

APPENDIX F

The Significance of ‘Through’

Below is a partial analysis of the use of the English preposition ‘through’. I make no claim that it is an exhaustive analysis of all of its uses. The purpose of this partial analysis is to highlight how varied are the uses of this English preposition. ‘Through’ is one of the more flexible and versatile of the English prepositions. As the data below is intended to show, it can be used in a wide variety of different contexts to indicate significantly different semantic relationships.

In light of the analysis below, I would draw attention to the following point:

When interpreting a passage that uses the Greek preposition *dia* followed by the genitive (typically translated “through”), the question is not “how can or should we translate *dia*,” the question is “what is the semantic relationship between the object of *dia* and the rest of the sentence.” Even if one accepts that it is mandatory that one translate *dia* (+gen) as “through”, that fact, in and of itself, tells us relatively little about what the *dia* phrase means—that is, how it is contributing to the meaning of the sentence. As we can see by the analysis below, “through” gets used to indicate all sorts of different semantic relationships. Accordingly, to agree to translate *dia* (+gen) as “through” does not settle the issue of what the sentence means that includes it.

Consider Colossians 1:16, for example. Even if one insists that the “correct” way to translate it is “...all things have been created through him and for him,” that does not settle the more important question of what the clause means. What would it mean that all things have been created “through Jesus”? One possible meaning is that Jesus acted as the agent of creation. That is one obvious way that ‘through’ is used in English. But there are other equally valid ways for ‘through’ to be used that do not entail agency at all. Therefore, to object to the Transcendent Monotheist’s interpretation of Col. 1:16, John 1:10, Hebrews 1:2, and 1 Cor. 8:6 on the grounds that it mistranslates *dia* (+gen) is irrelevant.

Example #26 below is especially noteworthy with respect to the above point. Translating *dia* (+gen) as “through” in this verse seems very natural to most of us—especially because we are so familiar with the way our English translations read. But it clearly does not settle the issue of what it means. It is decidedly not agency. So what is it? What could it possibly mean to thank God “through” Jesus Christ?

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ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH PREPOSITION "THROUGH"

SOME USES OF THE ENGLISH PREPOSITION "THROUGH" > *More or less idiomatic uses*

	Statement / use	Meaning	Meaning of "through"	Restatement of meaning
1.	I passed through the woods	The thing (woods) is what the person (I) transverses during the movement (passing) that the person is engaged in.	Through introduces what it is that a person transverses during some movement that he is making.	I transversed the woods.
2.	I built the house through hard work.	The thing (hard work) was an activity that was importantly relevant (if not necessary) to the performance of the first activity (building the house).	Through introduces an activity that is importantly relevant (if not necessary) to the performance of some other activity.	I performed the act of building the house by also performing the act of engaging in hard work.
3.	I finished my degree through perseverance.	The thing (perseverance) was an importantly relevant (if not necessary) personal attribute to the accomplishment (finishing my degree) that I achieved.	Through introduces a personal attribute that is importantly relevant (if not necessary) to some accomplishment.	My perseverance was an important attribute that led to the finishing of my degree.
4.	It is unfortunate that a child comes into the world through painful childbirth.	A complex process ([painful]childbirth) is that process that leads to one's being the benefactor of the outcome of that process (a child coming into the world).	Through introduces a process or procedure whereby some designated outcome is the result.	The process of painful childbirth is how a child comes into the world. It is unfortunate that it has to be a painful process.

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5.	I sent my greetings through Tom.	An action that some person (I) is taking is being performed through an intermediate agent (Tom). The greeting is going to actually be delivered by Tom, not by me directly.	Through introduces the intermediate agent who actually performs an act for and/or on behalf of someone else.	I wanted to greet someone whom I could not greet in person, so I requested of Tom that he communicate directly to that someone my desire that he receive my greeting.
6.	When the class was through, we all left.	Used as adverb: An activity has reached completion	As an adverb, it indicates the completion of some action, activity, or process.	What the class had come to completion, we all left.
7.	I am preparing for my retirement through an IRA.	My purpose or intention to do something (to prepare for retirement) shall be accomplished by way of a particular vehicle (an IRA).	Through indicates the vehicle used to fulfill some purpose or intention.	I am purposefully saving up money for my retirement and I am using the vehicle of an IRA to do it.
8.	Clarity sometimes comes through suffering.	There is a particular outcome (clarity) that sometimes occasions a particular experience (suffering).	Through indicates the experience or circumstance that is occasioned by some specific outcome.	Clarity is the particular outcome that sometimes occasions the experience of suffering.
9.	My infant slept through the night.	An activity (infant sleeping) lasted for a particularly relevant duration of time (the night).	Through indicates the duration of time that an activity transpired during.	The sleeping of the infant continued for the duration of the night.

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10.	My wife stayed with me through my bad moods and self-pity.	A condition (my bad moods and self-pity) defined the nature and quality of an experience that one had as she engaged in a particular activity (staying with).	Through introduces something importantly relevant to the nature or quality of an experience one has during a particular activity.	While I was indulging in bad moods and self-pity, my wife stayed with me.
11.	The general won the battle through throwing troops at the enemy lines.	A desired result (winning the battle) was accomplished by adopting a particular strategy (throwing troops at the enemy lines).	Through indicates the strategy adopted to effect some intended result.	The general accomplished his goal of winning the battle by adopting the strategy of sacrificing his troops as he ordered them to charge the enemy lines.
12.	They won the game through their exceptional offensive performance.	They accomplished a desired result (winning the game) by successfully accomplishing a particular feat (playing defense).	Through introduces the successful accomplishment (or failure) that led to some desired (or not desired) result.	By successfully performing the offensive aspects of the game, they won the game.
13.	Through his grade point average, he had a sense of personal worth.	On the basis of a particular achievement (grade point average) a person has a particular self-concept (a sense of worth).	Through indicates the achievement that serves as the basis for some positive subjective attitude.	On the basis of his having achieved a high grade point average, he formed the self-concept that he was a worthy individual.

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14.	Through her friends, she found acceptance.	The set of persons (her friends) who were the agents of those acts (of acceptance) that led to some positive subjective attitude (a sense of acceptance).	Through indicates the personal agent of some act that results in some subjective attitude.	Her friends acted toward her in such a way that she found personal acceptance.
15.	Through her children, she found a reason to live. -or- Through her children, she could keep going.	A particular reality (having children) constitutes the reason someone has for something (to live / to keep going).	Through indicates what it is that constitutes the reason for something, or the <i>raison d'etre</i> for something.	She had found a reason to live (a reason to keep going) in the children she had.
16.	Through his speed, he escaped capture.	Something occurs (he escapes capture) because of an ability someone possesses (speed).	Through indicates that ability because of which something else occurs.	Because he possessed the ability to move speedily, he escaped capture.

SOME USES OF THE ENGLISH PREPOSITION "THROUGH" > *Only marginally idiomatic uses*

	Statement / use	Meaning	Meaning of "through"	Restatement of meaning
17.	I evaluated every story I ever wrote through <i>Crime and Punishment</i> .	I used the novel <i>Crime and Punishment</i> as a model and standard in evaluating every effort I ever made to write a story.	Through introduces the model or standard referred to in the evaluation of something.	I referred to <i>Crime and Punishment</i> as my standard of good story writing whenever I evaluated any attempt I made to write a story.

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18.	I built my house through plans I bought over the internet.	Something I made or fashioned (house) was accomplished by referring to a particular model, template, blueprint, or set of instructions (plans).	Through introduces the model, plans, template, or instructions referred to in the creation or fashioning of something.	I referred to and followed plans that I purchased over the internet in the building of my house.
19.	Through his speed, he escaped capture.	Something occurs (he escapes capture) because of an ability someone possesses (speed).	Through indicates that ability because of which something else occurs.	Because he possessed the ability to move speedily, he escaped capture.

SOME USES OF THE ENGLISH PREPOSITION "THROUGH" > *Understandable, but non-idiomatic, uses*

	Statement / use	Meaning	Meaning of "through"	Restatement of meaning
20.	The ground was wet through dew.	Some state of affairs (wet ground) is caused by something (dew).	Through indicates the cause of some state of affairs.	The ground was wet from the dew.
21.	The glass was full through milk.	The content that is contained in or fills a container (glass) is milk.	Through indicates the content or material that makes some container full.	The glass was filled with milk.

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22.	Do not treat your child through his selfishness.	An exhortation to not act toward another (your child) in a manner that is based on or in a manner that is in response to the way he himself acts (in selfishness).	Through indicates the basis for or the situation in response to which something is done that is in keeping with it.	Do not respond to your child in a way that is in keeping with the fact that he is selfish.
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IMPORTANT USES OF THE GREEK PREPOSITION "*dia*" WHERE "THROUGH" IS NOT THE MOST HELPFUL TRANSLATION

Statement / use	Meaning	Meaning of "through"	Restatement of meaning
23. He will judge you who, <i>dia</i> the letter and circumcision, are a transgressor of the Covenant. (Rom. 2:27)	God will judge you who, in spite of the fact that you possess the written letter of the Mosaic Covenant and in spite of the fact that you are circumcised, are a transgressor of that Covenant.	<i>Dia</i> indicates a fact or a thing <u>in the face of</u> which something is done or is true, especially when what is done or is true somehow is at odds with that fact or thing.	God will judge you who, in face of the fact that you possess the written letter of the Mosaic Covenant and in face of the reality of your own circumcision, are a transgressor of that Covenant.
24. Abraham received the promise <i>dia</i> the <i>dikaiosune</i> of belief; he did not receive it <i>dia</i> his deeds of obedience to the Covenant. (Rom. 4:13)	God made his promise to Abraham (that he would inherit the world) in view of the fact that He would grant him <i>dikaiosune</i> in connection with his belief is God's promise; he did not make that promise in view of the fact that he would be obedient to the Mosaic Covenant such that he would show himself worthy of such a blessing.	<i>Dia</i> indicates that <u>with a view to</u> which something else is done.	Abraham received the promise with a view to his <i>dikaiosune</i> based on belief; he did not receive it with a view to a <i>dikaiosune</i> based on deeds of obedience to the Covenant.

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<p>25. The Gentile is rendered <i>dikaios dia</i> his belief. The Jew is rendered <i>dikaios ek</i> his belief. (Rom. 3:30)</p>	<p>The Gentile is rendered <i>dikaios</i> in keeping with the fact that he has believed.</p>	<p>When something is done that is somehow in keeping with some other reality or state of affairs, <i>dia</i> is used to indicate that other reality or state of affairs that it is done in keeping with.</p>	<p>The Gentile is rendered <i>dikaios</i> in connection with the fact that he has believed; and the Jew is likewise rendered <i>dikaios</i> stemming from the fact that he has believed.</p>
<p>26. First, I thank my God <i>dia</i> Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. (Rom. 1:8)</p>	<p>In light of the fact that Jesus is the Christ, I am grateful to God for all of you, because your belief that he is the Christ is being proclaimed throughout the whole world. [This takes the syntax this way: "Jesus Christ" is a metonymy for something like "the true identity of Jesus, the Messiah" [hence, = in the light of the true identity of Jesus, the Messiah]</p>	<p>When something is done that is somehow <u>in the light of</u> some fact or reality, <i>dia</i> is used to indicate that other fact or reality that it is done in the light of. [Where X "in the light of" Y indicates roughly that Y is some fact that is the basis for X or that to which X somehow corresponds.]</p>	<p>First, in light of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, I am grateful to God for granting you the grace to believe that Jesus as the Messiah, because your belief is being reported and spoken of throughout the whole world.</p>