



The AGNT Project Report—Q1 2016

As a licensee or friend of AGNT or ANLEX, we would like to update you once a quarter about our continuing work to enhance and perfect these databases and about our plans for the future.



The Project. *The AGNT Project Report—Q3 2008* introduced the team, outlined ongoing tasks, and discussed potential tasks.



Introductory Comments by Timothy Friberg

By way of reminder, when Carl Conrad suggested to us years ago that there was a better way to represent voice issues in our AGNT tagging than the traditional deponency approach we employed, I responded to the effect of “I’m listening.” Now many years later, we are busy implementing a parallel of that better analysis of verbal voice until such time as this newer and far more adequate approach filters down to pedagogical strata. Then we can scuttle the old.

Our parallel analysis overhaul, of which Carl is point man from start to finish, is extensive: all relevant AGNT tags, including the analytical listing of forms in ANLEX; a new presentation of voice in our appendix (5.3), which Carl also wrote and which we presented in the AGNT Project Report—Q3 2014; and not-insignificant adjustments to the individual verbal write-ups in ANLEX. But for all that, we felt that a longer explanatory statement of this paradigm shift with respect to understanding the phenomenon of voice in Greek would also be useful, to join the appendixes in ANLEX.

We are happy to present here what Carl prefers for the present to call “an advanced draft.” He notes that the essay below is essentially a report of the work of others. What is original with him is the evaluation of developments presented. He notes quite a bit of redundancy in his presentation, to which I counter that that is good for the learners among us. He wonders if he has pushed the acceptable boundaries too far in suggesting new terminology and areas for further research. (Might it be that AGNT’s current A-M-P-E-D-O-N will eventually be replaced not by A-M-P, but by a two-way E-A?) Always humble and realistic, Carl regrets that he lacks training in formal linguistics. Looked at another way, that is surely to the reader’s advantage.

Carl will be most honored for his contribution if there is rigorous feedback from the readership of this Newsletter. Not only is he interested in correcting error, but also in receiving input toward making his presentation clearer and more precise. We suggest that you send your input to us for forwarding to Carl; we will keep track of all input and receive his subsequent approval for editing.

We trust you will profit from this important summary statement.

Beyond Deponency: A Paradigm Shift in Our Understanding of Greek Voice¹

Carl Conrad, Ph.D.

1. Paradigm Shift?

The paradigm shift heralded by Neva Miller in an essay first published in 2000² is proclaimed as currently “taking place” by Constantine Campbell in a newly-published volume on developments in research in New Testament Greek.³ Miller questioned the traditional view of Greek voice-forms associated with their parsing in *Analytical Greek New Testament*.⁴ Acknowledging that the term “deponent” was no longer tenable for classifying verbs that do not conform to the traditional framework of Greek voice, she suggested a more adequate understanding of the semantics of middle-passive verbs.⁵ Earlier scholars, as Campbell notes, both J. H. Moulton (1908) and A. T. Robertson (1934) deplored use of the term “deponent” for verbs lacking active-voice-forms, but neither of them suggested an alternative term. Campbell goes on to describe more recent developments between Miller’s essay and the November 2010 SBL session on Deponency.⁶ While Campbell’s chapter and the 2010 meeting focused on the matter of “deponency,” our perspective on ancient Greek voice morphology and semantics voice has improved substantially. Those “deponent” verbs thought to be “misfits” of a sort in the traditional view of voice turn out to belong to major categories of middle-marked verbs in a more intelligible framework of voice-forms and meanings. In sum, it is the traditional framework that is undergoing reevaluation.⁷

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² Miller. References in the notes refer by name to authors and works listed in the bibliography at the end.

³ Campbell, 91.

⁴ AGNT.

⁵ Miller, 423n1: “The voice system used in AGNT and fully explained in its lengthy appendix,” she wrote, “was developed to classify verbs as to voice and ‘deponency’ according to ‘majority perceptions.’ Until there is a paradigm shift with regard to voice, both AGNT’s system and this essay may stand as useful tools for enquiring users.”

⁶ Campbell’s chapter 4 in *Advances in the Study of Greek* is substantially identical with the paper that he delivered at the 2010 SBL meeting.

⁷ The term “paradigm shift” is perhaps overly dramatic. The clarity gained by our better understanding ancient Greek voice-forms and usage will not yield a new and simpler structural framework. The complexity of the Greek verb generally is a consequence of the irregular process of Greek linguistic change over the centuries. Just as we must recognize that the form εἶπα (3x in the GNT) is an emerging equivalent of the still far more common form εἶπον (29x in the GNT), so too students of Greek must recognize the coexistence of older and emerging voice-forms and usage in Greek verbs. We shall understand the functions of Greek voice forms better despite their complexity, but we need no longer differentiate between several varieties of “deponent” verbs.

1.1. Ancient Greek Voice in a New Perspective: Major Elements in New Perspective

1.1.1. Middle-passive forms and usage are now seen as a single inflectional category represented in *both* the $\mu\alpha\iota/\sigma\alpha\iota/\tau\alpha\iota$ paradigms traditionally termed “middle-passive” and the $(\theta)\eta$ aorist and future paradigms traditionally termed “passive.” The aorist “passive” inflections in $(\theta)\eta$ are identical with those traditionally termed athematic second aorist active paradigms in $-\acute{\omega}\nu\alpha\iota$, $-\acute{\upsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$, and $-\acute{\eta}\nu\alpha\iota$. This inflectional paradigm encodes the same array of polysemous semantic values as do the $\mu\alpha\iota/\sigma\alpha\iota/\tau\alpha\iota$, $\mu\eta\nu/\sigma\omicron/\tau\omicron$ paradigms, including transitive passive transformations of active constructions, intransitive processes of internal change not brought about by external agent or instrument, and a range of processes internal to the grammatical subject, including perception, emotion, cognition, and locomotion.

1.1.2. Middle-passive forms and usage are understood as a *marked* set of inflections emphasizing the *subject-affectedness* of verbs conjugated with these endings; they are distinct from Active verb-forms that constitute a default set of inflections that is *unmarked* for *subject-affectedness*.

1.1.3. Verbs traditionally termed “deponents” and deemed “active” in meaning despite their conjugation with “middle-passive” or “passive” inflections are now understood in terms of their semantic value as properly belonging to the middle-passive forms in which they are regularly found.

In what follows I shall begin with what is at the heart of the new perspective: a brief account of the emergence of the new perspective and an exposition of the major categories of middle-passive usage. I shall then proceed to explain why the traditional understanding of the ancient Greek voice system is inadequate, that is, why the new perspective better explains discrepancies of forms and usage traditionally explained by the concept of “deponency.” Thereupon I shall discuss basic elements of the new perspective, including questions of terminology, subject-affectedness as the distinction denoted by middle-marking that sets middle-passive form apart from the default active conjugational paradigms, which, even if they do indicate actions or processes that are subject-affected, are not marked for that property and may even be employed in syntactic constructions that are essentially those of transitive verbs. I shall then discuss what is distinctive to middle-passive forms and usage—action or process initiated by or affecting or coming to fruition within the verbal subject before going on to describe the centuries-long process of supplanting of older $\mu\alpha\iota/\sigma\alpha\iota/\tau\alpha\iota$; $\mu\eta\nu/\sigma\omicron/\tau\omicron$ inflectional paradigms by $(\theta)\eta$ forms. In conclusion I shall offer some thoughts about implications of the new perspective on ancient Greek voice for pedagogy and grammatical and lexicological resources and about areas bearing on the understanding of the Greek voice system calling for further exploration.

2. Middle-Passive Voice: Marked for Self-Affectedness, Polysemous in Broad-ranging Categories

2.1. Kemmer’s *The Middle Voice*. In a cross-linguistic study published in 1993 Suzanne Kemmer demonstrated that “middle-marking” characterizes verb-forms indicating subject-affected meanings.⁸ Verbs bearing middle-markers in many languages of different language-families regularly indicate that the subject of the verb is somehow affected by the action or process, be it as a *patient* (if the verb is reflexive or passive), as an *undergoer* or *patient* of spontaneous process not initiated by any external agency, as an *experiencer* of emotional impulses or cognitive processes, and as acting on one’s self directly or indirectly or reciprocally with another on one’s own initiative or in one’s own interest. Kemmer lists as many as nineteen “situation types” commonly indicated by middle-marking of some sort in many languages.⁹ All of these “situation types” are represented in Neva Miller’s essay of 2000, albeit with alternative terminology in some instances. The most thoroughgoing exploration of middle-passive forms and meanings in ancient Greek is Rutger Allan’s 2002 Amsterdam dissertation, *The Middle Voice in Ancient Greek: A study in Polysemy*.¹⁰ While Allan’s study focuses on earlier Greek down through the era of Classical Attic, his findings and descriptions of the Greek voice-system are no less valid for Koine Greek of the New Testament era. Ongoing exploration of middle-passive morphology and usage in Koine Greek must proceed on the basis of Allan’s work. The present essay endeavors to set forth the basic features and implications of Allan’s work for our understanding of middle-passive voice in New Testament Koine Greek.

2.2. Rutger Allan’s Ancient Greek Middle-Passive Verb Categories. Koine Greek verbs in the New Testament corpus display middle-passive forms and usage falling into Suzanne Kemmer’s nineteen categories as well as into the categories of Neva Miller’s essay of 2000. Inasmuch, however, as Rutger Allan’s analysis has focused on ancient Greek specifically and has marked off distinguishing features of each of his categories, a brief overview of Allan’s eleven categories may serve as a basis for further discussion of the new perspective on ancient Greek voice, including the somewhat (but not altogether) questionable designation of the default forms of Greek voice morphology as “Active”¹¹ and the place of the $\theta\eta/\eta$ “passive” markers in a single middle-passive group. It should be noted at the outset that ancient Greek aorist- and future-tense forms conjugated with $\theta\eta$ and η formative elements are understood not as distinct from the middle-passive forms with endings in $\mu\alpha\iota/\sigma\alpha\iota/\tau\alpha\iota$, $\mu\eta\nu/\sigma\omicron/\tau\omicron$, infinitives in $\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$, and participles in $\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma/\mu\epsilon\nu\eta/\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\nu$; rather, all are seen as middle-passive forms, the $\theta\eta/\eta$ forms being later-emerging alternatives to the older middle-passive forms in the aorist and future tenses. Over the course of Greek linguistic history the $\theta\eta/\eta$ forms were supplanting the

⁸ Kemmer.

⁹ Kemmer, 267–70.

¹⁰ Allan.

¹¹ See below, §4.3. Verb-forms bearing endings conventionally labeled “active” constitute the “default” or unmarked voice-form for all verbs while those forms that bear “middle-passive” or $-\theta\eta$ - “passive” forms are differentiated and marked as indicating subject-affectedness.

older forms.¹² The verbs employed in these conjugational forms appear in eleven semantic categories¹³ distinguished by Allan, as follows.

2.2.1. Passive. Including transitive verbs indicating a subject functioning in the semantic role of a patient undergoing a change initiated by an agent or instrument external to the subject. Here belong transitive verbs such as βάλλειν with a present middle-passive βάλλεσθαι and aorist βλήθη. Here too belong verbs such as δαίμονιζεσθαι, a verb lacking an active form but clearly assuming the subject's state as possession by an external demonic power. In the same category belongs σεληνιαζεσθαι, “suffer as moon-induced, to be ‘moonstruck’.”

2.2.2. Spontaneous Process. Verbs in this category indicate that the subject has the semantic role of patient undergoing an internal process of change that is not initiated by any external agency or instrument. Verbs may indicate physiological processes: γίνεσθαι “come into existence, happen”; ἐρεύγεσθαι “belch”; ἀπόλλυσθαι “perish”; or they may indicate an inorganic process: ἀλλάσσεσθαι “undergo change”; τήκεσθαι “melt”; ἐκκαίεσθαι “kindle”; or they may indicate changes in physical properties: ξηραίνεσθαι “wither”; πωροῦσθαι “harden”; or appearance and disappearance: φαίνεσθαι “appear.”

2.2.3. Mental Process. Verbs in this category indicate that the subject has the semantic role of *experiencer*; There are two subcategories: (a) Emotional: ἀγαλλιᾶσθαι “rejoice”; ἐπαισχύνεσθαι “feel shame”; ὀργίζεσθαι “become angry”; (b) Cognitive: ἐπιλανθάνεσθαι “forget”; μιμνήσκεσθαι “remember.”

2.2.4. Body Motion. Subject is both agent and patient, change is initiated within (while these could be classified with other reflexive middles, they constitute a significant group of two subcategories, (a) Change of posture: ἵστασθαι “stand”; καθῆσθαι “sit”; κείσθαι “lie”; στρέφεσθαι “turn”; (b) Locomotion: ἔρχεσθαι “come/go”; κυλίεσθαι “roll”; πέτεσθαι “fly”; πορεύεσθαι “fare.”

2.2.5. Collective Motion. Motion of groups in concert; many have an active counterpart that is causative. As expected, many of these are συν- compounds, many are collective forms of verbs that are middle-marked for other reasons: ἀθροίζεσθαι “gather together, assemble”; συγκακουχεῖσθαι “endure mistreatment with”; συμφύεσθαι (or συνφύεσθαι) “grow together with.”

¹² See below, p 6. The changeover from aorists in μην/σο/το, etc. to -θην/θης/θη aorists is discernible in alternative forms of the same verb attested in different frequencies in the GNT and LXX such as ἀπεκρίνατο and ἀπεκρίθη, ἐγένετο and ἐγενήθη, forms for which it is difficult to demonstrate any semantic difference.

¹³ While there is no universal consensus on the categorization of middle-passive verbs, several features are accounted for in each scheme. Suzanne Kemmer counted seventeen categories of middle verbs; Neva Miller's listings of New Testament Greeks in six major classes of which several classes are subdivided generally groups together the same kinds of verbs as do Kemmer and Allan.

2.2.6. Reciprocal. Interaction of two or more with each other, with one argument (one alone), or with two arguments, one in the dative case: ἀντιστρατεύεσθαι “make war on”; κολλᾶσθαι “cling to”; μιμείσθαι “imitate”; συντίθέσθαι “come to agreement with someone.”

2.2.7. Direct Reflexive. Human agent is also the *patient*; a sizable group of these is constituted by verbs of grooming: ἀπεκδύεσθαι “undress”; ζώννυσθαι “gird oneself” (active causative); λούεσθαι/λούειν “bathe” (active causative); ὑποδείσθαι “shoe oneself”; other than grooming: γυμνάζεσθαι “exercise oneself”; δέχεσθαι and compounds, “accept, receive”; δωρεῖσθαι “donate”; ἐγκρατεύεσθαι “master one’s emotions.”

2.2.8. Perception. Animate subject is *experiencer*; many common verbs of perception have mostly active forms, discussed below): γεύεσθαι “taste”; ἐπακροᾶσθαι “listen (to)”; θεᾶσθαι “observe.”

2.2.9. Mental Activity. Animate subject is also *experiencer*, sometimes also a *beneficiary*, engaged in attending, deliberation, volition, etc.: βουλευέσθαι “take counsel, plan”; βούλεσθαι “want, wish”; ἐνθυμεῖσθαι “consider, ponder”; οἶεσθαι “suppose”; ἠγείσθαι “consider, regard”; λογίζεσθαι “reckon.”

2.2.10. Speech Act. Subject is *agent*, also interpreted as a *beneficiary* or an *experiencer*: αἰτιάσθαι “accuse, fault”; ἀποκρίνεσθαι “answer”; ἀπολογεῖσθαι “defend self”; ἐπαγγέλλεσθαι “promise”; καυχᾶσθαι “boast”; μέμψεσθαι “blame.”

2.2.11. Indirect Reflexive: Transitive Verbs. Subject is *agent* and *beneficiary*: ἀμύνεσθαι “defend”; ἐκδίδοσθαι “let out, lease”; ἐπιμελεῖσθαι “care for”; ἰᾶσθαι “heal, restore”; κτᾶσθαι “acquire”; χαρίζεσθαι “bestow as a favor”; χρῆσθαι “use, exploit.”

3. Inadequacy of Traditional Account of Ancient Greek Voice

Ancient Greek Voice as traditionally understood and taught is set forth in tables of morphological paradigms arranged in three categories of voice (active, middle-passive, and passive) for seven tenses. There are active forms in all tenses—two or more in some of them, middle-passive forms in seven tenses, and distinct passive forms in two tenses.

	Active	Middle-Passive	Passive
Present	Verbs in -ω, in -μι	Verbs in -μαι	
Imperfect	Verbs in -ον, in -ην	Verbs in -όμην, in -μην	
Future	Verbs in -σθ	Verbs in -σομαι	Verbs in -θήσομαι in -ήσομαι
Aorist	Verbs in -σα Verbs in -ον Verbs in -ην, in -ον, -υν	Verbs in -σάμην	Verbs in -θήν, in - ην
Perfect	Verbs in -χα Verbs in -α	Verbs in -μαι	
Pluperfect	Verbs in -εα, -ειν	Verbs in -μην	
Future Perfect	Verbs in -σθ	Verbs in -σομαι	

Figure 1 Traditional Greek Voice Scheme

The scheme is predicated on the understanding that the great majority of verbs are transitive and conform to the morphological paradigms and usage associated with each morphological paradigm. Active verbs have subjects that are agents performing the actions indicated by the verb, although many Active verbs may in fact be intransitive. Middle-Passive verbs may function in either a Middle (transitive, direct or indirect reflexive) or a Passive sense (transitive passive), but Aorist and Future tenses will have separate forms for Middle and Passive meanings, e.g., ἔπαυσα (transitive active: “I stopped”), ἐπαυσάμην (transitive middle: “I made myself stop”), ἐπαύθην (transitive passive: “I was stopped”).

3.1. Are there really three voice forms? The earliest ancient treatise on Greek grammar, attributed to the second century BCE Alexandrian scholar Dionysius Thrax, briefly describes “three διαθέσεις “dispositions” or “arrangements” of the Greek verb, ἐνέργεια, πάθος and μεσότης.¹⁴ While these Greek terms have been understood to refer to what grammatical tradition means by “active,” “passive” and “middle,” the text of Dionysius offers τύπτω and τύπτομαι as examples of ἐνέργεια and πάθος, while he says of μεσότης that verbs in this διάθεσις display in different inflected forms both ἐνέργεια and πάθος, examples being πέπηγα and διέφθορα. These two verb-forms have inflections associated with ἐνέργεια, but in meaning (“I am stuck,” “I am ruined”) they correspond to present-tense *middle* forms πήγνυμαι and διαφθείρομαι. He then adds—also as μεσότης—the aorist-tense forms ἐποίησάμην and ἐγραψάμην (“I produced [for myself]” and “I inscribed myself” or “I got myself registered”). He must have deemed these as exemplifying the πάθος “arrangement,” while at the same time they indicate agency or activity, ἐνέργεια. Dionysius cannot mean by μεσότης what traditional grammar means by “middle voice”; he seems rather to mean something like “mishmash,” a confusing combination of ἐνέργεια and πάθος. That would be closer to the meaning of the term “deponent” as used by traditional grammarians who include among “deponent verbs” second-aorist active forms of verbs with middle-passive meaning, verbs such as ἔστη “she stood” and ἐφάνη “he came into view.” By μεσότης Dionysius means verb-forms that

¹⁴ Text: διαθέσεις εἰσὶ τρεῖς, ἐνέργεια, πάθος, μεσότης• ἐνέργεια μὲν οἷον τύπτω, πάθος δὲ οἷον τύπτομαι, μεσότης δὲ ἢ ποτὲ μὲν ἐνέργειαν ποτὲ δὲ πάθος παριστάσα, οἷον πέπηγα διέφθορα ἐποίησάμην ἐγραψάμην.

display inflections that are at odds with their semantic values, that is to say, pretty much what traditional grammarians mean by “deponent verbs” (provided that aorist actives and perfect actives with middle-passive semantic values are included among the “deponents”). The question to be raised here is: does the Greek verb display *three* distinct patterns of inflection or only *two*? Are the aorist “passive” forms in -(θ)η that are conjugated with “active” endings different from the athematic “active” forms in -ῶναι and -ῆναι? And are the future “passive forms in (θ)ήσεσθαι that are conjugated with “middle” endings different from the future-tense forms in -ήσεσθαι?

3.2. Aorist “middle-passive” and “passive” are equally ambivalent semantically.

Figure 1 above indicates three groups of inflectional voice categories, one termed “Active,” one “Passive” and a third termed “Middle-Passive” because its forms in Present, Imperfect, Perfect, Pluperfect and Future Perfect are semantically ambivalent, to be interpreted as middle or passive in meaning according to context. However, if we include verbs such as ἐποπρεύθη and ἠδυνήθη, ἐγενήθη and ἀπεκρίθη—verbs conventionally termed “deponent” and thought to be misfits in the scheme—as belonging properly to the so-called “passive” inflectional group, then we must acknowledge that the (θ)η aorist is not distinctly passive but rather middle-passive, not semantically distinct from the group of inflectional paradigms with endings in μαι/σαι/ται etc. Like the verb forms inflected with Middle-Passive endings, these verbs are ambivalent semantically just as the others are. In a revised scheme of voice-forms and usage we might better refer to these (θ)η forms as “Middle-Passive 2” or “MP2.”¹⁵ As has been noted previously and will be discussed further below, θη “passive” forms were beginning to supplant the older “middle-passive” forms of several verbs (e.g., ἀπεκρίθη is found 83x in the GNT, ἀπεκρίνατο 7x without any demonstrable difference in meaning. The process had not advanced so far in the case of ἐγένετο (266x in the GNT) and ἐγενήθη (19x in the GNT).¹⁶

3.3. Future “middle-passive” and “passive” are also ambivalent semantically. The same question raised about distinct aorist voice-forms for “Middle-Passive” and “Passive”

¹⁵ This was an alternative considered for revised tagging of voice-forms in AGNT. Had it been adopted, the three designations (A, MP1, MP2) might better have reflected both form and usage. It was thought more practical to retain the more traditional single-character designations of the three inflectional patterns (A, M, P) as indicating the inflectional patterns clearly enough (e.g., ἐκήρυσσεν is tagged A, ἐβαπτίζοντο is tagged M, and ἐπορεύθη is tagged P, despite the fact that ἐβαπτίζοντο must be interpreted as semantically passive and ἐπορεύθη must be interpreted as semantically middle.

¹⁶ BDF §78 (p. 42). “Aorist (future) middle and passive. The later language preferred the aorist passive in the case of deponents (where a real passive meaning is at best a possibility; deponents in MGr always form the aorist in -(θ)ηκα = -(θ)ην. Thus in the NT: ἐγενήθην (Doric, Ionic, and generally Hellenistic; Phryn. 108; Lautensach 285; Mayser I2 2, 157f.) in addition to ἐγενόμην; ἀπ-, ὑπ-, δι-εκρίθην as in Hellenistic (Phryn. 108; Mayser I2 2, 158) in addition to ἀπεκρινάμην; ἀπελογήθην (an old form, but not good Attic) in addition to -γησάμην; ἠγέθην (intransitive and passive as in Hdt., Xen. and others [Lautensach 249]; likewise, ἐγεροθήσομαι), never the Attic ἠγρόμην; ἐγαμήθην (§101) for Attic ἐγημάμην; ἀναπαήσομαι is a variant for ἀναπαύσομαι (ἐπάην is to ἔπαυσα as ἐκάην is to ἔκαυσα). And especially with verbs of emotion (even those which were originally intransitive actives): ἠγαλλιάθην, (ἐνεβριμήθην,) ἐθαμβήθην, ἐθαυμάσθην (intransitive); see also §101 ἀπορεῖν. Koine shows reverse preference for the aorist middle instead of the passive in the case of ἀρνεῖσθαι and διαλέγεσθαι of which there are examples also in the NT.

can be raised regarding future voice-forms for “Middle-Passive” and “Passive.” The verb ἵστασθαι/ἰστάναι belongs to Allan’s Middle verbs in category 4, “Body Motion.” In the GNT this verb appears 1x in a “Middle-Passive” inflectional form (Revelation 18:15 στήσονται “will stand”) but 6x in the -θησ- “Passive” form. In two of these instances it can be argued that the semantic value of the verb is passive:

Mark 13:9: Βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτούς· παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς συνέδρια καὶ εἰς συναγωγὰς δαρήσεσθε καὶ ἐπὶ ἡγεμόνων καὶ βασιλέων σταθήσεσθε ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς. (σταθήσεσθε: “you will be made to stand.”)

2 Corinthians 13:1: Τρίτον τοῦτο ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς· ἐπὶ στόματος δύο μαρτύρων καὶ τριῶν σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα. (σταθήσεται: “will be grounded/given standing.”)

In a third instance (Romans 14:4 σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ κρίνων ἀλλότριον οἰκέτην; τῷ ἰδίῳ κυρίῳ στήκει ἢ πίπτει· σταθήσεται δέ, δυνατεῖ γὰρ ὁ κύριος στήσαι αὐτόν.) it is uncertain whether σταθήσεται should be interpreted as a passive (“will be made to stand”) or middle (“will stand”).

In the other three instances of a passive form in the GNT (Matthew 12:25, 12:26, Luke 11:18, all three σταθήσεται), all within pericopes of the “house divided” Jesus-saying, it is more difficult to make a case for a strictly passive sense, “will be stabilized,” rather than a middle sense “will stand.” We ought to recognize that this form, σταθήσεται is ambiguous in the same way that the “Middle-Passive” inflectional forms are ambiguous, which is to say that our interpretation of the form as middle or passive depends on whether we discern an external causal factor responsible for the standing. But this very semantic ambivalence is fundamental to the “Middle-Passive” inflectional form in στήσεται and no less fundamental to the “Passive” form σταθήσεται.

3.4. Why does the aorist “passive” in (θ)η- employ active personal endings? We might also wonder about the implications of the terminations in the inflectional patterns of both the aorist passives in -(θ)η- with their active secondary endings θην/θης/θῆ/θημεν/θητε/θησαν or ην/ης/ῆ/ημεν/ητε/ησαν and the future passives in (θ)η- with their middle primary endings θήσομαι/θηση/θήσεται etc., or ήσομαι/ήση/ήσεται etc. If we look more closely at the so-called “second” aorist passive forms in η- such as φανῆναι, we may well ask whether this is a “second” aorist passive or an athematic “second” aorist active? In fact, athematic second aorists in ην/ης/η κτλ. *do* correspond to subject-affected verbs, many of them with presents in the middle, e.g., ἵστασθαι/στήναι. The form ἕστη is ordinarily considered an athematic second aorist active; it is intransitive and is not passive.¹⁷ In the GNT forms of the aorist passive σταθήναι appear 20x; in only one of these can it be argued that the verb-form has a passive semantic value (Matthew 18:16 ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀκούσῃ, παράλαβε μετὰ σοῦ ἔτι ἓνα ἢ δύο, ἵνα ἐπὶ στόματος δύο

¹⁷ Cf. BDF §97 “... intransitive future στήσομαι and σταθήσομαι, aorist ἕστην and ἐστάθην (both simple forms) are intransitive, as in Ionic-Hellenistic.”

μαρτύρων ἢ τριῶν σταθῆ πᾶν ῥῆμα), while nineteen others bear the same semantic sense as the “Active” form. ἴστασθαι is a middle verb; its active form ἰστάναι is always causative: “make stand” or “station.” The same can be said of φανῆναι, which serves as the aorist of the middle verb φαίνεσθαι, “come into view”; its active form φαίνειν is causative, “make visible.”

Athematic second aorists are intransitive. The distinction between first aorist στήσαι “make stand” and athematic second aorist στήναι “stand” is found in Homer as well as in the GNT; Homer has a similar distinction between sigmatic aorist βῆσαι “cause to step forward” and athematic aorist βῆναι “step forward.” γινώσκειν is a subject-affected verb with an ω/o second aorist γνῶναι; much like it is ἀλίσκεσθαι “get caught,” with an athematic second aorist ἀλῶναι. The second aorist passive τραπήναι still found in the GNT relates to the present middle-passive τρέπεσθαι, a body-motion middle verb. Similar too is the spontaneous-process middle σήπεσθαι “rot” (with causative σήπειν “cause to rot”); its athematic aorist form being σαπήναι. Traditional grammars distinguish these forms lexically as second aorist *active* and second aorist *passive*, but there is no difference in the way the lexical forms are composed: a vocalic stem in η (rarely ω, υ in φῦναι). The distinction between these two varieties of athematic aorist forms is as artificial as the term “deponent.”¹⁸

3.5. Perfect actives with middle-passive meanings. Several of the verbs having athematic intransitive aorists in -ῆναι, -ῶναι, and -ῦναι have first or second perfect forms with middle-passive meanings also. φύεσθαι “sprout” or “grow” is a spontaneous-process middle; its perfect-tense form πεφυκέναι is still found in Hellenistic Greek, in the LXX, even if not in the GNT. More common are the mental process middle πείθεσθαι “trust, obey, confide in” (causative active πείθειν “persuade”) with perfect πεποιθέναι, spontaneous process middle γίνεσθαι with perfect γεγονέναι, another spontaneous process middle σήπεσθαι “rot” with perfect σεσηπέναι. All of these are older “second” perfect forms; ἴστασθαι “stand” has a first perfect ἔστηκέναι. Some grammarians have included these perfect actives with middle-passive meanings among the “deponent” verbs. It is safe to say that these verbs must have been used so regularly in everyday speech that they have not undergone the process of linguistic change that brings usage into conformity with standard forms as far as possible. Insofar as any of these verbs had causal active forms, middle-passive perfect forms emerged; thus πεπεισθαι “stand convinced” in relation to present πείθειν—but one may well question how sharp is the distinction in meaning between πεποιθέναι and πεπεισθαι.

¹⁸ Smyth, 219: “The second aorist in -ην is primarily intransitive and shows active inflection (as ἔστην stood). Many so-called passive forms are in fact merely intransitive aorists of active verbs, as ἐρρύην from ῥέω flow, κατεκλίνην from κατακλίνω lie down, and do not differ in meaning from the aorists of deponent verbs, as ἐμάνην from μαίνομαι rage.” Cf. also Bakker, 27. It would be wrong to characterize -θη//η- suffix as passive: “In Greek linguistics, they are sometimes referred to as “passive” aorists. This characterization, however, is inappropriate insofar as the -θη//η- suffix signals passiveness only in a certain class of verbs, and it is incorrect to generalize this function.”

3.6. Greek voice-forms: active, middle-passive, and anomalous. In the preceding paragraphs I have reviewed some irregularities in voice-forms and usage in New Testament Koine Greek which call into question the validity of the traditional framework. Despite the linguistic changes taking place between the era of Classical Attic and the Koine of the New Testament era, one may read in §§800–821 of Smyth’s *Greek Grammar for Schools*, the classic English-language reference grammar for Greek, a thorough accounting of these and other irregularities under the heading of “Peculiarities in the Use of the Voice-Forms, etc.”¹⁹ As noted above, Dionysius Thrax originally classified the διαθέσεις—what we have come to call “voices”—of Greek verbs in two major categories, namely ἐνέργεια and πάθος, to which he added a third: μεσότης. The term ἐνέργεια is traditionally equated with Active voice, πάθος with Middle-Passive voice—not *simply* Passive but the μαι/σαι/ται forms, which are semantically ambivalent. Dionysius’ third category, μεσότης includes verbs conjugated with middle-passive endings in some tenses but active-endings in others. While Dionysius’ μεσότης unquestionably includes verbs traditionally termed “deponent,” he employs the term in a broader sense, not as a “mean” (as if it were a “halfway house” between ἀνέργεια and πάθος, but as a “mishmash” or “mixed bag”—“part this and part that.” Can Dionysius’ μεσότης verbs be distributed into intelligible subcategories? If so, how might they differ from the categories of deponents explained in the Appendix of AGNT? Although most Greek verbs do conform to predictable inflectional patterns, there remain verbs in considerable number that fall into the mix that Dionysius called μεσότης. Why? Because “strong” verbs in daily spoken usage over the centuries do not readily adapt to emerging standard patterns of inflection. Greek not only has several verbs that are irregular owing to phonetic factors; it has also several second-aorist forms with active endings, particularly of athematic verbs formed on long-vowel stems in υ, ω, and especially in (θ)η. Some of these have traditionally been categorized as “active” (e.g., στήναι, βῆναι, γνῶναι, ἀλῶναι, φῦναι), but most have been categorized as “aorist passives in -ῆναι and θῆναι. Why should the intransitive aorist active forms be distinguished from aorist passive forms? It may be useful to term these θη and η verb-forms “passive” when they can be interpreted as bearing *passive* semantic value in clear opposition to an *active* form of the same verb, as ἔλυσα τὸν ἵππον “I untied the horse” as opposed to ἐλύθη ὁ ἵππος ὑπ’ ἐμοῦ “the horse was untied by me.” But what should we call the forms ἐπορεύθη “he traveled” and ἐδυνήθη? Traditionally this has been called “passive with active meaning”—but it could just as well be termed “active with middle meaning.” Or we could be more explicit and distinguish inflectional form from semantic value more clearly: “lexical active with passive semantic value” or “active with passive meaning.” My preference would be to speak of ἐπορεύθη as “active with middle meaning.”

The Greek verb will not become any less complex if the term “deponent” is abandoned, but there is reason to think that it will be more intelligible if we agree to acknowledge not three distinct inflectional paradigms of Greek voice (Active, Middle-Passive, and Passive) but only two: Active and Middle-Passive.

¹⁹ Smyth, 218.

4. Διότητες in the Greek Verb: Active and Middle-Passive

The terms we traditionally employ for the two distinct διαθέσεις or “voices” of the Greek verb do not very well serve the aim of understanding their nature and function. They are nevertheless not wholly arbitrary or wanting in justification. The traditional term “Active” suggests that transitive verbs indicating actions performed by agentive subjects on objects that are somehow altered by the action constitute the greater number of verbs in the “Active” voice. Not only is that true, but it is also true that transitive syntax is employed even with verbs that are not really transitive, verbs indicating actions that do not impact or alter objects (e.g., verbs of perception and of mental process). On the other hand, the term “Middle-Passive” is somewhat more suggestive of the usage to which the term refers, insofar as “middle” as a grammatical term has always been linked to reflexive semantic function, whether direct reflexive with reference to the subject’s action on itself or indirect reflexive with reference to the subject’s action in its own interest. At the same time “passive” has always indicated usage of a verb to indicate that the subject is the recipient or patient undergoing the action performed. It may very well be wisest, then, to retain these traditional terms, “Active” and “Middle-Passive” for the two διαθέσεις or “voices” of the Greek verb. On the other hand, it may be helpful for understanding the distinctive character of each to consider how alternative terminology might illuminate the distinctions and what is perhaps misleading about traditional terms and possible alternative terms.

4.1. Alternatives to “active” and “middle-passive”: (a) process/affect; (b) effect/affect; (c) κοινή/ἐαυτική. Dionysius Thrax uses the Greek nouns ἐνέργεια and πάθος, respectively, to refer to what English grammatical usage has traditionally termed “Active” and “Middle-Passive” voices. What equivalent terms that might replace “active” and “middle-passive” might be any more helpful?

One alternative pair is “process” and “affect.” “Affect” seems apt for πάθος for the very reason that the fundamental characteristic indicated by middle-marking is “subject-affected”; moreover, “affect” ordinarily is used of emotional experience and of what *happens* to a person. Each of Allan’s subcategories of Middle Verbs involves the subject in roles of *patient, undergoer, recipient, beneficiary* of a process initiated within or by the subject: either the subject is impacted and transformed by an external factor (passive), undergoes a spontaneous internal process, receives sensory impressions or emotional impressions or engages in thought processes, initiates speech, or acts on himself or in his own interest.

“Process” might well describe “Active” verbs (Dionysius’ ἐνέργεια) because it focuses on the ἔργον of the process, the deed or “work” performed: if the verb is *transitive*, it indicates the impact on an object external to the subject; if the verb *intransitive*, it indicates performance of a task (ἔργον); if it is *impersonal*, it points to a natural process (e.g., ὕει “it’s raining”) or to a condition that obtains (e.g., δεῖ “it is binding [obligatory]”). Even when a verb that is ordinarily *middle* is used intransitively in an *active* form (e.g., ἔγειρε

“get up!” more commonly ἐγείρου), “process” would adequately represent the voice-form, inasmuch as there’s no emphasis on the subject.

Dionysius’ term διάθεσις points to alternative “arrangements” or “dispositions” denoted by the voice-forms. Adoption of “effect” and “affect” for ἐνέργεια and πάθος, respectively, suggests the Latin cognate—*fect* for Greek ἔργον and the prefixed *ef-* and *af-* seems apt for the opposition of the two διαθέσεις: *effect* = “active”; *affect* = “middle-passive.”

A Greek adjectival pair of alternatives that might replace ἐνεργητική (διάθεσις) and παθητική (διάθεσις) are κοινή (διάθεσις) and ἑαυτική (διάθεσις), respectively. Here κοινή, “common” or “undistinguished,” aptly characterizes “active” voice, while ἑαυτική, “self-referent” or “reflexive,” seems just as aptly to characterize “middle-passive” voice. The adjective ἑαυτική has obviously been coined on the basis of the Greek reflexive pronoun ἑαυτοῦ/ἑαυτῆς/ἑαυτοῦ.

These alternative terminological pairs are not offered here with any serious suggestion that they be adopted to replace the traditional terms “Active” and “Middle-Passive,” but rather in the hope that they may contribute to the intelligibility of the new alternative understanding of ancient Greek voice.

4.2. Markedness: subject-affectedness; active unmarked (default), middle marked.

The Middle-Passive is the specialized voice-form, differentiated from the Active, which is a standard, “default” inflectional pattern. Linguists refer to “markedness” as the distinction of one more commonly used set of words or forms from another less commonly used set. Verb-forms with Middle-Passive inflection are said to be “marked for subject-affectedness,” while verb-forms with Active inflection are said to be “unmarked for subject-affectedness.” While subject-affectedness does characterize several verbs that are found with Active voice-forms, such forms are not so “marked.” For instance, two common subject-affected verbs regularly found in Active forms in the present tense are λαμβάνειν and γινώσκειν; their future-tense forms are Middle: λήψεσθαι and γνώσεσθαι. These future-tense forms are marked for subject-affectedness. Why? I believe the reason is that future-tense forms involve a greater degree of intentionality or self-assertion and that preference for middle-voice inflection indicates that intentionality.

One indication that middle-voice forms are the marked set, distinguished from the active-form, is the vocalic/diphthongal additions to pronominal endings of the unmarked Active endings as seen in the following table. The simplest pronominal endings are seen in the aorist active endings μ/ς/τ/με/τε/ντ; the middle-passive endings display an -ο- appended to the 2d sg., 3d sg. and 3d pl. consonants, σο/το/ντο, respectively; the present-tense endings show an -ι appended to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd sg. and to the 3rd pl. consonants, μι/σι/τι/ντι, respectively, while -αι is appended to the same consonants in the present MP endings, μαι/σαι/ται/νται, respectively.

Person/No.	Sec./Act.	Sec./MP	Prim./Act.	Prim./MP
1 sg.	-μ	-μ-ην	-μ-ι	-μ-αι
2 sg.	-ς	-σ-ο	-σ-ι	-σ-αι
3 sg.	-τ	-τ-ο	τ-ι	-τ-αι
1 pl.	-με-θα	-με-θα	-μ-ε	-με-θα
2 pl.	-τε	-σθε	-τ-ε	-σθε
3 pl.	-ντ	-ντ-ο	-ντ-ι	-ντ-αι

Figure 2. Pronominal Endings of Active and Middle-Passive Voices

4.3. “Active” voice: verbs transitive, intransitive, impersonal; causative forms of middle verbs; unmarked forms of middle verbs, quasi-transitive verbs of perception and mental process. “Active” inflectional patterns constitute the default or unmarked voice-form of the Greek verb. Of the 28,110 verb-forms in the GNT, more than half of them (18,407) are inflected with active-voice endings while 5,144 take middle-passive (μαι/σαι/ται) endings and 3,922 bear the distinct passive (θη/η) endings found only in the aorist and future tenses. Perhaps the great majority of verbs conjugated in active voice are transitive and involve an agentive subject performing an action that directly impacts an external object. As Rutger Allan asserts, “the active voice must be taken as the unmarked member of a privative opposition. In other words, the active voice is neutral as to the semantic feature of subject-affectedness.”²⁰

Regular transitive verbs are numerous and conform consistently to the traditional framework within which Greek voice has so long been understood. παιδεύειν “educate” will appear in every position of a full chart of paradigms of a regular Greek verb; in the present tense the active form παιδεύει corresponds to the middle-passive παιδεύεται, which may indicate either reflexivity “educates oneself” or passivity “is being educated”; in the aorist we find the three distinct voice-forms, ἐπαίδευσεν, ἐπαιδεύατο, and ἐπαιδεύθη corresponding to active (“educated”), middle (“educated oneself”) and passive (“was educated”) senses, respectively.

The active verb-form of many intransitive verbs more commonly used in the middle-passive bears a *causative* semantic value. The subject-affected verb commonly seen in its middle-passive form seems primary, while the active verb-form is secondary. Such a verb is ἵστασθαι “stand”; the active-voice form ἵσταναι is causative: “make stand, bring to a standstill, establish” or “install.” So too the verb φοβεῖσθαι (“fear”) is a mental-process middle verb of emotion; its active form φοβεῖν is causative, “frighten.”

Subject-affected verbs ordinarily appearing in middle-passive forms may be employed in active voice-forms without taking causative semantic value. The imperative forms ἐγείρε and ἐγείρετε appear often in the GNT in the intransitive sense, “rise!” or “wake up!” although the middle-passive equivalent is not as common (ἐγείρεσθε 3x, ἐγέρθητι 1x, ἐγέρθητε 1x).

²⁰ Allan, 13.

While verbs indicating mental events are essentially subject-affected and many of these appear in Greek as middle-marked, some very common verbs of perception (e.g., ἀκούειν, ὁρᾶν), cognition (e.g., γινώσκειν), and emotion (e.g., πάσχειν) regularly have active forms in the present and aorist tenses (ἀκούειν/ἀκούσαι, ὁρᾶν/ἰδεῖν, πάσχειν/παθεῖν). These verbs take the syntax of transitive verbs with subjects functioning as agents and accusative direct objects, although the subject is actually an *experiencer* and the sources of perception or experience are not transformed or affected by the verbal process. Allan suggests that these verbs are conceived as metaphorical extension of prototypical transitive verbs such as “grasp.”²¹ Allan also suggests that such verbs as ὁρᾶν and ἀκούειν may take active forms because they are used of involuntary sensation, whereas θεᾶσθαι, γεύεσθαι, and ἀκροάζεσθαι involve aroused intention.

The active verb πάσχειν functions in the manner of a passive verb. It may take an adverbial accusative (πολλά, κακῶς, εὖ) “to be much abused, to be badly/well treated,” but it regularly construes with an agent construction indicating the person responsible for the suffering, thus functioning like a passive verb. In Mark 8:31 it is used in a sequence of passive infinitives: ...ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι.

In summary, “Active” voice morphology is: (1) a “default” voice-form for Greek verbs, distinguished from “Middle-Passive” voice morphology in that it is *unmarked* for subject-affectedness. While subject-affected verbs may and often do appear in “Active” voice-forms, their subject-affectedness is not made conspicuous by their morphology; (2) while the term “active” may seem useful insofar as the great majority of verbs found in “active” voice-forms are transitive, there are nevertheless many verb-forms found in “active” voice-forms that are intransitive, impersonal, and even *passive* in semantic value. For that reason the term “active” is somewhat misleading and perhaps should be replaced by a more suitable term if consensus should settle on one.

4.4. “Middle-passive” voice: focus of process, intention, agentive/spontaneous. Middle-marking, the inflection of verb-forms with either the -μαι/σαι/ται endings of the present, imperfect, perfect, and pluperfect tenses or with the (θ)η inflections of the aorist and future tenses, indicates that these verbs involve *subject-affectedness* of one or another sort. Middle-passive inflections are *polysemous*; although all categories of middle-marked verbs

²¹ καταλαμβάνειν is the Stoic technical term for intellectual grasp of an object; κατάληψις is the Stoic term for “conception.” Allan, 9: “This extension, from the prototypical transitive event to the mental event, has a metaphorical character. Its motivation can be found in the abstract commonality that is inherent in both types of events. On the one hand, we have the transmission of energy from an active initiator (the agent) to a passive endpoint (the patient), and on the other hand, we have the concept of a metaphorical mental path leading from a more active, conscious participant (an experiencer) to a more passive object-participant. In other words, mental phenomena such as gazes and direct attention can be conceived of as paths, analogical to a physical path like that of an energy flow. Examples in Greek of mental events coded as transitive constructions are numerous: γινώσκω τι ‘I realize something’, οἶδά τι ‘I know something’, ὁράω τι ‘I see something’, τρέω τι ‘I fear something.’”

indicate subject-affectedness, the categories extend over a range including verbs that are fully transitive (passive, direct or indirect reflexive) and other verbs that are intransitive and indicate a process transpiring altogether within the person or thing represented by the verb's grammatical subject, be it a physical process of combustion, growth, decay or a mental process of waking, pondering, decision-making, willing). The categories of middle-marked verbs drawn up by Rutger Allan has been set forth above in §§2.2.1–11, each exemplified by verbs appearing in biblical Greek texts. While the term “middle-passive,” as noted above in §4.1, might conceivably be supplanted by a better descriptive word, it is helpful in that it calls attention to the ambivalence of the inflected forms that may indicate that the subject is a patient being manipulated or acted on by an external agent or force or alternatively a patient being moved or directed by the verb's own grammatical subject. The present-tense form ἵσταται and the aorist forms ἔστη and ἐστάθη are all open to interpretation in an intransitive sense (“stands/stood”), a reflexive sense (“brings himself to a halt/brought himself to a halt”) or a passive sense (“is stationed/was established”).

Subject-affectedness as the essential element of middle-marking characterizes both “middle” and “passive” usage and frequently calls to mind, on reflection, the ambivalence of a middle-passive Greek verb form. βαπτίζειν is a transitive verb, frequently used in the active voice with an accusative object explicit or implicit and frequently in the passive voice. Two middle-passive imperative usages of the verb in Acts, however, suggest a reflexive sense; The addressee is in each instance bidden to participate actively in the process of his own baptism. “Get baptized” calls on the addressee to exercise will and control over participation in the ritual:

Acts 2:38: μετανοήσατε, [φησίν,] καὶ βαπτισθήτω ἕκαστος ὑμῶν.

Acts 22:16: καὶ νῦν τί μέλλεις; ἀναστὰς βάπτισαι καὶ ἀπόλουσαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.

Several middle-marked verbs have active-voice counterparts that are causative. In some cases we may question whether the active voice is perhaps secondary. For instance, use of the first person singular active form ἵστημι as the lemma of the verb ἱστάναι/ἱστασθαι is misleading insofar as it suggests that the active form is primary; in fact, “I stand” is ἵσταμαι in the Greek, while ἵστημι means “I am causing X to stand” or “I am bringing X to a halt.”

Some verbs regularly used in ancient Greek (including biblical Koine Greek) have no known forms in the active voice; they have traditionally been termed “deponent,” but there is nothing irregular about them; they fall demonstrably into *subject-affected* middle-verb categories. Although some of these have been termed “*media tantum*” or “*passiva tantum*,” depending on whether their aorist forms follow the -μαι/σαι/ται or the (-θ)η- inflectional pattern, the usefulness of that distinction is as questionable as the usefulness of the term “deponent.”

Voice-usage in denominative verbs in *-εύειν/-εύεσθαι* is noteworthy: *πολιτεύειν* = “be a citizen, *πολιτεύεσθαι* = “exercise citizenship.” In Matthew 28:19 disciples are bidden to “disciple” Gentiles—bring them into their own condition: *μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*; in Matthew 26:19 we are told that Joseph of Arimathea *ἐμαθητεύθη τῷ Ἰησοῦ*, where the verb-form could be interpreted as passive (“was made a disciple to Jesus”) but might better be viewed as a reflexive (“had made himself a disciple to Jesus”) or intransitively (“had become a disciple of Jesus”).

Students of ancient Greek have very often found it puzzling that verbs that ordinarily display *active* inflections in other tenses inflect their *future* tense with middle-passive endings (*λαμβάνειν/λήψεσθαι*, *ἀναβαίνειν/ἀναβήσεσθαι*, *θνήσκειν/θανεῖσθαι*, *τίκτειν/τέξεσθαι*). Indeed, the appendix to AGNT includes a list of verbs that are “deponent” only in the future tense in the first century A.D. Among others, I find convincing the explanation that the Greek future involves strong intentionality and employs as its marker what was originally a desiderative marker.²²

4.5. (θ)η aorists as alternative middle-passives to μην/σο/το aorists. Early in the centuries-long history of the Greek language the *μαι/σαι/ται* aorist inflections, traditionally termed “middle-passive,” began to merge with and gradually to be supplanted by those others in (θ)η traditionally termed “passive.” Homeric *ἔβλητο* (*βάλλειν* “hit/strike”) was supplanted by the later prevalent form *ἔβληθη*, Homeric *ἔγρευτο* (*ἐγείρειν/ἐγείρεσθαι* “awaken/awake”) by *ἠγέροθη*,²³ while several more middle-marked categories are found in Greek of the Classical era.²⁴ We have already noted the predominance of the “passive” aorist *ἀποκριθῆναι* over the “middle-passive” *ἀποκρίνασθαι* in the GNT. On the other hand, the middle-passive aorist *γενέσθαι* is still far more frequent in the Greek of the New Testament than the passive *γενηθῆναι*, and it is hard to find a justification for a semantic difference between middle-passive and passive aorists of intransitive verbs. We have noted too the difficulty of drawing a clear semantic distinction middle-passive *στῆναι* and passive *σταθῆναι*: while the latter could be the passive of the active *στήσαι*, the absence of a contextual agentive or instrumental modifier leaves the semantic value of the passive form uncertain.

²² Bakker, 19: “The affinity between future and middle, here and in other cases, has puzzled philologists, but is in fact easy to explain. Future tense is, morphologically, an unstable category In Greek, future morphology is based on the erstwhile volitionality marker *-σε//σο-* (cf. also English *will*). On account of its connection with volitionality, future tense presents an event as a mental disposition, an intention, and this naturally explains the affinity between “middle” and “future,” since volitionality as the sole transitivity feature of an event (i.e., when agency and causation are absent) involved affectedness.”

²³ Allan, 148, “In the course of the history of the Greek language, a gradual expansion of the passive aorist form can be observed. This expansion took place mainly at the cost of the sigmatic middle aorist. As a result, in the Modern Greek language the sigmatic middle aorist form has disappeared completely.”

²⁴ Allan, on pages 147 (“The Distribution of the Sigmatic Middle Aorist and the Aorist in *-(θ)η-* in Homer”) and 156 (“The Distribution of the Sigmatic Middle Aorist and the Aorist in *-(θ)η-* in Classical Greek”) show the progressive concurrent usage and replacement of sigmatic aorist by (θ)η- aorists over the course of time.

As noted above (§3.4) the inflectional pattern $\eta\nu/\eta\varsigma/\eta/\eta\mu\epsilon\nu/\eta\tau\epsilon/\eta\sigma\alpha\nu$ of the aorist passive is identical with that of the athematic second aorist active. Rutger Allan and Egbert Bakker agree that the $(\theta)\eta$ aorist is an “active” inflectional pattern,²⁵ but neither of them argues that the term “passive” ought to be “laid aside” with reference to the $(\theta)\eta$ inflections. These athematic aorist forms are intransitive, always bearing a sense, “came to be *x*”, “entered into a state of *x*.” $\xi\gamma\nu\omega\nu$ = “I got to know”; $\xi\sigma\tau\eta\nu/\xi\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\theta\eta\nu$ = “I came to a stand/halt”; $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\rho\acute{\epsilon}\theta\eta$ = “it came to light”; $\epsilon\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\omega}\theta\eta$ = “became full/reached fulfillment”; $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron/\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\nu\acute{\eta}\theta\eta$ = “came into being/came to pass.” Whether the $(\theta)\eta$ form should preferably be understood as a *semantic* passive will depend on the particular verb’s inherent transitivity or, to be more precise, on the extent to which a verb displays volitionality, agency, and causation.²⁶

5. Grammatical and Lexicographic Implications: Changing the Terminology and Lemmatization

The new perspective on ancient Greek voice is still too new to be reflected in such references works as grammars and lexical works, but there are questions in this area that deserve serious consideration. One major concern that has already been mentioned above (§4.1) is the terms best suited to the inflectional patterns in particular (active, middle-passive). Perhaps even the term “voice” or $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\theta\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ might be replaced by a term more clearly indicative of the nature of the alternation between “active” and “middle-passive”; would “orientation” better represent $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\theta\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ and be a more serviceable term than “voice”? Certainly the term “deponent” can be finally “laid aside.”

But what should we say of verbs commonly described in lexical entries as “Passive with active meaning”? The term “active” is particularly confusing in that it is employed with reference both to lexical active inflectional pattern and to the “active” semantic value of a transitive verb. In my view it is misleading to say that the verb-forms $\pi\omicron\rho\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\epsilon\tau\omicron\iota$ and $\epsilon\pi\omicron\rho\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\theta\eta$ are “active.” For the time being, it may be useful to refer to the inflectional patterns (paradigms) as “lexical active,” “lexical middle” and “lexical passive,” but it would be best not to employ the term “active” with reference to the semantic value of an intransitive verb-form.

It may be difficult or even impossible to formulate and initiate more satisfactory terminology for the lexical forms now termed “active,” “middle-passive” and “passive.”

²⁵ Allan, 19: “Another indication that the active voice is the unmarked value relates to the passive aorist form.... If we judge the passive aorist form solely by its endings (1 sg. $(\theta)\eta\nu$, 2 sg. $-\varsigma$, 3 sg. -0 , etc.) it should be regarded as belonging to the active voice. However, in the system of voice oppositions, in the aorist stem the suffixes $-\sigma\alpha-$ and $-(\theta)\eta-$ also play an essential role. Therefore, it is justified to take the passive aorist as a distinct voice. The active endings are used unproblematically in the passive aorist, since the ‘passive’ meaning (i.e., subject-affectedness) is expressed by the portmanteau morpheme $-\theta\eta-$ which codes both aspect and voice. In my view, the case of the passive aorist forms clearly demonstrates the semantic neutrality of the active voice endings. Apparently, active endings can even be used in contexts of high subject-affectedness such as the passive aorist.”

²⁶ Bakker, 25. Bakker explores the whole range of Greek verbs from lower to higher transitivity.

Unless or until there is a truly helpful move to clearer and more useful descriptive terminology, users of standard reference works in Greek will need to be cognizant of the ambiguities of traditional terminology and clear on the difference between *lexical* voice-forms and *semantic* values associated with any particular form of a particular verb.

6. Pedagogical Implications: How Best to Teach and How to Learn Voice-forms and Usage

The continued teaching and study of ancient Greek in schools is itself currently in peril. The difficulty or complexity of the ancient Greek verb has always been an impediment to gaining competence in the language. While that complexity cannot be eliminated, the student's efforts can be eased by careful explanation of the default character of active voice-forms of verbs and of the distinct semantic value of middle marking. If students can grasp that middle-voice forms are *marked* for subject-affectedness and can become familiar with the categories of middle verbs, ancient Greek voice should be less perplexing than it has been for students taught the traditional framework. They must also understand the basic pattern of transitive verbs with sigmatic aorists in the active voice and (θ)η aorists in the passive voice. Finally, they must be aware that the (θ)η aorists can and do bear *middle* semantic value for middle verbs such as πορεύεσθαι/πορευθῆναι, δύνασθαι/δυνηθῆναι, βούλεσθαι/βουληθῆναι.

Students of ancient Greek would be wise to *study*—not merely *consult*—lexical entries for verbs that are in any way irregular. These are verbs that have been used constantly in everyday discourse over the centuries and have been slow to adapt to the prevalent morphological paradigms. The Koine Greek of the New Testament era is a language in flux; older verb-forms and usages of many verbs are in use concurrently with others that will become predominant in later centuries. A student who knows how to make the best use of the data for verbs supplied in a good lexicon is better able to follow the thinking of an ancient Greek author who has given careful expression to nuanced thoughts in a rich and powerful language.

7. Unresolved Questions

The Greek verb is extraordinarily complex and richly nuanced even in the great number of verbs that fully conform to standard inflectional paradigms. Deponency, in retrospect, was a term employed to designate verb-forms that do not conform to the framework as traditionally taught and set forth in reference works. The questions calling for investigation lie in the complex and multifarious history of linguistic change in ancient Greek from proto-Indo-European through proto-Greek, Mycenaean documents in Linear B, Homeric Greek, on down through Hellenistic Koine, resurgent Atticist, and later stages. With regard to voice-forms and usage, major developments from Homer on down through Classical have been researched and expounded. In particular, the gradual replacement of older middle-voice paradigms in μαι/σαι/ται etc. by (θ)η passive forms has been explored in some detail by Rutger Allan, but the further supplanting of sigmatic aorist middles by (θ)η

aorists in the era of biblical Greek deserves to be explored and factors involved in the process should be explained. Another question worth exploration is the matter of how later-emerging perfect middle-passive forms in *μαι/σαι/ται* etc. relate to older perfect active forms with subject-affected semantic values (e.g., *πεποιθέναι* and *πεπείσθαι*).

Of interest also are matters more directly concerned with earlier stages of Greek linguistic history. One question has to do with the origin of the (θ)η inflectional paradigm. Another concerns the question whether or not there is a semantic distinction between aorist passives in *-ῆναι* and those in *-θήναι*; Prévot (1935) argued that the former carries telic aspect, the latter atelic.²⁷ Although Prévot’s work is referenced in BDF,²⁸ the distinction he drew has not been persuasive. As noted above, BDF insists that there is no semantic distinction between *στήναι* and *σταθήναι* or between *στήσεσθαι* and *στατήσεσθαι*. Rutger Allan argues for phonetic factors governing the preference of either form over the other.²⁹

Another matter of morphological “archaeology” with regard to voice-forms and usage is that of *thematic* second-aorists of verbs that are essentially subject-affected. Herman Kolln, working with data from Homer, has argued that while sigmatic aorists are ordinarily transitive, strong aorist active forms in *-εἶν* often correspond to present-tense stems that are middle (e.g., *δέркоμαι/ἔδρακον*, *πέρδομαι/ἔπαρδον*, *ἐρεύγομαι/ἤρυνγον*).³⁰ Quite recently, José Luis García Ramón has presented an explanation of the origin of the (θ)η aorist based on Homeric data.³¹

What I have presented here is a brief sketch of basic features of the emerging consensus regarding Greek voice-forms and usage. Those who wish to delve more deeply into the evidence and linguistic foundations of the new perspective would do well to read the works of Suzanne Kemmer, Rutger Allan, and Egbert Bakker cited.

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²⁷ Prévot (83) cites Mark 7:34–35 (deaf man brought to Jesus, who tells him: *ἐφραθα, ὃ ἐστὶν διανοίχθητι· καὶ ἠνοιγήσαν αὐτοῦ αἱ ἀκοαί, καὶ ἐλύθη ὁ δεσμός τῆς γλῶσσης αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλάλει ὀρθῶς*, arguing that the verb-form *διανοίχθητι* carries an inceptive sense, “Open up!” while the other form of the same verb, *ἠνοιγήσαν*, is telic, “were (suddenly) open.”

²⁸ BDF §78 (42): “Prévot (90–93) wants to carry out extensively in the NT a distinction between *ἐγένετο* ‘was, happened, occurred’ and *ἐγενήθη* ‘became, was done’. This is not convincing.”

²⁹ Allan, 89ff. (chap. 3).

³⁰ Kolln.

³¹ García Ramón.

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