Some Remarks on Semantic Shifts in Postclassical Greek

1. Foreword: from Homer to the IV century BCE.

Homer is the starting point of this analysis, with the formula ἐντρέπεται φίλον ἦτορ, attested in only two passages, in which the use of ἐντρέπω is documented in the middle voice:

a) in *Iliad* 15,554

where Hector turns to Melanippus to motivate him towards greater courage, especially after his cousin's death;

b) in *Odyssey* 1.60

when Athena turns to Zeus to move him to compassion towards Odysseus's fate.

The formula, corresponding to a hemistich delimited by female caesura, uses the nexus 'name + epithet' φίλον ἦτορ in an original way, after the same phrase in the previous line (οὐδέ νυ σοί περ). Of the 40 cases of φίλον ἦτορ attested in Homer, in fact, in as many as 36 the nexus is at the end of the hexameter, while it is anticipated to the beginning of the verse only here and in two other passages. Walter Leaf comments on ἐντρέπω: "pay heed: only here and in the similar line α 60 in H., but familiar in Attic" (Leaf 1902, 140).

Even before Attic, what is striking is the apparent silence of lyrical poets, Hesiod and archaic literature at least until the tragedians. And while it is true that in the Homeric hymn to Hermes, there is probably the oldest attestation of the abstract co-radical noun ἐντροπίη, referring to the astute contortions artificially staged by Hermes as a child (l. 245: παῖδ ὀλίγον δολίης εἰλυμένον ἐντροπίη), this interpretation is not uncontroversial, and there have been attempts to amend it to derive rather "swaddling clothes" (ἐν στροφιῇσιν, van Bennekom). It is also well known that this hymn is "the most untraditional in its language, with many late words and expressions" (West 2003). If we really have to accept the reading handed down to us, as Vergados does in his latest edition despite considerable doubts (2013), we could consider it as an ancient form, already possible in the epic, entailing the idea of a crouching or drawing one's body together inward. Said reading, however, is still very far from indicating an actual interiorization of the concept.

The author from the 5th century BCE that is undoubtedly most sensitive to this semantic area is Sophocles, with 7 examples in total, compared to none in other tragic authors and in the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE in general. It is interesting to notice that Sophocles is not only sensitive to its verbal use, with his numerous examples of ἐντρέπομαι as 'showing respect' (6x) for which he surpasses any other tragic poet, but also to its use as a noun. In *Oedipus at Colonus* (l. 299), in fact, we find a rare attestation of ἐντροπή dating back to the fifth century BCE, when Oedipus asks the chorus what respect (ἐντροπή) for his fate the king of Athens will show him.

Beyond Sophocles, Plato uses it with a rather concrete meaning (*Phaedrus*, *Crito*), and another couple of examples are found in Xenophon and the playwright Alexis (attested for the first time as assigning accusative case). The literature handed down to us, otherwise, shows an apparent void that leads us directly to Polybius, the *Septuaginta*, and the *Psalms* in particular, and finally to Diodorus. It is interesting to note Aristotle's silence, despite his attention towards emotions and virtues in his *Rhetoric* (1383b). The notion on which he dwells is, above all, that of αἰσχύνη, but there is still no room for ἐντροπή or its corresponding verb. This is indicative of the slow development of the vocabulary tied to emotions and morals in ancient Greek.

2. Polybius

Even the data from epigraphic documents only offer little help in describing this phenomenon. One might indeed ask when the concept of ἐντροπή began to be perceived as being endowed with its own semantic dignity, so as to be introduced into the formal language of honorary inscriptions. Examples are not numerous (only 3 exist) and bring us mostly to the II-I century BCE.

A 2nd century BCE inscription from the Pergamon area (*IvP* I 224) reports a man's achievements, perhaps those of a certain Andronicus sent twice to Rome as an envoy, the last time in 151-150 BCE to denounce the abuses carried out by Prusias king of Bithynia in Asia Minor. Andronicus had earned παρὰ] [μὲ] ν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐντροπῆς καὶ δόξης δικαίως ἐτύγχανεν. The ἐντροπή to which the text alludes here is a sort of 'regard, respect', i.e. that necessary caution that is implemented towards people whose special worth one senses: particularly revealing, in this regard, is the dittology that makes the term synonymous with δόξα.

At this time, Polybius's linguistic usage acquires specific importance: ἐντρέπομαι is rather frequent (15x), if only in the middle or passive voice, and its meaning oscillates between 'taking into consideration' and 'respecting', as well as assigning either genitive or accusative case. It also has, however, an ethical meaning with two possible readings depending on the person taken as a moral parameter: '*sich schämen*' [to be ashamed] focusing on the subject, or '*jemand scheuen*' [to fear someone] when focused on someone other than the subject. After all, αἰδώς and αἰδέομαι are by and large completely missing in Polybius, except for two examples (6.4.5 and fr. 92). It does not seem accidental to me, however, that the first of these cases is precisely the nexus πρεσβυτέρους αἰδεῖσθαι, sounding very much like a fixed expression, and highlighted by the conservative Polybius as one of the many regulations with which to comply in a true democracy. There are, then, 16 cases of αἰσχύνη and of its co-radicals: roughly the same frequency as for ἐντρέπομαι.

Here are some indicative examples of the various synchronic possibilities of the semantic development of this latter verb, connected with its syntactic use:

a. 'to care for' (+ genitive, 2x = *sich jemandem zuwenden*)

b. 'hold someone in high esteem', 'respect' (+ accusative, 5x = *jemand scheuen*)

   Es. 9.36.10:
   Φίλιππον δὲ καὶ Μακεδόνας οὐκ **ἐντρέπεσθε**

c. 'respect [an opinion/someone's point of view]', and therefore 'concede, agree to, accept' (as absolute, with no explicit case assignment, but rather with an implicit argument = *sich darauf einlassen*). This is also the meaning to be attributed to its co-radical noun ἐντροπή in a possible Polybian *hapax* (4.52.2), translated by the *Polibios-Lexicon* as *Einwilligung*, *Bereitschaft* in a diplomatic context preceding the agreement between Byzanthium and Prusias, king of Bithynia.

d. 'bear respect towards' [in the sense of 'not contradicting'], 'crouch, retract onto oneself, take as little room as possible', which could also mean at times 'to be ashamed' (in an absolute form, 8x = *sich schämen*). This is the flimsiest and most impugnable semantic shift, which demands the closest reading of texts and contexts, and which has been generally recognized as having a mostly middle voice value by philologists, specifically by Adolf Bonhöffer and the lexicographers of the *Polybios-Lexikon*. This is particularly clear in the well-known passage on Scipio Africanus's reaction to royal honours, in:

10.38.3

The passage of the thirty first book, in which the Roman senate is moved by young Demetrius's fate, the son of Antiocus IV king of Syria and heir apparent, also deserves more than just a cursory reference:

31.2.6

The handwritten tradition of the codes containing the *excerpta de legationibus gentium ad Romanos* agrees on the reading ἐτρέποντο. We owe to Casaubon's genius (1609) the conjectural amendment in ἐνετρέποντο, later accepted by the critical edition of Büttner-Wobst, which seems preferable because of the emotional value added to the context by the use of ἐντρέπομαι, and because of the comparison with other passages in the text. The drive towards subjectification is also underlined by the use of the reflexive ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, which Paton translates as "they were all personally affected".

What motivates us to add a psychological, moral nuance to a concept that could easily be rendered by a more neutral meaning, such as that of 'showing one's regard [towards someone/something]'? It is perhaps our modern sensitivity, which demands greater internalization to describe Scipio's hesitation and sensitivity, or the senators' emotional involvement, or the ancient author's successful attempt to portray the involved parties' interiorization, for which Greek offered no other expression.

Another text in which the progressive shift is particularly evident, in my opinion, is a passage from the seventh book, in which King Philip V of Macedon asks Aratus for advice on treacherously occupying Messene's acropolis after a sacrifice to the gods. The Achaean politician's diplomatic response makes him desist from his purpose, and even succeeds in making King Philip ashamed of having ever contemplated such an idea.

In this case alone, Paton cannot resist the temptation to translate it as *to feel ashamed*, introducing the concept of shame, probably without many qualms.

Unfortunately, observations on the semantics of ἐντρέπομαι in Polybius's Greek are scarce and dated. In his 1911 study, Adolf Bonhöffer without any subtlety defines Polybius simply as a stoic, and this remains rather excessive. Nonetheless, Bonhöffer's semantic analysis of ἐντρέπομαι remains one of the sharpest, even if he fails to raise the problem I mentioned: namely when and in what measure are we allowed to postulate a reference to morality, possibly to the concept of shame, derived from the context of the psychological folding onto oneself expressed by ἐντρέπομαι?

I believe that the efforts by Polybius (and by the Greek language) to expand into this semantic area can be perceived in the passages that I have highlighted. These are 8 attestations altogether of the absolute use of ἐντρέπομαι, 5 of which correspond to a meaning of *ergriffen fühlen*, and among which I would also place the two examples that PL translates with *sich umstimmen lassen* (7.12.9, 11.4.6).

As demonstrated by Cairns and Konstan in recent years, albeit with different perspectives, the Greek language up to the classical age had two distinct concepts: that of modesty (αἰδώς) and that of shame (αἰσχύνη), which French (*pudeur*, *honte*) and German (*Scham*, *Schande*) also distinguish very well. This does not happen in English, however, which must resort to *sense of shame* [modesty] and *shame* respectively. The first feeling is chronologically earlier and actually indicates the fear of shame, which leads us to avoid reprehensible behavior, while the second notion instead describes the feeling of shame for a mistake one has already made. A very clear definition was given by Stephanus: "*aidos* pudor profectus ex verecundia, *aischyne* pudor profectus ex turpitude". In actual fact, Aristotle's use of αἰσχύνη already tends to conflate both meanings, also because of the progressive obsolescence and eventual disappearance of the archaic αἰδώς (Konstan).

The following, however, is a legitimate question: in which semantic context can one place ἐντρέπομαι and ἐντροπή, at least during the Hellenistic age? The answer must probably be sought

precisely in the void left by αἰδώς, and therefore in its meaning as 'respect', 'esteem, regard', and 'care', which sometimes connote something deeper and with a moral value, as in the case of Scipio's reaction and of Philip V of Macedon. What suggests it is not only an onomasiological argument, which would be weak in and of itself, but also and above all the contexts in which the term appears, as we have seen. This no longer entails the idea of fear, but rather a respect due to one's inner scrutiny. Self-respect is a condition that precedes shame, as it sets some guidelines for a status considered desirable by the individual, as stated by Gabriele Taylor in his beautiful book *Pride, Shame and Guilt* (1985), and -I would add- shared by a specific group or by society as a whole. The intransitive use of ἐντρέπομαι in the few cases attested in Polybius seems to go in this direction. The problem is that the definition of a common denominator for this new concept replacing αἰδώς, embodying respect and shame in Greek, would have taken a long time to take root. It would have effectively marked the transition from one stage of civilization to another. So far I have never appealed to the notion of guilt, which was absent in Greek. However, in the debated question of the opposition between *shame culture* and *guilt culture* initiated by Dodds and reviewed most recently by Cairns, I believe that it would be important to consider the fortunes of ἐντρέπομαι in Hellenistic and Imperial Greek.

Moreover, the fact that it was not a passing fad, but a lasting semantic development linked to the success of that lexeme is demonstrated by its usage in historiography by Diodorus Siculus, with 11 attestations for the verb, now assigning accusative exclusively, and 8 for the noun. The frequency of use of terms denoting shame in Diodorus is now as follows: αἰδώς (3x), ἐντροπή (8x), and αἰσχύνη (25x).

3. The *Septuagint* [or *Septuaginta*] and the *New Testament*

Even in the *Septuaginta*, the path whereby ἐντρέπομαι and ἐντροπή acquire an emotional and moral value passes through the progressive obsolescence and eventual disappearance of the notion of αἰδώς. On the one hand, αἰσχύνη definitely prevails as common usage (156 instances, including the verb and other co-radical words); however, along with αἰδέομαι and αἰδήμων, but excluding αἰδοῖα, αἰδώς, it is decidedly rarer and more literary (7x), and it is concentrated only in those books characterized by higher stylistic pretensions (*2, 3* and *4 Maccabees*).

The novelty in the *Septuaginta* is precisely the frequent use of ἐντρέπομαι (44 times counting only those in the passive aorist tense) and ἐντροπή (7 times). In this regard, Bonhöffer noted that, in the *Septuaginta*, interiorization is actually less evident than in Polybius: in the sense of entry *d* in the list above, the passive value prevails (*beschämt werden*, or even in a purely objective sense as in *zu Schanden werden*), while the more psychological and interiorized one of 'being ashamed, becoming discouraged' (*sich schämen, sich demütigen*) is rarer.

One has the impression that shame, or perhaps more precisely dishonor, in Judeo-Hellenistic usage is a heteronomous feeling, necessarily originating from the humiliation imposed by Jahvé, rather than from an autonomous sense of morality. Because of this basic reason, I believe that in the use of ἐντρέπομαι in the *Septuaginta*, the meaning 'to be shamed, to be humiliated', mostly at Jahvé's behest, tends to prevail over that of 'folding in onto oneself', 'being ashamed'. I would dare to count at least 25 cases out of 44 that can be highlighted as having this meaning, and an example among the many is that of the prophet Isaiah in the following passage:

Isaiah (50.7)

When in doubt, or when the verb is associated with synonyms, modern translators tend to equate ἐντραπῆναι with 'being confused', while still maintaining a passive sense. Examples of this kind are frequent in the *Psalms*.

A more intimate meaning comparable to our modern concept of shame, or at least to the Hellenistic Greek one found in Polybius, however, can be isolated -I believe- in about ten passages, mostly from the book of Ezra, Sirach, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. For example:

Sir. 4:25

As for the noun ἐντροπή in the *Septuaginta*, it is almost exclusively found the *Psalms*, except for one passage in the *Book of Job*. However, in 5 of the 7 texts in which it is attested, it is located in close proximity to αἰσχύνη and its meaning is by now similar to it, even if nuanced towards the material dimension of 'dishonor', as can be gleaned from the translation of the following passage from:

Psalm 34.26:

In this latter case, what is evident is the synonymous association between αἰσχύνη and **ἐντροπή**, both as a verb and as a noun, as well as the more purely objective sense of 'material shame', 'dishonor' (*in dem objectiven Sinn*) [possibly 'objektiven'?] attributed to it by Bonhöffer.

After the *Septuaginta*, examples in the *New Testament* are even more scarce. However, considering the very different total number of words, their frequency in the two works is comparable: 9 examples of the verb in the middle and passive voice, and 2 of the noun in the *New Testament*. There is, moreover, a significant novelty: the use of the verb in the active voice with a causative meaning in the first Letter of Paul to the Corinthians (4.14). It is, then, the same frequency for αἰσχύνη and αἰσχύνομαι, while the ancient root αἰδώς (or its co-radical verb) are only attested once in the First Epistle to Timothy (2.9).

4. The Imperial Age

This is as far as writers are concerned: but what about grammarians? The most ancient linguistic reflection on the new semantics of ἐντροπή is found during the Imperial Age, in the synonymy treatise *De differentia vocabolorum*, attributed to various authors, including Ptolemy (Heylbut p. 395), which recognizes an affinity between the concepts of αἰδώς καὶ αἰσχύνη based precisely on the commonality of ἐντροπή ('respect', and therefore 'modesty'):

[THERE IS NOTHING MARKING THE LOCATION OF THE PASSAGE BETWEEN THESE TWO PARAGRAPHS, UNLIKE PREVIOUS EXAMPLES]

The testimony of Apollonius the Sophist is also significant: in his *Lexicon Homericum* the explanation ἐντρέπεσθαι is given for the entry αἰδεῖσθαι. Apollonius, however, provides a useful gloss to understand the polysemy still implicit in ἐντροπή, whose primary meaning must have been 'attentive gaze', 'regard'. In fact, he uses that word to explain the Homeric term ὀπωπή 'sight', 'gaze'. Even Herodian, the grammarian, explains αἰδώς through the synonym ἐντροπή, and shortly afterwards also mentions another adjective, ἐντροπικός 'shy', which was however destined for total failure in literature.

This synonymous association soon entered literature: already in the first century CE, it is possible to find authors who couple αἰδώς and ἐντροπή as a dittology. The first one is probably Philo (*Quaestiones in Genesim*), who is soon followed by Flavius Josephus (2 times out of 8 attestations).

This development also leads to the emergence of the adjective ἐντρεπτικός, which can be traced back to the I-II century CE. It is interesting to highlight its causative meaning: ἐντρεπτικός refers to an awe-inspiring person or thing, not one that is cowed by awe, and therefore one who

feels shame. The earliest example is probably to be found in the philosopher Epictetus (3x), in one of his *Discourses* entitled 'Against the Academics' (9): it is used three times in the neutral with the meaning of 'moral sense', which is remarkable even just because it comes from a stoic philosopher who probably makes frequent use of the word αἰδώς with a meaning congruent with the modern one of conscience (Kamtekar 1998).

Peculiarly, however, this adjective did not have an immediate success, quite the opposite, actually. Except for a single attestation in Ælianus, its real literary boom only starts from the fourth century CE onwards with Christian authors (we find it in John Chrysostom a total of 54 times, and he is not alone in using it so frequently).

In actual fact, just when the psychological value of ἐντροπή and ἐντρέπομαι seems to have been established, and used by Paul even with a causative meaning, the authors of the Imperial Age began to avoid its use, albeit with duly noted exceptions, such as that of the pseudo-Hippocratic treatise περὶ εὐσχημοσύνης, *De decenti habitu* (5), written between the first and second centuries CE, which includes modesty among the physician's other moral prerequisites.

On the other hand, anyone who expected to find the concepts of ἐντροπὲ, ἐντρέπομαι or ἐντρεπτικός in authors prone to intimate and moral considerations such as the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Julian to mention but two of the classics of the Imperial Age, will surely be disappointed. There is not even a single example: one finds instead the learned and conscious use of the ancient epic terminology of morality, based on αἰδώς. Just in Marcus Aurelius one finds 29 occurrences of αἰδώς, of the verb αἰδέομαι and of the co-radical adjectives (αἰδέσιμος, αἰδήμων). A similar tally can be carried out in the texts written by the modest Julian.

With the Second Sophistic, the erudite reaction towards many semantic and lexical developments of the Hellenistic age definitively succeeded in effacing any trace of spoken Greek and in making a large number of innovations disappear from (or simply not enter) the literary language. Among them are ἐντρέπομαι and ἐντροπή with their emotional value. This, however, could not happen in the language of the inscriptions, at least not in those without any literary pretensions. For instance, in a long epigraph dated to the second century CE, found in Palestine at Tell Sandahannah and published in 1902 by R. Wünsch, one can read about a man held in captivity for three years who asks his correspondent for help and compassion, asking him not to reject his request and to learn about his story "*avec compassion*" (ἀλ 'ἐντρεπόμενος ἴσθι τἀμά).

The Greeks of the Hellenistic and Imperial Age no longer spontaneously felt that sense of respect and reverence for the Homeric concept of αἰδώς, but rather reserved it for the learned language. If idealistic categories can still be used to some extent, it had already been a long time since Greek speakers had begun the concept's journey of self-reflection and folding onto itself that modern linguists call *subjectification*. This journey was to take it from ἐντρέπομαι with the meaning of 'I worry' already attested in Homer, through ἐντροπή 'care, respect, esteem', and lastly to the neo-Greek use of ντροπή 'shame' and ντρέπομαι 'I am ashamed'.