

## Rethinking Homer from a Theory of Alterity: αἰδώς as a Function of the Other

One of the main drivers of the acts of Homeric's heroes is αἰδώς, the noun that means "shame" as well as "respect", in regard to a feeling directed outside, towards the Others. Acknowledgement, which is mainly shown through the war prizes that each hero owns as well as through the memories of the hero's great deeds, which elevate his epic fame (κλέος), depends always on the Other. Thus, the hero, to know who he is, must rely on what the Others say or remember about him. As J. P. Vernant has put it (1974, 1989, 2004), only in this way will he be able to recognize and know himself.

In this work, I make use of the theoretical framework developed by the Lithuanian philosopher E. Levinas (1971, 1982), according to whom the relationships with the Other should be based on the responsibility of the "I" with the "Other" and not in the domination (the "I" over the "Other"). With Levinas as a starting point, I study different scenes of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in which shame and acknowledgement appear governing the relationships with the "contemporaneous others", those with whom the heroes share time and community –understanding it in a narrow sense as small-scale local group or in a broader sense as the whole group of Achaeans. I also question what sorts of formerly unrecognized groups can constitute Others in Homer.

I will integrate such new insights into Homeric poetry with the work of E. R. Dodds (1951), who was the first to show that the society depicted in Homeric poems could be understood as a "shame-culture", as opposed to a later "guilt-culture". That the feeling of shame explicitly involves the Other will be analyzed in this paper through several prime examples (i.e. *Il.* V 529-532, *Il.* V 887, *Il.* XV 657-658, *Il.* XV 661-662, *Od.* XX 169-171, *Od.* XX 343-344, *Od.* XXI 323). In addition to the observations by Dodds, I utilize the work of E. Benveniste (1969), who has noted that every moral term in Homeric epic has, in fact, a

social role; and also that of W. Jaeger (1986), regarding the position of Homeric man and his awareness of value only through recognition of the society to which he belongs.

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