Expressing Aspectual and Temporal Distinctions in Indirect Speech: A Diachronic Perspective

The paper is based on an observation that goes back to Burton (1898: 53) and is repeated in several modern studies (cf. Fanning 1990: 401, Thorley 1989: 295–96), namely that New Testament (NT) Greek yields no instance of the aorist infinitive in "indirect discourse, representing the Aorist Indicative of the direct form" (Burton, loc. cit.); in other words, there is no instance of an aorist infinitive used in declarative infinitive clauses dependent on verbs of saying and thinking (hereafter DInf) in the NT. It has also been suggested that DInf are characterized in NT Greek by (1) significantly frequent use of the perfect infinitive as well as of the present infinitives of stative verbs, mainly the infinitive εἶναι, and (2) avoidance of non-stative present infinitives in DInf (cf. Fanning 1990: 401, Kavčič 2009).

The paper argues (1) that similar tendencies in the use of the aorist, the perfect and the present infinitives occur in the contemporary non-literary papyri, and (2) that, while the aorist is avoided in DInf, it is significantly more common in direct speech and in finite dependent clauses introduced with ὅτι/ὡς. The corpus examined consists of around 150 private and official documents dating from the 1st and early 2nd centuries AD (appx. 30,000 words). Despite evident parallels between the language of the non-literary papyri and NT Greek, the former also contain higher frequencies of future infinitives used within DInf than the latter. Nevertheless, both NT Greek and the language of the non-literary papyri display an avoidance of aorist infinitives. This avoidance is uncharacteristic of the Classical Greek syntax, where DInf containing an aorist infinitive seem to have been a common phenomenon (e.g. Plato, *Apol.* 33 b6, *Symp.* 178 b3, *Resp.* 377 e8, 586 c3; Hdt. 1.2.1, 1.129.7, 4.13.1, 4.151.9, 6.68.5; Thuc. 1.67.3, 4.83.5). The aorist infinitive is anterior to the main verb in this case (cf. Rijksbaron 2006: 97).

The second part of the paper focuses on interpreting these tendencies, pointing out the complexity of their relation to other developments in Hellenistic Greek (i.e. to the merger between the aorist and the perfect and to the disappearance of the Classical Greek future and the emergence of the periphrastic future forms; cf. Markopoulos 2009: 46–86). The aforementioned tendencies in the use of the aorist, the perfect and the present infinitives in DInf have led to the hypothesis that DInf mostly express states in NT Greek (Thorley 1989: 296). If this is accepted, the construction could have parallels in English clauses of the type *I believe her to be intelligent*, as well as in some other languages. On the other hand, this explanation faces the problem of the merger between the aorist and the perfect. If the aorist had merged with the perfect by the 1st century AD, then the avoidance of aorist infinitives and the high frequency of perfect infinitives runs counter to expectations. The issue of the merger between the aorist and the perfect has been discussed rather extensively in recent years. Whereas some scholars place this development in late antiquity, other find at least sporadic occurrences of the phenomenon considerably earlier (cf. McKay 1980, Horrocks 1997: 118). Although the high frequency of the stative present infinitive and the avoidance of the non-stative infinitive in DInf could be adduced in support of this interpretation, the aforementioned phenomena require another explanation (possibly in terms of expressing temporal distinctions within DInf) if the merger of the aorist and the perfect is assumed to date back to the first centuries AD.

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