THE POLITICAL EXPERIENCE OF ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY

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ABSTRACT

The Political Experience of Ancient Greek Tragedy

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Despite being produced over two millennia ago and with only a few remaining texts, ancient Greek tragedy still intrigues and perplexes modern readers. The mythic stories still invigorate discussion and reflection about a number of topics, especially in terms of understanding it within its ancient context. Modern scholars still debate what purpose tragedy played for the Athenian citizens and the interpretations of these few remaining texts. How should we understand the experience of tragedy for Athenian citizens during fifth-century Athens? One way of understanding tragedy is as a religious and political experience that helped Athenian citizens reflect upon the changing political circumstances of fifth-century Athens. Tragedy served a politically educational role as it was able to theoretically analyze contentious themes and subjects with the purpose of enlightening citizens on perspectives that may not have been available in other political settings. In addition, tragedy could analyze these political perspectives in light of theological understandings about the order of the cosmos through its use of myth and engage civic audiences on multiple levels. Spectators were able to imagine and think through the ambiguities of human speech in light of the changing religious and political understandings of their own world.

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Introduction

Despite being produced over two millennia ago and with only a few remaining texts, ancient Greek tragedy still intrigues and perplexes modern readers. The mythic stories still invigorate discussion and reflection about a number of topics, especially in terms of understanding it within its ancient context. Modern scholars still debate what purpose tragedy played for the Athenian citizens and the interpretations of these few remaining texts. How should we understand the experience of tragedy for Athenian citizens during fifth-century Athens? The thesis of this paper is that one way of understanding tragedy is as a religious and political experience that helped Athenian citizens reflect upon the changing political circumstances of fifth-century Athens. Tragedy served a politically educational role as it was able to theoretically analyze contentious themes and subjects with the purpose of enlightening citizens on perspectives that may not have been available in other political settings. In addition, tragedy could analyze these political perspectives in light of theological understandings about the order of the cosmos through its use of myth and engage civic audiences on multiple levels. Spectators were able to imagine and think through the ambiguities of human speech in light of the changing religious and political understandings of their own world.

Politically, the focus of this thesis is on politics as an activity, whereby the political life of a community is constantly being determined through the interactions of the actors (Hammer, 20). Tragedy's use of conflicting values and unresolved polarities centred on political themes may invigorate discussion between the audience members about their civic life. This thesis may demonstrate an important role that theatre, or art

in general, can play within a civic community, particularly in one that allows open discussion. This also provides a new manner of understanding how we may view tragedy as being democratic, particularly if we understand the democracy of Athens as being centred on free and open speech, equal access to the law courts, and the right for all citizens to vote. Thus, tragedy may be understood as democratic not specifically because of its institutional setting, but instead because of the manner in which it was presented. This thesis will also build upon the existing literature connecting religion and politics in Athens and the special role that tragedy could play in this connection. Tragedy's mythic representations and political underpinnings served the dual role of being able to question political ideals within theological understandings. Finally, this will be exemplified through a particular interpretation of an Aeschylean trilogy, *The Prometheia*, which will provide an example of how tragedy was able to combine religion and politics for civic purposes.

Literature Review

There have been a number of authors that have described tragedy as political in an assortment of ways. Podlecki takes a historical approach rooting tragedy in the specific historical circumstances when the play was written, (Podlecki, 3-11, 22, and 23). Macleod takes a broader political perspective defining politics as "a concern with human beings as part of a community", but fails to draw any historical connections to the material of the tragedies (Macleod, 126). Goldhill suggests that the tragedies were essentially democratic festivals directly connected with Athens utilized for the purpose of displaying Athens' power and prestige, as well as encouraging citizens to serve Athens

(Goldhill, 137-139). Griffith suggests that the tragedies essentially were geared towards negotiating the tension between the democratic ideology and elite leadership, such that tragedy mimicked how democracy actually functioned in Athens with the majority of people essentially relying on the advice and direction of their leaders (Griffith, 43). Rhodes suggests that tragedy was connected to the formation of the polis for all Greek cities, not just Athens (Rhodes, 118). Finally, Carter takes a similar view of Macleod suggesting that tragedy is political because it deals with concerns relating to human beings as part of a community, but with a particular focus on the polis. (Carter, 67).

There are similarities between several of these authors and the particular stance of this thesis. There are a few key points in which there is a divergence of opinion; whether tragedy should be understood as contemporaneously historical, whether Athenian tragedy was democratic or more broadly related to the Greek polis, and finally how we should understand tragedy's role within politics. Taking a historical approach that attempts to analyze tragedy within the contemporary political setting of fifth-century Athens coincides with all of the author's views, except Macleod. There is a divergence in terms of what exactly should be analyzed though. For example, Podlecki is correct in looking into the particular historical situation of Athens at the time the plays were written and produced as any reflection occurring was relevant to that time period. However, he focuses too much on what he believes the author was attempting to say, as well as limiting politics to political events such that he fails to recognize the political changes in terms of what it meant to be a citizen (Podlecki, 3-9). Goldhill is the only author arguing that Athenian tragedy was democratic, with the other author's suggesting that tragedy should be understood as a polis-based dramatic tool, not just a democratic one. While

Athenian tragedy may be democratic in both form and content, the criticisms that have been laid upon Goldhill by other authors, such as Rhodes and Carter, are not without credence. Rhodes attacks Goldhill on the grounds that many of the institutional and structural arguments Goldhill makes in favour of tragedy being democratic are not particularly democratic (Rhodes, 107-113). While I will not engage Rhodes and other scholars directly on their criticism of Goldhill, their refusal to view Athenian tragedy as democratic misses one of the primary tools in understanding its purpose. This thesis diverges from all other political arguments specifically in the manner in which it chooses to view politics, which is in terms of an activity, as opposed to basing it purely upon its institutions or structure (Hammer, 14). Tragedy was actively engaging the audience and the structure tragedy took in terms of language, speech, composition, etc. was not only influenced by the democracy, but influenced the development and direction of democracy within Athens. Tragedy developed within a tension between democratic and anti-democratic forces with both playing a factor in its development, but that does not dismiss the specific democratic element of tragedy. The content of the tragic plays dealt with polis-based issues, but the manner in which they were presented and specific themes in the tragedies were discussions that could only be raised in a democracy. The changes that were occurring in fifth-century Athens involved a redefinition of what it meant to be a citizen and tragedy was an intricate part of this democratic process.

Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* and what is believed to be the *Prometheia* trilogy is controversial in a number of different ways, as well. Some authors have drawn political messages from the text, such as Podlecki who sees in Prometheus a celebration of freedom and democracy versus the tyranny of Zeus (Podlecki, 121). Other authors

suggest that the plays represent a semi-rationalistic, evolutionary view of man and civilization common to the pre-Socratic philosophers, which is summarized by Havelock, but they generally fail to draw any political connections from this view (Havelock, 104-106). Other authors have speculated that the play most likely ends in a reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus with differing reasons as to how this takes place and the purpose of it. For example, White suggests that all the fault lies with Prometheus in the play and it is only when he submits that he learns of the truly civilized society that Zeus was attempting to teach humanity (White, 140). Dorter suggests that the reconciliation is about the combination of force and reason that is necessary in any political setting (Dorter, 132-133). Finally, Konstan draws an interesting association with the contemporaneous Athenian political situation suggesting that the myth represents the emergence of order out of chaos historically within the political realm of Athens with the emergence of democracy (Konstan, 71).

Dorter and Konstan offer the closest interpretations similar to the views of this thesis. Dorter (134-135) recognizes that there is a move towards reconciliation on the part of the two main characters in the play and draws political connections. He also fails to connect his argument to the historical setting of Athens. However, the complete alignment of Zeus with force and Prometheus with reason fails to recognize the complexity of the characters. Similarly, Podlecki (122) and White (139-140) both view the tragedy as a strict dichotomy between good and evil, albeit with one claiming Prometheus as the hero, and the other claiming Zeus. Konstan (1977) draws excellent conclusions about the order that seems to emerge from the trilogy, yet draws no connections between the political setting of Athens and the religious order of the gods

and without truly developing the argument underlying this historical political development. Havelock (1957) makes some excellent points about the rationalist elements of the play, but his focus is far too philosophical, failing to recognize how this connects on a more personal level to Athenian society.

The view of this thesis is that Aeschylus was arguing for a political order based upon the commonality of all the parts of the polis. This view was based upon the historical, political development of Athens that focused on maintaining order within the city. Underlying this view was an acceptance of Athenian citizenry's ability to achieve a just order. Aeschylus's political view was encased within a theological order that was based in finding the mean through compromise and moderation. Thus, for the Athenian polis to achieve a just order, it had to be in harmony with the order of the gods. *The Prometheia* was an attempt to demonstrate the importance of this theological, political view within the changing conditions of Athens, such that Athenians might understand the importance of incorporating all the elements of the community, both nobles and commoners, within the polis and how this form of the polis could fit within the order of the gods.

Methodology

Skinner provides an excellent starting point for describing what historical approach this thesis is taking. As Skinner states, it is not feasible that "the possibility that an acceptable account of an agent's behaviour could ever survive the demonstration that it was itself dependent on the use of criteria of description and classification not available to the agent himself" (Skinner, 28). What Skinner is attempting to show is that any

attempt to understand how people may have reacted or thought about issues in history must be understood within the context of ideas available to the time in which the writer was creating his texts. There is a close connection between intentionality on the art of the author and textual meaning, but where this thesis diverges from Skinner is in the consideration of the social and political context. Rorty suggests viewing it as an 'intellectual history', such that historical texts are viewed not only in the context of what intellectuals were up to at the time they composed their ideas, but also "their interaction with the rest of society" (Rorty, 1984). The political and social context of the particular time period, in the case ancient Athens, must be considered in both the development of the author's ideas as well as the reception by the audience.

To explain better the historical view, it is useful to provide an alternative manner in looking into history. Charles Taylor suggests that in looking into history, it is useful to attempt to find the similarities between different culturally specific ideas, such that we can discover intrinsic similarities between different time periods (Taylor, 1992, 342). Taylor suggests that what we need to do is a "historical redescription" to be able to discover the origins of our "present thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, and actions" and discover the source of our current problems through this process (Taylor, 1984, 18). Thus, we study historical ideas to better understand how it is we came to be in our modern society.

In opposition to this view, this thesis is not attempting to study the tragedy or democracy of Athens with the hope of shedding light on our modern conceptions. Instead, this thesis is attempting to describe the "conventionally recognizable meanings,

in a society of that kind, that might in principle have been possible for someone to have intended to communicate" (Skinner, 49). It recognizes that values of a specific time are contingent upon the factors of that time and cannot be transposed or universalized. While there may be links between the different time periods, it is nonetheless recognizing that any attempt to understand what was specifically must be reflective of how that society. There is an obvious shortfall in an attempt to understand people from an age different from our own, as we do not come from that time period. Moreover, there is always the danger of transposing our own ideas onto the past. Nonetheless, any attempt to understand material from the past must be, to the best of our ability, placed within the context which it was produced. This is not to suggest that any lessons taken from a historical time period are purely historical in nature, i.e. that no contemporary lessons can be drawn from them, but any attempt has to be contextualized. As Bevir states, "although historians cannot be certain of the truth or falsity of their view of a historical meaning, they can reach an understanding that they have good reason to take as more or less true" (Bevir, 212).

Using a historical lens necessitates providing the historical background both to the democracy of Athens, to the development of tragedy, and to the particular tragedies that are analyzed in this thesis, *Prometheus Bound, Prometheus Unbound,* and *Prometheus the Firebearer.* The historical development of democracy helps to demonstrate the manner in which Athens was democratic and how tragedy may have fit within the democracy. Tragedy was both changing and being changed by the political circumstances of Athens, representative of the political activity of democratic Athens.

Finally, providing the historical setting for the plays is vital, according to this methodological approach, in determining what political lessons may be available.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapter sets the background of the thesis, providing information regarding the development of democracy in Athens. It demonstrates how freedom of speech, equality before the law, and equal right for all citizens to take part in the political processes slowly materialized as political problems arose between the various political factions throughout history. Moreover, this chapter provides an argument in favour of Aeschylean authorship for *The Prometheia*, as well as attempts to establish a date for its production. This is absolutely necessary in attempting to make a historical interpretation of the text. Finally, it provides immediate historical, political background around the suggested date of *The Prometheia*, which helps to understand what message a contemporary Athenian audience may have taken from this particular set of tragedies.

Building upon the first chapter, the second chapter defines, in detail, how tragedy may be understood both politically and religiously. Taking a particular view of politics as an activity, this chapter focuses on the manner in which tragedy was democratic: in terms of the way it was presented, such as the open forum that facilitated discussion and debate and its particular use of language, its structure, such as its emphasis on competition, and its content, which dealt with issues that could only have been relevant to democratic Athens. Moreover, this tragedy focuses on the religious side of tragedy demonstrating that tragedy fit within the previous myths, serving as a sacred narrative explaining how the world of man and the world of the gods functioned, while accepting

its limitations. These two elements are combined to demonstrate the special function tragedy could serve in analyzing social and political concerns. Tragedy offered an elaborate presentation of civic and religious ideas to an Athenian audience that could reflect upon issues that may have been overlooked or too sensitive to be discussed in other political settings.

The third chapter provides an exemplar of the discussion that took place in chapter 2: Aeschylus' *The Prometheia. The Prometheia* is a reformulation of the myth of Prometheus and his conflict with Zeus, although representing the general conflict between the old rulers of the gods, the Titans, and the new rulers, the Olympians. This trilogy reflects upon the changing political circumstances occurring after the reforms of Ephialtes that seemed to split Athens in terms of oligarchs and democrats. A particular lesson that may be drawn from this text focuses on the idea of moderation and reconciliation between political factions for the purpose of maintaining a strong civic order, as well as touching upon some other political themes relating to new regimes and tension between political factions. Thus, The Prometheia provides an example of what sort of political themes may have been addressed, the manner they would have been presented, and what sort of revelations may have occurred as a result within tragedy.

Chapter 1 – Historical Background

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on understanding how democracy developed in Athens and what democracy entailed. The thesis of this chapter is that democracy was a slow and continuous, historical process that was continually being defined by the citizens of ancient Athens as they worked through their particular problems. Freedom of speech, equality before law, and the ability for all citizens to take part in the Athenian political system were the primary components of Athenian democracy, but they only came into being through a number of political reforms beginning from the time of Draco. This chapter also provides the historical background to the specific tragic trilogy that is being analyzed, *The Prometheia* with a particular focus on the political reforms of Ephialtes and the tension that resulted between the oligarchic and democratic factions of Athens.

This chapter provides the necessary background for understanding the political purposes of tragedy. It explains how democracy came to be and functioned, which is necessary in explaining how tragedy worked within Athenian democracy and played a vital part of it. Moreover, this chapter provides the particular historical, political background that existed leading up to the specific tragedies I have chosen to focus on, *The Prometheia*. It demonstrates the political tension that existed between the disparate forces helping to understand why these tragedies may have been written, what understandings may have been drawn from an Athenian audience, and what purpose they may have served.

Dating the play

Before delving into the historical context of its production it is important to first establish a date for the plays. There is considerable debate surrounding the authorship of *The Prometheia*, which is intertwined with the question of the date of the production of this tragedy. There are two primary schools of thought on the authorship and date of the text; most believe Aeschylus is the author and it was written somewhere near the end of his life, approximately 456/455 BCE; others suggest it was either Aeschylus' son, Euphorion, or Aeschylus' nephew, Philocles, who is the author with the play being produced around 445-435 BCE (for discussion see Conacher (1980), 141-142).

The main arguments for a non-Aeschylean authorship are based in the thematic and dramatic conception of the play. First, those who oppose Aeschylus' authorship argue that Aeschylus would never have presented Zeus in such a tyrannical manner, as portrayed in *Prometheus Bound*, especially when looking at his other plays. Many have countered this view with the idea of a development or a transformation on the part of Zeus (Conacher, 122-125, Dorter, 132-134, and Konstan, 71-74). Moreover, the general theme of conflicting gods and reconciliation is very similar to the theme of Aeschylus' tragedy, *The Oresteia,* and several authors have drawn similarities between *The Prometheia* and *The Oresteia* (Conacher, 164 and Nagle, 156). Second, arguments are made in terms of Aeschylus' structural and dramatic styles, mostly the stichomythia or minimal use of the chorus, which are very different from any of his other surviving plays

(Griffith (1984), 291).[1] As Herrington suggests, though, many of the structural changes can be associated with the general changes taking place with the appearance of Sophoclean tragedy, which resemble in both structure in style Aeschylus' *The Prometheia* (Herington**,** 92). The structural changes to the stichomythia in Aeschylus' late plays purposefully enhance the dramatic development of the play, which is a typical Aeschylean narrative form (Conacher, 152). Third, the vocabulary of *Prometheus Bound* has several repeated words not used anywhere else in the surviving plays of Aeschylus (Griffith (1977), 282). Although we have a relatively small sample of Aeschylean works to compare to the subject matter of the play will most likely alter the particular usage of words (Conacher, 155-156). Fourth, there are a number of metrical anomalies that differ from any other Aeschylean play in terms of "types of metre and length of anapaestic runs" (Conacher, 162). Again, the same problems occur as to whether there can be a conclusive Aeschylean style considering the small number of plays of his we have. Furthermore, the specific use of the metrical systems seem to fit with the dramatic context of the play and enhance its overall structure (Conacher, 164).

Notwithstanding these debates over style, narrative, structure, and authorship, there is no way to be certain regarding the date of the text, but there is sufficient support for the argument that Aeschylus was indeed the author and that the play was produced somewhere between 458-456 BCE. First, there are some of the anomalies in terms of style that have been attributed to Sophocles, meaning that if this is indeed an Aeschylean play, it most likely has to be near the end of his life (Conacher, 172). Third, there was a

[1] The stichomythia is a technique in verse drama in which single alternating lines, or half-lines, are given to alternating characters. It was invented and commonly used in the Greek theatre as a way to present dramatic dialogue between characters.

complete acceptance in antiquity that this play was indeed Aeschylus', coming from both Greek and Roman sources (Conacher, 173). Finally, the text is in many ways similar to other Aeschylean plays, such that even those who deny Aeschylus' authorship believe it was an attempt to imitate Aeschylus (Conacher, 173). The specific date of this trilogy both helps to determine the interpretation, but the interpretation of this text also reinforces the date of this trilogy.

Political History

In terms of political history, it is important to understand how the Athenian democracy developed. Before describing how it became democratic it is useful to define briefly what made Athens a democracy. Athens was democratic because of the freedom for all citizens to speak and vote on issues that were relevant to Athens, as well as the right for all citizens to judge and equally be judged under the law. Citizens were allowed to take part in open debates, discussed in length, about all legislative, judicial, and administrative matters (Nagle, 159). Decisions were voted upon by all citizens present in the assorted institutions only after open debate between those who wanted, or were able, to participate. Citizens were equal in the sense that "each could claim the right of private free speech (*parrhesia*) in general, and equality of public speech (*isegoria*) in the Assembly". *Isegoria* meant that all citizens were equal in their membership within the community, and thus in their ability to participate in the public sphere of decision-making. Freedom for the ancient Greeks meant that Athenians were autonomous in their self-rule to make their own laws and administer justice. *Isonomia*, "equality through the law…or before the law" meant that all citizens had the equal right to judge and be judged

regardless of wealth, power, etc (Coleman, 23-35). This is what truly made Athens a democracy. This did not develop over night, but was realized as the Athenians worked through their particular problems politically and continued to develop throughout the history of Athens. Thus, the activity of politics in Athens differed from other poleis in Greece because all citizens took part in and decided the manner in which they lived together communally on equal footing.

Democracy developed gradually in Athens. The reforms of Cleisthenes in 508/507 BCE are often given as the starting point of the democracy because his reforms led to a restructuring of the associations between Athenians. However, it depends on what one views as specific to Athenian democracy. If one focuses on the functioning of institutions, such as the Assembly or the courts, as the core of the Athenian democracy, then it would not be surprising to see Cleisthenes reforms as the primary starting point. If one believes what truly made Athens democratic was the freedom and equality of speech, equality under the law and equality for one to judge, one can see the beginnings of the development of the Athenian democracy with Draco.

Draco was the first Athenian to create a written law-code to replace the oral laws that existed in Athens with the intention of ending the problems related to blood-feuds (Buckley, 91). There was an attempt by Draco to fix the tensions that existed in Athens by establishing a set of guidelines and a system for recourse. The most significant reform for this thesis was the use of these written laws within the Areopagus court system, which was open to all citizens to defend cases of injustice (Buckley, 101). This set of written laws should be considered as the beginning of the idea of equality under the law and the

ability of citizens to defend themselves under the law courts, albeit not necessarily equally.

Draco`s laws were the earliest attempt at the creation of a system to handle the issues of Athens. Eventually, his laws led to new problems, resulting in Solon reforming the law system. Solon`s reforms were based upon the idea of what Meier describes as the emergence of "theological politics" (Meier, 125-126). 'Theological politics' assumed that the problems within the *polis* were due to the way affairs were conducted in the *polis* and not some random punishment of the gods (Meier, 126). Thus, it was possible for men to create a just order within the *polis* that was based upon the order of the gods. `Theological politics` was based on a belief that "different laws applied to the polis" than individuals or families, for justice was directly linked to the polis and the polis could, through the proper ordering of its disparate elements, create an order that was favoured by the gods (Meier, 127). Thus, Solon`s system was characterized by *eunomia*, wherein "the Athenian state would be guided by all citizens working together", albeit not equally (Burnstein et al, 190).[2] The idea of e*unomia* was based on an order that focused not on the particular parts, but on the whole. Each of the parts served a purpose within the whole with the intention of creating and maintaining a strong civic order. What this thesis will attempt to demonstrate is that tragedy was a continuation of this view of politics, such that it looked into political issues in light of religious concerns. Thus, for justice to be manifested in the polis at the time of Aeschylus, it had to be realized in the

[2] *Eunomia* was a Greek goddess, as well as a Greek term, that denoted good order, or good governance according to good laws (Meier, 160-161).

polis as a whole, meaning all the different forces had to be included, in some form, as opposed to it being at the behest of a single force (Meier, 128).

The manifestation of this idea of creating a strong civic order depended largely on the historical time. For Solon, this meant enacting legislative reform that fixed the political and economic decline of Athens while attempting to resolve the situations that were causing tension. In particular, this meant weakening the power of the aristocracy, which was done with a number of economic reforms, especially for holding office (Nagle, 112). Solon also created a court of appeal, which, albeit in limited cases, provided everyday citizens the opportunity to have an equal opportunity to defend themselves before the courts, as well as to bring charges against magistrates or other members of the noble classes (Nagle, 113). Solon's judicial reforms were the incipient stages to the arousal of equality under the law allowing a place for people to voice their concerns that was initiated by reacting to the concerns of the polis.

Athens fell under a tyranny after Solon, which lasted until 510 BCE. Once the Peisistratids were expelled, Athens returned to the old aristocratic, dynastic rivalries. Assorted upper class families fought amongst themselves for control of Athens, which had plagued Athens prior to the tyranny. These families were organized such that they controlled the political process and the rest of the citizens were largely dependent upon them for any form of a political voice (Burnstein et al, 200). To truly show the significance of Cleisthenes' reforms, it is important to first explain what led to these reforms historically within Athens. Prior to Cleisthenes' reforms, a struggle for power between two major aristocratic clans was ensuing with one being led by Cleisthenes and

the other by Isagoras. Isagoras was elected archon in 508 BCE on a policy of revoking the citizenship for all those that had received it under the previous reforms of Solon and Peisistratus, which essentially pushed the masses over to the side of Cleisthenes and nearly led to a revolt (Burnstein et al, 199). However, Isagoras used the support of Sparta to force Cleisthenes to leave Athens. Afterwards, Isagoras with the aid of Sparta attempted to expel several hundred families from Athens. This lead to a revolt by the Athenian citizenry, Isagoras' capitulation, and the return of Cleisthenes. This nearly sparked a fight between Athens and Sparta (Burnstein et al, 199).

In terms of labelling or selecting a specific time period to describe when Athens institutionally became a democracy, there are two primary views, i.e. the reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 BCE or the reforms of Ephialtes in 462/461 BCE. Cleisthenes came to power and devised a system that would neutralize the family-based aristocratic clans (Coleman, 26). Some suggest that Cleisthenes reforms were motivated purely by personal concerns, to take power away from his rivals and strengthen his own position (Boardman, Griffin, and Murray, 35 and Coleman, 23). Others suggest that Cleisthenes recognized problems within Athens between the disparate groupings within Athenian society (Burnstein et al, 199). There was a recognition that the aristocratic quarrelling was making Athens weak and leaving it open to a possible conquest by Sparta or elsewhere. Thus, it may have been a reflection on the part of Cleisthenes that for Athens as a city-state to maintain a unified defence, a larger portion of the citizens of the Athenian *polis* needed to be involved in the decision-making, not just the aristocracy. Regardless of the purpose for these reforms, they had a significant impact into the development of democracy in Athens.

The system he devised restructured the associations between Athenians by dividing the structure according to ten political tribes (*phylai*), which were further subdivided into regional units (*demes*), thus breaking down the traditional associations based on kinship and replacing them with local groupings, mixed of both the commoners and aristocrats (Coleman, 26-27). From the *demes*, people were selected or elected for the new Council of 500 (expanded and recreated under the reforms), jurors for the court, office of the ten generals (*strategoi*), and commissioners. The Council of 500 was responsible for preparing the agenda and drafting proposals for The Assembly, receiving foreign embassies, and implementing policy decisions. Another significant reform involved the creation of ostracism, wherein a political leader could be sent into exile for ten years if it was agreed upon in the assembly (Boardman, Griffin, and Murray, 35). The purpose of ostracism was to guard against an overly ambitious political figure, but was also used to ensure that if one side of a political conflict had won a decision, he could force out his strongest opponent and ensure his policy or goal was more strongly endorsed (Nagle, 135). From the reforms of Cleisthenes onwards the Assembly was slowly becoming the most powerful political body, in which people directly took part in open discussions as often as forty times a year. The average Athenian citizen began to have the freedom to express himself and take part in the formation of politics within Athens. It is from this point onwards that Athenian citizens, in general, began to be regularly engaged in political life. The average citizen was expected to reflect and decide upon political decisions that would have a direct affect on him personally, as well as on the polis as a whole. The institutions provided the arena for this activity to take place,

but what is more interesting is the activity of politics, wherein "questions of community organization were raised, determined, and implemented" (Hammer, 2002).

A number of political changes occurred following the reforms of Cleisthenes that induced Athens to move towards the direction of a democracy. However, of particular historical significance for this thesis are the political changes that occurred at the time that *The Prometheia* was written, around 456 BCE. What is noteworthy about this time period is that Athens had recently experienced a couple of significant political reforms that had been led by Ephialtes in 462/461 BCE. Ephialtes' institutional reforms helped define Athens as a democracy. They resulted in the remaining legal and supervisory powers of the Areopagus Court being handed over to the Popular Courts, such that the "full democracy" of ancient Athens was officially inaugurated (Nagle, 143). The reforms resulted in the removal of one of the last remaining institutional barriers to power for the citizenry as a whole to be in control of the political decisions of Athens, as opposed to sharing power institutionally with the aristocracy or having the entire process controlled by the aristocracy.

This is not to suggest that the Athenian democratic process stopped here. Following the reforms of Ephialtes, Athens moved more towards the directions of a radical democracy. Further reforms under the leadership of Pericles pushed Athens further towards ensuring that the common person had a better chance of being active in politics. For example, Pericles introduced pay for serving in the jury ensuring that more citizens were able to take part in the court system (Coleman, 27). Moreover, sometime after 411 BCE people began to be paid to attend the Assembly, which helped ensure that

not only those with money and free time were able to take part in the proceedings of the democracy (Nagle, 159).

Athens was the first society to ever institute a democracy, and, unlike in modernity, it did not have any pre-existing societies to look to when attempting to understand what exactly was taking place. Ancient Athens was a direct democracy, arguably more democratic than many modern democracies, because the citizens were intimately involved in most decisions and were directly affected by any of the decisions.[3] Thus, what took place was vastly different from anything yet experienced in the sense that Athenians were beginning to realize what exactly a political order entailed and for the first time began to question who should be governing. This profound change allowed citizens a greater scope for action, but also a realization of "the immense difficulty of decision making" and the "full measure of human suffering" caused by their own devices (Meier, 86). A whole new world of political responsibilities was laid at the Athenian's feet, but attempting to grasp all this really entailed was difficult to imagine.

The People's Assembly was one of the most important political bodies in Athens, 'especially following the reforms of Cleisthenes', as the Council of Five Hundred, which was the institution in charge of setting the agenda of the Assembly, became divided amongst a larger portion of the citizens. Within the Assembly, citizens would debate and decide on the major issues for Athenian society, although those who could attend

[3] While many modern democracies do incorporate many more sections of the political community than ancient Athens, such as women, and are, in general, a lot more open to allowing outsiders to join the political community, they are in general representative democracies, meaning that for many people democracy involves merely voting and allowing those elected representatives to make decisions for them. In ancient Athens, the citizens were required to take an active part in their polis, debating issues in the Assembly, taking part in the court decisions, and serving in the assorted institutions.

depended largely on having the time and money to attend. Nonetheless, the Athenians who attended Assembly and the Council became accustomed to listening and taking part in lengthy debates that certainly required some level of awareness about the functioning of their society. Similarly, it is shortly after the reforms of Cleisthenes that tragedy becomes institutionalized at the City Dionysia, but the role it played in the democracy was similar to that of the other institutions.[4] Athenian society was largely an oral culture, which meant that people were used to absorbing and discussing complex discussions (Burnstein et al, 244). Athenian citizens had grown up listening to the great myths of Homer and Hesiod and the lyric poetry of many traveling poets. Thus, many Athenians were used to hearing arguments presented to them in elegant language. As will be discussed in the following chapter, tragedy became an arena wherein citizens could reflect upon the changes occurring within the polis in a manner that was inherently democratic, in that the material raised political concerns that were reflected upon and discussed by the audience.

Historical Issues Relevant to *The Prometheia*

While the historical development of democracy is important, there are some more specific historically relevant issues that surround the date of this trilogy. Cleisthenes reforms created a political counterbalance in terms of power to that of the upper class (Coleman, 26). As opposed to quarrelling taking place between various aristocratic families or clans, quarrelling began to take place between the different forces within Athens; those who favoured a more oligarchic, aristocratic form of rule, and those who

[4] The City Dionysia was one of the largest festivals held in Athens in honor of the god Dionysus. This festival was believed to be established during the reign of Pisistratus in the 6th century most likely celebrating the end of winter and the harvesting of the crops.

favoured a more democratic rule involving all of the citizens of the *demos*. The aristocracy still maintained a significant amount of power compared to the rest of the polis, particularly through their continued control of the Areopagus Courts.[5] The Areopagus still had the right to try magistrates and supervise the administration of the laws and was particularly influential in decisions about war and in some internal affairs, such as conducting murder trials. In other words, the reforms of Cleisthenes may be understood as a significant creation of a power in opposition to the control of the aristocracy, which competed with the aristocracy, but did not necessarily usurp them.

Athens remained somewhat united following Cleisthenes' reforms, largely because of the wars and victories over the Persian army. Nonetheless, with the new power given to people, especially after the *archons* began to be selected by lot from the various demes in 487 BCE, there was tension between those favouring an oligarchy and those favouring a more democratic style of rule (Burnstein et al, 214).[6] Moreover, another important factor played into the increased importance of the Athenian populace. Prior to the war with the Persians, Athens had built a massive naval force. The naval force required large numbers of Athenian citizens to act as rowers. Rowers, unlike hoplite soldiers, were for the most part property-less, as hoplite soldiers had to be monetarily endowed enough to pay for their armour (Nagle, 141). In general, this meant

[5] The Areopagus was mostly composed of the rich and powerful nobility, albeit with some exceptions, such as Pericles (Meier, 83). The Areopagus had traditionally been a purely aristocratic council, but after the reforms of 487BCE, we begin to see the city's most influential and experienced politicians being admitted, which for the most part was still members of the aristocratic class (Meier, 83).

[6] Archons were the ones allowed to sit on the Areopagus. Thus, when archons began to be selected by lot, it meant that commoners not only had the chance to sit on a prestigious and important seat within the Athenian political community, but they were also allowed to sit on the Areopagus, which had hitherto completely composed of nobles. Prior to these reforms, only the wealthiest aristocrats were included in the selection for archon.

that those who were involved in the fighting prior to the importance of naval battle were aristocrats, which meant they were the ones defending the city and used this as a basis to limit political participation. During the war with the Persians, and Athens increased necessity for a naval force as it formed an empire throughout the Greek world the average citizen was playing a much larger role in the Athenian military scene. With the increased importance of naval battle for Athenian defence and later for its empire, the masses of Athenian citizens involved in the navy gained in importance within Athenian society. The more naval operations and the more importance for the navy, the more the average citizen, acting as a rower, demanded political participation (Nagle, 143).

From the time of Cleisthenes' reforms, there were essentially two primary sides within Athens; those who wanted to end the democratic reforms and form an oligarchy and those who wanted to expand upon the democratic reforms. From the time of the defeat of the Persians, around 471 BCE, these two sides formed along fault lines; those favouring an oligarchy tended to call for a close relationship with Sparta, whereas those favouring democracy tended to favour competition with Sparta and an Athenian empire (Burnstein et al, 233). Prior to the reforms of Ephialtes, a Spartan disaster lead to a request for Athenian aid. The *helots,* Spartan slaves, had revolted after an earthquake had struck Sparta and left it vulnerable (Nagle, 143). Cimon, a leading noble figure within the Areopagus and proponent of the oligarchic faction, led an Athenian army to Sparta to help with a revolt of the Spartan slave-class. Shortly after coming to the Spartan aid, the Athenian army was asked to leave by the Spartans due to the way in which they acted, resulting in Cimon's ostracism (Nagle, 143). This opened up the floor for Ephialtes, a leading opponent to Cimon and the oligarchic faction, to push forward reforms that

would further democratize Athens. The tension that results from these reforms had already been stirring prior to Ephialtes.

The reforms of Ephialtes completely removed any challenges to the insipient Athenian democracy and put the political power completely in the hands of the *demos*. Under Cleisthenes' reforms, the people had been given the power to force the nobles to pay more attention to their desires, but the old order, to a certain extent still survived. People shared in deliberations about civic affairs and decision making under the traditional order, in which rulers and ruled were distinct (Meier, 85). As Coleman suggests, with the reforms of Ephialtes the Athenians truly became, or were on the verge of becoming, "self-consciously democratic" (Coleman, 27). This reform altered the Athenian political landscape by placing the whole of the civic order in the hands of the citizens, as opposed to splitting power between the opposing social groupings, the aristocrats and the common citizens. The citizens not only took complete control of the political process, but also were becoming more aware of the political realities of their time. After Ephialtes reforms, the main political question became a choice between alternative forms of rule, wherein a government completely in the hands of the people was chosen in favour of the old noble/aristocratic form. Hence, people began to understand what exactly a political order meant, as "constitutions could be defined according to whether government was exercised by one person, by a few, or by the people" (Meier, 84). Politics became the concern of the citizens, such that the citizens determined the conduct of politics, and the concerns of the citizens became the stuff of politics.

Nevertheless, the reforms of Ephialtes were not wholeheartedly accepted by every citizen within the polis and thus, show the contention surrounding the significant changes that were taking place. Shortly after, Ephialtes was assassinated, most likely by people who disagreed with his reforms, although no suspects were ever named (Burnstein et al, 234). Moreover, in 457 BCE, some Athenians persuaded a Spartan army operating in the region to attack Athens and attempt to overthrow the democracy and reinstate an oligarchy; this attack failed. These events nearly led to a civil war within Athens, as supporters of the oligarchy and the democracy struggled for control of Athens. The reforms of Ephialtes marked a clear shift in the political makeup of Athens that was contested for years to follow. It is within this political setting that Aeschylus wrote *The Prometheia*. The question of the role of the aristocratic element within democratic Athens was still prominent in the minds of the citizenry, even though discussions about its role may not have been necessarily open within the other democratic institutions, such as the Council or the Assembly, after the reforms of Ephialtes. Within Aeschylus' *Prometheia*, though, a reflection upon the implications of this for the *polis* and Athenian life in general is depicted through the myth of Prometheus. How exactly this was possible through tragedy will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 – Political and Religious Role of Tragedy

Introduction

What was tragedy and what purpose did tragedy serve for the Athenians? The thesis of this chapter is that tragedy was a political experience providing a theoretical reflection upon the changing social and political circumstances of contemporary Athens. Tragedy, in particular, was tied to the emerging democracy of Athens in terms of its language, presentation, and content, which is tied to a specific view of politics as an activity. Like other forms of poetry, tragedy was religious as it extrapolated a particular view of the order of the gods within the changes occurring in Athenian society, while also recognizing the limitations of its own views. I will demonstrate that this combination of religion and politics provided Athenians with a particular political experience that could reflect upon the political changes occurring with Athenian society in a manner that was unavailable elsewhere. This was largely due to tragedy's ability to examine controversial themes that did not necessarily require certainty, or absolute resolutions. Its analysis was theoretical, raising questions and probing political subjects in a manner that was open to deliberation. I will demonstrate that the new interpretations of the old Greek myths were created to reflect the changes in society, while at the same time causing citizens to contemplate what exactly these changes entailed. This will help understand what purpose tragedy served for Athenian audiences and provide a particular understanding of how intimately tragedy was tied to the political atmosphere of Athens. This chapter provides the central theme for this thesis, describing what exactly tragedy meant for the Athenians. It builds upon the first chapter showing how tragedy fit within the developing democracy

and was directly connected to the changing political circumstances of Athens during the fifth century. It provides the theoretical background for understanding the particular tragedies this thesis has chosen to analyze, Aeschylus' *The Prometheia.*

Political Aspects

Viewing tragedy as political is not really considered controversial, but there is a fair amount of debate in regards to the way in which tragedy is political. For the purposes of this thesis, the different approaches taken can be broken up into a couple of general categories, which will help explain the benefits of the stance taken by this thesis and the shortfalls of others. There are two general categories in which the political form of tragedy can be split; first, by whether or not it was directly linked to Athens or was more of a Greek institution or body, and second, by how we define the "political" or "democracy" in Athens, either by its institutions, structure and function or as an activity in which communities reflect upon and figure out how they want to live together. These two general categories are interconnected within this thesis, although starting from whether or not tragedy was linked to Athens specifically will help clarify the purpose of this thesis.

The first general category is whether or not tragedy was particularly connected politically to Athens or whether or not tragedy was political in the sense of speaking to polis-life in general in Greece. Seaford suggests that tragedy was connected to the formation of the polis for all Greek cities, not just Athens (Seaford, 31). In a similar vein Carter suggests that tragedy is political because it deals with concerns relating to human beings as part of a community of the polis, not specifically democratic concerns. (Carter,

67). The strongest opponent to this particular view is Goldhill who suggests that Athenian dramatic festivals, of which tragedies were a part, were essentially democratic festivals directly connected with Athens utilized for the purpose of displaying Athens power and prestige, as well as encouraging citizens to serve the polis (Goldhill, 137-139). This is not to suggest that the festivals followed some democratic party line, but rather that the "festival itself, in organization and structure … is fully an institution of the democratic polis" (Goldhill, 135). In general, Goldhill`s arguments are based on his conception of the structural similarities between tragedy and the democracy, such as the selection of judges in a democratic manner or the use of the *choregia* (Goldhill, 140).

The strongest critique of this particular view comes from Rhodes. Rhodes, while recognizing that all tragedies performed in Athens were connected to the city and some plays certainly alluded to concerns only seen in a democracy, he believes it is false for Athenian tragedy to be viewed as a product of the democratic polis both in terms of its institutions and in its content (Rhodes, 105).[7] Rhodes` primary critique is that many of the institutions seen as primarily democratic were also present in other poleis (Rhodes, 107-113).[8] While Rhodes does provide adequate support for suggesting that many of the institutions labelled as specific to democratic Athens are not necessarily so, he

[7] In terms of institutional arguments, Rhodes is primarily responding to the views put forth by Goldhill that attempt to show that the institutional structure of Athens demonstrates the truly democratic nature of tragedy. Goldhill argues that many of the institutions associated with tragedy were specifically democratic in their nature, such as the funding of the chorus or festival, the selection of judges and the chorus through a democratic procedure, the certainty of seating according to the political position in the democracy, etc. (Goldhill, 143-145).

[8] For example, in terms of reserved seating, individuals with political authority were not the only ones with reserved seats, as foreigners also received special seating, and the idea of reserving seats is not something that is particularly egalitarian, and thus not representative of the democratic arguments put forth (Rhode, 110).

nonetheless recognizes that many of these institutions took a particularly democratic form in Athens (Rhodes, 113).[9]

The view of this thesis is that tragedy was directly connected to the emerging democracy, but the way in which this is exemplified is the manner in which tragedy developed, the manner in which it was presented, and the content of the plays, including the language used. The emphasis on tragedy's connection to democracy is largely in response to those who argue that Athenian tragedy is not specific to the emergence of democracy. To elaborate on this point requires differentiating between different understandings of politics, i.e. institutional, or structural, versus politics as an activity. Elaborating on this point will provide the opportunity to respond to the alternative views of tragedy as political and democratic.

There are a number of ways to understand politics, but for the purposes of this thesis, two understandings of politics will be presented. As Hammer states, "politics may be defined as either a structure, or function, or as an activity" (Hammer, 14). Politics defined by its structure or function looks to define specific relations between humans according to the institutions or structures that exist. Thus, the specific institutions of Athens during the fifth-century, such as the council, the assembly, or the courts, made it democratic. Or politics only begins in Greece with the creation of the polis, as there was not a developed political organization or institution prior to this to give shape to the

[9] For example, Rhode suggests that the *choregia* was not a specific democratic system, as Goldhill suggests. There were examples of non-democratic *choregia* and the *choregia* was a "device by which competition amongst the elite was harnessed for civic purposes" (Rhode, 108). However, he recognizes that the particular mechanism for the selection of the choregia was democratic and that the appointment of the richest men in Athens to act as such was also democratic (Rhode, 108). For more discussion on whether, or how, different institutions were or were not democratic, see Rhode (2003).

political life of the Greeks (Hammer, 14). In opposition to this is the view that politics is an activity, which views the institutions as evidence of political activity, but not the sole determinant of politics. As Hammer states, "the political field…is a realm in which questions of community organization are raised, determined, and implemented" (Hammer, 14). Politics is change in continuity, being formed as participants determine their relations with each other through their interactions, albeit partially shaped by the institutions. It is activity wherein people decide how they want to live among themselves, providing for their particular interests within a community setting. The advantage to viewing politics in this manner is that it recognizes that politics is not completely determined by its institutions, nor limited to them, but instead sees politics as a constant engagement and reflection of the composition of political life in a community (Hammer, 20). In addition, this understanding of the political recognizes that politics is not static, but rather fluid and dynamic, being partially determined by the institution and structural setting, but more so by the tensions between different individuals interacting. Moreover, it recognizes that human volition plays a part in the determination of politics as their relations continually change in their interactions with each other, as opposed to developing according to the specific structures or institutions in place (Hammer, 28).

Understanding politics as an activity can help us understand how tragedy was politically tied to the democracy of Athens. To understand this view requires recognizing that tragedy is democratic in the manner in which it worked out its problems. Political institutions were not the 'trade mark' of Athens as a democratic regime; rather, it was the praxis of its citizenship, its constant and flexible process of performance, creation and deliberation that made Athens truly democratic. That is, as much as Athens' political

regime, the tragic literary genre of the time also developed and was shaped by this 'democratic' praxis of the Athenian population.

Athens did not immediately become a democracy, although the reforms of Cleisthenes led the city in this direction and opened up discussions that would not have been present in many other poleis. Nor did the city stop defining the manner or extent of Athens' democracy after the reforms of Ephialtes, the date in which many scholars give as the final step towards a democratic Athens. The development of Athens' structure and institutions was part and parcel of its democratic development. While it may be pertinent to view the specific institutions of Athens as democratic per se, what truly made Athens a democracy was the freedom for all citizens to freely and openly deliberate about public issues, as well as the right for all citizens to judge and equally be judged under the rule of law. This meant that citizens were allowed to take part in open debates, discussed in length, about all legislative, judicial, and administrative matters (Nagle, 159). Decisions were voted upon by all citizens present in the assorted institutions only after open debate between those who wanted, or were able, to participate. What truly made Athens a democratic polis was not the 'effect' of deliberation but rather the very means through which decisions were taken, i.e. deliberation. As was discussed in the previous section, this did not develop over night, but was realized through a steady process of refashioning their particular problems politically and continued to develop throughout the history of Athens. Thus, the activity of politics in Athens differed from other poleis in Greece because all citizens took part in and decided the manner in which they lived together communally on equal footing.

Having defined the conception of the political in democratic Athens as a dynamic and flexible term, it is now possible to provide an analysis of the similar democratic aspects of tragedy as a literary genre. First, in terms of its presentation there are a number of connections to be made to democracy. Tragedy took place in an open forum, wherein plays were presented to audiences that involved debate and dialogue taking place between the characters. While figures differ, it is estimated that anywhere from ten to twenty thousand citizens were present at the tragic festivals, including citizens, foreigners, and possibly women, but there is still debate over whether women were actually allowed (Carter, 13). The scenes played out in tragedy were analogous to the other democratic institutions wherein characters took part in open discussions, similar to the speeches heard in the Assembly or the law courts. The dialogues may be seen as involving "overlapping, even clashing value centers that underlie how each character uniquely organizes the world into a complex of values" (Hammer, 11). Tragedy consistently presented characters with competing values and situations of "irresolvable polarities" (Segal, 45). As will be argued, in *The Prometheia* there is a tension between the new and the old as represented by the different gods, but without any one side being favoured, which is representative of the old and new regimes of Athens[10]. The audience, then, is invited to engage in a critical reflection similar to those to be undertaken by citizens in the political scene, as these opposing views were presented to them, debating amongst themselves the different interpretations. These ambiguities, tensions, and even conflict through the characters and their world invoked and reinvoked a cultural grammar that gave meaning and significance to the audience's values, beliefs, and social relations

[10] This point is thoroughly developed in the third chapter of this thesis.

(Hammer, 12). Thus, while Goldhill is right that tragedy was democratic, it was not necessarily the institutional framework that was similar to other Athenian institutions, but the manner in which tragedy engaged the audience.

The tragic festivals were also competitions presented to Athenian audiences. The audience played a role in deciding the winners, as the public's responses were vital to the success of the tragedian (Carter, 27 and Sommerstein, 6). Thus, similar to the law courts, the audience was expected to make judgments upon the material presented to them. Rhodes suggests that the festivals use of competition for the Great Dionysia was instituted during the Peisistratid tyranny and that the exchange of dialogue between characters began with Thespis (Rhodes, 107). His argument is that the debate and use of competition were not necessarily democratic in their make-up. There is some truth to this statement with many scholars dating the introduction of a dialogue between Thespis and a chorus to the 530s when Athens was ruled by a dictator (Cartledge (1997), 22). However, the Great or City Dionysia did not become formalized as a theatre of tragic drama until about 500 BCE, at which point it, along with the statue of Dionysus, was relocated from the Agora to the theatre in the sanctuary of Dionysos Eleuthereus located at the center of the city (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 198). Dionysos was a god of liberation and "the verbal similarity between Eleutherae and eleutheria, the Greek word for freedom, suggests that the newly institutionalized theatre-festival may have been inimical of a festival of democratic liberation" (Cartledge, 23). One may see the use of debate in tragedy and the development of debate between individuals as helping to foster elements in Athens that made it democratic, although there is not necessarily evidence to support this idea (Cartledge, 11-14).

Rhodes also suggests that competition utilized for civic purposes was not specifically democratic and thus competition cannot be seen as a specifically democratic thing. He does recognize that competitions in drama during the fifth-century were specific to Athens (Rhodes, 108). While other poleis did have debates in their political systems, the difference is that in Athens the political system was open to all citizens, who were, hypothetically speaking, equal in terms of a their ability to take part in the debate and decide on the outcome. Citizens in Athens had the freedom to speak about issues, unlike in other systems, where, short of the upper echelons of society, it was merely a situation of accepting or rejecting proposals. The participation in self-government, in the law courts, and at the tragic festivals were all part of the learning process for citizens as citizens, as if they were taking part in mass meetings that involved open debates over issues that related to the polis itself (Cartledge (1997), 19). Through tragedy, citizens were presented with yet another opportunity to debate and decide upon what they found most suitable to themselves. Thus, tragedy should be considered as a product of the Athenian democratic culture, performed in a specific Athenian festival with specific Athenian understandings. It emerged from the same Athenian contexts that gave specific meanings to each of the different members of the culture, who shared with the tragedians their "cultural assumptions and their conceptual map" (Sourvinou-Inwood (2005), 293). Tragedy was a system "whose signifiers are closely aligned to the central values" of the Athenian culture (Burian, 191). For example, the manner in which tragedy reworked female threats to male power through characters such as Clytemnestra or Antigone represents an affirmation of a cultural value and a threat to the male-dominated Athenian civic society (Burian, 191).

Second, tragedy was, in terms of content, democratic. Most specifically, tragedy underwent a developmental stage before the Athenians decided what suitable, which was based upon their reactions to the plays (Sommerstein, 6-7). First, the playwrights, officials, and audience determined what material was suitable, in terms of the method of recreating mythological stories and their content. As several scholars have noted, tragedy eventually developed a custom wherein it was unacceptable to use material that was too historically close to their present-day (Sommerstein, 19, Taplin, 2, and Cartledge, 24).[11] This 'custom' or informal rule took some time to develop and it was only after a number of attempts by different playwrights, such as Phrynichus and Aeschylus, before it became standard around 480 BCE (Cartledge, 25). This is not to say, however, that there were not reflections about current situations, or political messages that may have had direct relevance hidden within the texts; rather, it was a recognition that the Athenian audience expected a certain amount of distance and alienation from the world of tragedy, a distinction between the political world and the world of theatre (Cartledge, 25 and Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 226-227).[12][13]

[11] It was largely due to the manner in which the audience reacted, or badly reacted, to material presented by Phrynichus that dealt with the fall of Miletus to the Persians, wherein it was decided that there had to be a certain level of removal between the material presented and the present-day life of the Athenians (Taplin, 2-3).

[12] More discussion on the importance of distance for tragedy will be discussed below.

[13] Tragedy and comedy differed in almost all facets, including subject matter, characters, style, plot, and outcome. While both forms of drama were political, comedy often took the form of a political satire laced with sexual innuendos, often directly ridiculing the most important contemporary political figures and institutions openly. Comedy mocked present day individuals and political material in a direct, but ridiculous manner, often emphasizing irrational ideas and actions. While it may present political messages, the manner in which it did was more in jest and obvious to the audience. Tragedy, on the other hand, was more serious and its political messages were more hidden, albeit with a more serious tone, requiring the audience to supply "contemporary applications (Seidensticker, 41). For more on the differences between the two, see Seidensticker (2005).

In several other ways, though, the content of tragedy was specifically democratic. For instance the manner in which issues are discussed and the language used is something that is particular to democracy. As Cartledge suggests, "the competitiveness of the tragedies match the antagonistic speech used in the courts of Athens and the Assembly" and the "use of technical language was also similar to the courts" (Cartledge, 12-13).[14] This is particularly true for the courts, as the performance took place in front of lay citizen judges and was a shared experience. For example, in Sophocles' *Antigone*, the speech of Creon is heavily laden with legalist language and it is noted that in the prosecution of Leocrates in 336 BCE, the prosecutor utilized Praxithea's speech from Euripides *Erechtheus* to help make his case (Cartledge, 15-16). Moreover, tragedy often utilized speeches and arguments very similar to those which may have been seen in the other democratic institutions displayed openly in front of an audience (Goldhill, 132 and 135).

The language used in tragic plays while being familiar to the Athenian values and understandings consistently challenged the assumptions or values of the Athenians. Athens provided a stage for difficult questions to be asked (Pelling (2005) 83). Even though poets drew on traditional myth, which would have been recognizable to the audience, "the interaction of the poets and the audience resulted in a recreation of the past to fit the needs of the present", but this was done in front of a large audience that would have included many of the citizens (Hammer, 11). Tragedy`s questioning of values and

opinions was something that made it inherently democratic and helped foster a democratic ethos throughout Athens. Turning back to the discussion on freedom of speech, not as a right, but instead as an 'active expression of one's true beliefs', this meant that tragic plays truly practiced *parrhesia* and celebrated it. For example, in Aeschylus' *Persian Women*, the overthrow of the Persian tyranny is celebrated by an "unfettering of the tongue" celebrating the "free city" of Athens and its "free speech" (Saxonhouse, 89). This oral performance played a significant role in thinking about the nature and issues of community organization. It pried into the deepest questions and concerns of the Athenian audience. As Hammer suggests,

the performance can be reciprocal and reflexive since it is involved in a critique, direct or veiled, of the social life it grows out of. Social dramas present breaches in and inversions of accepted norms, actions, beliefs, and social structures, introducing a performance reflexivity in which the artist raises problems about the ordering principles deemed acceptable in real life (Hammer, 13).

Tragedy consistently challenged the opinions of the Athenians, raising questions in a radical manner that were both reflective of the society while also challenging many of the society's 'norms, actions, beliefs, and social structures'.[15]

However, as Rhodes suggests, democracy was not always tolerant of radical questioning, providing the example of individuals being persecuted for impiety, such as Socrates (Rhode, 119). There is an inherent weakness, not only in this argument, but in the example Rhodes used. Impiety was a charge labelled against somebody that failed to

[15] The ability of tragedy to question issues or deal with issues that may not have been available in other democratic institutions will be discussed later on in this chapter.

recognize the gods that the city recognized or for inventing new gods. Considering the accepted limitations of man's knowledge of the gods for ancient Greeks, there were multiple beliefs in terms of the order of the Cosmos.[16] Nonetheless, tragedy, through its religious undertones, not only questioned the role of the gods, but also the place of the gods in the city.[17]

The specific themes dealt with in tragedy, or the material of the tragedies themselves, was also democratic. Some plays are recognizably dealing with themes that were completely specific to the democracy, such as Aeschylus` *Supplices* and *Euminides*, and Euripides` *Supplices* (Rhodes, 114). The other plays were also in many ways very specific to the democracy. As Carter suggests what was relevant politically to the Athenians did not merely have to do with the political system or structure of Athens, but was more about what it meant to be a citizen in the polis, i.e. "with human beings as part of the community of the polis" (Carter, 67). The changes that were occurring in fifth-century Athens involved a redefinition of what it meant to be a citizen. Large segments of the population were given a more direct role in determining Athens' fate and how this affected Athenian society was being defined and redefined throughout the process.

Carter tends to view the politically-relevant as being relevant to all Greeks and not to the city of Athens specifically. Similarly, Rhodes suggests that the issues tragedy dealt with were not specifically democratic, but "are better seen as concerns of polis-dwelling Greeks" (Rhode, 104). Rhodes suggests that many of the themes labelled as

[16] More on the view of religion for the ancient Greeks will be discussed below.
[17] Tragedy's relation to religion and its ability to question, redefine, or reconsider the role of religion within Athenian society is extremely pertinent to this thesis and will be elaborated on further in this chapter.

being particularly democratic are not necessarily so, and are actually representative of issues being dealt with in poleis across the Greek world (Rhodes, 114). For example, Foley's discussion about the relationship between *oikos* and *polis* discussed in Antigone and the Athenian emphasis of the polis over the oikos is not something distinctively democratic (Rhodes, 114). According to these authors, tragedy explored issues that were mostly about the Greek city-state with a focus on the survival of polis (Carter, 78). To suggest that the concerns were only directed to Athenian democratic institutions and values fails to recognize the universality of certain issues dealt with that were relevant to any polis, such as the superiority of the Greeks to the barbarians.

Tragedy did not deal with particulars in the sense of pinpointing an issue within the present Athenian context; in fact, it was frowned upon to use myths that were too closely associated with present-day Athens. Instead, tragedy, for the most part, dealt with mythological events far-removed from the audience of the play. Tragedians dealt with universals; grand-overarching themes and big issues that could not be simplified into a simple question and answer. In his discussion about tragedy Aristotle states, "poetry speaks of general things, while history deals in particulars", as poetry aims at dealing with "the general" (Aristotle, 1451b4-1451b10). Thus, it is not always possible to specifically relate a character or a particular event to contemporary Athens, as is easily accessible in comedy. Instead, the characters and the events function as part of a larger story. They are the temporary means, both fragmentary and fluid, which the drama discovers for itself to enunciate certain views (Rosenmeyer, 214). The allusions that can be drawn from tragedy are not straightforward. For example allusions can be made be to the past and the present in such a way that myths of kings and gods could be associated to

present-day structures, such as *strategos* used to describe a military leader (Carter, 84-85). If this is the case, then similar allusions could be made to oligarchy or democracy that did not necessarily specifically use the word oligarchy or democracy. For example, *The Oresteia* has been described as a tragedy that focuses on the relationship between the oligarchy and democracy within Athens (Meier, 122). Similarly, allusions can be made about the relationship of oligarchy to democracy within Athens, as well as other similarities to democratic or oligarchic beliefs or norms.

Tragedy was inherently democratic in the manner in which it was presented and the manner in which it reflected the culture of Athens. However, tragedy was not purely political, as its subject matter was situated within the religious understandings of the Athenians. Tragedy was also a religious material that both utilized this as a lens to reflect upon its political changes, as well as redefining what religion meant to the Athenians. The way in which tragedy was religious will now be dealt with and then reconnected to the political.

Religious Aspects

There has been some debate about whether tragedy should be seen as religious or not. Many of the scholars who posit a political view of tragedy, mostly those who come from the collectivist school of criticism, are some of the strongest opponents to a religious argument for tragedy or downplay its actual importance.[18] For example, Griffin doubts whether tragedies had any religious undertones, and instead views the gods simply as theatrical devices (Griffin, 41). Heath recognizes that, while tragedy utilizes

[18] For a discussion on the different ways in which scholars have favored the political to the dismay of the religious, see Winkler and Zeitlin (1992).

mythological, religious figures, the religious elements of tragedy are secondary to the intellectual concerns these religious characters are used to raise (Heath (1987), 23). In other words, religion played a part in tragedy, but religious exploration was not one of the primary purposes of tragedy. The fact that the gods were often featured in tragic plays does not mean that the Athenians would have considered any of the religious conclusions drawn from tragedy to be a serious reflection upon their religious realities.

Another group of scholars went to great lengths to show that tragedy was indeed an important discussion and exploration of religion for Athenian audiences. One of the primary ways in which this has been demonstrated is through the underlying ritual elements that existed through what is referred to as "prototragedy", or one of the earliest exponents of tragedy, and which continued to play an important role in tragedy up through fifth-century Athens (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 4).[19] The particular view of this thesis is that the religious myths of the tragedies were not simply theatrical devices, but were instead a continuation of the poetic exploration of religion for the Athenians. Myth and poetry were always the manner in which the Greeks attempted to discover the order of the gods. Religion played an intricate part in attempting to decide the best manner for Athenians to coexist politically. As the discussion about Meier demonstrated, politics was inherently coupled with a theological component, as Athenians attempted to model

[19] As Sourvinou-Inwood demonstrates, tragedy had its origins in a festival that celebrated Dionysus. In the sixth century, a ritual involving the acceptance of Dionysus into the Greek Pantheon as a protector of Athens included the singing of hymns, sacrifice to the god, and the bringing of the statue of Dionysus into the city. This ritual was based upon the idea that previous generations had offended Dionysus, only to eventual receive him, establishing a cult in his honor. Eventually, "the performance part acquired a dynamic of its own, expanded, changed, and became spectacle. First prototragedy emerged, then tragedy developed, and eventually both tragic performances and dithyrambic performances became substantial competitions" (Sourvinou-Inwood, 198). Nonetheless, tragedy continued to include many of the ritual elements throughout its existence. For a more elaborate explanation regarding tragedy's development from this festival, see Sourvinou-Inwood (2003).

the order of their own polis according to the order of the gods, as best as was possible. Thus, any discussions about, or representations of, religion were of primary importance to the Athenian civic society. To understand how tragedy was religious requires looking into how the Athenians viewed religion, which will shed light on the experience of tragedy for the Athenian audiences and respond to the different views of tragedy's use of religious, mythical figures.

In understanding how Greek religion could be changed it is important to understand that traditional religious beliefs were ultimately uncertain for the Greeks. There was a lack of any fixed gods or expert form of fixed knowledge about the gods that existed in monotheistic religions. Granted, there are still elements of interpretation that exists in monotheistic religions, but there was still an expectation that justice is predictable and stable once an interpretation is reached, which did not exist amongst the Greeks. Instead, any mythical or poetical description of the gods was one and only one particular set of representations of a divine world which was ultimately unfathomable. Each description is a variation, supplementing, challenging, and displacing, but never completely replacing all of the other depictions (Burian, 180). It was poets inspired by the Muses who supplied the mythological and theological material, but human knowledge about the divine was limited, as there was a recognition that the Muses also lied (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 12 and 20). Thus, the notion of clashing divine personalities, present in ancient poetical descriptions of the gods, ensured that divine justice was not easy to comprehend. Tragedy continues along the same stream as previous poetical, religious descriptions of theology for the Greeks. It shows the inability of being able to elucidate a clear ethical dimension of what the gods believe, i.e. no fixed

canonical story. The gods within myth do not have a simple and consistent role. At times they are representative of a cosmic order, ensuring justice and operating in a somewhat predictable manner, while at other times they appear more as an exemplar of what is "uncanny, unpredictable, unseen, inexplicable, or intractable for humans" (Mastronarde, 321). In this way, poetry attempted to explore and give meaning to what was beyond the realm of explanation.

This is not to suggest that tragedians had complete poetic license to alter the myths in any way they pleased. For instance, it would be difficult to imagine a tragedian claiming that the gods did not exist, or completely inventing new gods that were in no way connected or were above the gods of traditional, mythic legend, as this may lead to a charge of impiety.[20] Rather, tragedy was open to interpretation and revision of previous myths and the room for manoeuvrability was vast. Tragedy blended traditional understandings of the gods with contemporary innovation, customarily reshaping inherited myths by modifying plots, particularly in terms of motivation and characterization, introducing new characters or new episodes from previous myths, or changing the sequence of events (Anderson, 121 and Burian, 184). The mythical stories presented were variant versions of a previous myth, such that all the audience knew was that the tragic story they were about to see would be in some ways new. It was the constant and complex tension between tradition and innovation that characterized Greek religion.

[20] The tragedians did make vast changes to the previous myths, which involved changing stories and giving gods new interpretations, but of what we know of tragedy, it was not common practice to invent new gods or to completely challenge the existence of the gods. However, there are those that Euripides was in fact challenging the existence of the gods and was not a believer, as Nagle (2002) suggests, but this is still open for debate. For more on this see Sourivnou-Inwood (2003) or Gregory (2005).

For the Greeks, myth was a sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form, which served as the basis and model for Greek tragic literature. It is sometimes difficult for modern audiences to understand or accept that these myths could be accepted as authoritative and meaningful descriptions of theology, which was nonetheless the case in the Greek world. These myths were a "revered form of validation for cultural institutions, practices, and beliefs" (Anderson, 122). They documented the foundation of cities and sanctuaries, provided insight into the origins of religious rituals, conveyed beliefs about the gods, explained social relations and hierarchies, illustrated proper moral behaviour, etc. Thus, despite the fallacious possibilities of any poet presenting a mythological narrative, it was still recognized that the poets in some ways spoke the truth.

Tragedy articulated and explored "things that were felt to be problematic or disquieting in the lived religion of the audience" (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 6). The use of myths and gods of the Greek past were not meant to be empty gestures or literary creations without any realistic importance. Any religious messages purveyed in tragedy were meant to be taken seriously as expressions of religious exploration or discussion. Orders issued from the gods, guidance in the form of interventions, or prophecies given to mythic characters were seriously perceived as offering theological solutions (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 8).

One of the tools that tragedy used to demonstrate the important of religion in tragedy was zooming and distancing devices. The purpose of these devices was to maintain a distance between, while also connecting, the audience and the heroic age, or

religion and human action; “the shifting of the distances through the use of zooming and distancing devices, allowed the exploration of problems to take place at a distance, so that the explorations were not symbolically threatening to the audience, but at the same time it allowed them to be relevant to the audience's realities” (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 46). These distancing devices were often used to separate the world of the gods from the world of men, such that a god may appear at a distance from the rest of the characters and thus takes his place outside of the world of men (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 495). However, this god may be ‘zoomed’ back into the play, such that he became part of the world of men (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 495). This zooming and distancing of gods was analogous to the relationship between gods and men, such that gods and men were in some ways connected, but at the same time gods maintained an “otherness to men” (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 495).

Rarely are the contemporary references directly stated or clearly descriptive in tragedy, considering that tragic material largely deals with the archaic age of the Greeks. Using characters or events from the recent past or present of Athens was considered off-limits. Instead, references to the recent past or present of Athens were often oblique and emblematic, represented by the selective changes the author makes to the myth. For example, reference to rituals, as in the case of myths, peculiarly Athenian rituals, was an important device whereby tragedians provided perspectives and filters for recent events (Bowie, 18).

The fact that tragedy used myths that were at a distance from the contemporary Athenian audience to which they were presented is of primary importance in

understanding how religion played into tragedy. The heroic age was a time when men could have direct contact with the gods and were, at times, direct descendents of the gods, so in that sense it was distant from what contemporary Athenians were dealing with in terms of religion. As Sourvinou-Inwood suggests, "the heroic age was a crucial part of the fifth-century Athenians past in which took place many important things that shaped the world of "today" in fifth-century Athens" (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 16). In other words, the heroic age was a part of the history of Athens, as much as any other historical moment was. However, it seemed only by relegating these discussions to a far-distant past, a legendary time outside of the present, that Athenian culture was able to integrate these dramatic myths into its own culture. This becomes particularly important when considering the polis, as it would have become evident that the heroic age laid the foundations of the polis' relationship with the divine world. The religious undertones of the heroic age could add an element of increased reverence to any political discussions, as the foundation and formation of Athens was based on this age. A clear way in which the worlds of the past and the present were intertwined was that often one or more of the characters in tragedy were cult recipients for the fifth-century Athenians (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 20).

As Hall discusses, tragedy was in many ways reminiscent of "Athenocentrism" (Hall, 1997, 100-101). Hall supports this view by demonstrating that many plays "include explicit panegyrics of Athens", provide an explanation of an Athenian custom through myth, the adaptation of specific mythical figures such that their origins appear Athenian, and its express superiority not only over barbaric tribes and cities, but even

other Greek city-states (Hall, 1997, 100-101).[21] Moreover, there is enough evidence to support the view that Athenian audiences associated with the tragic heroes of the ancient past (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 22). Sourvinou-Inwood suggests, the "exploration of so many human problems is so closely intertwined with religion because the matrix which shaped these other developments and problematizations was a matrix of religious exploration" (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 9). Since politics was in many ways theological for the Athenians, any problematizations within the political life of the Athenians was inherently a discussion about how one may view the political life of the Athenians fitting within the cosmic order. The universality of the myths allowed people to interpret in myth and drama, "their deepest concerns as human beings", which was in many ways politically defined for the Athenian citizens (Macleod, 131-132).

Tragedy had its origins in religion and religious exploration, but this did not mean that this theological aspect remained separate from the life of the Athenians, nor are human relations in tragedy explored in their own right, as if they were separate from the world of the gods. Instead, "human relationships are explored primarily in connection with relationships between human and divine" (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 220). Human action for the Greeks was not, of itself, strong enough to do without the power of the gods (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 34). Without the presence and the support of the gods, human action was nothing. This is where the true domain of tragedy lies; in the border

[21] Hall supports each of these views with a number of examples from the assorted tragedies. Thus, the view of panegyrics of Athens is associated with the Aeschylus' *Persians* and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*; the explanation of Athenian customs with Euripides' *Iphigeneia among the Taurians*; their superiority over others with Euripides' *Suppliant Women, Ion*, and *Erechtheus*, and the adaptation of Greek gods and heroes with the development of Thesus in the sixth and fifth centuries, of which very little had existed, and with the appropriation of such figures as Heracles or Oedipus (Hall, 1997, 100-101). For other examples, see Hall (1997).

zone where human actions and divine powers are hinged. This is where human actions "derive their true meaning by becoming an integral part of an order that is beyond man and that eludes him" (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 39). Religious discussions for Athenians included questioning the place of man in the cosmos, as well as looking into ideas of fate, social relationships amongst men, etc (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 47 and Knox, 9). These issues were not separate, but were intertwined with discussions about religion, as is evident in a number of the tragedies wherein the divine plays a determining role in human affairs, even if it is only through the form of oracle or some other divinely inspired revelation. Tragedians made it a point to emphasize that man did not function in a world separate from the gods, for which the numerous examples of disastrous consequences for anybody showing unbridled hubris in the face of the gods can attest.[22] The use of specific elements within plays suggests that even when the focus appears primarily on men, the larger affiliations with the gods is still important. For example, the use of prayer and of praises and curses in choral song was largely to remind the audience that the human world is connected with a higher order (Rosenmeyer, 156). Or as Cairns demonstrates, "the verbs meaning honour, respect, and revere", which typically utilized in the religious sphere, are common in tragedy to describe human superiors in power and honour, i.e. the upholders of human mortality within the city (Cairns, 314).

This relationship was not a one-way road though. Instead, the relationship may be seen as "fundamentally binary…between the fictions represented on stage and the

[22] Hubris is excessive pride or overconfidence and usually indicated an overestimation of one's own abilities or competence. In ancient Greece, hubris was commonly associated with those who had challenged the gods because they believed too strongly in their own abilities. It showed a lack of respect for the gods and their control over the cosmos.

world inhabited by spectators" (Hall (2006), 2). Society is not set in stone, nor composed of a single, coherent entity adopted and accepted by each of its members. It is in a constant state of flux, constructing, abandoning, and readjusting these systems of interconnected relations. As changes occurred in society it was difficult for contradictions not to emerge between the relations between men themselves and the relations between man and god. It is this interaction and continuous development of interlocking relations that "emerge as the dominant subject for scrutiny" (Segal, 44). For example, debate played an integral part in the democratic life of the Athenians, and this debate was often with a focus on how Athenians should coexist as a community. Underlying any political discussions was how the political life of the Athenians fit within the order of the gods, particularly in tragedy. Thus, there was an overlap in any debate about how political life was religious. At times, the tragedies may be ahead of contemporary thinking, exploring or problematizing the possibilities, or tragedy may simply remain within the normal boundaries of wisdom or convention with the purpose of exploring or questioning them in a more thorough manner.

Within *The Prometheia*, there is an attempt to question how moderation and reconciliation may be understood within the order of the cosmos and how this may play itself out in the political setting of Athens, after the reforms of Ephialtes seemed to split the Athenians along the lines of the aristocracy and the common citizen.[23] In traditional Greek thought, divine and human action may be seen as operating in parallel, or "human impulses and divine inspiration may interpenetrate and collaborate – phenomenon often called double motivation" (Mastronarde, 321). Greek tragedy stressed this

[23] This is the emphasis of the third chapter and will be demonstrated how this came into being.

interconnection trough the use of linked polarities, such as mortal and divine, man and women, man and beast, the city and the wild, etc., suggesting that the whole society functioned through multiple relationships within the natural and supernatural order (Segal, 57). Life in Athens influenced the material of the poets, which in turn informed the life of the Athenians, such as was discussed in the case of Solon and his belief in *Eunomia* that was reflected and reflective of his policies and his poetical material in Athens. This process was continued in tragedy, as the tragedies moulded, and continuously remoulded itself in theatrical ways (Hall (2006), 8).

Considering that myths dealt with the relationships between men and gods, in one form or another, and that the relations amongst men were constantly changing, it is not surprising that myths could constantly reflect anew. New moral and religious views, expressed in these myths, had to come to terms with current changes. Each new myth was an enlargement or a correction on previous myths depending on the authors and the times that reflected new preoccupations and attitudes of those times (Knox, 15 and 18). As Knox states, "any important modification of the story was a fresh contribution to the continual search for an understanding of the nature of divine government and the proper place and conduct of man in the world" (Knox, 20). Questioning how the distinct political segments of society could coexist may also be linked to discussions of moderation and its role within the order of the cosmos, as seems to be the case in *The Prometheia*. This is not to say that all of the themes dealt with previously in myth were left in the past, as certain issues reflected upon in the past were still significant. Only what continued to be meaningful and relevant survived in a new view of the divine nature and its governance of the world. In a sense then, tragedy has the ability to validate the

social order, which gave a somewhat shared unity and intelligibility to those experiencing it, while at the same time questioning that social order without it breaking down. While affirming the interrelatedness of the human and divine order, tragedy, or poetry in general, had the peculiarity of calling the normative codes themselves into question (Segal, 47). As Segal states, "it could thus combine a sense of the sacred, numinous, the mysterious entering of human life with a belief in the power of human intelligence to plumb fearlessly the deepest questions of existence" (Segal, 74). In this way, tragedy becomes a microcosm of Athenian existence within the totality of a grand overarching order, playing out themes that were representative of Athenian life.

The primary way in which religion and politics is connected is concerned with the connection between the polis and the will of the gods. As Meier states, politics was inherently religious, as according to ancient Greeks, "the proper order of the polis was divinely ordained" (Meier, 125). In its earliest form, these ideas took on a very practical mould in handling the gods. Thus, the most important function of polis religion was to ensure the good will of the gods and thereby, hopefully guarantee the survival and enrichment of the city (Nagle, 122). Whenever a problematic or disastrous situation occurred for the city, it was not unlikely for them to question which god they had offended and to attempt to make amends in some way. Eventually, this came to be perceived as a universal view, such that the whole world, including that of the gods, was subject to one supreme order (Meier, 128). From at least the time of Solon, there was somewhat of a recognition that the problems of the polis were a consequence of the way in which the affairs of the polis were conducted, not merely a punishment from the gods, nor free from the gods (Meier, 126). Man had the ability to create a strong and successful

polis, but the only way in which this was possible was by arranging the polis in accordance with the just order of the gods. If the polis was facing hardships then the fault lay with men. However, religion, like politics, was not fixed for the Athenians, nor completely knowable. The gods and the cosmic order was a realm of contradiction that the Greeks constantly attempted to make sense of. In Athens, the debate that took place in the political realm could be exemplary of the discussions about what the proper order of the cosmos was and how man could fit into it. While there was a "recognition of a divine order that meted out punishment in accordance with discoverable laws", the discovery or complete predictability of this order was not something that the Athenians perceived to be guaranteed. (Meier, 126). Thus, politically, tragedy functioned along the lines of challenging established power structures, practices and beliefs if they were viewed as being a threat to the cosmic order, while at the same time attempting to reaffirm that order. All of this is done within and through a particular Athenian lens.

Tragedy was rooted in the religion of the Athenians, as the material that was presented was based in the religious myths of the Athenian past. The myths were sacred narratives that helped the Athenians reflect upon communal life, as well as how man related to the order of the gods. Tragedy was a continuation of this attempt to explore the uncanny and inexplicable life of the gods, while still trying to make sense of it. The discussions about the gods was not completely straightforward, as a level of uncertainty always existed but the presentation of myth through tragedy played a vibrant part in raising discussion about how Athenians could view the cosmos and what this may mean for them as citizens.

Tragedy's Special Role

Discussions about religion and politics probably took place throughout Athens, but tragedy held a special place, as it was able to combine contemporary tropes and the vocabulary of the public institutions of the city with the elements of heroic grandeur and religious splendour (Goldhill (1997), 135). In terms of the tropes and vocabulary, the Athenian polis was committed to public speech, especially as the influence of Sophistic teachings about language and rhetoric emerged. Greek tragedies revolve around speech and action in the external world, in its discussions about communal traditions, or political, familial, and religious codes of conduct and the relative places for law, leadership, the household, etc. Practically any topic was open for discussion, as tragedy delved deep into the most horrific and catastrophic stories of their mythical past. It can be said that the rules of political intercourse, as they functioned in democratic Athens, functioned upon a basis of an equal right to free speech, which seemingly became the rule of intellectual intercourse through its use in tragedy (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 35). Moreover, there was a lot of interrelation between the assembly, law courts, and tragedy, especially in terms of the language used, such as speeches, debates, or argument and in the structure of judging and voting (Goldhill (1997), 132). This is represented both in the structure of tragedy itself and in the content of the plays in a number of different ways.[24]

Debate, in particular, was an important part of social and civic life, both politically and intellectually. Within tragedies deliberation and debate, in the broadest sense, took place regularly by the characters who were attempting to make sense of their

[24] For example, Goldhill demonstrates examples of courtroom settings or voting in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and *The Suppliant Women*, and Euripides' *Orestes* (Goldhill (1997), 132). For instances of public speeches numerous examples are provided, as well. For more on this, see Goldhill (1997).

own personal issues. Through the tragic competitions, different theological understandings of the gods and man's relation to them were debated in front of the Athenian audience. Since there was not any dogmatic certainty in any of the mythological discussions about the gods, the myths could at times serve as a tool for problematizing, explaining or even connecting the conflicting aspects of the civic religion (Nagle, 123).

In a way, then, tragedy engaged civic audiences in a more elaborate discussion about their civic, religious, and cultural lives that was similar to other arenas of civic activity. However, the discussion that took place within and because of tragedy was exclusive, in that it allowed for a practical education in citizen-spectators that may not have been available in such an elaborate manner elsewhere. In the first place, it is important to remember that gatherings at tragic festivals were only equalled or surpassed in terms of numbers by the Olympic games and battles in war, as well as involving members of the community that would not have been present in the other political spaces, such as foreigners or possibly women (Goldhill (1997), 58). Yet, unlike the Olympics this was a primarily Athenian event, despite the attendance of foreigners.

Second, tragedy offered a space for reflection that may not have been possible in the law-courts, the Council, or the Assembly, the Athenians more immediately active arenas of political life. Discussions about war or instituting policies would have taken place in these democratic forums. Tragedy, on the other hand was a more elaborate forum in the sense that it could look into issues relating to its culture, religion, and politics in general (Janover, 45). It was able to combine all of the important elements of

the Athenian society under its umbrella and provide a more complete understanding of the changes taking place. In tragic reflection the Athenian citizen-spectators came to imagine and think through the ambiguities of human speech and action in the light of their own world (Janover, 49). Tragedy did not require the Athenian audience to necessarily make decisions about the issues debated in the play in the same manner they would have to when political queries were raised in the assembly or the council. Instead, tragedy was able to question the civic ideology of the Athenians, looking theoretically into what these changes might entail (Heath (2006), 269). It could take a step back from the changes, examining what these implications might truly entail without having to give definite answers or decisions about them. In this way, tragedy was more conducive to political reflection, especially in terms of the political changes that were taking place.

Third, tragedy also had the ability of representing perspectives that might have been overlooked or questioning civic society in a manner that was not essentially open in the other civic institutions. It could make complete acquiescence or acceptance of certain values more difficult by challenging some of the assumptions that were connected with these values. For example, after the reforms of Ephialtes, the aristocracy did not hold a special place within the Athenian political setting, nor was there any real counterbalance to the democracy, as had existed prior to these reforms. Considering these changes, and the exile of many of the prominent aristocratic figures, discussions about a particular place being reserved for the aristocracy nor the implications of removing this counterbalance most likely would not have been raised within the Council or the Assembly. Yet, these issues figure prominently in to Aeschylus' tragedies *The Oresteia*

and *The Prometheia*, indicating some of the repercussions, such as extreme internal discord and near civil war, as well as a weakening of the Athenian society.

Finally, tragedy had the special ability of reinterpreting societal changes within a matrix of religious discussion that could reflect upon broader theological questions while still maintaining a connection to present political concerns. The mixture of distance in terms of theme and the contemporaneous, familiar manner in which it was presented was the only way that religious concepts could be brought closer to the ordinary man and made to become a part of their present. Considering the massive changes occurring in Athens during the fifth-century, particularly in terms of politics, it was absolutely necessary, then, for Athenian poets to attempt to explain or make sense of the old order of the gods and the cosmos in light of these new changes Because of the close connection between religion and politics. Tragedy came to the fore in a time of transition, a period when the old myths were beginning to lose touch with the new political realities of the city-states. A hero such as Orestes is still committed to traditional mythical ideals, but the manner in which this character had been discussed did not necessarily help a present-day Athenian solve a dilemma (Armstrong, 484). Instead, there was a necessity to adapt the myths to these new circumstances. For example, Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, which deals with the story of Orestes, discusses the law courts and the Athenian's abilities to administer a new form of justice, which is based in and assisted by the gods, as well as influenced by the democratic changes of the city (Burnstein et al, 157). Moreover, the numerous examples of the origins and development of civilizations, the emergence of laws and justice, the mastery over the savagery in nature and in man, are all important political themes dealt with in the few surviving tragedies (Segal, 55). For fifth-century

Athenians, these issues are all political in the broader sense that they are vital to the lives of humans in a polis society.

While some scholars may argue that the audience cannot associate with these heroic, mythical characters, as they would never experience the same sensational ordeals these characters dealt with, this is not the case. Yet they most likely had the same impulses and passions, albeit not on the same scale, in their own societal relationships. On the one hand, these heroic characters appear in a far distant mythical past instilled with the greatness practically unseen, walking and talking and sharing a lineage with the gods, while at the same time he seems to speak, think, and live in the very same age as the citizens of fifth-century Athens. In other words, "the tragic figures are larger than life but true to it" (Knox, 21). The audience may have been able to associate with a character within the play or associate to somebody within the polis, but it is not necessarily a specific individual or institution that is being looked in to.

Drawing the connection between religion, politics, and tragedy in this way is vital for understanding the purpose of tragedy for the Athenian audience. Tragedy for Athenian audiences served the purpose of helping them work through their difficulties, threats, or uncertainties related with the political changes taking place in fifth-century Athens. It is the values and beliefs held by the characters and the spectators that are challenged and reformulated. It is only in understanding that human action is depicted in religious terms, particularly in the interaction between the human and divine and in consideration of what the gods consider appropriate behaviour, not simply against a

divine backdrop, that we can understand how these understandings may have been able to help an Athenian spectator cope with the changes taking place.

Athenian tragedy fostered in its audience a kind of reflection that could attend to, yet stand back from, the crises of civic breakdown and societal turmoil embodied in the drama on view. The audience in some senses had a dualistic perception of tragedy. On the one hand, the audience knows more than the dramatic characters themselves as the tragedy is unfolding; partly because the characters of tragedy are players in the audience's religious and historical world. In other words, the audience is aware of the plot, for the most part, all the while the characters remain unconscious of their destiny or fate. They are spectators, they see the wider picture, part of the divine perspective acted out in such a way that can associate to it and learn from it. This reflection lies in the "light it can throw on the contingency, unpredictability, and ambiguity of human existence" (Janover, 47). The plurality of perspectives, the clash of characters and lives that make up the human and divine world can be reflected upon within a broader range of perspective. And this exploration or reflection is particularly rousing because of the broad variety of characters, attitudes, and principles discussed in each tragedy, such that it provokes and challenges the moral universe of the audience on several levels. As Sourvinou-Inwood states, "through the empty stage modality of divine appearance the audience gains a greater understanding of, and a broader perspective into, the action enacted on stage, a greater understanding of problems" (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 496).

On the other hand, tragedy helped people cope with these issues by creating an enlargement of vision, an awareness of one's role in a more comprehensive scheme in

which they, and their society, are a part (Knox, 82). The divine interventions in human life are not arbitrary, purely theatrical or analogical. Religion was taken seriously by Athenians, despite its seemingly, ever-changing nature, as it enacted a deep ethical response that would be unintelligible in the absence of the divine (Nussbaum, 41). As Janover states, "tragedy acts and engages a concrete, dramatic and necessarily uncertain reflection that can explore paradoxes of judgment and fatal misdirections in action" (Janover, 44). The audience is like the characters in tragedy, as their perspectives are also limited. The audience is also searching for the "morally salient" as the social and ritual order of the city is inverted and turned against itself in conflict and division (Nussbaum, 21).

Tragedy involves both a reflective action on the part of the spectator, who sees the action taking place and weighs the benefits or faults of the different views and grasps to a certain extent a particular understanding. At the same time, the spectator opens himself up to what is unknown and incomprehensible, "risking oneself on a terrain that remains impenetrable, entering into a game with supernatural forces", completely unaware of the outcome, but nonetheless with a feeling of being part of it (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 36). It is only up to the audience member to incorporate this understanding into his own "internal discourse", with the reasons put forward in the text presented to him (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 35). Tragedy can induce hearers to grasp an underlying insight beneath the stories, but it was up to the spectator whether or not he acquiesced (Halliwell, 396). Perhaps because, in order to make a morally responsive decision, one has to have as wide a perspective as possible. This acquiescence was not the same as worship, but

instead an acceptance on the part of the spectator to attempt to understand, or grasp the meaning of human lives within the principles of a larger, cosmic order.

This 'education' or experience would be both on an individual level and on a collective level, in the sense of the individual connecting to a larger whole. This is partially because any audience is collective, but more importantly, because of the primacy of the *polis* for Athenian citizens. Unlike modern audiences, the Athenian would not have privileged individual rights and freedoms over those of the state. The citizens were the state, and thus, the interests of the polis were paramount (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 40).

This is not to suggest that the characters, or the tragedy as a whole, present a single, definitive, dogmatic solution. On the contrary, at times the problems that tragedy proposes do not seem to have any clear-cut solutions. Citizens who watched the civic and religious world of the characters being turned upside-down experience truly what that order signifies, what its limitations may be, what stands below or above it in the overarching order. It is a mixture of the network of interconnections at every level, "from overtly shared themes, codes, roles, and sequences of events to the unconscious patterns or deep structures that generate them" (Burian, 191). By discussing human interactions through myths involving gods, the reflections made from these myths about human relations are enhanced. Tragedy's use of myths, or its links made to an authority of the past, could be used to dignify and legitimize the present (Hall (1997), 98). Without the ability to reflect within a religious schema, citizens may have otherwise been hampered in their thinking, feeling, and actions.

Aeschylus' *Prometheia* provides a compelling example of how religion and politics was enmeshed within tragedy and dealt with an issue that seemingly had no other place in Athenian political life. This particular tragedy is based on the idea of moderation and compromise between the old and new gods, but can be taken as an analogy for the old and new groups of political leaders in Athens; in other words, the aristocracy and the common democrats, for lack of a better term.

Chapter 3 – *The Prometheia*

Introduction

Aeschylus' *The Prometheia* exemplifies the manner in which tragedy was a religious and political experience for Athenian audiences. This particular tragedy provides a theoretical reflection about civil unrest between disparate political forces through the myth of Prometheus and the relations between himself and Zeus, representing the Olympians and the Titans. It is a clear demonstration of the manner in which tragedy could reflect upon the political changes occurring in contemporary Athens and the manner in which it was done. It should be noted, though, that tragedies dealt with several overlapping themes and issues and the explanation given for this trilogy is but one of multiple themes and issues addressed. The particular political message taken from this tragedy focuses on the importance of reconciliation between these disparate political forces through political cooperation, compromise, and moderation, as opposed to ruling purely through force. For the immediate political arena of Athens, this discussion was particularly relevant considering the recent unrest following the reforms of Ephialtes between those who favoured oligarchy and those who favoured democracy. However, the message itself can also be taken on a more general level as a reflection about the importance of a moderate form of rule that incorporates all of the disparate political elements with a focus on ensuring that the polis itself takes precedence over the individual or particular group desires.

The Prometheia: A Summary

Aeschylus' *Prometheia* is a trilogy of three tragedies based on the tribulations of the god Prometheus after he has defied the will of Zeus. Zeus and the Olympians have just come to power after defeating the Titans and it is under this background that the tragedy takes place. The poet used myth to present a message to his audience, altering the story of the gods. Myth was the manner in which the Greeks attempted to depict, or represent the divine, while recognizing that there was a limitation to any knowledge or predictability to the gods. Aeschylus departs significantly from the previous Hesiodic version of the myth of Prometheus, providing his own version of the story of to fit within the context of his personal extrapolation of the order of the cosmos.[25] In Aeschylus' version, there is no mention of Prometheus stealing fire back for humanity. It appears as though humans had no knowledge of fire, or any knowledge that may have helped them improve their mode of living, but instead completely lived off of whatever the earth gave to them (Aeschylus, *PB,* 440-443). As Prometheus describes them, "they lived underground or in caves" living a life akin to that of hunters and gatherers (Aeschylus, *PB,* 451-456). Prometheus completely changes humankind's circumstances by giving them fire, from which "they will learn many skills", along with a number of other gifts,

[25] Hesiod is considered one of the first Greeks to provide a written origin of the gods in the sixth and seventh centuries BCE. In the original Hesiodic version of the Promethean myth, Zeus hid fire away from humanity in result for a trick that Prometheus has played on Zeus. In Hesiod`s version, the trick which Prometheus played was getting the gods to accept the fatty part of the animal, as opposed to the edible and better part of the animal, as a sacrificial offering to the gods. In response, Zeus takes fire away from humanity, which Prometheus then steals back for humanity resulting in him being chained to the rock as punishment. Moreover, humanity was given Pandora and her box full of evils, which prior to that point had not existed for humanity, who lived a life free from evil, hard work, and disease. Another prominent difference between the Hesiodic version and Aeschylus' version of this particular myth is that hope is the only evil that remains in Pandora's Box in Hesiod's version, whereas in Aeschylus's version it is Prometheus who gives it to humanity as a gift, which will be discussed later in this chapter (Conacher, 11 and Morford and Lenardon, 85-87).

all of which were divine privileges, removing "the miseries of mortals" and "making them intelligent and possessed of understanding" (Aeschylus, *PB,* 254 and 441-444). Fire and the other gifts, such as hope, herding, house-building, etc., that allow men to flourish are given, seemingly, purely to help humanity (Aeschylus, *PB,* 250). The act of theft is portrayed as a selfless act on the part of Prometheus. Prometheus expresses this view, explaining that he helped humanity because they were in a desperate state and in need of the many technological advances he bestowed upon them (Aeschylus, *PB,* 237-240 and 436-471). Prometheus did it to ensure the survival of the human race, as Zeus was going to destroy all of humankind and replace humankind with his own creations (Aeschylus, *PB,* 230-234).

Aeschylus' version begins with *Prometheus Bound*, wherein Prometheus is being enchained to a rock at the top of the mountains in the remote regions of Scythia for defying the will of Zeus by stealing fire and giving it, amongst other gifts, to humankind. *Kratos* (Power or Strength) and *Bia* (Force)[26], two of Zeus offspring enforcers, oversee as Hephaestus, the god of craft, blacksmith, and fire, amongst other things, is commanded to fasten Prometheus to the rock.[27] The opening scene sets the mood for the remainder of the play, particularly in the character Hephaestus. Hephaestus feels a certain affinity to Prometheus, as Prometheus had helped the Olympians defeat the Titans in battle, but also recognizes that he must fulfill his task if he does not want to face the wrath of Zeus. Prometheus' aid to the Olympians in their battle against the Titans also defines the

[26] *Bia* and *Kratos* were offspring that served alongside *Nike* (Victory) and *Zelos* (Rivalry), as enforcers who stood in attendance to Zeus.

[27] Prometheus is often referred to as the trickster god due to his portrayal by Hesiod, but his name literally translates into forethought or foresight.

rational for Prometheus' indignation for the punishment he is facing from Zeus and the other Olympians.

Prometheus spends the entire rest of Prometheus Bound fastened to a rock lamenting his imprisonment, criticizing Zeus for his punishment, and threatening Zeus with knowledge of his impending doom, which he will withhold unless he is released..The play centers around other gods who come to visit Prometheus in his imprisonment with varying degrees of pity and advice for Prometheus, recognizing that his punishment is excessive, but also warning him to not further infuriate Zeus unless he desires further retribution. The first to visit are the Oceanids playing the part of the chorus, who are the children of Oceanus, meaning they are both relatives of Prometheus and Titans. They come and go throughout *Prometheus Bound*, often with excessive bouts of sorrow. The second to visit is Oceanus, who represents the world's oceans and is one of the Titans. Oceanus attempts to quell Prometheus' anger and to submit to Zeus to no avail. The third visitor is Io, a human, who is facing a similar fate as Prometheus, being tormented by a gadfly and blindly wandering the earth as a cow because of the Olympians.[28] Io desperately seeks an end to her suffering and Prometheus, through his gift of forethought, explains what lies ahead for her. She will face a number of trials and tribulations before finally being released from her torment when she lies with Zeus. Their consummation will result in the birth of Epaphus, king of Egypt, and ten

[28] Io is the daughter of Inachus, the king of Argos, and Melee, a sea nymph. Io is tormented either by Zeus, for advertently or inadvertently refusing his advances, or by Hera, who is jealous of Zeus' advances. Her defiance stems from her confusion surrounding a number of dreams and oracles about what exactly she is being requested to do. It seems as though she received conflicting oracles because Zeus desired her, but Hera was trying to prevent her from lying with him (Aeschylus, 578-582 and 640-686). The gadfly who is stinging her is from Argus, who is a ghost at the behest of Hera. This also results in some confusion around who exactly is causing Io's problems. In the text, blame is clearly laid at Zeus' doorstep, but Hera does receive mention as well (Aeschylus, 590-592). For more on this see Conacher (1980).

generations down the line to Heracles. She leaves feeling no better about her circumstances, realizing she has many trials to face before her suffering comes to an end. Throughout Prometheus' discussions with these assorted characters, Prometheus becomes more and more obstinate in the face of Zeus resulting in a showdown between himself and the last god to visit him in *Prometheus Bound*, Hermes.[29] There is a discussion that basically entails threats being hurled back and forth, but Prometheus continuing unwillingness to reveal what he knows about Zeus' fate results in a thunderbolt being hurled at him and his body collapsing into the interior of the mountain.

While there is limited information about the second and third tragedies, there is some information that is known due to a number of fragments that exist from the second play, *Prometheus Unbound*, and the third play, *Prometheus the Firebearer* (Aeschylus, *Fragments*, 197-219). The second play begins with Prometheus again being entrapped in some remote region. He is visited by a number of his fellow Titans that have been recently released. Prometheus is still lamenting his situation and his fellow Titans also feel pity for him and attempt to give him advice. Prometheus stays entrapped in this region until his eventual release by Heracles, who visits him at some point during the tragedy, which was part of the prophecy that Prometheus had revealed in the first play. The second play seems to end with Prometheus' release, although this is not certain. Information about the suspected third play of this trilogy is even more limited. There is some support for the idea that the third play involves a reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus, but in what manner is unclear.

[29] Hermes is the messenger of Zeus.

There are some apparent similarities between the play and Athens' political situation. There is a discussion of the tension that existed between the Titans and the Olympians, which eventually led to an overthrow of the Titans, similar to the loss of power for the aristocracy in Athens (Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* (*PB*) 197-202). The Olympians are now in control, i.e. they are the new regime much like the democracy in Athens, and the newness of their regime is emphasized throughout the text (Aeschylus, *PB* 148-150, 308-310, 402-405, and 938-944). Similar to the oligarchic faction in Athens, remnants of the Titans are unwilling to accept the Olympians, which Prometheus and a few other Titans that attempted to resist can attest to. Typhos and Atlas are specifically mentioned as Titans "who once rose up against the gods," but failed miserably and were punished as a result (Aeschylus, *PB,* 354-355). The tension between the old regime and the new regime is continually emphasized throughout the play. Even a number of Titans who have accepted the regime, such as the Oceanids or Oceanus, recognize the problems with Zeus' rule (Aeschylus, *PB,* 149-150 and 400-405). One can imagine similar views discussed amongst the aristocracy of Athens that cannot accept that they had lost a particularly prominent element of their political power in the Athenian political landscape, leaving them in many ways on similar footing with the common citizens of Athens. Thus, there are a few recognizable similarities that may be drawn from the political scene of Athens and the opening of the Prometheia trilogy; scenes that are not so dissimilar to any political environment that sees not only a new regime installed, but a new form of government replacing an old. By the same token, these analogies are not perfect. Whereas Prometheus had no power and was forcibly imprisoned, along with some of the other Titans, the aristocracy merely had diminished

power while still playing a prominent role in the Athenian civic life, as their education and wealth often allowed them to have prominent voices in the assembly or council or that generals predominantly came from the aristocracy (Coleman, 27).

Discussing any political relevance of tragedies must be accompanied by theological understandings within Athens at the time they were produced. In making a political argument for Athenian society, the argument had to be compatible with traditional views of theology, which had to be done as best as humanly possible considering the recognized limitations of theological understandings for Athenians. Myth provided the opportunity to illustrate or describe the order of the gods, or the order of the cosmos, within a cultural context, and tragedy was a continuation of this process (Anderson, 123). In Aeschylus' *Prometheia*, there is an attempt to postulate an element of the order of the cosmos, such that Athenian society would know how to order their polis in conjunction with it. This is an order based on moderation and compromise. A sensitive analysis of the plot of the *Prometheia* will elaborate what Aeschylus believed the basis for the order of the cosmos was, by first looking at his arguments surrounding the gods.

Analysis of the Plot of *The Prometheia*

Of particular importance to this thesis is recognizing that neither character is completely glorified, nor completely at fault. Instead, an alternative approach is to look at the two main characters as both good and bad, or as having both negative and positive traits, at least in the opening play of the trilogy, *Prometheus Bound*. In other words, the two main characters, Prometheus and Zeus, may be seen as two opposing forces, a rift

within the divine order, wherein each character represents an incomplete view, but both play a valid or important part. As the Oceanus episode in *Prometheus Bound* highlights, it is a mistake to criticize solely either side of the conflict (Konstan, 65). If we consider the political atmosphere of Athens at the time, this may seem to suggest that Aeschylus is neither completely glorifying the move to democracy nor the reaction of the oligarchic faction to this move. Analyzing the text will help demonstrate what exactly is meant by neither of the two main characters being solely in the right.

Considering the beginning of the play and what Prometheus did for humanity, it would be difficult for the audience to not feel pity or to lament over his sad state of affairs. Prometheus is portrayed as not only the saviour of humanity, but also the one who bestowed a slew of benefits upon them, which magnanimously improved their lives. Pity for Prometheus` state is emphasized through his sobs and moans heard throughout *Prometheus Bound*. The other gods who visit him also lament for his horrible situation, including the Oceanids, Oceanus, and even Hephaestus, the very god from whom Prometheus stole the gift of fire (Aeschylus, *PB,* 19-21, 145, and 288-289).

Prometheus is also viewed in a positive light in terms of intelligence. The first mention of Prometheus' intelligence comes from Power, a minion of Zeus with no sympathy for Prometheus' plight. Power recognizes that Prometheus is clever and, thus, it is important to ensure his chains are fastened solidly (Aeschylus, *PB,* 58-59 and 61-62). In addition to this, it is suggested that Prometheus' intelligence was what tipped the balance of power in favour of the Olympians during their struggle with the Titans for control of the heavens (Aeschylus, *PB,* 212-214 and 218-219). Throughout *Prometheus*

Bound several references are made to Prometheus' intelligence by a number of different gods, including Oceanus, the Oceanids, and even Hermes (Aeschylus, *PB,* 307-308,472-474 and 944). Albeit some of this praise is somewhat ironic in nature suggesting that Prometheus is not acting reasonably; a fault which even Prometheus himself seems to recognize (Aeschylus, *PB,* 386). Nonetheless, this emphasis on Prometheus' intelligence may be a suggestion that Prometheus can provide something for the new Olympian rulers. .

Every god who visits Prometheus recognizes that Prometheus deserves to be punished, except Oceanus.[30][31] They recognize that Prometheus was wrong to steal fire and to go against the will of Zeus and nearly every one of the gods makes a point to tell Prometheus (Aeschylus, *PB,* 19-21, 259-262, and 310-329). Even Prometheus knew he was going to be punished for his actions, recognizing that he intentionally "did the wrong thing" (Aeschylus, *PB,* 265-267). It was wrong to go against the will of Zeus and give gifts to humans, which humans either were not supposed to or ready to receive. Either way, Zeus is the leader of the gods and to defy him is to defy the gods. In other words, the ruling power must be respected.

There are other ways in which Prometheus is portrayed negatively throughout *Prometheus Bound*. There is the manner in which Prometheus treats the other characters that visit him in the tragedy. As Dorter suggests, Prometheus is "ungracious towards his

[30] Each of the gods who come to visit Prometheus may feel that the punishment he is receiving is a bit excessive, but they all feel that Prometheus deserves to be punished (Aeschylus, 263-270).

[31] Oceanus does not rebuke Prometheus for the actions he has already done, but only warns him against inciting more anger from Zeus with his hubristic actions (Konstan, 64). The importance of Oceanus remaining silent about his past transgressions plays an important role in understanding the grander theme at play in this tragedy, whose relevance will be made more clear further on in this paper.

seniors, shamelessly self-pitying before his peers, and insensitive and condescending toward the helpless" (Dorter, 121).[32] More importantly is his excessive use of hubris. Prometheus acts with a measure of stubbornness or inflexibility in the rightness of his position, such that he is constantly being rebuked by the other gods, both those who sympathize with him and those who are messengers of Zeus. Usually, hubris in tragedy is disastrously displayed by a human figure who challenged the gods and their laws, as well as being considered a crime in Athens. While at the beginning of the play Prometheus is open to reconciliation, Prometheus tenaciously challenges Zeus becoming more and more obstinate in his position. Many of the gods who visit him remind him of how foolish he is to act with such hubris, pointing out that this can do nothing to assuage the situation and will most likely lead to more punishment from Zeus (Aeschylus, *PB,* 178-180, 311-318, and 964-965). Moreover, Prometheus' obstinacy increases with his certainty about the fate of Zeus. It is his own personal traits that establish his destiny. Whereas at the beginning of the play, Prometheus leaves the fate of Zeus open to conjecture, by the end of the play he is certain that Zeus will fall. Considering that hubris was often connected with those who challenged the gods and their laws, especially in tragedy, it is fitting that these two go hand-in-hand (Cairns, 315). Prometheus' challenge to the order of Zeus and the certainty of his position is similar to many of the protagonists in Greek tragedy. As Prometheus is warned, his hubris will get him into more trouble,

[32] Dorter's view of the relationship between Prometheus and the other gods is not completely accepted for the purposes of this paper. He does highlight a stance of haughtiness towards Io and the other humans and is right to point out Prometheus' excessive self-pity before his peers. Yet, his suggestions of the relationship between Prometheus and Oceanus seem to be a bit of a stretch. For a better understanding of the discussion between Prometheus and Oceanus, see Konstan (1977).

which is does at the end with him plummeting down into a rocky abyss (Aeschylus, *PB,* 1071-1094).

There is a bit of controversy in terms of the theological understanding of the Greeks, in particular the role of Zeus in relation to the just order of the cosmos, which will help clarify how we may understand not only Zeus within this tragedy, but the role of the cosmos for the Greeks, as well. There is some debate about whether Zeus should be seen as the determinant of justice and thus of the order of the cosmos, or whether he is also subject to the order of the cosmos[33]. The view of this thesis is there was an overarching order of the cosmos, which Zeus, as well as all the other gods, were subject to and a part of. Specifically, Zeus was subject to the dictates of the fates (Morford and Lenardon, 130-131). Zeus may be understood as a sovereign that rules the world of the cosmos and controls it to a certain extent (Sourvinou-Inwood (2003), 464). This helps to explain the absence of Zeus in all the tragedies as he is the supreme authority and it is the other gods who do his will. However, at the same time Zeus is limited in, or there are constraints to, his power. This ambiguity is one amongst many for the Greeks and their polytheistic religion. Within *The Prometheia* what we see is the beginning of Zeus' regime, having just defeated the Titans, but he still has much to learn, which his faults described within this tragedy elaborate upon. While Zeus may determine how the regime of the gods is managed, it requires him learning the proper order of the cosmos for him to maintain his regime and thus learning from the faults depicted in Aeschylus' trilogy.

[33] For some discussion about this debate see Morford and Lenardon (2003).

Turning back to the synopsis of the play, the head of the Olympians is also depicted as having ambiguous characteristics. Zeus was often portrayed as the god who oversaw the universe, who was the enforcer of the just order. It was Zeus who maintained the order and was largely responsible for the blessings Athens had received. Aeschylus consistently represented Zeus in these terms throughout his previous tragedies, often celebrating the rule of Zeus, or at the very least presenting a justifiable view of his reign (Herington, 263-265).

The Zeus presented in *Prometheus Bound* seems vastly dissimilar to anything resembling his portrayals in any of Aeschylus' previous dramas.[34] The most obvious negative connotation emphasized in Zeus is that he seems to represent everything antithetical to the democracy emerging in Athens at the time, appearing as an extremely tyrannical figure. Traditionally, tyranny for the ancient Greeks merely meant "an individual who dominates a state through his own strength and abilities rather than by perceived conceptions of right", as in the case of a hereditary monarchy (McGrew, 52). A tyrant could be both good or bad but it depended largely on how well he ruled the city (McGrew, 57-58). In the writings of Solon, we begin to see the problems with tyranny, suggesting that the thirst for power inherent in tyranny needed to be quelled to a certain extent, thus the need for laws (McGrew, 118-120). What is portrayed is the beginnings of the recognition of the dangers of tyranny. With the fall of the Peisistratids tyranny and the re-emergence of oligarchy and then democracy shortly after, tyranny began to take on

[34] Some scholars that reject Aeschylus' authorship of this text point to this apparent obscurity, suggesting that it does not fit with Aeschylus' views about Zeus, but is much more representative of later views in Athens. For more on this see Conacher (1980).

an even more negative appeal within Athens, albeit tempered with a recognition of some of the necessities of tyrannical rule.[35]

Within *Prometheus Bound*, Zeus' cruelty and immoderation are exemplified in the opening scene through the two messengers, Power and Violence. They emphasize the autocratic nature of Zeus` rule and the harshness that accompanies it, threatening Hephaestus when he hesitates to chain Prometheus to the rock (Aeschylus, *PB,* 10, 40-41, 52-53, 67-68, 73, and 79-80). While Zeus managed to overthrow the previous regimes through the use of intelligence, as was bestowed upon him by Prometheus with the support of his mother Gaea, or Themis, his reign is established or maintained through the use of 'Power' and 'Violence (Aeschylus, *PB,* 205-214).[36] Similar to the old regime Zeus is maintaining his regime with force, thus falling into the same trap that had brought down the previous regimes even if it is, at times, necessary for new regimes that wish to firmly establish themselves. However, this may also be seen as a warning for Zeus and the Olympians if they wish to maintain their regime in perpetuity. Force may be

[35] The dangers of tyranny were expounded by the Athenians as they celebrated themselves as the liberators of Ionian Greeks in the wars against the Persians and the protectors of mainland Greece from Persian tyranny. Athens also recognized in their imperialist quests following the victories over the Persians that they themselves needed to act like tyrants towards the other city-states if they were going to maintain their own democracy (McGrew, 184). Hence, the duality of the conception of tyranny for the Athenians was based in the idea of recognizing that tyranny towards other city-states may have been necessary to ensure that Athens itself did not fall victim to a tyranny, but could maintain its own collective style of rule. As Athens moved towards a more collective possession of freedom and rule, a recognition arose amongst the Athenians that personal actions of an individual that threatened the existence of the polis were to be prevented at all costs (McGrew, 185). Tyranny began to be understood as a form of rule wherein everything was done for the tyrant and not for the city or the group for which the tyrant is ruling. Democracy, in its ideal form, was envisioned as a rule of and for the people, especially as it was the citizenry that was supposed to decide on issues that were directly relevant to them as citizens.

[36] Traditionally, Themis was the daughter of Gaea, but Aeschylus has altered the myth, most likely to ensure Prometheus is associated with the Titans, while also ensuring that his mother is a prophetic goddess, thus adding support to some of his prophecies. Moreover, in the original myths of the overthrow of the Titans by the Olympians, it is Gaea who played a decisive role by offering some important advice to the Olympians (Aeschylus, *PB* 467)

necessary in the infancy of a regime, but over the long term force cannot be the sole determinant in the maintenance of a regime.

While some have attempted to salvage a positive view of Zeus in this text (White, 109-112), it appears that Aeschylus is attempting to portray a tyrannical image of Zeus, or it would not have been emphasized. Throughout *Prometheus Bound* there are several references to Zeus being a tyrant from Prometheus, but also from the other Titans that have accepted his rule, such as Ocean or the Oceanids, as well as the Olympians that are now serving Zeus, such as Power, Violence and Hermes (Aeschylus, *PB,* 40-41, 67-68, 149-150, 194-195, 310-314, 321-322, and 950-952). The assorted gods are used to living under harsh tyrannies and Aeschylus makes it a point to compare Zeus' regime to the other two regimes that ruled over the gods, that of Uranus and Kronos, who ruled through brute force (Aeschylus, *PB,* 200-207 and 907-914). This may help explain the seeming acquiescence of the assorted gods to Zeus' harsh style of rule. Either way, Zeus` regime in *Prometheus Bound* does not appear to be any more enlightened than its predecessors, using the exact same tactics. Any thought of going against Zeus' rule or questioning any of his actions is responded to by threats of more violence or punishment for the perpetrator. A lot of the harshness of Zeus` rule is explained away by the newness of his regime, which seems to suggest that all new regimes must act harshly to create a level of control after the turmoil of an overthrow of a previous regime; a point which is stated throughout *Prometheus Bound* (Aeschylus, *PB,* 149-150, 186-187, 306-310, and 954-959). Nonetheless, it still appears tyrannical, which an audience of Athenians under a new democracy certainly would have taken note of. If the democracy of Athens wants to

avoid the problems that led to the previous reforms and is nearly causing a civil war, they may want to avoid alienating the oligarchic elements of society through force.

Similar to Prometheus, the rule of Zeus is also emphasized by an element of inflexibility throughout *Prometheus Bound*. Zeus is unwilling to give an inch, possibly because of the certainty in the rightness of his actions, or simply because he does not see the purpose. The unwillingness of Zeus to change his mind is expressed by a number of characters throughout the text, such as Hephaestus, Power, the Oceanids, Prometheus (Aeschylus, *PB,* 35, 79-80, 185, and 330-334). The messengers for Zeus, Power and Hermes, also seem to wholeheartedly accept the rightness of Zeus` position in comparison to Prometheus, suggesting that Zeus is not in the wrong at all, but that the entire fault lies with Prometheus (Aeschylus, *PB,* 7-10 and 964-965). Prometheus throughout the play states that Zeus should not be so confident that his regime will exist in perpetuity (Aeschylus, *PB,* 169-172, 188-189, 907-909, and 939-941). Prometheus suggests that, without his aid, Zeus will be brought down by somebody greater than him (Aeschylus, *PB,* 757-774). Zeus would follow in the footsteps of all the previous rulers of the gods. However, Prometheus will only reveal how Zeus can prevent his downfall once Zeus releases him "from these savage bonds and consents to pay compensation for this degrading treatment" (Aeschylus, *PB*, 175-177). One can imagine how a tyrant would respond to such a demand and Zeus does not disappoint. The end of *Prometheus Bound* exemplifies Zeus' characterization throughout the play, as Prometheus continues to refuse to yield Zeus' threats, Zeus hurls a thunderbolt at Prometheus resulting in Prometheus being tossed into the depths of a mountain and engulfed within (Aeschylus, *PB,* 1094). Thus, instead of attempting a compromise or considering Prometheus'

demands, Zeus acting unyieldingly in his own right by further using might to enforce his rule.

Within *Prometheus Bound* we begin to see the political direction of the trilogy. It leads towards reconciliation between the two main characters with a specific purpose in mind. There are only two possible alternatives stated within *Prometheus Bound*, either Zeus is usurped or the two must be reconciled. We see the inkling of a resolution to be reached between Prometheus and Zeus in discussions between Prometheus and the assorted gods (Aeschylus, *PB,* 188-189 and 373-376). Prometheus seems open to this possibility, especially early on in the play, but the likelihood of this occurrence decreases as Prometheus' indignation over his circumstances increases throughout *Prometheus Bound*. By the end, it seems as though Zeus would have to apologize on bended knee before Prometheus would accept any reconciliation between them.

Another element in Prometheus Bound suggests that reconciliation between the two will be achieved as presented by the only human character, Io. Io suffers a similar fate as Prometheus. She also is being punished for defying Zeus, although her case is different, as her defiance of Zeus was based more on ignorance than on hubris. Both are suffering at the hand of Zeus and the connection between their suffering is drawn by the chorus in the play (Aeschylus, *PB,* 687-695). Both are constantly tormented by their affliction, albeit in different senses. Prometheus cannot move from his boulder, whereas Io is turned into a cow being led by Argus, constantly being stung by a gadfly (Aeschlus, *PB,* 580-584 and 677-681). Prometheus and Io also have some ties in terms of kinship. Io's father, Inachus, is Oceanus' nephew (Aeschylus, *PB,* 636). According to the

changes Aeschylus made to the myth, both Oceanus and Prometheus are sons of Gaea and Uranus. Thus, Inachus is Prometheus nephew and Io is his great-niece. The medical imagery used to describe Prometheus and Io are very similar in terms their state of mind being compared to a mental sickness that needs healing (Mossman, 62). Other similarities between Prometheus and Io are made present throughout the play, particularly in terms of the structure of the dialogue between the two and their laments. As Conacher states, in two instances "a five verse complaint from Io over her woes is followed by a five-verse statement from Prometheus concerning his own more desperate plight" (Conacher, 62). Therefore, it appears as though Aeschylus went to great lengths to make a correlation between these two characters in the play.

The connection drawn between these two characters is important as it is possible to verify that Io does reconcile Zeus. In *Prometheus Bound* Prometheus describes the rest of Io's fate, the rest of the trials and tribulations she will face. Her torment will only end when she reaches a city called Canobus, at which point Zeus will restore her to her right mind and impregnate her. Thus, a reconciliation between her and Zeus will be reached, wherein her tribulations will end and Zeus is able to fulfil his desires with Io (Aeschylus, *PB,* 845-852). This will be the first of ten generations that will eventually lead to the birth of Heracles (Aeschylus, *PB,* 774). Although the remaining two plays of the trilogy are incomplete there is enough evidence from the excerpts we have to suggest that Io's fate does coincide with the story told to her by Prometheus. One of the excerpts we have from *Prometheus Unbound* is the beginning, wherein Heracles is seen visiting Prometheus, thus confirming her family line (Aeschylus, *Fragments,* 209-211)

If the similarities between the fates of Prometheus and Io continue throughout the tragedy, it is possible that Zeus and Prometheus reach a similar reconciliation at the end of the tragedy. The fate of Io also brings up another degree of support for the idea of a reconciliation being reached between Zeus and Prometheus. Prometheus mentions that it will be Heracles that releases him from his enchainment (Aeschylus, *PB,* 773-774). From the few excerpts of *Prometheus Unbound*, we know that Heracles does in fact release Prometheus from his bonds with a shot from his bow (Aeschylus, *Fragments,* 209-211**)**. Furthermore, in the opening of the *Prometheus Unbound*, a new chorus composed of released Titans come to visit Prometheus, many which were imprisoned in Tartarus while *Prometheus Bound* is taking place (Aeschylus, *Fragments, 196-205*). There has already been a reconciliation between Zeus and a number of others from the previous regime of Kronos, which may suggest a similar fate awaits Prometheus and Zeus. They have been given particular roles within Zeus' new regime and are now working as part of it (Aeschylus, *Fragments,* 196-197). Finally, some scholars suggest that *Prometheus the Firebearer* concludes with Prometheus being given a particularly honourable role within Athens and celebrated amongst the other gods as the one who first gave humanity fire, the origins of civilization (Thomas, 338). While Prometheus did not receive the same level of notoriety in Athens as Athena or Poseidon, there was, nonetheless, an altar dedicated to Prometheus in a region of Athens located northwest of the Acropolis and an annual torch-race dedicated to him in Athens. Thus, the suggested conclusion of *Prometheus the Firebearer* does have some support.

Before delving into the significance of this reconciliation, there is an element of time here that must be discussed. There are comparisons made between the previous two

regimes, those of Uranus and Cronos, as the possible fate that awaits Zeus, an overthrow from one of his sons, is same the others faced. Similarly, an emphasis is made on Zeus' regime being new and imperfect, as though Zeus still has something to learn or recognize. As Meier suggests, before the just order can be achieved a transformation on the part of Zeus` must take place, from someone who rules more within the dictates of the just order of the cosmos than purely in a tyrannical manner (Meier, 92-95).[37] This transformation is not necessarily in terms of Zeus' character completely changing. Instead, the transformation is in the manner in which Zeus rules, such that he comes to realize the benefits of ruling in a particular manner. Either way, this element of time suggests that the process of regime change, and the underlying circumstances surrounding it, is historical or as happened in the past. There were different stages in history, much like the different regimes of the gods. In each specific stage, a conflict or turmoil would arise, similar to the one that occurred between the Titans and Olympians. For instance, Ouranus continually hid the children born from Gaea in her depths, which resulted in Gaea groaning from both pain and sorrow and her devising a plan to overthrow Ouranus (Morford, and Lenardon, 61-61). The turmoil caused by Ouranus leads to Kronos taking over and establishing a new regime and a new order. However, his order eventually broke into disunity, resulting in yet another overthrow and Zeus establishing his own order. The current regime of Zeus has begun, but whether or not he can establish a just

[37] There is a substantial amount of debate surrounding whether or not it is possible for a transformation of Zeus to take place. Some suggest that while it is acceptable to have a conception of humanity growing to learn different elements of justice, it is unlikely to have a similar conception for divine personalities, especially Zeus (Conacher, 121). Other levels of the dispute range from whether or not it is an actual change in the nature of Zeus or merely a change in his dealings with others opinions varying (Conacher, 132). For more on the large range of opinions looking into this issue and the differing reasons for their stance, see Conacher (1980).

order that lasts is not completely in the hands of Zeus. Despite Zeus being the most knowledgeable ruler of the gods, he is still subject to the order of the cosmos and fate.

To elaborate what is meant requires turning towards a particular view of theology that Aeschylus seems to follow. As other scholars have suggested, there is a close connection between Aeschylus and Heraclitus' opinions about the cosmos (Kahn, 7**).**[38] The connection is especially drawn between Heraclitus` poetic style and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, as both depict an unfolding of "great truth" that is "continually enriched" (Kahn, 7 and 90).[39] Similarly, Heraclitus, like most pre-Socratic philosophers, believed there was a fundamental physical principle and for him it was fire, the very gift which Prometheus suggests is the origin of all human advancements (Aeschylus, *PB,* 108-111, 252-254, and 441-446). Heraclitus' conception of the cosmos is based on a mixture of order and chaos, such that there is an overarching order that even the gods are subject to, but the material circumstances are constantly in a state of flux. In other words, this is an order that governs the world, but the relations between the gods and between humans can always change, under this overarching order to the cosmos. The regime of the gods and the political entities of man can coincide with the just order, but this is not necessarily guaranteed, nor can it necessarily last in continuity. Like the gods, the political life of man is constantly changing and new political situations call for new political reforms.

[38] This connection between Heraclitus and Aeschylus does not go unchallenged. Others suggest that Aeschylus is closer in theory to the early poets, such as Homer, or to other pre-Socratic philosophers or poets, such as Archilocus or Pindar, although this seems to be largely dependent on the play that is being analyzed (Rosenmeyer, 261-283). For more on this see Rosenmeyer (1982).

[39] This paper makes a similar argument to the one proposed by Meier (1990) for *The Oresteia*. Thus, for similarities to be suggested between the plot of *The Oresteia* and Heraclitus suggests that a similar connection can be made for *The Prometheia* and Heraclitus.

Citizens must be able to adapt, recognizing that politics is a activity that is continually changing.

Turning back to the text, there are several references made to the overarching order being separate from that of Zeus and the Olympians. There are several names given to these overarching forces: fate, necessity, destiny, or order (Aeschylus, *PB*, 103-106, 514-518, and 550-551). However it may be defined, a point is made that all the gods, even Zeus, are subject to its dictates (Aeschylus, 514-518). On another level, there is more to suggest that there is an overarching order underlying the conflict between the gods, which is in relation to the gods that are spoken of or present in the tragedy. Aeschylus decides to make Gaea and Themis identical gods, something that had not previously existed in the myths about the gods. This was partially done to make Prometheus one of the Titans, but another reason may be given as well. Gaea is defined as land or Earth, but would be best associated with Mother Nature or Mother Earth (Kearns, 68). She is a primordial deity and one of the three parts of the tripartite world with the others being Sky and Styx (Kearns, 44-45). From Chaos emerged Gaea, who is the everlasting foundation of the gods of Olympus and a deity who was understood to exist everywhere (Morford and Lenardon, 55). Themis is literally defined as "what is laid down" or "what is customarily considered right or obligatory", but may be understood as "what was correct or permitted in a religious context" (Kearns, 42 and 198). In other words, she is the personification of divine law and the embodiment of divine order, law, and custom. Moreover, as is made evident in the text of Aeschylus, Themis serves her traditional role by being a prophetic goddess and, thus a goddess that knows how the order of the universe should unfold (Aeschylus, *PB*, 205-211). By

combining these two deities, there is a goddess that is the everlasting foundation of the gods, as well as the embodiment of divine order, law, and custom. She is both the embodiment of the divine order, as well as cognizant of what the divine order entails.

Taken together, it would seem to suggest that Aeschylus is exemplifying an overarching order that Prometheus and Zeus are subject to or that exists over them. Prometheus is given a portion of Themis or Gaea's knowledge, recognizing Io`s fate and the possibilities for his own fate and that of Zeus, although Prometheus' knowledge is incomplete. There is a clear dependence on this overarching order in terms of the determination of how Prometheus and Zeus' dispute is resolved. It was also his mother that provided Prometheus with the insight that "it was destined that the victors should be those who excelled not in might nor in power but in guile" (Aeschylus, *PB*, 212-214). This seems to entail that if Zeus wants to maintain his regime, as well as govern within the dictates of a just order, it is necessary for him to make his rule most aligned with the order of the cosmos, which is based upon an understanding of the just order that Gaea or Themis seem to know or exemplify. In this way, Zeus can serve his dual role of being the ruler of the gods while also recognizing that his rule is limited to an overarching order.

Oceanus' character and his interaction with Prometheus adds further credence to the idea of an overarching order to the cosmos. As Konstan suggests, "Like Earth the Mother, Oceanus is anterior to the generations of the gods yet he endures through their successive reigns and seems to stand outside or beyond their struggles" (Konstan, 68). Oceanus encompasses the earth, containing all the elements of Earth within the realm of

becoming (Konstan, 68). Unlike the other characters in *Prometheus Bound*, Oceanus' interaction with Prometheus has no element of rebuke for Prometheus' indiscretions towards Zeus. Oceanus sees no apparent purpose in reproaching Prometheus for defying the new ruler. Instead, his focus is on finding a way for Zeus and Prometheus to be reconciled. As such, there is condemnation for Prometheus continuing to provoke Zeus with threats of his imminent downfall, believing that this is leading Prometheus and Zeus further from reconciling (Aeschylus, 308-314, 326-330, and 335-338). As Konstan suggests, Oceanus' emphasis on cooperation and reconciliation "represents, par excellence, the original unity and harmony of nature" (Konstan, 68). His presence in the tragedy serves to emphasize an eventual reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus, as well as exemplifying the underlying order of the cosmos.

The reconciliation between Prometheus, and his fellow Titans, and Zeus, and his fellow Olympians, represents a realization of this overarching order in the realm of the divine. But what is the basis for this just order? The underlying concept in this play and which had been gradually learned and, to a certain extent, accepted by the Athenians was *sophrosyne* (Meier, 96). *Sophrosyne* has been defined in a number of different ways. For the purposes of this paper though, *sophrosyne* is defined as moderation or temperance guided by balance and intelligence (Irwin, 350**)**. This term is often related to the bodily pleasures and is not understood as complete self-restraint from all bodily pleasures, but instead a right indulgence (Irwin, 350). Politically, as *The Prometheia* suggests, moderation is achieved through the balancing of the disparate parts of the polis with a focus on the polis as a whole. To ensure the whole functions properly, one must

incorporate all the political forces, as opposed to maintaining a level of animosity between them.

Before reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus can be made, a change or a transformation in the stance of these two characters must take place. What this may entail is that the two main characters have to reach a compromise of sorts. Prometheus must also recognize the rule of Zeus and be willing to give up his freedom. He must be willing both to serve Zeus and to serve a role in his regime. Zeus, on the other hand, needs to move away from his role of tyranny and immoderation. His rule must not be one based solely on force, but instead one that works toward compromise and cooperation. In terms of a compromise with Prometheus and the other Titans, Zeus needs to give them a role in his new regime and learn to cooperate with the gods of the past, as long as they are willing to recognize that he is now the supreme ruler. Prometheus and the other Titans need to be given a role in Zeus' regime, such that a 'happy marriage' between the two forces can be conceived.

Unfortunately, what particular role the Titans or Prometheus are to serve in Zeus' regime is uncertain due to the lack of information from the few fragments of the last two plays of the trilogy. Nonetheless, there is some speculation that can be made on this point. While there has been some disregard for other authors` suggestions, such as Dorter or Podlecki, that Prometheus and Zeus simply represent opposing sides of a spectrum that are incompatible, i.e. force and intelligence, or tyranny versus freedom, there is an important point to be made from this. If the trilogy does indeed lead to a reconciliation between the two, and Prometheus is given a role within Zeus' regime, it is still unclear

what role he will serve. Throughout *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus' intelligence is emphasized. Prometheus' intelligence is expressed in this play through his foreknowledge, an understanding of the fate of the gods and the order of the cosmos given to him by his mother Gaea. Similarly, it is described as cunning or prudence (Aeschylus, *PB*, 211-214). It was through the intelligence of Prometheus that Zeus' regime was apparently able to be victorious in its battle with the Titans. In incorporating Prometheus, what may be recognized is that Zeus is incorporating a level of prudence into his regime, which, as opposed to only ruling with brute force, will help him realize the importance of being moderate as ruler of the gods.

This is not to suggest that Zeus obtains his intelligence in terms of ruling from Prometheus, as later evidence will suggest. Zeus' transformation is not about learning something brand new, as much as it is about recognizing the benefits of certain character traits. Zeus must come to a realization of wisdom and moderation that can help avoid the problems of the previous regimes and by incorporating Prometheus and the other Titans, he is symbolically serving this role. Zeus learns or is transformed into a god that creates a regime that is more harmonious with the order of the cosmos, which is based in a justice that finds its realization through moderation, cooperation and compromise.

The Prometheia's **Athenian Political Education**

There is evidence for the similarities between the Athenian political context and *The Prometheia.* Neither of the two main characters, Prometheus nor Zeus, appears to be favoured throughout the first book of the trilogy. The setting of the play involves a new order emerging, i.e. that of Zeus and the Olympians. Of particular importance is the

implacability on the part of the two characters, a trait which both characters share in the first part of the trilogy. Prometheus' character feels unjustifiably punished considering the aid he gave to the Olympians in overthrowing the Titans. Despite repeated suggestions from an assortment of characters to accept Zeus' regime and to give up his 'quest for justice', Prometheus will not concede. Through Prometheus, we see the unyielding stance often taken on the part of the losing side of a political battle. There is an unwillingness to accept the new order, much like Cimon and his supporters in their attempts to overthrow the democracy and install an oligarchy. Similarly, Zeus, despite repeated threats from Prometheus regarding the possible downfall of his regime, continues to use force, or a threat of force, to maintain and impose his rule. As had happened often in the history of Athens, when a new political faction came to power their actions tended to mimic Zeus. They attempted to force through their own rules and laws to the dismay of the regime they usurped, as the previous regimes under Kronos and Ouranos had done. The most obvious example if when Peisistratos came to power in the sixth century BCE and strengthened his own regime at the expense of the aristocracy by producing coinage and forcing many of the leading aristocracy out of the city (Nagle, 112). There are other examples. After the dispute led by Isagoras in 508 BCE, the faction he was a part of attempted to exile any opponents and repeal the laws of Solon (Burnstein et al, 199).[40] Similarly, once Cleisthenes was returned to the city with the

[40] Isagoras was the main opponent of Cleisthenes and was elected archon in 508 BCE. He attempted to repeal the reforms of Solon and repealed the citizenship of all those who had received it under Pisistratus and Solon. As a result, the citizenry revolted. To respond, Isagoras forced to exile Cleisthenes and all his followers with the aid of Sparta, i.e. he attempted to use force to obtain his goals, which failed as the Athenian citizenry forced Sparta out and Isagoras' capitulation.

support of the people, he initiated reforms that were meant to weaken his opponents and ensure that his ruling faction would have a more secure hold on power (Nagle, 112).

Zeus and Prometheus serve to represent different regimes: Zeus is at the head of the new regime of the Olympians and Prometheus stands in for the defeated Titans. Within the divine order a rift is created that mimics rifts often seen in political settings. There are two opposing sides that have reached a point of implacability. Both sides tend to see complete justice in their own view and are unwilling to compromise. Thus, neither side recognizes that they may be part of the problem, but instead place all the blame upon their opponent. This is the source of the problem and why it is so indicative of politics (Meier, 102). The pressure builds with no apparent solution, at least if it continues in the same manner, until it reaches a point of climax.

Within Athens, there were various forces at play with the emergence of the reforms of Ephialtes. Similar to the emergence of the regime of Zeus, Athens also has a new political regime in power with the materialization of a full-fledged democracy. The aristocratic or the oligarchic faction lost its primary source of political power with the dwindling of the responsibilities of the Areopagus, much like the loss of power for the Titans and Prometheus. The political atmosphere of Athens is drawn upon two main fault lines similar to the Titans and the Olympians with some pushing for an oligarchy and others supporting a more radical form of democracy. The tension between the two sides is rife. The strongest component of an Oligarchic regime, Cimon, was exiled after favouring a policy of alliance with Sparta. Cimon's strongest opponent, Ephialtes, was murdered shortly after his reforms were put into place without a suspect ever being

named or anybody convicted, which is fitting considering one of the few responsibilities the Areopagus still held was murder trials. The hostility of the two sides was near a breaking point with Athens on the brink of civil war.

Aeschylus' apparent condemnation of both sides in the tragedy appears to be a condemnation of the situation occurring in Athens, or at the very least recognition of the situation in Athens that gives praise to neither side in the conflict. Prometheus represents the old order of the Titans, the regime that has lost its power. In Athens, the aristocracy lost its particular place within the regime of the Athenians, which may be understood as being similar to Prometheus. If Prometheus is meant to represent the side of the oligarchic faction, then a more radical democracy that gives no special role to the aristocracy, as well as a regime that had exiled a number of leading aristocrats, does not seem to be favoured either. Why would Prometheus possibly be given a particular role within the Olympian order following his reconciliation with Zeus? Nor does Aeschylus seem to be favouring a complete reversal of all democratic principles and a return to an oligarchic style of rule, especially if this may lead to civil war, as Zeus would not have been used as the exemplar for the new regime.

Aeschylus is not merely recognizing this as an issue of contemporary Athens. There is a historical element at play, suggesting that this may have been a continual pattern in Athenian affairs. Athens had had many political changes over the last two centuries, particularly starting from the time of Solon. As Meier suggests, Solon was the first to "discover the just order, personified as Eunomia, wherein each of the forces have their allotted place in it, and there can be no conflict between just claims" (Meier, 126).

The focus of this just order was the whole, such that it required "balancing the claims of the parts" (Meier, 127). Similar to the tragedy, for Zeus to rule a regime that was best able to function, it was necessary for him to give a role to the Titans that were willing to accept his rule. Solon recognized the problems of his day and found a way to limit civil strife and ensure that each of the distinct parts were working for Athens, or at the very least were not working against Athens. Cleisthenes, albeit utilizing a strategy to gain superiority over his rivals, served a similar role that somewhat balanced the disparate parts within Athens.

There had been conflicts that emerged in the past that weakened Athens and threatened its survival. Aeschylus recognizes that when changes occurred, or when there was a reform initiated to rebalance Athens politically, it was usually as a result of an extreme conflict or dire situation. It was a recognition of the ideal that learning occurs through suffering, particularly in political settings. Aeschylus realized the importance of maintaining a balance of the various parts of Athens by recognizing some of the changes that took place in the past. Moreover, there was a realization that Athens was at its strongest when the city seemed to work somewhat together, something that is suggested by the victories in war over the Persians and general Athenian military success after the reforms of Cleisthenes. The victories of Athens supported the idea that Athens was indeed living according to the dictates of the just order, as the gods favour those that follow them.

This idea of reconciliation and cooperation between opposing political forces is the primary lesson available to present-day Athens from this tragedy. While the political

lesson that may be taken from this is specific to the Athenian context, a more general lesson about politics can be taken from this. Historically, this role of reconciliation was served by an individual leader, such as Solon, but this cannot be the case for Athens at the time of this tragedy. Athens is a democracy and while the leaders may be the most important figures in the democracy, it is all of the citizens that decide Athens' political fate.

One can recognize through this particular tragedy a discussion about the civic order being at the behest of its citizens and thus a realization of the ability of its citizens to affect a just change within it. As Meier states, "it could not be a subject for debate until order was construed in a more limited sense as political organization, as the relationship between citizens as citizens" (Meier, 104). This realization is a reflection of the changing circumstances of the Athenian polis, wherein for any decision to be made it is up to all the citizens to make it. Athens political life could no longer be about fighting for a particular side, as under the democracy the people were Athens and vice versa. If they were to prosper the polis needed to prosper, but this required cooperation between all the elements of the polis regardless of one's particular opinions, as opposed to the interpersonal relationships that had determined aristocratic life previously in Athens (Meier, 116).

If Aeschylus was indeed suggesting that the just order is one based upon moderation and cooperation, it is still left to determine how this was to unfold in democratic Athens. As the analysis of the trilogy suggests, for a political reconciliation to occur, the defeated had to accept the new regime of Athens, in the same way that

Prometheus and the Titans had to accept the rule of Zeus. The aristocracy had to give up its hopes of overthrowing the democracy and installing an oligarchy and to accept that all citizens would have somewhat of an equal role in decision-making. However, for them to accept democratic Athens required the demos to give the aristocracy a particular role within the regime, just as Zeus conferred roles on Prometheus and the other Titans. In other words, it was up to the victors, the citizens and in particular its leaders, to initiate a reconciliation between themselves and the aristocracy. The citizens of the democracy are now in control and only they can decide on the future political makeup of Athens. While it seems unlikely that Aeschylus is calling for a complete return to the order that existed prior to Ephialtes' reforms, it still seems that Aeschylus felt the Areopagus should act as a counterpoise within the newly established democracy (Meier, 113), or that some new role be created for the aristocracy. The old powers did have political rights that should not be completely invalidated because a reform was passed. What exactly its role should be could be determined by the citizens as a whole and would be open for interpretation. What is important is that the aristocrats are recognized as having an important role in the future of Athens to help ensure Athens can prosper.

There were other political lessons at play though. Zeus' regime was in its infancy and required a certain amount of force to ensure its survival in the same way many regimes have had to turn to force at its early stages. Athenians had to act with a certain measure of force to ensure that the oligarchic faction did not overthrow the democracy or continue to assassinate its leaders, but this was not to be its sole recourse in dealing with the aristocracy. Athens also had to recognize the need to ensure the support of its entire citizenry if it was going to maintain its internal strength. Athens also had to learn to

adapt to the changing circumstances, to learn through necessity, in the same manner that it appears Zeus adapts to the changes taking place in his regime. The focus was on Athens and its survival, which can only be ensured through a healthy balance of its disparate forces.

On a final note, Meier suggests in his analysis of *The Oresteia* that Aeschylus depiction of the Olympians and their reconciliation was meant to illustrate the permanence and perfection of the divinity and, if, and only if, Athens were to follow suit, of Athens itself (Meier, 93 and 96). For the purposes of this paper, this would be a contradiction and a failure to recognize the difference between the just overarching order and the contingent affairs of man and the gods. The interactions between the gods and humans stands apart from the just order itself. As this trilogy shows, the political order and the order of the gods can be compatible with the just order, but it does not guarantee that it will be in perpetuity. Instead, Aeschylus seems to suggest that if this is a historical process and this has occurred before, then it can occur again. The relations between citizens in Athens can reach another point of crisis and the regime itself can change again. For Athens to maintain a level of strength and for them to be compatible with the just order then the relations between men have to be continually based on maintaining a level of compromise and moderation between the disparate forces, especially as relations change.

This paper has just argued that the idea of moderation and reconciliation between the opposing forces is the purpose of the lesson that could be taken from this tragedy by an Athenian audience. Within Athens, there are various political forces at play with the

emergence of the reforms of Ephialtes. The populace and the aristocracy are in a struggle for control over Athens, but instead of favouring a radical democracy of the populace, the nobles need to be incorporated in the democratic regime, such that there is a reconciliation between the opposing forces. However, the message is more broad then the particular struggle encompassing Athens at the time. Aeschylus is attempting to show that the just theological order is one based on moderation and reconciliation in general, and one that the Athenians need to consider. The order transcends particularistic forces present in Athens at any time. In defining the religious order as one of moderation between disparate forces, Aeschylus presents to the Athenians the idea that moderation was needed within the polis, not only for it to align itself with the religious order, but also for the citizens themselves, which could be realized by themselves as they determined the direction of the polis. *The Prometheia* represents a perfect example of the manner in which was religious and political and could serve a political role within the Athenian polis by allowing Athenian audiences to reflect upon political themes that were relevant to the specifics of the time, as well as general to political and religious themes.

Human Agency in *The Prometheia*

According to Meier's argument of 'theological politics', the order of the cosmos is supposed to act as a model for the proper order of the polis (Meier, 125). The maintenance of such type of argumentation shows that Aeschylus suggests or recognizes that the Athenians, or humans in general, have the ability to change their political destiny to match the will of the cosmos. In other words, it requires proof that Aeschylus is drawing associations between man and the gods in terms of being able to alter their

political landscape. The similarities between Io and Prometheus help provide some support for similarities between the abilities of the gods and those of humans. Throughout *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus makes an effort to show that human beings do have a certain level of control over their destiny and are not completely dependent upon the gods. Power first mentions this at the beginning of *Prometheus Bound*, complaining of this change in the fate of mortals, explaining how Prometheus robbed the prerogatives of the gods and gave them to humans (Aeschylus, *PB,* 83-84). Prometheus also brings this point up a number of times suggesting that humans are intelligent and possess understanding, which would leave open the possibility of them being able to learn, to a certain extent, what the proper order is and how to put it into action (Aeschylus, *PB,* 442-445 and 552-554).

What is truly telling is the description of the gifts that Prometheus has given to mortals. Prometheus shows that human beings were in a desperate state before he bestowed many gifts upon them. The gifts that are stolen are given to help humanity. They represent the origins of civilized technology, with fire being the material basis of civilization (Segal, 55). In Prometheus` discussion of the many technological advances he has given to humanity we see an evolutionary design, wherein each advancement in technology seems to fall in line with the next step in terms of necessities for man (Conacher, 85). In other words, man is able to learn how to improve upon his own situation depending upon the problems they face. A problem arises and man must use his intellect to figure out a way to solve this particular problem if he wants to continue to improve his lot in life. For example, Prometheus describes how men lived in horrible dwellings underground, until they learned house-building, or how they were completely

at a loss on how to plan until he showed them how to understand the workings of the stars and planets (Aeschylus, *PB,* 447-470). Even though it is Prometheus who is guiding them, the manner in which it is described is analogous of the manner in which man has discovered technological advancements. Prometheus` suffering can be taken to represent the sufferings of mankind, wherein man attempts to improve his lot in the face of nature. As Thomas states, "the sufferings of Prometheus appear as sufferings of man himself, cast down from heaven into misery and death" (Thomas, 320), which the similarities between Io and Prometheus further suggest. Thus, we can begin to see a historical perspective and a recognition of man's ability to learn under duress.

One of the main gifts Prometheus gives to man supports this idea of learning through suffering, which is hope. Under the myth of Hesiod, hope had been viewed as a curse, the only one which remained in Pandora's Box (Morford and Lenardon, 85-88). This is largely because humanity's livelihood was completely dependent upon the gods meaning hope could only cause unnecessary angst as there was nothing to hope for. Aeschylus shifts this conception, removing any reference to hope originating from Pandora's Box along with the rest of the world's evils, and instead makes it a source for man's strivings (Aeschylus, *PB,* 246-248). Hope becomes more of a belief in a positive outcome related to one's circumstances or life. If things are bad, hope still provides a confidence that things can be improved or that what one desires can be accomplished or is possible. Blind hopes provides man with a desire to remove himself from his state of suffering, instead of leaving himself completely at the will of the gods. Even in the worst circumstances, man can be motivated to attempt to improve his situation if there is hope that things will improve, but without it, he has nothing. Thus, Aeschylus is emphasizing

that these technological advances that Prometheus apparently bestowed on man are actually natural advances that man acquired through suffering. In other words, man is able to affect change in his circumstances, when necessity dictates and there is a belief that it is possible.

The advances Aeschylus highlights also provide insight into the political lessons that Athenians may still require. Aeschylus outlines a number of advances Prometheus has given to humanity. Aeschylus apparently teaches them house-building, calendar reading, farming, raising livestock, sailing, mining, and medicine (Aeschylus, 450-471 and 476-506). As White suggest, these are all advances that allow humans to "manipulate and control their survival", but there is no mention of any of the "cooperative arts and institutions of social and political life, or any personal excellences, moral, intellectual, or aesthetic" (White, 113). These technological advances allow humans to live longer and better lives in terms of material goods and sustenance, but there is no advances that can help humans coexist or teach humans how to coexist politically. The gifts that are given are advances that would have been available for every society. The gifts that are excluded are those that are particular to Athens and to the emerging democracy, the gifts that would separate Athens from the rest of the ancient world. This also helps to show the shortfalls in the intelligence of Prometheus, which explains why Zeus' incorporation of knowledge into his regime is not necessarily the knowledge of Prometheus. This is not necessarily surprising when one considers the different nations of humans that are mentioned throughout the text. The Oceanids describe several different groups of humans that lament Prometheus` situation each of which is outside of Greece, such as Asia, Colchis (present-day Georgia), Arabia, etc

(Aeschylus, *PB,* 410-424). In other words, the mortals that praise Prometheus and the people Prometheus have saved are all barbarians from the uncivilized states outside of Greece (White, 111). The only mention of humans that exist or reside in the region of Greece comes from the line of Io. Her descendent, Hypermestra will start a kingdom in Argos that will eventually lead to the birth of Heracles (Aeschylus, 869-872). While it may be important that Prometheus has given to humanity gifts that have allowed them to flourish in a material sense, there is still something lacking. The important advancements for the Athenians in not merely in terms of material gains, but are instead in terms of civic advances and in obtaining an understanding of how to order their society, such that it can flourish.

While the gifts that Prometheus provides are important for humanity, they are nonetheless still lacking, especially in terms of what is important for Athenian political life. Prometheus provides the basis for civilization, but the lack of cooperative arts and skills for social and political life suggest that humans still had much to learn. The lack of these skills most likely would have been noticed by an Athenian audience considering its uniqueness in terms of the political organization compared to the rest of the known world. It is fitting that the only mention of humans associated with Athenian life are the ancestors of Heracles, the very person who confirms Io and Zeus' reconciliation and is responsible for releasing Prometheus. The similarities between Io and Prometheus' situation and the confirmation of Io's fate suggest that a similar reconciliation is awaiting Prometheus and Zeus, especially since Zeus is Heracles' father making one wonder whether or not it is in fact Zeus who is behind Prometheus' release. If this is indeed the case, then this may be the first sign of Zeus transforming or changing the way in which

he is ruling the gods. Therefore, it is likely that what is playing out in *Prometheus Bound* was that while humans have the ability to learn through suffering, they had yet to learn some of the most important lessons of political and social life. The idea of learning through suffering was not limited to technological advances. As Meier states, "a conflict arises and if the opposing forces become polarized, then the basis of which they existed is called into question resulting in innovation" (Meier, 94). Advances that occur are a result of men's abilities to overcome problems through his own devices, similar to a recognition of being able to change his political setting. The problems arising in Athens, i.e. being on the brink of civil war and the recent conflicts, may be the situation of duress that leads them to learn the political lessons useful to the democracy through this trilogy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrated that tragedy served a particular, reflective role in the democracy of Athens. The historical development of democracy in Athens established the contentious manner in which political factions shaped Athenian civic life. This lead to the establishment of a democracy based in free speech, open and free debate, and a fair and equal law system. Tragedy's active role in the Athenian democracy through its close relationship, both in developing and being developed by, to democracy made it an intricate part of the civic life of Athens. The activity of politics was demonstrated through tragedies open forum, stimulation of lively debate on contentious issues, and its controversial use of language and subject matter relevant to Athenian political life. Tragedy did all of this within a reflection of the order of the cosmos that enhanced the importance of its message. Its reflection was dually faceted questioning both the order of the gods and the ability of the Athenian polis to replicate, or become a part of, this order. Tragedy's ability to avoid certainty, but instead to work with the realm of exploration while scrutinizing the Athenians deepest values and civic ideals provided tragedy with a special relationship with the democracy. The experience of tragedy was particular in its ability to consider contentious subjects that may not have been open to discussion or arisen in the other democratic institutions of Athens. This was clearly demonstrated through Aeschylus' trilogy *The Prometheia*. In this trilogy a reconciliation between the old order of the gods, the Titans, and the new order of the gods, the Olympians, is exemplified in a struggle between Zeus and Prometheus. Through this trilogy, a message of reconciliation and moderation between opposing

political forces was demonstrated that could be interpreted as a message for the political factions in Athens, the oligarchs and the democrats. The oligarchs had to accept the democracy of Athens and their more equal status with the rest of the citizenry and the democrats needed to reconsider the special role the oligarchs could play with their civic society. All of this was wrapped within a message of ensuring that Athens remains strong and united for the good of the whole civic society.

This thesis has built upon the view of understanding Athenian drama as political and provided an alternate manner of viewing this as political by expanding Hammer's analysis politics as an activity. Theatre provided a particular forum that was able to look into civic questions in a theoretical manner that nonetheless corresponded to the democratic life of Athens. Moreover, this analysis focused on a slightly different manner of understanding tragedy as democratic focusing on the content, as Goldhill had, but also on the manner in which it was presented. It adapted alongside the democracy of Athens and became an inherent part of it. Not only did it promote free and open debate, but it emphasized competition that required an equal judgment from the audience, much like the law courts. It most likely reached more Athenian citizens than any other forum and its structure and style were shaped by the audience through their reactions. Its contentious language that challenged the values of the Athenian audience was comparable to the free speech open to Athenian citizens in the political forums.

This analysis of tragedy was coupled with the religious element of tragedy combining the questioning of the civic and religious order. It considered the importance of recognizing the religious element of tragedy. Finally, this thesis offered an original

interpretation of Aeschylus' *The Prometheia* that combined many of the previous views of reconciliation and moderation with the contemporary setting of Athenian civic life, albeit with a few innovations in terms of textual analysis. All of this to provide a necessary example to the proposed role that tragedy played.

While this thesis has provided some valid explanations for its main points, there are a few issues that one could anticipate. First, some may suggest that the other political institutions, such as the council or the assembly, were open to the same contentious, theoretical, political and religious reflection that I claim was special to tragedy. Discussions such as the importance of providing a special role for the aristocracy may have taken place in a democratic setting. While this thesis has not directly demonstrated the role that the assembly and the council may have played, as it is outside of its confines, it has focused on the special manner of presentation that tragedy had at its disposal. It did not require a vote, short of for a winner, but instead was based upon examination of values. It could touch on issues that may have been difficult to raise openly, but was possible through the guise of myth. Second, only one set of tragedies was chosen as to exemplify the thesis that has been proposed. Other scholars have recognized that certain tragedies do definitely include democratic themes and that certain tragedies are more evidently discussing political themes. Support from an assortment of scholars analyzing different tragedies was given in the second chapter to support some of the arguments made. In particular, the political and democratic content of certain tragedies and the religious nature of tragic myths in general provided similar evidence that adds further support to the argument given and the explanation from the chosen tragedy provide some support, yet a more thorough analysis of other tragedies would be necessary to build a

stronger case for the of the special political experience of tragedy. Third, the fact that we only have fragments of the latter two plays of the trilogy makes it impossible to know whether or not Zeus and Prometheus ever truly reconcile and what this reconciliation entails. As such, it is impossible to say whether or not this interpretation from the text is absolutely the direction of this trilogy and whether or not an Athenian audience would have been able to interpret the text in the manner that has been suggested. There are hints and suggestions from *Prometheus Bound* and from the fragments of the other two tragedies that lean towards this conclusion, but it is still an uncertainty. Unfortunately, short of a lost copy of this trilogy being discovered, it is not possible to provide further evidence than what has been given.

Each of these objections may have some potential to disrupt this thesis, but this is minimal in comparison to the potential support that may be garnered. This view has opened a discussion about the special role of tragedy within the Athenian democracy, but further study could provide a stronger argument in its favour. For instance, if a more thorough study of the democratic institutions of Athens were conducted, a better comparison between the special role of tragedy within the democracy may be made. Furthermore, if the focus of this thesis were tested on an assortment of tragedies from each of the three great tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, an argument about the development of tragedy alongside democracy and the role it played throughout all of fifth-century Athens may be demonstrated more conclusively. It would allow us to view the continuous changes of the democracy as well as that of tragedy and attempt to draw more coherent similarities between the two as well as provide more examples to support the general thesis. Similar studies may also be done in other ancient Greek cities,

although the material is much more limited, to examine whether or not tragedy served a comparable role within these civic societies or whether this was particular to Athens. Tragedy may also be more fully compared to that of comedy to see what, if any, similarities or differences occurred as the two developed, especially considering comedies increased importance in the end of the fifth-century and into the fourth-century in Athens.

Either way, by studying a combination of the religious and political factors of tragedy, a relatively new avenue for exploring ancient Greek tragedy has been opened. There is still much to explore and much we still do not know about the purpose or experience of tragedy and the importance of drama for democracy. This did demonstrate that democracy was not limited to the classical institutions in Athens, but instead manifested itself in a particular manner within the theological stories of the playwrights. This demonstrates yet another peculiar way in which the democracy of Athens had manifested itself in a particular manner and continued to develop according to the interactions between its citizenry. Tragedy's special role in this should not be underplayed, although further study could more fully elaborate on this point.

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