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John Greene

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NOTES ON THE EMPHATIC NEUTER.

SEVERAL years ago certain idiomatic uses of Latin neuters attracted the writer's attention and examples began to accumulate. A somewhat careful search in the meantime has failed to discover any published discussion of these neuters, or any mention of them in the grammars or the handbooks of Latin style. It is hoped therefore that the following observations may not be without interest.

It is so common in English to emphasize by saying 'Nothing could be finer, more agreeable,' or the like, that it is easy to overlook a striking peculiarity of certain analogous Latin phrases. Pliny writes (*Letters* i. 22):

Nihil est enim illo gravius sanctius doctius, ut mihi non unus homo, sed litterae ipsae omnesque bonae artes in uno homine summum periculum adire videantur.

Now a *thing* may be *gravis* in the physical sense, it may even be *sanctus*, but it cannot be *doctus*. Pliny evidently means to say that no one in the circle of his acquaintance possessed in larger measure the dignity, uprightness, and range of culture which the best Romans admired in their noblest men. Why then does he not say just that? *Nemo* was the precise word, always available, always in good use, from Plautus to Suetonius. Could *nihil* have been a slip, or an intrusion of the resurgent *sermo plebeius*?

The range of this peculiar idiom is very wide. Its essence is the coupling with certain neuters, *nihil*, *quid*, etc., of epithets or statements which are strictly applicable only to intelligent and moral beings. Examples follow, which might be greatly extended:

Pl. *Men.* 620 Nihil hoc confidentius, qui quae vides ea pernegat.

Also 630, *Trin.* 199-202 and elsewhere.

Ter. *Adel.* 98 Homine imperito numquam quicquam iniustiust.

Also 366 (*nihil quicquam*). *Hau. Tim.* 255 (*quid*).

Catullus 9. 11 Quid me laetius est beatiusve?

Cic. *Att.* 5. 1. 3 Nihil tam vidi mite, nihil tam placatum quam tum meus frater erat in sororem tuam. Also in sections 4 and 5 of the same letter.

Caes. *Att.* 9. 16. 3 Dolabella tuo nihil scito mihi esse iucundius.

Nepos, *Alcib.* 1 Constat enim . . . nihil

illo fuisse excellentius vel in vitiis vel in virtutibus.

Hor. *Sat.* i. 3. 18, 19 Nil fuit umquam sic impar sibi, that is, nobody was ever such a bundle of contradictions [as Tigellius]. Also *Odes* i. 12. 17, 18.

Martial i. 10 Adeone pulchra est [Maronilla]? Immo foedius nil est.

Juv. x. 278, 279 Quid illo cive tulisset | natura in terris, quid Roma beatius umquam?

These examples are without exception neuter or interrogative with a negative implication. *Quid*, *nihil* (*nil*), and *quicquam* are the prevailing neuters. In every instance *nemo*, *quis*, or *quisquam* would be the more precise word, and would correspond with good usage in English, where an imitation of the Latin would be not only incorrect, but often ludicrous or impertinent.

It will not be superfluous perhaps to dwell for a moment upon the distinctive meaning of these expressions. Demosthenes (*de Corona* 47) uses οὐδέν like *nihil*, and three editions taken at random interpret in as many ways. One says the neuter indicates 'contempt'; the second makes it suggest the character rather than the man, the third finds in it simply emphasis.

For the Latin the third view is undoubtedly the correct one. If we frame an English expression like this: 'In peace no virtue so becomes a man as modest stillness and humility,' clearly we have said something much less forceful than Shakspeare's 'In peace there's *nothing* so becomes a man,' etc. So when Clitipho says to his friend (*Ter. Hau. Tim.*, 295, 296), *Si haec sunt, Clinia, | vera, ita ut credo, quis test fortuntior?* all seems natural and as forcible as English could make it. But Catullus (ix. 10, 11), exulting in the return of his long-absent friend, anticipating with keenest zest the renewal of social joys, throws logic to the winds and cries,

O quantum est hominum beatiorum,
quid me laetius est beatiusve?

That is to say, *no man, no woman, no rollicking boy at play, no hero reclining at a banquet of the gods, was ever more radiantly happy than I.*

Considering the evident fondness of the

Latin writers for this form of emphasis, it seems probable that whenever *nihil*, or a similar neuter, is used in a comparison with masculine or feminine nouns, the expression is more emphatic than the (apparently) parallel English forms. To us all sexless objects are alike neuter: to the Latin writers not so.

In his *Laelius* (50) Cicero says *nihil est enim appetentius similitum sui nec rapacius quam natura*. Is it not probable that the writer intended to cover all beings, natures, elements, animate and inanimate that could be conceived of as coveting their like? So Caesar writes to Cicero (*Att.* 9. 16), *nihil a me abesse longius crudelitate*. Is not this intentionally more sweeping than *nullum vitium* etc.? Cicero says (*Fam.* 15. 4. 4) *nec est quicquam Cilicia contra Syriam munitius*: this certainly is more sweeping, more emphatic, than if he had used *ulla provincia*, or *ulla regio*.

We turn now to certain neuters found in expressions not negative, where emphasis is secured in a slightly different way. While *nihil*, *quicquam*, and *quid* in questions implying a negative, emphasize by exclusion, *quicquid*, *quantum*, and *quid* in exclamations produce a similar effect by inclusion. Thus in Ter. *Hau. Tim.* 247, we have *portant quid rerum*! What a load of things! In 254, *di boni, quid turbaest*! So in 255, *Andria* 745, and *Phor.* 853 (*quantum*).

Catullus is fond of this inclusive neuter. In 3. 1, 2 we find

Lugete, O Veneres Cupidinesque,
et quantum est hominum venustiorum.

Other examples occur in 9. 10 (already quoted), and in 31. 14. Compare the first two with Ter. *Phor.* 853. Horace has this use of *quicquid* in *Sat.* i. 6. 1, and *Epode* v. 1. Livy xxiii. 9. 3. *Iurantes per quicquid deorum est*. That is, by every god above, below. Cicero's *quicquid increpuerit, Catilinam timeri* (*in Cat.* i. 18) is like saying, At every rustle of man or mouse.

Typical examples illustrating the difference between the simple relative *quod* and the more inclusive *quicquid* may be taken from the *Andria*. In line 464, Mysis says, *nam quod peperisset iussit tolli* [*Pamphilus*]. That is, *be it male or female, he has promised to acknowledge it*. Earlier in the play Davus is expressing himself in a very different mood. He has no sympathy with his young master's feelings as a lover and prospective father, and besides he forebodes a flogging for himself. Hence he says (219) *quicquid peperisset decreverunt tollere. Be it*

male or female, sound or sickly, an infant Apollo or a monstrosity, they have decided to rear the brat. This fairly expresses Davus' mood, whether the poet distinctly thought of such a catalogue or not. The neuter indefinite is certainly broad enough to cover the amplest list of undesirables.

Tennyson has elegantly imitated this use of *quicquid* in his *In Memoriam* xviii. 'And come, whatever loves to weep.' And Henley wrote

'I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.'

If these two related uses of the Latin neuter deserve a name, they may perhaps be classed together with sufficient accuracy as *the emphatic neuter*, the one type emphasizing by exclusion and the other by inclusion.

When this usage is distinctly recognized, light is thrown on other expressions which at first seem inaccurate or clumsy. When Horace says (*Epist.* i. 9. 4), *legentis honesta Veronis*, the essential thought is that Tiberius chooses his friends from the ranks of honorable men; but the blanket-signification of the neuter makes the compliment much more telling. Livy (i. 53) makes the people of Gabii comfort 'the false Sextus' by assuring him *in se ipsum postremo saevitutum, si alia desint*. Not that Tarquin was given to venting his spite upon inanimate objects, but the neuter secures by the simplest means the utmost breadth of meaning.

In view of the range and frequency of these emphatic neuters, it may well be that in some passages, where the context does not absolutely require such an interpretation, the usage has been entirely overlooked. A possible instance is found in the *Adelphoe*, 125-127. Demea says with fine scorn, *Pater esse disce ab illis qui vere sciunt*. Micio replies, *Natura tu illi pater es, consiliis ego*. Demea retorts (*Dziatzko's text*) *Tun consiliis quicquam*? Understand *agis*, says Dziatzko. But why? If the omitted predicate can be taken from the preceding line with as good effect or even better, why should we bring in a new verb, even though it is one that is frequently omitted?

I understand Demea to mean 'Are you anything at all in judgment?' that is, when it comes to sound judgment, you are nobody, nothing. No wonder Micio replies, *Ah! si pergis, abiero*. For *quicquam* in predicate, instead of its more common use as subject, compare the *Tusculan Disputations* (i. 7. 14), *quid enim tam pugnat quam non modo miserum, sed omnino quicquam esse qui non sit?*

In the *Adelphoe* (264) we have the phrase *nil pote supra*, universally rendered, so far as the writer has observed, 'Nothing could be better,' or the like. This is a possible meaning of course. But Ctesipho is here exclaiming over the unselfish devotion of his brother. 'All his interests he has made second to my advantage. He has brought upon his own head the reproaches due to my *amour* and misdeed.' He concludes, *Nil pote supra*. Is not the natural climax this, 'No one could possibly do more'?

In the *Andria* (120) we have a similar phrase, *ut nil supra*. It seems more satisfactory, when careful account is taken of the context, to render in harmony with the usage illustrated above, and make the phrase equivalent to *ut numquam venustiore voltu quisquam fuerit*.

In the *Phormio* (208) Geta says *Hoc nil est, Phaedria. Illicet*. Possibly it is adequate to say, 'This is nonsense.' But Antipho's remark is true enough. The deficiency which disquiets the versatile Geta is in his young master's personality, not in his language. As a modern Geta might say, 'Antipho hasn't any *sand*.' Now if the emphatic neuter may properly be recognized here, the sense is certainly more satisfactory. '*Phaedria, this fellow's no good. Let's go.*' Such a use of *nil* would be parallel with that in the *Adelphoe*, 394, *Tu quantus quantu's nil nisi sapientia es*. If Syrus had been speaking in the same tone to Micio concerning Demea in the latter's presence, the Latin might have been, *Hoc, quantum quantumst, nil nisi sapientia est*.

For the present, one more instance must suffice. In his *De Finibus*, ii. 55, Cicero relates an interesting incident of a certain Sextilius, who secured a large legacy by a

falsehood of which he could not be convicted. Then follows *Num igitur eum postea censes anxio animo aut sollicito fuisse? Nihil minus contraque illa hereditate dives ob eamque rem laetus*. Reid translates 'Nothing could be less true.' But this again is dragging in a predicate in no way suggested by the foregoing words. *Dives* and *laetus* show clearly that the man, and not the statement is still in mind. The natural rendering, therefore, seems to be, 'No one was less so, but on the contrary he was enriched by that inheritance and happy for that reason.'

It should perhaps be added that this discussion lays no claim to completeness. After a sufficient number of examples were gathered to determine the nature and import of the usage, other questions demanded consideration, and therefore no author has been exhaustively studied with reference to these neuters, and some have not been examined at all.

Interesting queries are suggested. Is the usage essentially colloquial? Caesar uses it in letters, but apparently not in his narrative works. Cicero, on the other hand, employed it in most, if not all, of his most dignified works. Why is it rare in his orations? The *Milo* (ii. 5) contains the only example thus far noted by the writer. Yet it would seem to be precisely the sort of exaggeration suited to popular address. What does it signify if a writer absolutely avoids it, literary fastidiousness, or logical precision?

The writer at least, and perhaps Latinists in general, would be interested in a further discussion of these neuters.

JOHN GREENE.

Colgate University, N. Y.

THE LATIN FUTURE INFINITIVE

(*Crambe repetita*).

Quid Postgatius de origine Latini infinitivi et participii futuri activi senserit. Specimen literarium inaugurale quod—submitte JAN HENDRIK LEOPOLD Leovardiensis die xvi mensis Aprilis anno MCMIV hora iii. Leovardiae—apud H.V. Bellium K.Z.N. MCMIV. Pp. vi, 78 (pp. 72-78 Theses).

I DISLIKE as much as most people plodding over the same ground twice; but when

positions which I have defended in eight pages¹ are assailed in seventy, I feel that I owe it to the eminent philologists who have accepted my views to take some notice of the attack. I do so with somewhat less reluctance as most readers of the *Classical Review* have, it is probable, never seen my longer paper.

Dr. Leopold (for I assume that the

¹ *Classical Review* v. (1891) p. 301, *Indogermanische Forschungen* iv. (1894) pp. 252-258.