RÓNAI Revista de Estudos Clássicos e Tradutórios

On the guilt of Agamemnon, by Lloyd-Jones: a problematic of Ate and Zeus intervention

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RESUMO: O presente artigo aborda a Ate e Zeus na tragédia de Ésquilo de acordo com o tratamento de Hugh Lloyd-Jones em seu artigo "The Guilt of Agamemnon". A tese principal de Lloyd-Jones propõe que a culpa de Agamémnon deriva em última instância do reconhecimento de Zeus sobre da maldição dos Átridas. Ele chega a esta conclusão por reduzir drasticamente o livre arbítrio de Agamémnon, considerando que suas escolhas não foram feitas com a consciência clara, mas sim tomado por Ate, a qual fora enviada por Zeus para atordoar o herói. Lloyd-Jones propõe a intervenção de Zeus como fundamentada na maldição familiar. Apesar de seu artigo, em vários aspectos, possuir uma boa abordagem da tragédia, rejeito a tese de Lloyd-Jones embasando-me no texto de Ésquilo e na ausência de fundamento textual suficiente para peso à sua interpretação. Pretendo justificar minha posição demonstrando que as inclusões de Ate feitas por Lloyd-Jones não podem resultar em uma boa interpretação acerca das escolhas de Agamémnon nas passagens do Sacrifício de Ifigênia e da caminhada sobre a tapeçaria púrpura. Ao ler as tragédias de Ésquilo devem-se levar em consideração os antecedentes épicos como conhecimento de fundo com o qual ele dialoga constantemente – com os quais nem sempre de acordo. Ao final, sugiro que Zeus ainda é de fato o principal maestro dos eventos da peça, mas a culpa de Agamémnon permanece também como uma parte de seu próprio caráter; e sugiro que ele faz sua parte na construção de seu destino trágico de modo consciente.

Palavras-chave: Agamémnon, Ésquilo, Culpa, Ate.

ABSTRACT: The proposed paper addresses Ate's and Zeus' interventions over *Agamemnon* according to Hugh Lloyd-Jones's treatment in the paper "The Guilt of Agamemnon". Lloyd-Jones's main thesis is that Agamemnon's guilt comes ultimately

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from Zeus' acknowledgment of the Atreidae curse. He reaches this conclusion by reducing Agamemnon's free will, considering his choices not made by clear continence but taken by Ate, sent by Zeus to stun the hero. Lloyd-Jones reduces the god's intervention to be fomented by this single cause. Although his article has in many aspects a good approach of the tragedy, I reject Lloyd-Jones's thesis by basing myself on Aeschylus' text and the absence of enough textual evidence to give weight to his interpretation. I intend to substantiate my position showing that Lloyd-Jones inclusions of Ate cannot give a good interpretation on Agamemnon's choices in the passages of Iphigenia's Sacrifice and the stroll over the purple tapestry. On reading Aeschylus' tragedies one must take in consideration the previous epics as background knowledge that he constantly dialogs with – but not always in agreement. In the end, I suggest that Zeus is still the main planner of all events but Agamemnon's guilt remains also as a part of his own character and that he consciously play his part on building his tragic fate.

Key-Words: Agamemnon, Aeschylus, Guilty, Ate.

1. Introduction:

Hugh Lloyd-Jones, in his article "The Guilt of Agamemnon", comments important passages of Aeschylus' play regarding the deeds and circumstances that leads to the death of Agamemnon. Lloyd-Jones highlights two passages: Iphigenia's sacrifice and the stroll over the purple tapestry. Those would contain the main motives that ground the hero's guilt; were a critical decision was made that ultimately leads to his murder. Then Lloyd-Jones tries to solve the apparent contradictions between Agamemnon's deeds and duties, the righteousness of his cause versus the demand for his daughter's sacrifice. In order to do that, Lloyd-Jones implies an intervention of Ate and concentrates his argument on the passages that links Zeus as the perpetrator of all events, forcing comparisons with some extravagant interpretations from passages of Iliad (Book XIX) outside the play. That is because he sees Zeus' reasons to plot Agamemnon's destiny as originated solely by one great circumstance: the reason of his guilt is the Atreidae curse. In the end, he regards Agamemnon as, at the same time, guilt and innocent, which bounds the hero to face a tragic destiny held by Zeus' acknowledgment of the family's curse. I divide our analysis in two parts. First I will try to briefly present Lloyd-Jones' interpretations and to show how he builds his theory. Then, I intent to demonstrate how some of his interpretations are misleading and that his

conclusions cannot be neither fully in accordance to Aeschylus' play, nor gives the best reading about Agamemnon's character.

"The Guilt of Agamemnon"

Lloyd-Jones is one of the main scholars in classical studies from the last century and much of his work reflects on subsequent studies. His article brings some interesting interpretations and comparisons that one must know on studying Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. To be able to trace the main readings over *Agamemnon* one must start by his article. Lloyd-Jones focuses his reading on the *Oresteia* under the divine determinism of human destiny and based on laws concerned with a (not always logical) endless chain of equal retribution. This reading is, as many can assume, one of the many shades inside Aeschylus' trilogy, and Lloyd-Jones is not wrong for pointing that out. But, as we will discuss later on, it would be misleading to focus on only one side of this multifaceted and profound narrative. Lloyd-Jones will start his analysis from the Parodos and firstly stablishes whether the Greeks' march against Troy was made upon a just cause. Lloyd-Jones first answer is that the Greeks were demanded by divine law to avenge Helen's abduction, the Chorus' lines inside the Parodos leave no doubt of the righteousness of the war, and Lloyd-Jones acknowledges it (60ff). A crime was committed against the supreme laws of hospitality and the corresponding punishment must be held.

When Lloyd-Jones examines the reasons for Artemis' anger against Agamemnon, he brings the difference between the previous versions of the corresponding myth (mostly from the lost epic *Cypria*), which narrates Agamemnon hunting and killing a stag with a perfect shoot, then boasts about being greater archer even than Artemis herself. This impious act of improper pride angers Artemis and causes her to hold the winds of Aulis, avoiding the Greeks sealing against Troy. And to appease her wrath, Agamemnon should sacrifice his own daughter on the altar of the goddess. The main reasons for Artemis fury vary greatly between the preceding myth and the tragedy. Lloyd-Jones considers plausible to assume that Aeschylus had the previous myth in mind and changes it on purpose. His next question is, then, what were Artemis' reasons for anger inside the play. As portrayed by Aeschylus, the goddess is

angered against the eagles' feast of the hare and its unborn children. Calchas the soothsayer declares the eagles to be the Agamemnon and Menelaus. To understand the portent and Artemis' anger, Lloyd-Jones says, one must understand the connections between the world of the portent and the world of the characters (p. 60): "that portent symbolizes an event which is to happen in the real world". If the eagles' figure stands for the Atreidae, then the other figures should also have correspondents on the 'real world'. Lloyd-Jones identifies the pregnant hare as the city of Troy and its insiders (the unborn children), while the portent foresees the victory of the Greeks and the destruction of Priam's city. As such the author concludes (p. 60): "So when Calchas says (137) Artemis abhors the eagles' feast, he must mean that Artemis abhors the coming destruction of Troy, which the Atreidae are destined to accomplish", connecting the wrath of the goddess with her abomination for Troy's absolute obliteration. Lloyd-Jones does not recommend determining the goddess' wrath simply based on her long known hatred against the Greeks. Artemis' reasons should be based on what can be grasped from the portent. But when Lloyd-Jones turns back to look for Artemis' motivations inside the Homeric myths prior to Aeschylus' play, he concludes that her recurring support for Troy on earlier poetical tradition is the only reason one must consider in order to understand her actions inside the play. And Artemis' motivation, as Lloyd-Jones interprets, is completely disconnected from Zeus command. Therefore her actions must not be taken at any level as a reflection of Zeus own will. She is, as he says, just another character moving about the story against her enemies (p. 61): "Artemis' blow against Agamemnon is one move in the struggle; it is the attempt of a pro-Trojan goddess to strike at the invaders before the invasion: Artemis must be seen not as a judge punishing a sin, but as a powerful enemy striking at an enemy".

Artemis' actions were not commanded by Zeus himself. But, although he could, he does not interfere on Artemis' demands and does not come to rescue his avenger. Some explanation for Zeus' inaction is needed. Calchas' interpretation of the portent reads (152f): "There abides a terrible, ever re-raising, treacherous keeper of the house, unforgetting wrath, child-avenging."[2] (sic). Earlier scholars interpreted these verses as

[2] All English translations from *Agamemnon* are quoted from Richard Lattimore's edition.

referring to Iphigenia's Sacrifice and Clytemnestra's vengeance. The common interpretation (in Denniston-Page) for "palinortos" is "arising in the future", so it would put in the future the upcoming vengeance against a child murder. But Lloyd-Jones also reads the translation of "palinortos" as "ever re-raising" or "ever again raising", giving it a sense not only of something that will happen in the future, but also had happened before. There is one other "ever re-raising child-avenging" to be reminded, that is the Thyestes' feast and his curse against his brother, Atreus, and his descendants. That is a great connection in Calchas' prediction of the future, since Aeschylus plans the murder of the king to be held by two assassins, each with its own justifications regarding the expiation of past crimes.

Lloyd-Jones aims to figure whether Agamemnon is shown as guilty or innocent by Aeschylus. Therefore he will thoroughly examine if there was really a choice to be made by the hero concerning his dilemma. Lloyd-Jones sees as contradictory that after some struggle the king becomes sure about the righteousness of the sacrifice, affirming it as "themis", while the Chorus' account of events clearly points out towards a crime. But Lloyd-Jones accuses it as an apparent contradiction. He agrees with Page that Agamemnon had no other choice but to sacrifice Iphigenia, and also agrees with E. R. Dodds that it is equally proper to insist that this action is regarded as a crime. In his view the sacrifice has anything to do with "themis", it is not a righteous act; the hero needs to commit a crime in order to fulfill his duty. This would put Agamemnon's dilemma between deciding over two crimes: assassination of his daughter or deserting the Greeks. Lloyd-Jones assumes based on the Chorus' description that Agamemnon was mentally deranged when made his decision, and connects this passage with Iliad episodes were Ate has fallen upon epic characters. According to Lloyd-Jones, Zeus determines Agamemnon's fate "by sending Ate to take away his judgment so that he cannot do otherwise" (p. 63). Curiously the author does not find Ate's possession enough to make Agamemnon lose responsibility for his actions, as he says (p. 63): "Zeus has taken away Agamemnon's judgment; but that does not absolve Agamemnon from the guilt his error will incur." Although blinded by Ate, he still considers Agamemnon blameworthy. In Lloyd-Jones' interpretation, Aeschylus' and Homer's perceptions of how Ate works is the very same and apply in both situations.

He interprets that Agamemnon's death is based on a rightful punishment. Agamemnon was, supposedly, driven by Ate and Zeus to kill his own daughter because by doing so he would keep his place in the chain of crimes motivated by his cursed blood. On Lloyd-Jones' point of view, the crime that the Chorus is acknowledging here it is not Agamemnon's, but of his ancestor Atreus. Zeus ought to be punishing Atreus and all his descendants, perpetrating the destruction of his house. So Agamemnon was chosen by Zeus to be his avenger against Troy while driven to pay for his ancestor's crimes. Lloyd-Jones will return to that argument on discussing Cassandra's speech, when she reveals the past and future murderers, at the same time would point out to the audience Zeus' reasons to plot Agamemnon's destiny.

Lloyd-Jones confronts two perceptions of Agamemnon's characters. He gives Fraenkel's description of him as a righteous and inspiring character, while Page seems to doubt it, painting the king as impious and uninspiring. Lloyd-Jones agrees with Fraenkel that Agamemnon behave properly and it is not straightforward impious, but he says that the king boasts about the city destruction and it could be seen as a kind of exceeded action. Then, Lloyd-Jones agrees with Page that the king's grimness and his harshness towards the queen construct on Agamemnon an unfavorable first impression. However, he does not think that the king's cold approach to Clytemnestra is surprising, for he finds quite possible that Agamemnon might already know about the rumors of the queen's betrayal – then his actions towards her would be understandable. Agamemnon would still sustain heroic traces especially when antagonized with Aegisthus, whose description is quite low.

Next to Agamemnon's arrival, Lloyd-Jones examines the purple carpet scene. The author believes that the best interpretation for this passage, alongside the king's decision to sacrifice his daughter, is that he was made by Zeus to succumb in Ate. He refers to Herman Gunder's theory: Agamemnon surrenders because he was outwitted, and he has been deceived because Zeus had taken away his wits. When examining the verses of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra's argument, Lloyd-Jones discards the possibility that the kings' surrender to the queen's request is based on chivalry (as Fraenkel assumed). Then, he interprets Agamemnon's answers to Clytemnestra as proof

that he had somehow provoked the god's 'phthonos' (envy), accordingly the Elders speech. To explain why Agamemnon yields to Clytemnestra's cunning dialog, the most reasonable theory for Lloyd-Jones is the one presented by Gundert: Zeus and the Erinyes had put Ate in Agamemnon's mind. But Lloyd-Jones considers this interpretation as incomplete when it stablishes Agamemnon's own guilty (p. 69): "Gundert goes too far in arguing that Agamemnon reveals no *hybris*, but mere stupidity; for when Zeus takes away a man's wits, he sends upon him a moral blindness". By Gundert's theory Agamemnon couldn't possibly be responsible since he was acting blindly. Building an intermediate interpretation, Lloyd-Jones concludes that Agamemnon did commit crimes, both with his daughter's sacrifice and by strolling over purple cloth. And the crimes he committed are also a result of Zeus' double intervention. Although guilt from the start due his curse, Lloyd-Jones affirms that Agamemnon is still innocent in a certain sense, since prior to Zeus' intervention he had just committed the crime of being born in the house of Atreus. Lloyd-Jones goes as far as to state that, with his downfall by being both guilt and innocent, Agamemnon is a truly tragic figure (p. 70).

Lloyd-Jones finds that the double-murderer of the king of Argos and the princess of Troy confirms the parallel between the tragic destruction of both conquered and conqueror. She will reveal the reason for her presence in there – her betrayal toward Apollo – and the past and future events that build the chains of Atreus' curse that binds Agamemnon. Lloyd-Jones assumes the nature and origin of the curse as the central motive of this tragedy, the reason for Iphigenia's sacrifice and Agamemnon's yielding to Clytemnestra. When the Chorus lists the events that led the king to his tragic fate to state that Zeus is the doer of all, Lloyd-Jones jumps from this statement to conclude that Zeus had also planned the curse itself, bringing Ate upon Thyestes, whose betrayal against his brother started this chain of events. Zeus plans Agamemnon's fate to punish the Trojan crimes and to punish himself in account of his actions while carrying the god's vengeance (p. 71): "Even his righteous revenge upon the Trojans involves Agamemnon in yet further guilt. In one sense, it is a triumph of divine justice; in another, an atrocious crime; the instrument of Zeus' punishment of Troy must himself be punished. But such guilt as the King contracts from the sacrifice of his daughter and

from the annihilation of Troy with its people and its temples is only a consequence of the original guilt inherited from Atreus; the curse comes first, and determines everything that follows."

2. Analyzing the guilt of Agamemnon

Until now I described Lloyd-Jones' arguments and his main conclusion about Agamemnon's guilty, which was founded, according to the author, on his antecessors' curse, caused by family crimes that had bounded his fate (and of his descendants). Much of his conclusions are controversial. Although one could say that the Atreus' curse is a central thread inside the trilogy's cloth, it cannot be the only reason for Agamemnon's guilt. Zeus is regarded as the main conductor of the story, which is written and determined by him even when he 'choses' not to act. But the god does not stand as the only character that can reason and act. Lloyd-Jones' theory implicitly excludes any possibility of free will and choice of the hero over his own destiny. He breaks the nexus between Agamemnon's responsibility and his fate, concentrating the cause of events only over interventions from Zeus, from the beginning of the curse to the king's murder. Lloyd-Jones reads on Aeschylus' theology a world completely dominated by the command of the gods; in the last stance, this view portrait the humans as puppets whose main actions can only be made through intervention of a superior will. In one hand he undermines the hero's own freewill and character, while weakens and empties the dilemma and contradictions that Aeschylus strives to emphasize. On the other hand, his reading surpasses the limits of the play by sensing too much intervention where there is none. As Michael Simpson says – when arguing about the yielding of Agamemnon under Clytemnestra's persuasion – the proposals from Gundert and Lloyd-Jones are deeply compromised by straying outside the drama, one implicitly and the

other explicitly, for inserting an intervention form Ate over Agamemnon's mind based only on Iliad verses (Book XIX), when such thing is nowhere to be seen on the suggested verses[3]. Now I will argue against this theory by analyzing the verses were the

[3] Michael Simpson. "Why does Agamemnon yield?" (p. 94-101), in La Parola del Passato 137 (1971).

intervention would had been (but are not); and I will present some authors' solutions and theories that can give better interpretations on Agamemnon's circumstances and over some other passages analyzed by Lloyd-Jones.

3.1 The problem over the Elders' Chorus:

Lloyd-Jones does not give any further justification for his total trust in the Elders' Chorus voice, but I would like to refer it as being a controversial matter. Many authors tend to identify the Chorus' voice with the own poets' voice or the background knowledge or even the main deliver of the message inside the play. For some tragedians it may be true, but not so much when discussing Aeschylus' style. His plays have as many voices as characters, and all of them depicture some of the poets' voice. There is always misleading communication or idiosyncrasies built over a character's point of view. The whole tragedy is there to give Aeschylus' message; no character alone can hold the only true side of the story, although they might deliver crucial lines of great significance from time to time. That is how Aeschylus masters his controversial and ambiguous plot. The Chorus' assertions are not wrong, but also are not the only true message.

When accounting for the past events the Chorus makes many connections between these and the will of Zeus. Those links are strongly regarded by Lloyd-Jones when constructing his theory. He will transform the prudence and knowledge acclaimed by the Elders (when trying to understand the past and present happenings) into determinisms based on Zeus' intervention. But it is important to differ the Elders' account of Zeus' laws and wishes and their personal opinion over the past and present facts. On 60ff, the Chorus does the defense of the Greek's cause against Troy. It is the righteousness action to take, since the most regarding law of Zeus Xenios was disrespected by Paris and the Trojan. The 'hymn to Zeus' (160ff) is there to give a proper knowledge of the god's wishes and the rules he impose to humans. Lloyd-Jones sees the hymn as a call for help from the Chorus towards the god, and it would be a

mimic of Agamemnon's own cry when in face of the dilemma. If we concentrate only on this interpretation it would impose an answer for the lack of protection from Zeus on the one that represents his cause. But the hymn to Zeus does not have only one reading and many can coexist.

Later the Chorus state that Agamemnon committed a crime and the war was a huge waist that killed too many Greeks and wiped out an entire city for a single woman (367ff). So the same Chorus regards the Trojan War as "rightful huge mistake". It can only be possible because the first is statement reflects what religion and tradition require for vengeance, and the second one stands as the Elders' personal opinion, but Lloyd-Jones doesn't comment this contradictory statement of the Elders. He only troubles himself over why Zeus would tangle a terrible crime with Agamemnon's actions of justice and vengeance against Troy. To resolve this he highlights one passage from the Chorus (750ff) that says, as he summarizes to justify relying on Atreus' curse (p. 63): "Prosperity in itself, the Chorus insists, is not sufficient to arouse the anger of the gods; only crime beings down punishment on a man or on his descendants after him". These lines are directed towards Agamemnon's fate, alerting that no punishment will come in vain. Yet the Chorus welcomes its king with great joy and still hopes for a better future and Lloyd-Jones refuses to deal with this contradiction. It is important to understand and to segregate (to try, at least, at some easier passages) when the Elders are speaking meaningful insights from the plot, and when they are proposing their own point of view over the facts. One must comprehend that the Chorus can't be always the voice of the poet; otherwise it could never be 'wrong'. And it is certainly wrong at least one time when it comes to understanding Cassandra's predictions. It also fails to warn the king against hidden enemies inside Argos and to notice Clytemnestra's plot. Therefore it is possible to see the insights and general lines of the tragedy's message inside the Chorus' speeches, but one must remember that the Elders are also a character, and by doing so, they are sometimes fallible and can only fully comprehend their own point of view.

3.2 The problem over the Eagles' Portent and Artemis intervention:

If Zeus is the commander behind Troy's destruction, why would Artemis go against his agents of vengeance and justice? Here Lloyd-Jones brings for us an unsatisfying answer, since he demands too much from a crossed interpretation onto the previous stories in Homer's Iliad. He turns back to Artemis' motivations inside the background myths prior to Aeschylus' play: It is just right for her to hate the Greeks since she supports Troy. But these motives are not mentioned or alluded by Aeschylus. On the contrary, he purposely remove it when alters the myth. Lloyd-Jones traces Artemis' reasons against the Greeks to her recurring support for Troy on earlier poetical tradition, and that is all that he needs to clarify her motives and hostility against the Atreidae. But this is not enough. Aeschylus had always put himself in constant dialog with (and against) the Homeric poetry. Indeed one must take in consideration the previous epics as background knowledge that constantly dialogs with Aeschylus' plays – but not always in agreement. All things Aeschylus does not mention directly or indirectly, and things he continently changes from the previous versions have to be seen as opposed, or at least faced in mirror against the Homeric verses. Thus, it is quite hasty to bring such interpretations as if the play and the epic constitute both one same version of the story. Lloyd-Jones' options interpreting *Agamemnon* may give some answers for Aeschylus' ambiguous and obscure verses, but one may not be looking for those kinds of answers as the best interpretation of the tragedy.

Although earlier Lloyd-Jones assumed that Zeus is the mind behind Agamemnon's fate, he does not assume that another Olympian god's actions under Zeus' command could only be in accordance to his purpose. When the supreme god does not interfere on Artemis demands and does not come to rescue his avenger under the risk of treason and death, Lloyd-Jones must give it some explanation, and that is why he resorts to the Atreidae family's curse. Or better, he invests the Atreidae curse as the reason for Zeus' intervention over Agamemnon's destiny, even his absence to rescue or help his avenger from committing a crime demanded by the goddess. In the end, Lloyd-Jones state that Artemis is acting on her own behalf and has absolutely nothing to do with Zeus' plans. But by doing so, he only diverges from one problem to

another without solving the diversion between the gods. If he insists that Zeus had a reason for not intervening, so one only can conclude that Artemis' request of sacrifice is indeed inside Zeus plans. Otherwise Zeus couldn't be in the end the main perpetrator of the facts as Lloyd-Jones states.

3.3 The problem over Ate and Zeus' intervention:

The most problematic aspect on Lloyd-Jones' theory is how he interprets the interventions of Zeus. He asserts that Agamemnon is blinded by Ate two times inside the play: when deciding over the sacrifice of his daughter to be able to set off from Aulis and sail to Troy; and when he gives in to the queen's argument to stroll over sacred tapestry once he arrives in Argos. Then, Lloyd-Jones connects this intervention as sent by Zeus solely based on the curse of the Atreidae. I will first demonstrate that these two passages cannot allow this reading regarding to Ate, and next I will show that although the Atreidae curse is a strong force over Agamemnon's destiny, it follows its own course aside Zeus' direct patronage.

To prove his point, Lloyd-Jones invokes a passage from the Iliad where Agamemnon recalls his offense towards Achilles, provoking his wrath. There Agamemnon admits that he was blinded by Ate and confesses that he wasn't reasoning when confiscated the hero's slave (Book XIX, v. 86-88). Inside the tragedy Lloyd-Jones invokes the Chorus' description of Agamemnon on the moment he decided to sacrifice Iphigenia. The author supports this reading by comparing the term "parakopos" in "The sickening in men's minds, tough, reckless in fresh cruelty brings daring." (v.222-223) with the state of mind caused by Ate, equating both situations. Thus Lloyd-Jones assumes that Zeus, much alike in Iliad's passage, had sent Ate upon Agamemnon to cover his mind with blindness (p. 62-63). The first problem remains over the nature of this 'craziness' accused by the Chorus. By all means the lines delivered by Agamemnon were full of despair, helplessness and reasoning. Just after he understands his dilemma, he comes with his resolution (v.206-217): "My fate is angry if I disobey these, but angry if I slaughter this child, the beauty of my house, with maiden blood shed staining these father's hands beside the altar. What of these things goes now

without disaster? How shall I fail my ships and lose my faith of battle? For them to urge such sacrifice of innocent blood angrily, for their wrath is great – it is right. May all be well yet." Agamemnon is clearly disturbed by his dilemma. He ponders the situation and thinks things trough. Although one may question if his decision was right, no one can deny that Zeus' demand for justice against Troy had to be attended. The point is that there was no right choice. He is indeed made to decide between two crimes, either deserting the troops of the Greeks, risking the entire campaign and assuming his dishonor; or to kill his daughter and stain his hands. In his last lines he acknowledges Zeus' demand and acquiesces to the sacrifice. His resolution came from the desire to focuses and to do what he thinks it is right – it is "themis" to allow the campaign departs from Aulis. Agamemnon knows his duty and acts accordingly. He decides to do the sacrifice through a rational weighting, not by being possessed or out of his mind. Agamemnon's description as 'mentally deranged' made by the Chorus is meant to describe his condition just after his decision, as the king recognizes the necessity of the sacrilegious act.

I recall Albin Lensky's thesis, which the tragic hero faces a twofold judgment of his deeds. His study lies over selected dialogs inside four remaining Aeschylean plays (*Suppliants*, *Agamemnon*, *Seven against Thebes* and *Choephoroi*), in which he intends to prove two main characteristics in Aeschylus' tragedies: (1) in face of a dilemma, the necessity imposed by the gods and the hero's personal decision are mixed in a complex relation; and (2) from this untangled forces arise the hero's action that is, at the same time, the fulfillment of a god's will or a duty ruled by divine laws as much as an dreadful crime. *Agamemnon* is neither the first nor the last play of Aeschylus to contain this dilemmatic structure. Lensky points out that the hero's dilemma is constructed in two steps: (a) the hero's recognition of the incompatible claims, followed by (b) the hero's decision on takin one side[4]. At some level all four cases, which include Agamemnon's dilemma, meet those standards. The dilemma only makes full sense if the responsibility of the king is made clear, in whom any of his choices incur in an

[4] in his article "Decision and Responsibility in the Tragedy of Aeschylus" (p. 13-23), in "Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy" edited by Erich Segal.

unforgivable crime. He could have chosen differently, abandoning his mission delegated by Zeus, but he didn't. Although choosing differently, Agamemnon would only exchange one crime for another; it would only result in a different punishment and one without any remaining glory from the war or fulfilling Zeus' justice. Agamemnon is 'mentally deranged' for he is disturbed by the choice he has to make. And he can only go through his choice by behaving abnormally. He has to be able to sacrifice Iphigenia, and he has to desire the undesirable. His "parokopos" was born from his reasoning and his choice, not by any god's intervention. One has to notice that Aeschylus could have evoked Ate to describe this passage, or the corresponding substantive, but he didn't. Instead he chooses a relatively general term. Also, Lloyd-Jones withdraws verses from Iliad to justify a possession by Ate inside the play, however he doesn't analyze its appearances within the tragedy itself. I will proceed to do so, in order to differentiate those incurrences from Lloyd-Jones' proposal.

As the goddess of mischief, Ate appears three times over the *Agamemnon*. Two passages are inside the Chorus' lines within the First and Second Stasimon. In the first one its evocation came from the Chorus' words of wisdom, directed for the Trojan that once had acted against the laws of Zeus Xenios. The Elders had just heard about the fall of Troy from Clytemnestra's news, and they start the Stasimon by acclaiming Zeus' laws of retribution, explaining that the justice was finally accounted for the impious acts of Paris (v.381-386): "There is not any armor in gold against perdition from him who spurns the high altar of Justice down to the darkness. Persuasion the persistent overwhelms him, she, strong daughter of designing Ruin"[5]. Ate is brought by the Chorus to remember the outcomes for those who act against the gods. Logically follows the Chorus' verses which declares that Zeus is fulfilling his own decree. This first evocation of Ate is explicitly directed for Paris and those from Troy that acknowledged and accepted the abduction of Helen.

[5] The English translation is quoted from Richard Lattimore's edition and I will refer to the Greek version of Herbert Weir Smyth ed. as shown on Peseus Online Library (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/) v.381-386: "οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἔπαλξις πλούτου πρὸς κόρον ἀνδρὶ λακτίσαντι μέγαν Δίκας βωμὸν εἰς ἀφάνειαν. βιᾶται δ' ἀ τάλαινα πειθώ, προβούλου παῖς ἄφερτος **ἄτας**."

On the Second Stasimon the Chorus calls Ate on the simile of the lion cub (v.735-736): "this thing they raised in their house was blessed by god to be priest of destruction."[6] It is meant to evoke the foolishness of those that raised the offspring of a beast among humans. This simile has aroused many interpretations. Its reading could be associated with Helen, welcomed by the Trojans after her abduction. Or Paris, whom was retrieved by his parents to live inside the Trojan palace, once abandoned as a child due to an omen predicting that he would bring ruin to his house. Besides, the lion cub could also be the "daemon" that was raised by the house of Atreus along the years, maintained through the family crimes over the generations. This second reference of Ate is much broader and isn't explicitly directed to only one character or situation. This time the representation of the simile over the foolishness or wickedness created by the goddess is enlarged to cover many offenses at the same time. Of course, it will mean that Agamemnon is also under this force. However the lack of boundaries for this divine influence may as well turn much thinner the connection of any Ate's intervention specifically over the momentum of Agamemnon's dilemma. The Chorus' link between Ate and the adoption of a beast is made to state Zeus' law of retribution, but not as a dementia sent by the god himself. Ate comes explicitly from the choices of man. It's an audacity proper of humans. Here Aeschylus is not referring to the same Ate as Homer.

The third appearance of a personified Ate is inside Clytemnestra's speech in the Fifth Episode. She had just murdered, both Agamemnon and Cassandra, and brought her acts to broad light. The queen does not fear any reprimand, for she claims that the king died in accordance to justice. She recalls Iphigenia's sacrifice, her beloved daughter yet to be married, and establishes herself as the rightful avenger of filial blood. As she says, it was Agamemnon that drew upon himself that destiny (v. 1431-1434): "Now hear you this, the right behind my sacrament: By my child's Justice driven to fulfillment, by her Wrath and Fury, to whom I sacrificed this man."[7] Clytemnestra links her act to the goddesses Dike, Ate and Erinye, wrapping her arguments against the

[6] v.735-736: "ἐκ θεοῦ δ' ἱερεύς τις **ἄτας** δόμοις προσεθρέφθη."
[7] v. 1431-1434: "καὶ τήνδ' ἀκούεις ὀρκίων ἐμῶν θέμιν: μὰ τὴν τέλειον τῆς ἐμῆς παιδὸς Δίκην,**Ἄτην** Ἐρινύν θ', αἷσι τόνδ' ἔσφαξ' ἐγώ, οὔ μοι φόβου μέλαθρον ἐλπὶς ἐμπατεῖ,"

Chorus' accusations of betrayal. The Elders now have to admit, as they once did, that Agamemnon indeed committed a crime which was now being accounted for. Here Clytemnestra's words may induce to believe that Agamemnon was filled with Ate when sacrificed his daughter. It is important to keep in mind the earlier arguments against of Agamemnon's alleged 'blindness'. A proper reading will show that the queen calls the goddess of mischief alongside two others, both known for bringing justice and revenge over ones crimes. This Ate does not bring craziness or blindness, she is there to manifest guilty and punishment. Also, this is 'her' Wrath, not 'his'. The goddesses are mentioned as elements belonging to this vengeance, to which Agamemnon was sacrificed. It is her justice to be brought upon his crime; Clytemnestra will act as her daughter's Wrath and Fury who chase the offender.

The referent noun 'ate' appears multiple times throughout the play. It is first used on the Herald's speech, where he is forced by the Chorus to tell what had happened with the Greek fleet. Then, the Herald proceed to describe their fall caused by a great storm, sent by the gods to punish those who polluted the sacred shires of Troy (v. 641-643): "and that from many houses many men are slain by the two-lashed whip dear to the War God's hand, this turns disaster double-bladed, bloodily made two."[8] Here 'ate' means the disaster that felt upon those that committed sinful deeds. In this portrait of 'ate' as punishment is curiously an attribute of the weapons used by the god of war (not by Zeus himself). It is there to recall one lesson to be learned: the war always brings disaster for both sides and even on these circumstances no impious act is kept unaccounted. This is also meant to portrait the situation between Trojans and Greeks as alike, in order to remind the audience of Agamemnon own guilt and further punishment.

This noun appears again on the Second Stasimon, also on the Chorus' verses about the lion's cub simile mentioned earlier (v. 766-771): "late or soon when the dawn

[8] v. 641-643: "πολλοὺς δὲ πολλῶν ἐξαγισθέντας δόμων ἄνδρας διπλῆ μάστιγι, τὴν Ἄρης φιλεῖ,δίλογχον **ἄτην**, φοινίαν ξυνωρίδα:"

of destiny comes and birth is given to the spirit none may fight nor beat down, sinful daring; and in those halls the black visage Disasters stamped in the likeness of their

fathers."[9] As I said before, the simile of the lion cub can also work as a comparison with cursed families, especially for the Atreidae. The disaster ('ate' as a noun) is brought down onto foolish men and will be nurtured by their descendants foisting the whole house. Like the other passages, it is meant to relate firstly to the destruction of Troy due to the crime of Paris. But the message is ambiguous and leaves a trace that can be followed up to Agamemnon. On the Third Episode the relation with the overthrow of Troy is made clearer, for the noun emerges again on the king's speech about his victory over the burned city (v.819-820): "The stormclouds of their ruin live; the ash that dies upon them gushes still in smoke their pride of wealth."[10] The Trojan ruin, being referred as 'ate', connect their defeat with the proper punishment sent by Zeus. I the same way, it raises the victory of Agamemnon on the level of a divine fulfilment.

Where 'ate' as a noun mostly appear is in the revealing dialog between the Chorus and Cassandra inside the Fourth Episode. Cassandra foresees the past, present and future of the Atreidae family, while she tries to convince the Chorus on the imminent death of Agamemnon. The Elders' response is (v.1121-1124): "And to the heart below trickles the pale drop as in the hour of death timed to our sunset and the mortal radiance. Ruin is near, and swift."[11] Here, 'ate' also is related to the final fate of those cursed from Atreus House and does a strong parallel with the defense that Clytemnestra will bring latter to justify her acts. Here the Chorus already shows its comprehension over this possibility, even if it understands only half of Cassandra's prophecy. Just half of its meaning, though, as the priestess of Apollo is cursed to never be fully understood.

[9] v. 766-771: "ὅτε τὸ κύριον μόλῃ φάος τόκου, δαίμονά τε τὰν ἄμαχον ἀπόλεμον, ἀνίερον Θράσος, μελαίνας μελάθροισιν **Ἄτας**, εἰδομένας τοκεῦσιν."
[10] v.819-820: "**ἄτης** θύελλαι ζῶσι: συνθνῄσκουσα δὲ σποδὸς προπέμπει πίονας πλούτου πνοάς."
[11] v.1121-1124: "ἐπὶ δὲ καρδίαν ἕδραμε κροκοβαφὴς σταγών, ἅτε καιρία πτώσιμος ξυνανύτει βίου δύντος αὐγαῖς: ταχεῖα δ' **ἄτα** πέλει."

Cassandra's following speech refers to 'ate' many times and each time she mentions it like spinning through a spiral that will lead to the very end of the Trilogy. The slaved priestess starts by describing the first sin of this family curse, that is, Thyestes betrayal (v.1191-1193) "Hanging above the hall they chant their song of hate

and the old sin; and taking up the strain in turn spit curses on that man who spoiled his brother's bed."[12] The 'nume' of the house points out the past sins and lusts for the future ones, while calls upon the first sin that leaded the family into a tread of ruin. Here 'ate' has a meaning of 'error' and 'guilty', and presupposes action. Therefore it is usually translated as the 'sin' or the 'crime' of Thyestes. This meaning as sinful-act comes back on v.1227-1230, when Cassandra describes the murder of Agamemnon: "King of the ships, who tore up Ilium by the roots, what does he know of this accursed bitch, who licks is hands, who fawns on him with lifted ears, who like a secret death shall strike the coward's stroke, nor fail?"[13] This time 'ate' is related to Clytemnestra and her own crime. Lattimore opted for translating the noun as 'strike', that would better mean 'damage' (as a crime) which the queen planed in secret and will soon betray her husband. When Cassandra predicts Orestes' vengeance she will use 'ate' once again in the same sense of a sinful act (v.1282-1283): "Outlaw and wander, driven far from his own land, he will come back to cope these stones of inward hate."[14] This passage on Lattimore's translation can imply 'ate' as a 'hate born from the guts'. But it also could be put as "Orestes will come back to strike the final blow against his family", in which 'inward' will mean born from those internally alike; represents not just the feeling of hate but actually an act of sin committed to avenge an earlier crime inside the family. Orestes' act at the same time will put an end to the curse and will be the worst crime of all. Those uses of 'ate' imply action and mean 'damage', 'crime' or 'ruin', and the guilt of crimes that were perpetrated inside the chain of a curse. The allusion of an external manipulating power comes only on Cassandra's words describing her own death (v.1268): "Make someone else, not me, luxurious in disaster…"[15] And her ruin is, as

[12] v.1191-1193: "ὑμνοῦσι δ' ὕμνον δώμασιν προσήμεναι πρώταρχον **ἄτην**: ἐν μέρει δ' ἀπέπτυσαν εὐνὰς ἀδελφοῦ τῷ πατοῦντι δυσμενεῖς."
[13] v.1227-1230: "νεῶν τ' ἄπαρχος Ἰλίου τ' ἀναστάτης οὐκ οἶδεν οἷα γλῶσσα μισητῆς κυνὸς λείξασα κἀκτείνασα φαιδρὸν οὖς, δίκην **Ἄτης** λαθραίου, τεύξεται κακῆ τύχῃ."
[14] v.1282-1283: "φυγὰς δ' ἀλήτης τῆσδε γῆς ἀπόξενος κάτεισιν, **ἄτας** τάσδε θριγκώσων φίλοις:"
[15] v.1268: "ἄλλην τιν' **ἄτης** ἀντ' ἐμοῦ πλουτίζετε"

she sees it, sent by Apollo. But she remarks her own guilt as the reason for the god's hatred. She is also cursed and her death now is the conclusion of her 'ate' as her own choices and own guilt.

The last appearances of 'ate' are on the Fifth Episode. On v.1523-1524 Clytemnestra describes the willful ruin perpetrated inside the palace: "And did he not first of all in this house wreak death by treachery?"[16] She accuses Agamemnon to be the first to betray his family, bypassing the previous treason of Thyestes and Atreus because she is concerned with the treason against herself. He is the first to betray her when murdered her daughter, and so Clytemnestra brings his crime to justify hers. If she committed treachery, he did it first. Once more, 'ate' is related to an act, more specifically, to a crime and treason. Clytemnestra reckons this and relates her revenge into this chain. Later, in response to her, the Chorus laments this house tied to perdition (v.1563-1566): "The truth stands ever beside God's throne eternal: he who has wrought shall pay; that is law. Then who shall tear the curse from their blood? The seed is stiffened to ruin."[17] The Elders recognize the Zeus' amendment of learning by pain, within this system that finds its way for punishing the crimes. Once more 'ate' is used as 'ruin', the ravage consequence of crimes committed in order to punish other crimes. In this case, a family cursed on each round to spill the blood of its own kind.

As one can see on those quotations, neither Ate nor the related noun are connected to a mad blindness of the agents. They commit crimes and sinful acts – crimes that made them guilt and fated to ruin. Not any crimes, those were all committed against the gods, both personally (only on Cassandra's case) or against their laws. It is clear that this word can unveil many meanings. Of course one could try to account its meaning from the Iliad, but this is not enough to assume that Aeschylus uses the same meaning as Homer. It is most possibly that he is referring to it, but not with the same signification and reasons. On the contrary, Aeschylus gives more prominence to the

[16] v.1523-1524: "οὐδὲ γὰρ οὗτος δολίαν **ἄτην** οἴκοισιν ἔθηκ';"
[17] v.1563-1566: "μίμνει δὲ μίμνοντος ἐν θρόνῳ Διὸςπαθεῖν τὸν ἔρξαντα: θέσμιον γάρ. τίς ἂν γονὰν ἀραῖον ἐκβάλοι δόμων; κεκόλληται γένος πρὸς **ἄτᾳ**."

agents' guilt and he insists on highlighting the chain of choices and events that leads the accounted punishments to each character. He specially does that for Agamemnon and uses all other cases inside the play as examples on how this process works. All meanings of 'ate' as used by Aeschylus are related to an action (betrayal, attack, committing a crime) or to the nature of actions (ruin, desolation, disasters, guilty), and not once to mean 'crazy blindness' or the goddess possession. Agamemnon is guilt for what he had chosen to be, when he was divided between killing his daughter and deserting the Greeks. Either way he would commit a crime, but he still needs to choose his path. His is choice and the dilemma is built upon the tragedy contained in both options. Otherwise there would be no meaning on listing two possible ways. And this is his 'ate', portrayed at the same time as his crime, guilt and ruin. Furthermore 'ate' is not sent by Zeus, but it is part of the curse itself and human action. The Atreus' curse is perpetuated both by 'ate' and the laws that those characters need to abide.

3.4 The problem over Agamemnon's character and his yielding:

Lloyd-Jones also supports the idea of a second supposed intervention from Ate. He follow Gundert's thesis that Agamemnon only yield to Clytemnestra because he was outwitted by Zeus, as Ate would have taken his wits to resist the queen's demand. This assumption is even more strange here than over the sacrifice's episode. The first one had at least one assumption over the fact that Agamemnon was not completely himself in face of his choice. Here, however, there is no sign of madness, expressed or implied, or indicated by any other passage following the dialogue. On the contrary, the argument between the king and the queen is full of sophistry, carefully constructed to make Agamemnon follow Clytemnestra's reasoning, accept her premises, and bind himself to her conclusions.

Curiously Lloyd-Jones does not think that the king's "cold approach" on his first lines towards Clytemnestra comes as something surprising. He justifies the king harshness based over the assumption that Agamemnon might already know about the rumors of the queen's betrayal. This was certainly a rushed argument, proposed with no

bases for its reasoning. One can easily dismiss it by attesting that the king let his guard down to the queens welcoming speech, he is deceived by her fawning and her self-portrayal as a loyal and week female – he wouldn't do so if she was under suspicion of treason and cheating. His harshness is proper of a powerful male dismissing the queen's hysterical and over-sentimental lines. Overall, about Agamemnon's character, Lloyd-Jones seems to not notice much of Aeschylus' representation and imprints the Homeric Agamemnon upon the tragedy.

On that matter, Lloyd-Jones does not conceive Agamemnon's yielding as an exhibition of an aristocratic chivalry (*gentilezza*), as Fraenkel proposed, nor he considers it a pure act of *hybris* and a self-indulging form to give in to his internal impious desires, as proposed by Denniston and Page. But he overlooks Clytemnestra's outstanding rhetoric developed in order to convince the king. He centers his reading too much over Agamemnon's Homeric character to the point of disregarding the ways by which the king yields. That is Michael Simpson critics about Lloyd-Jones theory. In his article[18] he proposes a new reading over the tapestry scene, where the king is not made to yield by *gentilezza*, or just his own *hybris*, neither by external divine influences, but because he wraps himself over Clytemnestra's arguments. Clytemnestra makes Agamemnon to agree with her wish by also making him to do something that she wants; it remarks his defeat and configures his murderer. Here Simpson draws attention to the battlefield being constructed since Clytemnestra's welcoming speech where the queen puts his guard down and gain his trust. Followed by the stichomythia in which she manages conquer the conqueror and deceive him into her trap. She encloses the fatal blow by asking for the tapestry stroll so that a denial would be considered simply harshness against a woman's suffering, and by each turn she transforms the impious act from a religion matter, to a public matter, until it becomes just a personal matter of fulfilling her wishes – in a way that Agamemnon is not able to deny. Agamemnon felt in *hybris* by letting his guard down by her flattery and questioning, underestimating the queen into making her his greatest enemy.

[18] Michael Simpson op cit.

3.Conclusion

Lloyd-Jones conclusions are: Zeus is the constructor of Agamemnon's fate; the Olympian law is made in a way that crime is punished by an equivalent crime in an endless chain; Artemis acts by herself and her demands are not in accordance to Zeus plans, but he chooses not to interfere on the hero's behalf; the Chorus' vision over the account of the events is made absolute as the representative of the poet's thoughts; Troy is meant to fall, so Agamemnon does not have a real choice inside his dilemma; it is Ate, send by Zeus, that obscures the king judgment over his decisions; Zeus does so because he wants to punish the king for the curse he carries; then Agamemnon is regarded at the same time innocent and guilt. Lloyd-Jones creates a series of arguments and interpretations that corners him to find out how, on that account, Agamemnon can still be considered guilt and Zeus can have motives for his punishment. But Lloyd-Jones' answer reduces the hero's guilty to his family lineage. He gives full importance to the Atreidae curse and turns it into the main reason for Zeus punishment over Agamemnon. His conclusion could be seen as one of many layers of meaning inside the Trilogy. But it is only possible to point the curse as the only reason for Agamemnon's guilt by disregarding many events and passages from the play, by reducing the hero to be a manipulated puppet, and by overlooking Aeschylus' attempts to review the Homeric myths.

There are hard ambiguities to win and too much confusion to clear when one tries to segregate where Agamemnon's choice and action are, and where his fate is designed by Zeus. There is no doubt however that both concur to determine Aeschylus' narrative. This ambiguous relation is even more problematic when facing the hero's dilemma. By Lloyd-Jones reading, an Agamemnon blinded by Ate could not have acted differently – he would have been obliged by Zeus to sacrifice his daughter. This empties the character, depriving him not only of his own will but also from his responsibility in face of his actions. Ate's possession results in a dementia that takes the character out of itself, he becomes unreasonable. Much like Ajax was made unable to distinguish cattle from humans, Agamemnon would have lost his awareness over Iphigenia's humanity.

On the second part of this paper I proposed a series of challenges to Lloyd-Jones' interpretation, especially against his main proposal: the interventions of Zeus through Ate. As it was shown, there are many possible meanings for 'ate' as noun or the goddess herself – and curiously none of its appearances on the tragedy revolves around the accounts of Iphigenia's Sacrifice and the dispute of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra – no direct interference of the goddess is ever mentioned. When it comes to the goddess, Aeschylus approximates her of Dike and Erynie – the goddess of justice and vengeance – and by doing so he gives to her the meaning of guilt and ruin, a sore that the character carries. For the noun, 'ate' is either mentioned as an action (a betrayal, damage or crime) or as the nature of events (ruin, desolation, disasters, guilty). Also, there is no attempt of alluding innocence, lack of choice or reasoning from Agamemnon. Instead Aeschylus is keen to demonstrate the chain of events and the characters' choices that lead to their ruin.

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Data de envio: 23 de outubro de 2014
Data de aprovação: 18 de janeiro de 2015
Data de publicação: 19 de fevereiro de 2015