



# AESCHYLUS' 'THE EUMENIDES'

(Reflections on the just proportion between power and reason in the role of **Chorus**)  
by Pierre Beaudry, October 21, 2013



**Figure 1** *The Remorse of Orestes* by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, 1862.

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## **FOREWORD**

Historically, *The Eumenides* of Aeschylus has always been the best model for demonstrating the power of increasing energy-flux density in the minds of a citizenry. However, the historical intention of ruling oligarchies has also always been to prevent that power from ruling human society by using revenge as the means of reducing human population through war and pestilence.

The current British-Dutch oligarchy has reverted back to a sense of “justice” as it existed before *The Eumenides*, when the ancient Greek word **Dikē** (*Δίκη*) was the term used for justice meant revenge, and the infernal **Dikē** was represented by the *Erinyes* (the *Furies*), the goddesses of retribution.

On the contrary, the intention of *The Eumenides* is to demonstrate how mankind is capable of putting an end to such a *cycle of vengeance* as religious wars, and thus, extirpate revenge from the idea of justice and restore to justice the power of reason. The Aeschylus play is about the ability for the spectator to judge if he is able to stop that infernal cycle of violence and adopt a benevolent state of mind for the benefit of all of mankind. In other words: How can *Furies* be transformed into *Eumenides*? This four section report is the introduction to a future report on *The Power of the Peace of Westphalia*.

1. THE BALANCE OF POWER AND REASON AS THE BASIS FOR HUMAN ACTION
2. CAN MAN OVERCOME REVENGE AND ACCESS JUSTICE THROUGH REASON?
3. THE FLAW OF EURIPIDES IN THE BACCHAE
4. HOW JUSTICE IS MADE FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF THE MORE POWERFUL

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## **1. THE BALANCE OF POWER AND REASON AS THE BASIS FOR HUMAN ACTION**

*“Chorus:*

*Gods of the younger generation, you have ridden down  
the laws of the elder time, torn them out of my hands.*

*I, disinherited, suffering, heavy with anger*

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*Shall let loose upon the land*

*the vindictive poison*

*dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground;”*

(*Aeschylus I: The Eumenides*, translated by Richmond Lattimore, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953, p. 163)

As Lyn noted in several of his most recent documents, the present world strategic situation is dominated by an already ongoing paradigm shift inside of the political power centers of the world, which is dividing the world into two opposite tendencies represented by the collapsing of the British-Dutch monetary system of the Atlantic world on the one side, and by the immediate solution of a Glass-Steagall-

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Thermonuclear NAWAPA credit system on the Pacific side of the world. The problem is that the Atlantic side of the equation is presently bankrupt, because the US and Europe have been oriented toward the Greenie environmentalist *Furies*, while the Pacific world has been currently moving their nations into the state of mind of *The Eumenides* with a Promethean solution. This was made exceedingly clear by Lyn's answer to a question from a Beijing-based scholar during his webcast of October 4<sup>th</sup> 2013. The question was:

“Mr. LaRouche, China has made Shanghai a free-trade zone. This is the first experimental stage for eventual liberalization of the Chinese economy, a liberalization which, I believe, carries certain risks. This will be a main topic at the upcoming session of the Party leadership this November. It's being done now in response to the fact that most Asian nations have indicated a willingness to join Washington's Trans-Pacific Partnership, the TPP, which was specially directed against China. So, while China is not formally excluded, from the TPP, entry would require a much greater liberalization of the Chinese economy. But, at the same time, being left out of the TPP could also have serious repercussions on the Chinese economy.

“What then are the dangers that China incurs by further liberalization of China's economy? And, what can China do to avoid this dilemma?”

LAROUCHE: There is no way, by accommodation to that liberalization conception, which would not lead to the destruction of the nation of China, at a very rapid rate. But, let's look at the reality of the situation, because what he described is the usual view, shared among nations, and among cowardly nations in particular.

“Look what happened in Japan. They cancelled all nuclear power. Now that probably won't stick, but a certain faction in Japan did ram that through, and doing that will destroy Japan. That is, continuing to ban nuclear power in Japan will cause the collapse of Japan, because there's no substitute available for it. Nuclear power is inherently far more efficient than any other form of power being used in the world today. Thermonuclear fusion takes us to a completely different dimension.

“[...] If China goes with a liberal program, China will be destroyed.

“The only solution, on the planet as a whole, is to use thermonuclear fusion. You can't get it fully installed, as a going economic tool, right now, but we have to go through a process of activating thermonuclear fusion, which may take several years, before we even begin to get where we have to get. But, it's feasible. You don't have to prove that it can happen. It *will* work. But the problem is to get the skills and machinery and so forth and the experimental work done to do it. And in China too!” [...] (Lyndon LaRouche, [FRIDAY LPAC WEBCAST FOR OCTOBER 4, 2013](#).)

It is obvious that the difference between Green Power and Thermonuclear Fusion Power is of several orders of magnitude, yet world leaders hesitate as to which direction to take, because they fear the *Furies* of the bankrupt British-Dutch monetarist empire. They know the current monetarist system is finished, yet they have not yet found the courage to bury its stinking cadaver. How do you solve that

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problem? This is where the reader must go back to Gottfried Leibniz to find the answer regarding the idea of power. This is the solution that Leibniz provided:

"All beauty consists in a harmony and proportion; the beauty of minds, or of creatures who possess reason, is a proportion between reason and power, which in this life is also the foundation of the justice, the order, and the merits and even the form of the Republic, that each may understand what he is capable, and capable as much as he understands. If power is greater than reason, then the one who has that is either a simple sheep (in the case where he does not know how to use his power), or a wolf and a tyrant (in the case where he does not know how to use it well). If reason is greater than power, then he who has that is to be regarded as oppressed. Both are useless, indeed even harmful. If, then, the beauty of the mind lies in the proportionality between reason and power, then the beauty of the complete and infinite mind consists in an infinity of power as well as wisdom, and consequently the love of God, the highest good, consists in the incredible joy which one (even now present, without the beatific vision) draws out of the contemplation of that beauty or proportion which is the infinity of omnipotence and omniscience." (Quoted from *The Political Economy of the American Revolution*, EIR, 1995, p. 215-16.)

When you find yourself confronted with the decision to take action in order to change the world, this is how the question of power, and most notably the question of the power of justice, gets resolved. You have to examine the relationship between power and reason and discover how Leibniz solved the problem of harmonic proportionality between the two.

The discovery is far from being self-evident, because the experiment is a trial which calls for higher expenditures of understanding and action than most people are willing to spend in the course of their daily lives. As they say, you have to go through it to know it. Whatever effort you put into it, it is worth the expenditure of energy, because that proportionality is the key to solving all questions of power with respect to universal physical principles, and most emphatically the principle of increase in energy-flux density. This proportionality will unlock the power of your mind, effectively, by outflanking the mind of your opponent. Any such a small step freely expended for the improvement of mankind, will increase more than tenfold your power in energy-flux density which will be expressed as a higher performative proportion between the nature of the action and the understanding of reason that accompanies it. Such is the power of forecasting, which is the second great gift that Prometheus gave to man after the great gift of fire. As Aeschylus wrote:

***“Chorus:***

***Did you, perhaps go further that you have told us?***

***Prometheus: I caused mortals to cease foreseeing doom.***

***Chorus: What cure did you provide them with against that sickness?***

***Prometheus: I placed in them blind hopes.”***

(*Aeschylus II, Prometheus Bound*, Translated by David Grene, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956, p. 148)

Although the Prometheus gift of forecasting is less known than his gift of fire, it is not less significant. “*Blind hopes*” may appear to be a strange gift, at first, but it stands to reason that it should

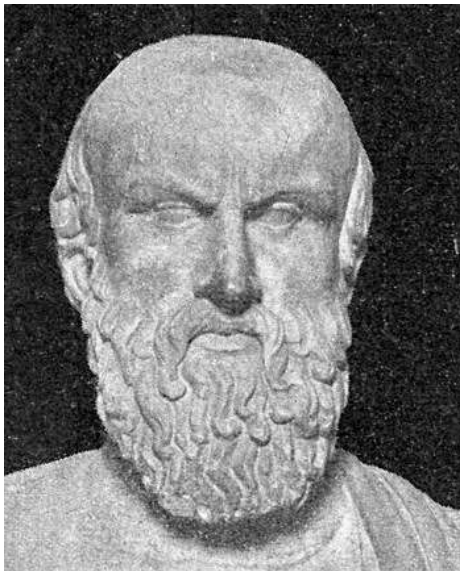
accompany the gift of fire, because it is, first and foremost, the acknowledgment of increases in the power of fire which provides the basis for the power of foresight in forecasting the future. According to Aeschylus both of those great gifts were meant to differentiate man from the beast by rescuing him from the enmity of the world he lived in as a hopeless victim of the ruling oligarchy and by making him a true creature of the future.

But, to make such a “myth” universally valid for all time in a play, one must find where the plot and the state of the human mind coincide as a matter of universal human experience, no matter what period of history one lives in. This is what Aeschylus had the genius of reproducing in all of his plays, and this is why he had Prometheus saying that he gave man “*blind hopes*,” because any wise man is capable of forecasting his destiny for the simple reason that he has the power to rescue himself from oligarchism and determine his own future. However, in order that this rescue be made to succeed, man was also given the power to solve other problems that Aeschylus identified, notably, with overcoming the power of the *Furies* as exemplified by *The Eumenides*.

## 2. CAN MAN OVERCOME REVENGE AND ACCESS JUSTICE THROUGH REASON?

*“And the staff thing is – because you’re always required to outflank the opposition, you have to pick the right policy and you have to pick the timing of the policy and how to present it at the same time.”*

Lyndon LaRouche



**Figure 2** Aeschylus (c. 525-456 BC)

It has been said that Ancient Athens left two eternal masterpieces for the benefit of mankind: the *Parthenon* and *Oresteia*. (I have reported on the pedagogical function of Parthenon in: [THE CURVATURE OF THE PARTHENON, PARTS I AND II.](#)) *Oresteia* is a group of three tragedies written by Aeschylus: *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and *The Eumenides*. *The Eumenides* is the resolution of the oligarchical strategic policy based on a *cycle of revenge* conflicts that started with the Curse on the House of Atreus by his brother Thyestes and culminated with the Trojan War led by the two sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaus.

Agamemnon married Clytaemestra and Menelaus married Helen. When the Trojan leader, Paris, kidnapped Helen, the whole of Greece was organized to wage war against Troy. On his way to Troy, Agamemnon was forced to sacrifice his own daughter, Iphigenia, to appease the goddess Artemis and ten

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years later, Troy and its people were destroyed completely. After his genocidal victory, Agamemnon returned home to be assassinated by his wife Clytaemestra for having sacrificed their daughter, Iphigenia; but, fearing her children might avenge the death of their father, Clytaemestra enslaved her daughter Electra and exiled her son, Orestes who came back with orders from Apollo to kill his mother in order to avenge his father's murder. *The Eumenides* begin at the temple of Apollo at Delphi where Orestes escapes to Athens to be tried by a jury of twelve citizens and Athena for the murder of his mother.

For Aeschylus, the spectator is a citizen of the Republic who must be able to take the responsibility to judge and render justice for the well being of the city. However, this implies that justice can no longer be the privilege of a ruling oligarchy and that the ordinary citizen is able to discover the power of reason capable of determining and establishing what is just and what is unjust.

In other words, the intention of universal peace is to have man become mature enough to be able to recognize and decide justice on the basis of truth. Athena does not wish to impose her own power on the citizenship jury, but wishes to recognize the power of that jury as being well-informed citizens. Since the citizens' verdict came to a tie, Athena broke the tie by casting her own vote in favor of acquitting Orestes, and thus, introduced in Greek society a new form of justice in which redemption takes precedence over revenge. This form of pre-Christian justice can only come from reason, because Athena arrived at the conclusion that it is always better to redeem the fault rather than to punish it. Thus, the power of reason was introduced in the city of Athens to secure impartial justice based on the generosity of the citizens. Reason became superior to passion and superior to the competition between the ruling oligarchies. Such will also later be the notion of justice at the Peace of Westphalia. (See my two part report on THE POWER OF THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA VERSUS THE BRITISH-DUTCH LIBERAL SYSTEM.)

This Aeschylus notion of strategic justice is not an easy question to resolve because the policy was never successfully implemented in Greece, because of the ruling oligarchy. The oligarchical objections came from their lack of understanding of the true nature of mother-dominated fears as were personified by the *Furies* (*The Eumenides*, "*Those grey and aged children: 69*). The question, therefore, is not whether justice can be fully understood by man, but if mankind can grow up and understands why justice as a means of retribution must be replaced by compassionate reason within society. Is the intention of justice the punishment of individual guilt, or the establishment of a social order based on the public good? This is the underlying question behind all of the Greek tragedies.

The fallacy of composition that one finds in most writers on this subject is that they ignore the fact that justice is an attempt to resolve the conflict between revenge and reason, and not to find a balance between the two. It is wrong to think that out of the two forces you can make a new fusion. The real issue is to resolve the conflict between the two which is located in the conflict between ruling families and society, and which, very early on, took the form of a conflict between matriarchate and patriarchate. That conflict, in itself, is a reflection of the universe going through a *process of lower to higher energy-flux densities*. Therefore, the fallacy of composition of ancient and modern authors becomes obvious whenever someone attempts to create a compromise between the state of the past and change coming from a new and higher state of the future, and by preventing such a future state from coming into existence. The point to understand is that there is a complete opposition and incompatibility between reason and revenge, a complete incompatibility based on the epistemological difference which comes,

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ontologically, from the conflict between mind and sense perception, and which is best represented, historically, by the irreconcilable opposition between Plato and Aristotle.

If one compares the Aeschylus trilogy of *The Oresteia* and the Euripides play *The Bacchae*, for example, one discovers that both authors write in the same historical period of axiomatic change, that is, during a period where the old oligarchical rule of retributive justice is no longer acceptable and is reflected in the irreconcilable clash with two conceptions of man: man defined as an animal with base tendencies and man defined as a being of the future in control of his passions and endowed with the power of universal reason. The two different conceptions are reflected in two completely irreconcilable forms of justice; one which measures justice by degrees of hatred and the other which measures justice by degrees of compassion. The point Aeschylus makes is that reason must overcome revenge as the measure of a bestial form of justice. The question is: which is the more powerful for society, justice created to check violence from the past, or justice to secure reason from the future?

### **3. THE FLAW OF EURIPIDES IN THE BACCHAE**

Now then, how do you deal with the bestial passions of man from the vantage point of that axiomatic change? Take the case of Euripides' last play, *The Bacchae*. In that last tragedy, Euripides makes the point that the suppression of the passions by reason leads to disastrous results. Although this last play is the only Euripides play featuring Dionysius, it is the first Greek play to glorify the irrational and excessive oppressive actions of a god. It is as if the character of Dionysius had been made to measure on command. So, did Euripides really know what he was doing from the standpoint of the future of civilization?

The play opens before the royal palace at Thebes which is a city that had denied the divinity of Dionysus, and which was ruled by Dionysus' first cousin, Pentheus, who considered Dionysus essentially as pure evil, but did not recognize his disguise as a stranger. The plot is based on the clash between two philosophical outlooks: The irrational power of Dionysus vs the rational power of Pentheus. What Euripides succeeded in doing was to make the reasonable character of Pentheus become a tragic figure because he ***“refuses to accept the necessity that Dionysus incarnates,”*** as the translator of the play, William Arrowsmith, put it. (William Arrowsmith, Introduction to the *Bacchae*, in *Euripides III*, The Modern Library, New York, 1959, p. 347) This is the equivalent of the British-Dutch oligarchy condemning you for not accepting the so-called “necessity” of human sacrifice.

The so-called ***“necessity that Dionysus incarnated”*** is nothing but an effect of sense deception, the result of pure Dionysian intoxication. Add some mind-altering drugs to your animal passion and you have an extreme experience of sense certainty, as the Maenads or Bacchae women of Thebes are made to experiment. Add a lot of noise and a lot of light effects as complement and you have an overwhelming sense of power taking you over. This is how Dionysian intoxications work. Does it prove anything? Yes! This experiment in sense perception extremes, indeed, is a much more powerful experience than any idea can appear to offer the mind, because you can't sense an idea, you can't touch it, you can't ***feeeel*** it. An idea can't give you as powerful an experience as an extreme sensation can give you. Why not? Because ideas don't work like that. The power of a world changing idea is not experienced in the same fashion.

Therefore, it is the great effect experiment of sense perception which makes people believe in such nonsense as a Dionysian power of justice. Take the example of the Dionysius condemnation of Pentheus:

*“(He turns to the corpse of Pentheus.)*

*Dionysius:*

*This man has found the death which he deserved,*

*Torn to pieces among the jagged rocks.*

*You are my witnesses: he came with outrage;*

*He attempted to chain my hands, abusing me*

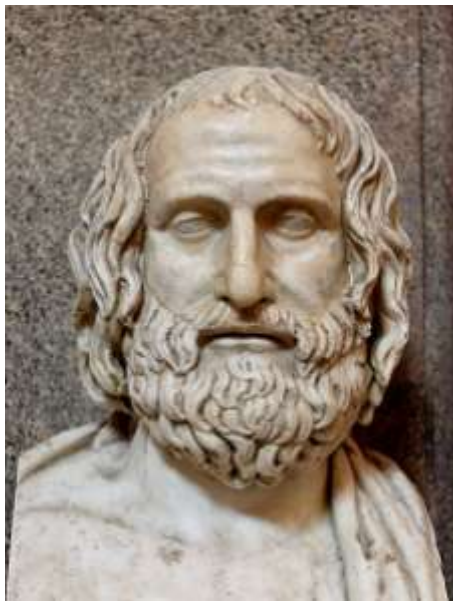
*[and doing what he should least of all have done.]*

*And therefore he has rightly perished by the hands*

*Of those who should the least of all have murdered him.*

*What he suffers, he suffers justly.”*

*(Euripides III, The Bacchae, Translated by William Arrowsmith, The Modern Library, New York, 1959, text reconstructed, p. 420)*



So much for justice. Although one cannot credit a poet with the opinions of his characters, I challenge anyone to find in any of Euripides’ writings a statement that would contradict that justice is anything else but revenge. The not so veiled purpose of the Euripides play is a defense of the power of the gods against the ability of men to rule themselves by a truth and justice seeking reason. The play *The Bacchae* is an actual terrorist threat against mankind advocating that the raw power of necessity be the daemonic motor of everything, and most cruelly, the so-called mysterious source of human tragic destiny. Aeschylus was right: the power of the gods as tradition and customs must be transformed into the power of truth and justice. Man must be able to go beyond the so-called right to punish.

**Figure 3** Euripides (c. 480-405 BC)

The fallacy of composition of Euripides is to make believe that the monopoly of reason is detrimental to mankind, and that only unchecked passion can unveil the true nature of mankind as expressing the total fulfillment of his nature. Ultimately, according to this assumption, a society controlled by reason must perish. Here, the false underlying assumption is that man is controlled by the same irrational forces that nature uses in its apparently uncontrolled brutal state, such as earthquakes, explosive volcanoes, and asteroids. Thus, by staging certain catastrophic events in advance, (such as 9/11) the oligarchy, demonstrates its power of forecasting, showing that reason is not a real power, but that the only real power is the blind irrational power of unstoppable natural forces. However, this opposition between natural forces and human society is nothing but a shadow of the opposition between power and reason.



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What Euripides doesn't say, is that it is such a premeditated terrorist view of mankind which destroys civilization. The truth of the matter is that if you let Dionysus into the city, he does not merely condemn and destroy its leaders; he also destroys its entire society, the innocent with the guilty alike. The play was premiered posthumously at the Theater of Dionysius in 405 BC, and won the first prize for the City of Athens' Dionysian festival competition. This demonstrated how the whole of Athens had gone mad.

An alert audience can only come to the conclusion that, ultimately, *The Bacchae* is evil in its mysterious and manipulative powers. It is a perfect instrument of oligarchical power which renders human beings impotent by means of apparent uncontrollable forces, while it is manipulated as a most careful source of human tragic destiny. While *The Eumenides* ends with the creation of a greater step of progress for mankind, *The Bacchae* ends with the total destruction of society and civilization. Such was the original intention, as *The Bacchae* declare in the end of the play: ***"The gods have many shapes. The gods bring many things to their accomplishment. And what was the most expected has not been accomplished. But god has found its way for what no man expected. So ends the play."*** (Euripides III, Trans. Arrowsmith, p. 424) The issue, here, is not to condemn Euripides for recommending the brutal immorality of Dionysius, but to understand why he accepted the false underlying assumption that reason could not override the passions of pure evil.

As the much earlier case of *Medea* also demonstrates, revenge is stronger than virtue, stronger than love, and stronger than reason, because it has the appearance of being a triumph over death. Revenge, overpowers everything because it is incapable of compassion or forgiveness, and as such, it is the ultimate barbaric motive for war. Revenge, therefore, and most of all the desire for revenge, must be considered as a social value at all cost for a single purpose and a single purpose only: human extinction. Since revenge contains within its ontological nature no possibility of compassion or forgiveness, Euripides may have been warning us that it becomes the perfect oligarchical tool for manipulating society into accepting human extermination. In that sense, if Aeschylus were the genius and champion of reason, Euripides would be the genius and champion of revenge.

The conclusion of this fight between revenge and reason is not self-evident, but it is quite revealing to anyone who is willing to pay attention to the underlying intention, and be clinical about the matterofmind presented before him. It is clear that the play of Euripides is a direct negation of the Aeschylus form of justice. And the proof is in the proverbial pudding. Aeschylus had explicitly warned the audience against Dionysius at the opening of *The Eumenides* by having *Pythia* saying about the god: ***"From here in divine form he (Bromius) led his Bacchanals in arms to hunt down Pentheus like a hare in the deathtrap."*** (Eumenides, Pythia: 24-26) The fact that Euripides would choose the subject of his tragedy from Aeschylus is quite normal, but the fact that he picked up his subject from *The Eumenides* and also built the character of Dionysius as an uncontrollable effeminate child, tells the whole story. For such an immature being, there cannot be any justice; there can only be whims of personal revenge. While for a normal mature human being, the pursuit of vengeance is naturally unjust, the caprice of a child made god can only be silly at best. So, why did Euripides take this seriously?

I can only come up with one answer to that question. In ancient times, as well as today, if that silliness has been elevated to the degree of uncontrolled necessity, it has to be for a single purpose only: mankind had to be made to realize that, once in a while, the oligarchy considers it necessary to create a

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great purge of humanity by bloodletting, and thus, reduce the human population to a controllable number by culling the herd. That is why, in *The Bacchae*, the question of justice is actually irrelevant, because revenge is merely a pretext giving vent to the evil oligarchical intention of genocide. There can be no other purpose or intention. Whatever pretext Euripides may have had, the underlying flaw of the *Bacchae* is obvious when you pay attention to the underlying intention.

The irony, however, is that humanity does not seem to have matured since the days of Euripides, because they have not understood the difference between the power of reason and revenge. It is as though strategic matters of civilization never made any progress, because the British-Dutch oligarchy still maintains the same priority of revenge over reason as a matter of principle, today, as it did in ancient Greece. The entire predatory monetary system of today is entirely based on revenge for the purpose of human extermination. It is as if the Trojan War had never ended and the same unresolved problem of revenge versus reason still dominates the world strategic situation. What are we to expect from the new Bacchae rulers of the IMF, the Federal Reserve, and the City of London? Are the *Pentheus* of today better prepared for the chaos of the upcoming Dionysian intoxications?

So, why did Euripides choose revenge as a debilitating subject matter for his plays? As Gerry Rose suggested, he might not have had the maturity that Aeschylus had, and, therefore, he fell into his own tragic trap. Moreover, the story of his life in exile suggests that his intention may have been to warn the Athenian audience against the long lasting effects of the Peloponnesian War. In a sense, a public outcry or a provocation is always useful to overthrow a tyranny, but not enough to keep it at bay. The point is not to blame Euripides, but to understand his underlying flaw and root it out in ourselves. As Gerry remarked to me: “It should be noted that Euripides while flawed, had all the right enemies. He was almost banned from Athens and tried for treason because his plays opposed the insanity that had gripped Athens during the Peloponnesian Wars. He portrayed in a totally unflinching way the inhumanity of the Greeks during the wars in Troy as a metaphor for the current war.”

#### 4. HOW JUSTICE IS MADE FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF THE MORE POWERFUL

*“All that hovers betwixt two domains; which is, therefore the reality, that of the players, or truth-seer? “Chorus” is the reality of the shadows or the unfolding imagery of the panorama of the characters seen and heard while moving as if they had been merely the likeness of shadows cast upon the stage.”*

Lyndon LaRouche, [Contemporary Pseudo-Morality](#).

In the Aeschylus plays, and most notably in *The Eumenides*, the purpose of the tragedy is to help mankind pass over from a primitive sort of society, where man is a wolf to man, to a more civilized society, where man is compassionate in becoming his neighbor’s keeper.

As Lyn indicated many times in his writings, the Greek role of *Chorus* serves as the moral advisor to the audience in bringing before them the mirror of the tragic figures of the characters on stage for their examination. That is the way *Chorus* works in Aeschylus’ plays: it makes you see inside the box

from the outside; it makes you forecast the future. Furthermore, in Aeschylus tragedies, the masked players are not facing each other, but are facing the audience to whom they address their plea. (**Figure 4**)



**Figure 4** [Oresteia](#), *Chorus*. The masks give the actors a universal characteristic. Actors were all men.

The intention of the *Chorus* is directed at the spectator in order to provoke in him a higher level of consciousness and help him deliberate on the matter presented before him. In that sense, the audience is not being entertained, but uplifted; the spectator is not a passive observer, but an active participant in the drama presented before him, and by means of which he must be made to perform a change inside of his mind by choosing the subtle means provided by the poet for solving the paradoxes that the players, as universal characters, must represent transparently through the medium of their masks. The role of *Chorus* is to tell the spectator: “Hey! Wait a minute: don’t just stupidly watch this: think!” Such is the classic role of *Chorus* in Aeschylus.

Bearing in mind this function of *Chorus*, look at how the idea of power is expressed inside the play. The oligarchy forces men to obey the gods not because they are just and good, but because they are powerful and fearful. In such an oligarchical society, it is this idea of power which rules, not the idea of justice. This is why Aeschylus challenged these traditional values of the gods and changed their characters by giving them the power of compassion for human failures. Although both Agamemnon and Clytaemestra are murderers, Apollo judges Clytaemestra’s murder of Agamemnon more severely than Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia. Why? This difference must be weighed in favor of the citizen’s decision to be more lenient with respect to Orestes’ own motive for murder. What is that motive in the minds of the citizen-jury? The jury is undecided, but the free mind of the spectator leans in favor of Orestes when he is able to make the difference between Agamemnon murdering his daughter for the benefit of his army and Clytaemestra murdering her husband as a vengeful act. In that sense, Aeschylus

gives more weight to the social motivation of the action rather than to its personal character, because he considers human beings as social beings foremost.

On the other hand, the *Erinyes*, or *Furies*, represent the goddesses of vengeance whose justice is retribution: “*An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.*” This is why they seek revenge against Orestes for killing his mother regardless of Apollo’s defense of him. The *Furies* represent the unchangeable experience of the past in opposition to the idea of change from the future. This is very much like the difference between the monetary system and the credit system in the world today: one represents the failures of the past and the other the hope for the future. For example, the *Furies* are the mother-dominated fears of all the members of Congress who are afraid to take a stand for Glass-Steagall, because they fear the retaliations of Barack Obama and his masters in London and Wall Street. Is this a balanced decision of justice?

As the guardians of the household, the *Furies* are ready to destroy the city of Athens and the



whole Greek system, rather than to admit that their oligarchical system of abuse no longer works. It is the oligarchical principle which is put into question by Aeschylus; that is, the legitimacy of ruling families and of their bloodlines. For the *Furies*, a murder between husband and wife would be made to be more acceptable because “*Such murder would not be the shedding of kindred blood.*” (*Chorus*: 212) Thus, it is the power of the bloodline which rules.

The *Furies* represent the mother dominated fears of immature child-like minds. (See **Figure 5**) This is why they always entertain guilt and seek revenge among their victims. The *Furies* do not see in Orestes the potential human being, but the helpless child who is brought to trial through the guilt of having killed his mother by orders of Apollo. The *Furies* do not see the higher purpose of the city from the standpoint of reason and they are willing to sacrifice Athens to avenge the violation of their matriarchic control of the household.

**Figure 5** Mother’s fears in *The Sleep of Reason Creates Monsters* by Francisco Goya.

On the other hand, Athena solves the conflict by putting the household at the service of the city based on what appears to be an arbitrary reason: the fact that she was born already adult and completely armored from the head of Zeus and without a mother. The strangeness of this metaphor should create complete perplexity in the mind of the spectator. It is through this anomaly that Athena embraces the patriarchy rather than the matriarchy system, city building rather than household building. She is a warrior for peace, not a mother-dominated female hell-

bent on revenge and family feuds. So, the question is: can the spectator see this metaphor as being coherent with the process of reason?

Moreover, Athena has succeeded in breaking the cycle of vengeance by putting forward the higher purpose of the city, but not without the prosperity of the households. As she said: ***“There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth and, but for marriage, I am always for the male with all my heart, and strongly on my father’s side.”*** (Athena: 736-638) Here, the new power that Athena has introduced in the city is capable of suppressing vengeance, because it is capable of solving problems that passions are blind to. Why? Because what is at stake, here, is a matter of principle that is not recognized by the oligarchies and their followers. And, whenever a matter of principle is at stake, the mind naturally looks for the pathway to follow in order to reach the next step upward. She might not know how far the pathway will take her, but Athena knows that the city must be the next step toward the universal form of individual identity.

Therefore, the city must be made safe from the *cycle of revenge*, otherwise the families will degenerate into power feuds over who has personal control of the city and their people, family against family, tribe against tribe, ethnic group against ethnic group; and Athena knows that this local control manipulation is how cities get destroyed. So, the issue is not who murdered who and who deserves to be murdered next as a matter of revenge; the issue is how does the city benefit from justice made to all of its citizens? This benefit of General Welfare is the higher moral intention, because the cause of mankind is nobler than the cause of families and households.

The more difficult part that the spectator is confronted with in *The Eumenides* is how the *Furies* are made to change into *Eumenides*, as if by turning on a dime. How do you transform mother-dominated fears into a compassionate state of mind? Indeed, all of a sudden, the *Furies* are forced to submit to reason, as if through a pinch-effect. They did not do it out of their own free will, in fact they could not. This fact is knowable by the audience, and yet, this is how, inside of a very short period of dialogue, the *Furies* are transformed from being ***“The wind I breathe is fury and utter hate”*** (Eumenides, Chorus: 873) to ***“I think you will have your way with me. My hate is going.”*** (Eumenides, Chorus: 900) Here is the perplexing moment of the axiomatic change:

***“Chorus: Lady Athene, what is this place you say is mine? 892***  
***Athena: A place free of all grief and pain. Take it for yours.***  
***Chorus: If I do take it, shall I have some definite powers?***  
***Athena: No household shall be prosperous without your will.***  
***Chorus: You will do this? You will really let me be strong?***  
***Athena: So we shall straighten the lives of all who worship us.***  
***Chorus: You guarantee such honor for the rest of time?***  
***Athena: I have no need to promise what I cannot do.***  
***Chorus: I think you will have your way with me. My hate is going. 900***  
***Athena: Stay here, then. You will win the hearts of others, too.”***

(Aeschylus I: *The Eumenides*, translated by Richmond Lattimore, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953, p. 166)

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Here, the *Chorus* speaks for the *Furies* because they are incapable of such an axiomatic change without being destroyed in their very nature. So, this is the reason why Aeschylus made a special use of *Chorus for the Furies*. However, if the *Furies* cannot make that change, because of their fixed nature, can the mind of the spectator see that, and can his mind make that change? That is the question that Aeschylus is posing to the spectator by making use of the *Chorus* as a performative discontinuity. In modern political language, this is called an “*intervention*.” As Schiller put it: “*The chorus thus purifies the tragic poem by dissociating reflection from the action, and by endowing reflection itself with poetic power through this very dissociation.*” (Friedrich Schiller, *The Bride of Messina, William Tell, Demetrius*, translation by Charles E. Passage, Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. New York, 1967, p. 10)

That is a very powerful performative irony, because the spectator is able to see that although it is not in the nature of the *Furies* to change, it is in the nature of the human mind to do so through a similar dissociative process. This is where action and reflective reason are separated and unified at the same time, paradoxically, as a performative dissociative proportion between reason and power. By fusing in this manner reflection and action, the *Chorus* unifies reason and power as one. That fact can be denied, bowdlerized, and even destroyed, but it cannot be ignored.

The reader or the spectator is made to be completely perplexed with that anomaly of the play, because the spectator is literally caught between two different states of existence, as if he were sitting between two chairs, between change and no change, between the past and the future. This is a very uncomfortable state to be in, and it is not due to a defect in the play, nor of some imperfection on the part of the spectator. This is an “*axiomatic singularity*,” that Aeschylus introduced deliberately and which defines the very purpose and intention of the play. However, this is the sort of discontinuity that can only be recognized by a mind who has experienced such an inversion process as one of the characteristic features of an axiomatic change. This cannot be discovered unless the mind seeks to discover the power of outflanking the mind of the enemy, and especially the enemy within. As Chorus sang just before the end of the play:

“*Chorus:*

*This my prayer: Civil War  
Fattening on men’s ruin shall  
Not thunder in our city. Let  
Not the dry dust that drinks  
The black blood of citizens 980  
Through passion for revenge  
And bloodshed for bloodshed  
Be given our state to prey upon.  
Let them render grace for grace.  
Let love be their common will;  
Let them hate with single heart. 985  
Much wrong in the world thereby is healed.”*

(*Aeschylus I: The Eumenides*, translated by Richmond Lattimore, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953, p. 169)

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## CONCLUSION

Finally, if we project *The Eumenides* into the future from where we are situated in the United States today, and operate from the same foresights Aeschylus had by time reversal, we will be able to see that we have entered into a similar historical period of *axiomatic change*, in which we will turn out to have been dominated by what will appear to be a last chance for humanity to decide between reason and extinction, because, in the last resort: revenge = extinction. This future knotty question as to which of the two, revenge or reason, will have prevailed over the coming months ahead cannot be decided in advance, and this is why it is essential that each and all of us go into the future with the power of forecasting in a *Chorus*-like manner and ask everyone we meet: ***“Can the power of reason ever become a true liberating reality for mankind?”*** Frederick Schiller provided a beautiful answer to this question in the essay on the *Chorus* that he had written as a pre-text to *The Bride of Messina*. It is useful, in ending this report, to cite his amazing paradoxical answer in its entirety:

“Every person, indeed, expects from the arts of imagination a certain liberation from the bounds of the real world; he wants to take pleasure in what is possible and give room to his own fantasy. He who sets his expectations the lowest, still wants to forget his business, his common life, his particular individuality, he wants to feel himself in extraordinary situations, he wants to delight in the strange combinations of chance, if he is of a more serious nature, he wants to find the moral world-government, which he misses in real life, upon the stage. But he himself knows quite well, that he is engaging in but an empty play, that in fact he takes delight only in dreams, and when he returns from the theater back to the real world, it will surround him once more with its full, oppressive constriction; he is its booty as he was before, and it has not been changed in the slightest. Thus, nothing but a pleasant delusion of the moment has been won, which disappears when one awakens.

“And just for that reason, because the intent here is but a temporary illusion, all that is necessary is thus but an appearance of truth, or popular probability, which one so gladly sets in the place of truth.

“True art, however, does not aim merely at a temporary play; it seriously intends not to transpose a person into a merely momentary dream of freedom, but to make him really and in fact free, and to accomplish this by awakening in him a force, exercising it and developing it, to thrust the sensuous world, which otherwise only presses upon us as crude material, bearing down upon us as a blind power, into an objective distance, to transpose it into a free work of our mind, and to achieve mastery over the material with ideas.

“And just for that reason, because true art wants something real and objective, it cannot be satisfied merely with the appearance of truth; upon the truth itself, upon the firm and deep foundation of nature, art erects its ideal edifice.

“But now, how art can be at once entirely ideal and yet in the most profound sense real—how it can take leave utterly from what is real and yet be in most precise accord with nature, that is what few comprehend, which makes the view of poetic and plastic works so furtive, because these two requirements seem to cancel each other out in the common way of judging.” (Frederick Schiller, [\*On the Employment of the Chorus in Tragedy\*](#), translated by George W. Gregory, Schiller Institute.)

**FIN**