

SOPHOCLES *OEDIPUS TYRANNUS* 334-340

- OIA. οὐκ, ὦ κακῶν κάμιστε, καὶ γὰρ ἂν πέτρον
φύσιν σὺ γ' ὀργάνειας, ἐξερεῖς ποτέ, 335
ἀλλ' ὡδ' ἄτεγκτος κἀτελεύτητος φανῆ;
- TEIP. ὀργὴν ἐμέμφω τὴν ἐμήν, τὴν σὴν δ' ὁμοῦ
ναλουσαν οὐ κατεῖδες, ἀλλ' ἐμὲ ψέγεις.
- OIA. τίς γὰρ τοιαῦτ' ἂν οὐκ ἂν ὀργίζουτ' ἔπη
κλύων, ἃ νῦν σὺ τήνδ' ἀτιμάζεις πόλιν;
337 ὀρμήν L^{ac}

Editors have been strangely reluctant to admit ὀρμήν, the uncorrected reading of L. Almost without exception¹⁾ they have accepted the correction ὀργήν, and then, to remove the apparent contradiction thus arising from Teiresias' words in 337-8, have been obliged to take ὀργήν as 'stubborn temper' or the like. Granting the notorious confusion between ὀργή and ὀρμή in mss. tradition I suggest that here if anywhere we have a classic case of *lectio difficilior potior*.

References to anger abound in this passage: apart from 335 and 339 see also 344-5 and 364. If then we read ὀργήν (and grant that ὀργάνειας is transitive) surely in the sequence ὀργάνειας - ὀργήν - ὀργίζουτ' the meaning can be nothing but 'anger'. But this clearly will not fit in with 337-8.

Booth's²⁾ solution to the problem was to make ὀργάνειας intransitive and to construe πέτρον φύσιν as an internal accusative (= 'you must have an ὀργή of very rock'). This, to say the least, is somewhat tortuous, and the aorist tense - as Booth fully realised - tells against it. Although we cannot adduce a parallel for the transitive usage of ὀργάνειν it is a well-known fact that many verbs in -άνω (and in -έω and -ύνω) may be either transitive or intransitive³⁾. If so, the words καὶ γὰρ κτλ.

1) L. Roussel in his edition of the play (Paris 1940) seems to be the only exception. However, his interpretation differs from mine in two important respects: (1) Roussel would not agree that ὀργήν, if correct, *must* mean 'anger'. Although he prefers ὀρμήν, he considers ὀργήν a possible reading 'à cause du sens, assez large, de ὀργή'; (2) he takes ὀρμήν as 'tendances naturelles', a quite different and, I would suggest, much less appropriate, interpretation than the one I offer below.

2) *Classical Quarterly* N.S. viii (1958), 142-3.

3) Cf. *Oed. Col.* 1282 for a transitive use of the normally intransitive *δυσχεράνω*.

explain, as they would seem naturally to do so, why Oedipus is driven to call Teiresias ὃ κακῶν κάκιστε: ‘for you would anger a very stone’⁴).

Oedipus then asks if Teiresias intends to remain impervious to his pleas for information, to which Teiresias replies (reading *δομήν*): ‘you blame my desire’⁵) (to keep silent) but you do not see clearly the one that dwells with you’ (the desire to find out the truth, with the undoubted *double entendre* ‘the female one who lives together with you’). Teiresias is not, or course, retorting to Oedipus’ charge that he has roused him to angry words: he is replying to the charge of being hard-hearted and evasive.

At 339 Oedipus’ repeated reference to his anger is not, as Booth would have it, ‘a very weak repetition of the idea already expressed more forcibly in lines 334–5’, but an attempt to justify his censure of Teiresias, about which Teiresias has just complained. It is anger which has driven Oedipus to call Teiresias ἀτεγκτος κατελεύτητος.

It would therefore seem unobjectionable in principle to take *δογάνειας* as transitive and to remove any reference to *Teiresias*’ anger at 337. In fact, I suggest that a closer examination of this passage and its immediate context will show beyond any reasonable doubt that Teiresias *keeps* his temper under control until perhaps 350 with its sarcastic ἀληθεες. He shows no sign of anger – the meaning which I maintain *δογήν* would have to carry at 337 – only a resigned determination to maintain silence regardless of the unfounded charges of Oedipus.

4) 'Stone', not 'rock': see Kamerbeek *Oedipus Tyrannus* (*The Plays of Sophocles* IV), 89.

5) For this usage of ὄρμη cf. e.g. *Philoctetes* 236–7: τίς προσήγαγεν χρεία; τίς ὄρμη; (palmost τί βουλόμενος), and Plato *Phil.* 35 d τήν τε ὄρμην καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν. Cf. also Hesychius s. v. ὄρμη. βουλή, ἐπιθυμία.