# WRITTEN AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE:
## AN EXERCISE IN THE PRAGMATICS OF THE GREEK SENTENCE

S. R. SLINGS

P RAGMATICS IS a relatively novel branch of linguistic research, which focuses on the rules and tendencies of language as a function of communication. Typically pragmatic questions are: How does a speaker or writer structure the information he wants to convey, at the levels of clause and sentence, but also of paragraph, and even entire text? What linguistic strategies does he use to convince the addressee or reader, or even to persuade his partner to take up a certain line of action?[1]

Pragmatics is not meant to supplant the more traditional disciplines of syntax and semantics, nor is it entirely unrelated to these. Indeed, the use of pragmatic concepts frequently yields a better understanding of problems which syntactic analysis has proved unable to solve (Greek word order is a good case in point) or even failed to perceive (e.g., the use of the passive as an alternative for the active). Besides, pragmatics tends to bring under one common denominator phenomena which the syntactic description of a language is obliged to relegate to various unrelated footnotes.

In the study of many modern languages, pragmatics has acquired a firm footing, and in Latin, pragmatic studies are becoming more and more common. Yet in the area of Greek, its concepts have been utilized only for the study of one isolated phenomenon, prolepsis; otherwise the field remains, as yet, virtually untilled.[2]

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1. This is the case with, e.g., directives, both direct ("Close the window") and indirect ("It's cold in here"), as analyzed in speech-act theory. As a matter of fact, pragmatics incorporates speech-act theory, as well as a major part of stylistics. For the latter, cf. n. 49 below. Among the many introductions to pragmatics, the following work is very useful: G. Brown and G. Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge, 1983).

2. C. M. J. Sicking, "The Distribution of Aorist and Present Tense Stem Forms in Greek, Especially in the Imperative," *Glotta* 59 (1991): 14–43, postulates pragmatic function as one of the factors that influence the choice between aspectually different forms. E. J. Bakker, *Linguistics and Formulas in Homer: Scalarity and the Description of the Particle* per (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1988) uses various pragmatic concepts. For the sake of completeness I cite N. E. Collinge, "Thoughts on the Pragmatics of Ancient Greek," *PCPS* (1988): 1–13. For literature on prolepsis, cf. n. 46 below.

The topic of the present pragmatic study is the difference between writ-
ten and spoken Greek. By way of introduction, a phenomenon will be dis-
cussed which is considered irregular from a syntactic point of view, but
which is perfectly acceptable if put in the context of oral communication.
Next, two other issues will be examined in order to show how the written
language develops its own regularity and rules. I will follow no particular
linguistic paradigm, though my terminology is rather closely related to
that of Functional Grammar as exemplified in Dik's works.[3] I will explain
pragmatic concepts as I go along.

I take my cue from a sentence from the *Iliad;* I will try to justify below
the implicit claim that the language of Homeric poetry somehow reflects
the ways and means of oral communication. The sentence comes from the
famous simile in which Paris is compared to a galloping horse:

(1)                          ὁ δ᾽ ἀγλαΐηφι πεποιθὼς
              ῥίμφα ἑ γοῦνα φέρει μετά τ᾽ ἤθεα καὶ νομὸν ἵππων·

                                                          (*Il.* 6.510–11)

Ancient grammarians seem to have been unhappy with this sentence:
various conjectures were proposed, and in the A Scholia it is called σο-
λοικοφανές, "creating the impression of incorrect Greek."[4]

The reason, of course, is the anacoluthon, more specifically the break
in construction after the participle πεποιθώς; the horse is introduced as
subject; after the break it changes its status to object. As a consequence,
there are two pronouns, in two different cases, referring to the same en-
tity. The phenomenon is well known: in handbooks of Greek grammar it
is called "nominative absolute," or *nominativus pendens,*[5] but the authors
of those handbooks, too, show more or less clearly that they consider it
incorrect—it is after all the same construction that in English prescriptive
grammar is branded as "dangling participle."

Some modern commentators of Homer make a connection between the
irregular construction and the lively description of the horse.[6] Appar-
ently, the assumption is that Homer is so fascinated by visualizing it that
he commits an error of syntax,[7] or alternatively (this isn't made quite

3. S. C. Dik, *Functional Grammar*[3] (Dordrecht, 1981); idem, *The Theory of Functional Grammar,*
vol. 1 (Dordrecht, 1989).

4. Schol. A Hom. Z 511a: Ζηνόδοτος "ῥίμφ᾽ ἑὰ γοῦνα φέρει," Ποσειδώνιος δὲ ὁ ἀναγνώστης
Ἀριστάρχου (ἄνευ) διαιρέσεως τὸ ε ψιλῶς προφέρεται, παρέλκειν αὐτὸ λέγων ὡς ἐν τῷ "ἠὲ σὺ τόνδε
δέδεξο" (*Il.* 5.228), καὶ λύεται τὸ σολοικοφανές. ὁ δὲ "Ομηρος ὑπὸ τῶν γονάτων καὶ ποδῶν φέρεσθαι
λέγει· (*Il.* 15.405 = [5] below). Cf. on other instances of the same type of anacoluthon Schol. Eur. *Phoen.*
283 σολοικοφανὲς τοῦτό ἐστιν; somewhat less reverent Schol. Eur. *Hipp.* 22–23: τοῦτο ἐσολοίκισεν.

5. Strictly speaking, "nominative absolute" refers to a noun or pronoun plus participle that cannot be
construed; *nominativus pendens* to any constituent so used, including participles without a "head." But
not many grammarians observe the distinction, and it serves no useful purpose here.

6. C. F. Ameis, C. Hentze, and P. Cauer, *Homers Ilias* (Leipzig, 1883–1927; repr. Amsterdam,
1965–66), vol. 1.2, ad loc.: "ein Anakoluth in lebhafter Darstellung," giving parallels from Homer;
M. M. Willcock, *The Iliad of Homer: Books I–XII* (London, 1978), ad loc.: "By a vivid change of con-
struction"; G. S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary,* vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 216: "the change of sub-
ject is expressive."

7. This is the general approach of L. Reinhard, *Die Anakoluthe bei Platon* (Berlin, 1920), though her
psychologizing is far less crude than, e.g., that of Sommerstein as discussed below. As an attempt at clas-
sification, her study is still highly valuable.

clear), that he consciously commits an error of syntax to illustrate or to underline the vividness. No commentator explains what is so particularly vivid about another nominative absolute:

(2)          Τυδείδης δ' ἐξαῦτις ἰὼν προμάχοισιν ἐμίχθη,
             καὶ πρίν περ θυμῷ <u>μεμαὼς</u> Τρώεσσι μάχεσθαι,
             δὴ τότε <u>μιν</u> τρὶς τόσσον ἕλεν μένος.

                                                              (*Il.* 5.134–36)[8]

Such psychologizing explanations are not uncommon. At the beginning of the *Eumenides,* Clytaemestra's ghost uses a nominative absolute twice in six lines:

(3)          ἐγὼ δ' ὑφ' ὑμῶν ὧδ' <u>ἀπητιμασμένη</u> . . .
             ὄνειδος ἐν φθιτοῖσιν οὐκ ἐκλείπεται . . .
             <u>παθοῦσα</u> δ' οὕτω δεινὰ πρὸς τῶν φιλτάτων
             οὐδεὶς ὑπέρ <u>μου</u> δαιμόνων μηνίεται.

                                                        (Aesch. *Eum.*. 95–101)

Sommerstein, the author of the most recent commentary, has the following to say: "The excited and indignant Clytaemestra loses track of her syntax."[9] There is a problem in that some four hundred lines later Athena also uses a nominative absolute, though she is perfectly calm:

(4)          καὶ μὴ <u>τυχοῦσαι</u> πράγματος νικηφόρου,
             χωρεῖ μεταῦθις ἰὸς ἐκ φρονημάτων.

                                                        (Aesch. *Eum.* 477–78)[10]

But it is no problem for Sommerstein: he digs up a long-forgotten conjecture, which by dint of changing a couple of letters turns the unwanted participle into a subordinate clause with a subjunctive (κἂν μὴ τύχωσι, M. Schmidt). In his commentary he notes: "one hardly expects Athena to lose control of her syntax like . . . Clytaemestra's angry ghost."

Apparently, the nominative absolute is considered, both by ancient and by modern scholars, deficient with regard to some grammatical standard. One may ask how valid the standard actually is: in the case of (1), whether it was indeed possible for Homer to put the first half of the sentence ("and he, sure of his glorious strength") directly in the accusative. On the basis of a pragmatic examination of the pronoun ὁ in the *Iliad,*[11] the answer is no.

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8. It is illogical to print a colon or a full stop after 135 μάχεσθαι, since the adversative participle καὶ πρίν περ . . . μεμαώς makes sense only if it qualifies μιν τρὶς τόσσον ἕλεν μένος. (In itself, δὴ τότε opening a new sentence in unobjectionable.) Likewise, a colon or full stop after 134 would result in an unattractive asyndeton: maybe there is also another anacoluthon, namely the type in which one sentence contains two (main clause) predicates—about this, cf. S. R. Slings, "Critical Notes on Plato's *Politeia,* III," *Mnemosyne* 43 (1990): 341–63, esp. 344–45; Reinhard, *Anakoluthe,* pp. 151–66.

9. A. H. Sommerstein, *Aeschylus: Eumenides* (Cambridge, 1989), ad loc.

10. καὶ μὴ τυχοῦσαι is a nominative absolute in any case, whether or not one interprets the transmitted χῶραι as χώραι or changes it to χωρεῖ (Wieseler), as I think one should. Cf. also 68–73 (Apollo's speech).

11. The corpus consists of all occurrences of the oblique cases of ὁ followed by δέ; further ὁ δέ, τὸν μέν, τὴν μέν. For this problem, only instances of the pronoun followed (not necessarily followed directly) by an agreeing participle and the predicate, in this order, are relevant. All the corpuses mentioned in this paper were compiled from the *TLG* material as made accessible by the IBYCUS.

Two pragmatic considerations are relevant here. In the first place, the horse is more interesting than the horse's knees. In the terminology of pragmatics: the horse occupies a higher place in the so-called empathy hierarchy,[12] and the higher in this hierarchy, the greater the chance for a constituent to become subject. In English, this hierarchy causes speakers to say normally "I was bitten by a dog," rather than "A dog bit me," even though this involves the use of the passive, because the first person is markedly higher in this hierarchy than the third person nonhuman. In our case, one of the reasons why the horse is brought in as subject, at any rate for the first half of the sentence, may be its higher position on this scale.[13] More generally, it is striking that, in many absolute nominatives registered in grammatical handbooks, the nominative is a first person singular or plural, as in the two instances from the speech of Clytaemestra's ghost: out of thirty-one passages quoted verbatim in Kühner and Gerth,[14] ten involve a first person.

A second factor that may have contributed to the break in construction is the information load of the participle πεποιθώς. The sentence starts with an anaphoric pronoun, which explicitly presents the horse as the entity which the sentence is about, otherwise known as the "Topic."[15] The most salient information given about the Topic, the "Focus,"[16] is contained in the words ῥίμφα ἑ γοῦνα φέρει κτέ. The line of information which runs from Topic to Focus is interrupted by the participle, which provides its own, new

12. D. J. Allerton, "Grammatical Subject as a Psycholinguistic Category," *TPS* (1980): 40–61, esp. 53; Dik, *Theory of Functional Grammar*, 1:32–36. The empathy hierarchy predicts that if a sentence contains two pronouns or nominal phrases (in the example given in the text: "I" and "a dog"), a number of syntactic or pragmatic decisions will be made on the basis of the relative proximity of either to the speaker and the addressee. The function of subject, for example, or the first position in the sentence, will usually be assigned to that constituent which is more to the left on the following scale: first/second person—third person human—other animate—inanimate force—other inanimate—abstract process. The greater the distance between the two constituents on this scale, the stronger this prediction holds. This has been proved for numerous languages and is probably a universal linguistic rule.

13. In my material there are no more than a handful of cases where the subject is lower in the empathy hierarchy than the entity indicated by τόv (etc.), and all of these cases meet the second requirement mentioned in the text, viz., that the participle should either contain given information or belong closely to the predicate semantically. An instance of the latter: *Il.* 19.377–78 τοὺς δ᾽ οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἄελλαι πόντον ἐπ᾽ ἰχθυόεντα φίλων ἀπάνευθε φέρουσιν; see also *Il.* 4.277. Both passages, like (1), come from similes.

14. R. Kühner and B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache, Zweiter Teil: Satzlehre* (Hannover and Leipzig, 1898–1904; repr. Darmstadt, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 105–7.

15. This relatively primitive definition of Topic (proposed, e.g., by Dik, *Functional Grammar³*, p. 130, but retracted in Dik, *Theory of Functional Grammar*) is not commonly accepted, as it excludes place and time expressions and predicates from Topic status. However, for the present investigation it will suffice, and it has the adventitious advantage of clarity. It will be observed from my treatment of (5) that I do not identify Topic and subject, as many scholars do, e.g., T. Givón, *Syntax: A Functional-Typological Introduction,* vol. 1 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 137–38 and passim. Nor do I follow other linguists in automatically assigning Topic status to the first constituent of a clause or sentence, e.g., M. A. K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London and Baltimore, 1985), pp. 32–37 and passim. For the distinction between Topic and Theme, cf. the discussion of (8) and (9) below.

16. I use a paradigm consisting of Topic and Focus rather than Topic=Comment or Theme=Rheme paradigms, since in the latter a clear-cut dichotomy has to obtain (e.g., one constituent is Theme, all others are Rheme; cf. Halliday, *Functional Grammar*, pp. 38–67; Panhuis as quoted below, n. 46), which seems too rigid to be workable: an overlap between topicality and focality is desirable—often enough the Topic of a sentence has focal properties, especially when two Topics are contrasted (cf. n. 21).

information.[17] Besides, this information doesn't have a great deal to do with the horse running to the pastures. My material (as defined in n. 11) shows that if a participle with independent, new information is placed between a Topic pronoun and the Focus, the pronoun (and consequently the participle as well) cannot be put in any other case than the nominative.[18]

The A Scholia give an interesting parallel where the construction is indeed regular, when Patroclus says he will go to Achilles to ask him to join the fight:

(5)                    τὸν μὲν ἄρ᾽ ὣς εἰπόντα πόδες φέρον.

(*Il.* 15.405)

Here the Topic pronoun can be put in in the accusative, despite the fact that Patroclus is higher in the empathy hierarchy than his feet are, because, in this case, the participle gives old information: indeed, together with the Topic pronoun it functions as a sort of launching pad for the new information, so the line of information from Topic to Focus is not interrupted by the participle here.

Before the argument is pursued any further, a clarification of the key notions of Topic and Focus is in order. Inasmuch as every speech-act aims at increasing the amount of information shared by speaker and addressee (writer and reader), every sentence contains at least one piece of new information; consequently, every sentence contains a Focus (in the extreme case, the whole sentence is Focus, cf. the discussion of [6] below).[19] In spoken language, the Focus is typically recognizable by prosodic emphasis; this does not apply to written language. But in written language, too, we will normally be able to identify the Focus of a sentence by examining the givenness of the information:[20] in (5), πόδες φέρον is the Focus, since it is the only piece of new information.[21] The new information may be structured as information about one specific entity, an entity which is normally given or implied in the preceding discourse; if so, the sentence contains a Topic as well as a Focus. Topics are typically expressed by means of nouns modified by a definite article, by anaphoric pronouns (sometimes

17. New information will normally be focal, but does not necessarily have Focus status. Conversely, given information is quite often topical without being Topic. The latter holds good, for example, for the participle in (5). In principle, the Topic/Focus (topicality/focality) scale on the one hand, and the given/new scale on the other, should be two different dimensions within any workable pragmatic paradigm.

18. The clearest cases: *Il.* 10.148–49 ὁ δὲ κλισίηνδε κιὼν πολύμητις ᾽Οδυσσεὺς ποικίλον ἀμφ᾽ ὤμοισι σάκος θέτο; 11.394–95 ὁ δὲ θ᾽ αἵματι γαῖαν ἐρεύθων πύθεται; 13.213–14, 14.499–500, 18.580–81.

19. In sentences in which all information is focal, one may sometimes regard one constituent as Focus, i.e., the most focal. This is typically the case in presentative sentences, e.g., ἦν δέ τις ἐν Τρώεσσι Δάρης (*Il.* 5.9), where Δάρης is Focus. Note the crescendo pattern: two constituents (ἦν, τις) with a very low informational content, a place adjunct with 50 percent predictability, and an entirely new personal name. This crescendo pattern is not limited to presentative sentences: cf., e.g., Pl. *Apol.* 41D1 οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδέν, where κακὸν οὐδέν is Focus (the following, highly focal, participles οὔτε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτήσαντι I take to be outside the clause proper).

20. Focus particles (adverbial καί and οὐδέ; in epic Greek περ—cf. n. 23; γε and δή frequently) also help to identify the Focus.

21. Except for the fact that μέν contrasts τόν with some other entity; this gives the Topic τόν a certain degree of focality—one might call it "contrastive Topic" (cf. n. 16).

personal and relative pronouns);[22] in languages which, like Greek, do not require overt expression of subject or object, Topics can have zero expression, and, vice versa, unexpressed subjects or (less frequently) objects are usually Topics.

I will offer an explanation of our anacoluthon in terms of oral communication. Whether or not the *Iliad* was composed by a literate singer is immaterial to my argument: the language of Greek epic evolved over a period of many centuries in an illiterate society. Therefore, its standards of grammatical correctness are ultimately derived from those of spoken Greek, because this was the only form of Greek in that period.[23] In our present-day literate language communities, anacolutha are far more easily tolerated in spoken language, even in formal spoken language, than in written language. In illiterate societies, the only grammar is that of the spoken language: it is to be expected a priori that at least some types of what we might call anacoluthon do in fact not violate the grammatical rules at all (and are, consequently, not anacoluthic).

To account for this particular "anacoluthon" (Topic expressed by anaphoric pronoun in the nominative, focal participle in the nominative, Focus proper with Topic repeated as personal pronoun in the accusative), the following hypothesis best fits the facts. In spoken Greek, the input of a Topic as object or complement requires more concentration from the listener than input as subject, and concentration is disturbed too much if a piece of independent information is stationed between Topic and Focus.[24] If for some reason this is inevitable, the solution is the one adopted by Homer: the Topic is put in as the provisional subject, and after the independent information has been provided, the Topic is repeated in the required syntactic function, with the corresponding case. From a point of view of oral communication, if this analysis is correct, the sentence is completely well-formed.

By formulating it in this way, we can explain at the same time why ancient and modern scholars, whose notions of grammatical correctness are those of the written language, have so much trouble with our sentence: in written language such a repetition of the Topic is superfluous—one can, after all, read a sentence through in one's own tempo, so a slightly more complicated syntactic structure is much less of a problem. Therefore, whoever considers the nominative absolute an error of syntax, to be excused by

22. Anaphoric pronouns: ὁ almost always, οὗτος usually, ἐκεῖνος not infrequently, ὅδε hardly ever. Enclitic or other postpositive forms of personal pronouns are normally given information, but not necessarily Topic. If relative clauses have a Topic=Focus structure (which seems possible only in nonrestrictive relative clauses), the relative pronoun is nearly always Topic.

23. Naturally, the formulaic character of epic Greek may play a distorting part. Thus, Bakker, *Linguistics and Formulas*, pp. 171–95; 239–65, shows that περ, basically a Focus particle with a specific semantic value, can lose its function partially or entirely when it is part of a formula which is, in a given context, suboptimally integrated. But in our case, the analysis of the anacoluthon in pragmatic terms makes good sense—there is no reason to appeal to formulaic diction in order to account for the alleged irregularity. Indeed, the parallels discussed in notes 13 and 18, combined with the general behavior of the nominative absolute in Greek, show that if formulas are at all involved here, they support an analysis in pragmatic terms. See also n. 30.

24. In Greek, as in most languages, Topic=Focus is the unmarked word order. Cf. n. 29.

all sorts of psychological ad hoc explanations, measures the Greek poets with the yardstick of the Greek written language, although in Homer's time there was no such language, and in Aeschylus' time hardly so.

The term "written language" here refers to Greek prose. As I said, the oldest poetic language originated from orally composed and performed song, and even when Greek poets start to write, their poetic language changes only gradually. The development of an autonomous written language, with a regularity of its own, is an aspect of the transition from oral to literate culture that has so far received little attention. While certainly not subscribing to speculations about a causal relationship between literacy and the faculty of logical thought,[25] I do claim that there is a fundamental difference in the way in which literate and illiterate persons express themselves. A person who has learned to read and write and who writes regularly will use language in a different way from a person who does not write.[26]

I want to illustrate the difference between the grammatical rules and standards of spoken and written Greek by focusing on two specific phenomena. It goes without saying that the real spoken language of the Greeks is irretrievably lost. But we do possess a huge corpus of what I will call "quasi-spoken language": an important part of Greek literature from the classical period portrays people in conversation: tragedy, Old and New Comedy, and philosophical dialogue (including Xenophon). From about 470 to 290 B.C. we have ample opportunities for contrasting written and quasi-spoken Greek.

It follows from the definition of "written Greek" that it includes all prose except the dialogue. This is not to deny or overlook the fact that during this period much of this "written Greek" was perceived primarily by listening, not by reading. This goes without saying for oratory, but it is also valid for other types of prose. Herodotus is reported to have read his work. Socrates became acquainted with Anaxagoras' philosophy by listening to someone reading from a book. Yet at the basis of this aural perception lies a written text. For oratory, we have this on the authority of no lesser man than Gorgias, who presupposes that speeches are normally written.[27] The dichotomy written/quasi-spoken depends on the internal structure of the texts (conversation versus continuous exposition or narrative), not on the way they were perceived externally.

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25. So, e.g., W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London and New York, 1982), pp. 51–52; E. A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write* (New Haven and London, 1986), pp. 38–40, both basing themselves on experiments conducted by A. S. Luria and reported in *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1976). These speculations were rejected emphatically by S. Scribner and M. Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981); cf. the sensible discussion by J. Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 211–57. See also W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1989), pp. 40–41.

26. There is of course a vast literature about the differences between spoken and written language, but only rarely is literacy or illiteracy a parameter. This is the case in S. Reder, "The Written and the Spoken Word: Influence of Vai Literacy on Vai Speech," in Scribner and Cole, *Psychology of Literacy*, pp. 187–99.

27. *Hel.* 13 τοὺς ἀναγκαίους διὰ λόγων ἀγῶνας, ἐν οἷς εἷς λόγος πολὺν ὄχλον ἔτερψε καὶ ἔπεισε τέχνῃ γραφείς, οὐκ ἀληθείᾳ λεχθείς.

This paper deals with the written language as a whole—there are of course great differences between historiography, science and philosophy, and oratory, and within these genres there are again great differences between individual authors, sometimes surprisingly great ones. What few studies there are of the development of Greek prose tend to concentrate on these differences, but for the present investigation those are irrelevant.

The first phenomenon I will examine is the repetition of ἄν in its use with optatives and past indicatives in main clauses. Its function there can be defined as changing nonactual expressions of volition (wishes and counterfactual wishes) into nonactual modal expressions of expectation (potential, counterfactual). This value leads to a permanent conflict as to its position. On the one hand, the user of the language logically wishes to indicate the nonfactual character of the sentence he utters as soon as possible, and the best way of doing so is to put ἄν as early in the sentence as possible.[28] On the other hand, it is the predicate which through the presence or absence of ἄν causes the sentence to change its meaning, and for that reason the logical position of ἄν is close to the predicate. And in general the predicate in a Greek sentence has a preference for a late position, depending on the information structure of the sentence.[29] So there are two opposite forces, one of them pushing ἄν forward, to the beginning of the sentence, the other pushing it backward, to the predicate, and consequently often to the end of the sentence.

Repetition of ἄν is a simple solution for this conflict; it is especially frequent in the quasi-spoken language of the fifth century, i.e., tragedy and Old Comedy.[30] As was to be expected, when ἄν is used twice, the first ἄν is usually found at the beginning of the sentence, the second close to the predicate.[31] This solution reminds us of what Homer did in the sentence about the galloping horse, which was referred to by two different pronouns in the same sentence. There has never been a systematic study of what is called "double ἄν"[32]—my conclusions are based on an investigation within a corpus consisting of most of fifth- and fourth-century Greek.[33]

28. I am trying to give a synchronic analysis, so I cannot analyze the phenomenon of double ἄν in terms of the diminishing role of Wackernagel's Law.

29. If the predicate is not itself Topic or (part of) Focus, its regular position is at the end of the clause, unless that position is taken up by the Focus for the sake of coherence. In clause-final position, the predicate may be followed by entirely predictable constituents.

30. Here again, cf. n. 23, the question may be raised whether the fact that this is poetry influences the issue. It might be supposed that ἄν is a useful filler, and that therefore no pragmatic explanation of its repetition in tragedy and Old Comedy is necessary. The only answer I can give is that it is possible to predict the occurrence of double ἄν, as well as the positions of the two ἄν's involved, by means of a relatively simple set of rules, so a recourse to meter, which in general seems to me a last line of defense, is inappropriate in this case. But when confronted with a specific instance, it would be foolish for anyone to deny categorically that metrical considerations have played a part.

31. In comedy, this happens occasionally also in the case of the "iterative" ἄν. Since iterativity can be regarded as a special case of nonactuality, the explanation given above holds good for these instances as well.

32. I use the term "double ἄν" as shorthand for "repeated ἄν." There are in fact cases of triple and even quadruple ἄν.

33. J. Wackernagel, "Über ein Gesetz der indogermanischen Wortstellung," IF 1 (1892): 333–436, esp. 399–402 = Kleine Schriften, vol. 1 (Göttingen, 1953), pp. 1–104, esp. 67–70, gives hardly more than a very incomplete collection of occurrences; he points out the disappearance of double ἄν in the

The main conclusion, incidentally, is only partly new: the doubling of
ἄν is connected with the complexity of the sentence: the more complex
the sentence, the higher the chance of a double ἄν. This complexity can
be syntactic in nature, or—and this is new—pragmatic.[34] The most typi-
cal sentence in the case of syntactic complexity has ἄν at the beginning,
followed by a subordinate clause or a participle, and when the main
clause returns ἄν appears for the second time, usually before or after the
predicate. This phenomenon is treated in the handbooks of Greek syntax,
and there is no point in going into it here.[35]

By "pragmatic complexity" I mean a high information load: the quan-
tity of new information in a sentence, plus the number of words that by
their very meaning carry a certain emphasis, like question words and ad-
jectives denoting quantitative intensity ("big," "many," "all"). A sentence
from the *Peace* illustrates this. In the first scene, one of the slaves tells
the audience how Trugaios is walking around looking up and asking Zeus
to make an end to the misery of the war. The slave goes on to quote what
Trugaios reportedly said several times:

(6)                     πῶς ἄν ποτ᾽ ἀφικοίμην ἄν εὐθὺ τοῦ Διός;

                                                                    (Ar. *Pax* 68)

Syntactically speaking, this sentence is as simple as can be: an adjunct
of manner, a predicate with implied subject, and a complement.[36] But
pragmatically it is rather complex. The sentence is not part of a conversa-
tion conducted on the stage, but a quotation: the slave tells the audience
that this is what Trugaios said a couple of times. This implies that the in-
formation contained in the sentence[37] is "all new": not a single word of it
is predictable or inferable from preceding sentences, because, as opposed
to the normal procedure in linguistic communication, this sentence does
not connect at all with a previous sentence.[38] Besides, the first word is a
question word, which by itself has a high degree of focality. So the sen-
tence may be called pragmatically complex, because there is no informa-
tion line running from known (Topic) to unknown (Focus): the sentence

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course of the fourth century without giving an explanation. The corpus upon which the following state-
ments are based consists of: all remains of tragedy and comedy; Herodotus, Thucydides, Lysias,
Isocrates, Plato, and some minor orators completely; parts of Hippocrates, Xenophon, Demosthenes, and
Aristotle.

34. This dichotomy is related to, but not identical with the distinction made by Kühner and Gerth be-
tween cases "wenn der Hauptsatz durch dazwischen tretende Nebensätze geteilt wird" (1:246) and "rhe-
torical" repetition (1:247–48). The term "rhetorical" is often used in this connection, especially to
explain the repetition of ἄν in simple sentences from the "rhetoric" of Sophocles and Euripides. The very
high frequency in Aristophanes has never been noticed, not even by Wackernagel.

35. A shortlist of syntactic conditions on the doubling of ἄν in the *Republic*, which can be general-
ized for all fourth-century Greek, can be found in S. R. Slings, "Critical Notes on Plato's *Politeia*, II,"
*Mnemosyne* 42 (1989): 380–97, esp. 391–92.

36. "However could I come straight to Zeus?" This is of course paratragic language for "Would that
I could come straight to Zeus."

37. To avoid misunderstanding, it should be pointed out that in the jargon of pragmatics, "informa-
tion" is used for the contents of all types of sentences (questions, commands, wishes, etc.), not only
declarative sentences.

38. On all-new predications, cf. S. C. Dik et al., "On the Typology of Focus Phenomena," in *Per-
spectives on Functional Grammar*, ed. T. Hoekstra et al. (Dordrecht, 1981), pp. 21–39.

is one entire Focus, and on top of that it starts with a strongly focal word. It is precisely in this sort of sentence that one finds double ἄν most often, at any rate in quasi-spoken language.[39]

An explanation of the conditions under which double ἄν occurs should at the same time account for the fact that sentences like (6) never, or hardly ever, occur in the written language: in Greek prose, sentences with double ἄν must always comply with the requirement of syntactic complexity, which Trugaios' complaint does not. One might advance the hypothesis that sentences like (6), with their high information load, were, in spoken Greek, not uttered in one stretch but with one or more pauses.[40] If a great deal of salient information is put into one sentence, this information has to be conveyed by bits and pieces. In Trugaios' sentence, such a pause could come after the combination of the focal question word πῶς and the enclitic particle ποτε. Despite its syntactic simplicity, the pragmatic complexity would cause the sentence to be cut into at least two parts. It then becomes logical that in each of these parts the modal character of the sentence is marked separately, namely through the repetition of ἄν. What this comes down to actually is that double ἄν is always caused by a caesura in the sentence, but in spoken language such caesuras are caused not only by syntactic but also by pragmatic complexity. In written language such caesuras are superfluous, because, as I said above, readers can determine their own tempos in absorbing information. Repetition of ἄν in simple sentences is therefore superfluous, indeed ungrammatical, in written language, since these sentences lack the caesura which in quasi-spoken language is responsible for the repetition.

Incidentally, there are strong indications that on this point, from the end of the fifth century on, Greek spoken language underwent a development that brought it closer to the written language. The average occurrence of double ἄν is 6.7 per play for Sophocles, 4.0 for Aristophanes, and 4.2 for the plays of Euripides up to and including the *Helen* (412)— after that the repetition becomes very rare in Euripides: the average for the four last plays is 1.0 per play.[41] In the quasi-spoken language of the fourth century (Plato, Xenophon, Menander) the practice is identical to that of prose proper.[42] Quite strikingly, one does occasionally find double ἄν in simple sentences in Plato, but hardly ever, contrary to what one would have expected, in the earlier dialogues: they are virtually confined

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39. In Homer, double ἄν is rare (Kühner and Gerth 1:248), but there, too, the phenomenon is found three times in simple clauses and only once in a syntactically complex sentence. Juxtaposition of ἄν and κεν, whether or not separated by a particle, does not belong here.

40. Cf. Brown and Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, pp. 153–69, on the predominance, in spoken language, of incomplete clauses, and on "chunking" as a basic principle in structuring the clause; W. L. Chafe, "Linguistic Differences Produced by Differences between Speaking and Writing," in *Literacy, Language, and Learning: The Nature and Consequences of Reading and Writing*, ed. D. R. Olson, N. Torrance, and A. Hildyard (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 105–23. This principle was applied to epic diction by E. J. Bakker, "Homeric Discourse and Enjambement: A Cognitive Approach," *TAPA* 120 (1990): 1–21.

41. The frequency is low in Aeschylus (1.3 per play), presumably because his quasi-spoken language is influenced by poetic language to a far higher degree than in the case of the later tragedians. Of course, these are very crude statistics: they are not meant to show anything but the sudden break in Euripides.

42. Cf. S. R. Slings, "Menander, Epitrepontes 284," *ZPE* 80 (1990): 11–12.

to those of the latest period, which of course are characterized in general by artificial language.[43] I suspect Plato here revived an idiom that in his childhood was still acceptable in educated spoken language,[44] but had long since disappeared from it.

A second grammatical phenomenon that I want to discuss in this connection is what I shall call "displacement,"[45] a term that covers a number of phenomena, including what is traditionally known as "prolepsis." Since no two grammarians agree on exactly how to define prolepsis (and also for a number of other reasons, which will become clear later on) I avoid this term. The classic example of course is

(7)            καταμάθετε τὰ κρίνα τοῦ ἀγροῦ, πῶς αὐξάνουσιν.

(Matt. 6:28)

One constituent, in this case τὰ κρίνα τοῦ ἀγροῦ, is displaced from subordinate clause to main clause.

As opposed to double ἄν, this displacement has always drawn a great deal of attention: from the last decade there are five sizable papers, mostly by French scholars.[46] The tenor of these studies is that displacement from subordinate clause to main clause is a strategy devised to make the line of information more visible. In a sentence like "Behold how the lilies of the field grow" the most salient part of the information (Focus) is identical to the entire subordinate clause: "Behold—What?—How the lilies of the field grow." Displacement of the lilies from subordinate clause to main clause creates a kind of three-stage rocket: "Behold—What?—The lilies

43. Of the dialogues which modern scholarship agrees in dating before the *Republic,* only four contain an instance of double ἄν not covered by the normal prose rules: *Apology, Laches, Lysis, Meno* (one each). There are no examples in the *Republic,* and there are twenty-two in the post-*Republic* dialogues: *Sophist* (3), *Politicus* (1), *Parmenides* (2), *Philebus* (2), *Phaedrus* (3), *Timaeus* (1), *Laws* (9), *Epinomis* (1, if genuine).

44. But the idiom must have had life yet in vulgar Attic: one instance in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* and five in *Plutus.* Menander's use is entirely that of fourth-century prose.

45. For this term, cf. Dik, *Theory of Functional Grammar,* 1:373–75. Here it covers (1) displacement of a constituent from subordinate to main clause with syntactic adaptation causing the complex predicate=displaced constituent in the main clause to be reinterpreted (prolepsis, properly speaking: type οἶσθα Εὐθύδημον ὁπόσους ὀδόντας ἔχει, cf. Pl. *Euthyd.* 294C4); (2) displacement of a constituent from subordinate to main clause with syntactic adaptation, without the semantic load of the main clause being affected, as in the example from Matt.; (3) displacement of a constituent without a change in its syntactic function (type τὴν ἑορτὴν βουλόμενος θεάσασθαι τίνα τρόπον ποιήσουσιν, cf. Pl. *Resp.* 327A2–3; this is sometimes called prolepsis but looks more like a Focus than a Theme construction); (4) displacement without adaptation in such a manner that the displaced constituent does not fit syntactically in the main clause (hyperbaton, type ἐγὼ μὰ τοὺς θεοὺς οὐκ οἶδα σὺ ἐφ᾽ ὅτι μάχαιραν περιφέρεις, cf. Men. *Sam.* 283–84; this is not called prolepsis, and as far as I can see it never is a Theme construction). My investigation also includes (5) cases where a Theme constituent precedes the subordinate clause (type ἑρπσόμενος ἐκεῖνον ῾Ελλήνων πέρι ἀπαξαπάντων ὅτι ποεῖν βουλεύεται, cf. Ar. *Pax* 105–6) and (6) epexegetic subordinate clauses in apposition to a complement which functions as Theme of the subordinate clause (cf. the discussion of [10] in the text).

46. A.-M. Chanet, "Objet propositionnel, prolepse et objet externe," in *In the Footsteps of Raphaël Kühner,* ed. A. Rijksbaron et al. (Amsterdam, 1988), pp. 67–97; A. Christol, "Prolepse et syntaxe indo-européenne," in *Subordination and Other Topics in Latin: Proceedings of the Third Colloquium on Latin Linguistics, Bologna,* ed. G. Calboli (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1989), pp. 65–89; J.-C. Milner, "La prolepse en grec ancien," *Lalies* 1 (1980): 39–52 = *Ordres et raisons de langue* (Paris, 1982), pp. 245–66; D. Panhuis, "Prolepsis in Greek as a Discourse Strategy," *Glotta* 62 (1984): 26–39; M.-C. Sibilot, "Les prolepses chez Aristophane," in *Mélanges Édouard Delebecque,* ed. C. Froidefond (Aix and Marseille, 1983), pp. 349–59.

of the field—What about them?—How they grow." In this way the un-
wieldy block of information is articulated:[47] the lilies of the field are
marked as the Theme of the subsequent clause.

Here a clarification of the terminology is in order: a Theme differs from
a Topic in that a Theme stands outside the sentence proper, whereas the
Topic is, syntactically and pragmatically, part of it. Consider the follow-
ing two sentences:

(8) The American universities are great institutions; the students work extremely hard.
(9) The American universities are great institutions; *as for the students,* they work ex-
     tremely hard.

In (8) "the students" is the Topic of the second clause; it is not old infor-
mation, the normal requirement for Topic status, but neither is it entirely
new: once universities are mentioned, the students can be regarded as in-
ferable.[48] If for some reason the Topic switch is too harsh,[49] one can use
a Theme construction to state the Topic of the second clause, as in (9). In
this version of the sentence, the students are introduced as the Theme of
the second clause; the pronoun "they" is its Topic.[50]

In (7), the displacement is, as I said, a way of marking the lilies of the
field as Theme of the subordinate clause, and thus of better articulating the
focal information. It seems quite possible that the empathy hierarchy men-
tioned before plays a part as well: the lilies of the field are concrete objects
and as such are higher in the hierarchy than an abstract process like the
growing of the lilies—in many languages "raising," displacement and re-
lated constructions are often caused by a higher level in this hierarchy.[51]

By thus interpreting displacement as a way of introducing a separate
Theme for a subordinate clause, we are able to connect prolepsis with
phenomena that at first look are entirely different, especially appositive
clauses. One example is:

(10)            οὐ φοβῇ τὴν ἡλικίαν, μὴ ἤδη πρεσβύτερος ἦς;
                                                (Pl. *Euthyd.* 272B5–6)

47. Cf. Givón, *Syntax,* 1:258–63 on the "One-Chunk-Per-Clause principle."
48. On "inferables," cf. E. F. Prince, "Towards a Taxonomy of Given/New Information," in *Radical Pragmatics,* ed. P. Cole (New York, 1981), pp. 223–56; M. Hannay, "Inferrability, Discourse-Bound-ness, and Sub-Topics," in *Syntax and Pragmatics in Functional Grammar,* ed. A. M. Bolkestein et al. (Dordrecht, 1985), pp. 49–63.
49. This is a matter of style rather than grammar: some speakers or writers of English will feel the need for a Theme construction more than others. This illustrates the remark made in n. 1, that pragmatics is partly stylistics, or more precisely, pragmatics provides a paradigm and a set of terminological tools and objective criteria for the study of style, which hitherto had to rely almost exclusively on instinctive judgment. There is also a syntactic aspect to theme constructions: they are outside the clause or sentence proper. Many cases of anacoluthic nominatives or accusatives can be explained along these lines; I give two examples from Plato: *Resp.* 565D9–E1 ὡς ἄρα ὁ γευσάμενος τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου σπλάγνου . . . ἀνάγκη δὴ τούτῳ λύκῳ γενέσθαι; *Ti.* 37E1–3 ἡμέρας γάρ . . . καὶ νύκτας . . . τότε δὴ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτοῦ μη-χανᾶται. Cf. Reinhard, *Anakoluthe,* pp. 166–80; Slings, "Critical Notes, II," p. 389.
50. For the distinction between Theme and Topic, cf. Dik, *Functional Grammar*[3], pp. 130–44; Dik, *Theory of Functional Grammar,* 1:264–65. Failure to make this distinction renders the accounts of Pan-huis and Chanet unsatisfactory. As I have already indicated in n. 45, displacement may also be a Focus construction. The description given here applies only to the great majority of the cases in my material, those coming under the headings (1) and (2) in n. 45.
51. Cf. Dik, *Theory of Functional Grammar,* 1:238.

In itself, τὴν ἡλικίαν could easily be omitted; but if it is, the subordinate clause is again entirely focal—the introduction of τὴν ἡλικίαν as its Theme, as a sort of tag as it were, helps to articulate the sentence in the same way that prolepsis does; which is why these phenomena may be lumped together as "displacement." As we will see, (7) and (10) also have common properties of a purely syntactic nature.

This articulation of a block of focal information is quite similar to what we observed in the case of double ἄν, and it seems a fair assumption that here, too, we have to do with a typical spoken language phenomenon. The numerous studies on prolepsis say nothing about that,[52] because they are dependent on collections of instances in grammatical handbooks, especially Kühner and Gerth, who have a strong prose bias anyway. On the basis of a much larger corpus of examples from the fifth and fourth centuries,[53] I am able to confirm that displacement is much more frequent in quasi-spoken than in written Greek. Just by way of illustration: in the *Peace* of Aristophanes, there are twenty-eight complement clauses in which displacement would be at all possible;[54] in eight of them, it actually occurs. In book 1 of Xenophon's *Hellenica,* the number of such clauses is twenty-seven, and in only two of them do we find displacement.[55]

As an explanation of the low frequency of displacement in the written language, we may postulate, as in the case of double ἄν, that readers have less trouble than listeners with absorbing unstructured blocks of information. Like clauses containing double ἄν, sentences exhibiting displacement rarely have a Topic=Focus structure; their information is often all new, at any rate in quasi-spoken language. There may also be another factor, namely syntactic well-formedness. Verbs like καταμανθάνω (7) and φοβέομαι (10) normally govern either an object or a complementary clause. Displacement creates one extra constituent: there are two pegs for one hole. The situation is not dissimilar to the repetition of ἄν, where the same word is used twice in the same syntactic role. In written language this is noticed sooner, and gives offence sooner, than in spoken language.

But there is more the matter here. My material (as defined in n. 53) shows that written language not only uses displacement less than quasi-spoken language; it also uses it in a different way. In quasi-spoken language the normal word order in the case of displacement is the one illustrated by (7) and (10): main-clause predicate—displaced constituent—subordinate clause ("Behold—the lilies of the field—how they grow"). In the written language, and, it seems, also in Plato's latest dialogues, the displaced

52. Not even that of Sibilot, "Prolepses chez Aristophane," who concentrates on Aristophanes, whereas Kühner and Gerth give only one example of prolepsis from Aristophanes (*Ausführliche Grammatik,* 2:577–80).

53. The corpus consists of samples, in which tragedy and Old Comedy are relatively strongly represented. Spot checks showed that the construction of a larger corpus would not affect the conclusions drawn here.

54. Absolute numbers, as given by Sibilot, "Prolepses chez Aristophane," p. 351, say nothing unless they are compared with the number of sentences in which prolepsis and other forms of displacement do not occur.

55. Ar. *Pax* 189, 264, 313–14, 371–72, 548, 549, 604, 1296, Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.18, 1.6.4. This count includes only those cases of displacement that are defined in n. 45, (1)=(4).

constituent is much more often put at the beginning of the whole sentence, which would correspond with "The lilies of the field—behold—how they grow."

This implies that, in written language, the informational role of displacement is not the same as in quasi-spoken language. If a couple of words are taken from a subordinate clause and put between main-clause predicate and subordinate clause, this articulates the focal information of the individual sentence. But if they are put at the very beginning of the sentence, they are made the Theme of the sentence as a whole: "As for the lilies of the field, behold how they grow." By starting off this sentence with a Theme constituent, one indicates that it is about the lilies, which implies that the previous sentence was about something else.[56] (11) illustrates this: it is from a report given to Cyrus about the forces brought into the field against him. First Croesus is mentioned, then in separate sentences the king of Phrygia, the king of the Cappadocians, and the king of Arabia.

(11)  τοὺς μέντοι ῞Ελληνας τοὺς ἐν τῇ ᾽Ασίαι οἰκοῦντας οὐδέν πω σαφὲς λέγεται εἰ
      ἕπονται.

                                                              (Xen. *Cyr.* 2.1.5)

The Greeks in Asia are contrasted, by means of a Theme construction which involves displacement (though not properly speaking prolepsis), with the various Topics of the preceding sentences. The constituent order "Behold the lilies of the field, how they grow" creates a clearer structure in the information within one sentence, and that will be necessary more often in spoken than in written Greek. But if the lilies are brought forward further, this enhances the coherence between two or more sentences, which is, of course, as necessary in written as in spoken language.

If we compare the two phenomena discussed here, double ἄν and displacement, we see that in both cases the written language is less interested in "chunking," that is to say, in strategies that administer new information in small doses. At the same time, the less important role of chunking causes syntactic well-formedness to become a more important requirement. Exceptions are, in both cases, exceptions at a distance: ἄν may be repeated in written language, provided there is a considerable distance between the two ἄν's; a constituent from a subordinate clause may be displaced, but it is put preferably at the beginning of the whole sentence. Thus, the written language creates its own regularity, which may

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56. Panhuis, "Prolepsis as a Discourse Strategy," pp. 32–35, suggests two unrelated factors that cause the order displaced constituent—main-clause predicate—subordinate clause: (1) the displaced constituent contains wholly new information; (2) when (1) does not apply, the order is "emotive"; (1) is valid, but brand-new constituents may have Theme function. As an example of (2) he gives Soph. *Phil.* 442–44: οὐ τοῦτον (sc. Odysseus) εἶπον, ἀλλὰ Θερσίτης τις ἦν . . . τοῦτον οἶσθ᾽ εἰ ζῶν κυρεῖ; But emotion, while never to be excluded in principle, is not a workable category in practice (cf. Panhuis' own justified strictures against terms like "emphasis," "vividness"). The displacement of the second τοῦτον is meant to contrast the Theme of this clause with the Topic of the previous one ("I'm not talking about Odysseus but Thersites"). So the analysis of displacement as a Theme construction yields a unified description and should therefore be preferred.

even influence the educated spoken language, as we saw in the case of the disappearance of double ἄν.

In modern linguistics, after De Saussure had postulated the primacy of the spoken language, we have observed, over the last decade and a half, a growing awareness of the autonomy of the written language. I think that Greek linguistics may render a unique service to general linguistics, given the opportunity for comparing quasi-spoken and written language over a long stretch of time.[57] But vice versa, the analysis of Greek in terms of transmitting information, a topic of ever-growing interest in general linguistics, adds a new dimension to the already many-sided problem of the development of a literate culture. And finally, Greek philologists must learn to distinguish better than before between poetic language, quasi-spoken language, and written language, and not to measure one kind of language use with the standards of another.

*Free University, Amsterdam*

57. Whereas research as exemplified by Reder, "The Written and the Spoken Word," (cf. n. 26) can give only synchronic analyses of changes in language use in nascent literate cultures.