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On Unemphatic "Emphatic" Pronouns in Greek

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On the face of it, the description of Greek personal pronouns is straightforward: There are specific rules for when orthotonic pronouns (also known as 'emphatic') are used, and the default option is to use the enclitic pronouns (also known as 'unemphatic'). In a recent restatement of the rule that has come down to us from the ancient grammarians [Devine & Stephens](#) (1995: 475) write that "When in focus (*emfasis*), particularly contrastive focus (*antidiastolh*), the pronouns are orthotonic". In addition, there are several syntactic environments (e.g., combination with *autos, kai*) which require the orthotonic pronoun.

The problem which this paper addresses is that of subject pronouns, regularly described as "never enclitic" (see, e.g., Devine & Stephens: 476) and interpreted as "almost always involv[ing] some sort of focus" (*ibid.*). On the face of it, this is only logical, as we tell our beginning students every year. Greek verbs are marked for person, *ergo*, if we see a subject pronoun it is by definition emphatic. But are we right to state this?

For Latin, this issue has been addressed and convincingly debunked by [Adams](#) (1994; esp. pp. 141 and following, 'An Enclitic Use of Nominative Pronouns'), and I believe it is time to re-examine the Greek evidence in the light of his findings. I will argue on the basis of examples especially from classical drama and Plato that emphatic pronouns can not only draw attention to themselves (the standard view) but are also used to 'punctuate' their clause and lend prominence to the preceding word, rather in the manner of traditional enclitics, as set out by [Fraenkel](#) in *Kolon und Satz*. This reinterpretation of 'Mobile' as 'postpositive', to use the terms of [Dover](#) (1960), has important consequences for our readings of the texts mentioned above, which I shall illustrate in this paper.

To give some sense of the kind of sentences I have been considering, I will here cite some of the Sophoclean instances (links are to the Perseus website). Note that the subject pronouns are found in 'Wackernagel position' and that it is the words they follow (underlined) that are in fact focused. For the type of words that are especially prone to receive such prominence, compare [Adams'](#) categories of demonstratives as host (122f.) and adjectives of quantity and size as host (124f.).

[Soph. Ant. 571](#): kakas egw

[Ant. 191](#) toioisd' egw

[OT 317-8](#) kalws egw

[El. 1043](#) toutois egw

[El. 1351-2](#) ek pollwn egw

References:

Adams, J.N. (1994), 'Wackernagel's Law and the Position of Unstressed Personal Pronouns in Classical Latin', TPhS 92.2 (1994), 103-178.

Devine, A.M. & L.D. Stephens (1995), *The Prosody of Greek Speech*. Oxford.

Dover, K.J. (1960), *Greek Word Order*. Oxford.

Fraenkel, Ed. (1932), 'Kolon und Satz: Beobachtungen zur Gliederung des antiken Satzes', *NGG* 1932: 197-213. (Repr. (1964) *Kleine Beiträge I*: 73-92).

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