

Eumenides

By Aeschylus

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Pythia¹

I give highest honor among the gods to Earth, the first seer [*mantis*]; and after her *themis*, for she was the second to take the office of seer [*manteion*] that belonged to her mother, so goes the tale. Third, **5** with *Themis* willing, and with no compulsion [*biā*], another Titan, child of Earth, Phoebé, took her office here. She then bestowed it as birth-gift upon Phoebus [Apollo], who has a name derived from Phoebé.² When Phoebus left behind the sea and the rocks of Delos **10** and landed on Pallas'³ ship-frequented shores, he came to this land and the temples of Parnassus. The children of Hephaistos,⁴ road-builders, who make the wilderness tame, accompanied him and honored him greatly. **15** The people, too, truly celebrated his coming, and Delphos, helmsman and lord of the land. Zeus made Phoebus' *phrēn* inspired with the skill of becoming possessed by the gods [*entheos*] and established him as the fourth seer [*mantis*] on this throne; and Loxias is the declarer [*prophētēs*] of Zeus his father.

20 I begin by invoking these gods. Pallas who stands before the temple also is especially honored in my words, and I worship the Nymphs who live on the hollow Korykian crag, the delight of birds and haunt of *daimones*. Bromios has held the region—I do not forget him— **25** since he, as a god, led the Bacchantes in war, and contrived for Pentheus to die as a hare dies. I call on the streams of Pleistos and the power [*kratos*] of Poseidon, and mightiest Zeus who brings prayers to fulfillment [*telos*], and I take my seat as seer [*mantis*] upon my throne. **30** Now grant that I enjoy the best fortune, far better than I enjoyed on my previous entrances to the temple. And if there are any Hellenes, let them come in turn by lot, as is the custom. I speak as a seer [*mantis*], whichever way the god leads.

She enters the temple and returns in terror.

Horrors, horrible to tell and to see, **35** have sent me back from the house of Loxias, so that I have no strength and I cannot stand straight. I am running on my hands and knees, not with quickness of limb; for a frightened old woman is nothing, or rather she is like a child.

I was going to the inner shrine, decked with wreaths, **40** and then I saw on top of the Omphalos⁵ a man abominable to the gods, in the attitude of a suppliant, his hands dripping gore, holding a sword freshly drawn from a wound, and an olive-branch, from the top of the tree, crowned in a balanced [*sōphrōn*] way **45** with a long strand of shining white wool; this much I can relate clearly.

In front of the man sitting on the throne, an awesome band of women sleeps. Not women, but Gorgons I mean, although I would not compare them to the forms of Gorgons. **50** Once before I saw a picture of Gorgons carrying off the feast of Phineus—but these here, at least as far as I can see, are wingless, black, totally loathsome;

they snore with sharp snorts, they drip vile tears from their eyes; **55** their appearance [*kosmos*] is not fit [*dikaïos*] to go either to the statues of the gods or to the homes of men. I have never seen this species nor the land that boasts of rearing this breed with impunity and does not grieve its labor [*ponos*] afterwards.

60 Let what is to come now be the concern of the master of the house, powerful Loxias himself. He is a *mantis* of healing, a diviner of portents, and a purifier of homes for others.

She exits. The temple doors open, revealing Apollo standing over Orestes at the omphalos. Nearby the Furies are asleep, and Hermes stands in the background.

Apollo

No, I will not abandon you. I am your guardian all the way to the *telos*, **65** standing near and far away, I will not be kind to your enemies. So now you see these mad women overcome, these loathsome maidens have fallen asleep—**70** old women, ancient children, with whom no god, no man, no beast ever consorts. They were born for evil, and since then they live in evil gloom and in Tartaros under the earth, hateful to men and to the Olympian gods. All the same, try to get away and do not lose heart. **75** For they will drive you on even as you go across the wide land, always in places where wanderers walk, beyond the sea [*pontos*] and the island cities. Do not grow weary brooding on your ordeal [*ponos*], but when you have come to the *polis* of Pallas, **80** sit yourself down and clasp in your arms the ancient wooden image of the goddess. And there we shall find judges for your case and have spellbinding and effective *muthoi* to release you from your labors [*ponoi*] completely. For I persuaded you to kill your mother.

Orestes

85 Lord Apollo, you do not know how to be without *dikē*; and, since you are capable, also learn not to neglect. For your power to do good is dependable.

Apollo

Remember, do not let fear conquer your *phrenes*. **90** Hermes, my blood brother, born of the same father, keep watch and, true to your name, be his Escort,⁶ shepherding this suppliant of mine; Zeus honors the respect of those who are outside the protection of laws [*nomoi*], and this respect brings to mortals a fate that leads to a good outcome.

He exits. Orestes departs escorted by Hermes. The Ghost of Clytemnestra appears.

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

You would sleep! Aha! Yet what need is there of sleepers? **95** Because of you I am dishonored in this way among the other dead; the reproach of those I killed never leaves me while I am among the dead, and I wander in disgrace. I declare to you that I endure much blame [*aitiā*] because of them. **100** And yet, while I suffer [*paskhein*] so cruelly from my most *philoï*, no *daimōn* has *mantis* on my behalf, although I was slaughtered at the hands of a matricide. See these gashes in my heart, and from where they came! For the sleeping *phrēn* is lit up with eyes, **105** but in the daytime it does not see the fate of mortals.

You really have lapped up many of my libations—wineless libations, offerings unmixed with wine for the dead, and I have offered solemn nocturnal banquets upon a hearth of fire at a time [*hōrā*] not shared with any other god. **110** I see all this trampled under foot. He is gone, escaping like a fawn, lightly like that, from the middle of a place surrounded with snares. He rushed out mocking you. Hear me, since I plead for my *psūkhē*. **115** Activate your *phrenes*, goddesses of the underworld! In a dream I, Clytemnestra, am calling you.

Chorus

(*Muttering*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

Mutter, if you will! But the man is gone, fled far away. For his friends are not like mine!

Chorus

120 (*Muttering*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

You are too drowsy and do not pity my suffering [*pathos*]. The murderer of his mother, Orestes, is gone!

Chorus

(*Moaning*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

You moan, you sleep—will you not get up quickly? **125** Are you supposed to be doing anything but working evil?

Chorus

(*Sharp moaning twice*)

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

Sleep and labor [*ponos*], real conspirators, have sapped the strength of the dreadful dragon.

Chorus

130 Catch him! Catch him! Catch him! Catch him! Take heed!

Ghost Of Clytemnestra

In a dream you are hunting your prey, and are barking like a dog after a scent, never leaving off the pursuit. What are you doing? Get up; do not let *ponos* overcome you, and do not ignore my misery because you have given in to sleep. **135** Sting your heart with reproaches that have *dikē*; for reproach goads those who are *sōphrones*. Send after him a gust of bloody breath, waste him with the vapor, with the fire from your guts—after him!—waste him with a second chase.

The Ghost of Clytemnestra disappears; the Furies awake.

Chorus

— **140** Awake! Wake her up, as I wake you. Still asleep? Get up, shake off sleep, let us see if any part of this beginning is in vain.

strophe 1

—Oh, oh! Alas! We have suffered [*paskhein*], sisters.

—Indeed I have suffered [*paskhein*] much and all in vain. **145** We have suffered [*paskhein*] an experience [*pathos*] hard to heal, oh! unbearable evil. Our prey has escaped from our nets and is gone. I was overcome by sleep and lost my prey.

antistrophe 1

Oh! Child of Zeus, you have become wily, **150** and you, a youth, have ridden down elder female *daimones*, by honoring the suppliant, a godless man and bitter to his parents; though you are a god, you have stolen away a man that killed his mother. Who will say that any of this was done with *dikē*?

strophe 2

155 Reproach comes to me in a dream, like a charioteer with goad grasped in the middle, and strikes me under my *phrenes*, under my vitals. **160** I can feel the cruel, so cruel chill of the people's destroying scourge.

antistrophe 2

They do this sort of thing, the younger gods, who have power far beyond *dikē*. A throne dripping blood, **165** about its foot, about its head, I can see the omphalos defiled with a terrible pollution of blood.

strophe 3

170 Though he is a *mantis*—he urges himself and directs himself—he has defiled his sanctuary with a family pollution [*miasma*]; contrary to the custom [*nomos*] of the gods, he respects the rights of humans and causes the ancient rights to decay.

antistrophe 3

Indeed he brings distress to me, but him he shall not deliver; **175** although he escapes to the places beneath the earth, never will he be free. A suppliant himself, he will suffer in his life another vengeance on account of his family.

Apollo enters from the inner sanctuary.

Apollo

Out of my temple at once, I order you. **180** Be gone, quit my sanctuary of the seer's [*mantis*] art, **180** or else you might be struck by a flying, winged, glistening snake shot forth from a golden bow-string, and then you would spit out black foam from your lungs in pain, vomiting the clotted blood you have drawn. **185** It is not proper for you to approach this house. So, go to those places where for punishment [*dikai*] they chop off heads, gouge out eyes, slit throats, and where young men's virility is ruined by destruction of their seed, where there are mutilations and stonings, and where men who are impaled beneath the spine **190** moan long and piteously. Do you hear—the feasts you love makes you detestable to the gods? The whole fashion of your form shows it. It is reasonable for creatures like you to dwell in the den of a blood-drinking lion, **195** but not to rub your filth on everything you touch in this oracular shrine. Be gone, you flock without a shepherd! No god is the beloved shepherd of such a flock.

Chorus

Lord Apollo, hear our reply in turn. You yourself are not just partly responsible [*aitios*] for these crimes, **200** but you alone have done it all and so you are totally to blame [*aitios*].

Apollo

What do you mean? Spin out your story a little longer.

Chorus

Through your oracle, you directed the stranger to kill his mother.

Apollo

Through my oracle, I directed him to exact vengeance for his father. What of it?

Chorus

And then you agreed to take the fresh blood on yourself.

Apollo

205 Yes, I ordered him to turn for expiation to this house.

Chorus

And then do you truly revile us who accompanied him?

Apollo

You are not fit to approach this house.

Chorus

But it's our duty—

Apollo

What is the *tīmē* here? Boast of your fine reward!

Chorus

210 We drive matricides from their homes.

Apollo

What about a wife who kills her husband?

Chorus

That would not be murder of relative by blood.

Apollo

Indeed you damage the *tīmē* that is due to the social contracts of Hera, who brings *telos*, and of Zeus. You slight them. **215** Aphrodite, too, is cast aside, bereft of *tīmē* because of your argument, Aphrodite who is the source of all things that are most *phila* to mortal men. For marriage between man and woman is ordained by fate and is better protected by *dikē* than an oath. If you release those who kill each other **220** and neither exact a penalty nor punish them with wrath, then I claim that you are without *dikē* in hunting down Orestes. For I know that you are very concerned about some murders, but you are more serene [*hēsukhoi*] even to those who openly commit others. But the goddess Pallas will handle the judgment [*dikai*] of these cases.

Chorus

225 I will never, never let that man go!

Apollo

Pursue him then and get more trouble [*ponos*] for yourself.

Chorus

Do not cut short my *tīmai* with your argument.

Apollo

I would not have anything to do with your *tīmai*.

Chorus

All the same you are said to be very important at the throne of Zeus. **230** But as for me—since a mother’s blood leads me, I will pursue justice [*dikai*] against this man and even now I am on his track.

They exit.

Apollo

And I will aid the suppliant and rescue him! For the *mēnis* of the suppliant would be awesome to mortals and gods, if I intentionally abandoned him.

He enters the sanctuary. The scene changes to Athens, before the temple of Athena. Hermes enters with Orestes, who embraces the image of the goddess.

Orestes

235 Queen Athena, at Loxias’ command I have come. Receive an accursed wretch kindly. I am not a suppliant for purification, my hand is not unclean, but my guilt’s edge has already been blunted and worn away at other temples and among men. **240** I have traveled on land and sea alike, and I have kept [*sōzein*] the commands of Loxias’ oracle: now I approach your house and wooden statue, goddess. Here will I keep watch and await the *telos* of *dikē*.

The Furies enter.

Chorus

Aha! This is a clear sign of the man. **245** Follow the clues of the voiceless informant. For as a hound tracks a wounded fawn, so we track him by the drops of blood. My lungs are heaving from many tiring struggles; I have visited every corner of the earth, **250** and I have come over the sea [*pontos*] in wingless flight, pursuing him, no slower than a ship. And now, he cowers here somewhere. The smell of human blood greets me.

Look! Look again! **255** Look everywhere, so that the matricide will not escape our notice and leave his debt unpaid!

Yes, here he is again with a defense; he has wrapped his arms around the wooden statue of the immortal goddess, **260** and he wants to be tried for his deeds.

But it is not possible; a mother’s blood upon the earth is hard to requite—alas, the quick liquid has been poured on the ground and is gone.

In return you must allow me to suck the blood red gore **265** from your live limbs. I would feed on you—a gruesome drink!

I will lance you alive and drag you down under the earth so that you repay your mother's murder with equal anguish.

You will see if any other mortal commits an offense **270** that dishonors a god or a *xenos* or his *philoï* parents—each has a worthy claim to *dikē*.

For Hādēs is a mighty judge of mortals under the earth, **275** and he observes everything with his recording *phrēn*.

Orestes

Schooled in misery, I know many purification rituals, and I know when it is *dikē* to speak and similarly when to be silent; and in this case, I have been ordered to speak by a *sophos* teacher. **280** For the blood slumbers and fades from my hand—the pollution [*miasma*] of matricide is washed away; while the blood was still fresh, it was driven away at the hearth of the god Phoebus by expiatory sacrifices of swine. It would be a long story to tell from the beginning, **285** how many people I visited with no harm from the meeting. As time grows old, it purifies all things alike.

So now with a pure mouth, in a manner that is *euphēmos*,⁷ I invoke Athena, lady of the land, to come to my aid. Without the spear, she will win **290** me, my land, and the good faith of the Argive people, as faithful allies in *dikē* and for all time. Whether in the Libyan regions of the world or near the waters of Triton, her native stream, whether she is in action or at rest, aiding those who are *philoï* to her, **295** or whether, like a bold marshal, she is surveying the Phlegraean plain,⁸ **295** oh, let her come—she hears even from far away because she is a goddess—and may she be my deliverer from these troubles!

Chorus

No, be sure, not Apollo nor Athena's strength **300** would save you from perishing abandoned, you who do not know joy in your *phrenes*—you will be sucked dry of blood by *daimones*, a shadow.

You do not answer—you scorn my words, you who are a victim fattened and dedicated to me? **305** You will be a living feast for me, even though you will not be slain at an altar; now you will hear my hymn, a spell for you.

anapests

Come now, let us also join in the *choros*, since it seems good to make our hateful song [*mousa*] known **310** and to show how our group [*stasis*] distributes positions among men. We believe that we give straight *dikē*. No *mēnis* from us will stealthily come over a man who shows his hands are clean, **315** and he will go through life unharmed; but whoever commits an offense, as this man has, and hides his blood-stained hands, we are reliable witnesses against him, and we are avengers of bloodshed, **320** coming to the aid of the dead as we appear in the fullness of time [*telos*].

strophe 1

O mother Night, hear me, mother who gave birth to me, so that I would work retribution for the blind and the seeing. For Leto's son has deprived me of *tīmē* **325** by snatching away this cowering wretch, who is a suitable expiation for his mother's

blood.

I sing this song over the sacrificial victim, a frenzied, wild, song, **330** injurious to the *phrēn*, the hymn of the Furies [*Erinyes*], a spell to bind the *phrenes*, a song not tuned to the lyre, a song that withers mortals.

antistrophe 1

Relentless destiny spun out our fate **335** so that we continuously have the duty to pursue mortals who are saddled with fruitless kin-murders, to pursue them until they go under the earth, and even when they die, **340** they are not really free.

I sing this song over the sacrificial victim, a frenzied, wild, song, injurious to the *phrēn*, the hymn of the Furies [*Erinyes*], a spell to bind the *phrenes*, a song not tuned to the lyre, **345** a song that withers mortals.

strophe 2

These duties were granted to us at birth, and it was also granted that the deathless gods hold back their hands from us, and none of them **350** shares a table with us as a companion at a feast; and I have neither lot nor portion of their pure white ceremonial robes...

For we undertake to ruin any house, **355** where domestic violence [*Arēs*] kills someone *philos*. So speeding after this man, we weaken him, even though he is strong, because of the fresh blood.

antistrophe 2

360 And we are eager to take these cares away from others, and to establish immunity from the gods for our concerns, so that no trial will even begin; **365** for Zeus has banished us, a blood-dripping, hateful race, from his council.

strophe 3

And men's reputations, which are proud and lofty under the sky, waste away and dwindle beneath the earth, in deprivation of *tīmē*, **370** when we, the black-robed Furies [*Erinyes*], attack and dance our hostile dance.

For surely I make a great leap from above and bring down the heavy-falling force of my foot; **375** my limbs trip even swift runners—unendurable *atē*.

antistrophe 3

But when he falls because of his heedless outrage, he does not know it; for pollution hovers over a man in this kind of darkness, and mournful rumor **380** announces that a murky mist envelops his house.

strophe 4

For it waits. We are skilled in plotting, powerful in bringing things to pass [*telos*], and we remember evil deeds—we are awesome and hard for mortals to appease. **385** Though we pursue our appointed office, we are disenfranchised, without *tīmē*, and we stand apart from the gods in sunless light—we make the road rugged and steep for the seeing and the blind alike.

antistrophe 4

What mortal does not stand in awe of these things **390** and tremble, when he hears the law enacted by destiny, the law ordained by the gods for perfect fulfillment [*telos*]? My prerogative is ancient, I do not meet with dishonor, **395** although I have a post under the earth and in sunless gloom.

Athena enters wearing the aegis.

Athena

I heard a voice calling from afar, from the Scamander, where I was taking possession of the land, which the leaders and chiefs of the Achaeans assigned to me, **400** a great portion of their spear-won spoil, to be all mine forever, a choice gift to Theseus' sons.⁹ From there I have come, driving my tireless foot, without wings, with the folds of the aegis rustling. **405** I yoked this chariot to lively colts. I am not afraid to see a strange group in my land, but it is a wonder to my eyes! Who in the world are you? I address you all together—both you, *xenos*, sitting at my image, **410** and you, who are like no race of humans, nor like any that was ever seen by the gods among the goddesses, or that resembles mortal forms. But it is not right [*dikaïos*] for neighbors to speak ill of a blameless man, and divine law [*themis*] stands aloof.

Chorus

415 Daughter of Zeus, you will hear it all in brief. We are the eternal children of Night. We are called Curses at home beneath the earth.

Athena

I know your family and your name.

Chorus

You will soon learn my *tīmai*.

Athena

420 I would understand, if someone would tell the story clearly.

Chorus

We drive murderers from their homes.

Athena

And where is the end of exile for a killer?

Chorus

Where happiness is not a custom [*nomos*].

Athena

Would you drive this man with your shrieks into such exile?

Chorus

425 Yes, for he thought he was worthy to be his mother's murderer.

Athena

Were there other compulsions, or did he fear someone else's wrath?

Chorus

Where is there a spur so keen that it drives a man to kill his mother?

Athena

Two parties are present, but only half the argument.

Chorus

But he would not accept our oath, nor would he be willing to give one.

Athena

430 You prefer to have a reputation for *dikē* rather than to have *dikē* itself.

Chorus

How so? Explain. For you are not lacking in *sophiā*.

Athena

I maintain that deeds without *dikē* do not win with oaths.

Chorus

Well then, put him to the test, and sort out [*krinein*] a straight judgment [*dikē*].

Athena

Then would you turn over the decision [*telos*] of responsibility [*aitiā*] to me?

Chorus

435 Why not? We honor you because you are worthy yourself and of worthy parentage.

Athena

What do you want to say to this, *xenos*, for your part? After you name your country, your family and your fortunes, then defend yourself against this charge, if in fact you trust in *dikē* **440** and if you sit guarding this statue near my hearth, as a sacred suppliant, like Ixion.¹⁰ To all this give me a plain answer.

Orestes

Lady Athena, first of all I will relieve you of the anxiety that your last words suggested. **445** I am not a suppliant in need of purification, nor is there pollution on my hands as I sit near your statue. I will give you hard evidence of this. It is the custom [*nomos*] for a man who is polluted by bloodguilt to be speechless until he is sprinkled with blood **450** from the slaughter of a newborn victim, from a sacrifice that expiates a man's blood. Long since at other temples we have performed these expiatory rites both by victims and by flowing streams. Therefore, I declare that this trouble is out of the way. As to my family, you shall soon learn how it is. **455** I am an Argive; my father—you rightly inquire [*historeîn*] about him—was Agamemnon, the commander of the naval forces; along with him, you made Troy, the *polis* of Ilion, into no *polis*. He did not die nobly, after he came home; but my mother with her black *phrenes* killed him **460** after she covered him with an intricately embroidered net, which bears witness to his murder in the bath. And when I came back home—after being an exile previously—I slew the woman who gave birth to me—I will not deny it—as the price for the murder of my *philos* father. **465** Together with me Loxias shares in being guilty [*aitios*] for this deed, because he goaded my heart by telling me that I would suffer if I did not hurt those who are responsible [*aitioi*] for his death. You sort out [*krinein*] whether I acted with *dikē* or not; in any case, however I fare with you, I solemnly approve [*aineîn*] it.

Athena

470 The case is too great, if any mortal thinks that he will pass judgment [*dikē*] on it; no, it is not right even for me to set the penalties [*dikai*] for murder that is followed by quick *mēnis*, especially since you had already performed the necessary rites, and when you came to my temple you were a pure and harmless suppliant; **475** so I respect you, since you do not bring offence to my city. Yet these women have a duty that is not to be dismissed lightly; and if they do not win this case, the venom of their *phrenes* will fall upon the ground, an intolerable, perpetual plague.

480 These are the choices: either to let them stay or to drive them away—both are disastrous and impossible. But since this case has been brought here, I will select homicide judges who will be bound by oath, and I will establish this tribunal for all time. **485** Summon your witnesses, collect your arguments, and the sworn evidence to support your case [*dikē*]. I will come back, after I sort out [*krinein*] the best of my townsmen, and then they will decide this case on the basis of truth, after they take an oath that they will give a verdict with *phrenes* of *dikē*.

She exits.

Chorus

strophe 1

490 Now this will mean the destruction of the new laws, if the *dikē* and harm of this matricide wins the case. Immediately all mortals will become accustomed to license because of this deed; **495** and in the future, many parents will endure the suffering [*pathos*] of real wounds and death at the hands of their children.

antistrophe 1

For the wrath of the Furies **500** who keep watch upon mortals will not follow deeds, but I will let loose death in every form. One person shall learn his own fortune or release from pain from another person, as he anticipates his neighbor's evil fate; **505** and some poor wretch will advise uncertain cures in vain.

strophe 2

Do not let anyone who is struck by misfortune make an appeal **510** and cry aloud, "*dikē!*" "Thrones of the Furies [*Erinyes*]!" Some father, perhaps, or mother in new *pathos* will lament piteously, **515** since the house of *dikē* is now falling.

antistrophe 2

There is a time when fear is good and must sit as a guardian of the *phrenes*. **520** It is profitable to achieve equilibrium [*sōphroneîn*] through suffering. But who, if he did not educate his heart in fear, either *polis* or mortal man, **525** would still honor *dikē* in the same way?

strophe 3

Do not approve [*aineîn*] a lawless life nor a life of tyrannical repression. The god grants power [*kratos*] to all in the middle rank, **530** but he treats other matters in different ways. I measure my words: *hubris* is truly the child of impiety, **535** but prosperity [*olbos*] arises from the health of *phrenes*, prosperity that is prayed-for and *philos* to all.

antistrophe 3

I command you to respect the altar of *dikē* forever, and do not spurn it, **540** do not tread on it with your godless foot because you are motivated by profit; for punishment will come upon you. The appointed cycle [*telos*] remains. **545** Therefore, let a man prefer respect for his parents, as is good, and show respect to the *xenoi* of his house.

550 Whoever is *dikaios* willingly and without compulsion, he will not be without prosperity [*olbos*]; utter destruction will never befall him. But I say that the man who boldly transgresses *dikē* and who does all sorts of evil things, **555** in time, he will surely trim his sails, when ordeals [*ponos*] break over him and the boom is splintered.

antistrophe 4

He will call on those who do not hear, when he is struggling in the midst of the whirling waters. **560** The *daimōn* laughs at a hot-headed man, after it has seen him boasting that this would never happen to him, now when he is powerless to relieve his distress and unable to surmount the cresting wave; shipwrecking the prosperity of his earlier life on the reef of *dikē*, **565** and he perishes unwept, unseen.

Athena enters in procession with a Herald and the jury of the Areopagus.

Athena

Herald, give the signal and restrain the crowd. Let the piercing Tyrrhenian trumpet, filled with human breath, send forth its loud blare to the crowd! **570** For while this council-hall is filling, it is good to be silent, it is good for the whole *polis* to learn my ordinances for time everlasting, and for these plaintiffs, too, so that *dikē* will be well-served.

Apollo enters.

Chorus

Lord Apollo, take charge of your business. **575** Explain how you are involved in this affair.

Apollo

I have come both to bear witness—for this man was a suppliant according to custom [*nomos*], and a guest of my sanctuary, and I am his purifier from bloodshed—and I come in person to be his advocate. I have the responsibility [*aitiā*] **580** for the murder of his mother.

To Athena.

Bring the case before the court, and, as best you can, accomplish *dikē*.

Athena

To the Furies.

It is for you to make the speech [*mūthos*—I am only bringing the case [*dikē*] before the council; for the prosecutor gives an account first and correctly explains the case from the beginning.

Chorus

585 We are many, but we shall speak briefly.

To Orestes.

Answer in turn, pitting word against word. Tell first if you murdered your mother.

Orestes

I killed her. There is no denial of this.

Chorus

This is already one of the three falls that win the match.

Orestes

590 You boast over a man who is not down yet.

Chorus

You still must tell how you committed the murder.

Orestes

I will answer: I wounded her neck with a drawn sword in my hand.

Chorus

By whom were you persuaded and whose advice did you follow?

Orestes

I followed the commands of this god here; he is my witness.

Chorus

595 The *mēnis* directed you to kill your mother?

Orestes

Yes; up till now I have never blamed my fortune.

Chorus

But if the jury's vote condemns you, you will change your tune soon enough.

Orestes

I have good confidence. My father will send defenders from his grave.

Chorus

Rely on the dead now, after you have killed your mother!

Orestes

600 I do, for she was twice afflicted with pollution [*miasma*].

Chorus

How so? Explain this to the judges.

Orestes

She murdered her husband, and she killed my father.

Chorus

So, that is why you are alive, and she is free in her death.

Orestes

But why did you not drive her into exile, while she still lived?

Chorus

605 The man she killed was not related to her by blood.

Orestes

Then am I my mother's kin by blood?

Chorus

How could she have nurtured you, murderer, within her skirts? Do you reject a most *philon* blood-tie with your mother?

Orestes

Please, Apollo, give your testimony now. Explain on my behalf, **610** whether I killed her with *dikē*. For we do not deny that I did the deed as is. But decide whether or not the bloodshed was, in your thinking [*phrēn*], just [*dikaion*], so that I can make a supporting statement.

Apollo

I will speak with *dikē* before you, Athena's great tribunal. **615** Since I am a *mantis*, I will not lie. I have never yet, on my throne of the *mantis*, said anything about a man or woman or *polis*, that Zeus, the father of the Olympians, did not command me to say.

I instruct you to understand how strong this *dikē* is, **620** but also to obey the will of my father; for an oath is not more powerful than Zeus.

Chorus

Zeus—as you say—granted you this oracular command, to tell this Orestes to avenge his father's murder, but not to respect his mother's *tīmai* at all?

Apollo

625 It is not at all the same thing—to kill a noble-born man who is invested with a god-given scepter, and to kill him this way, by a woman's hand, not in a rush of bow shots, as if he were killed by an Amazon, but as you will hear, Pallas, and the judges **630** who are empanelled to decide this case by vote.

She gladly received him home after the expedition, after he had succeeded for the most part; then, when he was going into the bath, as he stepped onto the edge, she draped a cloak around the bath **635** and trammed him in the tangle of an embroidered robe, and cut him down.

Thus the man's fate is told to you, a man who was in every way worthy of respect, who was a commander of the fleet. I have described her as such a woman, to whet the indignation of the people who are appointed to decide this case [*dikē*].

Chorus

640 Zeus gives preferred honor to a father's death, according to your argument; yet he himself bound his aged father, Kronos. How is it that your argument does not contradict these facts?

Turning to the judges.

I give this evidence on my own behalf for you to hear.

Apollo

Monsters, totally loathsome, hated by the gods! **645** Zeus could undo the shackles, there is a remedy for bondage, and many means of release. But after the dust has absorbed a dead man's blood, there is no resurrection [*anastasis*]. My father created no magic spells for that, **650** although he arranges everything else, and turning it all upside down with his power, does not cost him a breath.

Chorus

See how you advocate acquittal for him! After he has poured out his mother's blood on the ground, should he then live in his father's house in Argos? **655** Which of the city's altars shall he use? What brotherhood will allow him to use its ritual washing water?

Apollo

I will explain this, too, and notice how precisely I speak. The mother of her so-called child is not the parent, but she only nurtures the newly sown embryo. **660** The male who mounts is the one who generates the child, whereas she, like a host [*xenē*] for a guest [*xenos*], provides salvation [*sōzein*] for the seedling,¹¹ so that divine power does not harm it. And I will offer you a sure proof of this argument: a father can exist without a mother. A witness is here at hand, the child of Olympian Zeus, **665** who was not nurtured in the darkness of a womb, and she is such a seedling as no goddess could produce.

For my part, Pallas, in other matters and as I am able, I will make your city and your people great; I have sent this man as suppliant to your sanctuary **670** so that he will be a pledge for all time, and so that you might win him as an ally, goddess, and those that come after him, and so that later generations of Athenians would remain contented with these pledges.

Athena

Shall I now command these jurors to cast a vote of *dikē* according to their understanding of the case? **675** Has enough been said?

Chorus

All our arrows have already been shot. But I am waiting to hear how the trial is decided.

Athena

What else would you do?

To Apollo and Orestes.

As for you, how can I arrange things so that I will not be blamed?

Apollo

You have heard what you have heard; **680** and as you cast your ballots, keep the oath sacred in your hearts, *xenoi*.

Athena

Comply with my decree now, people of Attica, as you judge [*krinein*] the first trial [*dikai*] for bloodshed. In the future this council of jurors will always exist for the people of Aegeus. **685** And this Hill of Arēs [Areopagus], which was the position and the camp of the Amazons when they came here because of a grudge against Theseus, and they invaded with their army, and built a newly-founded rival *polis* with high towers, and dedicated their city to Arēs; the name of this rock comes from that event; **690** it is called the Hill of Arēs. The townsmen's reverence for this hill—and fear, her kinsman—will prevent them from acting unjustly both day and night alike, so long as my citizens do not revise their laws [*nomoi*] by adding evil to them; if you pollute clear water with filth, **695** you will never find a drink.

⁶⁹⁶ Neither anarchy nor tyranny ⁶⁹⁷ —I advise the citizens of my city not to hold either of these things in honor as they go on managing their affairs, ⁶⁹⁸ but I also advise them not to drive fear out of the city altogether. ⁶⁹⁹ For who among mortal men, if he fears nothing, behaves with justice [*dikē*]? ⁷⁰⁰ If you [Athenians], acting with justice [*dikē*], would treat reverence [*sebas*] for the divine as a thing to be feared, ⁷⁰¹ then there would be for you a protection that brings salvation [*sōtērios*] for your land and for your city [*polis*] ⁷⁰²—that is what you would have, the kind of protection that no other human could have anywhere else, ⁷⁰³ either among the Scythians or in the territories of Pelops. ⁷⁰⁴ I establish this lawcourt, which is untouched by desire for profit [*kerdos*]. ⁷⁰⁵ It is fully deserving of reverence and is quick to anger. Watching over those who sleep, ⁷⁰⁶ it is a wakeful guardian of the land. Yes, this is what I establish.

⁷⁰⁷ I have given to you at some length this set of instructions [*par-ainesis*] ⁷⁰⁸ to be heeded for all time by you as the citizens of my city. So now you must stand up, ⁷⁰⁹ take a ballot, and make a decision [*diagnōsis*] about the case [*dikē*], ⁷¹⁰ showing respect for your oath. The word has been spoken.

Chorus

And listen! I advise you not to deprive us of *tīmē* in any way, since our presence can oppress your land.

Apollo

I command you to stand in awe of oracles, mine and Zeus', and not to let them be unfulfilled.

Chorus

715 Although it is not your duty, you give approval to deeds of bloodshed. You as *mantis* will speak the words of a *mantis* but no longer keep them unpolluted.

Apollo

Then was my father mistaken in his decisions about Ixion's supplication in the first case of bloodshed?

Chorus

You do argue! But if I do not get *dikē*, **720** I will visit this land as a burdensome guest.

Apollo

But you have no *tīmē* among either the younger or the elder deities alike. I will win.

Chorus

You did this same sort of thing in the house of Pheres, when you persuaded the Fates to make mortal men unwilting [*aphthitōi*].¹²

Apollo

725 Is it not right [*dikaion*] to benefit a man who honors you, especially when he is in need?

Chorus

You made the old balance of power wilt when you beguiled the ancient goddesses with wine.

Apollo

Since you do not have the fullness [*telos*] of *dikē*, **730** you are spitting out venom that is not hard for your enemies to bear.

Chorus

Although you, a youth, ride roughshod over me, an elder female, I am still waiting to hear the decision of the case [*dikē*], since I have not decided whether to be angry at this *polis*.

Athena

It is my duty to decide [*krinein*] the last judgment [*dikē*], **735** and I cast my vote for Orestes. For there was no mother who gave me birth. In every way I approve [*aineîn*] what is male, with all my *thūmos*. I am very much on the father's side. Therefore, I will not award greater *tīmē* to the death of a woman **740** who killed her husband, the guardian of the house. Orestes wins, even if he is judged [*krinein*] by an equal vote. Toss the ballots out of the urns, as quickly as possible, you jurors who have been assigned this office [*telos*].

The ballots are counted.

Orestes

O Phoebus Apollo! How will the trial [*agōn*] be decided [*krinein*]?

Chorus

745 O Night, our dark Mother, are you watching this?

Orestes

Now I will meet my end by hanging—or I will see the light.

Chorus

We will either perish or maintain our *tīmai* in the future.

Apollo

Correctly count by fives the ballots that are cast out of the urns, *xenoi*, and feel the fear that keeps you from violating *dikē* in the division of the votes. **750** Great

suffering comes from a lack of attention, and a single ballot has often set straight a house.

The results are shown to Athena.

Athena

This man is acquitted on the charge [*dikē*] of bloodshed, for the number of casts is equal.

Orestes

Pallas, you have saved [*sōzein*] my house! **755** You have restored me to my home [*oikos*] when I was deprived of my fatherland. The Hellenes will say, “A man of Argos has an abode [*oikeîn*] again on the property of his ancestors, by the grace of Pallas and of Loxias and of that third god, the one who brings everything to fulfillment, **760** the *sōtēr*”—the one who respected my ancestral destiny, and saved [*sōzein*] me, when he saw who was defending my mother’s interests.

I will return to my home now, after I swear an oath to this land and to your people for the future and for all time to come, **765** that no captain of my land will ever come here and bring a well-equipped spear against them. For when we ourselves are in our graves, if anyone transgresses our oaths, we will enforce them by inflicting extraordinary failures on the transgressors, **770** by giving them heartless marches and ill-omened ocean voyages, so that pain [*ponos*] will make them feel regret. But while the men of the future stay on the straight course, they will always give *tīmē* to the city of Pallas with their allied spear, and we will remain more well disposed to them.

775 And so farewell—you and the people who live in your *polis*. May you have power, inescapable for your enemies in the fight, and salvation [*sōtēriā*] and victory with the spear!

Orestes and Apollo exit.

Chorus

strophe 1

Younger gods, you have ridden down the ancient laws [*nomoi*] and snatched them from my hands! **780** And I, wretched, deeply angry, and without *tīmē* in this land, alas, I will let venom fly from my heart, venom that brings sorrow [*penthos*] in return for *penthos*, drops of venom that the land cannot endure. **785** A blight will come from the venom that destroys leaves and destroys children, a blight that speeds over the plain and casts pollution on the land to destroy mortals. O *dikē, dikē!* I groan. What shall I do? I am the laughing-stock of the citizens. **790** I have suffered [*paskhein*] unbearably. Ah, unfortunate daughters of Night, you have the sorrow [*penthos*] of a great blight on your *tīmē*!

Athena

⁷⁹⁴ You [Erinyes] must be persuaded by me not to bear the decision with heavy grief. ⁷⁹⁵ For you are not defeated; the trial [*dikē*] resulted in an equal vote, ⁷⁹⁶ that is truly [*alēthōs*] how it came out, and so you are not deprived of your honor [*tīmē*], ⁷⁹⁷ since

there were clear pieces of testimony from Zeus. ⁷⁹⁸ And the one who spoke the oracle himself, he [= Apollo] was also the same one who came to give evidence himself, ⁷⁹⁹ with the result that Orestes could not suffer harm, even though he did [*drân*] these things that he did. ⁸⁰⁰ But here you are, vomiting your heavy anger [*kotos*] on this land. ⁸⁰¹ Do reconsider. Do not get passionately angry. Do not cause deprivation of fruit [*a-karpiā*], ⁸⁰² making the land sterile by releasing toxic drops dripping from superhuman powers [*daimones*], ⁸⁰³ drops becoming savage piercing pains that eat away the seeds. ⁸⁰⁴ For I do promise you, in all justness [*dikē*], ⁸⁰⁵ that you will have sanctuaries and sacred hollows in this land of justice [*dikē*], ⁸⁰⁶ where you will sit on bright thrones at places of fire-sacrifice, ⁸⁰⁷ that is what you will have, earning honor [*tīmē*] from the citizens here.

Chorus

antistrophe 1

Younger gods, you have ridden down the ancient *nomoi* and have snatched them from my hands! **810** And I wretched, deeply angry, and without *tīmē* in this land, alas, I will let venom fly from my heart, venom that brings *penthos* in return for *penthos*, drops of venom that the land cannot endure. **815** A blight will come from the venom that destroys leaves and destroys children, a blight that speeds over the plain and casts pollution on the land to destroy mortals. O *dikē, dikē!* I groan. What shall I do? I am the laughing-stock of the citizens. **820** I have suffered [*paskhein*] unbearably. Ah, unfortunate daughters of Night, you have the *penthos* of a great blight on your *tīmē!*

Athena

⁸²⁴ You are not without honor [*tīmē*], so do not be moved by your excessive feeling [*thūmos*], ⁸²⁵ O goddesses, by making the land cursed in the worst way for mortals. ⁸²⁶ I also rely on Zeus—what need is there to say that?—⁸²⁷ and I alone of the gods know where the keys are to the house ⁸²⁸ where his thunderbolt is kept safe, under a seal [*sphragīs*]. ⁸²⁹ But there is no need for it. So be obedient to me in the best possible way, ⁸³⁰ and do not hurl words against the land from a tongue uttering threats that cannot be fulfilled, ⁸³¹ threatening that all things bearing fruit [*karpos*] will not prosper. ⁸³² Put to sleep the bitter power [*menos*] of your dark flow, ⁸³³ since you will receive an honor [*tīmē*] that is revered [*semnē*], and you will share your dwelling [*sun-oikeîn*] with me. ⁸³⁴ You will have the first-fruits of this plentiful land, ⁸³⁵ and fire-sacrifices before childbirth—as also before matrimonial initiation [*telos*] ⁸³⁶ —that is what you will have. And, once you have these things, you will keep on transmitting forever these words of mine here, giving your approval [*ep-aineîn*].

Chorus

strophe 2

That I should suffer [*paskhein*] this, alas! That I, who have ancient *phrenes*, should live beneath the earth, alas, bereft of *tīmē* and unclean! **840** I am breathing *menos* and all possible rage. Oh, alas, earth! What is coming over me, what anguish steals into my heart! Hear my heart [*thūmos*], mother night, **845** for the deceptions of the

gods are hard to fight, and they have nearly deprived me of my ancient *tīmai*.

Athena

I will indulge your anger since you are older, and in that respect you are surely more *sophē* than I; **850** yet Zeus has also granted me good *phrenes*. But as for you, if you go to a foreign land, you will come to love this land—I forewarn you. For as time flows on, the years will be full of *tīmē* for these citizens. And you [= the Erinyes], if you have a place of honor [*tīmē*]⁸⁵⁵ at the house of Erekhtheus, you will be honored by the processions of men and women and you will have more honor than you would ever have from other mortals. So do not place on my land whetstones that hone my peoples' desire for bloodshed, harmful to the insides⁸⁶⁰ of young men, making them lose their minds with passionate feelings caused not by wine; and do not turn my people into fighting-cocks, making reckless internecine war [*Arēs*] for them, so that they kill each other. If there is war [*Arēs*], let it be with outsiders, and let it keep on happening,⁸⁶⁵ since war brings a terrific passion for genuine glory [*kleos*]; but I say there will be no bird-fights in my dwelling place [*oikos*]. I make it possible for you to choose to do [*drân*] good and to be treated [*paskhein*] well and with genuine honor [*tīmē*] to share in this land that is most dear [*philē*] to the gods.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

870 That I should suffer [*paskhein*] this, alas! That I, who have ancient *phrenes*, should live beneath the earth, alas, bereft of *tīmē* and unclean! I am breathing *menos* and all possible rage. Oh, alas, earth! **875** What is coming over me, what anguish steals into my heart! Hear my heart, mother night, for the deceptions of the gods are hard to fight, **880** and they have nearly deprived me of my ancient *tīmai*.

Athena

No, I will grow tired of telling you about these benefits—you'll never be able to say that you, an ancient goddess, went away deprived of your *tīmē* because of me, a younger goddess, and by the mortal inhabitants of this *polis*, and that you were bereft of *xeniā* in this land. **885** But if you give holy reverence to Persuasion and the honey of my speech is sweet, then you will surely remain here. But if you do not want to stay, it would be contrary to *dikē* for you to inflict *mēnis* or rage or harm on the people in this city. **890** For it is possible for you to have a share of the land with *dikē* and with full *tīmē*.

Chorus

Lady Athena, tell me what place will I have?

Athena

Your place will be free from pain and misery—please accept it.

Chorus

Say that I have accepted it, what honor awaits me?

Athena

895 No house will flourish without you.

Chorus

Will you let me be so strong?

Athena

Yes, for we give straight fortune to people who honor us.

Chorus

And will you give me a pledge for all time?

Athena

My word is as good as the accomplishment [*telos*] of my deed.

Chorus

900 You seem to enchant me, and I am not angry anymore.

Athena

Then stay in the land and you will gain *philoï*.

Chorus

So, what kind of hymn [*humnos*] are you telling me to sing for this land?

Athena

Sing the kinds of songs that are not about evil victory, ⁹⁰⁴ but songs of the land and of the currents of the sea, [*pontos*] ⁹⁰⁵ and of the sky; and sing that the gusts of wind ⁹⁰⁶ will come with good sunlight and blow over this land, ⁹⁰⁷ and that the fruit of the earth and the offspring of the animals of the field ⁹⁰⁸ will flourish abundantly for my citizens and will not wear out in the course of time, ⁹⁰⁹ and that there will be the salvation [*sōtēriā*] of human seed. ⁹¹⁰ May you be ready to promote the fertility of those who worship well [*eu-sebeîn*]; ⁹¹¹ for I cherish, like a gardener, ⁹¹² the progeny [*genos*] of these people here, who are so just [*dikaioi*][—]and who must be protected from sorrow [*penthos*]. ⁹¹³ Such things are for you to do. As for me, when it comes to deeds of war, ⁹¹⁴ ordeals [*agōnes*] that bring distinction, I will not stand for it if ⁹¹⁵ this citadel [*polis*], this victorious city [*astu*], is not honored [*tīmân*] among mortals.

Chorus

strophe 1

I will accept a common abode [*oikos*] with Pallas, and I will not deprive of *tīmē* a *polis* which is a fortress of the gods for omnipotent Zeus and Arēs, a city which has glory **920** in defending the altars of the Hellenic *daimones*. I pray for the city and give a favorable prophecy, that the joyous light of the sun **925** will cause profitable fortunes to rise rushing from the earth.

Athena

anapests

I act with favorable *phrenes* toward my citizens, when I settle here these great *daimones* who are hard to appease. **930** For their duty is to manage everything among mortals. Yet a man who has not found them grievous does not know where the strokes of fortune come from in life. For the errors of earlier generations **935** drag

him to these divinities; silent ruin and hateful wrath level him to the dust, even as he boasts.

Chorus

antistrophe 1

May no hurtful wind destroy the trees—I declare my reciprocity [*kharis*]¹³—and may no burning heat steal the buds from plants, **940** nor exceed its limit; may no fruitless, everlasting plague draw near; may the earth nurture the thriving flocks that bear double births in season; **945** and may the rich produce of the earth always pay the Hermes-found gift¹³ of the *daimones*.

Athena

anapests

Do you hear, guard of my *polis*, the things she will accomplish? **950** For the Lady Erinys is very powerful, both with the deathless gods and with those below the earth, and with mankind, in getting things done clearly and with proper fulfillment [*telos*]; she causes songs for some people, **955** but for others a life dimmed by tears.

Chorus

strophe 2

I forbid manslaughter and fates that are unseasonal [*a-(h)ōr-os*]; I grant to maidens **960** a life of lawful marriage with your husbands; you, divine Fates [*moirai*], our sisters by the same mother, *daimones* who distribute in a straight way, take part in every house, **965** at every time, and enforce the presence of *dikē*, you most honored of gods everywhere!

Athena

anapests

I rejoice that you are bringing these things to fulfillment for my land with favorable *phrenes*; **970** I love the eyes of Persuasion, who guided my tongue and mouth against the fierce refusal of these deities. But Zeus of the assembly [*agora*] has prevailed. **975** Our rivalry [*eris*] in doing good always wins.

Chorus

antistrophe 2

I pray that discord [*stasis*], that insatiable evil, may never rage in this *polis*, **980** and that the dust which drinks the black blood of citizens may never seize greedily upon disasters [*atai*] of vengeance in the *polis*—disasters in which blood is shed in requital for blood. May the citizens share joy instead, **985** in a disposition [*dianoia*] of mutual esteem, and may they hate with one *phrēn*; for this cures many ills for mortals.

Athena

anapests

Do they have the *phrenes* to follow the path of good speech? **990** Out of these terrible appearances I see great profit coming to these citizens; for, if you always give great

tīmē, with good *phrenes*, to the good goddesses, and guide your land and city down the straight path of *dikē* in every way, **995** you surely will shine.

Chorus

strophe 3

Rejoice, rejoice in the wealth allotted to you by fate. Rejoice, people of the city, as you sit near to Zeus; you are the *philoī* of the *philē* maiden, **1000** you who learn balance [*sōphrosunē*] in the fullness of time. The father stands in awe of you, since you are under the wings of Pallas.

Athena

anapests

You, too, rejoice; but I must go ahead to give you a presentation [*apodeixis*] of your dwellings **1005** in the sacred [*hieros*] light of these escorts. Go, speed beneath the earth with these solemn offerings and keep *atē* away from the land, but send what is profitable for the victory of the *polis*. **1010** Lead on, you who live in the *polis*, children of Kranaos;¹⁴ lead these females who have come from abroad to share in my abode [*oikos*] here. Let the citizens have a good disposition [*dianoia*] in good deeds.

Chorus

antistrophe 3

Rejoice, rejoice I say again, **1015** all you in the *polis*, both *daimones* and mortals who live in the *polis* of Pallas; if you respect well my taking up an abode [*oikos*] in the city, **1020** you will not blame the chances of your life.

Athena

I approve [*aineîn*] the words [*muthoi*] of your vows, and I will escort you by the light of gleaming torches to the places below and beneath the earth, with the attendant women who with *dikē* guard my wooden statue. **1025** For the eye of the whole land of Theseus will come forth, an ensemble of *kleos*, comprised of children, women, and a band of female elders.

Give them *tīmē* by wearing robes dyed crimson, and let the torches' light lead the march, **1030** so that the company of our land, with good *phrenes*, will manifest itself for the rest of time in fortune that brings prosperity to men.

Chorus Of The Processional Escort

strophe 1

Go to your home with good *phrenes* under a good escort, mighty lovers of *tīmē*, childless children of Night— **1035** be *euphēmoi*,¹⁵ all you who dwell in this land!

antistrophe 1

Under the primeval caverns you win much reverence in *tīmai* and sacrifices—be *euphēmoi*, the whole country in unison!

strophe 2

1040 Be propitious and show straight *phrenes* to the land; come here, venerable

goddesses, and delight in the flame-fed torch along the road—cry *ololu* in joyous song and dance!

antistrophe 2

The treaties between foreigners who settle here and Pallas' citizens will last for all time. **1045** Zeus who sees all and Fate have come down to lend support—cry *ololu* in joyous song!

Notes

[[back](#)] **1.** The chief priestess of Apollo at Delphi was known in the fifth century as the Pythia.

[[back](#)] **2.** Phoibos/Phoibē (Phoebus/Phoebe) means 'radiant like the sun'.

[[back](#)] **3.** Pallas is a cult-title of Athena throughout this play.

[[back](#)] **4.** The Athenians. Hephaistos and Earth herself were the parents of the hero Erikhthonios, in some versions identified with Erekhtheus, ancestor of the Athenians. – GN

[[back](#)] **5.** The name Omphalos 'navel' was given by the Delphians to a stone in the inmost sanctuary of Apollo, which they regarded as marking the exact center of the earth.

[[back](#)] **6.** Hermes is the guide of the living on their journeys, and the conductor of the *psūkhai* of the dead on their journey to the Underworld.

[[back](#)] **7.** The word *euphēmos* means 'uttering in a proper way' when it is applied in a sacred context; it means 'silent' when it is applied in a non-sacred context.

[[back](#)] **8.** Where the Olympian gods battled the Giants.

[[back](#)] **9.** What Athena says here confirms Athenian political claims: early in the sixth century, the Athenians had taken possession of Sigeion, near ancient Troy. Sigeion had earlier been possessed by the city of Mytilene (on Lesbos). The Athenian possession is equated here with Athena's possession.

[[back](#)] **10.** Ixion, king of the Lapiths, murdered the father of his bride, and was given purification by Zeus after having been denied by the other gods. Cf. 718.

[[back](#)] **11.** The word *ernos* 'seedling' here is found also in the lamentation of Thetis over the mortality of her son Achilles in *Iliad* XVIII 58: 'and he shot up like a seedling'. See Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* p.182.

[[back](#)] **12.** To atone for the murder of the dragon at Delphi, Apollo was compelled by Zeus to serve as a slave in the house of Admetus, son of Pheres. When it was time for Admetus to die, Apollo, in gratitude for his kindness, plied the Fates with wine (line 728) and secured their consent that Admetus should be released from death on condition that some one voluntarily die in his place. In Euripides' *Alcestis*, his parents refused, so his wife Alcestis chose to die for him.

[[back](#)] **13.** Hermes is the god of lucky finds. The Athenians have precious metals in mind, especially silver.

[[back](#)] **14.** Kranaos was a mythical founder of the 'rocky city' (*kranaos* 'rocky'), a favorite name of Athens.

[[back](#)] **15.** See the previous note on *euphēmos*.

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