

Outis and what he can tell us about negation in Homeric Greek*

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“ἤ μή τις σευ μῆλα βροτῶν ἀέκοντος ἐλαύνει; 405

ἤ μή τις σ' αὐτὸν κτείνει δόλω ἢ ἐ βίηφιν;”

Τοὺς δ' αὐτ' ἐξ ἄντρου προσέφη κρατερὸς Πολύφημος·

“ὦ φίλοι, Οὐτίς με κτείνει δόλω οὐδὲ βίηφιν.”

Οἱ δ' ἀπαμειβόμενοι ἔπεα πτερόεντ' ἀγόρευον·

“εἰ μὲν δὴ μή τις σε βιάζεται οἶον ἐόντα, 410

νοῦσον γ' οὐ πως ἔστι Διὸς μεγάλου ἀλέασθαι,

ἀλλὰ σύ γ' εὖχεο πατρὶ Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι.”

“Nobody is driving your sheep away against your will, I hope?

Nobody is killing you by tricks or force?”

Powerful Polyphemus replied to them from the cave:

“Friends, Nobody is killing me – with tricks and not force.”

And they answered him with winged words:

“Well, if nobody is harming you as you sit there alone,

There is no way of avoiding a sickness sent from Zeus.

Just pray to your father, Lord Poseidon.” (Homer *Odyssey* 9.405–12).

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Introduction

The Outis passage in *Odyssey* 9, where Odysseus escapes due to his cunning trick of naming himself ‘Nobody’ has been often analysed from a literary perspective, being seen as the earliest extant version of a widely-spread folk tale, with several important differences from the others found.¹ The sophistication and symmetry of the passage as well as the different layers of the puns have been analysed in great detail.²

Line 408 in particular has also been considered from a linguistic perspective, with Bernini and Ramat using it as a measure to compare the languages of Europe in their capacity to translate the line effectively.³ While English and Italian are languages which allow ‘n-words’ such as ‘nobody’ or ‘nessuno’ to stand by themselves in a sentence and to contribute the negation to the sentence, many European languages are either obliged or at least prefer to add a separate marker, thus making the pun unworkable. For example Modern Greek:

Κανένας δεν με πλήγωσε

Nobody not me hit

‘nobody hit me’ (and not ‘a man called Nobody hit me’)

While not wanting to lose sight of the effectiveness of the trick, the importance of the folk trope or the humour of the passage, I will argue that there is yet more to be said

¹ Schein (1970).

² Podlecki (1961), Simpson (1972).

³ Bernini and Ramat (1996) 171–79.

about this line from a linguistic perspective, in particular in the use of οὐδέ in its second half.

At first sight the meaning and use of οὐδέ is straightforward: ‘and not’. However, based on an analysis of all the instances of οὐδέ in the *Odyssey*, I will claim that its distribution sheds light not only on the line in question, showing that the pun is even more complex and untranslatable than previously thought, but also on the well-known capacity of Greek to pile up negatives without them cancelling each other out. To me, the combination of humour with the fine detail of the language makes it a topic ideally suited for a *Festschrift* to James Diggle.

The difficulties of Homeric Greek

I have written elsewhere about the general difficulties involved in analysing the language of Homer from a linguistic perspective.⁴ In this project, however, the difficulties will be particularly marked, as a successful analysis of the different grammatical elements of the line requires an understanding of the kinds of context in which they are found. It is always important to bear in mind the possibility that expressions are ‘formulaic’ and not particularly apt for their particular context. Unsurprisingly, elements in question in this line are found in several expressions which are found repeatedly throughout the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. For example:

οὐδέ τί σε χρή

οὐδ’ ὥς

⁴ Willmott (2007) §1.2.

οὐδ' ἠβαιόν.

Of course, the possibility that these constructions are formulaic does not mean that they cannot necessarily be analysed in the same way as non-formulaic expressions. However, some caution should be used. An example will illustrate my point here:⁵

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ὄπιθεν κακὸς ἔσσειαι οὐδ' ἀνοήμων

But since you will not be bad or foolish in time to come (2.278)

We might be tempted to classify this as an (unusual) example of an οὐδέ after a subordinating conjunction (ἐπεὶ). However, the οὐδέ section is repeated verbatim from a few lines earlier, where it follows a vocative:

Τηλέμαχ', οὐδ' ὄπιθεν κακὸς ἔσσειαι οὐδ' ἀνοήμων

Telemachus, you will not be bad or foolish in time to come (2.270)

It would therefore be rash to claim that line 2.278 proves that οὐδέ can be regularly used after a subordinating conjunction, as its use there may be rather formulaic.

Fortunately, the uses of οὐδέ are numerous, so that I will not be making any claims based on one or two dubious lines. With these caveats in mind, we can return to the question of the meaning and use of οὐδέ in 9.408 and the rest of the *Odyssey*.

The meaning of οὐδέ

⁵ All examples come from Homer *Odyssey* (text from Allen (1917)) unless otherwise stated. Translations are my own and line-numbers refer to the line the negative element in question is found in.

Introduction

The etymology of οὐδέ is transparent, made up of the negator οὐ and the particle δέ.

Unfortunately neither of these elements are simple to explain. The negator οὐ is one of two negators in Ancient Greek, which is used for both ‘sentential’ and ‘constituent’ negation.⁶ As this distinction will be useful in understanding οὐδέ, it will be useful to make it clear by comparing these English sentences:

I don’t eat fish

I eat fish, not chips

In the first sentence, the negation is sentential and has scope over the whole clause. In the second, the negation only has scope over the single unit it precedes, namely the chips. In English, these two types of negation are sometimes, if not necessarily, formally distinct (sentential negation may be reduced to ‘n’t’, constituent negation may not). In Greek, οὐ is used in both types. For example:

οὐ γάρ τ’ αἰψα θεῶν τρέπεται νόος αἰὲν ἔόντων

The intention of the gods, who exist forever, is not easily changed (3.147)

πρῆξις δ’ ἥδ’ ἰδίη, οὐ δῆμιος, ἣν ἀγορεύω

The matter I speak of is private, not public (3.82)

⁶ Jespersen (1917) 42–55 and Moorhouse (1959) use the term ‘nexal’ for ‘sentential’ and ‘special’ for ‘constituent’. For more on these terms, as well as the difficulty of distinguishing between them, see Horn (1989) 271–316.

The second element of οὐδέ is perhaps even more difficult to explain. Etymologically it has been argued to be the phonologically weakened form of δή,⁷ but its actual usage is complicated. Denniston claims that “δέ is both connective (either continuative, ‘and’, or adversative, ‘but’) and responsive or ‘adverbial’ (apodotic). The same varieties of meaning are found in the negative form”.⁸ However, recent scholars working on particles have criticised his approach, questioning what is meant by the division into connective and adverbial in general as well as questioning his interpretation of δέ in particular.⁹

In the most recent work on δέ, Bakker argues convincingly that it must be interpreted in discourse terms, showing that it functions as a boundary marker, separating and at the same time linking clausal intonation units.¹⁰ In this analysis of all the instances of οὐδέ in the *Odyssey* I will argue that, although Denniston provides useful examples of the different uses of the particle, by grouping them in a different way we may see how its meaning develops. And this development may shed some light on the later capacity for Greek to be a negative concord language.

Clause boundary marker

In the most straightforward instances, the different meanings contributed by the negator and the particle may be easily separated out. It is found at the beginning of a clause following either a positive or a negative assertion and means ‘and/but not’, expressing

⁷ Chantraine (1980) s.v.

⁸ Denniston (1954) 190.

⁹ Rijksbaron (1997) 187–8.

¹⁰ Bakker (1993) 280.

sentential negation:

Ὅς φάτ' Ἀθηναίη, κόρυη Διός· οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτι δὴν
Τηλέμαχος παρέμιμνεν, ἐπεὶ θεοῦ ἔκλυεν αὐδήν
So spoke Athena, daughter of Zeus. And Telemachus did not
Wait around once he had heard the voice of the goddess (2.296).

οὐ γὰρ ξείνους οἶδε μάλ' ἀνθρώπους ἀνέχονται
οὐδ' ἀγαπαζόμενοι φιλέουσ' ὅς κ' ἄλλοθεν ἔλθῃ
These men do not easily put up with strangers,
Nor do they like to welcome people from other places (7.33).

The negator negates the clause and the particle marks the boundary of the clause and separates it from the previous clause. The preceding clause is usually positive, though it need not be.¹¹ The clauses are entirely self-standing, and usually have their own subjects. In such contexts οὐδέ comes first in the clause over which it operates.

Constituent negator

As Denniston realises, however, οὐδέ does not always function at the clause or sentence level, but is found also as a constituent negator that negates other units, namely verbs, participles, infinitives, nouns and prepositional phrases. In all of these uses, οὐδέ tends to be positioned directly before the unit that it is negating, which is usually only a single word. Denniston categorises some of these uses as connective and some as adverbial.¹²

¹¹ Denniston (1954) 190.

¹² Denniston (1954) 191–5.

Just as with his analysis of δέ it is unclear on what grounds he makes this division. A more objective way of categorising them is in the syntactic nature of the unit that it is found with. This allows us to see an important difference between οὐδέ and δέ.

Firstly, οὐδέ is found preceding verbs, participles and infinitives. For example:

Εὐρύμαχ' ἠδὲ καὶ ἄλλοι, ὅσοι μνηστῆρες ἀγαυοί,
ταῦτα μὲν οὐχ ὑμέας ἔτι λίσσομαι οὐδ' ἀγορεύω
Eurymachus and all the other noble suitors,
I will not beg you or speak to you any more (2.209–10).

οὗτος γὰρ ἐπίηλεν τάδε ἔργα,
οὔ τι γάμου τόσσον κεχρημένος οὐδὲ χατίζων,
ἀλλ' ἄλλα φρονέων, τὰ οἱ οὐκ ἐτέλεσσε Κρονίων
He started this,
Not so much because he desired or needed marriage,
But with another purpose, which the son of Kronos did not fulfil (22.49–51).

οὐ γάρ μοι θέμις ἐστὶ κομιζέμεν οὐδ' ἀποπέμπειν
ἄνδρα τόν ὃς κε θεοῖσιν ἀπέχθεται μακάρεσσιν.
It is not right for me to help or send off this man
Who is hated by the blessed gods. (10.73–4).

We may in fact still be dealing with separate clauses in these instances. For example, we could interpret 2.210 as ‘I will not beg you, and nor will I speak to you’ and 2.370 as ‘you don’t have to suffer hardships, and nor do you have to wander’. In that interpretation we would have to admit that the οὐδέ clauses are rather elliptical, sharing elements with the preceding clause, but that does not prevent there being a clause

boundary here.

In the syntactic contexts exemplified above οὐδέ is operating in a unit in which δέ can also be found.¹³ For example in an infinitival phrase:¹⁴

ὕμιν μὲν θεοὶ δοῖεν Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες
ἐκπέρσαι Πριάμοιο πόλιν, εὖ δ' οἴκαδ' ἴκοισθε
May the gods who live in Olympus grant
That you sack Priam's city and return home safe (*Iliad* 1.18–19).

But οὐδέ is also found operating over even smaller units such as nouns and preposition phrases, in which contexts δέ is not found.¹⁵

ἠγαγόμην δὲ γυναῖκα πολυκλήρων ἀνθρώπων
εἴνεκ' ἐμῆς ἀρετῆς, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀποφώλιος ἦα
οὐδὲ φυγοπτόλεμος
I married a woman of famous stock because of my virtue,
Since I was not a weakling nor a coward (14.211–13).

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς μοι εἰπὲ τεὸν γένος, ὀππόθεν ἐσσί·
οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ δρυός ἐσσι παλαιφάτου οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης
But even still tell me about your family and where you come from.
After all you don't come from an ancient oak or from a stone (19.162–3).

¹³ Ruijgh (1971) §154.

¹⁴ Ruijgh (1971) §156.

¹⁵ As Ruijgh (1971) §182 points out, we can find οὐχ οἱ στρατιῶται καθεύδουσιν οὐδὲ ὁ στρατηγός but not οἱ στρατιῶται καθεύδουσιν ὁ στρατηγός δέ.

In these examples we could again argue that οὐδέ marks a clause boundary, with an elliptical clause second. This is particularly plausible when the verb is εἶμι and there is more than one word in the οὐδέ clause:

ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ οἱ ἔτ' ἦν ἴς ἔμπεδος οὐδέ τι κῖκυς,

οἷη περ πάρος ἔσκεν ἐνὶ γναμπτοῖσι μέλεσσι.

But he no longer had any strength or any force left in him,

The kind he used to have in his supple limbs (11.393–4).

However, in other instances this explanation is less plausible, and οὐδέ seems to be operating purely over the noun with no clause boundary. For example:

Τίφθ' οὕτως, Ὀδυσσεῦ, κατ' ἄρ' ἔζεαι ἴσος ἀναύδῳ,

θυμὸν ἔδων, βρώμης δ' οὐχ ἄπτεαι οὐδὲ ποτῆτος;

Odysseus, why on earth are you being like this, sitting there like a mute

As you eat your heart out, not touching any food or drink? (10.378–9).

This suggests that οὐδέ is becoming grammaticalised in its own right, and may no longer be interpreted as just the combination of the negator + δέ.

Significantly, the surrounding context in examples of the 'constituent' use of οὐδέ tends overwhelmingly to be negative, as in 10.379 above. There is thus a clear difference between the clausal and constituent uses of οὐδέ: when it marks a new clause the preceding clause tends to be positive whereas when it negates a constituent it tends to be

in a negative context.¹⁶ It is tempting to see that this is the context which enables οὐδέ to develop in a different way from δέ. The negator itself, of course, negates both sentences and smaller constituents, and is usually positioned as the first element of the unit over which it has scope.¹⁷

Importantly, οὐδέ can be a constituent negator after a clause with a sentential negator. For example:

Ἄτρεΐδη, μὴ δὴ με πολὺν χρόνον ἐνθάδ' ἔρυκε.

καὶ γάρ κ' εἰς ἐνιαυτὸν ἐγὼ παρὰ σοί γ' ἀνεχοίμην

ἦμενος, οὐδέ με οἴκου ἔλοι πόθος οὐδὲ τοκίω·

Son of Atreus, do not keep me here for too long.

For even if it was a year I could bear to sit in your house

And desire for home or parents would not afflict me (4.594–6).

Again this example hints at the way in which the use of οὐδέ might have developed.

From negating clauses it could have developed via this context of negating nouns in a negative context so as to negate nouns without a preceding negative context.

The examples of οὐδέ in a positive context are few, and most of them share particular features. In one example, the negated constituent lies in contrast to something

¹⁶ 36 examples of clausal οὐδέ follow a negative statement. 216 follow a positive statement. 77 examples of constituent οὐδέ are in a negative context. Only 10 examples are in a positive context (these figures do not include examples where οὐδέ means 'not even' or when it introduces a verb, which are ambiguous between the two types).

¹⁷ As Jespersen noted, it is cross-linguistically common for negators to appear early in the clause or directly before the word to be negated (Jespersen (1917) 5).

marked as different in the preceding unit:

Ἄλλο τι δὴ σὺ, θεά, τόδε μήδεαι οὐδέ τι πομπήν,

You are planning something different and not my send-off (5.173)

In others, the negative element follows two elements linked with τε ... καί:

ὦ μοι ἐγὼ, τέων αὖτε βροτῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἰκάνω;

ἦ ῥ' οἵ γ' ὕβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι,

ἦε φιλόξεينوι καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεουδής;

Alas, whose land have I come to?

Are they lawless, wild and unjust?

Or are they friendly to strangers with god-fearing hearts? (6.119–21)

In line 6.120 (which is formulaic, found in very similar form at 9.175, 13.201 and 8.575), we also face the possibility that there is ‘formulaic corruption’ of the kind that I mentioned previously. In 13.209 (also 2.282 and 3.133) we find οὐδὲ δίκαιοι in the same position of the line but in a negative context.

ὦ πόποι, οὐκ ἄρα πάντα νοήμονες οὐδὲ δίκαιοι

ἦσαν Φαιήκων ἠγήτορες ἠδὲ μέδοντες,

οἳ μ' εἰς ἄλλην γαῖαν ἀπήγαγον·

Alas – the leaders and counsellors of the Phaeacians

Who sent me to another land

Were not entirely thoughtful or just (13.209–11).

However, the possibility of formulaic corruption cannot explain away all the examples. Several examples of οὐδέ are found in a positive context without a similar line in a negative context. It would appear that, while it may have been a later development to allow οὐδέ in a positive context, it had become a grammatical construction already in Homeric Greek. For example:

τὸ δ' ἐγὼ κάμον οὐδέ τις ἄλλος.

I laboured over it and nobody else (23.187).

Negative scalar focus particle

I have so far been examining uses of οὐδέ which mean 'but not'. However, as is well known, it may also have the meaning 'not even', where it would now be described as a negative scalar focus particle.¹⁸ For example:

ἢ δ' ἐμὴ οὐδέ περ υἱὸς ἐνιπλησθῆναι ἄκοιτις

ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἔασε·

But my wife did not let me fill my eyes even with my own son (11.452).

Again, it is found directly before the element that it is negating, often supported by particles, such as περ. With this meaning it can have other elements in its scope, such as participles and even whole clauses:

ἢ μάλα τίς τοι θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι ἀπιστος,

οἷόν σ' οὐδ' ὁμόσας περ ἐπήγαγον οὐδέ σε πείθω.

¹⁸ Denniston (1954) 196, Ruijgh (1971) §182, Haspelmath (1997) §8.3.1.

You really have an untrusting heart in your chest

As I did not convince or persuade you even by swearing an oath (14.391–2)

ὅς τὸ καταβρόξειεν, ἐπὴν κρητῆρι μιγείη,
οὐ κεν ἐφημέριός γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν,
οὐδ' εἴ οἱ κατατεθναίη μήτηρ τε πατήρ τε,
οὐδ' εἴ οἱ προπάροιθεν ἀδελφεὸν ἢ φίλον υἱὸν
χαλκῶ δηϊόωεν, ὃ δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὄρωτο.

Whoever would drink this up when it had been mixed in the bowl

Would not shed a tear down his cheeks that day

Not even if his mother and father lay there dead

And not even if someone killed with the sword

His brother or dear son and he saw it with his own eyes (4.222–6).

It has been argued that οὐδέ is in this sense the negative equivalent of καί.¹⁹ This is particularly clear when we see one of the most common uses of the construction, with ὤς:²⁰

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὤς τιν' ἔμελλ' ἀπαλεξήσειν κακότητος

But not even then was she going to save any of them from ruin (17.364).

This is clearly the negative equivalent of the following:

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς κακὰ πολλὰ παθὼν πειρήσομ' ἀέθλων·

But even so, however much I have suffered, I will still take part in the

¹⁹ Ruijgh (1971) 182.

²⁰ Also in 1.6, 2.023, 5.324, 5.379, 10.291, 11.88, 18.155, 18.324, 21.246, 22.63.

competition. (8.184).

With this meaning too, although οὐδέ may be found in a negative context (as in 4.224), it is frequently found without a surrounding negative context and supplying the negation by itself (as in 17.364). This may have contributed to the ability of οὐδέ meaning to be found in positive contexts too.

Development

We may therefore distinguish the following stages in the development of οὐδέ even if the exact details of the order of these different developments remain unclear:

a. οὐδέ functions as clausal linker :

Ἦς φάτ' Ἀθηναίη, κόυρη Διός· οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτι δὴν

Τηλέμαχος παρέμιμνεν, ἐπεὶ θεοῦ ἔκλυεν αὐδήν.

So spoke Athena, daughter of Zeus.

And Telemachus did not wait around once he had heard the voice of the goddess (2.296–7).

b. οὐδέ functions as constituent negator in negative contexts:

Τίφθ' οὕτως, Ὀδυσσεῦ, κατ' ἄρ' ἔζει ἴσος ἀναύδω,

θυμὸν ἔδων, βρώμης δ' οὐχ ἄπτεαι οὐδὲ ποτῆτος;

Odysseus, why on earth are you being like this, sitting there like a mute

As you eat your heart out, not touching any food or drink? (10.378–9)

c. οὐδέ functions as constituent negator in positive contexts:

Ἄλλο τι δὴ σύ, θεά, τόδε μήδεαι οὐδέ τι πομπήν

You are planning something different and not my send-off (5.173).

d. οὐδέ functions as ‘negative scalar focus particle’ (‘not even’):

ἦ δ’ ἐμὴ οὐδέ περ υἱὸς ἐνιπλησθῆναι ἄκοιτις

ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἔασε·

But my wife did not let me fill my eyes even with my own son (11.452–3).

Double negation with οὐδέ

With an appreciation of the different uses of οὐδέ in Homer, and an understanding of the different stages of its development, we may now examine the last claim Denniston makes about the particle, namely that it is found with the typical ‘duplication of negatives’ that is found in later Greek.²¹

As is well known, Classical Greek is one of several languages which allow the grammatical phenomenon now usually termed ‘negative concord’, which was discussed in detail by Jespersen as a form of ‘double negation’.²² This phenomenon may be briefly described as follows: in sentences with two (or more) apparently negative elements (a negator and one or more so-called ‘n-words’), they do not ‘cancel out’ the negative meaning (as in English), but rather the sentence has a negative meaning. For example:

²¹ Denniston (1954) 196.

²² Jespersen (1917) 62–80, and see Haspelmath (1997) 201–3 for a discussion of why the term ‘double negation’ is problematic.

ὄμως δ' οὐδ' οὕτως οὐδὲν εἰπὼν περὶ τοῦ πράγματος ἐξεληθὼν ὠχόμην ἔξω σιωπῆ.

Nevertheless, not saying anything about the situation, I went out in silence (Lysias 1.14).

These 'n-words' (like οὐδείς) appear to be inherently negative, as they may stand by themselves and generate a negative reading. For example:

οὐδείς αὐτῶν ἄψεται

No-one will touch them (Lysias 1.36).

Importantly, in Classical Greek negative concord only occurs when the negator is followed by the n-word, or when there are two (or more) n-words in the sentence.²³ For example:

ὅτι τᾶλλα τῶν μὴ ὄντων οὐδενὶ οὐδαμῆ οὐδαμῶς οὐδεμίαν κοινωνίαν ἔχει

Because the others have nothing in common in any way at all with anything which is non-existent (Pl. *Prm.* 166a).

If the n-word comes first and is followed by the simple negator a negative concord reading does not result: in this situation the negations do cancel each other out.²⁴

οὐδείς οὐκ ἔπασché τι

No one was not suffering something (i.e. everybody suffered) (Xen. *Symp.* 1. 9).

This phenomenon has been widely discussed with relation to other languages. It has been shown that the great majority of the world's languages allow sentences with

²³ For further examples of several accumulating negatives see Kühner and Gerth (1898) §514.

²⁴ Smyth (1956) §2760.

two negative elements to give a negative reading, with the only exceptions being concentrated in Western Europe (the Germanic languages) and Mesoamerica.²⁵ Elsewhere I have examined the phenomenon as it develops from Classical to Modern Greek, particularly focussing on the differences between the earlier and later periods (Willmott (forthcoming)).

Grammars of Ancient Greek suggest that the phenomenon is exhibited at all periods.²⁶ However, the examples given for Homeric Greek appear rather different from those found in Classical Greek, and different from the examples of negative concord as described cross-linguistically. The second negative element is almost always οὐδέ rather than οὐδεῖς, οὐδέποτε or one of the several words seen in the Parmenides example above. And a search of Homer has revealed that this is not chance: in fact the *only* examples with more than one negative word in the sentences have οὐδέ rather than any other negative word, following either the simple οὐ or else another οὐδέ.

Of course, a simple search for an οὐδέ in close proximity to either οὐ or οὐδέ finds several false positives for the construction under consideration. For example, in the following line the two negators belong to different clauses, and thus are clearly contributing their own negation to the sentence.

οὐκ ἔστ' οὐδὲ ἔοικε τεὸν ἔπος ἀρνήσασθαι.

It is not possible, nor is it seemly to deny your claim (8.358).

²⁵ Haspelmath (2005) 470, and see a visual representation at <http://goo.gl/VOre8>.

²⁶ Eg. Jannaris (1897) 1824; Smyth (1956) §2760; Kühner and Gerth (1898) §514.

However, I have counted 20 examples in the *Odyssey* where two negative words occur in the same unit and yet the sentence remains negative. For example:

οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδέ τις ἄλλος ἀνήρ τάδε φάρμακ' ἀνέτλη,

ὅς κε πῆη καὶ πρῶτον ἀμείψεται ἕρκος ὀδόντων.

No other man has ever withstood this potion

Who has first drunk it down and let it pass his lips (10.327).

Many of these lines seem rather formulaic: the first negative element is followed by a particle (μέν or γάρ) and the second element (which is always οὐδέ) follows either directly afterwards or after the object.²⁷ Smyth argues that the two elements do contribute separately to the sentence: “the first negative belongs to the whole sentence, while the second limits a particular part”.²⁸ This analysis seems plausible for 10.327 above – τις ἄλλος is just the kind of unit we might expect to find after the emphasising use of οὐδέ. However, not all of the examples may be explained in the same way. For example:

οὐ μὲν θην κείνης γε χερείων εὐχομαι εἶναι,

οὐ δέμας οὐδὲ φύην, ἐπεὶ οὐ πῶς οὐδὲ ἔοικε

θνητὰς ἀθανάτησι δέμας καὶ εἶδος ἐρίζειν.

I would not claim to be far inferior to her

Either in body or nature, since it is not in any way right

For a mortal to rival the immortals in body or looks (5.211–13).

²⁷ Also found in 8.32, 10.327, 10.551, 21.319, 4.805, 5.212, 8.159.

²⁸ Smyth (1956) §2761.

This follows a similar ‘formulaic’ pattern noted above, but here it does not make sense that ἔοικε is being particularly emphasised while οὐ is negating the sentence.

In any case, not all of the instances follow the same formulaic pattern in terms of clause position and particles. For example:

μη̄ σύ γε κεῖθι τύχοις, ὅτε ῥοιβδήσειεν·

οὐ γάρ κεν ῥύσαιτό σ’ ὑπέκ κακοῦ οὐδ’ ἐνοσίχθων.

May you not be there when she sucks it down

As no-one could save you from ruin, not even the Earth-Shaker (12.107).

Τηλέμαχ’, οὐ μὲν σε χρὴ ἔτ’ αἰδοῦς οὐδ’ ἠβαιόν.²⁹

Telemachus, there is no longer any need to you to feel ashamed, not even the slightest (3.14).

These appear to again fit with Smyth’s explanation – we are in the context of a negative sentence, and then particular elements are stressed. These elements are usually clearly ‘extremes’ eg. ἠβαιόν, μάλ’ ἠβῶν, θεός, and therefore liable to being stressed in this way.

In both of the above sentences we could argue that simply by adding a comma we could understand the sentence without claiming that there was any double negation here. In the English translation we also find two negative elements without its being grammatically incorrect (standard English not being classed as a negative concord

²⁹ It has been claimed that οὐδ’ ἠβαιόν has resulted from a missegmentation of οὐ δὴ βαιόν (Reece (2009) 105). We might therefore ignore examples of this kind here. However, given that δέ is argued to be a phonologically weakened form of δὴ and that we do find ἠβαιός without οὐδ’ preceding it once in the *Odyssey* (Chantraine (1980) s.v. ἠβαιός), this does not appear to be necessary.

language).³⁰

However, in two examples the presence of οὐδέ in a negative context is rather more difficult to explain, as the different negated elements cannot easily be separated:

Αἴαν, παῖ Τελαμῶνος ἀμύμονος, οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες
οὐδὲ θανῶν λήσεσθαι ἐμοὶ χόλου εἴνεκα τευχέων
οὐλομένων;

Ajax, son of peerless Telamon, were you not going to forget how angry you were with me about the destructive weapons even in death? (11.554)

οὐ σύ γ' ἂν ἐξ οἴκου σῶ ἐπιστάτη οὐδ' ἄλα δοίης,

You would not even give a grain of salt to your suppliant (17.455)

In 11.554, although the two units οὐκ ἄρ' ἔμελλες λήσεσθαι ('you were not going to forget') and οὐδὲ θανῶν ('not even in death') can again be separated and the two separate negations explained, the word order of the Greek means that the division between the units is not distinct. This is even clearer in 17.455 where the verb δοίης is being negated by οὐ. The element οὐδ' ἄλα is intertwined in the negative clause. The same sense could have been achieved by οὐδ' ἄλα δοίης without the extra negation (as in 11.452 above).

Nevertheless, although the construction is of a different type to that in later Greek, with only οὐδέ rather than with all the n-words that we find there, we do seem to have the beginnings of the negative concord construction in Homeric Greek. This is particularly interesting given the nature of the n-words that are employed to create

³⁰ Similar examples may be found in 2.118, 8.177, 8.281, 9.525, 13.294, 18.355, 23.187.

negative concord in later Greek: they are all based on the particle οὐδέ with other particles and words tacked on. Might the nature of the embryonic stage that we see in Homer explain why later Greek is a negative concord language altogether?

Some possible support for this suggestion may be found in considering the kind of n-words found in Homer. Unlike in later Greek, these are usually built not on οὐδέ but simple οὐ. To return to our line 9.408, we find Οὐτις and not Οὐδεῖς. Aside from a couple of exceptions, we only find the neuter form of οὐδεῖς in Homer, and that rarely.³¹ Smyth has claimed that οὐτις is the poetical equivalent of οὐδεῖς.³² If that is the case, it is entirely to be expected that we find more οὐτις than οὐδεῖς in Homer.³³ However, looking at the Attic tragedians we may see that in fact both forms are used. A quick search with *TLG* revealed 341 results for the lemma ουδεις in Euripides, but only 29 for the lemma ουτις (no diacritics used). Significantly, we may note that it is only the n-words which derive from οὐδέ which are found in the negative concord construction in all the Attic tragedians. The reason that we do not find clear examples of negative concord in Homeric Greek might therefore be connected to the fact that we only rarely find n-words built to οὐδέ.

We might then claim that the development of the negative concord construction in later Greek was only enabled once οὐδέ had developed to a negative scalar focus particle and then on to a fully-blown n-word. Haspelmath has pointed out that, cross-linguistically, many of the n-words that are found in this construction are in origin

³¹ Chantraine (1980) s.v. οὐ.

³² Smyth (1956) §337.

³³ In fact, of course, we do not find the unverbated form οὐτις but rather two separate words.

negative scalar focus particles and thus distinct from the usual sentential negator.³⁴ There are therefore not two simple negative elements in a construction, rather a negator and a negative scalar focus particle.

A fuller search than is possible for this paper is necessary to examine other authors and genres to find out whether οὔτις type n-words are ever found in negative concord, and to see whether any other paths of development may be traced: it does however seem significant that in texts where both οὔτις and οὐδείς are found, it is only the n-words built on οὐδέ that allow the negative concord construction.

Οὔτις and οὐδέ

Now that we have analysed οὐδέ in more detail we may now return to line 9.408, repeated here for ease of reference.

ὦ φίλοι, Οὔτις με κτείνει δόλω οὐδὲ βίηφι

Friends, Nobody is killing me with tricks or/not force (9.408).

We can now see that it is an even more complex pun and even more untranslatable than has previously been argued. The meaning of οὐδέ is of course ambiguous, depending on whether the line is interpreted as being in a negative context or not.³⁵ In the negative

³⁴ Haspelmath (1997) 222.

³⁵ Ruijgh (1971) §183.

context which would be introduced in the Cyclopes' minds by οὐ τις (as they would hear it),³⁶ οὐδέ means 'or' as we may see from comparing the following line:

οὐ τις Φαιήκων τόδε γ' ἴξεται οὐδ' ὑπερήσει.

No Phaeacian will reach this or go beyond it (8.198).

The interpretation of 9.408 from the Cyclopes' point of view, therefore, must be 'Nobody is killing me by trick or force'. This is indeed the hoped-for answer to the question that they pose in 406 ('Nobody is killing you by trick or force, are they?'). This is a perfectly regular example of οὐδέ as constituent marker in a negative context. However, with Οὐ̃τις the name, the negative context is not introduced and οὐδέ cannot have that meaning.

For this reason, translators have given something approximating 'Nobody is killing me with a trick, and not with force'. That is, as Polyphemus *meant* the sentence, οὐδέ is acting as a constituent negator in a positive context, contrasting δόλω with βίηφι. Given the brutality of the eye-gorging incident it might seem rather strange for Polyphemus do be claiming that Odysseus was killing him without any force. However, it is the case that Odysseus would not have been able to inflict this harm without having tricked him first. This reading of the line is thus perfectly acceptable from a semantic point of view.³⁷

³⁶ Comrie (1989) 53 has discussed the different accentuation of οὐ̃τις from the name Οὐ̃τις: "Perhaps the Cyclops were not only one-eyed, but also tone-deaf; at any rate, they seem not to have reacted to this difference".

³⁷ Thanks to Olga Tribulato for discussion of this point.

We have seen above that it is grammatically acceptable to find οὐδέ in a positive context, too, although the examples are rare. This rarity goes some way to explaining why we find a couple of variants in the manuscripts as suggested replacements for οὐδέ.

It seems most plausible to argue that the ἦέ found in M comes from a contamination from line 406 where it fits in the question. After all, it does not work in either the ‘name’ interpretation (*“Outis is killing me by trick or force”) or the negative interpretation, where we need οὐδέ for the meaning ‘or’.³⁸ We also find the variant ἦδέ in the margin of J, which would fit in the sentence with the ‘name’ interpretation (‘Outis is killing me by trick and force’).³⁹ However, it is not at all clear that we should see that as the authentic reading, since it is the *lectio faciliior*.

In fact, the double meaning of οὐδέ makes it perfect for this line. Just as the name Outis may not be translated into some European languages, few languages have one word that can work in both positive and negative reading of this line. English is of course able to translate ‘Nobody is killing me’ successfully, as ‘Nobody’ can stand as negative quantifier or name.⁴⁰ However, it does not have a word that links the two methods of

³⁸ In any case, this variant is just the supralinear correction of the 2nd scholiast. The same correction by the same hand is also found at 9.406 where M has οὐδέ.

³⁹ Manuscript variants as noted in Ludwig (1891) s.v. 9.408. With thanks to Lucia Prauscello for discussion of these points.

⁴⁰ cf. the well-known joke ‘This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done’.

killing that works equally well with either the positive or the negative reading. Thus we already disambiguate the pun further than Greek does by choosing between the translations ‘Nobody is killing me with tricks or force’ and ‘Nobody is killing me – with tricks not force’.

Homeric Greek, with its (perhaps only recently developed) ability to use οὐδέ in a positive context, remains more subtle than English on this point. An analysis of οὐδέ in the *Odyssey* has shown both that this pun is even more complex and untranslatable than previously thought, but also suggested the possible origins of a construction that will remain a feature of Greek for millennia.