

ARCTOS

ACTA PHILOLOGICA FENNICA

VOL. XLII

HELSINKI 2008

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ON GRAMMATICAL GENDER IN ANCIENT LINGUISTICS – THE ORDER OF GENDERS*

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Apollonius Dyscolus believed that there is a linguistic order that is found on all levels of the linguistic system and that should be followed in grammar as well. This means that the order of the various lists used in grammar is rational and based on nature. Apollonius compares the list of the parts of speech to that of the letters of the alphabet. It is the parts of speech that are at the centre of this ordering,¹ but Apollonius also mentions the order of the cases, tenses, and genders, i.e. masculine, feminine, and their negation, neuter gender.² This

* This article is based on a paper given at the 11th International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences (ICHoLS XI) in Potsdam on 1 September 2008. The topic is something I have been working on for a long time, preparing a monograph on gender in ancient linguistics. I am deeply grateful to Professor Toivo Viljamaa for his invaluable insights and advice in the course of my work on gender in ancient linguistics generally and in preparing this paper. I also wish to thank Professor Martti Nyman for his kind help and advice. The anonymous referee of the *Arctos*, FM Minna Seppänen and Professor Jyri Vaahtera have all read the paper and suggested improvements, for which I am grateful.

¹ See A. Luhtala, *Grammar and Philosophy in Late Antiquity: A Study of Priscian's Sources*, Amsterdam – Philadelphia 2005, 80 ff. for Apollonius' explanations for the order of the parts of speech.

² *Synt. GG* II.2 15,6 – 16,4: "Ἴσως δὲ καὶ ἡ τάξις τῶν στοιχείων ἐν λόγῳ παραλαμβανομένη τοῦ δι' ὅτι τὸ α πρόκειται, εἶτα μετ' αὐτὸ τὸ β, ἀπαιτήσῃ καὶ τὴν κατὰ λόγον τῶν μερῶν τοῦ λόγου τάξιν, δι' ὅτι τὸ ὄνομα πρόκειται, μεθ' ὅ ἐστι τὸ ῥῆμα καὶ τὰ ὑπόλοιπα μέρη τοῦ λόγου, ὡσεὶ καὶ πάλιν ἐν ταῖς πτώσεσιν ἡ λεγομένη εὐθεῖα καὶ γενικὴ καὶ αἱ ὑπόλοιποι, ἔν τε ταῖς χρονικαῖς τομαῖς κατὰ τὰ ῥήματα ὁ ἐνεστώς, εἶτα ὁ παρατατικὸς καὶ οἱ ἐξῆς χρόνοι, ἔν τε γένεσι τὸ ἀρσενικόν, μεθ' ὃ τὸ θηλυκόν καὶ τρίτον τὸ τούτων ἀποφατικὸν οὐδέτερον, καὶ ἐπ' ἄλλων πλείστων, περὶ ὧν ἰδίᾳ ποιησόμεθα συναγωγὴν. – "Perhaps also the traditional order of the letters of the alphabet, with A first, followed by B (etc.), will suggest the order of the parts of speech, in which *noun* appears first, followed by *verb* and the rest of the parts of speech and likewise the order of the cases, with nominative, genitive and the rest, or of the tenses of the verb, with present (*enestōs*) first, then imperfect (*paratatikos*) and the rest; or the order of genders – masculine,

statement of the order of the three genders is the starting point of this paper.³ Why should this brief remark on the order of the genders be so remarkable? – In ancient linguistic texts the three genders are always listed in this order, but here the context gives the ordering an explicit justification: it is not merely a traditional order in which to treat the genders, but a natural linguistic order. I do not intend to analyse Apollonius' order of the genders as such, but to use it as a presupposition in my approach to grammatical gender in the ancient grammarians.

Apollonius' explanations for the order of the parts of speech vary in kind: noun precedes verb because substance must exist before action,⁴ noun and verb precede the participle because the participle shares the characteristics of both; analogously, masculine and feminine precede the neuter because the neuter is a

then feminine, and third the negation of these, the neuter, and similarly in many other cases which we will reason about individually." Translation Householder (*The Syntax of Apollonius Dyscolus*, Translated, and with commentary by Fred W. Householder, Amsterdam 1981) 23.

³ Apollonius claims that this order is μίμημα τοῦ ἀντοτελοῦς λόγου (*GG* II.2 16,12), a claim that cannot be taken literally and has consequently aroused slightly different interpretations. For interpretations of this passage I refer to D. L. Blank, *Ancient Philosophy and Grammar: The Syntax of Apollonius Dyscolus*, Chico, California 1982, 12–13; D. L. Blank, "Apollonius Dyscolus", *ANRW* II.34.1, Berlin – New York 1993, 715–716; J. Lallot, "L'ordre de la langue: Observations sur la théorie grammaticale d'Apollonius Dyscole", *Philosophie du langage et grammaire dans l'antiquité* (Cahiers de philosophie ancienne 5), Brussels 1986; J. Lallot, *Apollonius Dyscole: De la construction*, Texte grec accompagné de notes critiques, introduction, traduction, notes exégétiques, index par Jean Lallot, Volume II Notes et index, Paris 1997, 19 n. 52.

⁴ See *Synt.* *GG* II.2 18,5–8: Καὶ τοῦ ῥήματος δὲ ἀναγκαίως πρόκειται τὸ ὄνομα, ἐπεὶ τὸ διατιθέναι καὶ τὸ διατίθεσθαι σώματος ἴδιον, τοῖς δὲ σώμασιν ἐπίκειται ἡ θέσις τῶν ὀνομάτων, ἐξ ὧν ἡ ιδιότης τοῦ ῥήματος, λέγω τὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ τὸ πάθος. – "The noun necessarily precedes the verb, since influencing and being influenced are properties of physical things, and things are what nouns apply to, and to things belong the special features of verbs, namely doing and experiencing." – Translation Householder (above n. 2) 25. Lallot 1986 (above n. 3) 420 has observed that Apollonius refers constantly to the argument of presupposition in explaining the order of the parts of speech. Lallot (*ibid.*, 421) also suggests that this order is linked to the idea that what precedes is "earlier" ('invention progressive'). Blank 1993 (above n. 3) 716 n.50 objects to Lallot's reasoning since this includes the idea that the preceding parts of speech resolve the ambiguities of the following, an idea contrary to Apollonius' views as expressed in *GG* II.2 35,10–11. In view of what follows in the present article, however, the idea of presupposition as such is quite befitting to the order masculine, feminine, neuter.

negation of both of these.⁵ The characterization of the neuter as the negation of the masculine and feminine is thus repeated here, while the order masculine first, followed by feminine, is left unexplained.

The order of the genders is only briefly mentioned by Apollonius, but it is in fact of great importance in ancient grammatical texts as a whole, on many levels. Gender is a common criterion for forming groups or organizing items in various contexts in ancient grammar, and when it is used, it is used in the appropriate order. The Byzantine grammarian Theodosius, in his *Canones*, classifies Greek nouns according to gender: the first masculine κανών is that of disyllables ending in -ās, the second that of words of more than two syllables ending similarly, and so on, the total number of masculine κανόνες being 35 (see *GG* IV.1 118, 30 ff.).⁶ Charisius, in his account of first-declension nouns, begins with three masculine words, *Aeneas*, *poeta* and *Achates* (first-declension nouns, according to him, end in -as / -a / -es); he then names two feminine words, *Minerva* and *Diana*, and finally states that the first declension has no neuter (Char. 16,7–21 B = *GL* I 18,11–16). As to feminine words, Charisius simply states that they end in -a and are inflected in the same way as *poeta* or

⁵ *Synt. GG* II.2 24,1–10: Προφανές δ' ὅτι καὶ ἡ ἐγγενομένη θέσις τοῦ ὀνόματος οὐκ ἄλλως ἂν ἐφυλάχθη, εἰ μὴ μετὰ τὸ ὄνομα καὶ τὸ ῥῆμα τὸ ἐκ τούτων ἐκ καταφάσεως ἠρτημένον μόριον παρελαμβάνετο, ὡς καὶ μετὰ τὸ ἀρρενικὸν καὶ θηλυκὸν τὸ τούτων ἀποφατικὸν οὐδέτερον. εἰ γὰρ μὴ παραδεξαίμεθα τὴν τῶν προκειμένων μορίων προτέραν θέσιν, καταλείπεται τὸ μηδὲ μετοχὴν καλεῖν μηδὲ μὴν οὐδέτερον, ἐπεὶ τίνων δύο προϋφεστῶτων γένοιτο ἂν ἀποφατικὸν τὸ οὐδέτερον, τίνων δὲ μεθέξει ἡ μετοχὴ; ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἄλλου μορίου δύναίτο ἂν τις παρέμπωσιν ποιήσασθαι, λέγω ἀντωνυμίας, ἐπιρρήματος, συνδέσμου, ἄλλου του· οὐδὲ γὰρ τῆς τούτων ιδιότητος μετέσχεν. – "It is also clear that the etymological application of the name "participle" could not otherwise be kept in view unless it were introduced after both noun and verb had been, since this part of speech depends on its acceptance of some of their features, just as the neuter must come after masculine and feminine, as a negation of both of them. For if we did not accept the prior ordering of these categories, we would be left without a basis for calling one "participle" and the other "neuter"; of what two preestablished entities could the neuter be a denial? And what ones would the participle share? Neither would it be possible to insert any other part of speech – pronoun, adverb, conjunction, anything else – before the participle. For it (the participle) would not have any share in their unique features." Translation Householder (above, n. 2) 27.

⁶ See D. J. Taylor, "Varro and the Origins of Latin linguistic theory", in I. Rosier (éd.), *L'héritage des grammairiens latins de l'Antiquité aux Lumières* (Bibliothèque de l'Information grammaticale 13), Paris 1988, 44 for an informative juxtaposition of Theodosius' *canones* and Varro's declension.

fortuna (18,17–19 B = *GL* I 21,1–2).⁷ The newly introduced feminine *fortuna* is the word that Charisius inflects as a model. Charisius thus teaches the Latin first declension beginning with the masculine and using mostly proper names (of Greek origin) as examples.

Similarly, words ending in *-a*, according to Donatus and Priscianus, are either masculine or feminine, or of common or neuter gender, in this order.⁸ This does not mean that the grammarians did not connect words ending in *-a* with feminine gender. In his list of special cases of noun gender (*GL* IV 375,24 ff.), Donatus takes it for granted that the ending *-a* is primarily related to feminine gender: the words *poema* and *schema* are "feminine by form but are understood to be neuter".⁹

The order of the genders affects the mode of presenting paradigms, and is present for instance in the process of derivation as seen by the ancient grammarians, a theme discussed later in this paper. To look for an explanation for this influential order in ancient linguistics is unjustified in the sense that the ancient linguists did not question it. For us today, however, questioning the

⁷ Charisius mentions one exception (18,23–27 B = *GL* I 21,3–6), the plural dative forms in *-bus* in cases such as *his deabus, libertabus, filiabus* from *haec dea, liberta, filia*. I return to these forms later in the present article.

⁸ See Don. *GL* IV 376,10–12 and Prisc. *GL* II 143,4 ff. For the passage of Donatus, see J. Vaahtera, "Observations on *Genus nominum* in the Roman grammarians", *Arctos* 34 (2000) 239.

⁹ Pompeius, in his commentary on Donatus, clarifies this point after finishing his presentation of the epicene (*GL* V 161,32–162,7): *Praeterea scire debemus quasdam regulas quasi solemnes esse generum. ecce a quasi solemnis est generis feminini, puta Musa casa; ecce ipsa regula quasi dedicata est feminino generi. item us syllaba masculino generi quasi dedicata est, doctus clarus magnus. invenitur tamen ut et in us exeat et generis sit feminini, ut est haec laurus. ecce syllaba quasi quae erat masculino dedicata feminini est. sed non penitus us syllaba dixi quod dedicata sit masculino, sed quod frequentius ... ne dicas mihi 'ecce nomen in a exit, debet generis esse feminini'. nam potest fieri ut sonet femininum et sit masculinum, ut est Catilina Agrippa Messala. – "In addition, we should know that some paradigms are almost customary to a gender. See that *-a* is almost customary to feminine gender, e.g. *Musa, casa* 'a hut'; the very declension is almost dedicated to feminine gender. Likewise, the syllable *-us* is almost totally dedicated to masculine gender, e.g. *doctus* 'learned', *clarus* 'illustrious', *magnus* 'great'. However, there are cases when a word ends in *-us* but is feminine, e.g. *haec laurus* 'the laurel'. Here, a syllable that was almost dedicated to masculine belongs to feminine. But I did not say that the syllable *-us* is entirely dedicated to masculine, but that it is more often so [...] So do not say to me 'this noun ends in *-a*, therefore it has to be of feminine gender.' For it is possible that it sounds like a feminine but is a masculine, such as *Catilina, Agrippa, Messala*."*

order is rewarding since in the process of looking for answers we encounter some ideas central to ancient linguistics.

The two original genders

Apollonius explained the position of neuter as based on the negation of masculine and feminine. This explanation is repeated by many grammarians, but the order of the three genders is not discussed.¹⁰ What we find in grammatical texts is the idea that masculine and feminine are "the" genders. In this connection, many Roman grammarians report the opinion of Varro that "only those are genders that generate" (*GRF* 270, fr. 245 F: *Varro ait generatantum illa esse quae generant*; this fragment is *incertae sedis*).¹¹ We find an etymology of γένος that relates it to reproduction among the *scholia* on the *Techne* as well:¹² "What is the origin of γένος? It is derived from the verb γείνω which means γεννώ" (i.e. γεννώω 'to give birth').¹³ As far as Varro is concerned, this is first and foremost an etymology of the word *genus* and an explanation of the origin of the terms employed in connection with it. The notion expressed in

¹⁰ Priscianus, following Apollonius, mentions "the order of the cases, genders and tenses" before explaining the order of the parts of speech (Prisc. *GL* III 115,20–121,15). See Pompeius (*GL* V 96,27 ff.) for the order of the parts of speech normally followed by the Roman grammarians.

¹¹ A. Corbeill, "Genus quid est? Roman Scholars on Grammatical Gender and Biological Sex", *TAPhA* 138 (2008) 76, uses this Varronian etymology as a starting point in his useful article on grammatical gender and biological sex in Roman grammar. For grammarians using this etymology, see e.g. Pomp. *GL* V 159,23 ff.; *Explan. in Don.* *GL* IV 492,37 ff.; Serv. *GL* IV 407,39–408,1; Consent. *GL* V 343,9–10. Another fragment of Varro buttresses the idea that gender is really to be identified with male and female and the neuter is not a gender at all (*GRF* 270, fr. 246 F = Cleidonius *GL* V 41,27 ff.; this fragment, too, is *incertae sedis*): *dicit Varro nullam rem animalem neutro genere declinari* ("a word for a living thing cannot be inflected according to neuter gender").

¹² *Sch. in D.T. GG* I.3 361,29: Πόθεν γένος; Ἀπὸ τοῦ γείνω, ὃ δηλοῖ τὸ γεννώ. The *scholia* are a challenging source in the sense that there is often no proper context for individual statements. The question preceding this etymological question is "Why are there five properties of *onoma*?", accompanied by the answer "Because the human being has five senses ..."; the following question is "How many genders are there?" accompanied by the answer repeating the *Techne* and explaining the history of the neuter as the gender of the inanimates and the term itself as the negation of the masculine and the feminine.

¹³ There seems to be a lapsus in Corbeill (above n. 11) 76 n. 2 where he cites this passage with the remark (emphasis mine): "...the Byzantine commentaries on the Greek grammarian Dionysius Thrax, which **do not** refer to words engaging in a kind of reproduction".

it is not particularly descriptive of Varro's ideas on gender as they appear in the *De lingua Latina* as a whole. The discussion of anomaly and analogy in *De lingua Latina* is of course connected to the question of the nature of language and is therefore both philosophical and grammatical. This is also visible in Varro's approach to gender: in some contexts he seems to speak of natural gender, while in others gender is strictly grammatical.¹⁴ Grammatical gender is, of course, one of the criteria of the Alexandrian analogy.¹⁵

The etymology that connects gender with reproduction and sex was found useful for instance by Priscianus:¹⁶

The original genders of nouns are the two which are the only ones known to the order of nature, masculine and feminine. For those that can generate are called genders, from the word *generare*, and these are masculine and feminine.

Priscianus does not discuss this any further but proceeds to treat common gender and neuter, which he thus opposes to the original genders. He does not explicitly state the number of genders but seems to follow Donatus in acknowledging four of them, masculine, feminine, neuter and common gender (Don. *GL* IV 375,13 ff.). The number of genders recognized by individual grammarians varies,¹⁷ but masculine and feminine are of course the unquestioned genders.¹⁸ Priscianus' reference to the *ratio naturae* together with

¹⁴ See J. Collart, *Varron grammairien Latin*, Paris 1952, 160–162, on how Varro managed here too to combine two opposing theories into a theory of his own: the substance of this is that gender is natural in those words in which the distinction is useful. Otherwise the gender of a word is revealed by agreement. On gender and analogy in Varro, see V. Lomanto "Varrone e la dottrina del genere", in: U. Rapallo – G. Garbugino (a cura di), *Grammatica e lessico delle lingue 'morte'*, Alessandria 1998. In her article, Lomanto stresses the influence of the "naturalismo stoico" in Varro's vision of the Latin language (see e.g. *ibid.* 95).

¹⁵ Varro normally follows the Alexandrians in employing gender as one of the criteria of analogy, but in *Ling.* 10,62 he shows that gender is not a necessary criterion: the Latin declensions can be distinguished by the ablative singular alone (I thank Professor Daniel Taylor for drawing my attention to this brilliant passage).

¹⁶ *GL* II 141,4–6: *Genera igitur nominum principalia sunt duo, quae sola novit ratio naturae, masculinum et femininum. genera enim dicuntur a generando proprie quae generare possunt, quae sunt masculinum et femininum.*

¹⁷ On the number of the genders see A. Ahlqvist "'Gender' in Early Grammar", in V. Law – W. Hüllen (eds.), *Linguists and Their Diversions: A Festschrift for R.H. Robins on His 75th Birthday*, Münster 1996, 44 ff.

¹⁸ D. Baron, *Grammar and Gender*, New Haven and London 1986, 90, gives undeserved honor to Priscianus: "This association of grammatical gender with human generation was introduced as early as Priscian's sixth-century Latin grammar, and it was developed by

the Varronian etymology amounts to identifying gender with sex, and implicitly to connecting neuter with inanimate and placing animate before inanimate.

The *scholia* on the *Techne* record the reference to existing things in the extra-linguistic world as well, in the manner of Priscianus: a scholiast (Stephanos) relates that according to some there are only two genders because existing things are divided into male and female, while the rest are "neither".¹⁹ The scholiast opposes this view: grammar does not base the division into genders on the real world, but on the syntax of the articles and on euphony. For instance, πόλις 'a city' is in itself not male or female apart from its inhabitants (see *Sch. in D.T. GG I.3 218,9–16*). Euphony here seems to refer to the knowledge that a native speaker has of grammatical gender, i.e. to the "ear": for instance, ὁ πόλις must have "sounded wrong" to a native Greek speaker. Indeed, another scholiast shows that it is sometimes the meaning, sometimes the form and "the euphony of the article" that defines the gender of a word. In case the masculine article ὁ is added to the word πόλις, the result is ὄφωνία, while ἵππος 'a horse' allows both the masculine ὁ and the feminine ἡ, with euphony, because of the different meanings (stallion, mare).²⁰

The point about the possible discrepancy between grammatical gender and natural gender was also made by Apollonius:²¹

The word τὸ παιδίον 'a child', too, is neuter by form, although it is common by meaning: for when someone provides a male and a female child, he says "I provide you with children".

The word τὸ παιδίον is a typical example of a contradiction between form and meaning. On the one hand it is stated that the meaning does not show the gender

medieval grammarians and accepted by their successors." Baron is here discussing the following argument: "[t]he most blatant attempts to connect linguistic form with stereotyped characteristics of sexes are found ... in the study of the phenomenon of grammatical gender".

¹⁹ The passage of Priscianus is cited side by side with this statement from the scholiast in the fragments of Apollonius' lost works as gathered by Schneider, under the title of *περὶ γένων* (*GG II.3,59*). Schneider explains Apollonius' gender system in detail in his commentary on Apollonius' *scripta minora* (*GG II.1 fasc. 2,23–25*).

²⁰ *Sch. in D.T. GG I.3 525,6–18*.

²¹ *Coni. GG II.1 215,20–22*: ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ τὸ παιδίον οὐδέτερον διὰ τὸν τύπον, ἐπεὶ ἀμφοτέρων ἐστὶ διὰ τὸ δηλούμενον· παρατιθέμενος γούνη τις ἀρσενικὸν καὶ θηλυκόν, εἴποι ἄν παρατίθεμαί σοι παιδία. The context is that of proving that disjunctives are conjunctions, despite their meaning. See also *coni. GG II.1 248,7–8*.

of a word, while on the other hand the very stating of this fact shows the interest in the contradiction between form and meaning.

Philosophical *versus* grammatical

Choeroboscus, in his commentary on Theodosius' *Canones*, judges the approach that sees gender and sex as closely related to be philosophical, and opposes it to the grammarians' notion of gender. He first gives the usual definition of the three genders in terms of the article, and then states:²²

And we do not accept the view of those who say that it is masculine that ejects seed, feminine that receives seed and neuter that neither ejects nor receives seed: for see that ὁ οἶκος 'house' is masculine and does not eject seed, and again, ἡ αὐλή 'the court-yard' is feminine and does not receive seed: similarly, τὸ γύναιον 'little woman' is neuter and yet receives seed.

The scholiasts of the *Techne* discuss the same (e.g. *Sch. in D.T. GG I.3 361,35 – 362,5*):²³

In the definition of gender there is included the "in the word form" (ἐν φωνῇ), since the philosophers do not observe the gender from the form but from the meaning: and they call masculine that which ejects seed, feminine that which receives seed, and neuter that which does neither. If they are asked the gender of τὸ βρέφος 'fetus, the new-born babe' or τὸ παιδίον 'a child' they will answer "masculine" since they look at the meaning: and again if you ask them which gender is τὸ γύναιον 'little woman' they will say "feminine" looking at the meaning; and if you ask which genders are ἡ πέτρα 'a rock' and ὁ πύργος 'a tower' they will say "neuter": but the neuter does not have its name because of meaning but because of the negation of the two genders. The grammarians call masculine that which is preceded in the nominative singular by the article ὁ, as in ὁ Αἴας...

²² *GG IV.1 107,8–14*: οὐδὲ γὰρ δεχόμεθα τοὺς λέγοντας ἀρσενικὸν μὲν εἶναι τὸ σπέρματος ἀποβλητικόν, θηλυκὸν δὲ τὸ σπέρματος δεκτικόν, οὐδέτερον δὲ τὸ μήτε σπέρματος ἀποβλητικὸν μήτε σπέρματος δεκτικόν· ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ οἶκος ἀρσενικὸν ἐστὶ καὶ οὐκ ἔστι σπέρματος ἀποβλητικόν, καὶ πάλιν ἡ αὐλή θηλυκὸν ἐστὶ καὶ οὐκ ἔστι σπέρματος δεκτικόν· ὁμοίως καὶ τὸ γύναιον οὐδέτερόν ἐστι καὶ ὅμως σπέρματος δεκτικόν ἐστὶν.

²³ Similarly also *Sch. in D.T. GG I.3 524,35–525,2*.

These scholiasts explain how the poets often form the agreement of a neuter word according to the sense, not the form, as in Διὸς τέκος, ἥ ... "child of Zeus, who ..." (this is from *Iliad* 10,278, where the neuter τέκος is referred to with the feminine ἥ).²⁴

The relation of form and meaning is central to the idea of the two original genders: it is also central to the first history of the genders. The terminology itself records the association of gender with sex, but also the effort to efface this association: Aristophanes of Byzantium used the terms ἄρσεν and θῆλυ for masculine and feminine, while Aristonicus uses the terms found in later grammar, ἀρσενικόν and θηλυκόν, or the adverbs ἀρσενικῶς and θηλυκῶς.²⁵ Consentius presents the Varronian etymology for *genus*, but makes the point that "it is not the names that generate, but the bodies of which they are names" (*GL* V 343, 16). The original situation is no longer valid: a word being masculine or feminine no longer means that the referent is necessarily sex-differentiable. Consentius' point is that words such as *hic aer* 'air', *haec terra* 'earth', *hoc caelum* 'sky' are words that, not being attributed sex by nature, should be neuter – yet, grammar attributes to them any gender, whether freely (i.e. making them masculine or feminine) or properly (i.e. making them neuter). Consentius (*GL* V 343,21–344,7):

Since 'genders' were first thus named in names of animate beings, the custom was then extended by usage so that even those that were without sex were thought to be masculine or feminine, e.g. *aer* 'air', *portus* 'harbour', *terra* 'earth', *domus* 'house'. The two genders are then natural or original, masculine and feminine. The third gender is what is called neuter, which is thought artificial by some because it is said of those things alone that are not animate. For they say that this does not belong to nature but arises from grammar. But others think correctly that this too is a natural gender. For they say that what is neither masculine nor feminine by nature is neuter by nature. **Thus nature constituted first three genders.** Grammar followed nature, partly obeying some logic, and generally preserved the number of genders, supported by natural distinctions between things. **For what is not ascribed to sex by nature, should be considered neuter. But grammar attributed it to what gender it wanted whether freely or whether properly, e.g. *hic aer*, *haec terra*, *hoc caelum*.** It followed usage in that it thought *miles* 'soldier' to be masculine, since this office belongs to men; likewise it thought *Lamia* 'witch' to be feminine, because this is

²⁴ *Sch. in D.T. GG* I.3 362,20–24.

²⁵ See S. Matthaios, *Untersuchungen zur Grammatik Aristarchs: Texte und Interpretation zur Wortartenlehre*, Göttingen 1999, 272–273.

correctly said to be a women's crime. It follows a certain logic for instance in calling the male *caelebs* 'unmarried man' and the female *vidua* 'unmarried woman' so that the distinction of the names themselves would indicate the different quality of the solitude.

Consentius sees neuter as an originally natural gender belonging to the inanimate. Here too, however, history is history: *hic aer, haec terra, hoc caelum*.²⁶ According to Corbeill, *terra* has "a long tradition of having an "obvious" gender". He refers to Varro, whose statement on *terra* (*Ling.* 9,38: *Quo neque a terra terrus ut dicatur postulandum est, quod natura non subest, ut in hoc alterum maris, alterum feminae debeat esse*) he interprets to the effect that "the noun is feminine on account of its underlying nature".²⁷ I find Corbeill's interpretation to be too free. It is not in line with Varro's notions of gender generally or with the original context of the statement on *terra*.²⁸ The context is that of linguistic analogy, and Varro shows its limitations, based on nature and on usage.²⁹ Varro does not explain why *terra* is feminine rather than masculine, but why there are not both *terra* and *terrus*. The claim that "*terra* is feminine because earth has a somehow female character" is in my opinion alien to Varro's thinking. Varro discusses *Terra* as a female deity attaching to it (i.e. the earth) the feminine characteristics of frigidity and humidity (*Ling.* 5,59) and relates Aelius Stilo's etymology of *terra*, '*quod teritur*' (*Ling.* 5,21). It is important to note, however, that the grammatical gender of *terra* does not enter into these contexts. Indeed, there is no reason to believe that Varro found it significant here: *Caelum* is the male deity which together with *Terra* begets everything (*Ling.* 5,60), and Varro does not comment on the neuter gender of the word for this fatherly sky either.

This is an important point considering both Varro and the later grammarians. The history of gender in ancient linguistics begins with

²⁶ The use of the article here is equivalent to our listing "masculine *aer*, feminine *terra*, neuter *caelum*" – and, of course, the examples obey the order of the genders.

²⁷ Corbeill (above n. 11) 93.

²⁸ I thus agree with the translation of *Ling.* 9,38 by Kent (Varro *On the Latin Language*, with an English translation by Roland G. Kent, vol. 1–2, London 1951), *ad loc.*: "Therefore it is not to be demanded that from *terra* 'earth' there should be also *terrus*, because there is no natural basis that in this object there ought to be one word for the male and another for the female".

²⁹ See W. Ax, "Pragmatic arguments in morphology. Varro's defence of analogy in book 9 of his *De lingua Latina*", in P. Swiggers and A. Wouters (edd.), *Ancient Grammar: Content and Context* (Orbis Suppl. 7), Leuven – Paris 1996, especially 107 ff.

Protagoras and his often cited claim that Homer's μῆνις 'wrath' and πῆληξ 'helmet' should be masculine instead of feminine,³⁰ but the idea that the gender of a word for an inanimate thing might be based on its male or female characteristics is not expressed in Roman grammar.³¹ A passage in Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid* might be interpreted to contain a value statement of the masculine and feminine genders respectively: "And some people claim that *dies* as a masculine means a good day, as a feminine a bad day."³² Servius, however, does not present this as his own opinion or clarify the claim (nor does Aristotle when he cites Protagoras). The idea that masculine and good belong together, as well as feminine and bad, is merely one possible interpretation by the reader – the impression that this might be Servius' intention is caused by his manner of offering explanations that attach positive value to male sex in one way or another. I return to this below.

Default gender and valued sex

The grammatical terms for masculine and feminine are themselves subject to an order at the level of conventional expression, since I think the pair is comparable to those mentioned by Quintilian:

³⁰ Arist. *Soph.el.* 173b17–23. See I. Sluiter, *Ancient Grammar in Context. Contributions to the Study of Ancient Linguistic Thought*, Amsterdam 1990, 7–8 for the interpretation of the Aristotelian account of Protagoras and gender, with further literature. Casper de Jonge, in a paper held at the XIXth International Colloquium of the SGdS / Henry Sweet Society Annual Colloquium in July 2007 in Helsinki, argued convincingly that this Protagorean fragment (and Arist. *Poet.* 1456b13 ff.) should be interpreted primarily from the point of view of Protagoras' relativism (according to de Jonge, he will argue for the same interpretation in a forthcoming article: Casper C. de Jonge & Johannes M. van Ophuijsen "Greek philosophers on language", in Egbert J. Bakker (ed.), *A Companion to the Greek Language*, forthcoming 2009).

³¹ This does not mean that male or female characteristics were not attached to inanimate things. Macrobius (5th century AD), in describing the time after chaos (*Sat.* 1,17,53), states that while the warmth of the sun is intense, the moon has a more humid, moderate heat and is, as it were, of feminine sex. Macrobius finds the sun to have the substance of father, the moon that of mother. Macrobius does not, of course, speak about gender here, although it would have been easy to explicitly connect the feminine gender of *luna* and the masculine gender of *sol* with these characteristics.

³² Serv. *Aen.* 1,732: *et quidam volunt masculini generis 'diem' bonum significare, feminini malum.*

There is also another species of order which may be entitled natural, as for example when we speak of "men and women," "day and night," "rising and setting," in preference to the reverse order.³³

In our terms, this is about convention.³⁴ In Quintilian's opinion, rhythm, euphony, etc. would have been disturbed should one have said *femina ac vir* – and I think he might have said the same of *femininum et masculinum* as well. This is rhetoric, not grammar, but nonetheless important. The breaking of the convention with "feminine and masculine" would disturb the modern conventional ear as well.

Masculine plays a special role in many Indo-European languages, in the sense that it functions as the default gender. This was occasionally noted by the grammarians as well:³⁵ "ATQUE HOS whenever masculine and feminine are connected, the rule is that, even if the latter is feminine, we make the agreement with the masculine." The *hos* of Vergil refers to bulls and heifers. This observation by Servius is restricted to gender,³⁶ but in another passage Servius connects masculine gender, male sex, and positive value:³⁷ "AD SOCEROS why *ad soceros* although it is said both *socer* 'father-in-law' and *socrus* 'mother-in-law'? Vergil makes the agreement with the better sex, i.e. with the masculine."³⁸ As far as I can see, statements such as this are not easy to find in ancient grammar, even if one is looking for them. In the Carolingian *Commentum*

³³ Translation Butler (*The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, with an English Translation by H.E. Butler, Volume III, London 1986), *ad loc.* Quint. *inst.* 9,4,23: *Est et alius naturalis ordo, ut uiros ac feminas, diem ac noctem, ortum et occasum dicas potius quam retrorsum.*

³⁴ The context in Quintilian is that of the necessary properties of artistic composition, one of which is *ordo*.

³⁵ Serv. *Aen.* 8,209: *ATQVE HOS quotiens masculinum et femininum iunguntur, haec disciplina est, ut etiam si posterius est femininum, masculino respondeamus.* Probus states in *Instituta artium* something that comes close to being a rule (*GL IV* 127,31–34): *... quaecumque generis feminini nomina generibus masculinis reperiuntur esse coniuncta, haec sub sono generis masculini necesse est ut procedant* – ... all feminine words that are found connected with masculine ones have to go under a word of masculine gender" (repeated in *GL IV* 128,7–9). One of Probus' examples, the pronoun form *hos*, comes from the Vergilian passage (*Aen.* 8,209), discussed by Servius.

³⁶ See also Serv. *Buc.* 3,34 *ALTER ET HAEDOS*.

³⁷ Serv. *Aen.* 2,457: *AD SOCEROS quare 'ad soceros' cum 'socer' et 'socrus' dicantur? sed meliori sexui respondit, id est masculino.*

³⁸ The poet, in the lines commented on, speaks of Priamus and Hecuba as parents-in-law.

Einsidlense in Donati barbarismum (by Remigius of Auxerre), Donatus' *syllepsis*³⁹ is illustrated with an example that concerns gender.⁴⁰

... *vir et mulier, qui noviter ad nos venerunt, magni sunt*. Although *vir* 'man' and *mulier* 'woman' are of masculine and feminine gender respectively, they are enclosed within one gender, i.e., the masculine, since when the two genders masculine and feminine are joined together, they are resolved into the superior gender.

A statement to the effect that masculine and male are indeed worthier than feminine and female is found in the late grammar attributed to the bishop Iulianus Toletanus:⁴¹

Give a word of masculine gender: *vir* 'man'. Why is it called masculine gender? Because in it there is more virtue than in the woman. Give a feminine: *mulier* 'woman'. Why is it called feminine gender? From the parts of *femur* 'thigh' that distinguish the kind of sex from man.

This etymology for the terms *masculinum* and *femininum* comes from the discussion of the property of *genus nominum*. It can be considered a late recognition of the fact that the usually tacit order of the two genders is based on the hierarchy of the sexes in the society. It is not irrelevant from the point of view of earlier grammar either: although we do not find anything as explicit in the older texts, what we find is in accordance with these views.

An interesting example of how the social necessity of distinguishing the sexes could work its way into language is the ending *-abus*, created to avoid the

³⁹ See Don. *GL* IV 397,23–29.

⁴⁰ *GL* VIII 270,4–8: ... '*uir et mulier, qui nouiter ad nos uenerunt, magni sunt*'. *Hic 'uir' et 'mulier' cum sint masculini et feminini generis, per unum genus i(dest) masculinum clauduntur, quia, ubi duo genera iunguntur masculinum et femininum, per illud, quod praecipuum est, resoluuntur*. How should (*genus*) *praecipuum* be translated? Could the adjective just mean default gender? The expression *per illud, quod praecipuum est, resoluuntur* could also allow the interpretation that the gender chosen depends on the case at hand, but this interpretation is not credible since there is nothing in the example given that would suggest the masculine.

⁴¹ Iulianus Toletanus 20,279–281 Maestre Yenes: *da masculini generis nomen: 'vir'. masculinum genus cur dictum? eo quod maior in eo virtus sit quam in femina. da feminini: 'mulier'. femininum unde dictum? a partibus femorum ubi sexus species a viro distinguitur*. The etymology of *femor* that links it with *femina* is found in Isidorus of Seville (*orig.* 11,1,106: *Femora dicta sunt quod ea parte a femina sexus viri discrepet*).

ambiguity of such forms as *filiis*. This form, mentioned by Sacerdos already in the late third century (*GL VI 427,5 ff.*), is discussed by many Roman grammarians.⁴² Cledonius, among others, explains the necessity of the form in wills (*GL V 46,2 ff.*). He attributes its invention to those that are *iuris periti*: they created it in order to distinguish male and female, to avoid a situation in which someone wanting to leave an inheritance to his sons would seem to be making his daughters the heirs. This demonstrates how the social hierarchy could become the grammarians' business as well. The apparently minor morphological peculiarity recorded by the grammarians is important because it shows so manifestly the desire for exactness of reference, the interest in words for sex-differentiable beings (especially humans) and the ubiquity of the ideal of a single form corresponding to a single meaning.⁴³ Cases where this ideal was not realised were of special interest.

Pompeius' observation on forms such as *filiis* is certainly well-grounded.⁴⁴

For in case we say from *equa* 'mare' the form *equis* or from *filia* 'daughter' *filiarum* the form *filiis*, in case we say like this, we understand the male sex rather than the female sex.

⁴² Priscianus discusses *filiabus* and other similar forms in connection with dative and ablative cases of the first declension (*GL II 293,5–8*): *Inveniuntur tamen quaedam pauca feminini generis, quae ex masculinis transfigurantur non habentibus neutra, quae et animalium sunt demonstrativa, naturaliter divisum genus habentia, quae differentiae causa ablativo singulari 'bus' assumentia faciunt dativum et ablativum pluralem.* – "There are a few feminine words that are transformed from masculine ones that do not have a neuter form, and these indicate living beings that have naturally a division in gender, and these feminines produce, for the sake of differentiation, the dative and ablative plural by adding *-bus* to the ablative singular". Priscianus duly observes that the form *filiis* is in use for the feminine as well (*GL II 293,12–13*). See also Don. *GL IV 378,7–10*; Prob. *GL IV 84,33 ff.*; Serv. *GL IV 434,8 ff.*; *Fragmentum Bobiense GL V 557,3 ff.*

⁴³ See E. Itkonen, *Universal History of Linguistics. India, China, Arabia, Europe* (Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Series III, Vol. 65), Amsterdam – Philadelphia 1991, 185 for an exposition of how the 'one meaning – one form' ideal is connected to the Stoic theory of language: cases when for instance a feminine form expresses a masculine notion are supportive of anomaly in language.

⁴⁴ Pomp. *GL V 173,28–30*: *nam ab eo quod est equa si dixerimus equis, filia filiarum filiis, si sic dixerimus, sexum potius masculinum intellegimus, quam femininum.* See also Pomp. *GL V 189,9–11* where Pompeius acknowledges the ambiguity of the form.

According to Charisius, the words *heres* 'an heir / -ess', *parens* 'a parent', *homo* 'a human being, man' are always masculine.⁴⁵ This view concerns the actual grammatical gender of the word visible as agreement; Charisius claims that no one would say for instance *bona parens* 'a good parent' (with a feminine attribute), even when the reference is to a woman. In fact, *homo* as a feminine is in practice not found in Latin, while *heres* and *parens* are words of common gender, used with both feminine and masculine attributes. What is important is that Charisius wants to present them as essentially masculine words.

Masculine words

Words such as *filius* and *filia* share inflectional forms in the plural, which causes ambiguity – but it is also important to notice that the Roman grammarians approached *filius filia* as essentially one word.⁴⁶ This claim is true in the sense that the masculine is the basic form from which they derive the feminine one. The case is thus similar to that of adjectives such as *bonus bona bonum*, which are represented by the masculine form. All gender-inflected words could be subject to similar considerations, due to the less than clear status of the adjective among the *nomina*.⁴⁷ The masculine form of a gender-inflected word is thus comparable to the nominative in the inflection, but it is also similar to the primary word in word formation.

Varro employed gender in his discussion of *impositio* and *declinatio*, two concepts central to his great idea of the birth and development of language. He

⁴⁵ Char. 130,19–23 B = *GL* I 102,20–23: *Heres parens homo, etsi in communi sexu intellegantur, tamen masculino genere semper dicuntur. nemo enim aut secundam heredem dicit aut bonam parentem aut malam hominem, sed masculine, tametsi de femina sermo habeatur.*

⁴⁶ V. Law, *The History of Linguistics in Europe from Plato to 1600*, Cambridge 2003, 71 has pointed out this important detail in the ancient conception of grammatical gender, concerning words of common gender: gender was not conceived as intrinsic to a noun in the sense that *sacerdos* was not considered either masculine or feminine according to the referent, but at once potentially masculine and feminine. This conception is behind the very terms *commune* and *commune trium generum*.

⁴⁷ A survey of the definitions of noun and of the description of adjectives is found in Luhtala (above n. 1) 38 ff. (noun), 49 ff. (adjectives), 97 ff. (adjectives in Apollonius Dyscolus). Adjectives were not a part of speech, nor were they properly defined as a group of their own among the common nouns. See Vaahtera (above n. 8) for how the different types of Latin adjectives were accounted for in the Roman grammarians' account of *nomina*.

argued (*Ling.* 8,7) that it is no wonder if errors sometimes occur in inflection, since they may have taken place already in the process of the original name-giving (*impositio*). The purpose of this process was to name each thing and from these names to inflect the plural and the case forms. The aim concerning gender is "that male children be designated in such a way that from these the females might be indicated by inflection, as the feminine *Terentia* from the masculine *Terentius*".⁴⁸

Gender inflection appears in Roman grammar mostly in connection with the division into *genera nominum fixa* and *mobilia*.⁴⁹ It is clear that words semantically related to sex are in focus in the *genus mobile nominum*.⁵⁰ Priscianus usually employs the concept of *genus mobile* in a quite practical way, as a way of referring to adjectives.⁵¹ His account of *mobilia* within the

⁴⁸ Translation Kent (see n. 28) *ad loc.*; *ling.* 8,7: *sic mares liberos voluisse notari, ut ex his feminae declinarentur, ut est ab Terentio Terentia*. For Varro, the creation of *Terentius* is thus an act of name-giving, while that of *Terentia* is an act of inflection (*ling.* 8, 14; see also *ibid.* 9,55 ff.). Women, even in the highest social circles, were primarily identified through their fathers and families. This usage is continued for instance in the *RE*, which does not list women, e.g. the notable Hortensia and Cornelia, in their correct alphabetical position, but following the various Corneliuses and Hortensiuses. Hortensia (Tochter des Q. Hortalus Nr 13) is number 16 *s.v.* Hortensius (*RE* VIII, 2) and Cornelia is number 417 *s.v.* Cornelius (*RE* IV, 1). A seeker of less suspicious mind might not find these women at all: there is indeed a *vox* "Cornelia" (*ibid.*) but it is an "alte römische Landtribus".

⁴⁹ The examples of the latter are either proper names with a masculine and a feminine form, or adjectives of three genders. Words such as *filius filia* are mobile as well, although this is not so self-evident before Priscianus. See Vaahtera (above n. 8) 244–245.

⁵⁰ E.g. Donatus (*GL* IV 376,1–7): *sunt etiam genera nominum fixa, sunt mobilia. fixa sunt quae in alterum genus flecti non possunt, ut mater soror pater frater. mobilia autem aut propria sunt et duo genera faciunt, ut Gaius Gaia, Marcius Marcia, aut appellativa sunt et tria faciunt, ut bonus bona bonum, malus mala malum. sunt item alia nec in totum fixa nec in totum mobilia, ut draco dracaena, leo leaena, gallus gallina, rex regina.* – "There are also nouns that have fixed gender and nouns that have mobile gender. Those nouns have fixed gender that cannot be inflected into another gender, such as *mater* 'mother', *soror* 'sister', *pater* 'father', *frater* 'brother'. As for nouns of mobile gender, they are either proper names and have two genders, such as *Gaius Gaia*, *Marcus Marcia*, or *appellativa* and make three genders, such as *bonus bona bonum* 'good', *malus mala malum* 'bad'. There are likewise some words that are not entirely fixed nor entirely mobile, such as *draco dracaena* 'dragon', *leo leaena* 'lion', *gallus gallina* 'a cock, hen', *rex regina* 'king, queen'."

⁵¹ Priscianus employs the concept of mobility mainly in connection with adjectives of three forms, e.g. Prisc. *GL* II 86,14–18: "Words that can be compared belong thus to the second or third declension. And in case they belong to the second declension, they are mobile, i.e., they produce feminines in *-a* and neuters in *-um* and end either in *-er* or in *-us* ..."; *GL* II 94,25–26: "and all the superlatives are mobile, i.e. they produce feminines by changing *-us* into *-a* and neuters by changing it into *-um* ".

treatment of the *genus nominum*,⁵² however, is rather different in nature: Priscianus takes here into account gender variation even when there is no corresponding gender inflection. He claims that *pater* and *mater*, *frater* and *soror*, *patruus* 'father's brother' and *amita* 'father's sister', words with totally different stems, are mobile: this, according to him, is variation (mobility) *natura et significatione, non etiam voce* (*GL* II 142,1–2).⁵³ According to another passage, *mater* is the feminine of *pater*:⁵⁴

This is no wonder, since the same is found in other parts of speech as well, namely that related meaning is present between different forms, such as, in nouns, *pater* is masculine while its feminine is *mater*.

Apollonius made distinctions that resemble the division into fixed and mobile words in Roman grammars, but for instance his τριγενῆ is not quite equivalent to *mobilia*: Apollonius focuses on gender variation, not necessarily visible as gender inflection. Thus τριγενῆ applies to both two- and three-form adjectives (see e.g. *Adv. GG* II.1 167,16–18: e.g. εὐσεβής and καλός are included).⁵⁵ Later Greek grammarians, however, seem to have a notion of τριγενῆ similar to that of the Roman grammarians. When Sophronius (in his commentary on Theodosius' *Canones*) defines the τριγενῆ, he states that the masculine form makes the feminine and the neuter: "τριγενῆ are those words that make the feminine and the neuter with a derived form" (*GG* IV.2 391,11–12).

The masculine form is the word, which then may produce the feminine and neuter forms.⁵⁶ As in word formation, the primary word may be (from the

⁵² This account of the nature of the mobile nouns begins directly after the words common of three genders that Priscianus identifies with *adiectiva*.

⁵³ It is noteworthy that for instance in Donatus' standard account of the division into fixed and mobile words, *mater*, *soror*, *pater*, *frater* are examples of fixed words "that cannot be inflected into another gender" (see Don. *GL* IV 376,2–3). Words such as *mater* or *pater* are not mobile in Priscianus either but in this one passage.

⁵⁴ Prisc. *GL* II 418,3–5: *nec mirum, cum in aliis quoque partibus orationis hoc inveniatur, ut cognata significatio in diversis inveniatur vocibus, ut puta in nominibus 'pater' masculinum est, eius femininum 'mater'*. This comes from a section dedicated to the tenses of verbs.

⁵⁵ The Romans used *mobile* of the latter only, thus leaving adjectives with two forms without a clear position, see Vaahtera (above n. 8) 248–249.

⁵⁶ *Sch. in D.T. GG* I.3 144,2–9: "Masculine words ending in -ος that produce a feminine separately, meaning those that are not of common gender (in the manner of ὁ φιλόσοφος and ἡ φιλόσοφος), in case they have a vowel before the -ο-, produce the feminine in -α, such as Βυζάντιος Βυζαντία, Ρόδιος Ροδία, ἀλλότριος ἀλλοτρία 'belonging to another': in case they have a consonant before the -ο-, they produce the feminine in -η-, such as σοφός σοφή

modern point of view) totally unrelated to the derived word. Probus seems to hesitate in recognizing *anus* as the feminine of *senex*:⁵⁷

I remind that the nouns of masculine gender of the above-mentioned form [sc. ending in -ex], if they are forced to produce feminines, too, of their kind, that these feminine nouns are found to be anomalous through substitution, e.g. *hic senex* 'an old man' has to produce *haec anus* 'an old woman'.

As such, this sort of a relation between words that are not cognate must have been acceptable to the grammarians, since suppletive inflection is quite common in Latin.

When a female-specific noun is in question the expectation is that there is a masculine counterpart for it from which the feminine derives. Thus the feminine forms of patronymics in *-is* and *-as* are not endings in their own right, but rather the result of deletion.⁵⁸ The rule is mechanical: take *-de-* from *Priamides* and you obtain *Priami-s*.⁵⁹

Order of the genders – order of the sexes

I began this paper with the passage from Apollonius stating the order of the three genders, and I am fully aware that I have moved away from this to other kinds of order. However, I think the fact remains that the order of the genders stated by Apollonius and visible in the grammatical mode of treating gender has

'wise', *καλός καλή* 'beautiful', *ἀγαθός ἀγαθή* 'good': in case they have the *-ρ-* before the *-ο-*, they produce the feminine in *-α*, such as *φοβερός φοβερά* 'terrible', *χλιαρός χλιαρά* 'warm', *καθαρός καθαρά* 'clean': it is thus clear that *ρ* is not a consonant but a vowel". Neuter forms are not cited in the examples, since the interest lies in the employment of the feminine form in the argument at hand, namely that *ρ* is a vowel.

⁵⁷ *GL* IV 61,8–11: *sane hoc monemus, quod haec eiusdem supra dictae formae nomina generis scilicet masculini, si cogantur ex specie sua et generis feminini facere nomina, quod haec eadem generis feminini nomina per inmutationem reperiantur esse anomala, ut puta hic senex haec anus facere debeat.*

⁵⁸ Prisc. *GL* II 67,15–17.

⁵⁹ A similar derivational process is found in the *scholia* of the *Techne*, where there is an account for feminine words in *-ις* (*GG* I.3 222,4–5): *Τὰ εἰς δης ἀποβάλλοντα τὸ δὴ ποιεῖ θηλυκόν, Τανταλίδης Τανταλῖς. – "Words ending in *-δης* produce the feminine by losing the *-δης*, e.g. *Τανταλίδης Τανταλῖς*". This view is referred to Apollonius' followers, while Herodianus is said to have been of the opinion that the feminine forms are not derived from the masculine patronymics, but from the genitive of the primary word: thus *Πριαμῖς* is from *Πριάμου* (*ibid.* 222,10–21).*

its explanation in what has been said above. It is clear that the notion of the two original genders places masculine and feminine before neuter, but it does not explain why masculine comes before feminine. The grammarians do not explicitly claim that masculine is prior to feminine, but they nonetheless act on the principle that the order of the three genders is masculine, feminine, neuter, and not just in the listing of the genders.

The opinion of the gender and meaning of *dies* as related by Servius (above n. 32) in his commentaries on Vergil is accompanied by his references to the difference between the status of men and women. Servius refers to acting men and suffering women in explaining that Vergil's *Iovi Stygio* 'to the Stygian Jupiter' means *Plutoni* 'to Pluto':⁶⁰

And it is to be known that the Stoics say that there is one god, whose names vary according to actions and functions. Because of this, divinities are also said to be of double sex, so that when they act, they are male; they are female when they have the nature of being the object of action.

The active man and the passive woman continue to be a commonplace for centuries after Servius. A direct reference to the weakness of the female sex is found in another of Servius explanations:⁶¹ "*LAEVA TENET THETIS* prudently enough he places the weaker sex in the left part." The comment is interesting in the sense that it leads us to ask why Servius found it necessary to give this explanation – there is nothing unclear in what Vergil says, but Servius wants to make the point that it is appropriate for the weaker sex to be connected with the left side. This idea was by no means new. It appears in Aristotle's explanation of how the distinction between male and female came to be.⁶² Aristotle connects the left side with weakness and with the female: men are hotter and drier than women, and the right side of the body is warmer and stronger than the left. Indeed, Servius uses the poet in order to have an opportunity to make the nature of women explicit and to show his knowledge of biological facts.⁶³

⁶⁰ Serv. *Aen.* 4, 638: *et sciendum Stoicos dicere unum esse deum, cui nomina variantur pro actibus et officiis. unde etiam duplicis sexus numina esse dicuntur, ut cum in actu sunt, mares sint; feminae, cum patiendi habent naturam.*

⁶¹ Serv. *Aen.* 5,825: *LAEVA TENET THETIS satis prudenter sexum debiliorem sinistrae adplicat parti.*

⁶² Arist. *De gen. anim.* 763b26 ff.

⁶³ The grammarians were the guardians of language and tradition. R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1988, 18: "[t]he grammarian was the conservator of all the discrete pieces of

The order of the genders was taken for granted because it was so obvious. In spite of the contrary claims of the grammarians, gender is connected through the sexes with the real world and thus also with the male hierarchy of the society. Kaster has pointed out how the grammarians necessarily aimed at appearing as the most suitable guides for the best men: they aimed at giving the appearance of men that believed in the elite values of their society and behaved accordingly.⁶⁴ Furthermore, it is clear that the grammarians mostly did not want to be mixed up in "philosophical" notions of language. It seems, however, that a grammarian was perhaps freer to be philosophical when he was not writing grammar, as is the case with Servius' commentary on Vergil.

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tradition embedded in his texts, from matters of prosody [...] to the persons, events, and beliefs that marked the limits of vice and virtue."

⁶⁴ See Kaster (above n. 63) 60 ff.