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PHAIDRA'S PLEASURABLE *AIDOS* (EUR. *HIPP.* 380–7)

Rather than apologize for taking up this battered subject once again, let me compare scholarly treatment of the passage to such ancient rites as singing the *skolion*, where every member of the symposium was supposed to give his variant of a given theme. First we must have the passage before us. Phaidra, after first appearing on stage in a delirium where her speech is by no means coherent, addresses the chorus of women of Troizen from line 373 on in rational terms, explaining her predicament and behaviour. Peoples' lives, she says, are not ruined by lack of intelligence, but by failure to live up to their recognition of right and wrong.[1] Some fail to realize (381 *ἐκπονεῖν*) their high ideals through laziness or inertia (381 *ἀργίας ὕπο*), others by putting some dubious pleasure[2] before the good (382–3 *οἱ δ' ἡδονὴν προθέντες ἀντὶ τοῦ καλοῦ / ἄλλην τιν'*). Pleasures, she goes on, are many in life (*εἰσὶ δ' ἡδοναὶ πολλαὶ βίου*)—and now comes the crux:

> *μακραί τε λέσχαι καὶ σχολή, τερπνὸν κακόν,*
> *αἰδώς τε· δισσαὶ δ' εἰσίν, ἡ μὲν οὐ κακή,*
> *ἡ δ' ἄχθος οἴκων· εἰ δ' ὁ καιρὸς ἦν σαφής*
> *οὐκ ἂν δύ' ἦστην ταὔτ' ἔχοντε γράμματα.*

'... long hours of conviviality and leisure, an enjoyable sin, and *aidos*. There are two of this,[3] one not bad, the other a burden on the house. If the particular occasion were transparent, there would not be two composed of the same letters.'

There are many problems involved in the precise interpretation of Phaidra's words but the main source of difficulty lies in *aidos*' position at the end of a list of pleasures. Barrett says that *aidos* is the last item on Phaidra's list of things which distract men from the good, not necessarily a pleasure, as she (and the audience) will have lost

[1] Commentators have not been slow to detect in this position polemic against Socrates, who maintained that no-one chooses the wrong course knowingly. B. Snell, *Szenen aus griechischen Dramen* (Berlin/New York, 1971), 60–75, is the main champion of this view.

[2] *ἡδονὴν ... ἄλλην τιν'* could mean 'something else (sc. than *ἀργία*), a pleasure' as W. S. Barrett, *Euripides' Hippolytus* (Oxford 1964) 229, and B. Manuwald, 'Phaidras tragischer Irrtum. Zur Rede Phaidras in Euripides' *Hipp.* 373–430', *RhM* 122 (1979), 134–48 (here p. 137), maintain with parallels, or it could mean 'some pleasure other than *τὸ καλόν*', as argued by D. Kovacs, 'Shame, pleasure and honour in Phaidra's great speech', *AJP* 101 (1980), 287–303. Kovacs suspects a lacuna before 384 as Phaidra's list really only contains two items, *σχολή* and *αἰδώς*, as *λέσχαι μακραί* and *σχολή* = (by hendiadys) 'long leisurely talks'. In fact Phaidra's list is short but perfectly adequate with three items. My paraphrase 'some dubious pleasure' rests on the assumption that *ἄλλος τις* has the rare meaning here 'something other than true or good' i.e. 'illusory, bad' (cf. *LSJ* III 3 and 4). A good example of this meaning comes at Hesiod, *Works and Days* 344 *χρῆμ' ἐγκώμιον ἄλλο* 'any untoward affair in the village' (Paley).

[3] That *αἰδώς* has no plural form in Greek is no objection to the view that Euripides is talking here of two different types or aspects of *αἰδώς*. Kovacs makes too much of this difficulty, concluding that Euripides must be talking of two types of *ἡδοναί* instead (above n. 2). D. L. Cairns, *AIDOS. The Psychology and Ethics of Honour and Shame in Ancient Greek Literature* (Oxford, 1993), 326, comes, tentatively, to the same conclusion, but concedes doubt. He points in particular to the parallel constructions *εἰσὶ δ' ἡδοναὶ ...* and *δισσαὶ δ' εἰσίν*, arguing that they should share the same subject. I see the greatest difficulty with this view in v. 387 *οὐκ ἂν δύ' ἦστην ...* as the statement 'there would not be two of them ...' (the number two underlined by the dual verb) contradicts 383, where pleasures are said to be many. Cairns recognizes the difficulty and resorts to the expedient of understanding 'of two types' in 387. But that is not what the Greek says.

track of the syntax by that point and no longer take *aidos* necessarily as a pleasure. But this is intolerable: *aidos* comes at the end of a relatively short sentence which begins 'There are many pleasures in life...' He takes *aidos* to be that sense of shame or conscience which is sometimes a good thing because it acts in accordance with reason to prevent us doing something disgraceful, and sometimes a bad thing because it impedes us from doing the right thing out of some inhibiting feeling.[4]

A recent and detailed exegesis by E. Craik suggests that Phaidra's list of pleasures are all related to the sexual temptation open to upper-class ladies: long hours of leisure spent in lascivious relaxation with *aidos*.[5] What can *aidos* mean in this context? She suggests that it is a euphemism for *aidoia*, the genitals, thus = sex. This would certainly give a viable pleasure for Phaidra's list, but there is no direct parallel for *aidos* = sex,[6] and the sense required would be most abrupt. Moreover it is difficult to see how *aidos* with this sense could be obscurely ambivalent. Craik suggests that one sexual relationship could be beneficial because appropriate and with the right partner, another harmful because inappropriate. But there is no ambivalence possible in Phaidra's perception of the two relationships open to her: that with Theseus is appropriate and respectable, that with Hippolytos totally inappropriate and not even something to be considered for Phaidra.

Cairns' monumental treatment of the ethics of *aidos* takes a relatively traditional view of the meaning of *aidos* in this passage: it is that feeling of inhibition which holds one back from socially unacceptable action. On the crucial question of how this *aidos* can be a pleasure, he points to an earlier passage of the play (329–35), in which Phaidra gave in to the nurse's entreaties (reinforced by the supplicatory attitude of grasping the knees) to reveal the secret of her inner conflict. Phaidra says that 'I honour the sanctity of your gesture' (335 *σέβας γὰρ χειρὸς αἰδοῦμαι τὸ σὸν*). Cairns argues that the *aidos* implicit in *αἰδοῦμαι* here is pleasurable to Phaidra because it indirectly confers honour (something pleasurable) on her by affording her an opportunity to reveal the secret she has so nobly been concealing (cf. 229–30 where Phaidra claims that the matter she is concealing from the nurse—viz. her resolution *not* to give in to her passion for Hippolytos—does her credit).[7] But this is a very tenuous argument. One is entitled to wonder how much pleasure Phaidra feels in giving in to the nurse's supplication: can this be the ambiguous *aidos* whose lure is stronger than the pursuit of virtue? Surely the *aidos* Phaidra feels here is merely the conventional Greek respect for the supplicant. A Greek felt honour-bound (*αἰδεῖσθαι*) to respect the supplicant: simply to have torn free of the nurse's grip would have

[4] Ad loc. p. 230. He cites Plutarch, *de virt. mor.* 448f., who explains *aidos* in our passage in terms of moral scruples which sometimes harmonize with rational perception, sometimes not.

[5] 'AIDOS in Euripides *Hipp.* 373–430: review and interpretation', *JHS* 113 (1993), 45–59.

[6] It is true that Craik's best alleged parallel (Theognis 1263–6) implies sexual gratification through innuendo when the poet says that a boy whom he has treated well has failed to show *aidos* to him, but only by innuendo. There the paederastic context makes the poet's point clear, but Phaidra's speech is not on the level of sly winks.

[7] *AIDOS* esp. 330–32. E. R. Dodds, 'The *ΑΙΔΩΣ* of Phaedra and the meaning of the *Hippolytus*', *CR* 39 (1925), 102–4, similarly points to this earlier scene of the play as an indicator as to what *aidos* in the great speech means, but he identifies the pleasure deriving from Phaidra's submission to the nurse's entreaties as the 'pleasures of confession' i.e. Phaidra had been (subconsciously) longing to tell someone of her illicit passion for Hippolytos, and when the nurse supplicated her, this provides a welcome excuse to succumb to conventional *aidos* in order to ease her aching heart by revealing her secret. In a brief but lucid treatment of our passage from the point of view of ethical philosophy, B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Sather Classical Lectures, vol. 57; Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), 225–30, cites Dodds approvingly, though pointing to a slightly different pleasurable facet of *aidos*: '...it is a social pleasure—a comfort or reassurance' (p. 228).

constituted a breach of conventional morality. Moreover, can this indirect reference to *aidos* (latent in the verb *αἰδεῖσθαι*) really be the key to the emphatic position and role of *aidos* in Phaidra's great speech?

The search is still on, in my opinion, for a pleasurable *aidos* which may be ambivalent. A passage in the *Theognidea* (1063–8) which has not, to my knowledge, been adduced previously in this connection, may set us on the right trail. The context concerns the pleasures available to a young person. In youth, the poet says, one may sleep the night with someone of one's own age, satisfying one's appetite for 'delightful activities' (*Ἐν δ' ἤβηι παρὰ μὲν ξὺν ὁμήλικι πάννυχον εὕδειν / ἱμερτῶν ἔργων ἐξ ἔρον ἱέμενον*). One can also sing while the flute is played at a drinking party (*ἔστι δὲ κωμάζοντα μετ' αὐλητῆρος ἀείδειν*). Nothing is sweeter for men and women than these things (*τούτων οὐδὲν ⟨ἔγεν⟩τ'*[8] *ἄλλ' ἐπιτερπνότερον / ἀνδράσιν ἠδὲ γυναιξί*). What are wealth and *aidos* to me? Enjoyment along with merry-making defeats them all! (*τί μοι πλοῦτός τε καὶ αἰδώς; / τερπωλὴ νικᾶι πάντα σὺν εὐφροσύνηι*).

In these lines the pleasures of relaxation, sex and festivities are contrasted with wealth and *aidos*. The poet says he prefers indulgence in what we might call pleasures of the minute (wine, women and song) to a concern for wealth and *aidos*. Clearly wealth is a good, if one for which one has to work and exert oneself. So what is *aidos*? Hardly 'respect for others', 'shame', or any of the other conventional translations. It must be something which is a good in itself, a tangible benefit, if one which involves abstinence from the alternatives mentioned (indulgence in alcohol etc.). The translation which fits best, in my opinion, is 'honour', i.e. reputation, esteem, the respect which *others* feel toward one. That is, we have here an instance of the normal meaning of *aidos*, respect *for* something or someone, the feeling of shame because of something or before someone, turned around to signify that respect which is one's due from others.[9] In this passage the poet is contrasting different sorts of pleasures. On the one hand there are the 'virtuous' benefits for which one has to work (wealth and status, on my interpretation); on the other, those which bring immediate gratification through indulgence (wine, women and song). The poet says he prefers the latter over the former: it is the familiar call to relish the minute rather than standing on one's honour at the price of sacrificing the pleasures of the minute. Aesop's fable of the ant and the grasshopper illustrates the two tendencies: the grasshopper sings all summer and fails to provide for the winter; the ant toils all summer and gloats over his abundant stores in winter: he has amassed wealth and status.

Where else is *aidos* used in this sense? In Homer Odysseus says that singers obtain a share of *time* and *aidos* because the Muse has taught them and favoured the tribe of singers (*Od.* 8.480f.: *ἀοιδοί / τιμῆς ἔμμοροί ἐισι καὶ αἰδοῦς, οὕνεκ' ἄρα σφέας / οἵμας Μοῦσ' ἐδίδαξε, φίλησε δὲ φῦλον ἀοιδῶν*). The case of *time* illustrates what is meant by *aidos*: a man has *time* because his peers attribute it to him as recompense

[8] *⟨ἔγεν⟩τ'* Maas: *τι* O: *τοι* p: om. A: *ἄρ' ἦν* Bergk: *ἔην* Young. The reading is adopted by B. A. van Groningen, *Théognis, Le premier Livre* (Amsterdam, 1966), who dispenses with Bergk's view that the lines are by Mimnermos.

[9] C. E. von Erffa, *AIDOS und verwandte Begriffe in ihrer Entwicklung von Homer bis Demokrit* (Philologus suppl. vol. 30.2; Leipzig, 1937), 12, 42 etc., recognizes this inverted use of *aidos* from Homer on (e.g. *Od.* 8.480), calling it the 'passivische Bedeutung' in the sense that a person receives rather than shows respect/honour etc. However, he derives this passive sense from a hypothetical development *αἰδώς* = shame, respect → *αἰδοῖος* = respectable → passive *αἰδώς* = honour, esteem. He finds the meaning 'esteem', 'honour' particularly prominent in Tyrtaios (pp. 59–60). Van Groningen (previous note) translates 'respect de soi'. For the phrase, J. Carrière, *Théognis de Mégare* (Paris, 1948), 127, compares the Orphic formula *Αἰδώς τε Πλοῦτός τε*, Kern 336.

for (heroic) services rendered. Likewise with *aidos*: it is not only something which others show towards a person by deferring to him: it is also a quality possessed, like *time*, a hard-earned status. Thus the passage should not be translated 'singers have a share in honour and respect' (sc. showed by others toward them), but rather, by hendiadys, '... a share of (honour and esteem =) high-ranking honour'.[10]

Similarly, a good speaker in Homer impresses his audience by his quality of αἰδοῖ μειλιχίῃι (*Od.* 8.172). This does not mean that he insinuates himself into their favour by adopting a posture of flattering respectfulness, but rather that his words possess a pleasing dignity; the speaker carries conviction by his own bearing. It is an inner quality rather than a manner adopted toward his listeners.[11] *They* respond to his dignified bearing rather than vice versa.

A particularly striking instance of this sense of *aidos* as a quality possessed comes in a fourth-century inscription from Epidauros, in which one Isyllos records the *lex sacra* he passed to bolster the aristocracy in Epidauros by instituting an annual procession in honour of Apollo and Asklepios by the leading aristocratic youths of the community.[12] He says that only those will be chosen to perform the rite who 'possess city-governing virtue and *aidos* in their hearts' (l. 16 οἷς πολιοῦχος ὑπὸ στέρνοις ἀρετά τε καὶ αἰδώς). Of course, the quality of *aidos* implies 'honour' in the sense of 'god-fearing', 'law-abiding' as well. But the political message of Isyllos in this inscription—that the élite few are to govern the masses—reinforces the impression that *aidos* is a quality peculiar to the wealthy propertied classes: French 'noblesse oblige': to be in a position of honour obliges one to behave honourably.

It will have become clear that I am arguing for a link between *aidos* and social status. The aristocrat is in a better position to exhibit, and possess, *aidos* than the penurious.[13] This comes out interestingly in a passage of Euripides. When Admetus, after losing his wife, Alcestis, chooses to entertain his guest-friend of long standing, Herakles, rather than excuse himself because of his recent bereavement, the chorus comments on this—in their view—untimely hospitality: 'Nobility errs in the direction of *aidos*' (600–601: τὸ γὰρ εὐγενές / ἐκφέρεται πρὸς αἰδῶ).[14] In the chorus's view, Admetus' high-birth (his *eugenes*) results in his choosing a course of action, honourable in itself (sc. *aidos*), which nevertheless constitutes a mistake, a departure (sc. ἐκφέρεται) from what the chorus assumes to be right in this particular situation. The *aidos* cited could refer to Admetus' ingrained sense of honour towards a guest-friend, but I believe the chorus is pointing to a not wholly desirable attribute of the aristocracy: rather than reveal his personal misfortune, Admetus stands on his dignity and acts as if nothing had happened. To have broken down in front of Herakles and lamented his misfortune would have been to compromise his sense of decorum, the right way of behaving with one's equally honourable friends. *Aidos* is shown to be an attribute of the governing class which, on occasion, prevents them behaving normally (from the chorus's point of view).

[10] Thus Erffa (above n. 9), 12f. Citing Snell, Erffa makes the comparison with δόξα which means both what someone believes and what others believe of him, i.e. reputation.

[11] Thus Erffa (above n. 9), 46: '... eine Eigenschaft der Rede bzw. des Redenden'.

[12] Text and lengthy commentary: U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Isyllos von Epidauros* (Philologische Untersuchungen 9; Berlin, 1886); text in J. Powell, *Collectanea Alexandrina* repr. Chicago, 1981), 132–6. The text almost certainly dates to the late fourth century B.C.

[13] Hesiod, *Erga* 317, writes that *aidos* is an unsuitable companion to a man in need (sc. as it may stop him acting to better himself). Erffa (above n. 9, 84–5) finds that both Pindar and Theognis oppose aristocratic *aidos* to the profit-motive (*kerdos*) of the gain-seekers.

[14] A. M. Dale, *Euripides, Alcestis* (Oxford, 1961), 102, paraphrases: 'Nobility tends to carry its chivalry almost too far'.

With these passages in mind it is not difficult to perceive a good sense to Phaidra's listing of *aidos* among those 'pleasures' of life which may impede a person from pursuing a certain course of action, perhaps one which is morally better. *Aidos* is pleasurable because one takes pleasure in status, reputation, honour with all their trappings. We need not restrict *aidos* to the sense 'respectful behaviour to others or ideals', but can recognize on occasion an inverse sense in which *aidos* came to mean the good reputation and status a person acquired for consistently honourable behaviour. In this latter sense *aidos* could clearly be a source of pride to a person, something he might want to keep intact by avoiding contrary courses of action. At the same time we might perceive a better connection between the other 'pleasures' mentioned by Phaidra and *aidos*. Both 'long hours of chit-chat' (μακραὶ λέσχαι) and 'leisure' (σχολή) tended (then and now) to be things enjoyed by the wealthy classes, who do not have to work unremittingly to earn a living. Similarly, the banqueting implied by her words[15] was a pleasure which could be indulged in more by those with means than by the penurious. In this context, then, *aidos* as an umbrella term for the 'genteel', or 'civil', behaviour characteristic of those with breeding and position makes good sense. We can perhaps gloss it in our passage with terms such as 'decency', 'courteousness', 'impeccable manners' etc., i.e. as a word covering the unwritten code of gentlemanly behaviour with which the well-placed enjoy intercourse.

At the same time, the sense of *aidos* I am arguing for here strikes a chord with later words in Phaidra's *rhesis*. Having vowed that she prefers the ultimate expedient of suicide to any course which would involve giving in to her passion for Hippolytos, she rails at those aristocratic ladies, who, she maintains, introduced the bad habit of infidelity in marriage. She says that the habit only became widespread because it first found favour in aristocratic homes. She wonders how such women can look their husbands in the eye when guilty of infidelity, or fail to cringe in terror at the thought that the walls which have witnessed their sin might take voice and denounce them.[16] What Phaidra seems particularly to object to here is the hypocrisy of these well-placed ladies who indulge in sexual escapades and manage to preserve a façade of decency to their husbands and the outside world. According to my interpretation, they are preserving their *aidos* while forfeiting their true integrity, that is, *to kalon*. And this is what Phaidra vows not to do.

How precisely this *aidos* which I have attempted to identify impedes right action requires further explanation. In the case of the preceding factors mentioned by Phaidra (idleness, too much socializing) it is apparent that they stand in the way of *to kalon* by creating a sort of inertia which has to be overcome before right action is possible. That is, they are distractions from, or impediments to, virtuous action. The constraint of *aidos* is of a more complex nature. I argue that it lies in the reluctance a person might have to forfeit his 'good name' by doing something which does not normally meet with social approval (particularly in the circles in which he moves) even if it is in fact the 'right' thing to do. Euripides shows other characters in a similar

[15] From its original meaning of a bier or couch, λέσχη came to denote a banqueting room—where couches for dining, conversation and entertainment were placed around the walls of the room—and then, by association, the conversation or gossip which characterized gatherings in these public meeting places. It might be remarked in passing that these pleasures mentioned by Phaidra appear more characteristic of the leisure activities of fifth-century Athenian men, rather than women, as the latter had little opportunity for social gatherings at home. There was no equivalent to the men's dining room, *andron*.

[16] 409 ἐκ δέ γενναίων δόμων / τόδ' ἦρξε θηλείαισι γίγνεσθαι κακόν...; 415–18 express her outrage at the women's hypocrisy.

quandary. Agamemnon in the *I.A.* laments his high position which prevents him weeping openly at the fate which awaits his daughter. 'Low-birth has this advantage', he says, 'Crying is easy for them, and speaking one's mind. All that does not become an aristocrat... I am ashamed both to shed a tear and ashamed not to'.[17] In this passage the *aidos* Agamemnon feels as an encumbrance going with his position (cf. 450 *ὄγκον*) prevents him acknowledging the impending tragedy and perhaps averting it.

Slightly different is the case of the tyrant Kreon in the *Medea*. Here Medea requests she be given a day's reprieve from immediate banishment from Corinth in order to provide for her children. Kreon suspects a plot (316–17), but grants her request, observing 'My nature is the very opposite to that of a tyrant, and I have often blundered through my kindness'.[18] Clearly Kreon perceives a polarity between self-seeking (= tyrannical) behaviour and that which respects the wishes of others (*αἰδεῖσθαι*). At the same time, we should recognize that it is precisely Kreon's position which enables him to indulge a whim for kindness on occasion in order to avoid the stigma of the tyrant.

It is these and similar passages which reveal the ambiguity of *aidos*. In theory, a concern for honour, for one's good reputation, for the social norm, is no bad thing, as Phaidra says. It is when this concern becomes an obsession, however, that it can obstruct 'the good'. We have found relatively clear cases where Euripidean characters recognize that the *aidos* which goes with position can lead to inadequate behaviour: Admetus and Agamemnon. Conversely the *Medea* passage illustrates the possibility that *aidos* can provide a welcome check on barbarous behaviour. As Phaidra says, the value of *aidos* depends on the situation—which is not always clear. The skill clearly lies in grasping when *aidos* is a force for the good, and when not. The pleasure derived from *aidos* is the pleasure of smug self-esteem.

But Phaidra's perception that *aidos* can, on occasion, lead one astray, is a comment not only on her own moral struggle, but also on that of the protagonist Hippolytos. This pure and prudish young man gathers flowers from a meadow of personified Aidos to make a garland for Artemis. It is his *aidos*, sense of honour, which prevents his speaking openly to his father Theseus, which might have averted the ultimate tragedy of father and son in this play. Hippolytos shows the results of carrying *aidos* too far. His sense of purity and honour proves destructive to himself, Phaidra and Theseus. Euripides in this play seems to be saying something about that dangerous tendency in human nature to cling to an ideal, honourable in itself, which can become a vice if not constantly checked against 'the good'. *Aidos* seems to me to express that tendency: a fastidious sense of honour which can ruin oneself and others. I close with an interesting modern example drawn from life. In her biography *Wild Swans*[19] Yung Chang tells (among a great number of other things) the tragedy of her father who was a devoted communist with high and noble ideals in the early stages of Mao's revolution. His sense of honour as a high-ranking communist official led him to deny his wife, in the late stages of pregnancy and embarked on a long and arduous journey, appropriate medical treatment. In Greek terms one could say that his *aidos* prevented him from using his position to gain an advantage for his dependant. The *kalon* of the

[17] *ἡ δυσγένεια δ' ὡς ἔχει τι χρήσιμον. / καὶ γὰρ δακρῦσαι ῥαιδίως αὐτοῖς ἔχει, / ἅπαντά τ' εἰπεῖν. τῶι δὲ γενναίωι φύσιν / ἄνολβα ταῦτα... ἐγὼ γὰρ ἐκβαλεῖν μὲν αἰδοῦμαι δάκρυ, / τὸ μὴ δακρῦσαι δ' αὖθις αἰδοῦμαι τάλας....* Clearly *aidos* is pulling Agamemnon in two directions here: on the one hand his high rank prevents him giving in to his natural grief; on the other this very suppression of emotion causes him shame.

[18] 349: *αἰδούμενος δὲ πολλὰ δὴ διέφθορα.*

[19] London, 1993.

communist ideal outweighed in his mind the *kalon* of securing relief for a member of his own family. The result was predictable: a miscarriage, near death of his wife and physical suffering. Nor did his high-mindedness secure him the lasting favour of the movement to which he dedicated his life: he died in labour camp, a humiliated victim of the system he had championed to excess.

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