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AJAX' *TRUGREDE*: ITS MEANING AND DRAMATIC FUNCTION*

HELEN GASTI

Much has been written on Ajax' *Trugrede* (646–92), which comprises the whole second episode of Sophocles' *Ajax*, so much, that true progress is difficult to discern among the welter of theories.¹ This article is meant to further our understanding of the dissembling-speech of Ajax by revealing its meaning without obscuring its peculiar complexity.²

Since this speech has been one of the most problematic and controversial issues for a little more than hundred years, there is a correspondingly large amount of articles and essays. Anyone who wishes to approach this crucial issue anew must, therefore, begin with a brief survey of the trends in the modern study.

The controversy mainly turns on two questions. First, is Ajax still resolved to die, while he speaks these words?³ Second, if Ajax is still

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the First Panhellenic and International Convention of Ancient Greek Philology held in Athens (May 1994).

¹ Although this ambiguous speech has been the source of so much scholarly debate, it has not yet been satisfactorily explained. A new approach may, therefore, be justified. I. Errandonea who examines all previous attempts at interpretation in his article "Les quatre monologues d' Ajax et leur signification dramatique", *LEC* 26 (1958) 22–8 reaches the same conclusion. Cf. also M. Sicherl, "The Tragic Issue in Sophocles' Ajax", *YCIS* 25 (1977) 68.

² On a full discussion of Sophocles' extant deception-scenes one by one, with a separate chapter on each of the relevant plays (*Aj.*, *Trach.*, *El.*, *Phil.*, *OC*) see Ursula Parlavantza-Friedrich, *Täuschungsszenen in den Tragödien des Sophokles*, *Untersuchungen z. antiken Lit. und Gesch.* 2 (Berlin, 1969).

³ So R.C. Jebb (ed.), *Sophocles, The Plays and Fragments, Part VII, The Ajax* (Amsterdam, 1967), *Introd.* XXXV: "While he speaks these words, he is still resolved to die: that is certain". R. Ebeling, "Missverständnisse um den Aias des Sophokles", *Hermes* 76 (1941) 297 thinks that, though Ajax' resolve to die remains unaltered, his change of expression is well-intentioned and is dictated by his compassion for Tecmessa.

determined to die, does he intend to mislead his hearers, namely Tecmessa and the chorus by misrepresenting his intention?⁴ The great majority of critics and commentators assume that Ajax has never abandoned his initial intention to commit suicide.⁵ If so, a number of questions arise: does Ajax speak with intention to deceive his hearers, by introducing deliberately a highly ambiguous wording with ominous overtones? Or is this speech accidentally ambiguous?

Defenders of the view that the speech is dissimulation believe that Ajax' apparent change of purpose is pretended and the hero deliberately deceives his hearers. The speech is regarded as *tota simulatio*⁶ or as a *λόγος σχηματικός*.⁷ L. Campbell⁸ in his edition of Sophocles and R. Jebb⁹ with more elaborate arguments, unhesitatingly rejected the theory of unintentional ambiguity, which was propounded by F.G. Welcker.¹⁰ Above all, Jebb's greater contribution was to show that this speech, which contains

Cf. also I.M. Linforth, "Three Scenes in Sophocles' Ajax", Univ. of Calif. Public. in Class. Phil. 15,1 (1954) 10–20; W.B. Stanford, Sophocles Ajax edited with Introduction, Revised Text, Commentary, Appendices, Indexes and Bibliography (Bristol Classical Pr., 1981), 287; op. cit. 281 where Stanford maintains that it would be inappropriate dramatically or ethically to have Ajax in a state of uncertainty at this point.

⁴ According to C.H. Whitman, Sophocles. A Study of Heroic Humanism (Cambridge Mass., 1951), 75–76 it is not the fault of Ajax if his listeners do not understand his veiled language and are deceived. Thus, if Tecmessa and the chorus are persuaded that he has decided against suicide, that is entirely involuntary. Cf. Jebb, op. cit. XXXV. Double meanings and misleading half-truths with ominous overtones are carefully examined by Sicherl, op. cit. 77–85. At this point the spectators have an advantage over Tecmessa and the chorus, because they are aware of the traditional version of the story according to which Ajax finally killed himself. On this see P.T. Stevens, "Ajax in the *Trugrede*", CQ 36 (1986) 327.

⁵ On this see Stanford, op. cit. 282.

⁶ L. Doederlein, De Sophoclis Ajace, Diss., Abhandl. philos.-philolog. Klasse der k. bair. Akad. (München, 1837), 120.

⁷ W. Schadewaldt, "Aias und Antigone", Neue Wege zur Antike, Reihe I, Heft 8 (1929), 80.

⁸ L. Campbell (ed.), Sophocles (Oxford, 1881).

⁹ Jebb, op. cit. XXXIII–XXXVIII.

¹⁰ F.G. Welcker, "Über den Aias des Sophokles", RhM (1829) 43–92 [repr. in his Kleine Schriften (Bonn, 1845), II, 302–22].

splendid poetry, might have a profound significance for our conception of Ajax, while still being intended by the hero to deceive his hearers.¹¹

Nevertheless most critics, distressed by the speech's misleading purpose, maintained the view that the systematic ambiguity of language is unintentional. Welcker argued strongly that Ajax had not meant to mislead his hearers and it was no fault of his that his partisans misunderstood him.¹² This theory of unintentional ambiguity has the advantage of exonerating Ajax from the charge of inconsistency of character.¹³ Deception seems utterly contrary to Ajax' Achillean character,¹⁴ and it is not what one would expect from a man like him.¹⁵

The question was debated in a quite different way by E. Howald, a disciple of Tycho Wilamowitz, who argued that the *Trugrede*'s only contribution is one of dramatic effect.¹⁶ Thus the problem is nearly avoided since the explanation of the *Trugrede* is reduced to a purely technical one.¹⁷

There is, however, a general line of interpretation accepted by many scholars arising from the conviction that in a speech magnificent in its language and thought we must look for some profound significance for our

¹¹ Jebb, op. cit. XXXVIII.

¹² See Welcker, op. cit. 43–92.

¹³ For a discussion of this question cf. B.M.W. Knox, "The Ajax of Sophocles", HSCP 65 (1961) 1–37 repr. in Knox' s book *Word and Action. Essays on the Ancient Theater* (Baltimore–London, 1979), 125–60. T. von Wilamowitz, *Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles* (Berlin, 1917), 63ff. dismisses the problem of psychological consistency as unreal. He advocates the position that Ajax, as a Sophoclean personage, speaks what the dramatic situation at the moment happens to demand.

¹⁴ On Ajax as an "Achillean hero" see Mary Whitlock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies. A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethic* (Cambridge, 1989), 83 note 116. On the literary relationship between Ajax and Achilles see L.V. Hinckley, *Ajax and Achilles: Their Literary Relationship from Homer to Sophocles* (North Carolina, 1972).

¹⁵ It is still questionable whether or not ancient Greeks saw anything unworthy or unheroic in the use of such deception. See Jebb, op. cit. XXXV; Stanford, op. cit. 286; Blundell, op. cit. 82–85.

¹⁶ E. Howald, *Die griechische Tragödie* (Munich, 1930), 97–100.

¹⁷ On the question of the concept of "character" Howald agrees substantially with T. von Wilamowitz. The speech can not, therefore, contribute to our conception of Ajax' personality and its only effect is that of retardation. See Howald, op. cit. 98: "Diese Lugenszene ist rein um der Spannung willen da; sie schafft Retardation, Scheinentspannung. Dies ist ihre ganze, aber auch ihre grosse Bedeutung".

conception of Ajax.¹⁸ In the treatment of this problem a tendency may be discerned for preferring an interpretation which goes back to Reinhardt's view.¹⁹ The speech, according to Reinhardt, is admittedly a deceptive speech, evidently spoken to deceive another person. But in it, a deeper truth is revealed. This view has since been developed and modified by other scholars, notably by B.M.W. Knox in his penetrating study "The *Ajax* of Sophocles"²⁰ and by M. Sicheřl in his influential article "The Tragic Issue in Sophocles' *Ajax*".²¹ This interpretative line which, we feel, serves as the standard-bearer of this much debated issue, will enable us to attempt a reconsideration of the major problems underlying *Trugrede*.²² Furthermore, the state of research seems favorable to a reappraisal of the entire question since there are some neglected aspects which deserve attention.

Before proceeding to my analysis it is necessary to point out that I am an adherent of the view that this long speech is a deception speech in the sense that Tecmessa and the chorus are misled about what is going to happen.²³ On the other hand I think that, since this elusive speech contains some of the noblest poetry even Sophocles ever wrote, Ajax' words have for him an emotional meaning which is essentially true.²⁴ The purpose of this

¹⁸ C.M. Bowra, *Sophoclean Tragedy* (Oxford, 1944), 39–40 stresses the fact that the beauty of Ajax' language is a guarantee of his sincerity. The chief exponent of this point of view is H.D.F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Tragedy* (London, 1956), 188. Bowra's views are carefully criticised by Sicheřl, *op. cit.* 71–72. Cf. also J.P. Poe, *Genre and Meaning in Sophocles' Ajax*, *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* hg. E. Heitsch, L. Koenen, R. Merkelbach, C. Zintzen, Band 172 (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), 52 note 100.

¹⁹ K. Reinhardt, *Sophokles* (Frankfurt am Main, 1976), 33–38. See H. Friis Johansen, "Sophocles 1939–1959", *Lustrum* 7 (1963) 177–78.

²⁰ *Op. cit.* 1–37 [and in its reprint *op. cit.* 125–60].

²¹ *Op. cit.* 67–98.

²² It would be impossible to present adequately in the space available here a full survey of the vast spectrum of interpretation, concerning the *Trugrede*. For a full reviewing of this much debated issue see Johansen, *op. cit.* 94–288; J. Moore, "The Dissembling-speech of Ajax", *YCIS* 25 (1977) 47–66; Sicheřl, *op. cit.* 67–98; Poe, *op. cit.* 50–71.

²³ Cf. the brief but excellent discussion of this issue in Stevens, *op. cit.* 327.

²⁴ Jebb, *op. cit.* XXXVIII, remarks that in the texture of the speech are subtly interwoven direct expression of Ajax' real mind, irony and elaborate artifice of language. In Reinhardt's view, *op. cit.*, in this deceptive speech, evidently spoken to deceive another person, a deeper truth is revealed. Similarly to Errandonea, *op. cit.* 39, the speech "est une pièce essentielle du drame, une pierre angulaire qui soutient deux murs latéraux; il marque un moment dramatique, décisif sur l' action tragique et surtout c'est une étude

magnificent passage ought not to be judged solely in the light of its dramatic effect of relaxation of tension or *retardation*.²⁵ For Ajax' speech in its splendid language, which in its generalizations about human life and natural process ranges over a wide field, conveys Ajax' own tragic vision.²⁶ Kitto's observation that the speech "is something more gravely philosophical than anything we have yet heard, or would have expected, from Ajax" is really an important one.²⁷

It is in the opening lines of his long soliloquy²⁸ that Ajax is supposed to reveal his philosophic insight into reality. The speech begins with the famous statement about time, long and countless:

ἅπανθ' ὁ μακρὸς κἀναρίθμητος χρόνος
 φύει τ' ἄδηλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται·
 κούκ ἔστ' ἄελπτον οὐδέν, ἀλλ' ἀλίσκεται
 χῶ δεινὸς ὄρκος χαί περισκελεῖς φρένες.
 κἀγὼ γάρ, ὅς τὰ δεῖν' ἐκαρτέρουν τότε,

profonde de la psychologie du héros".

²⁵ Stevens, op. cit. 327, claims that at any rate part of Sophocles' purpose was evidently to achieve a dramatic effect, that of "retardation". On the speech's position in the development of the play see Sicherl, op. cit. 70–75.

²⁶ M. Heath, *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy* (London, 1987), 186 observes that "the speech is set in motion with a gnomic generalisation, which is then exemplified and applied to the speaker's specific concern".

²⁷ Cf. Kitto, op. cit. 188; on this philosophical aspect of the speech and on its meaning see Poe, op. cit. 61 and note 123.

²⁸ On the dramatic form of the speech see Stevens, op. cit. 328–29; Knox, op. cit. 12–14 [and in its reprint op. cit. 135–38] points out that Ajax' speech has a detached and meditative tone and that the hero in his self-absorption he is oblivious to Tecmessa and the chorus; cf. Poe, op. cit. 54–55 & 60–63 where he discusses Knox's observations; R.P. Winnington-Ingram, *Sophocles. An Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1980), 48 finds it hard to believe that this speech is a soliloquy, because in this case Ajax shouldn't waste so much irony on himself. Nevertheless Ajax seems to be isolated and real human contact is limited to the "staccato commands of his closing lines". On the concept of the monologue, which is one of the most frequently defined concepts in dramatic theory, see F. Leo, *Der Monolog im Drama: Ein Beitrag zur griechisch-römischen Poetik* (Berlin, 1908); W. Schadewaldt, *Monolog und Selbstgespräch. Untersuchungen zur Formgeschichte der griechischen Tragödie* (Berlin, 1926); on the terminological distinction between the concept of soliloquy and the concept of monologue see M. Pfister, *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*, transl. from the German by J. Halliday (Cambridge, 1988), 126–27.

βαφῆ σίδηρος ὥς, ἐθελύνθην στόμα
πρὸς τῆσδε τῆς γυναικός (646–52).²⁹

Within the process of time anything can be expected to happen and it is apparent that something has happened to Ajax. As Ajax himself asserts "he, who once was wondrously firm, like tempered iron, he felt his keen edge of his temper blunted by his woman's words, so that he has become womanish". Thus Ajax implies that time is the agency for all changes, since it works in depth altering the minds (φρένες) of people and the conditions of things (φύει τ' ἄδηλα καὶ φανέντα κρύπτεται). Everything, then, is at the mercy of time, which is a changing, accompanying presence associated with movement of the mind. Ajax' awareness of that purely human world exposed to every actuality as it arises, is important for the play. Even if Ajax is not expected to change his mind, he ought, as a genuine Sophoclean hero, to establish his quality by first examining the balancing factors in his decision to kill himself.³⁰

I consider this emphasis on change as fundamental for the play and as emerging from the realm of Ajax' recent social experiences.³¹ In order to understand this problem we must remember that Ajax, as represented by Sophocles, belongs to an earlier epic world, which was based on the idea of stability.³² When social life was determined by a rigid stability, everybody had his assigned place within the whole of this fixed social structure and felt that his place was the proper, the "natural" unchangeable place. In these terms Achilles was and stubbornly remained proud Achilles; Ajax was rather a stable entity than a man who could change his mind.

Nevertheless later generations saw their ideal of human greatness in terms of adaptation to circumstances, which is reflected in the political and social life of the city and it is embodied in the play by Odysseus.³³

²⁹ Here and hereafter I cite the text of H. Lloyd-Jones & N.G. Wilson (ed.), *Sophoclis Fabulae* (Oxford, 1990).

³⁰ G.H. Gellie, *Sophocles. A Reading* (Melbourne Univ. Pr., 1972), 14–16.

³¹ Cf. lines 422–27 where Ajax' words on his previous undoubted state of honour and on his present ἀτιμία imply the notion of mutability as emerging from his personal experience.

³² Cf. H. Fränkel, "Man's Ephemeros Nature according to Pindar and Others", *TAPhA* 77 (1946) 140–41.

³³ R.W. Burton, *The Chorus in Sophocles' Tragedies* (Oxford, 1980), 11 speaks of "a

Odysseus is fully aware of the fact that change is the only truth which dominates over human life and which needs to be impressed especially upon those who take their social environment for granted.³⁴ In the social and political field, as it is demonstrated by the action of the play and as it is experienced by Odysseus himself, human relationships are so unstable that even the distinction between friend and enemy does not remain constant.³⁵

But human life as a whole is confined as well to the limits of mortality, which means that it is moulded by the conditions of subjection to time. This elemental difference between the ephemeral nature of men and the permanent existence of gods is reconized by Odysseus and it is formulated in lines 125–26:

ὁρῶ γὰρ ἡμᾶς οὐδὲν ὄντας ἄλλο πλὴν
εἶδωλ' ὅσοι περ ζῶμεν ἢ κούφην σκιάν.

Man and his world, because everything in it seems to change in the course of time, are nothing but insubstantial shadows.³⁶

Ajax himself underwent the bitter experience of this unstable social reality, in which everything is in process of unending change. The old Homeric values prevailing in a stable aristocratic society do not any longer exist and yield to the new democratic values. It is significant that the decision of the judges to award the armor of Achilles to Odysseus reveals an attitude which differs from that of the Heroic age. The virtues demanded of a man are no longer bravery or undisciplined, individual heroism but tol-

conflict between two worlds, the world of the Homeric warrior and a more compassionate world to which Odysseus belongs and in which Ajax is an alien". On the difference between Ajax' "primitive heroism" and Odysseus' "modern world" see Winnington-Ingram, *op. cit.* 62.

³⁴ See lines 121–26, 1336, 1347, 1359, 1376–77.

³⁵ See Blundell, *op. cit.* 95–105. On the limits set to the traditional morality of competition and enmity by Odysseus himself see Heath, *op. cit.* 203.

³⁶ The central theme expressed here is that of man's ephemeral character. For this traditional theme see Fränkel, *op. cit.* 131–45; for its application to the action in the play see V. Leinieks, "Aias and the Day of Wrath", *CJ* 69 (1974) 193–201. The theme of the human weakness and of the ephemeral nature of his existence is amplified by the theme of the fortune and its swiftness to change in lines 131–32. Man's ephemeral nature is also suggested by Calchas' prophecy which is framed by references to the idea of the day; for an interpretation of the prophecy and on its dramatic function see M.M. Wigodsky, "The Salvation of Ajax", *Hermes* 90 (1962) 149–58.

erance, adaptability, persuasiveness, which contribute to the creation of a cohesive and ordered society.³⁷ Such political or social virtues are alien to Ajax.³⁸ From his point of view the new values of adjustment and adaptation to the changing circumstances represented by Odysseus, since they may be used for dishonest purposes, are considered inconsistent with his own values of stability, permanence and single-mindedness.³⁹

Knox in his influential article on Sophocles' *Ajax* thoroughly explores the dilemma posed in this speech by the changing nature of human relationships.⁴⁰ Ajax' recent social experience sets the pattern of the flux, of instability and unending change. Nevertheless, although he realizes that in the world of flux nothing remains forever,⁴¹ he himself is trying to define his place in this world in terms of $\alpha\epsilon\acute{\iota}$.⁴² He is obsessed with the idea of eternity⁴³ and by refusing to conform to the human mode of existence he is trying to reach a divine condition. Knox' argument, therefore, that Ajax

³⁷ On the incompatibility of Ajax' Heroic code with the values of a later time see Knox, op. cit. 22–24 [and in its reprint op. cit. 146–47].

³⁸ On the contrast between self-assertive Heroic values and the so-called "cooperative" virtues which prevailed in the 5th cent. see A.W.H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility. A Study in Greek Values* (Chicago–London, 1975), esp. chapter 3. The influence of the competitive system of values on the tragedy of Sophocles has been treated by B.M.W. Knox in his book *The Heroic Temper. Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (Berkeley–Los Angeles, 1964); cf. P. Easterling, "Notes on Tragedy and Epic" in *Papers given at a Colloquium on Greek Drama in honour of R.P. Winnington-Ingram*, ed. Lyn Rodley, Suppl. paper No. 15 (London, 1987), 53; cf. also H. Gasti, "Sophocles' Ajax: The Military Hybris", *QUCC* 69 (1992) 81–93. On the inappropriateness of Heroic individualism to 5th century see Christina Elliot Sorum, "Sophocles' Ajax in Context", *CW* 79 (1986) 361–77.

³⁹ Ajax and Odysseus present the two contrasting paradigms of the play.

⁴⁰ Knox, op. cit. 18 [and in its reprint op. cit. 141].

⁴¹ The notion of unfaithfulness of friends in lines 678ff. emerges from the idea of mutability. On this see Stanford, op. cit. 143 ad 646–48 & 148–49 ad 677–81.

⁴² Although Ajax emphasizes the general idea of mutability in lines 676 and 682 he continues to see his life in terms of eternity. Knox, op. cit. 18–19 [and in its reprint op. cit. 141–42] observes that the context casts an ironic light on the word $\alpha\epsilon\acute{\iota}$, since it is exposed as inappropriate by the reality.

⁴³ The word $\alpha\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ and its opposite $\omicron\upsilon\pi\omicron\tau\epsilon$, which also may refer to Ajax' absolutism and hyperbolic exaggeration, are of frequent occurrence throughout the play. A.E. Youman, "A Perfect Home for Ajax", *CW* 79 (1986) 397 note 2 finds no less than 13 instances of this vocabulary (cf. lines 98, 117, 342, 379, 430, 448, 463, 570, 676, 682, 835, 836, 858). It is also significant that the play opens with the word $\alpha\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ uttered by Athena.

must always be immutable, is the foundation stone of my interpretation of the *Trugrede*, which I am about to propose. Our reading of the speech, thus, consists in understanding the deeper meaning of Ajax' words by a close examination of lines 664–82, which seem to be inconsistent with Ajax' determination to die and with his adherence to the world of *ἀεί*.

After complaining about the ill luck that Hector's sword has brought him (661–65) Ajax speaks of yielding (*εἴκειν*) to the gods and venerating (*σέβειν*) the Atreidae (666–67). This reversal of the infinitives *εἴκειν* and *σέβειν* was already remarked by the scholiast⁴⁴ and has been a controversial issue for many years. To Knox this transposition of the verbs *εἴκειν* and *σέβειν*, by presenting submission in terms that Ajax could never accept, expresses a psychological truth and it also indicates his instinctive realization of an objective truth.⁴⁵ Winnington-Ingram believes that Ajax' choice of words betrays the insincerity of his speech.⁴⁶ Yet what seems at first to be an inconsistency or a highly ironic statement or an argument for submission to an hierarchical order turns out to move in a quite different range of ideas: the basic theme is not submission and change but a vision of the world in terms of alternation and permanence.

The term *εἴκειν*, which Ajax uses of the gods, seems to be more appropriate of submission to the royal authority than of submission to gods. Nevertheless, its use must be related to the following lines where the horizons expand in the cosmic scale. The reference to the formidable forces of nature, to the strongest things in the world *τὰ δεινὰ καὶ τὰ καρτερότατα* (669) in combination with the expression *τιμαῖς ὑπέικει* (670) provides a key to the understanding of the content of the verb *εἴκειν*, since it recalls lines 666–67, where Ajax, who is "dreadful and headstrong" like the forces of nature,⁴⁷ is trying to define his place in the world. The use of the verb

⁴⁴ See P.N. Papageorgius (ed.), *Scholia in Sophoclis tragoedias vetera* (Lipsiae, 1888), 57 ad 666: ἐπιφθόνως ἔφρασεν ἐν εἰρωνείᾳ ἀντιστρέψας τὴν τάξιν· ἔδει γὰρ εἰπεῖν θεοῦς μὲν σέβειν, εἴκειν δὲ Ἀτρεΐδαις, ὡς τῶν Ἀτρεΐδῶν οὖν ἤδη καὶ θεομαχούντων.

⁴⁵ Knox, *op. cit.* 16–17 [and in its reprint *op. cit.* 140–41].

⁴⁶ Winnington-Ingram, *op. cit.* 49.

⁴⁷ See line 205 where Ajax describes himself as *δεινός* and line 650 where he uses the expression *ἐκαρτέρου*. These two inherent characteristics of Ajax correspond with the natural forces as described by himself in lines 669–70. On this cf. J.C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles. Commentaries Part I: The Ajax* (Leiden, 1963) on line 669.

εἴκειν in line 667 is not necessarily ironic⁴⁸ and the verb might in itself suggest an hierarchy which is similar to the cosmic one, implied by the expression τιμαῖς ὑπέικει. To "yield to the gods", in that sense, would be merely to become part of a cosmic order, of an immutable and permanent order. When Ajax says that he will yield to the gods, he means that, by dying, he will escape the ephemeral and changing reality of human life and he will become a stable entity within cosmos.⁴⁹

This point needs further explanation because it implies a completely new way of interpreting Ajax' mind at lines 666–67. Even if Ajax feels pity at the prospect of deserting his wife and his child (652–53), his decision to suicide remains fixed. Thus, when he says that he will, in future, yield to the gods he refers to the time after his death (τὸ λοιπὸν), which is conceived as an everlasting period referring to ὀεί.⁵⁰ By using the verb εἴκειν Ajax is trying to draw a distinction between a cosmic order, represented by the gods which have no separate existence outside the phenomenal world⁵¹ and a human order, confined to the political life, represented by the Atreidae.

Nevertheless, Ajax' choice of the verb σέβειν in reference to the political order represented by the Atreidae amounts to a new perception of supernatural and human causation.⁵² To him Athena's wrath, which had been shown by his delusion and was essentially connected with the frustration of his vengeance, is interwoven with the political and social vision of the world. In lines 450–56 Ajax describes Athena's wrath in terms which

⁴⁸ Cf. Jebb, *op. cit.* XXXVI.

⁴⁹ Sicherl, *op. cit.* 86 correctly points out that although "Ajax perceives that change is the law of the world, at the same time, he knows that he himself cannot change as Tecmessa expects him to do". Sicherl also maintains that Ajax is aware of "the tragic paradox that to fit himself into the world he must yield and leave it; only by dying can he be reconciled with his enemies". M. Simpson, "Sophocles' Ajax: His Madness and Transformation", *Arethusa* 2 (1969) 98 observes that "Ajax is saying that his way of yielding, of revering, of becoming *sophron* is to remove himself, to cease to exist, not to alter his nature and then coexist with the changed order of things".

⁵⁰ For this meaning of τὸ λοιπὸν see O. Taplin, "Yielding to forethought: Sophocles' *Ajax*" in *Arktouros. Hellenic Studies presented to B.M.W. Knox on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, ed. by G.W. Bowersock, W. Burkert & C.J. Putnam (Berlin, 1979), 126.

⁵¹ This is implied by the parallel use of the verb ὑπέικειν (670).

⁵² On this point it would be useful to mention an observation of Ebeling, *op. cit.* 285 note 4, who says that the meaning of the words in this play is conditioned by the person and the situation and he lists a large number of examples.

clearly associate her with the way by which the political order is exerted through tribunal authority. Although Ajax himself recognizes no such communal authority, he fully understands that Athena, a supernatural force, supports the new type of ordered and cohesive society in which the individual's position is based on consent and cooperation.⁵³ Since Athena's attitude is consistent with the political order represented by the Atreidae and Odysseus, Ajax is justified in believing that there is an essential identification between godlike and human causation. Thus in this context the verb *σέβειν* refers to a political order sanctified by gods and to the way of acting demanded by the community. From Ajax' point of view *σέβειν* connotes reverence or respect by "leaving" or "abandoning" this society and does not necessarily imply acceptance of its rules.⁵⁴ Consequently, on the one hand Ajax' deliberate death is an act of reverence to the well ordered society of men, and on the other hand it represents a symbolic act of the transformation of the hero from mortality to immortality through heroic cult.

At this point one may wonder how the words *εἴκειν* and *ὑπέκειν* fit with the picture sketched above. One might object that the audience, hearing these words, would believe that the use of cosmic themes is an argument for discipline in terms of hierarchy. However, the case in nature is plain enough, since this order of succession described in lines (669–76) does not indicate that these elemental forces encroach upon one another.⁵⁵ Each force has its own individual and inalienable nature, which is preserved throughout. Thus the appearance of the unexpected word *τιμαῖς* (670) does not suggest that everything, however tough, gives way to *τιμαί* but it refers to the permanent and inherent characteristics of these elemental forces.⁵⁶ In like manner,

⁵³ Gellie, *op. cit.* 14 remarks that "Ajax's awareness of that world (the world of interdependent human beings) is important for the play".

⁵⁴ See Knox *op. cit.* 16 [and in its reprint *op. cit.* 139–40]. The notion of *σέβειν* implied here is connected with a negative aspect of respect, namely with refraining from doing something. This interpretation is supported by the etymological connection of the verb *σέβομαι* with a Sanskrit root signifying "leave" or "abandon". On this see P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Paris – ed. Klincksieck, 1968), 992–93 s.v. *σέβομαι*. In my view only *αἶδομαι* (poet. for *αἰδέομαι*) implies acceptance of the rules and consequently refers to a positive aspect of respect.

⁵⁵ Winnington-Ingram, *op. cit.* 50.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hes. *Theog.* 73–74 where *τιμαί* refer to the "provinces" or "spheres of influence" of the gods. On this see M.L. West (ed.), *Hesiod Theogony* (Oxford, 1966), 180 ad 73–74.

Empedocles' frg. B17 seems to provide a similar argumentation.⁵⁷ In lines 27–29 of the above mentioned fragment Empedocles advocates the equity of Love and Strife through the cosmic principle of cyclic change:⁵⁸

ταῦτα γὰρ ἴσα τε πάντα καὶ ἤλικα γένναν ἔασι,
τιμῆς δ' ἄλλης ἄλλο μέδει, πάρα δ' ἦθος ἐκάστω,
ἐν δὲ μέρει κρατέουσι περιπελομένοιο χρόνοιο.

In nature there is an order of succession which ensures its continuance. This means that withdrawal of the elemental forces does not consist a criterion of hierarchical evaluation, since they are equal (ἴσα) and their prerogatives are exerted in different areas.⁵⁹ Each element has its own τιμή and ἦθος which are preserved inviolate through motion and succession. This assumption of permanent characteristics of the elements is essential to their temporal and spatial continuity while allowing plurality and divisibility.⁶⁰ Having come to understand this harmony of the universe Ajax by following the same cosmic process can give way without loss of honour.⁶¹

In a similar way Ajax by using the expression τιμαῖς ὑπέικει (670) refers to the principle of rhythmic succession and alternation, which is a reality of the natural world that cannot be denied. But Ajax asserts some

⁵⁷ All references to the fragments of Empedocles and Heraclitus are from H. Diels–W. Kranz (ed.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. I, 12th ed. (Dublin–Zürich, 1966).

⁵⁸ On the so-called "interprétation cyclique" of Empedocles' fragments see D. O'Brien, *Pour interpréter Empédocle* (Collection d' Etudes Anciennes, Paris–Les Belles Lettres/Leiden–E.J. Brill, 1981), 29; M.R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven & London – Yale Univ. Pr., 1981), 181–82.

⁵⁹ Cf. Parmenides fr. 9, 3ff.; Alcmaeon fr. 4; Hes. Theog. 127–28; Soph. El. 86–87. On the concept of equality of the cosmic elements see E. Bignone, *Empedocle. Studio critico traduzione e commento delle testimonianze e dei frammenti* (Roma, 1963), 541–42; on equity as a cosmic principle of cyclic change see Eur. Phoen. 541–45; on the philosophical content of this passage from Phoenissae see E. Craik, *Euripides. Phoenician Women* (Aris&Phillips Ltd, 1988), 197–98 ad 528sq. For the idea of a cyclic pattern in human fortune cf. Soph. Trach. 129–31; Eur. HF 101–06; Hdt., I 207.2.

⁶⁰ See Wright, *op. cit.* 168–69 & 171–72. J.P. Hershbel, "Hesiod and Empedocles", *CJ* 65 (1970) 155 rightly points out that Empedocles' divine roots unlike Hesiod's gods are all equal and coeval.

⁶¹ Cf. Stanford, *op. cit.* XXXV.

connection or parallelism between the natural and the political order, as it is suggested by the use of the verb ὑπείκειν in line 668:

ἄρχοντές εἰσιν, ὥσθ' ὑπεικτέον

Ajax, in his loneliness and isolation, comes to realize a law of cosmic order, which by ensuring an orderly succession of the elemental forces does not necessarily imply a respective hierarchical evaluation of them within the cosmos. The elemental forces have their own spheres of operations and they have their own privileges and offices. In such a context there are no lower forces which must submit to the higher.⁶² So Ajax asks himself if according to this universal law of equity may be found a useful model of social behaviour, which will enable people like him, i.e. stubborn-minded and undaptable men, to have their proper place within the whole of the social structure.

We should, therefore, assume that in the case of Ajax by ὑπεικτέον (668) it is not meant that he will bend and give way, but it is suggested that by dying he will become part of a social and of a cosmic order as well.⁶³ After his death, which is a constant point of reference for him, his body will be transferred to a new state of belonging.⁶⁴ Thus Sophocles conceived Ajax as really meaning by the word ὑπεικτέον that he would thenceforth "revere the Atreidae" in this sense: that transferred to a new sphere of existence through death he would not anymore offend authorities.⁶⁵ Although death will mark his permanent separation from the group of living

⁶² H. Musurillo, *The Light and the Darkness. Studies in the Dramatic Poetry of Sophocles* (Leiden, 1967), 15 assumes the opposite, i.e. that the lower forces must submit to the higher.

⁶³ In this context the verb σωφρονεῖν (677) does not mean "recognition of limitations" or "submission to the Atreidae" but it refers to a cosmic order. The notion of *sophrosyne* is used throughout the play to describe the self-restraint, the attitude proper to a subordinate to a higher order, i.e. military, civic, theological or cosmic. On this see Gasti, op. cit. 88 note 30. Simpson, op. cit. 98–9 says that Ajax comes into harmony with the world (σωφρονεῖν) by leaving it.

⁶⁴ The transition to this new state of belonging, namely to the world of deads, is marked out by the ceremony of burial. On this see Emily Vermeule, *Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London, 1981), 1–3.

⁶⁵ This interpretation has the advantage of ruling out any sense of submission to authorities or to the laws of mutability.

men, by the ceremony of burial his visible body will be concealed or dispersed and finally replaced, in a sense, by a tombstone or a mound. Thus the tomb will be the visual symbol of his everlasting value and of his new position in society.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, his rehabilitation will actually depend on the permission of Agamemnon, since any form of burial marks the community action which transfers the body to a new state. Ὑπεικτέον, therefore, is provided of its full meaning when this double sense of belonging is taken into account. The sense of belonging to society can be confirmed only by social rehabilitation through the ceremony of burial and the dead hero can finally be transferred to the sphere of permanent existence – this implies the sense of belonging to the cosmic order – only by this ceremonial process of burial. It is conceivable, therefore, that the cosmic and social themes in the play are interconnected in a very effective way which serves also dramatic purposes.

These dramatic purposes can be better detected in the magnificent lines that follow (670–76), which by stating the argument for change finally become a formulation of Ajax' own vision for stability. In each case cited from the realm of nature, i.e. winter and summer, night and day, storm and sea, the fetters of all-powerful sleep, the notion of change seems to prevail:

τοῦτο μὲν νιφοστιβεῖς
χειμῶνες ἐκχωροῦσιν εὐκάρπῳ θέρει·
ἐξίσταται δὲ νυκτὸς αἰανῆς κύκλος
τῇ λευκοπώλῳ φέγγος ἡμέρα φλέγειν·
δεινῶν δ' ἄημα πνευμάτων ἐκοίμισε
στένοντα πόντον· ἐν δ' ὁ παγκρατῆς Ὑπνος
λύει πεδῆσας, οὐδ' ἀεὶ λαβῶν ἔχει (670–76).

Even if it is admitted that the reference to these forces of nature provides the key to an understanding of the scene,⁶⁷ unfortunately this statement has been misinterpreted. Winnington-Ingram's observation that in each case of

⁶⁶ This everlasting honour of his value is implied by the word τιμή, which can specify the "honour" that a god or a hero receives in cult. For a discussion of τιμή as cult see J. Rudhardt, "Les mythes grecs relatifs à l'instauration du sacrifice", *MH* 27 (1970) 6–7; cf. also G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans. Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore–London, 1979), 118.

⁶⁷ Poe, *op. cit.* 60.

the natural forces quoted above "there is a change from bad to good"⁶⁸ is undoubtedly misleading. Since each one of these natural forces has been allotted a definite province or sphere of influence (τιμή), the question of "evaluation" is not to be asked. What we have before us is the assertion that nature by providing us with the evidence of a circular process sets the pattern of a compromise between change and stability.

The speech accomplishes this compromise by allowing Ajax to overcome his resistance to the idea of change and to comfort himself for the loss of a stable world by clinging to the view that change is ruled by an unchanging law. The four pairs of opposites named here (winter–summer, night–day, storm–calmness and weaking–sleeping) represent the most typical regularities within the changing world. The circular process, which prevails in nature, provides the link between Ajax' adherence to ὄεί and the experience of flux.⁶⁹ Nevertheless the idea of change is not correlative to a respective adoption of a new role by Ajax but it is used to reconcile Ajax' own vision with the idea of change. The periodicity involved in the regularity within the circular movement of these opposite powers, mentioned above, helps Ajax to re-establish the stability and the unity of the cosmic framework and to confirm again his place within it.

Ajax' general intention is to show, therefore, that all differentiations and alternations in the sum of human experience are interconnected, so that there is an underlying unity. Alternation and circular process does not imply an hierarchical evaluation within the cosmic framework but it rather implies an overall unity. In the course of his lifetime Ajax had the opportunity to learn the deeper meaning of the phenomenal world and in his statement about the opposites, which are incompatible in nature but inseparable in thought, it becomes obvious that he perceives these opposed states as variations in a single continuum. Thus the notion of change combined with

⁶⁸ Winnington-Ingram, *op. cit.* 50.

⁶⁹ E. Benveniste, "Expressions indoeuropéennes de l'éternité", BSL 38 (1937) 111ff argues that the notion of κύκλος is the sensible projection of αἰών. The parallelism between κύκλος and αἰών is affirmed by Anaximander's fr. A10. On this see E. Degani, *Αἰών da Omero ad Aristotele* (Firenze, 1960), 69–70. For the semantic evolution of the word αἰών from Homer to Christianity see C. Lackeit, *Aion: Zeit und Ewigkeit in Sprache und Religion der Griechen* (Diss. Königsberg, 1916); cf. also A.J. Festugière, "Le sens philosophique du mot ΑΙΩΝ", PP 11(1949) 172–89.

the idea of cyclical periodicity can be used to explain Ajax' position within the cosmic and social framework.⁷⁰

This kind of change involved in Ajax' idea of circularity can be better illustrated by Empedocles' frg. B17, 12–13:

ἦ δὲ διαλλάσσοντα διαμπερὲς οὐδαμὰ λήγει,
ταύτη δ' αἰὲν ἔασιν ἀκίνητοι κατὰ κύκλον.

These verses imply the notion of change from one extreme to the other and they also refer to the notion of permanence and stability (αἰὲν...ἀκίνητοι). Thus κύκλος is a symbol of eternity as well of unending mutability. Ajax' reference to cyclic movement and the implication that cycle is related to his own vision of the world suggest that cycle is crucial to the meaning of the tragedy. Time conceived by Ajax as a cycle becomes rather a principle of unity and permanence than a source of instability and destruction.⁷¹ By integrating human time – this means the irreversible time which is experienced as a source of destruction – into the cyclical organization of the cosmos, Ajax introduces a notion of temporality, which is incompatible with the conception of eternity.⁷² The kind of change involved in the image of cycle is continuous and repetitive, while the idea of succession referred to in Ajax' statement is more probably to be regarded as spatial.⁷³ So much is perhaps indicated by the use of the verbs ἐκχωροῦσιν (671) and ἐξίσταται (672), which imply a gradual motion rather than an immediate and sudden

⁷⁰ J. de Romilly, *Time in Greek Tragedy* (Ithaca–New York, 1968), 91 correctly points out that the "cyclic time" embodies "a continuous movement of all things, which may be controlled by regular laws and yet illustrate the perpetual modification of the world we live in".

⁷¹ Cf. Lynne Ballew, *Straight and Circular. A Study of imagery in Greek Philosophy* (Van Corcum–Assen the Netherlands, 1979), 16 by drawing a distinction between circular and straight says that in Greek literature we find a general association between circular imagery and unchangingness.

⁷² Thus the view of Romilly, *op. cit.* 104–5, that the attitude of Sophoclean heroes suggests an absolute refusal of time's influence must be reconsidered. Ajax by ascribing a circular direction to time he finally abolishes its irreversibility. On this see M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l' éternel retour* (Paris, 1969), 104–5 & 108–9.

⁷³ On cyclicity providing a spatial conception of time see P. Tzamalikos, "The autonomy of the stoic view of Time", *Φιλοσοφία* 19–20 (1989–90) 364.

change.⁷⁴ Thus circularity comes to signify "permanence in an eternally mobile identity".⁷⁵

In such a scheme there cannot be any sense of real progress, since the most important feature of circular motion is periodicity and regularity. This regularity by excluding the tension between mutability and permanence enables Ajax to overcome his dislike for the changing reality by placing himself within this unified framework of a cosmic order. The evidence of the senses and his personal experience tell him that all eventually undergo change and some are in an everlasting process of change. The important point being that these four pairs of opposites named by Ajax are inextricably connected as the extremes of a single process because they invariably succeed each other. The continuous alternation from one state to its opposite and so on implies a circular regularity which excludes any kind of human temporality by introducing a sense of transhuman temporality.⁷⁶ The crisis presented in the *Trugrede* is precisely the moment when Ajax realizes that that other temporality is overtaking him. In this context the concept of ἀεί is being reevaluated and denotes what is "temporally continuous without a temporal gap in it".

The hero's understanding of the world and of himself as part of this single continuum of the cycle, which is presented as a unifying and unified whole, echoes the Heraclitean frg. B88: ταὐτό τ' ἐνὶ ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκὸς καὶ [τὸ] ἐγρηγορὸς καὶ καθεῦδον καὶ νέον καὶ γηραιόν· τάδε γὰρ μεταπεσόντα ἐκεῖνά ἐστι κάκεινα πάλιν μεταπεσόντα ταῦτα.⁷⁷ Valakas, I think, has coped with the adaptation of the Heraclitean picture of change and of the underlying unity of opposites in Ajax' soliloquy effectively.⁷⁸ In his view

⁷⁴ The use of these verbs provides an image of space-time perceived as one reality.

⁷⁵ J-P. Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* (London, 1983), 90.

⁷⁶ For the terms *human* and *transhuman* temporality see D. Halliburton, "Concealing revealing: a perspective on Greek tragedy" in A. Benjamin (ed.), *Post-Structuralist Classics* (London & New York, 1988), 263.

⁷⁷ On the interpretation of this fragment and on Heraclitus' assertion of the underlying unity of opposites cf. G.S. Kirk (ed.), *Heraclitus. The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge, 1962), 134–48. See also W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. I, *The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge, 1962), 452; M.C. Stokes, *One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy* (Cambridge/Mass., 1971), 92; A. Rivier, "L' homme et l' expérience humaine dans les fragments d' Héraclite", *MH* 13 (1956) 148.

⁷⁸ K. Valakas, *Homeric Mimesis and the Ajax of Sophocles* (Ph.D. Cambridge, 1987),

the speech emphasizes "change not as a loss of power on Ajax' part, but as a universal evolution in which he can see himself as a corpse",⁷⁹ namely dead.⁸⁰ Thus for Ajax as for Heraclitus life and death are inextricably connected, since they are the different poles of a cycle.⁸¹

The sameness of the opposites implied by the cyclical process excludes any discontinuance between life and death, since even death may be considered not as an end but as a new start. Only by death, therefore, Ajax can preserve his true permanent identity through transition to a different state, i.e. the state of a corpse, which marks as well the transition to a new social state. As a corpse Ajax will be integrated into a framework of stability and permanence, which is conceived as an infinite duration, as a world where *ἀεί* prevails. However, through his consecration as a hero, which is the goal to which the poet brings Ajax,⁸² Ajax can be integrated

93. The influence of Heraclitean thought on Ajax' speech and on Sophocles' plays in general has long been recognized; cf. J.C. Kamerbeek, "Sophocle et Héraclite", in *Studia varia C.W. Vollgraff a discipulis oblata* (Amsterdam, 1948), 84–98; T.B.L. Webster, *An Introduction to Sophocles* (London, 1969), 32; Sicherl, *op. cit.* 78 and Taplin, *op. cit.* 129 point out that the oracular aspect of the speech may be compared to what Heraclitus says of the Delphic oracle (fr. B93). The ambiguity of many of Ajax' statements involves this coming together of revealing and concealing. In line 658 the use of the verb *κρύπτειν* bears the marks of this reciprocal intimacy of revealing and concealing. This ominous verb conceals by revealing and reveals by concealing his intention to commit suicide. Ajax' true intention, therefore, finds itself disclosed in the Heraclitean concealing-revealing pattern of tragedy. In a list of the Heraclitean opposites given by Helen G. Ioannides, *Ηράκλειτος. Γλώσσα και Σκέψη* (Athens, 1962), 50–51 we may note that some of them refer to Ajax' opposites; cf. *ἡμέρη-εὐφρόνη* (frs. B57, B67), *χειμῶν-θέρος* (fr. B67), *μεταβάλλον-ἀναπαύεται* (fr. B84a), *λέγει-κρύπτει* (fr. B93), *κάματος-ἀνάπαυσις* (fr. B111). In fact this affinity noted here shows the link of Ajax' thought as formulated in his monologue with Heraclitus.

⁷⁹ Valakas, *op. cit.* 93.

⁸⁰ In the context of lines 691–92 the word *σεσωμένον* must bear a double meaning: to Tecmessa and the chorus, it means "safely alive", while to Ajax and to the audience, who know the end of the myth, it can only mean "safely dead". Ajax can find "safety" or "salvation" only in death. On this cf. Wigodsky, *op. cit.* 154. On this point, we may note that the notion of *σωτηρία* is situated in the centre of any conception of time and implies an eschatological meaning. On this see A. Kelesidou-Galanou, *Η έννοια της σωτηρίας στην πλατωνική πολιτική φιλοσοφία* (Athens, 1982).

⁸¹ The major difficulty concerning this interpretation proposed here is the objection that the audience could not be expected to understand the speech in this way. For an interesting comment on this major problem see Stevens, *op. cit.* 335–36.

⁸² For the hero's cult as a clue to the play's dramatic unity see Jebb, *op. cit.* XXX–

into the social order of the *polis* as well, since he is not anymore a threat for its existence.⁸³ In this way death is not presented as the irreversible end of a linear process but it can be considered as a starting point in a new mode of existence.

This new mode of existence is suggested, indeed, by the word *ἀείμνηστος* used by the chorus to describe Ajax' grave in lines 1163–67:

ἔσται μεγάλης ἔριδός τις ἀγών.
 ἀλλ' ὡς δύνασαι, Τεῦκρε, ταχύννας
 σπεῦσον κοίλην κάπετόν τιν' ἰδεῖν
 τῶδ', ἔνθα βροτοῖς τὸν ἀείμνηστον
 τάφον εὐρώεντα καθέξει.

After death the hero is immortal in two different senses: in cult the hero can be associated with the immortal existence of the gods,⁸⁴ as it is suggested by the first component of the word *ἀεί-μνηστος*. But in the same time the dead hero is immortalized only in the memory of men, as it is implied by the second part of the word *ἀεί-μνηστος*.

The memory as presented here is necessarily linked with the *mnemotopyne* of myth, namely with its archaic form whose function was "to liberate the soul from time and open up a path to immortality", as J-P. Vernant

XXXII. Unfortunately there is not a word of any of Ajax' cult in Sophocles' play. G. Perrotta, *Sofocle* (Messina, 1935), 128 says that "del culto dell' eroe Aiace nella tragedia non si parla affatto". P. Burian in his article "Supplication and Hero Cult in Ajax", *GRBS* 13 (1972) 151–56 provides a solution to this problem by arguing that in the scene in which Teucer places Eurysaces as a suppliant at his father's corpse, those who love Ajax enact in a symbolic way his consecration as a hero.

⁸³ On the final reintegration of Ajax into society see Ch. Segal, *Tragedy and Civilization. An Interpretation of Sophocles* (Cambridge/Mass., 1981), 142–46 & 150–51; Valakas, *op. cit.* 106. On the contrary A.M. Bowie, "The end of Sophocles' Ajax", *LCM* 8 (1983) 114–15 makes the point that Ajax' marginality continues after his death. On the cult of Ajax in Athens see L.R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921), 305–10.

⁸⁴ I found G. Nagy's distinction between two kinds of immortality, namely between heroic and epic cult very helpful. Cf. J.M. Redfield's foreword in Nagy's well-known book cited before. For the centrality of the tomb in hero cult cf. S.E. Alcock, "Tomb Cult & The Post – Classical Polis", *AJA* 95 (1991) 447–67 and J. Whitley, "Early States & Hero Cults: A Re-Appraisal", *JHS* 108 (1988) 173–82.

pointed out.⁸⁵ But it also contains a temporal aspect and it appears as included within time, since the link between past and present, between earlier and later, is conditioned by memory. In fact this double function of memory above time and within it explains how eternity implied by ἀεί can coexist with μνήμη in a single word like ἀείμνηστος.

To sum up the privilege that μνήμη confers on Ajax is the possibility of his entering into a world of eternal existence through immortalization without moving away from the temporality of human life. Hence Ajax who benefits from the memory is himself finally transformed by it. In the world of time and change, Ajax' grave may be concerned on the one hand as the visual symbol of eternity, since veneration is to be paid everlastingly to it. On the other hand Ajax' tomb as a material object which is liable to the destructive power of time⁸⁶ and through its function as μνήμα⁸⁷ is suggestive of human temporality.⁸⁸ In other words the tomb as the visual

⁸⁵ Vernant, op. cit. 95. On a detailed analysis of the mythical aspects of memory and time cf. Vernant, op. cit. 75–105. On the importance of memory for Ajax himself see Segal, op. cit. 111, who rightly observes that "civilization resists all-effacing time through 'memorials', means of remembering (*mnemeia*). These enable the individual to survive the effects of time through communal memory.... Without the commemoration of the 'always-remembering tomb' (1166–67), he confronts the full force of time, the utter effacement of his existence and identity".

⁸⁶ The tomb is defined as εὐρώεις which refers to its mouldering interior, namely to the destructive force of time; cf. Stanford, op. cit. 204 ad 1166–67. Cf. also the discussion of this passage in A. Henrichs' article "The Tomb of Aias and the Prospect of Hero Cult in Sophokles", *ClAnt* 12 (1993) 169–75.

⁸⁷ Kamerbeek, op. cit. 224 ad 1166–67 points out the significance of the grave as μνήμα.

⁸⁸ I am inclined to think that the use of the word κάπετος (originally *σκάπετος from σκάπτειν) is suggestive of a concept of spatiality as well. If μνήμη, by unifying the past, the present and the future, marks Ajax' temporal existence, the grave marks his spatial existence by reminding us of his local cult. Thus Ajax' condition as a dead hero is defined by ἀεί, namely by an infinite duration, by temporality, as it is implied by μνήμη and by locality. All these aspects of his existence seem to be recapitulated in the very name of Ajax. Since the real etymology of Αἴας is uncertain, Ajax' name may refer to three different etymologies: first Ajax' name may be correlated to αἰών or to αἶα, which implies the notion of spatiality or to αἰαῖ, a derivation which Ajax himself adopts in lines 430–33 and which refers to the ephemeral existence of human being. Αἴας is, therefore, the lexical sign of the fusion between αἰεί and αἶα-αἰαῖ, that is between the time of the gods and the time of men which is connected with land and local cult. For a discussion of these three etymologies see Degani, op. cit. 33–35; A. Fick, *Die griech. Personennamen* (Göttingen, 1894²), 425 says that the names Αἰακός-Αἴας-αἰών, δηναῖός, Αἴολος all

symbol of the immortalization of the dead hero in the memory of men reminds us everlastingly of the separation of god and man. But equally only through death and the subsequent cultic observance Ajax attains to the conditions of divine existence without excluding himself from human time and space.

This approach proposed in this article seems at least to provide a possible pattern of interpretation which reconciles some seeming contradictions already noted in Ajax' famous *Trugrede*. So far our analysis shows that Ajax' speech functions as a mediation between the internal and external communication systems.⁸⁹ Within the framework of the dramatic communication model Ajax' soliloquy can be understood as an epic tendency in drama because it encourages the development of a mediating communication system, which enables the author to communicate his message to the receiver.⁹⁰ The monologue declaimed by Ajax, i.e. a figure situated inside the dramatic action, creates a kind of "personal union" of dramatic figure and epic mediator. Nevertheless this may lead to a split between the self as a person involved in the dramatic situation and the self as a distanced commentator thereof. This assumes that the dramatic figure, namely Ajax, in communicating to the spectators his real opinion creates a mediating communication system through which the audience is informed of the ambivalence of his position. On the other hand, the dramatic illusion is not affected since Ajax in his role as a commentator never steps outside his role as a dramatic person but he merely deceives his hearers within drama.

It is now apparent that in Ajax' soliloquy a distinction can be made between two communication levels: the first has as its primary addressee the

contain the element αἰο- which means "Bewegung, Leben oder αἶα 'Land' in Φίλαιοσ ein Enkel von Αἶασ"; Cf. also A.G. Tsopanakis, "Onomatologia omerica: Αἶασ-Aiax-Aιακόσ", QUCC 30 (1979) 83–90; Jebb, op. cit. 74–75 ad 430f; Kamerbeek, op. cit. 95–96 ad 430; Stanford, op. cit. 115 ad 430–33. W.B. Stanford, *Ambiguity in Greek Literature. Studies in Theory and Practice* (New York & London, 1972), 35 notes that behind these etymological ambiguities there was lurking the shadow of a profound belief in the principle of *nomen omen*. Thus Ajax' name consists a heavensent epitome and prophecy of his tragic fate.

⁸⁹ Fullest discussion of the communication model for narrative and dramatic texts can be found in Pfister, op. cit. 3–4.

⁹⁰ Pfister, op. cit. 71–84, categorises the various structures and techniques of epic communication in drama: (1) The author as epic narrator (2) The introduction of epic elements by figures outside the action (3) the introduction of epic elements by figures inside the action (4) non-verbal epic tendencies.

audience (external communication system) while the second has its addressee on the internal dramatic level, namely the chorus and Tecmessa (internal communication system). Considering that Ajax' elusive speech expresses the truth of his situation in language which bears a double meaning we must conclude that the two communication levels above mentioned are interconnected. In view of this the question "intentional or unintentional deception?" is unimportant. In addition, the audience from its position of superior awareness is conscious of the ambiguities of the situation and is thus in a position to judge and not to be deceived.⁹¹

To conclude, the essence of Ajax' *Trugrede* is to be found in the contrast between the superior awareness of the audience and the inferior awareness of the dramatic figures. Hence the deceptive aspect of Ajax' soliloquy refers exclusively to the internal communication system, whilst its true content refers to the external system. I end with an interesting remark of P.T. Stevens who concedes that "the *Trugrede* has been rightly so called, since deception of Tecmessa and the Chorus is its principal *raison d' être* both on dramaturgical grounds and for Ajax' own reasons, and almost everything in the speech contributes in some way to this purpose. Ajax' intention has remained constant, to end his life for the reason he had already given, i.e. the intolerable wound to his pride and the damage to his reputation, which while he lived was irretrievable".⁹²

University of Ioannina

⁹¹ Wigodsky, op. cit. 153 notes that the audience knew the myth and those who had understood the ambiguities of the deception speech must have been expecting the news of the death already when the messenger appeared.

⁹² Op. cit. 334–35.