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The ancient Greek address system and some proposed sociolinguistic universals

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ABSTRACT

This article summarizes the results of a longer study of address forms in Ancient Greek, based on 11,891 address tokens from a variety of sources. It argues that the Greek evidence appears to contradict two tendencies, found in address forms in other languages, which have been claimed as possible sociolinguistic universals: the tendency toward T/V distinctions, and the principle that "What is new is polite." It is suggested that these alleged universals should perhaps be re-examined in light of the Greek evidence, and that ancient languages in general have more to contribute to sociolinguistics than is sometimes realized. (Address, Ancient Greek, T/V distinctions)*

In the 35 years since the appearance of Brown & Gilman's article on "pronouns of power and solidarity" (1960), the amount of attention paid by sociolinguists to forms of address has been steadily increasing. In addition to hundreds of books and articles on the address systems of individual languages, there are theoretical discussions of address theory (e.g. Braun 1988) and two bibliographies on the subject (Philipsen & Huspek 1985, Braun et al. 1986), one of which contains over 1,000 titles.

If one looks more closely at the way that work on forms of address has evolved over this period, one finds several major trends, in addition to the general tendency for the subject to become more popular. One of the most obvious developments is that the initial concentration on standard European languages like French, German, Spanish, and English has been superseded by an awareness of the usefulness of other languages such as Arabic (Parkinson 1985), Polish (Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak 1992), and Korean (Hwang 1975). Of course these languages are not inherently any more useful than French or German; but given that much has now been written on the address systems of major European languages, people working on forms of address are finding that the most interesting and unexpected results may be obtained from languages as different as possible from those which have already been studied.

Another trend has been an increasing awareness of the effect of methods of data collection on results, and consequently greater sophistication in the gathering and evaluation of linguistic data. Early studies of forms of address were often conducted by written questionnaires administered in the absence of the linguist, and the data so collected were not always checked against any other form of evidence. Other work has been based on data gathered from interviews and/or observation; but it is becoming more and more apparent that people asked about their use of language, and those who know that their language is being scrutinized or even observed, do not speak as they would in other situations (Labov 1972:113, Wolfson 1976).

One of the results of increased awareness of these problems is that data are now often collected using a variety of different methods, on Labov's principle (1972:102, 119) that conclusions are much more likely to be valid if they are supported by data gathered in a variety of different ways. One of the results of this proliferation of different sources has been an increased reliance on written texts to provide at least part of the data for studies of address forms in modern languages. There are also other reasons for the increasing popularity of text-based research: texts may not always represent the most colloquial level of language, and they are unlikely to be much help to a researcher whose main interest is in a phonetic feature, but they do have the advantage of representing a form of language which occurred outside the setting of a linguistic interview and was not determined by a linguist's questions (Labov, 109). They also have the advantage of making the basic data easily available to be checked by other linguists (Labov, 100). Moreover, the ideas that spoken and written language are fundamentally different, and that only the former is worthy of attention from linguists, have been called into question by theoretical work in other areas (Romaine 1982, Biber 1988).

Along with this change in methods of data collection has come increased sophistication in analysis. Linguists are now less satisfied than formerly merely to report the facts about a specific language; instead there is more emphasis on the presence or absence of linguistic universals, and on the more general conclusions which can be derived from the particular address system under discussion.

All three of these tendencies suggest that it is time for sociolinguists to consider the address systems of ancient languages. Such languages are in many important ways fundamentally different from their modern descendants, yet to my knowledge there is as yet no serious sociolinguistic work on their forms of address. Surely the different perspectives provided by languages 2000 years old have the potential to be as useful as those provided by modern languages from different linguistic groups? True, a study of ancient languages must be entirely text-based; but the use of texts is becoming more and more popular anyway, and some of the most important works in the history of address theory have been based exclusively on written data (e.g. Friedrich 1966). This

is not to say that texts can be used indiscriminately – see below for a discussion of the nature of the Greek evidence – but it does mean that the restriction of data to written texts does not in itself make a language unsuitable for sociolinguistic study. Moreover, it happens that ancient languages have some features which could be important in the continuing theoretical debates about linguistic universals and the general tendencies of forms of address. It will thus be useful for scholars to consider these features before making pronouncements about universality which might turn out to be false.

I offer here some of the results of a study of the address system of ancient Greek. Such a study is of course potentially of interest to classicists as well as to linguists, and the two groups have very different requirements in terms of the forms of publication. The main publication of this work is in a form geared to classicists (Dickey 1996), and I shall present here only those points which have a direct bearing on problems of interest to the sociolinguistic study of address. In consequence, there will be no attempt here to give a complete description of the ancient Greek address system.

NATURE OF THE STUDY AND METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Most of our evidence for the ancient Greek language comes from the following types of texts:

(a) Epigraphic evidence, i.e. inscriptions and graffiti. While such texts are often invaluable as clues to non-literary types of Greek, they are of little use to the present inquiry because they contain very few forms of address.

(b) Evidence from papyrus and parchment documents. These sources are often cited as prime examples of non-standard language, but they have two major disadvantages for our purposes: they do not contain many forms of address, and they are largely confined to a particular place (Egypt) and chronological period (the Roman empire).

(c) Literary prose. This category includes the works of Plato, Xenophon, Thucydides etc. Such works are rich in address forms and largely agree with each other in how such forms are used; there is no obvious reason why the address system they present should not have been that of the spoken language.

(d) Poetry. This category must be further divided by poetic genre – into epic (Homer), tragedy (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides), and comedy (Aristophanes, Menander). All these genres produce large numbers of address forms; there are other genres as well, which have been omitted from this list because they do not contain enough such forms to be useful for our purposes. Of these three, epic and tragedy are universally admitted to be written in artificial languages well removed from any type of ordinary speech and containing a variety of features from different times and places. This arti-

ficiality is likely to be responsible for the fact that no coherent system of address use is found in epic and tragedy.

Comedy is another issue; this genre used a very colloquial language, and one might well expect to find in it an address system very similar to that of ordinary speech. Yet when one analyzes the addresses found in Aristophanes and Menander, it emerges that Menander uses essentially the same address system as the prose authors – while Aristophanes, like the tragedians, fails to use this system and does not provide any coherent alternative. This suggests a conclusion also supported by other evidence, namely that Aristophanes made less effort than Menander to give a realistic portrayal of conversational language: he was more interested in doing other, more humorous, things with his use of language. Menander is thus likely to be much more help to us than Aristophanes; even with Menander, however, we must remember that the metrical constraints of poetry are likely to affect the addresses used on occasion.

From this list of possibilities it appears that the most complete and realistic evidence on spoken Greek address usage is likely to come from literary prose and Menander, and as a consequence these authors have been used as the basis of the present study. The particular prose works used were chosen in order to maximize the possibility of checking one against another, and to come as close as possible to the conversational language of at least one period of Greek history; they represent the work of 25 authors ranging from the 5th century BCE to the 2nd century CE.[1]

It is notable that the classical prose authors (those writing in the 5th–4th centuries BCE) and Menander (4th century BCE) did produce a simple, consistent system of address. Of course, that address system did then change over time, but there is a significant amount of evidence for it in the classical authors. It is very difficult to see where they got this address system, if not from their own speech. It would be surprising if these authors had imitated one another, since they show wide divergences in many other areas of style, and some of the characteristics concerned are are difficult to spot without the systematic analysis of a very large body of text. It is almost impossible that this address system could have been invented independently by the individual authors, given the large number of authors who used it and the close agreement among them.

The address system of classical prose is not elaborate, elegant, or elevated according to classical Greek standards; it can be dull and repetitious in the extreme. This accounts for the fact that Aristophanes and the tragedians abandoned it, and makes it very improbable that the prose address system was an invented, literary system. It is unlikely that the address system I have found in this project is in every way identical to that used by every single

Greek in casual conversation; but it is highly probable that it is much the same as that used by affluent, educated Athenians in certain situations.

The data were collected by reading through the works of each author chosen, noting all the forms of address; an electronic search was then conducted on each author, to make sure that nothing was missed. The total number of address tokens gathered in this way was 11,891. Most studies of forms of address in modern languages decline to specify exactly how much data they had; the few which are willing to give statistics might be presumed to be based on more evidence than the others. The largest such figure I have yet found is Parkinson's of "over 5,000" address tokens (1985:6). The corpus of data on which the present survey is based is thus probably more than twice the size of those of the largest studies of modern address systems.

RESULTS

Ancient Greek, unlike Modern Greek, had no T/V pronoun distinction; in practice, the only forms of address which could be used to indicate anything about the relationship between speaker and addressee were the free forms (as opposed to bound; cf. Braun 1988:11–12). These were easily identifiable, because Greek distinguished free forms of address by putting them into the vocative case, which usually gave them a distinctive ending. A study of address forms in Greek is thus basically a study of vocatives; for the rest of this discussion, the word ADDRESS when used in a Greek context is to be assumed to refer to vocatives.[2]

In general, addresses were expected at the beginnings of conversations; their absence usually meant that the communication was very urgent, or that the addressee was greatly inferior to the speaker in status. The address system reflected the division of Athenian society into categories of free and slave, as well as marking the special position of women and children in that society. Free adult males addressed each other by name, whatever their age or rank, but they often addressed slaves (their own or someone else's) as *paî* 'boy' or with other terms which indicated servile status. Slaves could address their own masters and mistresses with *déspota* 'master' and *déspoina* 'mistress'; but names were also possible, and slaves regularly used names to address free men other than their own masters.

Women and children appear to have used the same address system as men for the most part, although there are a few minor points on which it is possible that traces of "women's language" can be detected. Men, however, were much less likely to use names when addressing women and children; women were generally addressed as *gúnai* 'woman' and children as *paî* or with another word meaning 'child'. Young men could be addressed by name, with *paî*, or with terms meaning 'young man', such as *meirákion*, *neaníske*, or

neanía; unfortunately there is very little evidence for addresses to young females except by members of their own family.

Within the family, different rules of address usage prevailed. Children, of whatever age, always addressed their parents with *páter* 'father' and *mêter* 'mother', or with variants of these terms. Parents always addressed young children with *huié* 'son', *thúgater* 'daughter', *paî* 'child', *téknon* 'child', or with variants of these terms. Siblings usually addressed each other by name but could also use *ádelphe* 'brother' and *adelphé* 'sister'. Wives addressed their husbands either by name or with *áner* 'husband'. Husbands only rarely addressed their wives by name and preferred *gúnai* 'wife', although they always addressed their mistresses by name. With more distant relatives, the term used depended on the age difference between speaker and addressee, and on the absolute age of the younger one; children addressed substantially older relatives with kinship terms and were so addressed by them, but there seems to have been a tendency on both sides to switch to names when the children grew up.

A third facet of the address system concerned the terms used to strangers. The use of address forms at the beginning of a conversation seems to have been obligatory in Greek, even if the speaker did not know the addressee's name; in those circumstances an address was formed from the addressee's most obvious distinguishing feature, such as *ángele* 'messenger' or *xéne* 'foreigner'. If no such feature existed, and sometimes even if it did, addresses such as *ánthrōpe* 'human being' or *hoûtos* 'this one here' would be used.

T/V distinctions

The terms T PRONOUNS and V PRONOUNS are used to describe languages in which there are two 2nd person singular pronouns, one of which (the V pronoun) is used to distant or superior addressees, and the other of which (the T pronoun) is used to inferiors and intimates. Such pronoun distinctions occur in most major European languages other than English; examples include French *tu* and *vous*, German *du* and *Sie*. This pronoun distinction was the issue which sparked the first sociolinguistic research into forms of address, and it is still the main concern of much address research. Many languages which do not have T and V pronouns, such as English, nevertheless preserve an equivalent distinction in their nominal forms of address (Brown & Ford 1961). Thus the distinction in English between addressing someone as *Jane* and as *Mrs. Smith* is very much the same as that between *du* and *Sie* in German. Of course the exact details of how T and V forms are used vary from language to language; but it is clear that English makes essentially the same distinction as German, only with a different type of address form.

The realization that languages like English could have a T/V distinction without having T or V pronouns, and the discovery that many non-European

languages also have T/V distinctions, have led some writers to claim that the existence of some equivalent to such distinctions is a sociolinguistic universal (e.g. Slobin et al. 1968:289, Kroger & Wood 1992:148–49). Others have asserted more cautiously that, IF there is any connection between the address terms used to indicate familiarity/distance and those used to indicate respect/lack of respect, then this connection will always consist of the coupling of the respectful with the distant forms, and the disrespectful with the intimate ones (e.g. Head 1978:194).

It is however worth noting in this context that the Greek address system contains no trace of any type of T/V distinction. There is only one 2sg. pronoun, *sú*; its plural, *humeîs*, is never used for a singular addressee in ordinary language. Moreover, the Greek system of nomenclature did not allow for the distinction between first and last names which often replaces or supplements a T/V pronoun distinction in modern European languages. A Greek had only one name, a given name, although some family continuity was preserved by the fact that an eldest son was nearly always named after his paternal grandfather. If this name was not enough to identify the man being talked about, it could be supplemented by other information – most often who his father was, and/or where he came from.

In Athens, this information was often supplied in a standard format: the man's name was followed by the definite article, in agreement with it, and then the father's name in the genitive (patronymic). Alternatively, the article could be followed by an adjective formed from the name of the man's place of origin, if he came from outside Athens (ethnic), or from the Athenian deme to which he belonged, if he was an Athenian (demotic). Thus, at the beginning of Plato's *Lysis*, the characters are identified as

(1) *Hippothálei te tôi Hierōnúmou kaì Ktēsíppōi tôi Paianieî* (*Lysis* 203a)
'Hippothales the son of Hieronymus and Ktesippus the Paeanian'

Other identifying features could sometimes be used instead, as

(2) *Sōkrátēs ho neóteros* (Plato, *Politicus* 257a)
'the younger Socrates' (as distinguished from the famous Socrates)

A different system was used in referring to women, since their names were not normally used in public. Female nomenclature is not, however, relevant to the present discussion, since women's names were not often used in address either.

When a man was addressed by name, this name was virtually always his given name alone:

(3) *"Pánu mèn oûn," éphē, "ô Sókrates." "Oukoûn, ô Adeímante* ..." (Plato, *Republic* 552c)
'"Certainly, Socrates", he said. "Therefore, Adeimantus ..."'

Demotics were virtually never used as vocatives; ethnics were rare, and tended to be insulting when used to address an individual other than a slave.

The situation with patronymics is more complicated. In some types of poetry, patronymic addresses are not infrequent, and there it does look as though they may have constituted a more respectful and formal type of address than the given name:

(4) *Patróthen ek geneês onomázōn ándra hékaston, pántas kudaínōn* (Homer, *Iliad* X.68–69)
'Naming each man with his patronymic, honoring every one'

The same meaning could sometimes be attached to patronymics when they occur as addresses in prose. However, the rarity of such occurrences suggests that patronymic addresses were not in fact a part of normal speech in the late 5th–4th centuries in Athens; they belonged to formal, archaic, and poetic language.

If the situation in poetry reflects the practice of an earlier age when patronymic addresses were more widely used, it may be that, at some period prior to the 5th century BCE, Greek had a distinction in nomenclature equivalent to that between first name and last name in English, with the patronymic functioning like the English last name. But there is insufficient evidence to determine whether this distinction ever really existed; in any case, it is highly probable that patronymics were NOT used as addresses in the 5th–4th centuries. The historical relic of patronymic addresses would not have provided a real T/V opposition in classical Athenian speech, any more than the historical relic of the English T pronoun *thou* provides a meaningful T/V pronoun opposition in modern English.

Thus there was, to all intents and purposes, only one way to address a man by name in Athens. As most addresses to men were by name, this means that there cannot have been a formal/informal or T/V distinction as a major part of the classical Greek address system.

This does not necessarily prove that there might not be traces of this sort of distinction elsewhere in the address system, even if it was not a major feature. Such traces, however, are hard to find. The best candidate is the address *paî* 'boy', which is used both for children and for slaves, which might thus be argued to share some of the elements of a T pronoun used both to intimates and to inferiors:

(5) *"Allà phére, paî," phánai, "tòn psuktêra ekeînon."* (Plato, *Symposium* 213e)
'"Boy," he said, "bring over that wine-cooler"' (order to a slave)
(6) *Eàn mèn ára sophòs génēi, ô paî, pántes soi phíloi kaì pántes soi oikeîoi ésontai*
(Plato, *Lysis* 210d)
'So if you become wise, my child, everyone will be your friends and relatives'
(Socrates' advice to the boy Lysis)

Paî, however, is not a general term for intimates; it is restricted to boys (with occasional extensions to young men) and expresses the age and benevolence of the speaker rather than any intimacy with the addressee. Indeed, it can be a term of address for children the speaker has never met before:[3]

(7) *"Ápithi", éphē, "ô paî ..."* (Lucian, *Demonax* 17)
'"Go away, boy", he said ...' (Philosopher Demonax's advice to a strange boy)

This word is thus a very insecure foundation on which to argue for traces of a T/V distinction in ancient Greek, and no more solid one can be found.

More serious is the fact that some Greek forms of address for strangers seem to work in a way directly opposite to the T/V setup. That is, far from a situation where the terms normally used to address strangers are the same as those used in especially polite interaction with acquaintances (like French *vous*, English *Mr. Smith*), in Greek at least one term commonly applied to strangers is the opposite of polite when used to acquaintances. This term is *ánthrōpe* 'human being', which is often used as a contemptuous way of addressing people the speaker knows:

(8) *Oút' àn egò eòn Belbinítēs etimēthēn houtō pròs Spartiētéōn, oút' àn sú, ónthrōpe, eòn Athēnaîos* (Herodotus VIII.125.2)
'The Spartans would not have honored me if I had come from the middle of nowhere, nor would they ever honor you, O man, even though you are an Athenian.' (Themistocles to one of his rivals)

(9) *Tí légeis, ánthrōpe?* (Demosthenes 32.15)
'Man, what are you talking about?' (aggrieved merchant protesting to an official)

(10) *Ánthrōpe, apolólekás me* (Lucian, *Dialogi Meretricii* 9.4)
'Man, you have ruined me.' (courtesan to lover who appears at the wrong moment)

However, *ánthrōpe* can also appear as an address to perfect strangers, and in that sense it does not appear to be contemptuous or in any way derogatory:

(11) *Ónthrōpe, tís te eòn kaì kóthen tês Phrugíēs hékōn epístiós moi egéneo?* (Herodotus I.35.3)
'O man, who are you, and from what part of Phrygia have you come to be a suppliant before me?'

(12) *Ô ánthrōpe, toûtó moi péras gégone dustukhías hapásēs, eû patheîn ameípsasthai mè dunámenon* (Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 43.4)
'O man, this is the worst of all the things that have happened to me, to be unable to reward you for treating me so kindly.'

(13) *Ô ánthrōpe, hóstis eî kaì hóthen hékeis, hóti mèn gàr hḗxeis oîda, egò Kûros eimì ho Pérsais ktēsámenos tèn arkhḗn.* (Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 69.4)
'O man, whoever you are and wherever you come from – for I know that you will come – I am Cyrus who founded the Persian empire.' (inscription on Cyrus' tomb)

It seems very likely that the first usage grew out of the second one, i.e. that *ánthrōpe* became a contemptuous address for acquaintances because it implied that the speaker did not know the addressee.

Thus the evidence of ancient Greek provides a counterexample not only to the proposed universality of T/V systems, but also to the idea that if there is any connection at all between addresses used to express familiarity/distance and those to express respect/lack of respect, then the connection will work in the manner of a T/V system. In light of the Greek evidence, it might be wise to modify this alleged linguistic universal.

"What is new is polite"

A different universal has been suggested by the Kiel school of address research:

> A possibly universal phenomenon is conspicuous in regard to the introduction of forms of politeness: When a new pronoun of address or indirect address turns up in addition to an existing pronoun of address and refers to the same person, i.e., the collocutor, but differs from the older one in the degree of politeness, then the new form is always more polite. This observation supports the psychological explanation insofar as it confirms that avoidance or substitution of the pronoun or direct address is always an attempt to keep distance to the addressee. (Braun 1988:57)

This "universal" is supported by a good deal of evidence from a wide range of languages. In German, for example, the polite 2sg. pronoun is now *Sie*, which replaced an earlier *er/sie*, which replaced an earlier *ihr*; as each new pronoun was introduced, it became a more polite option as opposed to the previous one (Braun, 58). As it stands, this theory is not directly contradicted by Classical Greek, which made little social use either of pronouns of address or of indirect addresses. Yet it most certainly does not apply to forms of direct address in Greek; and if it does not apply there, one might wonder about Braun's universal "psychological" explanation.

Classical Greek had two words for 'master': *kúrios* (feminine form *kuría*) and *despótēs* (feminine form *déspoina*). In the classical period only the latter of these could be used as an address; the vocatives *déspota* and *déspoina* are relatively common, while *kúrie* and *kuría* do not occur at all, in any type of literature.

In the 5th–4th centuries BCE, *déspota* and *déspoina* were truly subservient addresses; the meanings 'master' and 'mistress' were still felt in their full senses:

(14) *Ô déspota, eásas me khariêi málista tòn theòn tôn Hellḗnōn, tòn egò etímēsa theôn málista, epeirésthai, pémpsanta tásde tàs pédas, ei exapatân toùs eû poieûntas nómos estí hoi* (Herodotus I.90.2)
'O master, if you want to do me a favor, please allow me to send these shackles to the god of the Greeks, whom I honored above all other gods, and ask him if it is his usual practice to betray his benefactors.' (prisoner to a king)

(15) ... *eípanta dè taûta prostáxai henì tôn therapóntōn deípnou prokeiménou autôi es tris hekástote eipeîn, "Déspota, mémneo tôn Athēnaíōn."* (Herodotus V.105.2)
'... and having said that, [King Darius] ordered one of his servants to say to him three times at meals, "Master, remember the Athenians."'

(16) *Tôn oûn hupēretôn tis apekrínato hóti, "Ô déspota, ou zêi ..."* (Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VII.3.3)
'Then one of the attendants answered, "Master, he is dead ..." (servant to king Cyrus)

Over time, however, this sense was eroded. This is a common process for polite address forms; it will not surprise anyone who knows the origins of

English *mister*, French *monsieur*, and German *Herr* to learn that, by the 4th century CE, *déspota* had lost a good deal of force in some varieties of Greek. Indeed it had been so weakened that it could occasionally be used as a polite address even between members of the same family – a usage which goes beyond that of 'Mr.'/'Mrs.' equivalents in many modern languages:

(17) *Thaumázō pôs epeláthou tôn emôn entolôn, hôn pollákis soi kat' ópsin eneteilámēn ... errôsthai, déspota, sè eúkhoma[i].* (P.Herm. 11)
'I wonder how you have forgotten the instructions which I often gave you in person ... farewell, master.' (landowner to employee or subordinate)

(18) *Kàn hós, déspotá moi, antígrapsón moi en tákhei.* (P.Oxy. 123.7)
'Nevertheless, my master, write back to me as soon as possible. (father to son)

The vocatives *déspota* and *déspoina* have been lost from Modern Greek, but a feminine form *despoinída* is the modern equivalent of 'Miss'.

Given this situation, and the fact that in Modern Greek the words for 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.' are *kúrie* and *kuría*, a universal rule that "What is new is polite" would suggest that, when *déspota* and *déspoina* were weakened, *kúrie* came in as a new, more polite address with essentially the same function. The new address would then have been weakened in its turn, so that it could end up as a 'Mr.'/'Mrs.' equivalent, relegating the older *déspota* to providing the word for 'Miss'.

Yet this is not in fact what happened, as can be seen from papyrus documents in the intervening centuries. Although *kúrie* was not a possible address in the 5th century BCE, it started to appear in the 1st century CE, well before *déspota* began to "wear out" significantly. More importantly, *kúrie* seems never to have been a more polite alternative to *déspota*; sometimes the two terms are interchangeable, but usually a difference can be detected, and then *kúrie* is always the LESS respectful address. It was weakened to the extent of being usable between close relatives in the early centuries CE, well before the same could be said of *déspota* (Zilliacus 1943:31–32, 1949:34), and even at a later date this weakened usage was far more common for *kúrie* than for *déspota*:

(19) *Erōtôsi d[è] kaì, kúrie, [hē] mḗtēr [a]utoû* ... (BGU 665.18)
'And, master, his mother asks ...' (son to father, 1st century CE)

(20) *Erōtô se oûn, kúrié mou patér, grápson moi epistólion prôton mèn perì tês sōtērías sou, deúteron perì tês tôn adelphôn mou* ... (BGU 423.11–14)
'Please, my lord father, write me a little letter saying first, how you are, and second, how my brothers are ...' (son to father, 2nd century CE)

(21) *Eudaimonìs Apollōníōi tôi huiôi khaírein ... érrōso, kúrie.* (P.Flor. 332)
'Eudaimonis to her son Apollonios, greetings ... farewell, master.' (mother to son, 2nd century CE)

(22) *Dōríōn Serḗnō tôi glukutátō huiô khaírein ... errôsthaí se eúkhomai, kúrie téknon.* (P.Mich. 212)
'Dorion to his sweetest son Serenos, greetings ... I pray for you to be well, my lord son.' (father to son, 2nd or early 3rd century CE)

In some types of letters there seems to be an opposition between the addresses *kúrie/kuría* and *déspota/déspoina*, such that the latter is clearly more deferential than the former (Dinneen 1929:56, 66, 78).

If the rule that "What is new is polite" does not apply to forms of direct address in Greek, then it seems difficult to argue that it follows from universal psychological tendencies. Indeed, it is difficult to think of any reason, psychological or otherwise, which could make this rule universal in the case of pronouns and bound forms of address, but not in the case of free addresses. It seems much more probable that the rule is not really a linguistic universal after all.

CONCLUSION

It thus seems that there are two points on which findings about the Ancient Greek address system affect theories about linguistic universals developed on the basis of evidence from modern languages. Neither the T/V distinction nor the phenomenon that "What is new is polite" existed in Ancient Greek; in fact, Greek had address patterns which worked in precisely the opposite way to both of these suggested universals. In both cases, the Greek evidence requires us to rethink the status of these theories as truly universal; in so doing, it demonstrates that sociolinguistic examinations of ancient languages can be useful for confirming or disconfirming theories formulated on the basis of modern languages. This supports the suggestion, made at the beginning of this article, that the study of ancient languages does indeed have something to contribute to sociolinguistics.

NOTES

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[1] The authors are (dates by century) Herodotus (5th BCE), Antiphon (5th BCE), Thucydides (5th–4th BCE), Lysias (5th–4th BCE), Andocides (5th–4th BCE), Isocrates (4th BCE), Plato (4th BCE), Xenophon (4th BCE), Isaeus (4th BCE), Aeschines (4th BCE), Lycurgus (4th BCE), Demosthenes (4th BCE), Dinarchus (4th–3rd BCE), Polybius (2nd BCE), Diodorus Siculus (1st BCE), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1st BCE–1st CE), Philo Judaeus (1st BCE–1st CE), Flavius Josephus (1st CE), Dio Chrysostom (1st–2nd CE), Plutarch (1st–2nd CE), Epictetus (1st–2nd CE), Lucian (2nd CE), Achilles Tatius (2nd? CE), Chariton (2nd? CE), and Longus (2nd? CE).

[2] An additional complication is that a Greek vocative is sometimes, but not always, preceded by the particle *ô*; it has often been suggested that the use or omission of this particle may affect the tone of the address. This suggestion may be correct in the case of post-classical Greek; but the results of this study indicate that, in classical Attic (and in those later authors who followed Attic practice), there was no difference in meaning between addresses preceded by *ô* and those standing alone. (For a survey of the extensive literature on this point, see Dickey 1996.)

[3] It is true that there are relatively few cases of this phenomenon from classical authors, and that all those contain some sort of problem which makes them unsuitable as examples. But evidence from Lucian and other authors of his era is not to be discounted lightly, since they wrote

in a 4th century style closely based on Plato and his contemporaries. In most respects, Lucian's Greek (both in general and in his use of forms of address) is outstandingly similar to Plato's.

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