The Place of Relations in Hieronymus Pardo’s Semantics of Propositions

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Abstract: I examine a sixteenth-century development of the anti-realist propositional semantics which is based on the notion of ‘mode’. Pardo uses this notion to offer a personal interpretation of the Buridian criticism of complexe significabilia. He develops a middle way between the reduction of the significate of propositions to particular things and the postulation of non-standard entities which are only complexly signifiable. The key to this middle way is Pardo’s understanding of the notion of ‘mode’ as connoting a relation between individual things. He offers a new interpretation of the signification of syncategorematic terms, and a definition of ‘comparative’ notions, by which something is known ‘relatively’ with respect to some other thing. And a real relational correlate is postulated for these relational ways of knowing. Relations are thus used to grant a specific significate of propositions, without renouncing the strict Buridianian rejection of any extra-categorial complexe significabilia. The role of relations in Pardo’s propositional semantics consists in allowing a new (intensional) understanding of the significate of propositions.

Keywords: Hieronymus Pardo; propositional semantics; modus se habendi; complexe significabile; relations; ontological parsimony

1. PROPOSITIONAL SEMANTICS IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY: ORDINARY THINGS, COMPLEXE SIGNIFICABILIA, MODI

The semantics of propositions provides a privileged point of view for analysing the relationship between thought, language and reality. In the late medieval period, one of the crucial semantic discussions was whether propositions have a specific significate or, simply, their signification can be reduced to the signification of terms. Two extremes of the debate were clearly articulated in the fourteenth century: on the one hand, the nominalist (reductivist) proposal that a proposition does not have any specific significate, but just signifies the things signified by its categorematic terms (for example, human beings and animals are signified by the proposition ‘homo est animal’: ‘a human being is an animal’); on the other hand, the theory of the complexe significabile (the

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1 I wish to thank the participants in the 20th European Symposium on Medieval Logic and Semantics for the suggestions that oriented my research on this topic.

2 A useful survey of the different opinions held in the fourteenth century can be found in Cesalli, Le réalisme propositionel, 65-90. The classic studies on propositions by Nuchelmans (Theories of the Proposition) and Kretzmann (‘Medieval Logicians’) are still helpful sources.
complexly signifiable), developed and made popular by Gregory of Rimini, who postulated a new kind of ‘entity’ not reducible to the things signified by the categorematic terms (for example, *hominem esse animal*: that-a-human-being-is-animal, is a peculiar ‘thing’ signified by the proposition ‘homo est animal’). Although the notion of ‘complexe significabile’ was originally introduced (by Adam Wodeham) in the context of an epistemic debate (the Ockham-Chatton dispute about the object of knowledge and assent: see Tachau, *Vision and Certitude*, 180-312), the theory of the *complexe significabile* was also a response to the onto-semantic question about the significance of propositions. Buridan’s famous attack on Gregory’s theses took place at this onto-semantic level (see Biard, ‘Les controverses’).

In what follows, I want to concentrate on an intermediate position between these two extremes: the opinion that propositions signify a certain ‘mode’. In the 14th century many lists of opinions were elaborated, either as possible answers to the question about the ‘adequate significate’ of mental propositions, or as an answer to the related question about the thing to which the *oratio infinitiva* (the infinitive plus accusative construction) refers (De Libera, *La référence vide*, 303, 318, 320-322). All the lists contain the thesis that a proposition can be said to signify a *modus rei* (a mode of a thing). Some of them connect this notion with other technical expressions such as ‘taliter se habere’ (being arranged in such a way) and ‘aliqualiter’ (in some way).

The theory of the *modus rei* was an anti-realist reaction by some ‘modern’ authors to the peculiar ontology of *complexe significabilia*. But this theory not only departs from the overpopulated ontology of Gregory of Rimini, but also from the reduction of the signification of propositions to the signification of categorematic terms. In fact, the theory provides not only a way of achieving ontological economy, but also a strategy for separating the semantics of saying from the semantics of naming: propositions are not namelike, they do not signify a thing or things (*aliquid vel aliqua*), either ordinary things or complexly signifiable ‘things’. Instead, a proposition is said to signify ‘a mere mode’ (*tantum modus rei*), which on the one hand reflects the idea that propositions have a specific signification (of a syncategorematic nature, they signify *aliqualiter*: in some way) and at the same time, allows the proposal to meet the nominalist requirement that entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity.

But the move from signifying *aliqualiter* to signifying a mode is not inconsequential. On this account, propositions would not only have a specific signification, but their signification would also be directed towards a specific significate of propositions (*significatum propositionis*). Obviously, this shift from the level of signification to the level of significate causes a tension between the aim of ontological economy and the search for specificity. If there are modes which act as specific signicates of propositions, are not these modes new ‘entities’, after all (just as Gregory of Rimini’s *complexe significabilia* were)? This impression is strengthened by the fact that very often modes are indeed labelled ‘complexe significabilia’. But if these modes are somehow reduced to ordinary things for the sake of economy, do propositions have a specific significate after all? Unfortunately, the texts which appeal to the notion of ‘modus rei’ do not usually contain a fully developed propositional semantics, which makes it difficult to see whether this tension is successfully resolved (see also Berger, ‘Il concetto di stato di cose’).

The aim of this article is to examine the propositional semantics of Hieronymus Pardo, a post-medieval logician who uses the notion of ‘modus’ and certainly combines a nominalist concern about ontological economy with an inescapable need to grant a specific significate to propositions: the *significatum propositionis* is needed both as the object of assent and as a grounding for alethic modalities and logical relations. The
interpretive hypothesis of the present approach to Pardo’s theory is that an understanding of the modes in terms of relations allows him to reach a certain balance between the two aims.

2. Pardo’s Propositional Semantics: From Modes to Relations

Hieronymus Pardo († 1505) was a Spanish logician who came to the University of Paris at the end of the fifteenth century. He first studied and then taught at the College of Montaigu, where the Scot John Maior lead a famous circle of theologians and logicians that played an important part in the sixteenth century reflorescing of nominalism, and in the development of late terminist logic (see Broadie, The Scottish-Spanish Circle, 7-8; Élie, 'Quelques maîtres de l’université de Paris'). As master of Arts and bachelor in Theology, Pardo commented on Aristotle and on the Sentences.³ His logical work, a textbook entitled Medulla Dyalectics, was first published in 1500 and republished posthumously in 1505, with some emendations by his colleagues John Maior and Jacobo Ortiz.⁴ Pardo’s logical teachings seem to have had some influence in the development of terminist logic in the late-medieval period (see García Villoslada, La universidad de París, 379; Muñoz Delgado, ‘La obra lógica de los españoles en París’, 227). In turn, the Medulla offers a rich picture of the received approach to logic: terminist notions and techniques are put into play in order to solve subtle difficulties, several competing interpretations are confronted, and the successive refinements and improvements of the terminist tools are taken into account. An additional richness of the work, on the other hand, derives from the intertwining of logical doctrines with metaphysical, epistemological, and very often theological issues. John Buridan (1295-1358), Gregory of Rimini (1300-1358), Andrew of Neufchâteau (fl. 1360), Peter of Mantua (fl. 1392), Peter of Ailly (1350-1421), and Paul of Venice (1369-1429) are among the most widely quoted authors throughout the Medulla. In spite of his debt to his predecessors, Pardo shows a considerable degree of originality, and he does not hesitate to contradict the common opinion when he finds it convenient. In recognition of Pardo’s achievements, his contemporaries gave him the appellation ‘perspicacissimus preceptore artium’ (most sharp-witted teacher of arts).

Concerning the problem of the significate of propositions, Pardo exhibits in the Medulla a well developed semantics of propositions, which he substantiates in the first chapter, and connects with his theory of mental language in the second. As a point of departure, Pardo accepts Buridan’s criticism of Gregory of Rimini's theory of complexe significabilia, and he accordingly tries to base his semantics of propositions on a nominalist ontology of individuals.⁵ Nevertheless, Pardo perceives some difficulties in Buridan’s approach, and he tries to solve them with a non-orthodox interpretation of Buridan’s thesis (see Pérez-Ilzarbe, ‘John Buridan and Jerónimo Pardo’). The result is a

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³ An incomplete manuscript containing Pardo’s commentaries on Aristotle’s Physics and De Anima is kept in Seville, at the Biblioteca Colombina. A copy of Pardo’s reading on Holkot’s Commentary of the Sentences is preserved at the Biblioteca del Seminario de Valladolid.

⁴ Medulla Dyalectics edita a perspicacissimo artium preceptore Hieronymo pardo (Parisius, Felix Baligault, 1500); Medulla Dyalectics ... de nouo correcta et emendata ... per honorandos magistros ... Johannem maioris ... Jacobum orti (Parisius, Guillermum Anabat, 1505). A summary of the contents can be found in Muñoz Delgado, ‘La obra lógica de los españoles en París’, 214-226. There is no modern edition of this work. I will quote from the 1505 edition, referring to it as MD. A provisional transcription of some fragments can be found at: http://www.unaves/filosofia/pilzarbe1/medulla_dyalectics/medulla_dyalectics.html

⁵ Allus est modus dicendi [Buridanus] qui licet verus multas tamen oppugnations patitur ut contra veritatem plerumque contingere solet. Pro quo ponitur talis conclusio: complexe significabile seu significatum propositionis non distinguitur a significacionibus terminorum. (MD, 2va)
new theory of *complexe significabilia*, where the assumption of a nominalist ontology is made compatible with the acceptance of a specific significate of propositions.

I will present Pardo’s propositional semantics in three steps. First, I will show the syncategorematic nature of the signification of propositions, where an original idea of complexity is in play. Second, I will describe the shift from the level of signification to the level of significate, where the notion of ‘modus’ translates the ‘aliqualiter’ which is typical of syncategorems. Third, I will analyse the interpretation of modes in terms of relations, which brings propositional complexity from the semantic to the ontological level. Pardo’s success in mitigating the tension between the idea that propositions have a specific significate (apt to be signified *only* in a complex way) and the nominalist requirement of ontological economy will depend on the interpretation of this new way of understanding *complexe significabilia*.

### 2.1. Complexity

In the second chapter of his *Medulla Dyalectices*, Pardo discusses the issue of the composition of mental propositions, and he defends the thesis that a mental proposition has no parts. Since propositions are typically classed as complex signs, Pardo has to explain the sense in which a non-composite act of knowing can be complex (see Ashworth, ‘Mental Language and the Unity’; Pérez-Ilzarbe, ‘Jerónimo Pardo on the Unity’). This discussion is crucial to his propositional semantics, since the balance between specificity of propositions and ontological economy will rest precisely on a certain understanding of the ‘complexe’ part of the label ‘complexe significabile’.

Pardo explicitly refuses a common definition of the complexity of a cognition considered as a sign (*in genere signi*): in reaction to the idea that a proposition might be complex as a thing (*in genere rei*), in the sense of a combination of several cognitions, a possible reply is to explain propositional complexity in terms of a sum of several incomplexe significations. In contrast with this (as it were static) view of propositional complexity, Pardo understands the complexity of propositions in terms of the process whereby human intellectual powers increase their knowledge about the world. Pardo proposes a new definition of ‘complex cognition’ (*notitia complexa*), which does not require a plurality of signs involved, but which is applicable to propositions such as ‘Socrates est Socrates’ (‘Socrates is Socrates’). Even if a single object (Socrates) was originally represented by a single sign (‘Socrates’), a cognitive process is always involved in propositional signification, a process by which a new way of knowing is added to the initial grasp of that object.

Here is Pardo’s definition of ‘complex cognition’: ‘a cognition through which it is known about an object *in a way* (aliqualiter) that it is not known through the incomplexe cognition which is presupposed as a cognition of the same object’. This idea of presupposition (as a cognition) must be understood in the sense that the representation of the object by the incomplexe cognition is a prerequisite for the complex cognition to represent it. Two different cognitions, incomplexe and complexe, represent the same object; but the complexe cognition adds some new way of knowing to the previous

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6 Quadruncunque aliqua noticia aliqualiter cognoscitur circa aliquod obiectum qualiter non cognoscitur per noticam incomplexam quam presupponit tanquam noticam eiusdem obiecti, tunc talis noticia debet dici complexa. (*MD*, 16vb)

7 Per noticam autem complexam idem obiectum cognoscitur quod per incomplexam, ita quod noticia illa que dicitur complexa presupponit incomplexam ut tendentem ad idem obiectum ad quod tendit ipsa complexa, ita quod noticia illa que dicitur complexa nunquam representaret obiectum nisi quia noticia incomplexa representaret idem obiectum. (*MD*, 16vb-17ra)
(required) grasp of the thing (see Ashworth, 'Mental Language and the Unity', 78-79). In this definition, the ‘aliqualiter’ points to an increase in one’s knowledge of the object.

This new notion of complexity is linked to Pardo’s conception of syncategorematic terms, again explicitly divergent from the common opinion (according to which spoken or written syncategorems do not signify any thing or things, but only signify in some way). In contrast, Pardo proposes a twofold signification for syncategorematic terms (see Nuchelmans, ‘Late-Scholastic and Humanist’, 29-30): they signify, on the one hand, something or some things, and, on the other hand, they signify them somehow (aliqualiter vel aliqua aliqualiter). For him, syncategorematic terms are subordinated to cognitive acts (notitiae), by which something is known, but differently (aliter).

Pardo roots this twofold signification in the fecundity of human intellectual powers: there are infinite ways of knowing the same thing. Pardo’s innovative notion of complexity is illuminated if this fecundity is understood in the sense of an enrichment of knowledge. That is, in the sense that humans’ understanding of a thing can always grow, in a potentially endless process of increasing knowledge. Considered from this dynamic perspective of the growth of knowledge, any syncategorem would be subordinated to a complex cognition, by which some initial knowledge of a thing (or things) is enriched: ‘more’ of the thing is known by it. As for the mental copula ‘est’ (or ‘non est’), which is the syncategorematic act involved in any proposition, it is seen as adding to the concepts of subject and predicate a propositional way (composition / division) of knowing the same things. There is, for example, a unitive way of knowing humans and animals, which the concepts ‘homo’ and ‘animal’ do not reach, but the mental proposition ‘homo est animal’ does.

It is important to highlight again that the complexity Pardo has in mind does not arise by means of a combination of previous conceptions. What a proposition does is not to combine (the conception of human beings with the conception of animals, for example), but to know ‘better’ (humans and animals are known univitively). As we have seen, Pardo wisely chooses an example where a single object is known, in order to show the nature of the complexity that characterises propositions, a complexity which does not necessarily include any plurality of elements, but which provides a richer

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8 Dico ergo quod huius conditionis sunt actus illi quibus subordinantur sincathegoreumata vocalia vel scripta: quod significant aliquid, puta illud quod significant cathegoreumata, sed aliqualiter taliter videlicet qualiter non significatur per cathegoreumata. (MD, 12vb)

9 Aliter ergo respondeo ponendo talem propositionem: actus illi quibus sincathegoreumata vocalia vel scripta subordinantur sunt vere noticie realiter distincte et diverse ab illis noticie quibus subordinantur cathegoreumata vocalia vel scripta, si enim precise ille noticie essent ille quibus cathegoreumata subordinantur non oporteret propter additionem sincathegoreumatis in voce intellectum aliter concipere quam non apposito tali sincathegoreumate, quod est contra experimentiam. (MD, 12va)

10 Et si queras quales ergo noticie aut cuius conditionis sunt illi quibus subordinantur sincathegoreumata vocalia aut scripta, respondeo intellectui nostro tanta est data intelligendo fecunditas ab ipso summo opifice Deo ut quamcumque rem in numeris et infinitis modis cognoscere potest: ut istam rem que est Sortes intellectus infinitis diversis modis cognoscedi cognoscere potest.(MD, 12va)

11 Ex isto patet quod omnis terminus sincathegoreumaticus dictur terminus complexus, nam subordinatur in mente conceptui complexo quo idem objectum cognoscitur quod per conceptum cui subordinatur cathegoreumata vocalia vel scripta, sed aliqualiter qualiter non cognoscitur per noticionem cui subordinatur cathegoreumata, puta universaliter, particulariter, aut aliquo alio modo. (MD, 17ra)

12 In order to preserve the simplicity of mental acts, Pardo in fact identifies the mental copula with the entire mental proposition (see Pérez-Izarbe, ‘Jerónimo Pardo on the Unity’), but this does not affect the present discussion.

13 Ut si dicam ‘homo est animal’ by ‘est’ subordinatur uni conceptui complexivo seu unitivo quo intellectus cognoscit hominem et animal, sed aliter qualiter non cognoscit per conceptus illos quibus subordinantur illi termini ‘homo’ ‘animal’ scilicet unitive et affirmativae et tali modo non cognoscit hominem et animal per conceptus illos quibus subordinantur illi duo termini ‘homo’ et ‘animal’. (MD, 12v)
understanding of a thing. For example, a concrete individual (say, Socrates) can be known by means of a non-complex cognition. But this very thing can also be known by the mental proposition ‘Socrates est Socrates’ (‘Socrates is Socrates’), which signifies the same thing in a different, richer way: Socrates is known in a composing way (compositive). And the same thing can also be represented in a different way by means of the negative proposition ‘Socrates non est Socrates’ (‘Socrates is not Socrates’): Socrates is known in a dividing way (divisive). And still in a different way, by means of the disjunctive proposition ‘Socrates est Socrates vel Socrates non est Socrates’ (‘Socrates is Socrates or Socrates is not Socrates’): Socrates is known in a disjunctive way (disjunctive). And so on. One and the same thing is known in all cases, but it is represented in new ways, which involve an enrichment of someone’s knowing Socrates.14

So far, mental propositions have been identified as a kind of ‘syncategorematic’ act (although Pardo prefers to speak about ‘acts to which vocal or written syncategorems are subordinated’). The specificity of propositions is thus placed in their syncategorematic signification. But now it will be seen how these added ‘ways of representing’ particular things, which are the specific elements in the signification of syncategorems, are transferred from the level of signification to the level of significate: Pardo postulates a ‘correlate in reality’ for each complex way of conceiving (Nuchelmans, ‘Late-Scholastic and Humanist’, 30), a ‘mode’ which is signified in addition to the usual things which are signified by the categorematic terms. In the case of propositions, Pardo introduces therefore a significatum propositionis.

2.2. Modes

Pardo has to prove that the aliqualiter which is characteristic of propositional signification is also located at the level of significate. He offers such a proof when he considers the signification of syncategorems in general. In the first place, he analyses the signification of the signs of quantity ‘omnis’ (‘every’), ‘quidam’ (‘some’) and ‘iste’ (‘this’), and he soon reaches the conclusion that the aliqualiter is in fact more than a mere way of representing. Universality, particularity, singularity, all are shown to be modes of the object, rather than mere modes of our knowledge.15

First, Pardo uses the contrast between the universality of a common noun such as ‘homo’ and the universality of the syncategorem ‘omnis’, for example in ‘omnis homo’: although ‘homo’ can be said to represent things ‘in a universal way’, this is not the kind of aliqualiter which is involved in syncategorematic signification. To investigate the nature of the relevant aliqualiter, Pardo explores an answer based on the distinction between being universal with respect to representation (‘homo’: ‘human being’) and being universal with respect to verification (‘omnis homo’: ‘every human being’) (see

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14 Potest enim [cognoscere] per noticiam simplicem et incomplexam cognoscere Sortem. Potest cognoscere etiam per mentalem cui subordinatur ista vocalis ‘Sortes est Sortes’, per illam enim mentalem ‘Sortes est Sortes’ nichil a Sorte realiter distinctum significatur, sed aliqualiter representatur qualiter non representatur per illam noticiam Sortis scilicet compositive et unitive; et tali modo non representatur per primam noticiam et ista secunda noticia compositiva et unitiva a prima noticia causatur cum ipso intellectu principaliter effective concurrente. Potest etiam cognoscere per istam mentalem ‘Sortes non est Sortes’ sed aliter puta unitive negative. Potest etiam cognoscere Sortem per hanc disiunctivam ‘Sortes est Sortes vel Sortes non est Sortes’ aliqualiter qualiter non concipit per illum terminum Sortes scilicet disiunctive. (MD, 12vb)

15 Respondeo quando dictum est sincathegoreuma aut actum sincathegoreumaticum aliquld aliqualiter significare illud aliqualiter non tantum modum cognitionis aut signi dicit, sed etiam ipsius obiecti cogniti. (MD, 13va)
Ashworth, ‘The Structure of Mental Language’, 63). By incorporating this distinction, the syncategorematic universality can be characterised by the requirement that the proposition was verified with respect to every known human being. The distinction can also be used to explain away the apparent paradox of particularly representing every man (‘quidam homo’: ‘some human being’), and of singularly representing every man (‘iste homo’: ‘this human being’, when Socrates is pointed at). The relevant particularity can be characterised by the fact that the proposition may be verified by one or other human being; and the relevant singularity can be characterised by the fact that the proposition has to be verified by the specific individual which is pointed at. But Pardo finds the distinction representation / verification to be insufficient, unless the reason for this verification requirement is adequately explained.

He then proceeds by reductio ad absurdum, showing that if there was nothing in the external world that distinguished universality from particularity, then ‘omnis homo est animal’ and ‘quidam homo est animal’ (‘every human being is an animal’ and ‘some human being is an animal’) would be synonymous, and therefore there would not be any difference concerning verification. In conclusion, there must be something in the external world from which the requirements for verification arise. And this implies, since the peculiar requisite for verification is what distinguishes ‘omnis homo’ from ‘quidam homo’, that the aliqualiter involved in the syncategorematic signification of ‘omnis’, on the one hand, and ‘quidam’, on the other, are pointing to their respective correlates in reality.

In the same vein, unless something is postulated in the external world, the proposition ‘iste homo currit’ (‘this human being runs’), when the ‘iste’ (‘this’) points to Socrates, and the proposition ‘iste homo currit’, when the ‘iste’ points to Plato, would be synonymous, and there would be no reason therefore to explain the fact that the first one requires verification for Socrates and the second one for Plato. In conclusion, again, there must be something in the external world which marks the difference between the two propositions.

Pardo concludes by saying that what is called universality / particularity / singularity (of verification) are not intrinsic qualities of mental propositions: they are extrinsic qualities, in the sense that they depend on the object which is represented by them. Or rather, they depend on the mode of the object, since this is the point where the notion of ‘modus se habendi’ comes into play. The aliqualiter which belongs to the

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16 Sed per omnia ista non videtur sufficiens satisfatio ad argumenta proposita, quero enim cur ad verificatione propositionis mentalis cui subordinatur illa vocalis ‘omnis homo est animal’ requiritur verificatio pro quocunque homine cognito, et ad veritatem istius mentalis ‘quidam homo est animal’ sufficit verificatio pro aliquo homine cognito si nichil neque aliter correspondet ex parte rei uni noticie quin tale et eodemmodo correspondeat ex parte rei alteri noticie. Unde arguo quod ille noticie sint synonyme hoc pacto: quandocunque aliquo noticie sic se habent quod nichil neque aliqualiter cognoscitur per unam quin tale et taliter [quin etiam] ex parte obiecti cogniti cognoscatur per aliam ille noticie sunt synonyme. Sed sic est quod nichil neque aliqualiter cognosciatur per istam mentalem ‘omnis homo est animal’ quin tale et taliter cognoscatur per illam mentalem ‘quidam homo est animal’, vel detur illud aliqualiter, ut ita dicam. Igitur, ille noticie sunt synonyme et per consequens quicquid requiritur et sufficit ad veritatem unius noticie requiritur et sufficit ad veritatem alterius noticie. (MD, 13rb-12va)

17 Et confirmatur, quia capiam istas duas mentales ‘iste homo currit’ demonstrando Sortem ‘iste homo currit’ demonstrando Platonem, ille due penitus idem significant a parte rei, ergo non magis una requirit verificationem pro Sorte quam alia. [...] Oportet ergo quod sit aliqual ex parte obiecti vel aliquis modus se habendi representatus per unum actum qui non representatur per reliquam. (MD, 13va)

18 Et hoc efficacter probant rationes, unde noticia illa cui subordinatur illa vocalis ‘omnis homo est animal’ non habet quod dicatur universalis intrinsece magis quam noticia illa cui subordinatur ista vocalis ‘quidam homo est animal’, ergo si ista dicatur universalis et illa particularis hoc tantum est extrinsece ab ipso obiecto vel modo obiecti per ipsam representato. (MD, 13va)
signification of syncategoremata is a certain ‘way of standing’ on the part of reality, which is previous to and independent of any intellectual operation (see Ashworth, ‘The Structure of Mental Language’, 65).19

Previous to this discussion about syncategoremata, modes had been introduced when Pardo was investigating the definitions of alethic modalities and wanted to base them on the signification of propositions. The fact that modalities have to be grounded in the signification of propositions is for Pardo clearest in the case of necessity and impossibility: since propositions are contingent entities, a proposition could only be named ‘necessary’ or ‘impossible’ because of its signification.20 Pardo interprets alethic modalities of propositions as involving different ways of conceiving things (aliter et aliter): things can be known truly or falsely, possibly or impossibly, necessarily or contingently. And he postulates the corresponding ways of ‘being so’ (ita esse) or of ‘being arranged’ (se habere) as the real correlates of the different modal ways of conceiving: the intellect must always be moved by the things.21 This is how he introduces composite and divisive ways of being (as the real correlates of propositions, the kind of cognition that admits alethic modalities), and upon them, true and false ways, possible, impossible, necessary and contingent.

Pardo sometimes speaks of a second way of understanding complexe significabilia, in contrast to Gregory of Rimini’s understanding: what he has in mind is Buridan’s idea that the signification of propositions (the ita esse that Pardo has introduced as the ontological ground for mental propositions and their modalities) can be identified with the ordinary things (concrete individuals) signified by categorematic terms. But if this identification were the whole story about the signification of propositions, the specificity of propositional signification would be in danger. Given that Pardo wants to preserve a specific signification of propositions, this ita esse, which in some sense is an ordinary thing, must at the same time have something specific with respect to the signification of a non-complex concept, must have something which is ‘only complexly signifiable’. This is granted by Pardo’s interpretation of the aliquid aliter in terms of some concrete individuals standing in a relation with respect to some concrete individuals. While each concrete individual can be signified by a non-complex cognition, the relational structure that they exhibit can only be signified in a complex way, that is, can only be signified when the intellect goes deeper in understanding individual things.

2.3. Relations

19 Et si queras an talis modus se habendii sit in re seclusa intellectus operatione, respondeo: quemadmodum in precedenti capitulo defensum est aliquid esse veritatem relativam omni operatione intellectus seclusa, sic etiam omni operatione intellectus seclusa ille modus se habendi universaliter importatur per ly ‘omnis’ est in re, similiter modus se habendi particulariter importatur per signum particulare, et etiam modus se habendi singulariter per signum singulare significatur. (MD, 13vb)

20 Sed quod necesse sit et veritatem et falsitatem et necessitatem et contingentiam possibilitatem et impossibilitatem ex parte significati propositionis sumi, quod negabat unus doctor, ostenditur maxime de necessitate et impossibilitate sic: propositio non dictur necessaria vel impossibilis per intrinsecam denominationem secundum formalem necessitatem vel impossibilitatem suae entitatis, quia ipsa formaliter est res contingens, dictur ergo necessaria vel impossibilis per extrinsecam denominationem et non nisi quia ei correspondet aliquid intelligibile et necessarium vel impossibile pro suo per se significato. (MD, 5va)

21 Item sic arguo: aliter concipitur res aliqua per propositionem necessariam, aliter per propositionem contingentem et aliter per propositionem impossibilem, et illa aliaetas non tantum in conceptu est consideranda, intellectus enim movetur a re, si ergo res non aliter se habet ut concipitur per unam propositionem et per aliam non videtur unde una propositione dicatur possibilis et alia impossibilis. (MD, 5vb)
When Pardo is defending the non-composite character of mental propositions, he faces the opinion of those who think that a mental apprehensive proposition (as opposed to a judicative proposition) has parts (namely, the apprehensions of subject and predicate). There he introduces the distinction between absolute and comparative cognitions, and he makes explicit reference to the propositional way of knowing (see Nuchelmans, ‘Late-Scholastic and Humanist’, 38). He interprets Aristotelian ‘simple apprehension’ as an absolute apprehension, and he makes a contrast with the Aristotelian ‘composition and division’, which he interprets as comparative apprehensions. Something is grasped, through this ‘comparative act’, with respect to itself or to something else (in ordine ad seipsum vel ad alium). The difference between the simple and the complex is thus explained in terms of the contrast between the absolute and the relational. This illuminates the ‘more of the thing’ which is known through a complex cognition: it has to do with the comparison that the intellect makes with respect to something. For example, through the mental proposition ‘Socrates non est Plato’ (‘Socrates is not Plato’) Socrates is not known in isolation, but he is known with respect to Plato.

But, as we have seen, the syncategorematic signification of propositions must have a real correlate, a syncategorematic significate: Socrates-with-respect-to-Plato cannot just be a new way of knowing Socrates, but it must also be the significate of the proposition through which this new knowledge is gained. This is in fact what Pardo postulates: the significate of a proposition (and of any syncategorematic term) is a real modus se habendi in ordine ad... (a way of standing with respect to...). If on the one hand the notion of ‘modus’ allows us to preserve ontological economy (given that a mode is after all a concrete individual), if adequately interpreted it also leaves untouched the specificity of propositions at the level of significate. The trick is that the relational framework introduces some peculiar sort of complexity at the ontological level.

The real correlate of syncategorematic complexity is clearly stated when Pardo examines the objections against his interpretation of the aliquid alius signified by syncategorematic terms. For example, the universality signified by the sign ‘omnis’ (‘every’) in ‘omnis homo est animal’ (‘every human being is an animal’) is explained as a ‘divisive’ relation of human beings to each other: more specifically, as a divisive relation between Socrates-as-related-to-animals and Plato-as-related-to-animals, and so on. A
similar relation among individual things is the ‘disjunctive way of standing’ which corresponds to the syncategorem ‘quidam’ (‘some’). As for the demonstrative ‘iste’ (‘this’) in a singular proposition, Pardo has to find a specific relation among particulars that can act as the ‘singular way of standing’ which corresponds to the ‘iste’ in ‘iste homo est animal’ (when, for example, Socrates is demonstrated). He postulates a singular relation between Socrates and himself, which is signified by the singular cognition ‘iste homo’ (‘this human being’). This singular cognition, apart from making known every human being, uniquely demonstrates Socrates rather than the rest: this uniqueness is explained by postulating a relation between Socrates and himself. Socrates is singularly arranged with respect to himself, and it is this relation that the term ‘iste’ is pointing at.

Pardo’s strong point is that extramental reality somehow ‘contains’ this kind of complexity, and it is therefore richer than a mere set of individuals. The fecundity of human intellect has to do with its ability to grow in the knowledge of individual things by grasping the different aspects of this real complexity. This strong thesis has some striking consequences. For example, human knowledge can grow to such an extent as to make the intellect consider one thing in its relation to everything which is not that thing. This is what infinitising negation does. The term ‘non homo’, for example, signifies every human being in a negative way, that is, it signifies human beings in so far as they are related to what is not a human being. This means that by the mental ‘non homo’ everything in the world is known: if the mode is the thing standing in a relation to something, then knowing a way of standing implies knowing the two terms of the relation, even that relatum which was not represented by the incomplex cognition which is presupposed by the complex one.

An important further aspect of the real complexity that Pardo needs as the real correlate of propositional signification has to do with alethic modalities and logical relations. Truth, falsity, necessity, impossibility, contradictoriness, consequence: all of these are grounded in reality by means of the same apparatus of relational modes.

Sortes relative affirmative se habens ad animal relative divisive se habet ad Platonem qui relative affirmative se habet ad animal [relative affirmative se habet ad animal] et ita de aliiis hominibus, ideo illa universalitas verificaturis que exigitur ad veritatem universalis ex parte ipsius rei significatae est accipienda. (MD, 13vb) On the ‘holistic’ character of Pardo’s analysis, see Nuchelmans, Late-Scholastic and Humanist, 38.

25 Sed de ly ‘quidam’ pari forma dico quod subordinatur conceptui quo cognoscitur id quod per cathegoreuma significatur particulariter, hoc est disjunctive et confuse qui modus se habendi disjunctive satis facile intelligitur sicut modus se habendi copulativa ut patet aspicienti. (MD, 13vb-14ra)

26 Sed de signo singulari difficilius videtur quam de signo universali et particulari, dico tamen hoc non obstante quod ly ‘iste’ in hac propositione ‘iste homo est animal’ significat omnem hominem (ita quod subordinatur conceptui per quem quilibet homo cognoscitur) et est demonstrativus Sortis, quia per illum conceptum cognoscitur Sortes sub aliquo speciali modo quo non cognoscuntur alihi homines, unde Sortes et quilibet res singularis singularis se habet ad seipsum. Dico autem quod per illum conceptum representatur Sortes relative singulariter se habens ad seipsum, non autem representatur aliquis alius hominum ut taliter se habens relative singulariter ad seipsum. (MD, 14ra)

27 Igitur, quodlibet ens est significatum termini infiniti et etiam negationis infinitantis, ideo iste terminus ‘non homo’ omne ens significat, quia omnem hominem significat et omne quod non est homo. [...] Sincathegoreuma significat id quod per cathegoreuma cui additur significatur alqualiter, puta secundum aliqum modum se habendi illius significati, vel potius dicam secundum aliqum modum se habendi qui est ipsum significatum taliter se habens. Et ideo concedo quod sicathegoreuma non tantum id quod per cathegoreuma significatur significat, sed etiam omne illud quod exigitur ad illum modum se habendi, videlicet id quod se habet et id ad quod se habet. (MD, 14ra)

28 Pardo’s theory of relative modalities has received attention from Coombs in his ‘Jeronimo Pardo on the Necessity’, in connection with the tricky problem of the necessity of scientific propositions.
For example, human beings are not only arranged negatively (or divisively) with respect to donkeys (this is the real grounding for propositional signification), but also truly negatively: this grounds the truth of the proposition ‘homo non est asinus’ (‘a human being is not a donkey’). There is a relative truth in the things themselves (veritas relativa in re), which consists in some particular human beings in their relative arrangement with respect to donkeys.29 Similarly, a relative necessity in the things themselves (necessitas relativa) is postulated, from which the proposition ‘homo non est asinus’ is said to be necessary.

Also false propositions have their corresponding ways of being, which ground their alethic modalities. For example, the proposition ‘homo est asinus’ (‘a man is a donkey’) is grounded in an affirmative way of human beings who are arranged with respect to donkeys: an affirmative but false way. There is thus a relative falsity in the things themselves (falsitas relativa), which grounds the falsity of the proposition. And also a relative impossibility in the external world, which grounds the imposibility of the proposition. Of course, modalities can be iterated (for example, it is true that ‘homo est asinus’ is false) and so the complexity of modes can grow further and further. Thus, we find Pardo speaking about the fact that human beings and donkeys stand truly relatively falsely with respect to each other.

And this kind of real complexity, in the form of some individual standing in a relation to some individual, is also the basis for logical relations. Propositional composition and division, alethic modalities, logical relations: all in all, the examples of ‘relative ways of standing’ multiply throughout the first chapter of the Medulla Dyalectices. It is time to assess what exactly is gained by the introduction of relations in Pardo’s account of propositional signification.

3. THE ROLE OF RELATIONS IN PARDO’S PROPOSITIONAL SEMANTICS

Pardo devotes a large part of the first chapter of his Medulla Dyalectices to elucidating what complexe significabilia are. Two competing ways of understanding the signicate of propositions are introduced. Pardo first presents and criticises Gregory of Rimini’s proposal (the signicate of a proposition is a non-existent ‘thing’), and he then goes on to explain and defend Buridan’s opinion (the signicate of a proposition cannot be distinguished from the signicates of terms), which he considers to be the correct one. Nevertheless, this second way faces a serious objection which cannot be overcome, in Pardo’s opinion, unless some departure from Buridan’s theory is allowed. The objection concerns the connection between alethic modalities and signicate, and Pardo’s departure from Buridan consists in, first, his option for a definition of the modalities which is based on the signicate of propositions; and second, his interpretation of this second way of taking complexe significabilia in relational terms. I am convinced that this relational interpretation implies an enrichment of the theory of the modus rei, because the apparatus of relations allows Pardo to explicitly address his two concerns: ontological parsimony and specificity of propositional signicate. I claim that Pardo’s interpretation constitutes a genuine new way of understanding complexe significabilia, a middle way between Gregory’s extension of the ontology and Buridan’s denial of a specific signicate.

29. It is perhaps useful to note that, although Paul of Venice’s interpretation of the complexe significabile is to some extent similar to Pardo’s, when Paul speaks about ‘veritas relativa’ he has something completely different in mind (see Conti, ‘Complexe Significabile and Truth’, 488).
Pardo shares Buridan’s concern about ontological parsimony. The ‘ways of being related’ which ground the semantics of propositions are not extending Pardo’s ontology beyond the ordinary things which suffice for a semantics of terms. In spite of the growing complexity that characterises the propositional enrichment of knowledge about ordinary things, it is ordinary things that the world is made up of. But at the same time, the intellectual complexity is claimed to have a mind-independent correlate. Pardo has shown that Gregory’s postulation of some ‘propositionally structured entities’ (see Gaskin, ‘Complexes Significabilia and the Formal Distinction’) points in the wrong direction. The isomorphism between thought and reality in Pardo takes a different route: complexity is reflected at the ontic level in a relational structure that does not extend the ontology beyond the concrete individuals which are related. Relations (and thus modes of things) are not to be counted among the ‘components’ of the world.

This is clearly exemplified by the case of the mental proposition ‘Socrates est Socrates’, through which Socrates is known unitively with respect to himself. In the second chapter of the Medulla Pardo proves that the complexity of the act of knowing has nothing to do with a combination of parts, not even with a plurality of signs, but with the simple and single comparative stance of the intellect. Pardo thinks that the object of this act of knowledge peculiarly reflects this kind of complexity: the fact is that Socrates is related to himself, but no new (somehow structured) entity is postulated beyond Socrates himself.

Here Pardo explicitly raises the question of the real distinction between thing and mode. The threat to ontological parsimony arises in an epistemic context. Pardo concedes that having the cognition of the things involved in the relation is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for having a cognition of the aliquam alter itself. Although at the ontic level the relation can be explained in terms of the things related, at the epistemic level the knowledge of the bare things does not suffice to know the relation. For example, for Socrates to be related unitively affirmatively with respect to himself nothing except Socrates is required in the external world; nevertheless, knowing Socrates is not sufficient in order to know Socrates as related unitive affirmatively with respect to himself. Pardo is aware that this might be used to prove that there must be some difference between the thing as such (Socrates) and the way of standing (that-Socrates-is-Socrates). Here, unfortunately, he does not solve the difficulty and he does not even take a stance. In the context of the second chapter, the discussion of this point seems to be out of place.

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30 Ideo patet quod ad asinum relative false se habere ad hominem sequitur quod vere relative asinus false se habet ad hominem, neque est inconveniens aliquam rem infinitis modis se habere et in illis modis se habendi procedatur in infinitum, non tamen dico ut modum se habendi de quo in presenti est mentio realiter distinctum a re que se habet. (MD, 6rb)

31 Per hec patet quod noticia cui subordinatur ista vocalis ‘Sortes est Sortes’ est complexa, eo quod causatur a noticia incomplexa et eam presupponit tanquam notiam eiusmodem objecti, et aliquam alter cognoscitur per istam notiam (puta, relative unitive et affirmativa) qualiter non cognoscitur per notiam cui subordinatur iste terminus ‘Sortes’, qui modus se habendi est Sortes realiter se habens. (MD, 12vb)

32 Sed ibi esset bonus dubium: utrum noticia illius modi se habendi sufficierent causetur a noticia rei que sic se habet. Respondeo: ad cognoscendum aliquem modum se habendi necessae est habere noticia omnium eorum vel cuiuslibet quod exigitur ad talesmodum se habendi, sed tamen hec consequentia non valet: ‘cognosco quicquid exigitur ad aliquam taliter se habere, ergo cognosco illa taliter se habere’; nam claram est quod ad hoc quod Sortes se habeat unitive affirmativa ad seipsum non requirit nisi Sortes, et tamen non sequitur ‘cognosco Sortem, ergo cognosco Sortem unitive in ordine ad seipsum’, nam per notiam cui subordinatur iste terminus ‘Sortem’ cognosco Sortem et tamen non cognosco Sortem unitive in ordine ad seipsum. Et ex hoc videtur apparentia quedam quod ille modus se habendi unitive non omnino ydemplificetur cum Sorte ex eo quod stat aliquem cognoscere Sortem et tamen non cognoscit quod Sortes se habeat unitive in ordine ad seipsum. Et istud argumentum posset applicari universaliter de
But in the previous chapter Pardo examined a set of similar counterexamples (in the course of an objection to Buridan’s idea that *complexe significabilia* cannot be distinguished from the significates of incomplex terms), and he solved the difficulty by showing that the objector’s arguments do not suffice to prove the difference between the thing and the ‘being so’. One of the arguments runs as follows:

God can be understood without any creature.

That-God-is-the-lord-of-creatures cannot be understood without any creature.

Therefore, that-God-is-the-lord-of-creatures is not God.\(^{33}\)

Pardo shows that this conclusion cannot be established, and reveals the fallacy behind the argument. He follows Andrew of Neufchâteau in using the distinction between the divided and the composite sense of the second premise: either the premise is a claim about the thing which is that-God-is-the-lord-of-creatures, but then it is false; or it is a claim about the proposition ‘that-God-is-the-lord-of-creatures is understood and no creature is understood’, which is true but does not allow us to draw the unwanted conclusion (see Gaskin, ‘*Complexe Significabilia* and the Formal Distinction’, 511-513). However, far from implying the acceptance of Buridan’s reductivist approach, this example shows that what is involved here is the crucial distinction between an extensional approach to semantics and an intensional one. My claim is that the new (third) way of understanding *complexe significabilia* is intended to combine the two perspectives. The introduction of an intensional perspective into the semantics of propositions is, in my opinion, Pardo’s contribution to the discussion of the significate of propositions.

The dispute between Buridan and Gregory belonged to the extensional perspective. It was an issue about the set of things that make up the world. From an extensional point of view, Pardo sides with Buridan’s proposal: he does not want *complexe significabilia* to be introduced as new elements in the set of things that make up the world. Happily, for a nominalist, admitting real relations does not imply admitting any entity beyond substances and qualities (see Henninger, *Relations*, 133).

But relations introduce an intensional point of view, which disrupts the straightforward identity between the mode and the thing. Pardo makes it clear that something can be real without being a thing, without strictly being an element of the set of things that make up the world.\(^{34}\) The same intensional perspective is operating in other uses of the notion of ‘modus rei’ in the literature: in connection with some physical problems raised by Aristotelian notions such as ‘motion’ (see, for example, Caroti, ‘Nicole Oresme and *Modi Rerum*’), and in connection with some theological problems about the Trinity (see, for example, Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought*). A *modus* belongs to reality, without strictly being a component of the world. This reality can be

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\(^{33}\) Argueretur enim sic: Deus potest intelligi absque creatura et Deum esse dominum creatur et hoc est falsum, alius sensus est quod illa minor habet duplicem sensum, unus sensus est ‘illa res que est Deus esse dominum creatur non potest intelligi absque creatura’ et hoc est falsum, alius sensus est quod hoc est impossibilis ‘intelligitur Deum esse dominum creatur et non intelligitur Deus’ et iste sensus est verus. (*MD*, 4ra)

\(^{34}\) For a similar approach in Paul of Venice, although not based on relations but on the scotist notion of formal distinction, see Conti, ‘*Complexe Significabile* and Truth’.
grasped by the intellect, but only in a complex way, that is, only through a process that goes beyond the bare things that make up the world. This fecundity of human intellect is what propositions (and, for Pardo, syncategoremata in general) add with respect to simple cognitions. If my interpretation is correct, Pardo’s proposal introduces an interesting nuance into the ontologically parsimonious nominalism that Pardo inherits from Buridan. From the extensional perspective, no entity is introduced in Pardo’s ontology beyond the bare things that make up the world. From the intensional perspective, there is no need to reduce the signifcates of propositions to the strict components of the world.

Pardo’s theory can be compared to Wodeham’s original theory of the complexe significabile, at least on one of its possible interpretations. Wodeham’s thesis about the ontological status of the complexe significabile is unequivocal: the signifcates of a proposition is not an ens (a being), but an ita esse (a being so). Making room for it among the entities that make up the world is simply misguided. Its reality cannot be expressed in extensional terms. Since terminist logicians are used to an extensionalist approach to logic, it is no surprise that Wodeham’s theory was misunderstood by his contemporaries. Since we readers with a background in mathematical logic are also used to an extensionalist approach to logic, it is not extraordinary that we want to reach signifcates in terms of ‘reference’, ‘denotation’ and ‘universe of discourse’. It is for this reason that we scrutinise Wodeham’s and Pardo’s claims about signifcates for some kind of statement about the set of entities that make up the world.

I take it that the restriction to an extensionalist perspective is what makes Brower-Toland, for example, say that Wodeham ‘intends complexe significabilia as entities distinct from and additional to individual substances and accidents’ (‘Facts vs. Things’, 640), and also, I must admit, what made me say that in Pardo ‘the difference between propositions and terms is dissolved’, that ‘the semantic evaluation of propositions is reduced to a referential relation’, and that ‘Pardo’s theory runs the risk of taking on undesirable ontological commitments’ (Pérez-Ilzarbe, ‘John Buridan and Jerónimo Pardo’, 170-171). The point of view concerning relations opens a new way of interpreting Pardo’s theory, and Wodeham’s notion of ita esse. From an intensional perspective, the admission of complexe significabilia needs to add nothing to the set of things that make up the world. Perler’s idea of supervenience (‘Late Medieval Ontologies of Facts’) is perhaps closer to the perspective I am adopting here, although his speaking about an ‘ontology of facts’ might be misleading: one might think of facts as ‘components’ of the world, instead of thinking of them as the structure that makes reality richer than a simple set of things.

The problem is that terminist logic is an extensional tool: it is based, after all, on the notion of ‘suppositio’, which connects pieces of language with elements of the world. No doubt terminist notions can deal with the intensional phenomena of natural language (connotation, modalities, epistemic contexts and so on), but when all is said and done, they do so in extensional terms. This is the reason why, within a terminist framework, the difference between thing and mode is so difficult to put into words. Perhaps the limits of Pardo’s propositional semantics are the limits of terminist logic itself. Pardo’s difficulties are similar to these faced today by contemporary advocates of correspondence theories of truth: any concern for ontological economy seems to inevitably drift into a reductivist semantics of propositions. Pardo has shown that the way to face these difficulties is to undertake a careful analysis of the specific elements in propositional signification, and to let this analysis guide the search for a structure of

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35 For a list of the main lines and the corresponding bibliographical references, see Brower-Toland, ‘Facts vs. Things’, 599.
reality, which has to be richer than the ‘ontology’ which determines ‘the furniture of the world’. Pardo’s appeal to relations apparently allows him to have this richness without compromising his ontological parsimony: what he lacks is a language to adequately express these modes of being. The challenge that this sixteenth-century discussion poses to logicians of any time is that of finding a technical tool which is able to preserve the genuine intensionality of language and thought.

References


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