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JERÓNIMO PARDO ON THE UNITY OF MENTAL PROPOSITIONS

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Pardo’s views on mental language reflect an advanced status of the discussions on this issue. Almost two centuries have passed since Ockham’s innovative theses were delivered, and since the reactions of his contemporaries which followed1. Given this distance from the original controversy, Pardo does not address the problem of mental language as an independent one, but rather he uses the notion of a mental language (which he takes for granted) when he needs it, either to solve some logical difficulty or to substantiate some of his semantic theses.

Pardo’s logical work (Medulla Dyalectices: Paris, 1500, 1505) is constructed around a core issue, namely, the problem of truth. All his analyses are directed to finding out what it is that truth and falsity depend on. In this approach, propositions (and also mental propositions) become the focus of the majority of Pardo’s reflections. I have chosen the question of the unity of mental propositions, because it is extensively treated by Pardo, so that the detailed discussion allows him to bring into play his whole theory of language and thought.

On the surface, the question “an propositio mentalis sit plures noticie” arises as a help to solve a technical difficulty: the problem raised by a sophism, namely, the apparent conflict concerning truth values, caused by the fact that utterances have parts that can be arranged in different ways (“Omnis homo est homo” / “Homo omnis homo est”). But at a deeper and more interesting level, the question about the composition of

mental propositions helps us to understand what exactly a proposition is: what, if there is such a thing, makes the proposition something different from other pieces of language.

**Preliminaries: propositions and their meaning**

*What is a proposition?*

If we search the *Medulla* looking for a definition of *propositio*, we do not find any. All we have are some lines explaining the supposition of the term “propositio (mentalis)”:  

*Iste terminus ‘propositio mentalis’ supponit pro una qualitate existente in anima, connotando talem qualitatem representare ita esse vel non esse*.

This analysis is quite illuminating, as it makes clear that a proposition is specifically linked to a special kind of *representare*. In contrast to the initial reading of the sophism, which focuses on the constituents of the proposition, Pardo’s ideas suggest that in order to understand what a proposition is we must not look at it as an object, but rather as a sign.

Thus, in order to understand Pardo’s answer to the question “an proposicio mentalis sit plures noticie”, it is worth explaining this special kind of *significare* that is characteristic of propositions. Moreover, in order to understand this special kind of signifying, we need to say something about Pardo’s ontology and his ideas about the significate of propositions.

**The significate of a proposition**

The problem of the *significatum propositionis* is addressed by Pardo at the very beginning of his work. He presents his own ideas as an intermediate solution between two paradigmatic conceptions: the theory of *complexe significabile* as defended by Gregory of Rimini, on the one hand (which postulates a special kind of entity designed to be the significate of propositions), and the theory put forward by John Buridan, on the other hand (which reduces the significate of a proposition to the particular things signified by the terms). Pardo’s solution is an original middle term. In fact, although his nominalism makes him sympathise with Buridan’s ideas, they must be (radically) transformed in order to achieve the project that Pardo has in mind: he wants to ground truth and falsity on the significate of propositions, and the Buridian “bare particulars” are not enough to carry out this task.

In addition to this semantic perspective, there is an epistemological motivation for Pardo’s proposal: as he makes a literal reading of the phrase “intellectus movetur a re”, and as he observes that the same things can be conceived in a multiplicity of ways, thus he is convinced that there must be some different ways for the same things to be arranged in reality (these ways functioning as the cause that moves the intellect to form the different ways of conceiving things). This is the extra element that Pardo adds to the Buridian view: the particular things signified by simple terms are *related in different ways*, and these “ways of being related” (*modus se habendi*) function as the cause that moves the intellect to conceive the same particular things in so many different ways. For example, the intellect can conceive things *affirmatively* by means of an affirmative proposition. Therefore, if the intellectual act must be strictly caused by reality, there must be in reality an *affirmative way of being related*.

This is how Pardo’s semantic views force him to adopt an enriched ontology. In Pardo’s world, in addition to the particular things (individual men and animals, for example), “there are” also some ways of being related (*modus se habendi*, which correspond to the different ways of being conceived: affirmatively, negatively, disjunctively, universally...), and even some relative modalities (*modalitates relativae*, which correspond to the different modes of these relationships: truly, falsely, necessarily, and so on). To the question about the significate of propositions, Pardo answers in a Buridian manner (identifying it with the particular things signified by the terms), but he qualifies this view from the perspective of his enriched ontology (as the significate of a proposition is not reduced
to the “bare particulars” signified by the terms, but is identified with these particulars insofar as they are related in an affirmative or negative way.

Of course, the nominalist Pardo always insists that these (infinitely many) “modes of being related” are not really (non realiter) different from the related things themselves. But eventually he cannot avoid recognising that there is some difference between the particular things and the modes of being that cause the different modes of conceiving them: Socrates, for example (which is conceived by the term “Socrates”), cannot be exactly the same as Socrates insofar as he is identical with himself (which is conceived by the proposition “Socrates is Socrates”): if they were the same, it would be impossible to know Socrates without knowing that Socrates is Socrates, which is denied by Pardo.

The signification of a proposition

In accordance with these ideas about the signification of propositions, Pardo recognises a specific signification for propositions (a specific way of signifying), that distinguishes them from terms. A proposition, although it signifies the same things as its terms signify separately, signifies them in a way that cannot be signified by the simple terms. In order to understand this “way of signifying” (parallel to the ontological “modes of being related”), it is worth considering Pardo’s ideas about syncategorematic terms.

Pardo offers an extensive analysis of “mental syncategoremata” (or better, of actus illis quibus subordinantur sincategoremata vocalia vel scripta), and presents a view which strongly diverges from the opinio communis. Opposing the view according to which mental syncategoremata do not signify aliqua, but only aliqua aliquid aliquator, Pardo defends the idea that any syncategorematic act signifies aliqua aliquid aliquator. That is, a syncategorem signifies the same things that are signified by the categorematic terms, but it signifies them in a way that the categorematic terms are not able to signify.

For Pardo, then, syncategorematic acts are true cognitions (notitia), by means of which the intellect knows something. The fact is that the intellect can know the same thing in many different ways, so there are many kinds of notitiae, by means of which the intellect knows the things in different ways. For example, Socrates can be known by a simple concept (“Socrates”), but also by a mental proposition (“Socrates est Socrates”), which represents the same thing in a different way (namely, as affirmatively related to himself), and also Socrates can be known by a complex term (“Socrates si est Socrates”), which represents him in a conditional way with respect to himself, etc.

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8 “Sed ibi esset bonum dubium: utrum noticia illius modi se habendi sufficienter causetur a noticia rei qua sic se habet. Respondeo: ad cognoscentum aliquem modum se habendi necessae est habere noticiae omnium eorum vel cuiuislibet quod exigatur ad talem modum se habendi. Sed tamen hoc consequentia non valet: ‘cognosco quicquid exigatur ad aliquid taliter se habere’, nec aliquid est quod ad hoc quod Sortes se habeat unitive affirmativa ad seipsum non requiratur nisi Sortes, et tamen non sequitur ‘cognosco Sortem, ergo cognosco Sortem unitive in ordine ad seipsum’, nam per noticiam sicubibit ‘cognosco Sortem’ cognosco Sortem et tamen non cognosco Sortem unitive in ordine ad seipsum. Et ex hoc videtur apparentia quaedam: quod ille modus se habendi unitive non omnino idem differt eum Sorte, et eum aliquid cognoscere Sortem et tamen non cognosco quod Sortes se habeat unitive in ordine ad seipsum. Et istud argumentum possit applicari universaliter de omnibus modis se habendi unius ad aliud, probando esse aliquid distinctieinum inter rem et modum se habendi, sed hoc omittio quia non est presentis inquisitionis” (Medulla Dialecticae, t. 17n).

9 Ibid., ff. 11vb-14rb. See G. Nuchelmans, op. cit., p. 29-31; E. J. Ashworth, “The Structure of Mental Language”, p. 63-65, with the reactions of Pardo’s contemporaries to his striking theses.

10 “Dico ergo quod huius conditionis sunt actus illi quibus subordinantur sincategoremata vocalia vel scripta; quod significant aliqua aliquid, puta illud quod significant categoremata, sed aliqua aliquator taliter vel aliquid aliquid aliquator non significatur per sincategoremata” (Medulla Dialecticae, t. 12v b).

11 Pardo puts forward three objections, and gives the corresponding detailed answers, in order to clarify the kind of signification that belongs to syncategoremata: “significare aliqua aliquid aliquator, representare aliqua aliquid aliquator” (Ibid., ff. 13n-14rb).

12 “Et si queras quales ergo notice aut cuius conditionis sunt ille quibus subordinantur sincategoremata vocalia aut scripta, respondore intellectui nostro tanta est data intelligendi gendicitas ab ipso summum opifice Deo ut quamcumque rem in numeris et infinitis modis cognoscere potest, ut istam rem quae est Sortes intellectus infinitis diversis modis cognoscendia cognoscere potest. Potest enim [cognoscere] per noticiam simplicem et incomplexam cognoscere Sortem. Potest cognoscere etiam per mentalem cui subordinatur ista vocalia ‘Sortes est Sortes’, per illam enim mentalem ‘Sortes est Sortes’ nichil a Sorte realiter distinctum significatur, sed aliquator representaret qualiter non representaretur per illam noticiam Sortis (scilicet, compositiva et unitiva); et tal modo non representaretur per primam noticiam, et ista secunda noticia compositiva et unitiva a prima noticia causatur, cu ipso intellectu principaliter effectus consequentis. Potest etiam cognoscere per istam mentalem ‘Sortes non est Sortes’, sed aliter (puta, unitiva negative). Potest etiam cognoscere Sortem per hanc distinctiam ‘Sortes est Sortes vel Sortes non est Sortes’ aliquator qualiter non concipit per illum terminum Sortes (scilicet, distinctiva)” (Ibid., f. 15vb-b).
The signification of a proposition is, of course, of a “syncategorematic” nature: a proposition signifies the same things that are signified by subject and predicate, but in a special way (affirmatively, negatively, etc.) which corresponds to the different modes of *ita esse vel non esse*.

This special syncategorematic signification of propositions is the key to understand the difference between a proposition and a term (for example, “Homo est animal” signifies man and animal, but in a way that “homo” and “animal” by themselves are not able to signify, that is, in so far as they are affirmatively related). But in addition, this special way of signifying is what allows Pardo to account for the unity of mental propositions.

The unity of mental propositions

It is important to note that Pardo’s conception about the unity of mental propositions has nothing to do with the question about the “glue” that joins subject and predicate together. The “unity” of a mental proposition means for Pardo the non-composite character of this mental act. Pardo’s answer to the question “an propositio mentalis sit plures notitie” is an emphatic “no mental ultimate proposition (whether categorical or hypothetical or any other) is composed as an aggregate of several cognitions”.

In the subsequent discussion of this general thesis, Pardo develops a full theory on the nature of mental propositions. I will focus on four aspects of this theory, which Pardo defends as his most original points: first, the place of judgement in Pardo’s account of the unity of propositions; second, the sense of the “complexity” which is traditionally ascribed to propositions; then, the role that is left to subject and predicate in this account; and, finally, the new conception of the copula which is advocated by Pardo.

Mental propositions and judgement

First of all, Pardo does not share Gregory of Rimini’s view which grants the unity of mental propositions by identifying them with simple acts of judging (*assensus* or *disensus*).

13 “Nulla propositio mentalis ultimata (sive categorica, sive hypothetica, aut cuius-cunque generis propositionum) est ex pluribus noticiis composita, compositione per aggre-gationem, quod est dicere quod nullas talis est plures notitie” (*Ibid.*, f. 14va). In order to prove this thesis, Pardo presents four *rationes* that show the shortcomings of the opposed view (*Ibid.*, ff. 14va-15va).


16 “His suppositis, ad instantiam respondó quod non sola noticia iudicativa est propositio mentalis, sed ponenda est quodam noticia apprehensiva a noticia iudicativa realiter distincta, quae praeter noticiam iudicativam iam formetur noticia iudicativa realiter distincta. Et hoc provenit ex perfectione quia habet noticia iudicativa, propter quae perfectionem presupponit modum representandi noticia apprehensiva. Unde dico quod illa quae est noticia iudicativa non esset noticia iudicativa sui objecti nisi per apprehensivam apprehendatur talia objectum. Ideo, poíst concedi quod noticia iudicativa quantum ad illam denominationem que est iudicativa dependent ab apprehensiva, licet quidam dictum quod ipsam iudicativa esse apprehensiva. Quamvis hoc possit sustineri, tamen possum esse necessae ponere aliquam apprehensivam a iudicativa realiter distinctam, melius est ponere apprehensivam ilam presuppositionem ad hoc quod habeatur noticia iudicativa” (*Ibid.*, f. 16rb).
proposition properly speaking is just the apprehensive one. Assensus and dissen sus are only called “propositions” in a derivative sense, insofar as they can be said true or false.21

In conclusion, the act of judgement, which is essential to Gregory’s account of the unity of mental propositions, does not play any role in Pardo’s explanation. Instead, his efforts are directed towards making clear how an apprehension that we usually call “compositionem vel divisionem” is nevertheless as simple as the “simplex apprehensio” itself.

Mental propositions and complexity

So the big challenge that Pardo has to face is the apparent conflict between the thesis about the unity of mental propositions and the traditional view of propositions as a kind of complex. On the one hand, he is strongly interested in preserving this complexity, as he wants to use it to draw the desired distinction between propositions and terms. But, on the other hand, he has to create a new notion of complexity, that would not involve any danger to the simplicity of mental propositions.22

Pardo explicitly rejects the common view, according to which two kinds of complexity can be distinguished: in genere rei and in genere signi. This common view attributes to the propositions a complexity in genere signi, which is explained as an equivalence in meaning to several simple cognitions.20 Now, Pardo objects that the proposition “Socrates est Socrates” is not equivalent in meaning to several cognitions. Instead, this mental proposition is a noticia by which the same thing is known as is known by the single noticia “Socrates”, although it is signified in a new way, namely in a unitive way (as related to itself).21

And this is the kind of complexity that corresponds to a proposition: a complexity consisting of knowing an object in a way that it is not known through an incomplex cognition which is presupposed by it as a cognition of the same object.22

Two important aspects are involved in this definition: first, that the true relation between the mental proposition and the simple cognitions corresponding to subject and predicate is not a relation of part-whole, but a relation of presupposition. Pardo emphasizes that this presupposition should be as a cognition, thus ruling out some apparent counterexamples. In the first place, it is not a matter of just presupposing a simple cognition, as any intellective (human) cognition presupposes some sensitive cognition, not necessarily being for this reason a complex cognition. In the second place, it is not a matter of presupposing a simple cognition as an object (sub ratione objecti), as the cognition through which some other cognition is known presupposes the existence of this other cognition, though not its being a cognition, and for this reason it should not be called a complex cognition: for example, I can know the cognition that I have of Peter, but this cognition is not known inasmuch as I am knowing Peter through it. In contrast, a complex cognition presupposes the incomplex one inasmuch as some object is being known by it, exactly the same object that is known by the complex cognition: should the incomplex cognition not represent the object, the complex cognition would not be able to represent it.

21 “Et si quaeque istarum noticiarum, indicativa videlicet apprehensiva, dicatur propositioni illa cui subordinatur proposito vocalis in significando, respondeo: de noticia apprehensiva solet teneri communiter quod est propositio mentalis cui subordinatur vocalis, sed de noticia indicativa non modo dubium est an sit propositio illa cui subordinatur vocalis, sed an debet dici propositio” (Ibid., f. 16va). “Sed quod noticia indicativa debet dici propositio, licet non illa cui subordinatur vocalis, non magna est vis: potest enim proposito appellari posquiun vera vel falsa dicuntur” (Ibid., f. 16vb).

22 “Alia est ergo assignanda ratio quare dicatur complexa, si omnis propositio mentalis complexa debeat dici talis: quandoque aliquis noticia aliquid qualiter cognoscitur circa aliquod obiectum qualiter non cognoscitur per noticiam incomplexam quam presupponit” (Ibid., f. 16vb).

23 “Etiam, non satis est ad noticiam complexam quod presupponit incomplexam, quia tunc noticia intellegens que haberetur de aliquo sensibili semper deberet dici complexa, cum presupponat noticiam sensitivum eiusdem obiecti; sed hoc non est quantum ex parte ipsius noticii, sed ex ordine potentiari pro statu isto, qui non ex natura rei sed ex ordinatione divina in anima coniuncta (saltem post peccatum primum hominum)” (Medulla Dialecticae, f. 16vb).

24 “Secunda instantia est: si proposito mentalis esset unica noticia sequeretur quod non esset noticia complexa quod est falsum, quia tunc non deberet dici erat de, quo uno terminus simplex, quod est falsum. Consequentia tamen probatur, quia si alia unica noticia non videtur quae debet magis dici complexa quam noticia cui subordinatur igitur terminus ‘homo’. Ad hoc solet communiter dici quod non vocatur complexa in genere rei (seu formaliter aut intrinsecus), eo quod sit plures noticia alterius rationis, sed solum in genere signi, pro quanto equivalet in significando pluribus vocibus vel pluribus noticiis. Sed contra, quia tunc sequetur quod esset aliquo proposito mentalis que non esset complexa. Patet: capio mentalem cui subordinatur ista vocalis ‘Sortes est Sortes’. Illa non est complexa in genere signi, quod probo: quia non equivalet pluribus noticiis in significando, nam per eam tantum cognoscitur id quod cognoscitur per noticiam cui subordinatur ille terminus ‘Sortes’, sed aliter (puta, unitive)” (Medulla Dialecticae, f. 16vb).
On the other hand, Pardo reminds us that in order to have a complex cognition it is not sufficient to have this relation of presupposition, but it is also needed that the same objects are known in a different way. This idea is explained when considering the question whether a common cognition (which seems to presuppose a singular cognition as a cognition) should be called a complex one. Pardo’s answer is that, although the common cognition presupposes a singular cognition of some object also known by it, the object is not known in different ways. This solution might appear an ad hoc one, as Pardo has to admit that the knowing confuse (corresponding to the common cognition) and the knowing distincte (corresponding to the singular cognition) do not count as different ways of knowing, because confusion and distinction are not on the part of the thing, but only on the part of the cognition: one may ask whether this thesis is compatible with Pardo’s general statement that intellectus moveatur a re\(^{19}\).

In any case, it is clear that Pardo’s idea of complexity involves presupposition of simple cognitions and also a different way of representing. A corollary is that, under this perspective, any syncategorematic term becomes a complex term, as through the mental syncategorem the same object is known as it is known by the corresponding mental categor. In a way that it is not known by it\(^{20}\).

Finally, Pardo elaborates his notion of presupposition in terms of a causal relationship: the reason why the complex cognition is said to presuppose the simple cognitions is that it is caused by them in the course of a cognitive process. For example, we have seen that through the mental proposition “Socrates est Socrates” one knows Socrates as he is affirmatively related to himself. Pardo understands that the act of knowing Socrates this way is the result of a cognitive process that must start by knowing Socrates in itself (this is achieved through the mental term “Socrates\(^{\circ}\)”). Then, by a mechanism that Pardo does not explain, this first cognition of Socrates comes to cause a new one, the proposition through which one knows Socrates in a different way as cannot be known by the simple term “Socrates”\(^{27}\).

This raises the additional question as to whether the simple cognitions are sufficient causes for the complex one. Pardo’s answer is that they are not: one can well know Socrates by the simple cognition “Socrates”, without automatically knowing that Socrates is Socrates (that is, Socrates as affirmatively related to himself), and this shows that the complex cognition “Socrates est Socrates” needs some extra cause, apart from the simple cognition that is presupposed by it\(^{26}\). The fact is that the tension between pure nominalism and some disguised realism that Pardo meets at the ontological level is reproduced at the cognitive level, as the complex cognition that was supposed to make us know the same things as the simple ones that are presupposed, in a sense makes us know something different from the simple ones, namely, a modus se habendi that in a sense must be something different from the things that are so related\(^{28}\).
Leaving aside this problem, the fact is that Pardo’s idea of complexity grants, as was desired, both the distinction between propositions and terms and the unity of mental propositions. The worry now is what is left in this picture of the traditional notions of subject and predicate.

The nature of mental predication

Pardo further elaborates his idea of mental complexity when he has to face an objection concerning the possibility for a proposition of representing contradictory contents, along with the possibility of representing the same things in repugnant ways. Pardo is convinced that the "unity" (that is, the simple nature) of a mental proposition does not prevent it from being able to represent different (even contradictory) contents, or to represent in different (even repugnant) ways. The key for a correct understanding of the propositional unity is now a distinction between absolute cognitions (noticia simplex seu absoluta) and comparative ones (noticia comparativa). An absolute cognition makes us know the thing in itself, as not compared to anything, whereas a comparative cognition makes us know the thing as related to something (in ordine ad alidum).

Pardo ascribes to the comparative cognitions the same notes previously ascribed to complex ones: a comparative cognition presupposes the simple cognitions that are compared, in the sense that its representing non cognoscit quod Sortes se habeat unitive in ordine ad seipsum. Et istud argumentum posset applicari universaliter de omnibus modis se habendi unius ad alium, probando esse aliquam distinctionem inter rem et modum se habendi, sed hoc omissi quia non est presentis inquisitionis" (Ibid., f. 17ra).

"Tertia instans est: si proposito mentalis esset una simplicis noticia sequetur quod eadem noticia esset noticia simplicis seu nothurium. Nam cognitum mentalis cui subordinatur ista vocalis 'Sortes currit et Sortes non currit': si illa sit unique simplicis noticia, sequitur quod eadem noticia representat contradictoria, scilicet Sortem currit et Sortem non currit. Et universaliter sequetur quod eadem noticia representaret objectum modis repugnantis (puta, intuitive, abstractive, singulariter, universaliter et sic de alis modis). Si enim aliquid habet mentalem cui subordinatur ista vocalis 'A est albedo', posito quod 'A' sit nomen proprium alivicis singularis albidinis quum intueratur, tune per illam propositionem mentallem cognoscit A simplicem seu discrete, cognoscit etiam ipsum A communiter seu confuse omnem albedinem cognoscendo; cognoscit etiam A intuitive per illam noticiam, et abstractive per hoc quod cognoscit quantitatem albedinem abstractive" (Ibid., f. 17ra-b). This problem has lead Peter of Ailly to consider hypothetical propositions as composed, a view that also Andreas Limos has defended. See E. J. Ashworth, “Mental Language and the Unity of Propositions”, p. 94.

"Respente: duplex est noticia; quod eadem simplicalis seu absoluta quod aliquid cognoscitur absolutum et non relative in ordine ad alid, aliud est noticia comparativa quod aliquid cognoscitur comparative seu relative in ordine ad alid" (Medulla Dialecticae, f. 17rb). See G. Nuchelmans, op. cit., p. 38.
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Now, when it comes to explaining the logical properties that are traditionally explained in terms of subject-predicate relations (for example, *predicatio superioris de inferiore*), Pardo always has recourse to the cognitions that are the cause of the mental proposition. The cognitions that we call "subject" and "predicate" need not be there as real parts, because they are contained in a superior way by the propositional cognition that transcends them (*eminenter continet*).

A striking corollary of Pardo’s view is that the vocal propositions “Homo est animal” and “Animal est homo” must be subordinated to one and the same mental proposition. That is, to the objection that, in the absence of any parts, the proposition that compares man and animal cannot be distinguished from the proposition that compares animal and man, Pardo concedes the argument: knowing man as related to animal is exactly the same as knowing animal as related to man. This simply confirms the non-compositional character of any propositional act of knowing. Through the mental proposition the intellect is just apprehending “at once” some individuals as related to each other in a certain way.

non habet subiectum et predicatum; similiter, in ea non esset predicatio. Respondeo: in ea dicitur esse predicatum et subiectum equivalenter et eminenter, pro quanto per eam cognosciatur aliquid ut alterius attributur vel sibi ipsi, et sic id quod attributur habet rationem predicati (saltem objective) et id cui attributur, saltem objective. Exemplum: illa noticia unitiva per quam cognosco hominem esse animal dicatur habere subiectum, pro quanto cognosciatur homo cui aliquid attributur, scilicet animal, et illa noticia dicitur habere predicatum, pro quanto per eam cognosciatur animal quod homini attributur cognosciendo quod homo est animal. Et ita homo dicitur subiectum objective et animal predicatum, et ita illi duo termini ‘homo’ et ‘animal’ equivalent dicuntur subiectum et predicatum, pro quanto illa noticia eminenter continet noticiam hominis et noticiam animalis” (Ibid., f. 17vb).

38 “Quamvis autem una predicatio dicatur superioris de inferiori videndum est, considerando si illa noticia unitiva causetur ex duabus noticiis quarum una sit superioris et altera inferioris, et in alius noticis consimilius est iudicandum” (Ibid., f. 17vb).

39 “Et si arguas: non est aliqua ratio quare homo habeat magis rationem subiecti quam animal, cum per illa cognosciatur hominem esse animal et animal esse hominem, qui enim comparat animal ad hominem etiam comparat hominem ad animal. Respondeo: argumentum vincit quod tam hominem quam animal posse habere rationem subiecti et predicati, homo enim potest habere rationem subiecti pro quo animal cognosci et in ordine ad hominem, potest etiam habere rationem predicati pro quo cognosci et in ordine ad animal, et similiter dico de ‘animal’ quod potest habere rationem subiecti et predicati. Ideo, concedo quod ille de usum propositiones vocales ‘Homo est animal’ ‘Animal est homo’ eodem mentali subordinatur, et certe in vocali quilibet illorum terminorum possit dici indifferenter subiectum vel predicatum, nisi consuetum esset terminum unum precedentem copulare appellare subiectum et aliun terminum predicatum” (Ibid., f. 17vb).

some things in a special syncategorematic way. That is, through a mental proposition we are signifying that something is something (or that it is not): “significat huc esse huc vel hoc non esse hoc”35. The *compositio divisio* is a new syncategorematic cognition caused by the previous ones, but never composed of them. Pardo even claims that we can discover this by introspective experience: it is true that, when understanding a proposition, one experiences having a concept of the subject and a concept of the predicate, but (Pardo says) one is not experiencing them as parts of the proposition; rather, what one experiences is that, once these simple cognitions are formed, the intellect forms a new cognition, namely a composition / division which is caused by the previous simple concepts36.

Can we, then, legitimately speak of the subject and predicate of a mental proposition? According to Pardo, we can say that a proposition has a subject and a predicate in a derivative sense: in the sense that the way of representing of the mental proposition is that of a *predication*. That is, through a mental proposition something is known as it is attributed to something else (or to itself). The thing that is attributed in the predication has the *ratio* of predicate, and the thing to which it is attributed has the *ratio* of subject. Thus derivatively, the propositional cognition through which I know, for example, that man is animal (“hominem esse animal”) can be said to have a subject, inasmuch as I am knowing something (man) to which something else is attributed (animal), and it can be said to have a predicate inasmuch as I am knowing something (animal) that is attributed to something else (man), because this predicative way of knowing contains in a superior way the cognitions of man and an animal37.

35 “Per hce dicta paet ad aliquid quomodo dicantur in mente esse predicaciones, pro quanto per illas propositiones significatur hoc esse hoc vel hoc non esse hoc” (Ibid., f. 17vb).

36 “Ex hæz pato soluto ad persuasionem aliquorum tenentium propositionem mentalen esse compositam ex pluribus noticiis. Sic enim persuasent: experimur in nobis ut cum audiamus illam vocalem ‘Homo est animal’ formamur unam noticiam de ly ‘homo’ et aliiss de ly ‘animal’, ergo dicendum est quod propositiones est plures noticiis. Respondeo: non negandum est eis quin experiantur habere illas conceptus, cum de facto ita sit, sed nego quod experiantur illas concepts esse partes aliquas propositionis mentalis, sed potius experiantur oppositum. Experiantur enim quod, habitus illis noticis simplicibus, intellectus componit, que compositio vera noticia est ab illis duabus causata. Quaerendum enim esset ab illis experientia ne illa actum sincerhegenre consistat quem ponat copule corre<spo>lente, quem quem actum nichil cognoscant, quia non est noticia ut volunt. Et si respondant quod sic, credo quod dicit contra mentem” (Ibid., f. 17va-b).

37 “Sed ut amplius cognoscatur quo pacto notitia illa unitiva proposito mentalis dicatur, ponitur quarta instantia: si talis propositio est una simplex noticia, sequitur quod...
**Mental propositions and “mental copula”**

Finally, we can understand the completely new conception of the copula that is involved in Pardo's account. As we have seen, the role of the propositional cognition is not that of combining subject and predicate into a composite unit, but rather that of representing them in a new predicative way. In accordance with this view, Pardo explains that the Aristotelian *dictum* according to which the copula “est” makes a composition of predicate with subject should be understood in the sense that the copula signifies in a compositional way the things that are absolutely signified by subject and predicate.

In Pardo’s position, the vocal “est” is not subordinated to any part of the predicative cognition (as there are no parts in it), but to the whole mental proposition that represents *alia quia aliqua*. In what sense, then, can we speak of a “mental copula” according to Pardo’s position? The only “mental copula” that is admissible in this account is the mental proposition itself, as it is the only cognition to which the vocal “est” can be subordinated.

Again, certain prejudices about “subject” and “predicate” come to distort our vision. We seem to have the intuitive idea that the syllogistic cognition corresponding to the copula needs to be accompanied by the syllogistic cognitions corresponding to subject and predicate (thus apparently confirming the view of a mental proposition as a composite of several parts). Of course, Pardo agrees that a “way of being related” cannot be known unless the things that are so related are also known: in some sense, there is a dependence between the propositional cognition and some simple cognitions of what we call its “extremes”.

But Pardo’s conception of syncategorems allows the mental proposition to represent both the things related and the way of being related: that is,

the dependence does not mean that the syncategorematic cognition is not sufficient by itself to represent *alia quia aliqua*. This dependence has been explained, not in terms of a part-whole relation, but in terms of a relation of causation and *eminenter contineere*. So, once it has been caused by the syllogistic cognitions, the syncategorematic cognition (on its own) suffices to represent both the things compared and their way of being related.

An interesting feature of this “holistic” view is that this allows Pardo to interpret negative propositions as a mental division (instead of as the negation of a mental composition). The vocal expression “non est” is subordinated to a single (propositional) cognition, the one through which something is known as related to something else in a comparative negative way.

So far we have at least two different copulas, affirmative and negative. But, as can be expected, Pardo’s picture gets more intricate as the structure of propositions becomes more complex. Pardo takes, for example, the universal affirmative proposition “Omnis homo est animal” and the universal negative “Nullus homo est animal”. According to him, the mental copula corresponding to the proposition “Omnis homo est animal” is a comparative cognition that signifies that animal is attributed to every man, and the mental copula corresponding to the proposition...
"Nullus homo est animal" is a negative cognition that signifies that animal is attributed to no man. Pardo explains that the vocal quantifier is not subordinated to a specific cognition, but both the "omnis" and the "est" (and similarly the "nullus" and the "est") are subordinated to one and the same cognition (namely, to the propositional cognition that we can call "mental copula", as it is the cognition to which the vocal copula is subordinated). This means that we see in Pardo a proliferation of "mental copulas": we have as many copulas as different ways of apprehending "ita esse vel non esse.

Conclusion

Pardo has presented a consistent view about the simplicity of mental propositions (and of mental acts in general). He has managed to free himself from the "common sense prejudices" that usually lead us to postulate a structure of mental language as mirroring the obvious structure of vocal and written language. We have seen that mental language is composed of simple acts of knowing. At most, what mirrors the structure of vocal and written language is rather the step by step cognitive process that ends up in a given propositional cognition.

In other words, speaking about a "structure" of mental propositions only makes sense in a "genealogical" way. Pardo replaces the question about parts with a new question about the "causal history" of any mental act. What is complex is the cognitive process that has led to a cognition, not the propositional cognition itself. In his logical work, Pardo does not describe this psychological process, but it is clearly presupposed. (In its turn, the structure of the psychological process is reflecting a real structure: the relations among particulars that Pardo has added to his initially Buridian ontology.)

But there is a further step that Pardo takes and that weakens the credibility of his proposal. He has had the courage to defend a view against certain "common sense" that is biased by our familiarity with vocal and written pieces of language. But this biased common sense seems to reappear in a way that (in my opinion) spoils his innovative conception of mental language. As we have seen, driven by the idea of subordination of vocal to mental language, he is forced to admit that the vocal "est" is a proposition in its own right, because, being subordinated to the mental "est", it signifies in the way required for being a proposition.

But as a consequence, Pardo seems also forced to admit that the complex vocal expression "Homo est animal" is not a proposition in the strict sense, but an aggregate of a proposition (the copula) plus the terms that signify what things are being signified by it. In analogy to what happens at the mental level, the reason that we can say that vocal subject and predicate are parts of the vocal proposition is that they signify separately what the "est" is signifying in a comparative way. And, as the cognitions that we call "subject" and "predicate" must be presupposed in order to have the simple cognition that is the mental proposition, the vocal subject and predicate must be added to the vocal proposition ("est") in order for it to signify the aliqua that it aliqua signifies. For example, "homo" and "animal" have to appear in the vocal expression "Homo est animal", but their role is just that of signifying in an absolute way the things that the copula is by itself signifying in a comparative way.

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44 "Credo tamen quod dicendo 'Omni homo est animal' ly 'omnis' non habet propriam subordinacionem distinctam a ly 'est', sed ly 'omnis' et ly 'est' subordinatur notificatione univiti universalis per quam univiti cognoscitur animal distincteum seu confuse tantum in ordine ad hominem universaliter seu copulative. Unde quando signum determinat propositionem quomodammodo dicendo 'Omni homo est animal', ly 'omnis' non subordinatur notitia quae precise cognoscitur homo, sed subordinatur cum ly 'est' toti propositioni universaliter" (Medulla Dyalectic, f. 18va-b).

45 See, however, Ashworth's criticism (E. J. Ashworth, "Mental Language and the Unity of Propositions", p. 87-88).

46 "Concedo preterea unum quod pavrum aspicientibus videbitur alienum: quia ly 'est' in voce est tota proposition, quia sufficiente significat illium quod requiritur ad esse propositionem" (Medulla Dyalectic, f. 18rb).

47 "Et si dicas nonne debet concedi quod totum hoc 'Homo est animal' est proposition, dico quod non, sicut neque debet concedi ex noticia universalis et de illis noticiis simplicibus quod debet dici proposition. Et ideo, si ille due voces 'homo' 'animal' dicuntur subjectum et predicatum hoc est in isto sensu, id est, significat esse univiti cognoscendum unum in ordine ad aliud per conceptus correspondentes. (Allas tamen loquendo utar hoc totum 'Homo est animal' et similibus pro ipsa propositione dum argumentum non petet illum difficultatem.) Et sicut illa noticia correspondentes extremis non sunt partes propositionis mentalis, sic etiam ille voces 'homo' 'animal' non sunt partes propositionis vocalis, ideo non consequitur applicatur de propositione vocalis sicut applicatur de mentali" (Ibid., f. 18rb).

48 "Et si dicas: ly 'homo' ponitur in propositione, respondeo: ille conceptus cui subordinatur ille terminus 'homo' causalet dictum poni in propositione, pro quanto effective causat conceptum illum univiti quem propositioni est. Et ideo, si voces 'homo' et 'animal' dicuntur poni in propositione quia instrumentaliter moverat ad formandum conceptum qui propositioni est saltum mediatem, nam immediate excitavit ad formandum conceptum sui significati, qui conceptus causat illum qui propositioni dicitur. Ille etiam due voces 'homo' et 'animal' dicuntur partes ipsius vocalis "Homo est animal" qua significat seorsum ea que conceptus unitivus est" (Ibid., f. 18vb).

49 "Et si queras: quia ly 'est' est proposition, quid ergo opus est in voce ly 'homo' et ly 'animal'. Respondeo: ly 'homo' et ly 'animal' ponuntur ad significandum ea que ly 'est' unitive debet significare" (Ibid., f. 18rb).
This is, I think, the weakest point in Pardo's proposal. He could have explained otherwise the composition that is obvious at the vocal level. Why not just say that the whole composite expression "Homo est animal" is as a whole subordinated to the mental syncategorematic act that we can call either copula or mental proposition? This would not compromise the simplicity of mental propositions, as Pardo has explained that mental propositions contain not as parts, but in a superior way, all the cognitions that are presupposed as their causes. This *eminenter continere* would be harmlessly reflected in the compositional character of vocal and written propositions.