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Faxo in Plautus Revisited: Causativity vs. Speaker's Stance*

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The article concerns the semantic nuances of the verb *faxo* in the Plautus' language. The vast majority of the occurrences demonstrate causative semantics, but there are a few cases where such a meaning can hardly be seen. De Melo singled out the two occurrences in which *faxo* can be treated as either an adverb similar to *forsitan* or a parenthetical expression with the meaning "I assume." The author of the article has found some more examples of the non-causative use of *faxo* and tried to find out which of De Melo's suggestions is preferable. On the grounds of the grammaticalization principles suggested by Hopper and Heine, there has been traced the stages of grammaticalization of *faxo* in the language of Roman comedy, with particular attention to the broader context. It is demonstrated that the causative meaning which transpires in many examples tends to emerge in the "bridging contexts" of grammaticalization, while the transition to the semantics under consideration occurs at the following stage, i.e. in the "switch context". Having analyzed all the occurrences of *faxo* against the broader contexts and comparative data from other languages, the author concludes that the rare sigmatic future *faxo* had over time become a semi-grammaticalized marker of the speaker's stance, which allowed both evidential (inferential) and modal-epistemic interpretation.

Keywords: *faxo*, sigmatic future, language of Plautus, causative verbs, epistemic modality, evidentiality, speaker's stance.

The sigmatic future *faxo* is found mainly in Archaic Latin and in some later archaizing authors.¹ It is most often used in the language of early Roman come-

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¹ The origin of this rare form is still disputable: the suffix *-s-* has been attributed both to the sigmatic aorist (in which case *faxo* is the aorist subjunctive) and to the Indo-European desiderative mood. For an overview of opinions, see Novikova 2015, 728–731 (Новикова М. И. Латинское *faxo* и венетское *vha*

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dy,² and, unlike other forms of the sigmatic future (*faxim, amassim etc.*), exclusively in independent clauses.

This rare form of the verb *facio* coexists with the more frequent forms *faciam* and *fecero* and normally occurs in combination with another verb in the subjunctive (14 cases in Plautus and 2 in Terence) or in the future (49 in Plautus and 5 in Terence), in either hypotactic or paratactic construction (Lindsay 1936, 61) (cf. *faxo (ut) scias* and *faxo scies*).³ This combination is typically used as a causative construction, mostly in promises and threats, as, for instance, in the following passage from Plautus' *Casina*, ex. (1):

- (1) LYS. *Ego iussi, et dixit se facturam uxor mea.
illa hic cubabit, vir aberit faxo domo.* (Plaut. *Cas.* 483–484).

“LYS. I had ordered, and my wife answered that she would.
That woman will spend the night here, while
I'll **make** her husband leave the house.”⁴

Aberit faxo may be treated as a paratactic causative construction. The causative meaning of *faxo* is registered in dictionaries, particularly in the *OLD*: “To bring it about, cause it to happen (that)” (Glare 1968, 668).

However, not all occurrences of *faxo* in Plautus allow for the causative interpretation. Thus, Wolfgang De Melo has drawn attention to two cases which, in his opinion, need a different explanation, namely, Plaut. *Curc.* 586–587 and Plaut. *Men.* 790–791 (De Melo 2002, 83). Let us consider them in detail.

In the passage from *Curculio*, the comic effect is based on the pun of the proper and common name *Curculio* ‘breadworm’, ex. (2):

- (2) THER. *Vbi nunc Curculionem inveniam?
CAPP. In tritico facillume, vel quingentos curculiones pro uno faxo reperias.* (Plaut. *Curc.* 586–587).

“THER. — Where is he, the evil worm?
CAPP. — In the wheat, where you [*faxo*?] will find five hundred breadworms instead of one.”

One could hardly imagine that in this scene Cappadox plays a role of a causer stimulating (or facilitating) Therapontigonus' search for breadworms, given Therapontigonus is not looking for breadworms, but for a parasite with the charactonym *Curculio*. Consequently, in this case *faxo* has a meaning other than causative, which for understandable reason is not easy to render in the translation.

Now we will turn to the passage from *Menaechmi*, ex. (3):

- (3) MAT. *At enim ille hinc amat meretricem ex proximo. SEN. Sane sapit,
atque ob istanc industriam etiam faxo amabit amplius.* (Plaut. *Men.* 790–791)

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² Total number of occurrences is 89 (79 in Plautus' and 10 in Terence's comedies).

³ As W. De Melo points out, there is no semantic difference between the construction of *faxo* with the subjunctive and with the future (e. g., *faxo scias* and *faxo scibis*) (De Melo 2008, 181). Several uses of *faxo* with *Ut obiectivum* and *Accusativus duplex* are also attested (De Melo 2008, 180).

⁴ The translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

“MAT. — But he has fallen for a hetaera from the neighbourhood.
SEN. Well, he’s got a knack for it! For your spying he’ll [*faxo*?] fall for many more.”

The causative meaning is not relevant in this context either. It would be absurd indeed to translate *faxo amabit* as “I make him fall in love”, since the father-in-law is not likely to encourage his son-in-law to have an affair on his side, and much less to openly confess such a weird conduct to his own daughter.

In addition to the cases singled out by De Melo, I have found two more examples of the non-causative *faxo* in the Plautus *Trinummus*. They are arranged in a row in the dialogue between the old men Callicles and Megaronides. The causative meaning of *faxo* is unlikely to be recognized here either, see (4–5):

- (4) MEG. *Vin commutemus, tuam ego ducam et tu meam?*
faxo haud tantillum dederis verborum mihi. (Plaut. *Trin.* 59–60).

“MEG. — Would you like to exchange? You take mine,
And I’ll take yours. [*Faxo*?] you’ll not deceive me, not at all.”

- (5) CAL. *Namque enim tu, credo, me imprudentem obreperis.*
MEG. *Ne tu hercle faxo haud nescias quam rem egeris.* (Plaut. *Trin.* 61–62).

“CAL — Well, I’m sure you’ll sneak up on me.
MEG — No, I swear to you, [*faxo*?] you shall know pretty well what you have to do.”

In example (4), Megaronides is pursuing Callicles to exchange their wives who are boring for their own husbands, and assures his mate that he himself will not be deceived by such an action in the slightest, since Megaronides considers his own wife much worse than his friend’s wife. In this context, *faxo*, instead of the usual causative value, seems to take on a meaning similar to “*I believe, be sure.*” In example (5), *faxo* apparently has the same meaning: Megaronides does his best (*Ne ... hercle*) to reassure Callicles that he would know beforehand what is to be done. It is clear that in both passages from *Trinummus*, *faxo* has lost its grammatical meaning of the future tense, as well as its syntactic function of the verb that governs the dependent predicate, and its lexical meaning “to do”. The question arises, what value does this verb acquire to compensate for the lost ones?

Since there are no more than four examples of the non-causative use of *faxo* in Roman comedy according to our calculation, it seems possible to briefly analyze all the cases.

Presumably, the analysis of the syntactic structure of example (5) will shed light on the meaning of *faxo* in all passages under consideration. Actually, lines 61–62 are interesting not only for the initial alliteration and homoeoteleuton, but also for the parallelism of the parenthetical *credo* and *faxo*.⁵ If one compares all four contexts at our disposal, the most likely meaning of *faxo* seems to be close to either *certe* (‘precisely, definitely’) or *forsitan* (‘perhaps’). The translations of these passages into other languages appear to corroborate this assumption.

⁵ The parenthetical character of *faxo* in the most contexts is emphasized by De Melo (De Melo 2002, 83) and Pinkster (Pinkster 2015, 470).

Thus, for *faxo* in *Curc.* 586–587 *In tritico facillume vel quingentos curculiones pro uno faxo reperias.* (ex. 2) A. Ernout gives a translation ‘Je te le garantis’ (Collection Budé), and P. Nixon — ‘I warrant...’ (Loeb Library).

For *faxo* in *Men.* 791 *ob istanc industriam etiam faxo amabit amplius* (ex. 3) W. Wagner (Wagner 1887, 94) suggests ‘I give you my word for it, and he will love her all the more’, F. Conrad (Conrad 1929, 74) — ‘Ich will dafür stehen...’, N. Moseley and M. Hammond (Moseley, Hammond 1975, 102) — ‘I warrant...’, A. Ernout (Collection Budé) — ‘Je suis prêt à parier que...’

In Plaut. *Trin.* 59–60 *faxo haud tantillum dederis verborum mihi* (ex. 4), *faxo* is translated as follows: ‘Ich stehe dafür...’ (Niemeyer 1925, 44), ‘I warrant...’ (Gray 1934, 66–67), ‘Je répons...’ (Ernout, Collection Budé), ‘I promiss you...’ (Nixon, Loeb Library).

Wolfgang De Melo has proposed a double explanation of *faxo* in *Curc.* 586–587 and *Men.* 790–791 (our exs. 2 and 3 respectively):

1) *faxo* has been re-analyzed syntactically and has become an adverb similar to *forsitan* ‘perhaps’,

2) *faxo* has been re-analyzed semantically and has turned into a parenthetical expression with the meaning ‘I assume’ (De Melo 2002, 83).

In our view, for the correct interpretation of the meaning of *faxo*, it is not so important to understand whether the verb eventually became an adverb or parenthesis, but rather to identify its semantics in the four passages in question.

In what follows, we will examine which of De Melo’s suggestions is more convincing and how far the process of reanalysis has reached, especially if we take into account that “extra-paradigmatic” *faxo* (Bertocci 2017, 22) ended up getting out of use in the post-Plautus epoch.

Let us trace the evolution of *faxo* step by step.

Probably, at the first stage that took place in the language of Roman comedy, the sigmatic future of the verb *facio* in combination with other verbs in the subjunctive or future grammaticalized into a causative construction, which was accompanied by the partial loss of its original lexical meaning.⁶ At this stage, according to P. Hopper’s principle of “divergence” (Hopper 1991, 24), the verb *faxo* could function both as a lexical unit with its original value “to make” and as a verb with the causative meaning ‘to bring about’.⁷ Then, in some particular contexts *faxo* developed a new value that was apparently close to *certo* ‘surely’, *forsitan* ‘perhaps’ or *credo* ‘I suppose, probably’.

The role of context in the process of grammaticalization is highlighted by B. Heine (2002). He describes the emergence of a new grammatical meaning as a four-stage scenario of transition from the source meaning to the target meaning (Heine 2002, 85–87). At the initial stage, the language unit is used in its primary, ‘normal’ meaning (“source meaning”) in a number of contexts. At the second stage, a “bridging context” emerges, in which a new meaning may appear, while the unit retains its original value in other contexts. At the third stage, a “switch context” contributes to the shift in semantics, which no longer

⁶ Cf. similar constructions in English and French (make/faire + Inf.).

⁷ Cf. Fr. *pas*, used both in its original lexical meaning ‘step’ and as a negative particle. It is worth mentioning that the imperative of the verb *facio* (*fac*) in Plautus’ language functions as both a causative verb (e. g., *Fac me certiozem, obsecro!* (Plaut. *Curc.* 634) ‘Let me know, I beg you!’) and a hortative particle (*Bono animo fac sis, Sostrata.* (Ter. *Adelph.* 511) ‘Come on, Sostrata, calm down!’). I am thankful to Michael Pozdnev for drawing my attention to this parallel.

allows the interpretation of the language unit in its original meaning. Finally, at the fourth stage, this unit starts functioning in a new meaning, which extends not only to the switch context, but also to other contexts (“conventionalization stage”).

Now we will apply this scenario to the Latin verb *faxo*.

At the initial stage *faxo* was undoubtedly a full-fledged verb “to, make, to do” in the future tense. Its lexical and grammatical status is clear due to the absence of any morpho-syntactic restrictions, since it is freely combined with the first person pronoun *ego* and governs the construction *Accusativus duplex*, as in (6):

- (6) *Ego te hodie faxo recte acceptum, ut dignus es.* (Plaut. *Rud.* 800)
‘I will give you respect today (lit. ‘make you respectable’), as you are worthy.’

At the second stage, the bridging context is added to the initial one. *Faxo* may occur in combination with another verb in the simple / perfect future (less often in the present / perfect subjunctive) and definitely demonstrates its causative value, as in ex. 1 (see above) and in ex. (7):

- (7) *Iam ego illic faxo erit.* (Plaut. *Men.* 956).
‘Now I **will bring** him here.’ (lit. “I’ll **make** him come”).

The causative contexts, as has already been pointed out, are the most numerous, so it does not come as a surprise that among them we can identify a group of examples in which it is possible to detect signs of transition to the next stage, as in (8–10):

- (8) *Immo vero indignum, Chreme, iam facinu’ faxo ex me audies.* (Ter. *Andr.* 854).
‘On the contrary, Chremes, **be sure**, you will learn from me of the outrage / I’ll **make** you aware of the outrage.’
- (9) *PY. Vise amabo num sit. PH. iam faxo scies.* (Ter. *Eun.* 663)
‘PY — Please, see if it’s him. PH. **Don’t doubt**, now you shall know / I’ll **make** you know.’
- (10) *Horrescet faxo lena, leges quom audiet.* (Plaut. *As.* 749).
‘**Be sure**, the procuress will tremble when she hears of the treaty/ I’ll **make** her tremble.’

In all these contexts, *faxo* is closer to expressions like ‘I promise, be sure, don’t doubt’ than to the purely causative one. Thence, a single step remains to the switch context, which no longer allows the interpretation of *faxo* as a future tense or a causative verb, but triggers quite a different meaning (or rather, a set of meanings), which is the focus of this study. Importantly, De Melo emphasized that in such contexts *faxo* never combines with first person singular or plural thus establishing a constraint against the causer being identical to the causee (De Melo 2002, 83).

It must be admitted, however, that at this third stage, the Heine’s scenario applied to Latin *faxo* is interrupted without reaching the “conventional” stage, since the life span of this particular form proved to have been extremely short for reasons which are outside the frame of the present inquiry.⁸

Nevertheless, what did this remarkable verbal form turn into at the final stage of its evolution: a marker of epistemic modality or of indirect (inferential) evidentiality? In other words, what meaning can be guessed behind the form *faxo* in our examples (2–5)? In

⁸ For more detail on the origin and functioning of the sigmatic future in Latin, see (De Melo 2002, 87–88; 2008, 17–188; Bertocci 2017).

support of the latter interpretation it should be mentioned that in a number of languages, grammaticalized evidentials, especially indirect ones, go back to future markers (Aikhenvald 2004, 111; Forker 2018, 67).

If we rely only on the four examples at our disposal, it is hardly possible to answer this question. But it seems possible to invoke comparative material from other languages, if one admits that same or similar phenomena could take place in different languages.

Interestingly enough, the issue similar to ours has been successfully solved by P. Dendale and F. Kreutz who investigated in detail the whole array of connotations of the French modal adverb *certainement* (Dendale, Kreutz 2019). This adverb had traditionally been considered an expression of epistemic modality with the semantics of certainty, which is close to ‘sûrement, bien sûr’. On the basis of a corpus analysis that reflects the actual usage of this adverb in modern French, Dendale and Kreutz conclude that the traditional modal epistemic interpretation applies only to a limited number of contexts whereas in a vast majority of cases *certainement* functions as a means of expressing an inferential/deductive conclusion (*probabilité, plausibilité*), which belongs to the domain of indirect inferential evidentiality. For this kind of evidential strategy, the scholars propose the terms “posture épistémique / posture de certitude”. With this strategy, the speaker, perhaps not altogether assured of the truth of his/her statement, is pretending to be sure indeed and makes the addressee believe in the truth of what he/she says (Dendale, Kreutz 2019, 18).⁹ The term “posture de certitude” seems to be part of a broader concept of *stance*, which in recent studies has increasingly replaced the familiar term *evidentiality*. As Mario Squartini argues with the reference to Biber (2004, 109), “in some of the discourse-focused perspectives the relationship with the original grammatical notion is so loosened that the very term ‘evidentiality’ is dismissed in favour of the overarching notion of ‘stance’, which is ‘the linguistic mechanisms used by speakers and writers to convey their personal feelings and assessments’. Within these ‘linguistic mechanisms’ Biber (2004) admits evidential (*apparently*) as well as epistemic adverbs (*certainly*) without distinguishing them from prototypical grammatical markers” (Squartini 2018, 275–276).

A detailed review of Dendale and Kreutz’s arguments and the analysis of the whole body of examples they had at hand is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is important to emphasize that the authors examine all examples against the background of the sufficiently broad contexts which describe various situations not directly accessible to the speaker, but comprehended on the grounds of inference, “common knowledge” or other indirect sources. The lack of direct access to information provides the basis for conjecture and hypothesis (Dendale, Kreutz 2019, 21). From this perspective, in modern French the adverb *certainement*, despite its etymology, corresponds not so much to adverbs “certain-

⁹ Among many others, P. Dendale and F. Kreutz analyze the example: “Mon interlocutrice était certainement plus âgée que moi, mais la confusion était telle que j’avais du mal à ne serait-ce que mettre un âge sur son visage” and come to the conclusion that “la présence de *certainement* a pour effet que l’énoncé ne s’interprète plus comme transmettant un savoir mémorisé (Mon interlocutrice était plus âgée que moi), que le locuteur a pris dans son stock d’informations. Il s’interprète, au contraire, comme communiquant une information que le locuteur (ou locuteur représenté) a générée par inférence (déductive), information ayant ainsi le statut d’une supposition, conjecture ou hypothèse. Par conséquent, l’information a peu de chances de paraître intrinsèquement “certaine” à l’interprétant. Toutefois, par l’emploi de *certainement* (plutôt que d’un adverbe comme *probablement, sans doute, peut-être...*), le locuteur se donne une posture de certitude, une assurance “jouée” par rapport à l’information communiquée : il se présente — de bonne ou de mauvaise foi — comme légitimement confiant en ces propos. Une telle posture peut évidemment être exploitée à des fins argumentatives” (Dendale, Kreutz 2019, 18).

ly, precisely, for sure” (epistemic-modal interpretation), as to “obviously, probably” (evidential interpretation).

Remarkably, the opposite evolution took place in the case of the Russian adverb “*navernoe*”: syntactically, it was eventually transformed from an adverb to a parenthetical expression, and semantically, from an epistemic marker to an evidential one, cf. “*On znal navernoe, chto...*” ‘He knew for sure that...’ and “*On, navernoe, znal, chto...*” ‘He probably knew that...’¹⁰

Unfortunately, with regard to Latin we do not have at our disposal the tools which are applied to the analysis of living languages; nevertheless, we can try to look at our examples (2–5) from the perspective of *posture de certitude*, with a special focus on the closest context of *faxo*.

Seemingly, in the four passages under consideration *faxo* admits of both epistemic and evidential interpretations. In two of them, the verb *faxo* is closer to *forsitan* than to *certo*, and should be translated by expressions with evidential semantics “perhaps, I suppose, obviously, probably”. To prove this, let us have a look again at ex. (2) *vel quingentos curculiones pro uno faxo reperias* ‘you will **obviously** find five hundred breadworms instead of one’ and (3) *ob istanc industriam etiam faxo amabit amplius* ‘By your efforts, **I suppose**, he’ll fall for many more’. Evidently, in both examples, *faxo* has a clear semantics of guess/presupposition, though accompanied by *posture of certitude* ‘position of certainty’ which the speaker wishes to inspire in the addressee.

On the contrary, in ex. (4) *faxo haud tantillum dederis verborum mihi* ‘**Surely** you will not deceive me at all!’, it is clearly seen that Megaronides is eager to convince his friend that there is no cheating in his offer, only mutual benefit. Therefore, *faxo* appears to be close to *certo* ‘surely, certainly, definitely, no doubt’. The same strategy of assurance is evident in Megaronides’ remark in ex. (5) *Ne tu hercle faxo haud nescias quam rem egeris* ‘I swear by Hercules, **no doubt** nothing will happen without you knowing it’: both the formula of the oath (*Ne... hercle*) and the litotes *haud nescias* (‘you will know for sure’) which reinforces the statement favor the epistemic interpretation, let alone the parallelism of *credo* and *faxo* which has already been discussed earlier.

Thus, the evidential and modal-epistemic functions of *faxo* are equally distributed in the examples analyzed.

Let us summarize the general findings of the study. We have examined all occurrences of sigmatic future *faxo* in the early Roman comedy and, in addition to the cases singled out by De Melo, have found two more examples of its non-standard use which does not fit in either initial (‘to make, to do’), or causative semantics (‘to bring about’) and, by all accounts, seems to have been the final stage in the evolution of its meaning. Still, the question remained as to what exactly this meaning was and into which domain of language it fits. By applying the principles of P. Hopper and B. Heine, we have traced the process of grammaticalization of *faxo* and came eventually to the conclusion that this verb had transformed into the parenthetical expression that was employed as both modal-epistemic and evidential marker. The former apparently corresponds to *certo* / *sine dubio*, the latter — to *forsitan* / *fortasse*, and in modern linguistics both are included in the overarching notion of ‘speaker’s stance’.

We have to admit that the difference between the evidential and epistemic nuances in such a small number of examples is insignificant and elusive, and another researcher is

¹⁰ Interestingly enough, the shift in usage (from adverb to parenthetical expression) is reflected in the shift in punctuation. I am indebted to Maria Kazanskaya for the last remark.

at liberty to consider all four cases as examples of only the evidential or, on the contrary, exclusively the epistemic value of *faxo*. We can only suppose that if the verb *faxo* had continued to be employed in later periods of Latin with the same frequency as in the language of Roman comedy, it could have become an evidential strategy like, for instance, *dizque* in Latin American Spanish, which goes back to the verb ‘to speak’ and has eventually become a marker of reportative evidentiality (Squartini 2018, 275), or like *est* in Chinese–Russian pidgin which conveys both direct and indirect evidence (Nichols 1986). But with almost total loss of *faxo* in later epochs, this evidential strategy had no chance to survive.

In spite of the fact that all our arguments are hypothetical, we believe that the contextual analysis of *faxo* along with the drawing upon the relevant phenomena in related languages allows us to observe the semantic nuances in the Plautus’ language and thus to better understand the text.

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