MISCELLANEA

SOPHOCLES, AJAX 148-50

tοιούθει λόγως φιλόφροις πλάσσων
εἰς ὥτα φέρει πάντων Ὄδυσσεὺς,
καὶ σφόδρα πείθει.

In agreement with the great majority of recent editors, R. D. Dawe adopts the reading πᾶσιν Ὄδυσσεος (149) for the Teubner text in preference to πάντων Ὅδυσσεος (the reading of L) which requires Nauck’s correction Ὅδυσσεος for metrical reasons. This note aims to show that the strong preference for πᾶσιν obscures the fact that there is little to choose between the two readings and that πάντων may in fact be what Sophocles wrote. The four main factors in the argument i.e. the MS tradition, the form of the name Odysseus, the grammatical construction, and the metrical context will be discussed in turn.

The MS tradition, in fact, seems to provide initial support for πᾶσιν Ὅδυσσεος since it is admittedly easy, as Jebb and Pearson stress, to explain πάντων as originally a gloss on the less predictable dative. Dawe also argues against πάντων on grounds of the transmission: “πάντων is in LC, but a number of other MSS record it as a gloss. In this, and many other cases, it seems likely that the other MSS are preserving a truer picture of the tradition than L; the alternative explanation, that they are recording L’s reading as a gloss, becomes less and less attractive as one dwells over the details of the transmission.”

On the other hand, it could be argued that if πάντων Ὅδυσσεος was the original reading, the problem may have stemmed from someone at an early stage of the transmission writing Ὅδυσσεος as the form of the name normally associated with tragic diction in general (see further below). A subsequent attempt to fix the metre may then have resulted in the alteration of πάντων to πᾶσιν and the establishment of this dative form in certain branches of the tradition, the genitive being retained as a gloss or perhaps reintroduced later in this capacity. With regard to Dawe’s particular line of argument, quite apart from the uncertainty of the subject in general, the relationship between readings in L and the appearance of these readings as glosses in other MSS will not necessarily require the same explanation in each case.

The spelling of Odysseus’ name is the second factor to consider. Dawe records with approval Jebb’s argument against Ὅδυσσεος on the grounds that the form occurs nowhere else in Sophocles whereas he uses the double sigma form “some twenty-five times.” This argument, however, is of limited value because every one of these examples occurs in iambics. Even

though the anapaestic ὄδυσσεύς could be accommodated in iambics, it would only be natural to expect the double sigma form to predominate, which of course it does. More significant by far is the fact, pointed out by Jebb himself, that the shortened form is found in anapaests at Eur. Hec. 141. Here it is undoubtedly the correct reading though many MSS offer the double sigma alternative, which is the form that Euripides too uses exclusively in his iambics.

Though both forms are regularly used in the Homeric hexameter, it is clear that ὄδυσσεύς is the normal fifth century tragic iambic form. The alternative ὃδυσσεύς, being unusual, may thus possibly have retained more of a specifically epic flavour. This would be most suitable in the Sophoclean passage since the Homeric colouring of the Ajax as a whole and the parodos in particular is most striking. Given this, there is no need to point as a parallel to Pi. Fr. 260 (Snell/Machler) where ὄδυσσεύς is used in a context of secretive words.

We must now turn to the question of grammatical function. Although Stanford argues that the reading πάντων gives a stronger sense “for the benefit of all” it is simpler to regard it with Pearson as virtually the equivalent of a genitive. The dative construction in itself is certainly elegant, as Kamerbeek comments, and appears to be supported by numerous parallels. Relevant Homeric examples include τῷ γὰρ ἐπὶ φρεσκὲς ὅσκηθεν ἐνεκκόλεονος Ἡρη (Il. 1, 55), σφῶν δ’ ὄρεθαν τις ἐν φρεσκὶ ποιήσειν (Il. 13, 55) and τῷ δ’ ἐρ’ Ἀθηνη/ὑπνον ἐπ’ ὅμμασι χεῦ’, (Od. 5, 491-2). A similar Sophoclean example involving the eyes is νῶν δ’ ὅλεθρια/νος ἐπ’ ὅμμασι βέβαια. (OC 1683-4). Sophocles himself also provides an example involving the ears ὅξιν δι’ ὡτων ἐμβεβαια ἴνειασις ἰσοτικΐ/πώλιός (El. 737-8). Further parallels here include προσκύψας μοι μικρὸν πρὸς τὸ οὖς (Pl. Euthyd. 275ε) and in particular ἐς οὖς ἐκάστῳ δυσμενεῖς ηῦδα λόγους; (Eur. Andr. 1091).

This data, however, should not blind us to the fact that at Ajax 149, no matter how neat the dative might be, the genitive πάντων would be equally acceptable. Moreover, the position of πάντων/πάντων in the expression as a whole is perhaps a factor telling against the dative. It is not a question of word order as such. Though the dative does tend to precede the word for mind, eyes or ears in the examples quoted, Soph. El. 737-8 and Eur. Andr. 1091 are conclusive proof that this need not always be the case. Rather is it a matter of emphasis. In the Homeric examples, which also provide the pattern for Soph. OC 1683-4, the dative is emphasized through its position at the head of the clause. But that is a special circumstance. Such a dative, especially if it is a pronoun or pronoun equivalent is normally slipped into the clause easily and unobtrusively to indicate the person concerned. If πάντων were the correct reading at Ajax 149, it would in that case, given the metrical context, bear an unparalleled emphasis in relation to ἐς οὖς and ὄδυσσεύς.

This raises a further point concerning the metre as such. The reading πάντων ὄδυσσεύς weakens the effect of the following καὶ φεύγειν πεθεί (150).