

New Observations on Voice in the Ancient Greek Verb¹

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1. Introductory

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1.2. Introductory remarks: In 1997 I formulated and published on the B-Greek internet discussion list some concerns regarding what seemed to me misleading and confusing ways of teaching Greek verb voice. Terminology and assumptions either implicit in the teaching or openly taught to students learning Greek seem to me to make understanding voice in the ancient Greek verb more difficult than it need be. In particular I believe that the meanings conveyed by the morphoparadigms for voice depend to a great extent upon understanding the distinctive force of the middle voice, that the passive sense is not inherent in the verb form

¹The following works have been consulted in the course of preparation of this discussion; several have been cited and reference initials for their identification in subsequent notes is indicated in square brackets (□):

- Blass, F. and Debrunner, A., *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, tr. Robert W. Funk, University of Chicago Press: 1961 [BDF]
 - Cooper, Guy, *Attic Greek Prose Syntax*, University of Michigan Press: 1998 [Cooper]
 - Danker, Frederick, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., University of Chicago Press, 2000 [BDAG]
 - Friberg, Barbara and Timothy, ed., *Analytical Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed., 1999 [AGNT]
 - Kemmer, Suzanne, *The Middle Voice*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Publishing co., 1993 [Kemmer]
 - Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene Albert, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domain*, 2nd ed., Fortress Press: 1994 [L&N]
 - Miller, Neva F., “A Theory of Deponent Verbs,” Appendix 2 of Friberg, Timothy and Barbara, and Miller, Neva F., *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, Baker Books: 2000, pp. 423-430) [Miller]
 - Robertson, A. T., *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 1934 [ATR]
 - Sihler, Andrew L., *New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin*, Oxford University Press: 1995 [Sihler]
 - Smyth, Herbert Weir, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges*, rev. Gordon M. Messing, Harvard University Press: 1956 [Smyth]
 - Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Zondervan: 1996 [DBW].
- Data on usage in the Greek New Testament was compiled using *Accordance*, a software program for Macintosh (current version 5.6c, c2002, marketed by the OakTree Software, Inc. using a morphologically-tagged Greek NT (Nestle-Aland27)).

but determined by usage in context, and that the conception of deponency is fundamentally wrong-headed and detrimental to understanding the phenomenon of “voice” in ancient Greek.

I do not expect to have influence in this matter sufficient to dislodge conventional terminology and assumptions from the pedagogy of ancient Greek, but I do hope to make some features of the voice-system in ancient Greek more intelligible to a few teachers and students of the language. In the present document I attempt to clarify and document more fully the ideas originally set forth in 1997 and with the same pedagogical end in view: to assist students and teachers of ancient Greek at understanding a complex feature of the language that can be but need not be bewildering.

As the outline in §1.1 above indicates, this document is organized in the fashion of a reference resource rather than as an essay to be read. There is some redundancy from section to section insofar as my perspective on ancient Greek voice is stated in segments. I seek to set forth in §§2-3 the conventional doctrine of voice and my reasons for finding that conventional doctrine problematic and in need of reformulation; in §4 I explain the emergence of -θη- morphoparadigms and their development as a replacement for the older aorist and future “middle-passive” morphoparadigms in -μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το; in §§5-6 I set forth my own understanding of the nature and functions of the voice morphoparadigms and my suggestions for renaming the morphoparadigms so as to be more clearly indicative of their functions; in §§7-8 I attempt to show the pedagogical implications of this understanding both for instructional purposes and for the student’s process of learning paradigms and principal parts of verbs. Finally I offer some details, drawn from Biblical Greek, demonstrative of my assertions regarding the relationship between relatively older and newer aorist and future “subject-focused” morphoparadigms.

2.0 Voice: Names and Frames in the Conventional Doctrine: It will perhaps be helpful to set forth at the outset the names, grammatical forms, and conventional understanding of the meanings conveyed by the forms thus named.

2.1 Morphoparadigms: I use the term “morphoparadigm” to indicate a regular sequence of personal endings for singular and plural in each voice category, as they are employed in appropriate combinations for tense and mood with adjustments for loss of intervocalic sigma and contraction of vowels:

2.1.1 Active endings (in the order, 1, 2, 3 sg., 1, 2, 3 pl.):

Primary: -ω/εις/ει; -ομεν/ετε/ουσι or -μι/σι/τι; μεν/τε/ντι;

Secondary: -v/ς/__; μεν/τε/ντ

2.1.2. Middle-passive endings:

Primary: -μαι/σαι/ται/μεθα/σθε/νται;

Secondary: -μην/σο/το/μεθα/σθε/ντο

2.1.3. Passive endings:

Aorist passive: -θην/θης/θη/θημεν/θητε/θησαν (or -ην/ης/η/ημεν/ητε/ησαν);

Future passive: -θησομαι/θησθη/θήσεται/θησόμεθα/θήσεσθε/θήσονται .

2.2 Voice meanings: The Conventional Doctrine (“semantic” voice): I present here standard definitions of “transitive” and “intransitive,” “active,” “middle,” and “passive” from Smyth’s *Greek Grammar*²:

2.2.1. “Transitive” and “Intransitive”: “Verbs capable of taking a direct object are called transitive because their action passes over to an object. Other verbs are called intransitive.” (Smyth, §920)

2.2.2. “Active”: The active voice represents the subject as performing the action of the verb: λούω ‘I wash’ (Smyth, §1703).

2.2.3. “Middle”: The middle voice shows that the action is performed with special reference to the subject: λούομαι I wash myself (Smyth, §1713).

2.2.4. “Passive”: The passive voice represents the subject as acted on: ἐθούον, ἐθοοῦντο, ἔπαιον, ἐπαίοντο *they pushed, were pushed, they struck, were struck* X. C.7.1.38. (Smyth, §1735).

2.2.5. “Deponent”: Deponent verbs have an active *meaning* but only middle (or middle and passive) *forms*. If its aorist has the middle form, a deponent is called a middle deponent (χαρίζομαι *gratify*, ἐχαρισάμην); if its aorist has the passive form, a deponent is called a passive deponent (ἐνθυμέομαι *reflect on*, ἐνεθυμήθην). Deponents usually prefer the passive to the middle forms of the aorist. (Smyth, §356c).

3. Difficulties implicit in and entailed by the Conventional Doctrine: There are several difficulties involved in the way the conventional doctrine is taught and understood by learners of ancient Greek. Among them are:

²Smyth: see note 1.

3.1 Misleading conceptions of the “Middle” Voice: The student may think of or may be introduced to voice in ancient Greek in terms of a basic polarity of active and passive meanings of transitive verbs: verbs in the active voice take a direct object that receives the action of the verb, while in passive verbs the direct object becomes the subject receiving the action of the verb. The Middle voice is sometimes said to assume a middle position “between the Active and the Passive,” in that the subject is said to act upon itself or in its own interest. While not false, that conception is misleading insofar as it assumes a relationship between a verb’s voice-form and transitivity that is not applicable with any regularity to the Greek verb.

Although it is true that most ancient Greek verbs with “active” morphoparadigms are transitive and active in meaning, quite a few of them are intransitive (e.g. εἶμι, εἶμι *ibo*, βαίνω), and some verbs with “active” morphoparadigms may even bear an authentic passive sense; for example, aor. ἐάλων —“I was captured”, pf. ἐάλωκα of ἀλίσκομαι; πίπτω with an agent ὑπὸ + gen. may mean “be felled in battle” and ἀποθνήσκω under the same circumstances may mean “be executed”; the usage of πάσχω is almost uncanny in that it can take a direct object and an agent construction and bear passive sense, so that δεινὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν μου ἔπαθον = “I was made to suffer terrible things by my enemies;” οἰκέω “sometimes seems to mean *be inhabited* or *be administered*, certainly passive conceptions from our point of view.”³

What the teacher of ancient Greek must understand and the student must learn is that the fundamental polarity in the Greek voice system is not *active-passive* but *active-middle*. The middle voice needs to be understood in its own status and function as indicating that the *subject* of a verb is the focus of the verb’s action or state; many Greek verbs in the middle voice are in fact intransitive, but whether intransitive or not, they indicate the deep involvement of the subject as the one experiencing, suffering, enduring, or undergoing an action or a change of state.

3.2 “Passive” verbs that aren’t passive: Students of ancient Greek are normally taught that forms in -θην/θησθαι and -θησομαι/θηση/θησεται are *passive* both in form and meaning, and that, if they don’t bear a passive sense, they are “deponent,” which is to say, somehow *defective*—they don’t behave as a “good” Greek verb should behave. But consider two verbal formulations of the proposition that Jesus “rose from the dead.” The aorist 3d singular ἀνέστη means “he arose”; the verb is intransitive and the initiative in the resurrection was Jesus’ own. On the other hand the aorist 3d singular ἠγέρθη is *passive* and must mean “he was raised”; there’s an implicit agent that is even sometimes expressed in the phrase ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ. Moreover ἐγείρω is a verb that shows all three voices: ἐγείρω = “I arouse, awaken, cause to rise”, ἐγείρομαι = “I rise, awake”, and ἐγείρομαι (MP in *passive* sense) = “I am roused, awakened, raised.” Actually, however, there are no distinctive aorist and future *middle* forms of this verb (one might expect ἠγειράμην and ἐγεροῦμαι); *only* the *passive* forms ἠγέρθη and ἐγερθήσομαι are ever found. But are these forms *really* passive? How does one say “he got up out of bed” or “he woke up”? The answer is: ἠγέρθη. This form may be used whether the initiative in the rising or awakening lies with the subject of the verb or with some external agent. The simple fact is that these ἠγέρθη forms are *not* essentially *passive*; rather they are, just like the *middle-passive* forms in -μαι/σαι/ται and -μην/σο/το, capable of bearing *either* middle *or* passive meaning. And what is true of the verb ἐγείρω, which can be either transitive and active or passive or intransitive, is certainly true also of a verb such as δύναιμι which is intransitive but, except in earlier Greek, is always ἠδυνήθην in the aorist.

The simple fact is that the -θη- endings were *never* essentially passive, even if they were often used and understood as indicating a passive sense to the verb in question; rather the -θη- endings are forms developed in the course of the history of ancient Greek to function for the *middle-passive* in the aorist and future tenses. So what is commonly taught—that passive sense is distinguished by verb forms different from those indicating middle sense in only two voices—is not really true after all.; while the -(θ)ην forms do indeed quite frequently indicate a passive sense, it cannot be assumed by any means that this was their regular and invariable function.⁴ As common usage and context must help us decide whether a -μαι/σαι/ται or -μην/σο/το form is middle or passive in a given instance, so the same factors must come into play in deciding whether a -θη-form should be understood as middle or as passive in meaning.

³Cooper, p. 560, §52.1.1, Wallace, p. 428, Robertson, pp. 332-333.

⁴Cooper, p. 583, §52.6.0: “... there do not seem to be any originally or properly passive forms in the conjugation of Classical Greek. In the present system and the perfect system the same forms double as middle and passive. In the aorist there are special forms in -(θ)ην κ.τ.λ. However they seem to be simply intransitive second aorists of the -μι (i.e. athematic) form much like ἔβην, ἔστην, κ.τ.λ. In Homer the second aorist forms in -ην are used but exceptionally as passives. Mostly they are still simply intransitive. Even the more recent first aorist forms ending in -θην are passive just about one-sixth of the time in Homer, and otherwise intransitive. Apparently it is only the convenience of the passive idea in developed expression, and the helpful specification offered by the expressions of agency ... which explains the development of fully passive meaning in these forms.”

3.3 “Deponents”: Verbs are conventionally termed “deponent” if they appear in passive or middle morphoparadigms but have an “active” sense.⁵ Thus πορεύομαι “go one’s way”, since its morphoparadigm is middle, is called a “deponent verb;” similarly ἠδυνήθην, the aorist 1st sg. of “be able,” is termed a “passive deponent verb.” But these verbs are *intransitive*—it is absurd to say that they carry an “active” sense. The term “deponent” seems to imply that verbs lacking an active form are somehow misbegotten: either they must once have had an active form and lost it, or else they never had an active but really *should* have had it; at any rate, they do not display the behavior of a “standard” Greek verb. I really doubt that a speaker or writer of ancient Greek would have thought these verbs were formed or function in any irregular manner. I believe that the problem of “deponent verbs” shows that our description of grammatical voice is in one or more respects not adequately descriptive of the way it really functions.

Some standard reference grammars of ancient Greek display, in an appendix or elsewhere, a list of common verbs categorized as “deponents”; although they generally have a present tense in -μῶν, some of them will have aorists in -σαμην, while others will have aorists in -(θ)ην. One of the most elaborate of all such lists of deponents may be found in what is sometimes termed a “parsing guide” to the Greek New Testament, the *Analytical Greek New Testament*, edd. Barbara and Timothy Friberg, 2nd ed., 1999, §§ 5.3-5.3.4, pp. 16-19, with lists of the verbs in the different categories of deponents in the Appendix.

In the explanation of the “tagging” system employed by the Fribergs, an explanation is offered for the -θη- “passive” forms functioning as “intransitives.” As chance would have it, it uses as an example the same verb ἐγείρω that I discussed in §3.2 above:

... Languages in general change the function or meaning of grammatical constructions to suit communication goals. A language may add meanings to grammatical constructions to suit its needs. In particular, the passive-voice verb in Koine Greek has more than one meaning or function: it may serve, as in English, to topicalize an object for purposes of discourse, but it may also function to “intransitivize” a transitive verb. Said another way (which may not be exactly equivalent), it may focus on the effect or result of an action while its active counterpart focuses on the causing of that action.

For example, ἐγείρω is an active, transitive verb. The aorist active is used of Jesus’ disciples rousing him from sleep (Matthew 8.25) and of Jesus lifting to his feet a boy whom he has just healed (Mark 9.27). All of these instances show the causing of an action. Let us now look at instances of ἐγείρω that are aorist passive. In Matthew 9.19 there is a construction that recurs elsewhere often: “Getting up or rising, Jesus followed Jairus.” The emphasis is on the effect or result of an action; it is intransitive. How this passive meaning of the active may have developed can be shown by contriving the agent that raised Jesus: “Having been raised to his feet by the action of his leg muscles, Jesus followed...” The focus, however, is intransitive: “Jesus rose.” (The passive of ἐγείρω can at least ambiguously mean “be raised by someone.” John 2.22, for instance, can be understood as “when Jesus rose from the dead” if the focus is on the intransitive result, or as “when Jesus was raised from the dead” if the focus is on the transitive action of causing Jesus to transfer from being dead to being alive.)⁶

This account does not misstate the facts about the verb ἐγείρω, but it is misleading. It inverts the phases of the process of linguistic fluctuation by suggesting that a fundamentally *passive* inflection serves to *intransitivize* a verb. While it is true that ἐγείρω is a transitive verb in active and passive functions, I think we ought to say that the “middle” form ἐγείρομαι (“I awake/rise up”) is intransitive rather than transitive in any sense of a direct reflexive.⁷ In my view the form ἠγέρθη was originally a “third” aorist intransitive form that *became* a middle-passive: *in origin* it was intransitive.

3.4 Direct objects of passive verbs? We may find ourselves puzzled when confronting a phrase like ἀνὴρ τὰς χειρὰς δεδεμένος. We know this should be Englished idiomatically as “a man with his hands tied,” but how do we understand the syntax? Is δεδεμένος a passive participle? How then do we explain τὰς χειρὰς? It is sometimes called an accusative of specification with a passive verb; this very common construction in Latin poetry is usually called a “Greek accusative”, which suggests that the construction is not at all uncommon in

⁵Smyth, p. 107, §356.c, cited above in §2.2.5.

⁶AGNT, § 5.31, p. 16.

⁷In fact the verb is used in the present “active” imperative 14x in the GNT intransitively in the sense “arise!” or “wake up!”

Greek. But might it not make just as much or more sense to view τὰς χεῖρας as the direct object of a middle participle, surmising that the “literal” sense is “having bound his hands” —or perhaps more accurately (since a middle voice can refer to an action permitted or suffered by one but performed by another) “having had his hands tied.”

3.5 Language in flux: Understanding the functioning of the morphoparadigms for voice in ancient Greek requires, I believe, an appreciation of the fact that the Greek language was in a process of change. It was never so homogeneous and stable as the primers of Greek grammar, whether those expounding Classical Attic or those laying out the forms and usage of Hellenistic Koine, are obliged to present them for beginning students. In particular, I think we need to grasp that the -θη- forms originated as intransitive aorists coordinated with “first” -σα aorists, that they increasingly assumed a function identical with that of the aorist middle-passives in -μην/σο/το κτλ. and gradually supplanted the older forms. While some very important everyday verbs such as γί(γ)νομαι and ὀλλομαι may have retained intransitive aorists in ἐγενόμην and ὠλόμην, even ἐγενόμην came increasingly in the Hellenistic era into competition with and indeed was ultimately replaced by ἐγενήθη. While ἀποκρίνομαι had its earlier aorist ἀποεκρινάμην, the standard Hellenistic form of the aorist is ἀπεκρίθη.

Even if it is conceded that the Greek language was in flux with regard to the voice morphoparadigms in the Hellenistic era, as may readily be seen in the Greek Bible, it may be asked whether it isn't preferable to designate the -θη- forms truly “passive” and explain that the “middle” aorist “deponents” such as ἀπεκρινάμην have simply become “passive” aorist deponents (ἀπεκρίθη) in Hellenistic Greek.⁸ But to continue using the term “deponent” for such forms and speaking of the -θη- forms as essentially “passive” is misrepresenting the nature and functioning of these forms in Hellenistic Greek; rather, the “subject-focus” of both the older -μην/σο/το and the newer -θη- morphoparadigms should be recognized in its own right and the verbs in question should not be categorized as somehow “defective” because they don't have active-voice forms.

4.0 Voice: How the Theta-forms probably originated

The question may be raised: If the successful emergence of the -θη- morphology is to be explained first and foremost by this morphoparadigm's differentiation between the middle and passive, then *why* indeed did it *not* spread to the other tense systems? I would say (a) that the differentiation between middle and passive was *not* so important to Greek-speakers/writers that they felt it necessary to have distinct morphoparadigms in the other tenses, and (b) distinction of middle from passive was *not* the first and foremost reason for adoption of the -θη- morphology. My hypothetical account of the origin and spread of the -θη-forms⁹ is essentially as follows:

- 4.1 In addition to older second-aorist thematic forms in -ομην/εσο/ετο which once were, I believe, as much middle and passive in meaning as the μαι/σαι/ται forms in other tenses, there was a “third” non-thematic aorist which tended to have intransitive or even “quasi-passive” semantic functions. Thus for ἵσταμαι and its compounds there was ἔστην and its compounds, and for φαίνομαι there was ἐφάνην. A form such as κατέστην στρατηγός from καθίστημι/καθίσταμαι might mean “I became Strategos” or “I was elected Strategos” (the only public office that Pericles ever held was Strategos), while a form such as ἐφάνη τούτο τὸ σημεῖον might mean “This omen appeared” or “This omen was revealed.”
- 4.2 With the growing adoption of the sigmatic or first aorist active morphoparadigm, the opposition of voice-forms in the aorist for verbs such as φαίνω/φαίνομαι and ἵστημι/ἵσταμαι became neatly: “active/causative” ἔφηνα (originally ἔφηνσα) and ἔστησα, “intransitive/quasi-passive” ἐφάνην and ἔστην.
- 4.3 At some point (and since there are a few such forms in Homer, it must have been a fairly early but not immediately sweeping development), an extended form of this morphoparadigm (long-vowel, normally Eta, secondary active endings: -ν/-ς/-μεν/τε/σαν) emerged in -θη- conjugated in the same fashion as the -ην/ης/η type. My hypothesis¹⁰ is that these -θη- aorist forms probably spread in common usage among Greek-speakers in roughly the same time frame that the Sigmatic active aorists in -σα spread. And of course, I'm also saying

⁸BDF, §§77-79, pp. 42-43, Horrocks, pp. 54, 76.

⁹Several features of this hypothetical reconstruction derive in part from P.Chantraine, *Morphologie Historique du Grec* (Paris:Klincksieck, 1961), pp. 165ff, and Cooper, pp. 583-8, §§52.6.0-52.6.4.

¹⁰I honestly don't think I invented this but I'm trying to show why understanding it may help us understand the ambivalence of the -θη-morphoparadigm. Robertson (p. 333) clearly stated the substance of what I am here stating, but although asserting that “deponent” was a term that “should not be used at all,” he made no effort to alter the traditional/conventional categorization of the voices.

that these -θη- forms carried the same ambivalence as the -ην/ηζ/η forms: they were “intransitive/quasi-passive”-- they might even convey “middle” semantics insofar as they function as aorists to verbs normally found in the “middle” in the present tense.

4.4 It appears to be the case that as the -θη- aorist morphoparadigms came increasingly into use, the older -μην/σο/το aorist morphoparadigm of the same verbs became obsolete. It appears that there are *very few koine Greek verbs*--certainly very few in the Greek New Testament--that display *both* -μην/σο/το aorists and -θη- aorists for non-active forms.¹¹

4.5 Future-tense forms in Greek may be based upon a present stem, but actually the present stem is most commonly formed with an extension of the verb root that differentiates the present stem from other tense-system stems. Not always, but more often than not, the future stem is built upon the same form of the verb root as the aorist stem. I would guess that just as, with expansion of the -σα aorist, futures in -σω/σομαι came increasingly to complement aorist actives in -σα/σαμην; in the same manner future-tense stems of the -θη- morphoparadigm developed -θησομαι/η/εται forms to complement the -την/θηζ/θη aorist forms and that these future forms also carried the same ambivalence as the -θη- aorists: intransitive, quasi-passive, middle semantics as called for by the particular verb and the context. And here too, by and large, the futures in --θησομαι tended to supplant the older middle futures in -σομαι.

That is *how* I think these morphoparadigms very likely developed and spread--and I believe it goes far to explain *why* they spread as well.

5.0 The Polarity of “marked” (Middle) and “unmarked” (Active) voice-forms

5.1 Proto-Indo-European and Greek Voices: only Active and Middle: Greek inherited from its PIE ancestor only two voice morphoparadigms, those described in section I above as “Active” and “Middle-Passive.” But the term “Middle-Passive” is itself questionable: although the “Middle-Passive” forms can be and were used to express the passive sense, there was no distinct passive-voice morphology in the parent language¹², and the -θη- forms which have been thought to bear the distinct passive sense are (a) relatively late developments in the history of ancient Greek and (b) were originally derivative from intransitive aorist forms¹³ and, far from ever bearing *per se* a distinct passive sense, competed with and ultimately supplanted the older Middle morphoparadigms in the aorist and future tenses.¹⁴

The importance of this for understanding the range of meanings that the “Middle” morphoparadigm may bear can hardly be overemphasized. I cite Sihler: “The middle had an important additional use in PIE in connection with the so-called middle verbs mentioned in 413a, namely the verbs in which the grammatical subject is the undergoer rather than the agent. The most basic formation was typically in the middle voice, as befit the involvement, as it were, of the subject in the action. By contrast, the derived (characterized) transitive forms were active or middle as the occasion demanded.”¹⁵

Both active and middle forms may indicate action carried out by others at the command or wish of the subject.¹⁶ So in the middle κειράσθαι may mean “cut one’s own hair” or “have one’s hair cut (by another)” and ξυράσθαι mean “shave oneself” or “have oneself shaved (by another).” But these usages demonstrate readily how the passive sense is almost indistinguishable from the middle sense and suggests why the older European and its daughter ancient Greek found no need to create a distinct passive morphoparadigm: inasmuch as κειράται

¹¹ See Appendix for illustrative details. There are 30 (thirty) verbs in the GNT with forms in both aorist morphoparadigms. I’ll list them here summarily in paragraph form showing numbers of MP and P forms for each: ἀγαλλιάω (4mp,1p); ἀναιρέω (1mp,3p); ἀνατρέφω (1mp,1p); ἀποδίδωμι (3mp,2p); ἀποκρίνομαι (7mp,213p); ἀπολογέομαι (1mp,1p); ἀσφαλίζω (3mp,1p); βαπτίζω (2mp,32p); γίνομαι (447mp,45p); διαλέγομαι (2mp,1p); διαμερίζω (2mp,2p); διατάσσω (3mp,3p); ἐκτίθημι (1mp,1p); ἐκμβριμάομαι (2mp,1p); ἐνδύω (18mp,1p); ἐπικαλέω (7mp,4p); θεάομαι (16mp,3p); ἰάομαι (5mp,10p); καταλαμβάνω (3mp,1p); λυτρόω (1mp,1p); μερίζω (1mp,6p); μεταπέμπω (mp7,p1); μωμάομαι (1mp,1p); ὀράω (root ὀπ-) (1mp,23p); προστίθημι (3mp,5p); ῥύομαι (6mp,4p); συλλαμβάνω (2mp,2p); σφραγίζω (2mp,2p); τίθημι (16mp,9p); χαρίζομαι (10mp,3p)

¹² Sihler, pp. 448-9 (§414).

¹³ Sihler, pp. 563-4 (§508).

¹⁴ Cooper, pp. 583-8, §§52.6.0-52.6.4; Horrocks, Geoffrey, pp. 54, 76.

¹⁵ Sihler, p. 449, §414b.

¹⁶ Cooper, p. 564, §52.1.4, pp. 607-8, §§52.11.0-1.

may mean “he cuts his hair” or, with an agent construction added (ὕπὸ τοῦ κουρέως) “he has his hair cut by his barber.”

5.2 IE Reflexive Verbs in English, German, French, Spanish: While the antithesis of active and passive does seem to have become normative in Latin (as it never really did completely become in Greek), yet the middle voice is clearly discernible in a number of very important so-called “deponent” verbs such as *utor*, *vescor*, *fruor*, *potior*, *fungor* --or one may note the usage of such verbs as *volvo* (“cause to roll”) vs. *volvor* (“roll” intransitive). What is truly remarkable is the historical emergence of great numbers of reflexive verbs over the course of time, especially in late or “Vulgar” Latin, a development which accounts for the massive number of reflexive verbs in French, Spanish, and Italian that gives English-speaking students the same kinds of headaches as do the so-called “deponent” verbs of Greek and Latin. While one can readily make sense, say, of French, “je me lave les mains” for “I wash my hands” (even though it literally means “I wash for myself the hands”, much like Greek λούομαι τὰς χεῖρας), one who first learns something like “elle s’en est allée” has a hard time making sense of what appears to mean, in “literal” English, “she betook herself from there” (cf. Latin *inde sese movit*).

In Miami and New Orleans, and doubtless in southwestern U.S. border towns too one may read on store windows the phrase, “Aqui se habla español,” literally “Spanish speaks itself here,” although normally translated with a passive in English, “Spanish is spoken here.” Students of French and Spanish are well aware of numerous such expressions wherein a reflexive verb construction serves to express the same idea as English expresses with a passive construction. Who is to say that the English passive is more “normal and natural” than the French or Spanish reflexive? The reflexive of French and Spanish is actually better representative of the original voice system of Indo-European.

Periphrastic expressions using reflexives in French and German perhaps indicate a usage that is not at all fundamentally different from the original Indo-European use of the “middle” voice to express a passive notion: in German: *das lässt sich leicht erklären* or French *celà se laisse expliquer facilement* “That can readily be explained” or *es versteht sich von selbst* “that is self-understood”: in French: *il s’agit de ...* “(x) is being discussed. But even in English the ancient Indo-European middle voice finds resonance in such verbal expressions as “make oneself clear” and “express one’s opinion.”

5.3 Simple and Subject-focused morphology: What I want to suggest or to urge as a perspective on ancient Greek voice is that the morphoparadigms for voice in Greek are built not upon a trichotomy but upon a bipolar basis. (1) On the one hand by far the most common verb forms in ancient Greek are “active” and they bear most commonly a transitive active sense, with subject as agent and, more often than not, a direct object or objective complement of some sort. Yet it is also true that there are several intransitive verbs in this category and even a few that bear an authentic passive sense. (2) On the other hand a smaller but sizable and very important group of verb forms is constituted by what have been traditionally called “middle-passive” or “passive” morphoparadigms. These really ought to be seen as a single category of verbs, and although the term “middle” or “middle-passive” has over the long duration been used to indicate it, it might be more aptly described and termed “subject-focused.” Many verbs which have been traditionally termed “deponent” are in fact verbs which are by their nature “subject-focused.”¹⁷ It may be futile to look for adoption of a different terminology for the voice paradigms in ancient Greek; nevertheless, it may be helpful to view the traditional/conventional distinction between “active” and “middle-passive” morphoparadigms as a distinction between an *unmarked* “Simple” morphoparadigm (the traditional/conventional “Active”) and a *marked* “Subject-focused” morphoparadigm (the traditional/conventional “Middle-Passive” -μαι/σαι/ται/μην/σο/το morphoparadigms as well as the “Passive” -θην/θης/θη morphoparadigm).

5.4 Subject-focused, “Middle” verbs: I have suggested and do indeed mean to argue that ancient Greek made no clear distinction in morphoparadigms between the “Middle” and the “Passive,” *not* because ancient Greeks did not understand the distinction between the subject acting in its own interest and the subject being acted upon by

¹⁷ Sihler, p. 448, §413a: “Verbs which might be either transitive or intransitive, but with the detail that the transitive object stands as intransitive subject (like English *fill*, *break*, *burn*, *cook*) are known in some grammatical traditions as *middle verbs*. In PIE morphosyntax, it appears that such roots were inherently intransitive; the transitive agnates were formed by characterized stems.”; p. 449, §414b: “The middle had an important additional use in PIE in connection with the so-called middle verbs mentioned in 413a, namely the verbs in which the grammatical subject is the undergoer rather than the agent. The most basic formation was typically in the middle voice, as befit the involvement, as it were, of the subject in the action. By contrast, the derived (characterized) transitive forms were active or middle as the occasion demanded.”

an external agent or instrument, but *rather* because ancient Greeks did not deem the distinction sufficiently important to require distinct morphoparadigms to indicate the distinct notions.

The so-called “middle/passive” endings in the present, imperfect, aorist and perfect tenses are fundamentally *subject-focused* in meaning and only secondarily came to assume any conventional passive function—and *never did assume exclusively a passive function*.

A few examples will illustrate how the distinct passive sense was readily expressed by use of the subject-focused morphoparadigms:

- (1) ἔλυνε τὸν ἵππον μου ὁ φίλος “My friend was untying my horse,” but ἐλύομην τὸν ἵππον, “I was untying my (own) horse.”
- (2) ἐλύετο ὁ ἵππος μου “My horse was getting loose,” but ἐλύετο ὁ ἵππος μου ὑπὸ τοῦ φίλου μου, “My horse was being untied by my friend”
- (3) ἡ δούλη λούει τοὺς πόδας μου “The maid is washing my feet,” but λούομαι τοὺς πόδας, ᾧ I am washing my feet”
- (4) λούονται οἱ πόδες μου, “My feet are washing themselves” (I think that’s what this really means, although most people will want to put this into normal English and say, “My feet are being washed”), but λούονται οἱ πόδες μου ὑπὸ τῆς δούλης “My feet are being washed by the maid.”

I would contend that it is only the presence of ὑπό + genitive, which became the standard agent construction in ancient Greek, that makes the “subject-focused” (“middle-passive”) forms here recognizable as having a distinctive passive function. Moreover, I would personally say that *unless* one can at *least implicitly* discern an agent (ὑπό + genitive) or perhaps an instrumental dative (which is not nearly so clearly an indicator of passive voice, since it might be used even with a reflexive verb), then one might do best to identify the verb in question as “subject-focused” (“middle/reflexive”) rather than passive. *That is*: I would urge pedagogically that students not learn to call the -μαι/-σαι/-ται, -μην/-σο/-το endings “passive” automatically, but either preferably “subject-focused.” or else “middle/passive.”

5.5 “Subject-focused” morphology and the so-called “Deponent” Verbs: The understanding of “subject-focused” morphoparadigms may be helpful for dealing with the apparent anomalies of so-called “deponent” verbs such as ἔρχομαι and πορεύομαι which have no active forms normally at all but which we would term intransitive verbs of motion. Perhaps it’s perilous to attempt to get very deep into the underlying psychology of the Greek verb, but I would be inclined at least to understand these verbs as originally involving a notion of self-projection, self-propulsion, and that this is the reason why their basic forms are “subject-focused” rather than active. Of course, it is certainly true also that there are intransitive verbs with active forms, and in fact, ἦλθον functions as the *active* aorist of ἔρχομαι and βαίνω or προβαίνω may be used to mean much the same thing as πορεύομαι (at least when one is traveling on foot!)—but we have already noted that the so-called “Active” morphoparadigm is by no means bound up with transitive active meaning, that intransitive verbs may appear in the “Active” morphoparadigm. I think the same psychology is at work in the fact that several ancient Greek verbs that are active in the present tense go into the “subject-focused” or “Middle” morphoparadigm in the future—they apparently involve a notion of self-projection or self-propulsion in the thought of the agent, e.g.: βαίνω /βήσομαι; μανθάνω/μαθήσομαι; ἀκούω/ἀκούσομαι; πάσχω/πέισομαι (from root παθ/πενθ) and I think anyone competent in classical or Attic Greek could readily add many others to this list.¹⁸ I also note with fascination that the verb εἰμί, which is certainly active in form in the present and imperfect in classical Attic and Homer, has a future ἔσομαι (Homeric ἔσσομαι) and already in Hellenistic Greek shows (with imperfect ἦμην) that it is on its way to the modern Greek verb which is conjugated wholly in the middle/reflexive (εἶμαι, ἦμουν, etc.).

¹⁸Cooper, p. 594, §52.8.5: “Very often the middle is not used so much because of the mobilization and expenditure of energy it can show as, because it reports on the intelligence, volition and emotions which are the source of the mobilization and expenditure of energy. This explains many deponent verbs such as αἰσθάνομαι, ἠγέομαι, θεάομαι, λογίζομαι, πυνθάνομαι, ὀλοφύρομαι, οἶμαι, σκέπτομαι. But there are also a number of verbs which are used in the Active, while also found in the middle. this expresses more strongly intellection, judgment, and passion and speech and gesture expressive of these. But in practice, if the middle is the more natural or accepted form, the active can be felt as a small surprise and gain strength from this. Middle forms of verbs of passionate expression become an almost routine device of tragic diction. The middle as an expression indicative of volition explains the remarkable tendency of many verbs to become deponent in their future forms. The future was originally a volitive mood which only subsequently became a strictly temporal expression (tense form) as it is usually observed in both Archaic and Classical Attic usage.”

An essay that might conceivably mark a “paradigm shift” in the understanding of voice and “deponency” in the ancient Greek verb is found in an essay by the late Neva F. Miller entitled “A Theory of Deponent Verbs.”¹⁹ I cite from it two paragraphs of the section entitled, “An Alternative Approach to Deponency” that go to the core of what is vitally important for students of the apparent anomalies of Greek voice inflection and meaning to understand:

“I propose, then, that we need to work toward a better understanding of those verbs for which no active form is found. We need to examine each such verb for its own sake and allow it to speak for itself. Since the middle voice signals that the agent is in some way staying involved in the action, it is appropriate to ask, How is the agent involved? Is he benefiting himself (e.g., *I eat*)? Is he interacting positively with someone else (*I welcome*)? Or is he interacting negatively with someone else (*I leap on*)? Could it be that he is communicating with someone else, so that if he did not stay involved as the speaker, the verb would become meaningless? And how could a person feel ashamed unless there were interaction with his own thoughts and feelings?

“If we accept the theory that so-called deponent verbs express personal interest, self-involvement, or interaction of the subject with himself or with others in some way, we will be better able to accept that the non-active form of the verb is valid for communicating a meaning on its own, and we will be challenged to look for that meaning.”²⁰

What I would urge is that we cease referring to the so-called “Deponent Verbs” by that name and that we henceforth pay attention to their principal parts and the morphoparadigm(s) in which the verb is found, interpreting the verb’s meaning in terms intelligible from those morphoparadigms. I may add that the recognition of the uselessness of the term, “Deponency,” is by no means new. A. T. Robertson years ago, in his classic grammar of the New Testament, succinctly noted with regard to what he termed, “The So-called ‘Deponent’ Verbs,” “Moulton is certainly right in saying that the term should be applied to all three voices if to any. *The truth is that it should not be used at all* [my emphasis].”²¹ Or as Neva Miller rightly says, “As a class, so-called deponent verbs probably never had an active form at all and so never laid it aside.”²² Nor is “defective” really an adequate term for such verbs, unless it is understood clearly that these verbs are not crippled or somehow deficient members of the fraternity of Greek verbs. Nor is it valid or helpful to define, a ‘deponent’ verb as one that has middle or passive form but ‘active’ meaning.

Suzanne Kemmer²³ offers the following categories of verbs that typically find expression in middle-voice morphology. I present a compilation from her listings and the illustrative verbs in Greek are, for the most part, my own compilation:

1. Grooming, body care: washing, dressing, shaving, bathing, undressing, cutting hair/nails, anointing self, buttoning clothes (Fr. *se laver*, Gr. *λούομαι*)
2. Change in body posture: sit down, lie down, kneel down, arise, stand up (Gr. *κείμαι, ἕζομαι, ἐγείρομαι, ἀνίσταμαι*)
3. Non-translational motion: stretch out, turn around, bend, shake head, move neck, clench fists (Gr. *τρέπομαι, κάμπτομαι*)
4. Translational motion: fly, flee, go away, run, hurry, go away from, climb, arrive, leave, come, go (Gr. *πέτομαι, ἔρχομαι, πορεύομαι*, Fr. *s’en aller*, Lat. *se remove*)
5. Indirect reflexive: break one’s arm, etc.; build oneself a house
6. Indirect middle, self-benefactive: choose, acquire for self, pray, attain, reach (Gr. *αἰρέομαι, κτάομαι, εὐχομαι, ὀρέγομαι*)
7. Naturally reciprocal events: meet, fight, greet, wrestle, embrace, quarrel, converse, agree with, mate, take stock together (Gr. *ἀσπάζομαι*)
8. Stative, naturally reciprocal: adjoin, be linked (copular), resemble one another, match (Gr. *ἕχομαι*)
9. Reciprocal marked naturally collective: assembling, gather, merge, be packed, accumulate, multiply, thin out, densify

¹⁹ Miller, note 1.

²⁰ Miller, p. 426.

²¹ Robertson, p. 332.

²² Miller, p. 425.

²³ See note 1, Kemmer.

10. Emotion: be frightened, hate, be angry, marvel at, delight in, take consolation, pity, care/worry, grieve/mourn, regret, be charmed, take pleasure, repent, be satisfied (Gr. ἠδομαι, Lat. misereor)
11. Emotive speech: complain, lament, blame (Gr. ὀλοφύρομαι, μέφομαι)
12. Other speech actions: confess, boast, chide, accuse, lie, deceive, threaten, refuse (Gr. καυχάομαι, αἰτιάζομαι, ὁμολογέομαι)
13. Simple cognitive events: ponder, meditate, interpret, devise, reflect, consider, deliberate, calculate (Gr. ἠγέομαι, βουλευέομαι, σταθμάομαι)
14. Perception: look at, feel, hear (Gr. δέρχομαι, αἰσθάνομαι, ἀκροάομαι, Lat. conspicio)
15. Complex cognitive events: believe, forget, remember, suspect, conjecture (Gr. οἶομαι, ἐπιλανθάνομαι, Lat. obliviscor)
16. Commissive, intensive: resolve, view, undertake, promise, intend, swear (Gr. ὑπχνέομαι)
17. Spontaneous events: die, sink, develop, become light, change, dissolve, evaporate, germinate, dissipate, grow, burst, spread out, convalesce, thaw, melt, open, split, be born (a very large group, the mother of all of which is γίγνομαι)
18. Facilitative: inherent characteristic of patient allows action to take place: "soup eats like a meal."
19. Impersonal: generic agent (both this and the above have generic aspects).

Neva Miller has drawn up her own categories of what I have called "subject-focused" verbs and placed into them just about all, if not absolutely all, the so-called "deponent" verbs found in the Greek New Testament. Whether or not one finds these lists of Kemmer and Miller fully satisfactory, I think they are very instructive for our understanding of what these verbs are and what they have in common.²⁴

Class 1: Reciprocity

- A. Positive [i.e. friendly] Interaction (δέχομαι, δωρέομαι, εἰσκαλέομαι, ἐναγκαλίζομαι, ἐπιμελέομαι, ἐπισκέπτομαι, ἰάομαι, ἰλάσκομαι, χυναντιλαμβάνομαι, χαρίζομαι)
 - B. Negative [i.e. hostile] Interaction (διαμάχομαι, δράσσομαι, ἐνάλλομαι, ἐπαγωνίζομαι, ἐπιλαμβάνομαι, μάχομαι, μέφομαι)
 - C. Positive and Negative Communication (αἰτιάζομαι, ἀνατάσσομαι, ἀποκρίνομαι, ἀρνέομαι, ἀσπάζομαι, διαβεβαιόομαι, διακατελέγχομαι, διαμαρτύρομαι, ἐξηγέομαι, μαρτύρομαι, παραιτέομαι, ψεύδομαι)
- Class 2: Reflexivity (ἀπολογέομαι, ἐγκαυχάομαι, ἐγκρατεύομαι, ἀπαναπαύομαι, μασάομαι, μιμέομαι, πειράομαι), directional: ἀφικνέομαι, διαπορεύομαι, διεξέρχομαι, ἐξάλλομαι, ἐπανέρχομαι, ἐπεκτείνωμαι, ἔρχομαι, ὀρχέομαι, πορεύομαι

Class 3: Self-Involvement

- A. Intellectual Activities (αἰσθάνομαι, διαλογίζομαι, ἐμπνιάζομαι, ἐπιλανθάνομαι, ἐπίσταμαι, ἠγέομαι, λογίζομαι, οἶομαι, πυνθάνομαι)
 - B. Emotional States (βδελύσσομαι, διαπονέομαι, ἐμβριμάομαι, ἐμμαίνομαι, εὐλαβέομαι, μετεωρίζομαι, ὁμείρομαι)
 - C. Volitional activities (βούλομαι, ἐναντιόομαι)
- Class 4: Self-Interest (διαδέχομαι, διαπραγματεύομαι, κτάομαι, ἐμπορεύομαι, ἐργάζομαι)
- Class 5: Receptivity (γεύομαι, ἐπακροάομαι, θεάομαι)
- Class 6: Passivity (γίνομαι, ἐπιγίνομαι, κοιμάομαι, μαίνομαι, μαντεύομαι)
- Class 7: State, Condition (δύναμαι, ἐπίκειμαι, καθέζομαι, κάθημαι, κείμαι, παράκειμαι)

6.0 Voice: Names & Frames of reference: I think that the existing categorization of ancient Greek voice needs fundamental re-casting into a more accurate and more intelligible scheme, and this scheme requires new designations--"names" for some basic categories. so that the associations traditionally attached to some of the categories may be dislodged from the implicit assumptions of students and scholars of Greek. We may have to work at formulation of the right names for the "morphoparadigms" especially, but I have become convinced that the following steps need to be taken if an intelligible and clear (i.e. unambiguous) "taxonomy" of the ancient Greek "voice" system is to emerge from the existing obscure and arcane mumbo-jumbo of terminology and conceptions:

6.1 Ambivalence of the -θη- morphoparadigms calls for adjustment in terminology and understanding of morphoparadigms:

The aorist forms in -θην/-ην and the future forms in -θησομαι/ησομαι, even if many of them must indeed be understood as passive, cannot justifiably be deemed

²⁴Miller, pp. 427-429.

essentially passive in nature. Many such forms are, like their parent athematic aorists in -ην, intransitive; many more are really middle in meaning. These morphoparadigms then should certainly be *understood* as ambivalent in the same way that the middle-passive morphoparadigms in -μαι/σαι/ται and -μην/σο/το are ambivalent; they should also be categorized or *named* with a designation indicating that they function very much as do those middle-passive morphoparadigms.

6.2 Both term and concept of “Deponency” should be eliminated forever from formal categories and thinking about ancient Greek voice.

If the morphoparadigms are appropriately designated and understood in their function, there is no reason to suppose that any verb found only in -μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το or -θην/-ην and -θησομαι/-ησομαι morphoparadigms is “defective” or irregular. So long as it is clearly understood that these paradigms may be either transitive or intransitive and that they are essentially “subject-focused,” regardless of whether or not they also appear in “active” morphoparadigms, they should be assimilated by students just as are other verbs with unpredictable principal parts such as εἰμί, οἶδα, and ἔρχομαι. One must learn their principal parts and their ranges of meaning; so long as the voice morphoparadigms and voice meanings are understood properly, the term “deponent” is of no use whatsoever.

6.3 While the distinction in meaning between “active,” “middle” and “passive” should indeed be retained, we must clearly understand that these meanings are *not necessary bound to any particular morphoparadigms of the Greek verb*. Verb-forms such as ἐάλων and ἐάλωκα bear passive meaning; ἐφάνην may be intransitive or passive, depending upon its syntactic relationships; ἔρχομαι and ἦλθον and ἐλεύσομαι and ἐλήλυθα all bear the same meaning; each of them is intransitive, regardless of the morphoparadigm in which each appears.

6.4 If it is at all possible to win some consensus in the pedagogical establishment responsible for teaching ancient Greek and producing textbooks and grammatical reference works, the traditional morphoparadigms should be clearly designated with names that point to their functional range; if new names cannot be settled upon, then at least some minimal alteration of conventional names should be attempted.

6.4.1. Ideally the conventionally-termed “active” morphoparadigms (-ω/εις/ει; -μι/σι/τι; -ν/ς/-) should be designated by a term indicating that they are *unmarked*—that is, they are the “regular” or “standard” or “basic” forms for verbs which Greek-speakers/writers did not choose to specify as being “subject-focused.” **If I had to choose one of these three terms to designate the conventionally-termed “active” morphoparadigms, I would prefer “basic.”** However, since the great majority of verbs in this morphoparadigm are in fact active in meaning, it may be feasible or even desirable to continue to call it “active”—provided that it is taught and understood that this morphoparadigm does not *necessarily* indicate that a verb bears active *meaning*.

6.4.2. I would urge that the designation of *both* the conventionally-termed “middle-passive” morphoparadigms (-μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το) and the conventionally-termed “passive” morphoparadigms (-θην/-ην and -θησομαι/-ησομαι) should bear the same designation. I personally believe that “subject-focused” would be the most *useful* term to designate *both* of the morphoparadigms in terms of their *marked* distinction in function from the *unmarked* “basic” or “active” morphoparadigms. If that is too radical a change for the pedagogical establishment to accept, then a less radical change would be designation of *both* morphoparadigms as “middle-passive.”

It might not be necessary to go beyond that in changing designations, but if it is thought that the distinct morphoparadigms, even if they bear the same function, need some indication of the morphological difference, then conventions such as those traditionally employed to distinguish aorists in -(σ)α (“sigmatic” or “first” or “weak” aorist) from aorists in -ον (“thematic” or “second” aorist) and athematic aorists in -ων or -ην (“athematic” or “third” aorist) could be used. For example: the -θην/-ην and -θησομαι/-ησομαι morphoparadigms could be called “first middle-passive” or “weak middle-passive” and the -μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το morphoparadigms could be termed “second middle-passive” or “strong middle-passive”

Yet another alternative, if it is agreed to call *both* the -μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το and the -θην/-ην and -θησομαι/-ησομαι morphoparadigms “middle-passive,” would be to refer to the former as “MP 1” and the latter as “MP 2”; this would allow for simple parsing of verb-forms accurately without resorting to the clumsy and arcane term “deponent” or the misleading older terms “aorist passive” and “future passive.”

7.0 Teaching Voice in Ancient Greek Verbs: Briefly summarized, here's my current thinking about how the voices of ancient Greek ought to be taught:

7.1 Morphoparadigms fall into two basic categories:

7.1.1 “Basic” (traditionally termed “Active” (ω/εις/ει;ον/εσ/ε); most of the verbs in this morphoparadigm are in fact semantically active, but quite a few are intransitive, and a few of them may even be semantically passive (e.g. *πάσχω*, a verb that compels translators to exercise great ingenuity). As I have indicated above in §6.4.1, it may well be useful to continue to call this morphoparadigm “active,” but the instructor and the student should be clear about the fact that this form is actually *unmarked for voice*—that a verb appearing in it may be active in meaning, intransitive, or even, in some instances, *passive* in meaning (e.g. *ἐάλων ὑπὸ τῶν δικαστῶν*, “I was convicted by the jurors”, or *ἐξέπεσον ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀθηναίων*, “I was sent into exile by the Athenians.”

7.1.2 “Subject-focused” (traditionally termed “Middle-Passive” (μαι/σαι/ται;μην/σο/το) **and “Passive”** (-θη-) **forms:** As noted above in §6.4.2, I think that both these morphoparadigms need to be learned and understood as sharing the possibility of being employed in an intransitive or a middle or a passive sense in any particular context. While a “head-count” of verb-forms in either morphoparadigm in a particular literary corpus might well show that a majority of the verb-forms bear passive meaning, I personally doubt this very much and I would argue that Greek-speakers (at least in the Hellenistic and Roman Koine periods) felt that either one of these paradigms was inclusive enough to cover the range from intransitive to middle to passive semantics). It ought to be enough in parsing to designate these forms, if it is thought too cumbersome to refer to them as “(weak or strong) subject-focused,” as “MP1” or “MP2.”

7.2 Semantic functions fall into four basic categories: I find no fault with the definitions cited from Smyth in §2.2 above for “Active,” “Middle,” “Passive,” “Transitive,” and “Intransitive.” It should be noted, however, that while “middle” and “passive” could be defined more-or-less precisely, Greek-speakers seem to have been content to let the “subject-focused” morphoparadigms do their job and leave it to the listener/reader to understand the implied semantic function in specific instances.

7.3 Parsing . I think this would be greatly simplified if we specify for finite verb forms the following: person, number, tense, voice-morphoparadigm (with an additional element: *semantic* voice-function). One virtue of this is that we are liberated from the absurdity of the “deponent” categorization; another is that we are careful to distinguish voice-morphoparadigm from semantic voice-function. Here are a few examples:

ἐγέννησεν: 3 sg. 1. aor. “active” (semantic active) of γεννάω
 ἀπῆλθεν: 3 sg. 2. aor. “active” (semantic intr.) of ἀπέρχομαι
 ἐλεύσεται: 3 sg. fut. “mp1” (semantic intr.) of ἔρχομαι
 ἐγεννήθη: 3 sg. aor. “mp2” (semantic passive) of γεννάω
 πορεύεται: 3 sg. pres. “mp1” (semantic intr.) of πορεύομαι
 ἐπορεύθη: 3 sg. aor. “mp2” (semantic intr.) of πορεύομαι
 ἔιλετο: 3 sg. aor. “mp1” (semantic middle) of αἰρέω/αἰρέομαι
 ἐάλω: 3 sg. aor. “active” (semantic passive) of ἀλίσκομαι

8.0. Suggestions to Students

8.1. Know the verb, not just the morphology: Whether your focus is classical Attic, Homeric, or Koine (especially Biblical) Greek, you must learn the principal parts of the 50+ *irregular* verbs, i.e. of verbs whose tense-stems are not predictable from the present first-person singular form (*lexical form* or *lemma*). In traditional terms these are (1) Present indicative first singular, (2) Future indicative first singular, (3) Aorist indicative first singular, (4) Perfect active first singular, (5) Perfect MP first singular, (6) Aorist -θη- first singular. If a student is ever to learn to read Greek with any fluency, he or she must gain the ability to recognize at sight any form of a verb confronted in the text. In addition to the principal parts one needs to learn the idiosyncracies of the important verbs—and you can be sure that the irregular verbs are particularly important: the reason that they have retained their idiosyncratic forms is precisely that they continued to be used repeatedly in everyday speech and writing and therefore their forms were not subject to the leveling and standardization of less-frequently used verbs. When you learn a verb like *ἀλίσκομαι*, *ἀλώσομαι*, *ἐάλων*, *ἐάλωκα*, _____, _____, you need to learn that all the morphoparadigms of this verb, regardless whether “basic” (or “active”) as are *ἐάλων*, and *ἐάλωκα* or MP

as are ἀλίσκομαι and ἀλώσομαι, bear a *passive* semantic value, “be caught/convicted.” When you learn a verb like ἀποκρίνομαι, ἀποκριθήσομαι, ἀπεκρίθην (which has only these three principal parts), you must grasp that this verb bears a “middle” semantic value and that the -θη- forms of its aorist-and future tense regularly bear the “middle” sense proper to this verb; there is nothing irregular about the voice morphoparadigms of this verb. When you learn the verb γίνομαι, γενήσομαι, ἐγενόμην/ἐγενήθην, γέγονα/γεγέννημαι, you must grasp that this verb too is essentially “middle” in sense although in some contexts it may bear a *passive* sense, and you must realize that the two aorist forms ἐγενόμην and ἐγενήθην bear the same sense and that, like sigmatic and thematic types of aorist, they are not different in meaning just because the morphoparadigm differs; you must grasp too that the perfect forms γέγονα (“basic” or “active” morphoparadigm) and γεγέννημαι (MP morphoparadigm) both bear the same “middle” sense. I would recommend further that, when the student learns these principal parts of the irregular verbs, he or she should spend some time and effort in careful study of the lexical entries in Liddell & Scott or in BDAG for each of them, noting carefully the idiosyncracies of form and usage of each verb. Ultimately one must know the idiosyncracies of these verbs as one comes to know the psyche of temperamental or “difficult” persons with whom one has frequent dealings and whom one must understand well.

8.2. When confronting a “middle-passive” form, assume it is “middle” unless the context or construction points clearly to passivity; respect the differences between ancient Greek and any modern language:

Any student of any new language must accustom him or herself to the idiosyncracies and idioms of that language. This is no less true when the alien language is kindred to one’s own as German is to English or as French and Spanish are more remotely to English, but it is particularly true when the language is as far removed (though still kindred) as ancient Greek is from any modern language (except perhaps modern Greek). This sensitivity to the perspectival differences between ancient Greek and one’s target language is important, for instance, with regard to the distinction between “subjective genitive” and “objective genitive:” an English-speaking exegete wants to ascertain whether πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ means “faith-commitment to Jesus Christ” or “faithfulness of Jesus Christ.” Yet the formulation of the phrase in question in the Greek by itself does not offer any clue to which alternative may have been intended by the writer who formulated it, and the question must be resolved, if it is to be resolved at all, by a careful examination of the broader context of the passage in which the phrase occurred and perhaps of the entire corpus of that author. The same is true of the Greek “middle-passive” forms—and by that I mean *both* the -μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το forms *and* the -θη- forms: since Greek does *not* in fact distinguish morphologically the middle and passive meanings, the determination of whether the meaning is *middle* or *passive* in any particular instance is a matter of judgment.

The student needs to grasp firmly that the Greek mind and the Greek language didn’t distinguish the middle and passive meanings as a student who is *not* a *Greek-speaker* may think they *ought to be* distinguished; the simple fact is they didn’t consider that distinction very important. Take the form βαπτίζεται or aorist ἐβαπτίσθη: the sense of βαπτίζεται as *middle* is “gets himself baptized”; if it’s *passive*, then the sense is “is baptized”—but this distinction perhaps is more significant to the translator than it was to the ancient Greek. Consider 1 Cor. 15:29: 1 Cor 15:29 ἐπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτίζομενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν; εἰ ὁλῶς οὐκ ἐγείρονται, τί καὶ βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν; Surely here we must consider οἱ βαπτίζομενοι and βαπτίζονται as middle rather than passive insofar as the persons involved are voluntarily undergoing baptism for the sake of the dead. But that is not any less true in Mk 1:5. καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται πάντες, καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῳ ποταμῷ ὁμολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. Almost every translation of this into English converts ἐβαπτίζοντο ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ as “were baptized by him”: the verb-form ἐβαπτίζοντο which is parsed as third-person imperfect MP1 is assumed to be *passive* in sense because (obviously) the persons who came to John underwent the process of baptism which was administered by John. In fact, however, the participial phrase coordinated with that verb, ὁμολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν, indicates that this process of baptism is one to which these penitents consciously and deliberately submitted themselves, so that it would not be less accurate to translate the phrase with a *middle* sense: “let themselves be baptized by him.” Some might say, of course, “But isn’t that just as surely a *passive* formulation as ‘they were baptized by him’?” The point I want to emphasize here is that the Greek morphoparadigm in question does *not* make that distinction. Clearly the penitents did not baptize *themselves*, so there’s no question of the form ἐβαπτίζοντο having a *direct reflexive* sense; on the other hand, it is just as clear that they intended this ritual to be performed on their own behalf: their will and intention was at play in the process—they were *not* passive “victims” of an action performed upon them. There is no reason why ἐβαπτίζοντο shouldn’t be Englished as “they were baptized” in this context, but the student of Greek ought to be sensitive to the fact that the verb-form itself is no less *middle* in sense than it is *passive* and that the distinction between the two voices was hardly so significant to the Greek-speaker as it is to the English-speaker.

I do *not* mean to say that the subject in a passive construction is a “victim” (unless the verb in question makes the subject a victim in fact, e.g. λίθοις ἐβλήθη “he was pelted with stones” or ἐσταυρώθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὑπὸ

τοῦ Πιλάτου, "Jesus was crucified by Pilate." All I mean to say is that the *idea* of the passive involves the subject functioning as the direct object of an active verb would function. To the extent that the subject is not *merely* the one experiencing or subjected to the action of the verb but also somehow *participates* or *engages* in the action he is undergoing, then the idea is "middle" to that extent. But the big and important point is that Greek does not distinguish *morphologically* between "middle" and "passive": the same forms can express either notion and sometimes it's not really that easy to distinguish whether the substance is more middle or more passive. As I noted earlier, the third-person singular verbs κερᾶται and ξυράται, can mean "he cuts his own hair" or "he has his hair cut" and "he shaves himself" or "he has himself shaved" respectively; the second version might appear to the English-speaker more passive but note that Greek doesn't make a distinction because it doesn't really consider it important.

Another passage which challenges the judgment regarding middle or passive sense to be ascribed to the verb-forms is Romans 12:2 καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς εἰς τὸ δοκιμάζειν ὑμᾶς τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον καὶ τέλειον. This exhortation follows upon Paul's urging that Roman believers "offer up your σώματα as a θυσίαν ζῶσαν ἁγίαν εὐάρεστον τῷ θεῷ, τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν." Clearly the will and initiative to this "living sacrifice" lies in the believers—else Paul would not be exhorting them. The imperatives that follow in verse 2, μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε and μεταμορφοῦσθε, should be understood as having *middle* sense—even if the transformation indicated by μεταμορφοῦσθε is one that God is to execute. It is the Roman believers who are not to adapt *themselves* to the pattern of this world-age, and they are to deliberately, consciously permit God to transform them in a renovation of their mind-set (ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοῦς). Here too then, it is possible to recognize that the "middle-passive" form is not really *passive* in sense and that the Greek-speaking Paul had no need to choose between a *middle* or *passive* sense. For my part I would suggest that verse 2 be Englished as a sort of "permissive passive": "Don't let this world mold you but allow yourselves to be transformed in the process of reconstruction of your mind-set ..."

I do not mean to suggest that *any and every* middle-passive verb-form is so ambivalent that one cannot determine whether the sense is *middle* or *passive* in a given instance. Some think that the text of Romans 9:22 might be understood in a less harsh sense if the verb-form κατηρτισμένα is understood as having a *middle* rather than a *passive* sense. The passage compares the will of God as creator to the intentions of a potter in shaping the pots he makes. Verses 22-3 read thus: εἰ δὲ θέλων ὁ θεὸς ἐνδείξασθαι τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ γνωρίσαι τὸ δύνατον αὐτοῦ ἤνεγκεν ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμίᾳ σκεύη ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν, καὶ ἵνα γνωρίσῃ τὸν πλοῦτον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σκεύη ἃ πρητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν; the phrase σκεύη ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν could theoretically be understood as "pots of wrath that have fashioned themselves for destruction." Such an interpretation would underscore the free initiative of these pots in determining somehow their own ultimate doom. Unquestionably the verb-form κατηρτισμένα in and of itself *might* (apart from the context) be viewed as *either* middle or passive; in my opinion, however, the context leaves little doubt that κατηρτισμένα here must be understood in a *passive* sense, for verse 21 refers to the deliberate intention of the potter: ἢ οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν ὁ κεραμεὺς τοῦ πηλοῦ ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ φερέματος ποιῆσαι ὃ μὲν εἰς τιμὴν σκευὸς ὃ δὲ εἰς ἀτιμίαν; And verse 20 mocks the thought that the creature might legitimately criticize the creator for fashioning him thus: ὃ ἄνθρωπε, μενοῦνγε σὺ τίς εἶ ὁ ἀνταποκρινόμενος τῷ θεῷ; μὴ ἐρεῖ τὸ πλάσμα τῷ πλάσαντι· τί με ἐποίησας οὕτως; Here then the verb-form κατηρτισμένα, although the form might conceivably be understood in either a middle or a passive sense, is shown by its context to admit *only* the passive interpretation.

Appendix: Notes on Voice in the Greek Bible (LXX, GNT)

Biblical Greek Verbs with both Middle and Passive Aorists & Futures

Some have claimed that the “MP” (-μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το) and “Passive” (-θη-) morphoparadigms (what I have suggested should be termed “MP1” and “MP2” forms) mark real distinctions between “middle” and “passive” sense in the aorist and future tenses—not only in classical Attic but still in Koine Greek; they insist also that so-called “deponent” verbs are to be understood simply as exceptions to this clear grammatical categorization. In fact, however, there are really *very few* verbs in the GNT database that are to be found in *both* the “MP” and the “Passive” morphoparadigms. I find that there are 30 (thirty) verbs in the GNT with forms in both aorist morphoparadigms. I’ll list them here summarily in paragraph form showing numbers of MP and P forms for each:

ἀγαλλιάω (4mp,1p); ἀναιρέω (1mp,3p); ἀνατρέφω (1mp,1p); ἀποδίδωμι (3mp,2p); ἀποκρίνομαι (7mp,213p); ἀπολογέομαι (1mp,1p); ἀσφαλίζω (3mp,1p); βαπτίζω (2mp,32p); γίνομαι (447mp,45p); διαλέγομαι (2mp,1p); διαμερίζω (2mp,2p); διατάσσω (3mp,3p); ἐκτίθημι (1mp,1p); ἐκμυρμάομαι (2mp,1p); ἐνδύω (18mp,1p); ἐπικαλέω (7mp,4p); θεάομαι (16mp,3p); ἰάομαι (5mp,10p); καταλαμβάνω (3mp,1p); λυτρόω (1mp,1p); μερίζω (1mp,6p); μεταπέμπω (mp7,p1); μωμάομαι (1mp,1p); ὀράω (root ὀρ-) (1mp,23p); προστίθημι (3mp,5p); ῥύομαι (6mp,4p); συλλαμβάνω (2mp,2p); σφραγίζω (2mp,2p); τίθημι (16mp,9p); χαρίζομαι (10mp,3p)

My contention has been that the process of linguistic change has gradually shifted expression of the middle-passive sense in the aorist and future tenses from the older -μαι/σαι/ται; -μην/σο/το to the newer -θη- morphoparadigms. The process of change has evolved more quickly in verbs to the degree that they are used with greater or less frequency in everyday speech. So for instance the verb ἀπόλλυμι is evidently used with such frequency that its middle-passive sense *never* shifted from the older to the newer forms. “Active” forms are ἀπόλλυμι, ἀπολώ, ἀπώλεσα, and ἀπόλωλα, although the last is really intransitive in meaning as are the “middle” forms ἀπόλλυμαι, ἀπολοῦμαι, ἀποωλόμην. In some instances one may understand the aorist or future form in a *passive* sense, as, for instance, in Lk 13:33 ... οὐκ ἐνδέχεται προφήτην ἀπολέσθαι ἔξω Ἱερουσαλήμ. While one might argue that the aorist infinitive ἀπολέσθαι here is intransitive and *middle*, surely there’s no question here of death other than at the hands of others.

ἀγαλλιάω: Some verbs are sufficiently uncommon not to show any clear preference. The verb ἀγαλλιάω is found twice in the GNT in the Active morphoparadigm (ἀγαλλιῶμεν, ἠγαλλίασεν), but it is found most frequently in the older MP1 forms (ἀγαλλιᾶσθε indicative 2x, imperative 1x, ἀγαλλιῶμενοι 1x, ἠγαλλιάσατο 4x; it is found only once in the newer MP2 form: ἀγαλλιαθήναι. It appears that the verb is intransitive in every instance, though one may readily understand a middle sense: “feel joy.” This verb is found 73x in the LXX, only three times in active morphoparadigms, otherwise only in the older MP1 morphoparadigm.

ἀποκρίνομαι: This verb is found 246x in the LXX; in the aorist, the indicative active is found only once (ἀπεκρίνατε), the indicative MP1 (ἀπεκρίνατο) 4x, the MP2 forms 205x; in the future only the MP2 form (20x). In the GNT the verb is found 7x in the aorist MP1 form, 213x in the aorist MP2 form. Wallace argues that usage of the MP1 form is deliberately archaic:

ἀποκρίνομαι is almost always put in the aorist passive in the NT and in that form has a deponent force. In the middle (seven instances in the aorist) the verb connotes a solemn or legal utterance. This is in keeping with the genius of the middle voice, for a legal defense is more than a mere response—it involves a vested interest on the part of the speaker. Cf. also Mark 14:61; Luke 3:16; 23:9; John 5:17, 19; Acts 3:12.²⁵

Wallace cites the older BAGD in support of this—but BDAG doesn’t note any such distinction; I think that distinction is specious, nor ; the use of ἀπεκρίνατο may be “archaic” but I really think it’s not significantly different from using the older form ἀφίημι instead of the newer form ἀφίω. It really does need to be taken into account that NT Greek is *not* a stable language but one in flux (as is probably true of any living language). Moreover, if the aorist MP1 form appears in what may be called a forensic context in Mt 27:12, Mk 14:61, and Lk 23:9, that really cannot be said of the other four instances in which the MP1 aorist form appears (Lk 3:16, Jn 5:17 & 19, Acts 3:12.

²⁵ Wallace, p. 421.

γίνομαι: This verb, it seems to me, is, in its very essential meaning of “becoming” or “coming into being” or “being transformed into”, the *Inbegriff* or “epitome” of the *ambivalence* of middle and passive voices—the ambivalence accounting for the fact that a differentiation of middle and passive form appears only in *two* of the ancient Greek verb’s tenses.

As noted above γίνομαι is found 492x in the aorist tense in the GNT, 447x in the “middle-passive” or MP1 morphoparadigm, 45x in the “passive” MP2 forms. The question is *whether there is any distinction of meaning or semantic function between ἐγενόμην and ἐγενήθην.*

BDF note: “The papyri and LXX also have ἐγενήθην in addition to the more frequent ἐγενόμην. Prévot, loc.cit.90-93 wants to carry out extensively in the NT a distinction between ἐγένετο ‘was, happened, occurred’ and ἐγενήθη ‘became, was done.’”²⁶ I don’t have access to Prévot’s work, but although I can discern in some instances of ἐγενήθην more of a passive sense, I find the same sense exemplified in forms of ἐγενόμην. I believe that we should recognize in these two verbs concurrent and competing forms of this verb with the same meanings and semantic functions in both the ἐγενόμην and the ἐγενήθην morphoparadigms.

It has been argued and may very well be true that the distinction such as some insist upon in the meaning and semantic functions of ἐλυσάμην and ἐλύθην once really did exist in earlier Attic Greek and can be shown to have existed. Although my perspective is diachronic, I have concerned myself with evidence at present only from the GNT since the tools for that research are more readily available to me where I am currently located.

I should note that I have found one interesting passage in Plato’s dialogue Parmenides wherein both verb-forms are found together, apparently with a distinction between the “middle” and the “passive”—in this instance in the future tense. In a discussion of how “the One” is wholly removed from participation in time and temporal change, At 141d-e Parmenides asks Socrates, τὸ ἦν καὶ τὸ γέγονε καὶ τὸ ἐγίγνετο οὐ χρόνου μεθέξιν δοκεῖ σημαίνειν τοῦ ποτε γεγονότος? and Socrates agrees. Then he asks τί δέ; τὸ ἔσται καὶ τὸ γενήσεται καὶ τὸ γενηθήσεται οὐ τοῦ ἔπειτα? and Socrates again assents. The Loeb translator, Shorey, renders this as: “‘Well, and do not the words ‘was,’ ‘has become,’ and ‘was becoming’ appear to denote participation in past time?’” “Certainly.” “And ‘will be,’ ‘will become,’ and ‘will be made to become,’ in future time?’” “Yes.” We shall have to say that this text certainly implies that a distinction of semantic and function was recognized by Plato as potentially present in the two morphoparadigms, although I think further exploration of usage of ἐγενήθην/γενηθήσομαι in the classical era would be needed to establish that this was a regularly-observed distinction. Surely what Plato is attempting here is to offer an exhaustive list of possible ways of expressing participation in time.

As an aid to my endeavor to sort out any distinctive “middle” and “passive” semantics to be associated with the MP ἐγενόμην and the P ἐγενήθην forms in the GNT, I’ve considered both L&N²⁷ and BDAG²⁸. Although L&N organize the semantic values for γίνομαι in a fashion different from that employed by BDAG, the overlap of categories is clearly there. I want to set forth the BDAG listing (abbreviated, of course) and comment briefly on semantic “middle” or “passive” functions in each instance.

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γίνομαι BDAG: A verb with numerous nuances relating to being and manner of being. Its contrast to the more static term εἶμί can be seen in Kaibel 595, 5 οὐκ ἦμην καὶ ἐγενόμην = “I was not and then I came to be (cp. Ath. 4, 2 in 3 below).

(1) To come into being through process of birth or natural production, be born, be produced²⁹

(2) To come into existence, be made, be created be manufactured, be performed³⁰ ὑπὸ τινός

²⁶BDF, p. 42, §78.

²⁷L&N.

²⁸BDAG.

²⁹I’d mark this sense as *middle*, noting at the same time that it is wrong to suppose that conscious and deliberate participation of the subject is essential to the meaning of the semantic; in fact the subject may play the role of the “patient” or “experiencer” without at all being aware of or directing the action or state indicated by the verb.

³⁰I’d mark this sense as authentically *passive*, certainly to the extent that an occurrence is deemed not simply to take place spontaneously but providentially or by act of the creator. And yet there are some subcategories of this BDAG sense that seem to me to be *middle* rather than passive. I’ll comment on each.

- (a) gen, ὃ γέγονεν (Jn 1:13c w/ διὰ τινός; w/ ἐκ τινός Hb 11:3, ὑπὸ τινός; Of commands, instructions: be fulfilled, performed; Of institutions, be established [*passive*])
- (b) w/ mention of the special nature of an undertaking: ἵνα οὕτως γένηται ἐν ἐμοί [*passive*, insofar as divine providence is understood as active here.]
- (3) come into being as an event or phenomenon from a point of origin, arise, come about, develop³¹
- (a) of events or phenomena in nature: lightning, thunder, calm, a cloud, earthquake, darkness, dawn
- (b) of other occurrences: complaining, persecution, oppression, discussion, tumult, sound, weeping, clamor, famine, sharp contention, tear (in a garment), silence, concourse, confusion; shout, loud voice, astonishment, joy, prayer, offering
- (c) of the various divisions of a day: ὥρα, ὀψία, πρωία, νύξ
- (4) to occur as process or result, happen, turn out, take place³²
- (a) gen. τοῦτο ὅλον γέγονεν, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται, πάντα τὰ γενόμενα
- (b) w/ dat. of person affected
- a. w/ inf. foll. ὅπως μὴ γένηται αὐτῷ χρονοτριβῆσαι;
- b. w/ adv. or adv. phrase added: κατὰ τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν γενηθήτω ὑμῖν
- c. w/ nom. of thing: γίνεταιί τινί τι: something happens to/befalls a person
- (c) w/ gen. of pers. τὸν τῆς Ἑλένης γεγενημένον ὄρμον
- (d) γίνεταιί τι ἐπί τινι something happens in the case or/to a person
- (e) w/ inf. foll. to emphasize the actual occurrence of the action denoted by the verb: εἰν γενήται εὐρεῖν αὐτό
- (f) καὶ ἐγένετο periphrastic like γHi with W' foll to indicate the progress of the narrative; it is followed by either a conjunction like ὅτε etc., or a gen. abs., or a prepositional constr., and joined to it is a finite verb w/ καί
- (5) to experience a change in nature and so indicate entry into a new condition, become something³³
- (a) w/ nouns: θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου; ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν; ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων
- (b) used w/ an adj. to paraphrase the passive: παντῶν ὑποχειρίων γενομένων; ἀπειθῆ γενέσθαι; δόκιμον γενέσθαι
- (c) w/ ἐν of a state of being: ἐν ἐκστάσει γενέσθαι; ἐν φόβῳ; ἐν τρόμῳ, ἐν πόνοις, ἐν Χριστῷ γενέσθαι
- (6) to make a change of location in space, move³⁴
- (a) εἰς τι εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, εἰς τὸν ἄγρον, εἰς τὰ ἔθνη
- (b) ἐκ τινός; γενέσθαι ἐκ μέσου: be removed (Lat. e medio tolli) [*passive*]
- (c) ἐπί τι: ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον; ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους; γενόμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου: when he had arrived at the place
- (d) w/ κατὰ and gen. of place: τὸ γενόμενον ῥῆμα καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἰουδαίας: the message that has spread throughout all Judea
- (e) w/ πρὸς and acc. of the direction and goal; of divine instructions: be given to someone [*passive* when of the coming of God's word to a person]
- (f) w/ σύν and the dat., join someone
- (g) w/ ἐγγύς
- (h) w/ ὦδε come here
- (i) ἔμπροσθεν τινός γενέσθαι

³¹I'd mark this sense as *middle*; it seems to me that this and its subcategories are derivative from sense (1) above; all are occurrences that are "natural", although obviously ἐγένετο of a voice coming from heaven might be understood as passive.

³²It seems to me that all these are really ambivalent: some occurrences may be said to "come to pass" while others may be said to be "brought to pass"; many of these are derivative from the LXX and are notable Hebraisms, as is most obviously subcategory (f).

³³I rather think these are ambivalent: all have the essential sense of "become/turn into"; a few are *passive* as ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων, and yet ποιήσω seems required here to clarify that this "becoming" is brought about by Jesus; often there is conscious or deliberate participation by the subject-patient or subject-experiencer, which points to *middle* sense.

³⁴Most of these seem pretty clearly *middle*: they are like πορεύομαι and involve conscious and deliberate participation of the agent in the movement. On the other hand, two or three of the subcategories may be *passive* in the appropriate context.

- (7) to come into a certain state or possess certain characteristics, to be, prove to be, turn out to be³⁵: γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι; ἄκαρπος γίνεται; τινὶ μαθητὴν γενέσθαι; τὶ γίνεται τινί τι a thing results in something for someone; ὁσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν ἐγενήθημεν
- (8) to be present at a given time, be there³⁶
- (9) to be closely related to someone or something, belong to, hence exist³⁷
- w/ gen. of the possessor
 - w/ dat. of person: belong to someone
 - w/ prep. μετὰ τινος: οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ γινόμενοι
 - Here perhaps belongs ἰδίᾳ ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται: it is not a matter of private interpretation³⁸
- (10) to be in or at a place, be in, be there
- ἐν τινί to designate one's present or future place of residence: Ἀντώνιος ἐν Ἐφέσῳ γινόμενος
 - w/ adv.: ἐκεῖ, κατὰ μονάς

What I propose to do now is to examine those of the 45 instances of the aorist "passive" morphoparadigm of γίνομαι in the GNT in three groups: (1) passages where it seems to me that the verb-form should be understood in an authentically *passive* sense semantically, (2) passages where it seems to me that the verb-forms should be understood in a *middle* sense semantically, and (3) passages where I find it difficult to make a clear determination that the sense is more middle or more passive. With regard to the passages where the verb is judged to have a *passive* sense, I shall try to show that there are passages where an aorist *middle* (-μην/σο/το) form also clearly demonstrates that same passive sense.

(I) Aorist -θη- forms of γίνομαι where sense is *passive*

- (1) Eph 3:6-7 τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, οὗ ἐγενήθην διάκονος κατὰ τὴν δωρεάν τῆς χάριτος ... (but note the same passive usage in the "middle" form ἐγενομένη: Col 1:23 τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ... οὗ ἐγενομένη ἐγὼ Παῦλος διάκονος and Col 1:24-5 ἡ ἐκκλησία, ἧς ἐγενομένη ἐγὼ διάκονος κατὰ τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ θεοῦ) BDAG def. #5a.
- (2) Rom 9:29 ὡς Σόδομα ἂν ἐγενήθημεν. I think this is another instance of BDAG def. #5a; while it might be considered intransitive, I would judge this to mean: "we would have been made to be like Sodom."
- (3) 1 Cor 4:9 θέατρον ἐγενήθημεν τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ ἀγγέλοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις. This is probably BDAG def. #7: "we've turned out to be/have been made to be a spectacle to the world and to angels and humanity." I deem this essentially passive.
- (4) 1 Cor 4:13 ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐγενήθημεν, παντῶν περίψωμα ἕως ἄρτι. This is just like the preceding passage, essentially passive: "We've become/been made to be the scum of the earth ..." BDAG def. #7.
- (5) Eph 2:13 οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγὺς ἐν τῷ ἁίματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ. While this could be classed under BDAG def. #7 I think it's closer to #5c and I think it's authentically passive: "You were made to be close ..."
- (6, 7, 8, 9) Mt 21:42 λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες, οὗτος ἐγενήθη εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας (= Mk 12:10, Lk 20:17, 1 Pet 2:7. This is a citation from Psalm 117:22 and the ἐγενήθη is there in the LXX, yet surely this is passive in sense, classifiable under BDAG def. #2.
- (10) Lk 18:23 ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας ταῦτα περίλυπος ἐγενήθη· ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα. This is passive, BDAG def. #5b. Yet this usage is quite common in the "middle" morphoparadigm also; cf. Mt 17:2 τὰ δὲ ἵμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο ὁ

³⁵It seems to me that this is essentially *middle*--insofar as subject participation as patient or experiencer is involved. I've not been able in some texts to differentiate this clearly from sense (5); perhaps here the outcome or transformation is viewed as a result of process or deliberate action rather than as an experience of new status achieved.

³⁶This seems pretty clearly *middle*.

³⁷I think all the subcategories are pretty clearly *middle*.

³⁸like French "il s'agit de ..." or German "es handelt sich um ..."

πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν. Here I don't think ἐγένετο νεκρὸς is equivalent quite to ἀπέθανεν but rather "was put to death."

(11) 1 Cor 1:30 ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ. This is surely passive, BDAG def. #5a; comparable to this in the "middle" morphoparadigm is surely John 1:14 καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο.

(12-13) Mt 11:23 = Lk 10:13 εἰ ἐν Σοδόμοις ἐγενήθησαν αἱ δυνάμεις αἰ γινόμεναι ἐν σοί ... This is clearly passive- "had been performed", BDAG def. #2; it is noteworthy that δυνάμεις is here subject to both the aorist "passive" indicative ἐγενήθησαν and the aorist "middle" participle with γίνονται bearing the same "passive" sense in each case. And it would appear that the same dominical saying is offered in slightly varied form with the aorist "middle" participle in Mt 11:21, 23 and Lk 10:13 αἱ δυνάμεις αἰ γινόμεναι ἐν ὑμῖν ...

(14) Col 4:10-11 Μάρκος ... καὶ Ἰησοῦς ὁ λεγόμενος Ἰουδστος ... οὔτινες ἐγενήθησάν μοι παρηγορία. This is presumably BDAG def. #7 and might be arguably middle ("have turned out to be"), but I'm inclined to see it as passive ("have been made my comfort").

(15-16) Mt 6:10 = Mt 26:42 γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου. This is unquestionably passive, BDAG def. #2, usually Englished as "thy will *be done!*"

(17-18-19) Very similar to the above are Mt 8:13 ὡς ἐπίστευσας γενηθήτω σοι, Mt 9:29 κατὰ τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν γενηθήτω ὑμῖν, and Mt 15:28 γενηθήτω σοι ὡς θέλεις. These too are passive, BDAG def. #2. The same sense may be seen in the aorist "middle" morphoparadigm in Lk 4:23 ὅσα ἠκούσαμεν γινόμενα εἰς τὴν Καφάρναουμ ποιήσον καὶ ὧδε ἐν τῇ πατρίδι σου (where ποιήσον is the active verb corresponding to the passive γινόμενα) and Heb. 9:11 ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς.

(20-21) Also similar are Acts 1:20 γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος (LXX citation) and Rom 11:9 γενηθήτω ἡ τράπεζα αὐτῶν εἰς παγίδα (another LXX citation). These are passive, classifiable, in my opinion, in BDAG def. #5c.

(22) Heb 5:5 ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασεν γενηθῆναι ἀρχιερέα. Passive, BDAG def. #5a "that he had been made a high priest ..."

(23) Heb 6:4 ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἄπαξ φωτισθέντας ... μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου ... Here, I think, the aorist participle is passive in sense, BDAG def. #5a "those who have been made to share in the Holy Spirit ..." Cf. Mk 6:26 where Herod certainly does not feel that he is acting of his own free will: καὶ περίλυπος γινόμενος ὁ βασιλεὺς διὰ τοὺς ὀρκούς καὶ τοὺς ἀνακειμένους οὐκ ἠθέλησεν ἀθετῆσαι αὐτήν. I think we'd want to understand γινόμενος here as passive: "having been made deeply pained because of his oaths and his dinner-guests ..."

(24) 2 Pet 1:16 ἔποπται γενηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος. I would guess that γενηθέντες here is passive and that the sense falls under BDAG def. #5a: "having been made eyewitnesses of his greatness ..." Cf. Gal 3:13 Χριστὸς ... γινόμενος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καταρά.

(25) Heb 4:3 καίτοι τῶν ἔργων ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου γενηθέντων Passive, BDAG def. #2 "the works (of creation) having been made/completed ever since the creation of the world." This is very much like the usage in John 1:3 παντὰ δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν.

(B) Aorist -θη forms of γίνονται where sense is middle

(1) 1 Th 1:5 ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν δυνάμει middle BDAG def. #6a "came to you"

(2) 1 Th 1:5 καθὼς οἴδατε οἷοι ἐγενήθημεν ὑμῖν δι' ὑμᾶς. I deem this to be middle because Paul's deliberate intention was involved; BDAG def #7.

(3) 1 Th 1:6 καὶ ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου. BDAG def. #7; I think this is middle: "You made yourselves emulators of us and of the Lord" Surely there's deliberate intent here.

(4) 1 Th 2:5 οὔτε γὰρ ποτε ἐν λόγῳ κολακείας ἐγενήθημεν, καθὼς οἴδατε. This is very similar to the preceding; Paul claims he acted sincerely: middle, BDAG def. #7.

(5) 1 Th 2:7 ἀλλὰ ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν. Again BDAG def. #7, middle. Paul claims guileless behavior in the presence of the Thessalonians.

(6) 1 Th 2:8 διότι ἀγάπητοι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε. BDAG def. #7. I think this is middle: the Thessalonians had made themselves Paul's loved ones by their own behavior.

(7) 1 Th 2:10 ὡς ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως καὶ ἀμέμπτως ὑμῖν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν ἐγενήθημεν. Again BDAG def. #7, middle. These four instances, in fact, all involve the same middle usage of γίνομαι to indicate intentional behavior on the part of the subject.

(8) 1 Th 2:14 ὑμεῖς γὰρ μίμηται ἐγενήθητε, ἄδελφοι, τῶν ἐκκλησίων τοῦ θεοῦ. Yet another instance of BDAG def. #7, middle. Here the Thessalonians themselves are said to have behaved in a deliberate manner to imitate others. This entire sequence of eight passages with -θη- forms of γίνομαι all involves the notion of deliberate effort to live up to a potential discerned.

(9) Acts 4:4 ἐγενήθη [ὁ] ἄριθμος τῶν ἀνδρῶν [ὡς] χιλιάδες πέντε. BDAG def. #8; I think this is middle as intransitive copula, γίνομαι being here used as an aorist equivalent of ἦν.

(10) Rom 16:2 καὶ γὰρ αὐτὴ πρόστατις πολλῶν ἐγενήθη καὶ ἐμοῦ αὐτοῦ. BDAG def. #7, middle; Phoebe "made herself to be" or "turned out to be" a patroness; she acted deliberately, not by happenstance.

(11) Heb 10:33 τοῦτο δὲ κοινῶνι τῶν οὕτως ἀναστρεφομένων γενηθέντες ... BDAG def. #7, middle: "having made yourselves partners with those who live in this manner ..."

(C) Aorist -θη- forms of γίνομαι where sense is ambiguous: "too close to call"

(1) Mt 28:4 ἀπὸ δὲ φόβου αὐτοῦ ἐσείσθησαν οἱ τηροῦντες καὶ ἐγενήθησαν ὡς νεκροί. middle, BDAG def. #5c; I think this is middle: "they seemed to change into dead men" but some might want to see it as passive, "they were made to be like dead men."

(2) 1 Cor 10:6 ταῦτα δὲ τύποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν BDAG def. #7. Paul has described the behavior of the Israelite tribes in the wilderness following the exodus from Egypt: those incidents are "paradigms" for believers in Paul's community, he says. But we may ask whether they were "made to be paradigms for us" or whether they simply "have become paradigms for us"?

(3) 1 Pet 1:15 καὶ αὐτοὶ ἅγιοι ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ γενήθητε; BDAG def. #5b, middle: "you are to become holy" or passive? "you are to be made holy"? If it's really an exhortation (aor. subjunctive) addressed to the audience, then it seems to me it must be middle.

(4) 1 Pet 3:6 ὡς Σάρρα ... ἧς ἐγενήθητε τέκνα ἀγαθοποιοῦσαι. BDAG def. #7. Is it passive: "you have been made children of Sarah"? or middle: "you have come to be children of Sarah"?

(5) 1 Cor 15:10 χάριτι δὲ θεοῦ εἰμὶ ὃ εἰμι, καὶ ἡ χάρις αὐτοῦ ἢ εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ κένη ἐγενήθη. BDAG def. #7--or 5b. I think this is middle ("and his grace towards me has not turned out to be futile") but one might just as well argue it is passive: "and has grace was not wasted on me."

(6) Heb 11:34 ἐγενήθησαν ἰσχύροι ἐν πολέμῳ, παρέμβολας ἔκλιναν ἀλλοτρίων. BDAG def. #7. Were they "strengthened in warfare" (passive) or is this a simple fact (aorist of γίνομαι for HN): "proved themselves valorous in warfare." (middle).

(7) 2 Cor 3:7 εἰ δὲ ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ ... I think this is middle, BDAG def. #10 or perhaps #3: "occurred" or "took place"--although some might want to see it as passive in BDAG def.#2, "was transacted"

(8) 2 Cor 7:14 οὕτως καὶ ἡ καύχησις ἡμῶν ἢ ἐπὶ Τίτου ἀληθεία ἐγενήθη. BDAG def. #5a; “has turned out to be the truth” (middle), I think, but some might say passive: “has been validated.”

(9) Tit 3:7 ἵνα δικαιωθέντες τῇ ἐκείνου χάριτι κληρόνομοι γενηθῶμεν. BDAG def. #5a. This looks passive, particularly in combination with δικαιωθέντες, yet one might argue that κληρόνομοι γενηθῶμεν. doesn't mean “Let us be made heirs” but rather “Let us make good our status as heirs” (middle).

I've discussed all 45 GNT texts displaying a -θη- form of γίνομαι: 25 I've judged to be Passive, another 11 Middle, and 9 others that seem to me to allow arguments for one side as well as the other. For most of the 25 deemed Passive, I've shown that there are comparable instances of the aorist MP ἐγενόμην in semantically identical usage. My own conclusion from this exercise is that these -θη- forms of γίνομαι, although some of them do indeed clearly bear a passive meaning, many others do not -- and the passive sense is equally well displayed in the so-called “middle” aorist forms which, according to the argument for a distinction of semantic function of aorist middle and passive morphoparadigms, ought *not* to bear that passive sense.

I should add that although later Greek does develop a so-called future “passive” morphoparadigm in γενηθήσομαι, it is not to be found in the GNT, which shows only a future “middle” γενήσομαι.

My examination here has been restricted to the -θη- forms of γίνομαι in the GNT; although I have shown how comparable GNT aorist “middle” forms bear comparable “passive” meanings to those seen in the -θη-forms, I think this study might be brought full round by a survey of those forms of the aorist MP morphoparadigm of γίνομαι which clearly express passive sense. I think, however, that the present examination has amply demonstrated that the -θη- forms of γίνομαι range across the spectrum of semantic dynamics from intransitive to middle to authentic passive--just as do the MP -μην/σο/το forms of γίνομαι .