

Euboulia on Stage: Deliberative Pivots and the Model Deliberator in Euripides' *Ion*

Second thought and deliberation in tragedy have enjoyed a good deal of scholarly attention following the landmark study by Knox (1966) on the subject. Rather few works since that time, however, have expressly dealt with the matter as it relates to Euripides' *Ion* in particular. Those scholars who have addressed the importance of deliberation in *Ion* (notably the recent Gibert 1995, Zacharia 2003, and Athanassaki 2010, e.g.) have emphasized aspects of Ion's deliberation other than those which I intend to highlight, namely Ion's less-than-straightforward but still quite demonstrable development into a figure of outstanding *euboulia*. Consequently I encourage further deliberation, as it were, on the subject. In the present paper I aim to examine the aspects of *Ion* that reveal him to be in possession of *euboulia* in a way that his fellow *dramatis personae* simply are not, and to show why this should matter to our reading of *Ion* on the whole.

In undertaking to identify the characteristics which mark *Ion* as a prudent decision-maker, this paper incorporates recent work on the ancients' conceptions of *euboulia* and the qualities which comprise it. Following the rubrics of Hesk (2011) and Woodruff (2013), I categorize *Ion*'s customary circumspection, willingness to pause, openness to discussion, and thoroughgoing examination of evidence as the principal traits which reveal him to be training variously his faculties of *euboulia*. Along the same lines, I demonstrate the ways in which *Ion* exhibits these qualities even more clearly when taken in contrast with the action of other characters in the play, all of whom fail to prove that they possess *euboulia* themselves.

Ion encounters a great many opportunities for demonstrating his thorough decision-making process, and each of what I call his deliberative pivots evokes his salient thoroughness. *Ion* consistently arrives at a decision only upon carefully examining all possibilities and lines of

inquiry. When Creusa criticizes Apollo for committing rape, Ion at first quickly defends the god before doggedly interrogating Creusa on the charge she levies (338-68). Ultimately Ion reconsiders his initial reaction, going so far as to chastise the god now himself (429-51). Other episodes illustrate Ion's penchant for thoroughness as well, such as his skeptical exchange with Xuthus (517-62), Ion's hesitation and later capitulation in opening the once hidden, now revealed chest (1380-90), and his challenge to Creusa to predict the unseen contents of the chest (1414-36). The hallmark throughout is Ion's tenacious persistence in arriving at the best and most rational decision possible.

While Ion himself may go to such lengths to be sure a course of action is best, his surrounding cast falls well short of *euboulia*. Xuthus fails to ask crucial follow-up questions of the Delphic oracle (541); the Chorus neglects crucial information and errs in counsel (755-62, cf. Chong-Gossard 2008); the Old Man is ready with an immediate explanation and revenge plot for Creusa (808-43); and Creusa herself is an utterly passive deliberator throughout, reluctant to speak out until Ion's goading at 335-7, receptive to the Old Man's revenge plot at 979, and pleading to the Chorus for direction at 1253-60. The haste of these characters in making decisions, as well as their tendency toward violence (Athanasaki 2010), stands in stark contrast with Ion's sober and methodical deliberation.

The differences among the various decision-making processes point to the central importance of dialogue and multilateral consideration in practicing meaningful *euboulia* and the political dimension thereof (Gregory 1991 and Zacharia 2003). In short, Ion's *euboulia* far outstrips the others' deliberative attempts, and a fuller reading of *Ion* depends on giving this characterization thorough consideration.

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