

# MEN *solitarium* in non-literary papyri: A reconsideration

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## Abstract

Previous scholarship has observed that the occurrence of μέν without a corresponding δέ (so-called μέν *solitarium*) is not an uncommon phenomenon in Post-classical Greek, including non-literary papyri. It has been suggested that such instances are best captured by considering them “elliptically antithetical” (“prospective”). In this contribution, I show that when it comes to the papyri, μέν can be found in other contexts, too. I explain the relatively frequent appearance of μέν *solitarium* by relating it to the semantic and syntactic extension of the μέν ... δέ construction in the Post-classical period. I conclude by drawing attention to the importance of taking into account social context when describing such a grammatical feature.

## Keywords

particle, μέν *solitarium*, diachrony, social context

## Introduction

Use of the correlative particle pair μέν ... δέ is perhaps one of the most characteristic features of Ancient Greek.<sup>1</sup> Lambert (2003, 269-270) observes that the construction occurs so frequently in the Classical period that nearly every sentence contains an instance, not only in rhetorical texts, but also in philosophical and poetic ones. The situation is markedly different in the Post-classical period: Lee 1985, for example, has noted that the construction occurs infrequently in the New Testament, with only five occurrences in the Gospel of Mark. Lee (1985) observes a similar decline in frequency in the non-literary papyri: he notes that when the construction does occur, it is in official writing, rather than in private letters. Lee concludes that the construction was no longer a living idiom, and that its use had become «a sign of an attempt at more educated Greek, a prestige feature consciously used» (Lee 1985, 2).

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Next to the correlative use, μέν could also occur on its own in the Archaic and Classical periods, a phenomenon usually referred to as μέν *solitarium*. Denniston (1954, 359-69), for example, recognizes three uses for μέν: «emphatic», when the particle occurs on its own, and «adversative» and «preparatory», when it occurs in combination with δέ (or some other particle). Denniston (1954, 359) considers the emphatic use to be diachronically prior, noting that the primary function of the particle was «strongly affirming an idea or concentrating the attention upon it».<sup>2</sup> As such emphasis entails isolating one idea from another, Denniston (1954, 359) hypothesizes that the emphatic sense developed into an antithetical one, «μέν coming to prepare the mind for a contrast of greater or lesser sharpness». Denniston (1954, 359) notes that most examples of emphatic μέν occur in Homer and Pindar; in the Classical period, too, examples can be found, but here Denniston (1954, 359) claims that «many cases which appear at first sight emphatic are really elliptically antithetical», and that it is often difficult to distinguish between the real emphatic use, and the elliptically antithetical one.<sup>3</sup>

For the Post-classical period, there has been some discussion with regard to the validity of Denniston's (1954) classification of uses: Runge (2010, 74), for example, in his discussion of discourse features of New Testament Greek, argues that μέν is best understood as unmarked for contrast, and that, instead of the different uses proposed by Denniston (1954), a general characterization along the following lines suffices: «[μέν] is anticipatory in nature, creating the expectation that another related point will follow» (Runge 2010, 74). Runge (2010, 76) furthermore claims that μέν should *always* be viewed as prospective, even when δέ is missing:<sup>4</sup> in other words, μέν *solitarium* should always be considered elliptically antithetical. A similar position is taken by Mayser (1934, 129), who notes with regard to the Ptolemaic papyri that «das adversative Bindewort kann nach dem einen Gegensatz vorbereitenden μέν fehlen, wenn das zweite Glied an und für sich schon einen Gegensatz ankündigt». Lee (1985), on the other hand, takes a more pragmatic, sociolinguistically informed position: he notes that later writers, when “indulging” in the use of μέν *solitarium*, «have little concern for the semantic value of μέν, but simply insert it, or a fixed phrase containing it, to add a touch of style» (Lee 1985, 4).

My main aim here is to discuss the contexts of use of μέν *solitarium* in non-literary papyri, with the intention of analyzing whether there are uses that go beyond the elliptically antithetical.<sup>5</sup> My findings are based on a corpus of about 3.000 letters, petitions, and contracts from the Roman and

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<sup>2</sup> Denniston 1954, 359 hypothesizes a connection between μέν and μήν.

<sup>3</sup> Denniston 1954, 364-368 provides a list of potential instances in the Classical period, distinguishing between the use of emphatic μέν in questions and in statements.

<sup>4</sup> Other New Testament scholars have recognized an emphatic function for μέν *solitarium* in the New Testament: so e.g. Porter 1992, 212 «the particle occurs along with emphatic value in many instances». For a critical examination of NT examples where μέν would carry emphasis, see Fresch 2017.

<sup>5</sup> For further discussion of the use of the μέν ... δέ construction in the papyri, see Bentein 2020.

Late Antique periods (I-VIII A.D.), in which there are some 825 attestations of μέν, around 125 of which are instances of “solitary” μέν. After presenting a typology of uses of μέν *solitarium*, I briefly discuss why μέν *solitarium* should be so frequently attested in the papyri.

## MEN *solitarium* in the papyri: Towards a typology

### Elliptically antithetical

There are quite a few cases in our corpus where the semantics of μέν could be described as elliptically antithetical: μέν is found without δέ or another corresponding particle, but there is a sense of «contrastive comparison»,<sup>6</sup> that is, contrastive information is predicated about related topics. Consider the following example:

1. δ[ί]δωμι τοὺς ὑπογεγραμμένους| ὄντας εὐπόρους καὶ ἐπιτηδείους. εἰσὶ δέ| ἐπὶ μέν ἄρτου| Διόσκορος Ἰσχυρίωνος τοῦ Διοσκόρου| Ἰσχυρίων Ἀμμωνίου τοῦ Εὐρήμονος μη(τρὸς) Ἡρακλείας| Μάρων Μαρείνου τοῦ Μάρωνος| Δεῖος Νεσεῦτος το[ῦ] Ἰσχυρίωνος| ἐπὶ τῶν οἴνωπωλ(ῶν) (l. οἴνοπωλ(ῶν)| Παντώνυμος Ἰσχυρίωνος τοῦ Παντωνύμου| Ἀφροδεῖσιος Ἀφροδεῖσί[ο]υ τοῦ Ἀφροδεῖσίου| Ἰσχυρίων Ἡρακλᾶ τοῦ Ἰσχυρίωνος (P.Petaus 46, ll. 6-16, 185 A.D., TM 8817).

«I suggest those below who have sufficient wealth and are suitable. They are the following. For the bread, Dioscorus son of Ischyriion grandson of Dioscorus; Ischyriion son of Ammonius grandson of Heuremon his mother being Heracleia; Maron son of Marinus grandson of Maron; Dius son of Neseus grandson of Ischyriion. For the wine merchants, Pantonymus son of Ischyriion grandson of Pantonymus; Aphrodisius son of Aphrodisius grandson of Aphrodisius; Ischyriion son of Heraclas grandson of Ischyriion».<sup>7</sup>

In this example, the village scribe Petaus makes a proposal for liturgists who have to supervise the procurement of food. His proposal contains various categories (eight in total), the first of which refers to bread, and the second to wine (merchants). Even though contrastive topics are explicitly present, μέν is only used for the first member, without a corresponding δέ.

<sup>6</sup> Following Allan 2017, the semantics of the μέν ... δέ construction in the Classical period can be captured in terms of the notion «contrastive comparison» as it is applied in cross-linguistic typological studies.

<sup>7</sup> Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

In other examples, an overarching topic is mentioned, which could in principle be split up in two contrastive parts: contrastive comparison remains implicit, however, since information is only provided for the first of these parts. Consider the following example:

2. καὶ τοῦ προειρημένου πραιποσίτ[ου] Θεοδώρου ἐπικρατήσαντος εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν ἐ[α]υτοῦ θη[λυ]κὰ κτήνη δύο ἀγορ[α]σθεντων (1. ἀγορασθέντα) ὑπὸ τῆς κώμης ἀργυρίου ταλάντων τεσσεράκο[v]τα [καὶ] παρ' ἑαυτῷ τυγχάνει σήμερον, καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν αὐτῶ[v] θηλυκῶ[v] κτηνῶν δύο μίαν μὲν| ἡμεῖν (1. ἡμῖν) πέπρακεν ἀργυρίου ταλάντων εἰκοσιεπτὰ . . [. . .]γματίαν ἡγησάμενος τὴν κώμην ἡμῶν οὐ[δὲν, ἀλλ]᾽ καὶ σίσαντος (1. σείσαντος) τὴν κώμην πρόββατα λ[ευ]κὰ τ[ὸ]ν ἀριθμὸν τριάκοντα καὶ ἀργυρίου τάλ[αντα τε]σσεράκοντα ἑπτὰ (P.Cair.Isid. 73, ll. 9-12, 314 A.D., TM 10404).

«Whereas the aforesaid Theodorus has seized for his own house two female donkeys which were purchased by the village for forty talents in silver, and these are in his possession today - and of the same two female donkeys he had sold us one for twenty-seven talents in silver ... - since he has no consideration for our village; and he has also defrauded the village of white sheep to the number of thirty and of forty-seven talents in silver». (Tr. Boak and Youtie 1960, 288).

It is stated that a certain Theodorus has seized two female donkeys, one of which he had previously sold to the village for twenty-seven talents of silver. The passage contains μίαν μὲν, seemingly setting up a contrast, but no more information is given about the second donkey.

This type of example can be compared to yet another type of example, where a contrastive construction is seemingly set up, but then not followed through in the rest of the text. Consider the following passage:

3. συνχωροῦσι ἢ μὲν Αὐρηλία Ἀπολλωνία ἢ καὶ Ἄρποκρατίαινα| καταγεγραφέναι τῷ τοῦ Καλπουρνίου Γαίου [ἀ]φήλικι υἱῷ Λουκίῳ Καλπουρνίῳ Φίρμῳ τὸ ὑπάρχον αὐτ[ῆ] περὶ κώμην| Σοῦιν τῆς κάτω τοπαρχίας τοῦ Ὀ[ξ]υρρυγχεΐτου νομοῦ ἐκ τοῦ Ἀριστοδήμου κλήρου ἀμπελικὸν κτῆμα κ[α]ὶ καλαμείαν κτλ. (P.Oxy. XXXIV 2723, ll. 6-8, III A.D., TM 30395)

«They agree, Aurelia Apollonia also called Harprocratiaena that she has made conveyance to Calpurnius Gaius' son Lucius Calpurnius Firmus, a minor, of property she owns near the village of Souis in the lower toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite nome, part of the estate of Aristodemus - a vineyard with reed-bed etc.». (Tr. Ingrams et al. 1968, 124).

In this contract of sale, Aurelia Apollonia acknowledges the sale of certain property to Lucius Calpurnius Firmus. The introductory phrase *συνχωροῦσι ἢ μὲν Αὐρηλία Ἀπολλωνία* «they acknowledge, Aurelia Apollonia ...» anticipates parallelism between the two parties; it is not followed through, however: in the next line, the second party is introduced in the dative case, as the indirect object of the verb *καταγεγραφέναι* «to have transferred by deed».

### In formulaic expressions

Lee (1985) does not offer a typology of the different uses of *μὲν solitarium*, although he explicitly mentions its frequent appearance in the formulaic phrase *πρὸ μὲν πάντων εὐχομαι σέ ὑγιαίνειν* «before all else I want you to be healthy», suggesting that «this one phrase must account for a large number of the occurrences of *μὲν* in the papyri» (Lee 1985, 3). It is true that many of the instances of *μὲν solitarium* can be found in this particular formulaic phrase, although it should be acknowledged that the particle can also be found in other opening phrases, such as *πρὸ μὲν πάντων σαι* (l. σε) | *ἀσπάσαιθε* (l. ἀσπάσασθαι?) «above all else I (want to?) greet you» (P.Mich. III 201, ll. 3-4, 99 A.D., TM 21340); *πρὸ μὲν πάν-|των εὐχ[ο]μαί σαι* ( l. σε) *ὀλόκλη-|ρον ἀπ[ο]λ[αβ]εῖν τὰ παρ' ἐ-|μοῦ γράμματα* «before all things I pray that you may receive my letter in good health» (P.Abinn. 23, ll. 2-5, 342-351 A.D., TM 32669); *πρὸ μὲν πάντων ὁμολογῶ ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ| πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος| ἵνα τὴν ἔγ[τευ]ξίν μου προσδέξῃ* «before all things I acknowledge (gratitude?) before God the father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, so that you may receive favorably my petition» (SB X 10755, ll. 3-5, 325-375 A.D., TM 32814); *πρὸ μὲν πάντων πολλὰ προσκυνῶ τὴν σὴν ἀδελφότητα* «before all else I much greet your brotherhood» (P.Harr. I 154, l. 1, V-VI A.D., TM 35405); *πρὸ μὲν πάντων| [εὐχο]μ[αι τ]ῷ [ὑ]π[ί]στ[ω] Θ[εῶ] καὶ τῇ θεῖα προνοία τοῦ Κυρίου| ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (l. Χριστοῦ) *νυκτὸς| [καὶ] ἡμέρας περὶ τῆς ὀλοκλη[ρί]α[ς]| [ὑ]μῶν* «before all else I pray day and night to the highest God and to the divine providence of our Lord Jesus Christ about your well-being» (SB VI 9605, ll. 2-7, IV A.D., TM 33118).

When it comes to the semantics of *μὲν*, one could perhaps argue that the particle has an emphatic function in these phrases, since the particle always seems to be attached to the phrase *πρὸ πάντων* «before all else» (or the like: *πρὸ παντὸς* (λόγου), *πρὸ ὅλων*). Interestingly, however, *μὲν* also attaches to other elements than *πρὸ πάντων*: so, for example, in P.Oxy. XVI 1860, l. 1 (VI-VII A.D., TM 37866) we find the phrase *ἐν μὲν προοιμίῳ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς πλεῖστα προσκυνῶ* «at the outset of my letter I send many reverences»: if *μὲν* indeed carried emphasis, one would perhaps expect it to co-occur with (preposed) *πλεῖστα*, rather than *ἐν προοιμίῳ*. Another argument that could be made with regard to the semantics of the particle is that it is anticipatory: since all of the above-mentioned formulaic phrases are opening statements, *μὲν* could be said to “anticipate” the remainder of the letter. Again, some qualification is in order: the use of *μὲν solitarium* is not restricted to opening phrases:

the particle also appears in formulaic phrases at the end of texts, though much less frequently. At the end of the private letter BGU XVI 2624, ll. 13-14 (7 B.C., TM 23348), for example, we find the phrase  $\pi\rho\acute{o}\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ |\ \acute{\omicron}\lambda\omega\nu\ \sigma\epsilon\alpha\langle\upsilon\rangle\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\mu\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\upsilon$  «above all things take care of yourself».<sup>8</sup>

### With inherently emphatic parts-of-speech

Next to formulaic expressions,  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  *solitarium* can also be found in another type of context where there is no sense of (real or implied) contrast, that is, with parts of speech that are inherently emphatic, such as personal and demonstrative pronouns. Since such pronouns often appear in contrastive comparison, they may have become associated with the use of  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ , even when the particle was not needed, at least not according to the Classical norm. Consider the following example:

4. οὐ γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνως ἔπραξεν, καὶ αὐτὸς μὲν μετ' ἄλλων πράγματα πράξας| οὐδέπω οὐδὲν φάσκει τὰ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων| ἡμᾶς διαθέμενος (PSI XII 1248, ll. 17-20, 235 A.D., TM 17411)

«Indeed this behavior was inhuman, yet although he himself, with the help of others, caused the trouble, he, ill-treating us, still does not admit to have done things which are not human».  
(Tr. Chapa 1998).

In this example,  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , which refers to a certain Chaeremon who has committed an inhuman deed towards the person sending the letter, is heavily emphatic. The pronoun is accompanied by  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$ , even though there is no explicit contrastive comparison. At best, there is an implicit comparison with the victim, who explicitly notes that even though he is able to pay Chaeremon back on the things he has inflicted, he has held back so forth (ll. 14-17).

In a second example,  $\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  accompanies a personal pronoun. Here, context shows even more clearly the sort of extension the particle was involved in, since the value of “anticipation”, which is emphasized by most scholars as a core semantic characteristic, is out of the question:

5. ὁμολογῶ ἐπιδῆ (l. ἐπειδῆ) γεγράφηκα ἄλλοται (l. ἄλλοτε) Ἰσακ νίῳ Σαβίνου περὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ μοναστηρίου (l. μοναστηρίου) {μου} οἶον-|δήποτα (l. οἶον|δήποτε) ἐξενίκει (l. ἐξενίκη) τῷ (l. τὸ) ἐμὸν χαρτίον ἄγυρόν (l. ἄκυρόν) ἐστιν (l. εἶναι), ἀλλὰ μετὰ τὴν τελευτήν \μου/ τῷ Εὐλόγιῳ| ἐστιν (l. ἔσεσθαι) τῷ (l. τὸ) μονατήριόν (l. μονα<σ>τήριόν) μου ... καὶ ἐγὼ μὲν ὁμολογῶ, ἐγὼ Εὐλόγιος, τῷ ἐμῷ ἀδελφῷ Αἰουλίῳ οὐκ ἐξεστιν (l. ἐξεῖναι) μου (l. μοι)| ἀπορισην (l. ἀπορρίψαι) σαι (l. σε) ἀπ' ἐμοῦ ζῶντα (l. ζῶντα) ἕως τοῦ καὶ ἀποθανῆς (P.Dubl. 34, ll. 3-9, 511 A.D., TM 41096)

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<sup>8</sup> Another example can be found in P.Oxy. II 294, l. 30 (22 A.D., TM 20565).

«I acknowledge that whereas I have written on another occasion to Isak son of Sabinos concerning my cell, whatever letter of mine he produces is invalid, but that after my death my cell will belong to Eulogios ... . And I on my part acknowledge, I Eulogios, to my brother Aioulios that it is not lawful for me to cast you away from me while you live, until you die». (Tr. McGing 1995, 180).

There is some ground for contrastive comparison in this example, since two monks make an acknowledgment to each other: surprisingly, however, μέν does not accompany the first party, but the second, and is therefore used with the function of δέ in the Classical μέν ... δέ construction. The particle seems to have been added to ἐγώ simply because the personal pronoun often occurs in contrastive comparison constructions. The many grammatical and orthographic deviations, even in a small passage such as the one cited here, show that the author of the text did not have a very good command of Greek.

### In additive contexts

Whereas μέν in the examples above attaches to elements that are emphatic (and therefore at least potentially contrastive), in still other examples such a link is completely absent, and μέν seems to acquire the value of an additive particle, comparable to καί or δέ. Consider the following example:

6. ἤνεκεν (l. ἦνε<γ>κεν) γὰρ ἐπίσκοπον τῆς κάτω χώρας| καὶ συνέκλισεν (l. συνέκλεισεν) αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ μακέλλῳ, καὶ πρεσβύτερον τῶν αὐτῶν μερῶν| συνέκλισεν (l. συνέκλεισεν) καὶ αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ἀπλικίτῳ καὶ διάκωνα (l. διάκονα) ἐν τῇ μεγίστῃ φοιλακῇ (l. φυλακῇ), καὶ μέχρις| τῆς ὀγδότης καὶ εἰκάδος τοῦ Παχῶν μηνὸς καὶ Ἡραεῖσκος συγκεκλισμέ|νος ( l. συγκεκλεισμέ|νος) ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ παρεμβολῇ – εὐχαριστῶ μέν τῷ δεσπότῃ θεῷ ὅτι ἐπαύθησαν ἐ (l. αἱ) πληγαὶ ἃς εἶχεν – καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ ὑδόμῃ (l. ἐβδόμῃ) καὶ εἰκάδι ἐποίησεν ἐπισκόπους ἕπτα ἀποδημῆσαι. Ἐμὶς καὶ Πέτρος εἰς αὐτούς ἐστιν, υἱὸς Τουβέστις (P.Lond. VI 1914, ll. 42-48, 335 A.D., TM 16852).

«For he carried off a bishop of the lower country and shut him up in the *macellum*, and a priest of the same parts, he shut him, too, in the jail, and a deacon in the biggest prison, and until the twenty-eighth of the month Pachon Heraiscus, too, was shut up in the Camp – I thank the Lord God that the blows which he endured have ceased – and on the twenty-seventh he made seven bishops leave the country; Emes, also called Peter, is among them, the son of Toubestis». (Tr. Winter 1933, 175).

Μέν is used in a thematically discontinuous context, almost with the value of δέ: a certain Callistus reports about some violent events that took place: among others, he notes that various people were arrested and confined, including Heraïscus. Before concluding the list of violent events, Callistus notes by way of parenthesis that he is happy that the blows which Heraïscus had to endure have ceased: μέν is used, accompanying the verb εὐχαριστῶ, without there being any explicit contrast (or an inherently contrastive element).

In some cases, μέν in one clause or sentence is followed by δέ (or a similar particle) in another clause or sentence, but is unclear whether we are really dealing with a correlative pair. For example, in P.Brem. 58, ll. 2-6 (113-120 A.D., TM 19643), the health wish (accompanied by μέν) is immediately followed by the *proskynêma* formula (introduced by καί): πρὸς μὲν πάντων εὐχομαί σε| ὑγενειν (I. ὑγιαίνειν) καὶ τὸ προσκύνη|μά σου ποιῶ παρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς θε|οῖς «above all I wish you to be healthy and I make your obeisance to all the gods». In such cases, there is no explicit contrast, and μέν ... καί, if viewed as a corresponding pair, does little more than connecting two related clauses. In still other cases, the information that is potentially connected through μέν ... δέ (or the like) is thematically completely unrelated. Consider the following example:

7. ἴσως μὲν ἠκούσθης περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἡμῶν Ὁρου ὅτι λι-|τουργεῖ (I. λει|τουργεῖ) ἄρτι καὶ πάντως διὰ τοῦ-|το οὐκ ἠθέλησας πρὸς ἡμᾶς| ἐλθεῖν πρ[ο]ορώμενος τὴν| τῆς λειτουργείας (I. λειτουργίας) [πίμ]πλησιν .ἐλ|θὲ σύ, καὶ χρεῖαν σου οὐκ ἔχει εἰς τοῦ-|το. θαυμάζω δὲ πῶς οὐκ ἐπέστειλάς μοι καὶ κἂν (I. ἐὰν) ποκάρι[ο]ν| ἔν κτλ. (P.Kell. I 72, ll. 12-21, 325-375 A.D., TM 33326).

«Perhaps you heard about our son Horos that he is a liturgist just now and for that very reason you did not want to come to us, in view of the performance of the liturgy. So come, and he does not need you for that. I wonder why you have not sent me even one fleece etc.». (Tr. Worp 1995, 190).

There does not seem to be any link between the first part of the passage, Horus' being a liturgist, and the second part, the demand for a fleece. In a passage such as this, both μέν and δέ function as an additive particle on their own, without their use necessarily being corresponding. In the same letter, δέ is used as an additive particle in a number of other sentences that are thematically unrelated to the previous sentence: ἐκπλήτ'τομαι| δέ σου τὸ ἀμέριμον περὶ ἡ|ημῶν (I. ἡμῶν) «I am baffled by your carelessness towards us» (ll. 28-29); ἀξιω[θ]εῖς δὲ καλόχρω-|μον ἀγόρασόν μοι «Please buy for me the little amount of nicely colored wool» (ll. 36-37); ἐλυπήθημεν δὲ πάνυ Traces μὴ| δεξάμενοι «and we were very sorry not receiving ... » (ll. 45-45).

## Discussion

In the previous section, we have seen (i) that *μέν solitarium* occurs relatively frequently in the Post-classical period, the non-literary papyri in particular, and (ii) that its use cannot be characterized purely as “elliptically antithetical”. Before concluding this paper, I briefly want to offer some considerations as to why this should be so. Older scholarship has made some suggestions as to the survival of *μέν solitarium* in the Post-classical period: Robertson (1923, 1150–51), for example, notes that the use of *μέν solitarium* «survived best in the vernacular and in poetry, while the literary prose was more careful to use the antithetical or resumptive *μέν*». He notes that *μέν solitarium* does occur in the New Testament, where it is «not to be regarded as unclassical or uncouth». The opposite position is taken by Lee (1985), as we have seen in the introduction, who situates his discussion of the use of the *μέν ... δέ* construction in a broader consideration of the loss of particles in the Post-classical period, and suggests that *μέν solitarium* was used «to add a touch of style».

My own view lies somewhere in between these two extremes: I do not believe that the appearance of *μέν solitarium* in non-literary sources should be viewed as a remnant from the Classical period, but I also do not think that its appearance was completely random – rather, it should be situated in a broader discussion of the use and development of the *μέν ... δέ* construction in the Post-classical period. Space does not permit such a broad discussion here, though I want to suggest that the notion of “contrastive comparison”, already briefly referred to in fn. 6, would be a good starting point for further analysis. Being based on cross-linguistic, typological work<sup>9</sup>, it provides more secure criteria for discussion than previous descriptions, which are centered around the somewhat abstract notion of “anticipation”, do. A prototypical example of contrastive comparison can be found in the following passage from Plato:<sup>10</sup>

8. ... τὸ μὲν ὠφέλιμον καλόν, τὸ δὲ βλαβερὸν αἰσχρόν (Plat., *Resp.* 457 b)

«the helpful is good, and the harmful is bad».

Use of the *μέν ... δέ* construction in an example such as this corresponds to a number of key criteria postulated in the linguistic literature: (i) there are two independent States of Affair (SoAs), each with their own subjects (τὸ ὠφέλιμον and τὸ βλαβερὸν); (ii) the predicates of these SoAs form lexical oppositions (καλόν vs. αἰσχρόν); and (iii) the two predicates are atemporal and interchangeable. It seems that already in the Classical period, the *μέν ... δέ* construction extended beyond these strict limits, especially when it comes to the first two criteria. In the Post-classical period, the construction

<sup>9</sup> Relevant studies include Lakoff 1971, Rudolph 1996 and Mauri 2008.

<sup>10</sup> I borrow the example from Allan 2017, 282.

seems to have further extended:<sup>11</sup> μέν ... δέ can be used for example, with topics that are not contrastive; with information that is rhematic, rather than thematic; and with SoAs that are not atemporal and interchangeable. In some cases, the double contrast structure (that is, with a double topic and a double focus) is even completely abandoned.

An indication of this semantic extension is also given by the frequent appearance of μέν with particles other than δέ, especially additive ones such as καί. In itself, this is not a Post-classical innovation: Denniston (1954, 374-76), for example, mentions the use of καί, ἡδέ, τε, and αὐτε as “answering particles” following μέν. Denniston (1954, 374) finds that the use of καί («a particle expressing mere addition») instead of δέ should come as no surprise, «since the contrast conveyed by μέν and δέ may be so slight as hardly to be a contrast at all». In the papyri, however, μέν ... καί does not only connect clauses and sentences, but also noun phrases: so, for example, we frequently find at the beginning of contracts opening phrases such as ὁμολογοῦμεν ὁ μὲν Μιηοῦς καὶ Ἡρακλῆ[ς] πεπρακέναι «we, Mieus and Heracles ... acknowledge that we have sold to ...» (P. Mich. V 301, l. 3, I A.D., TM 25194) and ὁμολογοῦμεν (l. ὁμολογοῦμεν) ἐγὼ μὲν ὁ Ἡρώων καὶ ἡ ἀδελφή μου Φαριένη| πεπρα[κ]ένε (l. πεπρακέναι) «we acknowledge, I Heron and my sister Phariene, that we have sold to ...» (P. Mich. V 274, ll. 3-4, 46-47 A.D., TM 12110), where the names of one of the contracting parties are joined without there being any contrastive comparison.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in the Post-classical period, we also get some unusual combinations, as the following example shows:

9. εἰ μὲν οἶδαται (l. οἶδατε) ὅτι ἐλάβαιτε (l. ἐλάβετε) τῷ (l. τὸ) ἀργυρίῳ (l. ἀργύριον) παρὰ Εὐδαίμωνος (l. Εὐδαίμονος), ἀντι-|γράφαται (l. ἀντιγράφαι) μοι· εἰ μὲν οἶδαται (l. οἶδατε) πάλιν (l. πάλιν) ὅτι οὐκ αἶδωκεν (l. ἔδωκεν) ὑμῖν (l. ὑμῖν)| τῷ (l. τὸ) ἀργύριον (l. ἀργύριον), γράφαται (l. γράφαι) μοι κτλ. (P.Oxy. XLVIII 3396, ll. 9-11, IV A.D., TM 33708).

«If then you know that you have received the money from Eudaemon, write me back. If, on the other hand, you know that he did not give you the money, write to me etc.». (Tr. Chambers *et al.* 1981, 93).

In an example such as this, there is contrastive comparison in a broad sense, that is, with the conditional clauses acting as topics that are compared,<sup>13</sup> and with the main clauses as the information predicated about these topics. Rather surprisingly, however, both subordinate clauses are introduced

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<sup>11</sup> For some observations on the Ptolemaic papyri, see Mayser 1934, 129-193.

<sup>12</sup> As an anonymous reviewer notes, in our first example (P. Mich. V 301) it would still be possible to consider a contrast with l. 8 (Ταπνεοιτοῖγίς (l. Ταπνεβτῦνις) δὲ ἡ προγεγραμμένη τοῦ Μιηοῦς (l. Μιηοῦτος) γυνὴ εὐδοκῶ «I, Tapnebtynis, the aforesaid wife of Mieus, consent»), with Mieus and Heracles performing the main act, and Mieus' wife simply consenting.

<sup>13</sup> For conditionals as topics, see e.g. Haiman 1978.

by μέν. Note, however, that in the second subordinate clause πάλιν is also used, which seems to carry the main weight of the parallelism between the two clauses.

I believe the more frequent appearance of μέν *solitarium* in the Post-classical period, the papyri in particular, should be seen in the same light: due to the semantic and syntactic extension of the μέν ... δέ construction, μέν was no longer narrowly connected to δέ from a syntactic point of view, and to the notion of contrastive comparison from a semantic point of view. As a result, it started to lead a life of its own: as we have seen, it could be used in contexts reminiscent of contrastive comparison, such as elliptically antithetical contexts, certain formulaic expressions, and inherently emphatic elements. At the same time, μέν *solitarium* was also used beyond these contexts, and could even be used as an additive particle, with the value of δέ or καί.

Semantically speaking, a straightforward characterization of μέν's semantics in terms of "anticipation" or "emphasis" is not self-evident. This makes the point made by Lee (1985) all the more important, namely that the (historical) sociolinguistic dimension should not be forgotten when taking into account the use of grammatical features in the New Testament, the papyri, and other types of Post-classical literature. In a number of previous publications,<sup>14</sup> I have suggested that we adopt a model of meaning along the lines of Halliday and Matthiessen (2013), where three types of meaning are postulated, called "ideational" (construing our experience of the world and our consciousness, e.g. "pen" = instrument for writing), "textual" (organizing discourse and creating continuity and flow in texts, e.g. "I love music, *so* I will go to the festival", *so* indicating a consequential relationship between clauses), and "interpersonal" (enacting personal and social relations, e.g. "I *might* go", *might* indicating probability of realization). Since Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) split up each of these major dimensions in detailed lexico-grammatical systems, and connect them to a number of major contextual variables, it becomes possible to provide a very detailed, sociolinguistically sensitive description. For now, such a description remains a *desideratum* for most Post-classical particles (and Post-classical grammar more generally speaking).

## Conclusion

In this contribution, I have analyzed the contexts of use of μέν *solitarium*, focusing in particular on the question whether it always appears in so-called elliptically antithetical contexts. I have suggested that the particle can also be found in a number of other contexts, where the notion of antithesis (anticipation) is less relevant: these include formulaic expressions, with inherently

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Bentein 2015, 2017, 2019.

emphatic parts of speech, and in additive contexts. Rather than viewing μέν *solitarium* as a remnant from the Classical period, I have suggested that the particle's relatively frequent appearance in the Post-classical period, the papyri in particular, should be related to the semantic and syntactic extension of the μέν ... δέ construction. In the spirit of an earlier publication by Lee (1985), I have argued that it is important not to lose sight of the sociolinguistic dimension when studying grammatical phenomena such as the present one: the concept of "meaning" should not be confined to purely ideational (representational) or textual reflections, but should also include the interpersonal (social) dimension.

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