

Epistemic modal particles in Ancient Greek.

The function of modal particles within the epistemic semantic field

Ancient Greek has many particles, a number of which are ascribed epistemic modal functions. However, in Ancient Greek, epistemic modality can also be expressed by mental state predicates, mood, adverbs, idiomatic expressions and auxiliaries. The differences between these expressions have not yet been studied, which results in translations in which the particles are either left out or they are treated as equivalent to mental state predicates. An example of this can be seen in (1) and (2), where both the particle *που* and the mental state predicate *οἶμαι* are translated with ‘I fancy’.

- (1) Χαίρεφῶντα γὰρ ἴστε **που** οὗτος... (Pl.Ap.20e)
Chaerephon. conn. you know **mod.** He...
ACC PTCL PTCL

‘You know Chaerephon, **I fancy**. He...’ translation: Fowler (1966)

- (2) ὀρθῶς: ταὐτὰ γὰρ ἐρεῖς **οἶμαι** περί τε τῆς ἐν
Rightly the same for you will say I think about and ART. GEN.SG in
ACC.PL
τοῖς ζώοις γῆς τῆς ἐνθάδε καὶ τῆς ἐν τῷ παντί...;
ART. living. land. ART. there and ART. in ART. all.
DAT.PL DAT.PL GEN.SG GEN.SG DAT.SG DAT.SG

‘True; and you will, **I fancy**, say the same of the earth which is in us living creatures and that which is in the universe...?’ translation: Fowler (1929)

In this paper, I will show how a careful study of modal collocations and their distribution over a text can shed new light on the polysemic functions of the Greek modal particle *που* and other modal expressions that are usually treated as equivalents of this particle.

References

- H.N. Fowler, (1925) *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
H.N. Fowler, (1966) *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 1, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.