

Of the *Choephoroi* only this is true, not of the *Oresteia*, or not to the same extent. The story of the *Agamemnon* is neither Apolline nor essentially religious. The facts are moralized from a religious point of view, as would be those of any story which passed through the handling of Aeschylus. But they are moralized, so to speak, from outside. Stripped of the religious interpretation, there would still be ample material of interest in the Thyestean feast, the death of Iphigenia, the passion of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra, the conspiracy, the storm, the signal, the triumphal entry, the vision of Cassandra, the fatal bath, the dupes and hirelings of the usurper, and the final overthrow of the Argive liberties. No theological prepossession is required to account for the existence of the story, which is constructed primarily to satisfy the human appetite for exciting narrative. There is in the piece no divine agency more direct and special than the general government of Providence; and Apollo in particular is but slightly attached to it through the punishment of the false Cassandra. In the *Eumenides* on the other hand, though the field is almost filled with divine personages, the religion taught is not by any means that of Delphi, nor of Hellas in general. It is the creed of Athens, or rather a creed for Athens, and the maker of it is Aeschylus. Apollo and the wisdom of Delphi have neither the highest place nor the last word; and religion itself, in its proper personal aspect, is merged in a sort of higher politics, which might have been approved at Delphi as best in the circumstances, but assuredly was neither invented nor preached by the possessors of the oracle. Indeed the *Eumenides*, alone of the extant plays, might be called original in plot as well as treatment, since in it the legendary data bear a small proportion to the transformations or additions of the author; for which very reason it is singularly easy of comprehension for us.

But the story of the *Choephoroi* is, in a different sense and the proper sense, a legend of religion. It is legendary as the *Eumenides* is not, and religious as the *Agamemnon* is not. The moral is neither made for the age of Aeschylus, nor superinduced by reflexion upon facts which to another mind might have had a merely secular interest. The story itself is a sacerdotal invention, and could not be secularized, except, as by Euripides, with the deliberate purpose of destroying it and turning it into contempt. Schlegel (*Dramatic Literature*, chap. ix.) remarks on Euripides' *Electra*, "I shall say nothing of his abuse of the oracle of Delphi. As it destroys the very basis of the whole drama, I cannot see why Euripides should have written it, except to provide a fortunate marriage for Electra", and so on. The simplicity of hatred, as