

On the semantics of the Proto-Indo-European roots **mel-*, **men-*, and **steh₂*: from the external-positional to the internal-cognitive perspective¹

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Abstract. The present discussion, which is articulated within the theoretical framework of cognitive semantics, aims to reconsider the homonymy between the Indo-European roots **men-* ‘to think, to have in mind’ and **men-* ‘to delay, linger, remain’. We should instead imagine the existence of a single archetype, whose different semantic values represent the developments of a metaphorical shift from a concrete to an abstract meaning, exactly as in the case of the historical products of IE **steh₂*- ‘to stay’, and **mel-* ‘to delay, linger, remain’; ‘to think, take care of’, which convey meanings related to both ‘stasis’ and ‘reflection/knowledge’.

Keywords: Indo-European; ancient Indo-European languages; linguistic metaphor; semantic shift; etymology.

[es] Sobre la semántica de las raíces proto-indoeuropeas **mel-*, **men-* y **steh₂*: desde la perspectiva externa-posicional a la interna-cognitiva

Resumen. La presente discusión, articulada dentro del marco teórico de la semántica cognitiva, tiene como objetivo reconsiderar la homonimia entre las raíces Indoeuropeas **men-* ‘pensar, tener en mente’ y **men-* ‘retrasar, permanecer, quedar’. Tendríamos que imaginar, sin embargo, la existencia de un arquetipo único, cuyos valores semánticos diferentes representarían los desarrollos de un cambio metafórico del significado concreto al abstracto, exactamente como en el caso de los resultados históricos de IE **steh₂*- ‘estar de pie’ y **mel-* ‘retrasar, permanecer, quedarse’; ‘pensar, cuidar de’, que transmite significados relativos a ‘posicionamiento’ y a ‘reflexión/conocimiento’.

Palabras clave: Indoeuropeo; lenguas Indoeuropeas antiguas; metáfora lingüística; cambio semántico; etimología.

Sumario. 1. Stasis as the first step in the process of acquiring knowledge. 1.1. IE **steh₂*- ‘to stand’ (→ ‘to think, comprehend’). 1.2. IE **men-* and **mel-* ‘to delay, remain’ (→ ‘to think, comprehend’). 2. Final considerations.

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1. Stasis as the first step in the process of acquiring knowledge

1.1. IE **steh₂-* ‘to stand’ (→ ‘to think, comprehend’)

In a recent paper, Giusfredi (2016) examines a series of Anatolian words in order to evaluate their potential mutual etymological connections. In particular, he hypothesizes that Hitt. *ištanāna-*, a common gender substantive probably meaning ‘altar’ (cf. KUB XXV 33 I 7-8 *ištananni* ^{GIŠ}*eyani sāra ḫukan[zi* ‘‘on the altar above the *eya*-tree they slaughter’’)³ and Hitt. *ištanzan-* ‘soul’ (cf. KUB XXX 10 Rs. 14-15 *nu-mu pittuliyai piran ištanzaš-miš tamatta pedi zappiškizzi* ‘‘from anxiety my spirit keeps dripping over and over’’)⁴ could in fact both be traced back to the Indo-European root **steh₂-* (LIV: 590) ‘to stand’⁵.

While from a formal point of view there do not seem to be particular difficulties in tracing the words back to a possible common prehistoric antecedent, problems instead emerge in relation to the semantic aspect, as noted by the Author. The words in fact convey fairly disparate meanings.

The formal tracing back of the two Anatolian forms to the common origin **steh₂-* is supported, as noted above, by fairly plausible, linear explanations (cf. HED 2: 463 and Kloekhorst 2008: 413): as observed by Giusfredi himself (2016)⁶, in fact, the lack of haplology in the suffix *-nāna-* suggests that *ištanāna-* may represent a new formation derived from an ancient theme in nasal comparable with forms such as Cretan Doric *στανύω* ‘I collocate, position’, Lat. *dēstināre* ‘to stop, bind, secure’, OCS *stanō*, Arm. *stanam* ‘I place myself, position myself’ (< **stā-nā* – IEW: 1005) etc. According to the scholar, in essence, we are dealing with an adjectival expansion of the zero-grade of **steh₂-*, from which a neutral substantive in *-n-* was built (later thematized in *-a*). The form *ištanzan-*⁷, which instead, as said, means ‘soul, mind, spirit’ (as well as ‘will, intention’), could, in his opinion, be traced back to the Indo-European base **steh₂-* through a previous **sth₂-ent-i-on-*⁸.

In Hittite, there are also some verbs that most likely continue the same IE root, including *tiya-*⁹ ‘to position oneself, place oneself; put one’s feet, step on, walk’, *tit(ta)nu-*¹⁰ ‘to install, position, place’ and *ištantai-* ‘to stay, delay, linger’. We see that

³ Transl. by Puhvel (HED 2: 468).

⁴ Transl. by Puhvel (*ibidem*).

⁵ According to Giusfredi (2016), the *hapax* of the Luwian cuneiform *taḫ(h)a-* ‘pedestal/stone support’ (< **stōh₂-o-*) and the common gender substantive *tani-* ‘soul, person’ (< **sth₂-(é)n-o-*) could also be considered forms etymologically connected with *ištanzan-* and *ištanāna-*.

⁶ See also HED (2: 463).

⁷ On this point, see also Melchert (2003).

⁸ Puhvel (HED 2: 471) suggests a comparison with Lat. *sensus* ‘meaning, feeling’, OHG *sin(n)* ‘mind, sense’ < **sent-no-*, Lith. *sintėti* ‘think’, all derived from a base *s(t)ent-to-* < **sent-* ‘take a direction, go’, or, in a transposed sense, ‘feel, perceive’ (see IEW: 908). Eichner (1973: 98), instead, proposes a derivation from an IE base **pstén* ‘breast’ (see Skr. *stāna-*, Arm. *stin* id. etc.), where IE **-ēn+s* > Hitt. *-anzan-*. *Contra*, Kloekhorst (2008: 415).

⁹ For the *s*-mobile of the IE base, from which **(s)teh₂-*, cf. Toch. A/B *tāk-* ‘I was, I became’ (cf. Pedersen 1941: 194, Kloekhorst 2008: 880), OIr. *ōtā* (cf. Vendryes 1959-, s.v. *tā-*, Watkins 1969: 57), *ad-tāu*, *-tō* ‘I place myself, I am, I exist’ < **steh₂-yō*.

¹⁰ Cf. Melchert (in press) for “two” possible *ti(ta)nu-*, respectively with the sense of ‘to position’ (used for objects with a horizontal orientation) and with that of ‘to position, erect, put in a vertical position’ (used for objects or people with a vertical orientation). For the etymological details, see also Sturtevant (1930: 152), Pedersen (1938: 183), Crossland (1951: 115), Kimball (1999: 409), García Ramón (2010: 48 ff.), Jasanoff (2010: 148). For the alternative hypothesis whereby *ti(ta)nu-* is interpreted as a reduplicated form from *dai-/ti-* ‘to place, position’, hence from IE **dheh₁-/*dhē-* ‘id.’, see, instead, Eichner (1973: 98), Oettinger (1979: 548), Melchert (2003), Kloekhorst (2008: 884), HED (2: 468 ff.).

išta(n)h- ‘to savour, taste’ is also formally very close (KBo III 38 Vs. 4-5 ^DUTU-*uš memal išša-šša šu[h]haš* NINDA.K]UR₄. R[A...] *š-an išta hta* ‘the sun god poured porridge into her mouth, bread ... she tasted it’, cf. HED 2: 463).

Despite the apparent semantic divergence with respect to the series just mentioned, nor can we rule out that *išta(n)h-* may be etymologically connected with the aforementioned forms, especially if it is interpreted – in light of the reasoning proposed by Pozza (2014 and 2019)¹¹ –, as a verb that expresses the act of experiencing/knowing through the senses, within a more general picture of the bodily dimension of cognition¹². Experience – in this case “gustatory” experience – in fact plays a fundamental role in the structuring of cognitive processes and, consequently, in that of the subsequent associated linguistic manifestation. At this point, the relation of *išta(n)h-* with the remaining three verbs in the series displays, by virtue of the observations presented by Giusfredi (2016) in relation to *ištanāna-* ‘altar’, and *ištanzan-* ‘soul’, a further, double, corroboration.

On the one hand, in fact, according to what was already hypothesized by Eichner (1988), the meaning attested in Hittite represents the result of a shift, followed by semantic shrinkage, which, from the generic sense originally conveyed by **steh₂-* ‘to stand’, led to the more specific one of ‘den Geschmack, oder den Zustand oder ähnlich feststellen’ (*ivi*: 143), or, again, of ‘zu sich nehmen, bei sich behalten’ (HEG A-K: 421), up to the documented “kulinarisch-technischer Sonderbedeutung” (Eichner 1988: 143) that the Hittite verb *išta(n)h-* actually expresses.

On the other hand, if we analyse the problem in the theoretical framework of cognitive linguistics, following, among others, the work of Lakoff – Johnson (1980) and Lakoff (1993: 235 ff.)¹³, one could reinterpret the sense historically conveyed by the verb *išta(n)h-* ‘to taste, savour’ as that of ‘to (re)cognise through the senses, appropriate’ and, therefore, ‘to come into contact with; know’, exactly as in the case of Lat. *sapere*, in which the sense of taste is connected not only with perceptual experience as such, but also with more general and abstract mental experience (cf. also Sweetser 1990: 36)¹⁴.

Basically, words indicating position, positioning in space, lingering, staying, etc. seem to be connected – not only formally but also due to semantic contiguity – with words indicating the act of knowing (see also *infra*, § 2), of coming into contact through the senses and through proximity with the object of knowledge, by virtue of the fact that the notion of ‘knowing’ in the pure, ahistorical state, freed from historical, religious and cultural implications, seems to be absent from many historical linguistic traditions¹⁵. Belardi (1976) had already noted that being in a position in

¹¹ Refer directly to the Author’s works for the etymological discussion of the forms in question and for the conclusions reached regarding the probable common origin of these words.

¹² The reference literature is vast. We will thus merely mention, as representative, Varela – Thompson – Rosch (1993), Lakoff-Johnson (1999), and Gibbs (2005).

¹³ See the metaphors relating to the interpretation of ideas such as food, perception as reception and as contact between the perceiver and the perceived. Cf. Pozza (2014 and 2019) for details.

¹⁴ “The sense of taste here is evidently connected not merely with general experience of perception, but with mental experience as well”.

¹⁵ Cf. Belardi (1976). See in particular the brilliant discussion (*ibidem*) of words such as Lat. *superstitio* ‘superstition’ but, originally ‘knowledge of the truth’ (**uper-steh₂-* ‘to be above’), Gr. ἐπιστήμη ‘knowledge, skill’ (< **epi-steh₂-* ‘to be above’), OEng. *understandan* ‘to understand, comprehend’ (< **hdher-steh₂-* ‘to be below’), OEng. *far-standan* ‘to defend’, but also ‘to intend, comprehend, acknowledge’ (< **pr-steh₂-* ‘to be in front of’), OIr. (*h*)*ires(s)* ‘faith, credo’ (< **iriss* < **eriss* < **peri-steh₂-* ‘to be around’), *am(a)ires*, *amaras* ‘unbelief’ (prefixed with the privative **h-*), the Pahlavi name of Avesta, *apastāk* ‘knowledge, religious knowledge’, to be intended as **upa-steh₂-ka-*, ‘being near’.

relation to the perceived object represents something very similar to our ‘to know’, something that is expressed as a spatial relationship between two physical entities: the object of knowledge is that on which our attention “lingers”. The perceptual metaphor “to experience is to taste”¹⁶ – of which the Hittite verb *išta(n)h-* represents an example – completes the picture presented here and offers support for the hypothesis that it is etymologically correlated with the series derived from **steh₂-*, a root which, as noted, is continued, in historical Indo-European languages, mostly by words indicating knowledge¹⁷. The connection between the “material” cognitive process (the source domain) and the “mental” cognitive process (the target domain) is identified, in the specific case, with the well-known and widespread metaphor “ideas are food/ to experience is to taste” (among others, Lakoff 1993 and Foresti 2002)¹⁸.

1.2. IE **men-* and **mel-* ‘to delay, remain’ (→ ‘to think, comprehend’)

As known, most Indo-European languages continue the root **men-/mon-/μη-* ‘to think, have in mind’¹⁹ (IEW: 726, LIV: 435) with words whose meanings remain strongly linked to the original one: see Lat. *mēns, mentis* ‘mind’, *meminī* ‘I remember, reflect’, *moneō* ‘I make think, remind, warn’, *mōn-strāre* ‘to show’, OEng. *ge-mynd* ‘mind, memory’, OHG *minna* ‘love’ (< *‘memory of love’), Gr. μένος ‘vital spirit, force (of spirit), courage’, μνήμη ‘memory’, μμνέσκω ‘I remember’, μέμονα ‘I have in mind’, μνάομαι ‘I have in mind’; ‘I desire’, Skr. *mānyate* ‘thinks, believes; perceives, comprehends’, *mānas-* ‘mind, intellect, will’, *mantār-* ‘thinker’ (cf. Gr. Μέντωρ, Lat. *commentor*), Av. *mañtā* ‘thinks’, *manah-* ‘mental power, thought, spirit’, OIr. *cuman, cuimne* ‘memory’, Goth. *munan* ‘to reflect’, *muns* ‘thought, opinion’, OEng. *mon, man* ‘to think’, *myne* ‘memory; love’, ON *munr* ‘vital energy, desire’, Lith. *miniù* ‘to think, remember’, Arm. *i-manam* ‘understand’ etc. Also Hitt. *mema/i-* ‘to speak, repeat’, but also (see Francia 2010) ‘to reflect, think’ (if combined with the pronominal particle *-za* – which expresses a high degree of subjectivity of expression –, with the noun for ‘mind/soul’ in the dative-locative case, *Zi-ni*, and with the preverb *āppa*) could be included within the series in question²⁰.

¹⁶ See also Foresti (2002).

¹⁷ See note 14.

¹⁸ Cf. Dante, *Inf.* II 53-54 “rimirando intorno come colui che nove cose assaggia”.

¹⁹ One of the first and most in-depth analyses of the root dates back to Meillet (1897), who distinguished five different homonymous IE **men-*, in addition to the one with the meaning ‘*mente agitare*’. He also noted that some Sanskrit forms derived from **men-* conveyed meanings connected with ‘to see’ (for an original value of ‘to see’ – hence, ‘to see with the mind’, ‘to know through inner vision’ – for IE **men-* see also Carruba 1986, Sweetser 1990: 28-40, and Bader 1997). Moreover, Meillet observed that, besides the general meaning of ‘to think’, which has notoriously formed the basis of a broad lexicon of knowledge, historical Indo-European languages documented a semantic divergence, oriented towards an apparently antithetical value compared to the rationality of the cognitive process (cf. for example Gr. μένος, μανία, μαινόμεναι etc.). See Bartolotta (2002 and 2003) for a discussion on the value of ‘knowledge’ as a rational or unmediated cognitive process (due to inspiration, impulsive tension). The scholar proposes, for IE **men-*, a polysemy that spreads from the meaning ‘to have in mind’ (and also, perhaps, ‘to see with the mind’) and which is able to encompass both the values that refer to a cognitive – rational and voluntary – process (see Gr. μμνήσκω, μανθάνω), and those that instead define a type of unmediated knowledge, that is the result of inspiration, or a state of desire and impulsive tension (see Gr. μενεαίνω, ματεύω, μάω, etc.).

²⁰ For the interpretation and possible derivation from **men-* (already hypothesized by Sturtevant 1930, Čop 1961 and Carruba 1986; LIV: 435 places the Hittite form within the root albeit with a certain margin of doubt), see Pozza (2014 and 2019) and the bibliography cited there, above all Archi (1995) and Francia (2010). A sense similar to that conveyed by Hittite is observed in the Greek μνάομαι ‘to think, reflect’, but also ‘to remember, mention’. For this latter verb in Homer see also Luraghi – Sausa (2017). For the hypothesis of a vocalization in /a/ of the original

For prehistoric Indo-European we also reconstruct a root which is homonymous with the previous one, **men-/mon-/mn-*, with the meaning of ‘to delay, linger, remain’ (IEW: 729, LIV: 437), from which Gr. μένω, μύμνω ‘I remain, stop’, μωνή ‘stay, permanence’, μόνιμος ‘which remains in its place, stable’, Hitt. *mimma/i-* ‘to refuse, reject (< **mi-mn-e/o-*)²¹, YAv. *upa.maṇaiiān* ‘one should wait’, OPers. *amānaya* ‘waited’, Skr. *man-* ‘to remain, wait, delay’, Lat. *maneō*²² ‘to remain, wait, delay’, Arm. *mnam* (< **mēnah₂-ye-*), ‘to remain, wait, delay’, Toch.A/B *māsk-* ‘to be somewhere, be’, OIr. *ainmne* ‘patience’, Wel. *amynedd* ‘id.’ etc.

The two roots are generally quoted as different headwords (see LIV, s.v.: 1. **men-* ‘einen Gedanken fassen’; 2. **men-* ‘bleiben, warten’), while however not ruling out some possible identity (cf. already IEW: 729 **men-* ‘bleiben, (sinnend) stillstehen’ = *men-* ‘denken’?)²³, based on a relationship that is not only formal but also semantic. In particular, according to a line of reasoning already proposed by Carruba (1986), we could establish a connection not only between Lat. *mora* and *memor*²⁴, but also between Gr. μένω and μέμωνα, according to the parallelism: ‘I wait, linger’, ‘I waited, I lingered’, so thus ‘I think, I have in mind’. A peculiarity of an abstract nature such as that of ‘to think’ would therefore be connected – as a logical consequence – with the concrete act of ‘stopping’, ‘delaying’, as we will see shortly.

Unlike Bomhard (2004), who considers it necessary to isolate a further root **men-* with the sense of ‘to desire ardently, with passion’ – by virtue of specific meanings conveyed by attestations such as Toch.B *mañu* ‘to desire’, Toch.A *mnu* ‘spirit, desire’, Skr. *manyú-* ‘spirit, ardour, zeal, passion’, Gr. μενοιάω ‘to desire ardently, crave’, OIr. *menn-* ‘desire’, *menme* ‘desire’, OHG *minna* ‘love’ etc. –, we consider it more economical here, as well as clearer from a semantic point of view, to include these forms within the same semantic sphere conveyed by the root for ‘to think’²⁵. The act of thinking repeatedly, with intensity, in fact, presupposes, by metaphorical extension, the concept of desiring, a concept which, moreover, is part of the polysemy of many terms such as Gr. μένος ‘vital spirit, force (of spirit), Skr. *mānas-* ‘mind, intellect, will’, *man-* ‘to think’ (but also ‘to hope, desire’) etc.

The same reasoning could be extended – as indeed Rieken effectively does (1999: 51) – to another Indo-European root, **mel-*, to which some attribute the meaning of ‘to delay, linger, hesitate’ (IEW: 720; EDG: 927; Rieken 1999: *ibid.*), others those

syllabic nasal **ŋ* (**me-mŋ-* > *mema-*, as in *katta-* ‘down’ < **k/km̄tŋ* etc.), see in particular HEG (L-N: 189) and, above all, the recent discussion presented by Melchert (2019). See also, on this subject, the literature cited by Kimball (1999: 252-253). Cf. Dardano (2018: 365 ff.) for the hypothesis that in the case of the Hittite expression (*-za*) ... *ZI-ni āppa mema-* ‘to speak from the bottom of (his) soul/mind’ we are dealing instead with a loan translation from Akkadian (where no verb for ‘to reflect’ exists either, but where expressions such as *itti libbi-šu qabū* ‘to speak with his own heart’, *itti libbi dabābu* ‘to speak to his own heart’, hence ‘to ponder, think’ are documented).

²¹ Cf. Sturtevant (1933: 133), Melchert (1984: 100). For semantic aspects, see Pedersen (1938) and Jasanoff (2003: 128 ff.): “the development from ‘stand fast’ to ‘stand firm’ and ‘refuse’ hardly requires comment”.

²² The vocalism of the Latin verb is considered problematic by LIV (437: note 6a): perhaps a reduced degree of **m_hn-* or a formation from a **mon-ē-* with delabialization after **m^o*, or, instead, from a **mŋ(n)-eh₁-* (for reference bibliography and objections, see LIV and LIV *Add.*: s.v.).

²³ See also Buck (1949: s.v. ‘remain, stay, wait’).

²⁴ Despite the doubts of DELL: 396.

²⁵ The etymological dictionaries also reconstruct a third homonymous root **men-* with the meaning of ‘to rise up, stand out’ (IEW: 726), from which Lat. *mentum* ‘chin’, *mōns* ‘mount’, Av. *mati-* (< **mŋti-*) ‘mountain outcrop’, OCor. *menit* ‘mountain’, Wel. *mynydd* id., Ml. *moned*, *monad* (found in toponyms) etc. In any case, the reconstruction of this root does not prejudice the reasoning proposed here, since it would be, in this case, a formally homonymous archetype, but semantically distinct.

of ‘to worry, think, have in mind’ (LIV *Add.*: **mel-* ‘nachedenken, sich sorgen’; Serangeli 2016²⁶). Both meanings attributed to the root in question are preserved in Greek, where the verb μέλλω (< *μέλ-*j*ω, with subsequent analogical extension of the form with the geminate to the rest of the verbal paradigm and to the noun derivatives) indicates the idea of ‘to linger, be late, delay’ (from which, ‘stop thinking’, according to HED M: 21) as well as that of ‘being on the point of’, while μέλω/μέλωμαι means ‘to take care of, think about; be at heart, be an object of thought’.

In Latin, this stem would seem to be continued by *remelīgō* ‘idler’, *prō-mellere* ‘*litem promovere*’, in Old Irish by *mall* ‘slow’. In the Anatolian sector the outcomes are represented, in Hittite, by the noun *māl-* ‘thought, mind, spiritual force’²⁷ and by the denominative verb *mala-/malāi-* ‘to have in mind, to meditate; to approve’²⁸, in Cuneiform Luwian by the verb *mali(ya)-*, *mal(ā)i-* ‘to consider, think’ and by the noun *mālī-* ‘idea, thought’ (see Serangeli 2016).

On the other hand, as already observed by Puhvel (HED M: 21), the relationship between Hitt. *māl-* ‘thought, mind, spiritual force’ and Gr. μέλω/μέλωμαι ‘to take care of, think of, be important to, be the subject of thought’ reminds us of that between Gr. μένος ‘vital spirit, force (of spirit), courage’ and Gr. μένω, μίμνω ‘I remain, I stop’, or of that (*cf.* also *supra*) between Lat. *memor* ‘which has in mind, remembering’ and Lat. *mora* ‘pause’.

Therefore, it would seem we may not rule out a possible semantic development, of a metaphorical type, which goes from the concrete to the abstract (*cf. infra* § 2 for the details), and which led, also in this case, from the meaning of ‘to wait, delay’ to that of ‘to meditate, think’, as already anticipated by Rieken (1999: 49-51)²⁹. In Greek, both μέλλω ‘to linger, delay, play for time’ / ‘to be on the point of’, and μέλω/μέλωμαι ‘to take care of, think of; to be important to, to be an object of thought’, therefore, could be traced back to a single and common root **mel-*³⁰, able to convey both the meanings subsequently documented historically.

The idea that the act of pausing or lingering generates reflection and thought could therefore be formulated both for **men-* and for **mel-*, both, therefore, polysemic in origin. The outcomes of these roots, in fact, display both the concrete and abstract meaning.

²⁶ According to Serangeli (2016) one should imagine that this root conveyed the sense of ‘to think’, since this meaning would be perfectly able to explain both the forms documented by Anatolian and by the Greek verb μέλω/μέλωμαι, which then developed the two specific meanings of ‘to take care of’ and ‘to be the object of someone’s thoughts’.

²⁷ *Cf.* Rieken (1999: 49): “Denken, Geist(esstärke), Verstand”. For CHD (L-N: 124) it referred to “a quality desirable for men in combat, such as boldness, ferocity, skill”, but also “something which is known or recognized”. *Cf. (ibidem) ma-al-wa- za tepuya UL [sak]ki UR.SAG-tarmašši 10-pa piyan [o x [o o o?]-ia?-wašmaš kuin TUR-an haššanzi / [nuwaza a-pé-] ‘e-ell’ [-la?] ma-a-al UL šakti* ‘He knows not for himself even a little *mal*, but courage has been given to him tenfold. The child whom the ...-s beget for themselves, you do not know the *mal* of it [either]’ (KUB 33.113 I 22-24 + KUB 36.12 I 35-37).

²⁸ *Cf.* Otten, *Bronzetafel* 20: *kuin-za imma DUMU-an*^{1D}LAMA *malāizzi* ‘whatever son Kuruntas has in mind’; KBo XVIII 48 Rs. 18: *n-at-za mān malasi* ‘if you agree with it’ (*cf.* HED M: 25-26).

²⁹ *Cf. ivi.* 51: “ich will noch warten → ich will noch denken”. *Contra*, Puhvel (HED M: 21): “Rieken [...] placed the cart before the horse by postulating a reverse semantic development ‘wait’ > ‘think’”. According to Melchert (1994: 169), who hypothesizes a proto-Anatolian dissimilation of */n/ in */l/ near a nasal, “Hitt. *māl-* is ‘inner strength’ < *‘mental force’ from a root noun to **men-*”.

³⁰ The etymologies of μέλω and μέλλω are generally considered obscure, but various scholars think that they may be related (see IEW: 720, EWG: 196; DELG and GEW, *s.v.*, and the bibliography contained therein), despite the different meanings (see EDG: 927; 929).

2. Final considerations

In conclusion, if we contextualize the hypothesis here proposed within a more general framework of semantic change, it could be observed, as Traugott (1982 and 1990) and Traugott – Dasher (2002: 94-96) have shown, that verbs related to the physical sphere frequently evolve into verbs of speech acts or mental state, which is precisely what seems to happen from ‘to stand’ and ‘to linger’ to ‘to think, to have in mind’. The semantic change here proposed falls within a general trend according to which meanings “based in the external described situation (positional)” change into meanings “based in the internal (evaluative / perceptual / cognitive) described situation” (*ivi*: 94).

This tendency, explicitly described by Traugott (1990: 500) and Traugott – Dasher (2002: 94) as “Tendency I”, subsumes many semantic changes from concrete to abstract, most especially from physical to mental (among the examples offered by the scholars, we remind OE *felan* ‘touch’ > ‘experience mentally’, or *agan to* ‘have for’ > ‘obligation,’ ‘ought’). Yet, according to Sweetser (1990: 31) “there is a general tendency to borrow concepts and vocabulary from the more accessible physical and social world to refer to less accessible worlds of reasoning, emotion, and conversational structure”³¹. “Tendency III”, according to which “meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief state/attitude toward the situation” is, according to Traugott (1989: 34-35; 1990: 500) and Traugott – Dasher (2002: 94), the dominant one, fed by other tendencies. Concerning this latter kind of semantic shift, the scholars remind Langacker’s (1986: 467) words: “Whereas the basic meaning profiles physical motion by an objectively-construed mover, namely the subject, one (unprofiled) facet of the extended meaning is abstract motion by a subjectively-construed mover, specifically the conceptualizer. The pivotal factor in this type of semantic shift is therefore subjectification”.

Particularly, the theoretical scheme adopted here provides, in light of cognitive semantics, the semantic link between the source domain, represented by ‘stasis’ and ‘sensory perception’, and the target domain, represented by ‘knowledge’, which manifests itself linguistically through verbs which, by indicating gustatory perception or lingering with respect to the nearby object of knowledge, denote a more general and abstract cognitive activity. In both cases, the connection with the gnoseological sphere thus develops from the experiential domains that envisage either the material incorporation (“embodiment”) of the object of knowledge (Hitt. *išta(n)h-*) or proximity to it – lingering in its observation, we could say – (Lat. *superstitio*, Gr. ἐπιστήμη, OEng. *understandan*, *far-standan*, Lat. *maneō* : *mēns*, Gr. μένω, μίμνω : μένος, Toch. *māsk-* : *mañu* etc.).

In fact, most Indo-European languages (see the table below) display outcomes characterized by both the semantic values attributed to the two “traditional” radical

³¹ See also Traugott (1982: 253), even if specifically focused on grammaticalization processes: if a meaning-shift in the process of grammaticalization occurs within a component, it is more likely to involve “less personal” to “more personal” than the reverse. Sweetser (1990: 31) underlines that Traugott’s propositional level (the “less personal”) corresponds fairly close to what she defines “sociophysical level”, and that Traugott’s textual/expressive level (the “more personal”) coincides partially with her epistemic level. The same argues Traugott (1990: 500), quoting Sweetser: “Tendency I also subsumes the tendency to use vocabulary from the external (sociophysical) domain in speaking of the internal (emotional and psychological) domain”.

archetypes of **men-*, which would therefore seem to confirm the historical continuation of the polysemy which we consider here to be original.

**men-/mon-/μη-* ‘think, have in mind’

Latin: *mēns*, *mentis* ‘mind’, *meminī* ‘I remember, reflect’, *moneō* ‘I make think, remind, warn’, *mōn-strāre* ‘to show’ etc.

Greek: μένος ‘vital spirit, force (of spirit), courage’, μνήμη ‘memory’, μιμνέσκω ‘recall’, μέμονα ‘have in mind’ etc.

Skr.: *man-* ‘to think, believe, comprehend’, *mānas-* ‘mind, intellect, will’, *mantār-* ‘thinker, manyú- ‘spirit, ardour, passion’ etc.

OEng. *gemynd* ‘mind, memory’, Goth. *munan* ‘reflect’, *muns* ‘thought, opinion’, OHG *minna* ‘love’ (< *‘memory of love’), OEng. *mon*, *man* ‘to think’, *myne* ‘memory; love’, ON *munr* ‘vital energy, desire’ etc.

Lith. *miniù* ‘to think, remember’, OCS *mbněti* ‘to think, imagine, acknowledge’, OCz. *mnieti* ‘to think, suppose, intend’ etc.

Hittite: *mema/i-* ‘to speak’, with *āppa*, *-za*, *ZI-ni* ‘to reflect, think’

Av. *maṇtā* ‘thinks’, *manah-* ‘mental power, thought, spirit’

Armenian: *i-manam* ‘to understand’

Toch.B *mañu* ‘to desire’, Toch.A *mnu* ‘spirit, desire’

OIr. *menn-* ‘to desire’, *menme* ‘desire’, *cuman*, *cuimne* ‘memory’

**men-/mon-/μη-* ‘delay, linger, remain’

Latin: *maneō* ‘I remain, wait’

Greek: μένω, μίμνω ‘I remain, I stop’, μονή ‘stay, permanence’, μόνιμος ‘which stays in its place, stable’ etc.

Skr.: *man-* ‘to delay, remain’ (IEW: 729), cf. Vedic *pari-mamandhi* ‘wait!’, *āmaman* ‘he/she waited’

The root is continued in English as a loan from Latin: Mod.Eng. *permanent*, *immanent*, *to remain* (< Lat. *re-manēre*) etc. In German the root **leyp-* ‘to attach, adhere’ prevailed, giving German *bleiben* (Goth. **bileiban*, OHG *bilīban*)

In the Baltic languages the root **leyk^w-/loyk^w-* ‘to leave (behind), go away’¹, has prevailed, giving Lith. *likti* ‘to maintain, hold, remain’, Latv. *likt* ‘to leave, put’

Hittite: *mimma/i-* ‘to refuse, reject’ < *‘to stay still’

YAv. *upa.maṇaiiēn* ‘should wait’, OP *amānaya* ‘waited’

Armenian: *mnam* ‘to remain, wait’

Toch.A/B *mäsk-* ‘to find oneself, be’

OIr. *ainmne*, Wel. *amynedd* ‘patience’ etc.

It will be noted that, except for the Germanic and the Balto-Slavic sectors (which document only outcomes of the root **men-* ‘to think’, and instead continue other IE

roots for the meaning of ‘to delay, wait’), most ancient Indo-European languages testify both of the meanings attributed to the two roots traditionally considered homonymous, which leads us to consider it highly probable that we are actually dealing with a single root capable of “accepting” within it the semantic shifts hypothesized here.

The fact, finally, that one can think that an IE root such as **men-/mon-/mṇ-* was originally polysemic and that, therefore, conveyed both the meaning of ‘to think, have in mind’ and that of ‘to delay, remain’, supports the parallel interpretation that sees in **mel-* a similar polysemy, showing a further “experiential” connection between (initial) stasis and (subsequent) reflection. It is no coincidence, in fact, that for the latter root the major etymological dictionaries reconstruct either the semantic value of ‘to delay’ (IEW: 720; EDG: 927) or, alternatively, that of ‘to think’ (LIV, *Add.*, *s.v.*), or consider the reconstruction of the main meaning of certain historical outcomes to be problematic (*cf.* GEW: 203 “Da der konkrete Begriffskern von μέλλω unbekannt bleibt, sind alle Erklärungsversuche hypothetisch”). The same polysemy would seem to occur, as we have seen (*cf.* § 1.1), also for **steh₂-*, which displays outcomes characterized both by the value of ‘to stay’ and of ‘to think’, mostly in the presence of localistic preverbs. The bodily model in fact represents – as already observed in the ethnolinguistic studies of G.R. Cardona³² – the primary point of reference around which the subsequent abstract concepts would take shape and develop: it is language itself that shows how important spatial references are to us (it is through denomination that the real appropriation of space is perceived), and it is precisely through language that the universal psycho-physical model may be filtered.

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³² See above all Cardona (1985).

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