

**THE USE OF THE ADJECTIVE
AS A SUBSTANTIVE IN
THE DE RERUM NATURA OF
LUCRETIUS, PP. 180-214**

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THE USE OF THE ADJECTIVE AS A SUBSTANTIVE IN THE DE RERUM NATURA OF T. LUCRETIVS CARUS.*

The transfer of a word ordinarily used as an adjective to the function of a substantive, involves one of the most common shifts of category that occur in language, and is abundantly illustrated by all the Indo-European languages. So among the Romans, as new substantive concepts arose new expressions developed for them. Of the various new forms that thus arose the substantivized adjective is one of the most important and most interesting, whether viewed from the point of view of general linguistics or treated as a factor in the historical development of the Latin language.

The use of the Latin adjective as a substantive has been made the subject of a great deal of study. Those who devoted attention to the subject in the earlier part of the past century approached it with minds seriously prejudiced in two respects. First, as they were interested in it mainly for the light it threw on "good usage" and "bad usage," they looked at the phenomenon mainly from the point of view of the stylist. In the second place they were still largely swayed by the "logical" method of language study, which had sharply and clearly defined the respective provinces of the adjective and the substantive, and they accordingly viewed with disapproval any "intrusion" of the former upon the field of the latter. It was an offense against the principles of grammar as well as a violation of good style.

* Additions by the editor are enclosed in single quotation marks reversed, thus:

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Even a man of the type of Christian Karl Reisig makes the following remarkable statement: "Es hat die Sprache eine Menge Redensarten, wo das neutrum adjectivi für ein substantivum gesetzt ist, erst almählich gebildet. Zuerst war dies mehr dichterisch; seit dem ersten Jahrhundert der Kaiser wurde es in der Prose immer allgemeiner; z. B. *in levi habendum* bei Tac. Ann. 3,54, *primas dominandi spes in arduo (esse)* Ann. 4,7. Auch früher schon hat Sallust, der überhaupt manches Dichterische anwendet, *in incerto* Cat. 41,1."

In 1837 C. G. Dietrich published a brief paper in the Zeitschrift f. Alterthumswissenschaft, Nr. 44, pp. 367ff., and treated the same subject in greater detail in the Easter program of the gymnasium at Freiburg in 1842. This paper was reprinted in Neue Jahrb. f. Phil. u. Paed. suppl. vol. 8, pp. 487-503 (= Archiv. f. Phil. u. Paed.). While Dietrich still viewed the question with the eyes of a stylist and bases his conclusions almost exclusively on the usage of Cicero (he cites scarcely more than half a dozen passages from Sallust, Nepos and Livy), yet to him is due the credit of having pointed out the frequency of this usage, which others had regarded as confined to a comparatively small number of words and to a few special phrases. He took a decided stand: "*omnia fere (sc. adjectiva) pro substantivis usurpari posse existimarem, si quidem ex ipsa verborum compositione satis intelligitur adjectiva habere vim substantivorum.*" During the succeeding thirty years Nägelsbach's Stilistik (1st ed. 1846, 3d 1858, 4th 1861), Holtze, Syntaxis priscorum scriptorum Latinorum usque ad Terentium, 1861, 1862 and Draeger's Historische Syntax der lat.

¹ Vorlesungen über lat. Sprachwissenschaft (first published in 1839 by his pupil Fr. Haase and re-edited in the 80's by Heerdegen, Schmalz and Landgraf), vol. 3, pp. 159ff.

Spr. vol. 1, 1872 (2d ed. 1878) added considerable new material from other writers than Cicero and introduced a more elaborate classification of the material.

In 1874 appeared two works which made substantial contributions to the subject: Haase, *Vorlesungen über lat. Sprachwissenschaft*, vol. 1, ed. by Eckstein and Ott, *Die Substantivierung des lat. Adjectivum durch Ellipse*, Program, Rottweil. The former dealt a heavy (and final) blow to those who had made extravagant use of the ellipsis as an explanation of origin of substantivized adjectives, while Ott pointed out a large group of instances, in the case of which one is justified in assuming that an ellipsis has been involved in the development of the usage. Ten years later Panhoff,¹ Barth,² and Wueseke³ enriched the available material by somewhat exhaustive papers on the usage of Tacitus, Terence and Plautus, and in 1890 Hirt added the material supplied by Quintilian.⁴ The special line of work opened up by Ott in the above-mentioned program was followed out by Wölflin, *Die Ellipse von *navis*⁵ and Rolfe, *Die Ellipse von *ars*⁶ and *The Formation of Latin Substantives from Geographical Adjectives by Ellipsis⁷ in the thorough and exhaustive manner characteristic of the school of Wölflin.⁴***

¹ Panhoff, *De neutrius generis adlectivorum substantivo usu apud Tacitum*, Diss. Halle, 1883.

² Barth, *Die Eleganz des Terentius im Gebrauch des Adjectivums*, in *Jahr. Class. Phil.*, vol. 129 (1884), pp. 177-182.

³ Wueseke, *De Plauti et Terentii usu, adjectiva et participle substantivo ponendi*, Diss. Marburg, 1884.

⁴ Hirt, *Ueber die Substantivierung des Adjectivums bei Quintilian*, Program des Sophiengymnasiums, Berlin, 1890.

⁵ *Archiv. Lat. Lex.* vol. 9 (1896), pp. 285-291.

⁶ *Archiv. Lat. Lex.* vol. 10 (1898), pp. 229-246.

⁷ *Trans. Amer. Phil. Assoc.* vol. 30 (1899), pp. 5-23.