

Clytemnestra's Use of XPH in the *Oresteia*

The little philological work that has been done on the language of necessity in Greek does not suffice to explicate the breadth or depth of the semantic field; although their work is valuable, scholars either make generalizing statements about the entire corpus (e.g. Goodell 1914, Benardete 1965) or do not acknowledge the distinctions in use and meaning between words which fence in that field (Redard 1953). This talk comes out of a master's thesis on the language of necessity in Aeschylus and in the *Prometheus Bound*; in the course of that study I stumbled upon Clytemnestra's distinct use of the word *χρή*.

Aside from logical necessity, an individual's expression of "what is necessary" betrays the values on which he or she bases such a statement, and therefore one can, in a study of such statements, identify these values. By and large, in Aeschylus, *χρή* is used to convey the standards and ideals of traditional Greek society (typically to recommend humility, especially before the gods), as at *Suppliants* 724-725 (*χρή... μή ἀμελεῖν θεῶν*) and *Persae* 820 (*οὐχ ὑπέρφεν θνητὸν ὄντα χρή φρονεῖν*); this is true also in the *Oresteia*, as seen by Orestes' words to Clytemnestra at *Choephoroi* 930 (*ἔκανες ὄν οὐ χρῆν*) and Agamemnon's at *Agamemnon* 921-922 (*μηδ' εἶμασι στρώσασ' ἐπίφθονον πόρον / τίθει θεοὺς τοι τοῖσδε τιμαλφεῖν χρεῶν*) and 928-929 (*ὀλβίσαι δὲ χρή / βίον τελευτήσαντ' ἐν εὐεστοῖ φίλῃ*). Clytemnestra, however, uses *χρή* to express a radically different perspective that reflects values built up from her own unique life experiences. Not only does she use the word in a novel way, but she also implicitly acknowledges the difference between her belief of what is "necessary" and what other characters claim to be such by manipulating those around her: in the first half of the *Agamemnon*, before Agamemnon's murder, Clytemnestra uses *χρή* to express sentiments consonant with traditional Greek thought in order to keep hidden her intention of killing her husband (*ἔρωσ δὲ μή τις πρότερον ἐμπίπτη στρατῶ / πορθεῖν ἅ μή χρή, κέρδεσιν νικωμένους. 341-342; ἐκ τῶνδὲ τοι παῖς ἐνθάδ' οὐ παραστατεῖ / ἐμῶν τε καὶ σῶν κύριος πιστωμάτων, / ὡς χρῆν, Ὀρέστης 877-879*). However, once she has carried out her plot, she uses the word to convey her own true feelings (*οὐ τοῦτον ἐκ γῆς τῆσδε χρῆν ζ' ἀνδρηλατεῖν / μισμάτων ἄποινα; Agamemnon 1419-1420; χρῆν τάδ' ὡς ἐπράξαμεν. 1658*). Clytemnestra is the only Aeschylean character to use *χρή* in a substantively different way from all others, to communicate personal values at odds with the standard use of the word. Her guile, therefore, and her perspective of what is necessary contribute profoundly to Aeschylus' characterization of her.