NOMOS

Direito e sociedade na Antiguidade Clássica
Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and Legal Anthropology¹

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In Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and Legal Anthropology a new interpretation of *Eumenides* is given against the background of anthropologically inspired studies in Athenian law. J. Grethlein challenges the traditional view that there is a development from vendetta to autonomous law. Firstly, it is given evidence by the text of *Eumenides* that there is neither the juxtaposition of two different legal orders nor the idea of an autonomous law in the end. In a second step it is argued that the idea of law in *Eumenides* closely corresponds to some recent attempts to reconstruct the features of Athenian legal thinking. Especially the insight into the close connection of law and politics proves illuminating. Thirdly, another interpretation of the juxtaposition of Apollo and Erinyes is given. J. Grethlein argues that horse references evoke the image of a young knight for the reception of Apollo. This audience-oriented approach is to be preferred to an allegoric interpretation as a concept for tragedy's relation to reality.

In the wake of New Historicism the border between history and literary criticism has been blurred². Literature has become an essential source for the reconstruction of mentalities, everyday life and social discourses. Moreover, New Historicists emphasize that literature is not l'art pour l'art, but fulfills important socio-political functions. The first aspect is not new for the Greek legal historian. Due to the sparceness of his sources he has always been forced to make use of literary texts. Not only are the Attic orators the "chief source of our knowledge of Athenian law"³, but also drama, especially comedy, gives important insight into the workings of Athenian legal life. In this article I will take a different perspective in that I would like to demonstrate in which way new developments in the study of Greek law have

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¹ The Greek text of Aeschylus is taken from West (1998), the translations are from Lloyd-Jones (1979).
² For the reception of New Historicism in Classics in general see Schmitz (2002) 175-192 with further literature, for Greek tragedy in particular see Mossmann (1995) 6-10.