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WHAT GRAECO-ROMAN GRAMMAR WAS ABOUT

P. H. MATTHEWS



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To the memory of
Anna Morpurgo Davies
1937–2014

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Preface

This book is one that Anna Morpurgo Davies was very keen that I should write. I have got round to it, alas, so slowly that she was no longer there to comment on my first drafts. I can only hope that it is worthy to be dedicated to her memory.

Julia Steer commissioned two reports for the Press which were both very helpful. I have been conscious at all times that I am not a pukka classical scholar, and am therefore especially grateful to one referee for corrections and qualifications on various points of detail where the limits of my competence were beginning to show. I have also been helped by encouragement from Philomen Probert.

Abbreviations used in glosses

| | |
|--------|---------------|
| ABL | Ablative |
| ACC | Accusative |
| ACT | Active |
| DAT | Dative |
| DU | Dual |
| FEM | Feminine |
| FUT | Future |
| GEN | Genitive |
| IMPER | Imperative |
| IND | Indicative |
| INF | Infinitive |
| INTERR | Interrogative |
| MASC | Masculine |
| NEUT | Neuter |
| NOM | Nominative |
| OPT | Optative |
| PART | Participle |
| PASS | Passive |
| PERF | Perfect |
| PL | Plural |
| PRES | Present |
| SG | Singular |
| SUBJ | Subjunctive |
| SUP | Superlative |
| 1 | First person |
| 2 | Second person |
| 3 | Third person |

Chapter 1

Introduction

The aim of this book is to explain how the grammarians of the Graeco-Roman world perceived the nature and structure of the languages they taught. It is addressed in particular to linguists of the present day, primarily in western countries, and I write as one such linguist, not as a specialist in Classics. I cannot among other things assume that every reader will know Latin, let alone Greek. I will assume, however, some basic understanding of linguistics, and will refer for comparison to ideas current in this century and the last without explaining them in detail.

The task may seem at first sight to be easy. Some ancient texts have been translated, often in terms that to a modern reader are in their modern senses perfectly familiar. For Greek *onoma* or Latin *nomen* a translator into English will write modern ‘noun’; for Greek *sundesmos* or Latin *coniunctio* the modern ‘conjunction’; for Greek *lexis* or Latin *dictio* the modern ‘word’; for Greek *gramma* or Latin *lit(t)era* the modern ‘letter’; and so on. For none of these terms are the equivalences exact. Ancient ‘nouns’ included adjectives, and ‘conjunctions’ in Greek included words that a modern treatment will class separately as ‘particles’. An ancient ‘letter’ was a unit as much of speech as of writing. Even, however, when such differences have been acknowledged, the

history of grammar can be seen as one of individual refinements and improvements, in which scholars of successive eras have drawn distinctions that their forebears missed, in which new findings have been added and new ideas assimilated, in which individual errors have often been corrected. It is the history of a continuous tradition, in which linguists of our day are labouring in a vineyard that was planted by linguists of the ancient Mediterranean world, and the problems they were addressing are at heart ours also.

In part that is, of course, true. Ancient physics, for comparison, was not modern physics. The ancient theory, for example, of four elements, of earth, air, fire, and water, is now simply dead. Yet linguists still talk, if not of the eight parts of speech, of a system of categories that include in large part similar distinctions. Their number varies, as does the basis on which they are established. But where ancient accounts of Latin distinguished *nomina* and *verba* modern grammars of, for example, English distinguish syntactic categories called 'noun' and 'verb'. The modern distinction between nouns and adjectives can be seen as one of the same order as those we have inherited from antiquity, such as that of prepositions and conjunctions, or one that the tradition has since demoted, between verbs and participles. Nor does anyone doubt, or seem to doubt, that categories like the parts of speech are fundamental to the study of grammar, in the twenty-first century as in the first.

Yet why, we might ask, are they so called? The term 'part of speech' has as a whole become opaque, but it translates in origin the one in Latin for the 'parts' quite literally of what was called an *oratio*. This can often be translated 'speech': the speeches of the Roman 'orator' Cicero were his *orationes* or 'orations'. But for the Roman grammarians it referred most nearly to what we might now call an 'utterance'. The formation of the term was similar: as

‘utterance’ is from the verb ‘to utter’, so *oratio* was formed transparently from a verb whose stem was *or(a)-*, meaning ‘to speak’. This was in turn related to the word for ‘mouth’ (genitive *oris*). An *oratio* was therefore anything said and anything represented, as if said, in writing. Its ‘parts’ (*partes*) were categories of units into which an utterance was again quite literally divided. We will address this topic in more detail in a later chapter. It is already clear, however, that an apparent continuity in terminology may mislead us into thinking that ideas too are unchanged.

The past as always is another country, and the greater the differences between periods the more our outlook must reflect it. The Roman empire was a society not only unlike ours. It was different too from that of the European Middle Ages, and from the way it came itself to be perceived in the Renaissance. Part of the history of grammar, therefore, in the west is of its adaptation to new circumstances and new pressures: to an educational system restricted in the Dark Ages to the church; to the teaching of Latin to speakers of Old English and other Germanic languages; to a new emphasis, at the height of the Middle Ages, on its philosophical foundations; to the development in the early Modern period of standard forms of national languages; to the description of unfamiliar languages in other continents; to the university system as developed in Germany in the nineteenth century; to later preoccupations nearer our own time. Its external history, if we may so call it, is a field in itself. But its internal history has its own momentum. Any grammar is a partial description of a language, which identifies certain kinds of unit and relations of certain kinds between them. Those established in antiquity in analyses of Greek and Latin were later taken as a model for the description of languages whose structure was in one way or another different. Other units, however, and other relations came in time to be identified, which have since been taken up by scholars

generally. The concepts, for example, of a root and an affix, which were no part of the Graeco-Roman model, were adopted gradually by Europeans from the sixteenth century onwards, from accounts of Arabic or Hebrew. A later, independent model lay in the ancient analysis of Sanskrit, when it became known to western scholars in the early nineteenth century. In response to these and other influences a modern account of Ancient Greek or Latin, leaving aside all other languages, is different in substance from those current fifteen and more centuries ago.

A central aim then of this book will be to make clear what the ancient model was. The term 'model' is an anachronism: an ancient grammarian, if teaching Greek, was thinking of Greek alone or, if teaching Latin, was thinking of just it and Greek. He had no professional interest in any other language with which speakers of either might be in contact. He had no motive like that of linguists nowadays, to develop a 'theory' of the structure of language that will be compatible with what we know of forms of speech in all societies. The moment, however, one says that a language has 'words', that they consist, as 'words' in antiquity were seen to consist, of letters and syllables, and that such 'words' belong to different classes within utterances, a system of grammar is implied which can in principle be abstracted and applied more generally.

The texts that survive, in which ideas can safely be identified, date at the earliest from the first century BC; most, however, were written four centuries or more later. Those in Latin include in particular the ones that were to prove most useful in the early Middle Ages, when it was taught increasingly as a foreign language. It is possible, therefore, that they are more homogeneous than they would be if survival had been more random. They formed part, however, of a continuous tradition, in which grammar as represented by Quintilian, who was born in the formative

years of the Roman empire, was still the discipline defined by Isidore of Seville, writing in the early seventh century AD, long after the empire had politically fragmented. These and other authors are identified briefly in an appendix. Earlier writers will at times be mentioned, as far back as the flowering of philosophy in ancient Athens. But in the later period at least, the model or technique of grammar became in essence frozen.

Before then it did have a history, which belongs especially to the period called Hellenistic, in officially Greek-speaking states across the eastern Mediterranean that succeeded the conquests of Alexander in the late fourth century BC. It is a history, however, that we do not know directly. Original texts have not survived, and we must therefore rely on subsequent accounts in what would now be textbooks, and on scattered references by various authors, often second-hand and sometimes hostile, and inevitably influenced by ideas of their own day. This is true especially of our sources for the Stoic philosophers of the third and second centuries BC, whose theory of language, as understood and ingeniously pieced together by modern scholars, underlay a great deal of what followed. Our earliest extended texts in Greek, by the great Alexandrian grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, date from the second century AD, and seem to attest a stage when many important details were still being worked out. They were details nevertheless, and the nature of the discipline had been established already by pioneers of whom we mostly know at best their names.

It would be perverse, if it were possible, to ignore this history entirely. The very term *grammatica* or 'grammar' has its origin in Greek in a period of which we have at least a partial understanding. The focus of this book, however, will be on the consensus that was broadly achieved. By the time the Roman empire reached its zenith, under the rule of Trajan and Hadrian and the other 'good' emperors,

a grammarian had not only a secure place in the ancient system of education, but could take for granted a technical apparatus that was already well developed. Our main task is to try and think about the nature and structure of language in the way that, from their often voluminous writings, it appears that they thought.

We will often be forced to that end to suspend preoccupations that belong to later eras. To most linguists nowadays it is obvious, for example, that writing is in principle not speech. We may give illustrations in writing, as grammarians have done from the beginning. But written English or written French has its own structure, which has evolved separately in many respects from spoken varieties. It is an error in this light to think of written sentences as ‘utterances’ or, as linguists did before the twentieth century, of letters as having ‘sounds’. But ancient attitudes had not developed that far. To read in particular was to read aloud, from manuscripts that in general did not divide words. A doctor could therefore prescribe the physical exercise of reading as a course of treatment for some diseases. Reading silently was odd and the practice that to us is normal, of scanning texts at speeds that are often much more rapid than speech, was facilitated by changes in the way a manuscript was written half a millennium after the period we are concerned with. To write was to represent, letter by letter, what could alternatively be uttered; to learn to read was to reconstitute a text, letter by letter and syllable by syllable, in its primary form. Compare in that light a modern recording of someone talking. It is strictly not, itself, an ‘utterance’. It records no more than the sound made in an act of utterance, in abstraction from facial expressions, gestures and body postures, and so on. Yet many linguists blithely talk of a transcription of such a recording as their ‘data’. To an ancient writer a conflation of speech and writing might have seemed as innocent.

To explain what ancient grammarians were up to, and in that way justify the title I have chosen, we need not argue that they were right. Even, however, where we know or believe that they were wrong, what they wrote may still make sense in the context in which they were writing. We must avoid in particular the temptation to think of them as ancient ‘linguists’: as the equivalents in antiquity to modern specialists in morphology and syntax, with the aims and preoccupations common to linguists of our day. ‘Linguistics’ is a term that dates from the early nineteenth century, and the boundaries between the study of language and other disciplines, such as philosophy or the study of literature, have since been determined largely by the growth of faculties and departments, with their own curricula and their own examinations, in universities. In the period of the Roman empire the role of a grammarian, or in Latin a *grammaticus*, was self-contained in a quite different way. He was professionally a secondary teacher, who took pupils whose parents wanted and could pay for it beyond a stage of primary literacy. If members of the governing elite, they were destined ideally to play a part in public life, in a society that valued skill in oral presentation. From a grammarian’s care they might therefore pass to that of a teacher of rhetoric, who could take for granted that his pupils were literate; that they were able to understand and study literary texts; that they could assign the words of any text to successive ‘parts of speech’; that they could identify the cases of nouns or the tenses of verbs; that they understood in general what made utterances complete and, in a modern term, ‘grammatical’. Some of this belongs to what is now linguistics. To talk, however, of ancient grammar as part of the history of this subject is to project a modern concept onto an ancient discipline that only partly corresponded to it.

In looking beyond grammar we must be yet more cautious. We have already referred, however, to the philosophers of the Stoic school, whose interest in language was not the earliest. The history of linguistics, or a projection of what is now linguistics, has therefore been taken to begin, some centuries before the Romans conquered everything in their path, in a Greek world dominated intellectually by Athens.

A leading text is Plato's *Cratylus*. It is a dialogue named like others after one participant, who maintains that relations of forms to meanings are 'by nature' (*phusei*). In an opposite view, defended by another participant, they are valid merely 'by custom' (*nomōi*) or by convention. In modern eyes this second opinion is obviously right. The relation is not natural but 'arbitrary', in a sense that can be traced directly, through the Middle Ages, to a Greek word for 'convention' as it was subsequently used by Aristotle. What Plato himself concluded, in the mouth of Socrates as a third participant, is open to varying interpretations. Let us assume however, as was largely assumed by scholars throughout antiquity, that the view we now take to be obvious is wrong. Words are subject as we know to changes in, for example, sounds. It is not so long ago that these were called, quite neutrally, 'corruptions'. They can also be replaced by 'borrowing', as linguists have come to describe it, from other languages. These represent disturbances, however, to what could be thought in principle to be an ideal system, in which the forms of words, as established before they were corrupted or replaced, directly reflect reality. An ideal system cannot, of course, be wholly recovered. But if this is right it is perfectly reasonable to ask, for example, why men should be referred to by a form *man* or, conversely, what sort of entity a form such as *man* can appropriately refer to.

It is in this light that we must understand especially the ancient concept of 'etymology'. In the period on which this book will

focus, etymology was in practice separate from grammar and could be said to overlap it at the edges only. Both terms, however, have been used continuously for two millennia. In both fields, therefore, it is tempting to assume a continuity of ideas, in which the aims of ancient writers were basically those that we have also. For etymology in particular that is strikingly not so.

For a skeletal history and some ancient definitions see Box 1.1. But the term in Greek, *etumologia*, was transparently a compound of *-logia*, as in modern ‘-(o)logy’, and an adjective, though not the one most usual, with the meaning ‘true’. What was ‘true’ then, and the subject of what was in antiquity an *etumon*, concerned the relation of an original form to an original sense, and the objective was to recover it as far as possible, by analysis and imaginative intuition, from the overlay of history. This involved in part establishing relations between forms; and in the simplest instances they were ones which we too, though with a different aim and by quite different criteria, will approve as valid. The name *Cicero*, for example, was and is from Latin *cicer* ‘chickpea’; the noun *amor* ‘love’ from the verb ‘to love’ (infinitive *amare*). The proper meaning of *amor*, and the right way for this word to be used, was in that way made clear. Less transparent relations called, however, for deeper insight, and those proposed in antiquity, if misinterpreted as ‘etymologies’ in the modern sense, will often seem absurd.

Some characteristic illustrations are in Box 1.1. Let us imagine, however, that an ancient etymologist were to apply his insight to the study of English. To ‘cover’, for example, might be explained in his view as a reduction of to ‘conceal overall’; ‘grass’ could be so called because it ‘grows fast’; a ‘television’, if we may be just a little bolder, because it ‘tells things that are visible’. These should not be seen as jokes. We are dealing with an earlier theory of the origin of words, rooted in earlier assumptions about the nature of language,

Box 1.1 Ancient etymology

The earliest serious treatment is in Plato's *Cratylus*. The origin, for example, of the Greek word for a god (nominative singular *theós*) lay, as the character Socrates proposes, in the verb 'to run' (infinitive *theîn*). The reason, he explains, is that the earliest deities to be recognized were bodies like the sun and moon, which were constantly moving. In a bolder hypothesis, which is part of the same fit of inspiration, the noun *ánthrōpos* ('man' in the general sense of 'human being') is explained as a contraction of *anathrôn ha ópōpe* 'considering the things he has seen', thus reflecting our ability to reason. How far Plato himself believed the flights of fancy that he put into the mouth of Socrates has been a central problem for the interpretation of the dialogue.

The term *etumologia* dates, from fragmentary sources, to the centuries that followed, and for the Roman scholar Varro, in the first century BC, it described a discipline then familiar. We do not have the chapters (traditionally the 'books'), in which he discussed and defended it in theory. The topic as a whole, however, was 'how words were applied to things in Latin',¹ and the parts of his work that survive are a classic illustration of the explanations that were thought to be illuminating. Many are again a product of imaginative speculation. *Vīta* 'life', for example, is from *vīs* 'force, physical strength': Varro cites in support a line from a Roman poet, which said that *vita est* ('is') *vis*. A blackbird is in Latin a *merula* because it does not form flocks and is thus, in a word used normally of wine, *mera* 'unmixed'.²

A definition in Greek, in a grammatical commentary of a much later period, describes the subject as 'the unfolding of words, through which their true meanings (literally 'that which is true') is made plain'.³ For *etumon* 'that which is true' this

definition substitutes the usual word *alēthes*. It is as if, the commentator goes on to explain, one were to talk of *alethologia*. For Isidore of Seville, writing in Latin seven centuries after Varro, a typical illustration, famous indeed in the history of the discipline, was the derivation of the word for ‘copse’ or ‘grove’ (nominative singular *lūcus*) from the verb for ‘to shine’ (infinitive *lūcēre*); a conventional explanation was that in such places, which were often sacred, light shines minimally. The term *etymologia* is applied in general to ‘the origin of words, where the force of a verb or noun is brought together through interpretation.’⁴ ‘For when the etymology is known,’ as Isidore explains a few sentences later, ‘every study of a thing is plainer.’⁵

These words are cited from a section headed ‘etymology’, in a work which was in effect an encyclopaedia of ancient knowledge. But the plural *Etymologiae* is also the title given to the whole. The meaning of a word was not a problem separate in principle from that of its origin. Both played a central role in any inquiry, and in any inquiry the proper use of words and the proper distinctions between them, was essential. We now excoriate what we call the ‘etymological fallacy’. But Varro or Isidore, for example, might have found it very hard to see it as such.

1. *quemadmodum vocabula essent imposita rebus in lingua latina* (LL 5.1, trans. Kent 1938: 2).
2. LL 2.63; 5.76.
3. *hē anáptuxis tōn léxeōn, di’ hēs tò alēthēs saphēnízetai* (GG 1.3: 14, ll. 23–4; trans. Robins 1990: 26).
4. *origo vocabulorum, cum vis verbi vel nominis per interpretationem colligitur* (Etym. 1.29).
5. *omnis enim rei inspectio etymologia cognita planior est.*

that linguists have been forced to reject. If a Greek or Roman scholar were to be resurrected, he would indeed have difficulty in understanding our priorities. He might well conclude that ‘etymology’ has become a sadly jejune discipline. People practising it now are simply ignoring what should be the central issue, of how the forms that a society has created relate appropriately to the things to which they are assigned.

The example of etymology can serve as a warning for the study of ancient grammar. We may try to project modern distinctions, between what is now and what is now not part of ‘linguistics’, but we must not lose sight of the intellectual context in which ancient scholars were working or their own, often tacit assumptions. For grammarians, moreover, part of the context was itself formed by the practice of etymology, and by ideas that lay behind it.

It mattered in this light that things should be named appropriately. The term for a noun, for example, was in origin the ordinary word for someone’s name: the *onoma* of Plato, or in Latin his *nomen*, was the nominative singular *Plátōn*. A word, however, like *ánthrōpos* ‘human being’ was not a name and in the earliest accounts was not an *onoma*. It was instead distinguished as in Greek a *prosēgoria* (literally an ‘addressing’ or an ‘identification’). In their grammar, however, names and ‘identifications’ were alike, and by the end of the Hellenistic period an *onoma* was in one analysis a part of an utterance, as in later grammars, that included both. But the name of an individual remained an *onoma* that was *kurion*, a principal or ‘leading’ name, and became in Latin a *nomen proprium*, or name in a strict sense distinguished from others. This is the source accordingly of ‘proper noun’ in English, in whatever way the term may now be understood.

The terms we use now tend in contrast to be more opaque. ‘Noun’ in English has no origin other than as the equivalent in

late Middle English of *nomen* as it was used in Latin grammar. ‘Tense’, for example, is a similar equivalent of Latin *tempus*, which corresponded to Greek *khronos* as the ordinary word for ‘time’. Any linguist writing nowadays will insist, of course, that tense and time are not the same thing. One is an inflectional category whose ‘basic role’, if I may cite a formulation of my own, ‘is to indicate the time of an event, etc. in relation to the moment of speaking’ (Matthews 2014: 403). The other is a dimension of reality as people perceive it. It does not follow from a definition such as mine that every form described as in, for example, the past tense must always refer to events or situations that in time too will be past. The point can be made clear in English with such utterances as *I was naturally seeing you tomorrow*. But for a Roman grammarian *tempus* meant quite literally ‘time’, and ‘past time’ (*tempus praeteritum*) meant precisely that. A verb such as *amāvī* ‘I loved, have loved’ had as a word the property of being situated on a time scale.

Another important category is that of ‘person’. For us, this too is a grammatical category, ‘distinguishing’ if I may cite myself again, ‘speakers and addressees from each other and from other individuals etc. referred to’ (2014: 296). But the term in Greek, *prosōpon*, had the ordinary meaning of a ‘face’; also of a ‘character’, distinguished by a mask worn by a performer, in the theatre. It was therefore natural to extend it to the individuals engaged in or referred to in an act of speech. The person speaking, whose utterance is the centre of attention, was the ‘first’ *prosōpon*, or in Latin the ‘first’ *persona*; a person spoken to the ‘second’. Any other entity an utterance might refer to was a ‘third person’. The same terms then applied to forms by which participants, as we may now call them, were identified. In the sentence, for example, in English *I told you the man was there* the form *I* refers to the

speaker and would itself as a form have had the property ‘first person’; *you* refers to someone addressed and would itself be ‘second person’; (*the*) *man*, which refers to someone else, would for an ancient grammarian have been as a form ‘third person’.

The assumption behind this is one that also inspired ancient etymology: that language was a rational representation of reality, invented by human beings who are distinguished by their power of reason from all other living creatures. Categories of reality and of language were therefore in principle the same. This belief also informed ancient understanding of how words with properties like these combined meaningfully, as we will see, in utterances.

Transcriptions

This is perhaps as good a place as any to explain the conventions by which forms in Greek especially will be represented. Where they are cited as examples I will follow a conventional transcription of the Greek alphabet, accents included: thus *ánthrōpos* for *ἄνθρωπος* ‘human being’. The acute on the first syllable of *ánthrōpos* represented what was historically a high pitch; the circumflex on words such as *theîn* ‘to run’ or *tôn* ‘of (plural) the’ represented a falling pitch over a syllable whose nucleus was a long vowel or diphthong; a third accent, the grave, was used in writing when a high pitch was lowered in context. Note that the length of vowels was distinguished in the Greek alphabet for mid vowels only. Note too that a γ will be transcribed by *n* before a velar consonant: thus *ángelos* for *ἄγγελος* ‘messenger’ (phonetically [anɣelos]).

I have been persuaded to use the same transcription where passages in Greek are cited in the notes to boxes. Where terms,

however, are cited in the text I will follow a more usual convention and omit accents: thus *etumologia* for *ἐτυμολογία*.

In representing examples in Latin I will add a macron, following the usual tradition, where the length of a vowel determined that of a syllable: thus *lūcēre* ‘to shine’. In citing terms, and in the notes to boxes, macrons are not added.

Chapter 2

Grammar

Grammars (plural), in the form in which we know them, date in the most plausible account from the last century before Christ. The earliest surviving texts, or the earliest whose provenance is not disputed, are found a century or so later, on papyrus excavated from rubbish tips in desert areas in Egypt. We also have a famous manual, ascribed to the Greek scholar Dionysius Thrax, who died around 90 BC. It begins with a definition of grammar, cited in Box 2.1, which is confirmed by other evidence as his; and, if other sections were genuine, much of the doctrine found in later grammars, on the units a language has in general, on the parts of an utterance, and so on, must have been largely worked out by his time. But it was noted already, in late antiquity, that where the ‘Dionysius’ of the manual says one thing the historical Dionysius is sometimes known, from intervening sources, to have said another. The text we have is very like a grammar from the period of the Roman empire; and in one view that is when the surviving text was put together.

Whatever its date, the manual is itself important. I will therefore refer to it often, but with the name of Dionysius in inverted commas. I will also refer from time to time to Varro’s work on ‘The Latin language’, which survives in part from later in the first

century BC. This is not a grammar, but a survey by a polymath and intellectual magpie who had clearly picked up and applied to Latin, ideas and analyses of language that had reached Rome from the eastern Mediterranean. His sources are in part unknown, and modern commentators have been inclined to seize on individual passages and to praise them both as more original and more systematic than, in a considered view, they actually may have been. They are sometimes, however, our only direct testimony of a very creative period, before standard doctrines had gelled.

The discipline that emerged is first described in detail by a Roman teacher of rhetoric, Quintilian, in the middle of the first century AD. It was divided ‘very briefly’, in his own words, into two parts. One was the knowledge of how to speak correctly (*recte loquendi scientia*). This part included, as he made clear, a mastery of speech as represented in writing. The other was ‘the detailed interpretation of poets’ (*poetarum enarratio*). It was not enough, however, to study poetry alone; other forms of literature also had to be examined thoroughly. For a similar division compare, for example, a Latin grammar by Diomedes compiled three centuries or so later. One part of grammar is called in Greek *horistikē* or ‘defining’, and it was this that included the study of letters, of parts of utterances, and other categories that belong, as we may now be tempted to see it, to a branch of ancient linguistics. In other accounts (see the end of Box 2.1), these fell under a part called *tekhnikē* or ‘technical’. Quintilian’s ‘interpretive’ part is distinguished by Diomedes, again using a Greek term, as ‘explanatory’ (*exēgētikē*).

What this meant in practice was that a grammarian taught both the parsing, word by word, of what were called the parts of utterances, and a mass of what were in Greek *historiai*, or gobbets of information and explanation which formed running notes on the texts their pupils studied. It could be part of his job, for example,

to explain to them both that the name *Hómēros* is a noun and is a form in the nominative singular, and that it refers to a famous poet, who wrote the ‘Iliad’ and the ‘Odyssey’, which are epics of the Trojan war and its aftermath, which were written in lines of verse with six feet called hexameters, and so on. It is hardly surprising that, in the ancient system of education, these things should have belonged together in the same classroom. But they also reflect the earlier history, or prehistory, of the grammarians’ profession. Grammar as it is later perceived, as a technical discipline concerned with the categories and structure of a language, had emerged historically, at the end of the Hellenistic period, from one whose origins, as early definitions make clear, had lain in the academic study of literature.

Box 2.1 Definitions of grammar

The term ‘grammar’ is derived from the Greek word for a letter of the alphabet: *gramma*, stem *grammat-*, hence *grammat-ik-ē*. A man could be called *grammatikos*, in the fifth century BC, if he was, as we would now say, educated. ‘Grammar’ as a specific discipline, practised by scholars who were in the plural *grammatikoi*, was to develop a couple of centuries later.

Early definitions, from the first century BC, are cited and rubbished by the philosopher Sextus Empiricus, whose critique of this and other scholarly professions (‘Against the professors’) appears to date from the late second century AD. The formulation he ascribes to Dionysius Thrax is the earliest, and corresponds, though in a partly different wording, to the one given in the manual which has come down under his name. That part of the manual, though that alone, is thus confirmed as genuine and was already in antiquity the subject of many commentaries.

Dionysius was a pupil of Aristarchus, who was above all a distinguished philologist and student of texts; *grammatikē* was as he defined it an *empeiria* or a form of practical expertise; and its field, in the wording of the manual, was ‘what is said, for the most part, in [the works of] poets and authors.’¹ This raised, however, two issues. One was whether grammar is indeed an *empeiria*, or is more properly a *tekhnē*, or craft based on underlying principles. A *tekhnē* was in Latin an *ars* or ‘art’, and in another definition in Greek that Sextus pinpoints, grammar was the ‘art’ whose subject was ‘the speech of poets and authors.’² For such an ‘art’ the qualification ‘for the most part’ was implicitly no longer appropriate. Commentators on the manual of ‘Dionysius’ distinguish various kinds of *tekhnē*: one purely ‘contemplative’ (*theōrētikē*), such as astronomy, and others whose nature was ‘active’ (*praktikē*), such as the art of war, or ‘creative’ (*poiētikē*), such as carpentry. Grammar was instead ‘mixed’ (*miktē*): both, as we would now say, ‘theoretical’ and ‘practical’. In this it was akin especially to medicine.³

A second issue was whether grammar was concerned with literary usage only. In one definition, which is also criticized by Sextus, it was ‘knowledge of the forms of speech in poets and also those in common usage.’⁴ Another he cites does not refer to literature specifically. ‘Grammar in full’ is instead ‘a skill [derived] from’ a *tekhnē*, that ‘distinguishes in the most exact way the expressions (*lekta*) and concepts (*noēmata*) among the Greeks’; except, the definition adds, those covered by another *tekhnē*.⁵

Quintilian’s account of grammar, as cited in the text, is in the first of twelve parts (or ‘books’) of his great work on the

education of a public speaker (*Inst.* 1.4 and following). It is possible that he was himself a pupil of Remmius Palaemon, who is the earliest known author of a grammatical manual (now lost) in Latin. The parts of Dionysius' *empeiria*, as listed in the manual ascribed to him, were instead those of the discipline that had developed in Alexandria, in particular, two centuries earlier. Its six parts, as Robins translates the passage in his pioneering history of linguistics, were:

first, accurate reading (aloud) with due regard to the prosodies; second, explanation of the literary expressions of the works; third, the provision of notes on phraseology and subject matter; fourth, the discovery of etymologies; fifth, the working out of analogical regularities; sixth, the appreciation of literary compositions, which is the noblest part of grammar.⁶

It might be unwise, however, to defer too much to this particular analysis. According to Sextus Empiricus, the parts of grammar were a topic of wide and never-ending dissension; but, for his purposes, he distinguished three. One was 'historical', in the sense that it supplied explanations called *historiai*. Another was 'more specific', and was concerned with the establishment of literary texts. The third was 'technical' and dealt with letters, parts of speech, and so on. They remained, however, the interconnected parts of a united discipline.⁷

1. *empeiria tôn parà poiētaís te kai sungrapheúsín hōs epí tò polù legoménōn* (GG 1.1, 5).
2. *tékhnē tôn parà poiētaís te kai sungrapheúsi legoménōn* (ascribed to Asclepiades, S. E., *Math.* 1.74; compare Bury's translation, 1949, 1: 45).

3. Thus GG 1.3, 1–2. For similar passages see the index to that volume.
4. *tôn parà poiētaïs te kai tôn katà tēn koinēn sunētheian léxeōn eídēsis* (ascribed to Demetrius Chlorus and others, S. E., *Math.* 1.84; trans. Bury 1949, 1: 51).
5. *héxin... apò tékhnes diagnōstikēn tôn parà Hállēsi lektōn kai noētōn epì tò akribéstaton, plēn tôn hup' állais tékhnaïs* (ascribed to Chares, S. E., *Math.* 1.76; compare Bury's translation, 1949, 1: 47).
6. *prōton anágñōsis entribēs katà prosōidían, deúteron exégēsis katà tous enupárkontas poiētikoūs trōpous, trítōn glōseōn te kai historiōn prókheiros apódosis, tétarton etumologías heúresis, pémphton analogías eklogismós, hékton krísis poiēmátōn, ho dē kálliston esti pántōn tôn en tēi tékhnēi* (GG 1.1, 5–6; Robins 1990: 36).
7. S. E., *Math.* 1.91–5; Bury 1949, 1: 53–7.

The story is, in part, a matter of guesswork. Our sources are fragmentary, often centuries later and not necessarily reliable, and must be assessed and put together, in part like a jigsaw, to reconstruct a plausible account of how ideas may have developed. The word, however, that we now translate as 'grammarian' was first applied professionally to someone who in practice had a mastery of *grammata* 'letters'. It was later applied specifically, from the third century BC onwards, to literary scholars at the library in ancient Alexandria. A *grammatikos* was thus a student of 'letters' in a wide sense of 'things written'. Aristarchus in particular, who was the head of the library in the first half of the second century, is described in a later source by the superlative *grammatikōtatos*, the 'most grammatical' or the expert in letters par excellence. We have little direct knowledge of contemporary methods or achievements. One objective, however, was to establish a standard text for the Homeric and other poems, in part at least by a criterion of inflec-

tional regularity. We are told, for example, in one later commentary that Aristarchus established the accent on the participle *peírōn* ‘piercing’, at the end of one line in the ‘Iliad’, by analogy with the form, already known, of *keírōn* ‘cutting’. The alternative would be to accent the last syllable. But as *keírōn* was to *keírei* ‘cuts’, so *peírōn*, as the form in doubt, would be to a known form *peírei* ‘pierces’.

What was *grammatica* in Latin was also called, in an early loan translation, *litteratura*. But as literary texts could be studied so, in principle, could speech in general. Before the conquests of Alexander, Greek had been the language of most of what is now Greece and of coastal colonies elsewhere. By the third century, however, it had become a first and second language throughout the land mass of the eastern Mediterranean. Alexandria, for example, was a Greek city which Alexander himself had founded, in a region where the native language was Egyptian, and became the capital of the Ptolemaic dynasty, whose rulers were descended from one of his generals, until the last, Cleopatra, was defeated by Rome. In this and other states a form of Greek called *koinē*, from an adjective meaning ‘in common’, came to be both written and spoken by many for whom it was or had been variously foreign. To speak it correctly became accordingly a badge of *Hellēnismos*, or ‘Greekness’, and a natural aim of education. It was important, therefore, to distinguish forms that should be rejected as ‘barbarisms’: that is, in the original meaning of this term, ‘not Greek’.

In the account of Varro, which many in ancient and modern times have swallowed uncritically, a great controversy arose between those who appealed to criteria of analogy and those who preferred irregularity, or, in the Greek term that he used, *anōmalia*. For this

sense of ‘anomaly’ and its opposition to *analogia* he is, however, our only contemporary authority and in the view that now prevails cannot be trusted. What was implied, however, is that an attempt to manufacture regularity could in principle have been indulged in to excess, in defiance of established usage. It would be as if, that is, some modern pundit were to insist that, to speak English grammatically, the plural *children* should be corrected to *childs*, or the verb forms *bought* and *thought* to *buyed* and *thinked*. What were, in Greek, the principles of *Hellēnismos* were, in Latin, those underpinning *Latinitas* (hence English ‘Latinity’) or *sermo Latinus* (‘Latin discourse’); and it is in Latin sources that criteria which have since become familiar are first set out clearly. As Quintilian saw them, one was that of *vetustas* (‘oldness’) or of usage in an earlier period. Two others were those of *auctoritas* ‘authority’, especially of the best prose writers, and of *consuetudo* or what we would now call current educated usage. A fourth is that of *ratio* (‘reason’, ‘proportion’), which might be translated in this context by the modern ‘regularity’. These criteria could conflict; and when they did a regular form might be preferred by analogy with others. But Quintilian rejected any attempt to impose regularity throughout. It did not seem inappropriate to remark, as he put it famously, that ‘it is one thing to speak in Latin (*Latine*) and another to speak according to grammar (*grammaticē*)’.

Disputes like this were simply about how, in practice, a standard should be established. To talk, however, of *ratio* or regularity, and thus apply the last of these criteria, implies a representation of forms in general, on the basis of which analogies are valid. In the example from Aristarchus, it is crucial that *keírei* ‘cuts’ and *keírōn* ‘cutting’ have the same semantic properties, and in particular the same places in what we now see as a paradigm, as

peírei ‘pierces’ and *peírōn* ‘piercing’. Otherwise one pair can have no bearing on the other. These were not properties, however, that the *grammatikoi* as literary scholars first distinguished and named. The underlying analysis was above all that of philosophers of the Stoic school, especially in the third century BC.

The term ‘philosophy’ (*philosophia*) implied nothing more precise, at this stage, than the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Etymologically it was the ‘love of wisdom’. The system of the Stoics had one part, accordingly, that was ‘natural’ or ‘physical’, and another that was ‘ethical’ or ‘moral’. A third part was, in Greek, *logikon* or ‘logical’. This translation, however, can be in turn misleading. What we now call ‘logic’ was included; but so was anything else that pertained to the study of, in Greek, *logos*. As defined by the Stoics (Box 4.1 in a later chapter), this term applied to any linguistic expression which had a meaning. For Greek grammarians, as we will see, it became the normal term for an utterance. To study such expressions was thus to study all of what we might now see as logic, grammar, and stylistics. Earlier writers had distinguished categories of, for example, time and gender, but it was in Stoic ‘logic’ that the way such distinctions were represented was first analysed systematically.

That at least is clear from later references. Though most of these talk simply of ‘the Stoics’, a crucial contribution was that of Chrysippus, who died towards the close of the third century BC. None of his extensive writings survive, nor those of his contemporaries, and much of what we know, or what we believe we know, about their system is a reconstruction by modern scholars, seeking to make sense of what subsequent reports tell us. If we are right, moreover, terms which had been crucial to it are not part of the model eventually developed by grammarians; or where they are their applications had shifted. In some way,

however, about which we can only speculate, many of the details that the Stoics must have worked out were transformed into the foundation, at the very end of the Hellenistic period, of the ‘technical’ part, or the part that made it the *tekhnē* it became, of a discipline whose aims were more practical than philosophical. It may be futile to argue about whether or when ‘linguistics’, as we have come to call it over the past two hundred years, might have emerged in antiquity as a distinct field of inquiry. It is in this moment of synthesis, however, that ‘grammar’ seems most clearly to have come into its own.

The scope of grammars

A *tekhnē grammatikē* was a study in Greek of the ‘technical part’ of grammar, whose author could be referred to, in later commentaries, as the *tekhnikos* or ‘technical (writer)’. The equivalent term in Latin was an *ars grammatica* or ‘art of grammar’, which became specifically the title of a certain kind of manual, sometimes brief and sometimes diffuse, designed in principle for the schoolroom. Its use as such was subsequently to survive for centuries in western Europe, long after the Roman empire had collapsed and as the needs of education changed. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of such works survive, from at the earliest the third century AD onwards, many of which are so alike, often in the smallest details of wording, that it has been possible to compare them as a textual critic might compare the manuscripts of a single work, to work out the order in which they were written and who may have repeated what from whom. We have nothing, however, in this tradition which dates from the period when it was formed, when the reasons for preferring this or that analysis must have been more widely debated.

In Greek we do have earlier sources, in the work especially of Apollonius Dyscolus, in the second century AD, and for his son Herodian, who taught at Rome when the empire was at its zenith. Apollonius could, for example, take the parts of speech for granted, but which words should be assigned to which could still be in dispute. Among other things he made clear, maybe for the first time, that what are thereafter impersonal verbs were indeed verbs, and not adverbs. His writings have not survived entirely. More than three centuries, however, later his analyses of Greek were explicitly admired and followed by the Latin grammarian Priscian, whose ‘Introduction to Grammar’ (*Institutiones grammaticae*) was written in Constantinople in what was then the Byzantine empire. This work is immensely longer than any other in the Roman tradition, and although in its ancient context it was in principle derivative, it was to become a dominant authority in the Middle Ages and beyond, wherever Latin was the language of education and Priscian’s sources in Greek were unknown. Two grammarians have a place in, for example, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. One is Donatus (see Box 2.2). The other is Priscian, who was condemned to Hell on no ancient evidence or authority, for sexual behaviour violating nature.

Both a simple schoolbook and a scholarly study had at their centre the parts, as they are now called, of speech. Each was defined; and, if the grammar was at all long, alternative definitions, sometime ascribed to specific predecessors, might be cited. Each is subdivided in criss-crossing ways, in the light of how, among other things, words are inflected. Nouns, for example, are distinguished by case and number; also by whether they are simple or compound, or proper nouns or common. Conjunctions, which have no inflections, are distinguished by their meanings into types which vary in detail from one authority to another. In terms still

used, they are conjunctive, disjunctive, adversative, and so on. A simple grammar might merely give examples of each class or subclass, but in Priscian's, for example, their uses are illustrated in detail, with many excerpts, as illustrations ideally were, from poetry. Prepositions were distinguished by the cases that, in later terminology, they governed, and a grammarian had to din into his pupils, as teachers of Latin still do, which takes which. A short grammar may list them in that way. But a longer work, like Priscian's, could survey their meanings individually: that of, for example, *super* 'above' is the opposite of that of *subter* 'underneath', and both, as he goes on to illustrate, are used with the accusative and the ablative (*G[rammatici] L[atini]* 3: 54–5).

It is mainly from these sections that a model for describing a language, as I am calling it, can be abstracted. In the manual of 'Dionysius Thrax' (Box 2.2) they are perhaps three quarters of the whole; in the standard edition of Priscian they take up more than six hundred pages in a total of nearly a thousand. They are preceded, however, by sections on letters and syllables and, in a manual like that of 'Dionysius', on topics such as accents and punctuation, which are the nearest equivalent to an analysis of what is now, in the broadest sense, phonology. Priscian's account includes, for example, the alternations of vowels and consonants: thus what Trubetzkoy was to call in the 1930s morphophonology. It also covers details of what other linguists have called phonotactics. Thus, for example, the letter *m* may end a syllable when the next begins with another *m* or with a *p* or *b* (*GL* 2: 49). Finally, Priscian's grammar ends with two long chapters on syntax (*GL* 3: 106–377), in conscious imitation of Apollonius Dyscolus, whose own treatment of syntax, for the most part, survives. This work was to become the foundation, above all, for the development of a theory of grammar in the later Middle Ages; and a similar plan,

Box 2.2 Two classic authorities

No *ars grammatica* was to become more famous in the west than two compiled in the fourth century AD by Donatus. In the century that followed, other grammarians added commentaries, of which that of Pompeius is much longer than the text of Donatus himself. It also helped that one of Donatus' pupils had been St Jerome; this ensured him his place in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in Paradise. Donatus' work was not in a modern sense original, but largely follows what is found in other grammars in the Roman tradition. But it is supremely economical and clear, and in western Europe, in the early Middle Ages, it lent itself to a new use in teaching Latin to pupils whose own language was, for example, Irish or Old English. A version exists in which his text was itself converted to Christianity, with Biblical replacing pagan illustrations. Centuries later the earliest grammar of French, for example, was that of Donatus in another adaptation.

Its nearest equivalent in the east is the grammar of 'Dionysius Thrax', which also became immensely influential as a model for the analysis of other languages. If it were genuine, it would date from the end of the Hellenistic period, and his treatment would be one that every later *ars grammatica*, those of Donatus among them, in essence followed. Whatever the truth, however, these are works that belong to similar traditions. The real importance of this manual, whoever its final compiler may have been, lies in its brevity and clarity, and his work was to become the subject of numerous commentaries, which go through essential definitions line by line.

The 'shorter manual' of Donatus, in Latin the *Ars minor*, deals only with the parts of an utterance. Its form is that of a catechism:

the first question, therefore, is how many parts there are (*Partes orationis quot sunt?*): answer ‘Eight’. ‘What are they?’ (*Quae?*): answer ‘Noun, pronoun, verb’ and so on. Next question ‘What is a noun?’ (*Nomen quid est?*): the answer a definition. For another stylized glimpse, as it were, of what could go on in the schoolroom we may compare a minor work by Priscian, which presents what we might call a benchmark reading of the first twelve lines of Virgil’s ‘Aeneid’. Pupils must know what metre it is written in, and about metrical feet in general; they must scan the metre of the first line; they must explain that the first word, *arma* ‘weapons’, is a noun, what sort of noun it is and how it is inflected; they must know everything that a teacher can drag in at this point, such as what compounds can be formed from *arma*; and so on. Ditto for each line and each word (GL 3: 459–515).

The ‘larger manual’ of Donatus, in Latin the *Ars maior*, is the one that will usually be cited. It is systematic and in general fuller, and falls effectively into three parts. The second again deals with the parts of an utterance, and is in essence like the treatment of Greek by ‘Dionysius’ in everything except the order in which the parts are listed. We will return to that difference in Chapter 5. For each category there is again a definition, and a listing of subclasses, properties like tense or case, and so on. Throughout these accounts the illustrations are minimal: a noun for example, as ‘Dionysius’ explains, may be a personal name, ‘as’, in Greek, *Hómēros* ‘Homer’ or *Sōkrátēs* ‘Socrates’. Or it may be what is now a ‘common’ noun, ‘as’ *ánthrōpos* ‘human being’ or *híppos* ‘horse’. One kind of common noun, originally distinguished by the Stoics, is in their term ‘in relation to something’ (in Greek *pros ti ekhon*), ‘as’, for

example, the words for ‘father’ (father, that is, of someone), ‘son’, ‘friend’ and ‘(on the) right’; and so on through twenty three other subtypes. In a third part, which has no equivalent in the manual of ‘Dionysius’, Donatus classifies and subclassifies minutely, with full illustrations, what are called in Latin the *vitia et virtutes*, literally the ‘vices and virtues’, of usage. The ‘vices’ are errors, but are illustrated with literary examples: Virgil, for example, at the very beginning of the *Aeneid*, has the first syllable of the word for ‘Italy’ long when it should be short. But what are errors in ordinary usage may be ‘virtues’, which enhance the beauty of a text, in appropriate circumstances: thus figures ‘of speech’ especially.

Finally, the first part of either manual deals with a range of preliminary topics. Those in common are, in particular, letters and syllables, accents and punctuation.

in which a linguist deals first with phonology, then in particular with inflections, then with syntax, has been widespread ever since.

Much of this seems reassuringly familiar, and contributes to an appearance of continuity. It is only when we ask exactly what was meant by a ‘letter’, and still more by a ‘word’, that we are forced to read texts like these through their authors’ eyes and not our own. We must also bear in mind the wider context in which the ‘technical part’ of grammar had its place.

One difference, in particular, between a Graeco-Roman grammarian and any current or recent linguist is that he had no professional concern with any other language. An educated Roman was taught both Latin and Greek; a Greek grammarian had to teach Greek only. Each wrote, moreover, in his own language. They were faced, however, with a problem that all teachers of a

standard language sooner or later have to cope with, that rules and distinctions valid in one period, which may be enshrined in literature and are part of what must traditionally be taught, may no longer accord entirely, or even at all, with the speech of educated people of the period in which the teacher lives. A grammarian had to teach that Latin, for example, had long and short syllables, determined in part by the duration of vowels. If his pupils did not understand that, they could not make sense of the metres of quantitative verse, in which classical poetry, which was the meat and drink of the classroom, was written. In late antiquity, however, Latin was already changing. Vowels distinguished by length were also distinguished by quality, then more by quality, and in a later period by quality alone. When length was no longer distinctive, syllables were simply either open or closed; a stress accent that had been predictable became free; and the phonetic duration of vowels was itself determined by their phonetic context. The history of late Latin must have been one of prolonged and complex variation, geographical and sociolinguistic, whose nature and timing we cannot recover in detail. Increasingly, however, the 'Latin' of the grammarians, with a rhythm determined by vowel length plus an opposition between single and double consonants, was not the 'Latin' children were beginning to learn naturally. In the seventh century AD the aim of grammar was still, as Isidore of Seville defined it, 'skill in speaking' (*loquendi peritia*). It was skill in a language that was still perceived as native to a great mass of the population. But what was being taught was a 'high' and backward-looking variety in a system that was increasingly, as a modern linguist might be tempted to say, diglossic.

The external history of Greek was dominated, over the same period, by an 'Atticizing' movement that looked back to the masterpieces of Athenian literature, in the fifth and fourth centuries

BC. It was remarkably successful: the internal history of the language, apart from its representation in writing, is substantially obscured until about the time of the Crusades. Grammarians were again the guardians and enforcers. But in Greek too, a distinction, for example, of long and short vowels was eventually to collapse. A further difficulty must have been that, of the ancient poets, Homer was the most revered. Where work by elementary pupils has survived, again in the papyri found in rubbish tips in Egypt, quotations from the 'Iliad' especially are the commonest that it seems they were instructed to write out. The language, however, of Homer was not in the Athenian dialect and antedated that of later literature by some centuries.

No traditional teacher of, for example, English has had to deal heroically with quite such difficulties. If ancient grammar seems to linguists to have been 'prescriptive' rather than 'descriptive', the explanation is in part inherent in the concepts of *Hellēnismos* or *sermo Latinus*, of 'Greekness' and 'Latinity', which had been central at the outset. But it is also through the role that grammarians came to play in the ancient educational system, and the ever-increasing conservatism that society demanded of them. They should not be condemned for what in practice was the job they had to do.

Chapter 3

Units

What exactly does a student of language analyse? Different linguists, since the end of the nineteenth century, have given different answers. Most, however, may now say that they are studying a system underlying speech: the ‘langue’ of Saussure (1916), or the ‘internalized’ or ‘I-language’ of Chomsky (1986). But for an ancient linguist, if we may so name him for comparison, the object was speech itself. It was straightforwardly the sounds that people make when they are talking. The units of language were in principle sounds that recurred in utterances.

The study of grammar should therefore begin, as both Donatus and Priscian among others did begin, with the concept of ‘vocal sound’ (Greek *phōnē*, Latin *vox*) in general. This had been defined by Diogenes of Babylon, a Stoic philosopher of the third to second centuries BC, in both physical and auditory terms. In an account described as Stoic in the Latin grammar of Diomedes, it is a ‘slight breathing capable of being heard’ (*spiritus tenuis auditu sensibilis*), created by the ‘setting in motion of a weak airstream’ (*exilis aurae pulsu*) or by ‘the impact of air that has been struck’ (*verberati aeris ictu*). Human speech, however, was a special kind of *vox* or

phōnē. The same general definition also covered, for example, the neighing of a horse. But the vocal sound a student of language is concerned with was distinguished from that of horses and other animals in two related ways. First it was inspired by thought (Greek *dianoia*). In that sense it was, in Latin, *rationalis*, exhibiting what for philosophers was the faculty of *ratio* or ‘reason’. When animals made sounds that were physically similar, they were thought instead to be compelled ‘by impulse’ (in Greek *hup’ hormēs*). Secondly, speech was vocal sound that could be represented in writing. A vocal sound made by an animal was no more than sound, and could not be written.

These properties could be seen as not entirely coinciding (Box 3.1). Crucially, however, speech has both. In the light of the first in particular, it was, in the term that Diogenes of Babylon had used, *enarthros* or ‘jointed’. In Latin, it was *vox articulata*: vocal sound that was ‘articulated’. That of an animal like a horse was physically similar, but not articulated: that is, as the term was eventually borrowed into English, ‘inarticulate’.

Box 3.1 *vox articulata*

For Stoic doctrine we depend especially on Diogenes Laertius, whose work on the ‘Lives of eminent philosophers’ was compiled, most probably some four centuries later (D.L. 7.55), on the basis of intervening sources that are lost. For other Stoic ideas see Box 4.1. The account of vocal sound by Diomedes begins the second part of his grammar (*GL* 1: 420), and is cited here as one of the earliest in Latin.

Priscian distinguishes four types of vocal sound, in an exemplary illustration of how types are distinguished by definition.

The first is both ‘articulated’ (*articulata*) and ‘made up of letters’ (*literata*). As an example he cites the opening words of Virgil’s ‘Aeneid’. But these are properties defined independently. Vocal sound is ‘articulated’, as he puts it, if as uttered it is ‘joined together’: ‘linked, that is, with some perception in the mind of whoever is speaking’.¹ Some sounds are accordingly articulated but cannot be represented in writing, such as human whistles or groans. ‘Although they signify some perception of the person uttering them, they nevertheless cannot be written.’² Others, as he classified them, can be written but are not articulated. A modern example, if we may attempt to update this, would be ‘woof!-woof!’, as a representation in writing of a dog barking. A fourth type, finally, is neither articulated nor can it be written: thus ‘creakings, groans’ (implicitly not human) ‘and the like’.

‘Articulation’ is defined similarly by, for example, Diomedes. But in another viewpoint speech is vocal sound that can be represented in writing; and, for other grammarians, that was the sole criterion. Thus for Donatus ‘all vocal sound is either articulated or indistinct. It is articulated if it can be captured by letters; it is indistinct if it cannot be written.’³ It is this characteristically crisper formulation that subsequent traditions have tended to follow.

1. *articulata est, quae coartata, hoc est copulata cum aliquo sensu eius, qui loquitur, profertur* (GL 2: 5).
2. *quamvis sensum aliquem significant proferentis eas, scribi tamen non possunt* (ibid.).
3. *omnis vox aut articulata est aut confusa. articulata est, quae litteris comprehendi potest; confusa, quae scribi non potest* (GL 4: 367).

The unit that is in Greek a *gramma*, or in Latin a *lit(t)era*, is defined by Donatus as ‘the smallest part of articulated vocal sound’ (*pars minima vocis articulatae*). Definitions by other grammarians may be worded differently. In all, however, this is the smallest unit on a hierarchy. Crucially a ‘letter’ is, in the words of another Latin grammarian, ‘a part of human vocal sound’ (GL 6: 5, Marius Victorinus); and it is minimal.

A letter can also be written. It is a vocal sound, in a formulation suggested by Priscian, ‘that can be written as undivided’ (*quae scribi potest individua*). Letters were therefore distinguished one from another in three ways. First, each had a name (Greek *onoma* or Latin *nomen*). For example, in the Greek alphabet, the first letter was called ‘*alpha*’, the second ‘*bēta*’, and so on. Secondly, each had a form in writing: this was in Greek its *kharaktēr* (whence English ‘character’), in Latin its *figura* ‘shape’. Thirdly, each had a ‘power’ or ‘force’ (Greek *dunamis*, Latin *potestas*). By this was meant in particular a phonetic value: as Priscian put it, ‘what is itself uttered’ (*pronuntiatio ipsa*), ‘on account of which’ both forms in writing and the names of letters have been developed.

This is the account we may present as standard. A ‘letter’, therefore, was neither strictly what has been distinguished, since the late nineteenth century, as a phoneme or ‘speech sound’; nor strictly what has been called a ‘grapheme’. It was a unit whose properties, described in Latin as *accidentia* or ‘things applicable’ to it, encompass those of both. In the light then of their phonetic values, ‘letters’ were divided into two main classes. Vowels, if we may return to Donatus, are those ‘produced on their own’, and forming ‘on their own’ a syllable (*per se proferuntur et per se syllabam faciunt*). Without ‘vowels’ (Greek *phōnēenta*, Latin *vocales*) there could be no ‘speech sound’ (*phōnē, vox*). Consonants (Latin *consonantes*) were in Greek *sumphōna*, both terms meaning,

literally, ‘co-sounding’. They were letters that form a syllable only in conjunction with a vowel, and were in turn divided into two subclasses. The first included ones which, as sounds, could be produced with no accompanying vowel : thus in Greek, in the order on which they were listed by ‘Dionysius Thrax’, those written ζ (phonetically [dz], [zd]), ξ ([ks]), ψ ([ps]), λ ([l]), μ ([m]), ν ([n]), ρ ([r]), and σ ([s]). In that respect they were like vowels; but unlike vowels they did not, on their own, form syllables. It is these that in antiquity were called ‘half-vowels’ (in Greek *hēmiphōna*, in Latin *semivocales*) and eventually in English, as this term was first used in the seventeenth century, ‘semivowels’. Consonants that were not ‘half-vowels’, such as κ ([k] or [tʰ]) or θ ([tʰ]), were instead in Greek *aphōna* (‘without vocal sound’), in Latin *mutae* ‘silent’. ‘Mute’, in that sense, was to remain in old-fashioned use in English into living memory.

‘Mutes’ in Greek, for example, are in turn divided into ‘hairy’, ‘bare’, and intermediate. A stop consonant, if we may use the modern term, was ‘hairy’ (*dasus*) if it was aspirated: thus the three whose shapes in writing are transcribed in the Latin alphabet as ‘ph’ (φ), ‘th’ (θ), and ‘kh’ (χ). A stop classed as ‘bare’ (*psilos*) was in our terms voiceless but unaspirated: thus ‘p’ (π), ‘t’ (τ), and ‘k’ (κ). One which was intermediate or ‘middle’ (*mesos*) was in our account voiced: thus, in a corresponding order, ‘b’ (β), ‘d’ (δ), and ‘g’ (γ). Stops of each type, however, are listed in the manual of ‘Dionysius’ not in this order, as bilabial, dental, and velar, but in that of the Greek alphabet, which ancient writers might defend as rational. The average grammar is not, however, our best source for the actual ‘powers’ of letters. We learn more, for example, from the summary account of grammar by Quintilian about the phonetics of Latin in the first century AD, than, for later periods, from the classification of letters by Donatus (29 lines in *GL* 2: 367–8) or the

survey by Priscian cited in the last chapter. A sufficient reason, for a Roman grammarian at least, might be that this was the native language of their pupils. How to articulate a ‘t’ or ‘d’, for example, did not need to be taught.

One problem, nevertheless, is that the ‘powers’ of letters could vary. The Greek alphabet had been derived from one designed for Semitic dialects of coastal Syria and Palestine, and was itself a marvellous invention: the first in which successive speech sounds, vowels as well as consonants, were represented individually. But the relation between written letters and their ‘powers’ was never perfect. The *hēmiphōna* whose ‘characters’ were ζ, ξ, and ψ are recognized as ‘double’ (*dipla*): as formed from two underlying consonants. The first was phonetically either [dz] or [zd]; the others [ks] (as Latin ‘x’) and [ps]. Three of the letters classed as vowels had ‘powers’ that were those of contrasting phonemes. An ‘alpha’ (α) was thus phonetically either a long [a:] or a short [a]; an ‘iota’ (ι) either a long [i:] or a short [i]; the ‘upsilon’ (υ) either a long [u:], as its quality had been in the beginning, or a short [u]. As described then by grammarians α, ι, and υ were *dikhrona* ‘having two time values’. Only for mid vowels were distinctions made in writing between an ‘eta’ (η), for what became in the Athenian dialect a long [ɛ:], and an ‘epsilon’ (ε) for short [e], and between an ‘omega’ (ω), for a long [ɔ:] and an ‘omicron’ (ο) short [o]. In this respect these vowels alone had a ‘power’ that was consistent. In the Latin alphabet, which had been modelled only indirectly on the Greek, all of *a, e, i, o, u* were letters like α, ι, and υ, each with two different time values. A further complication, in Latin, is that *i* and *u* also represented what we now call ‘semivowels’: phonetically [j] in, for example, the name of the goddess *Iuno* ‘Juno’; [w] in words like *uia* or, as we now write it, *via* ‘road’. As Donatus puts it, they were vowels that ‘cross over to the power of

consonants' (*transeunt in consonantium potestatem*). In that respect too, *i* and *u* had powers that varied.

An alternative solution, for which there is indeed some evidence in antiquity, was to define the units of speech and writing separately. That of writing was again the 'letter' (Latin *lit(t)era*). That of speech was instead, in Latin, an *elementum* or 'element'. It was not equivalent to the 'phoneme' as defined in the twentieth century; among terms that belong to the heyday of phonemics, 'phone' would perhaps be closer. Like a phoneme, however, an 'element' could not be divided into a succession of smaller units. Letters were instead marks by which they were represented. In the standard account some letters had again to be described as 'double' (Latin *duplex*). They marked accordingly a sequence of two *elementa*. A single letter could also represent contrasting *elementa*: thus a written 'a' represented both, in terms of vocal sound, a long [a:] and a short [a].

Such a solution was evidently developed (Box 3.2). We should never forget, however, that an interest in the nature of language is one thing, and the priorities of language teachers are another. It is not surprising that, in the context especially of the late Roman empire, grammarians may have paid lip service to the reality of vocal sound. In practice, however, they had to work with letters as written, and it was natural to prefer a simple doctrine, however muddled it may seem when taken to its logical conclusion, which allowed them to treat a single unit, that in itself had both a 'shape' and a 'power', as primary.

Box 3.2 Elements

The term in Greek that referred in general to an 'element' (*stoikheion*) is first used in that sense, by Plato, in the context of language. Thus he speaks, at one point, of *stoikheia* of letters

and of a syllable (*Theaet.* 202e). The form itself is related to that of a verb, with the root *steikh-* and a meaning ‘to move forward in file’. The image was therefore of a sequence of units.

Latin *elementum* was established as its equivalent, in the first century BC, by Cicero. As Stoic terms in physics both were used of, for example, the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. In language, however, an ‘element’ was a minimal vocal sound. It could therefore enter into the definition of a letter. In an awkward account, for example, by Diomedes, a *litera* was a smallest part of vocal sound ‘based on an element’ (*ab elemento incipiens*) and ‘representable by a single shape’ (*una figura notabilis*). In a definition he ascribes to Scaurus, a grammarian possibly of the second century AD, it was correspondingly ‘the form of a vocal sound that can be written.’¹ An element, he goes on, is a ‘smallest force and indivisible material of articulated vocal sound.’² It is its ‘shape’ (*figura*) that is called a ‘letter’ (*litera*), and of these there are only twenty-three. But their powers (*potestates*), which ‘we call’ elements (*elementa*), are understood to be many more. The unit that has a name, accordingly, as for example an ‘a’, is both a ‘power’ and a ‘shape’.

The parallel with elements in physics is made clear by Priscian. As the elements of matter come together to form an object, so speech is composed ‘as if it were a material object’. Indeed, he says, it is one. Since air is matter, and vocal sound is formed by air that has been set in motion, speech is itself matter.³ The difference between elements and letters, as he then explains, is that elements are strictly speaking what is actually uttered; letters the marks by which they are written.⁴

Nevertheless, as Priscian adds, each term is used in a way that is strictly improper, in the same sense as the other. For an

illustration in Greek, where the terms *stoikheion* ‘element’ and *gramma* ‘letter’ seem interchangeable, we need look no further than the manual of ‘Dionysius Thrax’ (GG 3.1: 15).

1. *vocis eius quae scribi potest forma* (GL 1: 421).
2. *minima vis et indivisibilis materia vocis articulatae* (ibid).
3. Thus GL 2: 6, ll. 14ff.
4. *interest inter elementa et litteras, quod elementa proprie dicuntur ipsae pronuntiationes, notae autem earum litterae* (ibid. 6–7).

Syllables

The unit called a ‘letter’ or an ‘element’ was in principle the smallest of articulated ‘vocal sound’, and the smallest in a hierarchy. The next largest was the syllable: Greek *sullabē*, in Latin *syllaba*.

The term was formed in Greek from a preposition, *sun* ‘with’, and a root, *lab-*, of the verb for ‘to take’, and was defined by a term formed from the same verb, as a *sullēpsis* or a ‘taking together’. It had been in use, however, before the development of grammar as an academic discipline; and where terms in Latin grammar were mostly loan translations, *syllaba* is a straightforward borrowing. The length of vowels and therefore of syllables were crucial to the metres of classical poetry, both in Greek from the beginning and when verses in Latin were modelled on it. The metre of, for example, Virgil’s ‘Aeneid’ was based directly on that of the Homeric ‘Iliad’ and ‘Odyssey’; the Odes of Horace, as he proclaimed with pride, were the first to adapt to Latin the rhythms of Sappho and other Greek lyric poets. This was a unit central, therefore, to the taking over not just of an analysis of language but of a large part of one literary culture, by another which was that of a civilization felt in that respect to be inferior.

That the takeover was possible was due to a structural similarity, in their classical forms, between the languages. In both, a syllable had to include a vowel or diphthong, and in the phonology of both, a single vowel was either long or short. In the Greek alphabet, as we have seen, length was distinguished only for mid vowels; in the Latin alphabet for none at all. Where there was no distinction, however, in writing, in the ‘shape’ of letters, there was a distinction in their ‘powers’. That of the short ‘a’ of, for example, Latin *canō* ‘I sing’ was phonologically distinct from that of the long ‘a’, though written identically, of *cānus* ‘turned white’. Where a syllable ended in a short vowel it was, as a syllable, ‘short’: in Latin, *brevis*. If not, it was ‘long’: in Latin *longa*. Compare accordingly the *ca* of *ca.nō* (where the dot marks a syllable boundary) with the *cā* of *cā.nus*. The first syllable of *cae.lum* ‘sky’ was long because *ae* was a diphthong: this term too (*diphthongon*) is straightforwardly Greek. So too was that of *car.men* ‘song’, since *car* ends in a consonant. The rules applied across word boundaries: if *cānus*, for example, was followed by a word beginning with a consonant, its second syllable ended in *-us* and was long: thus *cānus sum* (*cā.nus.sum*) ‘I am white-haired’. If it was followed by a word beginning with a vowel, the consonant was instead part of the next syllable: thus *cānus est* (by implication *cā.nu.sest*) ‘He is white-haired’.

For a classic account of syllables, as summarized by Donatus, see Box 3.3. Where linguists now distinguish a ‘long’ vowel from a ‘short’, Roman grammarians spoke of a single vowel, as we have seen, whose ‘power’ varied. In some words it was ‘drawn out’ or ‘extended’ (*producta*), whereas in others it was ‘cut short’ or ‘reduced’ (*correpta*). The terms used here are participles: alternatively an *a*, for example, either ‘is extended’ (in Latin *produci-tur*, in Greek *ekteinetai*) or ‘is reduced’ (*corripitur*, *sustelletai*). To remove a confusion in modern usage, many linguists now

distinguish the ‘length’ of vowels from the ‘weight’, as defined originally by the ancient Sanskrit grammarians, of syllables. It is therefore worth remarking that, although these terms were not used consistently by every ancient writer, there was a means by which a Roman grammarian could maintain a difference. Thus the *cā* of *cānus* was, as we might now say, ‘heavy’: in ancient terms it was, as a syllable, ‘long’. It was so because, as some ancient authorities also said, it had as its nucleus a ‘long’ vowel. In a more careful tradition the power of *a* was ‘extended’.

Box 3.3 The syllable in Latin

The syllable is defined, for example, by Donatus as ‘a grouping of letters or the utterance of a single vowel which can have a temporal value’.¹ ‘Dionysius Thrax’ points out that such a term was strictly misused when applied to a unit formed by one letter only.

Long syllables, still following Donatus, are either long ‘by nature’ (*natura*), when their vowel ‘is extended’ (*producitur*) or ‘vowels are joined to form a diphthong’, or become so ‘by placement’ (*positione*), when a ‘reduced’ vowel (*correpta*) is followed by, in particular, two consonants.² The notion that a syllable can ‘become long’ is justified to the extent that a second consonant might belong to the word that happens to follow. When so ‘placed’, it was reasonable to explain, the syllable ‘became’, as we would now say, heavy. A syllable in verse could also, in certain circumstances, be scanned as either long or short, and if so ‘is called’, as Donatus put it, *communis*. The term means literally ‘in common’, in correspondence to Greek *koinē*. Thus, for example, when a ‘reduced’ vowel was

followed by the consonants *t* plus *r* the syllable it formed might or might not ‘become long’, depending on its position in the metre.

In later usage syllables remained ‘long’ and ‘short’. But the same terms were used in antiquity of the letters in Greek which did represent the duration of vowels in writing: long ‘η’ and ‘ω’ (transcribed as *ē* and *ō*) as distinct from short ‘ε’ and ‘ο’: thus, for example, in the manual of ‘Dionysius Thrax’ (GG 1.1: 10). It is easy to understand how, in another or perhaps less technical tradition, they were applied to what were strictly the ‘powers’ of others. This was to lead in a later period to a notorious misinterpretation, by which not syllables, as Donatus had put it, but vowels themselves became ‘long by position’.

Priscian’s section on the syllable, as has been remarked in the last chapter, is a detailed survey of its makeup and the distribution of letters within it (GL 1: 44–53). None, for example, has more than six letters (53). None can end, for example, in *f* unless, as we would now say, it is assimilated, before a morphological boundary, to an *f* that follows (48). The difference between his treatment and that of Donatus reminds us that the interests of a linguistic scholar were one thing, however limited by modern standards were the generalizations ancient scholars may have achieved. Priorities in the classroom could be different.

1. *comprehensio litterarum vel unius vocalis enuntiatio temporum capax* (GL 4: 368).
2. *longae aut natura sunt aut positione fiunt: natura, cum aut vocalis producitur... aut duae vocales iunguntur et diphthongon faciunt ...; positione, cum correpta vocalis in duas desinit consonantes ...* (ibid.)

Units with meaning

Letters and syllables were, to repeat, two units in a hierarchy. Both were units of sound alone, of *vox* or *phōnē*, which did not in themselves have meaning. Two larger units did have meanings. The next largest was the word: in Greek a *lexis*, in Latin a *dictio*. The largest of all was what we now call a ‘sentence’: in Greek a *logos* and in Latin, as we have seen, an *oratio* or ‘utterance’. While both had meanings both, however, were still units of sound. An utterance in Latin which may be glossed as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Cicerō</i> | <i>venit</i> |
| Cicero-NOM.SG | come-PRES.IND.3.SG |
| ‘Cicero is coming’ | |

was, as an articulated vocal sound, made up directly of the letters c + i + c + e and so on. These formed, as intermediate units, the successive syllables *Ci.ce.rō.ve.nit*, which in turn formed the words *Cicerō* plus *venit*. Words too, as parts of an utterance, were segments of an articulated vocal sound. As Priscian explains, ‘just as letters combining appropriately form syllables’ (*quemadmodum literae apte coeuntes faciunt syllabas*), ‘and syllables words’ (*et syllabae dictiones*), ‘so too words form an utterance’ (*sic et dictiones orationem*) (GL 3: 108).

A ‘word’ was thus the smallest unit that had a meaning: that had, in Latin, the property of *significatio* or ‘signifying’. If we are to think then like an ancient grammarian, we must clear our minds of any concept of a ‘morpheme’ as defined by Bloomfield (1933), or the ‘monème’ of Martinet (1960), as a ‘sign’, or unit with a meaning, whose realization is potentially smaller than a word. A word such as *venit* ‘is coming’ was a unit in a single hierarchy of sounds, whose parts are letters and syllables. In an ancient

analysis it contained no unit such as, for example, a suffix *-t* to which a modern analyst might attach the meaning of ‘third singular’.

Nor was there any unit, as part of the hierarchy, like the one we now call variously a ‘phrase’, or ‘word group’ or ‘constituent’ of a sentence; or in French, for example, a ‘syntagme’. Literally, there was none. One word could be linked within an utterance to others. The hierarchy, however, was of continuous stretches of sound: letters were adjacent within a syllable, syllables adjacent within words, and words adjacent within utterances. Words could be joined to form a compound, but there was no other unit into which all utterances could be exhaustively segmented.

Take, for illustration, a sequence of words in Latin from the first line of the ‘Aeneid’:

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>Troiae</i> | <i>quī</i> | <i>prīmus</i> | <i>ab</i> | <i>ōrīs</i> |
| of-Troy | who | first | from | shores |
| ‘who first from the shores of Troy’ | | | | |

Troiae ‘of Troy’ modifies, as we would now say, *ōrīs* ‘shores’, but is separated from it not just by the preposition, *ab* ‘from’, which governs in a modern account the whole of *Troiae...ōrīs*, but by the first words of a relative clause to which all three belong. The example is literary, and poets exploited the freedom of word order for their own purposes. But they exploited what was also possible in ordinary language. In prose a sequence such as:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>multās</i> | <i>post</i> | <i>diēs</i> |
| many-ACC.PL | after | day-ACC.PL |
| ‘after many days’ | | |

where the adjective and a noun are related by agreement, was in principle quite normal; and, in general, modifiers could come before or after a noun, with or without an interval. In a line of

poetry contemporary with surviving grammars, in which it is more helpful to mark stress than the length of vowels:

| | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------------|-------------|
| <i>quándo</i> | <i>vér</i> | <i>véniét</i> | <i>méum</i> |
| when | spring | will-come | my |

‘When will my spring come?’

a final possessive is separated from a head noun by a verb. As words, they would be seen in antiquity as related and as agreeing in their inflections; but there is no continuous stretch of vocal sound, and thus no unit in a hierarchy, *ver meum* ‘my spring’.

Continuous constituents, like morphemes, are an invention of the twentieth century now thoroughly entrenched. It is hardly surprising that they were not perceived as basic in antiquity, however obvious they may seem in the analysis of, for example, modern English.

Chapter 4

Words

An utterance was divided directly, as we have seen in the last chapter, into words. These are literally the ‘parts’ of an utterance; and in practice the ancient terms were often interchangeable. To refer, for example, to the ‘next word’ in a text a Roman grammarian would talk quite normally of ‘the next *pars orationis*’. It was a word in this sense, as a form used in a particular context in speech or writing, that was more precisely a noun, a verb, and so on.

A word was in Greek a *lexis*; in Latin a *dictio*. Both terms (Box 4.1) were technical: in ordinary Latin, words were normally identified as *verba*. They were defined in grammars of either language by the place that words had in a hierarchy of vocal sound, of which the largest unit was again the *logos* or *oratio*. They were themselves the smallest parts of such a unit which, unlike a letter or a syllable, had meaning. The utterance, for example, translated ‘Cicero is coming’, cited in Latin in the last chapter, consisted directly of the successive words, or equivalently its ‘parts’, which were the noun *Cicerō* ‘Cicero’ and the verb *venit* ‘is coming’.

As a unit, then, within an utterance a *lexis* or *dictio* was a form as used in a specific context. In the terms, for example, of the English grammar by Huddleston and Pullum (2002) it was a

Box 4.1 Words and utterances

The Greek terms have a complex history, and the senses in which they were first used in a relevant way, by the Stoic philosophers, are not those that were to prevail in grammars. Both *lexis* and *logos* are nouns formed from the root (*leg-*) of a Greek verb for ‘to say’, which also had senses of ‘to pick out’ or ‘to gather together’. *Logos* in particular was used in a wide variety of senses, of a calculation, of a principle, of a systematic relation, of an argument, of discourse generally, and so on. One commentary on the manual of ‘Dionysius Thrax’ compares uses outside grammar, including by then what in the *New English Bible* is still rendered as ‘the Word’, in the first verse of St John’s Gospel (GG 1.3: 353–5). Other uses of *lexis* correspond in part to those of English ‘diction’, which is in turn from Latin *dictio*.

For Stoic doctrine we depend especially on Diogenes Laertius, in a passage already referred to in Box 3.1. In English, if we may take a more familiar illustration, [kri:m] and [kli:n] are vocal sounds with meanings: in writing, *cream* and *clean*. In Stoic terminology each was an instance of *logos*, as would be larger vocal sounds such as *The cream is fresh* or *The floor is clean*. In an account by Bloomfield (1933), writing in a language with an indefinite article, each of these was correspondingly a ‘linguistic form’, or a ‘phonetic form’ with meaning. Compare, however, [kli:m]. In Bloomfield’s terms this was a ‘phonetic form’ which has no meaning. Therefore it was not a ‘linguistic form’ and for the Stoics, likewise, the concept of *logos* did not apply to it. *Lexis*, however, did. As the distinction is presented, this term would apply to any unit of vocal sound (*phōnē*) that

is ‘articulated’ (*enarthros*). The difference, therefore, between *lexis* and *logos* is that, in the nature of *lexis* articulation is ‘without meaning’ (*asēmos*), while *logos* is always ‘meaningful’ (*sēmantikos*) (D.L. 7.57).

As grammar developed uses of *lexis* may at first have varied. *Merē lexeōs* (‘parts of *lexis*’) is also attested, where what was referred to might again, in the beginning, have been no more than a unit of form. But the distinctions the Stoics had drawn must in effect have been redrawn to suit new priorities. In the texts that concern us *lexis* refers to ‘a part’, as Apollonius Dyscolus described it, ‘of (a) correctly constructed complete *logos*’.¹ As defined by ‘Dionysius Thrax’, it was the smallest part²; more precisely still, in the words, for example, of one commentator, a part that ‘signifies some concept’.³ *Dictio* in Latin has a corresponding technical sense from the beginning. ‘Words’ in ordinary conversation were again more usually *verba*, which for grammarians were specifically ‘verbs’. *Dictio*, however, is derived transparently from the verb ‘to say’ (root *dic-*) just as *lexis* was derived from Greek *leg-*. In Priscian’s account it is equivalently ‘a minimal part of a connected *oratio*’; one put together, that is, in order. It was a part, moreover, to be understood within the whole.⁴

1. *méros... toû katà súntaxin autoteloús lógou* (Synt. 1.2 = GG 2.2: 2, l. 9).
2. *méros elákhiston toû katà súntaxin lógou* (GG 1.1: 22).
3. *noētón ti sēmaînon* (GG 1.3: 56, l. 22).
4. *dictio est pars minima orationis, id est in ordine compositae: pars autem quantum ad totum intellegendum, id est ad totius sensus intellectum* (GL 2: 53).

‘word’ seen as ‘syntactically oriented’, in a form in which it relates to others in the structure of a sentence, with, where appropriate, the inflections that its function requires. It was not what other linguists have called a ‘lexeme’: a word as distinguished from others simply by the meaning associated with it in a dictionary.

This point is fundamental and worth underlining. A modern grammar, such as that of Huddleston and Pullum, is only one part of the description of a language, and is conceived as complementary to another part, technically a ‘lexicon.’ A grammar, on the one hand, deals in abstract patterns, such as the relation between a verb and a subject. The lexicon, on the other hand, deals with words individually. A lexical unit such as English ‘come’ is therefore more than the specific form *come*, as it is used in *They will come* or *Come in!* It is an abstract unit which subsumes all that is common to the set of forms *come*, *comes*, *came*, and *coming*. The uses of these are then for the grammar to distinguish. This abstract unit is a word in the sense that Huddleston and Pullum describe as ‘lexically oriented.’ It is therefore helpful to represent it differently: not as *come* in italics, but as ‘come’ in inverted commas; or in common usage ‘to come’; or in another convention COME.

The division of effort is now well established. It is important, however, to remember that the modern concept of a lexicon or dictionary has developed only in the past few centuries. For an ancient writer a *lexis* or a *dictio* was what is now a ‘word-form’: a specific unit of an utterance that is related syntactically to others. Latin *venit*, which I have glossed as ‘come-PRES.IND.3.SG’, is one word in that sense. So is *veniēs* ‘you (sg) will come’, which we may gloss in similar style as ‘come-FUT.IND.2.SG’. *Cicerō* (‘Cicero-NOM.SG’) would be another, which was opposed to, for example, *Cicerōnis* ‘Cicero’s’ (‘Cicero-GEN.SG’). There was no exact equivalent, in ancient grammar or the closest ancient equivalent to a

dictionary, for a lexical unit as we now perceive it: VENIO 'come', as we might distinguish it, or CICERO 'Cicero'. If anything therefore had a status at all like it, it was the specific form which, in the development of language by a human society, could be seen as having been 'assigned' (in Latin *imposita*) to whatever is its reference. For a noun, this form was taken to be the nominative singular, in the case in which a word 'names' (in Latin *nominat*) things. For verbs, it was the form that represented the 'here and now', as we would now say, of the speaker: one which was present indicative, therefore, and first singular. These were, in a modern term, the 'leading forms' from which all other members of a paradigm, which like them were forms composed of letters and syllables, were successively derived.

The leading form for 'come' was accordingly *veniō* 'I am coming'; for 'Cicero' and 'human being', the leading forms were *Cicerō* or *homō*. From *veniō*, as the first singular of a present indicative, can then be derived the third singular *venit* and, for example, the perfect *vēnī* 'I came, have come'; also, as we will see in detail in Chapter 11, a participle such as *veniens* 'coming'. From *Cicerō* can in turn be derived among others the genitive *Cicerōnis*; from *homō* 'human being' a corresponding plural *hominēs* 'human beings', and so on. In this way properties that we would now ascribe in general to a lexeme can be assumed to carry over, failing any conflict or a statement to the contrary, from leading to derived words. *Veniō*, for example, has a reference to the act of coming which it shares implicitly with *vēnī* or with *veniens*. *Homō*, among other things, is masculine; so implicitly is the genitive *hominis*, so is *hominēs*, and so on.

This is why, of course, forms such as 'veniō' and 'homō' are the head words in a modern dictionary. The notion, however, of a 'leading form' is in principle and practice different from that of a

lexeme. One difference is that derivations relate forms that will now be seen as separate lexical units. A noun such as *orātor*, for example, was not assigned to a public speaker independently of a verb *ōrō*, assigned to the act of speaking. Another difference is that properties can be shared not only by all forms of a modern lexeme, but also by a smaller subset.

Take in particular the distinction in verbs between an active and passive. In ancient accounts, as we will see later in a wider perspective, this was between two types of verb which determined a different ‘layout’ (Greek *diathesis*) of nouns in relation to them. While we talk, therefore, of a lexical unit LOVE or ‘to love’, a form such as in Latin *amō* ‘I love’ was a leading form from which could be directly derived all other verb forms that were active: *amās* ‘you (sg) love’, *amābāmus* ‘we were loving’, and so on. A passive *amor* ‘I am loved’ was in its turn a form from which one could derive all other verb forms that were passive. *Amō* and *amor* could themselves be related by derivation (Box 7.2); a form with the meaning ‘love’ would naturally have been a single creation. Grammarians would talk usually, however, of the active *amō* or the passive *amor*, rather than a single unit ‘amō’ as it is entered, as a lexical unit, in a modern dictionary.

Take too a distinction between what would now be called inflectional classes. AMO for example, as a modern lexical unit, had a future formed, as we might now describe it, with a suffix *-b(i)*: *amā-b-ō* ‘I will love’, *amā-bi-s* ‘you (sg) will love’, and so on. For VENIO ‘come’ the future was instead formed with an *-a* or *-ā*: compare *veni-a-m* ‘I will come’, *veni-ā-s* ‘you (sg) will come’. In ancient terms, however, it was sufficient to say that, from a leading form *amō* ‘I love’ was derived, as a whole, a future *amābō* (‘love-FUT.IND.1.SG’); from a leading form *veniō* a future *veniam* (‘come-FUT.IND.1.SG’). If these were the forms for the first

singular, all other forms of the future implicitly followed from them. Once more there was no need to invoke a concept of a lexical unit, which had no precise equivalent in antiquity.

Words as parts of an utterance

It was a *lexis* or a *dictio*, in a sense that came closest therefore to a modern ‘word form’, that was classed as a specific ‘part of an utterance’, such as a noun or a verb, a pronoun for example, or a preposition.

Such words included what were already, in antiquity, ‘enclitics’. In, for example:

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| <i>ánthrōpós</i> | <i>tis</i> |
| human being-NOM.SG | a certain-NOM.SG |
| ‘some person’ | |

a word in Greek with the meaning ‘human being’, which on its own would have the form *ánthrōpos*, has an accent on the final syllable, *ánthrōpós*, which is conventionally explained as ‘thrown back’ from the one that follows. In the ancient metaphor, *tis* was a part of an utterance described as ‘leaning on’ (in Greek *enklikton*) a part that comes before. It remained a word, however, as a minimal part of any utterance in which it was used, like any other. In Latin, the first words of the ‘Aeneid’ can be glossed as follows, in a style now current among linguists:

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| <i>arma</i> | <i>virum=que</i> |
| weapon-ACC.PL | man-ACC.SG=and |
| ‘arms and the man’ | |

where *virumque* as a whole, in the way it is conventionally written, was an accentual unit with stress not on the first syllable, as it

would be if *que* were not there, but on the second. *Que* is again, however, a unit with a meaning and is minimal in a way no different, in that respect, from either *virum* ‘man’ or *arma* ‘arms’.

A further detail concerns the parts of an utterance classed as prepositions. In Latin, for example, the *ad* of:

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| <i>ad</i> | <i>flumen</i> |
| to | river |
| ‘(next) to a/the river’ | |

was a word, straightforwardly, like any other. But it was identified uncontroversially with the *ad* of, for example:

| |
|-----------------------|
| <i>ad-est</i> |
| to-is |
| ‘(he/she/it) is here’ |

where it was joined to *est* ‘is’ as a member of a compound. In an utterance, therefore, such as:

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| <i>Cicerō</i> | <i>ad-est</i> |
| ‘Cicero is here’ | |

it could be seen in one perspective as the second of three ‘parts of’ the whole: thus *Cicerō* plus *ad* plus *est*. In another perspective the utterance had two ‘parts’: just *Cicerō* plus *adest*.

The definitions by which ‘words’ in general belonged to a ‘part of speech’ may be reserved for our next chapter. It is important, however, to appreciate that since the ‘parts of an utterance’ were quite literally that, the motives for assigning them to different categories lay in the way they were related one to another within sentences. A noun, for example, was defined as having a certain type of meaning and as having cases, which in modern terms are a semantic criterion and one of morphology or ‘morphosyntax’.

See the definitions cited in Boxes 5.1 and 5.2 below. The reason, however, for distinguishing them from verbs and other units, is that, with such properties, nouns had a semantic function within sentences that was different from other 'parts', such as a verb or a preposition.

Consider, in particular, the treatment of participles. In English, for comparison, a form such as *coming* has one ending, and one such as *comes* another. Both, however, are forms of the same lexeme, or what we call the same 'word', which we may represent as COME, to whose root *-ing* and *-(e)s* are added, again in a modern account, as alternative affixes. As a lexeme COME is classed as a verb; therefore both *coming* and *comes*, as words in a 'syntactically oriented' sense, are in turn verbs. As defined by many linguists, they are said to realize the same 'syntactic category', even though their roles within a sentence, in constructions like those of *She comes* or *the man coming*, may be mutually exclusive. Let us focus, however, as an ancient grammarian would have focused, on this difference in their syntax. In a modern analysis which would not have been his, *comes* stands in a direct relation to the subject of a sentence. *Coming* cannot do so, but unlike *comes* it can be, still in modern terms, a direct subordinate of a noun. It can also combine, as in *She is coming*, with an auxiliary. These words could therefore be described as different 'parts of an utterance', precisely because they have different roles within sentences.

Either perspective is still more compelling in the case of Ancient Greek, for which participles were first defined. On the one hand, many more forms were distinguished; and their stems, as we would now describe them, were formed largely in the same way as verbs generally. A finite verb could be inflected as, for example, present:

leíp-ei

leave-3.SG

‘is leaving behind’

or, with a suffix -s, as future:

leíp-s-ei

leave-FUT.3.SG

‘(he, she, it) will leave behind’

For each there was a corresponding participle. Where the present had a stem in -ont:

leíp-ont-

leave-PART

‘leaving behind’

that of the future was in -s-ont:

leíp-s-ont-

leave-FUT.PART

Other finite forms distinguished a perfect and what is traditionally an ‘aorist’: perfect *lé-loip-e* ‘has left behind’, aorist *é-lip-e*. A vowel changes, as in these forms, in the root of some verbs; and, in the stems of participles, it changes similarly: perfect *le-loip-ót-* ‘having left behind’; aorist *lip-ónt-*. Still other distinctions, in both finite forms and participles, are in what we now call ‘voice’: between sets of forms which were active, like these, and corresponding sets that were classed as ‘middle’ (Chapter 7 below) or passive. Far more clearly than in English or, as it happens, in Latin the stems of participles can be described in parallel with other forms of what is, in a modern analysis, the same verbal lexeme.

To these stems, on the other hand, were added endings that linked participles with nouns. Nouns were inflected, as in Latin and as in other older Indo-European languages, in ways determined by their relations to other parts of an utterance. As a subject, in what is again a modern analysis, a word for ‘human being’ would be in the nominative: singular *ánthrōpos*, plural *ánthrōpoi*. In this role, as in others, it could combine with a definite article, whose inflections matched it in case, number, and gender. But so too could a participle. Compare:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| <i>hoi</i> | <i>ánthrōpoi</i> |
| the-MASC.NOM.PL | human being-NOM.PL |
| ‘the persons’ | |

with, for example:

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>hai</i> | <i>pepeisménai</i> |
| the-FEM.NOM.PL | PERF-persuade-PASS.PART.FEM. NOM.PL |
| ‘those (female) who have been persuaded’ | |

In another use a participle could be related to a noun in a role like that of an adjective: compare *hai gunáikes pepeisménai* ‘the women having been persuaded’ with, for example, *gunáikes sopháí* ‘wise women’. In both uses, as in others, participles could be related in turn to what in a modern term would be an object, or to anything else that could be related to a finite form corresponding. In that respect the passive participle in these combinations had a syntax like that of, for example, the finite *pépeismai* ‘I have been persuaded’. In other ways, however, a participle had a syntax like that of the other words whose endings realized, in particular, cases. As the stems, moreover, of participles had forms like those of, in

particular, the finite tenses, so their endings, as is already partly clear in these illustrations, were like those of nouns generally.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that as wholes they were described as different ‘parts of utterances.’ The terms for ‘noun’ and ‘verb’ can be traced back in antiquity to the earliest account, by Plato, of what we would now call a syntactic relation (Box 4.2). Nouns were distinguished later by a property of, among others, what was in a literal translation ‘falling’ (Latin *casus*, corresponding to Greek *ptōsis*). Either, that is, they were nominative, as they would be if someone were named; or they were, for example, accusative or dative. Verbs were distinguished in particular by differences in what is now called ‘tense’ (Greek *khronos* ‘time’ or Latin *tempus*) between, for example, present and future. A *metokhē*, or in Latin a *participium*, was then a part of an utterance with both these properties. The term in Greek is a word for ‘having together’ or ‘sharing’, formed transparently from a preposition *met(a)*, with among others a comitative meaning, and a nominal form *-okh-* of the root for ‘to have’. It was a word form, that is, which shared equally, in modern terminology, the features of both ‘case’ and ‘tense’.

Box 4.2 Nouns, verbs, participles

Functions of words within a sentence are first distinguished, though not as ‘parts of an utterance’, in Plato’s dialogue ‘The Sophist’ (*Soph.* 261c–263d). Take, for example, a statement about one of its characters: in English, ‘Theaetetus is walking’. The word we now call the subject names him, in Greek *Theaitētos*. As a ‘name’, in Greek an *onoma*, it does no more than identify this individual. A second word *badízei* ‘walks’ can be said, in itself, to identify a form of action. Crucially, however, this is ‘something said’, in Plato’s term a *rhēma*, about Theaetetus.

It is only because this *rhēma* is said of the *onoma* that what is formed becomes a statement that is either true of the individual identified, if Theaetetus actually is walking, or is false.

This analysis was in its day, in the fourth century BC, a breakthrough. In philosophy, in particular, it removed a difficulty in conceiving of statements that were meaningful but not true. Its relevance, however, to the development of grammar is that Plato's terms for a 'name' and 'something said', which distinguish what in modern terminology are an argument and a predicate, were to become those for a noun in general and for a finite verb specifically. An *onoma* was defined by its meaning and as a 'part' inflected for case: *Theaitētos*, in the statement cited, has the ending of a nominative singular. A *rhēma* came to be defined, as we will see in the next chapter, as a part which did not distinguish cases, which did distinguish times and persons. Thus *badízei* 'walks' or 'is walking' has the meaning of a present and a person that would be 'third'.

Other categories were said in antiquity to have been identified at various times, by Aristotle, by the Stoics, and by others, over the following three centuries. One scheme, however, which appears to date from the very end of the Hellenistic period was to catch the fancy of linguists two millennia later. Some words whose forms were variable distinguished cases but not tenses: thus, in Greek, a noun such as, in the nominative singular, *ánthrōpos* 'man'. These we may represent as having, in a modern notation, the properties [+ case, - tense]. Others had forms that varied for time but not in case: [- case, + tense]. This distinguished both the finite forms of verbs, such as *badízei* 'walks', and infinitives. Others, however, were in a modern notation both [+ case] and [+ tense]. These were what grammarians in

general called the ‘participles’: in Greek *metokhai* or ‘sharers’. A fourth type was then [- case] and [- tense]: thus, for example, an *epirrhēma* or ‘adverb’, as the Stoics had already described it, such as *pántōs* ‘wholly’.

Our source for this is Roman, in the parts of Varro’s work on ‘The Latin language’ that survive from the first century BC. We have no reason to suppose that the analysis was his originally. ‘Do you not see’, he asks at one point, ‘that [as] the Greeks have divided speech into four parts, one in which the words have cases, one in which they have indications of time, a third in which they have neither, a fourth in which they have both, we (in Latin, that is) have the same?’¹ For part at least of the scheme he refers, in another passage (LL 8.11), to an Alexandrian scholar, Dion, who had come to Rome in the middle of the century. But it is not included in the simplistic ancient story, as we find it scattered over later sources, of how the parts of speech had been progressively distinguished.

How significant, therefore, is it? It is one of ‘several divisions’ which Varro saw as current (LL 8.44); and is adopted by him in a study of how one word can be derived, in the spirit of ancient etymology (Box 1.1), from another. The ‘parts’ were also distinguished by meaning: thus the one that can be labelled [+ case, - tense] was called by ‘some’ (*quidam*) that of ‘addressing’ (*appellandi*). These too could in turn be subdivided. But the main criteria were, as we now say, morphological. Some words have no morphology: thus *et* ‘and’. In others inflectional derivations may arise (*declinationes oriantur*), and an exhaustive typology can then be defined very neatly, as we have seen. In the tradition, however, that was soon to be taken as standard, the ‘parts of an utterance’ were not words as

analysed internally, but units that entered as semantic wholes into semantic relations within utterances.

1. *An non vides, ut Graeci habeant eam quadripertitam, unam in qua sint casus, alteram in qua tempora, tertiam in qua neutrum, quartam in qua utrumque, sic nos habere?* (LL 9.31, trans. Kent 1938, 2: 461).

This is not to deny that participles were derivatives of verbs. If a verb, for example, could combine with a noun in the accusative, so could a participle that ‘came from’ it. The more then that one thinks of lexical meanings, as defined in modern dictionaries, the more the ‘parts of speech’ are seen as classes in the modern sense, of lexemes. One class would thus include a lexeme we may represent as LEIPO ‘leave’, of which a participle *leípōn* (‘leaving-NOM. SG’ is one form) and the finite *leípei* ‘leaves, is leaving’ is another. The ancient distinction between verbs and participles has in effect long been abandoned. But it had made perfect sense if ‘words’ are again specific parts of an articulated vocal sound that have specific positions in utterances.

Words classed ambiguously

In an ancient as in a modern account the same form may be assigned to different categories in different uses. *Falsō*, for example, was seen either as an adverb (‘wrongly’) or as the ablative singular of an adjective (‘wrong’). It is therefore one of ‘many’ words, as Donatus points out, that are ‘uncertain’ (*dubiae*) between an adverb and another category (GL 4: 387). In a modern analysis, which may at first sight seem equivalent, they have the same root and a meaning in common. Nevertheless they might be assigned

to different lexical units: an adjective which we may represent as *FALSUS*, which might have one entry in a modern dictionary; and an adverb *FALSO*, which might have another. Compare then the use of *Rōmae* in:

Rōmae *sum*
in Rome I am
'I am in Rome'

In other utterances a form which was identical is in all accounts a noun. Compare:

urbs *Rōmae*
city-NOM.SG Rome-GEN.SG
'the city of Rome'

where as a noun it is genitive. The lexeme, as we would now describe it, we may represent as *ROMA*; and *Rōmae* 'in Rome' is in a modern view as much a form of *ROMA* as, among others, the genitive *Rōmae* 'of Rome'.

It was seen as a noun, Donatus tells us and as we know from other sources, in one view in antiquity. But those who thought so he dismissed as ignorant (*imprudentes*). In the first of our examples, which is taken from him, *Rōmae* is instead an adverb. Its relation to *sum* 'I am' is like, for example, that of *intus* in:

intus *sum*
inside I-am
'I am inside'

which he has classed a little earlier as an adverb 'of place'. In an utterance such as:

Words classed ambiguously

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------|------------|
| <i>in</i> | <i>Italiā</i> | <i>sum</i> |
| in | Italy-ABL.SG | I-am |
| 'I am in Italy' | | |

sum would stand in the same relation to a noun preceded by a preposition. If forms are classed as forms, by the place they have in the structure of specific utterances, the view of Donatus and others was indeed right.

In another ancient analysis, whose transfer to English notoriously raises problems, the same form can be either an adverb or a preposition. In, for example:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| <i>extrā</i> | <i>prōgredior</i> |
| beyond | I-go-forward |
| 'I am going further' | |

extrā was an adverb of place, like *intus* in *intus sum*. Another example would be *forīs* 'outdoors' in:

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| <i>forīs</i> | <i>sum</i> |
| outdoors | I-am |
| 'I am away from home' | |

Extrā, however, could also be followed by a noun:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| <i>extrā</i> | <i>murōs</i> |
| outside | wall-ACC.PL |
| 'outside the walls' | |

In that use it met the definition, as in Boxes 5.1 and 5.2 below, of a preposition. Such words had the 'position', as Priscian put it, of a preposition; therefore, as such a part of such an utterance, prepositions they were. *Forīs*, for example, did not meet it, and

Box 4.3 Adverbs and prepositions in Latin

Most words with a locative meaning, for ‘place in’, ‘place to’, or ‘place from’, had a syntax like that of *in*. *Ad* ‘(up) to’ governed a noun in the accusative, *sub* ‘under’ a noun in either the ablative (‘in a position under’) or the accusative (‘to a position under’), and so on, all obligatory. With only a few forms, such as *extrā* ‘beyond’ or ‘outside’, was a noun possible but optional, and the grammarians tended to prescribe some uses which we know from direct evidence to have been possible. The test for a preposition is one that Priscian, for example, took from Apollonius Dyscolus (*GL* 3, 2: 24), and in this light it was ‘not irrational’, as he put it, that some adverbs should have been accepted, ‘by the authors of manuals of Latin’ (*ab artium scriptoribus Latinarum*), as prepositions also. What mattered was, among other things, that they ‘are accepted in the place’ (*loco... accipiuntur*) of many prepositions as originally defined in Greek (*GL* 3: 30–1). *Extrā* ‘outside’ is one such (similarly, for example, *GL* 3: 43).

The authors of Roman manuals include Donatus. In his brief account, these are among the other forms, like *falsō* and *Rōmae*, that were ‘uncertain’ (*dubiae*) between adverbs and other parts of an utterance. Where Priscian’s wording might suggest that forms *in loco praepositionum* (‘in the position of prepositions’) are in some sense secondary, it is tempting to read his Roman sources as implying the opposite. Where prepositions are word forms, and they are not followed by a case form, ‘they make adverbs.’¹ Likewise, for example, Diomedes (*GL* 1: 409, lines 11–12); compare, though the text at the very end is an emendation, Charisius (*GL* 1: 231–2). As the lexical properties, if we may talk in modern terms, of participles can be said to follow from those of corresponding verbs, so what is common to a single

form like *extrā*, in whichever use, could be basically the meaning of a preposition.

In a modern account that might be described by a process of conversion. A lexical unit 'EXTRA', which is a preposition, would be converted into a second 'EXTRA', which is an adverb. In an ancient context, however, we are talking simply of forms whose syntax is different in different utterances.

1. *separatae praepositiones...adverbia faciunt, si quando illas non subsequitur casus* (GL 4: 391).

was always an adverb. Many other forms, like *in* in *in Italiā* 'in Italy', were always prepositions. But a form like *extrā* could be either.

The solution (Box 4.3) became part of the grammatical tradition, which for centuries afterwards, in western Europe, was concerned with Latin only. It is still familiar in accounts of English, where the homonymies implied are far more numerous. If we reason consistently, however, *extra* is in modern terms a single lexical unit. Its syntactic category, in the modern sense, would be in either use the same as that of other lexemes, such as the 'IN' of *in Italia* 'in Italy', that are traditionally prepositions. Their uses happen, merely, to be more restricted, where those of 'EXTRA' and some others are more general. Such a solution has been adopted in English by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), and carries to its logical conclusion an analysis of 'parts of speech' in which, unlike in antiquity, a lexicon is central.

To a Roman grammarian such a line of argument would instead have made no sense. A 'part of an utterance' was at bottom precisely that: a concrete form in a specific context with specific syntactic connections to others.

Chapter 5

The eight parts

The syntactic categories of English, as set out in recent grammars, do not distinguish, at the highest level, participles from verbs and do at that level distinguish adjectives from nouns. In many ways, however, they may appear not very different from the system of ‘parts of an utterance’ established in Greek and Latin two millennia before. Nouns are distinguished from verbs; nouns from pronouns; prepositions from both a wider class of adverbs and a class, itself split or united, of conjunctions or their equivalent. Some intervening analyses, such as that of Jespersen (1924), have been more radical. Changes, however, have mostly affected levels in a hierarchy, either promoting what had earlier been a subclass to the status of a major category, or consolidating what had earlier been separate categories into one. At whatever level they have been distinguished, classes such as noun and adjective or verb and adverb ‘have a history’, in the words of Huddleston and Pullum, ‘going back to the grammar of classical Latin and classical Greek some 2,000 years ago’. But, they add, ‘they are apparently applicable to almost all human languages’ (2002). In many accounts a variant of the same scheme is now taken to be universal.

The eight parts

The ancient ‘parts’ are thus among the most abiding legacies of Graeco-Roman grammar. They were first distinguished in Greek, beginning in a largely discredited history of their development with Plato’s division of an *onoma* from a *rhēma* (above, Box 4.2). According to Quintilian, writing in the first century AD, eight parts were distinguished, in the second century BC, by Aristarchus (*Inst.* 1.4.20); and although he does not tell us what they were, it can be assumed that they were the categories of word forms that are later familiar. At the head of the list, as we know it from later sources, nouns are distinguished from verbs, and both from participles. Nouns are distinguished from articles and pronouns, with which they shared inflections for case; prepositions from adverbs and, at the end of the list, conjunctions. This is the order in which the parts of the utterance are defined in, for example, the manual of ‘Dionysius Thrax’, whose ostensible author was a pupil of Aristarchus.

In another view, still current in Quintilian’s day, the parts were nine, with an additional division, mentioned briefly near the end of Chapter 1, between names and ‘addressings’. We also have evidence, from the work of Varro in the first century BC (Box 4.2), of at least one other analysis that seems to have been airbrushed out of later doxographies. But eight parts were again distinguished, as Quintilian tells us, by his older contemporary Remmius Palaemon. Their adaptation to Latin was not slavish: it was clear, in particular, that there was no equivalent of the words the Greek grammarians distinguished as the article. The languages were nevertheless more like each other than either is like, for example, English; and the main difference, as the categories were distinguished by Roman grammarians, is in the order in which they were presented. In the system as set out by, among others Donatus, nouns were first distinguished from pronouns, whose roles in syntax are similar. The next were verbs and adverbs; after them first participles, then conjunctions,

Why words were central

then prepositions. A final eighth part, corresponding to a subclass as described in Greek, was the interjection.

For ancient writers the order in which things were listed was important. Even that of the alphabet ought not to be entirely arbitrary. The parts of utterances formed not simply a set, but what we would now see as a system, in which categories were ordered rationally, in a way that reflected the connections between them. An adverb, for example, was defined by its relation to a verb, and in the list set out by Roman grammarians they were adjacent. Adverbs, however, are among the parts that were not inflected for case or tense; and, in the list set out in grammars of Greek, these were grouped together at the end. It is significant that, in following the detailed arguments of Apollonius Dyscolus, Priscian was to reject what we may call the Roman scheme, which had been standard in the western empire.

Why words were central

It is at best very difficult for a linguist trained in the twentieth or twenty-first century, and speaking a language whose type is formally different, to look at Greek in the way it may have presented itself to, for example, a Stoic philosopher of the third century BC, when a system of this type may first have been envisaged. To appreciate, however, why it became so central to Graeco-Roman grammar, and the criteria by which the parts of utterances came to be defined, it may be helpful to bear in mind some of the salient characteristics of the older Indo-European languages, of the family to which both Greek and Latin belong.

Words, as units, might have stared one in the face. The order of forms in utterances varied: in Latin, which we may take for illustration, one could say, for example, *veniunt hominēs* '(The) people are

The eight parts

coming', but one could also say, in talking of the same movement of a group of people, *hominēs veniunt*. In comparison, neither *veniunt* 'are coming' nor *hominēs* 'people' could be divided into smaller parts whose sequence could itself be varied. At the same time either form was complex. The word that in modern practice can be glossed as:

veni-unt
come-3.PL
'(they) come, are coming'

was both partly like and partly unlike others that in a modern analysis include the same stem. Compare among others:

venī-mus
come-1.PL
'we come, are coming'

or:

veni-e-nt
come-FUT.3.PL
'(they) will come'

As forms varied so did meanings, and the further meaning such forms have in common, which we now distinguish as 'lexical', was also easy to recognize.

Different patterns of variation, with similar differences of meaning, could then be associated clearly with distinct types of, as we would now say, lexeme. A range of inflections semantically like those found for 'coming' also distinguished, for example:

ambula-nt
walk-3.PL
'(they) are walking'

from:

ambulā-mus
walk-1.PL
'we are walking'

or:

ambulā-b-unt
walk-FUT.3.PL
'(they) will walk'

and corresponding forms for running, swimming, and so on. Another pattern of variation distinguished forms like *hominēs* 'people' from the accusative singular *hominem* or the genitive *hominum* 'of people', and the corresponding forms for women, children, animals, and so on.

Across languages in general, such distinctions are not always so neat. In English, for comparison, forms like *comes* or *coming* illustrate one pattern of variation; *boy* and *boys*, for example, another. *Splash*, however, is one of many stems that can combine directly in forms parallel to both. In, for example, *a big splash* it forms the singular, as we describe it, of a noun. This is distinguished in dictionaries as one lexeme: 'splash, *n.*'. In *They are splashing about*, the same form combines with the *-ing* of *They are coming*. Therefore we distinguish another lexeme, 'splash, *v.*', whose entry in a dictionary is separate. But the meanings of 'splash, *n.*' and 'splash, *v.*' are plainly connected, as are those of 'love, *n.*' and 'love, *v.*', 'run, *n.*' and 'run, *v.*', and many others. If they are seen as separate it is historically, at least, because noun and verb are categories we have inherited from the ancient grammarians, in whose languages patterns of inflection partitioned forms more clearly. At another extreme are languages in which

splash-type distributions, as we might describe them, are the norm, and it is in analysing these that not surprisingly the distinction between nouns and verbs, which is the foundation of the doctrine of parts of speech, has often been brought into question. In the ancient languages, however, in which such categories were initially distinguished, different patterns of inflection correlated far more clearly both with meanings each set had in common, as referring to men or women, coming or walking, and so on, and the connections of forms within utterances.

Finally, we are talking of patterns in the abstract; not of endings, for example, of forms individually. A final *-nt* in *venient* or *ambulant*, among the forms glossed, was unusual in Latin in that, in itself, it distinguishes a third plural of a verb. But a form that ended in *-ō* could be either a verb like *veniō* ‘I am coming’; or, for example, a noun like *puerō* ‘boy-ABL.SG’ in *ā puerō* ‘by the boy’. *Veniam* ‘I will come’ is, like *veniō*, a first singular; but it ends in *am*. So does, for example, the form *puellam* ‘girl-ACC.SG’ in *puellam vīdī* ‘I have seen a/the girl’. A form in *-ēs* could have a meaning like that of *hominēs* ‘men’; but also that of verb in the future such as *veniēs* ‘you (sg) will come’ or a present such as *timēs* ‘you are afraid of’. Other distinctions similar in meaning could be drawn in varying ways. Where *veniam* ‘I will come’ differed from *veniō* ‘I am coming’ in its ending, *ambulābō* ‘I will walk’, which was likewise future, was distinguished from *ambulō* ‘I am walking’ by, on the face of it, an inserted *ā* and *b*. In *puerī veniunt* ‘(The) boys are coming’ the form for boys, *puerī*, has a final *ī*; in *hominēs veniunt* ‘(The) people are coming’, the form for ‘people’ again ends in *ēs*.

The same points can be made for Greek, as will be illustrated, in conclusion, in Chapter 12. Not every language, however, has inflections that contrast similarly. If we set aside, accordingly, the

way the ancient ‘parts of speech’ have been reshaped by later traditions, it is possible to see them as in origin a natural though a brilliant response, by philosophers and philologists in the Hellenistic period, to the problems posed by a language of a particular type, in which the partition of word forms into sets with similar semantic contrasts was the key to its structure. Nor is it surprising that categories came to be distinguished by all relevant criteria. If we take parts of an utterance for granted, we may speak in detail of ‘semantic’ criteria, which appeal to types of entities, activities, and so on referred to; of ‘morphological’ criteria, which appeal to inflections; of ‘syntactic’ criteria, which appeal to relations of words in larger units. In the insight, however, that led to the analysis, all these are aspects of meaning that could have been taken together.

The system of definitions

Our sources, alas, are spotty and centuries later. If we return, however, to the account transmitted by the grammarians, the list of parts begins, in either order, with the noun. This was the ‘Hauptwort’, as it has come to be called in the German tradition, from which other parts were distinguished, and its specific character, as Priscian put it in an introductory survey, is to signify (in Latin) *substantia* and *qualitas* (GL 2: 55, l. 6). These terms were eventually borrowed into English, as technical terms in philosophy. Their meanings are not, however, those that are normal in present-day English, of physical ‘substance’ and of a ‘quality’ that may be higher or lower. *Substantia* was instead a term that corresponded to Greek *ousia*, literally ‘being’, by which Aristotle had distinguished something essential or unchangeably real. It is by this that nouns were defined in one account in Greek (GG 1.3: 215,

l. 26 and elsewhere). *Qualitas* had been coined by Cicero, translating a term of Plato's, and was derived transparently from *qualis* 'of what sort?' The sense was, therefore, literally that of 'what-sort-ness', and was opposed directly to that of *quantitas*, as a term coined similarly with the meaning literally of 'what-size-ness'. In a formulation then that in the Middle Ages was to become especially illuminating, a noun signified the essential nature of some entity or a property that varies. Ancient definitions also make clear that nouns had 'fallings' or, as we now say, 'cases'.

The term for a noun was the ordinary word for a name: Greek *onoma* or Latin *nomen*. One's *onoma*, as a Greek, could be (as in Plato's example in Box 4.2) *Theaitētos*; one's *nomina* 'names' as a Roman could be *Gaius Iulius Caesar*. In a scheme with nine parts, which was a live alternative in the first century, forms such as these, which were names in a strict sense, were distinguished from ones such as, in Greek, *ánthrōpos* 'human being' or, in Latin, *puer* 'boy'. These were again distinguished as we saw in Chapter 1; and in the Stoic system of parts of an utterance, as it is represented in later grammatical and other sources, an *onoma* and a *prosēgoria* were two of five parts of an utterance. They had similar roles, however, in the structure of sentences, and similar patterns of inflections, and the grammarians of a later period mention this view only to reject it. The first subdivision of nouns, as we will see in the next chapter, was then between, in Greek, an *onoma kurion*, or noun of a subclass that was called in Latin *proprium* or 'one's own', and what was in Latin, in a term reflecting the sense of *prosēgoria* in Greek, an *appellatio*.

The Greek order, as we may call it, in which parts were listed is as in the manual of 'Dionysius Thrax'; and, if it is not that of the historical Dionysius, it had behind it the authority of Apollonius Dyscolus (*Synt.* 1.13–29 = *GG* 2.2: 15–27) in the second century

AD. It is again the one applied by Priscian, in the fifth century AD, to Latin. In either arrangement, however, the noun and the verb had a special status. An *onoma* and a *rhēma* had been distinguished by Plato (Box 4.2), and in the standard story, as the grammarians represented it, these were the only ‘parts of the utterance’ according to the earliest school of philosophers. For the grammarians themselves they were, as Priscian puts it, ‘primary and outstanding’ (*principales et egregiae*), and the other parts were ‘appendages’ (*appendices*) subsidiary to them (*GL* 2: 552, ll. 12–14). They were likewise primary, in the tradition of Roman grammars, for Donatus (*GL* 4: 372). Apollonius and Priscian argue, in particular, that both were essential if an utterance, or in their terms a *logos* or *oratio*, were to meet a criterion (as we will see in Box 9.1 below) of completeness. Other parts were, as we would now say, optional. To illustrate this, Priscian takes an utterance which in ancient accounts included all parts other than a conjunction:

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|
| <i>idem</i> | <i>homō</i> | <i>lapsus</i> | <i>heu</i> | <i>hodiē</i> | <i>con-cidit</i> |
| (pronoun) | (noun) | (participle) | (interjection) | (adverb) | (preposition-verb) |
| the-same | man | having-slipped | alas | today | fell-down |

The example is adapted from Apollonius (*Synt.* 1.14 = *GG* 2.2: 17), as is the argument. Delete any of *idem*, *lapsus*, *heu*, or *hodiē* and the utterance ‘will not entirely fall short’ (*non omnino deficiet*). These are the parts other than the noun and verb. Delete *con-*, which was a preposition, and the corresponding simple form, which was *cecidit* ‘fell’, would be sufficient. Delete, however, either *homō* or *-cidit* and the utterance does fall short (*GL* 3: 116). ‘Will fall short’ is in Greek *elleipsei*. An utterance which consisted of a

verb or noun alone was implicitly, as in one of the plethora of accounts that are current now, ‘elliptical’.

For the earliest philosophers, as the grammarians interpreted their doctrines, other units ‘consignified’, or had meaning, as we would now put it, in conjunction with them. But, as the example of the man falling over shows, the other parts were also meaningful. Each had, in Greek, its own *sēmasia*, what it was a ‘sign’ of, or something that it ‘made clear’. In Latin, it had its own *significatio* or ‘signification’. The parts in general cannot therefore be distinguished one from another ‘unless’, as Priscian puts it at the head of his initial survey, ‘we pay attention to what is specific to the significations of each’ (*nisi uniuscuiusque proprietates significationum attendamus*) (GL 2: 55, ll. 4–5). Here too he was simply following Apollonius.

Priscian’s definitions are translated, with those of Apollonius where they are known, in Box 5.1. Where the *proprietates* or specific character of a noun was to signify *substantia* and *qualitas*, that of a verb was to signify something distinguished in part by what is now called ‘voice’. It was thus an action either performed on someone or something or one which is instead experienced or undergone; or else, as definitions are worded, neither. Verbs also, in particular, distinguish times. The status of finite verbs was from the beginning undisputed; ‘finite’ in antiquity meant ‘distinguishing first, second, and third person’. Some ancient grammars, such as those of both Donatus and ‘Dionysius Thrax’ (see below, Box 5.2) also included persons in their definition. Apollonius Dyscolus, however, had been at pains to make clear that infinitives, which did not distinguish persons, were also a ‘mood’, as they are still traditionally described, of verbs (*Synt.* 3.55–9 = GG 2.2: 320–5). Priscian again followed him.

Participles, as we have seen in the last chapter, were not verbs. The insight is said by Apollonius to be that of Tryphon, a

grammarian of the late first century BC, whose work is often cited and, if we had it, might throw crucial light on how analyses evolved in that period. We may also remind ourselves of the account adapted to Latin by Tryphon's contemporary Varro (Box 4.2), in which the main parts were defined, consistently but unusually, by inflectional meanings alone. In Priscian's survey a participle, unlike an infinitive, is 'rightly separated' from a verb because it has cases, which a verb lacks, and genders, like a noun, without 'moods', which verbs do have (*GL* 2: 55, *ll.* 10–12). But fuller definitions make clear that a specific 'signification', or what we would again distinguish as its lexical meaning, is derived from that of a verb (Box 5.1). As a part related to both nouns and verbs, a participle is the third in the Greek order, which Priscian also follows.

Next, in that order, came the pronoun. The term in Greek (*antōnomia*) was a compound formed with a preposition, *ant(i)* 'instead of', and the term for a noun, and made clear how these parts were related. In the 'Roman' order of Donatus and others *pronomina* were listed directly after nouns, but in all accounts they signified in place of nouns in general or some nouns in particular. For Priscian what was specific to a pronoun was to be used in place of some noun in the 'proper' sense (*pro aliquo nomine proprio poni*), and to 'signify definite persons' (*certas significare personas*) (*GL* 2: 55, *ll.* 13–14). This is one part for which the reasoning of Apollonius survives in detail. The distinction in Greek between a pronoun and an article, as he and Priscian put it in another context, is that pronouns are admitted 'in place of' (*pro*) nouns. (Note in this context that 'nouns' include, as we will see, what we distinguish as adjectives.) Articles are instead admitted 'with' nouns (Apollonius *Synt.* 2.1 = *GG* 2.2: 267; Priscian *GL* 3: 139, *ll.* 25–6). A neuter article could also combine with an infinitive:

to *badízein* *agathón*
the to-walk good
‘It is good to take a walk’

and forms which for us are relative pronouns, beginning what we now call relative clauses, were described, as we will see in Chapter 10, as articles postposed to nouns. To say that Latin had no article, as Priscian’s survey states at the outset, is to acknowledge that no forms entered into a similar range of uses.

A noun, a participle, a pronoun, and an article all had in common, as grammarians remark, that they distinguished cases. They were therefore identified collectively, in distinction in particular from verbs, as parts which had that property: in Greek *ptōtika* (having a property of *ptōsis*, literally ‘falling’); in Latin *casuales*, from *casus*. As such they are distinct from verbs, which were regularly defined as, among other things, ‘without case’; also from the parts which remain, at the end in the Greek order, which are all ‘uninflected’.

The first of these is the preposition. In some uses it was, like other parts, a *dictio* or word form: thus, in Latin, in a form that grammarians distinguished as accented, the *in* of *in Italiā* ‘in Italy’. But similar forms, which they distinguished as unaccented, had another use, as we have seen in the last chapter, in a compound such as *advenit* ‘arrives’ or *influit* ‘flows in(to)’. The notion of ‘composition’ is ancient (Greek *sunthesis* ‘placing together’) and could in principle be distinguished from *suntaxis* or ‘arranging together’, which is the source of the modern ‘syntax’. In either relation units like *in* had a fixed position: before *fluit* and, unusually in a language in which the sequence of most combinations of words could vary, before a noun such as *Italiā*. It was therefore natural to see them as, in either case, the same part of an utterance, in Greek a *prothesis* or in Latin a *praepositio* ‘placing before’. What was

specific to them was accordingly just that position, in relation variously to parts which, like *Italiā*, were inflected for case, or in composition with other parts generally.

An adverb (Latin *adverbium*, Greek *epirrhēma*), was both named and defined by its relation to a *rhēma* or verb. It followed immediately in the Roman order, as the pronoun came after the noun; and what was specific to it, in the words of Priscian's survey, was 'to be placed with a verb and, without it, to be unable to have a complete signification' (*cum verbo poni nec sine eo perfectam significationem posse habere*). In this case, again, his source in the work of Apollonius is preserved in detail. A part that, as distinguished by Roman grammarians, was an interjection corresponded to a subclass of forms, as distinguished by grammarians of Greek, which they continued to describe as adverbs. One reason for treating them as separate is implied by the term *interiectio*, literally 'something placed between.' They were not added, that is, to another part specifically.

The final part, in the Greek order, is the conjunction. The term too was transparent: in Greek a *sundesmos* or 'binding together'; in Latin a *conjunctio* or 'conjoining.' What is specific to it, in Priscian's account, is 'to join together different nouns or any other words that distinguish cases, or different verbs or adverbs' (*diversa nomina vel quascumque dictiones casuales vel diversa verba vel adverbia conjungere*) (GL 2: 56, ll. 11–12). But in other accounts, for which one source is in the later commentaries on 'Dionysius Thrax', a conjunction, which included what in modern accounts are classed as particles, was a part of an utterance that still 'consignifies' (*sussēmainei*) or 'signifies jointly' (compare GG 1.3: 284, ll. 6–10). It did not signify, that is, on its own; but only in linkage with others.

A survey such as this, across two languages and grammars over a long period of time, may seem perilously synthetic. If we compare, however, the definitions of Priscian with those of Apollonius in

Box 5.1 The parts as defined by Apollonius Dyscolus or Priscian

Sources are partly in the work of Apollonius that survives. For the rest we rely on Priscian, who explicitly admired him; but equivalents in Greek are often cited, from sources that in many instances remain anonymous, in successive commentaries on the manual of 'Dionysius Thrax'.

A noun, for Apollonius as for Priscian, is inflected for case and 'assigns to every material or non-material entity that is the subject of predication a shared or individual what-sort-ness'.¹

A verb, as defined by Priscian, is a part of an utterance 'with times and moods, without case, signifying what is done or experienced'.²

A participle, again following Priscian, is a part 'which is admitted in place of a verb, from which it is also by nature derived, which has gender and case like a noun, and properties applying to a verb without distinction of persons and moods'.³

A pronoun is distinguished by Apollonius, in a careful study which survives, as 'a word indicative, in place of a noun, of definite persons, distinguished according to case and number'. Forms do not always, he adds, distinguish gender.⁴ As distinguished by Priscian, it 'is admitted in place' of a proper noun of an individual, and 'receives definite persons'.⁵

For the article in Greek, which had no equivalent in Latin, no formula of Apollonius survives directly. Of the remaining parts, a preposition is in Priscian's definition 'uninflected' and 'is placed before other parts either in juxtaposition or in composition'.⁶

An adverb, for which we have again a detailed study by Apollonius, is likewise ‘uninflected’ and ‘is predicated of the moods of verbs, wholly or partly, without which it does not conclude a thought.’⁷ In Priscian’s more summary definition, it is an uninflected part ‘whose signification is added to verbs’.⁸

A conjunction, in Priscian’s definition, is an uninflected part ‘conjoining other parts of an utterance, together with which it signifies, making force or order clear.’⁹

1. *onomá esti méros lógou ptōtikón, hekástōi tōn hupokeiménōn sōmátōn ē pragmatōn koinén ē idían poiótēta aponémōn* (ascribed to the school of Apollonius and Herodian, GG 1.3: 524, ll. 9–10); *quae unicuique subiectorum corporum seu rerum communem vel propriam qualitatem distribuit* (GL 2: 56–7).
2. *cum temporibus et modis, sine casu, agendi vel patiendi significativum* (GL 2: 369).
3. *quae pro verbo accipitur, ex quo et derivatur naturaliter, genus et casum habens ad similitudinem nominis et accidentia verbo absque discretione personarum et modorum* (GL 2: 552, ll. 18–20).
4. *léxin ant’ onómatos prosōpōn hōrisménōn parastatikén, diáphoron katà tēn ptōsin kai arithmón, hôte kai génous estī katà tēn phonēn aparēmphatos* (GG 2.1: 9, ll. 11–13).
5. *quae pro nomine proprio accipitur uniuscuiusque personasque finitas recipit* (GL 2: 577).
6. *indeclinabilis, quae proponitur aliis partibus vel appositione vel compositione* (GL 3: 24, ll. 13–14).
7. *léxis áklitos, katēgorōusa tōn en tois rhémasin enkliseōn kathólou ē merikōs, hōn áneu ou katakleisei diánoian* (GG 2.1: 119, ll. 6–7).
8. *pars orationis indeclinabilis, cuius significatio verbis adicitur* (GL 3: 60).
9. *indeclinabilis, coniunctiva aliarum partium orationis, quibus consignificat, vim vel ordinationem demonstrans* (GL 3: 93).

Box 5.1 and these in turn with those of other ancient authorities, the similarities are more striking than the variation. The definitions of Donatus and ‘Dionysius Thrax’, which have both had a great influence beyond the time when they were written, are set out for comparison in Box 5.2. One difference, for example, is that verbs are defined as words that distinguish persons. That was strictly true of some verbs only, since in both accounts the category included infinitives. The formula may, of course, have been inherited from a period before their status had been made clear. Other verbs, however, did distinguish a person, and a reminder that it was so might also have been helpful for a teacher.

A definition was nevertheless a definition, and where distinctions are exact and thorough the contribution of Apollonius Dyscolus seems to have been crucial. His style is never easy, and while studies of some parts survive, much has been lost. But it was Apollonius who established definitively what was, in particular, a verb. Predecessors, unnamed, had classed infinitives as adverbs; so to, as we will note in Chapter 10, a pair of verbs with the meaning ‘should’ or ‘ought to’, which again did not distinguish persons. The problem, however, was not simply to distinguish categories, as we would now say, extensionally. Which forms were assigned to which, in which uses, should be determined,

Box 5.2 The parts as defined by Donatus and by ‘Dionysius Thrax’

A noun is defined by ‘Dionysius’ as a part of an utterance ‘subject to case which signifies a material or non-material entity both in a strict sense and a common.’¹ The name *Sōkrátēs*, for example, signifies in one way; *ánthrōpos* ‘man’ in the other. The definition of Donatus corresponds exactly.²

A verb is defined by 'Dionysius' as a part of an utterance 'without case, admitting times and persons and numbers, representing an activity or an experience'.³ As defined in Latin by Donatus, a *verbum* was a part 'with time and person, without case, signifying either doing something or experiencing it or neither'.⁴

These head the list in the Greek order. A participle, which followed, is defined by 'Dionysius' simply as a word which 'shares the specific character of verbs and of nouns'.⁵ It is 'so called,' as Donatus explains, 'because it takes a part of the noun and a part of the verb'. From the verb alone it 'receives genders and cases,' from the verb alone, 'times and significations'.⁶

In the Roman order the noun was followed by the pronoun. In the definition of 'Dionysius', which is one of the simplest, it is a word 'employed in place of a noun, making clear definite persons'.⁷ The Latin term, *pronomen*, was likewise transparent and applied to some words that did not distinguish persons. As defined by Donatus, it is a part 'placed instead of a noun,' which 'signifies barely as much'; and, he adds, 'sometimes admits person'.⁸

The article, which follows the participle in the Greek order, is defined by Dionysius as 'subject to case' and 'ordered before and after the inflection of nouns'.⁹ Articles 'ordered after' are again ones now described as relative pronouns.

The remaining parts are those not distinguished by inflections. The adverb follows the verb in the Roman order and is defined by Donatus as a part which 'added to a verb makes clear and fills in its signification'.¹⁰ In the definition of 'Dionysius' it is simply 'said of or in addition to a verb'.¹¹

A preposition, according to ‘Dionysius’, is ‘placed before all other parts of the utterance in both composition and syntax’.¹² As defined by Donatus, it is ‘placed before other parts of an utterance and either fills out or changes or reduces their signification’.¹³

A conjunction, which is the last in the Greek order, is a part that for ‘Dionysius’ ‘binds a thought in an ordered way and makes clear a gap in interpretation’;¹⁴ in the formula of Donatus, it ‘ties together and orders a thought’.¹⁵

An interjection, finally, is added in the Roman order and defined by Donatus both by its syntax and an emotive meaning, as a part ‘added among other parts of an utterance to express feelings of the mind’.¹⁶

1. *méros lógou ptōtikón, sōma ē prágma sēmainon . . . koinôs te kai idíōs legómenon* (GG 1.1: 24).
2. *pars orationis cum casu corpus aut rem proprie communiterve significans* (GL 4: 373).
3. *léxis áptōtos, eidektikè khrónōn te kai prosópōn kai arithmōn, enérgeian è páthos paristása* (GG 1.1: 46).
4. *pars orationis cum tempore et persona sine casu aut agere aliquid aut pati aut neutrum significans* (GL 4: 381).
5. *léxis metékhousa tēs tōn rhēmátōn kai tēs tōn onomátōn idiotētos* (GG 1.1: 60).
6. *dicta quod partem capiat nominis partemque verbi. recipit enim a nomine genera et casus, a verbo tempora et significationes* (GL 4: 387).
7. *léxis anti onómatos paralambanómēnē, prosópōn hōrisménōn dēlōtiké* (GG 1.1: 63).
8. *quae pro nomine positum tantundem paene significat personamque interdum recipit* (GL 4: 379).
9. *méros lógou ptōtikón, protassómenon kai hupotassómenon tēs kliseōs tōn onomátōn* (GG 1.1: 61); for the text compare commentators (GG 1.3: 256 and elsewhere).

Adjectives

10. *quae adiecta verbo significationem eius explanat atque implet* (GL 4: 385).
11. *katà rhēmatos legómenon è epilegómenon rhēmati* (GG 1.1: 72).
12. *protitheménē pántōn tōn toũ lógou merōn én te sunthéseí kai suntáxei* (GG 1.1: 70).
13. *proposita aliis partibus orationis significationem earum aut conplet aut mutat aut minuit* (GL 4: 389).
14. *sundéousa diánoian metà táxeōs kai tò tēs hermeneías kekhēnós dēloúsa* (GG 1.1: 86).
15. *adnectens ordinansque sententiam* (GL 4: 388).
16. *interiecta aliis partibus orationis ad exprimendos animi adfectus* (GL 4: 391).

in the concept of science implicit in antiquity, by criteria as clear as possible, which individual forms either met or did not meet. In defining adverbs, for example, Apollonius begins by saying that they are indeclinable. This is not a mere descriptive observation; without it their intension, if we may use twentieth-century terminology, was not clear. For the same form, as we have seen in the last chapter, could be an adverb in one utterance, but a noun, for example, with the inflection of a noun, in others.

Adjectives

One major difference between the ancient system and modern concepts of the ‘parts of speech’ follows, as we have seen, from the modern focus on lexemes. Another particular difference, in addition to those discussed already, is that adjectives were seen in antiquity as no more than a subclass of nouns. In a modern analysis of Greek or Latin, as of most other languages, nouns and adjectives are instead assigned to different major categories.

The eight parts

The term for an adjective is itself ancient. A form such as:

takhús

quick-MASC.NOM.SG

was a noun of a type distinguished in Greek as *epithetikon*: as having the property of being ‘placed next to.’ This is one of twenty-four subtypes of *prosēgoriai*, or what are later ‘common nouns’, listed in the manual of ‘Dionysius Thrax’. In Latin, *bonus* in:

bonus

good-MASC. NOM.SG

‘a/the good person’

homō

human being-NOM.SG

was correspondingly a noun ‘added to’ (*adiectivum*), distinguished at the same level as many other subclasses by, for example, Donatus. A syntactic relation like that of *bonus* to *homō* was obvious and invoked for comparison in accounts of adverbs, to clarify their relation to verbs. Priscian, following Apollonius, points to the parallel with:

bene agit

well do-3.SG

‘is doing well’

(GL 3: 60). The property, however, specific to nouns was for Priscian that of signifying *substantia* ‘being’ and *qualitas* ‘what-sort-ness’, and both *bonus* ‘good’ and *homō* ‘person’ had it.

To a modern typologist it is clear that Latin ‘had’, as we may put it, a major category of adjectives. For many linguists, this is now a term in a universal system that constrains all languages that people can speak. In arguing, however, from that assumption we introduce preoccupations that belong to later periods in the history of our subject. It was a mediaeval Englishman, not

an ancient Greek philosopher, who made the much-trumpeted pronouncement that ‘grammar is substantially the same in all languages, even though it may vary accidentally’ (trans. Lyons 1968: 15–16). Other languages were spoken within the Roman empire as, before they were conquered, in the Greek-speaking states in the east. Punic, Egyptian, and others were not Indo-European. But they were of interest to ancient scholars mainly in that etymologists, in the sense of Box 1.1, might appeal to them.

In both Greek and Latin, the forms called adjectives entered into patterns of inflection similar to those of nouns in general. *Bonus*, for example, is distinguished from *bonum* in:

| | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| <i>bonum</i> | <i>hominem</i> |
| good-MASC.ACC.SG | human being-ACC.SG |

as *dominu-s*, a nominative singular meaning ‘master of a household’ is from a corresponding accusative *dominu-m*. *Bon-u-m* is in turn distinguished from *bon-a-m*, as in:

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| <i>bonam</i> | <i>mulierem</i> |
| good-FEM.ACC.SG | woman-ACC.SG |

as *domin-a-m*, an accusative meaning ‘mistress of a household’, is from *domin-u-m*, and so on. Other adjectives had endings like the *em* of *hominem* or *mulierem*, but their meanings and their relations to other units are the same.

The words called adjectives included simple forms like *bonus* plus comparatives and superlatives. While this, however, distinguished them from nouns of other subtypes, the difference in their range of inflections is less than among subtypes of verb, for example, that we may distinguish lexically as having or not having

The eight parts

passives. Apart, too, from the uses illustrated, their relations to other forms within an utterance were like those of other forms distinguished as ‘with case’. Thus, in particular, an adjective in Greek could combine with an article:

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| <i>hoi</i> | <i>agathoi</i> |
| the-MASC.NOM.PL | good-MASC.NOM.PL |
| ‘the good people’ | |

as straightforwardly as a noun such as *ánthrōpoi* ‘human beings’. In an analysis restricted to two of the older Indo-European languages, by the criteria implicit in ancient grammars, it would have been wrong to see this as a category separate at the highest level.

Chapter 6

Accidents

In the *Ars minor*, or ‘shorter manual’, of Donatus a teacher begins by asking how many parts of an utterance there are. In the sections that follow, he asks first what each part is. ‘What,’ for example, ‘is a noun?’ (*nomen quid est?*). The pupils answer with a definition: that of a noun, in this instance, as also given in the larger manual (Box 5.2). The next question is, in a literal translation, ‘how many things apply to’ it: in Latin, *quot accidunt?* One thing that ‘applies to’, for example, nouns is a subsidiary distinction between simple words, such as *potens* ‘powerful-NOM.SG’, and compounds, such as *im-potens* ‘powerless-NOM.SG’. Another is a distinction of gender; others of number, between singular and plural, or of case. All were described in Greek as *parepomena* or ‘things accompanying’ this part of an utterance in general. In Latin, they were equivalently described as *accidentia* or ‘things applying to’ it.

The term ‘accidence’ has come to be restricted in English, insofar as it is still used, to inflectional morphology. As defined, for example, in the *New Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, it is ‘that part of grammar which deals with variable forms of words (inflections etc.)’ (Brown, ed. 1993). As envisaged, however, in antiquity the *accidentia* included any property described as varying, ‘accidentally’

in a sense that went back to Aristotle, between instances of what was in essence the same part of an utterance. A word whose essential character was that of a noun could be compound or it could be simple: this was one criterion, therefore, by which nouns as forms were divided into subclasses. A noun in Latin such as *hominum* ‘of human beings’ was masculine, genitive, and plural, while, for example, *mulier* ‘woman’ was feminine, nominative, and singular. These too were terms by which subsets of words assigned to the same part of an utterance could be distinguished. Nouns were also divided, following their definition, into those which were, in Latin, *propria* or ‘proper’ and the common nouns described, as we have seen, as *appellationes*. In the usual account this was another ‘parameter’, if we may introduce a modern term, of variation.

These were properties, to repeat, of parts of an utterance. Some of the most important, therefore, were shared by words of different categories, which were central to the syntactic relations by which utterances were formed. In an example in Latin cited earlier:

| | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| <i>veniunt</i> | <i>hominēs</i> |
| come-3.PL | human being-NOM.PL |

number was a property ‘applying to’ both words, which, in a term whose origins are later, agree in being plural. Number also applied, as shown again by patterns of agreement, to participles. In Greek, gender was something ‘accompanying’ nouns, participles, and articles; case a property of these and of pronouns, classed together as we have seen as *ptōtika* or words characterized by ‘fallings’. Person was a property that varied in both pronouns and finite verbs. All these were parameters in any account of either language, and are still included in the modern concept of ‘accidence’. It will be clear, however, that not all parameters were of that kind.

Whether a word was simple or compound had in itself no bearing on the way it could combine with others to form an utterance. Yet if time, for example, was a property whose values varied, between present, future, past imperfect, and so on, simple and compound were described as values of another, said in Greek to be of *skhēma*, literally ‘shape’. In Latin it was equivalently of *figura*. Other properties applied to only one part of an utterance. A noun, for example, could be a proper noun, or else it would be common. This was the basis for another variable property, which the Roman grammarians distinguished as that of *qualitas*: literally, as seen in the last chapter, of ‘what-sort-ness’.

It is not surprising, therefore, that although there was broad agreement among authorities, with complete agreement over most parameters, there were also differences, in both the properties included and in part what names they had. In some accounts a simple word was distinguished not just from a compound but also, on a separate parameter, from one derived, as we would now say, by an affix. Compare in Greek, for example, *taúros* ‘bull’ → *taúr-ei-os* ‘of, from a bull’. This parameter was said in Greek to be of *eidos* (basically another word for ‘shape’); in Latin, of *species*. But for Donatus, among others, there was no equivalent parameter. Nouns that began a derivation were of ‘initial status’ (*primae positionis*), and formed one subtype (*species*) on the parameter of ‘what-sort-ness’. ‘Derived’ nouns formed another, or else they were specifically distinguished as, for example, diminutives.

Our sources in the main are manuals designed for practical use, if not directly in the classroom then as a help to teachers. The merits, therefore, of alternative accounts were debated as rarely as one might expect in modern textbooks. At one point, however, in his scholarly discussion of conjunctions, Priscian disagrees explicitly with what the Roman grammarians had taught earlier.

Box 6.1 The variable properties of nouns

A detailed survey of this category will make clearer both the range of ‘accidents’ that were included and the ways in which analyses could differ.

The list given by, for example, Donatus begins with a binary distinction of *qualitas* ‘what-sort-ness’. Nouns signified, by definition, *proprie communiterve*: either in a strict sense, in the translation proposed in Box 5.2, or a common. Any noun was accordingly a name of an individual or, in the ancient term, ‘appellative’. Names are distinguished on the model traditional in early Roman society; equivalents would now be Christian names or surnames. Appellatives are subdivided into classes by a wide variety of criteria. Some are, as implied again by the definition, *corporalia* or concrete; others *incorporalia* or abstract. Some are simple and others derived from them. Adjectives, as they are labelled elsewhere, are distinguished as ‘added (*adiecta*) to nouns’ and by a signification which is puzzlingly described as *media* ‘middle’. (Is it conceivable, perhaps, that it was what we might now see as ‘floating’?) Some nouns, for example, were diminutive (*deminutiva*). Others are, in a Latin rendering of what are known to be a Stoic formula, ‘said in relation to something’, such as *pater* ‘father (of so-and-so)’. These are distinguished from ones which in a similar formula ‘hold themselves in some way in relation to something’. Where Donatus, however, applied it to words such as *dexter* ‘(to the) right (of)’, examples in Greek, as given by ‘Dionysius Thrax’, are the words for ‘night’ and ‘day’, ‘death’ and ‘life’ (GG 1.1: 35; commentary GG 1.3: 235). Some nouns have general meanings, others more specific; some derive from Greek and have Greek endings; and so on.

The next property, in the account still of Donatus, is of comparison (*comparatio*). This included three ‘steps’ (*gradus*): in modern terms which are derived directly from Latin, a noun of a certain kind can be positive (*positivus*), or comparative (*comparativus*), or superlative (*superlativus*). In the analysis of Greek as represented by ‘Dionysius Thrax’, grade was not represented as a property distinct from others. Comparatives (*sunkritika*) were instead distinguished as one of many subtypes of derived noun, defined by the comparison of ‘one with another of the same kind’, as in, in an English translation, *Achilles is more manly than Ajax*, or of ‘one against many of another kind’, as in *Achilles is more manly than the Trojans*.¹ Superlatives, in Greek *huperthetika* or ‘placed over’, were another, distinguished by the ‘emphasis of one taken in comparison against many’.²

The third property, following the same source, is that of *genus*: in Greek *genos* or, in English, ‘gender’. A noun could thus be masculine (Latin *masculinum*, Greek *arsenikon*) or feminine (Latin *femininum*, Greek *thēlukon*). It could also be ‘neither’ of these: in Greek *oudeteron*, in Latin *neutrum*. ‘Some’ authorities, as the manual of ‘Dionysius’ put it, add two others. A noun could variably meet the ‘grammatical’ criterion, as we now distinguish it, for both masculine and feminine. A stock example, in Latin, was *sacerdos* ‘priest(ess)’, with which either masculine or feminine adjectives would agree. If so, its *genos* or *genus* was described in Greek as *koinon*, with the usual meaning of ‘in common’; in Latin, *commune*. Others, as commentators explain, signified things variously male or female: for example, in Greek, the word for a tortoise or an eagle. By the ‘grammatical’ criterion, however, the first of these was always feminine and the second was always masculine; therefore, in the tradition ‘Dionysius’ refers to, the

genos of both forms was *epikoinon*, in its ordinary sense ‘promiscuous’. See, for example, GG 1.3: 218–19, with an attempt to justify the term; also, against this tradition, GG 1.3: 363. For Donatus the genders were limited to masculine, feminine, neuter, and ‘common’. But the term *epikoinon* was transliterated into Latin; hence, though it is no longer usual in linguistics, ‘epicene’ in English.

The next property is that of number: Greek *arithmos*, Latin *numerus*. The basic distinction in Greek was between a number which was singular (*enikos*) and a plural (*plēthuntikos*); but older literature, in particular, preserved an optional dual (*duikos*). ‘Dionysius’ lists all three equally. Latin had just a singular and plural. Two individuals could be distinguished, as Donatus noted, by expressions meaning ‘both these’ or ‘these two’. In that sense ‘there is also a dual number, which,’ he argued, ‘cannot be pronounced singly’.³

Two other properties apply to nouns as they apply to verbs and other parts of an utterance. A noun may, first, be compound or it may be simple; in Greek, either *suntheton* ‘put together’ or *haploun*. In the tradition of ‘Dionysius Thrax’ (GG 1.1: 29) it could also be *parasuntheton* or derived from a compound. In English, for comparison, this would cover a form such as *Smithsonian*, from the prior combination of *Smith* plus *son*. These formed, in Greek, the property of *skhēma* ‘shape’. In Roman grammars the corresponding distinction was one of *figura*, between the values of *composita*, again ‘put together’, and *simplex*. Compounds were in addition subdivided, by the extent to which their members were modified. Thus, following Donatus, *suburbānus* ‘close to the city’ was formed from *sub* ‘under’ and *urbānus* ‘in the city’ without change to either. But in, for example, *in-eptus* ‘foolish’ the second member *aptus* ‘appropriate,

competent' is modified (*corrupta*); in others the first member is modified; in others both. It is worth adding that in this tradition compounds included units of meaning similar to, in English, *chief of police* or *lieutenant colonel*. Thus Donatus remarks that the members of, for example, *equēs Romānus* ('horseman' + 'Roman' as the term for one rung in a former social hierarchy) will always be inflected in cases that will be the same (GL 4: 377).

A noun which was not a compound could be, as we still say, 'derived': thus, in Latin, *montānus* 'to do with mountains', from *mons* 'mountain'. For Donatus, for example, this was not a separate 'accident': these are types distinguished, under the general heading of *qualitas* 'what-sort-ness', as nouns which were derived and those which were instead *primae positionis* 'of initial position' (GL 4: 373, ll. 13–14). In the manual, however, of 'Dionysius' equivalent distinctions are of *eidos*, between a form that in the Greek term is *paragōgon*, in a sense of 'further created', and one which is *prōtotupon*, literally 'first struck'. *Eidos* itself, whose use in Greek in general overlaps with that of *skhēma* 'shape', could also be translated by Latin *species* or modern 'species', and it is this term that Priscian used (GL 2: 57), in adapting, as elsewhere, the Greek tradition of Apollonius Dyscolus. A form which for Donatus had been 'of first position' was in Priscian's term *principalis*, and many details which in the Roman tradition were of *qualitas* were of subtypes, as for 'Dionysius', of nouns that were derived.

A final property, of case or 'falling', is one by which this and other parts could be defined, in opposition to verbs. Classical Greek had five cases (Box 7.1 below) which are listed in the manual, for example, of 'Dionysius' in the order: *orthē* (nominative), *genikē* (genitive), *dotikē* (dative), *aitiatikē* (accusative), *klētikē*

(vocative). This is also the order in which corresponding cases were listed in the Roman tradition. The ablative in Latin, which had no distinct equivalent in Greek, was added at the end by the Roman grammarians as a further value.

In summary, the properties of nouns were in one account: of ‘what-sort-ness’, which subsumed a hierarchy of what we would now describe as lexical classes; of comparison; of ‘gender’; of number; of ‘shape’; and of case. This is the order in which they are listed by, for example, Donatus. Alternatively, as listed for Latin by Priscian, they were of ‘species’; of ‘gender’; of number; of ‘shape’; and of case. In the manual of ‘Dionysius’ the equivalent five are simply ordered differently (GG 1.1: 24): in Greek, *genos* ‘genus’ and *eidos* ‘species’; *skhēma* ‘shape’; *arithmos* ‘number’; *ptōsis*, again literally ‘falling’.

There is no sign, however, that the order in which accidents are listed was thought significant.

1. *tēn súnkrisin ékhon enòs pròs éna homogenê...è enòs pròs polloùs heterogeneïs* (GG 1.1: 27).
2. *kat’ epítasin enòs pròs polloùs paralambanómenon en sunkrísei* (GG 1.1: 28).
3. *est et dualis numerus, qui singulariter enuntiari non potest, ut hi ambo, hi duo* (GL 4: 376, ll. 23–4).

Conjunctions were uninflected; the properties applying to them, therefore, were of meaning or syntax and not, in a modern term, ‘morphosyntactic’. For both Priscian and, for example, Donatus one ‘accident’ is that of *figura* ‘shape’: where *at* ‘but’ was simple, *atque* ‘and (moreover)’ was a compound. A second ‘accident’ was,

for Donatus, that of ‘power’ (*potestas*); it was on this parameter that a ‘copulative’ conjunction, such as *et* ‘and’ was distinguished from, for example, one like *vel* ‘or’ or *nec* ‘nor’, which were both classed as ‘disjunctive’. For Priscian an equivalent property is that of *species*, which in this context we may again translate as ‘sub-type’; and, where Donatus lists five values, Priscian names as many as seventeen. He acknowledges, however, that wider and narrower classifications were possible (*GL* 3: 93–104).

Finally, in the Roman tradition, a third ‘accident’ of conjunctions was their ‘order’ (*ordo*). In, for example, an utterance:

at veniunt
but come-3.PL
‘But they are coming’

at is placed, and could only be placed, first. One would not say *veniunt ad*, or *veniunt sed* (where *sed* is another word for ‘but’), and so on for most other conjunctions. But in:

arma virumque
arms man=and
‘arms and the man’

The ‘=’ distinguishes a conjunction *que* ‘and’ which, as an enclitic, could only follow the word it was attached to. The ‘order’, therefore, of a conjunction varied between ‘prepositive’ (*praepositiva*) and *subiunctiva* ‘following’ (literally, ‘joined on beneath’); or, if its position was not restricted, it was *communis* ‘in common’ (Donatus, *GL* 4: 389, ll. 10–12). But in Priscian’s account the ‘accidents’ of conjunctions were just two: their ‘shape’ and their ‘subtype’. He reports that order too was ‘said’ to apply to this part of an utterance. It is a property, however, which was shared in his view

by ‘almost all words’ (*GL* 3: 104), and in that light was not established as a distinct parameter.

To dwell on differences of this sort may border, at first sight, on pedantry. At least some, however, of the variation and uncertainty seems to point to a more fundamental problem, in that a technical terminology was still in part evolving. The terms available to an ancient grammarian were in essence words in ordinary Greek or ordinary Latin. Their meanings might be restricted and they might be given technical definitions. That of a *lexis* or a *dictio* (Box 4.1) is an obvious instance. Some are at least potentially technical, as we will argue in Chapter 10. But the grammarians did not generally invent words for the ‘accidents’ that their analyses forced them to recognize. It is not surprising therefore that there were not always, if we may put it crudely, quite enough terms to go round. Not only might one ‘accident’ have a name, as we have seen, that varied. The same term might be used of variable properties that were either not precisely, or were not at all, the same.

Take, for example, the term we now translate as ‘gender’. In an utterance in Greek such as:

hoi ánthrōpoi peripatoûsi
the persons walk around-3.PL
‘The men are strolling around’

each word agrees with the next, the article with the noun and the noun with the verb. All three are, in particular, plural, and it was therefore natural to see the number of nouns and other words ‘with case’ as the same property, varying on the same parameter, as that of the verbs with which they were linked. The article and noun also agree in gender (*genos*, *genus*). This term, however, was used for at least two properties that vary differently and are not connected in syntax or in meaning. One is an ‘accident’ as here of

nouns, which is one of those distinguished in detail in Box 6.1, and of other forms ‘with case’. The other corresponds most clearly to the ‘voice’, as it is now described, of verbs. For details of the latter see Box 7.2 in the next chapter. The term might be translated in either use by English ‘type’; but to say that nouns can be of a ‘type’ that is masculine, and verbs of a ‘type’ that is active, is to talk of properties that were plainly not related.

A single term could also be applied to ‘accidents’ whose values differ for words of different categories. In Latin, in a modern analysis, prepositions governed either an accusative or an ablative. Compare, for example:

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| <i>praeter</i> | <i>hominēs</i> |
| as-well-as | man-ACC.PL |
| ‘as well as (the) men’ | |

with:

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| <i>cum</i> | <i>hominibus</i> |
| together with | man-ABL.PL |
| ‘with (the) men’ | |

Replace one preposition with the other, without changing the case, and the combination *praeter* + *hominibus* or *cum* + *hominēs* was one that grammarians had to exclude. As described then by Donatus, case was also an ‘accident’ of prepositions (*GL* 4: 390). *Praeter*, for example, would itself be classed as accusative; and as such it could combine with a noun or other part that was in turn an accusative, just as, one might have explained, a masculine noun could combine in certain syntactic relations with another masculine or a singular with another singular.

If prepositions, however, had a property of ‘case’ it was not the same parameter as that of nouns. The cases of nouns were

traditionally six in Latin (details below, Box 7.1). The ‘cases’ of prepositions, as established by Donatus, were just two. Some prepositions, such as *in*, could govern either the accusative or the ablative: thus, with a difference in meaning, *in Italiam* ‘into Italy’ and *in Italiā* ‘(located) in Italy’. There could, accordingly, have been another value, which might have been called *communis* ‘in common’. But prepositions did not have ‘fallings’ in the sense that nouns, pronouns, or participles had ‘fallings’. It is not surprising, therefore, that in other treatments, including that of Priscian, the case of prepositions is not listed as an ‘accident’ (*GL* 3: 35).

Conjugation

A further ‘accident’ of verbs, as listed in the manuals of both Donatus and ‘Dionysius’, was that of, literally, a ‘yoking together’: in Greek *suzugia*, in Latin *coniugatio*. This was defined in Greek as a ‘consecutive modification of verbs’ (*akolouthos rhēmatōn klisis*), within what is in modern terms a paradigm. Among the forms derived in Latin from the active *amō* ‘I love’ was, as we have seen in Chapter 4, a future *amābō* ‘I will love’, ending in the syllable *bō*. Another was a second singular in the present indicative that ended in *ās*: *amās*. These forms were coupled together in that one ending implied the other. If the second singular of the present ended in *ās*, the first singular of the future would always, consecutively in the process of derivation, end in *bō*.

The historical Dionysius had been a pupil of Aristarchus, and his definition of grammar (Box 2.1), which is the only part of the manual ascribed to him that we can safely take as original, included the working out of what were called in his time ‘analogies’. It is possible, therefore, that the notion of ‘yoking’ dates from the Hellenistic period, in the second century BC. For later grammarians, however,

it was not the forms of words, in terms of letters and syllables, that were the main priority. Their pupils had learned Greek or Latin as a native language, and had already had some primary education. In teaching, therefore, how forms were arranged in paradigms, a teacher like, for example, Donatus had above all to instil a grasp of the semantic framework, formed in verbs by persons, numbers, times, and so on, and the place that each form, as a second singular of the present or whatever, had within it. The forms themselves were known already, unless, of course, the patterns of speech were changing and he had to correct or forestall what were seen as mistakes.

In a later era, Latin, in particular, came to be taught as a foreign language, and the priorities of teachers changed. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the early Middle Ages ancient grammars fell short of what was needed. Though ‘Dionysius’, for example, included ‘yokings’ as one property, the list as set out, which we can plausibly assign to a grammarian writing under the empire, is no more than an exhaustive classification of leading forms, first by their accentuation, and then by the letters that come before the ending. In a Roman tradition, as represented by the manual of Donatus, the *coniugationes* were divided with more insight into three: first, second, and third. They are defined, as can be seen in greater detail in Box 6.2, by dependencies between the second singular and the future. But other variations in their endings, in the form, for example, of the present subjunctive, did not need, it seems, to be linked similarly. It is also worth remarking that in neither of these manuals is ‘yoking’ treated as an accident of nouns. In a later tradition nouns are assigned as lexemes to ‘declensions’, in a term that was also ancient, just as verbs are assigned to conjugations. Donatus did include, moreover, what was in effect a coupling of forms of nouns, in which, for example, an ablative singular that ends in *ā*, such as *Mūsā* for the word for ‘Muse’, implies a genitive

plural that will end in *rum*: *Mūsārum*. But this is not said to reflect an ‘accident’ of forms inflected for case, in his manual or others.

It seems clear from this discussion that the notion of parameters ‘applying to’ a unit was in principle open-ended. We have met a notion of ‘things applying’ in an earlier context, where the shape, for example, of a letter was one of three *accidentia* (above,

Box 6.2 Conjugations in Latin

In the account, for example, of Donatus three conjugations apply to verbs: first, second, and third. The main ‘types’ of verb (see below, Box 7.2) were active and passive, but also included ‘neuters’, which were intransitives, as they would now be described, without passives systematically corresponding to them. On this basis, as he put it, the first conjugation was that which, in the second singular of the present indicative of a verb which was active or neuter, had an ‘extended’ *a* before the final letter. Thus, in his example, *vocō* ‘I am calling’; second singular *voc-ā-s* ‘you are calling’.¹ In corresponding passives the same vowel came before the final syllable: thus *vocor* ‘I am being called’, *voc-ā-ris* ‘you are being called’. The future indicative, again active and passive, ended in the syllable *bo* and *bor*: thus *vocō*, *vocā-bō* ‘I will call’; *vocor*, *vocā-bor* ‘I will be called’.² From these can be derived in turn all other forms that are future. The third conjugation was one in which the corresponding second singulars had a ‘reduced’ or ‘extended’ *i* in the active, and either a ‘reduced’ *e* or an ‘extended’ *i* in the passive. Thus, again with Donatus’ examples, active *legō* ‘I am picking out, am reading’, second singular *leg-i-s*; passive *legor*, second singular *leg-e-ris*; and, in the alternative coupling, active *audiō* ‘I hear’, second singular *aud-ī-s*; passive *audior*, second singular *aud-ī-ris*. In either case the first singulars

of the futures end instead in a ‘syllable’ *am* and *ar*: thus *leg-am* ‘I will pick out, read’ and passive *leg-ar*; *audi-am* ‘I will hear’ and passive *audi-ar*. For ‘some’ (*non nulli*), as Donatus explains, a subtype (*species*) of the third conjugation amounted to a fourth. The grounds were that a second singular in *-ī-* was sometimes coupled to a future in *-bō* or in *-bo*. But such forms are dismissed as no more than a set of definable exceptions.

In a modern treatment the ‘third’ conjugation is indeed divided into a third and a fourth, though differently and for different reasons, and classes are identified by endings across whole paradigms. The term ‘conjugation’ has accordingly become opaque; it applies to lexical units, and now refers to no more than an inflectional class of those belonging to one major category. But in its original use it referred precisely to what in Greek was a *suzugia*, or coupling of one inflected form with another.

1. *quae indicativo modo tempore praesenti numero singulari secunda persona verbo activo et neutrali a productam habet ante novissimam litteram, ut voco vocas* (GL 4: 382, ll. 11–13).
2. *futurum tempus eiusdem modi in bo et in bor syllabam mittit, ut voco vocabo, vocor vocabor* (GL 4: 382, ll. 14–15).

Chapter 3). The ‘accidents’ of words were in part obvious, and where that was so the ancient authorities agree. But words can be subclassified in any number of different ways. Some adverbs, for example, such as Greek *aúrion* ‘tomorrow’, were related in utterances to verbs with one ‘time’ rather than another (thus Apollonius Dyscolus, end of Box 8.1). Might they too have had time among their ‘accidents’, with the value, in this instance, ‘future’? No grammarian said so, but what they did say may have been a matter at the edges of what was judged in practice to be helpful.

Chapter 7

Inflectional categories

The title of this chapter has no exact equivalent in ancient grammars. Time and number, for example, were among the variable properties accompanying or applying to a verb. But others, such as ‘shape’, were listed alongside them and the parts of an utterance that were uninflected, such as conjunctions and prepositions, had properties that varied too. As number in Latin varied between singular and plural, so ‘shape’ varied, as we have seen in the last chapter, between simple and compound; the case of prepositions varied, in one analysis, with that of nouns to which they were related, and so on. The criteria, however, by which inflectional categories can be established were as they are more complex. They are not of form alone, as was, for example, the distinction between basic or ‘first-struck’ words (Box 6.1) and ones morphologically ‘derived’. Nor are they of meaning only, as, for example, the varied ‘powers’ or subtypes of conjunctions. They were of correlations between meanings and forms: thus, for number, between ‘one’ or ‘more than one’ as aspects of reality as speakers perceived it, and the words with which they referred to it.

Accounts of categories like these varied little, and may have been standard since at least the end of the Hellenistic period, when ‘grammar’ as a *tekhnē*, or a ‘technical part’ of grammar

(Box 2.1), emerged out of earlier Alexandrian scholarship. We know little, therefore, of the arguments that might have led to this or that analysis. Some correlations must, however, have appeared straightforward. There was no model of signs, as noted in Chapter 3, within the word: no relation between a morpheme and what Bloomfield was to call a 'sememe' (1933); no unit like the 'moneme' or minimal sign defined by Martinet, in the tradition of Saussure (1916), in the 1960s. But nouns which as singulars, for example, identified a single entity were different as wholes from plurals which identified a set of two or more entities, both in what in the Latin term they 'signified' and in the syllables and letters that composed them. A verb making clear the action, for example, of a single entity was different in turn from one which signified that of a set of entities. In either case distinctions in language correspond directly to one in perceived reality. Add to this the way such words combine in utterances. Not only, that is, were the significations alike; but in syntax properties of nouns and verbs were partly interdependent.

If it is hard at times to reason like a grammarian in the Roman empire, whose writings are before us, it is harder still to imagine how a student of language in the third or second century BC, whose work is now lost, might have set out to uncover rational correspondences between aspects of the structure of words in Greek and aspects of reality as he saw it. Of the distinctions, however, that accompanied verbs, person at least would also have been straightforward. The sense was, as we have seen, that of a 'face' or character in a drama: Greek *prosōpon*, Latin *persona*. Of those that a verb form or a pronoun might be used of, one was the speaker or 'first person', another an addressee or 'second person', and any other a 'third person'; and forms for all three differed at all points. For nouns, there remained two further parameters. In

the formation of utterances a noun could be modified, as we now put it, by another: thus Latin *hominēs* 'people', if we may illustrate again from the language in whose analysis these categories were taken over, by, for example, *bonī* 'good'. In such a combination:

| | |
|-------------|----------------|
| <i>bonī</i> | <i>hominēs</i> |
| good | people |

successive parts were matched not only in number, but in both gender and what was in antiquity their *ptōsis* or *casus* 'falling'.

Modern 'gender' derives from terms in Greek (*genos*) and Latin (*genus*) that applied to classes whose members have a common birth or origin: thus 'offspring', 'generation', 'race'. A connection with the sexes was clear from the outset. Protagoras, in the fifth century BC, is said by Aristotle to have argued that nouns such as those for 'anger' or a 'helmet' should not be feminine, as they were, but masculine, since they refer to male attributes; and for Aristotle himself the endings of for example *askós* (masculine) 'wineskin' or *klínē* (feminine) 'bed' did not correspond to the inanimate nature of the objects referred to (S.E. 173^b17). For the grammarians the criteria by which genders are distinguished were of how forms can combine in utterances. In Greek a noun was masculine (*arsenikon*) if it combined with an article in one form; it was feminine (*thēlukon*) or 'neither' (*oudeteron*, or in Latin *neutrum*) if the article was different again. An equivalent criterion in Latin, which had no article, was its combination with forms for 'this'. The terms, however, for genders were words for 'male' and 'female'; and for an ancient etymologist, as for a modern, the nouns *genos* and *genus* could in turn be connected with verbs for begetting and giving birth. As Priscian, for example, put it, the masculine and feminine were the 'basic' genders (*principales*), recognized in the light of nature alone (*quae sola novit*

ratio naturae). Genders that were not specifically masculine or feminine were distinguished more by the quality or ‘what-sort-ness’ of a vocal sound (*vocis... qualitate*), by what we would now call formal criteria, than by nature (*GL* 2: 141). Even in a manual as summary as his, Donatus (see Box 6.1) was at pains to cover the same point (*GL* 4: 375).

While genders had their basis in reality, cases may well have seemed far more of a problem. The image was from the beginning that of ‘falling off’ from one form to another, and while a correspondence of forms and meanings might have been clear enough in individual uses, an explanation of what in general was distinguished, or of why there should be this parameter, would have been elusive.

The underlying difficulty, as modern typologies make clear, is that cases in Greek and Latin, as in many other languages, had sets of disparate functions. They could distinguish relations of nouns to verbs; but also of nouns to nouns. The nominative case was that of the subject, as it is called now, of a predication, and a ‘falling’ from it could mark the relation of what is in modern terms an object. But in Greek especially, this other case, though often the one that in Latin was called the accusative, could also with specific verbs be genitive or dative. The same ‘fallings’ could distinguish relations of nouns to, in particular, adjectives; and the genitive above all was in a modern sense adnominal. As Dixon in particular has made clear (2010), relations like these need not go together. In other languages a relation between nouns may be indicated by, for example, an affix that is likely to be called ‘possessive’, whose function is separate from that of a quite different set of affixes, which mark relations like those of a subject and an object. But in the older members of the Indo-European family, of which Greek is one, there was clearly a single parameter,

intersecting with number. Many more specific uses, in construction variously with either verbs or nouns and adjectives, have become enshrined in the grammatical tradition: datives ‘of disadvantage’, accusatives ‘of respect’, and so on. Each case in Latin, as Priscian remarked, had many diverse ‘significations’, and could be named only after the best known or commonest (*GL* 2: 186).

One cannot but admire the insight of the Stoics in particular, who seem to have established the category as we know it. But the term in general, *ptōsis* or in Latin *casus*, is unlike those naming other variable properties. Its origin is obscure, and it had no obvious semantic motivation, as a linguist might now put it, such as those that ‘person’, ‘number’, or ‘gender’ did have. Nor could every individual case (Box 7.1) be assigned a name that was appropriate to all its uses. If one said, for example, that someone ‘is Plato’, or that a group of people ‘are women’, the forms for ‘Plato’ and ‘women’ (*Plátōn*, *gunaïkes*) were in a form called ‘naming’ (*onomastikē*, in Latin *nominativus*). But a more obvious function was as the case is now more usually defined, as standing in a particular relation to a verb.

Box 7.1 Case

Ptōsis ‘falling’ is a term the grammarians inherited from Aristotle and the Stoics. In Plato’s analysis of a simple predication (Box 4.2) a noun in the nominative was related to a verb as *rhēma*. For Aristotle (*Int.* 16^a31) a noun in another case was then not, in Plato’s sense, an *onoma* but a form that is altered and in that sense, if we understand the image correctly, ‘falls off’ from an *onoma*. From Aristotle the term was taken over by the Stoics, who applied it, as the secondary sources tell us, to what was originally the ‘unfallen’ *onoma* as well as to those

that were altered. The unaltered nominative became then, as it is later described by the grammarians, the ‘upright falling’: in Greek the *ptōsis orthē*, in Latin the *casus rectus*. According to Donatus, among others, the vocative was also upright (*GL* 4: 377). The remaining cases were described as ‘slanting’: in Greek *plagiai*, in Latin *obliqui*, thence, in English, ‘oblique’.

The writings of the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus, as listed by Diogenes Laertius, included one on ‘the five cases’ (D.L. 7.192). The terms for the genitive, dative, and accusative, as ‘slanting’ cases, are Stoic according to the same source (D.L. 7.65). The earliest account, however, that survives is from the end of the Hellenistic period, in a passing paragraph in Varro’s arguments for analogy. ‘Fallings’ were developed, as he put it, for the use of people speaking, so that ‘he who spoke of another might be able to make a distinction when he was calling, when he was giving, when he was accusing, and other differences of this same sort’.¹ In an attempt to explain the distinctions in Latin, he talks of differentiating ‘he who is called’, such as the ‘unfallen’ or ‘upright’ *Hercules*; ‘how the calling is done’, as the vocative *Hercule*; ‘whither there is a calling’, as in *ad Herculem* ‘to Hercules’; ‘by whom the calling is done’, as in *ab Hercule* ‘by Hercules’; ‘to or for whom there is a calling’, as *Herculi* ‘to or for Hercules’; ‘of whom the calling or called object is’, as *Herculis* ‘of Hercules’.²

The names of individual cases were established by the time of Quintilian and Remmius Palaemon, at the latest. The ‘upright case’, as grammars were to continue to describe it, was alternatively, in Greek, *onomastikē* ‘used in naming’; in Latin *nominativus*. Of the names for oblique cases that of the dative is also transparent: Greek *dotikē*, from the verb for ‘give’; likewise

Latin *dativus*. Of the other two that Diogenes Laertius ascribes to the Stoics, Greek *aitiatikē* ‘accusative’ is derived from a noun, *aitia*, with the meanings both of personal responsibility or blame and, more relevant according to the ancient sources, of a cause. A related verb, however, had the usual meaning of ‘accuse’, and it is this that Varro evidently latched onto, in the first of the passages cited, as he distinguished a speaker accusing from a speaker giving, and so on. The Latin *accusativus* is assumed to be a mistranslation; but, if an error, it confirms that what was meant in Greek was itself already obscure.

Greek *genikē*, for a form that many linguists might now call ‘possessive’, is a derivative of *genos*, with a meaning again of birth, origin, race, and so on. Varro uses another term, *patri-cus* (LL 9.54 and elsewhere), which is a transparent formation in Greek, with the same ending *-ikos*, from the word for ‘father’. One obvious use of this case, in classical Greek society, had been in naming its male members: thus, for example:

Aiskhúlos

Euphoríōnos

Aeschylus-NOM.SG

Euphorion-GEN.SG

‘Aeschylus the son of Euphorion’

Latin *genetivus* is established however, with the other terms conventional from then on, in the work of Quintilian in the century after Varro. These also include the Latin *ablativus*, transparently from a participle with the meaning ‘carried away’, for a sixth case, in whatever way the term suggests it may have been perceived, to which no distinction in Greek corresponded.

For nouns, participles, and so on the cases remained six in Latin and five in Greek. In some accounts grammarians spoke

in Latin of a ‘seventh case’, in form like an ablative, which would be translated in English by the *than* of, for example, *cleverer than a speaker* (discussion e.g. by Pompeius, *GL* 5: 183). In modern times it has been argued, with some subtlety, that Latin also distinguished a locative (see, for example, Blake 2001: 22–4). Thus in:

sum Romae
‘I am in Rome’

its form would be the same as that of a genitive. This was sometimes distinguished as an eighth case; also as a ‘second genitive’ (e.g. Pompeius, *GL* 5: 253). We must remember, however, from Chapter 4 that for Donatus and others *Romae*, in this use, was not a noun but an adverb. As such it would be seen in antiquity as uninflected and therefore having no case.

1. *Propter eorum qui dicunt usum declinati casus, uti is qui de altero diceret, distinguere posset, cum vocaret, cum daret, cum accusaret, sic alia eiusdem modi discrimina* (*LL* 8.16, ed. and trans. Kent 1938).
2. *quis vocetur...quemadmodum vocetur...quo vocetur...a quo vocetur...cui vocetur...cuius vocetur* (ibid., again Kent’s translation).

Diathesis

The remaining inflectional properties are those specific to verbs and participles. The most straightforward perhaps were those of what in modern grammars is called ‘voice’: in the term used by the Greek grammarians, such as ‘Dionysius Thrax’, *diathesis*. This had the sense in general of ‘arrangement’ or, in a more literal translation, ‘disposition’. As used, however, by grammarians it

referred to the semantic ‘layout’, as we may translate it, of a sentence, as determined by a verb of one type or another. A verb such as, in Greek:

leípō

‘I leave (e.g. something)’

had the meaning of an activity (*energeia*), and formed utterances in which it was related to an actor, in the case described as ‘upright’, and an entity acted on, whose case was ‘oblique’. Such verbs could be divided into subtypes (see below, Box 9.2), but shared a layout that was active (*energetikē*). A verb such as:

leípomai

‘I am left’

had instead the meaning not of an activity, but of an experience that is ‘suffered’ or undergone: Greek *pathos*. This determined a different layout, called *pathetikē* or ‘passive’, in which, in particular, an upright case was that of the ‘undergoer’. Verbs were defined, as we have seen, as having meanings that were active or passive (above, Boxes 5.1 and 5.2) and participles, as illustrated in part in Chapter 4, were parallel to them. Compare, for example, in the nominative singular:

leipōn

leave-PRES.ACT.NOM.SG.MASC

‘leaving’

with:

leipómenos

leave-PRES.PASS.NOM.SG.MASC

‘being left’

From verbs whose type was either active or passive could, by implication, be derived a set of participles whose meanings corresponded.

‘Voice’, as we now call it, was accordingly an ‘accident’ of a verb, with a status that in anachronistic terms was neither quite that of an inflection, nor quite that of a lexical unit. In Greek, however, there remains one complication, which has often been illustrated with forms whose general meaning is ‘bathe (someone)’. A verb form *louō*, for example, has the same ending as *leípō* above, and a meaning ‘I am bathing (someone else)’. This again represents an activity. A form *louōmai* could mean ‘I am being bathed’, and would represent an experience. But that is also the form that speakers would use for ‘I am bathing (myself)’. Most forms which did not represent an *energeia* could have either meaning: all those, for example, such as *leípomai* or *louōmai* which described things happening at the time of speaking. In other forms, however, the endings could be different. Thus, in talking about what was expected or intended to happen, a form *lousomai* had the meaning ‘I will bathe (myself)’, and would have been distinguished from one meaning ‘I will be bathed’. In accounts of inflection there were therefore three *diatheseis* or ‘layouts’, not two. One represented an *energeia* or, in the modern term derived from Latin, it was ‘active’. The third represented one perceived as between an active and a passive: in Greek accordingly a *mesotēs*, from the adjective for ‘middle’.

These were distinctions of meaning: the term *diathesis* is explained, in one commentary on the manual of ‘Dionysius’, as a ‘state’ (*diaita*) and ‘internal arrangement’ (*dioikēsis*) of the mind (GG 1.3: 245, ll. 26–7). Some centuries, however, after they would have been worked out for Greek, a corresponding analysis of Latin would have led to problems greater than, in the analysis of nouns, a distinction of six cases instead of five. One difficulty was

that, while an active such as *amō* ‘I love’ can be paired with a passive such as *amor* ‘I am loved’, no passive verb forms corresponded similarly to actives such as, for example, *amāvī* ‘I loved, have loved’. A solution, which has endured, was to describe the combination of a participle with a verb for ‘be’ as standing, as a whole, in an equivalent opposition: active *amāvī*, passive *amātus* ‘having been loved’ plus *sum* ‘I am’. Another difficulty is that endings which distinguished forms with a passive meaning, such as the *-or* of *amor* ‘I am loved’ were not restricted to them. An *-or* also ends, for example, *loquor* ‘I am speaking’, *sequor* ‘I am following’, and many other forms whose *diathesis*, if that term had been used by the Roman grammarians, would not have been passive. In fact they did not use it. Such a verb was instead classed as ‘deponent’ (Latin *deponens*, literally ‘laying aside’), and in the solution which was standard in antiquity (details in Box 7.2), actives and passives formed two types of verbs while deponents were among at least two others.

Box 7.2 Types of verb in Latin

‘Type’, in this context, translates Latin *genus*, the term also used for the ‘genders’ of nouns. The criteria, as set out by Donatus and others, rely mainly on the distribution, as a linguist might present them now, of *-ō* and *-or* and other endings. But the problem was basically one of meaning, and for Priscian, writing a few centuries later, the property is that of *significatio* ‘signification’ or *genus* (GL 2: 373).

Following Donatus, verbs are active if they ‘end in *o* and, with the addition of the letter *r*, they form from themselves passives.’¹ Thus in his own schematic illustration, as a linguist might now represent it, active *legō* ‘I am picking out, am reading’ →

passive *lego* + *r*. *Legō* implicitly represents a set, whose members are all forms of the lexical unit ‘*lego*’, as it is represented in modern dictionaries, which are verbs of one type. *Legor* is the leading member of another set, which includes all verbs whose type is different. This is an aspect of the model that perhaps did not need to be spelled out. What is clearly implied, however, is a mapping in general of one set onto the other. Thus, where the verb has a different person, active *legit* ‘is picking out, is reading’ → passive *legit* + *ur*; with a difference in ‘time’, active *legam* ‘I will pick out, read’ → passive *legar*; and so on.

Verbs are passive if they, in turn, have actives as their complement. ‘They end, that is, ‘in *r* and with that removed return to actives.’² Conversely, therefore, *legor* → *legō*; and by implication, for example, *legitur* → *legit*. Two other types, however, have no complements. One is formed of verbs that, like an active, end in *o*; ‘but, with the addition of the letter *r*, are not Latin.’³ Thus alongside, for example, *currō* ‘I am running’ there is no verb *curror*. This type of verb was classed as *neutrum*, with the straightforward sense, as the same term was applied to a *genus* of nouns, of ‘neither’. It is in this sense that ‘*v.n.*’ for ‘verb neuter’, is to be found, a millennium and a half later, as an abbreviation in older dictionaries. Deponents such as *loquor* ‘I am speaking’, are in turn those that ‘end, similarly to passives, in *r* but with that removed are not Latin.’⁴ There was no verb such as, that is, *loquō*.

So far, therefore, the distinctions seem no more than formal. Among the verbs, however, that by this criterion would be deponent, some, as Donatus put it, ‘fall into two forms, of

experiencing and acting'.⁵ *Criminor*, for example, was a form used for 'accusing' and, in the Latin at least that the grammarians inculcated, there was no form *criminō*. The form in *-or* was used, however, both in utterances such as:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| <i>criminator</i> | <i>tē</i> |
| accuse-1.SG | you |

and as in:

| | | |
|-------------------|----------|-----------|
| <i>criminator</i> | <i>ā</i> | <i>tē</i> |
| be accused-1.SG | by | you |

Its type was accordingly neither passive nor deponent; but *commune* or 'in common', in the same sense that the gender of a noun was 'common' (Box 6.1) if it combined with both masculine forms and feminine.

Priscian's account, of what 'the Greeks call a state of mind (*affectum*)', is equivalent, with more emphasis on differences in meaning (see again *GL* 2: 373–4). There is, of course, no trace in any of this of the modern term 'voice', which crept into use, in reference to the formal distinction in *vox* 'vocal sound', in English at the end of the Middle Ages.

1. (*quae*) in *o* *desinunt et accepta r littera faciunt ex se passiva* (*GL* 4: 359).
2. (*quae*) in *r* *desinunt et ea dempta redeunt in activa*.
3. (*quae*) in *o* *desinunt, ut activa, sed accepta r littera latina non sunt*.
4. (*quae*) *similiter ut passiva in r desinunt, sed ea dempta latina not sunt*.
5. *in duas formas cadunt, patientis et agentis*.

The other properties of verbs were those of ‘time’ and, as it is now called, mood. They too were first worked out for Greek, and one important feature of the language, as we have noted in an earlier chapter, is that reference to time was shared across the board by finite forms and participles. As the first singular *leíp-ō* ‘I am leaving’ corresponded to a nominative singular masculine *leíp-ōn*, so the future *leíp-s-ō* ‘I will leave’ was matched by a participle *leíp-s-ōn*, the passive or middle *leíp-o-mai* ‘I am left’ or ‘I stay put’ by a participle *leíp-ó-men-os*, and so on. The parts of an utterance and their variable properties may well have been established as two aspects of a single analysis. Distinctions, however, among predicates, in a more general sense of *rhēmata*, can be divided neatly into those that were shared with *ptōtika*, as forms that distinguished cases, and those that were not.

The latter included those labelled in Greek *enklixeis*, literally ‘leanings on’ or ‘inclinations’. One was called ‘defining’ (Greek *horistikē*); another was for ‘giving orders’ (*prostaktikē*); another was for ‘expressing wishes’ (*euktikē*); and a fourth, which is the one now called ‘subjunctive’, was *hupotaktikē* or, literally, ‘arranged under’. To these, as we noted in the last chapter, Apollonius Dyscolus added the infinitives, as a fifth *enklisis* distinguished, if we may hazard a gloss for a term that is only formally transparent, as ‘not with specific indication’ (*aparemphtatos*). For Roman grammarians these became the ‘ways’ or ‘modes’ of speaking (Latin *modi*), but the differences in meaning, as they perceived them, were the same. One mode was therefore, in their terminology, ‘indicative’ or ‘stating’ (*indicativus*); another *imperativus* ‘ordering’; another *optativus* ‘desiring’; the subjunctive, in Latin *coniunctivus*, was literally ‘joining’. The infinitive (*infinitivus*) was literally ‘not limiting’.

Divisions of time

Finally, the five ‘moods’ intersected with the parameter of *khronos* ‘time’. One time included the moment when someone was speaking: in Greek, *enestōs* ‘present’ (literally ‘being there’). The past was time that ‘had slipped by’ (*parelēluthōs*); the future *mellōn* ‘to be expected’. These are equivalently in Latin a *tempus* ‘time’ that was *praesens*, another that was *praeteritum* ‘gone by’, and a third that was *futurum* ‘coming to or about to be’. While time, however, was perceived in nature as divided in that way, the forms distinguished by inflections were not simply three. In their structure too they were more complex. In a modern analysis, the difference in Greek between forms such as *leíp-ō* ‘I am leaving’ and *leíp-s-ō* ‘I will leave’ lies in a suffix. Between *leíp-ō*, however, and *é-leíp-on* ‘I was leaving’ it lies in part in a prefix, which, like the *-s* of *leíp-s-ō*, was regular. This recurs, with a change in vowel that is less regular, in *é-lip-on* ‘I left’. Between these and, for example, *lé-loip-a* ‘I have left’ the differences lie in part in a reduplicative prefix, *le-*, which was likewise regular and recurs, with *e-*, in *e-le-loíp-ē* ‘I had left’. A linguist trained in modern methods might begin, in the spirit of Bloomfield, with an analysis of the forms, and if so would suspect at once, on evidence such as this, that what is traditionally described as ‘tense’ is not a single parameter. Thus, in particular, as the English translations suggest, *leíp-ō* (without reduplication) should be to *é-leíp-on* (without reduplication but with *e-*), just as *lé-loip-a* (with reduplication) should be to *e-le-loíp-ē* (with both reduplication and *e-*).

In ancient grammars, however, the parameter was simply that of time. A form such as *leípō* was present and one such as *leípsō* was future. Time in the past was then perceived as subdivided. One subtime, as we may call it, was distinguished as a past ‘continuing’

(Greek *paratatikos*); another as a past ‘laid down’ (*parakeimenos*); a third as a past ‘over-completed’ (*hypersuntelikos*). These are equivalent to three distinguished in Latin, with seductive neatness, as *imperfectum* ‘not completed’, *perfectum* ‘completed’, and *plusquamperfectum* ‘more than completed’. A fourth, in Greek, was ‘indeterminate’ (*aoristos*). To Priscian, for example, it seemed natural that the past, of which so much is known to us, should be the only time to be subdivided (GL 2: 405–6).

Behind this doctrine lay, however, a more complex history, for which our sources, such as they are, are surveyed in Box 7.3. It seems that in the beginning at least, in the work of the Stoic philosophers, two parameters of words or utterances were in part at least established. One would again have distinguished present, past, and future. The other, however, would have opposed a time that was ‘continuing’ (*paratatikos*) to one that was ‘completed’. In terms then of this second parameter, the present and the form we still call the imperfect would both have been continuing, and would have been opposed directly to the perfect and pluperfect, as a ‘completed present’ and a ‘completed past’.

For the grammarians who came later, this analysis was evidently a memory; but, it seems, a memory only.

Box 7.3 Pairings of times

The traditional analysis, of the stems as we now see them of the Greek verb for ‘to leave’, is displayed in Table 7.1. The terms are modern, but the division and subdivisions of words are set out by ‘Dionysius Thrax’ (GG 1.1: 53). In addition, however, the manual of ‘Dionysius’ identified three ‘kinships’ (*sungeneiai*)

Table 7.1 Divisions of time

| Present | Past | | | | Future |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Imperfect | Perfect | Pluperfect | Aorist | |
| <i>leip-</i> | <i>e-leip-</i> | <i>le-loip-</i> | <i>e-le-loip-</i> | <i>e-lip-</i> | <i>leip-s-</i> |
| ‘is leaving’ | ‘was leaving’ | ‘has left’ | ‘had left’ | ‘left’ | ‘will leave’ |

among times: between the ‘present’ and, in this table, the imperfect; between the perfect and the pluperfect; and between, in the order in which they are listed, the aorist and the future. There is no explanation; but, as shown in Table 7.2, each in a modern analysis would pair a stem without *e-* and another with *e-*. For the first two pairs, though not the third, the stems are in other respects the same.

Table 7.2 Kinships of times

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <i>leip-</i> | <i>le-loip-</i> | <i>leip-s-</i> |
| Present | Past Perfect | Future |
| <i>e-leip-</i> | <i>e-le-loip-</i> | <i>e-lip-</i> |
| Past Imperfect | Past Pluperfect | Aorist |

Later commentators make clear that there are parallels in meaning as in form, and one in particular ascribes to the Stoics the insight that the present, like the past imperfect, is ‘continuing’: to be doing something at present extends, that is, into the future. Both these times are ‘without an end’ (*ateleis*). Of the second pair in Table 7.2, the form that is traditionally ‘past perfect’ is described as ‘present brought to an end’ (*enestōs suntelikos*); the ‘pluperfect’ (in Greek *hypersuntelikos*) is a settled or

past time (*parōikhēmenos*) corresponding to it, as the ‘imperfect’, with a similar difference in voice-sound, corresponds to the ‘present continuing’ (*GG* 1.3: 250–1). This is part of our evidence, centuries later, that the analysis was originally Stoic. In the first century BC, however, a similar insight caught the eye of Varro. In two brief passages, he describes three pairs of times in Latin, as illustrated for the verb he cites in Table 7.3. In each pair the second is once more ‘completed’ (*perfectum*); the second *infectum* ‘not completed’ (*LL* 9.96; 10.48).

Table 7.3 Times as paired by Varro

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>discebam</i> | <i>discō</i> | <i>discam</i> |
| ‘I was learning’ | ‘I am learning’ | ‘I will learn’ |
| <i>didiceram</i> | <i>didici</i> | <i>didicerō</i> |
| ‘I had learned’ | ‘I learned, have learned’ | ‘I will have learned’ |

To a linguist of the modern school a solution will seem obvious: a parameter of ‘tense’, in the term derived from Latin *tempus*, intersects with one of, as a typologist will describe it, ‘aspect’. It is interesting, therefore, that in what was said to be a Stoic analysis, ‘kinships’ were established in Greek on the lines of Table 7.2; and that later grammarians could appeal to formal and semantic evidence for them. It is also, however, of interest that this analysis appears to have been superseded, in a later period, by the grammarians’ divisions of ‘time’ as shown in Table 7.1.

As to the reasons we can only speculate. The passage of time was obvious in the world about which people were speaking, and a concept of ‘completeness’, which is itself in time, may have been harder to perceive as independent. If this was another

parameter, there was no separate term in ordinary Greek that could readily be used to name it. The modern ‘aspect’ is itself as vague as they come, with a definition often at best waffly, for distinctions that are not consistent across languages. If no such term was invented in Greek, it may have been because, in the end, the analysis succeeded only in part. How, in particular, could the aorist be distinguished in meaning from the future, as implied by their arrangement in Table 7.2, or the future from the aorist, as the text of ‘Dionysius’ can be taken to imply, in the same way as the imperfect from the present or the pluperfect from the perfect? For verbs whose forms were the most regular, the formal correspondence was even clearer: compare, in a standard paradigm, the -s- of:

lú-s-ō

‘I will free, untie’

with that of the aorist:

é-lū-s-a

‘I freed, untied’

But beyond this all that such forms could be said to have in common was that, for different reasons, neither fitted into a system of times intersecting with completeness.

A further complication is that the classical and most prestigious variety of Greek had forms such as:

le-lú-s-o-mai

‘I will have been untied’

that combined the -s- of the future with a reduplicative prefix and an ending of verbs which were middle or passive. An

uncompleted future was thus in part opposed to one that was completed; but in part only, since there was no equivalent in verbs that were formally active. How such complexities may have swayed discussion we do not know. The most helpful solution in practice seems, however, to have been the one the grammarians actually adopted, even though, when it is summarized starkly, in four lines of a modern edition of the manual of ‘Dionysius’, it looks like an attempt to have one’s cake and eat it.

When applied to Latin, as in the manual of Donatus, the analysis became that of Table 7.1, once more, minus the aorist. As Priscian remarks at one point, a past perfect was also ‘admitted for’ what would be an aorist in Greek (*GL* 2: 415, ll. 23 and following). This scheme leaves out, however, a form such as *didicerō* in Table 7.3. For Varro, though no term distinguishes it, it was implicitly a ‘completed’ future; and it is as a ‘future perfect’ that scholars have described it since the Renaissance. For Priscian however, as for earlier Latin grammarians, it was instead the subjunctive ‘mode’ of the future, contrasting, in the lists, for example, of the shorter manual of Donatus, with a ‘future optative’ which is, in a modern analysis, the subjunctive of the present (*GL* 4: 360–1). As Priscian saw it, Latin had commendably no subdivisions of a ‘time’ which of its nature was uncertain (see again *GL* 2: 405). We will return to this analysis in Chapter 12. But the future perfect was still a subjunctive in, for example, the grammar of Latin prescribed by Henry VIII in English schools in the early sixteenth century.

Chapter 8

Speaking correctly

Grammar had become, under the Roman empire, an essential part of an elite male education. Boys could be punished physically if they did not learn the parts of an utterance, their definitions and their variable properties, how many cases or divisions of time there were, and so on. An overall aim, however, was still the one Quintilian had defined in a passage cited in Chapter 2. To know grammar was, in part, to have ‘a knowledge of correct speech’ (*recte loquendi scientia*). On the foundation of that knowledge, acquired in early childhood, a teacher of rhetoric could educate his pupils further, to put over arguments and points of view effectively.

The criteria for correctness were as Quintilian had described them: in particular those of, in Latin, *ratio* or regularity and of usage (*consuetudo*). They could conflict; and that of regularity attracted the ridicule, two or three centuries later, of Sextus Empiricus. One concept of ‘correct Greek’ lay, as he put it, in respect for usage (*sunētheia*), which could be determined by observation (*paratērēsis*) of ordinary conversation. Another, however, was dissociated from ‘the usage common to us’ and appeared to proceed ‘according to grammatical analogy’ (*Math.* 1.176). The forms for ‘dog’, for example, are in the nominative *kúōn*; in the

genitive, dative, and accusative *kunós, kuní, kúna*. These are the forms in common use, and to people in general they seem, as he said, harmless. If we were to follow, however, the principle of regularity then either the nominative should be *kús*, or the oblique cases should be *kúōnos, kúōni, and kúōna*: forms condemned by Sextus as unclear and ludicrous. In arguing for the evidence of usage, he points out that analogies themselves rest on it. A grammarian may argue, for example, that the Greek form for 'to use' should be *khṛâsthai*, with an *ā*, and not, as it was in normal usage, *khṛēsthai*. The *ā* would accordingly match that of *ktâsthai* 'to acquire', and would correspond to an *ē* in the noun *khṛêsis* 'use', just as that corresponds to an *ē* in *ktêsis* 'acquisition'. But how do we know that *ktâsthai* is itself correct? The only answer possible is that it is in general use (*Math.* 1.197–8).

This is cited from a polemic, but against what must have had some basis in fact. In general, however, when Sextus names the grammarians he was attacking, they are or seem to be those of the end of the Hellenistic period, of whose motives we know little beyond the dramatized account of Varro. For the later authorities whose writings survive, there is no evidence that this was a vital issue. Far greater problems must have lain in practice in the growing differences between Greek or Latin in the form in which it had to be taught, and the language as it was in general spoken, which, without their guidance, their pupils would pick up naturally.

The Greek grammarians, in particular, were the enforcers of an 'Atticizing' movement, which looked back to the 'Attic' dialect, or dialect of Athens, as it had been written in the fifth century BC. This was enshrined in a literary canon which included both great poetry, in the work especially of the ancient tragedians, and great prose writings, such as those of Plato. In the centuries, however, that intervened its written form had become increasingly out of

date. The model for Latin remained that of poets such as Virgil, and prose writers such as Cicero, both of the first century BC. They were not only widely read. The language as they wrote it was for centuries the variety officially written; and, in writing above all, educated speakers were expected not to deviate from it.

In English, for comparison, the language of the Book of Common Prayer, which is in essence that of Cranmer in the 1540s, is separated by a similar lapse of centuries from the varieties we speak now. Educated speakers know, through this and other early literature, that the language once had, for example, a third singular in *-eth*: *He that believeth in me*, or *Whosoever liveth*. But there has been no pressure in schools for them to use it; nor to say *he who believes* or *whosoever lives*, instead of *someone who believes* or *anyone who lives*. In Latin, however, such was the prestige of classical literature that changes had to be frowned on. Well after the western Roman empire had collapsed, educated people had no option but to try and write the language, and in some registers at least to speak it, in obedience to a model that was similarly out of date.

Take, for example, the system of cases. The variety the grammarians taught included some whose endings were identical; and, where they were distinct, the difference was often only in the length or quality of a final vowel. Compare, for example, the nominative singular *fili-a* 'daughter' with the ablative *fili-ā* and the genitive or dative that by then was phonetically *fili-[ε]*. Even where distinctions were not annulled by syncretism, they might be obscured in many contexts, where a vowel at the end of one word formed a single syllable with an initial vowel in the next. Other forms had final consonants: thus, for 'daughter', the accusative singular *filia-m*. But an ending in *-m* could also form a single syllable, as we know from the rhythms of Latin poetry, with a vowel

that followed. By the time, moreover, that the empire collapsed the vowel system was already changing. Distinctions among close and mid vowels, which had been primarily of length, developed into a system of close, mid-close and mid-open. If all else were equal, the *-us*, for example, of the nominative singular *fili-us* 'son' would have become identical in quality with the *-ōs*, as it had still to be taught, of the accusative plural *fili-ōs*. Though the timing is uncertain, the distinction between long and short vowels was eventually lost. Forms like the written '*filius*' and '*filios*' could then become identical, as could '*filia*' in the nominative and '*filia*' in the ablative. The system was overwhelmed by syncretisms, and the role of prepositions, in distinguishing what could once have been distinguished by a case alone, was ever more important.

There were also irregularities, for example in what was distinguished, as we will see in Chapter 11, as the 'fourth declension'. As an accusative singular such as *filiam*, with an open *a*, corresponded to an ablative in *-ā*, so, for example, an accusative such as *rēgem* 'king-ACC.SG', with the front vowel *e*, corresponded to an ablative such as *rēge* 'king-ABL.SG'. These are traditionally forms of the 'first declension' and the 'third'. Of the forms for 'son', which belonged to the 'second declension', an accusative in *-um* (*fili-um*) corresponded to an ablative in *-ō*. This too is part of a regular pattern, for nouns which ended, in the nominative singular, in *-us*. But not all followed it. *Manus*, for example, was the nominative singular for 'hand'; the ablative, however, was not *manō* but *manū*. This was one, moreover, of a set of variants which also included a genitive singular in *-ūs* (*manūs*) instead of regular *-ī*, a nominative and an accusative plural in *-ūs*, instead of *-ī* and *-ōs*, and all other inflections apart from the accusative singular. This too was part of the language the grammarians had to teach. But in Italian for example, where nouns do not distinguish cases, the word for 'hand' has inherited

the same inflections (singular *mano*, plural *mani*) as, for example, *figlio* 'son' and *figli* 'sons'. We cannot know how speech changed in detail. But by the fourth or the fifth century AD forms like *manūs* or *manū* could have been more of a shibboleth of educated usage than part of the language children acquired naturally.

It is not surprising, therefore, that a comprehensive list survives of, literally, 'common nouns of the masculine gender that in the ablative singular end in the letter *u*' (GL 4: 193). It begins a compilation known to scholarship as the *Appendix Probi* or 'Appendix to Probus', so called from its place in manuscripts, after other works attributed in the tradition to this author. As a whole, however, it is no more than a set of miscellaneous observations, in part systematic and in part not, that for their compilers at least must have seemed to have a practical use. The list of ablatives in *u* begins the first of its sections, which then deals with other exceptional forms of nouns. Another section, for example, simply lists the correct forms of a hundred and more individual words: *miles* 'soldier' not, in an error that pupils on this evidence were prone to, *milex*; *tristis* 'sad' not an analogically regular *tristus*; *speculum* 'mirror' not *speclum*; and so on. Entries like the last are often cited by historians of the Romance languages, as evidence of the timing of sound changes; compare, for example, *specchio* as the form for 'mirror' in Italian. Another list distinguishes the meanings of words whose forms, in writing or in speech, were different. The written *h* of *habeo* 'I have', which distinguished it from *abeo* 'I am going away' would have corresponded to no [h] in ordinary speech, *labat* 'is tottering' was no different, in consequence of a well attested merger of consonants, from *lavat* 'is washing'; of two words for 'drunk', *ebrius* signifies 'having drunk a lot on occasion', *ebriosus* 'drinking a lot at all times'. Such compilations were as practical then as manuals of correct English are today. Writing, for example,

habeo as *abeo* a member or aspiring member of the elite had to learn not to do.

Types of error

A text such as this reminds us that grammarians were teachers and not simply scholars, let alone what we would now call linguists. Both as scholars, however, and as teachers they had an interest in classifying errors, and assigning names to different types. These are the *vitia* or ‘vices’, that, for example, directly follow the parts of utterances and their properties, in the larger manual (*Ars maior*) of Donatus (GL 4: 393–5).

The most important division, in his account as others, is between a mistake in the form of one word only, such as the omission of an ‘h’ in *habeo*, and one in, as we would now describe it, syntax. The first was called, in Latin, a *barbarismus*; from a term in Greek that had referred originally to a form that was ‘foreign’ and contrary to *hellēnismos* ‘Greekness’. Donatus gives the example of someone saying *mastruga* or *magalia* or *catela*: forms, which he took as known, that were not Latin but respectively Sardinian, Punic, and probably Gaulish. In the analysis of errors, however, the term applied to the deforming of a word, either in speech production (*pronuntiatio*) or in writing, in any of four ways that were distinguished as exhaustive alternatives throughout antiquity. One was by the addition (*adiectio*) of what should not be there. Another was by the omission (*detractio*) of what should be; the others by the substitution (*immutatio*) of one unit for another, or by the transposition (*transmutatio*) of units in a sequence. The illustrations given by Donatus were, where possible, from Virgil. Thus Virgil was strictly wrong, in one passage, to use a form *reliquias* ‘(the) remains’, with the addition of a second ‘l’, instead of

reliquias, with just one. This was not a licence, by implication, that anyone should imitate. It was equally wrong, in another passage, to add a syllable to *abisse* ‘to have gone away’ to form *ab-i-isse*; or to add a time value, as Donatus puts it, to the first vowel of *Italiam* ‘(to) Italy’, in an example referred to earlier, to make the syllable long, *ī-*, when it should be short. Other illustrations, however, are not literary. An instance of, for example, the transposition of syllables would be a form *dis-pli-ci-na* in place of *dis-ci-pli-na*.

A ‘barbarism’ was thus a single part of an utterance that was ‘in error in ordinary discourse’ (*vitiosa in communi sermone*). A different ‘vice’, however, arises from ‘the weaving together of parts of an utterance’ (*contextu partium orationis*) ‘contrary to a rule of grammar’ (*contra regulam artis grammaticae*). This was called, in a term which is again directly from Greek, a *soloecismus*: in English, that is, a ‘solecism’. The term is early and, although alternative etymologies were mooted, it alluded, in the commonest explanation, to the language as it was spoken in the town of Soloi, on the southern coast of what is now Turkey. To speakers in Athens, the kind of mistake the ‘Soloecians’ were perceived as making was a *soloikismos*. For the grammarians, however, this was specifically an error in which words were individually correct, but did not fit together in an utterance. If someone, for example, were to write or say in Latin:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| <i>virum</i> | <i>hanc</i> |
| male-adult-ACC.SG | this-FEM.ACC.SG |

there would be nothing wrong with either *virum* as such, or with *hanc*. But they do not fit together, to form the meaning ‘this man’, since *virum* is masculine and *hanc* feminine. Suppose, to take another example from Donatus, that someone asks us where we are going. We could answer *Romam* ‘to Rome’, which as a form

would be correct. But it would be an error if we said *Romae* ‘at Rome’, since this form does not fit with a verb of ‘motion towards’. These too were obviously stock illustrations, which Donatus did not fully spell out. In general, however, he described a *soloecismus* as of two main kinds. Either, as in the case of *virum hanc*, the error lies in the variable properties, the ‘accidents’, that related parts have. Or it arises, as Donatus put it, ‘through parts of an utterance’ (*per partes orationis*): his example is of a noun in a context that required an adverb. Solecisms which involve conjunctions include one where an utterance begins with a member of this category that should by rule be in the second position (*GL* 4. 394, *ll.* 21–2).

A solecism was thus in general, as defined in one Greek commentary, an ‘error regarding the arrangement together (in Greek *suntaxis*) of the parts of the utterance’ (*GG* 1.3: 446, *ll.* 35–6). As Priscian explained it, following Apollonius Dyscolus, it was an ordering of words which did not go together, ‘as if the elements of an utterance come together inelegantly’. It was accordingly an error at that level parallel to one in which a combination of letters and syllables formed a barbarism (Priscian *GL* 3: 111; Apollonius as in Box 8.1). In an analysis already current in Quintilian’s day, solecisms were divided into types in which words too were either erroneously added, erroneously omitted, or erroneously transposed (*Inst.* 1.5.40). A persistent niggle, however, was whether a solecism could be formed by one word only. Suppose, to take an example from Quintilian, that someone uses a singular imperative:

abī

leave-IMPER.2SG

‘Go away!’

in addressing a group of people. There is plainly an error; and, like other errors, it can be corrected, by using a plural form, *abīte*, instead. But the mistake is not in the word itself: as a form it is correct. Therefore there is no barbarism. It lies in the way the word is used in an utterance, and, in one view, that too was a solecism.

Such reasoning was rejected firmly by Apollonius Dyscolus (Box 8.1), in terms which, to a modern reader, seem entirely convincing. The error lay in the way a word was used in reference to a speaker's surroundings, in a relation of *deixis*, literally of 'pointing out' or 'showing', or, as we would now say, 'reference'. A solecism lay instead in a relation within an utterance between one word and another. But the issue was still alive for commentators who followed Donatus: thus, for example, Pompeius (*GL* 5: 289), who gives as an example an utterance *Romae* '(I am) in Rome', when what was meant was *Romam* '(I am going) to Rome'. A final word could plausibly rest with Servius, another commentator, who insisted that an error in a relation cannot be an error in a word alone (*GL* 4: 446).

Box 8.1 Apollonius Dyscolus on solecisms

A central concept in Apollonius' analysis of utterances is that of *katallēlotēs*: literally of their parts 'corresponding to one another'. Where an article, for example, agrees with a noun they are, in a translation based on Latin, 'congruent'. If they do not agree, in gender, case, and number, their relation is one of *akatallēlotēs*, of 'not corresponding to one another' or 'non-congruence'. 'When words are defectively linked together', if we may cite Householder's translation, we talk of solecism, 'the elements of the sentence being ungrammatically combined'.¹

They are combined, that is, ‘non-congruently’ (*akatallēlōs*). Compare, as Apollonius explains, the relation between letters in a word that is spelled wrongly.

One crucial test, then, for non-congruence is that it is capable of correction: there must be an alternative by which congruence can be restored. Take, for example, the reflexive (as we call it now) in:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>heautoùs</i> | <i>hubrízomen</i> |
| (them)selves | we-mistreat |
| ‘We are mistreating ourselves’ | |

If the verb had been in the first singular, the reflexive would have matched it. Compare, for example:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <i>emautòn</i> | <i>húbrisa</i> |
| myself | I-mistreated |
| ‘I mistreated myself’ | |

Heautoùs, likewise, is a form that would match a third plural:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>heautoùs</i> | <i>túptousin</i> |
| themselves | they-hit |
| ‘They are hitting themselves’ | |

Therefore, when the verb is a first plural, we might expect a word for ‘ourselves’, which, if it existed, might have the form *hēmautoús*. But there is no such form; therefore the first sentence is not open to correction; therefore there is no solecism (*Synt.* 3.4–5, 23 = *GG* 2.2: 270–1, 290).

Nor is there a solecism if, for example:

hoûtos

this-MASC.NOM.SG

‘this man’

is said in reference to a woman, or to two or more people instead of one. This and other ‘silly’ analyses, as Apollonius describes them, muddy for a start the distinction between a barbarism and a solecism. Such an utterance does not, however, stand complete unless a verb, such as *peripateî* ‘is walking around’, is added. It is then correct, and the exchange of gender lies in the reference (*deixis*) that is in error, in relation to something that is seen. Solecisms ‘fall under what is heard’ and ‘are attested by the non-congruence inherent in the juxtaposition of the words,’² which even someone who is blind, and cannot see what they refer to, can still be aware of. The error would be quite different if, for example, one were to use a feminine pronoun in the singular, but with a verb in the plural:

haútē

this-FEM.NOM.SG

me étupsan

me they-hit

‘What is congruent or not congruent’ lay, as here, ‘in the arrangement together (*suntaxis*) of words, not in the things referred to.’³

A ‘most essential cause of non-congruence’⁴ was that specific parts of an utterance have specific variable properties. Some vary in form in respect of case and number, such as nouns and others distinguished as *ptōtika* ‘having case’. Others vary in number and person, such as verbs and pronouns, and others, including nouns, in gender. Others do not vary at all: thus conjunctions, prepositions, and ‘almost all adverbs’. In the

composition (*sunthesis*) of an utterance those that vary ‘are distributed in combination with what they can bear a relation to.’⁵ Thus, for example, in:

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------|------------------|
| <i>gráphousin</i> | <i>hoi</i> | <i>ánthrōpoi</i> |
| are writing-3.PL | the-NOM.PL | man-NOM.PL |
| ‘The men are writing’ | | |

there is, in Apollonius’ words, ‘involvement (*paremptōsis*) of the same person’. The reference, throughout the utterance, is to a single set of participants. Therefore a plural combines with a plural, as too in, for example:

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| <i>gráphomen</i> | <i>hēmeis</i> |
| are writing-1.PL | we |
| ‘We are writing’ | |

Only with the involvement of another ‘person’ (*prosōpon*), can a verb and a related noun be different in number. Thus, in:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| <i>túptousi</i> | <i>ton</i> | <i>ánthrōpon</i> |
| are hitting-3.PL | the-ACC.SG | human being-ACC.SG |
| ‘They are hitting the person’ | | |

the individual being hit is not the same as those who are hitting, and parts of an utterance whose numbers are different can therefore combine freely. The same principle (*logos*) applies to parts of an utterance related together (*sumparalambanomenōn*), as Apollonius illustrates, in gender and in case. Compare, for example, the agreement in the following example, where *ándres*, with the specific meaning of ‘male adult human beings’, is itself, like the word for ‘men’ in general, masculine:

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| <i>hoûtoi</i> | <i>hoi</i> | <i>ándres</i> |
| this-MASC.NOM.PL | the-MASC. NOM.PL | man-MASC. NOM.PL |

Parts of an utterance that do not vary, in any of these properties, can combine freely. To illustrate this, Apollonius compares the adverb *kalôs* ‘well’, where the second vowel is long, with the adjective (in the ancient account a noun) *kalós* ‘beautiful’. A construction (*suntaxis*) of the adverb is with a verb, by implication, of whatever person or whatever number. It could be the aorist *égrapsa* ‘I wrote’ or the present ‘I am writing’, or the second plural *gráphete* ‘You are writing’, and so on. But this is not what we find with *kalós*. It is singular and it also ‘happens’ (*tunkhanei*) to be third person. Therefore, while it has itself no tense and it too is combined with verbs in any tense whatever, it is restricted, as in an utterance such as:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>kalôs</i> | <i>grápheí</i> |
| beautiful-MASC.NOM.SG | write-3.SG |
| ‘A handsome male person is writing’ | |

to a verb whose properties correspond (*Synt.* 3.17–18 = *GG* 2.2: 282–4).

Nevertheless, what holds for *kalôs* ‘well’ does not hold, as Apollonius has hinted earlier, for adverbs of all kinds. At this point some lines of the text appear to have slipped out as successive manuscripts were copied. But in his separate work on adverbs he remarks that adverbs of time have a syntax chiming (*sumphônousan*) with the times of verbs.⁶ Thus *aúrion* ‘tomorrow’ combines with a present or future, but not with a past.

We have no earlier treatment of these issues, and we cannot know how much of this his predecessors may already have worked out. It remains, however, the earliest account of what we now describe as ‘agreement’, of a matching of properties that would be in error if they did not match, that has come down to us.

1. *epàn gâr tà mē déonta tôn léxeōn episunaphthēi, tò toioûto kaloûmen soloikismôn, hōs tôn stoikheîōn toû lógou akatallēlōs sunelthóntōn* (Synt. 1.8 = GG 2.2: 7, ll. 10–13; trans. Householder 1981: 21).
2. *akoēi hupopíptousin, elenkhómenoi ek tēs katà paráthesin tôn léxeōn sunoúsēs akatallēlías* (Synt. 3.9 = GG 2.2: 274, ll. 12–14).
3. *ou gâr en toîs hupokeiménois tò akatállēlon esti è katállēlon, en dè tēi suntáxei tôn léxeōn* (Synt. 3.10 = GG 2.2: 275, ll. 6–8).
4. *sunektikôtátē aitía toû akatallélou* (Synt. 3.13 = GG 2.2: 279, ll. 5–6).
5. *tēi toû lógou sunthéseí anaméristai eis epílokēn toû pròs hò dúnatai phéresthai* (Synt. 3.14 = GG 2.2: 280, ll. 4–5).
6. GG 2.1: 123. Transferred in Householder’s translation (1981: 160) to supply the assumed lacuna.

Figures

Children were taught to avoid combining words which did not agree; not to utter or write sentences, as we would now say, from which parts were seen as missing; nor to pad them out with words that were redundant, or combine them in a wrong order, or use words which refer incorrectly. Whether solecisms in a grammarian’s account, or errors other than solecisms, all were in one way or another errors. Children were also trained, however, to read classical literature, and in the work of admired and famous authors,

from the Homeric poems onwards, it was easy to find instances of what on the face of it were just such mistakes.

In an example from Virgil, which was another standard illustration:

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------|-------------------|
| <i>pars</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>frusta</i> | <i>secant</i> ... |
| part-NOM.SG | in | piece-ACC.PL | cut-3.PL |
| 'One group of them are chopping (wood) ...' | | | |

there is what linguists would now call 'notional' agreement. A noun *pars*, which is singular, is the subject, as we would now say, of a verb, *secant*, which is plural. In the ancient account there is no change in who these words referred to. Therefore different numbers are combined syntactically (*construuntur*) in a relation in which, according to a grammarian's rule, both this and other variable properties should correspond. The example is the first in a survey by Priscian (*GL* 3: 184 and following), of mismatches, both in number and in case and person, cited from both Greek and Latin authors. He also includes tenses used with inappropriate time reference. Thus in the same line of Virgil, though he did not cite it for this point, there is what we now call a 'historic' present: *secant* 'are cutting' in place of imperfect *secābant* 'were cutting'. But the imperfect would have been strictly correct, since Virgil was writing about the past.

Priscian then turns to errors, or what rationally should be errors, in parts of an utterance as such. In some instances, again from literature, a preposition is omitted where it would be expected; or added where it was not; or one preposition was substituted for another (*GL* 3: 194–6). This is also true, as he again shows, for conjunctions. The survey as a whole can easily be read as little more than a digression, at the end of which (*GL* 3: 198)

Priscian returns to his main theme. The rules, however, that grammarians saw as rational, which had since Hellenistic times been one criterion for what was correct, were often at variance with literary usage, which was traditionally to be admired and imitated. The question was not put so bluntly; but how could the rules be valid?

The solution adopted by the Roman grammarians was to distinguish a solecism from what was, once more in a term from Greek, a *skhēma lexeōs* or 'figure of speech'. *Skhēma* is a term that Priscian did not use in this sense, and the topic is one that now belongs to literary criticism. Donatus, however, distinguished a *figura* that was of interest to grammarians, qualified as 'of *lexis*', from a figure 'of thought', in Greek a *skhēma dianoias*, which was instead in the domain of rhetoric (GL 4: 397). If someone were to say in casual conversation *pars...secant* 'A part...are chopping' it would be an error: 'a corruption', if we may borrow a definition from one commentator, 'of healthy utterance' (GL 5: 288). When Virgil, however, wrote it it was not a 'vice' (Latin *vitium*), but could be justified as a literary ornament. The account which Donatus transmitted to posterity is detailed and elaborate, with the further inclusion of 'tropes' (literally 'turnings') such as metaphor, and divisions into subtypes, again distinguished by Greek terms, at all points. Figures, however, are specifically 'for reasons of ornament' (GL 4: 296, l. 5), and a crucial criterion, which commentators attributed to the younger Pliny, who was born in the mid-first century AD, was that they were deliberate. If done unknowingly, they would be solecisms (Pompeius, GL 5: 292; Servius, GL 4: 447).

Finally, as figures were distinguished from solecisms, so an alteration of a single word, which was in principle a barbarism, was permitted, as what was called, in a term again from Greek, a

Figures

metaplasmus (literally a ‘remoulding’), if the aim was in particular to preserve the metre of a line of verse. Donatus distinguishes fourteen subtypes, one of which is illustrated with the lengthening by Virgil of the first syllable of *Italiam* (*GL* 4: 394), already cited as a ‘vice’ or error. Where ‘figures’ were justified as ornaments, a ‘metaplasm’ was justified by metrical necessity.

Chapter 9

Utterances

The unit that Greek grammarians called a *logos*, and Latin grammarians an *oratio*, was the largest in a hierarchy. *Oratio* is here translated, literally, by English ‘utterance’; and in one sense that is all this unit was. It was something said, or else transcribed in writing, which was a subject of analysis. It could also be seen, however, as a unit that met certain normative criteria. As defined by Priscian (Box 9.1), it was, firstly, ‘congruent’. It had a property that Apollonius Dyscolus had called *katallēlotēs* or ‘corresponding-ness’ (Box 8.1). It was also, as a unit of meaning, ‘complete’.

Put this together with the definition of a solecism (Chapter 8) and it is tempting to conceive of ancient grammar in a radically modern way. An utterance is a sequence of words that meets criteria of correctness and completeness. Some utterances, with these properties, a grammarian had before him. They were to be found especially in the literary texts he worked with. But other sequences can in principle be uttered; call these ‘potential utterances’. Any other sequence of words is, we may then say, a ‘non-utterance’: either its meaning is not complete or it is contrary, as Donatus put it, to ‘a rule of grammar’. A rule is therefore a

Box 9.1 Definitions of an utterance

This unit is not always defined: not, for example, by Donatus and his commentators. Some grammarians in the Roman tradition supply a gloss, as *elocutio* ‘speaking out’, and an etymology in the ancient style: an *oratio*, ‘that is’, is an *oris ratio* ‘reasoning of the mouth’ (e.g. Pompeius, *GL* 5: 96). Utterances were literally sounds uttered and as such they had a physical reality. A ‘typical utterance’ was, in the words of a Greek commentary on ‘Dionysius Thrax’, the ‘material’ (*hulē*) of grammar.¹

Where definitions were given they tend to complement that of a word. For the Roman grammarian Scaurus, on the testimony of Diomedes, an *oratio* was a ‘pronouncement issued by mouth and set in order by means of words’.² In many other definitions an utterance explicitly made clear a ‘thought’: in Greek a *dianoia* or *ennoia*; in Latin a *sententia* (in other uses an ‘opinion’, ‘decree’, or ‘judgment’). In many too, thoughts are explicitly complete. Thus for ‘Dionysius Thrax’, and commentators following him, a *logos* was something put together in prose or conversation that ‘makes clear a self-complete thought’.³ For one commentator the *dianoia* was therefore intermediate between an utterance and the words that composed it.⁴ In another definition in Latin, also cited by Diomedes, an utterance is ‘a combination of words that brings a *sententia* to a conclusion and signifies something completed’.⁵

Finally, some definitions make explicit that an utterance is ‘congruent’: in Greek, *katallēlos*.⁶ No definition survives that is known to be by Apollonius Dyscolus. But that of Priscian can be assumed to follow in his footsteps. An *oratio* is simply

then ‘a congruent ordering of words making clear a completed *sententia*’.⁷

Varying traditions in antiquity, which lie behind these formulations, might be seen as a forerunner of ones that are still with us. In a much later period Latin *sententia* became the source of English ‘sentence’ and, in a natural translation from Latin, ‘Satz’ in German. The term for what was expressed therefore came to be applied, in a later tradition, to the expression itself. But a theory of ‘the sentence’, as seen by theorists at the end of the nineteenth century, remained a theory of how an idea arises in the mind of a speaker, whether as a whole which was analysed into parts, or as parts combined to form a whole, prior to its realization in speech. It was only in the mid-twentieth century, in early work on generative grammar, that ‘sentence’ and ‘utterance’ were for a while used interchangeably. If they are now distinguished, by most linguists at least, as units at different levels of abstraction it is in reaction to a usage that again confounded something said with something that meets certain criteria of, in effect, correctness.

1. *húlē dē grammatikēs estin ho genikòs lógos* (GG 1.3: 114, l. 35).
2. *ore missa et per dictiones ordinata pronuntiatio* (GL 1: 300).
3. *lógos dé esti pezēs léxeōs súnthesis diánoian autotelē dēloûsa* (GG 1.1: 22). For *pezēs léxeōs* as explained by *katalogádēn* see GG 1.3: 57, 355.
4. *ho gàr lógos ek dianoiòn, hē dē diánoia ek léxeōn* (GG 1.3: 214, ll. 5–6).
5. *compositio dictionum consummans sententiam remque perfectam significans*.
6. See again GG 1.3: 214, 355.
7. *ordinatio dictionum congrua sententiam perfectam demonstrans* (GL 2: 53).

constraint on what can form an utterance, and the aim of grammar, or of the part of grammar that we now call syntax, is to formulate constraints which comprehensively allow whatever is potentially an utterance and exclude non-utterances.

Apart from the appeal to meaning, which was crucial in antiquity, this is very like the programme for a generative grammar, as Chomsky (1957) originally proposed it. A connection with 'traditional grammar', as it was then disparagingly referred to, was indeed attractive at the outset to some linguists who were inspired by Chomsky's ideas while it was off-putting for others who criticized them. No ancient grammarian, however, had in practice any motive to see things that way or to follow such an argument through.

Grammar was naturally concerned with relations among successive parts of an utterance. If participles, for example, were separate from verbs it was because, despite what we would now call their shared status in a lexicon, they were parts that entered into different relations, within an utterance, to others. But a grammarian's interest, as a teacher, was not in the description, as we might now understand it, of a language. His pupils already spoke Greek, or already spoke Latin, and no other language professionally concerned him. A big part of his job, however, was to help them to read classical literature, including the works of poets, such as Virgil and Ovid in Latin, who exploited to the full the use of variable word order. In the last resort, they had to learn to look at individual words and work out, from their context, what part of an utterance they were, what were their 'accidents', and the relation each bore, often at a distance, to the others.

Take, for example, a passage from Horace:

| | | | | | |
|--|---------------|-------------|-------------------|---|--------------|
| <i>vixēre</i> | <i>fortēs</i> | <i>ante</i> | <i>Agamemnona</i> | / | <i>multī</i> |
| lived-3. | strong- | before | Agamemnon- | | many- |
| PL | NOM.PL | | ACC | | NOM.PL |
| ‘Many strong men lived before Agamemnon’ | | | | | |

or, in a form more like the way it was written in an ancient manuscript:

vixerefortesanteagamemnona/multi

To understand this one must in particular connect the plural *fortēs* ‘strong’ both to a verb, *vixēre* ‘(they) lived’, which is also plural and, at a distance, to *multī*. *Multī* could in itself be either a nominative plural or a genitive singular (‘of much’, ‘of a lot of’). But it has to be connected to some other part of the utterance; and, in effect, this must be *fortēs*. That word, in itself, could be either a nominative or an accusative. *Multī*, however, cannot be an accusative. Both are accordingly ‘parsed’, or assigned to a *pars orationis*, as nouns which are nominative, and it is as a nominative, too, that *fortēs* must be connected to the verb *vixēre*, which in the ancient term was ‘neuter’. Syncretisms within paradigms were common; and, as Priscian remarks of a number of instances, to make clear which is which ‘their syntax (*constructio*) is absolutely (*maxime*) necessary’ (GL 3: 200, l. 16).

It was also part of the grammarian’s job to teach what was ‘correct’. One type of incorrectness, as we have seen, lay in a solecism; in an error, that is, of syntax. What was correct had therefore to be made clear, by rules for the connections between parts of an utterance, which pupils could be told to follow.

To modern eyes, a grammar was accordingly ‘prescriptive’. It is not obvious, however, that the grammarians whose works survive would have seen a difference between prescription and ‘description’. The Greek that the grammarians taught in practice was that of ancient Athens; the Latin that of Virgil, Cicero, and others. Of the criteria, therefore, that Quintilian had distinguished in the first century AD, those of *vetustas* ‘oldness’ and *auctoritas* ‘authority’ had become especially important. But they are themselves criteria of what had once, at least, been *consuetudo* ‘usage’. To ‘describe’ such usage and to ‘prescribe’ it, as a model for students to follow in their own compositions, are two sides of a single method of instruction.

In syntax, too, the evidence of usage was not basically at variance with criteria of *ratio* or ‘regularity’. Language was a product, as we have seen, of human reason. It was distinguished in precisely that way from the noises of beasts; and in that light it was natural that utterances should be thought to have a rational structure. If there was a deeper motive therefore for the study of syntax, beyond the practical exigencies of teaching, it was to make clear why the rules of grammar were rationally as they were.

Grammarians were not philosophers and such an aim is no more than implicit. It may be helpful, however, to look in detail at three varied illustrations, two from Priscian and one, much more elaborate, from Apollonius Dyscolus, that show in practice how the rules by which words were related could be seen to make what we would now see as semantic sense.

In an example, first, from Latin:

| | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| <i>meum</i> | <i>patrem</i> | <i>et</i> | <i>Catōnis</i> |
| my-MASC.ACC. | father-ACC. | and | Cato-GEN.SG |
| SG | SG | | |
| ‘my father and Cato’s’ | | | |

a conjunction, *et*, joins two words which stand in the same adnominal relation to a head noun, as we now describe it, *patrem*. In themselves, however, they have different properties. *Meum* ‘my’ is accusative and agrees with *patrem* in both that respect and others. If the head noun were in another case, the case of the possessive would change with it. Compare:

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| <i>meus</i> | <i>pater</i> |
| my-NOM.SG | father-NOM.SG |

where both words are nominative,

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| <i>meī</i> | <i>patris</i> |
| my-GEN.SG | father-GEN.SG |

where both are genitive, and so on. *Catōnis* ‘of Cato’ is instead a genitive and would remain a genitive whatever the case of *patrem* were to change to. Different, though, as such forms may be they are regularly joined together.

The example is abridged from one of Priscian’s own (*GL* 3: 169). In a passage, however, that precedes it he points out that in referring to the son, for example, of a character in the ‘Aeneid’:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Evandrius</i> | <i>filius</i> |
| of Evander-MASC.NOM.SG | son-NOM.SG |

(literally, that is, ‘the Evandrian son’), a derived possessive, *Evandrius*, could be replaced with the same meaning by a simple genitive:

| | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| <i>Evandrī</i> | <i>filius</i> |
| Evander-GEN.SG | son-NOM.SG |
| ‘Evander’s son’ | |

The derived possessive *Evandrius* is like the word for ‘my’ in that it agrees with *filius*; and, if the case of *filius* were to change, its own case would change with it. *Evandrī* has in turn the same role as *Catōnis*. ‘Therefore it is allowed’ (*itaque licet*) to join such forms with *et* ‘and’, just as, implicitly, we could join *meum* ‘my’ and *tuum* ‘your’, or two nouns equally in the genitive. What might look anomalous is justified as part, implicitly, of a general pattern of meaning.

The appeal here is to no more than the ‘logic’, as we might now call it, of a grammar, independently of the relation of a language to reality. Take next, however, the case in Greek of what in a modern term would be the object of a verb. In, for example:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| <i>timô</i> | <i>sé</i> |
| honour-1.SG | you (sg)-ACC |
| ‘I am praising you’ | |

The verb governs, as we would now put it, the accusative. This we may describe as the ‘default’ construction. But other verbs took, as a rule at least, the genitive:

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| <i>kurieúō</i> | <i>soû</i> |
| be master of-1.SG | you (sg)-GEN |
| ‘I am in charge of you’ | |

and others the dative:

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| <i>palaíō</i> | <i>soí</i> |
| wrestle-1.SG | you (sg)-DAT |
| ‘I am wrestling with you’ | |

These are examples cited by Apollonius Dyscolus (*Synt.* 3.157 = GG 2.2: 404); the initial finding, therefore, is that each of the cases called ‘oblique’ can be appropriate with one verb or another.

In a deeper analysis, however, the case is seen to vary with the type of meaning that a verb has. If what is described is, for example, a physical activity the oblique noun or pronoun is accusative. Compare, among the illustrations cited by Apollonius:

tríbō sé
‘I am rubbing you’

So too for many verbs, such as ‘to honour’ in the first of our examples, where the effect on someone or something is not physical. With verbs of perception, among others, the case is instead, as a general rule, the genitive. Compare, for example:

akoúō sou
‘I hear/am listening to you’

But while the rule holds for ‘to perceive’ itself (infinitive *aisth-ánesthai*), and for ‘to taste’, ‘to smell’, and ‘to touch’, it does not apply to verbs of seeing. Compare, in an example Apollonius cites from Homer:

ossómenos patér(a) esthlón
seeing father-ACC.SG noble-MASC.ACC.SG
‘seeing [in his mind] his noble father’

In his view, however, this also fits ‘just as it should do’ (*panu deontōs*). If, for example, we hear something, our body is affected by a sound coming from outside it. We may not like it if, for example, it is the sound of thunder; but we cannot shut it off. The relation of the genitive ‘comes close’, in that light, to that of a genitive, with a preposition, in an utterance where the verb is passive. Compare the agent, as it has now come to be described, in:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| <i>timômai</i> | <i>hupò</i> | <i>Théōnos</i> |
| be honoured-1.SG | by | Theon-GEN.SG |
| 'I am honoured by Theon' | | |

The genitive indicates, in either utterance, a relation of experiencing or 'undergoing'.

The relation of seeing, however, is 'very active' (*energestatē*). Apollonius cites in support a line of Homer which includes the words:

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| <i>oxútatōn</i> | <i>kephalēs</i> | <i>èk</i> | <i>dérketōn</i> | <i>ósse</i> |
| sharp-SUP.ACC.SG | head-GEN.SG | out | look-DU | eyes |
| '[Your] eyes send out a piercing glance from [your] head' | | | | |

Hence the oblique case is the accusative; the relation is not open, moreover, to a contrary relation of undergoing, since sight can be blocked by closing our eyes.

This fits well with the way in which sight was explained in general in antiquity and later. This is only part, however, of a comprehensive treatment of the cases taken by verbs, which is summarized in detail in Box 9.2. The aim throughout this is to demonstrate that the choice between the accusative, the genitive, and the dative makes sense in a rational representation of reality.

Box 9.2 Apollonius Dyscolus on the cases taken by verbs

Types of verb are distinguished by *diatheseis*: by the varying 'layouts' of units in relation to a verb. One basic opposition, as we have seen already in Chapter 7, was between a layout that is active (*energetikē*), where what was represented was in broad terms an activity or action, and one that was passive (*pathētikē*), where what was represented was an experience

undergone. An active *diathesis* requires a noun in the ‘direct’ case, plus another whose case is oblique: either the accusative or the genitive or the dative. With such a verb, however, the layout may in general be converted to one of undergoing. In addition, by implication, to a noun which is in the direct case, a passive verb may take a genitive with the preposition *hupò* (basically ‘under’) in a use like that of English *by* (*Synt.* 3. 157, 159 = GG 2.2: 404–5).

What calls for explanation is the variation in the oblique case when the *diathesis* is active. For some verbs it is, more precisely, physical or ‘bodily’ (*sōmatikē*) and, if so, the oblique case is the accusative. These are verbs with meanings like ‘to rub’, ‘to clean’, ‘to force’, ‘to burn’. It is the accusative again if the relation is both mental (*psukhikē*) and physical, or is mental only. Compare *hubrízō sé* ‘I insult, mistreat you’ (which, as Apollonius explains, one can do with one’s hand), and verbs with meanings like ‘to libel’ or ‘to abuse’. Add to these verbs of praise, with such meanings as ‘to commend’ or ‘to celebrate’; verbs of deception, with meanings like ‘to con’ or ‘to trick’; and those where things referred to are at a distance,¹ with meanings such as ‘to look for’ or ‘to find’. There are exceptions, and the construction with the accusative is, in conclusion, ‘very subdivided’. It is united, however, in one way, in ‘receiving an active relationship from a direct case’.²

One type discussed in detail is that of verbs of ‘preferring’ (*proairetika*). In, for example:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>boúlomai</i> | <i>philologeîn</i> |
| want-1.SG | pursue learning-INF |
| ‘I want to study’ | |

there is no oblique case. None is needed, however, since the force is that of ‘self-undergoing’ (*autopatheia*); what is said is, as it were, ‘I want myself’ to do this.³ In, for example:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| <i>boúlomai</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>gráphein</i> |
| want-1.SG | you-ACC | write-INF |
| ‘I want you to write’ | | |

where the persons of *boúlomai* and *se* are different, the accusative is instead required. Apollonius dismisses as ‘frivolous’ a suggestion which to us is now familiar, that in such an utterance the relationship of the accusative is to the infinitive.

Where verbs take the genitive, the relationship may be the opposite, by implication, of what holds in general for the accusative. With a verb of perception, such as ‘to hear’, an activity does not originate in a perceiver, but in something external, such as a sound, that impinges on them. If verbs of seeing are an exception, as explained in the text of this chapter, it is because the activity was thought in antiquity to originate not in what was seen, but in the eyes. Another contrast, to which Apollonius then turns, is between two verbs which can both be translated into English by ‘to love’. The first of these, with the infinitive *phileîn*, is related to a noun *phílos* ‘beloved, friend’ and has meanings such as ‘be fond of’ or ‘befriend’. Fathers, for example, rationally ‘love’ (*philoûsi*) their children. The *diathesis* is like that of, for example, ‘to teach’ or ‘to persuade’; it is an activity of the ‘lover’ and the oblique case is the accusative. The other verb for ‘love’ is one of sexual passion (infinitive *erân*), with meanings such as ‘to lust after’. This is a state of someone who is not rationally in control of their feelings: to ‘love’ in that sense entails a relation imposed by the

person loved.⁴ Therefore, in a quotation from the lyric poet Sappho:

| | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------------|----------------|------------|---------------|
| <i>égō</i> | <i>de</i> | <i>kên'</i> | <i>ót / tō</i> | <i>tis</i> | <i>ératai</i> |
| I | but | that entity | whatever- | someone- | loves |
| | | | GEN.SG | NOM.SG | |

‘But I [say] it is whatsoever a person loves’⁵

óttō is appropriately in the genitive, in relation, within what is now described as a relative clause, to *ératai*.

For other verbs that take a genitive, there is a ‘not unpersuasive argument’, as Apollonius presents it, which appeals to a meaning of possession. In, for example:

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Aristárkhōu</i> | <i>doúlos</i> |
| Aristarchus-GEN.SG | slave-NOM.SG |
| ‘(a) slave of Aristarchus’ | |

The genitive is the case of a possessor. It is obvious, he argues, that without a genitive possession is inconceivable. Take then a noun such as *basileús* ‘king’. The subjects of kings are possessed by them, and for that reason in:

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>basileúō</i> | <i>toútōn</i> |
| be king of-1.SG | this-GEN.PL |
| ‘I am the king of these people’ | |

a genitive is also the case with a derived verb. Other verbs which take the genitive have meanings like ‘be in command of’, ‘be leader of’, ‘be master of’.

Apollonius acknowledges that while the genitive with, for example, the noun for ‘slave’ is that of a possessor, the genitive with a verb such as ‘be king of’ is, on the contrary, that of the

people possessed. But nouns, he argues, are one part of an utterance and verbs are another. With verbs, moreover, the structure of the utterance has to be inverted. They are related to words that are *ptōtika* ‘with case’; one case must be ‘direct’; and it is from them that the relationship (*diathesis*) of domination depends. Another person involved can be in no case other than the genitive, without which, he has argued, no possessive construction is formed.⁶ Apollonius adds that, with a noun such as the one for ‘king’, the construction is the same as with the verb derived from it. Compare:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| <i>basileús</i> | <i>toútōn</i> |
| king-NOM.SG | this-GEN.PL |
| ‘king of these people’ | |

where the genitive is again the case of the possessed.

The dative, to which Apollonius then turns, is the case to which all verbs are related if they indicate an ‘acquisition’. Thus, if one says:

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| <i>légō</i> | <i>soí</i> |
| speak-1.SG | you-DAT |
| ‘I am speaking to you’ | |

it is, as it were, ‘I give you a share of utterance’. What is acquired is in this instance verbal, but in:

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>temnō</i> | <i>soí</i> |
| cut-1.SG | you-DAT |
| ‘I am cutting [something] for you’ | |

it is instead material. These are verbs that can also take an accusative, but with a different meaning. Compare:

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <i>légō</i> | <i>se</i> | <i>kléptēn</i> |
| speak-1.SG | you-ACC | thief-ACC.SG |
| 'I say you are a thief' | | |

'I distinguish you,' that is, 'as having committed theft'; or *temnō se* 'I am cutting you.' It is only, he makes clear, when a verb such as 'to cut' is in an active relation to an accusative that there can be a passive *témnomai* 'I am being cut'.

Other verbs which take the dative in this way have meanings such as 'to sing', 'to show', 'to present as a gift', or 'to play the flute'. With the last of these 'the syntax signifies an acquisition' of what is played on the instrument.⁷ That is not all, however. In:

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <i>aulō</i> | <i>toîs</i> | <i>auloîs</i> |
| play the flute-1.SG | the-DAT.PL | flute-DAT.PL |
| 'I am playing on the (double) flute' | | |

the 'idea' (*ennoia*) is different. As Apollonius explains it, the verb signifies the knowledge of playing such an instrument, and the example is equivalent to demonstrating that skill 'through (the medium of) the flute'. Other verbs, he adds, have more than one sense. 'To hear', again, may simply indicate perception, but the same verb (infinitive *akoúein*) can be used when someone understands what they are told and acts accordingly. He makes clear too that any dative of the type considered so far 'contains within itself' an accusative. This it 'also outwardly adds'⁸ in, for example:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>témnō</i> | <i>soi</i> | <i>tò</i> | <i>kréas</i> |
| cut-1.SG | you-DAT | the-NEUT.ACC.SG | meat-ACC.SG |
| 'I am cutting the meat for you' | | | |

with the ‘containing’ dative ordered first, he remarks, in Homeric usage.

Other verbs that take the dative include ones with meanings like ‘to be a slave to’ or ‘to follow’; also ‘to fight with’ or ‘to wrestle with’, where the relationship (*diathesis*) is ‘equal’. If I am fighting you, you by the same token will be fighting me. Were the relationship merely active ‘you’ would be accusative: compare, for example, *túptō se* ‘I am hitting you’. If it was passive, but again one-sided, the appropriate case would be the genitive. The construction therefore rejects both cases, and the dative is the only alternative. The dative is also found in, for example:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>mélei</i> | <i>Sōkrátēi</i> |
| be of concern to | Socrates-DAT |
| ‘Socrates is concerned’ | |

where later grammarians describe the verb as impersonal. For Apollonius, however, it is thought to take an understood ‘upright’ case which is that of the act implicit in it:⁹ for example, that of philosophizing.

Finally, in the closing paragraphs of Book 3, which has dealt at length with these and other properties of verbs, Apollonius adds that what holds for them will also hold for participles. Thus he compares:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>gumnázōn</i> | <i>toûton</i> |
| train physically-PART.NOM.SG | this-ACC.SG |
| ‘training this person’ | |

where the accusative is also taken by the verb from which the participle derives, with:

gumnastēs

physical trainer-NOM.SG

‘this person’s trainer’

toútou

this-GEN.SG

where a genitive is instead related to a noun.

1. *kat’ apóstasin tôn hupokeiménōn* (Synt. 3.160 = GG 2.2: 407, l. 2).
2. *sumphōnoûsa tōi anadékhesthai tēn ex eutheías energetikēn diáthesin* (Synt. 3.168 = GG 2.2: 415).
3. Thus, with a change of infinitive, *epeí toi pálin ên ho lógos toioûtos, ‘bouílomai emautòn plouteîn’... toutéstīn diatíthēmai... eis tò plouteîn* (Synt. 3.161 = GG 2.2: 409, ll. 1–3). Apollonius need not be thought to imply that a reflexive, such as *emautón*, was actually used in this way.
4. *tò ge mēn erān homologēi tò prosdiatíthesthai hupò tou erōménou* (Synt. 3.172 = GG 2.2: 419, ll. 1–2).
5. Trans. Campbell 1982: 67.
6. *tò dè toutōi prósōpon anthupagómenon mē en állēi ptōsei katagínesthai è tēi genikēi, hēs áneu ou sunístatai ktētikē súntaxis* (Synt. 3.176 = GG 2.2: 421, ll. 12–14).
7. *tēs suntáxeōs peripoiēsín tina tou auleîn sēmainousēs* (Synt. 3.178 = GG 2.2: 423, l. 5).
8. *hēn kai éxōthen proslambánei* (Synt. 3.183 = GG 2.2: 426, l. 7).
9. *anadékhesthai noouménēn eutheían tēn katà tou paruphistaménou prágmatos* (Synt. 3.188 = GG 2.2: 431, l. 1).

For a third illustration, which has its roots too in the work of Apollonius, we may return to Priscian’s account of Latin. The problem here is that a rule of syntax is, at first sight at least, broken. How can this rationally be so?

By the rule in question, a noun in the ‘upright’ case (in Latin the *casus rectus* or ‘straight falling’) corresponds in person as in

number to a verb with which it combines. Thus, in an example we may repeat from an earlier chapter:

| | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| <i>Cicerō</i> | <i>venit</i> |
| Cicero-NOM.SG | come-3.SG |
| 'Cicero is coming' | |

A man named 'Cicero' is a third person and the verb ('he/she/it is coming') is also third person. 'Persons', remember, were individuals in the real world in the context in which an utterance was spoken. But in, for example:

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Prisciānus</i> | <i>scribō</i> |
| Priscian-NOM.SG | write-1.SG |
| 'I, Priscian, am writing' | |

the rule does not hold. A verb 'I am writing' which is in the first person is matched instead with a noun, again in the nominative, whose person is third. When one says this, Priscian makes clear, one is 'without doubt speaking incongruently' (*GL* 3: 151). By the criteria explained by Apollonius Dyscolus (Box 8.1) one is committing a solecism.

The explanation, however, was that such an utterance is incomplete. What 'is missing' (*deest*) is a pronoun:

| | | |
|------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <i>ego</i> | <i>Priscianus</i> | <i>scribō</i> |
| I-NOM | Priscian-NOM.SG | write-1.SG |

and, if added, it is this that stands, by implication, in a direct relation to the verb. Since both are first person there is no incongruence.

Priscian distinguishes, in comparison, an utterance such as:

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| <i>Prisciānus</i> | <i>sum</i> |
| Priscian-NOM | be-1.SG |
| 'I am Priscian' | |

or, for example:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <i>Prisciānus</i> | <i>nōminor</i> |
| Priscian-NOM | be named-1.SG |
| 'My name is Priscian' | |

The verbs here are of a type that 'signify being (*substantiam*) or naming', and with these, he explains, there is no incongruence. The reason he gives is that they include in their meaning the person who is or is named. Their relation, therefore, is not to a noun that would implicitly identify an individual referred to, but one which distinguishes a *qualitas* ('what-sort-ness'). Thus, for example:

| | |
|--------------------|------------|
| <i>homō</i> | <i>sum</i> |
| human being-NOM.SG | be-1.SG |

has the meaning 'My nature is that of a human being'. But a pronoun such as *egō* is instead excluded: to say 'I am I' would be mere duplication. It is obvious, Priscian concludes, that since the identity that a pronoun would indicate is inherent in the verb, a first person such as *sum* or *nōminor* connects readily with a noun that implicitly, like an adjective, has no meaning as a person (*GL* 3: 152).

I have tried to spell out Priscian's explanation in the terms he might himself have used had he been writing in English. Note in particular that nouns such as, in these examples, *Priscianus* simply had the property of being in the 'upright' case. It was as such that they were related to verbs in the *diathesis* or 'layout' of an utterance. There was in particular no ancient term that corresponded to a modern 'subject', or to a further functional distinction, as in modern grammars of English, between a subject and a 'subject' (or 'predicative') 'complement'. These were simply, to repeat, words classed as *ptōtika* or *casuales*, which distinguished cases, variably upright or oblique.

It is important, moreover, to remember that an ancient grammar was itself in the language whose grammar it was. A modern grammar may in its turn, for example, be of English and in English. But many are not; and, through centuries of experience, even linguists writing on their native language have learned to avoid what are now seen as confusions between what philosophers call an 'object language' and their metalanguage. A form like, for example, *horse* is one thing and is distinguished in italics. A meaning, such as 'horse', is another and, if that is all we need to represent, it can be put in inverted commas. *Horse*, alternatively, is used to refer to animals called, in English as a metalanguage, horses. We have also written for centuries, in English and other European languages, about object languages in which distinctions among words and categories can be very different. Therefore we do not expect that individual forms will correspond to individual meanings, across languages in general, in the same way.

An ancient writer had no devices like that of italics. Greek *híppos* 'horse' was written in the same way when it identified a word form and when one was writing about the animal itself. When forms were cited it was usual, in Greek especially, to use periphrases: 'the (word) which is híppos' or 'the híppos'. The more, however, one talked indifferently of words and things that words referred to, the easier it was to perceive a correspondence between language and reality, and the more natural it was to talk of forms and meanings interchangeably. A modern grammarian would not say, for example, that where a person related to a verb is in the direct case a person in a possessive relation to it must be in the genitive. Either a 'person' is someone or something referred to or it is a property of a word; it cannot be both. But that is essentially how Apollonius Dyscolus did put it, in a passage cited in Box 9.2 (original Greek in n. 6). It might have been hard to persuade him

that the term *prosōpon* 'person' was ambiguous. Nor might he have seen a difference, or one that was at all important, between saying that the type of verb determines the case of a noun related to it, and saying, as we might do now if we were careful, that it is determined by the meaning of the verb, or the relationships implied, in accordance with the semantic system of a given language, between the entities identified by the units with which it combines. A verb such as '(I) rub' or '(I) clean', with which he began his survey of verbs and oblique cases in, had quite simply the meaning of 'rub' or 'clean'.

Chapter 10

Parts of utterances and their constructions

The title of this chapter could well serve as a subtitle for the work by Apollonius Dyscolus *Peri suntaxeōs* ‘On syntax’. The term *suntaxis* was a compound with the meaning of ‘arrangement together’, which referred, in the context of language, to the arrangement of words in utterances. They were assigned, as we have seen, to categories; which were in Greek the *merē (tou) logou* or ‘parts of (the) utterance’. To study how they were arranged together was to study the connections between one part and another within utterances as wholes. For Priscian this topic was that of *constructio*, literally of ‘putting together’, or, in an alternative term, of *ordinatio* ‘ordering’. The units put together are again, in Latin, the *partes orationis*: nouns, pronouns, verbs, and so on.

Apollonius was, for Priscian himself, the intellectual leader and it is with a general survey of his work, whose structure Priscian largely followed, that we may most helpfully begin. In the introduction to his four books, he first drew parallels between the ways in which an utterance consists of words and words, in turn, consist of letters and syllables. He then surveyed the system of parts of an utterance, which for Greek grammarians was headed, as explained in Chapter 5, by the noun and verb. In an argument

followed, as we have seen, by Priscian, these two are essential for the completion of an utterance. Others are successively related to them: a pronoun, for example, is a word that can be substituted, with the same role in an utterance, for a noun. The list ended with the conjunction, which is a type of word that can join any of the others. One type of word, as Apollonius made clear at the end, includes forms of two different parts of an utterance. These are the interrogatives (*peustika*), which are rationally either ‘nominal’ (*onomastika*) or ‘adverbial’ (*epirrhēmatika*): compare English *who?* and *where?* Other types of word, by implication, are subclasses of nouns, or of verbs, or of participles, and so on.

Since all other parts of an utterance are ‘brought back’ (*anage-tai*) to the construction of nouns and verbs, we have to consider how each other part is used, either in replacement for or added to them (*Synt.* 1.36 = *GG* 2.2: 33–4). Apollonius begins, then, with the parts of an utterance related to the noun. First he examines in detail the construction of articles, both ‘prepositive’ and ‘post-positive’. Prepositive articles are as in, for example:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| <i>ho</i> | <i>ánthrōpos</i> |
| the-MASC.NOM.SG | human being-NOM.SG |
| ‘the man’ | |

and were specifically, as linguists now describe them, definite. For a postpositive article compare *hós* in, for example, the beginning of Homer’s ‘Odyssey’:

| | | | | | |
|--|------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <i>ándra</i> | <i>moi</i> | <i>énnepe</i> ... | <i>hós</i> | <i>mála pollá</i> | <i>/ plánkthē</i> |
| man- | to me | tell | which-MASC. | very many | wandered |
| ACC.SG | | | NOM.SG | | |
| ‘Tell me of the man ... who travelled so much’ | | | | | |

Their forms, as Apollonius remarks, are different. In oblique cases, in particular, a prepositive article had an initial *t*: thus, for example, *ton* ‘the-MASC.ACC.SG’. A postpositive article, such as *hón* ‘which-MASC.ACC.SG’, did not. They were also different in their syntax. A prepositive article was simply added to nouns and other parts of an utterance. These included, as we have seen earlier, other *ptōtika* or words ‘with case’; also, for example, a verb in the infinitive:

| | | |
|---|---------------------|------------------|
| <i>tò</i> | <i>philosopheîn</i> | <i>ōphélimon</i> |
| the-NEUT. | to philosophize | helpful-NEUT. |
| NOM/ACC.SG | | NOM/ACC.SG |
| ‘It is helpful to engage in philosophy’ | | |

But a postpositive article entered into two relations. One was to the noun, as in the quotation from Homer, that precedes it; with this *hós* shares its gender and number. The other was to a verb, which in this example is the word for ‘wandered’, whose presence such an article ‘absolutely requires’ (*Synt.* 1.143 = *GG* 2.2: 116–17). It is in relation to the verb that *hós* is in the nominative or ‘upright’ case.

One obvious problem, for which modern grammars have their own solution, was to distinguish articles from pronouns. In his separate study of the pronoun, Apollonius remarks that for the Stoics they were a single part of an utterance, called an *arthron* ‘joint’. The image is one that also underlay the concept of speech sound as ‘articulated’ (*enarthron*). In a later view, which we are told was that of (the historical) Dionysius Thrax, pronouns were *arthra* distinguished as *deiktika*, as ‘pointing out’ or demonstrative. For Apollonius himself, the specific property of *ho*, in *ho ánthrōpos* ‘the man’, was that of ‘carrying back’ (*anaphora*): of ‘indicating’, that is, ‘a person (*prosōpon*) known already’ (*Synt.* 1.43 = *GG* 2.2: 38).

That is also a property of a pronoun such as *autós*, with the sense in the nominative of ‘he himself’. Nevertheless articles are a separate category; human beings, for comparison, are not the same as other creatures merely because we share with others the property of being alive. One crucial difference is that a pronoun plus a verb can form a complete utterance: *autós grápheí* ‘He himself is writing’ or *sù grápheis* ‘You are writing’. Articles cannot; and are thus used ‘with’ nouns, not in their place (GG 2.1: 8).

Pronouns, as Apollonius explains in Book 2, include both ones that are ‘anaphoric’, in the sense of ‘carrying back’, and others that are ‘deictic’, in the sense of the modern ‘demonstrative’. Where a word for ‘he’, for example, is anaphoric it is used in place not of a noun, which does not itself have this property, but of a noun plus an article (*Synt.* 1.25; GG 2.2: 25–6 and elsewhere). Pronouns, however, are of more than one type, and Apollonius surveys each in detail.

Those with the meanings ‘I’ and ‘you’ distinguish persons; and, in oblique cases, could be either accented or enclitic. In, for example:

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| <i>épaisé</i> | <i>me</i> |
| mocked-3.SG | me-ACC |
| ‘He/she made fun of me’ | |

the accent of the word for ‘me’ is off-loaded, in the ancient image, onto the final syllable of the verb. But the accusative ‘me’ had another form, *emé*, which retained its accent; and, if this were used, the properties of *deixis* ‘pointing out’ would be intensive or contrastive. As Apollonius put it they ‘have been stretched’ (*epitetatai*). Other pronouns always had an accent, and forms such as *me* were possible in some constructions only. Apollonius explains exhaustively why, in his analysis, this was so: why it

made sense, for example, that the words for ‘I’ and ‘you’, in the direct case, should always be accented, and the oblique forms when, for example, they were coordinated.

This brings us, with digressions, to beyond the mid point of Book 2. Its remaining sections deal with many problems, involving in particular the compound pronouns that are later called ‘reflexive’. Apollonius begins, however, with possessives. In, for example:

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| <i>ho</i> | <i>emòs</i> | <i>híppos</i> | <i>trékhei</i> |
| the | my | horse | run-3.SG |

‘My horse is galloping’

the ‘person’ of a verb in the third singular is that of the horse that is possessed. But possessives imply both an entity possessed and a possessor, and in:

| | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| <i>tòn</i> | <i>emòn</i> | <i>agròn</i> | <i>éskapsa</i> |
| the | my | field | dug with spade-1.SG |

‘I dug my field’

that of a verb in the first singular corresponds instead to the speaker as possessor. When that is so, as Apollonius explains later, a simple pronoun such as *emón*, which in this example is an accusative agreeing with the noun for ‘field’, can be changed distinctively to the compound *emautoú* ‘of myself’, whose inflection is genitive.

Take next, if I may so represent the thread of his argument, a verb in the third person. If the entity possessed is in an oblique case, the person of the verb may not be related to the person of a possessive: compare, in English, ‘He dug his (someone else’s) field’. Alternatively, it may be: compare ‘He dug his own field’. In either instance the possessive would be genitive; but in the first it would

again be simple (*autoû*), in the second a compound (*heautoû*). After further details and digressions, the last sections of Book 2 concentrate on compound pronouns specifically.

In the opening sections of Book 3, the discussion of pronouns leads into a general analysis of solecisms, as summarized in detail in Box 8.1, from which Apollonius eventually turns to verbs. At that point he begins by setting out six major topics (*Synt.* 3.54 = GG 2.2: 226), which are covered, largely in sequence, by the sections that follow. The first is that of the *enkliseis* that we now call ‘moods’. Not only do these include infinitives, which some predecessors had, he says, described as adverbs; but this mood is the ‘most general’ (*genikôtatē*), with no distinctions, as there are elsewhere, of person and number. In explaining the uses of the infinitive, he argues among other things that in, for example:

deî *gráphein*
ought to write-INF
‘One has to write’

the word glossed ‘ought to’ was one of two forms that were verbs, albeit ones we must class as impersonal, and not, as earlier authorities are said to have held, a type of adverb. This repeats an argument in his separate work on adverbs, and reminds us that in the early second century AD, although the eight parts of an utterance were then standard doctrine, which words belonged to which class might still need to be made clear.

A survey of moods other than the infinitive also includes discussion of the second topic, which is that of ‘times’, by which moods are seen as subdivided. The third topic is the opposition of active, passive, and middle, and leads into one he had listed as the fifth, which is whether active and passive are distinguished

everywhere. Apollonius explains that no passive, in general, corresponds to verbs that do not take an oblique case. These include ones such as *kopiô* 'I am exhausted', whose definition he describes as of 'self-undergoing' (*autopatheia*). The remaining topic concerns restrictions on the range of persons. For example, one could say:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <i>peripateîtai</i> | <i>hè</i> | <i>hodós</i> |
| walk around-PASS.3.SG | the | road |
| 'The road is walked' | | |

with a passive verb in the third person; but there was no utterance such as *peripatoûmai* 'I am walked'. Finally, the sixth topic is that of verbs that take an oblique case: which case and, as we have seen in detail in Box 9.2, for what reasons.

This discussion of verbs, and its brief extension to participles, brings us to the end of Book 3. Of the remaining parts of the utterance, the first is the preposition, and an account of this is all that we have of Book 4. We assume that it dealt with adverbs and conjunctions, for which separate studies survive, and can only imagine how long it would have been. For prepositions, however, a central problem was that they were either distinct parts of an utterance or members, as we have seen, of compounds. How were such uses to be distinguished?

A difference between 'compounding' (*sunthesis*) and 'juxtaposition' (*parathesis*) lay in general in their accentuation: compounds had a single high pitch, but if words were syntactically connected they were accented separately. A high pitch might be lowered, however, before one on a syllable which follows; therefore that criterion was not always decisive. There was also a problem, among others, of what grammars now describe as 'tmesis'. Thus in an example from Homer:

léōn katà taûron edēdós
 lion down bull having eaten
 'a lion that has devoured a bull'

whose construction was normal in earlier literature, the preposition is to be taken together with the participle, as a compound 'having eaten up'. That a unit was a *meros logou*, or part of an utterance, and not as these terms appear to be distinguished in this passage, a *meros lexeōs*, or part of a word, is to be known, as Apollonius explains, from it being juxtaposed and not part of a compound that is divided (*Synt.* 4.14 = *GG* 2.2: 446).

The distinction is fundamentally, that is, one of syntax; and Apollonius surveys the relations possible between a preposition and another part of an utterance. With a noun or pronoun in the nominative it can only form a compound. With an oblique case it can instead be one of juxtaposition; with a verb it is of compounding; and so on.

Terms in embryo

It will be obvious, even from a sketch as cursory and as selective as this, that many of the issues Apollonius was addressing are still central to the field of syntax as we know it. Many of his terms are still used: 'syntax' itself; 'anaphora', again in something like its modern sense, and so on. It is therefore tempting to take for granted that they had a technical status like the one that, eighteen centuries later, they now have for us.

But did they? The terminology that grammarians developed had its basis, as has been pointed out already, in the vocabulary of ordinary Greek and ordinary Latin, and in their ordinary processes of word formation. Some were clearly what we now call

'terms of art' and many others had explicit definitions, such as those of the parts of an utterance (Boxes 5.1, 5.2). Others, like *khronos* or *tempus* 'time', had definitions independently of grammar. The nature of a definition, as seen generally in antiquity, is spelled out by Pompeius for the noun as defined by Donatus (*GL* 5: 137–8). But take, for example, a term such as 'anaphora'. In English, for comparison, it has a sense that is obviously peculiar to linguistics, with no source in ordinary language. It derives, however, from a Greek word which as Apollonius used it was a compound formed transparently from *ana* 'up' plus a noun *phora* which was itself derived, by a vowel change that was perfectly normal, from the verb 'to carry' (infinitive *pherein*). Nor was the word an invention of grammarians. In a sense of 'reference to' something it had been used by, for example, Aristotle. As the noun could be used in a sense like that of its reflex in English, so too could the verb corresponding to it. A pronoun is thus 'carried up' (*anapheretai*): 'back', that is, in a sequence of units.

Suntaxis, similarly, is a compound of *sun* 'with' and a noun derived from a verb 'to arrange'. 'Arrangement together' was distinct, for Apollonius, from simple 'arrangement' (*taxis*). Again the verb could be used: *suntassetai* 'is/are arranged together'. There are terms in modern linguistics whose status is partly similar: 'substitution', for example, and 'to substitute' as used by Harris (1951) and many after him. But in the work of Apollonius such words are simply used and, if they had what we would now see as a technical meaning, it is from their uses that any definition would have to be abstracted. It can be hard, moreover, to distinguish uses we may treat as technical, in senses that may have been refined by later traditions, and others that were no more than potentially technical, or were simply those of words derived from

ones in ordinary Greek, which happen to have been natural and appropriate in some specific context.

Anaphora and the adjective derived from it (modern ‘anaphoric’) are used consistently, and the latter distinguished a specific class of words from others described as ‘deictic’. Such a distinction, between pronouns that in Latin were *relativa* and *demonstrativa*, is in practice as technical as those drawn by grammars of the modern era, though not quite the same. The term for ‘congruence’ (*katallēlotēs*) is also univocal; and while the adjective ‘congruent’ (*katallēlos*) did have other uses, the noun itself does have a sense specific to grammar. If it is right to see this as a technical creation, it is as clearly so as, for comparison, the modern ‘grammaticality’. It is worth noting, however, that although this concept is central to the thought of Apollonius Dyscolus, Priscian did not feel a need, it seems, to find a term equivalent to it in Latin. The adjective (*congruus*) was central to, for example, Priscian’s definition of an *oratio* (Box 9.1). But an abstract noun, *congruitas*, is used only once, as the equivalent of a more specific term in Stoic logic, which it is not clear he understood (*GL* 3: 211, ll. 20–1). Other terms, however, or formations we are tempted to perceive as terms, have a range of uses that elude exact definition.

Metalēpsis, for example, is a formation in Greek that, unlike *anaphora* or *suntaxis*, has no modern reflex. It is derived, irregularly but in parallel with other derivations, from a compound verb (infinitive *metalambanein*) meaning ‘to take in exchange’. It is a term that Apollonius often uses, and again the verb was used equivalently. A word, for example, is in certain relations ‘exchanged for’ (*metalambanetai eis*) another. His work, however, is our main source and again no term in Latin, in Priscian’s account of syntax, is equivalent to it. If its uses, moreover, are examined carefully (Box 10.1) we can see that, in a technical perspective, it

is far from univocal. Nor was it the only form that Apollonius used similarly. Is it a term, then, that in certain contexts had a genuinely technical sense, but in others remained informal? If so, it was potentially exciting. Or did it, in whatever application, have the sense of no more than, in general, a ‘taking in exchange’? Is it indeed reasonable or fair, in dealing with a text of such a date, to ask such questions?

Box 10.1 *metalēpsis*

This is one of a set of compounds formed with the preposition *meta* ‘with’ that are, in appearance, at least semi-technical. *Metaptōsis* is another, from the verb for ‘to fall’, that Apollonius Dyscolus also uses, but less commonly. Another is *metathesis*, from the verb for ‘to place’. This is used most typically of a change in individual letters: thus, at one point, of a *t* in one Greek dialect replacing *s* in others.¹ Both it, however, and the corresponding verb are also used of an exchange of words.²

Metalēpsis is the commonest and is consistently a term in syntax. But in a single section (*Synt.* 2.28), it has in a precise analysis two different senses, which are similar only in that one thing or another ‘changes’. The context is that of words whose forms are like those of an article but are syntactically pronouns. This is how Apollonius explains, for example, a standard formula in Homer:

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| <i>tòn</i> | <i>d(e)</i> | <i>apabeimómenos</i> |
| the/that individual-MASC.ACC.SG | but | answering |
| ‘in answer to him’ | | |

The word glossed ‘the’ is in other uses added to a noun: compare *ton ánthrōpon* ‘the person’. Delete the noun, as he puts it

elsewhere, and the article ‘changes to’ a pronoun. There is, accordingly, a *metalēpsis* or ‘exchange’ of one part of an utterance for another (GG 2.2: 147, l. 7). As a pronoun, however, *ton* could then be replaced by another word of the same category. If so it is ‘exchanged for’ (*metalambanetai eis*) that word: thus, to adapt the argument to this example, *tòn* might be changed to *toûton* ‘this (person)’ (same page, l. 13).

A change of forms is one thing; a change in function, as we might now call it, is another. Not only, however, are both uses general, but other terms in *meta* are on occasion used equivalently. Apollonius also talks, for example, of an article being (literally) ‘stood’ or ‘falling’ in exchange for a pronoun.³ Where forms are interchanged, he can also say that one is simply ‘used in place of’ another: thus a genitive in place of a possessive pronoun.⁴ For any individual use, of any individual term in *meta*, it is of course very easy to find an appropriate translation. Sometimes, for example, the process is one of ‘rewording’: of an utterance, for example, instead of saying ‘I was reading and getting bored’, one can also say ‘I was getting bored reading’.⁵ Rewording can be seen as a technical operation, which may bring out a connection in meaning or an ambiguity. But in other uses, again of *metalēpsis* and such terms in general, what is involved is potentially, at least, more interesting. In particular, there is a seductive parallel with what many linguists, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, used to describe as ‘transformations’.

In an utterance, for example, with a meaning ‘I insulted me’, the simple pronoun *emé* ‘me-ACC’ is ‘changed to’ the compound *emautón* ‘myself’.⁶ In such a context, though not in every other in which pronouns are exchanged, a *metalēpsis* is

implicitly obligatory. A still more obvious parallel is with modern treatments of a passive construction. Verbs which require an oblique case can always, Apollonius says, be changed from an active to a passive *diathesis*. A nominative, where the verb is active, will then change more specifically, where it is passive, to a genitive with *hupó* ‘by’.⁷ The term, however, that Apollonius uses in this context is not *metalēpsis*: the image is instead of ‘standing in exchange for’ or one form ‘turned into’ another. If this illustrates a concept like that of a transformation, it was not one represented by a single term with settled status.

How carefully indeed did Apollonius think, or need to think, about the way such words were used? It is hard not to feel that *metalēpsis* was potentially a term of art. Yet its use had no successor. In an example discussed in the last chapter, Priscian compares the adjective in *Evandrius* in *Evandrius filius* ‘the Evandrian son’ with the genitive *Evandrī* in *Evandrī filius* ‘the son of Evander’. The change is like that of the *metalēpsis*, as Apollonius repeatedly described it, of a possessive pronoun to a genitive: of, for example, *emós* in:

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <i>emós</i> | <i>eimi</i> | <i>oikétēs</i> |
| my-NOM.SG | I-am | domestic slave-NOM.SG |
| ‘I am my servant’ | | |

to *emautoû* in:

| | | |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| <i>emautoû</i> | <i>eimi</i> | <i>oikétēs</i> |
| myself-GEN.SG | I-am | domestic slave-NOM.SG |

literally, ‘Of myself I am a servant’.⁸ Priscian, however, simply talks of one form ‘used in place of’ another. If we try, moreover, to define this term and others as they were used by Apollonius,

we can hardly arrive at any notion more specific than, in general, that of '(ex)change'.

Of *metalēpsis* itself the most we can say, unless we cherry-pick a limited range of passages, is that it could be used in any way that fitted the context, of any change in words or in relations between words within utterances. The moral, possibly, is that it is wrong to look for theories of syntax, above all like those current in modern linguistics, where none was either there or needed.

1. *Synt.* 2.118 = GG 2.2: 217, l. 17.
2. Thus, for example, *Synt.* 2.150, 159 (GG 2.2: 243, l. 15; 253, l. 4).
3. *methístatai eis ..., eis...metapíptei* (*Synt.* 1.12, 1.25 = GG 2.2: 15, l. 2; 26, ll. 2–3).
4. *kekhrêsthai...antì* (*Synt.* 2.126 = GG 2.2: 224, ll. 1–2).
5. *phamèn goûn hoútōs, 'égraphon kaì ēniómēn', eph' hēs suntáxeōs hē metalēpsis genēsetai 'gráphōn ēniómēn'* (*Synt.* 3.29 = GG 2.2: 295).
6. Thus, for example, *Synt.* 3.5 = GG 2.2: 271.
7. *pántōs eis pathētikēn diáthesin metastéseien* (*Synt.* 3.157 = GG 2.2: 404). *trepoménēs eis genikén* (*Synt.* 2.141 = GG 2.2: 236).
8. *Synt.* 2.105 = GG 2.2: 207.

The history of terminology is a dry topic at best. Unless terms, however, are used consistently there can be no theory, and in this light, although Apollonius and Priscian had a well-developed theory of the parts of an utterance, it is harder to argue that, beyond that, there was any more specific analysis of the relations by which utterances were formed. It is possible to talk with hindsight of the germs of ideas that were to become important later. But in western Europe they became so, at the earliest, in

scholastic grammars of the Middle Ages. By then the aims of grammar had changed.

Consider, for illustration, the sources in Priscian's books on syntax for the notion of 'transitivity'. We must first clear our minds of modern usage. The terms *transitivus* and *intransitivus*, though transparently the source of 'transitive' and 'intransitive', did not in antiquity distinguish classes of verbs. Classes partly similar were described in Latin, as we have seen in Box 7.2, as active and 'neuter'. This was one difference in what for Apollonius had been a wider concept of *diathesis* or 'layout' (Box 9.2 especially). For Priscian (*GL* 2: 267) the equivalent term was again the *genus* 'type' or *significatio* 'meaning' of a verb. The starting point for uses that developed later lies instead in a Greek verb for 'to go across' (infinitive *diabainein*). A verb that is now classed as 'transitive' was one in whose layout, as we may describe it, a relation of meaning crosses over (*diabainei*) from a 'person' referred to by the verb to another 'person', still in the ancient sense, distinguished by an oblique case. Thus in a simple example in Latin, which we will number for later reference:

- (1) *vīdī* *puellam*
 saw-1.SG girl-ACC
 'I saw/have seen the/a girl'

a verb refers to the speaker, as 'first person', who is the individual seeing something. The noun, in the accusative, identifies a different individual, the girl, who is a 'third person'.

A 'going across' is in Greek a *diabasis*; in Latin a *transitio*. In an utterance like (1), as Priscian would have described it, a transition is made from one person to another (*fit transitio ab alia ad aliam personam*). This relation can therefore be distinguished, in particular, from one in which there is 'reciprocation': where an object, as we

would now say, is reflexive. An action ‘starting from’ a nominative is then ‘understood’ not ‘in transition’, as one that likewise ‘goes across’, but ‘in one and the same person’ (*GL* 3: 15, *ll.* 10–11). In, for example:

- (2) *puella* *vēnit*
 girl-NOM came-3.SG
 ‘The/a girl came/has come’

the girl referred to by *puella* is likewise the same individual as the third person identified by the way the verb, *vēnit*, is inflected. Between these parts, then, of the utterance there is no ‘transition’.

Changes and identities of ‘person’ are not restricted, however, to these constructions. In an example where two nouns are both nominative:

percurrit *homō* *excelsus*
 runs through human being-NOM lofty-NOM
 ‘A lofty person passes through’

the relation between them is one of *appositio* ‘placing next to’, and there is no ‘transition’ either between them or between either of them and the verb (*GL* 3: 32). The term can also distinguish a relation that, in a modern view at least, is not specifically syntactic. Suppose, for example, that a man asks Priscian in his professional capacity:

ut *suus* *doceātur* *a* *mē* *filius*
 that his (own) be taught by me son
 ‘that I should teach his son’

a possessor, who is the individual making the request, is represented in Priscian’s words as ‘making a transition from outside’ (*extrinsecus facientem transitionem*) to ‘his own possession’, who

is the son that Priscian is to teach (*GL* 3: 170). But there is no relation of agreement in particular, as there is in the example numbered (2), between the word identifying his potential customer and the one identifying the pupil.

So far uses do at least belong together. But the infinitive *transire* ‘to go across’ remained an ordinary word in Latin, and could be used by Priscian and other grammarians in any other context where it was appropriate. We have seen in Chapter 3 that Donatus talked of vowels that ‘cross over’ (*transeunt*) to the power of consonants. In quite another context, for example, Priscian talks of a ‘crossing over’ (*transitio*) of gender when some nouns form compounds. *Mens* ‘mind’, for example, is feminine, but *āmens* ‘out of one’s mind’ will as an adjective cross over into being either masculine, or feminine, or neuter (*GL* 3: 182).

Uses are scattered across Priscian’s books on syntax, and in one reading, obviously, the term was one that in one sense was technical, which could be used as an ordinary word as well. It was not, however, until some seven centuries later that ‘transitive’ and ‘intransitive’ were defined precisely and comprehensively. The term *constructio* was by then used countably, of a relation in which one word depends on another. In (1), for example, the verb depended on the noun and their construction was *transitiva*. In (2) the verb again depended on the noun but their construction was *intransitiva*. For the modistic grammarians, on whose analysis I am relying, these constructions were transitive and intransitive ‘of acts’ (*actuum*), and were opposed, as such, to others that were ‘of persons’ (*personarum*). In, for example:

- (3) *filius* *Cicerōnis*
 son-NOM Cicero-GEN
 ‘Cicero’s son’

a noun which in this example is in the nominative depended on a genitive, and the persons they identified were different. The construction was therefore ‘transitive’, but ‘of persons’ not ‘of acts’. Finally in, for example:

- (4) *filius* *bonus*
 son-NOM good-NOM
 ‘a good son’

the adjective, which for the *modistae* was in effect a word of another category, depended on the noun in a construction that was ‘intransitive of persons’.

As (1) is to (2) so (3) is to (4); as (1) is to (3) so (2) is to (4). The inspiration for this analysis lay in part, of course, in mediaeval readings of Priscian’s grammar. But a general notion of dependency was not explicit in antiquity, and it is only in the Middle Ages that we can distinguish with confidence a theory of syntactic relations (though not a modern theory), as opposed to a range of related insights, partly systematic and partly less so, on which an informal image of ‘transition’ originally cast light.

By the thirteenth century the nature and aims of grammar had changed. If we dip at random into the work of Thomas of Erfurt, from which this theory of transitivity is extracted, and into the books on syntax of either Apollonius or Priscian, it is clear at once that we are dealing with scholars whose priorities were quite different. It is important especially to remember the profession in which, as teachers, ancient grammarians made their living. The books that Apollonius wrote, or Priscian wrote some centuries later, may not have been designed for use in classrooms, and are not accounts of what we might call their day job. One aim, however, of ancient grammar was to enable pupils to read and interpret classical literature, poetry especially. This had been the second

part of grammar in Quintilian's definition (Chapter 2). It is not surprising therefore that a grammarian's labours in that field profoundly influenced the way he wrote. The works of Apollonius and Priscian were organized by the successive parts of utterances, and dealt in sequence with the syntax of each. They belonged to the 'technical part' of grammar (Box 2.1), that was closest to what we now see as linguistics. The more we read of either, however, the more we come across long passages of detail, rich in specific literary examples, that often call, especially when they are from Homer, for interpretations tailored to specific usage in specific contexts. This is not how linguists may see syntax nowadays. But its study was in antiquity more a foundation for philology than an attempt, in modern terms, to make clear independently what sentences were possible and what were not.

We can only express our admiration at how far Apollonius, and Priscian following him, developed insights that successive theorists in later eras have been able to take further.

Chapter 11

Derivation

A *lexis* or *dictio*, as emphasized in Chapter 4 and elsewhere, was an individual word form found in individual utterances. A verb, for example, in the first singular of the present indicative is one such unit; a second singular, of the same word as it is entered in a modern dictionary, is another. Such forms, however, were systematically related. Latin *veniō* ‘I am coming’ is one word and one part of an utterance, but is related to, among others, *venīs* ‘you are coming’. It is also related to a participle such as *veniens* (‘coming-NOM.SG’), which is another word and another part of a utterance. Relations like these were between a particular form that was perceived as primary and others derived from it. The second singular *venīs* is ‘from’ *veniō*: in a modern notation *veniō* → *venīs*. So, directly or indirectly, is the participle: *veniō* → *veniens*. From that in turn is derived, for example, a genitive *venientis* ‘of (someone or something) coming’: *veniens* → *venientis*.

The formation of words from words was also a topic of ancient etymology (Box 1.1). At least as early, however, as the first century BC, in Varro’s study of ‘the Latin language’, the origin of words (*verborum principia*) was taken to have two aspects. One was their initial application or assignment (*impositio*) to things. The

priority at that point was that words assigned should be as few as possible, so that they could be learned more quickly. The other is distinguished in an earlier passage as the way in which ‘the derivatives of these names have arrived at their differences’ (LL 8.1; trans. Kent 1938: 370). The priority there was that derivatives should be as many as possible, so that people ‘may more easily say those that they need to use’ (LL 8.5).

The first aspect called, as Varro put it, for historical inquiry (*historia*) into forms individually. The second, in contrast, required a technical study (*ars*), with a few brief precepts (*praecepta*) that are as short as possible. An ancient image, as we have seen, was that of bending, or falling, or in his term ‘declining’, from a vertical. As the nominative singular *homō*, once it is a name assigned to human beings, is declined to form, among others, the genitive singular *hominis*, so, in the same sense, the active verb *legō* ‘I am picking out, am reading’, once assigned to an activity as a form in the first singular, could be declined to form, for example, the perfect *lēgī* ‘I have picked out, have read’ (LL 8.1, 3). Once someone has learned ‘to decline by reason in one word’ (*ratione in uno vocabulo declinare*), the pattern can be extended to a limitless set of other words, so that even when new names (*nomina*) come into use, everyone ‘can at once utter their declined forms without hesitation’ (LL 8.6).

The forms ‘declined’ included all those that in a modern analysis are ‘inflectional’. It is in this context, therefore, among others, that Varro drew distinctions between word classes (Box 4.2). But ‘declining’ also included derivations that in a modern account belong to derivational morphology, by which one lexeme, or word as entered in a modern dictionary, is formed from another. *Equisō* ‘groom, stable boy’ is from *equus* ‘horse’, as are *equēs* ‘horseman’ and *equile* ‘stable for horses’ (LL 8.14, 10.28). *Mammōsae*, of

goddesses ‘well endowed with breasts’, is from *mamma* ‘breast’, and so on. In a later passage Varro draws another distinction, between a type of declining that is ‘deliberate’ (*declinatio voluntaria*) and another that is ‘by nature’ (*naturalis*). A man might, for example, buy a slave from Ephesus, and give him the name *Ephēsius* ‘the Ephesian’. Or he might name him, instead, after the dealer who had sold him; in either case, it is a conscious decision. Declining by nature is instead a matter of ‘common agreement’. Once names have been assigned all people derive their cases in the same way: thus, for example, a genitive *Ephēsī* ‘of the Ephesian’ (LL 8.21–2). There can be an impression, he adds, of ‘nature’ when declining is deliberate, and of deliberation when it is ‘natural’. In this passage, however, and in others ‘deliberate declining’ is also an assignment (*impositio*) of words to things. A later example (LL 9.35, 10.15) is the naming of Rome after its legendary founder Romulus. Declining ‘by nature’ is explained in contrast with brief illustrations that in a modern analysis are of inflections.

Varro’s main concern, as we remarked in passing in Chapter 2, was with the principles as he saw them of analogy (*analogia*) and *anomalia* ‘irregularity’. We do not have or know his sources, but ‘the working out of analogical regularities’ was a part of grammar as defined by Dionysius Thrax; as too, it should be noted, was ‘the discovery of etymologies’ (Box 2.1). Take then a series of nouns related by analogy. As, in Latin, nominative *dominus* ‘master of a household’ was to genitive *dominī*, so nominative *servus* ‘slave’ was to genitive *servī*, so nominative *mūrus* ‘wall’ was to genitive *mūrī*, and so on. In each pair the nominative ends in *us* and the genitive in *ī*; therefore, if the nominative singular is the form in which names were initially assigned to things, the set as a whole is subject to a rule (in Latin *regula*) by which a genitive is derived from it. This rule is valid for one set of nouns; for others the ending may

change differently. If a form is ‘anomalous’ it too can be covered by a rule, valid in the last resort for one derivation only. This line of reasoning is not explicit, and may belong, at what is possibly a wild guess, to a period shortly after Varro was writing. It is reflected, however, to varying degrees, in grammars that came later.

The manual, for example, of Donatus distinguishes ‘couplings’ (Box 6.2) of verbs. In the ‘first’ coupling (*coniugatio*) a second singular in *-ās* is linked to a future in *-bō*; in the third, for example, a second singular in *-is* to a future in *-am*. By implication, *vocās* ‘you are calling’ → *vocābō* ‘I will call’, *regis* ‘you are ruling’ → *regam* ‘I will rule’. ‘Coupling’ was not a property said in the Roman tradition to be one ‘applying to’ nouns. At the end, however, of his section on cases Donatus included rules, or ‘a rule’, for the formation of nouns in the genitive plural and the dative or ablative plural. See, for details, Box 11.1. By implication, for example, *Mūsā* ‘Muse-ABL.SG’ → *Mūsārum* ‘Muse-GEN.PL’.

Box 11.1 The declension of nouns in Latin

The modern term ‘declension’ translates Latin *declinatio* ‘declining’. Each ‘declining’ is a pattern, therefore, of derivation in one set of nouns, distinct from those in others.

By late antiquity five regular patterns were established, which are those still taught nowadays. Texts that distinguish them include two attached to the name of Probus; also the commentary by Servius on Donatus. By Priscian’s day, at the latest, they could be taken for granted, as the framework for the treatment in Book 7 of his grammar of all cases other than the nominative and genitive singular. But they are not found in, for example, the work of Donatus himself; and, in the catechism forming his *Ars minor*, although five nominatives are

exhaustively inflected, they are classed not by declensions but by gender. These are, first, the masculine *magister* ‘teacher’; then the feminine *Mūsa* ‘Muse’; then a neuter *scamnum* ‘bench’; then *sacerdōs* ‘priest’, which was variously masculine or feminine; then the adjective *fēlix* ‘lucky’, whose inflections were of every gender (*GL* 4: 356). Genders did not alone determine inflectional classes, and in other treatments the inflections of, for example, *Mūsa* are listed in illustration of the first declension. We must remember, however, that so long as a grammarian’s pupils themselves spoke the language, his purpose was as much to teach how words were classified by meanings, into genders, numbers, and cases, as to ensure that their forms were derived correctly.

The *Ars minor* adds a brief account of what in verbs would have been ‘couplings’, of a noun in the ablative singular with two forms in the plural. Ablative singulars ended in vowels, variously *ā*, *ō*, and so on. To cite then the larger manual, ‘any nouns which ended with *a* in the ablative singular form a genitive plural ending in the syllable *rum*, and the dative and ablative in *is*.’¹ Thus, in a modern notation, *Mūsā* → *Mūsārum*, *Mūsīs*. ‘Contrary’, however, ‘to this rule’, *deā* goddess-ABL.SG → *deābus* ‘goddess-DAT/ABL.PL’; in that way, Donatus explains, female deities are distinguished from *deīs* ‘god-DAT/ABL.PL’, who would be understood as male. For other nouns the ablative ends in a ‘reduced’, in the modern term a short, *e*: for example, *pariete* ‘wall of building-ABL.SG’. If so, the genitive plural ends in ‘the syllable *um* and the dative and ablative in *bus*’: *parietum*, *parietibus*. In this way Donatus sets out a rule for all possibilities. He also appeals to nominatives where necessary. One instance, for example, where the genitive plural has an *i* before a final

um is where the nominative singular ends in *n* plus *s*: thus nominative *mons* ‘mountain’, genitive plural *montium*.

These are rules, however, for three cases only, which say nothing about overall declensions. It will be obvious too that they do not spell out things that native learners could take in their stride: that the *īs* of *Mūsīs*, for example, replaces and is not simply added to the *ā* of *Mūsā*, or that *pariētibus* has an *i* and not an *e* before *bus*.

1. *quaecumque nomina ablativo casu singulari a littera fuerint terminata, genitivum pluralem in rum syllabam mittunt, dativum et ablativum in is* (GL 4: 378).

In a school grammar, like that of Donatus, relations of this kind were spelled out in part only. It is therefore in Priscian’s scholarly treatise that we find the earliest attempt, as he himself presents it, to formulate exhaustively the rules for what we would now call the inflectional morphology of Latin. In the declining of nouns, which we may take for illustration, he divided his exposition into two parts, to each of which he devoted a whole ‘book’ or chapter. The first step, in his account and others that have followed him, is to derive the genitive singular from the nominative: for the word for ‘Muse’, nominative singular *Mūsa* → genitive singular *Mūsae*; for the word for ‘human being’, nominative singular *homō* → genitive singular *hominis*. What process applied depends, in Priscian’s analysis, on the letter or letters that ended the nominative. *Mūsa*, for example, is one of many that end in *a* and, if such words are masculine or feminine, the genitive is in general formed by adding *e*. Exceptions are also covered: for example, the numeral ‘one’ has a feminine singular *ūna* but a genitive *ūnius*. Yet, he says, *ūnae* is also found in early writers. If a neuter ends in *a* it is a word

from Greek and the genitive is formed by adding *tis*: thus *poēma* ‘poem’ → *poēmatis*. Of the other nominatives that end in vowels, some have in Priscian’s account a short *o*; ‘which, however, older writers often lengthen’. If, by his rule, they are feminine and a *g* or *d* precedes it, *o* is changed to *i* and the genitive is formed by adding *nis*: thus *Carthāgō* → *Carthāginis*. Others lengthen *o* in the genitive: thus, for example, *Cicerōnis*. There are exceptions, such as that of *hominis* from *homō* ‘human being’, where the vowel before *nis* is again *i*. A philologist however as always, Priscian cites a line of early verse in which a form of the accusative implies a genitive *homōnis*. In this way, in Book 6 of his grammar, he works through every possible ending of the nominative and gives both rules for the genitive and exceptions to them (GL 2: 195–282).

‘When the nominative and genitive singular have been found’ then, as Priscian remarks at the outset, ‘the other cases, both of the singular and the plural number, are easily determined’ (GL 2: 194). At this point, however, the distinctions between declensions (Box 11.1) become crucial. In the first declension, which is that of the word for ‘Muse’, the dative singular, like the genitive, ends in the diphthong *ae*. In the accusative singular this diphthong changes to *am*: genitive singular *Mūsae* → accusative singular *Mūsam*. In the ablative singular the form ends in a long *ā*, to which, in forming the genitive plural, a syllable *rum* is added. By implication, therefore, nominative singular *Mūsa* → ablative singular *Mūsā* → genitive plural *Mūsārum*. In forming the dative and ablative plural, the *ā* of the ablative changes explicitly to *īs*. In this way Priscian works through each successive declension, with exceptions noted where necessary. In the third, for example, the nominative singular can end in any of seventy-eight, ‘or slightly more’, ways: many in *is*; several in, among others, *ens*; just one in, for example, *ūr*. All endings found are illustrated (GL 2: 311–24). For nouns of

this declension the genitive singular ends, with some exceptions, in *is*.

Here and elsewhere it is taken for granted that, if their gender is neuter, nouns in the accusative will be the same as nominatives. Otherwise, in the third declension, the accusative singular is formed, with specific exceptions, by changing the *is* of the genitive to *em*: thus, for the word for ‘human being’, *hominis* → *hominem*. The ablative singular is formed, for many nouns, with a short *e*: from the genitive (implicitly), *hominis* → *homine*. For others it ended in, though Priscian does not specify its length, an *ī*; for many, both forms are attested. Evidence for this is surveyed as systematically as possible (*GL* 2: 331–49). Given then the form of the ablative singular, that of the genitive plural largely, but not entirely, follows from it. In Priscian’s account, if the ablative ends or can end in an *i*, it is shortened and *um* is added. But to that there are exceptions. If the ablative ends in *e* and the nominative ends in two consonants, the *e* is changed to a short *i* and *um* is added to that. There are then exceptions to that. So too for some nouns where the nominative ends in a single consonant. But finally, for all others, *e* is changed to *um*: thus, for example, *homine* → *hominum*.

Morphology without morphemes

The five declensions take up all of Book 7; the inflections of verbs Books 9 and 10. Enough has been cited, however, to make clear both how Priscian handled details and the criteria for derivation that he and other grammarians, however implicitly, had in mind. The heading I have inserted at this point is, of course, anachronistic: the morpheme in particular is a unit invented only towards the end of the nineteenth century. ‘Affix’ is older: it is used, for example, as a term assumed to be familiar, in a letter of

Descartes in 1629 on a proposed universal language (ed. Bridoux 1953: 912). But it had been adopted in western Europe no earlier than the Renaissance. Ancient thinking can be distinguished, as we have seen from the beginning, by the absence of such a concept.

On a casual reading it may sometimes seem that this was not so. *Hominum*, for example, is a genitive plural formed by the addition of *um*. This implies, as we are tempted to see it, a division between *homin-* and *-um*; which, in a modern analysis, are a stem and a suffix. The suffix forms a genitive plural, and it is natural to say, as many linguists now say, that it determines the meaning of the whole. It will be obvious, however, even from a survey as selective as I have given, that Priscian was not thinking in this way. In a modern analysis the genitive singular of the same noun would be divided into a stem *homin-* plus *-is*. Even in a language where segmentation can be disputed, no linguist would talk of a stem *homi-* followed by a suffix *-nis*. But the question Priscian was asking was not how *hominis* could be divided into units, but how it was derived from the nominative *homō*. *Nis* forms a syllable, and the natural answer was that first *ō* changes to *i* and then this syllable is added. In the word, for example, for 'dew' a nominative *rōs* is changed, in part similarly, to a genitive *rōris*. In a modern account *-is* is again a suffix, and is joined to a stem which ends, as a variant at least, in *r*. In Priscian's account, the *s* of *rōs* is removed and *ris* is added; at this point again a genitive ending *is* is not abstracted.

Nor do inflectional meanings determine which form is derived from which. In Priscian's account of participles, a form which is classed as future and active is related not to another word with either of these properties, but to an inflection in *ū* of a verbal noun described since antiquity, for reasons that escape us, as *supinum* (literally 'lying flat on its back'). Thus, for the verb for 'to love' a future participle:

amātūrus

love-FUT.ACT.NOM.SG.MASC

‘being about to love’

was derived from a ‘supine’ *amātū*. Here as elsewhere, the criteria are not explicit. But the derivation is as simple as it could be: just add the syllable *rus*. It is also completely regular: if the forms in *ū* are taken as given, those in *ūrus* follow without exception. Nouns are inflected only for case and number, and derivations vary, as we have seen. But words were made up, as we have seen in Chapter 3, of letters and syllables. In the derivation, again, of nouns a form such as *Mūsārum*, which is genitive and plural, is derived from one like *Mūsā*, which is ablative and genitive, rather than from any which shares either of its own semantic properties. The rule simply adds *rum*, which is as a whole a syllable. In this way Priscian established what we may call a chain of derivations, in which at every stage specific letters or specific syllables are either changed or added. Thus, for this noun, *Mūsa* → *Mūsā* → *Mūsārum*; for the forms for ‘human being’ *homō* → *hominis* → *homine* → *hominum*. Only the ‘leading form’ of each, which was assumed to be the nominative singular, is fixed by a criterion other than of simplicity or generality.

We have no precise equivalent in Greek of these four books of Priscian’s grammar. The criteria, however, by which a chain of derivation is established are implicit in a series of ‘introductory rules’ (*eisagōgikoi kanones*) by Theodosius of Alexandria, and two long commentaries on his work by Choeroboscus. The treatment of nouns is divided by genders, with the first ‘rule’ covering, as a model, the inflections of the masculine *Aías* ‘Ajax’; genitive *Aíantos*. In forming the dative, however, Theodosius remarks more generally that any genitive which ends in *os* exchanges this ending, without any change in accent or quantities, for *i*. Among others,

therefore, *Aíantos* → *Aíanti*. The next ‘rule’ or model is illustrated with the inflection of a word for ‘snail shell’ (*kokhlías*, genitive *kokhliou*); and so on. The same method of exposition, in which single forms exemplify more general processes, is taken to an extreme in his account of regular verbs. Theodosius chose one for illustration, which in a modern analysis has the root *tupt-* ‘hit’. All actual and potential forms are worked through: first the singulars of the present indicative, then the duals and plurals, then the singulars of the imperfect, and so on, ending with the corresponding participles. Processes are described in general for the first form that they derive, and in later applications are taken as given.

The leading form for verbs was the first singular of the present indicative active: therefore, for this verb, *túptō* ‘I am hitting’. ‘Leading form’ is a modern term, as we have remarked, which had no equivalent in antiquity, and if the choice were simply of a starting-point for derivations a different form might well have been preferred. The form, however, initially assigned to an activity was assumed to be the one referring to the here and now of speakers who engage in it. From first singular *túptō* is formed a second singular *túpteis*, and from that the third singular *túptei*: in succession, therefore, *túptō* → *túpteis* → *túptei*. In either case the rule is formulated in a way that can apply elsewhere, either to other forms for ‘to hit’ or for other verbs in general. For ‘to hit’ compare, in the future, *túpsō* (first singular) → *túpseis* → *túpsei*.

In the plural the first person, *túptomen*, is formed with an *o* that is also found in the stem, as we would now describe it, of the same tense of a participle. This has the genitive singular *túptontos* ‘of someone hitting’. In two operations, therefore, first remove *tos*; then add *men* in place of *n*. The nominative singular of the participle is derived from the leading form by adding *n*: *túptō* → *túptōn*. Likewise, for in the future, *túpsō* → *túpsōn*. The genitive is implicitly

formed in accordance with a rule for nouns: *túptōn*, *túpsōn* → *túptontos*, *túpsontos*. *Túpton* and *túpson* are as it happens a neuter form of the participles, derived by one operation from the genitive. In summary therefore, for the present, *túptō* (first singular) → *túptōn* (nominative singular of the participle) → *túptontos* (genitive singular) → *túpton* (neuter) → *túptomen* (first plural).

The forms of the participle are again part of the chain that leads to the third plural. From the genitive *túptontos*, which is the form for all genders, is derived a nominative singular *túptousa* which is specifically feminine. From this the dative plural, for all genders, is derived by the exchange of *a* for *i*: *túptousa* → *túptousi*. But that is also the form of the third plural. Therefore a further rule is simply one of homophony: *túptousi* → *túptousi*. In the future, likewise, *túpsontos* (genitive singular) → *túpsousa* (nominative singular feminine) → *túpsousi* (dative plural) → *túpsousi*. Further details can be seen in Box 11.2; the objective, however, was clearly to establish individual operations, on letters and syllables, which would be as simple as possible, regardless of the length of the chains that derivations formed and relations of meaning between the words they linked.

Box 11.2 Theodosius of Alexandria on the forms of verbs in Greek

Most verbs had, like *túptō*, a first singular in *ō*. For a small group, however, in very common use, the corresponding form ended in *mi*: for example, *eimí* ‘I am’. Each type was dealt with separately; one within the framework of forms of ‘to hit’, the other of forms of ‘to put’ (first singular *títhēmi*).

Either framework, therefore, is a paradigm in the modern sense, of in effect a lexical unit. Successive sections deal first

with the active forms of the indicative; then the passives. Middle forms are compared under either heading. The next section deals with the infinitives; those that follow with subjunctives and optatives, and finally with the participles. Though the participles were, implicitly, another part of an utterance and their case inflections follow those of nouns, they are listed as if they were another mood. Tenses are taken in order from the present to the future: within each the first, second, and third singular, then duals, then plurals.

The first rule for *túptō* states that any verb which ends in *ō* ends on a low pitch: it is accented, that is, on the syllable preceding. Some forms, however, are contracted: for example an underlying form, as we would now say, for 'I make' (*poiéō*) is contracted to *poiō*. The second rule states that any first singular ending in *ō* forms a second singular by exchanging it for *eis*: thus *túpteis*; also, for example, *poieis*. In the forms of 'to make' a falling tone on the final syllable results, as Theodosius explains, from the contraction. Where the same rule applies later, as in the formation of the corresponding future, the form *túpseis* from *túpsō* is simply listed at its place in the paradigm, without comment. Alternatively, when rules have been given earlier, Theodosius may add the reminder 'it has been said'.

The third rule states that any second person ending in *s* forms the third person by dropping *s*. For the verb 'to make' *poieis* similarly becomes *poiei*, and in the imperfect for 'to say', which Theodosius also cites in illustration, second singular *éleges* → *élege*. This rule also applies, for example, in the optative: second singular *túptois* → third singular *túptoi*. The deletion of *s* is a 'common principle' (*koinos logos*), as Theodosius calls it in his section on the perfect, that holds for verbs in

general (GG 4.1: 48, l.19); but there is more to be said, as he has already signalled, about both the perfect and what is traditionally the 'first' aorist. In both tenses, the first singular ends in *a*: *tétupha*, *étupsa*. Add *s* to form the second singular: *tétuphas*, *étupsas*. But then, as Theodosius explains, the deletion of *s* would result in a third person identical to the first. Hence, in an accompanying twist (*tropē*), the vowel changes: *tétuphe*, *étupse*.

It is in formulating rules for these three persons, the first, second, and third singular, that Theodosius came closest, in effect though not in intention, to a modern distinction between a stem and a termination. In the present, that is, *túptō* = *túpt* + *ō*; *túpteis* = *túpt* + *eis*; *túptei* = *túpt* + *ei*. Rules for the endings are stated in as simple and regular a way as possible: in the present or future, *ō* → *eis* → *ei*; in the perfect or aorist, *a* → *as* → *e*. As such they apply, implicitly, to whatever word, in whatever part of the paradigm, is within their scope. What precedes, in the perfect especially, is often irregular and Theodosius deals only with generalities. In the imperfect, however, the *e* of the first singular, *étupton*, is traditionally an 'augment', added as a syllable, he explains, when a primary form (*thema*) begins with a consonant.¹ The same process applies later in the derivation of the aorist *étupsa*. The perfect, *tétupha*, is derived in part, as Theodosius explains, by reduplication. It is characteristic, however, of his method, that the initial *t* is added to the *e* already added to form the imperfect. To the perfect, then, a further *e* is added to form a pluperfect. With other changes, therefore, imperfect *é-tupton* → perfect *t-é-tupha* → pluperfect *e-t-e-túphein*.

On the changes to the end, as we would now say, of the stems Theodosius remarked that two tenses 'bear on the formation of'

(*paraskeuazousi*) the perfect: the imperfect, as we have seen, and the future. If the perfect ends in *a*, it is immediately preceded by either *k*, or *ph*, or *kh*. If the stem of the future, as we would now say, ends in *s*, the perfect has *k*: these are the forms we now perceive as regular. If it ends in *ps* or *ks*, both of which were represented by single letters in the Greek alphabet, the perfects have respectively *ph* (thus *túps-ō*, *tétuph-a*) and *kh*.

1. *ei mèn apò sumphónou árkhoito tò théma...* (GG 4.1: 45, ll. 9–10).

This treatment has often been held up for ridicule, on the ground that forms of *túptō* were included which are not found anywhere in classical literature. From a philological viewpoint, certainly, the work of Priscian is more congenial. We need to ask, however, what else Theodosius could have done.

His subject, plainly, was not ‘to hit’ itself, but all forms of verbs that were regular. A linguist might now say, for example, that for any root *X*, if irregularities are excepted, the second singular of the present indicative is formed by adding *eis*: *X*, that is, $\rightarrow X + eis$. If we were to derive forms in a way much closer to his, we could say that, for any first singular of the form *X + ō*, the second singular is formed by an operation $\bar{o} \rightarrow eis$. The values of *X* would be *tupt* ‘hit’, *leip* ‘leave behind’, *leg* ‘say’, and other roots as entered in a lexicon. But ‘*X*’ is an abstraction foreign to ancient grammars, of a kind that I have known to be distasteful to some modern literary scholars. The alternative was to take for illustration one word in particular, which is a model for others. The Greek term *paradeigma* ‘model, precedent, exemplar’ had no established use in ancient grammars. A ‘paradigm’, however, in the sense now usual in linguistics, was set out and analysed, so far as it was regular, for

just one verb. The crucial claim is not that all forms listed can be found in texts, but that where derivations are given they are or would be regular. In a modern treatment, $X + eis$ describes the regular form of a second singular. X is a root: substitute, then, any root unless it is excepted. In its ancient equivalent $túpt + eis$ describes just one form that is regular: but in the derivation, in general, of first singulars substitute for $túptō$ any of $leipō$, $legō$, and so on, provided again that they are not excepted.

If there is an objection to the method of Theodosius and Choeroboscus it is not perhaps that such lists were unjustified, but simply that this verb was not the most regular they could have chosen.

Chapter 12

Final comments

An ancient grammar in context' is the title of an excellent book by Sluiter (1990). If my own title does not follow hers, it is because I am reluctant to invite comparison between an original contribution to scholarship and an exposition of what specialists will usually take for granted. Only, however, in its context can the achievement of the Graeco-Roman grammarians be dispassionately assessed.

The context is in part that of their own profession, and the role it had, and they had, in ancient society. The grammarians whose writings survive were more than pedagogues. Even a simple manual could be written with an awareness of alternative views on many issues, which might be cited or criticized. Other grammars were works of scholarship, going well beyond what teachers could have needed in practice. There are moments when, in reading Apollonius Dyscolus especially, one feels some empathy with a mind not so unlike that of a linguist nineteen centuries later. Yet it is in the light of a preoccupation with the study of texts, of older literature that called for philological analysis of one passage after another, that we can best appreciate in particular why no general theory of syntax, of the kind that linguists have taken to be essential

since the 1950s, developed out of the insights that to us, with such a theory as our background, were so clearly there.

Another part of the context is formed by the languages on which and in which ancient scholars worked. A Roman grammarian described Latin, though he might on occasion refer to ways in which it was different from Greek. In part he used Greek terminology, as throughout the account by Donatus of the 'vices and virtues of speech'; and in Priscian's grammar, which stands in a different tradition, examples in Greek are cited for comparison in many places. A Greek grammarian, in turn, wrote only on Greek. This may in part have helped to preserve a system of education independent of the Romans who had come to rule them. Each wrote, moreover, only in his own language. Educated Romans were themselves expected to learn Greek, but not, as we would now think natural, with the help of a Greek grammar in their own language. Many people in the eastern Mediterranean also had, in practice, to learn Latin. Evidence of how they did includes a partial translation, into Greek, of a late manual by Dositheus (*GL* 7: 376 and following). The translation is added, in an early mediaeval manuscript, word by word: thus, to start from the beginning, *ars* = *tekhnē* 'the skill' *grammatica* = *grammatikē* 'of grammar' *est* = *esti* 'is' *scientia* = *gnōsis* 'knowledge', and so on. But it is no more than partial, and it is clear that Dositheus originally wrote in Latin. It was not until the 1490s, at the height of the Italian Renaissance, that a grammar of Greek was published in Latin, and it was only from this period onwards that a knowledge of Latin was a foundation for the study of, for example, Hebrew, or it became a normal practice for Spanish priests to write in Spanish on indigenous languages of central and south America.

Nor were the ancient grammarians concerned with any other language, such as Syriac, Egyptian, or Punic, that we know to

have been spoken in the empire. It is therefore essential to bear in mind the character of the only ones with which they were professionally familiar.

They are languages whose analysis is centred, or is most naturally centred, on the word. We have seen for Latin, in Chapter 5, that the endings of words were not matched neatly with their meanings; nor is it always easy to divide words into what are now called morphemes. In the same way, for example, in Greek a final *eis* could mark the second singular of a verb:

túpt-ei-s

hit-PRES.IND-2.SG

Or should this word be segmented *túpt-e-is*, or maybe *túpte-i-s*? In a noun, however, the same ending could mark a nominative or accusative plural:

pól-eis

city-NOM/ACC.PL

Or should that rather be *póle-is*? A linguist may insist that morphemes are self-evident in many languages; ‘therefore’, though this scarcely follows, they have to be established universally. But it is not surprising that, for the nearest approximation to an ancient ‘linguist’, faced with the evidence of just one or just two of the older Indo-European type, no unit smaller than the word had meaning.

A sentence was, in turn, composed of words, related one to another in accordance with specific rules, with only some restrictions on their order. In a modern analysis, the unit called in antiquity a *logos* or *oratio* is made up of a hierarchy of intermediate units: traditionally, in English, phrases and subordinate clauses. These have specific structures, which distinguish categories of

units at higher levels, including that of the sentence as the largest. Thus in English, for comparison, a phrase may be formed by an article and a noun plus a relative clause:

the people [who came]

The clause (in square brackets) is now perceived as having its own structure, of a subject *who* which combines with a verb. But for Apollonius Dyscolus, as we have seen, no such unit was primary. In the gist of an example cited in Chapter 10:

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----|------------|-----|-----------------|
| <i>ándra</i> | ... | <i>hós</i> | ... | <i>plánkthē</i> |
| man | | who | | wandered |

a noun, which is one word, connects with a postpositive article, which is another word, and the article in turn connects with a third word, which is the verb. Utterances were by implication built up in this way, by a network of relations between words as their successive parts.

To a linguist educated since the 1950s it may seem that ancient writers failed to notice what is obvious. In a language, however, with the structure of Ancient Greek or Latin, the argument for an analysis based on clauses and phrases is not nearly as compelling as in, among others, modern English.

Compare, for example, the structure of interrogatives. In English they are distinguished by the position of auxiliary verbs: *Is she coming?*, *Does he drink?*, and so on. Others begin with words like *who* or *why*. But with these too an auxiliary is, as many analysts see it, moved or added: compare *Who can she see?* with *She can see him*, or *Why did she leave?* with *She left*. A natural way to describe the process is as part of a specific construction, which is that of a clause at a higher level. The term ‘interrogative’ can therefore be applied both to a word like *who* or *why*, which is a

‘*wh*-form’ in the current jargon, and to the larger unit it begins, which is an interrogative clause or an interrogative sentence. In Latin, there were similarly what we might call ‘*qu*-forms’: *quis* as a nominative for ‘who?’ or *quāre* as one word for ‘why?’. As words they were ‘interrogative’, and as such formed a class, as Apollonius Dyscolus pointed out in Greek, which cut across the parts of an utterance that were ‘nominal’ and ‘adverbial’. In an utterance, moreover, like in Latin:

| | |
|------------------|---------------|
| <i>quis</i> | <i>venit?</i> |
| which-NOM.SG | comes |
| ‘Who is coming?’ | |

or:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| <i>quem</i> | <i>videt?</i> |
| which-ACC.SG | sees |
| ‘Who can he/she see?’ | |

their position was restricted. But this is a position that other words, in similar relations, could have, as one alternative, as easily. Compare *Cicerō venit* ‘Cicero is coming’, *Cicerōnem videt* ‘... can see Cicero’. There was no need to say of any unit larger than a word that it too, as a unit, was ‘interrogative’. In an utterance such as:

| |
|------------------------|
| <i>venit-ne?</i> |
| come-3.SG=INTERR |
| ‘Is he/she/it coming?’ |

the enclitic *-ne* was another word whose meaning was specifically interrogative. But it was added to utterances that were in other respects no different from those that represented statements. Protagoras, in the fifth century BC, is said by Diogenes Laertius to have distinguished four types of utterance: a wish, a question, an

answer, and a command (D.L. 9.53). In grammars, however, the meaning of a question reduces, in Latin, to those of words like *ne* or *quis*. That of a command or a wish reduces, in turn, to a verb whose mood (*enklisis*) was imperative or, as described in antiquity in Latin as in Greek, optative.

If any sequence of words did tend to be continuous it was a clause introduced by, in particular, a conjunction. In an example, again, from Latin:

| | | |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <i>ut</i> | <i>veniat</i> | <i>Cicerō</i> |
| so that | come-SUBJ.3.SG | Cicero |
| 'so that Cicero comes' | | |

the whole can be seen as a unit, which we may class, as a whole, as 'purposive' or, in the traditional term, as 'final'. Within it, the verb must be subjunctive. But this meaning can in principle be reduced to those of *ut*, on the one hand, and a verb in that mood on the other. They are themselves connected, as one word to another. But no further difference in Latin was specific to the construction of a clause, like the difference, for comparison, in the order of main and auxiliary verbs in German.

In assessing, then, the achievement of Graeco-Roman grammar, and the influence it was to have in later centuries as a model for other languages, we have to bear in mind first that the grammarians were professionally teachers, of both language and literature; secondly, that they worked on two of the older Indo-European languages, whose type is not universal. They may have thought that other languages were similar; but that was not their problem. Neither was it their problem to reflect philosophically on the origin of language. What was assumed, however, in antiquity is a third part of the background into which the concept of a grammar can be seen to fit.

What linguists now believe is very much a hot potato. In one view, the evolution of language can be traced to a genetic mutation. In a myth, however, that Plato put in the mouth of Protagoras, it formed part of the development of human societies. Like, for example, a house it was the product of a 'technical wisdom' (*entechnos sophia*), which is peculiar to human beings (Plato, *Prot.* 322a). In a related myth, as retailed by the historian Diodorus Siculus, people had none of the physical advantages that the gods had bestowed on other creatures. They were not strong like lions, they could not run very fast, and so on. Originally, therefore, they were solitary and bestial. In compensation, however, they had the gift of reason, and through that they began to band together, as a protection from their environment, and to recognize each other's nature. Vocal sounds that were in the beginning meaningless and random were gradually articulated (Chapter 3), separately in different societies, to become the names for things in shared systems of communication. In such myths, what resulted had implicitly the character to be expected of a social institution, with a structure that is basically rational, tempered as always by exceptions.

The grammarians did not define, nor did they need to define, 'a language.' For what is implied, however, it is tempting to cite Chomsky in the 1950s:

From now on I will consider a *language* to be a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length and constructed out of a finite set of elements. All natural languages in their spoken or written form are languages in this sense, since each natural language has a finite number of phonemes (or letters in its alphabet) and each sentence is representable as a finite sequence of these phonemes (or letters) ...

(1957: 13)

For 'elements' read, in Greek, *stoikheia*, in Latin *elementa*. For 'phonemes (or letters)' read the ancient term for 'letters': Latin *lit(t)erae*, Greek *grammata*. For 'sentence' read the ancient *logos* or *oratio*, which I have translated 'utterance'. If there was a difference, at this early stage in Chomsky's thinking, it lay simply in the level of abstraction. 'Natural languages' are identified as no more than a subclass of 'languages' in general. To say too that a sentence is 'representable as' a sequence of phonemes was not to say that it literally 'is' one.

But this difference is crucial. In the sixty years since Chomsky was writing, the criteria for abstraction have become a central problem in linguistic theory. Levels of representation have at times run riot. In antiquity, however, the degree of abstraction was minimal. A word, in particular, was defined as part of a vocal sound, as a unit that was physically real. It was literally, in terms that Saussure could still use of a 'signifiant' just over a hundred years ago, 'une tranche de sonorité'. A syllable and an 'element' were smaller units of sound, an utterance a larger. Any statement that could be made about a language was made over, as a modern writer might say, such units.

In particular, therefore, there was no division between a grammar and a lexicon. A dictionary as we know it has its origin in practice in the earlier technique of glossing: of explaining in the margins or between the lines of manuscripts what was meant by a word or expression that was difficult, and gathering such explanations into ordered glossaries. A later step, which in western Europe dates back only a few centuries, was to deal with every lexeme, as entered again in practice, comprehensively. Grammars and dictionaries could then be complementary. *Horses*, for example, can be classified in a grammar as the plural of a noun, formed regularly with the ending *s*. As a word of such a category it can

combine syntactically with, for example, a preceding *the*. As a lexical unit, 'horse' is entered in the dictionary; it is a noun; it has the meanings '*Equus caballus*' and so on. The link between the grammar and a dictionary then lies in the modern 'parts of speech', which are classes of units such as 'horse' or, as it has also been distinguished, HORSE. Such categories may be divided, at the same level of abstraction, into subcategories. But there is no need to include a lexical meaning in a grammar, or the regular formation of a plural, for example, in a dictionary.

This spells out what may now seem tediously familiar. So engrained, however, has the concept of a dictionary become that modern theorists often reify it without thinking. People, for example, are assumed to have in their minds a 'mental lexicon.' In ancient grammars such a concept was not central. It is sobering, therefore, to reflect on how successfully a language could be analysed without it.

How far did analyses go astray?

To make clear how a language was described, and the reasons why this model was taken for granted, is not to argue that in a more general perspective it was right. We know now things that ancient writers did not know, especially about languages whose structure is unlike those of the ones they were concerned with. If we choose, however, to pass judgment on what was achieved, we must be careful to distinguish analyses that were justified in their terms, even though we now no longer agree, from specific errors or misunderstandings.

In our view, for example, an adjective is one 'part of speech' and a noun another. Participles, on the other hand, are forms of the same part of speech as verbs. This is as true of modern grammars

of Ancient Greek or Latin as of, for example, English. What has changed, however, is not any perception of the facts, but the criteria by which grammars are established. If the modern account of adjectives is right, it is because we are no longer looking at these languages alone, but at others in which forms with meanings such as 'good' or 'big' or 'green' are subject to rules that may not apply to nouns, or may be more like those applying to verbs. In any grammar there is, therefore, a tension between what is specific and what is universal. If participles are not a separate part of speech, it is because a part of speech is now a class of lexical units. In English, for example, *came* and *coming* are identified, in the first instance, as forms of COME or 'to come', or as sharing a lexical morpheme. But for an ancient grammarian the primary insight was that participles and verbs had different roles as forms of words in the construction of utterances.

If differences of this kind are discounted, the basic structure of Ancient Greek and Latin, as described in modern grammars, is still for the most part as established early in the Christian era. The analysis of the Stoics and their successors was in that sense right. We are left with points of detail, where either we have reached an understanding where ancient grammarians failed, or ancient categories were, as we now see it, misapplied.

One thing that was notoriously not understood was the phonetic difference between voiced and voiceless consonants. In English, for example, *beer* is distinguished from *peer* by the moment at which the vocal cords begin to vibrate, in the articulation of the vowel [ɪə], relative to the release of the preceding plosive. The timing varies across dialects, and for 'p' and 'b' in Latin it was probably different. All the evidence, however, confirms that Latin had four plosives, written *b*, *d*, *g*, and *gu*, which were in that sense voiced, with four voiceless counterparts, written as *p*, *t*,

c, and *qu*. Greek also had three that were voiced, written β, δ, and γ, opposed in the same way to three that were voiceless, written π, τ, and κ, in a system in which three more are described as voiceless aspirates, written as φ, θ, and χ. The evidence for classical Greek is that these too were plosives, but with the onset of voice appreciably later than the release of closure.

Table 12.1 Plosive consonants in Greek

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| voiceless | [p] | [t] | [k] |
| voiced | [b] | [d] | [g] |
| voiceless aspirate | [p ^h] | [t ^h] | [k ^h] |

Of the nine plosive consonants in Greek, as set out conventionally in Table 12.1, those in the third row were described, as we have seen, as ‘hairy’ (*dasea*). The term can also be translated ‘rough’ or ‘thick’, and such consonants were described in the first century, by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, as having an addition of breath. Those in the first row were opposed as ‘bare’ (*psila*). But the opposition between the first row and the second was not clear at all; and, not for the last time in the history of linguistics, terms like ‘middle’ were used to fill a gap in understanding. For ‘Dionysius Thrax’, as we have seen, [b], [d], and [g] were *mesa*, and in Latin, where the only opposition was of voiced to voiceless, similar consonants were meaninglessly contrasted as *mediae* with those that were *tenuis* ‘thin’.

The ancient Indian grammarians, as has often been remarked, knew better. The system, however, in the abstract was not misunderstood: neither the three columns of ‘mute’ consonants as shown formally in Table 12.1 nor the places of articulation. It is instructive to recall for comparison that at one time in the twentieth century the nature of an opposition in many West African languages,

between vowels articulated with the tongue root advanced or retracted, was similarly a puzzle. When the truth was pointed out it was a revelation: how had we missed what was obviously right? Nevertheless one series of vowels, described for want of a better term as ‘tense’, had long been identified as forming one side of a single contrast in phonology, and represented as such when the languages were written, in opposition to another series, described as uncomprehendingly as ‘lax’.

A more serious error, as we now perceive it, concerned the role in Latin of verb forms such as *lēgerō* ‘I will have read’. In modern accounts this is a ‘future perfect’ and its mood is indicative. That was also implied on formal grounds by Varro (Table 7.3). For the grammarians, however, ‘perfect’ was a subdivision of past time alone and, as futures, such forms were instead ‘subjunctive’. To understand, however, how they came to see its meaning in that way, we need to consider not this form in isolation, but the system as a whole of moods and ‘times’ in which it fitted.

In Greek there was a clear distinction, in the inflection of verbs, between an optative and a subjunctive. In a wish such as, for example:

mē génōito
not come to be-PRES.OPT.3.SG
‘May it not happen!’

the optative is marked by a suffix *-oi*, as we would now describe it, in contrast to an *-ē* in the subjunctive and the absence of either in the indicative. In Latin, however, a modern grammar will draw no distinction in verbs between a subjunctive and optative. In an utterance whose meaning as a whole was of a wish:

utinam *ita* *esset*
would that so be-IMPF.SUBJ.3.SG
‘I do wish he/she were like that’

the verb, as we now see it, is a subjunctive. That the whole is a wish is marked not by the form of *esset* ‘(he/she/it) were’ but by a particle *utinam* ‘would that’, with which the verb combines. But for the Roman grammarians *esset* was in such an utterance not, as glossed, an imperfect subjunctive. It was instead a present optative, whose meaning was distinguished, in a system full of syncretisms, from those of both a present subjunctive and four other optatives. Of the forms set out in Table 12.2, for the verb for ‘read’,

Table 12.2 Optatives and subjunctives as distinguished by Donatus

| | present | past | | | future |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | imperfect | perfect | pluperfect | |
| optative | <i>legerem</i> | <i>legerem</i> | <i>lēgissem</i> | <i>lēgissem</i> | <i>legam</i> |
| subjunctive | <i>legam</i> | <i>legerem</i> | <i>lēgerim</i> | <i>lēgissem</i> | <i>lēgerō</i> |

those in the first row were all distinguished in the shorter manual of Donatus, where they were listed in combination with *utinam*. Those in the second were all listed in turn, in combination with *cum* ‘since’, for which a subjunctive was obligatory. Now from a modern viewpoint this too is a mistake. As we now describe it, Latin had quite simply four subjunctives, as in Table 12.3, which contrasted with the corresponding indicatives. What is the point in separating meanings that are not marked formally?

One possible reason for the ancient treatment is that a system of moods (*enkliseis*) which was justified in Greek was simply carried over into the analysis of Latin. This would be an error,

Table 12.3 Subjunctives in Latin in a modern analysis

| present | imperfect | perfect | pluperfect |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <i>legam</i> | <i>legerem</i> | <i>lēgerim</i> | <i>lēgissem</i> |

however, of a type that Roman grammarians were able to avoid in other instances. They did not, for example, establish a formal distinction in Latin between a perfect and an aorist (compare for Greek Table 7.1). A more plausible reason is that *tempora*, or what we now call ‘tenses’, were conceived of in antiquity as literally ‘times’. In the example with Latin *utinam*, the verb has been glossed in the modern style as an imperfect subjunctive. The meaning, however, is that someone should be in the desired state at the time of speaking. For a grammarian, therefore, for whom the ‘tense’ of a verb was its time value *esset* had, in such an utterance, to be classed as present. If the wish had been for the past the verb would also have been *esset*. As a form then used for ‘wishing’ *esset* had two meanings and, like *legerem* in Table 12.2, had at least two separate places in a paradigm. But its use in wishing was then different from its use with, for example, *cum*. In *cum sit* ‘since he/she/it is’, where the time is again the present, the form was instead a present *sit*. Therefore *esset* and *sit* have to be distinguished, as a present optative and a present subjunctive, like *legerem* and *legam* in the first column of Table 12.2. If the time with *cum* were past imperfect, the subjunctive would instead have been *esset*. Therefore this is a form that must be listed yet again, as a past subjunctive as well as a present optative and a past optative.

The reasoning is impeccable, once we accept the ancient view of *tempora* as ‘times’. It is only because a ‘tense’ is thought of differently, and from an ancient viewpoint wrongly, that a subjunctive whose form is ‘past’ can now be seen as used, with *utinam* ‘would

be', with a meaning that is not past but present. If this reasoning is right, it is also easy to see how the 'future perfect', as we now describe it, had to be the 'future subjunctive'. The mood which we call subjunctive was in Greek *hupotaktikē* 'arranged under'; it was one especially of a verb 'subordinate', in a literal translation, to another. For Roman grammarians it was again the (*modus*) *coniunctivus* 'connecting'. Its uses varied, but a form such as *lēgerō* in Table 12.2 did have future reference and it could be subordinate to a future indicative. There were already five indicatives, as we have seen in Chapter 7, but so far only four subjunctives, variously present and past. Since the 'time' was certainly future, by far the neatest set of oppositions was accordingly as shown in Table 12.4, following again the systematic listing by Donatus. *Legam* appears twice, but the syncretism was in the first singular only. For the single column, moreover, in the future Priscian went on to offer a reasoned explanation: that future time was so uncertain that, commendably, the language did not divide it as it divided the past (*GL* 2: 405).

Table 12.4 Indicatives and subjunctives in an ancient analysis

| | present | past | | | future |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | imperfect | perfect | pluperfect | |
| indicative | <i>legō</i> | <i>legēbam</i> | <i>lēgī</i> | <i>lēgeram</i> | <i>legam</i> |
| subjunctive | <i>legam</i> | <i>legerem</i> | <i>lēgerim</i> | <i>lēgissem</i> | <i>lēgerō</i> |

What for us is then an error was a consequence of a different assumption about the nature of grammatical categories, which ties in clearly, as we have noted from the outset, with the belief that language had a structure that was not just regular, but in rational correspondence with reality. It may therefore be worth asking how far other forms of reasoning that are now disparaged,

especially in later periods in western Europe, can be interpreted as flowing from this view of language in general.

Take in particular the assumption, in prescriptive grammars in the past few centuries, that ancient rules, or ancient definitions of grammatical units, should apply to, for example, English. Instances are well-known. English *I*, for example, is said to be a pronoun in the nominative; *me* to be accusative. Therefore, many authorities have argued, it is wrong to say *First came me*, where *me* has the function of a subject, or *It was sold to you and I*, with *I* following a preposition. Prepositions are in turn words that in the traditional definition are ‘preposed’ to something else. Therefore it would be wrong to say *the people it was sold to*, instead of *the people to whom it was sold*, or to publish a book with the title *I have given this one*. It was that kind of fatwa that drove many linguists, in the mid-twentieth century especially, to rail against traditional grammar teaching.

We can hardly blame the ancient grammarians for things said about another language, a millennium or more later. In comparing, however, such a ruling to an Islamic fatwa I am underlining that the arguments it rests on are not arbitrary. Nor does it appeal to observations of how people speak, of what was in Latin *consuetudo*. If that were the criterion, some proscriptions, at least, might be far easier to justify. These are conclusions instead of pundits who present themselves or are regarded by their audience as experts, who are trying to argue logically from first principles. Their criterion is that of, in Latin, *ratio*: of reason based, however, not on English as a language with its own regularity and its own presumed correspondence with reality, but on the ‘logic’ of one that was different.

Ancient writers did not say that, if a language has a rational structure, it must have a set of words that meet their definition of

a preposition, or a rule by which a pronoun in a certain relation to a verb must be in the accusative. The definition held, however, and the rule held, for the languages they worked on; and these were regarded in general as a product of reason. A millennium later, the 'vernacular' languages of Europe needed, as it appeared, to be reduced to rule, and a natural model was the grammar of Latin, which in the Middle Ages had been simply called '*grammatica*', as inherited from Donatus and Priscian. It is not surprising, therefore, that where prepositions are 'stranded' or pronouns have a form that is not licensed by it, they should be proscribed as uses that could not logically be justified.

The argument is muddled, we may agree. It is hard to deny, however, that the seeds of what we now perceive as error had been there from the beginning. If a moral can be drawn, it is that the search for rationality in language is forever dangerous, even if we accept what ancient theorists were not in a position to appreciate, that it too is relative.

Ancient writers referred to

Greek names are in their traditional Latinized or Anglicized form.

Apollonius Dyscolus, first part of the second century AD. Greek grammarian practising in Alexandria. His four books on syntax (abbreviated *Synt.*) are translated into French by Lallot; into English by Householder (1997) with allusions to work on syntax in his own day. References are by book and paragraph and by page numbers in the edition by Uhlig (*GG* 2.2); the page numbers in Householder's margin are those of an older edition by Bekker, marked 'b' in the margins to *GG*. Other surviving works, on pronouns, conjunctions, and adverbs, ed. Schneider (*GG* 2.1).

Aristarchus, 'of Samothrace', c.216–144 BC. Librarian at Alexandria and a pioneer in scientific literary scholarship. Editor of the texts of Homer and other poets. No work survives directly.

Aristotle, 384–322 BC. Greek philosopher, a pupil of Plato at the Academy in Athens and tutor, in his forties, to Alexander the Great. Cited in histories of linguistics for remarks about language in works on various topics, including logic, rhetoric, and poetics.

Charisius, late fourth century AD. Latin grammarian, whose manual survives in part only. Ed. Keil (*GL* 1: 1–264); later edition by Barwick (1964).

Choeroboscus, sixth or seventh century AD. Greek grammarian, known for his commentary on Theodosius of Alexandria, ed. Hilgard (*GG* 4.2).

Chrysippus, c.280–207 BC. Stoic philosopher and virtually a second founder of the school. None of his voluminous writings, as listed by Diogenes Laertius, survive.

Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero), 106–43 BC. Roman politician and scholar, whose prose style, in speeches, philosophical works, and letters, was and is a model greatly admired.

Diodorus Siculus, first century BC. Author in Greek of a general history of the Greek and Roman world.

Diogenes, ‘of Babylon’, c.240–152 BC. Stoic philosopher, whose study of vocal sound is known only from later sources.

Diogenes Laertius, probably third century AD, abbreviated D.L. The author, in Greek, of a highly derivative ‘Lives and doctrines of eminent philosophers’, including the Stoics. Translated into English by Hicks (1925).

Diomedes, late fourth or early fifth century AD. Latin grammarian, whose work is linked especially to that of Charisius; ed. Keil (*GL* 1: 299–529).

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, first century BC/AD. Greek historian and literary scholar, working in Rome in the first years of the Empire.

Dionysius Thrax, c.170–c.90 BC. Greek grammarian, a pupil of Aristarchus in Alexandria later practising in Rhodes. The manual attributed to him is edited by Uhlig (*GG* 1.1) and translated into English by Kemp (1986). It was the subject of exhaustive commentaries, line by line, in late Antiquity; ed. Hilgard (*GG* 1.3).

Donatus (Aelius Donatus), fourth century AD. Roman grammarian, seen as especially authoritative, well into the Middle Ages and later. His shorter and larger manuals are edited by Keil (*GL* 4: 355–402) and more recently by Holtz (1981: 585–674); translation into English of the *Ars minor* by Wayland Chase, reprinted by Salus (1969). Other works were commentaries on authors studied in the schoolroom.

Dositheus, fourth or fifth century AD. Author of a Latin grammar, largely though not completely translated, apparently by him, into Greek; ed. Keil (*GL* 7: 376–436).

Herodian (Aelius Herodianus), second century AD. Greek grammarian, the son of Apollonius Dyscolus, practising in Rome. The author in particular of an immense work on accentuation, which survives only in later abridgments and excerpts, ed. Lentz (*GG* 3.1, 3.3).

'Homer'. The traditional author of two epic poems in Greek, the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey', originally oral but written down around the eighth century BC.

Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), 65–8 BC. Roman poet, whose 'Odes' adapted to Latin the rhythms of Greek lyric.

Isidore (Isidorus), bishop of Seville in the early seventh century AD, whose unfinished 'Etymologies' (abbreviated *Etym.*) are the equivalent, in modern terms, of a systematic encyclopaedia of ancient science and learning. Ed. Lindsay (1911); translated into English by Barney et al. (2006).

Marius Victorinus, fourth century AD. Roman philosopher, theologian, and grammarian. Studies of metre especially ed. Keil (*GL* 6).

Plato, c.429–347 BC. Greek philosopher, founder of the Academy in Athens, whose *Cratylus* is the earliest known work on the philosophy of language. Other dialogues, especially the *Sophist*, are important in this field.

Pliny, 'the younger' (Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus), c.61–c.112 AD. Advocate, man of letters, and imperial administrator.

Pompeius, late fifth to early sixth century AD. Latin grammarian practising in North Africa, the author of a lengthy and exhaustive commentary on the manual of Donatus; ed. Keil (*GL* 5: 95–312).

Priscian (Priscianus Caesariensis), fifth to sixth century AD. Latin grammarian practising in Constantinople (now Istanbul). His *Institutiones grammaticae* (abbreviated *Inst.*) are a comprehensive survey of grammar, in 18 books; ed. Keil, with a handful of shorter works that survive (*GL* 2–3).

'Probus'. Two works on grammar, ed. Keil (*GL* 4: 3–192), were attached in late antiquity to the name of Marcus Valerius Probus, a Roman scholar of the late first century AD.

Protagoras, c.490–420 BC. Greek philosopher, the most famous of the predecessors of Plato described as 'Sophists'.

Quintilian (Marcus Fabius Quintilianus), born c.35 AD. Advocate and teacher of rhetoric in Rome. His great work in Latin on the training of a public speaker (abbreviated *Inst.*) includes, in Book 1, one of the earliest accounts of grammar. Ed. Winterbottom (1970); translated into English by Russell (2001).

Remmius Palaemon, first century AD. A pioneer in Latin grammar, practising in Rome. No genuine work survives.

Sappho, late seventh century BC. Greek poet, whose work survives only in tattered papyri or when she is cited by a later author.

Scaurus, possibly second century AD. Roman grammarian whose work is cited by later authorities. A grammar taken to be his survives in manuscript (Law 2003: 66).

Servius, fourth century AD. Latin grammarian; the author of a famous commentary on Virgil, based on lost work by Donatus, and a commentary on Donatus' grammar, ed. Keil (*GL* 4: 405–48).

Sextus Empiricus, sceptic philosopher, probably late second century AD; abbreviated S.E. His critique of grammar forms the first part of a polemic 'Against the professors' (abbreviated *Math.*) attacking dogmas in philosophy and learning generally; translated into English by Bury (1949).

Theodosius Of Alexandria, fourth/fifth century AD. Greek grammarian, the author of 'introductory rules' for the inflection of both nouns and verbs; ed. Hilgard (*GG* 4.1: 3–99).

Tryphon, late first century BC. Greek grammarian; evidently a pioneer, whose work is lost but is widely referred to, critically or with approval, by Apollonius Dyscolus especially.

Ancient writers referred to

Varro (Marcus Terentius Varro), 112–27 BC. Roman scholar and antiquarian. A quarter of his work on the Latin language (abbreviated *LL*) survives; translated into English by Kent (1938).

Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro), 70–19 BC. Roman poet, whose most important work, the ‘Aeneid’, was exhaustively mined and analysed in the teaching of Latin grammar.

Some hints for background reading

I have not thought it helpful to engage with or refer in detail to the modern secondary literature, especially where its aim has been to reconstruct the early history of ideas, for which our evidence is fragmentary and often unsafe, rather than to study the technique of grammar eventually developed, for which primary sources are before us and are clearer. Nor is this book intended mainly for an audience of classical scholars. It might seem unhelpful to refer readers who do not know Greek or even Latin to contributions to scholarship which take for granted that these languages are familiar.

I would not wish, however, to appear to disparage through my silence studies that have so often helped me. Nor are all my primary sources as unproblematic or transparent as the typical *Ars grammatica*. The authenticity of 'Dionysius Thrax', which I have treated throughout as suspect, was first disputed comprehensively by Di Benedetto (1958–9); for definitive assessment see papers edited by Law and Sluiter (1998). The notion of grammar as an *empeiria*, as defined by Dionysius in a passage confirmed as genuine, and the parallel with medicine, was clarified for me by Siebenborn (1976). Varro's work on Latin is isolated and is open to different readings. My own has been affected especially by Fehling (1957–8); Varro's importance, however, as a theorist has been maintained especially by Taylor (1975 and later publications). In understanding Apollonius Dyscolus I have been helped above all by Lallot (1997) and by Sluiter (1990). Another influential account, however, is by Blank (1982); see also, though with caution, Householder's introduction (1981). The derivative character of the manuals of Donatus was made clear long ago by Barwick (1922). For their ascendancy, however, in later centuries see Holtz (1981); also Law (1982) on the development of grammar in the British Isles in the Dark and early Middle Ages.

I have taken for granted some general knowledge of ancient history. For a fresh perspective, however, on what may be a familiar story see Abulafia's 'human history' of the Mediterranean (2011), especially Part 2, Ch. 6, centred on Alexandria in the Hellenistic period; also Chs 8–10, covering the zenith and the gradual disintegration of the Roman empire. For changes in Greek, from the Homeric poems onwards, see Horrocks (1997). Among many studies of ancient education, that of Morgan (1998) on the teaching of elementary literacy is based directly on surviving evidence from Egypt. See also Wouters (1979) for early grammars on papyri. Dickey (2016) gives a fascinating account, based on her earlier scholarly studies, of how speakers of Greek learned Latin, including the use of grammars. It is important too, to remember how many other languages were spoken alongside Latin in the Roman empire; on this see fundamental work by Adams (2003).

For entries on individual writers, and many specific topics, see the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (third edition, ed. Hornblower and Spawforth 1996) and *Der kleine Pauly* (ed. Sontheimer and Ziegler 1979). It is no longer easy, unfortunately, to recommend a single survey by a single author of the place of ancient contributions in a general history of linguistics. The opening chapters of Robins' *Short History of Linguistics* (third edition 1990: Chs 2–3) were in their day masterly, with an agenda reflecting Steinthal's in the nineteenth century (second edition 1890). But the first edition dates from 1967, when Robins assumed both that the text of 'Dionysius Thrax' was authentic and that Varro's conflict of 'anomaly' with 'analogy' was real. He also followed the standard ancient story, as expounded in what was once a useful paper (Robins 1966), of the development of the system of parts of an utterance. For partial correctives I may perhaps refer with hesitation to a contribution of my own (1994), commissioned by Giulio Lepschy for a history of linguistics first published in Italian by Il Mulino. Robins himself had hoped that a new book by Law, published posthumously with a more restricted scope, would have superseded his entirely. Her chapters on the Greeks and Romans (2003: Chs 3–4) do offer in

Some hints for background reading

particular a valuable perspective from a scholar who remained at heart a mediaevalist, and are written carefully with an eye to students with no classical education. Pending a new synthesis, which might take some courage, we must be content with edited volumes: thus, most recently, Allan, ed. (2013).

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