REMARKS ON VARRO'S WORD-ORDER

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to offer a hypothesis that, among other defects of Marcus Terentius Varro's style, it might have been also his word-order that contributed to not very high appraisal of aesthetic values of his work by his contemporaries and successors. Very frequently, Varro uses word-order that defies both logic of the text and natural sentence intonation. His sentences often do not end in rheme proper, which is a common pattern for unmarked expository texts: a rheme proper is followed by a thematic constituent of low informative value. Such technique can give an impression that text is incoherent, or it makes readers go back and read the text again with different, not spontaneous, intonation. This might have been one of the reasons why Varro's phrasing was seen clumsy and not elegant enough.

Keywords: Marcus Terentius Varro; word-order; functional sentence perspective; communicative dynamism

Marcus Terentius Varro is undoubtedly one of the greatest cultural and scholarly authorities of ancient Rome. For example, an extant text by Pliny the Elder documents Varro as the only person, who, during his lifetime, saw his own statue erected – in the public library he managed.[1] However, it was not the aesthetic value of Varro's writings that earned him such admiration by his contemporaries and successors; it was entirely the content, and even more so the astounding extent of his works.[2] In most cases, Varro's artistic skills go politely unmentioned; however, also more explicit, unflattering comments exist, e.g. Quint. *Inst.* X, 1, 95: *Terentius Varro, vir Romanorum eruditissimus. Plurimos hic libros et doctissimos conposuit, peritissimus linguae Latinae et omnis antiquitatis*

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[1] Plin. *Nat.* VII, 115: *M. Varronis in bibliotheca, quae prima in orbe ab Asinio Pollione ex manubiis publicata Romae est, unius viventis posita imago est, haut minore, ut equidem reor, gloria, principe oratore et cive ex illa ingeniorum quae tunc fuit multitudine uni hanc coronam dante quam cum eidem Magnus Pompeius piratico ex bello navalem dedit.*

[2] Cf. Quint. *Inst.* XII, 11, 24: *Quam multa, paene omnia tradidit Varro!* The well-known list of Varro's works by St. Jerome (survived as an appendix to the translation of Origen's *Homilies* by Rufinus) lists 486 books in total (36 works), with Jerome himself saying that it is not a full list. Gell. III, 10, 17 quotes Varro declaring that at the age of almost eighty years he had written 490 books. Nowadays, the general consensus is that Varro wrote more than 600 books in total.

*et rerum Graecarum nostrarumque, **plus tamen scientiae conlaturus quam eloquentiae***, or later Aug. *Civ.* VI, 2: *Qui* [*sc. Varro*] *tametsi **minus est suavis eloquio**, doctrina tamen atque sententiis ita refertus est, ut ... Denique et ipse* [*sc. Cicero*] *... in libris Academicis dicat ... disputationem se habuisse cum Marco Varrone, "homine," inquit, "omnium facile acutissimo et sine ulla dubitatione doctissimo". **Non ait "eloquentissimo" vel "facundissimo", quoniam re vera in hac facultate multum impar est** ...*

Neither Quintilian nor St. Augustine explain what makes them find Varro's style so "unpleasing" (*minus suavis*). Certainly, compared to his contemporary and friend (or rather a rival?),[3] the brilliant stylist Cicero, whose Latin became a paragon for the generations to come, Varro's texts, at least the extant ones, are very austere, monotonous, formally boring, provoking no emotions. This in itself probably is not the problem. As far as I know, we have no extant treatise by Latin authors on style of expository prose, still they must have been aware that different genres require different styles; they surely did not require that scholarly texts be as eloquent as for example speeches.

Collart (1954: 336–337) summarises radically adverse criticism of Varro's style by modern literary scientists, and eases it by referring to extreme corruption of the text. He finds these to be the most serious defects of Varro's style: incorrect use of pronouns, frequent ellipses, syntactic irregularities, sentences too dense and tangled, frequent unnecessary repetitions or contrarily not expressing semantically relevant elements, a concise style. It is the purpose of this article to offer a hypothesis that the word order of Varro's sentences might have also been one of the reasons why his contemporaries saw his phrasing clumsy and not elegant enough.

1. Introduction to the question of word order in Latin in general

The author's interpretation of the examples from Varro's work (Section 2) needs to be preceded by a relatively extensive introduction that explains certain methodological approaches that will be used to examine Varro's text.

1.1 Functional Sentence Perspective

The author of this article belongs to those who believe that word-order in Latin is governed by the so-called "functional sentence perspective" principle, i.e. by the pragmatic function of a given sentence and not (primarily) by sentence syntax.[4] Thus, this is not a contribution to a wide discussion on what is the word-order in Latin governed by or on

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[3] Cf. e.g. Cic. *Ac.* I, 1: [*Varronem*] *... hominem nobiscum et studiis eisdem et vetustate amicitiae coniunctum; ... atque illum complexi, ut mos amicorum est* ... E.g. Kronenberg (2010: 88–89) sees Varro and Cicero more as rivals than as friends.

[4] Primarily syntactic terms are used by another, commonly used approach to word-order in general, developed by Greenberg (1963); he splits languages, from the word-order point of view, into two groups: 1) neutral word order of subject – verb – object (so-called SVO, e.g. Czech), 2) neutral word order of subject – object – verb (so-called SOV). Latin is usually categorized as SOV, but it is very disputable, see e.g. Panhuis 1984. Syntactic functions may not be the chief factor for Latin word-order, still they do have a say – cf. e.g. Pinkster 1988: 245–283.

how to describe it.[5] The author believes in the functional sentence perspective concept and uses this view to analyse a specific Latin text. For basic information, I will describe the theory as briefly as possible first.

The Functional Sentence Perspective theory was developed by members of the Prague Linguistic Circle, mainly by Vilém Mathesius and later on by four decades younger František Daneš and Jan Firbas, native speakers of highly inflected Czech. They already used the term "functional sentence perspective" instead of Mathesius's "aktuální členění větné" (= "actual division of the sentence"). The not very intuitive term "actual division"[6] was used to describe the situation where in languages governed by this principle, **distribution of sentence constituents** can vary, however not at random as it **depends on the context and author's purpose.** Every utterance has its topic and its focus. "Topic" (or "theme"; "communication basis" in Mathesius)[7] is "what we talk about", something known from previous discourse or shared knowledge; it is of low information value (low degree of communicative dynamism), i.e. it provides little or no new information. "Focus" (or "rheme", "comment"; "communication core" in Mathesius) is "what we say about it" – elaboration on the topic; it is of high information value (high degree of communicative dynamism).

Communications intending primarily not to make readers or listeners behave in a certain way or to arouse emotions, but just to inform or instruct them therefore quite logically start with the information already known to readers / listeners and then elaborate on it. Thus we can see a **default word-order of topic-focus** (in other words "left-to-right arrangement of a degree of communicative dynamism from the lowest to the highest").[8] Both thematic and rhematic parts of communication typically consist of more partial topics and focuses,[9] again with differing communicative dynamism. The topic of the lowest communicative dynamism degree is called "theme proper", on the other end of the scale is so-called "rheme proper" as a rhematic constituent of the highest communicative dynamism degree. The original notion of the concept was that distribution of all communication constituents is governed by their information value and that it culminates linearly, i.e. from the lowest to the highest degree, however it is actually obvious

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[5] Apart from Greenberg's typological approach (see previous comment), another approach, basically very close to the typological one, prevails in Latin linguistics – the generative approach, represented mainly by the Devine, Stephens (2006) monograph. It also presumes certain default syntactically determined word-order and attempts to define transformation rules that would cover numerous deviations from this basic word order. A brief and apt overview of individual approaches to Latin word order is offered by Spevak (2010: 1–5).

[6] The original term was replaced by a new term "Functional Sentence Perspective" mainly because it was uneasy to translate it into English (Czech "aktuální" and English "actual" do not correspond ideally – in Czech it means "current", whereas in English, it also and primarily means "real, genuine").

[7] Cf. Mathesius 1942: 59.

[8] The Functional Sentence Perspective approach has been introduced to Latin linguistics by Panhuis (1982). Due to certain "overloading" of the term "functional" (see Panhuis 1982: 9), he goes for another term, also used by Firbas, "communicative perspective". Panhuis assumes Latin to have the same default communicative dynamism as Czech, which was the original language used to develop the functional sentence perspective system, i.e. left-to-right arrangement. Also, it needs to be mentioned that starting with the known (topic) and elaborating on it afterwards (focus) is only a logical arrangement for expository texts and it basically applies to less inflective languages, such as English or French, too, where word order is much more strictly bound by various syntactic rules.

[9] Over the years, the theory had been developed in details, it had been modified in various ways many times and now, of course, it uses much more subtle categorization, not just "topic" and "focus"; various "transitional" elements have been used practically right from the beginning.

that the order of individual thematic constituents in the thematic part and of rhematic constituents in the rhematic part of utterance is very often influenced by various syntactic conventions (including Czech, which is generally considered to be governed by this principle very strongly).[10]

However, it needs to be pointed out that "default" word-order does not, of course, mean "the only possible" one. Therefore, my *a priori* standpoint that Latin word-order is governed by functional sentence perspective and in principal also by left-to-right communicative dynamism is not to say that there is an exact algorithm for distribution of sentence constituents valid for all sentences of a given language. Texts aiming primarily at aesthetic effect abound in breaches of this fundamental principle and the breaches themselves are an important source of the aesthetic effect (as will be shown in the example in 1.2). But even emotionally neutral expository utterances offer in most cases a number of variants that represent subtle semantic nuances. Therefore, not only the word-order is not the factor **governing** what is a topic and what is a focus in a sentence (only text logic tells us), but it even is not the factor we could use to **determine** the topic and the focus clearly. The factor that tells clearly and beyond any doubt what the author sees as a topic and as a focus of his communication is, in oral text, **the sentence intonation**, an integral partner of any other thematization / rhematization means.[11]

1.2 Intonation

Every sentence has its "intonation centre", which is the accented syllable (i.e. in Czech, the first syllable) of the rheme proper. A Czech sentence written as "Petr napsal dopis" can have three different meanings – intonation would be different each time (the intonation centre is in bold): "Petr napsal **do**pis" means "Peter has written a letter", "Petr **nap**sal dopis" means "Peter's letter has been written (= not printed, etc.)" and "**Pe**tr napsal dopis" means "It is Peter who has written the letter (i.e. not Paul, John, etc.)". Thus, the sentence intonation (it may also be referred to as sentence melody or rhythm; the intonation peak can have a form of higher, longer or stronger tone), as mentioned before, indicates clearly what is the theme and what is the rheme. Applying a reverse perspective we can say, that **any word-order, even the word-order that breaches the "default" linear culmination of communicative dynamism, is correct if there is adequate intonation** (this is called subjective, marked or emphatic word-order).

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[10] In Czech, e.g. attribute and its core substantive are never, apart from more or less extreme cases, separated (not even in case of utmost thematic attributes, e.g. possessive pronoun etc.) and exactly this order is usually kept (i.e. attribute – substantive; it is reversed usually only in cases where the attribute is the very rheme proper). Excessive clinging to absolute linearity affected adversely also Panhuis's work, which is otherwise exceptionally good as a whole and of fundamental importance for Latin linguistics; his aspirations to push through an entirely new concept in Latin linguistics at that time and to prove its universality, made him interpret the information degree of individual thematic and of individual rhematic constituents in some texts in a rather strained manner (e.g. Caes. *Gall.* I, 13, 2 in Panhuis 1982: 117, 119 or Verg. *Ecl.* 1, 18 in Panhuis 2006: 192).

[11] Means of thematization and rhematization include, besides word order itself, various particles, deictics etc.; e.g. in Czech "**To** Petr napsal <u>ten</u> dopis" ("It is Peter who has written the letter"), "to" is a rhematization particle, and "ten" is a thematization deictic pronoun. When phrased this way, the sentence has only one interpretation (unlike a simple sentence "Petr napsal dopis" – see below). The meaning is clear and it must be pronounced with the intonation centre in the word "Petr".

Word-order in spontaneous spoken communication by a native speaker free of specific language pathologies is therefore always "correct", because the speaker speaks with natural sentence intonation that reflects the speaker's "author's purpose" (i.e. focus is pointed out through the intonation). However, problems may arise when reading a written text: for a written text to work right, the reader's and the author's idea of sentence intonation must be identical. Authors have certain means to impress their ideas upon readers, on the other hand though, it is clear that they will fail impressing whatever ideas upon readers reading their texts fast.

We know that ancient artistic texts were far more often, compared to modern texts, meant to be read aloud (by professionals or right by its author).[12] The problem of possible mismatch between the author's and the readers' / listener's idea of intonation was therefore probably much less imminent than in case of modern texts that are intended for fast, silent, individual reading and whose authors cannot afford to "violate" natural flow of speech too much as they would be risking misapprehension. We can therefore assume that word-order of Latin artistic texts is, owing to this factor, even considerably more free than e.g. word-order of written Czech texts. E.g. the widely known three rhetorical questions Cicero uses to open his *First Catiline Oration* are illustrative of this.

It is very important for our analysis that these are rhetorical questions, not real ones. It is a general rule for questions that the interrogative word, positioned at the beginning, is the rheme proper (i.e. there is inversion of word-order). In "Where are you going" "going" is the topic (something that is obvious from the context), and the focus, i.e. the new information in the sentence, is the speaker's attempt to learn what is the destination of the obvious going, expressed by the interrogative "where". Even relatively long, complex "real" questions still have the intonation peak in the interrogative word and then the intensity falls linearly (e.g. "How long does it take to get from Písek to Tábor by train?). However, in case of rhetorical questions, the situation is more complex: the aim is not, in fact, to **learn** about what the interrogative word at the beginning refers to; the aim is to **inform** listeners **emphatically**. Thus, the sentence "When, O Catiline, do you mean to cease abusing our patience?" is just a more emphatic form of the declarative clause "Catiline, you have been abusing our patience for too long" or rather "Catiline has been abusing our patience for too long". We could also see rhetorical questions as two utterances joined together: "Catiline, you have been abusing our patience. When do you mean to cease it?" Thus, in *Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra* the *tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra* is not the topic, which would be the case if it were a real question; only *Catilina* and pronoun *nostra* referring to the speaker can be interpreted as thematic. The rest (except for the particle *tandem*) are rhematic elements of high information value, and I personally believe that the substantive *patientia*, not the quasi-interrogative *quo usque* is the rheme proper.

The same applies to the second rhetoric question *Quam diu etiam furor iste tuus nos eludet:* apart from *quam diu*, also *furor* and *eludet* are rhematic; this time I find the verb *eludet* a stronger focus; the verb is in a way unexpected, it is the point of the entire utter-

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12 A popularly held belief that they were meant **only** for aloud reading and that silent, individual reading practically did not exist in antiquity is a myth, disproved beyond any doubt by e.g. Knox (1968) or above all by Gavrilov (1997).

ance (by using the pronoun *iste tuus* Cicero, in fact, derhematizes *furor* – saying "all are aware of your *furor* and nobody doubts it").

Similarly, the third sentence *Quem ad finem sese effrenata iactabit audacia* cannot be interpreted as a real question either; Cicero informs his audience that Catiline is audacious and totally unbridled. Only *sese* and the verb *iactabit* that is of little information value are thematic here. As for the hierarchy of the remaining thematic elements, listeners did expect another, third vice / bad behaviour (here *audacia*); what is new thought, unexpected and the point, is the specification *(sese) effrenata* – this is, in my opinion, the rheme proper of this rhetorical question and therefore the intonation peak is on this element.[13]

I am not a native speaker and I can therefore only speculate, still I strongly believe that should the text be read by a professional speaker, the intonation would prove the above interpretation. It would be difficult to imagine these three rhetorical questions pronounced with the interrogatives as intonation peaks and then with linearly falling intensity – this would weaken their effect immensely. The intonation analysis, or speaker's pre-preparation if you please, would probably be as follows (partial intonation peaks are in bold):

> **Quo usque** tandem **abutere**, *Catilina*, **patientia** *nostra*? **Quam diu** *etiam* **furor** *iste tuus nos* **eludet**? **Quem ad finem** *sese* **effrenata** *iactabit* **audacia**?

In the first sentence, we can see regular changing of rhematic and thematic constituents, with rhematic constituents culminating gradually. Thus, the intonation resembles a sine curve with a rising axis. The intonation falling with every thematic constituent has the effect of far stronger emphasis on every rhematic constituent that follows. The same applies to the second sentence that also offers a little rhythmical refreshing in a form of a relatively longer thematic part before *eludet* – 5 fast syllables with weak intonation set the scene for even stronger emphasis on the verb *eludet*. In the third sentence, we are subconsciously expecting the same intonation model. However, Cicero, being a brilliant rhetorician, uses something resembling a so-called "moment of disappointed expectation" in a verse structure: at this point, the intonation structure will not follow the previous rules in every detail – rhematic and thematic constituents do alternate, however the peak is on the penultimate rhematic constituent (*effrenata*). Monotonousness is broken.[14]

An entirely parallel word-order could be used even in Czech: "**Jak dlouho ještě**, pravím, **hodláš**, Katilino, **zneužívat** naší **trpělivosti** (or: **trpělivosti**, kterou s tebou máme)?" However, modern translators would probably hesitate to use it, as a text structured this way simply *requires* aloud presentation – slow reading with premeditated strong emphases. And that is something a modern translation of an ancient text cannot

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[13] It must be said that interpretation of the third sentence is not unambiguous: many see (as published translations show) the name of the (bad) quality as the rheme proper, i.e. **Quem ad finem iactabit sese effrenata audacia*.

[14] In case the subst. *audacia* (see previous comment) is interpreted as the rheme proper, there is no "moment of disappointed expectation", the focuses would be culminating linearly again. Only Cicero could reveal what his purpose was, though.

assume; the original author's purpose and the translator's author's purpose (taking into account a current target reader) thus necessarily conflict in a way.

Speaking in musical terms, if the text were structured with simple linear communicative dynamism, it would proceed by gradual crescendo, from piano to fortissimo culminating on the last accented syllable of the last word. In his actual text, Cicero, makes this crescendo special and emphasises it by using gradually culminating sforzandos placed on accented syllables of all rhematic constituents.

Thus we can see, that for texts with high aesthetic ambitions, the "musical" aspect of them (melody and rhythm) is important and it must be in sync with the text logic. However, the "musical" aspect does not need to be one-dimensional; on the contrary, it can be very sophisticated: thematic (i.e. lower-pitched / weaker / shorter) and rhematic (higher-pitched / stronger / longer) constituents can intertwine and also the so-called "moment of disappointed expectation" can be employed – it breaks a monotonous rhythm (and thus works as means for emphasizing a constituent). It is clear that for some genres the sonic aspect of a text is more important than for the other, still it can never be ignored entirely because the melody of a sentence is always present, at least in reader's mind's eye.

1.3 "Mistakes" in word-order

Latin word-order, as already pointed out several times, is a matter of author's purpose and therefore, there is no point in talking about word-order "mistakes". Nevertheless, my proofreading / editing experience of similarly structured Czech texts shows that the word-order as produced by the author sometimes needs "corrections"; this means that from the viewpoint of a reader (represented by the proof-reader / editor), his or her understanding does not match the author's purpose very well. Readers are misled by natural flow of speech that does not match the logic of the text. In any case, this breaks fluency of the text; this can break the aesthetic quality of the text, in case the readers do understand its logic and in their mind's eye, they resort to unnatural intonation; or it can obscure the meaning, if the natural intonation overpowers the thematic-rhematic relations of the utterance.

Sensible proportion between "objective" intonation and "subjective" (emphatic) intonation forced upon readers by the author is one of the qualities that makes a good author a good author. It is something that cannot be taken for granted and previous experience with modern texts shows that it is usually another person (editor or proof reader) who can draw the author's attention to the fact that there is something wrong with the text (either the text too monotonous or on the other hand too incoherent). Varro's work *De lingua Latina* has most probably not been proofread and, on top of that, it was probably finalized hurriedly[15] – one cannot wonder that from this viewpoint, it is far from perfect.

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[15] The letter Cic. *Att.* XIII, 12, 3 from the second half of 45 BC proves that Varro still had not finished his long-time-ago-announced work. In the dialogue captured in Cic. *Ac.* I, 1, Atticus says: "The Muse of Varro has been silent much longer than usual; though I rather suppose he is suppressing for a time what he has written" (transl. Yonge 1891). Varro responds that he has not been idle at all and that his treatise of great importance is being polished up with a good deal of care. However, there are clues implying the treatise was finished off in a hurry – frequent unnecessary repetitions and contradictions in terms, an overall impression of work lacking final redaction, in contrast with the claim Varro makes

2. Varro's word-order

The preceding long exposé was a necessary preparation to be able to move to the true purpose of this article – propounding the thesis presented at the beginning that it might have been also Varro's word-order that contributed to not exactly very high appraisal of aesthetic values of his work by his contemporaries and successors. Let us briefly summarize well-known and broadly accepted theses regarding Latin word-order in general:

- Latin word-order is a matter of author's purpose;
- The default word-order topic – focus is used (and by far not only in Latin) for utterance whose primary purpose is to pass information as clearly as possible;
- Braking this default word-order is very frequent, takes on various forms and can act, in itself, as a significant factor of the aesthetic power of the text in case of utterance whose objective is not to pass information but to make readers / listeners do something, and in case of texts with predominant emphasis on the aesthetic (not informative) value (I used the opening lines of the *First Catiline Oration* as an example to show this).

Both purely informative and emotional passages are typically found in a single text and for this reason, it does not make much sense to process individual literary works as a whole – e.g. to produce statistics on word-order in all sentences of a given text. After all, this is exactly the situation we encounter in Varro's etymological books (V–VII) of his *De lingua Latina.* On the whole, the work is, in fact, a monolingual dictionary but it also contains rhetorizing passages of refined rhythm. E.g. the very beginning of volume V of the *De lingua Latina* is obviously highly aesthetically ambitious – it abounds in metaphors and it tends, like the example from the *Catiline Orations*, to alternate topics and focuses to emphasize rhematic parts more efficiently.[16]

As of paragraph 14 of volume V, it is an expository text where individual paragraphs often begin with simple statements and have repetitive wording, such as "X is / means Y", "X is called this, because Y", "X originates in Y", where X is always the topic and Y is the focus. In unmarked word-order, as these utterances are of purely informative nature, topic should be at the beginning and focus at the end, and in most cases this is the case, e.g.[17]

> V, 16: <u>Loca natura<e></u> secundum antiquam divisionem prima **duo, terra et caelum** ... <u>Caeli</u> dicuntur loca **supera et ea deorum,** <u>terrae</u> loca **infera et ea hominum.**

> V, 18: <u>Caelum</u> dictum ... quod est **c<a>elatum.**

> V, 27: <u>Fluvius,</u> quod **fluit** ...

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in the quoted dialogue. In any case, the work must have been finished before Cicero, to whom it is dedicated, died (43 BC).

[16] Varro *Ling.* V, 1: *Quemadmodum* **vocabula** *essent* **imposita** *rebus* **in lingua Latina, sex** *libris exponere institui. De his* **tris** *ante hunc* **feci,** *quos* **Septumio** *misi: in quibus est* **de disciplina,** *quam vocant* ἐτυμολογικήν: *quae* **contra ea<m>** *dicerentur, volumine* **primo,** *quae* **pro ea,** *secundo, quae* **de ea,** *tertio. In his* **ad te** *scribam,* **a quibus rebus** *vocabula imposita sint in lingua Latina, et* **ea,** *quae sunt in consuetudine* *** *apud* **poetas.** (Rhematic constituents are in bold.) Quotations from Varro's *De lingua Latina* are borrowed from Goetz, Schoell 1910. English translations of Varro's sentences are borrowed from the translation by Kent 1938.

[17] Themes proper are underlined and rhemes proper are in bold.

V, 33. *Ut nostri augures publici disserunt,* <u>agrorum</u> *sunt genera* **quinque: Romanus, Gabinus, peregrinus, hosticus, incertus.** <u>Romanus</u> *dictus, unde Roma* **ab Romo**; <u>Gabinus</u> *ab oppido* **Gabis**; <u>peregrinus</u> *ager pacatus, qui extra Romanum et Gabinum, quod uno modo in his* serv<a>ntur *auspicia; dictus peregrinus* **a pergendo** ...; <u>hosticus</u> *dictus* **ab hostibus**; <u>incertus</u> *is, qui de his quattuor, qui sit,* **ignoratur**.

V, 40: <u>Prata dicta ab eo, quod sine opere</u> **parata**.

The above examples, and we could excerpt many more from the text by Varro, comply with the theory (stipulated for Latin for the first time by Panhuis) of functional sentence perspective and left-to-right communicative dynamism and, after all, with "common sense" and with the general requirement for a coherent text where what we talk about is required to be mentioned at the beginning and what we want to say about it is at the end. Natural intonation of the above utterances would be that of a curve – mild stress on the theme proper (*caelum*, *fluvius* etc.), fall in intonation and finally the main stress on the rheme proper (*caelatum*, *fluit* etc.).

However, Varro breaks this natural rule quite frequently, too. The following summary includes only those cases where this is absolutely obvious – well preserved sections of texts and again, just sentences with simple syntax and such types of expository utterances wording where it would not be reasonable to assume subjective author's purpose.

V, 14: *Incipiam de locis ab ipsius* **loci** *origine.*
("Among places, I shall begin with the origin of the word *locus* 'place' itself.")

Focus, the point of the whole sentence, is clearly the subst. *locus*, not *origine*. Communicative dynamism of the subst. *origine* is, on the other hand, rather low; the whole book is on "origin", which implies that primarily, the author aims towards explaining the origin of individual words (i.e. not towards e.g. explaining the phonetic or morphological structure etc.). Unmarked word-order in this case would be **Incipiam de locis ab origine ipsius loci.* Varro's sentence must be therefore read with the intonation centre not on the final word, but it must culminate on *loci* and then fall abruptly on the word *origine*.

The main risk is that readers will place the intonation centre incorrectly on *origine*, which would change the meaning of the entire utterance as this would imply that readers will, on top of its origin, learn also something else about the word *locus*. If Varro leaves such marked word-order here, he burdens readers with a rather difficult task to guess, in the process of unprepared, linear reading, what his intentions were. And even if readers do succeed to guess, there is another "risk": abrupt intonation fall between the words *loci* and *origine* can cause that the subst. *origine* will be rather incomprehensible when read aloud.

V, 15: *Ubi quidque* **consistit** *locus. Ab eo praeco dicitur* **locare**, *quod usque †id emit, quoad in aliquo* **constitit pretium**. *In<de>* **locarium**, *quod datur in stabulo et taberna, ubi* **consistant**.
("Where anything comes to a standstill, is a *locus* 'place'. From this the auctioneer is said *locare* 'to place' because he is all the time likewise going on until the price comes to a standstill on someone. Thence also is *locarium* 'place-rent', which is given for lodging or a shop, where the payers take their stand.")

It is said in the previous paragraph 14 that we will now peruse origin of the subst. *locus* (see previous example). Therefore, this time, the subst. *locus* has the lowest degree of communicative dynamism; *consistit* is the focus – the explanation of the substantive meaning and a kind of pre-preparation for etymology of other substantives: *locare* and *locarium*. Here again, there is an intonation centre on the last but one word in the sentence and then an abrupt intonation fall towards the topic *locus* at the end of the sentence.

> V, 21: *Terra dicta ab eo, ut Aelius scribit, quod* **teritur**. *Itaque* **tera** *in augurum libris scripta cum R uno.* [...] 22. [...] *Igitur* **tera** *terra...*
> ("*Terra* 'earth' is – as Aelius writes – named from this fact, that it *teritur* 'is trodden'; therefore it is written *tera* in the Books of the Augurs, with one R. [...] Therefore *terra* is *tera...*")

Even though the subst. *terra* has not been mentioned specifically yet, it is clearly the topic in this case – it is simply just another word from the group of nouns used for locations that will be explained. It is the verb *teritur* that is the focus in this case, and therefore it is placed at the end of the sentence. Unmarked word-order of the next sentence should be as follows though, in my opinion: **Itaque in augurum libris scripta* **tera** *cum R uno*. *Tera (cum R uno)* is the rheme proper; in Varro's sentence, there are two intonation peaks – *tera* and *cum R uno*, with a rather long intonation fall between them. Similarly, in the sentence *Igitur tera terra...* further below in paragraph 22, unmarked word-order should be reversed (*Igitur terra tera...*).

> V, 28: *Amnis id flumen, quod* **circuit** *aliquod: nam* **ab ambitu** *amnis.*
> ("An *amnis* is that river which goes around something; for *amnis* is named from *ambitus* 'circuit'.")

In the first sentence, *amnis* is the theme proper (= the term being explained), *circuit* is the rheme proper, *aliquod* following the rheme proper brings again an abrupt fall in sentence intonation. This is even more evident in the next sentence where *ab ambitu* is the rheme proper (= explanation of subst. *amnis* origin), followed by a fall to the theme proper, i.e. to the word of the lowest communicative dynamism, *amnis*.

> V, 30: *Sunt, qui Tiberim priscum nomen Latinum* **Albulam** *vocitatum litteris tradiderint ...*[18]
> ("There are also those who in their writings have handed down the story that the Tiber was called *Albula* as its early Latin name ...")

The early name of the Tiber *Albula* is the rheme proper, with the intonation peak on it; it is followed by three more sentence constituents with low communicative dynamism.[19] Readers recognize automatically author's purpose and read the sentence with a correct intonation peak, still it is not easy to read the sentence aloud as there is a risk of coming

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[18] The entire paragraph 30 starts with a sentence of similar functional sentence perspective – I do not list it in the summary though, as it is not a standard phrasing for etymological interpretation (list "X comes from Y" etc.): *Sed de Tiberis nomine anceps historia. Anceps*, not *historia* itself is the rheme proper here.

[19] It is the verb that is in the ending position – something that is usually considered typical of Latin word-order but it is actually just a tendency typical mainly of narrative texts and in Varro – as examples quoted in this article show after all – this rule does not apply.

out of breath while reading the long rest of the sentence consisting of twelve syllables of weak intonation that, in addition, require a short pause between *vocitatum* and *litteris* for semantic reasons.

> V, 38: *Ubi frumenta secta ut terantur arescunt,* **area***. Propter horum similitudinem* **in urbe loca pura** *areae ...*
> ("Where the cut grain-sheaves *arescunt* 'dry out' for threshing, is an *area* 'threshing floor'. On account of the likeness to these, clean places in the city are called *areae* ...")

In the first sentence, subst. *area* is the rheme proper; it is therefore correctly at the end. In the second sentence though it becomes a topic and in case of unmarked word-order, subst. *areae* should be placed before *in urbe loca pura*; there is again an abrupt fall in intonation between *pura* and *areae*.

> V, 39: *Ager restibilis, qui restituitur ac reseritur quotquot annis; contra qui intermittitur, a novando* **novalis** *ager.*
> ("*Ager restibilis* 'land that withstands use' is that which *restituitur* 'is restored' and replanted yearly; on the other hand, that which receives an intermission is called *novalis ager* 'renewable field-land', from *novare* 'to renew'.")

Adj. *novalis* is the rheme proper in this case, subst. *ager*, on the other hand, is the lowest-informative-value word, plus logically, it is an antecedent for *qui intermittitur* and in neutral word-order, it should be right at the beginning of the sentence (after the participle *contra*).

> V, 41: *... Capitolinum dictum, quod hic, cum fundamenta foderentur aedis Iovis,* **caput** *humanum dicitur inventum.*
> ("... the Capitoline got its name because here, it is said, when the foundations of the temple of Jupiter were being dug, a human *caput* 'head' was found.")

Subst. *caput* is the etymology explanation itself, i.e. in this case, it is the rheme proper and the intonation peak. The remaining *humanum dicitur inventum* represents a very long intonation fall (similarly to the example V, 30 above).

Random examples from Book VI:

> VI, 6: *... quod* **nocet** *nox, nisi quod Graece* νύξ *nox.*
> ("... is called *nox* because it *nocet* 'harms'; unless it is because in Greek night is νύξ.")

Subst. *nox* is the topic in both sentences (even more so in the second sentence), not the focus. Its ending position is therefore strongly marked.

> VI, 8: *Dicta bruma, quod* **brevissimus** *tunc dies est ...*
> ("*Bruma* is so named, because the day is *brevissimus* 'shortest' ...")

Adj. *brevissimus* is the rheme proper, the following constituents *tunc dies est* are of low information and intonation degree.

> VI, 27: *Primi dies mensium nominati Kalendae, quod his diebus* **calantur** *eius mensis Nonae a pontificibus ...*
> ("The first days of the months are named the *Kalendae*, because on these days the Nones of this month *calantur* 'are announced' by the pontiffs ...")

The verb *calantur* is the rheme proper; its position so far away from the end of the sentence is remarkable, even more so as it is a verb and as it is in a subordinate clause; in certain types of Latin texts, verbs are placed at the end of the sentence, regardless of its communicative power (see above comment 19).

An example from Book VII:

> VII, 16: *... ab eo dicta Trivia, quod* **in trivio** *ponitur fere in oppidis Graecis ...*
> ("... called Trivia from the fact that her image is set up quite generally in Greek towns where three roads meet ...")

Rheme proper – an etymological explanation – is, again, placed at the beginning of a sentence and is followed by a long row of lower-intonation constituents that are difficult to be pronounced in one breath.

We could go in a similar vein about Varro's etymological books on and on. Very frequently (but not frequently enough to assume it was a standard technique for him), Varro simply uses word-order that does not comply with any of the identified word-order patterns common in Latin; on top of that his word-order also defies both logic of the text and natural sentence intonation: his sentences do not end in rheme proper, which is a common pattern for unmarked expository texts, such as the *De lingua Latina* (or at least those sentences from this work that I quote in this article); rheme proper is followed by a thematic constituent of low informative value.

As already mentioned above in 1.3, if this happens in the progress of text reading, i.e. if readers use intonation which ensues from natural flow of speech, but which defies the logic of the text, negative effect can be twofold: either the power of natural intonation prevails and the topic-focus relationships of utterance, and therefore understanding of the text, become obscured, or readers must "stop" in their mind, correct the spontaneous intonation and read the text in unnatural intonation implied by the text meaning. We can assume that in case of the simple expository formulas quoted in this article, where the meaning is clear, the latter happened (however, in case of other, more complex Varro's compound sentences, it might have been the opposite!), and thus the readers might have been left with a bad taste, however subconscious, of constant stammer, disfluency and clumsiness.

3. Conclusions

This article is meant to be a minor contribution to Varro's style assessment and apart from that also a kind of completion of the communicative dynamism / functional sentence perspective theory in that sense that it emphasizes the role of sentence intonation (melody, rhythm):

1) Sentence intonation is of paramount importance to express topic and focus and it can be used to express any author's purpose;
2) Natural intonation of fast linear unprepared reading is rising from left to right; and
3) Where authors do not observe this principle (i.e. if they use word-order that does not comply with the natural intonation), they risk misunderstanding, i.e. incorrect reading, especially in case of such texts where readers do not expect emphasizing, which is exactly the case of Varro's etymological expositions.

Let's emphasize once more that from **authors' point of view**, any word order is, in fact, "correct" – they use the adequate intonation in mind as they write their sentences and thus the topic and the focus are clear. The problem is that if any subjective word-order is used in neutral utterances, as Varro did in his etymological expositions, without using other means (particles, deictics, etc.) that help tell the topic and the focus apart, authors demand readers to guess their purpose, which is too much. Such technique can give an impression that the text is incoherent, or it makes readers go back and read the text again with different, not spontaneous, intonation – provided readers reading the text fast realize it is incoherent.

Drawing on my proof-reading experience in Czech, which is a language of a typology (as for the word-order) very similar to that of Latin, I must say that it is not the nature of a man to be able to identify the defective word-order as the culprit of a text "sounding strange". It is not something intuitive and it takes practice. This is why I believe that it was, among others, the frequent use of non-standard word-order that led Varro's contemporaries and successors to perceive his text as "not graceful" in a way, while they did not know what exactly makes them say so. Apart from other stylistic defects of Varro's texts summarized briefly at the beginning of this article, the non-standard word-order may have been the culprit of Varro's having been perceived to be *doctissimus*, but definitely not *eloquentissimus*.

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POZNÁMKY K VARRONOVU SLOVOSLEDU

Článek předkládá hypotézu, že jedním z prvků, který mohl přispět k ne zrovna vysokému hodnocení estetické stránky Varronových textů jeho vrstevníky a následovníky, mohl být i jejich slovosled. Varro se velmi často uchyluje ke slovosledu, který odporuje jak logice textu, tak přirozené větné intonaci. Věta často nekončí vlastním rématem, jak je jinak v bezpříznakových výkladových textech běžné, nýbrž po vlastním rématu pokračuje ještě informačně slabým tematickým členem. Takový postup pak může vést u čtenáře k pocitu nekoherentnosti vnímaného textu, anebo k nutnosti vracet se v textu a přečíst ho znovu s jinou než spontánní intonací. To mohlo být jedním z důvodů, proč byl Varronův styl považován za neobratný a málo elegantní.

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