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Apragmosyne* in Euripides' *Antiope

About 16 fragments of Euripides' lost *Antiope* can be placed in a debate between Zethus and Amphion, twins born to Zeus by Antiope and destined to rule Thebes. Following Plato's Callicles, scholars have usually described the twins' contrasting ideals as the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. This paper will show that this is the wrong antithesis: both lives are rather versions of selfish isolation. Athenians could have understood them within various contexts; one, forced on our attention by the use of political catchwords, is the reluctance of certain members of their own ruling class to contribute actively to the life of the city. This attitude, known as quietism (*apragmosyne*), reached a particularly important phase in Athens in the 420's BCE. *Antiope* is usually dated to 411-408 BCE on the strength of a scholion to Aristophanes' *Frogs*, but metrical evidence points firmly to the 420's. A secondary aim of the paper is to show that the play's discourse of quietism makes good sense in this period.

The ideal favored by Zethus includes physical fitness, concern for money, and hard work on the land. Although the twins apparently believe they are rustic slaves, the audience knows they are destined for greatness and will understand this program at least in part as the expression of an élite outlook. Zethus does *not* express an ideal of service to the community. Far from being an activist, he can be seen as a type of élite quietist whose interests are focused too narrowly (from the perspective, say, of the Thucydidean Pericles) on his own household.

Amphion is devoted to "fine things": music, wine, pleasure, whatever money can buy. He considers it foolish to be (overly) active (*polla prassein*) when one can live pleurably as a quietist (*apragmon*). But unlike his brother, he unambiguously aspires to advise the city in its affairs, including war. He regards athletes as bad citizens in hard times. While he wants to advise the city, he abhors factional strife. It is plainly impossible to accommodate Amphion to the active-contemplative antithesis. He does, however, resemble another type of élite quietist. Though *he* believes he is fit to rule, it is doubtful whether he can: his brother, at any rate, finds his effeminate and sophistic manner disgusting

Neither twin is ready for a life of service. The events of the play probably exposed their limitations but at the same time prepared them for their destiny. The debate, when not seen as irrelevant or an expression of Euripides' personal preference for the intellectual life, has been said to prepare for the conclusion that music (broadly construed) really is necessary to civic harmony or (incompatibly) that there is finally no future for Amphion's hedonistic aestheticism. This paper argues rather that Euripides represented two forms of selfish isolation, which Athenians might have seen as Ionian softness and Dorian hardness and/or associated with different fashions among their own ruling class, and put them to the test of action. One possible payoff is that they were implicitly invited to celebrate their own supposed ability to recognize and combine what was best in each ideal. While it would be crude simply to distill a "message" along these lines from the

(lost!) play, such optimism and patriotism recall *Heraclidae* and *Suppliants* more readily than they do the plays from Euripides' last years (e.g. *Phoenissae* and *Orestes*).