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One deception, many lies
Frr. 301/302 Radt and Aeschylus' Philoctetes

Summary – This note argues that the most likely attribution for frr. 301/302 Radt of *incerta fabula* is to Aeschylus' Philoctetes, where they are delivered by Odysseus as a self-justification. Few tragic deceptions could more reasonably be described as "just" than that of Odysseus in Philoctetes, for his guile served the just cause of assuring the Greek victory. According to Dio Chrysostom on Aeschylus' Philoctetes (or. 52), Odysseus disguised his own identity and told several lies concerning the condition of the Greek army; this corresponds to the one "just deception" and the several "timely lies" mentioned in our fragments.

(1.) Possible attributions

In formulating his thesis on just and unjust, the anonymous author of Dissoi logoi (3, 12) quotes two iambic trimeters from either a single or two different *incertae fabulae* of Aeschylus:

Αἰσχύλου δὲ ταῦτα·
ἀπάτης δικαίας οὐκ ἀποστατεῖ θεός [fr. 301]
⟨καί·⟩
ψευδῶν δὲ καιρὸν ἔσθ' ὅπου τιμᾷ θεός [fr. 302]

Both lines, separated by Diels' καί, appear to be drawn from a similar or identical context.[1] Scholars who ascribe them to the same play are probably right, such as Hermann, who thinks of Danaids,[2] and Oberdick, who suggests Chamber-Makers.[3]

Such gravity clearly suggests a tragedy rather than a satyr play. The speaker of both lines justifies an individual – probably the speaker himself – in deceiving and lying as such actions are required by the circumstances: deception and falsehood can be regarded as "just" when serving a just goal. This reading is suggested by the context in which the fragments are quoted:

[1] Cf. Hermann 1827, 330 answering to those who consider the lines as coming from different tragedies: *satius erat, opinor, dicere, non positos fuisse continuos*.
[2] Hermann 1827, 329.
[3] Oberdick 1869, 4.

for Dissoi logoi 3 considers the ways in which unjust actions can, in specific circumstances, be put to a just use; while Eustathius, who quotes fr. 301, explains that an ἀπάτη is good when it is timely and causes no harm (Il. 188, 42: 1, 290, 1 van der Valk) and that those who, like Odysseus, use deceptions when necessary (εἰς δέον) cannot be blamed, as Odysseus himself is not hated but enjoys admiration among men because of his blameless wiles (Il. 480, 42; 1, 760, 1 – 3 van der Valk; cf. Od. 9, 20). This is thin evidence, yet it can nevertheless suggest the context of the two lines.

Hartung – and eventually Avezzù – hold that fr. 302 comes from Aeschylus' Philoctetes (here possibly as a reply to fr. 322), though they provide little explanation in support.[4] Fr. 301 has been traditionally attributed to the Danaids trilogy – not only, as we have seen, by Hermann and Oberdick,[5] but also by Hartung, who ascribed it to the Aegyptians.[6] West ascribes fr. 301 to the Prometheus trilogy arguing that a possible context would be

> "a scene in which Prometheus obscurely intimated to the chorus that he intended to do something to alleviate man's lot. They will have questioned him wonderingly in a passage of stichomythia, but he probably did not reveal everything".[7]

However, Prometheus' tone about the theft of the fire is proud rather than justificatory in Prometheus Bound and, considering his character, we might well assume that in the remaining tragedies of the trilogy Prometheus felt little need to justify himself. Moreover, the character of Prometheus is not portrayed as deceptive, lying, or cheating, but on the contrary as forthright and outspoken. Indeed, stealing does not necessarily imply deception and lies,[8] and in Prometheus Bound the theft of the fire is not presented as a matter of guile and deception. As to the vocabulary, while Hesiod referred to Prometheus' deeds through ἐξαπαφίσκω, ἐπὶ δολίῃ τέχνῃ, δολοφρονέω, δόλος, ἐξαπατάω, ἠπεροπεύω, etc.,[9] (Ps.-)Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound does not show lexemes from the semantic field for cheating or deceiving (such as

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4 Hartung 1855, 107; Avezzù 1988, 104 and 113 refers to Soph. Ph. 77 – 85 and 108 – 111.
5 Like Hermann, Oberdick regarded the Chamber-Makers as the second tragedy of this trilogy: see Oberdick 1869, 2 – 4.
6 Hartung 1855, 5: „Denn Danaus meinte es mit der Aussöhnung nicht redlich, sondern lockte die Aegypter in die Falle […]".
7 West 1979, 133.
8 Also the author of Dissoi logoi (3, 2 – 4) considers ψεύδεσθαι and ἐξαπατᾶν as synonyms while distinguishing them from κλέπτειν.
9 Hes. Th. 537 – 616; Op. 47 – 105.

ἀπάτη, ψεῦδος, μηχανή, δόλος, τέχνημα, σόφισμα, etc.[10]). This suggests that the speaker of frr. 301 and 302 is probably not Prometheus. Furthermore, the context of gods deceiving humans to punish or to seduce them – as perhaps in Aeschylus' Athamas, Edonians, Carians or Europa, and Semele[11] – does not suit well our fragments, as gods need hardly any justification for so doing.

Indeed, frr. 301 and 302 do not imply that it is a god who deceives and lies. The speaker, who appears to be the deceiver and the liar himself, may well be a human who justifies his or her own behaviour through gnomic-like sentences.[12] He or she is either referring to the goal-oriented habits of the gods, who notoriously cheat and lie themselves, or arguing that gods do not blame and even appreciate humans for cheating and lying on behalf of a just cause.[13] This latter reading is not only more intriguing, but is also suggested by the sources quoting our fragments (see above). In any case, human deceptions which blatantly transgress divine morals and are punished mercilessly by the gods – as is probably the case in Aeschylus' Ixion and Perrhaebian Women – seem unlikely due to the double reference to the god.

As a character of legendary cunningness associated with lies and deceptive schemes, but within the moral boundaries set by the gods, Odysseus is certainly the most eligible speaker for these lines (indeed, Eustathius quotes fr. 301 referring to this hero). One might think of the Odysseus of Aeschylus' Palamedes, Penelope, Bone-Gatherers, and Philoctetes.

Let us consider each of these possibilities more carefully. Since Odysseus' betrayal of his comrade Palamedes is motivated by jealousy or revenge, this guile can hardly be described as "just" or as serving a just cause, as fr. 301 does. Penelope and Bone-Gatherers, which probably belonged to the same trilogy, also do not seem to fit. It is possible that in Penelope, where Odysseus disguises himself as a beggar and lies about his identity, the hero unveiled his "just deception" and "timely lies" (for example, at the moment of revealing his true identity), but justifications were hardly necessary − at least if the tragedy followed the Homeric story in the essentials: for Penelope and other family members were sympathetic, and a justificatory dialogue with the suitors would have broken the dramatic climax (indeed, in Homer the

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[10] Hermes and Kratos do call deprecatingly Prometheus a σοφιστής (Prom. 62, 944), and σόφισμα is used by Hermes (v. 1011) and by Prometheus himself (v. 459), but not with regard to the theft of the fire, which is referred to through κλέπτω and related terms: Prom. 8, 109, 946.

[11] On possible contents of the lost plays see Mette 1963; Sommerstein 2008.

[12] Cf. Eust. Il. 480, 42 (1, 760, 2 van der Valk): κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν.

[13] I thank Walter Stockert for having called my attention on this alternative.

suitors have little time to argue before dying). In Bone-Gatherers Odysseus may have justified himself in front of the suitors' families, but if so, rather for having killed the suitors (as also Aesch. frr. 179 and 180 suggest) than for having disguised himself.

Therefore, I suggest that frr. 301 and 302 might be delivered by Odysseus in Aeschylus' Philoctetes, where the *polymechanos* hero deceives and lies due to necessity (cf. Eustathius: εἰς δέον) and for a just cause (fr. 301: ἀπάτη δικαία):[14] in fact, this is the only way to ensure the Greek victory over the Trojans.

(2.) One deception, many lies

This hypothesis is supported by Dio Chrysostom's account of Aeschylus' Philoctetes. When Sophocles staged his Philoctetes in 409 B. C., homonymous tragedies had been already staged both by Aeschylus (unknown date[15]), and by Euripides in 431 B. C.[16] Dio provides an interesting piece of comparative literary criticism on the three plays. Discussing Aeschylus' version of this myth,[17] he incidentally comments on the nature of Odysseus' sole deception and several lies:

καὶ οὐδέν γε ἀλλαττούσης τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς προσεδεήθη πρὸς τὸ μὴ γνωσθῆναι ὅστις ἐστὶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Φιλοκτήτου, καθάπερ Ὅμηρος κἀκείνῳ δὴ ἑπόμενος Εὐριπίδης ἐποίησεν [...] (or. 52, 5)

καὶ μὴν **ἡ ἀπάτη** ἡ τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως πρὸς τὸν Φιλοκτήτην καὶ **οἱ λόγοι**, δι' ὧν προσηγάγετο αὐτόν [...] καὶ τὸ ἀπαγγέλλειν δὲ τὰς τῶν Ἀχαιῶν συμφορὰς καὶ τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα τεθνηκότα καὶ τὸν Ὀδυσσέα ἐπ' αἰτίᾳ ὡς οἷόν τε αἰσχίστῃ καὶ καθόλου τὸ στράτευμα διεφθαρμένον (or. 52, 9/10)

Odysseus commits only one deceptive act (ἀπάτη, sing.: cf. fr. 301), and this is, strictly speaking, not the theft of the bow – for which Dio uses κλοπή

[14] Other than for the theft of fire by Prometheus, Odysseus' deeds and words towards Philoctetes are consistently referred to through ἀπάτη, ἀπατάω, ἐξαπατάω etc.: see Soph. Ph. 929, 949, 1028 etc.; for synonyms see lines 14, 54ff., 77, 80, 88, 101f., 107, 133, 928, 948, 1013, 1025, 1282. Cf. also Dio Chrysostom or. 52, 15.

[15] According to Avezzù 1988, 102, Aeschylus staged Philoctetes between 470 and 459 B. C.; Müller 2000, 38f. is even more cautious.

[16] On further dramatic treatments of the Philoctetes myth see Avezzù 1988.

[17] For alternative versions of the same events see Untersteiner 1942, esp. 149 – 153 on the role of Odysseus; Avezzù 1988; Bowersock 1994, 60 – 76.

and ἁρπαγή (or. 52, 2)[18] – but rather the concealing of his own identity: for Odysseus is neither hidden to Philoctetes' eyes, as in Sophocles, nor transformed by Athena, as in Euripides, but pretends to be someone else. On the other hand, his lies are many (λόγοι, plur.: cf. fr. 302 ψεύδη). Although Dio's list does not necessarily include them all, he states that Odysseus spoke at length in what appears to have been a *rhesis aggelike* (cf. τὸ ἀπαγγέλλειν) about the disgraces occurred to the Achaeans, Agamemnon's death, Odysseus' being accused of an unspecified, ominous crime,[19] and the ruin of the entire army.

Moreover, the way the speaker of frr. 301 and 302 justifies the deception and lies is consistent with Dio's description of the Odysseus character in Aeschylus:

> ἥ τε γὰρ τοῦ Αἰσχύλου μεγαλοφροσύνη καὶ τὸ ἀρχαῖον, ἔτι δὲ τὸ αὔθαδες τῆς διανοίας καὶ φράσεως, πρέποντα ἐφαίνετο τραγῳδίᾳ καὶ τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἤθεσι τῶν ἡρώων, οὐδ' ἐνῆν τι βεβουλευμένον[20] οὐδὲ στωμύλον οὐδὲ ταπεινόν· ἐπεί τοι καὶ τὸν Ὀδυσσέα εἰσῆγε δριμὺν καὶ δόλιον, ὡς ἐν τοῖς τότε, πολὺ δὲ ἀπέχοντα τῆς νῦν κακοηθείας, ὥστε τῷ ὄντι ἀρχαῖον ἂν δόξαι παρὰ τοὺς νῦν ἁπλοῦς εἶναι βουλομένους καὶ μεγαλόφρονας. (or. 52, 4/5)

> καὶ μὴν ἡ ἀπάτη ἡ τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως πρὸς τὸν Φιλοκτήτην καὶ οἱ λόγοι [...] οὐ μόνον εὐσχημονέστεροι, καὶ ἥρωι πρέποντες, ἀλλ' οὐκ Εὐρυβάτου ἢ Παταικίωνος [...] (or. 52, 9)

Odysseus' character as described by Dio is very different from the sophistic Odysseus of Sophocles.[21] In Aeschylus, even Odysseus can be mentioned as an example of "magnanimous character" (μεγαλοφροσύνη), which conforms to traditional, heroic morals (πρέποντα ἐφαίνετο τραγῳδίᾳ καὶ τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἤθεσι τῶν ἡρώων). Even when he deceives and lies to Philoctetes,

[18] There are different opinions as to how Odysseus stole the bow and whether or not Philoctetes suffered a paroxysm of pain. T. von Wilamowitz 1917, 271, Untersteiner 1942, 157, Calder 1970, 177, Luzzatto 1980, 119, Avezzù 1988, 105f., and Jouan 2002, 276 think that, as in Sophocles, Aeschylus' Philoctetes fainted due to acute pain; Müller 2000, 59–61 argues that the staging of the paroxysm was an invention of Sophocles and that in Aeschylus Odysseus could simply steal the bow after having won Philoctetes' trust. Cf. Luzzatto 1980, 110–115; Bowersock 1994, 59.

[19] The hideous crime committed by Odysseus may have been framing Palamedes for treason (which according to Dio or. 59, 8 was also mentioned in Euripides' Philoctetes): see Calder 1970, 176.

[20] Or, according to Hermann 1828, 113: οὐδὲν ἔχοντα ἐπιβεβουλευμένον.

[21] Cf. for example Soph. Ph. 79–85, 438–445, 542–627, 1402–1408.

his arguments and language remain clear-cut (αὔθαδες τῆς διανοίας καὶ φράσεως), his eloquence straight (οὐδὲ στωμύλον), his guise far from the bad habits of later times (πολὺ δὲ ἀπέχοντα τῆς νῦν κακοηθείας), his simplicity and great-mindedness genuine rather than feigned (τῷ ὄντι ἀρχαῖον ἂν δόξαι παρὰ τοὺς νῦν ἁπλοῦς εἶναι βουλομένους καὶ μεγαλόφρονας), his mendacious speeches well-shaped and becoming for a hero (εὐσχημονέστεροι καὶ ἥρωι πρέποντες).[22] This way of speaking appears quite at odds with that of the Euripidean Odysseus, who even engages Paris into an *agon* which aims only at proving Odysseus a most skilful orator.[23]

Dio's picture conforms to the deference of the double acknowledgement of the gods' morals in frr. 301 and 302: even in justifying his own deception and lies, the speaker references the moral rules set by the gods and supports his words with sound and positive wisdom, rather than entangling himself in subtle arguments. These sentences are so clear-cut, that they seem to be true to the simplicity and greatness of mind that Dio attributes the ancient heroes. The speaker does not resemble a cunning rhetorician, but rather a perforce liar still deferring to divine morals.

(3.) Context of the lines

What West notices with regard to fr. 301 also applies to fr. 302: these verses do not "look like a line from a longer speech (as of a *deus ex machina*) but a complete response to a query or reproach".[24] Odysseus might be speaking either to Philoctetes, in a stichomythia, or to the chorus (cf. Dio or. 52, 7), perhaps in a lyric-epirrhematic dialogue.[25]

Hypothetical reconstructions of the structure of this play suggest two alternative openings:[26] either the *parodos* (for example Calder 1970, 173f.; Jouan 2002, 273), or a prologue by Philoctetes (for example Mette 1963,

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[22] Cf. Avezzù 1988, 105: "con una menzogna brutalmente semplice". As Müller 2000, 58 puts it, Odysseus "muß […] mit einer gewissen Selbstverständlichkeit und ohne die Raffinesse einer ausgeklügelten Intrige aufgetreten sein".

[23] To Euripides, such an *epideixis* of rhetorical skills is so important that he apparently creates a new variant of the myth in order to include the *agon*: since an altercation between Odysseus and Philoctetes himself is impossible, as Philoctetes would have gladly shot Odysseus if he recognized him (or. 59, 3; cf. Soph. Ph. 75f.), Euripides has Paris come from Troy to oppose Odysseus' intentions. On Euripides' Philoctetes see Dio or. 59; Müller 1997; idem 2000.

[24] West 1979, 134.

[25] Avezzù 1988, 103 – 106 and Müller 2000, 42 – 64 attempt to reconstruct the structure of Aeschylus' Philoctetes.

[26] For an overview of both positions see Calder 1970, 172 – 175; Jouan 2002, 273.

103; Luzzatto 1980, 106–110; Avezzù 1988; Müller 2000).[27] If the tragedy opened with a prologue by Odysseus – as in Euripides – or with the *parados*, then in both cases Odysseus would have the opportunity to reveal his schemes to the chorus of Lemnians while Philoctetes is still absent. But this seems dramaturgically inconvenient, as in doing so Odysseus would have jeopardized the secrecy of his plans, and because the chorus, although informed about such schemes throughout the dramatic action, would not have prevented Odysseus realising them.[28] Therefore, I suggest that frr. 301 and 302 came after the theft of the bow, when the deception and the lies have already become apparent and Odysseus is most likely to reveal his true identity and justify his dishonesty while speaking either to the chorus or to Philoctetes himself.[29]

Interestingly, a similar justification by Odysseus also occurs in Sophocles' Philoctetes, when the revealing of his schemes leads to a stichomythia with Philoctetes. Although the Sophoclean Odysseus pays but little attention to giving account for his conduct, he refers to the gods by stressing that it had been necessary to expel Philoctetes from the community in order to perform rituals in a correct way (cf. Soph. Ph. 8 and 1032–1034), and by declaring that his conduct is in accordance with Zeus' will (Soph. Ph. 990–994). In reply, Philoctetes seeks to prevent Odysseus using the gods to exculpate himself: "By putting the gods forward, you make liars out of them!"[30] This could be an echo of what I suppose to have been Odysseus' strategy of defence in Aeschylus' Philoctetes.

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27 The last position has been held more recently both by Avezzù and by Müller, though for different reasons: Avezzù argues that Dio or. 52, 11 seems to consider Euripides' choice to have a prologue by Odysseus as something new, and that therefore in Aeschylus the prologue was by Philoctetes; Müller holds that since in Aristophanes (Ra. 1382/1383) Euripides quotes the opening line of Medea, Aeschylus' response through Phil. fr. 249 Radt should be an opening line too (Müller 2000, 42) – although by this point of the comedy the competition on tragic prologues is over (cf. Ar. Ra. 1119–1248). See also Taplin 1977, 429f.

28 Cf. Calder 1970, 175; Luzzatto 1980, 108f.; Jouan 2002, 276. Contra Avezzù 1988, 104, who places fr. 302 before the theft supposing that Philoctetes is not hearing ("la battuta presuppone F[ilottete] assente o incosciente").

29 Already T. von Wilamowitz 1917, 271 judged the "Aufklärung des Betrugs" as "dramatisch unentbehrlich".

30 Also Untersteiner 1942, 162–168 puts these lines in connection with Aeschylus.

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