Moral and social values from Ancient Greek Tragedy
Ηθικές και κοινωνικές αξίες από την Αρχαία Ελληνική Τραγωδία

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Περίληψη
Η παρουσίαση για τις «ηθικές και κοινωνικές αξίες από την Αρχαία Ελληνική Τραγωδία» ασχολείται παγκοσμίως με την ιστορία των ανθρώπων και κοινωνικών αξιών από τον Όμηρο και τον Ηείς, ως στο τέλος του πέμπτου αιώνα. Οι ηθικές και κοινωνικές αντιλήψεις που εκφράζονται σε ορισμένα βασικά κείμενα των τριών μεγάλων τραγικών ποιητών (Αισχύλος, Σοφοκλή και του Ευριπίδη). Στην αρχαίη Ελλάδα, ένα άτομο επαινείται για την παρουσία του στον πόλεμο και στη δημόσια ζωή. Η σύνεση και η μετριοπάθεια είναι προαπαιτούμενες της αρετής. Η σύγκρουση της βίας και της πειθούς ήταν συνεχής στην ελληνική σκέψη. Στα έργα του Σοφοκλή, ο ηρωικός χαρακτήρας έρχεται αντιμέτωπος με την ευπάθεια του ανθρώπου με το χρόνο. Ο Ευριπίδης, «ο πιο τραγικός των ποιητών», σύμφωνα με τον Αριστοτέλη, απεικονίζει τη σκληρότητα και τη βία του πολέμου. Οι σοφιστές απέρριψαν τη διακρίσεις στην κοινωνία. Οι ηθικές αρετές και όχι η πλούτος ή η ευγενική καταγωγή προσδιορίζουν την ανθρώπινη προσωπικότητα. Κατά συνέπεια, ήταν υπό στης σημασία ότι οι πολίτες πρέπει να τιμούν τη δικαιοσύνη στις σχέσεις τους ο ένας με τον άλλο.

Η εργασία αυτή επικεντρώνεται ιδιαίτερα στη σημαντική διάκριση μεταξύ των ανταγωνιστικών αξιών, όπως ο πλούτος και η ευγενική καταγωγή, και τις συνεργατικές, όπως εκφράζονται στις έννοιες της δικαιοσύνης, της σοφίας, της εγκράτειας, της σεμνότητας και της ευγένειας του χαρακτήρα, καθώς και το σεβασμό για τα νόμιμα και τα ανθρώπινα και πολιτικά δικαιώματα, που διαμόρφωσαν την ανάπτυξη της δημοκρατίας.

Abstract
The presentation on the “Moral and social values from Ancient Greek Tragedy” deals globally with the history of human and social values from Homer and Hesiod to the end of the fifth century. Special emphasis is given on the moral and social concepts expressed in some fundamental texts of the three major tragic poets (Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides). In archaic Greece, an individual is praised for his presence in war and in public life. Prudence and moderation are prerequisites of aretē. The conflict of violence and persuasion was constant in Greek thought. In the works of Sophocles, the heroic status is confronted with man’s vulnerability to time. Euripides, “the most tragic of the poets” according to Aristotle, depicted the cruelty and the violence of war. The sophists had rejected the distinctions in society. Moral virtues and not wealth or noble origin determine human personality. Consequently, it was of the
utmost importance that the citizens should esteem justice in their relationships with each other.

The paper is particularly focused on the significant discrimination between the competitive values, such as wealth and noble origin, and the cooperative ones, expressed in the concepts of justice, wisdom, temperance, modesty, and nobility of character, as well as the respect for the law and the human and political rights, which shaped the development of democracy.

The most powerful words to commend an individual from the Homeric society to the fifth century B.C., the era of the Greek tragedy, are the adjectives *agathos* and *esthlos*, and the excellence of *aretē*, ‘virtue’. In Homer, *agathos* in particular commends a man who is of high birth, rich, brave and handsome. Achilles, the most effective and successful fighter, provides a model for such a character-portrayal. The Homeric *agathos*-character, the morally ideal character comprises the main competitive values: bravery and courage, strength, wealth and high birth.

The Homeric epic poetry focuses on the *agathos* hero; the opposite, *kakoi*, bad characters hardly exist and are very rarely mentioned. Agamemnon and Achilles, behaving in the way they behaved to Achilles and Hector respectively, are typical *agathoi*. Co-operative excellences and behaviour as they are known from tragedy and particularly Greek moral philosophy, such as temperance (*sophrosynē*), prudence (*phronesēs*) and justice (*dikaiosynē*) were much less esteemed.

The *agathos* in Homer primarily possesses *timē*, ‘honour’, and powerfully defends it, as Achilles did. The *agathos* also possesses friendship, *philia*, particularly guest friendship and care for another who needs help, a foreigner or a suppliant (*hiketēs*). If friendship, *philia* and *philotēs* provide a fundamental co-operative excellence in Homeric society, *aidōs*, ‘decency’, expresses failing to do something of which society approves and which secures the moral coherence of the Homeric world.

Homeric gods have similar values to those of the Homeric heroes: *timē* (honour), since they demand to be honoured with temples and offerings, and hence, close relationship, *philotēs* between man and gods is assured. Such a concept lasted for long until the period of tragedy (cf. Hippolytus’ honour for Artemis). On the other hand, if a god is not honoured by an individual, his punishment is powerful and violent (cf. Aphrodite’s punishment on Hippolytus and that of Dionysus on Pentheus). The jealousy of the gods, the *pthonos theōn*, is thus inevitably fulfilled. The most powerful values of the Homeric society commend success in peace and war, and prosperity and stability in family (*oikos*) and community. Gods pay little atten-

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3 Adkins 1972, 18.
tion to acts of injustice between men and they don’t commend just behaviour. The coherence of the Homeric world is thus mainly based on competitive values.

From Hesiod to the end of the sixth century, a new world arises. Though the wealthy possessors of land prevail in society and wealth is still a prerequisite for agathos, two new value-terms predominate in the Works and Days of Hesiod: dikê (justice) and ergasia (working); ‘work is no disgrace, it is idleness that is a disgrace’ (v. 311)\(^4\). ‘The immortal gods’, Hesiod says to Perses, his brother (Works and Days 289ff.), ‘have set sweat in the way of attaining aretê’; and a path leads to it that is long and steep, and rough too at first, but when one reaches the summit, then aretê is easy to possess, though before, it was difficult. Without effort and work, aretê cannot be achieved. ‘By working, men become dearer to the gods’ (v. 309). Aretê and fame (kûdos) accompany wealth (v. 314). Wealth, a traditionally competitive value-term, still prevails in Hesiod, associated with aretê. Such a co-existence will predominate in Ancient Greek ethics, until its total disruption by Socrates and Plato.

Justice, ‘Dikê’, seated by Zeus, her father, secures prosperity, since the unjust men do not prosper. The more beneficial to oneself’s road is to go towards justice, for Justice beats hubris, ‘arrogance’, when she comes to the end of the course (vv. 213 ff.). The gods reward the just and punish the unjust.

Zeus punishes hubris, a concept which after Hesiod predominates in Aeschylus, especially in the Persae. Hesiod for the first time suggests that violence and cruelty are unsuited to civilized human beings. Such a belief is vividly expressed in the story of the hawk and the nightingale\(^5\). Dikê, ‘justice’, distinguishes human beings from animals. The eye of Zeus sees and observes everything and nothing escapes him (267 ff.). Justice is a clear co-operative moral value in Hesiod.

The co-operative excellence of bravery and courage commends the agathos as the man successful in battle in Tyrtaeus. Aretê leads a warrior to be ready to die fighting bravely for his city.

In archaic Greece, an individual is praised for his remarkable presence in war and in public life. Wealth secures effectiveness in society while poverty deprives him of prestige. On the other hand, prudence (phronësis) and moderation (metron and temperance) are prerequisites of aretê. A conjunction, thus, of competitive and co-operative value-terms form the superior excellence aretê in lyric poetry and in the archaic era.

In Theognis’ poems a remarkable advice for the age’s morality is expressed (145 ff.): “Be willing to be a pious man and dwell with little wealth rather than be wealthy with possessions unjustly acquired. The whole of aretê is summed up in dikaiosynê (‘justice’). Every man is agathos if he is dikaios (‘just’)\(^7\). The Platonic concept of justice in the Republic is foreshadowed almost three centuries before.

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\(^5\) Adkins 1972, 30.

\(^6\) See West 1978 ad loc. Cf. also Bezantakos et al. 2007, 342ff.

\(^7\) See also 315ff.: “many kakoi are rich and many agathoi are poor; but we will not take wealth in exchange for our aretê”, transl. Adkins 1970, 76.
The value term of justice leads to Solon’s *Eunomia*, ‘sound government’. Solon by his reforms released the small farmers of sixth-century Attica from their debts, giving thus a clear image of just and law-abiding government. Solon’s *Eunomia* provided a fundamental catchword before the development of the Athenian democracy.

The opposite to *Eunomia*, ‘governing with justice’, is *hubris*, ‘arrogance’, personified in Xerxes’ attempt to conquer a free country. We enter the area of tragedy with Aeschylus’ *Persians*. Justice, ‘*dikaiosynē*’, commends what is fair and just for all. Nevertheless, Thrasymachus defined (Pl. *Republic* 338d ff.) as just ‘what is in my own interest’. *Hubris* meaning ‘getting above one’s *moira*, above the limits of what is due to him’, complies with Thrasymachus’ definition of justice. *Hubris* creates *atē*, ‘infatuation’, caused by blindness sent by the gods as the punishment of guilty rashness. The ghost of Darius exclaims in A. *Persae* 821 ff. referring to the disaster of the Persians troops at Salamis: “*Hubris* has flowered and borne a crop of *atē* whence it is reaping a harvest of woe” (821-22). “Seeing that such are the penalties, remember Athens and Greece, and let no-one…. be struck with desire for more… For Zeus, a heavy chastiser is near as a punisher of minds that boast too much” (827-828, transl. Adkins, 1972, 85-86). *Hubris* means transgressing the limits permitted by gods to men.

*Hubris* opposes to the prevailing ideas of measure, wisdom and self-knowledge ordered by Apollo, the god of Delphi, foreshadowing the development of Athenian democracy. In the *Persae*, patriotic exultation takes second place to the religious interpretation of a remarkable historic event held at Salamis. Divine retribution, especially the punishment of Persians and Xerxes for their impiety and sacrilege, moves the play. Darius instructs the moral order upheld by Zeus as the chastener of impious minds and foretells the great disaster of the Persians at Plataea (vv. 800-831).

The punishment (*Nemesis*) of *hubris*, the blind insolence, and of *atē*, infatuation, which form the tripartite expression of the tragic action, provides the kernel of the religious and political dimension of the play, as focused on Darius’ presence which is thematically the central feature of the play. *Hubris* and impious thoughts (v. 808 ff.) lead the Persians to destroy the temples of the gods in Greece. The Persians “have got above themselves”8. Aeschylus commends the proud claims of the free law-abiding Greeks for equal laws (*isonomia*) and free speech (*isigoria*), the people who ‘are not slaves or subjects of anyone’ (v. 242). There is only one master over them called Law, as Demaratus had said to Xerxes (Hrdt. 7.103-104).

The justice of Zeus provides the cornerstone of the *Persae* reaching its fuller expression in the *Agamemnon*, the first play of the *Oresteia*. The trilogy reveals a global dramatic exploration of the nature of justice, human and divine9. In both cases, justice is a matter of retribution, of retaliation (*talio*). Agamemnon is punished for the sacrifice of Iphigeneia, Clytemnestra for his murder and the avenger must be her son Orestes acting at the command of Apollo but pursued by Erinyes, the Furies, demanding his due punishment for the matricide. The doer shall suffer ‘*pathein ton exanta*’ (v. 1564). Experience, knowledge and morality is a result of strong misfortunes: “learning by suffering” are the morals of the hymn to

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8 Thus aptly Adkins 1972, 86.
Zeus in the parodos of the Agamemnon (vv.176-178). Zeus will punish the wrong doer and has the power to lead men to learn by suffering. With Zeus in the Agamemnon came a new couple of cooperative values: synesis and sophrosynē, ‘wisdom’ and ‘temperance’. The compound mnēsipēmōn ponos in the parodos of the Agamemnon (v. 180) denotes the pain from the memory of the sufferings that brings to wisdom. In Aeschylus dikē, justice, is directly associated with retributive acts. Guilt produces fresh guilt and such a situation is attributed to an evil spirit for whom the terms daimôn, alastōr and Erinyes, ‘Furies’, are used: Clytemnestra is identified to an alastōr for Agamemnon, and to madness, the beginning of disaster for her family. By treading on purple, Agamemnon provoked the jealousy of the gods, caused hubris and was blinded by atē. “He changed his mind so as to be utterly unscrupulous” (v. 221)10.

From the arbitrary monarchy of the Agamemnon to the law-abiding democratic governing of the Eumenides, the progress in morality and politics was remarkable.

In the Oresteia, the Aeschylean trilogy, the action is progressive, culminating in murder, a vengeance, and a trial. The Law of Justice penetrates the trilogy. Apollo orders Orestes to avenge his father’s death by killing his mother; the Furies chased him, revealing Apollo for helping a murderer. However, the doctrine of the ‘doer shall suffer’ is not applied to Orestes. Athena –this is very important– decides that there must be a trial and an examination into motives and circumstances. The mechanical retribution and punishment is abolished. Erinyes representing the law of blind retribution, the law of nature, a rigid punitive justice, became Eumenides, beneficial spirits protecting the city of Athens. In Aeschylus divine and human causes operate simultaneously, “the divine justice accomplishes itself through human motivation”11. In a context of democratic Athens, Athene brings persuasion (peithō) and reconciliation both in gods (Apollo and Erinyes) and between gods and men (Erinyes and Orestes).

The conflict of violence and persuasion was constant in Greek thinking. Athene succeeded in replacing violence, revenge and brutality by peaceful dialogue and democratic order. The superior court of Areios Pagos, as Athene proclaims, becomes “the fortress and salvation of the city” (v. 701). The citizens should protect its prestige with the respect and the feeling of justice deriving from the fear of the Law (Eum. v. 700). The fear for the illegal thus ensures that justice is maintained: “Who is safe from sin if he has no fear and reverence for God and Justice?” (v. 699).

The coherence of democracy is thus achieved, since the respect of the Law and of the law-court, justice averts both from tyranny (despoteia) and anarchy (anarchia); it secures justice among the citizens and the moral governing of the City. “Approve neither a life of anarchy, nor one subject to master. The god gives power to moderation... hubris is in truth the child of impiety... revere the altar of justice (dikē). He who of his own free will, without compulsion, is dikaios (just) shall be prosperous (olvios)” (vv. 526-551). Athene will echo these admonitions of the chorus (vv. 696-698) and the reconciliation of old and new institutions is achieved. The Furies, the Erinyes, were substituted by Eumenides, beneficent spirits for Athens, and democracy was powerfully established. The co-operative values of justice and moderation are commended in the Aeschylean drama as the cornerstone of democratic institutions.

11 Thus aptly Winnington-Ingram 1985, 294.
In Sophocles, the heroic status is confronted with man’s vulnerability to time and circumstance. Man is brave, clever, with moral qualities and faces suffering with endurance\textsuperscript{12}. The heroic code and the concept of \textit{sophrosyne}, ‘temperance, wisdom’, characterize many Sophoclean heroes, such as Oedipus and Antigone. The question of crime and punishment is not central to Sophoclean tragedy, as it was in Aeschylus. Action is mainly anthropocentric. Electra and Orestes regard as their own duty to take revenge of their father’s murder. After the matricide, there is no regret, no remorse as in Euripides.

In \textit{Ajax} the Homeric ideal of honour finds its highest expression. The hero’s death to defend his honour (\textit{time}) reveals both the moral value and the fragility of man\textsuperscript{13}. The play is built on the combination of heavy wrong-doing - Ajax in madness tried to kill the Achaeans - and of ultimate nobility - finally in humiliation, he committed suicide to save his honour. Athene punishes Ajax for his arrogance (\textit{hubris}) and wishes him, as we saw also in Aeschylus’ \textit{Agamemnon}, to learn wisdom by experience through suffering. Sophocles commends the co-operative value of modesty and the way of life with respect for the gods that leads to man’s happiness.

The mutability of human fortune provides thus a central motif in the dramatic action of Sophoclean plays. Nothing remains as it is, except the gods and their eternal laws. The antithesis between the divine, unwritten laws, commending the reverence for the gods, the parents, the suppliants, and the dead, and the written human laws in the \textit{Antigone} points to the values of democratic governing as opposed to the arbitrary expression of the ruler’s decision and intolerance. Antigone makes a noble defense to Creon, states her case against his accusation of breaking the law of the state and justifies herself by appealing to the sacred, unwritten laws, whose life lasts forever and no one knows whence they came (vv. 450-457). She knows that the laws of the gods are the basis of human order and morality. On the other hand, Sophocles depicts Creon as the strict ruler and the kind of man thinking that he knows more than the gods, a man who wrongly accuses others of faults which are his own\textsuperscript{14} and which lead to his own and his family’s disaster.

The inviolable laws of the gods defended by Antigone are broken when Oedipus in Sophocles’ \textit{Oedipus Tyrannus} kills his father and marries his mother. As Oedipus comes to see the truth, to realize his real destiny and to punish himself for his past actions and especially for his \textit{hamartia} in Aristotle’s sense (\textit{Poet.} 13, 1453a14-17), his peace with the gods is achieved and through his suffering the rightful, moral harmony of things is restored.

Divine benevolence and human respect for the suppliant finds its fullest expression in the last play of Sophocles, produced post-mortem by his grandson.

In \textit{Oedipus at Colonus} the poet evokes the powerful feeling of holiness in his description of the sanctity of Colonus and the grove of the Eumenides. Theseus, the personification of a democratic ruler, offers to the \textit{apoptolin}, the ‘homeless,’ blind Oedipus home and city rendering him \textit{empolin} (v. 637), ‘a dweller in the city of Athens’. Sophocles bridges the gap between the blind outcast who knows himself to be an incestuous patricide and the potent, beneficent spirit for Athens, transforming Oedipus into a hero. At the end of his long life Sophocles


\textsuperscript{13} Cf., indicatively, Easterling 1985, 302-303.

\textsuperscript{14} Thus aptly Bowra 1964, 115.
confronted his war-worn people with his vision of a heroic individual sustaining Attica by his moral presence\textsuperscript{15}.

Tragic texts show that Democracy developed according to a new morality that followed the aristocratic morals of the archaic era. The moral approach does not commend and evaluate human beings on the basis of their own noble origins and wealth but taking into account the fundamental moral, co-operative excellences of justice, piety and wisdom. This change is clear in the last Sophoclean and Euripidean plays. Neoptolemus in Sophocles’ \textit{Philoctetes} provides the symbol of an ideal young man in a law-abiding city, founded on the principles of the humanitarian feelings and social justice. From the morality of competition in the Homeric and the archaic period, dramatic poetry and especially Euripides, as we will see, foreshadows the ethics of Socrates.

The sophists whose influence on Euripides’ thinking is obvious had rejected the distinctions in society. Moral virtues and not wealth and noble origin determine human personality.

In later fifth-century literature values determining the \textit{aretē}-group were redefined to commend human behaviour in accordance with co-operative excellences or to decry deviations from such excellences\textsuperscript{16}. If one acts with injustice is not an \textit{agathos}. The man possessing \textit{aretē}, the \textit{agathos}, is the law-abiding, righteous and pious man. Such a usage of \textit{agathos} determined with co-operative values is frequent in Euripides and the later plays of Sophocles. The change from competitive to co-operative values has in this period been completed.

In \textit{E. Orestes}, a play of 408 B.C., Orestes has just discovered that the \textit{autourgos}, the husbandman, the working farmer, has respected Electra given to him as wife by Aegisthus to prevent any usurpation to his throne. Orestes (vv. 367ff.) identifies the husbandman with a real \textit{aristos}: he is not a wealthy man, not a man of noble origin, but he is brave, just and self-controlled, \textit{eugenēs}, concludes Euripides via Orestes, namely, a ‘noble man’, determined by his good behaviour and justice. Similarly, another working farmer defends Orestes in his trial in the court of the Argives. He is also an individual endowed with wisdom and nobility of character, a manly man, not a man of noble origin or physically good-looking, but intelligent, uncorrupted, self-disciplined to a life above reproach (vv. 918-922).

The \textit{aretē} of a citizen is determined in Euripidean drama by moral values not of social distinctions such as wealth and aristocratic origin, foreshadowing the moral and political thinking of fourth-century moral philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle.

Orestes adds on the \textit{agathos} husbandman (vv. 386ff: “… such men administer well not only their own households but also their cities. The real value of a man lies in his \textit{physis} (‘character’) and especially in his \textit{eupsychia} (‘his excellence of spirit’)\textsuperscript{17}. Self control and justice render a man decent at the administration of his city, what Protagoras called political art. \textit{Aretē} commends the most highly valued qualities, necessary for the well-being of the city. “The greatest honour to be given to those able to observe the written pronouncement of their good legislators” says Plato in the \textit{Laws} (922a). In Plato’s \textit{Meno} 71 e, the citizen’s contribution to the prosperity of the city is clearly expressed: “a man’s \textit{aretē} is to be capable of taking an


\textsuperscript{16} Adkins 1972, 99ff, for a thorough analysis with good examples.

active part in politics, of helping the City’s friends and harming its enemies”. This is exactly what Thucydides commends as *philopragmosynē* (‘remain active in the governing of the City’), decrying the abstention from the City’s affairs (*apragmosynē*) (Th. II 63.3).

The well-being of the city and the law-abiding government, entailing the moral development of both the citizens and the City as a whole, is most vividly pointed out in two clearly political plays of Euripides: The *Heraclidae*, ‘the Children of Heracles’, and the *Suppliant Women* which reveal outstanding dimensions of democratic governing: the protection of the suppliants and the attribution of the traditional respect to the dead.

In these two Euripidean plays the values of the Athenian democracy are depicted in the protection of human rights, especially of those oppressed by regimes. Theseus powerfully replies to the Theban messenger of Creon (vv. 524-25, 534-40) who refuses the burial of the Seven leaders: “Now let the dead be buried... and let each element return to the place from where it came... allow the burial of the dead, maintaining the custom of all the Greeks. Justice has run its course”. The Argives’ death was just but now they have right to burial\(^{18}\).

In the *Suppliant Women*, man’s existence is secure on the premise that he preserves the *cosmos*, namely the moral and ethical order which the state ordains\(^{19}\). Democracy, especially the values of human freedom and equality in the eye of the law are commended and the oppressive domination of tyranny is decried in the epigrammatic apostrophe of Theseus (vv. 429-32): “There is nothing more hostile to the city than a tyrant... There are no common laws in such a city and one man keeping the law in his own hands rules arbitrarily. This is unjust. When the laws are written, both the powerless and the rich have equal access to justice”.

Contrary to this praise of democracy in the plays of Euripides during the second decade of the Peloponnesian War, especially in the *Troades*, human sufferings of war are considered to result from man’s insanity. Euripides, “the most tragic of the poets” according to Aristotle (*Poet.* 13, 1453a30), depicted the cruelty and the violence of war from the aspect of the defeated women of Troy: The dedicated virgin, princess Cassandra, taken as a mistress by Agamemnon, Andromache who is given as a concubine to Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, her husband’s killer, Andromache whose infant Astyanax is thrown from the walls of Troy, and, above all, Hecuba, the respectable old queen of Troy lamenting the death of her daughter Polyxena and her grandson Astyanax. Hecuba’s lament for the dead Astyanax, pointing to the powerful victors’ unreasonable fear for the powerless infant, shows the vanity of such crimes at war.

Aeschylus in the *Persae* faced the war as a triumph of a just struggle against injustice, while Euripides, on the contrary, some years after the praise of democracy in the *Suppliant Women*, in the *Troades* stressed the disaster caused by human insanity and by arrogant men, trespassing their moral boundaries\(^{20}\).

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\(^{19}\) Xanthakis-Karamanos 1980, 115.


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The futility of a war for nothing is also strongly censured in the chorus of Helen, another later play of Euripides (vv. 1151-1154). Nevertheless, the anti-war atmosphere with the strong emphasis on inhumanity and violence in the Troades associated this play of 415 B.C., namely in the heart of the Peloponnesian War, with the incident of the island of Melos, held at the same year. Euripides’ morality must have been really shocked by the cruelty of the Athenians towards the inhabitants of Melos wishing their autonomy.

Concluding, the change in ethics can be clearly observed in the fifth-century dramatic poetry, especially tragedy\(^2\). It has been shown that for the continued existence and well-being of the city-state it was of the utmost importance that the citizens should esteem co-operative values, and particularly justice in their relationships with each other.

After the political upheavals of Athens in the closing years of the Peloponnesian War, it was necessary to strengthen such a belief in social justice and morality. A Plato and an Aristotle were needed.

Nevertheless, even before the flourishing development of fourth-century philosophy, equal rights of speech (isigoria), equality before the law (isonomia), observance of the laws and the institutions of democracy, respect for human and political rights and social justice are the everlasting moral and social values that the texts of Ancient Greek tragedy powerfully reveal. These principles which forged the concept of democracy are the heritage of Greek antiquity to our modern world.

Article Citation


\(^2\)Adkins (1972, 113) cites passages already from A. Supp. 402ff. (confined to generalizations) and S. Ajax 132f. and underlines the frequency of co-operative excellences in the later plays of Sophocles and particularly in Euripides.