'The ancient grammarians' concept of the adverb: the failure to make a distinction between a verb and a sentence

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C. Julius Romanus describes adverbs in the following way: 'An adverb is a part of speech that when added to a verb clarifies and completes its meaning. For instance there is a verb *scribo* ('I write'). If one adds to it *bene* ('well') or *male* ('badly'), which are adverbs, one will get *bene scribo* ('I write well') and *male scribo* ('I write badly')' (Charisius 246.18 ff.). 'We observe that all paths of adverbs go in company with verbs or by verbs, and without a verb following no meaning can sound. Let us suppose that there is an adverb of place, for instance *illic* ('there'), *istic* ('yonder') … Taken by itself it will achieve nothing and will be unable at all to dissipate the mist in front of the meaning, unless it is coupled with a verb as if in the darkness some clear light is held in front of faces. As a result *illic sto* ('I stand there') … By the accession of the verbs and adverb having much light and meaning comes about.' (Charisius 248.7 ff.) (the translations are taken from Schenkeveld's recent edition.). Other illustrations with adverbs belonging to other semantic classes follow in due course. Similar descriptions can be found in other ancient grammarians (see Pinkster 1972: 35-43). One remarkable element in this description is that it completely ignores that adverbs do occur independently (see my section on 'adverbs as optionally free forms' – 1972: 136-41). So-called attitudinal adverbs like *fortasse* ('perhaps') and *certe* ('surely'), but also manner adverbs like *constanter* ('firmly') and *humaniter* ('pleasantly') can be found as independent sentences without difficulty. Two examples.

(1)   Tutin vidisti? # Egomet, inquam. # **Certe**? # **Certe**, inquam.
       ('You saw him your very self? # I myself, yes. # You're positive? # Yes, positive.', Pl. *Mo*. 369)
(2)   Quaeris ego me ut gesserim. # **Constanter** et **libere**.
       ('You ask how I comported myself. Firmly and frankly', Cic. *Att*. 4.18.1)

This brings me to the second remarkable element in Romanus' description. His reaction to the examples probably would be that we have to supply the verbs from the context in order to fully understand the meaning of the adverbs, so: *certe tute vidisti? # certe egomet vidi* and *constanter et libere me gessi*. Now whereas many linguists would say that *constanter* and *libere* in ex. (2) qualify Cicero's behaviour as being firm and frank (I myself would rather say that they qualify Cicero during his behaviour – they are 'controller oriented' manner adverbs), probably few linguists would nowadays say that *certe* qualifies the vision of one of the speakers. It asks for and asserts the correctness of the statement *egomet vidi*. ('I myself saw it'). The question now is why the ancient grammarians did not make this obvious distinction between a 'verbal adverb' and a 'sentence adverb'. One reason may be that they liked the parallelism 'adjective' : 'noun' = 'adverb' : 'verb'. They were used to describe parts of speech in terms of relationhip between categories and not in terms of their function in a sentence. A second reason may be that one word sentences with only a finite verb form and without an explicit subject are quite common in Latin, the information about the subject being incorporated in the verb form. If one wants to supply what is understood in (1) and (2) the lacking element is

indeed a finite verb form, only it functions as a sentence, referring to an event in which one or more participants are involved.

In other situations it may be less easy to supply something from the context, so for example in (3).

(3)   Quid **deinde**? Quid censetis? Furtum fortasse aut praedam expectatis aliquam. ('What next? Well, what would you suppose? You will be looking. perhaps, to hear some piece of theft or robbery.', Cic. *Ver.* 5.10)

Dein(*de*) is given as an 'adverb of order' by Romanus (Charisius 249.3), illustrated along the same lines with *dein dixit* ('next he said'). However ex. (3) shows that *deinde* orders events and does not qualify the verb, whatever we wish to supply (*e.g. quid fit* ['what happens/comes next']). But that is not the kind of material the ancient grammarians used for syntactic description.

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