

IPHIGENIE AUF TAURIS: A REAFFIRMATION OF "GREEK RENAISSANCE"

IPHIGENIE AUF TAURIS:
A REAFFIRMATION OF "GREEK RENAISSANCE"
IN GOETHE'S EARLY CLASSICISM

By

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ABSTRACT

From the time of Goethe's writing of Iphigenie auf Tauris, a play based on Euripides' drama Iphigenia in Tauris, critics have been occupied with comparisons of the German 18th century and the ancient Greek works. Schiller, Goethe's contemporary, in a letter to Körner, has called Goethe's version "ungriechisch" and "erstaunlich modern". Since that time critics have taken varying viewpoints concerning the relationship between the two versions. This thesis takes a fresh view of this fascinating relationship by working very closely with the two texts.

Certainly Goethe's play, like any great work, is a creation of his own epoch, and as such is modern. However, the author of this thesis demonstrates that many of the changes Goethe has made do not actually depart from the Greek work, but rather represent a development of the ideas already present in the Greek drama. Euripides, a late contributor to 5th century tragedy, was an innovator and Goethe capitalized on some of his innovations. The direction the two plays take does vary, particularly with the decision Goethe's heroine makes to tell Thoas the truth, but in spite of this difference, there is much common ground in the characterization of the figures.

This investigation comprises two parts. In the first

part the plight of the human will be explored: Orestes' escape from the Furies, his recognition of Iphigenia, the curse on the house of Tantalus and Iphigenia's dilemma. In the second part the author deals with aspects which are considered to lie outside the human sphere: the goddess Diana, the heroic element, Apollo's oracle and the divine.

The element of "Greek Renaissance" found in Goethe's early classicism is evident in his exploration of the relationship between humanity and divinity. By tracing the origins of the myth surrounding Iphigenia, the author shows that Goethe's Iphigenie auf Tauris is part of a European literary tradition that finds its roots in the Euripidean drama.

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Introduction

Goethe's interest and enthusiasm for Homer and the Greek tragedians, and his passion for ancient Greek culture, have been well documented. Goethe studied ancient Greek literature intensively spanning the duration of his entire life. William Keller, by way of his thorough investigation of Goethe's diaries and correspondence, has made a list of all the formal qualities which Goethe admired in this ancient body of literature. With characteristics ranging from simplicity and moderation to variety, imagination and even complication of plot (especially in Euripides!), Goethe has mentioned at least 20 qualities which attracted him to ancient Greek and Roman authors. It is not surprising, then, that the ancient Greeks provided Goethe with his "great models" (Keller 512).

But even more than the formal aspects, it was the mythology itself which absorbed Goethe's imagination. He chose Euripides' Iphigenia in Tauris upon which to base his own version of the Tantalus myth, an unlikely model at first glance, since Goethe was primarily interested in Greek tragedy, and this ancient play has been usually categorized not as a tragedy, but variously as a romance, an adventure drama or a tragicomedy. Certainly while Goethe was drawn to the myth itself, he must have been also intrigued by Euripides' singular treatment of this

ancient, gruesome story. The Greek audience gathered at the Dionysian theater in numbers as large as 14,000, and it was precisely the poet's unique treatment of a myth, rather than allegiance to a previous model that the audience delighted in seeing. Goethe - by varying an established tale - has continued a literary tradition which began over two thousand years before his time.

If the Athenian theatre served as a place of instruction where new values might surface and in which an onlooker might learn how to live more productively in a democratic society, is there a relevance in these values for Goethe's public? And what is the function of the Greek setting and the Atreid history, which Goethe has left unimpaired, showing an allegiance to the family history that extends beyond Euripides' own embracement of the ancient material?

The relationship between Goethe's Iphigenie and the Euripidean model has intrigued critics from the day when the German play was first performed at Ettersburg in March, 1779. Goethe's "Schauspiel" has been labelled variously as an "enlightened work in a Greek veil", a drama where only the situation and names have been taken over from the Greek model, a drama which needs to be freed from the "Hülle des antikisierendes Klassizismus", or even a "correction" of the Euripidean drama. Schiller in his famous letter of 21-1-1802 to Körner called it "erstaunlich modern und ungriechisch". Many critics do not view Goethe's drama from the perspective of a long and continuous

European literary tradition that would bring the two works into relationship with one another.

Certainly Goethe's portrayal of Iphigenia is a modern one, derived from the cultural climate in which he was writing. For Euripides, writing in an age of doubt, the ancient heroine too is the offspring of his own epoch. Both are concrete, tied to their own point in the history of "civilized" society. According to Wolfdietrich Rasch, the reason a literary work survives over an extended period of time is precisely because it is representative of its own time. A work does not usually change, but the way it will be read does change (11-12). (I qualify this statement with "usually" since occasionally new and different manuscripts of older works are discovered). These last two statements are important to this study because they illuminate the necessity of exploring the relationship between Goethe's drama and its model. How can Euripides' model be representative of his own, ancient time-frame and yet relevant (i.e., allowing the possibility of being read in such a way that it is perceived as relevant) to Goethe and his public?

The answer to this question is grounded on the one hand in the traditional flexibility of the myth, and on the other hand in the constancy and pertinence of the values portrayed by Euripides. The traditional treatment of mythology provides plenty of room for expansion via new perspectives and yet there is also a common denominator; neither strictly ancient nor strictly modern, this common denominator is the quest for humanity.

Critics write time and again of Goethe's "Vermenschlichung" of the old fable and his smoothing over of the "crudity" of Euripides' castings. This study will show, however, that Goethe's drama does not stand for a humanization of the Greek play; rather it accomplishes a recovery and expansion of humanizing elements already present in the ancient model.

The relationship between Iphigenie and its Euripidean model is fascinating, and the study of it will deepen our understanding of the 18th century play. Jean Wilson states, and I agree with her, that Goethe's works need to be investigated as a "response to prior cultural examples" (11). Lilian Furst has written an influential commentary exploring the way in which Goethe transforms the mythological events of the Euripidean model into psychological phenomena. She cites by way of example Goethe's reinterpretation of the oracle and his psychological treatment of the gods and Furies. In her terms Goethe's Iphigenie is not a "response" to a prior work, but is "new" and "independent of the original" (13). Furst's conclusion concerning the change of the "Deus ex machina" into the "god within" is valid. She rightly points out that Goethe has stressed the psychological aspect in place of the ancient emphasis on the mythology. Furst has accurately seen what is new in Goethe's treatment of the material, but she has not determined what was new in Euripides in comparison to other ancient treatments of the myth. She outlines the Euripidean plot but does not mention Euripides' innovations. Her references to the ancient poet show

that she classifies Euripides' work in one category with all classical drama. It is an understatement to say that Euripides' treatment of the myth is atypical. To understand Goethe's reworking of the Greek model, it is necessary to understand first how Euripides shaped the existing ancient material into a work which displays modern tendencies. In other words, it is impossible to understand Goethe's recasting of the model without fully understanding the model's own innovative thrust. How "new" and how "independent" is Goethe's reworking of the model? I will show that the impetus for these innovations is not completely new and independent, but already present in the ancient work.

Uwe Petersen has touched on how Euripides was different from other Attic tragedians. He speculates, based on Goethe's writings concerning the "Volkstheater" in Venice, that Euripides represented for the 18th century poet an "Abkehr vom Asthetizismus", specifically a turning-away from the "reine Kunst" of Aeschylus. He notes further that Goethe portrayed Euripides in his Götter, Helden und Wieland as a poet interested in "Handwerk" (52). Petersen's approach differs from other critics in that he explores Goethe's associations with antiquity from the viewpoint of what Goethe had actually read. He poses the question: how much Greek tragedy had Goethe read by the time of writing Iphigenie, and should scholars not use Goethe's knowledge as a measuring stick for his work, rather than their own more comprehensive knowledge of antiquity (10)? Is it scientifically sound to say that Goethe created an echo from a certain work when

we are not sure he had ever read it? Goethe had with certainty read Euripides' Alcestis and Sophocles' Philoctetes by 1778. He owned other tragedies in translation, but there is no record of what he had read earlier. In the early 1770's he was learning Greek by attempting to read Homer. He was also familiar with mythological handbooks such as Hederich or Sulzer.

Petersen's methodology offers further opportunity for future scholarship. He only touches on what Goethe may have gleaned from the sources he used at the time of writing Iphigenie and further investigation of these sources may reveal an important influence on his work. Petersen takes the opposite stance to Furst; he claims that Goethe's play remained close to the ancient model.

Susan Helen Reynolds also takes into consideration Goethe's classical education as a starting point for her own interpretation, but whereas Petersen in his book accounts for Goethe's variation of the Euripidean plot, Reynolds considers the formal changes that the 18th century poet has made. She speculates that Schiller may have called Iphigenie "ungriechisch" because of these formal changes: Goethe omitted the chorus, he cast his first version in prose, and even in the second version written in blank verse, he avoids using the trimeters of classical Greek drama (63).

Contrasting all of these formal differences between the 18th century play and its model, Reynolds proceeds to highlight their numerous similarities - especially in characterization - some of which I will further investigate in this study. Her point

of departure is similar to my own. She is one of few critics who has recognized the importance of investigating how Euripides developed the ancient material, and she makes specific reference to Euripides' treatment of the myth and his development of the characters. Goethe's "refining" was clearly conducted in a spirit that was already evident in Euripides' play (63). Reynolds' contribution to the Iphigenie criticism is important because it allows us to view Goethe's drama as a continuation of a literary tradition.

James Malek and Franklin Carson do not compare the characterization in Goethe's drama and the model. They attempt instead to measure both the ancient and modern works using the definition of tragedy found in Aristotle's Poetics. While the approach is a unique one, the result is unfortunately somewhat forced. For example, they draw a parallel between Iphigenia's near sacrifice of her family members in the ancient drama, with Iphigenia's hesitation to tell the truth in Goethe's play (117). Searching for "hamartia" (a human mistake or shortcoming) in both plays, a necessary component for Aristotle's definition of tragedy, they label the above mentioned events as the characters' "hamartia". These are not, however, concrete examples of "hamartia" since Iphigenia did not sacrifice her family members, and she did tell the truth respectively in the ancient and modern plays.

The authors find the two plays fundamentally different, especially since in the modern drama, Iphigenia's dilemma engages

our attention much more than in the ancient version (114). The dilemma is certainly different. But there are other similarities between the two versions which the authors have overlooked, for example the oracle. Malek and Carson say that the oracle is not important in Goethe's work since it provides "no basis for hope" (114). Their criticism treats the two plays as separate entities and attempts to show how they both conform (quite independently) to Aristotle. The direction of their research does not lead to evaluating Goethe's drama as part of a tradition and does not investigate the relationship between the two plays.

Otto Brendel would agree that the ancient and modern dramas are very different, but he calls Goethe's version a "correction" of Euripides since the 18th century play concentrates on Iphigenia's conflict (57). Brendel considers Iphigenie to be a modern work; he highlights three areas in the ancient text which he considers to be foreign to modern thinking: Iphigenia's cunning, Thoas' role and the oracle. Once more, Brendel has not investigated the ancient text to see how these "differences" might be rooted in the Euripidean drama.

Looking more closely at the two plays, it becomes apparent that Iphigenia's "List" is not solely reserved for the ancient character. Jean Wilson points out that the protagonist in Goethe's play also shows "sheer boldness" in her action of telling the truth (64). This author explores in detail Iphigenia's development from silence to words and action. She looks into the meaning behind the curse and relates it back to

Euripides. Wilson is interested in Goethe's "reappropriation" of the Greek play which she sees as an "evocation of the past" becoming an "eloquent challenge to the present" (67). Working intertextually, Wilson outlines the differences between the two plays - for example, the reinterpretation of the oracle - but she also recognizes similarities to an ancient literary tradition which go back as far as Homer, such as the possibility of having two life stories. Wilson has treated Goethe's Iphigenie as a "response" to the Euripidean model. For her, the central issues in the ancient play include escape and freedom. She demonstrates how Goethe not only allows his characters to return to Greece, but also redeems them from the curse and transforms human society into a more humane one. I will show how these Goethean concepts are already present - albeit in a different form - in the ancient drama. Euripides too uses the concepts of redemption and transformation as a provocation to his own public.

Wolfdietrich Rasch's book 'Iphigenie auf Tauris' als Drama der Autonomie does not bring into play the Euripidean drama, but it is an important contribution to the Iphigenie criticism and is widely quoted. Rasch stresses the importance of Goethe's play because of its contribution to the German Enlightenment of the 18th century. He traces Iphigenia's development from her personal dependency on others to her freedom from everyone including the gods. Rasch understands Goethe's main interest to be a religious one; a new relationship between God and human beings is defined, one where mortals act autonomously

from any divine controlling power and are at the same time free from injustice, the burden of original sin and violence conducted in the name of religion. Iphigenie is not, however, against religion per se, but acts as a provocation against the religious authorities of Goethe's age. According to Rasch, the Olympian gods are simply analogies for the arbitrariness of an authoritarian religious structure (116).

Unlike Malek and Carson, Rasch considers Orestes' drama, which is concluded at the end of the third act, to be Goethe's main dramatic interest, whereby the poet shows how the troubled offspring of Atreus' house expiates the curse in strictly human terms without the help of the gods. Rasch's perspective is restricted in that it comments on the significance of the play from the viewpoint of the German Enlightenment. He does not stress the interdependence of people within the human community. For example, Orestes was healed on his own without the aid of his sister and even Thoas is already quite civilized from the beginning of the play. It is precisely such human values as loyalty, trust and friendship (which Rasch neglects) that connect Goethe's play to its ancient counterpart. Consequently, my investigation will lead in a direction that is different from this important book.

Taking another standpoint, Martin Mueller (with whom Wilson concurs) states that Tantalus' fall is a pagan version of Adam's fall and Iphigenia's mission is a secular rendition of Christ's redemption (91). Mueller avoids mentioning Iphigenia's

mission to redeem her family and their name from guilt in the ancient version, a mission which was obviously conceived independently from the Bible. Where he sees Goethe's work departing from its ancient model is in Iphigenia's rejection of duplicity.

Mueller is interested in the question of what may have guided Goethe in his choice of ancient models. He equates the first three acts of Goethe's play with an Electra drama, and the last two acts with Aeschylus' Eumenides. He bases Iphigenia's rejection of the lie on the model of Sophocles' Philoctetes. But Mueller only seldom connects Goethe's Iphigenie with Euripides' work of the same name.

Kathryn Brown and Anthony Stephens have decided that so much modern emphasis on the emancipation element in Goethe's Iphigenia character has distinctly ignored the mythical element in the play. For these authors as well as for Ursula Segebrecht, rather than being representative of Christian concepts, the mythological content should be read as a "closed fiction". Segebrecht sums up concisely the role of mythology: Iphigenia remembers her own sacrifice, sees the continuation of evil in her house and refuses to succumb to this continuation. Segebrecht demonstrates how the function of the Tantalus myth is to bring Iphigenia to a new self-consciousness through a broadened understanding of humanity. She discusses the function of the myth extensively and curiously enough, this is done without mentioning Euripides once! This author does, however, define with new

insight Goethe's relationship to the Greek world. Goethe "zeigt, daß die griechische Welt weder als Kostüm noch als Identifikationsmittel für bürgerliche und höfische Zwecke benutzt werden muß, sondern daß sie als geschichts- und lebensverändernde Kraft wirkt" (190). It is this life-changing force that has provoked people, whether ancient or modern, to think. Goethe recovered from the Greek text the humanity that belongs to the history of human civilization. Thus he takes up the challenge to humanity which has already been presented to 5th century Athens.

In many respects, Goethe's drama is "new" and consequently, the majority of critics have dealt with it as a separate entity from the Euripidean play. Many have delved into the meaning of the gods and come up with an allegorical interpretation. Others have stressed Iphigenia's self-development and the autonomy of humankind. Still others stress the significance of Iphigenia's moral integrity and her success of breaking the curse by telling the truth. With the exception of Reynolds and Wilson, very few contemporary scholars have worked intertextually with Goethe's Iphigenie and the ancient model. Closer intertextual research will reveal that Goethe's reclaiming part of the Greek spirit which still applies to his own public, and also the changes which he has made from the ancient text, are all connected to the Euripidean drama.

This thesis comprises two parts. In the first part I will investigate, by way of comparison, the plights of the human characters in both the ancient and modern plays and will comment

on the relationships that are developed between the characters. In the second part I intend to bring in elements which by ancient or modern standards are considered to be superhuman, because, although I do not concur with all of Rasch's conclusions, I do agree with him that Goethe's Iphigenie points to a new relationship between humankind and the divine. My method throughout is to work comparatively with both texts at hand, not to show, as many have before me, that Goethe has left out certain features of the Euripidean play and included other new material. This is assumed for Euripides himself was one of many poets who excluded certain aspects of his own tradition and developed new ones, and this was more than two thousand years before Goethe lived.

Euripides had already "humanized" the ancient Iphigenia story and it is my intention to show that the spirit of humanity which inspires every word of Goethe's Iphigenie is soundly established in the ancient play. And when Goethe's drama takes us down a different road away from Euripides, manifested for example in his treatment of the oracle, it is still from the seed of Euripides and Greek thought that we examine afresh the new branches of Goethe's humanity.

To understand Goethe's drama, we must first question whether we have understood the direction which his model has taken. If by lingering in the lines of the Greek play, I might clear up a few misconceptions about the model which are generally accepted as truths in the secondary literature concerning

Goethe's Iphigenie, then I will be successful in contributing also to a better understanding of the 18th century drama. My perspective will reveal that the play represents a continuation of a long established literary tradition.

PART ONE

Humanity

Orestes

A general understanding of the Furies and their role in Greek tragedy can be acquired by reading the final drama in Aeschylus' Oresteia trilogy, the Eumenides. According to an ancient system of retribution, crimes against family members must not be left unavenged. In the situation where a friend or family member had been murdered, it was not the duty of a court to establish innocence or guilt, but the responsibility of a family member to exact payment for this injustice. The family member was then obliged to murder the person who had murdered his relative. Orestes' dilemma is a unique one. He must avenge the murder of his father, Agamemnon, but the murderer is Clytemnestra, his mother, and the murder of one's parents is forbidden. At the behest of Apollo, Orestes fulfills the blood law; protecting his dead father's right for vengeance, he murders his mother. The Furies aggressively drive him out of his beloved homeland. Who are these ancient deities and what is their role in the system of Olympian justice?

The Furies are ancient, perhaps pre-Indo-European female deities, who attend to the appeals of dead spirits and act to avenge the murder of a family member which cannot otherwise claim

retribution. They are "spirits of just vengeance" and can be brought into play by a dead person's curses. The Furies:

enticed, almost seduced by the smell of human blood, who whine and howl like animals, are divinities immemorially old; they are of the dark, the children of Night, and to them the Olympian gods are young upstarts who fail to recognize them and will try to strip them of prerogatives which have been theirs since the birth of things, guaranteed by Fate. And in the end their duty of instilling terror into the community of men is acknowledged and underwritten by Athena herself. The Furies are not to be displaced by Olympian persuasive reasoning; they are the fearful face of divinity.
(Gould 28)

Their physical appearance is equally terrifying as their traditional role in the Olympian system is secure. Aeschylus describes them in his Eumenides as:

black and utterly repulsive, and they snore with breath that drives one back. From their eyes drips the foul ooze, and their dress is such as is not right to wear in the presence of the gods' statues, nor even into any human house. (52-56)

The Furies are very concrete in Aeschylus; they comprise the chorus and appear on stage. At the end of Eumenides, Orestes is acquitted in Athena's unconventional court which has tried his case. Athena herself breaks the vote and quite astonishingly the Furies are turned into benevolent Eumenides who will now play a positive role in protecting Athens. This is significant for the study at hand because Euripides initially discounts this transformation of the devilish daughters. In his Iphigenia in Tauris, Orestes - plagued by a group of Erinyes who reject Athena's verdict - begins his final travels in search of

deliverance from persecution.¹ This question of his escape is fundamental to Euripides.²

Before looking comparatively at Goethe's handling of the Furies, it is important to understand from the outset how the Euripidean model was already innovative in comparison to other ancient treatments of these hellish Fiends. Whereas the Furies are physically represented on the stage in Aeschylus' Eumenides, Euripides refrains from introducing them on his stage. He does not rule out their actual existence, but ensheathes it in doubt. In a speech reporting the arrival of the two seafarers, the herdsman reports Orestes' mental frenzy:

And we could tell, by the way he jerked his head
Whenever a dog barked or a cow moed,
That if a Fury wasn't chasing him
He thought there was in every sound he heard. (292-294)

Euripides cleverly leaves the question open: is a Fury chasing Orestes, or does he only perceive this persecution? The author's ambiguity concerning Orestes' mental state is alluded to later in the play, when he, requesting the aid of his sister to complete

¹Anne Burnett has identified five different escapes in this drama: Iphigenia from the barbarians; the chorus of Greek women from Tauris; Orestes and Pylades from being sacrificed; the statue of Artemis from Tauris; and Orestes from mental persecution (48).

²Furst says that the problem of Orestes being freed from the Furies is a question that interests Goethe, but not Euripides. She makes this claim based on the fact that in Euripides, the answer to Orestes' problem is based on a "public mythological model", i.e.: only through the divine grace of Athena can Orestes be saved (8). But Furst is only considering the end of the play and overlooking the plot leading up to the end. At the beginning of Euripides' drama, it is not known if or how Orestes will be freed from persecution and this mystery creates suspense. Mueller concurs with Furst (80).

his mission, says that if he is able to retrieve the image of the Goddess, he will be rid of "madness" (*μανία*) (981). At this point, although he does not mention the Furies, the allusion is sufficient to suggest a connection between these horrific deities and Orestes' "madness".³

In a letter of January 22, 1802, Schiller wrote to Goethe with reference to Iphigenie that the absence of gods and spirits on stage is one criterion which distinguishes old tragedy from new tragedy.⁴ Certainly gods and spirits do not appear physically on stage in Goethe's play, but as we have seen, this is, at least in part, a formal aspect reminiscent of Euripides. Although Athena, a goddess, does grace the ancient stage, the Furies do not appear in Euripides' list of "personae". The ancient poet had, therefore, already approached the boundary of "new" tragedy, according to Schiller's definition.

The ambiguity in Euripides' treatment of the Furies must have been one feature that attracted Goethe to this particular play. Goethe emphasizes the psychological basis of the phenomena - already developed in the ancient play - calling the ancient deities partners of "Zweifel" and "Reue" (1061). The dramatic function of the Furies here is to drive Orestes out of his mind. Hunted and homeless, he, however, opposes the forces of

³In his Orestes, Euripides develops the idea of the Furies as a psychological phenomena. Orestes describes his torments as a product of "conscience". He says: "I recognize the horror of what I did" (396). Madness is his punishment for matricide.

⁴Briefe, ed. Fritz Jonas. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1895. vi, 337, quoted in Furst, 1.

destruction and wishes to resolve the chaos in his life. In Orestes' own drama, this is the first stage of a crisis which will lead him to a new understanding of humanity. Wanting to be healed from the plague of madness and to return and be reintegrated into society, he begins his search for a means to this end.

Instead, his madness appearing more than merely episodic, Orestes sinks deeper into despair and is overcome by mental instability. From the admission of his identity until his collapse into exhaustion, he mentions the Furies four times. He even suspects Iphigenia of having a "Rachegöttin" concealed inside her person.⁵ Death is, in his view, his only refuge. He falsely interprets death as a possible solution to his own shattered personal existence, an existence which is outwardly and inwardly fragmented. Searching for a new unity, he hopes to achieve a reconciliation, alone, without the aid of his fellow human being. Thus, he demands of Iphigenia: "Laß allein und unbegleitet/Mich zu den Toten gehn" (1123-24).

Looking closely at the ancient text, it is evident that Goethe has extracted the idea of reconciliation in death from the

⁵Euripides does not emphasize Orestes' sufferings in Iphigenia in Tauris as much as he does in Orestes. The sufferings of Goethe's character resemble more those of the character in Orestes. Here the matricide has been suffering from fits and has not eaten for six days since he murdered his mother. During one of his convulsions, he accuses his sister, Electra, of being a Fury (265). It is not known whether Goethe had already read this play at the time of writing Iphigenie, but if he had read it, this may be the basis in his own play for Orestes accusing his sister of being disguised as a "Rachegöttin".

Euripidean text and used it as a point of departure to express his own idea. But the ancient Orestes' yearning for death is more pragmatic than existential and lacks the Romantic quality of refuge and reintegration which Goethe has developed in his play. The ancient Orestes, for example, intends to face death courageously and alone. "Alone" in the model has the thrust of self-sacrifice. Orestes alone will carry the burden of his cursed forebears. In dying alone, he will save Pylades. In practical terms, this is not only a sign of deep-felt friendship for his cousin, but also a chance to preserve his own family line since Pylades, who is married to his sister, Electra, may then return to Greece and bear a son.

On a personal level, the ancient Orestes sees his death as a catharsis. He asks Pylades to tell Electra that:

I was led
 Before this altar by a gentle hand,
 A woman's hand, a woman born in Argos,
 And how at last my blood was purified. (703-706)

The function of death is twofold: Orestes will be purified from the curse and at the same time, his self-sacrifice will afford Electra and Pylades the opportunity to rebuild the house of Agamemnon.

The Sister

Turning to the recognition proper, in ancient tragedy, the person arriving from a strange land is typically the first person to recognize the stray friend or relative (Petersen 34). Through a letter which Iphigenia asks Pylades to deliver to her

brother back at Argos, the two captives recognize that this fellow Argive is actually Orestes' estranged sister. Orestes must convince Iphigenia of their sibling relationship by reminding her of intimate objects from her past, such as: a tapestry of Helios woven by Iphigenia, bath perfumes given to her as a wedding present, a lock of hair which she sent to her mother and the ancient spear of Pelops kept by Iphigenia in her room.

Goethe, in his own version, has shortened the lengthiest recognition scene in extant Greek tragedy. He has typically turned these various outward signs of recognition into symbols of emerging truth. Iphigenia recognizes Orestes after he reveals his name, an action he takes in order to correct an earlier fabrication which Pylades had elaborately constructed and conveyed to her concerning their identity (820ff.). His exclamation: "zwischen uns/Sei Wahrheit!/Ich bin Orest!" (1080-82), is symbolic of the first stride made in Goethe's drama towards a new humanity, one which is based on truth-telling and trust.⁶ However, only very gradually does Orestes become accustomed to this new trust. In contrast to the Euripidean Iphigenia who must be formally convinced of their familial tie, Goethe's Iphigenia is the one who must convince her brother of their kinship.

Orestes actually negates his familial relationship to his

⁶An ancient belief held that to know a person's name was to have power over this person. In Goethe's play, Orestes thus shows a new trust in the priestess when he tells her his name. This does not occur in the ancient version.

sister when he calls her not by name, but refers only to her office. He calls her "Priesterin" or "Dienerin Dianas". His tormented state of mind and mistrust of his sister go hand in hand. He says to her:

Ich traue dir und deinem Schmeicheln nicht.
 Diana fordert strenge Dienerinnen
 Und rächet das entweihte Heiligtum.
 Entferne deinen Arm von meiner Brust! (1202-1205)

Orestes' negative attitude and refusal to believe that Iphigenia is his sister typifies a common attitude of mistrust and uncommunicativeness in the world and is an attitude that has existed historically in the play ever since Tantalus fell.

As expounded earlier on page 19, the first phase of Orestes' development is the admission of his desire to come to terms with himself which he intends to accomplish alone through death, without the aid of his fellow human being. The second phase of this development comes only at the end of the "mad" scene when he finally recognizes his sister (1251). By now he no longer trusts that Apollo's advice to steal the holy image from the shrine at Tauris will free him from the Furies and so he envisions his descent into Hades. Here he hopes to find reconciliation and subsequent respite from his torments. He will reach this goal, but it is only after he finds his sister that he recovers from his dementia. In Euripides' text, Orestes is also healed after recognizing his sister. Also abandoning any contemplation of death, this recognition brings him new hope for life, signaling as well an optimistic outcome for their escape mission.

Critics of Goethe's Iphigenie have often recognized that Orestes was healed from his madness by Iphigenia's "pure" humanism.⁷ His healing takes place in three stages: i) sleep ii) vision of the underworld iii) recognition of his sister.

Sleep can be a process of renewal. Goethe employed the "Genesungsschlaf" repeatedly for his male characters. Staiger notes that Orestes, Faust and Egmont "stehen aus dem Heilschlaf als verwandelte höhere Menschen auf und dürfen mit unbeschwertem Gemüt den freudigen Gruß des Lebens erwidern" (370).

(Euripides also employs this motif in his Heracles. After awaking, the protagonist is healed from his madness and recognizes Amphitryon.) However, Orestes, even after his sleep is not yet able to drink from river Lethe's cup of forgetfulness. He awakes regenerated, but still sees the solution to his dilemma only in death. Chronologically his trip to the underworld still stands between insanity and a new life.

Orestes' visit to Hades' dwelling is a touch with death. Rasch stresses rightly that Orestes' "excursion" also has an important role to play in stabilizing his mental disposition. It involves the evolution of his understanding concerning the curse. In his vision of Hades, Orestes observes that his dead relatives have been reconciled one with another. His father and mother walk

⁷See for example: Mueller (87), Henkel (82) and Grappin (38).

hand in hand and they welcome their son.⁸ Only Tantalus is still being punished. Perhaps as the person who committed the original crime, he is symbolic for the force opposing a resolution of the curse (Brown and Stephens 105). But even after observing his ancestors mingling with an air of friendly congeniality, Orestes is still alienated, a point which Rasch overlooks. With or without the knowledge concerning the reconciliation of his ancestors, Orestes cannot reach a stabilized mental state before he acknowledges his sister's presence. In contrast to the dead relatives whom he meets down there, Iphigenia represents a positive life force and similarly to the ancient Greek princess, it is she who will give him a new life-enforcing optimism and strength for the future.

In the ancient version, Orestes seeks purification in death and it is a woman from Argos (ironically his own sister) who will accompany him to the altar (refer to the quoted passage from Euripides on page 20). There is a parallel to this in the modern version. During his paroxysm, Orestes recognizes Iphigenia

⁸Theodor Adorno calls Orestes' visit to Hades and the reconciliation with his relatives a "utopia", which for him represents a "break" with classicism (167). Although there is no precedent for this journey in Euripides' Iphigenia in Tauris, journeys to the underworld are indeed very common in ancient tragedy and alone do not represent a "break" with classicism. Goethe was certainly familiar with Homer's Odyssey. In book ten, Odysseus visits Hades' House and asks Teiresias to prophesy the future (126). (This is not unlike Orestes' trip, which in a sense, shows him what the future outcome of the play will be.) Odysseus too sees dead relatives, including his mother as well as Agamemnon. What is new in Goethe's version and represents not a break with classicism, but more its development, is the reconciliation that takes place in Orestes' mind.

and perceives that she, like her ancient counterpart, has accompanied her brother in death. He asks his sister and Pylades: "Seid ihr auch schon herabgekommen?" (1310). Iphigenia's human sympathy is far-reaching. Orestes' hallucination leads him to Hades, but he is not alone, rather he is reunited there with his sister and cousin.

In the first scene of the second act, Orestes makes a conditional statement: "Bin ich bestimmt, zu leben und zu handeln,/So nehm' ein Gott von meiner schweren Stirn/Den Schwindel weg" (749-751). Iphigenia alone is not capable of achieving this miracle. Believing that her desire to help her brother is in accordance with the will of the gods, she makes three prayers requesting their assistance.⁹ In her final petition, Iphigenia pleads with Diana to loose the shackles of Orestes' madness:

O laß den einz'gen Spätgefundenen mir
 Nicht in der Finsternis des Wahnsinns rasen!
 Und ist dein Wille, da du hier mich bargst,
 Nunmehr vollendet, willst du mir durch ihn
 Und ihm durch mich die sel'ge Hülfe geben:
 So lös ihn von den Banden jenes Fluchs,
 Daß nicht die teure Zeit der Rettung schwinde.
 (1325-1331)

Without the goddess' sanction, Orestes would not have been healed. Only at the end of this scene, after discovering his estranged sister, does he call her "Schwester". However, she is more than just his kin. Orestes' discovery of her is also a symbol for the revelation of his need for an affiliation with

⁹The petitions begin at lines 1094, 1214 and 1325.

other human beings, summed up in German by the term "Mitmenschlichkeit". Confirming Pylades' earlier statement, that there is no curse which is visited on the descendants of those who commit evil, he has found an answer to the question that Thoas raised earlier concerning the existence of original sin. At the end of the third act Orestes concludes: "Es löset sich der Fluch, mir sagt's das Herz" (1358). "Das Herz" represents a person's inner being, and at the same time allows this person access to humanity. Since Orestes is restored only after Iphigenia petitions the gods, we can assume that the cessation of his trauma is unanimous with the will of the gods. Iphigenia says earlier to Thoas that the gods "reden durch unser Herz zu uns" (494). The heart makes it possible "den Willen Gottes in besonderer Innigkeit in das eigene Wesen mit hineinzunehmen" (Kunz 416). But the "Es" I equate with Orestes' act of self-discovery and his establishment of a new place within the circle of humanity. The curse of hybris is thus broken through a sense of "Mitmenschlichkeit".

Orestes' "katabasis" into the depths of his own madness represents both the conclusion of his own trauma and the beginning of the combined escape effort with his sister and cousin. After coming out of the deep sleep - Orestes' own period of silence - visiting Hades and recognizing Iphigenia, he is now "lebensfähig" and ready to accomplish heroic deeds "mit Lebensfreud'" (1364). Before seeing how Iphigenia develops and deals with her own understanding of the curse, it will be helpful

to further investigate its significance.

Tantalus

Critics of Iphigenie have traditionally underestimated the importance of the curse in Euripides' drama in order to stress, by way of comparison, Goethe's achievement. This is a misleading understanding which requires clarification.

Goethe was very interested in the relevance of the curse for his own public and so it warrants closer observation. Upon examining Euripides' model, it is apparent that the ancient writer does not dwell on the curse in Aeschylean fashion. The curse is, however, as central to the ancient play as it is to the 18th century rendition. Euripides does not recount all of the horrors in the background of Tantalus' house, horrors which begin with Tantalus, the great sinner of Antiquity who killed his own son, Pelops, and served him up "haute table" at a banquet of the gods. The tragedian is silent concerning the rivalry for the kingship between Pelops' two sons, Atreus and Thyestes, and fails to mention that Atreus killed two of his brother's sons and served up the corpses to their unsuspecting father.

Susan Helen Reynolds, however, reminds us that a 5th century Athenian audience would have already been very familiar with these crimes in the history of the house and whether or not Euripides recounted them, the public would have been conscious of the mythological background (67). The first word Iphigenia utters is "Pelops", a single word which would have served to trigger a

memory of his cursed ancestry in the mind of the Athenian public.¹⁰ The first character to meet Iphigenia (excluding the chorus) is the herdsman, and he addresses her not by name, but as "daughter of the house of Agamemnon" (238), the "house" being an important word, one which carries fully the implication of a cursed house.

Euripides' Iphigenia begins her prologue with a portrayal of her family tree. Neglecting the gruesome history of her ancestors, she proceeds to dwell on a recent ramification of the curse, namely her own story of the sacrifice at Aulis. She explains that Agamemnon was forced to sacrifice his own daughter to Artemis, in order to receive favourable winds to bear his fleets to Troy. The winds of Iphigenia's own immediate fate were those of ill-fortune.

This considered, the history of Agamemnon's house does seem underplayed in the beginning of the ancient drama. I postulate that the curse is much more present in the ancient drama than we might think and its thematic importance should not be underestimated. Euripides outlines the original sin and dwells on the resulting curse for about twenty lines beginning as early as line 186 with a woman from the chorus speaking:

Mourn for the sons of Atreus, in whose house
The hearth can never burn.
Mourn for their bitter heritage, a home

¹⁰Iphigenia is also associated with Pelops because both were supposedly "slaughtered" and then either restored or saved by a god (Hartigan 90). Euripides' narration of Pelops' story has a happy end (the death of Myrtilus is omitted) and so by association, Iphigenia also has reason to be optimistic for her future.

Which waits the coming of a happy king
 But cannot give him welcome.
 Trouble was born forever in their sky
 When Pelops tricked a car
 Of toppling horses out of the race for a bride. (186-194)

The upwardly mobile Tantalus has not been appropriated by Euripides for his own history's first perpetrator of gratuitous violence. The first sin was committed by Pelops, who, taking part in a contest to win the hand of Hippodamia in marriage, bribed a charioteer to replace the pins in the wheels of his opponent's chariot with wax. King Oenimaus, the father of Hippodamia, and hapless opponent of Pelops, died in the race and the suitor won the contest by deceit. In the ancient text, this deceit embodies the first sin. It is interesting that Euripides omits traditional aspects concerning the wrongdoing of Tantalus, i.e. his act of consorting with the gods. Instead he portrays the curse as a result of Pelops' guile, a strictly human action that has nothing to do with the gods. It is probable that this is an instance of the tragedian casting doubt on the divine source of the curse, an important assumption which the modern Iphigenia also comes to question. The curse is a result of one member of the human community treating another inhumanely. Referring to the passage quoted above, this iniquitous stunt will produce a "bitter heritage" for the descendants of this house. It is responsible for the death of Agamemnon and acts as an ill-omen for the future of his children.

I have already surmised why Euripides may have deleted Tantalus from his history of the curse. But omitting Tantalus and

his story does not lessen the importance of the curse as a theme. By the late 5th century, especially in the writings of Euripides, allusion to a theme was common in a writing style which offered material for thought to an ever increasingly sophisticated audience. This public was certainly familiar with the traditional myth and would have been interested in Euripides' variation of it.

Euripides introduces in his play a "topos" which was commonly discussed in 5th century Athens. This is the plausibility of children being punished for the crimes of their fathers, a concept known as "Zeus' violent grace". Dodds infers that a rise in individualism and a loss of family solidarity were trends in 5th century Athens that may have contributed to an increasing dissatisfaction with the idea of an individual paying for inherited family sins (34). Euripides raises the following question: what is the nature of the curse and whether humanly or divinely caused, is it so tenacious as to prevent the characters from successfully returning to Greece? This point is central to Euripides' escape drama.

Initially it seems there is little hope for them to escape the curse since, as a maiden from the chorus sings to Iphigenia:

Vengeance has made its unappeased way
 With every dart of death
 And visited your family one by one.
 And now with eager hand
 Fate is pursuing you. Your turn has come. (199-204)

Iphigenia's life is at present dismal and there seems to be little hope for her future. She describes her life in Tauris as a

second death and she blames the curse. From the beginning of her life: "Appointed by the Fates/ To suffer in this world, I was a child/Accursed" (205-207).

Contrary to a 5th century Athenian audience, Goethe's public would have found the material of the ancient myth quite exotic, and a narration of the horrors in the history of Tantalus' house would have been useful or even necessary to the understanding of his play. This may be one reason why he recounts the myth "da capo" in what Mueller calls "Senecan detail". Benjamin Bennett suggests that the reason Goethe gives so much prehistory is to point out that the Greeks are more "barbaric" with regard to their history than the non-Greeks are with their sacrificial rituals (108). This ties in with Goethe's programmatic intention to show that the need for "new" humanistic values are not restricted to one race of people, but are necessary for all humankind. In symbolic terms, the mythological background also illustrates the gravity of the curse, and by way of contrast makes Iphigenia's later step towards a new humanity more significant.

Goethe does not begin his prologue in the past, but in the present. He reserves information concerning Iphigenia's past for later when the priestess reveals the secret of her history. The first sentiment she expresses is her longing for Greece. Goethe emphasizes Iphigenia's fundamental isolation by placing her complaint at the very beginning of his play. She informs the audience of her despondent disposition:

Doch immer bin ich, wie im ersten, fremd.
 Denn ach mich trennt das Meer von den Geliebten,
 Und an dem Ufer steh ich lange Tage,
 Das Land der Griechen mit der Seele suchend;

 Weh dem, der fern von Eltern und Geschwistern
 Ein einsam Leben führt! (9-12, 14-16)

The sentiments she expresses, alienation from family and homesickness, are also common complaints for female characters in ancient tragedy. Goethe has developed this part of the opening monologue from a speech in Euripides which expresses a similar emotion. There Iphigenia complains:

And now beside this melancholy sea
 I live my days--lonely, no love, no friends,
 Wife of no man and mother of no child.
 I know no home. I sing no Argive song (217-221)

Comparing the two passages reveals that the grievance of Goethe's character is more specific than that of the ancient one. Without a husband, child or even a friend, Euripides' character is truly isolated from society, but Goethe takes this isolation one step further. His character is also alienated, but instead of desiring a husband and child, she articulates her desire to be reunited with her parents and siblings on Greek soil. Goethe has added this dimension purposely in order to contrast how her concept of family changes later in the play.

The 18th century Iphigenia does not reveal her identity or recite the chronicle of carnage in her family history' immediately. Suppression of one's identity is an ancient technique. To know a person's name was to possess power over that

person.¹¹ Orestes, for example, in Euripides' Iphigenia refuses to tell Iphigenia his name. He commands her to call him "unfortunate" or "nobody" (500ff.). Goethe expands upon the significance of this motif. Indeed we must keep in mind that Iphigenia has guarded her identity, not for a few fleeting lines, but for at least 15 to 20 years. Orestes was only a babe in arms when her sacrifice at Aulis supposedly transpired, and in this play he must be at least a young man.

Like Orestes, Iphigenia is initially preoccupied with the curse. The "Stille" of Diana's temple and her isolation there provide her with a place and time for quiet reflection. She also believes that her silence will afford her protection against being further punished for her tainted ancestry and from becoming assimilated through marriage into a foreign, uncivilized community. When Thoas once more extends his offer of marriage, she replies: "Der Unbekannten bietest du zu viel" (251). The foundation of friendship necessarily requires as a companion one of the gentler virtues, namely trust. In ancient literature, a new trust can be established between two people when a person finally reveals his or her name. Orestes took this step earlier in Goethe's drama, establishing a trust between Iphigenia and himself by revealing his name. Iphigenia now takes this step with Thoas. When she finally does reveal her identity to Thoas, she begins by calling herself not by name, but "verwünschtes Haupt"

¹¹Peter Salm calls this an echo of Homer's Odysseus. For example, Odysseus also spins a story for King Alcinous in order not to reveal his identity (Salm 353).

(268). She reveals her name only after the story of her background is complete. She still hesitates to give Thoas her full trust.

The Scythian king must have listened intently to Iphigenia as she broke her long silence and finally revealed her identity. Unlike Euripides' character, she traces the beginning of the curse back to Tantalus. While banqueting with the gods, he committed hybris. Goethe's version does not specify what grievous wrongdoing Tantalus committed, but because of his "Übermut" and "Untreu'", he was expelled from Olympus. Lefkowitz explains that the usual reason given for his fall in ancient literature finds its premise in the "Hauptgericht" on the banquet-menu where Tantalus fed his son, Pelops, to the gods. Demeter ate from Pelops' shoulder, but Zeus replaced the shoulder with ivory and restored his life. Pindar found this myth to be impious and changed it. In his version, Tantalus stole the gods' food and gave it to his mortal friends.¹² Goethe's telling differs slightly from this version. Tantalus fell because he dared to mix with the gods. In a typically Homeric fashion, he questioned the normal order of the universe where gods and humans have their prescribed place. Goethe includes all of the heinous details of the myth which Pindar found to be impious, but these hideous incidents are a result of Tantalus' fall, not the cause.

Euripides' Iphigenia does not believe in the Tantalus

¹²Pindar, O. 1: 60-4. Quoted in Lefkowitz, 164. Reynolds claims that Goethe had read Pindar in the original Greek (61).

myth in any form. She calls the tales of Tantalus "false" (387). Whereas Euripides is perhaps openly questioning the established religious beliefs of his time, Goethe is interested in developing the symbolic relevance of the curse and hence his character does believe the tale. She wants to trace the curse back to the beginning and find out how the misery of this house was initiated. Are the gods responsible for the "Zwist", or are human beings simply projecting blame upon them? In the first act of the drama, Iphigenia postulates that the initial tragic rift occurred amongst the gods and that men were victims, snagged in the whirlwind of a tragic aftermath. She blames the gods for the fall, for they should not mix with mortals. Tantalus, although his aspirations were lofty, was only human and as such bound to act in a human way.¹³ She describes him:

Unedel war er nicht und kein Verräter;
Allein zum Knecht zu groß, und zum Gesellen
Des großen Donnrers nur ein Mensch. So war
Auch sein Vergehen menschlich (319-322)

As a human he possessed noble traits, but his quest for immortality endangered his sense of responsibility toward other people (Kunz 419). In the beginning of the play, Iphigenia believes that the misery of her spiritual condition is a culmination of the curse on her house, a result of her ancestor's

¹³I am reminded of the ancient saying "know thyself" which may refer to the advice: know that you are mortal and live within these boundaries. Goethe suggests that Tantalus wanted to deny his own mortal condition by mixing with the gods. This is a criticism of the cult of superior genius prevalent during the "Geniezeit", a cult to which Goethe also contributed (cf. Prometheus). The criticism becomes more apparent as the play progresses.

fall. Armed with a new understanding of the curse, her accomplishment in the future will, by re-establishing a sense of responsibility of one person towards another, restore human relations to the way they were prior to the fall.

Thoas raises a question which is similar to the ancient question concerning Zeus' violent grace (see page 30). He asks whether the descendants of Tantalus are even suffering from the guilt of their cursed ancestor, or if they are indeed suffering from their own guilt: "Trug es [das Geschlecht] die Schuld des Ahnherrn oder eigne?" (327).¹⁴ Where does the responsibility lie? Thoas' question implies that the characters may be responsible for their own actions. It not only harks back to past deeds, implicating Tantalus and his offspring, but also foreshadows the moral dilemma Iphigenia will face, when in view of her evolving understanding of the curse, she weighs the consequences of lying versus telling the truth.

Iphigenia

Iphigenia is a woman, but her world is no longer "engebunden". After 15 or more years of being isolated and keeping a personal oath of silence regarding her identity, Goethe's character comes to realize that she has potential to act

¹⁴Rasch relates the topos of the inherited curse of Tantalus' house as an analogy for the biblical story of Adam and his original sin (102). Taking this idea yet further, Mueller identifies Iphigenia's mission as a "secular version of Christ's redemption" (91). We will see, however, later in this study, that Iphigenia's readiness for self-sacrifice and her desire for redemption are already in the ancient version.

decisively. At first glance, her course of action appears plain. Pylades has arranged the escape. The ship waits in the harbour. Only one "kluges Wort" stands between Iphigenia and their escape to Greece. She hesitates and vacillates between the "kluges" word and the "wahrgesprochenes" word. Iphigenia's irresolution contrasts Pylades' resolution. Her uncertainty in face of this dilemma has a parallel in Euripides' play. There the heroine displays considerable uncertainty with regard to ritual sacrifice. At first, angered because of her treatment at Aulis, she wants to slay all Greeks, then her tenderness of heart returns and she pities the newly arrived strangers. Soon after, she wants to re-establish her father's house in Greece. Euripides' female characters, however, often contain and hold "in suspension all contradictory signs" (Whitman 146). In the end, however, both the ancient and modern female protagonists will focus and carry through with their own plan.

Goethe has retained Iphigenia's initial indecisiveness from the ancient text, but he dwells on it more than Euripides. At the beginning of the fourth act, always relating her own subjective experience to the larger whole, Iphigenia accepts her confused state of mind as part of the normal human condition. Still sensing the capriciousness of the gods, she continues to feel they are responsible for the human lot. Her apostrophe expresses lyrically an attitude that is tinged with bitterness:

Denken die Himmlischen
 Einem der Erdgeborenen
 Viele Verwirrungen zu
 Und bereiten sie ihm

Von der Freude zu Schmerzen
 Und von Schmerzen zur Freude
 Tief-erschütternden Übergang (1369-1375)

Her inner debate continues. Unlike her great grandfather, Pelops, Iphigenia has not learned to deceive people. One side of the argument reveals that she is against lying in principle, but the other side is uppermost in her mind; she is influenced by intense anxiety caused by the desire to save her brother. Appealing to her heart or her feelings:

Meinen Bruder
 Ergriff das Herz mit einziger Gewalt:
 Ich horchte nur auf seines Freundes Rat;
 Nur sie zu retten, drang die Seele vorwärts. (1515-1519)

Pylades comes close to convincing her to carry through with the lie. He has meticulously weighed the consequences; one false word is a small price to pay for the safe deliverance of three people. And he reminds her of Thoas' evil intention to kill her brother. Iphigenia sees the good in Pylades' nature in spite of his single-mindedness. True to the ancient portrayal, he is a "ruhiger Freund", a trusty friend in need and ready to help (1381), but still she vacillates. If only she had a manly temperament!

O trüg ich doch ein männlich Herz in mir!
 Das, wenn es einen kühnen Vorsatz hegt,
 Vor jeder andern Stimme sich verschließt. (1677-1679)

If she were more like Pylades, perhaps her path would appear clearer. But the above statement must be interpreted as an ironic one since, while she envies the unswerving focus demonstrated by Pylades, it is ultimately the violence and mistrust of his world that she will reject.

Until this point in Goethe's drama, a parallel might be drawn between the heroines of the 18th century drama and its ancient model. Goethe's character chooses the way of truth-telling and this is where the two dramas differ significantly. Arkas, a character who does not exist in the Euripidean model, acts as an antithesis to Pylades. He also acts as a mediator for Thoas, strengthening the king's side in the conflict and influencing Iphigenia to tell the truth. Arkas admonishes her:

O wiederholtest du in deiner Seele,
Wie edel er sich gegen dich betrug
Von deiner Ankunft an bis diesen Tag. (1500-1503)

Iphigenia is directed by a new moral force. She reasons, she reflects and is then ready to act. She reasons that while a lie is deceitful, to lie to someone who has been like a second father to her is much more serious.¹⁵ She describes the burden she feels with: "Doppelt wird mir der Betrug" (1525).

The priestess reflects on her isolation in Tauris. If for the first 15 years of her stay she was unwilling to be assimilated into a foreign community, now she begins to see that Tauris is a community which is representative of all humanity. Her allegiance to Thoas is important as he now counts 'in broader terms as part of a larger human family. Just as her concept of family is extended, so is that of the curse. Iphigenia has come

¹⁵Reynolds connects Thoas as a second father figure in Goethe's work to the passage from Euripides where Iphigenia, lying to the king, tells him that she does not want the Taurian citizens to be polluted by Orestes, should they see him. She asks Thoas to keep the people inside their homes (so that the three might escape) and Thoas responds: "My people do concern you!" (1214) (Reynolds 68).

to understand that the curse is not limited to the house of Tantalus, but is, as she ponders in the fifth stanza of the Parcae song, extended to the entire human race. Despairing she still has hope that the curse may be resolved. She asks:

Soll dieser Fluch denn ewig walten? Soll
 Nie dies Geschlecht mit einem neuen Segen
 Sich wieder heben? - Nimmt doch alles ab! (1694-1696)

Agamemnon's daughter takes the problem of the curse in her own hands. She has misunderstood her own alienation. The curse has not alienated her from her homeland, but from society. And understanding now that people are not victims of a curse, but actually responsible for it, she decides via an unprecedented deed to break out of the previously established pattern. She does not need to return to her home in Greece in order to break the curse. This can be accomplished even on foreign soil. James Malek and Franklin Carson point out that in this play, Iphigenia is the only one left in her family line who is "untainted" (113), and she alone is capable of redeeming humanity. Following this idea one step further, her isolation has permitted her to remain untainted, since had she remained in Greece and in contact with her family, she too might have become involved in the bloodshed of her own kin.

Like the Grecian princess who constructs an audacious escape plan and carries through with it, the 18th century Iphigenia finally acts by deliberating and executing her own risky plan. Three lives are at stake in both plays, but while the Greek character hopes to redeem her family from the ancestral

curse, Goethe's character hopes to redeem humanity from the curse of ongoing deceit and mistrust.

By choosing the way of truth and trust, Goethe's main character is acting autonomously. To borrow the words from the Greek text, she is "wise", and she is following "no man's counsel" save her own. She is no longer silent. Realizing that her own deplorable history is intricately woven into the history of humanity, she uses her voice to address the violence and ignobility in the world. Goethe's Iphigenia acts as an individual and at the same time she is in a fundamental way also depending on her fellow-man to help lift the curse. If her new humanity (i.e. "Mitmenschlichkeit") is to work, she must show an even more profound, a more "daring" trust in Thoas.

As early as the first act, while trying to convince Iphigenia to reveal her identity, Thoas informs her: "Von dir hofft' ich Vertrauen" (263), an exchange made for his own loyalty to her. In the fifth act, this exchange is completed, but in reverse order. The king first gave his loyalty to her and expected trust in return. Now Iphigenia has come gradually to trust the king and expects her host's renewed loyalty and friendship in return.

Iphigenia challenges Thoas to embrace new values of truth. "Allein euch leg ich's auf die Kniee!" (1916). Horsley calls this act a "surrender" to Thoas' male authority (67). This viewpoint negates Goethe's dramatic intention which was not alone to portray Thoas as a male, but foremost to portray him as a human

being who is capable of a humane response. The decision rests on Thoas' "knees", but is still, in Iphigenia's mind, connected to the will of the gods. This is more apparent if we view this action as an echo from Homer. In the first book of the Odyssey, Athena tells Telemachus that the decision which will determine whether Odysseus returns to Ithaca to deal with Penelope's suitors "must rest on the knees of the gods" (7). It is not so significant that Iphigenia's act is placing the Greeks under Thoas' power, but more important, it is an indication that she is acting in accordance with the divine will of the gods and she is optimistic that Thoas' decision will also be harmonious with their will. In this case, her decision to hand over control of her fate, Thoas' decision to heed the voice of truth and the gods' will are all in accordance with one another.

It hardly needs to be restated that Iphigenia's route of truth-telling is one aspect which separates the 18th century play from its ancient model. But how "new" are these values? How does the ancient play stand up in comparison to Goethe's "enlightened" work? According to a traditional maxim of Greek morality, Iphigenia should be helping her friends and harming her enemies. But she does not strictly adhere to this. Iphigenia proves that she has a conscience. She is aware of the difference between good and bad actions. For example, she refuses to kill the king, but does not hesitate to trick him. By her moral measuring stick, murder is not acceptable, whereas chicanery is seemingly not so bad. From her point of view, is it so wrong to dupe a king (who

should boast higher reasoning, and not parade as a buffoon!), when this is evidently such an easy feat to accomplish? Ironically, the content of Iphigenia's lie is essentially made up of true statements: the would-be victim of sacrifice is a matricide, both he and the statue do require purification, they are removing the statue from the temple to the sea and the people of Tauris should remain in their houses. All of these statements are true, except that she neglects to convey to him the intent behind the statements, i.e. to escape. The ancient character's definition of moral behavior is simply different from the version that Goethe's Iphigenia propagates. For the ancient character the issue of telling the truth to the king is not developed. Saving her family is her main value and to accomplish this, she interprets deception as being contained within the boundary of moral behavior.

This is not to say that the exploration of truth does not exist in the early drama. It does, but on a different level. In the opening prologue, Iphigenia notes that the people of Aulis were deceived when Artemis delivered her from the brink of death, (an example of divine deceit). They still believe at the time of the play that she is dead. The value of truth in dreams is also questioned. Like oracles, dreams must be interpreted. Having dreamed of the devastation of Agamemnon's palace, her Grecian home, Iphigenia interprets this to mean that Orestes is dead. Dead also is the only hope that she might ever have to be rescued from the barbarian wilderness. This play demonstrates that what

seems to be true in dreams cannot be trusted. After the recognition scene, all deceptions are cleared away. Brother and sister realize that the other is still alive, and their escape to Greece becomes their uppermost priority. Ironically all misunderstandings are cleared up only to be replaced by new and conscious subterfuge.

The intelligence and wiliness of the ancient Iphigenia become apparent in her scheme to dupe the king. Goethe has to a large degree preserved these character traits in his own portraiture of the heroine. She demonstrates a wiliness in the beginning of the play which is suggestive of the ancient character. She uses her office as priestess on more than one occasion as a pretense to wield events according to her own will. She hides behind her office in order not to tell Thoas the history of her ancestors. She uses this same rationale as grounds for not accepting his marriage proposal, and finally she uses her holy duties to acquire authority while lying to Arkas as part of their escape plan. Arkas, ever astute, accuses her of using her office as a "heil'ge Vorwand" (1575). In Goethe's play, however, Thoas and Iphigenia have a more developed relationship than do the corresponding characters in the Greek text, and her sense of responsibility towards him is a sign of her humanity.

Goethe develops another dimension of the Greek heroic concepts of courage and daring. This is revealed in the audacious scheme Iphigenia contrives, not just to redeem herself, but to redeem humanity. The risk she takes to complete this task has

been understated in the secondary literature in favour of emphasizing the humane treatment which she has shown towards the Scythian Thoas. She risks three lives. She risks annihilating the last in line of her own family and with it the possibility of dissolving the curse. This "risky undertaking" (Wilson 64), which she initiates for the sake of humanity, is the final result of her own inner development.

The heroines of both dramas are realistically conceived human figures. Both are capable of acting rightly or wrongly, of making good or bad decisions and of behaving morally or immorally. Both act heroically, but their courageous exploits lead them in different directions. The ancient Iphigenia becomes involved in a duplicitous plan and the 18th century one opts to tell the truth. But both take substantial risks in order to accomplish the lifting of the curse.

Goethe's character is the heroine of a "new" humanity. How could this character have been formed from an ancient one who is directly involved with human sacrifice (the ultimate act against humanity) in addition to deliberate deceit? I propose that there is considerable common ground in the characterization of the two characters which has been neglected in the recent secondary literature.¹⁶ Goethe found ample material in the

¹⁶I agree with Reynolds who states that because Euripides' character shows a "softening" with regard to vengeance and since Goethe's is also capable of cunning, they are not so dissimilar as is usually expounded in the secondary literature (71).

ancient character to draw upon while molding his bearer of a
"new" humanity.

PART TWO

Divinity

Goethe's main characters have come gradually to discover their own role within a human community where new values of trust and friendship are emerging. Orestes has faced death and walked away from it and Iphigenia faces her own form of moral death by deceit. By examining the history of their own family, Orestes and Iphigenia come to reject the way of death. To live is to break away from the pattern set by Tantalus in the time surrounding his fall. It means not mixing with the gods, but depending on fellow human beings. As much as this play is about the discovery of human relationships, it equally explores the unfolding relationship between humankind and the superhuman.

Yet to be explored in this thesis are the role of the goddess, the heroic spirit of Iphigenia (which towers above the average human propensity to act), the divine communication to people via Apollo's oracle as well as its reinterpretation, and finally Iphigenia's new understanding of divinity.

The Goddess

Artemis is one of the most paradoxical divinities in extant Greek tragedy and is central to Euripides' play. Whitman has summarized the "self-contradictory" qualities which

traditionally distinguish this most mysterious figure. Tall, strong and fair of face, she is a huntress and yet she protects wild animals, especially the young. Although this "arrowscatterer" is a virgin, she is at the same time a fertility goddess and presides over childbirth. She is accountable for any sudden, painless deaths in women. The militant virgin execrates death and still she demands human sacrifice. Whitman concludes that she likely represents a combination of various local gods (1).

In Euripides' Iphigenia, Artemis demanded that Agamemnon sacrifice the fairest thing which the year had brought, in order to obtain favourable winds that the war-crazed Achaeans might sail to Troy. True to her capricious nature, the goddess demands the blood of Iphigenia, but she has a remarkable change of heart at the last moment. Whisking the intended oblation away to a distant Crimean shore, she saves from the sacrificial altar that which she had once ordained for death. Iphigenia is established in Tauris as priestess in her temple, preparing hapless roving foreigners as sacrificial victims. She must preside over a custom that is as cruel as its history in this barbarian land is long. Artemis is linked with this cruel custom and Iphigenia finds these orders "unholy" (36).

Ritualistic sacrifice is more than unholy in Euripides' Iphigenia. Should the priestess sacrifice the woebegone foreigners, she will unknowingly and ironically sacrifice her own brother, thereby at once continuing the gruesome horrors of her

house as well as extinguishing any hope of returning to Greece. She invokes with vividness the throat cutting sacrifice of her own "death" at Aulis at the very beginning of the play as she describes this ritual in detail.¹⁷

Euripides' priestess has a natural empathy for her fellow human being and is basically against human sacrifice. The Grecian princess, always having been "compassionate" and "tender" towards strangers (345), is hardly an antithesis to Goethe's "refined", "humanized" character. As the play opens, the ancient heroine recounts a dream she had the previous night. Now if she has a propensity for harshness in her nature, it is because she interprets her dream to mean that Orestes, her beloved brother and only hope for escape, is dead. She watched her father's house tumble down. She saw:

The cross-beams stir and yield, break and give way,
 Then the whole palace plunge from roof to base,
 Only one column left upright in all
 My father's house. But that one stood alive,
 A man with bright brown hair and breathing lips.

 The dream was of Orestes and his end. (48-52,55)

Providing Orestes' death as an explanation for the deviation from

¹⁷Considerable research has been conducted on the extent of human sacrifice in ancient times. See, for example: Friedrich Schwenn, in Die Menschenopfer bei den Griechen und Römern, 1915; Albert Henrichs, "Human Sacrifice in Greek Religion" in Le sacrifice dans l'antiquite, Fondation Hardt, Entretiens, 27 Geneva, 1980 pp.195-235; E. O'Connor-Visser, p.228ff.(see bibliography). There is some evidence of Greeks sacrificing humans in prehistorical times, but by the 5th century, the practice may have been replaced by animal sacrifice (O'Connor-Visser 228). Perhaps human sacrifice is reminiscent of a more ancient time and appropriate to the barbarian background in which the drama is set.

her natural compassion, she says: "Unhappiness, O friends, can harden us/ Toward other sorrow harsher than our own" (353-354).

It would be misleading to think that the ancient portrayal of Iphigenia reveals a strictly good character. She enjoys a "special status" being both the great granddaughter of the sinner, Tantalus, as well as a consecrated priestess (Brown and Stephens 96). She is not unlike Artemis, who is also distinguished by a polarity (see page 47). In spite of, or perhaps because of the moral ambiguity in her character, she is human, and since she suffered and was so humiliated at Aulis, she quite naturally displays a certain lust for vengeance. Her tenderness of heart would not, for example, extend to Helen or Menelaus, the people who caused the Trojan war. Given the opportunity, she would gladly sacrifice these people who are notoriously hated by all of Hellas, and thereby receive expiation for her own sufferings at Aulis. She also counts Calchas, Odysseus and Achilles as her enemies, but is, in spite of all said, basically against violence. This she proves when she meets Orestes and Pylades for the first time and takes pity on them. Her natural empathy returns and she calls them "unfortunate", for Fate has "cruel mysteries" (478).

The sacrificing of human beings is a violent, cruel act and Iphigenia does not believe that Artemis condones it. She asks:

How could Latona bear
To Zeus so cruel a daughter? It is not true....
These people, being murderers themselves,
Are charging Thee with their own wickedness.

No! I will not believe it of a God! (385-391)

In fact it is not a goddess at all, but a barbarian king, Thoas, who has "stationed" her as "High Priestess" in the temple of Artemis (30). The Euripidean drama openly criticizes men for using the gods as a scapegoat to excuse their own violence. Euripides expresses a related sentiment elsewhere in a fragment (292.7): "If gods act basely they are not gods".¹⁸

In Goethe's play, Iphigenia is responsible for having mollified Thoas' attitude towards sacrifice and this ancient custom has been temporarily discontinued.¹⁹ Whereas Euripides' priestess loathes the duty which requires her to sacrifice or assist in the sacrifice of human victims, Goethe's counterpart has been successful in ridding the barbarian culture temporarily of this custom.²⁰

Iphigenia's attitude towards Diana is similar to that of her ancient counterpart towards Artemis. She trusts in the good, non-violent nature of the goddess. From her point of view, Diana does not require human sacrifice. Why would she have saved Iphigenia from the altar at Aulis had her stance towards sacrifice been different (Segebrecht 178)? Iphigenia states this explicitly in lines 523ff. Goethe has successfully rendered the

¹⁸This viewpoint contradicts a traditional concept of the gods which derives from Homer. There the relationship between gods and men is very different, for men try to appease the deities hoping not to experience the harsher side of their erratic natures.

¹⁹The tempering influence of women is not a Greek idea.

²⁰Just as she has been successful in stopping sacrifice, she will also be responsible later in the play for ending the "curse".

incongruous nature of the ancient deity more consistent. His depiction of Diana is in accordance with the utterance in Euripides' fragment (quoted above) concerning the necessary integrity of the gods.

Gods do not instigate murder. This crime is a display of man's own violence. What is the main character's relationship to this world of male violence in Goethe's Iphigenie? In the beginning of the play she admires or envies the unfettered activities of men in comparison with the usual isolation of women. Whereas men conquer in battle and may have the opportunity to claim a glorious death, women are confined to the modesty of a quiet, domestic life.

These masculine activities include violence and the priestess has in the past taken part in this violence during sacrificial rites.²¹ When Thoas later re-instates ritualistic sacrifice, it is to Diana that Iphigenia makes her plea: "O enthalte vom Blut meine Hände!" (549). She is against the recommencement of such an activity and believes that her petition is in accordance with the will of the goddess. Iphigenia is against bloodshed and she accuses men of projecting their own desire for violence on the gods:

Der mißversteht die Himmlischen, der sie
Blutgierig wähnt; er dichtet ihnen nur
Die eignen grausamen Begierden an. (523-525)

²¹Death by "sphazo" or throat cutting with a sword was considered to be a masculine death in 5th century Athens. Women would not as a rule be inflicted with such a death, nor would they kill someone else with this method. Hanging was considered to be a more feminine death, perhaps because no blood was shed (Loroux 17).

A direct parallel is to be found in the Greek text. Here Iphigenia also believes that the goddess does not require human sacrifice. Referring to Tantalus and his progeny, she exclaims:

O Artemis,
 These people, being murderers themselves,
 Are charging Thee with their own wickedness. (388-390)

Both dramas set Iphigenia apart from the world of violence. In Goethe's play, this world has a long, fractious history sullied with human sacrifice, murder and general dissent among the members of the Tantalus race. It is significant that Iphigenia is a woman bringing a message of non-violence to men. Not disregarding the possibility of corruption in the Greek text, Goethe may have taken this idea from the following lines where Orestes questions by whose hand he will die.

Iphigenia: My hand--condemned to it by Artemis.
 Orestes: Your hand is still too young a hand for that.
 Iphigenia: It is the law.
 Orestes: That a woman shall stab men?
 Iphigenia: Not that! Oh not the knife! Only the water,
 The marking on the forehead--only the water!
 (618-623)

The idea of a woman stabbing men would have seemed peculiar to a 5th century audience. Goethe preserves this apartness for his female character and develops it into her final rejection of violent and deceitful deeds.

There is another prefiguration in the ancient text for Iphigenia's attitude of non-violence. After the recognition scene, the Greek characters discuss how they might escape back to Greece with the statue of Artemis. Orestes, suffering for having shed the blood of his own kin, but less concerned about the cold-

blooded murder of a barbarian, suggests that they might kill King Thoas (a lame-brained idea), but Iphigenia takes exception to this on two counts. Should they kill the king, the gods may be angered. In addition to this, although Thoas is a barbarian and has conferred on her this office of presider during sacrifice, he has also been "kind" to her, and she cannot reciprocate this treatment by murdering him. The 5th century character is not an entirely wily one who is singularly interested in her escape at any cost. She is practical and is also guided by her conscience. Goethe takes this kernel of conscience displayed in the ancient character and develops it into an ethical fidelity which will bear hope for a new future for humanity.

The Heroic

Heroic deeds and the concept of "arete" in ancient literature are often associated with male characters. Sophocles' Antigone may be the most renowned exception to this association, but Euripides' treatment of Iphigenia must also be included in this category. Goethe's initial characterization of Iphigenia hardly embodies any aspect of heroism. The story opens in the protected precinct of Diana's holy temple. The audience meets a taciturn priestess; silence apparently befits one who is consecrated under holy orders. She will be silent until she discovers the potential for her own heroic action and this "action" will consist of speaking words.

Jean Wilson, in her illuminating chapter on Iphigenie,

explores the literary history of Iphigenia's silence and gives a valid interpretation of the meaning behind her silence. Quoting a passage from Agamemnon, the third part of the Oresteia trilogy by Aeschylus, Iphigenia "fainting", who with voice broken, is silent, and acts only by "striking the sacrificers with the eyes' arrows of pity" (240-241). Iphigenia was gagged by the officiator before her sacrifice, and literary tradition "has established the role befitting her - the role of silence" (Wilson 68). Goethe's Iphigenia readily assumes this traditional role at the beginning of the drama, only to break it later as she matures and casts off her "Unmündigkeit" (Rasch).

However, some two thousand years before Goethe, Euripides had already challenged this established role of silence portrayed by Aeschylus. (His audience would have expected some variation of the established myth.) Euripides, in his Iphigenia at Aulis, places 41 eloquent lines into the mouth of his heroine (1212ff.). In this rather lengthy entreaty to her father (an anomaly considering the value placed upon conciseness of speech in most Greek drama!), she begs him to prevent the sacrifice. She wants to live since:

To see this sunlight is for us all our dearest love!
 Below is nothing; and to wish for death, madness.
 Better a life of wretchedness than a noble death.
 (1250-1252)

Agamemnon is, however, compelled to deliver his daughter over for sacrifice, since the powerful and warring Argive army is waiting impatiently for the promised wind to sail to Troy. This sacrifice will permit Agamemnon the opportunity to restore social rest in a

time of crisis (Foley 99). Since Iphigenia's fate is sealed and she will not even be granted a "life of wretchedness", she transmogrifies her own slaughter into a "noble death". This is not an instance of "disguised murder" as it was in Aeschylus (Foley 40). Euripides' "bride for Hades" interprets her peculiar fate heroically as an opportunity to die for and to save Greece. Far from one condemned to silent suffering, Iphigenia sings her last hymn of praise to Artemis:

Lead me, a maiden born to overthrow
 Great Troy and all her people;
 Bring flowers, hang garlands round me; take this lock
 Of hair, to grace the altar;
 Bring jars of holy water for my hands.
 Praise Artemis with dances,
 Queen Artemis the blessed; circle round
 Her altar and her temple.
 For with my blood so offered
 I shall, since Fate requires it,
 Cancel and purge the word that spoke from heaven.
 (1476-1486)²²

She is only a maiden (and not even an Athenian citizen!), but she is a heroine headed for Hades; triumphantly she celebrates the opportunity to renounce all cowardly feelings and to make possible all at once the sailing of the Argive fleet, the capture of Troy, as well as affording future protection to Greek women against forcible abductions from their homes (1475ff.). This is the literary history of Euripides' Iphigenia. If she is silent during the sacrifice itself, it is not because she is a defenseless victim of "phonos", but because she accepts her death

²²The ending of this drama survives only in fragmented form. Murray concludes that this speech is the last part of the play which is beyond doubt authentically Euripides' work.

as part of a divine plan. "Let holy silence be proclaimed throughout the camp....I come to give/To all Hellenes deliverance and victory!" (1471-1475). When measuring Goethe's characterization of Iphigenia against various ancient literary representations, his portrayal clearly follows in the footsteps of a Euripidean heroic spirit, once more building on a Euripidean innovation rather than an Attic tradition.

Arriving in Tauris, the Greek heroine must have viewed her new office as presider over human sacrifice with considerable trepidation. She is required by law to sacrifice all foreigners landing on the Crimean shore, regardless of race. This may be the first time that she is obligated to sacrifice Greeks, and the threat is one of fratricide. Iphigenia needs to be saved from this unholy office. After recognizing Orestes, she realizes there is now another opportunity to sacrifice herself a second time and thereby save her brother. At Aulis she was willing to die heroically for her country. Now she is willing to die in order to secure the continuation of her family. She explains to Orestes:

My life is little. I would gladly die
To earn your safety and your reaching home.
If a man die, a house, a name, is lost.
But if a woman die, what does it matter?(1003-1006)

Whitman rightly calls this changing from ritualistic sacrifice to self-sacrifice a "moral peripeteia" (21).

This inclination for self-sacrifice is not a common occurrence in extant Greek tragedy (Whitman 17). (Euripides' Alcestis is another exception that comes to mind.) In the Euripidean model the inclination towards self-sacrifice for the

sake of others is not only apparent in the recognition scene. Friendship and the willingness to die for another person pervade the ancient text. Even before Iphigenia offers to die in order to save her brother, Pylades, also prepared to die, refuses to go back to Greece with Iphigenia's letter if it means that Orestes will be sacrificed. He will not "betray" his friend. He would rather share in his friend's doom than return safely and alone to Greece. Orestes also insists on facing death courageously, if it means that Pylades can escape safely to Greece. These examples, cited above, can be considered acts of a heroic or courageous nature, but they also serve to demonstrate that the value of friendship and the readiness for self-sacrifice are human values which are extremely important in this ancient adventure drama. Characteristic of a process of humanization, these values provide evidence to show how, even before Goethe or other modern authors, Euripides had already humanized the ancient, so-called gruesome fable.

Taking into consideration the theme of self-sacrifice in Goethe's drama, we have already seen on page 32 that Goethe emphasizes Iphigenia's longing to return to Greece from the beginning of his play. Unlike her model, who concentrates in retrospect on her own sacrifice at Aulis, Goethe's Iphigenia looks forward to a future where her aspiration to go home might be realized. The goddess, Diana, has an important role to play. Iphigenia blames Thoas for keeping her in Tauris and hopes that Diana will save her from this injustice. Diana has already once

saved Iphigenia from death at Aulis and in her opening speech, she asks the goddess to save her from a second death, which is what she calls her life in Tauris. This idea is derived from the lines in Euripides' text where Iphigenia refers to her existence in Tauris as a "grave" which might "open" if someone will deliver her letter to Orestes asking him to rescue her (641).

Goethe does not stress the importance of returning to Greece in order for the characters to propagate their breed. Iphigenia is in the beginning simply homesick and wants to be reunited with her family. In contrast to Euripides' character, she does not once offer to sacrifice herself with the hope of saving her brother or their family line. Iphigenia's sacrifice will be developed along a different line. At first she does not understand why she is in Tauris and has yet to discover her own mission and the capacity of persuasion in her voice. She despises in general the lamentable condition of women; her fate is "engebunden" and she especially pities herself since she must live as an outlaw, banned from her home.

This is an example of Goethean irony, not to be found in the Greek text, for as soon as Iphigenia has the opportunity to return with her brother to Greece, she chooses to risk her own life as well as that of her brother and cousin for the sake of breaking the curse. After ruminating, Iphigenia opts to tell the truth. Her decision may well be a "Bewährung ihres Glaubens an den Menschen" (Staiger 374). If Thoas does not hear this "voice of a new humanity", then the possibility exists that three people

will lose their lives. This is the risk involved when she abides by her inner conviction and speaks the truth. She wants to trust Thoas to let them leave Tauris, but it is a "Bewährung", as Staiger rightly says, because, on the contrary, if she were absolutely sure that they would secure his permission to return to Greece, devoid of the risk, her deed of truth-telling would scarcely be an "unerhörte Tat".

Adorno calls Iphigenia's confession a sacrifice of the "spirit of self-preservation of her companions in civilization" (158). Self-preservation is secondary to the humanizing, civilizing force propelling her decision to tell the truth. Certainly her decision is a humane one, but is it heroic? Even if Thoas does enter the community of a new humanity, there is still a sacrifice involved. An old concept of humanity will be sacrificed in favour of a new one. This is Goethe's own version of a "moral peripeteia" (see page 56), and once more, rather than affecting one individual as it does in the ancient text, it applies universally to society. Iphigenia, with her decision to tell the truth, provides a model for society. This remarkable act shows courage. Her heroic act alone, however, will not bring the drama to a happy close. The stumbling block in the pathway of a new humanity is a simple wooden statue of Diana.

The Oracle

The oracle and its "reinterpretation" have been deemed

the most discussed events in Goethe's Iphigenie. An understanding of the oracle itself will help us later to evaluate Orestes' interpretation of it. In ancient tragedy characters consulted the Delphic oracle so that they might learn the will or plans of the gods for human life. In both plays at hand, Orestes consulted the oracle in order to receive advice which might lead him away from the snaky grasp of the gory-eyed goddesses. Apollo bade him retrieve the statue of Artemis from her temple in Tauris in exchange for freedom from his tribulations.

As an institution, the oracle experienced considerable criticism in 5th century Athens. Euripides depicts both sides of the debate. Orestes is wary and expresses his misgivings:

When treacherous Phoebus through his oracle
 First lied to me, then tricked me, luring me far
 From home, lest watchful eyes in Hellas see
 That Gods as well as men break promises.
 I trusted Him, with all my faith and will,
 Even, at His command, killing my mother,
 And in return He has forsaken me. (711-715)

Orestes feels misguided; only "fools" believe in oracles. "The wisest men follow their own direction/ And listen to no prophet guiding them" (574-75). The ancient Pylades maintains the opposite viewpoint and is less ready to condemn Apollo's oracle. Upon seeing Greek blood on the sacrificial altar at the temple of Artemis, Orestes suggests that they should forget their task and flee back to their ship (103), but the equanimous Pylades, ever optimistic and courageous asks: "Why should we disobey Apollo's order,/Do him dishonor? No, we shall find a way" (105-106).

Goethe has preserved Euripides' characterization of

Pylades, but he has developed to a far greater degree personality traits already present in the portrayal of the ancient character. If the ancient Pylades is optimistic for the outcome of their mission in Tauris, the modern one refuses to sit idly by on the fringe of the drama evaluating the situation. He illustrates in Goethe's play the epitome of a traditional male heroic attitude. Always ready to act and not prone to thinking first, Iphigenia calls him "der Arm des Jünglings in der Schlacht" (1384). A glorious death should be reserved for such a person and Pylades is not prepared to perish by a woman's hand on a sacrificial altar in a far-removed barbarian wilderness. He is single-minded in every line he speaks; he plans to escape and indeed it will be in the company of his friends and carrying the statue of Diana on his strong shoulders. Pylades is a solidly rooted, down-to-earth character. He believes neither in the curse (713ff.), nor in the Furies (757), probably because they are of no benefit to his goal, but he "says" he believes in the gods. Being an example of "der Geist der menschlichen Autonomie", it is questionable whether Pylades' belief in the gods is not simply "Schein" (Kunz 419). He is willing to act politically. If the other characters believe that the gods will help them return to Greece, then Pylades will use this trust to steer the escape mission forward. He is the one character who is devoted to ensuring that the literal meaning of Apollo's oracle is understood and the god's request completed.

Returning to the ancient tragedy, it was understood that the

gods had a divine plan for the path of human life. Still, Euripides emphasizes the importance of the human contribution, since "every God helps him who helps himself" (911). Even in the oracle, Apollo does not deny the importance of human skill and invention. He orders Orestes: "Then prove yourself a man able/Enough or fortunate enough to steal it [the statue]" (88-89). Success for this mission necessarily requires "technē", the systematic application of human skill and strategy, in addition to "tychē", that is fortune coming from a divine source or from outside the human sphere.

Contemporary critics of Goethe's Iphigenie have referred to the literal or unambiguous meaning of the oracle in Euripides' drama.²³ The literal meaning suggests that the word "sister" in Apollo's oracle refers only to the statue of Artemis, Apollo's divine sister, and not to Iphigenia, Orestes' human sister. An oracle in ancient tragedy is, however, intrinsically ambiguous and necessarily requires interpreting. This is alluded to elsewhere when Euripides refers to an oracle as: "Words too wise for a mere man to guess their meaning" (Medea 47). In his first lengthy speech the ancient Orestes recounts verbatim the words of Apollo's oracle.²⁴ Then he says: "Although no more was said, I understood/That this would mean the end of my afflictions" (91-

²³See: Brendel, 69; Salm, 354; Wilson, 40.

²⁴The most common word used for the statue in the Greek version is "ἄγαλμα". Euripides also refers to it as ἄγαλμα συγγονόν τε σην, as well as "θεᾶς βρέτας".

92). The important word in these lines is understood. His first understanding of the oracle is literal. If he can retrieve the statue from the temple and return to Greece with it, he will be released from his torments. But the characters in the ancient play come very gradually to understand the real reason why Apollo sent Orestes to Tauris. In line 938, after the recognition scene, Iphigenia questions why Apollo sent Orestes to "this place" referring to Tauris. Orestes relates his "bitter" narrative from beginning to end and comes to the following optimistic conclusion:

But by all signs, the Gods are on our side.
 If Artemis were not, why should it be
 Her Brother's oracle commanding me
 To bring Her image back? She wishes it!
 Here in Her Temple, in Her very presence,
 Has come the omen of my finding you!
 Yes, we are being guided by the Gods! (1012-1016)

The recognition scene marks a turning point in the play. Orestes once thought that Apollo had sent him to Tauris on a mission that was foreordained to end miserably. Now he considers the gods to be on his side! The curse has not yet been resolved in Euripides, but the characters are optimistic and realize they might have a chance to escape from it. Orestes' new optimistic attitude after recognizing his sister is one element from the ancient model which Goethe preserved and expanded.

This interpretation of the oracle in the ancient play couples the divine siblings (Apollo and Artemis) with the mortal ones (Orestes and Iphigenia). Orestes' task has already been classified as a "double rescue" in the secondary literature

dealing with Euripides. Should Orestes' mission prove successful, then both Apollo and Orestes will be reunited with their respective sisters on Argive soil. At the end of the play, speaking *ex machina*, Athena confirms this interpretation of the oracle. She proclaims that Apollo ordered Orestes:

through an oracle, to bring
Iphigenia home again to Argos
And the sacred statue home to Her own land. (1440-1442)

In the beginning the oracle was obscure, and the characters come to recognize its true meaning only after brother and sister are reunited. The ambiguity of the oracle is replaced by clarity, a clarity which will henceforth cause the characters to take certain actions bringing about their escape to Greece.

In Goethe's Iphigenie, it is ironical that Pylades exclaims: "Der Götter Worte sind nicht doppelsinnig" (613), because the oracle in Goethe's play, closely resembling its ancient model, is also ambiguous.²⁵ But Goethe takes the obscurity one step further. Orestes comes to understand that he must bring his "sister" home, that is not both the human and divine sisters as in the model, but only the human sister, Iphigenia. In bringing home his human sister, however, he will also bring home the image of the divine being which is manifest in her. Whereas the statue in the Greek play must still be returned to Greece, in Goethe's play, since the divine is in her,

²⁵Staiger erroneously notes that Pylades' exclamation "noch besser dem düstern Geist der alten Tragödie entspricht" (362).

the statue is now superfluous.²⁶

Rasch quibbles that it is not Iphigenia's humanity which saves the home-bound travellers, but only this reinterpretation of the word "Schwester", which permits them to leave the statue behind, thereby convincing Thoas to let them return (21). The king gives his permission and blessing to them only after they acquiesce to leave behind their find. And why would Thoas be converted to a new humanity when the proselytizers practice robbery? With this reinterpretation of the oracle, Goethe clarifies an error made in the beginning of the play, that the statue of Diana is necessary for redemption.²⁷

Reinterpretations of oracles are not a Goethean invention. They also occur in ancient Greek literature and so Goethe's use of the reinterpretation technique is hardly "ungriechisch". The 18th century author, however, brings the reinterpretation into a symbolic realm which is only hinted at in the Greek text. Furst refers to the metamorphosis of the divine sister into the mortal one as the change from "Dea ex machina" in

²⁶According to Burckhardt, the image of the goddess obstructs the realization of Goethe's "pure humanity". In order to solve the "crises", two resolutions are necessary:

i) Iphigenia telling the truth

ii) the reinterpretation of the oracle

He calls this not psychologically very realistic (35).

²⁷Several studies on the use of Goethe's language in Iphigenie are available. (See, for example, J. Baechtold Goethes 'Iphigenie auf Tauris' in vierfacher Gestalt, Freiburg, 1883). Burckhardt summarizes Goethe's use of the word "Schwester". This word is used up until the recognition scene and is then replaced with the word "Bild". The word "Schwester" returns once more at the reinterpretation of the oracle, this time referring to Iphigenia, the human sister (48).

the ancient play to "God within" in the modern one (5), an engaging topic which we will explore presently.

The Divine

It would be impossible to define, based on a few extant writings, what Euripides' theological views may have been and how he might have represented them in his works. Scholars agree that there is very little consistency regarding this author's portrayal of the divine element. Compare, for example, the following opinions voiced by various characters from dramas by Euripides: "What is god, what is not god, what is . . . between man and god, who shall say?" (Helen 1137-38); "What wretched things to call on--gods--for help" (Trojan Women 469); "What are the gods? We don't know - but we are their slaves" (Orestes 441).

Euripides' Iphigenia is a drama which balances "technē", "tychē" and the divine. Following Apollo's advice in the oracle, the characters have used what "human skill" they can muster and hoped for "chance" to be on their side. Iphigenia came very close to sacrificing her brother unknowingly, but on account of the recognition, she did not sacrifice him, and this she considers to be the beginning of a miracle. "Some God" prevented the sacrifice, but through their "mutual endeavor", the mortal ones aim to complete this miracle, i.e. to reunite the family in Greece.

Just when the trio is about to achieve their escape, the

god, Poseidon, stirs up an ocean wave whisking them back to the shore and preventing their escape. Bernd Seidensticker calls the wave "der letzte Schlag der unheilvollen Vergangenheit" (210). This symbol has a parallel at the end of Goethe's Iphigenie: Orestes, oblivious to the new relationship which has been established between the king and his sister, challenges Thoas to let fate decide the outcome of their coming or going once and for all with a violent duel. This is the first time Orestes appears on stage since the end of the third act, and all of Iphigenia's effort - completed during his absence - may possibly fail because her brother's attempt to settle the affair with violence is also the last stroke of their ruinous past.

In the ancient drama, what appears to be achievable by human strategy is foiled by an external force. Are the gods simply dramatic fictions for outside powers such as chance? The gods portrayed in the ancient play are certainly unpredictable. Will Artemis save Iphigenia a second time? Is Apollo's instruction reliable? Will the gods save them from certain death at the end of the play? The human characters are constantly working with unknown variables, but this does not undermine the value of human contribution, because at the same time people are still free to make decisions and to act upon them. Athena saves the Greeks at the end of the play, but she does not bring about the circumstances leading up to their escape. The Greek fugitives have executed their escape plan fastidiously and the goddess *ex machina* only validates the effort they have already made.

What is the significance of Athena's entrance? Malek and Carson criticize Euripides' use of this theatrical device (118).²⁸ What does it have to do with Athena? It is Apollo and Artemis who have been present in the play up to this point and have acted - albeit offstage - as catalysts. However, Athena's role is a significant one. She has already saved Orestes once before, at the end of Aeschylus' Eumenides (recounted in Iphigenia, 1469), although we must remember that Euripides began his drama by discounting Orestes' exoneration. Now this patron goddess of Athens, often associated in ancient literature with valor and victory, comes down brilliantly in a great theatrical machine to reclaim her judiciary authority. The human characters have throughout this adventure story also demonstrated courage and intelligence, but without the aid of a god, they are "doomed to frustration" (Hartigan 120). By overpowering Poseidon's attempt to stop the escape,²⁹ Athena replaces chaos with order and allows the natural course of fate to ensue, a pathway over which even gods have no control.

What is the nature of the relationship between the

²⁸Walter Nicolai speculates that after the failure of the Sicilian expedition, the Greek audience may have found Euripides' "Deus" plays an "Erleichterung über wunderbare Rettungen, erkauft um den Preis einer gewissen Unwirklichkeit" (15). Some interpreters of Goethe's play might argue that Orestes' reinterpretation of the oracle is precisely this same thing.

²⁹A well-known Athenian legend records the contest between Athena and Poseidon for possession of the Acropolis. Athena won, but Poseidon also established himself there (Kitto 14). Hence the wave which Poseidon sends looks like one more attempt to gain control of the Athenian people, but Athena overcomes this attempt once more.

mortals and gods in the ancient play? Euripides does not create one consistent image of divinity. Different characters represent varying viewpoints. Whereas Orestes believes Apollo "ruined" him, "tricked" and "lied" to him and is not to be trusted, Iphigenia, in contrast, does believe and trust in the good will and integrity of the gods. She believes in them and she challenges Artemis to:

Save with me now my brother and his friend,
Lest Phoebus be disproved because of Thee
And men forsake His oracle. (1083-85)

Iphigenia (and the Greek audience) are waiting to see if the gods will act honourably. At the last moment when it appears that the characters have been forsaken and left to a bleak fate, Athena saves them. By doing so, the goddess corrects Orestes' perception pertaining to the unscrupulous nature of the gods.

In Goethe's Iphigenie, the reinterpretation of the oracle parallels the Dea ex machina in Euripides. We have already seen how Orestes interprets the human sister and the divine sister to mean the same entity. Is this a simple apotheosis, or, in reverse, is it closer in thought to Euripides' fragment which points to the divine element in every person: "For the mind that is in each of us is a god"?³⁰ We have already seen that the seed for Goethe's reinterpretation of the oracle is found in Athena's Dea ex machina speech (see page 64). However, there is an association between the sister and the divine much earlier in the ancient text than this which deserves some attention. As soon as

³⁰Fragment 1018. Quoted in Appleton, 128.

Orestes recognizes that it is his sister speaking, in his mind he mistakes her for a god: "I hear a God!" (778). Iphigenia corrects him: "You hear only a woman", but Orestes refuses to abandon his idea and interjects: "I hear a woman--and I hear a God!/Let me hear more! I hear a miracle!" (780-81). The association cannot be denied; either gods speak through human beings or it is the divine in the human that causes him/her to speak. .

Goethe gradually develops this same association. All of the main characters in his drama are from the outset motivated by self-interests: Thoas wants to marry the priestess, Orestes and Pylades intend to rob the Taurian people of the Diana image, and Iphigenia wants to return home to Greece. Their understanding of divine will is still only dim in the beginning of the play.³¹ But this changes. Iphigenia especially is "segensmächtig" (Kunz 415) and gradually she comes to discover her own niche within a larger divine scheme. Although she trusts the gods, she also challenges them even more strongly than does Euripides' female character. With hope for reciprocation, Iphigenia asks Diana in supplication: "Rettet mich,/Und rettet euer Bild in meiner Seele!" (1716-17). The original "save us" in Euripides (see page 69) is transformed to "save me" in Goethe. The ancient version is literalistic. Iphigenia requests that Artemis save her family from destruction at the hands of the barbarians; her request is

³¹ The characters in Euripides' Iphigenia respect the power of the gods and show regular concern that their actions do not cross divine will. Pylades, for example, does not wish to anger Apollo and Iphigenia does not intend to murder Thoas for fear of angering the gods.

to be physically saved. Goethe's character is not asking to be saved physically, but spiritually. She has a positive picture of Diana in her mind, but if the will of the goddess will not allow the curse that sullies her house, analog humanity, to be broken, then this image is not worth preserving.

The "Parzenlied" comes after Iphigenia's challenge to Diana and is spiritually her most virulent moment of doubting. The old strain brings with it a memory of gods who are powerful and capricious. With a spirit reminiscent of Homer, the gods lord it over mortals; erratically treating them sometimes well and other times with malice and cruelty, human beings are only pawns or playthings for the gods.³² Looking at the second stanza of the song, another ancient idea is present, namely that an influential or ambitious person (such as Tantalus) will increase the risk of provoking the gods' wrath two-fold.

Josef Kunz espouses that it is this separation of God from humankind (similar to that outlined in the "Parzenlied")

³²Wittkowski claims that Rasch has "gründlich nachgewiesen" that the gods in Goethe's Iphigenie are simply symbols for the religious powers in the author's society (125). I disagree. Iphigenia criticizes openly "ein König, der Unmenschliches verlangt" (1812) and she could have included criticism of the religious authorities as well. Wittkowski's interpretation excludes one of Goethe's main dramatic intentions, that is Iphigenia's recovery of the divine element in humankind which I will discuss presently. Wittkowski takes his argument further saying that Iphigenia makes her decision to tell the truth without the support of the gods "auf die Gefahr hin, daß die Götter ungerecht, grausam, böse sind" (124). This negates Iphigenia's new relationship to the divine, a relationship distinguished by a divine and humane unity of purpose, one that causes her to request Diana's help in the first place (O rettet mich...) and to tell Thoas at the end of the play "O geben dir die Götter deiner Taten/Und deiner Milde wohlverdienten Lohn!" (2166-67).

which dominates the entire Greek way of thinking, and this, he believes is what differentiates the ancient model from Goethe's version (419). It should, however, be evident that Euripides' writing reflects a breaking down of this traditional belief system. Here the gods are called upon and challenged to act in a good way that befits a divine entity, thus bringing them into a relationship with humankind. If Apollo does not help them with their human mission, then the world will not believe in his divine prophecy. Goethe has taken over where the Attic tragedian left off. For the modern Iphigenia, "bestätigen sie [die Götter] ihre Göttlichkeit nur, wenn sie gut sind; sonst handeln sie gegen ihr eigenes Wesen" (Rasch 116). Euripides has already expressed this very idea in a fragment which I have already quoted. Even out of context, there is little room left for ambiguity in Euripides' idea: gods must act with integrity, because if they do not, then they are not gods (see original quote, page 50). The modern Iphigenia would confirm Euripides' conclusion. She has come to trust in Diana's goodness. She believes in the integrity of the goddess and the good she finds in the divine is also the good in herself. Her discovery of the divine leads through humankind.

Rasch calls Goethe's transformation of the human sister into the divine one an "Abkehr vom Mythischen" (182). Let us consider the background of the myth in order to determine whether this statement is valid. The literary history of the Iphigenia persona is at best a compilation of sketchy variants.

Occasionally the Greeks did render their older deities human and in the early legend, Iphigenia was an independent goddess who later became associated with Artemis. During a dubious festivity at Aulis, Iphigenia was offered to Artemis as a sacrifice, but the latter refused it. In another variant, found in a fragment of Hesiod, Agamemnon had a daughter Iphimede, and Artemis, refusing her as a sacrifice, poured ambrosia over her body to make her immortal. One variant depicts her living amongst the gods, while another 6th century myth transplants her to Tauris where she served the goddess who saved her (Burnett 73-75). Reynolds informs us that by the time of Herodotus, there was confusion between the mortal and deified figures:

Herodotus (iv.71-72) describes the custom of mass immolations at royal burials on the far shores of the Black Sea and, in particular, how the people of Tauris were said to have a goddess who claimed strangers as her victims; by the time of Herodotus, indeed, goddess and priestess had become confused, and she bore the name of Iphigeneia (iv.103) (64).

Euripides picks up the thread of this ambiguity. Does Orestes hear a god or a woman speaking? Do the words of Apollo's oracle refer to both a divine and a mortal sister? Why is Orestes miraculously cured from his madness only after recognizing his forlorn sister? Why is it Iphigenia, the female character, who devises an escape plan whose execution will be validated in the end by a goddess? Euripides has embossed more than an inkling of the divine in his heroine, but in case the onlooker has missed the association, the tragedian indicates tangibly at the end of the play that the human character, Iphigenia, is connected to the divine being, Artemis, in holy service. From the machine, Athena

appoints Iphigenia as priestess in a new temple of Artemis to be established in Brauron. Upon her death she will be buried there and people will honour her tomb with gifts of garments, woven by women who have since died in childbirth. This is an honour worthy of Artemis herself. Euripides does not entirely abandon his ambiguity. Is Iphigenia only a priestess during her lifetime, who, after death will be venerated as a goddess? Will the survival of her reputation award her a new status, lifting her to a deified sphere after death?

Euripides' Iphigenia has discovered her new role within a greater divine scheme. Goethe, therefore, found bountiful material in the ancient play to inspire the transformation of his own Iphigenia to the "god within". If Herodotus was accurate in his report citing confusion between Iphigenia, the priestess, and Iphigenia, the goddess, perhaps Goethe has in his own time replaced this ambiguity with a new understanding. His transformation of the human sister into the divine one is hardly a departure from the myth. The connection between the old fable and Goethe's reworking of the material follows a natural historical course through Euripides. The Attic tragedian dealt with the problem concerning Iphigenia's identity and her relationship to the divine, facets which he developed from the ancient myth. Continuing in a literary tradition inherited from the Greek tragedian, Goethe's Iphigenie explores a similar problem. Goethe, like Euripides before him, never revokes the ancient myth, but rather contributes to its evolution.

Summary and Conclusion

The ancient strains of the Iphigenia myth, by nature of their very age, are fragmented and the numerous blanks concerning the history of this material are open to scholarly speculation. One assumption is that Euripides was likely responsible for connecting Orestes' drama with Iphigenia's plight. Goethe follows the Euripidean plot without too many deviations, as numerous studies have abundantly shown. The 18th century poet uses Euripides' connection of the brother/sister stories to further explore the relationship of these people within a new human community. But how new is this? There are certain qualities of a higher humanity which Goethe has developed from the ancient text, while other aspects are new or only hinted at in the ancient play, such as the reinterpretation of the oracle or Thoas' friendship with Iphigenia. The modern play also departs from its model when the Greek princess follows her inner voice and tells Thoas the truth. However, the modern play does not entirely digress from the ancient version; rather it picks up and develops some of the ideas already present in the Greek drama. What both dramas have preserved for the history of human culture, and what Goethe may have found by way of inspiration in the Greek text, is a positive, optimistic, life-enforcing comment on the qualities which make a valid contribution to human civilization.'

How is this achieved in each play? Both poets adopt certain parts of the established literary representation, reject others and add some new material. For Euripides and Goethe, the central question has remained one of salvation and redemption. The centrality of salvation in the Greek play is evident when we consider the various entities which need to be saved: Orestes from the Furies, Iphigenia from the barbarians, the chorus of Greek women from Tauris, the family of Tantalus from a complex of inherited guilt, the image of Artemis from Tauris, the goddess herself from the association with human sacrifice, as well as the Taurian society from this same bloody cult. That Iphigenia was saved once from the altar and replaced by a stag, represents hope for the future salvation of all the characters. By using her initial salvation as a starting point for his play, Euripides provides a stage to watch the development of her humanity.

Goethe also uses Iphigenia's initial redemption on the altar as a portent for further salvation. The means to her physical salvation from the barbarian wilderness can be accomplished through scheming and lying, but the meaning of redemption for Goethe takes his heroine down a different pathway. Iphigenia must primarily save herself from lying. Her evolving humanity leads her to a level of individual freedom which is higher than simply being physically freed from the barbarians. She achieves this by way of reflection, feeling, reasoning and searching for a oneness with divinity. Autonomously she makes her decision for truth over deceit and establishes this as a

fundamental value for a new civilized society.

In the ancient play, Iphigenia also acts autonomously, even if this is not manifest in telling the truth. Her world is not restricted, because she too is a thinker. Her own contrived plan will lead to freedom from barbarism. Iphigenia's 'self-determination, demonstrated in her application of "technē", does not, however, negate her relationship to other human beings. Her understanding of humanity begins with the discovery of her empathy for the suffering of others, which she first becomes aware of in her brother's presence. Initially intending to vengefully sacrifice the first Greeks to land on shore, her need for revenge vanishes when she sees the Furies already wreaking their own punishment on this roving seafarer. For Iphigenia, revenge becomes no more an acceptable part of a civilized world than the Furies will be for this world's justice system. The Greek princess also eschews violence; her refusal to kill the king shows her commitment to non-violence. Instead she chooses to rely on her own imagination to devise a plan of escape, but this she cannot accomplish alone, without the trust and help of her family and the Greek chorus of women. Empathy, friendship, loyalty, trust and non-violence are humanistic values which Euripides has established in his transformation of the old fable.

The values which are illuminated in Euripides' Iphigenia are representative of the place and time period within which he was writing. The Attic tragedian humanized a gruesome myth and it is this humanization which constitutes the common ground for both

plays. Goethe has added to these values by juxtaposing them against the emergence of yet one more component of a new humanity: truth. The last line in Euripides' play reads: "Undo our troubled guile, crown us with Truth". If this can be read as a challenge for future civilizations, even our own, then Goethe has accepted the challenge; he has released his heroine from troubled guile and through her exemplary behavior, freed humanity.

Goethe's Iphigenie is as much about the divine as it is about the humane, and Goethe has claimed an image of the unearthly sphere which is no longer beyond reach for humankind. Euripides had already begun this process of reclamation. The gods in his drama are vindicated because Athena saved the seafaring trio, thereby at once restoring the honorable image of the gods as well as validating the human effort. In the 18th century version, the gods are again vindicated. Iphigenia's discovery of her ability to redeem herself and humanity by telling the truth is a rediscovery of the divine quality within the domain of human nature. Goethe, like Euripides before him, was interested in revealing this divine spirit that is within humankind. For both the ancient and modern cultures, this represents a new evaluation of human worth.

The introduction of the divine quality into a human realm is reliant on Iphigenia's purity. In ancient literature a young virgin was a preferred victim for human sacrifice and Iphigenia retains her purity in the Euripidean play. Once she was intended

as a bride for Achilles; now Artemis forbids any man to approach the priestess (381). In accordance with her holy office, she alone is allowed to handle sacred objects and to purify the temple (1219-1220). Her consecration will allow her to carry through with her plan to transport the statue down to the sea. Her purity and sanctity as a priestess of Artemis stands in opposition to the hellish Furies and facilitates their escape to Greece. Orestes can henceforth be freed from the Furies and Iphigenia from the barbarians.

Goethe capitalizes on purity as a theme. Iphigenia's purity is grounded, not in her holy office, but in truth. "Eine reine Seele" fighting against "ein bös Geschick", it is only because she tells Thoas the truth that she is able to redeem her family name as well as humanity. Thoas does in Goethe's play what Artemis has forbidden in the Euripidean model. He approaches her with a marriage proposal, but Iphigenia rejects the king's advances, sacrificing an erotic love for a purely human one.

Human sacrifice was temporarily and in the end permanently stopped in Goethe's Iphigenie, and in Euripides' drama it is also terminated at the end. Athena - the patron goddess of Athens - acting as an agent of civilization, is responsible for putting an end to human sacrifice, and the possibility of the barbarian society being transformed to a civilized one is implied. Thoas must "swallow his wrath", allow the Greeks to return home and give up the Artemis image. With the loss of the image follows the loss of the cult. A bloody ritual will be transformed to a

non-violent one at the festival in Halae, where a priest will extract one drop of blood from the neck of a victim to remind the people of bygone violent human sacrifices.

An ancient justice system is also transformed. When the votes are evenly cast in a trial, Athena decrees that the defendant will be absolved. This moment represents an important cultural and historical event; an old system of private vengeance, represented by the Furies, is transformed into Athena's democratic system of justice. And it is not coincidental that it is Athena who implements this mandate, for Athens was the democratic nucleus of the Greek world.

In Euripides' Iphigenia, the fundamental question of family guilt is resolved.³³ The characters are saved from an ongoing curse and correspondingly saved from life or death in a barbarian land. Thoas, a character who is not developed to a significant degree in the ancient text, bows to a greater power; with no choice, he succumbs to the new divinely appointed order at the end of the play. Greek humanistic values have been imported to and imposed upon a foreign community.

Goethe's portrayal of Thoas is very different from Euripides'. The starting point for the modern Thoas' journey into a humanitarian world begins where Euripides had at the close of his play left him standing. Thoas, although he is a man of few words, clearly demonstrates noble qualities right from the

³³I disagree with Kunz who maintains that guilt is overcome and a sense of unity restored at the end of Goethe's play, but not in Euripides' version (413).

beginning of Goethe's drama. A goddess demands that the escape transpire in the ancient version. A woman embodying the goddess makes the same request in the modern one, except here, Thoas' approval is a prerequisite to their departure.

The idea that a barbarian might act more nobly than the "civilized" Greeks is suggested in the Euripidean play. While delivering her lie to Thoas, Iphigenia relates to the king that one of the captives is a matricide. He responds: "O great Apollo, what barbarian/Would do the thing these Greeks have done!" (1173-1174). Is Orestes' murder of his mother more or less uncivilized than the barbarian's cult of human sacrifice? Goethe posits that both Greeks and barbarians need equally to be redeemed from uncivilized actions such as violence and deceit.

Goethe expounds a universal humanity. Greeks and barbarians alike are capable of hearing the voice of humanity, and if this humanity can be established in Greece, its precedent can just as easily be set in the wilderness. There is a universality in humaneness which does not rely on geographic place, but rather on the place within the human heart and mind. Adorno's idea that Thoas acts more nobly than the Greeks and is then abandoned (166), disregards this universality. True, humanistic values have been established on barbarian soil, and will now be imported back to Greece, but the Scythian king is hardly left empty-handed; he is left with new standards for a civilized society and a sense of belonging to a greater human community.

Goethe's Iphigenie is not a drama which hides behind a Greek "facade". Rather it captures certain vital aspects of the ancient model and presents them with a renewed thrust in a way which was relevant for Goethe's own public. Goethe was very conscious of the roots of the European literary tradition. The measure of his accomplishment is found in his portrayal of humanity, which is an important ingredient for his early classicism. Qualities such as loyalty, trust, friendship and all that this entails, as well as a happy ending where peace and reconciliation on the human and divine levels prevail, can hardly be labelled exclusively as "Greek" versus "German", or "ancient" versus "modern". Goethe has retrieved all of these qualities for his own culture, and has continued a tradition that was already long established in the Greek world.

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