‘indicate, use a sēma’
sophos ‘skilled, skilled in understanding special language’; sophia ‘being sophos’
sōphrōn ‘balanced, with equilibrium, moderate’; sōphrosunē ‘being sōphrōn’
sōtēr ‘savior’ (either ‘bringing to safety’ or, mystically, ‘bringing back to life’); sōteria ‘safety, salvation’; sōzein (verb) ‘save; be a sōtēr (for someone)’
stasis ‘division in a group; strife; division [= part of an organization, like a chorus]’
telos ‘coming full circle, rounding out, fulfillment, completion, ending, end; successfully passing through an ordeal; ritual, rite’
terma ‘end, boundary, limit’
themis, pl. themistes ‘something divinely ordained’
therapōn, pl. therapontes ‘attendant, minister; ritual substitute’
thurmos: designates realm of consciousness, of rational and emotional functions
timē, pl. timai ‘honor; honor paid to a supernatural force by way of cult’
turannos, pl. turannoi (Lydian word for ‘king’): ‘king’ (from the viewpoint of most Greek dynasties); ‘unconstitutional ruler’ (from the viewpoint of Greek democracy)
xenos, pl. xenoi ‘stranger who should be treated like a guest by a host, or like a host by a guest; xenia ‘reciprocal relationship between xenoi’; when the rules of xenia do not work, a xenos risks defaulting to the status of simply a ‘stranger’