Chapter 2
Atticism as a form of linguistic purism

1 The linguistic classification of Atticism

From the Hadrianic age onwards, Atticism championed the 5th-century BCE Attic dialect as a model of correct Greek through the production of special 'usage guides' or lexica.[1] This chapter considers whether Atticism should be defined as a form of standardisation or prescriptivism or more narrowly subsumed under the more specific category of linguistic purism. These are contiguous sociolinguistic phenomena that are not always easily distinguished: Sections 2 and 2.1 provide a rough description of their similarities and mutual differences in light of contemporary linguistic research. Following on from this, Section 3 proceeds to explore a second issue: what criteria should we apply in assigning Atticism to one of these categories?

In this chapter, we shall demonstrate that it is preferable to treat Atticism as a form of linguistic purism. Of course, this conclusion is hardly new; much of the standard bibliography equates Atticism to purism, including foundational reference works such as Tolkiehn (1925), Dihle (1977), and Tosi (1994a).[2] However, none of these works elaborated on the definition of Atticism as a form of purism: while the classification is taken for granted, it is never discussed critically. This is a direct consequence of the fact that although individual Atticist lexemes or lexicographic passages have been the object of linguistic analysis, Atticism as a whole has never been comprehensively studied from a distinctively linguistic perspective (see Chapter 1, Sections 1 and 5.1): we have neither a comprehensive view of its linguistic theories nor a set of criteria against which it might be assessed from the perspective of modern linguistics. Moreover, analyses of Atticism are inconsistent with respect to their use of terminology. Alongside the more ubiquitous 'purism', we also find alternative definitions, such as 'normativity', 'prescriptivism', and 'language correctness'. Schmitz' (1997) work, for instance, applies all the above

1 For the term 'usage guide', see Chapter 1, note 78.

2 The key terms employed in these studies include the following: 'Purismus' (Tolkiehn 1925, 2453), 'Reinheit' (Schmid *Atticismus passim*; Tolkiehn 1925, 2454), 'Puristen'/'Purismus' (Dihle 1977, 165, who applies them to Roman oratory; Schmitz 1997, 76; 116; 192 who uses them for the Atticist lexicographers), 'volontà analogistico-purista' (Tosi 1994a, 174), 'purismo' (Tosi 1994a, 206), 'purism' (Swain 1996, 17 and *passim*; Kim 2010, 476; G. Anderson 1993, 90; Tosi 2015, 632; Pagani 2015, 828), and 'linguistic purity' (Frösén 1974, 108).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111382890-002

terms to Atticist theories and lexica.[3] Again, in the absence of any theoretical discussion, it is impossible to ascertain whether Schmitz' terminological choice reflects an interpretative stance or is simply fortuitous (the latter seems more likely). The fact remains that prominent works on Atticism fail to discuss the criteria according to which they assign this phenomenon to a given sociolinguistic category.

Sections 2 and 3 will probe this issue and propose a set of criteria against which we can judge the extent to which Atticism may qualify as a form of purism according to the standards of (historical) sociolinguistics. We shall discuss the terminology, methodology, and structure of Atticist lexica against the framework proposed by G. Thomas (1991) and complemented by later works such as Langer, Nesse (2012). We shall also investigate the extent to which modern sociolinguistic categories enable us to approach Atticism as a linguistic phenomenon and the grey areas that remain after we have applied this methodology. Before commencing our analysis of Atticist lexica, we shall first briefly consider the difficulties inherent in the theoretical definition of purism vis-à-vis the contiguous phenomena of standardisation and prescriptivism.

2 Standardisation, prescriptivism, and purism

Standardisation, prescriptivism, and purism are all concerned with the definition of a superior, more desirable, or best form of language.[4] They are closely related sociolinguistic phenomena that adopt different perspectives on this aim and how it should be achieved. The establishment of boundaries between standardisation, prescriptivism, and purism is challenging and contingent on how broad or restrictive a notion of these one adopts.[5] In this section, we shall first define these phenomena before addressing their mutual differences and how these may apply to the case of Atticism.

Standardisation may be defined as an ongoing historical process that seeks to establish linguistic uniformity and minimise variability for political, social, or

3 In reference to Atticism itself, Schmitz employs the expressions 'normativer Charakter' (1997, 73), 'normativer Aspekt' (1997, 74), 'richtiger Sprachgebrauch' (1997, 46; 69; 74), 'korrekte Sprachform' (1997, 75), 'attizistiche Korrektheit' (1997, 78), 'Sprachrichtigkeit' (1997, 89 and *passim*), and 'Sprachreinheit' (1997, 69 and *passim*). Schmitz only rarely employs 'Purismus' and 'Purist/Puristen' for his own description of Atticism (see Schmitz 1997, 76; 116; 192). In most instances, these terms are used to qualify the attitudes of contemporary intellectuals toward Atticism: see Schmitz (1997, 80–2) on Galen; Schmitz (1997, 116; 118; 192) on Philostratus.

4 O. Walsh (2016, 8–9).

5 See Brunstad (2001, 23–30); Brincat (2003, 155); O. Walsh (2016, 8); Ayres-Bennett (2020, 192).

economic needs.[6] It aims to enforce a norm to overcome linguistic barriers within the same (political) community, to centralise language – particularly at the level of lower education – or even to plan its renewal or reconstruction from scratch, often with the additional aim of creating a community symbol.[7] Prescriptivism is contiguous to standardisation and focuses on elaborating *prescriptions* of arbitrary norms of linguistic usage by authority while rejecting others.[8] Purism may be provisionally defined as 'the manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable (including those originating in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language)' (G. Thomas 1991, 12; see below for a further discussion of this definition).[9]

It is important to note that all forms of standardisation, prescriptivism, and purism are inherently arbitrary, since the notion of linguistic correctness itself is an ideological construct. Hence, these phenomena are usually recognised as a specific focus of sociolinguistics but not of formal linguistics which, it is assumed, should only be concerned with *describing* language. However, their study is becoming increasingly central to linguistics, as is the recognition that it is difficult to set a clear boundary between prescriptivist and descriptivist attitudes to language.[10] In that which follows, we shall first highlight some areas of confusion and overlap between standardisation and prescriptivism on the one hand and purism on the other before proposing a set of criteria which may help overcome this confusion.

As a first step, it is necessary to reflect on the target of purism. Thomas' definition (see above) proposes a broad understanding of the phenomenon, by which

6 Our elaboration of Milroy, Milroy (2012, 19). Cf. Milroy (2001, 531).

7 Langer, Nesse (2012, 611).

8 Curzan (2014, 28–32) addresses the role of prescriptivism in language standardisation. See also Ayres-Bennett (2020, 184 n. 1): 'in broad terms, the term 'prescriptivism' is used, following the OED, to refer to 'the practice or advocacy of prescriptive grammar; the belief that the grammar of a language should lay down rules to which usage must conform', whilst 'prescription', itself underpinned by a prescriptive ideology, is used for the act of prescribing or the result of that prescription. In practice, some scholars use the terms more or less interchangeably'.

9 Cf. Chapter 1, Section 2. G. Thomas (1991, 115) also recognises the 'strong calibration between purism and standardization', given that both are concerned with the same functions of language (among them, the prestige function).

10 See Joseph (1987, 17–8); D. Cameron (1995, 3–11); Trask (2007, 48); Milroy (2001, 531); Milroy, Milroy (2012, 4–6); Curzan (2014, 12–6). Ayres-Bennett (2020, 182) notes that 'the prescriptive norm is typically based on the descriptive norm, that is, it often begins with the observation of usage, but then a notion of what is right and wrong, correct and incorrect, is added'. This progression may also be useful to assess the evolution of Greek linguistic thought: see Chapter 6, Section 2.

purism is not primarily or solely concerned with foreign elements, but may also target internal features – namely, those that also lie at the heart of standardisation and prescriptivism.[11] Several scholars have criticised this definition as problematic on the grounds that Thomas' framework is not conducive to the distinction of purism from other related sociolinguistic phenomena. Thus, more restrictive approaches associate purism with a reaction against foreign elements, which is accompanied by the (re)introduction of features native to the language in question ('xenophobic purism').[12] This view is ubiquitous in surveys of modern forms of purism, whereby attempts to preserve languages from the intrusion of foreign elements have gone together with nation-building and independentist stances. For instance, Brunstad's (2001) study of purist endeavours in Danish, Swedish, Faroese, and Norwegian defines purism as 'a normative ideology characterised by the idea of a pure language: certain foreign elements should be kept out on the grounds that they make the language impure. This perception is often combined with active efforts to replace language loans with native material or with strategies to adapt loans to native language structures' (our translation of Brunstad 2001, 1).[13] Similarly, other forms of purism entail a process of standardisation towards the definition of a national language as part of a wider political reclamation.

The variety of approaches summarily described here obliges us to confront several fundamental questions. The first question is whether purism is invariably rooted in processes of standardisation and whether it can exist without standardisation. In general, studies that focus on the more restrictive, 'xenophobic' forms of purism tend to assume that it is always a consequence of standardisation.[14] Even Thomas' looser definition (above) acknowledges that purism lies at the heart of standardisation efforts undertaken for many national languages.[15] However, the recognition that purism may play a part in standardisation should not inevitably lead us to conclude that all forms of standardisation must also entail purist attitudes, and this is particularly salient in the context of Graeco-Roman

11 A similar understanding in Delveroudi, Moschonas (2003, 4).

12 Milroy, Milroy (2012) focus on the English prescriptive debate. Although they do not state this explicitly, it appears that they consider purism to be directed solely against foreign elements and not internal developments, as indicated by the fact that they only mention 'purism' with respect to objections to foreign borrowing in English; cf. Ayres-Bennett (2020, 193).

13 Similar notions of purism feature in works assessing purist attitudes in languages as diverse as Tamil (Annamalai 1979), Norwegian (Gerdener 1986), Quechua (Niño-Murcia 1997), and Québécois French (O. Walsh 2016), among others (see also Chapter 1, Section 2).

14 See also Langer, Nesse (2012, 612), who subscribe to the view that 'linguistic purism only occurs in standardized languages or in languages in the process of standardization'.

15 G. Thomas (1991, 121) mentions Croatian and Modern Hebrew as examples.

theories of language correctness.[16] Like prescriptivism, standardisation is not inherently conservative (although it often is); it may prescribe norms that reflect linguistic change as it occurs or even impose change from scratch.[17] Purism, by contrast, is always opposed to change and emerges as a traditionalist reaction to it. Recognising that some 'osmosis' may occur between standardisation, prescriptivism, and purism does not preclude the establishment of boundaries between these phenomena.[18] We will mention some practical ways to do this in Section 2.1.

The second fundamental question that we must preliminarily address is whether it is useful to apply a restrictive (i.e. 'xenophobic') definition to purism and whether this definition is helpful in allowing linguists to describe purism comprehensively and cross-linguistically. Restrictive notions of purism do not always hold true and are often inconsistent. As an example, we may cite the Quechua purist movement studied by Niño-Murcia (1997). This movement does not simply wish to purge Quechua of Spanish influence. Significantly, it also involves the promotion of a perceived 'better' variety of Quechua (*qhapaj'simi*) that was associated with the Incan nobility over the perceived 'dialect' spoken by the lower classes (*runa simi* 'language of the people'). Like Quechua purism, which involves both xenophobic and elitist elements, several other iterations of purism are also hybrid. Atticism, discussed herein, provides a further and often-neglected example of linguistic attitudes that are associated with more than one type of purism (see Section 3.2). It follows that for a cross-linguistic study it is more convenient to approach purism in terms of its broader implications: not as 'un système d'idées clairement et explicitement formulé' but rather as 'une mentalité' (Delveroudi, Moschonas 2003, 1).

2.1 Differentiating elements: An increasingly militant linguistic ideology

This discussion of various forms of purism in their relation and overlap with standardisation and prescriptivism has foregrounded the centrality of their linguistic mentality. We shall now argue that the differences between these three

16 See also Moschonas, Delveroudi (2003, 5): '[l]e purisme est un présupposé de la grammaire normative'.

17 This point is made by O. Walsh (2016, 9): cf. Ayres-Bennett (2020, 193). An example of non-conservative prescriptivism would be the new Norwegian method of counting, discussed by Langer, Nesse (2012, 614), which was introduced for practical (rather than ideological) purposes.

18 Ayres-Bennett, Bellamy (2021, 7) discuss efforts to resist changes to a standard language but tellingly quote evidence from instances of purism, thus involuntarily highlighting the gradient that is proposed here: protectionist attitudes are more tied with the ideology of purism than specifically with that of standardisation.

phenomena may be conveniently correlated to (1) the dialectic between pragmatism and abstractness; (2) the way these phenomena attempt to codify a language standard; and (3) the nature of the ideological discourse.

Regarding (1), standardisation tends to have more pronounced functional purposes than prescriptivism and purism, which instead exhibit a more prominent tendency towards abstractness and arbitrariness. Standardisation focuses on the concrete means of achieving uniformity and its benefits.[19] Excellent examples include the debates surrounding the spelling reforms of Modern Greek (1982: an analysis in Papanastasiou 2008) and German (1996: an analysis in Johnson 2005), both instances of orthographic standardisation.[20] These state-imposed reforms aimed both to simplify orthography and to align it more closely with the respective phonetic realities of Greek and German while making the languages themselves easier to learn.[21] The motivations behind these standardisations, therefore, were practical, mostly objective, and largely sustained by linguists.[22] Prescriptivism and purism instead are marked by a somewhat more militant ambition towards codification, which tends to express itself in less objective terms. To pursue the same example further, opponents of the Modern Greek and German spelling reforms focus on the cultural significance of preserving the historical, traditional writing system, which they arbitrarily associate with ideas of 'national' character and prestige culture.[23] These opponents rarely offer rational, hardcore linguistic arguments but rather approach orthography as an expression of identity: in their discourse, concrete needs yield to arbitrariness.[24] On the linguistic level, the more militant the struggle of prescriptivism and purism for correct language, the narrower their notion of grammaticality. In their marked arbitrariness, prescriptivism and purism may thus pronounce a given form to be

19 See Milroy (2005, 325).

20 On the spelling system as a highly regulated domain of standardisation, see Ayres-Bennett, Bellamy (2021, 5).

21 See Papanastasiou (2008, 166–77); Johnson (2005, 55–83). In the Greek debate, these stances are largely based on Manolis Triantaphyllidis' positions on the Modern Greek 'language question' (Papanastasiou 2008, 148–59, especially 155–6).

22 Cf. conversely Milroy, Milroy (2012, 19), who, while admitting that standardisation is motivated by 'various political, social and commercial needs', also point out its intrinsically ideological nature, given that 'a standard language is an idea of the mind rather than a reality'.

23 Mackridge (2009, 323–4); Johnson (2005, 129–30).

24 See e.g. Langer (2000, 26–32) on the German spelling reform. Other similar cases are mentioned by Johnson (2005, 7). She offers an interesting treatment of why linguists' motivations for sustaining the German orthographic reform were often misinterpreted by the public and how the reformers might have improved the understanding of the implementation process (Johnson 2005, 156–62; on the stances of 'professional' opponents of the reform, see Johnson 2005, 120).

more linguistically logical (some examples in Milroy, Milroy 2012, 57 apropos prescriptivism) or even more beautiful (a common concern of purism: see below). However, in the dialectic between pragmatism and abstractness, purism goes a step further than prescriptivism: it imposes a moral, nostalgic, and polemical rhetoric on this dialectic.[25] To sum up, standardisation, prescriptivism, and purism arguably represent a continuum that progresses from concrete stances to more arbitrary ones.

Regarding (2), one of the reasons that it is difficult to distinguish between phenomena in this sociolinguistic continuum is that the category of standard language itself, with which they are all concerned, is an ill-defined notion.[26] It is also a particularly thorny notion when applied to the Greek situation, for which a narrow, modern understanding of linguistic standard is problematic.[27] Turning to Atticising Greek, while it does comply with some current definitions of 'standard language' – such as the fact that it entails some codification and elaboration (see below) and that it may be looked upon as the high variety, used for writing (Auer 2005, 8) – it also lacks certain characteristics that some models of standardisation identify as necessary for a variety to qualify as a standard language. These include, for instance, the speakers' recognition that the standard is 'set qualitatively apart from other *x* dialects' (Joseph 1987, 6: see below for the fact that Atticism did not have unanimous recognition and acceptance), or the 'intertranslatability' function, which requires regular intertranslation with other standard languages (Joseph 1987, 6): in fact, Atticist lexica and other texts commenting on the Atticists' efforts abound with remarks on the mutual unintelligibility of koine and Atticising features.

Different aspects of the current definitions of 'standard language' fall short on some levels or fail to account for specific forms of standardisation, to the extent that recent sociolinguistic approaches have increasingly emphasised the need for a loose notion of standardisation as an ongoing process, thus shifting the focus from the taxonomic identification of types of standardisation to the mechanisms at play therein.[28] Purism seeks to establish the 'pure language' as the linguistic standard. However, purism may be an unfulfilled aim, while standardisation, to claim this name, must be able to successfully codify a language standard. To establish objective criteria according to which the extent and success of standardisation may be

25 See Paveau, Rosier (2008, 57).

26 Some have tended to identify the standard with the written form: see Milroy, Milroy (2012, 18) on standard English. On why this is unsatisfactory, see Ayres-Bennett, Bellamy (2021, 4). Clackson (2015a, 313) discusses the issue from a Classical point of view.

27 As recognised by Colvin (2009, 36).

28 Milroy, Milroy (2012, 150), with discussion in Clackson (2015a, 314).

measured, Einar Haugen (1966b) elaborated a now classic schema according to which standardisation depends upon four processes:[29] (i) selection (of the linguistic norm at the basis of the standard – for Atticism this would be 5th-century BCE Attic, of course); (ii) 'codification' (the establishment of norms for phonology, grammar, and lexicon ideally to reduce variation in form to a minimum); (iii) 'acceptance' (whereby the whole speech community views a certain variety as the norm); (iv) 'elaboration', whereby the speech community actively extends the chosen variety (especially its vocabulary) to accommodate the standard language to various communication purposes (for instance, administration: that which Haugen called 'maximal variation in function').[30] Haugen's schema may be fruitfully applied to Atticism to determine whether or not it may be classified as a form of standardisation. In other words, our premise is that Atticism may be described as a form of standardisation if it can be proven to have been conducive to the codification of a linguistic standard.

Atticism shares with standardisation two aspects of Haugen's schema: 'selection' (it picks out Classical Attic as the norm that forms the basis of the linguistic standard) and 'codification' (it establishes phonological, morphological, and lexical norms through dictionaries). However, Atticism lacks the two functions that, in Haugen's schema, qualify the true making of standardisation: 'acceptance' and 'elaboration'. Beginning with the latter, we may recall that for Haugen a defining criterion of elaboration is the adaptability of the standard variety to all communication purposes. Indeed, Atticism actively strove to achieve exactly the opposite: it countered phono-morphological innovations, new vocabulary, and semantic shifts (particularly when they were connected with the administrative, technical, or scientific register) and promoted only rules, vocabulary, and meanings that were documented in Classical Attic authors. Inevitably, this means that Atticism – like most forms of purism – was focused on a past epoch of the language, which it sought to reproduce, imitate, and restore to life (the 'Golden Age Rule', see Section 3.2), rather than seeking to extend it so that it might accommodate new linguistic developments or communication needs.

Atticism does not appear to have fully achieved acceptance (iii) itself. The specific question in this respect is to what extent the prestige of Atticising Greek was recognised by all members of the speech community. This underpins a more general and difficult question: how should we address the notion of 'speech community' in ancient society? The question of whether prose writers, rhetors, and the

29 See Milroy, Milroy (2012, 22–3) for an alternative model. Ayres-Bennett (2020) and Ayres-Bennett (2021) elaborate on Haugen's schema and suggest some improvements.

30 See Haugen (1966b, 931).

educated elite should be seen as being sufficiently representative of a 'speech community' is open to debate. The assumption that these social groups recognised Atticising Greek as the high variety is not sufficient to conclude that the rest of the speech community entertained the same view and, therefore, that Atticism *was* a form of standardisation. In their definition of standard, Milroy and Milroy (2012, 1) highlighted the 'ideology' that promotes it as a preferable form of language. This is also a prominent feature in purist discourse (see Section 3.1). In discussing these features as revealing of standardisation, Clackson highlights as a crucial factor the fact that 'this ideology of the standard language is not just limited to a certain sector of society, but is generalised among all speakers, who internalise the judgement that non-standard forms as incorrect and inferior' (Clackson 2015a, 313–4). If we apply this view to Atticism, we see that this is hardly the case. Documentary texts (both inscriptions and papyri) show a remarkable lack of uniformity in Atticising features which – if present at all – mark special high-register texts, unique examples in a much larger corpus composed in registers of the written koine. Literary texts too are not uniformly Atticising, not even those written by the authors of the Second Sophistic, where various koine features are normally tolerated and actively employed. This lack of the 'acceptance' function thus exposes Atticism as a failed attempt at linguistic standardisation (see also Chapter 1, Section 3).

As further proof that Atticism does not fully fall within the standardisation category, we may bring in the koine as a point of comparison. The koine ticks all the boxes of Haugen's schema.[31] 'Selection' (i) is behind its very formation: the organised promotion of Attic-Ionic to a supraregional variety, through the combined efforts of the Athenian League first (the phase of *Großattisch*) and Macedonian administration later, turned the koine into 'the language of government [. . .] and education' (Colvin 2009, 42). 'Codification' (ii) is behind the grammars and treatises which placed the koine at the core of their description of linguistic norms – thus making it the focus of 'literate education' (Clackson 2015a, 314) and occasionally a benchmark against which to assess non-standard forms such as the dialects. As we have argued in Chapter 1, Section 3.1, this attention to the koine on the part of Greek grammarians does not mean that they unequivocally viewed it as a standard language, a correct form of Greek that was preferable to others. Clackson makes the important point that ἑλληνισμός, as a theory of linguistic correctness, was neither the correct form of language taught in schools (*pace* Versteegh 1986) nor was it focused on only one variety of Greek (e.g. the koine) against the others but recognised virtues of correctness in all varieties of the language, considering Greek as an abstract conception, a conglomerate of competing

31 See Consani (1993, 25); Consani (1998, 97–8).

correct norms (see Chapter 6, Section 3.3). Clackson's view may be further refined. The very fact that the koine is acknowledged in these grammatical treatises as one of the varieties worthy of attention, on a par with the Classical dialects, attests to its gradual path towards the standardisation that, still perhaps not fully recognised by ancient scholars, would later blossom into the Byzantine perception of the koine as the 'umbrella language' that subsumed the dialects (Chapter 3, Section 2) and that all Greeks spoke (Chapter 3, Section 3). Moreover, the koine functioned as a medium of communication between speakers of different local varieties, one of the conditions upon which Haugen (1966b, 927) based his definition of (standard) language.

The codification function is also at work in the promotion of the koine as the language of administration across all regions of the Greek-speaking world and against the local dialects, which at this chronological stage represent low – mostly only spoken – varieties. The 'acceptance' function (iii), meanwhile, is evidenced by the koine's widespread use across written production in several literary and documentary registers, some of which embody the closest approximation we get to the use of the koine as a spoken medium as well. Finally, the 'elaboration' function (iv) is also fully in view: the koine developed a comprehensive set of specialised registers and vocabularies to cater to the needs of science, technology, bureaucracy, and philosophy.

In conclusion, it is reasonable to say that the koine, by and large, complies with the standardisation paradigm, embodying a variety that was subject to an ongoing process of standardisation.[32] This is testified by the fact that it was the common language across different regions of the Greek-speaking world for an extended period of time and especially by the fact that it formed the basis of the Modern Greek *dimotiki*.[33] Atticism, by contrast, fell short of reaching the level of a standard language. Atticising Greek halted in the middle of its struggle for standardisation, posing a major challenge to the establishment of the koine as a norm, since it embodied an alternative competing norm.

We now come to the final aspect of our differentiation between standardisation, prescriptivism, and purism (3): the nature of their linguistic ideologies. More specifically, we shall consider the extent to which the ideological discourse that pertains to these phenomena is based on notions of 'contamination, corruption, protection, and preservation' (O. Walsh 2016, 9). Such rhetoric of endangerment and contamination has also been studied in relation to prescriptivism (D. Ca-

32 Bubeník (1989, 7) defines it as 'standard'.

33 See Milroy and Milroy (2012, 150) on standardisation as an ongoing process and Clackson (2015a, 313) on why it makes no sense to see standardisation as a continuum.

meron 1995; Curzan 2014) but is especially prominent in purism (Ayres-Bennett 2020, 192). Standardisation mostly prescribes or proscribes linguistic forms on formal grounds (in the latter case, e.g., because they are dialectal, archaic, slang, or phonetically incoherent). Prescriptivist and purist ideological discourses, meanwhile, entail a more marked focus on social values, gradually progressing towards the extremist end of the sociolinguistic continuum and embodying – at least in modern cultures – 'illiberal' attitudes to language and society (see further Section 3.3).[34]

One of the characteristics that help to identify purist discourse is its 'unprofessional' status.[35] The purist approach to language matters tends to be subjective, more pertinent to folk linguistics than to linguistic theory. This has been amply noticed cross-linguistically. As a recent example, we may cite the purist debate surrounding the Anglicisation of German, which has involved journalists, intellectuals, and laymen but not linguists.[36] A further characteristic of purism, tied with the former, is the prominence of emotional and aesthetic concerns, such as the fear that language is becoming 'corrupt'; the desire to preserve the form it took at an idealised time – that of our ancestors, for example, or of some prominent writer(s) – and the notion that one's language is 'better' or 'more beautiful' than another and must therefore be shielded against corrupting influences.[37] The purist ideological construction also informs the terminology adopted in reference to linguistic features: prescribed forms are marked by highly evaluative labels, while proscribed elements are accompanied by disparaging expressions.[38] Owing to their mostly non-technical nature, such purist concerns are widespread in many cultures' public debates. For the same reason, however, purism frequently fails to exert an impact on governmental policies and the speech community (see

34 Ayres-Bennett, Bellamy (2021, 9) highlight how some approaches have also interpreted standardisation as a means of imposing social hierarchies through language and how this runs counter to other views of standardisation as an essentially 'democratic' factor.

35 G. Thomas (1991, 37–49), with discussion in O. Walsh (2016, 12–14). See also Langer, Nesse (2012, 611); D. Cameron (1995); Milroy, Milroy (2012) (all these studies are concerned with the linguistic ideologies of prescriptivism in a broader sense); and cf. the provocative psycholinguistic account of Pinker (1994, 373–403).

36 Hohenhaus (2002, 161).

37 Cf. Delveroudi, Moschonas (2003, 4). On these 'myths' of prescriptive ideology broadly understood, see, e.g., Watts (2000, 31–6). The collection of essays in Bauer, Trudgill (1998) addresses many more that have almost universal relevance.

38 Studies that apply restrictive notions of purism attribute these attitudes to 'prescriptivism' instead: see, e.g., the definition in Trask (2007, 169), with the discussion in Langer, Nesse (2012, 607–8). See also Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2020, 12); Milroy, Milroy (2012); D. Cameron (1995) *passim*.

above) and to produce a real normative standardisation.[39] In that which follows, we shall focus further on the purist ideological discourse and address the shape that it assumes in the theorisation of Atticism.

3 Atticism within the purist framework: A checklist

The recurring folk conceptualisations of language analysed in Section 2.1 constitute the backbone of purism. Against this background, we turn here to a consideration of whether – and to what extent – the Atticist discourse complies with the purist paradigm. We shall first provide the working definition of purism that guides this consideration: we understand purism broadly as 'the conscious rejection of elements which are considered undesirable' (Langer, Nesse 2012, 608) – that is, not only (and, in the case of Atticism, not mostly) foreign features. Next, we propose a set of diagnostic questions that may be used as a sort of purism 'checklist', as follows:

(1) Is language described/prescribed in evaluative terms (good/bad, authentic/false, etc.)?
(2) Is language described/prescribed mostly through symbols and metaphors rather than technical language?
(3) Is the perceived correct language identified with a past epoch (the 'Golden Age Rule')?
(4) Are the features that must be avoided or cultivated in the correct language selected primarily in accordance with extra-linguistic criteria (such as cultural and social prestige)?
(5) Is language policy the initiative of a small group of individuals whose self-representation is also symbolically loaded?
(6) Do the language policies espoused by these groups have a perceivable societal impact?

In the next sections, we shall consider these questions to confirm which aspects of Atticism may align with purist discourse.

39 See Hohenhaus (2002, 159–60) apropos the complaints against the perceived Anglicisation of German, which have failed to produce ad hoc legislation.

3.1 The Atticist discourse: Evaluative terminology and impressionistic stances

In this section, we address the first two issues – namely, (1) to what extent the Atticist view of Greek involves evaluative terminology, and (2) whether language is approached symbolically or technically. According to G. Thomas (1991, 188), 'purism provides a set of principles on which a judgement may be made with respect to which elements are deemed to improve, and which to impair, the corpus of a given language. These principles (the purist paradigm) are based not on functional (or rational) but on aesthetic (or non-rational) criteria'. Among the aesthetic criteria, G. Thomas (1991, 39) includes those associated with the concepts of wholeness, homogeneity, and pristineness; among the psychological criteria, he includes the impulse to protect the language from threat (usually external) and disintegration (usually internal).[40]

The presence of such attitudes in Atticism is confirmed by a lexical search conducted across six lexica in Tribulato (forthcoming b): Phrynichus' *Eclogue* and *Praeparatio sophistica*, Pollux's *Onomasticon*, the *Antiatticist*, Moeris' lexicon, and the *Philaeterus*. The search was conducted to determine to what extent significant evaluative terms, such as the positive labels δόκιμος, ἀγαθός, καλός, ἀκριβής, and ὀρθός, and negative labels, such as ἀδόκιμος, μοχθηρός, κακός, κίβδηλος, σόλοικος, and αἰσχρός, among others, occur in the lexica and with what frequency. The results have shown that δόκιμος (72x) and ἀδόκιμος (43x), pertaining to the concept of 'authentic, unadulterated' language, are by far the most common, followed by the ethical and aesthetic adjectives ἀγαθός (31x), καλός (18x), μοχθηρός (13x), and κακός (8). Significantly, terms that may be considered more appropriate to linguistic discourse, such as ἀκριβής 'exact, accurate' and ὀρθός 'correct', are much less present: the former has seven occurrences, while the latter has a mere three. This confirms that Atticist discourse is heavily marked by non-rational criteria.[41] To the list discussed in Tribulato (forthcoming b) we may also add that the two versions of Philemon's lexicon (see Chapter 1, Section 4.1) preserve the equally loaded evaluative terms βάρβαρος and ξένος/ξενικός.[42] Evaluative discourse of this nature is most prominent in Phrynichus' *Eclogue* and particularly in the prefatory letter.

40 G. Thomas (1991, 47). Another useful 'checklist' of purist attitudes is provided by Hohenhaus (2002, 155).

41 For a comparandum, see Bourdieu's list of expressions characterising 'linguistic excellence' (Bourdieu 1991, 60).

42 See Batisti (2024c).

Phryn. *Ecl.* praef. 1–16: Φρύνιχος Κορνηλιανῷ εὖ πράττειν. τήν τε ἄλλην σου παιδείαν θαυμάζων, ἣν διαφερόντως ὑπὲρ ἅπαντας ὅσοις ἐγὼ ἐνέτυχον πεπαίδευσαι, καὶ δὴ καὶ τοῦτο θαυμάσας ἔχω, τὸ περὶ τὴν τῶν καλῶν καὶ δοκίμων ὀνομάτων κρίσιν. ταῦτ' ἄρα κελεύσαντός σου τὰς ἀδοκίμους τῶν φωνῶν ἀθροισθῆναι πάσας μὲν οὐχ οἷός τ' ἐγενόμην τὰ νῦν περιλαβεῖν, τὰς δ' ἐπιπολαζούσας μάλιστα καὶ τὴν ἀρχαίαν διάλεξιν ταραττούσας καὶ πολλὴν αἰσχύνην ἐμβαλλούσας. οὐ λανθάνει δὲ σέ, ὥσπερ οὐδ' ἄλλο τι τῶν κατὰ παιδείαν, ὥς τινες ἀποπεπτωκότες τῆς ἀρχαίας φωνῆς καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀμαθίαν καταφεύγοντες πορίζουσι μάρτυράς τινας τοῦ προειρῆσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχαίων τάσδε τὰς φωνάς· ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ πρὸς τὰ διημαρτημένα ἀφορῶμεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰ δοκιμώτατα τῶν ἀρχαίων. καὶ γὰρ αὐτοῖς εἴ τις αἵρεσιν προθείη, ποτέρως ἂν ἐθέλοιεν διαλέγεσθαι ἀρχαίως καὶ ἀκριβῶς ἢ νεοχμῶς καὶ ἀμελῶς, δέξαιντ' ἂν ἀντὶ παντὸς ἡμῖν σύμψηφοι γενόμενοι τῆς ἀμείνονος γενέσθαι μοίρας· οὐ γάρ τις οὕτως ἄθλιος ὡς τὸ αἰσχρὸν τοῦ καλοῦ προτιθέναι. ἔρρωσο.

Phrynichus to Cornelianus, greetings. Besides admiring all the rest of your education, in which you are instructed in such a distinctive way from all others I chanced upon, I admire especially your ability to select beautiful and approved words. Although you requested that I collect all the unapproved expressions, I was not able to include all those that are in use nowadays but only the most current ones, which corrupt the ancient way of speaking and bring much shame to it. Certainly, it does not escape your attention – just as nothing else that concerns education escapes you – that some people, who have fallen off from ancient speech and seek refuge in ignorance, produce some witnesses in favour of the fact that these expressions have already been used by the ancients. But we should not look up at what is wrong, but at the most authentic expressions of the ancients. For, if one gave them (i.e., ancient speakers) the opportunity to choose whether they would like to speak in the ancient and accurate way or in the new and careless one, they would choose above anything else to vote like us and side with the best party. Indeed, nobody is so wretched as to prefer baseness to goodness. Farewell.

Phrynichus states that he admires his addressee, the *ab epistulis Graecis* Imperial secretary Cornelianus, for his ability to choose both 'beautiful' and 'approved' words (τὸ περὶ τὴν τῶν καλῶν καὶ δοκίμων ὀνομάτων κρίσιν). The precedence afforded to beauty in this sentence attests to the fact that the Atticist view of language is based more on arbitrary criteria than on a typological definition of linguistic correctness. In the letter's central section, Phrynichus attacks the 'incorrect expressions' (τὰς ἀδοκίμους τῶν φωνῶν) that crowd contemporary language (τὰ νῦν), 'perturbing and throwing it into much shame' (ταραττούσας καὶ πολλὴν αἰσχύνην ἐμβαλλούσας). Speaking in an 'innovative manner' (νεοχμῶς) is equated to using language 'carelessly' (ἀμελῶς), and the recommended counteraction is to use language 'in the ancient manner and with care' (ἀρχαίως καὶ ἀκριβῶς). These passages contain all the typical elements of purist discourse and recur in another well-known entry in the *Eclogue* (394: see below), in which Phrynichus vents his indignation at those who admire Menander.

Other lexicographers may focus on different qualities in their evaluative discourse, as for example, Pollux's tendency to pass judgement on certain words,

highlighting their stylistic 'value'. Of the lexicographers, it is Pollux who most frequently uses ἀγαθός (26x) and μοχθηρός (13x), while apparently refraining from expressing his views in terms of 'authenticity' (δόκιμος and ἀδόκιμος thus have lower attestations than in Phrynichus: a mere 5 and 2, respectively, against the 66 and 39 in Phrynichus). Only a highly abbreviated version of the *Antiatticist* survives, but it is revealing that the evaluative terminology that it preserves complies with that used by Phrynichus, who was likely to have been the *Antiatticist*'s polemical target.[43] Moeris and the *Philaeterus*, meanwhile, are wholly lacking in this kind of evaluative terminology, resorting instead to other terms: Moeris prefers idiosyncratic labels, such as Ἀττικοί, Ἕλληνες, κοινόν, and ἑλληνικόν (see Pellettieri 2024b) while the *Philetaerus* has one instance of βάρβαρος (see Benuzzi, Batisti 2024). It cannot be ruled out that this different distribution partly reflects epitomisation, but a part of it must also depend on these lexica's different orientations.[44]

One might argue that this terminology is not specific to purism but also characterises prescriptivism and standardisation (see Section 2.1). To demonstrate that we are dealing with a kind of ideological discourse that is exclusive to Atticist lexicography and that should be classified within the purist framework, Tribulato (forthcoming b) conducts a further lexical search to compare several of the Atticist lexica with the grammatical fragments of Apollonius Dyscolus and Herodian and with the anonymous treatise on solecism attributed to Herodian (Sandri 2020). Since we expect grammars to be more oriented towards description than towards strict prescriptivism, the lack of proscriptions comparable to those of the lexica may not be significant. We may expect, however, that works aiming to define incorrect usage, such as the treatise on solecism, will be blunter in their criticism of mistakes. Nonetheless, the terminology and tone adopted by these texts are markedly different from those of the Atticist lexica. While all the texts compared use prescriptive expressions such as δεῖ ('one must') and the proscriptive φυλάσσομαι ('to guard oneself against') and ἁμαρτάνω ('to be wrong'), the more ideologically charged adjectives, such as ἀδόκιμος ('not authentic, unapproved'), ἀμαθής ('unlearned'), and ἀγοραῖος ('vulgar'), are confined to Atticist discourse. Phrynichus uses all of these expressions several times and may thus be identified as the most representative of the group. He is outnumbered by the *Antiatticist* only with respect to the use of the prescriptive δεῖ, which the *Antiatticist* interestingly invariably uses to refer to the prescriptions of other Atticists in the common sentence οὐ φάσι δεῖν λέγειν ('they say that [this] should not be said'). δεῖ is also relatively common in the normative treatises of Apol-

43 For an overview of the matter, see S. Valente (2015b, 52–4).

44 On the transmission of Moeris' lexicon, see D. U. Hansen (1998, 9–11); Dettori (2022); Pellettieri (2024b). For the *Philaeterus*, see Dain (1954, 9–13); Benuzzi, Batisti (2024).

lonius Dyscolus and Herodian as well as in the Pseudo-Herodianic treatise on solecism, as might be expected of works that establish linguistic rules (e.g. for accentuation and declension). However, these grammatical works lack the militant adjectives ἀδόκιμος, ἀμαθής, and ἀγοραῖος, which, on the whole, are more common in Phrynichus than in the rest of Atticist lexicography.

This test, despite its approximations (see Tribulato forthcoming b), allows us to substantiate the general impression of a different style and tone conveyed by Phrynichus and the other Atticists against the fragments of Greek grammar. Grammatical works may criticise certain linguistic usages as incorrect, but they almost never identify these as 'corrupt' Greek. Similarly, linguistic evolution is neither stigmatised as a threat to the pristineness of language nor presented as evidence of 'moral' depravity. Consider, for example, the difference between the *Eclogue*'s prefatory letter and the introductory section of the Pseudo-Herodianic treatise on solecism ([1] 1-.1–12 Sandri). As we have just seen, Phrynichus equates the incorrect use of language with a perturbation of the natural order. The treatise on solecism begins by emphasising that an imprecise manner of speaking is a sign of ignorance (πᾶς λόγος μὴ ἀκριβῆ τὴν ὁμιλίαν ἔχων ἀπαιδευσίας ἱκανὰ φέρει τεκμήρια 'any speech that does not have a precise elocution offers abundant signs of ignorance') but nothing more than this: while mistakes must be avoided, they are not regarded as evidence of improper reasoning and behaviour. This treatise was evidently intended for the theoretical education of students of rhetoric rather than seasoned orators. Nonetheless, its prosaic descriptive tone, which eschews polemical and militant statements, distinguishes it from the Atticist lexica.

Programmatic statements are similarly absent from the introductions to Apollonius Dyscolus' works, as may be appreciated, for instance, by reading the first paragraph of *On Syntax*:

> Apoll.Dysc. *Synt*. 1.1.2–5 (*GG* 2,2.1.2–2.2): ἡ δὲ νῦν ῥηθησομένη ἔκδοσις περιέξει τὴν ἐκ τούτων γινομένην σύνταξιν εἰς καταλληλότητα τοῦ αὐτοτελοῦς λόγου, ἣν πάνυ προῄρημαι, ἀναγκαιοτάτην οὖσαν πρὸς ἐξήγησιν τῶν ποιημάτων, μετὰ πάσης ἀκριβείας ἐκθέσθαι.
>
> The study that follows will treat the construction of these sounds into a correct and complete sentence, which I shall undertake to expound with all the required precision, since it is highly necessary for the interpretation of poetic texts.

One might justifiably counter that a scholarly introduction – such as that to *On Syntax* – belongs to a different rhetorical genre to that of a prefatory letter. However, prefaces such as those by Phrynichus and Pollux are also markedly different from similar pieces, such as the prefatory letter to Hesychius' lexicon:

Hsch. praef. 1–51: πολλοὶ μὲν καὶ ἄλλοι τῶν παλαιῶν τὰς κατὰ στοιχεῖον συντεθείκασι λέξεις, ὦ πάντων ἐμοὶ προσφιλέστατε Εὐλόγιε· ἀλλ’ οἱ μὲν τὰς Ὁμηρικὰς μόνας ὡς Ἀππίων καὶ Ἀπολλώνιος ὁ τοῦ Ἀρχιβίου· οἱ δὲ τὰς κωμικὰς ἰδίᾳ καὶ τὰς τραγικὰς ὡς Θέων καὶ Δίδυμος καὶ ἕτεροι τοιοῦτοι· ὁμοῦ δὲ πάσας τούτων οὐδὲ εἷς. Διογενιανὸς δέ τις μετὰ τούτους γεγονὼς ἀνὴρ σπουδαῖος καὶ φιλόκαλος, τά τε προειρημένα βιβλία καὶ πάσας τὰς σποράδην παρὰ πᾶσι κειμένας λέξεις συναγαγών, ὁμοῦ πάσας καθ’ἕκαστον στοιχεῖον συντέθεικε· λέγω δὴ τάς τε Ὁμηρικὰς καὶ κωμικὰς καὶ τραγικάς, τάς τε παρὰ τοῖς λυρικοῖς καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ῥήτορσι κειμένας, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ <τὰς> παρὰ τοῖς ἰατροῖς τάς τε παρὰ τοῖς ἱστοριογράφοις. συλλήβδην δὲ [ὁμοῦ] οὐδεμίαν λέξιν ἔσθ’ ἣν παρέλιπεν οὔτε τῶν παλαιῶν οὔτε τῶν ἐπ’ ἐκείνου γεγενημένων. προέθηκε δὲ κατ’ ἀρχὴν ἑκάστης λέξεως τριῶν ἢ τεσσάρων στοιχείων τάξιν, ἵν’ οὕτως εὐμαρεστέραν ἔχοι τὴν εὕρεσιν ἧς ἐπιζητεῖ τάξεως ὁ τοῖς βιβλίοις ἐντυγχάνειν προαιρούμενος. καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ὅσας οἷός τε ἦν παροιμίας εὑρεῖν, οὐδὲ ταύτας παρέλιπεν, ἐπιγράψας τὰ βιβλία Περιεργοπένητας, καὶ ταύτῃ χρησάμενος τῇ διανοίᾳ· ἠγεῖτο γάρ, οἶμαι, μὴ μόνοις πλουσίοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς πένησι τῶν ἀνθρώπων χρησιμεύσειν τε καὶ ἀντὶ διδασκάλων ἀρκέσειν αὐτά, εἰ μόνον περιεργασάμενοι πανταχόθεν ἀνευρεῖν ταῦτα δυνηθεῖεν καὶ ἐγκρατεῖς αὐτῶν γενέσθαι. ἐπαινῶ μὲν ἔγωγε τὸν ἄνδρα καὶ τῆς φιλοκαλίας καὶ τῆς σπουδῆς, ὅτι χρησιμωτάτην πραγματείαν καὶ τοῖς σπουδαίοις τῶν φιλολόγων ὠφελιμωτάτην χορηγίαν πρὸς ἅπασαν παιδείαν προείλετο παρέχειν. ἐβουλόμην δὲ αὐτὸν μήτε τὰς πλείους τῶν παροιμιῶν ψιλῶς καὶ ἄνευ τῶν ὑποθέσεων τεθεικέναι, μήτε τὰς ἐζητημένας τῶν λέξεων οὐκ ἐχούσας τά τε τῶν κεχρημένων ὀνόματα καὶ τὰς τῶν βιβλίων ἐπιγραφὰς ἔνθα φέρονται, τάς τε πολυσήμους αὐτῶν παραδραμεῖν καὶ ἀσαφεῖς παραλιπεῖν, δέον δὲ καὶ ἐν ταύταις ἑκάστης διαφόρου διανοίας τὴν παράστασιν ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν χρησαμένων μνήμης παρασχεῖν. ἅτινα σύμπαντα καὶ τῆς παρ’ ἡμῶν ἐπιμελείας δεηθέντα κατὰ δύναμιν τετύχηκε πάσης, ἐν δευτέρῳ κειμένης τῆς τῶν φιλεπιτιμητῶν μέμψεως. οὐ γὰρ ὀκνήσω μετὰ παῤῥησίας εἰπεῖν ὅτι τῶν Ἀριστάρχου καὶ Ἀππίωνος καὶ Ἡλιοδώρου λέξεων εὐπορήσας, καὶ τὰ βιβλία προσθεὶς Διογενιανοῦ, ὃ πρῶτον καὶ μέγιστον ὑπάρχει πλεονέκτημα δαιτός, ἰδίᾳ χειρὶ γράφων ἐγώ, μετὰ πάσης ὀρθότητος καὶ ἀκριβεστάτης γραφῆς κατὰ τὸν γραμματικὸν Ἡρωδιανόν, λέξιν μὲν οὐδεμίαν παρέλιπον κειμένην ἐν αὐτοῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ πλείστας οὐχ εὑρὼν προστέθεικα. ἐκείνην δὲ γραφὴν ἠξίωσα, ἧς εὕρισκον καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν τέλος περιέχουσαν καὶ τὴν φράσιν μετὰ τοῦ δοκίμου σαφῆ. ταῖς παροιμίαις ἀποδέδωκα τὰς ὑποθέσεις· καὶ τῶν πλειόνων λέξεων καὶ σπανίως εἰρημένων οὐ μόνον αὐτῶν τῶν χρησαμένων τὰ ὀνόματα προσγέγραφα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰς ἐπιγραφὰς πάντων μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀντιγράφων προστιθείς, οὐδαμοῦ δὲ πονεῖν παραιτησάμενος, ὡς ἂν μὴ καὶ αὐτὸς μέμψιν ὀφλήσαιμι δικαίως τινά, καὶ οἷς ἐγκαλῶ Διογενιανῷ πεπτωκὼς φανείην.

Hesychius, a grammarian of Alexandria, to his companion Eulogius, greeting. Many others also collected in the order of the letters the words of the ancients, o most beloved Eulogius: some, however, only those of Homer, as Apion, and Apollonius son of Archibius; some, separately those of the comic or of the tragic authors, as Theon, Didymus, and other such compilers; but none of these all the words together. After them arose a certain Diogenianus, a man of industry and taste, who, having brought together the aforementioned books and all the words dispersed through all, united all of them into one compilation in alphabetic order; I mean, the Homeric, the comic, and the tragic terms, as well as those which occur in the lyric poets and in the orators; nor these only, but also such as are to be found in the works of the physicians and of the historians. In short, no word, as far as we are aware of, did he omit, whether of the ancients, or of the writers of his own time. He ordered each word by the three or four letters of its beginning, so that one who chooses to read these

> books can more easily find what he is looking for. And on top of this he did not omit any of the proverbs he was able to find, and he inscribed the entire work *Perieropenetes*, meaning the following: he thought, to my mind, that this work would be useful not only for the rich but also for the poor (*penetes*), and that it would serve them instead of a teacher, if only by their curiosity (*periergasamenoi*) they would be able to search for it everywhere and acquire one copy. I must praise the generosity and the learning of this man, because he has chosen to offer an exceptionally useful work and a precious viaticum towards all instruction for the most serious of scholars. However, I would have wished that he had not simply quoted the majority of the proverbs without giving the context, and that he had not quoted the rare words without the name of those who used them or without the title of the works where they occur; and, finally, that he had not run over those of them which have many meanings and leave them unclear, since it is necessary even with these words to exhibit each different meaning by mentioning those who used them. All this needed our care, and received it in full according to our possibilities, in total disregard of the reproaches of the usual fault-finders. I shall not hesitate to state overtly that, having at my disposal the Words of Aristarchus, Apion and Heliodorus, and adding Diogenianus's book (which is the first and most significant delicacy of the banquet), writing in my own hand as correctly and as exactly as I could according to Herodian the grammarian, I did not omit any single word that was to be found in those books, but I even added many that I did not find in them. I validated the word-form whose meaning I found more accomplished and whose general sense was clear and acceptable. I gave the context of the proverbs, and, for the majority of the words, even those used rarely, I gave not only the names of those who used them, but also the titles of all the works where these words recur, adding them from the editions, without ever shirking hard work, so that I myself would not rightly deserve any blame nor appear to have fallen into the same faults I blame in Diogenianus. (Translation by Pontani 2023, 255–7).

Although the latter is the longest of these prefatory texts, it does not indulge in any programmatic statements. Hesychius cites abundant sources and details the methodology that he has applied in arranging his dictionary (the inclusion of words from all kinds of literary traditions and dialects; the alphabetical criterion; the direct citation of the names of ancient authors and the titles of their works; the contexts of proverbs, etc.) and highlights the elements that differentiate it from previous works. However, he does not overtly polemicise with these predecessors over their notions regarding Greek, nor does he discuss correct and incorrect usages of language: his aim is to collect λέξεις from across all literary genres rather than to list words that should be used or avoided.

The comparison between Atticist lexica and other contemporary or later erudite works shows that the Atticists did indeed devise a lexicographical genre characterised by distinctive style and terminology. These characters go hand in hand with the sustained aesthetic and ethical imagery that Atticism employs in discussing language. On a par with the prefatory letter's indignation for those expressions that 'perturb the language' stands Phrynichus' well-known tirade against Menander and his admirers:

> Phryn. *Ecl.* 394: οὐχ ὁρῶ μὰ τὸν Ἡρακλέα, τί πάσχουσιν οἱ τὸν Μένανδρον μέγαν ἄγοντες καὶ αἴροντες ὑπὲρ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἅπαν. διὰ τί δὲ θαυμάσας ἔχω; ὅτι τὰ ἄκρα τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὁρῶ μανικῶς περὶ τὸν κωμῳδοποιὸν τοῦτον σπουδάζοντα, πρώτιστον μὲν ἐν παιδείᾳ μέγιστον ἀξίωμα ἁπάντων ἔχοντα σὲ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ προκρίτων ἀποφανθέντα ὑπὸ βασιλέων ἐπιστολέα αὐτῶν, ἔπειτα δευτέρᾳ τιμῇ, λειπόμενον πολὺ τῆς σῆς παρασκευῆς, ἐξεταζόμενον δ' ἐν τοῖς Ἕλλησιν, Βάλβον τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν Τράλλεων, ὃς εἰς τοσοῦτο προθυμίας καὶ θαύματος ἥκει Μενάνδρου, ὥστε καὶ Δημοσθένους ἀμείνω ἐγχειρεῖν ἀποφαίνειν τὸν λέγοντα 'μεσοπορεῖν' [. . .] καὶ ἄλλα κίβδηλα ἀναρίθμητα καὶ ἀμαθῆ· τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ σοὶ καὶ Βάλβῳ πεπονθότα καὶ Γαϊανὸν τὸν Σμυρναῖον ῥήτορα, ἄνδρα ζηλωτὴν καὶ ἐραστὴν τῆς σῆς ἐν παιδείᾳ φιλοκαλίας. ἄγε οὖν ὅπως λύσῃς μου τὴν ἐν τῇ τοιᾷδε δυσχερείᾳ τῶν ὤτων ἀπορίαν.
>
> By Heracles, I do not know what the matter is with those who consider Menander great and extol him as the highest representative of all things Greek. Why am I surprised? Because I see the brightest Greeks manically busying themselves with this writer of comedies: first of all you (Cornelianus), who have the greatest worth of all in learning and for this reason have been elected secretary *ab epistulis* by the emperors themselves out of the most selected men; and then, in the second place, someone who of course is much inferior to your preparation though he is held in regard among the Greeks – I mean Balbus of Tralles, who reaches such a level of enthusiasm and admiration of Menander that he attempts to demonstrate that someone who uses words such as μεσοπορεῖν ('to be half way') [. . .] and other innumerable spurious and unlearned expressions, is better than Demosthenes. And another one who is in the same state as you and Balbus is the orator Gaianus of Smyrna, a zealous man and a devotee of your good taste in culture. Come on, release me from my bafflement in hearing such (contradictory) things! (Translation by Tribulato 2014, 201).

Phrynichus sees the most prominent Greek intellectuals admiring Menander 'in a manic way' (μανικῶς) and asks from what malady they suffer (τί πάσχουσιν). The equation between incorrect language and illness or mental deficiency is cross-culturally ubiquitous in purist discourse.[45] Phrynichus implicitly attributes a healing power for such 'linguistic illness' to the use of good literary models: the medical metaphor (another recurring feature: see G. Thomas 1991, 22) is picked up by the letter's rhetorically charged final sentence, in which Phrynichus invites Cornelianus to release him from, literally, 'the difficulty of the ears' – that is, his bafflement at hearing such (contradictory) things (λύσῃς μου τὴν ἐν τῇ τοιᾷδε δυσχερείᾳ τῶν ὤτων ἀπορίαν).[46]

Pollux's *Onomasticon* transmits a somewhat more fragmented purist discourse, which nonetheless contains several other recurring images of purism. The first prefatory letter – an introduction to the entire work, addressed to Commodus – pivots around the concepts of eloquence, identified as one of the *moral* virtues of emperors, and of 'beautiful language' (εὐγλωττία):

45 See, e.g., Watts (2000, 31); Hohenhaus (2002, 163).

46 See the analysis in Tribulato (2014, 202).

> Poll. praef. 1: Ἰούλιος Πολυδεύκης Κομμόδῳ Καίσαρι χαίρειν. ὦ παῖ πατρὸς ἀγαθοῦ, πατρῷόν ἐστί σοι κτῆμα κατ' ἴσον βασιλεία τε καὶ σοφία. τῆς δὲ σοφίας τὸ μέν τι ἐν τῇ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρετῇ, τὸ δ' ἐν τῇ χρείᾳ τῆς φωνῆς. τῆς μὲν οὖν ἀρετῆς ἔχεις τὸ μάθημα ἐν τῷ πατρί, τῆς δὲ φωνῆς, εἰ μὲν ἦγεν αὐτὸς σχολήν, παρεῖχεν ἄν σοι τὸ ἡμῶν ἐλάχιστα δεῖσθαι· ἐπεὶ δ' ἐκεῖνον ἡ σωτηρία τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀπασχολεῖ, ἔγωγ' οὖν ἔν γέ τί σοι πρὸς εὐγλωττίαν συμβαλοῦμαι. ὀνομαστικὸν μὲν οὖν τῷ βιβλίῳ τὸ ἐπίγραμμα, μηνύει δὲ ὅσα τε συνώνυμα ὡς ὑπαλλάττειν δύνασθαι, καὶ οἷς ἄν ἕκαστα δηλωθείη· πεφιλοτίμηται γὰρ οὐ τοσοῦτον εἰς πλῆθος ὁπόσον εἰς κάλλους ἐκλογήν. οὐ μέντοι πάντα τὰ ὀνόματα περιείληφε τοῦτο τὸ βιβλίον· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἦν ῥᾴδιον ἐνὶ βιβλίῳ πάντα συλλαβεῖν. ποιήσομαι δὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀφ' ὧν μάλιστα προσήκει τοὺς εὐσεβεῖς, ἀπὸ τῶν θεῶν· τὰ δ' ἄλλα ὡς ἂν ἕκαστον ἐπέλθῃ τάξομεν. ἔρρωσο.
>
> Iulius Pollux to Commodus Caesar, greetings. Son of a noble father, your paternal inheritance consists equally in the kingdom and in wisdom. The heritage of wisdom for one part lies in the excellence of the soul, for the other in the exercise of eloquence. Of excellence you certainly have in your father a model; and for eloquence, if he had the time, you would have no need at all to turn to my teaching. But since the salvation of the world keeps him busy, I will be the very one to put together for you a little something useful for good speech. *Onomasticon* is the title of the book; it indicates which synonyms may be used to vary one's diction, and those by which each thing may be designated; it aspires not so much to abundance as to the selection of elegant expressions. However, this book does not encompass all the words: it was not, in fact, easy to collect them all in one book. I will begin with those that are most suitable for the pious, that is, from the gods: the others we will list as each will come. Farewell.[47]

The *Onomasticon*, Pollux says, will privilege 'not amplitude but the selection of the beautiful' (πεφιλοτίμηται γὰρ οὐ τοσοῦτον εἰς πλῆθος ὁπόσον εἰς κάλλους ἐκλογήν).[48] However, no *definition* of beautiful language is provided. Just as Phrynichus' epistle never defines 'ancient language', Pollux leaves the object of his enquiry undetermined. Such indeterminacy is all the more striking in the *Onomasticon*, given the lexicon's length and level of articulation: each of its ten books is introduced by a prefatory letter in which Pollux could have clarified, had he so wished, the kind of language he intended to target in his work. Rather than discussing the notion of antiquity, these letters privilege the stylistic (but vague) notion of beauty (in the first letter), while 'precise language' (ἀκριβὴς φωνή) is mentioned only once in the second letter but in relation to the method that the lexicographer should follow in approaching medical terminology.[49] In conclusion, the stark presence of evaluative terminology that describes language in terms of common dichotomies ('good'/'bad', etc.) and the tendency to address language in sweeping, undefined statements

47 This translation is based on that by Tribulato (2018, 251): for some of its choices, see Tribulato (2018, 251–5).

48 See also Matthaios (2013, 80).

49 On ἀκρίβεια in Pollux, see Matthaios (2013, 80).

that underpin the lack of any solid linguistic methodology render Atticism compliant with modern paradigms of linguistic purism.

3.2 The 'Golden Age Rule' of Atticism

In this section, we discuss the Atticist view of 'language' as corresponding to a prestige variety, that was used in the *literature* of a certain *period*: 5th- and 4th-century BCE Attic texts.[50] The lexicographers seek to build an ideal community based on the use of a past linguistic variety. Atticism thus fully embodies the so-called 'Golden Age Rule' of the purist paradigm, which identifies the 'ground zero' of pure and perfect language with a precise epoch of the past. The ideological construction behind this belief is clear: language does not have a fixed beginning, a time when it was pristine and unadulterated. Any attempt to preserve language in such a state is utopist, which is also why linguistic theory refrains from including purity among the properties of language.[51]

The *Eclogue*'s prefatory letter (see Section 3.1) highlights the role of the 'Golden Age Rule' in the Atticist view of language. Here, Phrynichus uses the adjective ἀρχαῖος no fewer than six times in a text that is 160 words long. 'Language' is invariably equated with ancient language (τὴν ἀρχαίαν διάλεξιν, τῆς ἀρχαίας φωνῆς, τὰ δοκιμώτατα τῶν ἀρχαίων, etc.), to the point that the value of antiquity always exceeds that of correctness (as in the expressions ἀρχαίως καὶ ἀκριβῶς 'in an ancient and correct way'; ἀρχαίως καὶ δοκίμως 'in an ancient and approved way'). Phrynichus' letter thus supports the identification of Atticism as an instance of *archaising* purism – that is,

> an attempt to resuscitate the linguistic material of a past golden age, an exaggerated respect for past literary models, an excessive conservatism towards innovations or a recognition of the importance of the literary tradition (G. Thomas 1991, 76).

Taking Classical Athens to be symbolic of correct language, the Atticist lexicographers apply themselves to defining those words that have an Attic literary history and those that do not. At the root of this linguistic attitude lies the belief that the past is superior to the present and that the present can compete with the past only if it complies with its defining features. The failure to conform to Classical usage is never presented as a consequence of the natural evolution of language

50 For a modern parallel for this recurrent assumption of Atticism, see Langer, Nesse (2012, 610–1); Milroy (2000, 23–6), meanwhile, is useful for its caveats on the undefined notion of prestige in sociolinguistic accounts of language correctness.

51 Langer, Nesse (2012, 610).

but rather as contemporary Greek speakers' inability to appreciate the ancient roots of their idiom owing to the decline of their spoken variety, the koine.

The Atticist relationship with the past is thus signalled not only by adjectives such as ἀρχαῖος and παλαιός but also by an ideological opposition between the symbolic 'us' of Atticising speakers and a 'them' that encompasses unlearned contemporaries as well as the non-Attic Greeks of the past (see Section 3.3. for the social connotations of this polarity). As Phrynichus states in the prefatory letter of the *Eclogue*, 'we do not look up to the mistakes but to the most authentic expressions of the ancients' (ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ πρὸς τὰ διημαρτημένα ἀφορῶμεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰ δοκιμώτατα τῶν ἀρχαίων). Thus, e.g., in Phryn. *Ecl.* 101, ἡμεῖς marks the word θριδακίνη ('lettuce') that learned speakers must use, like the Ἀττικοί, against the disapproved usage of Herodotus (θρίδαξ). Phryn. *Ecl.* 165 expresses a similar conflict between unlearned contemporary usage (ὁ πολύς) and the Attic model (Aristophanes) to which the well-educated contemporaries (ἡμεῖς) must adhere (νίμμα ὁ πολὺς λέγει, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἀπόνιπτρον λέγομεν ὡς Ἀριστοφάνης 'the many say 'νίμμα' ('water for washing'), but let us use ἀπόνιπτρον, like Aristophanes').

Moeris' lexicon, which is organised around the contrast between Ἀττικοί and Ἕλληνες (see Chapter 1, Section 4.1), presents an interesting case. It is evident that the Ἀττικοί embody the positive extreme, but Ἕλληνες is at times a slippery label, particularly with respect to its evaluative significance. Although Ἕλληνες clearly identifies contemporary koine usage, it is not always derogatory. Addressing this issue, Maidhof (1912), for instance, thought that Moeris' view of the koine would be polarised between a literary high-register koine, expressed by Ἕλληνες, and the vulgar common variety, sometimes expressed by κοινόν. However, κοινόν is not always associated with uncontroversial low-level features, but rather appears to be used for forms that Attic shares with post-Classical Greek.[52]

Moeris' Ἀττικοί and other synonymic labels that symbolise correct usage are drawn from a wider and pervasive topos in Second Sophistic and Atticist discourse – that of Athens as the cultural (if not the political) 'motherland' of the Greeks, an idea that has its roots in 5th-century BCE Athenian propaganda (see Chapter 3, Section 2.6). The role that past literature plays in the construction of an ideal community is prominent in archaising forms of purism cross-culturally. As an example, we may cite 19th-century Italian purism, which – following in the footsteps of Renaissance classicism – identified the Florentine dialectal variety as the prestige language and Florence as Italy's ideal capital (see Chapter 1, Section 2).[53] In

52 See Monaco (2021, 32–3); Pellettieri (2024b).

53 The 'myth' of Florence, based on language, influenced Italian culture from the late Middle Ages to the mid-20th century: see the short but acute essay by Contini (1970), as well as Nicoletti (2007), who summarises the role of Florence in the education of non-Florentine authors. Nicoletti

Atticist discourse, Athens embodies a symbolic geographic 'centre' whose 'periphery' consists of Greek-speaking regions, such as Egypt and Asia Minor, that, while politically significant, are condemned to a shaky cultural status by virtue of their extra-Hellenic location. For this reason, criticism of dialectalisms, neologisms, and low-register vocabulary is significantly more prominent in Atticist lexicography than criticism of loanwords even though, at this chronological stage, hellenophones inhabited a multilingual society where linguistic contact was the norm.[54] The lexica pay little attention to the notion of foreignness (see Section 3.1 on Philemon). It is remarkable that, unlike contemporary sophistic discourse in which the relationship Greek/Latin was fraught with anxieties,[55] the lexica almost never voice an opposition to Latin loanwords. Rather, they object to words from peripheral Greek-speaking or Hellenised areas, such as Macedonia,[56] Egypt, and Alexandria,[57] although it should be noted that many of the criticised words are not real loanwords: the terms 'Egyptian' and 'Macedonian' etc. usually symbolically represent groups of speakers rather than actual languages.[58] Atticism is thus primarily concerned with internal variation and mostly targets either dialectalisms or low-level neologisms (see Section 3.3).[59] This also finds parallels in contemporary forms of purism, whose 'xenophobia' tends to oppose the adoption of foreign words rather than addressing the more rarefied level of modifications in morphology (e.g. through calques) or syntax (e.g. shifts in collocation that betray a foreign origin).[60]

aptly recalls a sonnet by the poet Vittorio Alfieri (born in 1749 in Asti, Piedmont) who found 'a citizenship based on words' (*una cittadinanza di parole*) in Florence, which he equates to Athens, 'the seat of all elegance' (*d'ogni eleganza* [. . .] *unica sede*).

54 The connection between purism and language contact, bilingualism, creolisation, and pidginisation is explored in G. Thomas (1991, 122–9).

55 Cf. Dickey (2023, 1–2).

56 See, especially, Phryn. *Ecl.* 354 (on παρεμβολή 'drawing up in battle-order') and *Ecl.* 383 (on ῥύμη 'rush/narrow street'). Pollux registers several Macedonian technical words in 1.138, 1.139, 6.70, 10.138, and 10.162.

57 See Phryn. *Ecl.* 270 (on πάπυρος). With οἱ Ἀλεξανδρεῖς ('Alexandrians'), the Atticists do not refer to the Greek spoken in Egypt as a diatopic variety: see Favi, Tribulato (2024); Favi (forthcoming b).

58 See Favi (forthcoming b).

59 On these categories, see G. Thomas (1991, 68–73). Delveroudi, Moschonas (2003, 19) highlight the fact that purism opposes not only the diachronic dimension of linguistic variation but also its synchronic dimension, embodied by social variation.

60 See Hohenhaus (2012, 167) on lexical Anglicisms in German. G. Thomas (1991, 63) argues that orthoepic prescriptions belong to normative attitudes linked with standardisation rather than to purism.

3.3 The Atticist linguistic theorisation and its extra-linguistic criteria

In Section 3.1, we touched on the lack of a specifically linguistic terminology in Atticist discourse, which instead prefers to resort to metaphors and impressionistic descriptions of language. In this section, we shall examine the indeterminacy of Atticist views of language to pinpoint the interpretative difficulties that they present for the modern scholar of Atticism as well as its marked elitist orientation. Atticist lexicography provides no comprehensive account of Atticising Greek but rather a series of disjoined precepts on the basis of which *we* may attempt to reconstruct their view of different linguistic levels (phonology, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon – this is the goal of Volume 2 in this series).[61] We face the additional difficulty of relating Atticist rules to the grammatical theorisation of their time. It is as though Atticism existed in a vacuum, given our inability to determine the use of contemporary grammars and other manuals on the part of the lexicographers.[62]

In attempting to define the Atticists' view of correct language, two key questions warrant further attention. The first is whether the Atticists had a notion of the diachronic evolution of language that goes beyond the polarised Attic/contemporary opposition. The second question is whether they had a linguistic perception of sociolects. Both these questions are inspired by the terminology used in the lexica. The lexicographers occasionally distinguish between the Attic of the παλαιοί and that of the νέοι. In many cases, the opposition uniquely concerns the comic canon, which occupies a central role in their description of Attic (see Chapter 1, Section 4.3; Chapter 5 *passim*; Chapter 6, Section 5.2; Chapter 7, Section 2).[63] In other instances, however, the opposition appears to draw on a more specific knowledge of diachronic change, although the assessment of individual forms attributed to the νέοι is often frustrating for the modern interpreter. For instance, in Poll. 7.24, ὑπερμαζάω ('to be overfull with barley bread') is identified as an older form than κριθάω, although our extant sources indicate that the latter was

61 For attempts in this direction, see Chapter 1, Section 5.1.

62 Dihle (1977, 174–5). See the different case of Roman rhetorical theories, which put Greek grammar to good use: Dihle (1977, 165–7).

63 Cf., e.g., Phryn. *Ecl.* 390 and 391 (both of which contrast Menander's language with that of the ἀρχαῖοι Ἀθηναῖοι), or Poll. 3.56, on metaphorical expressions for people of low ranking (τὸν δὲ τοιοῦτον καὶ ὑπόξυλον ὠνόμαζον οἱ νέοι κωμικοί. καὶ ὑπόχυτον δ' οἱ παλαιότεροι τὸν κακῶς γεγονότα 'the poets of New Comedy also called this man (the illegal citizen) ὑπόξυλος ('counterfeit'). And the older poets called the man of lowly birth ὑπόχυτος ('adulterated')).

used by Aeschylus while the former is not attested before the Imperial age.[64] Is Pollux correct, then, and have we simply lost an earlier attestation of ὑπερμαζάω? Or is Pollux confusingly referring to different *genres* rather than to linguistic stages? Monaco (2021, 40–4) discusses these linguistic labels' changing nature.

A similarly baffling terminology characterises the Atticists' description of certain forms as belonging to the language of certain social categories, those that Stephanos Matthaios (2013) aptly calls 'groups of anonymous speakers' (perhaps to avoid the term 'sociolects', which would imply that the Atticists had a clear notion of Greek's social variation). We have seen how labels such as οἱ ἀρχαῖοι, οἱ παλαιοί, οἱ δόκιμοι, and οἱ Ἀττικοί define the approved linguistic models. The expressions οἱ νῦν 'the contemporaries', οἱ πολλοί 'the masses/the common usage', οἱ ἰδιῶται 'vulgar/colloquial speakers', οἱ ἀγοραῖοι 'people from the market', and οἱ ἀμαθεῖς 'ignorant people' as well as Moeris' Ἕλληνες, meanwhile, are seemingly used with various purposes. According to Matthaios (2013), in Pollux, οἱ νῦν identifies the usage of Pollux's learned contemporaries, whereas οἱ πολλοί identifies current usage, towards which he may be expressing a neutral attitude.[65] In other passages, however, these expressions clearly identify contemporary usages that Pollux proscribes on the basis that they are vulgar, colloquial, incorrect, and – most importantly – too divergent from Attic standards.[66] The slippery nature of these terms also emerges when we compare their use in one lexicographer (e.g. Pollux) with that of another: Phrynichus routinely employs οἱ νῦν and οἱ πολλοί as synonymous with οἱ ἀμαθεῖς, while in Pollux they are not invariably negative labels.[67]

For our purposes here, two elements of this terminology warrant attention. First, in accordance with the 'Golden Age Rule', the benchmark for assessing

64 'The ancients also used ὑπερμαζάω ('to be overfull of barley bread') from μᾶζα ('barley bread') for 'to be full' and 'to be replete', but the younger [authors] call it κριθάω ('to be barley-fed'), [which is the verb used] for beasts'.

65 See Matthaios (2013, 81–95; 102–4).

66 See Matthaios (2013, 114), especially on the ἰδιῶται.

67 See, e.g., Phryn. *Ecl.* 210: παιδίσκη· οἱ νῦν ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπαίνης τοῦτο τιθέασιν, οἱ δ' ἀρχαῖοι ἐπὶ τῆς νεάνιδος, οἷς ἀκολουθητέον ('παιδίσκη: Our contemporaries use it to refer to the servant girl, but the ancients for a young girl. We should follow their example'; on this entry, see Merisio 2023) and *Ecl.* 240: ὄρθρος νῦν ἀκούω τῶν πολλῶν τιθέντων ἐπὶ τοῦ πρὸ ἡλίου ἀνίσχοντος χρόνου· οἱ δὲ ἀρχαῖοι ὄρθρον καὶ ὀρθρεύεσθαι τὸ πρὸ ἀρχομένης ἡμέρας, ἐν ᾧ ἔτι λύχνῳ δύναταί τις χρῆσθαι. ὃ τοίνυν οἱ πολλοὶ ἁμαρτάνοντες ὄρθρον λέγουσιν, τοῦθ' οἱ ἀρχαῖοι ἕω λέγουσιν ('ὄρθρος: I hear many of our contemporaries use this word for the time that precedes the rising of the sun. The ancients however used ὄρθρος and ὀρθρεύεσθαι for the time preceding the beginning of the day when one may still use a torch. The time of the day which the masses today erroneously call ὄρθρος was called ἕως by the ancients').

whether these speakers' usage is incorrect is invariably Classical Attic literature: the farther an expression is from these Classical models, the more likely it is that it will be condemned. Second, incorrect usage is associated with a lack of thorough education, which highlights the socially elitist orientation of Atticism, that which Delveroudi, Moschonas (2003, 9–13) call 'la dialectique sociale' of purism (on the social and political dimensions of linguistic classicism, see Chapter 1, Section 3.3). Atticist lexicography allows us to delve into the view of society entertained by the ancient practitioners of purism. Again, the *Eclogue* is our best source. It abounds in entries in which correct and incorrect usages are not contrasted by simply applying a binary Attic/non-Attic or correct/incorrect opposition but rather carry further social overtones. In *Ecl.* 370, common usage is identified with the elitist expression 'the masses' (ὁ πολὺς λεώς) and rejected in favour of that of the 'the few' (ὀλίγοι) and of Attic speakers.[68] In *Ecl.* 176, the language of 'vulgar people' (οἱ ἀγοραῖοι) is contrasted with that of the 'learned' (πεπαιδευμένοι) with respect to the correct expression for 'fruit-seller'.[69] The 'us/them' opposition, which we interpreted in Section 3.2 as a marker of archaising purism, now also reveals its elitist roots.

G. Thomas (1991, 78) defines elitist purism as 'a negative, proscriptive attitude to substandard and regional usage' that is often historically associated with the language of a court (G. Thomas 1991, 79). In this respect, Atticism embodies a different experience in that it does not promote the language of the ruling people (here, the Romans) but rather the prestige variety of Graeco-Roman culture. Nevertheless, Atticism symbolically subscribes to the centre/periphery and capital/regions dichotomies that are typical of elitist purism. These geographic dichotomies also express social oppositions, and it is revealing that they feature in the work of ancient scholars who, like Phrynichus and Pollux, came from Asia or Africa.[70]

As a comparandum for the elitist programme sponsored by Atticism, we may consider a text discussed by Joan Beal, an expert in the English normative tradition, in her investigation of the English obsession with correct pronunciation as an element of social distinction (Beal 2008). The quotation derives from *A Disser-*

68 Phryn. *Ecl.* 370: χρεολυτῆσαι λέγει ὁ πολὺς λεώς, ἀλλ' οἱ ὀλίγοι καὶ Ἀττικοὶ τὰ χρέα διαλύσασθαι ('Many vulgar people use χρεολυτῆσαι ('to pay one's debts'), but the few and Attic speakers use χρέα διαλύσασθαι'). On this entry, see Scomparin (2024).

69 Phryn. *Ecl.* 176: ὀπωροπώλης· τοῦθ' οἱ ἀγοραῖοι λέγουσιν, οἱ δὲ πεπαιδευμένοι ὀπωρώνης ὡς καὶ Δημοσθένης ('ὀπωροπώλης ('fruit-seller'): Unsophisticated people use this [form], while educated people [say] ὀπωρώνης, like Demosthenes also [does]'). See Favi (2022m).

70 Pollux came from Naucratis, in Egypt. According to Photius (*Bibl.* cod. 158.100a.33), Phrynichus was from Arabia, but this is likely to be a misunderstanding of some disparaging remarks directed against him: the *Suda* has him from Bithynia (in Asia Minor).

tation on the Causes of the Difficulties which Occur in Learning the English Tongue by Thomas Sheridan (1761), a proponent of the English 'elocution movement' and a representative of English 18th-century prescriptivism:[71]

> Almost every county in England has its peculiar dialect. [. . .] One must have preference, this is the court dialect, as the court is the source of fashions of all kinds. All the other dialects are sure marks, either of a provincial, rustic, pedantic or mechanical education, and therefore have some degree of disgrace annexed to them. (Sheridan 1761, 29–30, in Beal 2008, 24).

Sheridan first identifies the preferred language variety with 'the court dialect', superior to all other varieties, which are disparagingly described as marks 'of a provincial, rustic, pedantic or mechanical education'. Spatial descriptions ('rustic', 'provincial') are paired with social implications, such as 'mechanical', which, according to Beal's reading, refers to 'the more practically-based education which was available as an alternative to the Classical grammar-school curriculum' but also carries 'connotations of social class' (Beal 2008, 24). The fear of speaking incorrectly is symptomatic of the fear that one will be relegated or equated to the underclass.[72] Beal notes that, subsequent to the period of linguistic liberalisation that ensued from the 1960s onwards, English society is now regressing to a situation wherein speaking with an unfavourable regional or foreign accent is regarded as an obstacle to social improvement.[73]

A similar social anxiety lies at the heart of Atticism, a movement that sought to replace the social and political elite with one based on education and the correct use of language (Swain 1996, 43–51; Schmitz 1997).[74] This elitist attitude also informs the kind of language that Atticism targets: neologisms, slips in pronunciation, and dialectalisms. Neologisms form a multifaceted category in Atticist discourse, one that includes not only newly coined expressions but also terms that – despite having been used for centuries in Greek – lacked the necessary literary pedigree to qualify as preferred forms and, when used in writing, came across as novel oddities: in line with the 'Golden Age Rule', for the Atticists, the term 'language' mostly corresponds to 'written language'. This is not to say that the Atticists were not also interested in verbal language; slips in pronunciation are an

71 See also Watts (2000, 35–8).

72 See also Milroy, Milroy (2012, 2). For this fear in Imperial Greek culture, see Swain (1996, 44–50).

73 For a thorough study of this, see Milroy, Milroy (2012).

74 See also Whitmarsh (2001, 118–30) on the role of language in the acquisition of a Greek identity on the part of intellectuals who came from 'barbarian' lands, such as Favorinus of Arelate and Lucian of Samosata.

important part of the Atticist linguistic reflection (Vessella 2018). Nonetheless, the Atticists' orthoepic prescriptions were intended for orators' performances, a genre that presupposes writing and, together with correct pronunciation, appropriate lexical choices.[75]

Vocabulary concerns also inform the Atticists' approach to dialectalisms. The lexicographers provide evidence that Classical terms associated with dialects other than Attic used by non-Athenian authors were to be approached with caution. Phrynichus clearly states as much in *Ecl.* 235, where, in discussing the correct meaning of the adverb ἀνέκαθεν ('from above'), he adds that his enquiry concerns not Ionic or Doric but Attic (οὐ γὰρ Ἰωνικῶν καὶ Δωρικῶν ἐξέτασίς ἐστιν ὀνομάτων, ἀλλ' Ἀττικῶν). Pollux also examines the dialectal affiliations of several Classical forms of which he approves: see, for instance, *Onomasticon* 2.8, where he expresses uncertainty about νεογνός 'newborn' in light of its Ionic phonology, or *Onomasticon* 2.142, where he informs his readers that one is permitted to use κύβιτον 'elbow', despite the word's Doric origins.[76]

The impression derived from reading the lexica is that the reflections on pronunciation, sociolects, registers, and dialects do not inform a systematic reference system. The lexicographers' sensitivity towards diachronic, dialectal, and social variation – when expressed – never attains the level of a full sociolinguistic theorisation. However, before concluding that this is because the Atticists were not 'linguists' in the modern sense of the word (and see Chapter 1, Section 6 on the appropriate historical approach to Atticist thought), it should be noted that the indeterminacy evident in the Atticist lexica is not unique to Atticism but rather is one of purism's recurrent features. As noted in Section 3.1 above, while purist attitudes are widespread among laypeople and intellectuals and typically thrive in literary circles, they are rarely expressed by linguists.[77]

3.4 The Atticists: Self-appointed defenders of language

Purism tends to emerge in the activities of certain individuals or small groups before it reaches learned societies, academia, and governments (if at all).[78] Atticism was not promoted by cultural or political organisations, and hellenophones enjoyed no particular representation within the political community. In the context of Graeco-Roman society, the place left vacant by a central cultural authority was

75 For purism's strongly lexico-semantic nature, see G. Thomas (1991, 65).
76 On the first entry and its phonological interpretation, see Batisti (forthcoming a).
77 G. Thomas (1991, 101). See too Milroy, Milroy (2012, 7–8) (on prescriptivism).
78 On the role of these 'actors of purism', see G. Thomas (1991, 108–12;) Langer, Nesse (2012, 614).

filled by a self-defined community of 'language lovers' and 'experts in education'. We would expect the Atticist lexica to abound in information on these self-appointed defenders of correct Greek, who fed on the linguistic insecurity of individuals who probably belonged to the 'middle' classes, were non-native Greek speakers, and entertained aspirations of social mobility.[79] They contributed to developing what James Milroy and Leslie Milroy would go on to call 'a linguistic value system which both reflects and reinforces social class and power distinctions' (Milroy, Milroy 2012, 77).

In reading the works of the sophists of the Imperial age, we often witness their polemics over language correctness and how they were integral to the sophists' display of their learning and self-publicity ('identity parades' according to Whitmarsh 2005, 32). The lexicographers consign a different picture, one in which details about themselves are rare.[80] Of course, the primary reason for this stark difference is that lexicography is a different genre from oratory and literary prose, not to mention that we read all the lexica in abbreviated form: even the longest, Pollux's *Onomasticon*, is likely to have lost more authorial statements than those still evidenced in its prefatory letters. Thus, 'Moeris' is merely a name to us,[81] while the authors of the *Antiatticist* and of the *Philaeterus* remain unknown. Our knowledge even of Phrynichus and Pollux is so limited that a modern scholar, Naechster, was able to fabricate a story concerning their rivalry for the chair of rhetoric at Athens.[82] Both Phrynichus and Pollux were sophists but – to judge at least from the meagre evidence that has survived – not of the highest rank.[83] What remains of their works is so sparing with information on their own lives and occupations with the exception of a single reference in the *Onomasticon* to Pollux's intensive teaching activity (Poll. praef. 8) and several references in the *Eclogue* to Phrynichus' contemporaries and rivals (e.g. Cornelianus, Favorinus, Balbus of Tralles, and Gaianus of Smyrne). These afford us a glimpse of Phrynichus' polemics with other colleagues, who were guilty of the failure to properly

79 For this social value of education, see Schmitz (1997, 152–6), who distinguishes between the high-quality education afforded by aristocratic individuals and the pedantic half-knowledge of the parvenus, and Chapter 1, Section 3.3.

80 On the sophists' frequent self-discourse, see G. Anderson (1993, 213); Whitmarsh (2005, 32–4).

81 For this and the dating of Moeris' lexicon, see Dettori (2022).

82 See Naechster (1908), with criticism in Matthaios (2013, 71–3) and in Tribulato (2018, 249–50).

83 Pollux studied in Athens under the rhetor Hadrian of Tyre, himself a pupil of Herodes Atticus. According to Philostratus (*VA* 2.12), he secured the Athenian chair of rhetoric thanks to his sweet art of declamation, although Philostratus himself was not impressed with his Atticising style. We have no contemporary information on Phrynichus, but Photius (*Bibl.* cod. 158) demonstrates how he was connected with the sophistic milieu of west Anatolia (see C. Jones 2008).

use and defend the language.[84] Moreover, the summary that Photius gives of Phrynichus' *Praeparatio sophistica* in his *Bibliotheca* (cod. 158.100a–101a) shows how in the many prefatory letters of this lexicon – now lost to us – Phrynichus addressed several contemporary intellectuals and spoke about his work, methodology, and illnesses.[85] However, since these are merely Photius' summaries, we cannot reconstruct Phrynichus' own voice. That is the extent of the biographical information that survives on these – for us, very important – supporters of linguistic Atticism.

The lexicographers occasionally boast about their works' usefulness to their dedicatees (see, e.g., Poll. praef. 1 quoted above), but advertisements intended to attract other potential readers are uncommon: the sentence that precedes the beginning of Book 1 of the *Eclogue* (ὅστις ἀρχαίως καὶ δοκίμως ἐθέλει διαλέγεσθαι, τάδε αὐτῷ φυλακτέα 'he who wishes to speak in an ancient and approved manner should guard himself against these [expressions]') may well be a later addition.[86] Still, and notwithstanding all the philological caveats expressed above, the lexica also appear to support the idea that the lexicographers privileged a kind of symbolic self-representation, one that is achieved through metaphors rather than 'professional' presentation. Terms such as ἀττικισμός, ἀττικιστής, and ἀττικίζω are almost always absent from these texts, and evidence suggests that this terminology was mostly employed by the opponent parties.[87] It is as though the lexicographers obliterated their individuality to maximise their purist self-image, expressed through a set of standard symbols that are recurrent in purist discourse.[88]

A typical situation occurs when the lexicographer casts himself as a metallurgist who can distinguish good coins from counterfeits. As we have seen, Phrynichus (*Ecl.* 394) accuses Menander of using κίβδηλα ἀναρίθμητα καὶ ἀμαθῆ ('innumerable counterfeit and unlearned') expressions, with κίβδηλα equating Menander to a forger.[89] In his seventh prefatory letter, Pollux says that the lexicographer must cultivate precision (ἀκρίβεια) so that he might pass judgement on the authenticity of certain forms (Poll. praef. 7.5). The expression he uses, εἰς βασάνου κρίσιν, is derived from metallurgical terminology: the βάσανος was the touchstone that re-

84 For a parallel for these disputes between lay 'experts of language' and professional linguists, see Milroy, Milroy (2012, 10–6); Hohenhaus (2012, 170–1).

85 An overview of Phrynichus' dedicatees and an analysis of the production context of the *Praeparatio* is provided in C. Jones (2008) and Bowie (forthcoming).

86 It is attested only in the manuscripts of the b family: see Fischer (1974, 60).

87 The only exception is Phryn. *Ecl.* 332; cf. Schmitz (1997, 80–1; 148). See also the attestations of ὑπεραττικίζω in Philostr. *VA* 1.17 and ὑπεραττικός in Luc. *Lex.* 25.2

88 See G. Thomas (1991, 19–24); Delveroudi, Moschonas (2003) (on the metaphors of the Modern Greek purist discourse).

89 See Lamagna (2004a); Tribulato (2014, 202); Kim (2023).

vealed pure gold. The lexicographer may also equate himself to a judge in a metaphor involving the use of terms such as κρίσις 'judgement' (see Phryn. *Ecl.* praef. 4: τὴν τῶν καλῶν καὶ δοκίμων ὀνομάτων κρίσιν 'the judgement of beautiful and approved words', Poll. praef. 10.3: ὀνόματος κρίσει), μάρτυρες 'witnesses' (Phryn. *Ecl.* praef. 10, Poll. praef. 6.3 and 10.10), μηνύω 'denounce' (Poll. praef. 6.2), and γράφω 'indict' (Poll. praef. 6.2). Judicial metaphors are particularly common in the third, sixth, and tenth prefatory letters of the *Onomasticon*.[90] However, purists may also be guardians of language: Phrynichus commonly uses the middle-voice form φυλάσσομαι when indicating the incorrect forms against which his readers should guard themselves.

The scant information that we have supports the hypothesis that the Atticists' profile aligns with Thomas' picture of the purists as non-professional linguists and, to some extent, with an image of lower-level professionals who were not admitted to the upper echelons of contemporary literary circles. Their works are impoverished with respect to authorial self-definition and information, although their authorial *persona* is nonetheless detectable in the style of the prefatory letters and other programmatic parts of these texts that have survived epitomisation (this will be fully addressed in Volume 2 of the series).

3.5 The legacy of Atticism on Greek linguistic practices

The study of the structural discourse, terminology, and symbols adopted in Atticist lexica confirms that these texts may be fruitfully studied by applying the interpretative categories developed by sociolinguistic studies of purism. By way of conclusion, we shall now offer some preliminary thoughts on the extent to which Atticism succeeded in its attempts to purify Greek.

G. Thomas (1991, 84) identifies eight distinct yet connected activities in the purification process: recognition of need, identification of targets, censorship, eradication, prevention, replacement, reception, and evaluation. Atticism certainly fulfils the first three (recognition of need, identification of targets, and censorship). However, it is lacking in the full development of the fourth and fifth stages – eradication and prevention – because it is not an organised purist movement that has the backing of academies and governments.[91] Rather, the 'replacement' activity (sixth stage) is prominent, both in the instructions given by the lexica and in the choices made by Atticising authors who, by and large, tend to selectively pre-

90 On which, see Tribulato (2018, 260–5).

91 For these characteristics of the 'prevention' activity, see G. Thomas (1991, 92).

fer Attic features to the contemporary koine. That Atticism exerted a significant impact at least on Greek intellectual discourse is proven by the fact that its provisions received much praise and criticism from contemporary and later scholars. In this respect, the 'reception' (seventh) stage of Atticism is fully represented: as G. Thomas (1991, 97) explains, 'our concern should be not so much with the fate of the purist himself [. . .] but for the extent to which his attempts are accepted, resisted, ridiculed, rejected or simply ignored'.

It is more difficult to assess whether or not Atticism enjoyed a substantial reception on the part of the speech community beyond the linguistic consciousness of the literary elite. There is some research on Atticist influences in documentary papyri,[92] but inscriptions constitute wholly uncharted territory in this regard.[93] In some cases, Atticism may be identified as the cause of the loss of certain undesirable features in the history of Greek, but one might legitimately wonder about the extent to which it succeeded in profoundly reshaping the development of post-Classical Greek. By this, we mean that Atticism overall failed to promote Atticising Greek as the linguistic standard of the entire speech community, representing – at best – a competing norm that rivalled the koine in high-register written language. For this reason, as already discussed in Section 2.1, Atticism cannot be fully subsumed under the category of standardisation. Instead, its belonging to the category of purism is confirmed by the fact that Atticism mostly impacted only a section of literary and high-register language. This lack of complete success highlights that Atticism did not evolve into a form of standardisation unlike, for example, Italian Tuscanism, which began in the Renaissance as a form of archaising purism but later, in the 19th century, evolved into a form of standardisation with practical and political purposes that exerted a revolutionary impact on the history of standard modern Italian. The same did not happen with Atticism. Greek purism remained at the level of learned literary language and nobody – not even Aelius Aristides or Photius – would likely have chosen to say, for example, θάλαττα or φυλάττω, even when speaking with the educated elite.

Several rare Classical terms sanctioned by the Atticists seldom appear to have been seriously revamped even by later high-register language and scarcely at all in communication across different registers (the situation may be different with prescribed usages that were standard in Greek before the occurrence of post-Classical developments: see Roumanis 2016 for examples).[94] Morphological areas in which

92 Especially Luiselli (1999); see also A. L. Connolly (1983); Roumanis (2016); Vierros (2018).

93 See C. Jones (2008, 259) on the *Eclogue*; Tribulato (forthcoming c).

94 Consider, for instance, the case of the verb ψυχορροφέω 'to drain somebody's soul', discussed in Phryn. *PS* 128.11–3 but later used only by Leo Choerosphactes (see Gerbi 2023); or the case of πρόσφατος ('new'), which according to Phryn. *Ecl.* 27 should be used only in reference to corpses

archaising Atticistic Greek fails to counter post-Classical developments include, for example, the preservation of primary comparatives (e.g. ἀμείνων 'better' and χείρων 'worse') over analogical double formations (e.g. ἀμεινότερος, χειρότερος: Favi 2022q); the banning of analogical comparative adverbs in -τέρως for -τερον (Tribulato 2022b) and the synthetic comparative forms ἀγαθώτερος and ἀγαθώτατος rather than the periphrastic formations μᾶλλον ἀγαθός and μάλιστα ἀγαθός (Favi 2022o); the preference for forms of ἔρχομαι over those of εἶμι for 'to go' (particularly in the future tense: Favi 2022b); the predilection for σμάω 'to smear' over its by-form σμήχω (Favi 2022s); the preference for impersonal ἀπαρκεῖ ('it suffices') and ὔει ('it rains') over ἀρκεῖ (Favi 2022p) and βρέχει (Tribulato 2022c); and the prescription of the iussive infinitive (Favi 2022r). This is merely a selective sample of features that Atticism failed to successfully resuscitate, although they may differ in respect to their presence in various registers of later Greek. The list is also selective because we continue to lack a thorough mapping of the linguistic precepts of Atticism and their relation to the developments of post-Classical and Byzantine/Medieval Greek. The linguistic legacy of Atticism and its failure or moderate success will be addressed again in Volumes 2 and 3 of this series in the light of the lexicographic entries analysed by the PURA project in the *Digital Encyclopedia of Atticism*.

To conclude, throughout its entire history and later reception, Atticism was a matter of register (and style) rather than one of linguistic standardisation.[95] Even in literature, Atticism – despite being a prominent phenomenon in Greek intellectual discourse – never succeeded in imposing Atticising Greek as the sole recognised norm. Some genres of Greek literature continued to be written in various registers of the koine continuum (on this, see Bentein 2016, 19–20) or even in other literary dialects (such as Ionic). Byzantine high-register prose was also not simply Atticist but rather engaged in a complex negotiation between Classical language (as distinct from Attic alone) and contemporary Medieval Greek (based on the koine).[96] It may also be noted in passing that *katharevousa*, the 19th-century

(Favi 2022h); or the meaning that Phryn. *Ecl*. 56 prescribes for ἀφῆλιξ ('old person'), which is unattested in Byzantine Greek (Favi 2022n).

95 This conclusion differs from the account offered in Frösen (1974), in which Atticism – identified as an 'attribute of style' (Frösen 1974, 97) – is proposed to coincide with 'post-Classical common language', in which the stylistic features of Classical literature are encountered in addition to the features of Classical Attic' (Frösen 1974, 121), a formulation that replaces in terminology – but not in substance – the idea that Atticism corresponds to 'Standard Late Greek' (a proposition to which Frösen 1974, 95 adheres). In our view, Atticism was far from embodying any kind of real linguistic standard (see Section 2).

96 Ševčenko (1981), with expansions in Toufexis (2008); Horrocks (2010, 213–4); Wahlgren (2010, 529–30); Horrocks (2014, 50; 72).

purist form of Greek, did not represent the living legacy of Atticism, regardless of the ideological discourse that it espoused.[97] Rather, it was a form of archaising language planning based on Ancient Greek that included features of both Classical Attic and the Hellenistic koine (Holton 2002, 171; 'a compromise', according to Frangoudaki 1992, 367). Greek 'diglossia', both ancient and modern, has been rather a matter of a dichotomy between high literary language (which was certainly Atticistic but not exclusively so) and spoken varieties encompassing everything in between (Alexiou 1982).[98] In spite of its agenda, Atticism achieved no meaningful success in rendering later Greek more Attic (or less non-Attic). However, a more definitive conclusion regarding its legacy can be reached only after a comprehensive study of the relative success and failure of each proscription of the Atticist lexica in diachronic perspective and an assessment of the impact that Atticist provisions exerted on both literary and substandard Greek.

97 Browning (1983, 104); and *pace* Kazazis (2007, 1209–10).

98 Thus, Dihle (1977, 163) seems to overgeneralise when he states that 'die Griechen [haben leben müssen] auf Grund der attizistischen Reform des 1. Jh.s v.C. bis auf den heutigen Tag in einer zweisprachigen Zivilisation, mit einer strengen Trennung von Sprech- und Schriftsprache'.