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Socratic Elenchos and Maieusis in Euripides' Medea

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SOCRATIC ELENCHOS AND MAIEUSIS

IN EURIPIDES' MEDEA

by

Laurie K. Haight

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It is said that writing a dissertation is a lonely task, but the longer I worked, the less true the commonplace seemed. First, there came the growing awareness of working within a community of scholars, living and dead, the product of whose efforts supported and challenged my own ideas. Second, anyone who teaches as she writes finds her ideas tested by students. I wish to acknowledge in particular the contributions of Lynn Tallarico and Gretchen Moe, each of whom questioned a faulty assumption I had made. Third, the agitation of an unfinished project makes one trying to friends, from whom one requires uncommon support and understanding. Joseph Connelly has been such a friend. From the beginning he boosted my spirits when I was most discouraged. Fourth, I have been graced with special mentors. Joan O'Brien taught me as a difficult undergraduate and gave me solid grounding for my enthusiasm. Edwin Menes and John Makowski read my manuscript and saved me from errors, large and small. I owe the deepest gratitude to my adviser, James Keenan. His equanimity, good humor, and high standards made work a joy and a challenge. I was able to complete this project by imitating his commitment and perseverance; his model of scholarly humility was gently instructive. I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my parents, whose love and faith attend me--now as ever.
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INTRODUCTION: ASSUMPTIONS AND SCOPE

This study proceeds by analysis and comparison:

analysis of the elenctic method used by the Socrates of Plato's early dialogues and comparison of that method with the one used by Euripides in creating his Medea.

Any analysis entails assumptions. To begin with, it is assumed, on the basis of the work of many earlier scholars, that Plato’s dialogues show a chronological progression, and that the dialogues themselves may be divided into categories of early, middle, and late. It is additionally assumed that the Socratic method of the early dialogues shows certain characteristics which distinguish it from Plato's later method, and that these characteristics justify the designation "Socratic."¹

A comparison of Socratic and Euripidean method may, however, suggest a scope to which this study does not

¹This designation does not presume to solve the insoluble, the so-called "Socratic question," i.e., what is Socratic and what Platonic in the writings of Plato. The reticence of modern scholars in using the designation "Socratic," an understandable reaction to the sometimes reckless daring of their predecessors, seems nevertheless to exceed the demands of prudence. While the designation "Socratic," as a short-hand way of distinguishing the method of the early dialogues from that of the later ones, could cautiously be defended here by an appeal to the well respected need for brevity of expression, I nonetheless maintain that the (albeit scanty) evidence on the historical Socrates, as well as a commonsense reading of the vast literature on the development of Plato's method, justify the use of this designation. Solution of the Socratic question is, in any event, not essential for this study's argument.
aspire. This study does not propose, following modern assumptions, to treat philosophical discourse and drama as two distinct modes of expression, i.e., as the prosaic and the poetic. To do so would be anachronistic, for the ancient Greeks of the fifth century B.C. did not consider philosophical discourse and drama as so obviously distinct as do we of modern times. Nor was the "prosaic" mode of literary expression, new to Greek literature in the fifth century B.C., at that time so far removed from the standard, the poetic, mode. Furthermore, the assumption that philosophical discourse and drama are distinct and diverse modes of expression suggests two courses for comparison—one futile, the other promising—that this study does not take. It does not attempt to disclose Euripides' "philosophy," an attempt that has, despite being fraught with problems, been more than once made. Nor does it consider the dramatic elements per

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2On these points, see Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986; hereafter Nussbaum, Fragility), pp. 122-123.

3See below, Chapter Three, Part One, and Chapter Four, Part Two, for attempts to assign a "philosophy" to Euripides. He has been termed a rationalist, irrationalist, sophist, and idealist. He has been accused both of openly rejecting "Socratic doctrine" in his plays, and of agreeing with it.

There are at least two methodological errors that lead to such confusion. First, it is all too easy to extract sections of speeches made by characters in Euripidean plays in support of any of these philosophic orientations, but more difficult to defend them in light of an entire play, which is, after all, the poet's statement. Consider what
of Plato's dialogues, although such consideration is worthy of further pursuit.

Furthermore, this study does not seek to prove what the progression of its chapters—from analyzing the Socratic method to demonstrating that method's use in Euripides' Medea—may suggest: that Socrates influenced Euripides. Such a claim was, in fact, made by Aristophanes and various others, but the validity of these claims is assumed to be the perceived similarity of method which lies beneath them. Demonstrating this similarity of method and illustrating the method's employment by Euripides, and thereby offering a new way of interpreting his work, are the aims of this study.

Since the study's originality lies primarily in illustrating Euripides' method of composition, it is upon this endeavor that the strictest limits have been set.

 sort of assessment we would have of Plato's philosophy if analysis of his dialogues were based on statements made by certain characters he depicts. Second, even if an entire play is considered as a philosophic treatise, the rigorous standards of vocabulary common to (at least) modern philosophical treatises should not be assumed to be operational in literary texts. On the first point, see below, Chapter Three, Part One; on the second, see M. J. O'Brien, The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1967; hereafter O'Brien, Paradoxes) pp. 50-53.

Exposing an author's method requires an exhaustive examination of the literature, lest details overlooked in a superficial analysis provide by their omission false justification for an impaired hypothesis. This study therefore limits its analysis to one play of Euripides, Medea, so that the integrity of its hypothesis may be thoroughly tested.

5 Justification for the choice of this particular play may be found in Chapter Three, Part Two.
CHAPTER ONE

SOCRATIC ELENCHOS AND MAIEUSIS IN PLATO'S EARLY DIALOGUES

Part One: Plato's Early Dialogues

Although the chronological progression of Plato's dialogues is much disputed, the present study demands only that dialogues be classified as early, middle, or late, and does not require establishing exact dating of each dialogue, or even their relative chronology. I accept as convincing the broad characteristics of the three periods of Platonic dialogues, drafted and used by Richard Robinson.

6The highly favored stylometric method of dating the dialogues, using the Laws as the standard of Plato's late style (on the authority of Diogenes Laertius, 3.37.25), has yielded accord mainly, as one would expect, in the later dialogues. Relative dating of the early dialogues (the focus of this study) is hotly debated. For a table comparing the chronology of the Platonic dialogues by five different scholars, see Sir David Ross, Plato's Theory of Ideas (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976; hereafter Ross, Plato's Theory), p. 2. Scholars who concentrate on classifying dialogues into three distinct periods do not use the philological criteria most respected by those seeking exact dating, but instead point to philosophical or literary criteria as a basis for classification.

7Richard Robinson, Plato's Earlier Dialectic, 2 ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953; hereafter Robinson, PED2). My indebtedness to the work of this outstanding Platonic scholar will become evident. Robinson's criteria for categorization of the dialogues are not based on an assumed development of doctrine--a method rightly criticized by Ross, Plato's Theory, p. 1, as too subjective--but instead on evolution of method. For an ordering of the dialogues that agrees with Robinson's, see
Early dialogues, according to Robinson, are characterized by the presence of Socratic elenchos and Socratic definition. The predominance of elenchos itself is the hallmark of an early dialogue, and elenchos in these dialogues proceeds along systematically predictable lines:


8Protasoras, Euthyphro, Laches, Charmides, Lysis, Republic 1, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Apology, Crito, Euthydemus. The dialogues are not listed in any assumed chronological order. I follow Robinson's (PED2, passim) evident classification: he is understandably hesitant to attempt strict division in a corpus that forms an organic whole and was revised. Robinson boldly lists his middle dialogues (?Meno, Banquet, Phaedo, Republic, Parmenides, Theaetetus, and Cratylus) and "certain late dialogues" (Phaedrus, Sophist, Statesman, and Philebus) in his preface (PED2 p. v, but see p. 49 for Republic 1 as early, and pp. 70 and 122 for his qualifications on designating Meno a middle dialogue), but nowhere gives a complete account of how he classifies the remaining dialogues. Some dialogues clearly fall for him on the cusp of his divisions. Robinson includes Euthydemus both in the list of dialogues consulted for a count of direct and indirect elenctic arguments, which suggests that he considers it an early dialogue, and in his chapter on "Dialectic," which suggests that it is a middle dialogue (PED2, pp. 24, 26, 74, 87). Perhaps his discomfort in classifying the dialogue arises from his perception that it is "mainly devoted to picturing or exaggerating the eristical temper . . . ." (PED2, p. 85), and, as such, it obscures the elenchos.
an interlocutor is asked to define an entity, usually ethical, and in subsequent cross-examination, his definition, as a particular instance, is shown to be deficient in some way when compared to an assumed "form" of that entity. Discussion in the early dialogues ends in aporia: both the interlocutor and Socrates admit that they are at a loss, and they depart with but one fact established—that they do not know. The Socratic character of elenchos (see below, Part Three) gives these dialogues their ironic, destructive, conclusively negative tone; the fact of definition makes their subject matter particular, and the particulars chosen for definition give the dialogues a thematic compass that is distinctively moral.9

While elenchos and definition never entirely disappear in any period of the Platonic dialogues, those of the middle period10 show a gradual trend away from

9Robinson, PED2, pp. v, 7, 19, 61.

10Meno, Symposium, Phaedo, Republic (except Republic 1), Parmenides, Theaetetus, and Cratylus will be considered middle dialogues. The dialogues again are not in an assumed chronological order, and again, following Robinson, PED2, p. v. Meno is for Robinson a dialogue transitional between early and middle. See PED2, p. 122. Parmenides seems to waiver between middle and late for Robinson (see his chapter, "Hypothesis in the Parmenides," PED2, pp. 223-280) while still being a strange hybrid of early and middle: an examination of the theory of ideas via elenchos and, in its later half, an example of hypothesis, the "keyword" of the middle dialogues. See PED2, pp. 32 and 70.

Gregory Vlastos, "Elenchus and Mathematics: A Turning-Point in Plato's Philosophical Development," AJP
depicting to discussing elenchos,11 and shift the focus of definition from the individual universals to universals in general. The tone becomes constructive as the negative aspects of elenchos are subordinated to a new purpose: establishing permanent knowledge. The assumed existence of

109 (1988; hereafter Vlastos, "Elenchus and Mathematics"), pp. 362-396, argues that the metaphysical outlook which characterizes the middle dialogues is attributable to Plato's pursuit of the study of mathematics. Elenchos, which lacks "indubitably certain termini" (p. 368), was shed in the middle dialogues without comment by the budding mathematician Plato, who indicated its shedding "by dramatic means, pairing Socrates with interlocutors who no longer give him any fight." (p. 371). Vlastos similarly points out (pp. 376 and 380) that the adversative role elenchos demands of Socrates and "the 'say only what you believe' rule, which forbids debating an unasserted premise" are impediments to investigating hypotheses.

11By establishing this progression as the basis for his theory of chronology of the Platonic dialogues, Robinson's criteria are distinguished from the more subjective criteria criticized by Ross, Plato's Theory, p. 1. Any scholar working with interpretation of texts would do well to read Robinson's strictly formulated "canons of interpretation," outlined in his first chapter (PED², pp. 1-5), from which he derives his operational assumption that "to possess a single name for an idea is a later stage than to be able to express it only in a sentence . . ." (PED², p. 5). This assumption, which gives rise to the basis for Robinson's chronology, not only betrays a sound understanding of the evolution of thought, but has also been recently supported by the theoretical work of Eric A. Havelock on the revolution of literacy in fifth century Greece. For Havelock's theory on the transition from orality to literacy and its manifestation in forms of expression (showing an evolution from the concrete and particular to the abstract), as well as its implications for the origins of moral philosophy as applied to the Socrates of the Platonic dialogues, see his recent "The Orality of Socrates and the Literacy of Plato: with Some Reflections on the Historical origins of Moral Philosophy in Europe," in New Essays on Socrates, ed. Eugene Kelly (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984; hereafter Havelock, "Orality"), pp. 67-94.
"forms" no longer serves, as it did in the early dialogues, as a standard against which a particular "form" can be tested and proposed opinion negated, but instead as the hypothetical basis for constructing positive doctrine. As discussion of particulars recedes behind this larger program, negative elenchos is "incorporated into the larger whole of dialectic." Method yields to science, with knowledge, not correct procedure, as the goal. Robinson neatly divides the two periods:

... the early gives prominence to method but not to methodology, while the middle gives prominence to methodology but not to method. In other words, theories of method are more obvious in the middle, but examples of it are more obvious in the early. ... elenchus changes into dialectic, the negative into the positive, pedagogy into discovery, morality into science.13

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12 Robinson, PED2, p. 19. Robinson distinguishes between dialectic and elenchos by asserting that "dialectic is an art or τέχνη as well as a method" (p. 74), while elenchos is presumably a method only. Both art and method entail an end or purpose, but "method is, and art is not, a specialization of the notion of 'going'. The 'method' is the description of the temporal actions in their temporal sequence, by which the desired end is brought about; whereas the 'art' or 'science' is the recital of the facts and principles which prescribe those actions. 'Art' tends toward permanent Knowledge, but 'method' towards changing 'procedure.'" (pp. 62-63). By being "incorporated into the larger whole of dialectic," elenchos in the middle dialogues changes from unadulterated method to art and method, and thereby gives up its purely negative tone: "It is harnessed to the car of construction." (p. 19).

13 Robinson, PED2, pp. 61 and 19.
The late dialogues continue the trend, and there emerges in them a sense of discomfort with the question-and-answer method of even the more positive dialectic. Late dialogues tend to become treatises as hypothesis yields to synthesis and division.

In short, Robinson uses evolution of method as the criterion for classifying the chronological periods of Platonic dialogues: early dialogues depict elenchos in operation; middle and late dialogues, despite their discussion of elenchos, display affiliation with methods other than elenchos, i.e., dialectic on the one hand and synthesis and division on the other. Robinson's classifications provide this study with a sure way of discriminating between primary and secondary Platonic source material. For analyzing Socratic elenchos, 

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14 Late dialogues include Phaedrus, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus, Critias. See Robinson, PED², p. v. Robinson does not classify Timaeus, Menexenmus, or Critias, all of which are virtual monologues. Timaeus and Critias are deemed late by Ross, Plato's Theory, p. 10. Neither Critias nor Menexenmus is cited by Robinson, presumably considered inferior or spurious. Menexenmus must be either middle or late (terminus post quem is 390 B.C., according to Ross, Plato's Theory, p. 9).

15 See Robinson, PED², p. 84.

Robinson's early dialogues, with their distinctive depiction of *elenchos*, will best serve as primary source material, while his middle and late dialogues, with their shift from practicing to discussing *elenchos*, will serve as secondary source material which will provide evidence for Plato's understanding of the method.
Part Two: The Procedure of *Elenchos* in Plato’s Dialogues

_Elenchos_ in the Platonic dialogues is not merely procedure, but instead procedure given a distinctive character by its practitioner, Socrates. Although separating the method’s essence from its character is not entirely possible, analysis of _elenchos_ will begin here with a description of the method itself, primarily as it is depicted in the early Platonic dialogues. Part Three will proceed with an examination of the method’s Socratic character, for which Plato’s discussions of _elenchos_ in the middle and late dialogues give principal testament. Part Four will consider the tragic dimensions of Socratic _elenchos_ as it is depicted by Plato in the early dialogues.

The verb ἠλέγχω,\(^{17}\) used by Plato to describe Socrates’ procedure in the dialogues,\(^{18}\) gives a picture of the method in broad outline. In the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.,\(^{19}\) the uses of the verb ἠλέγχειν point to a procedure, to "question,"

\(^{17}\) And words sharing its root (ἐξελέγχεις, ἐξελέγχω, ἀνέλεγχος, and the like).

\(^{18}\) The word and its root occur most frequently in the middle and late dialogues. Robinson cites Gorgias as a dialogue with a high occurrence of the root ἠλέγχω: "over fifty times in its eighty pages" (Robinson, *PED*\(^2\), p. 15).

\(^{19}\) ἠλέγχω is a word whose definition shows marked differences in Epic and post-Epic periods.
"cross-examine," and imply its two possible goals, to "prove" (a positive outcome), or to "refute" (a negative outcome). The dictionary definitions serve to limit expectations but do not answer all questions: we know to expect a procedure of questioning and cross-examining and a goal of proof or refutation, but we do not know the intent of the questioning, the form it will take, or how that form effects either of the procedure's goals: proof or refutation. Plato's early dialogues, with their depiction of elenchos, provide answers not obtained from the dictionary definitions.

The procedure of elenchos in the early dialogues is largely informed by the intent of Socrates' questioning, which is to establish the definition of a universal. This intent expresses itself either obviously, in explicit primary questions, or more subtly, in a persistent emphasis on definition throughout the course of a dialogue. Primary


21 Properly speaking, the intent of the questioning falls under the method's Socratic character, but is inseparable from the form, which is truly the method's essence.

questions are expressed in one of two forms: "What is \( X? \)" or "Is \( X Y? \)".\(^{23}\) The dialogues with primary questions impress the reader both as more clearly intent on definition, since the focus of definition is maintained throughout and the progression of the questioning is obvious, and as somewhat more artificially arranged, since under the firm control of Socrates' questioning the topic does not range widely as ordinary conversation is wont to do. Dialogues without primary questions, by contrast, lack the focus and clear progressional form of those with primary questions, but strike the reader as more nearly approximating true conversational form. Thus, although the intent to define may be observed in all of the early dialogues, the progression of the questioning is more easily seen in dialogues that have a primary question.\(^{24}\)

The general form of the questioning in dialogues with a primary question follows a predictable procedure. After eliciting an answer to his primary question, Socrates often

\(^{23}\)See Robinson’s chapter, "Socratic Definition" (PED\(^2\), pp. 49-60). Robinson identifies Euthyphro, Laches, Charmides, and Hippias Major as dialogues dominated by the "What is \( X? \)" question, while in Gorgias, Meno, and Republic \(^1\) the "Is \( X Y? \)" question predominates. Dialogues lacking primary questions are, according to him, Ion, Hippias Minor, Apology, Crito, and Protagoras.

\(^{24}\)Both using a dialogue that has a primary question, and extracting the method from that dialogue are for the sake of clarifying the procedure’s form. This artificially created clarity should not be construed as integral to the method’s employ.
allows the answerer to elaborate and then expresses
dissatisfaction with the answer, not by claiming that the
answer is false, but that the question was misunderstood.
He has been given a particular example of practice, he
maintains, when what he wanted was a universal form
(εἴδος), essence (οὐσία), or aspect
(ιδέα).

A summary of Euthyphro will serve to illustrate the
procedure. After an introductory prologue, in which
Euthyphro explains his present circumstance and agrees to
the existence of the ιδέα of "holiness" (τὸ
ὀσιον)—that it is always the same regardless of action
and that holiness and unholiness are opposites (5d.1-5),
Socrates asks Euthyphro to tell him what he considers
"holiness and unholiness." To this Euthyphro replies,
"... holiness is the very thing I am doing now... ."
(/octet ἐγὼ νῦν ποιῶ, 5d.8-9).25
Euthyphro elaborates briefly by way of proof, drawing a
parallel between his actions and those which men
believe26 Zeus committed against his father (5e.2-

25The text used for all Platonic dialogues is the
five volume Oxford Plato: Platonis, Opera, vols. 1-5, ed.

26Euthyphro cites as proof the beliefs of his
contemporaries, but Socrates, in his customary way, makes
Euthyphro profess these beliefs as his own (6b.3-6) before
he will continue his questioning. Euthyphro must thus be
understood as both a fictional character in a dialogue and
an "everyman" contemporary of Socrates. See Robinson,
PED2, p. 26. See below, Part Three, for a discussion
6a). But Socrates complains that the answer is insufficient, being grounded in happenstance (6d.1-4). He reminds Euthyphro of his former agreement to the proposition that holiness and unholiness are consistent and opposite regardless of particular action (5d.1-6), and requests that Euthyphro now give him not examples from the many holy things, but instead "that form itself, by which all holy things are deemed holy" (ἐξεκένω αὐτὸ τὸ εἴδος . . .) or the "aspect" (τὴν ἱδέαν, 6d.10-e.3).

Astutely and definitely, Socrates steers the focus of definition away from reference to accepted practice and popular belief to the more rigorous definition of universals. Throughout the early Platonic dialogues Socrates does not allow particular action, described through the use of adjectives or verbs related to the concept, to serve as definition for the concept itself, for which he regularly uses an articular adjective. Nor does he take elaborated belief at face value, but often discreetly examines its logical consequences. Euthyphro of Plato's (or Socrates') intent in using this "personal aspect" of elenchos, and below, Chapter Four, Part Four, for Euripides' similar practice in creating mythic personae who exhibit fifth-century B.C. Athenian characteristics.

of these two realms of definition (accepted practice and popular belief on the one hand, and universals on the other) is the crux, I am convinced, of elenchos, and in and of itself goes a long way towards explaining how Socrates is able to bring about refutation, yet cannot but suggest proof.
agrees to the rules set by Socrates, and proposes a revised
definition of the universal: "What is dear to the gods is
holy, and what is not dear to them is unholy." (6e.10-
7a.1).

The procedure continues with Socrates asking
questions whose answers seem obvious; in effect he is
eliciting agreement to a number of secondary premises,
based both on information provided as proof by the
interlocutor in the elaboration of his original
definition, and on logical, commonsense interpretations of
seemingly analogous everyday occurrences.28 These
secondary premises, which sometimes at first blush seem to
have little to do with the universal proposed for

28As Robinson notes, "These secondary questions
differ from the primary one in that, whereas that was a
matter of real doubt and difficulty, the answers to all
these seem obvious and inescapable. Socrates usually
phrases them so that the natural answer is yes; and if you
say anything else you are likely to seem irrational or at
least queer." (PED², p. 7; italics added). The
italicized sections explain why it is that these secondary
premises are derived from situations which are only
seemingly analogous. The realm of belief and that of
logic, or enlightened self-interest which informs true
practicality and utility (from which Socrates' analogies
are inevitably drawn) are rarely synonymous.

Nietzsche boastfully exposes the naiveté with which we
all approach explanation of belief: "Would anyone like to
take a look into the secret of how ideals are made on
earth? Who has the courage?—Very well! Here is a point
we can see through into this dark workshop. But wait a
moment or two, Mr. Rash and Curious: your eyes must first
get used to this false iridescent light.—All right! Now
speak! What is going on down there? Say what you see, man
of the most perilous kind of inquisitiveness—now I am the
one who is listening." F. Nietzsche, The Genealogy of
Moral, in The Basic Writings of Nietzsche, transl. and ed.
definition, inevitably show a deficiency in the revised definition, which is consequently emended. In Euthyphro, this part of the procedure begins at 8a and continues through the dialogue until near its end, at 15b.7. Socrates first easily obtains Euthyphro's agreement to his own previously alleged statement of

29Robinson distinguishes three forms of Socrates' argumentation within elenchos, which depend on the attitude of the interlocutor. Socrates will merely restate a position with which the interlocutor is in agreement, and the interlocutor does not argue at all. If it is perceived as likely that the interlocutor will not agree with a statement, Socrates' mode of argumentation is adjusted to how willing he thinks the interlocutor may be to concede the destruction of a thesis. More or less deception is used in response to the interlocutor's perceived willingness: some few arguments in definition are fairly direct, and labelled "epagoge" (synonymous with induction) by Robinson; more are indirect, and called by Robinson "syllogism." (For his definition of these terms, see PED², pp. 33 and 21 respectively.) Robinson's conclusions about the occurrence of various forms of argumentation are as follows: "The Socratic elenchus is nearly always a syllogism. More in detail, the simple refutations are nearly always syllogisms; and in the complex refutations the last and main step is nearly always a syllogism. The probable cause of this is that an answerer is very unlikely to grant premisses from which the contradictory of his thesis could be obtained by epagoge. In epagoge the premisses even when taken separately are so closely allied to the conclusion that we can hardly help seeing that they go together. . . . It thus appears that practically the only function of epagoge in the elenchus is to provide some of the premisses for a final syllogism. When an elenchus is complex, as it usually is, the main step is always a syllogism; and of the premisses for these main steps some are admitted at once by the answerer, some are syllogized, and some are obtained by epagoge. . . . Probably the commonest structure for a Socratic elenchus to have is a syllogism from two premisses one of which is granted immediately while the other is induced. Very common variations on this scheme are for the uninduced premiss to be briefly syllogized, or for there to be three premisses instead of two." Robinson, PED², pp. 38-40 (italics added).
common belief (5e.5-6c.7) that the gods quarrel among themselves. Then, by analogy to disagreements among men, Socrates inductively attempts to get Euthyphro to agree that the gods would not quarrel over anything easily proven (like mathematics, measures and weights), but instead about ethical concepts, "justice and injustice, nobility and shamefulness, good and bad" (7d.1-2). This inductive argument points obviously to the refutation of Euthyphro's revised definition, since the gods do not agree among themselves about ethical concepts, one of which is holiness. Euthyphro, however, is as yet reluctant to abandon his thesis, and argues that the gods really do not so disagree, whereby Socrates resorts again to inductive analogy to prove his point about disagreements among men, whose more observable practice in the law courts he uses to show that men there do not disagree about punishment per se, but instead about whether or not a particular act is wrong or right. At this point Euthyphro, who undoubtedly has witnessed such practices himself, must agree to emend the revised primary definition, so that unholiness now is defined as "whatever all the gods hate, and holiness is what they all love" (9d.1-3). But by analogy again, this time through syllogism, to passive states and their corresponding actions (being carried and carrying, and the like, 10a.5 ff.), Socrates proves the emended definition deficient, since the essence (οὐσία) of holiness
has not been described, but instead something which happens to it, i.e., that it is loved by all the gods (11a.6 ff.).

There follows an interlude on Euthyphro's consternation (see below, Part Three). Socrates then suggests the definition that all that is holy is just, to which Euthyphro agrees. But is all that is just also holy (in Robinson's terminology, "Is X Y")? Led by Socrates through another analogy (this time on fear and reverence), Euthyphro admits that while all that is holy is just, all that is just is not holy, since justice, like fear, covers a range of which holiness is only a part. Euthyphro proposes the definition that holiness is the part of justice which attends to the gods (12e.5-8). By syllogistic analogy to other arts of attending (horsemanship, huntsmanship, etc.), Euthyphro is made to admit that attending aims at some good or benefit to the thing attended, which is clearly preposterous to Euthyphro when applied to the gods (13a-d.4). Euthyphro then proposes that the attention that is holiness is analogous to the service rendered by slaves to masters. But by inductive analogy to other services, Euthyphro is encouraged to define the result of this service which, according to him, is salvation to families and states who have prayed and sacrificed in a way that pleases the gods. Socrates deduces from this that holiness is then a science of asking and giving, which implies, as Euthyphro agrees,
asking for and giving what is needed. But what do the gods need? Euthyphro asserts that we give them honor and that which pleases them but is not beneficial.

At this point Socrates ends the questioning and begins a syllogistical tabulation of the agreed upon secondary premises. It is discovered that together they entail the refutation of the answerer's latest definition: for Euthyphro this means admitting that he has come full circle to a definition which has previously been recognized as deficient. The essence of holiness has eluded him because he is confronted again and again with deficiencies in his definition which require him to abandon one of the following: 1) commonsense interpretation derived from his everyday experience; 2) beliefs he holds concerning the gods (myths about their quarrelling, the belief that Zeus is "the best and most just," the belief that gods are self-sufficient and yet anthropomorphically analogous to humans in at least some instances); or 3) the entire conversation and its discomfiting implication that his beliefs, which he has used as justification for his present practice, are not in accord with what he clearly agrees is sensible.

Euthyphro, like every other exasperated interlocutor, chooses the third option. He rushes off to his now clearly suspect prosecution of his father.

Euthyphro ends with the interlocutor's admission of ignorance, yet unwillingness to continue the procedure as
Socrates requests. Every definition Euthyphro proposed was eventually acknowledged by him to be deficient or impaired. Both Socrates and his interlocutor depart in seeming ignorance. Euthyphro’s earlier self-assurance and eagerness to display his knowledge have been replaced by an urge to escape. He has not only been refuted, he has been made uncomfortable.30

But how exactly has Euthyphro been refuted, and in what arena? Definition, with which our description of the method began and which, as was asserted, informs the procedure, points not only to the way in which the goal of the method, refutation, is accomplished, but also to a more exact description of the method itself. Consider how it is that a definition may be refuted: "The most obvious way to refute a definition is to produce a case that falls under the definition but not under the definiend, or contrariwise."31 This suggests a neatly logical overthrow, which is but one small part of Socrates’ art of refutation, and the least subtle part of it at that. We know already the genus of the definiend, for Socrates is

30 This unwillingness is a commonplace in the early dialogues. How are we to interpret this unwillingness of the interlocutor when put again and again beside Socrates’ enthusiastic avowal that they must continue, if we do not say that the interlocutor has been made to feel enough discomfort that the process has become unpleasant? For Plato’s evidence on the effect of elenchos on the interlocutor, see below, Part Three.

careful to differentiate it from any haphazard offering of his interlocutor: the definiend is a universal. In Euthyphro, this means an entity that is unchanging regardless of circumstance, and, given the insistence in argumentation on logical cohesiveness, rational. Producing a case which "falls under the definition but not under the definiend" can mean, strictly speaking, any case which in and of itself does not fit the designation of "universal" as Socrates and his interlocutor have agreed. This is "refutation by citing the rules of definition," that aspect of elenchos which requires the least subtlety and artistry.

The method of defining universals by inductive analogy is open to disruption by Socrates because of the very nature of the universals as defined by him. Definition of universals through induction implies that one can

establish, from a number of observed instances, a general characteristic of a whole class. . . .

Induction leads to definition because a definition consists of a collection of these general characteristics, selected with certain requirements in mind: (a) They must be essential to membership of the class, not accidental attributes of certain individuals within it. . . . (b) They must be collectively sufficient to mark off the class of objects to be defined from all other classes of objects whatsoever.32

Socrates has access, then, in his refutation of an interlocutor's definition, to a set of agreed-upon rules

which can immediately disqualify a specific example as "not falling under the definiend," i.e., not qualifying as a universal. In Euthyphro, this tactic is used at 11a.6-b.6, and then recalled in the dialogue's syllogistic final refutation, at 15c.1-2.

Refutation of definition, however, also allows producing a case that falls under the definiend, but not under the definition. The distinction between definition and definiend, inferred from Robinson's statement, is everywhere applicable to the early dialogues where refutation of definition is the norm. The mere fact of this distinction indicates a sharp dichotomy\(^{33}\) between definition and definiend in these dialogues which, when explored, points to an arena of refutation beyond the strictly logical sphere suggested by Robinson's rule for refuting a definition. What, then, are the "definitions"

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\(^{33}\)This long unrecognized dichotomy is, I believe, the point behind Vlastos's disagreement ("Elenchus," especially pp. 29-30) with what he terms Robinson's "invention": that "the consequence which contradicts the thesis is drawn from that thesis, that is, deduced from it." Vlastos instead argues, "What Socrates in fact does in any given elenchus is convict p not of falsehood but of being a member of an inconsistent premiss-set; and to do this is not to show that p is false, but only that either p is false or that some or all of the premisses are false." Vlastos continues by noting that Socrates never undertakes to prove the truth of the premises: "... they have entered the argument simply as propositions on which he and the interlocutor are agreed." (p. 30). Vlastos seems to have misunderstood Robinson, whose designation of "indirect" refutation, the preferred form, does not allow for the deduction to which Vlastos protests. See Robinson, *PED*\(^2\), pp. 23 ff.
which are repeatedly found deficient under the agreed-upon rules for defining a universal?

Looking again to Euthyphro, we find that the definitions proposed by Euthyphro take two forms: the obvious expression of practice justified by belief, and the less obvious, but nonetheless insistent, reliance upon that same justifying system of beliefs. Euthyphro's first attempt at definition is perhaps most revealing, for the conflict between definiens and definition has as yet not been forced below the surface by Socrates' insistence on certain rules of definition: Euthyphro at first cites as definition an actual practice that he has undertaken, justified on the basis of popular beliefs he maintains he also holds. All of his subsequent allegations do not, at least on their face, challenge that justifying system of beliefs. In fact, when any facet of that system of beliefs is offered up by Socrates as a minor premise, Euthyphro readily agrees to the premise and refuses to abandon it, even at the eventual expense of his revised definition. Euthyphro's operational beliefs are thus integral not only to the primary definition he offers; they also form the basis of several of the premises which lead to the overthrow of his revised definitions. And, although Socrates never openly attacks Euthyphro's beliefs, it is precisely those beliefs which are overthrown by Socrates' seeming assumption and then collocation of them with
another set of operational beliefs, subtly suggested in his choice of analogous situations. This system of beliefs is clearly more logical, more consistent with enlightened self-interest, and yet totally foreign to Euthyphro and the other fifth-century B.C. Greeks with whom Socrates conversed.

It is, then, through judicious choice of the secondary premises that Socrates is able to refute definitions in the second way, by producing cases which fall under the definiend, but not under the definition. If the definition is in essence the interlocutor's set of operational beliefs, and the universal is some as yet unknown which must fulfill only certain rules in its definition, the search for the definiend quickly centers on the need for consistency and exclusivity in definition. The interlocutor, perhaps seduced by the need to produce appropriately analogous cases which do not offend the rules of definition, is easily led away from the as yet unstated but soon-to-become manifest inconsistencies in his system of beliefs. The analogous cases he is inductively led to affirm form a belief system that is clearly more logical and consistent, albeit unwitnessed. The secondary premises, then, so willingly conceded by the interlocutor, are in fact often cases which would, upon reflection, clearly be rejected in practice based on the belief system of the interlocutor (the definition), but acceptable as
universals (the definiendum), given the rigorous rules agreed upon by Socrates and the interlocutor for defining universals.\textsuperscript{34}

This establishment of certain of the secondary premises, whereby one "reaches the demonstrand without at any time or in any way assuming the contradictory of the demonstrand" is what Robinson terms "direct establishment," and is a crucial counterpoint to what he claims is the preferred method of refutation, the indirect method, i.e., showing that "... the thesis entails a consequence which is so repugnant to you that you would rather abandon the thesis than keep it and the consequence along with it."\textsuperscript{35} For if, as according to the dictionary definition of ἐλέγχω, the method is equally capable of proof as it is of refutation, it should be asked not only what is refuted by Socrates, but whether anything has withstood this process of cross-examination.

The emotional response to this preferred method of argumentation, apparent in Robinson's use of "repugnant" in the above quotation, supports the contention that the

\textsuperscript{34}It is here that the reader familiar with the Socrates of the early Platonic dialogues will begin to sense the presence of the well-known "Socratic paradoxes." See the discussion below, Part Three.

\textsuperscript{35}Robinson, PED\textsuperscript{2}, p. 23, italics added. This "indirect argument," by Robinson's count, accounts for approximately three-quarters of the arguments in nine of the early dialogues (both refutations and establishments of premises).
refutation involves more than simple logical overthrow of a proposed definition, which clearly would not elicit such a strong emotional response.36 The conversation becomes

36James Haden, "Socratic Ignorance," in *New Essays on Socrates*, ed. Eugene Kelly (Lantham, MD: University Press of America, 1984; hereafter Haden, "Socratic Ignorance"), pp. 17–28, sees the process of inquiry as the goal of elenchos, a process "... in which prior assumptions and especially feelings related to those assumptions are brought into the open and tested ...." Movement is toward "the integration of feeling and thought," not final definition (p. 27). Socrates' ignorance, according to Haden, is in how to effect such an integration. Michael Soupios' response to Haden in the same publication, "Reason and Feeling in Plato," pp. 137–141, does not, to my mind at least, argue persuasively against Haden's thesis. Soupios accuses Haden of taking an existentialist perspective on feeling among the Greeks, and cites two texts as evidence that the Greeks (even Socrates) thought that feeling must be subordinated to reason: 1) the Republic's theory of the tripartite soul, and 2) Diotima's encouragement in the *Symposium* to purify "crude eroticism" (p. 140). Soupios likewise cites Aristotle's *Politics* as evidence that the Greeks believed that "[Moral feeling] took shape only when raw human sentiment was ordered and disciplined by reason ...." Soupios seems to be confusing Socrates' early inquiries and honest confusion about the relationship between thought and feeling with the later solutions of Plato and Aristotle.

The failure to take account of elenchos' emotional component is an oversight in Vlastos' fine interpretation of elenchos. Vlastos thus must posit a "super Socrates" whose self-confidence comes from an assurance that he can logically overthrow any shift in argumentation the interlocutor may make ("Elenchus," p. 50). See also pp. 40 and 49, where Vlastos' oversight may be the source of his perplexity at the conviction allotted to premises that are "logically unsecured," and p. 48, where he argues that the only means to "compel' [an] adversary to affirm what he denies" are "logical." Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, "Vlastos on the Elenchus," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. Julia Annas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 191, argue against Vlastos but preserve his oversight. They do argue that elenchtic refutation sometimes requires that "true non-moral beliefs" be brought into conjunction with "true moral beliefs"; this suggests, but does not make explicit, the attempt to integrate feeling (moral beliefs) and thought (non-moral
repugnant to Euthyphro because Socrates' art in elenchos is the astute collocation of two separate worlds, the world of the interlocutor's practice and belief, one in which the interlocutor has an emotional investment, with the world from Socrates' analogies, a world where consistency, logic, and enlightened self-interest prevail. The collocation is astute precisely because it is never made clear until the final moments: the world of Euthyphro's practice and belief is assumed in the indirect refutation, and yet never openly contradicted in either the direct or the indirect beliefs). Nonetheless Brickhouse and Smith cannot imagine on the basis of what Vlastos' Socrates came to believe that his own moral views were consistent (p. 193), since no logic can argue for their consistency.

The oversight continues in Richard Kraut, "Comments on Gregory Vlastos, 'The Socratic Elenchus,'" in Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, vol. 1, ed. Julia Annas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983; hereafter Kraut, "Comments"), pp. 62-67. Although Kraut argues that not being able to give a reason for everything one believes does not deprive one of proof (p. 62) and describes Socrates as using premises that are "psychologically compelling" (p. 66) and as assuming that interlocutors have "a certain amount of psychological and moral fixity" (p. 67), he nonetheless does not make the leap to describing the interlocutor's dilemma as partly emotional. See, however, as an example of someone who does make this leap, Kahn, "Gorgias," p. 106, who describes Callicles' defeat as in part due to "moral emotion": 'Why cannot Callicles be a consistent hedonist? First of all, because of his aristocratic pride and his moral contempt for actions and persons that he regards as vulgar, disgusting, and unmanly."

Plato indicates his awareness of the potency of this collocation in a late dialogue, *Sophist*. By way of differentiating elenchos from another type of education, Plato has a "stranger" explain elenchos in broad outline:

... some men appear to have reached the conclusion that all ignorance is involuntary, and that no one will ever learn anything if he thinks he is already a wise man in that respect, and that the admonitory form of education involves great labour and achieves little result. ... So they aim at the removal of this opinion by another means. ... They question a man on those matters where he thinks he is saying something although he is really saying nothing. And as he is confused they easily convict his opinions, by bringing them together and putting them side by side [συνάγοντες ὅτι τοὺς λόγους εἰς ταύτων τιθέασι παρ’ ἀλλήλαις], and thus showing that they are contrary to each other at the same time in the same respect about the same things. (*Sophist* 230a.5–b.8)\(^37\)

The effect of this refutation by collocation is betrayed in the Epic definition of ἐλέγχειν, to "disgrace," "put to shame." Socratic elenchos derives the potency of its refutation from the fact that it confronts not only the logical basis of beliefs, but the believer's emotional investment as well. There is disgrace in publicly abandoning the system of beliefs that has guided one's actions, in admitting that one's entire basis for decision-making has been faulty--which would of course necessitate a drastic change in the conduct of one's

\(^{37}\)The translation is Robinson's, PED\(^2\), p. 12. The italics and Greek are added.
life, but who would choose instead to deny that which is clearly sensible? Who wants to appear "irrational or at least queer"? Who but Socrates could consistently apply to his own life the rigorous moral standards implicit in the proposed analogies? For it is these standards that alone survive, and they survive the rules of definition, the reluctance of the interlocutor, and the relentless scrutiny of Socrates. The only thing they do not survive is translation into the world of men, where consistency and enlightened self-interest are not the sole informers of action.

38Tolstoy perhaps best indicates the reason for the reluctance to abandon a belief: "I know that most men, including those at ease with problems of the greatest complexity, can seldom accept even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as would oblige them to admit the falsity of the conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, which they have proudly taught to others, and which they have woven, thread by thread, into the fabric of their lives." Quoted by the physicist Joseph Ford, in James Gleick, Chaos (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 38.

Ernest Becker, following Otto Rank, describes the defeat of beliefs as a sort of death. "Every conflict over truth is in the last analysis just the same old struggle over . . . immortality." If anyone doubts this, let him try to explain in any other way the life-and-death viciousness of all ideological disputes. Each person nourishes his immortality in the ideology of self-perpetuation to which he gives his allegiance; this gives his life the only abiding significance it can have. No wonder men go into a rage over fine points of belief: if your adversary wins the argument about truth, you die. Your immortality system has been shown to be fallible, your life becomes fallible." Ernest Becker, Escape from Evil (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 64, quoting Otto Rank, Psychology and the Soul (New York: Perpetua Books edition, 1961), p. 87.
In summary, then, the procedure of *elenchos* in the early Platonic dialogues consists of these essentials: 1) the intent to define, whether expressed through explicit primary questions or a persistent emphasis on definition; 2) establishing the rules of definition: differentiating between a universal, an entity that is consistent and never changing, and a mere list of particular instances; 3) a primary attempt to define by explicit citation of particular instance of common practice often justified by personal and popular belief; 4) rejection of the primary definition by reference to the agreed upon rules of definition; 5) subsequent attempts to define which, although they do not explicitly cite particular instances, reveal the interlocutor's reliance on the system of beliefs used to justify the primary definition; 6) argumentation, whose essence is the subtle collocation of the interlocutor's persevering belief system with another system of beliefs, consistent and rational, with which the interlocutor agrees because establishment is accomplished either by reference to particular instances which are seemingly analogous and appeal to what could be termed

39This revelation is apparent 1) in the interlocutor's persistent willingness to acknowledge certain statements assumed by Socrates in his argumentation and 2) in the interlocutor's unwillingness to abandon certain unstated but manifest beliefs regardless of the consequence of their espousal to his proposed definition. On "overt/explicit" vs. "covert/tacit" beliefs of the interlocutor, see Vlastos, "Elenchus," p. 51.
common sense," or by eliciting agreement to positions which appear unrelated to the interlocutor’s tenets of belief; 7) final refutation: the synthetic breakdown of the interlocutor’s position achieved by Socrates’ syllogistically re-evoking the two systems of beliefs embodied in the interlocutor’s ready assumptions on the one hand, and the premises painstakingly established in argumentation on the other; 8) agreement by both parties that they are at a loss and need to start all over again; 9) reluctance of the interlocutor to continue elenchos, a reluctance perhaps attributable to the shame he feels at a) his original profession of knowledge become manifest ignorance and b) the dawning recognition that there exists a system of beliefs which, although it has not been refuted and is clearly preferable to his own, would require that the interlocutor change his whole operational belief system, and thus his way of life; 10) continuation of the status quo, with the interlocutor returning to life as he has always conducted it, albeit with a new sense of uneasiness.

The procedure may be broadly described, then, as indirect refutation of definition become blatant refutation of the interlocutor’s belief system, and establishment of premises become intimation of a system of beliefs which would withstand another round of elenchos. The terminus of elenchos, refutation combined with implied
proof, simultaneous blatant overthrow of one belief system and implied establishment of another, perhaps suggests a method whose aspirations do not extend beyond the narrow boundaries of winning. Nevertheless, this impression of elenchos' aim is one which Plato was careful to dispel,\(^40\) for it seems he was aware of the potential for misinterpreting the aim of elenchos, especially given the distinctive character it acquired from its practitioner, Socrates.

\(^{40}\) Plato designated to eristic, rather than to elenchos or to his own dialectic, the aim of winning. See Sophist 225 and Robinson's discussion of Plato's seeming defensiveness about the distinction between dialectic, eristic, and antilogic (PED\(^2\), pp. 84-88). On the distinction, see also G. B. Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981; hereafter Kerferd, Sophistic Movement), pp. 59-67.
Part Three: The Socratic Character of Elenchos

Analysis of the Socratic character of elenchos requires a definition of its preliminary aims (reversal, recognition, and katharsis) and description of their effects as well as a consideration of its tone in relation to its distinctive subject matter. Plato's discussions of the method in the middle and late dialogues will serve not only to complete the description of elenchos in the early dialogues, but also to inform a final consideration of elenchos in Part Four, of its ultimate aim of moral improvement and the sense of tragedy produced by its lack of success in achieving this aim.

Elenchos' Preliminary Aims and Their Effects

Plato sees elenchos' ultimate aim as the moral improvement of the soul which is realized through a series of preliminary steps: 1) the interlocutor must undergo a reversal, which is usually termed by the interlocutor aporia, confusion; 2) he must recognize his ignorance; 3) he will have one or more reactions to this recognition—he will feel either shame or wonder; 4) he must be "purged" of his former opinions; and 5) the truth must be brought to birth. At this point the ultimate aim of elenchos, 41

41 My use of certain English words (e.g., "reversal" and "recognition"), suggestive of Aristotelian terms from the Poetics, were, in an earlier version of this study, justified not only on the basis of a commonsense
the moral improvement of the soul, finally becomes possible.

It is the refutation of the interlocutor's definitions (and thus his belief system) that serves to effect the first two aims of elenchos: the interlocutor goes from being one who claims to know something to one who cannot help but admit that he does not know. Euthyphro, for example, begins his discussion with Socrates with the boast that he has exact knowledge about holiness (5a.1-2), but is so "reversed" by the dialogue's close that he can do no more than feebly agree with Socrates' allegation that

interpretation of the text of Plato, but also by a comparison of that interpretation with the words peripeteia and anagnorisis as they are used in Aristotle. Robinson, who uses the words as well but nowhere connects them to Aristotle's terminology, serves as an observer of the method whose interpretations cannot be said to be conveniently prejudicial to terms from the text of Aristotle. Robinson's one word descriptions of a process are presumably justified on the basis of one of his study's assumptions, i.e., that "the history of human thought is 'evolutionist,'" and that that evolution is detected in part from the fact that "to possess a single name for an idea is a later stage than to be able to express it only in a sentence" (Robinson, PED2, pp. vi and 5). Havelock supports such assumptions as these in his writings on the effects of the advent of literacy, whereby narrative description of agents acting is replaced by the use of impersonals for the agents, and only later becomes analytic, i.e., more abstract. See Havelock, "Orality," pp. 72-75. The fact that we do have in Plato one of the Aristotelian terms, namely katharsis, should not nevertheless lead us away from a careful analysis of the term in both texts, which is the only way that a credible claim of comparable usage can be made. The dangers of declaring the correlation of ideas solely on the basis of a linguistic observation that the same words recur in two texts are clearly outlined by O'Brien, Paradoxes, pp. 39-53 passim.
they were either wrong in their former argumentation or are wrong now. In either case, they must begin again (15c.8-12). And while Euthyphro is pondering the implications of being wrong in their former argumentation where some things he took as givens without argumentation (his own belief system) and other things he agreed to after having been led through argumentation to logical conclusions he cannot now easily disavow, Socrates indulges in what has been called irony.42 He recalls Euthyphro’s earlier confidence in his knowledge, alludes to the consequences this confidence has on Euthyphro’s current lawsuit, and begs Euthyphro, who Socrates assumes is still every bit as knowledgeable, to continue their conversation. This wrenching counterpoint to his dawning realization of how untenable are his positions is too much for poor Euthyphro: not only has he been thoroughly trounced, but Socrates’ confidence in the "all-knowing" Euthyphro makes the Euthyphro, who now obviously does not know, feel shame that he was first "drawn into a parade of knowledge," and then suffered a "violent reversal of the situation."43 He escapes, claiming the press of unspecified commitments (ἐν ἄθαν τοῖς τοῖς, ὦ Ἐὐθυφρών, νῦν γὰρ σπεύδω ποι., καὶ μοι ζωά ἀπιέναι, Euthyphro 15e.2-3).

42I do not agree with Robinson and many others that Socrates’ "irony" is a sham. See the discussion below, Part Three, second section.

43Robinson, PED2, p. 18.
This interlocutor's sudden eager desire to escape, accompanied as it is by excuses which are vague and thus suspicious-sounding, can perhaps alone be used to defend Robinson's description of such an experience as a "violent reversal," although Plato himself nowhere describes it so succinctly. In Plato's text, interlocutors describe their own experience and term it aporia. Can their subjective perception be brought into consonance with Robinson's more objective perspective on their experience, which leads him to designate it a "reversal"? Plato's text suggests the validity of this interpretation, for even as the interlocutors proclaim their confusion, they profess the sudden and total reversal of their circumstances.

The reversal is apparent when one contrasts, for example, Meno's initial bravado--his incredulity that Socrates does not know what aretē is (Meno 71b.8-c.1) and his claim that, for him, defining aretē is no problem (ἀλλ' οὖ καλετόν, ὦ Σωκράτες, εἶπεν, Meno 71e.1)--with his later report of the "loss of way" he is experiencing and how he describes it:

Socrates, I heard before I met you that you never do anything but puzzle yourself and others too
[αὐτὸς τε ἀπορεῖς καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιεῖς ἀπορεῖν]; and now it seems to me that you are bewitching and drugging and completely spellbinding me, so that I have become saturated with puzzlement [ὡστε μεστὸν ἀπορίας γεγονέναι]. In fact, if I may make a little joke, you are absolutely like the broad electric ray of the sea, both in appearance and otherwise. That fish benumbs anyone who comes near and touches it, and that is what you seem to have done to me now; for really I am numb in mind and mouth, and I do not know how to answer you [οὐκ ἔχω δὴ ἀποκρίνωμαι οὐ]. Yet I have discoursed on virtue thousands of times and to many people; and done it well too, as I thought at the time. But now I cannot even say what it is [νῦν δὲ οὐδὲν ὅτι ἐστίν τὸ παράπαλλον ἔχω εἰπεῖν]. (Meno 79e.7–80b.4) 45

A man who has travelled the humbling road from confident self-assurance to the doubt and insecurity expressed here may perhaps be excused for attributing his condition to magical expertise practiced against him, or to the narcotic effect of some aquatic creature he has haplessly encountered; but the vividness of the similes that express the profundity of his confusion suggests not merely that source which is common to all confusion--dislocation (which even his use of the term aporia concedes). Meno has not only "lost his way"; he feels bewitched and benumbed because, like the sleeper who suffers a similar depth of confusion upon finding darkness when expecting light or vice versa, Meno finds himself in a place where before he

45Quoted and translated by Robinson, PED2, pp. 9-10. The italics and Greek are added.
adamantly was not. And since his former location is
the exact opposite of his previous one, may we not say,
along with Robinson, that he has undergone "violent
reversal"?

Socrates affirms this interpretation. In response to
Meno's comparison of him to the electric ray, Socrates
continues the simile and clarifies its implications for
Meno's present state: Meno has, indeed, lost his way to a
profound degree. He is in fact now in the position of
Socrates, a position so recently the subject of Meno's own
incredulity: Meno, who previously knew, now knows not. As
Socrates describes it, Meno has suffered what is tantamount
to total reversal:

As for me, if the electric ray is itself benumbed and
thus also numbs others, I am like it, but not
otherwise. For it is not that I, who know the way,
cause others to become lost (οὐ γὰρ εὑσσρῶν
αὐτὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν), but
rather that I am more at a loss than anyone, and in
this way also cause others to be lost (ἀλλὰ
παντὸς μᾶλλον αὐτὸς ἀπορῶν σώτως καὶ
τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν). Even now I
myself do not know what aretē is; whereas you, who
perhaps (ἰσως) knew before you came in contact
with me, now however likewise do not know. (Meno
80c.6-d.3)

46Jacqueline de Romilly, Magic and Rhetoric in
Ancient Greece (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975;
hereafter de Romilly, Magic), pp. 36-37, asserts that
"[Interlocutors] do not understand what happens to them,
but we do: they are just confronted with unyielding logic.
... Socrates' magic rests on the obstinate destruction of
all illusions. It is the magic of implacable truth; and
certainly it is not just by chance that those who describe
that magic spell of Socrates are young men or laymen, not
used to thorough reasoning, men such as Meno and
Alcibiades."
Socrates hedges here on Meno's knowledge prior to elenchos (he "perhaps knew before"), but later deems the condition of the interlocutor prior to elenchos more explicitly ignorance in reference to the boy who is subsequently examined. The simile of the electric ray is continued by Socrates, who describes the boy's progress after reversal as a kind of recognition:

At first he falsely thought he knew . . . and answered confidently as if he knew, and did not feel at a loss; whereas now, though he knows no more than he did before, he does at least feel at a loss, and no longer thinks he knows . . . . Then did we do him any harm in puzzling him and numbing him like the electric ray? --I think not. --At least it seems that we have made him more likely to find out the truth. For now he will be glad to search for it because he knows he does not know it, whereas formerly he might easily have supposed on many occasions that he was talking sense . . . . And do you think he would ever have tried to discover the truth, or to learn what he thought he knew though he did not, if he had not fallen into puzzlement and come to believe that he did not know and desired to know? --I do not think so, Socrates. --Then he was benefited by being numbed? --I think so. (Meno 84a.3-c.9)

This lengthy text has been quoted not only because it again illustrates the first aim of the method, the reversal caused by elenchos, in combination with the second aim, a recognition of ignorance, but likewise because it is an important witness to the fourth aim, the birth of the truth. After considering this passage, Robinson concludes,

The elenchus changes ignorant men from the state of falsely supposing that they know to the state of recognizing that they do not know; and this is an

47 Quoted and translated by Robinson, PED2, p. 11. The italics are added.
important step along the road to knowledge, because the recognition that we do not know at once arouses the desire to know, and thus supplies the motive that was lacking before. Philosophy begins in wonder, and the assertion here made is that elenchus supplies the wonder. . . . Elenchus is thus a method of teaching, of instilling intellectual knowledge in other persons. It does not, however, actually increase knowledge, but only prepares the ground for it.48

Plato could, according to Robinson,49 justify the "violent reversal" caused by elenchos because the recognition resulting from it is a necessary precursor to attaining knowledge.

Refutation does not, however, extend its effect in an uninterrupted line through reversal and recognition to katharsis and the birth of truth. At the point of recognition there is a pause for reflection and the interlocutor responds in one of two ways—he either experiences a sense of wonder or he feels shame. Robinson's above assertion that "philosophy begins in wonder" is a translation from Theaetetus, where Socrates declares that Theaetetus' wonder at the topic under discussion is evidence of his nature—Theaetetus, according to Socrates, is a true philosopher:

By the Gods, Socrates, I am in wonder (θαυμάζω) about what these things are, and sometimes when I consider them I truly feel dizzy (σκοτοδινώ).--It appears, my friend, that Theodoros rightly divined your nature. For this experience of wonder (τὸ θαυμάζειν) is truly that of the philosopher. There is not any other beginning of

48 Robinson, PED2, pp. 11-12, italics added.
49 Robinson, PED2, p. 18.
philosophy than this . . . (Theaetetus 155c.8-d.4)

Theaetetus' sense of wonder, an expression of doubt, marks him as Socrates' spiritual twin as surely as his snub nose and protruding eyes (Theaetetus 143e) mark his physical resemblance to the man. Socrates, Plato's paradigm of the true philosopher, is shown both expressing and engendering doubt, wonder, and amazement throughout the dialogues. The allegations of his interlocutors cause Socrates to wonder: What is a sophist? Can virtue be taught? Are all the virtues part of a whole or separate entities? (Protagoras 312c; 326e; 329c); Why would Gorgias pride himself in teaching persuasion when clearly the persuasive are the more ignorant? (Gorgias 458e); Can injustice really be in the same class as virtue and wisdom? (Republic 1.348e); Is there no such thing as a falsehood? (Euthydemus 286b-c); Why would Protagoras allege that "man is the measure of all things"? (Theaetetus 161b-c). Socrates likewise finds his interlocutors "amazing": Polus and Callicles are causes of wonder to him (Gorgias 470a; 489d), as are the sophists and their breadth of knowledge (Euthydemus 271c and 288b), or even Thrasymachus as he perspires profusely upon agreeing with Socrates' argumentation (Republic 1. 350d). Socrates' art of elenchos is likewise a cause of wonder, not only to himself (Gorgias 496a-b and Theaetetus 150d), but to others (Theaetetus at Theaetetus 157d and 193d;
Thrasy machus at Republic 1.337c; his prosecutors at Apology 17a; Cebes at Phaedo 95a; Euthyphro, who should rather wonder at his own abilities to "make arguments walk about," at Euthyphro 15b; Alcibiades, who compares his abilities with words to the wonders of flute players like Marsyas at Symposium 215b). Finally, Socrates himself is wondrous: to Crito, who is amazed at his peaceful slumber (Crito 43b); to Alcibiades, who is in awe of his true inner beauty and abilities to endure cold and strong drink and who calls him a "marvellous wonder" (Symposium 217a, 220a, and 219b-c); to those who witnessed him lost in thought from dusk until dawn (Symposium 220b).50

50Citations of words with the root θαυμά- in the Platonic corpus, from which all of the above testimonia are drawn, provide by their sheer number a vertigo-producing experience for one attempting to categorize the evidence they afford. I count over two hundred and fifty citations, for which see Friederich Ast, Lexicon Platonicum Vocum Platonicarum Index, vol. 2 (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1956), under θαυμά-, θαυμάξω, θαυμάζω, θαυμάζος, θαυμαστός, θαυματοποιία, θαυματοποιικός, θαυματοποιός, θαυματουργία, and θαυματουργῶ. I am indebted to Stephen Halliwell’s discussion of wonder in his Aristotle’s Poetics (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986; hereafter Halliwell, Poetics), pp. 74-76, for the impetus of this discussion, but cannot here undertake the closer study he rightly suggests this topic in Aristotle and Plato deserves. A preliminary examination of evidence from the early and middle dialogues indicates that Socrates, not surprisingly, more consistently than his interlocutors expresses wonder, while his interlocutors see him as often as his statements or the progression of the discussion as a cause of wonder. It is not uncommon for interlocutors to attribute the several effects of elenchos to the person of Socrates rather than to his method. The inability to separate the speaker from what is spoken is, according to Havelock, "Orality," p. 76, a hallmark of the preliterate. For the allegation that a kinship between knower and object known is an essential
Wonder, τὸ θαυμάζειν, in the sense of doubt, felt so consistently by Socrates, by his spiritual twin Theaetetus, and sometimes by other interlocutors, is in this sense the first positive step beyond the loss-of-way, the aporia regularly experienced by Socrates' respondents in the early dialogues. Protagoras, at Protagoras 326e, nearly equates the two experiences when he asks "... do you wonder, Socrates, and are you at a loss (θαυμάζεις καὶ ἀπορεῖς) whether virtue can be taught?" ὅ τὸ θαυμάζειν in its sense as doubt, the doubt of the true philosophers, Socrates and Theaetetus, however, has in it a willingness to go forward with elenchos, whereas, as has been shown, the recognition of ignorance termed aporia by the interlocutors in the early dialogues regularly produces in them a desire to escape rather than to continue. How are we to account for this unwillingness to continue elenchos?

Theaetetus' sense of vertigo, which he proclaims accompanies his wonder, provides a clue. Vertigo is produced when one sees things move that normally one perceives to be stationary. As every child who has turned round and round to experience dizziness knows, such a sensation can be invigorating to one who enjoys it.

Prerequisite for the success of elenchos, see Kenneth Seeskin, Dialogue and Discovery (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1987; hereafter Seeskin, Dialogue), pp. 41 ff. and passim.
Theaetetus, who has experienced the movement caused by the progression of elenchos, the necessity of discarding assumptions he formerly perceived as fixed, is so invigorated. He, like the child who no sooner recovers stasis than he turns himself round and round again, wants to continue.

Vertigo, however, is not so pleasant for one who is discomfited by movement. In elenchos, this means one who is unwilling to discard his assumptions because of his investment in them as validators of his actions. Such a man is Euthyphro.51 Euthyphro senses the movement of the argument: ". . . somehow our propositions walk about; no matter where we put them they do not want to stay." (Euthyphro 11b.7-8). Euthyphro is eager to assign responsibility for this movement to Socrates, or rather to some magical ability he imagines Socrates possesses. Thrice Socrates denies the comparison of himself to Daedalus, who could make seemingly fixed objects, statues, move about (twice at Euthyphro 11b.9-e.1; once again at the dialogue's closing, 15b.7-c.3). It is not himself, Socrates undauntedly claims, but Euthyphro who is the Daedalus, for the propositions are not Socrates' inventions, but Euthyphro's. And like Proteus, the master

51And the vast majority of interlocutors who, according to Vlastos, "Elenchus," p. 29, have to be "carried . . . kicking and screaming" to the consequence that contradicts the thesis.
quick-change artist, Euthyphro must be detained until he, who knows the truth, will tell (Euthyphro 15d.1-4).

Charges, like Euthyphro's, that Socrates makes use of some sort of magical ability are not hard to find in the dialogues. It will be remembered that Meno similarly accused the man: "you bewitch and drug and absolutely spellbind me" (γοητεύεις με καὶ φαρμάττεις καὶ ἀτεχνῶς κατεπάδεις, Meno 80a.2-3). Likewise, Alcibiades in Symposium (215a.4 ff.) attributes to Socrates a quasi-magical ability. Socrates' words, Alcibiades claims, are more the cause of wonder than the flute-playing of Marsyas, and like the Sirens, Socrates could have transfixed Alcibiades at his feet, had Alcibiades not fled. Alcibiades then gives a first-person account of one who, like Euthyphro, has fled. In this account he reveals why interlocutors like Euthyphro, intolerant of the movement they perceive occurring in elenchos, choose first to accuse

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Plato is careful to distinguish Socrates' wondrous abilities from those of the average enchanter. The sophist is a "wonder-worker" (θαυματοποιός, see Sophist 224a and 268d; cf. θαυματοποιῶς at 235b), and the tragic poet is "wondrous" (θαυμαστή, Gorgias 502b), but the effect of their word-juggling ends with the mere production of amazement and pleasure respectively. Socrates' wondrous ability with words, on the other hand, is ostensibly able to lead the interlocutor, by the agency of shame, through katharsis to the birth of truth and, ultimately, to moral improvement. For Socrates as the "counter-magician" and physician, who uses both the emotions and purifying powers of elenchos to effect his positive aims, see Elizabeth Belfiore, "Elenchus, Epode, and Magic: Socrates as Silenus," Phoenix 34 (1980), pp. 128-137.
Socrates of bewitchment and then to flee.

The testimony of Alcibiades in Symposium supports the claim that a sense of shame in the interlocutor, derived from an unwillingness to alter the beliefs he holds as verifiers of his actions, causes his accusations of bewitchment, which now begin to ring false, and then his flight. After his description of the magical abilities of Socrates, Alcibiades describes his own sense of shame, which he claims comes upon him when he is faced with things to which he has formerly agreed:

I have experienced at the hands of this man alone that of which no one would imagine me capable—being shamed (τὸ αἰσχύνεσθαι) by anyone; I feel shame (αἰσχύνομαι) before him alone. For I know well that I am not able to answer his arguments that I, who whenever I depart am seduced by the esteem of the masses, must do as he bids. So I skulk away like a runaway slave and flee him, and then when I see him, I feel shame at the agreements to which we'd come (αἰσχύνομαι τὰ ἡμολογημένα). (Symposium 216a.8-b.6)

The shame that Alcibiades feels results from being confronted with the disparity between beliefs whose validity he has avowed (τὰ ἡμολογημένα) in conversation with Socrates on the one hand, and the acts he nonetheless continues to perform on the other. He attributes his desire to flee the presence of Socrates to this shame. We can now with more assurance assert that

53 See Teloh, "Interlocutors' Characters," p. 34: "Shame occurs when an interlocutor admits that he is wrong, or when he concedes some element of morality. If an interlocutor cannot be shamed, then Socrates cannot refute him."
Euthyphro's flight is motivated by a similar sense of shame. Euthyphro hesitates to express his shame, for he, unlike Alcibiades, is neither drunk nor in the sympathetic company of those who have suffered similarly at the hands of Socrates (Symposium 217e.1-218b.7).

For Euthyphro, then, it is fair to assume that it is less shameful for him to say "I am lost" than to admit "I am totally wrong, whereas I previously thought I was right. My actions are based on beliefs which I now see are contradictory." This interpretation seems especially valid when one recalls how, just before Euthyphro flees, Socrates reminds him in no uncertain terms of the connection between his knowledge and his actions:

If you had not clearly known what holiness and unholiness were, surely you would not have ventured for the sake of a servant to prosecute your aged father for murder. You would have feared to risk angering the gods, lest you were acting incorrectly, and you would have felt shame (ἡοξύνθης) before men. (Euthyphro 15d.4-8)

It seems clear that Socrates here pinpoints the source of the shame that makes Euthyphro, who now realizes he in fact does not know, suddenly remember some urgent, unspecified commitment. Better to leave than to stay and witness the complete demise of his validating system of beliefs.

According to Plato, however, the shame is necessary, for it is shame, combined with refutation, that will effect katharsis of opinions which are the reluctant soul's impediment to future learning. Robinson cites a large
section of the late Sophist, where elenchos is first described in broad outline and then compared to medical purging:

For just as the physicians of the body believe that the body cannot benefit from the nourishment it receives until the internal hindrances are removed, so do those who perform this purification believe about the soul. She cannot profit from the knowledge offered her, until the elenchus is applied and the man is refuted and brought to shame [πρὶν ἀν ἐλεγχων τις τὸν ἐλεγχόμενον εἰς αἰσχύνην καταστήσας], thus purifying him from opinions that hinder learning [τὰς τοῖς μαθήμασιν ἐμπόδιους δόξας ἐξελών, καθαρὸν ἀποφήγη] and causing him to think he knows only what he does know and not more... For all these reasons, Theaetetus, we must say that elenchus is the greatest and most sovereign of the purifications [καθαρσεων]; and the man who has not been subjected to it... must be regarded by us as suffering from the greatest impurities [ἄκαθαρσων ὄντα], and as uneducated and base [ἀπαιδευτὸν τὸ καὶ αἰσχρὸν] in the respects in which the truly happy man ought to be purest and noblest [καθαρωτάτων καὶ καλλιστῶν]. (Sophist 230c.4-e.3)54

But Katharsis, the result of shame caused by the recognition of the reversal of refutation, is still not, according to Plato, the ultimate aim of elenchos. Katharsis is conducted for a purpose: so that the soul can "profit from the knowledge offered her"; the newly learned

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man is ostensibly transformed from being "uneducated and base" to "purest and noblest." After citing Apology for evidence concerning the method's ultimate aim of moral improvement, where Socrates proclaims the method's purpose is, "to shame people into putting first things first, and that the first thing is the virtue of the soul" and "... to put men to shame for living wrongly" (29d-30b passim), Robinson concludes:

The Apology, like the Meno and the Sophist, regards elenchus as a way of convincing men that they are ignorant of things they thought they knew; but it places this procedure in a strongly moral and religious setting of which the other two works show little trace. It tells us that the elenchus arose out of a divine oracle, and that Socrates continued it because he felt divinely commanded to do so. It represents the ultimate aim of the elenchus not as intellectual education but as moral improvement. Its purpose is, as it is expressed at the end of the Apology, to make men better men, to give them more of the highest virtue of a man; and in practising it Socrates is a moral reformer.56

At this point Robinson raises the hypothetical doubt of "many persons" about the suitability of Socratic elenchos, with its apparent "logic-chopping" and "paradoxical intellectualism," as an instrument for moral education.57 Can this instrument influence character?

55Socrates claims that he customarily asks the Athenian citizens, "Aren't you ashamed (ουκ αἰσχύνετε) to care more for acquiring wealth and reputation and honor . . . ?" (Apology 29d.8-e.1).

56Robinson, PED2, pp. 13-14.

57Robinson is convinced, like his own discomfited Plato, of the purely destructive potential of elenchos, and thus dismisses or rather gives short shrift to that part of
How can Socrates proclaim that he proposes to make men better, virtue being knowledge, if he does nothing other than, through reversal, recognition, and shame, to remove ignorance? 58

The answer to these questions lies in affirming that elenchos as it is depicted by Plato shows evidence of a second possible terminus beyond refutation, the proof. Although proof is never admitted in the early dialogues, which end in avowed aporia, Plato nonetheless attests to this positive aspect of elenchos. A second passage on katharsis, which Robinson does not cite, gives important evidence on the transition from the emotional investment of the interlocutor in his beliefs, which causes him to choose flight over endurance of another round of elenchos, which establishes premises and effects proof or at least suggests a way out of aporia. This interpretation of the method seems to belie Robinson's own assumed "evolution of thought," unless he perhaps thinks that Plato's original contribution to philosophy, the theory of forms, was fabricated out of whole cloth instead of synthesized from the work of Socrates. Robinson is at times forced by his interpretation to represent a Plato whose depiction of Socrates is in part dictated by a desire to accommodate his problematic mentor to his own greater philosophic sophistication. If this is so, Plato's accuracy as a witness to even the destructive aspect of elenchos is called into question.

to the truth that awaits him if only he would not flee. At phaedo 67-69, Socrates and Simmias discuss the true philosopher and his attainment of virtue. It is agreed that the only road to virtue and wisdom lies in the purification of the soul from the body and its emotional impediments to truth (67a-b). So-called virtuous men differ from the truly virtuous in that they, lacking wisdom, exchange one emotional investment for another, while the true philosopher, purified like the initiated mystic, knows that the only coin that can buy true virtue is wisdom:

\[\ldots\ \text{[T]}\text{ruth is in fact a sort of a purification (κάθαρσις ῥη), from all these things [i.e., the emotional investments], and moderation and justice and courage and wisdom itself are a kind of purification (καθαρμός ῥη).} \ldots \ \text{[T]}\text{he mystics} \ldots \text{are, in my opinion, none other than those who have truly engaged in philosophy (οἱ πεπλοσφηκότες ὅρθως).} \ (\text{Phaedo} \ 69b.8-d.2)\]

Elenchos' purgative powers, then, lie in its ability to separate the interlocutor from the emotions which impede him so that he can reach the truth, which in and of itself renders him pure and receptive to moral improvement. It is here that the role of shame in katharsis becomes manifest. In elenchos, the beliefs of the interlocutor become as public as his actions which they have previously only silently informed. By publicly showing the interlocutor's beliefs to be self-contradictory, Socrates can counter the interlocutor's emotional investment in his false opinions with the most powerful instrument of social control known
to the ancient Greeks, the feeling of shame. Socrates thus uses one emotion, shame, homeopathically against those which tie the interlocutor to his false opinions, and effectively clears the emotional field for the attainment of truth, which is a necessary precursor to the ultimate aim of moral improvement.

Plato represents Socrates metaphorically discussing the next step in elenchos’ aims, the attainment of truth, in one dialogue of the middle period, Theaetetus. There (148e.6-151d.3) Socrates likens his own technē to the art of the midwife Phaenarete, his mother. Like the

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59Robinson doubts the historical validity of the midwife (whether metaphor only or metaphor based on mother), and claims that it is "a purely Platonic invention, made long after Socrates’ death; and it serves the unconscious purpose of enabling the elenchus to preserve a good standing in an otherwise very un-Socratic mind" (PED2 p. 84). For the avowal that the similarities between Socrates’ usual pose of ignorance and the barrenness of the midwife support the contention that the midwife figure belongs to the historical Socrates, see Guthrie, Socrates, p. 77 n. 1. Guthrie likewise sees reference to the midwifery of Socrates in Diotima’s discussion of "the notion of the union of minds, resulting in pregnancy and parturition in the realm of ideas," which she claims even Socrates could understand, at Symposium 206b.7-209e.

60Guthrie, Socrates, p. 58 n. 1, speculates on the veracity of the name Socrates attributes to his mother, which means "she who brings virtue to light," and concludes, on the basis of Theaetetus’ recognition of it here, its recurrence at First Alcibiades 131e where the mention of the name has no special point, and its extra-Platonic existence as an Attic name, that it is an at least plausible, if fortuitously meaningful, name for Socrates’ mother.
midwife, he is past the age of bearing himself, and can discern who is pregnant and who is not, is a cunning matchmaker who can tell which unions will have the strongest issue, and is able to arouse and allay the pangs of childbirth. His art differs from midwifery in that he treats men, not women, and attends souls, not bodies, in labor. And while the midwife's triumph is her ability as matchmaker, Socrates feels his is the ability to test thoroughly whether the thought of a young man has given birth to a phantom and false idea or to one that is viable and true (βασανίζειν...πάντι τρόπῳ πότερον εἶδωλον καὶ ψεῦδος ἀποτίκτει τοῦ νέου ἡ διάνοια ἡ γόνιμον τε καὶ ἀληθές) (Theaetetus 150c.1-3).

If we are to give credence to this last statement, which implies at least the possibility of "viable and true" ideas surviving the touchstone of Socrates' examination, we must first ask why it is that interlocutors in the early dialogues ever recognize only the miscarriage of a sorry

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61 Teloh, "Interlocutors' Characters," p. 26, avoids problems in the midwife metaphor by describing Socrates' practice of dialectic as having two aspects: "... elenchus and psychagogia. In the former Socrates refutes the accounts of others, in the latter he leads the psyche to some view without directly saying what it is." As the quote illustrates, Teloh's depiction of Socratic psychagogia implies that Socrates' profession of ignorance, supported by the midwife's barrenness in the metaphor, is feigned.

62 He claims to have sent many "who seemed not yet pregnant" to Prodicus "and other wise and inspired men," ostensibly for impregnation. Prodicus, it is assumed, was the man of choice because he could instruct them in the art of definition.
excuse for the truth, a stillborn idea which Socrates, like the knowledgeable midwife, has been able to recognize as dead while it was yet in the womb, and merely attended to the necessary abortive procedure (149d.3). Socrates suggests the answer: the compelling nature of the pangs of a soul in delivery of an idea.

Socrates introduces the midwife metaphor by claiming that his practice of this art is unrecognized by others; they merely say that he is "really strange/paradoxical" (ἀτοπώτατος) and he makes men "be at a loss" (ἀπορεῖν, 149a.9). Yet this state of aporia, the description men tender of his art, is merely the birth travail of the souls his midwifery attends, not the art itself: "They labor and day and night are full of perplexity, much more than women in childbirth."

(ὡςίνουσι γὰρ καὶ ἀπορίας ἐμπίμπλανται . . ., 151a.6-8). Men, after delivery, it seems, remember only the pain of aporia, and cite it as the total procedure of Socrates. Nonetheless, many have in fact given birth out of their confusion to children of truth, but have deserted Socrates. Why? They, in their ignorance of his part in their delivery, either credit themselves and are disdainful of him (ἀγνοήσαντες καὶ ἐαυτοὺς αἰτιασάμενοι, ἐμοῦ δὲ καταφρονήσαντες), or are wooed away by the persuasion of others (150e.1-3).

Both groups are accused of esteeming falsehoods and
The truth-children delivered by Socrates are lost to poor nurturance, and all promise of future viable birth is aborted unless men are willing to submit again to Socrates' maieutic art.

It is difficult to continue to maintain that this metaphor of the midwife is merely "a curious example... of the subterfuges adopted by the notion of elenchus to maintain its home in Plato's alien mind"; that elenchos is, after all, a "purely destructive instrument" capable of producing only "wind-eggs,"

63 unless one feels no discomfort at discrediting our primary "philosophically inclined ancient evaluator of Socrates' method, Plato."

Perhaps Robinson, in his otherwise astute analysis of Socrates' elenctic refutation, has, as a close witness like so many other of Socrates' attendees to the

63 Robinson, PED2, pp. 83-84.

64 Xenophon's portrait of Socrates, the product of a "prosaic commonsense" need not be discredited or dismissed when compared to Plato's testimonia, according to Guthrie, Socrates, pp. 15-17: "When... we find in the Socrates of Plato something far less commonplace, far more paradox, humour and irony and above all a greater profundity of thought, it would be wrong to suppose that these were foreign to Socrates simply because they do not appear in Xenophon's portrait." In fact, as Guthrie illustrates by citing the text of Xenophon, even this prosaic observer gives us "the Socratic method in a nutshell, question and answer, 'mental midwifery' and all." Likewise, see Aristotle's claim that the two innovations ascribable to Socrates are "inductive reasoning and general definition" (Metaphysics 1078b).
force of the labor pains, forgotten that a child of truth may have issued forth as a tiny second twin to the ponderous child of *aporia*, the wind-egg, whose arrival is announced and acknowledged all round. Yet even if, as Robinson contends, the midwife metaphor is a Platonic invention,⁶⁵ we must at least afford Plato the respect he deserves as an observer of Socratic method, and ask on what basis Plato perceived the metaphor to be accurate. The answer lies in the arena of the premises established by Socrates and admitted by the interlocutors during the course of the *elenchos*.

Treatment of Socrates' secondary premises by Platonic scholars is the touchstone whereby one can determine the orientation of a particular critic. Those who are more philosophically oriented tend to view the secondary premises as a system whose latent logical cogency only needs be discovered to reveal a consistent philosophic doctrine. The critics who take a more literary approach tend to stress the importance of analysis of characterization and the like in rendering the dialogues meaningful, sometimes at the expense of their philosophic potential.

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Seeskin, in his book *Dialogue and Discovery*, makes an admirable attempt to present an interpretation of the early dialogues that takes both their philosophic and literary aspects into account, but he nonetheless at times takes on the somewhat reactionary stance of the literary critic. Seeskin argues against the interlocutor's and reader's optimistic impression that "he has only to fiddle with the premises of the argument to see what Plato is trying to say"; that there is nothing wrong with the subject matter, but instead that ". . . once the fog clears, all the pieces will fit together like a puzzle." By appealing to the "centuries of Platonic scholarship," where Grote's interpreters vainly "sift with microscopic accuracy the negative dialogues of Plato," and to "the fact that Socrates never claimed to have cleared up all the 'antecedent

*66*See, for example, the near apology of Teloh, "Interlocutors' Characters," p. 25, for his literary approach. Aryeh Kosman, "Commentary on Teloh," in Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, Vol. 2, ed. John J. Cleary (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 40-41, criticizes Teloh for placing the "drama of refutation and psychogogy, a represented process of philosophical therapy and enlightenment" above philosophical issues and questions. Teloh's view of the early dialogues is, according to Kosman, "radically Socratic" in that it ignores Plato's intent in writing these dialogues for readers.

difficulties,"68 Seeskin denies the validity of claims made by such as Koyré, who alleges, "one must conclude ... that every dialogue carries with it a conclusion. Certainly not a conclusion formulated by Socrates; but one that the reader-auditor is in duty bound and is in a position to formulate."69

The strong words, "duty bound," applied to the reader-auditor who "is in a position to formulate" Koyré's alleged conclusions, are suggestive of something which eludes the fearful interlocutors, who flee in horror from the pain of delivery and the stillborn it has produced, who refuse to do Socrates' bidding, namely, to look at the whole question again from the beginning (ἐγὼ ἡμῖν πάλιν σκεπτόμεν, Euthyphro 15c.11), assuming that either they were wrong before, or are wrong now. This duty—to take up whence the interlocutor has

68Seeskin, Dialogue, pp. 11-12. Seeskin believes that elenchos does have a positive aspect, in that it transforms several interlocutors. It is here that we may see the method's salutary, if nonetheless temporary, effect (p. 127). His allegation, based partly on Plato's Seventh Epistle (344b, "Knowledge never takes root in an alien nature."), that there must be a kinship between the knower and the object known, goes a long way towards explaining the theory of knowledge as recollection as well as the mixed success Socrates has in the early dialogues with interlocutors whose "arrogance, vanity, and cowardice" impede the progress of elenchos, which demands "honesty, reasonableness, and courage ...: the honesty to say what one really thinks, the reasonableness to admit what one does not know, and the courage to continue the investigation." (pp. 41 and 3).

fled and look at the whole question again—is accurately assigned by Koyré to the reader-auditor, for we are indeed in a position to formulate the conclusion. How so? First, because it is not our reputations or our lifestyles that are publicly on the line, which fact affords us a greater degree of emotional detachment than that allowed hapless interlocutors. We can perhaps forgo the shame which presses so many interlocutors to flee.70 And, second, because in this state of less emotional involvement, we are perhaps able to see more clearly the forest for the trees that have been felled, to discriminate between the unexamined assumptions of the interlocutor and those premises which have been examined and proven to the satisfaction of both interlocutor and Socrates. And it is in this forest that we may find the children of truth whose birth Plato witnessed and felt compelled to proclaim by means of the dramatic dialogue:

Plato could teach by suggestion and by silence. . . . instead of advancing the argument to the limits of his understanding of it, [Plato] was content to play the dramatist and lead his characters into conflict without result. This appears to be an adaptation of the Socratic method to the written word. The reader cannot be questioned like the slave in the Meno, but he can be asked to watch a discussion in which lines of inquiry are opened and not exhausted. The alert student is expected to pursue the inquiry further. . . . This method, by which Plato, as it were, pretends ignorance in order to awaken the mind of the reader, is his own version of Socratic irony.71

70See, however, below (next section), for the admitted emotional investment of the reader-auditor and its necessity to arriving at the ultimate aim of elenchos.

The above quotation, like Koyré's allegations on the role of the reader-auditor, points beyond Socratic method per se to the problem of Plato's interpretative intervention in the method, by indicating as it does a shift away from depiction of the method to the ultimate intentions of the depicter. Regardless of whether it can be proven that Plato was the creator of the midwife metaphor, it must nonetheless be admitted that the metaphor's sole occurrence in the middle dialogue, Theaetetus, is nowhere matched in the early dialogues by occurrence of its referent, a proclaimed birth of truth. Likewise, the necessary katharsis which precedes it, discussed in explicit reference to elenchos only in the late Sophist, is also unwitnessed in Plato's depictions of the method in the early dialogues. And, although it has been and will continue to be argued that Plato's understanding of the method is not alien to its more subtle aspects, we must nonetheless distinguish between the aims and their effects which are accomplished between Socrates and his interlocutors (reversal, recognition, and shame) and the aims which Plato leaves to be completed by his

72 Seeskin argues persuasively that elenchos does have a salutary effect, albeit temporary, on the title characters of the Meno, Crito, and Theaetetus, as well as Thrasymachus in Republic I. Put, however, in the context of what the reader knows about the subsequent career of someone like Meno, this momentary transformation serves only to heighten the tragic effect of elenchos' potential. See Seeskin, Dialogue, pp. 125-127, 14, and 130, and the discussion (below, Part Four) of tragedy in the dialogues.
audience of reader-auditors (katharsis, the birth of truth, and, ultimately, moral improvement). But before recognizing the role of Plato as creator of dramatic dialogues, and proclaiming the tragic force with which he depicts elenchos' lack of success in attaining its ultimate goal of moral improvement, it is essential to discuss at some length the tone and distinctive subject matter of the early dialogues, both of which give indication why Socrates found it so difficult to purge his interlocutors of their false opinions, to bring the truth to birth, and, ultimately, to achieve in his interlocutors the moral improvement requisite for living well.

Socratic Character of Elenchos: Its Tone Considered in Relation to Its Distinctive Subject Matter

There is evidence in the dialogues themselves that either Plato or Socrates himself was aware of the potential for misunderstanding that the interlocutor's emotional investment might produce, and took steps to remedy the impediment created by the negative reaction of flight in response to the shame felt after reversal and recognition. The evidence is to be found in two peculiar attitudes of Socrates towards the elenctic process: in the interplay between what Robinson designates the "personal character" of elenchos and the much discussed Socratic "irony."
Socrates in the early dialogues will not accept from his interlocutors a statement of hypotheticals to be used in argumentation. The classic example of this is at *protagoras* 331c, where Socrates refuses to discuss *protagoras*' proposed hypothesis that justice is holiness. By this insistence on discussing only what the interlocutor himself believes, Socrates sets up a situation wherein the interlocutor's emotional investment is assured: "At stake are the moral intuitions which underlie everything one stands for." The emotional investment of the interlocutor is that aspect of elenchos which Robinson deems its "personal character," and it is this investment that he acknowledges as essential to the method's first two aims: reversal and recognition. For if the interlocutor either does not believe his primary statement, or remains unconvinced by the argumentation, or does not accept the premises, "the refutation . . . will not convict him of thinking he knew when he did not." The personal character of elenchos is a defect, according to Robinson, because it thereby "takes on particularity and accidentalness," aspects which make it

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74 Robinson, *PED2*, p. 15. Cf. Vlastos, "Elenchus," pp. 36-37, who argues that Socrates serves three objectives in not allowing hypothetical argument: 1) to test honesty in argument; 2) to test seriousness in the pursuit of truth; 3) to accomplish elenchos' therapeutic aim of changing lives to accord with the truth.
"inferior to the impersonal and universal and rational march of science axiomatized according to Aristotle's prescription." This "particularity and accidentalness" renders elenchos closer to the realm of myth, perhaps, than to the realm of "treatise philosophy," with its axioms, its prescriptions, and its inevitable tramp towards the conceit of modern "science." And, given that this aspect of elenchos is more mythic than scientific, we might with more assurance assign it to Socrates himself than to the artistic intervention of Plato. The fallacy in Robinson's "preference for the impersonal march of science" when applied to Socratic philosophy is brought out by Seeskin, who counters:

The first line of response to Robinson is to point out that the subject matter of Socratic philosophy does not lend itself to axiomatization. To put it bluntly, Socratic philosophy tries to reason to axioms rather than from them. The fundamental quest of Socratic

75I prefer to think that Robinson's value judgment is sufficiently qualified here by the latter part of his sentence. Nonetheless, the statement begs the clarification be made that particularity and accidentalness are not perceived as inferior modes of "philosophic" expression until after the time of Aristotle. See the discussion of Nussbaum which addresses itself to "our conventional grouping of texts" which "[takes] the distinction between philosophy and literature for granted" and contrasts this with the views of the ancient Greeks: "epic and tragic poets were widely assumed to be the central ethical thinkers and teachers of Greece; nobody thought of their work as less serious, less aimed at truth, than the speculative prose treatises of historians and philosophers. Plato regards the poets not as colleagues in another department, pursuing different aims, but as dangerous rivals." (Nussbaum, Fragility, p. 12)

76Robinson, PED2, p. 16.
philosophy is to answer the question "What is it?". If we were to compare a Socratic dialogue with an axiomatized science, we would find more than a difference in presentation. [T]he point of Socrates asking his "What is it?" question in the way he does [is] to bring about serious revision. Socrates neither was nor claimed to be a scientist. His overriding concern was practical.77

Robinson, however, also recognizes what might be called a totally "impersonal aspect" of elenchos, that is, Socrates' insistence that neither he, nor the interlocutor, has anything whatsoever to do with the refutation which occurs:

And we must now observe some other curious disclaimers. Not merely does Socrates sometimes deny by implication that it is the answerer who is refuted ('It is the logos that I chiefly examine', he says, Prt. 333c); at other times he even denies that it is Socrates who is doing the refuting. He speaks as if the logos were what was doing the refuting, and as if the logos were a person over whom he had no control, refuting not merely the answerer and himself but even the whole company with equal impartiality and inexorability. He denies that he resembles Daedalus, who made statues move; for the logoi run away without his agency, and he would rather they remained (Euthyph. 11d). His language implies that he himself did not foresee the course the argument has taken, but was led along by it blindfold; and that for all he knew the argument might have turned out a proof instead of a disproof of the original thesis. He even implies at times that there is no refutation at all, of anybody or by anybody or anything. There is only a company of persons engaged in determining the truth-value of a proposition, engaged in an impersonal elenchus in the wider sense.78

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77 See Seeskin, Dialogue, pp. 145, 26, and 43. For Seeskin's insistence that Robinson's lack of appreciation of the personal aspect of elenchos renders the paradoxical connection between virtue and knowledge unnecessarily ludicrous, see his pp. 145-146. Vlastos, "Elenchus and Mathematics," p. 380, points out that elenchos' personal aspect forbids what investigating scientific hypotheses requires: "debating an unasserted premise."

78 Robinson, PED 2, p. 8.
Robinson's apparent incredulity arises from his belief that Socrates' "curious disclaimers" are not a sincere attempt to represent a perceived reality, but instead evidence of "Socratic irony or slyness." Socrates' disclaimer may at first seem to hinge on the meaning of one word, logos, but given that any meaning we assign to the word can never be conclusively ascertained to be the one that Plato or Socrates in these instances had in mind, another tack may prove more efficacious.

Taking as our clue the fact that Robinson describes Socratic "irony" as the removal of all personalities from the method, and that he designates the apparent opposite of

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79 Robinson, PED², pp. 8-9. That Socrates' "irony" is thinly veiled lying is taken as a commonplace by many scholars. See, e.g., Peter Smith, Nursling of Mortality: A Study of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite (Frankfurt am Main: Peter D. Lang, 1981), p. 49: "the Greek sense of fairness did not require one always to tell the whole or literal truth. Odysseus lied, Apollo equivocated, Socrates pretended an ignorance never quite real . . . ."

Gregory Vlastos, "Socratic Irony," CQ 37 (1987; hereafter Vlastos, "Irony"), pp. 79-96, argues that Socrates' irony does not admit of any intent to deceive and is "complex," i.e., Socrates "both does and does not mean what he says." Socrates has, in short, no certainty in the domain of morals, but does have true belief justified by elenchos (p. 86).

Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, "Irony, Arrogance, and Sincerity in Plato's Apology," in New Essays on Socrates, ed. Eugene Kelly (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 1984), pp. 29-46, claim that interpreting Socrates' remarks in the Apology as ironic requires one to doubt the sincerity of Socrates' moral commitments. Perhaps this doubt is understandable, given the paradoxical nature of these commitments.

80 LSJ 9 s.v.
this, the "personal" aspect of elenchos, as responsible for
the method's "particularity and accidentalness," we
might, on the one hand, profitably consider Socrates'
disclaimers as his, or Plato's, attempt to "depersonalize"
the method and thus bypass both the interlocutor's first
attempts to deny recognition (his attempt to blame Socrates
personally for the confusion that abounds), and the
personal investment of the interlocutor assured by
elenchos' "personal aspect."

On the other hand, by removing both himself and the
interlocutor from the procedure, Socrates likewise propels
the discussion out of the domain of the particular and
accidental (the interlocutor's old refrain, his definition)
and thereby nearer the domain of the universal and constant
(the "definiend"). By his insistence on the primacy
of the process, not personalities, Socrates simultaneously
moves his interlocutors one step away from the emotional
involvement that inevitably impedes them, and one step

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81 Robinson, PED2, p. 16. Robinson likewise
credits irony with causing "the bewilderment of the
answerer" (PED2, p. 9). Vlastos, "Irony," p. 93,
argues that the irony merely allows the interlocutor to
deceive himself, i.e., to believe what he wants to believe.

82 Robinson imagines that "Plato might urge . . .
that elenchus is the means by which the irrational and
accidental individual is brought to the appreciation of
universal science, brought out of his individual
arbitrariness into the common world of reason" (PED2,
p. 16), but he nowhere attributes this accomplishment to
the "irony," which he in fact finds difficult to defend and
whose sincerity he doubts.
away from the particular and accidental ideas that cannot withstand the rigorous rules for defining universals. The interlocutors are likewise moved nearer to an objectivity that makes it possible for them to accept the established premises, which are a hair's breadth away from the definition of universals, those viable truths whose birth elenchos' refutation portends. Whether or not Socratic "irony" is an intentional ruse, and whether or not it is a Platonic invention, it can nonetheless be defended as requisite for the method's penultimate aim: the acquisition of truth.

Even if the "irony" is assumed to be a Platonic fabrication, one must admit that it serves the reader-auditor just as well as it was perhaps intended to serve the interlocutor within the dialogue. Plato's reader-auditor, for whom above was posited a greater emotional distance than that afforded the interlocutor, would nevertheless also have need of a device that would increase objectivity both in thought and feeling, a device like the "irony" described above. Why is this so? Because repeatedly in the early dialogues the interlocutor's position is claimed to be one which "anyone" would share. Plato's reader-auditor, then, would likely

83 As Callicles, for example, claims at Gorgias 481c that the position of Socrates is one which would "turn the whole of human life upside down," and at 513c cites his consonance with the "experience of the many" as reason for his inability to agree with Socrates' argumentation. Polus
identify with the beliefs the interlocutor espouses, 
undergo a vicarious reversal and recognition, and feel a 
shame similar to, but perhaps less than, the 
interlocutor's. Seeskin asserts that shame is a natural 
by-product for any reader, even a modern one, of Plato's 
dialogues:

It is impossible for the reader not to be aroused by 
the optimism generated by the inquisitive process but 
simultaneously to be dismayed by the realization that 
like so many others, she will resist the conclusions 
to which it leads her. We saw before that the 
knowledge already present in the soul requires courage 
to recover. To the extent that we do not recover it, 
we, too, are made to feel shame.84

The "irony"--able as it is to diffuse the emotional 
response of shame which leads to flight, and likewise 
serving to "depersonalize" the reversal and encourage the 
objectivity required for sorting the surviving secondary 
premises from the interlocutor's proposed definitions--is 
an absolute necessity for Plato's reader-auditor, in whom 
a lone of the witnesses to the early dialogues the elenchos 
can realize its goal of truth-aquisition. Plato's (or 
Socrates') use of "irony" is defensible, astute, and to the 
point.

84 Seeskin, Dialogue, p. 16.
It is also comic. One suspects that there is not a single reader of the dialogues not guilty of sniggering at what appear to be Socrates' shenanigans and his interlocutors' squirmings. Vlastos notes that humor is one of the purposes to which irony can be put, but he assigns to Socrates' irony instead the purpose of riddling and dismisses its apparent humor. Eager to defend Socrates against the charge of making butts of his interlocutors, Vlastos fails to note that humor is regularly effected by objectification, and that thinking objectively is a sine qua non of thinking philosophically. Socrates, it has been argued, by his use of irony, urges his interlocutors to philosophic objectivity. Irony, then, even if its purpose is humor, is natural for Socrates the philosopher. But one suspects that the humorous aspects of Socratic irony were lost on the hapless interlocutor, and perhaps reserved for the reader-auditors of Plato's dialogues. Was irony, then, a Platonic rather than a Socratic invention?

It is hard to believe that Robinson's Plato, not above fabricating the midwife metaphor to assuage his

85 Vlastos, "Irony," p. 79.

86 See the discussion of comedy's use of objectification, below, Chapter Two, Part One.

guilty attachment to what he felt was a profoundly destructive method, would hesitate to eradicate the obviously problematic posture of irony, unless of course that posture was so historically verifiable that he felt it vain to attempt its censure. If, then, the irony can be defended as historical fact, and yet Socrates is considered insincere in his disclaimers, we must then accuse him of regularly perpetrating a knowing untruth, and this in the very man whom Plato depicts as primarily concerned with truth's acquisition. Although these disclaimers may be difficult to explain, they nonetheless may well be Socrates' honest evaluation of a perceived reality. Taken as sincere, they can inform our understanding both of Socrates' place in the development of philosophic thought and of the subject matter distinctive to elenchos.

To go a step further: if we take Socrates' disclaimers as a sincere attempt to represent a perceived reality, we must answer why it is that Socrates finds this method he wields with such apparent deftness to be

88 Vlastos, Socrates, pp. 132-156, similarly argues that Socrates' divinely commanded mission to seek the right way to live precludes his "cheating" in elenctic argumentation. It does not preclude, as Vlastos notes, Socrates' leaving his befuddled interlocutors to the discomfort of their ignorance.

89 Socrates' deftness, as well as the homogeneity of focus found in certain dialogues (which would seem peculiar if encountered in extemporaneous conversation), are likely the result of Plato's artistic organization of a procedure which was much less structured in real life. For Havelock's assertion that the exposition of even early
something which seems self-propelled, as if its outcome
were as hidden from him as from the interlocutor who
suffers reversal. The answer is to be found in the subject
matter distinctive to the elenchos of the early Platonic
dialogues—the Socratic ethical "doctrine," or rather in
the nature of that doctrine: both in the manner in which
the doctrine is expressed and in the content of the
doctrine and its effect on the interlocutor. It will be
shown first that the historical position of Socrates in the
development of philosophic thought and the form in which
his "doctrine" is expressed in the dialogues support the
hypothesis that his "irony" was an honest expression of his
perception of his own ignorance when faced with the
prospect of defining a universal or abstraction, something
consistent and bearing no relation to particular action.
Second, it will be shown that the substance of Socrates' 
ethical "doctrine," when set side-by-side with the
interlocutor's (and the interlocutor's contemporaries')
system of beliefs, creates a state of paradox that not only
succinctly restates the historical position of Socrates in
the development of philosophic thought, but also produces
in the interlocutor the two opposing reactions common to
all states of paradox: attraction and repulsion.

"Socratic" dialogues betrays "a manner thoroughly
characteristic of the way language is managed when it is
documented" which the "orality" of Socrates could never
produce, see Havelock, "Orality," p. 87.
The historical position of Socrates in the development of philosophic thought is first discussed by Aristotle, who claims that while Socrates sought after the definition of moral virtues and inquired into the essence of things, it was Plato and "the idealists" who first sought to define that which is not in the realm of the "sensible," who first separated universals from particulars (Metaphysics 987b, 1078b, and 1086a-b). It has long been accepted that Plato's contribution to the development of philosophy was the theory of "forms," and yet only recently has the ability of Plato to make such a contribution to his mentor's legacy been studied as a function of the development of language, and, in particular, of that development as it was influenced by the advent of literacy.

Eric A. Havelock's many inquiries90 into this

aspect of the evolution of thought have led to a greater understanding of the effect of the transition from orality to literacy on the development of moral philosophy.\(^{91}\)

In one of his most recent articles, Havelock proposes that... moral philosophy... is a creation of alphabetic literacy... [which came] into existence in the last half of the fifth century and the first half of the fourth century B.C., in the city of Athens... [T]he effectiveness of... the mental process we identify as forming a moral judgement... depended upon a prior ability of the human mind to conceptualize the rules of behaviour as moral universals, an ability which emerged at that time and place. Such mental ability depended in turn upon a linguistic ability to devise a suitable language for the expression of such universals.\(^{92}\)

In tracing the development of the language of moral thought through the transition from orality to literacy, Havelock marks, among other things, the progression from 1) narrative in which agents are described performing action...
to 2) "states of being" or names of "impersonals" replacing the agents in the descriptive narrative to 3) the discussion of "states of being" or "impersonals" as abstract entities removed from the action.93

Havelock is likewise careful to distinguish between the moral thought of preliterate and literate societies. Before the advent of literacy, he maintains, criteria for governing and judging behavior were

... settled by custom and habit. The wrong thing to do was not the immoral thing, but the non-customary thing; actions were judged by their propriety, which within certain limits could fluctuate. The canons of law and right were therefore identical with what the structure of any given society could accept.94

After the revolution of literacy, however, which made possible the abstraction of thought, Havelock proclaims:

The rules of human behavior are no longer proverbial or particular or pragmatic and flexible, no longer suggested by examples of behavior. Previously expressed only in specifics, they are now stated as universals. Ceasing to be customs, which are acted out, they become absolutes by which all custom is judged and categorized as either good or bad, right or wrong.95

Havelock, then, holds that the transition from oralism to literacy is witnessed in language as a progression away from specifics towards universals, and in moral thought as a development away from the hegemony of

95Havelock, "Orality," p. 91.
custom to that of absolutes. He locates the historical
Socrates on the cusp of the transformation which was
occurring in his lifetime: "... he was and remained an
oralist, yet paradoxically [he was] involved in a
transition from orality to literacy."96

We can perhaps never know for certain to what extent
Socrates was literate.97 We have, to be sure, no
writings of his and little evidence that he could
write,98 but absence of evidence is not proof of
absence. In any case, inability to write does not preclude
the ability to read, and both Plato and Xenophon seem to
depict Socrates as able to read. Plato has Socrates
describe himself as seizing upon the books of Anaxagoras
and reading them as fast as he could (Phaedo 98b);
Xenophon’s Socrates speaks of perusing written works of
ancient sages together with friends (καὶ τοὺς
θησαυροὺς τῶν πάλαι σοφῶν ἄνδρῶν, οὖς
ἐκεῖνοι κατέλιπον ἐν βιβλίοις γράφαντες,
ἀνελίπτων κοινὴ σὺν τοῖς φίλοις διέρχομαι)

97Thomas, Oral Tradition, pp. 17-19, has an
excellent discussion of the difficulties of defining
literacy in general.
98Xenophon, Memorabilia 4.2.13, describes Socrates
writing the letters alpha and delta as headings under which
he and his interlocutor place various actions they deem
just or unjust.
and extracting whatever is good (Memorabilia 1.6.14).99 This activity does not require that Socrates himself read, for his friends could have read passages aloud to him, a common practice of the time.100 Yet these bits of evidence are tantalizing, for if Socrates had in fact been introduced to writing or reading, part of his difficulties with his interlocutors—and even his difficulties in arriving at universals—may in this fact find explanation.

The effects on cognition of even a moderate degree of literacy are, according to the work of A. R. Luria, profound. When testing a wide range of subjects, from the illiterate to the newly and minimally literate to the fully literate, Luria found that illiterate subjects showed a remarkable inability to make generalizations, arrive at abstractions, and use deduction and inference in solving syllogisms. Instead, these subjects consistently reverted to practical, particular, situational thinking and did not seem able to understand syllogisms. In addition, the illiterate subjects found many of the tasks imposed upon them to be either perplexing, mildly annoying, ridiculous, or completely uninteresting. At times they seemed to consider their interviewers peculiar for posing such

99 Ancient sources for Socrates writing and reading are cited by Harris, Ancient Literacy, pp. 85 n. 95 and 91 n. 124. I owe this reference to James G. Keenan.

100 See Thomas, Oral Tradition, pp. 20–21, for a discussion of the extent to which the Athenians conducted education, literary criticism, and politics orally.
When one looks at even a few of the many examples Luria gives, the parallels—between Luria's interviewers and their subjects on the one hand, and Socrates and his interlocutors on the other hand—are astounding. In the following interview, for example, one can almost hear Socrates trying—unsuccessfully—to wrest from an interlocutor the definition of a universal:

—Try to explain to me what a tree is. —Why should I? Everyone knows what a tree is, they don't need me telling them. —Still, try and explain it. —There are trees here everywhere; you won't find a place that doesn't have trees. So what's the point of my explaining? —But some people have never seen trees, so you might have to explain. —Okay. You say there are no trees where these people come from. So I'll tell them how we plant beetroots by using seeds, how the root goes into the earth and the leaves come out on top. That's the way we plant a tree, the roots go down . . . —How would you define a tree in two words? —In two words? Apple tree, elm, poplar.

Incredulous though he is at being asked a question he believes anyone can answer, this subject finally makes an honest effort to define "tree." In his responses, from his initial wariness-cum-self-assurance to his (to our ears) naively particular and experiential answers, one can recognize Euthyphro's initial bravado at knowing exactly

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101 Luria, *Cognitive Development*, passim, esp. pp. 48-99. See also Havelock, "Socratic Question," p. 167, who suggests that Socrates' distinctively oral technique of asking "interrupting" or "disruptive" questions was his contribution to the formulation of "a vocabulary and syntax for conceptual discourse."

holiness is (5a.1-2) and first attempt at definition: 
"... holiness is the very thing I am doing now ... "
(5d.7-9). And yet Euthyphro never does arrive at a 
satisfactory definition; he thinks, essentially, like a 
preliterate. He, like Luria's illiterate subjects, is the 
product of an essentially oral culture, and, as Walter J. 
Ong asserts,

an oral culture simply does not deal in such items as 
geometrical figures, abstract categorization, formally 
logical reasoning processes, definitions, or even 
comprehensive descriptions, or articulated self-
analysis, all of which derive not simply from thought 
itself but from text-formed thought.103

Luria's subjects had similar difficulties 
comprehending syllogisms. Recall that Socrates' 
syllogistic adding together of the secondary premises is 
what led to the interlocutor's realization that the 
secondary premises together entailed the refutation of his 
thesis. If we can theorize that Socrates was more literate 
than his interlocutors, and therefore able to syllogize 
while his interlocutors were at best inept at it, we can go 
a long way toward explaining why the interlocutors seem so 
dense and gullible in the face of what seem to us such 
obvious logistic traps. Luria's interviewers indeed faced 
iliterate subjects who, when confronted with a syllogism, 
could only resort to their own particular experience. The 
syllogism made no sense to them:

103 Ong, Orality, p. 55.
--In the Far North, where there is snow, all bears are white. Novaya Zemlya is in the Far North and there is always snow there. What color are the bears there? --There are different sorts of bears. [The syllogism is repeated.] --I don’t know; I’ve seen a black bear, I’ve never seen any others . . . Each locality has its own animals: if it’s white, they will be white; if it’s yellow, they will be yellow. --But what kind of bears are there in Novaya Zemlya? --We always speak only of what we see; we don’t talk about what we haven’t seen.¹⁰⁴

Ong, in discussing Luria’s illiterate subjects’ responses to syllogisms and requests for definition, argues that a person from an oral or residually oral culture would react to such queries "... not by answering the seemingly mindless question itself but by trying to assess the total puzzling context ... ." Ong goes on to imagine the confusion under which such subjects are obviously laboring:

You find what color bears are by looking at them. Who ever heard of reasoning out in practical life the color of a bear? . . . What is he asking me this stupid question for? What is he trying to do? ‘What is a tree?’ Does he really expect me to respond to that when he and everyone else has seen thousands of trees?¹⁰⁵

That such an attitude echoes that of Socrates’ interlocutors is obvious. From such a perspective, the only reasonable explanation is that the questioner is really odd, which is exactly what Socrates’ interlocutors thought of him.

In short, there is evidence that the Socrates of the

¹⁰⁵Ong, Orality, pp. 53 and 56.
early dialogues lived at the time in the evolution of thought when the cognitive effects of literacy were just beginning to be felt. We can see the conflict brought upon by these effects in the problems Socrates has communicating with his interlocutors, for Socrates shows the signs of one who has at least been introduced to literacy. Havelock maintains, however, that "... [Socrates] was and remained an oralist, yet paradoxically [he was] involved in a transition from oralism to literacy."106

But what evidence is there that Socrates himself was stuck in oralism? The form the Socratic ethical "doctrine" takes in the early dialogues. For we nowhere find a Socrates who is able to offer up to his interlocutors anything that even approximates an abstraction which would survive the rules of definition agreed upon by both parties. Instead, the secondary premises, the only things to survive the rigors of definition and the touchstone of elenchos, impress the reader as being logically consistent but no further removed from the particular than any definition offered up by the interlocutor after his abortive initial attempt. It will be remembered that the secondary premises most often take the form of analogies, wherein a particular action is described and its logical or sensible cogency is assessed. In Euthyphro, for example, Socrates examines one

definition proposed by Euthyphro by drawing an analogy between attending to the gods and other arts of attending. By calling Euthyphro's attention to the particular art of attending horses, he elicits his eventual agreement to the premise that attention always aims to accomplish benefit (Euthyphro 12e-13c).

In short, Socrates himself displays at least some of the difficulties experienced by the preliterate: he can begin to define, but he cannot arrive at true abstraction. Socrates is able to offer something which can withstand the logical rigors of elenchos, but nonetheless cannot serve as the definition of a universal. His premises instead merely aim at an elastic approximation of the definiens by supplying seemingly analogous instances, but they

107 His establishment of premises is thus similar to the modern-day lawyer's attempt to establish precedents by discovering analogies between cases. The comparison between legal reasoning and Socrates' establishment of precedents is especially informing when one considers the arena from which Socrates regularly draws his precedent cases: the arena of technai. Edward H. Levi, in his An Introduction to Legal Reasoning (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1949), defines legal reasoning and indicates the influence of precedent cases on establishment of law: "The basic pattern of legal reasoning is reasoning by example. It is reasoning from case to case. It is a three-step process described by the doctrine of precedent in which a proposition descriptive of the first case is made into a rule of law and then applied to a next similar situation. The steps are these: similarity is seen between cases; next the rule of law inherent in the first case is announced; then the rule of law is made applicable to the second case. This is a method of reasoning necessary for the law, but it has characteristics which under other circumstances might be considered imperfections. . . . [C]ase-law reasoning . . . is not truly inductive, but the direction appears to be from particular to general. It has
cannot and do not serve as the definiendum itself.

The dialogues end in actual ignorance for both

Socrates and the interlocutor, and the "irony" Socrates

practices is best understood as his perception that the

proclaimed goal of definition has not been reached. In

arguing against interpretations, like that of Robinson, of

Socratic irony as a ruse, Seeskin states:

[W]e [should not] be misled into thinking that
Socrates has the necessary information but has
decided to keep it to himself. The Socratic

dialogues are spurs to inquiry in the sense that they

engage the reader and encourage her to think for

herself. But they are not like mystery novels where
the author leaves a trail of clues pointing to a
single conclusion. "What is justice?" cannot be

answered in the way we answer "Who killed the butler?"
We have the entire text of the Republic as proof. So
there is nothing insincere in Socrates' professing
ignorance even though he has spent a lifetime
examining the relation between virtue and knowledge.
To complete his search, he would need logical,
psychological, and metaphysical insights unavailing to any person in the fifth century.108

Havelock would probably argue that such insights were

unavailable to persons in the fifth century because they

had not yet experienced the transition to full literacy.

Such insights would have to await the fourth century and

Plato.

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been pointed out that the general finds its meaning in the
relationship between the particulars. Yet it has the
capacity to suggest by the implication of hypothetical
cases which it carries and even by its ability to suggest
other categories which sound the same." (pp. 1-2 and 27,
italics added. I owe this reference to James G. Keenan.)

108 Seeskin, Dialogue, p. 45.
Socrates nonetheless continually displays a sense of self-assurance about his ability eventually to arrive at knowledge of a universal. This self-assurance, which seems to suggest the interpretation of the "irony" as a ruse,\textsuperscript{109} may in fact come from Socrates' willingness to submit to yet another round of elenchos, for he does not experience the shame common to the fleeing interlocutors. Why? Because, his life was led, as far as our evidence gives witness, in consonance with the "doctrine" extractable from the analogies he proposes in the secondary premises.\textsuperscript{110} And yet, there is a sense in which Socrates, as will be shown, is a tragic hero. The tragedy belongs, however, not solely to him, but also to the interlocutors, and vicariously, to the reader-auditor.\textsuperscript{111}

Removing ethical principles from the context in which Socrates gives them tends to create an artificial sense of "doctrine," whose concreteness belies both the residual

\textsuperscript{109}This interpretation would doubtlessly be less formidable in its appeal if we had access to transcripts of elenchos as Socrates actually conducted it on the streets of Athens, stripped of the artistic arrangement and synthetic focus Plato has given it.


\textsuperscript{111}For the contrast between Socrates and the old tragic heroes, see Seeskin, Dialogue, pp. 78 and 91, and the discussion below, Part Four.
orality of Socrates defended above as well as the very particularity of the context. Nonetheless, even as we create a doctrine by extracting and perhaps concentrating concepts described at length in narrative form, the commonplaces of Socratic ethical doctrine loudly declare their position in the development of philosophic thought by attesting the foundation of their substance in the description of action.

The "commonplaces" form a group whose interrelation is grounded in the correlation between knowledge and action: 1) virtue is knowledge; 2) all wrongdoing is involuntary in as much as it results from ignorance; 3) the care of the soul is requisite for living well. These doctrines have been deemed "paradoxes," primarily because their translation into the real world seems to fly in the face of experience. Even Aristotle was troubled by their apparent inconsistency with the facts of human existence: "The effect of his [sc. Socrates's] making the virtues into branches of knowledge was to eliminate the irrational part of the soul, and with it emotion and moral character [ἀναίρεσι καὶ πάθος καὶ ἔθος]." (Magna Moralia 1182a.20).¹¹²

In his analysis of the Socratic paradoxes, M. J.

¹¹²Quoted and translated by Guthrie, Socrates, p. 131 (Greek added), who avows that he is sparing in his quotations from this text "owing to the widespread view that it is a product of the Peripatos after Aristotle's death" (p. 130 n. 3).
O'Brien recognizes in their phrasing both the capacity to surprise and shock Greek common sense as well as their latent appeal, given the origins he proposes for them: 1) the ancient ethic of self-interest, 2) the fifth-century conception of politics and virtue as an art, and 3) the Delphic maxim ("with the irony that is its formal expression"), "Know thyself."113 Socrates' constant questioning is unpleasant in that it is "an attack on the pretensions of Man the Artisan," the fifth-century assurance that humans could control their destinies, and yet it appeals, through the paradox that virtue is knowledge, to the very pretensions it attacks: "[T]he Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge ... is a fusion of opposites. It unites the passion for intelligent control of human life with the belief that man's intelligence is weak and puny compared to the God's."114

O'Brien's hypothesis of the latent appeal of the Socratic paradoxes is supported by the text of Plato, for only the brash Callicles of the Gorgias even comes close to accusing Socrates openly of complete denial of reality. This is not because, as Callicles on the one hand suggests, interlocutors are (like Polus) too modest to proclaim aloud their "natural" inclinations when confronted with the

113 O'Brien, Paradoxes, pp. 56 and 82.
114 O'Brien, Paradoxes, pp. 80-81.
dictates of "tradition," but instead, as he likewise implies, because they are not sharp enough to follow the pendulum of Socrates' argumentation as it swings from one arena to another. Callicles at one point comes close to pinpointing how it is that Socrates is able to slip undetected from one arena to another, when he complains that Socrates is always "inappropriately talking about cobblers and fullers and cooks and doctors, as if our discussion had anything to do with these things." (Gorgias 491a.1-3). The secondary premises do, in fact, quite regularly involve description from the arena of various technai, in which arena, it must be noted, equation of the good and the useful seems obvious, given the fact that the object of such technai is clear and unimpeded by the conflicting desires which regularly visit human beings in all situations where moral choice is required. Socrates' analogies from human practice of crafts, skills, and arts are not strictly analogous, then, for human beings making moral decisions, or at least for human beings unlike himself who do not live solely on the basis of enlightened self-interest. This is precisely why Socrates is able to "surprise and shock" his interlocutors with his paradoxical

115 Callicles thinks he detects the rapid transport of Socrates' argumentation between the realms guided by "nature" and "tradition," wherein Socrates attacks from whichever position is the opposite of his opponent's. Callicles' assessment is colored by his own division of reality into these two rather narrow positions, as the dialogue's subsequent progression shows.
Yet most interlocutors do not openly accuse Socrates of denying reality, as Callicles so boldly does. Why not? Because "[w]hat separates the paradoxes from nonsense is that, instead of denying common human experience, they simply reformulate it." By his analogies from

116 An in-depth consideration of the problems inherent in the craft analogies used by Socrates may be found in Terence Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977; hereafter Irwin, *Moral Theory*), pp. 37-101. Irwin locates the source of tension in *elenchos* in two unexamined assumptions: 1) that virtue must always be beneficial (p. 39), and 2) that virtue "prescribes instrumental means or components" to the determinate end of happiness (p. 84). These assumptions guide the *elenchos* and determine its paradoxical issue.


Another way of looking at the paradoxical issue of *elenchos* is to consider it the natural product of the tension in human psyche, which has opposing and mutually exclusive aims. Maynard Mack, "The Jacobean Shakespeare," quoted in Howard W. Clarke, *The Art of the Odyssey* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967), p. 62, describes this tension as "a confrontation of two of our most cherished instincts, the instinct to be resolute, autonomous, free, and the instinct to be 'realistic,' adaptable, secure." Cf. Haden, "Socratic Ignorance," p. 25, who similarly claims "... for human beings there are two equally fundamental but radically different life factors: intelligence and the sense of group solidarity." The ancient Greek manifestation of this tension can be seen, according to A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and
benefit in technai to benefit for humans making moral
decisions, Socrates discreetly "reformulates" the process
of making moral decisions so as to incorporate into it a
doctrine of benefit that looks to the end, not the
means. The potentially virtuous individual, like
the artisan practicing his techné, must now look beyond the
particularity of each action to the finished product
ahead. By his analogies to technai, then, Socrates sets up
a situation in which virtue, the definiend, is designated
as a desired goal. The paradox that "no one does wrong
voluntarily" becomes in this context the statement of an
obvious truth, in that only a fool would admit to doing
something voluntarily against his own desires. This

Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values (Clarendon:
Oxford Univ. Press, 1960; reprint ed., Chicago and London:
Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975; hereafter Adkins, Merit),
esp. pp. 30-60, in the conflict between competitive and
cooperative virtues, which Irwin, Moral Theory, pp. 15-18,
terms respectively the "Homeric" virtues and the "post-
Homerice law-conception."

Elenchos covertly supports community claims over those
of the individual, and this is why, as notes Warren, "Craft
Argument," p. 108, the craft analogy does not apply to
competitive skills such as warcraft and boxing: it assumes
without ever making explicit benefit of community.
The presupposed existence of this tension perhaps
explains, better than anything else does, why interlocutors
feel shame: they are confronted in elenchos with their
cherished beliefs in community benefit which, if indulged,
would overthrow pursuit of self-interest. See Kahn,
"Gorgias," p. 115, who claims that the interlocutor's sense
of shame can be attributed to Socrates' bringing "moral
concerns" into play, which support claims of the community
over those of the individual.

On benefit and teleology, see Irwin, Moral
Theory, pp. 39 and 76.
"desire," variously denoted in Plato's text by the verbs ρούλεσθαι, φιλεῖν, or ἐρᾶν and their cognates,119 is at the very heart of Socrates' paradoxes, for it succinctly describes the precarious position of the interlocutor who is confronted by the choice between the actual and now obvious (his current belief system) and the possible but still unknown (a belief system based in enlightened self-interest, suggested by analogy to various technai). By setting up a comparison between two things which are simultaneously different and yet somehow similar, Socrates as he "reformulates" creates metaphor, which invites the definition of the coincidence and, ultimately, demarcation of the system of beliefs which silently informs each action.

Anne Carson, in her book Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay, quotes and translates Aristotle's definition of metaphor from Rhetoric 1405a.34: "To give names to nameless things by transference [metaphora] from things kindred or similar in appearance."120 The "nameless things," whose name Socrates' metaphor urges but never accomplishes, are of course the universals, the belief...

119 O'Brien, Paradoxes, pp. 90 and 225-227. O'Brien sees Plato's choice of terminology as dictated by "... the associations he wants to create, the field of experience he wishes to include, the intensity of emotion he hopes to suggest." (p. 226).

systems which, at his time of history, silently informed action and were described only by reference to the action they informed.

The crux of elenctic procedure, the collocation of the action derived from analogy to technai with the action of the interlocutor, sets up a situation in which the interlocutor is made simultaneously to view his actual practice and the theoretical or possible practice (which he has agreed is both beneficial to the proposed end as well as logically consistent). Since the two are contradictory, the interlocutor is faced with the excruciating choice of denying the validity of his actual practice or of denying that of enlightened self-interest, whose desirability and logical consistency he has already affirmed. The moment is charged with a tension that is almost unbearable as the interlocutor stands face to face with the choice between what he does and what he has proclaimed is desirable and logically consistent. He is confronted with the essence of true paradox: "What is a paradox? A paradox is a kind of thinking that reaches out but never arrives at the end of its thought. Each time it reaches out, there is a shift of distance in mid-reasoning that prevents the answer from being grasped."\(^{121}\)

Socrates' habitual construction of paradoxical mental situations, in which the goal of definition seems just

\(^{121}\)Carson, *Eros*, p. 81.
within reach but is never attained, caused those with whom he conversed to feel simultaneously attracted to him and repelled. As is the usual practice of the pre-literate, Socrates' interlocutors cannot separate the agent from the action, Socrates from the procedure he practiced, elenchos. As a result, the conflicting emotions aroused by the paradoxical nature of the situations elenchos creates are said to be caused by Socrates the person, not his procedure. Alcibiades' wrenching delineation of the extreme measures to which he felt drawn in a vain attempt to find consummation of his erotic attraction to Socrates is so well known that it needs no further description here. But witness, in addition to this, his statement of a simultaneous yet opposing passion, repulsion, which Socrates evoked in him in similar excess: "Many are the times I would gladly find him no longer among men on earth, but if this were in fact to happen, I know that I would suffer greater distress than ever; the result is that I have no idea what to do with this man at all." (Symposium 216c.1-3)

Since the Alcibiades who is attracted to Socrates cannot tolerate the thought of a Socrates "no longer among men on earth" and yet cannot abide being in his presence, he chooses finally to flee. A similar expression of repulsion is to be found in every interlocutor who flees Socrates and his request to continue elenchos. Yet the
desire, at least for Alcibiades, remains. What causes it?

Socrates' practice of *elenchos* is essentially *erotic.* By using analogy, metaphor, paradox, and by engaging in the quest for knowledge, Socrates creates nearly every form of "erotic" situation Carson describes in her book. In his attempt, nowhere in the early dialogues accomplished, to define universals, Socrates engages his interlocutors in "an action of reaching out toward a meaning not yet known." By using analogy to technai to make the attainment of virtue a desired goal, Socrates encourages the "reaching out from what is known and present to something else, something different, something desired." Through metaphor, benefit in technai is made to suggest but never specifically to name the "nameless" universals which are the true informers of virtuous action for those whose practice is informed by enlightened self-interest. By constructing paradox which is never resolved, Socrates places his interlocutors at one of the points in what Carson calls the "three point circuit" requisite for erōs, wherein may be communicated "the difference between what is present/actual/known and

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122 For a discussion of Socratic, as opposed to Platonic erōs, see Vlastos, "Irony," pp. 90-92. It should be noted that the current discussion is about neither of these, but instead about elenctic erōs.

123 Carson herself identifies Socrates' eroticism as evidenced by his quest for knowledge, but designates analogy, metaphor, and paradox "erotic" in respect to other texts.
what is lacking/possible/unknown . . . “124

Alcibiades’ attraction and repulsion now become more understandable. For interlocutors like him the pull between the actual and the possible is too excruciating, for although the possible has been made desirable, it will never win out in the end. Alcibiades shows his preference for the actual by his return to the adulation of the crowd, just as Euthyphro betrays a similar preference by choosing to return to the prosecution of his father that he can no longer justify. Alcibiades and interlocutors like him resist the "kinetic . . . action of eros" and choose instead action of another sort: flight that is motivated by shame. Alcibiades’ sense of shame betrays his preference for the actual, for, according to Carson, “. . . the static electricity of erotic ‘shame’ is a very discreet way of marking that two are not one.”125

124Carson, Eros, pp. 166, 86, 73, and 169.

125Carson, Eros, pp. 97 and 21, italics added. Carson’s differentiation between the kinetic engagement in erōs and the static refusal to participate is reminiscent of the above discussion of Theaetetus’ sense of vertigo as he undergoes elenchos, and Euthyphro’s sensation of movement which he finds so unpleasant as to require escape. The discussion of static and kinetic emotions in James Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, in The Portable James Joyce (New York: Viking Press, 1946 and 1947) p. 471, is an instructive parallel to Aristotle’s designation of the role of emotions in tragedy: "Pity is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the human sufferer. Terror is the feeling which arrests the mind in the presence of whatsoever is grave and constant in human sufferings and unites it with the secret cause. . . . The tragic emotion, in fact, is a
For others, however, like Theaetetus, this "... kinetic, triangular, delightful and disturbing action of eros"\textsuperscript{126} is an exhilarating experience. Theaetetus is not discomfited by the movement of elenchos into the unknown, and, like Socrates, is a true lover of wisdom, a true philosopher. Carson cites Socrates' double proclamation (Symposium 177d; Theaetetus 128b) that "his knowledge, such as it is, is nothing but a knowledge of 'erotic things' (\textit{ta} \textit{erotika})," and explains what he means by deduction from the facts of his life:

He loved to ask questions. He loved to hear answers, construct arguments, test definitions, uncover riddles and watch them unfold out of one another in a structure opening down through the logos like a spiralling road (Phdr. 274a; cf. 272c) or a vertigo (Soph. 264c). He loved, that is, the process of coming to know.\textsuperscript{127}

Plato's depiction of a Socrates who knows only \textit{ta} \textit{erotika} again attests to a Socrates who was a fellow-searcher and not a sly seasoned traveller on the road to face looking two ways, towards terror and towards pity, both of which are phases of it. You see I use the word arrest. I mean that the tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I use the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing." I am indebted to James G. Keenan for this reference.

\textsuperscript{126}Carson, \textit{Eros}, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{127}Carson, \textit{Eros}, pp. 170-171.
the knowledge of "nameless things." For the Socrates whose alleged knowledge is merely of "erotic things" is one who knows only the first half of the necessary duo of drawing abstraction from experience—he knows how to set up by analogy the "three-dimensional space" in which collocated "images float one upon the other without convergence" with "something in between, something paradoxical: Eros."128

O'Brien sees in Plato's declining use of the form of the Socratic paradoxes a tempering of "the will to astonish, inherited from Socrates."129 And yet, while he does not explicitly attribute the paradoxes to Socrates, O'Brien does acknowledge that the paradoxes and the doctrine of the tripartite soul are
two different ways of presenting the complex and original ethics which Plato built upon the intellectualism of Socrates. In short, they are alternative pedagogic techniques. The paradoxes are the affirmation of the rational unity of human nature and human action; the partition of the soul is an acknowledgement of the irrational multiplicity of both.130

Havelock's hypotheses on the orality of Socrates support the designation of the paradoxes as Socratic, while the above quote from O'Brien suggests that the tripartite soul

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128Carson, Eros, p. 145.

129O'Brien, Paradoxes, p. 197. He notes here that "[t]he ethical paradoxes survive to the end in substance, and occasionally in form . . . ."

130O'Brien, Paradoxes, p. 198.
was Plato's answer to the problem he perceived in Socrates' paradoxical affirmation. Development of this doctrine in dialogues after Robinson's early period likewise supports the designation. Carson, in her analysis of the "erotic" Socrates, does not differentiate between Socrates and Plato, but we may now with more assurance proclaim that it would take a Plato to arrive at abstraction, to "divide things up by classes, where the natural joints are," to engage in "division." For it is by "collection" and "division" that we are able to arrive at abstraction: [. . . [W]e think by projecting sameness upon difference, by drawing things together in a relation or idea while at the same time maintaining the distinctions between them." 131

Plato could doubtlessly see and chose to depict the tendency in his mentor's accustomed procedure; he could see the abstractions waiting behind the collocated particulars for an interlocutor able to withstand elenchos to its true terminus. But Plato was a true "lover of wisdom," willing to withstand the procedure of elenchos, and perhaps impatient for its penultimate goal of truth-acquisition.132

As it has been described above, elenchos as practiced

131Carson, Eros, pp. 145 and 171.

132Carson, Eros, p. 173, concludes her chapter on Socrates with the claim that "... he was in love with the wooing itself. And who is not?" Plato, I submit.
by Socrates in the early dialogues is a procedure seemingly destined to reach for something it never could attain, whether that be the definition of universals or the moral improvement of those with whom Socrates conversed. A brief summary of this study's conclusions on Socratic elenchos will serve both to indicate why the method failed to attain its goals as well as to inaugurate the final consideration of elenchos: the tragic dimensions of its failure as depicted by Plato in the early dialogues.
Elenchos as practiced by Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues purports to have two distinct but ultimately related goals: to establish definition of universals on the one hand, and to effect moral improvement on the other hand. Although neither goal is accomplished, the two are joined in what may be termed the true issue of elenchos: the paradoxical doctrine that knowledge is virtue. The doctrine is paradoxical not because it is unrealistic, but because to gain knowledge, Plato assures us, one must undergo elenchos--but to undergo elenchos, one must, we are shown, be committed to virtue at all costs.

Plato is everywhere insistent that elenchos is able to accomplish its goal of defining universals. The procedure is clearly laid out: reversal, recognition, katharsis, the birth of truth. And, although truth's birth is never witnessed in the early dialogues, its genesis is strongly portended in the secondary premises which survive the touchstone of elenchos. By eliciting agreement that situations derived from the arena of technai are analogous to the subject of virtue under discussion, Socrates establishes his secondary premises. Elenchos as practiced by Socrates thus suggests that particular action must be informed by the end it professes to achieve, and this end
The analogy to *technai* has established as something beneficial and therefore desired. The truth is there to be had in the secondary premises, as is attested by the flight of every discomfited interlocutor and the confidence of every modern reader tempted to "fiddle with the premises." But the truth must be born—and birthing is painful.

The procedure of *elenchos* as depicted by Plato is not a cut-and-dried logical progression. *Elenchos* is everywhere shot through with the interlocutor's emotional reactions. The reversal *elenchos* effects is the source of confusion. Confusion clears, however, when one comes to recognize and accept one's ignorance. Acceptance of ignorance elicits wonder in the sense of doubt, and can lead to *katharsis* and to the birth of truth. But *katharsis* necessitates the willingness to let go of that which is to be removed, and it is here where most interlocutors are foiled. Instead of accepting ignorance, they first attempt to blame Socrates for their confusion.

So far the procedure sounds painful. An antidote to the interlocutor's confusion is administered: the Socratic "irony." This irony provides a much-needed humorous interlude to the painful engagement. It functions on many levels. First, it removes personalities from the process and diffuses the blame. Then, by removing personalities, irony allows the interlocutor a more objective perspective on the discussion. Objectification
provides an antidote to the interlocutor's emotional investment in his belief system, which can, if it is too strong, cause him to be unwilling to let go of his former beliefs, rendering him not susceptible to the benefit that shame, his next emotional reaction, can confer.

Shame, it has been argued, is a homeopathic remedy to the emotional investment of the interlocutor. As the most powerful emotional tool of social control, it is capable of producing alterations in behavior. But when the emotional investment is strong, the reaction of the interlocutor is flight to avoid further shame, by which he shows himself so emotionally invested in his beliefs that he is unwilling to let go of them.

Elenchos teeters, then, between failure and success, between tragedy and comedy. Its emotional power, however, is not derived entirely from its oscillation between these two poles, nor does it end with the interlocutor's escape from the presence of Socrates. Although the pain experienced during the process may keep the interlocutor at a distance, the lure of its potential success remains

133 For shame as an instrument of social control, see Alvin W. Gouldner, Enter Plato: Classical Greece and the Origins of Social Theory (New York: Basic Books, 1965; hereafter Gouldner, Enter Plato), pp. 81-90. On shame cultures see Ruth Benedict, The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), pp. 222-224. Benedict defines shame as "a reaction to other people's criticism" and deems it "a potent sanction," whether the criticism is real or imagined (p. 223).
strong. A desire has been implanted by the agency of the analogy to technai, and the interlocutor is left in a position where he feels simultaneously attracted to what he has been shown is desirable, virtue, and yet repelled by the only way he can acquire it: through knowledge, which he now senses, having recognized through elenchos his former ignorance, this painful process can provide.

Seeskin argues that the real tragedy of elenchos is its failure to persuade: its failure to attain the goal of altering the behavior of Socrates' respondents, of effecting a moral improvement that is more than temporary. He seems to place the blame for this failure not primarily on Socrates, but instead on the interlocutors, none of whom in the early dialogues has the "honesty, reasonableness, and courage" requisite for elenchos:

... the honesty to say what one really thinks, the reasonableness to admit what one does not know, and the courage to continue the investigation. Most of Socrates' respondents are lacking in all three. Protagoras becomes angry, Polus resorts to cheap rhetorical tricks, Callicles begins to sulk, Critias loses his self-control, Meno wants to quit. While their reactions leave much to be desired, Socrates' respondents do emerge from the pages of the dialogues as real people.134

Seeskin extends the tragedy beyond the limits of Plato's depiction of elenchos to the audience, who can identify with the shame of the "real people" interlocutors because

134Seeskin, Dialogue, p. 3. Cf. Teloh, "Interlocutors' Characters," p. 34, who cites Gorgias 487a for the character traits of interlocutors necessary for a fruitful elenchos: "knowledge, good will, and frankness."
the reader, too, senses that "she will resist the conclusions to which [elenchos] leads her." And, quoting Nussbaum, Seeskin claims that the tragedy is ours, for wanting both what Alcibiades represents in Symposium and that which Socrates represents. Seeskin maintains that the real-life interlocutors depicted by Plato increase the sense of tragedy of elenchos' inability to persuade, for although one may sense the salutary effect of elenchos on Meno, who "has become 'gentle towards others,'" or Crito, on whom "elenchus has a soothing effect," or Thrasymachus, who at "the end of Republic I ... becomes gentle towards Socrates," the reader "knows that the difference will be short-lived":

[Socrates'] closest associates, Critias and Alcibiades, became a disgrace to the city. Meno went on to a life of treachery in Asia Minor and was executed. Laches and Nicias both met with misfortune. Neither Gorgias nor Protagoras was moved to abandon sophistry and pursue philosophy. Worst of all, his longtime companion Crito accused him of cowardice for not breaking the law (Crito 45c ff.)--thereby proving that he missed the whole point of Socrates' speech to the jury. Callicles sums up the feeling of most respondents when, after hearing Socrates discourse on how to live a life, he says (Gorgias 513c): "I don't know why but somehow what you say strikes me as right, Socrates, and yet I feel as most people do: you don't quite convince me."

Seeskin develops at great length the theme of the

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135 Seeskin, Dialogue, pp. 16 and 148, where he quotes Martha Nussbaum, "The Speech of Alcibiades: A Reading of Plato's Symposium," Philosophy and Literature 3 (1979), pp. 167-169. This article is an earlier version of the sixth chapter of Nussbaum, Fragility, pp. 165-199.

136 Seeskin, Dialogue, pp. 127 and 130.
interlocutors' responsibility for elenchos' failure and uses his argument to support his contention that elenchos is essentially circular: it both requires and leads to virtue. But if we follow Socrates in his insistence that virtue is knowledge, we must protest along with Callicles that Socrates does not quite convince, and follow up on the implications of Seeskin's claim that Socrates' failure to persuade is the real tragedy of elenchos.

And yet there remains the suspicion, certainly for reader-auditors and probably even for interlocutors like Alcibiades, who cannot keep himself away from Socrates, that success lurks somewhere beneath the apparent failures. For reader-auditors, the suspicion is based on the conviction that interlocutors are less well-equipped, both emotionally and rationally, to spar with Socrates than they themselves would be. The humorous aspects of Socratic irony, no doubt lost on exasperated interlocutors, are a sign that reader-auditors are afforded an objectivity greater than that afforded interlocutors. For interlocutors, there is doubtless the sense that, if only they could give up their investment in their beliefs, they would be able to withstand elenchos to its successful terminus.

137 Seeskin, Dialogue, p. 112. Seeskin uses this argument to support his convincing theory on the origin of Plato's theory of recollection: that it is a derivative of the necessity in elenchos of virtue for its own attainment. See especially his pp. 8 and 149.
It must, however, be admitted that the failure of *elenchos* is not entirely attributable to the weak-willed interlocutors with whom Socrates converses. While it is true that they fail to have the moral fiber requisite for participating in *elenchos* in good faith and enduring it to its end, Socrates himself fails to provide in his analogies anything that can withstand the rules for defining universals. As has been shown, the analogies of the secondary premises that withstand *elenchos* are nonetheless as grounded in the particularity of action as anything proposed by interlocutors and refuted during the course of *elenchos*. Socrates' "irony" may be his honest perception of his inability to arrive at definition of universals, and his at least residual orality, his position in the history of philosophic thought, may provide the reason for his failure to arrive at abstraction, but it is a failure nonetheless.

*Elenchos,* then, hints at comedy, but is shot through with tragedy. But that is not all: It is likewise heroic in its tragic dimensions. Seeskin argues that the tragedy does not properly belong to the "... one person in the city who does not profess wisdom, [the] one person who goes about proclaiming his ignorance," Socrates, whom he contrasts with the old tragic heroes "who claim to something no mortal can have ..., [who] have become so enamored of their accomplishments that they have lost sight
of their limitations." Socrates is likewise, Seeskin maintains, successful in elenchos, where "success is judged by the degree to which the respondent can abide by his own admissions, which is to say the degree to which he can examine his life without feeling ashamed."\textsuperscript{138}

But despite Socrates' knowledge of his epistemological limitations, and despite the greater moral fiber he brings to elenchos, his failure continues to assert itself in the paradoxical equation that knowledge is virtue. Even if, as Seeskin argues, Socrates does have the requisite human knowledge of his own limitations, he nonetheless does not impart even this knowledge to his interlocutors, all of whom go back to their former lives and conduct them as if they know what they are doing. Socrates, in his inability to define universals, with his knowledge that is human, not divine, both contributes to the tragedy that is the lack of moral improvement in the interlocutors, and embodies the all-too-human tragedy in that "he put before us an ideal of inquiry whose ultimate success may be beyond human capabilities."\textsuperscript{139}

Although Seeskin is correct in seeing the tragic overtones of elenchos, he misses its comic undertones. For it is precisely the reassertion of the limits of "human capabilities," which nonetheless do not stop people

\textsuperscript{138}Seeskin, \textit{Dialogue}, pp. 78 and 141.

\textsuperscript{139}Seeskin, \textit{Dialogue}, pp. 78 and 150.
from bungling through their lives, that is essentially comic. And the impersonal aspect of elenchos, Socratic "irony," can afford reader-auditors the comic objectivity to see the humor in the situation, provided they are not overly concerned with defending Socrates against charges of insincerity and mockery. Play can be dead-serious, and elenchos, with its tragic overtones and comic undertones, was dead-serious play.

In short, Socrates' practice of elenchos tragically fails because of human limitations, whether these be Socrates' epistemological or his interlocutors' moral limitations: elenchos does not arrive at the definition of universals which can inform action. And yet humans, both Socrates and his interlocutors, continue to act and to live, for all of their misinformed beliefs. And this is comic. Elenchos' potential for achieving its goal is strongly asserted, while the limitations of its participants are made painfully evident. It is the collocation of potential, limitation, and survival in spite of it all that makes Plato's depiction of elenchos essentially tragic, but nonetheless comic. Socrates settles comfortably between tragedy (Agathon) and comedy (Aristophanes) in Symposium no less than he regularly does in his elenchos, for it is there that philosophy can be born:

Tragic plays make human beings conscious of their condition and of the dimensions of powerlessness
implicit in it: tragedies elicit wonder, awe, fear, even a sense of scandal. They hit us with a strong sense of our limitations; they feed a hunger for understanding. There is so much for us to think about, and what we have to think about gives us so much to think. And yet human beings seem to think so rarely—and then so poorly: they keep coming up against walls they have failed to see. . . . There is nevertheless a redeeming feature in the tragic religious awe: insight into our initial inability to learn and our subsequent opportunity to learn through suffering brings some relief.

Comedy has a counter-message. . . . Of course human beings do not learn: but all can laugh at the silliness of others and occasionally at their own. And laughter brings relief and occasionally some cure. . . . Comedy shows that the ideas we have in our heads are more foolish than the performances of our bodies. . . . If tragedy articulates the seriousness of life, comedy by having fun casts a cooling glance on the games we play and restores a grasp of some of the simplicities of life. Comedy enhances the power to think objectively (if not passionately) about our problems. The tragic hunger for justice, and understanding together with the witty levity and ironic resources of comedy jointly give birth to philosophy.140

There are ellipses in the above quote because, in Plato's depiction of Socratic elenchos, only tragedy comes into full bloom; comedy is an occasional intrusion on an essentially tragic course. We do not see, in elenchos, the "repetitious pursuit of simple pleasures" Despland refers to; nor do we, at least from our historical perspective, have the feeling that "[i]n any case, no one gets killed for ignoring his or her limits; the consequences of stupidity turn out to be lots of ridicule or a few blows."141 It may be, then, merely from an historical

perspective, that elenchos becomes a tragedy and Socrates its hero. But this is the case only if one chooses not to believe the dead-serious intent behind Socrates' play. To do this, however, one must ignore Plato's depiction of the man and his method.

In his depiction of potential and limitation, of the possible and the actual, Plato makes his paradoxical Socrates of the early dialogues a tragic hero. For the ancient Greeks, to be a hero meant to confront the paradox that "to aspire to be like the gods was a hopeless piece of dangerous presumption," and yet this same aspiration "was a necessary and inevitable spiritual urge." In his insistence that knowledge may be born through elenchos and his simultaneous failure to achieve it, the Platonic Socrates continues to aspire—and continues to fail. He is heroic in his potential, in his continual aspiration, and tragically limited only in the sense that all humans are (comically) limited, at least according to the ancient Greek view. His interlocutors, by contrast, are tragically limited in their heroic abilities to aspire, and yet (comically) all-too-human because of their failure.

By showing his audience Socrates' limitations in the realm of knowledge and his interlocutor's limitations in the realm of virtue, and putting both in a situation where

he insists that the limitations can be overcome, Plato constructs the essentially tragic interaction of potential and limitation. Virtue is knowledge, but neither can be reached. This tragic interaction between potential and limitation is at the very core of the Socratic paradoxes and the paradox that was the historical Socrates. Plato gives us both in his early dialogues.

Plato’s tragic depiction of Socrates’ method is not, however, the only depiction of the method to survive from antiquity. For, even though it has rarely been perceived as such, Aristophanes in the Clouds also depicts Socrates following his usual procedure. Aristophanes’ perspective, however, transforms the method into something primarily comic; it will therefore take an adjustment of vision to be able to see that Plato and Aristophanes have, in fact, taken as their subject the same method.
CHAPTER TWO: ARISTOPHANES ON SOCRATES AND EURIPIDES:

ELENCHOS COMICALLY DEPICTED

Part One: Evidence Linking Socrates and Euripides:

An Overview and an Apologia for Aristophanes

Evidence connecting Socrates and Euripides, while not abundant, is not lacking. It is claimed, for example, that Euripides studied philosophy under Socrates, and was unpopular because he admired Socrates. Socrates is said to have helped Euripides write his plays. Socrates, although he was not an habitual theater-goer, is averred to have made a point of attending new Euripidean productions and to have approved of certain sentiments expressed on stage, but is described as leaving when he heard what he considered objectionable sentiments expressed in Euripides' plays.¹

This evidence is, for the most part, however,

untrustworthy. Much of it is written after the fifth century B.C. by men who did not know Socrates and Euripides, and whose sources, historiographical methods, and intentions in writing are either unknown or, when known, are such that they render the information furnished suspect. Mary Lefkowitz, in her Lives of the Greek Poets, has demonstrated that "... virtually all the material in all the lives is fiction"; that the material was derived from the poets’ own works and from characterizations of the poets found in comedy, was written with an intent more often to entertain and delight than to inform, and was molded with an eye to the readers’ expectations, i.e. that poets ... should have lives like those of heroes, involving confrontations, requiring isolation and, often, violent deaths; but unlike heroes, poets could be portrayed as ordinary or even foolish men, so that their creativity would not seem mysterious or even particularly difficult.\(^2\)

Doubts about the reliability of the biographical tradition do not dispel what is more important for this study, namely, that even in ancient times a methodological similarity between Socrates and Euripides was perceived. Moreover, there is a contemporary witness, not of the biographical tradition, who also attests to a perceived methodological similarity between Socrates and Euripides. As any reader of Aristophanes’ comedies knows, Socrates and Euripides are depicted by the comic playwright as sharing

\(^2\)Lefkowitz, Lives, pp. vii-ix.
similar practices. A striking illustration comes from the end of the *Frogs*, where the Chorus censures habitual association with Socrates as a corrupting influence on Euripides' poetry:

\[
\text{xaríēn o̱vν μὴ Ἐυκράτει}
\text{παρακαθήμενον λαλεῖν,}
\text{ἀποβαλόντα μουσικὴν}
\text{τά τε μέγιστα παραλπόντα}
\text{τῆς τραγῳδίης τέχνης.}
\text{τὸ δ' ἐπὶ σεμνοῖς λόγοις}
\text{καὶ σκαρφησμοῖς λήρων}
\text{διατριβὴν ἁγών ποιεῖσθαι}
\text{παραφρονοῦντος ἄνδρος.}
\]

It is smart, then, not to sit beside Socrates chattering, throwing away music and the greatest remnants of the tragic art. Only a deranged man passes idle time in solemn words and trifles of trash. (*Frogs* 1491-1499).  

The above quotation is the most explicit and least ambiguous evidence from Aristophanes' plays, which in other ways forcefully suggest that Socrates' customary way of speaking with his fellow citizens was detectable in Euripides' dramatic poetry. Aristophanes, then, as a contemporary of Socrates and Euripides, stands the chance of being the only witness to a methodological similarity shared by the philosopher and the poet.

Aristophanes, a trustworthy witness? Aristophanes, who depicted Socrates' "thinkery" gleefully put to torch at

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the end of his Clouds? Whose Frogs showed Dionysus, the patron god of tragedy, forswearing and casting his vote against retrieving Euripides from death in Hades? Isn't this man a hostile witness? Yet, even if Aristophanes is not considered hostile, mustn't one wonder along with Lefkowitz, "... how reliable a source is Aristophanes, who was not a historian but a comic poet?"4

If, however, it can be argued that Aristophanes is a trustworthy witness, then his depictions of Socrates and Euripides can be examined for the evidence they give on methodological similarity. The perception of this similarity is, in fact, the one constant in the history of criticism of Aristophanes as a portrayer of Socrates and Euripides. The critical literature for the most part, however, denounces Aristophanes' representation of the two men, and of Socrates especially, as profoundly distorted. The reasons cited for this distortion are two: either Aristophanes was maliciously hostile, or else he chose to serve the muse of comedy at the expense of truthful representation. Each of these will be considered in turn.

The assessment that Aristophanes was motivated solely by hostility in portraying Socrates and Euripides is not widespread, but has had, nonetheless, as will be argued below, an insidious effect on most of the critical literature. The assessment of hostility seems to take its

From a sense of righteous indignation at what is considered the gross misrepresentation of (primarily) Socrates and (secondarily) Euripides and the imagined legacy of this misrepresentation in the lives of the two men. Wasn't Aristophanes, after all, answerable in part for the opinion of Socrates that led to his being charged and ultimately put to death? Plato has Socrates say as much at *Apology* 19a.7-c.5:

I will take up from the beginning and ask what is the accusation from which has arisen slander of me, and upon which Meletos relied when he wrote this indictment against me. Well, then, what is it the slanderers say? One must read their statements just like the affidavit of the accusers: "Socrates acts unjustly and is a meddler who seeks things under the earth and in heaven, makes the weaker argument the stronger, and teaches these things to others." Such is the accusation. You yourselves have seen these things in the comedy of Aristophanes, a certain Socrates there born aloft, claiming to walk the air and babbling many other absurdities, of which I understand nothing whatsoever.\(^5\)

Even the habitually judicious K. J. Dover, although he never overtly accuses Aristophanes of malicious intent in regard to Socrates, nevertheless suggests only incriminating explanations for Aristophanes' portrait of the philosopher—\(^\text{that Aristophanes was either politically motivated, or callously interested in playing to the gallery, or inexcusably oblivious to all-too-predictable consequences:}\)

\(^5\text{See also }*\text{Apology* 18b.}\)
indignation against the subversion of custom and traditional beliefs, he would have welcomed such an outcome; if he was not so very indignant, but wanted to raise all the laughs he could and enlist the sympathies of the average member of his audience, I doubt whether he would have hesitated to buy success at the price of Socrates' security. One simple consideration suggests, at any rate, that the play is not good-natured fun which Socrates' friends could enjoy as much as anyone else: people really were prosecuted and outlawed or killed for alleged injury to the community, and this makes all the difference between the burning of Socrates' school and some modern fantasy depicting the boiling of a politician, for we no longer boil people (or even discommoded them) for errors of political judgment.6

Martha Nussbaum cites "our reverence for Socrates" as primarily accountable for the Clouds' being experienced as an "irritating work."7 Similarly, indignation is

6K. J. Dover, Aristophanic Comedy (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1972), p. 119. See, however, Dover, Clouds, p. lvi, for a rectification of the assumption that Aristophanes' culpability is increased by the fact that he should have known of what the Athenians were capable: "We can only observe that the Athenians did not necessarily do what Ar. told them to do . . . ." Similarly, see Cedric H. Whitman, Aristophanes and the Comic Hero (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964; hereafter Whitman, Comic Hero), p. 15, for Aristophanes' imagined delight at being taken, in general, so seriously.

7Martha Nussbaum, "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom," YCS 26 (1980; hereafter Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom"), pp. 44-45. Cf. Whitman, Comic Hero, p. 143, who cites Socrates' remarks in the Apology as the source of the difficulty of accepting Aristophanes' caricature in the Clouds as "a highly distinguished comic creation," but argues against any animosity felt by Plato for Aristophanes. Whitman maintains that the testimony of the Symposium "far outweighs the passing remarks in the Apology," and concludes, "Had Plato really felt an enemy in Aristophanes, he certainly possessed the articulateness to say so clearly." Whitman in any case considers it "dubious" that the Clouds "may have engendered a degree of public prejudice against Socrates, nearly a quarter-century after the play's abysmal failure." (p. 8).
sometimes felt at Aristophanes' depiction of Euripides abandoned at the end of the Frogs, a scene that becomes tantamount to a betrayal when considered in light of what were presumed to be facts about the dramatic poet's life. Euripides' supposed unpopularity becomes the imagined reason for his final departure from Athens, and the poet's miserable life--the seemingly logical precursor of his final and dispirited exit--get laid, like the charges against Socrates, at Aristophanes' feet. In his discussion of Medea 292 ff., where Medea attributes the envy of

8 See P. T. Stevens, "Euripides and the Athenians," JHS 76 (1956; hereafter Stevens, "E. and Athenians"), pp. 87-94, who assesses information concerning Euripides' unpopularity from the ancient biographical tradition, the rarity of Euripides' dramatic victories, and the impression of the poet derived from his treatment in Aristophanes. He concludes that the picture of the increasingly unpopular and isolated poet is probably exaggerated, and not in any case founded upon undisputed evidence. Stevens anticipates Lefkowitz's work by recognizing that Satyros' Life of Euripides "... is partly based on the acceptance of the jests of Comedy as historical fact, and on the assumption that autobiographical allusions can be discerned in numerous passages from the plays of Euripides himself." (p. 87).

9The word she uses is ψόνος. See Lefkowitz, Lives, pp. 95-96, for the same word used in the biography of Euripides to explain the comic poets' attack, the attribution of Cephasphon as his coauthor, the generalized hatred of the Athenians, and a young man's offensive remark that the poet had bad breath. Lefkowitz does not suggest that the word points to Medea 292 ff. as the origin of these remarks, but maintains instead that the characteristic Greek ambivalence toward extraordinary achievement became, in the case of Euripides, who "presumably was somewhat arrogant and kept away from ordinary people and had no interest in appealing to his audiences," the ψόνος invited by a superior stance. The biographer's description of Euripides' arrogance and isolation, however, likewise suggests Medea as a source;
the citizens to their reaction against her reputation as one who is clever, Denys Page gives a poignant description of Euripides as the unappreciated genius and of Aristophanes as the heartless cad of a comic poet who contributed to his already considerable distress:

Foreshadowed, too, already in Medea is the great burden of unpopularity which was to oppress the poet throughout his life. The sequel was the ridicule and hatred which Aristophanes reflects: the climax was his voluntary exile to Macedonia in sorrow and disillusion. Euripides was not the only teacher whom the Athenians persecuted, though they returned to him again and again, admiring while they hated, moved while they mocked and slandered. History traces a single undeviating line from this passage of Medea [lines 292 ff.] through the bitter pages of Aristophanes to the final scene of an old man wandering out into the world friendless and embittered.\textsuperscript{10}

Yet the assessment of Aristophanes as a bitterly hostile witness, while it carries the scapegoat’s boon of the emotional purge, is nonetheless unfounded, not only because it relies for the most part on historical evidence shown by Lefkowitz to be of uncertain value, but also because it assumes that the plays in question admit of obvious interpretations: If Aristophanes in his plays shows Socrates’ school ablaze and Euripides abandoned in...

see Medea’s remarks to the Corinthian women at Medea 214 ff.

\textsuperscript{10}Denys L. Page, ed., Euripides, Medea (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961; hereafter Page, Medea), pp. xii-xiii. See also his comment at lines 292 sqq., p. 94: “A famous passage: we seem to hear Eur. himself speaking, who suffered much unpopularity at Athens. At last ‘mortified by the hostility of his fellow-citizens’, as his biographer relates, he retired to the court of Macedon.”
Hades, then Aristophanes must be the one who condones and recommends such actions. If Aristophanes in his plays shows Socrates’ school ablaze and Euripides abandoned in Hades, then the plays ipso facto are criticisms of Socrates and Euripides. Such interpretations of the plays, however, as will be suggested, are no more able to stand when put to close scrutiny than are the quasi-historical biographies with which they have association. Only when emotional bias against Aristophanes and obvious interpretations are abandoned can the complexities and subtleties of his comic vision begin to be appreciated.

The rewards of such an appreciation can be discovered in much of the critical literature assessing Aristophanes’ portrayal of Socrates and Euripides. Yet this literature is, from the perspective of this study at least, both blessed and cursed by a reactionary stance against the assessment of Aristophanes as maliciously hostile. In an attempt to exonerate Aristophanes from the charges of being either small and mean or else stupid, this literature regularly cites comic convention as the reason behind the distortion, and this is a blessing, because such a stance inspires examination of the nature of Aristophanes’ comic genius, and obvious interpretations of the plays are not

Ironically enough, such obvious interpretations may in fact be the only source for the assessment of Aristophanes as a hostile witness, since the ancient biographers relied on the comedies to make many of their seemingly plausible claims. See Lefkowitz, Lives, passim.
able to endure the consequences of this examination. The curse of this reactionary stance—the denial that the comic poet's depictions contain any significant element of historicity—is, it seems, the enduring byproduct of a resistance to accepting the vexing implications behind the obvious interpretations of the plays: that there was perhaps every reason why Socrates and his school should be incinerated and Euripides left to rot.¹²

In an attempt, then, to address the felt need to rehabilitate Aristophanes, it is often argued that Aristophanes himself bore no overwhelming hostility for Socrates and Euripides, but that he nonetheless confused his audience and readers; that his depiction distorts the truth with no forethought of malice, but simply by its service to the needs of comic exaggeration and simplification. From this perspective, Aristophanes comes into his own; he is exonerated as comic poet. No one better pronounces an apologia for Aristophanes than Cedric Whitman, who discerns the shadow of truth Aristophanic comedy mirrors, albeit sometimes darkly:

> Whether or not Old Comedy is a sound historical source for the study of fifth-century Athenian society, in

¹²Aristophanes' comedy in fact reflects, it will be argued below (Parts Two and Three), the fifth-century B.C. Athenian sentiment that the method employed by both men led only to confusion and disruption. Comedy, objective where reverence fears to tread, gives a view of elenchos from the outside: renouncing awareness of elenchos' ultimate goals of moral improvement and the birth of truth, comedy presents elenchos as chicanery.
Aristophanes' hands it is a powerful refractor of that society, more truthful, perhaps, about the passionate inner drives and aspirations than about the political or economic details; more concerned, at its best, with spiritual wholeness, as all true classic art is, than with moralizing about parts. Its mode is one of bursting generosity; it seems to use anything that comes to hand. Large sprays of wit, satire, slapstick, lyric, whimsy, realism, obscenity, and sheer nonsense come tumbling out in bacchanalian abundance, and in the midst of the cheerful tumult, it is vain, not to say absurd, to try to catch the poet, unmask him, and make him say his moral catechism. The effort to do so always leads to the same maddening and irresistible figure who avers that he is the best influence in Greece, constantly improving his fellow citizens by defending them from demagogues, sophists, and Euripides, and feeding them on the finest comic fare conceivable, in contrast to the vulgar and poverty-stricken offerings of his less fortunate rivals.  

And yet, even as some of the critical literature grants Aristophanes his comic license and identifies the locus of the truth he speaks in the audience whose drives and aspirations he mirrors, most of this same literature still assumes that Aristophanes' depiction of the Socrates and Euripides is, in all of its significant details, profoundly distorted; and there is a sense in this literature that neither Socrates nor Euripides deserved such roughshod treatment at the hands of a comic poet who did not even have the decency to draw them accurately. Aristophanes is frequently charged with wrongfully amalgamating the two men and with failing to distinguish them from broad categories of individuals held up for easy ridicule. In this vein is the remark of Bruno Snell:

Whatever the differences between Euripides, Socrates, and the Sophists, in Aristophanes they are indistinguishable; their only activity consists in cleverly lining their pockets through the teaching of various tricks which are destined to wreck the healthy morality of the solid Athenian citizen, and to subvert the traditional structure of the state.\textsuperscript{14}

Similarly, Dover, in his attempt to understand Aristophanes' reasons for misrepresenting Socrates in the Clouds, suggests that the philosopher is made to conform to the genus of the "intellectual," or even is more broadly drawn as the "abnormal man":

The abnormal man is essentially parasitic on the normal; he does no real work, he undermines the loyalties on which the city's continued existence depends, and he casts a shadow over the ordinary pleasures of life by the unspoken implication that there may be other, secret pleasures accessible to him alone.\textsuperscript{15}

Even Whitman, who has such a keen appreciation for Aristophanic comedy, is firm in maintaining that Aristophanes' portrayals of both Socrates and Euripides are


\textsuperscript{15}Dover, Clouds, p. liii. See also Dover's Aristophanic Comedy (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1972), pp. 116-120, where he maintains that "To suppose . . . that Aristophanes decided to treat Socrates as the paradigm of the sophist and attached to him any attribute of the whole genus which lent itself to ridicule is not particularly difficult." For the untenable argument that in depicting Socrates and Euripides, Aristophanes drew on the stock character of "The Learned Doctor," see F. M. Cornford, The Origin of Attic Comedy (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1914; hereafter Cornford, Attic Comedy), pp. 154-163.
virtually a-historical: "The Cleon whom Aristophanes
trounces is his own, not history's; his Euripides is his
own; his Socrates is his own." Dismissing as trivial any
correspondence to reality in Aristophanes' Socrates,
Whitman describes the portrayal as a virtuoso's
conglomerate of many men, rolled into the physically most
amusing package at hand with a recognizable name:

It is less important ... to trace the genuinely
Socratic touches in the Clouds, than it is to
recognize the composite image of the intellectual
climate, under the name of Socrates. The poet might
have called it by a different name, but Socrates' 
local pre-eminence entitled him to first
consideration. ... There could never have been any
question of representing him seriously and accurately.
Had there been, Aristophanes would scarcely have
accredited him with practically all the intellectual
accomplishments of the whole sophistic movement--plus
the doctrines of Diogenes, which cannot be called
sophistic. Rather, this was an inspired piece of
poetic invention to gather together the Weaker
Discourse of Protagoras, some of the rhetorical
claims of Gorgias, the air physics of Diogenes, the
linguistic studies of Prodicus, and the ethic of
Antiphon, or some one of his predecessors, into one
character. A dash of sheer crooked quackery was added
and then the mixture was molded into an image of
lofty, unscrupulous, and cloudy versatility--which
itself suggests Hippias of Elis. The total brilliant
imposture was staged under the name of the funniest-
looking man in Athens, the fat and pug-nosed
philosopher whose face itself was a comic mask.16

Whitman likewise perceives Aristophanes' Euripides as
a type, having little in common with the historical
tragedian. In the Frogs, Euripides represents

16 Whitman, Comic Hero, pp. 57 and 142. P.
65-69, argues that Aristophanes' Socrates differs from
Plato's because Aristophanes' only concern was to parody
Socrates' physical appearance.
... the divisive and centrifugal forces of relativism, irresponsible rhetoric, and in general the new education. ... Euripides appears as the embodiment of talk, both trivial and shifty, a quibbling immoralist concerned on the one hand with verbal exactitude, and on the other with morally ruinous equivocation.

But, Whitman protests, the image of Euripides in the Frogs, who "serves as a symbol for the ruinous present, and is identified with every form of public or private corruption and decay" is ... so distorted and the caricature so much the comedian's invention, that to take it literally comes close to humorless pedantry. ... Euripides is the eternal spoof artist, the long-haired hoax, made funnier than usual by the addition of the name and a few of the idiosyncrasies, of a great living tragedian.17

These arguments that Aristophanes depicts broad types, perceptive as they may be in certain particulars,18 nonetheless indicate a defensive undertone by their stringent denial that these are anything other than mere types, betraying little of importance about the historical Socrates and Euripides. Granting Aristophanes his comic license is clearly not enough; it does not entirely dispel the need to safeguard Socrates and Euripides from misinterpretation. Such an over-zealous policy of

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17Whitman, Comic Hero, pp. 232, 241, and 220.

18It will not be argued that there is no distortion in Aristophanes' portraits of Socrates and Euripides, but instead that these distortions can be recognized, in large part, as the reaction to and assessment of the elenctic method, which both men used. See the discussion below, Parts Two and Three.
protectionism, however, by anxiously proffering evidence of the "types" that the Aristophanic Socrates and Euripides supposedly represent, begs the question why Aristophanes used Socrates and Euripides. Was it merely that their notoriety, a few idiosyncrasies, and a funny face made them easy marks? Are we to grant so little integrity to Aristophanes' parodies? Or is it rather that our "reverence" blinds us and our indignation still rankles; that we perhaps want in some way to chastise Aristophanes for even an artistically pardonable misrepresentation, that we are hesitant to throw these two men once again to the critical wolves that have for centuries worried their reputations? If Aristophanes' depictions of Socrates and Euripides are allowed any credibility, a breach will be torn in carefully considered defenses of the two men. If it is granted that Aristophanes in any way accurately describes their practices, can it continue to be denied that the effects of those practices shown in the plays have validity? The distance seems short to a reassertion that Socrates and his ilk brought about the fall of Athens; that Euripides personally was to blame for the death of tragedy.

But it is not just the possibility that the critical literature has been dominated by an unhealthy over-reaction to the past that suggests a reason for reevaluating these portraits: a less prejudicial assessment of Aristophanes begins on its own to make the need for reevaluation
apparent. The logic of the "type" begins to crumble under
the weight of instances in Aristophanes' plays that
demonstrate how uncannily accurate he can be in certain
particulars of his portraits of Socrates and
Euripides. How are we to explain such perspicuity in
a man who insists on drawing broad and inaccurate types?
Must we return to the hypothesis of malicious hostility or
the possibility that condemnation is justifiable?
Likewise, as comic convention is used to exonerate
Aristophanes from the charges of malice and ignorance, the
more obvious interpretations of the two plays in question,
the Clouds and the Frogs—interpretations which suggest
full-blown condemnation of Socrates and Euripides—begin to
lose their conviction when the plays are seen as more than
the mere progression of their plots. In turn, an
understanding both for the genre of comedy in general and
the context required for appreciating its meaning release
the plays from being considered simply remonstrative.
Tone, characterization, and the poet's own methodology
begin to be taken into consideration. The burning of

19See below, Parts Two and Three.

20In the Clouds it comes to be recognized, for
example, that Aristophanes' censure of Socrates is
untenable when one considers that Strepsiades is shown to
be a swindler before he enters Socrates' school; that
Socrates' own interests are almost entirely harmless (if
not purely nonsensical); that the absenting of Socrates
from the agon between Right and Anti-Right needs
explanation; that Anti-Right is peculiarly prurient for all
his praise of chastity. In the Frogs, it is observed that
socrates' school and the abandonment of Euripides in Hades acquire the sinister undertone of poetic sanction, after all, only when extracted from their context; as Lefkowitz has noted, "... without perspective humour turns into criticism." Finally, the assumption that Aristophanes is an arch-conservative and champion against anything that is new, including Socrates and Euripides, is called to question and put to task.

In conclusion, Aristophanes' legitimacy as a witness to a methodological similarity between Socrates and Euripides can only be accurately assessed when the most damning criticism of Euripides comes from the mouth of the obviously biased Aeschylus; that Dionysus, who decides in favor of Aeschylus, does so not on any discernibly rational grounds, i.e., on the basis of Aeschylus' poetic merits or morality, but instead on the basis of whim. For discussion of these considerations, see below, Parts Two and Three.


complexity and subtlety of his comic vision begin to be respected, when the examination of his work is unburdened both of the indiscretion caused by ignorance or preconception and of the reactionary vigilance which is its obverse; when the censure, ridicule, and blame that are the custom of Athenian Old Comedy are accepted as a mirror of what the poet's audience recognizes, not of the poet's own thoughts and feelings or of an unassailable truth; when the plays of Aristophanes are considered as wholes, not preconceived parts to be mined for evidence of the poet's attitudes and beliefs; in short, when critics stop operating from the primary premise, ironically the modus operandi of the comic poets themselves, that "the man was his work."

This chapter, then, in Part Two will confirm what has recently been only fractionally argued, that Aristophanes' portrayal of Socrates is an acute parody of many facets of the elenctic method (analyzed above in Chapter One), the method Socrates is shown using in Plato's early dialogues. In Part Three it will further be proposed that Aristophanes insistently represents Euripides' methods as similar to Socrates', a similarity that the Chorus'

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monition at *Frogs* 1491-1499 (quoted above) makes explicit. There is every reason, it can be argued, to look to Guripides' plays for evidence of the Socratic *elenchos* Aristophanes parodied, a method that Aristophanes' comedies suggest was an all-too-evident feature of Guripides' dramatic art.
Part Two: Aristophanes' Comic Elenchos:
Socrates' Character and Strepsiades' Predicament

It may be that historical hindsight has forever kept posterity from unrestrained enjoyment of the humor in Aristophanes' portrayal of Socrates; the Clouds, with its gleeful incineration of the school of Socrates, perhaps master and all,\(^{25}\) eerily anticipate the events of 399 B.C. Nonetheless, an inability to laugh need not constrain us from accepting Aristophanes' portrait as humor, and, as will be argued below, humor with its gaze directed unblinkingly at its target: Socrates and the method he visited upon his unsuspecting fellow citizens. For although it is quite possible to defend Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates as a type-portrait, some of the humor is lost in the process. If, then, we pause, drop our indignation at the martyred Socrates blasphemously put to torch nearly a quarter century before his time, and instead for a moment consider what it must have been like for the fifth century B.C. Athenian--about his own business,

\(^{25}\) That the ending of the Clouds shows Socrates burned to death, and as such is evidence that Aristophanes foresaw, and indeed advised, a "final solution" for the Athenians' problematic relationship with the philosopher, is argued, although not persuasively, by E. Christian Kopff in his article "Nubes 1493 ff.: Was Socrates Murdered?", GRBS 18 (1977; hereafter Kopff, "Nubes 1493 ff."). pp. 113-122. F. D. Harvey, "Nubes 1493 ff.: Was Socrates Murdered?", GRBS 22 (1981; hereafter Harvey, "Nubes 1493 ff."). pp. 339-343, offers five sound arguments against Kopff's interpretation.
comfortable in the assurance that he knew full well what he wanted and was about to do--to have been accosted on the street by an elenchos-wielding Socrates, it becomes possible to accept that what Aristophanes gives is Socrates' method objectified from the interlocutor's perspective.

Objectification is one of comedy's primary tools: the insider's view tends to be serious if not tragic. But for the insider who steps back a few paces, the momentous and significant suddenly appear ludicrous. Neil Simon gives a delightful description of the comedian's objective perspective:

Not long after we were married, my wife and I stood toe to toe in the kitchen, exchanging verbal punches that were as devastating and as painful as any thrown in a championship heavyweight match. Each accusation, each emotional blow found its mark, and we both reeled from the awesome destructive power of the truths we hurled. Then suddenly, because there were no adequate words left to express her hurt, frustration and anger, my wife did what now seems to be the only sensible and rational thing she could have done. She picked up a frozen veal chop recently left out on the table to defrost, and hurled it at me, striking me just above the right eye.

I was so stunned I could barely react; stunned not by the blow nor the intent, but by the absurdity that I, a grown man, had just been hit in the head with a frozen veal chop. I could not contain myself, and a faint flicker of a smile crossed my face. Suddenly the anger and hostility drained from me and I found myself outside the situation looking in, no longer involved as a man in conflict, but as an observer, an audience so to speak, watching two people on a stage, both of whom cared for each other, but

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26See the contrast of tragic and comic viewpoints in Despland, Education, pp. 240-241 (quoted above, Chapter One, Part Four).
were unable or unwilling to yield or to submit without having first gained some small vicious victory.

Add to the scene the fact that, like the two policemen in a Roald Dahl short story who ate the frozen mutton leg murder instrument for dinner, thus depriving themselves of their single piece of evidence, I would soon be eating the object that nearly destroyed my marriage. And I hate veal chops. 27

As the chop follows a projectile away from Simon's wife's hand, its intent as weapon is confronted by its aspect as food. At the moment when it beans Simon on the forehead it becomes totally ridiculous: it is suddenly again food and, as such, no weapon to use against a grown man. The chop can no longer lay claim to the exalted status as weapon, just as the argument can no longer be taken as truly destructive: for if the argument is serious, the chop is a weapon and thus crucial evidence which should not be eaten. But eaten it will be, and, in the final tally, it is deemed substandard even as food.

If a passionately and pointedly hurled veal chop can, by being extracted from its context, lose all the seriousness of its intent, imagine, then, how ludicrous Socrates and his elenchos could appear to one who, like Simon from the argument, has retreated from intense involvement. Retreat allows for the fading of the

perceived object's motive and meaning, which are not evident on the surface. With distance, integrity of the whole gives way to conspicuous parts that, out of context, become idiosyncratic and beg exaggeration.

Comic objectification, which can transform a weapon into a bilious main course, a serious incident into a ludicrous one, does not, however, fully explain the comic transformation elenchos undergoes in Aristophanes' Clouds. Aristophanes, after all, was competing for a prize and was therefore eager to gain the belly-laugh that comes alone from a knowing recognition. Aristophanes does not therefore depict, and for good reason, the Socrates and Socratic method of Plato's early dialogues. It is not merely that Plato's Socrates, a man passionately concerned with virtue, knowledge, and the relentless examination of himself and others is not at all funny. Rather, it is that in Plato's Socrates we see one extraordinary man viewed by another; this was hardly the Socrates experienced by the majority of Athenians. Aristophanes, then, gives us a Socrates who serves as an antidote to the one portrayed by his devoted disciple Plato; Aristophanes gives us

28One need not, however, resort to the hypothesis that Aristophanes' counter-depiction is either a type portrait that so grossly distorts Plato's Socrates as to have very little in common with it, nor even that it is a portrayal of the pre-Platonic Socrates, as A. E. Taylor argues in Socrates: The Man and His Thought (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1953; hereafter Taylor, Socrates), pp. 70 ff.
Socrates as he was seen by the man on the street.

The perspective of man on the street was that of the pre-literate. And when this man met Socrates, two worlds collided. It is difficult for us, living as we do in an age of literacy, comfortable with linear, logical modes of thought and abstraction, to imagine what kind of experience it must have been for the average Athenian to be confronted by Socrates. Aristophanes gives us insight into this experience, and it is hilariously funny. Scholars have long argued about who is this Aristophanic Socrates, this floating, babbling lunatic, this oily shyster, this aggravating trouble-maker who begs to be brought down to earth and finally is: this is the Platonic Socrates, from the perspective of the eternally perplexed, befuddled, and worsted, i.e., the long-suffering interlocutor.

We should not wonder, then, to see Plato's metaphysical view of Socrates and elenchos made physical. In Aristophanes' play, abstractions are made concrete, universals become particulars, and, in Strepsiades' experience, the interlocutor's experience of elenchos is disclosed: his initial high confidence and wonder, his growing confusion and frustration, his painful recognition and reversal, his true desires laid bare with all of their disconcerting and unforeseen consequences, and what was, in

29See the discussion above, Chapter One, Part Three.
the end, the interlocutor's final wish: to be rid of this confounding pest; to escape, to get back, somehow—anyhow—to his comfortable world where everything once seemed so simple, so concrete, so secure.

In Aristophanes, then, one can see Socrates practicing elenchos, but elenchos stripped of the seriousness of its intent³⁰ and revelling in its aspect—in short, comically at play in the light that is refracted off its surface. And viewed from the interlocutor's perspective, Socrates and his elenchos are totally befuddling and begging for a fight. Strepsiades, start to finish in the Clouds both the comic hero, "Mr. Twister,"³¹ who bungles his way to dubious triumph,³² and the

³⁰See Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," pp. 85-86: "It would not be unfair to say that most of Socrates' concern for virtue remains in the realm of personal choice and good intentions for others. Aristophanes' portrait ignores the good intentions...." But Nussbaum's assessment of the Clouds, as will be argued below, brings the play precariously near the realm of tragedy by assuming that Aristophanes' main intent is critical rather than comic.


³²The comic triumph is always one of dubious merit; see Whitman, Comic Hero, p. 56: "Comedy makes life 'work'. All it takes is imagination, and an unwillingness to be hampered by scruples, consistency, and other kill-joy limitations." We should not, therefore, allow our delight at Strepsiades' audacious, and comically appropriate solution of arson to be dampened unduly, so that we are tempted, with Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 77-79,
unsuspecting "mark"--the guileless interlocutor who is himself "twisted" on Socrates' rack of elenchos--is just the man to give Socrates and his method a rip-roaring comic run for their money.\(^{33}\) If we cannot laugh, it is, as Kenneth Reckford so rightly maintains,\(^{34}\) our loss, for this is a deliciously funny play.

Accordingly, it will be shown here that what Aristophanes gives is a Socrates practicing elenchos, but objectively viewed from the perspective of the interlocutor. The *Clouds* will serve as the primary text, but time does not permit nor does this study require a full analysis of this or of any other Aristophanic play.

Instead, Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates will be drearily to posit that the play ends on a "note of anguish," possibly with Pheidippides unwittingly consumed in the fire his father lighted. Cf. also Edmunds, "Socrates," pp. 209-230. Edmunds' interpretation of the *Clouds*, which builds on that of Nussbaum, leads him to conclude, "... the consequences [of this comedy] are grave, uncomical for our view of Aristophanes as well as of Socrates. I say this because Aristophanes seems, in the course of his comic destruction [of] Socrates, to have tarred himself with his own brush." (p. 227). As antidote to Edmunds and Nussbaum, read Reckford, "Father-Beating," especially the hilarious pp. 101-103.

\(^{33}\)The similarities between the run-of-the-mill comic hero in Aristophanes and his depiction of Socrates in the *Clouds* and of Euripides elsewhere are suggestive and intriguing, but cannot be considered at length here. See Whitman, *Comic Hero*, pp. 21-58, on the comic hero as the master of *ponéria* and as "grotesque"; pp. 139-140, on Socrates as *ponéros* and *alazôn*.

considered strictly for the evidence its comic objectification gives of elenchos as analyzed above in Chapter One. It will be argued that although Aristophanes' comic vision yields an elenchos disjointed and, because the interlocutor's perspective drags it onto the plane of the physical, largely ridiculous, the disjointed parts nonetheless give sufficient indication of Aristophanes' familiarity with the method. But this first requires a brief recapitulation of elenchos as analyzed in Chapter One: its procedure, its potential and tragic dimension, and the interlocutor's experience of it. It will then be shown that Aristophanes is aware of each of these aspects of elenchos. The comic poet, however, as would be expected, plays to his audience: he gives greatest play to the interlocutor's perspective of elenchos, and therefore parodies only the most conspicuous features of the procedure, while merely suggesting his familiarity with elenchos' proclaimed potential and uncommon attainment of that potential.

The procedure of elenchos, it will be recalled, shows a rapid departure from questions that seek to define an ethical principle, to seemingly unrelated questions whose answers, obvious and inescapable, establish minor premises. Interlocutors answer initial questions by giving particular action as definition, which is pronounced unsatisfactory
and subsequently revised. The initial definition, although formally abandoned, is informed by a system of beliefs to which the interlocutor cleaves tenaciously. These beliefs are never openly attacked, but are nonetheless in the end refuted. In establishing minor premises, Socrates elicits agreement by using sometimes these beliefs, sometimes common-sense interpretations of analogous everyday occurrences whose relation to his thesis the interlocutor cannot discern, but with whose interpretations the interlocutor cannot help but agree. Minor premises are in the end summed up to the preferred "indirect" form of refutation: a thesis is established that entails consequences repugnant to the interlocutor himself.

Elenchos, however, does not aim to achieve mere refutation. According to Plato, by bringing the interlocutor to aporia, a reversal of his initial claim to knowledge, elenchos can ideally lead the interlocutor to recognize his ignorance and to experience wonder, the beginning of philosophy. The interlocutor then, with Socrates as midwife at his side, ideally would be willing to endure the painful birthing of new ideas, and ultimately would be morally improved. But few interlocutors choose to withstand elenchos to its terminus, and therefore elenchos in Plato's early dialogues reveals a tragic dimension. Elenchos holds forth the promise of universals but fails at their definition. It fails because
its interlocutors do not have the moral fiber it takes to endure *elenchos*. Both epistemological success and moral improvement lie at *elenchos*’ end, but its true terminus cannot be reached by ordinary human beings. It takes an other-worldly creature like Socrates to endure its rigors.

The experience of *elenchos* is intolerable for many interlocutors; the reversal it devises—highly personal, unforeseen, and total—is thoroughly unsettling. The interlocutor’s emotional investment is assured by *elenchos*’ personal aspect: Socrates’ insistence that interlocutors never argue hypothetically. Socrates, however, in what has been termed irony or *elenchos*’ impersonal aspect, denies his own personal involvement: the *logos*, he claims, not he, does the refuting. But Socrates’ denial contradicts the interlocutor’s sense of what is happening, for his experience of *elenchos* becomes most unpleasant precisely at the point of summing up the minor premises, which the interlocutor cannot help but notice Socrates was the one to propose. Suspicion of Socrates grows as the interlocutor squirms at the prospect of having to abandon either common sense or the beliefs that inform his actions, beliefs he proclaims are held by all. Recalling his initial bravado concerning the consonance of his actions and beliefs, the interlocutor experiences his current recognition of ignorance as a total dislocation, which he sometimes describes as a numbing or dizziness. The sensation is
discomfitting, and the interlocutor is wont to accuse Socrates of practicing against him some sort of magic or of dealing with him in an underhanded way. The interlocutor regularly flees, unwilling to go forward with elenchos, which has revealed to him not only his ignorance, but his shame: he is shown to be morally deficient. The interlocutor's realization of his moral deficiency is facilitated by the paradoxes to which elenchos leads. Reformulating experience after the pattern of Socrates' analogies, the paradoxes look to ends rather than to means, join virtue with knowledge, and expose an end that is desired but unpursued. Elenchos is thus in one sense erotically attractive, for it reveals the end that is desired and yet just out of reach. The interlocutor, however, realizes that pursuing this end would require him to give up his previous beliefs, beliefs that the many are said to share. Abandoning these beliefs would make him just like Socrates, who is a "wonder" from the true philosopher's perspective, but from an "every man's" perspective, a first-class oddball. Elenchos is therefore in another sense repulsive, for it bares the interlocutor's unwillingness to be propelled away from the comforts of the familiar and the normal in pursuit of an end that he nonetheless agrees is desireable. The

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35See especially Nussbaum on Socrates' oddness, *Fragility*, p. 184 (quoted below, this section).
interlocutor's flight from Socrates' request to continue elenchos is understandable: he prefers to pursue--albeit now uneasily--actions in which he has invested his emotions, even actions whose informing popular beliefs have been soundly refuted. Elenchos promises the birth of truth and moral improvement, but these desired goals are lost to the interlocutor who is unwilling to pursue them. In the final analysis, elenchos attracts by what it promises and repels by what its uncompleted process demands, and these feelings of attraction and repulsion often get displaced onto Socrates.

As unlikely as it may at first seem, it can be argued that Aristophanes shows solid familiarity with elenchos as it is described above. Scholars have not infrequently called attention to aspects of elenchos evident in the Clouds. As early as 1966, Leo Strauss proposed that the contest between the two logoi, Right and Anti-Right, at Clouds 889 ff., is an elenchos of Right by Anti-Right; Martha Nussbaum has recently explored and

36 I follow the suggestion of Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 50 n. 15, in choosing these names for these characters, variously elsewhere termed "Right" and "Wrong" or "The Weaker/Just Argument" and "The Stronger/Unjust Argument." For designations in the ancient text, see Dover, Clouds, pp. lvii-lviii.

argued in favor of Strauss' proposal. It is wrong, however, to remove the context of the two logos from the context of the play and suggest that Aristophanes criticizes elenchos because of the effects of elenctic arguments in that scene on Strepsiades' relationship with his son; an analysis based on this acceptance renders the Clouds—as does Nussbaum's analysis—a gloomy piece preoccupied with serious intent, more concerned with criticism of Socrates' method than it is with comically playing up its superficial features. Instead, the whole play—Strepsiades' entire experience with Socrates and his school—can be argued to be elenchos from the interlocutor's perspective, but it must be admitted that the elenchos served up by such an analysis is comically disjointed. Such an analysis succeeds, however, in giving comic antidote to Nussbaum's dreary assessment of Aristophanes' purpose in writing the Clouds, and it likewise reveals that Aristophanes is quite familiar with the method's procedure, with its proclaimed but rarely realized potential, and with the elements of elenchos so disconcerting to Socrates' interlocutors.

That Aristophanes was familiar with the procedure of elenchos is evident when one takes Strepsiades' entire experience with Socrates' school as the whole of elenchos.

This is justifiable, for Strepsiades hardly ceases to be affected by Socrates' method after he is unceremoniously expelled at lines 789-790. To be sure, even Strepsiades' short tenure at the school shows some features of elenchos' procedure: Strepsiades' preliminary conversations with Socrates betray the customary rapid shift from matters of particular action with which the interlocutor is immediately concerned, to the realm of universals whose attempted definition betrays the interlocutor's beliefs. Strepsiades no sooner announces his desire to learn how to cheat his creditors (239-246) than he finds himself first being introduced to the only true gods, the Clouds (247-363), and subsequently involved in a discussion concerning the existence of Zeus (364-411). Just such a radical swing from the particular to the universal can be found, for example, in the beginning of the Euthyphro, where Euthyphro no sooner announces his intention to prosecute his father for impiety than he finds himself embroiled in a conversation about the gods (Euthyphro 2-6).

39Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," pp. 69-70, acknowledges that procedures of the Platonic Socrates are recognizable in the procedures of the Socrates of the Clouds, but she gives this acknowledgement little consideration: "Socrates is a midwife of ideas (136f.). He begins with the present situation and thoughts of his interlocutor (695) and reduces him to a state of aporia (cf. 702-5, 743-5) by teaching him the depth of his own ignorance (842). As Strepsiades says to his son, "(you will learn) as many things as are wise (sopha) among men; you will know yourself, how ignorant and thick you are' (841f.)."
Although it is true that it is not Socrates, but Strepsiades, who asks the questions in this scene, Strepsiades' questions are nonetheless indicative of the eagerness and sense of real doubt that surround questions in the early rounds of elenchos. Socrates, however, does offer proof for his points in the customary ways, by appeal to common sense and logic (Clouds, not Zeus, cause rain, which only occurs when the sky is cloudy, 369-371; Zeus doesn't cause lightning, as is evidenced by the fact that perjurers escape lightning bolts while innocent shrines and oaks are destroyed, 398-402), and by analogy to mundane and readily recognizable experience (thunder's rumbling in full clouds is analogous to stomach gas caused by food consumed at a festival, 385-393). The scene ends with one of elenchos' familiar features, the interlocutor's revision of the way things are: Strepsiades is now convinced that Zeus' potency has been usurped by the Clouds and that his throne has been taken by Dinos, "Revolution." What this scene gives, then, is an

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40 Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 74 n. 64, cites lines 385 ff. as a "use of earthy examples" characteristic of Socratic elenchos, while referring the reader—mistakenly, it seems—to lines 314, 340, and 342 as examples of Socrates' "practice of arguing by illustration and analogy."

41 Reckford's translation, "Father-Beating," p. 92. Peter Green, "Strepsiades, Socrates and the Abuses of Intellectualism," GRBS 20 (1979; hereafter Green, "Strepsiades"), p. 18, argues that dinos, as "vortex," was a notion familiar to Aristophanes' audience from the thought of the pre-Socratics, and that Strepsiades'
objectification of two parts of elenchos' procedure: Socrates' leading the interlocutor from the particular to the universal, and his eliciting agreement to minor premises that will later have a telling impact on the interlocutor's initial position. The significance of Strepsiades' compliance with these minor premises, which now seem to have no relation to his assurance that defaulting his debts will solve his problems, will come home to roost for him—and then quite literally—only later in the play when all premises are summed up by his cockily brazen and truly revolting son.

The second scene between Socrates and his aged pupil (627-790) shows Socrates in his more accustomed procedural role as questioner, and vividly portrays elenchos' fluctuations between seemingly unrelated issues and the interlocutor's intended action. Socrates first proposes that Strepsiades be taught measures or rhythms (639) and later undertakes to teach his dull-witted student the rudiments of grammar (658 ff.), but Strepsiades rigorously objects that these subjects have no discernible bearing on

personification of dinos would cause the audience to snicker at the old man, who cannot conceptualize the abstract, but instead opts for anthropomorphism. Similarly, Green points out (p. 19), the Cloud-chorus, to Strepsiades' mind, must either be composed of real clouds or real women. For dinos as borrowed from natural Philosophers and Dinos as a pun on "Zeus" in the oblique cases, see J. Ferguson, "Δίνος on the Stage," CJ 68 (1973), pp. 377-380, and "Δίνος in Aristophanes and Euripides," CJ 74 (1979), pp. 356-359.
the matter that concerns him:

What good will rhythms do me in getting my bread and cheese? (648) . . . But I don't want to learn any of these things, you dreary man! (654-655) . . . Why must I learn things that we all know? (693) . . . You've heard a thousand times what I want! About my debts, how I can welch out of them! (737--738).

Strepsiades' exasperation is that of the pre-literate, vainly trying to follow Socrates' radical divergences in elenchos from the particular and the concrete to the universal and abstract. Aristophanes in this scene reduces this feature of elenchos' procedure to delightful absurdity, for in fact Strepsiades' perception is right: Socrates' divergences not only seem irrelevant, they actually are totally irrelevant.42

In the Platonic dialogues, where divergences always betray their relevance at elenchos' terminus, interlocutors express a similar impatience at Socrates' choices of subjects, whose significance to the conversation they can in no way fathom. Callicles, for example, quickly becomes

42This is not the case, however, with the secondary premises pertaining to the gods in the preliminary scene; see below, this section. Green, "Strepsiades," pp. 17-20, points out that Strepsiades, who is "anti-conceptual" and "utilitarian," in vain tries to make Socrates' instruction relevant: "Strepsiades is not a plain fool; he is fundamentally old-fashioned, and as such evinces archaic thought-processes which tend, inevitably, towards the specific, concrete and physical. When any verbal ambiguity arises, Strepsiades will always pick a practical interpretation, preferably--since he is also a country peasant--connected with money, food or sex." For this reason, Green continues, talk of "measures" and "rhythm" turn Strepsiades' thoughts to the sale of grain and to sex, respectively, rather than to music.
intolerant:

You're talking about meats and drinks and doctors and other gibberish; I'm not talking about these things. . . . What's this about cloaks? . . . What's this about shoes? You persist in talking nonsense. . . . I swear, you really never stop talking about cobbler's and fullers and cooks and doctors, as if this had anything to do with our argument. (Gorgias 490-491).

To the interlocutor in elenchos, whether he be Callicles or Strepsiades, Socrates' procedure of drawing analogy in establishing minor premises and thus raising discussion of seemingly unrelated issues makes Socrates appear to be a babbling lunatic. And so it happens that in the text of Aristophanes Socrates is called the "high-priest of most subtle nonsense" by the Cloud-chorus (λεπτοτάτων λήρων ήρευ, 359), and that Socrates prays to "tongue" (424), and that Strepsiades in the end alleges he was deranged by Socrates' prattle (ἐμοῦ παρανοησαντος ἀδόλεσχη, 1480).

Similarly, in Plato's text, by drawing analogies whose significance the interlocutor does not see, Socrates appears to be concerned only with irrelevant minutiae.

Witness further complaints of Callicles in Gorgias:

This is always the way Socrates is, Gorgias; he asks about and puts to proof small and worthless things (ομικρὰ καὶ ὀλίγου ἄξια). . . . You go ahead, then, [Socrates], ask about these small and

43Cf. Alcibiades at Symposium 221e: "He talks about pack-asses and smiths and cobbler's and curriers, and he always seems to say the same things about the same things, so that any inexperienced or foolish man would laugh at his words."
In the Clouds, then, we see elenchos' practitioner, Socrates, as a man whose interests are confined to things of diminutive proportion, things normally considered insignificant: splinters (130), flea feet (144 ff., cf. 831), gnat guts (156 ff.). Indeed, the byword for Socrates' concerns and practices in the Clouds is λεπτός, something ground down to its finest form (153, 230, 320, 359, 741; cf. 177-179, where Socrates sprinkles λεπτήν τέφραν, "fine ash," on a table and feigns a geometrical experiment to cover his filching a cloak,44 and 260, where Socrates promises that Strepsiades under his tutelage will become παίπάλη, "the finest flour").45

Socrates' discussions of seemingly extraneous topics in the Clouds are the comic representation of analogies regularly used in elenchos to establish the minor premises that, when added together, will ultimately refute the interlocutor's position. And it is through their agency that the interlocutor's ignorance becomes manifest.

44 See below, this section, for thievery as the comic representation of elenchos' ability to befuddle.

45 For the evidence on λεπτός as subtle, see the note on line 153 in Dover, Clouds; cf. also his notes at line 320, where he cites Gorgias 497c for evidence on the meaning of σενολεσχείν, and at line 130, where he cites Hippias Major 304a for a complaint against the triviality of Socrates' argument.
Strepsiades' tenure at the school ends abruptly when Socrates loses patience with the old man's stupidity (789-790) and ousts him. This forces Strepsiades to take his son in hand and send him, despite his protestations, to Socrates' school. And while Socrates may be finished with Strepsiades, elenchos hardly is: Strepsiades has yet to be brought at least temporarily to his knees and to the procedure's customary end when his cheeky brat of a son comes home "educated" in the way the old man requested but never fully envisioned.

Strepsiades, however, has no inkling that he is still in the clutches of elenchos; that the minor premises to which he formerly agreed are waiting to be added up with others by his son. Strepsiades never envisioned that having his son educated by Socrates to cheat his creditors would entail something emotionally unacceptable. Upon the return of his son, therefore, Strepsiades brings his intended action to effect on stage (1213-1302). And, as Nancy Sherman has pointed out, Strepsiades' confident confutation of the creditors is a parody of Socratic

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46The disassociation of Socrates from elenchos may be Aristophanes' representation of elenchos' "impersonal aspect" (Chapter One, Part Three); see below, this section.

47The contest between Right and Anti-Right, which comes between Strepsiades' ejection and Pheidippides' return home, is an objectification more of what may be called elenchos' character than of its procedure per se, and will be considered below.
questioning: at 1286, his gleefully impudent retort, "τόῦτο ὁ ἔσθον, ὁ τόκος, τί θηρίον;" recalls the "what is x?" question posed by Socrates in elenchos; at 1289, his confident "καλῶς λέγεις" is a stock Socratic reply. His joy is short-lived, however, for he is no sooner shrift of the agony his creditors have caused him than he is visited upon by the agony of being beaten by his own son. As Reckford notes, Strepsiades begins the play with the same ιοὺ he cries here at line 1321. There he called on Zeus in his distress, but Zeus is no longer in power, by Strepsiades' own repeated and willing admission (424-425, 827, 1240-1241). Strepsiades is now treated once again to the elenctic procedure of drawing analogies to establish minor premises, and is conclusively shown, in the adding up of all minor premises, how truly revolting can be the reign of the new god he previously acknowledged, Dinos, "Revolution."

The old man first gives an accounting of what went on

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inside (1353-1390), and Reckford's description of the scene is so delightful as to bear repeating: "It happens all the time. The son comes home from college; the proud father kills a fatted calf, all is good cheer; but eventually, from some trivial point, a heated discussion arises, tempers flare, a frightful hostility is bared." 50 Although Strepsiades' first inclination is to try in vain to call back Zeus along with the debt-inducing horse habits of his son (1406-1407), there is no turning back in elenchos once one has stated one's true opinion and agreed to minor premises. Strepsiades has no choice but to hear his son out.

Pheidippides argues—not as much like a sophist 51


51 The intent of this chapter is not to deny any similarity between Socratic and sophistic argumentation—Plato's special care in making distinctions between his own dialectic and sophistic argumentation (e.g., Sophist 225) indicates he is not defending against straw men. Even in modern critical discussion of the undeniable similarities between elenchos and the methods used by rhetoricians in general and the sophists in particular, however, one may find the insistence upon distinction. See, e.g., G. E. R. Lloyd, Magic, Reason and Experience: Studies in the Origin and Development of Greek Science (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 86 and 252-254; de Romilly, Magic (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 36-37. Lloyd argues (p. 86) that "Socrates' distinctive contribution was to turn the searchlight of his scrutiny on current moral and political assumptions to expose—as he saw it—their shallowness and incoherence." According to de Romilly, sophistic "magic" differs in kind from that of Socrates: "Whereas the magic of the sophists aimed at producing illusion, Socrates' magic rests on the obstinate destruction of all illusions. It is the magic of implacable truth . . . " (pp. 36-37). For the widespread use of sophistical antithesis in the Periclean Age, see
as like Socrates in elenchos—that it is right for him to
beat his father. In this scene, Aristophanes parodies
Socrates' habit of drawing analogies that look to ends
rather than to means, as well as the interlocutor's fatal
reliance on commonly accepted wisdom: Pheidippides first
argues from analogy of benefit\textsuperscript{52} to beaten sons that

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The intent of this chapter is instead to argue for
Aristophanes' familiarity with Socratic elenchos.
Pheidippides' argument, whether or not one may discern in
it standard sophistic tacks, can nonetheless likewise be
argued to reveal aspects undeniably Socratic. See the
following note and Havelock, "Socratic Problem," pp. 169-
170.

52Strepsiades readily admits having beaten
Pheidippides, defending the act by his claim, "I meant the
best and cared for you (ἐγωγε σ', εὖνοων τε και κηδόμενος, 1409)." For Socrates' habitual
argument from analogies to technai, which look to ends
rather than means, see above, Chapter One, Part Three. See
also, e.g., Euthyphro 13-15 for arguments from benefit.
The sophists, especially Antiphon, argued from
expedience or self-interest, τὸ συμφέρον, which
could likewise be translated as "benefit." The difference
between this and Socrates' argument from benefit, at least
as it is presented in Euthyphro, is that Socrates
understands benefit as therapeutic in a holistic sense; for
humans this means it is synonymous with moral improvement
and care of the soul (as at Apology 29e). Such tender
nurture is what both Strepsiades and Pheidippides
profess here. Sophistic "benefit" breaks down into
something much less laudable and more obviously self-
serving, something we would rather term expediency. For
sophistic expediency as cold-blooded opportunism, see John
H. Finley, Jr., Thucydides (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ.
Press, 1942; reprint ed., Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan
Press, 1963; hereafter Finley, Thucydides), pp. 51-54,
209, and 227.

Even if one were able to defend Pheidippides'
argumentation here as more sophistic than Socratic, the
elenctic progression of the Clouds in its entirety still
argues for Aristophanes' familiarity with Socratic
elenchos. It must be remembered that even in Plato's
beating benefits fathers, and bolsters his argument with popularized belief (1407-1419). Then, by analogy to cocks, Pheidippides reiterates his position, and confidently cites the great analogy-drawer himself, Socrates, as ultimate arbiter when his father gets off a plucky reply (1427-1432). Pot-shots are the defense of the truly desperate, and Strepsiades is clearly in their number. The answers to the questions his son poses are those familiar from the later stages of elenchos— they are both obvious and inescapable—and in addition, the conclusion that a father should be beaten by his son is a predictable aspect of the new reign of "Revolution," whom Strepsiades himself, in his eagerness to learn how to default his debts, readily agreed had dethroned Zeus. Strepsiades cannot now help but acknowledge that Pheidippides was right to beat him: "Gee, friends, it looks to me like he's got a point; even to me what's reasonable strikes an accord with these things he says. It's only fair that we should be beaten if we don't do right." (1437-1439).

We may be surprised that Strepsiades would acquiesce to being beaten, but it must be remembered that he has a lot at stake. A few blows at the hands of his son perhaps can be considered a small price when compared to the debts he has cancelled under the reign of Dinos. Furthermore,
the old man's acquiescence to the beating puts him squarely in the company of interlocutors in *elenchos*, who readily accept and refuse to abandon minor premises which embrace and thus do not challenge their beliefs.

When, however, Pheidippides subsequently uses the recently established minor premises to defend beating his mother, he takes Strepsiades to what in the early dialogues is the *terminus of* *elenchos*' procedure: to indirect refutation, the establishment of a thesis entailing consequences repugnant to the interlocutor himself. Strepsiades ostensibly has what he claimed he wanted: a son who can cheat his father's creditors. Alas, he never realized that this son would also be capable of beating his own mother. Strepsiades chooses to stop *elenchos* dead in its tracks: if this intolerable position can be argued, clearly something is wrong with the whole argument. Incredulity and repugnance are manifest in Strepsiades' reaction to his son's suggestion:

> What are you saying? What's that you say? Now this is far worse than the other. . . . What's next? If you can argue this, I'll tell you what's next: there's nothing stopping you from throwing yourself off a cliff--you, and Socrates, and that weaker argument with you! (1448-1451).

Strepsiades is appalled at the thesis that has just been established; he would rather put Zeus back on the throne--Zeus whose reign would bring back punishment of perjurers like Strepsiades himself (cf. 396 ff. and 1232)--than admit to the revolting realities of the reign of
But once one has stepped into the whirlwind of elenchos, return to the old world is nearly impossible, for the beliefs that buttressed that world have been overturned. And so Strepsiades, like so many interlocutors before him, seeks escape from Socrates and the method that has brought forth a thesis that seems both repugnant and yet incontrovertible. The drastic solution of burning the school can be viewed as an exercise of the comic hero's imperative: although Strepsiades, like any interlocutor, has been refuted and cannot return with comfort to his old world, we nonetheless cannot expect him, like Euthyphro and other refuted interlocutors, to slink off mumbling flimsy excuses. Such a retreat is unthinkable for any self-respecting comic hero. As Reckford puts it,

... we know perfectly well that a good clown (think of Laurel and Hardy) is never really hurt. More important, he can't be kept down for very long. Strepsiades' theme-note emerged in the first scene: "I may have fallen, but I won't just lie here." He always bounces back, like a large rubber ball or Bobo. Knock him down, and he will rise again; murder him, and his death, like Falstaff's, will prove only another "counterfeit."53

Strepsiades' own explanation for his behavior, however, gives compelling testimony of Aristophanes' familiarity with one of the features of elenchos that Plato maintained was necessary for moving the interlocutor toward

53Reckford, "Father-Beating," p. 96; cf. F. D. Harvey, "Nubes 1493 ff.,” p. 339: "people do not get killed in Old Comedy. Insulted, humiliated, beaten, yes; threatened with death . . . ; even . . . wounded; but not killed."
the ultimate goals of the birth of truth and moral improvement, for the conflagration brings a pointed comic justice to bear on the first step toward attaining that potential: reversal. "The Clouds is full of inversions, as well as reversals . . .," Reckford proclaims;\textsuperscript{54} clearly the most memorable is Strepsiades' hoisting of Socrates with his own petard: "Mr. Twister" goes from passive object to active subject as he takes torch in hand and puts the heat on Socrates. What in the world is he doing? Only throwing into reverse the one who has so fully reversed him, as is clear from Strepsiades' brazen, bawling replies to the cries and queries of Socrates' students and of the master himself:

Oh! Oh! (ιού ιού) . . . What are you doing, man? --What am I doing? Nothing but arguing the splinters (διαλεπτολογούμαι) out of the beams of your house! --Argh! Who's minding the fire put to our house? --The same guy you stole the cloak from! . . . --You there, up on the roof! What are you doing? --I'm walking on air, and putting the sun under circumspection. (ἀεροβατῶ, καὶ περιστρωνῷ τὸν ἥλιον.) (1493-1503).

Strepsiades now causes someone to cry ιού ιού, Strepsiades, whose own recent ιού announced the reversal of the his ill-considered solution for what in the play's opening moments had originally elicited ιού ιού from him--his son's racing debts. Similarly, Strepsiades, the one pulverized to finest flour by Socrates, master of λεπτός and

\textsuperscript{54}Reckford, "Father-Beating," p. 102.
scholar of splinters, now turns the figurative
literal as he reduces the roof of the school to its
finest form, splinters and ash. Strepsiades' repetition of
Socrates' opening salutation—as the master was lowered to
the stage with all the majesty of a god—puts Socrates on
notice that he is getting exactly what he dished out, and
ex machina to boot, as if Strepsiades the reverser is
himself becoming a new god, the successor to the so-
recently-enthroned Dinos. Strepsiades the perjurer now
becomes the defender of the gods he himself so readily cast
aside in defense of his swindling ways. Like an angel from
Zeus, who incinerates perjurers with his lightning bolt
(394-397), Strepsiades brings fire from on high to destroy
those who would insult and cast aside the gods. He reduces
to ashes those who through their teaching reduced heaven to
a stove and its inhabitants to ashes (95-97). In
good comic fashion, Strepsiades conquers by returning tit
for tat: reversal for reversal.

For Strepsiades has suffered a profound reversal:

55 Strepsiades' persistence in making the abstract
concrete defines him as a true pre-literate. See Green,
"Strepsiades," especially pp. 16-22.

56 Arrowsmith, in his translation of the Clouds,
suggests that Strepsiades' burning of the thinkery is a
return to the metaphor of the universe as a charcoal oven
(95-97). As such, it could be seen as another aspect of
Strepsiades' reversal of Socrates. See Aristophanes, The
Clouds, transl. William Arrowsmith (New York: New
136-137.
originally so intent on swindling others, he now identifies himself solely as the one swindled of a cloak. Initially so determined that sending his son to Socrates' school was the ideal solution for his debts, Strepsiades was treated to a dramatic exhibition of exactly what having such a son in one's home entails, for his son's education, which granted Strepsiades the impunity to threaten and beat his creditors (1256-1258, 1299-1300), also granted Pheidippides the impunity to beat his father, and--what was to Strepsiades unendurable--the audacity to propose beating his mother.

Elenchos' reversal regularly is, according to Plato, closely attended by recognition, and Aristophanes likewise shows that he is familiar with this feature of elenchos. Strepsiades is brought to a blatant, comic twist on the recognition of ignorance familiar from Plato's defenses of the method. In Plato's dialogues, the interlocutor's ignorance is not openly confronted; instead the interlocutor slowly begins on his own to sense his drift from knowing, and terms it aporia. In the Clouds, Aristophanes does signal familiarity with aporia.57

57 Socrates twice uses words with the stem apor-: at 629, he labels Strepsiades "lost" (ἀπορος); at 743 he tells Strepsiades to abandon any thoughts in respect to which "you should find yourself at a loss" (ἀπορης). At 702, the Chorus encourages nimbleness in Strepsiades should he fall "into loss" (εἰς ἀπορον); cf., however, 629, where the Chorus uses ἀπορον in a context clearly unrelated to elenchos.
but he shows, as should be expected, no subtlety or dainty restraint in presenting the interlocutor's dawning awareness of his own ignorance. The student who answers the door of the Thinkery rudely christens Strepsiades "stupid" (ἀμαθός, 135); Socrates repeatedly curses the old man's ignorance, and this happens, tellingly, with the greatest frequency in the scene at 627-790, where the shift is radical from the irrelevant issues of measures, rhythms, and grammar to the direct consideration of Strepsiades' affairs:

I have never seen such a bumpkin, nor one so lost (ἀπωρος), stupid, and absent-minded. (628-629) . . . You are clownish and gauche. (655) . . . Perish, wretch! (726) . . . Why don't you die and go to hell, you extremely absent-minded, inordinately stupid old coot? (789-790).

After this abrupt expulsion, Strepsiades, down but never out, determines to coerce his son Pheidippides into attending Socrates' school: "You will know yourself," Strepsiades reassures his son, "how stupid and thick you are." (842). Strepsiades naively assumes that Pheidippides' lessons will have the same result for son as

58 For a defense of Strepsiades' understanding as representative of that of the popular fifth century B.C. Athenian mind, which tended toward the literal and the physical rather than the metaphorical and the abstract, see Leonard Woodbury, "Strepsiades' Understanding: Five Notes on the Clouds," Phoenix 34 (1980), pp. 108-127.

they had for father, that Pheidippides will likewise discover his own ignorance. But Pheidippides will learn no such thing, for he is not the interlocutor in this comic elenchos, and the procedure is not to benefit him, but instead is reserved for the benefit of his father, the only true interlocutor in the Clouds.60 Strepsiades is not, however, merely an interlocutor. He is first and foremost a comic hero.

After his reversal and recognition should ideally come, if Plato's claims concerning elenchos are correct, katharsis of false beliefs and the birth of truth for Strepsiades. But, as was argued in Chapter One, these features of elenchos are not seen in the early dialogues, and it has been suggested that the idea of purgation as well as the midwife metaphor may be Platonic invention.61 It is perhaps, then, not surprising that Aristophanes gives evidence only suggestive of his familiarity with either of these features in the Clouds.

60Pheidippides is never shown in the role of interlocutor, and it may be that Aristophanes' care in concealing the boy's tutelage under Socrates is directed precisely to the point of establishing Strepsiades as sole interlocutor. Dover, Clouds, p. xciv n. 2, proposes that Pheidippides' tutelage would merely duplicate that of his father, and for this reason Aristophanes wisely omits a superfluous and potentially boring scene. Rosemary M. Harriott, Aristophanes: Poet & Dramatist (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986; hereafter Harriott, Aristophanes), p. 185, suggests that Pheidippides' conceit would have ruined the comic possibilities of the scene in the school.

61Burnyeat, "Midwifery," pp. 7-16.
The scene of Strepsiades' initiation (254 ff.) may have in it a hint of katharsis in the sense of "purification": Strepsiades is dusted with flour (260-262), commonly used on initiates into the mysteries in the process of their compulsory purification. A similarly slight reference, it has long been argued, is made to the midwife metaphor at line 137, where one of Socrates' students, who uses terminology reminiscent of that used at Theaetetus 149, accuses Strepsiades of causing miscarriage of a thought (φροντίδας ἐζήμβωκας ἓξηρημένην; see also Strepsiades' repetition at 139). K. J. Dover implies that the late and sole appearance of this metaphor in Plato marks it as Platonic rather than Socratic invention. This consideration, when combined with the few allusions to other authentic Platonic terminology in the Clouds, and the widely spread metaphorical use of τίκτειν and

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62 See Dover's notes, Clouds, lines 254 and 256, for bibliography and commentary.


64 Dover, Clouds, pp. xlii-xliv.

leads Dover to consider it implausible to accept *Clouds* 137 as an allusion to a metaphor employed by Socrates. And yet while both Dover's and A. E. Taylor's discussions of this possible allusion refer to a comparable metaphorical use of birthing terminology in the earlier *Symposium*, where Socrates tells of Diotima's description of the intent behind philosophical inquiry as a "birth in beauty" (τόκος ἐν καλῷ, *Symposium* 206c), neither remarks that Aristophanes in the *Clouds* uses this very birthing terminology to suggest the transformation afforded Strepsiades by his experience with elenchos.

A pun reveals the disparity between what Strepsiades falsely assumes is his paramount concern, and what Socrates treats and elenchos shows Strepsiades is his proper interest: τόκος, which can mean "interest" on money owed, or "birth," or "offspring." For Strepsiades, 

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66 Pace Taylor, *Varia*, p. 148: "In a language so chary of its metaphors as the Attic of the fifth century, such an expression [φροντιδ' ἐξημβλώκας εξημτηρεύειν] is more vigorous and unnatural than it would, unfortunately, be in a language like our own, which has been debased by the journalistic style of which the abuse of metaphor and the inability to say a simple thing in simple words are so familiar a symptom."


68 *LSJ*, s.v. Dover, *Clouds*, p. 234, commenting on τόκοι τόκων at line 1156, notes, "There is good word-play here (as in Pl. R. 506E-507A) on τόκος in its ordinary sense 'interest' and its poetic sense 'child'," but takes the suggestion no further. That
τόκος always means "interest" on money owed (see Clouds 18, 34, 240, 739, 747, 1156, 1285, 1286). It is, however, evident that Strepsiades' "offspring" Pheidippides, an irresponsible, lazy brat, is the true cause of Strepsiades' problems, and should be the old man's real "interest," not the money he owes on his son's behalf.69 Socrates, however, ignores Strepsiades' concern over money, and treats him instead as if he is in need of a personal re-"birth," by insisting upon Strepsiades' initiation, which will ostensibly allow him to join the company of the wise "souls" who populate Socrates' school.70 And, as Reckford has shown, in the scene between Strepsiades and his son, the old man is again

the pun occurs in Plato is intriguing, to say the least; discussion in the Republic is on the "offspring of the good." For the word elsewhere in Aristophanes, cf. Thesmophoriazusae 843 and 845; Lysistrata 742 and 754.

69Dover, Clouds, pp. 97-98 at line 34, argues that τόκος in Strepsiades' situation does not mean merely "interest"; instead, it refers to securities to be taken as a substitute for interest due. If he is right, Strepsiades in fact willingly gives up as security his true τόκος, his only son.

70Green, "Strepsiades," pp. 15-16, sees in the Clouds' references to the mysteries evidence for defining Strepsiades as "the classic ἄμουσος, the "non-intellectual" described at Theaetetus 155e and Sophist 246a-b and 259e. A. W. H. Adkins, "Clouds, Mysteries, Socrates and Plato," Antichthon 4 (1970), pp. 13-24, argues that Aristophanes in the Clouds deliberately ridicules Socrates' habit of using the language of initiation into the mysteries. See the note on line 143 in Dover, Clouds, for a brief summary of Socrates' metaphorical use of initiation into the mysteries. For psyche in the Clouds as indicative of Aristophanes' awareness of Socrates' doctrine of the soul, see Havelock, "Socratic Self," pp. 1-18.
re-" born" as the " offspring" who must now, for his own
good, be beaten. 71 When it is suggested that
strepsiades must, with childlike impotence, submit to the
intolerable beating of his wife at the hands of his son,
the elenctically induced re-" birth" is finally rejected.
The focus of Strepsiades' concern suddenly changes from
"interest" to his " offspring's" unendurable moral demise,
and he determines, in good comic fashion, to get the upper
hand over those whom he deems responsible: Socrates and
his school.

What is being argued, then, is that by extending a pun
on the word τόκος through the use of the motif of
rebirth of Strepsiades as offspring, Aristophanes subtly
suggests that Strepsiades, in his experience with Socratic
elenchos, is encouraged to bring to birth a truth, and
himself is in some fashion "reborn." Socrates' insistence
that Strepsiades take to bed as he undergoes the most
rigorous part of his elenchos makes sense if we understand
that Socrates intends him to be at "labor"--although
Strepsiades takes advantage of the opportunity by
masturbating. 72

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that in the course of
the play the old man at the very least undergoes a change

71 Reckford, "Father-Beating," pp. 101 ff., is excellent on the ironies of Strepsiades' rejuvenation.

72 See Dover, Clouds, p. 191 at line 734.
of heart. At the play's terminus Strepsiades, formerly so eager to swindle and so ready to abandon even his lip service belief in the gods, suddenly decides that those who taught him and his son to swindle must be destroyed, suddenly realizes with great clarity that the gods must not be dishonored and spurned (1476-1477; 1506-1509). The old man takes the control that is his birthright as a comic hero, and gives an alarmingly effective display of his regained potency as father. Whether or not he realizes it, whatever his intentions, and regardless of the fact that he has perhaps misplaced the prime cause for his son's degeneracy upon those he himself willfully employed for just such a purpose, Strepsiades has nonetheless taken one step away from his former misplaced "interest."

Strepsiades now is capable of taking action (undoubtedly vicious, probably vain, perhaps too late) that for the first time shows at least some concern over the progressive moral decline of his "offspring" Pheidippides, who from the beginning, like his father, showed an appalling lack of moral fiber.\(^73\)

We would be disappointed, however, if Aristophanes polluted his comedy with the actual moral improvement of its hero; Strepsiades must, after all, continue to be the rogue and, in the end, get the upper hand. But the play

does not, as Nussbaum contends, end on a "note of anguish," nor is Strepsiades' burning of the school meant to be taken as the old man's attempt "to reassert the lost authority of nomos by committing what would be, by any nomoi, a horrible crime." The gleefully set conflagration is, as has been argued, the comically appropriate reversal Socrates so deserves—but it may be more. It may be that the birth of truth afforded the old man by elenchos is suggested by Aristophanes' use of light imagery, perhaps even in antiquity an already hackneyed symbol of knowledge. The blaze from the torches Strepsiades and his slave wield at the play's end give glaring contrast to the play's beginning, where the old man's meager financial and intellectual resources were shown by his slave's inability to sustain one lamp's flame. Whereas Strepsiades at the play's beginning found himself totally in the dark, he now, after his experience with elenchos, is surrounded by light. Of course Strepsiades' act would be appalling in real life, and is the stuff of which tragedy could be made. But this is no tragedy, it is comedy: no corpse is trundled out of this conflagration. Socrates was not burned in this fire, but tried and put to death nearly a quarter of a century later at the hands of those who could no longer endure their elenchos-wielding gadfly.

It has been argued, then, that Aristophanes in the

Ciouds gives subtle evidence of his familiarity with Socrates' profession as midwife of truth, and perhaps even hints at elenchos' possibility for affording moral improvement. And while it must be admitted that the subtlety of such a device could easily be lost on an audience, Havelock rightly points out that Aristophanes' own lament in the play's second parabasis (510-626) indicates that the comic poet considered his first Ciouds quite sophisticated and subtle.75 Aristophanes claims that many of what he considered the play's finer aspects were overlooked by an audience that did not meet his expectations. He denies--humorously intended false boasts of avoiding cheap shots not to the contrary--that his current revision is any less subtle; in fact, he seems instead to challenge his audience to rise, this time, to the occasion.76

Still, it must be acknowledged that Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates admits of some morally questionable elements. In our eagerness to show Aristophanes' familiarity with Socrates and his method, the disparity between the Socrates of the Ciouds and the Socrates of


76See Dover, Ciouds, pp. lxxx-xcviii, for evidence on the two versions of the play, which need not be considered in this study.
Plato's early dialogues cannot be overlooked, for it is a disparity that scholars have found quite disturbing. Kenneth Reckford deems it understandable that modern scholars and teachers find unenjoyable the characterization of Socrates, "a patron saint of philosophers and intellectuals," as "an archvillain and imposter, a practitioner of scientific humbug, and the enemy of religion, morality, and good old-fashioned education generally." Nussbaum similarly remarks on the discrepancy between the Socrates in Aristophanes and the one in Plato:

Plato's Socrates tirelessly exhorts those he meets—whether citizens or sophists—to pursue virtue and the health of the soul rather than worldly success. The Aristophanic teacher helps students trick their creditors, win court cases, gain fame and power; he says nothing about virtue or the soul.

It should be noted that Nussbaum's observation contains a shift: what Plato's Socrates exhorts is contrasted with that which Aristophanes' Socrates accomplishes. The contrast, in short, is between the intended goal of elenchos and its actual effect. In Chapter One it was argued that, even in the dialogues of Plato, there is a discrepancy between what elenchos proclaims as intent and what it is seen to effect. For all the reader of Plato's earlier dialogues is able to see, the

77 Reckford, Old-and-New, p. 392.
moral improvement at which elenchos aims was lost on the likes of Meno, Euthyphro, and Alcibiades.79 With the exception of the later Theaetetus80 and the perpetually silent Plato, one is hard pressed to come up with names of those who can be considered unqualified successes.

Martha Nussbaum in fact argues that the Clouds is in large part concerned with offering acute criticism of Socratic education through elenchos, a criticism which "current comfortable acceptance, even adulation" of Socrates and his method—both of which, she notes, were, as late as the nineteenth century, still considered potentially subversive and dangerously negative—finds unacceptable. Nussbaum claims that the Clouds' assimilation of Socrates to the sophists and other of his contemporaries "suggests an interesting criticism of [Socrates'] thought" which "anticipates the main lines along which Plato, in the Republic, modifies the Socratic program of moral education."81

79 See Seeskin, Dialogue, especially pp. 3, 6, and 125-132, for the discrepancy between the type of character elenchos demands and the character of early interlocutors, and for the method's limited salutary effect.

80 I. F. Stone, The Trial of Socrates (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1988), p. 72, brands Theaetetus "... the least wide-awake of all the submissive yes-men given Socrates in the Platonic canon."

81 Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," pp. 44-45 and 50. Nussbaum's discussion of Plato's modifications of Socratic education in the Republic (pp. 79 ff.) offers compelling support for her thesis but cannot be considered here.
Nussbaum's assessment, however, is based on her assertion that the contest between the two logoi constitutes an elenchos in its entirety. The acuity of many of her observations on that contest will be acknowledged below; here, however, it must be recognized that concentrating only on that part of the elenchos found in the Clouds' contest of the logoi not only allows room for misrepresentation of Aristophanes' intent in depicting the method, it likewise yields a Clouds that is painfully humorless if philosophically perspicacious. To be sure, the negative aspects of Aristophanes' depiction could be defended as comic in the sense that comedy deals with the conspicuous, and nothing is more conspicuous than elenchos' potential for failure of its intent. But if Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates as the slimy, morally irresponsible sophist is taken as serious criticism, the play once more becomes quite dreary.82 This study, however, aims to defend Aristophanes' depiction not only as comic, but to restore the play as one meant to be considered good fun; it therefore becomes otiose to reduce Aristophanes in the very process of this defense to such a dour, if nonetheless

82 Even Nussbaum seems to recognize that her assessment has taken the play too far out of the realm of the comic; see "Practical Wisdom," pp. 78-79, for her suggestion, which she immediately rejects, that Aristophanes may hint at the play's close that young Pheidippides' life is lost in the conflagration. Cf. Kopff, "Nubes 1493 ff.," pp. 113-122.
potentially accurate, critic of Socrates.83

It should further be noted that Nussbaum's assessment depends heavily on the supposition that Aristophanes' comedy shows little awareness of the possibility of moral improvement that *elenchos* claims to offer. But is this in fact the case? It has already been claimed that Socrates' treatment of Strepsiades as a potential initiate, one in need of rebirth, hints at Aristophanes' awareness of *elenchos*' potential for moral improvement of its interlocutors. Such a claim gains support from Eric Havelock's 1972 article, "The Socratic Self as it is Parodied in Aristophanes' *Clouds.*"84

Havelock claims that the *Clouds* betrays Aristophanes' familiarity with Socrates' "doctrine of the soul," i.e., Socrates' belief, as reported by Plato in the *Apology*, that

83Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," especially pp. 79 ff., suggests, as was noted above, that Aristophanes' conflation of Socrates with the Sophists is part of his pointed criticism of *elenchos* and its practitioner. It could be argued with Nussbaum, then, that Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates is comic genius again at work, an intentional exaggeration in characterization which serves to illustrate in no dainty fashion the tragic dimension of a method that fails of its potential, much as the blatant ridicule of Strepsiades' stupidity was claimed above to be the comic representation of the interlocutor's growing sense of uncertainty. Nussbaum is perceptive in identifying many of the play's elenctic aspects, and her observations will be used below. Nussbaum fails to consider, however, that the negative aspects of Aristophanes' depiction could be anything other than the comic poet's own reservations about *elenchos*. This study will argue that these aspects represent the view of the admittedly befuddled and exasperated interlocutor.

84*YCS* 27 (1972), pp. 1-18.
everyone's first priorities should be thinking, truth, and the improvement of one's ψυχή. By analyzing passages from the Apology, Havelock marshals impressive verbal evidence in support of his thesis. He argues that the doctrine is represented in the Apology primarily by the recurrence of certain "think-words" that take as their objects either psychē, "soul/ghost," or the reflexive pronoun. The interchanging use of psychē with that of the reflexive pronoun in the Apology suggests, Havelock contends, that Socrates used the noun psychē in what must have been for his contemporaries a startling new sense: to mean "self." 85

Havelock notes that the Clouds admits of occurrence of "think-words" in formidable numbers, and calls attention both to incidents where these words are paired with reflexive pronouns as their objects, and to the play's extensive use throughout of the reflexive pronoun. Havelock's evidence reveals a Clouds that is truly ensconced in this vocabulary of thinking and attention to the "self": Socrates asks Strepsiades, "How comes it that you, unaware of yourself, fell into debt?" (242); the philosopher persuades his student by claiming, "I will give

85Cf. Taylor, Socrates, p. 137. Dover, Clouds, in his commentary at line 94, dismisses as "lame" the scholiast's suggestion "that the Socratics were called ψυχατί because Socrates believed in the immortality of the soul--as if no one else did." Dover makes his point, but misses, as did the scholiast, Aristophanes' humor. Cf. his pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.
you instruction from yourself ... " (385); during his intensive course of study, Strepsiades is encouraged by Socrates to "Think through one of the procedures of yourself." (694), and by the Chorus to "Think, yes think, and scrutinize. By all means condense your (own) self and make it spin." (700-702); Socrates repeats that his reticent student must "Keep thinking," must "Cover up and start thinking . . . Begin with yourself; discover what you want and then express it." (727-728). These are but a few of the examples Havelock offers. The humor is, as Havelock himself readily admits, quite sophisticated, relying as it does "on the device of parodying a verbal syntax which, if contemporary and posthumous records are compared, can be identified as in all probability Socratic." As humor demanding from its audience a keenness and an appreciation for subtlety, Havelock's evidence supports what this study has already argued and what Aristophanes himself contends, that the Clouds is a highly sophisticated piece.

But sophistication is not its only suit. The Clouds also offers, as Havelock points out, evidence for Aristophanes' awareness of the Socratic doctrine of the soul in the form of humor that is delightfully reductive


and that exploits the superficial and concrete. Socrates and his cohorts are introduced as "ghosts": "Here you see the think-tank, inhabited by intelligent ghosts" (94), strepsiades intones. Aristophanes continues the visual pun on the Socratic concern for the psyche by depicting the occupants of the thinkery as "ghost-like, i.e. pale and underfed." 88

So much Havelock perceptively observes, but the pun on psyche as the locus of Socrates’ concern is likewise continued by the poet in the motif of initiation and rebirth, mentioned above in conjunction with Socrates’ role as midwife of truth. Socrates’ insistence that Strepsiades undergo initiation is an insistence upon symbolic death and rebirth, which would qualify the harried old man as one of the number of psychai, "ghosts/souls." Support for this contention can be found in a passage from the Birds, where Socrates is described as a conjuror of souls visited by the notorious coward, Peisander:

At a lake in the vicinity of the Sciapodes, 89 unwashed Socrates was conjuring up spirits (ψυχαγωγεῖ). Peisander came there, wanting to see the spirit (δεόμενος ψυχήν ἵδεῖν) that


89 LSJ translates "Shade-footed" or "Shady-feet," and explains that these are "a fabulous people in the hottest part of Libya, with immense feet which they used as sunshades as they reclined," citing as one authority the scholia at Birds 1553. For the Sciapodes here as a mushroom used in the Eleusinian Mysteries, see C. A. P. Ruck, "Mushrooms and Mysteries. On Aristophanes and the Necromancy of Socrates," Helios 7 (1981), pp. 1-28.
deserted him in life. Then just like Odysseus, holding as victim a camel-lamb, he cut its throat, but he went away. Up from below towards the camel's blood then came for him the bat, Chairephon. (Birds 1553-1564).

The passage clearly pokes fun at Socrates' doctrine of the "soul"; here he is the psychagogos,\textsuperscript{90} the conjuror and persuader, who fails to effect moral improvement.

Peisander remains the coward he always was,\textsuperscript{91} and only the likes of the bloodless Chairephon hearken to Socrates' call: a "soul" is indeed conjured up, but one that is ghoulish and other-worldly.

An expansion on the pun on psyche may even be recognized in the Clouds' location of Socrates and his "gods," the Clouds themselves, in the realm of the ethereal.\textsuperscript{92} Although relation of psyche to the verb

\textsuperscript{90}For the use of ψυχαγωγός and its cognates to describe tragedy's and rhetoric's magical ability to beguile, see de Romilly, Magic, p. 15, who cites Aristotle's Poetics 1450a and Plato's Phaedrus 261a.

\textsuperscript{91}Taylor, Socrates, p. 39, points out that "philopsychia, concern for one's psyche, meant the cowardly hanging on to 'dear life' which leads a man to 'funk' in the field." Socrates, then, who himself is concerned with the psyche, logically cannot, by pun-analogy, cure Peisander's cowardice.

\textsuperscript{92}Socrates' position aloft has invited much comment. Nussbaum's assertion, "Practical Wisdom," p. 70, that "[Socrates'] initial appearance dangling in a basket (223ff.) indicates his remoteness from the interlocutor, his detachment from such 'earthly' matters as moral habitation and the management of the passions," is merely an extension of the regularly argued position that Socrates' air-treading underscores his difference from the common man, and suggests either an assumption of superiority or else the vaporous nonsense he regularly puts forth. See, e.g., Dover, Clouds, pp. 125-126, and Whitman,
"\[\nu'x\omega\] is contested,\textsuperscript{93} certainly association of the "ghost/spirit" with the "air" is one that can be witnessed as far back as Homer, where psychai are by simile compared with bats flitting through the air (\textit{Odyssey} 24.1-7), and are seen to elude the grasp like so much smoke (e.g., \textit{Iliad} 23.100). It is not surprising, then, that the "wise ghost" Socrates treads the air and mingles his thoughts with it, that, as an eternal "soul" he considers Strepsiades "ephemeral" (223),\textsuperscript{94} that he is associated with the "half-dead" (504), and "soul-drinking bugs" (712) and "bats," who, like the psychai brought up from the underworld, drink life-blood and flit about (\textit{Birds} 1564, cf. 1296); that he invokes Aer and Aither (264-265) and swears by Breath and Aer (627), and that he recognizes the air-treading Clouds as deities (252-253, 365). This airborne Socrates, then, can as easily be argued to be the Socrates whose concern was only for the psychê and, by

\textit{Comic Hero}, p. 139.


\textsuperscript{93}\textit{LSJ}, s.v. \[\nu'x\omega\] and \[\nu\nu'x\eta\]. Nevertheless, as Edwin Menes pointed out to me, "the absence of an etymological relationship does not preclude a significant punning relationship, e.g., \[\sigma\nu'\mu\alpha\] ."

\textsuperscript{94}Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 75, cites this line as evidence that the Socrates of the \textit{Clouds} considers himself, as did the Platonic Socrates in the \textit{Apology}, the servant of powerful deities, here the eternal Clouds; in this line he proclaims his association with their permanency.
comic extension, with all things of the "air," as it can be argued to be a Socrates who has been misconstrued as an inconsistent atheist, or as one who is mistakenly shown as a physicist cut from the same cloth as, say, Diogenes of Apollonia,95 or one who has been depicted as the typical intellectual, full of "hot air," with his head "in the clouds."

This last interpretation of the Clouds' up-in-the-air imagery--whether applied to Socrates himself, the Cloud-chorus, or the new "god" Dinos--is one popular with the play's many interpreters,96 and for good reason. Entailing as it does the sense of confusion that "every man" feels when confronted by the abstract world of the intellectual, Aristophanes' use of the image to depict a type is apropos. But using this imagery to depict Socrates practicing elenchos is a stroke of genius. To the pre-literate interlocutor of Socrates, the abstract universals Socrates urges them to define in elenchos are as difficult to grasp and pin down as is the "ghostly" Socrates

95Dover, Clouds, pp. xxxv and 127, n. on line 230. According to the latter, Diogenes of Apollonia believed that the soul is air, and used the adjective λευτός to describe both.

96See, e.g., Dover, Clouds, pp. lxvi-lxx; Whitman, Comic Hero, pp. 127-128; Reckford, "Father Beating," pp. 93 and 115 ff.
In Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates as a floating "ghost," then, it is possible to recognize not only the philosopher's alleged concern with the "soul," but also, more generally, the odd figure such a man must have cut among his fellow Athenians. Martha Nussbaum has given a striking description of the Socrates of Plato's _Symposium_, the disturbingly other-worldly creature:

Socrates is weird. He is, in fact, 'not similar to any human being'. We feel, as we look at him, both awestruck and queasy, timidly homesick for ourselves. We feel that we must look back at what we currently are, our loves and our ways of seeing, the problems these cause for practical reason. We need to see ourselves more clearly before we can say whether we would like to become this other sort of being, excellent and deaf.98

We see this oddball Socrates all over Aristophanes' _Clouds_, not only in his status as psyché, or in his familiar role as the distracted thinker--here comically shot upon by a lizard--but also in young Pheidippides' horror at the prospect of joining the ranks of Socrates' students, which caste would catapult the boy fully out of the realm of normalcy, as he himself recognizes (102-120). Pheidippides' reaction recalls that of the Alcibiades of the _Symposium_, whose attraction to the philosopher was ever cancelled by the repulsion he felt at what Socrates' way of

97Green, "Strepsiades," pp. 23-24, connects the "hot air" imagery with vapidty of abstraction to one who, like Strepsiades, understands only the concrete and situational.

98Nussbaum, _Fragility_, p. 184.
life demanded. Tenure in the ranks of the "wise souls" demands as prerequisite a kind of death, which even the eager Strepsiades dreads and finds scary (504; 507-508): a death of all that is familiar and normal and cozily secure.99

For the pre-literate fifth-century B.C. Athenian, talking with Socrates was, in short, like stepping into a whirlwind. Recall the sense of vertigo experienced during elenchos by interlocutors such as Theaetetus (Theaetetus 155c): this in Aristophanes’ play is the reign of Dinos, “Revolution,” established by the agreement of Strepsiades himself shortly after he has been in the thrall of Socrates. Reckford is especially insightful on this point, although he does not relate it to elenchos:

This earth, which seemed so solid, is floating on air. Our lives are shot through with illusion; nothing holds, neither Law nor Nature. We have clearly come—as in all times of personal or cultural transition—to the dizzy brink of the abyss of meaninglessness and absurdity.100

99Sherman, Moral Education, pp. 23-24, takes a negative view of this aspect of elenchos, and misses, it seems, all of Aristophanes’ humor: “Thus, the elenchus is a painful and debilitating process that sucks dry the spirit . . . from its victims. At 723, Strepsiades wails to the Chorus: Not only have my clothes and complexion vanished at the hands of the Socratics, but my life has vanished . . . . The implication is that in banishing customary beliefs and values—beliefs about god, piety, and respect, the Socratics perhaps rupture the emotional fiber of life. They destroy a person’s well-being and moral stability.”

100Reckford, “Father-Beating,” p. 115. Reckford sees the Cloud-chorus, with its constancy of change, expressive of the persistence of illusion, as connected
In Aristophanes' up-in-the-air, ghostly Socrates, who communes with the clouds and encourages the succession of Zeus by Dinos, we can detect the historical philosopher whose way of life, values, beliefs, and methods amazed, astounded, and ultimately repelled his fellow citizens. Who but Socrates is willing to "die" for the truth, willing to give up the body and its desires to become a "ghost," however wise? It is no wonder, then, that finding oneself in this ethereal realm of abstraction would be perceived as dizzying; or that placing oneself willingly in the admittedly seductive clutches of such a man would ultimately be perceived as an experience in which one had been duped, taken as an easy mark, hoodwinked, and robbed of one's everyday garb.

This brings our discussion to the previously mentioned negative aspects of Socrates' characterization in the Clouds. For in seeming contrast to Socrates-the-ghost we have another Socrates in Aristophanes' play: Socrates-the-shyster. Can it be that Aristophanes set these two depictions side-by-side and never noticed the confusing discrepancy? Hardly. Socrates in this play is, it is true, a detached, spirit-like ascetic, and yet also a rogue and a thief, one who steals with the finesse and aplomb of the professional. Furthermore, under Socrates'

with the idea behind Dinos. See also K. J. Reckford, "Aristophanes' Ever-Flowing Clouds," Emory University Quarterly 22 (1967), pp. 222-235.
instruction Strepsiades gains his desired end of cheating his creditors, and he is encouraged in this by the Clouds Socrates worships, Clouds who in the end self-righteously censure the old man for the very practice they had previously urged. Strepsiades' son is thoroughly corrupted by the two arguments in Socrates' employ, one of which urges moral license, the other of which is exposed as hypocritic. The old man in the play's final moments is driven to the point where he realizes that the true corruptors of his son are Socrates and his cronies, and it is this realization that impels him to set fire to the school. Are we then driven to argue that Aristophanes' intent is to impart harsh criticism of Socrates and his method? Not necessarily.

The negative aspects of Socrates' characterization, the way his associates, the Clouds and the Logoi, are depicted, and even the final burning of the school can be appreciated as an uncannily perceptive rendering of the interlocutor's experience of Socratic elenchos, put into a comic perspective which both exaggerates and objectifies. Aristophanes' view of elenchos is indeed perspicacious, but not for all that necessarily censorious.101 We can

never know what Aristophanes thought of Socrates, but we can recognize that in his portrayal of the philosopher, Aristophanes was as fully aware of the enigma that is *elenchos* as he was of the enigma that was its practitioner. Aristophanes could give vent to harsh criticism when occasion called for it. Whitman recalls Aristophanes' rantings against the likes of Cleon to make this point, and further notes that, although Aristophanes describes Socrates with what would normally be considered censorious

385-420. Murray admits that there is a likeness to Socrates, but denies that his honor is attacked; instead the play is a joke on bumpkin-meets-scholar, a "clash of 'humours,'" as Murray puts it (p. 95). Gelzer removes culpability from Socrates by making him the symbol of the new education and eristic; Erbse considers Aristophanes' Socrates a creation the poet uses to provide his play with a focus for all its disparate elements. The current study no more denies than it asserts that Aristophanes in the Clouds is critical of Socrates. Instead, it merely argues that the portrait is comically accurate. That Socrates and his *elenchos* are disruptive and discomfiting is as obvious from Aristophanes' play as it is from Plato's early dialogues, but that the two are culpable for the moral decline of the Athenians is in no way evident in either author. It is possible, to be sure, to argue from the perspective of the late dialogues of Plato or from that of Aristotle, as does Nussbaum in "Practical Wisdom," passim, that *elenchos* is a negative tool and therefore a dangerous one to use for moral improvement, in that its results are unpredictable and inconstant. But moral improvement is only one of many aspects of *elenchos*, one of its aims, according to Plato. This study is concerned with *elenchos*, not moral improvement per se; it is concerned with Socrates as practitioner of *elenchos*, not with his supposed failure at raising the moral consciousness of Athens. Aristophanes mirrors *elenchos* accurately, although comically--both the method itself and the effect it regularly has on interlocutors. The fact that Aristophanes' portrait has yielded so much controversy in interpretation is perhaps a testimonial to its accuracy in portraying the man and his method, both of which have long been controversial subjects.
words, the portrait of the philosopher is one that lacks the rancor common to harsh criticism. This is not to say that Aristophanes engages only in gentle mocking of Socrates. Such affectionate teasing is unworthy of the type of comedy that Aristophanes produces. Instead, he gives us a Socrates who is as big and bold in his roguishness as he is thoroughly eccentric in his concentration on the psyche. That this portrait is an accurate—though comic—representation of elenchos' effect on the interlocutor will now be defended.

It would be difficult to deny that Aristophanes fully intended his audience to view Socrates, at least in one aspect, as a rogue, a rather uncommon criminal. When Strepsiades first identifies for his suspicious son the academic society into whose membership he hopes to urge the boy, he hesitates to name Socrates and his associates, and instead labels them καλοί τε κάγαθοι, the standard epithet for men considered "true gentlemen" (101). Pheidippides, however, not fooled by his father's attempts at evasion, names names and does not blanch at giving what

102 Whitman, Comic Hero, pp. 142-143.
104 The point is that, in acknowledging the roguish elements of Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates, one need not be thrown into the position either of defending the historical Socrates, by making Aristophanes' depiction a mere type, or of attacking the historical Socrates, by assuming that Aristophanes is thus criticizing Socrates.
he considers the unvarnished truth: "Oh, no! You mean those rogues (πονηροί), I know! Those impostors (τοὺς ἀλαζόνας), pale-faced, shoeless, to whose number belong that ill-possessed Socrates and Chairephon!" (102-104).

While at first blush this might be excused as the over-reaction of a spoiled boy who would rather race horses in the sun than put his effort into academic pursuits, Pheidippides' assessment of Socrates as a rogue is borne out by Aristophanes' portrayal of the philosopher as a clothing thief. The student who haughtily answers the door to Strepsiades' urgent pounding proudly describes his master at work, procuring a meal ticket for himself and his cohorts: "He strewed fine ash over a table, bent a skewer, then taking it [to serve as] a pair of compasses, he stole a cloak from the wrestling-school." (177-179). This feat is a source of amazement for Strepsiades: "Why then do we wonder at (Θαυμάζουμεν) that Thales?," he

105Whitman, Comic Hero, pp. 139-140, considers Socrates the alazōn, the "quack" whose hold on ponēria rivals that of the usual comic hero. Whitman sees the term alazōn as descriptive of Socrates' aptness at thievery, but does not attempt to explain the meaning behind Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates as a thief. Cf. also pp. 26-27 and 96 for Whitman's more general consideration of the alazōn and its relation to the eirōn, both of which Strepsiades (449) hopes to become after his tenure with Socrates.

intones, and thereupon demands immediate entrance to the
school. Similarly, after Strepsiades has been expelled,
Pheidippides notices that his father's education has not
come without a price: --"And for this you lost your
cloak?" --"I didn't lose it; I thought it away
(καταφερόντω)." --"And your shoes, what have you
done with your shoes, you old fool, you?" --"As Pericles
said, I have lost them to what was needful." (856-859).

These blatant charges of thievery against Socrates can
only be taken as serious by someone who is looking to pick
a fight with the comic poet, someone willing at the same
time to overlook the fact that Aristophanes shows Socrates
engaging in all manner of unlikely things--like making his
entrance in an *ex machina* basket--simply to make the
caricature of the philosopher ludicrously accurate. Dover,
commenting on the student's initial description of
Socrates' adeptness at thievery, notes, "Demetrios
(loc.cit.) quotes this passage [177-179] as an 'unexpected'
joke, 'which has no connexion with what has gone
before,'"107 but this is precisely Aristophanes' point
in making Socrates a sneaky thief. Recall how
interlocutors in Plato's dialogues came to Socrates with
their opinions firmly entrenched, and how soon it was that
they became divested of those opinions. Recall how often
interlocutors charged Socrates with sorcery, how, for

107Dover, *Clouds*, p. 118 at line 179.
example, Euthyphro was convinced that Socrates could, like Daedalus, make inanimate objects move. The Platonic Socrates, when practicing elenchos, was to his interlocutors a source of wonder, just as he is in Aristophanes' play to the dull-witted Strepsiades, whose exclamation at line 180 attests to the wonder he feels at the philosopher's comic practice of elenchos-as-thievery. How is Socrates in elenchos able to do what he does? Elenchos is indeed like thievery; it accomplishes the unexpected by unnoticed means; it achieves refutation by using as arguments analogies which at the time seem unconnected to the discussion at hand.

Of course Socrates is a rogue generally, and, more specifically, a thief. Recall how common it is for interlocutors as well as for modern commentators to refuse to believe that Socrates' profession of ignorance is sincere; that his claim to impassive involvement is honest. Correspondingly, in the Clouds, Socrates is called an imposter, an alazôn (102), whom Strepsiades assumes will be able in turn to teach him to be an impositor and a dissembler, an eirôn.108 Whitman is at pains to

108 The literature on comic "types" is extensive, and the subject cannot be considered at length here. For the classic, though now considered overly rigid, characterization of the comic alazôn and eirôn, see Cornford, Attic Comedy, pp. 132-141 and 148-152. A more modern consideration of the meanings of alazôn and eirôn can be found in R. Stark, "Sokratisches in der Vögeln," RhM 96 (1953), pp. 77 f.

For the argument that Aristophanes' portrayal of
distinguish Socratic irony from the irony of the comic hero, but he misses the potential for similarity when Socratic irony is considered from the perspective of the increasingly suspicious interlocutor:

It is a mistake to confuse the irony of the comic hero with that of Plato's Socrates, though Socrates, clearly and often, made use of it to get the better of his opponent, and not seldom with subtle comic effect. For the irony of Socrates leads the opponent, at least theoretically, toward ultimate submission before a philosophic logos; the irony of a comic hero leads to his own swaggering triumph over all reason or opposition, in the name of an impudent self which has become liberated from all small restraints of consistency or responsibility.109

Socratic "irony" is, after all, often deemed a ruse, a posture, because it seems unlikely that there is no subterfuge in elenchos, where interlocutor after interlocutor is robbed of self-assurance and the status of one who knows, without once becoming aware that this is happening until it is already too late, until it is all over. And then, the master stroke: Socrates looks into the face of his confounded interlocutor, whose claim to knowledge he has just appropriated, and brazenly alleges that he has done nothing whatsoever. But then, what thief admits his guilt? Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates-as-rogue in the Clouds, whether in his guise as thief, imposture, or dissembler, is elenchos' uncanny ability to

Socrates bears the mark of Socratic irony as analyzed by Kierkegaard, see K. Kleve, "Anti-Dover or Socrates in the Clouds," SO 58 (1983), pp. 23-37.

109Whitman, Comic Hero, p. 27.
secure unforeseen reversal, and its so-called "impersonal aspect," comically depicted from the interlocutor's perspective.110

That Aristophanes shows Socrates in the Clouds stealing clothing instead of anything else is perhaps not merely a serendipitous choice. Socrates, after all, does lay everyone bare with his elenchos: as he impatiently explains to Strepsiades, who is hesitant to obey the philosopher's demand that he strip off his clothing, "It is the custom [here] to go about naked" (498).111 And indeed, if one wants to associate with Socrates, one must have no scruples whatever about showing to the world everything that one has. If commitment to the soul's nurture can be so ludicrously depicted on the physical plane by making Socrates and his cohorts into pallid, blood-sucking ghosts, one can likewise imagine that the soul-baring requisite for interlocutors in elenchos can similarly be reduced to a baring of the body, either with or without consent of the person involved.

110Edmunds, "Socrates," pp. 221-222, considers the Cloud-chorus Aristophanes' representation of Socratic irony (read: mockery), "... as an attitude, as a stance toward the world." Edmunds makes much of the Chorus' mockery and deception, and yet is amused that "... it did not occur to [Strepsiades] that the Clouds themselves were ironists."

111See Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 74: "This Socrates is out to strip away his pupil's preconceptions--it is the custom to enter naked into the phrontisterion (498)--and to expose the inconsistencies in his current beliefs (cf. esp. 369, 398)."
Elenchos is, after all, a process whereby the interlocutor, by putting his subjective beliefs to the touchstone of objective logic, only gradually becomes conscious that his initial bravado was ill-founded. As was argued above (Chapter One, Part Three), elenchos' personal aspect—which in Plato's dialogues takes the form of Socrates' insistence that interlocutors express only their own views—is integral to the interlocutor's dawning awareness of his own ignorance. In the Clouds, Aristophanes represents this process of gradual awakening primarily through the agency of the Cloud-chorus.112 The mimetic ability of the Cloud-chorus is elenchos' personal aspect per se, comically depicted on a physical rather than on a mental plane. The Chorus is insistently personal: its talent for imitation reveals the nature of whoever comes within its field (348-355);113 and it

112Interpretations of the Cloud-chorus generally stress their changeability; see the discussion above, this section, for up-in-the-air imagery. Charles Segal, "Aristophanes' Cloud-Chorus," Arethusa 2 (1969), pp. 143-161, does not consider the Chorus' mimetic abilities, but argues instead, by pointing to the Chorus' persistently concrete, poetic language and its association with nature's beauty, that the Chorus are more properly identified throughout the play with Right.

113As Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 76, comments: "Insofar the Clouds are symbolic of Socratic teaching, they display it as elenctic and negative, imparting no insight into anything but the interlocutor's own defects, leaving beyond the structure of the elenchos only a formless nebulous." Cf. Martha Nussbaum, "Commentary on Edmunds[' 'Aristophanes' Socrates']," in Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, Vol. 1, 1985 (Lantham, MD: University Press of
Likewise demands of the contestants in the set contest
between Right and Anti-Right: "... speak your nature"
(Ῥὴν σαυτοῦ φύσιν εἴπε, 960).

But by also making this insistently personal Chorus
the vehicle by which the initial bravado, intermediate
nagging doubt, and final awakening of Strepsiades are
expressed, Aristophanes in his nebulous Chorus gives a
concrete representation of the effect on the interlocutor
of elenchos' personal aspect: the change from ignorance to
knowledge, i.e., recognition. The Cloud-chorus, having
drawn near Strepsiades, reveals in their waning
approbation of Strepsiades' action the old man's own
evolution from self-assurance, to doubt, to recognition of

231-240, especially p. 236, where she again stresses, "The
Clouds take on the shape or form of the person to whom
their attention is directed; they become what they see.
Their function is to show or reveal something about the
pupil's own nature." Nussbaum takes her earlier argument
further, however, by noting that ". . . in at least two
cases [the Clouds] take on the shape of the interlocutor's
appetitive desires . . . ." (p. 237). Edmunds,
"Socrates," argues that the Cloud-chorus represents
Socrates' daimonion as well as his "ironic" (i.e., mocking)
stance; Nussbaum, "Commentary," p. 234, counters that
Socrates' references to his daimonion could be interpreted
as ". . . an ironic way of alluding to the supreme
authority of dissuasive reason and elenctic argument."

The members of the Cloud-chorus, as Strepsiades is
perplexed to note, have noses. For their noses as
indicative of deception, rather like the phrase, "lead by
the nose," see A. Köhnken, "Der Wolken-Chor des
After their entrance at 274, which is followed by a list of their requirements of devotees and promises to them at 412 ff., the Cloud-chorus, engaging first in high-hearted encouragement, reflects Strepsiades' willingness to entrust his fate to the power of cheating and his gullible aspirations that this new power will spell for him an enviable future: the Chorus assures Strepsiades that his new education will procure for him a "fame high as heaven" and the "most enviable life" (κλέος ουρανόμηκες, 461; ἔλεγχος τότατον βίου, 464); Strepsiades in addition will become wealthy by selling to others the rhetorical skills he is about to obtain (468-475). At 510-517 the Chorus again encourages the old man, and praises the courage shown by him during the initiation he has just undergone.

After Strepsiades' unsuccessful tenure as student, however, the Chorus becomes advisory, signalling the shift

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114 Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 76, sees the Cloud-chorus as Aristophanes' criticism of elenchos: "Insofar as the Clouds are symbolic of Socratic teaching, they display it as elenctic and negative, imparting no insight into anything but the interlocutor's own defects." Cf. Harriott, Aristophanes, p. 184: "... the Clouds observe human failings."

115 Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 80 n. 72, notes that it is not Socrates, but instead "it is the Clouds who are the goddesses of rogues and who promise Strepsiades the accomplishment of his dishonest ends (316-18, 331-4)," but does not recognize that the Chorus, in this, is reflecting Strepsiades' own desires.
from Strepsiades' reckless self-assurance to a sense that, to save his original trust in the powers of cheating, a new strategy must now be undertaken. But his eagerness to salvage his belief likewise marks Strepsiades as ripe for refutation: after advising Strepsiades to send his son to the school, the Chorus turns quickly to Socrates to apprise him that Strepsiades--eager, confused, and elated (ἐτοιμὸς; ἐκπεπληγμένου . . . ἐπηρμένου, 806 and 809-810)--is now every thief's dream: the easy mark, but he may not be one for long (see the Chorus' admonition, ἀπολάψεις . . . ταχέως, 810-812).

That the tide has measurably turned against Strepsiades is appropriately shown right after his moment of glory, when he has driven his creditors off the stage, and just before his comeuppance, when his son "beats" him at his own game. The Chorus' foreboding pronouncement at 1303 ff. explicitly connects Strepsiades' cheating with the result to come, one which he had never imagined:

See what it is, to long passionately for what is wrong! For this old man, in passionate longing, wants to default his loans. There is no way today he can avoid getting back straightaway some bit of that nasty business he has begun; it will make him "smart." For I think that soon he will find that very thing he once upon a time was looking for: his son to be clever for him, to give voice to views contrary to the just, and so to prevail—even if he speaks things utterly depraved—over all those with whom he holds

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116 Dover's discussion of the confusion over who it is the Chorus addresses in lines 804-813 argues persuasively for Socrates; see Dover, Clouds, p. 197 at lines 804-813.
intercourse. But maybe, maybe he’ll sometime wish his son were dumb. (1303-1320).

Strepsiades’ final revelation comes from the Cloud-chorus at 1452 ff. After cursing Socrates and Anti-Right, Strepsiades in vain tries to blame the Clouds for their part, only to learn that his current plight is one for which he is personally and solely responsible:

---I have suffered this on account of you, Clouds; to you I turned over all my affairs. --You yourself are for yourself the cause of these things; you turned\textsuperscript{117} yourself to roguish affairs.

---But why didn’t you counsel me back then, instead of leading on an old country bumpkin?

---We do these things whenever we find some lover (ἐραστὴν) of roguish affairs; we launch him into wrong, until he knows to fear the gods. (1452-1461).

To summarize, then, the Cloud-chorus is Aristophanes’ representation of 	extit{elenchos’} personal aspect. They not only are reputed to be able to give a physical rendition of someone’s nature (a feat which would unlikely be accomplished on stage), they likewise reveal Strepsiades’ own progression from self-assured bravado, through doubt and the sense that all is not well, to his final, though fleeting, recognition that he has only the desires that underpin his beliefs to blame. Recall the similar progression from self-assurance to doubt experienced by

\textsuperscript{117}Edmunds, “Socrates,” p. 224, notes this pun on Strepsiades’ name, but interprets this as “... making fun of the old man.” This interpretation fits Edmunds’ thesis that the Cloud-chorus represents a mocking Socratic irony.
guthyphro and Meno (see above, Chapter One, Part Three), and how quick they were to assume that it was Socrates who led them astray, how eager young Euthyphro was to leave when, as was argued, the implications of his beliefs' demise became glaringly apparent. In Aristophanes' play, the interlocutor's sense of how he—or rather, his beliefs—are faring in elenchos is given voice by the agency of the Cloud-chorus, who begin by heartily encouraging, and proceed through cautionary advice to unbridled reproach.

Is it any wonder, then, that Strepsiades burns the thinkery to the ground? For it is not only as comic hero—here reversing his own elenctic reversal—that he performs what in real life would be an admittedly foul act, but also as interlocutor in elenchos. The early Platonic dialogues are testimony to the fact that few humans are able to withstand the harsh realization that all that they hold dear is, at best, suspect and, more likely, totally fallacious. Recall Euthyphro, in his haste to leave on unspecified business, or Alcibiades in the Symposium, whose acknowledged shame at the recognition of own deficiencies left him ambivalent about Socrates: "Many are the times I would gladly find him no longer among men on earth, but if this were in fact to happen, I know that I would suffer greater distress than ever; the result is that I have no idea what to do with this man at all." (Symposium 216c.1-3).
Strepsiades in the Clouds has already been shown squirming as he undergoes the rigors of elenchos; as Nussbaum and others have pointed out, the bedbugs that beset the old man at 633 ff. are Aristophanes' comic depiction of the discomfort this method can visit upon Socrates' interlocutors.118 Add to this the fact that strepsiades agrees to submit himself to all sorts of physical discomfort (440-442), that he gets rained upon (267-268), is peppered with flour and scared out of his wits (256-260), and is finally soundly beaten by his own son (1321 ff.). In the end, the old man experiences a much more obvious but no less unpleasant recognition than Euthyphro or Alcibiades were seen to experience: "Alas, Clouds, your words are hard, but just! For it was not right that I refused to pay the money I borrowed." (1462-1464).

In summary, then, the mental exasperation regularly experienced by interlocutors at elenchos' terminus, which in Plato's dialogues gets displaced onto Socrates, is in

118See Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 75, who remarks, "Talking to Socrates undoubtedly was like being bitten and drained; talking to the others [i.e., sophists like Gorgias] was as easy as eating." See also Sherman, Moral Education, p. 23, who notes that, at lines 941-948, Anti-Right threatens Right with "stinging" arguments (κεντρούμενος). For interpretation of the bugs as representative of Strepsiades' distress in general (first caused by his son's "biting" debts, 12 f., and only later by Socrates), see Whitman, Comic Hero, p. 141. Whitman makes the additional point that Strepsiades' discomfort is also alluded to in his name.
the Clouds acted out on the physical plane. This is quite appropriate, for it is on this very plane that Aristophanes shows Strepsiades’ mental anguish during elenchos. In addition, even Socrates’ doctrine of the soul was similarly presented as a physical reality, while elenchos’ amazing capacity for procuring unforeseen reversal was depicted as theft of clothing. Of course Strepsiades should physically destroy even as he has suffered--at least in his own eyes--physical destruction. Poor Strepsiades yowled at his own destruction (ἀπόλλυμαι, 707; μ’ ἀπολούσιν, 715); it is justifiable, then, that destroying Socrates and his cohorts be urged by Strepsiades in turn (ἀπολείς, 1466), and that out from the school should come a comically gratifying penultimate cry (ἀπολεῖς ἀπολεῖς, 1499). The jolt when comic justice meets history is ours to feel, not for those who were to sit in Aristophanes’ audience and howl their appreciation at tit for tat.

Only an overly defensive historical perspective can raise the objection that Strepsiades wrongly lays the blame at Socrates’ feet, that, after all, Socrates is, by his absence from the contest of the two logoi, dissociated from the positions presented there by Anti-Right, who prevails. Nussbaum is right, then, to argue that Gelzer and Erbse err in defending Socrates against the charge of being a corrupting influence by claiming that blame is rightly
Ascribable to Strepsiades; for, as Nussbaum points out, even the Platonic Socrates argues—against the sophist Gorgias and elsewhere—that the student who acts badly does so because his teacher has failed.\textsuperscript{119} As insightful as is Nussbaum's analysis of the contest between the logoi, her imputation to Aristophanes of a critical perspective on Socrates as an educator—reminiscent of the implied views of the later Plato and those expressed by Aristotle—is attributable to her emphasis on the contest of the logoi as the primary locus in the Clouds of Socratic elenchos. Instead, the contest should be considered as only one facet of Aristophanes' presentation of elenchos. Many of Nussbaum's excellent observations can be reconsidered in this light.

That Socrates is absent from the contest is a great good joke, and should not be passed off as mere theatrical convention, whereby five actors are seldom found on stage in comedy;\textsuperscript{120} in addition, it is at least arguable that Aristophanes could fairly easily have, for example, absented Pheidippides, if he so chose. Socrates' departure from the stage, marked by his announcement, "\textup{αὐτὸς μαθήσεται παρ' αὐτοῖν τοῖν λόγοιν, ἐγὼ δ' ἀπέσουμαι}" (886-887), is a pointed reference to what

\textsuperscript{119}Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 47.

has been termed the "impersonal aspect" of elenchos: Socrates' insistence that it is not he, but the logos that does the refuting.\footnote{121} But putting forward as antidote to Socrates' supposed "innocence" the theory that, since Anti-Right argues elenctically, he is therefore the philosophical persona of Socrates,\footnote{122} who is then clearly culpable: "His attitude is at best morally

\footnote{121}{See the discussion above, Chapter One, Part Three. Sherman, Moral Education, pp. 14-15, although she argues that the limited number of actors is the most plausible explanation for Socrates' absence, tentatively suggests that "If anything, Socrates' absence during the contest of the two logoi seems to underscore the ironic, mock claim made in the Euthyphro that while Socrates sets logoi in motion, once moving they take on an agency of their own independent of his manipulations (91d-e, 15b)." Erbse, "Sokrates," p. 398, argues that Socrates remains, and that his ἄφεσθαι at 887 indicates merely that he is withdrawing any influence he might have over the contest.

This study, by arguing that Socrates' actual absence is the comedic representation of elenchos' impersonal aspect, in no way means to deny what Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 66, points out, that Pheidippides associates Socrates with the position argued by Anti-Right. Socrates' claim to be separate from the logoi he employed was regularly disbelieved by interlocutors, who accused him of using some sort of sorcery to throw the argument. It is not surprising, then, that Pheidippides would proudly, as later would the outraged Strepsiades, attribute Anti-Right's program to Socrates. It is surprising, however, that Nussbaum would follow suit.

\footnote{122}{Sherman, Moral Education, p. 16. Nussbaum's claim, "Practical Wisdom," p. 51, is slightly more cautious, "The personification of the two logoi is a handy dramatic device. But when they appear before the pupil in person, ready to tell the Chorus what their natures are (960), we may also be seeing a telling and particular representation of Socratic epistemology at work."}
neutral; at worst he condones deceit—this is, again, shadowboxing, now even more so, with a new offensive taken against a previously fabricated defensive position.

It is, to be sure, absolutely correct that Anti-Right argues elenctically; Nussbaum describes it succinctly:

The debate is not really an argument between proponents of rival programs, but something much more unusual in the rhetorical tradition: an elenchos of the moral views of one speaker by the arguments of the other. Anti-Right yields the first, expository place to his rival, announcing that he will debate 'from the things he will say' (942)—starting only from the views expressed by his opponent. Using these he will 'shoot him down' (944) using new and inventive (kainois, 943) arguments. These two are not logoi in the same sense. One expounds, the other argues; one sets out a view, the other speaks against it (cf. enantiais gnomaiai, 1037, cf. 1314; antilexai, 1040). And, as it will turn out, the aim and achievement of this negative procedure will be to show Right that he himself does not really believe in the education he defends. This is not to say that there is no positive content to the position of Anti-Right; it will turn out both to embody substantial moral assumptions and to produce tangible results. But in form and spirit it is much less like a contest in rhetoric than like another kind of debate that also conceals its positive contribution: the Socratic elenchos.124

The contest is, however, better understood as the later stages of elenchos rather than as the whole of

123Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 48. It is mistaken to argue that an elenctically argued position which prevails must therefore be sanctioned by Socrates who staged the contest; indeed, if one were to take such a position regarding elenchos in the Platonic dialogues, Socrates would have to be accused of cleaving to all sorts of beliefs that are unmistakably contrary to the convictions he continually professes. Besides, this is not, as I argue, the end of the elenchos.

elenchos, i.e., better understood as that part of elenchos when the connection between the emotion and cognition is made evident, when the emotions that underpin beliefs surface and win out. Nussbaum's description of Right's conduct during the contest is, though she does not remark on this, peculiarly reminiscent of behavior common to Socrates' interlocutors when the first flush of self-assurance has worn off:

Never . . . does he present a reasoned argument for his position. He reminisces in sentimental fashion . . .; what he does say (at 1002ff.) is so vague and remote as to be very little help. In the exchange with Anti-Right, he cannot for a minute hold his own in argument; he allows himself to be upset by moves so obviously specious that we wonder at his credulity (esp. 1050ff.). He is clearly indifferent to reason and to the reasoned justification of his opponent's proposals. His weapons are abuse, intolerance and disgust. One claim is answered by a threat (899); others by name-calling and unsubstantiated slurs (909-11, 916-18, 925-9, 1046, 1052-4, 1016-23); a hackneyed argument, easily answerable, by vomiting into a basin (904-6, cf. Ach. 584-7). 125

Recall how difficult it was for Socrates to get interlocutors to play the game by the rules: don't tell me particular instances, he would insist, tell me what x is. Recall the pre-literate aspects of interlocutors, how "indifferent to reason" the pre-literate can seem to Plato's literate readers, how easy it is for Socrates, a pre-literate showing the influence of literacy, to win a game whose rules he alone understands. Recall, finally, how, in Seeskin's words, "Protagoras becomes angry, Polus

resorts to cheap rhetorical tricks, Callicles begins to sulk, Critias loses his self-control, Meno wants to quit." This contest is, indeed, profoundly similar to elenchos' later stages, when incontrovertible logic meets the emotions that underpin beliefs.

Further support for this contention is to be found in what Nussbaum calls "an anomalous element" in Right's arguments: a heavy undercurrent of sexuality which, in the culmination of the contest, is brought up to the surface for all to see. For it is precisely Right's own desires--at 973 ff. comically exaggerated as a prurient, voyeuristic over-emphasis on the steps boys should take to remain modest--that, when exposed, cause him finally to admit defeat and run off like many an interlocutor. It is not without point that he disrobes as he departs in haste: he, too, has had his desires, latent in the mesh of his program of education, exposed by elenchos. He admits this by giving up his previous pose and joining the euruproktos he agrees

126 Seeskin, Dialogue, p. 3.


128 I am not convinced by Nussbaum's analysis, "Practical Wisdom," pp. 64 ff., of the euruproktos jokes at 1084 ff. as suggestive of a doctrine of "passive hedonism." As Dover notes, Clouds, p. 227 at line 1084, one could become euruproktos not merely from repeated anal intercourse, but also from being subjected to the notorious "radish treatment" used to punish adulterers, mentioned here by Anti-Right.
comprise the majority.

Here, then, is the wrenching collocation of professed beliefs and true desire, so common to elenchos. And when Strepsiades, who has witnessed the whole contest, chooses Anti-Right over Right, he bares his own mistaken desire: to cheat his creditors at all cost. Nussbaum cites line 43 (ἡδοστος βίος) as evidence of Strepsiades' "hedonism"; to this may be added his eagerness to hold "intercourse" with the Cloud-chorus (252-253) and his preference for masturbation over the labors of cognition (733-734). Such a man will have little trouble accepting the pleasure-filled program of Anti-Right; in fact, in choosing Anti-Right Strepsiades exposes his own desire: he shows himself to be a "lover of roguish deeds" (ποιητῶν . . . ἔραστὴν πραγμάτων, 1459).129 His desire to cheat, for which he must have access to Anti-Right's rhetorical skills, blinds him to what comes with them. But as Strepsiades chooses Anti-Right, he blindly chooses as well the revolutionary and blatant disrespect of all authority that will soon infest his own son. Strepsiades unknowingly chooses the very thing which, in the end, will "beat" him into recognizing how truly misguided his own desire to default his debts has been.

129 Strepsiades' "desire" to cheat is necessitated by his inability to control his son, who is spoiled by his wife. That Strepsiades' difficulties with his wife are in part sexual is discussed by Reckford, "Father-Beating," p. 113.
Nussbaum argues that Strepsiades' change of heart is worth little, and has the undertone of tragedy:

... whatever he does he has lost his son. He may be able, in his old age, to return to his own nature; the son's more malleable personality has been turned from him by Socratic questioning. To imagine him returning to the old paternal ways would be an optimism nowhere justified in the play.  

Nussbaum may be right, but the "anguish" she senses in the ending can perhaps be considered an overstatement of what in Chapter One was described as the tragic dimensions of elenchos, the erotic dangling of that which elenchos portends but is rarely shown to attain: definition of universals that can lead past ignorance to the birth of truth, and moral improvement of Socrates' interlocutors. Instead, Platonic dialogues end in avowed ignorance and with the suggestion that interlocutors lack the moral fiber requisite to withstand elenchos. But the potential remains poised, and the final impression one gains of elenchos is the erotic gap between profession and achievement.

This eroticism of elenchos may be represented in the Clouds by the increasing sexual raucousness as the play comes to its climax:  

130 Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 79.

131 Whitman, Comic Hero, p. 123, on the contest: "It must be noted that the motif of sex is elsewhere scarcely found in the Clouds, whose practical concerns are debts, law suits, barley, and horses."
Right's speech\textsuperscript{132} and the blatant appeal to pleasure by Anti-Right are only the most obvious examples of this. Nussbaum, following Henderson, remarks on the possibility that the \textit{physis} the Chorus at 959-960 encourages Right to reveal is a not very veiled reference to flashing the penis\textsuperscript{133} (which Right, by his disrobing at exit, in fact does).\textsuperscript{134} Reckford suggests that Strepsiades routs the creditors with an erect phallus to the rear, and that Pheidippides' "banging" on his father and proposed "banging" on his mother carry heavy sexual connotations.\textsuperscript{135} Even Strepsiades' burning of the

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\item \textsuperscript{132}For which see Dover, \textit{Clouds}, pp. 215-217, and Whitman, \textit{Comic Hero}, p. 123, "... the Just Discourse, ostensibly moralizing on the subject of boys' behavior toward male lovers, repeatedly bursts out in images of such prurience that editorial abatement in school editions is driven to greater lengths than in the case of his openly unregenerate adversary."
\item \textsuperscript{133}Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 63 n. 39, citing Jeffrey Henderson, \textit{The Maculate Muse} (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p. 5. Nussbaum sees the debate as revealing "the impotence of the old morality in a time of social ferment."
\item \textsuperscript{134}For Right's shedding of his cloak as signalling his initiation into Socrates' school, see L. M. Stone, "A Note on \textit{Clouds} 1104-1105," \textit{CP} 75 (1980), pp. 321-322.
\item \textsuperscript{135}Reckford, "Father-Beating," pp. 96, 113-114 and n. 20. If in fact \textit{physis} was understood as a euphemism for "penis," line 1078, where Anti-Right urges Pheidippides to use his \textit{physis} (\textit{xwv \tau\nu \phi\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota}), would support this interpretation. See Nussbaum, "Practical Wisdom," p. 63 n. 39, who cites line 1078 as an example of \textit{physis} = penis. Contra \textit{physis} as penis, see K. McLeish, "\phi\upsilon\omega\gamma. A Bawdy Joke in Aristophanes?," \textit{CQ} 27 (1977), pp. 76-79. Dover, \textit{Clouds}, notes at line 1300 that Strepsiades threatens his creditors not with a poke to the buttock, but a goad in the anus, a cruel practice used on pack-
thinkery—if it can in fact be interpreted as a return to the metaphor of the universe as a charcoal oven,136 where all men are charcoal (ἀνθρωπῶς, line 97)—may carry sexual connotations, for it has been argued that charcoal is an erotic symbol.137 And while such raucous sexuality is right at home in comedy, a more subtle counterpart of it can likewise be found in elenchos as it draws to its close, when desire is laid bare to confront all that the interlocutor has agreed is logically consistent and correct. Comically exaggerated in the Clouds, desire exposed by elenchos is brought by Aristophanes, like so much else before it, brashly onto the physical plane.

As the Clouds draws to a close, however, the erotic allure of the unattained gets lost, much as it does in the early Platonic dialogues, to a growing sense of outrage and repulsion. Alcibiades and Euthyphro chose avoidance and escape; the bawdy comic hero Strepsiades turns to arson. And, I believe, had we been in the audience for which this version of the Clouds was intended, we would have cheered and hooted as Strepsiades turns the tables and makes Socrates "smart," as Strepsiades "enlightens" Socrates with animals.

136 Following Arrowsmith, Clouds, pp. 136-137.
137 J. Glenn, "Coal as an Erotic Symbol," The Psychoanalytic Review, 60 (1973), pp. 297-300. Glenn cites Aristophanes’ Peace, line 440, as one example.
his new "brilliance," so painstakingly won.

In the final analysis, the Clouds is a thoroughly physical, delightfully comic antidote to the painful mental laboring towards truth Socrates and his elenchos induced in interlocutors. By viewing the man and his method from the perspective of those who felt confounded and accosted rather than those who felt inspired and enthralled, Aristophanes gives us a Socrates and an elenchos that are recognizable from the early dialogues of Plato, but objectified and disjointed. From Plato's philosophic and tragic perspective, Socrates and elenchos are wondrous and paradoxical; from Aristophanes' chosen perspective, the perspective of the pre-literate Athenian who found himself confronted by Socrates, Socrates and the elenchos he practiced are quite another thing. Socrates is weird, roguish, and laughable: a pale ghost, a thief, a babbling lunatic. The effect he had on his interlocutors begins with wonder and attraction, but after he has belittled and bewildered and discomfited them to a point near death, stripped them of all their beliefs--their normal garb--and exposed them, and brought down before their very eyes their whole world, Socrates in the end is a man who begs to be given just what he has dished out. The man who spent his time asking his fellow citizens to enlighten him, finally, and quite literally, in Aristophanes' play, gets what he asked for. His world, his "Thinkery," is burned to the
ground. Socrates is, as the Athenians were by him, "enlightened," and in the conflagration we are shown what the Athenians came to know through talking with this irritating man: enlightenment burns like fire.
Part Three: Comic Elenchos Revisited:

Aristophanes on the Character and Plays of Euripides

The Aristophanic evidence on Euripides differs in form from that on Socrates. Euripides appears as a character in three plays produced over some twenty years (Acharnians, 425 B.C., Thesmophoriazusae, 411 B.C., Frogs, 405 B.C.), is mentioned by name in four others (at Peace 146 ff. and 532 ff., Lysistrata 283 and 368 f., Ecclesiazusae 825 ff., Wasps 61 and 1414), and lines from his plays are a regular subject of parody and comment. Euripides' part in the Frogs is a large one, and yet he does not figure as prominently as does Socrates in the Clouds, the only Aristophanic play in which the philosopher is a character.138 Aristophanes does not give his audience a Euripides who functions as the Socrates of the Clouds does, i.e., as the examiner in a complete elenchos; but this need not entail rejecting the thesis that Aristophanes depicted Euripides as a practitioner of elenchos.

In depicting Socrates, Aristophanes used certain comic images and motifs that, it was argued above in Part Two, show his familiarity with Socrates' practice of elenchos. It can likewise be illustrated that Aristophanes uses many of the same images and motifs in depicting Euripides. There is, however, a difference: while Aristophanes made

138 Socrates is mentioned only twice outside of the Clouds, at Birds 1555 and Frogs 1491.
concrete largely in the character of Socrates, in the case of Euripides, Aristophanes uses comments on the tragedian’s plays as well as characterization of Euripides to depict his practice of elenchos. This suggests that, in Aristophanes’ comic view, what Socrates practiced on the streets was the same thing that Euripides did on stage in his plays. Indeed, Aristophanes’ Chorus insists at the end of the Frogs that Euripides lost the contest in Hades to Aeschylus for just this reason: that Euripides’ poetic art betrays the influence of conversation with Socrates:

> It is smart, then, not to sit beside Socrates chattering (Σωκράτει παρακαθήμενον λαλεῖν), throwing away music and the greatest remnants of the tragic art. Only a deranged man passes idle time in solemn words and trifles of trash (ἐπὶ σεμνοὶς λόγοις καὶ σκαριφησμοῖς λήρων). (Frogs 1491-1499).

This bold statement is only the most obvious place where Aristophanes compares Socrates’ practice and Euripides’ works. Repeatedly in depicting Euripides the comic poet uses the same images and motifs he used in depicting Socrates in the Clouds. A general similarity between the Aristophanic Socrates and Euripides has been detected by scholars of Aristophanes, who nonetheless do not take Aristophanes’ comment at Frogs 1491 ff. as a telling revelation about the methodology used by Euripides in writing his plays. Instead, they explain that Aristophanes perceived the two men as broadly similar because both played a part in the intellectual
Kenneth Reckford claims, Far from sharing the philistine view of Euripides and Socrates as teachers of immorality, [Aristophanes] sees them both quite fairly as spearheads of the educational and cultural revolution of his time; beneath the comic slander (which runs parallel to the philistine prejudice, but must not be taken seriously) both exemplify a loss of simplicity in the Greek world, an eating of the apple of knowledge. Moreover, both Socrates and Euripides extended the cultural revolution, brought it home to ordinary people through the media of teaching and theatre (we would say, college and television), and profoundly, in their different ways, disrupted the old mental and cultural bond between child and parent.

In a later work, Reckford expounds upon what he means by the "different ways" of Euripides and Socrates:

... Euripides remains a catalyst for change in his way, as Socrates in his. He exemplifies the power of new ideas in a popular medium. In his tragedies the older traditions of religion, democracy, and the family are subjected to conscious and often destructive scrutiny, just as in Socrates' teaching.

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139 A list of four identical charges Aristophanes levels against Socrates and Euripides may be found in Victor Martin, "Euripide et Ménandre face à leur public," in Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique, Vol. 6, 1958, Euripide (Geneva: Vandoeuvres, 1960), pp. 266-269.

For a comparison of two equally generalizing and thus distorting assessments of Euripides and Socrates, as evidenced in Aristophanes' attitude toward Euripides and Nietzsche's toward Socrates, see R. Friedrich, "Euripidaristophanizein and Nietzsche'sokratizein. Aristophanes, Nietzsche, and the Death of Tragedy," Dionysius 4 (1980), pp. 5-36.

140 Reckford, "Father-Beating," pp. 99-100, final italics added. Cf. E. A. Havelock, "Why Was Socrates Tried?," in Studies in Honour of Gilbert Norwood, ed. Mary E. White (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1952), pp. 95-109, for the theory that Socrates' "school" in the Clouds was the emblem of his very real disruption of the old educational system, in which fathers controlled the education of their sons. Socrates posed a threat to the social control afforded by this educational system, and for this reason he was tried.
they are brought, without exception, before the bar of reason. It is no wonder that Aristophanes treats the two "learned doctors" in similar ways; nor that both times, in the Clouds and in the Frogs, he goes beyond satire to deal with deeper issues, of cultural and educational change, to which Socrates' teaching and Euripides' writing point.  

Reckford's comments on Aristophanes' view of Socrates and Euripides are suggestive of what this study ultimately will argue: that there is between Socrates and Euripides a difference in medium, but no perceptible difference in their method or in its effect. Reckford is, of course, only one of several scholars who have recognized the similarity between Socrates and Euripides in Aristophanes' plays. William Arrowsmith, for example, who finds Aristophanes' depictions of Socrates and Euripides misrepresentative, remarks,

The distortions practiced upon Sokrates are typical and not exceptional. They are, for instance, completely of a piece with Aristophanes' systematic distortion of Euripides; if Euripides' words are quoted against him, they are invariably taken from their context and parodied by willful misunderstanding. But those who are angered by the spectacle of Sokrates mocked have never lifted a finger in defense of Euripides.  

This study does not propose to take up Arrowsmith's challenge to defend Euripides, any more than it has previously sought to defend Socrates. Instead, it will be argued that the Aristophanic evidence reveals that

141 Reckford, Old-and-New, p. 428.  
142 Arrowsmith, Clouds, p. 12.
Guripides was perceived to use in his plays a method like that used by Socrates among his fellow citizens, the very thing Aristophanes' lines at Frogs 1491 ff. so boldly proclaim. And while it is true that Aristophanes' Euripides is never shown conducting, as did Socrates in the Clouds, an entire elenchos, the evidence nonetheless forcefully suggests a methodological similarity between the two. Additionally, as was true of the Aristophanic Socrates, it will be seen that the Euripides Aristophanes depicts is not his own, but instead the Euripides Aristophanes' audience could laugh at in recognition, a Euripides whose work was perceived to have much in common with Socrates' practice of elenchos.

Indeed, in the Frogs, the play in which Euripides' poetry is examined at greatest length, Aristophanes uses words with the stem elench- more than in any other play. At Frogs 894 Euripides, as he is about to

\[143\] If, as this study will argue, Euripides' practice of elenchos was in his plays rather than in his daily conduct, we should not be surprised that Aristophanes would not choose to depict Euripides' practice of elenchos per se. After all, depiction of an entire Euripidean play as an elenchos would require, undoubtedly, too sustained and too cerebral an analysis for comedy's purposes. Besides, Socrates' practice of elenchos provided Aristophanes with material lacking in the case of Euripides: a sole interlocutor whose plight made for easy comic pickings. See below, Chapter Four, Parts One and Two, for the Chorus as the audience's agent "interlocutor" in Euripides' theatrical conduct of elenchos in Medea.

\[144\] The fact that such words are not used by Socrates in the Clouds is perplexing, but does not, I believe, invalidate the suggestive power of this evidence.
embark on his contest with Aeschylus, prays to his peculiar
gods: "... that I may rightly cross-examine these logoi
I attack" (ὁρθῶς μ’ ἐλέγχειν δὶν ἄν ἀπτῶμαι
λόγων); a few lines later at 908 he boasts that he will
begin his defense of his own poetry after having put
Aeschylus to test (τοῦτον δὲ πρῶτ’
ἐλέγξω); at 922 Euripides admits he is agitated
because he is refuting Aeschylus (αὐτὸν
ἐξελέγχω); and at 959-961 Euripides boasts that he
not only put everyday, common things to the test of
elenchos, but that he submitted his own art to such
testing: "I brought in domestic matters—things we use
and live with—and put them to proof (ἐξ δὲν γ’ ἄν
ἐξηλεγχόμην); those who knew—anyone—could put my
art to the test (εὐνειδότες γὰρ οὕτοι ἔλεγχον
ἄν μου τὴν τέχνην)."

Aeschylus in this play, by contrast, has to be urged
by Dionysus to "cross-examine and be cross-examined"
(ἐλέγχ’, ἔλεγξοι, 857), and indicates that he
considers the only valid "cross-examination" of poetry to
be the very concrete weighing of lines on scales

The dates of the two plays in question (Clouds 420-417,
Frogs 405) may provide an explanation: it may be that
Socrates’ practice was only regularly termed elenchos some
time after the production of the Clouds. Or it may be that
Aristophanes in his characterization of Euripides
intentionally used words he knew would recall the method of
Socrates, with which (not vice versa) he was comparing the
method used by Euripides in composing his plays. Either
alternative is highly speculative.
(ἐπὶ τὸν σταθμὸν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀγαγεῖν ὑπολογομαί, ὅπερ ἐξελέγει τὴν ποίησιν νῦν μόνον, 1365-1366). And although Aristophanes once in this play as in other plays uses words with this stem without identifiable reference to the type of cross-examination Socrates practiced,\(^{145}\) the use of these words seven times in the Frogs in reference to the contest between Euripides and Aeschylus is (at least) highly suggestive. This dictional phenomenon is made still more compelling as evidence because, of all Aristophanic characters, Euripides is the one who uses words of this stem most frequently (five times); and, in fact, Anti-Right in the Clouds is the only other character to use these words more than once (twice, at Clouds 1043 and 1062; see the discussion above in Part Two). Finally, Euripides' prayer for help in putting logoi to elenchos at 894, and his claim at 959 ff. that he not only conducts but submits to elenchos, mark his practice of elenchos as Socratic.

Further indication that the Aristophanic Euripides was a practitioner of Socratic elenchos may be found in references to Euripides' penchant for questioning everything and everybody and in reference to his teaching others, through his plays, to question in like manner. At Frogs 958 Euripides credits his plays with teaching men,

\(^{145}\)See Frogs 741, Knights 1232, Plutus 574, Ecclesiaziusae 485, Lysistrata 484.
"to be suspicious, to consider all things well"
(Ὑποτείσθαι, περινοεῖν ἀπαντα); at 971 ff. he further describes what it is he has taught men through his dramas:

I introduced them to thinking (φονεῖν) by bringing reasoning and examination (λογισμὸν . . . καὶ σκέψιν) into the art, so that now they reflect on all things and discern other things (νοεῖν ἀπαντα καὶ διειδέναι τὰ τ' ἄλλα) and live their home lives better than before and examine well (κανασκοπεῖν), "How's that?", "Where's this?", "Who took that?" (πῶς τοῦτ' ἔχει; ποῦ μοι τοδί; τίς τοῦτ' ἔλαβε;). (Frogs 971-979).

The final, persistent questions are especially reminiscent of Socrates' practice in elenchos, although Euripides' entire description certainly makes his art sound Socratic rather than what is sometimes termed sophistic.146 Sophists did not, so far as we know, pride themselves on presenting men with questions, but with answers.

Sophists were, of course, great talkers, but the concern of many of them was persuasion, which cannot be served if one is perceived to be a babbling lunatic. But this is precisely how Aristophanes' Euripides and his plays, like Aristophanes' Socrates before him, are presented: as ever talking about things, but making little sense. "Prattling" and "chattering" are how Aristophanes likes to describe Euripides and the effect his plays have

146 For the argument that Aristophanes' hostility to Euripides is because he considers him a sophist, see D. A. Deli, "Algunas Incógnitas de la Ecuación Eurípides Aristofanes," Argos 1 (1977), pp. 76-84.
had, and whether Aristophanes uses words related to the verb λαλέω or to στωμύλλω, it is clear that Euripides' words are incomprehensible because their significance is puzzling. This is exactly what the Chorus indicates when it asserts at Frogs 1491-1497 that Euripides "sits chattering beside Socrates" (Σωκράτης παρακαθημένος λαλεῖν) and idles away time "in solemn words and trifles of trash" (ἐπὶ σεμνοίσι λόγοισι καὶ σκαριφησμοίσι λήρων). The Frogs is full of other such references. For example, Heracles wonders that there is a dearth of poets "more prattling than Euripides" (Εὐριπίδου . . . λαλίστερα, 91); the Chorus comments on Euripides' "sharp-chattering tooth" (δεύλαλον . . . δόντα, 815); Aeschylus calls Euripides a "gossip gleaner" (στωμυλιοσυλλεκτάδη, 841); Euripides describes his reducing regimen for poetry as consisting in part of "chatterbox juice" (κυλὸν . . . στωμυλμάτων, 943); according to Aeschylus, Euripides taught men "to make a practice of chattering and prattling" (λαλιᾶν ἐπιτησέωσι καὶ στωμυλίαν, 1069) and Euripides himself he deems "ever-chattering" (κατεστωμυλένε, 1160). In the Acharnians, a play produced nearly twenty years earlier than the Frogs, Dikaiopolis similarly describes a Euripidean character as "chattering" (στωμύλος, 429).

To make the charge of "prattling" and "chattering" is
to perceive that the accused talks nonsense, something that the ordinary person finds inconsequential and banal. A similar charge of incomprehensibility was levelled against Socrates, both by interlocutors in Plato's dialogues and humorously by Aristophanes in the Clouds, for precisely this reason: Socrates' concern was with what seemed to other men to trivial and mundane. Aristophanes' Euripides and his poetry betray similar concerns. Euripides' verses are themselves treated as trivial; reference to them is in diminutives: Euripides composes "versicles" (ἐπύλλιον in its various inflections, Acharnians 398, Frogs 942, Peace 532) or "phrasicles" (ῥηματιον in its various inflections, Acharnians 444 and 447, Peace 534). In addition, in the verse-weighing scene at Frogs 1378 ff. Euripides' lines are every time lighter than Aeschylus', undoubtedly because, as Euripides himself has boasted, he put poetry on a diet to take away its heaviness (Frogs 939 ff.). Euripides' art is like the practice of Socrates in that Euripides, too, tends to bring things down to their finest, most pulverized, form: in the Frogs, the Chorus describes the contending Euripides as one who "will pulverize by talk".

καταλεπτολογήσει, 828), and Euripides himself boasts of having introduced in his poetry the squares of the “finest ground” rules (λεπτῶν, 956). In a similar vein are Euripides’ demand for instruments at Frogs 799 ff. so he can “put the tragedies to the touchstone, word by word” (κατ’ ἐπος βασανιέν ... τὰς τραγῳδίας, 802), and the Chorus’ description of the substance of Euripides’ speech as “something filed down” (τι ... κατερρινημένον, 901).

But besides being concerned with things that appear inconsequential, Euripides, like Socrates, attends to what is mundane, or, generally, to what others consider beneath serious concern. Callicles’ complaint at Gorgias 490-491 that Socrates persists in talking about “meats and drinks and doctors and other gibberish” is illuminating not only when one considers Strepsiades’ frustration with Socrates at Clouds 648 ff. (see above, Part Two), but also when one witnesses the comic business at Acharnians 415 ff. There, after Dikaiopolis has requested rags, a cap, a beggar’s staff, a little basket with a hole burned through it, a little tankard with a broken rim, and a little pitcher plugged with a sponge, Euripides laments “Listen, fellow, you’re robbing me of my tragedy.” (464). After Dikaiopolis continues with requests for withered leaves to fill the basket, Euripides moans, “You’re destroying me! Here! My plays are clean gone!” (470). This scene could
be chalked up merely as an extended bit satirizing Euripides' alleged penchant for beggars—which indeed is a part of its humor—were it not for similar pronouncements on Euripides' plays in the Frogs: at 959 Euripides claims, "I brought in domestic matters (οἶκεῖα πράγματα)—things we use and live with . . . ."; at 1197 ff. Aeschylus belittles Euripides' prologues by showing how easily one can fit in them everywhere a "little bottle of oil" (ληθυθείων), and claims that a "little fleece" or a "bag" (κφάρμιον, θύλακον, 1203; note that two are diminutives and all are very common items) would be equally easy to insert; at 1331 ff. Aeschylus hilariously parodies Euripides' monodies by reciting a classic case of "much ado about nothing": a women bewails at great length the theft of a cock as if it were a thing of portentous moment. Euripides' plays, then, according to Aristophanes, are as chock-full of the junk of everyday life as are Socrates' discussions on the streets of Athens.

But Euripides is not, according to Aristophanes' plays, merely a benign chatterbox. Euripides and his characters are shown to be rogues, as was Socrates, and Euripides and his plays attract and teach roguish behavior. In the Frogs, Dionysus describes Euripides as a "rogue" (πανούργος, 80); at lines 104 and 106 Heracles

148 All three may be diminutives, if the reading of the codices, θύλακον, is preferred to the θύλακον of the scholia.
denounces Euripides' poetic style as consisting of "knavish tricks" and as being "thoroughly depraved" (κόβαλα; παμπόνηρα); Aeschylus credits Euripides with having turned the Athenians into, among other things, "knives" and "rogues" (κοβάλους . . . πανούργους, 1015) and with having dragged out onto stage and taught "roguishness" (τὸ πονηρόν, 1053); Aeschylus later deems Euripides himself a "rogue and liar and offering swiper" (ὁ πανούργος ἀνήρ καὶ ψευδολόγος καὶ βυμόλοχος, 1520-1521; cf. 1085). This last label, with its charge of thievery, indicates why Euripides, his characters, and his art have a reputation so like that of Aristophanes' Socrates: it is not merely because he is a cunning contriver and uses subtle devices (see, e.g. Acharnians 445, Thesmophoriazusae 198-199, 927, and 1131-1132), but rather because Euripides makes use of the same sneaky devices Socrates was perceived to have used. This is made clearest by the speech at Frogs 771 ff., where Aeacus describes what happened upon Euripides' arrival in Hades:

When Euripides came down, he made a display of his powers to the thieves and cutpurses and parricides and burglars (τοῖς λωποδύταις καὶ τοῖς βαλλαγιοτόμοις καὶ τοῖς πατραλοίασι καὶ τοῖς χωρύχοις)—these are the majority in Hades—and these, listening to his opposing arguments and twistings and turnings (τῶν ἀντιλογῶν καὶ λυγμῶν καὶ στροφῶν), went mad and named him cleverest. (Frogs 771-776).

The Aristophanic Euripides, then, is depicted as a
thief and therefore attracts to his side a claque of thieves because he, like the Aristophanic Socrates, is able to secure the unforeseen, the peculiarly elenctic reversal. And yet this ability cannot save Euripides from the comically appropriate tit for tat. Euripides is hoist with his own petard in the Frogs as was only one other character in Aristophanes: Socrates in the Clouds, who likewise suffers his own words redirected against him. At 1471 ff. Dionysus retorts to Euripides’ objections at being left in Hades with words identifiable as parodies of lines from the Euripidean plays Hippolytus, Aeolus, and Polyeidus or Phrixus, respectively. "My tongue swore, but I will choose Aeschylus. . . . What is shameful, if it seems not so to the viewers? . . . Who knows if to live is to die . . . ?" (Frogs 1471, 1475, 1477).

In Aristophanes’ plays, "thieves" like Socrates and Euripides operate undetected by sowing verbal confusion; in

149 Dover, Clouds, p. 267 at line 1503, cites Thesmophoriazusae 51 as a parallel scene, but inappropriately, because the words of Agathon’s slave (line 43) used by Mnesilochus against him are not put to the service of quid pro quo reversal, but are instead a brief piece of comic business that goes nowhere.

150 “My tongue swore” (Hippolytus 612) was so notorious as to invite no comment in the scholia. W. S. Barrett, ed., Euripides, Hippolytos (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964; hereafter Barrett, Hippolytos), p. 274 at line 612, notes Aristophanes’ allusions to the line also at Thesmophoriazusae 275 and Frogs 101 as evidence of its notoriety.

For attribution of the other lines, see Scholia in Aristophanem, ed. W. J. W. Koster, Frogs 1475 and 1478, and Scholia in Euripidem, ed. E. Schwartz, Hippolytus 191.
socrates' case, this was accomplished by concentrating on what seemed to be matters entirely unrelated to the subject assumed to be at hand. The Aristophanic Euripides is similarly confusing to those around him. Dover rightly notes a similarity in the confusion of Mnesilochus speaking with Euripides at Thesmophoriazusae 13-20 and that of Strepsiades speaking with Socrates at Clouds 227-236; but the confusion between Mnesilochus and Euripides starts at the play's very beginning and is not merely, as Dover maintains, "[t]he total misunderstanding of a scientific argument by an ignorant man . . . ."151 Instead, the confusion of Mnesilochus comes from the fact that he has, at line 4, asked a straightforward question, "Where are you taking me, Euripides?," in reply to which he has been treated to a discourse which seems to have no bearing on the question asked. He must listen to Euripides hold forth on the diversity of hearing and seeing and to a story of the creation of the eye and ear in living creatures at the beginning of time, both of which are vast generalizations on the particular instance at hand: i.e., that if Mnesilochus were only to look straight in front of him, he wouldn't have to hear from Euripides where they were going, for their goal, the house of Agathon, lies dead ahead. But these generalizations are such that their significance to Mnesilochus' question is lost to him;

151 Dover, Clouds, p. 128 at lines 235-236.
instead, he can only express his perplexity at what in the world this discussion has to do with his question (πῶς ἔγειρε, 6; cf. 9, 13, and 22). Mnesilochus is confused because Euripides, as Socrates was seen to do in the Platonic dialogues and in the Clouds, has made a rapid shift from the particular (where are we going?) to a universal (one need not hear what one may see; hearing and seeing from the beginning of time have been separate). We are reminded of Strepsiades, who was faced with a Socrates whose practice of drawing analogy Aristophanes rendered absurd by having Socrates discuss things totally irrelevant—rhythm and the like—to Strepsiades' very simple question: how to get out of his debts.

The confusion that arises from drawing analogies is the result of the perception that x has nothing whatsoever to do with y, and, as such, is similar to the confusion that arises when two opposites are equated. In Aristophanes' plays, Euripides is the master of such equations. Euripides himself, according to Cephasphon at Acharnians 396, "not within, is within" (οὐκ ἐνδον, ἐνδον ἐστίν). In the Frogs, Aeschylus cites a Euripidean line, "not to live is to live" (οὐ ἐκὴν τὸ ἐκὴν, 1082), which Dionysus, after having suffered confusion upon hearing Euripides suggest that the mistrusted should become the trusted and vice versa (ὅταν τὰ νῦν ἁπίστα πίσθ', ἡγώμεθα, τὰ
Jovita Altman, 1443-1444), uses against Euripides in a way that forcefully suggests that such equations of opposites are hyperbolic shorthand for analogy that likewise seems to equate two unrelated subjects: "Who knows if to live is to die, to breathe is to dine, to sleep is a sheepskin?" (τίς οίδεν εἴ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἐστὶ καθαρεῖν, τὸ πνεῖν δὲ δειπνεῖν, τὸ δὲ καθεύδειν κύδιον; 1477-1478).

Such total confusion is, in any case, reminiscent of one aspect of what precedes the aporia\textsuperscript{152} that reigns at the end of the early Platonic dialogues: the sense of vertigo, resulting from the perception that things keep moving from their once stable locations. In Euripides' plays, then, as happens in discussions with Socrates, things get turned entirely topsy-turvy (see Chapter One, Part Three). Opposites converge in Euripides' plays (to live is to die) no less than they are wont to do in the course of the early Platonic dialogues, where, for example, it slowly dawns on young Euthyphro that his "pious" act of prosecuting his own father has the stench of impiety about it. Euripidean plays show once sure dissimilars finding equation (to breathe is to dine, to sleep is a sheepskin) no less than they do in Socratic elenchos, where Socrates' analogies, initially so apparently irrelevant to what is

\textsuperscript{152} The term aporia is not used in the Frogs in the technical, Socratic sense, nor is it used in reference to Euripides. See Frogs 806 and 1465.
being discussed, have a telling effect in the final syllogizing stage. That Aristophanes shows Euripides as the master converger of opposites and dissimilars marks the tragedian as fomenting confusion that bears a peculiarly elenctic impress.

And still it is not only in his procedure that Aristophanes' Euripides is shown to resemble Socrates; for the tragedian in his plays brings out the truth, the way things really are instead of the way they are professed to be, no less than does the Aristophanic Socrates, whose prowess at clothes "thievery" bares men's bodies. The Aristophanic Euripides is never accused of lying; on the contrary, the complaint against him is that he persists in revealing the truth. The attempt of women in the Thesmophoriazusae to charge Euripides with slander is shown to be motivated by their anger at his exposure of the truth about their drinking and carousing, which of course makes it difficult for them to continue to engage in these practices (Thesmophoriazusae, passim, especially lines 395 ff. and 473 ff.). Likewise, at Frogs 1052 ff., Aeschylus' charge against Euripides in regard to women like Phaedra is not that he has distorted the truth, but instead that he has dragged it out in the open and taught it.

With truth-baring comes the disclosure of desires, the desires that inform beliefs and actions. The Aristophanic Socrates' cross-examining elenchos was shown to effect such
a disclosure, by forcing Right in the Clouds to admit and graphically to reveal his latent desires. The Aristophanic Guryipides is no less subtle in his plays. Not only does he, with only seeming incongruity, put "to desire" (ἐρᾷν) at the center of the list of things he introduced in his plays ("to reflect, to see, to deliberate, to turn, to desire, to use cunning, to be suspicious, to consider all things well," Frogs 957 ff.); but Aeschylus' boast that he can find a place for ἄρτυθιον, κφόλριον, or θύλακον in any Euripidean prologue may allude to persistent sexual references in Euripides' works. Finally, Aeschylus at Frogs 1046, responding to Euripides' jibe that "... there was never anything of Aphrodite in you [i.e., your...

The literature on these three words is extensive. See, e.g., C. H. Whitman, "ΛΗΚΥΘΙΟΝ ΑΠΩΛΕΣΕΝ," HSCP 73 (1969), pp. 109-112 (who sees only the oil flask as carrying a sexual connotation, since it has a suggestive shape and the word has a suggestive first syllable); J. G. Griffith, "Ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν. A Postscript," HSCP 74 (1970), pp. 43-44 (who confirms the identification of ἄρτυθιον with θύφαλλος); R. J. Penella, "Κφόλριον in Aristophanes Frogs," Mnemosyne 26 (1973), pp. 337-341 (who argues that all three items refer to male genitalia). Against sexual connotation, see, e.g., Z. P. Ambrose, "The Lekythion and the Anagram of Frogs 1203," AJP 89 (1968), pp. 342-345 (who sees the three items as suggestive of an anagram, and, as such, criticism that Euripides says the same thing under different guises); J. Henderson, "The Lekythos and Frogs 1200-1248," HSCP 76 (1972), pp. 133-144 (who argues the word symbolizes poverty and sinister activity); D. Bain, "Ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν. Some Reservations," CQ 35 (1985), pp. 31-37 (who claims sexual connotations are not borne out by the context of the passage).
plays]," retorts, ". . . well, but she sat down on you
[i.e., your plays] and yours much too much."154 That
is, the chatterbox, ever-questioning tragedian was not only
known for his ability to befuddle by equating dissimilars
and for his insistent baring of the truth, but for his
constant exposure of the goddess of desire, the troubling
Aphrodite. What an odd, elenctic mixture of attributes!

The practice of elenchos won for Socrates the
reputation of an oddball; that Euripides' plays were
perceived by his fellow Athenians as being as weird as was
the man Socrates is apparent in the fact that Aristophanes
portrays Euripides as writing his tragedies aloft, floating
in the air like Socrates. As was argued above in Part Two,
the up-in-the-air imagery applied to Socrates is not only
appropriate to his comic status as psychê, but is also
expressive of the pre-literate interlocutor's sense of the
insubstantiality of Socrates' subject of choice in
elenchos: the unseen universals beyond the concrete
particulars with which the interlocutors constantly dealt.
In the pre-literate's view, unremitting reference to the
abstract puts one in the realm of the insubstantial; thus,
in comedy, such a one would of course float, having no

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154 Further evidence of Euripides' proclivity for
sexual subjects may be found in the tragedian's own use of
τάγη as a pun on τά τέη at line 862 of the
Frogs; see G. W. Dickerson, "Aristophanes' Ranae 862. A
Note on the Anatomy of Euripidean Tragedy," HSCP 78 (1974),
pp. 177-188.
ballasting substance to hold him down. And float Euripides
does, in the *Acharnians* of 425 B.C., and with no less
grandeur than his soul-mate Socrates. In place of the awe-
filled Strepsiades is Dikaiopolis, come for some tragic
rags, and instead of the haughty disciple is Cephisophon;
but the scene is much the same as its counterpart in the
*Clouds*:

-- (Cephisophon, of Euripides) His mind, without, is
gathering versicles and is not within; himself,
within, makes tragedy a-loft (ἀναβάσση). . . .
-- (Euripides, to the insistent Dikaiopolis) I'll
trundle myself out, but I have no time to come down.
. . . -- (Dikaiopolis) You make [tragedy] a-loft, is
it possible out of the loft (καταβάσση)?
(*Acharnians* 398-411).

As we view Euripides writing his tragedies, floating
"a-loft," we know he will share this air with Socrates,
whom Aristophanes was to depict in the same ethereal realm
a few years later. And while it was clearly possible to
write tragedy "out of the loft," Euripides did not choose
to do so. Instead, by remaining resolutely "a-loft,"
Euripides incurred many of the same charges levelled
against Socrates, because he used, on stage and to the same
effect, essentially the same methods the philosopher was
using on the streets of Athens. Aristophanes knew this
method well enough to show Socrates using it in the
*Clouds*, and well enough to insist that Euripides was using
it in his plays.

Yet Aristophanes left for posterity the task of
testing this claim. For, to him, it was clear. He never
felt obliged to do more than proclaim the comparison and suggest its validity by depicting Socrates and Euripides as alike. We of course do not wonder that Aristophanes in his plays did not choose to analyze in depth a play of Euripides, to show that the claims he made about Socrates and Euripides were true, for such an analysis would have no place on the comic stage. And while centuries have passed and scholars have persisted in observing similarities between Socrates and Euripides, no one thus far has put the bold claim of Aristophanes to the test. The time for testing is long overdue. Accordingly, the final chapter of this study (Chapter Four) will make a beginning of vindicating Aristophanes' depiction of Socrates' conversations and Euripides' plays as methodologically similar, by arguing that Euripides' Medea is elenchos transferred to a different medium.

But before this definitive task is undertaken, the next chapter will show that modern critics of Euripides have--no less insistently than Aristophanes but not so consciously as he--spoken of Euripides' method of composing his plays in terms that make it sound suspiciously like Socratic elenchos.
CHAPTER THREE: 
SOCRATIC ELENCHOS AND MAIEUSIS IN EURIPIDES' PLAYS

Part One: The History of Euripidean Criticism Reconsidered

This study sought, in its first chapter, to define the procedural elements and characteristics of Socratic method. The second chapter examined the Aristophanic evidence on Socrates and Euripides and showed, not only that Aristophanes explicitly states that Euripides' work bore the impress of Socrates' practice, but also that Aristophanes can be presented as an informed witness. This is because his comic depiction of Socrates, which has much in common with his depiction of Euripides, shows familiarity with Socrates' practice of elenchos. Since, then, Aristophanes, a contemporary of Socrates and Euripides, has depicted the methodological similarity of the two, the next logical step is to look to the work of Euripides for evidence of Socrates' method.

It would nonetheless discourage this study's thesis if, in the long history of Euripidean interpretation, the influence of Socrates' method on Euripides' work had never been discerned. But such is not the case; for although no one has argued what will now be argued, that Euripides' work duplicates the method characteristic of Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues, the critical literature on
guripides points toward, without explicitly formulating, this thesis. As early as 1923, F. L. Lucas remarked, "Socrates . . . is persistently linked with Euripides by a tradition, which cannot be entirely discounted except by that type of scholar who refuses to believe any facts about antiquity which he has not himself invented."\(^1\) Scholars have nonetheless persisted in discounting this tradition by their silence on the subject, while critical estimation of Euripides belies this silence.

A clear example of the intuited link between Euripides and Socrates is found in the general critical interpretation the two have shared. To begin with, in Euripidean interpretation\(^2\) there is little agreement on

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what Euripides was doing in his work. Albin Lesky declares, "Kaum eine andere Gestalt der antiken Literatur ist in ihrer Vielschichtigkeit so schwierig zu fassen wie Euripides." Lesky's opinion is confirmed by the contradictory results of the many attempts to pin down Euripides and his work under one label. Peter Burian reflects in despair: "Having been subjected over the years to Euripides the Rationalist, the Irrationalist, the Idealist, the Realist, the Patriot, the Escapist, and many more, we may now well ask whether there is any Euripides left at all." H. D. F. Kitto is no more optimistic as he contemplates how Euripides has fared in the critical literature:

... he has been represented as a deplorable atheist, as the daring and noble critic of an immoral and effete Olympian religion; as a "botcher," as the contriver of infinitely subtle plays that meant one thing to the simple and something much more exciting to the clever; as the preacher of a philanthropic liberalism and rationalism, as a total irrationalist; as a sour misogynist, as the first Greek to recognise that women too are of the human race.

Only those who see as the essence of Euripides' work its inability to be classified have avoided contradictions.

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4 Peter Burian, "Euripides the Contortionist," Arion n.s. 31 (1976), p. 96. Burian concludes his review (p. 113) by labelling Euripides "enigmatic."

These critics recognize in Euripides a peddler of paradoxes, a Protean contortionist. Indeed, Erich Segal designates Euripides the "poet of paradox" and maintains that "[e]very play of Euripides seems to be asking a question or else boldly stating some mythical and/or visual paradox." Michelini, after tracing diverging opinions of Euripides' interpreters, describes Euripides' protean mutability:

The skillful and facile theatrical technician who proceeds to spoil his plays out of moral principle is matched by the doctrinaire philosopher who cannot resist weakly pretty poetic fancies. The specialist in female emotional maladies (Leidenschaft) turns cold rhetorician, just as we become absorbed in his art. We break our hearts over the most harrowing and pathetic of tragedians (tragikōtatos), only to find ourselves in the next scene repressing a terrible urge to snigger. The most violent and improbable

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6 As will be noticed from some of the following comments, there is some tendency to confuse the poet with his work. See, as a caution against such tendencies, Harold Cherniss, "The Biographical Fashion in Literary Criticism," University of California Publications in Classical Philology 12 (1943), pp. 279-292. Cf. Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 95: "As a general rule, preference should be given to traits that seem to characterize the plays directly, in preference to those that attach to Euripides himself."

expedients have long been tried against these anomalies, without success, and without consensus, since one such exploit merely provokes another of a different stamp.8

Equal inability to characterize and equally profound disagreement in interpretation can be found in the critical literature on Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues. How Socrates the man and Socrates’ practice of elenchos are to be interpreted continue to be hotly debated. Socrates and his practice, too, have proven enigmatic, paradoxical, and hard to pin down. That such opinions of the philosopher and his work are a commonplace can be affirmed by even the most casual examination of the literature on Socratic elenchos.9

But the interpretation of Euripides’ work and of Socrates’ method has more in common than a recognition of the perplexity the two consistently inspire. In Euripidean criticism are found pronouncements on Euripides’ work that, taken together, give a full array of the procedural elements and characteristics of Socrates’ practice of elenchos as analyzed in Chapter One. And while it is true that at first glance Euripides’ plays bear little resemblance to the dialogues, the method of the dialogues


9For some examples, see above, Chapter One, Part Three.
and the tragedies, and even the effects of that method, can be shown to be similar.

And yet there is an apparent dissimilarity between the dialogues and Euripides' tragedies: they are of different genres. Nevertheless, though Euripides is certainly a tragedian, part of the long-standing criticism of his work, dating back to antiquity, has been that he is a philosopher only thinly disguised as a tragedian. Athenaeus (13.561a) labels Euripides "ὁ σκηνικὸς φιλόσοφος," and the scholiasts criticize what was considered superfluous philosophizing in his plays (see, e.g., at Alcestis 779). Nietzsche, infamous for his criticism of Euripides' prosaic, philosophic approach to tragedy, sensed that behind Euripides' philosophic "execution" of the genre was the sinister figure of Socrates. Nietzsche believed that Euripides in the end regretted having invaded the poetic terrain of tragedy with prosaic philosophy, but it was, alas, too late:

Dionysus had already been scared from the tragic stage, by a demonic power speaking through Euripides. Even Euripides was, in a sense, only a mask: the deity that spoke through him was neither Dionysus nor Apollo, but an altogether newborn demon, called Socrates.11

10 See Nussbaum, Fragility, pp. 122-123, for the argument that such genre distinctions are not ancient.

Nietzsche's hostility, however, did not lend to critics the pause for reflection its very excessiveness recommends.

Michelini traces the small success of early attempts to consider Euripides as a philosopher. The worst distortions were practiced by those who presumed to excavate Euripides' plays for bits of evidence to reconstruct his philosophic views. Even today, though without the earlier excesses, critics persist in treating Euripides as a philosopher. F. L. Lucas exhorts the discretion necessary in making such an assessment:

After Euripides the dramatist there remains Euripides the thinker,--the subject to-day of a vast and growing literature, much of it vitiated by disregard of an obvious principle, which book after book recognizes in theory in its first chapter, and ignores in all that follows. You cannot credit a dramatist indiscriminately with the opinions of his characters; this mistake is as old as the poet's own audiences, who seem to have been in some ways quite peculiarly

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12Michelini, Tragic Tradition, pp. 8-10.


14Witness, for example, the confident pronouncement of E. R. Dodds, "Euripides the Irrationalist," CR 43 (1929; hereafter Dodds, "Irrationalist"), p. 97: "... while Sophocles is a dramatist, Euripides happens to be, like Bernard Shaw and Pirandello, a philosophical dramatist."
imbecile, so that "immoral utterances" like Hippolytus' (612) "With my tongue I swore it—never with my heart," or praise of money in another play, were greeted with bellows of righteous indignation.15

Euripides, then, is often considered to be a philosopher, but the disparity of opinion concerning his philosophic outlook marks him as no ordinary philosopher, or at least as no philosopher in the modern sense of the word. Instead, Euripides is a disturbing sort of philosopher, one very like the Platonic Socrates of the early dialogues: a philosopher who asks questions he does not answer, and who proffers no identifiable, consistent doctrine.16

Euripides' penchant for questions to which he gives no answers is often observed. "Zur Grösse des Euripides gehört, dass er die Frage stellen, aber nicht hat lösen mögen," was Karl Reinhardt's conclusion on the playwright.17 Bernard Knox is less complimentary:

15Lucas, Influence, pp. 28-29. See, however, Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 89, who sympathizes with Aristophanes' and the audience's latching onto what she considers intentionally provocative epigrams because Euripides "... left so little room open for a blow. At the end of the play, there might be nothing for [the audience] to fix on except a few questionable and catchy witticisms."

16See Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 10, especially nn. 34 and 35, for bibliography on failed attempts to identify consistent doctrine in Euripidean plays.

"[Euripides] seems unable or perhaps unwilling to resolve the discords his plays inflict on our ears; even his masterpieces leave us full of disturbing questions."\(^{18}\) That ",[Euripides] seems more concerned to raise questions than to answer them, to cast doubts than to show how the doubts are to be resolved," is the verdict of D. W. Lucas;\(^{19}\) Gilbert Norwood similarly notes that "Euripides settles nothing ...,"\(^{20}\) and Albin Lesky agrees, "... überall ist die Intensität der Fragestellung um ein Vielfaches größer als die Sicherheit der Antwort."\(^{21}\)

As a philosopher, then, Euripides is less than satisfactory to the modern reader, who has come to expect a philosopher to espouse and defend a definable doctrine. Instead, Euripides, like Socrates, is lacking in doctrine, and he is sometimes considered little more than a conduit of the sundry philosophical influences of his time.

"Euripidean plays present no central idea and persuade to


\(^{21}\)Lesky, Geschichte, p. 409.
nothing . . . ,” Michelini proclaims; D. W. Lucas similarly comments:

The 'philosopher of the stage', far from being a philosopher in the technical sense, was an eclectic lover of wisdom ready to set himself in imagination within the framework of many different systems and unwilling to commit himself to any school.\(^\text{22}\)

Léon Parmentier finds Euripides' work to be "en quelque sorte un miroir où viennent se refléter . . . toutes les choses contemporaines."\(^\text{23}\) Albin Lesky, after citing the tradition that Euripides was a student of various philosophers and sophists and a friend of Socrates, notes that Euripides' plays show the influence of these men's ideas and yet contradict them: "Gekannt wird er diese Männer haben und Berührung mit ihren Ideen in Nachfolge und Widerspruch wird an vielen Stellen seines Werkes kenntlich."\(^\text{24}\) C. Collard likewise cautions against identifying Euripides' philosophy with any particular individual, or even with the spirit of the age:

Ancient sources assert his acquaintance with leading sophists or with Socrates—or at least with their ideas. Similarities and echoes are everywhere, sometimes apparent controversial engagement, but never consistently enough to justify the earlier modern view of Euripides as a publicist, in the guise of dramatist, for new theories or codes, let alone any one thinker's theories, a 'poet of the Enlightenment'.\(^\text{25}\)

\(^{22}\) Lucas, _Tragic Poets_, p. 243.


\(^{25}\) Collard, _Euripides_, p. 30.
All of these observations, however, are fairly broad generalizations that require little proof. They merely identify Euripides as one whose plays raise questions and offer no answers. But in so describing Euripides' work, scholars have recently begun to use terms reminiscent of Plato and of Socrates. Both William Arrowsmith and Christian Wolff, for example, have used the term "dialectic" to describe Euripides' drama. That ancient tragic drama in general shares with the Platonic dialogues "a central structural feature, the elenchos or cross-examination," has been asserted by Martha Nussbaum. More recently, Michelini has applied the label "elenchus" to the tendency of Euripides' plays to raise questions. She associates this tendency, however, with the Sophistic enlightenment (in which she considers Socrates played a part), not with Socrates in particular:

A posture of alienation . . . is precisely what does characterize the new historical, philosophical, and rhetorical prose genres of the fifth century, all of which have associations with the Sophistic enlightenment; and it was these genres that Euripidean drama used as the source of its particular tone and style. The prose artist, instead of acting as a source of tradition and its preservation, is a critic


27 Nussbaum, Fragility, p. 128.
who puts traditional values to the elenchus or who wishes to make his audience accept as true the "weaker logos," that is, the inverse of what they would normally believe and expect.28

The critical literature, then, has of late begun to acknowledge a loose association between Euripides' methodology and Socrates'. And yet, such testimony, suggestive though it may be, pales beside the long history

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28Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 70. Michelini uses the word "elenchus" several times (cf. pp. 127, 213, 297), but she never attempts to compare the methods of Socrates and Euripides. She indicates that she considers the two different in that Socrates "attempted to harmonize the contradictory ethics of moral right (dike) and heroic achievement (aretē) by subordinating the latter to the former," while Euripides, "by keeping the old and the new moralities in balance, and by playing the contradictions of one against the other, ... betrayed both of them and laid bare for us the full meaning of the Greek cultural revolution." (p. 127) Michelini seems to suggest that Socratic influence in Euripidean plays is thematic, that is, as evidenced in "the Euripidean convention of a sacrificial aretē" (p. 91), in plays that "anatomize the workings of a new morality of altruism" (p. 226), and in the emphasis on cooperative over competitive virtues (pp. 229-230). Michelini sees in Phaedra's musings on virtuous action in Hippolytus and in Medea's remarks on akrasia in Medea that "Euripides is giving free play to some of the problems that made this [Socratic] argument [that nobody willingly commits a moral error] so interesting and fertile for fifth-century thinkers," and she suggests that Phaedra's speech "looks more like a tribute to Socratic influence than a 'polemic' against the philosopher." (p. 304). For Michelini, the idealistic self-sacrifice, passivity, and integrity of the misunderstood and maligned Hippolytus mark him as a "Socratic hero" (pp. 305-310). Michelini includes Socrates as a "Sophist" without explanation (p. 140), and adamantly resists the notion that "Socratic doctrine" can be extracted from the work of Plato or other authors (p. 304).

of Euripidean interpretation, where the striking similarity between the methodology of the two has been a dominant though tacit theme, particularly in discussions of those aspects of Euripidean drama that have been subject to the most controversy.

For example, a sense of the presence of the *sine qua non* of *elenchos*, i.e., of two counterpoised positions, one of which is refuted, is everywhere in the critical literature on Euripides. Euripidean drama has the reputation of developing a plot and at the same time posing something that is counterplot, something that undermines the plot and makes characters on stage, as well as the audience in the theater, call into question the inevitability of the plot's progression. What, then, in the Platonic dialogues is made discrete by identification with at least two separate interlocutors, is in Euripides somehow less discrete. This lends to Euripidean plays what Gilbert Murray termed "a certain unintelligible note of discord." 30

29 Collard, *Euripides*, p. 32, calls this "the antithetical mode," and claims that it is "[a]pparently instinctive to the Greeks." The presence of this mode in Euripides signals influence of the sophists, who "developed it into an instrument of formal argumentation ...." In addition, Collard notes, "Polar statements and discussions, polar conceptions of setting and action, pervade Euripides ...."  

The critical literature on Euripides has, however, resisted leaving this discord unintelligible. One proposal is that the poet himself took the part of dissident: Euripides, it is claimed, either was betraying his disbelief in the Olympian gods who peopled the traditional stories that were his primary material or was undercutting the heroic ideals the stories embodied.

A. W. Verrall is the most notorious--but certainly not the only--champion of the view that in Euripides' plays is unmistakable evidence that the playwright did not believe in the gods of his countrymen:

The creed of Euripides was that of nascent philosophy, science, and rationalism; between which and the worship of the popular gods there was a war to which modern religious controversies offer no parallel. . . . The duty preached by the philosophers, and by Euripides as a public teacher known to be in sympathy with philosophers, was the duty of thinking on system, of not adopting, without evidence or investigation, contradictory hypotheses on different days of the month or at different stages of a journey; a duty which, as was seen with ever increasing clearness, would if pursued make it impossible to use at all such conceptions as 'Apollo', or 'Artemis', or 'Demeter', and reduce even 'Zeus' to the position of an inconvenient and misleading name.31

Cedric Whitman and others locate the dissonance of Euripides' work in a broader arena, i.e., in the poet's deliberate distortion of the heroic world of the traditional tales that served as his primary material:

Throughout his life, Euripides made use of heroic fiction, without ever shaping a heroic figure... What Euripides did not do was abandon either the framework or the implications of the myth in which all these characters move. The framework continues to surround them, slaves, minions, and demythologized heroes alike, and the overtones are still those of the wide universal world of the grand tradition. The result is a jarring discrepancy of ethos between the two factors, a kind of deliberate polytonality, as if tragedy were now being written in two keys at once.32

Euripides no more than dramatic fictions has been abundantly proved by Verrall and others: there is no need for me to labour the point." L. H. G. Greenwood, Aspects of Euripidean Tragedy (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1953), passim, followed Verrall; see his pp. 4 and 18 for gods as representing "concealed unbelief" and as "fantasy."

Christian Wolff suggests that dissonance in Euripides' plays is in some sense the hallmark of the end of the tragic genre itself:

More and more in the course of the latter part of the fifth century B.C., tragedy approaches the exhaustion of its traditional and conventional resources. For Euripides, this increasingly creates a tension between maintaining the established requirements of the genre --such as the use of a circumscribed body of myth or the presence of a participating chorus-- and a need to revitalize, perhaps even break with, them by innovation and change.33

But behind Euripides the dissident, one can sense the presence of two collocated positions and the refutation characteristic of elenchos. For even when scholars do not assign to Euripides the role of dissident, they recognize in his work the interplay and opposition of counterpoised elements. Wolff, for example, calls attention to the general "contradictoriness" of Euripidean drama and notes the "uneasy, unresolved juxtaposition" particularly in the Medea; Arrowsmith speaks of the "pattern of juxtaposed incongruities" and "critical counterpointing of . . . elements"; and Collard wonders if the "correspondences and balances" of episodes "emphasize the thoroughness of the contrasts, often reversals, they embody."34 Michelini 105-108.


proposes that there is in Euripides' work an "aesthetic of balance and counterpoint:"

The complexity denied to the icy clarity of Euripidean rhetoric is reconstituted in structure, in the interplay and counterpoint of the ideas themselves, and of the speakers who present them. The "drama of ideas" uses ideas to build aesthetic, not logical, structures, in which important elements are often presented only under cancellation by other opposing elements.35

Nevertheless, in Euripidean plays, two or more positions do not merely get presented. Instead, refutation is a regular feature in this arena of ideas. H. D. F. Kitto discerns a character-centered refutation when he says, "Euripides, to our great surprise, will round upon a sympathetic character in the last act . . . ."36 More recently, Michelini describes Euripides' skill at refutation in a peculiarly Socratic way when she remarks,

Euripidean theater is involved with the same cultural concerns that are raised by the theater of Sophokles; but its relation to these concerns is secondary, in that it represents them almost always by a process of inversion. . . . To say No is the function of Euripidean art, and this continual negation always juxtaposition of "one familiar action with another that was equally familiar, but contradictory in pattern."

35Michelini, Tragic Tradition, pp. 120 and 119.

36H. D. F. Kitto, Greek Tragedy, 3 ed. (London and New York: Methuen, 1961; hereafter Kitto, Tragedy), p. 253. Whitman, Full Circle, p. 129, sees in Euripides' "war plays" refutation on a larger scale, what he calls ". . . reversals of moral perspective that come from outside, rather than from any inherent, organic dynamics of the action such as would bring them about inevitably; they are arbitrarily imposed by the hand of the poet in order to evolve a counterpiece that somehow negates the first half of the play."
looks toward something else, adumbrating that other by the play of its refusal, its irony.37

It is clear, then, that Euripidean plays share with Socratic elenchos the collocation of two opposing positions, one of which is refuted. It may be objected, however, that this counterpoint, or juxtaposition, or whatever else it may be called, is still not the same as the give and take of elenchos, where the interlocutor is subtly urged by Socrates' argumentation from one position to another, and to yet another, until it becomes clear that his ultimate position is one that he himself can neither deny nor maintain, and, realizing that he is refuted, he experiences the dislocation known as aporia. The critical literature does, however, give testimony that there can be found in Euripides' plays the changing position of the interlocutor and the aporia of Socratic elenchos.

The changing position of the interlocutor is recognizable in what has been sometimes been termed the "emotional lability" of Euripidean characters. "Instability, conflict, and change seem to mark many of Euripides' characters," Collard observes, "so that understanding them is problematic."38 Arrowsmith

37Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 126.

38Collard, Euripides, p. 9. "Emotional lability" is Michelini's phrase; see Tragic Tradition, p. 113. Michelini argues (p. 114) that this emotional lability gets in the way of the audience's ability to maintain concern
identifies the mutability of character in Euripides with
the interplay of ideas when he claims that certain
characters change "... because their function is not that
of rounded characters or 'heroes' but specifications of the
shaping ideas of the play." He continues:

... the one kind of character which Euripides' theater cannot afford is that splendid integrated
self-knowledge represented by the "old fantastical
Duke of dark corners" in Measure for Measure;
Euripides' theater is all Angelos, Lucios, and
Claudios, average, maimed, irresolute, incomplete
human nature. ... Moral judgment is, as Euripides
tried to show, no less precarious and difficult than
the comprehensive description of reality.39

R. G. A. Buxton also senses in Euripides' characters ideas
being developed:

... [Euripides'] works are composed of a series of
interlocking arguments. Various characters put cases,
trying to persuade each other, and the audience, of
the validity of their position. The effect of the
play consists of nothing less than the complex impact
of all the interlocking persuasions, arguments and
cases.40

A. H. Dale similarly notes that

... in a well-constructed Euripidean tragedy what
controls a succession of situations is not a firmly
conceived unity of character but the shape of the
whole action, and what determines the development and
finesse of each situation is not a desire to paint in
the details of a portrait-study but the rhetoric of
the situation--what Aristotle calls

for the characters.

39Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 43. Cf. Kitto, Tragedy,
pp. 274-275, for "schematic treatment" of characters.

40Buxton, Persuasion, p. 150.
Dale's "rhetoric of the situation" is nothing less than the fluidity of a position successfully attacked. One need only recall Socrates' interlocutors, who change their tack to avoid total defeat of their position, to recognize that any attempt to characterize someone in such a situation would ultimately be futile. It is no wonder, then, that Euripides' characters can seem so inconstant.

One can likewise find observations in the critical literature on Euripides on the particular kind of refutation Socrates practiced. For Euripides does not merely leave the impression that one of the two positions has been soundly trounced. Instead, Euripides leaves the audience in a state of aporia, lost and confused instead of convinced of a well-argued surety. Kurt von Fritz sees the discrepancy between plot and ending as the impetus to an intended and enduring confusion. Von Fritz


42I will argue below, Chapter Four, Part Two, that the characters on stage likewise give evidence of aporia, but to date I have not found in the critical literature connection of this phenomenon to Socratic elenchos. For aporia as the theme of a Euripidean play (without reference to Socratic elenchos), see C. A. E. Luschnig, Tragic Aporia: A Study of Euripides' Iphigenia at Aulis (Berwick, Victoria, Australia: Aureal Publications, 1988), passim.
Bernard Knox, after calling the world Euripides creates on stage "... one of disruption, violence, subversion, uncertainty, discord," goes on to describe the total effect of this poet's works in terms reminiscent of *aporia*: "In Euripidean tragedy old certainties are shattered; what seems solid cracks and melts, foundations are torn up, direction lost." Walter Jens agrees: "Hier gibt es nichts Festes, Keine Bindungen, auf die man sich verlassen dürfte ... ." William Arrowsmith terms this same phenomenon an "impasse," which he sees as "... the dramatist's way of confronting his audience with the necessity of choosing between apparently antithetical

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realities or positions." Later, Arrowsmith continues to describe this impasse as one which extends out beyond the boundaries of the literary piece and into the minds of its intended audience:

... [Euripidean theater] presents its typical actions as problems and thereby involves the audience in a new relation, not as worshippers but jurors who must resolve the problem by decision. But because the problem is usually incapable of outright resolution, is in fact "tragic," the audience is compelled to forfeit the only luxury of making a decision--the luxury of knowing that one has decided wisely. Something--innocence, comfort, complacency--is always forfeited--or meant to be forfeited--by the audience of jurors. And this suggests that the essential anagnorisis of Euripidean theater is not between one actor and another but between the audience and its own experience, as that experience is figured in the plays. Anagnorisis here is knowing moral choice, exercised on a problem which aims at mimicking the quandary of a culture.46

The critical literature, then, again and again observes that Euripides' plays display the overt procedural elements of elenchos; but the literature likewise detects in the plays the presence of elenchos' more subtle procedural elements, the practice of getting the interlocutor to agree to a counterpoised set of questions, which, although they at first seem unrelated to the business at hand, show themselves in the end, when brought together, to entail an analogous situation that contradicts some aspect of the interlocutor's position (see above, Chapter One, Part Three). These analogies, then, when

46 Arrowsmith, "Ideas," pp. 45 and 53. See Chapter One, Part Four, for Seeskin's similar observation on Platonic dialogues.
applied to the interlocutor's position, bring it down to destruction. The same subtle, contrapuntal construction of a partially hidden, seductive, contradictory position is at the heart of Euripidean theater. That critics have detected the presence of this type of refutation in Euripides' plays may be argued from their impatience at what appears to them to be the poet's penchant for the irrelevant—a charge that was more than once levelled against Socrates.

Chapters One and Two demonstrated that one impression that the habit of counterpointing analogies gives is that the counterpointer appears to be a babbling lunatic who brings up all manner of thing not germane to the subject at hand. Such an impression of Euripides can be found in the critical literature. Compare Callicles' impatience with Socrates' choice of topics for discussion ("What's this about cloaks? ... What's this about shoes? You persist in talking nonsense ... ," Gorgias 490-491) with the obvious impatience of, for example, Gilbert Norwood, who claims Euripides "entered the theatre still groping." In concluding his discussion of the "the sudden inconsistencies ... ; the fits of inopportune, if not

47This study will argue that Euripides is able to effect such a contrapuntal construction poetically, by using motifs and images analogously to refute (and even point the way out of) the seemingly inevitable tragic progression of the plot. The characters, broadly speaking, manifest the particulars of the interlocutor's position in elenchos. See below, Chapter Four, Parts One and Four.
unseemly, open-mindedness; the changes of mood; the ramshackle or even self-contradictory plots" to which Euripidean drama is prone, Norwood bristles with Calliclean, self-confident disapproval:

One fact accounts for these lapses: with [Euripides] intellectual control of imagination was apt to fail abruptly. ... Euripides--can it be denied?--more than once began a play with no clear notion of how it was to develop. ... When this irresponsible mood [i.e., of being unable to control his characters] lays hold on Euripides he chases every hare that shows its scut. Often it is as handsome and nimble a beast as ever was coursed in March, but it means equivocal reputation for the man who promised his guests a leopard. 48

Norwood later grudgingly intones that the "genius" of Euripides perhaps excuses him: we should be "thankful" to receive whatever we get from him; after all, Euripides is "notoriously uneven" and had "never read Aristotle: if in the course of composition a quaint fancy struck him, down it went into the play, and a fig for consistency!" 49

In an earlier work, however, Norwood was more tolerant: ". . . nothing is better known about Euripides than that his writings are full of 'inconsistencies,' that is, of things which we, for our part, find ourselves unable to co-ordinate." Such inconsistencies leave one, Norwood is sure, " . . . wondering . . . 'why does [Euripides] mention

48 Norwood, Essays, pp. 48-49.
this' and 'why does he express it in this odd
fashion?' Inability to appreciate the aptness of
Euripidean 'inconsistencies' leaves other scholars like C.
Collard with little else to do but sound a note of regret:
"[Euripides] was rich in moral or philosophical ideas and
illustrative generalizations, clever and striking in their
deployment. These can occur without special dramatic need
or contextual aptness . . . ."51

Beside such impatience and regret, however, there has
been an increasing tolerance and, finally, even a respect
for Euripidean "inconsistencies" or "anomalies." A. W.
Verrall was the pioneer of this tolerance.52 It is
unfortunate that his approach to Euripides--notoriously
capricious, uneven, and, ultimately, totally
indefensible53--has made his name a byword for the

50Gilbert Norwood, The Riddle of the Bacchae: The
Last Stage of Euripides' Religious Views (Manchester: The
University Press, 1908), pp. 3 and 131. Cf. Kitto,
Tragedy, p. 194, on the Chorus' ode on childlessness in
Medea: "When such desperate deeds are afoot, why does
Euripides insert this pleasant little essay?"

51Collard, Euripides, p. 25.
52Verrall, Rationalist, passim.
53Michelini, Tragic Tradition, pp. 1-16 and
passim, gives Verrall full critical consideration, noting
that he is the first to attempt to defend Euripides against
the earlier critical tradition, which had abused Euripides' work
because it failed to measure up to the canonical work
of Sophocles. Michelini does not mince words, however, on
Verrall's failings: "His methods amount almost to parodies of
traditional scholarship" (p. 15); and yet she is able to
discern an eerie congruity between Verrall and Euripides:
"It is not by accident that the single most influential
bizarre and idiosyncratic. One nonetheless gets the sense that Verrall, had he not been reacting against a critical tradition that was openly hostile to Euripides, might have been capable of sound interpretation. Witness, for example, what Michelini rightly deems "Verrall at his best":

Once for all, let us not flatter ourselves that we can take the lead of Euripides, and show him how he might have improved this or that, if he had only known what he was doing. . . . If anywhere we suspect him of dulness, we should quietly mark that place for something which probably we do not understand.

A similar humility in the face of Euripidean "anomalies" has been expressed in the critical literature of recent years, and corresponding attempts to interpret Euripides' work have started with the assumption that such "anomalies" are intentionally important pointers to the meaning of the work. David Kovacs, for example, makes an appeal for a holistic interpretation of Euripides, one that would respectfully confront what, upon first glance, appears to be anomalous:

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scholar to write on Euripides was one whose thesis had a strong flavor of absurdity and paradox. Such an anomaly cannot be dismissed; it must be understood." (p. 3).

54 David Kovacs, The Andromache of Euripides: An Interpretation (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), p. 6, perhaps best describes the most distressing feature of Verrall's contribution in commenting on "the perverse ingenuity characteristic of his work."


56 Verrall, Rationalist, p. 119.
... our task as interpreters is never to respond to small segments of the work in isolation but precisely to interpret a whole. That whole, though it is certainly ambiguous as an autonomous text, is nevertheless not infinitely elastic. It consists of disparate elements all contributing to a single plan, and if we have misidentified the plan or misconstrued the individual elements or both, there will be some things that do not fit. A view of a Greek tragedy that can say little or nothing about the contribution of one speech or scene to the whole, that must ignore or apologize for another speech or scene, is unlikely to be correct. An interpretation that can "save the phenomena," including elements that are puzzling, alien, or repellent to modern taste... has a chance of reproducing the author's artistic intent. ... The critic should therefore set a high value on a text's puzzling or repellent features. They are his chief defense against subjectivity.57

Michelini agrees:

These awkward moments are neither errors nor meaningless blots, but elements of considerable aesthetic significance, valid parts of a system of literary meaning that derives from the Euripidean play's combative relation to its audience.58

Euripidean "anomalies" and "inconsistencies," then, have not always been well received, but have nonetheless been a long recognized feature of his work, a feature that attests to counterpointed analogies like those used by Socrates and often received with similar disfavor by his interlocutors. Further evidence for counterpointed analogies in Euripides' plays may be found in a second impression that this practice leaves, this time not only on


58Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 71.
the interlocutor, but also on the reader-auditor: i.e.
that, although the conclusion is one of avowed ignorance,
something has been suggested that lies just beneath the
surface—something unstated but nonetheless attainable, if
only one is willing to "fiddle with the premises."59

As fraught as Euripidean interpretation has been with
unsuccessful and inconstant attempts to extract from the
text the poet’s philosophical orientation and thus the
plays’ meanings, critics have not refrained from trying to
argue for meanings not readily apparent or easily defended.
Michelini pinpoints the heart of this confusing scholarly
phenomenon when she says,

> The persistent sense that things on stage in a
> Euripidean play cannot be what they seem is familiar
to every reader. This sense of something concealed or
> held back, of insincerity, is at the root of the
> Verrallian interpretations that seek to decipher the
> plays as a code is deciphered, once for all
time.60

Michelini in the above quote obviously touches on irony, a
much debated feature of the Socratic method. Irony will be
further discussed below under the topic "impersonal
aspect"; the point here is to illustrate that critics,
like the reader-auditor of Plato’s early dialogues, sense
in Euripidean plays the same sort of hidden meaning, a
meaning extractable after some "fiddling." The obvious

59 The phrase, again, is from Seeskin, Dialogue, p. 11.
60 Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 71.
excesses of Verrall gave only a brief respite from such fiddlings; the critical literature soon revealed, side by side with Euripides the subtle dissident, a new Euripides, this time the subtle traditionalist.

The 1960's and 1970's were fertile decades for excavating such hidden meanings in Euripidean plays. Thus, according to Desmond Conacher, one must first discern Euripides' treatment of myth before the poet's sincerity or lack thereof in regard to his subject matter can be assessed. Euripides was on the other hand, according to Andreas Spira's interpretation of the deus ex machina and Anne Burnett's analysis of the poet's use of certain plot types, also regarded as consistent in his outlook, as an espouser of an enduring cosmic order defended by the gods. And while Hermann Rohdich argued that Euripides introduced into his plays the sophistic world view only to repudiate it and thereby reassert the validity of more traditional views, Philip Vellacott insisted that Euripides' admittedly subversive and subtly presented ideas carried with them an undeniable if indeterminate "human or moral purpose" that went beyond the apparent sensationalism of their dramatization.61

61 The works alluded to are: Conacher, Euripidean Drama; Andreas Spira, Untersuchungen zum Deus ex Machina bei Sophokles und Euripides (Kallmünz: Lassleben, 1960); Burnett, Catastrophe; Rohdich, Tragödie; Philip Vellacott, Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1975; hereafter Vellacott, Ironic Drama). The quoted words appear on Vellacott's p. 94.
In short, even after Euripidean criticism escaped from the long history of censure of the poet, there has been a recurring sense that Euripides’ poetic technique involves something very much like maieusis, i.e., that it urges looking beyond the apparently inconclusive endings of the plays to some unstated but suggested truth. By an act of critical retrospection, the poet can be suspected of knowing this truth all along, and of leading his audience to "bring to birth" this truth.

The suspicion that the poet knows what he does not openly say brings our discussion to the final way that counterpointed analogy is acknowledged in the critical literature on Euripides’ plays: that the poet is designated a trickster. It will be recalled from Chapter Two that Socrates’ practice of elenchos earned him just such a designation in Aristophanes’ Clouds, and that the Aristophanic Euripides fared no better. It is amusing and suggestive, then, to find that Euripides has acquired the same reputation among modern critics. Michelini refers the reader to "the suspicion of Leeuwen that the audience is being tricked (verba dari) by the poet," and herself remarks that "[t]he mockery to which Euripidean protagonists are subjected is of course derisory not only

Michelini, Tragic Tradition, pp. 26-27 and 38-46, discusses all of the above works and fits them into the history of Euripidean criticism. See also her bibliography for reviews of these works.
of them, but of the audience as well." Michelini calls Euripidean drama "a drama of mockery" and later declares, "Euripides chose to present himself as deceiver and charlatan, the poet as liar . . . ."\textsuperscript{62} Collard agrees, alleging that "Euripides' 'deceptions' extend also to the audience."\textsuperscript{63} There is a sense, then, that Euripides, no less than the Daedalus-like Socrates of the \textit{Euthyphro}, manipulates and moves things around to the consternation of those around him. This sense of being tricked is, as was argued in Chapter One, one of the byproducts of counterpointed analogies, \textit{elenchos}' most subtle procedural aspect.

To sum up, the critical literature discerns in Euripides' plays both Socratic \textit{elenchos}' overt procedure as well that procedure's most subtle aspect. It will now be shown that the literature likewise acknowledges in Euripides' plays what was termed in Chapter One \textit{elenchos}' "Socratic Character": its impersonal and personal aspects, its confrontation of cognition and emotion, and its peculiar mix of attraction and repulsion, which results in an urge both to approach and to escape.

Chapter One's discussion of \textit{elenchos}' impersonal

\textsuperscript{62}Johannes van Leeuwen, \textit{De Aristophane Euripidis censore} (Amsterdam: Spin, 1876), p. 27, cited in Michelini, \textit{Tragic Tradition}, p. 85 n. 76. The other two quotes can be found on her pp. 85, 89, and 124.

\textsuperscript{63}Collard, \textit{Euripides}, p. 6.
aspect argued that what has been termed Socratic "irony" was no pose at all. Instead, this "irony" served to depersonalize the elenctic procedure, thus making possible an objectivity that otherwise would have been difficult to maintain, given the highly personalized involvement Socrates demands of his interlocutors. The term "irony" is one familiar in the literature on Euripides; indeed, Philip Vellacott's controversial study took for its title *Ironic Drama: A Study of Euripides' Method and Meaning.*

Whitman gives testimony to the damage done to Euripidean studies as well as to the poet's reputation by Euripidean "irony" misconstrued:

Throughout his life Euripides dramatized myths, but always with irony, sometimes as delicate as that of the *Alcestis*, sometimes intensely caustic, as in the *Heracles*, so that the mythic and ironic modes, to use Northrop Frye's terms, seemed to strive in hopeless and irreconcilable conflict, which suggested to many critics, ancient as well as modern, the view so often repeated in the handbooks, that the poet was satirizing the mythology of traditional religion, demolishing clay-footed gods, and teaching reason. Yet the positive substance of Euripides' rationalism has never been revealed by anyone, and its very existence has been devastatingly cross-examined by E. R. Dodds, so that one is left with a sorry picture of the poet destroying with sly malice something that he could not replace with anything better, and, if Verrall could be believed, taking a puerile joy in it. Nietzsche even saw him as writing to please Socrates, and Socrates alone, as if Socrates were guilty as charged, and Euripides his gifted accomplice in the dismantling of religion. That fantasy has faded, but the confusions linger, and the question of what

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64 London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975.
Euripides was really doing with myth remains.65

It is clear that Euripides' reputation has suffered
the same fate as that of Socrates, who, because of his use
of irony, is accused in the Platonic dialogues as well as
in the critical literature of smugly sniggering up his
sleeve all the while that he delights in the destruction of
other men's illusions. And even though, as Whitman notes,
this assessment of Euripides has faded, the literature on
Euripides consistently acknowledges his use of irony.
Whitman himself contrasts Euripides' use of irony in the
early plays, which he calls "the poet's own irony
externally imposed," with irony as used by Aeschylus and
Sophocles: "internal irony coextensive with the
dramaturgical forces of action and character."66
Michelini, following Whitman, identifies "[t]he keynote of
Euripidean drama" as "an irony that precludes a direct and
consistent approach, even to the 'low' elements that are so
conspicuous in the plays."67 That Euripidean irony
affects the audience's perspective is surely a more
important critical insight than what little can be derived
from attempts to determine the poet's own attitude toward
his subject matter, which is, after all, a futile exercise.

66Whitman, Full Circle, p. 108.
67Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 66.
Euripidean irony, then, like that used by Socrates, has the effect of distancing and thereby allowing the space necessary for emotional detachment and a more objective perspective. Whether or not this technique is termed "irony," an encouragement to objectivity is well attested in the critical literature on Euripides. Kitto, for example, calls this encouragement Euripides' "disconcerting aloofness" from his characters.69 Schlesinger asserts that "Euripides composes for mood control--that is, to avoid the accumulation of an undesired emotional effect."70 Michelini agrees: "[t]he Euripidean plot denies the audience a wholehearted participation in the pathetic circumstances of the dramatic protagonists."71

And yet the use to which Euripides puts irony does not end with detachment. The detachment is used, as it was by Socrates, as the necessary precursor for objective thought and, finally, for fostering the realization that one does

68A discussion of the problems involved in using the term "irony" may be found in W. D. Smith, "Ironic Structure in Alcestis," Phoenix 14 (1960; hereafter Smith, "Ironic Structure"), pp. 128-129.

69Kitto, Tragedy, p. 253.


71Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 86.
not know. Schlesinger briefly notes that Euripidean tragedies can demand of their audience "a considerable degree of judicial detachment."\(^7^2\) But by far the most insightful statement on Euripidean irony is by William Arrowsmith, who, without acknowledging it, describes Euripides' irony in terms reminiscent of Socratic elenchos:

In any traditional perspective, Euripidean theater is complex and uncomfortably strange, almost exasperating to a taste founded on Aeschylus and Sophocles. Its premises, as we have seen, are unlike, and almost the inversion of those of the traditional Greek theater. Typically it likes to conceal the truth beneath strata of irony because this is the look of truth: layered and elusive. For the same reason it presents its typical actions as problems and thereby involves the audience in a new relation, not as worshippers but jurors who must resolve the problem by decision. But because the problem is usually incapable of outright resolution, is in fact "tragic," the audience is compelled to forfeit the only luxury of making a decision—the luxury of knowing that one has decided wisely. Something—innocence, comfort, complacency—is always forfeited—or meant to be forfeited—by the audience of jurors. And this suggests that the essential anagnorisis of Euripidean theater is not between one actor and another but between the audience and its won experience, as that experience is figured in the plays. Anagnorisis here is knowing moral choice, exercised on a problem which aims at mimicking the quandary of a culture. As such, it is a pattern of the way in which the psyche is made whole again, and the hope of a culture.\(^7^3\)

Arrowsmith, in describing Euripidean irony, gives an inadvertent but accurate description of the irony Socrates

\(^7^2\)Schlesinger, *Boundaries*, p. 66.

\(^7^3\)Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 53.
uses in elenchos. Here is the same confession that the truth is difficult if not impossible to attain, the same need to discard the conceit of knowledge, and the same hope for psychic well-being to be gained from searching and coming to recognize that one does not, and indeed perhaps cannot, know.

Behind Euripidean irony, in short, is what Chapter One argued was the sincere Socratic conviction of ignorance. Arrowsmith sees the conviction of ignorance as central to Euripides' work: "The immediate, salient fact of Euripides' theater is the assumption of a universe devoid of rational order, or of an order incomprehensible to men." Wolff, in discussing Euripides' extensive use of recognitions in his later plays, likewise describes the poet's obsession with ignorance, this time with reference to Plato:

The recognitions dramatize one of Euripides' main preoccupations in his later plays, human ignorance and human need to know. This is the realm that Plato will describe as the area of opinion, doxa, which means "what people think," their consensus on a matter (a notion associated with the democratic process), and also "illusion" or what is supposed from the subjective, individual viewpoint, in contrast to what

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An opposing view is argued by Smith, "Ironic Structure," p. 128, who contrasts Euripides' irony, the method "of presenting a point of view and at the same time qualifying or contradicting it by means of a satirical treatment" with Socratic irony, "understatement which offers an apparently false surface meaning but which points to a profounder truth beneath ('I know nothing.')." Smith concludes that the two are related, but not the same.

Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 36.
is claimed to be universal truth. Euripides has an acute sense of the drama and pathos of human ignorance. It is the decisive mark of human vulnerability, and above all of the isolated person in his or her subjective being. It is, so to speak, the passive determinant of what makes us human, and it finds powerful expression in the emotions.\textsuperscript{76}

Recognizing ignorance, however, as will be recalled from Chapter One, is not possible in a discussion from which one remains coolly detached. It is here that what has been termed \textit{elenchos}' personal aspect shows its effect, for Socrates' insistence that interlocutors argue only what they believe, not hypotheses, assures their emotional involvement in the subject matter. It should not surprise us, then, to find in the critical literature observations on Euripides' singular adeptness at drawing his audience into identification with the characters on stage. Side by side with Euripidean detachment, Wolff declares, there is Euripidean conviction.\textsuperscript{77}

The personal aspect of \textit{elenchos} shows itself in Euripides' work in what have been termed his "realism" or "anachronism." The realism of his characters has been attested as far back as Aristotle, who, at \textit{Poetics} 60b.33-34 reports that "\textit{Σοφοκλῆς ἔφη αὐτὸς μὲν οἶνος δὲι ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδης δὲ οἶοι εἶσιν.}" Collard remarks upon this Euripidean realism and its potential effect:

\textsuperscript{76}Wolff, "Euripides," pp. 259-260.

\textsuperscript{77}Wolff, "Euripides," p. 33.
Euripides' theatre . . . shares with our own the representation of credible human beings, however extreme their predicaments: they feel, think, talk, hold themselves and move, doing the actions and gestures of their time, some unique to it, some universally human and so out of time, because that is how Euripides, how any dramatist, conveys reality. . . . it may be the everyday-realism, and the familial or friendly intimacy of so many settings, which paradoxically keep the persons within the range of experience and easy identification.78

Michelini, in contrasting the characterization of Clytaemestra at the hands of Aeschylus and of Euripides, gives vivid testimony to how convincingly familiar the Euripidean portrayal would have been to his audience:

Aischylos' Clytaimestra is a monster of heroic stature, resembling no woman of her time. The audience who watched the drama of male against female played out in the Oresteia were not likely to be moved, as Aristophanes claimed Euripides' audiences were, to check under the bed for an Aigisthos when they returned home from the performance. Because Euripidean women have not been placed in a remote, heroic past world, where clashes with everyday life are muted, they generate a discomfort that is a part of the continuing Euripidean assault on the tragic norm.79

A more audience-specific form of realism is anachronism. That Euripides transported into the archaic, heroic past of the stories that served as his subject matter mannerisms and concerns characteristic of fifth century B. C. Athens is a charge against him as old as the scholiasts. The scholiast on Hecuba (ed. Schwartz, line 254), for example, complains, "This is just like Euripides, ____________

78Collard, Euripides, pp. 16 and 11. For more bibliography, see also his p. 13 n. 26.

79Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 81.
imposing things from his own time on heroes and confounding the two times (καὶ ἐστι τοιοῦτος ὁ Ἐυριπίδης, περιάπτων τὰ καθ' ἐαυτὸν τοῖς ἡρωσὶ καὶ τοὺς χρόνους συγχέων)." Collard similarly remarks, "... [Euripides] brought his polis into the mythic world more obviously and consistently than Sophocles and even Aeschylus."80 Kenneth Reckford makes the point that Euripidean anachronisms in Medea close the distance between the audience and the characters in the play:

The anachronistic, fifth-century ideas with which Euripides enlivens his myth point to no program for better Athenian living; but they do bring the tragedy nearer home for the audience, and by extension for ourselves, by focusing the general failure of human aspirations in specifically Athenian terms.81

By the technique of anachronism, then, Euripides disallows the complacency of distance and forces his audience to be involved in an immediate way. P. E. Easterling comments on the jarring effect of Euripides' use of anachronisms:

All these subversive devices complicate the effects of the heroic stories by reminding the audience of the clash between the time of the story and their own present time, suggesting, often enough, that they should look closely at the disturbing implications of the heroic tales and not allow themselves to be anaesthetised by their glamour or by their familiarity on the Attic stage.82

In summary, Euripides uses techniques that have the

80Collard, Euripides, p. 32.


same effects as the impersonal and personal aspects of Socratic elenchos. Euripides, like Socrates, encourages both objectivity that allows room for cognition and identification that ensures emotional involvement. Michelini sums it up neatly:

Euripidean theater plays a dangerous game with its audience, luring them in with pathos and charm, but chilling their sympathy always, just at the crucial moment when the watchers would have become incapable of detaching themselves from the dramatic illusion. A biased and sentimental pity is deliberately evoked, only to be expunged by a wave of astringent irony. 83

It is not surprising, then, that the literature recognizes in Euripides' plays a confrontation between emotion and cognition—the very confrontation that builds to a crescendo in elenchos as practiced by Socrates. Albin Lesky, for example, vividly describes this confrontation:

"Da steht das Pathos flammender Leidenschaft neben handlungsfremden Rationalismen . . . "84 Michelini similarly remarks of Euripides, "The specialist in female emotional maladies (Leidenschaft) turns cold rhetorician, just as we become absorbed in his art."85 And finally, R. P. Winnington-Ingram summarizes the outcome of this confrontation of emotion and cognition in Euripides in such a way as to evoke memories of that moment in Socratic

83Michelini, Tragic Tradition, pp. 93-94.
84Lesky, Geschichte, p. 409.
85Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 50.
elenchos when the interlocutor realizes the emotional unacceptability of inescapably logical conclusions:

The devastating power of emotion in human life—that is indeed something by which Euripides was obsessed, not least during the period in which he wrote the Hippolytus; and he was hardly sanguine about the ability of men, individually or collectively, to control this power by intelligence.  

But such a confrontation of emotion and cognition is, as will be recalled from Chapter One's discussion of the interlocutor's experience of elenchos, fraught with contradictory impulses. There is the erotic allure of the as yet unrevealed truth, and then the painful prospect of admitting one's ignorance and reforming one's actions according to strange new standards. There are both attraction and repulsion at elenchos' terminus, and likewise, it seems, for the audience of Euripides' plays. P. T. Stevens, after considering the evidence for Euripides' legendary unpopularity among the Athenians, concludes that while Euripides was probably "unorthodox sometimes and disconcerting," he was nonetheless "a dramatist whose plays everyone wanted to see."  


87 Stevens, "E. and Athenians," p. 94. Cf. the similar conclusion of Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 73, "Euripidean plays were and are notoriously good theater; and an archon who gave a chorus to Euripides could be certain that the audience would not be bored or disappointed."
Michelini similarly notes "[t]he apparently contradictory aims of Euripidean theater, to enthral and delight, as well as to affront and irritate . . . ," and concludes her chapter "Euripides and His Audience: The Tactics of Shock" by describing the ambivalent impulses Euripidean theater was meant to evoke:

An outbreak of rage and rejection from the audience, the dreaded uproar in the theater (thorybos), is courted—and then allayed by a reversal that disarms resentment and seems for a time to right the moral universe. Besides the vibration between two extremes, there are also fainter overtones of dissonance built into scenes that seem to compel sympathy or repugnance, overtones that become dominant once the next variation begins to unfold. By approaching the audience in this way, Euripides guaranteed that they would never be able entirely to deny him their attention, though he would never gain their entire approval. 88

Euripides with his plays, it seems, roused in his audience no less intense feelings of attraction and repulsion than those experienced by the Athenians who both eagerly engaged in conversation with Socrates and hastened to escape the disturbing conclusions his practice of elenchos suggested. The reason for the similar reaction of Euripides' audience and Socrates' interlocutors is that both men practiced the same method—Socrates in seemingly casual conversation and Euripides in constructing his plays.

This chapter has thus far shown that the critical literature on Euripides gives ample testimony in support of 

88 Michelini, *Tragic Tradition*, pp. 74 and 94.
the above thesis. Euripides, like Socrates, was considered to be a philosopher, but a peculiar one, one who could only be consistently classified as unclassifiable, whose medium was paradox, asking questions but giving no answers, and advancing no identifiable doctrine. In Euripides’ plays one can detect the overt procedural aspects of Socratic elenchos: two counterpoised positions, one of which is refuted, the changing position of the interlocutor, and the aporia at the procedure’s end. One can even find evidence for the subtle procedural aspect of counterpointed analogies. Finally, Euripides’ plays exhibit the Socratic character of elenchos: its impersonal and personal aspects, its confrontation of emotion and cognition, and its ability to elicit both attraction and repulsion.

It is clear, then, that correspondences between the methodologies of Socratic elenchos and Euripides’ plays have been strongly sensed. It remains the final task of this study to illustrate those correspondences by a thoroughgoing analysis of a Euripidean play.
Choosing to establish the operation of Socratic elenchos in Medea, one of the earliest Euripidean plays, raises the question of when Socrates himself began using the method. It would seem imperative to argue that the production of Medea in 431 B.C. did not precede Socrates' practice of elenchos on the streets of Athens. And yet, the tantalizing but indefinite evidence on Socrates' intellectual development does not indicate when he took to practicing the method he is shown using in the early Platonic dialogues. But it is not necessary that Medea come after Socrates' practice of the method, for illustrating the similarity between Euripides' and the early Platonic Socrates' methods does not require what this study does not pretend to do: to argue that the historical Socrates actually used the method, or used it first.

Since, then, the question of priority is moot, any play of Euripides may be chosen. As it turns out, there

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89 For attempts to assign a chronology to Socrates' early life and to date the "autobiography" at Phaedo 96a ff. and Chaerephon's visit to the Delphic oracle (Apology 21a ff., cf. Xenophon's Apology 14), see, e.g., Guthrie, Socrates, pp. 58-88, and Taylor, Socrates, pp. 37-88.

90 If, however, Chapter Two's analysis of the Clouds is correct, we could hazard the guess that Socrates' practice of elenchos was in 423 (the date of the first Clouds) familiar enough to the Athenian citizenry to raise a laugh of recognition.
are compelling reasons for choosing an early play rather than a late one. For although critics differ on the evolution of Euripides' work through his middle and late periods, distinguishing features of the early plays are more widely agreed upon. It happens that these features mark the early plays as more promisingly illustrative of \textit{elenchos} than those from the middle and late periods.

First, early plays are recognized as being more purely tragic than the ones that follow. Some modern commentators see tragedy as an elenctic genre, even though they may not label it as such. Recall Nussbaum's observation that tragic drama shares with Plato's philosophic drama the central structural feature of

\begin{quote}
\textit{91} Either 427 B. C. or 417–415 B. C. are cited as the dividing point between early and other plays. For an overview of critical opinion on the periods of Euripides' work, see Michelini, \textit{Tragic Tradition}, pp. 23, 39-40, 75 and 89-91; and Collard, \textit{Euripides}, p. 5.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{92} The exceptions, of course, are the early \textit{Alcestis}, usually designated tragicomic, and the late, tragic \textit{Bacchae}. For the early period of Euripides' work as high tragedy, see, e.g., Kitto, \textit{Tragedy}, pp. 188-90. Kitto (p. 311) deems \textit{Alcestis} one of Euripides' tragicomedies, and \textit{Bacchae} "almost in a class of its own" (p. 370). See also André Rivier, \textit{Essai sur le tragique d'Euripide}, 2 ed. (Paris: Diffusion de Boccard, 1975), passim, but especially pp. 139-148, who includes \textit{Bacchae} in with \textit{Alcestis}, \textit{Medea}, \textit{Hippolytos}, \textit{Iphigenia at Aulis}, and \textit{Hercules} under the designation "le tragique," while other plays are designated either "le romanesque" or "le pathétique."
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textit{93} In the original Chapter Two of this dissertation, since set aside, it was argued that the genre of tragedy as conceived by Aristotle in the \textit{Poetics} shared much of \textit{elenchos}' procedure and character.
\end{quote}
elenchos, 94 and add to it the following observation of Froma Zeitlin, which unwittingly attests to tragedy’s elenctic nature:

... tragedy is the epistemological form par excellence. What it does best through the resources of the theater is to chart a path from ignorance to knowledge, deception to revelation, misunderstanding to recognition. The characters act out and live through the consequences of having clung to a partial single view of the world and themselves. ... If tragedy, as I have suggested, is the epistemological genre par excellence, which continually calls into question what we know and how we think we know it, it does so often by confronting the assumptions of rational thought with those psychological necessities that may not be denied. 95

It therefore seems reasonable to seek the operation of elenchos in a play recognized as tragic, rather than in one that has been considered a hybrid of tragedy and another genre. The later plays of Euripides, then, are not likely candidates for analysis, since these plays are often defined as not purely tragic, but are instead variously designated as tragicomedies, melodramas, or romantic

94 Nussbaum, Fragility, pp. 128-129; on p. 133 Nussbaum argues that tragic elenchos works primarily through the emotions, while Platonic elenchos teaches by appeal to the intellect alone.

95 Froma I. Zeitlin, "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," Representations 11 (1985; hereafter Zeitlin, "Playing the Other"), pp. 72-74. Zeitlin refers the reader to Jean-Pierre Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," in Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece, ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (New York: Zone Books, 1988), pp. 29-48. See especially Vernant’s p. 38: "In a tragic perspective man and human action are seen, not as things that can be defined or described, but as problems. They are presented as riddles whose double meanings can never be pinned down or exhausted."
tragedies.\textsuperscript{96} Even more generally, however, the tragic dimension of \textit{elenchos} (see Chapter One, Part Four), i.e., \textit{elenchos}' apparent lack of success at attaining its stated aims, suggests that a play with a happy or even a neutral ending would not reproduce \textit{elenchos}' interlocutor's descent to acknowledged ignorance and the ultimate defeat of his position.\textsuperscript{97}

A second characteristic of early plays indicating their affinity with \textit{elenchos} is that these plays display, more consistently than later ones, Euripides' above discussed (Part One) propensity for posing questions, and that they focus more consistently upon broad moral issues.\textsuperscript{98} Michelini, for example, agreeing with Schadewaldt's delineation of Euripides' stylistic development in the decades after the mid-420's, notes that "vigorous polemic against conventional views is replaced by

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\textsuperscript{97}See Michelini, \textit{Tragic Tradition}, p. 85: "In a few of the late plays, the cynicism becomes more benign, and the scramblings of the protagonists are sometimes rewarded with a success that, for all their plotting and contriving, they have not completely earned."

\textsuperscript{98}According to Eric Havelock, "The Evidence for the Teaching of Socrates," \textit{TAPA} 65 (1934), p. 283, "Acted drama, or dramatized conversations, was the traditional Greek method of discussing and analysing moral ideas."
a more 'resigned' stance."\textsuperscript{99} And Whitman detects, in three late Euripidean plays, what can only be described as the hardening of Euripidean speculation into dogma. There is, he maintains, in these plays truth "built from within the plays themselves" or rather "woven into the fabric" of the plays, which contain "revelations of inherent truth, like axioms rightly stated."\textsuperscript{100} Similarly, Friedrich Solmsen traces in the later plays a growing indifference to broad, philosophic issues and to the moral issues that received ironic treatment in the early plays, and a correspondingly increasing emphasis on the individual's concern over his own problems, his own quest for happiness.\textsuperscript{101} Early Euripidean plays, then, more closely approximate both the general focus and the broad program of \textit{elenchos} in the early Platonic dialogues.

Third and last, early Euripidean plays are similar to \textit{elenchos} in featuring the throes of heightened emotion that accompany the questioning of personal values. Many

\textsuperscript{99}Michelini, \textit{Tragic Tradition}, p. 79, in reference to Wolfgang Schadewaldt, \textit{Monolog und Selbstgespräch; Untersuchungen zur Formsgeschichte der griechischen Tragödie}, Neue Philol. Unters. 2 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1926), pp. 131 ff. See also Michelini, p. 90, where she notes in plays of the 420's and after themes of "patriotism and doctrinaire moralism."

\textsuperscript{100}Whitman, \textit{Full Circle}, pp. 139-140.

scholars, beginning with the Schlegels, have denounced the emotionalism of Euripidean plays, but the early plays are widely recognized as the most highly emotional, ridden as they are with themes of sexual deviance and an emphasis on women. Webster, for example, characterizes the pattern of Euripides' early plays as follows: "Each year he produced one play about a bad woman, one play about an unhappy woman, and one play of a different kind." The extent to which scholars identify with early plays the predominance of high emotion or, more specifically, the erotic, can be seen in Lesky's inclination to group together for discussion with early plays those that display emotionalism.

Two plays, however, from the early group are conspicuous in showing the conflict between cognition and emotion that is integral to elenchos: Medea and Hippolytus. For this reason both Kitto and Lesky assign

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102 For discussion of this point and bibliography, see Michelini, Tragic Tradition, pp. 5-6 and especially n. 16.

103 Michelini, Tragic Tradition, pp. 75-79, discusses Euripides' move away from themes of sexual deviance and the emphasis on women, and assigns the mid-420's as the time when this move began.


105 Lesky, Geschichte, p. 422.
these plays to a category of their own. That these two plays depict this conflict is not, however, the only reason for considering them leading candidates for this study's analysis. There is, in fact, a related but a much more seductive reason for illustrating elenchos' operation in one of these two plays.

This is because both Medea and Hippolytus have long been studied for possible signs of Euripides' attitude toward "Socratic doctrine." I speak, of course, of the controversy over Medea 1078-1080 and Hippolytus 380 ff. In the former, Medea proclaims, in seeming defiance of the Socratic paradox that one does the good if one knows it, that she knows the harm she is about to do, but will do it anyway. In the latter, Phaedra addresses herself to the puzzle of human akrasia (inconstancy) in the face of a perceived good, and meditates on the causes for not doing what one knows one ought to do. Speculation on these lines' relation to Socratic doctrine began in 1948—when Bruno Snell suggested that the lines spoken by Medea (Medea 1078-1080) and Phaedra (Hippolytus 380-430) respectively gave impetus to and conveyed sentiment against Socratic

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106Kitto, Tragedy, p. 250 ("The tragedies fall into two groups, the Medea and Hippolytus, and the war-plays or social tragedies.")
doctrine—and continues to the present day.\textsuperscript{107} And while it is not the intention of this study to try to determine the philosophic orientation of Euripides from the words spoken by his characters—surely an exercise in futility and presumptuous folly\textsuperscript{108}—it nonetheless would seem cowardly to avoid choosing one of the two plays in which the critical literature has discerned something distinctly Socratic.

Joseph Campbell, in the videotaped series, "The Power of Myth," cites an old Irish query, "Is this a private fight, or can anybody join in?"\textsuperscript{109} In analyzing one of these two plays, I plan to enter the fray, but to move its focus away from the purely speculative realm of the poet's own philosophy to a subject more suitable for a play whose author is long dead: the method used to create his play's effect. For here we have all the evidence we need:


\textsuperscript{108}On this point, see Kovacs, \textit{Heroic Muse}, p. 3, who quotes Northrop Frye, \textit{A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance} (New York, 1965), p. 43, on the indecency of reducing a poet "... to an ego with something to 'say.'"

\textsuperscript{109}Transcripts of the tapes, edited and reordered, were subsequently published. See Joseph Campbell, \textit{The Power of Myth}, with Bill Moyers, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1988; hereafter Campbell, \textit{Power}).
we have the play itself.

But why Medea rather than Hippolytus? Medea is preferable for one, critical reason: the domination of the play by its protagonist duplicates what was seen in the model dialogue, Euthyphro, analyzed in Chapter One—the focus on and refutation of the views of one person. For it will be argued below that it is primarily Medea's world-view, a view with which many Athenians in the audience would feel special affinity, that is ultimately found to be emotionally unacceptable when taken to the impeccably logical conclusions to which its premises point.

110 Medea’s world-view is shared by Jason, aspired to by Creon, and approved by the Chorus.
CHAPTER IV. SOCRATIC ELENCHOS AND MAIEUSIS IN EURIPIDES' MEDEA

Introduction (283); Proposed Definitions in Medea: Aretē, Sophia, and Erōs (287); Introductory Remarks (287); Aretē, Sophia, and Erōs: The Quest for Self-Advancement (290)--The Socratic Character of Elenchos in Medea: Refutation, Recognition, Aporia, and Escape (407)--Personal and Impersonal Aspects of Elenchos in Medea: Pre-requisites for Maieusis (480); Introductory Remarks (480); The Personal Aspect (481); The Impersonal Aspect (493)--The Art of Midwifery: Euripides' Maieutic Analogies (506); Introductory Remarks (506); Aretē and Music: The Virtue of Harmony (508); Aretē and Medicine: The Virtue of Harmony as Remedy (522); Sophia and Medicine: Knowledge as Cure (530)--The Tragedy of the Wind-Egg: The Perversion of Erōs and Stillbirth of Truth (542)

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SOCRATIC ELENCHOS AND MAIEUSIS IN EURIPIDES’ MEDEA

Introduction

A tragic play is not a philosophic dialogue. Similarity of method, not essence, is what must be shown here, and to do so requires dismembering the text. To trace in Medea what were described in Chapter One as the constituent elements of Socrates' method in the early Platonic dialogues requires that its parts be considered in turn before they be restored to the sum that is their whole. Such an analysis and reconstitution will show that Euripides' Medea operates in every aspect like an early Platonic dialogue.

Similarity of intent will be demonstrated first. It will be seen that in Medea, definition of three related universals is what is sought and proposed. These can be identified by the occurrence of key abstract nouns; their definition is proposed through etymologically related adjectives describing particular individuals performing particular actions.

The fate of these particulars, however, is the same in Medea as was the fate of the interlocutor's proposed definitions in elenchos. In short, they are ultimately refuted. Through the preferred "indirect establishment" of
the thesis, particulars in Medea are forced to undeniably logical conclusions that are nonetheless emotionally repugnant.

It will be argued that in this play one can discern the same evidence for reversal and recognition as in the early Platonic dialogues. The Chorus, who serve1 as the primary interlocutor, experience the interlocutor's transformation from boastful confidence in their certitude to a halting awareness of the limitations of their knowledge. Self-assurance gives way to feeling lost: the Chorus describe their recognition as aporia, mark the defeat of the definitions they supported by trying to project onto others blame for the defeat, and yet, if only momentarily, display a form of wonder and uncertainty that is the mark of the budding philosopher. Medea, and secondarily Jason and Creon, all of whom manifest the definitions, illustrate failure of these by their own reversals. Medea alone betrays recognition of her reversal, but chooses escape.

The choice of escape at the end of Medea is made for the same reasons that interlocutors chose to leave at the end of elenchos. For, unless one wants to begin to define the universals anew, there is nothing but to abandon the

1I have chosen, for the sake of consistency, to treat "Chorus" as a plural noun, since I often refer to the Chorus as "the Corinthian women" and must thereafter use the pronoun "they."
now repugnant particulars. As in elenchos so in this play: the particulars are abandoned, left, literally, in suspense at the end as escape is made. There remains only the vague suggestion of definition for the universals, and the queasy suspicion that their satisfactory definition would entail turning the known world on its ear.

The play proper, then, ends in aporia. It will next be proposed that aporia is not, however, the true terminus of Euripides' play. To support this proposition, we shall examine two of the poet's tactics to bring the truth to birth outside the play's confines, in the audience of theater-goers, as Plato in his dialogues left this task to the reader-auditors.

The first of these tactics is twofold: the so-called "personal" and "impersonal" aspects of elenchos familiar from the dialogues. It will be shown how Euripides renders the refutation effected in the play "personal," i.e., powerfully relevant, not only to the Chorus of Corinthian women, but to the Athenian audience as well. He likewise renders it "impersonal," by allowing the Chorus and his audience the requisite objective distance for attempting to come to definition of the universals. In short, Euripides both engages his audience and pushes them away so that they can reflect upon what they see and feel. Like Socrates of the early Platonic dialogues, Euripides collocates the actual with the possible, the known with the unknown, the
particular with the universal. His Medea is, in the end, tantalizingly suggestive at the same time it is repulsive.

Euripides' final tactic to bring the truth to birth is the Platonic Socrates' counterpoint of analogy. In Medea this counterpoint is provided by subtle poetic devices: metaphors, images, and motifs, which show affinity for one or more of the definiends. These poetic devices are put to two uses, to overturn the particulars proposed as definition and to suggest, but not defend, a preferred definition for the universals.

In conclusion, then, it will be argued that Euripides' elenchos is like that of the Platonic Socrates: highly provocative, but not--ultimately--negative.
Part One: Proposed Definitions in Medea:
Aretē, Sophia, and Erōs

Introductory Remarks

The universals whose definition the Medea considers are familiar to any reader of the play. Primary consideration is given to aretē ("heroic" excellence), while aretē's relationship to two other abstractions, sophia (wisdom/cunning)\(^2\) and erōs (generative desire) is secondary. And although these three abstract nouns are not often used (aretē twice, 629 and 845; sophia twice, 828 and 1086; erōs eight times, 8, 152, 330, 530, 627, 698, 714, 842), scarcely a line goes by in which definition of at least one of these universals is not implied, openly discussed, or boldly asserted; thus, their ring of familiarity. In the critical literature the "heroic" aspects of Medea,\(^3\) the sophistry passing for wisdom of

\(^2\)As will become apparent, my discussion of sophia owes its inspiration primarily to Arrowsmith, "Ideas," pp. 47-48, who asserts that Medea "is based upon a central key-term, sophia." This term, Arrowsmith rightly argues, "is an extremely complex term," comprising "Jason's cool self-interest, the magical and erotic skills of the sorceress Medea" as well as "that ideal Athenian fusion of moral and artistic skills which, fostered by eros, creates the distinctive aretē of the civilized polis." This last is "the standard by which the actions of Jason and Medea are to be judged."

one or more of the characters, and the disturbing nature of Medea's desire are frequent subjects. And yet, so compelling are the positions presented in this play that critics tend to side strongly with or against characters, praising or blaming them as if they were real people.


text must be postponed until the attempt to define in this elenchos is considered. We must first look to the inter-related definition of the just mentioned universals, and then to how they fare in elenchos, and finally to the artistry of Euripides, who, like the wily Socrates, has picked this fight and subtly shapes its inexorable progress.
Aretê, Sophia, and Erôs: The Quest for Self-Advancement.

Although the abstract noun ἀρετή is used but twice in the play (629 and 845), Medea is largely concerned with appropriate human behavior. Excellence in behavior is assumed to be the natural province of the powerful—in short, of "heroes"; it is defined by a quest to be known for promoting one's own interests, and a code of conduct that supports this quest. The validity of this quest and code is unchallenged. As remnants of a heroic past, they are adhered to, and their adherents are respected if sometimes feared. But when translated into the play's present, where the status quo has dislodged the very underpinnings of excellence, the code is deformed and the quest becomes deadly. The nonetheless enduring appeal of the quest and code is obvious in that neither is completely abandoned, at least not by the Chorus.

The two other abstractions the text is concerned to define, sophia and erôs, are integral to the definition of aretê and cannot, therefore, be artificially separated from its definition. Both sophia and erôs are valued only insofar as they are able to advance aretê as the play

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7 The text used for Medea is Page, Medea. I have chosen this over the more recent text of Diggle because I object to many of his excisions, especially the excision of lines 1056-1080.

For word study of the text, I have relied on Marianne McDonald, A Semilemmatized Concordance to Euripides' Medea (Irvine, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 1978; hereafter McDonald, Concordance).
defines it; their definitions are distorted by the exigencies of the code and quest whose purposes they serve.

As in Socratic elenchos, definition of universals in *Medea* is approached through the description of particulars. Such definition is, however, problematic in that no definition should be confined to instances in which the abstraction itself is uttered. Such an approach would be limited and nonsensical; concepts as broad as excellence, desire, and wisdom are discussed not only when absolute reference is made to abstract nouns. We are, admittedly, on firmest ground when such references occur. As far as the three universals in *Medea* are concerned, *aretē*, *sophia*, and *erōs*, definition of *aretē* is most difficult to trace, for besides occurring only twice in abstraction, it finds its primary expression in generalized approval or censure of individuals and their actions. *Erōs* is somewhat easier, for it is both more frequently discussed in abstraction than are *aretē* and *sophia*, and its expression can likewise be found in nouns and verbs which obviously denote erotic engagement. In *Medea*, this includes *erōs* anthropomorphized as the gods Aphrodite (Cypris) and the Erotes, and the physical manifestation of the force in nouns meaning "bed" (e.g., ἐὖνη, λέκτρον, κοίτη). *Sophia's* definition is easiest of all; although it occurs infrequently as the abstract noun *sophia*, *Medea* is heavy with descriptions of individuals by
recourse to the adjective sophos. The related adjective δεινός gives further guidance.

And yet, since a play is unlike a dialogue in that no one person is posing the question, "What is X?" to which other persons are proposing answers, tracing definition in Medea is not as easy as tracing definition in a dialogue, and must proceed by certain assumptions. First, it will be assumed that the very use of abstract nouns contains an implied if not clearly stated definition. Second, it will be assumed that description of an individual or an action by using words similar in meaning or cognate to one of the abstract nouns likewise contains a definition. Third, a definition—whether by reference to an abstract noun or to a particular individual or action—may be assumed to have been proposed and supported by an expression of approval, while its rejection takes the form of censure. In short, the establishment and rejection of definition gleaned from the admittedly rare discussions of the abstract nouns will be supplemented by tracing the approval and disapproval with which the characters and their actions are described. Finally, it will be assumed that approval (or disapproval) can be assessed: 1) by the occurrence of words denoting "good" and "fine" ("bad," "ugly") and the like; 8 2) by

8I follow Adkins, Merit, p. 30, who lists among "the most powerful words of commendation used of a man both in Homer and in later Greek" the following: areté, agathos, esthlos, chrēstos, kalon; comparatives ameínōn, beltiōn and kalliōn; superlatives aristos, beltistos, and
patent expressions of approval or agreement (disapproval or disagreement); 3) by espousal or emulation of like and thereby validating (opposing and thereby dissenting) positions or actions. In Medea, it is the Chorus primarily, and the minor characters (although the Nurse is a special case) secondarily, who serve as the interlocutors in this would-be dialogue, and it is therefore the Chorus primarily, and the Tutor, Nurse, Creon, Aegeus, and the Messenger to whom one must turn for expressions of approbation and censure.

In tracking these expressions of approbation and censure, it soon becomes apparent that generalized approbation of behavior, which signals definition of aretē, is above all given to what A. W. H. Adkins has termed the "competitive virtues," and to what Bernard Knox and others have described, in part incorrectly, as the "heroic" aspects of Medea.9 Unreserved approval is—at least at

kalliston.

9I first realized that to describe Euripides' Medea as heroic was missing the mark when I felt qualms about comparing her to Achilles or Odysseus. In the conclusion to a paper read to the Illinois Classical Conference in 1985, I described Medea as an "individual with no society, an Achilles who will never ransom Hector's body, an Odysseus who can never go home."

The critical literature is full of descriptions of Medea's heroic aspects, but there is often hesitation to describe her without qualification as a hero. See Elizabeth Bryson Bongie, "Heroic Elements in the Medea of Euripides," TAPA 107 (1977; hereafter Bongie, "Heroic Elements"), pp. 32 and 30, who deems Medea "probably the most genuinely 'heroic' figure on the Greek stage" in vocabulary and characterization and analyzes Medea as "an
heroic play of the Sophoclean type." Yet Bongie tends to narrow heroes when comparing Medea with them. Medea is compared, e.g., to Achilles reacting to his insulted honor, or to Ajax "who cares not a whit for the hideous crime he has almost perpetrated but only for his tarnished prestige, his loss of time." (pp. 29-30). Bongie seems to sense some discordant notes in this picture, for example when she contrasts Antigone's "positive aim in life" with Medea's "negative aim inspired by the same values" (p. 31). Cf. also p. 32 n. 17: "Quite conceivably, by the very exaggeration of Medea's heroic qualities, Euripides is in fact criticising the system of values that produced such results." This system of values, as Bongie describes it (p. 30), is taken from Adkins, who deems it "competitive" rather than "heroic." Bongie's use of the term "heroic" forces her to interpret Medea's exit on the sun-chariot as a "purification," symbolic of the "glory she has won in the eyes of the gods." (p. 54). Furthermore, Medea becomes, "... in the code of the ancient heroic system, a veritable saint." I find this statement, qualified though it is, impossible to accept.

Helene Foley, "Medea's Divided Self," CA 8 (1989; hereafter Foley, "Divided Self"), pp. 79-81, follows Bongie and Knox, Medea, in seeing Medea's heroic aspects, but avoids engaging in hero worship. Perhaps the reason is to be found on p. 76, where Foley compares Medea to Ajax, Odysseus, and Achilles, yet suggests that Medea "models her self-image... on a masculine heroic and even military model..." (emphasis added). According to Foley, by conflating Achilles and Odysseus, "two brands of heroism that epic views as partially contradictory, Medea shows herself a pathetically confused imitator of heroic masculinity." (p. 81). Foley's discussion of Medea's destruction of "the heroic integrity of her ethic" is excellent; see her conclusion that Euripides "comes close to labeling the 'friends-enemies' ethic as destructive of humanity and human values and thus suitable only for gods." (p. 82). Cf. Wolff, "Euripides," p. 238, for Euripides' uncovering of contradictions in the heroic code. See also Margaret Williamson, "A Woman's Place in Euripides' Medea," in Euripides, Women, and Sexuality, ed. Anton Powell (London and New York: Routledge, 1990; hereafter Williamson, "Woman's Place"), p. 26: "Her [Medea's] heroic stance is paradoxical and contradictory not only in its central formulation but also in its consequences: the distinction on which it rests has already been subverted by Medea herself, and it leads yet again to the destruction of the most intimate bond of philia, that between parents and children."
first--given to the competitive and autonomous character who has a reputation for advancing his own interests, while secondary, and much more wistful and provisional approval is given to the cooperative and connected character whose success is measured in his protection of and consideration for others.

This hierarchy of values is first delineated by the Nurse in her prologue. She refers to Jason and the Argonauts obliquely as the "best men" (ἀνδρῶν ἀριστῶν, 5), the only sincere use of the superlative

See also the unelaborated but qualified remarks of Conacher, Euripidean Drama, pp. 189 and 196, who, although he terms Medea "heroic," likens her, in the earlier scenes, "... to a hate-ridden Philoctetes as yet undisturbed by the friendship of Neoptolemus, or to a stubbornly resentful Achilles, untried by the loss of Patroclus."

Similarly, Emily McDermott, Euripides' Medea: The Incarnation of Disorder (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1989; hereafter McDermott, Incarnation), pp. 55-56, agrees that Medea is in some aspects set "squarely in the heroic tradition," and yet notes that "... standard [heroic] sentiments are misapplied by Medea." Furthermore, Medea's "... ascription to the heroic code must necessarily involve the demolition of the female and specifically maternal aspects of her ... ."

Finally, according to Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 38, Euripides, by using recognizable aspects of "traditional heroism" to construct Medea's character, exposes "... the widening gulf between reality and tradition, between the operative and the professed values of his culture ... ." Such exposure was, of course, Socrates' practice in elenchos.

10 Lines 1-17 of the prologue have excited attack, primarily on the basis of the illogical qualification describing happy circumstances in lines 11-15. A summary of the arguments and suggested emendations may be found in David Kovacs, "Euripides, Medea 1-17," CQ 41 (1991), pp. 30-35. Kovacs proposes a lacuna before line 11.
of the adjective *agathos* in the whole play.\textsuperscript{11} Coming as it does in the first few lines, it lends powerful approval to Jason and his expedition.\textsuperscript{12} It is not, however, approval without qualification. The reason for the Nurse's unattainable wish--that this heroic quest of the past had been nipped at its inception--is that she sees a chain of cause and effect\textsuperscript{13} reaching from the actions of these "best men," through Medea's being stricken with love, through her destruction of Pelias and general assistance to Jason, to the status quo: "Now all things are enmity, and the dearest things are diseased" (νῦν ὅσ' ἔχορὰ πάντα, καὶ νοσεῖ τὰ φίλτατα, 16). The result, then, of the quest for heroic excellence has been the creation of a world of enemies, the spread of disease in all that is most dear.

The Nurse's prologue does not, however, merely ponder

\textsuperscript{11}The text of *Medea*, while heavy with negative words like *kakos*, is sparse in words of positive connotation, like *agathos* and *kalos*. These words alone, according to McDonald, *Concordance*, appear as follows: *kakos*, 56 times; *agathos*, once; *kalos*, once. Both *agathos* and *kalos* are, besides, in some way negated. A possible explanation for this may be the heavily negative orientation of zero-sum competition (see below, this section) toward harming enemies over helping friends.


the achievements of the "best men"; it likewise, in its use of the noun erōs (§), indicates the place that generative desire plays in such achievements. The Nurse clearly sees Medea's erōs as the impetus to her advancement of Jason's suit. In addition, the interplay between erōs and what may be deemed "the heroic code of competition" is clear in the description the Nurse gives to Medea's falling in love: she was "struck in her thumos with desire for Jason" (ἐρωτηθεὶ θυμὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσθ' Ἰάσονος, §).

Although the Nurse's situating passions within the thumos is not at all surprising, the use of thumos in this play, as will be argued below (Part Two), is peculiarly limited; in this play, thumos is regularly the source of motives for competitive advancement, whether this takes the form—as it does here—of helping friends or—as it more regularly does—of harming enemies.

And yet, although the Nurse does not explicitly state it as such, it is clear from her view of events thus far that the erotically impelled aid to this heroic quest has had some disturbing issue.¹⁴ Medea's erōs-stricken

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¹⁴Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 63-64, notes how the epic voyage is rendered destructive in the prologue, and that, just as Medea is "smitten" by love (§) in the play's beginning, Jason is likewise "struck" at the play's end—by a piece of the Argo. Cf. Bennett Simon, Tragic Drama and the Family: Psychoanalytic Studies from Aeschylus to Beckett (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1988; hereafter Simon, Tragic Drama), pp. 72-73, who points out that epic is bemoaned at the beginning, ridiculed at the end.
thumos has effected horrors in the past and the Nurse fears that it will do so in the future: Medea, who persuaded the children of Pelias to kill their father (9-11), will doubtlessly engage in violent retaliation for Jason’s betrayal (37-43). Erôs is obviously a loose cannon on the deck of human affairs; this is clear from the destruction that has resulted from its arousal in Medea. The second use of the abstract noun erôs, 152 (this time in its poetic form, eros), is even more explicit in associating erôs with destruction. There the Chorus ask Medea, whom they have just heard wishing for death,

What in the world is this desire of yours for the unapproachable bedding-down, poor fool? The end that is death rushes forward; do not pray for it. (τίς σοι ποτε τὰς ἀπλάτου κοίτας ἔρος, ὁ ματαια; σπεύσει θανάτου τελευτάν, μηδὲν τὸδε λίσσου, 151-154).

These words show a powerful association, not only in Medea but in the Chorus as well, between erôs and death. The Chorus, it is true, censure Medea’s desire for death by labelling her "poor fool" and urging her to desist; but the poet has them nonetheless, in their description of death, use the erotically suggestive κοίτας ("bedding-down"), albeit modified by the oxymoronic ἀπλάτου ("unapproachable," i.e., "dire"). Disturbing associations, these: desire for death; death as a bed,

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approach to which is discouraged; proximity as danger. It
is as if ἐρῶς, normally associated with the generation of
life, is here instead the guarantor of violence if not
death. This will not be the last time such associations
are made (see below, Part Five). And yet, since in the
prologue the Nurse sees everything as stemming from the
sailing of the Argo (or rather, from the felling of the
tree that went to build its oars), it is hard to tell
whether the legacy of violence results from Medea’s
erotically smitten thumos or rather from the glorious past
deeds of the "best men."

The ambiguity is not accidental: ἐρῶς is firmly
entrenched in the arena of competition where dangerous
issue such as the Nurse describes is not only possible, but
predictable. This may seem, at least to modern readers,
surprising. Yet it is precisely to this use which Jason,
both in the past and in the present (though, as will be
argued, he is not alone in this), puts ἐρῶς. The Nurse
implies what Jason will later (526-531) be proud to admit:
that in the past, he relied on ἐρῶς in his quest for the
fleece, by which he won his status as one of the "best
men."

Likewise, in speaking of the present, the Nurse
informs us that Jason has now made another strategic erotic
attachment: "Jason beds a kingly marriage, having wed the
child of Creon, who rules over this land" (γάμους
These lines, which describe in explicitly sexual terms the acquisition of social advancement, in themselves go a long way toward illustrating how far removed from modern ideas of eroticism is this play’s definition of erōs. For not only is erōs a loose cannon (so much even we could recognize as common wisdom in our day), it is also a means to social advancement. This is further illustrated by the fact that the "child of Creon"—Jason’s new bride—remains unnamed: she is, just as Jason will later maintain (593-597), not the object of his erōs; instead, her erotic interest is used, as Medea’s was before her, to gain Jason’s goal of competitive advancement.

Medea’s response to Jason’s new attachment shows the

16. John J. Winkler, Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece (New York and London: Routledge, 1990; hereafter Winkler, Constraints), pp. 77-79, notes that in the ancient Greek magical texts, requests for erotic allure are a regular part of prayers for social success. After giving by way of illustration a prayer to Helios in which the petitioner asks, among other things, for wealth, good reputation, charm (charis), looks, beauty, and persuasiveness, Winkler explains the logic of this admixture as follows: "The petitioner would like to shine in his community not only with external marks of physical success but most particularly in personal qualities, because the truly significant interactions in which his value is continuously judged and rated by others are those where he shows his individual excellence. To get the edge on competitors often means charming or outfoxing them rather than fighting or insulting them, so generalized prayers for success frequently include what may seem to us a rather peacock-like pride in looking good and being seen as sexually appealing." (p. 77).
validity both of the Nurse's pronouncement that now hatred is epidemic and of our description of erōs as a loose cannon on the deck of human affairs: to the advice of friends Medea is unresponsive (ὤς δὲ πέτρος ἡ θαλάσσιος κλύδων ἀκούει νουθετουμένη φίλων, 28-29), "she bewails [as if he were dead] her dear father" (πατέρ' ἀφοιμώξης φίλον, 31), "she hates her children" (στυγεὶ δὲ παιδᾶς, 36; cf. 117, τί τούσδ' ἔχθεις; and Medea's curse against the children at 112-114: ὃ κατάρατοι παιδῆς ὀλοισθε στυγερᾶς ματρὸς σὺν πατρί). In addition, the Nurse expects that Medea "will not endure being treated badly" (οὐδ' ἀνέξεται κακῶς πάσχουσα, 38-39) and will retaliate viciously (40-43). Finally, the Nurse predicts that "no one joining in enmity with her will easily come out beautifully victorious" (οὔτοι ρεδίως γε συμβαλὼν ἔχθραν τις αὐτῇ καλλίνικον οἴσεται, 44-45).17

In short, as far as Medea is concerned, the world has

17Michael Shaw, "The Female Intruder: Women in Fifth-Century Drama," CP 70 (1975; hereafter Shaw, "Female Intruder"), following Page, Medea, at line 45, notes that "'Beautiful victors' . . . is an athletic term, a male term." Hills, Mythopoeia, pp. 98-99, cites this as one of many athletic metaphors used in the play (see its repetition at 765; cf. ἀγὸν at 235, 366-367, 403, and 1245; terms from wrestling and other competitions occur at 274-276, 546, 557, and 585). Buxton, Persuasion, p. 165, points out that καλλίνικος is "an epithet of Herakles and a term redolent of Pindar’s world of athletic immortality." See also Foley, "Divided Self," p. 75.
been severed in half, there are friends and there are enemies. But more than that: in the process of Jason's quest, and the use to which eros has been put, the world of "friends" has been violated.\textsuperscript{18} The quest has taken precedence; former friends are lightly turned into enemies in the wake of the unrelenting pursuit of self-advancement. So much the Tutor says when he comments on Jason's willingness to let his children suffer exile: "The old give way to new alliances; that one is not a friend to this house." (παλαιὰ καινῶν λείπεται κήσεωερών, κοῦκ ἔστ' ἐκεῖνος τοῖσδε ὀώμασιν φίλος, 76-77). Such fluidity of attachment is common, as the discussion below will show, to the type of aretē pursued by competitors like Jason.

But the stalwart Nurse has trouble defending or

\textsuperscript{18}J. Roger Dunkle, "The Aegeus Episode and the Theme of Euripides' Medea," TAPA 100 (1969; hereafter Dunkle, "Aegeus Episode"), p. 101, sees self-interest as motivating mistreatment of friends. According to Seth L. Schein, "Philia in Euripides' Medea," in Cabinet of the Muses, ed. Mark Griffith and Donald J. Mastronarde (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990; hereafter Schein, "Philia"), pp. 57-73, the concept of philia was ambiguous: it signifies "solidarity or affection" and is at the same time fundamentally instrumental. By the last part of the fifth century philia was primarily a political alliance and "came to be seen more and more as merely a useful connection which individuals manipulated and exploited for their own advantage." (p. 59). Jason and Medea, then, are not aberrant. The play, according to Schein, "explores the ambiguities" inherent in the concept of philia. Cf. Williamson, "Woman's Place," pp. 24-25, on Jason and Medea's violation of the very code they espouse, of helping philoi; Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 13, by omission seems to exonerate Jason: "it is the mark of Medea to confound the distinction between friend and foe."
censuring Jason. With her wish, "May he perish not" (δλοιτο μὲν μὴ, 83), she manages both to curse Jason and yet, by a technicality, not to curse her master; she does, however, openly express her disapproval by describing him as kakos: "But he is caught being vile to his friends" (ἀτᾷρ κακός γ' ών ἐς φίλους ἀλίσκεται, 84). In less than one hundred lines, then, Jason has gone from aristos to kakos, and all in the mouth of one Nurse. He will descend even further, to pankakistos, when Medea gets hold of him.

The Tutor, however, who enters at line 49, is blithely incredulous that the Nurse finds Jason's conduct unusual:

Who isn't this way? Were you born yesterday? Don't you know that everybody loves himself more than his neighbor (πᾶς τις αὐτὸν τοῦ πέλας μᾶλλον φιλεῖ)? Some do it justly, some for the sake of gain (οἱ μὲν δικαίως οἱ δὲ κέρδους κάριν). And just so the father, for the sake of a bed (ἐυνής οὖνεκ[α]), doesn't love these boys. (85-88).

The Tutor here, as Medea will later, interprets Jason's actions as motivated by erotic pursuit ("for the sake of a bed"), but the Tutor lacks Medea's jealousy and is able to go further and equate erotic pursuit with the pursuit of gain.¹⁹ We have just been informed of so much by the Nurse's description of Jason's choice of bed partners (a kingly marriage, 18); we will later be informed by Jason

¹⁹Musurillo, "Euripides' Medea: A Reconsideration," AJP 87 (1966; hereafter Musurillo, "Reconsideration"), pp. 53 and 57, misses this point, and therefore believes that Jason is in fact motivated by lust.
himself (593-597), and even later by Medea (700) that this "bed" Jason pursues is for the sake of cozying up to royalty, not a new and younger bride. In short, Jason puts everything at the service of self-advancement, even his generative desire. But the Tutor claims that it goes further: the love one feels, the love that defines friends and, more generally, those dear, is more self-referential than not. Jason, like all others, loves himself first; those near him, whether they be his sons or his friends, will inevitably come second.

This ethic makes just about any action possible, and closeness—whether erotic or filial—therefore dangerous because it puts one in striking distance of someone who, for self-interest, is likely to lay aside emotional investment in order to use or harm one. And so it should be no surprise that the Nurse, who has already expressed her concern at Medea's glowering at her children (36), now warns them not to go near their mother in her ill-humor (μὴ πέλαζε μητρὶ δυσθυμομένῃ, 91; cf. 101-102, μὴ πέλαση τ' ἐγγύς, μηδὲ προσέλθῃτε), and the discussion above of the Chorus' phrase, τῶς ἀπλάτου κοίτας at 151-152), and ill-wishes Medea upon her enemies instead of her friends (ἐχθροῦς γε μέντοι, μὴ φίλους, δράσει τί, 95).

The Nurse's last wish is the half articulation of a code whose full expression later in the play is Medea's
explanation of her decision to kill her own children:

Let no one consider me despicable and weak nor gentle, but of another sort, heavy to my enemies and kindly to my friends (μηθέεις με φαύλην κάσθενη νομίζετω μηδ' ἡσυχαίαν, ἀλλ' θατέρου τρόπου, βαρείαν ἐχθροίς καὶ φίλοισιν εύμενη, 807-809).

This code—of helping friends and harming enemies—at first glance may seem contradictory with the espousal of self-advancement. Yet by making the defining characteristic of friend and foe the action one delivers to others, and therefore logically receives at the hands of others, this code, read one way, puts the individual and his interests at the center.20 And, in fact, when viewed in light of self-interest, the code loses its force of helping as soon as self-interest dictates that gain lies in the disposal or mistreatment of former friends.

Espousal has so far been made, then, for two not necessarily antithetical standards of excellence: 1) making oneself known through the successful completion of a venture that advances one's own interests, and 2) helping friends and harming enemies.21 Approval of the first

20See Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 70-71, for the individual-centered world. Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 82, sees in Medea the perversion of the golden rule, so that you "do unto others as others have done unto you." This, Simon suggests, is a result of Medea's "identification with the aggressor."

is evident in the Nurse's (albeit qualified) description of Jason and his men as aristoi, in her unconscious use of the adjective καλλίνικος (45), which in itself expresses the beauty of conquest, and--although to a lesser degree--in the Tutor's unshaken recognition of personal gain as an all-too-common motive (87). Approval of the second can be found in the Tutor's automatic assigning Jason to the class of not-friend because of the wrongs against Medea and the children he will tolerate (76-77). It is also evident in the Nurse's half-hearted malediction against Jason (83): he is, as her master, both philos and, as one who harms her mistress, ou philos, in her obvious contemptuous description of him as kakos by his actions against philoi (84), and--finally and most especially--in her whole-hearted and unreserved wish that Medea's wrath may be visited upon her enemies and not her friends (95).

In addition, the play has proposed a concomitant definition of eros as an assistant--albeit unpredictable--to acquiring aretē. Although to this point Jason is the only one who has been shown to manipulate desire so as to attain the end of being considered "excellent" in this play's terms, we shall see that such a tactic is used even by Medea, who is currently the victim of such manipulation. Ironically, the Chorus, who reacted negatively to Jason's use of eros for such ends, will accept without comment Medea's admittedly more subtle but similar use of eros.
As will become even more evident later, the Chorus' blind loyalty is in large part a function of their status as friends to Medea. The Nurse's loyalty is similar, but not quite so blind since not fired (as we will see the Chorus' is) by prejudice against Medea's (and their vicarious) enemy Jason. A reader with modern Western Christian sensibilities may incorrectly assume that the Nurse, who knows all that Medea does, should censure Medea's vicious past and future vicious potential. But she does not. Instead, she merely thrice intones that she knows what Medea is like: her "character is heavy/severe" (βαρεῖα . . . φήν, 38), she is retaliatory (39-43), and "clever/terrible" (δεινή, 44). Furthermore, the Nurse's description of Medea as deīnē, with its connotations of both cleverness and the horrific, gives warning of what, exactly, will be meant by the designation of Medea as sōphē, "clever/wise," i.e., "smart." The adjective deinos, joining as it does intellectual prowess with destructiveness, is an apt term for describing Medea's brand of "smartness"; it is no coincidence that this same adjective will be used to describe the product of Medea's cunning: the horrifying deaths of the princess and Creon (1121, 1167, 1184, 1202, 1214; cf. Creon's dread of Medea's doing something deīnon at 356) as well as Medea's murder of her own children (403, 859, 1243, 1294). In short, the Nurse's description of Medea as deīnē is the first
intimation that intellectual prowess will be used as a force of destruction, not of creation.  

But we must note again that while the Nurse fears Medea's actions (36, 39), she never openly disapproves of her. The Nurse's tone, if anything, is one of pity, distress, and foreboding. It is true that the Nurse herself would not choose to live as Medea and her kind; this is evidence of indirectly expressed censure. But in her reflection on such lives at 119 ff., the Nurse stops short of denouncing Medea as she had Jason, and in this we can discern both her loyalty to her mistress and a grudging respect, although perhaps one born of fear. More importantly, though, the Nurse's generalization on Medea gives definition to the type of individual most likely to be emulated or described in terms of high approbation elsewhere in the play:

The moods of tyrants (τυράννων) are scary (δεινά), because even when little ruled and much in command (ὀλίγ' ἀρχόμενοι, πολλ' κρατούντες) they find it difficult to change their temper. Truly it is better to accustom oneself to live on equal terms (ἐπί ἴσοις); may I at least grow old in not-greatness (ἐν μη μεγάλοις), securely. For invoking moderate things first succeeds (τῶν γὰρ μετρίων πρῶτα μὲν εἰπεῖν τοῦρομα νικᾶ), and to make use of [moderate things] is by far best for man. Excelling (τὰ ἢ ... ὑπερβάλλοντα) effects no profit for mortals; but greater ruin, when god is angered, he brings to houses. (119-130).

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Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 119-120, sees in the description of Medea as deinos an expression of her divinity.
The Nurse's bid for humble obscurity and moderation is remarkable as a counterpoint to the opinions of the Chorus, Medea, Creon, and Jason, all of whom espouse and emulate (but, in Creon's case, only half-heartedly) the opposite: to be in command and not be ruled, to have power over many things, under no circumstances to live on equal terms, but instead to aspire to greatness which is mastery. Winning has nothing to do with the moderate, but instead is excelling over against others, pure and simple.

The most highly approved conduct in this play is not what we at least would deem "heroic," but is instead, suggestively put, getting on top and staying there. This is what Gouldner calls "the Greek contest system,"

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23Alan Elliott, ed., Euripides, Medea (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969; hereafter Elliott, Medea), p. 75, comments that the sentiment expressed in lines 119-130 is akin to μηδέν ἄγαν. That this sentiment was an integral part of and yet antithetical to the Greek contest system is noted by Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 44, and Philip E. Slater, The Glory of Hera (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968; hereafter Slater, Glory), p. 40. Slater agrees with the infamous pronouncement of Bertrand Russell, which he quotes: "[The Greeks] had a maxim, 'nothing too much,' but they were in fact excessive in everything." The Nurse's advocating moderation as success is a striking contrast to the "win at all costs" ethic of the zero-sum game. The Nurse's creed, which James G. Keenan summed up to me as "winning is tying for second," is one step away from proposing that "winning is losing" (or, to put it in the terms of Joseph Campbell, "sacrifice is bliss"). Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 92, sees the motif of self-sacrifice in Euripides' works as evidence of a connection between Euripides and Socrates.

24This turn of phrase was suggested to me by the statement of Winkler, Constraints, p. 37: "The very fact of considering social and sexual relations together provokes the question, 'Who's on top?"
which he describes as "a zero-sum game in that someone can win only if someone else loses." According to Gouldner, a complex of behaviors and beliefs is characteristic of the Greek contest system, whose orientation—to achievement won through competitive struggle—permeates nearly every aspect of self-identity as well as relations between self and others.

The objective of participants in this contest system is simple: to achieve, through one's own individual efforts, as much recognition as possible. The achievement is not complete unless one has the reputation of predominating over all others on the field of contest. Gaining such a reputation necessitates that one "be in all circumstances free and independent of the constraint of another . . . ."

Actions to achieve recognition of one's predominance may take the form of actual attack upon another, threatened attack, or competition. This last, which Gouldner suggests

25Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 41-77; the quotation is taken from p. 49. See also Winkler, Constraints, pp. 1-98, passim.

26Arrowsmith, "Ideas," pp. 33-36, gives a succinct overview of the "breakdown of the old community, the overwhelming destruction of [the] mythical and coherent world-order" and "transvaluation of morals" that occurred in the last half of the fifth century B.C. Arrowsmith quotes Thucydides, History 3.82 ff., a passage that can be read as a thumbnail sketch of the realities of zero-sum competition as described by Gouldner.

27Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 12 (quote); cf. also pp. 42-43 and 48.
is a sublimation of actual attack, may occur in any number of arenas: competition can be physical, intellectual, or economic. There are basically only two ways of winning: either one raises oneself or cuts the other down. "Playing fair" is not important; winning is, and to win one may break rules, use people as objects or interchangeable parts, and violate traditional codes of conduct. There is only one commitment—to oneself as the victor. To achieve victory one must be smart (thus Medea's renowned sophia), be able to control one's emotional impulses (it is here that we can discern Jason's judicious choice of where to expend his erotic impulses), and be willing to be ruthless enough to do whatever is necessary to win (as will be the case with Medea).28

The zero-sum system inspires four concomitant attitudes, which make sense only in context of the contest. The first of these, that the risk taken must be very high, has a double impetus: for one who aims at fame, risking what is dearest makes one legendary as a competitor, while gaining the high stakes risked by one's opponent increases one's own fame. The second attitude, that envy is as savored as the defeat of a foe, makes sense in an arena where there is only one victor. In such a circumstance, envy is the natural companion to victory, which itself is

28Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 48, 50, 56, 71-72, and 107.
accomplished only by someone else's defeat. The third attitude is related to the competitor's autonomy. Pitted as he is, alone against all others, the competitor must resist dependence and thwart all attempts to put him under constraint. He therefore values reciprocity and retribution, for he must repay what has been given to him, whether it be good or ill. "Helping friends and harming foes" becomes his creed, the individual-centered creed so highly touted in Medea, that covertly measures others by their services for or actions against one. The fourth and final attitude reflects the teleology of such competitors: means are chosen for their ability to achieve ends, and since there must be total commitment to achieving ends, any means will do. This is what Gouldner calls "total commitment rationality": the willingness to carry out, regardless the cost, a rationally conceived plan.29 It will be such willingness on Medea's part that brings this play to its disturbing climax.

As should already be clear, the zero-sum system has its human costs. For the competitor himself, there is the lunacy of what must have been a frantic and never-ending engagement in potentially self-destructive competition. There is no rest in a zero-sum game, for the minute one attains what appears to be the summit, either a higher

summit offers itself as the new goal for one's opponents, or one becomes the target of all other competitors, who are to a man eager to pull one down. One must continually, as Gouldner puts it, "hurl [one]self back into the fray." The competitor becomes prone to violence which appears and is deemed necessary. Such an escalation of "necessary" violence will be one of the most horrifying visions Euripides' play presents. Continual engagement in crisis leads, however, not only to escalation of violence, but to the recreation of crisis itself, for it is only the edge of crisis in competition that holds competitors together, ironically enough, in league.30

At all other times, competitors are alone and alienated from others, and this is the second price that competition exacts: it creates a world of autonomous, highly self-conscious beings for whom social discord is the norm, and feelings of separation, isolation, and insecurity are de rigueur.31 We will shortly see evidence of such isolation and self-consciousness in Medea. Insecurity encourages what Gouldner terms "low object attachment,"

30Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 54, 74, and 109. For the Greeks as excessive, see also p. 59, and Slater, Glory, p. 40.

31See George B. Walsh, "Public and Private in Three Plays of Euripides," CP 74 (1979; hereafter Walsh, "Public and Private"), pp. 294-295, for the tension between public life and private life in the Iliad: "... ties of family seem to inhibit distinction, and the private life seems to be incompatible with heroic action."
i.e., the ability to slough off connection to things and persons so as to avoid the pain experienced when the competitor must put these in jeopardy or when they are lost. Friendships and intimacies are therefore fluid—precisely the status quo described by the Tutor in Medea at 85 ff.; people and things are used and discarded, or treated like interchangeable parts—as was Medea before the play's beginning, and as will be the children at the play's climax. Fluidity of attachment further contributes to desire for immediate gratification rather than pursuing long term goals, for these, after all, may be overturned at any juncture.32 At the play's close, Medea espouses precisely such pursuit of immediate gratification at the expense of long term goals.

But what undermines security and destroys faith in human relations nonetheless promotes, according to Gouldner, the development of rationalism,

... an orientation in which the relation between means and ends is subject to deliberate calculation; in which ends or goals are constituted as perceptually organized foci set off from the contextual ground in which they are embedded; and in which other aspects of the surround are also taken from their context and evaluated primarily in terms of their anticipated capacity to realize the goal.33

In a zero-sum system, then, the mind—like the emotions—becomes a tool for achieving the goal of victory.

33 Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 70.
Discerning means to ends is the mind's primary task; efficiency is valued, morality discarded: thus, Medea's immoral choice to kill her children to effect her goal of punishing her enemy. Treachery and duplicity are not disdained (Medea uses both and is never criticized), and their use in turn deepens distrust between individuals. The mind is prized over emotions, which cannot calculate and besides are distrusted, for they must always be in control lest they betray one and bring defeat (so at line 1049 Medea chides herself for lack of control). Detachment from one's own emotions becomes as important as detachment from objects and others. In short, one should expect in such a system the same subservience of desire to the acquisition of the goal of self-advancement already seen in Jason in Medea.

As one would guess, the moral costs of this system are high. Individuals see themselves in competition with the group instead of members of it; the value of cooperative virtues is diminished. Gouldner traces participation in the contest system to the breakdown of tribalism and the rise of urban centers, when kinship was no longer an "all-embracing matrix" and the once unquestioned rules of tradition were cast aside. The Greek taboo against excess

34Cf. Winkler, Constraints, p. 75, who describes duplicity as "... a permanent state of defensiveness against intrusive enemies ... ."

35Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 65-71.
and commendation of temperance were, in Gouldner's view, in Gouldner's view, counter to the contest system and vain attempts to moderate the behavior of contestants whose behavior could no longer be moderated. The concentration on obtaining fame blinded contestants, ironically, to any opinion opposing their progress. Shame became an ineffective tool of social control because the need for a high opinion of oneself outstripped all other opinion; if all else were lost, the contestant could choose to ignore current opinion as irrelevant to the ultimate prize: posthumous fame won by ranking high in the eyes of those yet to be born.36

With its focus on the individual, then, competition in a zero-sum game is ultimately anti-social. Even its seemingly most social aspect, the code of "helping friends and harming enemies," spells danger in its individual-centered logical extreme: friends are those who help one, and enemies are those who hurt one. The world is readily divided into two camps, friends and enemies, with the greater focus on enemies, since it is only to enemies that one can lose and, in addition, one way of winning is by harming enemies. Divisiveness is endemic—as the Nurse in Medea says "all things are hatred" (16)—and harm becomes the action of choice. Violence is not just predictable, it is endorsed.

36Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 15, 44, 58-59, 72-74, and 97.
The espoused excellence in Medea, the profile of the autonomous competitor, is a concentration on harming one's enemies over helping one's friends, and, as such, is a promotion of divisiveness. There are two opposing camps, the philoi and the echthroi or ou philoi. Every one of the minor characters introduced thus far operates under such a division. The Nurse, Tutor, and Chorus are all philoi to Medea: all but the Chorus are household retainers and by definition philoi. The Chorus define themselves as philon to the house (138). Creon, as will be seen, is willing to be an enemy to Medea (290), while Aegeus will define himself as friend (664). Jason is no longer a philos to the house (77), and is therefore by definition an echthros to all but Creon, and perhaps the cautiously loyal Nurse. Although Jason attempts to define himself as a philos to Medea and the children (459), and Medea refers to herself and the children as friends whom he has harmed (470), she makes it clear that he is in fact no friend, except in hypothesis (499).

It is important to understand, then, that the Chorus' disapproval of Jason is because, as enemy to Medea, he is enemy to them; Medea, on the contrary, is a friend and therefore deserves their help and support. Right and wrong

37Ohlander, Suspense, p. 52 n. 10, suggests that the Chorus' total support of Medea is a Euripidean invention, and one that goes against the tradition of the Corinthians as slayers of the children.
are—in the first half of the play at least—not measured except by the relativistic standards of the code: the Chorus proclaim that Medea rightly punishes Jason (ἐνδίκως γὰρ ἐκτείσῃ πόσιν, Μήδεια, 267–268), the husband who has wronged her; they inform Jason that, in their opinion, his action has been wrong (δοκεῖς προδοὺς σὴν ἀλοχὸν οὗ δίκαια ὁρᾶν, 578). Their concept of justice, ὅικη, is one of an individual-centered reciprocity, not one sprung from social consciousness or broader concepts of right and wrong. In short, in their support of a friend over an enemy, one can see the Chorus’ espousal and practice of the code of "helping friends and harming enemies"; their loyalty can hardly be defended on ethical grounds. The actions of Medea and Jason are at least equally despicable, even only those actions known to have taken place at the time of the play’s beginning.

But the Chorus do not support Medea over Jason merely because she is friend and he is enemy; they censure Jason and are willing to stand silently by so that he may be harmed (267) because Jason is, in addition to being their enemy vicariously through Medea, their enemy vicariously because of his sex:38 in this he is a representative

38Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 49, cites the Chorus’ "profound resentment ... against male domination" to explain the ease with which Medea convinces them to help her.
of the class that has prevented their advancement to
superior status. Jason is a man, a husband; they, as women
and wives, have long been kept inferior to the likes of
him. They do not like this. They, like Medea and Jason,
crave to be on top, and are willing to witness the use of
harm to get there.

In short, the Chorus advocate the aggressively
competitive creed of the zero-sum game practiced, as we
have glimpsed already, by both the two main characters.
This is first obvious from Medea's use of it to gain their
support. Her opening monologue (214-266) assumes on their
part a competitive hostility which must be overcome and
redirected. As has long been recognized, her speech is a
masterpiece of manipulation. But what has been
largely overlooked is that such a masterpiece can only
succeed with a highly competitive and willingly hostile
group. Such a group is the Chorus of Corinthian

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40 Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 60-64, argues that Euripides, by not letting on that he was not going to follow versions of the myth wherein the Corinthians killed Medea's children, left the audience in suspense; if Ohlander is correct, Medea's treatment of these women as potentially hostile is even more plausible. R. G. Ussher, "Euripides Medea 214 ff.," CP 55 (1960), pp. 249-251, proposes that Medea uses σπευδόν at 216 not in reference to herself, but to the Corinthian women. Her opening words are, therefore, according to Ussher, "defiant
Medea's first sentence signals her recognition of their hostile competitiveness. She tells the women that she has come outside "lest you in some way find fault with me" (μή μοί τι μέμφησθε, 215). Medea here displays not only the self-consciousness typical of the zero-sum competitor, she likewise by this statement shows her awareness of the dynamics of the competition. Fault-finding in a zero-sum society is more serious than what we may cavalierly dismiss as gossip-mongering; in such a society one's chances for advancement can be thwarted by malevolent rumor. Medea accurately describes the kind of unjust and ready-to-hand censure typical of participants in zero-sum games, who are quick to destroy the other to advance themselves: Medea knows that one can incur at best indifference, at worst a bad

and attacking." I agree in part; Medea, however, is too smart to encourage, by attacking, a counter-attack, when what she wants is to make these women allies, not enemies.

Reckford, "First Exit," pp. 334-339, takes a different tack in analyzing Medea's speech. In it, he detects an ambiguity that indicates the tragedy of Medea, once intelligent and passionate, now suffering so much that she becomes cold and inhuman.

Medea later describes to Creon (292-305) her past experience with the hostility and envy of others. Even if she has fabricated this experience, her statement shows that she is well aware of the potential for such a reaction on the part of competitors.

Winkler, Constraints, pp. 58-59.

See Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 55-58.
reputation, by merely minding one's business (217-218), and that some people will simply hate one on sight (220-221). Medea is therefore eager to impress upon these potentially hostile women that she is neither haughty (216) nor does she mean to give offense (224); she has kept herself from them because she has been unexpectedly destroyed (225-228).

This last is a reassuring display of vulnerability. By spilling out her tale of woe Medea communicates to the Chorus not only that she is a deserving object of pity, but that she, once perhaps viewed by them as a suspiciously withdrawn foreigner, is not worth considering as competition. She is already destroyed, and may therefore visit upon them no harm. She cannot thereby be considered an enemy; they are--friends (227).

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This last is deemed unjust (219) not because hating per se is not just, but because hating on sight is a violation of the reciprocity code of conduct followed by zero-sum competitors; by contrast "unjust" people hate though "having suffered no injustice" (221).

Medea's exploitation of her alleged vulnerability (see Gellie, "Character," p. 17) is a constant in her repertoire of manipulation. It is easy to discern when Medea is engaging in, as Foley, "Divided Self," p. 74, terms it, "feminine role-playing" with men, but she is not above using it, as here, on her own sex. Pucci, Violence, p. 72, speaks of Medea's rhetoric as "mov[ing] back and forth between the contradictory figures of master and slave."

Odysseus similarly uses the disguise of a beggar to discourage the suitors from considering him a contender.
And so, Medea may join them, albeit falsely,\textsuperscript{47} in
the first person plural. "We women," she intones at 230-
231, "are the most wretched creatures of all things that
are alive and have intelligence."\textsuperscript{48} Her description of
their common wretchedness is no less an appeal to their
prejudice against the opposite sex—a trait we will see
they share with Jason—than it is designed to make the
blood of a competitor boil: women must willingly submit
themselves to the mastery of another (δεσωμότην τε
σώματος λαβεῖν, 233), even pay dearly for the
privilege! The whole sordid predicament of trying to get a
good deal for one's money Medea describes competitively
as "the greatest contest" (ἀγὼν μέγιστος,

\textsuperscript{47}So, e.g., Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 182:
"We are left in no doubt that this is a formidable woman;
and, despite all that she has said in this scene about the
limitations of the feminine role, it is clear that she
herself is capable of overcoming them." See also Stewart
Flory, "Medea's Right Hand: Promises and Revenge," \textsc{TAPA}
108 (1978; hereafter Flory, "Right Hand"), pp. 70-71, who
notes that Medea's extraordinary marriage contract with
Jason made on her own behalf makes her "a larger-than-life
Foley, "Divided Self," pp. 74-75, similarly points out that
Medea is no typical housewife, and that she often feigns
femininity to manipulate others. McDermott, \textit{Incarnation},
pp. 43-64, examines the tensions between the realistic and
the demonic in Euripides' characterization of Medea. Medea
as woman is an anomaly: sympathetic and revoltingly
unnatural.

\textsuperscript{48}Medea's descriptions of the plight of women are
realistic. See Helene P. Foley, "The Conception of Women
in Athenian Drama," in \textit{Reflections of Women in Antiquity},
ed. Helene P. Foley (New York: Gordon and Breach Science
Publishers, 1981), pp. 129-130, for prose text confirmation
of several of Medea's points.
for the task of protecting one's reputation—an all-consuming one in a zero-sum competition—deems escape from a bad marriage impossible for women (236-237). The best one can hope for is a husband who does not strain against the yoke; this makes one's life enviable (241-243). The competitor, recall, covets envy, perhaps even this sorry excuse for it.50

It is clear throughout this description that women are constrained and have no power (see 232 and 239, ἀπεί; 247, ἄναγκη), while power and choice are solely in the hands of men (see 242, βία, and 244-245). The description is thoroughly degrading to anyone with an ounce of self-respect and a need for self-mastery; for the highly competitive it is incitement to riot. Medea ends with a rousing call to arms:

"They say that we live life without danger at home, while they do battle with the spear. They don't know what they're talking about (κακὰς φρονοῦντες); I'd rather stand three times beside a shield than give birth once." (248-251).51

Foley, "Divided Self," p. 75.


In one sentence Medea reasserts the supremacy of women by degrading men who are, after all, misinformed fools (recall that competition need not be only in the physical realm, that it also invaded the realm of the intellect), and who have one-third the courage of women; she takes back the power of choice by her own preference for bearing arms over birthing, she advances the already implied keenly competitive role of wife by saying that one of her functions, giving birth, is the equivalent of three times

Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 34, remarks that "Marriage is for the girl what war is for the boy . . . ." Vernant continues--tellingly, in light of Medea's transformation in the play--that a girl who rejects marriage (or, one could argue, a woman who is ejected from marriage) " . . . finds herself to some extent forced toward warfare, and paradoxically becomes the equivalent of a warrior." See the even more telling comment of Joseph Campbell, *Power*, p. 125, who, after noting that the Aztecs placed warriors killed in battle in the same heaven with mothers who died in childbirth, asserts, "Giving birth is definitely a heroic deed, in that it is the giving over of oneself to the life of another."

It is here that one may begin to discern the difference between the "hero" and the zero-sum competitor, the latter of whom never "gives over" him or herself "to the life of another" and, therefore, has no claim to being a "hero."

52 Medea's weapon in the zero-sum game is her cleverness. See H. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, 2 rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1978; hereafter Finley, *World of Odysseus*), p. 120: "Nothing defines the quality of Greek culture more neatly than the way in which the idea of competition was extended from physical prowess to the realm of the intellect . . . . ."

53 Pucci, *Violence*, pp. 66-69, is excellent on this point.
on the front lines.\textsuperscript{54} Marriage is war, so one may as well fight to win.\textsuperscript{55} This is a sentiment appealing only to those who have been on the bottom way too long, are sick and tired of their subservience, and sense that in this "us vs. them" game only one side can win.

Medea has therefore skillfully reminded the Chorus of what to them is quite painful: they are subservient, helpless, constrained, degraded. They must pay for their degradation and endure being considered lucky for it. Medea easily wins the Chorus over because she appeals to them not merely as women, but rather as competitors who are sick of losing.

Medea at the same time defines herself as an aggressively competitive person, and one who is skilled at playing the zero-sum game. What defines Medea as a zero-sum competitor is her manipulation\textsuperscript{56} of assets critical

\textsuperscript{54}Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 89, sees Medea's equation of childbirth and battle as a reformulation of women's duty to bear sons who will bear the shield for the polis.

\textsuperscript{55}The phrase "Marriage is war" is taken from Susan Starr Richards, "How to Win at Marriage," \textit{Ms. Magazine}, March 1983, pp. 44-49, who claims that she came to recognize her own mistaken desire to "win" as "what comes of seeing yourself as the last of a long line of losers--by which I mean women." (p. 49). Cf. the Janis Joplin song, "Women is Losers," whose lyrics include the regretful "men always seem to end up on top"; the sentiment is similar in John Lennon and Yoko Ono's "Woman is the Nigger of the World."

\textsuperscript{56}McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 45-48, may be right that Medea knowingly falsely assumes the role of the average Hausfrau; if so, this is more evidence that Medea
to winning: her reputation in general and her particular status with these (to her) alien women. As a competitor, it is politic for her to dispel any negative accruals to her reputation and to ensure that these women will remain allies. The first she has accomplished—in a wily display of vulnerability—by redirecting their suspicions about her reserved nature; the second she accomplishes by delineating for them the degrading lot they share with her.

But Medea’s identification as a player in a cutthroat competitive game does not stop with her concern for impression management and securing allies. In the last part of her opening monologue, Medea claims she is different from the Corinthian women of the Chorus because of her isolation and alienation. Such isolation and alienation, however, are hallmarks of one whose major concern is self-advancement. Parallels can easily be drawn to Achilles, whose isolation was similarly self-

is using the intellectual tools of the zero-sum competitor. See Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 68, for treachery and duplicity as one aspect of the contest system.

57 Margaret Visser, "Medea: Daughter, Sister, Wife and Mother," in Greek Tragedy and Its Legacy, ed. Martin Cropp, et al. (Calgary, Alberta, Canada: Univ. of Calgary, 1986; hereafter Visser, "Medea"), p. 151, explains, however, that "[i]n marriage, a woman is a foreigner." Cf. Reckford, "First Exit," p. 354, who notes the appearance of this idea in Alcestis, where Admetus claims it is a "stranger woman" (γυνὴ θυραίος, 805) who has died.

58 See Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 106, for feelings of separateness and isolation as one of the tensions of individuality.
imposed: it was put to the service of achieving his sole desire, of receiving the honor he felt he deserved.

Medea’s current plight, as commentators indignantly point out, is of course of her own making: all that she suffers now, as she will be eager to remind Jason (475 ff.), is because of her desire to help Jason, who was her sole interest (228-229). Medea is not selfless, Jason selfish. They are both dominated by self-interest, both jockeying for the mastery to gain the objects of their desire. 60

Medea’s isolation and alienation, then, which she uses to emphasize her distinction, must in one sense have had the ring of familiarity to the competitive members of the

59See, e.g., Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 182.

60E. M. Blaiklock, "The Nautical Imagery of Euripides’ Medea," CP 50 (1955; hereafter Blaiklock, "Nautical Imagery"), p. 236: "The Medea of Corinth is to be understood in the light of the Medea of Colchis. The situation is a consummation. If the moralities are to be sought, it was a betrayal which led to this story of mutual treachery. If motives and catastrophe are to reveal their source and origin, it is in the past of both Jason and Medea." Cf. Dunkle, "Aegeus Episode," p. 99: "... it would be a mistake to see Medea’s passion for Jason as a self-sacrificing love ... ." Pace Cowherd, "Ending," p. 131: "[T]he fact remains that Medea took her oaths because of love. On the other hand, ... Jason was simply looking to his own advantage." Cowherd’s thesis of Medea as "feeling" and Jason as "unfeeling" forces her to ignore Jason’s expressions of grief at the end of the play so that she may maintain that Jason "... expresses no feeling for his children." (p. 134).
Chorus. 61 And although the differences she describes are not imagined—she is literally alone 62 (she has lost her city, her father's home, and cannot enjoy the company of friends, 253-254) and an alien (256)—Medea nonetheless stresses her helplessness, so recently put forth as their common plight. In this, she maintains the thread of their similarity, for her description of her alleged contrast to them finds her as one whose world is full of things she does not have, whose every action is blocked by negators (255-258; the use of negatives is remarkable here), and who is acted upon instead of acting (ὑπρίγομαι; λειπομένη, 255, 256). In short, she remains nonetheless one of them, helplessly constrained by others, like all women of her earlier description. 63

By the time she comes around to listing the things she lacks, therefore, these women will be hard pressed to recall (if indeed they knew it) that Medea herself has been

61 See Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 180, for the stress on Medea's foreignness as a way to emphasize her vulnerability and isolation.

62 Arrowsmith, "Ideas," pp. 41-42, sees the depiction of loneliness as a fate common to all humans as a striking feature of Euripides' tragedies.

63 Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 35, cites the murder of Medea's brother and the Nurse's warnings about Medea's temperament (172) as evidence that Medea, "no shrinking violet," does not conform to the Chorus' image of the "helpless female creature." Indeed, "[Medea's] situation never was the same as that of an average woman." (p. 36).
responsible for at least some of her desolation. The Chorus are ripe to grant her request for silence, which she cleverly couches both in tentative indefiniteness and passivity ("if for me some way, some device may be found . . .," 260) as well as in another rousing appeal for women to rise above their reputation as fearful cowards: women, she asserts, can be bloodier than anyone when it really matters to them (264–266).

And when does it really matter to a woman? "Whenever she happens to have lost honor in bed." (όταν ὃ ἔσ εὐνῆν ἡδικημένη κυρὶ, 265). Does this mean that sex, or—to put on it what Winkler calls "vanilla connotations"—love, is all that matters to women? Hardly. For if we return once more to the first part of Medea's speech to the Corinthian women, we find that for a woman, good reputation and enviable life—both things to which the zero-sum contender aspires—are secured through good relations with her husband, her "bed-mate": there is no such thing as a respectable divorce for a woman (οὐ γάρ εὐκλεείς ἀπαλλαγαί γυναιξίν, 236–237), and if she makes a miscalculation in dealing with her bed-mate (ἐυνευνέτη, 240, as synonymous with "husband" at

64 Ohlander, Suspense, p. 54, notes that, in any case, Medea's off stage self-accusations, in which she seems to be addressing her own soul in regret for her past deeds, would elicit sympathy from anyone who overhears them.

65 Winkler, Constraints, p. 72.
237 and 242), her life will not be the enviable one she describes as possible had this not happened (॥ηλωτός αἰὼν, 243). If a woman is "dishonored" in bed, her social status is at risk. This is a far cry from the "hell hath no fury" spins commonly put on interpretations of this passage. Medea is talking about reputation here, not a privately suffered sense of having been scorned.

For women in general as well as for the men in this play, there is a connection between ἐρῶς and one's social status. For men, ἐρῶς is used to achieve a higher social standing; for women, the connection is something more integral and beyond their control: their degree of success with their "bed-mate" is in direct proportion to their social success.

It is no wonder, then, that Medea's description of women

66 Pace Page, Medea, pp. xiv-xvii. Cf. Musurillo, "Reconsideration," passim, to whom Medea is "a woman wronged," or "a woman scorned," and for whom line 330 ("Ah, what a great evil love is for men!") is "the final theme of the play." (p. 74). Cf. also his p. 73, where Medea is "a pure woman ... wounded in the weakest and most sensitive part of her nature."

67 Bongie, "Heroic Elements," pp. 28-29, is especially good on this point: "No reference is made, it should be noticed, to a broken heart. ... [T]he key to [Medea's character] is not rejected love and jealousy, but a sense of slighted honour and a fear of loss of respect and status." Cf. Bernd Seidensticker, "Euripides, Medea 1056-80, An Interpolation?", in Cabinet of the Muses, ed. Mark Griffith and Donald J. Mastronarde (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990; hereafter Seidensticker, "Medea 1056-80"), p. 98.

Pace Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 183: "There is a clash here between Medea's self-image as a hero of the old style braving a great ordeal and her awareness of the destructiveness of thwarted female passion."
becoming bloody-minded when dishonored in bed does not strike the Chorus as odd. Here is a battle worth fighting.

Such a description of women as able to be "bloody-minded" can only win the day with a group to whom it appeals to be bloody when it matters. The women of the Chorus define themselves as eagerly vicious by granting Medea's request for silence. It will be all she needs from them. As they pledge silence, they further show their own agreement with the code of harming enemies: "I will do this; for justly you punish your husband, Medea" (ένδίκως γὰρ ἔτεισσα πώσιν, Μήδεια, 266).

One can hardly posit in this group willing passivity and horror of bloodshed. They are, in essence, sicking Medea on Jason, and are eager to stand by and watch as the flies. It will be a vicarious victory for them.

But this victory is hardly secured. What threatens it is the predicted order for Medea's exile with her two children, now issued upon his entry (271) by a brusque and bristling Creon. Creon's exiling Medea

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68 Exile was no trifling sentence, physically or psychologically. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic," in Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1991; hereafter Vernant, "Beautiful Death"), p. 54, recalls that Achilles compared his dishonor with the plight of the exile, whose fate was to be "a less than nothing (οὔτιδανος), a homeless and worthless drifter, a kind of nonperson (II. 9.648)."

69 Although Creon is blatantly threatening upon his entrance, his command of theatrical space nonetheless betrays his inferiority. Bernard Gredley, "The Place and
underscores the fact that Medea's actions--based on the attitude that she is a participant in a zero-sum game--have not been misguided. Creon and his daughter have won, therefore someone must have lost. They win only at Medea's cost. These are therefore her enemies (ἐξοριῶν, 278), for they willingly harm her to advance their own interests. Creon likewise considers Medea an enemy: upon his entrance he calls attention to her scowling countenance and the fact that her thumos has been roused against her husband (πόσει θυμομένην, 271). The participle can hardly be adequately translated by the English phrase "angry at your husband"; Creon makes it clear that he expects that Medea's roused thumos will inspire retaliatory action. He fears she may do his child some deadly harm (282). He recognizes that Medea has been deprived of a husband in this his gain (286); he has heard of her threats. Furthermore, Medea is sophē; this, combined with her skill for doing much harm, makes her a woman to be feared (285).

Creon's fears of the sophē Medea suggest that sophia

Time of Victory: Euripides' Medea," BICS 34 (1987; hereafter Gredley, "Place and Time"), p. 30, notes, "He comes to Medea; his palace, though the centre of communal authority, occupies a marginal position in theatrical space, displaced and decentred at the end of an eisodos."

70Creon's fears are not misguided, for Medea is uncannily proficient at discerning weaknesses she can use against her enemies. See J. O. de G. Hanson, "The Secret of Medea's Success," G&R 12 (1965), pp. 54-61.
being defined as something useful in defeating an enemy; indeed that this is the definition of sophia posited here is apparent from Medea’s response to Creon’s fear. To understand her response, however, we must first understand who it is Medea believes she is addressing, and to discern that, we must look at Creon’s announcement that he will take precautions against Medea. In this announcement, he lays claim to the code of behavior preferred by nearly everyone in this play: “As far as I’m concerned, it is better now to be hated (ἀπεχθέσθαι) by you, woman, than to be made soft (μαλακισθένθαι) and later groan greatly.” (290-291).

In this statement, Creon identifies himself as one who considers it better to have enemies than the regrets that come with being soft, yielding, approachable. In short, Creon espouses, but cannot, to his misfortune, live up to Medea’s disposition: she, too, has a distaste for softness and being gentle; she is heavy/severe, according to the Nurse (38) and the Chorus (1265), which is just what she wants to be, at least to her enemies (809); she makes but a pretense of softness, according to Creon (316; Medea herself at 776 admits to such a pretense regarding her intended words to Jason); later she chides herself for softness (1052) and finally sends from her sight the children with their soft skin and sweet breath (1075-
To designate this softness as effeminacy, and therefore to argue that Creon's and Medea's disdain of softness is a rejection of the feminine, is one step in the right direction. The Greeks, however, used the designations "soft" and "feminine" in their rhetoric of competition. To be "soft" or a "woman" means to be weak; that is, to be passive and the loser. Creon's own bluffing disdain of softness is an attempt to reject inferiority in competition. Such a rejection is not, therefore, for Creon obviously or even for Medea, a rejection of the feminine. Medea chooses, as Creon wishes he could by his words choose, to be the superior competitor, to be "hard." In a world full of actual and potential enemies, such a tack is not untoward, as the fatal consequences of Creon's ultimate softening will touch there is in the play, and how touch is again and again described as abrasive or even torturous.

See, e.g., Bongie, "Heroic Elements," pp. 39, who typifies Medea's reactions as "masculine" in arguing against "scorned woman" interpretations. Foley, "Divided Self," pp. 73-83, gives a gripping analysis of Medea's struggle as one between her "masculine" and "feminine" selves, and further delineates how Medea exploits expectations others have of her as a female. Shaw, "Female Intruder," pp. 258-264, argues that Medea begins the play with many of the traits of a typical Greek woman, but "becomes a man" (p. 261) in her vengeance and desire to dominate. Cf. Schein, "Philia," p. 67, for Medea's use of masculine vocabulary at 1240-1241.

demonstrate.

But in this scene, Creon still has the power to thwart Medea's plans; Medea must therefore succeed in manipulating him out of his competitive superiority.\textsuperscript{74} She tries to do this first by addressing his fear that she is sophē, that is, that he sees her as having in this a competitive edge over him. Medea tries, unsuccessfully, to counteract Creon's fear of her sophia as a competitive edge by despising her reputation for cleverness. She labels it a great bane to a competitor: it has more than once worked to her detriment instead of her favor (οὐ νῦν μὲ πρῶτον, ἄλλα πολλάκις, Κρέον, ἐβλαψε ὁδὸς μεγάλα τ' εἵργασται κακά, 292-293). In short, though it may appear a competitive advantage, it is not.

It is therefore in Creon's apprehension and Medea's attempts to soothe it that we get the play's first proffered definition of sophia: it is a means to bring about the end of advancing one's own interests; here, by harming one's enemy. Sophia in others, then, is to be feared. Nothing Medea can do will convince Creon otherwise. This is all to his credit, for in this scene we

\textsuperscript{74}Hills, \textit{Mythopoeia}, pp. 105-106, sees Medea's sophia in argumentation in her ability to present herself as other than what she is. Here, she tries to soften Creon's perception of the dangers of her competitive savvy. Williamson, "Woman's Place," p. 21, detects three distinct approaches Medea takes in her assault on Creon. She is least successful in the first, which is made in "abstract and judicial language."
witness the sophē Medea manipulate her enemy into harm's way. For it is Medea sophē who continues, by way of generalization on sophia, to try to persuade Creon not to be afraid; she does this both by resuming her attempt to undermine Creon's perception of sophia as a competitive edge and by appealing to Creon's own professed competitiveness. After first baldly stating that her reputation has, in fact, often harmed her (292–293), Medea claims that sophia is such a liability that anyone with his head on straight will refrain from teaching his children to be too "smart" (294–295). This is because a "smart" person does not, among the stupid, have the reputation sought by a competitor, because he seems useless (296; cf. 298–299), or because such a person incurs envy as a recognized superior (297; cf. 300–301 and 303, 305). Medea is walking a fine line here, however, for at the same time that she is tacitly admitting to the superiority of one who is sophos (only stupid people think such a person is useless and not "smart," while others who are considered—but are not really—smart are hostile in their envy), she again tries to convince Creon that this admitted superiority is a liability, for one either has no reputation or incurs enmity.

75Rohdich, Tragödie, pp. 48–49, argues that Euripides suggests in this scene that Medea's own intelligence is all-too-human, i.e., obtained by nurture, and is not thereby supernatural.
But this time Medea adds a new wrinkle to her argument: she backs Creon into a corner by implying that if Creon distrusts her because of her sophia, he must be envious or stupid--maybe both. In either case, if Creon admits that he considers Medea "smart," he places her on top: being "smarter" means she has the competitive edge; being envied means she is already recognized as better (303). If, then, Creon is a real competitor, he must agree with Medea and stop considering her "smart," for otherwise he shows himself to be at a disadvantage. But Creon does not so agree, because, as he will soon admit, he is bluffing at being a hardened competitor.

Medea, however, has taken him at his word, and continues to appeal to him in competitive terms. She tries to dispel his fears that she is by her "smartness" superior to him, first by encouraging him to believe that she "is not so smart" (305). She then baldly states that he, in fact, has the advantage as tyrant (309). Besides, he has not harmed her (309) and cannot therefore be considered her enemy; her rage is against her husband, not Creon (310-311). She bears no grudge against him--he, competitor that he is, should let his thumos guide him in choosing a husband for his daughter (310); his choice has been prudent (σωφρονῶν ἔσχορας τάδε, 311; cf. Jason's similar claim at 549 that his betrayal of Medea was σωφρων). On the contrary, Medea wishes him well
She--not the type to try to fight a tyrant, recall (307-308)--admits, in a false display of self-effacement, that she is vanquished by her betters (κρεισσόνων νικώμενοι), defers to his apparent power and begs to be allowed to stay (314-315).

This tactic, however, does not work with Creon because he has more at heart than his own interests. Indeed, he proclaimed as much in his first speech--his fear was for his daughter, not himself (283)--but somehow Medea and we were fooled by his bluff. And bluffing he was, for he is much more easily won over by an appeal to the champion of quiet virtues he is than to the competitor he has pretended to be. It takes a bluffer to know one, and Creon at first makes a show of firm resolve by calling attention to the discrepancy between Medea's ability to speak things "soft to hear" while planning--he shudders to imagine--some evil thing (316-317). She is, he knows, not saying what she really feels; he knows her thumos has been roused (as he indicated at 271) and that she is feigning congeniality and compliance: she is the type that is not

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76 Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 38, proposes that Medea is instead using a clever strategy: "By putting to Creon first a request she knows he cannot grant, and then by pretending to be very upset when he refuses, Medea prepares the ground for a much smaller request that he could hardly be so ungracious as to refuse, especially since she appeals to his feelings as a parent." According to this analysis, Medea must realize straight off that Creon is bluffing, for being seen as gracious and having feelings of connection are not the concern of the hardened competitor he professes to be and has so far been.
so easy to guard against, a "smart" person who keeps silent (σιωπηλος σοφος, 320).

Creon seems to know this woman well. We will later be told by Medea herself that he was completely accurate in this characterization of her: she was only fawning on him to get what she needed (368-369). That Creon would connect her "smartness" with an ability to keep silent as to (read: lie about) her true feelings gives us another wrinkle on the definition of sophia in the competitive arena. The sophos individual in a zero-sum game is the one who--to use a close paraphrase of Winkler's description of astute conduct in a scarcity economy--appears friendly, tries to maximize his profit, lies through his teeth, and plays his cards close to his vest.77 This is the portrait of someone "smart," a winner. But Medea cannot win this way with Creon, for Creon knows her too well. At 321 he repeats his order for her to depart. All seems, but is not, lost. For it is now that Medea starts playing to the real Creon and gains her success.

By admitting his connectedness to others and even symbolically extending it to an acknowledged enemy, by responding to an appeal for aidōs, and by allowing himself to be touched, Creon reveals his true, non-competitive, cooperative nature. In these three ways Creon's previously stated preference for acquiring an enemy over making

77Winkler, Constraints, p. 108.
concessions to one and suffering for it (290-291) is exposed as the bluff that it is. Creon even admits as much as he reluctantly grants Medea’s request for one day’s reprieve: “It is not at all my natural temperament to be tyrannical, and I have, in the act of showing aidōs, many times been destroyed.” (εἰκιστα τοῦμον λήμμενον εὖ τυράννικόν, αἰδώμενος δὲ πολλὰ δὴ διέφθορα, 348-349).

Creon’s statement recalls the Nurse’s reflections on the moods of tyrants (τυράννων λήματα, 119), and forces the realization that the real tyrant here, the autonomous competitor, is Medea, not Creon. For what Creon allows, both Medea and, in fact, Jason repeatedly resist.

Creon is not like them. As noted above, he marks his deficiencies as an autonomous competitor in three ways. First, Creon does not keep the attachment he has to others as a priority lower than his responsibility to himself.

By contrast, Jason shows his ability to do this in his remarrying for political advancement, Medea in killing her children to get the better of her enemy. Second, Creon needs aidōs, whereas an autonomous competitor like Jason does not,78 especially when aidōs conflicts with his

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78The reason that the competitor is shameless is spelled out by Jerome A. Miller, The Way of Suffering: A Geography of Crisis (Washington, DC: Georgetown Univ. Press, 1988), p. 109: "When we operate on the basis of the will to control, we are aware of only one kind of ‘evil’: the failure of existence to conform to the plan we have for it. From this point of view, a being has worth only
perception of himself as superior. For this reason, Jason is able to shake off Medea's branding him as "diseased" with anaidei[a] (472). Third, Creon fails to keep himself inaccessible to the touch of one he considers an enemy, unlike Medea at 1320-1322.

Creon is almost the opposite of Jason and Medea. He readily admits that, for him, his child is his first priority, his country second (329); he thereby defines himself as concerned for others above himself. He is not a keen and autonomous competitor and is consequently open to the influence of aidôs, to which Medea appeals insofar as it performs some instrumental function for me. I experience a being as evil whenever it stands over against me, insisting on its Otherness. Seen from this point of view, evil occurs in its most radical form when a crisis upsets my whole way of living at the most fundamental level. It is important to notice that when we define good and evil in these terms, we cannot possibly conceive of ourselves as evil. For from such a vantage point, evil is, by definition, that which runs counter to our wills. By taking the view that the goodness of a being depends on its measuring up to my criteria of what it ought to be, I put myself in the position of being the one who sets up criteria, not the one who has to measure up to them. That is why, when operating on the basis of the will to control, we are incapable of shame." Pace A. P. Burnett, "Medea and the Tragedy of Revenge," CP 68 (1973; hereafter Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge"), pp. 9-10, who attributes Medea's freedom from shame to her status as non-Greek.

According to Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 95, shame fails as a sanction in the contest system where there is "an intense concern with victory." It may also fail when there is a discrepancy between what others think of one and one's own self-image.

This, as Buxton, Persuasion, pp. 159-160, points out, is "[t]o his [Creon's] moral credit, but to his eventual downfall." For an excellent definition of aidôs,
and to which Creon finally admits he has more than once succumbed. It is significant that these two uses of the verb aideomai are the only ones in the play: aidôs, as the Chorus will soon proclaim, is gone from Hellas (439-440). It seems to reside only in this one man, Creon. It will not, just as he suspects, serve him well. It in fact signals him as soft: a weak and easily overcome contender in this dangerous game he half-heartedly plays.

So too does his allowing himself to be touched (339). By this Creon needlessly puts himself in the position of the supplicated; he must now choose either to ensure that Medea is removed by an act of violence, or else he must willingly extend to her--this woman he considers his enemy, a threat to what he holds dearest--the consideration normally given only to a philos. He chooses the latter and shows himself, in competitive terms, inferior to the woman who now grovels at his knees, but who later will rise in

81 John Gould, "Hiketeia," JHS 93 (1973; hereafter Gould, "Hiketeia"), pp. 84-85, notes that the supplicated can, like Odysseus at Euripides' Hecuba 342-345, take "counter-measures" to see to it that the supplicant is unable to gain hold of him. Creon here, like Odysseus there, has ample warning that a "figurative" supplication is about to be made actual: Gould sees evidence for "figurative" supplication as early as 324 (cf. Creon's words at 325); it becomes actual only at 338. Creon, however, fails to take the necessary precautions to avoid having to submit or--what is a rare case, according to Gould (p. 80)--having to use physical force to extract himself from Medea's supplication.
disgust at this act so far beneath her.

The act of supplication, Gould argues, is not entirely debasing—it is ambivalent, teetering between self-abasement and symbolic aggression.\textsuperscript{82} In displaying vulnerability, it ostensibly acknowledges the superiority of the supplicated, since the supplicant by his act "has temporarily opted out of the 'contest system' of social relationships that characterises normal behaviour between non-φίλου."\textsuperscript{83} And yet, suppliancy does so by the brash act of taking physical hold of a person and refusing to let go. Winkler describes the inviolability of the Athenian citizen, for whom touch was taken as a profound insult because it was what one did to social inferiors.\textsuperscript{84} And while it may be argued that Medea's gesture of supplication is something else entirely, it is clear from Creon's immediate, albeit reluctant, compliance to do something that he has good reason to believe will destroy him (349) that he has been dominated more than entreated. Indeed, Bennett Simon has shown that in this play touch is violation, and that Medea is one who not only will not allow herself to be touched, but who equates touch


\textsuperscript{83}Gould, "Hiketeia," p. 94.

\textsuperscript{84}Winkler, Constraints, pp. 48-49.
with wounding. And, as the Nurse’s forebodings have suggested, even proximity spells danger.

Creon, then, who has espoused the play’s proffered definition of competitive aretē, shows himself to be not up to carrying it off, at least against a contender like Medea. For just as she used a display of vulnerability to gain the support of the Chorus, Medea uses with Creon a pretense of self-abasement to get from him what she wants: one day.

In short, Medea’s exhibition of vulnerability is as false as Creon’s proclaimed espousal of the competitive code. After Creon departs, Medea lightly shrugs off the Chorus’ concern over her isolation and the obstacles she, without resources, must overcome (357-363). Instead, she rises from her abased posture to assume a competitor’s stance: she promises the Chorus that Jason and his bride have contests yet to come, and no small troubles (ἐτ’ εὖς ἄγωνες . . . καὶ . . . οὐ σμικροὶ πόνοι, 366-367). Finally, there is Medea’s contender’s disgust at having comported herself as an inferior: “For do you think that I would ever have fawned so upon that man, if I weren’t to gain something or weren’t

85Simon, Tragic Drama, pp. 77-78. Flory, “Right Hand,” pp. 69-74, traces in Medea the transformation from loving to hostile touch. Flory notes (p. 69) that denying the right to touch is cruel. Cf. Newton, “Passionate Poison,” p. 13: “The touch of Medea’s hand, it seems, distorts, perverts, and poisons all relationships with which it comes into contact.”
devising something for myself? I would not have spoken to him nor would I have touched his hand." (368-370).

While it may not be surprising that Medea openly acknowledges that her pleading touch veiled a sense of superiority, it perhaps shocks modern Western sensibilities that she so brazenly displays her deceitfulness, hatred, and villainy to these women, and they never once demur. Medea, however, knows these women as the competitors that they are, and therefore feels no compunction about displaying to them the competitive use to which she puts her "smartness," her vigor for competition, and her proneness to violence. She contemptuously points out to them Creon's inferiority in intellectual competition (he is a fool for having believed her, 371), and unselfconsciously savors the imagined defeat of her three enemies: Creon, his daughter, and Jason (374-375).

There is no question, then, for the Chorus or Medea that she is right to kill these enemies; though they may have their own reasons for wanting to see Jason punished, the Chorus do not protest that this gentle soul--their own king!--and his daughter be killed; Medea's only

86Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 55, shares Medea's view of Creon's "stupid self confidence."

87G. M. A. Grube, The Drama of Euripides (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 105. See also Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 18, who notes that the Corinthian women "prove to be women first and citizens only later." Cf. Ra'anana Meridor, "Euripides, Medea 639," CQ 36 (1986; hereafter Meridor, "Medea 639"), p. 95, and Ohlander,
concern in the act is how to accomplish it in such a way as not to threaten her superior status.

Lines 376-385 show Medea pondering her course of action. They end with her choosing one road, the way in which she acknowledges she is "especially smart" (σοφαί μάλιστα, 385), the use of drugs. What the use of such drugs has over other courses of action, Medea notes, is that she cannot be detected in the act of using them. Detection would lead to her death, which would in turn give her enemies a good laugh (381-383), which would cinch her inferiority. That being inferior to her enemies is unbearable is obvious from Medea's repetition of this point within a few lines, the second time bolstered by the need to maintain her status as genealogically superior to Jason's tribe (404-406). So, instead of choosing a course which would involve direct action, Medea chooses one which affords her the safety of distance from the action. As a competitor, she must choose this road. All others allow proximity of the enemy and room for defeat, and thereby the chance for her enemies to gloat. Given her aims, the plan is well conceived and highly rational. It is, furthermore, like the use of drugs themselves, an indication of the essence of Medea's sophia.

Suspense, p. 59.

Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 183, claims that "... in [Medea's] own view of herself her magical skill is part of her heroic aretē."
After all, using drugs to poison requires certain "interpersonal skills." For one cannot merely mix up potions and be done with it; drugs work only in proximity to the intended victim: they must either be swallowed or touch the skin. The skill of concoction is, then, only the beginning; the successful poisoner is one who can render the victim heedless of the drug’s presence, and can somehow so lull the victim’s fear and distract him from his natural wariness of offerings from the poisoner that he willingly and thoughtlessly administers the deadly dose to himself.

And while Medea’s plan in general indicates her abilities at rational calculation, her skillful execution of the use of poison--where she boasts of being especially sophē--shows what is meant in this play by "smart": Medea’s real "smartness" will be her ability to lie to her intended victims and wheedle out of them what she needs to destroy them, and her willingness to use innocent agents--her own children!--to gain the necessary proximity.

Medea’s "smartness" as a poisoner, then, is in the power of her words. She cannot be successful without the persuasion she wields over others. In short, Medea’s sophia in regard to poisons is her sophia as a chary player of the zero-sum game, translated to a specialized use. We have already seen the sophē Medea use these skills--of appearing friendly, trying to maximize her profit, lying through her teeth, and playing her cards close to her vest
--with Creon especially, but to a certain extent even with the Chorus. From each she gets what she wants: one day and silence. We will later see her using many of these skills with Aegeus (with whom, however, she seems genuinely friendly) to get a place of refuge; even later she will use these skills with Jason, when in her second interview with him she is more interested in manipulation than, as in her first interview with him, confrontation. It will be in this second interview that Medea’s sophia as poisoner is put to the test and shown exceptional, for she easily arranges to gain the proximity needed for the poison to work.

Medea’s sophia has, then, been on display all along. It is only in the scene with Creon where its definition is discussed and made explicit. Whether as poisoner or wielder of words, Medea is shown to be the "smartest" person in this play because of her skill at conceiving and bringing into effect whatever plans advance her own interests.89 She is precisely the "smart" woman Creon

89Ann Margaret Abbott, The ἀνὴρ σοφός in Euripides (diss. Bryn Mawr, 1971), is an exhaustive study of the full range of meaning of words with the stem soph- in the Euripidean corpus. Abbott acknowledges that concern for one’s own interests is one of the meanings of sophos in Medea (pp. 102-104; 141), but does not discuss self-interest in the competitive arena, and therefore classifies Medea’s knowledge of drugs only as a sinister skill. Abbott’s study, passim, traces the evolution of soph- stem words, and argues that their connotations, once both favorable and unfavorable, become predominantly unfavorable by Euripides’ time. The exceptions to this are sophia and philosophia.
feared, for she is interested in harming those who have harmed her, and she is most capable at this because her "smartness" is wheedling from others what she needs to accomplish her goals.

Medea's sophia, in short, finds its definition in the competitive arena as a force of destruction. It is a skill—whether in using words or administering potions—wherein one finds the way to self-advancement. And in this particular competitive arena, that advancement comes chiefly through the destruction of one's enemies. As the episode comes to a close, Medea contemplates what is to come, and in her contemplation shows the competitive domain within which her sophia operates, and its consequently destructive bent. Medea's current situation is described by her in purely competitive terms: "Creep forward to the clever/awful thing," she prompts herself, "Now is the contest of courage (ἐρωτευόμενον, νῦν ἄγων εὐφυκίας, 403). Medea concludes with another appeal to the solidarity of women, this time as the "smartest craftsmen of all harms" (κακῶν δὲ πάντων έκτοιον καλλιτεχνών, 409). This last may appear

Abbott's approach to this evolution is moralistic. Nonetheless, her list of characteristics of "the bad 'wise man" (pp. 125-126), is an illuminating list of zero-sum game strategies.

90This may be why Pucci, Violence, p. 94, finds sophia to be "an improbable heroic virtue." Zero-sum competition, not heroism, is the issue in this play.
misogynistic to the casual observer; it is in fact the first open acknowledgement of the destructiveness of sophia defined in the zero-sum game of this play. One may expect that the women of the Chorus will balk at being so described. But these women are not predictable to sensibilities outside the zero-sum game, for they not only do not protest, rather they crow their approval and agreement.

These women are, as they say, no ladies. The first half of their first stasimon (410–445) is a song of celebration of the zero-sum game in which they, at long last, are on top. The image of the streams of sacred rivers flowing backward is not just an expression of violent reversal; it is as well an expression of the zero-sum game. There is only one river; either it flows in your

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91 Pace Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 48, who tends to take at their word the Corinthian women of the Chorus, "with their Greek praise of sophrosuné and their fear of excess . . . ." The women's control of their passions is, nonetheless, if better than that of the barbarian Medea, "still inadequate and precarious."

92 Conacher, Euripidean Drama, p. 191, terms this stasimon "almost a song for feminists." Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 99, sees in the meter of the first four choral songs an extension of an athletic theme: "The first four stasima are all built on dactylic clausulae, a meter which Euripides was employing in this period generally for an epic or heroic effect. The Medea is unusual in that four stasima are in this meter, occurring specifically in the form of the dactylo-epitrite, the meter of epinikian odes. Indeed, the first stasimon does constitute a victory-ode for women as represented by Medea."

Boedeker, "Medea," p. 102, argues that the Chorus in this ode begin their criticism of received opinion, which is continued throughout the play.
direction or in theirs. Women can now be superior only because men have shown themselves inferior, at least in the realm of trust. There is no question of men and women both having good repute; change in the order of things will effect a change in the stories about woman's reputation (στρέψεται ... στρέψουσι, 411 and 418). Since men are now designated deceitful, women will no longer be so impugned.

The tone of the stasimon's first half is self-confident and brazen. The Chorus are confident in their report that the future holds changes in their favor (411, 418, 420, 421), and attribute their troubles in the past to their impotence at manipulating song. Phoebus had given song to men, it seems; the women boldly submit that otherwise they would have sung a song in their own defense (ἐσεὶ ἄνταχησ᾿ ἃν ὑμνον ἀρσένων γέννα, 426-429). But they are now the singers, and they intend to sing a new song. They are up, men are down. A long-standing wrong has been righted.

The antagonism the Chorus espouse in the first part of their song has taken its toll in the life of Medea. In the second strophe they relive her fateful departure from her paternal home, her taking up residence in a foreign land, her husband's betraying their marriage, her current status as fugitive. In this concentrated recapitulation of the Pivotal events of Medea's life, the Chorus concentrate on
Medea's alienation: she has left home, lives among strangers, has lost her husband, and is now an exile. The audience, now for the second time in the play, has been treated to a cause and effect view of Medea's past and present. For although the Chorus either pass over or are unaware of the circumstances in which Medea left her paternal home, the audience cannot help but be aware of them. And while the Chorus cannot discern a turning of the tide as they recount Medea's swift descent from active antagonist to passive victim (ἦλθεν οὐσίας... ἐλεύθερον, 431-438), Euripides, by making them in seven lines give her whole history, compels his audience to consider that this woman's willful choice to leave home and abandon philoi for strangers is a choice of alienation; it is only logical that she now find herself abandoned and driven out. In addition, the unspoken subtext of the strophe, that Medea betrayed and is now herself betrayed, is at least suggested by the Chorus' tale of Medea's transformation from the master of her fate to its victim.

The Chorus, however, speak none of this; instead, they

93Visser, "Medea," pp. 150-155, delineates the fine line that women must walk between natal and conjugal families. Upon marriage, women give up the security of the natal family only to become "foreigners" in the conjugal family. Medea differs from the ideal wife in that she lacks the reluctance to leave the natal family, a reluctance that signals a wife will prove to be a strong link between males of two lines.
sympathize with Medea's fate because she is on their side, and her current alienation is one with which they, as competitors, are doubtlessly familiar. The zero-sum game, recall, sets one at odds with all defined as contenders for the same prize.\textsuperscript{94} The Chorus unwittingly describe the ethics of this game in which they so willingly compete: trust is not fixed (οὐκέτι πίστις ἅμα, 415)—it is as fluid as the streams that flow backward; the grace of oaths is gone, and ἀιδος does not remain—it has flown away.\textsuperscript{95}

This is the creed of competition. Trust and oaths and regard for the sensibilities of others are only applicable in a consciously cooperative society, one in which common security and stability are the goals.\textsuperscript{96} In the field of autonomous competitors, such values are only weights around the neck. In such an arena, where what is on the

\textsuperscript{94}Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 106, indicates that contentiousness increases individuality, along with which comes a feeling of separateness and isolation.

\textsuperscript{95}The allusions to Hesiod's Works and Days 190-201 are discussed by Richard Garner, From Homer to Tragedy: The Art of Allusion in Greek Poetry (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 95-96. See also Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 20.

\textsuperscript{96}See Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," pp. 13 and 20, for the importance of oaths to society and their sanction by the gods. GailAnn Rickert, Akrasia and Euripides' Medea," HSCP 91 (1987; hereafter Rickert, "Akrasia"), pp. 107-113, makes the point that Jason's punishment, childlessness, reflects one part of the penalty of forswearing designated from Homer onward: "destruction or permanent obscurity of one's house or the destruction of one's children." (p. 110).
bottom strives only to be on the top, security and stability are a part of the rhetoric of power and control, not of cooperation. Instability becomes desirable when one is on the bottom; change, fluidity, and flight are then movements toward what is better. Stability is only to be maintained when one is in control. Otherwise, it is stifling and intolerable.

The Chorus, however, ignorant as yet of the consequences of the definition of excellence they support and espouse, ironically despair over the disappearance of the very values their chosen code of conduct destroys. In their ignorance, they can luxuriate in the pity they feel for Medea’s loss of her father’s home (441), and encourage her to fluidity in what is an unacceptable status quo: another queen is set up in her house in control of her bed (τῶν τε λέκτρων ἀλλὰ βασίλεια κρείσσων δόμοισιν ἐπέστα, 443-445). This particular stability—that of another “set up” in one’s former place—is of course intolerable to a competitor. And although Medea’s troubles began when she chose to set sail from her father’s home (ἐπιλευσόμεν, 431), the Chorus now despair that this anchorage is lost to her (σοὶ δ’ οὔτε πατρὸς δόμοι, σύστανε, μεθορμίσασθαι μόχθρων πάρα, 441-444).

The Chorus thus seem peculiarly short-sighted. It is hard to imagine that they could indulge in such
contradictory thinking, but it is precisely their self-contradiction which effects the refutation of all they believe. It would be possible at this point in the play to defend the Chorus as simply ignorant of Medea’s past crimes, for they have gotten no explicit information thus far from anyone on stage, and there is no reason for us to imagine that they of necessity know the nature of her services to Jason. During the next episode, however, they hear enough details of Medea’s treachery against her father and Pelias (see 483-487) that, if they were inclined to censure her, they would surely have grounds for it. But they do not. It is here, then, that one can see in operation the dangers inherent in even the seemingly innocuous part of the "help friends, harm enemies" code: in their support of Medea and hatred of Jason, the Chorus will find themselves paradoxically condoning violence they will come to abhor.

Nonetheless, the Chorus’ support of Medea over Jason is not hard to understand. For it is in the thoroughly self-serving opportunism of Jason, who is currently, but only briefly, on top, that Euripides shows to his audience, and even to his Chorus, the underside of competitive

97 They are not, however, ignorant of what Medea has just said, and, as Williamson, "Woman’s Place," p. 28, points out, "the ode is in fact in a deeply paradoxical relationship with what went before it." The Chorus have, that is, just seen Medea display the deceitfulness they attribute to men.
It is hard to imagine a more self-centered individual, except when one recalls that Medea, for all of her services in behalf of Jason was, in doing service to that which was everything to her (228), actually serving her own interests. It is Jason's job to illustrate how despicable is self-service and how thoroughly revolting is the individual who confuses his own interests with the good of others.\(^{98}\)

Jason is, in short, a contender like Medea and the Chorus, but he has, unlike Medea, the victor's easy generosity and nonchalance.\(^{99}\) With his entrance at line 446, he begins by trying to convince Medea that she should not have squirmed so at having been displaced; she should have been content to be one down. His arguments recall those very things about the status of women that galvanized the Chorus into taking Medea's side. Jason first counsels that Medea could have stayed if only she had consented to being inferior, i.e., would have "born lightly the decisions of those in control" (κούψεις θερόση
φρεισσόνων βουλεύματα, 449). In sum, she should violate the creed of the competitor: she should let others rule and forget about being in control. These words are,

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\(^{98}\) According to Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 183, in the character of Jason "... we are allowed to see the full extent of the provocation [Medea] has been suffering."

\(^{99}\) Bongie, "Heroic Elements," pp. 42-43, sees in Jason's disregard of Medea's threats his contemptuousness; she is not considered a worthy opponent.
of course, cheap when one is on top, as Jason is. He seems unaware that suggesting that Medea accept inferiority would offend his competitive wife, and yet, maddeningly, he does not stop at that.

Jason continues by supporting the play’s definition of “smartness” as a force used in competition to throw off the enemy and thereby gain the edge. Medea, he notes, displayed her intellectual inferiority by refusing to be duplicitous. He is confident in terming Medea a fool for speaking her mind: "You will be driven out of the land because of foolish words" (λόγων ματαιῶν οὐκετάλα, 450), he scolds; and again: "But you will not let go of your folly (μωρίας), forever bad-mouthing the rulers" (457-458). According to Jason, then, Medea has made some ill-considered moves in this game, and should consider herself lucky to be getting off with exile (πάν κέρδος ήγοῦς ζημιομένη φυγῆ, 454).

Perhaps it is only because Jason is now on top that he can be magnanimous. His condescension, however, can be read in the fact that it means nothing to him that Medea (underdog fool that she is) calls him kakistos (452). And yet, he still cleaves to the competitor’s code of helping friends. He therefore will not desert Medea and the children, who are still, by his lights, philoi to him (459, 465). He has, as far as he is concerned anyway, done nothing to harm her; everything she suffers is her own
fault (450, 453, 457-458). In these careful defenses, one can discern his competitor's attention to reciprocity.

Medea does not mince words with him, and later she will have to repair some of the damage her honesty here does. Jason is pankakistos, a coward, and her enemy (465-467). What he is doing to those he considers friends is shamelessness pure and simple (469-471). She further reckons that--locked as they are in a zero-sum contest--her delight will be his pain (έγώ τε γὰρ λέειςα κοιπισθήσουμαι ψυχήν κακῶς σε καὶ σὺ λυπήσῃ κλώνι, 473-474). She recalls in detail the services she performed for him and intimates that he has fallen short of the expected reciprocity (476-487); instead he has betrayed her for no reason (488-490). Competitor that she is, Medea would have understood being treated as an interchangeable part had she not given Jason the expected children, but such was not the case in their fruitful marriage (490-491). She, like the Chorus, ironically bemoans the fluidity of attachment typical of the zero-sum game; like them, Medea the loser now despairs at the loss of cooperative virtues like aidōs (472) and oath-keeping (492-495).

The irony of Medea's lament is driven home as she recalls how Jason used to supplicate her--falsely, she now

100Gredley, "Place and Time," p. 31, shows that Medea likewise controls the theatrical space in this episode.
realizes: "Ah! This right hand, which you so many times took hold of, and these knees. How falsely were we touched by this harming man; how far off target has landed the arrow of our hopes." (496-498). These lines, of course, recall the scene just witnessed, where Medea so skillfully did unto Creon as she now reveals had been done by Jason unto her.101 Her regret of false suppliancy is not one of principle, it is one of expediency. Suffering such an act is regrettable for the competitor, but doing it to others brings success, and therefore no regret.

Medea concludes her speech with a review of what Gouldner refers to as the low object attachment, sense of isolation, and distrust of others common to the zero-sum competitor. Fluidity of association, an indication of low object attachment, can be witnessed in the present acts of Jason as well as the past acts of Medea. Jason, once a friend, can now only hypothetically be considered one--and this consideration Medea, now his enemy, undertakes only to show up his baseness (499-501). Medea openly admits that she herself, in the service of her sole concern, Jason, has--like Jason without due cause--become hateful to her

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101 Boedeker, "Medea," pp. 95-100, shows how first Jason, and then Medea, violate trust by misusing oaths, supplication, and persuasion. Such are the potential horrors of reciprocity. Boedeker argues that Medea uses false supplication with Creon, Aegeus, and, indirectly through the children, the princess. In all three cases her primary goal is not the falsely proffered salvation for herself or the children, but successful retaliation.
friends at home (τοῖς μὲν οἶκοθεν φίλοις ἐξερατὰ καθέστηκεν, οὐς δὲ μ’ οὐκ ἐξερῆν κακῶς ἔραν, 506-507). The isolation of the competitor is next recounted: Medea is exiled, desolate, alone (φεύγομαι … ἔρημος … μόνη, 512-513). Finally, her prayer to Zeus at 516-519 is for some way to see through the deceptiveness which, as has been argued, is a large part of the sophia of zero-sum competitors.

We soon see, though, that Medea has misrepresented Jason in this generalization, for Jason is anything but deceptive. He lacks intelligence and tact; he can be nothing but blunt. By constructing Jason’s character in this way, Euripides does more than further alienate Medea and the Chorus against this man; in this characterization Euripides highlights the brutality of the zero-sum game’s precepts.

For example, Jason’s most infuriatingly crude argument—when he admits to using his erotic appeal to purchase Medea’s aid—is an incredibly unselfconscious acceptance of manipulation of desire in the zero-sum game. Jason can, by this frank admission, cancel the debt of reciprocity Medea claims he owes her; he’s beholden only to Aphrodite and Eros:

As for me—since in fact you overstress your favors to me—I consider Cypris, alone of gods and men, to be the savior of my naval enterprise. As for you, you do have an ingenious mind, but it would be begrudging to
describe how Eros compelled you with his unavoidable arrows to save my life. (526-531).

Jason is merely making explicit the standard operating procedure for the protagonists in this play: using everything at one's disposal, including one's erotic appeal, to accomplish one's goal of self-advancement. He indulges in a bit of archaic anthropomorphism, but his tactic with Medea differs not at all from his tactic with Creon's daughter, and only but a little, as will be seen, from Medea's tactic with Aegeus. Medea in Jason's description is depicted as the constrained and therefore the loser; she was compelled by Eros, whose arrows were unavoidable (Ἐρως σ' ἡνάγκασε τόξοις ὀφύκτοις, 530-531). He will soon go so far as to defend reusing this old tactic as "smart" (548). Jason is one who knows how to use erōs to his advantage; he is not, however, one who will be himself stricken by desire (ἵμερῳ πεπληγμένος, 556). Medea, who according to Jason believes this to be true of him, he will call mistaken.

But even more generally, Jason in his reply identifies himself as a competitor. He readily admits that fame, the competitor's highest prize, is more important to him than anything: "As far as I'm concerned, rather than

102 Cf. Walsh, "Public and Private," pp. 295-296, to whom Jason is a man who attends only to the public dimension of life.
gold in the house or a song more beautiful to sing than Orpheus', I'd have the fate that made me famous." (542-544). Jason can imagine that the score is settled between himself and Medea, since he has brought her to a land where she can enjoy the fruits of her fame (δόξαν ἔσχες, 540). Jason in addition sees things broadly in terms of contest. His argument with Medea is a "contest" of words; he refers to producing many children as a "contest" in which he takes no part (ἀμιλλᾶν, 546 and 557).

Furthermore, from the rest of what Jason says, he is clearly aware of the realities of the zero-sum game. He accepts that relationships are fleeting: he takes it for granted that friends flee the impoverished man (560-561). Indeed, he defines a friend as one who can advance social status; he is able therefore to defend himself as a "great friend" to Medea and the children because he has arranged for their prosperity and social standing (548-560).

But perhaps the most telling indication that Jason fits the definition of the zero-sum competitor is what is to Medea most infuriating about him: that he defends himself as "smart" as a competitor would:

As for your reproaching me for my royal marriage, I

103 Bongie, "Heroic Elements," pp. 43-44, acknowledges Jason's appeal to "heroic" values, and further notes his sly omission, i.e., "that he has by his recent actions brought [Medea] ill-fame since he has made her appear weak and vulnerable, and hence open to ridicule."
shall first show that I was smart in doing this
(ἐν τῷ δὲ δείγω πρῶτα μὲν σοφὸς γεγώργα), then that I was prudent, and finally that I was a great friend (μέγας φίλος) to you and my children—but do be quiet. (547-550).

In short, Jason can claim "smartness" precisely because he operates by total-commitment rationality and displays the concomitant low object attachment. In the zero-sum game, this is "smart." Consequently, what Jason considers "smart" and "prudent" is his ability to have conceived of and carried out a plan to win security and social standing for himself and his children. What luck!, he argues, that he, exile that he was,104 stumbled upon the chance to marry a king's child (551-554). His goal is not to produce more children, but to live well and not be in need (557-560). He dreams of bringing the children up worthily, of creating a clan that thrives and lives the good life (562-565). Perhaps this dream is, one begins to sense, not all that reprehensible.

But in the wake of this glorious dream of eudaimonia, Jason's former wife has been summarily dismissed so that he and his children (past and future) and new bride can live happily ever after. Wives are, obviously, interchangeable parts, as, Jason makes it clear, are children. Both are objects to be used to one's advantage; Medea, for example, according to Jason, does not need children (565), while it

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104 Shaw, "Female Intruder," p. 261, describes the plight of the cityless man.
is clearly to his advantage and benefit to have them (566-567). But, he at last concludes, wives—especially this obviously disgruntled one before him—are too messy a thing for a "smart" man like himself to have around. Jason, in his concluding remarks, is not being so misogynistic as coldly rational: wives should be avoided because they, like Medea, simply cannot accept being treated as interchangeable parts, even when it is clearly for the better; why, they cannot even recognize a great plan when they see one (μῶν βεβούλευμαι κακῶς; 567). Why can they not see this? It is something to do with sex—it is the "bed" that rubs them the wrong way (οὐδ’ ἄν σὺ φαίης, εἰ σε μὴ κνίδοι λέχος, 567-568; cf. ὀρθομένης εὐνῆς, 569-570). In frustration, Jason argues that the whole matter of begetting children to set oneself up socially is better left done without sex (573-575). Things would run so much more smoothly, he imagines, in a sexless world.¹⁰⁵

This last remark well accords with what for the

present is the one real difference between Jason and Medea
--although even this difference will not last. Jason's
forte as a competitor is his control of his emotions--the
phrase "cold fish" leaps to mind--while Medea, at least for
the present, has abandoned control of hers and instead
chosen to speak openly. This is a tactical mistake, as she
will soon recognize.¹⁰⁶

For the present, however, Medea attacks Jason's claim
to being sophos. At first it appears that she is over­
turning the play's previously offered definitions of
sophia, because she seems to be denying that one who is
sophos is duplicitous:

I admit that I am in many ways different from many
mortals. For as far as I'm concerned, the one who is
unjust and "smart" at speaking (όσις ἀδικος
ὡς σοφός λέγειν πέφυκες) should get the
greatest punishment. Glorifying in his power of speech,
he dresses injustices in finery; he dares to do
anything (γλώσσῃ γὰρ αὐξῶν τᾶδικ’ εὖ
περιστελεῖν, τολμᾶ πανουργεῖν). But he is
not really "smart" (ἐστι δ’ οὐκ ἄγαν
σοφός). This applies to you now: you don't
impress me as being elegant (ἐυσχήμων) and
"clever/ terrible" at speaking (λέγειν... ἃειν). For one remark will stretch you out
flat. If you were not kakos, you would have persuaded
me about making this marriage, and not done it in
secret from your friends (μὴ σιγᾷ φίλων).
(579-587).

¹⁰⁶ Foley, "Divided Self," p. 64, argues that
Medea, in her second interview with Jason, mimics Jason's
cold rationality and, in formulating her revenge, employs
against him his own "bloodless decision making... precisely to make Jason feel the emotions he once rejected..." See also p. 80, where Foley argues that Medea
comes to despise erôs along with "all that is feminine." In short, she assimilates Jason's misogyny; once the
oppressed victim, Medea becomes the oppressor (p. 81).
A careful reading of this passage, however, proves that Medea is in no way saying that only those who do not hide the truth are sophoi. In the first place, Medea does not make the claim to being sophos depend on the use or not-use of duplicity, but instead on the propriety of matching behavior to type of individual—friend or foe. In fact, in her first speech to Jason Medea admitted that she herself had likewise abandoned sophia when she betrayed philoi—her father and home—and came to Iolcus with Jason. She describes herself in this action as "more zealous than smart" (πρόθυμος μᾶλλον ἡ σοφωτέρα, 485).

In the current episode, then, Medea criticizes Jason's duplicity—not per se, but for its basis in betrayal: with his duplicity Jason conceals that he is "unjust," that is, that he is not returning to others what he has received. When Medea upbraids Jason for pretending to be "just" when he is in fact being "unjust," she picks up on the choral interjection that immediately precedes, which likewise is concerned with the intersection of what is "just" and the comely arrangement of words:

Jason, you have arranged these words nicely (εὖ μὲν τούσδ' ἐκόσμησας λόγους); nevertheless, as far as I am concerned, even if I speak against popular opinion, in betraying your wife, you seem to have done things that were not just (οὐ δίκαια δρᾶν). (576-578).

In short, both Medea and the Chorus are put off by Jason's "sophistry" because it has been used in violation of the code of reciprocity. He has dressed up betrayal as
help—but in this he is not at fault. The fault is that he has done this with someone with whom he himself claims to have a philos-relationship. Jason’s real transgression is of the code of "helping friends and harming enemies," because he has used on a friend the sophia-tactics (pretending friendliness, maximizing one’s own profit, lying, and playing cards close to one’s vest) rightly used against a not-friend. Medea makes this clear in lines 586-587: if Jason were really a philos, he would not have sneaked behind her back, but persuaded her of their mutual benefit in this new marriage. He did not: he is therefore manifestly "unjust" and kakos. 107

There is, however, a second facet of Medea’s criticism of Jason’s claim to be sophos, obvious even in both the Chorus’ and Medea’s being able to call him on his duplicity: he is not credible. As Medea points out, Jason’s argument is preposterously easy to

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107 Jason is kakos to Medea (586, 618) because he has harmed her and is therefore her enemy. He is not kakos because he is unjust. The equation of justice and virtue is later than the date of this play; see Adkins, Merit, pp. 78-79, for the equation of areté and justice as a late fifth century or fourth century B. C. phenomenon. The actions of the autonomous competitor do not concern themselves with what we would consider "justice," which is one of the "quiet," i.e., cooperative virtues. In an individual-centered system like the zero-sum contest, any justice (as distinct from reciprocity or revenge) which considers the interests of others as equal to one’s own cannot take precedence. For Socrates’ wranglings with Justice and personal benefit, see Irwin, Moral Theory, pp. 57-61.
She can do it, she claims, with one remark; one cannot point to such a flimsy construction as evidence of one’s sophia. If one is going to dupe another, the second party should never detect a sneer beneath the accommodating smile; the intended victim of poison should gladly quaff the potion. Jason is too transparently self-serving to convince her that he is acting in anyone’s interest but his own. Medea assumes he is simply incompetent at using sophia against an enemy. In reality, he is probably just too self-centered to see that this is what this circumstance requires, and too slow-witted to pull it off even if he were able to discern the difference between his own interest and that of others.

The rest of the scene deteriorates into verbal sniping, shorthand redefinitions of the nexus of aretê, eros, and sophia: 1) eros is merely a means to attaining aretê. Medea accuses Jason of interest in sex and the security of his beloved good reputation (591-592, 623-624); Jason assures her that sex was not the issue, social advancement was, and social security (593-

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108 Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 87-88, agrees. He terms Jason’s first two arguments "ludicrous." Cf. McDermott, Incarnation, p. 79, for whom "... her [Medea’s] outright duplicity seems a part of her strength, while Jason’s lesser dishonesty argues an innate weakness to his character."

109 See Bongie, "Heroic Elements," pp. 44-46, who is careful to dispel the validity of the charges that Jason and Medea exchange.
sophia means biting one's tongue, setting aside emotional reactions, and instead looking to the gain one is able to accrue, especially in terms of faring well (598-602, 614-615, 621-622). Speaking openly only brings one down (607).

In these their last bitter words, both Medea and Jason show again their adherence—at least in words—to the code of reciprocity: Medea again tries to shame Jason into realizing that he has not given her her due (603-604, 606); Jason again denies that he is to blame for Medea's plight (605, 607). Jason, as magnanimous as he was at the beginning of the scene, repeats that he is, as ever, willing to help Medea and the children since they are, to him, still philoi (610-613). Medea rejects the help of one who harms her (598-599), one who is kakos (616-618). She accordingly sends him off with a threat of harm (625-626).

That the Chorus now in the second stasimon (627-662) sing first about eros and aretē, and then philoi, is not surprising when one reflects upon how charged with such discussion was the previous episode. For not only were we treated to Jason's memorable disquisition on Cypris and Eros as his aides-de-camp in the expedition which won him

110 Robert B. Palmer, "An Apology for Jason: A Study of Euripides' Medea," CJ 53 (1957; hereafter Palmer, "Apology"), pp. 49-55, sees Jason's need for legitimate children as the impetus for his actions against Medea, and proposes that the Athenian audience would have found Jason sympathetic in this need.
his reputation (526-531), we were also made to witness, more broadly, the nexus of erôs and aretê. Similarly, a major point of contention between Jason and Medea was who had helped or harmed whom, i.e., who was friend or enemy, and consequently who owed what, help or harm, to whom. The stasimon, then, picks up on themes from the previous episode. It also, however, as will be shown, leads thematically into the next episode with Aegeus.

In the first strophe-antistrophe pair, the Chorus turn to the use of personified universals to explicate the relationship between erôs and aretê illustrated previously only by the particular actions of Jason and Medea. In turn, they reinforce the previously intimated competitive arena and potential destructiveness of erôs:

Love coming in grave excess grants men neither good reputation nor excellence (ἐρωτεύς ὑπὲρ μὲν ἄγαν ἔλθοντες οὐκ εὐδοξίαν οὖν ἀρετὰν παρέδωκαν ἀνδράσιν'). But if Cypris comes just sufficiently, no other goddess is so gracious (εἰ δ' ἄλλης ἐλθοῦν Κύρπις, οὐκ ἄλλα θεὸς εὐχαριστής οὕτως). May you never, mistress, against me launch from golden bow your unavoidable arrow, wounding me with desire (ἰμέρῳ κρίσασι). May prudence (σοφροσύνα), the gods' most beautiful gift, favor me; may clever/terrible Cypris never smite me with disputatious wrath and unceasing strife, driving my thumos away to other beds (μηδὲ ποτ' ἀμφιλόγους ὀργὰς ἀκόρεστα τε νείκη θυμὸν ἐκπλήξεις ἔτεροις ἐπὶ λέκτροις προσβάλοι δεινά Κύρπις); may she be sharp-witted (ὀχύρων) in judging beds of women, and honor beds not battle-scarred (ἀπτολέμους). (627-641).

The Chorus claim that erôs, through conferring grace, can garner for one the personal advantage of a good reputation
and aretē. So much is not new. But their further claim that excessive erōs can ruin one is a sentiment not before heard in so many words. The question is, how can excessive erōs ruin one’s reputation?

The Chorus’ answer at first seems to be that erōs in excess leads to marital infidelity. But reading their song in only this way is a mistake. Granted, one must allow that these women do not wish to be driven to other beds (638), and one must recall that, as Medea has flatly stated, women have no respectable way of leaving a marriage (οὐ γὰρ εὔκλεεις ἀπαλλαγαί γυναῖειν, 236-237). Their prayer against excessive erōs is, then, partly a prayer for marital fidelity. But it is more than that.¹¹¹

The antistrophe clarifies what the strophe only sketches. It continues the women’s prayer that they not be “wounded” by the “unavoidable” arrow of Cypris. The image of love as a wound is so familiar, both from the Greek lyric poets and our own derivative depictions of rotund cherubs coyly sporting their weaponry, that the menacing essence of the image gets lost. If one is wounded,

¹¹¹Meridor, “Medea 639,” pp. 95-100, argues that the Chorus in line 639 are praying that they not be unable to accept spousal infidelity. Meridor further remarks that “[t]he desire of married women for men other than their husbands is alien to this context.” Instead, wifely infidelity is alien, not to this context, but to these women, who are eager to protect their reputations. The subject of reputation is germane to this ode.
however, one is vulnerable and likely to lose. These Corinthian women, competitors that they are, pray that they never be put at a disadvantage in the competitive arena by the likes of erōs. It is more than anything else this—that is, advantage in competition—that they pray for, as the antistrophe shows.

The prayer, which began in the strophe at line 632, is ostensibly against excessive erōs, but it fluctuates chiastically between positive and negative formulation. In the first and last lines of the antistrophe, the formulation is positive,¹¹² and the results are favorable. In the first lines (635-636), the women pray for sōphrosunā, prudence, which they imagine as "favoring" them, as "the gods' most beautiful gift" of which they will be the recipients. "Prudent" (sōphrōn), recall, was how Jason billed his use of erōs to acquire his royal marriage (548). In the last lines (640-641), the women pray that "clever/terrible" Cypris be "sharp-witted" in judging and "honoring" the beds of women, beds which are "not battle scarred." It is obvious from this set of lines, at the antistrophe's beginning and end, that the women are praying for the control of erōs by the mind; that control, they imagine, leads to favor, gifts, and honor, the competitor's prizes. Prudent women succeed, for they control erōs to win.

The central lines of the antistrophe (637-640), however, are negatively formulated and show at best a contest of undecided outcome. There is no winning—no favor, gifts, or honor—when erōs is out of the mind's control. Instead, one's thumos becomes the object of violence; one is "driven out" and "struck at" by the "clever/terrible" Cypris, the battle one finds oneself in is without positive outcome: wrath is "disputatious/wavering/uncertain," strife is "unceasing." There is no way to win, for the two aces in the successful competitor's hole, erōs and sophia, are not being played to advantage. It is as if, to continue the card-playing metaphor, the ace of sophia is never played, while the ace of erōs is carelessly laid out on the table for all to see.

The women abruptly change theme in the second strophe-antistrophe pair, and end this song as they ended their last, with verses on country, home, and city. But whereas there (431-445) the Chorus spoke directly to Medea in the second person, and turned in the antistrophe at least briefly to discussion of lost civic virtues of oaths and aidōs, here (643-662) they are more personal. Not only have they changed to the first person, they now turn in the antistrophe to the value of honoring friends. As we shall see (below, Part Five), it will be this very thing, the proper treatment of philoi, which not only endures the definitions' (i.e., of aretē, erōs, and sophia) wending
their way to a logical but emotionally repulsive conclusion, it also, ironically, is the very fuel of the emotional repulsion.

The honor due a friend is the subject of Aegeus' opening remarks in the next episode (663-823), and thus his entrance, criticized as unmotivated since the time of Aristotle (Poetics 1461b.19-21), has obvious thematic connection to what precedes it. Aegeus

113 Ohlander, Suspense, p. 107, argues that Aegeus' "magic appearance" colors the help he is able to give Medea with the sense "that it was meant to be, was ordained by a higher will."

114 T. V. Buttrey, "Accident and Design in Euripides' Medea," AJP 79 (1958; hereafter Buttrey, "Accident"), pp. 1-17, answers Aristotle's objection by showing that the Aegeus episode is the "pivot on which both action and emotion turn" (p. 10). Buttrey dismisses earlier attempts to justify Aegeus' appearance as functional, i.e., as either offering Medea an escape (the exodos proves Medea needs no such help) or as unintentionally serving to suggest killing the children (this post quod ergo propter quod argument is invalidated by analysis of the scene).


Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 13, argues that the
greet Medea with a salutation he deems most appropriate
between friends;\(^1^{16}\) she returns the greeting to him
unamended (664–665). The two thus acknowledge that they
are friends, and the scene will show that they are willing
to live up to the definition of friend by lending help to
each other. This is all, it seems, so mutually congenial:
Medea offers help to Aegeus in alleviating his sterility
(716–718); Aegeus offers Medea help with a place of refuge
(723–724).

Both, indeed, show their adherence to the code of
reciprocity not only in these acts, but throughout the
scene. After Medea relates that Jason is *kakistos* to her,
having returned harm for no harm (690, 692), Aegeus is
clearly appalled, terming Jason’s action of supplanting
Medea "most reproachful" (αἰσχροτον, 695), the

functions of the Aegeus episode are to show oath-making in
action (cf. Boedeker, "Medea," p. 98) and to suggest the
ensuing rescue theme. Thomas Chase, "On the Introduction
of Aegeus in the Medea of Euripides," AJP 5 (1884), p. 87,
suggests that Euripides introduces Aegeus to emphasize the
contrast between the blessing of children he is about to
receive and Jason’s dire future childlessness. Conacher,
Euripidean Drama, p. 190, points out that Aegeus’ patent
high regard for Medea as professional wise woman increases
audience respect for her. At the same time, the episode is
a "turning point in Medea’s career of vengeance and in the
sympathy which the Chorus has hitherto afforded her."

\(^{1^{16}}\) R. A. Browne, "Medea-Interpretations," in
Studies in Honour of Gilbert Norwood, ed. Mary E. White
(Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1952; hereafter Browne,
"Interpretations"), p. 77, proposes that Aegeus’ entrance
seems unmotivated only because the Athenian king,
constrained by "the polite conventions often observed in
ancient conversation," would not blurt out his motive for
visiting Medea upon his entrance.
superlative degree of the adjective Adkins deems "the most powerful word used to denigrate a man's actions."\textsuperscript{117} Medea refers to herself as a "former friend" of Jason's who is now dishonored (696). After hearing the exact nature of Jason's erotic desire (see below), Aegeus is quick to agree that Jason is indeed \textit{Kakos} (699).

Aegeus, however, has no desire to offend anyone: not the gods (719-720, presumably those who protect the suppliant),\textsuperscript{118} nor his friend Medea, whom he is obligated to help. It is because of his keen desire to return like for like that Aegeus refers to his readiness to help Medea as evidence that he is "just" (δίκαιος, 724). In addition, Aegeus, eager to use an oath as a pretext to Medea's enemies (743-745), is unwilling to incur new enemies even on an old friend's behalf.\textsuperscript{119}

Aegeus is, in short, a man who seems deserving of the Chorus' description of "noble" (γενναίος, 762). He is clearly one to whom reciprocity is of the utmost importance, and one who looks out for himself, but not--unlike Medea--first and only. This characteristic is signalled, as it was earlier in the case of Creon, by

\textsuperscript{117}Adkins, \textit{Merit}, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{118}See Gould, "Hiketeia," p. 78, for the Protection of suppliants by Zeus Ηικέσιος.

\textsuperscript{119}Bonnie, "Heroic Elements," p. 48, remarks on Aegeus' "scrupulousness" as indication of "how very serious he deems the formal relationships of \textit{philoi}."
Aegaeus' single-minded concern for children.120 Aegaeus has journeyed, not, like Jason on the Argo, seeking his own advancement, but, as he tells Medea upon his entrance, to the oracle of Apollo, "seeking how there may be for me the seeds of children" (669).

The interaction between Medea and Aegaeus is strange, charged with talk of erōs and allusions to sophia. The two terms are so inextricably entwined that it is difficult to treat them separately. What should however preliminarily be noted is that both erōs and sophia function in this scene on two levels. The first level is that of explicit definition, the second that of enactment. Previously, we have been treated only to the enactment of the play's definitions of aretē and sophia; now at last we get a truly erotic scene. But the scene is erotic in the sense that the play has defined eroticism, something subtly manipulated by sophia and therefore difficult to espy.

On the level of explicit definition, this scene provides a turning point in the meaning of erōs. For while we once again are given the by now familiar definition of erōs put to the service of self-advancement (697-700), beside this is put another definition (714-715) which will ultimately suggest the refutation of the more familiar one

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120McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 101-104, considers Aegaeus amiable and noble-souled, a paragon when compared to Jason, and like Creon in that his virtues put him at the mercy of Medea.
Erōs and etymologically related words are used more often in this scene than in any other. The verb erao and the noun erōs are used thrice in four lines (697-700); their definition is the one familiar from previous formulation. The scene is of Aegeus asking Medea about the nature of her rift with Jason:

--Was it that Jason fell in love (ἐρασθείς), or did he loathe your bed? --Oh, it was a great love (μεγαλὺς γὰ' ἐρωτα) [he had], this man not faithful to his friends. --Let him go then, if, as you say, he is bad. --He loved to get a marriage connection with rulers (ἄνδρῶν τυράννων κήδος ἡράσθη λαβεῖν). (697-700).

This catty characterization of the nature of Jason's erotic desire is nonetheless one at which Jason would not flinch. In his view, one need not squirm against using erōs to advance one's own suit.

For Aegeus, however, erōs has aims other than social advancement. His erōs, at least by Medea's description, has as its end point the production of children, with no mention of his own gains thereby. Medea pleads with him,

... receive me in your land and in your house at the hearth (ἐφεσιον). In this way with the gods' favor your desire may be fruitful of children (οὕτως ἐρως σοι πρὸς θεῶν τελεσφόρος)

121 A few critics suggest that Euripides intends Aegeus' impotence to be amusing. For example, Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 42, sees Aegeus as "Euripides' pathetic and ironic embodiment of Athens," especially the Athens described as visited by Cypris in the choral song that follows Aegeus' exit.
γένοιτο παίδων), and you yourself may be happy. (713-715).

It is precisely this Aegeus, whose strong desire is for children, whom Medea supplicates, using both the erotic suggestion that she could serve as his bedmate, as well as that she could avail him of her renowned sophia.

While it is not certain that Medea’s supplication of Aegeus is, like that of Creon, actual instead of figurative, its erotic element is unmistakable if quite subtle. One could argue that Medea here supplicates Aegeus figuratively by placing herself—in his mind only and in the future—at his hearth. Recall her plea at 713: “Receive me . . . at the hearth” (δεξαί . . . ἐσοριον). And yet the figurative placement of herself at Aegeus’ hearth suggests that Medea could be to him more than a mere suppliant. The hearth, while certainly a stock site for the suppliant, also has general associations with group solidarity and family stability and, more specifically, with marriage: “The association of

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122 Dunkle, "Aegeus Episode," pp. 106-107, ties Aegeus’ childlessness to his self-interest, and suggests that “[h]is childlessness seems to infect the air of Corinth like a pestilence, bringing about the death of three children.”

123 See Gould, "Hiketeia," p. 85, for use of a past tense to indicate an achieved supplication. With Aegeus, however, Medea never deviates from the present tense; on the contrary, Medea uses what Gould calls "the language of supplication," and there is no indication in this passage that the act is being performed in word only, as Gould points out must be the case at 321 and 325.
wife, suppliant and hearth is ... traditional."

That the poet was aware of such an association seems
obvious from the phrasing he gives to Aegeus’ report of the
oracle: "I am not to lose the projecting foot of the
wineskin," Aegeus relays, "until I reach my paternal
hearth" (πρὶν ἄν πατρῷαν αὐτης ἔστιν
μόλω). (679; 681). Medea’s suggestion that Aegeus
place her at his hearth is, to be blunt, one that
encourages him to imagine himself "loosing the projecting
foot of the wineskin" in her presence; in short, he is to
imagine her as sexual partner.125

"Medea," p. 150: "A woman’s position in the home was
represented by the stationary and interior hearth." Visser
does not note Medea’s proposition to Aegeus, but does
remark (p. 151) upon the chilling fact that Euripides has
Medea kill her brother "at the hearth" (παρέστιον,
1334). Cf. McDermott, Incarnation, p. 96, who in addition
notes that the death of the princess and Creon is
described as Medea’s outrage against Creon’s hearth (1130).
Neither of these, of course, bodes well for Aegeus’
impending experience with Medea at his hearth.

How Hestia, the virginal goddess of the stationary
hearth, came to be associated with wives, who are expected
to be neither virginal nor stationary (since they must
leave their natal hearth to marry), is explained by Jean­Pierre Vernant, Myth and Thought Among the Greeks (London:

125 Marianne McDonald, Terms for Happiness in
Euripides (Göttingen; Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1978;
hereafter McDonald, Happiness), p. 52, notes that "[s]he
[Medea] calls herself his [Aegeus’] εὐρημα (716),
using the very word Jason did in describing his lucky find,
the princess (553)." The same point is made by Mills,
Mythopoeia, p. 71. Cf. Williamson, "Woman’s Place," p. 19,
who argues that Medea offers Aegeus and receives from him
"a version of what a woman would give and receive in
marriage," i.e., she would promise fertility and receive
safety, here "not of an oikos, but that of the Athenian
There are, obviously, two objections to this interpretation: 1) the hint is too subtle for Aegeus (or anyone, for that matter) to pick up on; 2) Aegeus in particular could not possibly pick up on the hint, because he does not know what the oracle’s pronouncement means; this is why he is seeking Medea’s advice in the first place. An answer to the first objection is Winkler's description of what he calls "the normal caution and restraint of Mediterranean social intercourse," and the series of parries and thrusts of half-hidden meaning and intention whose use (by Daphnis, his parents, and Chloe's father in their negotiations concerning the potential courtship of Chloe by Daphnis) Winkler uses as illustration from Longus' Daphnis and Chloe.126 A similar scene of discreet understatement and subtle manipulation, with the suggestion of sexual availability, is the one between Nausicaa and Odysseus in Odyssey 6, at least by Dimock's interpretation.127

With the second objection, that Aegeus does not know the oracle's meaning and therefore cannot be manipulated by reference to its sexual connotations, one must agree, and

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126 Winkler, Constraints, pp. 107-112.

posit instead that Euripides intends not Aegeus, but the audience to be cognizant of the erotic undertow of this scene. For it is likewise the audience, but not Aegeus, who would be aware that Aegeus will, in fact, become Medea's spouse/lover and have a child by him, and it is then the audience who can be expected to be able to pick up on Medea's manipulation of the erotic in this scene.

Aegeus' ignorance is, in fact, something upon which Medea "smartly" relies in her bid for a place of refuge. One of the puzzles of this scene is whether or not Medea knows what the oracle means, and, if so, why she does not reveal its meaning to Aegeus. Since Medea has been more than once termed sophē, and since Aegeus explicitly remarks that the oracle pronounced "words wiser than can be interpreted by a mere man" (σοφώτερ' ἂν' ἀνόρα συμβαλέιν ἔπη, 675), and that he certainly can tell them to Medea, since "there is need of a smart mind" (σοφῆς δεῖται φρενός, 677), Euripides encourages the audience to expect that Medea will be able to interpret the oracle's advice,128 which is— at least to the

128 Other versions of Medea's story, if the audience can be assumed to know them, also suggest that Medea has the ability to interpret the oracle's answer. See Jacob Wolf Petroff, Medea: A Study in the Development of a Myth (diss. Columbia Univ., 1966; hereafter Petroff, Medea), p. 64, who cites Pindar Pythian 4.15 as evidence that Medea could interpret omens and prophesy about the future, and a fragment from Neophron's Medea (W34), where Medea interprets for Aegeus the oracle's reply. Whether Neophron's play preceded Euripides' is still debated. For a review of the controversy, see Ann Norris Michelini,
audience that would know Aegeus' story as it unfolds in
Troizen with Aethra—fairly transparent.

But if Medea knows the oracle's meaning, why does she
do not reveal its meaning to Aegeus? The answer is simple:
Medea's "smartness" in this scene is used competitively,
i.e., not to give free advice to Aegeus, but to serve her
own interests. If she "unwisely" here, as
previously in threatening the royal family, speaks openly,
she will lose her chance of gaining the final thing she
needs: a place of refuge. For if Medea were to solve the
riddle for Aegeus, his insecurity about having children
would ostensibly be allayed, and he would have no need for
her drugs or her. By withholding the answer, Medea ensures
Aegeus will feel need of her to cure his sterility.

In short, it is more by appealing to Aegeus' self-
interest than his pity for her desolation (712) that

"Neophrion and Euripides' Medea 1056-80," TAPA 139 (1989;

129 So, too, according to the tradition, did
Pittheus, who is termed sophos in this episode (by Medea, at 685), serve his own interests in not interpreting the
oracle for Aegeus, so that his daughter would be
impregnated. For ancient sources on the proverbial wisdom
of Pittheus, see Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 81 n. 15. Did
Euripides borrow Pittheus' tactics for his equally "smart"
Medea to use against the same man? Tradition dictated
that Medea must not interpret the oracle for Aegeus
(Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 82-83); Euripides may be fitting
his Medea into this tradition more than has been previously
acknowledged.

130 Harmut Erbse, "Über die Aigeusszene de
euripideischen Medea," WS 79 (1966), pp. 127-129,
recognizes that Medea uses the promise of fertility drugs
Medea wins from Aegeus the refuge she needs. And by agreeing to protect Medea, Aegeus shows his self-interest, which in turn blinds him into unquestioning support of his friend. In this, he and the Chorus share blame.

Aegeus, however, is not as competitive as are the women of the Chorus. He is willing to go only so far in achieving his goal. Nor does he display the low object attachment and total commitment rationality seen in Jason and (very shortly) in Medea. Aegeus differs from Jason in his erōs: Aegeus' desire is for children (714-715), Jason's is for a marriage to advance his social position (700). Aegeus, then, is similar to Creon, and not only in his solicitous concern for children. Aegeus is the second king Medea manipulates for her own ends,131 and he will very nearly suffer in the future the fate that Creon as a bargaining chip with Aegeus. Dunkle, "Aegeus Episode," pp. 98-99, notes that mutual self-interest operates in Medea's relationships with Aegeus and with Jason.

131 Gredley, "Place and Time," p. 32, notes how Medea dominates Aegeus by setting the terms of their agreement. Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 59, sees Aegeus' difference from Creon (who has "stupid self-confidence") in Aegeus' ability to "match wits with Medea." He gets what he wants, and only gives as much as is necessary. Rickert, "Akrasia," p. 109 n. 43 and p. 113, notes that Aegeus, in swearing his oath, is delicately allowed to avoid "actually stating the usual imprecation against one's children . . . ." Rickert imagines that the mere threat of the usual penalty for perjury (destruction of one's children) would nonetheless discourage Aegeus from breaking his oath.
suffers near the end of the play.\textsuperscript{132}

The audience senses, then, that Aegeus, like Creon, is being set up as a mark. Medea, however, does not treat him like one (as she did Creon) because it is not as yet in her interest to harm Aegeus or his family. For now, his friendship is what suits her plans. The safe anchorage he has offered will allow what she most desires: to be proven "beautifully victorious" over her enemies; to make retribution by repaying the harm they have given. Medea savors her imagined triumph:

Oh Zeus, and Vengeance of Zeus and light of Sun, now, friends, we will prove ourselves beautifully victorious (καλλίνικοι) over my enemies, and we have set foot on the road. Now there is hope that these enemies of mine will pay the penalty. (764-777).

Aegeus' kindliness and friendship have been used by Medea no less than were Creon's display of quiet virtues; Medea in the case of Aegeus has promised a service (and hinted perhaps at something more) in return for a service promised. This is the manifestation of her and Aegeus' friendship: mutual support in attaining desired ends.

\textsuperscript{132} Reckford, "First Exit," pp. 330-331, discusses what introduction to Euripides' treatment of Medea the audience of 431 would have had, after viewing Euripides' Peliades of 455 and his Aegeus, whose production date is likely to have been between 450 and 430. Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 83, points out that Euripides combined two separate motifs in formulating the interactions of Aegeus and Medea: "... a magical cure for sterility and a disastrous favor promised to a supernatural being in exchange for help out of a dilemma; this favor ordinarily involves the loss of a child." According to Mills (p. 84), even as Aegeus secures his fertility, he jeopardizes the life of his unborn son.
Medea now has the time to complete her revenge and a place to which she may escape. She therefore may proceed with her plan. This involves, she reveals, using her children as tools of revenge, to carry deadly gifts to Creon’s daughter (780-789). But that is not all: she will proceed then to kill her own children, a deed “most unholy” and whose contemplation makes her weep (790-796).133

But Medea the zero-sum competitor is willing to weep, and she gives a competitor’s array of reasons: 1) it is unendurable for her to be laughed at by her enemies (οὔ γὰρ γελᾶσθαι τλητὸν ἐξ ἐχορῶν, 797); 2) Jason will thereby be repaid the harm he has done her (ὅς ἡμῖν σὺν θεῷ τείσει ἀίκην, 802); and 3) she is concerned to pursue the code of harming enemies (primarily) and helping friends (secondarily), for it is this type of conduct which wins the most fame (807-810). All three motives contribute to the type of excellence

133 Medea’s announcement at 790, “Thereupon, however, I will change the story,” (ἐνταῦθα μὲντοι τόνδ᾽ ἀπαλλάσσω λόγον), has generated intriguing scholarly debate. Boedeker, “Medea,” pp. 106-112, argues that Medea becomes the author of a new tale, which negates Jason’s story of epic grandeur and her own labors in regard to her children. The old tale is replaced by a new one: a tragedy, for both Jason and Medea. See also Emily McDermott, “Medea Line 37: A Note,” AJP 108 (1987), pp. 158-161, who argues that the Nurse’s dread at line 37, “I fear that she [Medea] will come upon some stange new plan,” anticipates Medea’s change from the old plot (where she does not kill the children) to a new one (where she does). McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 17-20, offers this interpretation as possible evidence for the priority of Euripides over Neophron in creating this version of the Medea story.
sought by the zero-sum competitor, but emphasis is on enemies; friends are included almost as an afterthought.

The last lines cited are especially telling in this regard, and therefore must be looked at closely:

Let no one consider me paltry and weak, nor gentle, but of another sort: heavy to my enemies and kindly to friends, for the life of such persons is most renowned (μηδείς με φαύλην κάσθενη νομιζέτω μηδ' ἰσχυραίαν, ἀλλὰ θατέρου τρόπου, βαρεῖαν ἐκθροίς καὶ φίλοις εὐμενή· τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων εὐκλείστατος βίος, 807-810).

Surely it is not friends by whom one would imagine it a danger to be considered paltry, weak, or gentle; only in regard to enemies would such a reputation be imagined dangerous. Renown in the zero-sum game is here, as Gouldner has described, won primarily by the conduct of one toward one's enemies; one must guard at all times against being viewed as gentle or weak, for it is at those moments that one is likely to be overtaken by overzealous enemies who are ever vigilant for their best chance at success over one. And so Medea, like the typical zero-sum competitor,\textsuperscript{134} must focus much of her attention on her enemies, who are the chief obstacles to achieving the goal of reestablishing her lost predominance over them and all others.\textsuperscript{135} Her threefold plan is to keep them from

\textsuperscript{134}Cf. Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 49, on Medea's "heroic outlook" here.

\textsuperscript{135}Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 185, recognizes in Medea's arguments "... all the words that belong to the traditional code, in which the laughter of enemies is
maintaining predominance over her (signalled by their being able to laugh at her), to harm them, and to establish her fame as an effective competitor.

With such a program of action in mind, merely harming the princess and Creon, and, for that matter, Jason, is not enough. She must kill her own children; it not only makes perfect sense, it is the only way. It is, within the arena of zero-sum competition, the rational albeit emotionally repugnant, necessary conclusion. In her recourse to the zero-sum competitor’s total commitment rationality, Medea finally establishes herself as a full participant in this cutthroat competition of self-

the ultimate disgrace and harming enemies and helping friends is the duty of a hero." Easterling is right to continue that "... Medea’s appropriation of the code seems hideously out of place"; this is because her acts against husband and children, cited by Easterling, in themselves deny her the status of hero. Eilhard Schlesinger, "Zu Euripides’ Medea," Hermes 94 (1966; hereafter Schlesinger, "Zu Medea"), pp. 30-32, opposes the favored psychological interpretation of Medea’s monologue (i.e., passion vs. maternal feeling), and sees the killing of the children predetermined by Medea’s decision to take revenge. In the monologue, Medea simply comes to terms with this necessity.

136See Wolff, "Euripides," p. 239, for the "relentless logic" of killing the children. Cf. Foley, "Divided Self," p. 65: "This argument has its own rationality as well, although some recent critics assume the contrary." Foley, like Wolff, sees the rationality of the argument within "the Greek heroic code." (p. 66). Similarly, Buxton, Persuasion, p. 157, remarks, "Medea is a tragedy of ananke: not a metaphysical ‘necessity’, but one implicated in the social circumstances in which Medea finds herself."
Medea's total commitment rationality, able as it is to assure achieving her goal, is not employed, however, without cost. For by viewing self-advancement as uppermost, and all others—including her beloved children—as expendable, Medea ultimately achieves what Gouldner views as the inevitable byproduct of zero-sum competition: total isolation and alienation. For Medea now suffers the alienation of the Chorus, who previously supported her. They, in disbelief and horror, will at the end of this episode have no recourse but to begin to distance themselves from her by imagining an idealized Athens (824-865; see discussion below, Part Two).

The Chorus are incredulous, for they had never envisioned what it meant to play this game to its logical conclusion. They first direct her away from this abnormal deed (811-813), and then express their disbelief that she will be able to commit a crime which will cause her so much anguish (816; 818). Medea's only explanations are that they would understand had they suffered as she has (814-815), that her goal is to sting her husband as much as possible (817), and that her own wretchedness counts for nothing (triggered, 819)—all spoken like a true competitor.

See Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 46, for the tension between rational and emotional motivations in Jason and Medea.
In the last sentiment especially we can detect the willingness of the zero-sum competitor to set the stakes high, and even to destroy that to which one is most attached—and by which one is therefore made most vulnerable—before the enemy can get to it and thereby prevail.\(^{138}\) The death of Medea's children will, the Chorus predict and she readily admits, render her "most wretched" (σὺ δ' ἀν γένοιό γ' ἀθλιωτάτη γυνή, 818); it is precisely why Medea must kill them. Medea is aware that her enemies would, if they could, take vengeance for her deeds upon her innocent children (781-782);\(^{139}\) she will return later to this consideration.

\(^{138}\)Thus Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 50 n. 47, on Medea's killing the children: "By this particular act she not only achieves the most ruinous vengeance conceivable, she also strips Jason of any means whereby he can exact retribution from her, for in destroying her children she has also destroyed her one vulnerable point. It is a perfect scheme for one who has the strength of will to go through with it."

Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 66-70, cites Thucydides History 1.143-144 as an example of total-commitment rationality. There, Pericles urged the Athenians to abandon their lands, and suggested that total commitment to victory would entail laying waste to their own lands themselves, so that the Peloponnesians would realize that such destruction could not make the Athenians submit.

\(^{139}\)There were several versions of how Medea's children died. A full discussion of the sources can be found in P. Roussel, "Médée et la meurtre de ses enfants," REA 22 (1920), pp. 158-161. The audience could only have been as surprised as the Chorus over Medea's proposal to kill the children if Euripides' version of Medea predated Neophron's, which fact is not firmly established, pace E. A. Thompson, "Neophron and Euripides' Medea," CQ 30 (1944), pp. 10-14, and Page, Medea, pp. xxx-xxxvi. See the discussion of von Fritz, Tragödie, pp. 333-336. Michelini, "Neophron," pp. 115-136.
It of course makes no sense to argue that Medea kills her children so that they will be spared the outrage her enemies may visit upon them; she kills them so that she will be spared the humiliation of total defeat her enemies' outrage of them would cause her. The focus here, first and only, is on Medea and her victory; the children will be sacrificed--not without a struggle--to attain a victory made all the more glorious by the sacrifice it demands.

We, like the Chorus, find it difficult to envisage such total commitment to victory; we would deem such behavior--by understatement--excessive. Yet excessiveness is the mark of such a system, as Slater has noted; calls for moderation in the zero-sum game were, according to Gouldner, feeble attempts to control those who, by all usual standards and norms, were out of control.

Medea's final words to the Chorus who, incidentally, cite

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argues from Euripides' play for Neophron's anteriority; McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 9-24, argues the opposite; cf. Ohlander, Suspense, p. 28 n. 9, for other supporters of Euripides' anteriority. Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 79, concurs, and (pp. 38-42) reviews fragmentary works on Medea predating 431 B.C for possible preconceptions of the audience.

140 Except, as Easterling, "Infanticide," pp. 186-187, has argued, to the desperately rationalizing parent.

141 Slater, Glory, p. 40.

142 Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 44.
"human norms" in a feeble attempt to stop her (812),\textsuperscript{143} indicate how, to a person at the extreme, middle ground appears immoderate: "All arguments in the middle are excessive" (περισσοι πάντες ούν μέσω λόγοι, 819).\textsuperscript{144} In short, there is no room for compromise in the zero-sum game. Compromise is for losers like Creon.

It is at this point, then, that the Chorus, formerly so loyal to Medea and the values she embodied, draw back from her in an attempt to reassess that to which they had formerly lent their wholehearted support. The next ode they sing, the Ode to Athens (824–865), marks the beginning of the refutation of their proffered definition of aretē and is only understandable in the context of the other two terms the play seeks to define, erōs and sophia. Discussion of this ode, and indeed of much of the rest of the play, will be postponed to later sections. For now, we

\textsuperscript{143}See the comment of Walsh, "Public and Private," p. 300: "Medea's heroic bid for public honor isolates her completely, for in abandoning natural feeling she offends conventional sensibility." Cf. McDermott, Incarnation, p. 61: ". . . the Chorus passes from a gender-oriented complicity with Medea to revulsion against her, born of common humanity." Their complicity, I have argued, is not only gender-based.

\textsuperscript{144}Buxton, Persuasion, p. 166. Cf. Boedeker, "Medea," p. 107, who translates the line, "all λόγοι in the middle are superfluous," but adds (n. 49) that the phrase is indeed ambiguous--perhaps intentially so--and "could be interpreted as 'words spoken between now and the time I kill the children' or 'words of compromise, in the middle between extremes.'" Gredley, "Place and Time." p. 32, interprets μέσω spatially, i.e., as referring to words coming--hereafter unheeded by Medea--from the Chorus in the orchestra.
need only note that the Medea of the last half of the play becomes more and more the zero-sum competitor.

The first evidence of this is during Medea’s second interview with Jason (866–975), where, with the competitor’s savvy, she discards her former honesty with him. In fact, Medea’s successful manipulation of Jason bears a strong resemblance to her manipulation of the Chorus in that she again faces someone who views her as a potential contender or enemy (recall that she minced no words with Jason in their first interview), whose services she nonetheless needs, and whose suspicions must therefore be defused. With the Chorus Medea combined self-abasement with an appeal to their status as viable contenders, and fueled their support by rousing their prejudice against men; with Jason she uses exactly the same tactics. She abases herself by owning her stupidity, she appeals to Jason’s desire to play the role of the magnanimous victor, and plays off his sense that he, as a male, is naturally superior to her.

In using on Jason the bait that even Creon would not take, Medea reveals her sense of Jason’s stupidity. And, in fact, in this contest of wits, he is gravely disadvantaged, for he mindlessly snaps up Medea’s bait: she is not, after all, intelligent. In reality, she is stupid. Unlike Creon, the witless Jason offers no challenge to Medea’s verbal withdrawal of herself as a contender against him;
without a word to the contrary he accepts her assessment of herself as impaired by being out of her mind (μαίνομαι, 873), as imprudent and senseless (ἀβουλίαν . . . μάτην, 882 and 883). Medea continues, as he silently agrees: she must have lost her mind (ἔγω δ' ἄφρων, 885); as a woman she is, after all, no better than a babbling infant (οὐδ' ἀντιεἰνεῖν νήπι' ἀντὶ νηπίων, 891); her thinking had been faulty (κακῶς φρονεῖν τότε), 892-893).

Medea ends her speech by summoning forth all of her contender's sophia: she lies through her teeth and uses the best weapon she has--her children!--to gain at least symbolic physical proximity to her enemy Jason. Through the agency of the children, she is able to touch Jason and falsely reassure him with a forsworn pledge of forgiveness and revived philia:145

Children, children, come here! Come out of the house! Greet your father; say farewell to him along with me, and, together with your mother, change from the enemies we were to friends (διαλλάκηθο' ἡμα τῆς προσθεν ἐχθρας ἐς φίλους μητρός μέσα); for we now have made a truce and my anger has changed (896-897).

Although it may seem unlikely that Jason could believe this pack of lies, it will do well to remember that this man, like the Tutor, is not unsettled by the fluidity of relationships; he has stated outright (560-561) that he

expects others to abandon (or, as here, cleave to) him according to their best interests. His willingness to accept Medea's "change of heart," then, is a byproduct of the expectations he has accrued as a player in the zero-sum game. By his lights, she has (at last!) come to her senses. She—now that she finally realizes there is no way for her to succeed against his and Creon's plan—is playing the game smart, by putting her true (and only natural) feelings under the control of her rational mind:

I do praise these things [you say], woman, though I can hardly blame those things [you said before]. It is only natural that a member of the female race get angry at her husband, when he engages in secret commerce for marriage with another (γάμος παρεμπολώντος ἄλλοιος). But you've changed your heart—though it took you some time!—to the better course, now that you've recognized the prevailing plan (ἐγνώς δὲ τὴν νικῶσαν . . . βουλήν). These are the acts of a prudent woman (γυναικὸς ἔργα ταύτα σώφρονος). (908-913).

In concluding this speech, Jason indulges in fantasizing about the future of his children, and in the process reconfirms himself as a competitor in the game (see below, Part Five). He imagines his children at the top of the heap in Corinth: "I expect that you with your brothers will be first (τὰ πρῶτα) of the Corinthian land" (916-917)—a position his new social standing will, he assures them, buy them. Furthermore, at lines 920-921, he hopes that they will serve as his protectors against the enemies he never questions he, the future aged competitor, will have: "May I see you thriving as you come to the end
of your youth, stronger than my enemies" (ἐξορῶν τῶν ἐμῶν ὑπερτέρους).

Medea now asks a clearly receptive Jason that the children be allowed to stay, feigning that she realizes the decree of exile is for her own good (κἀμοὶ τάδ’ ἐστί λύσα, 935), and equating her good with that of the royal house and Jason: after all, she would just be in the way (934-937). She further reminds Jason, who at first is incredulous of his success in achieving the children’s release from exile, that he will easily be able to have his way with his new wife, to which he agrees (942-945). His manipulation of his own erotic appeal will again win the day, he is sure, and in his breezy self-assurance one can perhaps discern the source of his prejudice against women. For, unlike the Corinthian women of the Chorus, whose prejudice is the competitor’s prejudice against a long-victorious competitor, Jason’s disdain for women is the victor’s contempt for the vanquished—women to him are interchangeable parts, easily manipulated to his advantage. For this reason he feels that Medea, in offering the costly gown and diadem to the princess, is disposing of valuable resources for no good reason: he will certainly prevail without these gifts; Medea, to him, is therefore foolish (Ἔ μαραία, 959).

But Medea, far from being a fool, is showing her
competitor's savvy. For if she cannot gain proximity to
the princess through these gifts, Medea will not be able to
poison her. Medea therefore at this crucial juncture once
again plays the supplicant, imaging herself as such to
Jason: she is in a thoroughly vulnerable position before
this young girl, whose star is rising, on whose side are
the gods, and in whose young hands is the absolute power to
rule (κείνης ὁ δαίμων, κείνα νῦν αὐξεῖ
θεός, νέα τυραννεῖ, 966-967). She notionally lays
her life on the line in approaching the princess ("I would
exchange for my children's exile not only gold, but my
life," 966-967). Medea culminates her imaged supplication
of the princess by bidding the children to "beseech your
father's young wife, my mistress" (πατρός νέαν
γυναικα, δεσπότιν ἐμήν, ἰκετεύετο, 970-
971).

The woman sounds so pathetic, so helpless,
and seems, by sending her innocent young children into the
den of her enemy, to be putting so much on the line. That
would be true of anyone but a zero-sum competitor.

For Medea the competitor this is another master
stroke. Who could guess that so pathetically tendered an

146Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 120-121, argues that
"[t]he entire episode comprising the death of Glauke is
full of ambiguities which give it the aspect of a perverted
sacrificial ritual." Point by point, Mills illustrates how
the children can be viewed as offerants following the steps
of sacrificial procedure, which culminate in the holocaust
that consumes the princess. The children later, of course,
themselves become the sacrificial victims of Medea's knife.
offer of such obviously costly gifts in the hands of two innocents, given ostensibly to attain something only for them—nothing for their mother—could be hiding treachery and death? Medea shows to the knowing a sleight of hand when she is ever so careful to instruct the little boys—this is important, she tells them—to put the gifts in the hands of the princess (972-973). In the zero-sum game, proximity spells danger, touch kills, as these boys will themselves soon discover.

To such a state Gouldner indicated zero-sum competition ultimately comes: it brings in its wake a crisis of intimacy that results from manipulating desire to the dictates of the game. At lines 974-975, Medea signals her now full involvement in this crisis by the instructions she gives her children: "Go, quick as you can; do well, and bring for your mother the good news of the things she desires to obtain" (ὡν ἐπὶ τὰξεῖν). With this statement Medea has come full circle: she is no longer a woman stricken with desire for any man (8), but one who, like the husband who taught her, knows how to control and channel her desire to the achievement of her own success over her enemies. This has now become the sole object of her desire. Medea has become Jason: no longer does she spend her desire on living beings, she saves it entirely for her own success.

The fourth stasimon (976-1001), which follows, is
taken up entirely with the Chorus' expression of hopelessness, and, as such, belongs properly in discussion of the next section, as does much of what follows. The Chorus, and indeed even Medea, from this point forward show the effects of the reversal in which they are involved. For now, we must ignore these fluctuations, and instead concentrate on what is left of adherence to the definitions. For this reason, discussion of the remaining choral songs will be postponed to the next section.

Despite the reverberations from the impending horrid deed of killing the children, Medea nonetheless argues successfully for cleaving to the definitions which have been established thus far in the play. After the Tutor announces that the children have successfully delivered the fateful gifts, Medea, although she wavers, remembers what a competitor can ill afford to forget, that her enemies await her failure so that they can laugh. At 1049-1051 she steels herself against softness, and determines to act: "Do I want my enemies to get off scot-free and to be a laughing-stock? I must do these things." (τολμητεον τ' ε' δε). Medea, who manifests the definitions tested in this elenchos, with this verbal adjective begins to show the inescapable, unendurable logic of the game into which these definitions fit. As happens in elenchos to interlocutors, this is the point past which one cannot answer anything
but "yes." For if one is to support the definitions, the consequences logically follow. This is why we see Medea giving expression to her sense of the "necessity" of the deed she is about to commit, although, obviously, there are other alternatives to killing the children, alternatives which this intelligent woman herself has been able to see: she could, after all, take the children with her (1045–1046). But this alternative means abandoning the full punishment of her enemy, Jason. It cannot be chosen unless the definition of aretē Medea represents is itself abandoned. And that choice, through the horrors that follow, will not be taken.

Instead, Medea, upon seeing the Messenger arrive with news from the royal palace, reverts back into her old, competitive self. She has been eagerly awaiting his arrival (1116–1117), terms the news that Creon and his daughter are dead "a most beautiful story" (καλλιστον ... μνήμον, 1127), and claims that the Messenger can

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147 Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 188, points to Medea's "obsessive need to triumph over her enemies" and her "heroic self-image" as pieces in the inescapable logic of killing the children. Similarly, for Schlesinger, "Zu Medea," p. 32, killing the children "aus Rache und ... aus Notwendigkeit" cannot be separated. Cf. Walsh, "Public and Private," pp. 298–299, who sees Medea, like Jason before her, now operating in the public sphere at the expense of the private.

Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 65, by contrast, asserts that "[t]here is no logic in the deed ...." McDermott, Incarnation, p. 92, sees the logic of Medea's killing her children in that it is the climax of her career as violator of the parent-child bond.
now and forevermore be counted among those who work to her advantage, and therefore one of her friends (ἐν δέ
εὐεργέταις τὸ λοιπὸν ἡδη καὶ φίλοις ἐμοὶ ἔσον, 1127-1128). What we are about to hear is ghastly;
and Medea, consummate competitor that she remains, shamelessly gloats over the prospect of savoring grisly
details: "Now don't hurry through it, friend, but do tell. How did they die? You will give me twice as much pleasure
if they died really horribly."

This statement, and the Messenger's description that follows, will be considered in the last section of this
chapter (Part Five, below); here we need only acknowledge that, typical as this gloating is of the zero-sum competi-
tor, the suggested eroticization of death that her anticipation of "pleasure" implies, gives pause to all but
the fully committed competitor, Medea. The disgusting and pathetic details of the deaths do nothing to her resolve
but stiffen it:

Friends, the matter is resolved (δέσικται) that I must kill my children as quickly as possible and set out from this land, and not by dallying give opportu-
nity for another, ill-disposed hand to kill the children. It is in every way necessary that they die (πάντως ὑπ᾽ ἀνάγκης κατανεὼν). And since it is necessary (ἐπεὶ δέ χρῆ), we our-
selves shall kill them, we who bore them. So come on, now, heart, arm yourself (ὁπλίζου). Why

148 Ohlander, Suspense, p. 167, compares Medea to a Homeric hero, who likewise "relishes the pain he has inflicted on his foes." An exception to this is, of course, Achilles, who does anything but gloat over the pain he has brought Priam (Iliad 24.538-548).
do we hesitate to do the terrible/clever and necessary harm (τὰ δεινὰ καναγκαὶα . . . κακὰ)?
Come, poor hand of mine, take the sword, take it, creep to the painful starting-post of life, and don't turn weak (κακισθότις), don't remember the children, how very dear they are, how you bore them. But for this short day forget your children, and then lament. (1236-1249).

Three things are of concern here. First, Medea again expresses, indeed this time stresses (four times in eight lines: δέδοκται, 1236; ἀνάγκη, 1240; χρῆ, 1240; ἀναγκαῖα, 1243) the necessity of her deed. And necessary it is, unless she is to abandon her pursuit of a reputation as one who comes out on top. There are no answers but "yes," for this logic, terrible though it is, is cohesively clever (δεινά, 1243). Second, Medea's decision here is basically to enter once again the field of competition. Mother that she nonetheless is, she must now be soldier who arms herself and takes up the sword (ὁμλίγου, 1242; λαβὲ είφος, 1244), athlete who sets out from the starting-post (βαλβίδα, 1245).149 Gouldner's description of the competitor who can "never withdraw from the contest; he must always hurl himself back into the fray"150 seems especially

149Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 81. Medea here "identifies with the aggressor," i.e., becomes like the male oppressor. Simon, p. 80, sees such identification, and "separation or segregation of the sexes," as the only two lines of resolution: "What makes the play a tragedy is that none of the solutions really allows men and women to live together in harmony and to beget and cherish children."

150Gouldner, Enter Plato, p. 54.
apropos to these lines. Here is Medea, arming herself for another combat, prodding herself to begin yet another race. Third, in urging herself to forget the children and her connection to them, that they are "very dear," that she was the one who bore them (1246-1248), Medea is merely urging herself to take on the competitor's mandatory practice of fluidity in relationships. Individuals, no matter how dear, cannot stand in the way of one's success.

And it is indeed this cold-blooded competitor that the children face, as Medea off stage traps and stabs them to death (1271-1281). The definitions have been brought to their logical conclusion, and here it is: dead children at the hands of their own mother.

The tragic magnitude of a mother's killing her children should be enough to destroy the system of definitions that made such an act necessary. But this does not happen. For as Jason enters, blustering and threatening, we are given to know that the competitive ethos which has wreaked all this savagery thrives. Jason is sure that the royal household will soon be looking for vengeance, and will extract it from Medea, who he is sure "will pay the penalty" (ἀσκήσει ὀίκησιν, 1298) and will not escape "without penalty" (ἁθῶος, 1300), for they will treat her harmfully (ἐξεθηλοὺς κακῶς, 1302). But that is not all. His concern is not her, but his children, whose lives he expects are also threatened by
avenging relatives of the princess (1303-1305).\footnote{Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 189; cf. Ohlander, Suspense, p. 180. Ohlander, passim, argues that the audience throughout anticipates and fears that the Corinthians will kill the children, as they in fact did in earlier versions.}

when he hears that Medea has beaten them to the task, Jason's first declaration is that he will get even (τὴν δὲ τείσωμαι δίκην, 1316). But he really cannot, for he is impotently unable to touch her: "You will not ever touch me with your hand (κειρὶ δ' οὐ ψαύσεις ποτε). Helios, father of our father, gave this chariot to us, a defense against hostile hand" (ἔρωμεν πολέμιος κερός). (1320-1322). All Jason can do is ill-wish her (ὀλοιολο, 1329; ἔρρει, 1346) and call her names,\footnote{Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 93, notes how the form of the dialogue from 1393-1398, with its intertwined half-lines, shows Jason and Medea "entwined in some murderous wrestling match, not entwined as husband and wife in procreative sex or in complementary efforts on behalf of children."} yet he acknowledges that with these he cannot "sting" her: "But I would not be able to sting you with a thousand reproaches." (1344-1345). Furthermore, he will not be allowed to bury his own children (1377-1378; cf. 1412), only his new wife (1394). In fact, he cannot even touch the children, though he longs to do so, begs Medea to let him, and calls the gods to witness that he cannot (1399-1400; 1402-1403; 1410-1412). His vanquishment
Medea could not be happier for it. She is fully in control as victor, herself and the bodies of her children out of reach. As victor, she does the touching and stinging, but is not herself touched and stung. Medea glories in her ability to have touched his heart (τῆς σής καρδίας ἀνθρώπης, 1360); she can "sting" him—by flaunting his children as dead: "They no longer exist; and that will sting you" (οι ὄνειρές, 1370). She lets him (and us) know that this is merely the payback for what was done to her: Jason did not practice reciprocity with her, but instead dishonored her (1353-1354); Creon provided her husband with a ready-to-hand marriage and tossed Medea herself out of his land (1356-1357). Both needed to be punished; she could not be the object of laughter for her enemies (1355; 1362). Furthermore, Medea leaves Jason and us with a pathetic picture of his future: he will die in disgrace, struck by a timber from the rotting Argo (1386-1389), after having

153 Flory, "Right Hand," p. 73. Furthermore, Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 22, suggests that in Medea's not allowing Jason to touch the children she is "treating them as if they were consecrated objects that would be soiled by Jason's touch . . . ." Furthermore, by killing the children Medea has "robbed [Jason] of the last fruit of that flawed quest for the fleece. He will have not so much as a pair of corpses to show for that entire expedition." See also Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 92, for Medea's revenge as robbing Jason of the chance for immortality through children.

spent his old age in lamentation more bitter even than he feels now (1396).

As the Chorus so long ago predicted, the tables have turned. The rivers flow backwards. Jason, once so confident in his rising star, is now suffering utter defeat. And Medea, what of Medea? With her display of seemingly total potency and control, she has all the trappings of the victor. She touches and stings but cannot be touched or stung. From her invulnerable position on high and with her departure announced and imminent (1384-1385), she and the definitions she manifests are maintained even to the end.

But have the definitions withstood the elenchos? Or have they, like Medea, merely escaped further scrutiny? As she flies off in Helios' chariot, the sun's new course signals cataclysmic upheaval (see below, Part Five). Despite triumph and Medea's claims to the contrary, all is not well. A reversal of the first order has taken place. No wonder the Chorus of Corinthian women, and we, are dismayed and confused.155

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155 Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 10, would attribute the audience's confusion to the fact that, in the killing of the children, they have witnessed "an inversion of an expected tragic pattern."
In statements made by Medea's Chorus of Corinthian women, one can see the same progression toward and through refutation witnessed in interlocutors of the early Platonic dialogues: the Chorus go from boastful confidence in the proposed definition to uncertainty and doubt. Although there is some evidence that these women experience recognition and begin to grope for a new truth, they end in aporia. The women of the Chorus are, after all, the primary interlocutors in this would-be dialogue. They are, however, not the only ones in whom the progression through refutation can be traced: Euripides shows traces of elenctic progression also in Medea, and, to a lesser extent, in Jason and Creon.156

Medea, in short, serves a double role. In her first role, she, along with the other main characters, manifests the proposed definitions of aretē, sophia, and erōs. In her second role, however, Medea manifests some of the same aspects of refutation evident in the Chorus: uncertainty and doubt, and evidence of some recognition. Medea, therefore, by being both the definition and its refutation, illustrates the definition's internal fallacy.

156 The messenger who witnesses the deaths in the royal house is likewise stricken to aporia; see the discussion below, this section.
The same can be said of Jason and Creon, in whose fates reversal is evident. In Medea alone, however, is exhibited the one hallmark of early Platonic interlocutors not seen in Medea's primary interlocutors, the Chorus: the slapdash solution of escape.

The Chorus, not being afforded escape, exceed Medea as interlocutors because they must stay and labor toward truth, the terminus of elenchos never witnessed in Plato's early dialogues. And although Medea does not transcend the early dialogues' terminus in gaining the truth, the Chorus' willingness to grope for it marks them as budding philosophers. They at one point realize, like Socrates, that they know only one thing: that they know nothing. This is quite a distance from where they started.

They started in general agreement with Medea. This much was apparent from their entrance at line 131, where their concern and sympathy are manifest, and where they define themselves as friends of the house (137; cf. 178-179, applied more specifically to Medea). Although they cannot at this point (152-154) understand or approve of Medea's eros (for death), and consider her foolish (μαράδ, 152) for entertaining it, this is because they have not yet been encouraged to acknowledge their own outrage at their endemic helplessness as women in the face of spousal infidelity and abandonment. For now they see such treatment as not remarkable (155-158). The Chorus are
at first more concerned to commiserate with Medea's woes
than to support her in action (173-182): they do not even
seem to consider taking action profitable or availing; to
their invariable victims' minds the best course is to trust
in the gods (157-158).

But after hearing Medea's assessment of her own and
other women's position, the Chorus' general agreement
becomes full-fledged support of Medea, and they become
boastfully confident of their position as allies of Medea
in her intended action. They without hesitation agree to
keep silent, and approve of Medea's plan to harm her enemy
Jason (267-268).

The first stasimon (410-445), recall, showed them
espousing broadly but unmistakably the zero-sum ideology,
the "us vs. them" division of the world into winners and
losers. The tone of the stasimon is evident from the first
strophe: the women intersperse strongly declarative
present tense verbs (410-411; 419) with bold, predictive
futures (418; 420). They obviously feel they know not only
what is, but what will be. In the first antistrophe (421-
430) they confidently explain their previous status as the
wrongly oppressed: they hadn't the control of song
afforded men.

The second strophe (431-438) finds them briefly
reviewing Medea's history. The use of ὀλολογα at 437
(cf. ὀλογανε at 442) marks their sympathy with
Medea's degeneration from active determiner of her fate to
the passive and helplessly dishonored; their transition in
line 438 from previously active verbs to a passive one
signals their perception that Medea is of course not
responsible for the status quo they subsequently describe
in the second antistrophe (439-445): oaths are gone, and
so is aidōs. Poor Medea is not to blame; how can she be?
She is without home (441), has no place of anchorage in a
sea of woes (442-443), and is under the control of another
woman whose position is fixed as ruler of a bed once hers
("and another queen is set up in control of the bed in your
house," τῶν τε λέκτρων ἄλλα βασίλεια κρείσσων
ὁμοιων ἐπέστα, 443-445). Jason, the oath breaker
and shameless betrayer of his wife, and the unnamed
princess whose exercise of control takes the manifestation
of possessing the bed once belonging to Medea, are
responsible. Medea is the victim with whom these women can
identify, for before the vicarious moral victory afforded
them by Medea's helplessness in the face of obvious male
treachery, they once were--but, thank god! no longer are--
one down.

But later, after the women have witnessed the verbal
contest between Jason and Medea, they admit for the first
time a certain distaste for one predictable aspect of the
zero-sum game: strife arising between friends. "Terrible
is the anger and one hard to cure when friends engage in
They, unlike Medea (and strangely like the cautious Nurse, who hesitates openly to curse her former master and therefore philos, Jason, even though she admits he has wronged his friends), seem unable to forget that in the relentless pursuit for one's own advancement friends are often discarded or betrayed and therefore become enemies. They take seriously the part of the creed that dictates that one help friends; this will soon contribute to the demise of the zero-sum definitions of aretē, sophia, and erōs they propound and defend.

The beginnings of this demise can be found in the second stasimon (627-662), though not until the end of the first strophe. Here the high confidence of the first stasimon is continued as the women assert that erōs can, in fact, as has been illustrated by Jason, bestow eudoxia and aretē, and that, as Medea's plight has shown, it is a dangerously unpredictable ally in this acquisition. Again the tone is, at least initially, one of great self-confidence and fully supportive of the propounded definition, and yet, there is, by the first antistrophe, a note of uncertainty.

The women's uncertainty is marked first by a change from the indicative to the wistful optative. After their brash gnomic aorist of the first lines (παρέδωκαν,
the indicative mood appears again only in the last antistrophe, which sports the boldly declarative εἴσομαι of line 652, and the definitive future tense indicative in its final word (ἔσται, 662). Furthermore, the ἐλθοῦ of line 630, part of a condition, is the only optative not expressing a wish. It is clear that the Chorus accept certain things (like the usefulness yet danger of ἐρῶς in the zero-sum game) as status quo, and yet, despite their acceptance, nonetheless wish for certain things to be otherwise.

For example, beyond the Chorus’ general mood of uncertainty, they again give at least lip service against the strife endemic to the zero-sum game. In the first antistrophe, they want nothing to do with the “disputatious wrath and unceasing strife” (ἀμφιλόγους ὀργάς ἀκόρεστα τε νείκη, 637-638), with which they suspect Cypris of being able to beset one’s thumos. They further wish that she may with keen discrimination honor "beds not battle-scarred" (ἀντολέμους . . . εὐνάς, 639). Furthermore, their desire for the favor of moderation (στέργοι δὲ μὲ σωφροσύνα, 635) in the first line of the antistrophe, marks them as chary of the excessiveness characteristic of fully committed competitors.157 In fact, all of the above appear to

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undercut their commitment to competition, and the second strophe/antistrophe pair adds more evidence for the Chorus’ growing doubts about the dictates of the zero-sum game. The theme of the last half of this ode, like the last half of the first ode, is the value of connection to others, this time applied more personally to the Chorus themselves. As they sing the praises of country and friends, the women take another notional step away from the complex definition of aretē within the confines of the zero-sum game. For although competitors in the game claim to value helping friends as much as harming enemies, as indeed does Medea later in the play (807-810), the game itself, as Gouldner has argued, puts emphasis primarily on harming enemies, from whom victory in competition must be wrested. The Chorus here, in their song of longing for fatherland, home, and city, and their musings on the meaning of having friends, stress instead the worth of connection, that fluid commodity in the zero-sum game. Can we then continue to posit the Chorus’ initial avowal and defence of the zero-sum competitor’s definition of aretē, when they have so quickly begun to repudiate necessary aspects of the game?

We, in fact, can, for in addition to the argument above (Part One), that the Chorus here fight for their only access to social respectability, the status as wife, they continue to cast their descriptions, both of their imagined
future encounters with Cypris and their wistful musings on family, home, and friends, in competitive terms. Basically, they still are concerned to remain in control, and are willing at least to ill-wish their enemies.

The first indication of their persistently adversarial standpoint is the terms by which they describe their imagined future encounters with Cypris.\(^\text{158}\) Not only is she uncharacteristically described as sporting bow and arrow,\(^\text{159}\) but, as argued above (Part One), the encounter shows the Chorus imagining themselves in a position of helplessness, and this is a position no contender can abide. Cypris here is in control: with her weaponry she is envisioned as "having stricken the thumos" of her victim, and, by means of the disputatious wraths and insatiate strifes, "striking out against" her

(\(\thetaυμον \ \epsilonκπληξισιον\), 639; \(\piροπα\\lambdaοι\), 640). In addition, Cypris is depicted in the zero-sum contender's victorious role of having rational control over this emotional landscape: she is "clever/terrible" (\(\delta\epsilon\nu\alpha\), 640), and the women describe her as potentially "sharp-witted" (\(\delta\epsilonυ\phi\rho\rho\), 641) in her discernment. This first antistrophe, in short, is not for the women of the Chorus merely a wish to avoid strife; it

\(^{158}\)Ohlander, *Suspense*, p. 99, presumes Medea is the intended referent in the Chorus' remarks about Cypris' victimization of lovers.

is instead a wish to avoid strife with which they visualize
themselves helplessly assailed, at the hands of a superi-
orly armed, highly rational contestant.

This interpretation is buttressed by the terminology
of helplessness which invades the second strophe. As they
imagine themselves in Medea's current state of disconnec-
tion, the Corinthian women foresee not only a painful
situation (ἀξέων, 647), but one in which they are
severely disadvantaged: the disconnected life is one
without resources and is hard to get through (τὸν
ἀμηχανίας . . . δυσφέρατον αἰῶνα), 645-646);
death is now preferable to them, too, rather than such a
state of helplessness (648-649); loss of one's fatherland
is described as the worst hardship, and as that most
helpless of states, bereavement (μόχθων ὃ ὦκ
ἀλλος ὑπερθεν ἡ γὰς πατρίας στέρεσθαι, 650-
651). The women clearly despair of attaining for
themselves the zero-sum contender's isolation, but they
despair of its practical disadvantages as much as its
emotional deprivations.

Furthermore, the Chorus are not yet willing to allow
that they are at a loss, but instead insist on their
enduring knowledge. They begin the second antistrophe back
in the indicative, with a declaration of first-hand
knowledge, "We have seen" (εἶδομεν, 653). They
remain solidly on Medea's side, Medea, whom they describe
as suffering and unpitied by city or friend (655-656).

They ill-wish those who do not honor friends, and end the ode by proclaiming, with a strongly predictive future, that "such a person will never be a friend of mine" (661-662).

The ill-wishing marks their enduring status as competitors in two ways. First, ill-wishing a non-friend is tantamount to the hope for harm to befall an enemy, which puts them squarely back into the fray of dealing out harm, at least notionally. So much for their wish to avoid conflict. Finally, this particular ill-wish, "may he die without charm" (ἀχάριστος ὀλοίθε, 659) is one which (balanced as it is by the earlier εὐχαρίς of line 631 of the first strophe), wishes upon the non-friend the worst of all fates for a contender: to die without the grace which can lead to good repute and areté. For the competitor, recall, does not prevail only by his strong right arm. Grace and good looks can bring victory.160

The women end, then, wishing upon enemies what they themselves despair at suffering, inability to attain one's own advancement.

It cannot be denied, however, that these same women have begun to display reservations about the competitive

160See Winkler, Constraints, pp. 77-79, and the discussion above, Part One. Meridor, "Medea 639," p. 97, does not sense the connection between grace and reputation, and therefore argues that line 631 "does not follow quite logically upon the first part of the bipartite introductory statement."
The heat is rising, and they begin to move away from its source. Like interlocutors made to sense for the first time the logical repercussions of their beliefs, these women show discomfort at one of the prices paid by the zero-sum competitor: the total alienation that is one of the game's most devastating and inevitable by-products.

It is for this reason that the Chorus are able to take solace in the ensuing interaction between Aegeus and Medea. Despite its undertow of erotic manipulation (see above, Part One), the current of the interaction between the two friends is one of cooperation and help, not divisiveness and harm. The Chorus can thereby well-wish Aegeus along on his journey (759-763), and they, like us, can experience momentary refuge from the competitive fray. This is, however, merely the calm before the storm, the moment in elenchos when the interlocutor, still clinging to his initial definitions, has been lulled into believing that the analogies with which he has expressed agreement have no real bearing on the maintenance of his thesis. Elucidating the analogies must wait for the final sections of this chapter. Now, however, we must look to the Chorus' reaction as Medea, after Aegeus exits (764-823), brings the definition of areté supported by them to its emotionally repugnant yet inescapably logical conclusion: that she must kill her own children--there is no other way (see above, Part One).
The Chorus' first reaction (811-813) is horror. They had no way of foreseeing the inevitability of this solution. Claiming a desire to help Medea, they try to dissuade her from this act, so far from human norms as it is. Their second reaction (816) is incredulity: "But will you dare to kill your own offspring, woman?" Their reactions allow them a certain distance from her; it is from this perspective that they again, in the third stasimon, define aretē, erōs, and sophia. And although, as we shall see, erōs and sophia are once again subordinate to aretē, the Chorus in their descriptions of the interconnection among these three terms show a subtle shift in their thinking. It will do well for us to recall that their third ode is sung in the spirit of trying to help Medea.

That ode, the Ode to Athens (824-865), is pivotal in the development of the motifs and images which serve as the play's elenctic analogies, and therefore discussion of its full impact must be postponed for the last two sections of this chapter. At this point, however, we may note that the Chorus' musings on the play's three crucial terms puts them into a new and decidedly different context.161

161 This may explain why the ode is sometimes considered a sort of escape for the Chorus. See, e.g., Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 50. Ruth Padel, "Imagery of the Elsewhere: Two Choral Odes of Euripides," CQ n.s. 24 (1974), pp. 227-241, finds in two other "escape odes" (Hippolytus 732-775 and Helen 1451-1511) "a reassertion of the themes and problems of the play in a different and
Whereas before areté, erós, and sophia were always defined in the arena of conflict, here they are participants in a cooperative milieu. Sophia makes its appearance first as that by which the prehistoric Athenians were nourished (ἐρεβόμενοι κλεινοτάταν σοφίαν, 826-829). This description, which renders sophia as sustenance for a whole society of undifferentiated humans, is a far cry from its previous depiction—as a commodity to be manipulated for individual advancement. Erós is also transformed and with even more subtlety. It first appears as the sensuously depicted Cypris, who busies herself not with advancing the position of one individual over another, but with drawing water and being pelted with flowers (835-843). Then erós is the personified Erotes, who are likewise not involved in competition, but who do the flower-pelting and are described as "the assistants to Sophia, helpers toward all sorts of aretē" (Τῆς distant context" (p. 227). Furthermore, "This type of ode ... creates mythological and pictorial associations that lead to a lyric vision of the appropriate action, and reassembles motifs of the play in a new mode, as a dream regroups the thoughts and events of the waking day." (p. 241). These comments have obvious relevance for the first strophe-antistrophe pair of the ode under discussion here. Cf. the similar analysis of another Euripidean ode by George B. Walsh, "The First Stasimon of Euripides' 'Electra'," YCS 25 (1977), pp. 277-289, especially pp. 281-282 and 288-289, where Walsh stresses the importance of the stasimon's world as a contrast to that of the play. By contrast, Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 60, dismisses the significance of this stasimon by remarking, "Euripides had long since abandoned the tautly relevant choral ode save for special occasions."
At first the nexus of aretē, erōs, and sophia seems to remain the same here: aretē is still the ultimate goal, while erōs and sophia are the aids-de-camp.

There is, however, a difference. That erōs would be an assistant (παρέδρος) is not surprising, for we have heard Jason describe Cypris, if not with this word, in broadly the same terms (526-528). Furthermore, as Winkler has noted in his study of magical papyri, the word παρέδρος is used to describe the all-purpose serviceableness of erōs throughout the competitive structure.162 Here, though, erōs is imagined as the assistant to sophia, not to the person seeking an edge.163 Elsewhere in the play we have seen erōs set off against sophia, as if erōs were something which had to be kept in control, and the controller were sophia.

It is different here. First, the description is overwhelmingly sensual. The Chorus engage our sense of sight with "most brilliant air" (829-830) and "golden Harmony" (834), of touch with "moderate breezes" (839-840), of smell with "sweet-breathing breezes" (840) and the

162 Winkler, Constraints, p. 79.

163 Foley, "Divided Self," p. 83. Foley, however, accurately cautions against taking this idealistic depiction too optimistically: "... yet Athens itself is about to be visited by Medea . . . ."
"sweet-smelling" rosebud wreath (843). Such sensual
description will only occur one other time in the play:
when Medea caresses her children for the last time.

There is, in addition, an the overriding spirit of aid
and cooperation that pervades the ode, and casts aretē,
erōs, and sophia in a totally different light.164 And
although the Chorus are unable to bring new definitions to
explicit formulation, the sense one gets from their use of
the three terms suggests the beginning of a complete
realignment, away from autonomy and competition, and toward
connection and cooperation. Later analysis (below, Parts
Four and Five) will bolster what here is presented as a
mere suggestion of this realignment.

The second strophe/antistrophe pair continues the
suggestion of realignment of values in two ways: first,
the Chorus betray a new uncertainty; second, their
alienation from Medea is unmistakable. Their uncertainty
is obvious from the series of questions they ask (846-850;
856-862); again, this is a far cry from the self-confident
brashness of the first ode: How then will this city of
holy rivers receive Medea? How will the land, safe escort
of friends, contain her, the child-murderer? How will she
get the boldness of mind either for hand or heart to

164 So Wolff, "Euripides," p. 241: "All the
elements that in the play produce destructive conflicts are
here integrated and beneficent: wisdom, fame, traditional
poetry, passion, heroic achievement, and excellence."
employ the clever/terrible daring for the child-
killing? How will she be able to look at her
children and tearlessly proceed with their murder?

What, in fact, all their questions amount to, is: How
can this be true? The Chorus' uncertainty and incredulity
are a regular feature of the interlocutor's reactions in
elechomos. The women's only recourse is to predict,
hopefully, that Medea will not be able to go through with
the murder when the time actually comes (862-865). It is
their only way of salvaging definitions which are self-
destructing before their very eyes.

Clearly, if Medea can kill her own children, the
Chorus' definition of aretē, and along with it the
definition of its helpmates, erōs and sophia, must undergo
severe revision, simply because these women can no longer
approve of Medea's actions. And that they can no longer
approve is evident from their imprecations that she
consider what she is about to do, and their figurative
supplication of her not to proceed as planned (851-855).
It is the first time they have disagreed with Medea's
actions, and thereby with the definitions those actions
represent.166 It is ironic that they, who have so

165 I adopt Page's solution for the difficulties in
this line; see Page, Medea, pp. 135-136 at lines 856 ff.

166 Buttrey, "Accident," p. 9, argues that the
Chorus' attitude after this point is reversed to sympathy
for Jason.
steadfastly insisted upon standing by friends, must now
\textit{take a stand} against her, but they supplicate her with
words, even as they imagine in the last antistrope the
children's (vain, although the Chorus are unaware of this)
final actual supplication of their mother (863). For the
children will confront, despite the Chorus' prediction
otherwise, a mother who remains true to the definition of
\textit{areté} her actions represent, whose \textit{thumos} is unaltering
(865), even when murdering her own offspring.

The Chorus come to this realization—\textit{that the}
definition of \textit{areté} they have openly approved does, in
\textit{fact}, include emotionally repugnant corollaries—during the
ensuing episode between Jason and Medea. Their only
interjection (906–907) shows the beginning of this
realization, for they admit that they, too, are beginning
to weep and express the—\textit{vain wish} that things may not get worse than they now are.
But as the episode draws to a close and Medea has
succeeded (though with great difficulty; see lines 899–
905), as the zero-sum competitor must, in keeping her
emotions in line with the accomplishment of her goal, and
has sent the children out with the poisoned garments, the
Chorus sing the fourth and last regular\textsuperscript{167} stasimon

\textsuperscript{167}Elliott, \textit{Medea}, p. 92 at lines 976 ff. The
point may be important when we consider that the Chorus' final observations are from the perspective of the reversed interlocutor.
(976-1001), remarkably different in tone from the high spirits evident in the first.

The double anaphora in this fourth stasimon's first lines, "no longer . . . no longer" (οὐκέτα . . . οὐκέτα, 976-977), and "She will receive . . . she will receive" (δέεται . . . δέεται, 978-979), betrays the numbness the Chorus feel as they own the consequences of the definitions they have espoused. Such numbness is common to interlocutors at the moment of reversal. But it is primarily in the Chorus' resignation and their despair that one can detect the dawning of their reversal.

They now admit that the hope they had--that Medea would not be able to go forward with her plan--is gone. By sending the children off with the gifts, Medea has set off a chain of reactions that will lead to the children's death, one way or the other. For either the Corinthians will kill them in revenge (so much even Jason expects; see lines 1301-1305), or Medea herself will--this much is certain, given the rules of the game the principals in this play are so proficient at playing. The Corinthian

168 Michelini, "Neophron," pp. 121-124, discusses the effect on Euripides' play of an earlier mythical tradition, in which the Corinthians kill Medea's children in revenge for the royal murders. Michelini sees lines 1058-1063--in which Medea first decides to take the children to Athens with her, then reverses her decision and claims that since in any case the children must die, she who bore them will kill them--as concluding in an illogical and perverse cooperation of Medea's conflicting personae:
women begin their song with the simple and pathetic
pronouncement: "Now there are no longer any hopes left me
for the children to live, no longer; for they proceed
already to the slaughter." This is a statement of
reversal, of acknowledging the inevitability of something
the women find intolerable. As they sing, it is obvious
that the success Medea will gain is a bitter one, not the
long anticipated moment of glory the women initially sang
of in the first ode. The mood, somber and regretful
throughout, is the exact opposite of that first ode, with
its crowing self-assurance and high hopes for the future.

As the reversal of definitions begins to take shape,
the old hard and fast lines between friend and enemy, the
"us vs. them" ethic that drives the whole contest system,
break down. Suddenly these women empathize with everyone
involved: the princess (whom they twice describe as
δύστανος, 979 and 988), Jason (τάλαν, 991;
δύστανε, 995), and Medea (τάλανα, 996). No
one here is named; instead, all three (four, including the
children, who are unnamed here as throughout the play) are
described tellingly by their marital and familial
connections to each other. The princess is "bride" (she,

mother and hero. This is a compelling insight, but I
cannot agree with Michelini's interpretation (p. 122) that
Medea's claim that "in any case (φῶντως)" the
children must die "strongly suggests . . . that the death
of the children is determined by factors other than the
will of Medea."
likethechildren,isadmittedlyotherwisealsounnamed;  

Byexpressingonlytherelatednessoftheprincess,  

Jason, and Medea to each other, and by joining them each,  

strophe by antistrophe, in the same web of horror the  

Chorus themselves are vicariously experiencing, the  

Corinthian women not only signal the beginning of the  

reversal of the old creed separating friends and enemies,  

eyesignaltthebeginningofanewkindofknowledge:that  

the apparent rugged autonomy of the zero-sum competitor is  

counterfactual. Here, in this ode, as in real life, all  
humansareboundbytheirmiseryandmortality. Thereis  

no "us" and "them" of the first ode.  

By having the women express their sympathy for the  
princess and Jason as well as for Medea, Euripides sets a  
tone which continues into the next episode. The horror at  
what is inevitably resulting from the established  
definitions, and the regret that it must be so, extend the  
reversal beyond this ode and these women to the next  
episode, where it reaches its culmination in Medea's  
struggle to bring her plan to fruition.  

In this episode, Medea takes up the tone of horror and  
regret as she reacts to the news the Messenger first
brings: that the gifts have been delivered and the
children reprieved from exile. This should, like
completion of earlier steps toward the success of her plan,
be a time of boastful exultation. We have seen her react
so after her success with Creon (366-385) and Aegeus (764-
789). We shall see this Medea again shortly, as she gloats
over the deaths of the princess and Creon (1127-1128;
1134-1135). But here, as Medea falters when she
contemplates her permanent severance from the children,
Euripides shows us the emotional unacceptability of the
logical consequences of the definition of aretē Medea’s
actions represent. For instead of gloating, Medea now
twice groans her despair: αἰεὶ. αἰεὶ μάλ’
αὔθις. (1008 and 1009).

The Messenger, who is confused at her reaction, asks
what is the matter, only to hear in her repetitive “You
have reported what you have reported” (ἢγγειλας ὁ δὲ
ἠγγειλας, 1011), her numbness at the news. Recall that
the Chorus betrayed a similar numbness in their repetitions
at 976-977 and 978-979. Euripides has, in fact, fashioned
an entwined reversal and recognition of the Chorus and
Medea: the Chorus lead in certain reactions, Medea in
others.

Medea shows the same despair and resignation as the
Chorus. Again, these are not the reactions of one
attaining a long-awaited goal. She pities herself as the Chorus pitied her and the princess and Jason: she refers to herself as ὑσταλαίνα (1028), δύστηνος (1032), and τάλαν (1057). She despairs, as did the Chorus, of her own lost hopes: she will never see her children grow up or have them tend to her in her old age (1032-1037). And yet, as were the Corinthian women, Medea is resigned that this must be so: they will, indeed, die (1038-1039); the princess has already dressed in the poisoned gifts and set off the chain of reactions that will lead to the children's deaths (1064-1066).

Medea likewise shows a recognition of the value of connection as did the Chorus, but hers is a much more physical and much more personal recognition than their notional and more philosophical one. Medea, experiencing the physical proximity of the children, twice exults in the joys of connection to them. At 1040-1048, she nearly

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169 Dunkle, "Aegeus Episode," p. 102, argues for Medea's self-pity as evidence of her "self-obsession" and considers her to be lacking in love for her children. One can protest, however, that self-pity is a regular feature of loss.

170 Reckford, "First Exit," pp. 355-356, argues that Medea's resignation to the inevitability of killing the children is a result of her entrapment in suffering, which is a result of her extraordinary alienation from her conjugal family. Notional alienation is inherent in the status of wife as "stranger" (θυραίος). It is this notional alienation that forces Medea literally "outside" at 214; her extraordinary alienation in turn forces her to take revenge as the only "way out."
renounces her plans when they look into her eyes and laugh in childish joy. She momentarily chooses connection over competitive autonomy and even plans to take the children away with her so as to preserve her connection to them,\textsuperscript{171} acknowledging the pain it would cost her to lose them. Again, at 1069-1075, she calls them back to her, takes their hands and kisses them, speaks of their lips and again of their eyes, experiences their sweet embrace, soft skin, and their childish—sweetest of all!—breath.

These two moments between Medea and her children, laden as they are with experience of the physical, are sensuously if not erotically cast. Medea's reactions to

\textsuperscript{171}The illogic of Medea's not taking the children to Athens, and her implication that not killing them means leaving them for her enemies to kill (1060-1061), have encouraged scholars to argue for excising some or all of lines 1056-1080. J. Diggle, \textit{Euripidis Fabulae, Vol. 1} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984; reprint ed. with corrections, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 138-139, encloses all the lines in square brackets. A recent review of the history of the debate on these troubled lines, and a persuasive argument for retaining them, may be found in Seidensticker, "\textit{Medea} 1056-80," pp. 89-96. Cf. also Gustav A. Seeck, "\textit{Euripides Medea} 1059-68: A Problem of Interpretation," \textit{GRBS} 9 (1968), pp. 291-307, who proposes excising 1060-1063 to solve the problem of the illogical progression of Medea's decision; David Kovacs, "On Medea's Great Monologue (E. Med. 1021-80)," \textit{CQ} 36 (1986; hereafter Kovacs, "Great Monologue"), pp. 343-352, argues on stylistic grounds for retaining with minor correction all but 1056-1064.

For Medea's decision as illogical synthesis of her conflicting personae, see Michelini, "\textit{Neopron}," pp. 122-124. McDermott, \textit{Incarnation}, pp. 57-59, argues that Medea employs a self-serving delusion here, because her decision is only valid "in an offbeat sense, given the mythic traditions."
her children engage all of the senses: she hears the sound of their laughter, sees the brightness of their eyes, feels their lips, embrace, and soft skin, and smells the sweet taste of their breath. We linger with her in these moments.172

But, in the end, the sensuous joys of physicality—laughter, bright eyes, sweet breath, and soft skin—must not win out. Sweet thoughts are dead (1036), words must not be soft (1052); the joys of the presence of children (1058) lose out to the thumos, that organ which "includes all those emotions which have to do with self-esteem."173 In short, the erotic comes under control of the mind, ever calculating to assure the predominance of the autonomous competitor. Despite her attempts to stop her thumos (1056)—the urge to self-assertion—Medea nonetheless chooses domination over her enemies, which has driven her by turns in this scene (see above, Part One), and once again puts her deliberation firmly under the control of her thumos. This is not the reign of emotion, alas, but "total commitment rationality" writ large.174

172 I cannot agree with Gellie, "Character," p. 20, who considers that Medea's momentary rejections of the plan to murder her children are "... meant only to tease us."

173 Elliot, Medea, p. 94 at lines 1078-1080.

174 Pace Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 52, to whom Medea's thumos is her heroic passion that overcomes her reason. "The heroes of Greek tragedy are not reasonable; they are undeniably and magnificently unreasonable..." Vide contra Seidensticker, "Medea 1056-80," pp. 96-97, for
Emotion would have let the children live. Instead, Medea abruptly dismisses them (1053)—no more physical proximity for her!—and becomes the epitome of the zero-sum antithesis of passion and reason as artificial.

Medea's dangerous "passion" has, however, been so overstressed in the critical literature that it is difficult not to exaggerate her rationality to make the point. For an antidote to viewing passion as a danger, see Robert C. Solomon, The Passions: The Myth and Nature of Human Emotions (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976; reprint ed., Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1983), p. 120: "Without the guidance of the passions, reasoning has neither principles nor power. Cut off from our 'sentiments,' we can justify or show that one cannot justify anything. Hume made this point powerfully but brutally when he insisted that it was not 'irrational' (that is, against the dictates of reason) for him to prefer the slaughter of a hundred thousand Orientals to the pricking of his little finger. Reason makes contact with human values only through the passions. It is only a particular form of reason—objective reasoning—that is free of personal values and passions."

One cannot, of course, separate emotion from reason except theoretically; a very balanced discussion of the folly of doing so can be found in Solomon's introduction, pp. 1-25. Solomon's view of the interrelation of emotions and self-identity is thought-provoking: "It is the goal of Self-esteem that motivates our actions, our inquiries, and—most importantly—our passions. Self-esteem is the ultimate goal of every passion. . . . Our emotions, to put the matter bluntly, are nothing other than our attempts to establish and defend our self-esteem." (pp. 96 and 99).

The success of a zero-sum competitor's self-promotion, however, is largely if not entirely dependent upon the opinions of others, upon which Solomon claims "self-esteem" is not dependent. (p. 99). The inability of pre-literate individuals to formulate self-analysis (see Ong, Orality, pp. 54-55, following Luria, Cognitive Development, pp. 144-160) is perhaps at issue here.

175 Reckford, "First Exit," pp. 334-335 and 340-343, is excellent on the alienation of emotion and intellect as Medea's tragedy; he sees Medea's "inhuman self-mastery" as "a kind of suicide." Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 143-151, is convincing on the psychological machinations of the loving mother that underlie the cold decisions of the competitor.
competitor, willing at any cost to ensure her reputation as the victorious contender.

For despite Medea's apparent victory over her enemies, now assured, there remains her unmistakable recognition of reversal and defeat. This takes place in the much-discussed lines 1078-1081:

In fact I understand what sort of harm I intend to do, but the urge to self-assertion\(^{176}\) has control over my considered deliberation, which urge is the cause of the greatest harm for mortals (καὶ μανθάνω μὲν ὁμα δραν μέλλω κακά, θυμός δὲ κρείσσων τῶν ἐμῶν βουλευμάτων, ὀσπερ μεγίστων αἰτίως κακῶν βροτοῖς).

Does this translation correctly interpret these lines?

The controversy over lines 1078-1080 is one that will perhaps never be resolved; especially when it is possible that ambiguity was Euripides' intent.\(^{177}\) One more discussion will not end the controversy; yet judicious choices must be made to try to understand these lines. It is my belief that the above choices about key words, all of them supported by previous scholars, are justified by the use of these words elsewhere in the play and by the interpretation of the play advanced in this study.

\(^{176}\)See Michelini, "Neophron," p. 132, who describes the thumos Medea addresses as "the product of an aggressive self-assertion that can lead to much unhappiness."

\(^{177}\)See Michelini, "Neophron," pp. 115-136, especially pp. 128-136; cf. Foley, "Divided Self," p. 72. See also Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 156-160, for the ambiguity as a way of maintaining the audience's hopes (and, given the threat of Corinthian vengeance, fears) on the children's behalf.
The disputed words are θυμός, κρείσσων, and 
βουλευμάτων of line 1079, and, to a lesser extent, 
μανθάνω of line 1078, and κακά and κακῶν 
of lines 1078 and 1080. Here I intend to consider each of 
these words in turn, to review the most relevant scholar-
ship on each, to look to their use elsewhere in the play, 
and to reconsider their meaning in light of the rules of 
the zero-sum game and the thesis that an elenchos is in 
process here.

Of the four disputed words, thumos undoubtedly gives 
the most trouble, because of its apparent referent: a 
mental or psychological phenomenon. What exactly the 
thumos is, i.e., what it does and how it was imagined to 
function, is a question which in scholarship is not always 
separate from its relevance to the debate over these 
lines.\textsuperscript{178} Bruno Snell, in 1948, was the first to try 
to clarify the meaning of thumos by contrasting thumos with 
psyché and noos. Snell begins profitably enough by 
claiming that "[t]hymos in Homer is the generator of motion 
or agitation ... ." He subsequently reduces the 
translation of the term to an "organ of (e)motion" and

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{178}See, e.g., for a transition between Snell's 
treatment of Homeric use and later considerations of 
Euripides' use of the term, William G. Thalmann, 
"Aeschylus' Physiology of the Emotions," \textit{AJP} 107 (1986), 
pp. 494-511.
\end{footnote}
claims this renders the matter "simple enough." He does not, however, stop there; the parentheses around the "we" are all too easy to dispatch, and dispatch them he does:

If, as we have suggested, thymos is the mental organ which causes (e)motion, while noos is the recipient of images, then noos may be said generally to be in charge of intellectual matters, and thymos of things emotional.180

Although Snell admits some overlap between noos and thumos, and acknowledges that "thymos may also serve as the name of a function, in which case we render it as 'will' or 'character' . . . ," the idea of thumos as emotion stuck with him; in a later discussion181 he discards his initially cautious translation of thumos as "agitation, passion" for "passion" over against bouleumata, which he renders as "reason."182 Snell's understanding of these two terms may be fuller than the black-and-white,

179Snell, Discovery, p. 9. The original 1948 publication was titled Die Entdeckung des Geistes; in the same year Snell published his provocative "Zeugnis."

180Snell, Discovery, p. 12. Cowherd, "Ending," pp. 131-132, seems to follow Snell in seeing thumos as emotion, despite her refinement that thumos undergoes transformations "from love [8] to lamentation (108) to hate (310) to murder (865) . . . ."

181Snell, Scenes. On p. 50 n. 3, Snell indicates that this discussion supersedes that found more briefly sketched in his 1948 "Zeugnis."

182Snell, Scenes, pp. 52 and 55.
dichotomous terminology suggests, but this dichotomy has nonetheless been influential in the critical literature on Medea. For although not all hold that Medea's conflict is between "passion" and "reason" per se, some element of the irrational is usually considered to win the day in her decision.

It was not until 1987 that G. R. Stanton's convincing objection was raised against interpreting thumos as "passion," which wrenched Medea's decision from the stranglehold irrationality had had on it for so long. Stanton looked to the context of the passage

183 e.g., Snell later states (p. 56) that "The inner impulse which drives Medea forward is the rebellion of the heart against a deep injury which Jason has done her. Her passion, which springs from just indignation, is elemental in its dimensions . . . ."


Christopher Gill, "Did Chrysippus Understand Medea?" Phronesis 28 (1983), pp. 136-149, especially 142 ff., is convinced that passion and reason operate on both sides of Medea's dilemma. Gill's footnotes, passim, are useful in identifying positions taken in the passion-reason controversy by various scholars.

as well as the validity of other scholars' solutions to translating *kreisso* and *bouleumata*, and concluded, "*θυμός* is not the seat of soft emotions such as motherly love, but the strong force in Medea which drives her to assert herself." In the same year, Gail Ann Rickert discussed the tendency to simplify *thumos* and, in the process, got to the heart of modern misgivings about Medea's *thumos*:

Since *thumos* is at the center of the passage under discussion, it is important to be aware of the tendency to reduce it to less complex concepts, or, more precisely, to concepts which in fact are no less complex, but with which we are more comfortable: feelings or emotion. . . .

The overgeneralization and reduction of *thumos* to "passion" (Leidenschaft) obscures its complexity, especially the principles with which *thumos*, including Medea's *thumos*, are inextricably bound up, namely, the heroic principles of harming enemies, helping friends, not submitting to dishonor, injustice, insults, or the mockery of one's enemies. All of these principles have been acknowledged to play a central role in Medea's action and tragedy. This reductionism, combined with a moralizing tendency to see passion as evil and in conflict with reason, which is good, is at the center of many unsatisfactory interpretations of this drama.

Then in 1989, Helene Foley agreed with Stanton and Rickert:

... it is better to categorize *thumos* in the monologue not as "irrational passion" or "rage" but as a capacity located in Medea that directs her to act, a "heart" that can (or at least pretends to itself that it can) choose to side either with the arguments of the revenger or the arguments of the mother (although it is predisposed to the former).

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188 Foley, "Divided Self," p. 71.
It seems possible, then, to translate *thumos* broadly as "motivator," which, ironically, comes close to Snell's earlier, more cautious renderings. But is it valid to particularize this to "urge to self-assertion" suggested above? Yes, if we look to the use of *thumos* in this play. Besides the line in question, there are eight other uses of *thumos*, and three uses of the verb *γυμών*. Two of these attribute to *thumos* Medea's ability to execute the murder: at 865 the Chorus assert that Medea will not be able to murder her children "with unfaltering *thumos*"; at 1056 Medea pleads with her *thumos* not to kill the children. Since Medea's stated purpose, both to the Chorus and to herself, for killing the children was to put herself above her enemies, it is safe to assume that self-assertion is operational here.

Five of the remaining uses refer to actions of Medea other than killing the children: at lines 6 ff. the Nurse notes Medea's being "struck with *erōs* in her *thumos*" as the precursor of her leaving home, persuading Pelias' daughters to kill him, and becoming Jason's wife; at 106 ff. the Nurse anticipates a "cloud of lamentation" which "will rise up anew with a greater *thumos*" in Medea, which makes the Nurse, who describes Medea as "high-spirited, hard-to-check" (μεγαλόσωλαγχνος δυσκατάπωρος), dread what

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189 Foley, "Divided Self," pp. 69-70, gives an overview of *thumos* in all Euripidean plays and fragments to arrive at her slightly less specific rendering of the term.
Medea will do; at 271 Creon, upon entering, describes Medea as sullen, with thumos roused against her husband—in this he must be referring to the threats he has heard she has made against Jason; at 879 Medea attributes her previously unreasonable, non-cooperative attitude toward Jason and his new marriage to her thumos; at 883 Jason praises the newly cooperative Medea for not foolishly rousing her thumos in vain. In short, in all of these instances, Medea’s thumos is the acknowledged origin of action against others taken to advance or protect her own interests.¹⁹⁰

The final four uses also show thumos as an organ of self-assertion: at 310 Medea attributes Creon’s giving his daughter to Jason as an act where his thumos led him; at 455 Jason describes how he tried to arrange for Medea’s staying when Creon’s thumos was roused; at 639 the Chorus, seemingly in reference to Jason’s bed-hopping, prays that Cypris will not, through strife and wrath, drive their

¹⁹⁰There are, in addition, five instances of compounds of thumos applied to Medea, none of which disprove the proposed definition of thumos: at 91 and 691, she is described as ὀμήθυμομολήγον and experiencing ὀμήθυμος, both the result of Jason’s treatment of her; at 176 the Chorus wish she would give up her βαρύθυμον ὑργάν at Jason’s treatment of her; at 319 and 485, Creon and Medea respectively relate Medea’s thumos to her sophia, which is shown to be, as elsewhere in the play, properly the agent of the thumos in competition: Creon asserts that it is easier to guard against an ὀξύθυμος person than a silent, sophos person; Medea laments that she, in following Jason, was ἐπόθυμοι γὰλλον ἀσοφωτέρα, i.e., using her sophia to advance his interests rather than tending exclusively to her own.
thumos to other beds; at 1152 Jason urges the princess to be released from her thumos so that she can consider her husband's friends her friends. Again, the thumos is what operates to assert one's own interests over against those of others; release from the thumos' control signals cooperation with the interests of others.\textsuperscript{191}

In line 1078, then, the disputed line, Medea can be argued to be acknowledging the control of her thumos, her urge to self-assertion. For indeed, whether we translate Kreiss\v{e}n as "stronger than" or "master of, in control of," the meaning of the line is nearly the same. In 1966, Hans Diller argued for the latter two meanings.\textsuperscript{192} If we look to the text of Medea, of the seven uses of kreiss\v{e}n outside of line 1078, three (123, 290, 301) are best translated as the comparative of agathos, i.e., as "better"; two of the remaining four (315 and 449) can easily be argued to mean either "in control of" or "stronger"; one (965) is awkward if translated anything other than "stronger"; one (444), as Diller himself argued,\textsuperscript{193} is impossible to translate as anything other

\textsuperscript{191}See Wolff, "Euripides," p. 239, for thumos as "self."


\textsuperscript{193}Diller, "Θυμός," p. 274.
than "in control of/master of." Given that Euripides is aware enough of this "obscure" meaning of kreissōn to use it in this play, there is, as far as I can see, no reason not to translate the kreissōn of 1078 "in control of/master of." In any case, the distinction between "stronger than" and "in control of/master of" for this line's translation is not apparent.

The controversy over bouleumata is a product of the controversy over thumos and kreissōn: as go thumos and kreissōn, so goes bouleumata. For, if one is translating thumos as "passion" or some equivalent, and kreissōn as "stronger than," then bouleumata must refer either to passion's perceived opposite, i.e., "reason," or to Medea's fleeting plans to save the children's lives. But Albrecht Dihle has argued that bouleumata here can refer to nothing other than Medea's plan to kill the children, since it is so used twice previously in the monologue (1044 and 1048). Dihle's interpretation of bouleumata, if not his understanding of the conflict Medea undergoes, has

194 Symposium 196d.2 offers a strong parallel. I am grateful to John Makowski for calling my attention to this passage.

195 I do not find the argument of Reeve, "Medea 1021-1080," p. 59 n. 2, convincing, since I cannot imagine what his proposed translation of 444, "another queen superior to your bed," could possibly mean.

gained support and encouraged rethinking of the line’s meaning, since one can in no wise propose a reasonable argument in favor of thumos as “passion” or its equivalent, and kreisōn as “stronger than” with Dihle’s bouleumata as “revenge plans” ringing in one’s ears.

The use of bouleumata and related words elsewhere in the play supports Dihle’s interpretation; Foley lists other occurrences and notes that “... every other use of bouleumata and bouleuo in Medea refers to a precise plan or change of plans.” While I agree that bouleumata in line 1078 must refer to the plans to kill the children, I do not find a problem with leaving the translation of this word at “considered deliberation,” with the

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197 See especially Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 156-163.


199 This did not stop Dihle himself from proposing that thumos is Medea’s maternal instinct, and that line 1078 is a red herring, in which Medea proclaims her decision to spare the children. See Dihle, “Euripides’ Medea,” pp. 12-13; cf. his “Euripides’ Medea und ihre Schwestern im europäischen Drama,” A&A 22 (1976; hereafter Dihle, “Medea und ihre Schwestern”), p. 179. Cowherd, “Ending,” p. 132, who sees thumos as generalized emotion, argues that ta bouleumata must change from plans to kill the children to plans to spare them.

200 See Foley, “Divided Self,” p. 67 n. 24, where she also lists bibliography for arguments in support of Dihle.

acknowledgement that, in this context, the word without question refers to plans to kill the children. Euripides could have made Medea speak quite explicitly here, but chose not to.

The translation I propose, then, is supported in all its parts in the critical literature. Medea says, "My urge to self-assertion has control of my considered deliberation," and as she makes this statement, she chooses to remain the zero-sum competitor she has been in all but a few fleeting moments,\(^{202}\) one who will put her success in competition above all else, who will jettison her emotional attachments so as to effect a rationally planned course of action aimed at victory over all challengers.

And yet, ironically, even as Medea announces her intent to carry out her plans, the struggle it took for her to arrive at this decision reveals to the Chorus and audience that her victory is also a defeat, that the logical consequence of all her preceding actions is

\[\text{Seelenlebens stehen} \] avoids the usual pitfalls. Cf. Rickert, "Akrasia," p. 102, who argues that "bouleumata represents at most competing claims on Medea."

\(^{202}\)Ohlander, Suspense, p. 116, points out that harming children to get at their parents is Medea's modus operandi; she merely returns to her old method, but, this time, with difficulty. See also McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 81-93, who describes Medea's "mythic biography" as "a relentless campaign to violate the parent-child bond." (p. 81).
emotionally repugnant—even to her. Indeed, she says as much as she delivers these troublesome lines, for besides announcing her decision she likewise acknowledges her defeat—her reversal—and an if only momentary recognition:

Oh soft skin and breath—sweetest of all!—of children. Go away! Go away! I am no longer able to look at you, but am vanquished by harm (νικῶμαι κακοῖς). In fact I understand (μανθάνω) what harm (κακά) I intend to do, but the urge to self-assertion has control over my considered deliberation, which urge is the cause of the greatest harm (κακῶν) for mortals. (1075-1081).

Previously, Medea only feigned being "vanquished" to gain an advantage over her enemies; at 315 she reassures Creon that she will remain silent, since she has been "vanquished by the stronger/those in control" (κρείσσονων νικῶμενοι); at 912 Jason praises Medea's (phony) submission and cooperation, and describes her as "recognizing the prevailing . . . plan" (ἐγνώς δέ νικῶσαι . . . βουλήν). Victory rightly belongs to Medea: the Nurse (44-45) expects Medea will prevail over her enemies, "Not easily will anyone joining in enmity with her turn out beautifully victorious (καλλίνικον)"; Medea herself (764-765) gloats over her expected victory after talking with Aegeus, "Oh Zeus, and Justice of Zeus, and light of the sun, now I shall prove

203 Husurillo, "Reconsideration," pp. 65, seems annoyed at what he considers the needless wavering " . . . when the audience from the beginning is aware of what is to take place."
beautifully victorious over my enemies (καλλίνικοι τῶν ἐμῶν ἐχορῶν)." "Being vanquished" is, then, reserved for Medea's enemies, like the princess, whom the Messenger describes as "vanquished by misfortune" (συμφορᾶς νικωμένη, 1195).

"Being vanquished" is not, to be sure, what the ever-vigilant competitor, Medea, has worked to attain for herself. Yet, at 1077-1081, she readily admits that she herself is "vanquished by kaka," and that she is about to do "kaka," of which kaka her urge to self-assertion is the cause. Does this mean that Medea is conscious of being about to commit morally reprehensible acts? Most decidedly not. Instead, what these lines mean is that Medea has come to recognition of her own reversal: she knows that she is in the position she had hoped to visit upon others, the position of having outrage committed against oneself and being able to do nothing about it, of being under the constraint of others instead of being self-ruled and ruling others.

All this can be ascertained from the word Medea uses to describe what she is about to do: κακά. I have chosen to translate this as "harm," instead of the more usual, morally-laden rendering, "evils" or "wrongs." The translation was chosen because, more often than not in

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204 Pace Conacher, Euripidean Drama, p. 196, who describes Medea after her decision as "now totally committed to evil."
Medea, kakos in its various manifestations, but especially in the neuter singular and plural, can be defended as being used in the morally-neutral sense of "harm" or "hurt."

Such usage is attested elsewhere, from archaic times through the fifth century B.C.\textsuperscript{205} A. W. H. Adkins notes that in Homeric usage,

The neuter forms agathon and kakon have no such claim [i.e., to be moral terms, as do the masculine and feminine forms]: to say of an action 'it is agathon (kakon) to do X' is simply to say that it is beneficial (harmful) to do X, without passing any moral judgement on the rightness or wrongness of X.\textsuperscript{206}

Adkins further argues that archaic age values persisted well into the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.,\textsuperscript{207} and quotes as one of many examples Simonides' (5 Bergk) use of agathos and kakos as definitions of one who "fares well, eu prattein" or "fares badly, kakôs." More recently, C. W. Willick has made a convincing case for reading what are

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\item \textsuperscript{205}LSJ\textsuperscript{9}, s.v. κακός, B.
\item \textsuperscript{206}Adkins, Merit, p. 31.
\item \textsuperscript{207}A. W. H. Adkins, however, claims in Moral Values and Political Behaviour in Ancient Greece from Homer to the End of the Fifth Century (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1972; hereafter Adkins, Moral Values), p. 115, that, at least insofar as use of terms like kakos from the negative end of the continuum, a complete change in values (i.e., from emphasis on competition to emphasis on cooperation) is evident in Euripides and the later plays of Sophocles. I am not convinced, especially in the case of Euripides, who in Medea at least seems to use terms like kakos in their "older" senses to question the validity of competitive standards, which still held sway in Athens. See also E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1971; hereafter Dodds, Greeks and the Irrational), pp. 28-63.
\end{itemize}
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regularly interpreted as ethical terms (kalos, kakos, and the like) in Euripides' Hippolytus as neutral terms of success and failure.\(^{208}\)

Kakos in Medea, then, need not connote moral wrong, but instead resides on the far side of a continuum of success and failure, benefit and harm.\(^{209}\) It can be argued that this meaning of kakos predominates, and that in fact translating kakos (in its various forms) consistently throughout the play as "bad" or "evil" or "wrong" is an anachronistic transplantation of value-laden language.\(^{210}\) A few examples must suffice, for I count 56 uses of the adjective kakos (in its various forms), and 19 uses of the adverb kakōs, and these are only the two largest categories of related words.

Actions taken against Medea, whether by Jason or Creon, are termed kakon or kaka, and Jason himself is labelled kakos for his actions: at 48, after describing Jason's choice of a new bride, the Nurse remarks that the children do not understand the kaka of their mother; at 62

\(^{208}\)C. W. Willink, "Some Problems of Text and Interpretation in the Hippolytus," CQ 18 (1968), pp. 11-43. Willink's views on these terms are upheld by David Claus, "Phaedra and the Socratic Paradox," YCS 22 (1972; hereafter Claus, "Phaedra"), pp. 223-238, who opposes psychological and what he calls "confessional" readings of Phaedra's famous speech.

\(^{209}\)Foley, "Divided Self," p. 70, apparently agrees; she translates, without comment, kaka as "things to Medea's harm."

\(^{210}\)Claus, "Phaedra," p. 231.
the Tutor exclaims that Medea doesn't know of new kaka to come (her impending exile by Creon); at 78 the Nurse agrees that this exile is a new kakan; at 84 she claims Jason has been caught being kakos to his friends; at 110 she wonders what Medea will do, stung as she will be by new kaka. Later, Jason cautions that exile brings many kaka (463); Aegeus likewise terms Medea's banishment a kakan (705).

The things Medea plans for her enemies are kakan or kaka, and those suffering them are said to fare kakōs or are themselves described with the adjective: Creon consistently uses the terms kakan and kaka (283, 285, 317) to describe the harm Medea, for all her skill, is likely to do to his daughter and himself; at 805 Medea claims the princess, kakēv, must die kakōs; at 1219 the Messenger describes Creon in his death as no longer victorious over kakan; at 1306 the Chorus caution Jason, who is about to see his children dead, that he does not know what sort of kaka he has come to; at 1315 when he learns what has happened, Jason himself terms it a kakan.

Most tellingly, in two lines, kakos is explicitly used as part of the vocabulary of benefit and harm: at 293 Medea complains to Creon that her reputation has "hurt" (ἐβλαψε) her and done her great kaka; at 618 Medea

211 Adkins, Merit, p. 190 n. 6, cites this line as evidence of a "quiet" use of kakos. I disagree.
claims that the gifts of a **kakos** man like Jason "contain no benefit" (ὄνησιν οὐκ ἔχει).

The harm done to Medea, after being passed along first to other people, ironically becomes harm she does to herself. She, who more than once called Jason **kakistos** (229, 488, 690; cf. Jason's remark at 452 and Medea's use of **pankakist[e]** at 465), is now herself **kake**: at 1046-1047. In an attempt to talk herself out of killing the children, Medea asks, "Why must I, in causing pain for their father by the **kaka** against these (children), obtain for myself twice as many **kaka**?"; at 1361 Jason tells Medea, "You yourself feel pain and are a companion of [these] **kaka**."; at 1363 he bemoans the fact that his children met up with a **kakē** mother.

It is in this spirit, then, that we must understand Medea's final lines at 1077-1081. Medea is not morally awakened to the "wrongness" of her actions and her incontinence in the face of what she knows is wrong; these lines were not the impetus to Socrates' dictum that "virtue is knowledge,"\(^{212}\) nor do they—or for that matter,

\(^{212}\) The views to which I refer are of course those of Snell, first put forth in "Zeugnis," pp. 125-34, and slightly amended in Scenes, pp. 23-69. Snell sees the monologue by Phaedra at *Hippolytus* 375 ff. as a close parallel. Snell's views have been both supported and challenged, and still generate response.

Supporters (some are predecessors) of Snell's views include Decharme, *Euripide et l'esprit*, pp. 45-47, who cites many alleged anti-Socratic sentiments in Euripides' plays; E. R. Dodds, "The αἴώς of Phaedra and the Meaning of the *Hippolytus*," CR 39 (1925), pp. 102-104
Phaedra's somewhat similar comments at Hippolytus 373-390 challenge its validity. Quite the contrary.213

(Euripides "emphatically denies that enlightenment can make men good"; see also his later "Irrationalist," pp. 97-104, and his slightly more reserved agreement of 1971 in Greeks and the Irrational, pp. 186-187); Winnington-Ingram, "Hippolytus," p. 174 (Snell's conclusions are "plausible, if not certain"); Lesky, History, p. 370; Richmond Lattimore, "Phaedra and Hippolytus," Arion 1 (1962), pp. 11-12; T. H. Irwin, "Euripides and Socrates," CP 78 (1983), pp. 183-197, concludes that Euripides describes incontinence and is probably replying to the Socratic paradox. Cf. McDonald, Happiness, pp. 49-54, who argues that Medea first takes up Socrates-like positions, and then a position that Socrates would certainly have rejected. T. B. L. Webster, "Euripides: Traditionalist and Innovator," in The Poetic Tradition. Essays on Greek, Latin, and English Poetry, ed. Don Cameron Allen and Henry T. Rowell (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), pp. 37-38, equivocates: Euripides makes his characters use Socratic terminology and take a Socratic position, but there is no intent by Euripides to debate Socrates. Detractors now abound; see especially Barrett, Hippolytus, p. 229 (who makes the point, which Snell in Scenes, p. 66 n. 26, acknowledges, that a character does not speak for the poet); Reeve, "Medea 1021-1080," p. 61 (Snell "manufactured" out of Medea 1078-1080 a debate between Euripides and Socrates); Claus, "Phaedra," pp. 223-238 (Phaedra's concerns are those of Homeric heroes, and have nothing whatsoever to do with Socratic conceptions of morality); Moline, "Euripides, Socrates," pp. 45-67; cf. his Plato's Theory of Understanding (Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1981; hereafter Moline, Plato's Theory), pp. 22-27 (Moline argues in both that neither Medea nor Phaedra are credible polemicist mouthpieces for the poet, and that the polemicist view fails to consider the overall impression one gets from the play); Yankow, Socratic ἐπιστήμη, passim (ἐπιστήμη as defined by Socrates is lacking in the main characters of both plays).

213 I agree (but not only for the reasons he gives) with Jon Moline's bold statements on these passages in his "Euripides, Socrates," pp. 49 and 62, respectively: "Socrates provided not the antithesis to Medea's words but rather their explanation."; "Phaedra's case then is less a counter-example to Socrates' view than a confirmation of it." Cf. Moline's Plato's Theory, p. 24.

Rickert, "Akrasia," pp. 103-104, argues that Medea is
As Medea states that she knows what she is doing is kakon, but that her thumos has control over her considered deliberation, she sounds remarkably like the interlocutor in the early dialogues of Plato. This is the moment of reversal and recognition of that reversal, when the interlocutor cannot help but admit that what he has championed is repugnant even to himself. I am reminded of that moment in the Symposion when Alcibiades shamefacedly admits that he, again and again, pursues policies he has agreed are not in his own best interests:

I have experienced at the hands of this man alone that of which no one would imagine me capable—being shamed by anyone; I feel shame before him alone. For I know not akратic because, even though she recognizes that her deed is kakon, she nonetheless deems it better than other possibilities, and therefore chooses a kakon that is, by her reasoning, the best course of action. As Rickert points out, Medea's thumos has "ties to principles and values as well as feelings." Within Medea's system of values, I would argue, totally defeating and therefore incapacitating the enemy is the best course of action. Michelini, "Neophron," p. 133 n. 86, claims that Rickert's definition of akrasia is "of modern date," but I see no proof of this in Michelini's citation of Rickert's p. 96 n. 14.

Michelini, "Neophron," p. 128, describes dissonances which have built up by line 1080, and calls them the "knot of a problem around which the Euripidean play is built."

Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 22, sees Medea's struggle as one between her "masculine, honor-oriented self and her feminine, hearth-oriented self." Cf. Foley, "Divided Self," pp. 79-85, and Boedeker, "Medea," pp. 99-100, who points out that by using against herself "soft words about her children," Medea nearly undermines her own revenge plot. This is, then, as Burnett acknowledges, a no-win situation for Medea, who "must be made the author of her own misery" (p. 21), and who, by killing her children, commits "an act of violence against herself" (p. 22).
well that I am not able to answer his arguments that I, who whenever I depart am seduced by the esteem of the masses, must do as he bids. So I skulk away like a runaway slave and flee him, and then when I see him, I feel shame at the agreements to which we'd come. (Symposium 216a.8-b.6).

As an interlocutor, Alcibiades is atypical, as has been argued (Chapter One, Part Three), because, by expressing his shame, he openly admits his reversal and recognition. Medea likewise openly admits her reversal and recognition. And since her actions represent the definitions in this would-be dialogue, Medea's admitted reversal and recognition allow the Chorus and the audience to witness the self-contradiction inherent in those definitions. Medea, however, is no Alcibiades, for as a zero-sum competitor, she can allow no room for shame. Shame, recall, according to Gouldner, is at variance with the need to maintain one's reputation and exalted self-image.215

Medea, then, in her open acknowledgement is atypical and like Alcibiades. But as she pursues actions that manifest the acknowledged faulty definitions of aretē, erōs, and sophia, she begins to fall into line with typical interlocutors. These consistently adopt tactics that allow a more comfortable championship of faulty definitions, namely, projecting blame onto another and fleeing. Medea engages in both, while the Chorus, as we shall see, are

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215 Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 94-95.
only allowed the small comfort of projection.

Recall that interlocutors in early Platonic dialogues regularly blame the demise of their faulty definitions on Socrates, or, more specifically, on some capacity of his for wizardry or magic or obfuscation. In this, they display the all-too-human trait of projection. Projection is, of course, the bailiwick of those interested in image-maintenance, and, as such, is a natural for the zero-sum competitor. We should not be surprised, then, to see both Medea and the Chorus engaging in projection, for, to paraphrase Philip Slater, the need to surpass prevents rational appraisal of one's own actions.216

In Medea, there is of course no Socrates allegedly wielding supernatural abilities, and so the blame is (by Medea, only partially; by the Chorus, to a greater extent) projected onto those best of all scapegoats, the gods.217 Medea is the first to do so: at lines 1013-1014, where she explains her sadness and tears to the befuddled Messenger, who has just reported what he thought was the good news of the children's reprieve from exile: "the gods and I, thinking harmfully, have contrived these things." (ταύτα . . . θεοὶ κἀγὼ κακῶς

216 Slater, Glory, p. 40.

217 For the ancient Greek tendency, as Slater, Glory, p. 40, puts it, "to attribute behavior they could not accept to external influence (e.g., divine agency) . . . ;" see Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 103-105; cf. Dodds, Greeks and the Irrational, pp. 1-18.
With this statement, Medea has already begun the escape which, at the play's end, she makes actual.

Is it any wonder, then, that the Chorus, as they sing in lyric anapaests at 1081-1115, begin to express their aporia and to grope tentatively toward a new understanding? For they have seen prevail the definition of aretē they openly upheld: they have seen Medea assiduously beat back with the necessity of executing a rationally conceived plan every bit of eroticism left in her; they have, in the end, heard her resolve to go forth with the logical consequence of her rational deliberations. Yet they, the women of the Chorus, have also seen first hand the emotional unacceptability of this logical consequence. In short, they have witnessed the self-annihilation but nonetheless continued advocacy of the definitions of aretē, erōs, and sophia they themselves espoused.

The Chorus, then, are confused, humble, and getting the sense that the only thing they can know for sure, is that one can know nothing for sure. These are the same women who, some 500 lines earlier, were crowing, assured of their knowledge and defending the superiority of women. Now they are meek and hesitant about their sex's claim to know:

I have by now many times gone through rather subtle matters and have come to conflict greater (πρὸς ὀμίλλας ἑλθον μείζους) than the female race is required to seek out. For in fact we too have a
muse, which has intercourse with us for the sake of wisdom (προσομιλεὶ σοφίας ἑνεκεν) --not with all of us, to be sure. But among the many you would perhaps find a few; the race of women is not entirely without muse (οὐχ ἀνόμουσον). (1081-1089).

The role of the muse, as well as the birthing imagery in this song, will be discussed below (Part Five); for now we should first notice the new hesitancy and humility evident here: "not with all of us"; "you would perhaps find a few." These are not phrases of self-confidence. The sophia to which the women say some of their sex can lay claim is not the first ode's boastful revelation of what was and what will be; instead what we find is a declarative statement that comes down to this: What we know is that one simply cannot know a single thing.

This is the point of their long digression on the advantage of not having children. First, we notice again the recurrence of many questions (though all but one are not, as previously at 846-862, direct questions): is it that children are a sweet thing or a trouble for mortals? (1095-1096); how is one to bring them up well? (1101-1102); from where is one to obtain an inheritable sustenance for one's children? (1102); how can one know if children will turn out bad or good? (1103-1104); how can one suppose that it is profitable to have children if children, by their dying, can cause one the most distressing of all griefs? (1112-1115). The sheer, remarkable abundance of interrogative words emphasizes the women's deep
uncertainty: εἰδοποιεῖ  . . . εἴπτερον  . . . ὄψις  . . . 

dόροθεν  . . . εἴπτερον  . . . εἴπτερον  . . . πῶς (1095, 1101, 1102, 1103-1104, 1112). To them, there is no way of 
knowing the answers; they admit, in the question of 
whether children will turn out bad or good, "this is 
unknownable" (τόδε ἐστὶν ἄδηλον, 1104).

Still, their orientation as zero-sum competitors 
remains, because their entire disquisition on parenting 
comes to the conclusion that it is better not to have 
children because it puts one in a position of being one-
down as compared to those who do not have children, and it 
is, quite simply, not profitable. At lines 1090-1093 the 
Chorus claim: "And I say that those of mortals who have no 
experience at all and who have not borne children, they 
surpass in good fortune (προφέρειν εἰς 
ἐὐτυχίαν) those who have begotten." Furthermore, 
their conclusion, at 1112, is: how does having children 
profit one? (πῶς οὖν λύει). The question is 
rhetorical, for they have already shown that it does not 
pay.

But it does cost, as it always costs, the zero-sum 
competitor who must give up connection to others. It costs 
in that one is not allowed to experience the innocent 
pleasures of such association. The Chorus signal their 
awareness of this loss in twice referring to children as 
"sweet": once, as potentially so, at line 1095 ("the
childless, through their inexperience of whether children are sweet or troublesome to mortals . . . "); again, at line 1099, where children are called a "sweet offshoot" in the house.

Even as these women seem to waver between acknowledging their sophia and their ignorance, as they teeter between coldly deciding that being a parent does not pay and yet signalling that the cost of childlessness is great, their final argument, that even if all else goes well, the gods can suddenly take one's children away unexpectedly to death, shows more than anything else their position in this elenchos. For, like Medea (1013-1014), and like interlocutors who blame Socrates for the demise of their definitions, the Chorus resort in the end to scapegoating the gods:

Even if all turns out well, death can nonetheless take clean away to Hades the bodies of your children. How then does it pay if, in addition to all those other things, the gods can still lay this grief, most distressing on behalf of children, on mortals? (1109-1115).

Critics regularly cite these lines as Euripidean nodding, or indulging in escape, because the women of the Chorus obviously cannot think that they are singing about Medea and her children. After all, no god is going to whisk these young ones off; their own mother will be to blame. Or, if the women do profess to be topical here, are they
von Arnim, Medea, p. 23, notes that the Chorus' remarks have no particular connection to the circumstances; cf. the complaint of Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 52 n. 50, that the Chorus' song "seems rather banal and more than a bit cranky, contributing little to dramatic development other than the necessary pause before the final achievement of Medea's goals." McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 62-63, finds the Chorus' remarks "somehow inappropriate, off-the-point." McDermott continues, "For, instead of dealing directly with the problem that faces them . . ., the Chorus rambles off into a prolonged catalogue of the various worries inflicted by children on their all-concerned parents." The women of the Chorus, though, are dealing directly with the problem that faces them: the destruction of definitions they hold dear. McDermott misses the point of the Chorus' "tax[ing] their brains" here because she consigns them to a passive role (p. 60 n. 38), and does not recognize them as quasi-interlocutors in an elenchos, whose work is precisely to tax their brains.

Dunkle, "Aegeus Episode," p. 103 n. 6, terms this ode "ironical," given that "[i]n this play parents are a plague to their children." Cf. Michelini, "Neopron," p. 131, according to whom the Chorus employ the trope of parental suffering "in a naive and therefore disturbing way." Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 62, finds this song irrelevant, and sees Euripides as "gloss[ing] over" the fact that "here it is no chance death that carries of the babies to Hades, but the uncontrolled fury of their mother."


Wolff, "Euripides," p. 240, is one of the few critics to appreciate the women's stance in this song: "Here, rationality is put in the service of a purely private goal of emotional self-sufficiency that simply ignores the community's need to reproduce itself, a need apparently supported by the nonrational forces that move human beings to produce and foster their children." Wolff further notes (pp. 240-241), brilliantly, that this ode "oddly resembles Jason's fantasy wish that men might produce children without women (574-575), making the male world essentially self-sufficient." Cf. McDermott, Incarnation, p. 69, who compares the ode to Jason's wish that he'd never begotten the children (1413-1414).
The women, quite simply, are seeking an escape that will allow them to persist in holding the definition of *aretē* to which they are attached, for otherwise, they will have to reformulate their lives top to bottom. They use their sense of their own ignorance—newly acquired in the *elenchos*—to justify the detachment from children which will soon be required of them (and of Medea) as they stand by (as every good Chorus must) and allow the action of the play to proceed without interference. They distance themselves and Medea from the act of child-murder about to take place by claiming that the gods can—and do—regularly visit parents with such a tragedy, whisk their children off to unforeseen death.

To these women, though, these deaths, this mother willing to kill her children, were in fact unforeseen, for they, like the typical interlocutor in *elenchos*, had never sufficiently examined the consequences of the definitions informing the actions of their daily lives. To the Chorus, the horrible logic of the zero-sum game remained hidden.

Reckford, "First Exit," pp. 345-346, recognizes the women's argument as a "tightly constructed but despairing ... demonstration [which] could have come from Antiphon ... ." The argument "dramatizes ... the divorce between reason and feeling" and shows that "[r]ational argument points to incalculable disaster."

Simon, *Tragic Drama*, pp. 75 and 89, sees this song as the culmination of an assault on the epic-heroic worldview. The declaration that it is better not to have children "... is both an abdication of a major source of power in the struggle between men and women and at the same time a crystallization of another possibility in the struggle--to refuse children."
It took Euripides, in fashioning his Medea, to force this logic into the open air of its emotional unacceptability. By the end of the play, after the off stage demonstration of this horrifying logic, the Chorus will be in full-blown aporia, acknowledging their disorientation and ignorance as unabashedly as Meno (Meno 79e.7-80b.4).

The Messenger who enters as the Chorus finish singing, and who reports to Medea the death of the princess and Creon, serves primarily in the maieutic part of the elenchos, and his speech will therefore be covered at length below in Part Five. For now, we need only consider two things: his description of Creon’s fate and his own concluding remarks.

In the description of Creon’s fate we are treated to a grisly representation of the reversal of Creon’s bid as an autonomous competitor. Creon’s one apparently effective act as zero-sum competitor was, as Medea put it, to give away his daughter to whomever his thumos led him (ἐξέδωκα κόρην ὃτι ϑυμός ἤγεν, 309-310). Recall that we argued that Creon was not really fit or eager for competition, at least competition against the likes of Medea.

The last becomes apparent in the horrible death Medea arranges for him. But in his demise we can see more than his mere unsuitability as contender against Medea. In it is also the reversal of Creon’s one act as autonomous
competitor, and the suggestion that competition, in whatever form it takes, is the deadly game it in fact is. Both of these things are conveyed in the gruesome struggle Creon has with the corpse of his daughter:

Her poor father, ignorant of what had happened, came unawares into the house and fell upon the corpse; he groaned straightaway, and, folding her in his arms, kissed her and addressed her as follows, "My poor child, which of daimones wrongfully killed you thus? Who made me an aged tomb bereft of you? Oh, let me die with you, child." And when he stopped his lamentation and groaning, and wanted to lift his aged flesh, he stuck to the fine gown, like ivy to the stems of a laurel, and there was a terrible/clever wrestling (δεινά δ' ἱν παλαισματα); he went to raise himself on his knee, she grabbed onto him. If he took to force (εί δέ προς βιαν ἄγοι), she tore the aged flesh from his bones. After a time the poor wretch extinguished his spirit and died; for he was no longer on top of harm (κακοῦ γάρ οὐκέτ' ἱν ὑπέρτερος). (1204-1219).

Creon, whose self-assertion had dictated that he should give away his daughter to a married man, now cannot get rid of her! He is engaged in a contest, here a horrifying wrestling match with a corpse,219 and the contest is, crudely speaking, to get rid of his daughter. But he cannot!220 Creon, who was "one up" at the

219See Husurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 70, who also notes the athletic metaphor in lines 1181-1182. Cf. Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 18. See also McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 86-87. My discussion owes much to McDermott's superb analysis of this scene, with Creon cast as the suddenly insincere elegiac lover caught in a wrestling match with his daughter's reanimated corpse.

220Dunkle, "Aegeus Episode," pp. 103-104, sees the death-scene as evidence of Creon's selflessness, and, in claiming that Creon "chooses to die with [his daughter]," disregards his struggle against the corpse.
The play's beginning, is no longer "on top"; kakon has overwhelmed him (1219). He dies in a contest he thought he had already won, letting go of his daughter. Their gruesome tussle graphically illustrates that, when one plays the zero-sum game, proximity spells danger. Touch kills, even between former intimates.221

No wonder that the Messenger, as he departs, makes an obviously aporetic statement:

This is not the first time that I have considered mortal affairs to be a shadow, nor would I hesitate to declare that those mortals who think they are wise and are concerned with explanations (τοὺς σοφοὺς βροτῶν δοκοῦντας εἶναι καὶ μεριμνητὰς λόγων) deserve the greatest rebuke. For no one of mortals is fortunate (εὖδαιμων); when prosperity flows in one man's direction, he is more successful than another, but, fortunate?—no. (1224-1230).

Such a sentiment is not so much anti-intellectual as it is pessimistic; it betrays a deep insecurity about the ability to maintain the status quo on even the most mundane level. Gouldner is convinced that such pessimism and insecurity are by-products of the zero-sum game, where envy brings success into association with peril and doom, which then generates pessimism; pessimism in its turn breeds insecurity.222 But such pessimism and insecurity become operative only when the unexpected in fact arises; this is precisely the situation Euripides has constructed

221 Flory, "Right Hand," pp. 70 and 73.
222 Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 58, 69-70.
at the end of his play. The perils of the competitor are not discernible except in reversal of fortune, and reversal has been arranged by the playwright not only for the once half-heartedly competitive Creon and his daughter—not only for these and, through them, Jason—but also for Medea, whom the Chorus will soon witness effecting with her own hand the harm that she, as competitor, should visit upon her enemies, not, as she does, upon her "friends" and herself.

The Chorus, upon hearing the Messenger’s report, express again their willingness to assign responsibility for this horror elsewhere than upon Medea, who represents all that they still uphold: “It seems,” they remark, “that on this day a daimôn has rightly (ἐνοίκως) brought up from below much harm (κακά) upon Jason” (1231-1232). This remark is testimony to their continuing support of zero-sum procedure. At the same time, however, they betray their growing discomfort as, for the second time, they express sympathy for the fate of the princess: “Poor thing (ὁ τλημον), how we pity your misfortune, daughter of Creon, you who go to Hades’ house because of the marriage of Jason” (1233-1235; cf. 978-990).

They are not, of course, the only ones discomfited. Medea now once again displays her pain at what she feels she must do. As has been argued (above, Part One), she is like the hapless interlocutor near the end of elenchos, who
discerns that she cannot avoid the logical consequences of
the definitions she has espoused and lived. And yet, these
consequences, terrible/clever and necessary as they are,
are nonetheless kaka (1243): harm, which she therefore,
understandably, hesitates to do (μέλλομεν, 1242).
she has to such an extent lost her taste for competition
that she must command herself to go back into the fray with
brusque imperatives:

Come on, now, heart, arm yourself (ὁμλίζου). . . . Come, wretched (τάλανα) hand of mine,
take the sword, take it!, creep to the painful
starting post of your life (λαβέ . . . λάβ',
ἐρπε προς βαλβίδα λυπηράν βίον), and do
not turn weak, do not remember (μὴ κακισθῆς μηθ'
ἀνομνησθῆς) your children, how very dear they
were (ὁς φίλτατοι), how you bore them; but
forget (λαθοῦ) your children for this brief day,
and then lament (θὲνει); for even if you will
kill them, they nonetheless were dear (φίλοι)--I
am an unfortunate (ὦυστυχῆς) woman! (1242, 1244-
1250).

That Medea sees this as a competitive arena is clear
from her use of "arm yourself" (ὁμλίζου) and her
description of the act as the painful "starting post"
(βαλβίδα) of her life (see above, Part One). That
she is reluctant is obvious from the abundance of
imperatives. That she knows this is harmful to herself,
her use of κακά and ωυστυχῆς illustrate.

But this act is not merely competitive, taken on
reluctantly, in the knowledge that it is self-harming. It
also consists of doubly self-negating premises. This is
unmistakable when one considers Medea's description of the
children as φίλτατα and φίλοι. For not only must Medea, in order to harm her enemies, harm herself; she must once again turn harm upon those dear to her. She has done this before, of course, in the case of her father and brother; the difference this time seems to be that these children are the only ones with whom Medea has allowed herself to feel real and enduring attachment. They are the only things she terms "dearest," φιλτάτα, and she uses this designation of them not only here, but four other times: at 795, when she first reveals that she will murder her children, they are φιλτάτα; twice, at 1071, their hands and mouths are so described; finally, at 1397 she snatches away Jason's description of the children as φιλτάτα with the response: "To their mother, yes, but not to you" (see further discussion below, Part Five).

It would certainly be much more comforting to propose that Medea does not--cannot--truly love her children, that so much is obvious from her ability to kill them. Such a theory, however, defies what Medea herself says, and robs the play's elenchos of its profound reversal. We must, with Medea, contemplate the excruciating paradox that her killing them does not negate their dearness to her. Her reversal is unmitigated: she experiences first-hand the emotional unacceptability of the zero-sum game's logical consequences. Otherwise, when Medea escapes, she escapes with the definitions she represents unchallenged, that is,
she escapes unscathed. That she does not, she herself will readily admit in the exodos, as she does here, talking to herself: "For even if you kill them, they nevertheless were dear—I am an unfortunate woman!" (1249-1251).

The Chorus, after hearing Medea pronounce the agonizing paradox in which she is embroiled, now sing their final song (1251-1292). It is interrupted by the cries of the children, being killed by Medea within, and by the Chorus' own impotent interjections (1271-1281).

They begin with a prayer to the Earth and light of the sun, begging them to look down on and stop Medea, whom they describe as "destroyed" (ὁλομέναν, 1253). They see her crime as the work of an Erinys (1260), and appeal to Medea herself to consider that she is rendering her birth pains, as well as her trip through the Symplegades, in vain (1261-1264). They finally try to convince her, as zero-sum competitor who carefully weighs advantage and disadvantage, that she will pay a heavy price (1267-1270). They know no other appeals, for they did not foresee the logical consequence of the competition they themselves were so keen on; they therefore can only ask, in confusion, "Why has this heavy bitterness of mind and harm-dealing slaughter fallen upon you?" They clearly see Medea

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223 N. E. Collinge, "Medea ex Machina," CP 57 (1962; hereafter Collinge, "Ex Machina"), p. 172, argues that, by providing Medea transport, the Sun ironically grants one part of the Chorus' request: that he drive Medea out.
as the victim of a perverse circumstance; their use of the verb *προσπίνει* (1266) suggests that the impetus for what Medea is about to commit has been visited upon her from the outside.

It is partly for this reason, their inability even now to understand the reasons behind the reversal their definitions, manifested in Medea, have undergone, that these women, after hearing within the cries of the children being slaughtered, compare Medea--insensibly, it seems, at first glance--to Ino (1281). For certainly, had they thought but a few minutes longer, some critics intimate, they could have come up with a much better parallel: Agave or Althaea, for example. Or better yet, Procne.225 Althaea and Procne, at least, killed their children knowingly; Procne, most like Medea, did so to punish her husband.

Why then do the women of Corinth insist that they have

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224 Joseph Fontenrose, "The Sorrows of Ino and of Procne," *TAPA* 79 (1948; hereafter Fontenrose, "Sorrows"), p. 165, notes that both Ino and Medea are involved in the Argonaut expedition; Collinge, *Ex Machina," p. 172 n. 10, adds that Ino is related by marriage to Jason. Fontenrose also sees a similarity between Ino and Medea (with Theseus) as wicked stepmothers. See also Wolf-Hartmut Friedrich, "Medeas Rache," in *Euripides*, ed. Ernst-Richard Schwinge (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968; hereafter Friedrich, "Medeas Rache"), pp. 185-186, for enumeration of the child-murders that occur in Attic drama.

225 See Rick M. Newton, "Ino in Euripides' Medea," *AJP* 106 (1985), pp. 496-502, who suggests that close parallels are suppressed intentionally by Euripides so that the non-parallel of Ino may make the point that Medea's crime is unparalleled in its unmitigated heinousness.
only heard of the acts of one other woman, Ino, to whom they can compare Medea's? Instead of looking to the patterns of the myth that one may allege the audience could have known, but which are nonetheless not expressed by Euripides, let us instead look to what the Chorus do say of Ino: 1) she laid her hands on her children (1283); 2) she was driven mad by the gods (1284); 3) she was driven out of her home and put to wandering by Zeus' wife (1284-1285); 4) she threw herself off a cliff into the sea, poor thing (1286-1288); 5) the leap followed hard on the irreverent slaughter of her children (1286-1287); 6) she died along with her children (1289). The Chorus conclude Ino's story by lamenting how much harm the "much-


227 Robert Eisner, "Euripides' Use of Myth," Arethusa 12 (1979), pp. 158-159, proposes that "[t]he focus of the comparison is Hera's crime in driving Ino crazy ... as opposed to Medea's crime in motivating her own crime. Later we hear Medea will bring the children to Hera's temple (1379). Euripides has chosen the Ino paradigm because Hera enters into Medea's crime. Medea acts like a goddess, with the gods' tacit approval, especially the approval of the goddess of marriage and childbirth, who herself once made a mother kill her children."

228 There is no mention that Ino later became a goddess. Maurice P. Cunningham, "Medea ἄω ἔλαια τος," CP 49 (1954; hereafter Cunningham, "Medea"), pp. 158-159, argues that this unmentioned fact is the parallel Euripides draws between Ino and Medea, who herself becomes a faux-godess by acting as deus ex machina.
troubled bed of women" has already done to mortals (1290-1293). In Ino's case as described here, this lament must refer to Hera's action against Ino herself, not to any action of Ino against her husband's paramours or other wives. 229

A few parallels immediately suggest themselves: both Ino and Medea are made exiles; both were driven out (Ino actually, Medea effectively) by another woman; both Ino and Medea killed their own children; both have the Chorus' sympathy. Why? Because both their crimes are, to the Chorus, equally inexplicable. Ino was driven mad by the gods, that they know, and such a suggestion is merely an expression of the inexplicable. Medea's action is similarly incomprehensible to them. They even go so far as to suggest, in an interpretation which brings them dangerously close to agreeing with Jason (569-573; cf. 1338), that sexual jealousy was the cause of all this. 230 They cannot see, despite its having been made more than sufficiently clear, that the ideas they

229 See Fontenrose, "Sorrows," pp. 127-129, for other variants. One of these, that involving the maidservant Antiphera (or Halos), shows more obvious similarities to the Jason and Medea story than the one given in the text of Medea.

230 Foley, "Divided Self," p. 77, notes that Creon and Jason, as well as the Chorus, misinterpret Medea's motivation as jealousy. Foley sees Medea not as "the tragedy of jealousy we expect" but "a tragedy of gender." Ohlander, Suspense, p. 93, argues that the gods Medea invokes suggest lost honor, not sexual jealousy, as her motive.
themselves hold about competitive excellence have given rise to this repugnant act. Therefore, they are at a loss. Medea's act, like Ino's, they propose, had external impetus.231 In this they once again join the ranks of interlocutors who look outside their systems of beliefs for the cause of these beliefs' reversal in elenchos.232

There is, however, one further, though less apparent, parallel between the stories of Medea and Ino. The Chorus, by comparing Medea to a woman who killed herself upon killing her children, suggest again what they have already hinted at with their recent description of Medea as "destroyed" (ὀλομέναν, 1252):233 namely, that Medea, like Ino, self-destructs after killing those most dear to her. This interpretation has been suggested before, in many different guises, but most of them psychologically based.234 What I wish to propose here (see also below, Part Five) is not that the Chorus foresee for Medea a psychological self-destruction, but instead, dimly

231 Cf. Ohlander, Suspense, p. 179, who claims the Chorus use Ino as a parallel because she, like Medea, was insane.

232 Perhaps this is what Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 53, means by her claim that, in proposing Ino as mythological antecedent, the women "rationalize" their experience.

233 Pace Cunningham, "Medea," p. 156, who considers ὀλομέναν to have optative force.

and tentatively perhaps, they sense the destruction of all that she has manifested for them: the competitive ideal of areté. Indeed, that this is so is supported by their (as well as Medea’s) reactions in the exodos and by their final tag.

When Jason enters at line 1293 to announce the swift-coming royal vengeance and to try to protect his children from it, he has only the Chorus, who aided Medea in her vengeance against him, to face. But they, unlike Medea, do not revel in his misery. Instead, they address him, their old vicarious enemy, as θλημον ("wretched," 1306), and acknowledge the harm he has come upon. They have, vicariously through Medea, won; they have also, understandably, lost their taste for victory.

Ironically, even as the victorious Medea by contrast gloats and exults, she too acknowledges defeat.235 This victory has brought its harm upon her, too. Jason says as much to her, and she agrees: --"You yourself suffer and you are a companion of the harm." (καυτή νε λυπή και κακών κοινωνός εἶ). --"You are right." (1361-1362).236 And again, at 1397, Medea

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235See Michelini, "Neophrorin," p. 134: "The final scene expresses th[e] union of irreconcilables in dramatic terms: it is a triumph that is also a kind of annihilation."

236Ohlander, Suspense, p. 172, sees in Medea’s future misery a basis for the audience’s abiding sympathy for her. Mills, "Sorrows," pp. 295-296, detects in Medea as ever-sorrowing mother a pattern from the Ino/Procne
asserts that the children were *philtata* to their mother, not to Jason.

Jason, however, has obviously lost too. We have mentioned already the Chorus’ description of what he is about to see as kaka (1306); to this may be added his own concessions of the harm done to him: At 1310 he exclaims, "Now you have destroyed (ἀψώλεσας) me, woman!"; at 1315, "Open the doors, so that I may see the double harm (κακόν)"; at 1348-1350 he uses again the language of benefit and harm, "I will get no benefit from (ὅνήσομαι) my newlywed bed, nor the children I begot and reared will I be able to speak to alive, but I am destroyed (ἀψώλεσα)"; at 1395-1403 Jason is pathetic in his grief, "I go, with no share of two children . . . Oh, dearest children (ὤ τέκνα φιλτατα) . . . Alas, I, wretch that I am (τάλας), want to kiss the dear (φιλίου) mouths of my children. . . . Let me--by the gods!--touch the soft skin of my children." 237

Pathetic as this scene is, neither Medea nor Jason accepts that their actions are culpable or suspect. Both, therefore, are like interlocutors who maintain their views by projecting the blame for their definitions' failures stories.

237McDermott, *Incarnation*, p. 70, correctly points out that although Jason is now pitiful, he is still not shrift of his mediocrity.
onto some external object. Medea, recall, previously laid at least a part of the blame for her actions on the gods (1013-1014); once again she mitigates her reversal even as she is acknowledging it. For Medea flees (1384-1385) like many interlocutors, and, like those who flee, she must, at least publicly, persist in disowning the blame. For it is only thus that faulty definitions can remain operational. Recall Seeskin's description of the interlocutors who, despite their stint at elenchos, depart from Socrates, suspect definitions still in heart and therefore to hand, only to dishonor themselves with (at least by the standards of definitions withstanding elenchos) ill-conceived and shameful actions. 238 Such a future of the continued employment of faulty definitions is suggested likewise in the case of Medea, as a few critics have pointed out, for, according to one version, Medea's future tenure in Athens includes an attempt on the life of Theseus, Aegeus' son. 239 Her repeating a crime like the one she has just committed reveals, as did interlocutors' aborted reformations, the failure not so much of elenchos as a failure of nerve and endurance in its reversed participants. Scapegoating, there against Socrates, here

238 Seeskin, Dialogue, pp. 127-130. See the quotation in the discussion above, Chapter One, Part Four.

against any convenient other, is a face-saving measure to
disown these failures.

And so in the exodos, Medea chooses Jason as
scapegoat, and he, similarly untransformable, chooses her.
Listen first to her accusations, then to his: "I would
make a long reply to you if father Zeus did not know what
you experienced from me and what sorts of things you did in
return (1351-1353) ... O children, you perished from
your father's disease (1364). ... [It was not my right
hand,] but it was your insolence, and your newly mastered
marriage [that killed them] (1366). ... The gods know
who began this torment (1372). ... You, pernicious
one (κακός), as is right, will die in harm
(κακώς), struck on your head by a chunk of the Argo,
and will see a bitter end of my marriage to you (1386-
1388). ... What god or daimôn listens to you, forswearer
and deceiver of outsiders? (1391-1392)."

Now Jason: "You despicable thing, you most hateful
thing to the gods and to me and to the whole race of men,
you who dared to lay sword upon your children, whom you
bore, and you destroyed me, leaving me childless (1323-
1326). ... you great harm (κακὸν μέγα, 1331)
... for the sake of pleasure and the bed you killed them
(1338). ... I married you, a hateful, destructive
connection for me, you lioness, no woman, who have the
savage nature of the Tuscan Scylla (1341-1343). ... Such
audacity is natural to you. Go to destruction, you who do shameful things, you who are foul with the murder of your children (1345-1346) . . . . Oh children, you met with a harmful (κακῆς) mother (1363). . . . It was not my right hand that killed them (1365). . . . You thought it meritorious to kill them for the sake of the bed (1367).

. . . All things are harms (κακά) to you (1369).

. . . [The children] are, alas, curses against the pollution upon your head (1371). . . . [The gods] do, in fact, know--they know your despicable mind (1373). . . . You revolting child-murderer (1393)." In fact, the bulk of Jason's last speech (i.e., 1405-1412) is an accusation against Medea. In it he calls Zeus and the other gods to witness what he has suffered at the hands of "this repulsive and child-murdering lioness" (1406-1407) who has killed his children (1411).

Jason ends his speech in helplessness and despair, wishing that he had not ever begotten the children to see them killed by Medea (1413-1414). In this pronouncement, he betrays a concession to the inevitability of what has happened (i.e., once begotten, the children were on their way to being murdered by Medea). His solution is one born of a sensed impotence in the face of this horrifying inevitability: the children should never have been born. He echoes the Chorus' earlier sentiment (1094-1115: one should not have children because one cannot predict or
control what happens to them), and Medea's slightly different rendering of this, a lament on the vanity of her birthing the children (1029-1031).

The hopelessness and impotence of the major parties to this elenchos are a consequence of their adherence at all costs to definitions proven faulty. Medea and Jason manifest those definitions and persist in their application, even through the horrors that result from them. Similarly, the Chorus, despite their sense of repulsion at the act Medea commits, never wholeheartedly abandon their support of her. No one therefore has the sense that such crimes are preventable in the future. And indeed, given the across the board reluctance to abandon faulty definitions, they are not.

The Chorus' departing tag echoes the despair of change and acceptance, albeit reluctant, of the status quo they and the principals feel. It is at one and the same time a prayer to Zeus and an acknowledgement of the women's impotence in the face of their ignorance. It is, more than anything, full-blown aporia:

Zeus on Olympus, controller (ταµίας) of many things, the gods bring to pass many things beyond anticipation (ἀέλπιτως). In fact, the expected (τὰ δοκηθέντα) was not accomplished, and god found a way (πόρον) for the unexpected (τῶν . . . ἀδόκητων). So it went. (1415-1419).
This sentiment, despite being formulaic, is an appropriate description of Medea's Chorus' experience. They had not expected what was logically inevitable from priorities of the zero-sum game whose player, Medea, they cheered on from the sidelines. They therefore, upon witnessing in Medea's escape the salvation of their faulty definitions from submission to another round of elenchos, again ascribe the outcome to some other entity, like interlocutors who blame Socrates for dispatching their surety. In five lines, they credit Zeus with control, the gods for accomplishing, and god with finding a way. They themselves have lost the way.

240 The lines appear at the end of four other Euripidean plays: Alcestis, Andromache, Helen, and Bacchae. In all of these, however, the first line instead reads: Πολλαί μορφαί τῶν δαμανίων, "Many are the shapes of the miraculous."

241 Pace Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 66, who terms this tag "a trite, all but meaningless refrain." Cf. Barrett, Hippolytus, pp. 417-418 at lines 1462-1466, who deems the lines a "platitude" inappropriate to all but Alcestis of the plays to which it is attached. It is "grossly out of place" in Medea.

242 So Buttrey, "Accident," p. 16: "... without warning we have gone completely off the track, the play charges off in a direction which we did not expect and of which we cannot approve. Like the chorus, we find ourselves struggling to be freed of that to which we have already given our allegiance. Seduced into approving Medea's revenge, we cannot approve it at all. ... And we object. But neither chorus nor audience has now any grounds for objecting. Euripides has trapped us in our own flabby reasoning, in the morality that justifies any action, be only the aggravation great enough. Our stupidity has led logically to this conclusion ... ."
McDermott sees the relevance of this tag not only to Medea, which she in the subtitle of her book calls "The Incarnation of Disorder," but sees in it an expression of what Whitman alleges is Euripides' penchant for the unforeseen:

Euripides' purposeful achievement of the unexpected is not simply a dramatic trick, a device to create suspense and keep the audience "on the hook." It is, rather, one of the primary tools by which the poet effects the play's final chaos. To the audience that comes to him asking, "'x' or 'y'," he responds, "Not 'x.' Nor 'y.'" He suggests no "z." Worse than that, whether on the large scale or the small, he repeatedly establishes (or seems to) an either-or structure within the play, to all appearances working with "x's" and "y's" easily recognizable by his audience. He thus seems to be saying "'x' or 'y'? I will tell you which." When he goes on to show that neither alternative is viable or true, or when the "answer" provided by the play's events is so ambiguous that the audience must conclude that the posed alternatives were simplistic or meaningless, this outcome is doubly destructive of the audience's sense of classification.

243 Aristotle is right, then, that Medea's escape in the chariot of the sun is, as a sort of deus ex machina, an inadaquate λύσις τοῦ μυθου (Poetics 1454a.36-b.2). None of the difficulties has been solved; Medea's "escape" does not cancel the aporia, but instead, as in the case of Plato's interlocutors, is its acknowledgement. See R. B. Appleton, "The Deus ex Machina in Euripides," CR 34 (1920), pp. 10-14, for the argument that Euripides at times uses the deus ex machina to complicate plots or "to remind us that the problems of life are not so easily solved as we had been led to suspect ... ." Euripides' Medea, according to Appleton, "is allowed to point [her wrongs] out for herself, with all the sanction and finality that belongs to the μηχανή." Even Plato indicates that the tragedian uses the deus ex machina at times of aporia: "tragedians, when they are at a loss (ἀπορώσων) in any way, have recourse to cranes with gods raised on high" (Cratylus 425d.5-6).
and order.244

While I would postpone judgment on whether Euripides (I would add, "like Socrates") purposefully effects the unexpected to reveal to his audience their ignorance, the similarities between the method used by Plato's early Socrates and the method used by Euripides in this, and perhaps other, plays, suggest that McDermott is wrong to claim that Euripides "suggests no z," or that the provided answer's ambiguity points back only to the simplicity and meaninglessness of the audience's notionally supported alternatives.245 For, as in

244McDermott, Incarnation, p. 112, where she also quotes Whitman, Full Circle, p. v.

245Ohlander, Suspense, 187-188, who imagines that the original audience felt "purposefully misled" by Euripides, nonetheless describes the self-searching Medea encourages: "We are left with self-doubt, left to question the validity of both Jason's and Medea's world, both the cavalier sophistry that can defend any decision and the passionate demands of piqued honor that justifies the brutalization of feelings and extremely vengeful actions. ... If we are at all to be made more conscious from our experience of the drama, we must question our own motivations for action, examine our feelings and challenge the authenticity of our thinking." See also Wolff, "Euripides," p. 241, for the "uneasy, unresolved juxtaposition" at the end of the Ode to Athens and at the end of the play, and the ambivalence Medea arouses in the audience; cf. Walsh, "Public and Private," p. 300: "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." Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 97, says that "this is a play that makes us writhe, twitch, and feel uncomfortable." Of the quasi-deus ex machina, Simon remarks that it "does not clean the irritants out of our system." Goldhill, Reading, p. 114, compares the end of Medea with those of Bacchae and Antigone, "where dissolution, aggression, and
elenchos, so in this play: once we begin to assault the boundaries of the work, be it dialogue or play, we confront reader-auditors or an audience of theater-goers, who are the ultimate consumers and targets of the philosopher's and playwright's purpose in conducting elenchos, and in whom success of that purpose is at least possible. For as in elenchos, the view from the outside provides to Euripides' audience, as it did to Plato's reader-auditors, a more objective perspective from which to view the unfolding elenchos. It is at this audience, then, as at Plato's reader-auditors, that we can perhaps suspect maieusis to be aimed, and in them we can theorize upon its operation and consider its varying success at attaining elenchos' ultimate goal: the birth of truth.

To such theorizing and consideration we now turn, keeping in mind that, if there is truth born of elenchos, it is neonatal, and that no one should expect full development from an infant.

disappointment seem to stress the shattering tragic oppositions . . . ."
Introductory Remarks

In Chapter One, it was argued that interlocutors in *elenchos* are led to philosophy and truth only when they are engaged personally in the discussion. At the same time, they must be allowed distance for objectivity. Socrates provides both. He insists, on the one hand, that interlocutors say only what they believe; on the other hand, he maintains that the reversal of definition is nonetheless impersonally effected. The result is engagement and estrangement, attraction and repulsion.\(^\text{246}\) In this balancing act are dangers and potential gains. For if repulsion takes hold, the interlocutor flees, denying the reversal—truth is never born. But if Socrates provides the right distance from which the interlocutor can simultaneously feel the pull of recognition and yet maintain the comfort of objectivity, the interlocutor may choose to stay through the painful process of birthing

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\(^{246}\) It was argued in this study’s original Chapter Two, now set aside, that, in Aristotle’s definition of tragedy, pity operates comparably to the personal aspect of *elenchos*, fear comparably to the impersonal aspect. For a discussion of pity as an engaging mechanism and fear as a distancing mechanism in *Medea*, see Pietro Pucci, "Euripides: The Monument and the Sacrifice," *Arethusa* 10 (1977; hereafter Pucci, "Monument"), pp. 174-175; cf. his *Violence*, pp. 169-174.
More often than not, though, pain repels the interlocutor, and the truth, conceived but unborn, makes for an irritating presence in his memory of the elenchos. Someone with more distance than the shame-ridden interlocutor is needed for truth to be born; in the dialogues of Plato, this is the reader-auditor. But even the reader-auditor must sense proximity and yet be kept at a distance.

In short, elenchos demands a balancing act, and Euripides in Medea performs one. He provides his audience with definitions, manifested primarily in Medea and Jason, which are like those upon which they base their own behavior. At the same time, Medea and Jason (and, to a lesser extent, Creon) are depicted in such a way that the audience cannot help but feel alienated from them, and therefore from the definitions they manifest.

The Personal Aspect

At Poetics 1460b.33-34, Aristotle reports Sophocles' claim to have depicted men as they should be, while Euripides depicted them as they were (Σοφοκλῆς ἔφη αὐτὸς μὲν οἶνος δὲι ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδης δὲ οἶοι εἰσίν). At Frogs 959-960, Aristophanes'
Euripides, in describing his poetry, agrees with this assessment of his art:

I enacted familiar things, things we use, things we live with, things on which I could be put to elenchos; for the audience knew about these things and could submit my craft to elenchos. (οἶκεία πράγματ' εἰσάγων, ὁδὸς κρώμεθ, ὁδὸς εὐνεσμεν, ἐξ ὑπ' γε ἀν ἐξηλεγχόμην, εὐνειδώτης γαρ οὗτοι ἣλεγχον ἀν μου τὴν τέχνην).

Are these assessments accurate, at least in the case of Euripides’ Medea? More specifically: were the rules of the zero-sum game by which Medea and Jason comported themselves familiar to the largely male Athenian audience of 431 B.C.? Did they recognize behind the outrageous acts of Medea and Jason the beliefs that informed their own less drastic actions? While it can never with absolute certainty be asserted that they did, there is evidence that the zero-sum game depicted in Medea was a commonplace in fifth century B.C. Athens.

Sentiments expressed by characters in Euripides’ plays correspond to sentiments expressed during events described by Thucydides in his History of the Peloponnesian Wars. John H. Finley, Jr. maintains that these correspondences argue for a realism in both Euripides and Thucydides rather than a borrowing by historian from dramatist:

As contrasted with Herodotus, Thucydides devotes his whole work to analyzing the actual, and therefore often the material, aspects of the war, and Sophocles’ remark about Euripides could as well have been made by the older about the younger historian, “I make men as they should be, he makes them as they are.” More specifically, the first debate in the History, that between the Corcyreans and the Corinthians, turns on
the same conflict between expedience and justice that has been noted in the Medea. . . . The close parallel presented by the debate in the Medea offers striking proof that these were the methods of argument in use at the time in Athens, and, though that fact might be taken to prove merely that Thucydides was influenced as a writer by the tragedians, surely it proves more than that. For the whole development of Attic tragedy was towards a greater naturalism, and Euripides in 431 would hardly have made his characters speak in this way unless the sophistic arguments were generally known and practised.248

Finley is of course not alone in noticing that Euripidean characters speak sophistically; indeed, they speak so persuasively in this manner that as late as 1971, when the third edition of his Geschichte der Griechischen Literatur was published, Lesky was still cautioning that Euripides should be considered "... weder einfach Schüler der Sophisten noch Propagandist ihrer Ideen . . . ."249

The theory that sophists were the mentors of Euripides is no longer promoted, even though it is acknowledged that Euripidean characters express views identified with the sophists.250 But did such views find popular reception

248 Finley, Thucydides, p. 53. General discussion of resemblances between sentiments expressed by characters in the History and Medea may be found on pp. 46-57; cf. also Finley's earlier "Euripides and Thucydides," HSCP 49 (1938; hereafter Finley, "Euripides"), pp. 23-68 passim.


250 See, e.g., Reckford, "First Exit," p. 341, for Jason's sophistic arguments in Medea as a reflection of fifth-century Athenian intellectualism. An analysis of the influence of sophistic argumentation and relativism in Euripides' Electra may be found in Fass, Tragedy, pp. 45-
among Athenian citizens? G. B. Kerferd has recently argued that they did, pointing out that the sophistic movement would not have flourished without the encouragement sophists received from regular employment by fifth century B.C. Athenians. Social and political conditions created a popular need for sophistic teachings, and Pericles was in the forefront of those who provided patronage for individual sophists.251

It is arguable, then, that views often expressed by Euripidean characters, views known to have been advanced by sophists, were not just familiar to, but used by the Athenians in Euripides’ audience. Moreover, these so-called sophistic views are a part of zero-sum ethics. Note, for example, the correspondence between elements of the zero-sum game and what Finley cites as elements common to Thucydides and Medea: 1) wide-spread rationalism; 2) arguments advanced and action taken on the basis of personal advantage/benefit/profit/interest; 3) material ends pursued at the expense of natural ties; 4) self-interest as destructive of fellow-feeling, which is considered harmful to its possessor.252 Finley suggests all of the above (which are elements of the zero-

251 Kerferd, Sophistic Movement, pp. 15-23.

252 Finley, "Euripides," pp. 31-33, 47, and 65; Thucydides, p. 51.
sum game as described by Gouldner) were commonplace to fifth century B. C. Athenians.

Zero-sum ethics are not, however, fully delineated by recourse to views of the sophists. There remains at the core of the zero-sum game an agonistic bent, whereby competition and self-advancement are more highly valued than cooperation and preservation of community. A high value on competition is found in societies where warriors' achievements on the battlefield mean the difference between life and death, security and peril. This hierarchy of values was posited as characteristic of heroes of the Homeric poems by (among others) A. W. H. Adkins and M. I. Finley. Adkins argued for at least a partial survival of this hierarchy into the classical age and saw a tension between the older, competitive virtues and what he terms the "quiet," cooperative virtues as the latter, in the interest of civic cohesiveness and stability, began to be given at least lip service in the last half of the fifth century B. C. Finley, though not concerned in The World of Odysseus with the survival of competitive values into the fifth century, nonetheless viewed competition as an enduring characteristic of the ancient Greeks: "Nothing defines the quality of Greek culture more neatly than the


way in which the idea of competition was extended from physical prowess to the realm of the intellect, to the feats of poetry and dramatic composition. 255

Of late, scholars outside the field of classics or working beyond its boundaries agree, and posit that the so-called Homeric conventions of behavior survived into, and perhaps beyond, the fifth century B.C. Sociologist Alvin Gouldner's description of the zero-sum game used in this chapter is one example of such work. Gouldner acknowledges that there was a tension that developed between the "quiet" virtues and the older competitive creed, but sees the survival of the older behavioral conventions as a result of Greece's continuing need for a warrior class:

The "quiet" virtues, as Adkins terms them, stressing cooperativeness or making cooperation feasible—such as temperance, civic service, justice, and wisdom—in time become more salient. The polis needed peace and stability within, if for no other reason than to pursue its perennial wars abroad. Yet the newer virtues never entirely displaced the older implications of agathos and aretē that, as generalized terms of commendation, were encysted with the older military traits. These traits formed a concrete paradigm of propriety underlying the more abstract usage, and they exerted silent inducements to charge military or competitive achievement with a special emotive force.

The viability of the older military virtues in the late classical period were not, however, an anachronism; they must not be regarded as a vestigial "survival" which continues simply through inertia. The military paradigm of virtue persists because it is actively reinforced by the continuing military character and ongoing warlike activities of the city-states. There was, it seems, a fatal contradiction—one among all too many—in the situation. If

255 Finley, World of Odysseus, p. 120.
constant warfare among the city-states required them to emphasize their internal stability and if this, in turn, contributed to the growing importance of the quiet, cooperative values, nonetheless the very continuance of the wars themselves, indeed their lengthening duration and growing ferocity, also called for fighting men and the old military virtues. Since the citizenry were both the major fighting force and, particularly during the periods of democracy, the ultimate decision-makers of the state, they were situationally constrained to maintain both sets of values and could thus never give full rein to either. It would have been fatal to the state, as then constituted in war-ridden Greece, had the citizenry lost all zest for the military virtues.256

We need only recall that Medea, produced in 431 B.C., fell at the beginning of Athens' longest and most devastating military engagement, to see the special applicability of Gouldner's argument to this play.

To Gouldner's arguments may be added the theories of Philip Slater and the work of John J. Winkler. Slater begins his book with Thucydides' Corinthian ambassador's assessment of the Athenians (History 1.70) and elaborates upon it. After terming the Athenians first "difficult" and then perhaps even "impossible," Slater, using zero-sum terminology, provides a stiff antidote to the quite contrary, idealizing depiction of the Athenians until so recently accepted without question:

They were quarrelsome as friends, treacherous as neighbors, brutal as masters, faithless as servants, shallow as lovers—all of which was in part redeemed by their intelligence and creativity. But the core of both what is most admirable and what is most "impossible" about them is a kind of grandiosity—an ability not merely to conceive, but also to entertain, in every sense of that term, an outrageous idea, an outlandish scheme.257

Slater’s description can almost qualify as a thumb-nail sketch of the zero-sum competitor. Winkler goes so far as to posit a Mediterranean "type" that survives even today, and senses in modern as well as ancient Greeks what he terms "a kind of controlled aggression"258 that, in very few words, cuts to the core of zero-sum ethics.

While it must be admitted that these reassessments of the ancient Greeks can—given our strictly literary evidence—no more be proven than the earlier idealizing portrait, further persuasive evidence comes, oddly enough, from early and middle Platonic dialogues. In these, characters (Polus and Callicles of Gorgias immediately leap to mind) parade out—in their commitment to self-advancement at the expense of others—values described by

257 Slater, Glory, pp. 3-4.

258 Winkler, Constraints, p. 3. Even if Winkler’s assessment of a peculiarly Greek aggressiveness is unfounded, the act of taking vengeance, at least according to Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 1, has universal human appeal. Cf. Ohlander, Suspense, p. 168, who cites Thucydides’ description of Athenian punishment of the Melians (History 5.84 ff.) in arguing that the Greeks, and especially the Athenians, would have identified strongly with the avenging Medea. Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 68, sees Jason in Thucydides’ description of change and upheaval (History 3.82 ff.).
As basic to zero-sum assumptions. It is hard to believe that Plato would pit his fifth century B.C. Socrates against vestiges of a bygone era; it is much more likely that he set his mentor against men who, as they themselves claimed, held beliefs common to men of their times.

To return to the Euripidean corpus in general, one other bit of evidence indicates that sentiments expressed in Euripides' plays were familiar to his audience. It is a frequent charge against Euripides that he portrays characters in an anachronistic way, that is, that Euripides draws characters from the mythic past who nonetheless express sentiments of the present. A. E. Haigh, for example, terms Euripides "most modern in tone and sentiment."259 D. W. Lucas agrees, and criticizes Euripides for his piecemeal application of modernity:

Euripides often sets his plays in the Greece of his own day; we can put our finger on many passages with a contemporary application and characters who were suggested by types to be met in fifth century Athens. But at times Euripides is all bits and pieces, because he has broken away from a tradition and can no longer use its language consistently. The characters of Sophocles bring before us the ideals of a society within the Athenian commonwealth, those of Euripides

restore to us scraps of the reality. 260

what we are defending in this study is something beyond Lucas' sense of Euripides' contemporaneity. Although one can certainly mine Euripides' plays for "bits and pieces" of contemporary influence, 261 we are positing that, in depicting the main characters of Medea, Euripides was representing in particular and dynamic form behaviors and the beliefs that informed these characters, and that their behaviors and beliefs were considered valid by many if not all of the Athenians in the audience. 262

Finally, it may be argued that one choice made by Euripides in composing Medea testifies to the poet's intent to suggest the particular appeal of the highly competitive and autonomous Medea to his Athenian audience. I refer, of course, to Euripides' decision--criticized since the time of Aristotle (Poetics 1461b.19-21)--to include in his text

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260 Lucas, Tragic Poets, p. 172. There is clearly unstated criticism in Lucas' contrast of Sophocles and Euripides. In this, he is following a long critical tradition. Michelini, Tragic Tradition, p. 9, traces the history of critics deprecating Euripides' use of "familiar things," which was sometimes attributed to the poet's psychological instability (Sophocles, by contrast, had no such problem); see Michelini's nn. 30 and 31 for bibliography and amusing quotes.

261 This practice is now out of favor in the critical literature. An annotated and categorized collection of such minings may be found in Yankow, Socratic ἡμιτόνημα, pp. 18-38.

262 See Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 180: "If Medea is to be seen as a distinctively oriental type . . . why does Euripides make her talk like a Greek, argue like a Greek, and to all appearances feel like a Greek?"
the otherwise unmotivated appearance of Aegeus. By showing Medea’s friendship with the legendary Athenian king, and Aegeus’ promise to accept her after she leaves Corinth, Euripides provides his Chorus with an opportunity to describe an idealized Athens in their third stasimon (824-865). This is not merely any idealized Athens, but, as critics have noticed, it is the Athens described a few months after the production of Medea by Thucydides’ Pericles in his funeral oration. The Chorus are incredulous that such an Athens would accept the likes of the child-killer, Medea. But they are wrong, as Euripides is careful to point out. For as Medea makes her escape, she informs Jason, "I myself am going to the land of Erechtheus, to live with Aegeus the son of Pandion" (1384-1385). "The land of Erechtheus" recalls the "Erechtheidae" of the third stasimon and the ideal Athens they inhabit, and, as myth melds with contemporary history, Athenians in the audience are left to ponder their own notional acceptance of Medea and the possible consequences of such acceptance, given the consequences for Aegeus known from myth.264

As Medea announces her itinerary at the play’s end, Euripides brings Medea and the definitions represented by

263 e.g., Elliott, Medea, p. 89 at 827-30, and Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 23.

264 McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 105-106.
She seems to suggest that, for all their idealism, they, like Jason and Aegeus, would be willing to bring first to Greece and then to Athens Medea and what she

265Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 20; McDermott, Incarnation, p. 116. McDermott (p. 117) is excellent in her analysis of the effect of Medea's journey to Athens: "Lest his audience sit back and presume that such things happen only onstage, or only in the mythic past, or only when wrought by a barbarian witch, the allusive insertion of Athens into the play intimates that the confusion Medea embodies lives on to the present day and touches them even on their sacred citadel, for it is part of the human condition."

This last remark recalls Seeskin's description of the reader-auditors' sense of their own incompetencies as comparable to those of interlocutors in elenchos (Seeskin, Dialogue, p. 15). It is difficult, upon reflection, to feel smug about the Athenians' shamed recognition of their complicity in basic human realities. The urge to self-assertion is, after all, one that has allure for all humans.

266I disagree with the critical opinion that holds out hope for the idealized Athens of the third stasimon. Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 23, for example, compares Medea to the Furies at the end of the Eumenides and suggests that "Medea might undergo a transformation and join the company of benevolent forces, since her promise to Aegeus, like theirs at the end of the Eumenides, is one of fruitfulness (714-15)." Burnett blames Jason more than Medea for the pollution in the play, and likens Medea to Nemesis who may take refuge "at Athens, a city that is healthy and virtuous still." (p. 24).

McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 105-106, by contrast, does not forget that Aegeus' child will be attacked by Medea, and instead calls attention to the implication in the Choral song that Medea's presence will pollute Athens. McDermott extends this threat of pollution to the Athens idealized in the minds of the the 431 B. C. theater-goers: "The clarity of the easy patriotism which the poet seemingly seeks to arouse with the Chorus's glittering evocation of Athens's pristine beauty is tainted by these haunting questions. One more revered truth is assailed as the Athenians are reluctantly drawn to see a chink in their pervasive assumption of virtue."
stands for, provided she further their interests. By bringing Medea literally home to his audience, Euripides, like Socrates in elenchos, drew the Athenians, as final interlocutors, into highly personal involvement with the definitions presented (and ultimately refuted) on stage.

But Euripides, like Socrates, did not only demand of his audience personal involvement. He likewise afforded them a distance from which they, emotionally disengaged, could see their own behaviors and beliefs in a new light.

The Impersonal Aspect

In an attempt to explain the factors that contribute to the extreme discomfort one is likely to feel as Medea draws to a close, Bennett Simon remarks, "The portrayal of character... leaves us with no one to admire, no one with whom we can make a comfortable and sustained identification, let alone a heroic identification."\textsuperscript{267}

Although Simon addresses his remark to a modern audience, critics have long sensed that the Athenian audience of 431 B. C. would have found Medea, Jason, and, to a lesser extent, Creon, less than palatable. In short, Medea is a

\textsuperscript{267}Simon, \textit{Tragic Drama}, p. 98. Cf. McDermott, \textit{Incarnation}, p. 70: "The audience's sympathies can attach themselves wholly to neither party [i.e., neither Medea nor Jason]; like the shades of unburied souls, they must hover disembodied, vainly seeking a final resting place." McDermott's final judgment is that "[b]oth characters repel, and so both sexes are indicted." (p. 114).
barbarian and a woman, Jason less than fully heroic, Creon a Corinthian. By assigning zero-sum characteristics to the likes of these, Euripides gives his audience, in Simon's words, "no one with whom [they] can make a comfortable and sustained identification." That is precisely the poet's aim.

Medea's foreign background is something Euripides keeps in his audience's mind. Indeed, the first lines of the play (6-12) describe Medea coming to Greece from another land. Medea herself, twice in her first speech to the Chorus, calls to mind her foreignness: she is, she reminds the women, a special case because of her status as stranger and because of having come from a barbarian land (ἐν τῷ, 222; ἐκ γῆς βαρβάρου, 255). The Chorus

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268 Medea's "otherness" is discussed by Goldhill, Reading, pp. 116-117. For Medea as a composite figure, some of whose elements are meant to discourage emotional involvement of the audience, see Gellie, "Character," pp. 18-22. See also Friedrich, "Medea's Rache," p. 236, for Euripides' artistry in bringing Medea into this world without ever taking her out of the world of myth. Mills, Mythopoeia, passim, argues the thesis (p. 8) that "[Medea] is both male and female, good and evil, Hellene (i.e. Corinthian) and barbarian (i.e. Kolchian); a Heliad descendant of the Sun-god who is at the same time linked with chthonic powers."

269 Foley, "Divided Self," p. 81, recognizes both Medea's barbarism and her femininity as distancing mechanisms exploited by Euripides to demonstrate "the contradictions inherent in this heroic ethic and behavior." Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 49, sees in Medea's barbarism the expression of naked, uncivilized physis; "... a symbol of the terrible closeness of all human nature to barbarism; in her inadequate σοφροσύνη and her imperfect sophia is represented the norm of Hellenic, and most human, society."
see Medea's alien status, though, as cause for sympathy, not contempt (ἐπὶ δὲ ἐνα ναιεῖς χῶνι, 435-436).

The same cannot be said of Jason's attitude. He throws it up in Medea's face that by marrying him she has gained the great advantage of living in "Greece instead of a barbarian land" (Ἑλλάδ' ἀντὶ βαρβάρου χθονὸς γαϊν, 536-537). Later in the play he bemoans the fact that he was the one to have brought her "from a barbarian land to a Greek home" (βαρβάρου . . . ἀπὸ χθονὸς Ἕλλην' ἐς οἶκον, 1330-1331), because no "Greek woman" ever would have dared kill her own children (1339-1340).

In Jason's words one can detect the prejudice against foreigners and xenophobia familiar from other ancient Greek texts; Medea thus understandably suspects Jason abandoned her because of such prejudice, i.e., that he realized his "barbarian marriage" would not serve his reputation well in his old age (591).

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270 For the Nurse's role in increasing audience sympathy for Medea, see Pucci, Violence, pp. 32-58, and Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 37-40.

271 Moline, Plato's Theory, p. 24, sees Medea's lack of the typical Greek woman's sōphrosuné as one in a long list of factors which would alienate her from audience sympathy. I would argue that Medea lacks this virtue because Euripides has depicted her as a zero-sum competitor, which depiction would win her some sympathy. Shaw, "Female Intruder," pp. 258-259, however, sees Medea as a typically Greek woman in her moral values and her skills, the latter of which differ from the average only in degree.
The foreignness of Medea, then, creates a distance between her and the audience, who, if they were typical Greeks, were prejudiced against non-Greeks (especially Easterners) and xenophobic. For although they, like the Chorus, would probably recognize in Medea's isolation the competitor's familiar plight, the males of the audience nonetheless would feel more affinity for Jason than Medea. For they, no less than Medea and the Chorus (or any of us, for that matter), could find in sex difference an easy peg upon which to hang the cause for all the dissonance they sense in their own operational beliefs. Recall that the Chorus were eager and ready to blame men for the oath-breaking and disregard for \textit{aidôs} that are regular features of the zero-sum competition in which they nonetheless engage (414-415, 439-441).

Should we be surprised, then, if Jason is sexist in

\textit{272} Page, \textit{Medea}, pp. xviii-xix, describes the various facets of this prejudice and phobia. For Euripides' amelioration of Medea's barbarian status, see Hills, \textit{Mythopoeia}, pp. 94-97.

\textit{273} Murray, \textit{Euripides}, pp. 53-54, claims of Medea that "the plain man thought that such women should simply be thrashed, not listened to."

\textit{274} See Marylin B. Arthur, "Classics," \textit{Signs} 2 (1976), p. 390: "The extreme sexual dimorphism of ancient Greek society was both its most rigid rule and its most absorbing problem. Inner and outer space, rational and irrational forces, religion and politics, chaos and order, bestial and human, human and divine, death and life—all were capable, in the imaginative life of the Greeks, of being subsumed under and expressed by the relation between male and female."
attributing to women negative aspects of zero-sum competition? With Jason as their model, the audience is afforded the comfort of distance from the more nefarious facets of competition. Jason is smug in citing Medea's sex as the cause for the heavy offence she takes at being worsted (568-573). When he proposes disposing of the female sex altogether (573-575), Jason (and, vicariously, the male audience) projects onto the opposite

275Hills, Mythopoeia, p. 65, sees in Jason's misogyny that of the Athenians.

Medea is not, however, entirely female; she usurps a male role in her aggressiveness and strength. This, nonetheless, could still serve as a distancing mechanism in a revenge play. See Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," pp. 3-9, who notes that although feminizing avengers tends to make them appear weaker, and their revenge therefore ethically more palatable, Euripides eschews this mitigation which would give his play "moral delicacy." Instead, in Medea, Euripides "embrac[es] the rudeness of a simple archaic revenge."

Even though Medea does become in some sense masculine, she remains, nonetheless, female, and this affords the male audience objectivity. Zeitlin, "Playing the Other," p. 67, makes an important point on gender of characters in the ancient Greek theater: "Even when female characters struggle with the conflicts generated by the particularities of their subordinate social position, their demands for identity and self-esteem are nevertheless designed primarily for exploring the male project of selfhood in the larger world as these impinge upon men's claims to knowledge, power, freedom and self-sufficiency--not for some greater entitlement or privilege, as some have thought, that the female might gain for herself, not even for revising notions of what femininity might be or mean."

276Hippolytus begins his famous diatribe against women (Hippolytus 616-668) with a similar suggestion. How much audience sympathy he retains by the end of the presentation of his belabored, excessive position is questionable. Theseus, at least (967-970), is not convinced by Hippolytus' projection of sexual misconduct onto women.
sex the cutthroat retaliation inevitable for losers in zero-sum competition. In so doing, the audience is allowed to view such behavior as being every bit as despicable as it is.277

The audience, then, doubly identifies with Jason against Medea, because he is Greek and male. They are allowed by this identification an objective, and probably

277Moline, "Euripides, Socrates," p. 53, emphasizes the maniacal aspects of Medea's cutthroat competitiveness, and concludes that audience identification with her was thereby precluded: "Medea was of course worse than queer. She was a crazed, would-be child-murderess and regicide who had already killed her own brother, as we are reminded at 167, and had been responsible for Pelias' dying a horrible death at the hands of his daughters, as she admits at 483-487. She regards herself as having betrayed her own father and his house, an estimate certain to be shared by a conventional Greek audience. One would not have to be a worldly rhetorician to recognize that ordinary Athenians in the audience would not be at all likely to identify with her."

Moline is of course correct; cf. Richmond Lattimore, The Poetry of Greek Tragedy (Baltimore and Oxford: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1958), p. 108 n. 7, for Medea as "pre-eminent cutter-up and boiler-woman." Moline's observation, however, aims to disprove the view that Medea can be considered a mouthpiece for Euripides' polemic against Socrates. But rather than merely making Medea discreditable as a mouthpiece, through Medea's "crazed" actions Euripides illustrates the emotionally repugnant, yet nonetheless logical consequence of zero-sum objectives. If, in fact, the object is self-advancement, and if it is deemed acceptable to use other people as means to that end, Medea should be considered a consummate player. Crazed she is, to be sure, but crazed also is zero-sum competition, which is Euripides' point, as Moline would doubtlessly agree.

critical, perspective on Medea and the definitions she manifests. In short, the audience mirrors the Chorus' perspective: while the Chorus are sympathetic with Medea and prejudiced against Jason, the audience is sympathetic with Jason and prejudiced against Medea. Yet Medea and Jason manifest—at least by the play's end—the same definitions.

The audience must surely have some sense of this, especially because Jason, as hero, can hardly fit the bill. It has been a critical norm that Jason leaves something to be desired. Some critics, in fact, find his behavior despicable. Most of these comments, however, as Robert Palmer has argued, betray modern sensibilities anachronistically assumed to apply to the Athenian males sitting in the audience. It is true enough that Jason is opportunistic and callous in his treatment of Medea and the children, but, after all, so much would be expected of him as a zero-sum competitor. If he is

278 Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 37, describes Euripides' Jason as "a vulgar adventurer" and terms his characterization by Euripides a "deflation of traditional heroism." Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 60-72, sketches Jason's decline from "true consort of Medea" to "loser."


280 Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 15, expresses contempt for Jason's behavior; many of her criticisms are of tactics common to zero-sum competitors.
to win, certain of the "quiet" virtues must be shunted aside. In regard to his desire for self-advancement, then, it is unlikely that many of the audience would be sorely put out by Jason's behavior. It is his tenuous hold on the status of hero, or even of mere winner, however, that would win for Jason an objective distance from Euripides' audience.

Jason's deficiencies as a hero in Euripides' Medea have not gone unremarked in the critical literature. For while Knox, Bongie, and others have compared Medea to Ajax or Achilles, no one compares Jason favorably to other Greek heroes. This is no mere misapplication of modern sensibilities, for there is evidence that, at least by the time of Medea, Jason's stature as hero was open to attack. The reasons for this are fairly obvious; the main one is broadcast by Medea as soon as Jason gives her a chance to speak. After welcoming him with the label θαγκάκιστε and accusing him of ἀνανορίσα (465-466), Medea spells out what she claims every Greek on the Argo knew, that she saved Jason and herself performed all

281 Palmer, "Apology," passim, argues that Jason's treatment of Medea would be considered reasonable by the male audience, who, given the Periclean citizenship law of 451/450, would sympathize with Jason's desire for legitimate male heirs. Conacher, Euripidean Drama, p. 190 n. 10, counters that, had Euripides intended us to sympathize with Jason, he would not have "let him cut such a sorry figure in comparison with Medea in this scene."

282 For bibliography on an earlier, healer and wizard Jason, see Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 60 nn. 4-6.
exploits necessary for securing the fleece and trying to gain his father's throne (476-487). And although Jason denigrates Medea's role in his success, he feels no qualms about crediting Aphrodite as the "savior" of his enterprise (527-528).

These two claims together spell out the primary obstacle to Jason's heroism. He was, it seems, incapable of great deeds without the help of others, most notably women and goddesses. Had Euripides wanted to suppress what was, even in his day, Jason's questionable hold on heroic status, he would have omitted Medea's belittling recollection of Jason's past impotence. But instead, Euripides begins and ends his play with reminders of the Argonautic expedition, and makes use of what Moses Hadas has called, in his article by that name, "The Tradition of a Feeble Jason," to increase distance between

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283Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 64-65, sees in the nautical imagery the suggestion that Medea is a new Argonaut, whose successes underscore Jason's failures; Jason, not even capable of navigating successfully through the storm of his wife's verbiage (525), is henpecked.

284Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 60, further remarks that, on the voyage to Colchis, other Argonauts outshone Jason by their exploits. Cf. Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 16, who notes that "Jason had never been a hero according to the rule, for he had not set off alone (or with a single companion) but rather in a vast company . . . ."

285Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 16, remarks that "[t]he myth of the Argonauts hangs like a great painted scene behind this play . . . ."
Jason and the audience.  

But besides being feeble in past exploits, Jason has, in the play's present and future time, another strike against him. He is once again no hero, no victor; even worse, he is finally a total loser. It is obvious to all but Jason himself that he is worsted by Medea in their every encounter. His attempts at sophistic argumentation are callow and pathetic. His every avowed aim is overthrown by the end: he has no security, no position, no children past and no hope of them in the future. He is the very picture of impotence as he rages at the suspended, out of reach Medea. Medea's prediction of his ignoble death--beaned on the head by a rotting hunk of the Argo--is the death knell not just for Jason, but for his heroic status as well (1386-1388).  

286 Moses Hadas, "The Tradition of a Feeble Jason," CP 31 (1936), pp. 166-168. Hadas argues from the evidence of an early fifth century B.C. crater, which shows Jason puny and outclassed by the dragon, Athena, and another Argonaut, and from the limited evidence on the Naupactia that Apollonius Rhodius' ἀμήχανος Jason is not the first helpless Jason, but instead a tradition (perhaps comic) from the fifth century. For Jason's extensive reliance on Medea, see von Fritz, Tragödie, p. 332.  

287 Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 16, sees the destruction of Jason's line, a detail of his story common to all variations, as proof of his failure to prove his purity and thereby his right to rule. For such destruction as the rightful punishment of perjurers, see Rickert, "Akrasia," pp. 106-113.  

whose sympathy for Jason undoubtedly increases as their ability to identify with Medea decreases, is left with the picture of an aging never-was hero, as decrepit as his moldering ship. If, in fact, the Athenians of Euripides' time were as entrenched in zero-sum realities as we have suggested, they would have had little sympathy for such a thoroughgoing loser. Plans and intentions do not count among the competitive, after all; only results are used to measure the man. And by this measure, Jason comes up short.

So, too, does Creon, who espouses competitive virtues, but lacks the detachment to remain aloof from the plight of his competitor, Medea. Creon therefore also loses in his contest, and dies in the offing. But Creon has an even stronger mark against him, at least in the eyes of the Athenian audience of 431 B.C. For Creon is a Corinthian, and the Athenians had in the preceding year engaged in

his spiritual paucity, his failure in the struggle against banalization. Similarly, Blaklock, "Nautical Imagery," pp. 233-234, sees "decadence" as one of Medea's themes, and comments that "[t]he falling beam which did [Jason] to death but translated into physical tragedy the spiritual catastrophe of a lost soul." Cf. p. 236, where the Argo, according to Blaklock, "suggests the ship of [Jason's] person."

Adkins, Merit, p. 35, speaking of the warrior code in the Homeric world: "Success is so imperative that only results have any value: intentions are unimportant."
bitter hostilities with Corinth. It is therefore likely that Euripides would have had to work hard to avoid arousing his audience’s contempt for any Corinthian character. The poet expends no such effort on Creon. By his silence he leaves his audience to their prejudice and resentment.

Simon, then, is right: Euripides indeed leaves us, and his original audience even more so, "... with no one to admire, no one with whom we can make a comfortable and sustained identification, let alone a heroic identification." Like Socrates who claims the logos does the refuting and thereby allows an objective distance from which to consider the disputed definitions, Euripides, too, prevents his audience from totally identifying with the definitions manifested on stage by his characters. For

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290 Ohlander, Suspense, p. 64. See Page, Medea, p. xxv, for strained relations between Athens and Corinth as evidenced by the rumor reported by Parmeniskos that the Corinthians had bribed Euripides to shift the murder of the children from their ancestors to Medea. McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 98-99, adds that Creon’s more tyrannical mode upon his entrance would have contributed to his being stereotyped as an unsympathetic Corinthian.

291 I do not, however, agree with Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," pp. 15 n. 27, 18 n. 40, and 19, who finds Creon culpable and therefore somehow deserving of his hideous fate. Burnett involves the Corinthian king in Jason’s crime of not respecting oaths and incriminates Creon in his daughter’s greed and vanity. Creon cannot win with Burnett; she criticizes first his exiling Medea before she commits any crime because it "violate[s] ordinary Hellenic practice" (p. 15 n. 27), and then his being "weak and a traitor to his own definition of what a ruler should be" (p. 18 n. 40) when he grants Medea a reprieve.
this reason he has drawn Medea, Jason, and Creon so that no competitive Athenian could consistently empathize with any of them. In this, he leaves space in which he can practice his maieutic art, in which he, like Socrates, can subtly suggest the truth through analogy.
Introductory Remarks

In Chapter One it was acknowledged that Socrates, as midwife, more often than not is unable to bring the truth to birth from his interlocutors, who flee to avoid another round of elenchos. The reason interlocutors want to avoid elenchos, it was argued, stems from Socrates' habitual use of analogies to technai. These analogies subtly impose upon the proposed definitions a consistency and logic whereby the end, an acknowledged benefit, informs the means, and not vice versa. The subtle imposition is made overt when Socrates, near the end of elenchos, syllogistically applies definitions conceded within analogies to the particular actions put forth as definitions by interlocutors. Interlocutors flee, then, when they realize that analogies to crafts render the particular actions proposed indefensible as definitions because those actions do not result in benefit. Truth is not born because interlocutors are too emotionally invested in their beliefs to allow them to be reformulated by analogies to crafts. Such reformulation would render their beliefs no longer recognizable as their own, and, as if that were not enough, interlocutors would then be left with the messy job of adjusting all actions informed by those beliefs.
The *elenchos* is not, then, brought in early dialogues to its true termini, the birth of truth and the moral improvement concomitant with that birth. Instead, analogies are left, suspended alongside the failure to achieve definition, to work suggestion on the ultimate interlocutor, Plato's reader-auditor. These analogies encourage the reader-auditor to "fiddle with the premises" in an attempt to arrive at definitions that will withstand *elenchos*, i.e., that will not collapse under analogies to crafts. In the end, the truth is only a faint suggestion, an unsolved riddle with intriguing clues.

Euripides, in constructing his *elenchos* in *Medea*, similarly draws analogies to crafts, which suggest to his interlocutors in the play (the Chorus) and to the ultimate interlocutors in the audience the truth that remains unborn at the end of the play. By applying the analogy of the craft of music to the definition of *aretē*, Euripides suggests that the *aretē* of the zero-sum competitor does not...

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292 W. G. Arnott, "Red Herrings and Other Baits: A Study in Euripidean Techniques," *MPL* 3 (1978), pp. 14-16, gives examples (but not from *Medea*) of Euripides' technique of using "linked images . . . to deepen our understanding of complex situations by making us see the implications of startling relationships and unexpected patterns of events." Arnott then (pp. 16 ff.) goes on to illustrate what he terms Euripides' use of "symbolic analogy," whereby the poet presents " . . . at a relatively early stage of a play, well before the details of the climax can be predicted, a mythical parallel to one of the events that will belong to that climax."

Both techniques are related to the one argued for here: use of analogies to craft to suggest a solution beyond the effected reversal.
achieve its proper end, but instead produces music's antithesis, dissonance and disharmony. Then, by applying the analogy of the craft of medicine both to the definition of aretē and to sophia, Euripides suggests that sophia, informed by competitive aretē, does not achieve medicine's proper end, health. Such a sophia is in fact destructive, whereas its potential is curative.

Euripides' elenchos, like that of Socrates, is not content to stop at suggestion that comes from subtle imposition of the analogies. Instead, as will be argued below (Part Five), Euripides drives home the logic of the benefit of health derived from the analogy to medicine by syllogistically bringing it to bear in the realm of the definition of competitive erōs. Here, the stark contrast between life-bestowing benefits that are readily identified with erōs, procreation and flourishing, and the produce of erōs in zero-sum competition, destruction and death, jolts the audience out of complacent acceptance of zero-sum definitions. It leaves them with a windegg, impels them toward the hard work of redefinition, and, ultimately, toward bringing truth to birth.

Aretē and Music: The Virtue of Harmony

Music in Medea is first heard, and only later defined 293Pace Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 73, who considers Euripides' treatment of music a "minor motif"; a "discourse on the origins of music" is something from which "Euripides cannot forbear."
as a craft with analogous bearing on areté. Before Medea ever appears, she "sings" (μέλει, 150) offstage, as the Chorus remark shortly after their entrance. And indeed she is "singing," for the Chorus' use of this verb is no mere metaphor. Medea--and the Nurse who sings responsively to her--uses lyric anapests (96-130, 139-147), a dignified meter appropriate to the lamentation she describes herself as singing (δούρμῶν, 112). But hers is a disconcerting song, and not because of the cries of ἔω and αἷᾶ. These regularly punctuate tragic lament and would not sound as unnatural to the Greeks as they do to us. Medea's song is disconcerting because it careens from mournful lament to explosions of violence. As such, it is the antithesis of one of music's fundamentals, the melding of two or more elements into harmonious union.

Medea's song is disturbing to both the Nurse and the Chorus. It is too violent and estranging to qualify as the lament suggested by the anaplectic meter. That Medea twice expresses suicidal desires (96-97, 144-147) is not

294 Pace Page, Medea, p. 81 at line 150, who acknowledges that "such a use of the verb is very rare in Tragedy."

295 Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 74, sees Medea's "moans, curses, and shrieks" as evidence of the Nurse's allegation (190-200) that traditional song is not able to cure pain.

296 Elliott, Medea, p. 75 at line 96.
necessarily strange in a lament, but that she hates her children, curses them along with their father, and wishes destruction upon the whole house (111-114) is. The Nurse is therefore understandably concerned for the children's safety (89-94, 98-105), for Medea's lament reveals more than sorrow: it reveals deep alienation. Medea's song signals dissolution of all social ties, or so the Nurse cautions the solicitous Chorus: there is no home (140) for them to be friends to, and besides, Medea will not respond to comforting words of friends (143-144). The Nurse attributes Medea's alienation to "the moods of tyrants" (119-130), whose propensity for excelling as opposed to living "on equal terms" is the hallmark of the play's most highly approved individual—the zero-sum competitor (see above, Part One).

Given the disturbing content of Medea's song, it is no wonder that the Nurse takes time to ponder the use to which song should be put:

You would not err calling men of times ago bumbling and not smart in any way, those men who devised songs (ὑμνοὺς)—the delightful (τερπνάς) sounds of life—for use at feasts and banquets and at dinners; but no one found a way, with music and with strains of many strings (μούσῃ καὶ πολυχόρδους ὕμνος), to stop hateful pains (στυγίος... λυπὸς), from which death and terrible/clever chance trip up (σφιλλοῦσι) houses. And yet it would be gain for mortals to cure these things with song (μολωῆς); but where there are luxurious feasts, why strain the voice in vain? For the ready-to-hand fulfillment of the feast in itself holds delight (τέρψιν) for mortals. (190-203).

Some of the Nurse's remarks must await comment; here we
note the preponderance of musical terms, signalling the introduction of the musical analogy in full force. The Nurse suggests that song be used to stop hateful (συγγίος) pains that lead to the overthrow of houses. She describes such an "overthrow" in competitive terms: houses are "tripped up" as are wrestlers by a throw.

Indeed, in the house of Medea antagonism reigns over cooperation. Medea, according to the Nurse, "hates" her children (συγγεί ὑπὸ παιδίας, 36). Medea's very nature is "hateful" (συγγεράν ... φύσιν, 103); the Nurse has, in addition, heard Medea call herself "hateful" (συγγερᾶς ματρός, 113) and her life "hateful" (βιοτάν συγγεράν, 147). All this hate results from Medea's strife with Jason and the assault on her status as successful competitor.

The Nurse proposes that song could, given the chance, cure such hatred, strife, and antagonism,297 all of

297 Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 191, notes that "[o]ne of the play's recurrent themes is that of song and the Muses ... " and lists the Nurse's speech, along with the first stasimon and the Ode to Athens, as expressions of this theme. Easterling offers that these passages "draw attention to the ambivalence of human intelligence and creativity, which is potentially a source of beauty and harmony, but liable, too, to break out in destructive violence under the influence of passion." To Easterling, Medea's heroic self-image is used by Euripides to increase the sense of tragedy, and is not itself, as I propose, the ultimate source of the violence.

Cunningham, "Medea," pp. 153-154, argues that the Nurse's speech is meant by Euripides to suggest "a mode of analysis" of the play; Medea's perpetuation of the strife
which are absent from the situations in which the Nurse finds song unnecessary, "at feasts and banquets and at dinners." This is because the sharing of elaborate repasts, as Finley explains, itself promotes solidarity:

Through the sharing of food—in substantial quantities, it should be noted, not just symbolically—a bond was instituted, or renewed, in ceremonial fashion, tying men and gods, the living and the dead, into an ordered universe of existence. It was as if the constant repetition of the feast were somehow necessary for the preservation of the group, whether on the oikos level or on the larger scale of the class, and also for the establishment of peaceful relations across lines, with strangers and guest-friends.298

But Medea, far from sharing food with others, is alone and "lies without eating" (24). Her dissonantly violent lament is the antithesis of the Nurse’s definition of song, the "delightful" (τερπυνάς, 194) sounds of life. Song’s delightfulness explains, according to the Nurse, why it is extraneous at the feast, for the feast in itself holds "delight" (τέρψιν).

Song as sung in Medea, the alienating song of the zero-sum competitor, will be shown to contain its own twisted "delight." At 1135, Medea informs the Messenger that if he reports that Creon and his daughter died horribly, "you will delight me twice as much" (δις τόσον . . . ἄν τέρψειας ἦμας). Medea likewise

music should end marks her as excessive and therefore unsympathetic.

298 Finley, World of Odysseus, pp. 125-126.
imagines that she has, by killing her children, thwarted Jason’s chance "to live a delightful life, laughing at me" (τερπνόν διάξειν βίοτον ἐγγελῶν ἐμοί, 1355). These are the perverse delights from the song of strife: joy taken at the suffering of others, especially when that suffering has put the other into the one-down position one sought to escape.

It is no coincidence, then, that, just as Medea "sang" at the play’s beginning her song of pain, so, near the play’s end, another voice lifts a similar song. The death scene of Creon’s daughter is heralded by a servant who "sang responsively a great wail of grief" (Ἀντίμολπον ἂκεν ὀλολυγῆς μέγαν κῶκυτόν, 1176-1177). This horrifying scene is the second chorus of competition’s discordant song, the answering round to Medea’s opening lament.

The Chorus, however, even after hearing Medea’s disturbing lament and the Nurse’s opinion that song be used to cure, themselves choose to sing the strife-ridden song of the zero-sum competitor and express their initial impression of song’s function: it is to be used to attain superiority.299 The Corinthian women’s enthusiasm for

299 Whether the songs upon which the women hope to improve are epic songs, as Boedeker, "Medea," p. 108 n. 53, argues, or lyric, specifically the misogynistic iambics of Archilochus, Hipponax, and Semonides, as argues Page (following Verrall), Medea, p. 104 at line 423, is less important than that the women do not question the validity of using song to benefit the individual, i.e., to get and
petition and their "us vs. them" posture in the first strophe-antistrophe pair of the first stasimon (410-430) have already been discussed. Since these women are the play's primary singers, the beginning of their first formal song is important in setting song's definition. What they suggest is contrary to the Nurse's opinion: song's proper subject-matter is competition; furthermore, since control of song is the mark of superiors, they, now that they have the opportunity, are determined to use song to their advantage:

... honor will come to the female race; no longer will an ill-sounding (δυσκέλαδος) reputation hold us. The muses (μοῦσαι) of ancient singers (ἀοιδῶν) will cease to hymn (ὑμνεῦσαι) my faithlessness. For Phoebus, lord of songs (μελέων), did not bestow on our mind inspired lyre-song (λυρας . . . ἀοιδάν); otherwise I would have sung in response a song (ἀντάχησθ' ἄν ὑμνον) to the race of men. The long stretch of time has much to say about our part and the part of men. (421-430).

Again, the preponderance of musical terms is remarkable. The Chorus' complaint is that they, as women, had in the past no access to song, and, therefore, men were able with impunity to destroy their reputation. The tables have turned: women now are the singers and intend to return tit for tat to men. The "ill-sounding" reputation that once applied to women will now sound discordant in songs about men. They do not for a moment entertain using keep power, rather than using it, as the Nurse has suggested, to bond opposing factions.
song to remedy the woes of competition, as the Nurse has so recently suggested. The women's use of song will continue the competition and strife.

The play's next mention of song finds it again in the competitive arena. This time it is Jason who, in describing to Medea his competitor's preference for reputation above all else, unwittingly recalls the song analogy and, in the process, like the Chorus, rejects the Nurse's notion that song be harmonizing:

... besides, all the Greeks perceive you as smart and you have a reputation (δόειαν); but if you lived on the outermost boundaries of the earth, there would be no word (λόγος) of you. As far as I'm concerned, I'd rather have no gold in my house or no song to sing finer than Orpheus (Ὀρφέως κάλλιον ύμνησα μέλος) than have no remarkable success (ἐπίσημος ή τύχη). (539-544).

Jason clearly vies for advancing his reputation for success above all else, and, in this, defines his priorities as competitive rather than cooperative. Particularly telling in this regard is Jason's rejection of Orpheus' song, for by this rejection he chooses strife over concord:300

The cosmogonies sung by Orpheus, by rehearsing the origin of the universe, promote order. When Orpheus sails with Jason and the Argonauts, for example, the very first song he sings for the heroes, to calm the strife arisen among them, is a cosmogony. This song has a cosmic significance for the cosmic journey of the Argonauts. In addition, it demonstrates one of the commonest features of cosmogonies: they are intimately related to the restoration of order in

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300Simon, *Tragic Drama*, p. 73 n. 8, sees Orpheus merely as singer, and, as such, the instrument of fame Jason so desires. He notes that Jason disparages this instrument, but offers no explanation.
situations of strife.\textsuperscript{301}

saying that Jason chooses an anti-Orphic strife does not
mean that he chooses chaos and anarchy, but instead strife
that fuels competition. Orpheus, according to Freiert,
rejects "logos 'speech, argument, reason,' the discursive
system of the polis"--the very logos that Jason cites as an
advantage Medea has gained from her tenure in Greece (541,
quoted above). In short,

Orpheus stands for the removal of argument and strife
in the secular sphere . . . . [He] appears as
nonheroic, alien to the warrior-hunter ethic, and
alien to the poetry of praise (kleos) and blame that
legitimizes heroic behavior in the archaic Greek
society.\textsuperscript{302}

The Orphic song that Jason rejects, then, is the sort of
tune that would appeal to the non-competitive Nurse, who
praises living "on equal terms" with others, and wants to
"grow old in not-greatness" (122-123). This sort of song,
however, has little appeal to anyone else in the play,
certainly not to Medea, the Chorus, or Jason.

It does, however, make its appearance in the third
stasimon, the Ode to Athens (824-865). Here, after having
heard Medea and Aegeus follow up his "overture" of wishing
his friend well--"Medea, may you be well! For no one knows
a finer overture than this for addressing friends"

\textsuperscript{301}William K. Freiert, "Orpheus: A Fugue on the
Polis," in Myth and the Polis, ed. Dora C. Pozzi and John
H. Wickersham (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press,

As they begin to sing, they describe Athens as the place where "the nine holy Pierian Muses produced golden Harmony" (Ἄγνας ἐννέα Πιερίδας Μούσας λέγουσι εἰσάνθαν Ἀρμονίαν φυτεύσαι 830–834). The connection between the Muses and Harmonia is not traditional and thus must be read as metaphorical. This concocted connection fits in well with the spirit of the first half of the ode, where nearly everyone is connected, either genealogically or through shared action, with everyone else. The cooperative milieu has been noted above (Part Two). Here we can add that the

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303 The line could, of course, be translated, "golden Harmony produced the nine holy Pierian Muses," pace Page, Medea, pp. 132-133 at line 831, who terms this "a meaningless and absurd idea" but explains that "Ἀρμονία here denotes the Union of the nine Muses: where these are together, they create a tenth essence, the child of none alone but of all together." As metaphor or allegory, however, I find it impossible to explain the difference between the two translations. Though I lean toward Page's preference, two considerations call it into question: 1) the verb, φυτεύω, is used elsewhere in the play to mean "beget, give birth to" (878, 1078). It is hard, at least for me, to imagine nine Muses laboring to give birth to one Harmony. 2) Euripides mentions Harmonia's "true" mother, Aphrodite, two lines later in the stasimon, which would seem an awkward intrusion upon the birthing Muses.

304 See Page, Medea, p. 133 at line 831.
cooperation seems natural, given the implied and expressed
genealogical connections between participants:305 In
lines 824-825, inhabitants of Athens are "the descendents
of Erechtheus" and "children of the blessed gods," i.e.,
dually descended, as Elliott explains, from Erechtheus and
the river god Cephisus, Erechtheus' relative, who is
mentioned in line 835.306 In lines 830-833, the Muses
are said, contrary to received tradition, to have been the
parents of Harmonia, whose traditional mother, Aphrodite,
is mentioned in line 836. Finally, the Erotes of line 844
recall Eros, who is Aphrodite's traditional cohort, or who
is sometimes even considered her son.

In short, this song depicts "harmony" in the non-
technical sense of the word. According to Giovanni
Comotti, harmonia's original meanings are "... 'joint,
connection, adaptation' (cf. Hom. Od. 5.248), and therefore
'pact, convention,'" out of which its musical senses
grew.307 What the Chorus present in the first strophe-

305 Simon, Tragic Drama, pp. 84 and 100, following
Pucci, Violence, pp. 122-123, senses a paucity of men and
stress on chastity and parthogenesis in the ode. Simon
suggests that this song encodes a wish by the Corinthian
women for separation from men.

306 Elliott, Medea, p. 89 at lines 825-856.

307 Giovanni Comotti, Music in Greek and Roman
Culture, trans. Rosaria V. Munson (Baltimore and London:
Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989), p. 24. By contrast,
Musurillo, "Reconsideration," p. 60, sees harmony in this
stasimon in terms of domination and control: "... it
represents the enlightened and sophisticated discipline of
the passions, the avoidance of extremes, and the elevation
antistrophe pair as they describe the cooperation and connection between the mythological inhabitants and visitants of Athens, is a song of harmony, the antithesis to the songs of strife sung by Medea offstage, themselves in the first stasimon, and preferred by Jason in his rejection of Orpheus.

When, then, in the second strophe-antistrophe pair, they imagine Medea the child-killer, the manifestation of the song of competitive strife, rejected from this harmonious environment at Athens, they are, as interlocutors in elenchos, for the first time sensing how the music-analogy imposes its logic upon the particular definition of aretè they have supported, Medea's ethic of competition. The two modes of song do not fit; there can be no joint, no connection, no harmony born from the second of these musics; the only hope is that Medea's song of strife will change its tune. The Chorus propose that Medea will be unable to engage in the violent slaughter of her

of what is best in man to the highest degree of excellence." It is obvious that, to Musurillo, the Erotes here are not equal partners, but untrustworthy elements that must be brought under control.

308 See Synnøve des Bouvrie, Women in Greek Tragedy (Oslo: Norwegian Univ. Press, 1990; hereafter des Bouvrie, Women), p. 232, who suggests that the Harmonia of this ode "evokes the Harmonia of well-ordered society." Cf. Wendell Berry, "The Specialization of Poetry," in Standing By Words (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), p. 17: "Song ... is a force opposed to specialty and to isolation. It is a testimony of the singer's inescapable relation to the world, to the human community, and also to tradition."
sons (861) that her strife-ridden song forewarned.

When, however, the Chorus are forced to realize that hope for a change in Medea's "song" is gone, they begin to change their own tune in response to a growing sense of their own ignorance. Instead of singing brashly of putting down their competitors, as they did in the first stasimon, the Chorus' song is now one of humility and acknowledged perplexity. And this is the first and only time they lay claim, haltingly, to having a muse:

I have many times by now gone through rather subtle matters and I have come to conflict (ἀμίλλας) greater than the female race is required to seek out. For in fact we too have a muse (ἐστιν μούσα καὶ ἡμῖν), which has intercourse with us for the sake of wisdom (ἡ προσομιλεῖ σοφίας ἐνεκεν) -- not with all of us, to be sure. But among the many you would perhaps find a few; the race of women is not entirely without muse (οὐκ ἀ πό μου σον).

And I say that those of mortals who have no experience at all in and have not born children, they surpass in good fortune (προφέρειν εῖς εὐτυχίαν) those who have begotten. (1081-1093).

The Chorus' new humility, uncertainty, and perplexity as indicative of aporia has been discussed above (Part Two); the concern here is with the role of song in contest. Oddly enough, just as the women of the Chorus acknowledge their aporia, they redefine both conflict and song. These are to be put to the service of philosophic musings which lead to sophia. The conflict they describe is an internal one, not a conflict designed to put them on top of the heap of other contenders; the muse they claim is one who, like some lover, leads them after intercourse through labor to
sophia (see below, Part Five). Suddenly, the analogy to song has worked its suggestion, and a reorientation of conflict and sophia has taken place. No longer is sophia the means to success in conflict; success in conflict is defined as arriving at the beneficial terminus: sophia.

In this sense the women can rightly claim to being "mused." The competitive strife of the old definition of areté has momentarily been laid aside. In their newfound hesitation and uncertainty the women sing a uniquely non-competitive song. Their song, like the song of Medea at the play's beginning, is again in anapests; but this song, instead of veering wildly between lament and threats of violence, instead of signalling dissolution of all social ties, recognizes that the pain brought on oneself by loss of those connections is inescapable.

The women of the Chorus, instead of proposing as had Medea in her opening song, a wish for the destruction of one's own children, outline in detail the pain that comes when one must endure such a loss. Theirs is a proper lament, one that in its subject matter deflates the willful violence in Medea's strife-ridden lament. For what the women in their final lines (1097-1115) describe as the result of their "musings"--their awareness of the solicitous concern for those one loves the most, and the pain of loss that comes from death of those loved ones--is what unites all mortals and therefore defies the
competitive creed: true lament springing from loss.

Lament, ironically, unites even Jason and Medea at the play's end. 309

This song, then, counteracts the pseudo-lament of Medea's song of strife at the play's beginning. By singing it, the Chorus betray their dawning recognition that grief and mortality connect all humans, encourage cooperation and the "quiet" virtues, and discourage competition and self-advancement at the expense of others. The Chorus, like the audience, have come under the spell of the first of Euripides' analogies. The analogy to song has informed areté; virtue lies in harmony, cooperation. But that is not all: this virtue of harmony is also, as the Nurse more than once suggests, curative.

Areté and Medicine: The Virtue of Harmony as Remedy

Euripides wastes no time establishing in Medea an analogy between the craft of medicine and the definition of commendable behavior. He again first uses the Nurse to establish the analogy verbally, while Medea is again the one who gives the analogy its physical manifestation. In this analogy, however, the Nurse leads the way and Medea

309 So Boedeker, "Medea," pp. 108-109, who, although she can hear the Chorus' laments at 976-1001, and Jason's lament at the play's close, does not, however, seem to hear Medea's as the play begins. Boedeker argues that these closing ὁρανοὶ signal the change of story, from epic to tragic, effected by Medea herself.
manifests the analogy shortly after the Nurse has established it.

In lines 11-16 of her prologue, the Nurse contrasts the time before strife erupted between Jason and Medea with the present. She describes two types of Medea's behavior, cooperative and conflictive, and classifies the first of these as healthy, the second as diseased. Her long negative wish against the chain of events leading to the present ends as follows:

... nor would she [i.e., Medea] be living in this Corinthian land with her husband and children, gratifying (ἀνδριάνονομον) the citizens to whose land she came in exile, and herself agreeing with/in harmony with (εὐμφέρουσι) Jason in all things; which very thing is the greatest preservation (σωτηρία), when a wife does not stand apart from/disagree with (ἀιχουστατη) her husband. But now all things are enmity, and the dearest things are diseased (νῦν δ' ἔχορά πάντα, καὶ νοσεὶ τὰ φίλτατα).

The contrast, between a gratifying, agreeable/harmonious Medea, who does not create stasis, and one who does, in whose world enmity presides, is for the Nurse analogous to the contrast between health and disease. The former, the cooperative state, is "the greatest preservation," while the latter, the conflictive state, results in "disease" of the dearest things. As we

310 I do not agree with Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 13, who diagnoses the disease as Medea's perverted love, and thus, the poison as that which recreates this "diseased love" in her victims.

311 By the second century A. D., σωτηρία comes to mean "bodily health"; see LSJ⁹.
will see, the Nurse's description of this disease of "the dearest things" will later be picked up and made horrifically literal by Medea.

It is no wonder, then, that this Nurse opines that song should be used to "cure" (ἀκείσθαι) those things which "trip up houses" like thrown wrestlers (197-199). For the Nurse, health results from the virtue of harmony, not in competition and strife. No "cure" is needed at elaborate repasts, where the bonds between fellow humans are symbolically renewed. Now, however, in the play's present, where "the dearest things are diseased" and the unity of the oikos has dissolved (140), a cure, a new song, is needed. For not only does Medea "sing" a lament discordant because of its outbursts of hatred against the closest ties of family, she also, as described by the Nurse, lies ill abed.

The motif of the description and appearance of an "ill" protagonist is not peculiar to Medea. Hippolytus and Orestes open similarly; according to F. D. Harvey, the motif may have been so familiarly Euripidean as to have occasioned Aristophanic parodies of it in Wasps, Peace, and Birds. In Medea, Harvey notes, "Euripides does not use the


313 For Medea in the prologue described as a sacrificial victim, see Ohlander, Suspense, p. 40.
obvious words νόσος or μανία or the cognate verbs, but there is no need for him to do so; they would be redundant." Euripides does, however, give the Nurse a strictly medical term to describe Medea's condition as she speculates on her mistress' future actions: "What ever will she do, high-spirited [μεγαλοπλάγχνος, as a medical term, "with enlarged abdomen/viscera"], impetuous in spirit, stung by harm as she's been?" (108-110).

Beyond her momentary recourse to careful diagnosis, though, the Nurse goes on to describe Medea more generally as a sick woman: "... she keeps to her bed, she refuses food, her gaze is perpetually downcast, she weeps and rages, she may do something desperate." But not every sick woman "rages" and "may do something desperate," like harming her own children. Such symptoms are peculiar to the disease described by the Nurse in line 16: the epidemic of enmity which has infected even "the dearest things."

The spread of enmity is a fact of zero-sum competition


as described by Gouldner, and the ill effects on intimacy of competition's prime directive of self-advancement have already been described. Here, by drawing a medical analogy, Euripides skillfully and economically shows how deadly this game of cutthroat competition really is. Medea is patently sick. And with her glowering and threats, she puts the healthy continuance of her children in jeopardy.

The Nurse, and doubtlessly at this point the audience, cannot understand how the children have become implicated in what their father has done: "Why do your children share in the offense of their father?," the Nurse asks; "Why do you hate (ἐχθές) them?" (116-117). The question is a logical one, but the answer's logic is beyond the ken of human understanding. Disease spreads without regard for the connections between people; it spreads, in fact, most rapidly among those who are "close." In this way, the enmity that is epidemic in zero-sum competition is like a disease: it too respects no ties, not even those of family.

But Medea is not the only one infected with this disease, for she is not the only zero-sum contender in the play. Jason, too, is sick, although Euripides does not have him manifest his disease as a physical disability. Instead, Euripides uses Medea to diagnose Jason's illness:

This is not courage or boldness, to look friends in the face when you're doing them harm, but instead it is the greatest of all diseases among men, shamelessness. (ἀλλ' ἢ μεγίστη τῶν ἐν
shamelessness is the stock-in-trade of the zero-sum competitor, for, as Gouldner argues, shame becomes an ineffective tool of social control when the need for high self-esteem outstrips all other opinion. 317 Shamelessness allows one to do to another whatever one pleases in order to advance one’s own cause; it allows ruthless engagement in zero-sum competition. It is of shamelessness that Achilles accuses Agamemnon in Iliad 1.49 after hearing Agamemnon threaten that he will take away some other man’s prize to replace the one he forfeits. This well-known incident from the beginning of the Iliad in fact succinctly illustrates the zero-sum reality of someone winning only at the expense of another’s loss (for, as Achilles himself notes, there is no stockpile of prizes awaiting distribution), zero-sum mentality and ethics (on the part of Agamemnon), and the human costs of zero-sum competition. Here, too, perhaps only coincidentally, disease spreads, first literally as a plague sent by Apollo, then metaphorically, as Greeks continue to die

317 Gouldner, Enter Plato, pp. 94-97; cf. Adkins, Merit, pp. 43-46, who argues that aidōs spans both competitive and cooperative excellences, but that aidōs felt at defeat would be stronger than the aidōs which could restrain competitiveness. Adkins tellingly remarks that it nonetheless must have been aidōs that held Homeric society together, "... for a society of agathoi with no quiet virtues at all would simply destroy itself." (p. 46). This is what happens in Medea.
because the strife between Agamemnon and Achilles causes the latter to remove himself from the fighting, leaving the Greeks more vulnerable to death on the battlefield.

A comparison between *Iliad* 1 and *Medea* is instructive, for in both cases innocent bystanders die as a result of ruthlessly shameless self-advancement. Just as innocent Greeks died there, so in *Medea* innocents die from the "disease" of competitiveness. In *Medea*, the innocents are children, both the children of Jason and Medea as well as the child of Creon.318

If even children must die from the disease of competitive disharmony, it must be considered rampant. Euripides does, however, give one glimpse of health, and strengthens his analogy between competitive aretē and disease by showing a healthy climate as one of cooperation, where harmony is in fact born (834). I refer, of course, to the Athens of the first half of the third stasimon (824-845).

Wilhelm Nestle argues that in these lines Euripides portrays, with nearly clinical precision, Athens as an ideally healthy climate. Nestle in fact cites these lines from *Medea*, together with a few Euripidean fragments, as evidence that Euripides was not only acquainted with the medical literature of his time, but that he may even have had it in front of him as he composed. In lines 824 ff. of

318See further discussion below, Part Five.
Medea, Nestle points to Euripides' depiction of the "most brilliant air," the abundance of water, and "mild, soft breezes" as poetic paraphrases of the descriptions of health-bringing climates in the Hippocratic treatise, "On Airs, Waters, and Places."\(^{319}\) It is no coincidence that this healthy Athens is a place where Harmony is born (834), where cooperation is the *modus operandi* (see especially *παρέδρος* and *εὐνεργοῦς* of 844-845), and aretē of every sort the final outcome (845).

This, however, is a utopia. The real world, the strife-ridden, competition-crazed world of Jason and Medea, is by contrast heavily diseased.\(^{320}\) Even the Chorus seem to realize this as they comment after hearing Medea and Jason's first words to each other, "Terrible/clever is

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\(^{320}\) I would argue that Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," pp. 23-24, is perhaps more optimistic than Euripides in seeing in the Athens of the central ode a chance for Medea's regeneration and transformation into a benevolent force. The hope for such is there, I would maintain, but in the Chorus or the audience, not in Medea herself, who at the end of the play has, as every Athenian would know, unfinished future business in Athens. Boedeker, "Medea," pp. 110-112, suggests instead that Euripides has created in Medea a cautionary tale for Athenians. The idealistic Athens of the central ode puts in high relief the strife enacted on stage between Jason and Medea, whose domestic dispute hints at the political disaster awaiting Athens, should she, like Jason and Medea, misuse language, especially the language of trust which maintains bonds between φίλοι.
the wrath and hard to cure (δυσίατος), when friends engage in strife with friends" (ὅταν φίλοι φίλοισι συμβάλωσι ἔριν) (520-521).

Sophia and Medicine: Knowledge as Cure

Hard to cure the disease indeed proves to be, for although Medea seeks a "cure," the disease continues to spread, bringing pain and death. Euripides, by describing Medea's attempts to find a "cure" in the language of medicine, applies the medical analogy which has served to redefine aretē, in redefining sophia as well. Sophia, recall, is Medea's primary means to achieve victory over her competitors. The sophē Medea is the "smart" contender, the one whose "total commitment rationality" gains her success. This sophia, then, in terms of the medical analogy, is the skill and knowledge necessary for diagnosis of disease and prescription for a cure.

As we have seen, both the Nurse (108-110) and Medea (471-472) have displayed diagnostic abilities. Similarly, both set prescriptions for cure: the Nurse prescribes an unheeded cure of song (199-200), while her mistress' prescriptions for cure are filled and administered without delay by Medea herself. Medea's prescriptions, however, are not meant to cure the disease of competitive strife. Instead, Medea, who herself is clearly ill and yet

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321 The word is cited among "semi-technical medical terms" by Miller, "Medical Terminology," p. 165.
paradoxically the diagnosing physician, prescribes cures that will only alleviate, and then only for herself, the disease's symptom: the pain of being the loser in competition.

Medea's first choice is to try to feel better by seeing her enemy, Jason, in pain. She accomplishes this by hurling at him what she imagines will be stinging words: "You have done well in coming; I will be alleviated (κοψίσθησομαι) in my spirit by speaking ill of you, and you by listening will feel pain (λυπήση)." (472-474). Medea then proceeds to use her competitor's sophia to win a verbal competition. So much is clear from her remarks at 579-585, where she criticizes the speaker (she is of course insinuating Jason) who is "smart" at speaking yet "unjust" (ὁστὶς ἄδικος ἰν σοφὸς λέγειν πέφυκε, 580-581), assures Jason such a speaker "is not so smart" (ἐστιν ὦ ἴν ἄγαν σοφός, 583), and then promises to "lay" Jason "flat" with only "one word" (ἐν γάρ ἐκτενεῖ σ' ἐςος, 585). The implication is that she, Medea, is the truly "smart" one, and that with this sophia of hers she will deliver to her opponent the knockout punch.

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Miller, "Medical Terminology," p. 161, cites Orestes 43 and Philoctetes 735 as the only other uses of κοψίσθω with "medical force" in tragedy; according to Miller the verb is, however, "very common in the case histories of Epidemics 1 and 3; also Aph. 2.27." Vide contra Page, Medea, p. 106 at line 473, who is not convinced the verb is a medical term.
Thus, Medea hopes during this verbal interaction to "alleviate" her pain by recourse to competitive sophia. Medea acknowledges the pain caused by the disease of competitive strife when she tells Jason that she will have nothing of the brand of happiness he has hoisted off onto her, and which she describes as a "painful happy life" (λυπρὸς εὐδαιμών βίος, 598). Creon had earlier remarked to Medea on this pain: "you feel pain (λυπή) at having been deprived of your husband's bed" (286); Aegeus later sympathizes that it is understandable for Medea "to feel pain" (λυπεῖσθαι, 703) at her situation.

Medea, however, does not stop at using her competitive sophia to choose stinging words and thus administer pain to her enemy. This is probably because Medea's words have no visible effect on the callous Jason. She resorts then to feeling more pain herself so that she can cause pain for Jason,323 thus effecting a "cure" for her pain at being one down.324 Jason's statement and Medea's acknowledgment at 1361-1362 give telling evidence of the nature

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323 See Medea's use of λυποῦσαν at 1046-1047; cf. the Chorus on Medea's ἄλγος at 997.

324 See Ohlander, Suspense, p. 115, on Medea's "willingness to suffer and harm herself . . . ." More to the point, Pucci, "Monument," p. 189, remarks, "In sacrificing her sons, Medea destroys the otherness, as it were, of her suffering by actively inflicting suffering on herself. She should gain control over the otherness of her pain."
of this "cure": --"You yourself in fact feel pain
(λυπή) and are my companion in harm [suffered]
(κακών κοινών εὖ)." --"You are right. But the
pain pays (λύει ἀν ἀλγος) if you cannot laugh [at
me]." Medea has prescribed the zero-sum competitor’s
common "cure": winning. Medea, like every other
competitor, has only two ways to effect this "cure," and
since she can not raise herself, she must lower Jason. The
cumulative effect, however, is the unchecked progress of
the disease, marked by an increase in total pain.

That this is no cure at all, Euripides’ use of the
analogy makes obvious. First, the cure is "sick" because
it is an already ill Medea who takes the role of attending
physician. Second, the cure is one that assumes the
disease of competitive strife is established and unassail-
able, and the best one can do is suffer its painful
symptoms less than or--in a worst case scenario--along with
one’s fellow contenders. And while Medea’s prescription of
a painful remedy is not unknown among medical practi-
tioners (cf. the familiar and dreaded "this will only hurt
a little bit"), increasing pain is not, as it is here,
prescription’s aim. Physicians use painful procedures and
potentially harmful medications to lessen pain and curtail
or cure disease. The potential for cure is the assumed
goal, and remains. Such is the case in true medical
practice, but not in the context of zero-sum competition,
where the goal is disabling one’s opponents by whatever means necessary, even if these be pain and death.

The analogy to medicine, then, suggests an alternative to the predictably destructive outcome of zero-sum competition. The alternative is nowhere more strongly suggested than in Medea’s choice to use pharmaka as her means to achieving victory. She makes this choice because the use of pharmaka is the means at which she is "especially sophē" (ἦ πεφύκαμεν σοφαὶ μάλιστα, φαρμάκοις αὐτοῦς ἐλεῖν, 384-385). Medea’s competitive sophia marks her as "smart," or, in Gouldner’s terms, as one who practices "total commitment rationality" to gain one’s ends.

By establishing an analogy between Medea’s competitive sophia and the use of pharmaka, then, Euripides suggests that competitive sophia is a poison used to spread destruction from the disease of disharmony. And, indeed, it is the sophē Medea who so arouses the Chorus’ ire at their status as losers that they agree to remain silent. It is the sophē Medea who persuades the suspicious Creon to give her the one day she needs. It is the sophē

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Pace Newton, “Passionate Poison,” p. 14, to whom Medea’s love is the disease and the poison. Newton notices that Medea “smears” poison on the gifts, just as Cypris “smears” arrows with longing (789, 634); the diadem is gold, as are Cypris’ shafts (786, 633). I would argue that éros is, indeed, diseased, as is sophia in zero-sum competition. These, however, are symptomatic of a larger disease: discord and disharmony, which distort éros and sophia.
Medea who manipulates her friend Aegeus' desire. It is the
*sope* Medea who hoists her gullible husband with his own
petard and wins his agreement to let their children deliver
the poisoned faux-conciliatory gifts.

Poison, as was argued above (Part One), cannot be
administered openly, but requires proximity. This Medea
gains through verbal manipulation, the manifestation of her
claim to be called *sope*.

Spreading *pharmaka* on the
bait of lovely gifts is merely the culmination of Medea's
art as poisoner. Through her poisonous *sophia*, she is able
to kill Creon's daughter and, perhaps not merely coinci-
dentally, Creon himself. And, by then killing her
own children, she is able finally to destroy their father.
She wins the palm of *sope* in zero-sum competition: she
has effectively destroyed or brought to her level of pain
every other contender on the field. She has "won." She
has poisoned and killed.

But *pharmaka* does not mean merely "poisons." It can

*326* On the association of knowledge with drugs, see
Petroff, *Medea*, p. 72: "The person who uses drugs and
herbs is different. He or she is someone special--a witch
or a doctor. The something special which characterizes
this type of person is knowledge--specifically knowledge of
drugs."

*327* At 788-789 Medea speaks of all dying who touch
the girl; perhaps she anticipates the scene which in fact
occurs. Further support for this interpretation comes from
the fact that Medea never renounces her intention to kill
Creon, and yet proposes no way of accomplishing his death.
Petroff, *Medea*, p. 108 n. 69, cites another version (of
Creophylus; schol. in Eur. *Med.* 264) of Creon's death by
poison at Medea's hands.
mean "drugs" that cure. Similarly, sophē, and the abstract noun related to it, sophia, are, like pharmaka, ambiguous.328 Sophia can be the "smartness" of the zero-sum player, or it can be something else, the "wisdom" that is unwitnessed in this play.329 By using the analogy of the craft of medicine to inform the definition of sophia, Euripides suggests redefinition of sophia only hinted at in this play. Sophia can be like a curative drug; it can mean "wisdom," it can be the means to obtaining the health that is the virtue of harmony.

Twice in Medea it is hinted that sophia can be a drug of cure instead of a lethal poison. In the Ode to Athens (824-865), the abstract noun sophia is used twice, first at line 828, and again at line 842. In the first instance, sophia is described as the food of the prehistorical Athenians; they are "nourished by most renowned sophia" (φερβόμενοι κλεινοτάταν σοφίαν). Attending to proper nourishment was one of the mainstays of ancient medicine; in fact, the verb φέρω chosen here by Euripides occurs twice in the Hippocratic corpus, although it is a verb of otherwise infrequent occurrence.330

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329 Similarly, Medea's potential as "a formidable friend" is, in this play, less obvious than her status as "formidable enemy"; see Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 20-22.

330 See LSJ⁹.
Admittedly, in the Ode to Athens sophia is not used as a drug per se. But whether as a source of nourishment, as it is described at line 828, or as a semi-anthropomorphized attendant upon the Erotes who assist sophia in bringing on all sorts of aretē, sophia in the Ode to Athens is undoubtedly an important element in a health-promoting environment. As an ingestant or as an assistant in a healthy locale, sophia’s use in this ode suggests, if only faintly, its function as a curative "drug."

The second hint that sophia can be a drug of cure comes just before the occurrences of sophia in the Ode to Athens discussed above. In this instance the analogy drawn between sophia and pharmaka is again subtle, but perhaps a bit more direct. I refer to the Aegeus episode (663-823), where the king of Athens explains that he has sought from the oracle of Apollo advice about how he may produce children (669). The advice, however, has come in the form of a pronouncement, in "words more clever ([σοφότερον]) than a man can interpret" (675). Aegeus therefore welcomes Medea’s hearing the pronouncement, for interpreting it requires a "clever/smart ([σοφής]) mind" (677). But Medea does not offer Aegeus her sophia in the form he has requested. She may well be able to interpret the oracle, but withholds interpretation and instead holds forth the promise that Aegeus will have access to that at which she has said (384-385) she is
most sophē: administration of pharmaka. Medea assures Aegeus, "I will stop your being childless, I will make you sow the offspring of children; I know of such drugs (φάρμακα)." (717-718).

In all other instances, pharmaka in Medea are clearly meant as a means to destruction, and must therefore be translated as "poisons." Only here can pharmaka be translated as "drugs." What Medea promises is the creation of life. And although the audience would know that one version of the myth had Medea's pharmaka not only not responsible for the Aegeus' renewed potency, but nearly the cause of his only son's death, Euripides nonetheless reminds his audience of the potential curative powers of Medea's pharmaka and, by analogy, of her sophia.331

I say "reminds" instead of "suggests," for the ambiguity of Medea's pharmaka and sophia is a part of the mythological tradition. In fact, early tradition may have depicted Medea's skills as largely life-promoting or preserving,332 although Euripides' predominantly

331 Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 15-18 and 20-21, shows how Medea's ambivalent sophia is similar to that of her relative, Circe.

332 This is a part of the Petroff's thesis in his Medea, passim. Petroff is convincing on this point, less so when he argues that Medea was originally a goddess. Of interest to the Aegeus episode are Petroff's parallels between Medea on the one hand and Artemis, Aphrodite, Demeter, Athena, and Hera on the other hand (pp. 137-149). In drawing this parallel, Petroff interprets the exploits of Jason to win the fleece as evidence for Medea's status as a goddess of fertility (pp. 146-147). Such a goddess
negative cast gives little indication of this tradition.

In any case, the audience doubtlessly would have been aware of at least some of the stories about Medea’s restorative and curative powers: how she proved her powers of rejuvenation on Aeson (Jason’s father), the nurses of Dionysus and their husbands, and Jason himself; how, though she failed to do so, her intent was to immortalize her children; how she salved wounds the Argonauts suffered and cured Heracles of madness.333

But besides Medea herself having a reputation for restorative and curative powers, the names "Medea" and "Jason," as well as Jason’s early history, may be evidence the couple’s historical association with healing. "Medea" is etymologically related to μήδεομαι ("to take counsel, plan, intend"), which suggests Medea’s status as could of course insure the future potency of the desperate Aegeus.

333Ancient sources for these and other incidents in the life of Medea may be found conveniently summarized and chronologically arranged in Petroff, Medea, pp. 4-41. The sources cited by Petroff are as follows: Nostoi fr. 6 Kinkel = Hypoth. ad Eur. Med. (Aeson); Aesch. fr. 50 Nauck² = fr. 426 Mette = Hypoth. ad Eur. Med. (nurses of Dionysus and their husbands); Simon. fr. 548 Page = Hypoth. ad Eur. Med. (Jason); Eum. fr. 2 Kinkel (paraphrased by Paus. 2.3.10) and schol. in Pind. Ol. 13.74g (children immortal); Diod. Sic. 4.48 and 4.55 (Argonauts’ wounds, Heracles’ madness). All sources predate Euripides’ version with the exception of Diodorus Siculus, whom Petroff argues (pp. 157-159) may himself have used sources predating Euripides.
a professional "wise woman"; the name "Jason" (Ἰάσων, "healer"), and his early association with Cheiron, at least since the time of Pindar's Fourth Pythian, suggest curative powers.

But in Jason's case, and for the most part in Medea's, Euripides chooses to ignore this tradition of healing potency. Instead, he emphasizes the destructive powers of this deadly pair. Medea may have the skill, the sophia, and the formulae to effect cure, but instead, herself ill, she spreads cure's antithesis, destruction, by the use of her wits and her pharmaka. Similarly, Jason, who may have been reared a healer, is too busy infecting those around him ever to consider that a cure is needed. Perhaps Medea was right to describe him as "not so smart" (οὐκ ἀγαν σοφός, 583). He has not the diagnostic let alone curative powers of Medea, misguided as these may be. Jason instead believes that everything is fine the way it is.

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334 Bibliography on this point may be found in Petroff, Medea, p. 118 n. 21 (pp. 219-220), and in Erich Segal, Pindar's Mythmaking: The Fourth Pythian Ode (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986; hereafter Segal, Pindar's Mythmaking), p. 19 n. 11. Petroff, pp. 118, 118 n. 19, and 127, adds the supportive evidence that Medea's mother's name is Iduia (Hesiod, Theogony 959-960) or Eiduia (Apollonius Rhodius 3.243), both of which mean "the knowing one."

335 See Segal, Pindar's Mythmaking, p. 19 and 19 n. 11 for bibliography. Petroff, Medea, p. 134 n. 82, cites scho in Ap. Rhod. 1.554: Ἰάσων παρὰ τὴν Ἰάσιν. Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 60, on Jason's name as meaning "healer," remarks, "[o]nce upon a time, Jason in myth must have been the true consort of Medea."
"Surely I have not planned injuriously?" (μῶν βεβούλευμαι κακῶς, 567), he inanely asks Medea.

Medea, though, is able to effect a cure, but it is the cure of a zero-sum competitor: winning. This she gains by using her wits, her competitor's sophia, whether this takes the form of dishing out verbal abuse, or using pharmaka, or being willing to increase her own pain so as to bring her enemy down to her level. She wins, but so does the disease, which if before was rampant, is now a plague.

What is needed, but never found in this play, is suggested by Euripides' use of the medical analogy. True sophia would entail finding a cure for the disease, not just its unpleasant symptoms. This, however, would require the pursuit of cooperation and harmony instead of competition, i.e., the complete overhaul of beliefs and values manifested in the play, and a painful reformulation of actions along those lines. The true cure is therefore never pursued. Instead, the "cure" to which Medea resorts is bringing death--no cure, but an end suitable when, as here, disease runs unchecked.
It is not surprising, therefore, that truth is not born in Medea, for nothing is born in this dark play. In fact, quite the opposite: instead of birth and growth, there are destruction and death. The young, especially, are targets. What Euripides gives his audience is predictable in a world where erōs is put to the service of vanquishing enemies. The generative force doubles back on itself, and, instead of taking the older generation before the younger, takes the younger first; it even attacks hope for the unborn. What is depicted, in short, is war brought into the domestic sphere.

This depiction, then, is the culmination of Euripides' art of midwifery. He delivers his elenchos to its syllogistic conclusion by bringing the analogy to medicine to bear upon competitive erōs, thereby showing this erōs for what it is: the antithesis of nature's erōs, a force of death instead of a force of life. Euripides shows how competitive erōs, desire manipulated to serve winning, a desire primarily to vanquish enemies, reverses nature's order.

By his final application of the analogy to medicine, Euripides forces recognition of the truth that competitive erōs, and ultimately the competitive sophia which attends it and the competitive aretē that defines them both, offend
the most basic human sensibilities about the continuation of human life through mating and child-rearing. 336 By syllogistically applying to the arena of competitive erôs an ethic of benefit, derived from the analogy to medicine, Euripides forces the stark realization that instead of benefit (life), competition breeds harm: death and destruction. 337

For, as Euripides shows his audience, competition perverts erôs. In Medea, as in the lives of Euripides' audience members, procreation is the bond of marriage, and yet, ironically in the competitive world of Medea, marriage is synonymous with mourning. This is because birth takes a

336 Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 48, likewise assigns pedagogic intent to Euripides' contrast between destructiveness and creativity in the play: "Jason's calculating, practical sophia is, lacking eros, selfish and destructive; Medea's consuming eros and psychological sophia... are, without compassion, maimed and destructive. They are both destroyers--destroyers of themselves, of others, of sophia and the polis--and it is this destructiveness which above all else Euripides wants his audience to observe: the spirit of brutal self-interest and passionate revenge which threatens both life and culture, and which is purposely set in sharp contrast to life-enhancing Athens where the arts flourish, eros collaborates with sophia, and creative physis is gentled by just nomoi. Behind Jason and Medea we are clearly meant to see that spreading spirit of expedition and revenge which, unchecked by culture or religion, finally brought about the Peloponnesian War and its attendant atrocities."

337 Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," herself uses medical terminology in describing the ills that erupt at Corinth (see, e.g., p. 19, where Burnett describes Jason and the Corinthian palace as "a malady that has spread" and "not been quarantined"), but attributes the cause for those ills to Jason and the Corinthians. She seems nearly to exonerate Medea as the avenging erinys, the natural result of Jason's violation of oaths (p. 13).
The first of the symbols of promise is the marriage bed. Euripides uses three words for "bed": εὐνή, λέκτρον, and λέξος. Altogether, "bed" occurs thirty-four times in 1419 lines. These words serve a double duty, for while on the one hand they can merely be taken as a concrete symbol for "marriage," on the other hand, the word "bed" summons up a vision of sexual intercourse. The audience is thereby encouraged to think of marriage as a bond formed primarily for procreation, a notion not alien to fifth-century B.C. Athenians. Indeed, Medea and Jason appear to have considered procreation marriage's purpose, for Medea claims she could have accepted Jason's abandoning her if their union had been childless (489-491), and Jason, despite his protests to the contrary (557-558), when he thinks of his new marriage, imagines the new children that will be born of it (563-564; 596-597; 917).

Alongside this impression of marriage as a potential for new life, Euripides places another image of marriage, as a death-knell. This he does by using κηδεμός and the related words κηδεμών, κηδευμα, and

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338 See, e.g., Xenophon, Oeconomicus 7.18-19:
κατεύθυνσις to signify "marriage" and the like. Euripides thereby suggests that the perversion of ἐρώς in zero-sum competition is a perversion of the first magnitude: the life-force becomes a death-force.

Κέδος and related words are ambiguous; their associations suggest both marriages and funerals, gaining connection and losing it forever. The words occur eight times in the play, and only in one case (the first instance, at line 76, where the Tutor is speaking) can use be argued to be strictly unambiguous. In their second and third occurrences, however, the ambiguity of these words is purposefully exploited. At 366–367 Medea boasts: "There are contests ahead for those newly wed and no small toils for the bridal/funeral party" (τοῖς

339 Yet another word suggesting both marriages and death is μακάριος, "blessed." See Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 144. Cf. McDonald, Happiness, p. 47, who elaborates that μακάριος is used "as an epithet for a bride or as an epithet for a person who is dead." McDonald further notes that the adjective in Medea is applied only to Medea (509, where Medea sarcastically imagines herself "blessed" by her marriage to Jason) and to the princess (957, by Medea, as she is instructing the children to take the fatal gifts to the princess); Euripides in other plays exploits the word's ambiguity to suggest that a person will be dead by the end of the play.

340 The ambiguity of these words has been noted, but not fitted into the pattern of related motifs I am proposing. See Collinge, "Ex Machina," p. 172 n. 6; cf. Elliot, Medea, p. 90 at lines 884–888, and Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 144. Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 14, does suggest that the ambiguity is carried over into the description of the death of the princess, whose wedding (perversely consummated with her father) becomes her funeral.
Again, at 399-400, Medea's threats bring out the ambiguity of ἱδος: "I will make the marriage painful for them and mournful, painful the marriage/mourning (κηδος) and my exile from the land."

While Medea's next use of one of the words seems innocent enough—at 700 she explains to Aegeus that Jason's desire is for a "marriage connection" (κηδος) with royalty—the meaning of the word is colored by the previous exploitation of its ambiguity. In the next two uses (κηδος at 885 followed quickly by κηδεύω at 888), the first, apparently innocent, use at 885 is undermined by a sinister and undeniable ambiguity at 888.

Medea is talking to Jason, and it becomes obvious that the only reason she does not openly exploit the words' ambiguity is that she does not wish Jason to sense that her repentance and mildness are a sham. The ambiguity is nonetheless there:

So now I praise you. To me you seem prudent in having taken on this marriage (κηδος), and I was stupid, I, who should have shared in these plans, should have taken part in the wedding, and stood beside the bed (παρεστάναι λέχει) and been delighted to tend to/bury (κηδεύσαν) your bride. (884-888).

Medea has previously, if as here only notionally, been at the side of Jason's new marriage bed. At lines 379-380, Medea briefly entertained the thought of sneaking with her dagger into the house "where the bed is made" (ἵν'
To have her now imagine herself standing beside this same bed, taking delight in "tending to" the bride, brings with it a chilling picture: the blood of murder drenching the marriage bed, where, if there is to be blood, it should be the result of an entirely different act. The picture, which juxtaposes procreation and killing by making them eerie bedmates, speaks volumes about the reversals of nature that occur in zero-sum competition.

The Chorus seem to get this message, for they are the next to use one of the words of this group. As they sing their fourth stasimon, they address Jason with these words:

And you, poor wretch, harm-ridden groom (κακόνυμφε), connected by marriage with/attender of the dead of (κηδεμών) kings, you do not know that for your children you bring destruction to their life (ὀλεθρον βίοτα) and hateful death to your wife. (991-994).

The juxtaposition here of life and death, hope and despair, is excruciating. This marriage is marriage's true antithesis: instead of bringing to life new children, it destroys that hope for the future and then doubles back, bringing death to children already alive.

Jason, in despair at finally coming to know the destruction, if not its source, is the last to use one of the words from this group. He blames Medea alone, and

341 At 40-41 the Nurse speaks the same lines, which both Page and Diggle consider to have been interpolated from 379-380.
terms his marrying her a "connection by marriage/mourning hateful and destructive to me" (κῆδος ἐχθρὸν δέθριον τ᾽ ἐμοί, 1341).

Jason, however, is not the one for whom this κῆδος has been literally destructive. By laying destruction on the bed of marriage, Euripides portends the transformation of children, the customary result of procreation, into corpses, destruction's ultimate issue. Euripides sees to it that children are a focus throughout the play. Children are, if not literally, at least imaginatively on stage in every episode, and they are the subject of four of the Chorus' songs. These symbols of new life, like the marriage bed as a symbol of procreation, are used by Euripides in another shocking counterpoint. Children, life's very beginning, brought repeatedly before his audience's mind's eye, become corpses, life's end.

Words for "children" appear more than twice as many times as words for the marriage bed. The word παῖς alone occurs in seventy-one lines, τέκνον in eleven. The majority of these references are to the children of Medea and Jason. There are, in addition, seven

342 The centrality of the theme of children has been often noticed, but little examined. See, e.g. Schlesinger, "Zu Medea," pp. 48-49. Cf. Conacher, Euripidean Drama, p. 192.

references to other, prospective children (of Jason and the princess, 597, 805; of Aegeus, 669, 674, 715, 717, 721); ten miscellaneous references (to children of various others, three referring to adults quasi-patronymically, 487, 665, 684, 825, 1289); five to children in general (295, 574, 1092, 1096, 1114); and nine references to Jason's new bride as a child (19, 283, 329, 344, 554, 783, 1207, 1210, 1220). 344

By these constant references to children, Euripides keeps children in his audience's minds. And while ideas about children and child-rearing have certainly changed since fifth-century B.C. Athens, and differences between modern and ancient notions may be difficult to discover, it is clear that the play depicts the death of children as traumatic. This can be argued from the reactions 1) of Medea herself at the prospect of killing her children (791-796; 1056-1058; 1069-1077); 2) of Creon at the sight of his child dying (1204-1210); 3) of the Chorus at Medea's raising her hand against her children (846-865; 976-977), at the imagined reaction of Jason and Medea to this act (990-1001; 1306-1307), and at the thought of losing a child in any way (1090-1115); and 4) of Jason at the news and sight of his children dead (1310; 1315; 1361; 1377; 1397;

344 McDermott, Incarnation, p. 85 n. 5, notes the namelessness of the princess, and suggests that it may be ascribed to Euripides' "... effort to emphasize her role in a significant parent-child relationship."
It is hard to imagine that Euripides would have presented adults so consistently traumatized by child-death and expected them to be sympathetic to an audience indifferent to such loss. And indeed, Mark Golden has argued that the ancient Athenians, despite high child mortality rates and the possible exposure of unwanted infants, were hardly indifferent to the loss of children. Furthermore, it seems safe to assert that children represented, among other things, to the ancient Athenians what they represent now: new life. It is for this reason that Euripides' turning children to corpses effects a powerful reversal. For if children cannot thrive, but instead must die horribly, the world must be disease-ridden.

The world of Medea is, in fact, disease-ridden in all of its parts—with one notable exception: the idealized Athens of the third stasimon (824-865). This is a healthy

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345See Mark Golden, Children and Childhood in Classical Athens (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1990; hereafter M. Golden, Children), p. 89, "... the weight of the evidence seems overwhelmingly to favor the proposition that the Athenians loved their children and grieved for them deeply when they died." Evidence follows, on pp. 89-99. McDermott, Incarnation, p. 27, cites Hesiod's Works and Days 185-188 for the assumption that trophē will be given by parents to children and should therefore be returned. McDermott argues that the ancient Greeks attributed parental philia particularly to females, and that Euripides especially shocks his audience by showing a mother who kills her children.

346Nussbaum, Fragility, pp. 397-399, is excellent on the effect created by Euripides' use of an already dead child, Polydorus, in the prologue of Hecuba.
clime, and, as such, one in which children are born, nurtured, and thrive. As was noted above (Part Four), the first strophe-antistrophe pair contributes largely to this picture. The first strophe begins by twice designating the Athenians "children," first by a patronymic and then by terming them "children of the blessed gods" (Ἐρεξθείδαι Ἰτ. θεῶν παιδες μακάρων, 824-825). These "children" are "nourished" (φερβόμενοι, 826) by wisdom. The strophe ends with the Muses giving birth to (φυτεύσαι) Harmony, whose more usually designated mother, Aphrodite, is mentioned in the succeeding antistrophe.

The contrast between these lines and the rest of the play is stark. Children do not thrive here; instead, they are born only to become corpses before they can grow up. This turning of children into corpses is the final extension of the medical analogy, and Euripides' most powerful weapon in reversing his audience's complacent acceptance of definitions encouraged by zero-sum competition. What the poet gradually reveals is that the Nurse's remark at line 16, "the dearest things are diseased" (νοσεὶ τὰ φίλτατα), was unwittingly prophetic within the analogy. Ta philtata, "the dearest things," to

347 Ohlander, Suspense, p. 124, notes the predominance of words for children in the stasimon.
Medea, in Medea, are her children: five times in the text she refers to them as such, at 795 ("fleeing the murder of my dearest children"); twice at 1071 (where one of the children's hands and then his mouth is termed "dearest"); at 1247 (both children are "dearest"); and finally at 1397, where, upon hearing Jason call the children "dearest" (ὥς τέκνα φίλτατα), Medea counters, "To their mother, but not to you."

Can we be surprised, then, that the children, these "dearest things," died "of their father's disease," (πατρόφα νόσῳ, 1364), as Medea claims at the play's end? There is, in this unhealthy climate of competitiveness, no place for children to thrive; at best, they must grow up quickly so that they can enter the competition in which their parents can no longer take part. Jason proudly describes this scenario to his children as he contemplates their future:

I therefore disagree with the meaning of line 16 proposed by Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 13, who translates τὰ φίλτατα as "what was the greatest love," which he equates loosely with ἐρῶς. This translation is then used in his interpretation of the rest of the play.

That Medea's reference to her killing the children as a "sacrifice" (1054) may not be a "mere metaphor" has been considered by Walter Burkert, "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," GRBS 7 (1966), p. 118. Although Burkert earlier (p. 112) claims that "[e]xtraordinary situations of emergency, famine, disease may again and again lead to human sacrifice," he does not consider that the impetus for Medea's "sacrifice" may be the disease, if only metaphorical, rampant in the play.
For I imagine that you will yet be first (τὰ πρῶτα) of the Corinthian land with your brothers. You just grow up; the rest your father and whatever gods are favorable will accomplish. May I see you thriving, coming to the fulfillment of your youth, victorious over my enemies (ἐξορῶν τῶν ἐμῶν ὑπερτέρους). (916-921).

Imagining that his children will be absorbed in his competitive struggle the moment they come to maturity, Jason has failed to imagine a worse, but, given the competitive milieu, fully possible case: that they will sooner be taken down by that struggle, that he will not ever see them full grown, but only as child corpses.

Jason is not, of course, alone in serving his children's lives up to competitive strife. In this he is anticipated by Medea, who does not wait for the future to throw her unwitting children into the fray. We should be astonished at such activity in most mothers, but certainly not in a mother who prefers thrice over the front line of battle to giving birth (250-251). Such a mother takes battle very seriously; so seriously, in fact, that children are used as pawns to clear the field of

350 Jason's words of course recall Hector's to Astyanax at Iliad 6.476-481. There is a difference, however: Hector imagines his child in a purely civic context, returning from war after killing an enemy not specified as Hector's personal enemy (ἐκ πολέμου ἀδούντα . . . κτείνας ὄντων ἄνδρα, 6.480-481). For a good discussion of this passage as indicative of the normative ancient Greek parents' expectation that a child is not only theirs but "a child of the state," for whose potential loss they must prepare themselves, see Rick M. Newton, "Oedipus' Wife and Mother," CJ 87 (1991), pp. 36-37.

difficulties standing in the way of ultimate victory. For Medea, in addition to using her pharmaka of sophia, her competitive savvy, uses the appeal of children to manipulate Creon into giving her the time (340–347) and Aegeus into providing her a place of refuge (714–722). Finally, she uses a pretense of concern for her children’s welfare to require making an appeal to the royal family on their behalf (939–940), and the persons of her children as bearers of falsely conciliatory gifts (956–958), thereby making them accessories to murder.352

We shudder to consider parents so hard, but these are competitors first, parents second.353 As competitors, they must be hard; Winkler quotes Xenophon’s Memorabilia 3.7.1 as a sort of thumb-nail sketch of competitive disdain of softness:

—"Tell me, Charmides, if a man is capable of winning a crown at contests and thus being honored in his own person and making his fatherland more renowned in Greece but does not wish to compete, what kind of person do you think this man would be?" —"Obviously a soft (malaKos) and cowardly one."354

Medea follows this creed of esteeming hardness and disdaining softness. She knows that being "hard" wins her

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352 Easterling, "Infanticide," p. 187. Shaw, "Female Intruder," p. 260, sees Medea’s poison as symbolic: "It represents the ability to create, destroy, or pervert the bonds between father and child."

353 Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 92, sees Medea’s instrumental use of the children as an extension of Jason’s instrumental attitude toward them (565).

354 Winkler, Constraints, quoted on p. 50.
the most renown (809-810) and rebukes herself for being
"soft" (1052) except in instances where she uses sham
softness to manipulate her enemies (291, Creon on Medea's
seemingly "soft" words; 776, Medea's plan to use "soft"
words to Jason). Even the half-heartedly competitive Creon
realizes that "being soft" leads to regret (316). Is it
any wonder, then, that such disdain of softness would
eradicate children, among whose most prominent
characteristics to the ancient Greeks was the very
softness so disdained by competitors? Both Medea
and Jason remark on their children's "soft" skin (1075,
1403). Such remarks signal not only the desirability of
children, but their vulnerability in the contest as well.
The softness of children seals their death on a field of
hardened and hard competitors.

In short, competition is innately deadly to children,
especially to the children of those who engage in it. The
death of Creon's daughter illustrates this. She, too, like
Medea's children, had the misfortune of being labelled
"dearest" (if only indirectly; see line 329) by her (albeit
halfheartedly) competitive parent. Predictably, then,
Creon's daughter also dies—and she almost literally—of
the play's disease, in a hideous competition with her
father, with whom she is described by the Messenger to be
"wrestling": "There was a terrible/clever wrestling,"

Poor Creon, ever the reluctant competitor, is finally pinned, vanquished. He is, according to the Messenger, no longer "on top of" (ὑπέρτερος, 1219) harm.

The princess' death scene abounds in grisly details that are not merely gratuitous; they serve a serious function. The scene is doubly meant to shock and impress the audience: first, it takes a child and turns her into a ghastly corpse; second, its culmination tinges death with a hint of the erotic. In short, Euripides gives first a graphic depiction of the horrors of the conjunction of young life and death, and then makes it

356 See McDermott, Incarnation, p. 87, who also notes that the men . . . de construction of lines 1215-1216 "succinctly reflects the change in this particular parent-child relationship from reciprocity to antagonism." Cf. Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 18.

357 Browne, "Interpretations," p. 78, suggests that Euripides uses "dramatic economy" in keeping Medea silent about the effects of the magical apparel so as to exploit "vivid, articulate horror" in his description here. Gellie, "Character," p. 21, suggests that the grisly death scene interrupts the audience's emotional involvement with Medea's "racked motherhood" and cautions them "to stand aloof."

Husurillo, "Reconsideration," pp. 62-63, by contrast, finds the scene's descriptions "nauseating," and comments that the "destruction of the innocent Glaukē seems gratuitous and wasteful: it serves merely to demonstrate Medea's awe-inspiring power and the force of her vengeance." In this, "Euripides reveals himself as a master of pure horror" and "betrays his morbid streak."

358 See Buttrey, "Accident," p. 12: "If you do not understand the meaning of a child's death, an example is immediately at hand: the second part of the episode is the messenger's relation of the death of Creusa."
doubly repugnant\textsuperscript{359} by casting this conjunction as perverse procreation.\textsuperscript{360}

That Euripides intends the audience to consider Creon's daughter a child is not difficult to defend. She is called παῖς because, technically speaking, she is a child, as was every girl of her era until marriage.\textsuperscript{361} And although this particular girl can be argued to have given up the status of child by her recent marriage (see especially 1178), her actions nonetheless betray her as childish. She may not be described as soft in skin as are the children of Jason and Medea, but she has the other softness typical of children: she is soft of character. Variable as the weather, she is, malleable, and greedy, as ancient Greeks thought children were.\textsuperscript{362}

Within four lines (1146-1149) she goes from eagerness to disgust, from an intent gaze to eyes covered by her hands and head turned away.

Perhaps the princess is momentarily the adult in the

\textsuperscript{359}Pace Ohlander, \textit{Suspense}, p. 167, who argues that Euripides guards against Medea's losing the audience's sympathy by keeping the princess off stage.

\textsuperscript{360}See Newton, "Passionate Poison," pp. 16-19, on whose superb analysis of the erotic elements of this scene my discussion depends. I depart, however, from Newton on several points, which makes our assessments of what is communicated by this scene radically different.


presence of her new husband; Burnett’s description of her as “touched by lust (1146)” and “haughty and filled with loathing for Medea’s sons” is not without merit.\textsuperscript{363} Her actions can be understood as those of any adult but young bride confronted with evidence of her husband’s former sexual attachments. The princess’ presumably adult disdain for the children and stiff resistance to her husband’s appeal to be reasonable immediately melt, however, in the face of pretty baubles that are dandled in front of her.\textsuperscript{364} Burnett finds in the princess’ greed evidence of Corinthian sensuality, of moral weakness and culpability.\textsuperscript{365} It takes a determinedly stern attitude, though, to require adult sensibilities and a corresponding accountability from the likes of this girl, whose lust quickly subsides (did she feel lust, or merely act it out?), who can barely wait for her husband’s and his children’s departure before she dons the dress and tiara

\textsuperscript{363}Burnett, “Tragedy of Revenge,” p. 18.

\textsuperscript{364}Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 85, sees in Medea’s gifts to the princess the folktale motif of “a jealous fairy or nymph [who] uses the gift of a magical belt in an attempt to destroy her rival.” Furthermore, Medea, by dressing up the princess in her [Medea’s] clothes and then destroying her, creates a double of herself and destroys her mortal aspect. (pp. 121-122).

\textsuperscript{365}Burnett, “Tragedy of Revenge,” pp. 18-19. Cf. Ohlander, Suspense, p. 167, who acknowledges that “Euripides presents the new bride in a scarcely winning light” but adds: “There can be no denying, however, that the princess dies horribly and could hardly have sinned enough in her short life to merit such punishment.”
(1156-1158), playing a little girl's dress-up game as she prims in front of the mirror and prances about the room, too overjoyed at the fall of the gown (1161-1166) to recall that she has abandoned her adult disdain. In front of our eyes, Euripides has begun to turn the newly adult bride back into the little girl she so recently has been.

Euripides completes this transformation from young adult to child even as he is turning the princess into a corpse. First, her childish glee is momentarily interrupted by a chilling foreshadowing: she smiles at her reflection,366 which Euripides describes as the "lifeless image of her body" (ἁψυχὸν ἐξικὼ ... σώματος, 1162). The moment is ghoulish and disturbing, coming as it does in the midst of her dress-up game. Then the princess is beset by what at first seems to be some kind of fit: she pales, falls into a chair,367 foams at the mouth as her eyes roll back, and finally bursts into flames (1167-1189). Her childish prancing gives way to headlong flight (1164, 1190); the tiara once set on so carefully arranged tresses now cannot be hurled from the

366Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 16, sees this act, as well as the princess' extreme joy and repeated looking at her outstretched calf (1165) as autoerotic (see his n. 12). Similarly, Newton argues that the dainty step of the princess echoes the "tender-footed Eros" described by Agathon in Plato's Symposium 195d-e; the "lifeless image" recalls a symptom of eros in Archilochus 104W.

367The princess' change of skin color and trembling limbs remind Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 16, of symptoms of love described by Sappho 31LP.
hair of a frantically shaken head (1160-1161, 1191-1192). Helpless to save herself, the girl falls into a heap. But finally, and all the while increasing the horror almost beyond our endurance, Euripides turns the princess once and for all time back into a child. He does this by bringing her father upon the scene.

A parent, as Euripides is careful to have his messenger note, is probably the only one who can identify the young girl: she was "... except to a parent, very hard to recognize at sight" (πλήν τῷ τεκόντι κάρτα δυσμαθής ἰδεῖν, 1196). Euripides thus puts us behind her father's eyes, and it is with these eyes that we see the deformities the princess has suffered (1197-1202). Her eyes have shifted from their normal position. Her whole face has lost its fine conformation. Blood mixed with fire drips from the top of her head. The poison still gnaws away from inside her; her flesh oozes off her bones like sap off a pine tree. A child becomes a macabre, revoltingly disfigured corpse (νεκροῦ, 1203).

We are no more finished beholding her with a parent's eyes, than in comes her father (πατήρ, 1204), who falls upon the corpse (νεκρῷ, 1205), twice calling it

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368Euripides has, in fact, immediately before the messenger's speech prepared the audience to view as parents by having the Chorus sing about the travails of those who rear children (1190-1115).
"child" (ὙΩ δύστηνε παῖ, 1207; τέκνον, 1210).

His wish to die with her, expressed in extreme grief, is granted after his grief has abated (1210-1211), and we witness father and child in a grisly struggle. Time seems to stand still as she appears to come alive only to kill him. And, in the end, it does stand still as we regard a bizarre and unforgettable tableau: "They lie, the corpses, both child and old father, close together, longed for--in tears--the disaster." (κεῖναι δὲ νεκροὶ παῖς τε καὶ γέρων πατὴρ πέλας, ποθεινή δακρύοισι συμφορά, 1220-1221).

The description of the child and parent lying together dead is not, however, merely pathetic. It is erotically suggestive. The physical closeness of the child and father is stressed in the Greek text by πέλας, which is the third element in an alliterative chain: παῖς . . . πατὴρ πέλας, ποθεινή, i.e., "... child . . . father, close together, longed for . . . ." The chain of words is itself somewhat suggestive, but becomes even more so by the emphatic placement of "close together" at the line's beginning, and hard upon the word for "longed for"
Surely one can consider neither the striking alliterative chain nor the doubly strategic placement of πέλασσ as accidental, especially when one reflects upon this line's status as climax of a scene in which other erotic elements abound. These have been duly noted by Rick M. Newton in his article, "Medea's Passionate Poison."

Although I disagree with Newton's final assessment of the meaning conveyed here, he is correct in arguing for this scene's eroticism. Newton cites an impressive list of loci classici to illustrate that all of the following can be interpreted as erotic: the princess' delighted laughter (1162), autoerotic self-gazing (1162-1165), and change of skin color and trembling limbs (1168-1169); Creon's lover-like desire to merge with his daughter in death (1210), and the subsequent melding of his flesh with that of his daughter after their "wrestling match" (1214).

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370 Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 19, notes the emphatic position of the adverb πέλασσ at the line's beginning, but does not remark upon its proximity to ποθευνή. This last word is not, of course, itself erotically suggestive. Indeed, as the line progresses into tears and disaster (δακρύοι σωμφορά), sexual suggestiveness yields to horror. This does not, however, obliterate the line's eroticism, much as one would prefer that it did.

371 Newton, "Passionate Poison," pp. 14-19. Newton argues that other details of the scene are likewise erotic; the ones I have cited are those which I find most convincing. Newton gives many citations to ancient texts which I will not reproduce here. To the references on wrestling as love-making, however, I would add one, called to my attention by James G. Keenan: Cassandra's
This last, the "wrestling match," deserves further comment, for it is here that I depart from Newton. As has already been noted (above, Part Two), "wrestling" denotes competition. It also, as Newton argues, connotes for the ancient Greeks love-making, a connotation undoubtedly suggested by the close physical proximity the two acts have in common. Denotation, however, predominates over connotation in the messenger's description, because the horrifying details of this "match" (1212-1217) depict death so graphically that the erotic undertone is increasingly eclipsed. By the end, when Euripides has his messenger reveal corpses of father and daughter lying close together, the depiction, despite erotic undertones, ends with tears and disaster (δακρύοις συμφορά, 1221). To be sure, an incestual tryst is suggested by this "wrestling." In the context of the whole scene, though, where a child becomes a corpse that literally wrestles her father to a gruesome death, while he is all the while fighting her, the perversity is not only, and not primarily, sexual.373

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372 Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 78, interprets the melding of flesh in this scene as one more example of the violence and torture resulting from touch.

373 Pace Newton, "Passionate Poison," p. 18 n. 18 and p. 19, where he suggests that Creon loved his daughter excessively and suffered an ironically fitting end.
In short, the father-daughter relationship is more grossly distorted by the overt struggle between the corpse and her father than it is by the sexual suggestiveness of the scene. There is, indeed, perversion of eros in this scene, but the perversion is of eros by competition, which, in its extreme, turns love, even the love of a father for his daughter, into a struggle that ends in death.

Medea's "delight" as she anticipates hearing the details of the death-struggle indicate how Euripides intended the perversion of eros in this scene to be understood: "How did they die? For you will delight (τερπεισισ) us twice as much if they died horribly" (1134-1135). The verb τερπω she here uses, and its related noun (τερψις) and adjective (τερπνός) are largely concerned with sensual pleasures, whether these be food, drink, song, stories, or, as the observation of Himnermus (5.3) reminds, the delights of Aphrodite. Here, delight is again sensually aroused, not by hearing song, nor partaking of food, nor engaging in sex, but by hearing the grotesque details of a father and daughter brought together in deaths that parody love-making. This, i.e., by hearing the destruction of one's enemies, is what

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374 On this point, see the excellent discussion of McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 86-89.

375 LSJ9, s.v. τερπω, τερψις, and τερπνός.
Medea, then, is true source of the perversion. For, even though the Messenger tells the tale, it is from the perspective of the competitive Medea that the transformation of a child into a corpse has erotic undertones, as, in turn, does the transformation of that very corpse into a force of destruction against its own father. Even the father is hideously transformed by Medea’s erōs rendered perverse by competition: Creon changes from one who, lover-like, wants only to die with his child (1207-1210) to one who struggles mightily to get rid of her.376

But from another perspective, that of the Messenger who is confused at Medea’s initial glee (1129-1131), this is more horrifying tragedy than incestual tryst. So much his last descriptive line (1221) and the regretful tone of his closing remarks (1224-1230) suggest. Competitive erōs has borne terrible issue: a dead father locked in the perversion of a loving embrace with a corpse recognizable only to him as his own beloved child.

There is, as we shall see, a similarly perverse issue

376McDermott, Incarnation, p. 86, suggests that Creon’s wish “... is revealed as a standard elegiac topic, not literally meant. However, with grim irony, it will be literally granted...” See also Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 98: “The movements conveyed by the messenger’s description of Creon trying to save his tormented daughter are a hideous combination of excessive closeness and excessive separation.”
from the erōs of Medea and Jason. As they single-mindedly follow their true desire, to attain competitive aretē, their children, no less than Creon's child, are rendered corpses. As we are treated to the vision of Medea, Jason, and the child corpses in the final scene, we are shown the epitome of the perverse issue of competitive erōs: young death. And as we think back to the young death that was the princess’, two truths begin to dawn: that young death is, contrary to what is suggested by a competitive creed that rewards high stakes, anything but beautiful, and that such a death sucks into its vortex of horror the parent of the child.

The idea of the beauty of young death is an epic motif that expresses all of the idealism of competitive aretē. In order to attain glory and honor, one must set the stakes high, must put one's life on the line; doing so does not insure (except in the case of Achilles) but certainly increases the chance that one will die young. Such a death is beautiful, it is a kalos thanatos. Euripides has, in describing the death of the young princess, exploited this motif and exposed it to reductive absurdity.

The princess, like the children of Jason and Medea, is

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young, and therefore by this fact alone a candidate for kalos thanatos. She, like they, is not, however, a warrior on the battlefield,\textsuperscript{378} but a frivolous young girl. Furthermore, she is hardly allowed to die with any beauty. Instead, she is grotesquely deformed by the pharmaka on the gown and tiara, and dies the pathetic death of the disfigured corpse. Of the three types of hideous death, of outrage (aiKia), Vernant has identified as possible for a warrior to suffer—disfigurement, dismemberment, or decomposition—\textsuperscript{379} the princess suffers the first:

One kind of cruelty consists in defiling the bloody corpse with dust and in tearing his flesh, so that the enemy will lose his individual appearance, his clear set of features, his color and glamor; he loses his distinct form along with his human aspect, so that he becomes unrecognizable. When Achilles begins to abuse Hektor, he ties the corpse to his chariot to tear off its skin, by letting it—especially the head and the hair—drag on the ground in the dust: "A cloud of dust rose where Hektor was dragged, his dark hair was falling about him, and all that head that once was so handsome [paros charien] was tumbled in the dust" (Il. 22.401-3). By dirtying and disfiguring the corpse, instead of purifying and anointing it, aiKia seeks to destroy the individuality of a body that was the source of the charm of youth and life. Achilles wants Hektor to be like Sarpedon: "No longer could a man, even a knowing one, have made out the godlike Sarpedon, since he was piled from head to ends of feet under a mass of weapons, the blood and the dust" (Il. 16.637-40).\textsuperscript{380}

\textsuperscript{378}Christopher M. Dawson, "Random Thoughts on Occasional Poems," YCS 19 (1966), pp. 51-55, discusses how Tyrtaeus (fr. 7 Diehl, 19-32) stresses that being dead is only beautiful if a man has died on the front lines in defense of his country.

\textsuperscript{379}Vernant, "Beautiful Death," pp. 70-72.

\textsuperscript{380}Vernant, "Beautiful Death," p. 70.
we now can better understand the detail Euripides has lavished on describing the princess' death. The young girl suffers nearly every aspect of disfigurement alluded to above. She is all but unrecognizable (1196), her features and beauty destroyed (1197-1198), her hair is defiled with blood and fire (1198-1199), her flesh is torn off, depriving her of human aspect: she brings to mind a pine tree (1200).

Such gross disfigurement is actualized in epic, but in the most significant cases it is countermanded by the gods, who protect the hero's glorious status by preserving the body from harm.\textsuperscript{381} Furthermore, parents are rarely allowed to view the death of the hero;\textsuperscript{382} they are instead brought in only notionally by the poet, by flashback or flash-forward, and then to increase the pathos or to begin the mourning that will doubtlessly ensue at such a tragic and beautiful self-sacrifice.\textsuperscript{383} But no such divine preservation and no such refined pathos occur in Medea; instead the princess is left a hideous mass of flesh, ultimately lying next to the equally disfigured corpse of her father, who has died with the memory of the

\textsuperscript{381}Vernant, "Beautiful Death," P. 74.

\textsuperscript{382}Charles Segal, The Theme of the Mutilation of the Corpse in the Iliad (Leyden: E. J. Brill, 1971; hereafter Segal, Mutilation), p. 17.

grotesque thing his daughter has become.

If there was, before this scene, any confusion remaining that the code of the zero-sum competitor is a vile perversion of the heroic creed, no such confusion can withstand the view with which the spectator is left at the end of this scene. There is here no glory, no honor, there is no beauty, no victory. Furthermore, there is no mention of anyone to bury these two; they are abandoned in a parody of procreation, an embrace that has brought grotesque death.

With this image in mind we are led into what can now only be considered paradox: Medea’s decision to proceed with killing her own children. The juxtaposition of birth and death is nowhere more violent than in Medea’s formulation of that decision: “We who gave [them] birth will kill [them]” (ἡμεῖς κτενοῦμεν οὖπερ ἔξεφύσαμεν, 1063). The decision to kill the children, logical for the zero-sum competitor, becomes repugnant by the juxtaposition of birth and death. Deftly, as if through the sleight-of-hand of some shell game, Euripides has indeed brought us to paradox, a mother who must kill the children she has borne into life. For what else is paradox than inexorable, yet emotionally

384 Buttrey, "Accident," p. 12 n. 14: "... the murder of Creusa is a sort of prologue to the death of the children. She is just as they, without form, without character, without even a name in the play."
The paradox of a mother who kills her young is brought uncomfortingly into physical manifestation in the final encounter between Jason and Medea. Here, in the little bodies Medea carries aloft with her in her moment of seeming triumph, is the visible evidence of this perversion of nature, the withdrawal of life from its soft, sweet-smelling, fresh, young receptacles. Here, again, and this time not merely described but made visible, are corpses of children. And here, with these corpses, is their mother

385Ohlander, Suspense, pp. 143-145, has a good appreciation of the paradoxical nature of Medea's decision; cf. Pucci, "Monument," pp. 186-187, for the paradox becoming apparent and projected into the future at the play's close, where Medea announces the ritual to commemorate her children, upon which Pucci remarks, "The unresolvable tension will continue forever." See Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 19, for Euripides' use in Medea of a "reversal of nature motif" whereby "... a mother is to bring death instead of life to her children ..." Cf. Hills, Mythopoeia, p. 107.

Similarly, Michelini, "Neophron," p. 131, explains, "Medea's particular dilemma and the solution she chooses involve her in interlocking contradictions." Cf. p. 134, where Michelini terms Medea "... an absurdity, a paradox, in which conflicting forces are held forever in opposition." I do not, however, agree with Michelini's later assertions (p. 133): 1) that the Medea's dilemma "resembles the complex picture of moral responsibility that we find in Aristotle more than it does a Sophistic or Socratic paradox," and 2) that "... Medea, who feels mother love most keenly at the moment of her decision to murder, recognizes the irrational force guiding her rationality." It is her mother love that is "irrational," and her decision to murder that is "rational," within the dictates of the established definitions. The paradox, by stressing the emotional unacceptability of seeing a decision to murder one's own children as "rational," forces the recognition that it is the definitions, not the logic, that is wrong. As in elenchos, one must discard the proposed definitions and begin anew.
who killed them. But, as Creon's death has suggested, the parent cannot survive the death of the child, for death makes no such discrimination. Parents, whether willing or not, cannot but die when their children die.

The women of the Chorus have already revealed that to parents the loss of a child is the "most distressing grief" (1113); so distressing that not having children makes one happier than having them (1090-1093). We can now, after having witnessed Creon's death with his child and Medea's killing of her own children, understand further why it is that the women of the Chorus can think only of Ino as a parallel to Medea's situation. Ino, too, died when her children died: "... and dying with οὐκενανοωσ(α) her two children she was destroyed" (1289). This is not a hint that Medea should kill herself;386 instead, it is a recognition of a fact: whether literally or not, parents die when their children die.387

386 Pace Hugh Parry, The Lyric Poems of Greek Tragedy (Toronto and Sarasota: Samuel Stevens, 1978), p. 198. Cf. the suggestion of Cunningham, "Medea," pp. 156-157, that the participle οὐκενανοωσ at 1253 has optative force, and that the Chorus' attitude toward Medea after the murder is one of revulsion.

387 So Conacher, Euripidean Drama, p. 197; Conacher, however, does not notice the parallel suggested by the scene between Creon and his daughter, and thus dismisses the Chorus' Ino analogue as an intimation that Medea's continuing to live and flourish annuls. Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 123, sees Ino's death as a parallel to Medea's in that Medea has to destroy a part of herself, her maternal instinct, in order to kill the children. Cf. Shaw, "Female Intruder," p. 262, who asserts that earlier, in Medea's second scene with Jason, "her [Medea's]
Neither Jason nor Medea literally die, but both suffer the death of their glory and honor, their status of attaining competitive aretē. Jason's ignoble death is foretold by an exultant Medea (1386-1388); he himself acknowledges that he has been destroyed (1350). Medea, meanwhile, is likewise destroyed along with her children. As Jason and modern critics are quick to point out, her act has in some sense assaulted her status as human being. Her victory of not being laughed at pales by involuntary outbursts of grief reveal that a part of herself is suffering and dying. 388

388 The mode of Medea's escape in the sun-chariot is regularly cited as evidence of her loss of humanity. For Medea's transformation into a faux-goddess, see Cunningham, "Medea," pp. 158-160; cf. Schlesinger, "Zu Medea," p. 51: "Der Mensch Medea is tot; an ihre Stelle is die siegreiche Rachegöttin getreten." Knox, "Medea," pp. 303-306, points out Medea's similarities to other Euripidean gods from the machine, but concludes that she is meant to represent "... something permanent and powerful in the human situation ... ."; Cowherd, "Ending," p. 135, asserts that this "irresistible power" is thumos, which Cowherd interprets as generalized emotion. To Conacher, Euripidean Drama, p. 198, Medea has been transformed into "the folk-tale fiend of magic powers." Burnett, "Tragedy of Revenge," p. 22, sees Medea as "slough[ing] off" her humanity to become "a truly impersonal alastor."

Bongie, "Heroic Elements," p. 54, casts Medea's transformation in a positive light: she has become "... something more than human, in a sense, purified by the cleansing fire of her own passion." Furthermore, she is "godlike": "The gift of the chariot from her grandfather the Sun symbolizes the recognition, the glory she has won in the eyes of the gods." Bongie is forced by her analysis of Medea as "heroic" into such ill-considered pronouncements. Mills, Mythopoeia, p. 93, by contrast, sees as evidence of Medea's duality the fact that "... she, a polluted murderess, is rescued by the Sun-god, the very incarnation of purity and light."

comparison with the destruction of her glory and honor that killing her children has brought upon her; like the corpses of the princess and Creon, Medea has been disfigured to the point where she is no longer recognizably human. Like Jason, Medea can no longer be the object of approval she once was. She is hideously transformed, and in the description of her transformation, we are allowed to see that the human status she has lost is that of the hero.

We have already witnessed Medea's professed delight at hearing the report of the princess' and Creon's deaths, and we recall that these deaths entailed grotesque disfiguring of a corpse, and that Medea had been careful to arrange just such a death (784-788). Medea has thus become that which the epic hero--with one notable exception--only threatens to become: one who not only kills his enemy, but proceeds to outrage the enemy's corpse. The notable exception is, of course, Achilles, whose vile treatment of Hector in Iliad 22 is the climax in a rising

170, who cautions, "We should not minimize the horrors Euripides finds inherent in human nature by saying that Medea here substitutes for the not human deus ex machina." See also Ohlander, Suspense, p. 185, to whom Medea is "a wrecked mortal."

A very balanced discussion of the many aspects of Medea's airborne escape can be found in Mills, Mythopoeia, pp. 109-118.

389One could argue that Odysseus serves as another, and, on one point, an even more appropriate comparison. Odysseus allowed, even as Medea arranged for, the mutilation of one of his enemies, Melanthius (Odyssey 22.474-477).
crescendo of threats of corpse mutilation—threats which veil an even more hideous threat: raw-eating the enemy’s corpse.

The case of Achilles and that of Medea are, then, strangely exceptional, and therefore comparable. Both desecrate the corpses of their enemies: Achilles by boring a hole in Hector’s heels and dragging his body (Iliad 22.395-404), Medea by arranging the hideous devastation her poison’s effect (1167-1203). Both outrages are witnessed by the enemy’s parent(s): Hector’s dragging is viewed from afar by Hecabe and Priam as well as Andromache (Iliad 22.405-436, 462-515); Creon’s misfortune is worse, and yet it has only begun, when he stumbles in upon the hideous mass that once was his daughter (1204-1210).

But there the similarities end. Achilles softens and relents. Although Hector’s corpse has been outraged, the outrage is in some sense mitigated by the gods’ alleged protection of the corpse (23.184-191; 24.18-21), by the decreasing detail in descriptions of the mutilation (22.395-405; 23.24-26; 24.14-18), and by Achilles’ both seeing to the repair of damage he has done the corpse.

390 Segal, Mutilation, passim, but especially pp. 33-47.


392 Segal, Mutilation, pp. 42 and 57.
and keeping it out of Priam’s sight until it is so repaired (24.581-586).

This last is but one example of Achilles’ respectful treatment of the grieving Priam. When Priam first enters Achilles’ tent, the hero submits to the old man’s touch of supplication, gently removing Priam’s hand only after hearing out his appeal for the return of his son’s body (24.475-480; 508-509). Achilles agrees to return the body for burial, and himself attends to some of the details of the return (24.571-591). Furthermore, he promises to secure a moratorium to give time for burial (24.656-670).

But this is not all the hero Achilles does. He shares with Priam both the wisdom he has gained from his own grief (24.523-551, 596-620) and, more importantly, a meal (24.601-627).393 This last act manifests the communion of Achilles and Priam from their shared experience of loss. It is no wonder that at this juncture the poet describes the respect these two ostensible enemies feel for one another (24.628-632). The violence latent between them (24.567-570, 583-586) never detonates; they instead part in peace, with Achilles using touch to reassure the old man (24.671-672). This is the hero’s final act in the Iliad; when the poet withdraws him from our vision, he is asleep beside Briseis (24.675-676).

393See above, Part Four, for the significance of feasting.
How different are Medea's final acts! As was noted above, the princess' corpse was afforded no divine protection, and the outrage visited upon it is described in unremittingly brutal detail. Furthermore, the desecration of this corpse is never repaired, and, in fact, the corpse's parent, instead of being kept at a distance, is made the unwilling instrument of the its further humiliation.

The princess' death-scene, as has been argued, serves as an analogue for what follows: the second turning of children into corpses, the killing of Medea's own children. And in the scene where Medea displays their bodies from afar to their grief-stricken father, her actions again show how far from the heroic Achilles is Medea, the zero-sum competitor. There is here no possibility for actual supplication: Jason cannot touch Medea (1320). There is no return of the bodies to the father, and there will be no burial of them at his hands (1377-1378; 1410-1412); he will not be allowed even to touch them (1402-1404; 1411-1412). Although Jason and Medea do share grief (1361-1362), and one even more common than that of Priam and Achilles, there is no quieting here, no resolution, no parting in peace with a reassuring touch. That is because there is no hero here, and the transformation of Medea described by Jason makes it clear that she, no less than he, has lost any association she may have had with the approval given to one
of heroic stature.

In short, Jason is unwittingly on-target when he describes Medea's transformation into a lioness (1342) who kills her cubs (1407), a wild beast, a monster like scylla (1343) who is no less befouled with the blood of slaughter (1346) than that monster who ate the raw flesh of men. What all of these descriptions suggest is the degenerated hero, which is precisely what the zero-sum competitor is.

The comparison of a warrior to a lion is a favorite in Homeric epic; the struggles between man and lion, and between the lion and other beasts serve as comparisons for man's struggling with man in war. The lion's awesome power as king of beasts makes him the perfect comparison for a warrior engaged in successful battle. That is not to say that the lion is regularly depicted as having an easy time of it. He is often, if set against helpless herds or flocks, equally matched by the men and dogs who come to defend the domesticated animals. Comparison with lions, then, is engineered to highlight a warrior as perseverant and brave in a contest in which he

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may fall. Lion similes celebrate the strength and bravery of the warrior.

There is another reason why the lion is a favored comparative to the warrior, and that is because the lion is imagined to be driven by blood-lust. As such, this animal, often depicted consuming raw flesh (e.g., Iliad 3.23-25, 5.782, 7.256, 15.592, 18.582-583; Odyssey 9.292-293), serves as the external manifestation of war's latent threat: that the heroic warrior may violate those boundaries of civilization his role forces him to brush against and at the same time protect. For the heroic warrior must act like the predatory lion but never partake of the kill. Doing so would transform him from human into beast, from hero into horror.

The Iliad, as Segal and Redfield have argued, depicts a world where just such a transformation of the hero is ever menacing, in the thrill of battle that overtakes even the best, in threats to leave bodies unburied for carrion, in threats of corpse mutilation, in actual mutilation, and in the threats and suppositions that someone or another wants to eat or is capable of eating the enemy's flesh.397 What Euripides has done in Medea is to show Medea as a warrior who has given in to the darkest impulses: she is termed a lioness, but not so as to

397 Segal, Mutilation, passim; Redfield, Nature and Culture, pp. 167-169, 189-203.
highlight her strength and bravery. She is a warrior, but not the hero whose reason for doing battle is protection of the vulnerable and the young; Medea is instead a horror who kills her own, who, lion-like, eats raw flesh. This is the transformation Euripides effects by having Jason describe Medea as he does: as lioness (1342) who kills her young (1407), and as one of a nature wilder than Scylla's (1342).

As lioness who kills her young, Medea loses every positive association the lion simile holds for the heroic warrior. Instead of engaging in battle with equals, she attacks those whose weakness in the face of her strength precludes their self-defense. She first killed a frivolous young girl, and now has killed two other children. Killing the defenseless may be lion-like, but it is not one of the positive associations between heroic warriors and lions. In Homeric epic, comparisons describing lions who all too easily take their prey are, whether to lion or to prey, clearly meant as insults or rebukes (Iliad 21.481-488; Odyssey 4.335-340 [= 17.126-131]). Furthermore, heroic warriors are ennobled when compared to lions (and other animals) who defend their own and feel keen loss when their young become the prey of others (Iliad 17.132-136; 18.318-322);398 heroic warriors do not, as Medea has, turn on

398Redfield, Nature and Culture, pp. 50 and 191. See also Emily Vermeule, Aspects of Death in Early Greek Art and Poetry, pp. 87-88, on lions as protectors of the weak, and on Heracles as "the preeminent lion-soldier." The contrast between the child-killing of Heracles and that
and kill their own.

As Scylla, Medea becomes the raw-eating savage beast that lion similes suggest the warrior is capable of becoming. Scylla's brief biography in Homeric epic is a one-pointed meditation on the horrific savagery entailed in the raw-eating of human flesh (Odyssey 12.85-259, passim). Odysseus calls her eating his men the "most pitiable sight" (οὐκιστοῦ, θόν, Odyssey 12.258) of all he has seen in his long journeys. Blood-lust is to be expected from both heroic warrior and lion, but raw-eating flesh, to be expected in Scylla and acceptable in a lion, constitutes for the heroic warrior a boundary-crossing that robs him of his humanity. So much is clear from Apollo's criticism of Achilles' much lesser savagery--dragging Hector's body--at Iliad 24.39-54. Apollo compares Achilles to a lion that feasts on domestic herds: Achilles "knows savage things" (ἀγρια οἰδεν, 24.41); his mind is not intent on justice (24.40); he has destroyed pity and has no aidōs (24.44-45). In short, Achilles has crossed the line of civilization and become the savage beast; justice, pity, and aidōs are values of civilization that war threatens to destroy of Medea is another indicator of her anti-heroism.

As even her name suggests, Scylla is part dog (Odyssey 22.86). For the dog as the representation of the uncivilized in man, see Redfield, Nature and Culture, pp. 193-203.

Segal, Mutilation, p. 58.
and that the gods—with the exception of Hera and Poseidon (24.25-30)—are now eager to protect.\textsuperscript{401}

Such civilized values must be protected by the heroic warrior whose actions, ironically, most threaten them. He must only be comparable to a lion, and not become the lion, for lions do what Scylla does—and what humans must never do. A final contrast to the lioness and Scylla Medea is the lion Odysseus. At \textit{Odyssey} 22.401-406, Homer gives a highly detailed description of Odysseus as Eurykleia found him after the slaughter of the suitors: like a lion after a kill, he is spattered with blood and gore (\textit{ἀματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπαλαμένον}, 22.402) up to his chest and his cheeks (22.403-404). But Odysseus, for all the gore of his enemies that is spattered upon him, has not become the lion. He remains the human: he checks Eurykleia's hooting glorification of slaughter as impious, and reminds her that the slain men died because of their maltreatment of others (\textit{Odyssey} 22.407-416).

Medea, however, can in no way distance herself from the horrible comparisons to lioness and Scylla Jason in his descriptions of her has made. The bodies of the slain over which she stands are her own children, helpless and

\textsuperscript{401}The poet gives the judgment of Paris as Hera's reason for not stopping Achilles' maltreatment of the corpse. A better reason may be her depiction as savagery incarnate, as the one with lust for raw-eating flesh; see Joan O'Brien, "Homer's Savage Hera," \textit{CJ} 86 (1991; hereafter O'Brien, "Savage Hera"), pp. 105-125.
innocent victims. She earlier arranged the death of another child by hideous mutilation. Jason's descriptions are correct: Medea is a lioness who has killed helpless innocents and she is capable, like Scylla, of eating raw human flesh—if only metaphorically. For, as zero-sum competitor, Medea, like Jason, rejects harmony and cooperation for discord and strife. Metaphorically, then, neither partakes of the feast of meat, ritually sacrificed and roasted; each is, metaphorically, an eater of raw human flesh, for "[t]he lust for raw-eating or omophagia . . . is epic's primary image of moral degeneration, just as a meal roasted and shared with others is the primary metaphor for the best of human behavior."

The zero-sum competitor, one who pursues self-advancement at the expense of all others, is no heroic warrior like Achilles or Odysseus, but that hero degenerated, like Agamemnon, who feeds on his own people (Iliad 1.231). The degenerated hero who feeds, if only metaphorically, on human flesh, is an inhuman human and, as such, a perversion of nature itself.

Medea, as she escapes, is just such a perversion. And as she flies off, we begin to recognize that even as a god, her grandfather Helios, conspires to save her, the very

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mode of her salvation signals a profound reversal.\(^{403}\) For as the chariot of the sun carries Medea and the child corpses that are her trophies from Corinth to the "land of Eretheus" (1384), the city of Athens, her very journey traces the cataclysmic reversal of nature effected by the operating definitions of zero-sum competitors: the sun travels from west to east, the reverse of its accustomed course.\(^{404}\)

That is not all that has been reversed in nature. By

\(^{403}\)Ohlander, *Suspense*, p. 175, suggests that a reversal of the natural order is anticipated by the Chorus at 1251-1260, when they call Earth and Sun to stop Medea. For Medea's mode of transport as empowering her position, see Arrowsmith, "Ideas," p. 43 (cf. pp. 49-50), who discerns in Euripides' use of the sun chariot a "savage moral oxymoron"; Medea's escape in it lends her "elemental" eros "the power of sacred physis." Mills, "Sorrows," pp. 294-296, sees in Medea's airborne escape the recurrence of a pattern from the Ino/Procne stories, i.e., it is "a kind of avian metamorphosis."

\(^{404}\)See the Chorus of Euripides' *Electra* (699-750), who disbelieve the story that, when Thyestes deceived and betrayed his brother Atreus, Zeus turned the course of the stars and the sun. Their disbelief is, of course, called into question when, after Orestes and Electra have deceived and killed their mother, the celestial Dioscuri come down from the sky (1233 ff.).

Collinge, "*Ex Machina*," pp. 171-172, however, sees no thematic significance to Medea's journey on the chariot of the sun. He accuses Euripides throughout the play of hinting that Medea has ready transport from Corinth, and, by strategic references to the Sun, suggests that Medea's celestial ancestor will play some role. Euripides thereby "... plays a game with his audience and indulges in an intellectual exercise which is detached from the course of the tragedy, and on another mental plane from its appreciation as tragedy, much as he so readily introduces sophistic disquisitions of startling dramatic irrelevance."
having bedded down erōs, the power to create life, with the choice to kill, Euripides has forced zero-sum logic to a conclusion that strikes the Chorus and his audience as preternatural, and therefore emotionally repugnant to an extent that annuls the logical cogency of killing the children. The image of the cosmos' forces reversed, of the blood of murder on the marriage bed, of the corpses of children at the side of their mother who killed them, reverses for all time Euripides' audience's easy acceptance of zero-sum ethics.

In the train of Medea's escape chariot are other reversals. Aretē has been claimed by a cannibalistic monster. So much should be expected, however, in a world where song, the celebration of the zero-sum competitor's aretē, is a twisted and dissonant lament, not the celebration of glory conferring immortality that is the reward of heroic excellence. It is logical in this world, where destruction is rampant, where it is the action of choice, that children become corpses. For nothing can thrive in such a sick reversal of natural order, where sophia is defined as having the savvy to catch one's enemies off guard, and erōs, generative desire, is trained to effect

\[405\]McDermott, Incarnation, pp. 109-111, sees in the anti-familial and anti-civic individualism and self-interest of Medea a comparison with the Cyclops Odysseus encounters in Odyssey 9. Medea, however, outdoes the Cyclops: she is actively hostile to family and state, while he merely exists in a place where such institutions are as yet not established.
As Medea escapes, drawing along with her these now reversed because newly repugnant definitions, Jason, like the Chorus earlier (1090-1115), suggests that it would be better for children--here, Jason specifically refers to his own children--never to be born only to die (1413-1414). The way he expresses it, however, further indicates that the definitions with which Medea escapes are not truths, but stillbirths of truth, nature's ghastly wind-eggs. For as Jason tells it, in his world, in the realm of zero-sum aretē, children are dead even before they are begotten to die: his children, whom he can neither touch nor bury, are, as Jason cries to Medea, "... corpses whom I ought never to have begotten to have to die at your hands" (νεκρούς, οὗς μὴ ποτὲ ἐγὼ φύσας ὄφελον πρὸς σοῦ φθιμένους ἐπιδέσθαι, 1412-1413). 406

Jason, driven as he is by the perverted erōs of the zero-sum competitor, is powerless to beget anything but child-corpses. Furthermore, since zero-sum aretē informs and defines sophia as well as erōs, competitive sophia

406 Boedeker, "Medea," p. 104, notes that this "impossible wish" of Jason, along with the Nurse's initial and equally impossible wish that the Argo had never sailed, "frame the action of the play [and] hint that the Medea deals somehow with a negation of its own myth." Cf. Ohlander, Suspense, p. 189. Simon, Tragic Drama, p. 89, suggests that Jason here repeats Medea's Killing of the children by killing them before they are ever conceived.
ensures such issue. No wonder the Chorus, only lately eager competitors, must, in the face of such a stillbirth, acknowledge that the gods have accomplished things beyond expectation and that gods alone can find a way out of this aporia (1415-1419). All things, even the very course of nature, have for them been reversed.407

The Chorus could themselves come up with only one solution: never have children (1090-1115). This is, of course, Jason’s solution—one born of despair when faced with the lioness, the Scylla, Medea. But even as Jason’s hideous descriptions betray a germ of—surely unwitting—wisdom, so too in the Chorus’ dire solution is there some small hope that live-birth may still be possible, that truth has, if not been born, at least taken embryonic form.

The evidence for this claim is at 1085-1086. There, the women of the Chorus tentatively lay claim to sophia, and one that is newly generated: by a muse, and through "intercourse": "For indeed there is even for us a muse, who holds intercourse [with us] for the sake of wisdom (άλλα γὰρ ἔστιν μοῦσα καὶ ἡμῖν, ἤ προσομιλεῖ σοφίας ἔνεκεν). The word προσομιλεῖ is itself uncommon. Euripides uses it only one other time: in fragment 897.3 (προσομιλεῖν οὗτος ὁ δαίμων [i.e. Ἄρως] πάντων ἦδιστος

where it has obvious sexual connotations. Here also there is a sexual undertone to the word, although it is admittedly subtle. By their use of this word, the women of the Chorus hint at a connection between erōs and sophia, a connection suggested more openly once before in this play, in the first antistrophe (835–845) of the Ode to Athens. There the Erotes were assistants to Sophia. Here again, and this time even more explicitly, erōs is not put at odds with sophia, not put, if one knows best, under the vigilant control of a rationally deliberated plan. Here, in fact, erōs is the generative force employed by a muse to produce sophia.

The Chorus' new sophia, never to have children, is surely not the final wisdom, but it is the best they can do, burdened as they still are with defective definitions they cannot quite bring themselves to discard. But we should not expect from them, any more than we should from

Evidence for use of the compound προσομιλέω in an explicitly sexual sense is, besides the Euripidean fragment mentioned, confined to texts later than Medea, according to LSJ⁹, which cites, in addition to a sixth century A. D. papyrus (PMasp.153.6, al.), Lucian’s Amores 17, and the third century A. D. novelist Heliodorus 4.8. Use of the uncompound σεμιλέω in a sexual sense is, however, not unknown to the fifth and fourth centuries B. C., again according to LSJ⁹, which cites Xenophon, Anabasis 3.2.25, Memorabilia 2.1.24, etc.; and Sophocles Oedipus the King 367 and 1185.

The relationship between erōs and sophia seems to resemble that found in Plato's Symposium.
the interlocutor in Socratic *elenchos*, truth to be born. It is instead someone else's--Euripides' audience's, Plato's reader-auditor's, in short, our--job to "fiddle" with the premises, even as the Chorus seem to have begun to do, to try to bring truth to birth, to arrive at true *sophia*, true *erôs*, and, finally, true *aretê*.

And what might those truths be? The clues lie in the maieutic analogies Euripides has drawn, and in the essence of benefit upon which those analogies rely. What clues have been given? The harmony of song, the healing from medicine, the life-giving power of generative desire. Somehow, with these in mind, we must--or so it ever seems!--be able to find our way out of discord, sickness, and death.
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