

# Verbs and Predicates in Ancient Greece

Lucio Melazzo\*

*Abstract:* The author starts by reading an excerpt by Symplicius of Cilicia where it is said that Aristotle spoke of the category action established as mere action and taken as a genus. This category was connected with dispositions of the mind corresponding to verbs. Equally there existed mere affection too. It is precisely the verbs that could convey either action or affection, and the two categories action and affection were drawn from the active and passive verbs. These verbs, however, are not the same as those called upright and overturned by the Stoics. While Aristotle took mere action and mere affection into account, the Stoics were interested in predicates, and predicates definitely correspond to some linguistic reality bearing some relation to something real. The excerpt by Simplicius is then compared with two *scholia* commenting on Dionysius Thrax's notion of diathesis. The author concludes his argument with an entirely reasonable interpretation on Dionysius Thrax's definition of verb.

*Keywords:* Aristotle; the Stoics; Verb; Predicate; Diathesis.

I do not believe that I am erring on the side of caution when I say that dealing with the problems related to the history of the linguistic theories in the Hellenistic Age and beyond is still a difficult undertaking<sup>1</sup>. Surely Greek linguistics was a part of the ancient philosophical research. Once this connection has been recognized, however, numerous and remarkably complex questions immediately arise.

First, since we do not know the episodes of the ancient grammatical theories in detail, we are compelled to tackle a great deal of delicate problems of chronology and doxography, i.e. historical and philological problems. Second, as more specifically regards the

\* Università degli studi di Palermo. E-mail: lucio.melazzo@unipa.it

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding Steinthal (1890), Pinborg (1975), Taylor (1987), Sluiter (1990), Matthews (1994), Law (2003).

aforsaid link between linguistics and philosophy in Greek cultural tradition, both classical and Hellenistic, I have to observe that, even though studies aiming at pointing out the most significant features of this close connection between linguistics and philosophy in ancient Greece are not missing<sup>2</sup>, a large number of questions, rather more linguistic than philosophical, still remain unresolved. These are relevant to the moment that the grammatical inquiry tended to break away from the philosophical and become autonomous. Third, it is far from easy to cast light on these questions, for it is undeniably difficult to assess and complete an undoubtedly complex wealth of knowledge, especially as this has sketchily been handed down to us by authors who were writing their works when a certain set of beliefs was current, and therefore did not consider it necessary to go into detailed elucidation, their aim being often to criticize or perhaps simply summarize the opinions that they were reporting.

In the light of these preliminary statements I think it useful to read the following excerpt by Simplicius of Cilicia. A disciple of Ammonius Hermiae, and Damascius, Simplicius was one of the last of the Neoplatonists and approximately lived between 490 and 560 AD. Although his writings are all commentaries on Aristotle and other authors, rather than original compositions, his intelligent and prodigious learning makes him the last great philosopher of pagan antiquity. His works have preserved much information about earlier philosophers which would have otherwise been lost. The excerpt is from Simplicius (*in Arist. Cat.*, 310.8-311.12).

Καὶ μάλιστα οὕτω συνεζευγμένον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ ποιεῖν τῷ πάσχειν διὰ τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸ σχέσιν, ὡς περὶ ἀμφοτέρων ἕνα ποιήσασθαι λόγον τὸν Ἀριστοτέλη, καὶ εἰ μὴ ὁ τῆς δεκάδος ἀριθμὸς ἀπῆται δηρῶσθαι, ᾤθησαν ἂν τινες, ὅτι εἰς μίαν τὰ δύο ἀνάγει κατηγορίαν· ἢ ὅτι τὸ ὡς γένος λαμβανόμενον ποιεῖν κατὰ τὴν καθαρῶς ποιῆσιν ἰστάμενον κχωρίζεται τελῶς τοῦ πάσχειν· καὶ γὰρ τὸ θερμαίνειν καὶ ψύγειν παρέλαβεν ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης οὐχ ὡς τὰ ὀρθὰ παρὰ τοῖς Στωικοῖς λεγόμενα, ἅπερ ὡς εἰς ἕτερον ῥέπουσαν ἔχει τὴν κίνησιν, ἀλλὰ κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν πρωτουργὸν αἰτίαν τῆς κινήσεως, ἥτις ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ εἶδει τῆς θερμότητος καὶ ψυχρότητος προὑπάρχει· οὕτω γὰρ καὶ καθαρῶς ποιῆσις ἔσται κχωρισμένη πάντῃ τοῦ πάσχειν· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τὸ θερμαίνεισθαι καὶ ψύχεσθαι ταῦτά ἐστιν ἅπερ ὕππια καλοῦσιν κατὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸ θερμαίνον σχέσιν θεωρούμενα· ἀλλὰ σημαίνεισθαι μὲν καὶ τοιαῦτά τινα ἀπὸ τῶν φωνῶν τούτων οὐκ ἂν ἀντείπομεν, οὐ μὴν ταῦτά γε εἶναι τὰ ἐν τῷ πάσχειν

<sup>2</sup> Among others see Barwick (1957), Belardi (1972; 1985), Ax (1993).

ὑπ' Ἀριστοτέλους τιθεμένα. ὡς γὰρ ἔστιν καθαρὰ ποίησις ἄλλη παρὰ τὴν ῥέπουσαν εἰς τὸ πάσχον καὶ ἄμικτος πάντη πρὸς αὐτήν, οὕτως ἔστιν καὶ καθαρὰ πείσις τὴν ἐν τῷ πάσχοντι μόνην πείσιν περιεληφύια, μήτε σχέσεως μήτε συζέξεως πρὸς τὴν ποίησιν ἐφαπτομένη, ὥστε οὐδὲ ὀρθὰ οὐδὲ ὑπτια ταῦτα ἔστιν, ὡς τοῖς Στωικοῖς καλεῖν ἔθος. ἐφ' ὧν γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν τὸ πάθος ἀπολελυμένον τῆς πρὸς τὸ ποιοῦν σχέσεως, ἐπὶ τούτων καὶ τὰ ὀρθὰ καὶ τὰ ὑπτια κείκωτος ἐνομιζέτο, τὰ μὲν τὴν ἐνέργειαν εἰς ἕτερον συντάττοντα, τὰ δὲ ὑφ' ἑτέρου τὴν κίνησιν ἐν τῷ πάσχοντι συναρμόζοντα καὶ ἀναφέροντα αὐτὴν πρὸς ἕτερον· ἅπερ εἰ καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἔστιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔστι γε ἀπλᾶ καὶ ἄμικτα καὶ πρῶτα γένη καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ὑφ' ἑστηκότα καὶ μὴ ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἔχοντα τὸ εἶναι. καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ ὀρθῶς λέγεται, ὡς οὐ τοῖς κατηγορήμασιν πρῶτος δεῖ προσεῖναι τὸ πρὸς τι εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τοῖς συνυφισταμένοις πῶς ἔχουσιν, οἷον τῷ κᾶοντι καὶ τύπτοντι· οὗτος γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ τόνδε τύππων καὶ τόνδε κᾶων· ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἐν συνθέσει πῶς ἔστιν ὁ τύππων μετὰ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου νοοῦμενος, καὶ ἢ ποίησις αὐτοῦ τὸ σύμμικτόν πως ἐμφαίνει καὶ τὸ ἔχον πως πρὸς ἕτερον. τὸ μέντοι ποιεῖν, ἐπειδὴ καθαρῶς μόνῃ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ συνέζευκται, διὰ τοῦτο κατ' αὐτὴν ἴσαται μόνην καθαρῶς, καὶ τὸ μὲν οὔτε σχέσεως οὔτε μίξεως τῆς πρὸς τὸ πάσχον ἀναπίμπλαται· καὶ γὰρ μάλιστα μὲν οὐδὲ ἔστιν ἐν τοῖς κατηγορήμασιν τὰ πρὸς τι, εἰ δὲ ἄρα τις αὐτὸ μέχρις ἐπινοίας λαμβάνει, ὡς δευτέρον νοεῖται· αὐτοὶ μὲν γὰρ οἱ πῶς ἔχοντες κατὰ πρῶτον εἶεν ἂν πρὸς τι, ἕτερον δὲ τρόπον κατὰ δευτέραν αἰτίαν καὶ τὰ κατηγορήματα τοιαῦτα ἐπινοεῖται. κάκεινο δὲ καλῶς εἴρηται, ὡς τὰ μὲν πρὸς τι μόνῃ ἢ σχέσις ὑφίστησιν, τὸ δὲ ποιεῖν καὶ πάσχειν ἔχει τινὰς ἰδίας φύσεις, παρ' ἅς, εἴπερ ἄρα, τὰ πρὸς τί πως δευτέρον ἐπινοεῖται· διόπερ οὐκ ἐξίσταται ἢς ἔχει ἐκάτερον καθ' ἑαυτὸ ἰδίας κατηγορίας<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> «And we notice that above all the acting has been so closely united by Aristotle with the being affected, by reason of the relation of the former to the latter, that he treats both in one and the same discourse and were it not that the number of 10 should be revised, many a one would think that he is tracing both back to one category. It must rather be thought that, when taken as a genus and related to the mere action, the acting is completely separated from the being affected. And indeed, Aristotle did interpret θερμαίνειν “to make warm or hot” and ψύχειν “to make cool or cold” not as those verbs which in the Stoic circle are called upright, ὀρθά [i.e. which are in the active form], and exhibit motion as if it inclines aslant towards another thing, but with regard to the primary cause of movement itself, which takes the initiative in the same species of hot and cold. In this way and also plainly, in fact, acting will altogether be separated from being affected. Neither are θερμαίνεσθαι “to be heated” and ψύχεσθαι “to be cooled” those verbs that they (sc. the Stoics) call overturned, ὑπτια, when considering them with relation to that which makes warm. However, we would not counter that some things of this type are not conveyed through these words, but we say that they are not exactly the same as those included by Aristotle in the being affected. Indeed, just as the mere action is both different from the action inclining aslant towards that which is affected and totally unmixed with this action, there is also a mere affection comprehending the sole affection received by that which is affected without entailing any relationship or combination with the action – hence the verbs that the Stoics call upright and overturned are not the same

The passage contains a portion of the comment that Simplicius makes on chapter 9 of Aristotle's *Categories*. As is well known, this chapter treats of the categories *action* and *affection*. Simplicius speaks of the category *action* established as mere action, *κατὰ τὴν καθαρῶς ποιήσιν ἰστάμενον*, and taken as a genus. Equally there exists mere affection too, *καθαρὰ πείσις*. It is not difficult therefore to imagine that those which are regarded as items of determination inherent in a thing and appropriate for being predicated of this thing when it is selected as a subject, i.e. as that which a statement is about, are connected with dispositions of the mind corresponding to verbs. Indeed, it is precisely the verbs that can convey either action or affection. In deploying his argument Simplicius thinks it advisable to point out that in keeping with Aristotle's thought, the two categories *action* and *affection* are drawn from the active and passive verbs. These verbs, however, are not the same as those called upright, *ὀρθά*, and overturned, *ὑπτία*, by the Stoics<sup>4</sup>. Aristotle takes mere action and mere affection into account. Never does he refer to the real processes that display them. Aristotle's argument

things of which Aristotle speaks. Indeed, as to those processes where the affection is not separate from the relation to that which acts, for them the distinction between upright and overturned verbs was fairly drawn too: the former arrange the activity with the inclusion of something else, the latter starting from something else connect the movement in that which is affected and relate it to something else. It is a matter of things that though pertaining to being are not simple and separate, are not primary genera, do not exist in them, and do not have their being in one another. And this, too, is said correctly: a relative needs not to be present first and foremost in the predicates, but rather in the realities coexisting in one way or another, e.g. with that which kindles or burns and that which beats or smites: this is in fact that which beats or strikes that and that which burns or kindles that. And it is indeed so because there is in a certain way the beater or striker contemplated in combination with the real object beaten or struck, and the beater's or striker's action somehow exhibits that which is commingled and has some relation to the other. Surely, since the acting is purely paired with the sole activity, it simply entails this alone and is not filled up by any relation to, or mixing with, that which is affected. And undoubtedly the things relating to the predicates are not in these, as a matter of fact, but if one figures one of these things in his thought, then this is considered as a second element. Those which bear some relation would themselves be relatives in the first place, and in another way the predicates, too, are thought like these for a second reason. This, too, has been said well: that the natural condition alone sets the relatives; the acting and the being affected have some origins of their own in correspondence with which, if anything, the relatives are considered as a second element. On this account they do not diverge from their own category, which each of them has by itself.

<sup>4</sup> On the Stoics' theory of grammar cf. Schmidt (1839), Pohlenz (1939), Frede (1978), Sluiter (2000). See also Ax (1993), Sluiter (1990), and Ildefonse (1997).

bears no reference, on the one side, to either the agent performing the action or the patient affected by the action and, on the other side, to either the patient being involved in the action or the agent starting it. The Stoics, contrariwise, are rather more interested in predicates, τοῖς κατηγορήμασιν πρῶτοις, than in realities coexisting in one way or another, τοῖς συνυφισταμένοις πῶς ἔχουσιν. The predicates, which are the main concern of the Stoics, definitely correspond to some linguistic reality bearing some relation to something real anyhow. The predicates of the Stoics, however, cannot be equated to the verbs of Aristotle. These can express the categories *action* and *affection* inasmuch as they are simple and unconnected. They are primary genera, exist in themselves, and have their being in one another, ἀπλὰ καὶ ἄμικτα καὶ πρῶτα γένη καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὰ ὑφειρηκότεα καὶ [...] ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἔχοντα τὸ εἶναι.

Now it is worth reading two scholia added to the text of *Grammar* attributed to Dionysius Thrax<sup>5</sup>. Some more scholia could or maybe should be examined, but we will just read these two anyway<sup>6</sup>.

The former is *sch. vat. in a. Dion.* § 13.48.1-49.3 (= GG I I/III, III 245.26-246.6).

Διάθεσις ἐστὶ δίαίτα ψυχῆς καὶ διοίκησις· καὶ ἐν τῇ συνηθείᾳ γὰρ διαθεῖναι τὸ οἰκονομῆσαι καὶ διοικῆσαι. Δύο οὖν εἶρηκε τοῦ ῥήματος διαθέσεις ὑπάρχειν, τὴν τε ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὸ πάθος· ἢ γὰρ ἐνεργοῦντές τι ποιοῦμεν ἢ ὡς πάσχοντες «ἔχομεν»· ἐπειδὴ δὲ κατὰ πάντα ἀκριβῆς οὐσα ἢ γραμματικῇ οὐδὲν ἀνεξέταστον ἔἴ, ἀναγκαίως καὶ τρίτην τὴν μεσότητα κατηγορηθήσατο, ἣτις ἐκατέραν τὴν διάθεσιν δηλοῖ τῇ φωνῇ· ἢ γὰρ τοῦ ἐγραψάμεν φωνῇ δύναται σημαίνειν καὶ πάθος καὶ ἐνέργειαν, εἰ τὴν ἀρμόζουσαν σύνταξιν λάβοι· ἐὰν γὰρ εἴπῃς, ὅτι ἐγραψάμεν σοι, δῆλον ὡς ἐνέργειαν δηλοῖ, ὡς ἐὰν τις εἴπῃ «ἔτυψά σε», ἐὰν δὲ προσθήσω τὸ «ὑπὸ σοῦ», «γράφομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ» πάθος σημαίνει, ὡς τὸ «τύπτομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ». Ἐνεργητικὴ μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ διάθεσις, δι' ἧς τὰ ἐνεργήματα δηλοῦνται, οἷον τέμνω δαίρω· παθητικὴ δὲ ἐστὶ, δι' ἧς τὰ πάθη σημαίνεται, οἷον τέμνομαι δαίρομαι· οὐδετέρω δὲ ἢ μήτε ἐνέργειαν μήτε πάθος σημαίνουσα, οἷον ζῶ πλουτῶ δύναμαι βούλομαι· μέση δὲ ἢ πῆ μὲν ἐνέργειαν πῆ δὲ πάθος δηλοῦσα ἴ· τὸ γὰρ ἐποισάμεν δηλοῖ, ὅτι ἐμαυτῷ ἐποίησά τι, τὸ δὲ ἐποίηθη, ὅτι δι' ἐμοῦ ἐποιήθη<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> On Dionysius Thrax's grammar see Di Benedetto (1958; 1959; 1973; 1990), Janko (1995), Law (1990), Law-Sluitter (1998), Patillon (1990), Robins (1986; 1998).

<sup>6</sup> On the role and importance of scholia cf. Dickey (2007) and Montanari-Pagani (2011).

<sup>7</sup> «Diathesis is a disposition and a sort of internal administration of the soul;

The latter is *sch. marc. in a. Dion.* § 13.48.1-49.3 (= GG I I/III, III 401.1-28).

Ἐνεργητικὴ μὲν ἐστὶ διάθεσις καθ' ἣν ἐνεργῶν τις φαίνεται, ἥτις παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις δραστικὴ καὶ ὀρθὴ καλεῖται· δραστικὴ μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ δράν, ὀρθὴ δὲ ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τῶν ἀθλητῶν· συμβαίνει γὰρ τοὺς νικῶντας ὀρθῶς ἴστασθαι. Χρηρὴ δὲ εἰδέναι, ὅτι ἡ ἐνεργητικὴ διάθεσις ἢ πρὸς γενικὴν ἢ πρὸς αἰτιατικὴν ποιεῖ τὰς συντάξεις, οἷον ἄρχω σου, δεσπόζω σου, τύπτω σε, τέμνω σε· πρὸς δὲ δοτικὴν κατὰ περιποιητικὴν ἔννοιαν ποιεῖ τὴν σύνταξιν, ὡς τὸ γράφω σοι, λέγω σοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια. Παθητικὴ δέ, καθ' ἣν πάσχων τις φαίνεται, ἥτις παρὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ὑπτία καλεῖται, καὶ αὕτη ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τῶν ἀθλητῶν· συμβαίνει γὰρ τοὺς ἠττωμένους ὑπτίους εἶναι. Χρηρὴ δὲ πάλιν εἰδέναι, ὅτι ἡ παθητικὴ διάθεσις ἀπὸ τῆς ἐνεργητικῆς γίνεται τῆς συναπτομένης γενικῆς ἢ αἰτιατικῆς· αὕτη γὰρ ἢ σύνταξις ἢ πρὸς γενικὴν ἢ πρὸς αἰτιατικὴν αἰτία πάντως γίνεται τῆς γενέσεως τῶν παθητικῶν, οἷον ἢ ἄρχω σου σύνταξις ποιεῖ παθητικὴν σύνταξιν μετὰ τῆς ὑπὸ προθέσεως τὴν ἄρχομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ, καὶ ἡ δεσπόζω σου τὴν δεσπόζομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ, καὶ ἡ τύπτω σε τὴν τύπτομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ· ἢ δὲ πρὸς δοτικὴν σύνταξις περιποιητικὴ οὐσα ἐνέργειαν μὲν σημαίνει, οὐ ποιεῖ δὲ πάθος· διὸ ἡ τέμνομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ σύνταξις οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς τέμνω σοι, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς τέμνω σε γίνεται, καὶ ἡ φέρομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ οὐκ ἀπὸ τῆς φέρω σοι, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς φέρω σε τίκτεται. Μέση δὲ καλεῖται διάθεσις, ὅταν ἡ αὐτὴ φωνὴ χωρὴ εἰς τε ἐνέργειαν καὶ «εἰς» πάθος, ὡς τὸ βιάζομαι· αὕτη γὰρ ἡ φωνὴ χωρεῖ καὶ εἰς ἐνέργειαν καὶ «εἰς» πάθος, οἷον ἐὰν εἶπω βιάζομαί σε καὶ βιάζομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ. Ἡ πάλιν μέση ἐστὶ διάθεσις, ὅταν τῷ αὐτῷ ῥήματι τυπῶ μόνον πάθος καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ

indeed, in the customary usage of language, regulating and administering correspond to disposing, too. He (sc. Dionysius Thrax) has therefore said that there are two diatheses of the verb: the activity and the affection, for we either make something by being in activity or feel as if we are affected. Moreover, as an extensive treatment of Greek quite accurate in all respects, grammar, which leaves nothing unsearched, perforce took to counting the middle as the third diathesis. This discloses each of the other two diatheses through the same phonic form. Indeed, the form ἐγραψάμην can convey either affection (“I was written”) or activity (“I charged with”) as long as the appropriate syntax is chosen. If you say ἐγραψάμην σοι (“I wrote you”), in fact, then an activity is clearly conveyed as if you say ἔτυψα σε (“I beat you”). If I add ὑπὸ σοῦ, however, γράφομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am written by you”) conveys affection like τύπτομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am beaten by you”). The diathesis through which energetic actions are expressed is therefore called active. This is the case for τέμνω (“I cut”) or δαίω (“I flay”). Conversely, the diathesis through which affections are signified is named passive. This is the case for τέμνομαι (“I am cut”) or δαίωμαι (“I am flayed”). The diathesis expressing neither activity nor affection is described as neuter: ζῶ (“I live”), πλουτῶ (“I am wealthy”), δύναμαι (“I am able to”), βούλομαι (“I will/wish”) are good examples of it. On the other hand, the diathesis importing at times activity and other times affection is depicted as middle †. As a matter of fact, ἐποιήσάμην is equivalent to ἐμαυτῷ ἐποίησα τι (“I made something for myself”), while ἐποιήθη corresponds to δι' ἐμοῦ ἐποιήθη (“it was made by me”).

ῥήματι τυπῶ μόνον ἐνέργειαν, ὡς ὁ εἰς -μην τύπος· μέσος γάρ ἐστι μόνων παθητικῶν καὶ πάλιν μόνων ἐνεργητικῶν· καὶ ἐνεργητικῶν μὲν μόνων ἐγραψάμην ἐφάμην, παθητικῶν δὲ μόνων ἐτριψάμην ἠλειψάμην· ἴσθη γάρ ἔχουσι δύναμιν κατὰ σημασίαν τῷ ἐτριφθῆν καὶ ἠλείφθην παθητικῶ τύπῳ<sup>8</sup>.

Both scholia are interesting in many respects. The former starts from a “new” and different acceptance of the term ‘diathesis’ by way of which the soul is said to have the capability to administer and regulate linguistic production, which recounts reality<sup>9</sup>. Dionysius Thrax was therefore right when he spoke of two diatheses.

<sup>8</sup> «The diathesis, in accordance with which one turns out to be an agent, is active, and it is called effective and upright in certain philosophical circles: effective from the verb “to effect” and upright with a metaphor developed from the upshot of a combat between two fighters in sport. It happens that the winners maintain an upright stance, as a matter of fact. It must be known that the active diathesis produces constructions with either the genitive or the accusative such as ἄρχω σου (“I command you”), δεσπάζω σου (“I dominate you”), τύπτω σε (“I beat you”), τέμνω σε (“I cut you”). It also shows a construction with the dative in accordance with an act of thinking that saves something: γράφω σοι (“I write you”), λέγω σοι (“I say you”) and other similar forms are good cases in point. On the other hand, the diathesis, in accordance with which one turns out to be a patient, is passive, and it is called overturned in certain philosophical circles, once more with a metaphor developed from the upshot of a combat between two fighters in sport. It happens, in fact, that the losers lay overturned. It must be known, too, that the passive diathesis derives from the active combined with a genitive or an accusative. Indeed, it is precisely the construction with a genitive or an accusative that is the starting-point for passive sentences. For example, the construction ἄρχω σου brings about the passive structure ἄρχομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am commanded by you”) with the insertion of the preposition ὑπὸ, and δεσπάζω σου builds δεσπόζομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am dominated by you”), and τύπτω σε yields τύπτομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am beaten by you”). The construction with the dative, which is a construction saving a part, conveys some activity but gives no affection. Therefore the construction τέμνομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am cut by you”) does not derive from τέμνω σοι (“I cut for you”) but from τέμνω σε, and φέρομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am carried by you”) is not produced by φέρω σοι but by φέρω σε. Moreover, the diathesis is called middle when the same verbal form contains activity and affection like βιάζομαι (“I constrain/I am constrained”). This verbal form expresses both activity and affection as if I say βιάζομαι σε (“I constrain you”) and βιάζομαι ὑπὸ σοῦ (“I am constrained by you”). The diathesis is middle once more when with a verbal form I convey only affection and with another verbal form only activity. This is the case for the ending -μην, for a form proper only to passive verbs and a form proper only to active verbs is middle. And ἐγραψάμην (“I charged with”) and ἐφάμην (“I said”) are proper to the sole active verbs, while ἐτριψάμην (“I was bruised”) and ἠλειψάμην (“I was anointed”) are typical only of passive verbs: as regards their meaning, in fact, the latter have the same value as the passive forms ἐτριφθῆν and ἠλείφθην».

<sup>9</sup> On the value of the term ‘diathesis’ see Collinge (1963), Brague (1980), Rijksbaron (1986), Andersen (1994), Pantiglioni (1998), Rijksbaron (1986), Pagani (2014).

What happens in the real world, in fact, is that one either makes something by acting or is affected by something. The grammarians are said to have introduced the middle as a third diathesis. The middle can express the other two diatheses. The scholium says nothing more in this respect but the choice made by the grammarians was surely suggested by considerations of an exclusively formal type, since Greek verbal forms were not so rigidly distributed that the endings traditionally known to us as active and middle-passive were joined to the diverse stems to always express activity and affection respectively. The scholiast goes on to illustrate what he has just said. His examples comprise some verbal forms that can convey either activity or affection when considered in isolation. What allows one to assign the import of either activity or affection to them is precisely the syntactic construction in which they occur. Things standing as they are, however, it really seems that the pure and simple verb, ῥήμα, takes second place while the entire predicate, κατηγορημα, is considered in accordance with the way the Stoics behaved. Then the diatheses are listed, and to the middle, μέση, which in different syntactic constructions can convey either activity or affection, the neuter is added as a fourth. This fourth diathesis, which expresses neither activity nor affection, seems to appear in the list incongruously. It has not been mentioned before in the scholium and besides Dionysius Thrax speaks of only three diatheses. It can be thought, however, that the scholiast regarded it as one of the possible expressions of mediality, μεσότης. Halfway between activity and affection, this could import either the former or the latter as well as neither the former nor the latter. This hypothesis is confirmed by the examples the scholiast gives: two are in the active form (ζῶ and πλουτῶ) and two in the middle-passive (δύναμαι and βούλομαι).

The other scholium, in which the adjective δραστική and the infinitive δράν occur, both connected with the substantive δράσις, utterly corroborates the interpretation I put on the former. The hypothesis that the content of the former echoes the views of the Stoics is supported by the latter. This scholium says that in certain philosophical circles the active and the passive diatheses are also named upright, ὀρθή, and overturned, ὑπία, respectively. Both terms – there would be no need for me to say it – copy those used as to distinguish the upright, ὀρθά, verbs from the overturned, ὑπια, as we read in Simplicius' passage quoted above. These terms are



said to owe their origin to a metaphor bringing up two fighters in sport: as a rule, the winner stands upright while the loser lies supine. The idea is also implicit in the metaphor that the active diathesis overrides the passive, and the scholiast actually says that the passive diathesis derives from the active, ἡ παθητικὴ διάθεσις ἀπὸ τῆς ἐνεργητικῆς γίνεται. Here the analysis of the verbs is performed once again by considering the syntactic constructions in which they are used. As to the syntactic constructions, the genitive and the accusative are distinguished from the dative: in the active diathesis the verbs can occur with a nominal complement in one of these three cases, but the constructions with the dative have no equivalent in the passive differently from those with the genitive and the accusative. Finally, the middle is the third and last diathesis the scholium deals with. About this diathesis the scholiast makes a remark that we have not yet read elsewhere: one and the same middle-passive ending can produce forms either only active or contrariwise only passive in keeping with the verbal stem to which it is affixed.

What remains of all that was briefly said above? It is worth reading Dion. Th. *a. gr.* § 13 (= GG I I/III, I 46.4-47.2).

Ῥῆμά ἐστι λέξις ἄπτωτος, ἐπιδεικτικὴ χρόνων τε καὶ προσώπων καὶ ἀριθμῶν, ἐνεργεῖαν ἢ πάθος παριστάσα. παρέπεται δὲ τῷ ῥήματι ὀκτώ, ἐγκλίσεις, διαθέσεις, εἶδη, σχήματα, ἀριθμοί, πρόσωπα, χρόνοι, συζυγίαι<sup>10</sup>.

This passage must be collated with Dion. Th. *a. gr.* § 13 (= GG I I/III, I 48.1-49.3).

Διαθέσεις εἰσὶ τρεῖς, ἐνεργεῖα, πάθος, μεσότης· ἐνεργεῖα μὲν οἶον τύπτω, πάθος δὲ οἶον τύπτομαι, μεσότης δὲ ἢ ποτὲ μὲν ἐνεργεῖαν ποτὲ δὲ πάθος παριστάσα, οἶον πέπνηγα διέφθορα ἐποιησάμην ἐγραψάμην<sup>11</sup>.

What is clearly stated is that verbs convey either activity or affection, but they do not express mediality, μεσότης. This presumes that differently from activity and affection, mediality constitutes no

<sup>10</sup> «A verb is an indeclinable word, indicating differences in time, persons, and numbers, and showing activity or affection. There are eight constant attributes of the verb: moods, diatheses, species, forms, number, persons, tenses, conjugations».

<sup>11</sup> «There are three diatheses: activity, affection, and mediality. Activity as τύπτω, affection as τύπτομαι, mediality, showing either activity, ἐνεργεῖα, or affection, πάθος, as πέπνηγα (“I have been/am stuck”), διέφθορα (“I have lost my wits”), ἐποιησάμην (“I made”), ἐγραψάμην (“I charged with”)».

semantic property of the verb. It can therefore be inferred that in the second Dionysius' excerpt ἐνέργεια and πάθος correspond to the active and respectively passive inflection of a verb. There is no need to mention here that Greek only had these two inflections. A third inflection peculiar to what is called μεσότης did not exist. Consequently, in the second Dionysius' excerpt the first pair of examples of mediality, i.e. πέπηγα and διέφθορα, exhibit active endings, while the other pair, i.e. ἐποησάμην and ἐγραψάμην, displays middle-passive endings.

This is why in rendering the passage I proposed no translation of διέφθορα, which expressed activity instead of affection. Neither did I take into account a rendering of ἐποησάμην and ἐγραψάμην which recognized a value of affection to them. An import of activity does not seem to have been possible for πέπηγα, on the other hand.

Once it has been stated that in the second Dionysius' excerpt, the salient formal property of the διάθεσις is the difference between the two series of endings, active and middle-passive, it can easily be thought that the diathesis was considered a particular quality inherent in the noun with which the verbal endings agreed. In other words, the diathesis might appertain to the thematic relation of the subject to predication. As is well known, a subject can have different types of thematic relation to the verb in a sentence. Since Greek only owned two distinct series of verbal endings, however, it could distribute these types of thematic relation to the two diverse series of forms distinguished by the two diverse series of endings. Characterized by the series of the active endings, therefore, the διάθεσις ἐνέργεια could be found in a set of constructions showing various sorts of verbs to which English verbs, nowadays described as transitive, intransitive, reflexive, or reciprocal, would correspond. Recognizable through the middle-passive endings, contrariwise, the διάθεσις πάθος could be realized with verbs equivalent to the English passive, reflexive, reciprocal, or anti-causative.

The terms ἐνέργεια and πάθος occur in both Dionysius Thrax's extracts quoted above. The fact that mediality, μεσότης, is not mentioned in the former, however, is not of little consequence. Moreover, when we rely on what can be read in the same passage, we can easily notice that both terms, ἐνέργεια and πάθος, hold a rank different from time, person, and number. On the one hand, a verb

is a word ἐπιδεικτική, i.e. is a word fit for displaying, and therefore endowed with, i.e. inflected following the morphological categories of, time, person, and number. On the other hand, a verb comprises παριστάσα, the semantic implications of activity or affection. A fair inference to draw from this is that the categories of time, person, and number are invariant, for they qualify as properties exhibited in any case by finite verbs independently of the predicative structure of the sentence. The notions of activity and affection, contrariwise, are variable, i.e. they turn out to be properties of a finite verb, which depend on the predicative structure of the sentence.

In the second sentence of the same passage, however, the διάθεσις is counted as an overt morphological category of the finite verb together with the other six listed there. The inconsistency is patently obvious. On the one hand, ἐνέργεια and πάθος, which are types of διάθεσις, prove to be dependent on the overall value of the sentence; on the other hand, the διάθεσις is a contextually independent property of the finite verb. It follows that in the τέχνη γραμματική the terms ἐνέργεια and πάθος are referred to semantic properties, on the one hand, and on the other hand, when they represent types of diathesis, they mention formal properties.

Of course, when in Greek the relation between form and meaning was direct, there were no problems: the morphemes for ἐνέργεια and πάθος displayed a particular form and imported a particular meaning. The reason for separating form from meaning, however, lay in the frequent lack of direct relation between form and meaning. As a consequence, the mediality introduced in the second passage of the τέχνη γραμματική does not constitute a distinct morphological category, but only answers the purpose of accounting for the cases of absence of relation between form and meaning. In Dionysius Thrax's definition the diathesis turns out to be a precise morphological category with two formal alternatives: ἐνέργεια and πάθος.

What is there to be got out of our discussion? The text of the τέχνη γραμματική is only apparently simple. In this case in point the difficulty lies in the author's working on a theory which takes into account Aristotle's idea of verb and the Stoics' notion of predicate.

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