To say that Euripides was influenced by the thought of the sophists is a truism. An example of such influence is his view that the content of moral terms is not constant and absolute, but shifting and relative. One such term is the complex word αἰδός, and explicit statements about its force attest to the poet's view that the concept is of an ambivalent and ambiguous nature. The aim of the present article is to draw attention to a technique exploiting this view in a dramatic portrayal of various manifestations of the concept. The particular force of this technique is to stress a contrast between objective, externally motivated and subjective, inwardly centred notions of αἰδός and its cognates. A rough outline of the development of these notions will provide the framework for Euripides' usage.

Αἰδός is an inhibitory emotion; aroused in the face of some awesome power, it restrains man from self-assertive action. In Homer the power is first and foremost the opinion of others, having so uncanny an effect that affronting public opinion amounts to impudence. Accordingly, in its most significant meaning, αἰδός denotes 'respect'. Other external situations impelling the Homeric hero to experience the emotion are the entreaties of suppliants and ἔρως, because they are protected by the gods, as well as the claims of parents and elders, because they command a superior status in society. In such contexts, too, αἰδός refers to 'respect', or rather, to 'reverence'. When the epic poet applies the word to the chaste behaviour conventionally expected of women, it denotes 'modesty'. The development of the concept from the time of Homer to the fifth century accords with a general trend in the history of Greek ethics. Moral terms continue to have their traditional references in the latter age, but they increasingly tend to describe the inwardly centred attitude of an individual, rather than to define his position in society, or his relation to divine powers. The development of αἰδός in this respect is firmly attested by a reflexive use of the concept in a fragment attributed to Democritus. The author of the fragment, after developing the thought that αἰδός for oneself should take precedence over αἰδός for others, affirms: ἐκαντόν μᾶλλον αἰδεῖσθαι. The reflexive use of αἰδεῖσθαι shows that the agent experiencing the notion has also become the object of the force. 'Let one have shame especially for oneself' is the correct rendition of the affirmation, since the fragment continues: καὶ τοῦτον νόμον τῇ νυξὶ καθεστάναι, ὃς τι μηδὲν ποιεῖν ἀπεπηρήσει. This use of αἰδός marks a decisive stage in the history of the concept in so far as it provides evidence of an attempt to find restraint in an autonomous inner ethic, rather than in an external constraint of public opinion. Αἰδός has thereby come to refer to the curbing influence of conscience.
In the work of Euripides conventional meanings of *aiōdoi* appear in numerous passages; evidence of the reflexive use of the notion, by contrast, is scant. It has been found in passages bearing witness to a widening of the scope of the emotion so as to embrace the reflexive force of both an introspective shame for a blameworthy attitude and a retrospective shame for reprehensible action. An example of the anticipatory effect of an inwardly seated *aiōdoi*, required by the ‘Democritean’ ethic to forestall wrongful action, appears to be lacking. However, it is possible to supplement scholarly conclusions regarding the reflexive use of *aiōdoi* by studying a technique of juxtaposition and contrast. The poet’s intention in employing this technique is to highlight the difference between traditional notions, motivated by external sanctions, and more advanced concepts, grounded in inner ethical attitudes.

The first example selected to illustrate the technique is taken from the *Iphigenia in Aulis*. It is a stichomythia portraying the meeting between Clytaemestra and Achilles (vv. 819–854). The context is as follows. Agamemnon, intending to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia, has summoned her from Argos, pretending to his wife Clytaemestra that he wishes to give Iphigenia in marriage to Achilles. During the stichomythia Clytaemestra discovers that the wedding is a pure fabrication. This discovery is the object of the scene; an object achieved by Clytaemestra’s sudden realization that Achilles is totally unaware of the supposed marriage. The stichomythia develops in two sections (respectively vv. 819–830 and 831–854), each of which concludes with one of the actors feeling impelled by *aiōdoi* to depart from the scene. In the first section Achilles is overcome by this emotion when Clytaemestra appears on the stage in order to introduce herself to her ‘son-in-law’. When he sees Clytaemestra approaching him, Achilles exclaims:

*Aīrho~. τήνδε τίνα λέωσις πώτερ γυναῖκα, μορφήν εύπρεπής κεκτημένην;*  
(v. 821f.)

Clytaemestra solemnly reveals her identity, but Achilles, on the point of departure, concludes the first section with this motivation:

*αἰσχρόν δὲ μοι γυναῖκι συμβάλλειν λόγους.*  
(v. 830)

At the close of the second section it is Clytaemestra’s turn to feel shame. Having learnt that Achilles had never intended to marry her daughter she says:

*ἀλλ’ ἦ πέπονθα δεινά; μνηστεύο γάμους ὦκ δνας, ὦς εἰςαίνει αἰδοῦμαι τάδε.*  
(v. 847f.)

Achilles utters some words of comfort, but now Clytaemestra is determined to quit the scene:

*χαίρ’ οὐ γάρ ὅρθος δημασίν κε ἐκεῖ ἔσορῶ, ψυχῆς γενομένη καὶ παθοῦσαν ἀνάξια.*  
(v. 851f.)

The two situations evoking *aiōdoi* are strikingly accentuated by means of parallelism. Two other examples of *aiōdoi* appear in the second section (in vv. 6
833 and 839), but without emphasis; the examples quoted, by contrast, are emphasised in order to bring out their analogous nature. Yet they are also contrasted with each other. The αἰδώς of Achilles is evoked by an external situation which is purely conventional; its basis is the prohibition against the appearance in public of women with strange men. The situation portrayed is particularly offensive to public taste, since Clytemnestra is attractive and talks openly to a stranger. Clytemnestra, however, feels no shame at what people will see and say; it is because she has ‘become a liar’ that she can no longer face Achilles. She feels the inhibiting force of an inner shame. Her reaction does not depend on intention inasmuch as, judged objectively, she has become the victim of an untruth. Still, the formulation ψευδής γενομένη reveals a subjective feeling of inner shame for having actually told a lie, thereby implying the acceptance of moral responsibility. Moreover, that the inner basis of Clytemnestra’s αἰδώς is offset by Achilles’ conventional ‘shame’, is not accidental. But what is needed to relate such retrospective shame more closely to the precept of autonomous responsibility is an example of αἰδώς inspired by an intentional wrong.

Such an example may be found at the start of the action of the Orestes where the poet employs the same technique of juxtaposition and contrast. The action of the drama starts after Orestes has committed matricide with the help of his sister Electra. In the Prologue we meet Electra nursing her brother, who has been undergoing violent attacks by the Furies. Helen appears on the stage; she requests Electra to take libation offerings to the grave of her sister Clytemnestra. Electra refuses and persuades Helen to send her daughter Hermione instead. The reasons for Helen’s reluctance to go to the grave, as well as for Electra’s refusal to do so, constitute contrasted motivations for αἰδώς. These are represented in the following stichomythia.

**Helen**

σοὶ δ' οὔχι θεμιτὸν πρὸς φίλων στείχειν τάφον;

δείξαι γάρ Ἀργείουσι σῶμι ἀσχύνομαι.

οὐ γε φρόνεις εὖ, τότε λιπόσθ' ἄσχρος δόμους.

**Electra**

ὀρθῶς ἔλεξας, οὐ φίλως δ' ἔμοι λέγεις.

αἰδώς δὲ δὴ τὶς σ' ἐξ Ἄκηναίους ἔχεις,

ἐκείνη φιλάτας τῶν ἵππ' Ἤλαιον νεκρῶν.

δεινὸν γὰρ Ἀργείς τ' ἀναβολά διὰ στῶμα.

ἔχει νῦν χάριν μοί τὸν φόβον λύσασα δός.

οὐκ ἄν δυνάμην μητρὸς ἐορθέν τάφον.

**(vv. 97–105)**

The passage betrays something of the delight the sophists took in defining and contrasting concepts. It also bears witness to the consummate skill with which the dramatist employs the technique set out above. The concept ‘shame’ is first introduced into the dramatic situation when Helen professes a distaste for appearing in public in Argos (v. 98). Her professed attitude imitates the female modesty demanded by the convention discussed with reference to the previous passage. This is attested by Electra’s reproach in the third verse of the quotation.
suggests that Helen’s present compliance with the convention of remaining indoors is unexpected in view of her earlier conduct when she shamelessly left home for the sake of adulterous love. But Electra, unconvinced by her aunt’s sudden display of virtue, asks Helen to define the nature of her αἰδώς vis-à-vis the Mycenaean populace (v.101). Now Helen’s restraint is unmasked as fear of an external threat, viz. of retaliation at the hands of the Argives (v.102). In the final verse of the quotation, by contrast, we discover an inner αἰδώς manifesting itself within Electra. Set in relief by the externally motivated αἰδώς of Helen, which has been exposed as an externally motivated fear, it is an inner horror forbidding Electra to look upon the grave of the mother in whose murder she shared with her brother.29

In the final example illustrating the poet’s technique, attention is drawn to a use of αἰδώς which is not retrospective, but anticipatory. It occurs in the ἀγάνων of the Alcestis, a debate on the question whether Admetus could expect his father Pheres to die in his stead. In this play the technique of juxtaposition and contrast is not employed in a stichomythia, but in two successive scenes. At the close of the first scene αἰδώς is stressed as ‘respect’ for ἔνων, a respect which moved Admetus to entertain Heracles in his palace, despite the death of Alcestis, the king’s wife who sacrificed her life for him. The Chorus reflect on Admetus’ φιλοξενία as follows:

τὸ γὰρ εὐγένεις
ἐκφέρεται πρὸς αἰδώ.
ἐν τοῖς ἁγαθοῖσιν δὲ πάντ᾽ ἔνωσιν σοφίας. ἁγαμαί... 30

(v. 600ff.)

Αἰδώς here refers to the traditional ‘awe’ aroused by ἀγάνων and ἔνωοι, since they are protected by the gods.31 But when a negative form of αἰδώς is emphasized, its connotations are new. After the Chorus have extravagantly praised Admetus’ noble conduct in the sphere of social conventions, their enthusiasm is subdued by severe criticism of the king’s conduct when his existence is at stake. Pheres, having denied that he was under an obligation to die for Admetus, delivers the following attack on his son:

ὡς μὴν πολὺν γε τὸν κάτω λογίζομαι
χρόνον, τὸ δὲ χὰν μικρόν, ἀλλ᾽ ὀμοίς χλυκῷ.
σὺ γαῖν ἁναιδός διεμάχου τὸ μὴ θανεῖν,
καὶ ἑαὶ παρελθὼν τὴν πεπρομένην τύχην,
ταῦταν κατακτᾶς... 32

(vv. 692–696a)

The meaning of ἁναιδός in v. 694 requires discussion, since it presupposes knowledge of the events preceding Alcestis’ sacrifice. It modifies διεμάχου, which reminds the audience forcibly of an earlier verse in the Prologue (v. 15) where Apollo related how Admetus, when he was given the opportunity to evade death, approached φιλος after φιλος ‘sounding out’ possible alternatives.33 The word contains a fundamental criticism,34 censuring Admetus’ determined effort to avoid death as ‘shameless’, since he thereby denies others the pleasure which
he himself attaches to life. This is attested by the final words of Pheres' speech:

σίγα νόμιζε δ', εἰ σὺ τήν σαυτοῦ φιλείς
ψυχήν, φιλεῖν ἄπαντας

(vv. 703–704a)

Thus ἀναίδος implies that the pleasure Admetus derived from life should have instilled in him ἁίδος, i.e. an 'inhibition' preventing him from expecting others to die in his stead. Here at last we have a negative form of ἁίδος censuring the absence of the inner restraint demanded by Democritus as the measure defining and limiting the action of man. As in the previous examples, the inner force of ἀναίδος is enhanced by the technique of juxtaposition and contrast. The technique emphasizes the contrast between Admetus' pre-eminent observance of ἁίδος in the context of social conventions and his ἀναίδεια on the existential level.

The technique discussed above shows how Euripides employs a concept to focus attention sharply on different aspects of ἁίδος. By juxtaposing and contrasting two levels of the concept he expounds the view that the emotion is aroused not only by objective, external conventions, but also by a subjective, inner ethic. The distinction without doubt derives from the discussions of the sophists who asserted that terms describing ethical ideas exist only 'by convention', and that their content is relative to the perception of the individual. Yet the view reflected by Euripides' technique transcends the sophistic assertion. The representation of the inwardly motivated shame is given emphasis by the technique; contrasted with traditional notions, it emerges as a more profound manifestation of ἁίδος, whether it be the retrospective shame of a guilty conscience, or the anticipatory shame of a clear conscience. Hence the purpose of the technique is clearly to expose traditional notions as superficial, and in this respect Euripides' view anticipates Democritus and Socrates, whose avowed object it was to find moral order in an inner ethic.

NOTES

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1. See, for example, W.K.C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. III, Cambridge 1969, 43, 48, 127ff. The influence was of course vastly overstated at the start of the present century, but even H. Lloyd-Jones, who stresses the traditional element of the poet's thought, concedes that 'Euripides sometimes echoes the very tone of the sophists in a way Sophocles is careful to avoid': The Justice of Zeus, Berkeley 1971, 145.

2. Fr. 19 and Ph. v. 499ff. The Euripidean ἵγος, presenting two opposed views of the same subject, also fit the relativistic thought of the sophists.

4. The history of ἀιδός is set out by C.E.F. von Erffa. *Aidos und verwandte Begriffe in ihrer Entwicklung von Homer bis Demokrit*, Philologus, Supplementbd. 30.2, Leipzig 1937. His conclusions on Homer should be read with the articles of W.J. Verdenius, 'ΑΙΔΩΣ bei Homer' *Mnemosyne* 3,12 (1945) 47–60 and M. Scott, 'Aidos and Nemesis in the works of Homer, and their relevance to social or co-operative values', *AClass* 23 (1980) 13–35. The present résumé offers only a convenient summary which is by no means exhaustive; for the wide range of meaning of the notion the reader is referred to the work of von Erffa.


10. A parallel development may be observed in the emergence of σωφίατις. In Euripides, *Or.* (vv. 396, 408, 411f.) the rational conception of a guilty conscience and the mythical view of persecution by the Furies hover in unresolved juxtaposition. On the development of σωφίατις see O. Seel, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Gewissen-Begriffes im altgriechischen Denken* in *Festschrift Franz Dornseiff*, Leipzig 1953, 291–319 with earlier literature quoted by this scholar. Seel proves that the notion had already existed before the classical period, but makes the valid observation that its significance was stressed only as the fifth century tendency to rationalize, secularize and explicitly name inner forces.


12. 'And let this norm guard over the soul, that one might do nothing which is unfit'.

13. See, for example, the following passages where ἀιδός and its cognates are used in traditional meanings: as 'respect' for suppliants or ἱένα (Αἰ. vv. 823, 857; Ἱε. vv. 286, 806; *Heracl.* v. 101; *Hipp.* v. 335; *Med.* v. 326; *I.A.* v. 1246), as 'respect' for parents and elders (Αἰ. v. 658f.; *Andr.* v. 917f.; *Ba.* v. 263ff.), as 'modesty' with reference to women (*Heracl.* v. 43f.; *I.A.* v. 994; *Ph.* v. 1276). See also the use of ἀνωτάτως as 'lack of shame' for a bad reputation: *Αἰ. v. 725f.* Other conventional meanings of ἀιδός and related terms in Euripides have been collected by von Erffa, *op. cit.*, 131–142.

14. See *Heracl.* v. 813f. Where lack of shame towards others is distinguished from an absence of an inwardly motivated shame: ὅταν ὁ τύχας ἀλποθεία μεταφέρει λόγον ἢ ἀνθέος ἄνωθεν διὰ τοῦ στρατηγοῦ ἄνω. 'But he, though the commander, ashamed neither of those who heard the challenges, nor of his own cowardice'. (Reference is to Eurythous' unwillingness to meet Hylus in a duel, after being challenged to do so; λόγον refers to Hylus' challenge. The passage is discussed by von Erffa, *op. cit.*, 142). The inner force of ἀιδός is similarly distinguished from an outwardly directed concern in *Hipp.* v. 772f.: διὰ μόνας συγγένεις κατὰ -/διάστασι πᾶν τ' ἀνθέος ἄνω/ αὐτού μὲν φήμα. 'Overcome by shame at her hateful lot', viz. her incestuous love, 'and choosing instead the fame of good repute'. For the significance of the distinction see Segal, *op. cit.*, 287f.

15. Von Erffa (*op. cit.*, 157) cites *HF.* v. 1199ff.; *Or.* v. 459ff. (see footnote 29 below) and *Hipp.* v. 244 to which Barrett (ad *Hipp.* v. 244) adds *I.T.* v. 713 as examples of such retrospective shame.


17. 'Oh august shamefacedness, what woman do I see here, lovely in appearance?'

18. 'But it is shameful for me to converse with women (in public)'.

19. 'What! Have I been the victim of a terrible trick! I am celebrating a marriage which does not exist, as it seems. I am abashed for this!'

20. 'Farewell! I can no longer with straight eyes look at you; because I have become a liar and have suffered outrage!'


23. ἀιδός is manifest in the eyes (Euripides, fr. 457=fr. 75 in Austin's edition where parallels are cited), often restraining them from meeting the glances of another: Euripides, *Hec.* v. 970ff.
See, for example, Prodicus' discourse in 35.

The use of the verb aorist in verse 98 and the noun άδος in verse 101 shows that the two words and their cognates are interchangeable. They have become synonyms also elsewhere: in Euripides (von Erffa, op. cit., 153ff. and Barrett ad Hipp. v. 244), in Sophocles (von Erffa, op. cit., 120), in Thucydides (Solmsen, op. cit., 422) and in Democritus (compare the use of άδος in Diels/Kranz, 68 B 244 with that of άδος in ibid., 68 B 264).

The verb άδος does not appear in the verse, but the emotion clearly underlies Electra's conduct. As was evident from the passage in the Iphigenia in Auiles, άδος restrains the eyes of a person who avoids the glance of another. The thought is a commonplace (see footnote 23 above), but we need look no further than the text of the Orestes itself for an exact parallel to Electra's reaction. Orestes, espying Clytaemestra's father approaching, says:

'But are you not permitted to approach the grave of kin?'

Hel. 'I am ashamed to show myself to the Argives.'

El. 'Of late indeed have you become right-minded; at that time you shamefully left home.'

Hel. 'You speak truthfully, but in no friendly way to me'.

El. 'But what could this shame be which you have for the Mycenaeans?'

Hel. 'I fear the fathers of those who have died at Troy.'

El. 'You have just cause to fear. You are decried by the tongues of Argos'.

Hel. 'Then grant me this favour and free me from fear'.

El. 'I should not be able to look upon my mother's grave'.

See, for example, Prodicus' discourse in Plato, Prt. 337 a–c.

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δασκλοφιν, Μενελαε. Γυμνάκες ὁδε
στατάχει πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὥσ μισοῦσ σαίδους μί' ἔχειν
ἐς ἐμίσοι' ἐδίδειν τοῖς εἰςφυγαμυνόντος

('I am undone Menelaus! Tyndareus is here approaching us: his glances most of all I am ashamed to meet because of the deed committed'.

τοῦτον ἐξιδρωμενόν, referring to the matricide, is the basis of Orestes' άδος, which is an inner feeling of guilt preventing his eyes from meeting the reproachful glances of Tyndareus, as it prevented Electra from facing the accusing sight of her mother's grave. Schwingel, unaware of the technique of juxtaposition and contrast, maintains that Electra refuses to take the offerings to her mother's grave since she persists in hating Clytaemestra even after the matricide: op. cit., 67.

30. 'For nobility leaves the normal course as far as respect is concerned. But among nobles every kind of wisdom prevails. I am struck with wonder'.

31. V. 604f., following the Chorus' reflections, establishes this: πρὸς δ' ἠμαῖν γυναῖκα καθότου ἡμᾶς / θεοσφή φανα ταῦτα πράξαν '('and in my heart there is confidence that a god-revering man will prosper'). For this traditional 'awe' see footnotes 6 and 13.

32. 'Surely, the time we spend in the Underworld I count as long, and life though short, is sweet' (J.D. Denniston, The Greek Parables, Oxford 1945: γοῦν ἰδα, 451ff.). άναρχειν, characterizing as 'shameless' the contradiction between Admetus' personal behaviour and his expectation from others, forms the basis of Pheres' entire argument, for Admetus' inconsistency is now effectively exploited by his father in self-defence. Pheres refutes his son's charge that he is faint-hearted by proving that Admetus himself has turned out to be a coward: see...
both the contradiction between εἴτ' ὑμὴν ὄψισθεν /ἀέγεις and ὁ κάκοςθ', and that between κατ' ἄνειδείςς φιλοίς and οὐκ ὄν κακός; (vv. 696b—702). Another compound of αἰσχὸς appears earlier in the debate (αἰσχόφρον in v. 659), but not being emphatic, it does not function as a contrast with Ἀδμετος' αἰσχὸς to εἶξον.

36. 'Be quiet! Consider, if you love your own life, everybody loves (his life).'
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