

**THE MORAL  
STANDPOINT  
OF EURIPIDES**

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The Moral Standpoint of Euripides by W. H. S. Jones

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**W. H. S. JONES**

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“THE MORAL STANDPOINT  
OF EURIPIDES”

BY

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1906

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“ 1915 ”

## PREFACE

THIS pamphlet consists of two parts : (a) the essay proper, dealing with the views of Euripides himself on blind *ἀνάγκη* and the intelligent *φύσις* of man : (b) the index, which will enable the reader to form his own conclusions about contemporary morality. I am well aware that pp. 11-29 deal with controversial matter which it is extremely difficult to discuss in a few pages. I can only hope that the reader will test my statements by referring to the passages mentioned in the index, bearing in mind the important fact that cumulative evidence must take precedence over every other consideration. E.g. the fact that the Theseus of the *Suppliants* believes in the gods and their care for men must not outweigh the many indications, in other plays, in Aristophanes and in Lucian, that Euripides himself took the opposite view.

I believe that Euripides, writing during the period which gave birth to Greek ethics, reflects the tendencies which were afterwards developed by philosophers. Herein lie the interest and importance of the poet's own views.

I may publish similar indexes to the other non-philosophic Greek writers, probably without comment.

The references throughout are to Nauck (Teubner series).

W. H. S. JONES.

PRASE SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE.

Κρείσσον οὐδὲν ἀνάγκας.

*Alc.* 965.

οὔποτε θνητοῖς  
ἀρετῆς ἄλλη δύναμις μείζων.

*Fr.* 449.

μέγιστον ἄρ' ἦν ἡ φύσις.

*Fr.* 807.

τέλος δ' ἐφ' ἡμῖν.

*Hel.* 887.

Blind ἀνάγκη) (the intelligent φύσις of man.



## INTRODUCTION

§ 1. Euripides was born in the year 480 B.C. He won his first prize for tragedy in 441, and died 407-406. The dates of the extant plays are as follows:—

*Alceſtis*, 438.

*Medea*, 431.

*Hippolytus*, 428 (?).

*Hecuba*, 423 or earlier.

*Heraclidae*, date uncertain, but early.

*Supplices*, 421-420.

*Hercules Furens*, date uncertain, but earlier than 416.

*Andromache*, date uncertain, but between 431 and 421.

*Troades*, 415.

*Ion*, not later than 412.

*Electra* } date uncertain, but traditionally assigned to  
*Helena* } the period 413-409.  
*Phoenissae* }

*Iphigenia in Tauris*, 418-412.

*Orestes*, 408.

*Iphigenia in Aulide* appeared after 406.

*Bacchae* appeared after the death of Euripides.

*Cyclops*, a satyric play of uncertain date.

*Rhesus*, probably spurious.

There seems to be no reason for supposing, with Berlage, that Euripides was not at first opposed to the popular religion. Contempt for the 'gods' is almost as clearly marked in the *Alceſtis* as in later plays.<sup>1</sup> It is also impossible to regard the *Bacchae* as a palinode, for Dionysus is a fiend.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the whole of the prologue, and especially the humorous sarcasm of ll. 39, 40—

ΘΑ. τί δήνα τόσον ἔργον, εἰ θεῶν ἔχεις;  
Αἲ. ἀνθρώποι δὲ ταῦτα βουράδην ἐποι.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the influence he exercises is intended to be looked upon as mesmerism.



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