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Introduction

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Introduction

1. Some thirty-five years ago the first part of Vincenzo Di Benedetto's study, "Dionisio Trace e la Techne a lui attribuita", appeared in the *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*. Perhaps it was the length and thoroughness of the work, and its author's refusal to make concessions to readers less familiar with the material than himself; possibly diffidence on the part of transalpine scholars in the face of over seventy pages of academic Italian; or simply the weight of received opinion — but whatever the cause, the initial reaction was cautious, along the lines of 'interesting if correct, but the implications for the history of ancient grammar are so daunting that I shall continue to work on the assumption that the *communis opinio* still holds'. Jan Pinborg, in his chapter on Greek linguistic thought in *Current Trends in Linguistics* 13 (1975), was probably the first to begin to think through the consequences; but it was only in the '80s, over twenty years after Di Benedetto's initial article, that scholars began to engage in 'rethinking the history of language science in classical Antiquity', to quote the title of Dan Taylor's article (1987). And yet the original question, about the authenticity of the *Technē*, has received little direct scrutiny. For this reason it seemed appropriate to bring together a number of scholars with an interest in this problem to focus directly upon the question of authenticity.

The meeting, 'The *Tekhnē* attributed to Dionysius Thrax and its place in the ancient grammatical tradition', took place at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, under the auspices of the Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas, on 29 and 30 June 1993. Speakers took up various aspects of the problem.

R. H. Robins surveyed the *status quaestionis* and added some reflections on the nature of textbooks as a (sub-)literary genre. The most important characteristic of this genre is its essentially ‘open’ nature. Typically, a textbook will be subject to continuous change and adaptation while its (valued) traditionality and the continuity of its teaching are ‘guaranteed’ by the familiarity and renown of its first author. This insight throws an unexpected light on the question of the authenticity of the *Technē*, in that it enables us to distinguish between the question of the date of the (original) *Technē* and that of the authoritative (not to say authorized) version. But its main effect is to make the matter of authenticity less urgent. Instead, issues of intellectual context and influence acquire pride of place, and in fact most of the speakers concentrated on these aspects. Jean Lallot (unfortunately unable to present his paper in person) analyzed the rhetoric and dialectics of the modern debate. His typology of arguments draws attention to the inherent dangers of appeals to authority, the vacillations in modern evaluations of ancient testimony, the problems of arguing *e silentio*, and the question of when a text will qualify as a quotation or echo.

Three contributors examined the context of the *Technē*. Teresa Morgan provided a reminder of the educational (and political) context of the *Technē*, and of the purpose of the study of poetry and grammar in ancient pedagogy. Dirk Schenkeveld and Richard Janko attempted to characterise the state of the art of grammar in the second century BC, the period in which the *Technē* — if authentic — should have been conceived. Their reconstructions yield a ‘horizon of expectations’ against which one may read the theories actually found in the *Technē*. Dirk Schenkeveld outlined the probable contents of Dionysius’s *Paragelmata*, a new type of technical grammatical treatise combining elements from the philosophical and philological traditions, and concluded that the *Technē*, from § 6 on, does not correspond to what we know of Dionysius’s work. Richard Janko (1995) looked at the evidence of newly-discovered material from Herculaneum for the content of grammar in the second century BC; more specifically, he tried to establish the extent to which Philodemus may be used as a source for the theories of Crates of Mallos.

A text-centered approach was advocated by N. E. Collinge. He scrutinized various inconsistencies in the *Technē* in order to establish text-internal arguments for its origin. His outspoken evaluation, both positive and negative, of the *Technē*’s linguistic competence, and his comparison of what the *Technē* offers with other theories ancient and modern, adds

a new and original type of argument to the authenticity debate Collinge concludes that the evidence is on balance against Dionysius's authorship A similar evaluative approach was represented by Catherine Atherton in her discussion of 'Apollonius Dyscolus on the ambiguity of ambiguity' (1995)

In two case-studies Alfons Wouters and Vivien Law confronted doctrine from the *Technē* with the grammatical tradition at large in an attempt to situate the *Technē*'s contribution chronologically Alfons Wouters,¹ comparing the treatment of the correlative (demonstrative) (pro-) noun in the *Technē* with that of various papyri, reasoned that the apparent inconsistency in the treatment in the *Technē* cannot, of itself, be used as an argument against an early dating of the *Technē*, to, let us say, the first century AD On the other hand, Vivien Law, using a similar method, inclined to a relatively late date for the *Technē* on the basis of a comparison of the treatment of derivational morphology in the *Technē*, the published papyrus and Latin sources There seems to be little evidence for early influence of the *Technē* on the Greek tradition (not even in the second and third centuries AD) and in the Latin grammarians influence is restricted to Priscian, although perhaps Palladius, in the fourth century, deserves mention

The survival of the *Technē* was the subject of two further papers, James Clackson's on the translation of the grammatical terminology of the *Technē* into Armenian, and Vivian Salmon (in a paper promised for but not actually delivered at the colloquium) on the adaptation of the phonetic doctrine of the *Technē* in sixteenth-century accounts of the phonetics of English

Finally, Vincenzo Di Benedetto has distilled the many remarks with which he enlivened the discussion into a brief afterword for this volume

2. The *Technē* is not, of course, the only ancient work of disputed authenticity It may therefore be useful to extrapolate from this most recent research on the *Technē* some general methodological points regarding issues of authenticity Obviously, many items on the list lay no claim to originality

The formulation of arguments for and against the authenticity of a given work may proceed along the following lines

¹ During the conference Alfons Wouters presented some new (and as yet unpublished) papyrus material (see Type 3 below) However, for obvious reasons his results in that field could not be published in this volume

1. By investigating the (direct and) indirect transmission (translations etc.).
2. By comparing the text in question with *testimonia* about its alleged author.
3. By investigating new material (papyri etc.).
4. By applying stylometric criteria if genuine works of the author in question are available.
5. By looking into the internal structure of the text in search of telling inconsistencies. In this form of argument the text may be approached from an evaluative, not a historical-descriptive point of view.
6. By establishing a 'horizon of expectations' against which to read the text. This entails a reconstruction of the intellectual and cultural context of the period in which the text supposedly originated. This method entails a slight risk of circularity.
7. By situating ideas from the text in question both geographically and chronologically. Case-studies are indicated here.
8. By looking into the characteristics of the genre to which the text belongs. There may be special circumstances to explain a deviant pattern of transmission.
9. By inquiring into the survival of the text. This establishes the pattern of development in the acceptance, influence and authority of a text.
10. Finally, reflection on the procedure of the formulation of arguments itself may lead to a refinement of the typology of arguments and to a clearer view of their relative value.

In the case of the *Technē* all criteria except the fourth could be and have been applied. However, it is apparent that the problem does not lend itself to easy solution (unless, of course, a papyrus fragment of the *Technē* securely dated to the first century BC turns up). The facts are well known; what is at issue, as became clear during the meeting, is the relative weight which is attached to any particular argument. In fact, consensus was limited to the fact that no one defended the authenticity of the *Technē* in its most rigorous and straightforward formulation, i.e. that the *Technē as we have it now* was written by Dionysius Thrax, the pupil of Aristarchus, in the second century BC. The new insights into the nature of textbooks preclude this view. Most participants would probably subscribe to the view that the *Technē* is unlikely to have acquired its present form before the first or second century AD, while it was only recognized as an authority from the fifth century. Some would prefer not even to draw this distinction between origin and acquisition of an authoritative status, and date the *Technē* to the fourth century AD. However, as Anna Morpurgo Davies remarked in her summing-up, the outcome was not so much a

straight answer to the question, but a reformulation of the problem in a new set of questions:

- Could a book like the *Technē* have existed in the time of Dionysius Thrax?
- At what point in the history of grammar in Antiquity can we expect the concepts and terminology of the *Technē* to have been available?
- How unified was grammar at any given point between the first century BC and the fifth century AD?
- Assuming that Dionysius's own grammar in fact existed in the first century BC, could it plausibly have got lost, in whole or in part? Who would have wanted to rewrite it, and why?
- What was the *Technē* meant for? Was it a textbook for students, or intended for colleagues?

And in fact, this is a promising development. For the search for answers to these questions will eventually deepen our insight into a crucial period in the history of European grammar in a way which a simple yes or no answer to the question of authenticity could never do. It is our hope that this collection of papers will form a contribution, however small, towards gaining such an insight.

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An important review article which appeared after this volume went to press is:

- Swiggers, Pierre / Wouters, Alfons
1994 "La *Technē grammatikē* de Denys le Thrace: une perspective historiographique nouvelle". *Orbis*. 37: 521-549.

Note to the Reader

The problem of the authenticity of the *Technē* is one which crosses the boundaries of several disciplines — textual history, papyrology, history of linguistics, history of education — and its survival takes us, in this volume, into the domains not only of Greek and Latin literature, but into Armenian and English as well. The diverse backgrounds of the authors and their varying views of their intended audience have led them to present their arguments in contrasting ways. At the most basic level, some assume Dionysian authorship of the *Technē*, whereas others see 'Dionysius Thrax' and 'the author of the *Technē*' as distinct individuals. Those who wished their arguments to be accessible to historians of linguistics and education have transliterated Greek terms throughout, whereas those who saw themselves as addressing fellow-Classicists have used Greek characters or a combination. In this and in the systems of transliteration adopted, as much as in the views expressed in the papers, the editors have preferred to acknowledge the wisdom of the saying *tot homines quot sententiae*.
