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Dionysos and Katharsis in *Antigone*

In the fifth stasimon of Sophokles' *Antigone* the chorus observe that “the whole city is subject to a violent sickness” and invoke the presence of Dionysos “with kathartic foot.” It is generally assumed that the katharsis the chorus has in mind is purification of Thebes from a plague or pollution arising from the unburied corpse of Polyneikes; katharsis of this sort is however unattested as a function of Dionysos. A case can be made that we have here rather the earliest explicit attestation of the kathartic effect of ecstatic Dionysiac dancing upon νόσος as a species of mental disorder, the chorus equating the mental “sickness” of Kreon, Antigone and Haimon with the νόσος of civil strife afflicting their city.

1. *ANTIGONE* 1115-54: THE PROBLEM

After being thoroughly reproached by Teiresias, Kreon finally agrees that his behavior has been unjust, and he exits with the intention of burying the body of Polyneikes and freeing Antigone. It is at this point that the chorus sing the ode to Dionysos:

πολυώνυμε, Καδμείας νύμφας ἄγαλμα καὶ Διὸς βαρυβρεμέτα γένος, κλυτὰν δὲ ἀμφέπεις Ἴταλίαν, μέδεις δὲ παγκοίνοις Ἐλευσινίας Δηοῦς ἐν κόλποις, ὡς Βακχεῖ,	στρ. α 1116 1120
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Βακχᾶν ματρόπολιν Θήβαν
ναιετῶν παρ' ὑγρόν ⟨τ'⟩
Ίεμηνοῦ ρέεθρον, ἀγρίου τ'
ἐπὶ σπορᾶι δράκοντος·

1125

σὲ δ' ὑπὲρ διλόφου πέτρας
στέροψ ὄπωπε
λιγνύς, ἐνθα Κωρύκιαι
στείχουσι νύμφαι Βακχίδες
Κασταλίας τε νᾶμα·
καὶ σε Νυσαίων ὄρέων
κισσήρεις ὅχθαι χλωρά τ' ἀ-
κτὰ πολυστάφυλος πέμπει
ἀμβρότων ἐπέων
εὐαζόντων Θηβαίας
ἐπικυκοποῦντ' ἀγυιάς·

1130

1135

τὰν ἐκ πασῶν τιμᾶις
ὑπερτάταν πόλεων
ματρὶ σὺν κεραυνίαι·
καὶ νῦν, ὃς βιαίας ἔχεται
πάνδαμος πόλις ἐπὶ νόσου,
μολεῖν καθαρσίωι ποδὶ Παρνασίαν
ὑπὲρ κλειτὸν ἦ στονόεντα πορθμόν.

στρ. β

1140

1145

ἰὼ πῦρ πνεόντων
χοράγ' ἀστρων, νυχίων
φθεγμάτων ἐπίκυκοπε,
παῖ Ζηνὸς γένεθλον, προφάνηθ',
ῶναξ, ταῖς ἄμα περιπόλοις
Θυίασιν, αἵ σε μαινόμεναι πάννυχοι
χορεύουσι τὸν ταμίαν Ἰακχον.

ἀντ. β

1150

(strophe a)

You of many names, glory of the Kadmeian nymph and child of deep-thundering Zeus, you who care for famous Italy and rule in the hospitable recesses of Eleusinian Deo, O Bakchos, dwelling in Thebes, the mother-city of Bakchai, by the stream of Ismenos and over the seed of the savage dragon;

(antistrophe a)

you the flashing, smoky flame saw over the twin-crested rock, where the Korykian nymphs, Bakhides, come, and the stream of Kastalia (saw you), and you the ivy-covered slopes of the Nysaian mountains and the

green shore of many grape-clusters send, while immortal cries of *euai* are heard, a visitor to the ways of Thebes,

(strophe b)

which of all cities you, with your mother whom the lightning killed, honor most. So now, when the whole city is subject to a violent sickness, come with kathartic foot over the Parnassian slope or the groaning strait.

(antistrophe b)

Io chorus-leader of the fire-breathing stars, master of the voices of the night, child born of Zeus, appear O king with your attendant Thyiads, who in madness dance through the night for you, the steward Iakchos.

This is an exceptionally attractive lyric, even by Sophoklean standards; it occurs at a crucial point in the action of the play, is entirely focused on Dionysos, and presents no inordinate textual difficulty. Nevertheless, many critics pass over it in silence, and those who deal with it most often dismiss it as one of those “cheerful choruses,” of little or no relevance to the plot,¹ that Sophokles likes to deploy immediately before a catastrophe.² These are known by a traditional and convenient misnomer as “hyporchemes”; deluded by some piece of apparent good news, the chorus sings and dances a euphoric, *presto* ode, which is immediately followed by a report of utter disaster.³ This particular hyporcheme is in the form of a Υμνος κλητικός,⁴ the highly conventional form of divine invocation attested in both literary and cultic settings and familiar to modern scholars since Eduard Norden’s famous study.⁵

1. T.B.L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles* (Oxford, 1936) 105, cf. 116 n. 1, 184 n. L. Similarly simplistic treatment in e.g. G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study of Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca, 1958) 200-201; G. H. Gellie, *Sophocles: A Reading* (Melbourne, 1972) 229-30, cf. 50.

2. The canonical comparanda are *Aias* 693-718, *Tr* 633-62 and *OT* 1086-1109; add *Tr* 205-24. See e.g. Walther Kranz, *Stasimon: Untersuchungen zu Form und Gehalt der griechischen Tragödie* (Berlin, 1933) 213-14.

3. The fundamental discussion is A. M. Dale, “*Stasimon and Hyporcheme*,” *Eranos* 48 (1950) 14-20 = *Collected Papers* (Cambridge, 1969) 34-40. See also Albert Henrichs, “Why Should I Dance?: Choral Self-Referentiality in Greek Tragedy,” *Arion*, 3rd ser., 3 (1994/1995) 56-111, at 59-60, and 73-85 on Sophoklean hyporchemes and their Dionysiac associations.

4. The hymnic aspect of the ode has been dealt with in great detail by Klaus-Dieter Dorsch, *Götterhymnen in den Chorliedern der griechischen Tragiker: Form, Inhalt und Funktion* (Diss. Münster, 1983) 66-78, though one might differ from aspects of Dorsch’s approach even to the purely formal elements.

5. Many features of hymns and some basic structural principles were studied by K. Ausfeld, “De Graecorum precationibus quaestiones,” *Jhb. f. Ph. Suppl.* 28 (1903) 505-47, but the classic treatment is E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1913) 143-77. There is a very useful collection of thematic and verbal conventions in K. Keyßner, *Gottesvorstellung und Lebensauffassung im griechischen Hymnus* (Stuttgart, 1932). For a recent treatment with further bibliography and discussion of some notable cultic examples see J. M. Bremer, “Greek hymns,” in H. S. Versnel, ed., *Faith, Hope and Worship* (Leiden, 1981) 193-215; cf. also in the same volume Versnel, “Religious mentality in ancient prayer,” 1-64, esp. 14-15 and 29.

Commentators have duly noted the well-attested connections of Dionysos with the various places, Italy, Eleusis, Parnassos-Delphi, mentioned beside Thebes in the ode. Historians of Greek religion have noted that we have here the earliest evidence for the equation of Dionysos with Iakchos, patron of the procession from Athens to Eleusis on the nineteenth of Boedromion.⁶ Until recently little had been done to connect these disparate cultic facts, but Albert Henrichs has produced a coherent account of central aspects of the ode, showing how Sophokles stresses Dionysos' intimate connection, especially in his Eleusinian and Italian aspects, with hopes for a happy afterlife, and thus with Antigone's "progressive self-identification with the world of the dead."⁷ Little will be added here to what Henrichs has to say on these matters.

Interpretation of the ode remains conditioned by the assumption that it culminates as prayer in a request for purification from pollution. Jebb translates βιαίας ἔχεται ... ἐπὶ νόνου (1140-41) as "is captive to a violent (= a most grievous) plague," and notes (ad loc.) that "the νόνος is the divine anger which Thebes has incurred." Here he refers to line 1015, where, in the midst of describing the failure of his augury and the filling by dogs and birds of all the βωμοί and ἐσχάραι with scraps of Polyneikes' body, Teiresias says καὶ ταῦτα τῆς σῆς ἐξ φρενὸς νοεῖ πόλις. Jebb (ad loc.) translates the adjective applied to the altars, πλήρεις ("full"), as "defiled." We will have more to say on the subjects of pollution and of the possible senses of the νόνος group of words, but it is clear that Jebb is over-translating, that this interpretation of the passage conditions the construction he puts on νοεῖ in 1015, and that this in turn is behind his translation of νόνου in 1141 as "a plague."

This view of the matter has enjoyed universal acceptance. Kamerbeek says (p. 186) that the chorus sing a hymn to Dionysos "to come to the rescue of his city, now in the grip of imminent danger by awful defilement,"—we note Jebb's word—"and to come forthwith with purifying feet." He is less confident about Jebb's claim (ad 1144) that "Dionysos was often invested with the attributes of the Purifier and Healer"; Kamerbeek prefers to express the connection as follows: "To Dionysos, renewer of life and by his Delphian connection associated with Apollo, is attributed a purifying force."

The difficulty here is that Dionysos is unknown in the role of purifier from pollution. The passages of Athenaios cited by Jebb in support of his contention⁸ only show that the god could be thought of as "Doctor Dionysos" in virtue of the properties of wine.⁹ Reviewing the evidence for Dionysos as purifier, Robert

6. See Ludwig Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin, 1932) 73f.

7. Albert Henrichs, "Between Country and City: Cultic Dimensions of Dionysus in Athens and Attica," in M. Griffith and D. J. Mastronarde, eds., *Cabinet of the Muses* (Chico, Calif., 1990 [Festschrift Rosenmeyer]) 257-77 at 264-69; quotation at 267.

8. Viz 22e and 36-37.

9. Noted by Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1983) 288 n. 36, without reference to Jebb.

Parker notes that "The chorus in the *Antigone* call on Dionysos to come χαθαρίωι ποδὶ to rescue the city. This reveals nothing about the cult of Dionysos. The chorus, needing purification, turn to their city's greatest god (cf. Soph. *OT* 210) to supply it: a Pylian would have invoked Poseidon."¹⁰

Parker thus accepts, as everyone else does, the premise that the ode is a prayer for purification from pollution; he disagrees with Kamerbeek in seeing the attribution to Dionysos of a purificatory function as based on his preeminence at Thebes rather than on his brother's expertise in this area. It might be urged further against Kamerbeek's view that in an ode which includes Delphi in its itinerary a reference by way of clarification to the purifier Apollo would not have come amiss. Yet Parker's view is not really satisfying either. It is one thing for Dionysos to be numbered among a group of deities, including Apollo, invoked to end the plague in Thebes—in concrete mythical terms, to counterattack Ares—at the beginning of *OT*, quite another for Dionysos alone to be asked to perform a function with which he is nowhere else associated. The Greeks were acutely conscious of the capacities of their gods, and I can discover no instance in which they can be shown to have resorted to a god, however important to them, on a matter in which the god took no interest and with which other gods were closely associated. Athenians and Argives did not look to Athena or Hera for wine and Thebans did not look to Dionysos for help in childbirth; so too the Athenians took the first available opportunity to import the cult of Asklepios after their experience of the plague. Parker describes the chorus as undertaking what seems an extremely arbitrary proceeding; and certainly Sophokles has done nothing to prevent this appearing a curiosity, though Delphi and Apollo were at hand for this purpose.

Henrichs and Mikalson, the historians of Greek religion who have dealt with the ode most recently, are more cautious about the invocation of Dionysos as purifier, acknowledging that it is something of an anomaly.¹¹ A more convincing view of the ode can however be suggested. The *vócoc* from which the whole demos suffers is best understood as primarily the disorder of civil or familial strife, arising in turn from distress or sickness of a mental kind, and the relief to be granted by Dionysos as consisting in kathartic dancing, for which this passage will become the earliest evidence.

10. *Ibid.*, 290 n. 45.

11. Henrichs (above, n. 7) 265 with 275 n. 37, who suggests that Dionysos' "cathartic foot" might be broadly comparable with healing hands, which are well known, and more specifically with "supernatural feet that heal by contact," for which the ancient evidence is negligible; he notes as an alternative the explanation offered in the present paper, but its "drastic reinterpretation of the nature of the *vócoc* that afflicts Thebes" gives him pause. At "Why Should I Dance?" (above, n. 3) 103 n. 90 Henrichs endorses the connection of both foot and katharsis with Dionysiac dance. Jon D. Mikalson, *Honor Thy Gods: Popular Religion in Greek Tragedy* (Chapel Hill, 1991) 302 n. 73, who sees Sophokles as the tragedian most inclined to manipulate the realities of popular religion to suit his literary purposes (217-25).

It has been recognized by some scholars that the reference here is to Bakchic dance itself rather than to Dionysos specified through synecdoche by his foot. Eitrem noted that the chorus call on Dionysos to come *καθάρσιωι ποδὶ* “um die Stadt zu reinigen. Der Ausdruck ist sehr auffällig (das Schol. bietet nichts), aber reine Füße als ein Merkmal der kultischen Reinheit setzt wohl das ‘Reinigen durch den Fuß’ voraus. Der orgiastische Tanz des Dionysos und seiner Verehrer wird damit gemeint sein.”¹² Eitrem’s “purifications through the foot” remain problematic; he recognizes that Dionysiac dancing is meant, but sees it as having a kathartic effect in the sense of purifying the city from pollution. A handful of scholars have taken the same approach, assuming a reference to the dance without offering any argument, and supposing it to be effective against pollution without offering any parallel.¹³ Most scholars have found this view unworthy even of mention.¹⁴ This is partly because it has not been properly defended, but also because it is very surprising: the conjunction of Dionysiac dancing and katharsis ought to involve homeopathic treatment of madness or mental anxiety rather than the combating of an external ill such as pollution. Interpretation of the ode turns on the exegesis of three words: *πούς*, *καθάρσιος*, and *vócoc*. Let us look first at the foot.

2. DIONYSOS AND THE DANCE

Close observation of feet in ancient hymns and epiphanies, and especially in cultic contexts involving Dionysos, reveals that they are almost invariably dancing. It can also be shown that the various manifestations of Dionysos in our ode are united in the dance. This is the first step out of the difficulties involved in the traditional interpretation, with its exclusive focus on pollution.

I. GREEK SACRAL PODOLOGY

One will seek long in our sources for a purification from pollution achieved through the agency of the foot. It is generally taken for granted, though I have found no explicit statement to this effect, that in the phrase *μολεῖν καθάρσιωι ποδὶ* the use of the word *πούς* is a sort of synecdoche, or is as natural as it would be in

12. S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Kristiania, 1915) 92-93.

13. Louis Moulinier, *Le pur et l'impur dans la pensée des Grecs d'Homère à Aristote* (Paris, 1952) 116; Paul Vicaire, “Place et figure de Dionysos dans la tragédie de Sophocle,” *REG* 81 (1968) 351-73, at 363f. These two and Eitrem appear to have come to the same view independently. Vicaire’s view is approved by Anton Bierl, “Was hat die Tragödie mit Dionysos zu tun? Rolle und Funktion des Dionysos am Beispiel der ‘Antigone’ des Sophokles,” *Würzburger Jahrb. f. d. Altertumswissenschaft* 15 (1989) 43-57; see also idem, *Dionysos und die griechische Tragödie* (Tübingen, 1991 [*Classica Monacensia* 1]) 127-32. In a single sentence in her very suggestive discussion of the ode, Elizabeth van Nes Ditmars, *Sophocles’ Antigone: Lyric Shape and Meaning* (Pisa, 1992) 167 connects the foot not only with dancing but with healing from madness.

14. Parker (above, n. 9), e.g., does not mention Moulinier’s view, though he cites the interpretation of *Ba. 77* (discussed below) that is on the same page of Moulinier’s book.

any phrase involving coming or going. In a context of purification the specification of the foot is pointless; one would expect the hand¹⁵ rather than the foot to be chosen if a part of the body were to be mentioned at all. The use of πούς in contexts involving walking or running is of course common, but involves a quite concrete picture of feet touching the ground. In a passage where the epiphany of a god is sought such a use seems rather pedestrian, and I can find no example in a passage involving divine epiphany of a foot mentioned merely as the means of locomotion: it has always some specific association.¹⁶ Here it is clear that the adjective καθάρσιος has a central significance, and—on the traditional view—it is odd that it should be applied to the foot: neither the god's mode of transit nor his foot as such have any role to play in alleviating pollution.

Consideration of certain hymnic conventions supports these general conclusions. Sophokles' phrase is regarded as amounting to "come (μολεῖν ... ποδί) as a purifier (καθάρσιοι)." The natural way to say this is μολεῖν καθάρσιος (ποδί), which is of course an exact metrical equivalent of our phrase. The specification of the god's function or state of mind in the nominative,¹⁷ as in μολῶν ἄναξ Απόλλων | ὁ Δάλιος εὔγνωστος | ἐμοὶ ξυνείη διὰ παντὸς εὔφρων (*Aias* 703-705) and elsewhere in Sophokles,¹⁸ is conventional, and indeed in the conservative language of hymns I can find no instance of such epithets being simply transferred, though of course they may be applied to appropriate parts, as for example in such expressions as "come having benevolent heart" or "receive your servant with benevolent mind."¹⁹ This requires us to conclude that the foot is in some concrete sense the agent of the katharsis. In this respect it resembles the frequent instrumental datives in such hymns, often specifying some useful weapon, as at the end of the parodos of *OT* (213-15), where Dionysos is asked "to approach with flaming torch against the god dishonored among gods (Ares)." The usual interpretation also overlooks the conventional status of μολεῖν; the verb is a standard component of the hymnic

15. See Keyßner (above, n. 5) 95, and on healing hands in general Otto Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder* (Giessen, 1909 [RGVV 8.1]) 1-62.

16. Three passages perhaps require a word of explanation. At Aisch. *Eum.* 294 Orestes in good hymnic fashion is compiling a catalogue of possible locations of Athena, whose presence he is invoking. He wonders whether in Libya she τίθεται ὁρθὸν ἡ κατηρεφῆ πόδα | φίλοις ἀρήγους' κτλ.; E. K. Borthwick, *Hermes* 97 (1969) 385-90, summarised by Sommerstein ad loc., explains the words as referring to alternative sorts of movement in hoplite fighting or armed dancing, so that a quite specific visual image appropriate to the goddess' activity is aimed at. When Athena arrives at Orestes' summons, she says she has come from fighting at the Skamander, ἔνθεν διώκους' ἥλθον ἀτρυπτον πόδα | πτερῶν ἀτερ κτλ. (403f.). This example comes closest to being merely pedestrian, but the phrase is there to indicate the speed with which Athena has come, and is part of an elaborate (and notoriously vexatious) sketch of her mode of transit which continues in the following line or two. Finally, at Kall. *h.Dem.* 10, πότνια, πῶς σε δύναντο πόδες φέρεν ἔστ' ἐπὶ δυθμάς, κτλ., Demeter is on foot because she has been searching out the tracks of the lost Persephone (ἄπυκτα μετέστιχεν λχνια κώρας [9]).

17. Or accusative when the request is governed by a verb such as "beg" or "pray."

18. Several times e.g. in the parodos of the *OT* (152-215).

19. *H.Hom.* 22.7 and Pindar *Paian* 5.45; see Keyßner (above, n. 5) 87ff. for abundant illustration of the normal formulations.

request to come, as in the *Aias* passage just quoted, *OK* 1095, and elsewhere.²⁰ It and other verbs of motion are used with the sort of epithets and phrases we have noted, and like them looks to the god's arrival and its purpose rather than his journey. It is not surprising then that neither the foot nor any other bald reference to the method of locomotion is in such contexts ever associated with them.

Greek sacrificial podology has been a neglected topic.²¹ There seem to be four basic reasons for mentioning the foot in divine epiphanies: simply as a peg for appropriate footwear;²² as one way among others of emphasizing the god's enormous size or stride;²³ as a way of focusing on the significant act of crossing the threshold;²⁴ or because the god and the worshipers who invoke the god are dancing.

The last type is by far the most common, from the prooimion of the *Theogony* onward.²⁵ Alkman perhaps provides our earliest connection of the feet with dancing of an ecstatic kind,²⁶ which becomes common in cultic hymns to Dionysos.²⁷ In the hymn to Poseidon attributed to Arion (*PMG* 939) dolphins are presented as choristers who χορεύουσι κύκλωι | κούφοις ποδῶν ρίψασιν. In this case the mention of feet indicates that their connection with dancing was so conventional as to override the word's literal meaning—apart from this word the metaphor of the dance is perfectly adapted to the sportive leaping of real dolphins.²⁸ In fifth-century drama the word is used with the same special significance,²⁹ above all in connection with Dionysos.³⁰ Most of these passages have to do with the feet of his worshipers rather than those of the god, but it is by joining his devotees in

20. For μολεῖν/μόλε in invocations cf. e.g. Aisch. *Eum.* 289; Eur. *Ba.* 583f.; Aristoph. *Lys.* 1263, 1297, *Thesm.* 1146; Limenius 45 Powell.

21. The only original treatment of the subject known to me is a footnote in Eduard Fraenkel's *Horace* (Oxford, 1957), 204-205 n. 4; he adduces seven passages and does not distinguish types among them. He has been followed by Frederick Williams ad Kall. *h.Ap.* 3 and by Christopher Brown, "Dionysos and the Women of Elis: *PMG* 871," *GRBS* 23 (1982) 305-14 at 306 n. 7.

22. E.g. Aisch. *Pers.* 659f.; Aristoph. *Thesm.* 1098-1100; and Catullus 61.9f. In the first two cases the physical use of the feet is anticipated, as also at Aristoph. *Peace* 279, 319 etc., where the god Polemos will kick things over with his feet.

23. *H.Hom.Dem.* 188-89; Richardson ad loc. compares *Il.* 4.443 and *h.Hom.Aphr.* 173f. Cf. also Kall. *h.Dem.* 58; Verg. *Aen.* 4.177 = 10.767.

24. Richardson ad *h.Hom.Dem.* 188-89 with abundant examples and further references; the threshold motif is here as elsewhere combined with that of size. See also Kall. *h.Ap.* 3; Theokr. 2.104; Cat. 68.70-72; Hor. C. 1.4.13f. Cf. Eur. *Ion* 220-21, where, as in Kallimachos, dancing is also involved.

25. *Theog.* 3f., 70 with West ad loc.; Lesb. fr. inc. 16 LP.

26. *PMG* 3.8-10, where κούμ[αν] ξανθὰν τινάξω gives the ecstatic note.

27. Pratinas *PMG* 708.14; cf. *PMG* 977, *PMG* 871.5.

28. The metaphor is conventional: see Eur. *Hel.* 1454; *Anacreonta* 57.23-27 with West's *loci similes*.

29. Aisch. *Eum.* 370-76; Aristoph. *Lys.* 1307-17, *Thesm.* 947-69.

30. Aristoph. *Thesm.* 985 ἀλλ' εῖ ἐπ' ἄλλ' ἀνάστρεψ' εὐρύθμωι ποδί. Most frequently in Eur. *Ba.*: 168f. κῶλον ἔγει ταχύπουν σκιρτήμασι βάχχα, 184f. ποὶ δεῖ χορεύειν, ποῖ καθιειτάναι πόδα | καὶ χρῆτα σεῖσαι πολιόν; 862-66, 1230f. δεῦρο βαχχεῖωι ποδί | στείχειν Άγαύην.

their dance that Dionysos normally makes his epiphany, often in response to such invocations as μόλε νῦν ἡμέτερον ἐς | θίασον.³¹ The chorus of *Frogs* anticipates an epiphany of Iakchos, the Eleusinian Dionysos invoked also in the *Antigone* ode, asking him to come χορεύσων | ὁσίους ἐς θιασώτας (326-27),

θρασεῖ δ' ἐγκαταχρούων
ποδὶ τὰν ἀκόλαστον
φιλοπαίγμονα τιμάν,
χαρίτων πλεῖστον ἔχουσαν μέρος, ἀγνάν, ιερὰν
ὅσιοις μύσταις χορείαν. (330-36)

The word “dance” comes as the culmination of a very intense description that must have owed much to ritual and ritual language. Here is the best parallel to our passage: the πούς of Iakchos in the dative, referring to the dance in which he will join his worshipers.³² Dionysos dancing among his worshipers is of course common also on vases.³³ Given this background it seems probable that a Greek audience would have been disposed to take Dionysos’ foot in μολεῖν καθαρσίωι ποδὶ as a dancing foot.³⁴

2. DANCE IN THE ANTIGONE ODE

If we now return to *Antigone* it becomes easier to see that dance is the unifying theme of the fifth stasimon. Immediately after the opening genealogy we hear of Italy, where the popularity of the more mystic varieties of Dionysiac cult is well established,³⁵ and of Eleusis, where, under the name Iakchos, Dionysos was the tutelary god of the procession, which involved much ecstatic dancing according to the parodos of the *Frogs*,³⁶ and of the mainadic *pannychis* that followed, as we gather from the end of the present ode and elsewhere. But it is from the mention of Thebes, “metropolis of the Bakchai,”³⁷ that explicit references to dance begin.

31. *Ba.* 583f., cf. e.g. Aristoph. *Kn.* 559, *Thesm.* 1137.

32. Cf. Eur. *Hypsipyle* fr. 752 N² ≈ Aristoph. *Frogs* 1211-13, where the god is explicitly dancing with the Delphic maidens; so also *Ion* 714-17. In later hymns Dionysos is called αἱ χορευτής: *Epid.h.* 1.3 Maas = *IG IV* 1² 129.4 (Βρόμιον τε χορευτάν); *Orph.h.Mousaion* 9 Quandt (Διόνυσε χορευτά).

33. See e.g. the article on Dionysos in *LIMC*; cf. Beazley’s examples from the middle of the sixth century, cited by Bond on the opening of *Hypsipyle*.

34. Among later examples of the motif cf. esp. Hor. *C.* 1.4.7, 3.25.11f.; Sen. *Oed.* 433; and above all Cat. 63 *passim*.

35. See e.g. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987) 22-23 with notes; Henrichs (above, n. 7) 267f. For defense of the paradosis Ἰταλίαν against various attempts to emend see H. Lloyd-Jones, “Pindar and the After-Life,” in *Pindare* (Geneva, 1985 [*Entretiens sur l’antiquité classique* 31]) 245-83, at 263-64 = *Greek Epic, Lyric, and Tragedy* (Oxford, 1990) 92-93; H. Lloyd-Jones and N. G. Wilson, *Sophoclea: Studies on the Text of Sophocles* (Oxford, 1990) 144; Henrichs (above, n. 7) 276f. n. 49.

36. See Fritz Graf, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Berlin, 1974) 40-50 on the parodos, esp. 46 on dance, and 51-58 on Iakchos and Dionysos.

37. The phrase is a quite literal description: see Albert Henrichs, “Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina,” *HSCP* 82 (1978) 121-60, at 123-37 for the founding of Bakchic rites by

The first antistrophe begins with the smoky light of the torches and the “Korykian nymph Bakchides,” passes over another mountain—Nysa, blooming with ivy and vines—and reverts to Thebes amidst cries of “euai.” We know of nothing but mainadic ritual that Dionysos and a group of women might be doing on Parnassos,³⁸ and the torch is of course a well-attested requisite of their famous dance there. The second strophe states the hymnic *argumentum* and asks Dionysos to come with kathartic foot over Parnassos or the groaning strait, which takes us back to the mainadic dance on Parnassos and perhaps to Mount Nysa, and thus reinforces our interpretation of the foot. Finally, the second antistrophe is an extravagant evocation of Dionysiaca dance with a distinctly cosmic flavour: the god is chorus-leader of the fire-breathing stars and master of the voices of the night, and is to appear with his attendant Thyiads, who in an ecstatic *pannychis* celebrate him in dance as steward Iakchos; both the imagery and the Eleusinian reference bring the mainadic dance to a very exalted plane.

On the basis of our investigation of the cultic foot, and given the emphasis on dance throughout the ode, we can hardly escape the conclusion that χολεῖν καθαρσίωι ποδὶ anticipates the advent of a dancing Dionysos. In most of the parallel passages cited there is an explicit reference to dancing close to the mention of the foot. Although the verb χορεύειν occurs only at the end of the fifth stasimon, Dionysiaca dance is the dominant motif from the first antistrophe onward. Moreover, in the second antistrophe, which constitutes a sort of pendant to the hymn, reiterating the request that Dionysos come, it is clear that he is dancing. This is parallel to the first request, and must be taken to describe the same event: a kathartic dance for and with the god.

If dance is central to the god’s role in the ode, it is equally central to the character of this type of ode. We noted that it is one of those euphoric songs, immediately preceding the catastrophe, that are a favourite Sophoclean device. The scholiasts called them by the misnomer “hyporchema” because of common characteristics: they are all limpid and urgent, and they all refer explicitly to dancing; it is a fair assumption that the dancing of the choruses who performed them was correspondingly strenuous and excited. This basic point must reinforce our conclusion on other grounds that the fifth stasimon is united by the dance. The dance is kathartic, and we must now consider the connections between dance, katharsis and Dionysos.

three Theban mainads “of the descent of Kadmeian Ino” at Magnesia on Maiander in the Hellenistic period (*IMagn.* 215).

38. See Aisch. *Eum.* 22-26; Eur. *Ion* 550-53, 714-17, 1125-27, *Ph.* 226-28, *IT* 1242-44, *Ba.* 306-308, fr. 752 N² ≈ Aristoph. *Frogs* 1211-13 (opening lines of *Hypsipyle*); Aristoph. *Clouds* 603-606; Philodamos *Dion. Paian* 21-23 Powell; Aristonous *Apoll. Paian* 37 Powell. See Bond on the *Hypsipyle* and Dover on the *Clouds* passage.

3. BAKCHIC AND KORYBANTIC KATHARSIS

The only known association of Dionysos with katharsis is in homeopathic ritual dancing, but it has been doubted whether this association was made as early as the fifth century. To achieve this kind of purification the mentally afflicted participate in ecstatic Dionysiac dancing, and by increasing the intensity of their “madness” in a controlled cultic context are relieved of it: as the ritual runs its course and returns to normality, the participants leave behind not only the ritually-generated madness but whatever mental distress previously afflicted them. Three basic sources are usually considered in connection with this phenomenon: the Melampous myth, Plato’s discussion of “Bakchic and Korybantic rites,” and Aristotle’s definition of tragedy. The Melampous myth is often regarded as “the mythical prototype of this homeopathic cure,”³⁹ but Pseudo-Apollodorus’ version (2. [26-29] 2.2) is the only one involving this sort of cure, and the original story, which may well have been connected with Hera rather than Dionysos, probably involved the employment of conceptually very different methods of healing or purification.⁴⁰ That leaves us with Plato, Aristotle, and some scattered earlier evidence; this has often been impugned, but another look suggests that it is solid enough.

The chorus of *Bakchai* in the parodos describe as blessed “whoever is fortunate enough to know the *teletai* of the gods, leads a pure life, καὶ θιασεύεται ψυχὰν | ἐν ὄφεσι βακχεύων | ὁσίοις καθαρμοῖς (73-77).” Discussing the hope for a happy afterlife very commonly associated with later forms of Dionysiac cult, Henrichs says “Im Grunde ist diese Jenseitserwartung schon in dem Makarismos der euripideischen Bakchen angedeutet.”⁴¹ He later explained the καθαρμοί in particular as referring to the “mountain rites . . . as a religious group experience which ‘merges the individual consciousness in a group consciousness’⁴² and which translates physical exhaustion into spiritual well-being (75 *thiasueutai*

39. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951) 77, following Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen*² (Freiburg, 1898) II 50-52. In his notes Rohde strains the evidence to fit his view that the version of Ps.-Apolldoros is the original one. It is worth noting that that version only hints at homeopathic dancing as the cure.

40. Ps.-Apolldoros attributes the Dionysiac version to Hesiod (F 131 MW), but it is at least as likely that Hera was the divinity in question there: see in general Albert Henrichs, “Die Proitiden im hesiodischen Katalog,” *ZPE* 15 (1974) 297-301; M. L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford, 1985) 78-79. On Melampous and his methods see most recently Parker (above, n. 9) 207-209.

41. Albert Henrichs, “Die Maenaden von Milet,” *ZPE* 4 (1969) 223-241 at 238 with further bibliography on conceptions of the afterlife associated with Dionysiac cult. On the passage in the parodos see A. J. Festugière, “La signification religieuse de la Parodos des Bacchantes,” *Eranos* 54 (1956) 72-86 = *Études de religion grecque et hellénistique* (Paris, 1972) 66-80, who finds here a promise of a happy afterlife connected with secret ritual (the *teletai*).

42. From Dodds’ commentary, p. xx.

*psychan).*⁴³ This seems a cautious formulation; Parker, following Boyancé and Moulinier,⁴⁴ suggests “that mountain dancing is itself the ‘holy purification.’” He supports this statement by referring to the homeopathic element in the Melampus myth; “it is likely,” he adds, “that the Corybantic rites, which similarly cured mental disturbance by homeopathic means, could be spoken of as a ‘purification.’” Parker is also cautious, however, leaving open the possibility that in the Platonic evidence “the ecstatic dancing is distinct from the katharmos” (288 n. 38), and in general finding little evidence for a connection of Dionysiac dances with katharsis. Boyancé and Moulinier had been more sanguine on this point, and a review of the evidence suggests that they were justified.

In the third Pythian,⁴⁵ which seems to be much concerned with an illness of Hieron, Pindar announces his intention to pray to “the Mother,” “for whom and for Pan the Theban maidens dance all night long near my house” (77-79). The scholiast informs us that Pindar had actually built a shrine of the Mother, and, to account for Pindar’s reference to her here, adds that she is *καθάρτρια τῆς μανίας*. We understand that the scholiast is doing his best for us, but it is of course unlikely that Pindar should intercede for Hieron with a goddess connected exclusively with victims of mental derangement. Yet Pindar is evidently interceding, and in a context of ecstatic dance, as the inclusion of Pan indicates. This suggests that such rites were conceived rather as generally healthy and restorative than as specialist treatments of pathological conditions; as we shall see, less prestigious cults provided emergency care. The inclusion of Pan in the Theban rites of the Mother suggests that we have to do here with the sort of syncretism of ecstatic cults exemplified by the parodos of the *Bakchai*. Pan is an habitué of the Dionysiac thiasos, and both the rite and its Theban locale suggest at least a conceptual link with Dionysos. The scholiast seems to have sensed this, and tells us that Dionysos too is *καθαρτικὸς μανίας*. Of course scholiastic evidence can always be impugned, but we will find support for this.⁴⁶

When in *Choephoroi* Orestes announces his own death to his mother, she replies, among other things, *vūn δ' ἡπερ ἐν δόμοις βακχείας καλῆς | ιατρὸς ἐλπὶς ἦν, τπαροῦσαν ἐγγράφειτ* (698f.). Whatever may be the proper reading of the last clause, its sense must be that the hope is defunct. Recent editors invariably print Portus’ *κακῆς* for *καλῆς*, and understand it in some such way as Garvie (ad loc.): “that hope which was present in the house as a doctor for your evil revelry,” where “your” refers to the Curse on the house addressed by

43. Albert Henrichs, “Changing Dionysiac Identities,” in Ben F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders, eds., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*. Vol. III: *Self-Definition in the Graeco-Roman World* (London, 1982) 137-60 and 213-35 at 223-24 n. 95.

44. Parker (above, n. 9) 288; Pierre Boyancé, *Le culte des Muses chez les philosophes grecs* (Paris, 1972 [BEFAR 141]) 64-73; Moulinier (above, n. 13) 116-18, who adduces Ba. 77.

45. Celebrating a victory in, perhaps, 474, but the date of composition is disputed.

46. Parker (above, n. 9) 288 n. 38 cites the scholiast as evidence for katharsis in connection with the Mother, but ignores the statement about Dionysos in the same source.

Klytaimestra at the beginning of her speech. The βαρχεία should be referred to the Curse because, according to Garvie, "Aeschylus is certainly thinking of the evil revelry of the Erinyes in the house," an anticipation of the mainadic Erinyes at *Eumenides* 500.⁴⁷ This seems, without possessive or even article, rather abrupt, and it is also odd to speak of hope as "curing" the mad violence of the Curse itself rather than as countering human fear of it, for example. We ought probably to follow Wilamowitz (ad loc.) in retaining the manuscript reading and taking λατρὸς ἐλπὶς as paired: "Heilungshoffnung auf einen schönen Jubelrausch." The associations elicited will be joyful celebration and relief of anxiety. The point cannot be pressed, but the passage accords with other evidence.

This is principally supplied by Plato,⁴⁸ who offers in the *Phaidros* a typology of divinely-inspired madness. In the summary at 265b the four types are named and provided with tutelary divinities: mantic madness is in the gift of Apollo; poetic in that of the Muses; erotic, the most sublime form, is associated with Aphrodite and Eros; and telestic madness is the property of Dionysos. "Telestic" madness assumes *teletai*, and we hear of these in a difficult sentence in the body of the dialogue (244de).⁴⁹ Certain νόοι and πόνοι have been brought about in great families by divine wrath; Μανία herself has, by resort to prayer and service of the gods, discovered a way out of these νόοι: καθαρμοί and τελεταί with which she restores to normality τὸν ἔαυτῆς ἔχοντα, finding a λύσις τῷ ὄρθῳ μανέντι τε καὶ κατασχομένῳ τῶν παρόντων κακῶν. This passage was once held to refer to the story of Melampus, but Linforth has given excellent reasons for rejecting this notion, among others that by all accounts the Proetids suffered for some offence of their own, not for a curse on their family (169). He suggests that the reference is deliberately vague, Sokrates being concerned to present telestic madness as "a dignified and worthy thing, without lowering the tone of his discourse by reminding the reader of some of the more degraded current manifestations of it" (171). This may well be the case; Plato has also chosen not to name a particular god here, but later associates such phenomena with Dionysos. It is more probable, however, that the personification of μανία is just an appropriate conceit; the rite itself, properly undertaken, provides relief: madness finds out its own cure. Parker (288 n. 38) regards it as possible that the καθαρμοί and τελεταί may "really ... refer to two stages, so that the ecstatic dancing is distinct from the *katharmos*." He

47. Cf. Dodds (above, n. 39) 95 n. 87 to similar effect. *Ch.* 698f. has recently been treated by Richard Seaford, "The Attribution of Aeschylus, *Choephoroi* 691-99," *CQ* 39 (1989) 302-306, and Renate Schlesier, "Mixtures of Masks: Maenads as Tragic Models," in Thomas H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone, eds., *Masks of Dionysus* (Ithaca, 1993) 89-114, at 113 n. 91, who also favours καλῆς against Portus' emendation, but suggests a reference to "private initiation cult."

48. Most of the passages discussed in what follows are thoroughly and very capably treated, but without special attention to the questions important for us, by Ivan M. Linforth, "The Corybantic Rites in Plato," *UCPCP* 13 (1946) 121-62. Cf. also Dodds (above, n. 39) 75ff. with notes.

49. Ivan M. Linforth, "Telestic Madness in Plato, *Phaedrus* 244de," *UCPCP* 13 (1946) 163-72 is fundamental here; his interpretation of the sentence seems the most probable, but the problems do not affect what concerns us.

assumes otherwise, and indeed Plato gives no warrant for taking the phrase in this way. Mania discovers and operates every aspect of the rite here described; if the *katharmoi* are some species of preliminary, such as a ritual washing or sacrifice, are we to suppose that these are performed in a mad way? Moreover, the two terms, which we shall find in tandem elsewhere, seem to be telescoped here into the single word λύσις, and in a famous passage of the *Republic* (364e) these three words recur in a similar relationship. Plato is there attacking the ἀγύρται καὶ μάντεις who go from door to door among the rich with their hubbub of books of Orpheus and Musaios, convincing both individuals and cities that there are λύσις τε καὶ καθαρμοὶ ἀδικημάτων διὰ θυσῶν καὶ παιδιᾶς ἥδονῶν . . . δὲ δὴ τελετὰς καλοῦσιν. These are excellent candidates for inclusion among Linforth's "more degraded current manifestations," but it is notable that in connection both with the blessing of telestic madness and with a fraudulent ritual, each designed partly to overcome the sins of the fathers, Plato should employ the same vocabulary. The most reasonable conclusion is that the terms are virtually synonymous and are employed by Plato to characterize rites of a general similarity. This being so, and telestic madness being associated with the name of Dionysos, we can only infer that the connection of the god with katharsis of this type was perfectly familiar to Plato's audience.

When he speaks of an actual ritual of this sort, Plato most commonly names the Korybants and their devotees. These originally form part of the train of the Phrygian Mother or Kybele, but by the second half of the fifth century they become members of the great ecstatic thiasos centred on Dionysos that we meet with in the parodos of *Bakchai* and elsewhere.⁵⁰ Plato and other Athenian authors make it clear that there was associated with them at Athens an ecstatic ritual widely held to be effective in pathological cases. Xanthias in the *Wasps* describes Bdelykleon's attempts to cure Philokleon's court-mania: he washed and purged him with no success, and then submitted him to the Korybantic ritual, from which the old man raced off, tympanon and all, into the lawcourts (118-20).⁵¹ Xanthias had previously used the verb χορυβαντιᾶν in the sense "to be crazy" (8).

These rites are referred to in the *Phaidros*, but as a metaphor in Sokrates' conversation rather than as part of the formal discussion of telestic madness. At 228b Sokrates says that Phaidros must have been delighted to encounter τῷ νοοῦντι περὶ λόγων ἀκοήν, namely Sokrates himself, as he would thus have a συγχορυβαντιῶντα. Just as Mania's rites could overcome νόσοι, which must refer to mental anxieties or, as often, simply to "madness," so Sokrates is afflicted with the mental disease of liking speeches, and he and Phaidros can tend their illness in common Korybantism. When Phaidros has delivered himself of a speech, Sokrates congratulates him and describes its powerful effect on

50. See Kannicht ad Eur. *Hel.* 1301-68, p. 331.

51. Philokleon did not benefit, says Xanthias, from these *teletai*; the scholiast informs us that Bdelykleon performed the μυστήρια of the Korybants for his father ἐπὶ καθαρμῶι τῆς μανίας.

himself (234d): *συνεβάκχευσα μετὰ σοῦ τῆς θείας κεφαλῆς*. Here again Plato has, in a more jocose spirit, cleverly emphasized the homeopathic element: a craze for speeches has found expression in speeches, and is thus alleviated; the alleviation, one need scarcely add, is temporary, and this is an important point. The Korybantism of Sokrates and Phaidros does not “cure” or “purify” them of the speech-obsession forever after. This clearly corresponds to what went on in real Korybantic rites; their evident popularity cannot be reconciled with an exclusive interest in pathological ailments and they must have been enjoyed repeatedly by everyone from the lunatic to the dedicated dancer. In a passage of the *Euthydemos* (277de) describing the Korybantic rite of θρόνωσις in which participants seat a newcomer and dance round him, Sokrates asks the young Kleinias whether he isn’t familiar with this as a participant himself. Linforth draws the obvious conclusion that young men of high society must therefore sometimes have taken part,⁵² and Dodds even claims that Sokrates’ question is most naturally taken as implying the philosopher’s own participation.⁵³

In the *Laws* Plato mentions nurses who have learned that the best way to calm a restive baby is by the application of movement, rocking it in their arms, and by song rather than silence. On the basis of this knowledge they are compared with αἱ περὶ τὰ τῶν Κορυβάντων ιάματα τελοῦσαι; mothers apply kinesis and καταυλοῦσι their charges, with dance and song, καθάπερ αἱ τῶν ἔκφρόνων βακχεῶν ιάσεις (790de). The parallel is very carefully constructed and also essentially superfluous; if Plato had wished for stylistic reasons to avoid naming the Korybants a second time he could as well have done without the second comparison altogether, and might have been expected also to avoid the marked similarity of phrasing. The conclusion seems inescapable that he attached importance to the mention of both Korybantic and Bakchic cures, and he employs this parallel elsewhere, as we have seen. Plato goes on to discover the common element in these phenomena. Both πάθη, the baby’s restlessness and the adult’s “madness,” consist in fear, which is due to some morbid condition of the soul. When rocking movement is applied from without this external kinesis dominates the inner kinesis, which is of a fearful and manic sort, and thus produces a sense of calm relief from the terrible beating of the heart. This leads to sleep for the child and restores to their senses those made to dance to the pipes with the gods.

Some other passages may be more briefly dealt with. At *Krito* 54d Sokrates again associates the Korybantic rites with the pipes. In the *Ion* (533e-534b) we are told that οἱ κορυβαντιῶντες οὐκ ἔμφρονες δύντες ὀρχοῦνται, and again that the Korybants βακχεύουσι when possessed, and like Bakchai can draw milk and honey from rivers κατεχόμενοι, ἔμφρονες δὲ οὖσαι οὖ. This casts an interesting light on the psychology of mainadic ritual, which is compared directly with the mixed-gender Korybantic rites. In a subsequent passage (536c) Sokrates,

52. “Corybantic” (above, n. 48) 123f.

53. Dodds (above, n. 39) 79 with n. 104.

in connection with Ion's love for Homer, says that participants in Korybantic rites "have a sharp ear for one tune only, the one which belongs to the god by whom they are possessed, and to that tune they respond freely with gesture and speech, while they ignore all others."⁵⁴ The passage is valuable for our purposes as an illustration of the tendency to treat ecstatic rituals connected with different divinities as falling under the same general rubric.

In a discussion in the *Laws* (815c) of the sort of dances fit for the state, we pass from the various martial and pacific dances to ὅση μὲν βαχχεία τ' ἔστιν καὶ τῶν ταύταις ἐπομένων, ἃς Νύμφας τε καὶ Πᾶνας καὶ Σειληνοὺς καὶ Σατύρους ἐπονομάζοντες, ὡς φασιν, μιμοῦνται κατωινωμένους, περὶ καθαρμούς τε καὶ τελετάς τινας ἀποτελούντων. The conclusion about these is that οὐκ ἔστι πολιτικὸν τοῦτο τῆς ὁρχήσεως τὸ γένος. It has been disputed whether οὐ πολιτικὸν here means "uncivilised" or merely "not a matter of civic interest."⁵⁵ The latter seems correct: to Linforth's point that "there is no warrant for giving the adjective this turn of condemnation" one can add that the end of the passage, where the topic is left on one side and we pass to "matters that unquestionably concern us," seems to suit a suspension of judgement rather than condemnation.

Finally, we may turn to the famous speech of Alkibiades in the *Symposion*. The young man begins by calling Sokrates an αὐλητής and comparing him to the satyr Marsyas. The music of Marsyas, or of his pupil Olympos, can enchant and possess, and because of its divinity make clear who stands in need of the gods and their *teletai*. So Sokrates' words can astound and possess, and Alkibiades himself, when he hears him, has a pounding of the heart and tears in his eyes "much more than the χορυβαντιῶντες" (215c-e). Linforth claims that when Alkibiades mentions those who need the gods and their *teletai* the Korybants were "without doubt in his mind," although they are explicitly referred to only some ten lines later, and that "the tacit allusion to them" would be understood by the others present. "Teletae, pipes, divine possession, and Phrygian music could point only in that direction."⁵⁶ This must seem a perverse conclusion to anyone who recalls the context of this item of evidence. *Teletai*, flutes and divine possession suit Dionysos at least as well as the Korybants; Phrygian music would suit him only slightly less well, but is not in fact mentioned. The satyr Marsyas is of course a Dionysiaca figure, and indeed the organizing theme of the whole speech is Sokrates' infamous resemblance to satyrs and silenoi, which Alkibiades suggests

54. Dodds' translation, ibid. Linforth (above, n. 48) 140 takes it that Κορυβαντιῶντες is here used generally of anyone taking part in ecstatic rites, and that the music is that of the particular rites. Dodds 98 n. 102, following A. Jahn, assumes that the Korybantic ritual must have involved a "musical diagnosis." Dodds seems to have the stronger case, but certainty is unobtainable.

55. Dodds (above, n. 39) 95 n. 87 and Linforth (above, n. 48) 161 with n. 78 respectively.

56. "Corybantic" (above, n. 48) 141. Dodds (above, n. 39) adopts this interpretation and is thus enabled to use the passage as evidence for his "first or diagnostic stage of the Corybantic rite," 98 n. 102. So far as I can see this view has never been challenged; Dover in his commentary, by referring to Dodds' general treatment, appears to endorse it.

is more than skin-deep. He begins by describing Silenos-figures with pipes in their hands, which open to reveal images of gods. There follows the passage we have been considering, based on the pipes, then a comparison on the ground of erotic inclination (216d): Sokrates appears *très sportif*, but when he is opened a fount of sophrosyne is discovered. We revert to the comparison at the end: Sokrates' discourse looks odd from outside, but when one gets inside it is found to be full of divinity and images of excellence (221d-222a). We must conclude, then, that the primary reference in the passage in question is to specifically Dionysiac possession and *teletai*—one thinks of the Silenos on the Derveni Krater⁵⁷—and that the Korybants are brought in by the way as familiar figures from the same conceptual and cultic realm. One is tempted to suppose on this basis that Plato was as well inclined toward Dionysiac rites of this kind as he apparently is to their Korybantic congeners; but the whole context is one of joviality and fancy, and the inference would not on this ground be altogether safe. Still, if our view of *Laws* 815c is correct, and if we bear in mind that Alkibiades' conceits are invented for him or, if historical, at least not suppressed by Plato, there is no reason to suppose that the philosopher viewed the rites in any other way than he did those of the Korybants, with which he everywhere brackets them. They are amusing for many and therapeutic for some, and are tolerated in the ideal state, though not endorsed. The quacks in the *Republic*, with their books by Orpheus and Musaios, their “incantations” (rather than music and dance?), and their absurd claims about the afterlife, are of course beyond the pale, however superficially similar their rites may be.

Most of the evidence we have discussed is familiar, but we have been able to reach some new conclusions which we may here summarise. A coherent pattern seems to emerge. We find fifth- and fourth-century authors describing or more frequently alluding to rituals of music and dance of an ecstatic kind, which have a beneficial effect on the psyche of participants in them; this covers a range from the “healing” of obsessive conditions to the amusement of well-balanced and even highly-placed people. The rite itself can induce euphoric hallucinations or fantasies of the mainadic “milk-and-honey” variety, though there seems no reason to believe that it invariably did so: this will have been the ultimate sort of experience that becomes normal only in the myth. In the parodos of the *Bakchai* and in Plato these rites are called τελεται and καθαρισμοι, and, by implication, have a kathartic effect also in Pindar and even Aischylos. The earlier writers associate them with Dionysos or with the syncretised thiasos that includes the Mother and the Korybants themselves. So also Plato, who, however, gives a special prominence to the Korybants. We have suggested that this prominence is based on the appropriateness of their rites in urgent cases of mental brea' lown

57. Good illustration e.g. in Beryl Barr-Sharrar, “Dionysos and the Derveni Krater,” *Archaeology* 35.6 (1982) 13-19, at 16.

such as are envisioned in *Wasps*, that they were available at need and to anyone in a way that mainadism or other forms of ecstatic Dionysiac ritual were not.

Yet we know that there existed similar rites of Dionysos which included men: Herodotos (4.79) tells us about the Skythian king Skyles, initiated into an ecstatic Dionysiac thiasos at Olbia; his subjects deprecated the Greeks' creation of a god "who leads men into madness," and a native secreted some of them in a tower whence they viewed the rite, a motif which seems to owe something to the Pentheus myth. The Olbian Dionysos, as we have learned from the bone tablets,⁵⁸ was associated with some very cosmic ideas or teachings; and associations of a looser kind between ecstatic ritual and secret teaching are to be found in the *Bakchai*.⁵⁹

With this in mind it is possible to suggest a more convincing explanation of Plato's predilection for the Korybants. Our evidence suggests the existence of ecstatic Dionysiac rites involving men in unofficial cult at Athens as elsewhere;⁶⁰ it is not difficult to suppose, and the *Bakchai* passage probably attests, that these were associated with esoteric teachings. Nothing similar is attested in connection with the Korybants, who seem to have been involved with kathartic music and dance entirely for its own sake. This is perhaps the essential difference for Plato. In the comparison between the satyric, pipe-playing Sokrates and the philosopher Sokrates in the *Symposion*, it is notable that the former is an enchanter through musical means alone, and that only the latter purveys λόγος. So elsewhere in his references to the τελεταί and καθαρμοί Plato has the salutary psychological effect of music and dance in mind, but it gives him pause when a mimetic element enters, as at *Laws* 814e ff., and he openly condemns the rites of the Orpheus-Musaios crowd, which are connected with books and superstitious claims and doctrines. Alkibiades, in his speech, uses a striking metaphor for the effect of Sokratic discourse: all of those present, he says, have shared in τῆς φιλοσόφου μανίας τε καὶ βακχείας (218b). Intellectual madness like this, which falls under the erotic category of the *Phaidros*, is to be sharply distinguished from telesic madness, which has a merely psychological effect. The telesic variety, as Plato must allow, is preeminently Dionysiac, but to keep the categories clearer he refers more often to the Korybantic rites, which offer little or nothing in the way of λόγος.

There is then abundant evidence from the classical period for ecstatic and kathartic rites in Dionysiac cult and in cults closely associated with those of Dionysos. Their essential form, the music and dancing, must have been at least very similar, and their effect, achieved by homeopathic katharsis, is regarded by

58. A. S. Rusyaeva, "Orfizm i kul't Dionisa v Olbii," *Vestnik drevney istorii* 143 (1978) 87-104.

59. *Ba.* 465ff. On these matters see M. L. West, "The Orphics at Olbia," *ZPE* 45 (1982) 17-29; Fritz Graf, "Dionysian and Orphic Eschatology: New Texts and Old Questions," in Carpenter and Faraone (above, n. 47) 239-58; Albert Henrichs, "Der rasende Gott: Zur Psychologie des Dionysos und des Dionysischen in Mythos und Literatur," *A&A* 40 (1994) 31-58 at 47-51.

60. Aristoph. *Frogs* 357; *Lys.* 1, which clearly refers to unofficial cult, not mainadism; see Parker (above, n. 9) 287.

Plato as identical. This is much better evidence than is offered by the Melampous myth, where homeopathic Dionysiac ecstasy is a secondary addition to a story that is based on the employment by a human “healer” of conceptually very different methods of healing or purification.

This brings us naturally to Aristotle’s definition of tragedy, which cannot be discussed in detail here. As a minority view has maintained against Jacob Bernays’ generally accepted medical explanation, it is this sort of ritual kathartic dancing that Aristotle has in mind when he says that tragedy achieves through pity and fear the katharsis of such emotions.⁶¹ The medical interpretation of tragic katharsis has held the field only because of a regrettable aspect of specialization: students of the *Poetics* have continued to regard ritual katharsis as suitable only for the mentally deranged, and therefore as an inappropriate model for the experience of tragedy. As we have seen, Linforth long ago demolished this view of ritual katharsis, which we can now regard as an eminently suitable *comparandum* for what Aristotle took to be the effect of tragic drama. μολεῖν καθαρέσθαι ποδί in *Antigone* 1142 provides a further and very valuable piece of evidence, indeed the earliest evidence, for this kind of kathartic dancing.

So much for our exegesis of πούς and of καθάρειος; this leaves us with the problem of the nature of the νόσος that needs to be alleviated.

4. MADNESS, CIVIL STRIFE, POLLUTION: SOPHOKLEAN NOCOC

At the end of *Trachiniai* Herakles proposes that his son marry Iole. Hyllos replies τίς ταῦτ’ ἄν, ὅστις μὴ ’ξ ἀλαστόρων νοσοῖ, | ἔλοιτο; (1235f.). Burkert cites the line as illustration of the point that “in archaischen Gesellschaften soziale und leibseelische Störungen nicht klar geschieden werden, daß Richten und Heilen ineinander geht . . . Verfehlung führt zu Krankheit, Krankheit beruht auf Verfehlung. Auch das griechische Wort νόσος umfaßt ja beides, Leibliches und Soziales, ein breites Spektrum von Störung und Leiden.”⁶² Thus Thukydides describes the great plague at Athens simply as ἡ νόσος (2.47ff.) and in Sophokles the word is repeatedly used on the one hand of Philoktetes’ physical ailment⁶³ and on the other of Aias’ madness.⁶⁴ These are the two basic areas of meaning: a sickness, either in the sense of a debilitating ailment or in the wider sense of a disease that may be infectious; and on the other hand mental disturbance or madness. Either of these may be regarded as sent by the gods; Aias sees his own

61. See Rohde (above, n. 39) II 48-49 n. 1; Jeanne Croissant, *Aristote et les Mystères* (Liège and Paris, 1932); Burkert (above, n. 35) 141 n. 32.

62. Walter Burkert, *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur* (SB Heidelberg 1984, 1) 159.

63. See Ellendt-Genthe, *Lexicon Sophocleum* s.v.

64. See 59, 66, 185, 271-74, 452; νόσημα at 338; νοσέω at 207, 269, 280, 337, 625f., 635; cf. θεία μανία at 610.

madness in this way, and plague may be interpreted on religious lines, as at the beginning of *OT*.

Trachiniai is much concerned with madness, and Sophokles clearly plays on the word νόσος. Herakles is physically afflicted, yet also in some sense mad; the powerful sexual tension of the play seems to be figured in the robe that was meant to possess him in another way but actually destroys him and Deianeira with him. The line quoted by Burkert is part of a long series of typically sharp Sophoklean ambiguities. Herakles had just commanded Hyllus to obey him in the matter of marrying the woman Hyllus sees as responsible for his parents' destruction. The son replies: οἴμοι· τὸ μὲν νοσοῦντι θυμοῦθαι κακόν, | τὸ δ' ὃδ' ὄρᾶν φρονοῦντα τίς ποτ' ἀν φέροι; (1230f.). After Hyllus says that a man would have to be “sick with avengers” to do such a thing, Herakles castigates his failure to respect his father's dying prayer and says that a curse of the gods will follow such disobedience. Hyllus replies (1241): οἴμοι· τάχ', ως ἔσικας, ως νοεῖς φράσεις. The ambiguities here are unmistakable; they have been noticed by Easterling in her commentary⁶⁵ and are well treated by Winnington-Ingram.⁶⁶

It seems impossible to formulate a typology of Sophoklean mental νόσος that is not arbitrary. We can, however, indicate the range of mental affliction the word covers: Aias killing the sheep is at one extreme and Herakles, who is merely sick-minded or has some strange and arrogant ideas, is at the other. Sophokles' employment of the term thus corresponds to general usage; Dover concludes that νόσος may be used to refer to “any state of mind which is unwelcome or may have bad consequences.”⁶⁷

Judging from Sophokles' practice elsewhere, then, it is perfectly possible that in the phrase βιωτας ἔχεται . . . ἐπὶ νόσου (*Ant.* 1140f.) νόσος refers to a disorder other than a “plague.” Careful reconsideration of the themes of the play will allow us to decide the issue. Two points need to be made first: the negative point that there is no real parallel for the usage of the word νόσος traditionally assumed for our passage; and the positive point that one of the less familiar metaphorical uses of the word suits our context very well indeed.

So far as I can tell, νόσος, when associated with pollution, must refer to an actual disease or contagion that is making people sick, that is to a “plague.” It cannot be applied to what is merely a potential source of disease, a pollutant that has not yet caused a plague; for this the appropriate terms are ἄγος or μίασμα. There is no doubt that Polyneikes' unburied body is a pollutant, and it is referred to both as an ἄγος (256) and as a μίασμα (1040ff.). But there is not the slightest hint anywhere in the text of *Antigone* that a plague has arisen and is afflicting

65. See her introduction, p. 5, and ad 999, 1142, 1230-31, 1233-36, 1241.

66. “Sophoclea,” *BICS* 26 (1979) 4f., where the connection between 1230f. and 543ff. is stressed; cf. idem, *Sophocles: An Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980) 85 with n. 39.

67. K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality* (Berkeley, 1974) 125; cf. Griffith ad *PV* 249: “Behaviour which is strange, undesirable, or perverse is ‘unhealthy, sick.’” For νόσος used of “mental anguish” see *OK* 544 with Jebb; for “folly” (τὸ μῆδον) as νόσος see Eur. fr. 166 N².

the Thebans with disease; the contrast with Thukydides or, more to the point, with *OT* could not be sharper: there it is abundantly clear that a contagion is abroad, and that people are sickening and dying of it in large numbers. The usage of νόσος assumed for our passage is therefore anomalous.

One of the things that is clearly afflicting Thebes is civil strife, and the center of the conflict in which the Thebans generally have taken up sides is a characteristically tragic case of familial strife, with niece set against uncle and father against son. There is a well-established Greek idiom, attested as early as Herodotos (5.28), by which states afflicted with strife are said “to be sick,” νοσεῖν.⁶⁸ LSJ cites *Antigone* 1015 for this sense (see next paragraph). In *Elektra* Sophokles applies the verb to strife within the family: the chorus send word to the shade of Agamemnon ὅτι σφιν ἥδη τὰ μὲν ἐξ δόμων νοσεῖται | τὰ δὲ πρὸς τέκνων διπλῆ φύ- | λοπις οὐχέτ' ἐξισοῦται | φιλοτασίωι διαιτᾶι (1070-74). So similarly tyranny is a “sickness” of the state.⁶⁹ This particular metaphor certainly suits the general situation in *Antigone* very well. It is less clear that Dionysiac kathartic dancing is the ideal specific for civil or familial strife,⁷⁰ but, as we shall see, the particular form this “sickness” takes in *Antigone* has its origin in various mental “disorders” that are attributed to principal characters in the play.

Sophokles shows an interest in the varieties of mental νόσος, and *Antigone* abounds in them; there is no warrant elsewhere in the play for taking the νόσος of the Dionysos ode as “plague.” Our passage is reminiscent of line 1015, where Teiresias tells Kreon καὶ ταῦτα τῆς σῆς ἐκ φρενὸς νοσεῖ πόλις. What Teiresias describes is a breakdown of communication with the gods as a result of fouled altars. He uses no such word as μίασμα or ἄγος; that is left to Kreon himself, who says at 1040ff. that even if the eagles of Zeus should carry bits of Polyneikes to Zeus’ throne, not even fearing that μίασμα would he allow him burial. In fact such words are very seldom used. At 172 μίασμα occurs metaphorically of the mutual destruction of Eteokles and Polyneikes. The messenger tells us at 256 that sufficient sand has been poured over the body to “avoid the ἄγος,” and Kreon later says he will entomb Antigone φορβῆς τοσοῦτον ὡς ἄγος μάνον προθείς, | ὅπως μίασμα πᾶς’ ὑπεκφύγῃ πόλις (775f.). Even these few passages present problems. The pouring of sand on Polyneikes apparently suffices to end the threat

68. See LSJ s.v.; Wilamowitz ad *HF* 542: “Bürgerzwist als krankheit des staates zu bezeichnen ist dem Hellenen so gewöhnlich, daß es kaum noch metaphor ist.” Cf. Fraenkel ad *Ag.* 850, Bond ad *HF* 542. The metaphor of a wound to the body politic is found already in Solon 4.17 West.

69. E.g. Isokrates *Helen* 34: tyrants as νοσήματα τῶν πόλεων; Plato *Rep.* 544c: τυραννίδα . . . ἔχατον πόλεως νόσημα.

70. An association between dance and the end of στάσις is found in an ode from Euripides’ *Kresphontes* (fr. 71 Austin = 453 N²) which—ecstatic mood apart—is a good parallel for the choral request in *Antigone*. Euripides’ chorus, upset by a political power struggle which is also mad familial strife, invoke Εἰρήνα, fearful of being overtaken by old age πρὸν cὰν προσιδεῖν χαρίεσσαν ὥραν | καὶ καλλιχόρους ἀσιδάς | φιλοστεφάνους τε κώμους. | ίθι μοι, πότνια, πόλιν. | τὰν δ’ ἐχθρὰν στάσιν εἶργ’ ἀπ’ οἴ- | κων τὰν μαινομέναν τ’ ἔριν | θηχτῶι τερπομέναν ειδάρωι (4ff.).

of pollution, yet Kreon later feels that the spreading of scraps of his corpse, at least if it went as far as the throne of Zeus, would constitute a miasma. The suppositions that not enough sand was in fact poured or that the efficacy of the rite has lapsed with time are not attractive. It seems safest to conclude that it is the fouling of sacred things—altars or the throne of Zeus—that angers the gods and is ominous. We have been told often enough that Polyneikes now belongs to the gods below, so that the anger and omen are sufficiently comprehensible: the body is still being dishonored, and in the usual way, as a meal for animals. We need not assume that the “burial” did not work or that a general plague is loosed. Sophokles could not have made it clearer that the only sort of pollution he has in mind is that which affects sacred things such as altars (or the throne of Zeus); these are much more easily polluted than ordinary persons and things, and the gods themselves are notably meticulous about avoiding pollutants.⁷¹ Still, Teiresias avoids the technical vocabulary of pollution. The consequence of the fouled altars is that the gods do not accept prayer and sacrifice (1019ff.). The phenomenon is very specific and localised, and so is what it forebodes: death in the household of Kreon (1064ff.); not a word from the prophet of wholesale plague and destruction such as is vividly portrayed in *OT*. The tyrant’s claim that he will do enough to avoid pollution from Antigone is of course dubious, but the issue never arises in the play. The claim is interesting, taken with the “throne of Zeus” passage, as indicating that Kreon is alive only to technical offences, not to the fundamental unrighteousness of his attitude and behavior.

The line *καὶ ταῦτα τῆς εἰκὸνὸς νοεῖ πόλις* precedes the description of the fouled altars Kreon responds to. It follows a picture of a different sort (1001ff.): the birds by which Teiresias is accustomed to take augury are speaking in an unknown voice; they scream and tear each other apart. Teiresias’ μαντεύματα are ἀείμων ὄργιῶν (1013); he attempts in fear to try the offerings, but the fire is not burning brightly: they sputter and melt on the altar (1005-11). *καὶ ταῦτα τῆς εἰκὸνὸς νοεῖ πόλις*—“and it is because of your mind that the city is sick in these respects,” or perhaps better, “in regard to these things too the city is disordered because of your attitude.” The description of the fouled altars that follows suggests that Sophokles is making an unusual connection of *νοεῖ* in 1015 with the local effect of pollutants, but the close connection with Kreon’s φρήν indicates that he is equating the imagery of pollution with the disordered state of Kreon’s mind, and the end of Teiresias’ speech is an exhortation to Kreon to remedy his mental folly and error (1023-32); his second long speech ends in the same way (1089-90). This view of the matter finds confirmation in an exchange, again involving *νόσος* and φρήν, which is the last reference to *νόσος* before the fifth stasimon. Teiresias says “does any man ever reflect on . . .” “What?”

71. The *locus classicus* is Eur. *IT* 380ff.; see Moulinier (above, n. 13) 103-109, Parker (above, n. 9) 33f., 65f. (mention of *Antigone*). So also at *Ant.* 1083 Teiresias speaks specifically of altars in connection with defilement by human carrion (see next note).

says Kreon. TE. ὅσωι κράτιστον κτημάτων εύβουλία; | KR. ὅσωιπερ, οἴμαι, μὴ φρονεῖν πλείστη βλάβη. | TE. ταύτης cù μέντοι τῆς νόσου πλήρης ἔψυς (1050-52). These lines clearly echo 1015-17 (τῆς cῆς ἐκ φρενὸς νοεῖ πόλις ... βωμοὶ γὰρ ... πλήρεις), but with the telling shift of “full” from the altars to Kreon himself, so that the earlier combined image of pollutant plus mental sickness is collapsed into the single motif of Kreon’s disordered mind. Teiresias will soon tell us that “all cities become tumultuous with hostility (ἐχθραὶ δὲ πᾶσαι συνταράσσονται πόλεις) in which mangled bodies are buried by dogs or beasts, or by some winged bird that carries an unholy odor to the acropolis and its hearth” (1080-83).⁷² Exposure of a body is again linked with the specific phenomenon of fouled altars, but the focus is on the consequent ἔχθρα that throws the city into tumult; here Sophokles modulates the motif into the realm of civic disorder. The exchange between Teiresias and Kreon (1050-52) is recalled when the messenger reports the scene in the cave: Haimon is a corpse and has made his marriage in the halls of Hades, δεῖξας ἐν ἀνθρώποις τὴν ἀβουλίαν | ὅσωι μέγιστον ἀνδρὶ πρόσκειται κακόν (1242f.): here mental disorder takes center stage in the sequel to our ode. In the sung exchange that follows between Kreon and the chorus, the disaster is attributed to mental errors and offences,⁷³ and there is no mention of pollution.

Antigone herself has been accused by Kreon of being “sick.” Haimon told his father that he “would bid no one reverence the evil.” Kreon replies, “doesn’t she have that νόσος” (731f.)? We would doubtless judge Antigone’s “sickness” differently than we do Kreon’s, but we understand what the chorus mean by saying that “the whole city is in the grip of a violent sickness.”

Both Haimon and Teiresias argue at length with Kreon about what constitutes “right thinking,”⁷⁴ and, as we have seen, “wrong thinking” is described by Teiresias as a νόσος. Haimon actually tells his father that he is mad (765), and this statement immediately precedes the Eros stasimon, which seems to point to Haimon, and where we are told that the person under the spell of Eros is mad (790). Eros is then addressed directly: “you divert the *phrenes* of the just to injustice and injury” (791f.). The theme is reflected in other choral contexts: the great second stasimon, on *ate*, lays great stress on various sorts of mental delusion, and we hear that it is λόγου τ’ ἀνοια καὶ φρενῶν Ἐρινύς (603) that is destroying the

72. I translate Dawe’s text; for other views of this controversial passage see Jebb (with appendix), Kamerbeek ad loc. and Lloyd-Jones and Wilson (above, n. 35) 143f. (where *σπαράγματ'* in the third line of p. 144 is presumably a slip for πόλεις). Surely Teiresias is making a generalisation on the basis of the particular case of Polyneikes and its outcome; a reference here to the story of the Epigonoi seems both awkward and unheralded. The editors are particularly bothered by the repetition πόλεις (1080) ... ἑστιοῦχον ἐς πόλιν (1083), but the latter is surely an example of the common idiom πόλις = ἀχρόπολις (see LSJ s.v.), as Kamerbeek suggests ad loc. It is the sacred sites of a city that are most easily defiled, and with the worst consequences: see previous note.

73. 1259f., 1261-69, 1272ff.

74. See 683-84 and the whole passage 705ff. (Haimon), with Kreon’s response at 726f. and Haimon’s rejoinder at 755; cf. 648, 1228f.

last light of the house of Oidipous. At 875 the chorus say that it is Antigone's αὐτόγνωτος ὄργα that is destroying her; and the reference in the following fourth stasimon to the ὄργαι and μάνια of Lykourgos (957-60) may be meant to recall the description of Antigone, and has been felt lately to reflect also on Kreon—and the passage is of course closely connected with Dionysos. It is worth mentioning in this regard a fragment from the *Tyron*, τίχτουσι γάρ τοι καὶ νόσους δυσθυμίας (F 663 R). Finally, immediately before the fifth stasimon, the chorus tell Kreon to accomplish his new resolutions with all haste because the swift-footed Blabai catch up with οἱ κακόφρονες (1103f.).⁷⁵

Certainly, then, it is reasonable for the chorus to speak of the mentalities of Antigone, Haimon and Kreon as νόσοι, and there follows what Winnington-Ingram describes as “an outbreak of pathological violence which it would be vain to hope that Dionysus would cure, since it springs from mad emotion. That is the epiphany, that is the dispensation.”⁷⁶ There seems to be no stress of any kind laid on the violence of the god in the stasimon or what follows; indeed, it is rather the civic sickness from which the chorus seek Dionysiac katharsis that is explicitly “violent.” The very ironic effect of the hyporcheme is produced rather differently, by its Eleusinian coloring and by the kathartic *enthusiasmos* that Winnington-Ingram followed Reinhardt in maintaining Sophokles did not represent on the stage.⁷⁷ The chorus are seeking to purge Thebans of the stress of violent mental and civic sickness by means of ritual katharsis, but the madness proves far from susceptible to ritual alleviation, playing itself out in suicide and general ruination. We ought to remember too that the fifth stasimon covers in dramatic time the events going forward in the tomb, and that in tragedy “raging like a Bakchant” is a conventional simile for lethal madness. The chorus’ enthusiastic euphoria turns out to be a symptom—indeed to mark a culminating *crescendo*—of madness, rather than to achieve and celebrate its purgation. Winnington-Ingram’s focus on the god seems misplaced; nothing in the text suggests that Dionysos is in any way interested or involved in what is happening, and the chorus’ invocation tells us far more about themselves and the other human agents than about him. Their deluded onstage madness is a powerful piece of dramatic irony, yet at the same time a truthful reflection of the delusion and violence going on offstage.

So too the Eleusinian coloring of the ode is ironic in effect. No doubt, as Henrichs has shown, the ode offers an “Eleusinian glimmer of hope,” confirming

75. Although one must be cautious about the choral tags at the ends of tragedies, it is worth noting also that the moral drawn from *Antigone* focuses on the twice repeated τὸ φρονεῖν. Ditmars (above, n. 13) 158 notes that the “Bacchic communion” of the fifth stasimon picks up the theme of madness prominent in the third and fourth stasima.

76. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles* (above, n. 66) 115. Others attracted by the notion of an ironic epiphany include Dorsch (above, n. 4) 78 and Bierl, *Dionysos und die gr. Trag.* (above, n. 13) 130: “Nach diesem Lied übernimmt Dionysos also die Rolle des Hades.” Nothing in the text seems to me to elicit the latter reaction.

77. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles* (above, n. 66) 110; Karl Reinhardt, *Sophokles*³ (Frankfurt, 1947) 84f.

Antigone's hopes of being reunited with her family in the afterworld.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the ode is far more Dionysiac than Eleusinian and manifests kathartic madness more obviously than afterlife hopes. In its immediate dramatic context the equation of Dionysos with Iakchos follows up Antigone's references to Persephone and (more prominently) Hades, and anticipates the messenger's tragic news, by linking the god with the underworld, which, whatever anyone hopes, is the realm of the dead. At this juncture it is whether Antigone will die or be saved that is at issue, and Sophokles produces further dramatic irony by having the chorus make associations with the underworld even as they indulge themselves in deluded celebration of her rescue.

The irony of the hyporchemes suggests a further argument. The basic premise of this device is that what the chorus rejoices at is a delusion, what it hopes for it does not obtain. On the traditional interpretation, the fifth stasimon asks Dionysos to purify Thebes from a pollution arising from the unburied corpse of Polyneikes. Forty lines later the messenger describes how he accompanied Kreon to the corpse; asking Hekate and Plouton to be benevolent (*εὐμενεῖς*) they gave the body a holy washing, burned what was left of it with fresh boughs, and buried it (1196-1204). Assuming that the traditional view is correct and that—what we have doubted—the body is a source of general pollution, this ritual prayer, washing, burning and burial must end the pollution. Here then is a great curiosity: a hyporchematic wish that immediately comes true. We may note that Hekate and Plouton are eminently suitable to the request for benevolence that amounts to atonement. They are among the gods of the underworld to whom Polyneikes belongs, and are closely connected with death in particular; the euphemistic name Plouton⁷⁹ and the adjective *εὐμενεῖς* indicate indebtedness to cultic practice. The anger of the appropriate gods is appeased and the body is given a normal cleansing and burial; there is no mention of any form of pollution beyond the implicit presence of that normally associated with corpses. The euphemism reflects the caution appropriate to dealings with angry gods of ambiguous character, as indeed to all dealings with the chthonian realm, including ordinary funerals. Dionysos is nowhere in sight: this is not his place.

The two passages—hyporcheme and burial—have to do with quite distinct conceptual realms and elements of plot. Teiresias mentions two offences: the imprisonment of Antigone and the exposure of Polyneikes (1069ff.). The chorus are anxious for Kreon to remedy these two (1100f.). They have a more general wish, expressed in the hyporcheme—and in connection with Antigone, as the Eleusinian ambience indicates—for an end to violent stress and madness, for

78. Henrichs (above, n. 7) 266f. Ditmars (above, n. 13) 160-63 and 168-69 questions Henrichs' interpretation on grounds similar to those I offer in this paragraph.

79. See Albert Henrichs, "Namenlosigkeit und Euphemismus: Zur Ambivalenz der chthonischen Mächte im attischen Drama," in Annette Harder and Heinz Hofmann, eds., *Fragmenta Dramatica* (Göttingen, 1990 [Festschrift Radt]) 161-201.

a happy outcome such as they thought to celebrate, also with Dionysos, at the end of the parodos. Their wish is not fulfilled, and this again has to do with the Antigone-situation, which is all that matters in what follows. Polyneikes is buried, in a rite—reported to us very briefly—that is unconnected with Dionysos and is only a pause on the way to Antigone’s tomb and the real outcome. It ought to be clear that Dionysos is associated with Antigone and with the conflicts that play themselves out in her prison, not with the burial of Polyneikes, which turns out to be a side-issue. So also the hyporcheme retains its full ironic effect.

Polyneikes’ body provided the ground for the conflict and did service as an omen, but the conflict thrives on the various obsessions of Antigone, Haimon and Kreon, and finds its tragic culmination in their irreconcilability. The body has served its purpose, and is quickly disposed of; the burial and Kreon’s grudging submission are the proverbial too little too late. Teiresias had said that tumultuous hostility comes upon cities in which bodies are exposed (1080ff.): so in the present case a body provides the starting-point, but it is the hostility and the tumult that in the end overwhelm the polis.

This passage anticipates and provides a good parallel for the πάνδαμος πόλις τητ̄ βιαίας ἔχεται ... ἐπὶ νόσου (1142f.). It might be objected on the basis of such parallels as ὅπως μίασμα πᾶς' ὑπεκφύγῃ πόλις (775f.)⁸⁰ that 1015 and 1142f. would more naturally refer to an external ill such as pollution than to mental “sickness,” even if this brings “violence” in its train. The phrase πάνδαμος πόλις of course refers to the people rather than the place,⁸¹ in *OT*, as the imagery of the parodos shows, and possibly also at *Ant.* 775f., πόλις includes land and livestock, which are regular victims of plague, but far more often than not Sophokles uses πόλις in the sense *civitas*,⁸² frequently with predicates of mental, verbal and emotional activity. The polis mocks (839ff.) and mourns (693) Antigone, and the ὁμόπολις λεώς disagrees with Kreon’s claim that Antigone has the νόσος of reverencing the evil (733); in *Oidipous at Kolonus* the πόλις practises justice (913), is persuaded (1298) and commits hybris (1534f.). Verbally, then, 1015 and 1142f. can as easily refer to widespread mental distress as widespread physical disease, and we remember that in Solon the outrageous behaviour of the powerful⁸³ comes as an inevitable wound upon the whole city (τοῦτ' ἥδη πάσῃ πόλει ἔρχεται Ἐλκος ἀφυκτον), with consequences including base slavery and στάσις. As we have seen, there is no indication in *Antigone* of sickness caused by any sort of plague, let alone a “violent” one; the principals are, however, explicitly connected with mental varieties of sickness and with madness, and all of Thebes is afflicted with a malady compounded of mental and civil strife. The chorus is sufficiently relieved by Kreon’s change of heart, but still sufficiently afflicted with mental

80. Cf. also e.g. *OT* 165, 169f. (νοεῖ δέ μοι πρόπας στόλος), 302; *OK* 368.

81. Cf. 7; *Aias* 175, 844; *El.* 982.

82. As Ellendt and Genthe s.v. point out.

83. Or perhaps the revenge of Dike; Solon 4.17 West = 3.17 Gentili-Prato.

anxiety and foreboding, to become euphoric, and manifests its euphoria in the form of kathartic ritual, which will culminate in the feeling that Dionysos is dancing among them and cleansing their minds of their troubles. They perform a ritual of closure, but it is a false closure.

5. CONCLUSION

By associating the Dionysos of the fifth stasimon with the only kind of katharsis he is elsewhere credited with effecting we not only discover greater thematic coherence in the play itself, but restore a plausible relation between Sophokles' employment of religious motifs and the basic facts of Greek cult. This interpretation suggests a shift of accent in our reading not only of the hymn itself but of the theatics of the play in general. Pollution will take its place among Sophokles' poetic resources, but not in a dominant role; the network of psychic and social tensions in which the Thebans have bound themselves will move into the foreground. It is usually taken for granted that interpretation of Sophoklean tragedy inevitably entails the acceptance as basic premises of various theological beliefs imputed to the poet. Here, however, we seem able to account for the god's role in the drama without recourse to extra-dramatic authority. Dionysos is the focus of Sophokles' portrait of the very human anxiety and delusion of the chorus; to put it this way is to emphasise the point that the figure of the god is there to illustrate and manifest the spiritual condition of the human agents, an imaginative correlative as it were. The chorus, like Antigone, Kreon and Haimon, are not troubled by powers that arbitrarily inflict or alleviate sufferings from without, but by needs and desires and conflicts within and among themselves. In his literary function the god is or represents the movement of a certain sort of human energy in a certain direction; he is not there to point beyond the limits of art to an existential realm of divinity which art can contemplate but cannot comprehend.

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