PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN THREE PLAYS OF EURIPIDES

GEORGE B. WALSH

ARISTOPHANES depicted Euripides as the poet of petty household worries, and more gracious critics have praised him for his fine observation of the individual's inner experience. Nevertheless, the private life in Euripidean drama is an elusive thing; scarcely one of his dramatic characters lives beyond the range of public concerns or entirely by his own inner imperatives. We may eavesdrop briefly when Medea raves within her house; but, as soon as she steps out upon the stage, she begins to conceal her feelings to make herself acceptable to the women of Corinth. The expectations and demands of the public world impose themselves upon the dramatic character and sometimes even appear to change him, as they transform the retiring, pitiable Iphigenia into a heroine. Thus, if we wish to discover what is private in Euripidean drama, we must seek it within another, public realm.

We may begin by defining the private life negatively, as something different from the dramatic character's public role. If his public role is imposed by society which demands service and accords approval and honor, or blame, he plays a private role when he does not aim at service to society or at winning its approval, and a privately motivated action is most sharply marked when the hero contemplates doing something that will damage society's interest or win him shame in its eyes. Achilles in *Iliad* 9 might be described in these terms. He rejects honor from the Achaeans because he has enough from Zeus (607–8), and he seems to offer a rudimentary definition of the alternative to public endeavor: he would please himself rather than Agamemnon and set the enjoyment of riches before winning more at Troy (398–409), life and a family before glory and an early death (414–15, 398–99).

Hector faces a more complicated decision in Book 6, but it can be formulated in similar terms, as a choice between chiefly private well-being and public honor. Andromache, who regards him as father, mother, brother, and husband at once, pleads for the preservation of the *οἶκος* (429–30); she asks him to fight defensively (431–34) and fears most that he may die (406–13). Hector, on the other hand, wishes to avoid shame and win glory in the Trojans' eyes (440–46), and so chooses to fight among the front ranks, inviting death and his family's ruin, although he foresees that the reputation for bravery he wins now will make Andromache's slavery harder to bear in the future (459–61).

Since Achilles must relinquish glory if he is to rejoin his father at home, and Andromache sets the preservation of her home against Hector's honor, the ties of family seem to inhibit distinction, and the private life seems to

0009-837X/79/7404-0002$01.40

be incompatible with heroic action. This may explain why, when honor is at stake in the plays discussed below, Euripides gives prominence to the feelings between parents and children and makes the action turn upon the children's deaths.

We shall seek, first, to mark the boundaries between the dramatic character's public and private roles; this is most easily done in the *Medea*, where the two stand in irreconcilable conflict. We shall then follow the attempts of Euripides' characters in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* and the *Madness of Heracles* to reconcile public and private claims upon them.

When Medea first enters the stage, she suggests that her current difficulties stem from the failure of the public accurately to assess individual character, since those who live quietly, as she claims to do, win a bad reputation (218 δύσκλεια). The public, before it judges, should know a man's inner qualities, his internal organs, where feelings reside (220 σπλάγχνον); these are the real determinants of character, for one cannot judge properly from appearances (219 δίκη γὰρ οὐκ ἔνεστ' ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς βροτῶν). But since Medea's public position as a foreigner at Corinth is especially weak (255 ἔρημος ἄπολις), she must exert herself to repair her reputation and adapt herself to society (222 χρὴ δὲ ξένον μὲν κάρτα προσχωρεῖν πόλει). Medea's speech makes two points that will be critical for the play's treatment of public and private roles: first, that the two roles differ, since there is a "quiet" life distinct from life in society and an emotional life distinct from public image; second, that there is a public dimension to Medea's predicament. She has sacrificed her father's home and her family to be Jason's wife (257–58), one private life for another which may be narrowly defined as εὐνή (cf. 265). When Jason rejects her and abandons their οἶκος, he forces her out of the private and into the public realm; Medea finds that she is vulnerable to public opinion, which she had earlier neglected, and without allies. For this reason, she attempts to win the chorus' aid and to repair her public image with an argument based upon the shared private miseries of women (230–51). She will, if she can, bring public perception into line with her experience.

As the play continues, a conflict between public and private roles develops, first between the heroine and Jason, and then within Medea herself. Jason seems aware of little but the public dimension of his relationship to Medea, and he regards marriage not as a benefit in itself but as a means for obtaining material prosperity. He will marry the king's daughter not ἱμέρῳ πεπλημμένος (556) but ὡς . . . μὴ σπανιζοίμεσθα (559–60), and he desires her wealth not so that he may enjoy it but to enhance his social status (cf. 542–44): his family will live according to its rank (562 ἀξίως δόμων ἐμῶν), and he will prevent the defection of his φίλοι (561). By a public standard, Jason has satisfied his marital obligation toward Medea and returned favor for favor by bringing her to Greece, where she has acquired universal renown for her wisdom (540 δόξαν ἔσχες). Even her passion, in his view, is not a personal feeling that must be reciprocated in kind but a divine and impersonal force (526–31).

Jason characteristically speaks of the ends he seeks as a kind of profit that may be won with reason and moderation:

ἐμοί τε λύει τοῖσι μέλλουσιν τέκνοις
τὰ ζῶντ' ὀνῆσαι . . . [566–67]

λήξασα δ' ὀργῆς κερδανεῖς ἀμείνονα. [615]

When Medea insists upon expressing her hatred to please herself, Jason accuses her of folly (457, 614 μωρία, cf. 600), but she rejects his notion of reason, as she does his plan to marry for profit: feeling must be the criterion of prosperity (598–99),

μή μοι γένοιτο λυπρὸς εὐδαίμων βίος
μηδ' ὄλβος ὅστις τὴν ἐμὴν κνίζοι φρένα.

Thus, Medea insists upon what Jason denied, that the emotions must be counted in assessing their duties to one another. Since personal feeling is opposed here to Jason's social ambition, as it was to public opinion in Medea's first speech, it seems a characteristic feature of the nonpublic and, therefore, of the private life.[1] Medea, who posits a distinction between public and private roles, has sought in her first speech to bring the public into line with the private. Jason, on the other hand, acknowledges no distinction between the two roles, and he manipulates for public ends what Medea would regard as private relationships.

Gradually, however, the differences between Jason and Medea become less apparent, until Medea entirely assumes Jason's principles and negates the position she had taken against him earlier. As Jason seeks to enhance his status at Corinth by abandoning Medea, Medea's decision to punish Jason also turns upon the issue of status.[2] At each key point of planning and resolve, her desire for vengeance is described not as aimed at emotional satisfaction or the restitution of justice, although these are both important themes, but as a means for throwing off the public onus of the victim's role and for rehabilitating herself in the eyes of society as potent and dangerous. To win vengeance, Medea must dissemble and control her anger, and the hatred she feels for Jason takes shape in calculation. In the process, she abandons her initial attempt to reconcile public judgment with private feeling, for circumstance requires that feeling be violated or denied.

What Medea fears most is ridicule, especially by her enemies. She will not risk a direct attack upon the palace because, if she is caught and killed, θήσω τοῖς ἐμοῖς ἐχθροῖς γέλων (383). When she first explains her plan to kill the children, she opposes her maternal grief to the preservation of her dignity, which is now revealed as the stronger motive (791–96):[3]

1. θυμός (1079) seems to represent another sort of feeling, which favors Medea's pursuit of honor, but it need not be taken as signifying feeling in general; see E. Schlesinger, "Zu Euripides' *Medea*," *Hermes* 94 (1966): 29–30.

2. The problem is raised as one concerning women generally by Medea (236–37) and by the chorus (410–20).

3. Medea's final decision to murder the children is similarly motivated: βούλομαι γέλωτ' ὀφλεῖν / ἐχθροὺς μεθεῖσα τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀζημίους; / τολμητέον τάδ' . . . (1049–51), and, as she explains her-

ὤμωξα δ' οἷον ἔργον ἔστ' ἐργαστέον
τοὐντεῦθεν ἡμῖν· τέκνα γὰρ κατακτενῶ
τἄμ' . . .
οὐ γὰρ γελᾶσθαι τλητὸν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν, φίλαι.

The feeling that binds together kin cannot be reconciled with the demands of honor.

In seeking to avoid the laughter of enemies, Medea subscribes to a common heroic sentiment,[4] and the obligation she feels to preserve her honor derives, like Jason's desire for wealth, from a sense of high rank that must be maintained (404–6):[5]

οὐ γέλωτα δεῖ σ' ὀφλεῖν . . .
γεγῶσαν ἐσθλοῦ πατρὸς Ἡλίου τ' ἄπο.

Ridicule, for such a person, is best avoided and renown most easily won by a demonstration of power—the power to hurt one's enemies and, should the occasion arise, to help one's friends.[6] Thus Medea expresses her sense of the murder of Jason's bride (807–10):[7]

μηδείς με φαύλην κἀσθενῆ νομιζέτω
μηδ' ἡσυχαίαν, ἀλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου,
βαρεῖαν ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοισιν εὐμενῆ·
τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων εὐκλεέστατος βίος.

Among Medea's φίλοι, however, her children should take first place[8] (1250 φίλοι γ' ἔφυσαν); and, since her plan for achieving vengeance entails her murdering them, it evidently excludes the possibility that she will be εὐμενῆ φίλοισιν. In this failure to fulfill her obligations to help, or at least to do no harm to her friends, Medea repeats Jason's offense, φίλους κακῶς δράσαντ' (470).[9]

Medea's plan also causes her more grief than it does her enemy (1046–47):

τί δεῖ με πατέρα τῶνδε τοῖς τούτων κακοῖς
λυποῦσαν αὐτὴν δὶς τόσα κτᾶσθαι κακά;

By so constructing Medea's situation, the playwright has clearly opposed

self to Jason at the end of the play, σὺ δ' οὐκ ἔμελλες τἄμ' ἀτιμάσας λέχη / τερπνὸν διάξειν βίοτον ἐγγελῶν ἐμοί (1354–55).

4. Cf. Soph. *Aj.* 367, 382; for the pleasure of laughing at enemies, *Aj.* 79. See also A. P. Burnett, "Medea and the Tragedy of Revenge," *CP* 68 (1973): 22; B. Knox, "The *Medea* of Euripides," *YCS* 25 (1977): 198–99.

5. Cf. *Med.* 562, *Hcld.* 507–10; Soph. *Aj.* 472.

6. For this reason suicide is ruled out by Ajax (Soph. *Aj.* 466–69).

7. Cf. *HF* 585–86.

8. Cf. *Med.* 16, where τὰ φίλτατα for Jason are his wife and children, and the words describe their family relationship rather than affection: the point is that he owes them loyalty. Cf. A. W. H. Adkins, "Homeric Gods and the Values of Homeric Society," *JHS* 92 (1972): 12; idem, " 'Friendship' and 'Self-sufficiency' in Homer and Aristotle," *CQ*, n.s. 13 (1963): 33.

9. Medea also deserves to be treated well as a φίλος because of the favors she conferred upon him (476–87).

the heroic code to what is most natural[10]—the protection of offspring—and what privately would please the heroine best.[11] Medea's plan of vengeance sets her concern with status above personal pleasure (598–99), so that she comes to value what she had complained of in Jason's plan, a sort of profit that brings with it emotional pain (1362 λύει δ' ἄλγος, ἢν σὺ μὴ 'γγελᾷς). What Jason offered (598) and what Medea now does is λυπρός (1037), and so her vengeance exacts the same price from her that Jason's new marriage would have done.

Medea justifies killing the children with another argument that sets public and impersonal values over private and emotional ones. She kills them, she says, not only to punish Jason, but to save them from an enemy's insult (781–82):[12]

οὐχ ὡς λιποῦσ' ἂν πολεμίας ἐπὶ χθονὸς
ἐχθροῖσι παῖδας τοὺς ἐμοὺς καθυβρίσαι.

As she sends them into the palace, she promises (1060–61),

οὗτοι ποτ' ἔσται τοῦθ' ὅπως ἐχθροῖς ἐγὼ
παῖδας παρήσω τοὺς ἐμοὺς καθυβρίσαι.

This argument[13] strikes the modern reader as so peculiar that he cannot resist asking why, if Medea can flee in the Sun's chariot, the children cannot also, and why the life Aegeus promises Medea at Athens, guaranteed by solemn oaths to be secure from attack by Medea's enemies (734–53), should not be safe enough for them.[14] In other words, if Medea kills the children to preserve their honor as an extension of her own, why can she not save them as an extension of herself? The anomaly in Medea's reasoning underscores the significance of her decision, which is entirely consistent with her motives as they emerge elsewhere in the play.

The murder of the children is not an act of hatred against them, any more than Medea's wish to live means that she looks forward to pleasure in life: both arise from impersonal motives, their purpose defined principally in terms of the judgment they may elicit from society. The children's death, like her survival, is necessary to cause her enemies pain, and in this way to win the greatest renown for her power,[15] but Medea is not interested in saving the children's lives, because she is not truly interested in saving her own.

10. Medea's resentment may be a natural feminine trait, but the murder of the children surely does not represent "the power of sacred φύσις," as W. Arrowsmith suggests ("A Greek Theater of Ideas," in *Ideas in the Drama*, ed. J. Gassner [New York and London, 1964], p. 20).

11. Ajax in Sophocles' play must also make a choice between preserving his honor and protecting his family, but he clearly prefers his honor. Euripides' use of a female protagonist enables him here to formulate the choice in more sharply antithetical terms.

12. Cf. Megara in the *Madness of Heracles* (below, p. 305) and Phaedra in the *Hippolytus* (p. 299).

13. Cf. Medea's motive in burying the children herself, ὡς μή τις αὐτοὺς πολεμίων καθυβρίσῃ (1380).

14. Schlesinger, "Zu Euripides' *Medea*," p. 32.

15. Medea also wins a terrible sort of distinction because her action is almost unique: cf. 1282 and, for the text, D. Page (ed.), *Euripides' "Medea"* (Oxford, 1938), ad loc. For disinterest in life linked to concern for honor, cf. *Hcld.* 443–44.

We may see in Medea's disinterest in life for its own sake an extension of the impulse toward suicide that she expresses early in the play.[16] Medea's first thought of killing the children stems from her feeling that she is hateful herself (112–14),

ὦ κατάρατοι
παῖδες ὄλοισθε στυγερᾶς ματρὸς
σὺν πατρί, καὶ πᾶς δόμος ἔρροι,

and from an urge toward self-destruction (97 πῶς ἂν ὀλοίμαν;). She reconciles herself to the murder with the thought that her own life is worthless (798 τί μοι ζῆν κέρδος;), and so her victory over Jason is also an act of despair.[17] Medea's vengeance is also like a suicide in that both sorts of action are aimed at saving face, by sacrificing a life regarded as impossible to preserve honorably. By killing oneself one avoids the abuse suffered by the homeless and despised (*HF* 1285–90; cf. *Hcld.* 303), and the higher one's rank the greater one's obligation to die well and to deny one's enemies an occasion for glee.[18] Phaedra, in the *Hippolytus*, kills herself to save her own and her children's honor (715–21; cf. 419–23, 687–88), and also to deny Hippolytus any sense of superiority to her in her distress (728–30).

Thus, Medea's early impulse to kill herself has been not so much abandoned as transformed into a plan of vengeance. Vengeance saves her honor much more effectively than suicide would,[19] but it serves a similar purpose, and in the *Medea* it exacts a price from the avenger not unlike the loss of life. To a fifth-century thinker like the sophist Antiphon, who regarded the natural and the conventional as exclusive categories and the natural by definition as that which promotes the preservation of life,[20] suicide might seem the most social and least natural of acts. By extension, Medea's murder of her children may be regarded as an act of complete socialization, designed to win respect from society but inimical to her instinctive role as a mother.[21] The dramatic point of the murder depends partly upon its failure to achieve precisely the intended social effect, for the public whose respect Medea seeks must surely feel as much horror at her violation of natural ties as esteem for her ability to avenge herself (cf. 846–65); while Medea has come to set public motives against private ones, the chorus does not.

Abandoning her role as a mother and accepting emotional distress, Medea chooses to elevate herself over her enemy, and so to make of herself

16. Cf. Schlesinger, "Zu Euripides' *Medea*," pp. 34, on the version of Anouilh ("So ist auch hier vielleicht der Selbstmord Medeas die richtige Deutung des eigentlichen Gehalts der euripideischen Tragödie"), and 53, on Medea's revenge ("die ihren eigenen Untergang als Mensch bedeutet").

17. Medea's words are typically those of a suicide: cf. *HF* 1301–2 (τί δῆτά με ζῆν δεῖ; τί κέρδος ἔξομεν / βίον γ' ἀχρεῖον ἀνόσιον κεκτημένοι;); Soph. *Aj.* 475.

18. *Or.* 1060–63, *HF* 287–92; Soph. *Aj.* 479–80.

19. One avoids by killing oneself a fate over which one has no control, and so suicide is a confession of ἀπορία; at best it will succeed only in saving some shred of one's former dignity. The suicide hides in death (*HF* 1155–60; cf. 1199–1201) to escape δύσκλεια (*HF* 1152). Vengeance, on the other hand, can do more than repel δύσκλεια—it can create εὔκλεια (*Med.* 807–10).

20. Diels–Kranz[8] (Berlin, 1956), 87B44 frag. A col. 3, 25–col. 4, 8.

21. Cf. *HF* 636, *Phoen.* 356.

an entirely public figure. Her triumph consists not so much in Jason's pain as in his humiliation and his recognition of her power, and in this respect Medea's vengeance resembles an act of divine punishment. Like Dionysus' coolly executed public humiliation of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*, the punishment of Jason completes the avenger's plan to win honor, and the plan succeeds because the avenger can act, when necessary, without feeling. For this reason, among others, Medea's godlike[22] escape in the machine seems appropriate.

The *Medea* presents public and private roles in a dialectic that develops through the conflicts of the dramatic characters and shapes the meaning of the dramatic action; the action gives the dialectic a concrete form, in which the audience may test its own values. The play does not, however, simply reflect what one might expect to be the conventional judgment of its audience, nor does it offer its own single point of view. Its discoveries are paradoxical and inconclusive: Medea's heroic bid for public honor isolates her completely, for in abandoning natural feeling she offends conventional sensibility. But Medea perhaps represents a special case, because she takes her public life in hand only when Jason's debased ambition has begun the destruction of her οἶκος. Embodied for other characters in another kind of dramatic plot, the dialectic may take a different form.

The conflict in the *Medea* between public and private motives for action also characterizes Euripides' treatment of self-sacrifice, or acquiescence in a death imposed by enemies or the gods. Vengeance and self-sacrifice both serve to fulfill the demands of the heroic code which requires aid to friends and harm to enemies—self-sacrifice aims chiefly at the first, and vengeance at the second—and, since both sorts of heroic action enhance one's stature in the eyes of society, both may be regarded as located within the public sphere.

Vengeance and self-sacrifice differ, however, in two ways. First, society can be more intimately concerned in an action of self-sacrifice, for it is not only the arbiter and audience of the hero's success, but may also be his beneficiary.[23] Menoeceus' self-sacrifice in the *Phoenician Women*, for example, aims clearly at public benefit (1012 ἐλευθερώσω γαῖαν) as well as public approval (1005 ὅπου δ' ἂν ζῶ, κακὸς φανήσομαι), to the dismay of his closest kin, his father Creon (963–67). Creon's reluctance and Menoeceus' readiness to complete the sacrifice points to a second difference between the dramatic treatments of vengeance and self-sacrifice. Menoeceus experiences no internal conflict like Medea's, engendered by the opposed claims of public and private roles. The case for the sacrificial victim's private ties to

22. Cf. Knox, "The *Medea* of Euripides," p. 206; M. P. Cunningham, "Medea ΑΠΟ ΜΗΧΑΝΗΣ," *CP* 49 (1954): 152, 158–59.

23. Not all actions of self-sacrifice are inspired by their social utility: Polyxena's death in the *Hecuba* helps no one but Achilles' ghost and her enemies the Greeks, and so may be called public only because it saves Polyxena herself the shame of cowardice and slavery (346–78); Alcestis and Phaedra intend by dying to benefit principally members of their own family, although Phaedra wishes also to set an example as a wife (stated negatively, *Hipp.* 409–12); Macaria, in the *Children of Heracles*, dies less to help Athens than her kin (500–34).

family must be made by his family, which must then itself face a conflict between its own desires and society's.[24]

The interplay of rank and personal desire, public and private roles, pervades the *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Euripides' final and most complete statement of this theme. The role of the sacrificial victim has been much expanded,[25] but every other character also contributes to the elaboration of the theme, by eliminating each area of common ground between public and private motives and finally by isolating Iphigenia as the only wholehearted representative of the public interest. Only she achieves what she desires; others, who would arrange public life so that it reflects personal priorities, or who reject the demands of honor entirely in favor of family feeling, fail. In the prologue and the first episode, Agamemnon and Menelaus prepare the way for what follows by establishing between them that their own public and private roles cannot be reconciled and that the public demand for Iphigenia's death must inevitably be satisfied.

Agamemnon first raises the question of public life as he debates with an old servant the meaning of social position. He envies the servant (16–19) and his own honor pains him (23), because his position has imposed upon him now the duty to sacrifice his daughter;[26] but the old man rebuffs him, warning that everyone, at every social level, must accept his rank.

Menelaus has no trouble doing this at first, because the common goals of the Greek expedition coincide with his own personal desire (330 ὅτι τὸ βούλεσθαί μ' ἔκνιζε), and he accuses Agamemnon of having dissembled a similar self-interest in seeking command (338). Agamemnon, he feels, has now failed to live up to the position he has won, having abandoned his public role as soon as it ceased to satisfy his personal desire. As a result, all of Greece now suffers the fate Medea sought to avoid, the laughter of its enemies, and it excites Menelaus' sympathy (366–75). As a spokesman for public duty,[27] Menelaus criticizes Agamemnon's self-indulgence in terms similar to those invoked by Jason against Medea: Agamemnon, by implication, lacks νοῦς and ξύνεσις (374–75),[28] the most important qualities in a leader. In both the *Medea* and the *Iphigenia* terms for wisdom and intelligence seem to denote a type of practicality that is hard to distinguish from social ambition and opposed to the impracticality of indulging one's emotions.

Agamemnon responds by redefining intelligence: the divine is not ἀσύνετον (394*a*), and so does not make binding oaths taken κακῶς and under compulsion (395). Similarly, the bonds of birth are to be regarded only if they

24. The internal conflict, if there is one, falls upon the parent of the victim, who must perform or sanction the sacrifice: see below on Agamemnon in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* (pp. 301–2).

25. Cf., e.g., Macaria in the *Children of Heracles* or Menoeceus in the *Phoenician Women*.

26. Cf. E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: "Agamemnon,"* 3 vols. (Oxford, 1950), ad 212, on Agamemnon's social obligation in Aeschylus.

27. F. M. Wasserman, "Agamemnon in the *Iphigenia at Aulis:* A Man in an Age of Crisis," *TAPA* 80 (1949): 177, identifies Agamemnon as an introvert, Menelaus as an extrovert.

28. Cf. *Med.* 457, 614 on Medea's μωρία; 548–49 on Jason's σοφία and σωφροσύνη; 600 on the desirability of Medea's becoming σοφωτέρα.

enforce good sense (406-7):

Με. δείξεις δὲ ποῦ μοι πατρὸς ἐκ ταὐτοῦ γεγώς;
Αγ. συνσωφρονεῖν σοι βούλομ', ἀλλ' οὐ συννοσεῖν.

Thus, according to Agamemnon, Menelaus' definition of intelligence is purely formal and social; intelligence in essence, on the contrary, does not depend upon society's judgment, even society's interest, but upon the individual. The relationship of φίλοι and the common interest of Greece take second place to Agamemnon's own perception of comfort (409 μὴ λυπῶν ἐμέ) and moral correctness defined apart from society (411 Ἕλλὰς . . . σὺν σοὶ . . . νοσεῖ).

But Agamemnon cannot maintain his position: he realizes that once Iphigenia has arrived at Aulis she must be sacrificed, and that she cannot be saved by his σοφίσματα because the daemon is σοφώτερος (444-45) and so overturns his personal definition of wisdom. This inspires another discourse on the conflict between his public and private roles. Once again, he deplores his high position: ἡ δυσγένεια δ' ὡς ἔχει τι χρήσιμον (446); ὄγκος constrains both his speech and his tears (447-50), so that the well-born is a slave to the mob. The constraints of Agamemnon's position forbid his weeping at Iphigenia's fate, but he also feels the compulsion of personal misfortune urging him to weep despite the mob; caught between these two pressures, he does not know what to do (451-53):

ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐκβαλεῖν μὲν αἰδοῦμαι δάκρυ,
τὸ μὴ δακρῦσαι δ' αὖθις αἰδοῦμαι τάλας,
ἐς τὰς μεγίστας συμφορὰς ἀφιγμένος.

Coincidentally, as Agamemnon confronts the defeat of his personal desire, Menelaus reverses himself. Speaking to Agamemnon ἀπὸ καρδίας . . . / καὶ μὴ 'πίτηδες μηδέν (475-76), he cancels his earlier δεινοὶ λόγοι (477-80, 500); he no longer desires Helen, because pity and love inspired by his relationship by blood to Iphigenia (492 συγγένειαν ἐννοουμένῳ) and to Agamemnon (501-2 τὸν ὁμόθεν πεφυκότα / στέργων) have proved the stronger feelings. Since his own desire no longer requires what he regarded before as the public interest, he contemplates breaking up the expedition with equanimity (495), and so incurs the charge he levelled against his brother, that he supported public causes only when they satisfied his private wants (337-62).

Although Menelaus now adopts a personal position like Agamemnon's, the public necessities they reject can no longer be resisted: Odysseus, who is ambitious for honor (527 φιλοτιμίᾳ)[29] and in league with the mob (526 τοῦ ὄχλου μέτα), will force the sacrifice. The Greek army must proceed against Troy, although neither Agamemnon nor Menelaus wishes it.

The pattern of the first episode, in which Agamemnon's reasoning and Menelaus' abrupt conversion to feeling together fail to save Iphigenia, is repeated when Achilles' plan of reasoned persuasion and Iphigenia's emo-

29. The term appears frequently in the *Iphigenia at Aulis* with negative connotations: cf. 342, 385, 520, 527.

tional appeal also fail. Achilles presents reason and moderation as his chief virtues and the means to stop the sacrifice (922–23, deleted by some editors):

λελογισμένοι γὰρ οἱ τοιοίδ' εἰσὶν βροτῶν
ὀρθῶς διαζῆν τὸν βίον γνώμης μέτα.

He suggests to Clytemnestra that they may make Agamemnon βέλτιον φρονεῖν (1011), and he prefers λελογισμένως πράσσοιμι μᾶλλον ἢ σθένει (1021), claiming that οἱ λόγοι γε καταπαλαίουσιν λόγους (1013).[30]

Achilles' difficulty in acting as Iphigenia's protector, however, arises principally from his commitment to the public interest and public opinion. Although Clytemnestra tells him that she feels no shame in doing anything that may aid so vital a purpose as saving her daughter (900–902), and so clearly sets private values over public ones, her appeal for help is based upon Achilles' honor. She holds before him the prospect of ill-repute if his pretended bride should be slaughtered (906–8); and, since it is his name, she says, that has destroyed her, she calls upon him to defend it (910). Clytemnestra appears to believe that Achilles' obligation to behave well derives specifically from the rank he inherits from his divine mother,[31] and she self-consciously treats him as a god although she knows he is mortal (900–901), calling him an altar at which she seeks sanctuary (911). Achilles promises to become the god he appears, to make real this external aspect of himself (973–74):

θεὸς ἐγὼ πέφηνά σοι
μέγιστος, οὐκ ὤν· ἀλλ' ὅμως γενήσομαι.

His own quarrel with Agamemnon is purely formal—his name was available to trap Iphigenia had the king requested it (962–63)—and he seems even now committed to the common good (967 τὸ κοινόν), as Menelaus was before pity taught him otherwise (cf. 370), and to salvaging his position among the chieftains (968–69), as Agamemnon was when he first planned Iphigenia's death (356–60). Achilles is afraid that he may incur the army's blame by indiscreetly taking Clytemnestra's part (1020); he wishes to preserve her reputation as well as his own (1030–32), and he has been uneasy about speaking to her since they first met (830 αἰσχρὸν δέ μοι γυναιξὶ συμβάλλειν λόγους).

By contrast, until she changes her mind and accepts the sacrifice, Iphigenia seems the perfect representative of private values, disinclined toward reason and careless of honor. She has none of Achilles' rational arguments (λόγοι) to plead her case (1211–14), and instead of wise words she offers tears to persuade Agamemnon. To give pleasure, she is willing to make no sense (654 ἀσύνετά νυν ἐροῦμεν, εἰ σέ γ' εὐφρανῶ), and to enjoy pleasure she easily sets aside glory (1250–52 τὸ φῶς τόδ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἥδιστον βλέπειν . . .

30. Although Clytemnestra expects little from this approach (1014), she accuses Agamemnon of lacking νοῦς (1139) and argues from the same premise that Agamemnon invoked against Menelaus, the intelligence of the gods (1189; cf. 349*a*).

31. This is suggested by the train of thought of 909–10 πρὸς μητέρος—/ ὄνομα γὰρ τὸ σόν μ' ἀπώλεσ', ᾧ σ' ἀμυναθεῖν χρεών.

κακῶς ζῆν κρεῖσσον ἢ καλῶς θανεῖν).[32] But Iphigenia fails to save herself, because there is a higher harmony of public necessity and personal feeling: the collective passion of the mob (1264), which achieves what no individual dramatic character could in reconciling public and private motives, and carries all individuals before it. It defeats Achilles' rational pursuit of honor and Iphigenia's personal appeal to the emotions. Even Agamemnon, who is "intelligent in pity" (1255), and so, in this curious phrase, combines reason and feeling, cannot resist. Public passion is a divine force (1264).

Iphigenia responds to this impasse by identifying herself with the forces that destroy her—reason, honor, and the public good—and she decides to offer herself freely at the altar.[33] Like Achilles, she is now conscious of herself as the object of public scrutiny (1378), and she has become concerned with winning a good reputation (1375–76 τοῦτο δ' αὐτὸ βούλομαι / εὐκλεῶς πρᾶξαι, cf. 1383 κλέος and *Hcld.* 534); therefore, she wins Achilles' approval (1407–9). Iphigenia conflates the normally sexual and private ἀρετή of women (569) with its masculine counterpart, the glorious destruction of cities: her children and her marriage will be the expedition against Troy (1398–99 ταῦτα γὰρ μνημεῖά μου / διὰ μακροῦ, καὶ παῖδες οὗτοι καὶ γάμοι καὶ δόξ' ἐμή). Her identity merges with that of the goddess to whom she is sacrificed, and she requires no tomb but Artemis' altar (1444). She now defines her very existence as public, admonishing her mother, πᾶσι γάρ μ' Ἕλλησι κοινὸν ἔτεκες, οὐχὶ σοὶ μόνῃ (1386; cf. *Phoen.* 996 πατρίδος ἥ μ' ἐγείνατο).

Iphigenia has no stake like Medea's in the result of her action, nothing to fear but the sacrifice itself; she does not avoid the laughter of enemies because she was never threatened by it. The *Iphigenia* presents a new and extended version of the plot of sacrifice, in which the victim does not die for her family, like Macaria in the *Children of Heracles*, or even her city, like Menoeceus in the *Phoenician Women*, but for her entire society. Greece as a whole is to enjoy the honor won by Iphigenia's death, and it is to Greece that she feels obligated to act honorably.

By setting the interest of Greece against the life of the girl, the playwright gives the dialectic of public and private a form different from the *Medea*. The two realms are as sharply distinguished, but when Iphigenia chooses public goals, and subverts her οἶκος by setting her parents at odds (cf. 1171–79), she takes all of Greece in its place (1386), and so escapes Medea's isolation. Iphigenia's attachment to public honor also differs from Achilles', and this explains why he does not fully grasp the vigor of her resolve (1430). Iphigenia at the last combines the emotional directness of her first appearance in the play with patriotism, and thus she reflects the overwhelming

32. Cf. 1218. For the generalization and the value Iphigenia places upon common human qualities, cf. Demophon (*Hcld.* 413) and Heracles (*HF* 633–36); her wish to live reverses Soph. *Aj.* 479–80 ἢ καλῶς ζῆν ἢ καλῶς τεθνηκέναι / τὸν εὐγενῆ χρή.

33. On the language in which her decision is expressed, cf. Knox, "The *Medea* of Euripides," p. 198, and *Med.* 822, 1236. The abruptness of Iphigenia's conversion to public values and of Menelaus' to private ones emphasizes the separation of the two realms: cf. Arrowsmith, "A Greek Theater of Ideas," p. 19, who sees it as explained by the heroine's function as a "specification of the shaping ideas of the play." Both conversions come as the result of reflection (492 συγγένειαν ἐννοουμένῳ, 1374 ἐννοουμένην).

power of the army's collective feeling. Like the army, Iphigenia attains a harmony of personal and public motives that is not possible for Achilles, who thinks of public life only as an arena in which honor is won with calculation.

When Iphigenia forbids Achilles to defend her and chooses death because she believes that a woman's life is worth less than a man's (1392–94), she resolves the dialectic of public and private with a new sort of feminine, acquiescent heroism modeled neither upon the old-fashioned, fearsome and uncompromising type Medea emulates nor the ungenerous pragmatism of Jason and Achilles. The *Madness of Heracles*, by placing at center-stage the chief exemplar of male ἀρετή and generous service, casts the dialectic of roles in a third and different form, which encompasses the attempts of one character at the start and another at the end to come to terms with the demands of honor.

The first action is occasioned by a coup d'etat at Thebes, where Heracles' family has remained while he completes his labors for Eurystheus; the new tyrant Lycus plans to kill Heracles' wife Megara and his children to forestall any vengeance they might seek for the death of Megara's father, the former ruler of the city. Megara's predicament seems worse than Medea's or Iphigenia's: she and her children are threatened with shameful death at the hands of an enemy, with no protector in view, no power of their own, and no divine mechanism like a sacrifice through which salvation may be won with honor. Like Medea, Megara is concerned most with avoiding the laughter of enemies (285 ἐχθροῖσιν γέλων) and the ignominy of cowardice, and for her children the humiliation of exile (303–4 τόδ' ἄθλιον, / πενίᾳ σὺν οἰκτρᾷ περιβαλεῖν σωτηρίαν, 291); she feels that her rank, derived from the fame of Heracles and his nominal father Amphitryon, obliges her to behave honorably (287 δόκησις . . . εὐκλεής, 290 εὐκλεὴς πόσις). Megara's plan for preserving honor calls for surrendering her children from the sanctuary of the altar at which they have taken refuge, so that they may die willingly and with good grace (cf. *Hcld.* 550–51); thus, despite their defeat and the loss of Heracles' wealth, their name will remain (338 τὸ δ' ὄνομ' ἔσθ' ἡμῶν ἔτι). She is brought to this decision not by any lack of feeling for her children, for like Medea she embarks upon what she thinks is a heroic course against the pressure of her own emotions (485–89). Her inability to act against her enemies forces her to choose a kind of honor that violates personal ties, and so she fails through weakness to reconcile public and private roles.

Heracles is paired with Megara by contrast, and his approach to the conflict between public and private roles, completed at the end of the play, balances and corrects hers at the beginning.[34] He arrives in time to save his family from Lycus, but the danger they have faced is enough to make him reject his past achievements because they distracted him from

34. Amphitryon also serves as a foil for Megara: he values honor less than the lives of the children and vainly offers his own life in despair of saving theirs (317–18). Cf. A. P. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 161–62, for another view of Megara's error; for the opposite approach, H. H. O. Chalk, "Ἀρετή and Βία in Euripides' *Herakles*," *JHS* 82 (1962): 12, who suggests that Megara represents a valid sort of ἀρετή. A. W. H. Adkins, "Basic Greek Values in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Hercules Furens*," *CQ*, n.s. 16 (1966): 212, disputes Chalk.

the safety of his home, his good deeds because they have won no return, and his status because it commanded no palpable honor or reward (575–82 *χαιρόντων πόνοι . . . οὐκ ἄρ' Ἡρακλῆς ὁ καλλίνικος ὡς πάροιθε λέξομαι*). What matters most matters regardless of distinction, honor, or wealth (632–36):

> *καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἀναίνομαι*
> *θεράπευμα τέκνων. πάντα τἀνθρώπων ἴσα·*
> *φιλοῦσι παῖδας οἵ τ' ἀμείνονες βροτῶν*
> *οἵ τ' οὐδὲν ὄντες· χρήμασιν δὲ διάφοροι·*
> *ἔχουσιν, οἱ δ' οὔ· πᾶν δὲ φιλότεκνον γένος.*

In this preference for universal and instinctive protection of his family, Heracles seems to confute Megara's concern for their public stature and her decision to let the children die.

The central action of the play, however, ruins Heracles precisely in the personal realm for which he has just expressed his preference, and it forces him to reconsider his carelessness of public stature. He distinguishes himself heroically with one more victory by killing Lycus, but then he is driven mad and kills the children whose safety he now values above everything. In his madness, Heracles thinks that he has merely continued the attack upon his enemies (938 *ἔργον μιᾶς μοι χειρὸς εὖ θέσθαι τάδε*, cf. 1279, where the murder is described as another of his toils), and this represents a real connection between his vengeance and the murder of the children: like the rest of his labors, his vengeance is achieved at the expense of the family whom he left undefended, and, like Megara, Heracles can win victory only by violating his role as a parent.

With the loss of his children Heracles has lost the focus of his private life, and he has nothing left to contemplate but a minimal public advantage—to escape ill-repute (1152 *δύσκλεια*) and the humiliations of exile (1285–90) made worse by the eminence he once enjoyed as the son of Zeus. His position now resembles Megara's at the start of the play, but his response differs. Megara thinks it *δειλία* not to die voluntarily (289), Heracles *δειλία* not to live (1347–48), and he apparently sees a standard of heroic behavior that extends beyond what Megara envisions, that makes demands upon the hero other than *καλῶς ζῆν ἢ καλῶς θανεῖν*.

Heracles does not arrive at the decision to live immediately, and its meaning may be deduced from the manner in which it is made. At first he wishes to die (1256–57) because, like Megara, he sees himself in the grip of external forces—a necessity that has made him commit involuntary murder (1262 *ἀνάγκῃ δυστυχεῖν*, cf. Megara at 282–83 *τῷ δ' ἀναγκαίῳ τρόπῳ / ὃς ἀντιτείνει σκαιὸν ἡγοῦμαι βροτόν*), imposed both by his human father's crimes and by the hatred of his divine father's wife (1258–64), and the results of the murder, which make another sort of necessity (1281 *ἥκω δ' ἀνάγκης ἐς τόδ'*), including pollution, exile, and public humiliation.

To these externally imposed conditions Theseus applies public, external, "non-moral"[35] remedies—purification for Heracles' pollution (1324), and

35. Cf. A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford, 1960; repr. Chicago, 1975), pp. 90–91, on pollution.

honors and a place to live in his exile (1325). He argues, too, that Heracles' crime, like the immorality of the gods, reflects a universal condition of which one should not complain (1321), and this part of Theseus' prescription reinforces the other, for, if the gods' crimes relieve Heracles of responsibility for the murder, nothing remains of it but the physical stain that purification may remove.

Heracles rejects both these notions[36] and yet obliquely arrives at the decision to which Theseus wished to bring him, to persevere in life. Noting that the topics Theseus addresses are irrelevant to his misery (1340), Heracles nevertheless feels impelled to refute him on one point: the gods do not commit crimes, do not enjoy illicit love (1341–46). Thus, he deprives himself of a consolation and an excuse for having murdered his family, and so must bear a kind of responsibility for it that Theseus cannot remove when he purifies him physically of pollution. He accepts the Athenian's offer of honors and asylum (1351–52), but such things cannot cure his misery since they are remedies only for the public ills of humiliation and exile, and his decision to live goes beyond what Theseus urges, for it entails not merely a continuation of his heroic past (cf. 1250, 1252) but bravery of a different sort, the acceptance of grief that the hero never tasted in all his toils (1356).

To endure to live Heracles requires something different from what Theseus offers, a point of view that will break the helpless passivity he feels at first before the necessity of his misfortune. Theseus' notion that crime is universal merely reinforces his own belief, that the gods have made him suffer (cf. 1303–10), for both excuse his crime only by making him a victim of the inevitable. Perhaps Theseus' consoling speech encourages Heracles to live precisely because it does not address his greater need, and so provokes him to meet it himself: his change of heart, for some time already in motion (1347), is completed immediately after he refutes the claim that the gods are criminal, and so, because he acknowledges his own responsibility for misfortune, he comes to see that he can endure it. He must accept what he has done not as a helpless victim of ἀνάγκη but as a servant of fortune (1357 τύχη), and this leaves room for an active courage radically different from Megara's acquiescence in death. Misfortune and life are enemies that must be withstood like opponents in battle (1349–51).

Heracles overcomes two obstacles in deciding to live, the first, with Theseus' help, his public shame, exile, and pollution, the second a permanent grief that cannot be washed away. In overcoming both shame and grief, Heracles undertakes a combined public and private enterprise, which is figuratively embodied in the weapons with which he has won renown and killed his children.[37] The arms must be kept for a conventional heroic

36. Heracles and Theseus differ as Phaedra and her nurse do in the *Hippolytus*. When the nurse urges that the gods' licentiousness excuses Phaedra's, Phaedra condemns her arguments as the bane of society (451–58, 486–87); and, when she asks whether Phaedra's hands are stained with blood, as if that were the worst she could suffer, Phaedra replies that her pollution lies within herself, in the heart (316–17). Cf. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*, p. 114, n. 29, on the latter passage.

37. Cf. J. C. Kamerbeek, "Unity and Meaning of Euripides' *Heracles*," *Mnemosyne*, ser. 4, 19 (1966): 6; Chalk, " Ἀρετή and Βία," p. 14.

reason, to save him from shameful death at the hands of his enemies (1382–84):

ἀλλὰ γυμνωθεὶς ὅπλων
ξὺν οἷς τὰ κάλλιστ' ἐξέπραξ' ἐν Ἑλλάδι,
ἐχθροῖς ἐμαυτὸν ὑποβαλὼν αἰσχρῶς θάνω;

But, since they are the instruments of his children's death, they also remind Heracles of his terrible crime (1379–81) and the grief he must endure as a concomitant of his heroic dignity (1385 ἀθλίως δὲ σῳστέον). By choosing to live and to retain his weapons, Heracles accepts his public role as a hero who cannot allow himself to be discovered a coward or weaker than his enemy. At the same time, he is fully conscious of the personal cost of maintaining this role, and of the magnitude of his loss.

Theseus' tendency to see only public shame and public heroism makes him impatient of Heracles' grief, and blind to the personal side of his endurance. For Theseus, Heracles' wish to linger near the corpses of his children and to embrace his father ill suits his heroic past (1410);[38] grief is a disease, which makes Heracles a woman and no longer the hero he was before (1412–14 εἴ σ' ὄψεταί τις θῆλυν ὄντ', οὐκ αἰνέσει . . . ὁ κλεινὸς Ἡρακλῆς οὐκ εἶ νοσῶν). But Heracles insists that he is the same man, no worse than Theseus himself (1415–17).[39] He will not, like Agamemnon at Aulis, feel shame for his grief, or sacrifice family feeling for the sake of public appearance.

Caught between the conflicting claims of his sentiment as a father and his public role, Agamemnon becomes incapable of choice or action; Iphigenia chooses and acts, but only by relinquishing the persona we first encountered on stage and by putting on another, more abstract, ideally heroic one; Medea in pursuit of honor appears to shed human form. Heracles, on the other hand, by choosing to live a life of honor and grief, extends the dialectic of roles so that it defines a new kind of heroism, which differs both from Iphigenia's patriotic surrender to the passion of the group and from Medea's savage isolation. He clings, as no other Euripidean character seems able, to his place in a human *οἶκος*, as the son of Amphitryon, as well as to the distinction he won as the son of Zeus;[40] he seems at the last to have made Theseus his family, following his ally as his children once followed him.[41]

38. LP ascribe 1412 to Amphitryon, P 1414 and 1416 as well. Amphitryon's sentiments noted earlier (n. 34) support the distribution of lines given by Murray. For the meaning of the passage, cf. Chalk, "Ἀρετή and Βία," p. 13.

39. Since society judges public actions and the individual himself his private ones, public and private roles differ as shame and guilt do: cf. Gouldner's concise definition of these terms, *Enter Plato* (New York and London, 1965), pp. 81–90. Heracles now seems to reject the old standard of shame as mere failure: cf. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility*, p. 33, on τὸ αἴσχρον. What matters instead is his response to failure, and it is tempting to see in this the emergence of an internalized standard of success. Adkins, "Basic Greek Values," pp. 218–19, however, would object that Heracles can win no success here and seeks only to avoid worse dishonor.

40. See now J. Gregory, "Euripides' *Heracles*," *YCS* 25 (1977): 259–75, on the significance of the double heritage.

41. 1424 Θησεῖ πανώλεις ἐψόμεσθ' ἐφολκίδες, cf. 631 ἄξω λαβών γε τούσδ' ἐφολκίδας χεροῖν, / ναῦς δ' ὡς ἐφέλξω. A connection between the two passages is noted by Wilamowitz, *Euripides "Herakles"*[2], 2 vols. (Berlin, 1895), ad 1424.

Medea, Iphigenia, and Heracles cannot represent directly the values of Euripides' audience, for each engages the dialectic of public and private in a different way, and consequently discovers within it a different sort of heroic stature. The conflict itself, however, is not new, only sharper than before, as the code of social behavior has progressively become more abstract and depersonalized, while coincidentally the human personality emerges as a counterforce of richer complexity. In the first of these developments, Menelaus conceives of defending the honor of Greece as a hero like Ajax does of defending himself; from the second grows Euripides' penchant for psychological characterization. The familiar fifth-century opposition of *φύσις* and *νόμος* also helps to separate public and private more decisively. While a man acting privately attempts to win recognition of his superior or unique qualities, and so to distinguish himself from other men, personal motives will be shared by all members of the human species, and so make the man acting privately indistinguishable from others; social distinctions in the public realm are often regarded as conventional (Eur. frag. 52 Nauck^2, for example), the common, private motives of the species, among which Heracles ranks family ties first (*HF* 632–36), as natural.[42] In such a formulation, public action may be natural, and so penetrate the private realm, only when it arises from collective passion, as it seems to do in the *Iphigenia*, although even in this case it may collide with competing individual impulses.

Euripides' characters must therefore reconcile the immediate experience of their emotions with abstract or conventional claims upon their loyalty, or with their need to maintain their position in a society that often fails to reward instinctive behavior. Thus, the individual personality's scope for action is diminished, or subordinated to some greater force. Those who would reject public pressures, like Menelaus after his change of heart, or Clytemnestra, will find their private desires frustrated by circumstance; Heracles' initial conversion to private values is thwarted by god-sent madness; emotionally vital figures such as Medea and Iphigenia transform their private distress and public vulnerability into public success, but they are transformed themselves. Private life has been made a foil for the social values these Euripidean characters profess and for the public figures they become.[43]

University of Chicago

42. For instinct and the family, cf. Arist. *EN* 1162a7 *ἄνθρωπος γὰρ τῇ φύσει συνδυαστικὸν μᾶλλον ἢ πολιτικόν, ὅσῳ πρότερον καὶ ἀναγκαιότερον οἰκία πόλεως, καὶ τεκνοποιία κοινότερον τοῖς ζῴοις.*

43. I owe much to the generous advice of Anne Burnett, Michael Murrin, and the journal's referees.