Topic 16. *Examine the death of deponents.*

Examine the problem.

There has been some confusion about the meaning of action agency.

Traditionally, there are three action agencies: active, intensive, and passive. The suffix of the root generally identifies agency. Agency describes the relationship between subject and action. The subject is actor in active agency, καθὼς παρεκάλεσά σε 'just like I urged you' 1 Timothy 1:3. The subject is receiver in passive agency, ἀλλὰ ἠλεήθην 'however, I was shown mercy' 1 Timothy 1:13. The subject is directly participates in intensive, or middle, agency, βαθμὸν ἑαυτοῖς καλὸν περιποιοῦνται 'they gain a good reputation for themselves' 1 Timothy 3:13.

Notice that the intensive agency is something of an orphan. The standard definitions depend on the other agencies.

The form of the intensive and passive agency are identical in most action tenses. For example, the first personal singular for both intensive and passive agency of the omega-actions, παύω, is παυόμαι 'I yield'. Only the future and aorist tenses have distinct intensive and passive forms.

Many actions never appear in the active agency, including ἀσπάζομαι 'I greet', βούλομαι 'I plan', γίνομαι 'I exist', ἔρχομαι 'I go'.

Certain actions appear only in the active agency in some tenses, but in the intensive or passive in other tenses, for example, present intensive ἔρχομαι 'I go' but aorist active ἦλθον 'I came', present active ἀκούω 'I hear' but future intensive ἀκούσομαι 'I will hear', present active μανθάνω 'I learn' but future intensive μᾶθήσομαι 'I will learn', present active πίπτω 'I fall down' but future intensive πεσοῦμαι 'I will fall down', present active ὁράω 'I see' but future intensive ὄψομαι 'I will see', active intensive ἰάομαι 'I cure' but aorist ἰάσαμεν 'we were healed'.

Consider the concept of 'deponent' actions.

The standard solution to this problem has been to declare that certain actions are intensive or passive in form, but active in meaning. Some call actions with this characteristic 'deponent'.

There are numerous challenges to this claim. They suggest that these long-standing traditions about agency are false. The subject has direct participation

or benefit in the intensive agency. This may include reflexive participation, but is not limited to the subject acting as agent on himself. In most cases, intensive and passive are distinguishable from the context.

Deponent actions are dead.

There are no such things as deponent actions. Intensive actions represent strong participation of the subject. This may be difficult to translate into English, because English does not have an intensive agency. However, from the perspective of the Greek author, actions in intensive form still have a sense of strong participation or benefit.[1]

Actions that appear in the intensive agency often fall in common categories, including,

1. Effort: ἐργάζομαι 'I work, I produce' 2 John 1:8, 1 Timothy 2:1, χράομαι 'I use' 1 Timothy 1:8, ἀγωνίζομαι 'I struggle' 1 Timothy 4:10, δύναμαι 'I am able' 1 Timothy 5:19, ὀρέγομαι 'I strive' 1 Timothy 6:10.

2. Motion: ἐρχόμαι 'I come, I go' 2 John 1:7, 1:10, πορευόμαι 'I travel' 1 Timothy 1:3, φεύξομαι 'I will flee' James 4:7.

3. Reciprocity: ἀσπάζομαι 'I greet' 2 John 1:12, στρατεύομαι 'I battle' 1 Timothy 1:18, παραδέχομαι 'I accept' 1 Timothy 5:19, ἐκτρέπομαι 'I turn away' 1 Timothy 6:20, παρατίθημι 'I transfer' 2 Timothy 2:2, μάχομαι 'I quarrel' 2 Timothy 2:24.

4. Spontaneity: ἔσομαι 'I will be' 2 John 1:3, 1:4, , γίνομαι 'I am, I visit, I am born' 2 John 1:12, βυθίζομαι 'I sink' Luke 5:7, ἀποθανοῦμαι 'I will die' John 8:21, 8:24.

5. Self-beneficial conduct: προσεύχομαι 'I pray' 1 Timothy 2:8, ὀρεγέομαι 'I strive' 1 Timothy 3:2, ἐπιμελέομαι 'I care for' 1 Timothy 3:5.

6. Speech: ὁμολογέομαι 'I agree' 2 John 1:7, ψεύδομαι 'I deceive' 1 Timothy 2:7, ἤρνέομαι 'I deny' 1 Timothy 5:8, διαμαρτύρομαι 'I declare' 1 Timothy 5:21, ἐπαγγέλλομαι 'I promise' Titus 1:2, βλάσφομαι 'I slander' Titus 2:5.

7. Cognition: βούλομαι 'I intend' 2 John 1:12, διαβεβαιόομαι 'I am confident' 1 Timothy 1:7, 1 Timothy 2:8, ἐπίσταμαι 'I know' 1 Timothy 6:4, μιμνήσκομαι 'I remember' 2 Timothy 1:4.

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1. Some recent authors challenge the tradition to varying degrees. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 67-71. Pennington, "Is Deponency a Valid Category for Koine Greek?" Conrad, "New Observations on Voice in the Ancient Greek Verb." Ladewig, "Defining Deponency: An Investigation into Greek Deponency of the Middle and Passive Voices in the Koine Period." Wallace, *Greek Grammar, Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, pp. 407-441.

8. Emotion: φοβέομαι 'I fear' 1 John 4:18, ἀντίκειμαι 'I oppose' 1 Timothy 1:10, ἐπαισχύνομαι 'I am ashamed' 2 Timothy 1:12, τυφόομαι 'I am prideful' 2 Timothy 3:2.

Translate intensive actions as strong participation of the subject.

The translator should identify the intensive agency of an action, first from form, then from context. The translator should be familiar with actions that commonly appear in the intensive agency. Do not consider any actions having intensive form but active meaning. Translate with the sense of the subject's participation in the event. In some cases, this idea may not translate well into English. However, this sense of the intensive agency may rule out inappropriate choices in the range of possibility.

Examine related literature.

1. Allan, Rutger J. *The Middle Voice in Ancient Greek: A Study of Polysemy*. Amsterdam Studies in Classical Philology. Book 11. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003.

2. Conrad, Carl W. "Active, Middle, and Passive: Understanding Ancient Greek Voice." 2003. Internet. http://www.cultus.hk/latin_lessons/deponens/GreekDeponens.pdf.

3. Conrad, Carl W. "New Observations on Voice in the Ancient Greek Verb." 2002. Internet. https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.wustl.edu/dist/8/2865/files/2020/10/newobsancgrkvc.pdf.

4. διονύσιος ὁ θρᾷξ. τέχνη γραμματική. Internet. http://el.wikisource.org/wiki/Τέχνη_Γραμματική.

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6. *The Grammar of Dionysius Thrax*. Translated into English by Anthony Alcock. Internet. https://www.academia.edu/7891168/The_Grammar_of_Dionysius_Thrax_Translated_into_English.

7. *The Grammar of Dionysius Thrax*. Translated from the Greek by Thomas Davidson. St. Louis, MO: The Studley Company, 1874.

8. Kemmer, Suzanne. *The Middle Voice*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1993.

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10. Ladewig, Stratton L. "Defining Deponency: An Investigation into Greek Deponency of the Middle and Passive Voices in the Koine Period." Ph.D. dissertation. Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010.

11. Miller, Neva F. "A Theory of Deponent Verbs." In *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament,* Appendix 2, pp. 424-430. Edited by Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, and Neva F. Miller. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing, 2005.

12. Pennington, Jonathan T. "Deponency in Koine Greek: The Grammatical Question and the Lexicographical Dilemma." *Trinity Journal* 24 (2003): 55-76.

13. Pennington, Jonathan T. "Is Deponency a Valid Category for Koine Greek?" 2003. Internet. http://jonathanpennington.com/wp-content/uploads/Pennington_Middle_Voice.pdf.

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15. Rijksbaron, Albert. *The Syntax and Semantics of the Verb in Classical Greek: An Introduction*. Third edition. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

16. Rijksbaron, Albert. "The Treatment of the Greek Middle Voice by the Ancient Grammarians." In *Philosophic du langage et grammaire dans l'antiquite*, A21-AA. Cahiers de philosophie ancienne, vol. 5. Grenoble, France: Editions Ousia, 1986.

17. Taylor, Bernard Alwyn. "Deponency and Greek Lexicography." In *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography: Essays in Honor of Frederick W. Danker*. Edited by Bernard A. Taylor. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.