

Introduction

The reason / no-reason conceptual pair (also declinable in the similar forms of rational/a-rational, logical/a-logical) pervades the history of Western thought from the ancient to contemporary times. Perceived in different historical periods and in different cultural forms either as a conflict or as a vital coexistence, the reason / no-reason pair was first theorized and legitimated as a sharp contrast in antiquity with the Pythagorean *systoichiai*, and at the dawn of the twentieth century it was successfully exemplified by Nietzsche with the opposition between *Apollonian* and *Dionysian* principles. Since they denote the harmonious, orderly, ‘bright’ side of the human soul, emblematically shown in Greek sculpture, and the chaotic, wild, instinctive, passionate, ‘dark’ side, best expressed in music, tragedy and some Greek pre- and post-socratic philosophy, Apollonian and Dionysian are the best known categories of the rational vs. a-rational contrast present in human culture through the ages in philosophy, i.e. metaphysics and ontology (good principle vs. evil principle), ethics (good vs. bad, reason vs. passions), theology (reason vs. faith; established religion vs. mystery cults), art and literature (prose vs. poetry and tragedy; logos vs. myth; rational expression vs. suprarational contents), medicine, biology and neuropsychology (thought vs. emotion, mind vs. brain; conscious vs. unconscious and subconscious). In the modern age, the already deep-rooted dichotomy between reason and no-reason expressed itself in ethics in the conflict between reason and passion. While Kant thought that rationality alone was the basis and motive of moral action, Hume claimed that passions were “reasonable”, which helped disprove the thesis of the contradiction between what he believed to be the two coexisting and inseparable sides of the human soul. Among the proponents of the reevaluation of the a-rational sphere there have been, besides Nietzsche, philosophers such as Bergson, Heidegger, Lévinas in the twentieth century, and leading figures in philosophy and science such as M. Zambrano, M. Nussbaum, E. Goldberg, and G. Vallortigara, in our century.

This volume is the outcome of the work of an international research group, which intended to cover some aspects of this dichotomy specifically to prove that the two sides of the human ‘soul’ don’t contradict each other – in such a way that one excludes, ontologically and axiologically, the other – but are rather closely interrelated and interdependent. Scholars with different expertise in the history of thought tackled diachronically some key moments of this story, from different angles and with different approaches, from ancient thought to modern neurosciences. The research group is characterized by an interdisciplinary character in the field of Philosophy in general, being historians of philosophy, addressing the ongoing conflict between the rational and a-rational in the history of thought – from ancient times, through Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages,

up to the neurosciences, that study the issue by verifying the anatomical and physiological interactions between those brain areas responsible for the rational and those areas that control the emotions and, in general, the alogical.

By closing this volume, we would like to thank first of all the colleagues which cooperated in our project, our Department for funding it and the Academia Verlag for including it in the Philosophical Studies Series.

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The Critical Spirit and the Demands of Reason in Ancient Greece: Development, Posterity, Actuality¹

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The title of my talk, “The Critical Spirit and the Demands of Reason in Ancient Greece” may seem, according to our habitual understanding, to be highly incongruous: does not the critical, rational spirit, the spirit of the Enlightenment, first arise only in the XVIII-century? If we enlarge only slightly our definition of Enlightenment however, such that it includes the freedom to reason in a critical fashion about all problems and all subjects and such that this concept is no longer restricted simply to that 18th Century movement, which itself was heavily indebted to the Greeks, then, given this definition of enlightenment, it becomes possible to adopt the following thesis: the enlightenment spirit suffuses Greek thought from early antiquity onwards and indeed represents one of its most characteristic features.

To substantiate this thesis, I will turn first to a citation not from a philosopher but from a historian. Jacqueline De Romilly, in her book on the Sophist movement, *Eminent Sophists in the Athens of Pericles*, writes:

In terms of criticism, the Sophists are the first devote themselves to a radical critique of all beliefs, in the name of a methodical and rigorous rationality. They are the first to have tried to think life and the world by virtue of the human alone. They are the first to have made the relativity of knowledge a fundamental principle and to have hewn a pathway, leading not only to the freedom of thought but also to absolute doubt in the domains of metaphysics, religion and morality. I am not claiming that the Sophists were right to do all of this. Yet, they did have the originality to push rationality and scepticism as far as they could go. Even if that critical labour had only had the effect of eliciting responses, of calling on their contemporaries to better defend their beliefs and to become conscious of what those beliefs entailed, the sophistic movement would have performed a priceless service. It begins bearing fruit with Plato, pushing him to justify dialectically, the superiority of the good. After the Sophists, the philosophy no longer operates in the realm of revelation. It has to reason. It has to prove. But be this as it may, the new orientation inaugurated by the

¹ I would like to thank Christopher Sauder for his fine *translation* of this essay.

Sophists will itself survive. It would be naïve to overlook the fact that from the 18th-Century onwards and in our modern world, Sophism is everywhere. This diffusion of the Sophistic critique has in our world largely surpassed that of Platonism.²

I am in full agreement with the historian's way of putting things here, which can be summarised as follows: the generalised critique of beliefs; the attempt to ground things anthropologically; the relativity of knowledge; the freedom of thought; rationalism and scepticism; the influence on the century of the enlightenment and the preponderance of that philosophical approach in contemporary thought. Similar conclusions are drawn by a specialist such as Kerferd, who writes: "The modernity of a great number of problems that were formulated and discussed by the Sophists in the context of their teaching is really quite striking."³ Indeed we quite frequently find connections being made in the scholarly literature between the Sophist movement and the Enlightenment.⁴

Yet, the critical and innovative potential of ancient Greek thought is not exhausted by the formidable intellectual breakthroughs of the 5th century Sophists. It is here that I would nuance the portrait drawn by the historian. We find indeed, *prior to the Sophists*, a number of critical stances, vis-à-vis traditional religion it should be noted,⁵ that pave the road for sophistic rationalism. Likewise, the Sophist movement is accompanied by numerous intellectual breakthroughs: historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides, Orators such as Lysias and Isocrates, tragic and comic dramaturges, such as Euripides and Aristophanes especially, without forgetting the prolongation of this strand of thought in the succession of schools (Cynicism, Epicureanism, Scepticism and Neoplatonism). To put it concisely: the *critical spirit* is a *generalized cultural trait* of Greek antiquity, of which the period of the Sophists represents without a doubt the high-water mark, though by no means the totality of the phenomenon.

There is a way in which it would be possible to speak of a type of *cultural convergence* between Greek and contemporary thinking, in the sense that the

² Jacqueline De Romilly, *Les grands sophistes dans l'Athènes de Périclès*, Paris, 1988, p. 318-319.

³ G. Br. Kerferd, *Le mouvement sophistique*, Paris, Vrin, 1999, p. 40.

⁴ Cf. for example E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Berkeley, 1951, p. 189: "[T]he evidence we have is more than enough to prove that the Great Age of Greek Enlightenment was also, like our own time, an Age of Persecution."; W.K.C. Guthrie, in his book *The Sophists* (London/New York, 1971) goes so far as to speak, of the Europe of the 17th and 18th centuries, as the "the second great period of enlightenment" (p. 23); E. Zeller wrote (cf. *Die Philosophie der Griechen*, ed. W. Nestle, Leipzig, p. 1432): "Just as it would have been difficult for us, the Germans, to have a Kant without the century of the Enlightenment, likewise it would have been difficult for the Greeks to have a Socrates and Socratic philosophy without Sophism".

⁵ Cf. S. Zeppi, *Les origines de l'athéisme antique*, Paris, 2011, p. 60: "Pythagoras (or the first Pythagoreans), Alcmaeon, Xenophanes and later Socrates himself [...], while not coming close to the negation of the divine, [...] are the first thinkers who demonstrate perplexity with regard to the human capacity to arrive at knowledge of the mode of being of divine reality: this was the first opening achieved by Greek reflection towards the path of atheism, which is the extreme accentuation of the theological problematic".

former manifests a complex spectrum of beliefs and attitudes (ranging from the most unconditional adhesion to the most radical contestation), as well as a diversity of ways of thinking and of moral codes, which nearly finds no equivalent before today. The relativity of values; racial, social and political equality; the opposition of nature and the law; plural and non-conflictual access to the Divine, the openness to foreign cults; the right to critique and to stand in reserve towards all dogma (the ancestor of “private beliefs”); the freedom of behaviour; and literary license: on all of these points Greek Culture constitutes an incredible source of reflection and an astonishing reservoir of possibilities. I spoke initially of convergence but this term is not entirely appropriate. In the notion of convergence is implied a temporary intersection of two trajectories, which have different starting places. In reality, I should rather speak of a *resurgence* of something *seminal*, which has diffused to us from its origin in the heart of the Greek experience of the world, and which now reappears, after the resistance and the obstacles. In that way, Greece is less of a model, than a seed, a genesis, as Castoriadis suggested.

If I am proposing that we discuss Greece, I want to make it understood that it is in no way a matter of valorising Greek culture [...], but much rather of considering it as a kind of genesis (I insist on this this word, in opposition to ‘model’), which remains productive for us.⁶

From this perspective, the modern “open society” echoes the problematizing of tradition, inaugurated in the context of a democratic Greece. Hellenic culture distinguishes itself here – and this point is fundamental – from *heteronomic* (i.e. governed by the law of exteriority) societies, which are marked by what Castoriadis calls the *closure of sense*. In these societies, laws of conduct are dictated unilaterally by the tradition (ancestors, heroes, gods, etc.). “This situation,” Castoriadis writes, “as we know, is disrupted only two times in our history: in ancient Greece and in Western Europe. We have inherited that disruption. It is what allows us to speak as we speak.”⁷ I share this point of view. Without this disruption, we would not have autonomous society. We would not have the practice of self-founding. We would not have the *open society*. This is what we could call in Popperian terms, “the tradition of relating critically to the tradition.”⁸

⁶ C. Castoriadis, *Ce qui fait la Grèce. 1. D’Homère à Héraclite*, Paris, Seuil, 2004, p. 40.

⁷ *La montée de l’insignifiance*, Paris, Seuil, 1996, p. 225.

⁸ In *The World of Parmenides. Essays on the Presocratic Enlightenment* (éd. A. F. Petersen et J. Mejer, London/New York, Routledge, 1998), Popper attempts to trace the source of that idiosyncratic Greek tradition, *the tradition of critical discussion*, or to put it differently, *the tradition of a critical relation to the tradition*, back to the relation, inaugurated right from the very beginning, between Anaximander and Thales, an educational tradition in which the student was permitted to critique the master. In other words, it is not the argument from authority that prevails, but rather the *best possible argument*: “Here is a unique phenomenon, and it is closely connected with the astonishing freedom and creativeness of Greek philosophy [...]. If we look for the first signs of this new critical atti-

Our own culture has, to be sure, *its* own tradition. But that tradition is one of relating critically to its own past. We owe this to the Greek *critical rationalist ethos*, which still guides us today. It was this same *ethos* that guided roman civilisation from its inception before being transmitted to an emergent Christianity that was seeking intellectual definition and then passing over, in still another way, into Islam, etc.

1. Rationalism and Democracy

K. Popper pleaded repeatedly for a definitively enlarged version of the *Greek Enlightenment*. For Popper, the Greek tradition “made the most important contributions to our present-day western culture.” “I mean,” he continues, “the idea of freedom, the discovery of democracy, and the critical, rational attitude which ultimately resulted in modern natural science.”⁹ Popper traces that “rational, explanatory attitude,” that sympathetic outlook towards both Greeks and non-Greeks,” all the way back to Homer, as well as other authors:

[...] in those works in which, under the influence of the Greek struggle for freedom against Persian attacks, the idea of freedom was first celebrated; especially in the works of Aeschylus and Herodotus. It is not national freedom,¹⁰ but rather personal freedom [...]. In this context, freedom is no mere ideology but a way of life which makes life better and more worth living. Both Aeschylus and Herodotus make this clear.¹¹

Popper is far from the first person to have observed that the critical spirit represents a dominant cultural trait of ancient Greece. In Germany, E. Zeller had already remarked that:

The Greeks were the first to conquer the independence of thought. They insisted on the truth, not by way of the religious tradition, but through the consideration of the things themselves. It is in Greece that, for the first time, a rigorously scientific method, a knowledge subjected only to the laws of the intelligence, became possible. Already that *formal* character serves to completely distinguish Greek philosophy from the systems and investigations of the Orient.¹²

tude, this new freedom of thought, we are led back to Anaximander’s criticism of Thales [...]. I think that it was Thales who founded the new tradition of freedom – based upon a new relation between master and pupil – and who thus created a new kind of school, utterly different from the Pythagorean School” (p. 21-22).

⁹ *In Search of a Better World*, trans. L.J. Bennett, London/New York, Routledge, 1994, p. 122.

¹⁰ A freedom for which of course Greek thinking laid the foundations. Cf., among others, K. Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*, University of Chicago Press, 2004 [revised edition of *Die Entdeckung der Freiheit*, München, 1988].

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² E. Zeller, *La philosophie grecque considérée dans son développement historique*, Partie I, v. 1, Paris, Hachette, 1877 [see edition IV, 1989, II, 1, p. 328 on the Enlightenment].

Zeller's point here is not that the Greeks *invented* science. Indeed, as the Greeks themselves were quick to recognize, in many areas the scientific knowledge of the Babylonians and the Egyptians surpassed their own. What Zeller means by *formal* character, though, is that the Greeks instigated a new, fundamentally freer *relationship* to knowledge, in which the simple question, taken in the most detached, abstract sense, of *why* things are, held more weight than the question of their concrete applicability.

The shift in perspective vis-à-vis more ancient or neighbouring cultures is thus a comprehensive one because everything is *put in the middle*. Everything is discussed and subjected to critical scrutiny: political power, claims to be debated, the cosmos itself – conceived by Anaximander as situated at equal distance from each point of the circumference, etc.

From this *critical ethos* is born in Greece that hitherto unknown wide-ranging de-hierarchizing. The uniqueness of Greek culture in this respect cannot be measured in terms of the raw quantity of scientific knowledge but only in terms of its *manner of being*, in terms of its *attitude*.

Politically, *isonomia*,¹³ the equality of political rights, and *isocratia*, the equality of power, required and undergirded *parrhesia*, in other words the “free speech” of the free citizen vis-à-vis not only his equals (*isoi*), other citizens, but vis-à-vis the city itself, inside of which he can in principle *say anything* under the protection of the law.¹⁴ The neutral point of view will thus be an integral part of the democratic impulse. What this means in practice is that in Athens, one is perfectly free to praise Sparta, whereas in Sparta itself, it is prohibited to praise any other constitution than that of Sparta, as Demosthenes put it.¹⁵

Philosophical neutrality will thus be the sister of democracy and Thales will be the brother of Solon. This point was initially made by the first modern historian of philosophy, Johann Jakob Brucker. For Brucker, the *curiosity of the*

¹³ As C. Calame emphasises, (*Masques d'autorité. Fiction et pragmatique dans la poésie grecque antique*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2005), *isonomia* was also considered as a sign of *political health*: “We recall that Alcmaeon of Croton presented the state of health as a balanced mixture of opposing qualities: wet and dry, cold and hot, bitter and sweet, etc. In a representation that does not hesitate to have recourse to political metaphor, sickness appears as coming from the “monarchy” of one of these elements, while health results from the proper distribution (*isonomia*) of opposed qualities” (p. 255). On the differences between *isonomy* and *democracy*, cf. the magisterial work of P. Lévêque and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Clisthène l'Athénien. Essai sur la représentation de l'espace et du temps en Grèce de la fin du VI^e siècle à la mort de Platon*, Paris, Macula, 1992, p. 27-31.

¹⁴ The very idea of a law (*nomos*) that is no longer attached to custom – unwritten law –, but applies to everyone and is politically recognized by everyone, is linked to the very appearance of democracy (cf. J. De Romilly, *La loi dans la pensée grecque des origines à Aristote*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1971, p. 12 ss; p. 139 ss.).

¹⁵ Cf. Demosthenes, *Against Leptines*, 20, 106: “For in the first place, if this is their argument, they are about to do exactly what a man cannot do at Sparta—praise the laws of Athens or of any other state; nay, so far from that, he is obliged to praise, as well as do, whatever accords with his native constitution” (Loeb Edition, trad. C. Vince and M.A. and J.H. Vince, Cambridge, MA/London, 1926).

Greeks is to be explained by “a form of government under which everyone may think, say and study that which he wishes.”¹⁶ To this, Bruckner opposed what he labelled the *philosophia traditiva*, which, “resembles the knowledge held by priests.”¹⁷ It is in this sense that Diderot can in turn emphasise the unique keenness of mind, the particular *tour d’esprit*, of the Greeks:

Because we know that the Greeks had a *tour d’esprit*, very different from that of the Orientals, and that they disfigured [i.e., in the modern sense, *transformed*] everything they touched, which came to them from the *barbarian* nations [...]. The dogmas of other nations, passing through their imagination, took on the sheen of their way of thinking and never entered their writing, without having undergone significant modification.¹⁸

More recently, in the “Vienna Lecture” on “The Crisis of European Humanity and Philosophy”, Husserl will, in no uncertain terms, ascribe a leading role to Greece in the development of European thought: “Europe [...] has a clearly demarcated birthplace, a spiritual one of course. This birth occurs in individuals, as men who belong to an entirely unique nation”:¹⁹ Ancient Greece. It is here that “a new type of attitude of the individual towards his environment develops. In the wake of this we observe the outbreak of a *totally new kind* of mental production .”²⁰ For Husserl, the outbreak of philosophy constitutes “the originary phenomenon (*Urphänomen*) of the spirit of Europe,”²¹ because it represents, he says, the birth of the pure desire to know. Yet Husserl goes even further, going so far as to speak of the Greek invention of a new humanity, “a humanity of infinite tasks.”²² “It is only with the Greeks,” he writes, “that we find a universal (“cosmological”) life commitment in the fundamentally original form of a pure “theoretical” attitude.”²³

In sum, all of these different expressions (formal character, unique *ethos*, *tour d’esprit*, *innovative attitude*, even *new humanity*) point to something simi-

¹⁶ J. J. Brucker, *Kurtze Fragen aus der Philosophischen Historie*, I, Ulm, 1731, p. 223, cited by H. Blumenberg, *La légitimité des temps modernes*, *op. cit.*, p. 459-460.

¹⁷ Brucker, *apud* Blumenberg, *ibid.*, p. 461. Compare Diderot, *Œuvres complètes*, vol... XV, p. 45: “A particular advantage of the peoples of Greece is that superstition never snuffed out the feeling of freedom and that they preserve, under the authority of priests and magistrates, a robust manner of thinking, which characterises them in all times”. The same evaluation can be found in Winckelmann, this time concerning art: “It is in the epoch when enlightenment and liberty blossom in Greece that art as well becomes more free and more noble” (*op. cit.*, p. 344). Summing up his vast body of research, Winckelmann again declares: “and the lesson of all that history is that liberty allows for the blossoming of art” (p. 461; see also p. 499 et 513).

¹⁸ Cf. « Chaldéens (philosophie des) », *Œuvres complètes*, ed. J. Assézat and M. Tourneux, Paris, Garnier, 1875-1877, vol. XIV, p. 39.

¹⁹ *Husserliana* VI, ed. W. Biemel, p. 321.17-20. Italics are mine.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 321.21-24.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 321.36-37.

²² *Ibid.* p. 325.19.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 326.3-5. Compare p. 332.38-39, “In singular personalities, such as Thales etc., a *new humanity* is born”. Italics are mine.

lar: the unique way of being, the idiosyncrasy – the miracle?²⁴ – of a relationship to the world marked by a spirit of openness and equality. This new attitude is to be found before the establishment of democracies themselves²⁵ and, indeed, explains precisely why democracy is born and instituted in Hellenised²⁶ territory and not elsewhere.

2. New Perspectives

If the raw outlines of this summary sketch of Greek heritage is to some degree correct and if we consider the influence of Greece in the development of western thought, a very different portrait of the history of our culture takes shape. According to what one might call the standard vision of that history, the relatively stable and homogenous ancient world is submitted in modernity to a series of uninterrupted upheavals and disruptions, a growing loss of norms leading to contemporary subjectivism and relativism, which some interpret as a dangerous decline. That decidedly simplistic and reductive vision stands in need of revision and correction. Whether the modern era is interpreted as a gain or a

²⁴ On the interpretation of Renan's "miracle", in the sense of a phenomena which *cannot be surpassed*, rather than in the sense of something resulting from a supernatural intervention, cf. cf. P. Vidal-Naquet, *La démocratie grecque vue d'ailleurs. Essai d'historiographie ancienne et moderne*, Paris, Flammarion, 1990, « Renan et le miracle grec » (p. 246-264).

²⁵ For the 6th century, we must recall the famous (historical or, more likely, retro-projected by Herodotus) discourse of Octanes in support of democracy, the first known critical examination of the merit of different constitutions: democracy, oligarchy and royalty: "but the rule of the multitude has in the first place the loveliest name of all, equality of laws (*isonomie*), and does in the second place none of the things that a monarch does. It determines offices by lot, and holds power accountable, and conducts all deliberating publicly." (III, 80, 6, trans. A. D. Godley, Loeb edition, Cambridge, MA, 1920, translation modified); in the same sense, we can read the discourse of Maeandrius of Samos: "I invite you to share power, I proclaim equality" (*ibid.*, III, 142, 3, my translation) or "he set apart certain domains and priesthoods for their king Battus, but all the rest, which had belonged to the kings, were now to be held by the people in common" (*ibid.*, IV, 161, 3, trans. Godley; compare Aristagoras of Miletus, *ibid.*, V 37; Cadmus of Cos, *ibid.*, VII, 164). In Athens, the new attitude is found obviously in Solon at the beginning of the 6th century, who establishes the first rudiments of democracy (cf. Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, V-XIII) and who left us the eloquent declaration: "To the people gave I grace enough, nor from their honor took, nor proffered more; while those possessing power and graced with wealth, These too I made to suffer nought unseemly; I stood protecting both with a strong shield, and suffered neither to prevail unjustly" (XII, 1, trans. W. Heinemann, Loeb edition, Cambridge, MA/London, 1952).

²⁶ Cf. among others, I. Morris, "The Strong principle of Equality and the Archaic Origins of Greek Democracy", *Demokratia: A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, ed. J. Ober and C. Hendrick, Princeton, p. 19-48; J. L. O'Neil, *The Origins and Development of Ancient Greek Democracy*, Landham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995. It is true that we can find traces of proto-democracies earlier in ancient Assyria (e.g. Assur) and in several neo-Babylonian city states (e.g. Mari, on which see: D. E. Flemming, *Democracy's Ancient Ancestors. Mari and Early Collective Governance*, Cambridge, 2004). However, as Hansen emphasises ("Introduction", in *Démocratie athénienne, démocratie moderne : tradition et influences : neuf exposés suivis de discussions* [Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique, v. LVI], ed. A.-Ch. Hernandez, Genève, Vandœuvres, 2009, p. XI-XXXVIII), "an ancient pure democracy has not (yet) been found outside the Western World" (p. XIII n. 7).

loss, flourishing or degeneration, a disenchantment or a (possible) reëchantment of the world, it does not mark the irruption of an absolute novelty into history, the culmination of a long process at the end of which and *only* at the end, the phenomena that characterize contemporary culture, in opposition to the tradition, *could at last* emerge. Such a view would only repeat the (false) idea of an original, internally-stable golden age, which gradually began to decline. In many ways however, the age in which we find ourselves is one of *resurgence*. To be sure, the context and circumstances of that resurgence are ones which are on many points divergent and this must certainly be taken into account. Yet, we must speak all the same of a resurgence, one involving complex experiences of living and thinking, which previously marked the dawn of our civilisation and which continued, across the centuries to weigh positively on it.

In sum, our thesis posits that it was the *initial Greek opening* (philosophically, politically, artistically, etc.), which, by virtue of its critical nature, made possible, or at least heavily favoured, the *final opening*. Once we have adopted this new, optimistic, view, which provides a more historically coherent account of the facts, our assessment of the modern world is thoroughly reoriented. We no longer see ourselves confronted with a fall, a levelling down, a decline or an unprecedented dissolution. Instead, the contemporary world reveals itself to us as an increasingly-accentuated critical awakening, which, to be sure, disengages us from a more recent past but which, at the same time, reconnects us with our more ancient roots.

Does this thesis represent, as some might suppose, an absolutely innovative hermeneutic grid, resulting from a “typically contemporary” audacity ? Not at all. The following text proves it (I will come back to its author afterwards):

If one renounces, as one reasonably must, the idea of an absolute perfection, which is not given to humans to attain, one will have to admit that despite the abuses that crept into some Athenian institutions, on the whole they offer the human spirit a very interesting portrait. It is not possible to surpass them, nor to find, in any imaginable combination, wiser regulation or better-organised measures, especially when one thinks back to the distant centuries to which they belong. Having benefited from the discoveries and errors of so many different peoples, we can be proud of what we know, more than what we have invented, as far as laws and regulations go. We can boldly assert that no nation of Europe would have been capable of rising to the level of the Athenians, without a guide, without a master and by its own proper force....

This extract is taken from a certain Cornelius De Pauw (1739-1799), a German Protestant from Clèves in the Rhineland, who was the uncle of Anacharsis Cloots, who will be assassinated during the terrors. Although in the time of the revolution, it was Sparta that was at the forefront of the imagination and that represented the political ideal, De Pauw took the side of Athens. As such he is a precursor of the nascent pro-democratic sentiment and of what P. Vidal-Naquet

will call the “bourgeois Athens model.”²⁷ He was likewise the author of the *Philosophical Investigations Concerning the Greeks (Recherches philosophiques sur les Grecs*, Berlin, 2 vol. 1787-1788),²⁸ which systematically accentuate the progressive, democratic and critical spirit of the Athenians.²⁹

In the extract I have cited, De Pauw actually goes further than I did, since I had been satisfied with making the more modest claim that the Greek opening *favourised* the modern opening. Yet, for him, modernity itself would have simply been impossible without the Greek *example* or *germination*. We can, he argues, be proud of our knowledge (which comes to us from our predecessors), but surely not of our *discoveries*. This comment reminds me of course of the Ch. Meier’s remark about democracy: “The Greeks know nothing of the possibility of democracy before achieving it themselves. Before the Greeks there had not been the Greeks.”³⁰ In other words, the most difficult and decisive moment is to *clear* a path, to *pave* the way, to show for the *first time*, that democracy was possible, that it was conceivable. Even at a distance and even under modified conditions, this experience remains in principle open to reiteration.

And it was precisely this distant example and this keen fascination, this, if one can say, primitive Greek germination (a great amount of our history is comprised of this), which unceasingly held sway and indelibly coloured the Roman and then the Christian tradition all along their way. It was towards this original source that we spontaneously turned and historically appealed to even more intensely throughout the process of disengaging ourselves from traditional dogmatism and the proscriptions it had accumulated.

It is not possible, within the confines of this lecture, to properly develop the lines of reflection I have just mentioned. I will have to content myself here, in guise of a provisional conclusion, to make several general and programmatic remarks.

1 – I am convinced that the Greeks still possess an effective way of speaking to us. Ancient Greek culture has unceasingly nourished our history (this is a brute fact that is beyond dispute). It has permanently played to role of instructor in this history, working as a brake on or permanent rampart against the danger of exceptionalism, dogmatism and fanaticism. This critical influence is gaining ground. Practically speaking, it is more powerful today than it ever was.

²⁷ Cf. P. Vidal-Naquet, *La démocratie grecque vue d’ailleurs*, Paris, Flammarion, 1990, Chap. VII.

²⁸ The citation is an extract from *Recherches philosophiques sur les Grecs*, v. II, Berlin, Georges Jacques Decker et fils, 1788, p. 64-65.

²⁹ As Claude Mossé has noted (“Un éloge inattendu de la démocratie athénienne au xviii^e : Les recherches philosophiques sur la Grèce de Cornelius de Pauw”, in *Les Autorités. Dynamiques et mutations d’une figure de référence à l’Antiquité*, ed. Didier Foucault and Pascal Payen, Grenoble, Millon, 2007, p. 99-104), “[De Pauw’s] description of the Athenian political regime [...] is wholly original for its era” (p. 104).

³⁰ Ch. Meier, *Introduction à l’anthropologie politique de l’Antiquité classique*, [Collège de France. Essais et conférences], Paris, PUF, 1984, p. 7.

2 – Because of its diversity, because of its multifaceted curiosity, because of style of critical distance and sobriety of judgment towards its different objects of investigation, I believe that Greek culture not only demonstrates numerous points of commonality with contemporary culture, but can likewise serve in many ways as a comparative model for the present state of affairs. I am thinking for example of that plural relationship to the divine, experienced non-conflictually by the Greeks, or again of the climate of provocation and mockery all throughout Greek history, that astonishing freedom of judgment, which is hardly equalled in all of human history, except perhaps precisely in our own epoch.

3 – My hypothesis is that the *emancipatory* potentialities of polymorphous Greek critical thinking, which saw their autonomous development stunted by the encounter with the Judeo-Christian tradition, while nonetheless being powerfully developed by the latter, would have lead perfectly naturally to something like the modern type of *open society* that we are familiar with. When commentators such as Hans Blumenberg³¹ or again M. Gauchet³² interpret ancient democracy, ancient curiosity, ancient materialism, ancient individualism, ancient subjectivity, etc., the judgments they bring to bear often take a fundamentally Hegelian form: “It was only that...but not yet this....” My position is the inverse of that. It would take the form, “It is already that...and almost this....” In opposition to what all of modern political philosophy took to be the case, there is nothing that prevents us, for example, from thinking that ancient individuality, already more and more elaborated in the Hellenistic period and then in Late Antiquity, will have come to prevail over the *precedence* of everything that was still extolled by Aristotle for example. On the contrary, nothing obligates us to suppose that the progressive implementation of democracy from the 17th century onwards - i.e. after a detour of more than a millennium – necessarily required the intermediary of Christianity, for example.

4 – Finally, in order to better grasp what is meant by the *disenchantment of the world*, I propose that we seek to develop a better understanding of the *ancient disenchantment of the world*, of which Greece offers us the privileged scene. We have still not fully taken stock of that disenchantment, which attained, for the very first time, the horizons with which we are again confronted by the modalities of our present situation.³³

³¹ Hans Blumenberg, *La légitimité des Temps modernes*, translated from German by M. Sagnol, J.-L. Schlegel and D. Trierweiler, Paris, 1999 [1988].

³² Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde. Une histoire politique de la religion*, Paris, Gallimard, 1985.

³³ For a more detailed treatment of the of the history of the Greek critical heritage that I outlined here, see J.-M. Narbonne, *Antiquité critique et modernité. Essai sur le rôle de la pensée critique en Occident*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2016.

Emotions and Reason in Alexander of Aphrodisias: the Place of *aidôs* in the Human Soul

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The problem of the cognitive component of emotions in the philosophy of Alexander of Aphrodisias has been downplayed by literature so far. In this paper, I will focus on the emotion of *aidôs*, about which Alexander says in his commentary on book 4 of the *Topics* that it cannot arise unless there is reason. In order to understand what Alexander meant, I will reference other works written by him or his students, in particular the twenty-first *Ethical Problem*, which primarily deals with *aidôs*.¹

1. The problem of the cognitive component of emotions

In the last forty years, there has been a debate about the cognitive component of emotions according to Aristotle, particularly the question of what cognitive faculty is necessary for *pathê* to arise. According to some scholars, emotions are preceded by the images produced by *phantasia*, a faculty of the *sensitive* soul, while according to others, it is a judgment produced by *doxa* – whose place is the *rational* soul – that allows *pathê* to emerge.² There is, however, a lack of studies on the cognitive component of emotions in the most important ancient Aristotelian, Alexander of Aphrodisias. One reason for this gap in the literature is that the relationship between emotions and cognition is not very important in Alexander. Though he discusses cognitive faculties in the *psychological and*

¹ I thank Professor R. Loredana Cardullo for providing me with valuable guidance in preparing this paper. I also thank Tom Maglio for helping me proofread the paper. Of course all remaining errors are my own.

² On the cognitive component of emotions in Aristotle see Dow's book and the texts he cites on p. 183 n. 1: J. Dow, *Passions and Persuasion in Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Oxford 2015). On emotions in Aristotle also see R.L. Cardullo, 'Attualità di Aristotele? L'ilemorfismo alla base di alcune proposte morali contemporanee' in R.L. Cardullo and G.R. Giardina (eds.), *Percepire apprendere agire. La riflessione filosofica antica sul rapporto tra mente e corpo* (Sankt Augustin 2016) 57-81. On the differences between the practical sphere and the theoretical sphere in Aristotle see R.L. Cardullo, 'Aristotele filosofo della complessità? Attualità della filosofia pratica', *Complessità* 2014-2015.

epistemological parts of his works,³ when emotions are explored, it is from an *ethical* point of view, as a factor to consider when choosing the right course of action. This does not mean, however, that Alexander's statements on the cognitive component of emotions should be ignored. Despite not being a central point of Alexander's works, these statements help us understand that he had his own theory about this subject. It can be beneficial to wonder which cognitive functions are required for each emotion to arise according to Alexander. I will try to argue that there is at least one emotion - *aidōs* - that can exist only by virtue of the activity of the rational soul. The analysis of what Alexander says about either emotions in general, or the specific emotions that are not *aidōs* (such as anger, satisfaction, love, etc.) is therefore excluded from this paper, nor will any remarks be made about all the features of emotions that are not their cognitive component. For example, I will not discuss how, according to Alexander, the virtuous man manages emotions. It should also be pointed out that I have examined the complete works attributed to Alexander that have survived in their original Greek version; this does not mean, however, that the fragments and testimonies that are found in subsequent authors and the works preserved only in Arabic do not deserve attention. Finally, although it would be interesting to compare Alexander's theses both with the theories of previous Peripatetic philosophers and with the ideas of his contemporaries who belong to the schools with which he debates, and particularly to the Stoic and Platonic schools, the restrictions on the size of this paper prevent me from making these comparisons.

Before going further, a clarification is necessary. I will cite some works whose attribution to Alexander is not certain, mainly the *Ethical Problems*, but also the *Supplement to On the Soul*.⁴ However, scholars agree on one fact: with the possible exception of few, even though notable, theses (such as the one about *nous* stated in *On the Intellect*, the second treatise of the *Supplement to On the Soul*), theories that are found in these works reflect Alexander's ideas. It is no coincidence that these writings are often mentioned in the studies on the thought of Alexander. It will suffice to mention three of the most important texts discussing the philosophy of Alexander published in the last thirty years. The first of these texts is the *status quaestionis* on the life and thought of Alexander written by Robert Sharples and published in 1987 in one of the volumes of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*. The English scholar says that the *Ethical Problems* and the *Supplement to On the Soul* «reflect the activity of his

³ On the different levels of knowledge according to Alexander see C. Militello, 'Alessandro di Afrodisia e la gerarchia aristotelica delle conoscenze' in R.L. Cardullo (ed.), *Il libro Alpha della Metafisica di Aristotele tra storiografia e teoria. Atti del Convegno Nazionale. Catania, 16-18 gennaio 2008* (Catania 2009) 211-237.

⁴ On these two works see, among other studies, the recent M. Bonelli (ed.), *Aristotele e Alessandro di Afrodisia (Questioni etiche e Mantissa). Metodo e oggetto dell'etica peripatetica* (Napoli 2015).

[i.e. Alexander's] school». ⁵ It is on this basis that Sharples cites these writings when he sums up Alexander's opinion on the central questions that he faces. ⁶ In the third volume of Paul Moraux's *Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, devoted to Alexander and published posthumously in 2001, the collections of works ascribed to Alexander are studied mostly in the appendix on ethical theories, also written by Sharples. ⁷ Here, Sharples questions the agreement between the theses of the twenty-second treatise of the *Supplement to On the Soul* and the thought of Alexander, ⁸ but on the other hand he sees the twenty-fifth treatise as a systematization of the theories that we find in *On Fate*. ⁹ Sharples also points out the similarities between the twenty-eighth *Ethical Problem* and Alexander's *On Mixture and Increase*. ¹⁰ Moreover, Sharples treats the subject of some of the *Ethical Problems* as an indication that Alexander lectured on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. ¹¹ Finally, in his 2007 book on Alexander's *Essentialisme*, Marwan Rashed often cites the *Supplement to On the Soul*, which he treats as an authentic work. ¹² However, one should not forget Gauthier and Jolif's opinion, which Sharples mentions: the two French scholars, referring to Bruns' and Moraux's theories, state that in the writings gathered in the collections attributed to Alexander, one can find some theses that differ from Alexander's theories or reflect them only superficially. ¹³ Despite this, there has not yet been a criticism of the congruence between the passages from the *Ethical Problems* and the *Supplement to On the Soul* that I will mention with Alexander's ideas. Indeed, I will show the continuity between the theories set forth in these passages and those that are found in the works that are definitely authentic: to cite these passages is therefore a justified action.

⁵ R.W. Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias: Scholasticism and Innovation' in W. Haase (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (ANRW). Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neuen Forschung. II: Principat. 36: Philosophie, Wissenschaften, Technik. 2: Philosophie (Platonismus [Forts.]; Aristotelismus)* (Berlin - New York 1987) 1176-1243, 1189. See *ibid.*, 1195.

⁶ Sharples, 'Alexander of Aphrodisias' (n. 5 above) 1199-1220. Sharples also reminds that in the commentary to *On Sense Perception* Alexander mentions the ninth treatise of the *Supplement to On the Soul* (*ibid.*, 1181).

⁷ R.W. Sharples, 'Schriften und Problemkomplexe zur Ethik' in P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen. III: Alexander von Aphrodisias* (Berlin - New York 2001) 513-616.

⁸ Sharples, 'Schriften und Problemkomplexe zur Ethik' (n. 7 above) 578-580.

⁹ Sharples, 'Schriften und Problemkomplexe zur Ethik' (n. 7 above) 581-582.

¹⁰ Sharples, 'Schriften und Problemkomplexe zur Ethik' (n. 7 above) 610.

¹¹ Sharples, 'Schriften und Problemkomplexe zur Ethik' (n. 7 above) 594. Sharples also conjectures that, when in the commentary on the *Topics* Alexander refers to a commentary of his on a passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he means one of the *Ethical problems* (*ibid.*, 593-594).

¹² M. Rashed, *Essentialisme. Alexandre d'Aphrodise entre logique, philosophie et cosmologie* (Berlin - New York 2007).

¹³ Sharples, 'Schriften und Problemkomplexe zur Ethik' (n. 7 above) 594, n. 559. On the authenticity of the *Supplement to On the Soul* also see C. Militello, 'Il lessico dell'astrazione in Alessandro di Afrodisia', *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana* VII serie volume IX 92 (94) (2013) 302-321, 318-321.

2. *Aidôs* and *logos* in the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics*

In the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics*, Alexander argues that at least one emotion arises from reasoning.¹⁴ Here, Alexander comments on Aristotle's assertion that *aischynê* is in the rational soul (*en tōi logistikōi*). The *topos* explained by Aristotle in this passage is that one cannot assign a genus to a species if what is assigned as the genus does not reside in the same thing in which the species resides. For example, you can *not* reject the assertion that colour is the genus of white on account of this *topos*, as both colour and white reside in the same subject. On the other hand, this *topos* does allow one to refute the attribution of fear (*phobos*) as genus of *aischynê*, because while the latter has the rational soul as its seat, fear is in the spirited soul (*en tōi thymoeidei*).¹⁵

I have not translated the word *aischynê*. In order to understand its meaning, an overview, albeit quick and without any claim to be complete, of the history of its use and of the different interpretations that scholars have proposed is needed; I will refer especially to Christina Tarnopolsky's *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants*, in which a concise but comprehensive *status quaestionis* is provided. According to Kurt Riezler and Thomas Scheff *aischynê* means shame in a negative sense as a feeling that one feels towards those who lose the respect of their peers. Of course, this feeling is directed primarily at yourself when you are devoid of honor. David Konstan thinks instead that *aischynê* is the general feeling of repugnance for your own reprehensible actions, be they already completed or just planned.¹⁶ In any case, it bears repeating that *aischynê* belongs to the same family as *aischos*, "disgrace". This is why, when in the sixth century BC *aischynê* appears for the first time in Greek literature – more precisely, in Theognis – *aischynê* means "disgrace"; between the fifth and fourth century, however, it comes to mean deference to other human beings.¹⁷ As for the meaning of the word among philosophers, one can mention at least Tarnopolsky's results. She, by focusing on the references to *aischynê* in the *Gorgias*, shows how in the dialogue this word is attributed, in turn, different meanings and argues that Plato depicts the condemnation of *aischynê* as a typical element of tyrannical regimes: as a matter of fact a «respectful» form of mutual *aischynê* is necessary to reach truly collective deliberations.¹⁸ Aristotle, on the other hand, defines *aischynê* as

¹⁴ On Alexander's commentary on the fourth book of the *Topics* see C. Militello, *Dialettica, genere e anima nel commento di Alessandro di Afrodisia al quarto libro dei Topici di Aristotele. Introduzione, saggi di commento, traduzione e note* (in press). On the commentary on the *Topics* as a source for Alexander's psychological theories see C. Militello, 'L'inseparabilità dell'anima dal corpo in Alessandro di Afrodisia (De anima e in Top.)' in Cardullo and Giardina (n. 2 above) 123-142.

¹⁵ Arist. *Top.* IV, 5, 126a, ll. 3-13. Unless otherwise stated, the editions that have been used are those collected in the TLG-E.

¹⁶ C.H. Tarnopolsky, *Prudes, Perverts, and Tyrants. Plato's Gorgias and the Politics of Shame* (Princeton - Oxford 2010) 11.

¹⁷ Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above) 12.

¹⁸ Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above).

«a kind of pain or distress (λύπη τις ἢ ταραχή) with respect to those evils, be they past or present or future, which seem to lead to bad reputation (εἰς ἀδοξίαν)».¹⁹ Douglas Cairns notes that this definition, which we find in *Rhetoric* II, meets the criteria to describe emotions laid down by Aristotle in *On the Soul* I, 1: each *pathos* should in fact be defined as a bodily change, but at the same time one should also refer to its efficient and final cause. The Scottish scholar is among the proponents of the thesis that in Aristotle emotions are always preceded by the activity of opinion, and according to Cairns this is also true of *aischynê*, which one cannot feel without having beliefs regarding both an objectionable act and the people in front of which one is ashamed.²⁰ *Aischynê*, at least in Aristotle and the Aristotelians, can be translated as “shame” meant as “distress because of the negative opinion of your peers for your actions” (rather than as awareness of your error based on your inner life). However, I would rather not translate this word in this paper, because I do not want to repeat a long paraphrase every time.

In the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics*, Alexander questions Aristotle’s assertion that *aischynê* is in the rational soul, because *aischynê* is an emotion, and emotions are not located in the rational soul, but rather in the emotional one (*en tōi pathêtikōi*).²¹ Although this is the only reference to *aischynê* in the works of Alexander and his school, the claim that this emotion, like the others, is not in the rational soul is consistent with what is said in the fourth treatise of the *Supplement to On the Soul*. The first reasoning mentioned in this text to prove that the soul is composed of many faculties and not by just one of them is because sometimes there is a conflict between reason (the word used here is *logos*) and emotions (*pathê*), where the former or the latter prevails, depending on one’s character: since the same faculty cannot both win and lose at the same time, it follows that there are two faculties in conflict, and accordingly that the soul includes a plurality of *dynameis*.²² One can find the same reasoning, although without explicit reference to reason and emotions, in Alexander’s *On the Soul*: as a matter of fact here the philosopher states that both in those with self-control and in those without it there is a conflict among different faculties,²³ which proves that the soul cannot be seen as an absolute unity.²⁴ This reasoning, as

¹⁹ Arist. *Rh.* II, 6, 1383b, ll. 12-14. All translations from Greek are my own.

²⁰ D.L. Cairns, *Aidōs. The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford 1993) 393-397.

²¹ Alex. Aphr. in *Top.* IV, 5, p. 347, ll. 12-13. Alexander is probably thinking of a passage such as Arist. *Pol.* I, 5, 1254b, ll. 6-9, where Aristotle says that the emotional part (*to pathêtikon morion*) of the soul must be subjected to intellect and reason. I thank Professor Giovanna Giardina for soliciting this remark.

²² Alex. Aphr. *Mantissa* 4, p. 118, ll. 6-9.

²³ Of course the difference between *enkrateis* and *akrateis* is that in the former reason prevails, while in the latter emotions have the upper hand.

²⁴ Alex. Aphr. *de An.* p. 27, ll. 4-8.

Sharples explains, challenges Chrysippus' concept of self-control; according to the Stoic philosopher, self-control is not to be interpreted as a conflict between reason and emotions, because emotions are nothing more than rational judgments (though they are incorrect judgments).²⁵ So, not only in the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics*, but also in other works, Alexander or his students state that the seat of emotions is different from the seat of reason.

In the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics*, Alexander does not just emphasize that the Aristotelian assertion (that *aischynê* is in the rational soul) is problematic, because the commentator also notices that, if one wants to apply to *aischynê* and fear the *topos* about genus and species being in the same thing, one could place *aischynê* in the spirited soul (*en tōi epithymêtikōi*).²⁶ It is clear that the idea that *aischynê* resides in the rational soul does not convince the commentator, who seeks an alternative solution to the problem of applying the *topos* about the natural seat of genus and species to the fear-shame pair. However, just stating that the seat of *aischynê* is the emotional soul, or at most the appetitive one, would mean criticizing Aristotle, who said that *aischynê* is in the rational soul. To avoid contradicting Aristotle's assertion, Alexander has to justify it. To this end, the commentator gives two "favorable" interpretations of Aristotle's statement: either Aristotle expressed himself loosely, as common men do (which is appropriate in the case of a dialectical reasoning), or, talking about *aischynê*, he meant a similar psychological state, *aidôs*.²⁷

The meaning of *aidôs* is not much different from the meaning of *aischynê*, so that both of these words are often translated into modern languages as the same noun ("shame" in English, "vergogna" in Italian, etc.),²⁸ but, as is evident from Alexander's reasoning, the two terms do not necessarily share the same meaning. It is therefore advisable to provide for *aidôs*, too, a brief overview of some key moments in the history of the word, as well as some opinions regarding its meaning, and in particular regarding the differences between its meaning and the meaning of *aischynê*; in this case as well, one can refer to what Tarnopolsky wrote. While Douglas Cairns, Bernard Williams and Paul Nieuwenberg think that, at least in the classical age, *aidôs* and *aischynê* are used almost interchangeably, other authors try to identify the differences between the meanings of the two words. For example, Riezler and Scheff contrast *aidôs* with *aischynê* because, while the latter means the feeling of dishonour, the former expresses the positive meaning of shame as modesty regarding your own actions and respect for those who are worthy of honour. On the other hand, Konstan distinguishes the two emotions according to their timing because he thinks that *aidôs*,

²⁵ R.W. Sharples (trans.), *Alexander of Aphrodisias. Supplement to On the soul* (London 2004) 55.

²⁶ Alex. Aphr. in Top. IV, 5, p. 347, ll. 15-16.

²⁷ Alex. Aphr. in Top. IV, 5, p. 347, ll. 13-14.

²⁸ For the literature about the differences between *aischynê* and *aidôs* see Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above) 11, n. 42.

as opposed to *aischynê*, only refers to the feeling that prevents from carrying out an action by showing the dishonour that would result from acting in that way.²⁹ Tarnopolsky notes for her part that the verb corresponding to *aischynê* (i.e. *aischynô*) is transitive and so one can *aischynein* another person, that is, dishonour them or despise them. However, the verb that derives from *aidôs*, that is, *aideomai*, does not take the accusative when it is used in the sense of “feeling shame”: in this sense *aideomai* refers only to the subject itself (inversely, when it means “to respect”, *aideomai* takes the accusative). Thus *aischynê* is more suitable when describing one criticizing another person, while the word *aidôs*, referring to a more introspective feeling, is more appropriate when one shows modesty. According to Tarnopolsky, these differences between the two words remain until the classical age.³⁰ In any case, Tarnopolsky points out that *aidôs* can already be found in the Homeric poems, where it means respect for someone else, whether it be a god or a human being.³¹ In the *Iliad*, however, *aidôs* also represents fear regarding the opinion that people may have of your actions. Tarnopolsky goes on to note that Plato often uses *aidôs* and *aischynê* in place of one another: evidently for Plato the two words have the same meaning.³² Having said that, *aidôs* has a key role in human progress as told by Protagoras in the eponymous dialogue. In order to prevent human beings from killing each other, Zeus gave them *dikê* and *aidôs*, that is, respectively, sense of justice and sense of decency, which constitute political virtue. As Robert Hall highlights, here *aidôs* means respect for the people for whom you have a responsibility. The myth suggests that *aidôs* has an intermediate status between the innate features of human beings and the customs and laws that distinguish a given civilization from the others: as a matter of fact, *aidôs* is universal, like the innate qualities and unlike customs; but, like customs and unlike innate qualities, it has not always been present in human history. Although the *ability* to feel *aidôs* is part of human nature, *aidôs* itself is not; rather, it has been given to mankind at a certain point in time.³³

Aristotle speaks of *aidôs* mostly in book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There he defines it as «a kind of fear of bad reputation» (φόβος τις ἄδοξιας).³⁴ One may notice that this definition justifies Alexander’s statement that in book 4 of the *Topics* Aristotle speaks of fear as possible genus of *aidôs*, not of *aischynê*, because the latter has no direct links with fear. That said, *aidôs* is undoubtedly defined by Aristotle in similar terms to *aischynê*, about which he also says that it

²⁹ Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above) 11.

³⁰ Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above) 12-13.

³¹ Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above) 11-12.

³² Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above) 11.

³³ R.W. Hall, *Plato* (London 1981) 15-19.

³⁴ Arist. *EN* IV, 9, 1128b, ll. 11-12 (I follow the division of the *Nicomachean Ethics* into chapters that has been proposed by its editor, Bywater).

is a negative feeling due to bad reputation; so, it is natural to wonder whether for Aristotle the two words actually have different meanings. One should mention Konstan's opinion about this subject. He thinks that for Aristotle, *aidôs* is the specific emotion that causes restraint out of fear for the repercussions of an action, while *aischynê* means not only this but also shame due to a past action.³⁵ Cairns takes the view that, at least in the chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* devoted to *aidôs*, *aischynê* is for Aristotle just shame for an act already done. On the other hand, Cairns, too, argues that if treated as an emotion, *aidôs* is here to be understood as the fear of doing something dishonourable.³⁶ However, according to Cairns, Aristotle uses the word *aidôs* to mean not only an *emotion* actually felt, but also the *disposition* to feel such an emotion and even the *character* of the people in which this disposition is stronger;³⁷ when *aidôs* is used in the latter two meanings, it also includes the inclination to feel *aischynê* for acts that have already been done.³⁸ Cairns thinks that *aidôs* as a disposition results from an inner voice that rejects what is morally wrong. *Aidôs* is not fear of what others might think if one does certain acts, but rather rejection of those acts on the basis of a moral judgment. In this sense, *aidôs* is preparatory to actual virtue, although it is not a virtue. Since *aidôs* is not a virtue, neither it can be a habit (*hexis*), because each habit is for Aristotle either a virtue or a vice;³⁹ according to Cairns, although for this reason Aristotle has to deny the status of habit to *aidôs*, nevertheless *aidôs* has all the features of Aristotelian *hexeis*.⁴⁰ Describing *aidôs* as a kind of conscience based on the moral values that you have made your own, Aristotle, according to Cairns, draws from the popular view of this psychological state – a view that had already been elaborated in philosophical form by both Democritus and Plato.⁴¹ In summary, in an Aristotelian context *aidôs* could be translated as “modesty”, because this English word means both the emotion that makes us avoid acts that are morally reprehensible and the disposition to feel such emotion. However, as in the case of *aischynê*, the English word has other meanings, that cannot be found in *aidôs* as it is understood by Aristotle and the Aristotelians. For example, modesty is often used with reference to the way one dresses, which is not true of Aristotelian *aidôs*. Accordingly, from here on I will use the word *aidôs* without translating it.

As it has been seen, Alexander suggested two explanations for the Aristotelian statement that *aischynê* is in the rational soul. According to the commentator, on the one hand one may think that Aristotle has expressed himself in a “di-

³⁵ Tarnopolsky (n. 16 above) 11, n. 46.

³⁶ Cairns (n. 20 above) 414-419.

³⁷ Cairns (n. 20 above) 397-398.

³⁸ Cairns (n. 20 above) 414-419.

³⁹ On virtue as a habit see R.L. Cardullo, *Aristotele. Profilo introduttivo* (Roma 2007) 115-116.

⁴⁰ Cairns (n. 20 above) 398-430.

⁴¹ Cairns (n. 20 above) 430-431.

alectical” and therefore inaccurate way, while on the other hand, one can also imagine that although Aristotle mentioned *aischynê*, he was thinking about a similar emotion, *aidôs*. The latter hypothesis is interesting in the context of the study of the cognitive component of emotions because Alexander explains it by saying that *aidôs* does not exist without reason (*logos*).⁴² It should be noted that Alexander did not have to make this statement about the connection between *aidôs* and reason to avoid contradicting Aristotle. In fact, Alexander had already achieved this result by conjecturing that Aristotle had expressed himself loosely because of the dialectical context of the example. Therefore, it cannot be said that the reason Alexander detects a link between *aidôs* and *logos* is that he is forced to do so in order not to disprove Aristotle. However, even if Alexander’s only motivation were that he wanted to explain a statement by Aristotle this would not mean that the commentator does not personally subscribe to the theory that he proposes. As a matter of fact, the entirety of Alexander’s thought sprouted from the need to explain and systematize Aristotle’s words. However, as we have just seen, in the present case Alexander has already solved the problem of justifying the Aristotelian assertion. This shows that Alexander thinks that the thesis of the connection between *aidôs* and reason is true.

In a previous passage of the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics*, Alexander states that *aidôs* is not a habit, but rather an emotion.⁴³ Here Alexander draws from what Aristotle says in book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: *aidôs* «looks more like an emotion (πάθει) than a habit (ἔξει)».⁴⁴ Therefore, *aidôs* is an emotion that does not arise unless it is also in the presence of reason.

Two open questions remain. First, one could wonder why Alexander does not apply to *aidôs* the reasoning already cited for *aischynê*. If *aidôs* is an emotion, should it not have the emotional soul as its seat? The second question is: why is there no *aidôs* without reason? To answer these two questions, one can turn to another work attributed to Alexander: *aidôs* is in fact the subject of the twenty-first *Ethical Problem*.⁴⁵

3. *Aidôs* as habit and emotion in *Ethical Problems* 21

As for the issue of the alleged impossibility of placing an emotion in the rational soul, it can be repeated that the author of the twenty-first *Problem* concludes that *aidôs* is not an emotion without further qualification (*aplôs*), but ra-

⁴² Alex. Aphr. in *Top.* IV, 5, p. 347, ll. 14-15.

⁴³ Alex. Aphr. in *Top.* IV, 2, p. 308, l. 28 - p. 309, l. 1.

⁴⁴ Arist. *EN* IV, 9, 1128b, l. 11.

⁴⁵ On this text see A. Madigan, ‘Alexander of Aphrodisias: the Book of Ethical Problems’ in Haase (n. 5 above) 1260-1279, 1266-1267. The *Ethical Problems* are edited in I. Bruns (ed.), *Alexandri Aphrodisiensis praeter commentaria scripta minora. Quaestiones. De fato. De mixtione* (Berolini 1892) 117-163. Sharples suggests some revisions to Bruns’ text (R.W. Sharples [trans.], *Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ethical Problems* [London 1990] 84-88).

ther a habit (*hexis*) and disposition (*diathesis*) followed by an emotion.⁴⁶ As a matter of fact, *aidôs* is not just the fear of having a bad reputation;⁴⁷ if it were only that, without further qualification, it would be just a simple emotion. Rather, *aidôs* is a hostility to shameful things (*allotriotês pros ta aischra*), and those who have this habit (*oi houtôs echontes*) are afraid of the bad reputation that derives from shameful things.⁴⁸ *Aidôs* is therefore primarily the habit to hate vile deeds, which brings disgrace, and only as a consequence of this it is the emotion of being afraid of reproach.

One might at this point be wondering how the author of the *Problem* can say that *aidôs* is a habit given that this is explicitly denied by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*⁴⁹ (and, in his wake, by Alexander in the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics*); we have also seen that it looks like habits only include virtues and vices (at least, this is what Cairns thinks),⁵⁰ and *aidôs* does not fall in any of these two genera. Regarding the latter part of the question, one should note that in the *Ethical Problems* it is argued that there is an intermediate state (*hexis metaxy*) between virtue and vice. This theory is explained in the third *Problem*. The fact that Aristotle denied that *aidôs* is a habit remains, though. A possible solution can be derived from the analysis of another issue about *Problem 21*. As a matter of fact, in this text, while on one hand it is concluded that *aidôs* is not simply an emotion, on the other hand *aidôs* is described just like an emotion:

And if one should be afraid of this bad reputation, which stems not less from false accusations than by real acts, this emotion (*pathos*) is not even foreign to good people and to those who are getting on in years, not even according to <Aristotle> himself, if indeed one must be careful with bad reputation and afraid of it, and this is *aidôs*.⁵¹

In the notes to his translation of this passage, Sharples explains why the *pathos* that is mentioned here can only be *aidôs*. On the basis of an analysis of the Greek text, Sharples points out that the reasoning flows as follows: if everyone should be afraid of bad reputation, and if fear of bad reputation is *aidôs*, then everyone should feel «this emotion», that is, precisely *aidôs*.⁵² The reason why

⁴⁶ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Êthika problêmata* 21, p. 142, ll. 14-16.

⁴⁷ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Êthika problêmata* 21, p. 142, l. 11.

⁴⁸ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Êthika problêmata* 21, p. 142, ll. 11-13.

⁴⁹ More precisely, as we have seen, Aristotle says that *aidôs* seems to be an emotion more than a habit.

⁵⁰ In fact, there is at least one passage – not mentioned by Cairns when he deals with the relationship between habits, virtues and vices (Cairns [n. 20 above] 398-401) – in which Aristotle speaks of habits that are intermediate between virtues and vices, being neither *aretai* nor *kakiai*: it is Arist. *Top.* IV, 3, 123b, ll. 14-17; ll. 20-23. Cairns himself, however, is aware of some problems of his thesis that for Aristotle each habit is either a virtue or a vice, because *enkrateia* and *akrasia* are *hexeis*, but they are neither *aretai* nor *kakiai* (Cairns [n. 20 above] 399-400, n. 174).

⁵¹ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Êthika problêmata* 21, p. 142, ll. 4-8.

⁵² Sharples, *Alexander of Aphrodisias, Ethical Problems* (n. 45 above) 55, n. 179.

in this passage the author of *Problem 21* speaks of *aidôs* as an emotion is that, as we have seen, this is the opinion of Aristotle in the passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics* referred in the *Problem*. Therefore, the real contradiction is between what Aristotle says – i.e. that *aidôs* is an emotion – and the opinion of the author of *Problem 21*, who thinks that one cannot say that *aidôs* is just a *pathos*. This second point of friction with Aristotle is linked to the one from which our investigation began: Aristotle's assertion that *aidôs* is an emotion and not a habit is contradicted by the author of *Problem 21* both when he says that *aidôs* is primarily a habit and when he denies that *aidôs* can be described as a simple emotion.

The way in which the author of *Problem 21* avoids contradicting the Aristotelian statement that *aidôs* is an emotion is clear if one peruses the words this philosopher uses. Having to define *aidôs* more precisely, he says that it is an emotion, but not an emotion *aplôs*; rather, it is an emotion that follows a habit and a disposition. So the author of *Problem 21* solves the contradiction between what Aristotle says and his own opinion through the concept of *aplôs*. More generally, the interpretative strategy of this commentator does not makes him contradict Aristotle regarding the attributes of a given genus, because he rather distinguishes the different species within that genus, in order to be able to conclude that what Aristotle says is true for a species, although not for the other. Specifically, the commentator has to reconcile the Aristotelian assertion that *aidôs* is felt by young people and not by the elderly,⁵³ and his own experience that advancing age does not suppress the feeling of modesty.⁵⁴ The solution the author of *Problem 21* suggests is exactly a distinction between two kinds of elderly people: what Aristotle says applies to those old people who usually do shameful deeds, and thus have become accustomed to them and to the dishonor that results from them; but there are also old people who have abstained from shameful things, and they feel shame more strongly than is possible for a young person.⁵⁵ The distinction of different species within a genus, in turn, seems a special case of the method of adding clarifications to what Aristotle said in order not to contradict him directly. As a matter of fact, the author of *Problem 21* also states that the people who act less shamefully feel *aidôs* more strongly, which is just the opposite of what Aristotle maintains: the latter explains that, since *aidôs* is fear of gaining that kind of bad reputation that comes from having engaged in shameful actions, those who abstain from such actions cannot feel *aidôs*.⁵⁶ The author of *Problem 21* accepts the definition of *aidôs* given by Aristotle, but adds that acquiring a bad reputation may also result from actions that, while not bad, may be the subject of suspicion and rumours: this is why even those who do not

⁵³ Arist. *EN* IV, 9, 1128b, ll. 15-21. Alex. Aphr. (?) *Éthika problēmata* 21, p. 141, ll. 17-20.

⁵⁴ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Éthika problēmata* 21, p. 141, ll. 25-27.

⁵⁵ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Éthika problēmata* 21, p. 142, ll. 16-21.

⁵⁶ Arist. *EN* IV, 9, 1128b, ll. 21-34.

act indecently can feel modesty.⁵⁷ Aristotle's assertion about good people and *aidôs* is in fact contradicted, but the reason given to demonstrate the link between virtue and *aidôs* is introduced not as a different thesis from Aristotle's, but rather as a clarification of it. It is very significant in this regard that the author of the *Problem* points out that «not even according to <Aristotle> himself»⁵⁸ *aidôs* is alien to those who do not act shamefully.

The author of *Problem* 21 reconciles his own position, in which *aidôs* is denied the status of emotion because it is a disposition, with the Aristotelian assertion that *aidôs* is not a habit but rather an emotion by saying that *aidôs* is an emotion, but not an emotion *aplôs*. It can be assumed that the commentator solves in the same way the other side of the contradiction, that is, the contrast between his own definition of *aidôs* as a habit and Aristotle's denial that *aidôs* is a *hexis*: therefore, it is possible that the author of *Problem* 21 considers *aidôs* a habit, but not just a habit – rather a habit followed by an emotion.

Being a habit – or at least an emotion that follows a habit –, *aidôs* can be in a part of the soul that is not the emotional one: the problem implied by the passages about *aidôs* in the commentary on book 4 of the *Topics* is solved. One may also notice that, being not only an emotion but also a habit, *aidôs* is different from *aischynê*, which Alexander only treats as an emotion. It therefore seems that Alexander anticipates Cairns's theses: while *aischynê* is just an emotion, *aidôs* is also the disposition to feel an emotion.

4. *Aidôs* and *logos* in *Ethical Problems* 21

As for the role of *logos* in the genesis of *aidôs*, it should be noted that in the description of *aidôs* in the twenty-first *Problem* there are four elements that link this habit/emotion to the rational soul. [1] The first of these elements is that, as we have seen, the author of *Problem* 21 says that those who have *aidôs* are afraid of *adoxia*, that is, having a bad reputation. More precisely, *aidôs* is fear of the kind of bad reputation that can result not only from evil deeds that the subject has done or is about to do, but also from the deeds *dokousin*, that is, that seemingly should be attributed to him.⁵⁹ Conversely, according to the author of the *Problem* the reason Aristotle says that the elderly have no *aidôs* it is that those who are older tend to avoid things that *dokei* (seem) to be causes of bad reputation.⁶⁰ Now, *adoxia* seems to refer to *doxa*, i.e. opinion, because there is *adoxia* when people have a negative *doxa* of someone, and in any case the use of the verb *dokeô* shows that there in some cases bad reputation is due to acts that seem bad and ascribable to the subject after a *doxa* has shaped. If bad repu-

⁵⁷ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Éthika problēmata* 21, p. 141, l. 32 - p. 142, l. 8.

⁵⁸ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Éthika problēmata* 21, p. 142, l. 7.

⁵⁹ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Éthika problēmata* 21, p. 141, ll. 20-22.

⁶⁰ Alex. Aphr. (?) *Éthika problēmata* 21, p. 141, ll. 23-25.