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***The curious case of the transitive middle in ancient Indo-European languages***

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In this paper, we investigate a possible pattern of extension of the middle in ancient Greek and Sanskrit, in order to clarify the principles underlying the relationship between the unaccusative prototype of the category and the transitive middle. While the Homeric and Vedic *media tantum* verbs, as well as the anticausative oppositional middle verbs are prototypical members of the category (see Romagno 2005: 27 ff. and Appendices I and II, pages 139-145; Romagno 2010; Lazzeroni 2004, 2014), the transitive agentive middle verbs, traditionally reported as common in post-Homeric Greek and Sanskrit (see Wackernagel 1926: 124 ff., Rijksbaron 1984: 139 ff.; Allan 2003: 112 ff., among others) are peripheral (and, therefore, less prototypical) at the morphosyntax/semantics interface. The transitive middle with an actor (typically agent) subject and an undergoer (typically patient or theme) object, in fact, constitutes an (apparently) irreducible aporia in the commonly accepted interpretation of the Indo-European middle as a category that assigns an undergoer role to its subject (cf. Delbrück 1897: 416 ff.; Wackernagel 1926: 118 ff.; Neu 1968; Gonda 1975, 1979; Lazzeroni 1990; Kurzová 1999, 2014; Benedetti 2002; Romagno 2002, 2021; Allan 2003; Inglese 2020, among many others).

We propose a unifying account for the various manifestations and paths of development of the two-argument middle (direct and indirect reflexive, possessive and self-benefactive) in ancient Greek and Sanskrit, based on the interplay between subject affectedness, reflexivity and the distinction between inalienable and alienable possession. This account is consistent with the prototypical and archetypical function of the category (cf. Lazzeroni 1990; Romagno 2019, 2021).

**Keywords:** voice, subject affectedness, reflexivity, possession.

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