



Universiteit
Leiden

The Netherlands

The Greek Tradition

Sluiter, I.; Bekkem, W.; Houben, J.E.M.; Versteegh, C.

Citation

Sluiter, I. (1997). The Greek Tradition. In W. Bekkem, J. E. M. Houben, & C. Versteegh (Eds.), *Studies in the History of the Language Sciences* (pp. 147-224). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/2375>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/2375>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Part Three

THE GREEK TRADITION

Ineke Sluiter

Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

“Your brain is full of rotten-wool”. “You mean cotton-wool,” Sophie said. “What I mean and what I say is two different things”, the BFG announced rather grandly.

Roald Dahl, *The BFG*, 1982; ch. “Snozzcumbers”

1. Introduction

From the earliest beginnings of their literature (ca. 800 BCE), the Greeks betray an awareness of the medium they are using to express themselves. Implicitly at first, but with increasing elaboration later on, they investigate the relationship between language and the world around us, and between language and thought. Beyond these first explorations, the context of the Greek *polis* or city-state saw the development of a theory of rhetoric, analysing the persuasive potential of discourse, and a poetics that focused on the psychagogic and didactic functions of language. Logic, instrumental to all scholarly and scientific activities, dealt with language from the point of view of validity and truth value. Moreover, as Greece developed from an oral to a (more) literate society, the philological study of (mainly poetic) texts became increasingly important. Although the communicative function of language was never lost from sight, and the problem of signification (often coupled with that of the essential nature of language) formed a central concern, no autonomous semantics, i.e. a theory of meaning without extra-linguistic concerns (see Leech 1981:4), ever developed. Since language was never supposed to be an end in itself, it did not get to be studied for its own sake until the hesitating emergence of ‘technical grammar’ in the 2nd/1st centuries BCE. Even in that period, however, the only specimens of ‘technical grammar’ are school grammars, which offer no more than a basic framework for quick reference and rehearsal: their content seems not to have been studied for its own sake but as an auxiliary to the study of the poets, itself a propaedeutic stage leading to the study of rhetoric.

However, this does not mean that the Greeks had no semantic theories; it just implies that the study of ‘meaning’ was taken up in different contexts

with specific requirements. Nonetheless, this resulted in a variety of purely linguistic insights, and the development of a quite specific semantic terminology (Section 2): initially, there was the instinctive concern to understand the world through the medium of the words or names denoting items in it. This concern was reflected in the practice of etymology, the attempt to grasp the complete meaning of a word, which will be discussed in Section 3. Interpreting 'words' and interpreting the spoken or written 'texts' of the gods (oracles, dreams) or of great authoritative poets of the past, are in a sense related activities. Some early exegetical techniques will be discussed in Section 4.

A number of fundamental issues to do with the nature of language were taken up in intellectual circles in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, discussed in Section 5. The debate focused on the question of language's reliability as a source of knowledge, its 'correctness'. Is there a natural connection between a thing and its name, or is language completely arbitrary and conventional?

Since Plato's (427–347 BCE) whole philosophy was ultimately based on his belief in fixed ethical norms, he had to take up the challenge posed by the relativist point of view held by some of the sophists. A total lack of stability in language would render it unsuitable as the vehicle of philosophical inquiry. On the other hand, Plato's commitment to the process of dialectics meant that he could not embrace the other extreme either. His dialectical method implied making use of words, not blindly relying on them as equivalents of a 'truth' they could not possibly contain. This dilemma produced the *Cratylus*, discussed in Section 6.

In his turn, Aristotle (384–322 BCE) took up questions of language and meaning in a number of different contexts, with Plato's work looming large in the background. Always focusing on the functions language was supposed to fulfil in different circumstances, he sketched an outline of a semantic theory that was to bear fruit for centuries to come. Clearly and apodictically he stated the difference between having meaning and being true, thus for the first time restricting the notion of semanticity to the purely linguistic level, no ontological or logical strings attached. Although anticipated by Plato, it was Aristotle's formulation of the principle that words do not signify things immediately, but only through the filter of the speaker's mind, that would be the major influence on medieval linguistic thought (Section 7).

Section 8 deals with the Hellenistic period (3rd/2nd centuries BCE), with the revolutionary logical work by the Stoics, and the theory of meaning developed by Epicurus. Intriguingly, linguistic notions are narrowly bound up with the ethical theories held by both schools. This period also saw the

spectacular rise of philology with the institution of the Alexandrian Museum. The skeletal remains of the work of Zenodotus (fl. ca. 284 BCE), Aristophanes (ca. 257–180 BCE) and Aristarchus (ca. 217–145 BCE) still provide fascinating glimpses of the nature of their exegetical work, but hardly any vestiges of truly semantic interests remain. As philology gained in popularity and intellectual prestige, it came to be adopted by specialists in other fields, primarily by doctors and philosophers, as a method of dealing with authoritative texts.

Section 9 is a discussion of the development of semantics as the basis for a syntactic theory in Apollonius Dyscolus.

Section 10 briefly focuses on a Latin author: in the work of Augustine (354–430) we find a theory of meaning originating in a blend of philosophical, linguistic and theological concerns.

Section 11 ends the main body of this essay with an overview of ancient theories of translation. It is followed by a conclusion (12), suggestions for further reading (13) and a list of bibliographical references (14). Since we are mainly interested in the emergence of semantics, most attention will be given to the early periods and the conditions for the development of theories of meaning.

2. Terminology

The main Greek verbs meaning “to mean” are *dēlóō/dēloūn* “to make clear”, and *sēmaínō/sēmaínein* “to signify, to give a sign” (on these verbs plus derivatives see Manetti 1987:84). Neither is used exclusively to denote verbal or vocal signification. Any kind of sign may be indicated by them. In an early text like that of Heraclitus (5th century BCE) B 93, an opposition is felt between *légein* “to say”, and *sēmaínein* “to signify” (contra Calboli 1992):

“the lord who owns the oracle in Delphi does not speak, nor does he hide, but he signifies” (*ho ánox hoũ tò manteíōn esti tò en Delphoĩs, oúte légei oúte krúptei allá sēmaínei*, Heracl. Fr. B 93).

Sēmeíōn “sign” is formed from the same root *sēm-* that is also in *sēmaínō* “to signify”; it may be used for the formal aspects of a word (e.g. Plato *Crat.* 427c8 *sēmeíōn te kai ónoma* “a sign and name”). The same goes for *sēma* “sign”, possibly used for a linguistic sign in Parmenides *Fragment* B 8.2. Conceptually related is the use of *súmbolon* “symbol”, e.g. in Diodorus Siculus 1,8,1 (going back to the 5th-century philosopher Democritus): when the unarticulated and meaningless (*asémou*) stream of sound is articulated

and assigned fixed referents, i.e. when it is turned into symbols proper (*súmbola*), language becomes a recognizable instrument for communication. Aristotle, too, makes uses of the concept of the symbol to explain the relationship between (spoken) language and thought, and between spoken and written language: "The things that are in the voice are symbols of the affections in the soul, and written things are symbols of the things that are in the voice" (*Ésti mèn oũn tà en tēi phōnēi tōn en tēi psukhēi pathēmátōn súmbola, kai tà graphómēna tōn en tēi phōnēi, De Interpretatione* 16a3f.) (cf. *sēmeia*, "signs" 16a6; the words seem to be used interchangeably in this passage).

The Greeks have no separate expression for "to mean" as conveying the intention of the speaker (ex.: I mean A, not B); they use the verb *légein*, "to say". In later Greek, intention on the macro-level (intention of a text or a section of a text) may also be expressed by the noun *skopós*, "mark, goal".

As a noun, "meaning" is most frequently *tò dēloúmenon* "that which is made clear", or *tò sēmainómenon* "that which is signified". Both are substantivized passive participles from the verbs mentioned above. The corresponding active participles are *tò dēloũn* "that which makes clear", and *tò sēmainōn* "that which signifies". They are used to refer to the form of the word (as opposed to its content or meaning). This formal or sound aspect is also indicated by *phōnē* "(articulated) voice", which is unrelated to the idea of "sign". On the other hand, it has a specific link with linguistics (viz. vocal sound) which the others lack. Plato's *Cratylus* also features a different verbal noun from the root *dēlo-*, viz. *dēlōma* "a means of making clear, that which makes clear, indication", possibly selected because it is linked with the similarly formed *mímēma* "imitation" (423b6; cf. 433b2; 433d1; 435a2). *Dēlōma* "a means of making known, indication" is also used in Plato's *Sophist*, where two kinds of "vocal indications of being" (*tōn tēi phōnēi peri tēn ousían dēlōmátōn*) are distinguished: names and verbs/predicates. A predicate (*rhēma*) is taken as the indication (*dēlōma*) which relates to actions, a name is the vocal sign (*sēmeion tēs phōnēs*, obviously meant as a synonym of *dēlōma* here) applied to those who perform the action in question. Instead of *dēlōma*, Epicurus and his school use *dēlōsis*, "indication", a nomen actionis from the same root *dēlo-*. An alternative for "meaning" from the root *sēm(a)-* is *sēmasía* (e.g. Chrysippus *apud* Galen *On the Doctrines of Plato and Hippocrates* 2.5.15, p. 130,24 DeLacy; Scholia on Dionysius Thrax 516.2ff.; 616.13–27). A third Greek verb meaning "to show" is *phainō*: its compound *emphainō* "to give to understand", and the substantive *émphasis* "meaning, significance" are usually employed to indicate the extra informa-

tion that is conveyed by an expression, over and above its lexical meaning (see e.g. Quintilian 8.3.83).

The use of the verb *dúnasthai* ("to be able, strong enough to") in the sense of "to be equivalent to, to mean" is first attested in Herodotus *Histories* 4.110 "The Scyths call the Amazons 'Oiorpata'; that name means (*dúnatai*) men-killers in Greek. For they call a man 'oior' and 'pata' is to kill" (*tàs dè Amazónas kaléousi hoi Skúthai Oiórputa, dúnatai dè tò ónoma toũto katà Helláda glóssan androktónoi; oĩor gàr kaléousi ándra, tò dè patà kteínein*). The substantive *dúnamis* "power, ability, meaning" is used in connection with letters, syllables, rhythms and harmonies by the sophist Hippias (Fr. A 11), and in the *Cratylus* 394b-c it stands for a name's value, reflecting the essence of the thing the name refers to.

Apart from these words from the verbal roots *dēlo-* "to make clear", *sēm(a(i)n)-* "to indicate", *pha(i)n-* "to show", and *dúnasthai* "to be equivalent to", words connected with 'mental processes' also come to be used as technical terminology for the semantic level of language. Their connotation is completely different from the group of words related to "signaling, sign-giving". Signs can refer directly to an element from reality, words like *diánoia* "thought, intention", and *énnoia* "reflection, notion, conception"; hence: "sense of a word", add a psychological or intentional level: a word is the vehicle of a 'thought', either of a speaker, or in the abstract. The 'thought' of the word is its meaning. *Diánoia* and *énnoia* are related to the Greek word for "mind", *noûs* (itself used as "meaning" in Dionysius Thrax, *Tekhnē* 6.8). *Diánoia* "thought, intention" features e.g. in Plato's *Cratylus* 418a7: "they change the meanings of the names", *alloioûsi tàs tōn onomatōn dianóias*, cf. *ibid.* 418c9 "the intention of the namegiver", *tēn diánoian toũ theménou*. *Énnoia* "reflection, notion, conception; hence: sense of a word", becomes one of the common words to signify "meaning" in later Greek. In the 2nd-century-CE grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, it is used for all the conceptual aspects of a word, its semantic and syntactic values (Sluiter 1990:97). But it also occurs in the historian Dio Cassius (2nd/3rd century CE):

[Verus showed exceptional strength of character:] "This led Hadrian to apply to the young man the name 'Verissimus' ["Truest"], thus playing upon the meaning (*énnoia*) of the Latin word" (*aph' hoũ kai Ouēriśsimon autón, pròs tēn toũ Rhōmaĩkoũ rhēmatos énnoian kompseuómenos, apekálei*, Dio Cassius *Roman History* 69.21 [tr. Cary]).

According to the 1st-century-BCE literary critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus, we signify (*sēmaínomen*) our thoughts (*noēseis*) by speech (*léxis*) (*On Literary Composition* 3).

Form-meaning and form-referent oppositions can be expressed in a variety of ways, as the following scheme shows (cf. Ax 1982):

Form	Meaning	Referent
<i>ónoma</i>		<i>prāgma</i>
<i>psóphos</i>	<i>sēmainómenon</i>	
<i>léxis</i>	<i>lógos</i>	
<i>léxis</i>	<i>énnoia</i>	
<i>léxis</i>	<i>nóēsis</i>	
<i>léxis/phōnē</i>	<i>lektón/prāgma</i>	<i>tunkhānon</i>
<i>sēmaĩnon</i>	<i>sēmainómenon</i>	
	<i>?prólēpsis</i>	

The oldest combination is *ónoma* “name” and *prāgma* “(extra-linguistic) thing”. A typical combination of terminology can be found in the *Cratylus* once again: “It is completely irrelevant whether there is a letter extra, or one missing, as long as the essence of the thing (*prāgma*) which is made clear in the name (*ónoma*) is valid” (*oud' ei próskeitaí ti grámma è aphēirētai, oudèn oudè toũto, hēōs àn enkratēs ēī hē ousía toũ prágmatoz dēlouménē en tōĩ onómati, Crat. 393d2ff.*).

In his *Rhetoric* III, 2.1405b8, Aristotle opposes the effects reached “in the sounds” (*en psóphois*) to those “in the meaning” (*(en) tōĩ sēmainoménōĩ*).

The Stoics oppose *léxis* “string of sounds” (regarded from the formal side) to *lógos*, “meaningful speech”. In rhetorical theory *léxis* is coupled with *énnoia* (as “diction” versus “thought”, e.g. in Hermogenes *On the Qualities of Style* 2.4). *Léxis* in later Greek comes to mean “word”, a more general alternative for *ónoma* “name”, and *rhēma*, “word, verb (predicate)”. In a grammatical context *lógos* develops into “complete utterance, sentence”.

The Stoics add another lexical element from the root *lég-/lóg-* “to speak, speech”: *Tò lektón* “the sayable, that which can be said, that which is said” comes to stand for the incorporeal meaning, mediating between the corporeal word-form (*léxis, phōnē, sēmaĩnon*) and the referent in reality (*tò tunkhānon*, probably intended originally as “that which has the quality signified (by the noun)”, or maybe “that which gets a case/name”; later felt as “something which happens to be there”. *Lektón* is more specific than *sēmainómenon*. It is the meaning in so far as it can be uttered in speech. This complicated notion will be discussed in Section 8. In Stoic theory, *prāgma* “thing”, acquires a completely different status. It does not refer to extra-linguistic reality, but signifies the (incorporeal) content of a *lektón*. Thus, *lektón* and

prāgma come to be complementary; both refer to the incorporeal meaning, but the one stresses its language-related aspect, the other its reality-related side. In technical grammar *prāgma* is associated especially with the meaning of verbs.

The closest equivalent to a concept of ‘meaning’ contributed by Epicurus (341–270 BCE) and his school seems to be the notion of *prólēpsis* “preconception, common notion”, which mediates between words and things. However, the term itself does not belong to the semantic field of ‘meaning’.

The Latin terminology corresponds closely to the Greek. Meaning is expressed by verbs meaning “to show”: *ostendere* and *significare* (e.g. Varro *On the Latin Language* 5.3). Substantives derived from *significare* are *significatio* (e.g. Varro *ibid.* 9.40; Seneca *Letters* 89.17 (opposed to *vox* (= *phōnē*) and to *verba* respectively)) and *significatus* (e.g. the title of M. Verrius Flaccus’ (1st centuries BCE/CE) lexicographical work *De significatu verborum* “On the meaning of words”). Other derivations from *significare* “to mean, to signify”, are *significabilis* and *significans* “capable of conveying meaning, significant”.

As the Greek can use *dúnamis* and *dúnasthai*, Latin has *vis* “force, meaning” and *valere* “to be equivalent to, to mean”. And Latin also uses words derived from the semantic field of thought processes/perception to indicate meaning: *sensus* (e.g. Ovid *Fasti* 5.484; Quintilian 6.3.48 *verba duos sensus significantia* “words with two meanings”). In a rhetorical context *sententia* “meaning” is opposed to the “letter” of a law or other written document.

The form-meaning opposition is expressed by couples like *vox / forma / verbum / nomen / vocabulum—res*; *forma—res*; *facies—vis* (Seneca *Letters* 9.2.3); *vox—significatio* etc.

Augustine forms *dicibile* on the model of *lektón*, but this term never enjoyed much popularity.

3. Folk linguistics, etymology, magic: the meaning of names

Archaic Greece was an oral society. This means that the community was kept together by oral communication and that orally transmitted tradition lay at the basis of all functions and institutions. Oral and literate societies differ significantly in the ways they address the natural human need for points of orientation in past and present. Oral tradition fulfils the role that written record does in a literate society, but it is a completely different medium, because of its flexibility and the absence of any fixed form. Every time a story

is retold, it is in fact created anew. The important role of poets in such a society has attracted a lot of scholarly attention over the last two decades. They embody the collective memory, and thus the history, of the group, and their role is to a large extent that of visionary teachers of the people. Their poetry provides or preserves the points of reference necessary to strengthen feelings of group identity and of orientation in the world. While dealing with events from the past, one of its main functions is to help people understand the *status quo*.

Various strategies for acquiring such a sense of control over the present can be recognized in early Greek poetry. Its very medium, language itself, formed an obvious starting-point. Being traditional itself, it was thought to contain clues as to how the world worked. Names could generate myths (cf. Kraus 1987:18; Leclerc 1993:271). For example, the story about an earth-born people may have originated in the word *laoi* "people", which was felt to be somehow associated in meaning with *lāas* "stone". The myth then explains how once upon a time a people of men was born from the stones buried in the earth, and it was corroborated by the similarity of names—which probably triggered the story in the first place. The same may go for the name Penelope, which derives from *pēnēlops* "duck", but was connected with *pēnē* "woof" and *lōpē* "robe, mantle": here, either the name may have generated the myth of the heroine who spun a robe by day and undid her work by night, or the other way around: the myth was there and a suitable name for its protagonist was devised (Peradotto 1990: 107–108). Mythology—sometimes combined with etymology—is one of the strategies to gain control over the present. The same goes for (mythical) genealogy, especially the ones that eventually produce a god or hero as the ultimate forebear, a fixed and stable point of reference if ever there was one (cf. Thomas 1989; Leclerc 1993:258). Etymology came in because an understanding of names was taken to imply an understanding of the corresponding realities.

This same presupposition explains certain magical practices in which names and things named do not essentially differ from each other (Kraus 1987:19f.). It is also apparent in the common folktale motif of hiding one's real name: allowing somebody to know your name means giving him power over your person (cf. Odysseus' trick of introducing himself to the Cyclops as "Nobody" (*Odyssey* 9.366). When Romulus founded the city of Rome, he allegedly invented three names for it, a "political" one (namely "*Roma*", "Strength"), a sacerdotal one ("*Flora*", "flourishing"), and a mystical one that could only be used by priests and should never be divulged to the people.

One priest who did so anyway was put to death. The secret name was “Love”, *Amor*, the inversion of *Roma* (Joh. Lydus, *On the Months*, 125 2ff. Wuensch)

There is a lot of implicit, and some explicit, linguistic thought in Homer (8th century BCE) and Hesiod (around 700 BCE), although the two are not in the same class in this respect. Hesiod is far more self-conscious as a poet, and the attention he pays to problems of meaning is related to the didactic nature of his work. Both poets know that names—the most important objects for etymologizing by far throughout Antiquity—can be significant. The word they use to designate such a name is “eponym(ous)” (*epōnumos*), used for a name in so far as it relates to something else. Thus, in the *Odyssey* it is told how his maternal grandfather gave Odysseus his name:

‘My daughter’s husband and my daughter, give him whatsoever name I say. Lo, inasmuch as I am come hither as one that has been angered (*odussamenos*) with many, both men and women, over the fruitful earth, therefore let the name by which the child is named be Odysseus’ (*Gambros emos thugatēr te tithesth onom hotu ken eipō /polloisin gar egō ge odussamenos tod’ hikanō /andī asin ēde gunaixin ana khthōna pouluboteiran /tōi d’ Oduseus onom’ estō epōnumon*, *Odyssey* 19.406ff., tr. Murray)

“Odysseus” was felt to be linked with *odússomai* “to be wroth against”, and it reflected his grandfather’s attitude to the world, but it turned out to be relevant to Odysseus’ unenviable personal fate as well, the fate of someone hated by gods and men. This seems to be implied in Athena’s question to Zeus:

“Wherefore then didst thou conceive such wrath (*odusao*) against him, O Zeus?” (*ti nu hoi toson ōdusao Zeū?*, *Odyssey* 1.62, tr. Murray)

In the same passage, Homer hints at a connection between “Odysseus” and *odúromai* “to lament”. The one association does not exclude the other.

There are many instances of etymologizing in Homer. Especially the cases where someone or something has more than one name, make it obvious to look for meaning in the extra name:

Him, Hector called Skamandrios, but the rest called him Astyanax (ruler of the city). For Hector was the only protector of Troy’ (*ton rh Hektōr kaleeske Skamandriōn autar hoi alloi/Astuanakti oīos gar erueto Ilion Hektōr*, *Iliad* 6.402f.)

In this example, Hector has called his son after Troy’s main river, the Skamander, and the other Trojans have found a name for the young prince that not only honours his father, but also expresses their hopes that Astyanax will take over his father’s role as Troy’s champion. The etymology gives *rhúomai* “to protect” as a variant on *-anax* “ruler”, while *Astú-* “city” stands for *Ílios* “Troy”.

Other cases of double names are caused by the fact that men and gods use different names. One would expect the names of the gods to be especially ‘truthful’, but they are either entirely opaque or their relevance is unclear; the poet knows them, and communicates them to us, but we do not understand them. Examples are *Iliad* 1.403f., where the gods’ name for the giant with hundred arms is Briareos, while its human name is Aegaeon; and *Iliad* 20.74 where a river is called Xanthos “blond” by the gods and Skamander by men.

Hesiod also used “eponym(ous)” for significant names (e.g. in *Theogony* 280ff. in the explanations of the names Pegasus and Chrysaor), and both poets introduce etymologies with the phrase “eponymous (significant) because ...” (*epónumon hoúneka*):

“And they were surnamed ‘Cyclopes’ (Orb-eyed) because one orb-ed eye was set in their foreheads” (*Kúklōpes d’ónom’ ēsan epónumon, hoúnek’ ára spheōn/kukloterēs ophthal-mōs hēeis enékeito metópoi*, Hesiod *Theogony* 144f., tr. Evelyn-White; cf. Homer *Iliad* 9.562).

Later, the “eponyms” were to be adopted by grammatical theory as a special class of nouns. The *Tékhnē grammatikḗ* ascribed to Dionysius Thrax (2nd century BCE) defines it as follows:

“An eponym, also called dionym (“double name”) is a name that is applied to one subject together with another proper name, as e.g. Poseidon is also called “Enosíkhthōn” (“Earth-shaker”) and Apollo “Phoebus” (“the shining one”)” (*Epónumon dé estin, hò kai diónumon kaleítai, tò meth’ hetérou kuríou kath’ henòs legómenon, hòs Enosíkhthōn ho Poseidōn kai Phoibos ho Apóllōn*, 38.3).

By that time, eponyms were ‘nicknames’, or name-epithets, with an obvious meaning that related to the nature of the person (god) named. The prefix *ep-* was apparently taken to mean ‘extra’; a name that is ‘added to’ the regular one. In its earliest usage, where *epónumon* “eponym” serves to modify *ónoma* “name”, the term itself is not very perspicuous. It seems to bear overtones of “being related to (a quality)”, or of “to the point”, “fitting”.

Our first attestation of the word *etētúmōs* “truthfully, in accordance with truth” (cf. etymo-logy), to indicate the ‘appropriateness’ of a name is in the *Agamemnon*, a tragedy by Aeschylus (525/4–456 BCE); there, it is asked about Helen:

“Who gave her so very true a name?” (*tís pot’ ónómazen hōd’ es tò pān etētúmōs?*, Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 681f.).

Helen’s name was found fitting, because it was associated with the root *hel-* (cf. *hairéō*) “to destroy”: Helen destroyed ships and men; she was *helénaus*,

“ship-destroying”. As a synonym for *etētúmōs* “truthfully”, “fittingly” *prepóntōs* is used in verse 687. There are many more examples from tragedy of significant names (e.g. Ajax, associated with “crying aiai, wailing” (*aiázein*, Sophocles *Ajax* 430ff.; cf. Pentheus—*pénthos* “grief, sorrow”, Eteocles “truly famous”, Polyneikes “of many quarrels”).

The word “etymology” (or at least the corresponding adjective) appears to have been coined by the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus (3rd century BCE) (two works *On Etymology* are listed in his bibliography, Diogenes Laertius 7.200), but the practice it denotes was ubiquitous in Greek literature, both before and after him. The word is strikingly absent from Plato’s *Cratylus*.

Leclerc (1993) suggests that the great concentration of etymologies in the earlier part of Hesiod’s *Theogony* is meant to be an illustration of the ease with which man could grasp reality in the time before they were separated from the company of the gods, by Prometheus’ treacherous division of the first sacrificial victim. This would reflect the belief in the status of names as a source of power or danger. The dangerous side may be illustrated by the reluctance to use the names of dangerous gods, which were preferably replaced with euphemistic ones:

“I hesitate to call the ‘Benevolent Goddesses’ by name” ... “I know the goddesses you meant. I do not want to name them” (*onomázein gàr aidōūmai theàs eumenidas; oīd’ hàs élexas. onomásai d’ou boulōmai*, Euripides *Orestes* 37f.; 409).

Eumenids, “Benevolent Ones”, is the euphemistic name for the Furies, the divine revengers, a name best avoided lest those formidable powers be aroused by it (cf. Van der Horst 1994:3ff.).

As there was a link between eponymy and etymology, so is there between euphemism and etymology. In fact, euphemism is a very reasonable explanation for a phenomenon that has been an endless subject of derision, the ancient etymologizing technique that derives a word from the opposite of its meaning, with the famous example

lucus a non lucendo “a sacred wood (*lucus*) is called after the fact that there is no light there (*non lucendo*) (Quintilianus 1.6.34; Augustinus *De dialectica* 6; *De doctrina christiana* III,29.41; Martianus Capella IV,360; Herbermann 1991:364, n. 45).

The awe-inspiring nature of the power named made people look for an inoffensive way of indicating what they meant without inadvertently activating its anger by using its real name.

Again, later grammatical terminology preserves a remainder of the belief in the power of names. Jocelyn (1979:136, n. 218) discusses the term for a

name or noun used in its proper sense, *kúrion* (in the combination *ónoma kúrion*), first attested in this technical usage in Aristotle (e.g. *Rhetoric* III,2.1405b; *Poetics* 21.1457b; 22.1458a19 etc.). The casual way in which Aristotle uses it, makes it likely that he did not coin it (as do the implications of the word). *Kúrios* means “having power or authority over”; when applied to inanimate things, it indicates something with special power or effect. What then about *kúria onómata* “proper (valid) names”?

“Such names were thought of as owning the things they signified, like occupiers with a title to their lands and movable goods, and possessing the reliability associated in the ancient world with ownership. Horace’s *verbum dominans* [*Ars Poetica* 234] expressed the concept exactly. The regular Latin term, however, *verbum proprium* .. put the relationship the other way about with the thing signified owning the word (cf. the Greek *onómata oikeîa tōn pragmatōn* [“the proper names of the things”] ([Aristotle] *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* 1438a34f) (Jocelyn 1979 136, n. 218)

This section started with some early ideas underlying etymology. In origin it was without any doubt a phenomenon that belonged in folk-linguistics, but it also played a role in later exchanges between intellectuals, notably philosophers and philologists. As one of the six tasks of grammar (see e.g. the opening section of Dionysius Thrax *Tékhnē grammatikē*), it was helpful to establish the meaning and orthography of obscure poetic words, but it never turned into a mainstream activity of grammar with its own theory. Rather, it was part of the general intellectual paradigm, a legitimate way to underpin an argument, or to illustrate a point. Basically every change in the form of a word would be acceptable, as long as there remained a vague similarity between the word in question and the names or sentences adduced to explain it. A felicitous link on the semantic level was all-important.

Apart from the many instances of etymology in ancient literature at large, and especially in works of a linguistic nature, our three main sources for ancient etymology are Plato (427–347 BCE) in his *Cratylus*, Varro (116–27 BCE) in his *De lingua Latina* “On the Latin Language” and Augustine’s (354–430 CE) *De dialectica*. It is striking how little change or development in the actual techniques can be found between the three of them.

Herbermann (1991) rightly stresses the fact that in antiquity etymology was never motivated by historical interests. Its purpose was primarily better to understand the reasons for giving a concept its name, and therefore, to motivate a meaning which the concept supposedly was carrying all the while. A preconceived notion of what the meaning actually is, usually underlies the proposed etymology:

“Es handelt sich um die Frage nach dem Grund der Benennungsbeziehung eines bestimmten lexikalischen Ausdrucks zu einem bestimmten Inhalt oder Gegenstand, und die Begründung dieser Beziehung durch bestimmte Arten der Bezugnahme auf andere Ausdrücke derselben Sprache sowie deren Inhalt bzw. Denotata” (Herbermann 1991:366)

In this sense etymology is never used to *find* the meaning of a word (unless perhaps where a philologist tries to establish the meaning of a now obscure poeticism), but only to corroborate it. Meaning is supposed to be the constant factor, no matter what happens to the word-form. This principle was first expounded by Socrates in Plato's *Cratylus* (393d1f.; 394b2ff.; see below, Section 6), and it was to guide ancient etymological practice throughout. It fitted in especially well with the principles of the Stoics who held that only a word-form could act or be acted upon (because it is a ‘body’, namely battered air), while meaning is something incorporeal, which therefore remains unaffected (see Section 8). The grammarian Trypho (1st century BCE) idiosyncratically held the view that meaning could actually influence the form of a word, and vice versa (as in *hēmikúkklion* “half circle”, where the first part of the compound, *hēmi-*, is itself half of the word for “half”, *hēmisu-*). Usually, however, etymology's basic contribution is to a synchronic understanding of language, and through language, of the world.

The absence of a historical interest also explains why it was possible to give several etymologies for one name, as when, for example, Socrates gives four different explanation of the name Apollo, based on the four areas in which the activities of that god were thought to reside: he is the god of medicine and ritual purification, and his name duly reflects that he is “cleansing and redeeming from evil” *apolouōn te kai apolúōn tōn ... kakōn*, *Cratylus* 405b. He is the god of divination and in that capacity deals in truth and simplicity (*tò alēthēs te kai tò haploūn*), which yields the name *Háploun*, and hence, Apollo (405c). He is also the god of archery and always hits his target. Thus, his name is *Aeibállōn*, “ever-darting”, and hence, Apollo. And, finally, he is the god of music, astronomy and harmony: this means that he makes things “move together”, either the poles of heaven (*pólous*), or in musical harmony. As “together” is *homoū* or *a*, Apollo is “he who causes to move together”, *Homopolōn* (405c). The extra lambda is inserted in order to avoid associations with “to destroy utterly” (*apol-lapōl-*; unfortunately the present infinitive of the same verb does have two lambda's (*apollúnai*)). The removal of this unwanted association—which detracts from the essence of the god—is the ethical motivation behind the whole operation (405e).

All four derivations of the name are obviously meant to be true simulta-

neously. They are not mutually exclusive, but complementary. Together they present the full range of meanings that Apollo had in Greek society. These meanings are not learned from the name, but the name functions as a kind of repository or archive from which they may be retrieved: although it would be rash to lump Plato together with representatives of an archaic cosmology, I submit that he has preserved a trace here of how etymology could be used as a strategy to understand the present better.

Both the use of etymologies and the possibility of combinations of simultaneously valid etymologies proved to be very long-lived. For example, when Theophilus, a Christian from the 2nd century CE, explains the ‘names’ or titles of God, he gives a double derivation for the word God (*theós*) itself:

“He is called God (*theós*) because he bases (*tetheikénai*) the world on his own stability, and because he runs (*théin*) and running is racing, moving, being active, nourishing, taking care, governing, and making everything alive” (*theòs dè légetai dià tò tetheikénai tà pánta epì tē̄ heautoū asphaleíai, kai dià tò théin tò dè théin estìn tò trékhein, kai kineîn, kai energeîn, kai tréphein, kai pronoeîn, kai kubernân, kai zōopoieîn tà pánta*, Theophilus *Against Autolycus* I,4)

The second of these etymologies is taken straight from the *Cratylus* (397d). For the connection with the verb *tuthénai*, see Herodotus *Histories* 2.52, who connects “gods” (*theoús*) with “setting in order” (*kósmōi théntes*).

Obviously, etymology also lends itself to comical distortions, and the comedian Aristophanes (5th century BCE) was quick to avail himself of the opportunity: thunder is no more than a heavenly fart, as is obvious from the names:

“That is why their names are similar, too, *brontē* (thunder) and *porḗ* (fart)” (*taút’ ára kai tōnómat’ allélon, brontē kai porḗ, homoiō*, Aristophanes *Clouds* 394)

This takes us back to folk-linguistics (i.c. punning), but the difference with ‘serious’ etymologies lies in the intention of the author only. Even Plato, who gives a sharp critique of the value of etymology in the *Cratylus* makes use of the possibilities of assonance to suggest meaningful links between words like: *anoēτους/amuēτους* “stupid”/“not initiated (in the Mysteries)” (*Phaedo* 80d); *Haídou/aídes* “Hades’ place (the underworld)”/“invisible” (*Phaedo* 81 c-d, in spite of *Cratylus* 403a; 404ab); *sōma/sēma* “body”/“tomb” (*Gorgias* 493a1ff., the connection goes back to Orphic doctrine, cf. *Cratylus* 400b/c) and *píthos/pithanós* “jar/impressionable” (*Gorgias* 493a6, explaining that someone gave the name “jar” to the part of the soul that contains the appetites “as being so impressionable and persuadable” (*dià tò pithanón te kai peistikón*, tr. Lamb).

The ancient authors most consistently resisting the indiscriminate use of etymology are Aristotle (384–322 BCE) and Galen (2nd century CE). The former only accords it the value of an *auctoritas* argument, because an etymology represents the ‘true’ view of reality of the earliest Greeks (cf. e.g. Aristotle *On the Soul* I.2 405b26ff.). Galen equally rejects the epistemological value of etymology and its use as a heuristic device (in his *On the Views of Plato and Hippocrates*, see DeLacy 1966).

In this section, etymology turned out to be a common strategy by which especially an oral society tries to get a sense of control over the world. As such it was connected with mythology and genealogy. Names were held to convey information about the essence of a thing, the sort of information you would not want to give an enemy access to. Ancient etymology appears in the context of folk-linguistics, but is also a constant factor in intellectual discourse. Multiple explanations of a name can be simultaneously valid and collaborate to give a complete picture of the concept named. The supposed changes in the word-forms are not ruled by any firm laws, except for the fact that the semantic value of the word, through all its changes, must be constant.

4. Pre-Alexandrian exegesis (6th–4th centuries BCE)

Manetti (1987) locates the origins of ancient semiotics in divination, medicine (prognosis), and writing. Trying to find out the will of the gods, the Greeks, like the people from Mesopotamia, ‘read’ the signs, verbal and otherwise that were thought to stem from divine powers. The gap dividing men from gods implied that the signs were bound to be obscure and in need of interpretation (Manetti 1987:27ff.). In this context, we will focus on the exegesis of the linguistic sign. In fact, the earliest attestations of the very words *exēgēsis* “explanation, interpretation” and its corresponding verb *exēgēomai* “to expound, interpret” point towards these same areas. Functionaries called *exēgētai* “interpreters” stood guard over Attic sacred rites and customs that were orally transmitted. These Attic interpreters put down their ‘interpretations’ in writing from the 4th century BCE onwards. *Exēgētēs* is used in Herodotus of interpreters of oracles, dreams and omens (e.g. *Histories* 1.78). In *Histories* 2.49 he states that it was Melampous “who {introduced and explained} (*exēgēsámenos*) the name, sacrifice and phallic procession of Dionysus” (*Melámpous esti ho exēgēsámenos toū Dionúsou tó te oúnoma kai tēn thusiēn kai tēn pompēn toū phalloū*). *Exēgeísthai* means that he introduced them to these new rites and taught them how to use them, but it

also seems to carry overtones of explanation, especially when compared to the *Histories* 2.50 on the Egyptian origin of the Greek names of the gods (cf. also 4.36.2). Exegesis of Homer is expressed by the verb *exēgeĩsthai* “to interpret”, e.g. Plato *Cratylus* 407a; *Ion* 531a. Another area where exegesis came to be practised was philosophy: Zeno of Elea (fl. 464/1 BCE) allegedly wrote an *Exēgēsis tōn Empedokléous* “Exegesis of the works of Empedocles”, and Heracleides Ponticus (ca. 390–310 BCE) wrote four books of *Hērakleítou exēgēseis* “interpretations of Heraclitus”.

Manetti (1987:53ff.) illustrates the rhetorical or dialectical process through which the results of oracular consultation was translated into a concrete policy for the *polis* with the well-known example of the oracle on the ‘wooden walls’ from Herodotus. But this passage (*Histories* 7.140ff.) is also revealing for its exegetical techniques and the quite sophisticated, if implicit, ideas on ‘meaning’. Moreover, it shows how exegetical techniques were made subordinate to an ulterior (in this case political) goal.

Faced with the threat of a massive Persian attack (480 BCE), the Athenians dispatched envoys to the oracle at Delphi. The answer (which they had taken down in writing, *sungrapsámenoi* 7.142) seemed to leave very little hope: the only glimmer of light offered by the oracle was the protection to be offered by “a wood-built wall”. The oracle ended with the verses:

“Salamis, isle divine! ’tis writ that children of women

Thou shalt destroy one day, in the season of seed-time or harvest” (*ō theĩē Salamĩs, apoletĩs dē sũ tékna gunaĩkōn/ē pou skidnaménēs Dēmēteros ē sunioúsēs*, *Histories* 7.141, tr. Godley).

Back in Athens the oracle is discussed in the Assembly. A group of elders suggested the oracle was referring to the Acropolis, which had originally been fenced in by a thorn hedge (the “wood-built wall”): they proposed to give Athens up to the enemy and to withdraw on the Acropolis. A second group thought the “wood-built wall” signified (*semaĩnein*, 7.142) a naval force of wooden ships. But this group was confounded by the last two verses which seemed to announce a terrible defeat in a sea-battle near the little island of Salamis.

From a semantic point of view, it is striking that no one opts for a literal interpretation. The literal meaning of “a wood-built wall” is clear. What is disputed is the *intention* of the oracle. The exegesis of the elders requires a kind of synecdoche: the wood-built wall that once upon a time fenced in the Acropolis now stands for the Acropolis as a whole. The other party takes the words metaphorically: a “wood-built wall” refers to a protective device

made of wood. Both parties are aware of the fact that what one says and what one means do not stand in a one-to-one correspondence.

At this point of his story Herodotus first introduces the great Athenian statesman Themistocles. As becomes evident later (7.144), Themistocles had advocated the building of a fleet before, and he had suggested that the Athenians use the silver from the mines of Laurium for this purpose. So, clearly, Themistocles is committed to defending the second 'reading' of the oracle: this means he must offer an interpretation of the last two verses that removes the threat of a naval defeat for the Athenians. Themistocles realizes that the oracle is ambiguous: "children of women" can refer to the Persians as well as to the Greeks. Ambiguity is a regular characteristic of oracles and one of the reasons why they are always right. We may compare the oracle given to Croesus (purporting that a great empire would fall if he attacked. He duly attacked, not realizing that his own empire was meant (*Histories* 1.54)). Themistocles exploits this ambiguity and points out that the qualification "divine" for the isle of Salamis sits oddly with a defeat of the Greeks. In that case, the oracle would surely have called Salamis "wretched". Therefore, says Themistocles, the "children of women" are the Persians, not the Greeks; the Greeks will be victorious in the naval battle, and the "wood-built wall" means the fleet.

It is clear that Themistocles starts his interpretation from a preconceived notion of what is to be the most fruitful policy for the Athenians. His exegesis serves a rhetorical (persuasive) and political end, and indeed, it betrays a considerable degree of sophistication. Although this is not made explicit, Themistocles requires consistency in the emotional impact of the two halves of the problematic verse: you cannot say in one breath: "*Divine* Salamis, you will *destroy us*", which is what the alternative interpretation of the words "children of women" would boil down to. "Children of women" is ambiguous, "divine" is not (or so Themistocles claims); therefore, "divine" must be the starting-point of the interpretation and "children of women" must be explained accordingly. The possibility that the oracle might be pro-Persian or neutral is not taken into consideration. The former would enable it to call the island "divine" while still alluding to the defeat of the Athenians, the latter to call the island "divine" irrespective of what happens in its environment. All that matters in this context is that the apparent threat of the oracle is dissolved, and that is where the interpretation will stop. Exegesis is not practised for its own sake.

Not only in interpreting the will of the gods, whether expressed in dreams

or in oracles, did the Greeks need exegesis. The original function of the poets in an oral society, to be the preservers of the tribal past and the living explanation of the *status quo*, was not over and done with when Greece gradually evolved into a (more) literate society (from the 7th century BCE onwards). The poets remained all-important as the educators of youth, and the teachers of society at large. Their work was not only disseminated through performance, it also constituted an important part of the school curriculum. But since the chronological gap between their language and social background and that of their students was continually widening, an effort of interpretation was necessary in order to make their work accessible and to maintain its relevance to the new historical circumstances. In the period before the foundation of the Museum in Alexandria (6th-4th centuries BCE), three exegetical techniques are especially relevant to our present theme of semantics: glosses, paraphrase, and allegory.

Glosses are “difficult words” from Homer, for which Attic equivalents had to be found. Real “glossography” emerged only in the 3rd century, but on a less institutionalized basis the practice was much older. The rhapsodes, who performed Homer’s poetry, were also supposed to be able to explain his words. Democritus (5th century BCE) wrote about glosses in Homer, and Aristotle (4th century BCE) uses the term as a matter of course.

An example of paraphrastic technique is Plato’s *Republic* (II, 392c ff.); in this text Socrates remedies the baneful influence of direct speech in poetry, which forces the reader completely to identify with the emotions of a character. Socrates’ solution is to *report* such speech in a prose paraphrase. The paraphrastic technique is likely to reflect a familiar school practice.

In view of the authority attributed to the poets, it was important to have them on your side in any argument. This means that exegesis was often used with ulterior motives, to support a certain view. Plato again offers an example in his *Protagoras*, where Socrates’ paraphrase of a poem by Simonides turns that poet into a Socratic *avant la lettre*. Clearly, the exegesis has a rhetorical (or dialectical) function, but at the same time it exhibits considerable philological sophistication (e.g., Socrates uses different antonyms to the same terms to bring about a shift in the argument). Plato does not leave it at this, however. His Socrates rejects the interpretation of poems as a legitimate way of conducting a discussion. The poets cannot be questioned nor can they answer back. This means that there is an element of arbitrariness in asserting that the poet means or intends (*noein*) this or the other (347e); it can never be proven or disproved. In other words: using the poets is incompatible with

dialectics. The same rejection of the authority of the poets can be seen in the *Ion* and in the so-called aporetic dialogues, where the interlocutors look for definitions of moral values. One of the definitions proposed in the course of the discussion (only to be rejected as unsatisfactory) always stems from a poet. It is typical of Plato to take up such generally accepted discussion techniques (using the poets, using language and etymology) only to dismiss them as improper tools for a dialectician: epistemologically, they are of strictly limited value. I will return to this matter in Section 6, on the *Cratylus*.

Finding support for one's view in the poets, especially in Homer and Hesiod, sometimes required a huge interpretive effort. When the surface meaning of the text failed to produce the required testimony, its true meaning was searched for below the surface. In a sense, the poetic text took on the characteristics of an oracle. The deeper sense, or *hupónoia*, "under-sense", is hidden (like the true meaning of an oracle) and should be retrieved from the text by reading it *allegorically*. Allegory was often backed up by etymology (Buffière 1956:60ff.). Plato already knew of (possibly quite extensive) allegorical readings of Homer. He was prepared to admit that Homer's message might be relevant and respectable on such an interpretation, but he felt one could not leave it to children to gather such hidden boons from the text, and therefore he rejected the poets as educators of the Greek (*Republic* II,378 d).

The first allegorical interpretations of Homer took the gods as allegories for physical phenomena, reading the *Iliad* as a kind of cosmogony (Theagenes of Rhegium, 6th century BCE). They were positive in character, trying to turn Homer into a very early witness for cosmological and philosophical insights that were made explicit only later on (e.g. by the originators of the allegorical interpretation themselves). But there was also an apologetic stream of allegorical interpretation, that tried to explain away offensive bits of Homer (like the gods' adulteries, or lies), often by invoking ethical allegories (in which e.g. the gods represent virtues). This was a reaction to the criticism of philosophers like Xenophanes (6th century BCE) directed at Homer's representation of the gods. Ethical and physical allegory were to remain the major species of this type of interpretation, the former practiced mainly by rhetoricians, the latter by philosophers and theologians. The Stoa was to become especially famous (or notorious) for it.

Hupónoia "under-sense" was the earliest term for allegory. The word *allēgoría* "to say other (than that which is meant)" is of later date. It stems from a grammatical/rhetorical context, i.e. a context that is primarily didactic

and prescriptive: *allēgoréō* “to say other (than that which is meant)”, is what the producer of a text does; only secondarily can it refer to a method of reading or explaining a text (see Whitman 1987:263–68; Buffière 1956:45ff.). The term *hupónoia* is neutral where the opposition intended/unintentional deeper meaning is concerned.

Allegory is not the only rhetorical trope in which what is said and what is meant do not coincide: the same goes for tropes like metaphor and irony. Allegorical interpretation became especially important in Jewish and Christian exegesis of the Bible and in the Neoplatonists.

5. The intellectuals’ debate in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE: On language, truth, knowledge and reality

The intellectuals of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE regarded Homer and Hesiod as the first Greek intellectuals, and they regarded themselves as (critical) heirs to the poetic tradition. Philosophers, poets, doctors, sophists and politicians (groups often difficult to distinguish, because most of the individuals involved belong to more than one category) took up position against their predecessors in the polemical and antagonistic way characteristic of intellectual discourse of the period. Hence, interestingly, the poets’ outlook came to some extent to determine the questions that were discussed. The poetic interest in language, in the trustworthiness of names, and the implicit observations made in that connection became part of the general scholarly ‘data-base’, a common body of knowledge, to be dealt with by every self-respecting scholar. This helps to explain why even in the context of early Ionian ‘natural philosophy’ questions pertaining to the nature of language were inevitably taken up. Although their interest was not primarily linguistic, scholars were concerned with the relationship between language, truth, knowledge and reality, in the footsteps of the poets.

The issue that lay at the heart of scholarly interests in this period was the nature of our world: how did it originate and what were its principles, its ultimate constituents? Another question concerned the value of our sense-perceptions: is the world in a state of eternal flux, or, quite to the contrary, is change just an illusion? Widely diverging opinions on each of these issues were aired, in a process of continuous reevaluation and reinterpretation of the ‘common data-base’ mentioned above, and it is in this context that the contribution of language to our state of knowledge was being weighed. However, this does not mean that the philosophers involved engaged in a

proper 'philosophy of language'. Their goals lay elsewhere.

Heraclitus (fl. ca. 500 BCE) "the dark philosopher" (*ho skoteinós*) emphatically takes up position against the poets: in his view the world is based on a substrate of fire, which is involved in a continuous process of change (or strife, as he prefers to call it). Strife between opposites creates the temporarily harmonious states that we think we observe. Over and beyond matter (fire) and the change processes there is the Logos, or Reason, which governs our cosmos. In view of this cosmology, Homer was completely misguided when he wished away strife from between gods and men (*Iliad* 18.107; Heraclitus *Fragment A 22*). And because opposites are essentially one, Hesiod was equally wrong when he called "Day" a child of "Night" (*Fragment B 57*). The same polemical tone is clear from *Fragment B 40*, for example:

"Much learning does not teach one to have intelligence, for it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again, Xenophanes and Hecataeus" (*polumathíē nóon ékhein ou didáskei Hēsíodon gàr àn edídaxe kai Puthagórēn autís te Xenopháneá te kai Hekataíon*, tr. Freeman, cf. Fr. B 42)

Now, since everything essentially consists of opposites, names are always insufficient as a medium to convey essences. They never capture more than one half of the essential duality. On the other hand, they are not absolutely useless either, for they do contain relevant information about that one half of the concept. This is clear from fragments like the following:

"That which alone is wise is one, it is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus" (*hèn tò sophòn moûnon légesthai ouk ethélei kai ethélei Zēnòs ónoma*, *Fragment 32*, tr. Freeman).

Zeus' name is felt to indicate "living" (*zēn*); thus, it leaves out one half of an essential unity, but the half that is represented is meaningful. The divine unity of oppositions and the ensuing arbitrariness of names also comes out in *Fragment 67*:

"God is day-night, winter-summer, war-peace, satiety-famine. But he changes like (fire, or, oil?) which when it mingles with the smoke of incense, is named according to each man's pleasure" (*ho theòs hēmérē euphrónē, kheimôn theros, pólemos eirēnē, kóros limós, alloioûtai dē hókōsper <pūr; elaïon (Barnes)> hopótan summigēi thuómasin, onomázetai kath' hēdonēn hekástou*, tr. Freeman)

In this fragment Heraclitus first refers to the essential unity of opposites (god is day-night), and then to the process of continuous change (*alloioûtai*), comparing god to fire (or oil); if it is correct to give a linear interpretation of the aphorism, naming belongs to the stage of perpetual change and cap-

tures one element of it in accordance with individual preferences. To a certain extent, names are therefore both arbitrary and conventional. The incomplete reliability of names seems to be at the heart of *Fragment 48* as well:

“The bow [*biós*] is called Life [*bíos*], but its work is death” (*tōi oūn tóxōi ónoma bíos, érgon dè thánatos*; tr. Freeman).

The opposition between name and “work” is common. See e.g. the Hippocratic *On Nutriment 21*.

Heraclitus’ gambit of a world in flux was countered by Parmenides of Elea (515-after 450 BCE), who wrote a poem in hexameters (putting himself firmly in the tradition of Homer, Hesiod and oracular utterances, but also of Xenophanes who had used the same medium to contest their authority). After a prologue describing how goddesses set him on the road to knowledge, a Way of Truth, and a Way of Opinion are described. It is Parmenides’ main object to penetrate the concepts of Truth and Opinion. The Way of Truth teaches him that the cosmos is eternal, unmoved and true, whereas the world of Coming-to-be is not true: in fact it is the world of “it is not”. Perception does not lead to truth. Parmenides starts from the only basic truths, namely the predicate that “It is” (*esti*) and the corresponding noun (or substantivized participle) “what is” (*eón*). In the realm of Truth, there is a complete identity between being, thought and speech, but it is restricted to the only possible true statement that “What is, is” (e.g. *Fragments B 3; 6; 7; 8.34*; cf. Di Cesare 1991:94f.). “What is not” cannot be named and cannot be thought (*anóēton anónumon*, *Fragment 8.17*). ‘Names’, other than *esti* and *eón* do not belong to the sphere of Truth, but are just that: mere names that form the subjects or predicates of deceptive statements that do not reflect reality, but human beliefs:

“Therefore, all things will be (just) a name which mortals, believing that they are real, suppose to be coming to be and perishing, to be and not to be, to change position, and to alter their colour from dark to bright and vice versa” (*tōi pánt’ ónom(a) éstai, hós sa brotoi katéthento pepoithótes eínai alēthē, / gígnesthaí te kai óllusthai, eínai te kai oukhí, / kai tópon allássein diá te khróa phanòn ameíbein*, *Fragment 8.37ff.*; tr. Coxon, adapted).

This is also emphasized in the transitional part of the poem, where we go from the Way of Truth onto that of Opinion:

“At this point I cease my reliable theory and thought, concerning Truth; from here onwards you must learn the opinions of mortals, listening to the deceptive order of my words. They have established [the custom of] naming two forms, one of which ought not to be [mentioned]: that is where they have gone astray. They have distinguished

them as opposite in form, and have marked them off from another by giving them different signs [Light/Night] ... But since all things are named Light and Night ...” (*en tōi soi paúō pistōn lōgon ēdē nōēma/amphis alētheiēs: dóxas d'apò toude broteías/mánthane kósmon emōn epéōn apatēlōn akouōn*./53 *morphās gār katéthento dúo gnōmas onomázein:/tōn mían ou khreón estin—en hōi peplanēmēnoi eisin -/antía d'ekrínanto démas kai sēmat' éthento/khōrīs ap'allēlōn [pháos/núx]*, Fragment B 8,50ff.; ... *autār epeidē pánta pháos kai núx onómastai* ..., Fragment B 9; tr. Freeman).

In the realm of Opinion, names are essentially unreliable. People think they can distinguish opposites. They give them separate names and when making a statement about them, they can use only one to the exclusion of the other, which at that time ‘is not’: but as we have seen, that means they tread outside the realm of Truth. The arbitrary process of naming causes fragmentation of ‘what is’ (cf. Di Cesare 1980:30). This seems to be the meaning of this difficult fragment. What is clear in any case, is that mortals err in assigning and/or applying names; names are instruments of Opinion (*dóxa*) (Fragment B 19). They belong in the domain of Opinion and are conventional. By making his distinction of the role and reliability of names in the Ways of Truth and Opinion, Parmenides reacts to Heraclitus both where the principles of change or immutability are concerned, and in the question of the relation of names to truth, reality and knowledge.

A similar view of the difference between reality and the makeshift names people use to describe their view of reality can be found in Empedocles (493–433 BCE): he thinks the world consists of the four elements, earth, water, air and fire, which are continually mixing or separating in two opposed processes directed by “Love” and “Strife”:

“And I shall tell you another thing: there is no creation of substance (*phúsis*) in any one of mortal existences, nor any end in execrable death, but only mixing and exchange of what has been mixed; and the name ‘substance’ (*phúsis*, “nature”) is applied to them by mankind” (*állo dé toi eréō: phúsis oudenōs éstin hapántōn/thnētōn, oudé tis ouloménou thanátoio teleutē, allà mónon míxis te diállaxis te migéntōn/ésti, phúsis d'epi toīs onomázetai anthrōpoisin*, Fragment B 8, tr. Freeman).

“Nature” “coming to being” (*phúsis*) does not correspond to an ontological reality, it is just a name. The conventional nature of names is taken up again in Fragment 9: If a certain phenomenon takes place

“then (they) say that this has ‘come into being’ ... The terms that Right demands they do not use; but through custom I myself also apply these names” (*tóte mèn tò <légousi> genésthai ... hē thémis <ou> kaléousi, nómoi d'epiphēmi kai autós*, Fragment B 9; tr. Freeman).

Names are not in accordance with the factual state of affairs, but Empedocles

is not going to quibble over them: he adapts to custom (*nómos*) (cf. Heinimann 1945:84ff.; Schmitter 1991:76). Instead of trying to get rid of the word “coming-to-be” (*génesis*), he gives it its customary due (*Fragment B 10, apodoūnai toīs onómasi tò nenomisménon*). This idea is widespread among the intellectuals of the era. Exactly the same view, namely that coming-into-being and passing away are no more than the customary names for mixing and separating, is to be found in Hippocrates’ *On Regimen* 1.4. He, too, is prepared to accommodate “hoi polloi”. Anaxagoras also points out the faultiness of this usage on the same grounds (*Fragment B 17* “the Greeks have an incorrect belief (or: an incorrect usage) about Coming into Being and Passing Away” (*tò dè gínesthai kai apóllusthai ouk orthōs nomízousin hoi Hēllēnes*, tr. Freeman; notice that *nomízein* is ambiguous between “to hold a belief”, and “to have a custom(ary usage)”). Herodotus extends the same tolerance to mistaken usage in his description of the coast of Asia:

“It ends, not really but as the word goes (*nómōi*) in the Arab Gulf” (*lēgei dè hautē, ou légousa ei mē nómōi, es tòn kólpon tòn Arábion*, *Histories* 4.39, cf. Heinimann 1945:82).

According to Empedocles, language is a reflection of man’s (wrong) opinions about the world, but it is useless to oppose it. Empedocles here anticipates one of the theories of meaning put forward in Plato’s *Cratylus*, namely that words reflect a certain perspective on the world (see Section 6).

A similar slight depreciation of language on account of its conventional nature can be found in Socrates’ contemporary, Democritus (ca. 460–360), who otherwise shows a vivid interest in linguistic (literary) questions (see Diogenes Laertius 9.37 for a list of his works). In his view there are but two realities, atoms and the void. These are “by nature” (*phúsei*), everything else is a matter of convention, or conventional linguistic usage (cf. Heinimann 1945:87f.). This can be illustrated by the fact that he uses a number of different terms to indicate what he sees as the ultimate goal of mankind, namely “contentment” (*euthumía*) (Diogenes Laertius 9.45). In Proclus’ commentary on Plato’s *Cratylus*, Democritus is made out to be a champion of the conventionalist thesis that the relation between names and things is arbitrary on the strength of four arguments, all of them reflecting a deficient one-to-one correspondence between language and reality:

“Democritus says names are by convention and he confirms this by four dialectical proofs: (1) from homonymy: different things are called by the same name; therefore names are not by nature; (2) and from multiplicity of names: if different names will fit one and the same thing, they will also fit each other, which is impossible; (3) from the

change of names for why have we changed Aristocles into Plato, and Tyrtamus into Theophrastus, if names are by nature? (4) and by the deficiency of similar items why do we say 'to be wise' (*phroneîn*) from 'wisdom' (*phrônêsis*), but is there no such derivation from justice (*dikaiousûnê*)? Therefore, names are by coincidence and not by nature .. (7.3ff.) and he calls the first proof 'polyseme' (*polúsêmon*), the second 'equality' (*isórrhōpon*), the third 'metonym' (*metónumon*), the fourth 'nameless' (*nónnumon*)" (*Ho dē Dēmókritos thései légōn tà onómata dià tessárōn epikheirēmátōn toutō kateskeúazen· ek tēs homónumías tà gár diáphora prágmata tōi autōi kaloúntai onómata, ouk ára phúsei tò ónoma; kai ek tēs poluónumías· ei gár tà diáphora onómata epì tò autò kai hèn prágma epharmósousin, kai epállēla, hóper adúnaton; trítōn ek tēs tōn onomátōn metathéseōs· dià tí gár tōn Aristokléa mèn Plátōna, tòn dē Týrtamon Theóphrastōn metónomásamen, ei phúsei tà onómata? ek dē tēs tōn homoiōn elleípseōs; dià tí apò mèn tēs phronéseōs légomen phroneîn, apò dē tēs dikaiousûnēs ouk éti paronomázomen? túkhēi ára kai ou phúsei tà onómata. (7 3ff.). kaleî dē ho autòs tò mèn prōtōn epikheirēma polúsêmon, tò dē deúteron isórrhōpon, <tò dē trítōn metónumon>, tò dē tétartōn nónumon, Proclus in Pl. Crat. p. 6 2off. Pasquali (= Fragment A 26))*

It is unclear how much in this fragment is actually Democritean, apart from the bare fact of a distinction of the different types of failing one-to-one correspondence between names and things. In spite of his view of language as a conventional system, Democritus still uses etymologies. Like Empedocles, he knows that what the etymologies will reflect is not so much a reliable picture of the world as it is, but rather convention itself, and hence, the views that go with it. Accordingly, he derives "woman" (*gunē*), from "seed" (*gonē*), because that is what she is receptive of (*Fragment B 122a*); and the name Tritogeneia for Athena, representing wisdom, is explained because three things originate from wisdom (*gínetai ... tría*): good counsel, flawless speech and appropriate action (*Fragment B 2*). The context of his saying "speech is the shadow of action" (*lógos érgou skiē*, *Fragment B 145*) is lost. Maybe it simply refers to the common conception of the priority of action over words, but the word "shadow" seems to imply more, viz. both the derived nature of speech, and the fact that it is meaningful—even if only in a secondary or derived sense. Compare Simonides' (6th century BCE) view that "speech is an image of the facts (so that a speech of what is useful, is useful etc.)" (*ho lógos tōn pragmatōn eikōn estin (hōs eīnai tōn mèn tōn ôphelímōn ôphélimon ktl*, Simonides apud Michael Psellus, *De daemonum energia* (Patrologia Graeca Migne 122,821)); (see also Isocrates 3.7, quoted in Section 7).

Democritus' views on the opposition between convention (*nómos*) and nature (*phúsis*) reflect the general interest of contemporary intellectuals in the relationship between the two, especially in connection with the develop-

ment of human culture. Around the middle of the fifth century BCE, a number of teachers of rhetoric traveled through the Greek world, offering lectures and courses to young people who wanted to prepare themselves for active citizenship in the *polis*. Because of their interest in the nature of human culture, these sophists accorded the study of language a much greater emphasis than had the philosophers we have been discussing so far. The primary interests of the latter group was in cosmology and epistemology. The sophists on the other hand concentrated on language itself, not only because it was the medium of their rhetoric, but also as a part of human culture at large. They considered the question whether language was a cultural acquisition, and therefore a barrier between men and the ultimate truths, or a direct, natural road of access to reality. Many, but not all of the sophists opted for a relativist position, denying fixed ethical values, and stressing the arbitrariness of all conventions, including those of human language.

How widely diffused these ideas were among intellectuals of the period appears from the opening section of a treatise that was falsely attributed to the famous physician Hippocrates, but was presumably written by a 5th-century sophist. In trying to defend the status of medicine as a true art, the author of *The Art* also comes to reflect on the status of names:

“Now reality is known when the arts have been already revealed, and there is no art which is not seen as springing from some real essence. I for my part think that the arts have also got their names because of the real essences; for it is absurd—nay impossible—to hold that real essences spring from names. For names are institutions, but real essences are not institutions but the offspring of nature” (*ginōsketai toînun dedeigménōn ēdē tōn tekhnēōn, kai oudemía estín, hē ge ēk tinos eídeos oukh horātai. oîmai d’ égōge kai tà onómata autàs dià tà eídea labeîn: álogon gàr apò tōn onomatōn hēgeísthai tà eídea blastánein kai adúnaton; tà mèn gàr onómata [phúsios] nomothetémata estín, tà dè eídea ou nomothetémata allà blastémata [phúseōs A, del. Diels, post blastémata transposuit Gomperz], *The Art* 2; tr. Jones, adapted)*

The author does not argue for a direct link between name and essence. On the contrary, he claims that essences are primary. Every art is based on a real essence. Only at a second stage have the arts received an (arbitrary) name; the things named, however, do in this case reflect real divisions in reality. Contrast ch. 6 of the same treatise, where the author denies that such a correspondence with reality exists for the word “spontaneity” (*tò autómaton*). “Spontaneity” is therefore “nothing but a name” (*oudemíēn all’ è ónoma*). The priority of the ontological, existential level can be found in another pseudo-Hippocratic treatise, perhaps by Polybus (ca. 400 BCE), *On the Nature of Man*. In this work a humoral theory is expounded, in which bodily func-

tions are seen as largely dependent on an equilibrium between the four body humours (blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm). Here, it is argued that there are four different names for these humours, precisely because there are four separate entities that correspond to these names in reality (*On the Nature of Man* 5, 6.40 Littré). The concept of naming as a method to differentiate elements of reality may equally lie behind Herodotus' intriguing remark—untrue in its literal sense—about the origin of Greek religion: “The names of almost all the gods came to Greece from Egypt” (*skhedòn dè kai pántōn tà ounómata tōn theōn ex Aigúptou eléluthe es tēn Helláda*, *Histories* 2.50); it also plays a role in the Derveni Papyrus, a commentary on an Orphic cosmogony, and is taken up in Plato's *Cratylus* 388b13ff., where names are described as tools to differentiate reality (see Section 6; cf. Burkert 1985; Thomas forthcoming).

Protagoras (fl. 444 BCE), one of the proposed spiritual fathers of the treatise *The Art*, claimed that any subject gave occasion to two opposite speeches and he found a truly ‘sophistic’ method of confounding his opponents by ignoring the sense (*diánoian*) of words and arguing strictly from the words (*pròs toúnoma*) (*Fragment A 1* = Diogenes Laertius 9.52). That means that he was convinced there was no naturally correct way of approaching reality with words, or rather that he was not interested in reality at all. Whether something is ‘real’ or ‘the case’ or not is immaterial to his method.

On the other hand, he is also known as the first to have explicitly formulated a number of grammatical distinctions based on semantic considerations: He distinguished the genders of the nouns, inspired by the biological difference between male, female and inanimate beings (*skeuē* “instruments”, “things”) (*Fragment A 27* = Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III, 5.1407b6), and criticized Homer for not applying the biological distinctions correctly in language. Surely, words like wrath (*mēnis*) and axe (*pēlēx*) should be masculine: therefore, when Homer sings of Achilles' “terrible wrath” as *mēnin... ouloménēn* (the ending of *ouloménēn* indicates that *mēnin* is feminine) in the first two verses of the *Iliad*, he is committing a solecism, even if nobody had noticed before (*Fragment A 28* = Aristotle *On Sophistical Refutations* 14.173b17). He also distinguished four types of discourse, prayer, question, answer and order, which he called “foundations of speech” (*puthménas... lógōn*, *Fragment A 1*). Again, Homer's opening verse of the *Iliad* comes in for criticism: when he sang “Goddess, sing of the wrath”, he was using a command-form, instead of a prayer (*Fragment A 29* = Aristotle *Poetics* 19.1456b15). How seriously this ‘criticism’ was intended, is a different matter.

Not all sophists rejected the natural ‘correctness’ of language, in the sense of an accurate correspondence between names and things. The correlation between such a rejection and a relativist view of ethics was mirrored in the opposite case: a belief in fixed ethical values tended to entail a certain faith in the epistemological reliability of language. The sophist Prodicus, a contemporary of Socrates and Democritus (5th century BCE), reacted to Democritus’ claim that language rested on coincidence and convention. Democritus’ claim was based on the absence of a one-to-one correspondence between linguistic entities and elements in the world around us. One example of this deficient correspondence was the existence of synonyms. Prodicus analysed groups of synonyms to prove that, in fact, they were not true synonyms. There were minute differences in their semantic load, as he demonstrated by a method of *diáiresis* “distinction”:

“Prodicus tried to assign a meaning of its own to each of these names, as the Stoics did [follow examples]” (*Pródikos δὲ επειρᾶτο hekástōi tōn onomátōn toutōn idíon ti sēmainómenon hupotássein, hōsper kai hoi apò tēs Stoās, Fragment A 19* (= Alexander on Aristotle’s *Topics* B 6.112b22).

Heinimann (1945:156ff.) rightly emphasizes the hidden philosophical agenda: a successful defence of language’s accurate reflection of even the subtlest distinctions in reality (*orthótēs onomátōn*) is a strong argument against relativism and scepticism (cf. Momigliano 1929–30:102). And Prodicus’ interest in questions of ethics and norms is borne out by his parable of Heracles on the crossroads. In sum, both the sophists who held a relativist position and those who did not, employed arguments from the nature of language, a fashionable problem in the intellectual discourse of the time.

Distinguishing synonyms and demanding a proper choice of words gained a permanent place in later linguistic theory, more specifically in rhetoric. Traces of the practice can be found in all corpora of scholia, usually in the stylized form “word x and word y differ: for ...” (*diaphérei tò A kai tò B, hótí ...*). Accordingly, *akurología*, the use of an improper word when a better one was available, could be regarded as one of the three major vices of speech.

By the second half of the 5th century a shift in academic interest had occurred. Formerly, intellectuals had discussed the nature of language as a corollary to the study of nature and the search for its ultimate principles. Language was thought to contain a key to the Truth. Now, intellectual circles focused increasingly on the different ways one could *use* language. The difference is clear: language is no longer primarily regarded as an instrument to acquire knowledge, but to bring about actions or to influence attitudes.

Rhetoricians in particular explore the ethical and practical consequences of using language as a psychagogical device to enthrall and captivate the audience, Gorgias (483–376 BCE) is the outstanding example of an orator who goes all out for acoustic effect, bringing his audience in a kind of trance. At the same time, he also affirms the basic impossibility of true communication because of the intrinsic incommensurability of language and its objects: there is no way words can convey, for instance, a colour (*Fragment B 3a*). While Parmenides asserted the identity of being, thought and speech in the Way of Truth, Gorgias systematically invalidated this claim.

‘He says that nothing exists and if it exists, that it cannot be known and if it both exists and can be known it cannot be communicated to others (*ouk eīnai phesin ouden ei d estin agnoston eīnai ei de kai esti kai gnōston all ou dēlōton allois*, *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia* 979a12f.)

Under these circumstances, the only role left for language is that of a drug. Accordingly, Gorgias devoted his energy to the production of show-pieces, designed to stun.

The historian Thucydides (2nd half of the 5th century BCE) offers a striking analysis of a shrewd, politically manipulative use of evaluative terms, *New Speak avant la lettre*. Commenting on the idea that war brings out the worst in people, he gives the following illustration (3.82.4):

‘Further, they exchanged their usual verbal evaluations of deeds for new ones, in the light of what they now thought justified, thus irrational daring was considered courage for the sake of the Party, prudent delay, specious cowardice’ (*kai ten eiōthūian axiosin tōn onomatōn es ta erga antiēllaxan teīdikaiōsei tolma men gar alogistos andria phile tairos enomisthē mellēsis de promēthēs deiūa euprepes*, *Histories* 3.82.4, tr. Wilson).

This text both suggests that there is an absolute norm of describing and evaluating certain types of behaviour, and at the same time that a conventional use of language can be highly (and misleadingly) suggestive.

By the end of the 5th century BCE, intellectuals were sharply aware of the poetic, rhetorical and philosophical potential of language. ‘Meaning’ was located in the relationship between words and things, in the opinion of the speakers about the world around them, and in the effect words have. All these themes were to be taken up and connected by Plato.

6. Plato: the limits of language

When Plato (427–347 BCE) wrote his *Cratylus*, one of the seminal works in the history of linguistic thought, language was definitely on the intellectual

agenda. The epistemological reflections of the pre-Socratics, and the anthropological and political interests of the Sophists had been underpinned by various arguments derived from language. Both groups had mainly been concerned with the relationship between language (names) and reality, and between words, knowledge and truth, and this was to be the central issue in the *Cratylus* as well. But why did Plato feel it imperative to address the issue, and what place does the linguistic question occupy in his philosophy? These questions must be dealt with after a discussion of the contents of the dialogue.

Socrates is asked to adjudicate in a debate between Hermogenes and Cratylus. Both positions are initially presented by Hermogenes himself; that of Cratylus is reported as follows:

“Cratylus, whom you see here, Socrates, says that everything has a right name of its own, which comes by nature, and that a name is not whatever people call a thing by agreement, just a piece of their own voice applied to the thing, but that there is a kind of inherent correctness in names, which is the same for all men, both Greeks and barbarians” (*Krátulos phēsin hóde, ὃ Sókrates, onómatos orthótēta eīnai hekástōi tōn ontōn phūsei pephukūian, kai ou toūto eīnai ónoma hò án tines sunthémenoi kaleīn kalōsi, tēs hautōn phōnēs mórion epiphthengómenoi, allà orthótētá tina tōn onomátōn pephukénai kai Hállēsi kai barbárois tēn autēn hápasin, Crat. 383a4ff.; tr. Fowler*).

And Hermogenes' own, opposing view is expressed shortly afterwards:

“I cannot come to the conclusion that there is any correctness of names other than convention and agreement. For it seems to me that whatever name you give to a thing is its right name; and if you give up that name and change it for another, the later name is no less correct than the earlier, just as we change the names of our servants; for I think no name belongs to any particular thing by nature, but only by the habit and custom of those who employ it and who established the usage” (*ou dúnamai peisthēnai hōs állē tis orthótēs onómatos è sunthékē kai homología. emoi gàr dokeī hótī án tīs tōi thētai ónoma, toūto eīnai tò orthón; kai àn aūthís ge héteron metathētai, ekeīno dè mēkéti kalēi, oudèn hēiton tò hústeron orthōs ékhein toū protérou, hōsper toīs oikétais hēmeīs metatithémetha: ou gàr phūsei hekástōi pephukénai ónoma oudèn oudení, allà nómōi kai éthei tōn ethisántōn te kai kaloúntōn, Crat. 384c10-d3, tr. Fowler*).

It should be pointed out at once that both debaters are agreed on the essential correctness of names (*onomátōn orthótēs*). It is the source and definition of that correctness that is at issue. This is also clear from the way in which they both reconcile the existence of different languages with this presupposed correctness. Cratylus can refer to a correctness transcending the individual languages (worked out by Socrates in 389d4ff.); Hermogenes to the existence of different, but equally valid conventions (385d9ff.).

A second point is that the *Cratylus* is not concerned with the origin of

names or language. That names have at one point come into being is taken for granted by both parties, and it is more or less indifferent whether language was created by a god or a man, or by human society at large. Indeed, throughout the dialogue the name-giver is variously described in the singular and the plural, as god or man, or as 'men of old'. The central question is the relationship between words and reality. Cratylus does not ask himself whether *names* are *phúsei* "by nature", but whether their *orthótēs* "correctness" is by nature, and *mutatis mutandis* the same goes for Hermogenes: his concern is not with a supposedly conventional *origin* of names, but with their conventional *correctness*. On both views language was 'given' at some point; "by nature" does not refer to a spontaneous coming-into-being.

Socrates first takes up Hermogenes' position for investigation and develops a first theory of meaning in six moves. First, he gets Hermogenes to agree that it is possible to speak the truth, and, hence, to give names in accordance with what *is* (a fixed *ousía* "being"); Hermogenes turns out not to insist on an extreme relativism (385a1ff.) (1). Then, the essentially communicative (didactic) function of language and names is established, leading up to the following conclusion (2):

"A name is, then, an instrument of teaching and of separating reality" (*ónoma ára didaskalikón tí estin órganon kai diakritikòn tēs ousías*, *Crat.* 388b13f., tr. Fowler).

Thirdly, it is agreed, without any discussion, that "custom" (or "law") (*nómos*) creates language, and that whoever uses words, uses the work of an "establisher of custom" or a "lawgiver" (*nomothétēs*, 388d-e) (3), and then the question is tackled how this name-giver proceeds in giving names. Socrates submits that in fact "nature" (*phúsis*) is taken into account at this stage. The name-giver concentrates on the "absolute or ideal name" (*autò ekeíno hò éstin ónoma*, *Crat.* 389d7) and on the object that should be named. He then creates a 'name' for this object in a phonetic form that is in itself indifferent—which explains the existence of different languages. As long as the name-giver keeps the Form (*eĩdos*) of Name in mind, he will be a good *nomothétēs* (4):

"Then, my dear friend, must not the lawgiver also know how to embody in the sounds and syllables each object's natural name? Must he not make and give all his names with his eye fixed upon the absolute or ideal name, if he is to be an authoritative giver of names? And if different lawgivers do not embody it in the same syllables, we must not be mistaken about this on that account; for different smiths do not embody the form in the same iron, making the same instrument for the same purpose, but so long as they reproduce the same ideal, though it be in different iron, still the instrument is as it should be, whether it be made here or in foreign lands, is it not?" (*ār' oūn, ō bēltiste, kai tò*

hekastōi phūsei pephukos ónoma tòn nomothétēn ekeīnon eis toūs phthóngous kai tās sullabàs deī epistasthai tuthénai, kai bléponta pròs autò ekeīno hò éstin ónoma, pánta ta onomata poieîn te kai títhesthai, ei méllēi kurios eīnai onomátōn thétēs? ei dē mē eis tās autàs sullabàs hékastos ho nomothétēs títhēsai, oudèn deī toúto a<mpu>gnoeîn oude gár eis tòn autòn sidēron hapas khalkeüs títhēsai, toū autoū hénēka poiōn tò autò órganon, all’ homós, hēós àn tèn autèn idéan apodidōi, eánte en állōi sidērōi, hómōs orthōs ékhei to órganon, eánte entháde eánte en barbárois tis poiēi ē gár?, Crat 389d4–390a2, tr Fowler, adapted)

The efficacy of the name-giver’s work will be judged by the user, the *dialektikós* (390c11) (5). And Socrates concludes (6):

“Then, Hermogenes, the giving of names can hardly be, as you imagine, a trifling matter, or a task for trifling or casual persons and Cratylus is right in saying that names belong to things by nature and that not every one is an artisan of names, but only he who keeps in view the name which belongs by nature to each particular thing and is able to embody its form in the letters and syllables” (*Kinduneúei ára, ô Hermógenes, eīnai ou phaûlon, hōs sù oiei, hē toū onómatos thésis, oudē phaûlōn andrōn oudē tōn epitukhónōn. kai Kratúlos alēthē légei légōn phūsei tà onómata eīnai toīs prágmati, kai ou pánta dēmiourgōn onomátōn eīnai, allà mónon ekeīnon tòn apobléponta eis tò tēi phūsei ónoma òn hekástōi kai dunámenon autoū tò eīdos tuthénai eīs te tà grámmata kai tās sullabàs, Crat 390d7–e4, tr Fowler*)

On this view, the Form or Idea (*eīdos*), the “natural name for each thing” (*tò tēi phūsei ónoma òn hekástōi*) mediates between individual names and individual items in the world—in fact, it functions as their meaning.

Now that it has been established that there *is* some natural correctness of names (*orthótēs*), a further investigation of its nature triggers the exposition of a second theory of meaning. Claiming to experience a sudden inspiration, Socrates identifies the source of correctness of names in Homer (393a4 ff.): it consists in the primacy of meaning, *dúnamis*, over form. The form of a word may change, while its meaning remains unaffected, and this can disturb a name’s perspicuity. The constancy of meaning had always been, and was to remain, the basic principle of ancient etymology, and it is first formulated in the *Cratylus* (393d1f.; 394b2ff.). Socrates then launches into a series of etymologies, profiting from his fit of ‘superhuman wisdom’ (396d8). There is a lot of irony in the etymological section which follows, especially the repeated references to Socrates’ miraculous inspiration (e.g. 396e1ff.; 399a1; 401e7; 409d1ff.; 410e3). Several etymologies are obviously intended ironically as well, as when “heroes” (*hērōes*) is first almost derived from “love” (*érōs*) because heroes spring from the love of a god for a mortal woman or that of a goddess for a mortal man. Socrates then quickly gives the argument a turn and derives the word from *erōtáo* “to ask” or *eírein* “to say”, which

makes the heroes into the forerunners of the rhetoricians and sophists (Crat. 398c6ff.). Or the impossible *Selaenoneoáeia* (409b12), “the one who has an old and a new gleam”, which is posited as the origin of *Selanaía* “moon”, making its name coincide with (and anticipate!) the views defended by Anaxagoras: Hermogenes cannot refrain from commenting on its “opéra bouffe” (*dithurambōdes*, tr. Fowler) character (Crat. 409c1ff.). A comparable instance is when the word for “name” (*ónoma*) is derived from “a being that one is searching for” (*ón, hoũ máσμα estin*, Crat. 421b1), relating it directly to the present conversation—but also to the name-giver’s activity.

In the course of the etymological section, Socrates expounds his second theory of meaning: names represent earlier people’s interpretations of reality (cf. 401a1ff.); in that sense many of the etymologies can be taken seriously in that they are genuine reflections of existing views on the cosmos (according to Goldschmidt 1940 they represent a complete Heraclitean cosmology; he thinks Socrates is made to expound what were basically Cratylus’ etymological theories here). Their quantity may be explained by the fact that they are supposed to represent a systematic account of nature, while the humorous touches are part of the literary make-up of the dialogue. Socrates’ hypothesis is, that many names were imposed by people holding Heraclitean convictions, and he accordingly proceeds to explain a whole series of names on the supposition that ‘flux’ was their underlying principle. Throughout he keeps stressing that no serious explanations are to be expected from him (406b9f.; cf. 391a4 ff.). Moreover, Socrates seems fully aware of the arbitrary character of his etymological method (414d7 ff.).

When the etymological section narrows down to an investigation of the ‘first words’, the elements to which the other words can be reduced (422b6ff.), Socrates argues that these ‘first words’ are formed on the basis of sound symbolism; they make something clear (*dēlōma* 423b1 f.) according to a mimetic principle (423b4ff.). The sounds are not just onomatopoeic, but they copy “being” (*ousía*) as their model (423e1ff.). At this point it is made clear once again that ‘being’ does not allow of relativism.

In the last third of the dialogue, Cratylus takes over the role of Socrates’ interlocutor from Hermogenes (427c9ff.). His position was that names are always correct, or they stop being names at all—convention does not come into it. Socrates makes Cratylus admit the relevance of convention and give up his epistemological claim that whoever knows a thing’s name, knows the thing itself. In order to drive home the former point, Socrates makes Cratylus acknowledge the possibility of saying something which is not true, i.e. to use

names that do not reflect reality perfectly. (It may be remembered that he used the reverse strategy against Hermogenes who was made to admit the possibility of 'true' speech.) Names are imitations of things (430a10). Since every imitation differs qualitatively from its model (otherwise it would be a complete duplicate, not an imitation), there is always a qualitative margin between a name and that of which it is the name: this means names may be more or less successful (432a8ff.; d7). Cratylus has to admit that it is custom or convention that makes people understand each other in spite of the imperfections that names may contain (435a2ff.). A word may be as similar to the thing it denotes as possible, but for the remaining part it functions by convention (435 b-c). The principle that words imitate things also makes a guest-appearance in Plato's *Sophist*: people may be deceived into the belief that what is said is actually real, because there is a similarity between words and things. Thus, discourse (*lógoi*) is in a sense no more than "spoken images" (*eidōla legόμενα*, *Sophist* 234c6); it is not the real thing. But then, in a sense, neither is the perceptible world as a whole.

After this demonstration of the influence of convention on name-giving, Cratylus' epistemological position is undermined by Socrates' demonstration that names only lead to knowledge of the namegiver's opinions on things, not to that of the things themselves (436b5f.). If the namegiver's principles are misguided, his whole vocabulary will suffer from this *vitium originis*. (At this point, Socrates shows that many words may be regarded as being formed on a principle, not that the world is in a state of continuous flux (Heraclitus' theory), but that it is at rest (the view of Parmenides and his school, the Eleatics) (437a1ff.). Therefore, it is impossible to ascribe an essential correctness of names to divine intervention: this very inconsistency in the guiding principles of the lexicon forbids it (438c5). He then raises the question of the source of the namegiver's knowledge of things. Obviously, this source cannot be the names themselves (which are yet to be given). Rather, it is extra-linguistic reality itself, that should be studied if one wants to acquire knowledge about it (438d2ff.; 438e2f.; 439b7f.): the source of knowledge must be sought in the originals, not the copies (i.e. the names) (439a5)—again the model-imitation relationship is stressed. The existence of absolute ethical notions is posited (439c8). This means that serious doubt is cast on the Heraclitean principles which apparently were at the basis of so many names. Socrates ends with a grave warning against blindly entrusting oneself to names:

"But surely no man of sense can put himself and his soul under the control of names, and trust in names and their makers to the point of affirming that he know anything"

(*oudè pánu noĩn ékhontos anthrōpou epitrépsanta onómasin hautòn kai tèn hautouĩ psukhèn therapeúein pepisteukóta ekeínois kai toĩs theménois autá, diiskhurízesthai hōs ti eidóta*, 440c, tr. Fowler).

And the dialogue ends on a protreptic note: the topic requires further study.

Plato's Socratic dialogues are to a large extent concerned with establishing the status, ontological and epistemological, of ethical concepts. Taking position against the 'relativism' of certain Sophists, who denied the existence of fixed and absolute ethical values, Plato makes his Socrates search for Truth in conversations with various interlocutors. The final object of these investigations is the Good, which is identical to the Beautiful. To Plato's Socrates knowledge of the Good ensures possession of the Good, and thus of Virtue. Whoever knows what is good, will always act virtuously. The dialectical process, the joint effort in which Socrates and his interlocutors try to attain insight in ethical questions by a succession of questions and answers, involves delivering these interlocutors from their false assumptions and claims to a knowledge that they do not possess. Socrates himself does not lay claim to any firm knowledge ('Socratic irony'); his competence is that of a midwife (his mother's profession), and thus he is able to make people give birth to whatever their minds are carrying. These spiritual children are then tested for viability in a process of *élenkhos* "cross-examination", "refutation", and their 'fathers' should be able to account for them (*lógon didónai*). If they are not, they will reach a stage of healthy perplexity (*aporía*); once they realize that they do not know what they thought they knew, there is a basis for a constructive re-investigation of the issue. Theaetetus, for example, is asked what 'knowledge' is. Once he grasps the difference between giving an example and formulating a definition, he produces several definitions, which are then successively refuted and discarded. Knowledge does not equal sense-perception, nor true opinion, nor "true opinion, accounted for". Equally, in the *Laches*, several definitions of 'courage' are tested, in the *Lysis* definitions of 'friendship', etcetera. The definitions do not constitute conclusions of research, rather they are its starting-point.

It is obvious that this dialectical process, which is at the very basis of the Platonic, or at least of the Socratic, enterprise, is seriously endangered by the extreme views of language that were popular at the time. Strangely enough, Cratylus' and Hermogenes' positions form an equally severe threat to it. In both cases, language is always 'correct', even if in the former case this correctness is legitimized by 'nature', and in the latter by convention. On Hermogenes' view, the intersubjectivity required by dialectics is replaced

by pure subjectivism. If every one is entitled to create his own language, and to assign individual meanings to names, there can be no common search for truth. (Hermogenes keeps shifting back and forth between convention as a function of the individual and of the community, see e.g. 385a4 f.) On Cratylus' view, on the other hand, every name (and every proposition) is true, or it simply is not a name any longer. There is no point in investigating names (or definitions) in a search for an ulterior truth. This view reduces one to utter inertia; it would mean the end of dialectics as a process of inquiry to get beyond mere names and appearances. But, as Socrates points out, accounting for a name does not equal grasping a concept.

Not only is this made clear in the final section of the dialogue, but it is also anticipated almost incidentally in the etymological section, when Socrates examines the names of the virtues. The "just" (*tò díkaion*) is supposed to be derived from *diaíón*, "passing through (all other things)" with an interposed *k*. So far many people would agree, but beyond that they differ (412c8ff.). Even if we agree that the word *díkaion* is formed on the supposition that everything is in flux, that does not provide us with any essential insight in the nature of justice itself:

"Up to this point ... many men agree about justice (*díkaion*); and I, Hermogenes, being very much in earnest about it, have persistently asked questions and have been told in secret teachings that this is justice, or the cause—for that through which creation takes place is a cause—and some one told me that it was for this reason rightly called Zeus (*Día*; accusative of *Zeús*, but also a preposition meaning 'through, because of'). But when, after hearing this, I nevertheless ask them quietly, 'What then, my most excellent friend, if this is true, is justice?', they think I am asking too many questions and am leaping over the trenches. They say I have been told enough; they try to satisfy me by saying all sorts of different things, and they no longer agree" (*mékhrī mèn oūn entaūtha ... parà pollōn homologētai tōuto eīnai tò díkaion. egō dé, ō Hermógenes, háte liparēs ōn perī autoū, taūta mèn pánta diapépusmai en aporrhētois, hótī toútó esti tò díkaion kai tò aítion—dī' hò gár gínetai, toūt' ésti tò aítion—kai "Día" kaleîn éphē tis toūto orthōs ékhein dià taūta. epeidān d' ēréma autoús epanerōtō akoúsas taūta mēden hētton: "Tī oūn pot' éstin, ō árīste, díkaion, ei toūto houtōs ékhei?" dokō te édē makrótera toū prosēkontos erōtān kai hūper tà eskamména hállesthai. hikanōs gár mé phasi pepústhai kai epíkheiroúsīn, boulómenoi apopimplánai me, állos álla édē légein, kai oukéti sumphōnoúsīn, Crat. 412e2ff.).*

Socrates then sums up the different answers he was given: One man says justice is the Sun, another says it's fire, or just the heat that is in fire; yet another adheres to Anaxagoras' view and claims that justice is 'mind' (413b3ff.).

"Then, my friend, I am far more perplexed than before I undertook to learn about the nature of justice. But I think this name—and that was the subject of our investiga-

tion—was given to it for the reasons I have mentioned” (*entaũtha dē egō, ō phile, polū en pleioni aporiāi eimī ē prīn epikheirēsai manthánein perī toũ dikaiou hōti pot’ éstin. all’ oũn hoũper héneka eskopoũmen, tó ge ónoma toũto pháinetai autōĩ dià taũta keĩsthai, Crat. 413c7ff.*).

We are on well-known Socratic terrain here, and there is great irony in Hermogenes’ completely misguided reaction: he cannot believe that this undoubtedly Socratic intervention was not actually taken over from someone else! On the other hand, he assumes that the rest of the etymologies are original. (Accordingly, Socrates announces that he will try to keep up the deceit (413d3 ff.)) The distinction Socrates draws in 413a5ff. is subtle, yet vital: he is convinced he knows why the name has been given, and in that sense he knows its correctness. But this teaches him nothing about the essential concept to which the name refers. Names and their ‘definitions’ should indeed be a starting-point, there is no way one can stop short at it. This is the reason why it is essential for Plato to come to grips with the question of the nature of names, to eliminate any false expectations of this kind; this is arguably the main *raison d’être* of the *Cratylus*. Interestingly enough, the literary form of the dialogue itself, representing three people searching for truth, underscores the Platonic position and undermines that of both Hermogenes and Cratylus: the dialogue demonstrates the relevance of the dialectical method, in that that method is its structuring principle. In that sense, the *Cratylus* is a *leçon par l’exemple*.

The two theories of meaning put forth in the *Cratylus* are both based on the principle of imitation, with different objects. Either language imitates reality and there is a direct link between linguistic phenomena and the ontological level; or language imitates a thought. This latter view on which names are the namegiver’s interpretation of reality, is related to taking language as verbalized thought (and thought as an internal dialogue, *Sophist* 263e), and that is in effect what we find in the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates and Theaetetus agree that one of the possible meanings of the word *lógos* is

“making one’s own thought clear through speech by means of verbs and nouns, imaging the opinion in the stream that flows through the lips, as in a mirror or water” (*tò tēn hautōũ diánoian emphanē poieĩn dià phōnēs metā rhēmátōn te kai onomátōn, hōsper eis kátoptron ē húdōr tēn dóxan ektupoũmenon eis tēn dià toũ stómatos rhoēn, Theaetetus 206d1ff., tr. Fowler*).

The idea that language is an imitation of thought processes also appears in the *Republic*, and it was to trigger a reaction from Aristotle, as we will see (Section 7). In the *Republic* Socrates argues that falsehood is incompatible

with the nature of the gods, and he makes the following comment on *spoken* falsehood:

“But surely it would be most wholly right ... to describe this as in very truth falsehood, ignorance namely in the *soul* of the man deceived. For the falsehood in *words* is a copy of the affection in the soul, an after-rising image of it and not an altogether unmixed falsehood” (*allà mèn orthótatá g' án ... toũto hōs alēthōs pseũdos kaloĩto, hē en tēĩ psukhēĩ ágnoia hē tou epseusménou, epeĩ tó ge en toĩs lógois mímēmá ti toũ en tēĩ psukhēĩ estĩ pathēmatois kai hústeron gegonōs eĩdōlon, ou pánu ákraton pseũdos*, *Rep.* II,382b6ff.; tr. R. Waterfield).

In view of the importance attributed in Plato's philosophical thought to the relationship between model and copy, it comes as no surprise to find language fitted into this conceptual framework as well. The frequent references in the *Cratylus* to language's essential status of being a copy or imitation, and its concomitant devaluation as an immediate heuristic device in the search for the absolute truths that belong to the model only, find their place in the same battle against relativism that eventually produced the theory of Forms.

Plato returns to the relationship between names, knowledge and reality in his Seventh Letter—if it is really his—in which he explains why true philosophical thought can never be laid down in something as fixed as writing. In fact, the theory expounded here can be seen as the negative corollary of the theories of the *Cratylus*: there, the necessity of the (oral) dialectical process was put forth by denying the value of names by themselves. Here, the low status of names is used as an argument against written theories: since every expression is imperfect, it will never do to let it acquire a fixed and permanent state that does not allow of deliberation anymore.

In this letter, Plato distinguishes between names, definitions and images, three factors contributing to a fourth level, that of knowledge; all four levels are concerned with qualities, but the real essence of a thing is something separate again, a fifth item in the series. Names and definitions are vocal utterances (*en phōnaĩs*), images are corporeal, knowledge is something that exists in the soul: all four are therefore essentially external to and different from the essence; they are so many starting-points for a dialectical process of questioning and answering, of refuting false views and looking for the truth. Nothing committed to writing could be absolutely identical to the fifth element, the object of research. Once again, names is where philosophical enquiry starts, not where it ends (*Epistle VII*, 342a-344d).

One more text must be discussed here, because it takes the study of semantics one important step further. So far, the individual name was taken as the bearer not only of meaning, but also of truth and falsity. Both in the *Cratylus*

and in the *Theaetetus*, this had caused major difficulties in investigating the possibility of falsehood. A solution is reached in the *Sophist*. In *Sophist* 261d5ff., the Eleatic stranger who is talking with Theaetetus establishes the fact that not all words combine with each other indifferently; the resulting combination must be meaningful:

“This, perhaps, is what you mean, that those which are spoken in order and mean something do unite, but those that mean nothing in their sequence do not unite?” (*Tò toiónde légeis ísōs hótí tà mèn ephexēs legómena kai dēloúntá ti sunarmóttei, tà dè tēi sunekheíai mēden sēmaínonta anarmosteí*, *Sophist* 261d8ff., tr. Fowler).

In order to deserve the predicate ‘a good fit’, meaningful words must be combined, or words must be combined (a syntactical criterium, cf. *ephexēs legómena* “spoken one after the other”; *tēi sunekheíai* “in their sequence”; cf. *sumploké* 262c6) in a meaningful way (a semantic criterium, cf. *dēloúntá ti* “making something clear”; *sēmaínonta* “signifying”). The “Stranger” goes on to explain that there are two basic types of “vocal indications of being” (*ésti gár hēmīn tōn tēi phōnēi perì tēn ousían dēlōmátōn dittōn génos*, *Sophist* 261e5), namely “names” (*onómata*) and predicates (*rhémata*) (*Sophist* 262a1). A ‘predicate’ is “the indication which relates to action” (*tò ... epì taís práxesin òn dēlōma*), or, somewhat differently phrased (262b) “predicates signify actions” (*práxeis sēmaínei rhémata*); a ‘name’ is “the vocal sign applied to those who perform the action in question” (*tò ... ep’ autoīs toīs ekeína prátousi sēmeōn tēs phōnēs epitethén*). (Plato does not distinguish the way predicates refer to actions from that in which names refer to things or people, cf. Denyer 1991:164ff.) It takes both names and predicates to produce a statement, or sentence (*lógos*) (262a9ff.), which fulfils the function of “making something clear” (*dēloūn*), just like its constituent parts (262d2). On the other hand, it also outdoes both names and predicates taken in isolation; when someone utters the sentence “man learns”:

“he makes a statement about that which is or is becoming or has become or is to be; he does not merely give names (*onomázei*), but he reaches a conclusion by combining verbs with names” (*dēloī gár édē pou tóte perì tōn óntōn è gignoménōn è gegonótōn è mellóntōn kai ouk onomázei mónon, allá ti peráinei, sumplékōn tà rhémata toīs onómasi*, *Sophist* 262d2ff., tr. Fowler).

Discoursing’ is more than mere ‘naming’. And ‘being the case’ is something else than ‘being meaningful’, as becomes apparent when the stranger goes on to analyse the sentences “Theaetetus sits”, and “Theaetetus, with whom I am talking, flies” (263b4ff.). “Here the Stranger speaks of things that are said to ‘be concerning’ [or: ‘be about’ IS] (*eīnai perì*) Theaetetus ...; the thing

that in the true sentence is said to ‘be concerning’ Theaetetus actually ‘is concerning’ him, whereas its counterpart in the false sentence actually ‘is not concerning’ him” (Denyer 1991:173). Unfortunately, what exactly these ‘things’ are is left unclear. A little later on, thought (*diánoia*) couched in words is said to comprise affirmation and negation (*phásis* and *apóphasis*, 263e).

It will be remembered that in the *Cratylus* neither Hermogenes nor Cratylus (nor, arguably, Plato himself at the time) had grasped the fundamental difference between being meaningful and being true. Neither had sought the truth or falsehood of a statement in its “combination” *synthesis*, or in the fact that it asserted anything of a given person or thing. Both believed that falsehood was impossible, since truth resided in the individual name, and the individual name was correct (either conventionally, or by nature) (cf. Denyer 1991: 71ff.). Hermogenes assented to Socrates’ proposition that true speech must consist of true parts. Therefore, if words are always (conventionally) true, falsehood is impossible (385b2ff.). Equally, on Cratylus’ view falsehood is impossible (429c6ff.), since words are correct by nature. When names are not correct, they are simply names no longer. The solution reached in the *Sophist* was to be put to good use by Aristotle (see Section 7).

For Plato, the interest of language as a topic of research was completely bound up with his view of the world. Like every other phenomenon under the moon, language is an imitation of reality; there is no way in which it can lead one directly to the ultimate Truths. The best one can do, is to use it in a process of question and answer, a dialectical attempt to ascend to the absolute values of the Forms.

7. Aristotle: the function of language

The works by Aristotle (384–322 BCE) that have come down to us, cover an unusually broad area of scientific inquiries, many of them involving problems of language. Unlike Plato, Aristotle never devoted any separate work to the analysis of language, but he had occasion to take up questions of language and signification in the course of his biological and psychological work (focusing mainly on the acoustic and phonetic aspects), his poetical and rhetorical theory (in which the pragmatic side of language was dealt with) and, first and foremost, his logic (cf. Ax 1992).

Aristotle’s basic conviction that “nature does nothing in vain” (*outhèn ... mátēn hē phúsis poieĩ*, *Pol.* I,1 1253a10, and *saep.*) entails that he is

always interested in a thing's function, in its purpose. If one does not grasp a thing's purpose, one does not properly know it. This teleological approach also comes out where language is concerned, as Aristotle shifts focus from the biological to the political, rhetorical, poetical or logical functions of language in accordance with the context of his work (cf. Di Cesare 1980:8; 159). For example, animals are capable of "signifying" (*sēmaínein*) pleasure and pain by means of their "voice" (*phōnē*, the capacity for articulated sound-production)—that is what it is for—, but adult human speech needs has an ethical dimension:

"speech [*lógos*] is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong" (*ho dè lógos epì tōi dēloūn estì tò sumphéron kai tò blabērón, hōste kai tò díkaiōn kai tò ádikon*, *Pol.* I,1.1253a10ff., tr. Rackham)

Of course, this fits in perfectly with the context of the *Politics*. In other contexts, however, it is mainly semanticity that is stressed. Thus, in his *Rhetoric* Aristotle takes it that the most important virtue of speech is clarity (*Rhet.* III,2.1404b1f.):

"An argument for this is that speech, if it does not convey meaning (*dēloī*, if it does not make something clear), will not fulfil its proper task (*érگون*)" (*sēmeíōn gār hōtí ho lógos, eàn mē dēloī, ou poiēsei tò heautoū érgon*, *Rhet.* III,2.1404b2f.).

Aristotle also pays much attention to the function of language in his logic. The group of treatises known as the *Organon* consists of six works. It forms a series leading from an analysis and classification of being from a logical/semantic point of view (*Categories*), to a treatise on judgement (assertion and negation) (*On Interpretation*), typical forms of dialectical arguments (*Topics*), a classification of invalid reasoning, mainly based on confusion over the relationship between language and reality (*Sophistical Refutations*), and, finally, to the theory of the scientific syllogism (*Prior and Posterior Analytics*).

It is a frustrating enterprise to add one more discussion of the beginning of *On Interpretation* to the long list of those already in existence, and one can hardly hope to be original in its execution. The title of the work (*Peri hermēneías*) is interesting in itself: *hermēneía* means "interpretation, explanation"; the title may refer either to the "interpretation" (or: "expression") of thoughts by words, or, going one stage back in what eventually amounts to the same process, to "the interpretation of reality by means of a judgement" (Arens 1984:17). The former view is supported by a parallel from *Poetics*, where "diction" (*léxis*) is explained as "the expression (of thought)

through the use of words” (*tên dià tēs onomasías hermēneían*, *Poet.* 6.1450b13f.; cf. Weidemann 1994:43). The latter seems preferable, however, in view of the content of *On Interpretation*: although the first four chapters do indeed deal with the relationship between thought and expression, and the nature of the constituent elements of meaningful speech, these chapters only serve as preliminary material for the more important analysis of ‘positive and negative judgements’ that is to follow. On either interpretation, the title bears some similarity to the second ‘theory of language’ from the *Cratylus*, in which names were seen as the embodiment of the namegiver’s opinions, and this will be borne out by Aristotle’s text. It goes without saying that in reading Aristotle, it is always imperative to keep in mind the possibility that he refers to Plato. The esoterical nature of most of the Aristotelian corpus, mostly lecture notes and other forms of writing that were not destined for the general public, hardly ever allows scope for explicit polemic—Aristotle often rejects alternative or conflicting views implicitly.

The opening section of *On Interpretation* offers a brief outline of a semantic theory. Its laconic form makes it seductively easy to read all kinds of later developments back into it.

“First we must determine what onoma and what rhema is, and after that, what negation, affirmation, statement [or: proposition], and sentence. The spoken forms are symbols of the affections in the soul, and the written forms are symbols of the spoken forms. And just as the letters are not the same for everyone so are not the vocal forms; but what all these forms [sc. the written and spoken ones] are primarily symbols of, the affections in the soul, they are the same for all people, and what the latter are likenesses of, the things, they are also the same. Of these matters we speak in our book *On the Soul*, for this is a different subject” (*Prōton deī thésthai tí ónoma kai tí rhēma, épeita tí estin apóphasis kai katáphasis kai apóphansis kai lógos. Ésti mèn oūn tà en tēi phōnēi tōn en tēi psukhēi pathēmátōn súmbola, kai tà graphómēna tōn en tēi phōnēi. kai hōsper oudè grámmata pāsi tà autá, oudè phōnai hai autai; hōn méntoi taūta sēmeīa prōtōn, tautá pāsi pathēmata tēs psukhēs, kai hōn taūta homoiómata, prágmata édē tautá. peri mèn oūn toutōn eíretai en tois peri psukhēs, állēs gàr pragmatéas*, *On Interpretation* 16a1–8, tr. Arens 1984, adapted).

Aristotle grounds his theory of the proposition and the judgement in a broader view of the way language operates. *Tà en tēi phōnēi* “the spoken forms”, encompass all the items enumerated in the first sentence (Arens 1984:26). If judgements are interpretations of reality that eventually take on linguistic form, it becomes relevant to investigate the relationship between words, thought and things, and that is what Aristotle sets out to do.

He designs a hierarchy of symbolical representations, in which writing symbolically represents speech, while speech symbolically represents *tà en*

tēi psukhēi pathēmata “the affections in the soul”. I take this (with Ax 1992:253) as primarily referring to sense perception; however, since thought (mentioned in 16a10 *nóēma*) functions rather similarly to perception on Aristotle’s view, there is no need to worry about the distinction). The expression “the affections in the soul” (*tà en tēi psukhēi pathēmata*) is familiar from Plato’s *Republic* (II,382b9f.; VI,511d7), discussed in Section 6, but there is a subtle difference. Both philosophers are aware of the possibility that language reflects thought, not reality. But Plato thinks of the relationship between thought and speech as one of model and copy, whereas to Aristotle language is symbolic. On the first view, a certain natural resemblance between thought and language is implied. We may compare Isocrates’ remark on the image-like character (*eídōlon*) of language in his speech *Nicocles*:

“For the power to speak well is taken as the surest index of a sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul” (... *tò gàr légein hōs deī toū phroneîn eū mégiston sēmeion poioúmētha, kai lōgos alēthēs kai nómimos kai díkaios psukhēs agathēs kai pistēs eídōlon estin, Nicocles* 7; tr. Norlin).

A symbolical relationship, on the other hand, is purely conventional in nature. There is no need for a symbol to be in any way similar to the object symbolized. That explains why not everyone has the same writing system, or the same sounds. Aristotle also stresses the notion of conventionality in 16a26ff. in his explanation of the definition of the *ónoma* “name” (covering parts of what we would call ‘noun’, ‘subject’, ‘topic’):

“‘Conventional’ is said because no word is by nature, but only when it becomes a symbol; the inarticulate sounds, namely, of wild animals, for instance, also make something clear, but nothing in them is a word [or: *ónoma*]...” (*tò dè katà sunthēkēn, hōti phúsei tōn onomatōn oudén estin, all’ hótan génētai súmbolon, epei dēloúsí gé ti kai hoi agrámmatoi psóphoi, hoīon thērīōn, hōn oudén estin ónoma*, tr. Arens 1984, adapted).

Although this might seem to bring him in proximity to Hermogenes’ position, there is a vital difference. Whereas Hermogenes defended a variant of *orthótēs*, based on a conventional relationship between words and things, Aristotle ignores the question of correctness—in a way, the outcome of the *Cratylus* itself justifies the step—and replaces the problem why names are as they are (*Cratylus*) with the question what they are for (cf. Di Cesare 1980:159). In his view, the concept of conventionality applies to the symbolic relationship between words and thought. The expression “conventionally” (*katà sunthēkēn*) (together with “being a symbol” (*súmbolon*)) is contrasted with “by nature” (*phúsei*) here; In *On Interpretation* 17a1 ff. it is opposed

to “being a tool” (*órganon*) in the definition of the sentence (*lógos*):

“Every sentence is significant, not as an instrument, but, as I said, conventionally” (*Ésti dè lógos hápas mèn sēmantikós, oukh hōs órganon dé, all’ hōsper eirētai, katà sunthēkēn*).

Again, it is clear that the *Cratylus* (“a name is ... a didactic instrument which is able to make distinctions in all that is” (*ónoma ára didaskalikón tí estin órganon kai diakritikón tēs ousías*, 388b12)) lurks in the background, and its tenets are rejected quite apodictically. The reason why “being significant as an instrument” is opposed to “being significant by convention” appears to be that the ‘instrument theory’ stems from that part of the *Cratylus* where Socrates convinces the champion of the convention-theory, Hermogenes, that Cratylus is at least partially right.

Words (spoken and written) are primarily (*prōtōn*, used predicatively; Montanari 1984) signs of the affections in the soul; through these, they eventually refer to “things” (*prágmata*) (cf. Weidemann 1994:135; 141f.). At other places, Aristotle describes names as symbols of things without mentioning the mediating function of the affections in the soul (*On Sophistical Refutation* 165a6 ff.), and there is even one passage from the *Rhetoric* in which the notion of symbolism is omitted in favour of a purely Platonic approach. In this passage, Aristotle explains that the poets were the first to pay attention to style. We are to assume that this makes sense, since their job is imitation. This thought is left implicit, but it is to be gleaned from the explanation that Aristotle does provide:

“For names are imitations” (*tà gàr onómata mimémata estin*, *Rhetoric* III, I.1404a20f.).

However, here I will concentrate on the theory from *On Interpretation*, where, as we saw, there is a hierarchy of symbolic relationships, writing being symbolic of spoken language, and spoken language of the affections in the soul.

The relationship between “the affections in the soul” and “things”, however, can no longer be described in terms of symbols: mental impressions are said to be “likenesses” (*homoiómata*) of things. In order to understand what is meant by this, it is necessary to follow up Aristotle’s own reference and to consider his views on perception and thought, as set out in his *On the Soul* (Denyer 1991:186ff., esp. 200ff.).

Aristotle believes in the basic accuracy of perception. In his view “perception is a sort of alteration, an alteration which the thing that is perceived causes in the thing that perceives it” (Denyer 1991:189; e.g. *On the Soul*

416b33–5). Since “like causes like”, the soul must have the potential for becoming “like” the thing it perceives. Perceptible objects consist of matter (*húlē*) and the active principle “form” (*eīdos*). A perceptible object is the cause of the soul’s taking on its form, but it does not pass on its matter (nor is the “matter” of the perceiver affected, Denyer 1991:194). Aristotle illustrates this with a famous image:

“We must understand as true generally of every sense that sense is that which is receptive of the form of sensible objects without the matter, just as the wax receives the impression of the signet-ring without the iron or the gold and receives the impression of the gold or bronze, but not as gold or bronze” (*katholou dē peri pásēs aisthēseōs deī labeīn hótī hē men aisthēsis estī tò dektikon tōn aisthētōn eīdōn áneu tēs húlēs, hoīon ho kēros toū daktulíou áneu toū sidērou kai toū khūsou dékhetai tò sēmeīon, lambáneī de tò khrusoūn ē tò khalkoūn sēmeīon, all’ oukh hēī khrusōs ē khalkós, On the Soul II, 12 424a18ff, tr Hett*)

The ‘wax-like’ quality of the soul entails that the affections (or impressions) in the soul (*pathēmata tēs psukhēs*) from *On Interpretation* are the same for everyone, as are the things themselves (16a6–8). There is an automatic perception of perceptible forms or perceptible objects. This is the only use Aristotle has for the relationship between model (original) and copy in the context of his theory of language. Ax (1992:253) states the results for the interpretation of our passage in an exemplary way:

“Das *homoiómata* von 16a7 bezeichnet also nichts anderes als die Identität psychischer Rezeptionsresultate (*pathēmata tēs psukhēs*) mit den sie bewirkenden ausserpsychischen Gegenständen (*prágmata*), und zwar im Sinne einer Abbildungs- und nicht einer Wesensidentität ”

The text of *On Interpretation* continues as follows:

“Now just as there are in the mind concepts which are neither true nor false as well as such as are necessarily the one or the other, so there are likewise in speech, because in composition and division lies falsity or truth. The onomata and the rhemata alone are like concepts without composition and division, for instance ‘man’ or ‘white’, when nothing is added, for then they are neither false nor true. This is proved by the fact that even a word like goat-stag signifies something, but not yet something true or false without the addition of existence or non-existence, whether absolutely or temporarily” (*ésti dé, hōsper en tēi psukhēi hotē mēn nóēma áneu toū alētheuēin ē pseúdesthai, hotē dē éē hōī anánkē toutōn hupárkhein tháteron, hótō kai en tēi phōnēi; perī gār súnthesin kai diaíresin estī tò pseúdós te kai tò alēthés, tà mēn oūn onómata autá kai tà rhēmata éoike tōi áneu sunthéseōs kai diaréseōs nóēmati, hoīon tò ánthrōpos ē tò leukón, hótan mē prostethēi ti, oúte gār pseúdos oúte alēthés pō sēmeīon d’ estī toúde· kai gār ho tragélaphos sēmaínei mēn ti, oúpō dē alēthēs ē pseúdos, eān mē tò eīnai ē mē eīnai prostethēi, ē haplōs ē katá khrónon, On Interpretation 16a9–18, tr Arens 1984, adapted*)

In this section, Aristotle draws the important distinction between truth-value and semantic value. Intellect, or thought, adduced as an example here, functions much in the same way as does perception (Denyer 1991:203; cf. *On the Soul* 429a13). Thinking of something presupposes that the object of our thought causes our thought to take on its “form” (*eĩdos*) (cf. Denyer 1991:203). For not only does “like cause like”, but “like” is also “known by like” (*ginõskesthai tò hómoion tōĩ hómoĩoi*, *On the Soul* 405b15ff.). In that sense, thought (*nóēma*) is always correct, just like perception. In another sense, however, truth or falsehood do not apply to thought as such, but only to complex thought. Where we can go wrong, is when we form judgements. When we affirm or deny mentally that a concept exists, this will either be true or false. This may be extended to language, which is, after all, nothing but a symbol for our mental impressions. Names and predicates taken by themselves are neither true nor false. An argument for this is that the name “goat-stag” has a meaning, but the name by itself cannot be said to be true or false, unless we affirm or deny its existence (present, past, or future). Similarly it is pointed out somewhat later (16b20) that every “predicate” (*rhēma*) is a name when taken in isolation; as such it has meaning (*sēmaínei ti*), but its meaning does not include reference to its existence or truthfulness (*ei éstin ē mē, oupō sēmaínei*). It carries meaning, “for the speaker stops his process of thinking and the mind of the hearer acquiesces” (*On Interpretation* 16b20, tr. Cook; interestingly, Aristotle refers to the intersubjectivity of meaning here). This solves the problem of names without referents (cf. the passage from ps.Hippocrates *The Art* 6, discussed in Section 5). Here, too, Aristotle could build on Plato, who had solved this very problem in his *Sophist*. There, it is pointed out that the meaning of a name “is independent of anything that may make it true” (Denyer 1991:181). A sentence carries meaning because it consists of a meaningful ‘name’ and a meaningful predicate. Truth and falsehood depend on the question whether the proposition ‘is’ really ‘concerning’, is really true of, the referent of its “name” part (*ónoma*). In *On Interpretation*, the symbolic relationship between language and thought is combined with this insight into the difference between semanticity and truth or falsehood. New insight into linguistic meaning results.

The ensuing definitions of “name” (*ónoma*), “predicate” (*rhēma*), and sentence (*lógos*) share an emphasis on semanticity:

“The onoma is a vocal form with conventional timeless meaning, no part of which is significant separately ...

Rhema is what cosignifies time, no part of it has separate meaning, and it is always the sign of what is said of something else...

The sentence is a significant vocal form of whose parts some have meaning separately, as an expression, not as an affirmation" (*ónoma mèn oũn estì phōnē sēmantikē katà sunthēkēn áneu khronou, hēs mēden méros estì sēmantikōn kekhōrisménon ...*

Rhēma dé estì tò prossēmainōn khronon, hoũ méros oudēn sēmainei khōrís, kai éstin aei tōn kath' hetérou legoménōn sēmeion ...

Lógos dé estì phōnē sēmantikē, hēs tōn merōn ti sēmantikōn estì kekhōrisménon, hōs phásis, all' oukh hōs katáphasis, On Interpretation 16a19ff.; 16b6ff.; 16b26ff., tr. Arens 1984, adapted)

Ónoma and *rhēma* are differentiated by the fact that *rhēma* cosignifies 'time', while 'time' forms no part of an *ónoma*'s meaning. Moreover, *rhēma* is always a sign for what is predicated of something else (or: of a predicate). Among the class of sentences, a further distinction is drawn by means of the truth criterium: when a sentence admits of truth or falsehood, it is a proposition (*apophantikòs lógos*). And that takes Aristotle to the heart of what he wanted to discuss in his *On Interpretation*. Once again the difference with the *Cratylus*, but the similarity to the *Sophist* must be stressed: In the discussion between Cratylus and Socrates on the possibility of falsehood, the example given was not a proposition, but an address ("Welcome, stranger from Athens, Hermogenes son of Smicrion", addressed to Cratylus (429e4f.); cf. Denyer 72ff.; Hermogenes was in fact the son of Hipponicus). Only in the *Sophist* was the discussion restricted to minimal sentences consisting of what we would call a subject and a predicate.

Aristotle needed the first chapter of *On Interpretation* to provide some background information for his theory of judgement that was to follow. His rapid sketch of the functioning of language proved to have a rich potential. It anticipated many developments in semantic theory, but did no more than that: its own interests eventually lay elsewhere. If he could pass so rapidly over the distinction between semanticity and truth value, this was because he could build on Plato's work here. What was new was his theory of the linguistic sign, bearing a symbolic relationship to the thought of the speaker, and only secondarily to the things.

Apart from the brief outline in the first chapter of *On Interpretation*, semantic distinctions play a role in different parts of Aristotle's work (Ax 1992). The points he stresses are mainly to do with the deficient one-to-one relationship between words and things, language and concepts. This is important, since the starting-point for philosophical investigation is formed by the concepts people have (*éndoxa*), and these concepts are revealed by language ("the things said", *tà legόμενα*). Linguistic expressions of thought, ordinary

speech and belief about human life (*phainómena*) must be tested and scrutinized, especially if they are in conflict with each other, or if they are not univocal to begin with. Thus, in a sense language provides both the subject-matter and the tools of philosophical discourse (cf. Owen 1986).

In his *Categories*, the first work in the *Organon*, Aristotle provides a system for classifying reality from a logico-semantic point of view. The categories are Substance, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, State/Condition, Action and Passion. The exact status of the categories is nowhere made clear; they combine ontological, linguistic (semantic) and logical characteristics. However, it is clear that Aristotle's starting-point is reality, and that his distinctions are largely motivated by semantic (and logical) considerations.

This is borne out by the beginning of the treatise, where Aristotle gives definitions of "homonyms" (*homónuma*), "synonyms" (*sunónuma*) and "paronyms" (*parónuma*). All three terms are primarily used as modifiers of elements of reality, not of linguistic entities (cf. Desbordes 1988; Sluiter 1990:125f.). According to Simplicius (6th century CE), who wrote a commentary on the *Categories*, Aristotle took over this principle from Speusippus, Plato's successor as head of the Academy (see Dillon 1977:20; Desbordes 1988:58f.). The *Categories* opens with the following three definitions:

(1) "Things are equivocally named, when they have the name only in common, the definition (or statement of essence) corresponding with the name being different. For instance, a man and a portrait can both be called 'an animal' (*zōion*)" (*Homónuma légetai hōn ónoma mónon koinón, ho de katà touónoma lógos tēs ousías héteros, hoion zōion hó te ánthrōpos kai tò gegramménon, Categories* 1a1ff., tr. Cook, adapted).

(2) "Things are univocally named, when not only they bear the same name but the statement of essence corresponding to the name is also the same. Thus a man and an ox can both be called 'an animal' " (*Sunónuma de légetai hōn tó te ónoma koinòn kai ho katà touónoma lógos tēs ousías ho autós, hoion zōion hó te ánthrōpos kai ho boüs, Categories* 1a6ff., tr. Cook, adapted).

(3) "Things are 'derivatively' named that derive the way they are called from something while differing in verbal form, as for instance 'grammarian' from 'grammar', from 'heroism', 'hero' and so on" (*parónuma de légetai hósá apó tinos diaphéronta tēi ptósei tēn katà touónoma prosēgorían ékhei, hoion apò tēs grammatikēs ho grammatikòs kai apò tēs andreías ho andreios, Categories* 1a13ff.).

The first quotation suggests that the term 'homonyms' always refers to

entities or concepts that do not belong as species to the same genus, but whose respective genera happen to share the same name. And they may in their turn be designated by that common name. Though more sophisticated, this is not fundamentally different from Homer's usage, who calls the Greater and the Lesser Ajax "homonymous" (*homōnumoi*, *Iliad* 17.720). Aristotle's example (portrait and man) derives from Plato:

"And so we recognize that he who professes to be able by virtue of a single art to make all things will be able by virtue of the painter's art, to make imitations which have the same names as the real things (*mumēmata kai homōnuma tōn ontōn*), and by showing the pictures at a distance will be able to deceive the duller ones among young children into the belief that he is perfectly able to accomplish in fact whatever he wishes to do" (*Oukoūn tōn g' hupiskhnoūmenon dunatōn einai mairē tékhnei panta poieîn gignōskomén pou toūto, hōti mumēmata kai homōnuma tōn ontōn apergazómenos tēi graphikēi tékhnei dunatōs éstai toūs anoētous tōn néon paídōn, pórrōthen tà gegramména epideiknús, lanthánein hōs hótiper àn boulēthēi drân, toūto hukanōtatos òn apoteleîn érgōi*, *Sophist* 234b5ff., tr Fowler)

In other contexts, Aristotle also uses 'homonym' to designate words, rather than things, e.g. in *On Sophistical Refutations* 165b33:

"Here 'learn' is equivocal (*homōnumon*), (meaning) 'understand by using knowledge' and 'acquire knowledge'" (*Tò gàr manthánein homōnumon, tò te xuníenai khrómemon tēi epistēmēi kai tò lambánein epistēmēn*, tr Forster)

That this is the correct interpretation is shown by the fact that only in these contexts can 'homonym' occur in the singular; when referring to entities or concepts, there is always at least a pair of 'homonyms' involved.

Even more explicitly, in the *Rhetoric* homonyms are called a type of 'names'/'nouns' that is especially useful to the sophist, while synonyms come in handy for the poet; here it is obvious that types of words are meant:

"In regard to nouns, homonyms are most useful to the sophist, for it is by their aid that he employs captious arguments, and synonyms to the poet" (*tōn d'onomátōn tōi mèn sophistēi homōnumíai khrésimoi (parà taútās gàr kakourgei), tōi poiētēi dè sunōnumíai*, *Rhetoric* 1404b37ff, tr Freese, cf Sluter 1990 125, cf *Rhetoric* III,2 1405a1ff for the use of *sunōnuma* to designate types of words)

In the second quotation from the *Categories*, however, synonyms—like homonyms in the same treatise—are entities or concepts. Synonyms belong as species to the same genus, thus sharing not only its name, but also its definition.

The third type bears the clearest mark of linguistic inspiration: "paronyms" are things that get their name from something else, while the linguistic

form in which they are expressed is different, but related. The clear relationship between words like ‘grammarian’ and ‘grammar’ obviously suggested their joint classification.

Ax (1992:256) calls attention to the other types of semantic distinctions that are to be found throughout Aristotle’s work. Especially in his biological works, Aristotle points out lacunae in the Greek lexicon, where a separate name (e.g. for a genus that should logically be superordinated to a number of species) is lacking. The term used is *anónumon*, and we may compare Democritus’ fourth argument (*nónumon*) against names being by nature. Obviously, in this case Aristotle reasons from ‘things’ to ‘names’ again, the nature of the problem forbidding the opposite analysis.

An interesting refinement of the theory of homonymy and synonymy is the development of a concept of ‘focal meaning’ (the term is coined by Owen 1986:184; cf. Lloyd 1987:198ff.). ‘Focal meaning’ is the phenomenon that there is one focus, one common element in all the senses of a given word (Owen 1986:183). Words with focal meaning are used “by reference to one concept” (*pròs hén*) or “taking their origin from one thing” (*aph’ henós*); the phenomenon is diagnosed as “being said in various senses” (*pollakhōs légesthai* (e.g. *Metaphysics* III,2.1003a33ff.) or “being said in more than one sense” (*pleonakhōs légesthai*, *Topics* 106b29ff., and it is explained as follows:

“The term ‘being’ is used in various senses (*pollakhōs*), but with reference to one central idea (*pròs hén*) and one definite characteristic, and not equivocally (*homónúmōs*). Thus as the term ‘healthy’ always relates to health (either as preserving it or as producing it or as indicating it or as receptive of it) ... so ‘being’ is used in various senses, but always with reference to one principle (*Tò dè òn légetai mèn pollakhōs, allà pròs hén kai mían tina phúsin kai oukh homónúmōs, all’ hōsper kai tò hugieinòn hápan pròs hugíeian, tò mèn tōi phuláttein tò dè tōi poieîn tò dè tōi sēmeion eīnai tēs hugieías tò d’ hōti dektikòn autēs ... hoútō dè kai tò òn légetai pollakhōs mèn all’ hápan pròs mían arkhēn*, *Metaphysics* III,2.1003a34ff., tr. Tredennick; cf. *Met.* IX,3.1060b31ff.).

Aristotle needs this concept to explain the possibility of one unified theory of Being in spite of the non-univocal nature of the word “being” (*ón*) itself, which has different meanings in different categories (Owen 1986:181 ff.).

The difference with the concept of homonymy from *On Categories* is, that the theory of ‘focal meaning’ starts from words, not from things. Nor are words with ‘focal meaning’ to be identified with “things that are derivatively named” (*parónuma*) (pace Ross ad *Metaphysics* III,2.1003a34 ff.). Paronyms are things in the world, while words with ‘focal meaning’ are precisely that, namely words. Secondly, words with ‘focal meaning’ are defined by their

relation to one concept (*aph' henós*), while derivatively named things derive their *names* "from something" (*apó tinos*), but differ in inflected or declined verbal form (*ptōsis*). And, thirdly, related inflected forms (*ptōseis*) can be bearers of focal meaning, but this is not necessarily the case. There is no need to assume that every 'paronym' behaves as a word with focal meaning, carrying more than one sense with a common concept as unifying factor (cf. *Topics* I, 15.106b29 ff.).

In another passage, it seems that (random) 'equivocity' is the general term of which focal meaning is a special case (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1096b26 ff., with the commentary by Gauthier & Jolif). Aristotle would then distinguish three different species of the genus 'homonymy', the most common of which can itself also be called 'homonymy': (1) the case where completely different and unrelated things share the same name by chance (example: "animal" (*zōōn*)—this species may be called 'homonymy' too; it is homonymy *par excellence*; (2) 'focal meaning': different things can be called by the same name because they all relate to the same central concept, be it in different ways (example: "healthy" (*hugieinón*)); (3) analogical or proportional homonymy: things bear the same name, or acquire the same predicate because they stand in a similar relationship to (ever varying) objects (example: "good" (*agathón*): Sight is to body as intellect is to soul. Therefore, the same predicate (i.e. "good") can be applied to both sight and intellect.

Interestingly, Aristotle extends the principle of proportionality both to homonymy and to metaphor (cf. *Poetics* 21.1457b); there, he also explains the linguistic process involved in terms of a transfer between species and genera, and evinces a preference for the analogical type. In general, it seems likely that the theory of 'focal meaning' and of 'proportional homonymy' originated in a rhetorical, rather than a logical context. This is, I think, clear from the fact that Aristotle stresses its argumentative use: any sense applying to 'healthy' also applies to 'healthily'. This reminds one of the argumentative 'paradigms', groups of forms belonging together (*sustoichía*; in later theory *suzugía*) that are discussed extensively in the *Topics* (e.g. 114a26ff.) (cf. Sluiter 1990:84).

Aristotle's contribution to the development of semantics was substantial. His brief outline in *On Interpretation* was destined to become the most discussed text in the history of linguistics. Building on Plato's work, he explicitly defined the relationship between language, thought and reality. His theory of the symbolic (instead of mimetic) nature of the linguistic sign was

revolutionary. He explained the existence of non-referential terms. In a great many different contexts, in rhetoric, poetics, phonetics/acoustics, biology and logic, he tried to clarify the various functions of language, and to determine what language is for. The fact that language itself, as the embodiment of common concepts, formed the starting-point as well as the method of doing philosophy, is made explicit in his theory of the common concepts (*éndoxa*), opinions (*phainómena*) and things said (*legómena*). These are subjected to intensive scrutiny to eliminate untenable ones and to establish valid premisses for scientific discourse.

8. The Hellenistic period: philosophy and philology

In the Hellenistic period (roughly from the death of Alexander (323 BCE) to the Battle of Actium (31 BCE), new insights in semantics were mainly being developed in two contexts: philosophy, with the important contributions of the Stoa and Epicurus; and philology, with the tentative rise of a more technically oriented grammar as a by-product. It is important to realize that these developments occur simultaneously—this is the reason why they are discussed in one section here.

The Stoa was founded in the early 3rd century BCE, and its most important thinker, Chrysippus, lived from ca 280–205 BCE. After Aristotle's methodical differentiation of the various scientific disciplines, the Stoa stressed the unity of its system, and it grounded its ethics in particular on a scientific basis (cf. Schmidt 1984:287). The 'wise man' attains a state of freedom from emotional disturbances (*apátheia*), because he knows that virtue is the only good. Thus, he is able to form correct judgements about every situation that presents itself to him, and to evaluate it correctly. The constant correctness of these judgements guarantees a continual state of tranquillity of mind. Judgements are expressed in language, the bearer of truth and falsehood being the proposition. This is why language is an important topic for examination.

What happens when we form a judgement is the following: the material world around us gives rise to presentations or impressions (*phantasíai*) that are formed in our (equally material) souls. Our minds may either give their assent to, or withhold it from such a presentation, which is always primary:

"For presentation comes first; then thought, which is capable of expressing itself, puts into the form of discourse what it experiences through the presentation" (*proēgeĩtai gàr hē phantasia, eĩth' hē diánoia eklalētikē hupárkhousa, hò páskhei hupò tēs phantasías, toũto ekphérei lógōi*, Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.49).

One way to classify presentations, is to divide them into “rational” (*logikáí*) and “irrational” (*álogoí*) ones. A rational presentation (i.e. one experienced by a rational being) is called a “thought process” (*nóēsis*) (Diogenes Laertius 7.51). The Stoic theory of meaning is intricately linked up with these views about epistemology and, through them, with ethics.

Stoic ideas of language are discussed under two headings, one dealing with language’s formal aspects (“sound”, *phōnē*), the other with “meanings” (*semainómena*) (Diogenes Laertius 7.43). Three elements are conjoined in any given meaningful utterance: the signifier (*semaínon*), the extra-linguistic referent (*tunkhánon*) and the meaning (*semainómenon*) (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.11 f.). Signifier and referent are corporeal, for they can act or be acted upon (e.g. a word can travel from speaker to listener). Meaning is incorporeal, and remains unaffected by whatever happens to either the signifier or the referent. The Stoic chapter on the formal aspects of language develops the idea of an implicative hierarchy: mere ‘sound’ is nothing but battered air, verbal expression (*léxis*) is sound that can be captured in writing (i.e. that is articulate), discourse (*lógos*) is meaningful sound that is sent forth from the mind (Diogenes Laertius 7.55f.). Notice that the concept of ‘word’ is lacking. A sentence may be called *lexis* if abstraction is made from its meaning, and the emphasis is on its characteristic of being articulate (writable) speech. Later theory misunderstood this part of Stoic thought and reinterpreted the distinction between *léxis* and *lógos* as that between ‘word’ and ‘sentence’. The Stoa probably took over Plato’s and Aristotle’s suggestion of thought being an internal dialogue, while meaningful language is thought that is expressed linguistically, in their distinction of a *lógos endiáthetos* “internal reason/discourse” and a *lógos prophorikós* “expressed reason/discourse”.

The chapter on meanings includes the theory of presentations or impressions (*phantasíai*) discussed above, but it also develops the notion of the *lektón*, the Stoic locus for meaning *par excellence*. A *lektón* or “sayable” is defined as “that which subsists according to a rational presentation” (*tò katà phantasían logikēn huphistámenon*, Diogenes Laertius 7.63; Sextus Empiricus 8.70). As we saw above, a rational presentation, or thought-process can be expressed in discourse, it is available to be expressed (i.e. ‘sayable’), and so, through it, is the fact or event in the material world that gave rise to the presentation or impression. In that sense ‘meaning’ is related to thought-content in Stoic theory like it was in Aristotle. On the other hand, it does not simply equal the thought-process (which is in itself material, because it is mind in a certain condition), but it “subsists in accordance with it”. The

unusual verb “to subsist” (*huphestánai*) is used, because *lektá* do not ‘exist’ in the full sense of the word, they are ‘somethings’, but they do not fall under the concept of ‘being’ (Long & Sedley 1987:I, 162ff.). Like the other incorporeal items in Stoic ontology, time, place and the void, they ‘subsist’ only. The incorporeal nature of the *lektón* is stressed by Seneca (*Letters to Lucilius* 117.13). The Stoics thus gave a place in their ontology to states of affairs of the form ‘that Cato walks’, as opposed to the material Cato and his material walking. As Seneca puts it: “it makes all the difference whether you name a thing or speak about it” (*plurimum autem interest utrum illud dicas an de illo*, *Letters to Lucilius* 117.13).

Lektá can be either complete or incomplete, and, interestingly, this depends on the completeness of the expression. A predicate like ‘writes’ is an incomplete expression, representing an incomplete *lektón*, for we ask ourselves: “who writes?”. Thus, a predicate is an incomplete *lektón*. It is the ‘incomplete meaning’ corresponding to e.g. a verb on the level of the expression. The standard example of a complete *lektón* is the axiom or proposition, the bearer of truth and falsehood (Diogenes Laertius 7.63). A predicate requires a ‘nominative case’ in the open slot in order to produce an axiom, but the ‘nominative case’ itself is never called an incomplete *lektón*: to qualify as a *lektón* there has to be a propositional content, or the content of a speech-act. This fits in with the difference between the Stoic logic of propositions as opposed to the Aristotelian logic of terms.

The relationship between expressions and *lektá* is especially interesting: the restrictions of human language and thought make it necessary to talk about these two items in isomorphic terms, but their elements do not have a one-to-one correspondence. One expression may represent various *lektá* and vice versa. Although according to the Stoa language was originally in perfect rational order, the corruptions occurring with the passage of time disturbed the primeval perfect economy of language, which included such a one-to-one correspondence as well as complete perspicuity.

An example of disrupted perfection is the phenomenon of ambiguity. Atherton (1993:53) points out the relevance of the ethical point of view in this area as well: expressions which could give rise to two or more interpretations could mislead the would-be wise man inadvertently to give his assent to a false presentation, and that in turn could endanger his success as a moral agent, i.e. the achievement of *apátheia*. The distinction between signifier and referent solves the ambiguity of the ‘Wagon’, which seems to have occurred independently in other grammatical traditions as well:

“If you say something, it passes through your lips: now you say wagon, consequently

a wagon passes through your lips" (*ei ti laleis, touto dia tou stomatos sou diérkhetai; hámaxon de laleis; hámaxon ára dia tou stomatos sou diérkhetai*, Diogenes Laertius *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 7.187; tr. Hicks (cf. for full references Atherton 1993:285f.)).

In their reading of Homer, the Stoics practised allegory, not so much to show that Homer was a Proto-Stoic, but to prove that the truths they presented could boast a long pedigree. In fact, it is likely that they believed that Homer himself could not understand the deep truths hidden in his work anymore. Again, the passage of time had corrupted original lucidity (cf. Long 1992).

Epicurus (341–271 BCE) showed an interest in language in two connections, namely its origin, and its epistemological role. He developed a philosophy which aimed at procuring freedom of emotional disturbances (*ataraxía*), by liberating mankind of fear of the gods and fear of death. The gods lead a remote existence, far away from our world with which they do not interfere at all. This theory gave Epicurus a vested interest in stressing the original naturalness of language, which according to him came into being without any divine intervention. When mankind further developed and organized its rudimentary language, however, an element of arbitrariness and convention was introduced.

More important for our present purposes are Epicurus' views on the relationship between language and knowledge. Epicurean physics is an atomistic system, the world being material and built up out of clusters of atoms. Physical objects emit streams of particles, which form images. These images are received by the observer or hearer, and may or may not be an accurate reflection of the original object—some wear and tear may occur during transmission. On the receiving end, there is a sensation (*aísthēsis*) and/or a feeling (*páthos*), which are in themselves criteria of truth: they are always (subjectively) 'true' in the sense that they are completely determined by the image. They are indubitable facts of experience (Long 1971:116). If these sensations or feelings are 'clear', i.e. if they are accompanied by the "clear view" (*enárgeia*) and if they are compatible with the so-called "preconceptions" (*prolēpseis*), a judgement can be formed which is objectively true. It is these preconceptions which form the Epicurean locus for 'meaning'.

"Preconception ... is as it were a perception, or correct opinion, or conception, or universal 'stored notion' (i.e. memory) of that which has frequently become evident externally; e.g. 'Such and such a kind of thing is a man'. For as soon as the word 'man' is uttered, immediately its outline also comes to mind by means of preconception, since the senses give the lead. Thus what primarily underlies each name is something self-evident ... Nor would we have named something if we had not previously learnt its

outline by means of preconception. Thus preconceptions are self-evident" (*tên dè prōlēpsin légousin hoionēi katálēpsin ē dóxan orthēn ē énnoian ē katholikēn nóēsin enapokeiménēn, toutēsti mnēmēn, toū pollákis éxōthen phanéntos, hoion 'tò toioútōn estin ánthrōpos'. háma gār tōi rhēthēnai ánthrōpos euthūs katá prōlēpsin kai ho túpos autoū noeítai proēgouménōn tōn aisthéseōn. panti oūn onómati tò prōtōs hupotetagmēnon enargēs esti ... oud' àn ōnomásamen ti mē próteron autoū katá prōlēpsin tòn túpon mathóntes. enargeīs oūn eisin hai prolēpseis*, Diogenes Laertius *Lives of eminent Philosophers* 10.33, tr. Long & Sedley 1987:I.87f., adapted).

By repeatedly encountering a phenomenon and remembering those encounters, we acquire a generic notion of such an object of experience. It is this concept which is naturally evoked by the name of that thing (cf. Long & Sedley 1987:I.89). Conversely, we need such a concept in order to be able to name a phenomenon in the first place. The "preconception" (*prōlēpsis*) is the first thing that comes to mind (*prōton ennóēma*, cf. *Letter to Herodotus* 38; 72), something underlying the sounds uttered (*tà hupotetagména toīs phthóngois*, *Letter to Herodotus* 37f.), and these preconceptions are 'self-evident' or 'clear', i.e. they need no exterior validation. The two sources which deny that Epicurean philosophy knows of any mediator between names and things have a clear Stoic bias (Plutarch *Against Colotes* I I 19F and Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.13): if they were looking for incorporeal equivalents to Stoic *lektá*, the Epicurean theory would seem deficient indeed. But the concept of *prōlēpsis* does mediate between the sounds (*phthongoí*) and things in the world.

Apart from the philosophical theories developed in the Hellenistic period, this era also saw the rise of philology as a separate and distinguished discipline with the foundation of the Museum at Alexandria. By sponsoring a group of eminent scholars who were working on the cultural heritage of Greece, the Ptolemies hoped to corroborate their claim to be the true heirs of Alexander the Great, and of Greek culture (*paideía*) in general, which was mainly embodied in the great Greek poets of the past, Homer prominent among them. The three most famous philologists were Zenodotus (fl. 3rd century BCE, 1st half), Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 255–180 BCE) and Aristarchus (217–145 BCE).

Their interest in semantics is apparent from their lexicographical work: Zenodotus composed lists of difficult words (*Glōssai*), Aristophanes wrote several lexicographical treatises organised around semantic fields, and forming part of the larger work called *Words* (*Léxeis*), e.g. on *Names of Kinship* (*Onómata Suggeniká*) and *Names of Ages* (*Perì onomasías hēlikiōn*).

Callanan (1987:90ff.) collects the evidence for his use of semantic criteria in settling philological questions: he uses the concept of literal and metaphorical usage, complete with the technical terms “properly/improperly used” (*kuriōs/akuriōs*) and “metaphor” (*metaphorá*). And he is also familiar with the concepts of homonymy and the absence of a word that would fit a slot in the lexical system (e.g. there is no Greek word that specifically describes a brother’s wife)—this is the Democritean *nōnumon*; Aristarchus himself does not use any technical terminology for these latter two phenomena. He did not write any lexica, but his commentaries contained numerous explanations of poetic usage. In addition, of the three great Alexandrian philologists, it is his exegetical principles that are most clearly identifiable: He tried to explain Homer from Homer (whether or not that famous phrase can actually be attributed to him), and asked for consistency and functionality in Homer’s work. Where those characteristics seemed to be absent, he felt there was reason to doubt the correctness of the transmission.

One of Aristarchus’ pupils is Dionysius Thrax (2nd century BCE). The *Art of Grammar* that has come down to us under his name may or may not be authentic, but it is certainly representative of the grammatical knowledge of the time. It is a rather schematic overview of the tasks of the grammarian and the parts of speech, with many subclassifications. Three out of six tasks of the grammarian have a clear semantic component: “exegesis according to the poetical expressions” (*exēgēsis katà toùs enupárkhontas poiētikoùs trópus*, I p. 5.4); “prompt rendering of poetical words and realia” (*glōssōn te kai historiōn prókheiros apódosis*, I, p. 6.1); and “discovery of etymology” (*etumologías heúresis*, I, p. 6.1f.). The brief section on punctuation defines both the full-stop and the comma in relation to the question whether or not the “thought has been completed” (e.g. *dianoías apērtisménēs*, 4, p. 7.5). Similarly, the sentence is defined as “a composite prose expression, indicating a complete thought” (*pezēs léxeōs súnthesis diánoian autotelē déloûsa*).

Some of the definitions of the parts of speech have a semantic component (e.g. the noun “signifies a body or a thing” (*sōma ē prāgma sēmaïnon*), the verb signifies an action or passion, and the pronoun indicates previously identified persons). Moreover, the noun and the adverb are further classified according to semantic criteria. In the case of the noun such a classification is applied twice. First it affects the subtypes of derived nouns, and then it is used to categorize the nouns as a whole. Interestingly, the subclassification of the derived nouns is itself a mix of semantic and morphological criteria. Derived nouns can be patronymics, words indicating possession, compara-

tives, superlatives, terms of endearment, but also (and there is no indication that we are on a different level here) words derived from nouns, or from verbs (12, p. 25,3ff.).

Although semantic criteria have a considerable relevance, there is no explicit theory of meaning in Alexandrian grammar. The notion that meaning resides on the level of the proposition only is clearly abandoned, in favour of a view which attributes meaning to individual words. For the first time, the notions of word and sentence start playing a role.

Philology became an intellectual trend in this period, to the extent that it actually influenced the modes of thought in non-linguistic disciplines like medicine. The works attributed to the great 5th-century-BCE physician Hippocrates attracted the same kind of philological attention as did Homer. Lexica and commentaries were being produced, and, clearly, the predominant interest in Hippocrates' medical information and the virtual irrelevance of his literary qualities promoted an even stronger concentration of what the texts actually meant—at least this is what the exegetes themselves claim. In fact, however, the dominant literary paradigm and its requirements do influence their interpretations. Apart from medicine, in the 2nd century BCE the philosophical texts by Epicurus were the object of a commentary by Demetrius Lacon, who also applied philological tools to elucidate the meaning of Epicurus' words. Unclearities in the work of the master had to be eliminated, because they disturbed the tranquillity of mind of his followers, the very goal of Epicurean philosophy. As in the Stoic theory of ambiguity, an ethical motivation validates the study of language and texts. A whole stream of philosophical and technical commentaries on great authoritative texts by past masters was to follow. Neo-Platonists (commenting on Plato and Aristotle) and Christians (commenting on the Bible), developed exegetical and hermeneutic principles, for instance, that a text should be interpreted in view of a unified theme (Jamblichus, 3rd century CE), even if read on different levels; or that true understanding was a matter of inspiration. They also looked for criteria on the basis of which one could decide whether texts were to be read literally or allegorically. However, no new theories of linguistic meaning were generated in this context.

9. Apollonius Dyscolus: the role of semantics in syntactic theory

The grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus (2nd century CE) wrote an extensive oeuvre, which has only partially come down to us. Apart from three minor

works (*On Pronouns*, *On Adverbs* and *On Conjunctions*) and some fragments, we have his four books *On Syntax*. Apollonius made a substantial contribution towards making grammar an autonomous discipline. He wants to provide a framework for problem-solving, which can be used by philologists, who try to establish the correct text of their literary authors (*dióρθōsis*), rhetoricians and philosophers, who look for linguistic purity and correctness (*Hellēnismós*) and orthographers, who investigate criteria for correct spelling. Apollonius is indebted to all of these groups, especially to the (Stoic) philosophers, but his own work claims to provide a new and independent method for all of them. Part of his conceptual linguistic model is philosophical in origin, but Apollonius is not committed to Stoic philosophy. Part of his input may be Stoic, but his output is his own.

According to Apollonius, language is an orderly system, with a hierarchy of levels, ascending from letters, to syllables, to words, through concepts, to the meaningful and grammatically sound sentence (*autotelēs lógos*) (*On Syntax* I,2, 2.3ff.). There is isomorphism between the several levels: their organisation is structurally identical and the orderly and regular combination of elements from each level forms those of a higher one. The complete sentence can be formed by words, because upon each word an intelligible (concept), a meaning that can be thought (*noētón*) is grafted, and these meanings are the elements (*stoikheía*, the same word is used for “letters”) of the meaningful and complete sentence:

“And just as the elements [i.e. letters] in their combinations complete syllables, so too does the syntax of the intelligibles complete syllables in a certain sense, through the combination of words. Again, as the word comes from the syllables, so does the complete sentence come from the regularity (symmetrical congruence) of the intelligibles” (*kai hōs tà stoikheía tās sullabàs apoteleĩ katà tās epiplokás, hoútō kai hē súntaxis tōn noētōn trópon tinà sullabàs apotelései dià tēs epiplokēs tōn léxeōn. kai éti hōn trópon ek tōn sullabōn hē léxis, hoútōs ek tēs katallēlótētos tōn noētōn ho autotelēs lógos, On Syntax* I,2, 2.11 ff.; tr. Blank 1983:30).

The rational and regular structure of language makes it possible for the grammarian to deduce rules according to strictly rational principles, rational orderliness being the main criterion for linguistic correctness. Other criteria are the established usage of cultivated people, literary precedents, and the authority of previous scholars. All these criteria are used to track down and diagnose phenomena of “grammatical irregularity” (*tò akatállēlon*), and to establish the “regularity of the complete sentence” (*katallēlótēs tou autoteloūs lógon*).

A sentence is “regular” (*katállēlos*) if all its parts are syntactically congru-

ent and semantically compatible. “Regularity” (*katallēlótēs*) refers to the mutual relationships of the constituents of a sentence; it is the notion into which symmetry of structure and semantics merge. In fact, syntax—the Greek word *súntaxis* means no more than the combination/collocation of words, or constituents—is a function of semantics. The reason why certain words can be combined, whereas others yield an ungrammatical construction, must be sought on the level of meaning.

The central portion of the *On Syntax* (the opening section of book III) is devoted to an explanation of the phenomenon of ungrammaticality. What are its causes? Words have a certain (lexical) meaning, but apart from that they also carry information imparted through inflection (e.g. tense, voice, mood, number, case, gender). Two words will be regularly and grammatically construed if all information conveyed by them is compatible (*On Syntax* III,14, 280.1ff.). If a word is unmarked for a certain category (e.g. an indeclinable part of speech like the adverb is unmarked for case), it cannot be incompatible with information conveyed by that category in the rest of the sentence, because it cannot be demonstrated to be incorrect by the substitution of a better alternative (III,17, 282.1ff.). This is expressed e.g. in the phrase:

“No part of speech can be ungrammatical in respect of a category which it fails to distinguish” (*oudèn méros lógou gínetai akatállēlon en hōi mē diekríthē*, *On Syntax* III,51, 316.10ff.; tr. Householder).

Adverbs are usually not marked for tense, since they are indeclinable. Therefore, the adverb ‘here’ can be construed with all tenses. But a word like ‘yesterday’ does convey a temporal sense in its lexical meaning, and this explains why it cannot be construed with a future tense.

‘Meaning’ and ‘intelligibles’ are the substance of regularity, but they are emphatically tied to the level of the expression. If someone points at a woman and complains ‘he has beaten me’, nothing is wrong with the grammaticality and regularity of the sentence. *Katallēlótēs* is definitely a characteristic of language rather than a function of the relation between language and reality. The same plaintiff exclaiming: ‘she have beaten me’ does produce an ungrammatical sentence, even if he successfully points out the culprit:

“For irregularity or regularity are not to be found in the substance of discourse (*tois hupokeiménois*), but in the combination of the words” (*ou gàr en tois hupokeiménois tò akatállēlón estin è katállēlon, en dè tēi suntáxei tōn léxeōn*, *On Syntax* III,10, 275.6ff.).

Apollonius’ problem-solving approach is diagnostic in nature: even though an expression seems to be familiar and in order, it can still be incorrect, and

the grammarian who follows Apollonius' logical principles will be able to demonstrate this. He will reveal incorrect usage by substituting a (more) correct alternative. Thus, correct usage refutes the incorrect, a principle styled *élenkhos*.

Apollonius' view of language is normative. Originally, language was in perfect regular order and there was a one-to-one relationship between words and meanings. However, that order has been disturbed and corrupted over time. The grammarian needs to understand the basic regularity in order to be able to correct mistakes, or to explain the rules underlying an aberration. On the other hand, Apollonius is no reformer nor does he demand a return to the pristine state of language. He wants to understand the linguistic system and to correct those (new) mistakes which are not integral to linguistic usage already. He shows, for instance, that the Greek idiom which construes a neuter plural subject with a predicate in the singular is strictly speaking irregular, but he does not propose to abolish it (*On Syntax* III, 50, 315.16ff.; Schenkeveld 1994:295ff.). In order to explain the 'regular meaning' of a given Greek sentence, he has to take recourse to a paraphrase in normalized Greek, which purports to represent as regularly as possible all aspects of the meaning of the sentence in question (in fact, the *lektón*). Such paraphrases or translations into structurally perspicuous, truly regular sentences are called *tò hexēs*, "the orderly version". Here, the original one-to-one correspondence between words and meanings is artificially restored.

It will be clear from the foregoing that Apollonius works with the Stoic dichotomy between sounds (*phōnai*) and meanings (*sēmainómena*). His three minor works reflect this dichotomy in their structure. Apollonius always opens with a discussion of the various definitions and names for a given part of speech, their syntax (or place in the sentence) and examples of words which may or may not belong to this particular part of speech. All of this comes under the heading of "sense, meaning" (*énnoia*); notice especially that this also holds good for syntax. After that he will turn to a discussion of the morphology of the relevant part of speech (*skhēma tēs phōnēs*).

Meaning is always intrinsically more important than form. Not only is it the determining factor in establishing grammatical regularity (*katallēlótēs*), it is also meaning which is decisive for assigning a word to one part of speech rather than another (*merismós*). Forms of words may undergo various changes, but these cannot affect their meaning. In this sense, Apollonius is an interesting illustration of the fact that ancient grammar mainly concentrates on two levels, the morphological one (cf. his interest in parsing (*merismós*)),

and the semanto-logical one (cf. his interest in meaning). Syntax in our sense of the word, as a purely grammatico-structural phenomenon, hardly plays any role.

10. Augustine: semantics and theology

Augustine (354–430 CE) was well-versed in pagan scholarship, although he had had a slow start. Before his conversion to Christianity, he specialized in rhetoric. After his conversion, he wrote on the liberal arts (treatises on grammar and dialectic are extant) and developed a programme for a Christian education. His ideas on language and the problem of meaning are deeply influenced by previous philosophical scholarship, although heavily filtered through Roman sources and schooltexts. Augustine's command of Greek was poor and he is not likely to have studied the relevant sources (especially the Stoic ones) in any great depth. The resulting theories are thoroughly Christianized and often original. The works that are most relevant here are *On Dialectic* (386–7 CE), *On the Teacher* (ca. 389), *On Christian Culture* (397, part of book 3 and all of book 4 was written in 427), and *On the Trinity* (415).

In *On Dialectic* Augustine is the first firmly to incorporate the study of the linguistic sign into a general theory of signs; in Hellenistic philosophy language had never been regarded as the system of signs *par excellence*, although a theory of sign-inference had been important in both Stoic and Epicurean philosophy. Augustine identifies the word as the locus for meaning. A word is the smallest combination of signifier and signified. This latter dichotomy is Stoic in origin, but Augustine's application of the theory is new in that Stoic theory had no place for the concept of 'word' at all. They distinguished strings of articulated sound (*léxis*) and meaningful articulated sound as found in a proposition (*lógos*). Augustine's theory is a blend of Stoic philosophical influence and Roman school grammar, which focused entirely on words.

On Dialectic refines the Latin terminology to express the distinctions that apply to any given expression: a word (*verbum*) qua physical sound (*sonus*) is opposed to that aspect that is grasped not by the ears, but by the mind, the *dicibile* "sayable", a calque on the Stoic *lektón*, although *lektón* is never related to words in isolation. The referent is distinct from this "meaning": it is called *res*, equivalent to Greek *prāgma* in the trivial, non-Stoic sense. A further distinction is made between words that are used to refer to themselves, in which case their *res* is equivalent to *verbum*, and words which are

not used autonomously, but to signify something else: in that case the technical term is *dictio* (*On Dialectic* 5). Any given word is therefore a nodal point in which four aspects converge: *verbum*, *dicibile*, *dictio* and *res*. Augustine is the first systematically to distinguish 'use' and 'mention' of a word in his terminology.

Aristotelian influence may be detected in Augustine's view that written language is a sign of spoken language:

"Every word is a sound, for when it is written it is not a word but the sign of a word"
(*Omne verbum sonat. Cum enim est in scripto, non verbum sed verbi signum est, On Dialectic* 5; tr. Jackson).

In the dialogue *On the Teacher* the relationship between language and knowledge is investigated. The two basic functions of language are to teach (cf. Plato) and to remind, but after a first half in which it is argued that it is impossible to learn anything without signs, the second half of the dialogue leads to an impasse: for it is argued that signs are learned and understood from the things of which they are signs, and not vice versa (X,33). We need knowledge, before we can understand signs. Therefore, language by itself cannot teach us anything. The solution to this dilemma is theological: getting to know intelligibles can only come about through revelation. The interior teacher is the Word, Christ, who "can teach by at once displaying to the mind the reality to be known and providing the language for its understanding" (Markus 1957:69) (cf. *On the Teacher* XII,39).

Some of these ideas are further developed in *On the Trinity*, when Augustine comes to reflect on the nature of the Word. The 'interior word' is an abstract concept in that it is unrelated to any particular language (in that sense it resembles the 'Form' or 'Idea' (*eĩdos*) of the first theory of meaning in the *Cratylus* (see above, Section 6). The "word which is luminous inside" (*verbum quod intus lucet*) is opposed to its external realisation, the "word heard sounding outside" (*verbum quod foris sonat*) (*On the Trinity* XV, II.20; Markus 1957:77). Communication is realized because the internal word in the interlocutor's mind is activated by speech addressed to him. The distinction is reminiscent of the theory of "internal" and "expressed reason/discourse", the *lógos endiáthetos* and the *lógos prophorikós*.

On Christian Culture is the first systematic attempt to develop a Christian curriculum, preparing for an adequate interpretation of the Bible. The process of communication is described as follows:

"When we speak, the word that we carry in our hearts turns into sound, in order that what we carry in our mind may glide into the mind of the hearer through his carnal ears. It

is called expression. However, it is not our thought that is converted into that same sound, but our thought remains intact with itself; it takes on the form of the words in which it insinuates itself into the ears, without being affected by any kind of internal change" (*cum loquimur, ut id quod animo gerimus in audientis animum per aures carneas illabatur, fit sonus verbum quod corde gestamus, et locutio vocatur; nec tamen in eundem sonum cogitatio nostra convertitur, sed apud se manens integra, formam vocis qua se insinuet auribus, sine aliqua labe suae mutationis assumit*, *On Christian Culture* I,13.12).

Discourse is a transfer of thought from one mind to the other through the temporary physical medium of sound. The fact that the internal word, thought, remains intact and complete is important because of the analogy with the Incarnation of God's Word. The general framework for the interpretation of the Bible is equally determined by religious considerations: the starting-point for every interpretation is love of God and of one's neighbour, and the triad faith, hope and love (I,35.39; 37.41ff.).

In the following books (especially book II) Augustine takes up the theory of signs, of which words are the prime examples. He draws a distinction between "signs" (*signa*) and "things" (*res*), pointing out that signs are things, too, but that not all things are signs. In the case of words, it is almost exclusively their nature of being signs that is relevant. A sign is defined as follows:

"A sign ... is a thing which, in addition to what it is perceived to be by the senses also brings something else to mind" (*signum ... est res, praeter speciem quam ingerit sensibus aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem venire*, *On Christian Culture* II,1.1; tr. Markus 1957:71).

Signs can be divided into 'natural' ones and 'given' ones. Words belong to the latter class, and derive their meaning from convention, or consensus.

After a discussion of the general education necessary to the would-be interpreter of the Bible, Augustine devotes the third book to the problem of ambiguity. Some contexts are not immediately transparent and it is imperative that the exegete know how to deal with these. In literal expressions, ambiguity will usually be solved by the context, a comparison of different translations or a comparison with the original (III,4.8). To prevent error and heresy, it is crucial to be able to determine when a text is to be taken literally and when figuratively (III,5.9; 10.14). In this book he integrates pagan hermeneutics and pagan education in a completely Christian framework. His criteria are in part familiar from the pagan tradition (cf. above), e.g. if the surface meaning of the text yields an unacceptable meaning, it should be interpreted allegorically. The historical framework should be taken into account, so that

something which can be taken literally in the time in which it was written should not be interpreted allegorically in Augustine's time (III,22.32) (a principle already known to Aristotle and to Aristarchus). Augustine also advocates the principle of explaining the Bible from the Bible (e.g. III,27.38f.). However, his particular slant is completely Christianized, the final test being whether or not a text is compatible with the prime directives of love of God and of one's neighbour (III,10.14). It is very interesting that Augustine stipulates explicitly that the text of the Bible can carry more than one meaning simultaneously: all these meanings have been foreseen and intended by the Holy Spirit (III,27.38).

Augustine's unique achievement was to adopt and adapt the pagan philosophical heritage in such a way that it came to be an acceptable basis for the Christian Middle Age. This goes in particular for the analogies he sees between the human word and the Word, second person of the Holy Trinity, which preserves its integrity and completeness while it is transferred through a physical medium from one person to another. Communication and revelation are put on an analogical footing.

II. Semantics and translations

Early Greek exegetical techniques included paraphrase and the replacement of difficult poetical words with more ordinary prosaic ones. Translation of a word into synonymous expressions (*metálēpsis*) was to remain common scholiast practice, and it was an important way to establish the semantic content of a word for a grammarian like Apollonius Dyscolus (cf. Sluiter 1990:111ff.). The Greek dialects, too, posed problems of 'translation' into the dominant Attic or Koine. However, translations from foreign languages into Greek or vice versa are virtually absent from Greek linguistic thought. The Greeks did not have any particular systematic interest in other languages, although one does find the incidental comparison of words, and although there must have been numerous interpreters in cosmopolitan cities like Athens and Alexandria. Very little by way of linguistic comparison is to be found in Greek technical literature. Where literary works are concerned, Herodotus has incidental remarks about the words other people use for certain phenomena, and Aristophanes pokes fun at the incomprehensible gibberish of foreigners (e.g. in his *Acharnians*). Other tongues were styled "barbarian", and were compared to animal sounds (especially twittering birds, e.g. Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1050–53, cf. Sluiter 1990:206).

In fact, mutual incomprehension between Greeks and foreigners, rather than the possibility of translation is what one finds mainly stressed in the theoretical literature about language. Greeks can perceive the sounds of a barbarian language, they can distinguish the vocal inflections, but that does not give them the knowledge of an interpreter, i.e. the meaning of the words remains obscure to them (Plato *Theaetetus* 163b1ff.). Earlier, Heraclitus had already pointed out that eyes and ears are poor witnesses if one has a barbarian soul, i.e. if the sense-data fail to be interpreted correctly (Fr. B 107). The Stoics define 'meaning' with reference to its availability to "foreigners" (*bárbaroi*): they hear the sounds (*phōnē*) which carry the meaning, but are still unable to grasp it (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.12). In fact this proves that *phōnē* as such is meaningless: if it were meaningful, perceiving the sounds would entail grasping the meaning, but in fact foreigners (*bárbaroi*) are unable to do this (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 8.134, cf. 1.155). Sextus uses the same point to prove that discourse does not signify "by nature" (*phúsei*). This appears from the fact that not everyone understands everyone else, but that there is a mutual lack of communication between Greeks and foreigners, and even between Greeks and Greeks, and foreigners and foreigners (Sextus Empiricus *Against the Professors* 1.37f., cf. *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 2.214 and 3.267). This link between the conventional nature of language and the fact that writing and sounds are not the same for everyone goes back to Plato (*Cratylus* 385d9ff.) and Aristotle's *On Interpretation* I (16a4ff.).

The first major translation project in the Greek world was that of the Septuagint (2nd century BCE), but no theory of translation was required at that point, because it was claimed that the Greek end-result itself was the product of divine inspiration, seventy-two translators having separately and independently produced an identical version.

For explicit theories of translation we have to wait until the Romans, who used Greek as a metalanguage, whenever they were talking about the Latin language. This goes especially for the Roman grammarians, but it is also evident from observations like those of Augustine, who notices that some expressions are ambiguous, because they mean one thing in Greek and another in Latin (e.g. *lege* is Greek for "read" (imperative) and Latin for "law" (in the ablative case), *On Christian Culture* I,24.37). This is, of course, a late example (end 4th century CE), but right from the beginning the Romans were very conscious of the existence of Greek as a 'Kultursprache'; indeed, for a long time it was not certain whether Latin would ever acquire

a similar status in its own right. A Roman annalist like Fabius Pictor (3rd/2nd century BCE) wrote his works directly in Greek. The first Latin poet was in fact a Greek, Livius Andronicus, who translated the *Odyssey* into Latin (3rd century BCE). Early comic poets, like Plautus (250–184 BCE) and Terence (2nd century BCE), heavily relied on Greek examples and translated parts of them, although they managed to produce something new and uniquely Roman in the process. Terence has the prologue-speaker in his *Adelphoe* recommend him for the faithfulness of his translation:

“He has translated it word for word” (*verbum de verbo expressum extulit, Adelphoe* 11).

In the 1st century BCE we find more theoretical reflections on the process of translation as such. It is once again the translation of Greek poetry that triggers Horace’s remark that one should not be too compulsive about following one’s model (*Ars Poetica* 133). The project of giving the Romans their own philosophical terminology was undertaken by Cicero and Lucretius. Cicero frequently reflects on this enterprise, and he feels strongly that one should not be too literal-minded while translating. Incidentally he will suggest a word-for-word (*verbum e verbo*) isomorphic translation (e.g. *Lucullus* 17), which amounts to a calque, e.g. *comprehensio* for Greek *katálēpsis*. Usually, however, he is disparaging about this behaviour which befits a mere interpreter: he prefers remodelling his example as an orator should (*On the Best Type of Orator* 14; *de Finibus* 3.15): he wants to translate not the words, but the force, the meaning (*non verba, sed vim, Academica* 1.10). Neologisms are not forbidden, but one should look for a natural equivalent, paraphrase if necessary, or take over a Greek word as a technical term (*de Finibus* 3.15). The 1st-century-CE philosopher Seneca agrees with him in his rejection of word-for-word isomorphism:

“This abiding stability of mind the Greeks call ‘euthymia’, ‘well-being of the soul’ ...; I call it tranquillity. For there is no need to imitate and reproduce words in their Greek shape; the thing itself, which is under discussion, must be designated by some name which ought to have, not the form, but the force, of the Greek term” (*Hanc stabilem animi sedem Graeci euthymian vocant ...; ego tranquillitatem voco. Nec enim imitari et transferre verba ad illorum formam necesse est; res ipsa, de qua agitur, aliquo signanda nomine est, quod appellationis Graecae vim debet habere, non faciem, On Tranquillity of Mind* 2.3).

And when looking for a translation of the Greek *apátheia* “non-suffering” in the sense of “freedom from affections and emotional disturbances”, he equally rejects the formation of the calque *impatientia* (“non-suffering”; the word was already in use as “impatience”) (*Letters to Lucilius* 9.2).

In the Roman world, too, the translation of the Bible was a major event. Jerome (4th century CE), who translated the Bible into Latin, composes a long letter which forms a treatise on the best style of translation (*Letters* 57). The letter was not instigated by his translation of the Bible, however, but was written after he had been attacked for a sloppy translation of a Greek letter. In his defense, he firmly places himself in the tradition of Horace, Cicero and Seneca, rejecting a literalistic approach in favour of one aiming to convey the intention of the words. He makes an exception for Bible translations, which, however, is not always reflected in his actual translations (cf. Bartelink 1980):

“For not only do I admit, but I even freely proclaim that when I translate Greek texts, with the exception of Holy Scripture where even the word order is a mystery, I do not translate word-for-word, but meaning for meaning” (*Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu, Letters* 57.5)

Augustine thought Jerome’s translation was rather too free, and preferred the old-fashioned Itala on the grounds that it “clung more closely to the words” (*est verborum tenacior*) “while the intention is clear” (*cum perspicuitate sententiae*, *On Christian Culture* II, 15.22. This combination is obviously the most ideal.

Clearly, the opposition between words and meanings was completely internalized by the 1st century BCE. It was also realized that a preference for a translation *ad sensum* would enhance the literary quality of the translation (this is Jerome’s point), while a literal translation shows the faithfulness of the plodding interpreter. As so often, the ideal solution was the middle road.

12. Conclusion

In this essay we have tried to show the central role of meaning in Greek linguistic thought. In a way, the earliest emergence of linguistic concerns in the form of etymology set the tone for what was to come. Etymology was a strategy to get a sense of control over a baffling world, an attempt to understand the world through language. It focused on single words, especially names. Interpretation of larger contexts is attested at an early stage in the form of explaining dreams and oracles, taken as divine communications.

Once the focus of attention, the nature of language kept occupying the Greek intellectuals: its potential for persuasion and entertainment was ex-

plored by the sophists, who lay the foundation of theoretical rhetoric and poetical theory. The relationship between language and knowledge, and language and the outside world occupied the philosophers who started where the poets had left off. Plato feels compelled to address these problems, because contemporary speculation seemed to undermine the whole enterprise of dialectic. The first of the two theories of meaning put forward in the *Cratylus* locates meaning in the ideal Form of a name, which the name-giver has to keep in view. Alternatively, a name is felt to represent the name-giver's view of reality. Plato assigns language its proper place in the dialectical process: it is its instrument and vehicle, but it does not form a fit object for research in and of itself, nor is it a reliable source of information about the world: at best, it represents the name-givers' opinions of the world. In the *Sophist*, it is recognized that propositional meaning (and, therefore, truth and falsity) resides, not in the single word, but in a syntactically complete sentence.

Aristotle agrees that language can represent established opinion, but in his eyes common opinions and expressions form a legitimate starting-point for philosophical inquiry. However, he does not endorse reliance on etymology, which can only be used as a back-up argument, not in the course of establishing scholarly proof. Aristotle's view of language as a conventional symbolic, rather than mimetic, system was to revolutionize linguistic thought. In his mentalistic view, language signifies the speaker's thoughts.

In the Hellenistic period, important contributions to the theory of meaning were made by the Epicureans, but especially by the Stoics. Their radical distinction between form and meaning, not in the context of the single word—which plays no role whatsoever—but in that of the proposition came to form part of the common stock of linguistic concepts at the disposal of every educated Greek. Meaning is something incorporeal, subsistent on thought, that has the potential to be expressed in language—hence its name: “sayable” (*lektón*). Now that meaning was recognized as having an identity of its own, different from sound, concept or thing, theoretically the way was made clear for a purely linguistic approach to semantics, as opposed to a logical one; however, this was not to happen in Antiquity. Both the Stoics and the Epicureans had good philosophical motives for studying language: misunderstanding this vehicle for thought was a severe threat to the ultimate attainment of a philosopher's happiness.

In the same period, the Museum at Alexandria was established, Center for Hellenic Studies *avant la lettre*, where philology was the intellectual fashion of the day, because it was the instrument to preserve the cultural inheritance

of archaic and classical Greece. The interpretation of the poets, Homer prominent among them, had always formed part of the Greek intellectual tradition and the school curriculum. Now, it became a separate discipline, philology. Apart from lexicography, interpretive principles were established to determine whether the texts of the great poets were in good order. Philosophers and doctors followed the intellectual trend, and applied the tools of philology to write commentaries and lexica on the authoritative works from their respective traditions, Epicurus, Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates.

This whole tradition of studying the meaning of language in whichever form, was probably one of the main reasons why no Greek equivalent of a purely structural syntax ever emerged. Language was either studied at the basic level of the single word, or for its communicative or logical value. The intermediate stage was not skipped altogether, but observations pertaining to the formal syntactic structure of language are rather incidental. The word 'syntax' had been around for a long time, but meant no more than the combination or the collocation of lexical items to achieve a certain effect. This focus on the meaning of language, on its communicative function, is also central to the work of the 'syntactician' Apollonius Dyscolus, in which semantical concerns came to form the basis of a theory of grammatical regularity (*katallēlotēs*). He focuses mainly on the construction of the complete sentence, expressing a complete meaning.

In the work of Augustine, a synthesis is achieved between the pagan philosophical, rhetorical and philological tradition, and Christian religion: he develops a Christian curriculum for the ideal exegete of the Bible. Augustine is the first to make a clear distinction between 'use' and 'mention'. He explicitly redirects the search for meaning to the individual word, in a confirmation of the fact that the Stoics' concentration on the incorporeal proposition had been unable to win the day in school-practice.

Ancient theories of translation, the last topic briefly discussed here, corroborate the fact that form-meaning distinctions had been completely absorbed into ancient linguistic thought. Not surprisingly, a translation that stays close to the 'Wortlaut' of the original while at the same time completely conveying its meaning and intention, is generally preferred.

13. Suggestions for further reading

1. The best general introduction to the Greek grammatical tradition is probably still Steinthal (1890–91) and Pfeiffer (1968). A brief survey of ancient

views on 'meaning' is to be found in Calboli (1992). Manetti (1987) discusses ancient theories of signs. Di Cesare (1980) deals with ancient philosophical theories of meaning (up to and including the Epicureans, but without the Stoics).

2. For Greek grammatical terminology, see also Bécares Botas (1985).

3. See Kraus (1987) on the relationships between words and things. Amsler (1989) deals with etymology; he focuses mainly on later antiquity, but gives a useful survey of earlier material. Good general discussion of etymology in Herbermann 1991. Rank (1951) is still indispensable on Homeric etymology; on Homeric names, Peradotto (1990) is good. Leclerc (1993) deals with Hesiod's views on language and names. For Aristotle's use of etymology, see Eucken (1869:246)

4. For pre-Alexandrian exegetical techniques, see Manetti (1987) (on signs); Sluiter (1994) (Themistocles' interpretation of the Delphic oracle). Paraphrastic techniques and glosses in Plato: Bottin (1975). On allegory: Buffière (1956), who is also indispensable for Homeric interpretations in antiquity in general; Whitman (1987), see also under 8.

5. General survey of linguistic ideas in the Pre-Socratics in Schmitter (1991) and Di Cesare (1980); on Heraclitus' theory of meaning, see Hussey (1982). For the sophists, see Di Cesare (1991), for Prodicus, Momigliano (1929–30), for Gorgias, Kraus (1987:171ff.) and Di Cesare (1991:95f.). Heinimann (1945 (1972)) is still fundamental on the opposition *nómos*—*phúsis*, characteristic of the intellectual outlook of the period.

6. Derbolav (1972) provides a survey of the extensive literature on Plato's *Cratylus*. Goldschmidt's essay (1940) is still important. Of the more recent literature, see especially Denyer (1991) on the problem of truth and falsehood, and Baxter (1992) on the theory of names and the etymological section.

7. Excellent overview of the Aristotelian philosophy of language in Ax (1992), see also Flashar (1983). Arens (1984) discusses the vital first section of *On Interpretation*, for which see further Montanari (1984; 1988) and Weidemann (1994).

8. For Hellenistic philosophy, see Long & Sedley 1987, who collect the most important sources with translations and commentary. On Stoic semantics, see Frede (1978), Egli (1986), Sluiter (1990:13ff. and forthc.) and Hülser (1992). Schenkeveld (1984:326–31) discusses the parallels between the Stoic

theory of *lektá* and Searle's speech act theory. For Stoic allegoresis, Steinmetz (1986), Most (1989) and Long (1992). Epicurean semantics is discussed in Long (1971), Sedley (1973), and Hossenfelder (1991). Glidden (1983) takes a different view from the one expounded here. For Alexandrian philology, see, apart from Pfeiffer (1968), Callanan (1987) with the critical discussion and corrections in Schenkeveld (1990). On the *Techne* ascribed to Dionysius Thrax, see Law and Sluiter (1995).

9. Apollonius Dyscolus *On Syntax* is available in the English version by Householder (1981) (a new translation is being prepared by Jean Lallot). For discussions of Apollonius' semantic views, see Blank (1982 and 1993), and Sluiter (1990). Van Ophuijsen (1993) provides a discussion of some of the relevant technical terms from the semantic field of 'meaning', notably *prāgma*, *diáthesis*, *énnoia*, and *paremphaínein* and related terms.

10. Rotta (1909) discusses theories of language in patristic authors. For Augustine, see especially Markus (1957) and Baratin (1981); further Gangutía (1977) and Manetti (1987).

11. On ancient theories of translation, see Bartelink (1980). On the general issue, of course, Steiner (1992²).

14. Bibliographical references

A. Primary sources

- Apollonius Dyscolus, *On Syntax*. Transl. by Fred W. Householder, *The Syntax of Apollonius Dyscolus*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981.
- Aristotle, *On Interpretation, Categories, Topics, Sophistic Refutations*. Ed. by W.D. Ross, *The Works of Aristotle translated into English. Vol. I*. Transl. by E.M. Edghill, *Categoriae and De Interpretatione*. Transl. by W.A. Pickard-Cambridge, *Topica and De Sophisticis Elenchis*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1928.
- . *The Categories, On Interpretation*. Transl. by Harold P. Cook. London: Heinemann (Loeb), 1962.
- . *On the Soul, Parva Naturalia, On Breath*. Transl. by W.S. Hett. London: Heinemann (Loeb), 1964.
- . *On Sophistical Refutations*. Transl. by E.S. Forster. London: Heinemann (Loeb), 1965.
- . *Rhetoric*. Transl. by John Henry Freese, *On the "Art" of Rhetoric*. London: Heinemann (Loeb), 1967.
- . *Poetics*. Transl. by W. Hamilton Fyfe, *The Poetics*. London: Heinemann (Loeb), 1965.
- . *The Nicomachean Ethics*. Transl. by H. Rackham. London: Heinemann (Loeb), 1968. Transl. by R.A. Gauthier and J.Y. Jolif. Louvain, 1958–59.
- . *Metaphysics*. Transl. by Hugh Tredennick. London: Heinemann (Loeb), 1968.

- "Aristoteles", *De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia* Ed by Hermann Diels, *Aristotelis qui fertur De Melisso Xenophane Gorgia libellus* Berlin 1900
- Augustinus, *De dialectica* Ed by Jan Pinborg Transl by B Darrell Jackson Dordrecht & Boston D Reidel, 1975
- Dio Cassius *Roman History* Transl by Earnest Cary, *Dio's Roman History* London Heinemann (Loeb) vol 8, 1955
- Epicurus, Ed by Graziano Arrighetti, *Epicuro, Opere* Torino Einaudi, 1973
- Herodotus, *Histories* Transl by A D Godley London Heinemann (Loeb), 1920–31 (3 volumes)
- Hippocrates *Peri Tékhñēs*, On the Art Ed by I L Heiberg (Corpus Medicorum Graecorum I 1) Leipzig & Berlin 1927
- *On Nutriment* Transl by W H S Jones London Heinemann (Loeb), 1923 (vol 1)
- *On Regimen* Transl by W H S Jones London Heinemann (Loeb), 1979 (vol 4)
- Hesiod, *Theogony Works and Days* Transl by Hugh G Evelyn-White London Heinemann (Loeb), 1967
- Homer, *Odyssey* Transl by A T Murray London Heinemann (Loeb), 1966
- Isocrates, *Speeches* Transl by George Norlin London Heinemann (Loeb), 1966
- Johannes Lydus, *De mensibus* Ed by R Wuensch Leipzig Teubner (BT), 1898
- Parmenides *Fragments* Ed and transl by A H Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides (cr text, intr, tr, testim, comm)* Assen-Maastricht Van Gorcum, 1986
- Plato, *Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias* Transl by H N Fowler London Heinemann (Loeb), 1963
- *Theaetetus, Sophist* Transl by H N Fowler London Heinemann (Loeb), 1967
- *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles* Transl by R G Bury London Heinemann (Loeb), 1966
- *Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias* Transl by W R M Lamb London Heinemann (Loeb), 1967
- *Republic* Transl by Robin Waterfield Oxford & New York Oxford Univ Press, 1993
- Pre-Socratics Ed by Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (3 Bande) Berlin Weidmann, 1972¹⁶ Transl by Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers A complete translation of the Fragments in Diels Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* Oxford Blackwell, 1948 Transl by Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (2 Vols) London Routledge, 1979

B. Secondary sources

- Amsler, Mark E 1989 *Etymology and Discourse in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (= *Studies in the History of the Language Sciences*, 44) Amsterdam & Philadelphia John Benjamins
- Arens, Hans 1984 *Aristotle's Theory of Language and its Tradition* Amsterdam & Philadelphia John Benjamins
- Atherton, Catherine 1993 *The Stoics on Ambiguity* Cambridge Cambridge Univ Press
- Ax, Wolfram 1982 *Laut, Stimme und Sprache Studien zu drei Grundbegriffen der antiken Sprachtheorie* Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht
- 1992 "Aristoteles" *Sprachphilosophie I Halbband*, ed by M Dascal, D Gerhardus et al, 244–59 Berlin & New York de Gruyter

- Baratin, Marc 1981 "Les origines stoiciennes de la theorie Augustinienne du signe" *Revue des Etudes Latines* 59 260-68
- Baxter, Timothy M S 1992 *The Cratylus Plato's Critique of Naming* Leiden E J Brill
- Bartelink, Gerhardus J M 1980 *Hieronymus liber de optimo genere interpretandi (ep 57) Ein Kommentar* Leiden E J Brill
- Blank, David L 1982 *Ancient Philosophy and Grammar The Syntax of Apollonius Dyscolus (= American Classical Studies, 10)* Chico, Calif Scholars Press
- 1993 "Apollonius Dyscolus" *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 34 1 *Sprache und Literatur*, ed by Wolfgang Haase, 708-730 Berlin & New York de Gruyter
- Becares Botas, Vicente 1985 *Diccionario de terminología gramatical griega* Salamanca Ed Universidad
- Bottin, Luigi 1975 "Platone censore di Omero" *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Filologia Greca* 2 60-79
- Buffière, Félix 1956 *Les mythes d'Homere et la pensee grecque* Paris Les Belles Lettres
- Burkert, Walter 1985 "Herodot über die Namen der Gotter Polytheismus als historisches Problem" *Museum Helveticum* 42 121-32
- Calboli, Gualtiero 1992 "Bedeutung" *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*, ed by Gert Ueding, 1372-1399 Tübingen
- Callanan, Christopher K 1987 *Die Sprachbeschreibung bei Aristophanes von Byzanz (= Hypomnemata, 88)* Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht
- Chiesa, C 1992 "Le probleme du langage interieur dans la philosophie antique de Platon a Porphyre" *Histoire, Epistemologie, Langage* 14 15-30
- DeLacy, Phillip 1966 "Galen and the Greek Poets" *Greek Roman & Byzantine Studies* 7 259-66
- Denyer, Nicholas 1991 *Language, Thought and Falsehood in Ancient Greek Philosophy* London & New York Routledge
- Derbolav, Josef 1972 *Platons Sprachphilosophie im Kratylus und in den späteren Schriften* Darmstadt Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft
- Desbordes, Françoise 1988 "Homonymie et synonymie d'après les textes théoriques latins" *AAVV, L'ambiguité* Lille Presses Universitaires
- Di Cesare, Donatella 1980 *La semantica nella filosofia greca* Roma Bulzoni
- 1991 "Die Geschmeidigkeit der Sprache Zur Sprachauffassung und Sprachbetrachtung der Sophistik" *Sprachtheorien der abendlandischen Antike*, ed by Peter Schmitter, 87-118 Tübingen
- Dillon, John 1977 *The Middle Platonists A Study of Platonism 80 B C to A D 220* London Duckworth
- Egli, Urs 1986 "Stoic Syntax and Semantics" *Historiographia Linguistica* 13 281-306
- Eucken, R 1869 "Beiträge zum Verständnis des Aristoteles I Die Etymologie bei Aristoteles" *Neue Jahrbücher für Philologie und Pädagogik* 15 243-8
- Flashar, Hellmut 1983 "Aristoteles" *Die Philosophie der Antike III Aeltere Akademie—Aristoteles—Peripatos*, ed by Hellmut Flashar, 177-457 Basel & Stuttgart Schwabe & Co
- Frede, Michael 1978 "Principles of Stoic Grammar" *The Stoics*, ed by John M Rist, 27-75 Berkeley, Los Angeles & London Univ of California Press
- Gangutía, Elvira 1977 "Teorías semánticas en la antigüedad" *Introducción a la lexicografía griega*, ed by FR Adrados, E Gangutía, J Lope de Facal, C Serrano Aybar, 3-60 Madrid

- Glidden, David K. 1983. "Epicurean Semantics". *Syzetesis. Studi sull'epicureismo greco e romano offerti a Marcello Gigante*, 185–226. Napoli.
- Goldschmidt, Victor. 1940. *Essai sur le "Cratyle". Contribution à l'histoire de la pensée de Platon*. Paris: Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques.
- Heinimann, Felix. 1945. *Nomos und Physis. Herkunft und Bedeutung einer Antithese im Griechischen Denken des 5. Jahrhunderts*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. [2nd ed., 1972]
- Herbermann, C.-P. 1991. "Antike Etymologie". *Sprachtheorien der abendländischen Antike*, ed. by Peter Schmitter, 353–76. Tübingen.
- Horst, Pieter W. van der. 1994. "Silent Prayer in Antiquity". *Numen* 41.1–25.
- Hossenfelder, M. 1991. "Epikureer". *Sprachtheorien der abendländischen Antike*, ed. by Peter Schmitter, 217–37. Tübingen.
- Hülser, Karlheinz. 1992. "Stoische Sprachphilosophie". *Sprachphilosophie I. Halbband*, ed. by M. Dascal, D. Gerhardus et al., 17–34. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter.
- Hussey, Edward 1982. "Epistemology and Meaning in Heraclitus". *Language and Logos. Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy presented to G.E.L. Owen*, ed. by Malcolm Schofield and Martha C. Nussbaum, 33–59. Cambridge.
- Kraus, Manfred. 1987. *Name und Sache. Ein Problem im frühgriechischen Denken*. Amsterdam: Grüner.
- Jocelyn, H.D. 1979. "Vergilius cacozelus (Donatus Vita Vergilii 44)". *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 2.67–142.
- Law, Vivien and Ineke Sluiter (eds.). 1995. *Dionysius Thrax and the Technē grammatikē*. Münster: Nodus Publikationen.
- Leclerc, Marie-Christine. 1993. *La parole chez Hésiode: A la recherche de l'harmonie perdue*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.
- Leech, Geoffrey. 1981. *Semantics. The Study of Meaning*. 2nd ed. London: Penguin.
- Lloyd, Geoffrey E[rnest] R[ichard]. 1987. *The Revolutions of Wisdom. Studies in the Claims and Practice of Ancient Greek Science*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: Univ. of California Press.
- Long, Anthony A. 1971. "Aisthesis, Prolepsis and Linguistic Theory in Epicurus". *Bulletin of the Institute for Classical Studies* 18.114–33.
- . 1992. "Stoic Readings of Homer. Homer's Ancient Readers. The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic's earliest Exegetes", ed. by Robert Lamberton and J.J. Keany, 41–66. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.
- . and David N. Sedley. 1987. *The Hellenistic philosophers*. 2 vols. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Manetti, Giovanni. 1987. *Le teorie del segno nell' Antichità classica*. Milano.
- Markus, R.A. 1957. "St. Augustine on Signs". *Phronesis* 2.60–83.
- Momigliano, Arnaldo. 1929–30. "Prodicus da Ceo e le dottrine sul linguaggio da Democrito ai Cinici". *Atti della Reale Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 65.95–107.
- Montanari, Elio. I 1984; II 1988. *La sezione linguistica del Peri hermeneias di Aristotele. I: Il testo; II: Il commento*. Firenze: Università degli Studi di Firenze.
- Most, Glenn W. 1989. "Cornutus and Stoic Allegoresis: A Preliminary Report". *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 36.3, ed. by Wolfgang Haase, 2014–65. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter.

- Ophuijsen, Jan van. 1993. "The Semantics of a Syntactician: Things meant by verbs according to Apollonius Dyscolus *Peri suntaxeōs*". *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 34.1. *Sprache und Literatur*, ed. by Wolfgang Haase, 731–70. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter.
- Owen, Gwilym Ellis Lane. 1986. *Logic, Science and Dialectic: Collected papers in Greek philosophy*. Ed. by Martha Nussbaum. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.
- Peradotto, John. 1990. *Man in the Middle Voice: Name and Narration in the Odyssey*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.
- Pfeiffer, Rudolf. 1968. *A History of Classical Scholarship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rank, L. Ph. 1951. *Etymologiseering en verwante verschijnselen bij Homerus [Etymologizing and Related Phenomena in Homer]*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Rotta, P. 1909. *La filosofia del linguaggio nella Patristica e nella Scolastica*. Torino.
- Schenkeveld, Dirk M. 1984. "Studies in the History of Ancient Linguistics. II: Stoic and Peripatetic Kinds of Speech Act and the Distinction of Grammatical Moods". *Mnemosyne* 37.291–353.
- . 1990. "Studies in the History of Ancient Linguistics. IV. Developments in the Study of Ancient Linguistics". *Mnemosyne* 43.289–306.
- . 1994. "Scholarship and Grammar". *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* 40.263–306.
- Schmidt, E.G. 1984. "Zur Geschichte des wissenschaftlichen Denkens im Altertum". *Philologus* 128.276–92.
- Schmitter, Peter. 1991. "Vom 'Mythos' zum 'Logos': Erkenntniskritik und Sprachreflexion bei den Vorsokratikern". *Sprachtheorien der abendländischen Antike*, ed. by Peter Schmitter, 57–86. Tübingen.
- Sedley, David. 1973. "Epicurus, On Nature, Book xxviii". *Cronache Ercolanesi* 3.5–83.
- Sluiter, Ineke. 1990. *Ancient Grammar in Context: Contributions to the History of Ancient Linguistic Thought*. Amsterdam: VU Univ. Press.
- . 1994. "Themistocles, *Labeo en de Taalkunde*". *Hermeneus* 66.210–4.
- . forth. "Language and Thought in Stoic Philosophy", *History of the Language Sciences*, ed. by Sylvain Auroux, Konrad Koerner, Hans-Josef Niederehe, Kees Versteegh. Berlin & New York: de Gruyter.
- Steiner, George. 1992. *After Babel. Aspects of Language and Translation*. 2nd ed. Oxford & New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Steinmetz, Peter. 1986. "Allegorische Deutung und allegorische Dichtung in der alten Stoa", *Rheinisches Museum* 129.18–30.
- Steinthal, Hermann. 1890, 1891. *Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft bei den Griechen und Römern*. 2 vols. Berlin.
- Thomas, Rosalind. 1989. *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- . Forthcoming. *Herodotus the Sophist?* Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Weidemann, Hermann. 1994. *Aristoteles Peri Hermeneias*. Uebersetzt und erläutert. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
- Whitman, Jon. 1987. *Allegory. The Dynamics of an Ancient and Medieval Technique*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Wilson, John. 1982. "'The customary meanings of words were changed'—or were they? A Note on Thucydides 3.82.4". *Classical Quarterly* 32.18–20.