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Chapter 2.1 Introduction

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Introduction

Glenn W. Most, Dagmar Schäfer, and Michele Loporcaro

The present chapter gathers under the heading “etymology” premodern texts from different ages and places that all had a tremendous and lasting impact on the intellectual life of the countless people who were brought up in the respective cultures. The common denominator of all those texts is that they deal with the subject of the origin and meaning of individual words. The scholarly practice of etymology seems to have been very widespread geographically and historically in earlier times, and it continues to remain an object of great interest for ordinary people throughout the world even today.¹ The different kinds of spoken languages and writing systems that have been involved and the different roles and ambitions of scholars in their cultures have led to considerable variation in the nature of the practice. Moreover, in the past two centuries, as the historical study of language has developed into an academic discipline, at first in Europe but then also in those other parts of the world most influenced by European ideas, a new science of etymology has become established that differs radically in theory and method from all earlier practices.² During the earlier period, plurilingualism played only sometimes, but not always, a decisive role in analyzing and understanding language diversity on the level of the individual word; but in later forms during that period plurilingualism tended to become much more prominent, and it has become an indispensable foundation of more recent scientific practice. The purpose of this introduction is to sketch out briefly a panoramic overview of the changing nature of etymology in the context of the reality of plurilingualism, considering its cultural and linguistic variations and its historical development, especially in premodern times, and thereby to set into a wider context the readings that are provided in this part.

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- 1 For a general orientation, especially on etymology in Western traditions, see e.g., Belardi, *L'etimologia*; Katz, “Etymology”; Nifadopoulos, *Etymologia*.
 - 2 For the rise of scientific etymology and its differences with regard to pre-scientific etymology, see e.g., Baldinger, “L'Étymologie hier et aujourd'hui”; Benedetti, “Etymology Between Typology and History”; Herbermann, “Moderne und antike Etymologie”; Davies, *Nineteenth-Century Linguistics*; Tsitsibakou-Vasalos, “Gradations of Science.”

1 What Is Etymology?

The term “etymology” is Greek and dates from the third century BCE: the first scholar to have written a (non-extant) treatise under such a title (*Etymologika* “etymological issues”) was the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus of Soli (ca. 280–207 BCE).³ But the practice of etymology is much older, and is attested in a number of cultures throughout the world. Etymology presupposes the existence of a language as an already established, largely successful semantic and communicative system, and it directs its attention in particular to single words taken as separable from one another, asking why and how they mean what they mean. In fact, there is no self-evident reason in principle why it should even be possible to explain how it is exactly that words convey meaning; whether language works by nature, by convention, by usage, or by fiat, it might be enough just to accept that it does happen to work pretty well and then go on from there. For most practical situations involving language communication, it suffices if I ask my workmate for a hammer and he gives it to me; what the etymology of the word “hammer” is might just as well be a matter of perfect indifference to the two of us, so long as the nail ends up getting beaten into the wood.

But this is not how etymologists look at language. They focus less upon the thing that the word denotes than upon the word that denotes it—that is, less upon the hammer and more upon “hammer”—and ask how that relation of denotation can be satisfactorily explained. This practice involves a series of premises and processes. First, the continuous stream of language must be articulated into a series of individual words which can be examined each for itself and whose meanings are in each case generally taken to be clear. Second, the individual word (we might call it the “target word”) is explained by being linked to one or more other words (its “source words”): the target word’s relation to the source words tends not to be one of morphological derivation from them, for otherwise the link would be obvious and unsurprising (Varro and Isidore, of whom extracts are presented in this chapter, are among prominent exceptions to this tendency), and the meanings of the latter are generally taken to be clear in themselves. Third, these links are simultaneously on the one hand of a semantic nature and on the other hand non-semantic; most often the non-semantic links are acoustic in nature, but in logographic writing systems they can also involve the shape of the written characters. And finally, these links

3 Belardi, *Letimologia*, 1:28–29. One of the excerpted texts comes from a Stoic philosopher (Cornutus, see Chapter 2.5); another one (Varro, see Chapter 2.4) is deeply indebted to the Stoic line of investigation.

between the target word and its source words are taken to explain the former's signification and, in some sense, to yield the "truth" (Gk. *etymos* "true") of the "word" (Gk. *logos* "word, discourse") that would otherwise have remained concealed. Thus, according to the scientific etymology of contemporary linguistics, the modern English word "hammer" turns out to have no connection whatsoever with the English words "ham" or "hummer" or "slammer"; instead it has evolved from the Old English *hamor* or *hamer*, is derived from the Proto-Germanic **hamaraz* from which come such words as Dutch *hamer* and German *Hammer*, and is cognate with the Old Norse *hamarr* which means "stone." So its original meaning was probably "a tool with a stone head." Knowing this does not help me to hammer the nail into the wood any better than I could have done if I were ignorant of this derivation; but it is capable of giving me a comforting sense of where this word comes from, why it means what it means, and how this individual derivation testifies to much vaster developments in the cultural history of mankind. The shiny brand-new object that I hold firmly in my ephemeral hand is a carefully designed and industrially manufactured implement made of hardened steel, but it goes back in its conception and function to crude stone tools first made by rough hands in the Neolithic Age; and, properly understood, the modern word that I hold in my mind and say to my workmate can still be recognized as hinting at this ancient truth even today.

2 Monolingualism and Plurilingualism in Ancient Etymology

The etymology of "hammer" that was provided in the preceding section is a good example of the way in which modern linguistic science moves easily among different interrelated languages in order to establish explanatory links of derivation and affinity between the words in one or more of them.

In the ancient world too, etymology was a widespread scholarly practice concerned with explaining language on the level of the word. It could be used to elucidate the purposes of words or to identify their origins, to find structures and patterns in language, as an argumentative or analytical tool for political or social purposes, and also for rhetoric embellishment. It is always justified by the privileged status attributed to the principal language in a certain region and often by the prestige and difficulty of certain canonical text traditions, and it tends to offer a plurality of explanations, indeed even to cumulate possible explanations. This ancient practice of etymology shares at least three common features across cultures: it claims to reveal hidden truths; the correspondences it establishes between words are one to many; and, relatedly, it elaborates on meaning and is most often guided by meaning correspondences, rather than by correspondences in form.

We have no surviving evidence of texts from non-Greek literate cultures before Plato's *Cratylus* (fourth century BCE; see Chapter 2.3) that explicitly addressed the origin of words, though some kind of etymological practice may underlie much earlier texts such as the Middle Babylonian (late second millennium BCE) *Nabnitu* ("Creation" in Akkadian, from the root *bny* "to build"), a bilingual Akkadian-Sumerian word-list compilation whose "main organizing principle" is "etymological and pseudoetymological associations."⁴ But the evidence for scholarly practices of etymology in other ancient written cultures such as those in Greek, Chinese, or Sanskrit (Latin, as we shall see shortly, is an exception) shows above all one common feature, namely the attempt to remain as far as possible within the compass of a single language system, orienting the explanation of words to the language used by the elite and/or by scholars. Before the advent of modern scientific etymology, the central aim of this older practice was to celebrate and if possible increase the degree of consistency in that single language, rather than to acknowledge a plurilingual world.

Thus, early examples of these ancient modes of etymology are dedicated to revealing the hidden consistency of written language. In ancient Greece and Eastern and Southern Asia, scholars were always pursuing the aim of trying to find underlying structures and patterns in their languages; but they tended to operate thereby in slightly different ways.

In ancient Greece, it was the names of the Greek gods whose obscurity first and foremost caused puzzlement and led to developing the practices of etymology.⁵ This was because Greek parents most often gave their children proper names that were semantically transparent in the Greek language; but because Greek cults mostly either preexisted in Greece the arrival of the people we identify as the Greeks or were imported into Greece in very ancient times,

4 Veldhuis, "Ancient Mesopotamia," 28. In China too, works that purport to explain the origin of words emerge much later, the earliest being *Shìning* 釋名 (Explaining names) by Liu Xi 劉熙 (200 CE), a glossary characterized by "the general use of paronomastic glosses (also called puns or phonetic glosses, 聲訓) in order to clarify the supposed etymology of some 1,500 words." Bottéro, "Ancient China," 58. The logographic writing system of Chinese paved the ground for a peculiar kind of investigation into the origin of (the written shape of) words, sometimes called "graphic etymology" (*ibid.*, 61), which focuses on Chinese logographic characters (*Hanzi* 汉字) as first instanced in *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explain the graphs to unravel the written words; around 100 CE) by Xu Shen 許慎, see Chapter 2.6.

5 On Greek etymological practices, see e.g., Lallot, "Etumologia" and "L'étymologie"; Most, "Allegoresis and Etymology"; Peraki-Kyriakidou, "Aspects of Ancient Etymologizing"; Sluiter, "Ancient Etymology."

only very few of the Greek gods, especially of the most important ones, had names that were transparent in terms of the Greek language. Instead of interpreting the fact that the names of most of their gods were simply not Greek as excellent evidence of the importance of plurilingualism in the development of their culture, the Greeks, starting from the earliest recorded times, tried to explain these names exclusively in terms of their own language. Etymology in Greece was thus in origin an attempt to rescue an appearance of monolingualism in the particularly delicate and fraught case of religion. And even when, as happened comparatively early, Greek etymology moved out from the special case of the gods' names and came to be applied first to other kinds of nouns, and eventually to other parts of speech, it continued to preserve its fundamental monolingualism. Within the privileged domain of the Greek language, which the Greeks regarded as the only truly valuable mode of speech (notoriously they applied the term "barbarians" to all peoples who spoke any language other than Greek), Greek etymologists established relations between source words and target words that acoustically were often astonishingly inventive (to say nothing of being totally arbitrary) in order to justify the target words by connecting them by close semantic links with the source words. Notably, there seems to have been little sense that only one such etymological explanation could be correct: instead, one often has the impression that the more the links that could be established, the richer and more perfect the Greek language would thereby be demonstrated to be. Normativity tended to be sought not so much in the usage or form of particular words, but rather in the preeminence of the Greek language as a whole: the more surprising the etymology proposed for some particularly baffling term, the greater the sense of admiration for the hidden systematicity of ancient Greek.

In South Asia, in contrast, matters were different. Just as Sanskrit philology tended to highlight grammar, so too word analysis was also ultimately more concerned with finding structures and patterns than with explaining meanings. Of the four identifiable word groups—nominal words, verbs, prepositions, and particles—all nouns originated from verbs. Even in Yāska's *Nirukta*, the early post-Vedic etymological treatise of which an excerpt is included in this part, the fundamental assumption is that words have varied origins. Hence, while an analysis on the basis of words in Sanskrit must always be concerned with grammar, such an analysis is not possible in the case of other dialects. Yāska's analysis focuses on words that lacked a regular grammatical derivation and whose meaning was therefore obscure—the frequency of such unintelligible terms in the ancient Vedic mantras was a problem not only for the investigation of language but also for the practice of religion—and it proceeds by using etymology to extend the domain of grammar and to reveal regularities simi-

lar to the ones recognized by grammar, even in terms that are grammatically obscure. The Sanskrit etymological analysis of the underlying structure of language then went on to be appropriated and adapted by Buddhist scholars for the purposes of commentary on their sacred texts.

In the Sinophone world, matters were different yet again. Chinese scholars explained the structures of their words by supposing that their written script combined a meaning-giving element with phonetic indicators. They also recognized that both kinds of elements had developed historically. In the case of the meaning-giving element, scholars sought to correct the kinds of historical developments that had led to what they regarded as being not only linguistic defects, but also political ones: the multiplication of terminology across various regions and inconsistencies and a certain imprecision of meaning. Their aim was to return to what they thought had been an ideal condition in antiquity and to correct names in such a way that they would match reality once again: that is, so that offices, ranks, subjects, and activities would each have one and the same name rather than many different ones. What was called “rectifying names” was the attempt to discover the meaning in “context” of a specific discourse defined by either a social group or a historical trajectory, given that the very concept of language was that of a dynamic system changing all the time. Thus, the focus of etymological studies in China was usually not on explaining the truth of a word, but on rectifying the truth in words by studying their changing meanings.

The study of language on the level of individual words originated in Chinese history in three interrelated scholarly interests: tracking historical changes in meanings; understanding the relation between reality and language; and tracing phonetic variations. Etymology was pursued alongside lexical work and together with commentarial traditions, that is, by means of textual exegesis. In both lexical work and commentarial practices, scholars emphasized that the etymological analysis of words was the key to correct social and political ordering. With the emergence of kingdoms by the eighth to fifth centuries BCE (if not earlier), elites increasingly came to attach importance to the standardization of language and tied writing to political and social power. Thus, for example, Xunzi (see Chapter 1.5) stands at the end of a long period of political disunity, in which languages had drifted apart and writing standards were diverging substantially; and his notion of the “Rectification of Names” (*Zhengming* 正名), which is a combined etymological and historical approach to word meanings together with a lexicographic element, can be interpreted as an ethnography of the language situation in his era. Later too, many works of the Han era attest to a diversity of “regional variations of language” (*fangyan* 方言). For example, during the Western Han, Yang Xiong 楊雄 attempted to survey and document

these regional varieties. So too, Xu Shen 許慎 (*Shuowen jiezi*) and Liu Xi 劉熙 (*Shiming*) regularly pinpoint regional variations of pronunciations in their lexical studies. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (see Chapter 2.6) stands at the end of an era of unified script, in which scholars looked back onto the period of the Warring States as a time of chaos but also as a source of inspiration: diverse versions and interpretations of texts had existed, of which some may have been “truer” than the standardized versions sanctioned by Han rulers. Within these scholarly and political debates, Zheng Xuan exemplifies a shift from what looks like *ad hoc* reflections on language and reality to the systematic analysis of language and language development, approaching both of these as dynamic processes of connecting oral variations to written forms.

3 The Development of Plurilingual Etymology

Thus, in however many ways ancient Greek, Sanskrit, and Chinese etymologists differed from one another in their ideas and methods, they all shared an approach to the etymological analysis of words that was guided by the central aim of finding coherence and consistency in a single language, their own. But this commitment took different forms in each of these three traditions. Ancient Greek etymologists—unlike their ancient and medieval counterparts in Greek lexicography (see Chapters 3.3 and 3.5)—seem to have displayed a blithe indifference to the existence of other languages than their own and presumed that the Greek language provided sufficient means to explain the derivation and meaning of any Greek word whatsoever. For Sanskrit scholars, the language of the Vedas was of unique religious value—indeed, in a certain sense it was thought to be the only language that truly existed—and it would have been an unthinkable heresy to invoke other languages than Sanskrit in trying to explain an obscure Vedic term. In China, the historical reality was one of numerous quite different spoken languages that could only with very limited success be constrained within the harness of a single writing system, which was itself subject to constant variation and development; but scholars regarded such changes as being not only a defect but even a direct menace to the well-being of the Chinese state and its emperors and people, so that etymology was used normatively in order to reduce variation and reestablish a correct meaning and pronunciation that had begun to decline and were in danger of being lost altogether. To put the matter a bit too simply, we might say that the Greek etymologists were motivated in their avoidance of plurilingualism above all by considerations of linguistic chauvinism, the Sanskrit ones by religious scruples, and the Chinese ones by political anxieties.

In the West, it was above all the ancient and medieval Latin tradition that accepted plurilingualism and integrated it into its etymological practice.⁶ The reason for this might seem obvious: after all, in terms of cultural history, for at least three reasons plurilingualism was simply a fact of life for the ancient Romans and it continued to be one for their medieval successors. First, Latin was originally only one of a number of quite different languages which were spoken throughout the Italian peninsula in the first millennium BCE, including some that belonged to the Italic family such as Faliscan, Umbrian, and Oscan, and others which were more remotely related to Latin or were not even Indo-European, like Etruscan. As Rome rose to dominance in Italy, these competing political and linguistic entities were suppressed or absorbed; by the first century CE they had largely vanished except as an object of antiquarian interest, but they left numerous traces in local idioms and in the names of people and places. Second, during the last centuries BCE Rome underwent a massive influence by Greece which decisively determined many key sectors of its cultural production.⁷ After about the second century BCE until the end of antiquity, to be a Roman man of letters meant to be able to speak, read, and write fluently not only in Latin but also in Greek. And third, after about the first century BCE Rome's empire brought it into close, systematic, and not always hostile contact with a number of other peoples throughout the Mediterranean, and its military, legal, commercial, and educational structures involved frequent interaction with them. Moreover, this daily experience of plurilingualism continued long after the fall of the Roman empire in the West, where it eventually led to the rise of the vernacular languages of Europe alongside medieval Latin (vernacular terms are already documented occasionally in Hugutio of Pisa's *Derivationes*, see the introduction to Chapter 2.9). But before we conclude that the Latin recognition of plurilingualism can be dismissed as having been simply self-evident and inevitable, we should remind ourselves that similar causes did not lead to similar effects elsewhere in the world, notably in South and East Asia, where various strategies were instead devised in an effort to minimize the reality of plurilingualism and to protect the apparent dominance of a single language over the others that were present in a complex political and cultural reality.

Whatever the explanation, Latin etymologists were certainly more inclined to move outside the limits of their own language in attempting to explain the origins and meaning of their words than their Greek counterparts were (so for

6 For an introduction, see e.g., Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse*; Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*; Buridant, *L'étymologie de l'antiquité*; Klinck, *Die lateinische Etymologie*.

7 Feeney, *Beyond Greek*.

example in Varro, see the introduction to Chapter 2.4). To be sure, the explanations they furnish are very often not acceptable in terms of modern linguistic science, and the actual amount of Greek that they really knew declines unmistakably over time. But the effect their treatises communicate is that to understand the Latin language well is to see it as one among a number of languages, above all of course Greek, in a plurilingual world.

So too in the multilingual world of Arabic linguistic scholarship. While there does not seem to have been much systematic study of the etymology of Arabic words in premodern Arabic scholarship—the term *ishtiqāq* means not “etymology” but instead “derivation” and is concerned above all with how new words could be derived from the consonantal roots of the Arabic language⁸—there was widespread recognition of the presence of Iranian loanwords in Arabic, also because a number of early grammarians and lexicographers were Iranians.

4 Modern Scientific Etymology

The term *etymologia* became established in Hellenistic Greece and was borrowed into Latin in ancient Rome (though Varro uses it sparingly, see Chapter 2.4), to then enter the modern European languages through Latin. Thus, when employing *etymology* in English or related terms in other modern languages, we are looking back on twenty-four centuries of uninterrupted usage of the term. But during the course of this period, the nature of the scholarly practice which it denoted has changed radically. The modern understanding of etymology *qua* scientific discipline defines it as a subdiscipline of linguistics (i.e., the scientific study of language) concerned exclusively with the study of the origin of words or, more exactly, with “the search for the relationships—formal and semantic—that link a word with another unit that historically precedes it and from which it derives.”⁹

The history of etymology as a scientific discipline is incomparably shorter than the history of the scholarly study of the origins and meaning of individ-

8 See e.g., El Masri, *Semantics of Qur'anic Language*, 7–50, who contrasts “semantic” (i.e., pre-scientific) etymology in the Arabic tradition, with “historic(al)” (i.e., scientific) etymology. However, also within Arabic studies, Larcher uses the latter label to refer to pre-scientific etymology, and contrasts it with “diachronic” (i.e., scientific) etymology. Larcher, “Derivation,” 575.

9 Zamboni, *Letimologia*, 1, our translation. For some representative modern discussions of scientific etymology, cf. Chambon and Lüdi, *Discours étymologiques*; Durkin, *Oxford Guide to Etymology*; Malkiel, *Etymology*; Thurneysen, *Etymologie*.

ual words. It started in the early nineteenth century, when a line of research initiated by Franz Bopp, Rasmus Rask and Jakob Grimm established a rule-based scientific method, subject to corroboration or refutation by an international community of scholars, that made possible the systematic investigation of regular sound correspondences across related languages and, based on this, regular sound change over time. This paved the way for the modern study of language relatedness—which is why this method is also called the (historical)comparative method—and, by the same token, of etymology.¹⁰ The handbook example of this major innovation is the discovery of the so-called Grimm’s Law (although, as a matter of fact, it was first noted by Rasmus Rask), which describes the relation between the obstruent consonants of the Germanic languages and their counterparts elsewhere in Indo-European, as is still visible to this day within the lexicon of English, where the initial consonants in, for instance, *father*, *tooth* and *heart* are etymologically the same as in *paternal*, *dental* and *cardiac* respectively, the latter mirroring—like all Latinate vocabulary—the sound laws of Latin, or Greek, as in *cardiac* (see Old Greek *kardía* “heart”), not of Germanic.¹¹ Before this crucial step, there was no historical linguistics (or comparative philology), and hence no scientific method for etymology.

This by no means implies that the questions we now ask, in the framework of those disciplines, were not asked earlier as well.¹² Indeed, they often were, but they could not be answered in the same scientifically rigorous way, that is, by a strict method that could be applied to a large number of cases and languages and that could be empirically verified or falsified by the community of scholars. But it does mean that the aspirations and methods of premodern etymology and of its modern successor were very different from one another. Ancient etymological investigation tends to start out in the service of a philosophical and/or religious quest for truth. This is most obviously the case in both

10 The foundational texts in this line were Bopp, *Conjugationssystem*; Rask, *Undersøgelse*; and Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik*.

11 In this case, Latin preserved the voiceless stops which are reconstructed for PIE, while in Germanic they became fricatives.

12 This point is beautifully made by Philomen Probert in her Gray lectures March 9 and 11, 2021 (University of Cambridge, online event) under the titles “Did the Ancient Greeks Do Historical Linguistics?” and “Did the Romans Do Historical Linguistics?” Her answer is affirmative, as she shows that several ancient sources attest to the observation that language changes over time, as well as to the attempt to describe and understand the changes, sometimes reconstructing previous stages of the language at issue. However, similarities with what historical linguistics does today end here, because, crucially, the method allowing investigators to provide detailed and empirically verifiable or falsifiable answers to whatever question may be asked in this area was not available in antiquity.

Greece and India, the two cultures where this practice emerged first. The following characterization of the fundamental differences between ancient Greek and modern scientific etymology applies as well *mutatis mutandis* to other pre-modern versions of this scholarly practice:

Modern etymology always claims to be looking diachronically for the real attested or postulated historical source of a given word; whereas ancient etymology tends more to search for one word's possible synchronic connections with other words in the language as it is currently used, privileging semantic relations between coexisting lexical units rather than any laws of phonetic change governing the gradual succession of forms over time. The ancient etymologist presupposes language not as a dynamic process of continuous historical development but instead as a stable and coherent system of intelligible and interconnected conceptual meanings; and when he does invoke the past, he usually seems to think of it not as a continuous series of discrete phases passing gradually through the many stages of a coherent evolution but rather as a single radical contrast between some postulated primeval moment and the manifest current state of affairs. Furthermore, modern etymology aims to derive from the examination of real evidence of linguistic usage attested in different historical periods as economical and as broadly applicable as possible a set of mechanisms for explaining language change; and while ancient etymology does tend to respect certain elementary transformative rules like addition, subtraction, and inversion of elements, it derives these rules not from the inspection of linguistic evidence but from general principles of logic, grammar, and rhetoric, applies them haphazardly, and only rarely, if ever, subjects them to analysis and justification by any kind of serious meta-theory. Moreover, ancient Greek etymology tends almost always to search for connections within the confines of the ancient Greek language (Latin etymology, by contrast, is aware that there are at least two languages in the world and often searches for Greek roots for Latin words); whereas modern etymology is oriented no less toward inter-lingual than toward intra-lingual research. Finally, ancient etymology often seeks to establish as many relationships as possible between one word and others, as though it were following the principle of the more relations the better, and does not, like its modern counterpart, attempt to discover the one hypothetical etymology that must be the correct one and that automatically disallows all other proposed ones. In short, ancient etymology attempts, as the name rightly suggests, to demonstrate the truthfulness, in the sense of the appropriateness, of a given term, as it happens by relating

it to other coexisting ones; whereas modern etymology (despite its own etymology) aims not at all at the truthfulness of any particular word but exclusively at its true historical origin.¹³

5 Conclusion

The etymological texts that are translated and introduced in this part offer a few glimpses of the wealth of etymological practices that have been attested from very different times and places. As is explained in the general introduction to this volume, our preference for a strictly chronological arrangement (as far as possible) should help readers focus on similarities and differences among the objects and strategies of pre-modern etymology throughout the world; of course, readers are welcome to use the texts we present in order to explore regional and generic tendencies as well. We include a specimen of an early post-Vedic treatise on the etymological explanation of words in the Veda (2.2); two excerpts from Greek philosophical works, Plato's *Cratylus* (2.3) and Cornutus's *Compendium of Greek Theology* (2.5); selections from three very disparate works in Latin from different historical periods, Varro's *On the Latin Language* (2.4), Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (2.7), and Hugutio of Pisa's *Derivationes* (2.9); a sample of Zheng Xuan's commentarial etymology (2.6); and extracts from works by Vasubandhu, Sthiramati, and Paramārtha (2.8) that illustrate Buddhist etymologies from first-millennium India and China. These texts illustrate some of the ways that premodern etymology operated and some of the functions it was designed to fulfil. Even the texts that only operate within the terms of a single language may be said to be plurilingual in a larger sense, inasmuch as they postulate earlier stages of the same language. The historical study of prescientific etymology has been stimulated and shaped by the rise of scientific etymology since the nineteenth century; much has already been explored, and much remains to be done.

Abbreviations

Gk. Greek
PIE Proto-Indo European

13 Most, "Allegoresis and Etymology," 65–66.

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