

Prof. Dr. María José Martín Velasco.

Title of the paper: The debate on equity and justice in the characters of Euripides'

Language: English.

University of Santiago de Compostela. Facultade de Fololoxia. Campus Norte. Avenida de Castelao sn. 15704. Santiago de Compostela (Spain)
lgchevip@usc.es

Preferred panel: 5. The Powers of Persuasion

The debate on equity and justice in the characters of Euripides' Alcestis

The Euripidean tragedy, giving priority to the role of dialogue upon other forms of performance, clearly reflects the main controversies in fourth century Athenian society. In the particular case of Alcestis, a recurrent topic of the Greek thought is brought to the stage: where are the boundaries of the written law?, are we allowed to think that sometimes it can be fairer to go beyond the written law than to comply with it? This controversy scattered along his whole work is shaped with the rhetorical resources that we know mainly through the Rhetoric of Aristotle. One of them is particularly useful in theatre, the persuasion through the nature of the characters. The speaker's personality, as it shows throughout the work, contributes to generate persuasion. The audience will be persuaded if the character shows himself as a reliable man (ἀξιοπιστία), and that means that he will have to prove that he possesses wisdom (φρόνησις), courage (ἀρετή) and goodwill (εὐνοία) throughout the work. The topic of what is fair and what is legal is also treated as Aristotle treats them in his Rhetoric, exposing the advantages and disadvantages of behaving only within the boundaries of written law or giving priority to equity. Main characters have opposed personalities and embody opposed ideas as far as this matter is concerned. Thus, Apollo and Admeto claim their right to get out of the established rules and they disapprove the excessively normative behaviour of Thanatos and Pheres. But they are also criticized by those two, as the risks that such a conduct may trigger are emphasized.