On the Alleged Functions of Word-order in Wulfilian Gothic

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Theories of a functional differentiation of Gothic passive periphrases depending on their members’ position are examined by contrast with the textual data. The author argues that participles normally follow copulae in such cases and divergent instances cannot be regarded as having distinct functions of their own if not as emphatic variants.

It is commonly held that the language of Wulfila’s Bible follows quite closely its Greek source, giving little room for its own syntactic features. As far as word order is concerned, in particular, Wulfilian Gothic seems to represent little more than a slavish reproduction of New Testament Greek, unlike what happens, as shown by Else Ebel¹, in the language of the so-called Skeireins. The latter, whether a translation or an original work, shows a syntax which is much freer, from this point of view, from the authority of the Greek model and essentially comes within the SOV type; biblical quotations in the Skeireins, as Ebel says, show a VO basic order instead, which should be regarded as due to the influence of New Testament Greek. The strict dependence of Gothic syntax on its Greek model was already pointed out by Mai and Castiglione² and reaffirmed by Gabelentz and Loebe³. This view was later criticized by Streitberg⁴, whose thesis is resumed and further elaborated by Schröder⁵. The latter’s statement, which we will stick to, can be summarized thus: Wulfila never sacrifices his adherence to the holy text to stylistic caprice, but at the same time he prefers clear expression to respecting the Greek original’s purely exterior features. As Stolzenburg put it, Wulfila’s

¹Ebel 1978, pp. 49-82.
²Mai / Castiglione 1819, p. XX.
³Gabelentz / Loebe, 1836, p. XXVII.
⁴Streitberg 1891, pp. 81 sg.
⁵Schröder 1957, p. 6.
translation is generally slavish but not so slavish as to exclude recourse to Gothic idiomatic structures when necessary. As for word order in Wulfilian Gothic, scholars looking for a sound field of investigation basically have to content themselves with those cases in which the necessities of translation make a direct transposition from Greek into Gothic impossible or decidedly inelegant. Among these are all Greek synthetic forms for which Wulfila lacks any exact equivalent and has to resort to periphrastic renderings.

Koppitz was one of the first to note that Gothic verbs, if present, normally keep the last position in periphrastic renderings of single Greek terms. In introducing his work, however, Koppitz makes it clear that general statements regarding the position of verbs in the Gothic sentence are excluded from it, as the available textual data do not seem sufficient to allow sound conclusions to be drawn. He extensively considers the places where a single Greek term is translated by a verb-noun, verb-pronoun or verb-adverb syntagm. The only case, among these, where the verb does not regularly occupy the last position is the second.

The analysis is methodically resumed by Fourquet who reaffirms, even for the periphrastic passive and for adjective-verb syntagms in general, the verb’s tendency to follow the predicate, a tendency occurring with almost perfect regularity except when the verb is an imperative form or the periphrasis is preceded by a negative particle. In this case the predicate-verb order is kept in crystallized expressions such as J 10:13 oμήλει ni kar-ist (note the elision). Fourquet hypothesizes that locutions with predicate-verb order are to be taken as single logical units, while locutions with verb-predicate order as a fusion of two functionally distinct elements. The general principle he follows is: la traduction d’un mot unique a nécessairement la valeur d’une seule unité sémantique.

Such an attribution of different functions to periphrases

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6 Stolzenburg 1905, p. 385.
7 Koppitz 1900, p. 458.
8 Ibidem, p. 433.
10 This had already been pointed out in Meillet 1908, p. 97.
11 Fourquet 1938, p. 255.
depending on their members’ position is proposed again by Ambrosini in his study on Gothic modal verbs and by Benveniste in his article about the functions of “to be” and “to have”. Benveniste’s views are later adopted by Ramat. These scholars do not just assume that periphrases with predicate-verb order are to be read as semantic units, while periphrases with verb-predicate order are to be read as a coming together of two distinct elements. Ambrosini recognizes a “prevalence of the temporal over the modal meaning” in periphrases showing the modal verb in second position; Benveniste states that periphrases with *wisan* and a past participle have a temporal value (they are to be read as a “perfect”, in Benveniste’s own words) only when the copula follows the participle: otherwise what we have is predicative syntagms.

Ambrosini, however, draws his conclusions from only five cases in which the modal verbs *haban* and *duginnan* + infinitive translate a Greek future, and this without taking into account the general behaviour of Gothic periphrases. The problem is further examined by Anna Martellotti, who notes that the modal verb *skulan* (which is never employed to translate a Greek future) appears after the infinitive it governs when the Greek text in turn postponed δεί or ὤφειλεν, which *skulan* translates. *Duginnan* is similarly postponed in the only case in which προενέρχεσθα, the verb it translates, is postponed in the Greek text. In all other cases the Greek text shows a modal-infinitive order and this is faithfully reproduced in Gothic. Of great significance is Mk 8:31,

*δεί τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἄρχιερῶν*  
*skul sunus mans filu winnan jah uskiusan skulds ist fram þaim sinistam jah þaim auhumistam gudjam*

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16Lk 4:43 Εὐαγγελίσαςκή με δεί τὴν βασιλεῖαν τοῦ θεοῦ ωςλαμερναίαν ἵκ σολ δια ἰπυδάγαρδαι γυδίς 2Thess 1:3 εὐχαριστείς ὑπέλαμα τὸ θέσ αὐνιλδον skulun guda 2Cor 5:10 τῶς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς φανερώθηκε δεὶ ἐμπροσθέν τοῦ βήματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ allai weis atuagjan skulds siym faura stauastola Xristaus 2Cor 8:10 τούτῳ γὰρ ὡςν συμφέρει, αὕτης οὐ μόνον τὸ ποιήσαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἥλελεν προενερχεσθαι ἀπὸ πέραν unte þata izveis hatizo ist, juzei ni þatainei taufan, ak jah wiljan dugunnuf of fairnir jera.
where Wulfila, having the necessity to reintroduce *skulan* (in the locution *skulds ist*) to allow for a passive reading of the infinitive *uskiusan*, adds the modal verb after it independently of the Greek text, which makes both *πωθεῖν* and *ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι* depend on the preceding *δεῖ*, translated by *skal* in the first instance; and surely there is no detectable functional difference of a temporal kind here between *skal winnan* and *uskiusan skulds ist*. Putting the Gothic modal verb after the infinitive it governs, therefore, seems to be a mechanical fact devoid of any semantic relevance\(^{18}\).

If such a functional distinction based on word order does not seem admissible for modal verbs, we may ask whether the position of passive auxiliaries *wisan* and *wairþan* is governed by simply mechanical principles or, as Benveniste and Ramat claim, it is indeed a sign of a distinction in meaning.

Ancient Greek has a synthetic mediopassive perfect, which is a typical feature of this language\(^{19}\), and a periphrastic perfect formed by juxtaposition of a perfect mediopassive participle and the present tense of *εἰμί*. This periphrasis was originally limited to all persons of the subjunctive and of the optative and to the third person plural indicative of consonant stems\(^{20}\), but it is extended to all persons of the indicative in New Testament Greek\(^{21}\). The Greek mediopassive perfect indicative, in its synthetic as well as periphrastic forms, finds its most frequent rendering in the periphrasis with *wisan* and the preterite participle: we have counted 73 cases translated thus, against four cases translated by *wairþan* with a preterite participle and six cases translated by synthetic passive forms. In rendering the periphrastic perfect by means of a *wisan*-periphrasis Gothic unexceptionably follows the Greek word order:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Mt 10:26} & \text{ ἐστὶν κεκαλυμμένον ist gahuliþ} \\
\text{Mt 10:30} & \text{ ἐπικινδυνεῖν εἰσὶν garaþana sind} \\
\text{J 6:31} & \text{ ἐστὶν γεγραμμένον ist gamelip} \\
\text{J 6:65} & \text{ ἐκδοθέντα ist atgiban} \\
\text{J 10:34} & \text{ ἐστὶν γεγραμμένον ist gamelip} \\
\text{J 12:14} & \text{ ἐστὶν γεγραμμένον ist gamelip}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{19}\)Watkins 1969, p. 131.  
\(^{21}\)DeWitt Burton 1898, § 84.
When rendering synthetic mediopassive perfect forms, *wisian* always follows the participle, with only two exceptions out of 62 occurrences:

J 8:41 ἔγενεν ἡμέθα σιτίου γαβουραναί
1Cor 7:15 οὔ δεδούλωτα τίνι γαθίωαδις

and in the latter the auxiliary's position seems to be conditioned by the negative particle *ni*²², so that Benveniste appears to be justified in saying that the reverse order, with «to be» preceding the adjective, designates a predicative syntagm, not a perfect: he compares *was gadraban* to its Greek model ἦ λελατομημένον²³; moreover, he compares Gothic to Latin, which, having a periphrastic passive perfect structurally similar to the Gothic *wisian* + preterite participle periphrasis, similarly puts the auxiliary before the participle when the periphrasis is a descriptive form, not a true perfect²⁴:

J 20:30-31 πολλαμέν ὁ νόον καὶ ἄλλα σημεία ἔποιησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῷ καθάρῃ τῶν μαθητῶν [αὕτῳ], ὁ οὖν ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ ταύτη ὁ γέγραψαι ἵνα πιστεύσῃς
multa quidem et alia signa fecit Iesus in conspectu discipulorum suorum quae non sunt scripta in libro hoc haec autem scripta sunt ut credatis.

Just like Ambrosini, however, Benveniste does not consider this phenomenon in the wider perspective of the behaviour of Gothic periphrases and, in general, of Gothic predicative syntagms.

If Gothic regularly follows Greek word order when

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²²Fourquet 1938, p. 253.
²³The example is taken from Mk 15:46.
rendering periphrases, putting the auxiliary, however, after the participle with the same regularity when translating Greek synthetic forms, we have good reason to suspect that the former fact, too, may represent a mere reproduction of Greek syntactic features – and in any case it seems highly doubtful that we are dealing with Gothic idiomatic structures here. We must remember that modal verbs show identical behaviour, as does the *wairþan*-passive. This has a predicate-verb order in no more than two renderings of synthetic Greek forms:

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Mk 2:27 τὸ σάββατον διὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐγένετο
  sabbato in mans wair gaskapans
1Tm 2:14 Ἄδωμ ὁ ἡ τιπτήθης Adam ni warþ uslutoþs
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and in the second case the auxiliary’s position seems influenced by the negative particle ἡ. The *wairþan* + preterite participle periphrasis, unlike *wisan*-periphrases, translates almost exclusively synthetic Greek forms and thus appears almost always with a predicate-verb order. In the (rare) renderings of ἱνόμαι or εἰμί-periphrases it unexceptionably follows Greek word order:

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J 12:42 ἄποσυνάγωγοι γένονται uswaurpanai waufpeina
Lk 6:40 κατηρτισμένος δὲ πᾶς ἐσται gamanwids
  iwarjizah wairfai
Lk 10:21 ἐγένετο εὐθοδία wair galekaif
Lk 14:12 γένηται ἀνταπόδομα σοι wairþa þus usguldan
Mk 9:50 ἀκαλόν γένηται unsaltan wairþa
1Cor 9:27 ἀδόκιμος γένομαι uskusans wairfa
1Tm 2:14 ἐξαπατηθεῖσα ἐν παραβάσει γέγονεν
  uslutoða in missadedai warþ
Neh 6:16 ἐγενήθη δεξιοσθήται τὸ ἔργον warþ
  usfullþ jata waurstuw.
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In like manner the *wisan*-periphrasis follows Greek word order when translating εἰμί-syntagms which cannot be classified as periphrastic perfect forms.

This is the case with the periphrastic pluperfect:

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Mt 9:36 ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένωι καὶ ἔρημμένωι wesun
  ofdauidai jah frawaurnpanai
J 12:16 ἦν γεγραμμένων was gamelid
J 19:11 ἦν δεδομένων οὐκ ὅσοι ὅσοi hüs atgbah
Lk 2:26 ἦν αὐτῷ κεχρηματισμένον was imma gataihan
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with the only exception of J 3:24 ἐὰν βεβλημένος γαλαγῖς ἦν, which is, however, unattested in Wulfila’s Bible and known to us only by indirect tradition (Skeireins 3:2)\textsuperscript{25}.

This is also the case with ἐμὶ and aorist or present participles:

and with predicative syntagms or other periphrastic Greek expressions:

\textsuperscript{25}See Del Pezzo 1973, p. 9.
In order to reach sound conclusions in this field it seems preferable to draw our attention to those places where Gothic is forced to show a certain autonomy from its source, translating synthetic expressions by means of predicative syntagms. A first possibility worth considering is the rendering of synthetic forms by threefold syntagms, i. e. syntagms made up of a periphrastic passive and a predicative adjective. This is the case with the passive forms of τελειόω and δίκαιοω, which are translated by threefold syntagms in three instances:

Mt 11:19 δικαιατώς έσωathoia γαδομίδα ωρή
Phil 3:12 τετελείωματα γαράθς γαδομίψ σιμν
1Tm 3:16 δικαιατώς γαράθς γαδομίψ ωρή.

In all three cases – undeniably representing predicative syntagms – Gothic puts the adjective in the first position, followed by the customary participle-auxiliary complex. A similar behaviour is shown by twofold predicative syntagms (ωρήν or ωρήψ + predicate). When translating synthetic forms, ωρήψ-syntagms regularly put the verb in final position\(^\text{27}\):

Mt 8:3 ἐκαθαρίζοντοι ήραι ωρή
J 6:12 ἐνεπλήσθησαν σάδαι ωιρήψ

\(^{26}\)This order in Nestle-Aland 2001, p. 529, the reverse in Streitberg 2000, p. 388.

\(^{27}\)Only preterital instances are quoted as sample-cases.
When periphrastic expressions are translated Greek word order is again strictly followed:

Lk 2:42 ἐγένετο ἐτών δώδεκα ὡρὰς τωλιβώντρυς
Lk 6:16 ἐγένετο προδότης ὡρὰς γαλαιχάνδας
Lk 6:49 ἐγένετο τὸ τήμια τῆς οἰκίας ἐκείνης μέγα ὡρὰν ὡς ὑπεράσπης ἐκείνης μικρὰ
Lk 16:11 πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε τριγκόρι τι ὡρὰν ὑπεράσπης
Lk 16:12 πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε τριγκόρι τι ὡρὰν ὑπεράσπης
Lk 18:23 περίλυπος ἐγενήθη γαύρ ὡρὰν
Mk 1:1 ἐγένετο ἀπόκρυφον ὡρὰν ἀναλαγν
Mk 6:14 φανερὸν γὰρ ἐγένετο σωκύρον ἀλλὰ ὡρὰν
Mk 9:3 ἐγένετο στιλβόντα ὡρὰν γλίτων ἀνάρτων
Rm 10:20 ἐμφανιζεὶς ἐγενόμενον σωκυρὸν ὡρὰν
1Cor 15:10 οὐ κενὴ ἐγενήθη ἡμᾶς ὡς ὡρὰν
2Cor 3:7 ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ ὡρὰν ὑπεράσπης
2Cor 5:17 γέγονεν καθὼς ὡρὰν ὑπεράσπης
1Thess 2:14 μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε γαλακτονόμοι ὡρὰν ὑπεράσπης.

The only noticeable exceptions to this are imperative and negative forms\(^{28}\). Note threefold Gothic syntagms translating twofold Greek ones:

\(^{28}\)Fourquet 1938, pp. 253 sg.
Wisan shows an analogous behaviour. A third case worth considering is that of Greek nominal clauses translated by Gothic sentences containing a participle-governing copula:

- Lk 8:29 καὶ πέθανες φυλασσόμενος jah fotubandjom fastaiþs was
- Rm 11:33 ὃς ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρῆματα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνεξιχνιάστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ hnaia unaspspilloda sind stauos is jah unbilaistidai wigos is
- Rm 14:18 εὐάρστος τῷ θεῷ καὶ δόκιμος τοῖς ἀνθρώποις waila galeikaþ guda jah gakusans ist mannam
- Phil 3:10 συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ mikhaurips was dauþau is
- Col 4:6 ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἀλατι ἠρτυμένος waourd izwar sintreino in anstai salta gusubob sijai.

Again, no difference can be found between these and other renderings of elliptical clauses by copulae with non-verbal adjectives. The only exception to this seems to be Lk 2:25 ὁ ἀνθρώπος σῶτος δίκαιος καὶ εὐλαβής sa manna was garaihts jah gudafaurhts. Gothic renderings not showing a predicate-copula order or not following Greek word order generally lack predicative adjectives and have a copula governing various other predicative forms. The copula may precede the predicate if the subject is a pronoun. Some examples:

- J 1:29 ἰδε ὁ ἀρχόν τοῦ θεοῦ sai, sa ist wiprus gudis
- J 19:5 ἵδον ὁ ἀνθρώπος sa ist sa manna
- Lk 8:30 τι σοι ἐστιν ὁνομα hna ist namo hein
- 1Thess 5:18 τοῦτο γὰρ θέλημα θεοῦ pata auk ist wilja gudis
- Eph 5:17 τὸ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου hna sijai wilja fraujins
- Neh 7:2 ἀυτός ἀνήρ ἄληθής sa was wair sunjeins.

We cannot exclude that, at least in some cases, the

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29 Ibidem, p. 252.

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copula is put before the predicate in order to avoid ambiguities: e. g. *sa wair sunjeins was* could also mean “that man was true”, and *sa wiþrus gudis ist* could also mean “this goat is God’s”. In the last instance, *wiþrus gudis* also needs to stand undivided close to the following anaphoric *saei*.

Such a pronoun-copula attraction is perhaps also involved when Gothic has a relative clause with copula-predicate order where Greek has an attributive syntagm:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Rm 7:10} & \text{ καὶ εὑρέθη μοι ἡ ἑντολὴ ἢ εἰς ζωὴν αὐτῆ} \\
& \text{εἰς θάνατον bigitana warp mis anabusns, sei was} \\
& \text{du libainai, wisan du dafau}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{J 9:13} & \text{ τὸν ποτε τυφλὸν ἡν saei was blinds} \\
\text{1Tm 5:3} & \text{ τὰς ὄντας χήρας ἠozei bi sunjai sijaina} \\
& \text{widuwons.}
\end{align*}
\]

Similarly 2Tm 1:1, Gal 5:24, 1Tm 1:11, Col 4:13, 4:16, where the copula never governs an adjective but a genitive (*Xristaus*, Gal 5:24) or one or more predicative complexes of various kinds\(^{30}\). Here, again, the necessity to unambiguously keep two terms together is perhaps at work. It should also be noted that, as Adams has shown, copulae tend to attach themselves not to the predicate but to the relative pronoun *qui* in Latin and a similar phenomenon can be observed in Greek, which suggests a special status for the relative pronoun as a host of clitic elements in these languages\(^{31}\). This may well be the case with Gothic too.

It is clear that Wulfila normally has the copula follow the predicate, even when there is a possibility to autonomously translate a nominal clause by means of a predicative syntagm consisting of *wisan* + preterite participle: cases like Mt 11:19, Phil 3:12, 1Tm 3:16 represent independent examples, or independent models with non-verbal adjectives, of the adjective-verb order in Gothic predicative syntagms. The same holds true of the many instances of twofold syntagms translating synthetic Greek forms. If Gothic indeed shows an adjective-verb order in an almost exceptionless fashion even in autonomous predicative syntagms, the hypothesis of a double function for participial periphrases depending on their members’ position seems unjustified. In such cases as J 9:21,

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\(^{30}\)Fourquet (*op. cit.*, p. 258) considers all quoted instances as emphatic.

\(^{31}\)Adams 1994, p. 49.
1Cor 10:28, 1Thess 4:9, Col 3:20, on the other hand, it is impossible to discern precisely whether the periphrasis is to be read as a predicative syntagm or as a "perfect", to use Benveniste’s words, if not by looking at the Greek text and projecting its meaning onto the Gothic translation, a method that teaches us nothing concrete about the syntactic peculiarities of Wulfila’s language. No appreciable semantic difference can be detected between the Greek εὐφραστὸν ἔστιν (Col 3:20) and ἔστιν εὐφραστὸν (Eph 5:10), and there is no reason to think that the difference in word order between waila galeikaïp ist and sijai waila galeikaïp represents anything else than a syntactic calque. The same may be said of 2Cor 13:5 and 13:6. The strenuous regularity with which the adjective-verb order is applied in translating Greek synthetic forms also makes it unlikely that Wulfilian Gothic offers any clue about variations in word order in subordinate clauses, contrary to Ramat’s claims.

Similarly there seem to be no grounds for Fourquet’s thesis that the adjective-verb order is typical of a semantic unit. We have seen that predicative syntagms normally follow Greek word order and keep the verb in final position when translating synthetic Greek forms, with very few exceptions in emphatic contexts and none with participles: the only contrary instance would seem to be Col 3:20, where the Gothic word order, however, finds an exact equivalence in a Greek variant that Streitberg has not adopted. The participle-copula order seems thus to be the unmarked order for periphrastic passive forms as well as predicative syntagms: the reverse order, which is never directly attested with participles, seems to have a merely emphatic value and is a stylistic variant rather than a functionally independent form. It is, therefore, consistently with Schröder’s criterion, hardly given priority over the adherence to the Greek text.

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