

Sophocles, *Antigone* 687: An Emendation

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There is still disagreement on verse 687. R.D. Dawe in his standard Teubner reads:¹

ἐγὼ δ' ὅπως σὺ μὴ λέγεις ὀρθῶς τάδε,
οὔτ' ἂν δυναίμην μήτ' ἐπισταίμην λέγειν·
γένοιτο μέντ' ἄν χ' ἀτέρως καλῶς ἔχον.

The competing *OCT* reads:²

ἐγὼ δ' ὅπως σὺ μὴ λέγεις ὀρθῶς τάδε,
οὔτ' ἂν δυναίμην μήτ' ἐπισταίμην λέγειν·
[γένοιτο μέντ' ἄν χ' ἀτέρω καλῶς ἔχου]

I should render:³

I couldn't possibly say nor may I learn to say
that you were wrong in what you have said and
yet it might be a good thing for another to say so.

Jebb points the difficulty, not one of grammar but of nuance:⁴ “Haemon seeks to propitiate his father; but that purpose would scarcely be served by such a speech as this”. The verse in its present form appears incongruous to its context. Critics have not been idle. Either they 1) advance implausible translations (*e.g.*, Jebb) or

¹ R.D. Dawe, *Sophoclis Tragoediae II Trachiniae, Antigone, Philoctetes, Oedipus Coloneus*², 1985, 71.

² H. Lloyd-Jones and N.G. Wilson, *Sophoclis Fabulae*, 1990, 211. So also H. Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles Antigone, The Women of Trachis, Philoctetes, Oedipus at Colonus*, 1994, 66, who reproduces his earlier text. Lloyd-Jones (67) translates the deleted verse: “But a different view might be correct”. For my review of Lloyd-Jones’ Loeb see *New England Classical Newsletter & Journal* 23 (1995), 75-6.

³ I prefer with Nauck, Campbell, Jebb and Gerhard Müller χ' ἀτέρω, which is a better antithesis to ἐγὼ. I consider verse 687 genuine.

⁴ Sir Richard Jebb, *Sophocles The Plays and Fragments III The Antigone*³, 1900, 130 (*ad* 687).

2) allege that Haemon is more angry than diplomatic (Campbell),⁵ or 3) tamper with χᾶτέρω⁶ or 4) give up and with Heimreich delete 687.⁷

There is a fifth and easier solution. Read κακῶς for καλῶς and render:

I couldn't possibly say nor may I learn to say
that you were wrong in what you have said and
indeed it would be dreadful for another to say so.

A minimal change of one letter allows verse 687 to amplify rather than contradict the indignation of 685-86 and this avoids the tactlessness noted by Jebb. The solution is intimated by Blaydes⁸ (*ad loc.*), who suggests that an original gloss κακῶς had replaced Sophocles' ἑτέρως and been corrupted to καλῶς. For the confusion (a polar error)⁹ compare *OC* 1187: καλῶς MSS, κακῶς Hermann; *S. El.* 1320 καλῶς MSS, κακῶς Nauck; Euripides, *Frag.* 1035.2 N² κακοῖς MSS, καλοῖς Grotius.¹⁰

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⁵ Lewis Campbell, *Paralipomena Sophoclea: Supplementary Notes on the Text and Interpretation of Sophocles*, 1907 (repr. 1969), 27 (*ad Ant.* 687): "Haemon is so far roused by his father's vehemence as to throw out this further hint, which is certainly not well calculated to mollify Creon". It is inconsistent with Haemon's tact.

⁶ See the valuable discussion by H.D. Broadhead, *Tragica: Elucidations of Passages in Greek Tragedy*, 1968, 73-75 and also J.C. Kamerbeek, *The Plays of Sophocles III The Antigone*, 1978, 132 (*ad* 687).

⁷ Thus the new *OCT* and Loeb: see H. Lloyd-Jones and N.G. Wilson, *Sophoclea: Studies on the Text of Sophocles*, 1990, 132 (*ad* 687): "But whatever reading one adopts, the line seems feeble, and may be an interpolation, as was argued by Chr. Heimreich (*Gymnasialprogr.* Plön, 1884); if genuine, it seems to be the hesitant assertion of a contrary opinion".

⁸ See F.H.M. Blaydes, *Sophocles with English Notes*, 1859, 545.

⁹ The term was first used by Douglas Young, *GRBS* 6, 1965, 267. For a thorough discussion see Ward W. Briggs Jr., "Housman and Polar Errors", *AJPh* 104, 1983, 268-277. Briggs defines a polar error as "the recording of a word whose exact opposite is intended and for which no palaeographical explanation can be found" (268).

¹⁰ For further examples of precisely this confusion see R.D. Dawe, *Studies on the Text of Sophocles I The Manuscripts and the Text*, 1973, 73 (*ad El.* 1006), where, however, I should not include *HF* 1368. I thank E.C. Kopff, who improved an earlier version. I am also grateful to an anonymous reader who notes that μέντοι is rarely found outside of dialogue: see Denniston, *Greek Particles*, 401. Although the passage is not stichomythic, the particle is tolerable here.