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ON THE CONCEPT OF *BARBARIAN* IN AELIUS ARISTIDES*

To Phanis J. Kakridis

Abstract: Aelius Aristides, writing under Roman rule, employs in both his declamatory and contemporary works the term *barbarian* and the polarity *Greek – barbarian*. The historical background under which he composed his work has apparently affected his treatment of these issues causing the transformation of their traditional meaning in some cases. Thus, the dichotomy *Greeks – barbarians* has been silently replaced by the trichotomy *Greeks – barbarians – Romans*, or by the opposition *Romans – non-Romans*, even though Aristides keeps using the traditional polarity *Greeks – barbarians*. Overall, the semantic field of the terms under discussion comprises traditional as well as novel concepts of them. The conventional notion of the inferiority of barbarians is still operative, some qualification of the concept of the inferior barbarian notwithstanding. Alongside, several “neutral” instances of the term *barbarian* and of the opposition *Greek – barbarian* do not imply anything derogatory. Moreover, a novel concept of the dichotomy *Greek – barbarian* designates the entire world sharing common values. Finally, the dichotomy *Greek – barbarian* is transcended by the introduction of the concept *the common race of men*. Ambiguity, tension and irony seem to underline such a diversity in the use of these traditional terms.

Key words: barbarian, Greek – barbarian opposition, inferiority, transcendence, tension

Περίληψη: Ο Αίλιος Αριστείδης, ρήτορας της Β΄ Σοφιστικής υπό ρωμαϊκήν κυριαρχίαν, χρησιμοποιοῦν τὸν παραδοσιακὸν ὄρον *βάρβαρος* καὶ τὴν ἐξίσου παραδοσιακὴν ἀντίθεση *Ἕλληνας – βάρβαρος* τόσο σε ἔργα του με «ιστορικὸν» περιε-

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χόμενο όσο και σε σύγχρονα έργα. Ο ρήτορας, υπό το πρίσμα της εποχής του, διαφοροποιεί, σε ορισμένες περιπτώσεις, τη σημασία του όρου *βάρβαρος* και της αντίθεσης *Έλληνας – βάρβαρος*. Έτσι η διχοτόμηση *Έλληνες – βάρβαροι* έχει σιωπηλά αντικατασταθεί από την τριχοτόμηση *Έλληνες – βάρβαροι – Ρωμαίοι*, ή από την αντίθεση *Ρωμαίοι – μη-Ρωμαίοι*, αν και ο Αριστείδης εξακολουθεί να χρησιμοποιεί την παραδοσιακή αντίθεση *Έλληνες – βάρβαροι*. Γενικά, οι υπό συζήτηση όροι αναφέρονται τόσο σε παραδοσιακές όσο και σε νέες σημασίες τους. Η συμβατική αντίληψη για την κατωτερότητα των βαρβάρων ισχύει ακόμα, αν και ορισμένες φορές η έννοια του κατώτερου βάρβαρου γίνεται κάπως σχετική. Παράλληλα, αρκετές «ουδέτερες» περιπτώσεις του όρου *βάρβαρος* και της αντίθεσης *Έλληνες – βάρβαροι* δεν συνεπάγονται τίποτε το υποτιμητικό. Επιπλέον, η αντίθεση *Έλληνες – βάρβαροι* αποκτά νέα σημασία, καθώς δηλώνει ολόκληρη την ανθρωπότητα που μοιράζεται κοινές αξίες. Τελικά, η αντίθεση αυτή ξεπερνιέται με αναφορά στο *κοινὸν γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων*. Ένταση, ειρωνεία και αμφισημία φαίνεται να χαρακτηρίζουν τις πολλαπλές χρήσεις των παραδοσιακών αυτών εννοιών από τον Αριστείδη.

Λέξεις-κλειδιά: βάρβαρος, αντίθεση Έλληνας – βάρβαρος, κατωτερότητα, υπέρβαση, ένταση

INTRODUCTION

The orator Aelius Aristides (AD117- after 180) quite often employs the term *barbarian* and the polarity *Greek – barbarian*. As is well-known, initially the onomatopoeic epithet *βάρβαρος*, *barbarian*, referred to somebody who spoke incomprehensibly, that is non-Greek. Before the fifth century BC it was used exclusively as an adjective in regard to language: barbarian is the non-Greek, the foreign language speaker. Homer never uses this word, he only attributes the compound adjective *βαρβαρόφωνος*, “foreign speaker” to Carians (*Il*.2.867). Likewise, before the fifth century BC, *βάρβαρος* was never used in the plural as a noun to designate all foreigners, that is the non-Greeks, the barbarians. Nor had it as yet acquired a derogatory meaning.¹ In the early classical period however, due to the impetus of the Persian wars in particular, the word *barbarian* came to mean *slave*, with all the connotations of inferiority that such a concept implies.

1. See, for example, Hall 1989, pp. 4, 9.

The decisive factor for the prevalence of the view of the barbarians' slavery, which to a great extent caused the chasm that would bring about the separation of the Greeks from the barbarians, was the Greek victory over the Persians. Indeed, Aeschylus' *Persians* provide by implication the oldest evidence of the fundamental opposition *Greek – barbarian*, according to which Greeks equal free whereas the barbarians are the equivalent of slave (241-2).² Aristides however is writing under Roman rule, where the Greeks, in spite of their more or less privileged treatment by the imperial Romans, had long ago lost their freedom. In the light of such a historical background, some questions cannot help but be raised regarding the treatment by Aristides of the concept of *barbarian* and of the polarity *Greek – barbarian*. But it seems worthwhile to make some preliminary remarks concerning their employment by Aristides. Notably, he uses these terms in both his declamatory, "historical" works as, for example, the *On Sending Reinforcements to Those in Sicily* (5 Lenz-Behr), and in speeches dealing with contemporary events, like, for example, *To the Cities on Concord* (23 Keil);³ it follows then that, in discussing Aristides' works, the "dramatic" time of each speech should be taken into consideration. The frequency of the occurrence of the term *barbarian* and of the antithesis *Greek – barbarian* is far greater in speeches that glorify Greek past successes and are addressed to Greek audiences like, for example, in the *Panathenaic Oration* (1) than in *To Rome* (26), addressed to Roman audience,⁴ or in speeches which deal with con-

2. See, for example, Schlaifer 1960, p. 94; Synodinou 1977, pp. 37, 43-44; Hall 1989, pp. 16, 58-59. Cf. Isaac 2004, pp. 269-276, and *passim*, who points out that Herodotus and Aeschylus and indeed all fifth century sources saw the war between Greece and Persia as a war for freedom, not as struggle for "freedom of the individual to do as he pleases, that is, to pursue his own life, liberty, and happiness"(269).

3. For the orations 1 to 16, I refer to the edition of Lenz - Behr 1976-1980; for the orations 17 to 53, to the edition of Keil 1898.

4. See Pernot [1997] 2004, p. 20, who points out that there is no evidence for the alleged delivery of the speech in the presence of the emperor or of the imperial court.

temporary issues and are addressed again to Greek audiences, like in *To the Rhodians: Concerning Concord* (24).⁵ The majority of the cases (about 188) of the term *barbarian* and of the antithesis *Greek – barbarian* refer to the barbarians of the past, mainly to Persians of the Persian Wars, while a far smaller number (about 30) refer to contemporary barbarians, who nonetheless are not named, and occur for the most part in contemporary speeches. It is noteworthy that Aristides deals marginally with the contemporary barbarians. Evidently, he underestimated the military activity against the barbarians in the early years of Antoninus Pius' reign.⁶ At any rate, in contrast to Tacitus, he did not presumably foresee any barbarian threat to Rome.⁷ He had perhaps underrated their importance for Rome in the long run, or he might have been preoccupied mainly with the classical past of Greece, and especially of Athens, so that current issues were pushed into the background. Or it might be that just as Aristides was not concerned with the history of Rome in general, nor was he interested in her dealings with the contemporary barbarians either.⁸

THE STATUS OF ROMANS

Be that as it may, in the context of the polarity *Greeks – barbarians* a first question comes up concerning the status of Romans. Are they classified among the Greeks or among the barbarians? True, the Ro-

5. Saïd 2001, p. 287.

6. Jones 2013, pp. 41-52, *pace* Pernot [1997] 2004, p. 95.

7. The following passage from *To Rome*, even though it implies a threat, seems to underestimate the military activity of contemporary barbarians: “Even if somewhere on the borders clashes should occur... through the madness of the Dacians, or the ill fortune of the Moors, or the wretchedness of the people of the Red Sea ... these wars and the discussions about them have quickly passed away like myths.” (70, transl. Behr). For these alleged clashes on the frontiers of the Empire see Behr 1968, pp. 88-89; Behr 1981, p. 376, n. 77; Pernot [1997] 2004, pp. 32, 95, who points out that, although it is difficult to date these uprisings, they seem to refer to contemporary events. See also Oliver 1953, p. 894.

8. But cf. Saïd 2006, pp. 47-60, and Oudot 2016, pp. 23-58, who attempt to interpret the history of Athens in the *Panathenaic* as “romanization” of the Athenian past or as “prehistory” to Rome respectively.

mans, at least explicitly, are never referred to as barbarians by Aristides or, for that matter, by any other author of the Second Sophistic, and the Italians are called so only once by Dion of Prusa (32. 40).⁹ However, such a statement might be qualified by Aristides' recurring references to Trojans, the legendary "ancestors" of the Romans, as barbarians. In *The Smyrnaean Oration II* (21), the orator affirms that Agamemnon demolished the empire of the barbarians at Troy (3). In the oration *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* (3) Paris is labelled as the most cowardly of the barbarians (463), while Hector in the *Concerning a Remark in Passing* (28) is qualified as a barbarian, who is lacking in self-control (106). Finally, in the *Embassy Speech to Achilles* (16), the Trojan War is presented as a conflict between Greeks and barbarians (16). As is well known, Homer never calls the Trojans barbarians (as he likewise never calls their adversaries Greeks). Aristides applies to them the term barbarian seven times (4, 5, 6, 11, 26, 34, 41) and concludes his speech by saying: ἐκδῦς (you, Achilles) τὴν ὀργὴν ὥσπερ νόσον, φάνηθι τοῖς βαρβάροις ἅμα τῷ ἡλίῳ (41). "And put off your wrath like a disease, and appear to the barbarians with the rising sun." (transl. Behr). Might it be possible to suppose that Aristides is alluding to Romans under the guise of their Trojan "ancestors"?¹⁰ It is a question.¹¹

Nor are the Romans explicitly classified among the Greeks either. But in *To Rome* the Romans are said to care for the Greeks as if they were their foster parents (96). The children are supposed to inherit the qualities or at least some of the qualities of their, even adoptive, parents. Even so, such a state of affairs does not amount to the "naturalization", so to speak, of the Romans in the Greek world. The Ro-

9. Bowie 1991, p. 200; Saïd 2001, p. 287.

10. See Harris 2008, p. 2, who maintains: "It will have been a sleepy Greek listener or reader who never for a moment thought that Aristides might be alluding to the Romans in the guise of their Trojan 'ancestors'..."

11. Cf. Swain 1996, p. 351, in whose view Pausanias' belief that the Trojans were barbarians (5. 22. 2) does not necessarily imply that he believed the contemporary Romans were also barbarians.

mans then are neither barbarians, nor Greeks. Nonetheless, some passages in Aristides allow us to infer that he conceived of them as a separate group. Thus, in *To Rome* the orator praises the Romans for surpassing the barbarians in wealth and power and the Greeks in σοφία καὶ σωφροσύνη (41), “in (political) wisdom and prudence”.¹² In the same speech, as we saw, he contends that the Romans take care of the Greeks as though they were their foster parents, while they educate the barbarians mildly or sternly depending on their respective nature (96). In the *Panegyric in Cyzicus* (27) Aristides compares the Roman emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus to Greeks and barbarians, who had ever exerted some power, as the only ones who allocate their ἀγαθὰ (goods) to be shared like prizes by the best people (32). From such examples¹³ it follows that the Romans constitute a third category of people between Greeks and barbarians. Consequently, the traditional dichotomy *Greeks – barbarians* has been silently replaced by a trichotomy, *Greeks – barbarians – Romans*. Evidently, we can speak of an important transformation of the classical antithesis *Greeks – barbarians*. But Aristides keeps employing in his works the traditional opposition *Greeks – barbarians*, reserving for the Romans a precarious position, neither Greeks, nor barbarians.¹⁴

INFERIORITY OF BARBARIANS

Be that as it may, the use of the term *barbarian* and of the polarity *Greeks – barbarians* varies in Aelius Aristides. To begin with, the

12. See Fontanella 2007, p. 110 ad 41, who points out that this σοφία καὶ σωφροσύνη is political wisdom and prudence, as it becomes clear in section 51, where the Greeks are declared to be superior to all other peoples in wisdom, the Romans in the art of ruling. See also Fontanella 2008, p. 207.

13. There are also some implicit ones in *To Rome*: The works of the arts of the Greeks and barbarians are carried to Rome (11). Aristides will compare the superiority of the Romans with some barbarian empire or Greek power (14). In the Roman empire it is possible for both Greeks and barbarians to travel wherever they wish (100).

14. On these issues see Swain 1996, p. 68; Saïd 2001, pp. 287-288.

traditional inferiority of the barbarians, in contrast for the most part to Greek superiority, occurs in some passages (about seventeen) of Aristides' "historical" as well as contemporary works. In good traditional fashion, the barbarians are considered linguistically inferior *par excellence* compared to Athenians (*Panathenaic* 327).¹⁵ More, they are untrustworthy (*On Sending Reinforcements to Those in Sicily* 34), they lack self-control (*Concerning a Remark in Passing* 106), and they are morally¹⁶ and legally inferior (*To Plato: In Defense of Oratory* 321). In the contemporary *Panathenaic* Aristides underlines the geographical isolation of Athens from all that is barbarian, which warrants the racial, cultural and linguistic "purity" of the Athenians from any barbarian "miasma"(14-15).¹⁷

Another traditional inferiority of the barbarians concerning their fighting incompetence operates in Aristides' works with reference to the Trojan War and especially to Persians and the Persian Wars. In the *Embassy Speech to Achilles* one of the arguments for Achilles to return to battle is that he, alone, can subdue all the barbarians, and even more (34)! In the *On Behalf of Making Peace with the Lacedaemonians* (7) the speaker considers it as self-evident that the barbarians are to be conquered much more easily than the Lacedaemonians (25). In assessing the outcome of the battle of Marathon, Aristides contrasts virtue with wealth and Greek morale with barbarian multitude and equipment (*Panathenaic* 107).¹⁸ This is not the only time that the orator contrasts moral-mental qualities and material power. In the *To Plato: In Defense of Oratory*, referring to Plato's funeral oration for the Marathon and Salamis fighters, Aristides quotes almost verbatim Pla-

15. Cf. also *To Plato: In Defense of Oratory* 380, for the barbarians' implicit linguistic inferiority.

16. In his study of the barbarians in Plutarch, Schmidt 1999, pp. 325-332 and *passim*, concludes that Plutarch, following the tradition, attributes to them moral inferiority as their main characteristic.

17. See also Richter 2011, p. 128.

18. Cf. also Saïd 2006, p. 59, who points out the symbolic value of the battle of Marathon.

to's apophthegmatic praise of them: how they showed to the barbarians that πᾶς πλοῦτος καὶ δύναμις ἀρετῇ ὑπέικει (341). "all wealth and power yields to virtue."¹⁹

Finally, in his contemporary speech *Concerning a Remark in Passing* Aristides utters a general evaluation of the barbarians and Greeks respectively, according to which it would have been possible to believe that the barbarians are not inferior as far as arts and practical sciences and other similar activities are concerned as well. But ἡ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς ῥώμη καὶ τὸ φρονεῖν μετ' ἐλευθερίας ἀνεπαχθοῦς ἀρχαῖον ἄρ' ἦν καὶ ἴδιον τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀγαθόν (152). "However, strength of character and a feeling of pride combined with an inoffensive freedom were ancient and peculiar virtues of the Greeks." (transl. Behr).²⁰ Such a view does not appear in a "historical" speech, where it could be seen as born out by the historical background; to all intents and purposes then it seems to articulate the opinion of the author at the time of his writing this work. At face value, this remark seems to hint that even Romans count as barbarians.²¹ On the other hand, one cannot help but discern some irony in such a contention upon recalling the subordinate political status of the Greeks that time. Could it be possible that the "strength of spirit" and the "free morale" bring to mind "the paradise lost" of the Greeks?

Some qualification, however, about the inferiority of the barbarians, in relation to Greek superiority, is raised when Aristides, in his wish to stress the role of the Athenians in the Persian Wars, equates all other Greeks to the barbarians: the Athenians are superior to both Greeks and barbarians! So, according to Aristides, in the battle of Plataea, they "were victorious in every way, over the barbarians in

19. See Pl. *Men.* 240d: ...πᾶν πλῆθος καὶ πᾶς πλοῦτος ἀρετῇ ὑπέικει. "all multitude and all wealth yields to virtue."

20. Cf. also *Panathenaic* 112, 184; *On Behalf of Making Peace with the Athenians* (8) 21; *The Sacred Tales: II* (48) 61; *To Plato, In Defense of the Four* 261, for implicit inferiority of the barbarians.

21. See also Miletta 2011, p. 209 ad 152, who maintains that the passage under discussion alludes to the superiority of the Greeks even over the Romans.

virtue, and the Greeks in virtue and number”. (*Panathenaic* 183, transl. Behr).²² Furthermore, the Athenians surpass all other Greeks – to say nothing of the barbarians– in language to the extent that their dialects are like words of “lispings children” compared to Attic (*Panathenaic* 327).²³ In the context then of the second century AD, Aristides occasionally qualifies to some extent the notorious inferiority of the barbarians.²⁴

GREEK ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BARBARIANS

In Aristides, as we will see, the attitude of the Greeks towards the barbarians is conditioned by traditional views, as far as historical issues are concerned. Thus, the conventional idea that the Athenians and the Greeks in general are enemies by nature to barbarians comes up in Aristides. This deep-rooted notion, as is well-known, was of paramount importance in the fourth century BC Athens. According to Plato, Athens is φύσει μισοβάρβαρος, “she hates the barbarians by

22. See also *Panathenaic* 92, 129, 226, for similar views.

23. In Saïd’s opinion 2001, p. 287, the traditional antithesis between the articulate Greeks and the “lispings” barbarians has given way to opposition between the Attic and the other Greek dialects, which indicates that the old antithesis has lost some of its meaning. However, I think, it is more to the point not to talk of giving way, but of adding a new member, the other Greeks, in the old opposition: *Athenians* versus *barbarians* and *the rest of the Greeks*.

24. There are three passages in the *Panathenaic* in which the Athenians are compared to other Greeks and to the rest of mankind, not to barbarians. Thus Athens, according to Aristides, has been the leader in all other things and in the oratory as well for the Greeks and for other people (6). During the invasion of Xerxes, the courage of the Athenians, upon examination, would be found most manifest among the Greeks, or to say it once and for all, among mankind (134). In the Persian Wars Athens proved to be a means of protection not only for the Greeks, but also for the rest of the world (167). In these cases, I think, the opposition is not Greeks versus the rest of mankind (instead of barbarians), but *Athenians* versus *Greeks and the rest of mankind* (instead of *barbarians*). Consequently, the traditional antithesis *Greeks – barbarians* does not seem to be replaced by a new and more neutral antithesis between *Greeks and the rest of mankind*, as Saïd 2001, p. 288 maintains; the new antithesis apparently is *Athenians* versus *Greeks and the rest of mankind*.

nature” (*Men.* 245c). By the same token, the barbarians are φύσει πολέμιοι (*Rep.* 470c).²⁵ Similarly, Isocrates considers the barbarians φύσει πολεμίους, “natural enemies” (*Panathenaic* [12] 163). Let us see some examples of such a notion in Aristides. Athens got her sea-empire because she defeated the barbarians, her φύσει πολεμίους, “her natural enemies” (*Panathenaic* 281).²⁶ Before the battle of Marathon, the Athenians killed even the Greek interpreter of the Persians, since τὸν γὰρ τῆς πόλεως ἄποικον, “a colonist from the city”, should not serve the barbarian, their natural enemy, even if only in the use of his voice, against the interests of the city and the Greeks (*Panathenaic* 99). The envoy to Achilles in Troy suggests to him that, were he to be angry to the end, he should address his fury to the barbarians, their natural enemies (*Embassy Speech to Achilles* 4).

Following the tradition of Demosthenes,²⁷ Aristides also presents Philip II of Macedon as a barbarian καὶ φύσει κεχωρισμένον, “alien in nature”, even if he kills himself parroting the Pythian rites in order to pass for a Greek (*To the Thebans: Concerning the Alliance I* [9] 44). In this way he perhaps makes him into an equivalent not only to the traditional Persian enemy, but also to the contemporary Parthian one.²⁸

In the context of the barbarians as natural enemies of the Greeks, the war against them is considered a just war in accord again with Isocrates who labels the war against the barbarians ἀναγκαιότατον καὶ δικαιοτάτον, “most necessary and fairest” (*Panathenaic* 163). In

25. See also Richter 2011, p. 39.

26. See also *Panathenaic* 15; *On Behalf of Making Peace with the Athenians* 13; *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 137; *Embassy Speech to Achilles* 26, for similar views.

27. Demosthenes calls famously Philip a barbarian, rather less than a “decent” barbarian, in *Philippic III* 31: “... he (Philip) is not only no Greek, nor related to the Greeks, but not even a barbarian from any place that can be named with honour...” (transl. J. H. Vince, Loeb Classical Library).

28. For this view and for the implications in general of dubbing Philip a barbarian see Asirvatham 2008, pp. 207-227.

Aristides' view, Themistocles' choice to make war against the barbarians on behalf of the Greeks, and not the other way around, constitutes a token of bravery and at the same time a token of justice (*To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 256).²⁹

Moreover, the war of Greeks against barbarians must be dealt with differently from the war against Greeks. In this Aristides agrees with Plato who recommends the civil fights of the Greeks should not be pushed to extremes, i.e. Greeks devastating Greek territory and setting fire to Greek houses; they should insist in the dispute only till the guiltless compel the guilty ones to offer compensation (*Rep.* 471a-b). In the same way, according to Aristides, Athens believed that "it must wage total war against the barbarians, but against the Greeks must fight simply to the point of attaining superiority". (*Panathenaic* 225, transl. Behr).³⁰ Under these conditions, the terms of a peace treaty, whether with Greeks or barbarians, vary considerably. Athens, under the terms of the peace of Callias, deprived the barbarians of territory and sea, while she gave back to the Greeks whatever she gained during the war (*Panathenaic* 225). Such stereotypical views concern only historical issues, not contemporary ones.

Things change though in the contemporary oration *To the Cities on Concord*, which advocates the concord of the Greek cities of Asia Minor, Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum. Traditionally, concord among the Greeks and war against the barbarians would have been the ideal state of affairs, as Isocrates declared in his *Panegyric* (4).³¹

29. Cf. also *Panathenaic* 93.

30. See also *On Behalf of Making Peace with the Lacedaemonians* 27; *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 137, for similar views.

31. ... ἦκω συμβουλευέσων περί τε τοῦ πολέμου τοῦ πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους καὶ τῆς ὁμονοίας τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτοῦς...(3). "...I have come before you to give my counsels on the war against the barbarians and on concord among ourselves..." (transl. George Norlin, Loeb Classical Library). See also Isocrates *Panathenaic* 42, where, according to the orator, the ancestors of the Athenians preserved the spirit of concord towards the Greeks and of hatred towards the barbarians, which they received from the Trojan War.

At the beginning of his speech *To the Cities on Concord*, Aristides quotes the programmatic statement of Isocrates that the orator was going to speak exclusively about two themes, concord among the Greeks and war against the barbarians (2). This notion of the fourth century BC comes up as well in some orations of Aristides in relation to historical issues. According to him, Themistocles put an end to the wars and the disputes of the Greeks among themselves, he convinced them that they were relatives and friends to one another, and he directed them to one war, the war against the barbarians (*To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 232).³²

But these events took place long ago, in the time of the Persian Wars. Now, in the time of the Second Sophistic, things have changed. Aristides is of course aware of this and in the above mentioned speech, *To the Cities on Concord*, he is eager to take his leave from Isocrates' dogma, making clear that "it is no longer opportune to speak on behalf of a war against the barbarians" (3, transl. Behr).³³ Apparently, Aristides here alludes to the recent (AD 165) victory of the Romans against the barbarian Parthians, which rendered a war against the barbarians temporarily inopportune. But what seems to bear more on his attitude, in my opinion, is the general political situation at the time he was composing his speech (AD 167). In his own words, a few people still resist Romans out of folly (3). Could it be possible that the impotence of the subordinate Greeks to play any political role might be read between these lines? The then traditional opposition of the classical era "concord among the Greeks – war against the barbarians", ceased to be an antithesis in this speech; it has been simply reduced to an advice to three Greek cities of Asia Minor to live

32. Cf. also *Panathenaic* 190, where there is an appeal to the Greeks to live in concord and to despise the barbarians.

33. Cf. Saïd 2001, p. 288, who adduces this example, among others (cf. n. 23, 24 above), to suggest that the opposition *Greek – barbarian* has lost its centrality in Aristides. Differently, Fontanella 2015, p. 178, who maintains that Aristides took up "a theme [war against the barbarians] which, even though declared useless at present, celebrated the glory of Hellenic history".

in concord in order to share whatever benefits were granted to them by Rome peacefully.³⁴

“NEUTRALITY” OF THE TERM *BARBARIAN* AND OF THE DICHOTOMY *GREEK – BARBARIAN*

In Aristides there are quite a few passages (about 131) in which the word *barbarian* does not seem to have any evident derogatory connotations.³⁵ Most (about 117) of these passages refer to Persians of the classical era and occur in speeches, such as the *Panathenaic* (about 48 references) and the *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* (about 37 references), which to a great extent deal with the Persian Wars. In evaluating properly these more or less unbiased passages, one should take into consideration that the overall presentation of the Persians and especially of Xerxes by Aristides is negative;³⁶ consequently the “neutralized” effect of these passages is minimized, if not eliminated altogether.³⁷

Of the remaining “neutral” passages, six refer to Carthaginians in relation to the history of Sicily in the fifth century BC, four to the barbarian inhabitants of Sicily during the Peloponnesian War and only four to contemporary barbarians who are not named.³⁸

34. See also Λυμπεροπούλου 2007, p. 109.

35. Cf. Bowie 1974, p. 199, who points out that in Dion of Prusa there are numerous passages of the opposition *Greek – barbarian* without implications of barbarian inferiority.

36. Cf., for example, Oliver 1968, p. 119; Day 1980, pp. 44, 52-54; Λυμπεροπούλου 2007, pp. 141-143; Μπατάς 2015, p. 191.

37. As things stand it is not out of the question that the visualization of the Persians in the authors of the Roman Empire may allude to the Parthians, the contemporary enemy of Rome. On this, see Spawforth 1994, pp. 233-247. In regard to Aristides, however, one should perhaps be on guard taking into consideration his alleged “indifference” concerning the contemporary barbarians. But see Oliver 1968, p. 38, who maintains that, although the Parthians are not mentioned by Aristides, they are present in his mind “when he equates the Persians with the forces of evil, destruction and despotism”.

38. *To Rome* 12, 41, 96; *The Sacred Tales I* (47) 9.

In addition, the polarity *Greek – barbarian* occurs as well in some “neutral” passages (about thirteen) of Aristides’ “historical” and contemporary speeches, without any apparent implications of barbarian inferiority. In these cases, the polarity denotes the entire world. Ironically the Romans, the third member of the trichotomy, *Greeks – barbarians – Romans*, do not seem to be taken again into consideration! Thus, in *To Rome* the orator maintains that all the products of the earth and all the arts of the Greeks and of the barbarians are carried to Rome so that, were someone to see them, one would either have to travel all over the world or be in Rome (11).³⁹ The evidence of these “neutral” passages may possibly indicate that the conventional term *barbarian* and the polarity *Greek – barbarian* have lost some of their sting.⁴⁰ Be that as it may, only the cumulative effect of the available evidence could warrant the inferences that the traditional concept *barbarian* and the antithesis *Greek – barbarian* no longer dominated.

A NOVEL CONCEPT OF THE DICHOTOMY *GREEK – BAR-BARIAN*

Indeed, there are some cases (about eight) in Aristides’ “historical” and contemporary speeches in which the polarity *Greek – barbarian* denotes not only the entire world, but the entire world sharing common values. In *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* there is mention of those things that are considered the μέγιστα, “the greatest”, by everybody, Greek or barbarian (392). In the same speech it is stated that the virtue of Themistocles became manifest to all, Greeks and barbarians alike (287). On the occasion of the plundering and the burning down

39. For similar cases see also *The Sons of Asclepius* (38) 12; *Panathenaic* 211, 231, 301, 308; *The Eleusinian Oration* (22) 4; *A Monody for Smyrna* (18) 1; *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 109, 342; *To Plato: In Defense of Oratory* 331; *The Egyptian Discourse* (36) 88; *Concerning A Remark in Passing* 69.

40. See *To Rome* 96; *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 371, for indications that the barbarians have the potential to be educated, to ameliorate themselves. See also *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 460-461, where the barbarians (the Persians) are invoked as examples to be imitated by the Greeks.

by the barbarians of the temple of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis,⁴¹ Aristides wonders which Greek or barbarian⁴² could be so uncivilized, so far from Earth or the gods or so insensitive to good, except for the accursed perpetrators of these acts, that he would not consider Eleusis a common sanctuary on Earth (*The Eleusinian Oration* 2).⁴³

TRANSCENDENCE OF THE POLARITY *GREEK – BARBARIAN* BY THE ROMANS

The above cases in Aristides suggest that we are far from the conventional polarity *Greek – barbarian* with the concomitant notion of barbarian inferiority. Such a polarity was finally transcended, when Aristides, evidently under the impact of the Stoics as well, who professed the unity of mankind,⁴⁴ refers to the κοινὸν γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “the common race of men”. Notably, in his work, such a transcendence is accomplished by both Romans and Greeks. In the case of the Romans it occurs in contemporary orations. So in the *Panegyric in Cyzicus*, according to the orator, the two emperors, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus live in concord with one another ἐπ’ ὠφελείᾳ τοῦ κοινοῦ γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων (39), “for the benefit of the common race of men”. Speaking in the superlative Aristides presents this concord as the most κοινή, “profitable” harmony for the sake of the human race (31). Moreover, in the same speech, in regard to the Roman administration, Aristides draws a dividing line between

41. See, for example, Brown 2011, pp. 80-82, for the alleged raid of the Costobocans upon the sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone around AD 170.

42. Cf. Humbel 1994, p.76 ad Kapitel 2, who points out that in the phrase τίς γὰρ Ἑλλήνων ἢ τίς βαρβάρων, the Greeks and the barbarians stand, so to speak, side by side, which corresponds to reality, since the Eleusinian sanctuary and the initiation into the mysteries were not reserved exclusively for the Greeks.

43. For similar cases see also *Panathenaic* 1; *To the Rhodians: Concerning Concord* 4. 37; *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 377; *A Monody for Smyrna* 10.

44. On this concept of the Stoics see, for example, Clarke 1968, p. 44, and *passim*.

the Romans on the one hand, and all other peoples on the other. So Greeks and barbarians who once wielded some power would think of how to exclude all other people from their goods (benefits), while the Romans are the only ones to set out their ἀγαθά, “goods”, εἰς μέσον “in the middle”, to be shared by the best, without geographical or other restrictions, ἀλλὰ πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ πάντα γένη προσήκει τῇ πόλει καὶ πᾶσιν ἔξεστιν ἄρχειν τὰ γιγνόμενα (32).⁴⁵ “but all men and all races are connected with the city, and all have the right to exercise due authority.” (transl. Behr).⁴⁶ Therefore the transcendence of the polarity *Greek – barbarian* by the Romans comes about in the context of Roman administration and concerns ἀγαθά, “benefits”, granted by Rome to people.

In *To Rome* the opposition *Greek – barbarian* has been replaced with another one: the Romans do not divide the human races any longer into Greeks and barbarians like the Greeks, but into *Romans and non-Romans*. This achievement was accomplished, because τὸ Ῥωμαῖον εἶναι ἐποιήσατε οὐ πόλεως, ἀλλὰ γένους ὄνομα κοινοῦ τινος, καὶ τούτου οὐχ ἑνὸς τῶν πάντων, ἀλλ’ ἀντιρρόπου πᾶσι τοῖς λοιποῖς (63). “you have caused the word ‘Roman’ to belong not to a city, but to be the name of a sort of common race, and this not one out of all the races, but a balance to all the remaining ones.” (transl. Behr). Here the orator alludes to the Roman citizenship which the Romans conferred to aliens within the borders of the Roman empire. Ironically, the use of the word γένος, “race”, which traditionally refers to ethnic bonds of blood, indicates here how its conventional meaning has vanished and has been transformed, we may say, into its opposite. As is well known, racial purity was never part of the Roman “mytho-

45. See also Forte 1972, pp. 409-410.

46. The historicity of such contentions is beyond the scope of this paper. But cf. Swain 1996, p. 283, who in reference to *To Rome* remarks: “Overall Aristides carried out rather well the task of presenting an autocratic regime as a participatory democracy where the elite are all Romans by name.” Differently, Pernot [1997] 2004, p. 51, who maintains that the general message of the oration *To Rome* should not be called in question.

logy".⁴⁷ In fact, the rejection of blood as a token of ethnicity permeated a well-known myth of Rome's foundation.⁴⁸ At any rate, the figurative meaning of the term γένος in this case recalls Isocrates' attempt (*Panegyric* 50) to redefine the term *Greek* (Ἕλλην) as a cultural rather than an ethnic⁴⁹ description.

But, although Aristides confirmed that the Romans now divide the human race into *Romans and non-Romans*, in the same speech he continues to employ the traditional *Greek – barbarian* opposition. So according to Aristides, the Romans have proved that the earth is the mother of all and the common country of all. Now, Aristides maintains, it is possible for both Greek and barbarian –he does not say for Roman and non-Roman– to travel fearlessly wherever he wishes, without any geographical restrictions or any fear of inhospitable barbarian races. For his safety it is enough to be a Roman –here the term Roman comes up again– or rather one of those under the Romans – here the subject of the Romans is made equal with the Romans (100). Could it be possible that the use of the old antithesis *Greek – barbarian* here hints at Aristides' reluctance to accept once and for all the reality of his time, which imposed de facto the opposition *Roman – non-Roman*? Aristides of course hastens to use in the same breath the term *Roman* in order to supersede the good old antithesis *Greek – barbarian*. And not only the Roman, but the subject of the Romans is called up as well to serve the same purpose! One cannot help but discern some tension in the use by Aristides of the time honoured opposition *Greek – barbarian* and of the contemporary concept of

47. See, for example, Woolf 1994, p. 130.

48. Let us recall what Romulus' envoys said to their neighbours trying to persuade them to enter into intermarriage with the Romans: they should not be unwilling to mingle their blood and stock with the Romans, who really were as manly as they were (Livy I. 9). See also Richter 2011, p. 132.

49. See also *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5. Cf. also Fontanella 2007, p. 123 ad 63, who points out that the "Roman name" denotes here a new "race" of someone who participates fully not only in the culture but also in the social-political structure of the Empire.

Roman.⁵⁰

In Aristides then the transcendence by the Romans of the antithesis *Greek – barbarian* by introduction of the concept *the common race* (κοινὸν γένος) of *men* relates to Roman citizenship, to the administration of the Empire, and to the benefits (ἀγαθὰ) that she grants to her citizens and subjects.

TRANSCENDENCE OF THE POLARITY *GREEK – BARBARIAN* BY THE GREEKS

The polarity *Greek – barbarian* is overstepped by Greeks as well. According to Aristides, Heracles benefitted all men without exception. Starting from his hearth, he purified Greece and afterwards τὸ κοινὸν γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων, “the common race of men”, exterminating beasts, murdering tyrants, bringing to reason cities, some of them by means of laws, others by means of weapons, annihilating robbers, in the same way, both in Greece and in the barbarian cities (*Heracles* [40] 4-5). In general, Heracles never failed in anything he undertook, due to his great might, and he accomplished everything with extreme justice ἐπ’ ὠφελείᾳ τοῦ κοινοῦ γένους (6), “to the benefit of the human race”.⁵¹ In this way Heracles’ civilizing role was emphasized and he was dignified as the great benefactor of all humanity.⁵²

The Asclepiadae, the sons and descendants of Asclepius, are also presented by Aristides as benefactors of all humankind. First, Machaon and Podalirius, the sons of Asclepius, after settling down in Cos, rendered the island, which was previously dangerous, accessible to all, Greeks and barbarians (*The Sons of Asclepius* 12). Next, the sons of Asclepius, making their sons collaborators in their science, and their successors, benefitted the Greeks medically, and all other

50. In Swain’s opinion 1996, p. 279, “... the old opposition of Greek versus barbarian is what constitutes Aristides’ ‘moral barrier’, not the borders of the Roman empire”.

51. See also *Panathenaic* 52; *To Plato: In Defense of the Four* 68, 276, in which Heracles is presented as the protector of all mankind in general.

52. Said 2008, pp. 62-64.

people without exception, so that their aid and their grace might never fail τὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένος (14), “the race of men”. Finally, Aristides affirms that the sons of Asclepius, starting from Machaon and Podalirius, became κοινὴ πᾶσιν ἀσφάλεια καὶ σωτηρία (18), “common security and salvation for all the people”. The abandonment of the contrast *Greeks – barbarians* in this case is related to the medical science and points to a significant cultural achievement.

The final transcendence of the antithesis *Greeks – barbarians* in Aristides is related to Athenian dialect, Attic dialect. In Aristides’ words, all the cities without exception and all the races of humankind turned to Athens, her way of life and her dialect (*Panathenaic* 322). Aristides characterizes the cultural achievement of Athens ἀναιμακτον τρόπαιον, “bloodless trophy”, which the Athenians erected not by defeating the Boeotians, or Lacedaemonians, or Corinthians, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τῶν ὁμοφύλων ἀπάντων, – λέγω δὲ οὐχ ὡς ἂν τις Ἑλληνας προσείποι πρὸς βαρβάρους ἀντιδιαιρούμενος, ἀλλ’ ἀπὸ τοῦ κοινοῦ γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων – ... (322). “But all their kindred races –I do not mean in the way one would describe Greeks in distinction to barbarians, but the whole human race – ...” (transl. Behr). Here Aristides went so far as to identify the ὁμοφύλους, “the kindred races”, with the common race of men, barbarians included.⁵³ So great is the cultural accomplishment of Athens that Aristides considers it even greater than the battle of Marathon (322). Without geographical restrictions the civilization of Athens spread everywhere, and everybody has come to believe that her language is the common voice of the human race. Through Athens the whole world has come to speak the same tongue (324-325). All men have to accept this dialect as a token of civilization, and it is superior to all other dialects –to say nothing of the barbarians, but of the Greeks themselves, whose dialects were like the words of “lispings children” compared to the dialect of the Athenians. In Aristides’ opinion, such a dialect constitutes the μεγάλην ἀρχήν, “the great empire” of the Athenians, and not the triremes or Ionia or the Hellespont, or the regions in Thrace (327). The Athe-

53. Saïd 2001, p. 288.

nians support πάντας ἀνθρώπους καὶ πάντα γένη, “all men and all races”, with the best of benefits, becoming the leaders of all education and wisdom. For these reasons it is an act of piety to honour τὴν κοινὴν πατρίδα τοῦ γένους, “the common country of the human race”, Athens, before one’s own (330).⁵⁴

It is evident then that the transcendence of the opposition *Greeks* – *barbarians* on the part of the Athenians is related to civilization. Athens created and donated to the whole world a great culture which was articulated by the most sublime language. In this respect Aristides visualizes Athens as a cultural empire that brought about a sort of cultural globalization. Within this framework, even barbarians who shared in Athenian culture could be considered, in some sense, as Greeks. In this Aristides is in accord with Isocrates who, as is well-known, suggested a sort of Greekness based on culture rather than ethnicity (blood).⁵⁵ Aristides, however, was writing in the second century AD under Roman rule. The *Panathenaic* was in all probability delivered in AD 155.⁵⁶ Famously, there is no mention in Aristides’ works, not even in *To Rome*, of the Romans’ origins,⁵⁷ history or cultural accomplishments.⁵⁸ Notably, he draws his citations, even in *To Rome*, from Greek authors.⁵⁹ Could it be possible that Aristides implies that Rome is just another recipient of the Athenian culture, like everybody else, including barbarians? And to go one step further: could it be possible that Aristides’ telling silence is meant to suggest

54. Cf. *Panathenaic* 25, where Athens is presented as mother and a common τροφός, “nurse” for the human race.

55. See also Oliver 1968, p. 14; Bowie 1974, p. 196; Richter 2011, pp. 124-125; Oudot 2008, p. 48.

56. See Behr 1968, pp. 87-88, who suggested the date of AD 155, which has been generally accepted; cf. Bowersock 2013, p. 34.

57. Except for an allusion to Homer’s verses (*Il.* 20. 307-308) regarding Aeneias (*To Rome* 106).

58. See Boulanger [1923] 1968, pp. 357-358; Klein 1981, p. 129; Pernot [1997] 2004, pp. 26, 49.

59. Pernot [1997] 2004, p. 46. Cf. Gkourogiannis 1999; Bowie 2008, pp. 9-29.

that Roman civilization is of no account, as Laurent Pernot has maintained?⁶⁰ At any rate what matters here is to trace once more, in Aristides, how the antithesis *Greeks – barbarians* was superseded by a Greek cultural “revolution” in the context of the Roman empire.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that, contrary to the classical usage, the barbarians are not explicitly called slaves in Aristides.⁶¹ In the classical period the concept of the barbarian slave was generally shaped in contradistinction to the Greeks who fought against the barbarians, the Persians, in order to preserve their freedom. The present political subordination of the Greeks did not render it opportune to use such a concept of the barbarian slave. In general, the different historical background against which Aristides composed his work has apparently affected his treatment of the term *barbarian* and of the opposition *Greeks – barbarians* eventually causing the transformation of their meaning in some cases. To begin with, since the Romans are not overtly classified among the Greeks or among the barbarians, the traditional dichotomy *Greeks – barbarians* has been silently replaced by the trichotomy, *Greeks – barbarians – Romans*; at least in some contexts, because in practice Aristides keeps using the traditional polarity *Greek – barbarian*. Further, in *To Rome* the Romans are said no longer to divide the human race into Greeks and barbarians, but into *Romans and non-Romans*, Aristides’ usage of the traditional oppos-

60. Pernot 2008, p. 190; Pernot 2015, pp. 107-109. Some corroboration of such a point of view is supplied by the passage (152) of *Concerning a Remark in Passing*, discussed above p. 16.

61. In *To Rome* Aristides distinguishes between the Romans, the natural rulers, so to speak, and all the others who held power before the Romans and became in turn slaves of another ruler: ... καὶ ἐδούλευσαν Μακεδόνες Πέρσαις, Πέρσαι Μήδοις, Μῆδοι Σύροις (91). “... and the Macedonians were slaves of the Persians, the Persians of the Medes, the Medes of the Assyrians.” (transl. Behr). The fact that an imperial people could become enslaved by means of conquest does not seem, I think, to amount to natural slavery of this people. For a different view see Asirvatham 2008, pp. 221-222.

ition *Greek – barbarian*, even in this speech, notwithstanding.

Within this framework, the semantic field of the term *barbarian* and of the opposition *Greek – barbarian* comprises both traditional as well as novel concepts of them. The conventional notion of the inferiority of barbarians, coupled with the concomitant attitude of the Greeks towards them, still operates in Aristides, some qualification of the concept of the inferior barbarian notwithstanding. Alongside, several “neutral” passages of the term *barbarian* and of the polarity *Greek – barbarian* do not imply anything derogatory. Moreover, a novel concept of the contrast *Greek – barbarian* denotes the entire world sharing common values. Finally, the dichotomy *Greek – barbarian* is transcended by the introduction of the concept *the common race of men*.

Taking into consideration such a diversity in the use of those concepts, it seems somewhat hazardous to pronounce whether they have lost all or part of their traditional meaning. Perhaps it seems more to the point to discern some tension, and ambiguity, and irony in the employment of those terms by Aristides. Such a tension may partly be due to the different historical background under which Aristides wrote his work. The requirements of his age undermine at times Aristides’ claims for Greek superiority and freedom, or at times “compels” him to retract some traditional notion he had expressed about the barbarians. Furthermore, this tension may be also due to the diverse use of the polarity *Greek – barbarian*, whose replacement by the concept *the common race of men* is motivated on the one hand by the art of ruling and the advantages of the Roman Empire on behalf of the human race; and on the other by the achievements mainly of Athens, military and especially cultural, again on behalf of the human race! Caught between the glorious past of Athens and the mighty present of the Roman Empire what else could Aristides have done?

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