

2. Uses of the gerund

[438]

a) Accusative

We have seen that, for the role of direct object, we use the infinitive as such:

- *Volo legere* I WANT TO READ.

Then, if as direct object we do not use the gerund in accusative (usually we need a noun in the accusative if it is to perform the role of direct object, but it is not so if it is an infinitive), what do we use the accusative of the gerund for?

The use of the accusative of the gerund has nothing to do with direct objects (let's remember that it is usually preceded by the preposition *ad*). In fact it is the only case of the gerund which is not used for the usual function of that case, and the meaning it has is one of purpose:

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| • <i>Venio ad ludendum</i> | I COME TO PLAY. |
| • <i>Milites ad pugnandum venient</i> | THE SOLDIERS WILL COME TO FIGHT. |
| • <i>Studium ad pugnandum virtusque deerat</i>
(Caesar, <i>Bellum Civile</i>). | THE DESIRE FOR FIGHTING AND BRAVERY WAS ABSENT |
| • <i>Exercitus Romanorum ad pugnandum concitatus est</i>
(Julius Frontinus, <i>Strategemata</i>). | THE ROMAN ARMY WAS INCITED TO FIGHT |
| • <i>Scio te ... ad occidendum me venisse</i>
(Petronius, <i>Satyricon</i>). | I KNOW THAT YOU HAVE COME TO KILL ME |

It must be reminded that purpose can also be expressed by *ut* + subjunctive:

- *Venio ut ludam* I COME TO PLAY

and moreover there are more methods of expressing purpose, which we will see further ahead.

b) Genitive

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The use of the gerund in genitive is identical to the use of any noun in genitive:

- *Librum scripsi de arte legendi* I HAVE WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT THE ART OF READING.
- *Cupidus sum bibendi* I AM DESIROUS OF DRINKING.
- *Bomilcar, ... cupidus incepta patrandi ..., litteras ad eum per homines fidelis mittit* BOMILCAR, DESIROUS OF CARRYING OUT WHAT HAD ALREADY BEGUN, SENDS HIM A LETTER BY MEANS OF FAITHFUL MEN (Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum*).

Its use after the ablatives *causa* or *gratia* is very common, and the whole construction will have a *purpose meaning*:

- *Domum iniit dormiendo causa/gratia* HE WENT INTO THE HOUSE FOR THE SAKE OF SLEEPING.
- *Si praedandi causa ad eos venissent, ...* IF THEY HAD COME TO THEM FOR THE SAKE OF PLUNDERING, ...
(Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*).