MOTUS IN THE *ARS ASPRI* (GL 5, 547–554)
Contextualizing a Grammarian's 'Mathematical' Approach to Number and Reference in Possessive Pronouns*

Abstract: The concise *ars Aspri*, printed in vol. 5 of H. Keil's *Grammatici Latini*, provides a peculiar discussion of the category or 'accident' of *numerus*, grammatical number, as occurring in possessive pronouns. Starting from the fact that in Latin, both the possessor and the object of possession expressed by a possessive pronoun can be either singular or plural, Asper calculates four possible *motus*, i. e. relations of twofold reference. This configuration is specifically contrasted with the one in Greek, where both the possessor and the object of possession can also occur in the dual number, thus giving rise to nine possible *motus*. In taking a closer look at this 'mathematical' approach to number and reference in possessive pronouns, this article tries (a) to interpret and contextualize the peculiar contents and terminology of Asper's exposition, and (b) to elucidate some issues of textual transmission.

Keywords: *ars Aspri*, possessive pronouns, person and number, 'twofold' reference (*intrinsecus / extrinsecus*), *motus*

This article deals with issues of grammatical doctrine and textual transmission related to a Latin *ars grammatica* which has hitherto received only little attention, namely the so-called *ars Aspri*. The text, edited by Heinrich Keil in GL 5, 547–554,[1] is problematic with regard to its authorship, dating, and contents. The edition in Keil's GL is based on the 1831 edition by Friedrich Lindemann[2]

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1) For the abbreviations GL, GG and ThLL, cf. the Reference list, infra. For a description of the contents of the various volumes (and sub-volumes) of GL and GG, cf. Swiggers / Wouters 2002, 5–7.

2) Cf. Lindemann 1831; the printed editions of the *ars Aspri* (always as part of a larger collection of grammatical texts) prior to Lindemann's edition are all Renaissance printings: 1503 (Fano, edited by G. Soncino), 1516 (Paris, edited by J. Badius Ascensius), 1525 (Cologne, edited by J. Caesarius), 1533 (Freiburg im Breisgau, also edited by J. Caesarius), 1605 (Hanau, edited by H. Putschius); cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 80.

and on two manuscripts: Vaticanus Latinus 1491 (V^1) and Gothanus 717 (olim 117) (G). The full textual tradition of the *ars Aspri* comprises the following set of manuscripts:[3]

> Angers, Bibliothèque municipale 493 (olim 447), ff. 115r–120r (ninth century) (A)
> Neapolitanus IV A 34, ff. 162v–165r (ninth century) (N)
> Gothanus 717 (olim 117), ff. 48r–53r (fifteenth century) (G)
> Reginensis Latinus 1818, ff. 56r–62r (fifteenth century) (R)
> Baltimorensis W. 372 (483), ff. 102r–109r (fifteenth century) (B)
> Vaticanus Latinus 1491, ff. 24v–27v (fifteenth century) (V^1)
> Vaticanus Latinus 1492, ff. 57r–64r (fifteenth century) (V^2)

Giuliana Filandri in her 1995–1997 article provides a detailed description of the various textual witnesses, but does not offer a stemma codicum;[4] the relationships between the textual witnesses are indeed complex.[5] The two ninth-century manuscripts, A and N, belong to two distinct branches linking them, through lost intermediaries, to the archetype. Witness G is (indirectly) derivative from N, and to N one can also link V^1, which may reflect interference with A. As to the other manuscripts (V^2, B and R), these can be assigned to a third branch, of which the intermediate stages are obscure (due to the fact that all three witnesses are Renaissance copies). Witness V^2 seems to reflect a version closer to the original, and B and R can be considered derivative. As to the relationship between the latter two, R is closely linked to B, and might be an apograph of it, although it has many deviating readings. One can schematize the relationships between the textual witnesses in the following way; the stemma, however, is bound to be a provisional one, since the number and internal relationships of the intermediate stages remain uncertain.

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3) Cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 68.

4) Filandri 1995–1997, 67 announced a new critical edition of the *ars Aspri*, which to the best of our knowledge has not been published yet.

5) The classification we propose here is a tentative one, based on Filandri's 1995–1997 description of the codices, and on a partial and preliminary comparison of readings found in the various manuscripts. As a general rule, on the basis of the readings shared and not shared by the various textual witnesses, one can oppose two groupings of manuscripts: $A N G V^1$ vs. $V^2 B R$.

$$(\Omega)$$

(?)   (?)   (?)

(?)

A   *N*

V^1 *G* V^2 *R* - - - - *B*
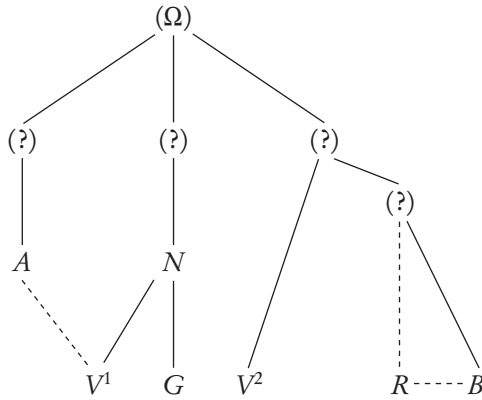
We can now turn to the problem of the authorship of the *ars* at hand, and the closely related issue of its dating. In the present article, dealing with the *ars* printed in GL 5, 547–554, we will consistently refer to its author as "Asper". Opinions differ on the possible identity of this Asper with Aemilius Asper, the second-century author of commentaries on Terence, Sallust and Virgil.[6] In this connection, a third "Asper" should be mentioned, namely the author of a seventh-century *ars Asporii / Asperii*, printed in GL 8, 39–61 (edited by H. Hagen, and previously by the same in Hagen 1870, 39–61 – GL 8 as a whole is a reprint of Hagen 1870). While an identification between the authors of the *ars Aspri* and of the *ars Asporii / Asperii*[7]

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6) Parts of the commentary on Virgil are printed in Keil 1848; for a detailed study of this commentary, cf. Thomsin 1952. For a useful survey of the literary passages discussed by Aemilius Asper and examined by Thomsin 1952, cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 100. Concerning Aemilius Asper's commentaries on Sallust and Terence, cf. Buffa 1977.

7) The *ars Asporii / Asperii* is a 'christianizing' adaptation of Donatus (both the *ars minor* and the *ars maior*). According to Law 1982, 41, it was composed around 600 and it circulated in a Continental and an Insular version; Law proposes an origin "in eastern France", possibly Burgundy. Holtz 1981, 274 dates the text to the second quarter of the seventh century and postulates an Irish origin (on the basis of its later perusal by Virgilius Maro, Bonifatius, and the "Anonymus ad Cuimnanum"). On the contents of the *ars Asporii / Asperii*, cf. Löfstedt 1976. For a detailed study of the differences, in content and cultural outlook, between the *ars Aspri* and the *ars Asporii*, cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 85–92, also 101.

is excluded,[8] the relationship of the author of the *ars Aspri* to the second-century commentator remains a matter of debate.

On the one hand, Giuliana Filandri reached the conclusion that the identity of the author of the *ars Aspri* with the second-century commentator cannot be excluded,[9] while Vivien Law – abstaining from any precise dating and identification – considered Asper's *ars* to be "of uncertain date and provenance, but probably early", and placed the grammar chronologically between those of Scaurus (early second century) and Sacerdos (late third century).[10] On the other hand, James Zetzel clearly distinguishes Asper, the author of the *ars Aspri*, from Aemilius Asper,[11] and follows Hugh Chisholm in proposing a late dating, perhaps in the fifth century. Zetzel notes that the *ars Aspri* is "presumably based on Donatus", while "also showing some knowledge of Victorinus", i.e., quite probably, the *ars* that has been attributed to Marius Victorinus.[12]

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8) Holtz 1981, 272–283 draws a clear distinction between these two authors, but complicates matters by referring to the author of the *ars* printed in GL 5 as "pseudo-Asper", and to the author of the *ars Asporii / Asperii* either as "Asper minor" (a designation introduced by Löfstedt 1976, for which there is no evidence in the manuscript tradition) or as "Asper" (Holtz' abbreviations: "Asp. Min." and "Asp."). The identification of (various) "Aspri" was left undecided by Stangl 1891, 28, who proposed to distinguish Asper I, II, and III.

9) Cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 84: "Pur in mancanza di argomenti decisivi, non è da escludere che l'*Ars grammatica* sia stata compilata proprio dall'omonimo (e più noto) esegeta di Virgilio, di Terenzio e di Sallustio. Semmai, è ragionevole ipotizzare che il testo dell'*Ars* sia stato sottoposto nel corso del tempo ad un'opera di revisione e di omologazione da parte di altri grammatici e interpreti tardo antichi"; cf. also Filandri 1995–1997, 94 and 101.

10) Law 2003, 66; unfortunately, in the index (Law 2003, 299) Asper is not distinguished from the early medieval grammarian Asporius.

11) Zetzel 2018, 282: "The text printed by Keil under the title *Aspri grammatici ars* is a brief and jejune grammar, presumably based on Donatus, but also showing some knowledge of Victorinus; it is so brief and empty that it is hard to have any firm opinion about its sources, date, or origin. It has sections on *ars*, then on letters, syllables, and (metrical) feet followed by the parts of speech in the order noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, participle, conjunction, preposition, interjection. All examples come from Virgil, but this is certainly not the work of the Virgilian commentator but of someone writing probably in the fifth century."

12) Chisholm 1910–1911; Zetzel 2018, 282. On the attribution of this *ars* to Marius Victorinus, cf. Zetzel 2018, 328–329, who considers it problematic; Mariotti 1967 and Dahlmann 1970 do attribute the work to Marius Victorinus.

We agree with Zetzel that Asper is unrelated to Aemilius Asper, but with regard to Asper's dating we prefer to take a middle position between the early dating by Law and Filandri, and the rather late one by Chisholm and Zetzel. To be more precise, we would date the *ars Aspri* somewhere in the second half of the fourth century, i. e. n o t   l o n g after both Marius Victorinus (born between 281 and 291, died ca. 365) and Donatus (*floruit* 354–363),[13] at a time when the latter's authority was on the rise, but still left room for significantly deviating approaches. Our dating, earlier than Zetzel's, is based on the following elements: (1) the generally loose and atypical plan of the grammar, which in our opinion would be less evident for a text written in the fifth century, at a time when Donatus' tightly structured grammatical model was becoming authoritative; (2) the author's interest in grammatical features specific to Greek,[14] in a Latin grammar which does not appear to be conceived for a Greek audience; (3) the inclusion of a concise definition of the concept of '*ars*' (which provides a link with Marius Victorinus);[15] (4) some terminological peculiarities, such as *pars vocis explanatae*, *positio* (in the section on the pronouns; cf. our discussion infra), and *passivitas* (in the section on the verb); and (5) the author's (indirect) acquaintance with Marcus Terentius Varro, which is suggested by the reference at the beginning of the grammar (GL 5, 547.9: *Terentius* [*et*] *Varro*)[16] – although it is a

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13) For Marius Victorinus' life dates, cf. Ziegenaus 2002, 487; for those of Donatus, cf. Holtz 1981, 16.

14) Apart from a reference to Greek letters (GL 5, 547.14), Asper mentions the phenomenon of *monoptota* in Greek (GL 5, 550.21), and the existence of a dual in Greek pronouns (GL 5, 550.39); on the latter element, also cf. infra.

15) Cf. GL 5, 547.5–7: *Ars est comprehensio praeceptorum ad utilitatem usui accommodata per artificis sui exercitationem, medendi, ut medici, declamandi, ut rhetorici, legendi, ut grammatici.* In the grammar attributed to Marius Victorinus, we also find a definition of *ars* (it is attributed to Ariston), in which the terms *praeceptum*, *exercitatio* and *utilitas* appear as well (GL 6, 3.7–10 = Mariotti 1967, 65): '*Ars*', *ut Aristoni placet*, '*collectio est ex perceptionibus et exercitationibus ad aliquem finem vitae pertinens, id est generaliter omne quicquid certis praeceptis ad utilitatem nostram format animos*'. However, the two definitions also show divergences. On the passage in the grammar attributed to Marius Victorinus, cf. Dahlmann 1970, 5–8, who furthermore discusses the (disputed) identification of Ariston with Ariston of Alexandria.

16) GL 5, 547.7–10: *Grammatica est scientia recte scribendi et enunciandi interpretandique poetas per historiam* ⟨…⟩ *formatam ad usum rationemque verborum*,

well-known fact that references to Varro are also found in later authors (e. g. Cassiodorus).[17] In this connection, it is also worth noting that the *ars Aspri* explicitly mentions the names of Cato, Caesar and Cicero.[18]

As to the contents, one can point among other things to Asper's peculiar use of a grammatical property or 'accident' (*accidens*) termed *positio*, a categorial feature which is assigned specifically to pronouns.[19] As it is put to use by Asper, *positio* seems to involve a typology of various referential and discursive uses of pronouns, being thus distinguished from what he calls *significatio*, which could be rendered as '(focal) meaning'.[20] *Significatio* concerns the distinction between several 'meaning-types' of pronouns (such as

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quam Terentius [*et*] *Varro primum ut adhuc rudem appellatam esse dicit litteraturam.* Keil prints *Terentius* [*et*] *Varro*, and in his text-critical apparatus he mentions the reading *Terrentius varro* in *R*. The 1516 Paris edition of the text by J. Badius Ascensius (cf. supra, note 2) has *Terentius etiam Varro*.

17) The definition of grammar by Varro is reported in other terms by Marius Victorinus (GL 6, 4.4–6 = Mariotti 1967, 65–66): *Ut Varroni placet, 'Ars grammatica, quae a nobis litteratura dicitur, scientia est ⟨rerum⟩ quae a poetis historicis oratoribusque dicuntur ex parte maiore'.* Varro's definition, involving the use of the term *litteratura*, is discussed by Dahlmann 1970, 8–12, who notes its reflection in the writings of Asper, Diomedes, Augustine, and Isidore of Seville. Cf. already Lindemann 1831, 309, and Filandri 1995–1997, 93 n. 17.

18) On the three mentions of Cato's name in the *ars Aspri*, cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 92.

19) Asper mentions the following *accidentia* for pronouns (GL 5, 550.26–27): *Pronomini accidunt qualitas* [1] *significatio* [2] *positio* [3] *genus* [4] *numerus* [5] *ordo* [6] *figura* [7] *persona* [8] *casus* [9]. It should be noted that although the pronoun is defined by Asper as having a 'less full' meaning than the noun (GL 5, 550.25–26: *Pronomen est pars orationis quae idem quod nomen, sed minus plene significat*), it outnumbers the noun in accidents: 9 for the pronoun vs. 5 for the noun (GL 5, 549.24–25: *Nomini accidunt quinque, qualitas genus numerus figura casus*).

20) Schad 2007, 306, s. v. *positio*, renders the term as "sense, essence" [of pronouns]. In the particular case of Asper, this rendering seems rather inadequate, in view of the fact (a) that Asper considers *positio* to be not an 'ontic' but a 'perspectival' feature (cf. *positio* […] *qua spectatur*), and (b) that a list of different *positiones* follows upon the definition. Clearly, Asper here uses *positio* in a meaning different from the one it has in Priscian's *Institutiones*, where *positio* renders the Greek term ϑέσις. It should be noted, however, that Asper also uses the term in the latter meaning elsewhere, namely when he mentions the distinction between nouns *primae positionis* (i. e. 'primitive, original' nouns) on the one hand, and derived nouns on the other (GL 5, 549.33–34).

demonstrative, possessive, and indefinite), whereas *positio* is the 'accident' that serves to distinguish different types of pronouns from the point of view of what one could call 'discursive uses' (GL 5, 550.35–37): *Positio est, qua spectatur,*[21] *utrum interrogativa sint pronomina, ut quis uter, aut responsiva, ut hic iste, aut segregativa,*[22] *ut quisquis uterque, aut privativa, ut nequis neuter nemo nihil* ("*Positio* is [the accident] by / from which it is seen / determined[23] whether the pronouns are interrogative, such as *quis* and *uter*, or answering, such as *hic* and *iste*, or segregative, such as *quisquis* and *uterque*, or privative, such as *nequis*, *neuter*, *nemo* and *nihil*"). It should be stressed that the way in which Asper uses the term *positio* in dealing with pronouns is very different from the way he uses it in dealing with adverbs. In the latter context, the term *positio* is reserved for word order (GL 5, 552.20: *positio accidit adverbiis, cum quaedam praepositiva sunt* […] *quaedam subiunctiva*), a feature which in his discussion of pronouns, Asper simply designates by the term *ordo* (GL 5, 551.1–3). With reference to pronouns, *positio* designates an 'arrangement', in terms not of (linear) ordering but of distinct types of semantic-pragmatic speech events.

Another intriguing passage in Asper's treatment of pronouns – the passage into which we want to take a closer look here – is his discussion of the 'accident' of *numerus*, i. e. grammatical number.[24]

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21) This is the reading of *G*; cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 72. Keil's text-critical apparatus (GL 5, 550) mentions the variant reading *expectatur*. The latter is the reading found in *V*[1] and in almost all other manuscripts that have not been used by Keil (*B*, *R*, *N*, and *V*[2]; *A* has the reading *expectantur*, cf. Filandri 1995–1997, 69); this (problematic) reading can possibly be explained by a confusion, or 'contamination', with a phrasing such as *positio est quo spectat*, "*positio* is (that) to what it refers", or *positio est ex qua spectatur*, "*positio* is that from which it is seen".

22) Not only is this the only passage cited as evidence by Schad 2007, 354, s. v. *segregativus* ("separative"), it is moreover a unique attestation of the word *segregativus* in ancient Latin literature (as it has been preserved).

23) The phrasing of the initial part of this passage (*positio est, qua spectatur*) is somewhat puzzling, but the intended meaning is clear: *positio* is defined as the characteristic that consists in making it possible for the speaker to establish the distinction between different semantic-pragmatic types of pronouns (interrogative, 'responsive', 'answering', etc.). The verb *spectare* should then be taken in its philosophical sense of "to bear in mind, test, determine".

24) On Asper's description and terminology of the *pronomina* in relation to the general treatment of the pronoun in manuals of Latin grammar, cf. Lenoble / Swiggers / Wouters 2003, 8–11.

At the outset of this discussion, Asper lists the grammatical numbers singular, plural, and 'common' (*communis*) – although the latter is not actually counted as a third *numerus* in its own right (cf. infra) (GL 5, 550.37–39): *Numerus pronomini accidit singularis, ut ego quis, pluralis, ut nos quanti, communis, ut quae quanta* ("To the pronoun apply the singular number, as in *ego* and *quis*, the plural number, as in *nos* and *quanti*, and the common number, as in *quae* and *quanta*"). Asper seems to use the term [*numerus*] *communis* in the 'normal' way (i. e., in the same way as it is used for nouns and verbs), meaning "common to both singular and plural", in that *quae* and *quanta* can be singular or plural feminine, respectively singular feminine or plural neuter forms.[25] Immediately upon introducing the 'accident' of *numerus* for pronouns, Asper discusses what he calls their *motus*, literally 'movements'. Interestingly, *motus* does not refer here to a formal change, e. g. in gender, but to the various possible combinations in twofold reference that define the grammatical number of possessive pronouns, in relation to their (first, second and – theoretically[26] – third) person status;[27] the restriction to the subclass of p o s s e s s i v e pronouns is not explicitly formulated by Asper, but it can be inferred from the examples he provides (GL 5, 550.39–551.1): *Numerus apud Graecos propter dualem numerum motus*[28] *habet novem, in sermone nostro quatuor: aut enim unum unius significamus, ut meus tuus, aut multos multorum, ut nostri vestri, aut unum multorum, ut noster vester, aut multos unius, ut mei tui* ("Because of the dual number, among

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25) This, in any case, is how it is used by Donatus in his *ars maior* 2.11 (Holtz 1981, 630): *Sunt etiam numero communia, ut qui, quae: dicimus enim qui vir et qui viri, quae mulier et quae mulieres.*

26) The passage lists no examples of third person possessive pronouns, but there is no indication that they are actually excluded from the observation at hand.

27) This particular meaning does not seem to be listed in ThLL 8, 1537.41–57, s. v. *motus* – b: *in arte rhet. et gramm.* Schad 2007, 253 records the meaning "grammatical relation, transition", with reference only to the present passage in Asper. Occurrences of the term *motus* are also listed in Lomanto / Marinone 1990, 1244–1245. Generally, in ancient Latin grammaticography *motus* expresses the idea of 'movement' involved with prepositions indicating a direction, or it is used with reference to the inflectional changes in endings; cf. Schad 2007, 253–254, and the examples listed in ThLL.

28) Keil's text-critical apparatus (GL 5, 550) mentions the variant readings *motos* and *modos*.

the Greek [the category of] number [in possessive pronouns] has nine movements, in our language it has four; for either we designate one of [i. e., belonging to] one, as in *meus* and *tuus*, or many of many, as in *nostri* and *vestri*, or one of many, as in *noster* and *vester*, or many of one, as in *mei* and *tui*").

Asper's statement calls for three observations.

(I) First, it should be noted that we are confronted here with a comparison between Greek and Latin which specifically regards the paradigmatic organization of possessive pronouns – a comparison which is lacking in other Latin *artes grammaticae*. This comparison is all the more remarkable since it is absent from a number of Latin grammars that are explicitly conceived for a Greek audience (e. g., Diomedes, Charisius, Priscian; cf. infra). As we have argued above, its presence in Asper's *ars* might be an indication in support of a relatively early dating, i. e. at a time when a good command of Greek was not uncommon among (an elite of) native speakers of Latin.

(II) Second, this comparison is made in a 'formalist' or 'mathematical' way, that is to say, by means of a calculation of the different possible combinations in twofold reference (possessor × object of possession). For Greek, Asper identifies nine possible *motus*, for Latin four. This calculation should be understood in the following way: given the fact (a) that Greek has a singular, a dual,[29] and a plural number (in nouns, pronouns and verbs), and (b) that this 'numerically' triple reference (singular, dual, plural) applies both to the possessor and to the object of possession in possessive pronouns, we obtain $3 \times 3 = 9$ possible combinations (e. g. a single pupil's book [1] / two books [2] / several books [3] – two pupils' book [4] / two books [5] / several books [6] – several pupils' book [7] / two books [8] / several books [9]). For Latin, on the contrary, Asper counts four *motus*, which implies that although he mentions a *communis* number for the pronoun (exemplified by *quae* and *quanta*; cf. supra), he does not count it as a 'number' in its own right (thus applying the following count: a single pupil's book [1] / several books [2] – several pupils' book [3] / several

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29) On this difference between Greek and Latin and its reflection in Latin grammaticography, cf. Denecker 2019.

books [4]). This assumption with regard to the [*numerus*] *communis* is supported by a passage in Asper's account of the 'accident' of number for nouns (GL 5, 550.3–4): *Numeri accidunt duo, singularis, ut hic Cato, pluralis, ut hi Catones, communis, ut dies nubes* ("Two numbers apply [to the noun]: singular, as in *hic Cato*, plural, as in *hi Catones*, common, as in *dies* and *nubes*").

Peculiar though Asper's approach is, it is possible to single out a number of parallels in the Latin grammatical tradition. The recognition of four *motus* in Latin possessive pronouns is also found in other (late) grammarians, but none of them uses the term *motus*[30] or adopts a similarly explicit 'mathematical' approach: they speak of *quattuor partes* (Servius), *quattuor species* (the so-called "Sergius"), or *quattuor modi* (Diomedes),[31] and they specify the four possible combinations in twofold reference, distinguishing the two combinations where the possessor and the object of possession are either both singular or both plural (*utraque significatione / ex utraque parte*), and the two combinations where the *numerus* is different for the possessor and the object of possession. This is also the case for instance in Pompeius, Charisius and Priscian, who however do not speak of *quattuor partes* or anything similar.[32] All of the foresaid authors mention the twofold *significatio* – i. e., the twofold refer-

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30) One will notice that while Servius, "Sergius" and Diomedes use a term with static meaning (*pars*, *species*, *modus*), Asper uses a term expressing dynamics (*motus*).

31) Servius (GL 4, 410.17–19): *Possessiva dicuntur pronomina quae nos aliquid possidere ostendunt, ut est meus tuus. Haec in quattuor partes dividuntur*; "Sergius" (GL 4, 500.33–34): *Item possessivum per quattuor species dividitur*; Diomedes (GL 1, 329.25–26): *Quaedam possessiva finita ad aliquid referuntur, et ea quattuor modis enuntiantur.*

32) Pompeius (GL 5, 207.7–15): *Sunt pronomina ex utraque parte singularia, ut meus, id est et ille qui possidet et ille qui possidetur unus est; ex utraque parte pluralia, ut nostri, et qui dicunt se possidere et de quibus dicunt plures sunt. Intrinsecus singulare, extrinsecus plurale: intrinsecus dicitur quod pertinet ad personam possidentis, extrinsecus quod pertinet ad personam possessionis. Quando ergo intrinsecus plurale est, extrinsecus singulare, erit hic noster, ut multi sint qui possident, unus qui possidetur. Aliquando intrinsecus singulare, extrinsecus plurale, ut si dicas mei*; Charisius (Barwick / Kühnert 1964 [1925], 205.7–11): *Quaedam pronomina ad aliquid pronuntiantur et utraque significatione singularia sunt, ut meus tuus; aut utraque pluralia, ut nostri vestri; aut intrinsecus pluralia extrinsecus singularia, ut noster vester; aut intrinsecus singularia extrinsecus pluralia, ut mei tui.* The relevant passage from Priscian is quoted in the main text of this article.

ence or designation – of possessive pronouns: an 'inner' reference, designating the possessor, and an 'outer' reference, designating the object possessed. The (adverbial) terms that are used by all authors are respectively *intrinsecus* and *extrinsecus*;[33] the authors' choice of these terms appears to be motivated by the fact that *intrinsecus* indicates a reference 'from within', i.e. to the 'inner' possessor, realized by the lexical stem of the possessive pronoun (*me[u]-*; *tu[u]-*; *su[u]-*; *nostR-*; *vestR-*), whereas *extrinsecus* ('from outside') indicates the reference realized by the (possibly unexpressed) noun designating the 'exterior' object of possession. It is Priscian who offers the most circumstantial formulation of this conception (GL 2, 580.24–581.8):[34]

> […] *in omnibus enim derivativis pronominibus duae intelleguntur personae, intrinsecus possessoris, extrinsecus possessionis. Unde intrinsecus personae, in quibus genetivi primitivorum, sicut dictum est, intelleguntur, ex quibus et derivantur, confundunt genera, quomodo et primitiva eorum, extrinsecus vero distinguunt ea pro generibus nominum, quibus adiunguntur: 'meus servus', 'mea ancilla', 'meum mancipium'. Numerus vero intrinsecus hic intelligitur, quem habent genetivi primitivorum, ex quibus derivantur. Genera etiam possessorum demonstratio ostendit, quemadmodum in primitivis. Extrinsecus vero terminatio distinguit numerum, quomodo et genera et casus possessionum; in quibus regula eorum consequentiam servat mobilium nominum.*

> […] for in all derived pronouns [i.e.: *meus*, *tuus*, *suus*, *noster*, *vester*, *nostras*, *vestras*] two persons are understood, intrinsically that of the possessor, and extrinsically that of the possession [= object of possession]. Hence it is that intrinsically, the persons in which (as has been said) the genitives of the primary forms are understood [i.e.: *mei*, *tui*, *sui* > *me(u)-*, *tu(u)-*, *su(u)-*], from which they are also derived, confound

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33) On the conspicuous absence of the terminological pair *extrinsecus / intrinsecus* in Donatus, cf. Holtz 1981, 131.

34) Priscian also observes that the possessive pronoun of the first person should be understood as being capable of having the vocative on account of the object of possession, not on account of the person of the possessor (on the assumption that one cannot address oneself); that is to say, an exclamation such as "o my book" should be interpreted as "o book of mine", and not as "o I, who own the book" (GL 3, 1.15–20): *Primae quoque personae possessivum, quod solum etiam secundae potest adiungi personae, sicut supra dictum est, habet vocativum, non possessoris, qui est in prima persona, quae intrinsecus secundum genetivum intelligitur primitivi, sed possessionis, quae cum extrinsecus declinatur, vocativum quoque propter secundam assumit personam, cum ad eam dirigatur.*

the genders, in the same way as their primary forms do, but extrinsically they distinguish these [genders] in accordance with the genders of the nouns to which they are joined: *meus servus*, *mea ancilla*, *meum mancipium*. And intrinsically the number which the genitives of the primary forms have, from which they are derived, is understood. The designation also indicates the genders of the possessors, as is the case for the primary forms. And extrinsically, the ending distinguishes number as well as genders and cases for the possessions [= objects of possession]; in these respects their paradigm maintains the consistency of the *nomina mobilia* [i. e., nouns which have different endings for different genders].

(III) Our third observation concerns the descriptive account of the twofold reference of possessive pronouns, and the terminology involved in this account. The Latin grammarians we have just mentioned – Pompeius, Charisius and Priscian[35] – draw a distinction between a reference 'from inside' (*intrinsecus*) and a reference 'from outside' (*extrinsecus*): the former concerns the person of the possessor, the latter the object of possession.[36] As it is printed by Keil in GL 5, Asper's text offers a different account: in the passage dealing with the *significatio* of pronouns that signify *ad aliquid* (i. e., that have a relational function)[37] we read (GL 5, 550.32–35): […] *quorum quaedam aut utraque singularia sunt, ut meus tuus, aut utraque pluralia, ut nostri vestri, aut extrinsecus singularia, ut noster vester, aut intrinsecus pluralia, ut mei tui* ("[…] some of which are either doubly singular, such as *meus* and *tuus*, or doubly plural, such as *nostri* and *vestri*, or extrinsically singular, such as *noster* and *vester*, or intrinsically plural, such as *mei* and *tui*"). The text printed in GL 5 is problematic at this point: next to *extrinsecus singularia* – exemplified by *noster* and *vester* – one expects the designation *extrinsecus pluralia* for *mei* and *tui*, at least if one assumes that Asper's doctrine conformed to the opinions expressed by Pompeius, Charisius and Priscian. More precisely, in view of the examples provided by Asper, one would expect a single term (i. e. either twice *extrinsecus* or twice *intrinsecus*), differentiated by the indication of number (*singularia* vs. *pluralia*).

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35) Cf. the statements by Pompeius and Charisius quoted in note 32, and Priscian's text (GL 2, 580.24–581.8) quoted supra in the main text.

36) As Schad 2007, 161 summarizes s. v. *extrinsecus*: "The internal sense refers to the possessor, the external sense to that which is possessed."

37) On the concept '*ad aliquid*' in Latin grammaticography, cf. Swiggers / Wouters 1999.

The problematic reading[38] is supported by the two manu-
scripts on which Keil based his edition of Asper's *ars* (*V*[1] and *G*,
cf. supra).[39] However, witness *R* – the Reginensis Latinus 1818,
which is closely related to *B*, Baltimorensis W. 372 (483) – offers
a different reading: […] *aut **in**trinsecus singularia, ut noster vester,
aut intrinsecus pluralia, ut mei tui*. This reading has the advantage
of internal consistency, but it entails an interpretation of *intrinsecus*
that is diametrically opposed to the one we have found in the other
Latin grammarians; here, *intrinsecus* is applied to the object(s) of
possession (singular in the case of *noster* and *vester*, plural in the
case of *mei* and *tui*). On this account,[40] *intrinsecus* would have been
used as applying to the grammatically 'salient' element of the pos-
sessive pronoun, namely its ending, and *extrinsecus* as referring to
the person of the possessor (expressed by the stem, and thus present
in the 'background'). Obviously, it would appear more 'natural'
to interpret *extrinsecus* as referring to the 'outer object (of pos-
session)',[41] but one cannot disregard the fact that for the final part
of the passage, a l l textual witnesses have the reading ***in**trinsecus
pluralia, ut mei tui*.[42]

There is one further crucial consideration: since the text of *R*
is close to that of *B*,[43] this variant reading must probably be consid-

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38) The same (inconsistent) reading of Asper's text can be found in *V*[2] (which
Keil did not use for his edition in GL).

39) It should be noted, however, that *G* omits the portion *ut nostri vestri, aut
extrinsecus singularia*.

40) This explanation, deviating from the traditional view, has of course equal
grounding. In the traditional view, the possessor is 'intrinsic' to the act of possessing
(something), and the object is the element that enters 'from outside' into the act of
possessing. By contrast, the alternative account focuses on the object, which has the
'intrinsic property' of being possessed; on this view, the contingent fact of being its
possessor is 'extrinsic' to the object.

41) Varro's use of the term *extrinsecus* (cf. infra, note 45) shows that the term
was used to refer to something 'exterior'.

42) Except *A*, which on f. 117[r] offers the reading *aut intrinsecus singul^{ria}, ut
mei tui*. However, it cannot be excluded that *singul^{ria}* was written as a correction
over something that had been removed (perhaps *pluralia*?).

43) Cf. supra; the dependence of *R* on *B* has been demonstrated for other
texts that circulate in the same manuscripts, such as Pseudo-Palaemon's *Regulae*
(Rosellini 2001, xxiii and xl–xlii) and Lorenzo Valla's grammatical verses (Rizzo /
De Nonno 1997, 1616–1620).

ered a correction by a responsive copyist rather than having stem-
matic value. Thus, although the reading constitutes an interpreta-
tive – and conceptual-improvement upon this problematic passage,
it does not bring us any closer to the archetype. The most likely
explanation for our textual crux therefore appears to be that Asper's
text underwent an unfortunate reduction, possibly due to (a com-
bination of) homoearcton / homoeoteleuton, which gave rise to an
inconsistency. Asper's original wording, parallel or identical to that
of, e. g., Charisius (cf. supra, note 32: […] *aut intrinsecus pluralia
extrinsecus singularia, ut noster vester; aut intrinsecus singularia
extrinsecus pluralia, ut mei tui*), would then have been shortened
to *aut ⟨intrinsecus pluralia⟩ extrinsecus singularia, ut noster vester;
aut intrinsecus ⟨singularia extrinsecus⟩ pluralia, ut mei tui*. On this
explanation, Asper's doctrine – distorted in the process of textual
transmission – would have conformed to that of other (late) Latin
grammarians.

One question that remains – and which can only be answered
in a tentative way – concerns the possible sources for the views
expressed in Asper's *ars*. Within the Latin tradition, a background
for the distinction between the 'internal' and the 'external' reference
expressed by possessive pronouns can possibly be found in a gram-
matical observation by Pliny the Elder.[44] As regards Asper's 'math-
ematical' approach to the various *motus* of possessive pronouns,
the grammarian may have been inspired by the use of mathematical
equations in Marcus Terentius Varro's *De lingua Latina*.[45] Rely-

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44) Pseudo-Probus in his *ars grammatica* (GL 4, 137.11–15) refers to the dis-
tinction made by Pliny the Elder in his *Dubius sermo*, for which no direct textual
testimony survives: *Nunc etiam hoc monemus, quod Plinius Secundus pronomina
possessiva et per quandam mixturam sic putavit esse declinanda, id est intrinsecus
et extrinsecus. Sed hoc supervacue cunctis artis latoribus visum est disputari, quan-
doquidem eadem mixtura non habeat rationem, ad quam causam proficiat. Nunc
et eiusdem mixturae declinationem subicimus.* For the attribution to Pliny, cf. Beck
1894, 33; the passage is commented upon as "fragment 101C" by della Casa 1969.
In pseudo-Probus, this statement is followed by an extensive declension list (GL 4,
137.16–138.22). Pliny the Elder's grammatical views also had an impact on later dis-
cussions in Latin grammaticography of the status of the *articulus* or *pronomen arti-
culare*; cf. Denecker / Swiggers 2018, 138–139.

45) In De lingua Latina 8.7 Varro also uses the term *extrinsecus*, but with ref-
erence to nouns, and more specifically concerning the derivation of 'exterior' place
names from animal names; Goetz / Schoell 1964 [1910], 130: *Quae in eas res quae*

ing on Hellenistic sources,[46] Varro in his description of language structures has recourse to numerical series and equations in order to underpin his principle of proportionality or *analogia*.[47] This can be seen in particular in book 10 of *De lingua Latina*, where Varro (1) investigates the role of analogy in the morphological marking of case, (2) deals with the 'vertical' (*directa*) and 'crosswise' (*transversa*) *ratio* that can be recognized when aligning inflectional forms, and (3) discusses cases of (a) 'disjoined' proportionality, involving four distinct members (*rex – regi :: lex – legi*), and (b) 'conjoint' proportionality, involving three members (*legebam* standing to *lego* as *lego* stands to *legam*).[48] However, we have no concrete evidence that Varro offered a description of the referential semantics of possessive pronouns by means of a calculation.

In the Greek tradition – with which Asper may well have been (indirectly) acquainted[49] – the distinction between the two 'persons' or 'directions' of reference involved can be found in Apollonius Dyscolus' Περὶ συντάξεως.[50] In § 1.100 of this work,

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extrinsecus declinantur, sunt ab equo equile, ab ovibus ovile, sic alia […]. Kent 1951 [1938], 385: "The terms which are derived for application to exterior objects, are for example *equile* 'horse-stable' from *equus* 'horse', *ovile* 'sheepfold' from *oves* 'sheep', and others in the same way." There is no evidence that Varro applied the terminological pair *extrinsecus / intrinsecus* to the twofold designation of possessive pronouns.

46) Cf. Dahlmann's study (1964 [1932]; Ital. transl. 1997) of Varro's (Stoic and Alexandrian) sources for his theory of etymology, and for his theory of analogy vs. anomaly.

47) Cf. Fehling 1956–1957; for a more general discussion of Varro's theory of language, cf. Taylor 1974 and, more recently, Taylor 2015.

48) Varro's use of mathematical proportions is discussed by Taylor 1974, 42–49, Taylor 1977, Swiggers 1997, 75–80, and Garcea 2008.

49) This hypothesis is corroborated by the fact that in his description of the adverbs, Asper uses the term *absolutum* as a calque translation of the Greek term ἀπόλυτος; cf. Wouters / Swiggers 2007, 94.

50) For Apollonius' text, cf. the edition by Lallot 1997, with a meticulously prepared French translation and commentary. We have also consulted the (linguistically rephrased or modernized) English translation by Householder 1981 and the Spanish one by Bécares Botas 1987. The respective translations they offer of Apollonius' passage quoted above are: "Il faut maintenant passer à la construction possessive des pronoms. Les pronoms possessifs, qui indiquent deux personnes, celle qui est possédée et celle du possesseur, prendront normalement place dans [l']une] de trois constructions, du fait que les pronoms primaires, qui sont unipersonnels, admettaient, eux, comme nous l'avons montré, deux constructions" (Lallot 1997,

Apollonius remarks upon the twofold, 'bipersonal'[51] reference of possessive pronouns: it is precisely on account of the reference to the possessed object (and not to the possessor) that one can explain the definite article in the combinations ὁ ἐμός or ὁ σός.[52] The issue is taken up in § 2.103, where Apollonius makes the following observation (GG 2.2, 205.13–18):

> Ἀκολούθως ἰτέον καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν κτητικὴν σύνταξιν τῶν ἀντωνυμιῶν. Αἱ κτητικαὶ ἀντωνυμίαι δύο πρόσωπα παριστᾶσαι, λέγω τό τε τοῦ κτήματος καὶ τὸ τοῦ κτήτορος, δεόντως καὶ ἐν συντάξεσι τρισὶν καταγενήσονται, εἴγε αἱ τούτων πρωτότυποι μονοπρόσωποι οὖσαι δύο συντάξεις ἀνεδέξαντο, καθὼς ἀπεδείχθη.

> We now have to proceed with the possessive construction of pronouns. The possessive pronouns, which indicate two persons, the person of what is possessed and the person of the possessor, normally engage in one of three[53] constructions, given the fact that primary pronouns, which are unipersonal, accept two constructions, as we have shown.

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vol. 1, 180); "Next we must proceed to the topic of possessive pronouns and their constructions. Possessive pronouns refer to two distinct persons [NPs, referents], namely the thing possessed and the possessor, and necessarily appear in three different types of construction, since the basic personal pronouns, which refer to only one person, have two constructions [transitive and reflexive], as we have shown" (Householder 1981, 126); "A continuación hemos de pasar a la construcción posesiva de los pronombres. Los pronombres posesivos presentan dos personas, a saber, la de lo poseído y la del poseedor, y su construcción se realiza necesariamente de tres modos, dado que sus formas primitivas, los personales, por tener una sola referencia, admiten dos modos de construcción, según acabamos de mostrar" (Bécares Botas 1987, 215–216).

51) This 'bipersonal' reference of possessive pronouns is also remarked upon by Apollonius Dyscolus in his Περὶ ἀντωνυμίας (GG 2.1 fasc. 1, 17.1–17), where he points to the possibility that a possessive pronoun signifies an object that is possessed, without saying which one it is.

52) In Apollonius' words, the article is construed not with the pronominal person (i. e. the reference of the possessor), but with the implication of the object of possession (GG 2.2, 83.16–84.1: τοῦ δὲ ὑπακουομένου κατὰ τὸ κτῆμα): "[in using 'mine'], I am speaking about a slave, a house, or something of that sort [belonging to me]."

53) The three constructions are the following: (1) the object of possession commands the construction ("my horse runs", with third person agreement); (2) the person of the possessor governs the construction ("I have seen my friend"); or (3) a person exterior to both the possessor and the object of possession governs the construction ("the teacher is instructing my / your son").

Immediately afterwards (§ 2.112), Apollonius reverts to the issue of the 'bipersonal' reference of possessive pronouns, and remarks that the form ἐμός is understood twice or 'doubly' in the singular (i. e. the singular of the first person singular possessor, and the singular of the one object possessed), and that it 'connotes' (or 'makes appear aside', 'lets shine aside' – παρεμφαίνει) two persons (GG 2.2, 367.2): ἐμός καὶ δὶς ἑνικῶς νοεῖται καὶ δύο πρόσωπα παρεμφαίνει. In his observations, Apollonius thus points to a twofold 'person-reference' in possessive pronouns, one of them being oriented towards the object possessed, the other towards the possessor.

Given the fact that Asper establishes a comparison between Greek and Latin, and in view of his mention of Varro at the beginning of his *ars* (which may reflect a borrowing from Marius Victorinus' *ars*), it seems justified to assume that he derived inspiration for his views, through intermediaries, from one or several Greek and / or Roman predecessor(s). Nonetheless, his discussion of the grammatical number of possessive pronouns in correlation with their 'twofold reference' presents us with a highly personal approach, in terms of a calculation of the possible *motus*, to the matter at issue. Asper's stand remained a rather isolated one, lacking any real impact in the tradition of Latin grammaticography. One reason for the marginalization (and even oblivion) of this stand may have been the loose composition of the manual in which it was embedded, which limited its usefulness in didactic practice. The most likely explanation, however – and one that fits in well with a dating of the *ars Aspri* in the fourth century AD –, is that like other grammatical texts, it was soon eclipsed by the prevailing authority of Donatus and his commentators.

Reference list

GG = Grammatici Graeci, Lipsiae 1867–1901
GL = Grammatici Latini, Lipsiae 1855–1880
ThLL = Thesaurus Linguae Latinae, Lipsiae, now Berlin 1900–

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