



## The AGNT Project Report—Q3 2018

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.



### The Interface of Theory and Practice: The Case of Greek Voice

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When we were in the later stages of preparing our ANLEX (Baker, 2000), our coauthor Neva Miller told me that whereas she was happy to work with our commitment to presenting Greek voice in a traditional framework, she was convinced that the treatment of deponents was wrongheaded. She wrote an essay to present her “other way,” and we printed it as the second appendix in ANLEX, *A theory of deponent verbs*. In it she put forward an understanding of nonactive verb forms that rather explained the phenomenon as involving personal interest, self-involvement, and/or a particular way of the subject interacting with himself or others in some way distinct from that of simply transitive active meaning.

Years later Carl Conrad reiterated the same general position to me. I told him I was open to learn more. In fact, still later we finally agreed to work toward a parallel AGNT, maintaining the traditional AGNT, on the one hand, while presenting a parallel innovating approach, on the other.

That parallel work in AGNT involved potential changes to our database in several areas.

1. Our AGNT Appendix’s traditional explanation of the phenomenon (5.3, Voice: Deponency) needed to be totally rewritten if there were no such thing as deponent verbs.
2. Our analytical verbal parsings (tags) had to be revised from a five-symbol set (A, M, P, D, O) to a three-symbol set A, M, P.
3. The lexical write-ups for verbs in ANLEX, currently under revision, needed to be reevaluated in terms of this new understanding of verbal “voice.”
4. An unrelated matter was also to be instituted, that of changing all

verbal lemmas from first person singular form (λέγω) to infinite form (λέγειν), with corresponding principal parts also being changed. 5. A longer essay (than Appendix 5.3) was called for, justifying this whole new parallel approach.

At this moment I am happy to report the current status of the steps thought necessary. 1. The treatment of voice in verbs in the AGNT appendix was penned. (See the AGNT website for innovating Appendix, 5.3.) 2. A list of all verbal tags in ANLEX and AGNT was readied, going from the deponent-sensitive five symbols to the three symbols of the innovating approach. 3. The lexical write-ups in our on-going revision of ANLEX are being weighed for appropriate form and expression. For example, is the correct lemma for earlier φοβέω now to be φοβεῖν, recognizing a causative active meaning, *frighten*, not found in the New Testament, or is it to be φοβεῖσθαι, representing *be afraid* among other meanings current in the GNT? 4. The change of lemmas and principal parts from first person singular to infinitive is an ongoing change keeping pace with the revision of ANLEX. 5. The follow-up essay—two actually—has been completed as *Beyond Deponency: A paradigm shift in our understanding of Greek voice* and *Retrospect: Beyond Deponency*. (See AGNT website, ANLEX appendices 4 and 4a.)

A close and profitable reading of these two new appendices shows that there are several matters interacting in Greek verbs. There is the matter of inflectional morphology, which still sits well with A(ctive), M(iddle) and P(assive). As Carl notes, it would be right to use A, MP1 and MP2, which would better reflect form *and* usage. There we are met with the challenge that with available AGNT symbols for morpho-grammatical tagging, we have only a single-unit character at our disposal. Since in the traditional AGNT deponent analysis we used less-than-transparent D for “middle Deponent” and O for “passive deponent,” perhaps M for MP1 and P for MP2 is not too difficult a symbolization to employ.

In addition to the formal morphological distinctions in Greek verbs, in terms of basic semantics there is rather a two-way distinction, that is, between a generic what-we-may-call process inflection, where the subject does little more than act as the agent of the named action, thus traditionally A for active (but not necessarily representing transitive in its English-grammar understanding); and a specific subject-affected inflection, traditionally M and P, those that are middle or passive in form, in which the subject is impacted in some way by the action of the verb. That is good input for the user, especially if he will use it as a learning device and not an ongoing crutch. The terminology (*process* for traditional active and *subject-affected* for traditional middle-passive) might still be improved on, but the two semantic poles are increasingly clear in current research).

But the distinction is further explicated in there being marked subject-affectedness and unmarked subject-affectedness. Verbs traditionally thought of as middle and passive generally show marked subject-affectedness (by their morphology), while verbs like ἀκούειν, fitting in with the understanding of something acting on the subject, as here

sound waves impacting his ears, are considered unmarked in that they lack a formal middle or passive morphological marker.

Further, there is a largely congruent agreement of the kinds of subject-affected situations suggested. So whether it is one of a dozen or so situations, this also is a candidate for noting. In particular, whether the semantic situation is passive, a spontaneous process, a mental process, a bodily motion, a collective action, a reciprocal process, a direct or indirect reflexive action, among others of the larger set of conditions suggested by a number of researchers (including Miller, Kemmer, Allan), the student might well profit from having access to this kind of analysis.

Perhaps such understanding as found in the preceding three paragraphs can best be added to our annotations field, which allows for comment outside of basic AGNT analysis.

In any case, please take this short statement as a situation report on the state of our parallel innovating analysis being developed for verbs within the larger AGNT. The linguistic evidence for the rightness of this approach is all but overwhelming. On the other hand, traditional pedagogy currently seems quite unassailable in its deponent analysis. For that reason, we are developing the parallel analysis to allow the user to toggle into the future by choosing to work with the innovating analysis as ready to assist him in his reading of the Greek New Testament.

Since it is the user—the translator, the student, the pastor—for whom we work in maintaining and developing AGNT, we are very happy to hear from those that are in fact users or teachers of users. We want to do our best for increased understanding of the Greek New Testament. Please communicate with us your own best practice suggestions.



As always, we remain open to developing AGNT and ANLEX in ways that are most useful to the needs of students and readers of God's Word.

Thank you for your continued support of *The AGNT Project*, for faithfully marketing the AGNT and ANLEX databases, and for making these state-of-the-art tools for studying the Greek New Testament available to students, scholars, pastors, translators, and laymen worldwide.

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