ASPECTS OF ANCIENT GREEK COSMOLOGY

4.1. Building materials of ancient Greek cosmology

In ancient Greece, the interconnected nature of boundaries could be seen everywhere. For example, the physical boundaries of a holy place, a *temenos*, separated the sacred from the profane (Burkert GR 86), and the separation extended to people who were or were not allowed to enter: only the pure were allowed to cross such boundaries.[1] By transformation, the boundary between life and death was involved as well: those who had come into contact with childbirth or with a death bed were barred from these holy places (Parker M 66). Those boundaries also served to distinguish man from animals; only the latter give birth, mate and die in sacred precincts. The separation between holy spaces and profane ones was also a separation between gods and man, but for the Greeks this separation was not absolute. Holy places did not only serve to emphasize the differences between mortals and immortals, but also allowed man to approach his gods. The human sphere and the divine one remained connected in various ways.

The rigidity of the demarcations in Greek cosmology resulted in its being haunted by marginals who could not be accommodated in the strict system of categories. One example may suffice. Hesiod was baffled by feminine nature. In his eyes, women were not ordinary human beings (i.e. men). They were able to speak like men (Op 61), but their faces were like those of goddesses (Op 62-63), whereas their way of thinking was like that of dogs (Op 67). Their use of language was feared by Hesiod: he was convinced that they lied and cajoled (Op 78). Though generally the Greeks accepted feminine marginality, some states felt obliged to check the power of women by a special magistracy, the 'women-controllers' (Parker M 101); in a similar vein the metics, Greece's migrant workers, were feared when they wormed themselves into the city (Parker M 262-63).

Being interconnected, Greek cosmology was often unable to accept marginality. It was readily condemned as a transgression. The fear of

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[1] "We ourselves fix boundaries (ὅρους) to the sanctuaries and precincts of the gods, so that nobody may cross them (ὑπερβαίνῃ) unless he be pure; and when we enter we sprinkle ourselves not as defiling ourselves thereby, but to wash away any pollution we may have already contracted" (Hippocr Morb Sacr 1, Littré 6.364).

overstepping existing cosmological boundaries is clear from the frequent use of images like 'stepping over a line' and 'trampling underfoot' in all major cosmological categories.[2] Like other people with interconnected cosmologies, the Greeks feared fundamental transgressions as *pollutions*, i.e. as the mixing of what should remain separate: the verb φύρω means both 'to mix' and 'to pollute' (Il 24.162, Pind N 1.68, Aes Ag 731, Eur El 1173). In the same vein Herodotus calls the temple burner Xerxes one "who made the sacred (ἱρὰ) and the profane (ἴδια) alike (ἐν ὁμοίῳ)" (8.109). That pollution was a cosmological and not primarily a physiological phenomenon is confirmed by the fact that it concerned transgressions in all six cosmological categories.[3]

We encounter all three major interconnected characteristics of pollution in Greek cosmology. To begin with, pollution was not just dirt, but exposure to dangerous power as a result of overstepping a cosmological boundary. For example, in Greek cosmology killing on the battlefield did not involve serious danger of pollution, but kinslaying did (Parker M 113, 123). The social distinction between friend and enemy determined the degree of contamination, according to the famous maxim: "Help your friends and hate your enemies" (e.g. Thgn 869-72). Next, pollution was contagious. What was polluted was polluting as well, spreading as it did across various categories. As Antiphon said of a murderer:

> It is against your interests to allow this polluted man to enter divine precincts and pollute their sanctity, or pass on his contamination to the in-

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[2] Homer calls the breaking of a solemn oath a transgression (ὑπερβασίη - Il 3.107). The same is said of social offences (Il 16.17-18, Od 3.206, 22.168) and of lack of insight (ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβήῃ καὶ ἁμάρτῃ - Il 9.501). Hesiod connects transgressions (παραιβασίας) with the distinction between good and bad (Th 220). The verb 'to transgress' (παραβαίνω) was commonly used for the breaking of laws (e.g. Meiggs/Lewis SGI 13.15).
In the ubiquitous fear of hubris, the abhorrence of disturbances of the order is condensed, again in all major categories. It should be emphasized that, as an interconnected phenomenon, hubris is not confined to human beings. It concerns everything that transgresses its boundaries: it may be applied to an overflowing river (ὑπερβάλλουσαν - Aes Pr 717-22), to plants (Michelini HP *passim*), animals (e.g. Hdt 1.189) and cities (Gernet RPG 401). Hubris may denote an intrusion into the domain of the gods (Aes Sept 502, Soph OC 120, Eur Suppl 630), violation of the honour of a friend (Il 1.203, 214), incest (Eur Hipp 1072) or an infringement of the boundary between life and death in the refusal to bury a corpse (Soph Aj 1092).
[3] Nature/culture: diseases as intrusions of nature into culture soil the body (Soph Ph 758-60, cf. Parker M 217, 248). Man/gods: cf. Parker M 257. Social relations: traitors and law-breakers are contaminated (Ar Ach 182, Eq 239, Dem 25.28, 35.26), and Hesiod fears the contamination of the domestic hearth by sexuality—it should not be approached with pubes bespattered with seed (Op 733-34, cf. Hipponax Fr 104.20W). Life/death: Hesiod warns against the polluting confusion of death and procreation (Op 735-36). Justice: in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, Athena warns the citizens that the mingling of evil with the law may cause a pollution (Eum 693-95). Insight: evil words spoken on a joyous occasion involve a contamination (Aes Ag 636-37), just like evil thoughts do (Parker M 146).

nocent by eating at the same table with them. This is the kind of thing that causes crops to fail. (Tetr 1.α.10)

The effect of pollution is that the whole cosmos totters. Criminal pollutions were believed to cause plague, famine, and subsequently death and barrenness of women (Hes Op 240-45). Pollutions involved the divine sphere as well, and were therefore considered divine punishments, afflicting both perpetrator and victim (e.g. in cases of murder).[4] In so far as hubris was considered a pollution (Parker M 5N), it shared its contagiousness: "Old hubris loves to bring forth a young hubris in the evils of men" (Aes Ag 765-67). Thirdly, though the Greeks meticulously distinguished intentional acts from unintentional ones (cf. Gernet RPG 349ff.), in the case of pollution this distinction was not decisive, as was explicitly stated by the prosecutor in Antiphon's *Tetralogies*: "I do not accuse the man of having killed voluntarily (ἑκόντα), but involuntarily (ἄκοντα). Yet in my opinion the involuntary killer causes no less harm than the voluntary one" (Tetr 2.α.1-2). This explains why animals and inanimate objects which had caused a lethal casualty were brought to trial and expelled if found guilty (Parker M 117). The most famous literary example of an involuntary pollution is that of Oedipus. But there are more instances: Theseus killed his cousins in self-defence, for example, but despite this disculpation he had to go into exile, "fleeing the contamination of the blood of Pallas' sons" (Eur Hipp 35; cf. Barret EH 162-63).

Purification being the counterpart of pollution, in ancient Greece it was not primarily a matter of hygiene, but of separation where cosmological categories had become confused. Small wonder, then, that Plato described purification as "a science of division (διάκρισις)" (Sph 226d). The five forms of separation in interconnected cosmology that we distinguished in the preceding chapter are encountered again:

To begin with, separative purifications were ubiquitous in ancient Greece. We will confine ourselves to two examples. One mode of non-ritual separation was the spitting out of a pollution, for example after the polluting encounter with a madman or an epileptic (Parker M 219). A good cultic example of purification occurred after the sacrifice of a calf

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[4] "The same word (prostropaios) can be used of the polluted killer himself, of the victim's polluting blood, and of the victim himself in his anger, or his avenging spirits; palamnaios is applied to the killer, the demons that attack him, and the (demonic) pollution that radiates from him; words like miastoor, alastoor, and aliterios work in very similar ways. The killer is prostropaios, but so is the victim; the killer, a palamnaios himself, is also attacked by, and emanates, supernatural palamnaioi. The unifying factor is the polluting act, which sets up a chain of abnormal relations[...]" (Parker M 108-09).

to Dionysus on Tenedos: the participants showered the sacrificer with stones "in order to remove the stain from themselves" (Ael Nat an 12.34, cf. Burkert HN 165).

A second mode of separation was the expulsion of the polluter, an attempt to reverse the contamination. In this context the banishment of murderers and temple desecrators was described as "driving out the pollution (ἀγηλατεῖν)" (Hdt 5.72, Soph OT 402, Arist Ath 20.3). Expulsion was not confined to human beings: diseases could be transferred to *pharmaka* which were sent to nature (the earth, the sea, or the mountains) (Hippocr Morb Sacr 1, Littré 6.362). Again it is clear that purification is a procedure of separation.

Like all interconnected cosmologies the Greeks had to employ substitution in order to avert the never-ending destructive effects of pollution and counterpollution. In a case of homicide, for example, a pig or a lamb was slaughtered in order to free the murderer from the talion of vengeance (Guépin TP 160-62). Parker has raised two objections to the idea that substitution played a role in this Greek sacrifice. First, he maintains that the meaning of the sacrifice does not consist of substitution but of the production of blood for the purpose of purification. Secondly, he considers a cheap animal a poor replacement for a human life (Parker M 372). These objections are not valid, however. First of all, if a pig's blood is to purify human hands it must be presupposed that the pig can somehow stand for the man - otherwise there would be no question of purification at all. Secondly, the fact that substitutes are less important than what they stand for is the very basis of substitution, as we argued in the preceding chapter. Our thesis is confirmed by a double substitution in one of Plato's laws. Plato decries that the state's magistrates must accompany the corpse of an executed kinslayer to the boundaries of the state, whereupon each magistrate has to throw a stone at the head of the killer "in order to purify the city" (Leg 9.873b). Evidently, kinslaying contaminates the whole city, and in order to purify it, both the corpse of the killer and the magistrates serve as its substitutes. The magistrates bear the city's pollutions and by means of the stoning transfer them to the body, the second substitute, which is thrown over the border without funerary rites. Only substitution makes sense of the notion that this separation should serve to purify the whole city.

The procedures of expulsion and substitution were combined into a fourth form of separation: the banishment of royal scapegoats. Greek mythology is crowded with them, especially when it is noted that there is a strong resemblance between the expulsion of a king, his self-oblation, and the sacrificing of his son or daughter (Versnel SCG 139f., Parker M 259). In ordinary Greek life, kings themselves were not selected as

scapegoats, but another substitute was executed or expelled, from the lower strata of society (Bremmer SRG 304-05; Parker M 258) or from the animal kingdom (Plut Quaest Gr 297b/c, 294a; cf. Burkert SHM 65-66).

It remains a matter of debate to what extent substitution played a role in the fifth type of separation, Greek practice as regards sacrifice (Vernant TSM 6ff. contra Burkert GR 65). A famous example is the story of Iphigeneia who was about to be sacrificed to Artemis but who, according to the *Cypria*, was at the last moment saved by the goddess, who presented the sacrificers with a substitute, a hind (Henrichs HSR 198ff.). In myth and tragedy we are also confronted with the perverted ritual of sacrifices in which human beings are killed instead of their animal substitutes (Burkert HN 21, Henrichs HSR 214). Aeschylus' Iphigeneia, for example, dies "like a goat above the altar" (Ag 232; note the previous identification of Agamemnon and Menelaus with two murderous eagles – Ag 114ff.).

Despite all efforts at separation and purification, ambiguity plays a predominant role in Greek cosmology. This should be understood in the context of the relationship between order and power. In Greek eyes the cosmos is not only the order of sharply distinguished entities, it is a battlefield of conflicting forces. Each entity has its limits, but also possesses the power to transcend them, thereby coming into conflict both with other entities and with its own boundaries. Not only man, but also the sun is prone to overstep the mark (Heraclitus DK B 49). The same is true of meteorological phenomena like heat (Aes Eum 941), and the divine world reflects sublunary agitation and conflict (Lloyd-Jones JZ 160). In this torn and agitated cosmos, entities can solely maintain themselves if they do not only keep within their limits, but also exert power. Over a shifting reality, elusive because of its continuing metamorphoses, victory can only be gained through an excess of mobility, an even greater power of agitation (Detienne/Vernant RI 28). The fundamental problem is that, though indispensable, this excess of power at the same time threatens the existence of entities in so far as it breaks through their boundaries, and that the conflict between limitation and power which both underlies and destroys entities is insoluble. This conflict is exemplified in the concept of hubris, applicable to both nature and man. The excesses of hubris jeopardize life, because they overstep the set boundaries, but at the same time they are indispensable to life.

The positive aspect of hubris cannot be separated from the negative one. As Solon states, every human undertaking is a venture, a risky enterprise (κίνδυνος), meaning that nobody knows its boundaries; once started, nobody knows where the venture will end (Solon Fr 13.65-66W).

For example, in earning money no limit (τέρμα) of riches is set (13.71W), human beings being intrinsically insatiable. In order to make money, the power of greed is indispensable, but because it exceeds all boundaries, ruin is inevitable.

Like all entities, man has to be extremely versatile in order to sustain his existence; he always has to be on the look-out for ways (πόροι) to overcome obstacles (ἀπορίαι). Models of man are Odysseus, who never lacked expedients (Detienne/Vernant RI 25) and Prometheus, characterized by his quick intelligence (Hes Th 511, 521, 616). Man's problem is to overcome his inability to separate indispensable daring and passion from excess and transgression.

This conflict between indispensable and destructive power is seen in a number of ambiguous Greek words.[5] A good example is the word δεινός. This word points to overwhelming power as well as dreadful transgression in an inextricable confusion.[6] For example, in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* the Erinyes are horrible transgressing monsters, yet indispensable to the welfare of the city. Athena counsels the citizens to expel such awesomeness (τὸ δεινὸν) from the city, but not altogether (Aes Eum 698).

Because of their interconnected cosmology, the Greeks were thoroughly familiar with controlled ambiguity, i.e. procedures in which transgressions are condoned and encouraged under specifically delimited ritual circumstances, in order to come into contact with power and separate its beneficial aspects from the destructive ones. Again we have to take issue with Parker, who maintains: ''A Greek would be puzzled by the suggestion that there is anything impure about the sacred, or vice versa'' (M 11). Parker himself adduces examples which prove the opposite. A good one may be found in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (448-50, cf. Eur IT 1223ff.): ''It is the law that he who is defiled by shedding blood shall be debarred from all speech until the blood of a suckling victim shall have contaminated (καθαιμάξωσι) him by the ministrations of one empowered to purify from murder'', confronting us with a clear-cut purificatory use of pollution. Parker himself shows that no Greek would be puzzled by this ambiguity when he describes this episode as a ''sanctification of pollution,'' adding that here the ''source of power'' is the

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[5] θράσος (courage *and* overboldness), θυμός (passionate spirit *and* evil temper), μένος (strength *and* fierceness), ὀργή (temperament *and* wrath), τόλμα (courage *and* recklessness).

[6] In Hdt 9.3 Mardonius' awesome (δεινὸς) wish to capture Athens is believed to derive from his inborn arrogance. In Homer the war cry of the goddess Eris is both a great power and terrible (Il 11.10-11, cf. Aes Ch 634, Thuc 1.122). What is dreadful to one person (Hdt 7.157) is awesome power to someone else (Hdt 1.155; cf. Od 8.22, Il 7.245). In δεινός the positive meaning of ''marvelous'' and ''clever'' may be foremost as well (Hdt 3.152, 5.23).

contact with polluted blood "in a controlled ritual" (M 373). The same
is true of the ambiguous powers of bodily wastes, marginal plants (M
231-33) and *pharmaka*, substances which are both poisons and healing
drugs, described by Parker as deriving from "an original undifferen-
tiated concept of *pharmaka* as forces operating invisibly for good or evil"
(M 222N). That this ambiguity was not lost to classical Greece is proved
in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, where the centaur Nessus calls his blood a φάρ-
μακον (Tr 685). Deianeira believed that the *pharmakon* was a love-potion,
but it turned out to be a deadly poison.

What is true of *pharmaka* also applies to *pharmakoi*, the Greek
scapegoats. It was due to their extreme power that they were able to bear
the pollutions of the whole community and cosmos and take them away
on their defiled backs (Gernet RPG 255). But the power transforming
them into absolute pollutions is the same power which made them the
saviours of the city and the cosmos (Burkert GR 84). In this context it
is understandable that Euripides should call Creon's son Menoeceus,
who died on behalf of Thebes, a *pharmakon* of salvation (φάρμακον
σωτηρίας) (Phoen 893). The gap which separated the tragedians from
philosophers like Heraclitus is seen in the phenomenon of controlled am-
biguity. This is vehemently rejected by Heraclitus: "Vainly they purify
(καθαίρονται) themselves with blood when they are polluted by blood
(αἵματι μιαινόμενοι), as if a man who had stepped into mud were to wash
himself with mud" (DK B 5). Here Heraclitus has made a decisive step
towards separativeness— a step which undermines the core of tragedy.

The impossibility of controlling ambiguous power in Greek
cosmology, resulting in tragic ambiguity, may be illustrated by the
tragically ambiguous position of Achilles in the *Iliad*. He has to employ
his excessive power to defend his honour against Agamemnon, but by his
awesome defence of the warrior code he inevitably undermines that same
code (Vernant MC 46), without any boundary between upholding the
ethics of heroism and undermining them. Patroclus sums up Achilles'
tragically ambiguous position in the word αἰναρέτη (Il 16.31), which
Aristarchus of Samothrace explained as "possessing excellence in evil,"
and in tragedy such paradoxes are common when tragic ambiguity is
rendered.[7] Small wonder that the *Iliad* should emphasize Achilles' *deinotes*
(Il 11.654), and that δεινός is one of Sophocles' favourite words to des-
cribe his heroes (Knox HT 23-24).

It is true that tragedy often presents us with examples of transgressions
which are extremely rare in everyday life, e.g. a patricidal and incestuous

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[7] Aeschylus for example, speaks of an action being "greater than rightful" (μεῖζον ἢ
δικαίως - Ag 376), and "above the best" (ὑπὲρ τὸ βέλτιστον - Ag 378). He maintains that
"too strikingly doing well is heavy" (τὸ δ' ὑπερκόπως κλύειν εὖ βαρύ - Ag 468-69).

king (Parker M 308), but it is in such extremes that the foundations of a cosmology are seen. What tragedy shows in its exceptional episodes is that it may be impossible to do what all Greeks wanted to do: to separate the sacred from the impure and the profane (Cyrene Cathartic Law A 10; cf. Parker M 335). One example may suffice. Orestes' matricide was an inevitable and just act, prompted by a god (Aes Ch 268ff.) and by the avenging spirits of his father Agamemnon. Nevertheless, this purificatory act (Ch 283-84) is at the same time a new pollution, which in its turn demands purificatory revenge. Orestes' position is tragically ambiguous: it is impossible to distinguish between his purificatory power and his defiling power.

The tragic juxtaposition of the sacred and the impure is also seen in the Greek language, for example in the famous doublet ἄγος/ἁγνός (pollution/pure, sacred) (Gernet RPG 37-38, Vernant MSG 136). Even without etymological kinship the words were felt to belong together (Burkert GR 270-71), so that ἄγος is also used for expiatory offerings (Soph Fr 689R), and ἁγνός also refers to the 'untouchable' (Parker M 148, Burkert GR 271).[8]

4.2. Man and nature

Being interconnected, for Greek cosmology it was difficult to reconcile opposite demands where relations between man and nature were at stake. On the one hand man's civilization had to be kept free of all intrusions of wild and polluting nature, on the other hand nature was conceived of as part of an interconnected cosmos, implying that nature can neither be separated from the divine sphere nor from the human one. Men and gods can only maintain themselves thanks to their continuous possession by natural powers. The power of erotic attraction, for example, unites plants, animals, men and gods (Hom Hym Aphr 5.2-5, Eur Hipp 1-8, Aes Fr 44R). Conversely, nature cannot be reduced to pollution; at the same time it is a divine power which should be worshipped - for example, the earth as the goddess Ge or Gaia. Nature's divineness and interconnectedness with human behaviour explains the conviction that the impiety of high-placed persons could cause bad weather (Parker M 265) and the abundance of literary examples of storms sent by the gods in response to human arrogance (e.g. Il 16.384ff., Od 12.400ff.,

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[8] The same ambiguity characterizes ἐξάγιστος (Soph OC 1526, Dem 25.93, Aeschin 3.113), ἐναγής and ἐναγίζω, which Burkert translates: "to make taboo" (HN 9N, GR 271). Cratinus employed ἅγιος (holy) in the sense of "defiled" (Fr 402 K.-A; Parker M 328).

Aes Ag 649ff.). Nature has to be expelled from human civilization, but such is impossible at the same time.

The interconnectedness between the natural and the divine distinguished ordinary Greek cosmology from the separatism of certain philosophers. Philosophers tended to strip nature of its divine character, as may be seen in Aristophanes' sarcasm in *The Clouds*. The pious Strepsiades asks Socrates, the foremost of the Sophists, "whether it is not Zeus who makes the clouds move?" "Not at all," answers Socrates, "it is the celestial vortex." Strepsiades then retorts in interconnected vein: "Vortex? I had missed this altogether - that Zeus no longer exists but in his place Vortex is king" (Nu 379-81). The tragedians have a similar attitude. To them, as to ordinary Greeks, Zeus was present in thunderstorms and rain (Burkert GR 126).

Like other interconnected cosmologies, the Greeks clearly separated civilized, inhabited space from the wilderness and the mountains which form the foreign and hostile space of the ἀγρός (Vernant MPG I.162, cf. Soph OT 112). The Greeks also meticulously separated themselves from the abhorred animal world. Man should not be like animals, whose essential characteristic is that they do not recognize boundaries: animals give birth, mate and die in sacred precincts (Parker M 326), they commit cannibalism and have no justice (Hes Op 276-79), they do not sacrifice and have no restrictions on violence (Epicurus Sent 32) (cf. Vernant MSG 192). Abhorrence of this animal lack of boundaries did not prevent the Greeks from making distinctions between animals. In accordance with the cosmic distinction between earth, sky and water, the animals were divided into land animals, birds and fish (e.g. Hom Hymn Aphr 5.4-5, cf. Hes Op 277); land animals were further divided according to their degree of acculturation. Only domestic animals were sacrificed in order to be consumed; wild animals were only sacrificed to wild gods (Guépin TP 161).

With domestic animals we return to interconnectedness: though these animals belong to civilized space, some of them remain wild. Horses, for example, are civilized by the bit and the rein, but they remain dangerously prone to transgressions as in the case of Diomedes who was devoured by his horses (cf. Detienne/Vernant RI 181, 185). Another inevitable intrusion of the animal world into the human one is the consumption of meat. Even if an animal had been sacrificed according to the established rites, its flesh remained an intrusion of untamedness into culture. Raw meat was considered a pollution which could only be removed by the civilizing procedure of roasting or cooking. As Plutarch says of raw meat:

> For neither is it a living creature nor has it yet become cooked food. Now boiling and roasting, being a sort of alteration and mutation, eliminates the previous form; but fresh raw meat does not have a clean and unsullied appearance, but one that is repulsive like a fresh wound. (Quaest Rom 109.289e/f)

No wonder that omophagy was considered an inhuman, polluted deed (Porphyr De Abst. 1.13).

Interconnectedness between man and nature is complete when we realize that both human transgressions and human power are natural phenomena. Here we moderns have to be extremely cautious not to ascribe our separative thinking to the Greeks. The Greeks often linked human transgressions with natural phenomena, for example in associating domestic treachery, i.e. the treachery of women, with the behaviour of a viper (Aes Ch 249, Eur Andr 271, Ion 1262, cf. Arist Mirab 165), or the madness of man with horses which, no longer controlled by rein or bit, throw their masters out of the race track (e.g. Aes Pr 883, Ch 1022-24, Eur Ba 853), but these associations differ radically from modern separative poetic comparisons and images. Modern nature has been *entzaubert* by rational separation. Poets try to revive the cosmos by means of anthropomorphic metaphors and comparisons: to them, a viper or a wild horse are man-like phenomena. In Greek interconnected cosmology it was the other way round: nature was primary and man was connected with it in a physiomorphic way (cf. Austin ADM 116). Greek connections between nature and man were not comparisons, symbols or metaphors: to the Greeks, there was no 'literal' reality which could subsequently be enriched by symbols. Interconnectedness implies that the human sphere and the natural one are really connected in ever expanding transformations (cf. ADM 117-18). A treacherous woman is not compared to a viper, she is possessed by the natural power of a viper. The blood on Oedipus' hands is not like a winter storm—it unchains the real power of a storm within the city (Soph OT 101).

This interconnectedness is not confined to the sphere of transgressions. In some human actions the natural and the civilized are really fused, and not only by comparison. This is evident in marriage, a civilized institution which nevertheless sorely needs the elemental power of lust (Detienne JA 120, Friedrich MA 84-85). To the Greeks it was not a comparison but real interconnectedness if they called a fertile woman an arable field and her husband a ploughman (Gould LCM 53, Soph Tr 32-33). The genuine interconnectedness between man and nature makes their relationship ambiguous. Man has to expel natural power from civilization, but also needs this power to uphold it. If civilized life succeeds in expelling power it is threatened by weakness (aridity). This may

be illustrated by the function of the goddess Athena as the virginal representative of civilization. Without outside support she would become powerless (cf. Burkert GR 141, 143); therefore every year two maidens—the Arrephoroi who were consecrated to her cult—were sent down to the temple of the wild gods Aphrodite and Eros at the foot of the Acropolis in order to acquire ''something'' (Paus 1.27.3). According to one interpretation (which has not found universal acclaim) this rite gave power to the Athenian olive crop, to human seed and to the whole polis, as represented by the sacred olive tree (Simon FA 46).

In this context it is understandable that, under strict ritual control, polluted contacts with nature were allowed which would normally inspire horror. For example, in the cult of Dionysus women left the domestic hearth to dance in the wild mountains. During this ambiguous rite—both a transgression and a holy purification (ὁσίοις καθαρμοῖσιν - Eur Ba 77)—omophagy was allowed, though not in the mythological, exaggerated form of tearing apart wild animals (Versnel PD 25, Bremmer GMR 275). When Euripides maintains that this ambiguity leads to holiness (Fr 472N2), we may presume that he is referring to the reintroduction of un-tamed power into civilization along ritual channels.

The interconnectedness of nature and civilization becomes tragically ambiguous when we are confronted with the power of tragic heroes. In the *Iliad*, when Achilles defended his honour he had to employ his ''proud spirit,'' but this implied that at the same time he was ''savage'' (ἄγριον) (Il 9.629). To indicate this ambiguous power of tragic heroes the adjective 'raw' (ὠμός) is employed, both in the sense of 'transgressing' (Aes Ag 1045) and of 'extremely powerful' (Soph Aj 548, cf. 205). A hero like Heracles is a typical culture founder. He killed monsters and intro-duced the Olympic Games. But at the same time he was bestial as well: he was covered with a lion's hide, bore a bludgeon, killed his kinsmen, and was unbridled in his sexual lust. This passionate, animal lust even-tually caused his death. No wonder that Kirk compares him to the Mesopotamian friends Gilgamesh and Enkidu (NM 206).

4.3 The Greeks and their gods

The Greek religion of the archaic and classical period shares the fun-damental characteristics of interconnected religions: it is not personal but ritual (Burkert GR 275), while the gods are not transcendent but directly involved in natural and social processes (Lloyd-Jones JZ 160). Every home had its *sanctum*, every city its divine protector. Burial rites were as sacred as the laws of the city. Even poetic inspiration was of a divine nature (cf. Muir RE 194-95).

Greek gods were at an immense distance from mortals and at the same time dangerously close (Vernant MSG 118). Primarily, man had to draw firm boundaries between himself and the divine sphere, otherwise self-deification and ruin were the upshot. The separation between gods and men comprised the most important categories, like knowledge/opinions, immortality/mortality, permissiveness/regulated sex, etc.(Burkert GR 183, Vernant MSG 191). In the rituals through which the Greeks sought contact with their gods their separation was particularly emphasized. Men ate the flesh which is perishable like their nature, whereas the gods received the incorruptible substances (bones) which reflected their eternal existence (Detienne in Gordon MRS 217-18). The smoke of sacrifice rose to heaven, whereas the human part remained on earth.

Once more, the problem is man's inability to separate himself completely from the divine realm. He is not only connected with nature, but with the gods as well. This is emphasized by Pindar:

> One is the race of men, one is the race of the gods, but from one mother (Earth) do we both draw our breath. Yet a power wholly sundered holds us aloof, in that the one is a thing of naught, while for the other the brazen heaven abides as a sure abode forever. Nevertheless we have some likeness, either in power of mind (μέγαν νόον) or in nature (φύσιν) to the immortals. (N 6.1-5)

Man's proximity to the gods endowed him with his expansive power, but this power inevitably turns into hubris, because man's finite nature is unable to bear such an excess of force. Therefore Apollo's warning to Diomedes in the *Iliad* was both necessary and without avail: ''Bethink thee, son of Tydeus, and yield, and do not think to be the equal of the gods, for never shall the race of immortal gods be the same as that of men who walk the earth'' (Il 5.440-43). Sophoclean heroes are characterized by the same unbearable divine power which makes them both god-like and untamed animals (cf. Knox HT 42-44).

Tragic heroes are like gods (ἰσόθεος - e.g. Il 2.565, Od 1.324, Eur IA 626), in that they represent the community in prosperity and adversity. But their power is dreadful as well if it leads to transgressions threatening the state, as happened with Oedipus. In that particular case the city could only maintain its order by exorcizing the source of danger, which was also its very foundation. Because this expulsion was at the same time a self-expulsion and a self-sacrifice, after his death the state tried to reintroduce the heroic outcast to serve as a source of beneficial power. This happened more than once, both in reality and in tragedy: for example, Cimon was praised for bringing Theseus' bones to Athens in 475 (Richardson VLD 56), while the Spartans were convinced that Orestes' bones gave them success in battle (Hdt 1.67-68). Similarly, in Sophocles'

Oedipus Coloneus Oedipus claims that his secret grave in Colonus will be of more avail to Athens than many shields and mercenaries (OC 1518-25). It should be emphasized that the creation of heroes is dependent upon power, not upon moral qualities. Kleomedes, for example, who had killed a whole school of children, was made a hero (Bremmer CS 107). A powerful enemy of the state could become its protector after death, e.g. Cimon in Cition (Plut Cim 19.5), Eurystheus in Athens (Eur Heraclid 1024-43). Even a corpse could become the focus of a heroic cult: sometimes plagues and other disasters were ascribed to the wrath of a dead man; once a seer had spotted the source of contamination and the corpse's anger had been ritually appeased, the corpse was believed to have a beneficial influence, in making the fields fertile, the sick healthy, etc. (Burkert GR 206-07).

But the cults of the heroes were a poor protection against the dangers of the tragically ambiguous relationship between man and the gods. The fundamental problem is that in a sense all human beings are like tragic heroes: all had to employ divine power in order to sustain themselves— meaning that they all intruded upon the domain of the gods. This inevitably incited divine jealousy. The gods did not only punish excessive evil, but excessive goodness as well: they punished all that was god-like. As Theognis expresses it:

> Often a man is eager of virtue (ἀρετὴν), pursuing gain, only to be misled into great error by a kindly disposed daemon, who has the custom to make what is evil seem good to him, and what is good seem evil. (Thgn 402-06, cf. Solon in Hdt 1.32 and Il 19.270-74)

A structural approach to the Greek pantheon is particularly apt, because like the Mesopotamian gods, the Greek gods are not clear-cut individuals but focuses of divergent cosmological oppositions. As such they are comparable to language elements as studied by structuralism (cf. Vernant MSG 106). On the one hand the gods only exist as oppositions to each other, Hestia and Hermes for example deriving their identity from their opposition in categories like inside/outside, hearth/polis, immobility/movement (Vernant MPG I 124ff.). On the other hand, gods are accumulations of divergent, sometimes conflicting aspects. For example, Zeus protects royal power in his capacity of Zeus Basileus, while he protects the family as Zeus Herkeios (MSG 107-08). There is also a Zeus of the underworld and a Zeus who brings disorder to mortals. All gods have both light and dark aspects (Burkert GR 188). 'Father Zeus, no god is more destructive than you' is a theme which runs through the whole of Homeric poetry (e.g. Il 3.365, Od 20.201). The most important opposition is that between the Olympian and the chthonian (Burkert GR

202),[9] which is also the opposition between heaven and the underworld, light and darkness, life and death, the public cult of the city and the private cult of the family, etc. As such Zeus is not only opposed to Hades, but as Zeus Olympios he is also opposed to himself as Zeus Chthonios (Vernant MSG 107, Burkert GR 200).

It is of the utmost importance to note that Greek gods do not only represent structural oppositions, but that which cannot be accounted for in structural order as well, i.e. transgression, pollution and ambiguity. There is a category of gods who represent disorder, and certain aspects of orderly gods represent disorder as well. Hecate, for example, is associated with impurity and honoured as such (Parker M 223-24). Apollo normally represents order—but there is also an Apollo Nomios who probably exemplifies the same amoral menace as does Pan: sudden terrors of the herds, the midday madness of men (Parker M 244-45).

The disorderly trio Dionysus, Ares and Aphrodite deserve special attention. They occupy positions in the interstices of the Olympian family (Burkert GR 218-19). The tragically ambiguous character of these gods comes to light when we realize that they represent disorderly power which on the one hand has to be expelled as a threat, but on the other hand is indispensable to support order. We shall concentrate on Aphrodite and Dionysus.

First of all we must emphasize that Aphrodite is akin to her Near Eastern counterparts Ishtar and Inanna (Burkert GR 152, Friedrich MA 14) in that her power is not confined to the area of sexual love, but is universal. With her consort Eros she also represents the passion for food, drink, song, dance and even condolence (Wickert-Micknat F 101). She is also connected with the destruction of war. Aeschylus connects Eros with the lust for vengeance (Ag 1478), while Sophocles speaks of Aphrodite's victory (Trach 497, cf. Easterling ST 134). Some cities worshipped an Aphrodite of war, Aphrodite Areia (Nilsson GGR I 490, cf. 487, 493). Aphrodite is primarily a power of destruction which should be shunned. Her power is seen in abductions, divorce, maledictions, murder, war and the destruction of the state (Wickert-Micknat F 100), yet it is indispensable. Marriage cannot be confined to Hera's realm— Aphrodite's passion is just as indispensable to it. Her power is also necessary to maintain the polis: in Athens she was worshipped, together with Peitho, as benefactress to the polis (Simon FA 50, cf. Buxton PT 33-34). This means that man's relationship with Aphrodite is impossible: he has to exorcize her power and to worship it at the same time. Both

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[9] The difference is emphasized, both in literature (e.g. Aes Supp 24f., Ag 89, Eur Hec 146, Isocr 5.117) and in cult (Graf MHW 217-18, Burkert GR 199).

may lead to destruction, as is seen in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Phaedra delivers herself completely to the destructive goddess and has to pay the price of suicide, while Hippolytus, who resists Aphrodite's force, is also destroyed.

A similar ambiguous position is occupied by Dionysus. He leads people on to behave madly and to confuse cosmological categories. Often it is impossible to say whether his *mania* is a boon or a curse—it is a vehicle of indiscriminate power (Burkert GR 162). That the god was conceived of as a living paradox transpires from two fifth-century Orphic tablets (Henrichs LSS 235N): the words 'life/death/life,' 'peace/war' and 'truth/falsehood' appear next to his name. Dionysus' ambiguity is not fully revealed until we realize that he was not only worshipped in untamed nature, in defiance of the rules of the polis (Detienne in Gordon MRS 224), but also in the heart of the polis, for example during the festival of tragedies and comedies. Like Aphrodite, Dionysus represents power which has to be both abhorred and worshipped. This tragic situation is made clear in Euripides' *Bacchae*: Agave completely surrenders herself to the god and is punished by unwittingly slaying her son and being banished, while the opposite attitude of Pentheus, who resists the god, leads to his violent death.

4.4. Social relations

Like all interconnected cosmologies that of the Greeks was not focused on man's individuality, but on his position in a web of social relations. The basic unity was the family, the *oikos* (both the house and the household). The *oikos* could comprise the *anchisteis*, the bilateral kinsmen, extending to second cousins who had rights to intestate inheritance and, in the absence of brothers, to heiresses (Humphreys A 199).

That the interconnected unity of the extended family was the major focus of Greek cosmology is apparent from the nature of transgressions against it. It was dangerous for the whole family if one member connected himself by marriage with a family of polluters. For example, in Euripides' *Supplices* Theseus reproaches Adrastus for mixing his pure house with contaminated families, i.e. those of Tydeus and Polyneices (Suppl 222-23). That the family's unity even extended through time is clear when we realize that children could be polluted by their fathers' crimes. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*, for example, Antigone speaks of "the cursed blood that is ours from our father" (OC 1671-72). The clearest expression of this state of affairs is the Greek conception of killing a family member: this was considered a form of suicide (Parker M 123N). Conversely, suicide was conceived as a form of kin-killing.

In ancient Greece the family was a patriarchy. The head of the household was invested with great authority and had to be honoured and taken care of by his sons as long as he lived (Glotz SFD 31, Lacey FG 21). Women were minors all their lives and always lived under the guardianship of their husbands, fathers or sons. If a woman's father died before she was married, her male next-of-kin became her guardian (Pomeroy GWW 62, 74, 102).

A son should not offend his parents—that would be sacrilege and a pollution (Parker M 197) inviting divine sanctions (Il 9.456ff, Aes Eum 269ff.). In this context it is not surprising that patricide had to be immediately retaliated for (cf. Plato Leg 9.872e). According to Pindar, for example, the mutual slaying of Polyneices and Eteocles was a direct consequence of the patricide committed by their father Oedipus (Ol 2.38-42). That patricides were models of ambiguous power is not only clear from the case of Oedipus, and from the heroic patricides Telegonus and Althaemus (Parker M 378, 390), but also from the "power and might" (βίη καὶ χερσὶ) with which Zeus had to overthrow his father (Hes Th 490) in order to establish the prevailing cosmological order.

In ancient Greece siblings had to be affectionate towards each other (Bremmer IUG 182). Aeschylus, for example, points out that the conflict between Eteocles and Polyneices was a fission where unity should reign. They stood as "brother to brother, enemy to enemy" (Sept 674-75). In the underworld Agamemnon deplored the strife between the two sisters belonging to his house, Electra and Chrysothemis (Soph El 1070f.). The irony is that this strife was unavoidable—it resulted from Electra's conception of her duty towards her family, her duty to please her dead father (e.g. El 399, 1075f.).

The most important task of the Greek interconnected family was its continuation through the generations. This was important both for the living members of the family and for the deceased ones—the latter could only survive through the honours paid to them by the living (Lacey FG 147). Therefore the most important task of women was to bear a legitimate heir (Pomeroy GWW 62, Calame CF I 454). The importance of this feminine task is clear from the gravity of the two transgressions against it. On the one hand there was an extreme fear of promiscuity (e.g. in the case of Helen of Troy); on the other hand extended spinsterhood was abhorred as well. The Greeks had no ideal of permanent chastity. On the contrary (Parker M 92), a spinster was a transgressor: she did not leave her family in order to join that of a husband, thereby obstructing interfamilial communication. Prolonged virginity was believed to be dangerous for the girl as well. According to the Hippocratic treatises nubile girls who postponed marriage too long developed

symptoms of hysteria (a deficiency connected with the uterus) which could result in 'longing for death' (King BB 115).

Being members of their parental family as well as of their husband's household, women often had to fulfil conflicting duties. Electra, for example, had to give all her attention to her brother Orestes, who thereby became a dangerous mixture of son, father and spouse to her (Vernant MPG I 138). A similar conflict characterizes the relationship between Oedipus and Antigone. This being a child's duty, Antigone had to support her father in his exile, but such consorting with her father implied a transgression against her feminine nature (Soph OC 1368). In Euripides' *Phoenissae* her wish to stay with Oedipus was the reason why Antigone refused to marry Haemon (Phoen 1678-79).

It is a well-known fact that in fifth-century Athens there was a noticeable tension between the family, with its old customs, and the polis, which had been reorganized by Cleisthenes (508B.C.), partly in order to curb the power of important families (Forrest RD 198). One of the battlegrounds was the family's prerogative of burial (Gernet DIG 224). Despite this smouldering conflict, the Greeks realized that both institutions were indispensable. The family remained a venerable institution with its own deities (Gernet/Boulanger GGR 247), while the state was indispensable in protecting the citizens against foreigners (who were often considered untamed and subhuman).

The king was seen as the city's highest substitute, not only in times of affliction, but in times of prosperity as well.

> A god-fearing king, who ruling over a large and mighty people maintains straight justice, and the earth bears corn and barley, and the trees are weighed down with fruit, and the flocks give birth unfailingly, and the sea produces fish, because of his good rule, and the people prosper. (Od 19.109-14)

It is illuminating to contrast this quotation with the disastrous effects which Oedipus' misfortunes had on the city of Thebes (Soph OT 22-28).

Because of his ability to bring disaster as well as prosperity to the land, the very eminence of a king was considered perilous (Parker M 166). Also, conflicts could arise between the demands of his family and those of the community. For example, Agamemnon had to sacrifice his daughter Iphigeneia to enable Greece's leaders to reach Troy, and in Aeschylus' *Septem* Eteocles had to fight his own brother to save the city of Thebes.

4.5. Life and death

In ancient Greece man not only occupied a position between animals and gods, he also lived in the niches between life and death. Man's primary

status was that of a *brotos* and a *thnetos*, a mortal who had to combine the demands of life with those of death. That Greek life was permeated with death is clear from the duty to take care of deceased family members. If these rituals were omitted, dead fathers were literally bereft of their sons and their names (Isae 2.46). And one had to keep in mind one's own mortality as well. Whoever forgot his mortal nature was apt to think like an immortal, thereby, ironically, jeopardizing his life.

Again we are confronted with the conflicting demands of interconnected cosmology. On the one hand, mortals were induced to separate the domains of life and death because their mixture might cause pollutions. Hesiod, for example, warned: "Do not beget children on your return from a funeral where ill words were spoken, but after a festival of the immortal god" (Op 735-36). On the other hand, life and death had to be reconciled. Both neglect of life in favour of death and neglect of death in favour of life were considered cosmological transgressions. An example of the first transgression is seen in Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus*: "Who craves to live too long, neglecting just measure—it is clear to me that he lives in darkness" (OC 1211-14). In Sophoclean heroes the opposite transgression is more prominent. Their awesome power makes their conceptions more than mortal; their deeds bring them into contact with immortal power. But their human frailty is unable to bear this contact with power: they obtain the opposite of their intentions; they may even accept the consequence of death as the result of their immortal pretensions. In the context of this ambiguity Ajax is called a transgressor against mortality, being "intent on death" (Aj 812), even in "love with death" (Aj 967). In Euripides' *Phoenissae* Creon warns Antigone not to mar her chances of procreation (through her marriage with Haemon) by excessive lamentations for the dead (Phoen 1672). But Antigone's excessive power had already brought her into the realm of death, as "a Bacchante of corpses" (βάχχα νεκύων - Phoen 1489).

Killing in war was not polluting at all, or was easily purified (Aes Sept 679-80), whereas kinslaying, being a sort of suicide, caused a pollution which could not be wiped out. As Aeschylus says of the mutual killing of Polyneices and Eteocles: "Suicidal death (θάνατος...αὐτοκτόνος), dealt to each other by two men of the same blood—of that pollution (μιάσματος) there is no growing old" (681-82). This fear of pollution explains the precautions which were taken in cases where one family member had to execute the death penalty on another. The wrong-doer was driven out or else made to die by himself, e.g. by shutting him up to starve (Rose HM 85). Of course, this problem only cropped up when it was impossible to hand the kinsman over to the legal authorities. As far as we know, burial alive only occurs in myths about royal families. King Cercyon of Eleusis,

for example, adopted the practice in the execution of his adulterous daughter Alope.[10] What he did not know was that Alope was no ordinary transgressor but an ambiguous character, whose adultery consisted of being raped by Poseidon. This god reaffirmed her ambiguous position by transforming her into a well.

Purifying rites such as that performed by King Cercyon were ambiguous, because violent death was counteracted by renewed violence. This counterviolence was, of course, heavily controlled by ritual. That such a violent answer to violence was playing with fire is clear from the dreadful sacrifices in the *Oresteia*. After Agamemnon, incited by the gods, had sacrificed Iphigeneia, a purification had to be performed. On Zeus' demand Clytaemnestra prepares a counter-sacrifice (Ag 1118, 1433, 1504)—a bath being used as the purificatory implement (Ag 1109). But the purification of Agamemnon's pollution could only succeed if it shared the same power. As a result another polluted perversion emerged: another human sacrifice, in a bath which had become a polluted blood-bath (δολοφόνου λέβητος - Ag 1129).

To the Greeks a corpse, being a marginal between life and death, was a source of pollution which extended to the family members of the deceased. Normally the pollution was easily removed by sending the body to Hades and the kinsmen back to normal life (Parker M 60-61). The pollution only became dangerous if these rites of separation were omitted—if the body was left unburied. This danger induced everybody who passed an unburied corpse to throw a handful of dust over it as a purification. Omission of this sacred ritual was threatened by a curse, annually proclaimed by the Bouzygean priests in Athens (Parker M 44).

Not all corpses were alike, however. Some were more polluted than others, for instance, those of suicides: whereas a normal deathbed was not defiled by the dying man, in a case of suicide by hanging the rope and branch were destroyed or thrown over the city boundaries (Parker M 41-42). According to Aeschines the hand of a suicide was buried apart (3.244), while Plato decreed that a suicide's body should be left on the state's boundaries without a name on its grave (Leg 9.873d). Other transgressors got an exceptional treatment as well: those who died before their time (having overstepped the boundary between life and death) were buried, not cremated (Bremmer CS 94). It is interesting that some people who thus ignominiously died before their time were later made heroes (Bremmer CS 105)—they seem to have been in possession of uncanny power.

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[10] The main source for the myth is Hyginus (Fab 187) whose account may go back to a tragedy by Euripides (Fr 105ffN2). See also Ar Av 559, Paus 1.39.3.

This brings us to an important rite of controlled ambiguity: the official practice of leaving the corpses of felons unburied. What under normal circumstances would have been a dreadful defilement now serves ritual ends, not, as Parker maintains, because the pollution of the criminals has faded away (Parker M 46), but because the undiminished power of their pollution is ritually controlled. It was not an accident that the practice of leaving a body unburied only applied to the foulest of men: murderers of father, mother, brother or children (Plato Leg 9.873b), temple robbers and traitors (in contrast to enemies) (Xen Hell 1.7.22; Thyc 1.138.6).

These customs explain why in the *Oedipus Coloneus* Oedipus is not allowed burial in his native soil: "the blood of a kinsman will not let thee (οὐκ ἐᾷ τοὔμφυλον αἷμά σ')" (OC 407, cf. 600-01). In Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Creon refuses burial to Polyneices because he was not an ordinary enemy but an enemy from within the city, a traitor: "He was an enemy of the state, while being no enemy (πόλεως ἐχθρὸς ἦν, οὐκ ἐχθρὸς ὤν)" (Phoen 1652). In the same episode in Aeschylus' *Septem*, the ritual character of the act is emphasized when a herald declares that the whole Theban population decided to leave Polyneices unburied (1005ff.), not because the pollution had left him, but because he was extremely defiled: "Even in death (θανὼν) he will possess the vehement pollution (ἄγος) of his fatherland's gods, whom he held in dishonour by leading a foreign army against the city and besieging it" (1017-19).

Sometimes the corpse was thrown over the border (e.g. Phoen 1630), as some believe in order to enable the family to bury it outside the territory of the state (Parker M 46). But other ways of disposing of the body, like throwing it into the sea (Bremmer CS 90), excluded every possibility of burial (Parker M 47). In Athens certain criminals were thrown into a pit, the *barathron*, just outside the city walls, from which the corpses could not be recovered (Gernet DIG 182, 192, Höppener BSA 74, cf. Parker 47N). The ambiguity of the ritual comes to light in a story by Agathias (Hist. 2.31), in which seven Greek philosophers buried the corpse of a committer of incest. That night, however, one of the philosophers was thus admonished in his dream: "Do not bury the unburiable; let him be prey to the dogs. Earth, mother of all, does not accept the mother-corrupting man." The next day they found the body uncovered, "as though the earth of her own accord had cast it up and refused to save it from being eaten," and even the philosophers were convinced that committers of incest should be left to be torn apart by dogs. And in the *Septem* the Theban people want Polyneices' body to be mangled by dogs and birds (1014, 1020); nobody is allowed to bury it, not even a kinsman (1024, cf. Phoen 778).

That the ritual use of the defilement of exposed corpses was extremely

dangerous is seen in the legend of the Athenians who stoned a priest of Cybele and threw his body into the *barathron*. It turned out that the priest was not a charlatan, and the Athenians were convinced that the fact that the priest was innocent, and that therefore the ritual had been perverted, was the main cause of a great outbreak of the bubonic plague (Nilsson GGR I 725N, Versnel PD 11). How striking the differences may be between an interconnected cosmology and rising separatism is clear from Heraclitus' remark that after death the body is "more fit to be cast out than dung" (DK B 96). For Heraclitus the power of polluted corpses has vanished.

4.6. Law and order

As in other interconnected cosmologies, to the Greeks justice was primarily a matter of order and balance (Gernet RPG 49,74) on a divine and cosmic scale. *Dike* was a goddess, the daughter of Zeus (Hes Op 256, Aes Sept 662), and his assessor (Soph OC 1382). In the word *dike* the ideas of law and order were combined (Lloyd-Jones JZ 4). Human laws were considered reflections of divine law. As a fourth century orator declared: "Every law is the invention and gift of the gods, as well as a decree by wise men" (Dem 25.16). Human sanctions against transgressions were regarded as "coming to the aid" of the gods (Parker M 165).

The law governing the whole universe was the *lex talionis*. Whoever acted had to expect to be paid back in his own coin—δράσαντι παθεῖν (Aes Ag 1430, 1564, Ch 313), both where merit was concerned (Hes Op 353-55, Soph Aj 522) and where offences were at stake. The hope which fed on the belief in the cosmic law of talion was that disasters could be explained by previous transgressions (Hdt 6.86), while there was the certainty that crime would always be punished in the end (Thgn 199-202). In an interconnected cosmology retribution could either overtake the criminal himself or his descendants (Hdt 1.91, Solon Fr 13.25-32W).

The tragic nature of the law of talion was felt in Greece no less than in the Near East. First, talion may operate on a cosmic scale, which from the point of view of the human individual may be grossly unjust. It is an ironic consolation that an innocent man should suffer for the deeds of his forebears (Thgn 731-36) and that evildoers should continue to thrive (Thgn 373-85). It is humanly impossible simultaneously to adopt the divine and the human perspective in the law of talion (Thgn 203-04). The fundamental problem of talion is that its retaliations in their turn have to be transgressions demanding more retaliation, and so on. The order of talion is violence. The Greeks had various rituals with which to control the dangers of unrestricted violence and counterviolence. A good

example is sacrificial killing, in which great efforts were made to prevent retaliation. For instance, measures were taken to ensure the willingness of the victim ('the comedy of innocence' – Burkert GTR 106).[11] In the *Bouphonia* the victim was even induced to commit an error for which it could be punished by death. Afterwards the sacrificial knife was condemned and thrown into the sea (Burkert HN 136f).

All these rituals could not overcome the fact that acting according to talion was also committing a transgression, and thereby potentially dangerous. This is abundantly confirmed by the inevitable mixture of purification and violence in the perverted rituals we encounter in the *Oresteia*. No wonder that in this trilogy Aeschylus should speak of "the grace which comes with violence" (Ag 182-83, cf. Pind Fr 169 Snell). What is true of the law of talion applies to cosmic order as a whole: it is based on violence (cf. Detienne/Vernant RI 99).

4.7. Darkness and insight

If there is one category in which all aspects of tragic ambiguity in Greek cosmology are condensed, it is that of insight. Again the fundamental *aporia* is that mortals are confronted with conflicting cosmological demands. On the one hand it is necessary to separate truth from falsehood. In particular when man has to take action, he must be cognizant of the boundary between good and evil. On the other hand, it is not only humanly impossible to distinguish knowledge sharply from mere opinion, it is also extremely dangerous. Being mortal, man should not infringe on the gods' prerogative of eternal insight.[12] He should keep truth and darkness mixed.

In order to maintain life, man constantly had to make separations, because the dangers of hubris lurked everywhere. Insight was the weapon against human recklessness (Thgn 1171-76). The separations man had to make in order to avoid transgressions were predominantly of a relative nature: the avoidance of hubris consisted of the avoidance of one-sidedness. Man had to do nothing overmuch, keep to the middle road (Thgn 219-20). Being mortal, man needs the changeable, adaptable nature of a polyp. He has to separate himself from rigidity in his opinion:

> Turn, my heart, towards all friends a changefully coloured (ποικίλον) habit, mingling your temperament (ὀργήν) to be like unto each. Let your temperament be that of the convolvèd polyp, which takes the semblance of the rock he has converse with; now be guided this way, and then be of a different colour. Surely, skill (σοφίη) is better than unchangeableness. (Thgn 213-18)

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[11] The god at Delphi said: "That which willingly nods the head at the washing of hands I say you may justly sacrifice" (Porphyr De Abst 2.9; cf. Burkert GR 56).

[12] For θνητὰ φρονεῖν see e.g. Aes Pers 820, Soph Aj 761, Eur Ba 395.

The major question is: what is the nature of human insight? It is clear that in interconnected cosmology the distinction between truth (ἀλήθεια) and opinions (τὸ δοκεῖν) was well-known (e.g. Simon. 598P), but contrary to separative philosophy Greek interconnected cosmology was convinced that through its very nature the domain of truth was inaccessible to mortals. Contrary to the gods man knows neither good nor evil (Mimn 2.4-5W). The gods possess truth, but are unwilling to share it with mortals: their truth is invisible to man (Solon Fr 17W); with his human mind, man is unable to search out the counsel of the gods (Hom Hymn Ap 3.192, Simon 61-62, Solon 13.63ff.W).

Here the tragic problem comes to the fore. Man has to separate his behaviour from hubris, but the power of insight, which should be the the instrument of his separation, itself cannot be pure, otherwise man would still become 'hybrid'. This forms an insoluble dilemma: either man claims pure separative insight and becomes 'hybrid,' or he accepts the impurity of insight, but is unable to avoid recklessness. Small wonder that Solon should maintain: ''It is most difficult to have insight into the invisible measure (μέτρον) of judgment, which yet alone holds the boundaries (πείρατα) of everything'' (Fr 16W). The conclusion must be that it is humanly impossible not to fail. Only the gods are infallible, man can never be (Dem 18.290). All mortals are prone to err (Eur Hipp 615, Thyc 3.45.3). The tragic duality of human and divine knowledge is summed up in Theognis' remark that nobody who is active knows for sure (ἐν φρεσὶν εἰδώς) whether he is moving to a good end or a bad one. Man practises vain things, knowing nothing, whereas the gods accomplish everything according to their own mind (Thgn 133-42).

It is in this context of duality that the character of tragic heroes has to be understood. By means of their excessive power they strive for the purity of truth which is the prerogative of the gods (compare Oedipus' search for truth). The consequence is that they lack prudence. They are unable to restrain their temper (Soph El 1011). They are particularly unable to yield and be changeable like Theognis' polyp (e.g. Aj 371, El 396, 1014). Their claims to divine insight are beyond their human powers. Ironically, they are unable to learn (El 370, cf. 889). They go mad involuntarily, violating the measure of human thinking (Aes Sep 842, 875, Soph OT 550) and contracting defilements (Aes Ag 220, Eum 377-78, Soph OC 805).

Tragedy is not complete until we realize that someone who does his utmost to be prudent may nevertheless be led into transgression and insolence by demonic powers. This is what happened to Deianeira in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. Ironically, her immoderate erring was due to her longing for temperance (Reinhardt S 57). The tragic duality of im-

prudence *and* prudence is worked out in Sophocles' *Electra*. Chrysothemis admits that Electra has justice on her side, yet she has to condemn her sister's imprudence (El 338-39). Electra realizes that she is in an insoluble predicament. Either she is imprudent (φρονεῖν κακῶς) or she is prudent, but then she has to forfeit her friends (El 345-46, cf. 1027). Therefore Electra is convinced that not only her own imprudence is a tragic failure, but Chrysothemis' prudence as well. She calls it awesome (δεινὸν) that her sister should err (ἐξαμαρτάνειν) despite her ability to speak well (El 1039).

Even with the opposition between the 'hybrid' and the moderate the structural possibilities of tragedy are not exhausted. There is another mirror image of the tragic hero: the seer. Whereas tragic heroes live in an excess of power and so go mad, seers live in an excess of divine insight, but pay the price of being powerless on the human level. According to the law of talion, seers had to atone for their divine insight, for example by being blind in the human world (Buxton BL 28-29). The tragedy of seers mirrors that of tragic heroes: they know the divine ordinances but are unable to communicate them to mortals. First Tiresias vainly tried to block Oedipus' search for truth, and when events had gone too far, he elected to remain silent. Against his wish Oedipus compelled him to speak—he knew that his words would be the instrument of the hero's downfall.[13]

The heroes' madness was only one side of the tragic coin. The other was that hubris did not only depend upon human transgression; the gods were involved as well: they jealously guarded the purity of their insight. For example, Apollo gave "unfailing advice (νημερτέα βουλήν)" to men through his oracle (Hom Hymn Ap 3.252), but to mortals this advice was not unfailing at all. The oracular Apollo was called Loxias, the Oblique (Burkert GR 148); his advice was "hard to understand (δυσμαθῆ)" (Aes Ag 1255). Like the Pale Fox of the Dogon, Apollo represented truth which was a confusion to mortals. But Apollo was not the only god to bring confusion to mortals. Deities like the Erinyes brought blindness and madness (Soph Fr 577R). The gods not only confounded voluntary transgressors— they were resentful of all human greatness: "The wise man errs and fame comes to the man without insight" (Thgn 665-66). As Lycurgus explained, referring to the old poets: "When the anger of the daemons is injuring a man, the first thing is that it takes the good

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[13] In Greece, as in other interconnected societies, people were convinced that a prophet did not only predict, but also made his prediction come true by uttering the words themselves. Thus Agamemnon accuses Calchas of never predicting anything good for him nor bringing anything good to pass (Il 1.106ff., cf. Linforth AC 239).

understanding out of his mind and turns him to the worse judgment, so that he may not be aware of his errors'' (C. Leocratem 92, cf. Il 9.18, 19.90f., Od 15.234-35, Thgn 402ff.).

The inevitability of erring was not confined to tragic heroes - they exemplified human life in general. Man needs power to maintain himself in a conflicting universe, and this need for power prevents him from attaining the required prudence. Madness is an illness which should be cured by *iatroi logoi* (Aes Pr 378). But the tragic problem is that the cure is impotent in comparison to the power of temperament (ὀργή - Pr 315, 378, 977f). The temperament which is indispensable for upholding civilization inevitably generates ''raw'' words (τραχεῖς.. λόγους - Pr 311) bringing madness. In man's claim to insight this power, both indispensable and destructive, manifests itself as hope. Theognis explicitly connects hope with man's spirit of enterprise and calls both ''demons which are hard to bear (χαλεποὶ δαίμονες)'' (637-38). Hope is as necessary as it is dangerous. It is indispensable to action, but inevitably leads to the neglect of limits (Opstelten SGP 176). As such it is analogous to hubris (Thyc 2.62.5, 3.45.1, 5.103.2). Man's tragedy is that he cannot live without the delusion of hope. For example, hoping for life he has to forget death, otherwise he would be paralyzed by fear. As the *Prometheus* phrases it:

Prom: Yes, I caused mortals no longer to foresee their doom
Chorus: What sort of cure (φάρμακον) did you find for this illness?
Prom: I made blind hopes dwell in them. (248-50)

Hope is the most ambiguous of *pharmaka*: it offers both insight and illusion, it is both a boon and a poison.

EXISTING INTERPRETATIONS OF SOPHOCLES' ANTIGONE

5.1. The directly separative point of view

As was to be expected, existing interpretations of the play have been deeply influenced by separative cosmology. The two major interpretative trends with respect to the *Antigone*, the orthodox view and the Hegelian view, correspond to direct separativeness and indirect separativeness (viz. harmonization), the two major European cosmological strategies in dealing with contradictions and ambiguity. For centuries the *Antigone* was interpreted in the light of directly separative cosmology. Separative interpretations constituted such an overwhelming majority, that this interpretation has been labelled the orthodox point of view (Hester SU 12). It is characteristic of the separative orthodoxy of interpretations of the *Antigone* that the category of justice should be singled out as the tragedy's primary subject matter. Within this category an unambiguous division is made between absolute justice, as represented by Antigone, and total baseness, as represented by Creon. This interpretative tradition, starting with Schlegel (cf. Eberlein DKT 17-20), is still very strong, thanks to well-known interpreters like Jebb (A xxii), Reinhardt (S 86, 264), Diller (GMW 8-10), Müller (SA 11), Else (MA 40) and Kamerbeek (A 28). Typical of this trend is Müller's remark: "Antigone is completely right, Creon is completely wrong." Though sometimes it is conceded that at the start of his career Creon is not so bad, the orthodox are convinced that in the end he turns out to be a tyrant, destroying the purity of a maiden who is merely obeying the call of duty.

From the separative point of view, the *Antigone* is primarily seen as a moral tragedy. Problems of justice and injustice dominate over other cosmological categories, and there is no doubt about the possibility of separating the sphere of justice from that of injustice. An ambiguous sphere between justice and injustice, for example in the idea of hubris, is not believed relevant. The problem of the *Antigone* is not regarded as a problem of internal division and ambiguity, but as a problem of the destruction of a person who represents an inherently just principle. The unambiguous separation between Antigone and Creon implies a separation of the divine sphere, to which Antigone is thought to belong, from the merely human realm to which Creon is confined. Creon's law has no divine aspects, it is a merely human edict. As such it belongs to a sphere

which cannot even touch the purity of Antigone's holy status (Reinhardt S 74-75). In contrast to Antigone, Creon merely proclaims a "menschlicher Machtsspruch" (Lesky GL 321).[1]   In this conception there is no problem of an intermingling of the divine and the subhuman (the natural) in the deeds of Antigone and Creon. According to some interpreters, notably Reinhardt, the divine law which Antigone follows is also that which 'nature in itself' wants (S 86). In that case the divine and natural character of Antigone is opposed to the human and non-natural behaviour of Creon. To many adherents of the separative point of view the divine world is no longer in inner conflict, as in the tragedies of Aeschylus, but essentially unified, contrary to the human world. Müller maintains, for example, that in the *Antigone* there is no "innergöttlicher Widerstreit" (SA 172). He speaks of the "power and perfection of the god" (SA 138).

In the separative view, Antigone is isolated as the only protagonist of the tragedy, and as such her pure identity remains unimpaired. To the orthodox the unity of this tragedy is the unity and purity of one protagonist; Creon is separated from the tragic realm because he is a mere human being. Therefore he is unable to contaminate Antigone's isolated heroism. It is interesting to note that to an interpreter like Müller, Creon cannot be a protagonist because he has no unified identity. Because in yielding to the persuasion of Tiresias, his behaviour is changeable, Creon has no fixed identity and therefore he cannot be accepted as a tragic hero (SA 19). The counterpart to this separation of Creon from the tragic realm is that the purity of Antigone's identity is believed to remain uncontaminated. She never recedes from her position, she stands by her just decisions, even in the face of death. Her lamentations at the end of her life are no weakness. As Müller has it, she remains "ungebrochen" (SA 265). The end of her life does not bring any significant reversal (Müller SA 184). If Antigone is seen as a unified person who sticks to her decisions, even under the threat of execution, it is understandable that many an orthodox interpreter should compare her to a Christian martyr (Jebb A xxv—Reinhardt disagrees S 85), or, at least, to a romantic or existential rebel (cf. Hester SU 42). In our days this romanticism comes to light in comparisons between Antigone and Ulrike Meinhof (cf. Steiner AS 151, 296 on H. Böll).

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[1] Reinhardt phrases this separation between the human and the divine very clearly: "Hier steht nicht Recht gegen Recht, Idee gegen Idee, sondern das Göttliche, als Allumfangendes, mit dem das junge Mädchen sich in Einklang weiss, gegen das Menschliche als das Beschränkte, Blinde, von sich selbst Gejagte, in sich selbst Verstellte und Verfälschte" (S 87).

Antigone's unimpaired identity is reflected in her relations with others. On her part, they are of the utmost purity. Her behaviour towards Creon may be stormy, but morally it is immaculate. With respect to her sister Ismene she is moved by her duties (Jebb A xxix), and for Haemon she has the purest form of affection (Jebb A xxx). The reverse of this coin is that in her purity she is completely isolated. Being merely human, the other persons in the tragedy do not understand her divine stature (Müller SA 16).

In the orthodox view the realms of life and death, and the problems of justice and injustice with regard to these realms, are clearly separated. There is no doubt that Antigone was completely justified in burying Polyneices, and that Creon had no right at all either to leave Polyneices unburied or to bury Antigone alive. Antigone's proclamation of her adherence to the sphere of death, and her eventual suicide, are unproblematic as well. Her suicide is justified as a "Freitod." And her corporeal life, being mortal, is separated from her eternal principles. Müller for example maintains "that she is right with respect to the truth of the gods, and that she continues to be right, though as a human being she is destroyed" (SA 103). Antigone's devotion to the realm of death is clearly opposed to Creon's clinging to life. The former attitude is considered high and divine, the latter low and merely human. Reinhardt speaks of a conflict between "the high, the unconditional, that which is devoted to death, and that which maintains itself, the conditional" (S 264).

Because in the orthodox point of view Antigone really knows the nature of divine law, it is beyond doubt that her insight is pure and uncontaminated, and clearly opposed to the mere opinions of Creon. As Müller maintains: "If we acknowledge the relationship between truth and appearance, we are protected against the danger of considering Creon as a Sophoclean protagonist" (SA 12). The consequence of the notion that Antigone's insight is pure is that not only Creon's opinions should be separated from it as impure and faulty, but also Ismene's remarks and almost all statements made by the chorus.

Of course the orthodox view is not totally non-tragic: it does not reduce all tragic division to clear-cut oppositions. Müller for example emphasizes the tragic conflict between the righteousness of Antigone's principles and her downfall. The model of holy order is destroyed by the enemies of the gods. In Müller's view—and here we agree with him—the *Antigone* is therefore neither edifying nor reconciliatory (SA 273).

Our objection to the orthodox view expounded by Müller is that it reduces the manifold interconnected tragic problems to a single duality, that of holiness and its destruction. It does not acknowledge that the *An-*

tigone is part of an interconnected cosmology, and therefore permeated with all sorts of internal divisions and ambiguities which make it inadequate to divide justice and insight sharply from injustice and error. There is historical evidence undermining most of the tenets of orthodox separatism (cf. for example Höppener BSA, Mette AS, Linforth AC 193, Knox HT 84-86, SP 13-15, Ferguson PMF 45, Sourvinou-Inwood ACM passim), and there are philological objections to the orthodox view: the unity of orthodoxy is bought at the price of excluding major parts of the tragedy. In the orthodox view it is impossible not to reject as illusory or unimportant many utterances by Antigone herself, nor is it an accident that a majority of the orthodoxy should reject Antigone's lines 904-20, because these lines impair the purity of her unified identity and the loftiness of her principles. The most persistent problem for the separative conception is that it rests on prematurely expelling Creon out of the tragedy, even though his presence in it is more prolonged than Antigone's, and even though in innumerable aspects his fate structurally mirrors Antigone's fate. In short, the orthodox view excludes certain tragic aspects from the *Antigone* (Hester SU 12).[2]

5.2. The harmonizing point of view

The great advantages of harmonizing conceptions of the *Antigone* over the directly separative ones are that they are better able to account for the deep structure of oppositions and transformations characterizing the tragedy. They are also better able to detect the undermining force of negativity, not only between the protagonists, but within them as well. The harmonizing point of view has been expounded paradigmatically in the philosophy of Hegel, which has had a great influence on a major trend in modern philological interpretation of the *Antigone*. Of course we do not pretend to give an adequate account of Hegel's thought as such. We shall merely discuss his remarks regarding the *Antigone*.

In Hegel's conception, Creon and Antigone are both representatives of ethical powers (*sittliche Mächte*) of equal strength and justice. The public law of the state and love and duty to the family are opposed as a struggle of one-sided aspects of justice.[3] This point of view has found

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[2] Even scholars who have completely undermined the presuppositions of the orthodox, in the end return to a glorification of Antigone at the expense of Creon. This happens in interpretations like those of Knox (HT 116), Eberlein (DKT 22-29) and Winnington-Ingram (SI 91-149, esp 119-20).

[3] ''Jede dieser beiden Seiten verwirklicht nur die eine der sittlichen Mächte, hat nur die eine derselben zum Inhalt, das ist die Einseitigkeit, und der Sinn der ewigen Gerechtigkeit ist, dass Beide Unrecht erlangen, weil sie einseitig sind, aber damit auch Beide Recht[...]'' (Hegel PR II 133-34, cf. A II 51-52).

many modern followers, not only in structuralist interpretations of the *Antigone* (Vernant MTG 33, Segal TC 152-206, Vidal-Naquet in Vernant/Vidal-Naquet MTG II 161-63), but among adherents of other interpretative, methods as well (for a list cf. Hester SU 52f.).

It is striking that in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* Hegel should have accounted for the interconnectedness of all the cosmological oppositions which we have mentioned. In general, philologists have not been able to present such a complete cosmological interpretation of the tragedy—they have mostly confined themselves to a few categories only. According to Hegel, the protagonists Antigone and Creon represent the "natural" and the "conscious" respectively (PG 321). That does not mean that Antigone's behaviour is purely natural and Creon's purely conscious. By their deeds both protagonists transcend nature, yet continue to belong to it. Just that is the dual character of their acts, that they both belong to nature and to spirit (PG 342). In modern philology, the relationship of the protagonists to nature has been worked out in detail. Many interpreters have emphasized that the opposition between natural and accultured behaviour permeates the tragedy. More than Hegel do they acknowledge the negativity of Sophoclean comparisons of the protagonists to natural events like storms and animals (cf. Knox HT 42). They consider the tragic human position between animals and gods as essential to the play (Goheen ISA 26).

According to Hegel natural law, as represented by Antigone, is a direct, simple form of justice, of divine nature. Creon's law on the other hand represents the human community (PG 319). But this opposition between divine law and human law should not be interpreted in an orthodox vein. Creon's law is merely called human because in Hegel's view it is self-aware, but it is as absolute as is Antigone's (PG 332). Neither law can claim to be more essential than the other (PG 337). Therefore it should be emphasized that the human character of Creon's law does not preclude its divineness. In Hegel's *Aesthetik* this is made explicit. Antigone reveres the lower gods of Hades, and Creon is not 'merely human': he is a representative of the Olympian "Tagesgötter" of the self-aware citizens and of the state (A II 51-52).

This notion of Hegel's, that Antigone represents the lower gods and Creon the higher gods has had great influence in philology. It is acknowledged by adherents of the orthodox view as well (cf. Müller SA 232), and it is all-pervasive in the harmonizing view. What Hegel does not mention, but what is essential to the ambiguous nature of the tragedy, is that many problems of the *Antigone* are centred around a third category of divine powers: confusing powers like Dionysus, Aphrodite, Eros and Ares. This ambiguity has been recognized by Bultmann, who

opposes Olympian and nether gods on the one hand to the confusing power of Eros on the other (PHA 319). The power of the ambiguous deities has been worked out in detail by Winnington-Ingram, who calls Ares, Aphrodite and Dionysus a trio of deities representing irrational emotion (SI 110).

The oppositions between Antigone and Creon are not only relevant on the vertical axis, between nature and the gods, but on the horizontal, social axis as well. As a law of nature and of the lower gods, Antigone's ideal belongs to the sphere of the family, which Hegel considers a more 'natural' relationship than the state and which belongs to the sphere of the lower gods through its preoccupations with burial. But in Hegel's conception the family is not purely natural. On the contrary, by its care for burial of the dead it prevents corpses from being devoured by the forces of nature (PG 322-23), and hence is a force of civilization.

In its capacity of law of the people and the state, Creon's law of the "Tagesgötter" is equally essential as Antigone's, and in Hegel's eyes the conflict between them is inevitable. In order to maintain itself, the state *has to* injure (*verletzen*) and confuse (*verwirren*) the independence of family members. If the family becomes too powerful, the community is threatened with destruction: a return to natural conditions (PG 324). According to Hegel, the opposition between family and state is also reflected in sexual difference. Women stay at home, organize the house, honour the penates. Men have to leave the home to carve out a career in the polis. Therefore Antigone defends the feminine principles against Creon's male law (PG 326).

A point which is not mentioned by Hegel, but emphasizing Antigone's dangerous ambiguity, is that this heroine does not perform the feminine duty of procreation. Not only men have to leave their family, but women too: they have to move to their husband's house. This omission in Hegel's interpretation may be explained by his curious ideas on the relationship between brother and sister. Hegel maintains that, contrary to that between man and woman, which is always tinged with nature's aim of procreation, this relationship is completely devoid of natural desire, and therefore direct and pure. According to Hegel, only brother and sister can accept each other as irreplaceable, contrary to parents and children (PG 326).

Here many modern philologists disagree with Hegel. He overlooks the ambiguous nature of the relationship between Antigone and Polyneices, and so continues to separate Antigone from her tragic status in a romantic idealization. In Greek eyes, the proper thing for Antigone to do was to leave her family and to join that of her husband. Her persistent attachment to her brother is a dangerous transgression verging on the in-

cestuous. Antigone's refusal of procreation, mirrored in Creon's aversion to sexuality (cf. Winnington Ingram SI 95-97), is a transgression of her marital duties.[4]

In so far as burying the dead is a female duty within the family, Antigone's law is also that of death (PG 320-21) and the night (PG 319, 339), as against Creon's law of life and the day, says Hegel. Here we must disagree with his interpretation on historical grounds—burial was not a female prerogative, and certainly not of an unmarried girl.

That Antigone's respect for death is not inherently superior to Creon's lack of reverence becomes clear from the question of the justification of Polyneices' burial. Hegel acknowledges the civilizing power of burial. This act interrupts the damaging work of natural forces and lower forms of life (*niedrige Lebendigkeiten*) on the corpse (PG 323). By burial the family interrupts this dishonouring activity (*entehrendes Tun*) and marries (*vermählt*) the body to the womb (*Schoss*) of the earth. But this does not annul the justice of Creon's refusal to bury the body:

> He who wantonly attacked the spirit's highest form of consciousness, the spirit of the community, must be stripped of the honour of his entire and finished being, the honour due to the spirit of the departed. (PS 286) (German PG 339)

How difficult the problem of justice is in Hegel's eyes becomes evident when we realize that Polyneices was not simply a malefactor either. It was merely an accident of nature that Eteocles was born before Polyneices. If the government of the state is at stake, such an unimportant difference should have no influence. Yet it must have, because government cannot bear the duality of individuality (*Zweiheit der Individualität*). This implies an inevitable fission between brothers. The conclusion is that both were just and unjust (PG 338).

In Hegel's conception Antigone's law, as a law of nature and of the family, belongs to the sphere of the unconscious, whereas Creon's law of the state belongs to that of self-awareness (PG 319, 321). But this opposition is not absolute. By positive action both protagonists claim to have knowledge of the truth. And finally, according to Hegel, both have to acknowledge that their claims to insight were manifestations of hubris. The irony of events shows that both erred through one-sidedness and lack of self-knowledge. This conception of the hubristic claims of insight of both protagonists can also be found in many modern interpretations. Ac-

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[4] Vernant remarks: "Antigone n'a pas voulu entendre l'appel à se détacher des 'siens' et de la *philía* pour s'ouvrir à l'autre, reconnaître Éros et, dans l'union avec un 'étranger', transmettre à son tour la vie. L'opposition *philía/éros*, attachement familial-désir sexuel, tient donc une place majeure dans l'architecture du drame" (MTG 90).

cording to Eberlein, for example, prudence would point to a way out of the tragic dialectics of human existence—but Creon and Antigone are unable to be prudent: they are driven on by their awesomeness. The dreadfulness of the gift of man's immense talents and aptitude is that it turns to good as well as to evil. Therefore mortals are unable to know what is just and what is not (DKT 30).

Hegel's interpretation of the *Antigone* is not only extremely important because he has elaborated the oppositions between the protagonists in the six cosmological categories, but also because he has shown that these oppositions are not static differences. The opposites are not only one-sided, they are internally divided as well. The oppositions are not homogeneous, they are internally fissured and contaminated by their opposites (cf. Derrida Gl 166-67). In this connection it is important to assess Hegel's conception of the tragic nature of human action in general. Only by action can man establish his identity (PG 331). But every act disturbs the quiet movement of the ethical world. As soon as man acts, this world is torn apart, it suffers a division (*Entzweiung*). That implies that human action is essentially tragic. It is necessarily one-sided and ignorant of its own character. Action is hubris, and as such inevitably guilty—only non-action like the being of a stone is not guilty—even the action of a child is. In its content ethical action comprises the moment of wrongdoing (*Verbrechen*) (PG 334).

In chapter three we have remarked that transgressions are of a twofold nature: they can be relative or absolute. Hegel points out precisely this duality of hubris. Those who act are inevitably one-sided: they have to choose one law, and are thus compelled to consider its opposite unimportant and negative (PG 334). Antigone believes that Creon's law is merely accidental violence, while Creon thinks Antigone just a disobedient person (PG 332). Both are one-sided because they forget that they belong to the other side as well. As Hegel points out at the end of the *Aesthetik*: Antigone forgets that she is not only a sister, but a king's daughter and a citizen as well, and Creon does not acknowledge that he is not only the king, but a father and married man as well. It should be emphasized that these forms of one-sidedness are inevitable if actions are to be effective.

But besides the relative transgression there is the absolute transgression of one's own principles. Those who act also inevitably misjudge the meaning of their own actions (PG 331). By neglecting Antigone's justice, Creon also contaminates his own principles. The irony of the events makes his law become tyrannical hubris (*tyrannische Frevel*). The same is true of Antigone. She pretends to insight into the nature of all laws, her own included, meaning that she falls into the hubris of having knowledge (*den Frevel des Wissens*) with respect to human law and divine law (cf. PG

309, 317). This implies that the tragic guilt of the protagonists consists of their one-sidedness as well as of their illusions with respect to their own actions.[5] This extremely fruitful idea that Antigone and Creon are not only one-sided, but also reckless with respect to their own principles, has been brought forward in modern philology by scholars like Eberlein (DKT 32), Hester (SU 40, in a misguided attack on Hegel) and Segal (TC 177).

Hegel's analysis also shows that the tragic events in the play reveal that the protagonists' one-sided actions go together. It is a tragic irony that the principles of the family and of the state are inseparable (PG 335). Contrary to the orthodox view, this implies that it is not only Creon who undergoes a reversal, but that both protagonists eventually have to acknowledge that they were wrong, and end up in completely reversed positions. Both have to recognize their *hamartia* (PG 336, 340), and both undergo a reversal of their fate. As Hegel points out at the end of the *Aesthetik*: Antigone dies before she can "enjoy the marital bed," and Creon's procreative power is stricken as well, by the loss of his sons and wife. In modern philology the idea that both protagonists undergo a reversal, both as regard their insight and with respect to their position in life, has been put forward by interpreters like Jens (AI 307-08), Hogan (PA 96) and Rohdich (A 11).

The extraordinary penetration of Hegel's analysis of the *Antigone* notwithstanding, the problems of pollution, transgression and ambiguity make it impossible to integrate the tragedy into philosophy in Hegel's way. In a number of aspects Hegel merely points out oppositions between categories, without assessing the foundation and medium of these oppositions: ambiguous power. He pays no attention to the confusing, ambiguous gods, he does not point out Antigone's hubris with respect to Polyneices, he does not mention the dangerous positions of the tragic heroes between nature and the divine. In this connection it is important to note that his conception of hybrid one-sidedness is not opposed to prudence, of which Ismene and the guard are models. Yet it is only through accepting the notion that recklessness and prudence are inevitable and irreconcilable aspects of human behaviour that the tragic ambiguity of the *Antigone* is revealed.

Nor does Hegel put much emphasis on a typically interconnected characteristic of the *Antigone*: its obsession with pollution, control of am-

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[5] "[Das Selbstbewusstsein] erfährt also in seiner Tat sowohl den Widerspruch *jener Mächte*, worein die Substanz sich entzweite, und ihre gegenseitige Zerstörung, wie den Widerspruch seines Wissens von der Sittlichkeit seines Handelns mit dem, was an und für sich sittlich ist, und findet *seinen eignen* Untergang" (Hegel PG 317-18).

biguity by ritual, and perversion of ritual. The only point that he mentions in this connection—important enough in itself—is that the exposure of Polyneices' body is shameful, but at the same time a power undermining Creon's kingship: ''The dead man, whose right has been outraged, knows how to find implements for his revenge which are as powerful as the power that injures him'' (PG 339). Hegel is referring to the powerful pollution of the altars by Polyneices' remains. But the whole *Antigone* is permeated with inherited and unpredictable pollution (for example in the Labdacid family, in the exposure of the corpse, in the mutual slaying of Polyneices and Eteocles, in Antigone's burial, in her suicide, etc.). These pollutions are counteracted more than once by measures forming examples of controlled ambiguity, e.g. Creon's decree that Polyneices should remain unburied. Through ritual measures Creon hopes to employ this pollution to beneficial ends, but in the end all control of ambiguity turns out to be perverted—tragic ambiguity is shown to prevail.

This is where we disagree most fundamentally with Hegel. To him, the outcome of the tragedy is a reconciliation of state and family in a condition of absolute justice. In his eyes the result of the tragedy is that only justice obtains (*dass nichts gilt als das Rechte*). By the submission of both sides absolute justice has been achieved (PG 337). In the end, the workings of fate turn out to be justice. But this harmonizing point of view can only be maintained if the tragic ambiguity of the tragedy is silenced. The final outcome of the *Antigone* is not justice, not merely because justice is inevitably intermingled with injustice, but primarily because in this tragedy justice and injustice are manifestations of ambiguous power, and this power underlies and pervades the distinction.

Modern philologists generally do not follow Hegel's notion of a reconciliation of the principles of family and state in a higher harmony. But even if they acknowledge the importance of pollution and ambiguity, most of them cling to the harmonizing view. They accept the ritual character of the fates of Creon and Antigone, but they will not go any further than this ritual ambiguity. They believe that the fate of Antigone and Creon is finally justified, because it is part of the ritual by means of which the community is able to maintain itself.[6] Certainly, there is an aspect of ritual ambiguity to the scapegoating of Antigone and Creon, but an interpretation of the tragedy in which this is the final, harmonious

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[6] Rohdich's ideas form a good example: ''Die Dichtung bürdet der Person die Folgen einer schuldhaften Massnahme auf [...] und jagt sie als Sündenbock aus dem Schein einer gereinigten Gesellschaft, die vom individualen Miasma ihres frevelnden Führers genas. Aus dem Untergang der Heldin und der Vernichtung ihres Widerparts geht die Polis nicht nur als das unbeschädigt Überlebende, sondern in seinem Bestand Gerechtfertigte und Bejahte hervor'' (Rohdich A 229).

answer is a surreptitious exponent of separative cosmology: it is quietly forgotten that the exorcism of Antigone and Creon is paradoxical, because it shows the city thriving on the loss of its very leaders, those who are high in the city. The exorcism is partly an auto-exorcism, which points to the ambiguity of power.

The power of which Antigone and Creon are the vehicles cannot be divided into just and unjust parts, nor can it be harmonized in a final scene of higher justice. Their reckless acts, their ambiguous fates, their holy pollutions, are alien to coherent, separative or harmonious thought. Therefore these protagonists cannot be incorporated into any philosophical system. Though we deplore Derrida's romantic, orthodox emphasis on Antigone as the sole heroine of the tragedy, we do agree with his description of her tragically ambiguous position: Antigone is an impossible desire which is unable to live, which both undermines order and supports it from her crypt.[7]

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[7] ''[...]cet immense désir impossible qui ne pouvait pas vivre, capable seulement de renverser, paralyser ou excéder un système et une histoire, d'interrompre la vie du concept, de lui couper le souffle ou bien, ce qui revient au même, de le supporter depuis le dehors ou le dessous d'une crypte.

Crypte—on aurait dit du transcendental ou du refoulé, de l'impensé ou de l'exclu—qui organise le sol auquel elle n'appartient pas'' (Derrida Gl 187).