PATHOLOGY OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE:
THE LEGACY OF EURIPIDES’ *ORESTES*

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The *Orestes* is an episode of drama and action, created by Euripides and inserted in the Orestes-myth between the matricide and the departure of the mother-murderer Orestes to be tried in Athens. One of the many innovations in this presentation of the myth is the νόσος of the main character. In the second episodion, Menelaus finds him reduced to a state of debilitated disease and, assuming the role of doctor, inquires about the symptoms (395–400):¹

Me: τι χρῆμα πάσχεις; τίς σ’ ἀπόλλυσιν νόσος; 395
Or: ἡ σύνεσις ὅτι σύνοιδα δεῖν εἰργασμένος 396
Me: πῶς φης; σοφόν τοι τὸ σαφές, οὐ τὸ μὴ σαφές. 397
Or: λύπη μάλιστα γ’ ἢ διαφθείρουσά με— 398
Me: δείνῃ γαρ ἡ θεός, ἀλλ’ ὅμως ἰάσμος. 399
Or: μανία τε, μητρὸς ἀματος τιμωρία. 400

After questioning him briefly on the circumstances in which he fell ill, Menelaus returns to the illness itself (407–411):²

Me: ἐκ φασμάτων δὲ τάδε νοσεῖς ποιὸν ὕπο; 407
Or: ἐδοξὶ ιδεῖν τρεῖς νυκτὶ προσφερεῖς χόρας. 408
Me: οἴδ’ ἃς ἔλεξας· ὄνομάσαι δ’ οὐ βούλομαι. 409
Or: σεμιναί γὰρ. εὐπαίδευσα δ’ ἀποτρέπον λέγειν. 410
Me: αὕτα σε βασκεύουσι συγγενὴ φόνον. 411

It was especially line 396 that captured the attention of both modern scholars and authors in antiquity, and proved to be pivotal in discussions about conscience in antiquity. In addition, the way in which Euripides transforms the traditional view of the Erinyes, has often been regarded as reflecting a significant change in the spiritual development of ancient Greece.

In the present paper, this line will be discussed in relation to (1) the theme of νόσος in the *Orestes*; (2) its place within the development towards
a concept of conscience; (3) the novel way in which Orestes depicts the Erinyes. Finally, two explicit quotations of the line in antiquity will be discussed. It will be argued that the line’s legacy reflects two aspects inherent in Euripides’ presentation of the νόσος of Orestes: one seeing the νόσος in terms of tormenting reason, the other seeing it as diseased rationality.

1. The νόσος of Orestes

In the prologue of the Orestes, Electra describes her brother’s disease, while Orestes lies ‘hidden inside his wraps’ (42-43) outside the palace, to symbolise his exclusion from the community. Orestes killed his mother at the command of Phoebus, and because of that deed he is ill, plagued by the ‘Benign Ones’ (εὐμενίδες, 38), who are subjecting him to ordeals of terror, namely attacks of madness (μανία). During these fits, he ‘jumps from the bed, running wild like a colt from under the yoke’ (44-45). The frenzy-fits are only temporary states, but even when the μανία leave his body at times (during which he is ἔφρων), he remains passive: he does not eat or wash, and he weeps (43-44).

The direct cause of Orestes’ illness/disease is the murder of his mother. Electra tells the audience that the blood of his mother drives him into fits of madness (τροχηλατεί) him into fits of madness (the tradition concerning Clytaemnestra’s unavenged blood, impelling the Erinyes to persecute the matricide). Immediately after describing Orestes’ state of illness, she relates the impending death threat by the city of Argos: a provisional decree has been issued that no contact should be made with Electra and Orestes, and only the manner in which the death sentence will be executed is still to be decided. At this stage one last flicker of hope, the possible appearance of Menelaus, remains. In the subsequent sequences fairly frequent mention of Orestes’ illness is made. He is even portrayed during an attack of μανία, calling for the help of Phoebus against the murderous attacks of the Erinyes and confusing his caring sister with one of them.

Thus far the illness has been described either in objective terms (the attacks of the Erinyes) or as a mental illness (297: τὸ δεῖνον καὶ διαφθαρέν ἔρενόν), with both states being suspended while the patient is asleep. A new element enters when Orestes himself describes his νόσος in the Menelaus-stichomythia (385ff.). He first assesses his uncle that it is not his disfigured appearance which causes his suffering, but his acts, that is, the murder of his wretched mother. Menelaus is at this stage still so amazed by the terrible figure before him that he does not comprehend the answers of Orestes until he utters the provocative line, ἡ σύνεσις, ὅτι σύνοιδα δεῖν’ εἶργασμένος. This leaves Menelaus perplexed, and Orestes must explain in other terms: it is primarily the λύπη which destroys him, the μανία being the secondary cause. Menelaus, after calling λύπη fearsome but curable,
seems to regard the Erinyes as the real cause of the illness (411). When the ‘diagnosis’ has progressed to questions about religious considerations (414–426), and social and political conditions (427–446), the νόσος no longer plays a major role.8

To conclude, when Orestes himself is asked about the nature of his illness, two aspects, related to the two symptoms which Electra already described to the audience in the prologue, still appear:9 the ‘sickness of mind’ is made explicit as λύπη, and juxtaposed to a second aspect, μανία, which are defined as τιμωρία/retributions for the maternal blood. The second aspect is the one especially related to the Erinyes in the following section (401ff., especially 407–413). Both aspects are seemingly connected to an embracing term, ἥ σύνεσις.10 The question now arising is: To what extent did Euripides, with this combination, contribute to the description of the phenomenon of conscience? Did he deliberately attempt to provide an abstract term for the phenomenon, and did he reinterpret the Erinyes to such an extent that they assume the features of introspective conscience?

2. Orestes and conscience

It is notoriously difficult to judge whether ‘conscience’ plays a role within a specific situation, and even more so when such judgment concerns passages from classical literature. The problem seems to be twofold: (1) modern examination offers widely diverging views on the essential features of the phenomenon of conscience, and each opinion tends to highlight different aspects of it in antiquity; (2) the phenomenon itself has a definite historical development, which changes and develops in its main characteristics during various historical phases and communities. It can be accepted as fact that not all aspects of the modern concept were already present in antiquity. Therefore, it is of greater value to describe the possible features of ‘conscience’ in its role in a specific context, rather than to discard its presence on grounds of the absence of one or more of its ‘modern’ features. A working definition should be as inclusive as possible. In this discussion the basic feature, ‘critical and emotional awareness of one’s own moral conduct’ will be used as the criterion.

When conscience in antiquity is discussed, a distinction should be drawn between the development of fixed expressions and abstract terms describing the concept on the one hand, and other ways of expressing the phenomenon on the other. This is necessary once it has been accepted that the absence of an abstract concept describing the phenomenon does not necessarily imply the absence of the phenomenon itself.11 Within the Orestes the substantive ἥ σύνεσις and the Erinyes-theme may be regarded as related to, respectively, an abstract term and a traditional expression of the phenomenon.
2.1 Or. 396 and the development towards an abstract concept of conscience

The history of the interpretation of this line reflects a positive relation between the substantive Ἰ σύνεσις and the phenomenon of conscience. With the exception of the most recent commentaries, Ἰ σύνεσις is usually translated by that very term. Scholars almost unanimously regard this description of his νόος by Orestes as a break-through towards the later concept of conscience. Some confidently state that Euripides here coined the term. Others, though unwilling to read too much into σύνεσις itself, regard this usage as being completely determined by the situation, in which all the necessary elements of a functioning conscience are present.

To gain a clear picture of what Euripides most probably tried to express in line 396, it is advisable to view the history of the expression of conscience towards the development of an abstract term, as reflected in Greek literature. The picture will become clearer when the evidence of this particular line is at first deliberately ignored, since it seems to precede the earliest transmitted substantive related to conscience by almost four centuries.

(a) In the Homeric poems there is neither a specific term for, nor a description of the phenomenon of conscience, in any way similar to the typical later forms. Although this absence may for the most part be attributed to stylistic reasons and specific literary goals, it seems also to be connected with the mythical world view of the society reflected by these writings, as well as with the system of values of a community in which the concept of honour plays an important part.

(b) Σύνοιδα is used since Aeschylus (Cho. 215ff.) and Herodotus (6.57.4; 8.113.3) in a non-reflexive way to express knowledge about the doings of someone else, shared knowledge or knowledge gained from one's own experience. The connotation of being a witness to or an accomplice in something is often implied (for instance, Eur. Hec. 870ff.).

(c) The reflexive usage (σύνοιδα ἐμαυτῷ/ συμαιδέναι τι ἐμαυτῷ) is attested even earlier than the non-reflexive, but starts to occur more often during the latter part of the fifth century. The aspect varies from awareness of one's own transgression (only once in the fifth century, but becoming common in the fourth), to simple knowledge of one's own deeds, to reflexion on the self without actions or deeds being considered, depending on the context. Thus the basic sense in which it was used seems to be 'awareness or consciousness of some fact about oneself'. During the course of history until late antiquity, the whole spectrum continued to be employed, although the predominant usage was to express the critical consciousness of one's own actions with regard to moral norms.
(d) The oldest attestation of the substantive συνείδησις dates from the fifth century, where it is used neither reflexively nor morally, but to denote the unfortunate shared knowledge of the fate of life.\textsuperscript{25} No usage of either συνείδησις or συνείδος in the self-reflective, moral sense is transmitted from the period 5th–3rd century B.C.,\textsuperscript{26} and no attestations of these two substantives occur at all in the transmitted literature of the 2nd century. From the 1st century B.C. onwards συνείδησις does assume the common usage of the reflexive verbal construction, namely of the critical reflection on one’s own actions performed in the past. Here too the range is from purely rational to affective attitudes towards the deed(s). During the first century A.D. adjectival objects and ὅτι-clauses, providing further description of the content of the συνείδησις/συνείδος, regularly occur.

(e) The third substantive, σύνεσις\textsuperscript{27} (from the verb συνιήμι), retains its usual meaning of ‘intelligence’, ‘insight’\textsuperscript{28} up to the 1st century A.D., except in two passages: Men. fr. 632, where σύνεσις is used as a parallel to ὅ σωματορόμω, and seems to carry the meaning of ‘having something grave on one’s mind’;\textsuperscript{29} and Pol. 28.43.13, where, in a strange leap of logical thought, it is used in the absolute sense of conscience as an independent faculty.\textsuperscript{30}

(f) From the 1st century A.D. onwards the three substantives may be used as synonyms, as is evident from the anthology of Stobaeus. ‘Conscience’ may now also act as a guide to future actions (the so-called conscientia antecedens). It appears to be more and more objectified as an autonomous faculty or permanent state of consciousness, judging ethical actions of both the past and the future.

The conclusions drawn from this survey: From the fifth century onward the verbal phrase σύνοιδα ἐμαυτῷ may express reflection on the self, but moral and rational knowledge appear to be inextricably intertwined. Substantives expressing a wide and inclusive concept of conscience, on the other hand, bear witness to a very late development—not before the first century B.C. Historically speaking, therefore, it would be rash to read a defined abstract term for the phenomenon of conscience into the use of σύνεσις in Or. 396.\textsuperscript{31} Much depends on the way ἐὰν σύνεσις and the clause ὃ ὅτι σύνοιδα ἐδέιν εἰργασμένος are related to each other.\textsuperscript{32} This seems to be the point of difference in the interpretations of Zucker and Biehl. Zucker sees the ὅτι as a causal link,\textsuperscript{33} with σύνεσις as a result of the knowledge. From such an interpretation it is easier to give σύνεσις a new, special meaning in this context, and even to create a gap between the ‘insight’, as expressed in σύνεσις, and the ‘knowledge’, referred to in σύνοιδα κτλ. Biehl, on the other hand, understands the ὅτι-clause as declarative, and translates: ‘die (späte bzw. zu späte) Einsicht richtet mich zu Grunde (die darin besteht), dass ich mir bewusst bin, Schreckliches, Frevelhaftes begangen zu haben’.\textsuperscript{34} Σύνεσις
and σόνοικα remain in this instance very closely linked to each other. This difference results in Zucker’s seeing Ὑ σόνεσις as situated outside reason, while the interpretation of Bielh maintains the pure intellectual meaning of the term. As seen from both the history of a concept for ‘conscience’, and the history of the word σόνεσις itself, Bielh’s interpretation must be accepted. The regular way in which the word was used, was not in any moral sense. Even in the Orestes itself it is used a little further on in the usual sense of intellectual insight, in the immediate context denoting something like ‘common sense’. Later absolute usages of the term, such as the above-mentioned Menander fragment and Polybius, may in all probability have had a literary dependence on the Orestes-passage.

The dominating aspect in line 396 must thus be seen as the intellectual, rational component. Even in the expression σόνοικα ἔμφατο, which probably does have an emotional component, it is the cognitive element that is stressed. The feeling that this rational description cannot easily be reconciled with νός ς (reflected by Menelaus’ puzzled answer in line 397), probably forced the author to an exposition of what he meant. In this exposition, the two terms used are remarkably non-rational, but constitute another ‘paradoxical fusion’: destroying emotion (λύπη) in 398 and the non-rational force (μαντα) in 400. As in earlier parts of the play, the μαντα do not remain a ‘menschlich-medizinisches Phänomen’, but are immediately explained as related to the blood of Orestes’ mother. This opens the way for Euripides to reintroduce the Erinys-theme.

2.2 Euripides and the Erinys

It has often been suggested that the Erinys are a mythical expression of the phenomenon of conscience, and that the Orestes reflects the moment of their reinterpretation as the psychological ‘pangs of conscience’. Is it true in terms of the text of the Orestes to say that the Erinys are no longer real, but depicted as a ‘krankhafte, emotionale Regung in der Seele des Schuldigen’? What exactly is Euripides’ contribution to the tradition of the Erinys?

The way in which they can be equated with conscience has been energetically discussed since Zucker denied a parallel: ‘Zu göttlichen Mächten geworden, verkörpern sie zwar einen hohen sittlichen Gedanken, die Pflicht, vergossenes Blut zu stürmen, aber keine innerlichen Vorgänge sittlichen Bewusstseins; sie verkörpern die Folgen der Blutrache für den Mörder, aber nicht Gewissensqualen des Mörders.’ The majority of scholars, however, have rejected Zucker’s point of view, ever since the reaction of Snell to Zucker’s article: although a concept should not be projected into an era when it did not exist, the deeper identity between conscience and the Erinys must nonetheless be accepted.
These fearsome, dog-like creatures have been found to have originated either as the embodiment of the demand for blood-vengeance, or as the vengeful dead themselves. Most probably, however, they were in an earlier time the keepers of the sacred, naturally ordained order \textit{par excellence}.\textsuperscript{44} In Homer they have the threefold function of keepers of order and justice, punishers of perjury, and goddesses of the curse, responsible for the fulfilment of the curse once it has been uttered. In the post-homeric era, the Erinyes were moralised in accordance with the new structures of society, and it is in an already reduced form, though still as the dispensers of fate,\textsuperscript{45} that they are encountered in Aeschylus. At the instigation of spilled kin­
dred blood, they are awakened from the dark earth, and thereafter they cannot be ignored, extinguished or silenced, giving their view of the case in a completely overstated, biased way.\textsuperscript{46} In Aeschylus’ \textit{Oresteia} they are still definitely a force outside the individual. It is true that Aeschylus does allow the Erinyes to be perceived only by their victim at the close of the \textit{Choephoroe} (1061), but the chorus present in the \textit{orchestra} during the entire duration of the \textit{Eumenides} could hardly be considered figures of fantasy, although they represent an older generation of gods now being replaced.

The differences between the depiction of Aeschylus and that of Euripides in the \textit{Orestes} are striking: In line 37 Electra is unwilling to name the Erinyes even under the name of Eumenides, for fear of arousing these powers, with the result that objective status is attributed to them. To the chorus the Erinyes are obviously objective beings (316–331). However, when Orestes is depicted during an attack, only he is able to see them, thus suggesting purely subjective illusions. Furthermore, he sees them only during attacks of \textit{μανία}: they are thus not only the producers of \textit{μανία}, but also their result. In this ‘illusion’, however, he mistakes the very real Electra for one of them. Electra soothes him by saying that what he sees is not real at all.\textsuperscript{47}

This juxtaposition between their objective and subjective existence is presented in contracted form in the Menelaus-stichomythia.\textsuperscript{48} In line 400 only the impersonal \textit{μανία} \ldots \textit{τυμωρία} are named, in line 408 the Erinyes are called \textit{χώρα}, in answer to Menelaus’ inquiry about the nature of his \textit{φάσματα} (407). In the following line Orestes himself is not certain of the reality of what he sees (\textit{έδοξει} \textit{δευτεραν}), but immediately thereafter they are called \textit{σεμναί}, and the fear of naming them again points to the acceptance of their personal/objective existence. The final move back to their mythical representation is when they are again called \textit{θεσία} by Menelaus (423).

In this oscillation between objective and subjective descriptions, Euripides may be seen as a child of the late fifth century, during which the old mythical world view was questioned. Although a presupposition of an immediate ‘demythologizing’ of the Erinyes into psychological terms should
be regarded as dubious, the move towards an internalised conception is sig­
nificant, especially in consideration of the fact that mythological depiction
in tragedy is determined by convention.49 Internalisation is, however, not
the same thing as introspection,50 and madness not the same as ‘emotional­
critical awareness of own moral conduct’.

2.3 A description of conscience?

The equation of conscience with either the term Ἡ σύνεσις or the inter­
nalised way in which Euripides depicts the Erinyes, is thus shown to be un­ntenable. This by no means indicates that the phenomenon is absent, or
that Euripides does not struggle with it. The whole structure of the Orestes
points to the introspective interests of the poet. The myth itself probably
contained the typical mentality of the Homeric code, in which moral er­
ror was described in objective terms as ἀτη. In the Odyssey, no mention
is made of the matricide, but Orestes’ protection of the father’s τιμή re­
results in the positive evaluation of his murder of Aegisthus. In Aeschylus’
Eumenides, the situation was felt to be problematic, but dominated by a
sense of objective guilt and pollution. Therefore the solution is sought in a
court of law, where divine law clashes with divine law, and the individual is
little more than a victim of conflicting norms.51 Euripides shows the effects
of the matricide on the individual himself, and depicts him as being torn
apart by anxiety, horror and desperation. From a modern point of view,
conscience would be expected to play a role in the situation of Orestes: his
repeated attempts to hold Apollo responsible for his deed point to futile
efforts to still his own feelings of guilt.52 He himself considers his deed to
be repulsive (285ff.), indicating the aspect of moral-critical awareness of
one’s own deeds.

As already pointed out in Rodgers’ discussion of σύνεσις,53 literature
from the late fifth century reflects a ‘growing awareness of the inner self,
and an increasingly subtle psychological analysis’. This interest is also re­
lected in Euripides’ description of Orestes’ plight, which he depicts with
the typical technique of juxtaposing seemingly conflicting conceptions.54 It
should thus, with Willink,55 be considered as more rewarding to appreci­
ate the interplay of intellectual and emotive, and objective and introspec­
tive depictions of the νόσος-presentaion as a whole, rather than to try
to disentangle them in a quest for a logical definition of the phenomenon
described.56 The period’s search for clearer expressions of mental and
emotional states of mind is seen in Euripides’ ‘paradoxical fusion of rea­
son, emotion and unreason’. When he has to test a single term to express
the phenomenon, however, his first intuition is to choose an intellectual
one, thus reflecting the typical Greek tendency to include morality in an
embracing rationality.
3. The pathology of the σύνεσις: two instances of the line’s reception

Authors in antiquity already gave prominence to Orestes’ plight, and especially σύνοιδα δείν' εἰργασμένος seems to have become ordinary Attic idiom.57 Σύνεσις is used absolutely in at least the Menander fragment 632 and Pol. 18.43.13. A clear indication of the line’s significance is two explicit quotations and interpretations from late antiquity, one by Plutarch and the other by Philostratus. These are interesting because of the difference in emphasis, reflecting philosophical views accumulated in the intervening periods of respectively 500 and 600 years after Or. 396 was initially written. Of course these views cannot all be discussed; what is most interesting with respect to both Euripides and Plutarch, is a significant addition to the later interpretation of Philostratus, indicating a fundamental change in Greek thought.

In the Tranq. An. 19,58 Plutarch praises the disposition of the φρονίμος as yielding the highest degree of calm in bodily affections, destroying the conditions leading to νόσος by means of self-control, temperate diet, and moderate exertion. It also enables the wise man, when suffering comes from outside himself, to ‘ride it out with light and well-furled sail’. Even when some great unforeseen disaster meets him, the wise man needs not despair, since the harbour is always close at hand and he may swim away from his body, as from a leaky boat. The soul, through study and ‘severe application of its powers of reasoning’ will realise that what appear to be illnesses and suffering are in reality only wrong perceptions.

The greatest suffering, and the most severe danger to the tranquillity of mind comes from within: where other forms of suffering may be discarded by reason as of lesser importance, ἡ σύνεσις, ὃ τι σύνοιδα δείν' εἰργασμένος is caused by reason itself, and, like an ulcer in the flesh, leaves behind it in the soul regret which ever continues to wound and pricks it. The soul, together with shame stings and chastises itself. Why would this suffering caused by reason itself be worse than other kinds of suffering? Just as the pain caused by fever is worse than cold and heat coming from an outside source, so the accidental λύσα, coming from without, are easier to bear than the knowledge of personal blame, because this comes from within and carries with it the further element of disgrace.

Both differences from and similarities to Orestes’ illness may be noted in this Platonic cum Stoic presentation: Plutarch clearly thinks of the σύνεσις in terms of reason: it is reason that punishes itself (αὐτὸς ἑργάζεται). Plutarch thus understood Euripides’ use of σύνεσις correctly, especially when it is observed that his usual word for expressing conscience is τὸ συνειδός (Publ. 4,5; mor. 84 D; Ser. Num. Vind. 21). Σύνεσις is not seen in this instance as an independent faculty, nor even as an independent
function of reason, but merely as a result of self-examining reason. The intellectual accent introduced by Euripides has grown in this account to overwhelming proportions, with ὁ λόγος being expanded by the broader concept ἡ φυγή, used here as synonyms. None of the other terms used by Euripides in describing Orestes' illness is used in connection with this result of reason. In fact, the λύσις are not internal agonies, but are contrasted with the lament, 'None is to blame for this but me myself' (οὗ τις ἐμοί τῶν ἀλλος ἐπαίτιος, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ αὐτός). Where Euripides describes the illness in analogy to objective disease, Plutarch, in typical Platonic fashion, considers bodily illness as of far lesser importance and with far less claim to reality than that caused by reason, which cannot be avoided even by the wise man. The feeling of shame (ἁπαξ λόγων; ἀπεχρόν) is a theme unexploited by Euripides; of the Erinyes in the Orestes, on the other hand, no trace is left. In one respect Plutarch remains firmly in the old Greek tradition: here, as also in his usage of τὸ συνέδος, only the deeds of the past come under consideration.59

From the pious Platonist Plutarch we move to a still later date of reception: to Philostratus' world of 'sophistical sagecraft and sainthood'.60 In Philostratus' Vit. Ap. VII.14,61 dating from around the end of the second century, a very different picture of the Euripides passage emerges. Wisdom, says Apollonius, praises Euripides who regarded ξύνεσις as a disease, which appears whenever humans realise that they have done wrong. Because, he explains, it is this which drew the shapes of the Eumenides in the mind of Orestes (ἡ γὰρ που καὶ τῶν Ὀρέστη τὰ τῶν Ἑυμενίδων εἶδη ἀνέγραφεν). Then follows a definition of η ξύνεσις, placing it not within but alongside reason: νοῦς μὲν γὰρ τῶν πρᾶξεων κύριος, σύνεσις δὲ τῶν ἐκεῖνων δοξάντων. η ξύνεσις is seen as working both retrospectively and prospectively, accompanying man at all times: when reason chooses the better part (χρηστά), she applauds him and sings his praises, even in sleep. When reason falls into evil courses, she hinders man’s free interaction with his fellow and the gods, drives such men from social meetings, terrifies them in their sleep and blurs the distinction between reality and illusion.62

The most obvious difference between this rendering of σύνεσις and those of Euripides and Plutarch, is the prospective function it has received. In contrast with Plutarch, but in conjunction with Euripides’ μανία, the depiction of the νόσος caused by σύνεσις is in terms of mental attacks and as an inhibiting force in social and religious interaction. While the relation between Erinyes and σύνεσις remains obscure in Euripides, the Erinyes are here explicitly regarded as an imaginary result of her working.

For Philostratus η σύνεσις has become a very powerful, independent faculty alongside reason. It reflects another new era in Greek thought, when the limits of reason’s domain were discovered as inherent in the Platonic construction of reality itself,63 and a new philosophy grew alongside the old:
If reality (both external and internal κόσμος) can be understood only from the vantage point of the Absolute which is ἐπέχεινα τῆς ὀύσιας, knowledge must come from a source outside reason. Philostratus makes his hero a prophet of the new philosophy: ‘In the view of Apollonius one can become a philosopher only after having been given the basic knowledge by divine revelation’. This restriction of reason leaves room for another faculty in man which acts as the judge of the resolutions of reason. Philostratus is therefore freed to reintroduce the non-rational aspect of conscience that was in earlier times depicted as the Erinyes. The phenomenon has undergone the full circle: from an objectified mythical conception, to an internalised rational one (Plutarch’s σύνεσις), to another, but this time internal, objectification as an independent faculty.

**NOTES**

1. Me: What’s wrong with you? What sickness is killing you?
   Or: My intellect—I am conscious of having done awful things.
   Me: How do you mean? It's intelligent to be clear, not obscure.
   Or: It is anguish in particular that is destroying me—
   Me: Yes, she is formidable, that one, but still curable.
   Or: And frenzy-fits, retributions for my mother’s blood.

2. Me: And from what kind of visions are you being disordered by?
   Or: I thought I saw three maidens that looked like Night.
   Me: I know the ones you mean. I don’t care to name them.
   Or: No, they are awesome. Turn to politer matters.
   Me: It is these that drive you wild on kindred murder.


4. Later (lines 831–833) the chorus refers to matricide as the ultimate human νόσος:
   ‘τίς νόσος ἡ τίνα δάκρυα καὶ τίς ἔλεος μεῖναν κατὰ γὰν ἡ ματροκτόνοιν αἷμα χειρὶ
   θέσοις.’

5. Also line 338: ματέρος αἷμα σῶς, ὃ σ’ ἄναβαιπχεύει.


7. Here (line 261) described as κυνώπιδες, γοργώπιες ἐνέρων λέρεια, θείαι θεια.

8. See Smith (above, n.3) for his thesis on the continuation of the νόσος-theme throughout the tragedy.


10. It is unclear to what extent both λύπη and μανία must be seen as explaining line 396, thus whether both are incorporated into the term ἡ σύνεσις. The main connection seems to be the λύπη, indicated by μαλάτα.

Gewissen spricht, ist sich eines Gewissens nicht bewusst, ein Gewissen existiert für ihn nicht.

12. These exceptions are represented by Biehl (above, n.9) 46: 'die (späte bzw. zu späte) Einsicht ...'; Willink (above, n.3) 150: 'Remorseful distress ... is a state of mind that combines 'thinking' (at least as 'awareness') and 'feeling' in such a way as to make it hard to draw a line between reason and non-rational activity ...'; West (above, n.2) 210: 'My intellect'.

13. B. Snell, Die Entdeckung des Geistes, Hamburg 1955, 229: 'Das schlechte Gewissen ist allerdings ein Zustand, den erst Euripides entdeckt hat'; Stebler (above, n.11) 121: 'Der euripideischen "Orestes"-Stelle, welche durch Hiebel und Seel in ihrem Primat entwertet schien, kommt also immer noch die Rolle des frühesten Beleges des Gewissens-Begriffs zu'.

14. Class (above, n.11) 102: 'Orestes ist die Schlüsselfigur, die man heranziehen muss, wenn man fragt, was die klassische tragische Zeit unter 'Gewissen' versteht, er gibt das eindrucksvolle Beispiel, wie ein Mensch unter der Gewalt seines Gewissens leidet'.

15. For surveys of the history or development, see C. Maurer, "ouvOloa X"tA., ThWNT 7 (1964) 897–918; J. Stelzenberger, Syneidesis im Neuen Testament, Paderborn 1961; H.-J. Eckstein, Der Begriff Syneidesis bei Paulus, Tübingen 1983.


18. Sappho fr. 26(37).11–12: ἑγὼ δ' ἐμ' αὐται τῶτο σύνοιδα. Because of the vague object, the meaning can unfortunately not be reconstructed.


20. Xenophon An. 1.3.10; 2.5.7; Cyrop. 1.6.4; Ap. 24; Plato Rep. 1.331a: τῷ δὲ μὴν ἐμαυτῷ ἐδικὸν συνειδήτῃ ἱδειά δὲν πάρεστι.

21. I will place Aristoph. Eq. 184 in this category.


23. Rodgers (above, n.19) 246. Rodgers (p. 252) denies any contexts indicating a sense of moral guilt having to do with a personally accepted code of behaviour, till after Plato and Demosthenes. What is involved is 'awareness of culpability' or 'scrupulous fear', connected with the consequences of one's actions.

24. See Eckstein (above, n.15) 47.

25. Democ. fr. 297: ἔνοιοι θυτήσεως φύσεως διάλυσιν οὐκ εἰδότες ἀνήρωτοι, συνειδήσει δὲ τῆς ἐν τῷ βίῳ κακοπραγμοσύνης, τὸν τῆς βιοτῆς χρόνον ἐν ταραχαῖς καὶ φόβοις ταλαιπωρέουσιν, φεύγει τόπο χρόνου. Maurer (above, n.15) 900 interprets it as referring to 'das schlichte Mitwissen oder die Erfahrung um die notvolle Situation des Lebens'.

27. See especially Rodgers (above, n.19) 241–254; Eckstein (above, n.15) 53–55.

28. Willink (above, n.3) 151: ‘... often equivalent to νοεσις, sometimes to ἐπιστήμη or ἀφθονίας as Democritus A135, B181 ... without which one is ἄσωντος ...’. F. Zucker, Synneidesis-Conscientia: Ein Versuch zur Geschichte des sittlichen Bewusstseins im griechisch-römischen Altertum, Jena 1928, 8 regards this use of σύνεσις as unusual, as it usually refers to the ‘aufgeklärte, vorurteilslose Weltanschauung der Sophisten’.

29. ὁ σωματοριτῶν αὐτῷ τι, κἂν ἢ θρασύτατος, ἡ σύνεσις αὐτῶν δειλότατον εἶναι σοει. The usual meaning of ‘insight’ does not exclude such a translation—Maurer (above, n.15) 901. H. Osborne, ‘Συνειδήσις und σύνεσις’, CLR 45 (1931) 10, questions the authenticity of the fragment.

30. σοῦς ἡν εὐτός ἤ πατρὸς ἡν παῖς καθηγορος δεινός ἢ σύνεσις ἢ κατάκοιμος ἢ ταῖς ἐκάστων ψυχαῖς—this statement’s relation to the preceding account of political connivance is unclear. Both Maurer (above, n.15) 901 and Eckstein (above, n.15) 55 regard this passage, on grounds of context and content, as a gloss.

31. Such a defined term is assumed by Eckstein (above, n.15) 55: ‘So findet sich also für die Verwendung von σύνεσις im Sinne des ‘auf eigene Taten bezogene Bewusstseins’ bei Eur Or 300 ein Beispiel aus dem 5.Jh.v.Chr.—lange bevor συνειδήσις in dieser reflexiven Bedeutung nachweisbar ist. Später, wahrscheinlich um oder nach der Zeitwende, kann σύνεσις gelegentlich sogar synonym zu συνειδός und συνείδησις in dem spezifischen Sinne von “Gewissen” gebraucht werden’.

32. With Zucker (above, n.28) 7, the use of σῶνοδα must be seen as a contracted form, on metrical grounds, of the reflective construction σῶνοδα ἐμαυτῷ. Zucker is of the opinion that such a contraction shows that the construction was already common language for expressing knowledge of moral guilt.


34. Biehl (above, n.9) 46, in much the same vein as the translation of Wilamowitz, ‘die eigene Einsicht, dass er Unrecht getan hat’, that was rejected by Zucker.


36. Line 1524, Orestes’ response after the Phrygian slave said that man prefers being alive to anything else: it is σύνεσις that saves him.


38. See Stebler (above, n.11) 117 for the symptoms of μαζία as an ‘ausschliesslich menschlich-medizinisches Phänomen’.

39. The genitive ματρὸς σάματος (line 400) may be read as both subjective and objective, the latter being in this context the more probable: in line 425 πατρὸς is used in objective sense with τιμωρία; in line 36 it is the blood itself that seeks revenge.

40. Cf. Dodds (above, n.17) 42, though uncomfortable: ‘It is only Euripides and Mr T.S. Elliot who psychologise the otherwise objective Furies as the pangs of conscience’.

41. Class (above, n.11) 103. See also W. Nestle, Vom Mythos zum Logos: Die Selbstentfaltung des griechischen Denkens von Homer bis auf die Sophistik und Sokrates,

42. Zucker (above, n.28) 5.


44. Class (above, n.11) 51. Dodds (above, n.17) 6–8 agrees, while explaining their presence in Agamemnon’s apology in the Iliad: ‘The explanation is perhaps that the Erinyes is the personal agent who ensures the fulfilment of a moira. Most probably, I think, the moral function of the Erinyes as ministers of vengeance derives from this primitive task of enforcing a moira which was at first morally neutral’.

45. Dodds (above, n.17) 6–8. Heraclit B 94 still sees them as keepers of the natural order, in close relation to Δική (Nestlé (above, n.41) 96; Class (above, n.11) 51).

46. See K. Reinhardt, Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe, Bern 1949, 147ff.

47. Line 259: ὃς γὰρ οὐδὲν ἄν δικεῖς ἀφ’ εἰδέναι.


50. Dodds (above, n.17) 42: ‘Such beings ... are not wholly external to their human agents and victims.... Yet they are objective, since they stand for the objective rule that blood must be atoned’.

51. See Reinhardt (above, n.46) 147.

52. As pointed out by Stebler (above, n.11) 117.

53. Rodgers (above, n.19) 254.


55. (Above, n.3) 151: ‘It is more important to appreciate the paradoxical use of language and interplay of themes than to ask whether Or. is ‘truly remorseful’ in the sense of ‘repentant’.

56. Cf. Biehl (above, n.9) 47: ‘Or führt nun die psychischen Folgen des Muttermordes (Ἀθυρία, ἀμώλια) an, d.i. die in 43ff. von El. geschilderten alternierenden Phasen der νόος, wobei das Mythische (‘Erinyen-Motiv’) vorübergehend in den Hintergrund tritt; eine strenge Scheidung ist jedoch offenbar nicht angestrebt, weder zwischen der intellektuelle Seite des Handelns und den zu Grunde liegenden ‘irrationalen Gewalten’ (Pohlenz a.O. 413) noch zwischen dem inneren und äusseren Ursprung der Pathosmomente (vgl 40ffff.)’.
57. Thus Willink (above, n.3) 151. However, the example Willink quotes, ἡμωτῇ πολλὰ δὲν was used by Aristoph. *Thesm. 477*, 3 years before the production of the *Orestes* in 408 B.C.


59. See Eckstein (above, n.15) 59–60.


62. 'While she turns into dreams and windy forms all that they see by day, and any things they think they hear or say, she lends to their empty and fantastic flutterings of heart truth and substantial reality of well-founded terror'.


64. Dihle (above, n.63) 12.
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