Book Review

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The development of periphrases constitutes a well-examined central phenomenon for the diachrony of the grammar of Greek as well as crosslinguistically. Bentein (hereafter B) adds new perspectives to the discussion of change in periphrases: transitivity is considered another parameter that can reveal aspects of periphrases. B also analyzes synchronic characteristics of periphrastic constructions in various registers, demonstrating a variation with regard to these constructions. This makes B’s book a valuable addition to other works on the diachrony of periphrases.

The study provides an in-depth examination of the development of the Ancient Greek verbal system by investigating the diachrony of constructions with εἰμί ‘be’ and ἔχω ‘have’ and a participle (see 1). The constructions under investigation belong to an area of some debate, mainly with regard to two questions: whether both εἰμί ‘be’ and ἔχω ‘have’ form periphrases in Ancient Greek, and whether the analysis of adjectival periphrases, such as πρέπον ἐστί ‘it is fitting’, is similar to that of the (typical) verbal periphrases. B shows continuities as well as discontinuities between Archaic/ Classical Greek and Post-Classical/ Byzantine Greek. He organizes the rich data that he offers into relatively small subperiods: Archaic Greek (8th–6th cent. BC), Classical Greek (5th–4th cent. BC), Early Post-Classical Greek (3rd–1st cent. BC), Middle Post-Classical Greek (1st–3rd cent. AD), and Late Post-Classical and Early Byzantine Greek (4th–8th cent. AD).

(1) a. Perfect aspect
κρύψαντες ἔχουσι
hide.aor.act.part.nom.pl have.prs.act.ind.3pl
‘They have hidden it.’
b. Imperfective aspect

\[
\text{ἦν} \quad \tauρεφόμενος
\]
\[
\text{be.IMP.ACT.IND.3PL} \quad \text{bring-up.PRS.MP.PART.NOM.SG}
\]

‘He was being brought up [with his uncle].’

c. Perfective aspect

\[
\text{γηρυθείσ} \quad \text{ἐσηι}
\]
\[
\text{utter.AOR.PASS.PART.NOM.SG} \quad \text{be.FUT.MID.IND.2SG}
\]

‘You are going to utter [these words].’

Chapters 1 and 2 of the book offer a discussion of the main concepts: periphrasis, aspect, grammaticalization, and verbal–adjectival periphrasis. Chapters 3–5 present the diachrony of periphrastic constructions with \(\varepsilonιμι\) ‘be’ and \(\varepsilonχω\) ‘have’ from the Archaic to Early Byzantine period. Their development is analyzed based on three basic functional domains: perfect aspect, imperfective aspect, and perfective aspect. The main motive in all sections (offering coherence to the analysis in a systematic way) is a focus on grammaticalization paths and on semantic transitivity (following Hopper & Thompson 1980). This decision leads to a creative way of attempting a synthesis of grammaticalization and transitivization. The book successfully raises strong criticism against many previous proposals. For instance, B deconstructs Dietrich’s (1973ab) idea of a relationship between \(\text{Erzählungsmanier}\) (‘narrative pace’), periphrasis, and Christian texts; he shows that it is not the case that the authors of a genre follow the same narrative pace (p. 272).

The whole study is heavily integrated into a theoretical model, as one can realize with the sections on the noun-to-verb continuum, for instance. According to this approach, adjectival participles are located on a continuum ranging from most noun-like to most verb-like. The perfect participle is least verb-like, and the present participle is more verb-like than the perfect participle but less than the aorist participle, which is the most verb-like. In this way, B follows the prototype model of linguistic categorization, according to which there are no sharp boundaries between categories and some category members are more prototypical than others; periphrastic constructions can be located on a “periphrasticity” continuum in which the most prototypical periphrastic constructions are syntactically contiguous, paradigmatically integrated, and semantically idiomatic.

Moreover, the book contains an exhaustive description of all subcases/interpretations of each of the constructions, as attested in the texts. Consider, for example, \(\varepsilonιμι\) ‘be’ with the present participle (pp. 242–243): B discusses (a) the case where the particular periphrastic construction can be related to a fore-