Fiske Hall Graduate Paper Award

What's All the Drama About?: The Development of Tragedy in Ancient Greece

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The art of storytelling is only a step away from the art of performance. Yet it took centuries to develop into the form we easily recognize today. Theatre, a gift of ancient Greece, pulled threads from many facets of Greek society – religion, festival, poetry, and competition. And yet, as much as historians know about the Greek theatre, they are still theorizing about its origins and how it suddenly developed and flourished within the confines of the 5th century B.C. Fascination concerning the origin of the theatre developed as quickly as the 4th century B.C. and remains a topic of speculation even today.

Many simply state that drama and tragedy developed out of the cult of Dionysus and the dithyramb, certainly ignoring other important factors of its development. As this paper will argue, during the 7th and 6th centuries B.C. epic poetry and hero worship intersected with the cult of Dionysus and the dithyramb. This collision of cult worship and poetic art created the high drama of the tragedy found in the late 6th century B.C. and throughout the 5th century B.C. Therefore, the cult of Dionysus and the dithyramb merely served as catalysts in creating tragic drama and were not its origin. It was during this collision of poetry and religion that tragedy flourished; however, by the 4th century B.C., theatre had moved away from its original religious context to a more political context, shifting the theatre away from tragedy and towards comedy.

To understand this argument, it is important to first look at the evidence that epic and lyric poetry contained several important elements. First, epic poets performed for an audience. Next, epic poems were of a tragic nature. Finally, epic poetry served as a form of religious worship of both the gods and heroes.

Of the epic poems, the poetry of Homer provides the best and most complete examples for the modern reader. Homer's epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were most likely set down in writing between 750 and 700 B.C.[1] These epics belonged to the oral tradition; they were composed and sung for audiences. Green noted that both epic and tragedy shared the element of performance.[2] In his study of the oral tradition in Serbia, A.B. Lord concluded that the epic poet composed his poetry in three parts – by listening and absorbing, by imitating, and finally, by singing before an audience.[3] In ancient times, this mode of performance began with the *aoidoi*, or poets. According to Hagel, *aoidoi* sang the epic poem in unison with the four-stringed *phorminx* serving as accompaniment to their song.[4] This establishes the performance element as a crucial ingredient to epic poetry.

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[1] Claude Orrieux, *The History of Ancient Greece*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 28.

[2] J.R. Green, *Theatre in Ancient Greek Society* (London: Routledge, 1994; Routledge, 1996), 16.

[3] Alfred Bates Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 2d ed., (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 2000), passim.

[4] Stefan Hagel, "Homeric Singing – An Approach to the Original Performance," (Classical Text Editor, 2002) available from http://www.oeaw.ac.at/kal/sh/, November 20, 2003. An interesting comparison could be made between poets singing their poems "in unison" and the tragic chorus.

Automatically associating epic poetry with the concept of tragedy, Plato referred to Homer as "the first among tragic poets"[5] and Aristotle claimed that Homer was the architect of "dramatic imitations."[6] Homer's poetry was like tragedyin several ways. First, Homer used a narrative style mirrored later by the tragedians.[7] While the poet was not removed totally from the story as he was in later narrative, Homer did not speak in third person either.[8] Rather, his careful style attributed different "voices" to his characters. Next, Homer permitted his audience to visualize his characters and the action before their eyes.[9] As Lada-Richards correctly affirmed, Homer was a "dramatist" while the *rhapsode* functioned very much like an actor.[10] It was the *rhapsode*, a "stitcher of songs," that performed the already famous works of Homer for audiences with a *rhabdos* in his hand. Unfortunately, only a bit of information about the *rhapsode* survives, but one of the remaining pieces is very enlightening. It indicates that the audience had an emotional experience during the *rhapsodes'* performances that was comparable to the emotional experience of the audience of a drama. In Plato's *Ion*, Socrates discusses with the *rhapsode* Ion the effects of his acting on his audience:

> Socrates: And are you aware that you produce similar effects on most spectators?
> Ion: Only too well; for I look down upon them from the stage, and behold the various emotions of pity, wonder, sternness, stamped upon their countenances when I am speaking: and I am obliged to give my very best attention to them. [11]

Socrates then states that, "the *rhapsode* like yourself and the actor are intermediate links, and the poet himself is the first of them."[12] The epic poet was the first link; the *rhapsode* and the actor fall somewhere after the creation of the epic. Thus, the epic poet wrote "tragic" poems which, when performed by *rhapsodes*, produced an emotional experience for the audience.

Epic poetry was the first literary step to establishing tragic performance, but in order for the epic itself to occur, it had to be established within a context. Religion provided that framework. The context of religion is important to the understanding of the development of drama because "religion provided the context for almost all communal activity throughout the history of ancient Greece."[13] While the subject of gods, goddesses, and heroes provided the poets plenty of myths to enhance their stories, the social nature of religious events and festivals provided the poets with a natural audience.

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[5] Plato, *Republic*, Book 10. *The Republic*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Available from The Internet Classic Archive, http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.11.x.html, November 10, 2003.
[6] Aristotle, *Poetics*, I.iv Available from http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html, November 10, 2003.
[7] Ismene Lada-Richards, "Bards, Rhapsodes, and Stage-actors," *Didaskalia* 5, no.2. (2001) 1-8. Available from http:didaskalia.open.ac.uk/issues/vol5no2/ladarichards.html, December 5, 2003.
[8] Lada-Richards, "Bards, Rhapsodes, and Stage-Actors," 1-8.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Plato. *Ion*. Available from The Internet Classic Archive, http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html, November 10, 2003.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Thomas R. Martin, *An Overview of Classical Greek History from Homer to Alexander*. Available from http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0009, October 15, 2003.

Epic poems, and later tragedies, were permeated with hymns, prayers, and other religious elements.[14] Homer, for example, refers to paeans and songs to Apollo and Demeter in his stories.[15] According to Furley and Bremer, there was not one stage of Greek literary development that was without cult songs.[16] It was difficult to separate the sacred from the secular in Greek poetry not only because of its content and form, but also because the Greek life did not separate the two. Since it remains difficult to separate the cult hymn from the literary piece in religious content, scholars must look at the purpose. Furley and Bremer stated that hymns were forms of "worship directed towards winning a god's goodwill and securing his or her assistance" while the literary piece was "concerned with the entertainment and enlightenment of the audience addressed."[17] It would not have been unusual to see the combination of hymn to a god, goddess, or hero within the performance of epic poetry. While creating hymns for religious purposes, the poets were also expanding their own literary abilities.

Ideas about religion from epic poetry are later emulated in tragedy. As early as the Mycenaean period, hero worship was established. The tombs of the unknown dead became heroes with names. The hero then became an integral part of the local population providing it with an identity. Ridgeway found that early forms of the tragic chorus were "closely attached to the tombs of heroes."[18] The fact that Homer's epics are based on heroes who were heavily worshipped in Greece provides evidence that the epic might have served a religious function, which included both the gods and the heroes. This idea was carried over into the early tragedies as well. It is clear that all three major tragedians – Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides – used the cults of heroes in their plays. All three poets used Agamemnon, Aeschylus portrayed Darius in *Persians*, and both Sophocles and Euripides depicted Oedipus. This was not the only literary similarity; another religious idea that was developed in Homer's poetry and continued in tragedy was the character's relationship with the gods. Characters in both literary types exhibit a "degree of intimacy with and knowledge about the gods."[19]

Clearly then, the creation of the epic poem fashioned both literary standards and performance standards for what would later develop into a much more recognizable form of tragedy, and ultimately, the theatre. But the epic poem and the epic poet's performance could only fashion it to a certain point; other elements were needed to continue to develop what had been started. The dithyramb and the cult worship of Dionysus were among such elements. To understand these as only catalysts to the development of tragedy, it is valuable to glance at why others have emphasized their importance.

At the same time that the official text of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was being written down, Pisistratus, tyrant of Athens, founded the festival the Greater Dionysia sometime between 600-570 B.C. To only look at that date as the start of the cult of Dionysus would be inaccurate however. The cult worship of Dionysus started in the country and was later transported to the city. Unfortunately, dates are not as easy to pinpoint for the rural Dionysia. Traditionally, Arion of Methymna was said to have produced the first dithyramb at Corinth in the late 7th

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[14] William D. Furley and Jan Maarten Bremer, *Hymns: Selected Cult Songs from Archaic to Hellenistic Period*, Introduction (2001): 2, Available from http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~q67/Info/HymnsIntro.pdf, December 5, 2003. Based on the work of Easterling, 1985, 34-49.

[15] Furley and Bremer, 2.

[16] Ibid, 2.

[17] Furley and Bremer, 2.

[18] William Ridgeway, *The Origins of Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 61.

[19] Jon D. Mikalson, *Honor Thy Gods* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 205.

century B.C.[20] The dithyramb, a hymn that belonged to the god Dionysus, consisted of untamed sounds and rhythms that fit in with the tradition of its patron god.[21] As part of the cult worship of Dionysus, a chorus of men, often playing the role of the half man, half goat satyrs, sang this unique hymn. Over the centuries, scholars have suggested the dithyramb and satyr played as the start of the tragedy.

Why have so many scholars attributed the cult of Dionysus solely to the development of ancient Greek drama, and most particularly, tragedy? One of the first sources written about the origin of theatre was Aristotle's *Poetics*. In it, Aristotle stated that tragedy developed from the "impromptus by the leaders of dithyrambic choruses" and later he also attributed the origin of tragedy to the satyr play.[22] It is difficult to fully discern what Aristotle wanted his reader to take from this statement as in the sentences just prior he stated that out of epic poetry came tragedy and out of lyric poetry came comedy.[23] Scholars have tried to accommodate Aristotle's statement by assigning the satyr play to evolution of the tragedy.

Without taking into account other factors, namely the epic poem and the worship of all gods, goddesses, and heroes, however, this approach runs into major obstacles. First, from what the reader can learn of the Dionysiac cult from Euripides's *The Bacchae*, the cult of the god was frenzied and a bit grotesque. A close analysis of the "father of tragedy" Aeschylus and his plays would lead the reader to believe that they have very little in common with art depictions of the demonic satyr or the ritual surrounding the cult of Dionysus. Additionally, Winkler has suggested that scholars have misread Aristotle since Aristotle did not say that "tragedy grew out of dithyrambs," but rather that the improvisation of the satyr was *like* the performance of the tragic performers.[24] Ridgeway also pointed out that Aristotle's purpose in *Poetics* was not to trace the origins of tragedy (note that Aristotle does not even mention early and important figures such as Thespis or Phrynichus) but rather to discuss the theatre after it was fully developed.[25] Finally, it is worth mentioning that it is not until 500 B.C. that Pratinus introduced the satyr play to Athens. The first tragic competition took place in 534 B.C. If tragedy came out of satyr, surely tragic competition would have been introduced after, and not before, the satyr play.

Another argument that arises over the origin of tragedy is the word "tragedy" itself. Believed to have been derived from the word *tragoidia*, meaning "song of the goat," most scholars have agreed that the goat reference points in the direction of Dionysus. Explanations of this connection include: 1) Dionysus was represented as a goat in certain myths; 2) The prize for tragic competitors was a goat; or that, 3) It referred to the song of the satyrs. Several questions must be explored about these explanations however. Was Dionysus the only god to be portrayed as a goat? Why were the satyrs, depicted as half-goat, called satyrs and not tragedians if they were first ones singing the dithyramb? Since the etymology of the word tragedy may very well have had its roots in the "song of the goat," the argument cannot be totally disproved. However, this argument alone is not strong enough to support the theory that theatre developed

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[20] The Suda lexicon. Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suda_Lexicon, November 10, 2003.

[21] Furley and Bremer, 12. Based on the work of Proklos.

[22] Aristotle, *Poetics*, I.iv.

[23] Ibid. It is interesting to note that the dithyramb is in lyric form.

[24] John J. Winkler, "The Ephebes Song: Tragoidia and Polis," *Representations* 52 (1985): 26-62. Available from http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=07346018%28198522%290%3A11%3C26%3ATESTAP%3E2.0.CO%3B2C; JSTOR Database, November 20, 2003. Winkler attributes the origin of tragedy to a ritual that focused on the *ephebes* and not necessarily cult god Dionysus.

[25] Ridgeway, 57.

solely out of the cult of Dionysus. So then the question is asked, did the development of theatre have "nothing to do with Dionysus?"[26]

It would be a mistake to discount the cult of Dionysus altogether. There were many myths, cults, and festivals dedicated to different gods, goddesses, and heroes early on in Greek history, but the theatre does not take its recognizable form until Thespis in about 534 B.C. Certainly, the cult of Dionysus served as a catalyst. There were several reasons that this cult played an important role. First, as Bieber stated, the cult of Dionysus was different from other cults not only because its late development, but also because the myths surrounding the god were open to variance not found with other cult religions. [27] Furthermore, the worship of Dionysus, the god of wine and revelry, lent itself to a frenzied and free approach. And finally, the Dionysian cult was "inclined to disguise individual personality in favor of a transformation into a higher being."[28] Perhaps all four reasons functioned as catalysts in the development of tragedy, but it is important to add that Bieber also stated that the reason the late arrival of the cult of Dionysus was important to the development was because epic and lyric poetry were already mature art forms.[29] In essence, it was time for a new type of performance to sprout from the old. The new form of tragic performance was not separate from the old form but rather linked and then improved.

The mask was an important invention stemming from the cult worship of Dionysus because it enabled the person behind it to "become" the character. Even in the early stages of the cult, as the dithyramb was being performed, men masqueraded as satyrs. As exhibited on Attic vases, the men wore pointed ears and long tails. Not long after, a visible distinction appeared between the leader of the chorus and the rest of the chorus. The satyr chorus lead by Hermes is a first-rate example of this difference. The leader is seen with a patterned cloak and boots, but he remains a satyr. Although he plays the god Hermes, he had not truly embodied the character.[30] The final stage occurred when the leader of the chorus was no longer a satyr, but actually puts on a mask and impersonates either a god or hero.[31] It is imperative to recognize however in the earliest vase paintings satyrs are mostly painted as mythical beings and not actors. Csapo asserts that, because of this, it is not viable to claim that satyrs are connected with drama in the 6th century B.C.[32] Nevertheless, the cult encouraged masks and impersonation, which eventually combined with epic poetry for entertainment purposes.

The cult also presented a larger "stage" for theatre to grow. Regardless of what one believes about the initial beginnings of the tragic theatre, it cannot be debated that once the Greater Dionysia was introduced in Athens, the theatre grew rapidly.

The Greater Dionysia festival, which lasted for several days, was to give honor to its patron god. It began with a processional that included the *phallephoria* and a wooden statue of

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[26] Several theories have been proposed as to the origin of this popular statement. The Suda Lexicon provides, "Originally when writing in honor of Dionysus they competed with pieces which were called satyric. Later they changed to the writing of tragedy and gradually turned to plots and stories in which they had no thought for Dionysus." Suda Lexicon available from Suda On Line: Byzantine Lexicography, http://www.stoa.org/sol/.

[27] Margarete Bieber, *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 1-2.

[28] Ibid,2.

[29] Ibid,1.

[30] Ibid,15.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Eric Csapo and William Slater, *The Context of Ancient Drama* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 92.

Dionysus. Sacrifice alongside the processional was recorded in both Chalkis and Priene.[33] The theatric competition trailed the processional. It is certain that Dionysus was honored in this cult festival for his statue loomed largely in the theatre.[34] However, just as scholars question the cult's importance in the theatre, many question how much ritual worship was part of the Greater Dionysia. Numerous scholars have regarded the festival as simply a way to promote Athenian superiority and Greek civic duty.[35] After all, it was during this festival that Athens' allies came into the city to pay tribute. Civic honors were also awarded before the performance of plays.[36] It was time to model for everyone present the duties that were expected of a citizen in the democratic *polis*.

At the core of the entire festival though was the entertainment of the theatre. The dramatists competed for three days in hopes of capturing three prizes – best poet, best *choregos*, and best actor. The contest must have been grueling for it lasted from sunrise until sunset. And so, it was here, in Athens, that epic poetry and hero worship intersected with the dithyramb and Dionysian cult worship to create the theatre, and more specifically the tragedy.

As epic poetry, hero worship, and the Dionysian cult became intertwined on the Greater Dionysian stage, it created something unique: the 5th century tragedy. The religious aspect does not last. As a matter of fact, in the short time that spanned from Aeschylus to his contemporaries, Sophocles and Euripides, the religious aspect had already begun to fade.

In general, there are some differences between the beliefs of the people of Greece and the beliefs of the characters of Greek tragedy. These differences provided a distance for the audience, and instead of creating a worshipful atmosphere, they created one of mere entertainment. For example, in Hellenistic religion people generally assigned the good things that happened to the gods and the bad that happened to fate, while the characters in tragedy readily assigned the bad to both the gods and fate.[37] Mikalson noted that this tragic religious concept was found particularly in the plays of Sophocles and Euripides.[38] An excellent example of this, taken from Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* occurs when Oedipus, upon piercing his own eyes, cries "Apollo, friends, Apollo was he that brought these woes of mine to pass/ These sore, sore woes."[39]

The concept of staging also removed the audience from a mode of worship to one of entertainment. For example, hero worship created innovative staging within the tragedy. While hero worship continued to be common in actual religious practice in 5th century B.C. Athens, the tragedians used the heroes in very theatrical ways for the effect and not for the religious experience. Aeschylus's *Persians* raised the hero Darius from the tomb for advice after the battle of Salamis as part of the staging. This must have been a shock and a thrill for the audience,

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[33] Susan G. Cole, "Procession and Celebration at the Dionysia," *Theater and Society in the Classical World*, ed. Ruth Scodel (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 30.
[34] Orrieux, 170.
[35] Simon Goldhill in his essay, "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology"; Orrieux suggests that the festival offered a "unique civic ritual," 171; and Josiah Ober and Barry Strauss note that dramatic texts were forms of public speech in "Drama, Rhetoric, and the Discourse of Athenian Democracy," *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?*, ed. John J. Winkler and Forma I. Zeitlin, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990),
[36] Simon Goldhill, "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology," *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?*, ed. John J. Winkler and Forma I. Zeitlin, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 104.
[37] Mikalson, chap.2 passim.
[38] Ibid, 19.
[39] Sophocles, "Oedipus the King," *Greek Drama*, ed. Moses Hadas (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1965), 144.

although according to Green, this could have been a common motif by the time Aeschylus staged it as there are earlier vases depicting the dead rising.[40]

Sophocles steadily moved away from the piety and reverence found in the plays of Aeschylus in his use of staging. From a series of five vase paintings, scholars have determined Sophocles staging for the play *Andromeda*.[41] With her knee-length tunic, Andromeda is pictured defenselessly tied to stakes; Green stated that, "Sophocles clearly aimed to shock the audience."[42]

Sophocles and Euripides visibly broke away from the traditional boundaries of tragedy, while Aeschylus remained the link between the old (religious foci) and the new (entertainment foci). Mikalson identified this split plainly:

> In Aeschylus religious beliefs often seem the center of attention in the play, and while many beliefs he presents are popular and conventional, the theological scheme and the theodicy into which he places them are not. For Sophocles and Euripides religious beliefs occasionally become objects of major concern, but most often they appear peripheral, introduced primarily to create or develop situations and characterizations. [43]

Ultimately, Aeschylus wrote "religious dramas," while at best Sophocles wrote "pious dramas," and Euripides wrote dramas with even less religious focus.[44]

In tragedy, Aeschylus had a few unique theological views, particularly of justice. He makes Zeus into the defender and distributor of justice.[45] He had his characters punished for unanswered sins in the afterlife.[46] And though not unheard of in the plays of his contemporaries, Aeschylus regularly had the gods in his plays decide the outcome of a conflict or war. For example, in Agamemnon the chorus sings, attributing the outcome of the war to Zeus:

> Hail, sovereign Zeus, hail, gracious night, high is the glory thou hast won, thou night, that hast cast over the towers of Troy meshes so close, that none full-
> grown, nay, nor any young could pass the wide enslaving net, one capture taking them all.[47]

Aeschylus seemed to have had a more systematic theology than his contemporaries. In fact, the genius of Aeschylean tragedy came from the "theological, philosophical line" which he established as a "counterpoint" to the vague and conflicting storyline.[48] Finally, another important feature of Aeschylean tragedy is his use of the chorus. The chorus later begins to fade in importance, but the strong religious roots that had helped propel tragedy forward remained intact within the chorus of Aeschylus's plays.

Sophocles's tragedies could be considered more philosophical, and maybe even a bit more political than that of his predecessor. Any reshaping that Sophocles did in his plays to

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[40] Green, 18.
[41] Ibid, 20.
[42] Ibid, 22.
[43] Mikalson, 15.
[44] Gilbert Norwood, *Essay on Euripidean Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 8. Norwood expressed this idea as well in his book. His conclusion was that tragedy did not have to be religious.
[45] Mikalson, 212.
[46] Ibid, 212-213.
[47] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," *Greek Drama*, ed. Moses Hadas (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1965), 23.
[48] Charles R. Beye, Ancient Greek Literature and Society (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, 1975), 143.

convey religion were not because of some grand theological scheme, but rather for the enjoyment of the audience. Mikalson claimed that Sophocles was the "one most willing to distort it [popular religion] for literary purposes."[49]

Sophocles's primary focus was the human side of the hero. Perhaps this was a natural advancement in literary technique; when he added yet a third actor, perhaps character development became easier for the tragedian. Whatever the reason, Sophocles's heavier focus on the human characters meant that he did not have to utilize the gods as much in the action. He portrayed the concept of the "hero" differently from the "hero's" portrayal in epics or popular religion. It seemed that the greater the hero, like Creon at the height of his kingship in *Antigone*, the more likely he was to fall, often due to his own *hubris*.

His choruses, which were smaller in size and importance than earlier choruses, spotlighted humanity, giving little credit, if any, to the gods.[50] In Antigone, the chorus sings an ode to the achievements of man beginning with, "Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man."[51] The ode continues with praise for man and his actions, a far cry from Aeschylus and even Euripides.

When Euripides entered the tragic scene, the chorus had already been reduced, but it still played a role that was interwoven with the text. However, Euripides's chorus could have been completely removed from the play without disrupting the essence of the drama. According to Dearden, the depleted chorus can be attributed to a "change in the audience's attitude towards the state and politics" causing the playwrights to focus not on the religious themes, but rather on "more social and economic themes."[52]

Hadas wrote in his introduction that "by applying contemporary gauges" Euripides exposed social issues and problems at hand in the state.[53] Euripides was a "realistic" playwright, addressing political and social problems while focusing more on the everyday person. In addition, the characters in his plays were allowed the privilege of "having second thoughts" and do not seem to always bow to the will of the gods or fate.[54]

Euripides portrayed the gods differently than Aeschylus or Sophocles too. Instead of using the gods in the traditional *deus ex machina*, Euripides sometimes created a "*homo ex machina*" in his plays.[55] For example, Medea, in Euripides's play by the same name, uses her own abilities of prophecy and power to punish Jason. In addition, Euripides was sometimes criticized for his harsh treatment of the gods.[56] Aphrodite in *Hippolytus* and Dionysus in the *Bacchae*, for example, were unusually cruel and unjust to their human "subjects." Euripides's plays did not truly mark the end of the performance of tragedy, or even its creation, but after the "three great tragedians," tragedy as it had been known in the 5th century B.C. faded in importance, giving way perhaps to philosophy.

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[49]Mikalson, 219.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Sophocles, "Antigone," *Greek Drama*, ed. Moses Hadas (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1965), 89. This example is also used in Mikalson, 219.

[52] C.W. Dearden, *The State of Aristophanes* (London: The Athlone Press, 1976), 101.

[53] Moses Hadas, "Introduction," *Greek Drama*, ed. Moses Hadas (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1965), 8.

[54] Benard Knox, "Second Thoughts in Greek Tragedy," *Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 232.

[55]Norwood, 21. Euripides still utilized *deus ex machina* in his plays (Artemis in *Hippolytus* is an excellent example), but he did not rely on it as much as his predecessors.

[56] Aristophanes, writing at the same time as Euripides, often criticized Euripides. His criticisms demonstrate that the focus of tragedy had changed from the time of Aeschylus to Euripides. In his play *Frogs*, Aristophanes provides a literary criticism of tragedy by comparing Aeschylus and Euripides.

It is not within the scope of this essay to trace comedy's development, however, it is important to note a few aspects of 5th century B. C. Attic Old Comedy and the development of New Comedy and its relationship to tragedy. Attic comedy, like the tragedy, developed into highly political and social statements. Unfortunately, the only complete works from the era of Old Comedy come from Aristophanes, but they are insightful pieces. Aristophanes's plays involved so many contemporary events that scholars use them as a source for political and social history. According to Walton and Arnott, comedies of the 5th century B.C., like the "later tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides" were created for "an audience under stress and frequently under siege as a result of the Peloponnesian War."[57] It is possible to see the concerns of the Athenian population in his plays.

In the 4th century however, the population had a "new concept of what the theatre was for;" it was no longer religious, or even political. [58] It was a source of entertainment. Murray summed it appropriately by stating, "there arose in the fourth century, B.C., a kind of play that we could understand at once, ... New Comedy is neither tragic nor comic, but, like our own plays a discreet mixture of both."[59] In the New Comedy, plot was not an archaic myth; it was an invention in the playwright's mind. Whereas tragedy wanted to reveal human destiny, comedy revealed developed characters – human characters.

The quest to discover the origins of Greek tragedy will, without a doubt, continue. But perhaps the better quest would be to discover what impact tragedy had on the Greek world, the Roman world, and even today's world. It certainly served as a necessary step in literary development, and perhaps a necessary step in the spectrum of Greek religion and philosophy, pushing society forward. Instead of viewing Greek tragedy as a result of one cult religion, the scholar should view it as an integral part to a continuum.

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[57] J. Michael Walton and Peter D. Arnott, *Menander and the Making of Comedy* (London: Praeger, 1996), 2.
[58] Ibid, 30.
[59] Gilbert Murray, *Euripides and His Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 101.