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Original Citation:

Availability:

This version is available <http://hdl.handle.net/2318/136576> since 2019-01-23T10:08:35Z

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NOTES ON THE FUNCTION OF GOTHIC -U

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In this article the distribution of the Gothic enclitic particle *-u* is examined in the light of speech act theory. It is argued that the particle is optional in non-canonical questions but compulsory in canonical ones, therefore it should be regarded as a fully vital and not yet vestigial question-introducing device in Gothic.

1. The problem

Gothic is the only Germanic language in which the enclitic particle *-u* is used. This particle, which is thought to be etymologically related to the Sanskrit deictic particle *-u* and Old Bulgarian *-ŭ* (Wright 1954: 140), is found in direct and indirect interrogative clauses, where it cliticizes to any constituent that appears in first position (Buzzoni 2009: 39). It has therefore been interpreted and is usually referred to in handbooks and dictionaries simply as an interrogative particle (see, for instance, Wright 1954: 140; Mossé 1942: 190; Binnig 1999: 117; Streitberg 1981: 62; Lehmann 1986: *s. u.*). Its apparent optionality, however, has not failed to puzzle scholars. Jones (1955) notes couples of cases like the following¹:

¹ The English translation of New Testament verses is taken from the New International Version.

- (1) a. *niu ussuggwup aiw h̥a gatawida Daweid...?* (Mk 2:25)
 b. *ni pata ussuggwud p̥atei gatawida Daweid...?* (Lk 6:3)
 “Have you never read what David did...?”

Here the enclitic appears in the first question but it is not used in the second one, even though the two sentences are practically identical. To explain this inconsistency, Jones hypothesizes that the enclitic is made virtually redundant by interrogative intonation, therefore it should be considered as vestigial in Gothic. Its absence in later Germanic would, in his opinion, confirm this assumption.

Scherer (1968) gives a different explanation of the particle's optionality as an interrogative enclitic, basically proposing that it can introduce rhetorical questions only. Two more recently published studies on Gothic syntax (Ferraresi 2005; Buzzoni 2009) advance a similar claim, arguing that *-u* functions as a modifier of the interrogative force of a sentence, contributing an “emotive flavour” that turns the sentence into a “surprise or disapproval” question. Ferraresi, in particular, suggests that *-u* expresses surprise or disappointment of the questioner, bearing the same function as the Greek particle ὅρα.

The aim of the present study is to establish whether there is any truth in these theories and to help define the limits of the Gothic particle's usage more clearly.

2. Distribution of *-u*

It should be noted that, according to Ferraresi and Scherer, *-u* can introduce yes/no and wh-questions alike; this is also implicitly granted by Streitberg (1981: 64). According to

Ferraresi (2005: 149) the particle's ubiquitous distribution is exemplified by the following cases:

- (2) a. *magutsu driggkan?* (Mk 10:38)
 δύνασθε πίνειν
 “Can you drink...?”
- b. *hauḅḅan [= ha-u-uh ḅan] habais ḅatei ni namt?* (1Kor 4:7)
 τί δὲ ἔχεις ὃ οὐκ ἔλαβες;
 “What do you have that you did not receive?”

It should be noted, however, that *-u* never appears as such after wh-words. Wh-words can only be found to host the sequence *-uh*. In all such cases the sequence is most parsimoniously analyzed as a copulative particle (*-uh* as in *wakaiḅ standauiduh* “wake and stand firm”, 1Kor 16:13), rather than a (theoretically possible, but distributionally very limited: Schulze 1907) *-u-uh* (interrogative-copulative) complex. Here are the relevant passages:

- (3) a. *hanuh ḅan ḅuk sehum gast jah galapodedum?* (Mt 25:38)
 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ξένον καὶ συνηγάγομεν;
 “When did we see you a stranger and invite you in?”
- b. *hanuh ḅan ḅuk sehum siukana...* (Mt 25:39)
 πότε δέ σε εἶδομεν ἀσθενοῦντα...
 “When did we see you sick...”
- c. *hauḅḅan habais ḅatei ni namt?* (1Kor 4:7)
 τί δὲ ἔχεις ὃ οὐκ ἔλαβες;

“What do you have that you did not receive?”

- d. *hūuh þan samaqisse alhs gudis miþ galiugam?* (2Kor 6:16)

τίς δὲ συγκατάθεσις ναῶ θεοῦ μετὰ εἰδώλων;

"What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?"

- e. *hūuh þan samaqisse Xristau miþ Bailiama...* (2Kor 6:15)

τίς δὲ συμφώνησις χριστοῦ πρὸς βελιάρ...

"What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?"

It must be noted that in all five cases the enclitic is immediately followed by *þan* and the Greek question shows the particle δέ. Now, it is quite common practice, for the Gothic translator, to render δέ with *-uh þan*, in all kinds of sentences:

- (4) a. *þatuh þan qap fraisands ina* (J 6:6)

τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν

"He asked this only to test him"

- b. *niþ-þan mag augo qiþan du handau* (1Kor 12:21)

οὐ δύναται δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς εἰπεῖν τῇ χειρὶ

"The eye cannot say to the hand"

- c. *sumaizeh þan jah afargaggand* (1Tm 5:24 A)

τισὶν δὲ καὶ ἑπακολουθοῦσιν

"the sins of others trail behind them"

- d. *qiþanuh þan ist* (Mt 5:31)

ἔρρέθη δέ

"it is said"

See Fourquet 1938: 247.

Note, moreover, that the copulative enclitic *-uh* is never used independently of the Greek text in questions, with the exception of disjunctive ones:

- (5) a. *ḡû is sa qimanda ḡau anḡarizuh beidaima?* (Mt 11:3)
σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν;
“Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”
- b. *framuh guda sijai, ḡau iku fram mis silbin rodja* (J 7:17)
πότερον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν ἢ ἐγὼ ἀπ' ἐμαντοῦ λαλῶ
“whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own”
- c. *daupeins Iohannis uzuh himina was ḡau uzuh mannam?* (Mk 11:30)
τὸ βάπτισμα τοῦ ἰωάννου ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἦν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων;
- d. *daupeins Iohannis uzuh himina was ḡau uzuh mannam?* (Lk 20:4)
τὸ βάπτισμα ἰωάννου ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἦν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων;
“John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?”

If we accept Ferraresi's analysis, we will have to grant that *-u* is never found in wh-questions except in the sequence *-u-uh*, a sequence that, in turn, is only found together with the particle *ḡan* and in the translation of Greek δέ. As *-uh ḡan* (where *-uh* is a simple copulative enclitic) is a commonplace rendering of δέ in all kinds of sentences, Ferraresi's analysis of this particular passage (2b) is effectively a piece of special pleading. Interpreting (2b) as a sequence of two enclitics rather than a simple instance of copulative *-uh* requires a textually unjustified complication of the passage's analysis.

As to the possibility of using *-u* after *wh*-words, it should also be noted that, as a rule, the translator avoids using *-u* to mark the first member of a disjunctive question when this stands in appositive relation to a preceding interrogative pronoun (as in Lk 6:9: *hwa skuld ist sabbato dagam, þiuþ taujan þau unþiuþ taujan?* See Schulze 1907: 563). Buzzoni (2009: 34) also rejects Ferraresi's analysis of *hwaupþan* as “tentative”, on the grounds that the expression is “an isolated sequence”. The sequence, however, is not isolated at all, as (3d) and (3e) show.

One might object that the forms *hwauh* and *hwauh* are not what would be expected as the result of *hwa* and *hw* plus enclitic *-uh*, the regular enclitic-hosting forms of these pronouns being *hwah* and *hwah*. These forms, however, are never used as interrogative pronouns but only as indefinite pronouns in the Gothic Bible. The text, moreover, shows some hesitation in the use of *-uh* after vowels:

- (6) a. *sumaiþ-þan* (Lk 9:8)
 ἄλλων δὲ
 b. *sumaiþ-þan lofam slohun* (Mt 26:67)
 οἱ δὲ ἐράπισαν

which suggests that both forms may have been acceptable. The alternation between (interrogative) *hwa-uh* and (indefinite) *hwa-h* may also be due to prosodic reasons: as in Greek, the interrogative pronoun may bear a heavier stress.

It seems therefore soundest to affirm that Gothic *-u* is only used in yes/no or disjunctive questions. To generalize, we may say that the enclitic is only used when a choice between two distinct possibilities is given.

3. Greek ἄρα, Gothic -u

Ferraresi claims that Greek ἄρα and Gothic -u have the same function. Greek ἄρα may denote “anxiety of the questioner” (Liddell-Scott 1940: *s. u.*), “lively feeling of interest”, “surprise attendant upon disillusionment”, “scepticism”, or it may simply add liveliness to a question (Denniston 1950: 33-40).

The direct textual evidence does not support Ferraresi's claim. Let us note, first of all, that the Greek particle may easily be left untranslated in the Gothic Bible:

- (7) a. *hwa skuli þata barn wairþan?* (Lk 1:66)

τί ἄρα τὸ παιδίον τοῦτο ἔσται;

“What then is this child going to be?”

- b. *hwas siai sa...* (Lk 8:25)

τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν...

“Who is this?”

against

- (8) *hwas þannu sa sijai...* (Mk 4:41)

τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν...

“Who is this?”

The Gothic Bible yields three instances of yes/no questions in which the Greek text has ἄρα or the similar form ἄρα:

- (9) a. *ibai aufto leihtis bruhta?* (2Kor 1:17)
μήτι ἄρα τῇ ἐλαφρίᾳ ἐχρησάμην;
“Was I fickle?”
- b. *þannu Xristus frawaurhtais andbahts?* (Gal 2:17)
ἄρα χριστοῦς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος;
“doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin?”
- c. *bi-u-gitai galaubein ana airþai?* (Lk 18:8)
ἄρα εὕρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;
“will he find faith on the earth?”

In (9a) *-u* is excluded by the presence of the particle *ibai*, as Gothic interrogative clauses are never introduced by more than one particle (Buzzoni 2009: 36). In (9b) the Greek particle is rendered by the inferential pronoun *þannu*, as in (8). The only case suggesting a functional equivalence between Greek ἄρα and Gothic *-u* is (9c), which, in its isolation, and in consideration of the inconsistent rendering of ἄρα, is of little significance. It is practically impossible to discern whether the Greek particle is here left untranslated or it is rendered by the Gothic enclitic, which is used independently of the Greek text throughout the Gothic Bible.

4. Use of *-u* in rhetorical questions

Scherer claims that *-u* is never used in “content interrogations” (i. e. canonical questions), its use being restricted to rhetorical questions.

This claim is advanced not only about *-u*, but about all Gothic interrogative particles. According to Scherer, word-order is also used as a “differentiator” of rhetorical response: the SV order marks questions predicting an affirmative answer, the VS order marks questions predicting a negative answer. In both cases incredulity is denoted. This would be illustrated by the following examples (Scherer 1968: 420-421)

- (8) a. *þata izwis gamarzeiþ?* (J 6:61)
τοῦτο ὑμᾶς σκανδαλίζει;
“Does this offend you?”
- b. *swa jah jus unwitans sijub?* (Mk 7:18)
οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε;
“Are you so dull?”
- c. *swa filu gawunnub sware?* (Gal 3:4)
τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῆ;
“Have you experienced so much in vain?”
- d. *fimftiguns jere nauh ni habais jah Abraham sah?* (J 8:57)
πεντήκοντα ἔτη οὐπω ἔχεις καὶ ἀβραάμ ἐώρακας;
“You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!”
- e. *disdailips ist Xristus?* (1Kor 1:13)
μεμέρισται ὁ χριστός;
“Is Christ divided?”
- f. *aftra þugkeiþ izwis ei sunjoma uns wibra izwis?* (2Kor 12:19)
πάλαι δοκεῖτε ὅτι ὑμῖν ἀπολογούμεθα;
“Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you?”

It is easy to see, though, that in examples (8a)-(8d) the Gothic text merely reproduces its source's word-order. In example (8e) the periphrasis *disdailips ist* translates the Greek μεμέρισται: in cases like this, it is commonplace for the translator to put the copula immediately after the participle, in all kinds of sentences (Pagliarulo 2006). Example (8f) is not a proper case of inversion, and the position of the object pronoun *izwis* has nothing unusual, as shown by plain declarative clauses like the following:

- (9) a. *miþinsandida imma broþar* (2Kor 12:18)
 συναπέστειλα τὸν ἀδελφόν
 "I sent our brother with him"
- b. *miþgaqiwiða uns Xristau* (Eph 2:5)
 συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ χριστῷ
 "made us alive with Christ"
- c. *galeikaida uns* (1Thess 3:1)
 εὐδοκήσαμεν
 "we thought it best"

See Fourquet 1938: 271-272.

An analysis of the function of all Gothic interrogative particles lies far beyond the scope of this study, but an outline thereof will be given in §6. Suffice it to say, for the moment, that Scherer's thesis about the function of *-u* seems far-fetched. It is perhaps reasonable to regard the following sentences as rhetorical questions, i.e. questions the response to which, in Scherer's own words, is "unambiguously anticipated" within their

context:

- (10) a. *swau andhaffis þamma reikistin gudjin?* (J 18:22)
οὕτως ἀποκρίνη τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ;
“Is this the way you answer the high priest?”
- b. *sau ist sa sunus izwar þanei jus qibip þatei blinds gabaurans waurþi?* (J 9:19)
οὕτως ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμῶν, ὃν ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι τυφλὸς ἐγεννήθη;
“Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind?”

but it is much more difficult to see how the same could be said of

- (11) a. *wileidu fraleitan izwis þana þiudan Iudaie?* (Mk 15:9)
θέλετε ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων;
“Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?”
- b. *witudu hwa gatawida izwis?* (J 13:12)
γινώσκετε τί πεποίηκα ὑμῖν;
“Do you understand what I have done for you?”
- c. *þu ga-u-laubeis du sunau gudis?* (J 9:35)
σὺ πιστεύεις εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ;
“Do you believe in the Son of [God]?”
- d. *wileidu nu ei fraletau izwis þana þiudan Iudaie?* (J 18:39)
βούλεσθε οὖν ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων;
“Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews’?”
- e. *ga-u-laubjats þatei magjau þata taujan?* (Mt 9:28)

πιστεύετε ὅτι δύναμαι τοῦτο ποιῆσαι;

“Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

Moreover, a remarkable number of obviously rhetorical questions can be found to lack the enclitic, as we have already seen. Note the following case:

(12) *gasaihis ho qinon?* (Lk 7:44)

βλέπεις ταύτην τὴν γυναῖκα;

“Do you see this woman?”

(the woman in question is right in front of the listener).

Scherer (1968: 419) lists (12) as a “content interrogation”, which it clearly is not.

Thus, there seems to be no textual evidence of a relation between rhetorical questions and word-order in Gothic, nor is there any evidence of a consistent relation between the use of *-u* and rhetorical questions.

5. Use of *-u* as a modifier of the interrogative force

Ferraresi claims that *-u* acts as a modifier of the interrogative force, expressing surprise or disappointment of the questioner.

Unfortunately, Ferraresi develops her analysis on a very limited amount of cases. Her conclusions are basically drawn from a comparison between the following sets of examples (Ferraresi 2005: 148-149):

- (13) a. *iku fram mis silbin rodja* (J 7:17)
 ἐγὼ ἂπ' ἐμαυτοῦ λαλῶ
 “(whether my teaching comes from God or) whether I speak on my own”
- b. *hau ainzu ik jah Barnabas ni habos waldufni...?* (1Kor 9:6)
 ἢ μόνος ἐγὼ καὶ βαρναβᾶς οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν μὴ ἐργάζεσθαι;
 “Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right...?”
- c. *abu hus silbin hu pata qipis hau anparai hus qepun bi mik?* (J 18:34)
 ἂπὸ σεαυτοῦ σὺ τοῦτο λέγεις ἢ ἄλλοι σοι εἶπόν περὶ ἐμοῦ;
 “Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?”
- d. *swau andhaffjis pamma reikistin gudjin?* (J 18:22)
 οὕτως ἀποκρίνη τῷ ἀρχιερεῖ;
 “Is this the way you answer the high priest?”
- (14) a. *qap du im: pata izwis gamarzeip?* (J 6:61)
 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, τοῦτο ὑμεῖς σκανδαλίζει;
 “[Jesus] said to them, “Does this offend you?””
- b. *haruh qepun du imma: h̄a taujaima, ei waurkjaima waurstwa gудis?* (J 6:28)
 εἶπον οὖν πρὸς αὐτόν, τί ποιῶμεν ἵνα ἐργαζώμεθα τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ;
 “Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?””

Example (14b) is not pertinent, because it is not a binary question (see §2, above).

Examples (13a)-(13c) are disjunctive questions. As Schulze (1907) has persuasively

shown, the use of *-u* can be regarded as exceptionless in disjunctive questions, so that, at least in such cases, the enclitic may be considered as bearing no intrinsic emotive charge. Example (13d) is indeed recognizable as a “surprise or disapproval question” – and so is example (14a): Jesus is here reproaching his disciples for the “scandal” they take at hearing his words. Incidentally, Buzzoni (2009: 34) mentions (14a) as an example of canonical question, which it is not: the answer to this question can be easily assumed to be known in advance (“But Jesus, knowing in his heart that his disciples were murmuring so, said...”). The supposed element of surprise, disappointment or disapproval is hardly detectable in such sentences as (11a), (11c), (11d).

Anyway, Ferraresi's thesis does not seem applicable to the whole Gothic corpus. It is difficult to see how questions like (11) and (13) can be thought to be more heavily charged with surprise, disapproval or disappointment than the following:

- (15) a. *qamt her faur mel balwjan unsis?* (Mt 8:29)
 ἦλθες ὥδε πρὸ καιροῦ βασανίσαι ἡμᾶς;
 “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”
- b. *fimftiguns jere nauh ni habais jah Abraham sahr?* (J 8:57)
 πεντήκοντα ἔτη οὐπω ἔχεις καὶ ἄβραάμ ἐώρακας;
 “You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!”
- c. *ni bigitanai waurþun... giban wulþu guda, niba sa aljakunja?* (Lk 17:18)
 οὐχ εὐρέθησαν... δοῦναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀλλογενὴς οὗτος;
 “Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”
- d. *swa jah jus unwitans sijup?* (Mk 7:18)
 οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε;

“Are you so dull?”

e. *swa unfroþans sijub?* (Gal 3:3)

οὕτως ἀνόητοί ἐστε;

“Are you so foolish?”

Ferraresi's thesis seems therefore no more efficient than Scherer's in capturing the conditions under which the use of *-u* – or its omission – may be expected.

6. The negative evidence

Gothic *-u* is found in all kinds of binary questions, both canonical and non-canonical. However, as Buzzoni (2009: 36) notes, the enclitic is in complementary distribution with non-clitic complementizers such as *ibai*, *ei* etc. This complementarity, it must be added, is perfect in the case of indirect questions (zero-complementizer indirect questions are never found) but it is imperfect in the case of direct questions: a certain number of direct yes/no interrogative clauses are not introduced by any interrogative particle whatsoever. It is therefore possible to proceed “negatively”, i.e. to try to define the limits of the enclitic's usage by analyzing the cases in which it is *not* used. The rhetorical force of particles like *ibai*, whose presence excludes *-u*, has long been recognized. Ferraresi (2005: 145) qualifies *ibai* as a modifier of the illocutionary force that basically turns questions into rhetorical statements the answer to which is known in advance. This is essentially the same function of *ja-u* and *ni-u*, in which the enclitic does appear: the rhetorical force of these particles, however, is determined by their first elements (*ja* “yes”, *ni* “not”) rather than the enclitic itself. *Ibai* and *jau* are used in

expectation of a negative answer, *niu* in expectation of an affirmative one.

Let us consider all direct yes/no questions lacking interrogative particles. The Gothic Bible contains less than thirty such cases. A complete list of these is given here:

- (16) a. *qamt her faur mel balwjan unsis?* (Mt 8:29)
ἤλθεσ ὥδε πρὸ καιροῦ βασανίσαι ἡμᾶς;
“Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”
- b. *þata izwis gamarzeiþ?* (J 6:61)
τοῦτο ὑμᾶς σκανδαλίζει;
“Does this offend you?”
- c. *iþ mis hatizop, unte allana mannan hailana gatawida in sabbato?* (J 7:23)
ἐμοὶ χολᾶτε ὅτι ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ὑγιῇ ἐποίησα ἐν σαββάτῳ;
“are you angry with me for healing a man’s whole body on the Sabbath?”
- d. *fimftiguns jere nauh ni habais jah Abraham sah?* (J 8:57)
πεντήκοντα ἔτη οὐπω ἔχεις καὶ ἀβραάμ ἐώρακας;
“You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!”
- e. *in frawaurhtim þu gabaurans warst alls jah þu laiseis unsis?* (J 9:34)
ἐν ἁμαρτίαις σὺ ἐγεννήθης ὅλος, καὶ σὺ διδάσκεις ἡμᾶς;
“You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!”
- f. *jus qipþ þatei wajamerjau, unte qap: sunus gudis im?* (J 10:36)
ὕμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι βλασφημεῖς, ὅτι εἶπον, υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ εἰμι;
“do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”
- g. *nu sokidedun þuk afwairpan stainam Iudaeis, jah aftra gaggis*

jaind? (J 11:8)

νῦν ἐζήτουν σε λιθάσαι οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ πάλιν ὑπάγεις ἐκεῖ;

“a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?”

h. *galaubeis pata?* (J 11:26)

πιστεύεις τοῦτο;

“Do you believe this?”

i. *saiwala peina faur mik lagjis?* (J 13:38)

τὴν ψυχὴν σου ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ θήσεις;

“Will you really lay down your life for me?”

j. *swalaud melis mip izwis was, jah ni ufkunbes mik, Filippu?* (J 14:9)

τοσοῦτῳ χρόνῳ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι καὶ οὐκ ἔγνωκάς με, φίλιππε;

“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?”

k. *waitei ik Iudaius im?* (J 18:35)

μήτι ἐγὼ Ἰουδαῖός εἰμι;

“Am I a Jew?”

m. *qamt fraqistjan unsis?* (Lk 4:34)

ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς;

“Have you come to destroy us?”

n. *ni pata ussuggwud patei gatawida Daweid...?* (Lk 6:3)

οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἀνέγνωτε ὃ ἐποίησεν δαυλδ...;

“Have you never read what David did...?”

o. *gasaihis bo qinon?* (Lk 7:44)

βλέπεις ταύτην τὴν γυναῖκα;

“Do you see this woman?”

- p. *ni bigitanai waurþun... giban wulþu guda, niba sa aljakunja?* (Lk 17:18)

οὐχ εὐρέθησαν... δοῦναι δόξαν τῷ θεῷ εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀλλογενὴς οὗτος;

“Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”

- q. *swa jah jus unwitans sijub?* (Mk 7:18)

οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε;

“Are you so dull?”

- r. *nih þata gamelido ussuggwub...?* (Mk 12:10)

οὐδὲ τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην ἀνέγνωτε...;

“Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture”

- s. *þata nu þiuþeigo warþ mis dauþus?* (Rm 7:13)

τὸ οὖν ἀγαθὸν ἐμοὶ ἐγένετο θάνατος;

“Did that which is good, then, become death to me?”

- t. *disdailips ist Xristus?* (1Kor 1:13)

μεμέρισται ὁ χριστός;

“Is Christ divided?”

- u. *nih dwala gatawida guþ handugein þis fairhʰaus?* (1Kor 1:20)

οὐχὶ ἐμώρανεν ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου;

“Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

- v. *nist us þamma leika?* (1Kor 12:15,16)

οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος;

“Is it not of the body?”

- w. *duginnam aftra uns silbans anafilhan?* (2Kor 3:1)

ἀρχόμεθα πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνειν;

“Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?”

- x. *aftra þugkeiþ izwis ei sunjoma uns wiþra izwis?* (2Kor 12:19)

πάλαι δοκεῖτε ὅτι ὑμῖν ἀπολογούμεθα;

“Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you?”

- y. *swa unfroþans sijub? anastodjandans ahmin nu leika ustiuhþ? swa filu gawunnuþ sware?* (Gal 3:3-4)

οὕτως ἀνόητοί ἐστε; ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε; τοσαῦτα ἐπάθετε εἰκῆ;

“Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh? Have you experienced so much in vain?”

- z. *du mis ni rodeis?* (J 19:10)

ἐμοὶ οὐ λαλεῖς;

“Do you refuse to speak to me?”

This list does not include ambiguous cases like Mk 15:2: *þu is þiudans Iudaie?* = σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; or J 16:31: *nu galaubeiþ?* = ἄρτι πιστεύετε;

What most of these questions seem to have in common can be stated negatively, in speech act terminology, thus: they appear to be *defective*, in that they fail to fulfill the preparatory and essential rules of questions as described by Searle (1968: 66). In other words, they do not presuppose that the speaker does not know the answer to them (i.e. if their propositional content is true or not) and/or they do not count as sincere attempts to elicit any information from the listener.

Questions like (16d), (16e), (16s), (16t) have a propositional content that is patently

absurd to the speaker or to both speaker and listener: “You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!”; “You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!”; “Did that which is good, then, become death to me?”; “Is Christ divided?”. In (16s), it will be noted, the speaker himself immediately gives the answer: *nis-sijai!* “By no means!”. Such utterances are mere expressions of indignation, incredulity or reproach. A similar case is that of ironic sentences like (16k): “Am I a Jew?”, says Pilate, and of course he and his listeners know very well that he is not.

Questions like (16b), (16c), (16f), (16g), (16i), (16j), (16z) are simple repetitions of previous statements made by the listeners, or descriptions of actions recently performed by the listeners, uttered in disbelief, disapproval or irony – so much so that the answer may be immediately given by the speaker himself: “Will you really lay down your life for me? (I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!)”.

Questions (16o), (16p) have a patently true propositional content: the actual function of (16o) is simply to direct the listener's attention to someone (the woman), while (16p) is an expression of surprise: “(Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?) Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”. It is interesting to note that (16p) is almost immediately preceded by another rhetorical question introduced by *ni-u*: *niu taihun pai gahrainidai waurpun?* The difference lies in the rhetorical force of the two questions: the use of *ni-u* is avoided in the second one because it, unlike the previous one, predicts a negative answer. In other words, the propositional content of the predicted answer is here identical to that of the question. Question (16u) is another clearly rhetorical question: “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”. The answer can only be positive. The same can be said of question (16v).

Questions (16n), (16r) are ironic utterances that do not actually predict any answer or, at best, they can be considered as “exam questions”, in Searle's terms: “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?”; “Haven't you read this scripture?”. Both questions are directed at the scribes and at the pharisees, whose authority Jesus is questioning.

Questions (16q) and (16y) are actually reproaches and, as such, do not require answers. Questions (16w) and (16x) are clearly rhetorical, the answers being immediately given by the speaker himself: “Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? (Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody)”; “Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? (We have been speaking in the sight of God as those in Christ)”.

The only ambiguous cases seem to be (16a), (16h), (16m). In (16h), however, the questioner can be assumed to know the answer in advance, as the question is not meant to put Martha's faith in doubt, but rather to have her proclaim it openly: “And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”. In (16a) and (16m), two almost identical instances, the question stands in appositive relation to a preceding interrogative pronoun (*hxa uns jah þus?*) and the use of *-u* is therefore avoided. Compare Lk 6:9: *hxa skuld ist sabbato dagam, þiup taujan þau unþiup taujan?* (see Schulze 1907: 563).

We may conclude that what almost all the sentences grouped under (16) have in common is, at the illocutionary force level, their non-interrogativity. It is interesting to note, in this respect, that some of the considered sentences are rendered by declarative clauses or by uninverted questions in the English translation.

It thus seems that “zero-particle” questions do not actually compete, functionally,

with all kinds of particle-bearing questions, but only with non-canonical questions. The absence of the interrogative particle, in other words, is observed only in the kind of questions in which such particles as *ibai* find their only possible use. Canonical yes/no questions, which can be introduced by *-u* only, are never left with no particle to introduce them.

7. Conclusions

As we have seen, Jones (1958: 222) finds the cause of the optionality of *-u* in its redundancy, which is brought about by the contrast between affirmative and interrogative intonation, and sees this as the probable cause of the loss of the enclitic in later Germanic.

What we have observed, however, suggests that interrogative particles are optional in non-canonical questions only and this optionality seems to limit the use of rhetorically charged particles such as *ibai* much more than that of *-u*, a particle that seems to bear no intrinsic rhetorical or emotive charge and to function as a plain question-introducing device, which makes its use optional in rhetorical questions and compulsory in canonical questions – very much like inversion in modern English. Considering this, it may perhaps be useful to re-examine the current editions of the Gothic Bible for what concerns places like *þu is þiudans Iudaie?* (Mk 15:2). Here, the personal pronoun *þu* is perhaps better read *þû* (= *þu-u*), as in Mt 11:3 *þû is sa qimanda þau anþarizuh beidaima?* or Lk 7:19 *þû is sa qimanda þau anþaranu wenjaima?* (see Streitberg-Scardigli 2000, *ad loc.*; Schulze 1907).

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