

**PERSONIFICATION AND THE
USE OF ABSTRACT SUBJECTS
IN THE ATTIC ORATORS AND
THUKYDIDES, PART I**

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Personification and the Use of Abstract Subjects in the Attic Orators and Thukydides, Part I by
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PERSONIFICATION

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ATTIC ORATORS AND THUKYDIDES

PART I

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ROBERT SOMERVILLE RADFORD

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¹ This work is cited simply as Hense.

PERSONIFICATION¹ AND THE USE OF
ABSTRACT SUBJECTS IN THE ATTIC
ORATORS AND THUKYDIDES.

INTRODUCTION.

The use of simple concrete terms is the rule in the classical languages; abstract words and phrases are far more usual in modern English. When an abstract noun is employed in Greek or Latin, it adds dignity to the style, and if an abstract subject is employed with a verb of action, the effect is still more marked. The reason for this is that originally when non-personal subjects were associated with verbs of action, personification was always involved². This vivid conception is commonly lost in the later stages of

Previous
Literature.

¹ In the present title Personification is employed in a restricted sense and used to include only those cases in which non-personal subjects are associated with verbs of action. For this use of the term, cf. Meyer, I. 1., p. 3. The cases are excluded in which adjectives which are properly used only of persons are applied metaphorically to things. Similarly the term 'abstract' subject is often employed in the general sense of 'non-personal.'

² Usener, *Götternamen*, p. 371 ff., holds that the earliest stratum of Greek abstract nouns, viz., the feminines of the a-declension, did not originally possess an abstract meaning, but are old feminine forms which correspond to the nomina agentis in -δς, ἡ τροφή, 'nourishment,' being really the feminine of an original adjective τροφός-ῆ-δς, 'nourishing.' The feminine adjective has become an abstract noun through first denoting some female personality, which in the oldest time was that of some divine being. This view, which Usener seeks to support by some precise philological data, is substantially the same as that formerly advocated on more general grounds by Max Müller (*Chips from a German Workshop*, II 56 ff.) According to the latter, the old enlivening and individualizing forms of expression live on in poetry. According to the well-known view of J. Grimm, *Deutsche Gramm.* III, p. 344 ff., personification lies at the basis of all grammatical gender, since the earliest stages of language uniformly attributed personal actions and qualities to things.

language, yet, as Prof. Gildersleeve (*A. J. P.*, XX, 111) points out in discussing the *συνέτης* of abstract nouns, 'the nominative of the abstract is apt to hark back to the primal personification.'

The use of non-personal subjects has been hitherto examined chiefly for Latin authors. Nägelsbach's discussion of Latin usage in his *Lateinische Stilistik*, p. 570 ff., is a standard one, and the main outlines of his treatment may be briefly reproduced here. Nägelsbach treats the use of subjects of the thing as involving the elevation of the thing to the dignity of a person, in other words, the personification of the thing, and as restricted largely to special styles and kinds of composition. This personification, according to Nägelsbach, is akin, on the whole, to the poetical fancy, but there are certain spheres of writing in which no prose author has refrained from its use. Hence he distinguishes four classes of abstract subjects which are freely associated with verbs of action:—

(1) An affection or disposition of the mind stands out so prominently that it appears to be the real agent and to play the part of the person, as *Liv.* 21, 8 *hinc spes, hinc desperatio animos irritat.*

(2) Abstract substantives may designate actions so weighty and important in themselves that in our thought they are detached from the acting person and become independent, as *Cic. ad Att.* 12, 16 *fin. me scriptio et litterae non leniunt, sed obturbant.*

(3) This personification finds its proper sphere especially in political and scientific language, as *Cic. Ac.* 2, 3, 7 *neque nostrae disputationes quidquam aliud agunt, nisi ut eliciant, etc.*

(4) Here belong also the arts and sciences conceived as independent of those who pursue them, as *Cic. Fin.* 3, 2, 4 *agricultura eas res nominibus notavit novis.*

More recently the question of the Latin use of abstract subjects has received extended treatment in a number of special dissertations, which are enumerated in Nägelsbach, l. l., p. 572. Of these only two require mention here, viz., the dissertation of Ahlén, *De subjectis rei apud Ciceronem cum verbis, quae actionem significant, coniunctis*, Upsala, 1877, and that of Bock, *Subiecta rei cum actionis verbis coniungendi usus*, Leipzig, 1889. Ahlén has collected the examples of subjects of the thing used by Cicero and arranged them into classes according to the several verbs with which they occur. Bock, on the other hand, has divided the material collected by Ahlén as well as that added by himself into

seven classes, based largely on the four classes of Nägelsbach. The examples occurring in Cicero have been shown by Ahlén's collection to be so numerous that they have led grammarians to recognize a larger use of abstract subjects in Latin than was formerly admitted (Nägelsbach-Müller, l. l., p. 567); yet the frequency of this use in the Roman writer must also be ascribed in part to the luxuriant and rhetorical qualities of Ciceronian style.

No special examination has hitherto been made of the Greek use of abstract subjects, although a collection of examples appears

to show that the usage of many Greek authors
Method of in this respect is more moderate than that of any
Procedure. Latin author. In the present dissertation I shall

attempt to supply this omission by collecting the various uses of non-personal subjects with verbs of action, which are found in the genuine works of the Attic Orators and in Thukydides, and by pointing out, so far as possible, their stylistic effect. In determining the question of genuineness I have followed the judgment of Blass; of the doubtful speeches only the Epitaphios ascribed to Lysias has been included in view of its special interest. The arrangement of the material offers some difficulty. Ahlén has arranged his examples according to verbs, Bock according to subjects. The arrangement which I shall adopt will be an attempt to combine, so far as possible, the chief advantages of both these methods. Hence I shall first arrange the following classes according to subjects (Part I):—

(1) Natural objects or phenomena in which the force of nature seems to act, as Thuk. 4, 3, 1 *χειμῶν ἐπιγενόμενος κατήνευγε τὰς ναῦς ἐς τὴν Πύλον.*

(2) Phrases and forms of expression which belong to popular or to technical language, i. e., the language of special classes or professions, as Dem. 19, 44 *ταῦτα λέγει ἡ ἐπιστολή; νόμος λέγει, κελεύει*, etc.; Isokr. 2, 42 *τὰ συμβουλευόντα τῶν συγγραμμάτων.*—The association of verbs with subjects which fall under this class is, in general, no more restricted than in a modern language, often it is less restricted.

(3) Cases in which the actions or affections of persons are consciously ascribed to inanimate things (Personification Proper), as Dem. 18, 172 *ἐχεινος ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη εὐνοῦν ἄνδρα ἐκάλει.* It will be observed that only those cases of personification are included under the present class in which the individual writer