
E.’s book is a revision of a Zurich dissertation, directed by Walter Burkert, that appeared exactly one hundred years after the publication of Wilhelm Nestle’s ‘Untersuchungen über die philosophischen Quellen des Euripides’, Philologus Suppl. 8 (1902). As E. herself acknowledges (23), the great majority of passages treated in her book were discussed in Nestle’s monograph and/or in his ‘Euripides, der Dichter der griechischen Aufklärung’ (1901). Despite the advances that the intervening years have seen, E.’s conclusions (273–8) are, not surprisingly, remarkably similar to Nestle’s: Euripides was familiar with the work of, and was influenced by, Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia, Xenophanes, Protagoras, Prodicus, Socrates and the other Presocratics, with the possible exception of Heraclitus. But, while Nestle, like committed positivists generally, was concerned to identify the specific thinker whose influence could be detected in this or that passage, E.’s more sophisticated approach recognizes that a given culture at any given time resembles a great river, the waters of whose tributaries mingle in such a way that it is often impossible to sort out the various currents, hence the conspicuous appearance of the word ‘Strömungen’ in the title and frequently throughout. E. makes good use of recent theoretical work on intertextuality, especially that of Genette and Helbig. Her concern is to examine the relationship between the Euripidean text and its various philosophical, scientific and sophistic pre-texts, except that the pre-texts are in many instances not literally sense of surviving written predecessors, but the ‘cultural and intellectual currents’ (25) of the fifth century. The validity of this approach is bolstered by the fact (not sufficiently emphasized by E.) that fifth-century culture was still fundamentally oral in character, so that the latest ideas were ‘in the air’ in more than a merely metaphorical sense.

Still, E. cannot refrain from arguing that in some cases an individual Euripidean passage is dependent upon a specific, identifiable ‘source’. Even when she is successful (as she often is) in showing a specific dependency, her very success reveals the inherent tension between this traditional type of Quellenforschung and the premise on which E.’s study is based. This tension is also apparent in the titles of the sections in Part II, ‘Übersicht über die philosophisch beeinflussten Stellen im Werk des Euripides’, which feature the names of individual philosophers and sophists, despite the more wide-ranging conclusions reached in those sections.

For example, E. discusses (49–53) Frs. 593 and 594, coming to the justifiable conclusion that the author (whom E. takes to be Euripides rather than Critias, despite the non-Euripidean ένθελεγός, Fr. 593, 3) is here not reflecting the ideas of a single thinker, but has combined ‘various philosophical concepts that were familiar in the fifth century’; yet the discussion occurs in the section entitled ‘ΜΕΤΕΩΡΑ: Der Einfluss des Anaxagoras’. In fact, E. seems to have missed a possible Anaxagorean feature of Fr. 593: ἐμπλέξθη (line 2) looks as though it might be a reference to 59 B 12 D–K τα μὲν ἄλλα παντὸς μόριαν μετέχει τα συμμορφώμενα τε καὶ άποκρινόμενα καὶ διαφημόμενα πάντα ἐγγύ νοσς. E. identifies the addressee of this fragment as ‘Zeus, nous and Aither – all names for the one, supreme god’ (51). But is Anaxagorean nous αὐτός (line 1; cf. Fr. 594, 1–3), from the same passage: χρόνος πότον εὐτός (εὐτόν)? Is Zeus? Is Aither?
Further, there are occasions when E.’s attempt to connect a Euripidean passage with a specific philosophical precursor is not entirely successful. In her treatment of Or. 982–86 E. tries to show that Tantalus’ βόλος is Anaxagorean by saying (47), «Man muss sich vorstellen, dass sie wie vulkanisches Gestein lockerer, trockener und heisser als normale Steine sind», and referring to 59 B 15 D–K. But βόλος, which is generally used of earthy materials or weighty metals like gold, silver, iron or lead, is a curious word for Euripides to have chosen for this purpose and, in general, Anaxagoras’ δίνος produces a cosmos in which the heavier, denser materials are concentrated in the center, with progressively lighter, finer materials at the periphery (cf. especially B 16). No matter how dry and rarefied Tantalus’ rock is imagined to be, Anaxagoras would surely have placed it closer to the center of the universe than, say, the air we breathe. E. is also committed to an Anaxagorean reading of the nous to which Hecuba refers in her bizarre prayer at Tro. 886, and she criticizes Scodel (89 n. 1) for rejecting a connection with Anaxagoras, on the grounds that Anaxagoras does not distinguish between divine and other nous. It is true that he does not so distinguish, but Hecuba specifies ‘mortal nous’ (νούς βροτοῦ), so she must be distinguishing. Water is water, but one does not designate water tout court by referring to ‘the water of the Ganges’. This line is glossed by 988, where Hecuba says that Helen’s (eminently mortal) nous ἐποίηθη Κώπης when she laid eyes on Paris. Elsewhere, E. seeks to connect some of the ‘atheistic’ views expressed by Euripidean characters with the teaching of Prodicus, referring (137 n. 2) to «die offensichtliche Bekanntheit seiner Lehre». But, while some of Prodicus’ ideas were indeed well known in the fifth century, his atheism seems never to have been mentioned until much later (see A. Henrichs, The Atheism of Prodicus, CronErf 6, 1976, 21). Nor is there evidence from any period that connects Prodicus’ Sprachphilosophie with his account of the origin of religion, a connection that E. wants to make (137–39) in relation to Bacch. 288–97.

It must be said, however, that E. has an excellent discussion (145) of the way in which the intertextual links in this speech of Teiresias undercut his purported intention of ‘converting’ Pentheus. And several of her other, purely literary, excursions are very perceptive and illuminating. For example, she well brings out the perceived connections between Euripides and Socrates by laying out the parallels in Aristophanes’ characterizations of the two (159–63), and her discussion of Socrates (157 ff) sensibly and helpfully begins with the comic poets rather than with Plato and Xenophon. In her fine comparison of Eur. Fr. 282 and Xenophon 27 B 2 D–K she makes the crucial point (126) that, while the latter does not so much criticize athletics as use them as a foil for his own wisdom, the speaker of the former finds no value in athletics whatsoever. Her analysis of the question of the teachability of virtue in Hippolytus concludes with the memorable formulation (178), «Hippolytos, von Natur aus vermeintlich αἰεί φήμος, leugnet die Lehrbarkeit der σοφίας, scheitert aber gerade daran, dass er nicht gelernt hat, was σοφίας umfasst».

All of this indicates that E., unlike Nestle before her, is fully conscious of the fact that, as she puts it bluntly (18), «Euripides ist kein Philosoph, sondern ein Dichter». Nor is she concerned to establish ‘what Euripides himself thought’ about the gods, about ethics, about the nature of the universe, etc. What she fails
to do, however, is to come to grips in a serious fashion with the question, Why is Euripides in this or that scene representing this particular character as holding this particular ‘philosophical’ view? E. claims (217--18) that this issue is of particular concern to her treatment, and it is indeed fundamental to any study of a dramatic author’s work, since every word and every thought is expressed by someone other than the author. Occasionally E. makes this explicit.

So, for example, HF 101–6, with their ‘philosophical’ color, are said (238) to contribute to the characterization of Amphitryon. But how exactly is Amphitryon characterized, and why does Euripides wish to characterize him as the type of person who is ‘philosophically’ inclined, particularly inasmuch as Lycur too is so characterized (as E. well points out)? Lycur is Amphitryon’s opponent in the agon and participants in Euripidean agones are regularly proficient in philosophical and sophistic argumentation. In any event, as E. acknowledges (242), Amphitryon is persuasive only because he is the more sympathetic character, not because of superior rhetoric. Similarly, Jason is shown to be characterized as someone who is under the influence of cutting-edge sophistic thinking (186–88, 282): E. very perceptively points to a connection between Med. 662–2 and Pl. Thet. 166d (a passage that seems to allude to its direct derivation from Protagoras’ written work: Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐγώ μὲν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἔχων ός γνώμην). But we are also told that the chorus in this play shows traces of the thought of Diogenes of Apollonia (114–16) and Medea seems to reflect an awareness of the Socratic paradox that no one knowingly does wrong (164–66). If the major characters of the play (and even the chorus) are in tune with the latest, most advanced thinking, how can we say that familiarity with this thinking serves to characterize this or that individual character? In the case of Hecuba’s prayer at Tro. 884–88, Menelaus’ uncomprehending reaction, as E. notes (281), serves as a ‘Störfaktor’ and conspicuously calls attention to the unconventional views that Hecuba voices. But in dramatic terms, the fundamental question is, Why does Euripides go out of his way to characterize Hecuba as up on the latest in philosophical speculation? But this question goes unanswered and, consequently, unanswered.

Finally, the section in which E. treats of the relationship between the soul and aither (94–114) is undermined by conceptual and terminological difficulties. Essential to E.’s argument is her statement (102), ‘The idea that the soul dissipates upon death into the aither is closely connected with the notion that the aither is divine. Upon death, the soul, as the divine element in humans, seeks out its kindred element’. But there has been no demonstration that, in Euripides, the soul is divine. (Nevertheless, the next section opens, on the following page, by saying, ‘A consequence of the notion of the divine soul ...’) Further, none of the Euripidean passages discussed except Fr. 65, 71 Austin (Erechtheus) even mentions psyche in this connection, only pneuma. And this passage from the Erechtheus deals not with the souls of ordinary mortals, but with those of the heroized Hya-cinthids, so it is not necessarily relevant to the relationship between ‘the soul’ and the aither. The same is true of the epigram for those who died at Potidaea, CEG 10 Hansen, which E. implausibly suggests (98) might have been composed by Euripides. Death in war confers on the deceased a status comparable to that of heroes; cf. C. Sourvinou-Inwood, ‘Reading’ Greek Death to the End of the Classical Period (Oxford 1995) 194. Throughout her discussion (104–10) of the curious passage Hel. 1013–16 E. speaks of ‘die Seele’, but there is no mention of psyche in the passage, only of nous and gnome. As Günther Zuntz pointed out in 1958, ‘the word ‘soul’ does not occur and would indeed be out of place’ (Entretiens Fond. Hardt VI 211). Nor is there justification for E.’s claim (113)
that, according to this passage, «die Seele wird in die unsterbliche ἀνάμνησις und den νοῦς geteilt».

For the most part, however, this is a careful and thorough study of an important element in the work of an important poet. E. has read widely in the secondary literature and on the whole her conclusions are sensible and well-founded. While she has not entirely succeeded in accomplishing the goal that she has set herself – Part III attempts to explore ‘the way in which philosophically influenced passages function’ in Electra, HF and Orestes, but the concerns raised above regarding characterization are not successfully addressed – this book is a valuable resource for students of Euripides and his place within fifth-century thought and culture.

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