Ancient Greece: Alexandrian philology

• Famous Alexandrian libraries established in early 3rd c. BC (Mouseion & Serapeion)
• Goal: to compare existing manuscripts of earlier texts (p.ex. Homer) and establish the putative original; scholarly community!
• which parts of a text are original and which are later interpolations?
• which parts have been correctly transmitted and which have been garbled?
  → Textual criticism
Ancient Greece: Alexandrian philology
Ancient Greece: Alexandrian philology

- Standardisation of alphabet
- Introduction of punctuation and accent marks
- Symbols to indicate problems in text
- Commentaries on text
- Scholarly discussions of issues like the identity of Homer (not much remains)
- Glossaries of difficult words (archaic, dialectal)
- Notes on points of morphology
- Standardised "editions" of important texts
Ancient Greece: Alexandrian philology

Dionysios Thrax (~100 BC): "Grammar is the practical study of the normal usage of poets and prose writers. It has six parts."

• competence in reading aloud observing prosody
• interpretation with attention to figures of speech
• explanation of difficult words and allusions
• investigation of the true meaning (*etymologia*) of words (probably Plato-like)
• analysis of analogy (probably morphology)
• criticism of poems, the finest branch of subject
Ancient Greece: Alexandrian philology

• basically textual criticism, closer to literary studies than to anything else
• philology in 19th century European sense
• grammar an ancillary discipline (though, of course, branches of science were not yet compartmentalised)
• seminal work, very important for future of humanities as academic disciplines and of European culture in general
Ancient Greece: Summary

• Philosophical interest: language and reality / truth / knowledge
  – meaning, syllogisms, sentence types
    • Plato, Aristotle, Stoics
• Practical interest: effective use of language
  – rhetoric, poetry, style, metaphor
    • Sophists, Aristotle, rhetoricians
• Philological interest: language as the raw material of poetry & prose
  – spelling, punctuation, morphology
    • Alexandrian scholars (Aristophanes, Zenodotos...)
Rome: Grammar as a discipline

Patterned entirely on Greek models
But develops in new direction: school grammar, organised in a methodical way
Language seen "from outside" (learning Greek!)
Almost nothing remains from the crucial period (1st–2nd c. BC)
Twenty-odd grammars from 3rd–5th c. AD
Plus: Varro’s *De lingua latina* (1st c. BC) and Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* (1st c. AD)
Also Greek grammars in a similar tradition
Rome: M. T. Varro’s *De lingua latina*

- One of the greatest scholars of Antiquity
- Lengthy treatise, only 6 books out of 25 remain, in a single corrupt manuscript
- Unlike anything else on language!
- Philosophically grounded discussion of grammar and vocabulary; general principles (we would now call it theoretical linguistics)
- Analogy vs. anomaly (~ inflectional vs. derivational morphology — outstanding!)
Excursus: schooling in Antiquity

- basic literacy & numeracy
- reading some outstanding pieces of literature (Vergil’s Aeneid; in Greece Homer); grammar
- no compartmentalisation of subjects: ~history, geography, mythology all through literature
- higher education:
  - rhetoric (esp. in Rome)
  - philosophy (esp. in Greece)
  - law
  → verbal skills, consciousness of language
Rome: Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*

- *Training of the public speaker*
- Includes discussion of what is / should be taught to children
- One of the most important things: grammar
  - letters/sound (litterae)
  - word classes
  - figures of speech ("virtues and vices" of speech)
- Also includes brief historical recapitulation of grammar as a discipline; word classes, categories etc. (see handout)
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

- Semantically oriented grammars
  - aka Ars (scil. ‘art’, tekhnē), Schulgrammatik
- Formally oriented grammars
  - aka Regulæ

(none of these names are very good since in
the manuscripts anything can be called
anything, if there is a title at all, but there is
a tradition of using them in the literature)
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

- Semantically oriented grammars
  - rigorously hierarchical structure
  - systematic structure within chapters
  - emphasis on semantic – rather than formal – categories
  - (probably) aimed at native speakers
  - goal: to appreciate and imitate style of great poets & writers (Vergil, Cicero, Sallust...)
  - most famous: Donatus (mid-4th c. AD; widely used until 16th c.)
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

• Semantically oriented grammars; Donatus
  – Ars minor (Shorter grammar)
    • only parts of speech
    • dialogical form (very unusual!)
  – Ars maior (Longer grammar)
    • Book 1: sound, letter, syllable, feet, accent, punctuation
    • Book 2: noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, participle, conjunction, preposition, interjection
    • Book 3: barbarisms, solecisms, other faults, metaplasms, schemes, tropes
      – this type of info unknown in Greek grammars of the time
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

• Semantically oriented grammars; Donatus
  – Ars minor (Shorter grammar): see handout
    Example: *nomen*
    • definition
    • main types & properties listed
    • properties explained in detail
    • examples
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

• Formally oriented grammars
  – (probably) written for non-natives (more and more of them from 1\textsuperscript{st} c. BC on!); \textit{Regulae} ~ Gr \textit{Kanones}
  – all survive from originally non-Latin speaking territories (North Africa, Palestine...)
  – teachers’ attempts to organise basic morphological information for memorisation
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

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  – teachers’ attempts to organise basic morphological information for memorisation
  – long lists of similar forms arranged in some way
  – fundamental educational problem! (we have no idea how elementary Latin was taught to "Barbarians" and Greeks)
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

• **Priscian(us)**: most famous and influential grammarian (along with Donatus); Constantinople, ~ 500 AD

• Famous teacher (at advanced level); wide-ranging work; also close to Emperor

• Grammatical works basis of advanced humanities education until end of Middle Ages
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

Priscian’s *Partitiones*... *(Analyses of the twelve first lines of Vergil’s Aeneid)*

- detailed analysis of select verse lines
  - metrical
  - grammatical
  - lexical

- rare glimpse into classroom pedagogy!
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

Priscian’s *Institutio de nomine*... (*Instruction on the noun, pronoun and verb*)

- short but very systematic formal description of the four inflecting parts of speech
- successful classification into declensions and conjugations (rather than alphabetic order...)
- very influential later because of its practicality
Rome: Extant grammars (late period)

Priscian’s *Institutiones grammaticae*  
(*Grammatical doctrine*)

- lengthy combination of semantically oriented and formal type of grammar, advanced
- highly theoretical; Greek presumed
- first ever discussion of Latin syntax! (modelled on the Greek Apollonios Dyskolos, 2\textsuperscript{nd} c. AD)
- Standard material at medieval universities
Christianity and language: St Augustine

354–430; highly learned teacher of rhetoric from North Africa; convert to Christianity, then bishop of Hippo (now Annaba, Algeria)

Highly regarded preacher, prolific writer, most influential thinker of Western Christianity, with strong background in philosophy and liberal arts

Vast amount of exegesis

Works on liberal arts, including dialectic with discussion of signs/semiotics
Christianity and language: St Augustine

The Bible on language (Augustine’s exegesis):
• The Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1–9)
  – variety of languages is God’s punishment
• The Pentecost miracle (Acts 2:1–11)
  – reversal of punishment, "redemption" of lgs
• Jesus as the Word of God (Greek logos / Latin verbum / Hung ige etc.) → Jn 1:1–23
  [see next slide]
"In the beginning was the **Word** and the Word was with God and the Word was God...

[John the Baptist] said: I am... a **voice** of one that cries in the desert: Prepare a way for the Lord..."

The word (*logos*, *verbum*) is a meaningful unit of utterance, which exists before it is uttered; the only valuable part of the relation

The voice (Greek *phōnē*, Latin *vox*) is only the carrier, the body of the meaning, accidental (e.g. can be in any language), of no value in itself
Christianity and language: St Augustine

The consequence at a general level: what were seen as accidental, external properties of language (forms, sound shapes, variation) were not considered interesting.

What matters is meaning and pragmatic force.

Also: great efforts to anchor "accidental" properties of language in some aspect of reality (e.g. five vowels → five senses; eight parts of speech → eight beatitudes).
Christianity and the language of the Church

In the East, several languages with time-honoured literary traditions (Greek + Aramaic, Coptic, Syriac)

→ Church had no reservations about translating Bible; liturgy, services in local languages

→ creation of alphabet for languages with no tradition of writing (Armenian, Georgian, Gothic 4th c., Old Church Slavonic 9th c.)
Christianity and the language of the Church

In the West, no such languages (West Germanic, Celtic, later Scandinavian, Slavonic and Hungarian)

→ Roman Church decided to use Latin in liturgy, services, also as the sole language of the Bible (though translations & paraphrases of parts were made occasionally)

→ Literacy meant knowledge of Latin; anyone aspiring for higher status had to be schooled in Latin, the language of all serious business
The Early Middle Ages: 600–800

Elementary instruction in Latin was needed (primarily morphology)

inherited material (Donatus) not really good for this purpose

Lot of experimentation, additions to Donatus, combinations of Donatus and Priscian’s *Institutio de nomine*...

Insular grammars (mainly by Irish and English monks — Ireland most cultured part of Europe between cca. 600–800; missions!)