Between grammar and rhetoric : Dionysius of Halicarnassus on language, linguistics, and literature

Jonge, C.C. de

CHAPTER 2. DIONYSIUS ON THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE

2.1. Introduction

As a rhetorician, Dionysius of Halicarnassus is primarily interested in the artistic use of language for the sake of persuasion and aesthetic effects. However, his theories of composition and style presuppose certain more general views on the nature of language. These ideas will be the subject of this chapter. Here, we will not yet be concerned with grammatical, syntactical or poetical theory. We will rather try to find out what language itself means to Dionysius. I will discuss three aspects of Dionysius' concept of language in particular, namely the hierarchical structure of language (section 2.2), the connections between language, thought and reality (section 2.3), and Dionysius' views on the relationship between Greek and Latin, the two languages of the Graeco-Roman world in which he lived (section 2.4). Finally, we will focus on three passages in the work *On Composition* where Dionysius has been thought to allude to a certain philosophy of language. Some scholars have claimed that there is an inconsistency between Dionysius' views in these different passages; they think that, concerning the relation between names and things, in one case Dionysius follows Peripatetic and in other cases Stoic theories. I will argue (section 2.5), however, that the relevant passages are not in fact incompatible and that the local functions of these passages within Dionysius' treatise scarcely allow us to draw any conclusions about his alleged philosophy of language.

Before I start my discussion of Dionysius' ideas on language, a note of caution is necessary. To a certain extent, it is possible to recover Dionysius' views, by combining various passages of his works where he (sometimes implicitly) expresses himself on the nature of language. But we should not ignore the fact that his statements are always embedded in his rhetorical theory. Dionysius is not a philosopher but a rhetorician, and his works should not be interpreted as philosophical treatises. When discussing Dionysius' ideas, I will take their rhetorical context into account. In two respects, then, this chapter may be considered as introductory to the following chapters. First, it brings together some of Dionysius' more general views on language that form the basis of his technical theories on linguistics and style. Second, this chapter is programmatic in the sense that it shows the importance of interpreting Dionysius' views within the context of his (rhetorical and historical) theories. As we saw in section 1.6, many modern scholars have primarily used Dionysius in order to reconstruct the ideas of his 'sources' (e.g. Aristoxenus, Theophrastus, the Stoics). This traditional approach has led to a lot of misunderstanding. We will see that

Dionysius' views on the hierarchical structure of language and the relation between names and things are closely related to his rhetorical theory (sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.5), and his ideas on Greek and Latin can only be understood as part of his historical work (section 2.4). The contextual approach to Dionysius' views on language will turn out to be fruitful in all the chapters that follow.

2.2. The hierarchical structure of language

The concept of language as a hierarchical structure is one of the central ideas in Dionysius' rhetorical works. According to this concept, language is a system that consists of various levels: the units of one level are the building blocks (or elements, στοιχεῖα) of the units at the next level. The '*stoicheion* theory of language' is found in the texts of many ancient writers of various language disciplines.[1] It can be traced back to Plato, but the various levels of language that are distinguished differ from one discipline to the other.[2] For the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, the levels are letters, syllables, words and sentences.[3] For the rhetorician Dionysius, they are letters, syllables, words (parts of speech), clauses, periods and discourse. The musical theorist Aristides Quintilianus distinguishes between letters, syllables, metrical feet, metres and a complete poem.[4] All the scholars mentioned regard letters or sounds as the elements (στοιχεῖα) of language, but the levels that they distinguish in addition to that of the smallest elements depend on the units that are relevant to their specific discipline.[5] While the levels that consist of the smallest units (letters, syllables, words) seem to be regarded as representing the structure of language itself, the levels consisting of larger units (e.g. clauses, metres) are part of the artistic (technical) use of language for certain purposes. Thus, where the scholars of different disciplines seem to agree that language as such has a (naturally) hierarchical structure, they have their own views on how this hierarchical structure can be further developed in artistic (rhetorical or musical) composition. The atomistic approach to language does not only describe the hierarchical structure of language as such, but it also has a pedagogical function: many scholars organise their technical treatises (on grammar, metre, or music) according to the different levels of language that they distinguish.[6]

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[1] See Pinborg (1975) 70 and Armstrong (1995) 211.
[2] Plato, *Cratylus* 424c5-425a5.
[3] Apollonius Dyscolus, *Synt.* I.2: see section 4.2.1 n. 11.
[4] Aristides Quintilianus, *On Music* 1.20-29.
[5] Because writing is central to all these disciplines, it is the letter (γράμμα) rather than the sound that is considered to be the element: see Desbordes (1986).
[6] See Sluiter (1990) 43 n. 16 and the literature mentioned there.

Plato expresses the atomic character of letters (γράμματα) by referring to them as στοιχεῖα ('elements'), and this becomes a standard term for letters in later times.[7] The Stoic philosophers emphasise the symmetry between the different levels of language when they use the term στοιχεῖα not only for letters, but also for the parts of speech (τὰ μέρη τοῦ λόγου): they distinguish between the στοιχεῖα λέξεως (or φωνῆς), the 'elements of articulated sound' (letters) on the one hand, and the στοιχεῖα λόγου, the 'elements of speech' (words) on the other (see section 3.2).[8] Dionysius of Halicarnassus uses the term στοιχεῖα for letters, but he also tells us that 'some call the parts of speech στοιχεῖα τῆς λέξεως.'[9] The latter statement seems to combine the Stoic point of view (words as elements) with a rhetorical approach to language as expression (λέξις): according to Dionysius, composition (σύνθεσις) starts from the parts of speech, which are the 'elements of style' (see section 4.3.1). But we should not read too much in Dionysius' reference to words as στοιχεῖα λέξεως (rather than στοιχεῖα λόγου), because he does not consistently distinguish between parts of λέξις and parts of λόγος (see sections 3.5 and 4.2.1). In any case, Dionysius' use of the term στοιχεῖα for both letters and words (parts of speech) is explicitly related to his concept of language as a hierarchical structure. Concerning the letters, Dionysius states the following:[10]

Ἀρχαὶ μὲν οὖν εἰσι τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φωνῆς καὶ ἐνάρθρου μηκέτι δεχόμεναι διαίρεσιν, ἃ καλοῦμεν στοιχεῖα καὶ γράμματα· γράμματα μὲν ὅτι γραμμαῖς τισι σημαίνεται, στοιχεῖα δὲ ὅτι πᾶσα φωνὴ τὴν γένεσιν ἐκ τούτων λαμβάνει πρώτων καὶ τὴν διάλυσιν εἰς ταῦτα ποιεῖται τελευταῖα.

'Now in the human and articulate speech there are prime units admitting no further division, which we call "elements" and "letters": "letters" (γράμματα) because they are signified by certain lines (γραμμαί), and "elements" (στοιχεῖα) because every vocal sound originates in these first units and is ultimately resolved into them.'

According to this explanation, the letters are the indivisible 'atoms' of the articulate speech of human beings. Dionysius also calls them τὰς πρώτας τε καὶ στοιχειώδεις τῆς φωνῆς δυνάμεις ('the first and elementary powers of the voice').[11] The adjective πρῶτος ('first') emphasises the status of letters as the smallest units: they constitute

[7] See Sluiter (1990) 44 n. 19.
[8] See *FDS* 539-541.
[9] *Comp.* 2.6,19. See also De Jonge (2005a).
[10] *Comp.* 14.48,3-8.
[11] *Comp.* 14.49,11-12. The terminology may be borrowed from Aristoxenus, to whom Dionysius refers in *Comp.* 14.49,2.

the first level of the hierarchical structure of language. The symmetry between the level of letters and that of words is indicated by the fact that the parts of speech are described as τὰ πρῶτα μόρια καὶ στοιχεῖα τῆς λέξεως ('the first parts and elements of the phrase' (see section 3.5).[12] Dionysius' atomic theory of language is closely related to the concept of architectural discourse (see section 4.3.1): the structure of language is reflected in the composition of a text, which is 'built' together from its building blocks. In *Comp.* 2, Dionysius discusses the various levels of composition: here, the levels of language (in general) coincide with the levels of rhetorical composition.[13] The difference is that artistic composition starts from words (Dionysius' στοιχεῖα λέξεως) and not from letters (Dionysius' στοιχεῖα φωνῆς), although the building of certain mimetic words is also treated in the work *On Composition*.[14] The process of σύνθεσις begins with τὰ τοῦ λόγου μόρια ('the parts of speech'): they are put together in order to form κῶλα ('clauses'); the clauses constitute περίοδοι ('periods'), and these complete the λόγος ('discourse').[15] In chapter 4 of this study, I will argue that Dionysius' theory of composition is deeply influenced by the concept of architectural discourse.

2.3. Language, thought, and reality

Dionysius of Halicarnassus does not teach his students a semantic theory. But for a rhetorician it is crucial that one can use language both in order to formulate one's ideas and in order to present or describe the world about which one speaks or writes. Therefore, we find many implicit remarks in Dionysius' rhetorical works on the relationship between language and thought on the one hand, and the relationship between language and extra-linguistic reality on the other hand.[16] In this section, I will discuss Dionysius' ideas on these two aspects of language.

Central to Dionysius' views as a rhetorician is the distinction between 'ideas' (τὰ νοήματα) and 'words' (τὰ ὀνόματα), which correspond to the two aspects of discourse (τὰς θεωρίας τοῦ λόγου), namely 'subject matter' (ὁ πραγματικὸς τόπος)

[12] *Comp.* 7.30,14.
[13] *Comp.* 2.6,17-7,18. See my discussion in section 4.2.1.
[14] *Comp.* 16.61,20-63,3.
[15] Dionysius describes the final stage as follows: αὗται δὲ τὸν σύμπαντα τελειοῦσι λόγον, 'and the periods make up the complete discourse' (*Comp.* 2.7,17-18). The use of the words τελειοῦσι λόγον reminds us of Apollonius Dyscolus' view (*Synt.* I.2) that the regularity of the intelligibles (νοητά) constitutes the complete discourse (ὁ αὐτοτελὴς λόγος), but Apollonius' λόγος is the sentence. See section 4.2.1.
[16] On ancient theories of semantics and signification, see Calboli (1992), Manetti (1993) and Sluiter (1997).

and 'expression' (ὁ λεκτικὸς τόπος) (see also section 1.6).[17] This division is a guiding principle in Dionysius' essay on Thucydides, where he first discusses the historian's treatment of subject matter and then his style.[18] Likewise, in the *Letter to Pompeius*, Dionysius compares Herodotus and Thucydides first with regard to subject matter and subsequently with regard to style.[19] However, expression and subject matter cannot always be separated. Although in many parts of his work Dionysius focuses on stylistic matters, he knows very well that words and ideas are closely related.[20] I disagree with Scaglione, who argues that Dionysius 'is not interested in words as symbols but only as sounds, not in logic and semantics but only in phonetics broadly understood'.[21] It is true that, because of the scope of his treatises, Dionysius pays more attention to euphony than to the correct formulation of thoughts; but he is always aware of the relationship between the form of words and their meaning, and he is concerned with the propriety (τὸ πρέπον) that should exist between the two: both the selection of words and the composition should be appropriate to the subject matter (τὸ ὑποκείμενον), 'the matter that underlies' the words.[22] In spite of Dionysius' focus on matters of euphony and rhythm, the subject matter is in the end more important than the expression: Dionysius explicitly states that 'nature wants the expression to follow the thoughts, not the thoughts to follow the expression' (see also section 5.2).[23] Similarly, Lysias is praised because he does not make the subject (πράγματα) slave of his words (ὀνόματα), but makes the words conform to the subject.[24]

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[17] See *Comp.* 1.4,6-15.

[18] Dionysius deals with Thucydides' subject matter in *Thuc.* 6-20, his style in *Thuc.* 21-51.

[19] Subject matter in *Pomp.* 3.232,18-238,22; style in *Pomp.* 3.239,1-240,22.

[20] See also Goudriaan (1989) 248-249.

[21] Scaglione (1972) 58. Blass, *DGB* (1865) 199 expresses a similar view. It is true that euphony is Dionysius' central concern in *On Composition* and that the meaning of words receives less attention here, but we must not forget that the subject of the treatise (σύνθεσις) is the cause of this imbalance. We should not interpret a treatise on stylistic composition as a treatise on rhetoric in general.

[22] See esp. *Comp.* 20.88,11-15: ὁμολογουμένου δὴ παρὰ πᾶσιν ὅτι πρέπον ἐστὶ τὸ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις ἁρμόττον προσώποις τε καὶ πράγμασιν, ὥσπερ ἐκλογὴ τῶν ὀνομάτων εἴη τις ἂν ἡ μὲν πρέπουσα τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις ἡ δὲ ἀπρεπής, οὕτω δή που καὶ σύνθεσις. 'It is generally agreed that appropriateness is the treatment that is fitting for the underlying persons and things. Just as the choice of words may be either appropriate or inappropriate to the subject matter, so surely may the composition be.' See further e.g. *Dem.* 13.156,6-7: τὸ πρέπον τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις προσώποις τε καὶ πράγμασι, 'the appropriateness concerning the underlying persons and things.' *Comp.* 11.40,7: τὸ μὴ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις ἁρμόττον, 'that which does not fit the subject.' In the selection of the correct grammatical form of a word (one of the ἔργα of composition), one should also pay attention to the propriety between the form and the underlying matter: see *Comp.* 6.28,20-29,14 (section 4.3.1): ἔπειτα διακρίνειν, πῶς σχηματισθὲν τοὔνομα ἢ τὸ ῥῆμα ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ὅ τι δή ποτε χαριέστερον ἱδρυθήσεται καὶ πρὸς τὰ ὑποκείμενα πρεπωδέστερον. 'Then they should decide the form in which the noun or verb or whichever of the other parts of speech it may be will be situated more elegantly and in a way that fits more appropriately the underlying matter.' On the term ὑποκείμενον in ancient literary theory, see also Meijering (1987) 110.

[23] *Isoc.* 12.72,6-8: βούλεται δὲ ἡ φύσις τοῖς νοήμασιν ἕπεσθαι τὴν λέξιν, οὐ τῇ λέξει τὰ νοήματα. Scaglione (1972) 58 has taken over Rhys Roberts' ([1910] 11) wrong reference to *Isoc.* 2.

[24] *Lys.* 4.13,6-8: τούτου δὲ αἴτιον, ὅτι οὐ τοῖς ὀνόμασι δουλεύει τὰ πράγματα παρ' αὐτῷ, τοῖς δὲ πράγμασιν ἀκολουθεῖ τὰ ὀνόματα.

The semantic relationship between language and thought is especially expressed by the terms σημαίνειν ('to signify') and δηλοῦν ('to make clear').[25] In utterances (λέξις), 'we signify our thoughts' (σημαίνομεν τὰς νοήσεις).[26] For Dionysius' stylistic theory, it is of course fundamental that thoughts can be expressed in different ways.[27] This idea is not only central to Dionysius' distinction of three types of composition (see section 4.3.2), but it also clears the way for his important method of 'metathesis', the rewriting of a text in order to show the qualities, faults and particularities of the original (see section 7.3). Besides, it enables Dionysius to explain obscure passages in Thucydides by reformulating 'what he means to say', a technique that we also know from the ancient scholia (see section 4.4.2). Thus, Dionysius frequently introduces his interpretations with the words βούλεται γὰρ δηλοῦν ..., 'for he wants to designate (...)', or βούλεται γὰρ λέγειν ...., 'for he wants to say (...)'.[28] An expression that he uses in a similar way is ὁ μὲν νοῦς ἐστὶ τοιόσδε ('the meaning is as follows') (see below).[29] The expression ἐκφέρειν τὴν νόησιν ('to express the thought') also relates to the formulation of thought in language.[30] In some cases, Dionysius simply states that a writer 'formulates as follows' (ἐκφέρει οὕτως). The concept of 'meaning' is more implicit in expressions like ποιεῖν τὴν λέξιν or ποιεῖν τὴν φράσιν ('to make the expression', 'to phrase'), σχηματίζειν τὸν λόγον ('to construct the sentence'), σχηματίζειν τὴν φράσιν ('to construct the phrase'), or simply σχηματίζειν ('to construct'): these terms refer to the shaping of a thought on the level of expression.[31]

The word νόησις ('thought', 'intelligence') is used less often in Dionysius' works than νόημα ('that which is thought', 'thought').[32] Dionysius also employs the term διάνοια ('thought', 'intention', 'meaning'), and, as I already mentioned, νοῦς

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[25] Van Ophuijsen (2003) 84-85 argues that both Aristotle and the Stoics use σημαίνειν in the sense of 'signposting': where δηλοῦν is 'to designate' (something designates something), σημαίνειν is an act of communication between speaker and addressee (someone points something out to someone).

[26] *Comp.* 3.8,20-21: Ἔστι τοίνυν πᾶσα λέξις ᾗ σημαίνομεν τὰς νοήσεις ἢ μὲν ἔμμετρος, ἢ δὲ ἄμετρος. 'Every utterance, then, by which we signify our thoughts is either in metre or not in metre.' On the Greek terms for 'meaning', see Sluiter (1997) 151-155.

[27] See e.g. *Comp.* 4.20,8-10: on this passage, see section 7.1.

[28] For βούλεται δηλοῦν, see *Amm.* II 4.426,12; *Amm.* II 6.427,12-13; *Amm.* II 8.428,12-13; *Amm.* II 14.433,17; *Thuc.* 29.374,22; *Thuc.* 30.375,25-376,1; *Thuc.* 30.376,6; *Thuc.* 31.378,5. For βούλεται λέγειν, see *Amm.* II 9.429,2-3; *Thuc.* 29.374,13; *Thuc.* 32.378,22; *Thuc.* 46.402,24.

[29] *Thuc.* 31.377,16. Cf. *Thuc.* 40.394,8.

[30] *Amm.* II 4.426,1-2.

[31] For ποιεῖν τὴν λέξιν, see *Amm.* II 4.426,2. For ποιεῖν τὴν φράσιν, see *Amm.* II 5.426,16. For σχηματίζειν τὸν λόγον, see *Amm.* II 7.427,17-18; *Amm.* II 13.432,16-17. For σχηματίζειν, see e.g. *Amm.* II 5.426,16 (see also section 3.7).

[32] For νόησις, see above (*Comp.* 3.8,20-21) and e.g. *Dem.* 25.183,19 ('ideas' opposed to aspects of style like εὐέπεια and καλλιλογία); *Amm.* II 4.426,2. For νόημα, see e.g. *Lys.* 4.13,1; *Isoc.* 3.58,15.

('meaning', 'sense', 'idea').[33] The word ἔννοια ('thought', 'intent'), which is a common term for 'meaning' in the works of the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, appears in one or two passages of Dionysius only.[34] As Sluiter points out, all these words are somehow connected to the idea of 'mental' processes, and their use points to the idea of words as 'vehicles of a thought'.[35] This can be either the thought of the speaker or a thought that is simply attached to a certain word. Dionysius presents the thought as the 'substrate' of the words, by referring to 'the underlying meaning' (τὴν ὑποκειμένην διάνοιαν, τὸν ὑποκείμενον νοῦν).[36]

With regard to utterances, Dionysius distinguishes between the form, τὸ σημαῖνον ('that which signifies') and the meaning, τὸ σημαινόμενον ('that which is signified').[37] These terms are prominent in Stoic philosophy, which distinguishes between the corporeal form (σημαῖνον) of a word, its incorporeal meaning (σημαινόμενον) and the thing in reality to which it refers (τυγχάνον).[38] The Stoic division between form and meaning, which has deeply influenced the grammarian Apollonius Dyscolus, also seems to play a role in Dionysius' work.[39] According to Apollonius Dyscolus, only the forms of words can be modified, but their (incorporeal) meanings remain unaffected by the changes that occur on the level of the form.[40] Thus, whereas many sentences contain certain mistakes or irregularities on the level of expression, the asomatic λεκτόν ('sayable' — a more specific term than σημαινόμενον) is always regular (κατάλληλος).[41] Apollonius frequently rewrites sentences from daily usage or literary texts in order to bring out their meaning. The rewritten sentences are in fact 'verbal representations of the incorporeal λεκτά'.[42] In other words, Apollonius' paraphrases offer a representation of that which is signified

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[33] For διάνοια as 'thought', see e.g. *Lys.* 8.15,12 (as one of the three aspects, besides λέξις and σύνθεσις, in which Lysias' ἠθοποιία [characterisation] becomes manifest); *Dem.* 20.171,3 ('thought' opposed to λέξις 'style'). For νοῦς, see e.g. *Comp.* 9.33,9; *Comp.* 22.97,10; *Comp.* 22.97,14.

[34] For ἔννοια, see *Ant. Rom.* 20.9.3; τῶν ἐννοιῶν in *Dem.* 39.212,11 was deleted by Krüger, probably because the text of the MSS would say that 'figures of thought' (τῶν ἐννοιῶν) include both 'figures of thought' (κατὰ τὰς νοήσεις) and 'figures of style properly' (κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν λέξιν); but Aujac keeps τῶν ἐννοιῶν in her text, translating 'des idées'. For the use of ἔννοια in Apollonius Dyscolus, see Van Ophuijsen (1993) 755-759.

[35] Sluiter (1997) 153.

[36] *Dem.* 39.212,21-22; *Dem.* 40.215,21.

[37] These neuter participles τὸ σημαῖνον and τὸ σημαινόμενον occur only in *Thuc.* and *Amm.* II.

[38] See Sluiter (1990) 22-26. Dionysius does not use the term τυγχάνον.

[39] On the distinction between σημαῖνον and σημαινόμενον in Apollonius Dyscolus, see Sluiter (1990) 26-36.

[40] See Apollonius Dyscolus, *G.G.* II 1, *Adv.* 158,14-15: τῶν ... φωνῶν τὰ πάθη, καὶ οὐ τῶν σημαινομένων. 'Modifications affect the sounds, not the meanings.' (Translation by Sluiter.) See Sluiter (1990) 24-25.

[41] See Sluiter (1990) 61-62. See also section 5.2 of this study. On the Stoic λεκτόν ('sayable'), see Frede (1987a) 303-309 and Sluiter (2000a) 377-378.

[42] Sluiter (1990) 63.

by the expression.[43] As a rhetorician, Dionysius of Halicarnassus employs a similar method when he analyses obscure passages from Thucydides and other writers. In these cases, his rewritings (metatheses) offer a clear and straightforward alternative to the original passage, which he regards as difficult to understand (see sections 5.2 and 7.3.1). Interestingly, he twice introduces his metathesis with the following words: ἦν δὲ τὸ σημαινόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς λέξεως τοιοῦτο ('that which is signified by the expression was the following').[44] Here, Dionysius of course employs the same technique as the one that he elsewhere describes by the words βούλεται δηλοῦν, βούλεται λέγειν, etc. (see above); but his formulation suggests that he intends to recover *the* (unchangeable) meaning that underlies a certain expression rather than simply giving an alternative phrasing.[45] Dionysius' idea seems to be that there is a fixed meaning underlying all utterances, which one can present in different ways (more and less accurately, more and less clearly, or with different sounds or rhythms). In some passages, Dionysius states that a certain classical author has 'adapted' the formulation of a thought that he himself presents in his metathesis: in these cases, he regards his own metathesis as the more natural formulation, which corresponds more closely to the underlying meaning of the expression (see section 7.3.2). Unlike Apollonius' 'word-pictures', Dionysius' rewritings do not only intend to recover the true 'meaning' of a passage, but to show the student how he should or should not construct his sentences. I will discuss Dionysius' rewriting method in more detail in chapter 7 of this study.[46]

Another context in which Dionysius employs the terms σημαῖνον (form) and σημαινόμενον (meaning) is the grammatical analysis of a *constructio ad sensum*. More than once Dionysius points out that Thucydides 'sometimes changes the cases of nouns or participles from the signified to the signifying, and sometimes from the signifying to the signified' (ποτὲ μὲν πρὸς τὸ σημαινόμενον ἀπὸ τοῦ σημαίνοντος ἀποστρέφων, ποτὲ δὲ πρὸς τὸ σημαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ σημαινομένου).[47] This construction occurs when Thucydides combines a collective noun in the singular (e.g. δῆμος, 'populace') with a plural verb, so that the grammatical from of the verb does not

[43] Householder (1981) characterises Apollonius' verbal representations of the λεκτόν as a form of 'deep structure', but this is an anachronistic interpretation. Sluiter (1990) 67-68 points out that Apollonius' paraphrases do not represent the 'underlying structure' of expressions, but their true meaning: Apollonius' interest is semantic, not structural.

[44] *Amm.* II 7.428,3-4; *Amm.* II 10.430,8-9.

[45] The expression ὁ μὲν νοῦς ἐστὶ τοιόσδε (see above) similarly refers to the representation of an underlying meaning (νοῦς).

[46] In section 5.2, I will relate Dionysius' concept of a basic, underlying word order to his views on ἀκολουθία and ὁ κατάλληλος λόγος.

[47] *Thuc.* 24.362,7-10; *Amm.* II 2.423,13-16; *Amm.* II 13.432,14-17. The translation of Usher (1974) 529 'from subject to object' and 'from object to subject' is misleading.

correspond to the grammatical form of the noun, but to its meaning (σημαινόμενον) (see section 4.4.2). Aristarchus calls this kind of construction a σχῆμα πρὸς τὸ νοητόν.[48] The fact that Dionysius adopts the term σημαινόμενον (and not νοητόν) can be explained by the influence of Stoic philosophy on grammatical theory in the period between Aristarchus and Apollonius Dyscolus (see section 3.2). Another word from the same verbal root as σημαίνειν is σημασία ('signification', 'meaning'). Dionysius uses this word twice when referring to Thucydides' 'rapidity of signification' (τὸ τάχος τῆς σημασίας):[49] the historian uses few words to express a lot of thoughts. Dionysius characterises the same aspect of Thucydides' style as 'the effort to signify as many things as possible in the fewest possible words, and to combine many ideas into one' (τό τε πειρᾶσθαι δι' ἐλαχίστων ὀνομάτων πλεῖστα σημαίνειν πράγματα καὶ πολλὰ συντιθέναι νοήματα εἰς ἕν).[50] The result is obscure brevity.

Concerning the relationship between language and extra-linguistic reality, we have already observed above that Dionysius pays much attention to the appropriate harmony that should exist between words and their subject matter (ὑποκείμενον). The 'substrate' (ὑποκείμενον) can be either the thought (e.g. τὴν ὑποκειμένην διάνοιαν, see above) or the referent (person or object) in reality.[51] Dionysius frequently specifies τὸ ὑποκείμενον by the words πράγματα (things) and πρόσωπα (persons).[52] In general, words are said to refer to a person (σῶμα) or a thing (πρᾶγμα), and Dionysius criticises Thucydides when he refers to a person as a thing or to a thing as a person (see section 4.4.2).[53] More generally, the reality to which language refers is described as the πρᾶγμα or πράγματα: this term forms one angle in the triangle between words (ὀνόματα), thoughts (νοήματα) and things (πράγματα). Thus, in Dionysius' discussion of Herodotus' story about Gyges and Candaules, he states that neither the incident described (πρᾶγμα), nor the words (ὀνόματα) are dignified, and the words have not made the thoughts (νοήματα) nobler than they are. In this passage, the appealing quality of the style is not derived from the beauty of the words, but from their combination (συζυγία).[54] It should be said that it is not in all cases clear whether

[48] See Matthaios (1999) 384.
[49] *Thuc.* 24.363,12; *Amm.* II 2.425,3.
[50] *Thuc.* 24.363,5-9.
[51] For ὑποκείμενον as the extra-linguistic referent, see e.g. *Comp.* 16.61,21-62,1: οἰκεῖα καὶ δηλωτικὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων τὰ ὀνόματα, 'the words that suit and illustrate their referents' (see section 2.5). On ὑποκείμενον in Apollonius Dyscolus, see Lallot (1997 II) 213 n. 228.
[52] See *Lys.* 13.23,1-2: τὸ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις προσώποις καὶ πράγμασι τοὺς πρέποντας ἐφαρμόττειν λόγους, 'accommodating the arguments to suit the underlying persons and things'; *Dem.* 13.156,6-7 (see section 2.3 n. 22); *Comp.* 20.88,11-15 (see above).
[53] *Dem.* 40.215,14-15; *Amm.* II 14.433,6-434,12.
[54] *Comp.* 3.12,8-15,2.

πρᾶγμα designates the 'thought' or the 'referent': Dionysius uses the word in both ways; the πραγματικὸς τόπος, for example, is the treatment of νοήματα (ideas).[55] The use of πρᾶγμα as extra-linguistic referent is common in Plato, whereas the use of πρᾶγμα in the sense of 'meaning' or 'content' can be traced back to Stoic philosophy.[56] The grammarians use πρᾶγμα in particular for the meaning of verbs.[57] In section 2.5, I will further discuss Dionysius' views on the (natural or conventional) relationship between ὀνόματα and πράγματα.

In a few cases, Dionysius describes the connection between language and reality in a more technical way: nouns indicate substance (οὐσία), verbs accident (τὸ συμβεβηκός), and adverbs 'circumstances of manner, place, time and the like' (τῶν συνεδρευόντων αὐτοῖς, τρόπου ... καὶ τόπου καὶ χρόνου καὶ τῶν παραπλησίων).[58] According to this approach, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the logical structure of language on the one hand and that of reality on the other. As Schenkeveld has pointed out, these terms betray Stoic influence.[59] I will discuss this philosophical terminology in section 5.3.

2.4. Greek and Latin

After his arrival in Rome, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 'learnt the language of the Romans and acquired knowledge of their writings' (διάλεκτόν τε τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν ἐκμαθὼν καὶ γραμμάτων ⟨τῶν⟩ ἐπιχωρίων λαβὼν ἐπιστήμην).[60] Dionysius was thus one of the many bilinguals who lived in Rome in the first century BC.[61] Bilingualism was extremely common at the time: although it was particularly Romans who acquired Greek as a second language, there were also many Greeks who learnt Latin.[62] In his rhetorical works, Dionysius does not mention any Roman author by name, although there is one passage in which he seems to refer to Cicero (see section

[55] For πράγματα as extra-linguistic referents, see e.g. *Comp.* 16.62,3 (see section 2.5.3).
[56] See Sluiter (1997a) 154-155.
[57] See Sluiter (1997a) 155.
[58] *Comp.* 5.23,13-24,20.
[59] Schenkeveld (1983) 85-89.
[60] *Ant. Rom.* 1.7.2. Dionysius' attitude towards Rome and the Roman Empire has been the subject of many publications. See the useful discussion in Hurst (1982) 845-856; add Goudriaan (1989) 299-329, Gabba (1991) 3-4 and 18-19, and Hidber (1996) 75-81.
[61] On the bilingualism of Romans and Greeks, see Adams (2003).
[62] See Rochette (1997) 211-256 and Adams (2003) 15-16. Whereas a Greek accent in Latin was normally positively evaluated, a Latin accent in Greek sounded 'rustic'. In *Ant. Rom.* 19.5.1, Dionysius tells about a Roman ambassador who was humiliated because of his bad Greek. See Adams (2003) 108-110.

4.4.1).[63] In the preface to *On the Ancient Orators*, he mentions the publication of contemporary works on history, politics, philosophy and other subjects 'by both Roman and Greek writers'.[64] In the *Roman Antiquities*, he is more explicit. He tells us that he studied the works of Quintus Fabius Pictor, Lucius Cincius Alimentus, Porcius Cato, Quintus Fabius Maximus Servilianus, Valerius Antias, Licinius Macer, 'the Aelii, Gellii and Calpurnii', and that he acquired information from the men with whom he associated (οἷς εἰς ὁμιλίαν ἦλθον).[65] This list suggests that Dionysius read and spoke Latin reasonably well.[66] How did he view the relationship between his mother tongue and his second language? At the end of the first book of his *Roman Antiquities*, Dionysius gives the following explanation of the Latin language:[67]

Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ φωνὴν μὲν οὔτ' ἄκρως βάρβαρον οὔτ' ἀπηρτισμένως Ἑλλάδα φθέγγονται, μικτὴν δέ τινα ἐξ ἀμφοῖν, ἧς ἐστιν ἡ πλείων Αἰολίς, τοῦτο μόνον ἀπολαύσαντες ἐκ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπιμιξιῶν, τὸ μὴ πᾶσι τοῖς φθόγγοις ὀρθοεπεῖν ...

'The language spoken by the Romans is neither utterly barbarous nor absolutely Greek, but a mixture, as it were, of both, the greater part of which is Aeolic; and the only disadvantage they have experienced from their intermingling with these various nations is that they do not pronounce their sounds properly (...).'

Dionysius' view on the nature of the Latin language plays a crucial role in his history of early Rome: it is the linguistic argument that supports the main thesis of the work (especially of its first book), namely that the Romans are direct descendants of the Greeks. According to Dionysius, the Greeks arrived in several groups in Italy, in the

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[63] *Thuc.* 50.409,13. Most scholars think that Caecilius of Caleacte is one of the οὐκ ἄδοξοι σοφισταί to whom Dionysius refers, but we know that Cicero expressed the view that Dionysius attributes to these 'reputable critics'. Many scholars are surprised that Dionysius does not mention Cicero, whereas his colleague Caecilius of Caleacte compared Cicero with Demosthenes: see Delcourt (2005) 29-30.

[64] *Orat. Vett.* 3.6,1-7.

[65] *Ant. Rom.* 1.6.2; 1.7.3 (see section 1.4 n. 134). Many other Roman writers are mentioned in other passages. In *Ant. Rom.* 1.14.1., Varro is mentioned.

[66] On Dionysius' knowledge of Latin, see Rhys Roberts (1900) 442, Rhys Roberts (1910) 48, Gabba (1991) 4, Rochette (1997) 231-233 and Delcourt (2005) 28-30. On the influence of Latin on Dionysius' Greek, see Marin (1969), who distinguishes five types of Latinisms in Dionysius' Greek: (a) specific terminology pertaining to typical Roman institutions (e.g. *curia*, κουρία), (b) dates of the Roman calendar (e.g. ἐν μηνὶ Φεβρουαρίῳ, 'in February'), (c) names of Roman persons and places (e.g. *Aventinus*, Αὐεντῖνος), (d) common Roman words (e.g. *lustrum*, Λοῦστρον), and (e) grammatical constructions that are typical of Latin (e.g. the use of ὥσπερ ... οὕτως as the Latin *ita ... ut*). On Dionysius' Latinisms, see also Lebel (1976) 80.

[67] *Ant. Rom.* 1.90.1. The translation is by Cary. Whereas the rest of this study focuses on Dionysius' views on language in his rhetorical works, section 2.4 is based on his *Antiquitates Romanae*. It is in general useful to study Dionysius' historical and rhetorical works together (cf. Gabba [1991] 4). Dionysius' ideas on the relationship between Greek and Latin (only expressed in the *Antiquitates Romanae*) are of course highly relevant to a study on his views on language.

period before and directly after the Trojan War.[68] He argues that the Greeks of his time should not look down on the origins of Rome, because the founders of that city *were* in fact Greeks (see also section 1.2).[69] Various scholars have pointed out that by his identification of Romans and Greeks and his presentation of Rome as the revival of classical Athens Dionysius accepts and supports the new order of the Augustan empire, in which Greeks and Romans are integrated into a genuinely Graeco-Roman world.[70] Dionysius' theory on the Greek origin of the Romans can be interpreted as a political contribution to the integration of Greeks and Romans in the Roman Empire: for the Greeks it would of course be easier to accept being ruled by a Greek than by a barbarian people. Dionysius' linguistic argument on the Latin language is thus part of his wider theory on the origin of the Roman people, which is closely related to his interpretation of the bicultural world in which he lived.[71]

Dionysius is not the only author who argues that Latin is partly derived from Aeolic Greek. In the first century BC, there were several grammarians who shared Dionysius' views.[72] One of them was Philoxenus of Alexandria (active in Rome), who may have been the first to advance the theory on the Aeolic origin of the Latin language (see section 1.4).[73] He wrote a treatise Περὶ τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων διαλέκτου (*On the Dialect of the Romans*), in which he used the absence of the dual from both

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[68] The first of these groups consisted of the Aborigines, who were Arcadians (*Ant. Rom.* 1.11.1-4). In a later period, the Pelasgians, inhabitants of Thessaly, joined the Aborigines (*Ant. Rom.* 1.17.1). Next, Evander brought a group of Arcadians to Rome, 'the sixtieth year before the Trojan war' (*Ant. Rom.* 1.31.1). Then, another Greek expedition, guided by Heracles, came to Italy from the Peloponnese (*Ant. Rom.* 1.34.1-2). Finally, Aeneas and his fellow Trojans fled from Troy to Italy (*Ant. Rom.* 1.45.1). Dionysius argues that the Trojans were originally also a Greek people (*Ant. Rom.* 1.61-62). In *Ant. Rom.* 1.89.1-2, Dionysius summarises the various Greek groups who were the original inhabitants of Rome, 'a Greek city' (Ἑλλάδα πόλιν). In later times, many barbarian tribes came to Rome (*Ant. Rom.* 1.89.3), such as the Opicans, Marsians, Samnites, etc., which explains (according to Dionysius) the fact that Latin is a mixture of Greek and barbarian languages. On the importance of Arcadia in Dionysius' concept of the Roman origins, see Delcourt (2005) 130-156.

[69] *Ant. Rom.* 1.5.1. In *Ant. Rom.* 1.4.2, Dionysius rejects the views of certain ignorant Greeks who believe that Rome, being founded by barbarians, attained the dominion of the world through unjust fortune (τύχην ἄδικον). On Dionysius' opponents (possibly the historian Timagenes) and their anti-Roman sentiments, see Baumann (1930) 22-25, who compares similar polemical passages in Polybius and Livy. See also Crawford (1978) 193, Gabba (1991) 191-192 and Hidber (1996) 76.

[70] For the literature, see section 1.2.

[71] Dionysius' presentation of the past (in particular his view on the Greek origins of Rome) shows his positive attitude towards the Roman rulers of his time. According to Bowie (1974), this attitude may be contrasted to the way in which the Greeks of the Second Sophistic presented their past. However, Gabba (1982) 64 and Schmitz (1999) 85 point out that we hardly find any traces of anti-Roman sentiments in the Second Sophistic. Gabba argues that even in that period, the focus on the classical period may be explained 'as an exaltation of Greek glory within the framework of an acceptance of Rome's empire'.

[72] On the grammarians who mention the theory of Aeolic Latin, see Gabba (1963), Dubuisson (1984) and Sluiter (1993) 133-135.

[73] On Philoxenus and his works, see Wendel (1941) and Theodoridis (1976) 2-14.

Aeolic and Latin as an argument for the dependence of these two languages. More specifically, he argued that the forms of the dual are used neither by the Aeolians, nor by the Romans, 'who are colonists of the Aeolians' (οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι ἄποικοι ὄντες τῶν Αἰολέων).[74] The younger Tyrannion, who was active in the Augustan age, presumably defended the same theory in a treatise Περὶ τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς διαλέκτου (*On the Roman Dialect*).[75] There is uncertainty about the authorship. The Suda attributes the work to Tyrannion, but we do not know whether this was the elder or the younger one, though most scholars think that it was the younger Tyrannion (also named Diocles).[76] In any case, this grammarian argued that the Roman dialect is not αὐθιγενής (native) but derived from Greek. We may assume that Tyrannion agreed with Philoxenus' views on the Aeolic origin of Latin. Dubuisson lists some later Greek grammarians who seem to have defended the same theory.[77] Their contemporary Roman colleagues also believed that Latin and Greek were related. Lucius Aelius Stilo Praeconinus explained Latin words by deriving them from Greek words.[78] His student Varro not only discussed the etymological relationship between Latin and Aeolic words in his work *De lingua latina*, but he also composed a separate work *De origine linguae latinae* (*On the Origin of the Latin Language*), which he dedicated to Pompeius.[79]

There are two recurring arguments in discussions of the Aeolic origin of the Latin language. First, the absence of the dual in both Aeolic and Latin; second, the similarity between the Latin letter *u* and the Aeolic digamma (Ϝ). Quintilian says that Latin uses the Aeolic digamma (*Aeolicum digammon*).[80] Dionysius of Halicarnassus points out that the lands where the Greek Pelasgians once settled are in his time still called Οὐέλια (*Velia*), 'in accordance with the ancient form of their language' (κατὰ

[74] Philoxenus fr. 323 Theodoridis. On this fragment, see also Dubuisson (1984) 60 and Rochette (1997) 225.
[75] Tyrannion fr. 63 Haas.
[76] For Haas (1977) 98 and Rawson (1985) 69, both possibilities remain open. Wendel (1943) 1820, Dubuisson (1984) 60-61 and Rochette (1997) 224 assign the work to the younger Tyrannion. On both grammarians named Tyrannion, see Wendel (1943).
[77] Apart from Philoxenus and the younger Tyrannion,. Dubuisson (1984) 60-61 mentions Hypsicrates of Amisus, Seleucus, Apion and Claudius Didymus. See also Rochette (1997) 258-263.
[78] Lucius Aelius Stilo fr. 21 *GRF*. On this grammarian, see Suetonius, *De grammaticis* 3.2 with the commentary by Kaster (1995).
[79] For Varro's Aeolic etymologies of Latin words, see *De lingua latina* 5.25-26; 5.96; 5.101-102. For *De origine linguae latinae*, see Varro fr. 295 *GRF*. Cf. Gabba (1963) 189-190. Dahlmann (1932) 30-31 points out that Varro does not go as far as the Greek grammarians: he derives only a few Latin words directly from Greek. 'Er folgt also, wenn mann so will, eher der latinistischen als der anderen damals in Rom florierenden gräzistischen Richtung, die möglichst alles Lateinische griechisch erklärte in dem Glauben, daß Lateinische sei ein äolischer Dialekt.'
[80] Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* 1.4.8; cf. *Inst. orat.* 1.7.26. On Quintilian's views on the differences between Greek and Latin, see Fögen (2000) 170-177.

τὸν ἀρχαῖον τῆς διαλέκτου τρόπον).[81] He adds that many ancient Greek words begin with the syllable ου, written as one letter Ϝ, which corresponds to the Latin *u*.[82] Dionysius may have been influenced by the theories of Philoxenus or the younger Tyrannion, who was his contemporary fellow citizen.[83]

Just like Dionysius, Varro seems to have connected his linguistic observations on the relationship between Latin and Aeolic with a theory about the (partly) Greek origin of the Roman people: 'when Evander and the other Arcadians came to Italy, they sowed the Aeolic language into the barbarians.'[84] It has been suggested that Pompeius (the addressee of Varro's *De origine linguae latinae*), who had connections with several Greek intellectuals, played a special role in the dissemination of this kind of theory.[85] It is possible that Augustus also supported the propagation of similar ideas in order to unite the Greeks and Romans in his empire. If so, Greek intellectuals may have contributed to a Roman act of propaganda: grammarians provided linguistic arguments that supported the theory of the Greek origin of Latin, which in its turn confirmed the politically important idea that the Romans and Greeks were really one people. In this way, linguistic theory may have given a political answer to two aspects of the urgent problem of integration. On the one hand, the Greeks would more easily accept their Roman rulers if they were Greek descendants. On the other hand, the Romans would be happy that they were not longer considered to be 'barbarians'. The traditional Greek division of the world into two types of people, Greeks and barbarians, became a problem when the Romans developed their powerful empire.[86] In the first instance, Romans were considered to be barbarians, and they even called themselves *barbari*.[87] In later times, two alternative classifications were invented in order to save the Romans from their pejorative qualification: either the Romans were

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[81] *Ant. Rom.* 1.20.2-3.

[82] *Ant. Rom.* 1.20.3: σύνηθες γὰρ ἦν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις Ἕλλησιν ὡς τὰ πολλὰ προτιθέναι τῶν ὀνομάτων, ὁπόσων αἱ ἀρχαὶ ἀπὸ φωνηέντων ἐγίνοντο, τὴν ⟨ου⟩ συλλαβὴν ἑνὶ στοιχείῳ γραφομένην. τοῦτο δ' ἦν ὥσπερ γάμμα διτταῖς ἐπὶ μίαν ὀρθὴν ἐπιζευγνύμενον ταῖς πλαγίοις, ὡς Ϝελένη καὶ Ϝάναξ καὶ Ϝοῖκος καὶ Ϝέαρ καὶ πολλὰ τοιαῦτα. 'For it was the custom of the ancient Greeks generally to place before those words that began with a vowel the syllable ου, written with one letter (this was like a gamma, formed by two oblique lines joined to the one upright line), as Ϝελένη, Ϝάναξ, Ϝοῖκος, Ϝέαρ and many such words.' Translation by Cary.

[83] Baumann (1930) 21 and Hurst (1982) 852 consider the possibility that the younger Tyrannion influenced Dionysius' views on Latin.

[84] Varro fr. 295 *GRF*: Εὐάνδρου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων Ἀρκάδων εἰς Ἰταλίαν ἐλθόντων ποτὲ καὶ τὴν Αἰολίδα τοῖς βαρβάροις ἐνσπειράντων φωνήν.

[85] See Sluiter (1993) 135. On Pompeius' contacts with Greek intellectuals, see Anderson (1963) and Crawford (1978) 203-204. Pompeius died in 48 BC, long before Dionysius of Halicarnassus arrived at Rome. But it may be relevant to recall that Dionysius' correspondent Cn. Pompeius Geminus may have been connected to Cn. Pompeius Magnus: see section 1.4.

[86] See Dubuisson (1984) 55-57 and Sluiter (1993) 133-134.

[87] Plautus refers to Romans as *barbari*: see Dubuisson (1984) 56.

a third group, besides Greeks and barbarians (the *tertium genus* theory), or they were Greeks themselves. According to the latter option, the traditional bipartition of the world into Greeks and barbarians could be maintained. The linguistic theory on the similarity between Aeolic and Latin supplied an important argument for the latter worldview.

2.5. Philosophy of language in Dionysius' *On Composition*?

In section 2.3, I discussed some aspects of the relationship between words, thoughts and extra-linguistic referents as treated in Dionysius' rhetorical works. The present section will focus on a related problem in Dionysius' *On Composition*, which concerns his ideas on the connection between names (ὀνόματα) and things (πράγματα). Scholars have suggested that in three different chapters of his treatise Dionysius expresses views on this topic. His formulations in those passages seem to betray philosophical influence. The three passages have puzzled modern scholars, because Dionysius appears to defend two incompatible views within one treatise, namely an arbitrary relation between names and words on the one hand (*Comp.* 18), and a natural correctness of words on the other hand (*Comp.* 16).[88] A third passage (*Comp.* 3) has been considered even internally inconsistent.[89] I will argue that these passages, when interpreted within their rhetorical context, are not incompatible with each other, but fully consistent. Further, I will show that it is in fact doubtful whether Dionysius expresses any belief at all concerning the philosophical subject of the correctness of words. These passages should first and foremost be understood as part of Dionysius' rhetorical instruction on several aspects of composition.

First, I will briefly cite the three relevant statements that Dionysius seems to make on the relation between names and things, and I will mention the inconsistencies that modern interpreters have observed in these remarks (section 2.5.1). Next, I will raise some objections to the modern interpretations (section 2.5.2). Finally, I will attempt to interpret the three passages within their rhetorical context (sections 2.5.3, 2.5.4, 2.5.5), in order to demonstrate that the three statements are in fact not incompatible.

[88] *Comp.* 18.74,2; *Comp.* 16.62,9-12. See Schenkeveld (1983) 89.
[89] *Comp.* 3.14,11-12. See Schenkeveld (1983) 90.

2.5.1. The alleged inconsistency in Dionysius' views on names and things

One of Dionysius' statements that have been interpreted as expressing ideas on the relation between ὀνόματα and πράγματα is found in a passage in *Comp.* 16, which deals with the use of mimetic words:[90]

μεγάλη δὲ τούτων ἀρχὴ καὶ διδάσκαλος ἡ φύσις ἡ ποιοῦσα μιμητικοὺς καὶ θετικοὺς[91] ἡμᾶς τῶν ὀνομάτων οἷς δηλοῦται τὰ πράγματα κατά τινας εὐλόγους καὶ κινητικὰς τῆς διανοίας ὁμοιότητας·

'The great source and teacher in these matters is nature, who prompts us to imitate and to coin words, by which things are designated according to certain resemblances, which are plausible and capable of stimulating our thoughts.'

Schenkeveld interprets these words in the following way: 'These words accord with the Stoic view that originally language is an exact replica of things signified, and that when composing names the namegiver acted in a precise way, be it that here we, not an imaginary name-giver, are said to do so.'[92] I will later come back to this text and Schenkeveld's interpretation. For the moment, I only observe that Schenkeveld's final words seem to be important: Dionysius is not referring to an original name giver, but to us (ἡμᾶς): *we* can express the things that we are talking about by the use of certain mimetic words.[93] The second statement that is relevant to our topic is found in Dionysius' discussion of rhythm (*Comp.* 18):[94]

τὰ γὰρ ὀνόματα κεῖται τοῖς πράγμασιν ὡς ἔτυχεν.
'For names have been assigned to things in a haphazard way.'[95]

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[90] *Comp.* 16.62,9-12.
[91] With F, I read καὶ θετικούς. These words are omitted in P, and Usener deletes them. However, I do not think that without these words (ἡ φύσις ἡ ποιοῦσα μιμητικοὺς ἡμᾶς τῶν ὀνομάτων) the text gives the desired sense. The meaning must be 'nature, making us imitators [of things] and [thereby] coiners of words': see my explanation in section 2.5.3.
[92] Schenkeveld (1983) 89. See also Allen (2005) 29 n. 25. Schenkeveld's presentation of the Stoic view ('that originally language is an exact replica of things signified') is a simplification. The very first words were indeed onomatopoeic; this principle produced only a very few words; other words were formed by various other principles: see Allen (2005) 16-17 (the only extant source is Augustine, *De dialectica* 6).
[93] Just as we imitate things on a higher level in the combination of words: *mimesis* plays a role not only in the ἐκλογή (selection), but also in the σύνθεσις (composition) of words: see *Comp.* 20.
[94] *Comp.* 18.74,2.
[95] This is Usher's translation, which is similar to the translations of Rhys Roberts ('for names have been attached to things in a haphazard way') and Aujac ('car les noms sont donnés n'importe comment aux choses'). I will argue, however, that Dionysius' words should be translated differently (see section 2.5.4). I would suggest something like the following: 'For [it cannot be helped that] things have the

Here one might think that Dionysius contradicts his earlier statement (*Comp.* 16 above), where he discussed words imitating the things that they refer to. Schenkeveld says: 'This idea is the very opposite of the first one: ὡς ἔτυχεν versus κατά τινας εὐλόγους ὁμοιότητας.[96] This second opinion may have been taken from a Peripatetic source (...). We must not imagine that between ch. 16 and ch. 18 Dionysius has changed his mind; on the contrary, he only reproduces what he has read, without realizing its implications.'[97] Other scholars share Schenkeveld's assumption that Dionysius makes a mistake in *Comp.* 18. Goudriaan calls it an 'uitglijder' ('a slip'), and Aujac also thinks that Dionysius' statement in *Comp.* 18 is incompatible with that in *Comp.* 16: 'Denys, après avoir dit ailleurs que les mots étaient imitation des choses, et imposés par la Nature (par ex. 16, 1-2), semble ici faire du langage un produit du hasard et de la convention.'[98]

Dionysius' earlier statement about mimetic words (*Comp.* 16) has been thought to express the same idea as a remark in *Comp.* 3. In that passage, he explains that, in his famous story of 'Gyges and Candaules', Herodotus has used very simple and common words:[99]

ἀνεπιτήδευτα γάρ ἐστι καὶ ἀνέκλεκτα, οἷα ἡ φύσις τέθηκεν σύμβολα τοῖς πράγμασιν.[100]

'These [i.e. the words] have not been carefully contrived and selected, but are such labels as nature has fixed to things.'

The word σύμβολα may remind us of Peripatetic philosophy, according to which names are conventional 'tokens', whose meaning is fixed by convention. Aristotle states that 'spoken utterances are symbols (σύμβολα) of affections in the soul, and written things are symbols of spoken utterances.'[101] In another text, Aristotle states

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names that they have'. In other words, one cannot avoid using certain words (although they contain ugly sounds or rhythms), because if one refers to a certain object, one will have to use the name that is normally used for that object.

[96] Schenkeveld here ignores the words καὶ κινητικὰς τῆς διανοίας.

[97] Schenkeveld (1983) 89.

[98] Goudriaan (1989) 246 (cf. also 157), and Aujac & Lebel (1981) 126 n. 1.

[99] *Comp.* 3.14,11-12. See Schenkeveld (1983) 90.

[100] The subject of the sentence is τὰ ὀνόματα (the words), to be supplied from the preceding sentence (see section 2.5.3 for the full passage).

[101] Aristotle, *Int.* 16a3-9: Ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, καὶ τὰ γραφόμενα τῶν ἐν τῇ φωνῇ. A σύμβολον is a 'token', whose meaning is fixed by agreement between certain parties. Cf. Manetti (1993) 71-72, Whitaker (1996) 9-13, Sluiter (1997) 190-192 and Weidemann (1996^2) 180: 'Symbole sind die stimmlichen Aüßerungen — genauer gesagt: die

that words are tokens (σύμβολα) for things.[102] Dionysius' remark would then partly correspond to the Aristotelian view on words, but Schenkeveld thinks that the use of ἡ φύσις in the same phrase agrees more with the statement about mimetic words in *Comp.* 16: in both cases, Dionysius would be referring to nature as 'the originator of language'.[103] Because he assumes that the reference to nature is based on Stoic ideas, Schenkeveld draws the following conclusion concerning Dionysius' words οἷα ἡ φύσις τέθηκεν σύμβολα τοῖς πράγμασιν (*Comp.* 3): 'One may wonder whether this expression betrays a Peripatetic source, — the use of σύμβολα certainly leads us to think so — and in that case, confusion between Peripatetic and Stoic views seems complete.'[104]

Is it possible to solve this problem? In other words, can we interpret Dionysius' statements in such a way that they are not incompatible? I intend to show that this is indeed possible. At the very least, we should interpret Dionysius' alleged philosophical remarks within their rhetorical context. Dionysius is not a philosopher, and we should pay attention to the purposes of the relevant passages within the treatise *On Composition*. Before I discuss the alleged philosophical statements within the context of Dionysius' rhetorical theory, I will first raise some objections to the modern interpretations just mentioned (section 2.5.2). Subsequently, I will discuss in more detail Dionysius' statements in *Comp.* 16 (section 2.5.3), *Comp.* 18 (section 2.5.4) and *Comp.* 3 (section 2.5.5).

2.5.2. Objections to modern interpretations

My objections to the modern interpretations of the three passages mentioned in the previous section are the following. First, it seems that interpreters of Dionysius do not always pay due attention to the different ways in which the word φύσις can be used.[105] The modern scholars who discuss Dionysius' views on ὀνόματα and

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sprachlichen Äußerungen der Stimme — insofern, als sie Zeichen sind, die ihre Bedeutung nicht von der Natur aus besitzen, sondern eine Uebereinkunft verdanken.'

[102] Aristotle, *Sophistici Elenchi* 165a6-8. The word πρώτων in Aristotle, *Int.* 16a6 also seems to imply that words are signs of thoughts 'in the first place' and of things in the second place; when we adopt this interpretation of the word πρώτων (Minio-Paluello's emendation for πρώτως or πρῶτον), the passage *Int.* 16a6-8 confirms the view (known from the *Sophistici Elenchi*) that words are labels for things (apart from labels for thoughts). Note that this interpretation is also possible with the adverbs πρώτως and πρῶτον, which have been transmitted in the MSS. On this problem, see Whitaker (1996) 17-23.

[103] Schenkeveld (1983) 90: 'The first opinion, that of φύσις as the originator of language, we find again in Comp. Verb. 3.14,11 ff.' It remains to be seen, however, whether Dionysius considers nature 'the originator of language'.

[104] Schenkeveld (1983) 90.

[105] On the complex problem of φύσις, see e.g. Holwerda (1955).

πράγματα fail to distinguish between ideas on the natural *correctness* of words on the one hand and views on the natural *origin* of words on the other hand. As Fehling and other scholars have pointed out, these are two distinct problems, which are often (both in antiquity and in modern time) confused with each other.[106] In fact, a conventional correctness of names does not exclude the possibility of a natural origin (see e.g. the view of Epicurus); and the idea of imposition (θέσις) by name givers can be combined with either a conventional or a natural correctness of names.[107] For this reason it is confusing when Usher, commenting on Dionysius' discussion of *onomatopoeia* in *Comp.* 16, seems to state that the Stoic philosophers thought that words had 'natural origins'.[108] In fact we do not know much about the Stoic views on the origin of words, but it is more probable that the Stoics assumed that one or more original name givers created language than that they thought of a natural origin.[109] In other words, it was θέσις (imposition), not φύσις, that originated language.[110] Apart from the two uses of the word φύσις mentioned so far, namely φύσις as opposed to θέσις (natural origin versus imposition) and φύσις as opposed to νόμος (natural correctness versus convention), there is a third usage, which seems to be particularly relevant to the passages under discussion. I mean the use of φύσις as opposed to τέχνη. I will argue that, in the passages from both *Comp.* 3 and 16, the word φύσις is used as opposed to τέχνη rather than to θέσις or νόμος.

My second objection to the modern interpretations of Dionysius' alleged 'philosophy of language' is a more general and methodological one. It seems that modern scholars who interpret Dionysius' observations on ὀνόματα do not pay sufficient attention to the context of his remarks. Aujac, Schenkeveld and Goudriaan detach the three statements in *Comp.* 3, 16 and 18 from their context, and they are more interested in

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[106] Fehling (1965). See also Sluiter (1997) 178-179, Schenkeveld (1999) 179, Gera (2003) 168-170, and Allen (2005) 18-20. In later antiquity, the two problems were confused to the extent that θέσις came to mean 'convention': Hermogenes' position in the *Cratylus*, which is characterised by συνθήκη ('convention') is wrongly described by the term θέσις. See Fehling (1965) 226-229.

[107] On Epicurus' ideas on the natural origin of language, see Sluiter (1997) 203-204 and Verlinsky (2005) and the literature mentioned there. On the views of Hermogenes and Cratylus in the *Cratylus*, a dialogue that does not deal with the origin of names but with the relationship between words and reality, see e.g. Sluiter (1997) 177-188; Schmitter (2000) lists the most important titles of the enormous amount of literature on the *Cratylus*. As Fehling (1965) 225 rightly emphasises, Hermogenes' defence of a conventional relationship between names and things does not imply any view on the origin of language.

[108] Usher (1985) 113 n. 3: '*Onomatopoeia*, the formation of words by natural association, (...) was also of especial interest to the Stoics, who related it to their doctrine of the natural origins of words.'

[109] On the Stoic views on the origin of language, see Sluiter (1990) 20-21 and Allen (2005).

[110] See Sluiter (1990) 20-21 and Schenkeveld (1999) 180: 'Definite texts on Stoic views on the origin of language are lacking because they probably paid little attention to this question. From their view that a fully rational correspondence between word and meaning existed it may follow that they favoured a conscious invention of language.' See also Allen (2005) 16-18.

the alleged 'source' that Dionysius has used in these passages (Platonic, Aristotelian or Stoic) than in the point that he is making himself.[111] My objection to this approach is mainly that it interprets Dionysius as someone who just copies and pastes his book together. Schenkeveld's suggestion that Dionysius 'only reproduces what he has read, without realizing its implications' ignores the fact that Dionysius' statements are directly relevant to the context of his theory of composition.[112] The idea that Dionysius merely copies earlier ideas and brings them together without adding anything useful is characteristic of nineteenth-century scholarship, but it has influenced a lot of more recent interpretations as well (see section 1.1). I will not follow this approach. Instead, I will now look more closely at the three passages cited above in order to understand how they fit into Dionysius' compositional theory.

2.5.3. Dionysius on mimetic words (*Comp.* 16)

The passage where Dionysius has been thought to express a Stoic theory on the relationship between names and things is part of *Comp.* 16: this passage concludes the discussion of μέλος (*Comp.* 14-16), one of the four means of composition (σύνθεσις). Dionysius has examined the phonetic values of the various letters (*Comp.* 14) and syllables (*Comp.* 15). Then, he states that great poets and prose-writers are aware of the different sound-effects of letters and syllables: 'they arrange their words by weaving them together with deliberate care, and with elaborate artistic skill they adapt the syllables and the letters to the emotions which they wish to portray.'[113] Thus Homer expresses the ceaseless roar of the seashore exposed to the wind (*Il.* 17.265: ἠιόνες βοόωσιν etc.), the greatness of the Cyclops' anguish and the slowness of his searching hands (*Od.* 9.415-416: Κύκλωψ δὲ στενάχων etc.), and he portrays Apollo's supplication 'when he keeps rolling before his father Zeus' (*Il.* 22.220-221, containing the word προπροκυλινδόμενος).[114] It is clear that Dionysius thinks that, in the Homeric lines that he quotes, the poet mimetically expresses the things that he describes, through the juxtaposition of certain sounds. According to Dionysius, 'there are countless such lines in Homer, representing (δηλοῦντα) length of time, bodily size, extremity of emotion, immobility of position, or some similar effect, by nothing more than the artistic arrangement of the syllables; and other lines are wrought in the

[111] See Aujac & Lebel (1981) 68 n. 2, Schenkeveld (1983) 89 and Goudriaan (1989) 157.
[112] Schenkeveld (1983) 89.
[113] *Comp.* 15.60,6-10: Ταῦτα δὴ καταμαθόντες οἱ χαριέστατοι ποιητῶν τε καὶ συγγραφέων τὰ μὲν αὐτοὶ κατασκευάζουσιν ὀνόματα συμπλέκοντες ἐπιτηδείως ἀλλήλοις, τὰ δὲ γράμματα καὶ τὰς συλλαβὰς οἰκείας οἷς ἂν βούλωνται παραστῆσαι πάθεσιν ποικίλως φιλοτεχνοῦσιν.
[114] *Comp.* 15.60,10-61,4. For ancient views on Homer as the creator of neologisms, see Gera (2003) 180.

opposite way to portray brevity, speed, urgency, and the like.'[115] He adds two more examples: in the first one, Homer describes Andromache halting her breath and losing control of her voice (*Il.* 22.476, containing the word γοόωσα); in the second one, he expresses the mental distraction and the unexpectedness of the terror of some charioteers beholding a fire (*Il.* 18.225: ἡνίοχοι δ' ἔκπληγεν etc.).[116] In both cases, it is the reduction of the number of syllables and letters' (ἡ τῶν συλλαβῶν τε καὶ γραμμάτων ἐλάττωσις) that causes the effect.[117] The latter explanation seems to be related to the modification of syllables through subtraction (ἀφαίρεσις), one of the categories of change that Dionysius has discussed in *Comp.* 6 (see section 4.3.1).[118] It seems then that Homer does not only coin new mimetic words (e.g. προπροκυλινδόμενος), but also adapts existing words in order to portray the things that he describes (e.g. by elision of δέ).[119]

Next, at the beginning of *Comp.* 16, Dionysius explains that there are two possibilities for poets and prose-writers who wish to use mimetic words: either they coin (κατασκευάζουσιν) these words themselves, or they borrow (λαμβάνουσιν) from earlier writers (for example Homer) 'as many words as imitate things' (ὅσα μιμητικὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστίν):[120]

Καὶ αὐτοὶ μὲν δὴ κατασκευάζουσιν οἱ ποιηταὶ καὶ λογογράφοι πρὸς χρῆμα ὁρῶντες οἰκεῖα καὶ δηλωτικὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων τὰ ὀνόματα, ὥσπερ ἔφην· πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν λαμβάνουσιν ὡς ἐκεῖνοι κατεσκεύασαν, ὅσα μιμητικὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστίν· ὡς ἔχει ταυτί

ῥόχθει γὰρ μέγα κῦμα ποτὶ ξερὸν ἠπείροιο.
αὐτὸς δὲ κλάγξας πέτετο πνοιῇς ἀνέμοιο.
αἰγιαλῷ μεγάλῳ βρέμεται, σμαραγεῖ δέ τε πόντος.
σκέπτετ' ὀιστῶν τε ῥοῖζον καὶ δοῦπον ἀκόντων.

[115] *Comp.* 15.61,5-10: μυρία ἔστιν εὑρεῖν παρ' αὐτῷ τοιαῦτα χρόνου μῆκος ἢ σώματος μέγεθος ἢ πάθους ὑπερβολὴν ἢ στάσεως ἠρεμίαν ἢ τῶν παραπλησίων τι δηλοῦντα παρ' οὐδὲν οὕτως ἕτερον ἢ τὰς τῶν συλλαβῶν κατασκευάς· καὶ ἄλλα τούτοις ἐναντίως εἰργασμένα εἰς βραχύτητα καὶ τάχος καὶ σπουδὴν καὶ τὰ τούτοις ὁμοιογενῆ.
[116] *Comp.* 15.61,10-17.
[117] *Comp.* 15.61,17-19.
[118] *Comp.* 6.29,14-30,12.
[119] It is difficult to determine which words Dionysius regards as shortened in *Iliad* 22.476 and *Iliad* 18.225: see Usher (1985) 112 n. 1.
[120] *Comp.* 16.61,20-62,8. Here and elsewhere, I translate μίμησις as 'imitation'. In general, μίμησις is 'representation' rather than 'imitation' (see Kardaun [1993]), but in the case of Dionysius' discussion of mimetic words, 'imitation' seems to be the better translation: words represent things according to certain 'resemblances' (ὁμοιότητας), i.e. the words sound just like the things to which they refer.

'Thus the poets and prose authors, on their own account, look at the matter they are treating and furnish it with the words which suit and illustrate the subject, as I said. But they also borrow many words from earlier writers, in the very form in which they fashioned them — as many words as imitate things, as is the case in these examples:[121]

> *With thunderous roar the mighty billow crashed upon the shore.*
> *And he with yelping cry flew headlong down the wind's strong blast.*
> *(The wave) resounds upon the mighty strand, the ocean crashes round.*
> *Alert, he watched for hissing arrows and for clattering spears.*'

Dionysius is still discussing the use of words that mimetically designate their underlying subject (ὑποκειμένων: for the term, see section 2.3). The Homeric lines that he quotes contain several mimetic words (ῥόχθει, κλάγξας, βρέμεται, σμαραγεῖ), whose onomatopoeic character is also mentioned in the Homeric scholia.[122] Whereas Dionysius previously quoted Homeric lines containing mimetic words that are produced by artistic treatment (κατασκευή), he now quotes some lines that contain words that later writers 'borrow from their predecessors' (παρὰ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν λαμβάνουσιν). Indeed, all the onomatopoeic words mentioned here are also found in later poets, such as Aeschylus, Pindar and Apollonius Rhodius. These later poets did not coin these mimetic words themselves, but they borrowed them from Homer.[123] The important thing to notice is that Dionysius is thinking of a very limited group of specific words, which writers borrow from each other: the word ὅσα (in ὅσα μιμητικὰ τῶν πραγμάτων ἐστίν) has a restrictive sense. Dionysius does not say that all words imitate the things that they signify: it is clear that he supposes that there is a distinct group of mimetic words that can be used for specific purposes. Therefore, this passage does not imply anything about the relationship between ὀνόματα and πράγματα in general. In the subsequent passage, nature (φύσις) comes in:[124]

μεγάλη δὲ τούτων ἀρχὴ καὶ διδάσκαλος ἡ φύσις ἡ ποιοῦσα μιμητικοὺς καὶ θετικοὺς[125] ἡμᾶς τῶν ὀνομάτων, οἷς δηλοῦται τὰ πράγματα κατά τινας εὐλόγους

[121] Homer, *Od.* 5.402; *Il.* 12.207; 2.210; 16.361.
[122] See Sch. Hom. *Iliad* 2.210a, 2.463c (βρέμεται, σμαραγεῖ); 16.361c (ῥοῖζος).
[123] For κλάγξας, see e.g. Aeschylus, *A.* 201; Pindar, *P.* 4.23. For ῥοχθεῖν, see e.g. Apollonius Rhodius 4.925. For βρέμεται, see e.g. Pindar, *N.* 11.7. For σμαραγεῖ, see e.g. Hesiod, *Th.* 679; Apollonius Rhodius 4.148; 4.1543. See further Aujac & Lebel (1981) 210.
[124] *Comp.* 16.62,9-63,3.
[125] Usener & Radermacher (1904) delete καὶ θετικοὺς, which is not found in P. However, this solution makes the Greek phrase incomprehensible; ἡ φύσις ἡ ποιοῦσα μιμητικοὺς ἡμᾶς τῶν ὀνομάτων would mean 'nature, making us imitators of words', but the context makes clear that Dionysius is dealing with words that imitate things: things are represented, not words. Therefore, I believe that we have to follow

καὶ κινητικὰς τῆς διανοίας ὁμοιότητας· ὑφ' ἧς ἐδιδάχθημεν ταύρων τε μυκήματα λέγειν καὶ χρεμετισμοὺς ἵππων καὶ φριμαγμοὺς τράγων πυρός τε βρόμον καὶ πάταγον ἀνέμων καὶ συριγμὸν κάλων καὶ ἄλλα τούτοις ὅμοια παμπληθῆ τὰ μὲν φωνῆς μηνύματα, τὰ δὲ μορφῆς, τὰ δὲ ἔργου, τὰ δὲ πάθους, τὰ δὲ κινήσεως, τὰ δ' ἠρεμίας, τὰ δ' ἄλλου χρήματος ὅτου δή· περὶ ὧν εἴρηται πολλὰ τοῖς πρὸ ἡμῶν, τὰ κράτιστα δ' ὡς πρώτῳ τὸν ὑπὲρ ἐτυμολογίας εἰσαγαγόντι λόγον, Πλάτωνι τῷ Σωκρατικῷ, πολλαχῇ μὲν καὶ ἄλλῃ μάλιστα δ' ἐν τῷ Κρατύλῳ.

'The great source and teacher in these matters is nature, who prompts us to imitate and to coin words, by which things are designated according to certain resemblances, which are plausible and capable of stimulating our thoughts. It is she who has taught us to speak of the bellowing of bulls, the whinnying of horses, the bleating of goats, the roar of fire, the beating of winds, the creaking of ropes, and a host of other similar imitations of sound, shape, action, feeling, movement, stillness, and anything else whatsoever. These matters have been discussed at length by our predecessors, the most important work being that of the first writer to introduce the subject of etymology, Plato the Socratic, especially in his Cratylus, but in many places elsewhere.'

At the beginning of this passage, Dionysius makes the transition from μίμησις as it is practiced by prose-writers and poets, Homer and his successors in particular, to the μίμησις that we (ἡμᾶς), human beings in general, apply in our natural (that is daily) language. In other words, he makes the transition from τέχνη to φύσις. In my opinion, the use of the word φύσις in this text should not be related to an alleged opinion on the natural origin of words, or on the natural correspondence between the form and meaning of words.[126] The thing that Dionysius wants to make clear is that the τέχνη of poets and prose-writers, who imitate the objects that they describe in the sounds of their words, finds a model in (human) φύσις, which makes that we 'naturally', that is usually (not technically) use imitative, onomatopoeic words, such as 'bellowing' or

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F, reading ἡ φύσις ἡ ποιοῦσα μιμητικοὺς καὶ θετικοὺς ἡμᾶς τῶν ὀνομάτων: 'nature, making us imitators [of things] and [thereby] coiners of words'. Strangely enough, Aujac & Lebel (1981) 114 follow Usener & Radermacher (and P) in printing ἡ φύσις ἡ ποιοῦσα μιμητικοὺς ἡμᾶς τῶν ὀνομάτων, whereas they translate 'la Nature, qui fait de nous des imitateurs, créant des mots'. There does not seem to be a parallel for the use of the word μιμητικός with a genitive case in that sense ('imitating through'), and therefore I think that the reading of F is to be preferred.

[126] Therefore, it does not seem correct to interpret φύσις here as 'the originator of language' (Schenkeveld [1983] 90). Cf. also Aujac & Lebel (1981) 126 n. 1: 'Denys, après avoir dit ailleurs que les mots étaient imitation des choses, et imposés par la Nature (par ex. 16, 1-2) (...).' In my opinion, Dionysius says nothing more than that one can create certain words that imitate things: we ourselves create those words, not nature. Nature is, however, our teacher in these matters, in that our natural use of onomatopoeic words is the model for the artistic composition of mimetic words.

'whinnying'. In the immediately preceding text, Dionysius does not use the term τέχνη itself, but he does use the word φιλοτεχνοῦσιν ('they arrange artistically') when referring to the artistic skill by which Homer and other poets compose their syllables and words.[127] In my view, the words μεγάλη δὲ τούτων ἀρχὴ καὶ διδάσκαλος ἡ φύσις provide a strong indication that φύσις is here used as opposed to τέχνη (rather than to νόμος or θέσις): τούτων refers (indirectly) to the τέχνη of Homer and his imitators, and μεγάλη δὲ τούτων ἀρχὴ καὶ διδάσκαλος ἡ φύσις (*Comp.* 16) appears to be nothing else but a Greek variant of the well known aphorism *natura artis magistra*, 'nature is the teacher of art.'[128] Like other ancient critics, Dionysius regularly refers to nature as the model for art (and stylistic writing): 'the greatest achievement of art (τέχνη) is to imitate nature (τὸ μιμήσασθαι τὴν φύσιν) (see section 5.2).[129]

Dionysius tells us, then, that nature (we might say human nature) causes us to produce mimetic words, which express things according to certain resemblances (ὁμοιότητας), 'which are plausible and stimulate our thoughts'. The idea seems to be that a mimetic word triggers a certain image in the mind, thus stimulating our thinking. The word ῥόχθει, for example, helps the listener to imagine the 'sparkling' of a wave, because it triggers a specific image in the mind (διάνοια). Dionysius mentions two categories of mimetic words that nature prompts us to coin. First, there are the purely onomatopoeic words that designate sounds, such as the bellowing of bulls, the whinnying of horses, the bleating of goats, the roar of fire, the beating of winds, the creaking of ropes, and so on. This type of words also appears in Augustine's discussion of the first words according to Stoic theory (see below): he mentions *tinnitus* (the clash of bronze), *hinnitus* (the whinnying of horses) and *balatus* (the bleating of sheep) as words that sound like the noise to which they refer.[130] But it seems that these are standard examples of onomatopoeic words, which are not necessarily related to Stoic theory. Having mentioned these onomatopoeic words, Dionysius lists a more general category of mimetic words, namely 'a host of other similar indications (μηνύματα) of sound, shape, action, feeling, movement, stillness, and anything else whatsoever.' Apparently, mimetic words comprise not only onomatopoeic words, but also 'a whole multitude' of other words. It is important, however, to observe the use of the word παμπληθῆ ('in their whole multitude', LSJ), which implies that Dionysius is not

[127] *Comp.* 15.60,10.
[128] For a discussion of Dionysius' search for a natural word order in *Comp.* 5, see De Jonge (2001) and section 5.3 of this study.
[129] *Is.* 16.114,12-13: τῆς τέχνης, ὅτι τὸ μιμήσασθαι τὴν φύσιν αὐτῆς μέγιστον ἔργον ἦν. See also *Comp.* 4.23,3-4; *Comp.* 5.23,13: see section 5.3.2. Cf. 'Longinus', *Subl.* 22.1.
[130] Augustine, *De dialectica* 6. See Sluiter (1990) 18 and Allen (2005) 16-17.

speaking about *all* words: there are 'very many' mimetic words, but nothing is said about the relationship between ὀνόματα and πράγματα in general. Although Dionysius mentions Plato's *Cratylus* as the first work in which the subject of etymology was discussed, he does not express any opinion about Cratylus' views on the natural correctness of names.

Etymology (ἐτυμολογία) was a subject in which the Stoics were particularly interested.[131] In my view, however, it is doubtful that Dionysius is referring here to the Stoic view on the *original*, mimetic relation between the form and meaning of the first words, as Schenkeveld argues.[132] Our knowledge of Stoic ideas on the correlation between the form and meaning of words is based on the relatively late accounts of Origen and Augustine.[133] The former tells us that, according to the Stoics, the first verbal sounds (πρῶται φωναί) imitate the things that they express (μιμουμένων τῶν πρώτων φωνῶν τὰ πράγματα). The latter describes various principles according to which words 'imitate' their meaning: apart from the onomatopoeic principle that applies to the first words (e.g. *tinnitus*, *hinnitus* and *balatus*), there are several other ways in which words imitate their meaning: for example, words can affect the sense of hearing just as the quality that they designate affects another sense (e.g. *mel*, 'honey'); Augustine mentions several other principles of imitation.[134] Because many words became gradually corrupt, it is the task of etymology to retrace the original meaning of those words. Dionysius, however, does not discuss 'first words'. He refers neither to original name givers, nor to the gradual corruption of words. He is only interested in the ways in which *we* (ἡμᾶς) create words and mimetically portray certain things by the combination of sounds: this happens both in our daily language (φύσις) and in our stylistic writing (τέχνη). In my view, the references to Plato's *Cratylus* and to etymology do not imply any opinion about the natural relation between names and things in general.[135] Dionysius mentions the *Cratylus* only as a text in which Plato discussed the mimetic qualities of certain words.[136]

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[131] See Herbermann (1996[2]) 356, Allen (2005) 14-15 and Long (2005) 36.
[132] Schenkeveld (1983) 89.
[133] Origen, *Cels.* 1.24 (= *FDS* 643); Augustine, *De dialectica* 6.
[134] See Allen (2005) 16-17. Allen (2005) argues that the Stoic views on the natural relationship between the form and meaning of words differ in important respects from the views that are discussed in Plato's *Cratylus*. According to his interpretation of the Stoic texts, 'mimetic accuracy' is not the reason why words are correct, because there are many other principles of imitation involved (see Augustine, *De dialectica* 6). If Allen is right, then we will have even more reason to doubt that Dionysius' passage (which mentions the *Cratylus* but no Stoics) is taken from a Stoic source.
[135] The term 'etymology' remained to be used by grammarians, although they did not necessarily suppose that the discovery of the original form of a word conveyed its 'natural' meaning: use of etymology did not imply any opinion in the debate on the natural or conventional correctness of words. See Herbermann (1996[2]) 359: 'Diesen anspruchsvollen Namen [sc. ἐτυμολογία, "Lehre vom Wahren"] aber behielt die Beschäftigung mit den Bennenungsgründen schließlich auch dann noch bei, als der

2.5.4. Dionysius on mixing mean and beautiful rhythms (*Comp.* 18)

The second passage in which modern scholars have recognised a statement on the relationship between ὀνόματα and πράγματα is part of the discussion of rhythm, the second of the four means of composition (*Comp.* 17-18). In *Comp.* 17, Dionysius has started his careful analysis of all types of rhythms that one can use in a text: some of these rhythms are beautiful, whereas others are ugly (see also section 6.3). Examples of dignified and impressive rhythms are the spondee (−−) and the molossus (−−−). Mean and unimpressive rhythms are for example the choree (⏑⏑⏑) and the effeminate amphibrach (⏑−⏑).[137] Because each word has its rhythmical value, we have to arrange the words that we use in the best way, mixing the inferior with the more dignified:[138]

εἰ μὲν οὖν ἔσται δύναμις ἐξ ἁπάντων κρατίστων ῥυθμῶν συνθεῖναι τὴν λέξιν, ἔχοι ἂν ἡμῖν κατ' εὐχήν· εἰ δ' ἀναγκαῖον εἴη μίσγειν τοῖς κρείττοσι τοὺς χείρονας, ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν γίνεται (τὰ γὰρ ὀνόματα κεῖται τοῖς πράγμασιν ὡς ἔτυχεν), οἰκονομεῖν αὐτὰ χρὴ φιλοτέχνως καὶ διακλέπτειν τῇ χάριτι τῆς συνθέσεως τὴν ἀνάγκην ἄλλως τε καὶ πολλὴν τὴν ἄδειαν ἔχοντας· οὐ γὰρ ἀπελαύνεται ῥυθμὸς οὐδεὶς ἐκ τῆς ἀμέτρου λέξεως, ὥςπερ ἐκ τῆς ἐμμέτρου.

'Now if it proves possible for us to compose in a style which consists entirely of the finest rhythms, our ideal may be realised; but if it should be necessary to mix the worse with the better, as happens in many cases (for it cannot be helped that things have the names that they have),[139] we must manage our subject-matter artistically and disguise the constraint under which we are working by the elegance of our composition; and we can cultivate this elegance the more effectively because here we have great freedom, since no rhythm is excluded from non-metrical language, as some are from metrical language.'

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namensprechende Anspruch, nämlich der, daß die Entdeckung der Benennungsgründe zu wahren Aussagen über das Wesen des Benannten führe, nicht mehr als ihre eigentliche Triebfeder fungierte, als aus der philosophischen Disziplin eine Disziplin der Grammatik bzw. Sprachlehre geworden war. Unabhängig von seinem Standpunkt in dem alten Disput um den φύσει- oder νόμῳ- resp. θέσει Status der Wörter und unabhängig auch davon, ob er überhaupt einen diesbezüglichen Standpunkt einnimmt, versucht der antike Grammatiker (...) die Benennungsgründe bzw. die Ursprüng der Bildung der einzelnen Wörter darzulegen.'

[136] Note Dionysius' words περὶ ὧν εἴρηται πολλὰ τοῖς πρὸ ἡμῶν: the words περὶ ὧν refer to the types of mimetic words discussed in the preceding passage. In *Comp.* 16.63,3-66,8, Dionysius goes on citing Homeric lines that portray things by the use and combination of certain letters and syllables.

[137] See Rhys Roberts (1910) 6, who lists all rhythms discussed by Dionysius with the qualities attributed to them.

[138] *Comp.* 18.73,19-74,6.

[139] I have altered Usher's translation ('for names have been assigned to things in a haphazard way').

Dionysius' argument is the following: some words have a beautiful rhythmical structure, whereas other words are characterised by a mean rhythm. It would be ideal if we were able to compose a text entirely consisting of dignified rhythms. In reality, however, this is impossible in most cases, because τὰ ὀνόματα κεῖται τοῖς πράγμασιν ὡς ἔτυχεν: 'for names have been attached to things as they happen to have been attached.'[140] In other words: 'it cannot be changed that things have the names that they have.' Therefore, in some cases we are forced to use a certain word with an ignoble rhythm, for example when we cannot find a synonym with a more dignified rhythmical structure. In that case we cannot avoid using the ugly rhythm, but we can compensate it by mixing it with (and hiding it between) more beautiful rhythms. Earlier in his treatise, Dionysius has given similar advice with regard to the use of words that do not have a beautiful sound: just like words with an undignified rhythm, words that are built from unattractive sounds should be 'mixed' with more euphonious words. According to Dionysius, Homer has applied this technique in his catalogue of ships, where he has hidden the inelegant names of Boeotian cities such as Hyria, Mycalessus and Graia:[141]

εἰ μὲν οὖν ἐγχωροίη πάντ' εἶναι τὰ μόρια τῆς λέξεως ὑφ' ὧν μέλλει δηλοῦσθαι τὸ πρᾶγμα εὔφωνά τε καὶ καλλιρήμονα, μανίας ἔργον ζητεῖν τὰ χείρω· εἰ δὲ ἀδύνατον εἴη τοῦτο, ὥςπερ ἐπὶ πολλῶν ἔχει, τῇ πλοκῇ καὶ μίξει καὶ παραθέσει πειρατέον ἀφανίζειν τὴν τῶν χειρόνων φύσιν, ὅπερ Ὅμηρος εἴωθεν ἐπὶ πολλῶν ποιεῖν. εἰ γάρ τις ἔροιτο ὄντιν' οὖν ἢ ποιητῶν ἢ ῥητόρων, τίνα σεμνότητα ἢ καλλιλογίαν ταῦτ' ἔχει τὰ ὀνόματα ἃ ταῖς Βοιωτίαις κεῖται πόλεσιν Ὑρία καὶ Μυκαλησσὸς καὶ Γραῖα καὶ Ἐτεωνὸς καὶ Σκῶλος καὶ Θίσβη καὶ Ὀγχηστὸς καὶ Εὔτρησις καὶ τἆλλ' ἐφεξῆς ὧν ὁ ποιητὴς μέμνηται, οὐδεὶς ἂν εἰπεῖν οὐδ' ἥντιν' οὖν ἔχοι· ἀλλ' οὕτως αὐτὰ καλῶς ἐκεῖνος συνύφαγκεν καὶ παραπληρώμασιν εὐφώνοις διείληφεν ὥςτε μεγαλοπρεπέστατα φαίνεσθαι πάντων ὀνομάτων·

'If then, it were possible that all parts of speech by which a certain subject was to be expressed should sound beautiful and be elegantly phrased, it would be an act of madness to look for the inferior ones. But supposing this to be impossible, as in many cases it is, we must try to cover up the natural defects of the inferior letters by interweaving, mixing and juxtaposing, and this is precisely Homer's practice in many passages. For instance, if someone were to ask any poet or rhetorician what grandeur

[140] The word κεῖσθαι ('to lie') is of course also used as the passive perfect of τιθέναι ('to be placed'). If we adopt the latter interpretation for the text under discussion, this would mean that Dionysius refers to a process of imposition (θέσις), but it would not imply anything about the relationship between names and things (natural or conventional).
[141] *Comp.* 16.66,18-67,14.

or elegance there is in those names which have been given to the Boeotian towns Hyria, Mycalessus, Graea, Eteonus, Scolus, Thisbe, Onchestus, Eutresis, and the rest of the list which the poet records, no one would be able to say that they possessed any such quality at all. But Homer has so beautifully interwoven them and dispersed them among supplementary words that sound pleasant that they appear as the most impressive of all names.'

Dionysius proceeds to quote *Iliad* 2.494-501, in order to show that Homer, when he is forced (ἀναγκασθείς) to use words that are not naturally beautiful (οὐ καλὰ τὴν φύσιν), abolishes their unpleasant effect (δυσχέρειαν) by mixing them with beautiful words.[142] The similarity between the passage quoted above (*Comp.* 16.66,18-67,14) and the passage in which Dionysius discusses the blending of beautiful and ugly rhythms (*Comp.* 18.73,19-74,6) is striking. The same argument is applied to the theory of μέλος ('melody', the first element of composition) on the one hand, and ῥυθμός (rhythm, the second element) on the other. In both cases, Dionysius seems to elaborate a theory of Theophrastus, who (as Dionysius tells us) defined which words are naturally beautiful and which words are mean and paltry.[143] Where Theophrastus thought that 'from paltry and mean words neither fine poetry nor prose will be produced', Dionysius recommends that these words be mixed with the beautiful words.[144] Furthermore, Dionysius uses the division between beautiful and mean words not only for words with attractive or unattractive sounds, but also for words with attractive or unattractive rhythms. Ideally, we would only use the beautiful words when composing a text, but that is often impossible. If we are forced to use the paltry words, we should intermingle them with the more dignified. Thus, Homer is forced to mention the names of the Boeotian towns in his catalogue of ships. The names that have been given to these cities (τὰ ὀνόματα ἃ ταῖς Βοιωτίαις κεῖται πόλεσιν) could not be avoided. Therefore, Homer has intermingled these names with more beautiful words and παραπληρώματα (filler words) (see section 4.3.2).[145]

This analysis of the context of Dionysius' remark (τὰ γὰρ ὀνόματα κεῖται τοῖς πράγμασιν ὡς ἔτυχεν) shows that he does not intend to say more than that things have the names that they happen to have. Philosophy of language is not the issue in

[142] *Comp.* 16.67,15-68,6.
[143] *Comp.* 16.66,8-18 (= Theophrastus fr. 688 Fortenbaugh). This text is closely related to 'Demetrius', *Eloc.* 173-175 (= Theophrastus fr. 687 Fortenbaugh). See Fortenbaugh (2005) 281-286. It seems plausible that Theophrastus divided words merely according to the euphonic quality of their letters, whereas Dionysius applies this theory also to rhythmic quality of words.
[144] *Comp.* 16.66,16-17. Fortenbaugh (2005) 285 rightly argues that Dionysius' recommendation to mix beautiful and ugly words cannot be Theophrastus' advice.
[145] On the theory of 'parapleromatic' words, see also Sluiter (1997b).

this passage, at least not in the sense of a theory of the natural or conventional relation between names and things: a statement on the 'haphazard' distribution of names to things would not have any function in the context of *Comp.* 18. Consequently, there is no inconsistency between this passage and other statements by Dionysius, and we should not speak of a 'slip' or a 'contradiction'.[146] Dionysius' statements in *Comp.* 16.62,9-12 and *Comp.* 18.74,2 are perfectly compatible: in the former passage Dionysius discusses the creation and use of a distinct group of mimetic words in order to express the things we discuss by the sounds of our words; in the latter passage he advises mixing ugly rhythms with beautiful ones in order to hide the inferior rhythms of unavoidable words. Both recommendations perfectly fit into Dionysius' theory of composition, without contradicting each other.

It may be helpful to add some comment on the expression ὡς ἔτυχε. Part of the modern confusion concerning Dionysius' statement on ὀνόματα and πράγματα in *Comp.* 18 seems to result from the standard translation of the words ὡς ἔτυχε(ν) as 'haphazardly' or 'at random'. Although these translations are possible interpretations of the words in some contexts, they are not in all cases correct. The basic sense of the words ὡς ἔτυχε(ν) is 'as it happened (to be)': something occurs or is done without planning.[147] The verb τυγχάνω does not point to 'randomness' or 'arbitrariness' (although this can be the interpretation of the words in some particular cases) but to the fact that there is no control or consciousness involved.[148] The phrase ὡς ἔτυχεν applies to a situation in which things are just as they happen to be: nobody can consciously change anything about that situation. Apart from the passage discussed above, there are seven passages in Dionysius' works where the phrase ὡς ἔτυχε(ν) occurs.[149] An analysis of these passages makes it clear that it is very unlikely that in *Comp.* 18, Dionysius uses the expression ὡς ἔτυχεν as opposed to something that is 'natural', as Aujac and Schenkeveld think. As a matter of fact, Dionysius in two cases uses the expression ὡς ἔτυχεν in combination with φύσις, whereas there seems to be a clear contrast between something that is (or is done) ὡς ἔτυχεν on the one hand, and something that is artful, conscious, and technical on the other hand.[150] I cannot discuss all these passages here, but two of them will sufficiently illustrate my point.

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[146] Goudriaan (1989) 246 ('uitglijder') and Schenkeveld (1983) 89.
[147] See LSJ s.v. τυγχάνω I.A.3.
[148] See also Sicking (1971) 111 and 115 n. 104.
[149] *Ant. Rom.* 1.56.5; *Lys.* 8.16,3-16 (= *Imit.* fr. X Usener, 216,7-14; fr. 7 Battisti); *Is.* 16.114,7-17; *Dem.* 40.214,20-215,8; *Comp.* 3.8,20-9,2.
[150] In *Lys.* 8.16,3-16 (= *Imit.* fr. X Usener, 216,7-14; fr. 7 Battisti) and in *Is.* 16.114,7-17, ὡς ἔτυχεν is associated with φύσις (see below). In *Is.* 16.114,7-17, ὡς ἔτυχεν is also contrasted with τέχνη. In *Dem.* 40.214,20-215,8, ὡς ἔτυχεν is likewise contrasted with a conscious and artistic process: the words are not placed ὡς ἔτυχεν or fit together ἀπερισκέπτως, in an 'inconsiderate' or 'thoughtless' way; no, the process of composition is characterised by 'deciding' (διακρίνουσα), 'paying attention' (σκοποῦσα)

When discussing the qualities of Lysias' style, Dionysius points out that his type of composition is ἀποίητος (not artificial) and ἀτεχνίτευτος (artless): it makes the impression 'that it has not been composed deliberately and artistically, but spontaneously and as it happens to be': ὅτι ἀνεπιτηδεύτως καὶ οὐ κατὰ τέχνην, αὐτομάτως δέ πως καὶ ὡς ἔτυχε σύγκειται.[151] It is clear that Dionysius does not mean that the words in Lysias' texts are combined 'at random' (the point is not that the words can take *any* position in the sentence), but that the composition is just as it would be in common language. A text that is composed ὡς ἔτυχε is not composed 'at random' or 'fortuitously', but it is written in the style that corresponds to everyday language, that is 'naturally' or (seemingly) 'spontaneously'. The special thing of Lysias' style is that it appears to change nothing about the normal way of expression: that is the reason why Dionysius thinks that a student who wishes to become an imitator of nature (φύσεως μιμητὴς γίνεσθαι βουλόμενος) should study Lysias. The idea that the phrase ὡς ἔτυχεν brings out is elsewhere clearly formulated as follows: '[Lysias] achieves elegance not by changing (διαλλάττειν) the language of everyday life, but by reproducing (μιμήσασθαι) it.'[152] Unlike Lysias, the orator Isaeus makes the impression that 'not a single statement was spontaneous or unconsidered, not even when it describes the events as they actually happened (ὡς ἔτυχε γενόμενα), but that everything was artfully designed and contrived to mislead'.[153] Isaeus makes the impression that he is always artfully shaping his composition, even when he is describing certain things as they actually happened. The γενόμενα to which Dionysius here refers are not 'random' events, but the relevant events that have to be reported in the narrative of a speech.

Before we conclude our discussion of the expression ὡς ἔτυχεν, there are two passages from other authors that deserve our attention, because they are part of a context in which the relation between names and things is discussed. In the first book of his *Bibliotheca*, Dionysius' contemporary Diodorus Siculus describes the pre-history of men, in a famous passage that may be based on the ideas of Democritus.[154] According to Diodorus, men developed speech together, 'agreeing with one another upon symbols (σύμβολα) for each of the underlying things (τῶν ὑποκειμένων)'.[155] In

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and 'taking very great care' (πολλὴν σφόδρα ποιουμένη φροντίδα). In *Comp.* 3.8,20-9,2, beautiful conscious arrangement of words is contrasted with expression that is ἀνεπιστάτως δὲ καὶ ὡς ἔτυχεν ῥιπτουμένη ('thrown off without control and inattentively').

[151] *Lys.* 8.16,3-16 (= *Imit.* fr. X Usener, 216,7-14; fr. 7 Battisti).

[152] *Lys.* 4.13,8-10: τὸν δὲ κόσμον οὐκ ἐν τῷ διαλλάττειν τὸν ἰδιώτην, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ μιμήσασθαι λαμβάνει.

[153] *Is.* 16.114,14-17: μηδὲν ὑπολαβεῖν αὐτοφυῶς καὶ ἀπραγματεύτως λέγεσθαι μηδ' εἴ τινα ὡς ἔτυχε γενόμενα εἴρηται, ἐκ κατασκευῆς δὲ πάντα καὶ μεμηχανημένα πρὸς ἀπάτην ἢ ἄλλην τινὰ κακουργίαν.

[154] On this passage, see Vlastos (1946), Gera (2003) 159-166 and the literature mentioned there.

[155] Diodorus Siculus 1.8.3: καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους τιθέντας σύμβολα περὶ ἑκάστου τῶν ὑποκειμένων.

various parts of the inhabited world, different groups of men created language in this way, each group developing its own words, which resulted into the existence of a variety of languages and nations:[156]

τοιούτων δὲ συστημάτων γινομένων καθ' ἅπασαν τὴν οἰκουμένην, οὐχ ὁμόφωνον πάντας ἔχειν τὴν διάλεκτον, ἑκάστων ὡς ἔτυχε συνταξάντων τὰς λέξεις· διὸ καὶ παντοίους τε ὑπάρξαι χαρακτῆρας διαλέκτων καὶ τὰ πρῶτα γενόμενα συστήματα τῶν ἁπάντων ἐθνῶν ἀρχέγονα γενέσθαι.

'But since groups of this kind arose over every part of the inhabited world, not all men had the same language, inasmuch as every group composed their words as they happened to do. This is the explanation of the present existence of every conceivable kind of language, and, furthermore, out of these first groups to be formed came all the original nations of the world.'

According to Diodorus' account, the relation between names and things is conventional: words are tokens (σύμβολα), the product of an agreement between human beings.[157] Words could have any form, for there is no natural relation between words and objects. And, as a matter of fact, words are not everywhere the same, for every society composes its own words ὡς ἔτυχε: in this context, we can indeed translate (that is, interpret) the expression as 'arbitrarily'.[158] The main point is, however, that in the formation of words there was no general principle involved that caused the words to be the same in every part of the world. The basic meaning of ὡς ἔτυχε is still the same: various groups of human beings coined words as they happened to do without planning. The notion of arbitrariness is not part of the meaning of the phrase ὡς ἔτυχε itself, but it is a connotation attached to it as a result of the use of the expression in this context. In a similar way, the expression ὡς ἔτυχε is used in a scholion on Dionysius Thrax, which deals with etymology:[159]

Ἐτυμολογία οὖν, ὡς ἄν τις εἴποι ἀληθολογία· οὐ γὰρ ὡς ἔτυχεν ἐξ ἀρχῆς αἱ Ἑλληνικαὶ λέξεις ἐπετέθησαν ἑκάστῳ πράγματι, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ τὸν νοῦν ἀναπτύσσοντας ἐξευρίσκειν, ...

[156] Diodorus Siculus 1.8.4. Translation adapted from Oldfather.
[157] Cf. Gera (2003) 163-164.
[158] Cf. Gera (2003) 164: 'arbitrarily, by chance'.
[159] Sch. D. Thrax, *G.G.* I 3, 14,26-29.

'Etymology is, as one could say, "the stating of the truth". For from the beginning the Greek words were not assigned to each thing without planning, but through the invention by men who disclosed their meaning (...).'

In this text, it is stated that the imposition of words was a conscious process by name givers who disclosed the meaning of words in their forms.[160] Again, the words ὡς ἔτυχεν describe a situation that is contrasted with a situation in which control and consciousness are involved: the words were not formed in an uncontrolled way (as they happened to occur), but by a conscious process. In this case, the result is that the forms of words correspond to their meaning, so that etymology can do its work.[161]

Although the passage from Diodorus Siculus and the scholion on Dionysius Thrax use the words ὡς ἔτυχεν in a context in which the relationship between words and things is explicitly discussed, I do not think that these texts should influence our reading of Dionysius' remark in *Comp.* 18. I have argued that the basic meaning of ὡς ἔτυχεν ('as it happened to be') applies to all passages discussed above. There is no reason to believe that the expression ὡς ἔτυχεν as such refers to language as 'un produit du hasard et de la convention'.[162] Besides, chance ('hasard') and convention are two entirely different things. Both Diodorus and the scholion on Dionysius Thrax describe the process of name giving as a conscious act of imposition; the former thinks that the relation between names and things is arbitrary, whereas the latter argues that there is an original connection between word and meaning. But neither of these texts speaks of 'chance' ('hasard'). In Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the context is entirely different, as we have seen. His point is nothing more than that it cannot be helped that things have the names that they happen to have, so that one can not avoid using certain words despite their unattractive rhythmical structure. When composing a text, one should mix the unavoidable ugly words with the more attractive ones.

2.5.5. Dionysius on the pleasing combination of common words (*Comp.* 3)

In the previous sections, I have argued that in *Comp.* 16 and 18 Dionysius does not present any philosophical view on the relationship between names and things. There remains one passage to be discussed, namely *Comp.* 3.14,11-12. At the beginning of his treatise *On Composition*, Dionysius tells us that there are two subdivisions of the treatment of style, namely selection of words (ἐκλογή) and composition

[160] On similar ancient definitions of etymology, see Herbermann (1996^2) 357-358.
[161] A similar text is Sch. D. Thrax, *G.G.* I 3, 470,36-471,5.
[162] Aujac & Lebel (1981) 126 n. 1. Fehling (1965) 224 argues that the terms ὡς ἔτυχε and *fortuito* are characteristic of ancient accounts of the evolutionary development of language.

(σύνθεσις).[163] Selection of words is prior in 'order' (τάξει), but composition is prior in 'potency' (δυνάμει).[164] In *Comp.* 3, Dionysius claims that the combination of words is more important and effective than the choice of words (see also section 7.2).[165] He intends to prove his claim by analysing two passages, one in prose and one in poetry. The two examples are *Odyssey* 16.1-16 (Odysseus in Eumaeus' hut) and Herodotus 1.8-10 (the famous conversation between Candaules and Gyges).[166] In his analysis of these texts, Dionysius distinguishes between three aspects, namely the subject matter or thoughts, the words, and the composition. His argument is in both cases that neither the subject matter (πράγματα) nor the words (ὀνόματα) are the cause of beauty; it is the composition (σύνθεσις) that has produced the pleasing form of these passages. Dionysius focuses on the contrast between the commonplace words on the one hand and the beautiful composition on the other, but in both cases he implies that the character of the words corresponds to that of the subject matter: the passage from the Odyssey portrays 'minor happenings from everyday life' (πραγμάτι' ἄττα βιωτικά).[167] The passage from Herodotus (in which Candaules asks Gyges to see his wife naked) describes 'an incident that is not only undignified and unsuitable for artistic embellishment, but also insignificant and hazardous and closer to ugliness than to beauty.'[168] Nevertheless, the story has been told 'with great dexterity' (δεξιῶς): in fact, 'it is better to hear the incident described than to see it done': the latter words clearly allude to Candaules' words that 'men trust their ears less readily than their eyes'.[169] The attractiveness of the passage is due neither to the subject matter (which is unsuitable and insignificant), nor to the selection of words (which are common and artless), nor to the Ionic dialect (which Dionysius changes into Attic —

[163] *Comp.* 1.5,14-17.
[164] *Comp.* 2.8,14-15.
[165] *Comp.* 3.9,17-21. Cf. *Comp.* 3.9,6-9: ἕτεροι δ' εὐκαταφρόνητα καὶ ταπεινὰ λαβόντες ὀνόματα, συνθέντες δ' αὐτὰ ἡδέως καὶ περιττῶς πολλὴν τὴν ἀφροδίτην τῷ λόγῳ περιέθηκαν. 'Other writers have taken words that are easily despised and humble, and by arranging them in a pleasing and striking way they have succeeded in investing their discourse with great beauty.' Görler (1979) demonstrates that this theme (*ex verbis communis cacozelia*) is very influential in the Augustan period, both in Greek classicistic theory (Dionysius) and in Roman poetic practice (Vergil). See also Freudenburg (1993) 139.
[166] *Comp.* 3.10,1-12,3; *Comp.* 3.12,4-15,2.
[167] *Comp.* 3.10,5-6.
[168] *Comp.* 3.12,14-16: πρᾶγμα οὐχ ὅτι σεμνὸν ἢ καλλιλογεῖσθαι ἐπιτήδειον, ἀλλὰ καὶ παιδικὸν καὶ ἐπικίνδυνον καὶ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ καλοῦ ἐγγυτέρῳ.
[169] *Comp.* 3.12,17-18: κρεῖττον γέγονεν ἀκουσθῆναι λεγόμενον ἢ ὀφθῆναι γινόμενον. Compare Herodotus 1.8.2 (cited in *Comp.* 3.13,4-5): ὦτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποις ὄντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν. Dionysius borrows Candaules' opposition between eyes and ears (seeing and hearing), but he turns things around: Herodotus' composition makes the incident better to hear described (ἀκουσθῆναι) than to see done (ὀφθῆναι), whereas Candaules thought that it would be better for Gyges to see his wife than to hear somebody describing her. If we extrapolate the comparison, Dionysius' allusion will make Herodotus' story as attractive as Candaules' wife. Goudriaan (1989) 198 thinks that Dionysius' remark on ὀφθῆναι echoes Aristotelian ideas on ὄψις, but he does not notice the allusion to Herodotus.

see section 7.3.3):[170] consequently, the cause of the attractiveness can be nothing else but the composition. After he has quoted Herodotus 1.8-10, Dionysius wants the reader to agree that it is not the words, but the composition that has made the story so elegant:[171]

οὐκ ἂν ἔχοι τις οὐδὲ ἐνταῦθα εἰπεῖν, ὅτι τὸ ἀξίωμα καὶ ἡ σεμνότης τῶν ὀνομάτων εὔμορφον πεποίηκε τὴν φράσιν· ἀνεπιτήδευτα γάρ ἐστι καὶ ἀνέκλεκτα, οἷα ἡ φύσις τέθηκεν σύμβολα τοῖς πράγμασιν· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἥρμοττεν ἴσως κρείττοσι χρήσασθαι ἑτέροις. ἀνάγκη δὲ δή που, ὅταν τοῖς κυριωτάτοις τε καὶ προσεχεστάτοις ὀνόμασιν ἐκφέρηται, τὰ νοήματα μηδὲν σεμνότερα εἶναι, ἢ οἷά ἐστιν.[172] ὅτι δὲ οὐδὲν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐστι σεμνὸν οὐδὲ περιττόν, ὁ βουλόμενος εἴσεται μεταθεὶς οὐδὲν ὅ τι μὴ τὴν ἁρμονίαν. πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παρὰ τούτῳ τῷ ἀνδρὶ τοιαῦτά ἐστιν, ἐξ ὧν ἄν τις τεκμήραιτο, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν τῷ κάλλει τῶν ὀνομάτων ἡ πειθὼ τῆς ἑρμηνείας ἦν, ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ συζυγίᾳ. καὶ περὶ μὲν τούτων ἱκανὰ ταῦτα.

'Here again, no one can say that it is the dignity and grandeur of the words that has given the style its pleasing form. These have not been carefully contrived and selected, but they are such labels as nature has fixed to things: indeed, perhaps it would not have been fitting to use other more striking words. It must necessarily be the case, in fact, that whenever they are expressed in the most common and appropriate words the thoughts are not more dignified but remain such as they are. That there is no grand or striking word in the present passage, anyone who wishes may discover by changing nothing but the arrangement. There are many passages like this in this author, as in Homer, from which one may conclude that the appealing quality of his style is derived, after all, not from the beauty of the words, but from their combination. That is sufficient on this subject.'

Herodotus could have used more beautiful words in order to present the banal story in a more elevated way; but he has not done that, for the character of the words corresponds to that of the ideas. Neither the subject matter, nor the words, nor the dialect are responsible for the beauty of the passage: the persuasiveness of the style (ἡ πειθὼ τῆς ἑρμηνείας) lies solely in the combination (τῇ συζυγίᾳ) of the words.[173] As

[170] On the change (metathesis) of the Ionic dialect into Attic, see also De Jonge (2005b) 476.
[171] *Comp.* 3.14,9-15,2.
[172] The text seems to be corrupt here. The MSS (P,F) have σεμνότερον. I follow the reading of Aujac & Lebel (1981) 68-69: τὰ νοήματα μηδὲν σεμνότερα εἶναι, ἢ οἷά ἐστιν. Usener prints τὰ νοήματα μηδὲν σεμνότερ' εἶναι, ἢ οἷά ἐστιν ⟨ἐκεῖνα⟩ ('the thoughts are not more dignified than such as the words are').
[173] For a discussion of this passage, see also Goudriaan (1989) 197-198. On Dionysius' use of συζυγία, see Pohl (1968) 7.

we have seen above (section 2.5.1), Schenkeveld supposes that in this text (οἷα ἡ φύσις τέθηκεν σύμβολα τοῖς πράγμασιν), there is an inconsistency between the idea of φύσις 'as the originator of language' and the use of the word σύμβολα, which seems to imply that words are conventional tokens.[174] He relates the word φύσις to the Stoic views on the natural correctness of words, but he thinks that the term σύμβολα must have been taken from a 'Peripatetic source'. However, from our analysis of *Comp.* 16 (section 2.5.3) we found that it may be more helpful to interpret φύσις as the opposite of τέχνη rather than as the opposite of νόμος or θέσις. The contrast between nature and art is a recurring theme in Dionysius' rhetorical works, and it seems to be relevant in this passage as well.[175] The artistic merits of the story of 'Gyges and Candaules' cannot be found in the choice of words, but in the composition, for the words themselves are artless (ἀνεπιτήδευτα) and have not been selected with studious care (ἀνέκλεκτα): they are just the most common words, by which one normally calls the things by their proper names. They are κυριωτάτοις τε καὶ προσεχεστάτοις, 'the most proper and appropriate words'.[176] Given the emphasis on the inartistic character of Herodotus' words, Dionysius' use of the word φύσις in this passage presumably does not indicate more than that the words used by Herodotus are those of everyday language. In the preceding discussion of the passage from the *Odyssey*, where Dionysius uses exactly the same argument, he points out that 'the whole passage is woven together from the most commonplace, humble words, such as might have come readily to the tongue of a farmer, seaman or artisan, or anyone else who takes no trouble to speak well'.[177] In my view, the term φύσις summarises exactly the latter idea: it is not 'the originator of language', but rather 'human nature' that has assigned the proper (not metaphorical or poetic) words to things. Another passage in which Dionysius uses the word φύσις in a similar way is the following text from the treatise *On Demosthenes*, where Dionysius describes the style of Thucydides (see also section 5.2):[178]

τουτὶ δ' ἔστι τὸ μὴ κατ' εὐθεῖαν ἑρμηνείαν ἐξενηνέχθαι τὰ νοήματα μηδ', ὡς ἔστι τοῖς ἄλλοις σύνηθες λέγειν, ἁπλῶς καὶ ἀφελῶς, ἀλλὰ ἐξηλλάχθαι καὶ

[174] Schenkeveld (1983) 90.
[175] On Dionysius' use of the contrast between φύσις amd τέχνη, see Untersteiner (1959) and section 5.2 of this study. On φύσις in general, see Holwerda (1955).
[176] Aristotle, *Po.* 21.1457b1-6 defines κύριον ὄνομα as a word used by all members of a community (ἕκαστοι), whereas a 'loan word' (γλῶττα) is used by outsiders (ἕτεροι). For Dionysius' use of κύριον ὄνομα (a word used in its proper sense), see section 3.6.1.
[177] *Comp.* 3.11,10-14: διὰ γὰρ τῶν εὐτελεστάτων καὶ ταπεινοτάτων ὀνομάτων πέπλεκται πᾶσα ἡ λέξις, οἷς ἂν καὶ γεωργὸς καὶ θαλαττουργὸς καὶ χειροτέχνης καὶ πᾶς ὁ μηδεμίαν ὡραν τοῦ λέγειν εὖ ποιούμενος ἐξ ἑτοίμου λαβὼν ἐχρήσατο.
[178] *Dem.* 9.145,6-11.

ἀπεστράφθαι τὴν διάλεκτον ἐκ τῶν ἐν ἔθει καὶ κατὰ φύσιν εἰς τὰ μὴ συνήθη τοῖς πολλοῖς μηδ' ὡς ἡ φύσις ἀπαιτεῖ.

'This [i.e. the most characteristic aspect of Thucyides' style] is that the thoughts are not expressed by direct means and not in a simple and plain way, as is the normal practice of other writers, but that the language is removed and turned away from what is customary and natural (κατὰ φύσιν) towards expressions that are unfamiliar to most people and different from what nature (ἡ φύσις) demands.'

In my view, the φύσις in this passage is the same φύσις that appears in *Comp.* 3. In both cases, 'nature' corresponds to the normal and familiar usage of human beings, which is contrasted to a technical and artificial use of language (words and constructions). When Dionysius states that 'nature demands' (ἡ φύσις ἀπαιτεῖ) a certain use of language, he presumably does not have a philosophical construct in mind. In my view, the same interpretation holds for his remark that 'nature has fixed labels to things' (ἡ φύσις τέθηκεν σύμβολα τοῖς πράγμασιν).

As far as the term σύμβολα is concerned, I am less certain. I do not believe that the use of this word implies the use of a 'Peripatetic source', but it is possible that it echoes Aristotelian ideas: we recall that Aristotle said that 'spoken utterances are symbols (σύμβολα) of affections in the soul'.[179] This could mean that Dionysius believes that the relation between ὀνόματα and πράγματα depends on convention, a view that we encountered in our discussion of his contemporary Diodorus Siculus (section 2.5.4).[180] But perhaps we should not read too much into the use of the word σύμβολα: in the first century BC. many originally philosophic terms had become part of the general intellectual discourse of the time, and it seems that a certain philosophical terminology could also be used as a mere dressing of scholarship. Besides, the word σύμβολον was used in a wider sense than that of the Aristotelian 'token'. The terms σύμβολον and συμβολαῖον both occur rather frequently in Dionysius' works. My impression is that Dionysius normally uses σύμβολον with a general sense of 'sign', 'mark' or 'guarantee', and that it does not necessarily imply a preceding human agreement or convention.[181] I think that Dionysius may have selected the term σύμβολον in *Comp.* 3 because of its philosophical flavour. In any case, on the basis of the passage discussed above, we should not draw too many

[179] Aristotle, *Int.* 16a3-9: see section 2.5.1 above, where I also referred to Aristotle, *Sophistici Elenchi* 165a6-8 (words as tokens for things).
[180] Cf. Whitaker (1996) 9-10.
[181] See e.g. *Dem.* 50.237,8 (μορφῆς σύμβολον); *Ant. Rom.* 2.8.4 (τεκμήριον and σύμβολον as 'proofs' or 'indications').

conclusions regarding Dionysius' views on the origin of language or his ideas on the natural or conventional relation between words and things. As I have pointed out above, the passage in which the allegedly philosophical remark occurs deals primarily with a stylistic evaluation of Herodotus' 'Gyges and Candaules': Dionysius' argument is that the pleasing character of this story results from the pleasing combination of common words.

2.5.6. No inconsistency in Dionysius' views on language

Having analysed three passages of his work *On Composition*, I have shown that a good understanding of Dionysius' works in general, and of his alleged philosophical statements on language in particular, must be underpinned by a careful interpretation of the context of his theories. Dionysius is not a philosopher, and it is not his purpose to teach his audience about the nature of language. In *De compositione verborum*, Dionysius wishes to teach his addressee and other readers about the means and aims of composition. It is true that he makes use of a lot of views on language that were developed in other language disciplines, such as philosophy, grammar and rhetoric. However, the suggestion that Dionysius 'only reproduces what he has read, without realizing its implications' is incorrect and ignores the internal cohesion of Dionysius' theory of composition.[182] The three statements on *onomata* that have been discussed in this chapter all contribute to Dionysius' rhetorical theory, and should not be interpreted out of context. The alleged inconsistency between two views on the relation between ὀνόματα and πράγματα (a Stoic view on the one hand and an Aristotelian view on the other) appears to rest on a misinterpretation of Dionysius' statements and their context. We have to conclude that 'philosophy of language' was not a matter of great concern to Dionysius of Halicarnassus in his work *On Composition*. At the same time, however, we may conclude that as a teacher of rhetorical theory he was not so careless and ignorant as some modern scholars have thought he was.

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have collected and analysed a number of Dionysius' more general ideas on the nature of language. We have seen that, according to Dionysius, language is characterised by a hierarchical structure. Language is an atomic system, which is reflected in the architectural character of written discourse. Dionysius was of course aware of the different languages spoken in the world. He himself was bilingual, and

[182] Schenkeveld (1983) 89.

he adopted a common theory on the Greek (Aeolic) origin of the Latin language. We have observed that this theory is closely related to Dionysius' views on the Greek origin of the Roman people and the unity of the Graeco-Roman world under August. I have also explored Dionysius' views on the relation between language, thought and reality. Despite some modern claims, Dionysius does not ignore the importance of the meanings underlying words. His stylistic analyses build on the important idea that the meaning that underlies a certain utterance can be expressed in several ways, with different degrees of accuracy, clarity and embellishment. Finally, I have discussed three passages from the treatise *On Composition* in which Dionysius has been thought to offer contradicting explanations of the relation between names and things. These passages deal primarily with different aspects of composition theory, and they scarcely allow any conclusions about Dionysius' philosophical views to be drawn. I have argued that a contextual approach to Dionysius' ideas is more fruitful than the approach that portrays Dionysius as a stupid copyist. Now that we have detected the importance of this principle, we are ready to turn to Dionysius' more technical ideas on language.