

## ΒΕΛΟΣ as ΒΟΥΛΗ?

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Modern linguistics scholars seem in agreement that the Greek words in the semantic group βέλος/βάλλω and those in the group βουλή/βούλομαι are derived from closely related Indo-European roots.<sup>1)</sup> They are in the congenial company of Plato on this point, who was the first, so far as we know, to suggest a semantic link between these two groups. In the *Cratylus* he comments that the words βούλεσθαι, βουλή, ἀβουλία all have to do with βολή.<sup>2)</sup> That is, "to wish" or "be willing", "council" or "will", and "thoughtlessness" all have to do with a blow from a missile. Modern linguists are more precise: Pierre Chantraine suggests the root \*g<sup>w</sup>elH<sub>1</sub>-/\*g<sup>w</sup>leH<sub>1</sub>- for the βάλλω group, and \*g<sup>w</sup>el-/\*g<sup>w</sup>ol- for the βούλομαι group.<sup>3)</sup> Hjalmar Frisk accepts the initial labio-velar for βούλομαι, which, in his opinion, places it "without difficulty" alongside the βάλλω group.<sup>4)</sup> Both Chantraine and Frisk take the basic meaning of the βάλλω group to be "throw", citing as a source for the development of the meaning "wish, will" of the βούλομαι group the Homeric phrases βάλλεσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ/μετὰ φρεσὶ/ἐνὶ θυμῷ.<sup>5)</sup>

It is the purpose of this article to suggest an alternative source for the semantic specialization of these related roots; that is, to suggest an answer to the question: why are words meaning "throw, strike" etymologically related to words denoting "will"?<sup>6)</sup> βάλλω/throw did not develop

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<sup>1)</sup> This article was first presented as a paper at the meeting of the American Philological Association in December 1983. Several colleagues offered advice: Richard Martin on the linguistics, etymologies and problems of Homeric diction involved; Amy Richlin on the rhetorical structure of the oral version; Leslie Shear on the iconographic problems. Prof. Martin offered useful suggestions on the final written version as well, as did the editors of *Glotta*. I am grateful to them all. Any infelicities which remain are my own.

<sup>2)</sup> Plato, *Cratylus*, 420.

<sup>3)</sup> Chantraine, Pierre, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, Paris, 1968–80, *sv* βάλλω, βούλομαι.

<sup>4)</sup> Frisk, Hjalmar, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1960–70, *sv* βάλλω, βούλομαι.

<sup>5)</sup> Chantraine, *sv* βούλομαι; Frisk, *sv* βούλομαι. They are not, of course, the first to suggest this phrase as the source for the development. See fn. 6 for bibliography. I include the phrase ἐμβάλλω/ἐμβάλλομαι θυμῷ in all statistics in this article.

<sup>6)</sup> This article does not address the phonological or morphological problems connected with the development of the βάλλω and the βούλομαι groups from \*g<sup>w</sup>elH<sub>1</sub>- and \*g<sup>w</sup>el-/\*g<sup>w</sup>ol- respectively, nor those of the relationship between

into *βούλομαι*/wish, as Frisk and Chantraine imply, but at one time contained both meanings. The explanation for this is to be found in an early concept of divinity which is reflected in two artistic traditions: that of the diction of the Homeric poems, and that of an iconographic convention on coins, vase paintings and plaques. The concept is well-expressed by Geoffrey Kirk.<sup>7)</sup> He remarks that one of the few things that differentiates the behaviour of the gods from that of humans in the Homeric poems is the gods' "special powers of remote operation". That is, the gods can exert their will from a distance. Both in the convention of Homeric diction and in that of archaic iconography, this exertion of will is expressed by the concept of throwing.

It is useful first to examine in more detail the suggestion that the phrases *βάλλεσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ, ἐνὶ θυμῷ, μετὰ φρεσὶ* are the source for the semantic relationship between *βάλλω* and *βούλομαι*. It is my contention that the narrative contexts of these phrases do not provide for this semantic relationship;<sup>8)</sup> the meaning of "wish" or "will" is not pre-

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these two roots, which appears to be one of an enlargement through a laryngal. A useful discussion of the formal problems in the *βάλλω* group is to be found in Klaus Strunk, „Der Verbalstamm *βεβολη-* im epischen Griechischen“ (*Studies in Greek, Italic, and Indo-European Linguistics offered to Leonard R. Palmer*, Innsbruck 1976). Strunk notes in passing the blurred semantic lines of the *βάλλω* and *βούλομαι* groups in such Homeric phrases as *πένθει...βεβολήατο* and *ἄχει...βεβολημένος* (pp. 391 ff.), where the physical activity of striking is moving into the emotional and mental realm (see below, on the specialization of the active of *βάλλω*.) Another recent discussion of some of these problems is in S.R. Slings, "The etymology of *βούλομαι* and *ὀφείλω*", *Mnemosyne* XXVIII (1975) 1–16. He touches on the possible etymological connections between *βάλλω* and *βούλομαι* : "*βούλομαι*, since Kretschmer connected with *βάλλω*, has recently found a new home in PIE \*g<sup>w</sup>el- ..." (2–3). He does not explain his implication, however; that is, why such a home rules out a connection with *βάλλω*. He rejects (also without explanation) a possible semantic relation between the two groups as "the result of mere chance" (8–9), referring to P. Kretschmer, *Gl.* 3 (1912) and K. Forbes, *Gl.* 36 (1958), who argue, respectively, *pro* and *contra* a connection between the two groups. In fact, all three scholars are responding to the position (witnessed in Frisk and Chantraine, as noted above) that the Homeric phrases *βάλλεσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ*, etc. provide the basis for linking the two groups semantically. I agree with Slings and Forbes that these phrases do not supply a reason for linking the two, but feel that other evidence does.

<sup>7)</sup> Kirk, Geoffrey, *Myth, its Meaning and Functions*, Cambridge and U. of California, 1971, 33. He is supported in this by Athena herself at *Od.* 3.231: *ῥεῖα θεός γ' ἐθέλων καὶ τηλόθεν ἄνδρα σαώσαι ...* (A god, if he wishes, can save a man easily, even from far off.)

<sup>8)</sup> Indeed, Frisk comments that this is only acceptable with what he calls „a harsh displacement of meaning" ("starke Bedeutungsverschiebung"), *sv.* *βούλομαι*.

sent in these phrases. The sense is uniformly "to consider",<sup>9)</sup> as in the most common line containing the phrase: *ἄλλο δέ τοι ἐρέω, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσι...* (15x). (And I will say something to you, and do you consider (it) in your mind.) In another instance, Nestor speaks to his son Antilochos, as Antilochos is about to enter the horse race in the funeral games for Patroklos: *ἄλλ' ἄγε δὴ σὺ, φίλος, μῆτιν ἐμβάλλεο θυμῷ...* (But come, dear one, and consider this advice/course of action in (your) heart...) Or, during the battle at the ships, Ajax exhorts his companions: *ὡς ἔφατ',.../ἐν θυμῷ δ' ἐβάλλοντο ἔπος, φράζαντο δὲ νῆας/ἔρκει χαλκείῳ* (Thus he spoke, and they considered his word in their hearts, and fenced in the ships with a bulwark of bronze.) Rarely the meaning may be extended, to "plan", for example, at *Od.* 11.248, where the ghost of Agamemnon speaks to Odysseus of Klytaimnestra's deed:

*ὡς οὐκ αἰνότερον καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο γυναικός  
ἦτις δὴ τοιαῦτα μετὰ φρεσὶν ἔργα βάλῃται.*

(There is nothing more dreadful and shameful than a woman who considers/plans such deeds in (her) mind.) But there in no instance, in the 22 occurrences of these phrases, where "consider" does injustice to the Greek.<sup>10)</sup>

So much for the phrases *βάλλεσθαι ἐνὶ θυμῷ* etc., in the middle. The active form, however, *βάλλειν ἐνὶ θυμῷ* etc., does have the combined meaning of "throw" and "will".<sup>11)</sup> In all ten cases of these phrases in the active form, the image is that of throwing an emotion or an idea into a human or animal.<sup>12)</sup> Zeus says of Achilles' horses: *σφῶϊν δ' ἐν γούνεσσι βαλῶ μένος ἢ δ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ* (*Il.* 17.45.: I will throw strength into their knees and heart.) The god wills the horses to be strong again. Or, in the

<sup>9)</sup> So Forbes (244): "... a phrase like *βάλλεσθαι ἐνὶ θυμῷ* means 'think about', not 'wish'...".

<sup>10)</sup> The line references for the phrases under consideration are: *Iliad* 1.297; 4.39; 5.259; 9.434–5; 9.611; 10.447; 14.50; 15.566; 16.444; 16.851; 20.195–6; 21.94; 23.313; *Odyssey* 11.428; 11.454; 12.217–18; 16.281; 16.299; 17.548; 19.236; 19.495; 19.570.

<sup>11)</sup> Neither Frisk nor Chantraine mentions the active versions. Kretschmer (61–2) discusses the "Wunschpartikel" *ἀβάλε* (< *ἄ βάλε*), but without noting the significance of the active form. He cites the Homeric phrases with only the middle forms of *βάλλω*.

<sup>12)</sup> The line references are: *Il.* 3.139; 13.82; 16.529; 17.451; 19.485 = 23.260; *Od.* 1.200–1 = 15.172–3; 2.79; 19.10. Three additional occurrences of the phrase are found in the *HApfr.* (45; 53; 143 = *Il.* 3.139). Again, the object is abstract (*ἴμερος, μένος*) and the subject divine.

passage at *Od.* 1.200–1, where Athena in disguise is answering Telemachos' questions about his father: *αὐτὰρ νῦν τοι ἐγὼ μαντεύσομαι, ὡς ἐνὶ θυμῷ/ ἀθάνατοι βάλλουσι καὶ ὡς τελέεσθαι οἴω* (But I will prophesy to you now, as the immortals throw it into (my) spirit and I think it will be accomplished so ...) It is the divine will here both *that* she speak and *what* she speaks.

In all these ten instances of the active form which uses the image of throwing as willing, the subject of the verb is a god or goddess. The middle form of the verb is used by both humans and gods in the sense of considering, but the active form, where the sense combines willing and throwing, is confined, in the Homeric poems, to divinities.

This same specializations obtains in the usage of *βάλλω/βάλλομαι* without the phrases *ἐνὶ θυμῷ*, etc.<sup>13)</sup> The vast majority of the verb's occurrences in both the active and the middle have the straightforward meaning of throw or strike: throwing a cloak or sword around one's shoulders, or striking or being struck by a weapon in battle. When the object of the verb is abstract, however, when it is an emotion or condition, then the verb is once again always active and the subject always a divinity.<sup>14)</sup> Apollo throws/wills strength into Aineas' chest at *Il.* 5.513: *ἦκε, καὶ ἐν στήθεσσι μένος βάλε ποιμένι λαῶν* (He came, and threw/willed strength for the shepherd of the peoples.) Athena wills/throws sweet sleep upon the eyelids of various figures: ... *καὶ ὕπνον/ ἠδὺν ἐπὶ βλεφάροισι βάλε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη*. (And bright-eyed Athena threw/willed sweet sleep upon their eyelids. *Od.* 1.363–4, *et al.*) Or, at *Il.* 4.15–16, Zeus asks his fellow immortals: *φύλοπιν αἰνὴν/ ὄρσομεν, ἢ φιλότητα μετ' ἀμφοτέροιοι βάλωμεν*, (Shall we arouse dread battle, or throw/will friendship among them both?)

This remarkably consistent specialization has only one exception: at *Od.* 2.79, Telemachos complains to the suitors that they have thrown fruitless pains into his spirit: *νῦν δέ μοι ἀπρήκτους ὀδύνας ἐμβάλλετε θυμῷ*. Otherwise, where forms of *βάλλω* are used combining the senses of "willing" and "throwing", the form is active and the subject is a god or gods.

This grammatical specialization reflects the concept of divinity which appears to be behind the image of "willing" as "throwing". An Homeric divinity exerts control over events from a distance by throwing what it

<sup>13)</sup> There are 73 forms in all; see Prendergast and Dunbar, *Concordances to the Iliad and Odyssey; Lexicon des Frühgriechisches Epos, sv βάλλω*.

<sup>14)</sup> *Il.* 2.376; 4.16; 5.513; 21.547; *Od.* 1.363–4 = 16.450–1 = 19.603–4 = 17.357–8; 14.269; 17.438. At *Il.* 2.376, the direct object is not abstract, but Zeus is clearly willing unprofitable strife and quarrels for Agamemnon.

wishes to accomplish – by throwing its will – into the person or situation it wishes to affect. The use of *βάλλω* in the active in Homeric diction is the verbal depiction of this concept.

Iconographic depiction of this power is more difficult: how does the sculptor or painter make it clear that what is happening on the coin or vase is the will of the god or goddess standing near-by? How does the artist depict divine will in action? At least as early as the archaic period, artists visualized divine will as the god's winged soul that could fly from one place to another. Sometimes the will took the form of a winged creature standing on a figure's arm or shoulder, or hovering near; sometimes it took the form of a winged object, a branch, or anything that could be sent flying through the air to work the will of the sender from afar. Examples of both types are combined in the striding figure of Zeus, holding in one hand this thunderbolt, and, in the other outstretched, his eagle. A fully anthropomorphic example is Hermes with his winged feet, the messenger of Zeus who flies through space to work his master's will.<sup>15)</sup> Aphrodite retains her will in purely winged form, in the small *erotes* which so often accompany her on vase paintings. Apollo, lord of the bow, is iconographically a combination of these types: he wreaks his will with a winged missile, the arrow.

Apollo's arrows are also represented in Homeric diction as objects which express the will of a divinity. They not only do his will on the narrative level, but their nature as missiles, and their purpose as the god's will, are specifically combined in his epithets *ἐκηβόλος*, *ἐκατηβόλος* and *ἐκατηβελέτης*.<sup>16)</sup> They reflect his character as the god who

<sup>15)</sup> See, e.g., silver coins from Kaulonia (c. 550 B.C.) showing *inter alia* small winged figures on outstretched arms of deities; and a votive terra cotta pinax from Calabria (mid 5th c.), showing Aphrodite confronting Hermes with a small winged Eros on her outstretched arm. Both the coins and the pinax are reproduced in A. B. Cook, *Zeus, A Study in Ancient Religion*, Cambridge University Press, 1925. Part 2, Vol. 2, (Appendix G) 1041–1043. See also bronze votive figures of Zeus (from Olympia, c. 520 B.C. and 480–470 B.C., *inter alia*), and a stater from Elis, c. 470 B.C., reproduced in W. Schwabacher, "The Olympian Zeus before Phidias", *Arch.* (1961) 104 ff.; a proto-Corinthian lecythos showing Zeus and his thunderbolt (2nd quarter 7th c.) and Hermes with winged feet on an amphora from Melos, c. 600 B.C., both reproduced in Karl Schefold, *Myth and Legend in Early Greek Art*, London, 1966, (*Frühgriechische Sagenbilder*, München 1964), figs. 4 (Zeus) and 45 (Hermes). These examples are among the earliest of the iconographic specialization of the *βέλεα* – or instruments of will – of different divinities. Later examples are, of course, readily available.

<sup>16)</sup> The *ἐκα* – portion of the epithets presents a problem. Is it connected with *ἐκῶν* (willingly) or with *ἐκᾶς* (from afar)? It is most probably, according to Frisk and Chantraine, connected with *ἐκῶν*. This gives a meaning to the epithets of

strikes from afar. His *βέλεα* are not only the instruments of his *βουλή*; they are, on the levels of iconography, literary imagery, and etymology, identical with his *βουλή*.<sup>17)</sup>

This offers another perspective on the phrases *βάλλεσθαι* or *βάλλειν ἐνὶ φρεσὶ*, etc. Just as Apollo's epithets combine the ideas of "willing" and "throwing", so the Homeric contexts of *βάλλειν ἐνὶ φρεσὶ*, etc., show this combined sense. Willing from afar is the perquisite of gods alone, and the image for this is the sending out of a winged or flying object.

The middle, *βάλλεσθαι ἐνὶ φρεσὶ*, on the one hand, means "consider", in one or two instances, "plan", "to toss something around in one's mind". The image here is one of throwing alone, and has nothing to do with will. The middle is used because the action of the verb is directed towards the subject of the verb; the locus of the verb's action is within one person; no one's will is being exerted on another's. *This* throwing image is used by both humans and divinities. The active *βάλλειν*, on the other hand, is carefully confined to gods, and reflects the archaic image, both iconographic and verbal, of how a god exercises its will.

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"he who strikes willingly", which perhaps does not make much sense when used of a god. Or, it could mean "he who strikes what he wills" – that is, "he who strikes purposefully", but this way of combining the two words adjusts the meaning of *ἐκῶν* from its ordinary passive sense to an active one. In any case, it seems that the prefix *ἐκα-*, whatever its etymology, was understood by the poets of the *Iliad* to be connected with *ἐκάς* and to mean "from afar". Frisk and Chantraine (*sv. ἐκηβόλος*), cite *Iliad* 5.54 to support this: *οὐδὲ ἐκηβολίαι ἦσιν τὸ πρὶν γ' ἐκέκαστο* (and not the spearcasts from afar with which formerly he excelled ...). The context here surely supports their contention; "the willing spearcasts" make little sense.

<sup>17)</sup> The name of the goddess Hekate is suggestive in this context. Apparently originally a goddess from Asia Minor, she was given a name by Greeks who adopted her into their scheme of things (Nilsson, Martin, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*, München 1941–50, Vol. 1, 722 ff; Hesiod, *Theogony* 411. See also Deborah Boedeker, *TAPhA* 113 (1983) 79–93, on her fundamental position in Hesiodic, and perhaps also Indo-European theology). On the etymology of the name, Frisk cites (*sv. ἐκατηβελέτης*) Wilamowitz's opinion (among others) that it is from a language of Asia Minor and adapted by folk etymology to Greek *ἐκάς*. Chantraine (*sv. Ἐκάτη*) is concise in his opposition: "La forme originelle devait comporter un digamma initial comme *ἔκατος*. Pas de raison de supposer que la forme même soit un emprunt. Féminin de *ἔκατος* ...". *Ἐκατος* is an epithet of Apollo also in the *Iliad* (1.385; 7.83; 20.71,295), and it is interesting to note that Aeschylus (*Supp.* 676) uses *ἐκάτη* as an epithet of Artemis, the other (with Apollo) divine archer.